

---

---

## Book Reviews

### ***A Basic Guide to Applied Linguistics***

ベーシック応用言語学:L2の習得 *Beishikku ouyou gengogaku: L2 no shuutoku, shori, gakushuu, kyoujyu, hyouka*. Ishikawa, S. (2017). Bunkyou-ku, Tokyo: Hitsuzi Shobou. (351 pp). ISBN: 978-4-89476-795-9

Reviewed by Tomoko Hashimoto

*Meiji University*

As an English teacher at a higher education institution in Japan, I found myself wanting to link what I was learning about classroom instruction in practice to its theoretical underpinnings. However, when I set out on a journey to find a book which would be a one-stop shop written in Japanese, I was unable to find one that had a good balance of both practice and theory. Most books discuss only one or the other. This was when a senior colleague of mine recommended me to read *A Basic Guide to Applied Linguistics*. As I started to read this book, I discovered that it provided me not only with the information I was looking for but much more.

The first chapter of *A Basic Guide to Applied Linguistics* starts out with a brief history and definition of applied linguistics, followed by an overview of the book's contents. The book is divided into two main sections. The first is on acquisition and learning of a second language and the second on teaching and evaluation of a second language. Thus, readers are provided with an extensive picture of linguistic theory and how this has been and is applied to practice.

The first section covers various theories of second language acquisition (SLA), psycholinguistics and individual differences (IDs). As the aim of this book is to present readers with comprehensive knowledge of SLA, areas such as linguistics, psychology, education, and information science are also referred to. What is

notable about this book is that when explaining a certain theory, it not only gives a description of what it is, but also presents its positive and negative points. Detailed description and analysis of previous theories act as background knowledge for how the next theory evolved, which can be helpful to a novice applied linguist.

The most interesting subject for me in this part of the book was about individual differences. Although individual differences in and of themselves cover many areas of study, this book focuses on age, aptitude, personality, learning styles, learning strategies, and motivation. Of these, motivation attracted me the most from my experience as a teacher. I always ask myself how I can motivate students who seem to have no interest in English. I have always been interested in this question, yet had not found an answer to it.

This book starts its section on motivation in SLA from Gardner and Lambert's (1959) socio-educational model. It then moves on to Ryan and Deci's (2000) self-determination theory, which posits that the higher the level of self-determination, the higher the motivation. Their model allowed me to see student motivation as a continuous framework instead of a dichotomy. Moreover, I found out that motivation can change depending on the environment (Dörnyei, 2001). This made me realize that even the most motivated students could become demotivated. As a teacher, I realized I must focus not only on the less motivated students but also on students who may currently seem to have no problems in English, as this could potentially change.

*A Basic Guide to Applied Linguistics* explains another concept introduced by Dörnyei, that being the L2 motivational self system. The idea of this theory is that L2 motivation is "the desire to reduce the perceived discrepancies between the learner's actual self and his or her ideal and ought-to L2 selves" (Csizér & Dörnyei, 2005, p. 617). Learning about this concept made me realize the importance of heightening student awareness of their ideal L2 self and ought-to L2 self in order to increase motivation. As a teacher in the classroom, there are times when I feel that my enthusiasm to teach English is much higher than my students' will to learn. I realize now that this may have been because my students still did not have an image of their ideal L2 self or had yet to be aware of their ought-to L2 self. Thus, I asked myself how I could assist students to develop an

image of their ideal and ought-to L2 selves. One way may be to have students think about and write down answers to the following questions: How proficient do you want to become in English? What are your future dreams concerning English? Which English skills do you wish to strengthen? How important is the grade and course credit you receive in this class to you? What effect will obtaining these credits have on your future dreams? Answering the first three questions would allow students to focus on their ideal L2 self, and the last two make them pay attention to their ought-to L2 self. If I had not been introduced to Dörnyei's L2 motivational self system through *A Basic Guide to Applied Linguistics*, I might still be pondering how I can help motivate my students.

The second section of this book is on L2 language teaching and evaluation. It is broken down into three subsections. The first subsection is on language teaching methods and provides a history of major teaching methods in L2. Methods such as grammar translation, the oral approach, and audio lingual are introduced as traditional teaching methods. Then, more contemporary methods such as total physical response, communicative language teaching, and cooperative language learning are discussed.

The next subsection covers the changing definitions of L2. The author argues that any teaching method relies on their definition of L2, and thus, when this definition is altered, the method must also be revisited. For example, vocabulary and grammar were emphasized in definitions of L2 when behavioral psychology was mainstream. Now, a more action-oriented approach is emphasized in the definition of L2, as can be seen in the popularization of the Common European Framework of Reference. Thus, teaching methods must be revisited and discussed based on this new definition.

The last section discusses various evaluation and testing methods, as well as test validity and reliability. This part of the book covers a wide range of material. However, individuals who have less interest in these themes may skim most of these parts. On the other hand, a reader wanting to deepen their understanding of any one area of evaluation may refer to the "For Advanced Learning" sections that provide a list of references for further reading.

