Reviews
Comptes rendus

LINGUISTICS, COMPUTERS AND THE LANGUAGE TEACHER:
A COMMUNICATIVE APPROACH

John H. Underwood, Rowley, Mass.: Newbury House, 1984.

A major difficulty for readers in the field of Computer-assisted Lan-
guage Learning (CALL) is to bridge the gap between language learning
theory and computer programming principles. The fact that so much
CALL programming reflects precisely those behaviouristic precepts that
communicative syllabuses reject has prompted many teachers to conclude
that CALL has trivialized language learning. Mr. Underwood argues that
through active involvement in the development of CALL systems, lan-
guage teachers can ensure instead that such systems reflect coherent and
contemporary language theories. In this highly readable introduction to
CALL, he takes the reader on a step-by-step journey from linguistic
theory to computer programming, stopping repeatedly to illustrate how
computer technology has been used inappropriately by unthinking,
uncritical educators. Citing the propensity of many curriculum develop-
ers to view computers as glorified tape recorders he writes,

> ...we seem to be falling into the same pattern of failure that
> characterized our use of the language lab: mesmerized by the
> hardware, we remain remarkably uncritical of the software and its
> underlying principles... the novelty will wear off... we are going to
> be stuck with another pile of equipment gathering dust in a closet
> somewhere. (p. 39)

That is, of course, unless we start making appropriate use of computers.

The need for the development of programs that both accommodate
and respond to the wide variety of learning styles and aptitudes that
exist in the real world is a recurring theme in the book. Underwood
argues that programs already exist which may serve as prototypes for
communicative CALL systems. Some examples are: computer simula-
tions, where learners use the computer to act out real-life experiences on
the screen; text manipulation and generation programs in which they
use their knowledge of the world to process and generate discourse in a
variety of ways, and information retrieval applications, where the com-
puter acts as an informational resource for a specific topic. Although it

may be argued that such applications are not intrinsically communicative, they do not require learners to actively participate in the operation of the program by both initiating and responding to program prompts. Such behaviour alone is far more communicative than that demanded by most other types of CALL programs.

The combination of teacher and computer is a new and powerful social force in our schools and as such, it should be treated with intelligence and respect. The potential for misuse is great, as this book so clearly points out, and the responsibility for ensuring that CALL systems are valid, reliable and practical is most certainly ours.

COMPUTER-ASSISTED LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION

David H. Wyatt (Ed.), Willowdale: Pergamon Press, 1984.

This republication of a special issue of the journal *System* features eight articles written by authors who have experience in language teaching. Many of them will be familiar to TESOL members. The introductory article by David Wyatt serves to distinguish CALL from other forms of Computer-assisted Instruction (CAI) by describing some of its key principles and technological applications. Subsequent articles are concerned with available types of courseware, videodisc applications and natural language processing. The descriptions of existing systems and projects are invariably concise and readable and most teachers will find something of interest here. Linguists, for example, will enjoy "Applications of Parsing Theory to Computer Assisted Instruction," by Lawrence Markosian and Tryg Ager, which describes how formal grammars may be applied to natural language processing. Curriculum Developers will find "Creating CAL Courseware: Some Possibilities," by Glyn Holmes, a practical and objective guide to available software. Videophiles will be intrigued by "Videodisc Image Retrieval for Language Teaching" by Sue K. Otto, which focuses on how videodiscs may be integrated into language curricula.

For the most part, however, it is left to the reader to try and infer the authors' proclivities with regard to language learning and pedagogical theory. Only one article, "Whither CAI? The Need for Communicative Courseware," by David Sanders and Roger Kenner even addresses the potential conflict between theory and practice in CALL systems. In a seven-point summary of lessons the authors have learned while developing a CALL system, they present a checklist against which some of the applications described in the book do not fare well at all.

Still, the book does what it sets out to do, namely, focus on some of the areas of main interest in CALL and, if one keeps the Sanders and

Kenner article in mind while reading the rest, it is a good introduction to the field.

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INNOVATIVE APPROACHES TO LANGUAGE TEACHING

Robert W. Blair (Ed.), Rowley, Mass.: Newbury House, 1982.

