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# REVIEWS

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**TEACHING WRITING IN SECOND AND FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSROOMS.** *Jessica Williams*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2005. Pp. xv + 209. $41.56 paper.

New in the *McGraw-Hill second language professional series*, this volume is a welcome addition to current resources for English as a second language (ESL), English as a foreign language (EFL), and foreign language (FL) teachers seeking an introduction to research and practice in second language (L2) writing instruction. The book unifies insights from multiple sources from a SLA perspective. An experienced language teacher, teacher educator, and researcher, Williams emphasizes that writing involves more than text production; "it is also a learning and thinking process" (p. 76).

Although grounded in SLA theory, the volume synthesizes rather than surveys research findings and is geared toward nonspecialists, principally students, preservice teachers, and practitioners who "feel unprepared to teach [L2] composition" (pp. 1–2). Consistent with the *Professional series* format, the text eschews bibliographic references: Readers seeking primary sources will find bibliographic citations only at each chapter's conclusion. Decidedly practical in orientation, chapters include prompts designed to help readers apply the content to classroom practice. Sample materials (e.g., instructional activities, student writing, scoring rubrics) punctuate most chapters, which conclude with a synthesis of main points and a list of readings for beginning students.

Chapter 1 introduces factors that influence SLA, such as implicit and explicit knowledge, input, system and item learning, attention, practice, and time, acquainting readers with the cognitive, sociocultural, and educational contexts for academic L2 writing. In chapter 2 Williams considers how texts, L2 writers, and instructional processes influence language development, stressing the importance of audience awareness in teaching L2 writing. The chapter curiously underrepresents social constructionist and discursive models of L2 literacy. Offering general guidelines for designing classroom tasks, chapter 3 presents methods and techniques suitable for L2 learners at beginning, intermediate, and advanced levels. The chapter also appraises technological approaches to teaching L2 writing. Chapter 4 focuses on text production activities involving invention, drafting, and revision. The author effectively summarizes the conventional wisdom on managing teacher and peer response in L2 classrooms.

Chapter 5 pursues these themes by assessing mixed research findings on teacher feedback and peer response and suggests implications for educational practice. Chapter 6 elaborates on the feedback topic by outlining basic principles of writing assessment. The chapter begins with a nontechnical survey of key "terms, concepts, and issues in testing," (p. 119) that some readers might find less than complete. Core constructs such as reliability and validity, for example, are treated in the simplest terms. Omitting trait-based scoring, the author describes both holistic and analytic rating scales, the

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most commonplace tools used for evaluating student writing. Portfolio assessment is appropriately introduced, although the discussion is surprisingly brief, given the widespread adoption of alternative assessment in many L2 settings.

In chapter 7, the author loops back to the volume's distinctive SLA focus by exploring the effects of production, instruction, and feedback on L2 writing. Readers will find this chapter particularly valuable, as it treats writing performance as a salient contributor to L2 development. The author carefully reviews the functions of output in language learning and highlights the impact of metalinguistic knowledge, negative evidence, and explicit grammar instruction on L2 writing skills, including editing. The book's final chapter examines programmatic options for L2 writing instruction, describing and comparing methodological alternatives such as task-based and content-based models. End matter includes two appendixes (one contains student writing samples and the other presents model assessment guidelines), a brief glossary, and a topical index.

As with any introductory book with ambitious goals, readers might appreciate unique strengths while noting inevitable weaknesses. This book's discussion of classroom practices, for example, alternates somewhat unsystematically from one setting to another. Although unquestionably practical in purpose, this volume is not a comprehensive how-to manual, as the extent of genuinely hands-on material is minimal. Similarly, most procedural examples and vignettes, although insightful, are presented in largely abstract language and thus lack contextualization in a specific ESL, EFL, or FL setting. Consequently, readers might infer that the conditions and constraints in these divergent situations are comparable—contrary to the author's explicit message that FL and L2 contexts are profoundly distinct. These flaws notwithstanding, Williams has admirably succeeded in developing "a short, accessible text that would be as useful as possible" to ESL writing instructors and in creating a resource "for those . . . interested in teaching academic literacy in foreign languages" (p. xiii). She has likewise produced a volume centered on the premise that "our students are always second language learners" (p. xiv).

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**SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING THEORIES (2nd ed.). Rosamond Mitchell and Florence Myles**. London: Arnold, 2004. Pp. xiii + 303. $21.95 paper.

