

Reviews

Comptes rendus

REVIEW ARTICLE: FOUR WRITING TEXTS

READY TO WRITE

Karen Blanchard and Christine Root, New York: Longman, 1984. 92 pages.

THE WRITING PROCESS: 20 PROJECTS FOR GROUP WORK

Nancy Arapoff Cramer, Rowley, MA: Newbury House, 1985. 331 pages.

LEARNING ESL COMPOSITION

V. Faye Hartfiel, Jane B. Hughey, Deanna R. Wormuth, and Holly Jacobs, Rowley, MA: Newbury House, 1985. 240 pages.

WRITING WORKSHOP: PARAGRAPH AND SENTENCE PRACTICE

Joyce Pagurek. Rowley, MA: Newbury House, 1985. 118 pages.

Recent writing research has focused on the writing process and a new understanding of it has emerged. In contrast to the conventional view, an experienced writer does not follow a neat linear sequence of planning, organizing, writing, revising and editing. The finished product is linear, but the process is "non-linear, exploratory and generative...whereby writers discover and reformulate their ideas as they attempt to approximate meaning" (Zamel, 1983: 165). Experienced writers draw on their background knowledge and consider both purpose and audience. As they write, "they read over what they have written to keep in touch with the 'conceptual blueprint' (Beach, 1979) which helps them plan what to write next" (Raimes, 1985: 229). Experienced writers are flexible. As they consider their conceptual blueprint they may reject or reformulate what they have written. This view has obvious implications for teaching writing in both L1 and L2, particularly in light of the evidence that inexperienced, less successful writers are not willing to change their plans. Unfortunately such writers are under the impression that good writers know exactly what they want to say before they say it. (Zamel, 1983: 166). Classroom instruction then should encourage students to write as successful writers do. Zamel (1984: 80) laments that practice lags far behind research and theory. However, two new texts for teaching ESL composition attempt to rectify this situation. *Learning ESL Composition* and *The Writing Process: 20 Projects for Group Work* have learners focus on the writing process.

Learning ESL Composition is one book in a series of three interrelated

books, *Testing ESL Composition* and *Teaching ESL Composition*. This text, for intermediate to advanced students, is divided into two parts: Writing Principles and Writing Purposes. Writing Principles considers the writing process: purpose, audience, subject, creating, shaping and revising. Writing Purposes includes chapters on telling how, reporting facts, telling what, telling why, solving, judging and persuading.

Exercises designed to encourage students to deal with the writing process present a variety of heuristic techniques to teach them how to get shape and develop the subject, and direct and expand it. Some of these heuristics, or methods of discovery, are brainstorming, journal keeping, experiment and observation, debate and questioning. By actively developing a topic using these techniques, the students learn how to search their minds, consider various dimensions of the topic and generate new ideas. Another means of ensuring that the students view writing as process is through the use of The ESL Composition Profile. The profile, a tool for teacher, peer, and individual student diagnosis of writing, addresses content, organization, vocabulary, language use and mechanics. The students are introduced to its use early in the book with examples from student writing which take them from rough draft, recommendations based on the criteria in the profile through to a finished product. As the students learn to evaluate their own writing and the writing of their peers, they also develop an understanding of what constitutes good writing.

Students are also given directions for methods of development. They read and analyze numerous examples of student writing and over sixty examples of professional work. These examples include classical rhetorical designs. In Part A the students learn the traditional designs in isolation and practice them in single paragraphs, and in Part B the designs are applied to specific purposes. The authors have done an excellent job of illustrating how these designs or methods of development are often used in combination rather than in isolation. They have managed this by focusing on purpose rather than design; a mix of various patterns is seen as a means of effectively conveying information. For instance, the reporting of facts in Chapter 7 may include informational order, comparison/contrast, cause/effect, and classification. Similarly, in Chapter 9 the authors demonstrate how "telling why" is predominantly cause/effect but may include other methods of development.

Learning ESL Composition analyses the writing process in great detail and provides students with explanations, examples and practice which moves from short single paragraphs to longer compositions. This is an excellent and comprehensive writing text.

