Intercultural Communication
Ron Scollon and Suzanne Wong Scollon. Oxford: Blackwell, 1995. Pp. ix+271. ISBN 0-631-19488-6 (hbk): £40.00. ISBN 0-631-19489-4 (pbk): £13.99

This book by Ron Scollon and Suzanne Wong Scollon is written for professionals interested in understanding and improving their communication with people from different cultural or discourse groups. The strength of this book lies in the authors’ interpretation of intercultural or interdiscourse communication to include the view that culture is a discourse system. Even though the authors state that the book is intended for North American and English-speaking Asian professionals, their practical guidelines for improving face-to-face communication are valuable to everyone involved in interdiscourse communication. The thorough treatment by the authors reflects their in-depth knowledge of the complex nature of the subject matter.

In the first chapter, the authors propose a discourse approach for the analysis of intercultural communication. They begin with the assumption that human communication is inherently ambiguous because we cannot express everything clearly through language; we often have to draw tentative inferences about meaning depending on the social context and the relationship of the interlocutors. Because of the limitations of language, misinterpretation and miscommunication are common phenomena in human communication. To improve communication, Scollon and Scollon propose that we should: (1) increase our knowledge of the people with whom we are communicating and (2) learn how to cope with miscommunication. We need to understand that ‘the most successful professional communicator is not one who believes he or she is an expert in crossing boundaries of discourse systems, but, rather, the person who strives to learn as much as possible about other discourse systems while recognising that except within his or her discourse systems he or she is likely to always remain a novice’ (p. 15). In Chapters 2–5, the authors outline in detail how shared knowledge can reduce ambiguity in communication, and how miscommunication can be understood through sociolinguistic study of conversational inferences.

In Chapter 6, Scollon and Scollon propose a multi-dimensional discourse framework and argue strongly against simplistic definitions of discourse systems using just one single dimension. In their comprehensive framework, discourse systems are seen in four dimensions: (1) ideology (the historical and social characteristics of the group), (2) socialisation (membership and identity), (3) forms of discourse, and (4) face systems (human relationships). The authors exemplify this conceptual framework with their analysis of the ‘Utilitarian discourse system’ (p. 98); understanding ideology in discourse is seen to be crucial in this framework because ideology is related to power and is the most influential component of the discourse system. According to the authors, ‘Utilitarianism’ (p. 102), based on the philosophy of Jeremy Bentham and developed by John Stuart Mill, has become the ideological basis of contemporary Western society. The Utilitarian ideology has seven principles: happiness for the greatest
number, progress, individual freedom and equality, rationality, creativity, technology and invention, and quantitative evaluation. These values are imparted to society through the school system. The forms of discourse preferred are ‘anti-rhetorical’, ‘positivist-empirical’, ‘deductive’, ‘individualistic’, ‘egalitarian’, and ‘public (institutionally sanctioned)’ (p. 107). In Utilitarian discourse, the face system is egalitarian in public discourse and hierarchical in institutional discourse. At the same time, the discourse system ‘prescribes a face system of asymmetry and hierarchy with any and all non-members’ (p. 117). The Utilitarian system has been accepted as the ‘natural way to communicate’ (pp. 117–118) by the majority of professional communicators. The authors believe that this is merely an idealised picture that does not match reality. In reality, the discourse system is much more complex, and includes a variety of forms and practices. Scollon and Scollon take the position that ‘pragmatic effectiveness in communication means participating as fully as possible in the discourse systems of those with whom one is wishing to communicate, while never taking their requirements as simply self-evident’ (p. 121).

In the next chapter, the authors warn us against stereotyping when we define cultural groups based on just one or two dimensions. They obviously do not view a culture as being defined by a group of homogenous people. Therefore, when we attribute certain features to be characteristic of the identity of a discourse group, we are committing a ‘lumping fallacy’ because we do not ‘acknowledge internal differences within a group’ (p. 156). Scollon and Scollon stress that cultures consist of individuals and that we should be cautious of adopting an overgeneralised and simplistic view of cultural or discourse groups. A more serious problem in intercultural discourse is to assume a ‘cultural ideology’ (p. 154), placing value judgements on a discourse system and believing that one system is better or worse than another. Such a biased view of a discourse system will ‘limit our understanding of human behaviour and of intercultural discourse’ (p. 156). The authors believe that stereotyping can be minimised if people are ‘culturally sensitive’ (p. 121) to the patterns of commonalities and differences between discourse systems and accept that individuals are not all similar or homogenous within the same cultural group.

Using their proposed discourse framework, the authors describe four different discourse systems in the last four chapters: corporate, professional, generational, and gender. The purpose is to make us realise that people do simultaneously belong to multiple discourse systems. Their analysis allows them to foresee that belonging to different discourse systems, especially with competing ideologies, could lead to the problem of ‘cross-cutting identities’ (p. 195) in interdiscourse communication. The authors exemplify this problem with ESL (English as a Second Language) teachers who are members of a professional discourse system such as the TESOL (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages) and a corporate discourse system such as the universities or private institutions which employ them. ESL teachers will experience ‘cross-cutting identities’ when their professional goals are in conflict with the corporate goals. To cope with such conflict in identities and group membership, the authors wisely suggest that the individual has to accept that such a problem is inevitable and ‘constantly tune and adjust his or her sense of identity and membership so that the goals of both systems are at least minimally satisfied’ (p. 204).
As an ESL teacher who frequently communicates and interacts with students from diverse cultural or discourse groups, I could easily relate to and identify with some of the issues and problems that Scollon and Scollon have discussed in this book. In particular, the practical suggestions given by the authors are relevant and useful in ESL teaching contexts. They argue that teachers need to be sensitive to students’ discourse systems and to guard themselves against cultural ideology and stereotyping through the placing of value judgements on students’ discourse style. Understanding and accepting students as ‘novices’ would be an effective strategy in helping intercultural communication. On the other hand, having teachers acknowledge that they are also learners in classroom interdiscourse communication is just as important. When teachers learn more about the discourse systems of their students, more effective teaching can take place with misinterpretation and miscommunication minimised.

Overall, *Intercultural Communication* is informative, insightful, and pragmatic. The authors have presented a realistic, balanced, and comprehensive view of the concepts and complexities of intercultural or interdiscourse communication. It is highly recommended for teachers and professionals whose jobs require them to communicate with different discourse or cultural groups. The practical suggestions provided by the authors to improve interdiscourse communication are sound and sensible.

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*Gender Articulated: Language and the Socially Constructed Self*  
Kira Hall and Mary Bucholtz (eds). New York and London: Routledge, 1995. Pp. x + 512. ISBN 0-415-91398-5 (hbk): £50.00. 0-415-91399-3 (pbk): £16.99.

