

Reviews

How Different Are We? Spoken Discourse in Intercultural Communication. Helen Fitzgerald. Cleveland, UK: Multilingual Matters, 2003. 261 pp.

Reviewed by

Marie Cosgrove
Surugadai University

The author, Helen Fitzgerald, is concerned with not just the requirements for communicative competence in English but also with what contributes to successful intercultural communication. This is necessary for understanding intercultural communicative competence. Based in a multicultural, multilingual society, Australia, Fitzgerald points out that English is not a culture-free language. Thus it can seem like cultural imperialism for L2 students to aim only for native-like communicative competence. L2 learners must have sufficient cultural awareness in order to make informed choices about how far they wish to be culturally adapted. Therefore, English language courses need to promote awareness of the different cultural values underlying languages. Ways to improve interpersonal communication across cultures are to know as much as possible about those with whom they are communicating, and to understand that misunderstandings are the only certainties.

This study focused on the classroom interactions of six native-speaker university students with 155 tertiary-level L2 speakers, from a wide range of countries. The study identified three significant communication styles: discourse organization and rhetorical styles; turn-taking patterns; and the distribution of talk and attitudes towards the expression of opinion and agreement. Fitzgerald grouped the L2 speakers according to background, such as those from an egalitarian, individualist culture or those from a hierarchical, collectivist society. In order to get a more balanced discourse, she tried to avoid putting only group-orientated (collectivist) L2 speakers together.

In the data analysis of cultural values, obtained from recorded discourse and questionnaires, it became clear to Fitzgerald that L2 speakers judge others on the basis of their own values, from within their own cul-

tural frame of reference, and thus make negative judgments about others with opposing views. According to the author, this can lead to serious repercussions in a multicultural society where people must live and work alongside one another. With cultural-awareness training, people can try to understand the cultural constraints and priorities which determine the views of others, and so avert deterioration in relationships.

There are 10 chapters in the book including the introduction and conclusion. In chapters 3 and 5, Fitzgerald reviews the literature available on cultural value systems and communication styles. Chapters 4, 6, 7, and 8 contain data analysis of the different communication styles and cultural values reflected in the discourse. Chapter 9 focuses on developing communicative competencies, both intercultural and linguacultural. Fitzgerald praises Fantini (1995) for using the term *linguacultural* to remind us of the inseparability of language and culture and of the fact that people can be linguistically proficient and at the same time culturally deficient. Fitzgerald says, "To be appropriate and effective, communication must fit the requirements and expectations of the situation and achieve the personal outcomes desired by the participants" (p. 171).

As a result of the study, Fitzgerald lists six strategies to foster English language development in the workplace: collaboration, creating a positive team spirit, being sensitive to cultural expectations, being sensitive to cultural differences, turn-taking, using straightforward English, and avoiding ungrammatical foreigner talk. In other words, teachers of L2 speakers need to speak English correctly and not abbreviate.

There is also a need for L2 users to appreciate that people from other cultures might have different attitudes to direct confrontation and criticism. An L2 speaker from a culture where indirect forms of communication are not valued may well be seen as blunt and evasive. On the other hand, an L2 speaker from a culture where indirect communication is highly valued may feel a direct approach to be counterproductive. Limited English may also play a role in preventing L2 speakers from being persuasive in cultural terms. These differences, or disregard of culturally sensitive viewpoints, may not happen if L2 speakers have cultural-awareness training consisting of intercultural communication and interpersonal skills. Most of the L2 participants in this study are working or will be working in a different cultural environment from their own, as they are immigrants or refugees to Australia from 104 different countries.

The training methods and materials are listed in detail in Appendix 3 and may be useful for anyone teaching a cultural awareness course. Fitzgerald stresses that students should be encouraged to become cultural

observers and analysts, discovering the territory and drawing the map for themselves. Teachers provide an outline and students fill it in. This book is an excellent resource for teachers who work with L2 speakers from different culture groups than their own.

Reference

- Fantini, A. (1995). An expanded goal for language education: The development of intercultural communication competencies. In M.L. Tickoo (Ed.), *Language and Culture in Multilingual Societies* (pp. 37-53). Singapore: SEAMEO Regional Language Centre.

Planning Lessons for a Reading Class. Thomas S.C. Farrell. Singapore: SEAMEO Regional Language Center RELC Portfolio Series, 2002. iii + 46 pp.

