Introduction to Instructed Second Language Acquisition. Shawn Loewen. Routledge, New York and London (2015). x + 210 pp., ISBN: 978-0-415-52953-2 (pbk).

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Introduction to Instructed Second Language Acquisition is a pioneering volume in the field of second language acquisition (SLA). In his book, Loewen, argues for the significance and effectiveness of instructed second language acquisition (ISLA) which is considered a subfield in SLA. He defines ISLA from a cognitive-interactionist perspective. Next, he delves into theory, pedagogy, and research of ISLA in different contexts, of course with a balanced diet. His purpose is "to use the familiar context of the classroom to highlight the processes that underlay the acquisition processes that occur therein" (p. ix); in other words, "the main theme [of the volume] is how ISLA theory and research underpin and support classroom L2 learning" (p.16). The book is aimed at meeting the needs of graduate students, practicing teachers and researchers in SLA.

The book consists of 11 chapters, a reference list, and a subject index. The chapters follow more or less the same structure. Each chapter begins with a definition of the topic at hand, followed by an account of several of the more important theoretical issues related to the topic. Next, each chapter reviews important research related to the topic. In some chapters, there are meta-analyses that synthetize the related research, and still in others, individual research studies that illustrate important concepts. Then, most chapters deal with the more practical aspects of the topic in terms of the L2 classroom. Finally, each chapter ends with a variety of activities that aim to help the reader to reflect upon the issues discussed in the chapter.

However, the volume can be tacitly divided into two sections: in the first section, Chapter 1, Lowen attempts to answer the question whether instruction can be beneficial for L2 acquisition or not, and having concluded that it can, in the second section, Chapters 2-11, he tries to answer the

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question in what aspects and to what extent it can be beneficial. Having read Chapters 1-2, the reader does not need to study the following chapters linearly.

Chapter 1 discusses the scope of ISLA and focuses on the effectiveness of L2 instruction. Here, Lowen not only marks the domain of ISLA by comparing and contrasting it with SLA, but also illustrates various theoretical issues of ISLA by cohesively tying them to certain skills in teaching and research. Arguably, this chapter is the book's most insightful chapter in that it sets the building blocks of the volume.

Chapter 2 elaborates the nature of L2 knowledge and its relationship to L2 instruction. It considers two possible goals of L2 instruction: explicit, declarative knowledge of grammatical rules and other linguistic areas, and implicit, procedural knowledge that enables spontaneous communication in the L2. It concludes that both types of L2 knowledge can be developed by a variety of means and a combination of both types of instruction may be best for the L2 classroom.

Chapter 3 focuses on the role of communication and interaction in the development of L2 knowledge. It investigates whether a classroom rich in L2 input and L2 interaction can bring about L2 knowledge and skills. Particular attention has been given to the theoretical support provided by the Interaction Approach, and its manifestation in the classroom in the form of communicative language teaching and task-based language learning. Chapter 4 deals with focus on form in which learners' attention is drawn to specific linguistic forms within a larger meaning-focused context. Considerable research has examined various types of focus on form (Long, 1996) and their effectiveness. After exploring the two broader theoretical approaches of the Interaction Approach and focus on form towards developing communicative competence, the focus of the book shifts to consider how instruction might influence specific linguistic areas.

Chapter 5 looks at grammar, being the object of much theoretical speculation, empirical investigation, and pedagogical intervention. It carefully examines the theoretical issues that pertain specifically to the instruction of grammar in the L2 classroom, such as Input Processing and explicit grammar instruction. Chapter 6 probes into vocabulary. It considers the role of both explicit instruction and implicit learning of vocabulary and how such instruction affects the resulting types of vocabulary knowledge.

Chapter 7 presents the less researched area of pronunciation. Again, the unique challenges of pronunciation instruction have been explored in relation to theories of phonological learning. Chapter 8 examines whether pragmatics can be taught in the classroom, and what research has shown about such efforts.

Chapter 9 investigates the larger instructional contexts in which L2 learning occurs, such as L2 immersion classes and content-based instruction. It also moves outside the walls of the classroom to consider the role of study abroad, and the impact of technology on L2 acquisition. The penultimate chapter considers how learner differences can impact classroom instruction, exploring such issues as motivation and aptitude. Finally, Chapter 11 attempts to bring some unification to the variety of issues discussed throughout the book.

On the evaluation level, as the title of the book expresses itself, it is an introductory volume and indeed an easy-to-digest-book. The audience does not need to have deep background knowledge on the issue to grasp the concepts and discussions. Almost all of the key terms and concepts have been clearly defined and/or elaborated, if necessary. The book is trustworthy since it links theories, methods, experiments and research findings to related literature in the field. Furthermore, the organization of each chapter into almost four sections is effective and each section gives a brief but adequate overview of the related issue. Another advantage is that it provides a fresh look at areas of common interest to ISLA research, and ways in which research in this area of linguistics can be fruitfully integrated. The strong orientation of the book towards an exploration of different issues in ISLA makes it a valuable resource for researchers, teachers and students who wish to explore SLA topics. What adds to the strength of this volume is the author's position in taking the realities of the classroom to consideration. Another virtue rests on its provision of a number of reflective and practical classroom activities that assist the reader in bringing to practice the previously presented topics and theories. In comparison with other similar books on the ISLA such as that of Ellis (2005), this volume is more comprehensive and coherent. Generally speaking, the reader-friendly, simple, and easy-to- understand layout of the book, the contribution of the author by offering his personal experience, novel and practical activities are but a few of the outstanding features of this must-have.

On the other hand, there are a few typos throughout the volume (such as, "two distinct types, with [wrong word → **which**] have been referred to …" line 2, p. 35, or "… pertinent for [wrong grammar → **to**] one type…" line 6, paragraph 2, p. 59) to be corrected in a later reprint or edition. In some cases the writer could have been more specific and definite. For example, in the statement "In addition, the corrective feedback that can be provided by some programs constitutes negative evidence …" (line 7, paragraph 2, p.122) the author could have stated or exemplified which programs. The book has a subject index, but lacks an author index. Most of the instances of L2 studies referred to in the book are from English. Examples from other languages can add to the book's strength and attraction. The issues concerning ISLA have been approached just from a cognitive-interactionist perspective and other existing perspectives, such as sociocultural theory, have not been dealt with. Finally, comparing and contrasting this approach to/with other existing approaches and adding two other chapters on reading and writing skills can enrich the discussion.

The above-mentioned shortcomings should not overshadow the volume's strength. In a nutshell, this book is highly recommended if you do not want to be just another teacher but one of the best, are eager to find immediately- usable practical techniques and tired of reading books offering tempting, idealistic, and not practical solutions. The volume is an informative, inspiring, and important contribution to the field of ISLA.

References

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