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*Second Language Task Complexity: Researching the Cognition  
Hypothesis of Language Learning and Performance* (review)

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is unclear why Basturkmen decided to include an extremely brief section on future trends in research in the closing chapter. Perhaps the author's intent was to make novice ESP practitioners aware of the field's recent trend in recognizing the limitation of text-internal needs analysis alone, and that there is a committed need on the part of ESP researchers, teachers, and course developers to combine such analyses with examinations of the socio-cognitive processes and disciplinary practices involved in the construction of specialist texts. We, however, can only speculate about her motive.

Nevertheless, this book goes beyond previous volumes on ESP in its balanced approach to the subject. Readers will also appreciate its judicious use of hypothetical scenarios, actual course developments in action, and theoretical considerations. The book makes a valuable contribution to the field of ESP, and it would make a great companion text in an ESP education course, as well as serving as an invaluable resource for any beginning ESP researcher, teacher, or course developer.

### Reference

Basturkmen, H. (2006). *Ideas and options in English for specific purposes*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

**Matthew J. Kessler**, *Ohio University*

**Joseph J. Lee**, *Ohio University*

**P. Robinson (Ed.)** (2011). *Second Language Task Complexity: Researching the Cognition Hypothesis of Language Learning and Performance*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins. Pp. 345, US\$49.95 (paper).

Task-based language learning has attracted the attention of both researchers and second language (L2) teachers because of the potential L2 tasks have to promote L2 development. Since the 1990s, there has been a debate on how task characteristics affect learners' L2 performance, with Peter Robinson and Peter Skehan as the main leaders in the discussion. Within task characteristics, cognitive complexity has been the focus of a series of theoretical and empirical studies, to which the present volume, edited by Robinson, is an excellent contribution. This book includes different chapters that operationalize complexity along different resource-directing and resource-dispersing dimensions (following Robinson's classification) and analyze how task complexity interacts with other variables in predicting L2 performance.

In the first part of the book, several theoretical and methodological issues regarding task complexity and L2 acquisition are discussed. In chapter 1, Robinson reviews the Triadic Componential Framework (Robinson, 2007) for task classification and introduces the main tenets of the Cognition Hypothesis (CH). In chapter 2, Judit Kormos presents a model of L2 speech production and relates it to the CH. Kormos suggests that tasks that are complex along the resource-directing dimension are potentially beneficial to encourage L2 morphosyntactic and lexical development. In chapter 3, Stefanie Wulff and Stefan Th. Gries provide evidence for the usefulness of a corpus-based approach to assess L2 learners' accuracy, in which learners' use of constructions (or collocations) is compared to native speakers' use. The authors then consider the implications of using corpora for L2 teaching and discuss the benefits and possible drawbacks of exposing learners to the complexity of real language use.

The second part of the book includes two empirical studies that examine task complexity in different modes. In chapter 4, Folkert Kuiken and Ineke Vedder analyze the effect of task complexity in relation to the number of elements that need to be considered in order to perform a task [ $\pm$  few elements] in the written and oral mode, comparing Dutch learners of the Italian language by different proficiency levels. In the following chapter, Roger Gilabert, Júlia Barón, and Mayya Levkina compare learners' performance in two different modes (monologic and dialogic) in three types of tasks in which complexity is operationalized along the following dimensions: [ $\pm$  here and now] (narrative task); [ $\pm$  few elements] (instruction-giving map task); and [ $\pm$  causal reasoning] (decision-making task).

In the third part of the book, the effects of task complexity on interaction, modified output, and uptake are analyzed. In chapter 6, Marije C. Michel examines how task complexity along the [ $\pm$  few elements] and interaction affect the performance in Dutch as first language (L1) and L2. In chapter 7, Ana-María Nuevo, Rebecca Adams, and Lauren Ross-Feldman investigate how the [ $\pm$  reasoning demands] dimension of task complexity determines learners' output modifications, and how modified output predicts the learning of locatives and past tense in English as L2. In the next chapter, Andrea Révész, Rebecca Sachs, and Alison Mackey analyze how task complexity mediates learners' uptake of recasts and L2 development. In this study, task complexity is operationalized along the [ $\pm$  visual support] dimension and the linguistic target is English past progressive.

The last part of this book is devoted to the role of learner characteristics in L2 task performance. In chapter 9, Ágnes Albert examines a resource-dispersing dimension of task complexity [ $\pm$  task structure]

and how creativity interacts with this variable in determining L2 performance. In chapter 10, Judit Kormos and Anna Trebits investigate the relationship between working memory capacity and performance in simple and complex narrative tasks along the [ $\pm$  task structure] dimension. The chapter by YouJin Kim and Nicole Tracy-Ventura analyzes how anxiety determines L2 performance in simple and complex tasks. Three different degrees of complexity are examined. First, the dimension [ $\pm$  reasoning demands] is considered, and within the [+ reasoning demands] tasks, some have an additional degree of complexity along the [ $\pm$  few elements] dimension. In the last chapter, Tomohito Ishikawa analyzes the relationship between two of the three categories of task characteristics proposed by Robinson (2001): task complexity (along the [ $\pm$  reasoning demands] dimension) and task difficulty (learners' perceptions) in monologic tasks.

This book is a timely contribution to the debate on task complexity and it also provides empirical evidence for the importance of task complexity in predicting L2 development. Most of the results reported in the different chapters are in line with Robinson's CH. However, when the findings do not follow the predictions of the CH, the authors provide a critical discussion of their results and open new questions to the debate on task complexity and its operationalization. This book is a key reading not only for researchers in the field of applied linguistics or cognitive psychology, but also for teachers and those interested in educational psychology.

### References

- Robinson, P. (2001). Task complexity, task difficulty, and task production: Exploring interactions in a componential framework. *Applied Linguistics*, 22, 27–57.
- Robinson, P. (2007). Criteria for classifying and sequencing pedagogic tasks. In M.P. García-Mayo (Ed.), *Investigating tasks in formal language learning* (pp. 7–27). Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters.

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**R.M. Manchón** (2011). *Learning-to-Write and Writing-to-Learn in an Additional Language*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins. Pp. 263, US\$54 (paper).

As I begin to review *Learning-to-Write and Writing-to-Learn in an Additional Language*, I ask myself, will the book provide me with new insight into the theories and pedagogies of writing in multilingual