REVIEW

SECOND LANGUAGE GRAMMAR: LEARNING AND TEACHING
By William E. Rutherford
Longman, 1987 pp.195

Second language teaching and learning has been dominated so much by the movement of the communicative approach that the exclusive discussion of grammar in such a context is considered as out-dated or assigned as the task of a language analyst. The above title may evoke the same reaction and the book might be taken as one of the now unpopular grammar books that used to congest the market.

C.N Candlin, however, feels that the work is quite indispensable and it 'provides a unifying perspective on interlanguage, learning and pedagogy.' He appreciates Rutherford's concern with language as an organism- a system in process - and adds that the author has stipulated clearly that interlanguage syntax is constrained by the general organizing principles common to all languages, (language universals) the selective and focussing influences of mother tongue (L1), and the exploratory processes of learners' cognition. Grammar acts as a bridge between concepts and context and grammaticization or grammar consciousness-raising "...presupposes drawing upon the contribution of the learner and ... advocates the refinement of the learner's metacommunicative and metacognitive awareness" (in the preface to the book). Rutherford has capitalized on the major concern of current language pedagogics- learner centredness and the centrality of learner training in the curriculum.

Second Language Grammar: Learning and Teaching is divided into five parts, each part followed by activities and notes related to the topic.

Part one, which has two chapters, mainly focusses on the major theoretical underpinnings related to language description, the learning process and the practice of consciousness-raising (C-R). Conventionalists state that language learning is the accumulation of entities- sounds, words, etc.- and the preoccupation of language teaching is to bring the identified language entities to the learner's attention. However, Rutherford argues, the description of

language as consisting of separate entities is incomplete (and excludes the major and deciding factor- their organic interrelationships) and the learner does not come to the language learning situation in total ignorance concerning the nature of language and its use. In fact, Rutherford stipulates, the learner is endowed with a prior knowledge of two sorts: 'Knowledge that' (a sort of prior knowledge about the organization of L2 and the capacity, with some help, to make guesses) and 'knowledge how' (the ability temporarily to bend the new language into forms that will serve the initial desire for rudimentary communication). Language learning takes place only when the learner endowed with these cognitive capacities is exposed to intelligible data from the new language (p.14).

Rutherford stresses that the act of making L2 data available (C-R) is the sine qua non for language learning. These assumptions run through out the book and each part extends or explicates further these assumptions.

Part Two has three chapters concerned with an exploratory discussion of language description and consciousness-raising. Rutherford admits that language can be comprehensively described if both characteristics-organic and mechanic- are taken into consideration. He says "... grammaticization is a visible manifestation of the organic side of language" and C-R procedures must be conceived organically (p.58). What models should C-R procedures follow? "...the ultimately most desirable means for raising consciousness will come as close as possible to replicating in some general sense the nature of acquisition itself "(p.61). But what does the nature of acquisition look like? Can acquisition be explicitly defined in concrete terms? Are both acquisitions (L1 and L2) similar in nature and does the learner follow similar courses in learning L1 and L2? Rutherford does not capitalize on this.

Part Three, which consists of three chapters, is devoted to the description of L2 grammar and the act of grammaticization. The interrelationships of grammar, discourse and semantics and their implications for C-R is discussed in detail. Rutherford underscores that "...smoothly flowing discourse is characterized among other things by the extent towhich new and given form a chain." He employs such binaries as given/new, theme/rheme, and topic/comment for discourse (sentence) analysis and states that the three systems - syntax, semantics and discourse - cannot be defined appropriately in

the absence of one of the systems. Their interrelationships generate that "...1) the ways in which we... interact with each other through language conspire to bring about within discourse the arrangement of whole chunks of propositional content in preferred sequences; 2) crucial semantic relationships destined for destruction in the placement of these 'chunks' are rescued through grammaticization; 3) grammar thus ensures that the entire discourse/semantics complex becomes processable for comprehension (p. 97)." Thus C-R regarding the ordering of sentence constituents can be effected best through the utilization of propositional cluster principle as shown below:

> Below is a photograph of the sun taken with special telescope.
>
> **call-dark patches on sun-sunspots**

The above example requires the learner to 1) decide which of the two available noun phrases **(sunspots** and **dark patches on sun)** is the subject of **call** and put it in that position; 2) mark **call** as PASSIVE since the subject now bears the objective relation to **call**; 3) distinguish GIVEN/NEW and THEME/RHEME by means of the appropriate choice of determiners; 4) replace repeated **sun** with REFERENTIAL **it**; and 5) adjust for subject-verb agreement (p.99). The learner is left on his own to make such principled decisions. One may wonder where he would get the capacity to do so. Rutherford asserts that the learner would be aided by his experience in learning his first language and also by language universals.

Part Four delves into the aspect of the shape of English grammar. Rutherford's assumptions of grammar learning, as indicated above, are based on language specifics on the one hand, and language universals on the other. The L2 learner is supposed to come to the language learning situation with the language universals - the common characteristics that determine the nature and purposes of language - in order to learn the specifics of L2. As cited above, these cognitive capacities are the 'knowledge how' (**how** to bend the target language to purposeful activity in the course of learning it) and the 'knowledge that'(**that** language itself obeys sets of universal constraints upon the shape that any individual language may assume). He concludes this part by stating his hope that

extensive research into UG may contribute a lot to the knowledge of what the learner may bring to L2 learning situation from his L1.

Part Five outlines the place of grammar in the pedagogical programme. This portion is essentially significant for two reasons: 1) Rutherford puts in a nut-shell all the principles he has exploited to draft his stipulations about C-R or grammaticization and its place in the language curriculum and syllabus; 2) He outlines the forms and nature of exercises or rather 'instruments of C-R'. Rutherford outlines the basic assumptions that inform his decisions regarding the place of grammar in language curriculum and syllabus as follows:

1) Language maybe viewed as a network of interdependent systems rather than as a multi-layered structure
2) Grammar may be viewed as the on-line discourse processing aspect of language rather than the set of constructs with which discourse is 'put together'
3) Grammatical consciousness-raising may be viewed as the means to an end ... rather than the end itself
4) Acquisition of language form may better be facilitated by the learner's working through grammatical processes than by his working at assembling grammatical constructs.
5) Learning at least partially entails the continual forming, testing, and often revising of hypotheses by the learner
6) Learning may best be accomplished by proceeding from the familiar... to the unfamiliar.
7) Language learning may better be achieved through a programme that incorporates the raising to consciousness of aspects of language form... than through a programme in which grammatical C-R of any kind is purposely excluded.

Rutherford also lists various criteria that constrain both the grammar-centred curriculum and syllabus. Similarly he states that the methodology, in consonance with the outlined grammar-centred curriculum and syllabus, is not designed to teach grammar. The methodology has to be designed in such a way as to teach the student "how to learn" or "how to manage his own learning." He stipulates that L2 grammar should be