
Reviews/Comptes rendus

La Communication formative

Daniel Michaud

La Communication formative de Daniel Michaud présente une méthodologie d'enseignement des langues secondes à supports non didactiques. Ce livre s'adresse principalement aux enseignants de langue seconde (L2) ainsi qu'aux intervenants intéressés aux méthodologies d'enseignement.

Les rôles de l'enseignant et des étudiants, les différentes interventions pédagogiques, les activités pédagogiques à supports non didactiques ainsi que l'approche communicative dans un cadre institutionnel sont abordés. A prime abord, très peu d'information est donnée sur l'auteur, ce qui nuit considérablement à la pleine compréhension de l'approche pédagogique suggérée. La formation pratique et/ou académique, l'expérience professionnelle ainsi que le domaine de spécialisation de l'auteur ne sont pas présentés. Toutefois, on nous dit qu'il est "praticien de longue date," et "professeur dans un centre d'orientation et de formation des immigrants."

L'auteur promeut la communication entre l'enseignant et les étudiants comme méthode pédagogique dans l'enseignement de L2. Toutefois, il le fait au détriment des enseignants qui utilisent du matériel didactique dans leur profession. Il va même jusqu'à porter un jugement sur les capacités d'analyse des enseignants ainsi que sur l'effet négatif que peut avoir leur enseignement sur la créativité des étudiants: "L'expérience du didactisme a certainement affecté la capacité d'analyse des faits et empêché la créativité de plusieurs de se manifester" (p. 38). L'auteur ne présente aucun résultat de recherche qui supporte cette opinion. Il s'agit bien ici d'une opinion personnelle et non pas d'un argument soutenu par la présentation de la littérature dans le domaine.

La force du livre réside dans les schémas qui illustrent les différents processus reliés à la communication verbale dans l'apprentissage de L2 (interaction grammaticale-linguistique), ainsi que les différentes étapes d'intervention dans l'approche communicative.

Les nombreuses grilles d'évaluation et tableaux de planification présentés dans le livre sont clairs, pratiques et spécifiques. Ils peuvent sûrement être utiles à tout enseignant de L2 peu importe la méthodologie d'enseignement favorisée.

L'une des faiblesses du livre réside dans la sur-organisation de l'information et dans la maigreur de la bibliographie. L'auteur schématise avec brio chaque concept à l'étude mais toutefois, il omet de présenter un schéma synthèse qui relie et illustre les liens entre les différents concepts présentés.

On se retrouve donc perdu dans une mer de concepts, de sous-concepts et de facteurs d'influence variés. Quant à la bibliographie, elle ne comprend que six références dont seulement une est récente (1994). Les cinq autres, beaucoup moins récentes, sont datées de 1972 à 1986. Les éléments théoriques qui pourraient supporter la méthodologie présentée sont absents. Toutefois, on nous apprend dans la bibliographie que l'auteur a écrit un mémoire de maîtrise au début des années 1980. Cette information aurait dû être présentée en début de lecture pour éclairer le lecteur sur la formation professionnelle de l'auteur. Au même endroit, on mentionne l'influence des théories de l'école de Palo Alto dans l'approche pédagogique suggérée, soit la communication formative à supports non didactiques. Cette précieuse information aurait aussi dû être divulguée en début de lecture afin de donner un cadre de référence au lecteur. De plus, l'auteur aurait eu avantage à expliquer les prémices de cette École pour aider à la compréhension des idées et permettre au lecteur de faire des liens entre la pratique et la théorie.

Où sont donc la théorie, les résultats de recherche, et les expériences professionnelles qui supportent la communication formative en L2? En fait, présente-t-on vraiment une méthodologie pédagogique ou plutôt une philosophie d'enseignement? La première est basée sur des arguments spécifiques qui émanent des connaissances dans le milieu tandis que la seconde est le fruit d'une idéologie basée sur nos croyances et notre vécu personnel. Quelles sont les croyances et les expériences professionnelles de l'auteur? Le peu d'information à ce sujet rend plus difficile l'assimilation des idées de l'auteur.

Nadia Rousseau

The Reviewer

Nadia Rousseau est chargée de cours en psychopédagogie à la Faculté Saint-Jean de l'Université de l'Alberta. Elle complète présentement son doctorat au département d'Éducationnel Psychology à l'Université de l'Alberta. Elle s'intéresse principalement aux difficultés d'apprentissage en immersion française, ainsi qu'à l'utilisation des stratégies cognitives et métacognitives dans l'apprentissage.

