

# Reviews

*Sociolinguistics*. Janet Holmes. London and New York: Longman, 1992. 412 pp.

*Language in Society: An Introduction to Sociolinguistics*. Susanne Romaine. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994. 235 pp.

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Throughout the 20th century, "core" linguistics has focused on grammar of isolated sentences that are unrelated to any particular speaker, status, or situation. When the term "applied linguistics" appeared in the 1960s during the heyday of contrastive analysis, the conventional wisdom of the period was that a detailed comparison and contrast of the learners' native grammar with the target grammar constituted the proper focus and preparation for foreign language teachers. At that time, applied linguistics was, therefore, very much applied "linguistics."

At about the same time, "sociolinguistics" was establishing itself as a new field, evolving out of dialectology and other disciplines interested in language variation. Although "sociolinguistics" is sometimes used synonymously with "applied linguistics," it is useful to distinguish the two from each other and from "linguistics." Sociolinguistics studies the relationship between language and society and accounts for linguistic variation. In contrast to core linguistics, sociolinguistics often examines language that is more than one sentence in length, explaining how it relates to a context of variables.

Those who like to quibble with the term "applied linguistics" will enjoy doing the same with "sociolinguistics." Some areas of *sociolinguistics* are remote from the concerns of core linguistics, and few in university departments of sociology refer to themselves as *sociolinguists*. These terminological distinctions, however, deserve more respect than they are commonly accorded, and ignorance of them and their histories has caused a lot of unnecessary misunderstanding and ill will.

Over the past two decades, applied linguists, including those in the language teaching profession, have been looking less to core linguistics and more to sociolinguistics in order to understand and address lan-

guage problems in education and society. This review examines two new "introductions to sociolinguistics" that may be of interest to applied linguists and language teachers.

In her preface, Janet Holmes, a Reader in Linguistics at Victoria University in Wellington, New Zealand, carefully states that her book has been written "for people who have never heard of sociolinguistics," and that she intends to prepare them for "more sophisticated" books in the field (p. x). Holmes has apparently developed this book from earlier drafts that she has field-tested with students in her classrooms. The Longman book jacket properly recommends the textbook for "senior school (6th form) and 1st year undergraduate students in sociolinguistics."

This textbook by Holmes may be the most carefully written, and symmetrical, introduction to sociolinguistics published. The twelve-chapter body of the text is framed by a short introductory chapter and a short conclusion. The twelve body-chapters are grouped into three major sections, each 110 to 120 pages in length and including four chapters. Each chapter has an introduction and a conclusion, and contains a number of highlighted and indented sociolinguistic "Examples" that illustrate some sociolinguistic topic. The "Examples," in turn, are frequently followed by "Exercises" testing or developing the reader's comprehension. Each "Exercise" is immediately followed by an "Answer." Relatively few works are cited within the text, and an extensive list of references appears at the end of the book. The main sections of all chapters are carefully edited.

Less well edited, at the end of each body-chapter, are poorly formatted and sometimes incomplete lists of important concepts introduced in the chapter, sources for the chapter, and suggestions for additional reading. In addition, some tables and examples (e.g., pp. 92, 271) are poorly formatted, and the index is not as thorough as it should be (e.g., omitting "India," which is used in several sections).

Section I, "Multilingual Speech Communities," contains four chapters on language choice, language maintenance and shift, language varieties and multilingual nations, and national languages and language planning. Here one finds sociolinguistic "Examples" from diverse speech communities around the world: the unemployed urban youth of eastern Zaire, the Vaupes in the northwest Amazon, the Cantonese of Singapore, among others. Below is a representative "Example" that Holmes included in her discussion of "language death and language loss," amid predictions that by the year 2000 almost all Australian Aboriginal languages will be extinct:

Annie at 20 is a young speaker of Dyrbal, an Australian Aboriginal language. She also speaks English which she learned at school. There is no written Dyrbal material for her to read, and there are fewer and fewer contexts in which she can appropriately hear and speak the language. So she is steadily becoming less proficient in it. She can understand the Dyrbal she hears used by older people in her community, and she uses it to speak to her grandmother. But her grandmother is scathing about her ability in Dyrbal, saying Annie doesn't speak the language properly. (p. 62)

Especially in the early chapters, Holmes experiments with an introductory-textbook prose style that experienced readers may find annoying, for instance her definition and description of pidgin (p. 90). Another problem with the early chapters is that some answers to the exercises are a bit simplistic and misleading. For example, in Holmes' discussion (pp. 74, 88) of language planning and language revival, she stresses positive "attitudes" as the reason for the Israeli and the Tanzanian successes with Hebrew and Swahili, respectively; but she completely ignores what others have considered to be the crucial factor: the absence of a pre-existing common language used by the majority of the population. (Positive attitudes alone have not been enough in the case of motivated and patriotic Irish to re-establish Irish Gaelic into Ireland because the *vast majority already knew English* and could not shift away from that pre-existing language of contact.) Nonetheless, although one may not always be pleased with Holmes' "Answers" one must appreciate the way she reduces complex sociolinguistic data to neat, comprehensible packages that appeal to students.

In sections II and III, both the prose style and the discussion become more sophisticated. Section II, "Language Variation: Reflecting its users," contains four chapters on regional and social dialects, sex and age, ethnicity and social networks, and language change. This section covers a number of the classic studies on linguistic (mostly English) variation involving variables such as h-dropping, and final "-ing" in the USA and the UK. To these, Holmes adds some more recent and less widely publicized studies from Australia and New Zealand. Included in this section are "Explanations of women's linguistic behaviour" (pp. 171-181) and some interesting parallels between Maori English and British and American Black English.

Compared with Romaine, Holmes seems even-handed, dispassionate and (in as much as it is possible) objective in her description of sociolinguistic variation across gender, age, nationality, and other factors. Occasionally, however, Holmes shows a Western bias:

Finally, the generalisation about women leading change towards the standard dialect applied only where women play some role in public life. In Iran and India, for instance, it has been found that women's speech does not follow the western pattern. In these places the status of women is relatively fixed and there is no motivation for them to lead linguistic change. It will not lead them anywhere socially. In these societies women do not lead linguistic innovation in any direction. (p. 234)

Unfortunately, Holmes does not address that fact that Turkey, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, India, and the Philippines have all had democratically elected female heads of state. Elsewhere, Holmes (p. 271) classifies "Style in non-Western societies" as if there were a straightforward and simple binary distinction. Sometimes she is not in command of the world data that she uses, evident in her assessment that the population of India is "over 700 million" (p. 79), and that in "West Africa, Hausa is learned as a second language and used in nearly every market place" (p. 88).