According to one authority, there are over 20 theories of SLA. This book attempts to help students without a substantial background in linguistics make sense of this diverse field by explaining and relating the most important of these. The second edition updates the original by dropping or shortening the discussion of older theories (Schumann's, 1986, acculturation model is now discussed in the chapter on historical antecedents) and updating the discussion of others (the expanded chapter on Vygotsky is particularly good). Chapter 1 contains a discussion of what an adequate theory of SLA would look like, pointing out, for example, the distinction between a property theory like Universal Grammar (UG) and a transition theory like connectionism; this distinction is

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referred to throughout the book. Chapter 2 offers a valuable account of the historical development of the SLA field, which includes discussions of behaviorism and the monitor model. Again, this preliminary groundwork is referred to in subsequent chapters.

Current SLA theories are grouped together under the following rubrics, with a chapter devoted to each: UG, cognitive approaches, functional/pragmatic perspectives, input and interaction approaches, sociocultural perspectives (Vygotskian theory), and sociolinguistic perspectives. The final chapter presents a summary and conclusions.

A major challenge in surveying a broad, interdisciplinary field is to present the details of complex theories clearly, concisely, and accurately. For the most part, the authors accomplish this goal. For example, the chapter on UG begins with a discussion of structure dependency illustrated by the familiar example of subject/verb inversion in yes-no questions. The authors then move on to more complex matters, including the inflection parameter, with illustrations from French and English. Empirical evidence for the operation of this parameter in SLA is then reviewed; the authors note that the evidence is inconclusive but that the UG framework enables researchers to develop clear hypotheses about this and other SLA issues. Throughout the chapter, the explanation of UG is clear and accurate, and it contains enough detail to be understood without much help from a teacher. The same cannot be said of all of the discussions, however. For example, the section on connectionism does not provide enough detail about how a connectionist network works. Students need to see an example of how a network learns through the mechanism of back propagation, which causes the connections to be reweighted. Therefore, this section—and a few others—might require considerable additional explanation in a classroom setting.

When reading literature reviews, the closer one is to a particular specialty, the more one notices errors and confusions. For example, in chapter 8, I noticed that in the reproduction of a table from Bailey (1996) displaying probabilistic VARBRUL weights for the production of word final t/d (as in *missed* and *mist*) by Chinese-speaking English learners, the authors do not explain that the weights in the different rows of the table are based on two different versions of the VARBRUL program and, therefore, cannot be directly compared. Without such an explanation, the table is misleading.

A strength of the book, on the other hand, is that the authors usually explain the connections, similarities, and differences between the theories that are grouped together in each chapter. For example, they point out how Long's (1983) interaction hypothesis extends Krashen's (1982) input hypothesis, and how Swain's (1995) output hypothesis expands on Long; they also contrast the entire discussion with similar concerns in first language acquisition. In chapters 4 and 8, however, the connections between the (very) different theories are not strongly drawn. Nevertheless, it is helpful that the authors present, for example, variation studies alongside ethnographic studies, so that students can see similar sociolinguistic themes addressed in succession, even if explicit connections between the theories are not made. Overall, this volume provides an accessible and authoritative introduction to SLA for beginning graduate students or advanced undergraduates.

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**MAINTAINING A MINORITY LANGUAGE: A CASE STUDY OF HISPANIC TEENAGERS.** *John Gibbons and Elizabeth Ramirez*. Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters, 2004. Pp. x + 240. £25.95 paper.

On reading the title of this volume, the reader might assume that the study involves teenagers in a large urban area of the United States. Potential readers will be surprised to realize that this book is about Hispanic teenagers in Sydney, Australia, and the efforts of these teens and their families to maintain their Spanish language. The authors, Gibbons and Ramirez, argue that the understanding of minority language maintenance and shift "requires the examination of the degree of acquisition of various elements of proficiency, including spoken language, basic literacy skills, grammar and high register" (p. l). Thus, having set a rather rigorous benchmark for themselves, they proceed to study 106 Hispanic teenagers to determine the degree of maintenance of Spanish among them as well as their attitudes toward their bilingualism.

The book begins with a broad overview of bilingual maintenance issues and research. In its eight chapters, the authors explore definitions and measurement of bilingual proficiency as well as factors that might influence bilingual development and maintenance, such as sociocultural and demographic factors, interpersonal interaction, media and education, biliteracy, and attitudes and beliefs about bilingualism. The authors conclude with their judgments on methodology for research on language maintenance processes and implications, to which they add recommendations for bilingual maintenance in minority communities. One strength of the book is that each chapter provides an overview of the issues and findings of other researchers and then explains how the authors investigated those same issues in the Sydney community. The reader is thereby able to judge the authors' contributions to the principal literature on the topic as they critique the research of others.