The Writing Process: 20 Projects for Group Work, another writing text written from a process perspective, is designed for advanced ESL students and basic writing students in a university or community college. Four

premises about students at this level underlie this book: a great deal of practice is very important; cooperative work motivates and develops a good attitude writing; the teaching/learning focus should be on process; and finally, focus on fluency and expressiveness should take precedence over grammatical accuracy. The procedure for each project follows the same six steps based on the underlying premises of the book; these steps are *Getting ideas*, *Putting ideas together*, *Drafting*, *Getting feedback*, *Revising* and *Editing*. During the first step, *Getting ideas*, the students generate ideas about the topic. This involves the students in two activities: a fifteen minute "quick-write" and a task which aids them in getting background information. Both of these are done before the group meeting. During the second step, *Putting ideas together*, students compare notes, answer questions on the topic and brainstorm. The results of these activities are recorded by a group member on a *Report on group meeting* form and are handed in to the instructor. During the *Drafting* step the student produces another "quick-write" which is brought to class. For the fourth step, *Feedback*, the student receives a thoughtful evaluation from at least three peers. After this, students are ready to write a final draft, following instructions in *Revising*. At this stage of the writing process the students are asked to consider purpose, audience and voice carefully. Finally, during *Editing* the students, working in pairs, follow an editing checklist and correct any grammatical errors. Although the last step may seem to contradict the premise that students need very little direct instruction in grammar, Cramer is careful to point out that the purpose here is to help "students use the grammatical knowledge they already have in correcting common errors that result from inattention rather than from lack of knowledge" (v). After the students have gone through these six steps, the teacher follows up with suggestions on how to improve the process, examples of successful compositions, or analysis of various rhetorical devices or transitions.

The twenty interesting and relevant topics cover a wide range, from a comparison of campus life in sixteen American colleges and universities to euthanasia. By developing one topic in each chapter through individual and group work, the students experience the writing process; that is, they consult their own background knowledge, generate ideas and finally focus on one aspect of the topic.

Writing Workshop: Paragraph and Sentence Practice takes a more traditional approach to the teaching of writing. The exercises have been carefully designed so that students gain practice in writing sentences and then paragraphs within particular rhetorical designs. This book sets out to aid students in writing cohesive and coherent paragraphs by focusing on sentence and paragraph organization. Each chapter is divided into three parts; sentences, paragraphs and "exam-type" questions. Designs consi-

dered are generalization and support, enumeration, comparison, definition, cause and result, and static description.

In the sentence section of each chapter, the students learn to recognize the functions of various discourse markers, both between and within sentences. Consideration of paragraphs written according to specific patterns follows sentence analysis. Following the paragraph analysis is a format or outline of the particular design under consideration. After the students have analyzed a paragraph and understood the organization, they write a class composition. This allows the teacher to guide the class in the first attempt at a paragraph, following the design under consideration. For instance, using a chart illustrating the sources of noise pollution, the students write a cause and effect composition together. This group activity is followed by a guided writing exercise, done individually, in which the students are given a choice of two topics. Finally the students write their own paragraph. At the end of each chapter is an "exam-type" question which utilizes the organizational pattern taught in the chapter. The instructor chooses a text from the students' reading course and asks a question following guidelines presented in this section. This is a valuable exercise in that it gives students experience responding to the types of questions they will be expected to answer in their subject areas.

Skills are well integrated; the students engage in reading, speaking and listening activities while gathering data from stimulating current topics. All writing exercises are contextualized and as Pagurek maintains "writing never occurs in a vacuum. Students are given a perspective from which to write, an audience for whom to write and a purpose." (vi). It is true that in the writing assignments students are given these three criteria. However, consideration of audience is a complex notion and the need for more diverse models is apparent. A single topic written and rewritten for a variety of audiences would serve to illustrate differences of style and content which are audience dependent. This is done in Chapter 1 but is not continued in the rest of the text where single audience models are employed.

The book provides the student with practice in various sentence structures which are integral to the various designs and gives students practice in writing using the major designs, both in compositions and in the practice of taking exams. All this is good; however, the book would have been more effective if it had provided students with more guidance in how to consider audience.

