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Book Review

Cognitive implications for raising cross-language awareness in foreign language acquisition >

by Tina Čok, Cham, Palgrave Macmillan, 2023, 197 pp., €93.08 (Ebook), ISBN: 978-3-031-27829-7

Endang Sri Maruti, Parji, Muhammad Hanif & Nur Hidayat

Published online: 09 Aug 2023

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Book Review



Book Review

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written by Victoria L. Joffe and Hilary Low, New York, NY 10158, Routledge, Published 27 October 2022 2023 (Paperback), ISBN 978-1-138-36040-2 (lpbk), ISBN 978-0-429-43317-7 (hardback).

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Cognitive implications for raising cross-language awareness in foreign language acquisition

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Endang Sri Maruti, Parji, Muhammad Hanif & Nur Hidayat

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BOOK REVIEW

1 **Cognitive implications for raising cross-language awareness in foreign language acquisition**, by Tina Čok, Cham, Palgrave Macmillan, 2023, 197 pp., €93.08 (Ebook), ISBN: 978-3-031-27829-7

In recent years, the prevalence of multilingualism has become increasingly evident in the realm of education, driven by various factors. A notable trend is the growing number of students whose native languages differ from the majority language spoken in their classrooms (Cenoz and Gorter 2017). Consequently, linguistic diversity in school settings has expanded beyond what was observed in the past, primarily due to increased population mobility (Gorter and Cenoz 2017). The dissemination of multilingualism in education is closely intertwined with the necessity to learn foreign languages and the resurgence of minoritised languages in certain educational contexts. Nevertheless, this significant development remains relatively underrepresented and lacks the attention it deserves in scholarly discourse.

The book entitled Cognitive Implications for **1** Raising Cross-language Awareness in Foreign Language Acquisition by Tina Čok describes the role of cross-linguistic awareness in foreign language learning, particularly when the language is unrelated as a third or additional language. The author integrates theoretical approaches and empirical research in foreign language acquisition, with a specific focus **1** on how typological differences in languages influence cognitive language processing. The book defines unrelated languages in the context of methodological approaches to understanding how they are learned as foreign languages. The author investigates cross-linguistic awareness competencies in the context of unrelated language acquisition and establishes a cognitive approach to understanding how foreign languages are acquired. The book also provides empirical evidence showing the disparities when using certain aspects of language, such as verbal aspects.

The book applies its empirical findings by offering guidelines and recommendations to enhance cross-linguistic awareness in third language learning. Its goal is to help language learners overcome challenges arising from the differences in the languages they are studying, enabling them to achieve a better understanding and competence in acquiring foreign languages.

In the introduction chapter, the author explains the concept of unrelated languages and lays the foundation for the methodological approach in the study of unrelated language acquisition. This chapter discusses second, third, and foreign languages to evaluate the most suitable nomenclature and classification before focusing on different aspects of foreign language learning and teaching. The author also describes the linguistic context that emerges in language acquisition, such as multilingualism and plurilingualism, while considering the role of English as a lingua franca. The book connects all these elements to the reality that in Europe, languages with significant typological and geographical differences, such as Mandarin, are taught using didactic approaches primarily developed for linguistically and culturally related languages. Frameworks like the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and the Framework of Reference for Pluralistic Approaches to Languages and Cultures (FREPA) have been designed for linguistically and culturally related languages, often overlooking aspects of cross-linguistic awareness. This underscores the importance of this book in highlighting these deficiencies and emphasising the integration of cross-linguistic awareness in foreign language learning, especially when the languages studied lack clear linguistic connections with learners' native or previously studied languages.

Chapter 2 elaborates on the complex relationships between language, culture, and cognition as suggested by experts in philosophy, linguistic anthropology, and cognitive and applied linguistics. The book presents ideas about these interconnections, which play a crucial role in how individuals

perceive, understand, and express the world through their first language. In this chapter, the author employs moderately relativistic linguistic principles as a basis for considering cross-linguistic awareness and presents perspectives on its significant contribution to understanding cognitive processes in language learning. The author also highlights notions of universal grammar. Language is considered not only as a sufficiently important category in class to enhance cross-linguistic and cross-cultural awareness but also shaped by culture and cross-cultural principles. This view contributes to certain changes in the traditional approach to language learning. In other words, this chapter outlines the complexity of the relationships between language, culture, and cognitive processes while discussing the importance of cross-linguistic awareness in language learning, combining moderately relativistic linguistic thinking and an understanding of the influence of culture in language formation.