Reviewed by

James M. Hall

Iwate University

A few months ago I was asked to conduct a workshop about teaching reading to local junior and senior high school English teachers. In three hours, we were to try to grasp the frighteningly complex process of reading and improve our ways of teaching it. Ideas from *Planning Lessons for a Reading Class* by Thomas S.C. Farrell served as the foundation for this seminar. I found the book to be useful because it provided numerous interactive activities that gave participants the opportunity to reflect on their own teaching and discuss ways of improving it.

The booklet is 49 A5-sized pages and is part of the *RELC Portfolio* series edited by Willy A. Renandya and Jack C. Richards. It is designed to provide teachers with practical guidelines to make their reading lessons more interesting and effective. The booklet gives the teacher trainee a better understanding of what reading is and then discusses how to prepare and present reading lessons that have a strategic focus. Although a few parts of the first chapter are slightly difficult to grasp, the remainder of the book is clear and useful.

In the initial chapter, Farrell introduces the top-down, bottom-up, and interactive models to explain the reading process. Parts of these descriptions, though, were hard to follow. For example, the bottom-up reading process is described as a procedure in which people "...extract propositions from the text. This is where the reader chunks the sentences into constituents and constructs the propositions from there" (p. 2). To me, this sentence is not written in the purported "accessible, nonacademic style" (Series Editors' Preface, p. i) intended for books in the *RELC* series. Furthermore, it is hard to make sense of Figure 1 on page 2, which shows the way in which the interaction between top-down and bottom-up approaches facilitates reading comprehension. However, the two reading exercises designed to demonstrate the way readers use both bottom-up and top-down processes when they read were effective in illustrating how contextual information, background knowledge, vocabulary, and syntax are used for comprehension. Although the exercises in chapter 1 are valuable, the instructor should consider supplementing the descriptions of the various reading models.

In the second chapter, the reader is given principles for designing effective and interesting reading lessons. This chapter sparked a very interesting discussion in the workshop. On page 14, Farrell writes that the reason why so many students dislike reading is that a large number of schools teach it "as a decoding activity with many students unable to recall what they read." This led to a debate about the importance of translation in teaching reading. We also compared our own principles of reading instruction with those listed in the chapter. Furthermore, principles such as the importance of students engaging in actual reading during a reading class (p. 11) were thought provoking.

In the third chapter, Farrell initially discusses the criteria teachers should use for choosing textbooks. Readers are then asked to identify strategies they use when they read and compare these to strategies that, according to researchers, fluent readers use. At the end of the chapter, a list of strategies that can be taught are presented. In the workshop, we discussed which strategies from this list we thought we could teach and designed lessons to teach them.

The fourth chapter is the longest and introduces exercises to develop students' skills in using strategies such as activating prior knowledge, predicting, skimming, guessing the meaning of unknown words, and questioning. In the workshop, I used various activities from this chapter to demonstrate how to teach certain reading strategies. This chapter is helpful as a reference for reading activities.

Overall, Thomas Farrell has managed to pack ample information into this little book. Furthermore, the numerous interactive tasks and sample reading activities make the content easier to digest and can be incorporated into reading workshops. Since the book is reasonably priced, it is a sensible investment to ask in-service teacher trainees to make.

Action Research in Action. Gregory Hadley, Editor. Singapore: SEAMEO Regional Language Centre, The RELC Portfolio Series, 2003. vi + 54 pp.

Reviewed by
Kay Hammond

International Christian University

Action Research in Action makes up part of the *RELC Portfolio* series of short books that emphasize a balance of theory and practice. The writing style is clear enough to be accessible to a wide range of readers. This book provides the reader with eight concise examples of research conducted using an action research method.

The book is divided into eight short chapters, each containing one completed research project. The first chapter provides an account of an investigation by Sabrina Almeida Ribeiro into her own error correction techniques in spoken language. She used this to enable her students to gain self-awareness of their errors and their progress. The second chapter, by Thomas Farrell and Lee Fong Ting, explores beliefs about grammar correction techniques used in the teaching of composition and related classroom practices by two English language teachers. The third chapter contains an investigation and reevaluation of small-group work as a method of learner autonomy by David Mayo. A project on raising students' pragmatic awareness by Nicola Helen Green is presented in chapter 4. In chapter 5, Matthew Warwick and David Jeffrey investigate student and teacher attitudes to homework, and develop strategies and further questions regarding homework in their ongoing development of an English language program. In chapter six, Isabel Pefianco Martin shows how the results of her investigation of students' attitudes to first drafts resulted in her reevaluation of the comments she wrote. Richard Watson Todd conducts an investigation into the conception of teaching by a small group of novice teachers in chapter seven. As a result of this,

he comes to see his trainee teachers in a new light. In the final chapter, Gregory Hadley examines the differences between students' concepts of "good student/poor student" in their Asian home cultures and in the British culture they were currently studying in. The findings help him to prepare students to avoid academic failure from a lack of awareness of the differences in strategies employed between the two academic cultures. The final pages of this book contain a list of references used throughout.

