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Coulmas’s new book, *Writing systems*, is intended as a textbook for use in upper-level undergraduate and graduate-level courses dealing with written languages and literacy from the standpoint of linguistics and anthropology. The book provides an excellent and comprehensive introduction to the linguistic analysis of writing, and it offers detailed illustrations of the world’s major writing systems and their social consequences, ranging from the birth of graphic signs as mnemonics to social stratification resulting from issues of literacy in modern society.

Geared particularly toward the interests of linguists, the book places strong emphasis on the multiple levels of the form-sound nexus and the structural complexities of various writing systems around the world. It is accompanied by a concise exposition of the history of writing and a review of current investigations into reading and writing in psycholinguistics and sociolinguistics. Overall, Coulmas does a first-rate job of linking the origin, development, and spread of writing to the growing interest in the linguistically motivated analysis of writing and its relation to the mind and society. Although the chapters cut across several layers of writing analysis, the historical, educational, and ideological issues of literacy are given less attention than might be expected, owing to the author’s focus on the linguistic aspects of writing. At the end of each chapter, exercises are provided for mastery of basic concepts and issues discussed.

The first two of the twelve chapters eloquently introduce the origins and philosophical exegesis of writing. Chap. 1, “What is writing?,” starts with a revealing exposition of historical changes in the conceptualization of what “writing” is, the answer to which is, as shown by the claims of major scholars of writing, contingent upon historical and cultural circumstances. Coulmas traces the ways in which concepts of writing have shifted (and largely stayed the same) from the time of Aristotle, the most articulate Western proponent of writing as the surrogate for speech, to the contemporary view of Saussure, who upheld Aristotelian surrogationalism, which implies the assumed supremacy of spoken words and a dichotomous split that sees writing as conceptually distinct from speech.
Chap. 2, “The basic options: Meaning and sound,” juxtaposes two ideals of writing – semiography (meaning-based writing) and phonography (sound-based writing, which culminated in the International Phonetic Alphabet, or IPA) – representing the human aspiration to pure reason on one hand, and on the other, the ideal of creating a neutral and faithful writing system corresponding to speech. Coulmas characterizes real writing as being “auto-indexical” and “conventional” in the sense that writing needs not only to convey the message in itself but also to be conventionally learned in accordance with the established procedures for interpretation. Finally, the author proposes three principles for linguistic analysis that underlie the following chapters (34): (i) the principle of the autonomy of the graphic system, (ii) the principle of interpretation, and (iii) the principle of historicity.

Chaps. 3–5 deal with the vaguely established analytical levels of writing from larger to smaller units. Chap. 3, “Signs of words,” focuses on a fundamental unit called the “word.” Despite its seeming transparency, this is shown to be an extremely difficult category to define in a way that is valid for all languages. Theoretically, a system of writing with words as the basic units is called a “logographic” or “ideographic” system. Coulmas examines two such systems, Sumerian cuneiform and Chinese characters, and concludes that sound-meaning correspondence is never clear-cut because “the interpretation of words is a multilayered process involving reference to semantic, phonetic, and lexical information, all of which is hinted at more or less vaguely” (60).

In Chap. 4, “Signs of syllables,” Coulmas carefully considers the differences between speech and graphic syllables. Concise expositions of modern syllabaries such as Cherokee, Cree, and Vai are offered as representative examples that variously target “the syllable as the functional unit of the system” (69). Obviously, the problem here is striking the right balance between economy (or the learning load) and accuracy (or the efficacy for unambiguous understanding). Two ancient syllabaries, Aegean Cypriot and the Yi system of southwestern China, are used to illustrate two extreme cases that optimize the sound-based and meaning-based types of writing: the former with only a few dozens of writing syllables, in which the phonetic fit is thus very poor, and the latter with well over 800 signs encoding various tonal syllables, in which the learning burden does not meet the requirements of economy.

Chap. 5, “Signs of segments,” deals with phonemic segments, the notion of which is still largely fuzzy because “the relationship between sequences of alphabetic letters and speech is never a one-to-one mapping relation” (91). Nevertheless, a view that a segment in writing is “what alphabetic letters encode” (89) survives because the Latin alphabet is the most widely used script and is assumed to be the prototype of phonemic writing – a perception augmented by the elaboration of IPA. Coulmas shows that such a construct is simply an ideal in establishing orthography, and that phonetic representation and orthography operate on different levels.
The next two chapters investigate how speech sound may be represented in letters. The focus of attention here is on consonants and vowels (Chap. 6), and vowel incorporation (Chap. 7). To begin with, the author delineates different features of vowels and consonants, with vowels being more likely than consonants to be syllabic, to have stress accent, pitch, and tone, to be involved in sound change, to be uttered in isolation, and so on. These fundamental “differences in regard to how vowels and consonants are encoded in phonographic writing” (111) lead to the consequences that consonants are always present in writing systems (i.e., they are referentially rigid) and that, conversely, “the range of phonetic interpretation of V letters tends to be wider than that of C letters” (129).

Chap. 7, “Vowel incorporation,” focuses on the Indian writing systems which take the syllable as an intuitively salient unit in writing. However, these systems, often called “syllabic alphabets” or “alphasyllabaries,” have both the syllable and an internal structure that distinguishes between consonants and vowels. For example, Brhāmi, a descendant heavily influenced by Semitic scripts and the source of all modern Indian scripts, has syllables that mostly consist of CV or CCV and is characterized by vowel incorporation – a phenomenon in which the consonantal base is “interpreted as incorporating it (an unmarked sound, usually reduced vowel [ə] or [ə]) together with the consonant unless otherwise indicated” (134: parentheses mine). This “inherent” vowel is superseded when marked by the other vowel diacritics, which are added around the base. Examining individual differences of Brhāmi-derived scripts (Devanagari, Tamil, Tibetan, and Thai writing), Coulmas stresses that these scripts are “analytic” rather than sequential because some syllables need to be interpreted “as a whole rather than [as] a succession of isolated Cs and Vs” (137).

Chap. 8, “Analysis and interpretation,” picks up once again the point discussed in chap. 7, with the aim of deepening the understanding of how (linguistic) analyticity and (interpretive) linearity become manifest on different levels. For this purpose, Coulmas briefly delineates two more types of syllabic alphabets (Mangyan and Ethiopic scripts), and goes on to elaborate on the Korean script generally known as Han’gul, which is now well known for its “formal simplicity and systematic beauty” (156), and which is characterized by the iconicity of basic letter shapes (for positions of articulation) and the systematic arrangement of syllable blocks encoding consonants and vowels.

In Chap. 9, “Mixed systems,” Coulmas considers four scripts – Egyptian, Akkadian, Japanese, and English – all of which represent different degrees of mixing of the basic elements. Egyptian incorporates logograms (or ideograms), phonograms, and determinatives (semantic classifiers indicating materials, events, people, etc.), and the resulting system is quite complex in that one cannot differentiate the functional differences just by looking at the graphic appearance. This is the case also with Akkadian, which is an outcome of adapting Sumerian cuneiform writing to a Semitic language. It uses logograms, syllabograms, and determinatives, respecting the literary culture of the original Sumerian writing system. The
Japanese writing system is similar in the latter respect, preserving many of the characteristics of Chinese system but modifying it through the application of indigenous interpretations of Chinese characters as well as the addition of two syllabaries called kana. English is an interesting case because, owing to its historical contacts with other languages (through the Norman Conquest) and phonological changes (through, e.g., the Great English Vowel Shift), several principles for reading coexist to the extent that the overall match between spelling and pronunciation is very low.

