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Alcón Soler, E. and M. P. Safont-Jordà. 2012. *Discourse and Language Learning Across L2 Instructional Settings*. Amsterdam: Utrecht Studies in Language and Communication 24. 319 pp. ISBN 978-90-420-3584-3.

This book gathers 13 studies that concentrate on discourse practices and explore their potential for language learning. This is done in a great variety of settings, with learners of different ages and different linguistic backgrounds and, at the same time, adopting different perspectives. Thus, the book greatly extends previous research on discourse and language learning and it also achieves ecological validity by concentrating on some current and yet rather unexplored instructional settings.

The volume comprises thirteen chapters which are organized into 4 parts. In part 1 the studies are placed in primary, secondary and tertiary education with learners who follow immersion and foreign language approaches. What I would really like to emphasize from this section is that all the four studies are of great pedagogical interest for current language learning settings and, in addition, they yield ecologically valid understandings of some important themes. The first chapter by Elsa Tragant and Carmen Muñoz presents a study that attempts to better understand the relatively unexplored population of early learners of English as a foreign language. The researchers conducted classroom observations, listening tests, questionnaires and interviews in three Spanish schools over a period of four years in order to analyse the dominant classroom discourse features, on the one hand, and the influence of the teacher factor, on the other, in relation to students' attitudes, linguistic achievements and type of classroom discourse. The findings show that students in the three schools had very distinct experiences leading to different patterns of classroom discourse. Also, the study evidences that students' attitudes and achievements can be very sensitive to teaching style. The second study, written by Nathalie Blanc, Rita Carol, Peter Griggs and Roy Lyster, focuses on the pedagogical potential of lexical scaffolding with a group of 8-year-olds in a French immersion primary school in Canada. The authors point to the pedagogical potential of scaffolding when it does not remain restricted to word definitions and seeks to increase learners' depth of processing, which can be achieved by encouraging

connections of lexical items to other languages the learners know or to their own epistemic and experiential knowledge. It is also worth noting that, as in the previous study, the authors also find great differences when comparing two teaching styles. The next study, by Rita Tognini and Rhonda Oliver, touches on a controversial issue in foreign language classrooms: the value of L1 use and its potential for language acquisition. Departing from the observation that L1 use in teacher-learner and peer-interaction is common practice, the authors examine the functions of the L1 in 10 foreign language classes in primary and secondary Australian schools. The findings indicate that, while L1 use in peer interactions seems to be effective for language learning, teachers' L1 use may limit learning opportunities. Thus, this study illustrates the validity of research findings for improving teaching practices. To finish part I, the study by Yumiko Tateyama analyses the types of repair that appear in the discourse of Japanese as a foreign language learners with their teachers during a role-play exercise. The author identifies three repair patterns and also opens an interesting line for further research, since she shows how embodied actions seem to be connected to the willingness for offering assistance during interaction.

The second part of the book gathers studies carried out in CLIL contexts and tries to explore what specific opportunities this programme offers. Ana Llinares and Tom Morton open this part with a chapter in which they argue in favour of the use of sociolinguistic perspectives. The authors emphasise the need to frame research on language use and interaction in CLIL classrooms within theoretical approaches that consider the social context as having a key role in the learning processes. In so doing, they attempt to provide conceptual anchor for the research results and, also, to make the shift from often used product-oriented approaches to process-oriented ones as a way to provide a better understanding of CLIL. Next, Tarja Nikula presents a study carried out in Finland in which peer discussions were recorded during history lessons in order to explore how students negotiate meaning and how they integrate the content and the language in these discussions. The analysis of these discussions leads the author to offer some pedagogical advice regarding students' awareness of the content and of the genre-specific language. With the next two studies (one closing part II, the other opening part III) the readers concentrate on English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), which is a relatively new field of enquiry from the perspective of discourse analyses. Ute Smit analyses the role of English in the classroom discourse of students and teachers in a Viennese hospitality educational centre. This centre offers an international hotel management programme that aims to prepare newcomers to this business sector. 28 students of 14 different nationalities and using 22 languages for communication participate in the study and their question-initiated exchanges during 9 lessons are analysed. The findings confirm previous research in identifying the question as a highly central speech act for formal educational settings. Based on the discourse-pragmatic findings in the analysed exchanges between teachers and students, the author argues that the two identified roles of English as a lingua franca and as a professional language should be integrated within content-focussed teaching programmes.

