

## Book Review

**Book Title:** The Cambridge Guide to Learning English as a Second Language

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This book is new. It was published in 2018 as one of the Guide Series of Cambridge. The rationale underlining this book is, as stated by the editors, that despite extensive studies in second language acquisition ranging from cognitive, interactive and sociocultural perspectives, the topics have tended to focus on individual factors which affect learning from the views of monolingual native speakers. Moreover, many SLA publications typically do not include language knowledge and use, or the acquisition of intercultural features of languages. These are some of the gaps which this book intends to fill.

The book's introduction focuses on broad and diverse aspects of second language learning under four major themes: 1) Learning and learners: learners as emergent bilinguals and multilinguals. Learning a second language plays a part in shaping learners' identities. Also, learners can be viewed as social agents who are able to work collaboratively with others, shaping their identity and how they position themselves; 2) Learning and language: the ideas that language learning is more than learning grammar or language systems, but learners develop skills in the use of multiple resources in and outside classrooms; 3) Language learning is dynamic and situated and is varying and shaped by environments; and, 4) Learning and development: Development in second language learning cannot be accounted for by a single theory. Development includes increasing fluency, pragmatic competency, confidence or the transformation from the outer to inner of the learners. Development is a complex and multidimensional process which requires multidimensional explanations. For example, incidental or scaffolded learning, learning as socialization or through participation. Diverse learning contexts influence language learning, too, such as learners having different backgrounds which can mediate both language and culture.

The book is organized into 9 sections. Section 1: Learners and Learning English, Section 2: Individual, Social and Affective Dimensions of Learning English, Section 3: Contexts of Learning English, Section 4: Learning English for Particular Purposes, Section 5: Learning the 'Systems' of English, Section 6: Learning the Four Skills of English, Section 7: Learning the Social Uses of English, Section 8: Approaches to Learning English, and, Section 9: Technology and Learning English.

Each section starts with an overview of the chapters. Each chapter starts with an introduction which leads into the definition of the key terms, the centrality of the topics, and an outline of sub topics. The authors also include key learning issues such as implications for

teaching and assessment. Each chapter ends with discussion questions, key readings and references. These can be useful to those wishing to conduct further studies.

### Section 1 Learners and Learning English

This section focuses on varying factors, including learners' needs and goals as well as linguistic and learning resources which need to be considered in L2 learning: In Chapter 1, Yuko Goto Butler explores aspects of children learning L2. She underscores the difference between children learning L 1 and L 2, and between young and adult learners. In Chapter 2 Tracey Costley discusses contexts in which adolescents learn L2s and she highlights the influence of social, contextual and the maturational factors that affect language learning. Carol Griffiths and Adem Sorug, in Chapter 3, summarize findings on studies of adult learners. Neurological, psycho-affective, and socio-cultural factors which influence adults learning are discussed. They challenge the view that adults are unsuccessful L2 learners. In Chapter 4, Judit Kormos explores the effects of learning difficulties on aspects of L2 development such as grammar and vocabulary. John Witney and Jean-Marc Dewaele in Chapter 5 discuss learners' acquisition and use of the third language employing metalinguistic awareness and previously-gained language learning experience.

### Section 2 Individual, Social, and Effective Dimensions of Learning English

This section includes areas which are related to second language acquisition (SLA) including aspects of learning in relation to individual, social and affective factors.

In Chapter 6, Stephen Ryan discusses aspects of motivation to learn a second language. Motivational levels can fluctuate over time depending upon both internal and external factors. Shaofeng Li, in Chapter 7, presents an extensive review of studies on language aptitude and its usefulness in predicting second language achievement levels. The author describes the links between aptitude and which types of instruction will be more effective, as well as the relationship between aptitude and age. In Chapter 8 Elaine K. Horwitz and Lama Nassif review studies on language anxiety and point out that language anxiety is situational, that is, specific and correlated with situations. Rebecca L. Oxford, in Chapter 9, presents studies on how learners regulate their learning through the use of language learning strategies (LLS). She points out that learners' use of LLS is complex, and influenced by cultural, social, political and personal factors. In Chapter 10, Martha C. Pennington contends that identity is the most seminal factor in second language learning. Identity is by no means static but changes through dialogic interactions with members of community of learning practice. Moreover, she underscores the importance of self-concept, self-esteem and self-confidence as crucial factors affecting learning.

### Section 3 The Context of Learning English

The importance of language learning contexts is underscored in this section. Learning contexts are discussed with respect to their affordance and/or constraints in language development. The contexts may be a real or virtual classroom, or in or out of class time. In Chapter 11, Patricia A. Duff and Victoria Surtees discuss the impact of socialization on language learning, the nature of social interaction and class-based language learning. They present studies which confirm the importance of social interaction to language learning. In Chapter 12 Martin East reviews studies which examine the limitations of class-based language teaching and those that focus on communicative or task-based methodology. He discusses the

difference between language as subject of study and language as a resource for authentic real-world communication. To address what he describes as a mismatch between the two contexts, he proposes the flipped-classroom where classroom activities prepare for out of class language usage. Alice Chik, in Chapter 13 explores out-of-class learning and its many learning opportunities. She concludes that language learning is a life-long process most of which occurs outside a classroom. What is needed, she argues, is that teaching should match the needs of diverse students and that there should be multiple learning opportunities which combine both in and out of class and in virtual spaces.