The topic of chap. 10, the history of writing, partially overlaps that of chap. 3, but here Coulmas focuses on three essential themes: writing’s origin, its development, and its spread. With regard to origin and development, he states that writing was invented at least four times—in Mesopotamia, Egypt, China, and Mesoamerica—but he avoids monogeneticism and unidirectional evolutionism, which ultimately lead to a quasi-Darwinian view that writing evolves toward a destined goal, usually perceived to be the Roman alphabet. Finally, he takes the position that the spread and transformation of scripts has usually been motivated by trade and religion, but he acknowledges that language is always suffused with influences from indigenous sociocultural environments.

Chaps. 11 (“Psycholinguistics of writing”) and 12 (“Sociolinguistics of writing”) summarize relevant basic research questions and findings in the respective fields. Psycholinguistic research on literacy has been conducted predominantly in the study of reading, an area in which research designs are relatively easily controlled. In writing, however, there are many mental processes operating at the same time—including relevant physical operations before, during, and after the act of writing—and they are enclosed within “the black box” to a much greater extent. This, as well as the paucity of effective experimental techniques, undoubtedly has caused research on writing to lag behind. Yet even with these inadequacies, research on reading and writing has been steadily gaining in importance because of the widespread view that illiteracy is a social problem that should be eradicated, and an assumption that “written language, once mastered, takes on a life of its own, influencing the way we speak and conceptualize language” (221).

Although the scope of the author’s argument is rather limited, chap. 12 takes on sociolinguistic aspects of illiteracy as a social problem. Coulmas first sketches the attitudes commonly taken toward illiteracy and illiterate people and contrasts with them the written code as the embodiment of the centralization of resources. He then discusses some instances of standardization, diglossia, and digraphia, all of which divide and stratify people in certain ways in indigenous contexts. Accordingly, the facets of literacy and illiteracy in society, as well as those of writing reforms, serve as indicators of social inequalities, loyalties, stigmas, and identities based on ethnocultural backgrounds.

As mentioned at the outset, there are some new developments that would appeal to researchers and students of writing that are not covered in this book, especially in the areas of sociocultural analysis and the language ideology of
Because a basic knowledge of linguistics and its terminology is assumed, some portions of the author’s discussion are highly technical and compel a very careful reading and even rereading. But the summary and exercises provided at the end of each chapter do help to highlight the basic issues and to clarify the points raised.

With regard to the organization of the book, there are some editorial problems that should be addressed in a future edition, such as typographical errors in scripts and transliterations and inconsistent citing of figures and tables in the text. Despite these things, the book will definitely provide an extraordinary learning experience for those interested in the study of language. The book’s lasting value lies in its precise and systematic accounts of the intrinsic variability and intricate realizations of sound-form mapping in world writing systems, and in its clear exposition of the comparative stances in the linguistic investigation of writing in relation to speech. It represents an indispensable asset for both in-depth and cross-linguistic study of writing, and as such it accomplishes what other monographs on writing have rarely managed to achieve completely.

(Received 8 September 2003)


*The new handbook of language and social psychology* is a collection of essays that aim to highlight the importance of linguistic factors in social psychology and to stress the role of social interaction in the study of language. It follows in the footsteps of *The handbook of social psychology*, published just over 10 years ago. The goal of the present volume, as stated by one of the editors (Robinson), is to promote interest in and understanding of the dual relationship between the study of language and social psychology. Robinson states that the new handbook, in contrast with the original handbook, puts more emphasis on the “five ints”: intentions and interpretations in interpersonal and intergroup interactions. The volume delivers on its promise of promoting interest and understanding. There are a number of stimulating chapters, of which some provide an overview of a research area, others a particular perspective on a problem or a synthesis of different strands
of research, and still others speculations, questions, and directions for future research. The volume as a whole is invaluable as a reference book and for an overview of current research questions in language and social psychology.

The book consists of 32 chapters, subdivided into six sections. There are far too many engaging chapters to be able to do justice to them all, so I will discuss only a subset of them. First, I present an overview of the methodological concerns that appear many times in the volume, followed by some of the applications of language and social psychology research to society. Finally, I point to some chapters that raise challenging issues for the future.

Questions and concerns about appropriate methodology appear in many of the chapters. The main tension appears to be between those researchers who favor a qualitative approach and those who favor a quantitative one. In some cases, choice of methodology is based on the kind of data that the researcher is dealing with; however, in many cases choice of methodology seems to be a question of taste and ideology. For example, Jonathan Potter and Derek Edwards critique the dominant perspective in social psychology, where it is assumed that social behavior is based on information from perceptual input. In contrast, they advocate a discourse social psychology, which stresses activities that are done through discourse and are a part of situated practices. As well as rejecting a particular view of social interaction, Potter & Edwards also reject the use of experiments, surveys, and interviews in favor of qualitative analyses of natural interactions.

Potter & Edwards give an overview of their perspective on social interaction. Discursive psychology is the use of discourse – that is, talk and text – as a social practice. Three properties of discourse are fundamental to Potter & Edwards. (i) Discourse is situated and has rhetorical properties; neither characteristic figures in the mainstream social psychology perspective. (ii) Discourse is action-oriented; in the dominant social psychology perspective, attitudes are inner entities that drive behavior, but according to the discursive perspective, attitudes are evaluations that are not separable from discourse practices. (iii) Discourse is constructed; the discourse itself is constructed, and reality is constructed through discourse. It is because discourse is used to construct reality and cannot be separated from inner states, such as attitudes, that Potter & Edwards reject the dominant factor-and-outcomes model, in which social life is an interplay of factors that determine specific outcomes.

Other chapters also emphasize the use of qualitative approaches. One especially worth mentioning is by Sunwolf & Lawrence Frey. These authors claim that narrative is the principal way for people to structure, experience, and know the world. Methodologically, Sunwolf & Frey stress the importance of examining individual narratives for the form and function of a story, how the story is told, and the effects the story has.

Both Potter & Edwards and Sunwolf & Frey present modes of conceptualizing social interactions that challenge the dominant social psychological perspective. However, there is no reason that a commitment to discursive social psychology
should preclude the use of experimental methodology and quantitative techniques. This point is made by Ben Slugoski & Denis Hilton, who argue that one can maintain an emphasis on discourse while using experimental techniques to test specific hypotheses. They suggest that one can investigate specific features of discourse situations to test what factors affect behavior. For example, there is an assumption in social psychology that inferences drawn during conversation occur because the addressee is treating the speaker as an intentional agent. This hypothesis can be tested by persuading an addressee that a message has been generated either by an intentional agent or by a non-intentional agent, such as a computer, and then measuring the addressee’s resulting inferences. Hence, discourse factors can be teased apart by using experimental approaches.

This tension between qualitative and quantitative approaches is unfortunate. There is a very nice discussion of this by Robinson, who bemoans needless arguments about which method is the “correct” one. His view is that methodological questions should be decided on the basis of the question asked: “Suffice it to say that in an earlier existence as a biologist, I did not experience methodological battles. The means for answering questions depended upon the nature of the question asked” (p. 28). Given the richness and complexity of the phenomena studied at the intersection between language and social psychology, it is doubtful that a particular methodology will lead scientists to “the truth”; rather, “horse for courses” seems a much more sensible option.