The Sydney Hispanic community researched here is a medium-sized community that would be considered middle class by American standards. One positive feature of the book is the use of multiple sources for data collection. The authors provide census data as a way to examine the role of society in language maintenance, but most of the data comes from their interviews with 106 Hispanic teenagers, ages 12 to 16, in their homes and with their caregivers. The interviews included broad, open-ended questions on language, their lives, and their identities as well as more specific questions about their language use. The teenagers also completed a questionnaire with some fixed choice

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options. Proficiency was analyzed through self-evaluation in addition to analysis of the free conversation portion of the interviews and language tests. A valuable feature of the research was the use of some of the measures of language proficiency with a comparison group of Spanish native speakers in Chile, the country that provides the largest number of Hispanic immigrants to Australia. This comparison showed that nearly half of the Australian group performed near the monolingual standards of Chile.

This book presents a great deal of information about many of the issues that educators, linguists, and policy-makers would consider of interest in the area of language maintenance and shift. By examining not only oral language but biliteracy as well, it provides a variety of ways that researchers can examine these issues in other studies and with other language communities. One fascinating feature of the study is the analysis of sample lessons from natural and social science textbooks used in Argentina and Uruguay schools as a way to examine Spanish academic register. The authors use examples from these texts to demonstrate the features of this academic register. Such features would pose challenges for the biliteracy development of students who do not receive literacy instruction in their native language beyond a basic level, which is the case for many bilinguals in Australia who do not have access to bilingual education.

One shortcoming of the book is that it contains over 100 charts or graphs, some of which involve statistical analysis of the data. At times, the charts and explanations might become overwhelming for the reader who is not very sophisticated in statistical analysis. Many of these charts could be relegated to an appendix. However, for the reader who values quantitative data analysis, the charts provide broader documentation for the authors' claims.

The authors conclude that it is possible to maintain a high level of proficiency in a minority language and that the family plays a major role, especially in the absence of institutional support for such language maintenance. Positive attitudes toward bilingualism are an important factor, including resistance to the hegemony of English among Spanish speakers. The educational arena is nevertheless the most important institutional variable in minority language maintenance, which is problematic in Australia, where Spanish/English bilingual education is not offered. Proficiency in conversational language might affect the development of biliteracy, but the factors that affect bilingual proficiency are quite numerous and complex. Quantitative and qualitative research approaches might provide guidance to other researchers who want to engage in related research on these factors.

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**MULTILINGUAL COMMUNICATION.** *Julian House and Jochen Rehbein (Eds.)*. Amsterdam: Benjamins, 2004. Pp. vii + 358. $90.00 cloth.

Studies on multilingualism embody a range of theoretical approaches, research paradigms, and methods. In this book, the third publication in the *Hamburg studies on multilingualism* series, the focus is on the form-function relationship between the languages

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involved in multilingual communication and on the mechanisms that relate multilingual communicative processes to social structures. The volume consists of 11 chapters divided into three sections, and two useful appendixes (author and subject indexes). The editing is highly competent and the selection of papers is excellent in quality and scope. Papers mostly emerge from colloquia on linguistic aspects of multilingualism organized by the Research Centre on Multilingualism at the University of Hamburg; many provide access to empirical studies that had previously existed only as unpublished manuscripts or research reports. Most of the contributions deal with the creation of differentiated, multilingual communication systems due to the mutual influence of languages in contact, whereas others deal with functional explanations of problems in second language (L2) use.

In the introductory section, the editors reflect upon different aspects of multilingual communication and briefly summarize the contents of each of the collected papers. A paper by Clyne on language policy then follows. In addition to setting up an agenda for developing multilingual communication, he discusses different myths and problems with the popular view that multilingual communication will soon become unnecessary because everyone will be able to communicate in a lingua franca (i.e., in English).

Part 1, "Mediated multilingual communication," contains four chapters that highlight different aspects of interpretation or translation as practices of mediation in institutional contexts. Bührig and Meyer address functional explanations of problems in L2 use by focusing on the achievement of communicative purposes in doctor-patient communication. They demonstrate that even linguistically skilled interpreters with near-native competence in both languages have difficulties recognizing and processing the institutional dimensions of doctor-patient communication in the L2. The next three papers deal with English-German genre-mixing; speaking and writing (Biber, 1988; House, 1997) are central concepts. Within this framework, Baumgarten and Probst examine the role of English as a global lingua franca and its impact on German text norms via translation. The next two chapters slightly change the method of inquiry, exploring genre-mixing by means of connectivity. Thus, Bührig and House use data-driven connective categories (e.g., temporal expressions, discourse markers, deictics, and parallelism/repetition) to illustrate how the form-function relationship in a German translation deviates from its American original, which pushes "the communicative quality of the German text into the direction of 'writtenness'" (p. 107). In the last chapter, Böttger investigates how English corporate philosophies change as a result of the process of translation.