Section III, "Language Variation: Reflecting its uses" contains four chapters: on style, context, and register; speech functions, politeness, and cross-cultural communication; sex, politeness, and stereotypes; and attitudes and applications. Here, Holmes' steady tone and even-handed treatment of gender provide a clear contrast with Romaine's treatment of the same topics. Holmes summarizes a range of sociolinguistic research by noting that, "it is quite clearly gender rather than occupational status, social class, or some other social factor, which most adequately accounts for the interactional patterns described" (p. 329).

These chapters in section III coincide with some of Holmes' own areas of expertise and previous publications on pragmatics and miscommunication. In section III, as in section II, she supplements classic studies from Europe and North America with less widely known material, often from Australia and New Zealand. The discussion of register, for example, includes a fascinating account of Australian sports announcer talk, and its syntactic reduction, syntactic inversion, and heavy noun modification.

Susanne Romaine's text, *Language and Society*, covers many of the same topics as Holmes'. Romaine's treatment of these topics, however, is both more spontaneous and brilliant and less organized and careful. The most deeply rooted difference between these two books lies in their assumed readerships. Unlike Holmes, who is constantly attentive to the needs of her 18-year-old reader, Romaine never bothers to identify her readership. It is clear from the outset, however, that Romaine is speaking as much to her peer sociolinguists around the world as she is to her students. Romaine has impressive credentials. A Professor of

English at Oxford, since 1988 she has published four books on pidgins and creoles, bilingualism, Tok Pisin, and Australian languages—all sources from which she draws freely to provide material for the book reviewed here.

Whereas Holmes selects examples from all around the world without exploring any particular culture or language at length or in depth, Romaine relies heavily on examples from the Germanic language branch in Europe and North America, and on her previous work involving Tok Pisin in Melanesia. As Melanesia is recycled across chapters and topics, and examined from different sociolinguistic angles, the reader leaves the book with a sense of the whole and of “having been there.” Romaine grabs our attention and sweeps us through the text, which in sections is a pleasure to read. Unlike Holmes, however, Romaine seldom stops to review, summarize or check our understanding, Romaine’s book is only half the length of that of Holmes, in part because Romaine assumes a much greater knowledge on the part of her readers.

Romaine’s tone is confident, personal, cynical, and anecdotal, drawing freely on her own unpleasant experiences with neighbors and colleagues, and as a *professor* at Oxford among *male professors*. Her cloaked references (e.g., pp. viii, 25, 124) to sociolinguists may appeal to peers who know who and what she is talking about, but they are likely to confound students.

Romaine’s bare bones table of contents inadequately reveals her chapters’ contents, which, for that reason, must be spelled out below. In Chapter 1, “Language in Society/Society in Language,” one quickly encounters one of the important resources of the book, the rich vein of sociolinguistic data drawn from the languages and societies of Papua New Guinea and New Britain. Using the Melanesian setting, Romaine clearly demonstrates why “language” and “dialect” are social rather than linguistic constructs and that “the very concept of discrete languages is probably a European cultural artifact fostered by processes such as literacy and standardization” (p. 12).

Chapter 2, “Language Choice,” addresses individual and societal bilingualism and multilingualism. Here one finds familiar sociolinguistic examples dealing with Scandinavia, Quebec, Ireland, Hungarians in Austria, and Puerto Ricans and Amish in the USA. While Romaine acknowledges that a lot of standard theory on bilingualism is based on the European “one-language: one state” paradigm and is therefore limited, she fails to challenge this paradigm and ignores material on the bilingual’s repertoire in multilingual settings which scholars in South and Southeast Asia have recently produced. Her heavy reliance on

European and North American scholarship here reflects one weakness of the book as a whole.

A good example of how Holmes and Romaine illustrate the same topic differently may be seen in their accounts of "language shift" across "language domains." Both use the same example from a village in Austria, but Romaine's table (p. 51) involves 32 speakers interacting with each of 11 different "interlocutors." Holmes' table (p. 58) simplifies the material, showing just seven speakers and six "addressees," for her 18-year-old reader

Chapter 3, "Sociolinguistic Patterns," deals with sociolinguistic variables such as social class, style, gender, age, and network. In this chapter, more than any other, Romaine's carelessness in putting the book together is evident. She refers to Melbourne as having "the largest concentration of Greek speakers in the world" (p. 68). She also introduces Tok Pisin (p. 54), after having already used it and assumed familiarity with it earlier (pp. 10, 45, 46). The largest section, on language standardization, does not fit the rest of the chapter, although the material, especially that involving Western missionaries in Papua New Guinea, is interesting.

The subsections of Chapter 4, "Language and Gender," include "Man-Made Language," "Learning to Talk Like a Lady," and "Gossip Talk vs. Shop Talk." Here Romaine addresses two fundamental questions: How do women speak? How are they spoken about? The discussion, unfortunately, is not new and relies mostly on familiar examples from western cultures and little on her work with Australian and Melanesian languages. Romaine's argument ends at the same point where Holmes, always the more careful of the two, begins: "In conclusion, we can say that the study of men's versus women's speech is much more complicated than it at first appears" (Romaine, p. 131).

Chapter 5, "Linguistic Change in Social Perspective," deals with dialectology, focusing on numerous familiar examples of Low, Middle, and High German, rhotic and non-rhotic English dialects, and pronouns of solidarity. Little Melanesian material enlivens the discussion, perhaps because the linguistic history of preliterate cultures is difficult to reconstruct.

Chapter 6, "Pidgins and Creoles," drawing on Romaine's previous work in Melanesia, is one of the best chapters in the book. Here she interprets the distribution, origin, structure, and social context of pidgins. Romaine succeeds in illustrating a number of points introductory texts often avoid: (1) Creolization and decreolization can co-exist (p. 171); (2) "phonology remains the least stable component of otherwise stabilized pidgins" (p. 179), and (3) "there is no reduction in the overall semantic domains covered by a pidgin, but merely in the number of

items used to map them" (p. 181). In this chapter, as elsewhere, one wishes that Romaine had used more word-for-word glosses and phonetic transcription. Again, Holmes helps here by providing an appendix with a phonetic alphabet; Romaine does not.

Chapter 7, "Linguistic Problems as Societal Problems," is a concatenation of accusations involving "language and educational failure," deficit theories, biased testing, bilingual education, immersion, and "semilingualism." Romaine's rhetorical tone exhausts rather than inspires the reader and her arguments are weak on three counts: (1) most of the examples are familiar ones from Western cultures; (2) unlike Holmes (e.g., p. 357), Romaine neither acknowledges social progress nor inspires students to bring it about; (3) Romaine offers little support for her arguments. Describing American immigrants, for example, she says "The number of foreigners deported [who had been assessed as feeble-minded largely because they did not understand English] increased by approximately 350 percent in 1913 and 570 per cent in 1914" (p. 193). Unless we are given more information and some raw data as a baseline, it is impossible to interpret the significance of these percentages.