The second theme that recurs throughout the volume is the applications to and implications of language and social psychology research for society. Most of the chapters in the volume in fact conclude with a pointer to both established and possible future applications. For example, Charles Berger outlines a theoretical framework for investigating miscommunication and communication failure, as well as discussing the empirical evidence and outlining the application to mass media. Berger presents various taxonomies of communication failure and a critique of existing models. The taxonomies provide a way to catalogue communication problems that can arise between people, such as acoustic problems (e.g., failing to hear a particular word), or lexical problems (e.g., failing to understand a specific word), right through to the making of unwarranted inferences. He goes on to argue that communication failure is found not only in face-to-face interactions but also in communication between mass media and the audience. Berger claims that the mass media use specific communication devices to encourage the audience to make erroneous inferences. Although such faulty inferences do not involve the goals and plans of a conversation partner, as in face-to-face interaction, they can have significant social consequences because they lead the audience to incorrect beliefs about the physical and social world. For instance, teenagers who do or do not watch television talk shows every day differ in their estimation of various social phenomena: Those who watch talk shows overestimate the incidence of teenage pregnancy, the number of students in possession of guns at school, and the number of teenagers who run away from home. Because
of the potential social implications of such unwarranted beliefs, Berger proposes that communication researchers should do more to expose communication failures and devise strategies for overcoming them.

Another chapter that explores the social implications of language and social psychology investigates how communication impacts on health. Mary Anne Fitzpatrick & Anita Vangelisti provide evidence that social interaction is fundamental for achieving positive health outcomes. Specifically, they claim that communication can affect quality of life, prolong life, and affect how people respond to health-related advice – all important social consequences. Fitzpatrick & Vangelisti emphasize the psychosocial dimensions of health over biological and medical ones, although they do acknowledge that for some diseases, such as the end stage of Oates cell carcinoma, no amount of communication will cure the patient. Their main point is that communication affects both the prognosis of patients and how many people succumb to illness by making people understand health risk messages better.

As an example of how communication can affect the prognosis of a patient, Fitzpatrick & Vangelisti discuss spousal interaction style and its impact on hypertension. Hypertension, or high blood pressure, is strongly linked to death from stroke, congestive heart failure, and coronary disease. Fitzpatrick & Vangelisti report that frequency of hostile exchanges between husbands and wives with hypertension is associated with increases in blood pressure. The implications of such findings is that by changing the communication patterns between spouses, the rate of cardiovascular diseases could perhaps be reduced. Similarly, children who are chronically ill, with for example rheumatoid arthritis or diabetes mellitus, have better psychological and physical outcomes when they have supportive parents than when they do not. Such findings clearly show the need for a better understanding of the role of communication in health.

Part 3 of the handbook is a thought-provoking introduction to various phenomena at the center of language and social psychology that pose some challenging questions for researchers in the future. Mary Lee Hummert & Ellen Bouchard Ryan provide an overview of patronizing, by which one person addresses another in a manner which suggests that the former has a low opinion of the latter’s competence. Specifically, they discuss how patronizing language is displayed by young people toward older people. This is studied under a number of different titles: elderspeak, dependence-inducing, and secondary baby talk. Their chapter questions why such patronizing talk occurs: Is the talk justified by decreased competence on the part of the elderly? Or is it due to speakers’ holding a negative stereotype of the elderly? Or is it, in fact, due to the speaker’s trying to help communication by speaking in an easily understood style?

Jenny Tornquist, Eric Anderson, & Bella De Paulo, in their chapter on deceiving, present a convincing argument that people are very bad at detecting deception. In more than 100 studies, it has been shown that people distinguished truth from lies only at chance levels – that is, they correctly identify a lie only half the
time. People also believe that they lie less often than other people in their cohort. Several questions emerge: Why are we so bad at lie detection? Many studies have focused on lie detection, but relatively little is known about whether some people are better deceivers than others. What are the characteristics of a good lie and a good liar? And how good are we at detecting deception from those we know, in contrast to experimental settings which present information from strangers?

Finally, there is a strong commitment in many of the chapters to cross-cultural research “as a brake on overzealous generalizations” (Robinson, p. 30). Sunwolf & Frey discuss variations in narrative structure as a function of culture. For example, the number of times oppositions, encounters, and subparts of narrative are repeated vary cross-culturally: Western European folktales favor cycles of three, whereas Canadian and Alaskan Athabascans favor four, and Chinookans favor five repetitions. In another chapter, Michael Hecht, Ronald Jackson II, Sheryl Lindsay, Susan Stauss, & Karen Johnson investigate how language is used to build identity. They compare similarities and differences in communication between various ethnic groups – African Americans, Mexican Americans and Asian Americans – and the ancestral traditions from which they emerged. One hopes such cross-cultural research will be commonplace in the next decade and that it will be strongly represented in a third volume of the Handbook of language and social psychology.

(Received 28 February 2003)
The book also politicizes questions of social power in ways that may alienate many readers who do not share the authors’ Eurocentric politics. Finally, the writing in this volume suffers from needlessly dense and complex prose syntax. These rhetorical problems are not as minor as they may sound, for they disguise—and, thereby, ironically reveal—more substantial flaws in the core arguments of the volume.

This book attempts to ground CDA in a broader social scientific theoretical context, at the intersection of what the authors dichotomize as “structuralist” and “interpretivist” traditions. It aims to show how CDA approaches to discourse transcend this purported opposition. But this argument is curiously hermetic. The authors virtually ignore the rich array of competing discourse-centered traditions of thought that have grappled with both the discursive character of modernity and the resolution of competing paradigms of social explanation. I refer, in particular, to linguistic anthropology, semiotics, sociolinguistics, and performance-oriented folklore studies. Also relatively neglected here are the many advanced approaches to discourse in modernity that have developed under the rubrics of (popular) cultural studies and media studies. Hence, we are in an intellectual universe consisting only of general theories of modernity and CDA, which causes the book to reinvent problems addressed quite powerfully in adjacent disciplines of discourse analysis, and to ignore other problems raised in those adjacent disciplines (most problematically, issues of orality and literacy, socialization, and subject-formation).

The volume begins by limning the boundaries of the “critical social science” it aims to advance entirely within poststructuralist and constructionist terms. It moves next to theorizing the idea of “discourse” as the interactive production of “texts.” Readers familiar with the principal conversations in American sociolinguistic disciplines since the 1970s will feel the absence of reference to these conversations most acutely in this chapter. A middle chapter attempts to describe broadly the analytic and explanatory concepts deployed in CDA, and contains the fullest empirical example in the book. This example is nonetheless inadequate to the task of differentiating CDA from other approaches as an analytic methodology, at least for a reader not already familiar with the richer examples of CDA as an applied discipline.

