Reading Journal for "Applied Linguistics," by Kees De Bot and Margaret Thomas

This chapter focuses on applied linguistics as foreign language learning. From a research perspective, it does not really interest me. At the same time, however, I have been spending the past couple years unsuccessfully learning new languages using Duolingo. So the research part of this is not too interesting, but on a practical level, I am a fan of AL. I do appreciate this classical tradition Bot and Thomas mention: "The classical tradition of L2 teaching, especially of Latin, goes back to the fourth century BCE. It was based on learners' memorization of rules and decontextualized lists of word forms" (887). Perhaps it is over dramatized by Aaron Sorkin, but imagine if our current president could quiz all of his advisors in the oval office on Latin words. Needless to say, we do not have Jed Bartlet. Is there any better argument to bring back the classical tradition?

To relate to our last reading, this chapter argues while UG dominated research, it did not have practical use in the classroom: "Although generative L2 research retained a high profile (especially in NA) among researchers with an LA orientation, its impact in the classroom remained limited" (893). From our last reading, UG seemed extremely abstract and not practical. This seems like what this chapter suggests as well. To me, it feels like algebra in mathematics. The algebra that a graduate mathematics student studies is completely abstract, as opposed to the algebra studied as a general education requirement. Even the highest performing student from a general algebra course would find the algebra course studied by a mathematics student completely unrecognizable for its complete abstractness. That was my take away from grammar as opposed to universal grammar.

Returning to the benefits of bilingualism, Bialystok makes the argument that "because bilinguals constantly manage more than one language, task-specific executive functions are strengthened, improving non-domain-specific functions" (899). This suggests you can train your brain by learning a second language. It feels like the mental equivalence to Piccolo training with weighted gear.