Holmes concludes as carefully as she began: she summarizes "sociolinguistic competence" and offers a conservative list of sociolinguistic universals involving solidarity, status, and formality for her students to look for in the future. Romaine concludes her final chapter, Chapter 8, as recklessly as she began: "While there are at the moment no ready-made social theories for sociolinguists to plug all of their data into which will cover all the aspects of language use I have discussed in the book, there is also no reason to dismiss the enterprise" (p. 227). One leaves Romaine's book more impressed by individual sections, especially those dealing with Melanesia, and less impressed with the overall organization and coherence of the work.

Neither Romaine's nor Holmes's book serves as a guide for "how to do sociolinguistics" or presents an eloquent, unifying theory, but no introduction ever does. Both books, however, offer numerous insights about language variation, and many of these insights should add to our understanding the larger social context in which of language learning and teaching occur.

Holmes' book is highly recommended for those it is written for—a class of eighteen-year-olds; older students may find it a bit slow, pedantic, and patronizing. Romaine's book, despite the many problems pointed out above, will appeal to readers who have already read at least one other introduction to sociolinguistics and are looking for another perspective of the field.

*Beyond the Monitor Model: Comments on Current Theory and Practice in Second Language Acquisition.* Ronald M. Barasch and C. Vaughan James (Eds.). Boston: Heinle and Heinle, 1994. 290 pp.

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Educators variously find Stephen D. Krashen's influential ideas on second language acquisition useful, objectionable, or both. Few remain unaffected. Many use his terminology (comprehensible input, the affective filter) chiefly as convenient shorthand in discussing methods, especially when working from a communicative-based pedagogy. Even if teachers have not read Krashen's theoretical works, such as *Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition* (1982), they are probably familiar with his and Terrell's *The Natural Approach* (1983), directly or through secondary texts (see Richards & Rodgers, 1986, pp. 128-141). Barasch and James' *Beyond the Monitor Model* continues this commentary on Krashen's theories and their effects on the language teaching community. One strength of the book is its writings critiquing or expanding on most major aspects of Krashen's theory of language acquisition. Another strength is its essays by experts from North America as well as Europe. (Krashen, unfortunately does not contribute.) Timely topics in language teaching are brought up, directly or indirectly, throughout the book. This review summarizes selected articles from the book to show its breadth and tone.

Sheila M. Shannon's introduction outlines Krashen's theory of second language acquisition and its five hypotheses: (1) the Acquisition Learning Hypothesis; (2) the Natural Order Hypothesis; (3) the Monitor Hypothesis; (4) the Input Hypothesis; and (5) the Affective Filter Hypothesis. She highlights aspects of the hypotheses that have preoccupied scholars and teachers, including those in this volume.

Part 1, "Theoretical Bases," begins with two essays strongly critical of Krashen's theory. Peter af Trampe calls the monitor theory "simplistic and unscientific" (p. 27). For example, Krashen's differentiation between learning and acquisition is vague. Krashen does not explain precisely how conscious and subconscious learning occur or differ, nor does he account for the possibility that distinct aspects of language will be internalized differently. As af Trampe considers Krashen's advice theoretically unsound, he advises teachers to approach the theory "with the healthy skepticism it deserves" (p. 36). As a cautionary tale, he relates



three cases where acceptance of a new "scientific" theory hurt educational efforts in Sweden.

In "Krashen's Theory, Acquisition Theory, and Theory," Kevin Gregg argues that the theory does not meet Atkinson's (1982) conditions for a language acquisition theory. Among the flaws he highlights is the failure to define a "domain of inquiry," or "D" in Atkinson's terminology. In other words, Krashen does not limit his analysis to one aspect of language, for example the acquisition of a phonological system (p. 39).

Next, Waldemar Marton argues in pedagogical terms against the tenet that "natural" practice of a second language is superior to organized presentation in the classroom. Marton's contribution is noteworthy for going beyond arguing theory to offering suggestions for teachers. Marton admits that Krashen uses some empirical evidence to support his "natural approach"; however, studies exist to the contrary. Marton questions Krashen's studies, stating that they are not "truly convincing for the simple reason that none of them in fact take into consideration one decisive factor—the quality of the teacher" (p. 60). Marton finds Krashen's reduction of language teaching to the providing of comprehensible input objectionable because it ignores strategies that have been successful in some situations. For example, Krashen and Terrell doubt the benefits of expansion (1983, p. 87), or the technique of repeating the speaker's incorrect utterance correctly. Some studies indicate, however, that these can be effective.

Wilga M. Rivers recommends an interactive approach that requires teachers to assess each teaching situation, indeed each student, separately. She argues that Krashen's view that comprehensible input leads to acquisition is not logical: it doesn't account for degrees of effectiveness of teachers or for students' motivational levels. Also, by recommending that students listen first and produce only later, she argues Krashen would have the teacher miss an opportunity to help the student gain confidence through interaction. Rivers reviews studies of situations very similar to Krashen's ideal situation of language acquisition, noting that in such cases students did not necessarily acquire greater accuracy in the target language, as he predicts, and sometimes developed "fossilized" inaccuracies (p. 84).

Essays in the next section, "Some Hypotheses Examined," continue to examine and critique the utility of aspects of Krashen's hypotheses. However, a shift from theory to the inclusion of research, analysis, and literature reviews makes these essays more practical for the teacher than most of those in the first section.

In "The Case for Learning," the late Carlos Yorio disputes Krashen's suggestion that acquisition as a strategy is superior to learning. Yorio

studied his own use of English, not his first language, and found that monitoring himself did not necessarily inhibit effective communication. Krashen suggests that such cases are atypical, since they are narrated by linguists or those interested in linguistics. Yorio responds that this is irrelevant, and that the fact that helpful monitoring is possible suggests it should be developed in learners. Additionally, Yorio holds that language learned solely through acquisition can lead to fossilized errors, to the academic or professional detriment of some learners. To this end he examines a case study of a Korean immigrant studying in a U.S. college and results drawn from the Canadian French immersion program.

Rod Ellis and Peter af Trampe both highlight elements of Krashen's theory that they find inadequate, due largely to vagueness or the ignoring of important information. According to Ellis, Krashen does not account for situational and linguistic context—the social aspects of language. As a result, his model has a limited usefulness. In "Rules, Consciousness, and Learning," af Trampe examines the role of rules in language development, and chastises Krashen for offering a vague definition of "rules" (p. 159). Additionally, he is dissatisfied with Krashen's classification of conscious learning and unconscious acquisition, a complaint that recurs throughout this book. Af Trampe finds it possible to assume that consciousness is a matter of degree, in regard to knowledge of rules and capacity for self-monitoring.