Within the first section of this book, cooperative language learning

caught my eye the most. This may be because lately I have been encouraged to incorporate this method into my syllabi. Cooperative learning has recently gained attention in Japan by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) as the importance of active learning has come to be recognized. As information technology is changing the way we live and work, the language abilities and skills necessary to communicate with others has changed as well. MEXT aims to foster individuals who are proactive, are willing to discuss ideas, and can learn at a deeper level. (MEXT, 2017). These are skills that are difficult to strengthen through the traditional cramming style of education (*tsumekomi kyōuiku*) and require a shift in educational methodology. Hence, the call for active learning in classrooms.

Through this book, I learned that ideas of cooperative learning date back to Dewey (2007) and Vygotsky (1980) and have had a long history. Moreover, although active learning does not necessarily have to be conducted in groups, it often is. *A Basic Guide to Applied Linguistics* made me realize that group work is different from cooperative learning and that as a teacher I need to actively create an environment which will help nurture a positive, deep learning experience. This book introduces definitions on cooperative learning by Johnson and Johnson (1989) and Johnson, Johnson, and Holubec (1994). Cooperative learning occurs when a group of diverse individuals assist one another and aim to attain a group goal as a whole. Cooperative learning in a language acquisition setting is called “cooperative language learning.” According to the book, cooperative language learning has the following elements: 1) to learn the importance of attaining goals as a group and to work together with individuals, 2) to keep race, gender and environmental diversity in mind when forming groups, 3) to combine individual and group activities, and 4) to have students be responsible for individual and group goal attainment. When these are met, a fifth element to cooperative learning arises, which is having positive interdependence.

Although group work is a technique often used in a language classroom, many teachers may not realize the difference between this and cooperative language learning. Until I read this book, I myself was one such teacher. I would put my students in pairs or groups asking them to work on a certain project and

allow them class time to discuss it. Then, I would walk around the classroom to see if anyone had questions and help out groups that seemed to be struggling. Without keeping in mind the elements of cooperative learning, these activities sometimes failed to be valuable learning experiences for some of my students. Prior to this book, I did not know why they were not benefitting from an activity that seemed very educational to me. Now I understand why. Cooperative language learning, when not conducted properly, can be hazardous by taking extra time, causing frustration for able students, and creating free-riders. This is why it is necessary to do it right, while keeping the necessary elements above in mind. If done correctly, it has the potential to deepen student learning, help simultaneously teach students regardless of difference in ability, and help them obtain interpersonal and communication skills.

The first section of *A Basic Guide to Applied Linguistics* regarding motivation taught me that students have various needs, and thus their individual differences should be considered. The second section of this book made me aware of the importance of cooperative learning. *A Basic Guide to Applied Linguistics* covers much more than IDs and motivation, which I referred to earlier. Since it provides an overview of the field in general, every reader will be able to take something away from it if they are interested in applied linguistics. However, as is true with any book that covers a wide range of material, it fails to go into detail about each topic, so those who are already knowledgeable about the discipline may finish the book feeling somewhat dissatisfied. Despite this fact, it is difficult to complain if one compares the price of the book with the material and vast number of references covered both in English and Japanese. I especially recommend it for teachers who are interested in linking their experiences to theory, and for those new to the field of applied linguistics.

## References

- Csizér, K., & Dörnyei, Z. (2005). Language learners' motivational profiles and their motivated learning behavior. *Language Learning*, 55(4), 613-659.
- Dewey, J. (2007). *The school and society*. New York, NY: Casimo Classics.
- Dörnyei, Z. (2001). New themes and approaches in second language motivation

- research. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 21, 43-59.
- Gardner, R. C., & Lambert, W. E. (1959). Motivational variables in second language acquisition. *Canadian Journal of Psychology*, 13, 266-271.
- Johnson, D. W., & Johnson, R. T. (1989). *Cooperation and competition: Theory and research*. Edina, MN: Interaction Book Company.
- Johnson, D. W., Johnson, R. T., & Holubec, E. J. (1994). *The new circles of learning: Cooperation in the classroom and school*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. [石田裕久・梅原巳代子(訳) (2010). 『学習の輪: 学び合いの協同教育入門(改訂新版)』二瓶社.]
- Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT). (2017). Major points for the revised course of study for kindergarten, elementary school, and junior high school. Retrieved from [http://www.mext.go.jp/a\\_menu/shotou/new-cs/\\_\\_\\_icsFiles/afieldfile/2017/06/16/1384662\\_2.pdf](http://www.mext.go.jp/a_menu/shotou/new-cs/___icsFiles/afieldfile/2017/06/16/1384662_2.pdf)
- Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. *American Psychologist*, 55, 68-78.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1980). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

## Author bio

*Tomoko Hashimoto is a graduate student at Meiji University. She teaches part-time at Tsurukawa College and Hosen College of Childhood Education. She believes in the importance of linking theory to practice and is especially interested in the psychological aspects of language learning. linkpt\_1@yahoo.co.jp*

Date Received: February 8, 2018

Date Accepted: March 16, 2018