Another text, *Ready to Write*, also looks at writing from the perspective of rhetorical design. It is a composition book for the high-beginning or low-intermediate student. Its most outstanding feature is that it refutes two myths about ESL writing: that high-beginning and even low-intermediate students are not ready to write compositions since they have

barely mastered the simple sentence and that if students are ready to write, it should only be in the form of personal journals. Since it has learners begin writing at the discourse level about academic subjects, *Ready to Write* is a welcome departure from these two assumptions.

This book is attractively laid out, with many contextualized activities. Data for writing are drawn from such things as graphs, charts, picture series, newspaper advertisements, and resumes. The students consider information individually, in pairs or small groups. The book is divided into fourteen chapters each dealing with one aspect of writing; the first two chapters deal with organization and topic and supporting sentences. Other chapters consider organization by time and space, organizing ideas by rank order, informing, expressing an opinion, describing processes and writing instructions, writing personal and business letters, describing, reporting, comparing and contrasting, analyzing, making predictions and writing summaries. This book meets its objective of giving beginning and intermediate students practice in writing the type of compositions required in academic work.

All four books consider writing as a part of a broader language learning experience; writing exercises are set up so that learners engage in speaking, listening and reading activities as well as writing activities. As a result, these texts are a valuable contribution to second language teaching. However, while the authors of *Writing Workshop: Paragraph and Sentence Practice* and *Ready to Write* focus on the writing product, the authors of *Learning ESL Composition* and *The Writing Process: 20 Projects for Group Work* have incorporated insights from current research into their materials, putting the emphasis on the writing process.

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RECENT MATERIALS FOR LISTENING COMPREHENSION

LISTEN TO ME! BEGINNING LISTENING COMPREHENSION

Barbara H. Foley. Rowley, MA: Newbury House, 1985.

LISTENING TASKS FOR INTERMEDIATE STUDENTS OF AMERICAN ENGLISH

Sandra Schecter. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984.

TUNE IN TONIGHT: LISTENING TO THE NEWS

Alexis Finger. Rowley, MA: Newbury House, 1985.

The overall aim of listening comprehension instruction is to help the learners acquire the ability to understand and respond appropriately to the spoken language as used in a variety of real-life situations. Since the emphasis is on communicative meaning, the focus should be on content rather than on form or syntax. How do we as teachers achieve this? First and foremost is the need to select materials that motivate learners to want to listen—materials that are comprehensible, interesting and relevant to the immediate needs of the learners.

However, the selection of appropriate materials for classroom teaching is not an easy task. Firstly, it is often difficult to collect or simulate samples of authentic communications. Secondly, in most cases, the method of presenting listening material in the classroom is using tape recordings. The taped material cannot provide the total context even if the content is authentic; because the learners do not see the speaker(s) or the listener(s) or the social environment in which the real language takes place. Thirdly, each learner interprets the text according to his/her own priorities, values, experiences and knowledge. Whether the learner shares enough of the values and experience of the speaker to assign a meaning that is close to the one intended is also a crucial issue for consideration. Fourthly, the success of suitable listening materials depends also on the instructional factors (e.g., developing appropriate listening strategies and tasks).

Grading also present new problems when using authentic input. One solution is to "adapt" the authentic material, simplifying or eliminating what is considered inappropriate for the learners using it. However, it is often difficult to preserve the characteristics of the authentic discourse if it is modified in this way. Another solution is to grade the listening tasks that learners are expected to perform. There are different kinds of selective responses the learners can be asked to give. Some are more complex than others. In addition, the selection of themes and topics helps to control the level of language difficulty. Topics like family, housing, infor-

mal short dialogues, brief announcements are easier to follow than lectures, long radio reports or broadcasts or discussions of economic or political issues.

Listen to Me is intended for beginners. Its stated purpose is to systematically develop and improve the following listening skills:

- (1) Identifying different sounds and sound combinations at word, phrase and sentence level (emphasis on aural perception).
- (2) Understanding the overall meaning of the passage.
- (3) Picking out specific information.

