Book Reviews

TOWARD AN UNDERSTANDING OF LANGUAGE: CHARLES CARPENTER FRIES IN PERSPECTIVE. (Current issues in linguistic theory, Vol. 40. Amsterdam studies in the theory and history of linguistic science IV.) Peter Howard Fries (Ed.). Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1985. 384+xv pp. Hardback. No index.

1. Introduction

This volume—a collection of 20 articles—is in three parts: *English Education, Linguistics and the English Language,* and *English as a Second Language.* The three parts are preceded by a preface by Peter Fries and Nancy Fries, and a biographical sketch of Charles C. Fries (henceforth CCF) by Richard W. Bailey; and followed by a complete, chronologically arranged bibliography of CCF's published and unpublished writings and short comments about the authors who contributed to the volume. There are fascinating photographs of CCF including one of him aged 19 and "the last known photograph" taken at the National Council of Teachers of English meeting in Hawaii, just a few days before his death on December 8, 1967.

The list of contributors includes such prominent scholars as Sidney Greenbaum, Archibald Hill, Robert Lado, Raven McDavid, Kenneth Pike, who were all asked "to take some aspect of Charles Fries' work and to present it and evaluate it. They were also encouraged to bring the field up to date, and show how similar ideas are being used today." (pp. ix-x)[1]

Given the versatility of CCF, the range of topics discussed in the book is quite wide, covering numerous academic fields including language pedagogy, functionalism, and grammatic theory. There are, perhaps inevitably, several overlaps. For example, CCF's views on language learning as habit formation, his advice to teachers, his goals of education are themes that recur in many papers.

The diversity of themes in the book, with no thread linking them except the name of CCF, makes it difficult to review. What I intend to do here is first to summarize certain predominant ideas of and about CCF, second to introduce a few articles of interest to language teachers, and third to express briefly my opinions about the book.

2. Fries' Contribution

The image of CCF that emerges from the book is that of a versatile, inventive, practical scholar. His versatility may be gauged from the number of different fields he influenced, such as syntactic theory, linguistic geography, semantics, sociolinguistics. His interests lay not only in linguistics but also in literature, lexicology, intercultural communication, educational psychology, and philosophy. His inventiveness is apparent from the original and lasting contributions he made to most of the disciplines in which he showed inerest. Almost every contributor to the volume points out that CCF constantly strove to blaze a trail. "At a time when many linguists were limiting themselves to the analysis of single sentences," observes Hartnett (p. 129), "Fries analyzed discourse by studying the signals that relate sentences in sequence." According to Morgan and Sellner (quoted in Page, p. 44), "The first American linguist to attempt the analysis of connected discourse as discourse was probably Fries (1952)." Collins, discussing the impact of CCF's work in historical linguistics, says that CCF

> determined the proper variables to be investigated in language change analyses and set forth the proper methodology and technique to be used. These prevented him from making the methodological errors that had resulted in ... non-definitive statements about language change in English and about language change generally, contributing greatly to the body of theory concerning language change. (p. 168)

CCF is also recognized as the founder or at least a pioneer of certain methods and approaches in sociolinguistics, grammatical theory, applied linguistics, error analysis, contrastive analysis, and intercultural communication. CCF is perhaps most widely known for his efforts to apply theoretical knowledge for practical purposes. His indisputable fame in the field of applied linguistics is largely due to his contributions in bringing abstract linguistics down to earth by making it useful and relevant for language teaching. In the words of Marckwardt (quoted in Bailey, p. 11), CCF's student and colleague:

> It is doubtful that anyone whom we can remember ever did more [than CCF] in bringing linguistics to bear upon every kind of language teaching activity, in insisting that linguistics was not merely for the linguists but that it belonged in every curriculum designed for students who were preparing for a professional career in which language activities play a significant role.