The third section, "From Theory to Practice," examines how Krashen's hypotheses can be or have been put into practice. Teresa Pica studied the progress of grammatical competency in students in three environments, including a group learning (acquiring) only through social interaction, and a group formally studying EFL. In other words, she studied what kind of input specifically leads to improvement. Krashen and Terrell write of the "limited role" that grammar instruction should play in certain contexts (1983, p. 57). Pica's results were inconclusive; in some cases they supported Krashen and Terrell's prediction, but in others they did not.

Next, William T. Littlewood examines the usefulness of the Natural Approach in teaching a foreign language in a secondary school. He imagines a tired teacher's response to *Principles and Practice and Second Language Acquisition* (Krashen, 1982). He imagines the teacher reacting positively, deciding to enliven the classroom with some motivating activities that will include reading and listening. This essays stands out as a reminder of the appeal that Krashen holds for many teachers who have observed that drilling and other traditional methods do not result in accurate language production in learners outside of the classroom.

Essays by Reinhold Freudenstein and Ian Dunlop both assert that many of Krashen's ideas are not new. Freudenstein provides many proofs of this, citing earlier research and citations. In some cases, similarities with earlier European models are striking; only the terminology is different. Freudenstein finds this indicative of a lack of professional dialogue which discourages the development of strong research that can be incorporated into methodology. He concludes with a reminder that teachers must think of students first, and should remember that one method is not necessarily ideal for all students.

A practical and accessible article by Bill VanPatten argues for the importance of input in language teaching. In "On Babies and Bathwater: Input in Foreign Language Learning," he also addresses the complaint by some EFL teachers that since Krashen's theories are based on data generated in second language situations, they should not be applied to teaching foreign languages. He thinks it mistaken to de-emphasize input in favor of grammar, simply because of changes that may result from the "Proficiency Movement" (p. 231). To throw out the input "baby" with the "bathwater" of the monitor theory seems needless. Rather, the input hypothesis can be modified to take variability into account (p. 229). VanPatten offers a "rough outline" for curriculum progression that accounts for using input as well as grammar instruction, with Natural Approach activities most evident in early and intermediate stage curriculum.

Karl J. Krahnke suggests that while Krashen's theory of acquisition has a "classificatory and descriptive function" (p. 247), it lacks details that would give teachers direction. The theory's generality allows, perhaps with positive results, "for individual teacher interpretation and application" (p. 246). The theory does not, however, offer specific aims or outcomes to teachers. It offers, in Krahnke's view, "empowerment" without "enlightenment." He warns, "language instruction that is based on vague license with no knowledge of the context in which that license has developed [nor] of what effects it will have also tends toward chaos" (p. 247). Overall then, as a methodological resource, Krahnke finds Krashen's theory limited.

The final section of *Beyond the Monitor Model*, "The Panacea Fallacy," includes essays reiterating many of the points discussed above. Christopher Brumfit reminds us that language teachers interact in an "unstable world," and "are more akin to social workers, marriage guidance counselors, career advisers, and even priests or parents than they are to lawyers, accountants, or even doctors" (p. 266). He recommends administrative changes to encourage dialogue between teachers and theorists. More interaction and an "openness of argument" will help

teachers acquire range in their varied situations. It is not the teacher's role to apply any particular theory, as Krashen seems to encourage in his writings.

Individuals with a thorough knowledge of Krashen's writing will find this book engaging. This book might supplement training grounded in communicative approaches, but instructors should bear in mind its negative tone and somewhat repetitious content. It might be more suitable as a text for a seminar specifically dealing with Krashen and his influence. The "Topics for Discussion" appendix would encourage seminar participants to relate readings to their own teaching experiences, and also to view the essays in light of other acquisition theory and research. Such discussion would go far to encourage teachers to consider the role of theory in their own classrooms, and to assess the merits of relying on scientific models.

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*Language and the Law*. John Gibbons (Ed.). London: Longman, 1994. 476 pp.

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In his introduction to *Language and the Law*, series editor Christopher N. Candlin states that "the series exists to explore the contention that our understanding of the social order is most easily and conveniently achieved through a critical awareness of the power of language; to recognize that access to and participation in the power forums of society

depend largely on a mastery of their discourses and through that knowledge and that communicative competence to enable the achievement of personal, social, and professional goals." The law is certainly a power forum constructed by language as well as played out through language. Furthermore, a lack of competence on the part of those uneducated in legal discourse often leads to disadvantage and inequality before the law and is thus a concern for social order. For these reasons, *Language and the Law* is a natural choice for this series.

The book collects papers written mainly by linguists for those with a professional interest in the law—lawyers, sociologists, anthropologists, and other linguists. Its three parts represent areas where language and the law coincide: language constructing law, language and disadvantage before the law, and forensic linguistics. Editor John Gibbons introduces each section, and a lawyer with a specific interest in the content concludes each section with a commentary.

Part 1, "Language Constructing Law," shows the evolution of the language of the law in the context of the developing literacy within a culture. The basis for this part is the chapter "The Language of the Law" (Maley) which examines three legal discourse situations—legislation, trial proceedings, and judicial judgments—and provides the framework for the rest of this part. The following four chapters take the reader through aspects of a legal system in pre-literate, literate, and post-literate cultures ranging from the concept of "accident" in the forensic discourse of the Huli people of Papua New Guinea (Goldman) to caveats and endorsements for video depositions (Person and Berch). The latter presents an interesting juxtaposition to the chapter on Anglo-Saxon wills (Danet and Bogoch) which examines the transition from oral to written wills while the advent of video depositions in the present era takes us in the opposite direction—from written to oral testimony. The chapter on "Cognitive Structuring in Legislative Provisions" (Bhatia) is an exemplary balance of the tools of the linguists and the needs of the lawyers. Through the use of a two-part interactive cognitive structure consisting of the main provisionary clause and its qualifications, Bhatia unravels some of the mysteries underlying the reading and interpretations of statutory legislation.

Part 2 of this book examines language and disadvantage before the law. Just because the law provides equal treatment for everyone does not mean that it is operating fairly. Gibbons advises constant vigilance in areas where disparities of power and knowledge of legal language produce injustice. This part begins with a chapter on the cross-examination of children in criminal courts (Brennan) where, in an adversarial

legal system, the victims of child abuse are abused again when they become the victims of the skilled language of a cross-examining lawyer—a telling criticism of the system. Walsh examines the ways courtroom styles disadvantage Aborigines within the Australian legal system, and Eades discusses the communication clash caused by cultural and linguistic differences between the modern Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal cultures in Australia. Labov and Harris provide a chapter on how linguistic testimony, such as surveys on interpretation, readability, and syntactic complexity, plays an important part in judicial decisions in the United States. Two of the cases they consider deal with ethnic and racial minorities disadvantaged by the complexities of written legal language.