The second half of the book is mostly taken up with a series of summary explications of general theories of modernity. Giddens, Habermas, Harvey, Lacalau and Mouffe, Bourdieu, and (Basil) Bernstein receive top billing; Foucault, Lyotard, Althusser, Jameson, Haraway, and Derrida appear in supporting roles. (The last turns in a cameo as a “postmodern discourse theorist,” which is indicative of the level of theoretical reductionism this approach to theoretical positioning sometimes employs, since very few acolytes of Derridean theory would accept such a label.) At a basic level, the book’s main value may be the telegraphic summaries it provides of such a large number of complex paradigmatic accounts of the general character of modern social formations. Un-
Fortunately, the summaries are frequently so telegraphic as to be misleading or interchangeable.

The point of this extended exercise in positioning is to demonstrate that there is a place for a rigorous practice of discourse analysis at the intersection of these theoretical accounts of modernity – that social theory and discourse analysis stand properly in a dialectical relationship. The point is quite valid. This is especially so because there is general agreement among the theorists discussed here that “modernity” represents a distinctive epoch in the history of discourse, and as such necessitates a specifically “modern” theorization of discourse (whether CDA fulfills this need is another matter) with an emphasis on mediation, contestation over the public sphere, and the dominance of instrumental reason. Specifically, discourse is described here as a social practice, dialectically related to other forms of social practice in modernity. The term “practice” is meant to situate CDA at the intersection of structuralist and poststructuralist accounts according to which the form and content of discourse are determined by the hegemonic character of modernity, and it is used to organize the theoretical framework offered here into three “levels” of abstraction.

In invoking discourse as a species of “practice,” the authors set themselves the complex and challenging task of theorizing social conduct “beyond” discourse but within particular institutional contexts. Bourdieu and Bernstein are cited primarily to characterize the “middle-level” problematic of the localized organization of social practices (including discursive practices) into texts, fields, and genres, and hybrids thereof. The view offered here of Bernstein’s work – as a more flexible and interaction-sensitive perspective than Bourdieu’s on the stratification of discursive practice – is perhaps the most useful aspect of this book for sociolinguists accustomed to thinking of Bernstein’s work primarily as a contribution to critical studies of education.

Giddens, Habermas, and Harvey provide the main “macro-level” accounts of the broad limits on and possibilities for social organization and discursive mediation invoked by the term “modernity.” At the other extreme, Halliday’s Systemic Functional Linguistics is introduced to resolve “micro-level” questions relevant to the analysis of actual texts (though it is only one of many such micro-analytic approaches, and one wishes the authors had surveyed the terrain of formal and semiotic approaches to grammar as broadly as they survey social theory). Practice theory mediates between “modernity” and “discourse” as objects of analysis. This is a useful and interesting way of conceptualizing the place of discourse analysis in the sociology of modernity, but it is by no means as transparent as this volume makes it seem. One can imagine connecting Halliday’s and Harvey’s work through Bernstein’s, for example, in very interesting ways. But such a connection is neither exemplified nor juxtaposed with other possible mediations. And it is not clear why CDA, as these authors see it, interconnects these “levels” of theoretical conception (macro theories of the modern, micro theories of discursive form, and “middle-level” theories of the
organization of practice) in ways that make it a uniquely powerful paradigmatic approach to modern discourse.

A sustained example would help. But despite the argument the authors frequently advance for a rigorous textual analysis to operationalize the proposed dialectic of sociological and linguistic models, the principal lacuna here is the nearly complete absence of any concrete, extended examples of the analytic practice being advocated, even in the form of citations. Of the minimal examples, almost all are sketchy “reanalyses” of low-quality data drawn from other scholars’ work, and almost all are intended to illustrate very particular points (and to indict American culture) rather than to demonstrate the general importance or utility of CDA. But none of these analyses is contextualized richly enough or pursued in sufficient detail to warrant the grand claims for CDA as the “critical” synthesis of social theory and discourse analysis to which all theoretical roads lead. The authors frequently assert that “discourse” is broader than verbal language, textuality, and the emergent rules and codes governing register, style, and interactional dynamics; however, there is almost no consideration of differences in communicative modality, let alone of such aspects of discourse as gesture, paralinguistic form, or poetics. The authors frequently invoke vaguely sinister (“totalitarian”) forces operating through discourse, for the most part represented by somewhat facile references to sexism, corporate culture, and the instrumental colonization of domestic and public life, as if these were uniform across modern social formations. At no point, however, do we encounter a systematic consideration of power or resistance (which is much fetishized here) as such, let alone an example of a characteristically “late modern” social struggle conducted on the terrain of discourse. And despite several promising references to the “semologic” (i.e., “semiotic logic”) and “lexicogrammar” of discourse, the book pays little attention to the kinds of formal dimensions of expression that most sociolinguists and linguistic anthropologists would recognize as central to any approach to “discourse analysis.”

The book’s title, with its invocation of “late modernity,” suggests some consideration of the fate of orality, the status of discursive agency, new structures of difference, new vectors of oppression and resistance, and new technologies of mediation, but such ideas receive little attention here. The usual postmodern tropes – the fragmented subject, the aestheticization of politics, the play of simulations, the dissolution of the public sphere, disembodied networks of semiosis, the triumph of difference over universalism – appear here, but without coherent applications. The figures such tropes seem to have replaced within European Marxist and Social Democratic thought – culture, the intending subject, ideology as the terrain of social conflict, actual interpersonal interaction, locality, and practical reason – are also absent, and sorely missed. (Raymond Williams, for example, addressed many of the issues on display here with much more subtlety 30 years ago.) “Modernity” appears here to be an undifferentiated phenomenon. It is familiar to the point of banality (hence there is no need to place the book’s few
examples in sociologically precise contexts); yet it is impervious to critical in-
terrogation by ordinary speaking subjects (hence there is no need to ask how
discourse might be related to cognition, consciousness, or experience). These are
flaws that beset several major traditions of sociolinguistic theory, but they be-
come more problematic when discourse analysis is seen as a key to sociological
explanation in general, not merely as a description of socially conditioned lin-
guistic practice.

Thus, it is hard for me to recommend this volume to anyone who is not already
engaged in the project of institutionalizing CDA. This book is, at best, a murky
window through which the project of CDA appears only in outline, and as such it
is hard to tell how it differs from other, related projects. For those who already
identify their work as belonging to the CDA enterprise and seeking paths through
a broader social scientific landscape, this book offers an equally clouded view of
the theoretical terrain beyond. Moreover, the volume’s style, rhetoric, and orga-
nization only add to and amplify the overall lack of clarity and direction. There
are insights of value in this volume. They are simply overmatched by the book’s
several flaws.

(Received 5 November 2003)

Joel Sherzer, *Speech play and verbal art*. Austin: University of Texas Press,

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During the past 25 years, anthropologists, linguists, and other social scientists
have taken a keen interest in delineating the nature (form and function) of play,
not only among humans but also among other higher primates. The establishment
of the Society for the Study of Play in the 1970s, the annual meetings of its mem-
bers, and the resulting publications clearly manifest this interest. Sherzer’s book
on speech play and verbal art is a significant addition to the extant literature on
the subject. His aim is to delineate “the significance of verbal play in the inter-
section of language, culture, and society in relation to verbal art” (p. 1). He views
speech play as an “implicit and explicit meta-commentary on everyday life and
artistic performance” (1).