The most striking feature of CCF's research methodology appears to be its empirical foundation. CCF was skeptical of intuitive data—and hence against the Chomskian school—and sought to theorize about language only

after collecting realistic spoken or written samples. It is using this empirical methodology that CCF arrived at conclusions such as "Standard English is a social dialect rather than the clearest and most precise form of English," which were revolutionary when he proposed them. The most revealing cases of how he employed his empirical methods are his studies related to standard English, dialectology, and the history of English. Although a strong advocate of collecting realistic data, CCF discouraged meaningless head-counting, without the researcher knowing exactly what significance and role the data collected had within the surrounding context. He "insisted on knowing the nature of what he was counting." It is this that Lado (p. 331) recalls to be one of the most memorable lessons he learned from CCF: "Fries taught me to look inside for the structure of things, not just for curios."

A point stressed by many authors in the book is that CCF was not a simple-minded behaviorist who believed that mere mechanical pattern practices without any reference to meaning, grammar, or context of discourse would enable learners to acquire fluency in English. Bosco (p. 299) states that much of what goes by the name of pattern practice and that ignores grammar, meaning, and context comes from authors other than CCF. He actually points the finger at Mackey (1967) and Brooks (1960) as being partly responsible for dissociating meaning and context from pattern practices. Crawford, citing CCF, argues that there is no foundation to the prevalent opinion that structuralists such as Bloomfield and CCF rejected meaning. Apparently CCF was influenced by behaviorists such as Skinner, Weiss, and Watson, and rejected mentalism, but stressed the need to account for how meaning is conveyed through language. According to Crawford

> meaning as the *object* of linguistic analysis is a dominant theme throughout all Fries' writings, from his earliest work in philology to his later writings in formal linguistics. Fries described the various layers and levels of meaning in terms of form, arrangement, and distribution. (p. 154)

In his study of *Listening Comprehension in C. C. Fries' Oral Approach,* Henrichsen (p. 344) observes that "it would certainly be both unfair and incorrect to categorize C. C. Fries along with those who neglected the teaching of listening and ignored the importance of comprehension."

CCF seems to have envisioned the development of the human person as the primary goal of education, whether the subject studied be language, literature, or any of the arts or sciences. This humanistic perspective pervades many of his writings. Recapitulating CCF's manuscript *The Education of the Teacher of English,* H. B. Allen states:

> From the premises that the ultimate goal of education is freedom of the individual and that this freedom is to be won through struggle, Fries argued that the prospective teachers who would help students must themselves be equipped not only with the subject-matter to be passed on but also with a foundation for constant independent subsequent growth, for continuing self-education. (p. 21)

Crawford points out that according to CCF "the fundamental purpose or objective of language teaching was to achieve an understanding between people of different backgrounds" (p. 155). How committed CCF was to the development of a student as a person is suggested by the persuasive words of CCF himself, where he places more emphasis on personal development than on his favorite academic prescription, "language habits":

> The primary aim of the required work in English Composition is not "literary style," nor rhetorical knowledge, nor language habits, grammar, and spelling; it is the developing of the student's ability to *think clearly through a subject, to choose and organize his material for communication*, and such a control of language as will enable him to *adapt his expression to the needs of particular readers*. (p. 7)

It is the neglect of this humanistic and holistic perspective in education that seems to have displeased and disappointed CCF. CCF's advice to all teachers, especially language teachers, would be to discontinue their preocccupation with abstract and unproductive knowledge and cultivate a humanistic perspective so that it may guide them in deciding upon what to teach and how to teach.

CCF wished that every English teacher be equipped with three "tools": "an introduction to phonetics and phonemics, a solid core of knowledge of English grammar, and some understanding of vocabulary growth and semantic change" (p. 24). But he discouraged the teaching of linguistics to young learners, and objected to linguists "capitalizing on the unwary educational market by authoritatively using basic research paradigms in educational materials for consumption by children before the paradigms have undergone adequate testing under the real life conditions of classrooms in schools" (p. 35). Perhaps the most important advice that CCF would give to English teachers is the one contained in the following memorable passage quoted by Stalker:

> In the teaching of English, even in our times, these teachers are still giving more time to a study of grammar and usage than to almost any other aspect of English. Unfortunately, from the point of view of modern linguistic science, much of this work is not only wasted time but harmful practice, as

well. It is wasted time because it employs methods and materials that could not possibly attain the ends desired, no matter how much time was given to English. It is harmful practice beause the habits set up and the views inculcated turn the students away from the only source of real knowledge—the actual language of the people about them. (p. 216)

