Book Reviews/Comptes rendus

Lexical Phrases and Language Teaching

James R. Nattinger & Jeanette S. DeCarrico
Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992
234 pages

The lexical approach, a popular methodology in recent years, excited considerable attention in the early 1990s. Nattinger and DeCarrico's award-winning *Lexical Phrases and Language Teaching*, one of the *Oxford Applied Linguistics* series, first appeared in 1992. Michael Lewis' *The Lexical Approach* was published the next year.

The first section of *Lexical Phrases and Language Teaching* describes the lexical phrase and its role in language. Drawing from their extensive research, the authors have developed a thorough, well-documented, well-organized, convincing argument on the usefulness of teaching lexical phrases. The lexical phrase is a chunk of prefabricated language of varying length such as "as it were, on the other hand, as X would have us believe" (p. 1). The lexical phrase theory goes beyond, but also includes, existing ideas of functions, form/function, collocations, and discourse markers. The explicit definition evolves through the first part of the book, but essentially lexical phrases are "form/function composites, lexico-grammatical units that occupy a position somewhere between the traditional poles of lexicon and syntax" (p. 36).

The lexical phrase forms the basis of sentence-building. Several lexical phrases together can produce a sentence. The authors group lexical phrases according to function: social interactions (subdivided into conversational maintenance and conversational purpose), necessary topics, and discourse devices. Examples of the first include "Well, I must be going" and "If you don't mind." The second group includes comments about oneself, language, quantity, time, location, weather, and things one likes; for example, "how much is a coffee?" and "I enjoy dancing." The authors illustrate that the groups interact and that the phrases are variable.

Part Two describes applications for the language teaching of conversation, listening comprehension, and reading and writing. Here the authors explain that students need to learn words and sentences not as isolated, planned answers, but as useful structures in the flow of spontaneous conversation. Students begin by learning phrases that contain several slots instead of invariant ones. These introduce flexibility. By stacking the lexical phrases and using appropriate linking devices, students develop coherence and

ELLEN PILON, JENNIFER ST. JOHN, and CHRISTINE WIHAK

fluency. Nattinger and DeCarrico stress the importance of developing polite forms from the lexical chunks.

The most convincing section is the chapter on listening comprehension. The authors argue that university students have serious note-taking difficulties because they are not trained to recognize discourse markers, or *macro-organizers*. The lack of comprehension experienced by students during university lectures stems from their inability to identify topic markers and shifters, exemplifiers, summarizers, and qualifiers; therefore, they are unable to comprehend salient points. Students may be able to identify key words and issues, but they fail to find the direction of the discourse and the relationship of its parts. Once they learn the lexical phrases common in transactional discourse, they can take notes successfully.

Lexical Phrases and Language Teaching includes a detailed contents page that facilitates locating relevant sections of the book, a seven-page bibliography, and a brief index. The third impression of the book appeared in 2001, but is merely a reprint, not a new edition with updated resources. Therefore, data and references all predate 1990. A useful three-page chart of lexical phrase discourse organizers helps readers focus on the lexical phrases the authors identify as most useful. Although of particular interest in EAP, *Lexical Phrases and Language Teaching* will interest everyone teaching ESL/EFL because of its thorough research and detailed arguments about why the lexical phrase is crucial in language teaching.

Ellen Pilon

The Reviewer

Ellen Pilon is an ESL teacher at the International Language Institute in Halifax, NS. She is now working on her third master's, an MEd in curriculum studies TESL at Mount Saint Vincent University. A former librarian, English literature major, and bookstore owner, Ellen is a book aficionada.

Language Testing

Tim McNamara
Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000
140 pages

Language Testing by Tim McNamara, a volume in the *Oxford Introductions to Language Study* series (edited by H.G. Widdowson), is a short text (140 pages) divided into four sections: a survey of language-testing and related issues (8 chapters), a series of short readings from the field of language testing, an annotated bibliography, and a glossary of terms. *Language Testing* offers the nonexpert in this field an impressive account of details and issues about historical and current practices in second-language testing, with a particular focus on performance testing and criterion referencing. This text is most

appropriate for readers who have a background in applied linguistics or practical experience in second-language teaching, as its primary focus is to introduce the reader to the discipline of language testing and "to provide access to specialist knowledge and stimulate an awareness of its significance" (p.xiv). In the introducton to this volume, McNamara acknowledges that testing is not everyone's cup of tea and that by its nature testing provides a context of intimidation; nonetheless, the author effectively introduces an otherwise complex and obscure discipline.

Language Testing begins with a survey of language-testing that discusses the scope, principles, concerns, and concepts of the field. This survey, the principal part of the text, leads the reader through introductory to increasingly more complex topics, including definitions and models of communicative language tests, descriptions of integrative and pragmatic tests, details on test development procedures and rating processes, an overview of the complexities of test validity, measurement, and the issues of the interface between test design and the social character of language tests. In the final chapter of this section, McNamara presents his view of the direction future test developers must take when balancing technological advancements applied to language tests with current theoretical assumptions and definitions about communication and language use.

Section Two is an ensemble of excerpts from readings, each of which is related directly to highlighted issues raised in the survey, and is followed by questions engaging the reader in analyzing and applying the text's theoretical content to real-world contexts. The design of this section is founded on the assumption that either the reader has some experience with language testing or access to a forum in which to discuss these issues (i.e., with classmates or colleagues). The third and fourth sections include an annotated bibliography and a glossary of terms and definitions; both sections are directly referenced to Section One.