Part 2, "Code-switching," deals with functional explanations of code-switching in L2 use, not focusing on the phenomenon as a means for resolving communicative problems but as a resource for constructing and enacting social and ethnic identities or as a signal for *world-switching*. Holmes and Stubbe explore the former function by detailed analyses of transcripts of talk between members of different ethnic groups in New Zealand; Edmondson examines the latter by looking at classroom observation data. In the final chapter, Franceschini, Krick, Behrent, and Reith address code-switching from a neurolinguistic angle. By analyzing neurobiological data, they tentatively identify code-switching with an activated neuronal system not specific to language that seems to fulfill general functions related to attention, comparison, and control.

The two chapters in Part 3, "Rapport and politeness," deal with pragmatic transfer of cultural patterns of politeness, which, due to different social structures, lead to mismanagement or alternative management of communication. Thus, Spencer-Oatey and Xing examine problems within the affective dimension as experienced by British and Chinese businesspeople in their attempts to achieve rapport. Their interesting study of

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rapport management data is set within the framework of Coupland, Wienemann, and Giles (1991). Rehbein and Fienemann address the issue of introduction within polite action and develop a six-stage model for people becoming acquainted. By analyzing a videotaped and transcribed section of intercultural communication with German as a lingua franca, the authors demonstrate how a special type of discourse might deescalate the perception of lingua franca impoliteness due to the transfer of varying cultural concepts of politeness into German.

Part 4, "Grammar and discourse in a contrastive perspective," focuses on politeness from a different angle (i.e., on the pragmatic effects of L2 speakers' faulty mastery of modals). Kameyama investigates in detail modal expressions in Japanese and German and their form-function mismatch in L2 Japanese, suggesting a heightened awareness of these expressions in foreign language learning. Hohenstein makes a similar analysis of complement constructions with matrix verbs of thinking and assessing, also pinpointing some characteristic functional differences in Japanese and German.

This is an excellent volume that offers a good survey of theoretical principles, analytic procedures based on empirical data, and an up-to-date overview of the latest literature within this field of study. There is much to be learned from this book for students, teachers, and scholars interested in multilingual communication.

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**A NEUROLINGUISTIC THEORY OF BILINGUALISM.** *Michel Paradis*. Amsterdam: Benjamins, 2004. Pp. vi + 299. $39.95 paper.

It is hard to think of anyone who is in a better position to talk about bilingualism and aphasia (differential patterns of recovery and so forth) than Paradis. Since the 1970s, he has been a central figure in this area of research, and it is widely recognized that his contribution has been major. It is impossible to imagine any discussion of the topic that does not rely heavily on his work. Given this author's prominence in the field, second language (L2) researchers will find much to admire in this volume.

There is also much to agree with in this book. In particular, the cautions regarding the manner in which neuroimaging tools have been deployed to address questions of differential representation of two languages in the brain are timely and worthwhile. Apart from any other concerns, many of these studies, as Paradis reasonably points out, suffer from a lack of linguistic sophistication (unfortunately true of neuroimaging studies of language more generally).

Agreement might be more difficult to arrive at when it comes to the various proposals that Paradis lays out for an "integrated neurolinguistic perspective on bilingualism"

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(the importance of implicit vs. explicit memory, the relevance of motivation and affect, etc.; p. 187). These issues have been much discussed in the L2 literature, and researchers will no doubt have already formed quite clear views on whether, for example, Schumann and his amygdala are matters that could ever engage them. Rather than discuss these familiar issues, I will devote the remainder of this brief review to an issue that might be a little less familiar—namely, what is meant by neurolinguistics and why anyone should care about the enterprise, because it is here, in particular, that I would venture to dissent from the author.

To put it bluntly, what I miss in this volume's notion of neurolinguistic theory is anything theoretically linguistic. Linguistic, in this book, refers to anything but linguistic theory, which it shuns like the plague. It might also be noted that there is very little that is specifically neuro either. The role of the neuro appears to be restricted to the brute fact that language is processed in a brain as opposed to some other organ. Additionally, the term *theory* is used, it seems, to characterize the product of more or less any kind of thought, whereas some would prefer to reserve use of the term to refer to scientific theory.

So, what is the notion of neurolinguistic theory espoused by this volume? Paradis fosters the widely held idea that neurolinguistic theory is about various things: It is about verbal deficits due to brain lesions; it is about whether two languages have distinct neural representations; it is about language rehabilitation; and so on. The Linguistic Society of America's website description of neurolinguistics is entirely in the spirit of this book: "all of these questions and more are what neurolinguistics is about" (paragraph 3). Further, Paradis sees the compatibility of linguistic and neural theories as an early step that has paved the way for a neurolinguistic theory of bilingualism to be proposed in this volume (p. 1).

