

REVIEWS/RESENHAS

Breen, M (Ed.) (2001). *Learner contributions to language learning: New directions in research*. Edinburgh Gate, Harlow: Pearson Education Ltda. Pp. xxii, 218.

Reviewed by Heliana Mello

The advances in the field of second (L2) and foreign (FL) language teaching and learning in the past two decades have been manifold, among these: acquisition theories that have emerged as a consequence of refinements in experimental and methodological tools; the shift of focus to approaches rather than methods in L2 and FL teaching; socio-interactionist studies' emphasis on the ecology of the classroom, geared towards community building; and the questioning of teacher training paradigms by teacher development and education programs. All of this progress, however, has blatantly left out a very crucial issue: learners' contributions to the process of language learning. Breen's book comes to remedy this fault. Here the focus of attention is the language learner and what she/he actually learns, the outcome from language learning, viewed through the lenses of the learner's contributions to this process.

In Chapter 1, Diane Larsen-Freeman, after distinguishing between learner attributes, learner conceptualizations and learner actions, argues for the study of all of these factors in relation to one another. In Chapter 2, Anna Chamot assesses the strategies adopted by learners to make language learning more accessible to them. Anita Wenden, in Chapter 3, focuses on issues that underlie learners' strategic behavior, pointing towards metacognitive knowledge as the guiding force behind learners' regulatory control of how learning is to be done. Next, in Chapters 4 and 5, Rod Ellis and Rebecca Oxford, respectively, discuss metaphors in learners' discourse as a window into conceptualization processes. Both authors emphasize the importance of considering metaphors as a way to assess learners' construal of the learning experience as it relates to the context in which it occurs. Ellis' Chapter presents an analysis of nine recent papers by leading scholars in L2 research and uncovers a paradox: the learner is seen as both a passive, lacking agent in the learning process and an active problem-solver. The same ambiguity emerges in his analysis of learners' discourse. Learners, however, signal emphatically the relevance of emotional or affective factors in their experience. Oxford, on the other hand, reveals, through a detailed metaphor analysis, how learners

Ilha do Desterro	Florianópolis	nº 41	p.267-268	jul./dez. 2001
------------------	---------------	-------	-----------	----------------

classify teachers into three distinct categories: autocratic, democratic/participatory, or laissez faire. Furthermore, she points to the significance of cultural issues in the understanding of classroom interactions and expectations, noting that it is very likely that students from different cultural backgrounds will have distinct expectations regarding their teachers and themselves. In Chapter 6, Michael Breen explores issues pertaining to classroom interaction and the actual influence that overt classroom participation exerts upon learners' acquisition of language. Following up this same line of thought, in Chapter 7, Lantolf and Pavlenko focus on the learning of language through learners' active engagement within activities. They argue that context is the source of mental development, therefore concluding that learners' language development is highly related to their level of involvement and agency in this process. Concluding the book, in Chapter 8, Bonny Norton explores the possible clashes between different agency roles, which are established through the conceptualization of learners' perceived or imagined community identity, and their actions in terms of their classroom participation or lack of participation.

The biggest achievement of this book is to actually set forth different views on the overwhelming role that learners play in their own process of language learning. This is consistently done throughout the eight chapters in an

intertwined way, in which learner identity is explored based on personality, self-image, and community and culture factors. In turn, supporting this approach is the exploration of language learning through the lenses of agency, engagement in joint activity, classroom and task interaction, and strategy use. All of this is based on a view of learners' thinking which presupposes crucial factors such as knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, constructs and conceptualizations pertaining to culture, community and context.