Part 3, by its nature the most technical part of the book, covers forensic linguistics which primarily deals with expert linguistic evidence. The chapters in this part examine the reliability of such evidence in a variety of categories such as speaker recognition (Nolan), voice identification (Jones), disputed written authorship (Smith), and discourse analysis (Coulthard). This reveals the problems of admissibility of linguistic evidence due to the judiciary's suspicion of new disciplines, the probability rather than the certainty of the expert testimony, and the length of time and intelligibility of presentation to a court. The part concludes with a cautionary tale regarding the confidentiality of linguistic material (Simpson).

The papers in *Language and the Law* suggest solutions, as well as informing us of and criticizing prevailing trends. The major thread of advice in Part 1 (in line with the plain-language movements in the U.S., Australia, and England) is to narrow the gap between the language of the law and everyday language needs. However, this advice is balanced by the sensible recognition that many of the linguistic complexities of legal language, especially statutory legislation, are unavoidable due to the unenviable task of those who draft the law to be not only clear, precise, and unambiguous but also to be all-inclusive. In other words, legal discourses are contingent upon the systems within which they operate—for there to be a change in the language there needs to be change in the legal institution. However, this does not mean that there is no room for immediate improvement. Part 2 demonstrates areas of legal discourse, such as dealing with children and racial or ethnic minorities where disadvantage does occur, and counsels vigilance and offers measures to address such situations.

However, *Language and the Law* has its limits. First is its limited scope. The "Language" is English and the "Law" refers to systems primarily influenced by the Anglo-Saxon common law, which is adversarial in

its trial proceedings. Little account is taken of the European system which is "inquisitorial" or systems such as the Japanese where there is no jury system and criminal proceedings are based primarily on confessions and written testimony. Furthermore, 11 of the 19 papers and lawyer responses are by authors based in Australia and three of these papers are on issues involving the Aboriginal peoples. The disadvantages suffered by Aborigines within the Australian legal system because of disparities in culture and language may or may not transfer to other people who are disenfranchised or discriminated against, but that is not investigated here either in relation to other countries (with the exception of Blacks and Puerto Ricans in the United States) or even in relation to other minority populations within Australia itself.

A second problem lies in the structure of the book. There is a sense, rightly or wrongly, that the available papers dictated the structure of the book, rather than vice versa; although the papers are interesting and informative in themselves, the cohesion of the book seems forced. The lawyer responses at the end of each part tend to focus on a specific interest in a particular chapter rather than commenting on the full part, which suggests that the content matter of the section may be too wide or too complex for comment. In fact, parts of the final section on forensic linguistics become so technical and inaccessible to non-linguists that one wonders at the irony of a book which starts out with linguists advising us of the need to simplify the language of the law, and ends by becoming hogged down in the jargon and conflicts of the linguistic profession itself.

I have reviewed this book both as a lawyer and as a language teacher: I use the topic of law in content-based English language courses and am a qualified lawyer. *Language and the Law* is a brave and ambitious attempt to illuminate linguistics as found in the classroom by taking it into the context of the courtroom. In this it mostly succeeds. By demonstrating the practical application of linguistics to the language of the law and in particular showing how language is power and how people without the necessary language skills are disadvantaged within legal systems, the book fulfills many of the objectives in the series.

Further, the broad base of the book's material introduces linguists, lawyers, sociologists, and anthropologists to topics they might otherwise miss. While linguists wrote the majority of the papers, the topics are accessible and informative to lawyers and teachers of ESL or EFL. The section on forensic linguistics, as with any discipline involving expert testimony, is less accessible and thus serves as a salutary reminder to us as teachers of the problems students face when the process —

legal or linguistic or cultural—is difficult to present and comprehend.

*Language and the Law* is a welcome addition to the limited resources on the topic and provides a wide range of subjects by some distinguished writers relevant to a variety of disciplines. For teachers of English as a foreign language, the application of linguistic theories to legislative and judicial discourse is particularly enlightening. In addition, it reminds us that the rules of evidence and procedure do not often translate to other countries, and that we need to be aware of these differences. For those using current affairs topics as a teaching medium, legal, and more specifically these days, trial issues are increasingly important. Merely consider the cultural and linguistic components of cases such as the US soldiers accused of rape in Okinawa, the allegations and procedures in the Aum cases, the issues raised in the lengthy trial of O.J. Simpson, and the differing expectations of banks, legislators, and regulators in the Daiwa case. *Language and the Law* is a worthwhile reminder of how language does not exist in a vacuum but brings with it a whole array of advantages and disadvantages for the participants in the legal process.

*Studies in Team Teaching*. Minoru Wada and Antony Cominos (Eds.).  
Tokyo: Kenkyusha, 1994. 228 pp.

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With more than 3,300 participants and sending foreign teachers into secondary schools in Japan, the JET (Japan Exchange Teaching) program (started in 1987) is clearly a subject meriting serious study. Until now, as Wada notes in this volume, “the seemingly abundant literature ... is based on personal impressions and anecdotes” (p. 42). That is precisely what the JALT Junior and Senior High School (formerly Team Teaching) N-SIG was formed to counteract and the task editors Wada and Cominos undertake in *Studies in Team Teaching*.

In their introduction, the editors argue for pedagogically informed team teaching, noting, “it is essential ... to [marshal] both empirical evidence and theory driven argument which will help us to understand team teaching and [the] JET program” (pp. 5-6). They hope to complement the JET Program's organizers' (CLAIR) perspective that team teach-



ing is part of a larger project promoting “mutual understanding between Japan and other nations” (pp. 4-5). Wada and Cominos, while recognizing the political and budgetary limits the Home Affairs Ministry places on the program, argue for a firmer pedagogical base for JET instructors. In particular, they point out that the characteristics of JET participants—their youth (they must be under 35 years of age at entry), high turnover (they can serve a maximum of three years), and inexperience (only 11.7 percent of participants in 1991 had any sort of TEFL qualification [also discussed by Garant, p. 105])—probably has a significant effect on English education in Japan.

These concerns animate the book, which, while having no single overall argument, addresses a wide range of issues. The material falls into four areas and could have been usefully organized into sections along these lines: institutional influences on the JET Program and team teaching (Chapters 1, 3, 7, 14, 15, and 16); suggestions for classroom practice in a team teaching situation (Chapters 2, 8, 9, and 10); lessons drawn from the examination of specific team teaching situations (Chapters 4, 6, and 13); and the cultural and communication problems involved in native/non-native team teaching situations (Chapters 5, 11, and 12).

