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BOOK REVIEW

Title	: Explicit Learning in the L2 Classroom: A Student-Centered Approach
ISBN	: 978-0-415-70706-0
Author	: Ronald P. Leow
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This book provides a theoretically framed and empirically supported approach to support explicit learning (learning with awareness) in L2 development with a link to learning in the classroom setting. It approaches explicit L2 learning from five perspectives: theory, methodology, empirical work, model building, and pedagogy. It is theoretically based on mentalist or psycholinguistics SLA which posit that L2 development is more cognitive in nature. It also reviews studies which were motivated by cognitive accounts of SLA, more specifically studies on explicit L2 learning. It provides teachers with a model of L2 learning process in instructed SLA, and researchers with reviews on data elicitation procedures (online and offline) in SLA research. This book is written with novice teachers and researchers in mind, therefore it is both theoretical and practical in nature.

The book is divided into three sections, preceded by an introductory chapter which reviews history of SLA research and the theoretical foundations. The first section, consisting of 4 chapters, discusses theoretical foundations from non-SLA fields which inform SLA fields, focusing on the role of attention and awareness in L2 learning. The second and third section review research methodology in studies about attention and awareness in L2 research. The author discusses three online (i.e., reaction time, eye-tracking, and think aloud protocol) and two offline (i.e., verbal reports and stimulated recall) data-elicitation procedures. The fourth and the last sections focus on the models of explicit teaching in L2 classrooms and pedagogical implications of explicit L2 learning in L2 classrooms.

Since this book is about explicit L2 learning, therefore the author first presents in chapter 1 what L2 learning is and how this book is framed theoretically. The author then discusses what changes concerning students' role in L2 learning in the SLA field, from the theoretical and pedagogical approaches to learning in the 1960s to the current empirical emphasis on implicit learning in SLA. Then in Chapter 2, the author presents a preliminary framework of a five-stage learning process, from processing input (stage 1) to processing product (stage 5). The author emphasizes the distinction between learning as a process

(e.g., the processing of input to become intake) and learning as a product (e.g., L2 knowledge). This framework enables the readers to know which stage along the learning process the construct of learning is being discussed and investigated.

Chapters 3 and 4 discuss the role of attention and awareness in learning from non-SLA fields (cognitive science, cognitive neuroscience, and cognitive psychology). Understanding what non-SLA fields inform SLA facilitates readers to critically appraise the relevance or irrelevance of non-SLA theories and findings to SLA. Chapter 5 surveys the role of attention and awareness in nine theoretical foundations in SLA. For each theory, the author first describes the role of attention and awareness, followed by key features of the theories in question and his own reflective comments. It provides readers with critical evaluation on those theories. However, not each theoretical foundation was treated equally in this chapter. For example, McLaughlin's Cognitive Theory, and Robinson's Model of the Relationship between Attention and Memory, and surprisingly Swain's Output hypothesis suffer from lack of detail attention on theoretical elaboration and previous studies conducted using this theoretical foundation, something that this author did well on other theories. As a survey chapter, as the author claims, it should provide a balanced overview of all those theories.

Section 2 discusses the methodological issues in researching explicit learning. Chapter 6 explores internal and external validities in research design. 17 and 4 criteria to achieve high internal and external validities are presented respectively. Those criteria include randomizing participants to experimental and control groups, exposing both groups to the same materials, and optimizing the reliability and validity of the measurement. These criteria are followed by a clear exemplification. The author also presents some suggestions for novice researchers to minimize the limitation and achieve the highest possible internal and external validities. However, the author could have done more for novice researchers, especially L2 teachers, since this book as the author argues has direct link to L2 classroom learning and teaching. More practical suggestions for L2 teachers conducting research in classroom or school settings should be provided (e.g., what L2 teachers as novice researchers should do dealing with ethics and fairness in research, what L2 teachers should do to ensure that two intact classrooms as their research participants start from the same baseline, how to collaborate with more senior researchers, etc.).

In chapter 7 section 2 the author defines the construct of learning (i.e. learning as process and product). He also adds kinds of learning (i.e. item vs. system learning) and type of processing (implicit vs. explicit) in the discussion of construct of learning. Then, he discusses online measurements to measure learning processes, and offline measurements to measure learning products. He explains those measurements further in chapter 8. Three online (i.e., reaction time, eye-tracking, and think aloud) and two offline (i.e., verbal reports and stimulated recall) measurements or data-elicitation procedures are elaborated. For each data-elicitation procedure, a succinct introduction of the typical procedure is presented followed by its benefits.

Section 3 reviews studies on three major topics in explicit learning: attention, implicit versus explicit learning, and depth of processing. Chapter 9 on attention

starts with a reminder of the assumption that the mind is a processor, while Chapters 10 and 11 discuss explicit and implicit learning, and depth of processing in SLA. Chapter 9 also reviews four strands of research (simultaneous attention to form and meaning, input/textual enhancement, processing instruction, and interactional feedback), with their theoretical underpinnings based on the role of attention/noticing and which are implemented to promote L2 development in the classroom setting. In Chapter 11, the author presents the definition and highlights the role of deep processing. Then, he reviews the concept of deep processing in Cognitive Psychology as well as online and offline data collected in SLA research to support the conclusion. Next, he relates several relevant concepts (e.g. levels of awareness) to the concept of depth of processing. The operationalization of depth of processing for lexical and grammatical items is also provided. The L2 readers (who are teachers and novice researchers) however will benefit more if the sub-chapter on operationalization of depth of processing can be more directly related to practical classroom activities to help L2 students learn, since as the title suggests, this book is "a student-centered approach".

Section 4 presents the model of explicit learning. Three processes are detailed following the five-stage learning process framework: input processing stage (from input to intake), intake processing stage (from intake to L2 knowledge), and knowledge processing stage (from L2 knowledge to production). The first stage can be further separated into three phases: attended intake, detected intake, and noticed intake. In the second stage, intake processing stage, linguistic data can be proceeded either to a low or high-level processing. In the low-level processing, the data are kept in the L2 system without conceptual learning. In the high-level processing, the data could stimulate previous knowledge and further processing could be automatized. In the knowledge processing stage, a learner could monitor their production in relation to their L2 system.

Section 5 conceptually describes the psycholinguistics-based E-Tutor which can suggest receptive and productive tasks to attract learners' attention to the target items, provide concurrent feedback, and encourage deep cognitive processing. The author argues that such learning platforms could optimize explicit learning by supporting awareness and deep processing.

This book provides more detailed discussion on explicit L2 learning, one aspect of SLA research covered in Ellis' book (2008). This book then serves as a useful "Further Reading" for Chapter 9, 10, 15, and 16 of Ellis' (2008) book. It is recommended that a more comprehensive, encyclopedic reference on SLA, like Ellis (2008), or an introductory book on SLA (e.g., Mitchell, Myles, & Marsden, 2013), should be discussed first before reading this book, so that readers will have more thorough and comprehensive understanding of SLA fields before they go further focusing on one specific aspect of SLA that they like.

References

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