Although this text is not a hands-on, step-by-step, practical manual on language-test development, it does present a clear, concise, detailed summary of language-testing drawing on McNamara's in-depth professional experience in standardized test development and providing the reader with a historical view and current snapshot of the complexities of the field. This text is of relevance not only to those interested in second-language testing for program admissions or professional certification, but also to those working with any large-scale standardized testing systems such the Ontario province-wide EQAO assessments. It has, however, less significance for the classroom teacher interested in individual student assessments.

Although language testing is "not a topic likely to quicken the pulse or excite much immediate interest" (p. 3), McNamara provides a thorough, informed overview accessible to those with some experience and interesting

to those seeking a better understanding of the field. *Language Testing* provides a realistic reflection of the situation facing test developers and is grounded by McNamara's extensive experience and insight.

> All decisions about test method involve a compromise between the desirability of an appearance of authenticity on the one hand and the practicalities imposed by the test situation on the other. As assessment becomes more authentic, it also becomes more expensive, complex, and potentially unwieldy. (p. 28)

Further, all decisions about test creation require test developers to engage in theoretical inquiry into our understanding of language systems, language use, and the social dimensions in which language exists.

Jennifer St. John

The Reviewer
Jennifer St. John has taught ESL at the Second Language Institute of the University of Ottawa for over 15 years, during which time her teaching and research activities have focused on applied phonetics, oral proficiency testing, and interviewer training. She has been involved in numerous test development projects such as CanTEST/TESTCan, OTESL, the Crown Corporations Proficiency Test, and the University of Ottawa Second Language Certification Test.

Negotiating Bilingual and Bicultural Identities: Japanese Returnees Betwixt Two Worlds

Yasuko Kanno
Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum, 2003
188 pages

In this remarkable and readable study of linguistic and cultural identity development, Kanno has provided a work of interest to both TESL practitioners and scholars. For TESL practitioners, the narratives of four Japanese youths' experiences during extended sojourns in Canada and after their return to Japan give a rare glimpse into the lives of ESL students outside and beyond the classroom, awakening curiosity about how external factors support or block L2 acquisition and L1 maintenance. For scholars, this research offers an unusual longitudinal perspective on the interactive relationship between second-language learning and cultural identity development during adolescence and young adulthood. The study has significant educational implications, both at the level of the classroom and at the systemic level.

During her doctoral studies in Toronto, Kanno encountered her participants while teaching Japanese language arts at a *hoshuko* (Japanese supplementary school.) Through interviews, journals, letters, telephone calls,

and e-mail exchange, Kanno followed her participants from the last few months of their Canadian sojourns until two years after their return to Japan. Having at one time been a young Japanese ESL learner herself, Kanno was able to establish an unusual rapport with the four Japanese young people during their extended collaboration. Most of their communication took place in Japanese, their shared language, providing Kanno an insider's perspective on the ESL students' often difficult experiences as sojourners and *kikokushijo* (returnees to Japan).

Kanno's analysis of her data took two forms: individual narratives for each of the participants that reflect personal themes and concerns, and an analysis that compares shared experiences. The individual stories provide nuanced insights into how ESL students' language-learning is affected by their identity development, noting in particular the influence of relationships with native-speaking and ESL peers. These stories highlight how the expectation of return to Japan affected bicultural identity development and language-learning. The stories also allude to the racism encountered in the Canadian setting by these visible-minority members, giving an important perspective for majority-member TESL teachers who may be unaware of the operation of racism in the hallways and school grounds of their institutions (Wihak, 2004). The narratives also make an important contribution to our knowledge of what happens in ESL learners' lives after their return to their home country (Pilon, 2004).

Kanno argues that her study demonstrated the need to acknowledge that *identity* is both multiple, as argued by postmodernist theorists such as Norton Peirce (1995), and coherent, as asserted by narrativists such as Polkinghorne (1991). Kanno's participants showed a multiplicity of identities in varied social-cultural contexts. At the same time, their stories contain narrative links as they try to make connections among their disparate selves. Kanno concludes that her work shows that it is possible for youth to develop balanced bilingual and bicultural identities. In this, her study findings corroborate earlier work by scholars such as Bennett (2001), Berry (2001), Helms (1995), and Kim (2001) in their research on cultural identity development in sojourners, immigrants, refugees, and minorities.

Kanno identifies a number of important educational implications that stem from her research. She points out the need for ESL schools to address students' needs for social interaction with native speakers; discusses the conditions required for successful L1 maintenance; and raises the question of offering institutional support to assist returning students to reintegrate into their home culture. Although not discussed as such by Kanno, these issues point to the larger issue of the need for educators working with ESL learners to become multiculturally competent (McAllister & Irvine, 2000; Pope-Davis, Coleman, Liu, & Toporek, 2003). Because of the intimate relationship be-

tween language and cultural identity, TESL practitioners are not simply teaching language: they are teaching culture. To assist their ESL students to integrate their varied cultural identities, teachers themselves need knowledge of cultural diversity and awareness of their own cultural history and assumptions, as well as skills in language-teaching. If they had encountered multiculturally competent ESL teachers, the stories of Kanno's participants might have been different.

Christine Wihak

The Reviewer

Christine Wihak holds a doctorate in educational psychology. Her research interests focus on the development of multicultural competence and White identity in majority-culture professional who work with members of minority cultures. She taught Inuit students for many years in the Canadian Arctic and maintains a working relationship with Nunavut Arctic College.

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