This volume, which originates from the Second Berkeley Women and Language Conference, 1992, is dedicated to Robin Lakoff. The Introduction situates it ‘Twenty years after *Language and Woman’s Place*, which the editors claim ‘was and continues to be a highly subversive text’ (p. 19) and which they ‘wish to rescue … for contemporary use by reading it from perspectives that differ from those of earlier reviewers’ (p. 1). I will deal with its three sections in sequence.

**Part 1: Mechanisms of hegemony and control**

This section opens, unsurprisingly, with a contribution from Lakoff herself, who writes here not about women’s speech but about men’s silencing of women. She is wrong in believing that there is ‘only a single collection of papers on silence (Tannen & Saville-Troike, 1985)’: there is, at least, Jaworski (1993) as well. Many of Lakoff’s points have, in fact, already been made elsewhere, e.g. by Spender (1980). Lakoff has never let the data get in the way of a good theory, and her discussion of men’s interruptions is scarcely hindered by the finding that most studies on the subject ‘do not corroborate the asserted tendency of men to interrupt women’ (p. 27). She does contribute some new material by adding ‘nonresponse’ and ‘interpretive control’ to the list of silencing mechanisms, along with the better-known and studied strategies of interruptions and topic control.
Lakoff’s commentaries on recent high-profile events will be at variance with many readers’ understandings of language and life. For instance, commending Hilary Rodham Clinton, on the grounds that by changing her styles of hair and dress she constructed herself as ‘not so much a photo opportunity as a policy maker’; or appropriating Lacan’s theories of the phallus to allege that ‘John Bobbitt’s crime was that he talked out of turn and Lorena silenced him by removing his ‘capacity for speech’ (p. 40). I fear that Lakoff is not even attempting a sick joke, but is disturbingly serious.

Mendoza-Denton analyses the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearing tapes, arguing that the senators use language to make Hill give answers which are less concise and cumulatively less coherent than Thomas’s. Like Lakoff (1986), she is well aware that tag questions have many functions: in the courtroom, at least, they are often used by the powerful to restrict the range of answers available to the powerless. At times one might question both her statistics and her categories (‘There are two types of yes/no questions in English: simple yes/no questions and tag questions’ (p. 55)); nonetheless this is a useful contribution to the study of legal and quasi-legal discourse as well as of language and gender.

Herring, Johnson and DiBenedetto’s detailed account of how women are silenced on the Internet is much more convincing, and may be more useful for teaching purposes, than Lakoff’s offering. There must be thousands of female Internet-users who, like myself, have at times been ‘flamed’ or even electronically harassed. Studies like this can deconstruct such practices and facilitate discussion of questions like ‘who decides what constitutes an off-topic posting?’ and ‘what, if anything, should be censored on the Internet?’.

The white, middle-class American women participating in the family dinner-time conversations studied by Ochs and Taylor were not literally silenced; on the contrary, they typically took the lead in eliciting or initiating a narrative from one of the children, with the father/husband as the intended ‘primary recipient’. This, however, had the effect of ‘giving fathers a platform for monitoring and judging wives and children’ (p. 117), thereby perpetuating the ‘Father knows best’ power dynamic. We will know we have arrived at an egalitarian society when women return home from work to be greeted by their partners with ‘Honey, tell the children what you did today’.

Houghton’s ‘Managing the Body of Labour’ derives from a two-year study of group therapy sessions involving ‘problem’ Latina adolescents in state-funded institutions. She argues that resistance as well as authority manifests itself covertly, and sometimes overtly, in the form taken by the therapist-patient interaction. This chapter would have been even better if it had incorporated more background information, a more accessible style of writing and more actual extracts from the ‘therapeutic’ discourse.

Despite the opacity of her post-structuralist introduction, Talbot provides a persuasive analysis of a beauty feature in Jackie magazine, showing how its synthetic personalisation, shared knowledge and reciprocity contribute to an ideology of teenage femininity which is concerned with work and socialisation as well as sexuality, and is actively negotiated as well as passively absorbed by young women. Indeed, their involvement in constructing their own femininity extends to using such magazines oppositionally, as a focus of rebellion against school or parental values.
Part 2: Agency through appropriation

This section explores ‘women’s diverse forms of contestation and resistance to dominant definitions of gender categories and of women’s speech’ (p. 178).

Gal’s introductory chapter makes the rather obvious point that sociolinguistic and cultural studies approaches need each other. Neither microscopic analysis of language usage patterns in a social group, nor a broad description of its prevailing ideology, can be adequate in isolation. However, while Gal praises Okamoto (q.v.) for unmasking ‘women’s Japanese’ as an ideological construct, she herself seems to accept unquestioningly ‘men’s expertise in competitive talk’ (p. 178) when discussing Edelsky’s (1981) study of faculty meetings in an American college.

Hall’s ‘Lip Service on the Fantasy Lines’ provides some revealing insights into the work, and attitudes towards it, of San Francisco phone-sex operators. These workers’ discourse actually conforms to the patterns described in Lakoff (1975), using colour terms like peach and apricot to describe their preferred underwear. Yet the operators themselves — including the Mexican-American bisexual man ‘playing’ a range of heterosexual female roles — are well aware that they are exploiting stereotypes. They typically describe themselves as ‘artists’ or ‘storytellers’ and are more concerned with the lack of a trade union or health-care benefits than with issues like pornography or sexual oppression. Hall explores the linguistic paradox of how they use their verbal skills to simulate shared knowledge and intimacy with total strangers, along with the social paradox of how they exploit sexual stereotypes of weakness and submission — expressed entirely by linguistic means — in order to gain financial power and social freedom.

McElhinny’s study of how a Pittsburgh policeman and policewoman handle comparable incidents of alleged domestic violence demonstrates how male and female officers alike use language to achieve ‘facelessness in face-to-face interaction’, apparently in order to avoid emotional involvement which would be costly in both personal and professional terms. Today’s model police officers are more middle-class than their predecessors, because their competence is evaluated on their teamwork and report-writing skills rather than their ability to display aggression and physical force; but the ideal is still a masculine one, because they are required to be ‘objective’ and ‘rational’ rather than empathetic with their ‘clients’.

Livia’s investigation into lesbian literature makes a witty, refreshingly critical and highly readable contribution to the growing field of research in ‘lavender language’, despite her penchant for bizarre self-indulgent footnotes. She concludes that the language of the butch heroine depends more on intertextual references than on a folk-linguistic stereotype of male speech, let alone an accurate model of men’s talk. Butch characters created by white lesbian writers (the ‘strong silent types’: gruff, monosyllabic, unable to express emotion except through song lyrics) are likely to be based on Chandler’s Philip Marlowe or on a Clint Eastwood character; while the heroines of African-American novelists tend to draw on the models of the charismatic preacher or the jazz singer, which lend themselves less easily to butch/femme labelling.