Innovative Approaches to Language Teaching is a book for English as a second language teacher-training courses and professional libraries. Robert Blair's objective was to provide "ideas and tools to help a learner or a teacher in his or her pursuit of excellence in language learning and language teaching." The book also contains comments on his experience with the various approaches.

The book is divided into five parts. Parts One and Five are written by Blair. The rest of the book is made up of articles about recent methods. It includes articles by Gattegno (The Silent Way), Asher (Total Physical Response), Curran (Community Language Learning) and Terrell (The Natural Approach). Each article is accompanied by a summary of the author's contribution to the field of language teaching and learning.

In Part One, Robert Blair writes of his experience with each of the approaches as if it were an adventure. He is quite skeptical each time he meets an approach but he listens, reads, and tries to understand the theory behind it. He extracts what is practical to him, adds it to his teaching repertoire, and then moves on to experience yet another approach. Blair succeeds in conveying an attitude of fairness when he comments on his experiences with the approaches. He claims there is something for everyone no matter how unconventional an approach might appear to be.

The editor is impressed by the silent or comprehension period used in the Silent Way because it is a natural approach. He suggests that following this model by including a silent period as an early stage of language learning might improve our language teaching. Blair also says his teaching is more successful because people like Curran, Lozanov and Terrell have taught him to focus on the learner and communication with others rather than on a grammar overload and a perfection criterion.

An article by Blair includes ideas for communication activities and mnemonic techniques. Blair calls his communication activities "Games II." In these games everybody "wins" when there is a successful exchange of information. He also advocates the use of memory tricks and text memorization to deal with the problem learners have in developing active vocabulary.

Part Five presents the Integrated Approach. This is Blair's blend of techniques from the educators whose approaches he has experienced. These techniques are combined in a way intended to complement each other.

His argument for the Integrated Approach is that since "we still do not fully understand what goes into language learning, why not try an integrated approach." He says his objective was "to create and experiment with an instructional system rich enough and versatile enough to accommodate a broad range of learning needs and learning styles—not excluding those of the gifted learners."

After thirty years of studying other people's ideas about language learning and language teaching, Robert Blair feels his Integrated Approach is the most versatile developed so far and the one with the most options and variety. He gives us an example of his approach in some beginning lessons of a Spanish course. Two-thirds of the time is invested in listening as in the Silent Way approach. During some of the listening time, students are given coloured flags to indicate their level of understanding. They know they are expected to focus on meaning and not to worry about the details of form. Then there is Asher's Total Physical Response approach in which the students react to commands given by the instructor. Later one sees Blair's mnemonic priming for vocabulary study and Burling's bilingual (two languages in a sentence) reader. There are familiar narratives on cassettes with background music (Lozanov's Suggestopedia or "concert session" approach) which are for pre-sleep listening. In the next lesson the learners are encouraged to retell or role-play the stories by the Community Language Learning or "angel-on-the-shoulder" approach. The pronunciation and grammar aspects of the lessons are on tape and assigned as home listening.

Robert Blair claims the learning outcomes of his approach have been extraordinary. One cannot deny that he has succeeded in integrating a series of stress-reducing elements from the approaches he has experienced. However, it must be noted that the focus of his approach, as is that of the others, is on the receptive skills of listening and reading. He does not deal with how to cope with the productive skills of speaking and writing beyond the beginners stage. Does one revert to conventional approaches?

In spite of the questions, Blair's comments on the Innovative

Approaches to Language Teaching leave one inspired. Robert Blair has shown that he is an open-minded educator who is willing to use a combination of stress-reducing elements in an attempt to improve language learning and language teaching. For experienced teachers this collection of articles is a good basis for workshops or study sessions. Perhaps a more appropriate title would have been Innovative Approaches to Language Teaching—A Review and Extension. The book is a must for professional libraries and teacher-training courses since most of the Innovative Approaches up to 1981 are together for convenient reference.

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A HISTORY OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

A.P.R. Howatt, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984. 394 pages + xiv.