Part III includes three studies that concentrate on discourse in new language learning contexts. The first of this section is a small scale study by Juliane House. This

author tackles the issues of face and identity in the requests that emerge during academic advising sessions between German professors and university students of various L1s using ELF. In the study, discourse markers “I think” and “I mean” and code switching are interpreted as expressions of identity in ELF talk. The study concludes that, although the status-superior interactant (professor) was occasionally interrupted and corrected, this face-threatening behaviour did not negatively affect the professor’s face. The second chapter also presents a case study in which Josep Maria Cots and Laura Espelt, adopting a linguistic ethnographic approach, analyse the language of a newly-arrived female teenage immigrant student during the first 10 weeks of the academic year in a bilingual secondary school in Catalonia where English, Spanish and Catalan are used. The authors study the means and contexts provided by the institution to make the integration of the study successful and, on the other hand, they also investigate how the student uses these means and copes with the three languages, all of them different from her L1. The next study, whose author is César Félix-Brasdefer, is framed within the field of Computer-Mediated Discourse. The author has two aims, first, to examine pragmalinguistic variations in the opening and closing moves in 320 emails, 200 written in Spanish (L2) and 120 written in English (L1), by US university students to their instructors of Spanish. Second, César Félix-Brasdefer aims to examine the impact of gender on the language used in these emails. The main finding is that there is a great deal of variation in the ways to open and close an email message sent to an instructor. While opening moves tend to be introduced by conversational features such as informal greetings, closing moves are characterized by a formal style. Results also indicate that gender does influence the type and frequency of opening moves. To finish, the author explains that pedagogical intervention should be implemented in foreign language classrooms to provide learners with knowledge about the pragmatics of email discourse in the target culture.

In part IV the volume presents three studies dealing with the role of gender, the effectiveness of feedback and, finally, code-switching in the classroom. Agurtzane Azkarai and María del Pilar García Mayo examine the role of gender in the oral production of students performing interactive tasks. These authors depart from the claim that interaction is influenced by gender and explore whether this is also the case with students of English as a foreign language at university level across three different tasks. More specifically, they examine whether dyad type (male-male, female-female or female-male) and task type have an incidence in the production of Language Related Episodes (LREs) during the interactions. The authors find that gender does not seem to exert an influence on LREs whereas tasks, on the contrary, do exert an important influence. Finally, the authors also ascertain that the learners are able to resolve most LREs correctly. The next study, by Patricia Salazar, tackles with the controversial issue of whether corrective feedback on students’ written production is effective. In her study, 8 Spanish university students of English write an assignment and receive two different types of feedback on it, a more explicit and a less explicit type, during a recorded interview. The next day, the author uses stimulated recall interviews in order to explore what the students were thinking at the time of obtaining the feedback. The results show that feedback plays an

important role, as learners identify it as such and frequently try to look for more grammatical versions of their production. As for feedback type, the author finds the same effectiveness with the more and less explicit types. The last chapter, by Laura Portolés-Falomir and Sofía Martín-Laguna, is set in a multilingual context, a Spanish primary school in Valencia where children are bilingual in Spanish and Catalan and have to learn English in the classroom. The study examines the instances of code-switching when students and teachers interact in English, identifies the most common types and their functions and, finally, analyses in what manner the two languages are habitually used. The findings show that the L1s are mainly used with a pragmatic or intentional purpose, which gives these languages an instrumental role in the classroom. Also, it was found that both learners and teachers code-switch into Spanish rather than Catalan and the authors suggest that this option may have been motivated by contextual factors.

In sum, from my point of view, this compilation of studies has two main strengths, on the one hand, the great variety of elements (L1s, contexts, perspectives, etc.) that are interwoven with the thread of discourse and language acquisition, on the other, the fact that all studies include, in some form or another, pedagogical implications that can be crucial for the improvement of teaching practices. All this, makes this volume a valuable contribution for policy makers, teachers at all levels of education, researchers and university students in the field of language learning.

NOTE

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