Sutton’s survey of slang among Berkeley undergraduates reinforces both a similar study of UCLA students (Munro, 1989) and the earlier claims of Lakoff,
and Schulz (1975), that there are more derogatory words for women than for men, and that such words tend to be sexual in nature. However, a minority of Sutton’s female subjects reported using ‘bitch’ and ‘ho’ (= whore) in friendly banter among their peers. She suggests that this apparent reclamation of pejorative names — comparable to similar processes which have gone farther with ‘nigga’ or ‘queer’ among Black and gay communities respectively — is an attempt to establish individual and collective identities rather than to imitate men.

Okamoto examines Japanese ‘women’s language’, concluding that it is an ideological construct ‘based largely on the speech style of traditional women in the middle and upper-middle classes in Tokyo’ (p. 309). Perhaps the gender differences never were very marked in rural areas or in non-standard regional dialects. Moreover, the younger women studied by Okamoto displayed more neutral and even moderately ‘masculine’ forms in their casual speech than forms traditionally regarded as ‘feminine’. Perhaps younger women comprise the vanguard of change in ‘defeminizing’ Japanese, which their elders are resisting; or perhaps individual women adopt more ‘feminine’ styles as they grow older.

Part 3: Contingent practices and emergent selves

The papers in this final section demonstrate how women construct their own identities through ‘acts of resistance and innovation’ (p. 15).

Foster focuses on African-American women — a hitherto neglected group — claiming that the teachers in her study display versatility of expression in classroom and interview situations. However, ‘code-switching’ is an inappropriate term to describe occasional uses of multiple negation, especially since none of the other syntactic features commonly associated with BVE (copula omission, etc.) were used by her interviewees. This would tend to confirm the traditional belief of sociolinguists that ‘women adhere to the prestige code more than men’ (p. 347), which Foster is too quick to dismiss.

Bucholtz argues that ‘passing’ as a member of an ethnic group other than one’s own is not always a sign of denial or alienation, and should be compared to the subversion of gender identities involved in drag, cross-dressing etc. which is discussed approvingly by ‘queer’ theorists. While the mixed-race women she interviewed constructed their ethnic identities in a variety of ways, none of them reported ‘passing’ as white. This construction work is largely linguistic in nature, and may involve either revealing or concealing the extent of one’s bilingual ability.

Goldstein’s data from production-line workers in Toronto seriously challenge the ideological assumptions behind workplace ESL teaching provision. These women knew they had little hope of obtaining better-paid jobs merely by improving their English; instead they concentrated their efforts on strengthening the sisterly solidarity of their peer-group network through the medium of gossip in Portuguese. Goldstein argues that English could nonetheless be useful to such women, for instance in empowering them to resist sexual harassment in the workplace and to participate in trade union activities: she advocates a ‘critical pedagogy of ESL’ to this end.

Cook-Gumperz offers a persuasive analysis of the various ‘voices’ in the dialogue produced by three-year-old girls playing ‘mummies and babies’. The
linguistic and metalinguistic abilities displayed in these transcripts far exceed those usually discernible in adult–child discourse. However, the findings are embedded in a model of gender identity acquisition which I find deeply problematic, being premised on a dogma derived from de Beauvoir that ‘girls must go from experiencing a model of all-powerful womanhood that mothers offer their daughters … to finding that adult women’s lives offer models of subordination’ (p. 403). One also suspects that a comparison with boys’ dialogues, or with ‘egocentric’ speech of children playing alone, might reveal that many of the features uncovered here will not be confined to ‘mummies and babies’ games, and may have less to do with the negotiation of gendered identity than Cook-Gumperz claims.

Gonzales-Velásquez depicts in detail the shifting patterns of language use among three generations of Chicana women in a New Mexico village. Their choices between Spanish, English and ‘code-switching’ are motivated by a complex combination of factors including age, life experiences, respect for one’s elders, accommodation to interlocutors, maintenance of cultural identity and displays of group solidarity. These are skilled ‘cultural brokers’ whose use of English and code-switching, far from being symptomatic of L1 attrition, demonstrate that they are secure enough in their own linguistic and cultural identities to build bridges with non-Spanish speaking communities through linguistic innovation.

A series of graffiti in a women’s toilet comprise the unconventional data for Moonwomn’s analysis. The developing arguments about an alleged inter-racial rape on a university campus make it clear that, contrary to received wisdom, women-only discussion is quite capable of being vehement and confrontational. Moonwomn makes some valid points about the tensions between anti-racist and anti-sexist discourses, but on the whole she displays a talent for stating the obvious in obscure language: do we really need terminology like ‘the situated co-saliency of differently delimited oppressions’ (p. 448)? Some angry graffiti of my own appeared in the margins of her article.

Eckert and McConnell-Ginet paint a vivid picture of the competitive ethos and ‘compulsory heterosexuality’ prevalent at an American high school. Student aspirations are polarised between the overt prestige coveted by the ‘jocks’ and the covert prestige cultivated by the ‘burnouts’, which are epitomised by sporting achievements and illicit substance use respectively. For both these ‘communities of practice’, the repertoire of acceptable behaviours is more constrained for females. While quoting extensively from interviews with students of both sexes and both social groupings, this chapter does not present much data that I would call linguistic: the statistics on shifts in vowel pronunciation are included as an afterthought.

**Summary**

The division into sections is artificial: for instance, ‘agency through appropriation’ is not only exemplified in chapters such as that of Gal, who mentions (p. 173) the women reading romance novels in stolen moments in Radway’s (1987) study, and the subversive oral poetry of Bedouin women and youths observed by Abu-Lughod (1986); it is a recurring theme which also appears in Section 1, e.g. the Latina women having babies (Houghton) or the teenagers reading Jackie behind their desks (Talbot).

An index would have been helpful: valuable summaries of the literature, e.g.
on interruptions, or pornography, or silence, are scattered through the articles and it would be useful to be able to access them readily. Admittedly this would be unusual for a multi-authored publication. But we have the technology — and hey, why conform to patriarchal structures?

My main problem with this book is that it packages what is often excellent, original research in a way which will alienate many readers, including the women students at whom it is presumably targeted. Few of the contributors seem to share Cameron’s ‘concern to demystify language and linguistics’ (1992: vi). Even the section and chapter titles are pretentious: ‘Challenging Hegemonic Masculinities’, ‘Constructing Meaning, Constructing Selves’. This is a book for the converted: specifically the middle-class, American, post-modernist converted.