#### Section 4 Learning English for Particular Purposes

There are many reasons for learning a second language. In Chapter 14, Helen Baskurkmen explores the learning of English for specific purposes and the genres of academic English. In Chapter 15, Christopher Hafner elaborates on the nature of the various genres and the types of language that is used various in specialized areas, as well as in different disciplines and professions, or in various workplace contexts. In Chapter 16 Jane Lockwood discusses the globalized nature of languages in the context of workplaces. She points out that modern-day workplaces are likely to include both non-native and native speakers and that it will be necessary for them to acquire particular communication skills in order to function efficiently. This also will be the case for exchanges between non-native speakers in such a work place.

#### Section 5 Learning the ‘Systems’ of the Language

This section discusses what is meant by a ‘language system’, namely, words, pronunciation, phrases and grammar. Thus, learning the system of any language is a vital part of learning to communicate orally, and in writing. Chapter 17 by Ee Ling Low identifies concepts of pronunciation skills. Factors influencing pronunciation skills and teaching approaches are included. In Chapter 18, David Hirsh explains the nature of word knowledge, word meanings and factors which promote L2 vocabulary development. He discusses both direct and indirect instructions as well as factors promoting word retention. Chapter 19, by Frank Boers covers lexical knowledge, including phrases, chunks and multi word units which facilitate L2 use. In Chapter 20, Scott Thornbury discusses studies on aspects of grammar acquisition.

#### Section 6 Learning the Four Skills of English

The four skills of language use are the focus of this section. In Chapter 21 Joseph Seigel defines listening as an interactive process in which listeners make use of various factors. These include knowledge of the context, the speakers, the listener’s intention, and related language knowledge. The development of L2 speaking is discussed by Christine C.M. Goh In Chapter 22. She proposes a model of L2 speaking skills which includes knowledge of the rules and conventions of language and discourse. In Chapter 23, Lawrence Jun Zhang discusses knowledge, skills and dispositions that readers bring to reading. He also elaborates on the concept of effective reading. Writing is the subject of Naomi Storch’s Chapter 24. She explains the process of writing. Learning to write involves such issues as text creation and reflection on genre conventions as well as being aware of the expectations of readers.

### Section 7 Learning the Social Use of English

The acquisition of second language communicative competence is explored with cultural, social, community and personal practice in appropriate and effective language use. Chapter 25, Susan Feez and Zuocheng Zhang examine the nature of genres and texts as well as their application in second language teaching. In Chapter 26, Marie Stevenson discusses the link between literacy and L2 development and learning. Learning has shifted beyond learners' comprehension of texts to the processes of production and application of texts in social context. In Chapter 27, Naoko Taguchi explores how L2 pragmatic competence is influenced by social and interpersonal contexts. Pragmatic, in her view, relates to participation in social practice. Chapter 28 Farzad Sharifian explores the links between pragmatic and intercultural communication. Language users with diverse cultural backgrounds need to adjust social interaction to accommodate multicultural norm and expectation.

### Section 8 Approach to Learning English

Diverse approaches and modes to address second language learners' needs and preferences are the highlight of this section. In Chapter 29 Ali Shehadeh revisited the notion of tasks as meaning-focused activities, central to the teaching of four skills. Moreover, their role in promoting accuracy, fluency and the acquisition of complex language system is underscored. John Macalister, in Chapter 30, offers an overview of theories supporting the integration of language and content. He emphasizes that an effective curricular approach needs to promote meaning and fluency while focusing on form and accuracy. In Chapter 31, Guy Cook revisits the role of translation in language learning. He explores language learning through and language learning for translation. He gives examples of activities which apply translation as resources for acquisition and communication. Gregory Hadley, in Chapter 32, discusses the use of text books as resources to promote second language learning and recommends activities for effective use. In chapter 33, Averil Coxhead and Oliver J. Balance explore the application of English language corpora to promote teaching and learning. Approaches in involving learning with consideration for implementing corpus in teaching are discussed.

### Section 9 Technology and Learning English

The advent of technology has prompted teachers to shift from teaching language for communicative competence to teach language as a tool for participation in the social practice. Rodney H. Jones, in Chapter 34 discusses the role of technology in language learning, focusing on the affordances and constraints that technology provides. He elaborates how digital technology and social network affect the way language is learned and used. In Chapter 35, Nicky Hockly and Gavin Dudeney discuss the affordances for learning in an out-of-class online learning that internet and mobile technology provide in both formal and informal language learning contexts. Factors influencing the effectiveness of online learning, task and course design for language teaching and teacher training are emphasized. Christopher Jenks, in Chapter 36 explains the influence of social media on social interaction, types and forms of communication. Social media shapes how content is shared and exchanged. Therefore, different types of social media, both asynchronous and synchronous offers ample opportunities for learners to engage in social interaction, developing fluency and accuracy. Language has essentially become a tool for creating and participating in social activities.

This book is truly a compendium. My Longman's dictionary defines a 'compendium' as 'a book that contains a complete collection of facts, drawings etc. on a particular subject'. In my opinion, this book is a must for not only second language teachers but also researchers. The book's contributors clearly base their writing on well-grounded research and therein lies the strength of their contributions.

### **About the Reviewer**

Associate Professor Suchada Nimmannit is Director of Rangsit English Language Institute. Prior to that, she taught English at Chulalongkorn University. She was President of Thailand TESOL, 2001-2003, and TESOL Board of Directors, 2004-2007. She was honored as a TESOL's leading professional, 2015. Her interest includes talks and technology in ELT.