

1 Introduction

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Globalization over the past 20 years has engendered a renewed interest in language learning among researchers and employers alike. Increasingly, studies in second language acquisition (SLA) not only address the capacity and/or potential of advanced language learning and use, but also consider the social demands for multilingual actors, as the traditionally popular descriptors of an individual's language ability—those such as *bilingual* or *fluent*—fail to sufficiently describe proficiency in everyday life. What does it mean to be advanced in a second (L2) or foreign (FL) language?

The need for a more visible and understandable profile of advanced-level language use—one that is understood by theorists and practitioners alike—serves as the main impetus for the present volume. The volume is of particular interest to theorists and scholars of SLA who seek out a better understanding of advanced-level proficiency as well as a comprehensive update of contemporary research. The need for such an update can be seen in a variety of recent works in the field, such as *The Routledge Handbook of Second Language Acquisition* (Routledge, 2012), which contains a chapter devoted specifically to advanced-level proficiency. In it, Heidi Byrnes (the author) calls for a more comprehensive theoretical basis for understanding advanced-level language use and capacity, one that combines cognitive, social, semantic, and textual orientations to acquisition. The present volume responds to such an invitation by bringing together a state-of-the-science review of literature addressing various orientations to advanced-level proficiency, including different approaches to exploring the L2 learner's capacity for advanced-level language use, the complexities of defining advanced proficiency across various genres and socially situated contexts, and a linguistic profile of the performance of advanced users across phonological, morphosyntactic, and pragmatic domains. From a theoretical perspective, the volume addresses a growing need (and interest)

in SLA to better understand advanced proficiency. From a practical one, it provides a profile and description of advanced-level performance according to a variety of contexts, across specific genres, through different modes of communication, and in terms of grammatical structure.

The volume is motivated by a growing need to understand advanced proficiency, within academic and professional circles, as well as the potential and limitations of classroom instruction. In addition to developing the skills necessary for students to analyze and critique literary and cultural texts, language programs must also produce advanced- to superior-level *users* of foreign language in order to meet the growing societal and global demands for multilingualism. Program assessment metrics often use descriptors of student performance such as *advanced*, *near-native*, *professional*, and *fluent*, to name just a few, but without any shared understanding among directors, department chairs, professors, advisors, or SLA experts, of the meaning of such terms. What does an advanced-level learner look like in terms of linguistic knowledge and ability to communicate? Does enrollment in an upper-division university course constitute an advanced level of linguistic knowledge? Is a fluent language user also an accurate one? What level of language proficiency can realistically be achieved by a group of students in four years of study? Is studying abroad the only way for a student to become an advanced speaker? All too regularly, such questions lead to confusion, frustration, and discord among practitioners. This volume addresses such questions, balancing empirical research and literature reviews to describe and account for advanced-level development, psycholinguistic phenomena, variable performance, and the potential of fostering development through classroom intervention.

Previous research addressing advanced proficiency has tended to do so by following a specific theoretical approach, ranging from psycholinguistic processing strategies, to cognition, to the critical period, and to ultimate attainment, to name a just a few. Other works have focused on variable performance according to either individual differences or contextual and situational constraints. And others have taken a pedagogical interventionist approach as a means to explore the limits of instruction at advanced levels, usually arguing for reform in curricular design. The current volume aims to synthesize various dimensions of advanced proficiency with different orientations of, approaches to, and capacity for *advancedness*. It consists of five main parts organized in such a way that various fundamentally distinct themes may be addressed. The first part addresses the capacity for advanced proficiency by reviewing literature within distinct theoretical frameworks and approaches that address advanced-level development. Marianna Ryshina-Pankova provides an overview of systemic functional linguistics in Chapter 2, Leah Roberts addresses psycholinguistic approaches in Chapter 3, and Michael H. Long, Gisela Granena, and Fátima Montero ask what research regarding the critical period may tell us about advanced proficiency in Chapter 4. Jason Rothman, Fatih Bayram, Tanja Kupisch, Terje Lohndal, and Marit Westergaard discuss advanced proficiency according to generative grammar in Chapter 5. Interaction-driven approaches to advancedness are discussed in Chapter 6 by

Nicole Ziegler and Lara Bryfonski, and Matthew E. Poehner provides an overview of advanced proficiency according to Sociocultural Theory in Chapter 7.

Part II of the volume explores the complexity of defining advanced-level language use, given the multitude of internal and external factors constraining or obscuring our ability to assess proficiency. It focuses on contextually constrained language use and individual differences in advanced performance, as well as different methods of intervening with development in instructed settings. In Chapter 8, Heidi Byrnes provides a thorough call for future research regarding advanced-level grammatical development in instructed contexts from the perspective of systemic functional linguistics, whereas Paul A. Malovrh and Nina Moreno, in Chapter 11, examine the need for structural reform in basic language programs from the perspective of language processing, arguing that development toward advanced proficiency in instructed settings needs to start from the ground up. In Chapter 9, Paula Winke and Susan M. Gass offer profiles of advanced learners in the form of clusters based on empirical data measuring individual differences, and Cristina Sanz and Julio Torres discuss prior language experience of heritage bilinguals in Chapter 10. Concluding Part II, Gavin Bui, Peter Skehan, and Zhan Wang provide an overview of the effects of task conditions on advanced-level performance in Chapter 12.