The wording of the title of this book is important. First, the indefinite article is used deliberately by the author, and stressed in the Preface. By *a history* is meant a European-oriented history, with special attention to English language teaching (henceforth ELT) in Britain and/or by Britons and other Europeans. Post-Bloomfieldian American contributions to ELT are quite well covered. Those by Canadians, and other ELT professionals from countries where English is an official language or is widely spoken, are not dealt with in any detail. Second, the choice of *ELT* rather than "TESL/TEFL/TESOL/TEAL" is also deliberate, as ELT encompasses all the foregoing, as well as teaching English as a mother tongue, as a second dialect, for specific or academic or occupational purposes, etc.

This book is recommended for anyone curious about why we are where we are in ELT at present. Primarily, it should be read because of our deep ignorance of our professional past. Time and time again, this has led to the widespread error (especially prevalent in North America) of believing that some pedagogical fad or piece of conventional wisdom is "new and improved," when it is neither. German philosopher G.W. Hegel (1770-1831) was cynical about the utility of history, claiming that people and governments have never learned anything from it, nor acted on principles

induced from it. Those of us who have been involved in ELT for more than a decade may be inclined to think Hegel was right. However, the attempt to disseminate information about our eventful professional history is a worthy one. Perhaps a developed historical sense will save us from future excesses, and a repetition of past mistakes.

Within the parameters indicated above, Howatt's account has great breadth of scope and depth of analysis. It is much more than a detailed listing of articles, authors, books, conferences, journals, movements and teachers. Not content with mere narration of historical facts, Howatt also *interprets* them, always being careful to distinguish between narration and interpretation. Nevertheless, anyone searching for *a theory* of ELT in this book will be disappointed. Historians distinguish themselves from other social scientists by usually refraining from developing general laws of human behaviour. Howatt is no exception. He offers the reader no general theory (neither cyclical nor developmental) of language teaching to explain the rise and fall of the plethora of methodological approaches, designs and procedures (see Richards and Rodgers 1982) with which ELT has been assailed. The final words of the Preface make his position clear:

> ... if there is a latent point of view beneath the surface [of the book], it is a belief that progress in the teaching of languages, as in many practical arts, is neither a function solely of the application of theoretical principle, however persuasive, nor of an unthinking reaction to the demands of the immediate market, but of the alchemy which, whether by accident or by design, unites them to a common purpose.

The eighteen chapters of the core of the book are grouped into four parts:

1. Practical language teaching to 1800
2. On "fixing" the language
3. Language teaching in the nineteenth century
4. The making of a profession
   Section 1: Overview of ELT since 1900
   Section 2: Essays in the history of ELT since 1900

Although the most distant from us in time, such 16th and 17th language specialists as Holyband, Florio, Webbe, the great Comenius, and Miège, all described in the early chapters, will be for some readers the most fascinating, perhaps because of their exotic remoteness. Part Two of the book is a most interesting contribution to the endless debate (often bitterly waged in the "Letters to the Editor" section of newspapers) between linguistic conservatives and radicals. In particular, Howatt examines the historical problems of English orthography in rewarding detail. The majority of readers will find Parts Three and Four, dealing with ELT

in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, of greatest interest. Modern history is the hardest to write, because of the difficulty of selecting what is most significant from the myriad facts available. Howatt, I feel, is particularly gifted in his ability to sift the grain from the chaff, and he offers some especially perceptive analyses of the situation in which we find ourselves today. This is surely a result of his historical perspective.

Especially interesting is Howatt's Epilogue. It is subtitled "On Rational and Natural Approaches to Language Teaching." In Part Three, chapter 13 is devoted to the late nineteenth century (rationalist) Reform Movement and such reformist, phonetics-oriented language teachers and educational linguists as Viëtor, Passy, Jespersen and Sweet. Chapter 14 is entitled "Natural methods of language teaching from Montaigne to Berlitz." Other commentators have noted the inherent dualism of language teaching throughout the ages. Mackey (1965:7-8) termed the two fundamental approaches to language teaching the inductive and the deductive. McArthur (1983:12-13) called them the marketplace and monastery traditions. Others have termed them the natural and the formal. Diller (1971), preferring Chomsky's "rationalist" view of language acquisition to behaviourist empiricism, chose to call the members of the Reform Movement "empiricists," and the proponents of the Direct Method "rationalists." Howatt did not make the rational/natural dichotomy a central theme in his book, but in his short epilogue he attempts to reconcile the two (quite often mutually antagonistic) schools of thought. The epilogue concludes

> Provided the learner's attention is engaged by the task at hand, the meanings being communicated are not obscure, the signs used in their communication are clear, and the confidence of the learner not abused by the fear of error, nature will take its course. It is up to reason to provide the most propitious conditions (p. 297).