There are five chapters in addition to the preface. The introductory chapter
defines the various relevant concepts and issues, provides ethnographic settings
of Sherzer’s research, presents a brief history of research on play, and emphasizes
its multidisciplinary relevance. Sherzer claims that studying play is relevant to
understanding the very nature of language in general since it is “an important
component of language structure and language use” (9). Stating that the word “play” has numerous intersecting meanings and uses, Sherzer selectively provides some, chosen from several definitions in Webster’s Third New International Dictionary of the English Language. He then compares them with those in French, Spanish, Indonesian, and Kuna, a language spoken in Panama. Sherzer’s theoretical perspective is that of a “sociolinguistically informed, discourse-oriented, ethnographic approach to language structure and language use” (9).

In his discussion and analysis, Sherzer juxtaposes many different verbal forms, such as “puns, jokes, riddles, limericks, verbal dueling, proverbs, play languages, code switching, trickster tales, palindromes, anagrams, song lyrics, traditional indigenous chants, and modern European poetry” (10). He views languages and cultures “as open systems with squishes, fuzziness, leaks, inventions, constructions, negotiations, and imaginations, and as constantly emergent” (10).

Chap. 2 focuses on the ways in which some inherent distinctions in the sound-meaning relationship in language structure are manifested – for example, paradigmatic and syntactic axes, signifiers and signifieds, and denotative and connotative meanings. Sherzer quotes Edward Sapir’s well-known axiom that “all grammars leak” (13). For Sherzer, this implies that “language structure is not exact, consistent, and fully patterned.” The various components of language are not tightly linked, but are “loosely coupled together” (13), hence the existence of irregularity and ambiguity in language. These aspects, along with others, are fully exploited in speech play, including loose connections among the three types of signs: symbols, icons, and indexes.

Using grammatical categories of person, number, tense, and aspect, Sherzer expands the concept of iconicity and argues that formal linguistic additions representing these categories are iconic in that “grammatical adding on expresses a semantic adding on” (15). I find this extension of the meaning of iconicity somewhat dubious because there is no exact match between linguistic signs and their meanings, except perhaps in onomatopoeic expressions, which constitute only a small part of any language structure. Sherzer’s view thus ignores a fundamental aspect of language: the arbitrariness of the relationship between form and content. But Sherzer wishes to stretch the notion of iconicity for his analytical goals. In the rest of the chapter, he discusses the processes of reduplication and onomatopoeia.

Chap. 3 is devoted to describing and analyzing play languages, jokes, put-ons, proverbs, riddles, and so on. Sherzer places these forms of play in ethnographic and interactional contexts, and he examines their “social and cultural roles in different societies” and their “strategic use in face-to-face dialogues and conversations” (26). Examples from several European, Asian, and indigenous American languages are provided. I am not convinced of Sherzer’s claim here that his focus on the social and cultural roles of play languages in human interaction is unique (26). Other sociolinguists and anthropologists have analyzed functions of these forms in various intralinguistic and extralinguistic contexts.
Sherzer provides definitions and elaborations of many types of linguistic forms, such as puns, jokes, put-ons, trickster tales, proverbs, and riddles. His discussion of jokes is detailed. He describes different types of jokes, joke-tellings, and performances. He also presents various functions of jokes. All these types of verbal play “are common in everyday conversation, are both playful and verbally artistic” (69). Sherzer claims that when put in sociocultural contexts, the forms of talk he analyzes and discusses “reveal much about a group of people’s social, cultural, and personal lives – their systems of beliefs, their daily preoccupations, their relations with others, and the kinds of changes they are undergoing” (69).

Chap. 4 is concerned with discussing the overlapping and intersecting nature of speech play and verbal art and with describing various types of speech play. In Sherzer’s view, “Boundaries between speech play and verbal art are hard to delimit and are cultural as well as linguistic” (70). For him, the distinction between speech play and verbal art is contextually determined. However, he attempts to separate them and states that in certain contexts, “forms of speech play constitute the building blocks of verbal art” (70). Sherzer’s central premise here is that speech play and verbal art are creative and result from the “stretching and manipulation of linguistic patterns, processes, and practices” (77). Various word games, puzzles, figures of speech, anagrams, palindromes, acrostics and other linguistic forms are analyzed in this chapter. For Sherzer, “Sociolinguistic variation is a source of creativity and vibrance, in everyday speech, in spoken and written poetry, and in song and musical performance” (90). Such variation also provides “an alternative to conventional ways of expressing things by providing constant and ongoing forms of innovation” (91).

Sherzer’s sociolinguistic perspective also includes a discussion of linguistic techniques and cultural values and attitudes. In this connection, truncation, code-switching, repetition and parallelism, polite language, and figurative and metaphorical language are some of the techniques described and analyzed. Sherzer claims that these and other techniques and forms constitute “ideological acts and expressions of identity and affiliation” (122).

The last chapter provides cross-cultural contexts for speech play. Sherzer defines context as “both the immediate and concrete situations and settings in which speech play occurs, including the social-interactional strategies involved, and the general assumptions and ideologies underlying the practice of speech play” (123). Examples from the United States, France, Latin America, the Kuna, and the Balinese are provided to support one of the major premises of this book: that speech play and verbal art are “weapons of the weak against the strong” and they also “constitute the quintessential and exuberant expression of just who people are” (154). Speech play and verbal art function as “counterhegemony and resistance to domination” (154–55), but more important, they are a manifestation of human creativity and are appreciated for sheer pleasure and for their own sake. Sherzer believes that speech play and verbal art should be seen as “central and most significant and revealing aspect of the language-culture-society nexus” (155).
Sherzer has done a commendable job of analyzing speech play and verbal art from both theoretical and ethnographic perspectives. The book is a detailed, exhaustive, and insightful account of speech play and verbal art. It is chock-full of linguistic, sociolinguistic, and ethnographic examples from several far-flung languages and cultures. Any scholar interested in the subject of speech play and verbal art will certainly have to take note of Sherzer’s book.

(Received 30 July 2003)


This is a study of dialogues performed in improvisational (“improv”) theater. Improv actors work without scripts, using mime and dialogue to come to a working agreement about cast of characters, setting, and plot, usually within a few interactional turns. Their performances are thus an ideal site for studying how framing works: how interactants come to a mutual understanding of what is going on that is shaped by and subsequently shapes their contributions. Although it does not quite meet its ambitious theoretical goals, the book is well worth reading, both for the descriptions and examples of a fascinating set of language games and for Sawyer’s intriguing suggestions about what we can learn from them.