To achieve these objectives, there are listening tasks for listening discrimination and listening comprehension. The texts have been carefully manipulated to control the lexical and grammatical items to suit the beginning level. The content is divided into four sections based on four tenses: verb 'be,' the present continuous tense, the present tense, and the past tense. In spite of this manipulation, the author has managed to retain the "reality" of every day situations. We hear the voices of native speakers and non-native speakers. Most of the non-native speakers are ESL learners who communicate in English in their own accents, intonations and pronunciations. These features give the materials authenticity.

The book has 20 units. Each unit is based on a narrative and a conversation. The materials discuss the needs, feelings and problems of immigrants; for example, Ali, an English student, describes his neighbours; Gloria, a nurse, discusses her dilemma in choosing one of the two job offers; Mrs. Santana has a job interview, etc. This is motivating content for learners who are in similar situations.

To contextualize the material for learners in the lower levels every story begins with an illustration consisting of several pictures. The learners are expected to demonstrate their understanding of the stories by performing short specific tasks like: identifying pictures, ordering pictures in correct sequence, choosing true and false statements, etc. These responses are easy to check immediately either by the learners themselves or by the instructor. Getting immediate feedback helps the learners to sustain their interest and motivation.

In the listening for discrimination section, there are tasks to identify phonological items and grammatical items like verbs. There are some writing exercises using grammatical structures from the stories.

Listening Tasks is designed for intermediate learners. It provides tasks which focus on what is essential (selective listening) and encourages learners to disregard what is not relevant to their tasks.

The book consists of 20 units. Each unit is built around a theme representing a real-life situation where listening plays an important part.

There are functional themes like: understanding and following simple instructions given by a bank teller, understanding and taking telephone messages, understanding airport and other public announcements, understanding weather forecasts, understanding and following discussions about T.V. programs, understanding street directions, etc. The roles presented in the material and the tasks assigned are similar to situations in the learners' daily life. They are aware of the need to respond to these situations appropriately. Thus the motivation to focus on the listening tasks is genuine.

The tape recordings are semi-authentic, scripted materials. However, they have all the essential features of normal spoken language like redundancy, false starts, background noises, hesitations, incomplete sentences, pauses, etc. Each listening exercise begins with a narrator who sets the scene and prepares the learner for a specific task. Most of the exercises are dialogues, one and a half to three and a half minutes long. Life-like pictures, illustrations, charts and diagrams provide visual cues to support the taped material. Each unit also has reading and writing exercises related to the theme. Both types of exercises use a functional approach to learning. The reading exercises include authentic tasks such as reading schedules, street signs, newspaper ads, etc. The writing exercises include functional tasks like filling out forms, writing a post card or a letter.

There are two particularly strong points about this book. One is the way the specific tasks are assigned to give the learners an opportunity to take on a specific role and perform the task. They also get immediate feedback working with other learners or the teacher to check their responses. The second strong point is the strategies used to integrate thematically other language learning skills with listening activities. The approach is such that the author has succeeded in bringing the reality of the outside world into the classroom—the kind of reality that the learners understand and appreciate.

Tune in Tonight is aimed at exposing advanced ESL students to authentic excerpts of news reports from the program ABC World News Tonight. The author wants her students to develop skills for listening to the news so that they can begin to understand and appreciate American culture. "If you want to learn about Americans and their interests, attitudes and values, you have to listen to their news."

The book has 15 lessons. Most of the themes have relevance both to Americans and non-Americans. Topics like: Zomax-A Pain Killing Drug, Earthquake in California, Organ Donors, The Pope in Poland, Anti-nuclear protests, contain information and ideas that are of current interest to all of us. There are also typical American themes like: Horse Racing—The Belmont Stakes, Living Atop a Billboard and John F. Kennedy, Jr.

Graduates from College.

The book presents tasks aimed at developing the following listening skills:

- (1) To predict the meaning of words from context.
- (2) To practice scanning the listening text to understand the main points.
- (3) To select specific information and take notes while listening.
- (4) To summarize the main points of the text.

The students listen to each report at least three times:

The original news report as recorded (live).

The same news report re-recorded by another person for clarity.

The original news report again.

The tasks are organized under three sections: pre-listening, listening, and post-listening.