We should not be surprised: as the editors acknowledge (p. 6), Lakoff herself is primarily concerned with ‘the ideologically dominant socialization process of middle-class European American women’. This is abundantly clear from her own chapter, despite her more down-to-earth ‘Postscript’ deploring the recent ‘backlash’ and its likely consequences (see Faludi, 1991), and her apparent support for recent studies on language in the workplace (p. 48).

As Lakoff at least admits, ‘It may be time to do some work, within the confines of scholarly discourse or not, on converting the yet unconverted’ (p. 48).

Quite.

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Working with Texts: A Core Book for Language Analysis

R. Carter, A. Goddard, D. Reah, K. Sanger and M. Bowring. London: Routledge, 1997. Pp. xv+332. ISBN 0-415-14596-1 (hbk): £45.00. ISBN 0-415-1459-X (pbk): £12.99.

In this book the reader is introduced to certain linguistic concepts as exemplified in whole-text, naturally occurring data; decontextualised and/or invented examples of language are largely avoided. In terms of page space, more than half
of the book consists of texts or long text extracts; in the case of published texts these are often reproduced in their original form with accompanying visuals. The texts have two functions: first, as data sources which Carter et al. (henceforth C&A) draw on to introduce and illustrate linguistic concepts and terminology; second, as objects on which readers are invited to carry out analytical activities for themselves. So, for example, the concept of pronoun is introduced via the absence of pronouns in a given text, a poem. A definition is given and there is a reader activity: compile a list of pronouns and their referents and account for their high frequency in a second text, a leaflet produced by a dairy announcing a price increase to its customers. The authors then provide a commentary on the second text.

C&A have divided their coverage of text/language into five units moving generally from micro to macro features:

1. Signs and sounds;
2. Words and things;
3. Sentences and structures;
4. Text and context: written discourse;
5. Text and context: spoken discourse.

Several of the book’s authors are employed by an English Language A-level board, so I presume the content reflects a typical examination syllabus. For the general reader, however, a little more explanation of the book’s content and what body of knowledge or procedures is aimed at, would be welcome. C&A describe their aim as ‘to provide a foundation for the analysis of texts in order to support students in any discipline who want to achieve a detailed focus on language’ (p. xiii). The blurb asserts the focus to be those ‘aspects of English crucial in the analysis of texts’. These wordings ascribe to ‘analysis of texts’ a kind of self-evident content area. In fact, like ‘discourse analysis’ and ‘text analysis’, the content area is far from being self-evident. For some, discourse or text analysis represents the macro-level end of the linguistic spectrum, at the other end from phonology, and is understood to be about supra-sentential systems and structures. For others, text/discourse analysis comprehends the whole of linguistics and is essentially a cross-disciplinary undertaking. The potential inter-disciplinary scope of text/discourse analysis is enormous — as a glance at the chapter headings in the recent collection edited by van Dijk (1997) shows. Some would also make a distinction between text and discourse, but C&A don’t seem to be in the last camp. Generally, their ‘analysis of texts’ tends more to the ‘whole of linguistics’ version of discourse analysis, including phonetics for example. They venture little into cross-disciplinary areas.

Hatch (1992: 1), in her introductory survey of discourse analysis, usefully warns readers that the purposes of the analysis are actually rather important in terms of procedure:

There is no agreed upon set of analytic procedures for the description of discourse. The units and processes defined in an analysis depend on the goals of the study.

C&A never make their own analytical goals explicit. I infer their working definition of ‘text’ to be something like ‘cultural product’ and their analytical goals to
be mainly evaluative/literary/cultural, addressing questions such as ‘what makes this text effective?’ and ‘what does this text tell us about the society/social group of which it is an artefact?’. Questions such as ‘what does this text tell us about the language system/human cognition/language acquisition?’ are not addressed. By avoiding mention of differing goals or linguistic disciplines (stylistics, sociolinguistics etc.), and by making such claims to centrality as ‘foundation’, ‘core’ and ‘crucial’, C&A give the somewhat misleading impression that ‘text analysis’ is autonomous and that the kind of text analysis evidenced in their commentaries is text analysis. It may be inevitable that an introductory work like this will present only certain aspects of text analysis, but it seems a pity that this is not acknowledged a little more clearly.

The commentaries here follow a literary ‘practical criticism’ paradigm: the reader/commentator critiques a text based on a combination of his/her own cultural knowledge, which is largely unanalysed (because assumed to be shared with other readers), and his/her own subjective response. For a student familiar with this paradigm, the novelty of C&A’s version of text analysis would presumably consist chiefly in (1) the extension of the exercise to non-literary texts, and (2) the adoption of a certain amount of linguistic apparatus. The goal, however, as with literary criticism, remains that of commentary — on either individual works or social phenomena in general. The end product of more linguistically-oriented text analysis, by contrast — for example, the twelve analyses of a single text collected in Mann and Thompson (1992) — would be an explanatory account of the working of some aspect of the language system. C&A do give accounts of some aspects of the language system but their coverage is a little distorted, in my view, because of their focus on literary effect. Conscious manipulation of the language system by professional text-producers is emphasised — for example, how journalists use active verbs to allocate responsibility and how novelists use representations of non-RP vowels to indicate class. Unconscious language choices in everyday conversation, on which the conscious ‘literary’ ones are built — for example, how speakers flag ‘news’ or how they hold their turn — are left largely unconsidered.

C&A seem keen to ‘sell’ language study as useful, interesting and accessible. In an apparent reluctance to stray far from textual data, they largely eschew a mapping out of the field or a description and discussion of different approaches — unlike, for example, the more conventional introductions to language study by Yule (1985) or Graddol et al. (1994). This might at first seem a sound sales tactic: linguistic theory can appear disconcertingly abstract and literally ‘useless’. Syntactic and semantic accounts of non-naturally occurring utterances such as ‘The King of France is bald’, can be tedious and seem irrelevant to any likely analytical goal. C&A have unquestionably chosen richer and more engaging data to look at. However, there is a limit to how much it is possible to dispense with a consideration of theoretical issues. Any analysis presupposes a theory. Halliday (perhaps anticipating complaints about the abstraction and complexity of his own ‘introduction’ to grammar?) has argued:

A discourse analysis that is not based on grammar is not an analysis at all, but simply a running commentary ... the exercise remains a private one in
The aptly named commentaries which form a large part of the meat of this book seem to me to offer full evidence of the justice of that view.

C&A emphasise the quantity and variety of the texts they have selected but this emphasis is possibly a little misplaced. With the exception of transcripts of unrehearsed spoken data, which unfortunately account for only four out of the 80 or so texts assembled here, access to textual data (advertising copy, newspaper reports, junk mail, and English literature texts figure largely) is not likely to be a problem for readers living in an Anglophone environment, certainly not the A-level and undergraduate students mentioned in the blurb. Perhaps the act of reproducing non-literary texts alongside literary texts is intended as a kind of consciousness-raising act for UK secondary school students, aimed at encouraging them to collect such data for themselves and perceive it as worthy of study. Mass reproduction of texts on this scale certainly saves the teacher from having to distribute sheaves of photocopying but has the disadvantage of reducing the amount of page space available for analysis and discussion.