At the institutional level, in Chapter 1 Wada examines the relationship between team teaching and the 1989 revised curriculum for secondary schools. Wada, then a senior curriculum specialist in English at the Ministry of Education, points out that the JET Program was expected to play a crucial part in developing “communicative skills and mutual understanding between Japan and the rest of the world” (p. 9). However, problems in implementing team teaching emerged, first because in a “top-down” educational system, there is a “gap between what the ‘top’ wants to achieve and the ‘bottom’ really wants to do” (p. 15). A second, more basic, and more shocking, source of problems is the “fact that team teaching began without any form of pedagogic research to validate it as an effective educational innovation” (p. 15). With hindsight he urges this be rectified.

In Chapter 3, Gillis-Furutaka notes the worrying lack of teacher training of new AETs and proposes two new roles for JTEs who have studied TEFL abroad. First, they could train the inexperienced AETs. Second, they could help educate other JTEs whose training, based largely on the examples of senior teachers, tends to perpetuate outdated methods. However, Gillis-Furutaka overlooks a number of problems with this proposal. First, since the number of teachers sent abroad is pitifully small—in 1990, 175 teachers studied abroad for two months, 50 for 6 months, and only 5 for a year—the number of qualified JTE trainers is inad-

equate. Further, though she states, "communicative language teaching does not require the presence of a native speaker at all" (p. 38), Gillis-Furutaka fails to consider arguments for increasing the number of foreign-educated JTEs rather than increasing the number of AETs, who after all each represent a temporary investment.

One of the most commonly cited institutional constraints on English teaching in Japan is the college entrance exam system, and in Chapter 7 Law examines whether claims that they fail to test communication are well-founded (c.f. Shillaw, 1990). After making a careful study of the tests of 11 different universities, Law concludes: "College entrance exams are not perfect but they could be a lot worse; and reform-minded JTEs and AETs have better things to do than simply moan about them" (p. 100). Instead he suggests they recognize the administrative limits on testing oral skills and, in line with recent changes in exams, focus on replacing "yakudoku" translation reading classes with a more communicative approach. Law's article reminds us of the dangers of making wild claims that are unsubstantiated by empirical evidence.

In chapters 14 and 15, Gottlieb offers a study of team teaching in Australian universities, while Fanselow looks at "JET as an Exercise in Program Analysis." Gottlieb provides a detailed profile of a Japanese-language team teaching program in which native and non-native speakers teach separate but coordinated courses, arguing that this model could be considered in Japan—a proposition that ignores the limited TEFL qualifications of AETs. Gottlieb criticizes Krashen and Terrell's (1983) Natural Approach hypotheses when she writes, "learners ... do not just passively acquire the language through comprehensible input" (p. 197). Instead she seems to support consciousness-raising theories (Ellis, 1992) by writing, "Learners ... actively question ... the grammar they are using" (p. 197). She weakens her position by failing to support her arguments with empirical evidence or by referring to the theoretical literature. Similarly, Fanselow's paper is less grounded in academic research than in philosophical speculation. For example, to widen our perspectives on the JET program, he invites readers to make positive statements about the program and turn them into negative ones. He then urges us to back up such exercises with the systematic collection of data (interviews, observations, and reading), without offering readers his own supporting ideas.

In the final paper, Brogan describes British Council Koto-ku (Tokyo) team teaching projects which predate the JET program by two years. He describes methodological and institutional restrictions on English education stemming, on the one hand, from "teachers who feel most comfortable when lecturing about grammar" (p. 218) and on the other from

the "little time for teacher training" (p. 222). However, he concludes that team-teaching can help motivate both JTEs and students.

Chapters 2, 8, 9, and 10 offer various suggestions to counter the "ineffective utilization of ALTs in the classroom" (p. 18). Brown and Evans propose content-based teaching on cultural themes. Garant would have AETs focus on specific speaking and listening activities. Jannuzi conversely argues that they should focus on reading, and Griffie describes the use of songs in the team teaching classroom. Each article is well researched and backed up with relevant readings from the field. However, this emphasizes that more empirical research is required to recommend one teaching method over the others. I don't underestimate the difficulty of such research, but the limited experience and contact time of most AETs makes it all the more necessary.

In Chapter 4, the first of the three chapters looking at specific team teaching situations, Yukawa attempts to address the above problem using Hymes' (1982) ethnography of speaking. Her valuable study compares three classes in detail at different points in the academic year and analyses the effects of an AET on a JTE's teaching techniques. She shows that JTEs clearly modified their teaching methodology in both solo and team-taught classes as a result of team teaching, shifting from 63% to 28% translation in lessons over a six-month period. She concludes by suggesting, "Studies are needed of schools where innovative teachers have managed to unite the faculty in a common search for the best use of an AET" (p. 57).

In Chapter 6, Smith observes five team teaching relationships towards the end of the academic year in order to determine the content and activities of apparently successful team lessons. Though there are a wide range of activities, the emphasis falls on specific reviews of parts of the textbook or on general communicative reviews. Smith acknowledges that this is partly due to the timing of the study at the end of the school year, but he argues for "the presence in team teaching of 'review' activities" (p. 81) as one of the possibilities in otherwise "fossilized team teaching practices" (p. 88).

Chapter 13 describes an experiment in team teaching in Japanese universities and evaluates it based on a student questionnaire. This is less convincing than the detailed ethnographic transcriptions of Yukawa and Smith, and the conclusions are necessarily more general: "Students ... found the combination of the two teachers to be interesting and stimulating" (p. 184). The authors admit that their data is subjective and needs to be followed up.

The three remaining chapters (5, 11, and 12) focus on inter-cultural problems in team teaching. Voci-Reed, looking at stress in Chapter 5,

points to differing role expectations, poor communications, and their limited influence as stress factors for AETs, and sees JTEs' stress factors in team teaching situations as professional responsibilities, cultural differences, and lack of support for innovation. Her proposals for solving such problems remain vague: "The key to success remains within individuals themselves" (p. 70). Identifying more specific responses is the next step. In Chapter 11, Miyazaki makes a detailed analysis of communication strategies between native and non-native teachers in a Japanese-language program in Australia. He notes, "communicative negotiation is indispensable in order for NNT [non-native teachers] to develop their interactive confidence in real social contexts" (p. 152). From this he argues that for the JET program this means enlarging the opportunities for AETs and JTEs to communicate in and out of school to increase the latter's communicative competence. In Chapter 12 Kobayashi uses a questionnaire to look at cultural differences perceived by JTEs and AETs, and discovers findings similar to Voci-Reed's. Like Voci-Reed's, Kobayashi's suggestions for dealing with these problems remain vague, noting that success "depends on one's personal viewpoint" and ability to "recognize that both [cultures] have merits and demerits" (p. 175).

In varying ways, these 16 papers attempt to marshal "both empirical evidence and theory driven argument" to improve team teaching in Japan, the stated goal of the volume. Clearly some are more successful than others. Moreover, the book's lack of thematic organization makes it difficult to see a direction in which to move. Nevertheless, it represents a welcome start on a larger project: the development of pedagogical viewpoints on the JET program. To a degree, the future of the JET program rests on these matters, especially as the broader "cultural understanding" goals of CLAIR become fulfilled through other means. That future is uncertain until genuine pedagogical benefits can be shown for team teaching. This book represents the first step on that road.