The selection and presentation of the action research projects are positive features of this book. These projects were completed by a variety of authors in various countries (mostly Asian) and settings. They all follow the same layout: setting, focus, investigation, response, and reflection. This cohesive feature of the book makes it a good source of examples for those interested in studying action research. Furthermore, the inclusion of the full questionnaires used in the studies provides researchers with useful examples of questionnaire design. The procedures use simple techniques without the need for complicated design and equipment, thus making the action research process accessible to all readers. In addition to the clarity of the layout, each chapter contains two task boxes that invite readers to reflect on the same issues in their own context.

This book would be best suited to anyone who has an interest in action research, whether they are teachers wishing to investigate their own contexts or students wanting to learn about the action research process. Overall, this book is a quality collection of short action research projects that gives readers not only good examples of each stage of the process, but also an interesting introduction and a list of references for the important areas of teaching beliefs and practices. An aim of this book is to inspire teachers to consider using this process to investigate challenges in their own teaching contexts. The collection of research papers presented in this book certainly fulfils this aim.

The Reflective Teacher: A Guide to Classroom Research. Sandra Lee McKay. Singapore: SEAMEO Regional Language Centre, The RELC Portfolio Series, 2002. iii + 34pp.

Reviewed by

Kay Hammond

International Christian University

This book is part of the *RELC Portfolio* series: a set of short books characterized by a focus on a balance of theory and procedures, the use of practical techniques, and presentation in a clear, nonacademic writing style. *The Reflective Teacher: A Guide To Classroom Research* is well described by those characteristics. The aim of this book is to assist teachers to reflect on their work in a more systematic and useful way for their teaching.

The book is divided into six chapters. The first chapter, "Practice, Purposes, and Effects," provides a concise overview of the practice and rewards of reflective teaching. The concepts of reflective teaching are described and readers are invited to reflect on their own practices of teaching through task work. The second chapter, "Stages of Reflection," introduces the reader to the reflection cycle, that is, the stages of identifying a problem, considering a cause, and then collecting and analyzing data. Chapter 3, "Collecting Data," goes into more detail about the way in which information can be collected. The types of data focused on are classroom documents, teaching journals, classroom observations, questionnaires, and interviews. The central concepts of collecting these types of data are concisely described and examples are given for each. Chapter 4, "Analysing the Data," provides an illustration of how a teacher could analyze data from a teaching journal and classroom recordings and then look for and categorize recurring themes, before finally developing interpretations. Chapter 5, "Sharing Insights from Reflections," briefly suggests how teachers could share their findings through oral presentations and journals. The final chapter offers a very short summary of the reflective research procedure and asks readers to consider a few issues about being a reflective teacher, the data they would need, the difficulty of obtaining it, and how they would feel about presenting and publishing their work. A sample action research report based on some reflective research done in a Japanese college is included as an appendix.

Two immediately impressive features of this book are its conciseness and attractive layout. Principles and techniques are clearly described, and the reader is not overburdened with a heavy literature review. Chapters, subheadings, and task boxes are set out in a way that can be skimmed easily for those who want to read ahead or review concepts and techniques. These characteristics will be of great assistance to the type of person most likely to need this book: busy teachers who want to delve into their teaching practices quickly, but systematically.

There are some aspects of the book that are disappointing. Although it is acknowledged at the end of the first chapter that reflective teaching takes time, there are no suggestions on how teachers could fit such practice into a busy schedule. Including ideas or insights from others on how they managed this difficulty would have improved the book. The description of the use of questionnaires in chapter 3 could have benefited by the inclusion of suggestions on when to use which type of response format. In addition, it would have been useful to show how quantitative and qualitative methods can be combined by leaving space for written comments under a numerical response question. Mixing these methods can give researchers more depth to their results, as the additional explanations by participants can keep researchers from guessing at the meaning of the numbers they collect through a quantitative questionnaire alone.