It should be pointed out that the four main parts of the book and the epilogue represent only three-quarters of the material in this volume. Apart from the front matter, there is a chronology of ELT (1362-1980); useful biographical notes on 63 major contributors to ELT; a translation of the second edition (1886) of Wilhelm Viëtor's *Der Sprachunterricht muss umkehren!* [Language Teaching Must Start Afresh!]; a "compendious" (as earlier writers would have put it) bibliography of 546 items, providing a map for future historians, and an index.

A History of English Language Teaching is well written, but that is not to say that the book is uniformly fascinating. There are passages which come perilously close to being tedious in their detailed examination of the life and work of those who, long ago, laboured long and hard in ELT. However, Howatt is such a skilled wordsmith that his obvious delight at examining these people and their work is well communicated to his

readers. His diction and dry humour frequently delight the mind, and relieve the weight of a text that sometimes threatens to plod, burdened by the impedimenta of scholarly minutiae. Let one short example suffice:

> Finally, if there is one single source which has been responsible for stimulating innovation and activity, it is (in one or another of its various guises) applied linguistics. It has not performed miracles, but as a focus of enquiry, critical self-examination, and new ideas, it has enriched the profession [of ELT] at least as much as it has irritated it (p. 226).

A survey of books dealing with ELT from a historical perspective reveals that, for the time being at least, there are no other accounts which are so informative, so current and so well written. Titone (1968) provides a brief (124-page) readable account of foreign language teaching from "ancient times" to "today," but it was written almost two decades ago. Kelly's (1969) 474-page canvas is vast, but his decision to describe his twenty-five centuries of language teaching (in the Western world) in terms of presentation, practice, selection, staging, gradation, media, and the source disciplines inevitably led to a rather incoherent treatment of his subject. (Howatt's chronological method is much easier to follow.) Darian (1972) devotes his first chapter to the historical background of linguistics and language teaching prior to 1880. His other seven chapters and five appendices provide quite a detailed examination of ELT from an almost exclusively American perspective. To date, I have found very few (even partial) histories or chronicles of Canadian ELT. Martin (1972), Stokes (1974) and Germain (1977) are rare exceptions to this absence of documentation. Howatt's monumental work is a challenge to Canadians to investigate *their* history of ELT.

Each generation must write history anew, not because facts change, nor necessarily because new facts are discovered, but because the new generation's interpretations will be different from the preceding ones. Thus, there can never be a definitive history of ELT, but all future ones will benefit from Howatt's work.

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PARTICIPATE: A PREPARATION COURSE FOR CANADIAN CITIZENSHIP

Mary Ellen Belfiore, Toronto: Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Culture, 1983.

In the not-so-distant past, teachers of Citizenship and ESL were hard-pressed to find curriculum materials designed to facilitate the active participation of new Canadians in the social and political institutions which impact on their daily lives. Larger and larger numbers of new Canadians are inactive politically, while the fabric of their lives is determined by social, economic and political pressures over which they have no control.

More recently, the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Culture has published a curriculum guide which makes a giant leap towards providing the Citizenship and ESL teacher with exciting, thought-provoking materials. *Participate: A Preparation Course for Canadian Citizenship* presents a wealth of historic, economic and political information about Canada. And it offers specific ways in which new Canadians can participate in the shaping of political policies and institutions.

The course is designed for people beyond the basic level. In fact, the English language abilities required for the course, as outlined in the introduction, indicate that it is well beyond the basic level. However,

within its well-structured format, complete with excellent guidelines and a logical organization (a treat in itself for ESL teachers), the material is flexible enough to adapt to low intermediate levels and will generate a lot of discussion, debate and excitement at the high intermediate and advanced levels.