3. Articles of Interest to Teachers

H. B. Allen's *Education of English Teachers* summarizes CCF's expectations of a good English teacher. It stresses CCF's humanistic perspective and his rejection of a teaching strategy that is aimed at reinforcing outdated rules of grammar and usage. According to Allen, CCF maintained that the prospective teacher "should learn to refrain from item correction of students' use of English and instead help them to master new habits of acceptable English," but "offered no specific counsel on just how this help could best be provided, either for the prospective teacher or for the students in the schools." (p. 23)

Page's *Charles Fries and Reading* is a superb critique of CCF's views on reading. As he expounds the recommendations of CCF concerning the teaching of reading, Page contrasts CCF with contemporary authorities showing the weaknesses and strengths of CCF's position. For instance, Page points out that contemporary scholars would not sponsor CCF's view that reading be begun as late as when a child is four or five years old, or that teaching of reading and writing be approached as habit formation. In contrast with many other writers of this volume, Page also discusses several inconsistencies and ambiguities in CCF's writings. For instance, although CCF gives greater emphasis in his writings to mechanical learning, characterized by "high speed" and "automatic" repetition, he suggests that "comprehension" must also be encouraged; but he does not explain satisfactorily how comprehension and mechanical learning can be reconciled.

Jones' *American English Grammar* is written as an informal letter addressed to CCF. Basically, what he says amounts to this:

> In spite of the insights of *American English Grammar*, we haven't made much progress toward your "workable program in English language"—not in the classroom, not in the profession.
>
> Where you called for teachers to encourage students to observe actual usage and "to go as far as possible in giving them a practical equipment for this purpose," we have persisted in limiting students to artificial examples, rules, and exceptions to rules; and, worst of all, we have almost never given them the important tools: knowledge of word forms, understanding of function words, sensitivity to word order. (p. 59)

The article supplies a lot of ammunition for those who would like to belittle the teaching of grammar and usage, but offers no constructive suggestions for those who would rather be told how to apply CCF's ideals.

Hartnett's *Signals of Sequence and Thought* deals with CCF's treatment of phenomena which are similar to the "cohesive ties" subsequently proposed by Halliday and Hasan (1976). Hartnett develops the concept of cohesive ties, partly using the insights of others and partly her own, and suggests that by teaching students to use these ties properly teachers can help them to write better: "Manipulative cohesive ties express the mental processes that underlie rhetorical patterns and show the organization and development of thought. By learning to use these signals, student writers learn to bring together diverse ideas and to express their relationships." (p. 139)

Teachers unfamiliar with cohesive ties or signals of sequence would find the article highly informative and useful. Several recent textbooks on writing have incorporated the concepts of cohesion, coherence, and signals, which interested teachers may consult for finding ways of applying them to classroom situations (e.g. Arnaudet & Barrett, 1984; Seale, 1978; Johnston & Zukowski/Faust, 1985).

Bailey's *Charles C. Fries and the 'Early Modern English Dictionary'* is a detailed chronological account of CCF's unsuccessful attempt to edit the dictionary of the title. Without minimizing the greatness of CCF, Bailey traces the causes of CCF's failure and concludes without mincing words:

> Fries and his associates failed to produce a dictionary for reasons partly practical and partly personal, yet they enjoyed an opportunity on which they failed to act, the opportunity to do more than merely to complete a dictionary on a pre-established plan or to describe in a conventional way the lexicon of a linguistic domain not yet given serious attention. (p. 199)

Although this article deals with one of CCF's major failures, it reveals CCF's research methodology, his perfectionism, and his English scholarship.

Stalker's *C. C. Fries on Standard English* comes to the defense of CCF's views on standard English which have been the butt of many criticisms from prescriptive grammarians and champions of correct and standard English. For instance, Warfel (1952) in his diatribe *Who Killed Grammar?* depicts CCF as the arch-villain. Stalker stresses that CCF did not reject the notion of standard English, but only wanted it defined in terms of current usage rather than outdated prescriptive rules. Stalker argues that CCF more clearly than anyone else established with a thorough analysis of synchronic and

diachronic data that there are no degenerate dialects and that standard English is merely one commonly recognized dialect, used by "those who are carrying on the important affairs of English speaking people" (p. 208). Perhaps the best part of the article is the treatment of how CCF proceeded to identify the characteristics of standard English using empirical methodology.