Overall, although this book may let some readers down with the brief details on how to plan and carry out their research, it is well presented and provides a strong introduction into the purpose and process of reflective teaching. This book would be useful as a workbook for students under the guidance of a teacher, or for those who need a summary reminder of the steps in reflective teaching.

Controversies in Second Language Writing: Dilemmas and Decisions in Research and Instruction. Christine Pearson Casanave. Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2004. xi + 245 pp.

Reviewed By

Hiroyuki Iida

Setagaya Gakuen School

Have you ever stopped to think what L2 writing instruction should be like? If you have, *Controversies in Second Language Writing: Dilemmas and Decisions in Research and Instruction* will help you to reshape your beliefs about L2 writing instruction.

This book is one of the latest volumes of the *Michigan Series on Teaching Multilingual Writers*. As Christine Pearson Casanave, the author, writes in the introduction, the main focus of this book is “how teachers in L2 writing can be helped to make reasoned decisions by understanding some of the key issues and conflicting opinions about L2 writing research and pedagogy” (p. 1).

The book consists of six chapters that cover the following: a framework for decision making, L1 and L2 contrastive rhetoric, a detailed literature review of L2 writing instruction, an assessment of student writing, students’ awareness of audience and plagiarism, and politics and ideology. Each chapter is then divided into different sections and begins with questions so that readers think about the basic schema of the topic, followed by a detailed literature review of the area. For example, the “Discussions in the Literature” section presents current issues in teaching L2 writing. In the “Classroom Perspectives” section, the author, together with other teachers, shares experiences in teaching L2 writing.

What distinguishes this book from other L2 writing books is seen in “Beliefs and Practices,” the final section of each chapter. In this section, the questions posed by the author encourage you to reshape your beliefs not only about L2 writing instruction but about educational philosophy as well. One such question is: “Should the L2 writing class be a place where students and teachers work together to address social and institutional injustices and to promote change?” (p. 224).

You may wonder, “Is this a book on L2 writing instruction?” The answer is “Yes, it is.” Frank Smith (1990) suggests, “educational institutions—from kindergarten to university—should be places where relevant and worthwhile thinking is embedded in every activity of the day” (p.

125). Christine Pearson Casanave expects the L2 writing class to be one such place. I studied L2 writing methodology under the guidance of the author. Exchanging ideas and opinions with her and colleagues inspired me and gave me a better perspective on L2 writing instruction. I am sure you will also find a new you as an L2 writing teacher by answering the author's questions and sharing ideas with your colleagues.

It is obvious that this book is useful as a textbook for L2 writing teacher training or as a reference book for L2 writing research. Basic information about L2 writing, current issues, and research questions in L2 writing instruction, and an extensive bibliography are available in this book. Although the author says that the book does not provide novice L2 writing teachers with immutable answers, the "Classroom Perspectives" section will greatly help them create an image of practical lessons. If you are an experienced L2 writing teacher, you will surely appreciate the book's insights into L2 writing instruction.

Reference

Smith, F. (1990). *To think*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Teaching Pronunciation: Why, What, When, and How. Gloria Poedjosoedarmo. Singapore: SEAMEO Regional Language Centre, RELC Portfolio Series 9, 2003. 44 pp.

Reviewed by

James McCrostie

Kanda University of International Studies

Do any teachers still bother teaching pronunciation? The popularity of teaching pronunciation has ebbed and flowed along with the latest fashions in foreign language teaching. The rise to prominence of the communicative approach downgraded the importance of pronunciation instruction. Communicative approach proponents do not view pronunciation as an indispensable ingredient for communicative competence and largely neglect pronunciation training. However, Gloria Poedjosoedarmo considers more than a minimal degree of accuracy important and provides an alternative to the current neglect of pronunciation instruction in her booklet *Teaching Pronunciation: Why, What, When, and How*.

Poedjosoedarmo wrote the booklet to provide practical advice in accessible language to teachers (many of whom may be anxious about their own pronunciation). The booklet covers reasons for teaching pronunciation, features of the English sound system (including not only individual sounds but also intonation), as well as when and how to teach pronunciation.

