

Second Language Acquisition Myths

by Steven Brown
and Jenifer Larson-Hall
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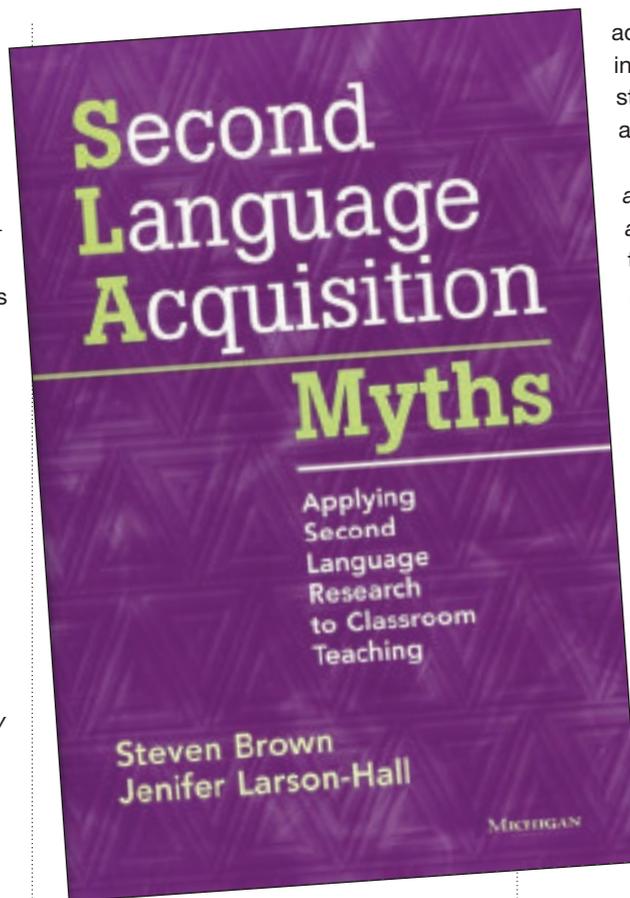
Second language acquisition (SLA) is a broad field, with research that investigates language learning in many contexts including instructed learning as well as naturalistic learning (learning outside the classroom). With numerous books, journals and academic papers on the subject appearing every year, teachers can feel overwhelmed by the task of keeping up with current research. This book is a bold attempt to create a readable introduction to SLA that summarises a few major issues. However, as the authors point out, 'it is not the goal of this book to address every SLA theory'. Even so, they do an admirable job of tackling eight myths.

Following the structure of other titles in the *Myths* series by Michigan University Press, each chapter contains three parts: *In the Real World* (an introductory anecdote), *What the Research Says* (a description of relevant research) and *What We Can Do* (classroom applications).

Myth 1, *Children learn languages quickly and easily while adults are ineffective in comparison*, takes a closer look at commonly-held beliefs about children and adult language learning. It points out some of the major differences between the two, and gives a positive spin on the notion that adults are not good at learning foreign languages.

Myth 2, *A true bilingual is someone who speaks two languages perfectly*, zeroes in on this flawed definition of a bilingual. It summarises research about bilingualism, listing some of the benefits that bilingualism provides.

Myth 3, *You can acquire a language simply through listening or reading*, debunks the notion that input alone can result in language learning. This section of the book contains a robust discussion of input, output and interaction in language learning.



Myth 4, *Practice makes perfect*, is an overview of research about the role of practice in language learning. The authors emphasise that students need to do more than practise a language, indicating the need for noticing new language.

Myth 5, *Language students learn (and retain) what they are taught*, points out the perceptible gap between what teachers present in class and what students actually retain. This chapter has several practical suggestions for effective grammar teaching, such as repeating information on problematic grammar points and teaching chunks instead of single words.

Myth 6, *Language learners always benefit from correction*, is my favourite section of the book. It summarises several intriguing studies on error correction, and offers a helpful discussion about several types of oral correction, such as recasts and prompts.

Myth 7, *Individual differences are a major, perhaps the major, factor in SLA*,

addresses a number of topics, including learning styles and strategies, personality differences and motivation.

The final myth, *Language acquisition is the individual acquisition of grammar*, covers the thorny issue of what role grammar should play in language learning.

Overall, I enjoyed this book a great deal. Some of the material was familiar, but a few topics, such as bilingualism and social approaches, were new to me, and I greatly appreciated learning about them.

The authors do a most commendable job of summarising the studies they cite, describing them without too much detail. They also include tables which provide quick reference for the studies they review.

Another winning feature of the book is the boxes that explain aspects of research that teachers may not fully understand, such as 'correlation' and 'effect sizes'. These provide assistance to teachers who want to read second language acquisition papers, or even do their own research.

I should emphasise here that this is a book on second language acquisition, not language teaching, so parts of the book go beyond language learning in the classroom setting. With that said, the authors make a concerted effort to make suggestions for teachers (through activities or policy) based on the research, quite often including practical activities for the classroom.