The procedures for performing the tasks seem a bit complex and therefore may be confusing to the learners. Also, listening to the re-recorded report is superfluous: it defeats the purpose of listening to authentic natural speech. The objectives of each task as described are not specific enough and the tasks themselves do not seem to actually teach a particular listening skill. For example, in the listening section, the initial task is: "Close your book and listen to News Report 2. Take notes then listen to the statements. Write right or wrong in the blank spaces." The purpose of this task is "to provide authentic discourse and information; to have students practice scanning what they hear." The students are asked to take notes while listening to the tape and then answer questions. The main point is how do you teach your students note-taking while listening? How do you teach them to scan listening material? Do the tasks demonstrate that students have learnt and/or practiced "scanning"? Is it possible to answer comprehension questions without using the skills of note-taking or scanning?

The post-listening exercises give practice in speaking and writing skills. Students have an opportunity to use the vocabulary they have learnt to express their opinions about the topics discussed.

The book succeeds in exposing students to a variety of suitable authentic material, but does not address the question of how to teach advanced listening skills.

All three books discussed above have pre-listening activities to give the learners a sense of purpose and focus in listening. This is crucial. However, the strategies used in pre-listening activities are rather weak. The basis for all of them seems to be to start from what the learners do not know: teaching new vocabulary (even in context), asking questions related to the theme, assessing statements from the text. These strategies still work in isolation; they do not activate the schema of knowledge and

experience that the learners already have. Instead, the learners could be encouraged to create their own questions, to use their own resources to discuss a given topic or a theme. Most real listening situations are built on expectation strategies. We know to a certain extent what to expect in a given listening situation. The sense of expectation and prediction helps the learners to understand and interpret what they are going to hear. Secondly, all three books recognize that there are various types of listening skills and that they need to be taught. However, at the more advanced levels, there seem to be two weaknesses: first, identifying the actual listening skills required to deal with higher levels of comprehension like making inferences, evaluating and interpreting materials critically, and second, selecting tasks which would train the learners to acquire these skills.

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PHONETIQUE COMPAREE DU FRANCAIS ET DE L'ANGLAIS NORD-AMERICAINS

Luc Ostiguy et Robert Sarrasin, Trois-Rivières: Les Editions du Réseau U, 1985. 211 pages.

Phonétique comparée du français et de l'anglais nord-américains purports to provide the much-needed comparative descriptions of the sound system of North American French (NAF) and North American English (NAE) which language teachers and linguists have long awaited. For many years it has been accepted that NAE has a standard form as well as various colloquial forms. (The earliest description of American English is John Kenyon's *American Pronunciation* written in the 1930's. Clifford Prator's *Manual of American Pronunciation* was published in 1951.) NAF, however, has been slower in gaining recognition as a standard form. Hence the importance of this book—the first of its kind.

The text very sensibly opens with a short, well illustrated chapter describing the organs of speech. As the book is intended for readers with no previous knowledge of phonetics, the illustrations are invaluable, while the writing itself is simple and lucid, mindful of the difficulties of the subject for beginners but without inappropriate oversimplification.

The second chapter describes the NAF and NAE phonemes in general terms, explaining the necessity for phonetic transcription, introducing the concept of allophonic variation, and concluding with four pages of tables illustrating the NAF and NAE allophones.

The next chapter describes the NAE system in greater detail; illustrating the degree of tongue height, of fronting, and of rounding required for the production of the vowels and diphthongs; and describing the place and manner of articulation required for the consonants.

Unfortunately, this chapter is somewhat marred by its treatment of the allophones of the voiceless plosives. In English, these three plosives /p, t, k/ are aspirated before a stressed vowel, as in *tag* [t^hæg] or *attack* [ət^hækə]. However, Ostiguy and Sarrasin claim that aspiration is equally present before an unstressed vowel or before a consonant provided the plosive begins an initial syllable, giving as examples *tomatoes* [t^hamej-towz] and *cremate* [k^hlɛmejt] (p. 62). Although some very slight degree of aspiration may be produced by certain NAE speakers in such environments, this should be indicated by the symbols [t^l] and [k^l], not by the symbols [th] and [kh] which indicate the heavier degree of aspiration; and, furthermore, the majority of NAE speakers produce only the unaspirated plosive in this position. (Note, too, that the first vowel in *tomatoes* would be realized as the schwa [ə] rather than [a] by most native speakers of NAE.)