The booklet provides helpful information to those teachers who are unsure of their own pronunciation and uncertain of how to teach it to their students. For instance, Poedjosoedarmo sensibly recommends incorporating pronunciation teaching into a lesson in five to ten minute chunks. In another example, instruction on the t- and d- sounds could be integrated into a past tense grammar lesson. This practical way to expose students to pronunciation also demonstrates to both teachers and learners that pronunciation forms a natural connection with other language skills including grammar, listening, and vocabulary.

However, Poedjosoedarmo's advice tends to be overly orthodox, offering standard tried and true (and often failed) suggestions. For instance, she offers many ideas for teaching minimal pairs; mainly traditional activities such as holding up pictures and having students differentiate between the words such as "ship" and "sheep." Examples of sounds and model sentences for minimal pair instruction take up three and a half pages of the booklet. Unfortunately, this focus on isolated sounds is unnecessarily artificial and students are unlikely to translate the practice into natural communication. Focusing on individual sounds would be more useful for helping students overcome specific difficulties.

Teaching suprasegmental features (stress, rhythm, and intonation) should receive more focus since they are more important for communicating meaning. Unfortunately, only one paragraph offers guidance on teaching pronunciation features such as intonation. Poedjosoedarmo briefly advises having students read poems and stories aloud. Such an important topic deserves far more attention.

Poedjosoedarmo's booklet provides teachers with a helpful, easily understandable description of the English sound system and practical ways to introduce these sounds to beginning students. Teachers with absolutely no idea of how to teach pronunciation will benefit from the advice, though educators already giving pronunciation instruction will find little to add to their teaching repertoire.

The Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English with CD-ROM (4th ed.). Harlow, England: Longman, 2003. xvii + 1949 pp.

Reviewed by

Brian C. Perry

Otaru University of Commerce

Longman has been a major creative force in the production of dictionaries for learners since its original and highly-accessible *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* was first published in 1978. The second and third editions in 1991 and 1995, respectively, along with the fourth edition in 2003, reviewed here, have continued this innovative tradition.

In addition to the best features of previous editions, such as detailed frequency information and “signposts” which summarise each meaning for long entries, the fourth edition has introduced a number of improvements. The most frequent 1,000 words are now conveniently highlighted in red and hundreds of colour illustrations have been included. There are 40% more example sentences based on the Longman Corpus Network of over 300 million words, together with 7,000 new synonyms and antonyms. Colour-coded Collocation, Word Choice, and Word Focus boxes have been added to the existing Grammar boxes, thereby providing extensive additional help for writing. The Collocation boxes are particularly useful as they display at a glance common word combinations. The Word Choice boxes highlight common mistakes by learners of English and the Word Focus boxes lead writers to associated words in the same lexical range, thus at a stroke expanding the vocabulary available to them. For instance, the Word Focus box for **Internet** (p. 851) contains: **website, site, webpage, chatroom, surf the net, visit websites/chatrooms, download files, email, chat, shop/work online, bookmark, favourites, intranet, extranet, cyberspace, virtual, search engine, isp and browser**—most of which are written into a brief paragraph indicating usage.

However, the real attractive feature is the accompanying CD-ROM. Up until now most dictionary CD-ROMs have contained, with a few minor modifications, the same information as their printed counterparts, but this CD-ROM goes far beyond being an electronic copy of the main dictionary and is in effect a vast language resource. There are 80,000 extra examples and over 1,000,000 sentences taken from the Longman corpora. As well as the printed dictionary, it contains the entire new edition of the *Longman Language Activator* (Summers, 2002)—ideal for

learners who need assistance with their writing. The pop-up mode is excellent for referring to the dictionary whilst using another application such as browsing a webpage or working on a word-processing document. By placing the cursor over a word and pressing the Ctrl key, one finds the relevant entry displayed on a small pop-up sized screen. The pronunciation (usually British) can then be conveniently heard by clicking on a button. There is also an impressive array of interactive activities and functions. They include an excellent help facility and guided tour for first-time users, as well as extensive exercises, incorporating dictation and examination practice targeted at the Cambridge and IELTS English proficiency tests. Furthermore, you can listen to the British and American pronunciation for every word.

In fact, it is hard to find any significant faults with the contents or the way they are accessed and presented in this dictionary/CD-ROM package. Perhaps there could be exercises specifically geared to such widely employed tests as TOEFL and TOEIC, but this is a minor point when considering the overall effect. Being a large weighty flagship dictionary, it is not suitable for students who want something light that they can easily carry to classes. As is the case with most dictionary CD-ROMs, there is no Macintosh version, at least not on sale in Japan. Surely, given its potential sales, it would not require too much effort to produce an accompanying CD-ROM that is in hybrid rather than Windows-only format.

