

Larsen-Freeman, Diane. (2003) *Teaching Language: From Grammar to Grammaticing*. Thomson Heinle.

Betty's comments and notable quotes:

This is a gem of a book. Larsen-Freeman writes in the first person and states her views with conviction, basing them not solely on carefully chosen research that might support her views but also, unabashedly, on her common-sense judgments and observations as a language learner and teacher. She also includes and gives weight (most justifiably in my opinion) to the assessments and insights of both L2 teachers and L2 students regarding how second languages are acquired.

She makes the point that

... very few learners, even if they have the opportunity to live in a community where the target language is spoken, would learn the grammar as efficiently outside the classroom as they can within it. The point of education is to accelerate the language acquisition process, not be satisfied with or try to emulate what learners can do on their own. (p. 78)

In other words, as teachers we want our students to learn faster and better than they could without our help and “comprehensible input” alone is not sufficient for optimal language teaching.

As she says in another place, it is not our job

to re-create in our classrooms the natural conditions of acquisition present in the external environment. Instead, what we want to do as language teachers, it seems to me, is to improve upon natural acquisition, not emulate it. We do want our teaching to harmonize with our students' natural tendencies, but we want our teaching to accelerate the actual rate of acquisition beyond what students could achieve on their own. (p. 20)

I believe Larsen-Freeman agrees with me that grammar practice activities that are “meaningful and engaging” and have “focus” (p. 117) can and do help accelerate the acquisition process.

Larsen-Freeman says “grammaticing” can be seen as a “fifth skill.” By grammaring, she means “the ability to use grammar structures accurately, meaningfully, and appropriately.” (p. 143) I find her idea of “grammaticing” original and audacious and wonderful — but I'm not sure I agree with the idea of calling the ability to use grammar a “fifth skill.” I think my fear would be that teachers might overdo grammar instruction, thinking more is better — the more students know, the more skill they'll have at using English. I still see grammar as a starting point and a little help along the way, not as a skill to be honed and refined as an area of explicit, rule-based knowledge that will always stay with a learner. And I don't believe that the successful completion of exercise tasks should depend on students' knowledge of grammar labels and an ability to verbalize grammatical analyses.

There's still much that could be said about this. Let us know what you think on [Teacher Talk](#).