Danesi's *Charles Fries and Contrastive Analysis* summarizes CCF's theoretical principles which underlie the contrastive analysis hypothesis and CCF's language teaching methodology. He lists six major principles culled from CCF's writings and defends them as valid even at present, when the validity of contrastive analysis is viewed with suspicion. The six principles he abstracts are:

1. Second language acquisition is different from first language acquisition;
2. Native language influences the way a second language is learned;
3. Effective teaching strategies should be based on a scientific description of and comparison between the first and second language;
4. Although contrastive analysis may not predict the levels of difficulties or provide a fool-proof approach, it can help in identifying, selecting, and arranging the materials to be taught;
5. The ultimate goal of second language pedagogy is the full mastery of the target language that takes into account the meaning, context, and social situations of discourse;
6. The fundamental aim of second language learning and teaching should be an understanding of the second language culture and its people.

The article is essentially exegetical, but may be of interest to those who would like to know the mind of CCF.

In his *Pattern-Practice Revisited,* Bosco attempts to revitalize the pattern-practice methodology with some concrete proposals. Like most of the other authors, Bosco begins with a defense of CCF, arguing that CCF never belittled the importance of meaning or context in encouraging pattern practice. Bosco's proposals to make pattern practice relevant include:

1. Provide the learner with visual and informative contexts to channel the discussion;
2. Exploit the concept of "connectedness" in establishing picture sequences and verbal cues; and
3. Utilize interactional frames in which the communicative functions are labeled ... (p. 306)

He also recommends that "we create 'dialogs and options' (Di Pietro, 1975) in which the communicative functions are clearly labeled" (p. 311).

Bosco's defense of CCF seems somewhat labored since he himself acknowledges that "An examination of *English Pattern Practices* (Lado & Fries, 1958) reveals relatively few instances of 'natural communication' in any real sense. The utterances are largely uncontextualized. They remain grammatical isolates—unrelated to contexts of use." This article is probably the most practical of the whole volume, and teachers who use pattern practice methodology would find it extremely useful.

Lado's *Native Speaker Performance and the Cloze Test, A Quest for Validity* is a critical evaluation of the cloze test with a brief historical review followed by empirical evidence from his own research. He acknowledges that "cloze tests certainly do rank the students in an order based on objective criteria," but raises the question "what use is counting errors and ranking students if we do not know what those numbers and that ranking mean" (p. 341). He maintains that the cloze procedure is useless as an overall measure of language ability since it was originally proposed to estimate the difficulty level of prose passages and since empirical evidence suggests that it is not reliable.

Peter Fries' *C. C. Fries' View of Language and Linguistics,* Ney's *Charles C. Fries and Jerome S. Bruner: Common-Sense and Cognition in Learning,* and Blanton's *Fries' Functionalism* are rather heavy but excellent syntheses of CCF's multidimensional scholarship. Fries stresses CCF's strong commitment to seeking empirical bases before making linguistic generalizations and CCF's concern to account for "how people communicate meanings to one another." Ney's comparative study of Bruner and CCF explores CCF's educational philosophy and educational psychology, highlighting the fact that CCF valued functional knowledge, the knowledge that leads to action and that can be put to use rather than intellectual knowledge that is unproductive. Blanton's rather philosophical paper reveals the holistic and humanistic approach that CCF favored. As an educationist, CCF felt

> that the contribution of modern scholarship and art was their attention to human development, and that the theme of human development shaped modern experience when the inner growth of human character and situation resonated throughout one's theory and art. Hence, the growth of the human spirit had to be the great theme of all scholars—of scientists and artists. (p. 240)

4. Conclusion

Although the title of the book is *Toward an Understanding of Language,*

a title such as *Toward an Understanding of Fries* would have been much more appropriate. The book is primarily an exegesis of CCFs writings, not a treatise about language. Certainly, since most of CCF's writings are about language, the book does deal with language. But the book would seem merely ordinary if one were to judge its merits on what it conveys aboutlanguage and linguistics. There is little in it on language or linguistics that one cannot come across in other commonly available publications. On the other hand, if one were to judge its worth on what it conveys about CCF, it would seem highly valuable and useful. It is indeed a mine of information filled with details about CCF's scholarship, personality, and methodology, and a reference tool that contains numerous topically related quotations from CCF and facts concerning the history an development of applied linguistics.