Unit 1 introduces signs, differences in written/spoken language, and phonology lucidly, economically and entertainingly. As one would expect in a book with Ronald Carter’s name on the cover, the book is strong throughout on lexical choice, introduced in Unit 2. Topics covered include ambiguity, metaphor, idiom, language change, and taboos and euphemisms. Unit 3, on grammar, looks at the noun phrase, the verb phrase, and clauses/sentences, using the metaphor of grammar as ‘pattern’. Unit 4, on written discourse, introduces the Halliday and Hasan (1976) view of cohesion and information structure (their work is quoted in the text, though strangely absent from the bibliography) in an interesting way in a variety of texts.

Overall, however, on aspects of language above the sentence the book seems a little thin. It is surprising, for example, in Unit 4, on written text, to find Labov (1972) on narrative the only general theory of text structure covered, and no reference made to Clause Relations, Given-New, RST, or any account of genre analysis. Unit 5, on spoken discourse, does introduce the Cooperative Principle, a Politeness Principle (R. Lakoff’s, 1984 — not fully referenced) rather than Brown and Levinson’s (1987), and Conversation Analysis, but oddly chooses to focus on prepared speeches and literary representations of speech. Neither section looks at influential theories of communication (system and ritual constraints) or cognition (scripts and schemata).

C&A are clearly very interested in the relation between language and society: their own egalitarian ideology is clear in their commentaries on texts chosen to illustrate British social attitudes to language use by women and ethnic minorities. Overall, however, one senses a kind of mismatch between C&A’s analytical goals and the particular analytical apparatus on which they have chosen to focus. A common goal of the commentaries seems to be to demonstrate ideology in texts, but much of the apparatus explored, that part of Functional Grammar concerned with ‘texture’, is designed to demonstrate what makes a text cohesive and/or coherent. In terms of the Hallidayan triad of metafunctions, the book overall, and particularly in Unit 4, majors on this textual function, text as co-text. It
glances at the experiential function, *text as representation*, in the section on passive/active and transitive/intransitive in Unit 3. However, overall it tends to neglect the interpersonal function, *text as interaction*, which would seem to be the most natural starting point for analysing how social relations are demonstrated/regulated by language choices. Understandably, the sheer size and complexity of Functional Grammar may have deterred the authors in this respect, but without the power of systemic-functional analyses, a lot of their commentary appears somewhat unfocused. There are brief discussions of ‘linguistic determinism’ and ‘intertextuality’ but no explicit reference is made to Critical Discourse Analysis. Texts are depicted as ‘representing/misrepresenting’ culture rather than constituting it: this embodies a traditional literary perspective, perhaps.

C&A often try to set out a link between language choices and their effect on their reader/hearer, and encourage the reader to do this, for example: ‘say what effect the leaflet has on you. Pay particular attention to the choices of language’ (p. 155). However, by neglecting the systemic network of choices open to speakers in the grammar, and focusing instead on ‘texture’, they have not equipped the reader to do this particularly well. The use of first and second person pronouns in the ‘milk’ text is summarised thus:

> It is an effective piece of writing and it is all the more effective for personalising a message which informs us that the price of milk is to go up. (C&A: 137)

Comments like this seem a little simplistic. Does repeated use of ‘I’, ‘we’ and ‘you’ *per se* really make anyone feel better about their milk bill going up? Will all readers respond in the same way? The following is from another text commentary, illustrating *cohesion*:

> The extract from *Lucky sods* is tightly shaped by cohesion:
> change — wrong — sequence — birthday — change
> and this helps make it what it sets out to be: humorous. (C&A: 287)

In the extract discussed there is cohesion and I, too, found it funny, but for me a causal link has not been shown: is ‘serious’ text *not* cohesive, are ‘humorous’ texts always cohesive? Isn’t cohesion, anyway, a defining property of text? The last two extracts are typical in having no apparent misgivings about claiming to be able to interpret text-producers’ and predict text-receivers’ intentions perfectly. C&A omit reference to any theory of text comprehension or discussion of what might therefore cause a text to be ineffective. As attempts to explain on linguistic grounds how texts create certain effects, commentaries such as these seem to me to be unconvincing. Perhaps text linguistics/discourse analysis is still in too much of a primitive, ‘research’ state for a book with goals such as this to be written. The explanation of complex phenomena such as ‘effectiveness’ and ‘humour’ would really need to go beyond equating linguistic feature X with function Y, and draw on areas of discourse analysis where linguistics necessarily overlaps with other disciplines — sociology, psychology, rhetoric. C&A’s reluctance to engage in theoretical discussion and their tendency to jump from linguistic feature to generalising commentary becomes progressively less satisf-
factory as the book moves from micro (sound, word) to macro (sentence, discourse) level.

Reflecting an approach which is generally more ‘humanities’ than ‘social sciences’ the book lacks reference to what either quantitative or qualitative corpus-based studies have shown, or might show, about the frequency of textual features across genres or text-types. Although words like ‘marked’ are used, readers are largely left to their own intuitions as to what textual features are marked/unmarked. The only quantitative research referenced in the book is on differences in quantity of male/female classroom talk. Even in discussing lexical choice, the book’s strongest area, the probabilistic phenomenon of collocation is not mentioned, there are no keyword-in-context concordances, and no reference is made to corpora, frequency, lexical density, or type-token ratio.

To conclude, this book’s literary and cultural emphases and its consequent omissions — discussion of theoretical issues, description of quantitative analytical approaches — would seem to me to undermine its usefulness as an introduction for the general reader to either language study or text analysis as these terms are usually understood. For EFL/English Literature students overseas who are interested in contemporary British culture, the book will be useful as an anthology of and commentary on various kinds of texts otherwise difficult to obtain. For the UK students for whom it becomes a set text, I hope the strengths of the earlier sections prove sufficiently tempting to encourage further exploration and ‘work with texts’.

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Inspiring Innovations in Language Teaching
Judith Hamilton. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 1995. Pp. vii + 296. ISBN 1-85359-284-6 (hbk): £43.00. ISBN 1-8539-283-8 (pbk): £14.95.

You can tell that this book was written by a teacher — it’s so clear. It begins with an outline, ‘About the Book’, which summarises the main arguments; a sort of ‘pass notes’ for those not quite inspired enough to read the whole thing. I actually turned first to the bibliography, to get an idea of where Hamilton was coming
from, and saw several familiar (too familiar?) names from ELT, such as the Bangalore Project (Alderson & Beretta, 1992). But ‘About this Book’ did whet my appetite. There was enough promise of new ideas to make me want to read more.