The Elements of Language Curriculum: A Systematic Approach to Program Development

James Dean Brown

Newbury House, 1995, ISBN 0-8384-5810-6

This book describes the different phases and activities involved in developing and implementing a sound, rational, and effective language program. There are 7 chapters in the book. The concepts of each chapter are illustrated by two different language programs the author has been involved in. At the end of each chapter there is a summary and a checklist, which organizes

important concepts. In addition, there are review questions and a section in which the reader is asked to reflect on the concepts of the chapter in the context of his or her own teaching situation as well as the example language programs.

The introductory chapter defines terms such as *approach*, *method*, *technique*, and *procedure* as they are used in the language teaching literature. The author describes teaching activities in terms of what teachers and learners actually do: approaches, ways of defining what and how the students learn; syllabuses, ways of organizing the course and materials; techniques, ways of presenting the materials and teaching; and exercises, ways of practicing what has been presented. Types of syllabuses with sample headings from tables of contents, are described. There are examples of layered syllabuses in which materials are organized in more than one way.

In Chapter 2 there is a discussion of needs analysis and a suggestion for narrowing areas of investigations by considering three dichotomies: situation needs versus language needs, objective needs versus subjective needs and linguistic content versus learning processes. Terms such as *delphi technique*, *reliability*, and *validity* are defined and described. Procedures available to needs analysts are also listed and described.

In Chapter 3 the pros and cons of curriculum objectives are argued. Whether goals are derived from objectives, or vice versa, developers must think about the purposes of the program at several levels of specificity. The author lists a number of needs, then shows how these can be changed into goal statements and objectives. The steps are summarized.

Chapter 4 describes testing decisions based on categories of tests: proficiency, placement, achievement, and diagnosis. These tests are described with respect to specificity, focus, purpose, and type of comparison. Norm-referenced and criterion-referenced tests are described and compared according to use, purpose, distribution of scores, test design, and students' knowledge of test questions.

In Chapter 5 Dean discusses the possibilities of adopting, adapting or developing materials. There are checklists for adopting textbooks and developing materials from scratch and a table of steps for adapting materials.

Chapter 6 concerns the orientation of staff and involvement of teachers in the curriculum, including sections on how to support and monitor teachers. Included in a discussion of types of observations is a sample administrator observation form that highlights positive aspects of the lesson with space for suggestions. There is a list of descriptors for classroom observers. Student evaluations are discussed at some length.

Four approaches to program evaluation are outlined in the final chapter. The issues of program effectiveness, efficiency, and attitudes are organized around questions to be posed and primary data sources for each of the curriculum development elements.

This book would be a welcome text in adult education courses. It is well organized and explains issues clearly from a variety of viewpoints. The review questions at the end of each chapter are included with this purpose in mind. The book is also an excellent resource for classroom teachers. The style of writing makes the information easily accessible and the many tables add clarity. The author not only defines many terms, but describes them with several examples. As well, he describes curriculum design in the context of change, flexibility, and differing viewpoints. This book affirms what teachers do and includes them as a necessary part of curriculum design. Throughout the book the author reiterates his position that one purpose of all the elements of curriculum design is to support teachers and help them to do what they do best: teach.

Experienced curriculum developers may find little new in the book. The definitions, comparisons, and illustrations would be of limited interest. Nevertheless, the clarity of concepts and issues model how administrators and curriculum designers can make the curriculum design process more collaborative and accessible to those who will be directly involved in the delivery.

Marg Armstrong

The Reviewer

Marg Armstrong is working on her master's degree in adult education at the University of Alberta. She has taught at all proficiency levels at Alberta Vocational College, Edmonton for several years, and is currently coordinating a neighborhood program for AVC..

Pragmatics

George Yule

Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996

142 pages (xi-138) ISBN: 0-19-437207-3

This book, as the back cover succinctly states, is part of a series of "brief surveys intended for readers new to the formal study of language." It is intended as a "broad map of the terrain" (p. xi) of pragmatics, before a reader goes on to a more detailed study of the area. This guidebook to pragmatics consists of a general survey of the key concepts of the area, selected in-depth readings on those concepts, an annotated reference section of appropriate texts and articles, and finally the glossary.