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*Appropriate Methodology and Social Context*. Adrian Holliday. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994. 237 pp.

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Reading *Appropriate Methodology and Social Context (AM&SC)* brought back memories of studying sociology and psychology. Yet, as interesting as this book was personally, I wondered about its appropriateness to the average L2 teacher in general and English teachers in Japan in particular. To evaluate this work on its applicability to L2 classrooms was difficult since it was not written as a classroom cookbook but as a sociological study. *AM&SC* appears to be aimed at educational sociologists. Does this book have relevance for practicing L2 teachers, or is it only for theoretical scholars? If the book does not provide clear solutions to real world problems, how can the determined L2 teacher find a way to apply specifically the information in it?

As the title implies, *AM&SC* presents arguments for using methodologies appropriate to the culture and country. It is divided into three main parts: Part A, The Cultures of the Classroom; Part B, Sources of Conflict; and Part C, Appropriate Methodology Design. Each of the 12 chapters includes a summary and questions for discussion. There is quite an extensive list of references. One potential drawback for the language teacher in Japan is that most of the case studies were drawn from experiences in the Middle East (i.e. Egypt, Iran, Morocco and Pakistan). There are only four references to Japan. However, if as statistics suggest, there is more difference within a group than between groups, then we can still learn from Holliday's analysis.

I have selected six salient points from the book for discussion.

*Culture is changeable*: It is important for L2 teachers to realize that their classroom cultures change not only with geographic borders, but with temporal ones as well. Indeed, the teaching of a language is often accompanied by the teaching of culture. As students master the new language, they may also adopt some of the cultural ways that go with that language, hence their classroom behavior may noticeably change during their years of study.

*Cultural imperialism and classroom expectations*: A key point, addressed in section 3.5.3, is the varying expectations of students and teachers. One study cited in Holliday (Coleman, 1987) examined how local students and teachers on the one hand, and expatriate teachers

and curriculum developers on the other, saw the same situation differently. While the first group felt that learning not initially taking place was "not problematic as long as there was a harmonious teacher-learner relationship," the second group found the situation extremely unsettling for the very reason that learning was not taking place (p. 50). These varying expectations raise questions. Indeed, what is a teacher to do? What exactly is the job of an L2 teacher? It is to teach language? It is to meet some hidden agenda? Is it for some unstated and perhaps unknown purpose? Holliday reminds us that in most TESEP<sup>1</sup> (tertiary, secondary and primary) educational situations, the education process is intimately connected with socialization, and refers to other authors (cf. Bernstein, 1971; Stenhouse, 1975; LoCastro, 1989) in arguing that teachers are a primary source of socialization and "have responsibility as role models in the process of socializing their students" (p. 94).

In Part B, the schematic discussion of cultural imperialism, linguicism, politics, and the special needs of state education makes the reader aware of many problems faced by language teachers yet fails to provide solutions.

In BANA2 (Britain, Australasia, and North America) cultural and educational methodology, the concept of socialization as a factor in education may not be regarded as highly significant in secondary and post-secondary education. However, the emphasis placed on it in other cultures may be higher than what most native speaking English teachers are familiar with. Highly qualified, professional BANA educators may be placed in circumstances where they face low job satisfaction, low respect by their local peers and students, and an inability to complete their curriculum solely because of a misunderstanding of the social expectations. It follows that an understanding of Part B, Sources of Conflict, may help lessen the risk of culture shock in a new position.

*Learning festivals:* In section 3.2 the author introduces related concepts drawn from anthropology and applied to the classroom culture: "teaching spectacles" and "learning festivals." These, if pedagogically valid, would provide the basis for a valuable classroom approach. Teaching spectacles are seen as rituals which are staged by a teacher to serve a purpose. The example given (p. 36) is of an Indonesian puppet show with students being relatively passive viewers. A learning festival, on the other hand, is oriented toward increasing student participation. Obviously, this requires change and cooperation on the part of both the students and the teachers. I have sometimes found this to be a valuable approach. The classroom culture must first be thoroughly examined to determine whether a learning festival is appropriate, and if the neces-

sary changes are feasible. However, in many contemporary classroom environments a more traditional approach is expected and preferred.

*Classroom culture:* Most non-sociologists think of a 'culture' as a large body of people, a group such as those who inhabit a country or practice a religion. However, a culture may be a smaller unit, and Chapter 4 looks at institutional cultures and classroom cultures. One point deals with class size. As any TESEP teacher in Japan knows, large classes are the rule. Holliday suggests it is an error to attribute this to a lack of funds for education.

Large classes might be permissible where prevailing educational ideologies do not see the role of the teacher as a monitor of learning, but [as] a fount of knowledge, which is delivered without any concession to the students, and which students must struggle to attain. (pp. 58-59)

*Teaching or learning:* Chapter 5.4, "Setting the scene for conflict", is difficult to sum up, yet contains some important points. In many cultures the concept of teaching implies a traditional teacher/lecturer and student/receiver style of education. However, many contemporary BANA methodologies encourage a more active learner role. Obviously, when students expect a passive role, with the teacher as the supplier of wisdom and knowledge, and are then faced with demands for active participation, conflict seems inevitable. Interestingly, this also occurs when non-BANA English teachers attend BANA institutes of higher learning.

This particular section also deals with a variety of dichotomies: linguistics vs. language skills; theory vs. practical application; professor vs. teacher; giving the lesson vs. managing the learning; discovery vs. confusion; learning without teaching. The points raised address issues which affect teachers in every cultural setting.

*Appropriate methodology design:* The title suggests the book is about appropriate methodology. However, even though the last three chapters are devoted to this topic with a few examples of curriculum design, the task is an impossible one. Even the most casual reader must surely see this point. After all, if culture is changeable and there is such a multitude of cultures that even discrete classroom cultures exist, then how can one text cover all conceivable methodologies? Holliday realizes this, and, rather than provide a single method, gives ideas on analyzing the particular classroom which can aid in designing a methodology appropriate to that venue.

This text is not for everybody. The teacher who needs a syllabus for next week, or the curriculum designer who must redesign the school's curriculum by next month will not be helped. However, it does a rea-

sonable job of introducing ways to take culture into account in academic preparation, and as such would be useful to study. For serious teachers who want to better understand their classes and for those with the time and willingness to undertake the venture, I recommend it. For those in search of a quick answer to a social or cultural problem, it will not be of much help.

### Notes

1. Holliday repeatedly uses two acronyms, TESEP (tertiary, secondary and primary) and BANA (Britain, Australasia, and North America).
2. Holliday has a very schematic view of the English language teaching world and divides it into two unequal parts: BANA and non-BANA (the rest of the world).

