

## Review

Bardovi-Harlig, Kathleen (2000). *Tense and Aspect in Second Language Acquisition: Form, Meaning and Use*, Malden, USA, Oxford, UK: Blackwell, ISBN 0-63122-149-2, paperback, 491 pages, US \$34.95

Published as part of Blackwell's Language Learning Monograph Series, this study presents an overview of research in second language temporality. Kathleen Bardovi-Harlig introduces different approaches within the structure of five distinct chapters, which summarise research on the emergence and development of temporal expression under the following headings: meaning, morphology, lexical aspect, discourse, and instruction. An introductory chapter outlines the approach and a closing chapter summarises the findings and gives indications of future research; chapters 2-6 each conclude with a summary and there is a useful bibliography and an index. This book, however, is not an easy read for the uninitiated.

Bardovi-Harlig presents the different approaches to the study of temporality taking into account both that of the North Americans as well as of the Europeans. The North American predominantly form-oriented studies are distinguished from the European predominantly meaning-oriented studies: a graphic representation (Fig. 1.1) gives an overview of the two research traditions. The main focus of inquiry for each approach as well as the methods of research and analysis is first outlined and then the two research traditions are examined in greater depth. Linguistic devices for temporal reference are introduced in the same sequence in which acquisition occurs: pragmatic, lexical, morphological and multiple means of expressing temporality. Two longitudinal meaning-oriented studies serve as examples for a research framework.

The presentation of the form-oriented approach begins with the third stage of acquisition of temporality, verbal morphology. Cross-sectional and longitudinal studies of sequences in morphological development in different European languages (Catalan, Dutch, English, French, German, Italian, Spanish and Swedish) are introduced. The different perspectives that the meaning-oriented and form-oriented approaches can bring to the same corpus are highlighted.

Recent empirical studies addressing the aspect hypothesis are systematically presented in a table under such headings as type of analysis, design, etc. (206-210). Competing data presentations (across-category analysis and within-category analysis) and apparent challenges to the aspect hypothesis due to different methodological approaches are discussed.

The chapters dealing with the aspect hypothesis and discourse describe more theory-driven inquiries than the previous chapters. The role of discourse is looked at through the "analysis of interlanguage narrative structure and its influence on the distribution of

tense-aspect morphology” (277). The central influence of discourse on the distribution of tense-aspect morphology is affirmed (335).

The role of instruction on the development of temporality is looked at from an acquisitional (not pedagogical) perspective. Studies with a local perspective (experimental versus control group, both instructed) and studies comparing tutored to untutored groups are introduced. The positive effect instruction may have on the acquisition of the tense-aspect system is confirmed. However, it seems that acquisitional sequences remain the same and are not changed by instruction (405).

The final chapter summarises the research findings discussed in the book under separate headings, each followed by an explanation and suggested areas for further research.

This book brings together a multitude of different approaches to tense and aspect research in SLA (taking very different languages as L1 and L2 into account) and therefore represents a major contribution to SLA research literature. A glossary of selective terms referring to various different usage of terminology by different authors or research approaches would have been helpful, but was probably prevented by the constraints of the framework (a monograph of already 491 pages) and the declared target group of the monograph series, i.e., interdisciplinary researchers (xiii). Even though Bardovi-Harlig refers to different usage within the text (e.g., regarding the term ‘meaning-oriented study’, p.22), this is not introduced systematically in a way, which can be easily referred to, i.e., as an appendix. The tables help to guide the reader through the information and more graphical representations like Fig. 1.1 would have further helped to lead the reader through complex areas. However, the book’s achievement in bringing together and discussing diverse approaches to tense and aspect research in SLA and hereby presenting an overview of the field is undisputed. The author’s enthusiasm for the research field is reflected in her writing and adds a positive touch to the reading experience.

The studies cited do not refer to computer-assisted language learning. However, for CALL authors this monograph is informative. When designing a closed programme for L2 beginners it would be useful to take the sequence of acquisition of temporality into account since it appears that instruction does not effect it. The discussion of different research approaches which might seem to produce contradictory results is also helpful and can inform the design of a framework for CALL applications.

Christine Leahy  
Nottingham Trent University  
June 2001