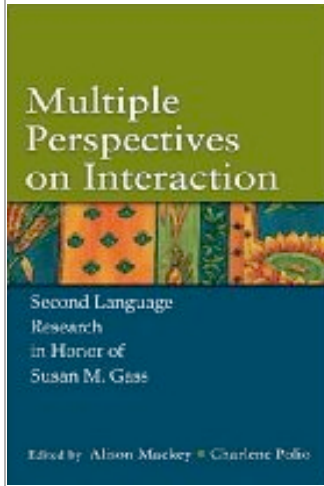


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Multiple Perspectives on Interaction: Second Language Research in Honor of Susan M. Gass		
Author:	Alison Mackey & Charlene Polio (Eds.)	
Publisher:	New York: Routledge	
Pages	ISBN	Price
Pp. vi + 281	978-0-8058-6458-8 (hardcover)	\$115.00 U.S.



As suggested by its subtitle, the book under review, edited by Allison Mackey and Charlene Polio, is a fairly comprehensive *festschrift* for Susan Gass, honoring the work that she has done and continues to do in the field of second language acquisition (SLA) by offering a wide range of perspectives on the interaction approach. Original contributions to this work are given by highly regarded researchers in SLA and other subdisciplines of applied linguistics. The first two chapters are devoted to how the interaction approach relates to two, non-SLA subfields of Applied Linguistics: Psycholinguistics and Sociolinguistics. The next eight chapters offer diverse empirical and contextual views of interaction. Finally, the epilogue describes the possible areas of further investigation involving the interaction approach.

Throughout the book, the authors begin their respective chapters with small literature reviews that address relevant findings from previous work on the interaction approach. Reading the book as a whole, this has an effect of better understanding the volume and breadth of research in this approach. The broad review of literature as well as the multiple perspectives present in this compilation is further evidence of this legitimacy. In fact, while this book generally refers to interaction as an approach, Gass and Mackey (2007) have noted that there is evidence of its evolution toward becoming a theory. They write how the approach “attempts to explain why interaction and learning can be linked, using cognitive concepts derived from psychology” (p. 176). Also, recent meta-analyses, compiling studies from the last few decades, have

also synthesized the research on studies on interaction have shown significant effect on language learning (Keck, et al., 2006; Mackey & Goo, 2007).

The sometimes repetitious reviews of research conducted on interaction that are found in each chapter might make reading the book as a whole, instead of choosing select chapters, a bit too monotonous for some readers. However, such repetition could be seen as a way to help inform the reader of the previous research. It also acts as a useful tool for the reader to better understand the point of reference from which each author comes. This is a critical step in this type of work because the purpose of the book is to bring together different perspectives on the study of the same topic.

The book begins with two theoretical chapters written by Nick Ellis and Elaine Tarone, respectively. This section is used to broaden the applicability of interaction, showing how such an approach can not only be compatible with but can also add to psycholinguistic and sociocognitive theories. Ellis begins his chapter by describing the figurative divorce between traditional psycholinguistic and SLA research. His chapter, in response to this divide is an attempt to make a case that psycholinguistic models of acquisition can be improved by the inclusion of interaction because real language exists in a dynamic social, interactive context. Tarone continues this section by describing how interaction can be approached from a socio-cognitive perspective. Bringing in a sociocognitive perspective, Tarone is able to make a clear case for including social factors when assessing the attention a learner pays to target forms.

The theoretical section is followed by four chapters that describe empirical studies, examining interaction. For example, Brooks and Swain write about a study in which two sets of pairs of learners performed a collaborative writing activity, then a peer noticing activity, then a stimulated recall session led by a researcher. Interestingly, data from posttests showed that the peers, through negotiation and noticing of a reformulation of their text, were able to resolve most of their language problems. The next three chapters offer similar studies on interaction in terms of task, task-motivation process, and presence in even pre-pubescent language learners.

Following this experimental section the last four chapters are grouped under the theme of interaction in specific contexts. Spada and Lightbown offer a call for more research on the need for more classroom based research, taking the role of context into account. Loewen writes about recasts in the classroom setting. The last two chapters then focus on interaction in computer-mediated communication (CMC). These four chapters show an extension of studies in interaction from the laboratory to different areas.

Overall, this book is fairly straightforward. Because each chapter elaborates on the background of the interaction approach, after reading the book, one with very basic SLA knowledge and little exposure to this particular approach could become much more fluent in the major studies and issues that have surfaced over the past few decades involving interaction.

While the book offers a broad range of perspectives on interaction, the overall feel of the book is still definitely that of a *festschrift*. Because the theme of the book is to

honor Dr. Gass for her work in the interaction approach, the authors of each chapter often reference the same studies and researchers. Not only do these references become somewhat repetitive, however, they are also quite voluminous in proportion to the rest of the text. In relation to narrative text, the parenthetical references can be distracting. For example, on two pages of one literature review (pp. 254-55), there are 58 references. While this style of writing gives the maximum amount of acknowledgment to researchers, it is not reader-friendly. Not only does such extensive citation hinder the narrative structure, but also with so many references, many different topics are addressed in a short amount of space. The authors were probably making the most of their space allotted for their respective literature reviews.

Interestingly, neither the editors nor the publisher offer a description of their intended audience. The one reference to audience comes from the interaction approach pioneer, Michael Long, who writes on the back cover “the book is likely to be of value to an equally broad range of readers.” Based on its content and SLA-specific jargon, however, his book does not seem like it would be of much value to general educators. Chapters from it could be more suitable for a graduate level SLA course than someone looking for classroom applicability.

Because of its extensive reporting on research conducted over the last twenty-five years on interaction, this book would also serve as a good source for a TESOL or applied linguistics student, wanting to know more about where to start looking for empirical studies relating to his or her area of interest in SLA.

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