A rather different way of conceiving the neurolinguistic enterprise is that we have two bodies of knowledge—linguistic theory and brain theory—that we can only hope one day might be unified. At present, far from these theories being compatible, any possibility of unification seems utterly remote. So what can we do? The obvious thing we can do is to continue to develop linguistic theory and brain theory and hope that, as our understanding deepens, it will ultimately become possible to see how both theories might be mutually constrained. Another thing we can do is try to ask brains coherent questions about language, bearing in mind that the only coherent questions we can pose to a brain about language are those that find a place in linguistic theory. In this vein, we might ask a relatively simple question such as "Does the brain care about morphological roots in any way that we can measure?" The brain might respond in ways that seem uninterpretable, which is always a distinct possibility given the current levels of understanding. However, it might respond in a way that indicates that it does care about roots. In fact, it appears that a particular neuromagnetic component (the M350) might be an index of access to morphological roots. The component can be systematically moved earlier or later in time by varying relevant properties of words. The finding, although fascinating (to me, at least), is still largely mysterious, given that we lack a theory of brain that accounts for it.

Understanding is obviously very sparse, so it appears pointless to talk about theory at all in connection with neurolinguistics. Thus, far from being ready to formulate a neurolinguistic theory of bilingualism, we have barely the ghost of an idea of what a neurolinguistic theory of any aspect of one language would look like!

This volume can hardly be expected to endorse this view of neurolinguistics, in which linguistic theory is key, because the author is convinced that linguistic theory has

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achieved very little. Paradis alludes to "the repeated unsuccessful attempts of professional linguists over the past 40 years to characterize the simplest underlying syntactic algorithm" (p. 34). This is rather bad news because this book does not set the bar very high for what counts as knowledge, dismissing linguistic theory in favor of notions such as affect. Apparently, we know nothing about syntax, but we know plenty about human motivation. Worse still, linguists cannot agree with each other (p. 34), and the theory keeps changing (p. 36).

In response, it might be worth observing that linguistic theory had better keep changing or it is a dead theory—after all, it is the merest truism that all scientific theories are constantly changing. Similarly, there had better be disagreement; but the kind of disagreement that Paradis has in mind is rather different from normal scientific dispute. He sees the very existence of both generative and, say, stratificational linguists as a cause for throwing up one's arms in despair. First, I think it is fair to say that stratificational linguistics has very few adherents, but, independent of that, the issue at stake in any theory is insight. Does any given theory yield insight? Paradis' judgment is that linguistic theory has yielded zero insight, about which I have nothing to say.

However, whereas this volume cannot be expected, in light of the above, to consider the alternative view of neurolinguistics that I have sketched, adopting such a view helps to resolve some of the problems that this book highlights. Paradis claims that theoretical linguists prize elegance and economy above all (which, incidentally, is far from obvious) and argues that

> it is unlikely that these properties that linguists value most in weighing the merits of grammars, are those in accordance with which the brain actually operates, since, in general, it has been shown that the brain favors redundancy rather than economy in its functioning. (p. 33)

Although reasonable, this is far from being an argument against linguistic theory in neurolinguistic inquiry; in fact, this is a recognition that there is a unification problem, which is what drives the alternative view of neurolinguistic inquiry. Similarly, when Paradis worries that "grammar rules are abstractions, not descriptions of actual cerebral computational procedures" (p. 34), it is useful to consider once again that the chasm that separates brain theory and linguistic theory is a problem of unifying these bodies of knowledge, not a reason for abandoning linguistic theory. Recognizing the true nature of the problem is a starting point, not the end of the line. For L2 researchers interested in examining this alternative view in more detail, let me recommend two articles that they might wish to read in conjunction with this book: Chomsky (1995) for discussion of the unification problem facing neurolinguistics and Phillips (2004) for some proposals regarding other challenges that neurolinguistic inquiry must meet.

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**A HISTORY OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING (2nd ed).** *A. P. R. Howatt (with H. G. Widdowson)*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004. Pp. xix + 417. £19.20 paper.

This volume, a record of the teaching of English to speakers of other languages from the Renaissance to the present day, starts in 1400, when English was a minority language spoken by a population of no more than 3 million people. The book describes the process of making the language teachable and documents the developments in language teaching theory and practice that led to the emergence of English language teaching (ELT) as an autonomous profession.