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*Assessing Language Ability in the Classroom*. 2nd Edition. Andrew D. Cohen. Boston: Heinle & Heinle Publishers, 1994. 394 pp.

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As the introduction to this volume states: "The assessment of students' language abilities is something on which teachers spend a fair amount of class time in one way or another" (p. 1). It would appear, given the recent literature in the field, that assessment is also something language



teachers think about quite a lot outside the classroom: JALT '95 in Nagoya took on testing as a central theme with the plenary address of J.D. Brown and the first publication in the JALT Applied Materials series (Brown and Yamashita, 1995) focuses on language testing in Japan. Globally, there has been an explosion recently in the number of books concentrating specifically on how we test our students (e.g. Alderson, Clapham, & Wall, 1995; Brown, 1995) and even on the 20th century history of language testing itself (Spolsky, 1995). *Assessing Language Ability in the Classroom* claims to support this body of literature rather than try to replicate it. Cohen claims that the book was not written for testing novices, but the back cover advertises it as "accessible to novices in the field." This strange identity crisis plagues the book throughout. Cohen attempts to address issues that are left out in other texts on assessment, yet in so doing leaves out large chunks of necessary basic information about the assessment process. In the end, however, the book raises interesting and valid points about assessment in our own classrooms.

The book has 10 chapters, with the chapters organizing themselves into identifiable groups, though the sequencing of the chapters themselves is puzzling and not very intuitive. The first two chapters invite the readers to question their own philosophy of and need for assessment. The second group of chapters (3 through 6) focuses more discretely on instruments and the assessment process and environment. The final group of chapters (7 through 10) addresses individual skills and alternatives to the ways they are traditionally assessed. Throughout each chapter, Research Notes give those readers who want a more theoretical understanding of the material short summaries of research studies relevant to the current topic. I found this feature helpful; it concentrated most of the references into small areas of the text, allowing readers to skip over them as they please, in turn helping the general flow of the prose, which seems a little less burdened with parenthetical references than other language assessment texts.

The first chapter asks teachers to inventory their own needs and purposes for assessment. A questionnaire presents eight questions to help readers decide how the book will be helpful and the discussion that follows guides the readers to relevant sections of the following chapters depending on the answers generated. For example, item four in the questionnaire asks the teacher to consider how often assessment should take place in their classroom. The discussion of the questionnaire directs the readers to chapter 2, which "looks briefly at the issues of when to assess and the challenge associated with working out a

series of ongoing, informal assessment techniques ..." (p. 9). This road map, a useful part of the text, makes the book more like a handbook and resource than a read-through volume on how to go about assessing students.

Chapter 2 includes brief discussions of the notions of reliability and validity, as well as the differences between norm-referenced and criterion-referenced instruments. Cohen highlights the role of the quiz, as opposed to the test, as a means of ongoing assessment of language ability. Although the terminology and concepts are defined, these discussions assume prior knowledge, not because they are complex but because they do not thoroughly cover these areas of assessment and are only partial thoughts on what these concepts mean in classroom testing. This weakens the book for anyone not comfortable with these concepts. If basic knowledge of these tenets is what is being sought by the reader, then this is not the volume to turn to.

Chapters 3 through 6 offer discussions of test-takers, instruments, and the processes involved in assessment. Chapter 3 sets forth a vocabulary for discussing assessment instruments, giving the reader a basis for the rest of the book. It also offers a "best of" selection of suggestions for those who are designing testing instruments for use in their classes. One example is an excellent suggestion about ways of gathering distractors for a multiple-choice measure. Rather than test developers guessing at what might be attractive distractors, Cohen suggests, citing relevant research, administering items in an open-ended format first and choosing popular wrong answers as distractors for future multiple-choice measures. This gem of a suggestion is one of many in this text.

Chapters 4 and 5 entertain issues and problems related to scoring and evaluating assessment instruments. They cover basic ground with a discussion of item analysis and revision and the meaning of a particular score on an instrument. More innovative suggestions are made regarding processes teachers may follow to continually evaluate assessment in programs and classrooms. Cohen includes a set of guidelines with some rather helpful and penetrating questions to ask about instruments.

Another insight from these two chapters is the use of student reporting about instruments themselves and about the strategies they use to answer items. Cohen discusses methods of gathering this information, including student verbal reports, inserting overt strategy items between language assessment items on an instrument, and administering checklist instruments on test-taking strategies after the fact. This leads to a discussion of students' test-taking strategies and what they can tell us about our own instruments.

Chapter 6 focuses on the development of assessment instruments. This seems out of place, since Chapters 3 through 5 deal with the processes of administering, scoring, evaluating, and gathering feedback on tests. It is strangely off-putting to read a discussion of item elicitation methods after we have already read an extended discussion of how to analyze whether items on a test have performed as we hoped they would. In many ways, the book would be more psychologically comforting if Chapters 3 through 6 were reversed. The introductory nature of the material contributes to the disjointed feeling.

By far the most useful part of the book, the final chapters (7, 8, and 9) raise important issues and provide a list of examples and possibilities for thinking about and assessing reading comprehension, listening and speaking, and writing. Here Cohen discusses current theory pertaining to these skills and various methods for eliciting performance in them. This section will help those who are designing their own instruments and need some fresh ideas. The brief treatment of computer-assisted testing of reading comprehension is an excellent example of the sort of insight that constitutes the greatest strength of the text.

In spite of these strengths, *Assessing Language Ability in the Classroom* tries to be too many things at once. The text contains useful and interesting directions to follow in assessment, information to put assessment into practice, and topics for further debate and clarification of one's own views. But without a great deal of effort in piecing together this scattered information, the reader comes away with a fuzzy picture of how to go about the task of assessment from beginning to end. This book does not provide a novice in language assessment with a clear and orderly presentation of the basic information needed to initiate an assessment process. We are left with a confusing question: who do we believe, the introduction, which claims the text was revised for those who have test-constructing experience, or the back cover, which claims it is accessible to the novice?

The conclusion to the text answers this question in a way when it says that the writer's goal was to give classroom teachers practical ideas on assessment, and "to write a testing book around the edges of other testing books—i.e., covering topics not covered in much depth elsewhere" (p. 358). Extending the metaphor, to me this book feels like only the edges of a picture, with many of the important details cut out and hidden away elsewhere. As a handbook of suggestions and an introduction to some currently debated issues in assessment, this book may prove satisfying. It is in this light that I again mention the questionnaire/road map in Chapter 1. Properly used, this feature may guide the reader

directly to useful information, saving time and energy trying to figure out the organization and flow of the text as a whole. Readers requiring more systematic introduction to how to go about assessing students and evaluating instruments we use for assessment should look elsewhere.

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