Hamilton addresses personal issues such as the angst engendered by conflicts of self-value (as a caring, loyal, professional teacher) and self-interest (whether our career ambitions are to be realised), and how these relate to management. As she insists, ‘Innovation … requires good management practices … The question of what constitutes good management, of teachers and their pupils, as well as of those who manage and train teachers, lies at the heart of much of this book, since unless the possibility for innovation is built into the structure of an institution, it will become an affair of chance, left to the individual teacher, whose good efforts, lacking a supporting framework, wither on the vine’ (p. 9). Thus she firmly puts people at the centre of the picture — not systems, or structures, or curriculum demands: innovation is a social process.

In the four main sections of the book, Hamilton presents a number of case studies. Through these she identifies factors that enable innovation in education to become the ‘driving force which enhances teachers’ careers and prevents “burn-out”’ (p. 3), and allows education as a service to be ‘responsive, flexible and self-renewing — the key to raising standards’ (ibid.). Part I deals with the legitimising of innovation. It begins with the story of a project in Scotland: the National Pilot in Modern Languages in the Primary School. I say ‘story’ because, as Hamilton explains, the accounts are interlaced with ‘short, scene-setting vignettes, to replicate the missing evidence of the sights and sounds of classrooms, the buzzing of staffroom chatter, the zany unpredictability of the kids — the very stuff of teaching’ (p. 21). These vignettes, together with a strong narrative style, imbue the accounts with the freshness and immediacy that any good story should have. However, some sections, like the eulogy to the field officer for the Pilot (pp. 25–27), could be construed as taking the personal, narrative approach too far. Further on we find a similarly disorienting passage when we are treated to a romantic description of the country lanes of Dumfries and Galway (p. 29), which seems to have no obvious purpose, notwithstanding Hamilton’s own caveat about the use of vignettes (p. 21). But I have to confess, by the time I was halfway into Chapter 2 I had warmed to this approach and couldn’t resist a smile at the image of the pompous school inspector sitting at the back of a classroom and licking his lips ‘like a big fat toad’ (p. 33).

The account of the National Pilot is thus very much a personal one, both in content and style. But the reader should not allow this to distract them from the lessons to be learned. Having set the scene with background information on the Pilot, including the fact that the scheme initially met with strong resistance, in Chapters 2 and 3, Hamilton tells the heartening story of how teachers took this government initiative and effectively hijacked the project, going on to implement it in their own ways and on their own timescales. The project was a success, but its final form was diverse and very different from that envisaged by its originators.

In Chapter 2 we meet the close-knit rural community of Dumfries and Galway, and ‘der kleine Elefant mit seine klitzekleine Nase’ where the project achieves ‘fit’ and acceptance through story-telling, drama and project work in German, and both teachers and pupils are learners. In Chapter 3 we move to Lothian,
where we find a very different manifestation of the National Pilot as French is introduced to the pupils of three primary schools. The context here ranges from the well-disciplined, suburbanite Dean Park school in Edinburgh (‘Good morning. Can we help you?’) to the confident chaos of Ratho (‘Are youse from the secondary?’ ‘Parlez-vous français?’) to the rural backwater of Kirknewton (‘The school clock showed 10.05. It was early afternoon. The head was seeing to some matter involving the boys’ toilets’). The use of games, TPR (Total Physical Response) and a task-based, immersion approach is described. Underpinning the narrative is a discussion of issues such as support for teachers and the roles and relationships between the various project participants. Hamilton is an enthusiastic writer — her goal, after all, is to inspire — but I was left feeling that she sometimes tells a one-sided version of events. Surely there were disagreements, difficulties and challenges too?

Chapter 4 widens the study to take a brief look at the Australian Language Learning (ALL) Project, also initiated by government policy, and Chapter 5, the final chapter of Part I, comprises a consideration of the limitations of top-down, policy driven initiatives. This last chapter is a refreshing mix of standard management concepts (such as ‘dynamic disequilibrium’, which can catalyse innovation), and Hamilton’s own reflections. She constantly refers back to the Scottish National Pilot to illustrate how policy changes ‘might in fact stifle rather than encourage innovation’ (p. 63), or how ‘encouraging a flexible implementation of central proposals’ (ibid.) can aid success. She points out that innovative practices may have nothing to do with policy per se, but are desirable in their own right, since they ‘make for a more motivated, activist and effective teaching force’ (p. 64) and the conditions which support innovation should therefore be fostered.

Parts II to IV follow a similar pattern: a chapter or two on innovations in Scotland, followed by one or two ‘Looking Around’ chapters reporting on related events elsewhere, and finally a ‘Pause for Thought’ to draw together common threads and establish what is to be learned. Part II introduces the campaigning model of innovation and goes on to present two (in Hamilton’s view) successful campaigns: the GLAFL (Graded Levels of Achievement in Foreign Language Learning) project in Scotland and Prabhu’s Bangalore project in India. Chapter 8, ‘Ideology as Inspiration in New Zealand’, in contrast presents a chilling account of recent education policy in New Zealand in which Hamilton’s clear concerns are belied by the chapter title. The ‘Pause for Thought’ on ‘Discouraging Dependency’ ranges in scope from the dubious policies behind foreign aid packages for developing countries to the active encouragement of dependency in the new regime of New Zealand, sinisterly disguised as increased autonomy, to the healthy independence of the GLAFL teachers.

Part III takes as its focus social organisation for innovation, and from an inspirational visit to an experiential school for ‘difficult’ adolescents in Canada we return to Lothian, and Balerno Community High School, where Hamilton herself was Principal Teacher. Here, an action-research approach is used to counter stagnation through continuous innovation, and active involvement of all sectors of the community is the order of the day. At nearly fifty pages, this is by far the longest chapter in the book, again raising questions of balance, but there is a reward for perseverance in the in-depth portraits it paints of the individuals who
together make the institution extraordinary. From Balerno we take a flying visit to the Bronx before pausing to think about ‘Organising for Innovation’, with an emphasis placed on informality and flexibility. The social learning model as inspiration for innovation and the importance of socially integrated schools are emphasised.