This second edition is fully revised and includes new sections on (a) ELT in the British Empire, (b) the period from 1900 to the present day, (c) topics such as English for specific purposes (ESP), (d) the spread of English as a global language, and (e) current trends in ELT. The book consists of a short preface to the second edition, an introduction, three main parts that total 21 chapters, and a chronology of ELT.

The three parts constitute the bulk of the book. Each part is subdivided into two sections that are chronologically parallel and look at the subject matter from complementary points of view. Part 1 documents ELT in the period between 1400 and 1800. It starts with the emergence of English as a national language in the late fourteenth century and ends as schools in Europe and elsewhere start to take interest in teaching it along with other modern languages. Section 1 documents practical ELT before 1800, which was constituted mainly of (a) the language taken up by learners wanting to read texts that were only available in English and (b) the measures of spoken fluency used for refugees. Section 2 deals with the process of making the English language teachable by providing a stable orthography, a standardized grammar, and an authoritative dictionary.

Part 2 documents ELT in the period between 1800 and 1900. It records the changes and development of language education in Europe and in the expanding British Empire. Part 2 contains two main sections. The first relates to the growth of the teaching of foreign languages to children in school, which was rare before 1800. The second relates to innovation in the sense that language teaching changed rapidly due to innovations in linguistics and psychology.

Part 3 documents ELT in the period from 1900 to the present day. The key theme in Part 3 is the emergence of ELT as an autonomous profession in its own right. This part also consists of two parallel sections. Section 1 provides a detailed account of ELT throughout the twentieth century and into the twenty-first century. Section 2 provides selective accounts of ELT that are of sufficient interest to warrant a more detailed study.

The final chapter, a perspective on recent trends, is by Widdowson, one of the acknowledged leaders of the profession during the last three decades. The chapter identifies and focuses on trends and tendencies that have influenced ELT during the last 20 years or so. Widdowson's chapter provides a contrasting view to the other chapters because it provides an interpretation of the events of the recent past and a prediction of potential trends and tendencies, rather than a record of these events, as was the case with the other chapters.

Finally, the book provides a detailed chronology that contains content that has directly and indirectly influenced ELT. The chronology also includes other significant events in order to provide historical context.

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Does the book achieve its objectives? In his introduction, Howatt states that

> the basic intention of this book is to try and illuminate the teaching of English to speakers of other languages by exploring some of its origins and some of the ideas that have influenced and moulded it over the years. (p. 1)

As stated earlier, the book has indeed documented the progress of English from a minority language in the fifteenth century to making the language teachable to the developments in language teaching theory and practice that have led to making ELT an autonomous profession as we see it today.

What is noteworthy about this book, however, is that most of the discussion centers around spoken discourse in ELT, with little reference to written discourse. This might be because, admittedly, the vast majority of approaches to—and theories of—ELT that the book documents have themselves emphasized the spoken language in ELT at the expense of the written language.

Finally, the book is written in an accessible style. It would be relevant to most courses in language studies, including applied linguistics, the teaching of English to speakers of other languages, language education, and SLA. The readership of the book might therefore include students and researchers of applied linguistics and the teaching of English to speakers of other languages as well as language educators and language teachers around the world.

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**INPUT ENHANCEMENT: FROM THEORY AND RESEARCH TO THE CLASSROOM.** *Wynne Wong*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2005. Pp. xx + 130. $43.44 paper.

This new title in the McGraw-Hill *Second language professional series* is a highly readable book written primarily for in-service and would-be teachers of second and foreign languages (L2) who have never studied SLA. The book addresses one of the fundamental concepts of current SLA research—input—in the context of its relationship to grammar instruction. It introduces readers to instructional techniques that help L2 learners pay attention to grammatical form while providing them with the input that they need for successful acquisition of their L2s. These techniques are called input enhancement techniques—specifically, input flood, textual enhancement, structured input, and grammar consciousness-raising tasks, which are explained in chapters 4, 5, 6, and 7 of the book, respectively. This main part of the book is preceded by a historical overview of grammar instruction in chapter 1, a brief discussion of SLA research and its relation to classroom teaching in chapter 2, and a concise explanation focused on the concepts of input and input enhancement as used in the field of SLA in chapter 3. Chapter 8 is a concluding chapter in which the author gives caveats, suggestions, and advice for using the input enhancement techniques introduced in the book.

One of the strengths of this book is objectivity in the sense that the input enhancement techniques are introduced with empirical evidence of their effectiveness. Throughout the book, the author makes a conscious effort to convey the message that "SLA

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research is indeed an important knowledge source to inform our pedagogical choices" (p. 23). Another laudable feature of the book is the author's skill in explaining theoretical concepts and complex notions in simple words. The author, assuming no prior knowledge of SLA on the part of readers, presents current theory and research in an informal, reader-friendly style.