Chapter 3 discusses the aspectual systems of the three languages focused on in this research. First, the principles of aspectuality in Chinese are introduced, with a particular emphasis on how perfection and imperfection are expressed in the language. The chapter concludes with an explanation of the interaction between typological features of verbs and the mechanisms available in Chinese for expressing aspect in grammar. Subsequently, the aspectual systems in Italian and Slovenian are described, focusing on the specific features related to the most prominent aspects in each of the considered languages. The results of this research have significant implications for understanding linguistic transfer from one language to another. The core of this chapter is to provide an in-depth description of the aspectual systems of the three languages studied. Consequently, readers are introduced to how each language expresses aspect grammatically, especially in terms of perfection and imperfection. Understanding these differences in aspectual systems will assist in better comprehending language acquisition and linguistic transfer between languages.

Chapter 4 presents evidence of conceptual differences among the three researched languages. In this empirical study, language tests involving native speakers of Chinese, Italian, and Slovenian were conducted. They were asked to assess their perception of the degree of completion expressed by verbs. The main purpose of this research is to prove two main ideas. First, unrelated languages demonstrate greater semantic differences due to both structural disparities between these languages and unique conceptualisation in each native language. Second, the interpretive freedom of completing monomorphemic verbs in Mandarin leads native Mandarin speakers to focus more on process categories than outcomes, both linguistically and generally. This chapter is dedicated to analysing the differences and contrasts among the three studied languages and interpreting the obtained results. The final section discusses in greater detail the use of aspect markers derived from language tests to demonstrate different degrees of relatedness between lexical and grammatical aspects in these languages. Overall, this chapter provides empirical evidence on the conceptual differences among diverse languages and reveals how the relatedness of aspectual features in a language can influence the way native speakers understand and express actions through verbs. This research illustrates the importance of deeply understanding language differences in the context of foreign language acquisition and underscores the critical relevance of cross-linguistic awareness in the language learning process.

In Chapter 5, the book presents a summary of the empirical study's findings and applies them practically by providing **guidelines and recommendations** to enhance **cross-linguistic awareness in acquiring a third language**. The empirical findings demonstrate that the way language speakers conceptualise reality is often influenced by their first language, which needs to be considered in the context of language teaching and learning. Potential risks arise when foreign language learners develop incorrect linguistic patterns, especially when learning languages unrelated to their previous language experiences, and become difficult to overcome if not acknowledged and explained properly. To achieve this goal, the author first analyses commonly used frameworks for European languages and Mandarin. Based on a critical analysis of these frameworks, guidelines and recommendations are formulated that will greatly aid in complementing existing language frameworks, particularly in developing cross-linguistic awareness. These guidelines and recommendations also

include descriptor proposals to develop cross-linguistic competencies, specifically for Mandarin. This will assist educators in integrating content to develop cross-linguistic competencies when teaching Mandarin or can be adapted to their language expertise. Overall, this chapter provides a summary of key findings from the empirical study and emphasises the importance of applying this knowledge in foreign language teaching, particularly in developing cross-linguistic awareness. The presented guidelines and recommendations will help improve existing language teaching approaches and enhance students' understanding of learning a third language.


Through this book, the author aims to convince that the unrelatedness of languages – in terms of typological, geographical, and psychological distances – is a crucial aspect in the process of acquiring foreign languages. These structural differences influence the acquisition of conceptual systems, assuming that these systems are not identical among language speakers. The book concludes by highlighting some main implications of the conducted research and provides directions for future studies. The interdisciplinary approach presented in this book will appeal to various readers, including postgraduate students, faculty members, and academic researchers interested in Second Language Acquisition (SLA), Third Language Acquisition (TLA), Psycholinguistics, Cognitive Psychology, and Education.

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