

Practice in a Second Language: Perspectives from Applied Linguistics and Cognitive Psychology

Edited by Robert M. DeKeyser

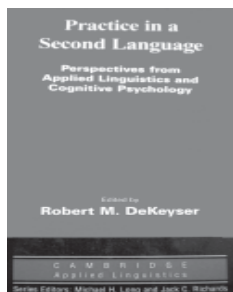
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Practice in a Second Language addresses the concept of practice in language teaching from a theoretical perspective. In all the articles in the volume, a number of questions are explored, ranging from what kind of practice is most effective for different kinds of language learners and in what contexts. The ‘Introduction’ as well as the ‘Conclusion’ chapters by DeKeyser provide multiple dimensions, and lay out the ‘praxis of practice’ for the readers. In the Introduction, DeKeyser notes practice to be “specific activities in the second language, engaged in systematically, deliberately, with the goal of developing knowledge of and skills in the second language” (p. 1). He also explains the concept from the perspective of cognitive psychology, educational psychology and applied linguistics. In the concluding chapter, DeKeyser situates the notion of practice within contemporary discourse, and how it is understood in a triple sense: The narrow sense of repeated focused exercises aimed to optimize the retrieval of what one has learned, the slightly wider sense of any kind of L2 use that encourages expansion and fine-tuning of existing knowledge, and the widest sense of any kind of contact with the L2 that may improve its

knowledge at some level. In the same chapter, DeKeyser notes that procedural and not declarative knowledge is the ultimate goal for L2 practice activities. The distinction between declarative and procedural knowledge is well known: in most forms of skill acquisition, people are first presented with *information* such as how to put a sentence in an explicit form; this is called practice in ‘declarative knowledge’. Procedural knowledge means the practice through which learners incorporate this information into *behavioural routines*.

The ten articles in the book are spread across three main sections: ‘foundations’, ‘institutional contexts’ and ‘individual differences’. Of these, language teachers and teacher trainers will find the first four articles on input in L2 classroom, output practice in L2 classroom, and interaction as practice and feedback in L2 learning, particularly useful. The other papers in this book will also be useful given the various cognitive, educational psychology and applied linguistics perspectives that inform them. The importance of individual differences because of age, aptitude, abilities and contexts in second language learning practice is addressed in the papers in the last section of the book.

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