With its clear organization and concise chapters, this text is ideal for use in a teaching methods course or an introductory seminar on SLA, either on its own or in conjunction with other introductory books. For such use, the *Pause to Consider . . .* boxes inserted throughout the text (52 in total) should come in handy. In these boxes, the author poses questions that help readers think further about issues that have just been discussed. For instance, after the paragraphs that raise the issue of saliency of different grammatical features, the author asks "What are some forms in the target language you teach that are not salient? What factors do you think could affect the salience of a form?" (p. 49). Some questions in these boxes are intended to encourage readers to read published studies with a critical eye and conduct (or think about conducting) a research study on their own. Further, in the appendix, 13 sample instructional materials for different techniques with different languages are useful for understanding the explanations of the techniques given in the main text.

Overall, the author has effectively accomplished her goal of familiarizing readers with procedures, theoretical underpinnings, and research findings of the four input enhancement techniques. The only unsettling part of the book has to do with the definitive tone of some statements about SLA, such as the following:

> Acquisition orders and developmental stages appear to be impermeable to instruction and other outside influences because learners of all types will make the same type of errors in the same order no matter what kind of formal instruction they receive. These orders are universal. No matter how instructors teach certain structures or how much they get their learners to practice the forms, or how much error correction is used, they will not be able to alter these orders. (p. 15)

Although the strength of such a tendency might be illustrated in the SLA literature, we are not yet at the stage at which we can make such a definitive statement. There remains much to be learned before we can make predictions that are absolutely confident regarding this and other issues of SLA. This drawback, however, would not deter me from recommending this book or using it for an introductory SLA course.

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**TASK-BASED INSTRUCTION IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE EDUCATION.** *Betty Lou Leaver and Jane R. Willis (Eds.)*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2004. Pp. vi + 336. $29.95 paper.

This volume provides in-depth coverage of what is actually meant by task-based instruction (TBI) through a large range of case studies carried out in government schools, pri-

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vate schools, universities, and Web-based programs. Although this book is useful for teachers and administrators who implement such programs in their curricula, it is also useful for preservice teachers, instructors, and publishers trying to integrate and comprehend TBI more extensively.

Part 1 begins with a very thorough description of TBI as it exists today and its emergence as a form of communicative language teaching. The varied definitions of a task are extremely interesting because they show that there are different interpretations of what tasks are when we look at them in practice. Discussions about typologies of tasks and the parameters of task design enhance our understanding of tasks. The final chapters go into syllabus design, testing, and task cycle (pretask, maintask, and posttask). Within the chapters and in the appendixes, concrete examples demonstrate the feasibility of TBI in the classroom.

From the more theoretical, historical perspectives in Part 1, we come to success stories and analyses of curriculum design in Part 2, "TBI in classroom instruction." Model programs in Slavic languages in the United States, Spanish, Arabic, and Japanese at American universities, English in Brazil, and Spanish and French for professionals all demonstrate the commitment of staff and students to the success of their TBI programs. Challenges involved in the training and commitment of the staff as well as the trials and tribulations of getting programs off the ground give us insight into how TBI curricula can be integrated in part or as a whole with various interest groups. Most programs used a TBI approach with complete or false beginners, which shows that TBI is indeed possible from the beginning.

Part 3 addresses Internet tasks and programs. The first chapter, "TBI in online learning," discusses instructional design (types and levels of interaction) and meaningful online tasks used to develop online reading comprehension materials and skills-integrated courses in several languages. The second chapter, about webhead communities, discusses the use of computer mediated communication tools in constructivist and task-based ways to enhance language learning. The essence of these virtual communities is the support and mutual interest that foster language learning. These studies pioneer what many other organizations that use e-learning are striving toward.

The first example of Part 4, "Assessment and teacher development," shows how the discrepancy between the way students are taught (here through TBI) and the way that they are tested (through a more traditional approach) is slowly becoming less of an issue as steps are taken that tend toward a TBI means of testing. Although not yet pure TBI, the analysis of the steps taken, especially of the different characteristics (setting, rubric, input, expected response, and input and response), sheds light on what a TBI framework of assessment actually means. The final chapter, "Teacher development in an EFL program," reveals the importance of thorough and obligatory teacher training when initiating a new course design, which is essential in the overall success and reputation of the program. Although the challenge is always in encouraging those who embrace and implement new ideas easily while supporting those who have difficulty in grasping an approach that they are not yet comfortable with, the importance of not only collaboration and classroom observation but also good, constructive education through old-fashioned input is stressed (p. 295).

