

## **Second Language Learning: Theoretical Foundations**

By Michael Sharwood Smith, Applied  
Studies and Language Study Series  
General Editor: C.N Candlin, Longman  
Group, UK Limited, First Published: 1994  
ISBN: 0-582-218861 (Paperback)

*Second Language Learning* in the Applied Studies and Language Study series approaches second language acquisition as a complex psychological process involving human cognitive ability. The book provides a psychological analysis of learner language, and gives an idea of the field right from its inception to the 90s. Of the three parts in the book, the first provides a historical analysis pertaining to issues of second language; the third focuses on recent trends and implications for second language research while the interim section provides a discussion of the theoretical problems arising from various earlier approaches. For readers looking for a quick overview of concepts (second language, interlanguage, input and intake, metalanguage, acquisition, variability, modularity, strategy, transfer, processing, learning and development, LAD, etc.) and debates in modern second language research, the first three chapters in particular will be immensely useful. Chapter 3 in particular, with its useful illustrations of 'creative construction theory' provides solid foothold to the new researcher in issues of L1 and L2. Besides touching upon various research frameworks, the book also discusses, in Smith's own words, "the role of mother tongue influence, the contribution of conscious processes in learning, and the differences and similarities between second or foreign learner language and child language development" (Author's Preface, p. xix). The theoretical

applications and implications drawn out in chapters 7 and 8 would be of interest to scholars stepping into the area of second language learning. In all, this book is more useful now, nearly two decades after its first publication, as a basic introduction to core concepts and as a marker of 'what went before' in the field of applied linguistics as it is today.

## **Context and Culture in Language Teaching**

By Claire Kramersch  
Oxford University Press, First Published:  
1993, ISBN: 0-19437187 5 (Paperback)

The basic premise of Kramersch's *Context and Culture in Language Teaching* provides a fresh perspective to the issue of language acquisition by taking the philosophy of conflict as its point of departure. It acknowledges the difficulties that *cultural contexts* play in second language teaching, given that culture is not an "expendable fifth skill tacked on" to the teaching of speaking, listening, reading and writing. Instead, for Kramersch, culture always remains in the background, and manages to "unsettle the good language learners when they expect it least" (p.1). The book is divided into eight major sections dealing with, amongst others, education challenges, contexts, stories and discourses, teaching the literary text, authentic texts and contexts and 'teaching language along the cultural fault line'. Chapter 3 of the book analyses three case studies of teachers trying to get students to talk and interact as a way of acquiring linguistic forms. However, as the detailed description of each of the case studies and the problems that follow reveal, *context plays a very important role in the construction of meaning*. Kramersch's