That said, it suffers from none of the drawbacks associated with its rivals such as the sixth edition of the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (Wehmeier, 2000) (too little frequency information), or the *COBUILD Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (Sinclair, 2003) (long-winded definitions and overly rigid adherence to corpus data). Longman has clearly researched well into the needs of users. In short, the result is the most student-centred of all the major dictionaries for learners and accordingly comes with my highest recommendation.

References

- Sinclair, J. (Ed.). (2003). *COBUILD advanced learner's dictionary*. London: Collins.
- Summers, D. (Ed.). (2002). *Longman Language Activator (2nd ed.)*. Harlow, UK: Longman.
- Wehmeier, S. (Ed.). (2000). *Oxford advanced learner's dictionary (6th ed.)*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Grammar In The Language Classroom: Changing Approaches and Practices. Joyce E. James, Editor. Singapore: SEAMEO Regional Language Centre, 2003. v + 357 pp.

Reviewed by

Robert Salter

Kawasaki Commercial High School

This well-edited anthology of papers selected from presentations at the 2001 SEAMEO Regional Language Centre Seminar mainly explores issues of grammar for classroom teachers. The text is, however, also useful for researchers and graduate students who are interested in theoretical and practical issues of teaching and learning grammar in various classroom contexts. In any work with multiple authors there are differences in quality. However, what one or two papers in this collection might seem to lack in intellectual rigor the text overall more than makes up for in enthusiasm, which is something that texts on grammar sometimes lack.

The first section of *Grammar in the Language Classroom*, Issues and Responses, consists of six papers. These papers examine various lines of enquiry such as linguistics and grammar, curriculum choices and grammar, and investigation of student experience and grammar. For the most part, the first section takes a Systemic Functional Grammar approach to classroom issues. The emphasis is on how text and context can aid students in learning language.

A strength of this collection is that there is not only one perspective taken throughout the papers. In the first section, other theoretical frameworks of grammar are explored such as cognitive grammar, corpus linguistics, and generative grammar. The exploration of these different grammatical frameworks is undertaken to show the reader the utility of using insights from various approaches to grammar in the language classroom.

The second section of the collection of papers, Implications for Materials Development and Teaching, is diverse and inspiring. The focus on using authentic materials is particularly noteworthy. Building on the theoretical papers in the first section, the implications for learners who must contend with various fields, tenors, and modes of language are examined in admirable detail. Indeed, the concern for learners is clear throughout the second section. This concern, most likely, is rooted in the fact that classroom teachers are the authors.

A further benefit of the authors being teachers is that the majority of the essays have an element of self-analysis. The self-analysis of teaching leads to many insights into how to use texts effectively as suitable materials in language classrooms. An example of this beneficial feature of the collection can be found most readily in Annabelle Lukin's essay, *Grammar and the Study of Poetry*. She uses a poem and some excerpts from others to illustrate the benefit of systematic grammatical study in contrast to arguments based solely on personal opinion. She anticipates that many people may suggest that students are not capable of such rigorous study. As she is a classroom teacher, Lukin is able to use her own experiences to justify the types of educational activities she advocates in her paper.

This book's two sections complement each other and create a book that is useful for both academics and practitioners. The enthusiasm for grammar is a refreshing part of each paper. The fact that not a single paper in the collection bothers to argue for or against the explicit teaching of grammar in any detail permits the book to focus on specific lines of enquiry. The specific focus should bring immediate and long-term benefits to those who read and reflect on the content. Those who decide to use the ideas in the classroom or in further research would, I hope, be welcome at the next regional seminar.

Qualitative Inquiry in TESOL. Keith Richards. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003. 323 pp.

Reviewed by

Debra Simms-Asai

College and University Educators SIG

A great many language teachers in Japan are, in principle, committed to ongoing professional development. Unfortunately however, there is no shortage of obstacles preventing such improvement. Overwork, administrative obligations, and a lack of solid research skills all contribute to professional inertia. While Keith Richards cannot reduce our teaching loads or rescue us from endless staff meetings, his *Qualitative Inquiry in TESOL* does provide everything one needs to start producing high quality qualitative research.