The volume then proceeds to examine advanced proficiency from a linguistic perspective. Part III begins a review of literature yielding a profile of advanced-level language users' capacity for phonological development and performance according to several phonological constructs. John Archibald begins the section by providing an overview of advanced-level phonology in Chapter 13, followed by Fred R. Eckman's chapter on markedness in the context of advancedness in Chapter 14. Kazuya Saito explores segmental and suprasegmental advanced acquisition in Chapter 15, Burcu Gokgoz-Kurt and D. Eric Holt investigate connected speech in Chapter 16, and Alfonso Morales-Front discusses voice onset time (VOT) in Chapter 17.

Another unique feature of the present volume is its compilation of research and literature reviews with regard to the production and grammatical development. Part IV explores the notion of linguistic profiles, and yields a state-of-the-science update regarding various structures and features. In Chapter 18, for example, Aarnes Gudmestad explores four possible ways of classifying advanced proficiency in terms of mood distinction, and in Chapter 19, M. Rafael Salaberry describes previous theoretical definitions of aspect and the possible effects of explicit instruction on advanced knowledge. Roumyana Slabakova examines L2 learners' variability in their use of inflectional morphology in Chapter 20, and Stuart A. Webb, in Chapter 21, explores lexical development and how we can determine if an L2 learner has reached (or is at) an advanced level. In Chapter 22, Cristóbal Lozano and Marcus Callies argue that one hurdle for advanced L2 learners is the acquisition of lexical and morphosyntactic alternations, when constrained by information-structure factors, and Tania Ionin provides a review of current research evidence on advanced learners' knowledge of semantics in Chapter 23.

Part V completes the volume with a profile of advanced-level performance in terms of socially situated language use by exploring topics such as cultural literacy, interlanguage pragmatics, and advanced rhetoric and writing. Feng Xiao begins the section, in Chapter 24, by reviewing the results of empirical research measuring pragmatic competence of high proficiency levels in instructed contexts. Keiko Koda and Sihui Echo Ke, in Chapter 25, define reading as a three-phased process among tertiary-level FL learners, consisting of text meaning building, personal meaning construction, and knowledge refinement. In Chapter 26, Naoko Taguchi offers a profile for advanced pragmatic competence by synthesizing findings from cross-sectional studies comparing L2 learners' pragmatic performance, and in Chapter 27, Gregg Fields and Paul Kei Matsuda explore rhetoric and writing as two important factors describing and defining advanced second language acquisition, and they discuss how these two factors influence the development of socially situated language acquisition in general. Finally, in Chapter 28, Kimberly L. Geeslin identifies the abilities used by second language learners to vary the language they produce. She discusses how linguistic variation among native speakers functions as a mechanism to express and interpret information about individual characteristics of the speaker and the context in which the interaction takes place. The chapter provides an analysis of how these abilities might be developed in second language acquisition.

Each chapter in the volume concludes with a description or definition of advancedness according to its respective content, and provides a call for future research. Among them, the reader will note various consistent threads interwoven throughout the volume, such as the need for more longitudinal data, the need for more direct analysis of internal mechanisms using on-line measures, and the need for the triangulation of research data elicited (or collected) by different means. In short, the volume makes a strong argument for the need for more sophisticated research design, as well as more analyses of multiple advanced-level skills. It also sets the stage for meeting a number of goals established in previous SLA research. Consider, for example, the list of directions, posited in Byrnes's (2012, pp. 516–517) conclusion, which need to be pursued in order to better understand advancedness in SLA:

1. A push toward theorizing advancedness through functionally and textually oriented approaches to language analysis;
2. Explicit linking of advancedness to multilingualism;
3. Expansion of research contexts into additional domains;
4. Expansion of the domains of inquiry regarding advancedness;
5. Longitudinal studies investigating diverse aspects of instructed language learning;
6. Research on learning multiple languages to advanced levels;
7. Development of corpora that use to greatest advantage the capacities of corpus-based analysis; and,
8. Further specification of research methodologies suited for investigating the development of L2 abilities.

The present volume provides an overview of the research that has been conducted in the six years since, and takes note of the areas in which more still needs to be done. For example, Malovrh and Moreno (Chapter 11, this volume) note the need for more longitudinal data examining the effects of instructed learning, and Lozano and Callies (Chapter 22, this volume) note the need for more corpus-based analyses. The reader will find chapters that touch on at least one of the above-cited themes cited in Byrnes's conclusion. What becomes evident to us is that, despite the pioneering work of scholars such as Maxim, Norris, and Ortega, to name just a few, the study of advancedness in SLA is still in its infancy, and to re-emphasize Byrnes's (2012) assertion, the field of SLA needs, "a sufficiently comprehensive theoretical basis for understanding advanced language ... and use" (p. 506). The present volume contributes to the field by compiling (and adding) research to serve as a foundation upon which such an understanding may be developed.

To conclude our introductory chapter, we call on our readers to make note of topics that were excluded from our table of contents but which deserve attention by future scholars if we are to continue to theorize on advancedness in SLA. For example, what can we learn about advancedness through the study of balanced bilingualism? And, what can the study of conversation and interaction tell us about advancedness in situated language use? Furthermore, what other grammatical and morphological features deserve attention and should be studied in future research to add to the profiles of advancedness yielded in the present volume? It is our belief that the importance of such research will only continue to grow, and its demand will increase in proportion to the changing geopolitical landscape of globalization. As the world continues to demand "advanced" multilingual actors, researchers in SLA will continue to be called upon to help us understand precisely what that means, and to more appropriately situate the concept according to theoretical, academic, professional, social, practical, and pedagogical contexts.

REFERENCE

Byrnes, H. (2012). Advanced language proficiency. In S. M. Gass & A. Mackey (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of second*

language acquisition (pp. 506–520). New York: Routledge.