My major dissatisfaction with the book is that it is too reverential and not sufficiently critical of CCF's views. Most writers come across as awed and tamed (presumably by the overwhelming encounter they had with CCF), especially when evaluating CCF's ideas and their relevance for today.

To give an example, at least two authors, Crawford and V. F. Allen discuss how CCF stressed the importance of cultural context in language learning. Both suggest, rightly, that CCF recommended that EFL learners should not only acquire knowledge of the English language but also learn the culture and customs of native English speakers. They compliment CCF, again rightly, for initiating a new era of studies that focus on communicative functions and cultural meanings. But, strangely, they suggest that CCF's approach is still highly regarded and is to be followed. While I strongly agree that language cannot be detached from culture, I would question the validity of teaching the culture of English natives to EFL learners. Numerous studies have appeared in the past decade that suggest that there is no need for EFL students to learn the culture of English natives unless they intend to interact regularly with English natives (e.g. Bailey & Görlach, 1982; Fishman et al., 1977; Kachru, 1983). English, as now widely recognized, is an international language, and most EFL learners study English in order to communicate with those who speak English, not necessarily with those who speak English natively. In fact, most EFL learners will have no opportunity at all to communicate with native speakers regularly. A critical appraisal, then, of CCF's suggestion that the culture of English natives be taught to EFL learners would be that it is outdated or that it is only tenable subject to extremely limiting qualifications.

On a positive note, I found the book an extremely valuable source for

understanding CCF. As one who was initiated into linguistics after the transformationalist revolution, my image of CCF was, I am embarrassed to confess, of a medicine man who had a good business going until the arrival of Doctor Chomsky. I am happy to say that after reading the book I have changed my mind. I have come to admire CCF for his versatility, commitment to learning, and contributions to the teaching of languages. I was most impressed by the fact that CCF was in his own right a revolutionary and a trail-blazer in the '40s and '50s, as Chomsky was in the '60s and '70s. I would highly recommend the book to every library and to everyone interested in CCF or in the historical development of linguistics and language teaching methods. As regards practical suggestions to language teaching, the book is dispensable; but to offer practical suggestions does not seem to have been the aim of the book in the first place.

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Note

1. All page references, except those preceded by a year of publication, are to works contained in the book under review.

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SECOND LANGUAGE PEDAGOGY. N. S. Prabhu. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987. 110 pp. + Bibliography + Appendices.

At a time when the appropriateness of designing teaching methods from top-down (i.e., from theory to practice) is being questioned (Richards & Rodgers, 1987), along comes a model for an approach that involves teachers in each step of its development. The model comes from India. *Second Language Pedagogy* reports the process and thinking which went into and came out of a five-year communicative teaching project. The project set out to address problems identified in the teaching of English in Indian schools. N. S. Prabhu describes a teacher-centered style of curriculum planning and development used to address these problems. The results present some challenging conclusions about communicative classroom practice. The conclusions come from a thoughtful writer seeking not to establish dogma, but dialogue.

Prabhu traces the impetus for change in pedagogic thought to discontent with the Structural-Oral-Situational (S-O-S) approach developed and adopted in Indian schools between 1955 and 1965. The S-O-S approach worked from a structurally and lexically graded syllabus which sought to develop the four skill areas (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) simultaneously. Teachers were dissatisfied because of inadequate reading skill development, lack of control by the students of the structures they had learned, and an inability to teach enough structures. More significant reasons were posited by Prabhu: the perception that S-O-S did not get any better results than previous methods, and the loss of the intellectual momentum behind S-O-S. From this discontent came the Communicational Teaching Project.

The work done for this project led to a teacher-directed, meaning-centered, task-based approach. The emphasis of this approach is upon development of language skills through focusing upon cognitive skills use. Three basic tenets underlie this approach.

The first tenet is that grammatical competence develops through working with meaning-centered activities. From exposure and use the learners build up a base of language information. Then they test this information through working with other meaning-centered activities. They succeed in developing grammatical competence through a sort of meaningful trial and error, not through explicit grammar teaching.