The fourth chapter parallels the third, but with the NAF system. Once again excellent tables and illustrations have been provided, and this chapter exhibits none of the problems of the third chapter.

Next follows an interesting section on Combinatory Phonetics, opening with both English and French examples of the assimilation processes. The chapter is particularly detailed relative to the NAF system, and provides clear examples of assimilation caused by voicing, by tongue position, by place of articulation, etc. (e.g. *neige* in *il neige*, *il a neigé*, and *il neigeait* being realized as [næɪʒ], [nɛ:ʒɛ], and [nɛʒə]). The chapter continues with a clear description of the French liaison system and of NAF vowel fusion. This section is of particular value for adult learners of French and their teachers; it is less valuable for teachers and learners of English.

The sixth chapter, on Prosody, although satisfactory relative to French, proves disappointing as far as it relates to the English intonation patterns. The authors have unwisely decided to base their patterns on those described in D.R. Ladd's *The Structure of Intonation Meaning, Evidence from English* (1980), but Ladd's patterns are meant to convey various shadings or nuances of meaning in certain restricted emotional situations (e.g. extreme fatigue, boredom, etc.); they are not the patterns common to ordinary everyday speech and therefore could prove misleading for the

francophone learner of English. The suggested readings at the end of the chapter include the *Manual of American English Pronunciation* by C.H. Prator and B.W. Robinett (1972), and the intonation patterns described in this latter book would have provided Ostiguy and Sarrasin with more valuable models than have the Ladd descriptions.

The final chapter of *Phonétique comparée* reviews the phonemes of both languages, illustrates them in their most usual environments, and also points out the difficulties which a speaker of one of these languages might experience when attempting to produce an unfamiliar sound in the other language, (e.g. English /ʌ/ as in *duck* would be more rounded by the francophone learner of English). This is a short but useful chapter.

Phonétique comparée is an important book in many respects. To have access to a text dedicated solely to the comparison of NAF and NAE has been the dream of language teachers, phonetic instructors, and Canadian linguists for many years. The text will be useful for those advanced learners of NAF who possess an adequate control of reading skills to be able to follow the text with ease. It will be even more useful for teachers of NAF at every level, providing them with a clear understanding of how the sound system operates.

In addition to the weaknesses already pointed out relative to the English system, the text contains various minor slips which can easily be eradicated from future editions, for example, on page 117 *taped* is transcribed as [tæpt], and *good morning* has been reduced to [gʊnmɔlnɪŋ] rather than to [gʊ(m)mɔlnɪŋ] which would complete the nasal assimilation process; on page 119 "come in" appears as "comme in"; on page 144 there is an intrusive "a" in the infelicitous "It's a bad luck," and on page 146 "bulks" appears twice instead of "bucks."

If the weaknesses pointed out in this review are eradicated, this text should prove as useful for learners of English as it now is for learners of French. An English translation would also open up a wider market for the book, for such a translation would make the text useful for those students of NAF phonetics in English-speaking universities whose reading knowledge of French is not equal to the demands of *Phonétique comparée*.

A comparative text of this nature and depth has been long awaited. It is to be hoped that the errors will be corrected in later editions to ensure that *Phonétique comparée* achieves the recognition it so richly deserves.

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MODELLING AND ASSESSING SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

Kenneth Hyltenstam & Manfred Pienemann (Eds.), Clevedon, England: Multilingual Matters, 1985.