Second language acquisition researchers will find plenty to explore here (and even more in the references). Teachers at the beginning of their careers will find this an accessible introduction. More experienced teachers will enjoy the opportunity to review some main ideas of second language acquisition, and possibly learn something new.

Hall Houston
Luzhu, Taiwan

International Negotiations

by Mark Powell

CUP 2012

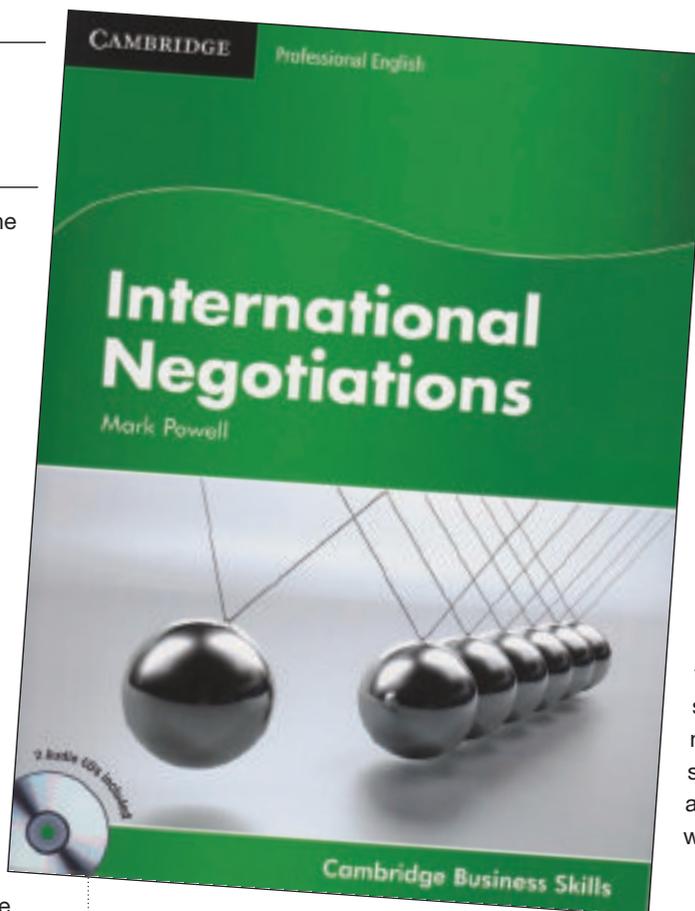
978-05211-4992-1

Mark Powell continues to expand the world of quality business English materials with his latest publication, *International Negotiations*. This, like his previous book *Presenting In English*, is part of the *Cambridge Professional English* series, which combines real business content, speaking skills and functional language.

International Negotiations is, perhaps surprisingly, aimed at students from B1 right up to the C2 level on the Common European Framework scale. Intermediate students will find the materials comfortably challenging, but advanced and even proficiency-level students will get a lot out of the business side of the book: the negotiation skills training and the functional language. Having tried the book with all these levels, I would say that those of my students who were studying for the Cambridge Proficiency in English exam, in particular, really benefited from the negotiation skills development side and the varied nature of the speaking activities, which one manager amongst my students called 'extremely realistic'.

Mark Powell has certainly been busy since his last book came out. He has sourced a myriad of top business experts and leaders whose ideas appear in texts, quotes and listenings. This turns *International Negotiations* into as much a book for learning successful negotiation skills as a vehicle for learning business English. You can tell a good book when even the teacher learns something in every lesson, and that has been my experience with this book on countless occasions.

International Negotiations is organised into ten units and spans all the essentials of business negotiations, from the preparation (the topic of Unit 1) to closing the final deal. The book itself is



quite light and easy to carry round and, like the others in the series, only devotes about a third of its length to typical textbook pages. Why? Because the rest offers enough materials for any teacher to create an optimal course for their own individual teaching situation. These include an initial needs analysis, which pinpoints which parts of the book need working through, exercise keys and a commentary for every unit, very professional additional speaking materials, audio scripts for the two accompanying CDs and a preview of the online feedback forms (one for each unit) which can be used for student assessment. You will also find a final downloadable in-depth negotiation and an impressive teacher's pack with many more teaching ideas.

Mark Powell has shown yet again that business can and should be interesting for both students and teachers. He has successfully integrated teaching authentic knowledge of the methods and techniques of negotiation with the study of the English language.

This is the reason why this book will be of use with both students at intermediate level or those who are more advanced. Whether it is used for a short course, a couple of sessions of a more general business English programme or as a full-blown classroom course, *International Negotiations* has something up its sleeve for everyone. I have even enjoyed several one-to-one negotiation sessions with my corporate learners using the roleplays in the book. As these are quite easy to set up and run, they provide an ideal opportunity to focus on your one-to-one students and how they handle negotiating with a native speaker. But be careful – they are often better negotiators than we teachers are.

Phil Wade
La Réunion, France

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