The second tenet is that tasks which involve cognitive skills use are instrumental in language development. The tasks used provide reasonable cognitive challenges. Reasonable challenge depends on both the quality of

thinking involved in the activity and the level of language demanded. Activities emphasize reasoning gaps, instead of information gaps. A reasoning gap is defined as an activity "which involves deriving some new information from given information through processes of inference, deduction, practical reasoning, or perception of relationships or patterns." (p. 46)

The third tenet puts the teacher in charge. According to Prabhu, teacher-directed classes provide more challenge for language students in testing hypotheses and extending language notions. Also, teacher-directed interaction structures the students less than does forcing everyone to engage in group work—an intriguing challenge to research findings on the effectiveness of group work (Long & Porter, 1983; Pica & Doughty, 1987), though not totally convincing.

A procedural syllabus was developed for the program. The procedural syllabus suggests tasks for the teacher to use according to the development of the students. Prabhu argues that the multi-detailed syllabus does not take into account learner development and teacher plausibility. Because learners' rates and focuses of learning differ, the well-defined structured syllabus might give the impression of having "done" certain elements while the learners' attention never touched upon these elements. Secondly, detailed syllabuses, which direct classroom teaching operations, deprive the teacher of the ability to choose and thus use their knowledge and experience consequently making the lesson "soulless." In contrast, the procedural syllabus allows the teacher to use tasks according to student ability and performance. Unfortunately, no sample syllabus is included, so it remains unclear how such a syllabus would look.

Prabhu models a curriculum development program which incorporates teachers in the planning and execution. While the setting, English teaching in India, influences some of the pedagogical conclusions, the implemention strategies can apply outside of this setting. The primary audience for this book seems to be the instructional supervisor and curriculum planner. Classroom researchers may find this book frustrating because of the lack of a clear research methodology or conclusive (or even sufficient) data, but instructional supervisors will find useful ideas for implementing curriculum change that has teacher investment.

The book portrays the educational experience of developing, adjusting, and implementing a new approach to teaching in a school system. The process, as much as the conclusions reached about pedagogic philosophy, deserve thoughtful examination. While the direction charted for pedagogic

change may or may not be convincing, the process strikes me as well worth further trials and discussion.

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OBSERVATION IN THE LANGUAGE CLASSROOM. Dick Allwright. Longman, 1988. 288 pp.

Most teachers at some time have felt that they would like to do their own bit of research in the classroom but have been daunted by the prospect of where to start. Up to now, there has been a lack of easily available information on what has been done in the field of classroom research which would provide some background knowledge and references on research techniques and tools for the busy classroom teacher. It seems to me that Dick Allwright's book goes a long way towards doing this.

At the beginning of the book, Allwright points out that the goal is to know enough about language learning and teaching to help learners and teachers make the classroom a more productive place to work. He feels that observation is the key tool to help us to achieve this goal. By observation he does not mean private diary entries or vague evaluative statements but a systematic process which involves collecting data by "agreed and explicit coding procedures." He then goes on to look at what was done in the sixties. The focus of research done at this time was partly towards helping teachers in the classroom but mainly towards helping in teacher training. The Pennsylvania Project looked at method with a view to proving that the audio-lingual method was best. Jarvis, Rothfarb and Pollitzer all veered more towards describing teaching techniques. All the above used a variety of coding devices in order to observe systematically the particular areas they were focusing on.

The second chapter describes work by Moskowitz, Grittner, and Krumm. Moskowitz wanted to use observation to raise teacher trainee awareness of what they were doing in the classroom; therefore, she adapted Flanders' categories to create a tool for feedback and self-observation. Grittner was concerned with providing a tool for teacher trainee supervisors and used another adaptation of Flanders' categories in order to take account of real and other uses of language. Krumm used the same adaptation as a means of giving trainees feedback on "attempts to implement a particular teaching method." Overall the chapter emphasises two main trends. It shows a more teacher-trainee centred focus rather than a method-centred focus, and a move away from validating categories in terms of learner results towards using them as a means of trainee consciousness raising.