The study is based on videotapes of performances by 15 improv groups and interviews with directors and actors. Improvisation is a 20th-century development influenced by medieval commedia dell’arte and Stanislavskian Method acting. It is used as a rehearsal and warm-up technique and, beginning in Chicago in the 1950s, it has been performed live in cabaret-style settings (most famously by the Second City troupe, the model for TV’s *Saturday Night Live*). An improvisation can begin without any specification of plot, characters, setting, or events, although many improv formats begin by eliciting audience suggestions for the location, the first line of dialogue, the identity of one character, or some other element of the performance. Each format dictates certain other elements of structure, such as the length of the performance, how starting and ending points are determined, and whether or not actors may step out of character to “edit” the action. Actors also orient to “ethnotheory” about what makes effective improvisation work, some of which is explicitly codified in instructional books. For example, actors try to respond to the preceding turn in such a way as to move the scene forward, and actors are expected to relinquish individual control in favor of collaborative shaping of the scene.
Sawyer’s theoretical context is the notion of framing. In most research on conversational interaction, interactional frames are described from the perspective of individual interactants, in terms of individuals’ actions, intentions, or mental representations. Social forces constrain individuals only via individuals’ selective orientation to and interpretation of them; it is thus impossible to formulate laws that predict how such forces will affect individuals’ behavior in particular instances. Sawyer proposes a more macro-sociological account in which the object of inquiry is the interactional process, and the goal is to make statistical predictions about participants’ behavior over a set of instances. Drawing on theories of sociological emergentism, Sawyer claims that interactional frames arise out of a series of individual turns of dialogue, but are not reducible to them. Frames are the result of a process of “collaborative emergence,” and emergent frames can be shown to affect participants’ behavior in predictable ways. In other words, in order to account fully for what goes on in improvisation (and in conversation in general, to the extent that it is improvisatory), we cannot just adduce individuals’ actions and others’ interpretations of and generalizations about them. Once they begin to emerge, frames constrain participants in a process Sawyer calls “downward causation.”

To test these claims, Sawyer develops hypotheses about how emergent frames will affect improv performances as they proceed. Because the frame does not exist previous to the performance in the form of a script or a set of stage directions, improv actors use metapragmatics (Silverstein 1993) to offer suggestions about what is going on and to respond to these suggestions. With respect to how particular framing strategies constrain subsequent actors’ turns, Sawyer predicts that dialogue turns that offer a greater amount of dramatic information or constrain other actors’ behavior more narrowly will be stronger, shaping the emergent frame powerfully and influencing the responding actor’s dialogue turn in a number of ways. For example, an actor who begins a scene by saying, “I’ve got to have today’s newspaper, do you sell them?” has made an offer about the setting and the other actor’s character. She has used stronger metapragmatic strategies than she would have had she started with “Where are the papers?,” which proposes neither a setting nor a role for the other. An actor responding to the first of these might be more likely to accept the proffered setting and characterization and quicker to respond, and it should be interactionally more difficult for him or her to reject the offer.

With respect to the frame’s emergence over time, Sawyer predicts that use of more powerful metapragmatic strategies at the beginning of an improvisation will result in the frame’s emerging more quickly, that the frame will become more complex and elaborated as the performance proceeds, and that the use of different metapragmatic strategies will result in different kinds of frames. With respect to how the emerging frame (rather than just preceding actors’ dialogue turns) then constrains subsequent actors, Sawyer predicts that as the complexity of the frame increases, its interactional power increases, reducing the range of moves that are
possible for subsequent speakers on one level and enabling new kinds of interactional moves on another; and that actors use progressively weaker metapragmatic strategies as performances proceed.

Sawyer then compares two short-form improv “games” with somewhat different ground rules to see whether these differences are associated with the predicted metapragmatic contrasts. For example, one of the “freeze games” requires the actors to create a cumulative frame over the course of a number of short scenes. In the other, a new frame has to emerge in each scene. In the former, less metapragmatic work is required as the game progresses. Scenes accordingly become shorter, and actors use less powerful frame-offering metapragmatic strategies. In the latter, scene length stays the same and more powerful strategies are used.

A second empirical chapter consists of short descriptions of a number of other improv formats. Sawyer raises intriguing questions about how the starting rules for each affect the collaborative emergence of its frame. The third data-based chapter returns to the study’s specific hypotheses in a comparison of two long-form formats. In one, actors may step out of character to play director, explicitly setting the scene at the beginning of each new episode. In the other, they may not, so scene-setting is accomplished via indirect metapragmatic strategies by actors delivering dialogue in character and simultaneously accomplishing scene-setting edits. This difference has consequences for the nature of the emergent frame – consequences actors do not intend and of which they are unaware. For example, metapragmatic scene-setting is often accomplished by directing character-identifying address forms (e.g., “Sister”) at other actors. Accordingly, in the format in which characterization is indirect, the frame tends to be more focused on characters than on plot.

Sawyer positions the study as “a version of . . . positivism” (p. 72), in contradistinction to the interpretivist stance of interaction analysis in the ethnomethodological and ethnographic traditions. This makes sense only in the context of Sawyer’s narrow definition of interpretivism and correspondingly broad definition of positivism. For Sawyer, an interpretive account is one in which the participants’ own explicit, conscious interpretations are the only acceptable explanatory mechanism, and any account in which the analyst makes generalizations that participants do not explicitly orient to is positivist. But many social scientists who would not accept the ontological and epistemological assumptions of positivism would accept accounts invoking generalizations participants are not aware of making. It is far from clear what “awareness” even is, or what it means to say that participants “intend” outcomes or are “conscious” of their intentions. Even the sort of ethnotheory that improv actors do sometimes make explicit (and with which Sawyer contrasts the kinds of explanations he develops) is probably mostly implicit and “unconscious.” The improv teachers and authors who codify this knowledge make analytically useful generalizations just as Sawyer does, and actors may or may not subsequently make use of these generalizations.

Sawyer’s approach thus differs from that of conversation analysts not so much in that it offers a competing account of what goes on in conversation rooted in a

different philosophy of science, but in that it takes a different perspective, interpreting the social system from the outside rather than through the system-interpreting eyes of particular actors making particular moves. His predictions are necessarily about the behavior of the system, not about the particular behaviors of individual actors. However, Sawyer’s more specific methodological claim—that it might be analytically useful in an account of conversation as a social process to adduce interactional frames that emerge in interaction and come to affect the interaction—is interesting and well supported. This is promising early work by someone we will probably hear more from.

REFERENCE


(Received 30 July 2003)

DOI: 10.1017/S0047404505263055


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The analysis of classroom discourse dates back at least to Sinclair & Coulthard’s (1975) often-cited study, which inspired researchers to examine patterns of student-teacher interaction. In particular, their description of a typical classroom interactional pattern, the Initiation-Response-Evaluation (IRE), inspired further research that focused on issues of control and how interaction is structured. Cazden’s (1988) volume influenced a further generation of researchers to ask questions about how patterns of language use reveal what counts as knowledge and learning.

Classroom discourse analysis makes further substantive contributions. For Christie, two major themes have emerged from the study of classroom discourse: recognition that classroom activity is structured experience, and that language is part of social practice. These themes articulate with Christie’s theoretical frameworks, Halliday’s (1978, 1994) theory of language as social semiotic, systemic functional linguistics (SFL), and Bernstein’s (1990, 1996) theory of pedagogic discourse. Christie demonstrates, using SFL, how discourse analysis enables interpretation of the ways patterns of classroom language function to position teacher and student, and how it reveals the ways access to knowledge is made available in classroom activities.

Chap. 1 reviews research on classroom discourse analysis and introduces Christie’s perspective. Although readers unfamiliar with SFL may need additional resources to understand the finer points of her approach, the proposals that form a key contribution of the book are quite accessible: She argues for understanding the role of the teacher as authority and the role of the student as one who is apprenticed. This view of the roles of teacher and student is elaborated in chap. 2, in which Christie challenges what she characterizes as the dominant educational theories of the past generation: those suggesting that students’ development is not promoted through formal instruction. Such a perspective, according to Christie, does not recognize capacities developed in a sustained way over time through goals that are clearly articulated. Instead, it views teachers as facilitators of the unfolding of students’ intrinsic “competence.” She suggests that this conception “leaves poorly defined … goals for teaching and learning, and what particular capacities in using language might best serve those goals. Competence is not an end in itself, promoted in some fashion apart from social relationships, the meaning predispositions of the learner, contexts for learning or goals for teaching and learning” (pp. 32–33).