The final part takes as its theme the personal qualities inherent in innovation — not just intellectual, but emotional. Management systems are witheringly dismissed in favour of harnessing existing social forces. Chapter 14 provides a welcome endorsement of the rigorous selection procedures for new trainee teachers at Moray House College and the exemplary way the College consults and works with local schools in order to prepare teachers for the community in which they will work. The teacher preparation theme is continued in Chapter 15, but then strangely ‘Looking Around’ is devoted to a list of Hamilton’s favourite books which she has found to be ‘inspirations for innovation’ plus another eulogy, this time to Earl Stevick. Perhaps it is appropriate for a book about innovation to break with convention and include such chapters. By the final chapter we are back on course, pausing to consider the role that researchers can play in innovatory practice, before two parting shots from Hamilton in the form of the appendices, one on market forces and management of teachers (no prizes for guessing Hamilton’s views here), the other a short account of the 1988 Scottish Campaign for Languages.

Woodward (1996) exhorts individuals who are trying to foster change but find their efforts swamped by the inertia of their colleagues or institution, to seek out and read books and articles by other like-minded people in order to alleviate their sense of isolation and futility. Although Hamilton’s passion does occasionally get in the way of objective discussion, the reader can not help but be infected by her enthusiasm. This has to be welcome at a time when many teachers’ sense of professional worth, security and general morale appears to be at an all-time low. This is the sort of book Woodward had in mind.

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Breaking Tradition: An Exploration of the Historical Relationship Between Theory and Practice in Second Language Teaching
D. Musumeci. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1997. Pp. xiii + 142. ISBN 0-07-044394-7 (pbk): $17.50

Diane Musumeci’s Breaking Tradition is unique because it has the courage to take a historical view of language teaching at a time when to do so is highly unfashionable. Language teaching is currently unconcerned with its own past, prefer-
ring to align itself with the scientific method, and dismissing ‘tradition’ as irrelevant. Historical accounts are few, and we have not had any full-length work in this field since Howatt (1984). The author and the publishers of this book therefore deserve, if nothing else, a medal for bravery.

Musumeci argues that an ‘historical perspective’ (p. 7) is advantageous and even necessary in language teaching because, amongst other things, it gives us an opportunity to re-assess our earlier successes and failures as a profession. Whether positive or negative, our past experiences may have urgent and relevant messages for modern teachers. This approach has led Musumeci to pick out an alternative ‘tradition’ focusing on three ever-present topics: curriculum, administration, and materials. These topics were, respectively, the prime concerns of Guarino Guarini in fifteenth century Italy, Ignatius of Loyola in sixteenth century Spain, and Comenius in various parts of Europe in the seventeenth century.

Guarino Guarini (1374–1460) is Musumeci’s example of the curriculum innovator. He was one of the leading humanists of his age, and in that sense was one of a group who, fired with the ideals of Quintillian and the works of Cicero and the glory that was Greece, swept aside the medieval auctores and put in place a new paradigm, the studia humanitatis. Guarino himself ran famously successful schools in Ferrara, and by the time he died at age 80 was celebrated throughout Europe as a teacher of Latin and Greek.

Musumeci now introduces her main thesis: although Guarino Guarini was a great innovator and adored by all his pupils for his vision and teaching skill, his techniques were doomed to be either lost or distorted because he never formally set out his teaching method. This task fell to his son Battista, who was in turn his pupil, then his assistant, and finally his successor in the running of the school. Battista was more of an administrator than a visionary, and when De ordine docendi et discendi (The Program of Teaching and Learning) was published in 1459 most of the father’s ideas had been eviscerated.

Musumeci’s analytical method is to place some of Guarino Guarini’s letters, many of which have come down to us, alongside related passages in son Battista’s book. The dichotomies thus revealed allow Musumeci to reconstruct Guarino Guarini as a teacher well ahead of his time, for example as an advocate of direct method teaching, of wide authentic reading, and of content-based instruction, to name just a few modern concerns. Battista transformed these advanced notions into rules, norms, and other pedantic activities more suited to grinding pedantry than to visionary thought.

By the time of Ignatius Loyola (1491–1556), the once-innovative pedagogy of the studia humanitatis had become established doctrine and the administrative problem he faced was to maintain consistency of instruction across all Jesuit institutions. These had burgeoned on account of the Jesuits’ novel idea of giving free instruction, which guaranteed a large and generally enthusiastic enrolment. Loyola set out the governing principles of the Society of Jesus in the Constitutiones, Part IV of which deals with educational matters. Here he set out a basic teaching method, together with practical matters such as acquiring a good site for the school, appropriate class sizes, and even when holidays should be taken. While he was composing this section (between 1547 and 1550) he wrote numerous letters to Jesuit schools giving ad hoc direction or advice on particular
problems. Musumeci, again probing the gap between the official and the private, offers samples of both Part IV and of the letters, building up a picture of Loyola as a powerful and concerned administrator. Like Guarino Guarini, he had modern ideas about teaching, for example wanting Latin to be used actively and communicatively both inside and outside class, and advocating an immersion approach for oral and written fluency. By the time of his death in 1556 he had created a flourishing system of education, echoes of which are still with us.

His immediate successors, however, saw fit to revise his work, and for 40 years committees of Jesuits laboured to transform his thoughts into a working document. When this finally appeared in 1599, the Ratio Studiorum (Plan of Study) bore little resemblance to Loyola’s lofty ideas. Rules were given for conducting examinations, awarding prizes, correcting papers; for the behaviour of rectors, prefects of study, teachers and even janitors; there were even rules for reviewing the rules! Latin had become a catalogue of precepts, not a system of communication. A fatal ‘separation of language and content’ (p. 69) had occurred, and the final document was, as Musumeci says, ‘distinguished by its pedantry’ (p. 55).

The case of Comenius (1592–1670) differs from that of either Guarino Guarini or Ignatius Loyola. He did not have a son to misrepresent him, or enthusiastic but misguided successors to distort his ideas: he was well able to create confusion himself, especially when he tried to grapple with teaching methodology. As a textbook writer, however, he remained very clear, and it is this attribute that Musumeci admires.

Comenius’ experiences in school had left him with the conviction that the teaching of Latin by the learning and application of rules — the tradition that we have seen in Battista Guarino’s book, and that was later reinforced by the Ratio — was ineffective. His response was to create materials that were more pupil friendly than those then in use. In modern terms, Comenius would be seen as coming out of a linguistic rather than a literary background.

This linguistic approach was clearly popular with teachers, who welcomed his first book, Janua Linguarum Reserata (The Gate of Language Unlocked, 1631) as being more suitable and easier than existing materials. Two years later Comenius added an easier book, the Vestibulum (Porch). His other ‘best seller’ (Sadler, 1966: 268) was the Orbis Pictus (Picture of the World, 1658) which ran to over 100 editions, including nine in the 20th century. Its attraction lay in its use of pictures to accompany and illustrate its lexical approach.