The book's structure makes it particularly reader friendly. Each chapter is subdivided into three increasingly complex levels. This means that teachers who have never taken any research methodology courses—as well as those who have and have forgotten what they learned—can start fresh at Level I. More experienced teacher-researchers can deepen their insights with Levels II and III. Certainly novice researchers may find that they will return to the book, and to Levels II and III, as they gain experience.

All readers will appreciate that Richards saturates his text with “Reading Guides.” At every turn, he provides abundant resources for further study. This feature alone makes *Qualitative Inquiry in TESOL* an extremely valuable tool.

The text covers both theory and practice. It starts with a theory chapter, which as mentioned above, is presented in three levels. Level I challenges popular bias against qualitative inquiry (QI), dealing with the assumption that QI is “soft” science, and therefore less legitimate than the quantitative variety. It serves as an opening foray into the nature of research, asking readers to explore their own attitudes and preconceptions. Level II introduces the seven core QI traditions: ethnography, grounded theory, phenomenology, case study, life history, action research, and conversation analysis. Philosophy majors and graduate students of all sorts will find themselves at home in Level III. Here, Richards gets to the paradigms or fundamental beliefs about the world which underlie the various QI traditions and inevitably affect one's teaching and research. While this chapter can be rather heavy going, particularly if one has been away from scholarly life for some time, Richards cautions against skipping ahead to the other chapters. By not taking the time to understand the traditions of QI, and the beliefs which inform them and influence us, we unnecessarily put the quality of our projects at risk. Richards offers many examples of how this can happen in actual TESOL studies.

The remaining chapters are essentially a “how-to” manual. Presented at three increasing levels of difficulty, Richards provides detailed advice on interviewing, observing, collecting and analyzing spoken interaction, project planning, and analyzing and representing evidence. Logically and clearly laid out, these chapters get to the “nuts and bolts” of a good QI project.

Qualitative Inquiry in TESOL is destined to become required reading in master's degree programs, and belongs on the shelves of teachers committed to sharing their insights with the larger community. It

provides a rigorous and thorough introduction to QI without ever condescending to the overworked teacher who is reading it. The theory of QI, dealt with expertly in the opening chapter, is put to work in helpful and detailed descriptions of specific research skills. Teachers who need a push or a pep talk before diving into the career-enhancing activity of QI will find such encouragement here. Those who are already engaged in a QI project may find it even more valuable, since it will provide new ways of gathering, understanding, and presenting their research.

Applied Linguistics. Guy Cook. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003. x + 134 pp.

Reviewed by

Wang Shaoxiang

Fujian Teachers University

Language is alive and fun, yet language study is sometimes dismissed as stiff and dull. This seeming contradiction is partly because academics have produced and will very likely continue producing jargon-ridden tomes removed from the general public's everyday experience of language. Fortunately, Professor Guy Cook's *Applied Linguistics*, the latest release in the series, *Oxford Introductions to Language Study*, is a pleasant exception.

Designed as a well-documented introductory text to applied linguistics, the book follows the same format as its predecessors with sections titled: *Survey*, *Readings*, *References*, and *Glossary*. What I find particularly illuminating is the *Survey* section. Divided into 8 chapters, this section gives an overview of the major concerns and recurring issues at the core of applied linguistics: its definition, aim, and scope; the relationship between linguistics and applied linguistics; language in the contemporary world; English language teaching; language and communication; context and culture; persuasion and poetics; and past, present, and future directions of the discipline. Aspiring to reach a broad readership, the author makes a conscious effort to refrain from using too many technical terms. For example, instead of indulging in a lengthy explanation, the author summarises the early orientation of applied linguistics in this way, "...linguists knew about language; applied linguists made this knowledge available to English language teachers; the consequence

was that language learning was improved" (p. 69). This familiar style and ease of writing provide a reader-friendly and highly accessible introduction to the subject matter.

Brief and simple as it is, the book is by no means an "idiot's guide." Deliberate efforts on the part of the reader are called for from time to time. This is particularly true with the Readings section, where Cook's hand-picked excerpts from authentic academic writings are presented to get the reader to "focus on the specifics of what is said, and how it is said" (p. ix). Following upon the heels of each reading are provocative questions such as:

Labov talks here about "the myth of verbal deprivation" and suggests that it arises from "a very poor understanding of the nature of language." What do you think the author of Text 5 would say about this? Do you think Labov could be considered to be a finger-wagging descriptivist? (p. 91)

These thought-provoking questions not only encourage independent thinking but serve as a catalyst for further pursuit of the discipline.