Those familiar with Christie’s previous work will recognize her model of pedagogic discourse with its focus on curriculum “macrogenres” (e.g., Christie, 1997). As she focuses on the values that underlie schooling and the nature of the knowledge that is constructed in classroom activity, she argues that analysis of a complete teaching/learning cycle, with all of its teacher talk, student talk, and other elements, is necessary to demonstrate the role language plays in negotiating that construction. The notion of macrogenre provides a basis for collecting and selecting for close text analysis passages that reveal the role language plays at different stages of activity, the ways the relationships of participants are negotiated over time, and the principles of evaluation that apply. The book analyzes five macrogenres in successive chapters that represent movement from the early grades into secondary schooling, demonstrating how classroom language changes as students move into disciplinary learning.

The lessons analyzed illustrate both effective and less effective teaching practices. Early primary school genres come in for substantial criticism, as Christie analyzes the “morning news” genre (known also as “sharing time”) and demonstrates that it offers few opportunities for students who do not already have skills in talking about experience to gain the ability to do so, because the teacher does not share the experience the students are attempting to re-create through language, and so cannot assist in scaffolding the development of new ways of using language. Christie suggests that, instead, teacher and students should work together to re-create shared experiences in language.

Examining classroom discourse across a range of grades and subjects, Christie shows that classroom language changes as students mature. Her notion of register (e.g., Christie 1991) is key in showing this development, since classroom language is realized through a first-order, regulative register, as well as a second-
order, instructional register. These registers are the forms through which schooling becomes a powerful agent in shaping students’ consciousness, because they relate to interpersonal behavior (how to act in the classroom) as well as to “the patterns and methods of handling information, reasoning, thinking, arguing, describing and explaining particular to the instructional fields” (163).

In the early grades, the regulative register is foregrounded, but as students move into the higher grades, it becomes more implicit. For example, teachers use fewer direct imperatives and more modality in directing behavior (e.g., So you’re probably best to sit next to somebody that you will work with (165)), and abstractions take the place of overt expressions of authority (e.g., The main requirement is . . . [166]). The regulative register in this sense “appropriates” the instructional register, positioning students to adopt technical language and the patterns of reasoning that it construes. Where teaching is successful, students are enabled to reason in particular ways that reflect the values of the disciplines they are studying.

A key concept for Christie is logogenesis, which she contrasts with phylogenesis, the development of a language over time, and ontogenesis, the development of language in an individual. Logogenesis happens when a curriculum macrogenre includes interdependent genres that enable students to use specialized language. In chap. 3, Christie analyzes an early childhood classroom in which logogenesis is not at work. The teacher assigns writing after reading a story aloud, but the teacher treats the act of writing itself as sufficient indication of learning and development, with no attention given to the children’s texts once they are drafted. In addition, Christie shows that the teacher has no clear idea about the linguistic features of the texts the students are to write. Few directions are given for the writing task, criteria for evaluation are vague, and the teacher cannot articulate what might constitute evidence of success. All texts are accepted as “good,” and the children do not reflect on the language used or the structure created in their stories. Using SFL tools, Christie shows how the students’ texts are modeled after the story that was read aloud, or are written in modes that the children were already familiar with, rather than following the teacher’s oral models. The writing is not linked with past or future activities to give students a sense of working toward larger goals.

In chaps. 4 and 5, Christie provides examples of effective logogenesis in two upper elementary classrooms and a ninth-grade geography classroom. Her analysis reveals the learning that occurs at different phases of the lessons and how the students’ language develops as they work with new ideas and technical language. She also shows that the often-maligned IRE structure can be an effective tool for consolidating knowledge, and she suggests that “the only reliable measure of the value of either small group talk or the IRE (or indeed any other pattern of language use) must lie in an examination of the role and significance of the particular pattern of talk in the total body of language that marks the macrogenre” (118).

In chap. 6, Christie describes the role of schools as “initiation and induction into ways of knowing, ways of valuing, ways of reasoning” (177), and she sug-
suggests that a better understanding of the mechanisms of this role is necessary to enable learning for all students. This, ultimately, is why Christie believes that the analysis of classroom discourse and a better understanding of the ways language construes meaning is important for setting clear goals for education.

Christie’s agenda is ambitious; she addresses issues of the power conferred by specialist discourses, the authority of the teacher in structuring opportunities to learn them, and the positioning of the students “whose consciousness is shaped and who acquire various ways of behaving, responding, reasoning and articulating experience of many kinds” (162). She shows how these issues are illuminated in the analysis of classroom discourse. Researchers interested in fine-grained analyses of language will find valuable models here for linking language structures with the meanings they construe. Those unfamiliar with SFL can benefit from Christie’s discussion of the values and goals of education as manifested in the language of teaching and learning. Her analysis of classroom discourse provides tools and frameworks for students and researchers to focus on the role that language plays in structuring learning opportunities.

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(Received 30 July 2003)
and social interaction” (LSI), and to honor the work and teachings of Robert Hopper, who died in 1998. Toward the first goal, the book begins, following the Introduction, with 32 original essays divided into 4 parts: “Orienting to the field of language and social interaction,” “Talk in everyday life,” “Talk in institutional settings,” and “Emerging trajectories: Body, mind, and spirit.” The contributors are largely researchers well known for their work in the area of conversation analysis (CA), including Emanuel Schegloff, Gail Jefferson, Paul Drew, John Heritage, Anita Pomerantz, Chuck Goodwin, and Gene Lerner, but the articles also cross disciplinary borders to incorporate research on cognitive processing, gesture, speech evaluations, sociolinguistic variables (e.g., gender), and ethnography. To meet the second goal, the volume not only brings together a mixture of Hopper’s former students and colleagues, but it also ends with a fifth part, titled “Robert Hopper: Teacher and scholar,” which is devoted to more personal messages about Hopper and his work, including a final chapter with his acceptance speech for the National Communication Association mentorship award. This last section of the book brings the total number of chapters to 39 and the number of pages to more than 600 (including the Index).

Part 1, “Orienting to the field of language and social interaction,” sets the cross-disciplinary tone of the book by featuring an eclectic group of articles, starting with one discussing the scope of speech evaluation research by James Bradac. There follow an analysis of questions in news interviews by Heritage, and a discussion of intercultural communication by Kristine Fitch. In the Introduction, the editors account for the inclusion of various approaches by stressing that they are writing from the field of communication; when put together in one volume, the different disciplines attest to the progress made within that field in the past three decades. As the editors note, this diverse base of work has been crucial in pushing communication studies away from outdated models, most notably the sender-receiver model, and toward a “social constructionist or constitutive view” of communication.