One question often addressed to second language acquisition (SLA) researchers presenting papers at language teaching conferences is — “What are the implications of your research to teaching?” Such a question can sometimes lead to an unsatisfactory response from both the questioner’s and responder’s point of view. On the one hand, the responder may consider the question to be inappropriate since the primary purpose of his/her research is to investigate fundamental questions about the nature of language learning which do not necessarily relate to pedagogy. On the other hand, the questioner clearly assumes that knowledge about the L2 learning process must have applications for teaching. The relationship between SLA research and L2 teaching is precisely the issue addressed in *Modelling and Assessing Second Language Acquisition*. More specifically, it is intended to examine the applicability of SLA research to L2 syllabus design and testing. And what is particularly interesting about this volume is that it is the SLA researchers themselves who are tackling this thorny issue and they are by no means in agreement.

The book contains an introduction by the editors and a total of fifteen papers which are divided into two sections. The first section, concentrating on the applications of SLA research to syllabus design, contains eight papers; and the second section, examining relationships between SLA and testing, has seven papers. As the editors indicate in their introduction, the planning of this volume involved the distribution of three major articles (i.e., one on SLA and syllabus design and two on SLA and testing) to all other contributors. These position papers contain specific proposals for SLA research findings in their respective pedagogical areas (syllabus design and testing). These papers were distributed before the other articles were written so that the remaining contributors could directly respond to the proposals in their own papers.

The first section begins with a position paper by Manfred Pienemann entitled “Learnability and Syllabus Construction,” in which he argues that the tradition of organizing language teaching syllabuses in linguistic terms (i.e., proceeding from the linguistically simple to the more complex) is a practice which fails to take into account the psycholinguistic development of the learner. This, he says, is problematic, because what is described as simple in linguistic terms may in fact be difficult in psycholinguistic terms (i.e., difficult for the learner to learn). He therefore suggests that syllabuses be designed in terms of the developmental path of L2 acquisition thereby proposing a psycholinguistic rationale for syllabus

design. To support his proposal, Pienemann refers to research in German L2 acquisition which provides evidence for positing four separate stages in word order development for learners from different language backgrounds and from both natural and instructional environments. This research has also provided evidence that instruction does not seem to be effective in altering these developmental stages. That is, learners seem to need to go through each of the stages in a specified order to successfully attain the final stage. Pienemann interprets these findings as support for the claim that one cannot teach learners what they are not ready to learn. Therefore, he concludes that aspects of language which appear to have universal patterns of development can be taught most successfully through a syllabus which orders language in terms of the natural sequence in L2 acquisition.

The remaining seven papers in this section are intended as responses to Pienemann's paper. Some of them, however, are more directly related to his proposal than others. Mike Long's response, entitled "A Role for Instruction in Second Language Acquisition: Task-based Language Training," points out that although he acknowledges such a proposal as an important step toward providing a psycholinguistic rationale for L2 teaching, he questions the belief, implicit in a syllabus based on the acquisition of grammatical sequences, that a focus on form facilitates SLA. He also argues that such a proposal deals with only one aspect of program design (i.e., syllabus development) and ignores other important aspects (i.e., methodology). Stressing the need to integrate both aspects of program planning into a psycholinguistic rationale, Long proposes a *task-based* language program as an example of what an integrated and psycholinguistically-based solution might look like.

Patsy Lightbown's response to Pienemann's proposal, entitled "Can Language Acquisition be Altered by Instruction?" cautions researchers in SLA about the dangers of promising another "scientific approach" to language teaching in premature attempts to apply the findings of SLA research to language teaching. She provides evidence for her claim that not enough information is known about acquisition sequences to effectively design syllabuses, and points out that even if the "currently described sequences were completely and universally correct," we would still be left with only a very small portion of a syllabus. Her view of the application of SLA research to teaching is fundamentally different from Pienemann's in that she sees SLA research as being able to tell teachers what to expect, whereas Pienemann seems to be making recommendations as to what practitioners should do.