Anyone whose appetite is whetted by these readings may venture into the third section of this book—Annotated References. However, do remember to check the difficulty marker before each book listed in the section. Finally, there is the Glossary, which though not exhaustive provides an instant check of technical terms.

Although readily accessible and clearly written, the book is not without flaws. Brevity entails oversimplifying. The two-page discussion of "Translation, culture, and context" (pp. 55-56) is a case in point. Translation, according to Ivor Richards (as cited in Fawcett, 1997, p. 1), is "the most complex type of event yet produced in the evolution of the cosmos." Therefore, if we reduce translation to such a tidy summary as "how far to depart from the original" (p. 55), then the interplay of different voices in translation studies such as Descriptive Translation Studies, postcolonialism, or feminism would be lost. However, this is a demerit beyond the control of any writer, given the scope of this small book.

Despite this minor flaw, the book is an excellent primer for the novice and a desktop reference for those who want to take a panoramic view of the field.

Reference

- Fawcett, P. (1997). *Translation and Language: Linguistic Theories Explained*. Manchester: St. Jerome.

The Japanese Mind: Understanding Contemporary Japanese Culture.
Roger J. Davies & Osamu Ikeno (Eds). Tokyo: Tuttle Publishing, 2002.
vii + 270 pp.

Reviewed by

Jay Ercanbrack

Ehime University

I am writing this critique in response to a review of *The Japanese Mind* published in the last issue of *JALT Journal*, which I believe does a great disservice to a very good book. Far from being a failure, as the implacably negative review suggests, *The Japanese Mind* is an unusual and refreshing collection of essays, produced not by scholarly “experts” on Japanese society, but by Japanese students themselves. Presented in a very readable set of compositions, this volume explores essential elements of Japanese culture, including values, attitudes, behavior patterns, and communication styles. The result is an honest portrait of contemporary Japan that neither glorifies nor trivializes the culture, but rather provides a clear, multifaceted description of core values and customs and their historical roots.

The book consists of a total of 28 short essays, arranged in alphabetical order from “Aimai: Ambiguity and the Japanese” to “Zoto: The Japanese Custom of Gift-Giving.” The essays do in some instances overlap, but because the topics are dealt with from somewhat different perspectives, this never becomes a problem. Each essay is well documented, with citations, quotations, and footnotes throughout. Yet, while the writing is of a high academic caliber, the information contained within the essays remains readily accessible to the lay reader. In addition, the book contains a Japanese chronology that is useful for historical perspective, a set of references for each essay, and a helpful glossary. Each unit is also accompanied by two sets of discussion activities suitable for classroom use: “Exploring Japanese Culture” and “Exploring Cross-Cultural Issues.”

As a teacher, I am most struck by the potential this book has for use with students in English language classes in Japan. The brevity of the essays, their highly relevant content, and the stimulating nature of the discussion activities that accompany them all bode well for positive acceptance by Japanese students. A course using this book as a text, intertwining the development of English language skills with increased

understanding of Japanese cultural themes would, I believe, prove to be a valuable component of an English language curriculum at the university level.

Despite its utility and strengths, however, the book is not without its flaws. First, when contrasted individually, the essays are somewhat unbalanced. Some are long and delve deeply into their subject matter, while others are rather brief and lacking in detail. Perhaps more troubling is the fact that the “Japanese mind” is often presented as a single, unified entity; that is, there is a tendency in the essays to portray Japanese people as a strictly homogeneous group, all with the same values and thought processes. This type of overgeneralizing, in fact, is a trap that is difficult to avoid when discussing the people of any nation, race, or culture, but here it plays into the cherished myth of Japanese oneness.

That said, this is a highly commendable book in that the essays do not shy away from objectively addressing issues that the Japanese themselves find controversial or problematic. The activities and questions that follow the essays are designed to promote critical thinking and, in the classroom context, would no doubt engender lively discussions. As such, *The Japanese Mind* is successful both as an informative and thought-provoking volume for the reader motivated to learn more about diverse aspects of Japanese culture, and as a core textbook for Japanese students enrolled in advanced-level English courses. It is also worth noting that while many professors choose to churn out tedious research papers that are of little use or benefit to either their fellow academics or their students, Davies and Ikeno have designed and carried out a project decidedly beneficial to students both in its production and its subsequent use. Taken from this perspective, this book serves as a model of educational endeavor that others involved in higher education would do well to emulate.