This book does, indeed, cover some of the hot topics in TBI, such as whether it can actually work with complete beginners and how the need for some form-focused instruction, often left out in earlier research, is satisfied. Although some chapters offer some stunning statements, there is something to be learned from every example. More importantly, the book discusses the eternal question of how to get instructors familiar with

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and able to practice TBI, a real paradigm change for many. What would still be worth investigating, however, are other age groups, such as young learners, and how effective TBI is at the very beginning of foreign language learning with a population of young learners. That said, this volume is valuable for enhancing our understanding of tasks and how they differ from more traditional communicative language teaching activities. Although the authors state that this book is geared toward adult professional learners, the designs shown and the ideas put forth could easily be transferred to both young learners and adolescents.

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**WHAT IS MEANING? FUNDAMENTALS OF FORMAL SEMANTICS.** *Paul Portner*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2005. Pp. x + 235. $29.95 paper.

Another textbook on formal semantics? Before you reach for the Tylenol, relax; this is a textbook with a twist: It is an informal textbook on formal semantics. Portner's book is actually a very ambitious endeavor because it sets out to teach the basics of the scientific study of meaning in an accessible and user-friendly way. Readers of *SSLA* who have struggled with formal semantics as undergraduates, in graduate school, or both will appreciate the challenge. I believe that Portner is mostly successful in his endeavor. As I will explain, he is almost too successful; as a result, the apparent *raison d'être* of the book is defeated, to an extent. In what follows, I will qualify this claim.

This textbook is clearly addressed to undergraduate students, but it is possible to use it as a self-help book if one wants to refresh one's stale knowledge or learn the basics. It is written in a lucid and helpful—but not condescending—way, with numerous examples and drawings throughout. Chapter 1 tackles the fundamental question of what is meaning and how we should think of it. The author presents the idea theory, which maintains that meanings are concepts, thoughts, and ideas in our mind/brain, and he rejects it due to its psychological implausibility. He then introduces the theory that meanings are social practices and shows that this cannot be the whole story. He argues for word meanings as based in language-external and mind-external reality and shows that the meanings of sentences are their truth conditions. To illustrate the concept of possible worlds, he gives drawings that represent the true situation and some false situations for the sentence *The circle is inside the square*. Next, he introduces propositions and gives three arguments from logical words, semantic relationships, and the usefulness of language for communication in daily life.

This style of presentation is representative of his approach throughout the book. Chapter 2 introduces compositionality and the saturation of propositions with arguments. I will illustrate Portner's style with one more example, in which he uses an analogy from real life to explain the division of labor between syntax and semantics. If a company (understand, language user) wants a new building (meaning), its cost can either be calculated on an individual operation basis (so much for the plans, so much for the scaffolding, so much for the workers), or the company can be charged a lump sum regard-

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less of the operations performed in the process. The first choice represents the rule-by-rule approach, in which interpretation is calculated at each step of the syntactic tree. The second choice represents the interpretive theory, which calculates the interpretation of the final clause but does not require that every syntactic step along the way have semantic relevance. Chapter 3 deals with models of predication. If you have always wanted to understand functions and the lambda calculus, this is the chapter for you. Chapter 4 introduces modification as another semantic relation and elaborates on the differences and similarities between sentence semantics and lexical semantics. Chapter 5 deals with referring expressions, touching on definites, indefinites, mass/bare plural nouns, and anaphora. In this and later chapters, Portner describes contradictory theories and hypotheses, illustrating how and what semanticists argue about, all the while managing to convey that a theoretical debate can be very fruitful even if it does not lead to one side winning decisively over the other.

Chapters 6 (quantifiers), 7 (intensional meaning), 8 (tense, aspect, modality), and 9 (propositional attitudes) are the real stuff of formal semantics. To the exceptionally lucid style of presentation, Portner adds a neat didactic technique—repetition! For example, every time he mentions a *property*, he repeats its definition: an unsaturated proposition. The book finishes with two chapters on linguistic pragmatics, bringing home the distinction between semantic meaning and speaker meaning.

So why do I think that this textbook is almost too successful in its accessibility quest? The answer, of course, depends on what one expects. If one wants to get a good idea of the fundamental topics and issues of formal semantics as a piece in the bigger picture of linguistic knowledge, this book is great. If one wants to prepare for reading real semantics as published in journals and scholarly books, this book will not do. It introduces almost no formalisms (symbols, functions, equations), which are the language of semantics in the same way as syntactic trees are the language of syntax. Although I would not recommend it for use as a textbook for linguistics majors, it might be quite profitable reading for language acquisition students.

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