

John Field. *Psycholinguistics: A resource book for students*. London: Routledge, 2003. Pp. xviii + 231.

The learning and teaching of languages is a major focus in applied linguistics. Areas pertaining to language pedagogy include first and second language acquisition, teaching strategies, learning styles, cognitive processing, social interaction and learning, emotion and language acquisition, and metaphor and teaching. Cutting across these subtopics of language learning in applied linguistics, psycholinguistics, expanded in scope, has close affinity with language pedagogy. The increasing complexity of the field of psycholinguistics requires a general reference for beginners to approach the subject matter in an informed manner.

There are two reasons why psycholinguistics is difficult to study. First, it is cross-disciplinary in nature with an overlapping domain that includes phonetics, discourse analysis, language pathology, neuroscience, computer modelling, and language teaching pedagogy (Field 2004: ix). Second, many psycholinguistic findings are inaccessible, due to the way they are reported. This book is written for non-specialist readers, to address these difficulties. The book is useful in guiding readers to understand topics in psycholinguistics in a systematic order.

The book is divided into four parts, namely *A: Introduction*, *B: Development*, *C: Exploration*, and *D: Extension*. Part A contains the key concepts in psycholinguistics, including lexical storage and lexical access, information processing, decoding in reading, long term memory and schema theory. Part B contains data about and examples to substantiate various psycholinguistic issues such as aphasia, lexical form, bottom-up and top-down processing, stages of speaking process and language disorders.

Part C provides findings and discussions on many psycholinguistic debates such as chimp language (excerpts on Washoe and Kanzi are presented), critical period (details of seven attic children reported by Skuse are provided), prototype theory, models of lexical

retrieval, working memory and the stages of writing. Part D holds selected readings by specialists ranging from George A. Miller, Terrence Deacon, Jean Aitchison, Kenneth I. Forster, Robert H. Logie, Anne Cutler and Sally Butterfield to Willem Levelt.

Among some of the interesting concepts found in Part C are rehearsal mechanism (p. 111), articulatory suppression (p. 112), central executive (p. 113), bridging inference (p. 132) and elaborative inference (p.133). The introduction of rehearsal mechanism is useful to explain the capacity of working memory valuable to readers who are new to psycholinguistics. The different types of inference illuminate the processes involved when we infer. Field makes explicit that the division between bridging inference and elaborative inference is not always a clear distinction. However, logical inference is missing from the discussion (cf. Field 2004: 129). Rehearsal mechanism and inference are two essential areas for advancing the understanding on the basic cognitive operations behind human processing of linguistic-logical system.

In the chapter on *Language Acquisition*, O'Grady (2005) proposes for a basic computing system as the operating mechanism for successful linguistic attainment. O'Grady claims that the parsing mechanism does not require any universal grammar parameter. This point is in line with the recent interview in which Chomsky explains that the procedural knowledge of the linguistic system of a language underscores language acquisition (Jack 2006: 95). Chomsky uses the analogy of instructing someone to reach for a cup. Chomsky points to the irrelevance of imparting the knowledge of physiology within the body system leading to the moving of the limb toward an object in getting the cup. As such, grammatical rules are not relevant to language acquisition.

In an interesting article on the state of the art in language acquisition, Lantolf (2006) proposes that private speech *is* language acquisition. That without private speech there might not be language acquisition is supported with data showing children repeating utterances

heard reflexively. The internalization of these utterances allows the child to build the linguistic competencies that underline language performance. This is an interesting area of research as sociocultural theory has a major implication for psycholinguistics in general and second language acquisition in particular. This area of discussion might add to the discussion in Part C.

Following recent discussions of language acquisition, a naturalistic model of language acquisition might be a required addition for Part C in the next edition. Field might want to consider the inclusion of the ideas of Vygotsky as part of the specialist readings in Part D. Private speech can have a place in Part B as part of the data development. The relevance of repetition and imitation in language acquisition are significant. These concepts might find a place in Part A respectively.

There is something for each reader to explore in psycholinguistics. Ranging from cognitive processing to typology of writing symbols, one will find informative and inciting topics. The strength of this book is the guiding questions and the reading instructions provided in each section. These guidelines serve as discerning strategies for beginners to approach psycholinguistics, which is a difficult area of study that overlaps across many diverse domains. Field includes a small number of examples from languages like Mandarin, Arabic, Japanese and Spanish. The foreign language data offer a fresh perspective to psycholinguistics, which has been based on English data predominantly. Undergraduates of general linguistics and psycholinguistics should find this book a useful guide.

## References

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