In a paper entitled "Linguistic Simplicity and Learnability: Implications for Language Syllabus Design," Teresa Pica draws on her own research on L2 classroom learning making the argument that effective syllabus design must take into account not only natural L2 acquisition

sequences (i.e., Pienemann's proposal), but also, sequences of classroom L2 acquisition. She further adds that more research into the sociolinguistic and pragmatic dimensions of interlanguage development is needed if syllabuses based on psycholinguistic principles are to be effective. In another response paper, "Learner Variations and the Teachability Hypothesis," Howard Nicholas raises an important issue by pointing out that a syllabus based on a set of developmental features of L2 acquisition fails to adequately take into account the variation which exists among interlanguage users. He argues that because different learners have different orientations to the L2 development process, they are not necessarily *ready* to move from one developmental stage of acquisition to another at the same time, and this presents obvious problems in terms of timing for the type of syllabus Pienemann is proposing. Björn Hammarberg's response, "Learnability and Learner Strategies in Second Language Syntax and Phonology," also views the planning of a syllabus in terms of developmental stages as problematic, because it fails to take into account other factors (i.e., communicative demands) which can also influence the learnability of particular structures.

The paper by Kenneth Hyltenstam, "L2 Learners' Variable Output and Language Teaching," discusses the relationship between SLA and teaching in somewhat broader terms, suggesting that while our knowledge of the SLA process is not sufficient for *direct* applications to teaching, it can provide teachers with valuable insights which may influence their teaching in more *indirect* ways.

Michael Clyne's paper "Medium or Object — Different Contexts of (school-based) Second Language Acquisition" does not directly address the issue of applicability of SLA research findings to teaching, but rather, reports on a study investigating the effects of the presence or absence of an explicit linguistic syllabus on L2 learning.

The second section of the book, dealing with the application of SLA research to testing, differs from the first section in that there is less discussion and debate among the authors concerning the issue at hand. That is, although both position papers address the issue of SLA research and testing, the other papers tend to discuss a somewhat wider range of issues in testing rather than responding directly to the position papers.

In the first position paper, "Assessing Proficiency: An Overview on Some Aspects of Testing," David Ingram provides a broad overview of L2 testing, claiming that until SLA research provides a "more comprehensive picture of the development of language behaviours as a whole" and more information about the developmental schedule of learners' acquisition, any contributions it can make to testing are indirect and tentative. He concludes a detailed review of the various approaches to the measurement of proficiency by advocating a proficiency-rating approach to measurement.

In the second position paper, "Profiling Second Language Development: A Procedure for Assessing L2 Proficiency," Harold Clahsen advocates a psycholinguistic approach to test development, claiming that ordered developmental sequences of L2 acquisition should be the "primary grading device of an L2 assessment procedure." To illustrate how this could be done, he develops a profile analysis for L2 acquisition based on findings from research into German word order development. In responding to the proposals made by Ingram and Clahsen, the paper by Lian Fried, "On the Validity of Second Language Tests," points out some potential weakness in both regarding the establishment of test validity.

The three remaining papers do not directly address the proposals made by Ingram and Clahsen. Wilfried Stölting's paper, "Language Assessment as a Social Activity" raises the delicate issue of the misuse of language tests in the educational and social systems and argues for the right of learners to participate in the evaluation of their L2 competence through self-assessment procedures. Sharon Lapkin's paper, "Pedagogical Implications of Direct Second Language Testing: A Canadian Example," describes an approach to L2 testing based on communicative (task-solving) principles. In the final paper, "Second Language Proficiency: An Interactive Approach," Jan Hulstijn addresses the topic of defining second language proficiency from a linguistic and cognitive perspective.

Perhaps the greatest strength of *Modelling and Assessing Second Language Acquisition* lies in the way in which the book was originally planned. Organizing it in terms of position papers and responses permits a wide range of stimulating ideas and conflicting viewpoints to be developed in the same volume. And indeed, this was the case with several papers in this collection. Unfortunately, however, there are papers which do not respond either to the general question of applicability of SLA research findings to teaching, or to the specific proposals put forth in the position papers. This is particularly true of the second section on SLA and testing. It is frustrating for the reader who gets involved in a continuing discussion in three or four consecutive papers to come across another paper which does not address the same issues. Despite this weakness, *Modelling and Assessing Second Language Acquisition* is a valuable contribution to the field in that it brings together the work and views of SLA researchers from Europe, North America and Australia in an effort to discuss the applicability of their findings to specific aspects of L2 teaching. Clearly, this is a highly controversial subject and both L2 teachers and SLA researchers should benefit a great deal from a book which confronts this issue head-on.

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