For those who teach ESL and Citizenship together, or teach a component of citizenship in an ESL program, *Participate* offers a dynamic course preparing participants for their citizenship hearing. The course can be completed within 30 hours. This is a fairly fast pace, given the wealth of content information provided, and many ESL teachers will enjoy going more slowly through the course with an intermediate class, building the term's program around the material. The content information goes well beyond the kind of information required of most citizenship applicants. It includes such things as relative employment statistics for each province and information on the role of manufacturing in the Canadian economy. In the history unit, there are thought-provoking questions about the changes that took place in Canada when the European settlers arrived. The depth of detail in the historical and geographical information provides an education for the ESL teacher, as well as for the other participants in the class.

Not only the content but also the activities are unlike those found in more traditional citizenship curriculum guides. Built into each unit are suggestions for contact activities in which participants interact directly with people in their communities and with a variety of Canada's social and political institutions. The aim is for participants to learn what their rights are as citizens of Canada, and to exercise those rights. For example, during the field-testing of an early version of the guide, a citizenship class chose a contact activity designed to investigate why summer ESL classes for children had been discontinued in their neighbourhood. Participants investigated the issue, wrote letters, made phone calls and eventually turned the decision around and ESL classes for children were re-instated. *Participate* teaches that it is possible to make changes in the system.

Divided into 5 units, the core component of the curriculum guide can be used in conjunction with Secretary of State citizenship materials, which include important information about rights and responsibiities of Canadian citizens. By using *Participate,* teachers can flesh out the basic information provided in the federal government's documents and bring life to clichéd citizenship terminology.

The five units of the core component include: "Introduction to Citizenship," "Personal Information," "A Look at Canada's History," "A Look at Canada's Geography," and "How to Participate." Following the units are sample activities, such as field trips or visits to the class by individuals

or groups; activity worksheets, which prepare participants for contacting people and agencies in their communities; and eight appendices, including a full listing of Canada's export products, readings on the First Nations, and a chart outlining the Canadian legal system. In addition, there are practice questions for each unit designed to reinforce the content information provided in the core component of the guide.

One of the key aspects of the course is the evaluation and assessment procedures provided. At the end of each unit is a self-assessment form which helps participants keep track of just how much they have learned and how well they are able to communicate what they have learned. As well, the questions accompanying each unit give participants practice, in pairs and small groups, asking and answering questions based on the information given in the core component. And, at the end of each unit, participants role-play a citizenship hearing, using what they have learned.

One of the objectives of the course is to develop language skills through tasks and activities related to citizenship. It is certainly true that there is a direct connection between the language skills development activities and the content material. However, if there is a criticism to be made of this guide, it is that the language used in the instructions is difficult even for some high intermediate students. Instructions for filling in the charts, for example, assume a familiarity with presenting information in point-form. Though there is ample opportunity for participants to use their speaking, listening and reading skills—and though the development of these skills is well integrated with the content material—interpreting instructions, defining new words, and explaining procedures could take an ESL teacher a considerable amount of time, particularly at the low to mid-intermediate levels. I suggest, therefore, that teachers plan enough time to ensure student comprehension of instructions, vocabulary and procedures before proceeding with each unit.

The amount of content information and the myriad of tasks and activities should not discourage use of the guide. On the contrary, ESL and Citizenship teachers could not find a better, more complete guide for citizenship preparation on the market. *Participate* offers participants and teachers the opportunity to study crucial aspects of citizenship, immigration, Canadian history and geography in a comprehensive, challenging and thought-provoking course.

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Related Topics
Sujets connexes

THE HANDBOOK OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (VOLS. 1-3)

Edward A. Feigenbaum, et al., Los Altos, Calif.: William Kaufmann, 1981/2.

LANGUAGE AS A COGNITIVE PROCESS: VOL. 1. SYNTAX

Terry Winograd, Reading, Mass.: Addison Wesley, 1983.

