

## **Book Review: Common Ground: Second Language Acquisition Theory Goes to the Classroom**

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Florencia G. Henshaw & Maris D. Hawkins. (2022). *Common Ground: Second Language Acquisition Theory Goes to the Classroom*. Indianapolis & Cambridge: Focus, Hackett Publishing Company, Inc.

*Common Ground: Second Language Acquisition Theory Goes to the Classroom* by Florencia G. Henshaw and Maris D. Hawkins is an important contribution to the field of second language acquisition (SLA). As stated in the preface, the authors' goal is to build connections between SLA principles and the reality of language classrooms, and specifically, to help world language educators understand how they can develop materials or implement classroom strategies that are informed by core principles of SLA, and to help the learners develop communicative abilities in the second language. *Common Ground* is a handbook on how to develop language proficiency for both language educators and learners. Focusing on application rather than on the theoretical research on language acquisition, the book begins by defining the SLA principles without the usual literature survey and summary of the latest research. All six chapters of the book are formatted to respond to two questions of "What Do I Need to Know?" and "What Does it Look Like in the Classrooms?", followed by a section of "Now That you Know" on reflection, expansion, and application questions. Most prominently featured in every chapter are the useful and well-thought-out examples, tasks, and activities that are also designed to illustrate that chapter's principles and language models.

Chapter one outlines the book's fundamental premise. It begins to define the important concepts of language acquisition and communication; to do so, it uses three modes of communication based on the Integrated Performance Assessment (IPA) model assessment as its framework. The authors' definition of acquisition stresses "meaning" in the form-meaning connection, with key elements of input referring to building a language system and output that refers to helping learners access the system (skill development). Their definition of "communication" as "the purposeful interpretation and/or expression of meaning" underscores the information or content conveyed and what the learners will do with that information. In contrast to traditional methods of language teaching, they alternate teaching methods, as illustrated by the examples/tasks focused on "meaning" in this form-meaning continuum. Corresponding to their definitions of acquisition and communication, they choose interpretive, presentational, and interpersonal modes of communication rather than the traditional method of framing communication in terms of the four skills of reading, writing, listening, and speaking. While underscoring the importance of context and purpose, these three modes can cut across oral and written levels and different proficiency levels, and occur either in different orders or even simultaneously. This chapter also discusses acquisition approaches in the first and second languages. While identifying and acknowledging their similarities, it discusses various differences in acquisition, before continuing with a discussion of the role and challenges for language teachers.

The second chapter discusses the important connection between the goal and the assessment. In terms of goals, the chapter focuses on the roles of proficiency and performance in curriculum, course, unit, and daily lesson designs, and demonstrates how to plan measurable, appropriate, and reliable tasks that correspond to the targeted proficiency level. Of significance

here are the concrete examples/tasks the chapter provides for connecting the ACTFL Proficiency Guideline and the Can-Do Statement (drafted by both the National Council of State Supervisors for Language and ACTFL). Regarding assessment, the chapter stresses the importance of alignment between instruction and assessment. It gives valuable suggestions for the use of IPA, a performance-based assessment, and how to design rubrics in clear, accurate, and easy-to-follow wording and categories. Integrating intercultural competence into the goals of SLA, the chapter argues that educators should go beyond superficial cultural knowledge to consciously develop learners' intercultural competence.

Chapter three focuses on input and chapter four on reading, listening, and viewing from Section II on Interpretive Communication. The chapter on input discusses various ways/approaches including resources that help build a language system in the learner. These strategies underscore interactive exercises/tasks that compel the learner to understand and engage in communication. For one example, the authors recommend implicit grammar instruction, that is, to embed the grammar into the content or meaning in the meaning-form continuum. Thus, chapter four highlights interpretive proficiency and communication in reading and listening, and proposes local/micro and global-macro strategies to compel students to be actively involved in interpretive listening and reading activities.

Chapters five and six on output and interaction respectively form the third section on Presentational and Interpersonal Communication. In contrast to input, output helps learners develop skills to access the system. Defining output as production of the target language in order to express meaning, the chapter again focuses on meaning formation. It further underscores the importance of process versus products and recommends various strategies of the process (such as scaffolding and revision) to facilitate learners in producing products. Chapter Six on

interpersonal communication provides suggestions that facilitate instructor-learner and learner-learner interaction activities. The exercises and tasks are designed to highlight the information gap and back-and-forth exchange that characterizes interpersonal communication. The book ends with an epilogue that answers many what-ifs questions often encountered by instructors.

The book's greatest merit is that, again, it provides a wealth of useful, concrete, well-informed, and carefully thought-out examples, activities, and tasks that help instructors implement their proficiency-based instruction and pedagogical concepts/models into the practical classroom. Highlighting interactive, communicative, and student-engaged teaching/learning in all aspects, these strategies, most importantly, help cultivate active learners in SLA.