Having shown in chapter two how observation categories had begun to come into their own as a useful means of recording classroom events, Allwright goes on to discuss in chapter three the notes of caution which were

being sounded about them. Rosenshine was mainly concerned with the lack of evidence up to this point of any correspondence between teacher behaviour—as recorded by Flanders' categories—and learner achievement. Bailey takes it further and expresses concern with the clarity of the categories being used, the difficulty of using them objectively, and the lack of research findings either to back up the "good" teaching behaviours implied in some of the category systems or to evaluate the interaction analysis. These criticisms are applied to category systems in general, not just the Flanders system.

In chapter four Allwright moves on to describe a variety of research illustrating the move away from a prescriptive approach to a descriptive one "... now interpreted more interestingly to indicate 'exploratory and explanatory' investigations rather than simply descriptive ones." The research reported includes, besides Allwright's own work on turn-taking analysis, work by: Bellack on classroom interaction looking at it as a set of moves by all participants not a series of teaching acts; Fanselow's FOCUS whose aim was to provide an objective observation system to be used in all settings; and Long et al.'s study of language learning behaviour in small groups. The chapter highlights the difficulties of interpreting categories and shows that in fact category analysis alone is insufficient. It also illustrates that all the work done so far, although interesting in terms of providing insights into some of the things which happen in the classroom, had not provided a theory which could be a basis for future research. Researchers therefore turned to second language acquisition theory to provide a basis for hypotheses and predictions. Chapter five covers some of the work which came from this move.

Chapter six provides a review of the past and a look towards the future. It emphasies that what seems to have happened so far is that research has raised a great many new questions simply by revealing the complexity of the language classroom situation. Allwright argues that it is important now that we consolidate what has been done so far by more replication and the collection of a greater variety of specific data. He goes on to say that we should look carefully at the wide range of questions which have been raised before selecting those we will attempt to answer. Allwright also emphasies that we need to use all available resources in the research process, including the learners.

What are the main positive features of this book? Firstly, it provides a useful overview of the development of classroom research, particularly the move from prescriptive to descriptive research. He takes us from the early

stages aimed at finding the best method, through the search for good techniques, on to the move towards studying interaction, both teacher/student and student/student, with its effects on the learning process, and finally to the use of second language acquisition theory to provide specific areas for research. This means that research topics have gradually become narrower as researchers have found that far more was going on in the learning process than they ever realised.

Two other positive features are the summaries at the end of each chapter and the *Follow-up activities and points for discussion* section which promote ease of reference and use. The former ensures that readers can evaluate for themselves whether they have grasped the main content of the chapter as well as providing a reminder of where specific information is at a later date. The latter provides a useful source of study and discussion material for any tutor wishing to use the book as a text on a course. The items closely mirror the points that are being made in the chapter and prepare the ground for what is to follow by encouraging the readers to reflect on both sides of the issues raised. It would probably not be feasible to deal with all the items in this section, due to time constraints and the need for a tutor to select and perhaps modify specific areas to focus on. The main thing is that this book provides a useful base from which to work.

The final, and for me most crucial feature, is the possibilities for its use in encouraging both current and prospective teachers to take on classroom research of their own. I would have liked to see this aspect emphasised even more in the main body of the text as well as in the discussion section, but nevertheless comments which point out that those involved in research should "do everything possible to encourage teachers to join in the research enterprise," as well as the frequent references to the need for more replication and small-scale research, do provide some of the impetus necessary. Teachers and learners working together can contribute greatly to data collection for classroom research and books like this which will help them to overcome feelings of insufficient knowledge by providing information and encouragement must be welcome.

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ELT TEXTBOOKS AND MATERIALS: PROBLEMS IN EVALUATION AND DEVELOPMENT. Leslie E. Sheldon (Ed.). ELT Documents 126, Modern English Publications, 1987. 125 pp.

This volume is a collection of eleven articles about materials evaluation and development. Its stated goals are to suggest material evaluation heuristics for classroom teachers and to make ELT professionals—teachers, administrators, authors, and publishers—more aware of the materials-related problems faced by each of the others.

The essays are divided into three sections: evaluating materials, producing materials, and adapting materials. Most of the papers of immediate concern to classroom teachers are in the first section.