Computers may at long last be close to delivering some of the things in language teaching and language analysis that their defenders have promised for so many years. Interestingly, these promises may soon be made good not by denizens of departments of education, linguistics, or applied linguistics. Rather, developments in esoteric areas of computer science such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Computational Linguistics (CL) hold far more promise and potential.

"AI (itself) is the part of computer science concerned with designing intelligent computer systems, that is, systems that exhibit the characteristics we associate with intelligence in human behaviour—understanding language, learning, reasoning, solving problems, and so on" (Feigenbaum, et al., *1*, p. 3). In other words, a main driver in AI is the design of *Machines Who Think.**

One of the applications of AI research is the design of so-called "expert systems" in areas such as "chemical data interpretation, symbolic integration, infectious disease diagnosis, DNA sequencing, computer systems debugging, structural engineering, computer chip design, and so on" (Feigenbaum, et al., *1*, p. xii).

The Handbook of Artificial Intelligence is the bible of the field; part definition, part history, part conceptual basis, part parable. This three

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Machines Who Think by Pamela McCorduck (San Francisco, Freeman, 1979).

volume effort is detailed and comprehensive: a readable introduction but hardly an exhaustive commentary on the "state of the art."

Volume 1 deals with the relationship between expert systems and natural language, and of the effort to relate the use of natural language to a guided search for knowledge.

Volume 2 tells the tale of DENDRAL (the original expert system) which attempted to be a model for medical/dental diagnosis related to natural language, as well as the tales of a variety of other expert systems in areas of science, medicine, education, and automatic programming—an area in which the analysis and generation of natural language is critical. Volume 2 also attempts to relate advances in these areas to the more general one of problem solving in education.

Volume 3 addresses itself to question of "models of cognition," "vision," "learning and inductive inference," and "planning and problem solving."

Terry Winograd's long-awaited volume *Language as a Cognitive Process: Volume 1, Syntax* also needs mentioning here as a watershed contribution to computational linguistics, discourse analysis, and language viewed as a knowledge-based process, in this case a communicative process based on knowledge.

Winograd's notions of augmented transition network (ATN) grammars, feature and function grammars, and the development of computer systems for natural language parsing (explained at length with background readings noted in this book) owe at least as much to M. A. K. Halliday's sociolinguistic analysis of discourse as they do to computer-based computational models. The consequent fusion of sociolinguistic and mathematical models is spectacular. Should Winograd's very convincing ideas catch on, we are looking at the beginnings of a metagrammar which combines the most powerful features of transformational grammar, systemic grammar, case grammar, Prague School's "functional" grammar, stratificational grammar, functional and lexical-functional grammar, phrase structure grammar, slot and filler grammar, junction grammar, cognitive grammar, and relational grammar which can both parse and generate text.

Winograd's book is already an "underground" classic and deserves more recognition and acceptance as *the* standard textbook in language teacher education.

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INTERCULTURAL COUNSELLING AND ASSESSMENT

Ronald Samuda & Aaron Wolfgang (Eds.), Lewiston, N.Y.: C.J. Hogrefe, Inc., 1984.

This book contains papers representing views from the United States, Great Britain, West Germany, Australia, and Canada. The authors discuss theoretical concepts, comparative models and perspectives, assessment and placement of minorities, counselling specific ethnic and cultural groups in general and in specific environments. The inclusion of papers from different countries provides an opportunity to compare the Canadian situation to that in other countries. However, the papers in each section do not all address the same issues and it is therefore sometimes difficult to make comparisons. The book does not provide a single model for intercultural counselling, but it does provide insights into the ways the countries represented are approaching counselling multi-ethnic clientele.

One of the central issues is the one highlighted by Paul Pederson of the USA which is that behaviours which might be considered pathological in one culture, are often seen as being adaptive in another. Recognition of this requires awareness and sensitivity on the part of counsellors. Another issue of central importance, addressed by Samuda, is the assessment and placement of students in special education classes. The use of assessment instruments which are invalid and inappropriate often results in the over-representation of children from minority groups in special education classes. Samuda's paper suggests some alternative approaches to assessment, focussing on student strengths and assets, rather than on deficiencies.

This book provides valuable background and suggestions for anyone involved in intercultural counselling or teaching.

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