About two thirds of the book (pp. 1-90) comprises Section I, the survey. Yule breaks the field of pragmatics down into nine short chapters of dual headings such as Deixis and Distance; Reference and Inference; Politeness and Interaction. The chapters follow a specific to general order. Semantic, syntactic, and pragmatic specifics about utterances are tackled in earlier chapters; later chapters begin analysis of whole conversations in context. In

each chapter salient terms appear in boldface type and can then be found in the glossary. The second section, readings, is a series of short excerpts from texts by other linguists prominent in the field of pragmatics. Organized according to the contents of each chapter, each excerpt presents the reader with a viewpoint that elaborates on a concept presented by Yule in the survey. Yule invites readers to question and compare the new viewpoint with what they have encountered in the survey with three or four thought-provoking questions. In trying to answer these questions, a reader can start along the road to a "more specific and specialized enquiry" (p. xii) of pragmatics. The third section of the book is a list of references, also broken down by chapter content. Yule provides a one- or two-sentence synopsis of each reference while indicating where the reader should focus his or her attention. Each reference is classified as either introductory, more advanced/technical, or specialized/very demanding.

Chapter 1, Definitions and Background, is a neat and tidy setup and overview of the study of pragmatics, how linguists study it, and how Yule approaches it in the book. On the very first page Yule gives four subexplanations of pragmatics with four accompanying italicized definitions. The four definitions are: Pragmatics is the study of (1) speaker meaning, (2) contextual meaning, (3) how more gets communicated than is said, and (4) relative distance. Yule is always careful to relate his explanations and examples back to these four definitions. As a result they serve as excellent signposts for any explanation the reader comes across in the rest of the book. Yule also sets out from the first to make the book user-friendly by telling the reader not just what pragmatics is, but why it would be interesting for anyone to study, and even how it is often quite frustrating to study. In the rest of this first chapter Yule tells the story of how pragmatics rose from having a low status in the field of linguistics—that is, once deemed hardly worthy of study—to a legitimate field of inquiry. By setting the linguistic and historical scene for the study of pragmatics, Yule nicely backs up the claim in the preface of "preparing the conceptual ground" (p. xi) for the reader in the chapters to follow. At the end of Chapter 1, as at the end of all chapters, Yule introduces the topic of the next chapter. This practice maintains momentum and a smooth continuity for the survey section.

Having painted the broad pragmatic picture for the reader in Chapter 1, in each following chapter Yule lays out two individual areas of study, shows how they relate to one of the four main areas of pragmatics, and illustrates them with one or two pertinent examples. I found these examples specific without being esoteric, and drawn from everyday or even personal experience. They are all easily understandable by the lay reader, even in the chapter on the dreaded logical Presupposition and Entailment. In this chapter especially, Yule is careful never to take for granted that the reader sees the point of a distinction or example. He always spells it out.

The last three chapters of the survey will be those of most interest to educators and researchers in the field of ESL. Chapter 7, *Politeness and Interaction*, discusses the social awareness that interlocutors must use in English to save face and be polite when speaking English. Chapter 8, *Conversation and Preference Structure*, breaks down how a speaker and hearer exchange utterances in regular patterns to produce a coherent, meaningful conversation. Strategies such as taking turns successfully, back-channeling, and remaining silent are necessary to keep a conversation flowing in sequence. Being aware of how politeness and conversation strategies are used in English is a necessary step to teaching them to nonnative speakers of English whose pragmatic strategies may be different. Chapter 9, *Discourse and Culture*, brings this pragmatics guidebook full circle to analysis of a "much broader area of the form and function of what is said and written" (p. 83), that is, *Discourse Analysis*. This short chapter discusses the notions of schemas and scripts. Here the reader is introduced briefly to the potential for pragmatic cross-cultural differences. Yule ends the survey on a cross-cultural note by encouraging the reader and researchers to explore issues in cross-cultural pragmatics further. ESL educators are in a prime position to undertake this task, or at the very least to appreciate its complexity and scope.

In summary, this pragmatics handbook is a clear, well-written, satisfying book to read. It would be a useful addition to any linguistics library, especially one with an ESL or applied orientation.

Martha Gibson

The Reviewer

Martha Gibson is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Linguistics at the University of Alberta. Her research interests include the acquisition of English prosody and pragmatics by second language speakers, especially Russian speakers of English.