Comenius’ genius with textbooks unfortunately did not extend to language teaching methodology. Musumeci shows the contradictions inherent in his Great Didactic (1657), and indeed these have been remarked on elsewhere (e.g. Howatt, 1984: 49). However, most commentators (e.g. Murphy, 1995) have attempted to see beyond the contradictions to the overall achievement, which remains remarkable. Musumeci is clearly frustrated at Comenius’ all too evident feet of clay. This frustration may be the result of some loss of focus in this chapter, since Comenius was originally held up as an innovative textbook writer, but is later blamed for being methodologically erratic.

The view that all three men were visionaries who saw language as a system of communication makes a reappearance in the fourth and final chapter. Musumeci’s contention here is that we use the word ‘tradition’ in a generally
pejorative sense, without taking note of the alternative visionary tradition that these three men exemplify. She draws some interesting parallels between the fate of the Communicative Approach (CA) in our own time and the fate that befell their earlier idealistic thinking; in the hands of its originators it was good; in the hands of the unreconstructed masses of teachers it became insipid. Various writers from the 1980s and 1990s are shown to be infiltrating grammatical structures, error correction, and other older techniques into CA. Content-based instruction may be the only exception to this general decline.

The fate of innovation itself is therefore the ultimate question posed by this book. When innovation is separated from its theoretical underpinnings — as happened in the case of Guarino, Loyola, Comenius, and of CA — it may quickly decline into hollow prescriptivism. The author therefore calls for a more theoretically informed teaching profession; one, for example, that would have the courage to place intellectually challenging material in front of language students, and that would take seriously the concept of differential achievement. In short, she argues, we have not learned the lessons of the past, since our professional beliefs have undergone no real conversion.

This short but important book is not the last word on the subject, and does not pretend to be. The treatment of two of the visionaries — Guarino Guarini and Ignatius Loyola — is clear and well handled, though that of the more complex Comenius is less convincing. The final chapter, which should make the vital connections for the modern reader, is at best diffuse. Despite this, the book would be excellent on a modern ‘methods’ course, and programmes should consider its inclusion for the depth it gives to discussions of innovation in general, and of materials, administration, and methodology in particular.

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Input, Interaction and the Second Language Learner
Susan M. Gass. Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1997. Pp.xi + 189. ISBN 0-8058-2209 (hbk). ISBN 0-8058-2209-7 (pbk).

This text provides a clear, comprehensive description of second language acquisition processes from an interactionist perspective. Essentially the book considers why input is assimilated differentially by learners, how learners make use of the input they receive, and the role interaction plays in that use, both in terms of initial intake and eventual output. While this topic has been treated previously (Long, 1997; Pica, 1994), this book provides the first monograph on the connections between input, interaction and output. The book is unlike introductory
texts that seek to summarise all previous research; rather it presents a thoughtful analysis of the topic from an interactionist position on language acquisition processes. Here Gass has been able to synthesise work on interaction with research on information processing and learnability. As she notes in the conclusion, language is both ‘constrained by universals’ and ‘shaped by interactions’ (p. 161). A strength of the book is Gass’ treatment of acquisition processes which allows for the fusion of these two seeming contradictions.

The book begins by presenting a model of second language acquisition, from input to output, incorporating central theoretical arguments such as comprehensible input, language universals, the nature and role of attention, and mediating factors such as linguistic characteristics, saliency, affective factors and prior knowledge. What is particularly illuminating in this model is the synthesis between these areas which are often compartmentalised in research. Gass’ model places an emphasis on attention and awareness. She writes, ‘The input-interaction view must take the position that noticing is crucial. In negotiation, the learner is focusing on linguistic form, and that focus, or specific attention paid to linguistic form, is the first step toward grammar change’ (p. 101). The first chapter clearly describes the nature of these elements.

The issues of learnability and innate knowledge are dealt with in the second chapter through a discussion of the nature of evidence available to learners and the kinds of evidence, both positive and negative, learners require in order to construct and modify a grammar of the target language. An emphasis is given in this chapter to Universal Grammar (UG) accounts of second language acquisition, although non-UG-based theories are also considered.

The following chapter provides a detailed presentation of the types of input available to learners and their relative importance to learning. Gass describes findings from both first and second language acquisition research as she considers four theoretical positions concerning the importance of input to acquisition: an input/interactionist framework, Krashen’s model, UG positions, and an input-processing perspective. Factors affecting how and why input is and is not assimilated by the learner are discussed with relation to these perspectives. Gass notes also the importance of sociolinguistic, linguistic and psycholinguistic factors in the differential use individuals make of input.

The relationship between input, interaction and second language acquisition is treated in the fifth chapter, most particularly in terms of the role of negotiated interaction following miscommunication. In this she emphasises that attention is crucial to the use learners make of input. Gass argues that the importance of negotiation is ‘as a facilitator of learning (...) of drawing attention to areas of needed change. It is one means by which input can become comprehensible and manageable’ (pp. 131–2).

In the final chapter Gass discusses the relationship between input, intake and output, focusing on the role of interaction. It is here that the connections between the central concepts discussed in previous chapters are given most explicitly: connections between comprehension, intake and output. A ‘learner system’ which takes account of these is outlined. Comprehension, Gass stresses, needs to be at a syntactic, not just a semantic, level in order to lead to acquisition. Intake, occurring only through comprehension, is described as the ‘process of assimilating linguistic material … that takes learners from the input to their interlanguage grammars’ (p. 137).
Finally, the learner’s interlanguage grammar is tested out, reassessed and modified through production. Gass views output as the key means by which learners’ attention is brought to focus on deficiencies in their production or mismatches between the input and their own speech, leading ultimately to change.

As an epilogue, Gass moves from the theoretical to the practical, sketching a view of language teaching consistent with an interactionist perspective. The role of the classroom and a justification for task-based language learning are presented. Gass argues for the use of well designed tasks: tasks which provide a means by which students’ attention may be drawn to form while using language in a meaningful way. Gass further notes the importance of different types of tasks in terms of learning outcomes. While ‘natural’ tasks may allow for practice and increased automaticity, other tasks orchestrated to incorporate a particular targeted structure may lead to restructuring of the learner’s grammar.

For the SLA researcher much of this book will be familiar ground, yet it is illuminating in the links Gass makes between different perspectives (interactionist, innatist, and information-processing), in her balanced view of second language acquisition. For language professionals and students of applied linguistics, this book offers a clear and readable account of the importance of interaction to second language learning. Gass’ scholarly treatment of issues is all the more readable for the inclusion of data and anecdotes. For those primarily interested in pedagogical issues, the book may be less satisfying. The central focus of the text is theoretical, and discussion of classroom implications and applications is, of necessity, brief and limited.

In *Input, Interaction and the Second Language Learner*, Gass draws on a wealth of research and knowledge from different areas within the field and provides original, coherent and stimulating discussion of the phenomenon of language learning. Highly recommended.

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