Five of the six papers in this section have immediate practical value for the language teacher. The first three papers discuss the selection of course materials. They point out the importance of selecting materials consistent with the teacher's theories of language acquisition, the students' needs and the pragmatics of the learning/teaching situation. Papers by Breen & Candlin and Dougill offer lists of questions for teachers to ask themselves when reviewing a prospective text. They do not espouse any one theory or approach to language teaching. Of the two, the Dougill paper may be more accessible to teachers just beginning their careers. The Breen & Candlin paper is of unquestionable merit but may be overwhelming for some newcomers to the field. For most teachers, these are probably the two most useful papers in the collection.

The next two essays in this section are also immediately useful but have a more specialized appeal. The Cunningsworth paper is addressed to those who teach conversational skills. He calls for texts based on the rules of actual, native-speaker conversations as gleaned through discourse analysis. He discusses the features of an ideal conversation text but concludes that such texts do not yet exist. He does name the texts which he feels are moving in the right direction. This essay has a good bibliography for those interested in learning more about the theoretical underpinnings of teaching conversational language skills. West's *A Consumer's Guide to ELT Dictionaries* includes an evaluation matrix which clearly shows the relative merits of nineteen learner dictionaries. For those wishing to evaluate learner dictionaries for themselves, the paper provides an overview of the differences, explains how learner dictionaries have changed in recent years, and discusses the factors to be considered when evaluating a dictionary.

The final paper in section one is an administrator's lament. It is meant to

raise the consciousness of non-administrators to the purchasing problems administrators face.

The focus in the other two sections of the volume shifts from evaluation to the twin problems of production and adaptation. Of the five essays in these sections, three are specifically addressed to ESP but in most cases the points made may be applied to other ELT materials as well. Evans & Bates, two of the authors of the *Nucleus* series, discuss problems materials writers have in obtaining teacher input about the shortcomings of the materials. This paper is disappointing. The survey methods and response patterns are largely culture specific and the paper is laced with suggestions to read other papers by the same authors in order to get information about the complex issues alluded to in this one. It might be wise to skip the article and go straight to the bibliography, which provides a list of articles tracing the genesis of the *Nucleus* series. A case study of this text series from inception to international publication could prove useful to any teachers interested in publishing their materials.

The two papers in the final section address the issue of published versus in-house materials. They discuss time-constraints and the relative worth of the materials in terms of originality, diversity, and the needs of specific classes. They conclude, not surprisingly, that a judicious mix of published and in-house materials is best. Additionally, the Leckey paper addresses the teaching versus training issue and suggests a set of conditions under which training meets the needs of the students better than teaching.

The remaining two papers serve the second goal of this volume, to make ESL professionals more aware of the problems faced by their colleagues. Zombory-Moldovan presents the materials problem from a publisher's point of view and calls on teachers to write to publishers telling them what is good or bad about their texts. The Ellis paper discusses graphics in ELT texts and how layout can affect the accessiblity and effectiveness of a textbook.

ELT Textbooks and Materials succeeds relatively well in both of its goals although the evaluation section seems far stronger from the classroom teacher's point of view. It provides practical suggestions for materials selection and development for teachers and teacher-authors as well as providing insights into the problems of publishers and institutional buyers.

There are a few problems, however. The title and introduction seem to promise more than the book delivers. There is very little on the practical aspects of materials development for teachers below the multi-course/multi-level curriculum design level. There is a disproportionately large number

of papers directed specifically to ESP concerns. While there are papers addressing the materials-related problems of administrators, authors and publishers, there are really no papers directed at these groups detailing the materials problems classroom teachers face daily. Such minor problems do not negate the value of this collection of essays. There is a great need for professional literature on materials evaluation and development. It would be impossible for any one volume to meet adequately this need. The slight let-down that one feels after reading this collection should probably be attributed to a deficiency in the literature of our field, not to deficiencies in this volume.

I would recommend this book to any teacher of EFL. For the beginner it offers both a clear presentation of factors to be considered in text selection and well-developed checklists. For the more experienced teacher these checklists hold little or no new information but are useful for their excellent organization. The overview of materials problems from all corners of the language teaching profession is of value to teachers with all levels of experience.

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