However, even though the editors are quick to note that the disciplines touched on in the book constitute “an array of assumptions, methods, and topics” that are sometimes connected by no more than “family resemblances,” Hopper’s own writings suggest potential difficulties in the attempt to bring these diverse approaches together. Consider, for example, his mostly negative reaction (Hopper 1990/1991) to Michael Moerman’s book *Talking culture* (1988), which endeavors to integrate conversation analysis with ethnography. Hopper expressed his belief that the book constructed only a “fragile bridge” between CA and ethnography and questioned Moerman’s understanding of CA, particularly its approach to context. In response to the assertion by Moerman that conversation analysts need ethnography to help them understand the context surrounding social interaction, Hopper emphasized the belief within CA that analysts should focus only on those details of interaction oriented to by the participants themselves. Analysts looking to move from the talk into the surrounding context in order to explain
interactional phenomena are often forced to make decisions about what they, not necessarily the participants, deem to be relevant to the interaction. As Hopper (1990/1991:163) asked, after noting the seemingly limitless features that might qualify as background context to any episode of interaction, “How can an analyst select from such a bewildering list those aspects of ‘context’ most likely to be relevant?” Although more than 10 years has passed since Hopper asked this question in print, context remains a hotly debated topic within the social sciences, especially within disciplines closely related to communication (e.g., Schegloff 1997, Wetherell 1998, Billig 1999).

Yet, while the book begs questions about the treatment of context, placing too much emphasis on differences among the contributors’ approaches risks underestimating the wide research interests of Hopper. The impressive list of his works crosses many disciplines, including speech evaluation and ethnography. Most of the chapters in the volume do not dig at and pursue past points of difference, but rather look more to the future as they build on Hopper’s insights in order to underscore the vast potential of the field of communication. In particular, Part 3, “Talk in institutional settings,” provides interesting, if not provocative, suggestions concerning the possible application of communication research in professional contexts. For example, the contribution by Pomerantz considers the use of naturally recorded data for assessing the benefits and drawbacks of employing a particular teaching strategy, referred to as “modeling,” in clinical training sessions. A chapter coauthored by Jennifer Molloy & Howard Giles provides ideas for employing “intergroup theories of communication” to improve the relationship between police and other citizens, and a chapter by Kurt Bruder describes prescriptive uses of discourse analytic concepts and practices in a therapeutic setting. Though Drew’s contribution in this section does not necessarily describe a professional application, it offers a “sketch” of what might be involved in a comparative analysis of talk across institutional settings.

Drew’s use of the term “sketch” to describe his contribution highlights another overarching feature of the volume. Instead of in-depth analyses, most of the chapters present relatively brief descriptions of specific communicative phenomena or possible applications of research. Schegloff, for instance, has two contributions in the book, in Part 2 and Part 4, which add up to fewer than 30 pages. The latter chapter focuses on a phenomenon he terms “ESP puns,” characterized as a “fringe” possibility for gaining further knowledge about the “mysterious” domain of word selection. As is the case with most of the other chapters, Schegloff’s discussion of ESP puns, rather than serving as a definitive statement on the topic, is meant to provide hints for gaining deeper insights into an important but not yet understood aspect of communication. In a similar vein, Jefferson uses her contribution (in Part 2) to “take a shot” at describing a particular phenomenon – participants’ attempts to disambiguate their own statements without doing so explicitly – that she has been tracking for more than 20 years. Despite modestly claiming that she still does not have a “handle” on the
practice, Jefferson uses her space (fewer than 20 pages) to present and discuss a number of candidate cases.

For some academics, the book’s emphasis on shorter articles that tend to express ideas in the process of being developed rather than in-depth analyses might induce dissatisfaction. At the same time, however, the contributions in this volume may be viewed as a welcome source of inspiration. After all, except for a handful of lucky students and colleagues, not many researchers regularly have the opportunity to “hear” developing ideas from scholars such as Schegloff, Jefferson, and Drew, not to mention the numerous other distinguished contributors. The short remembrances of Hopper in the last section may not interest all readers, but researchers searching for innovative applications of LSI methods and research and graduate students in need of ideas for thesis and dissertation topics will certainly have much to gain from a thorough reading of this volume.

There is one aspect of communication I was hoping to see discussed more in the book: the relationship of gender to communication. Gender was one topic that Hopper focused on in his later writings (Hopper 2002, Hopper & LeBaron 1998), and the book does recognize this with two articles in Part 2: a discussion by Phillip Glenn of the relationship of laughter to sex categories and sexuality on a call-in radio show, and a short analysis by Hanneke Houtkoop-Steenstra concerning gender and cultural differences in telephone openings. Hopper predominantly adopted a CA approach to gender as he used his work to demonstrate some of the practices used by participants to make gender relevant to interaction. In this respect, it is Glenn who most closely follows Hopper by skillfully describing how the participants on the radio program used laughter to mark gender as a relevant feature of context.

However, despite the interest and import of Glenn’s article, it should be noted that recent research on gender and social interaction, in addition to demonstrating participants’ means of orienting to gender, has begun exploring innovative ways of employing CA to promote insights into the positions of women and men in society (e.g., Kitzinger 2000a, Stokoe & Weatherall 2002, Ohara & Saft 2003). Making use of both sequential CA and membership categorization analysis, this research is presenting interactional perspectives on difficult topics such as sexual harassment (Kitzinger & Frith 1999), breast cancer (Kitzinger 2000b), and care for the elderly and disabled (Paoletti 2002). Given that many of the authors of these recent studies refer to and claim to build on Hopper’s work, it would have been possible to include an example of this research and still maintain the celebratory nature of the book. To be sure, even with approximately 600 pages of text, it is impossible to cover fully the many directions of LSI research and even all of the diverse interests embraced by Hopper himself. Needless to say, this one point of criticism does not detract from the fact that this volume contains a wealth of information that will undoubtedly prove useful to people working within and around the field of communication.
Its title and back-panel blurb are somewhat misleading: *Faiths in their pronouns* reflects a field of scholarship completely removed from the evidentiary standards to which sociolinguistic researchers are accustomed. This review therefore approaches the work with two broad questions in mind. First, how is scholarship from sociolinguistics transformed and utilized by other fields of study? And second, what can social scientists glean from various projects of “humanism” that bring to the forefront linguistic phenomena such as pronouns?

Cragg initiates this largely Christian-theological work with the basic idea that pronoun use delineates and reflects social groupings, selfhood, and, most important, religious identity. Alongside this proposition is put forth a broad interpretation of the roles of familiar pronouns the author finds within religious texts; the goal seems to be a pan-historical or ahistorical understanding of “faith” in world religions, predominantly Judaism, Islam, and Christianity. Interlaced with a curiously obscure analogy of the Internet as society and websites as religions, the account ultimately urges that religious claims yield to the priorities of basic humanism in the 21st century, while simultaneously regarding secular space as lacking in “awareness” (p. 191).
For a book purportedly on pronouns, rarely are we, I, or you offered in their original form, as if the Bhagavad Gita, Qur’an, or Torah were inscribed in King’s English. Owing to the lack of precise citations, the reader is left hoping that these sources are, in fact, among those the author used, given that the works of Milton, Donne, Kipling, and Shakespeare clearly guide his exposition. Much presupposed knowledge is required for the reader to steer through the ill-defined positioning of “followers” in space and time, the various Jewish, Islamic and Christian theological debates, and the author’s indirect manner of expression. Therefore, this book would likely interest only a finite group of devout readers.

Although the degree to which the author’s assessment is based on translated texts remains unclear, chaps. 6 and 7 on “The Muslim personal pronoun” demonstrate an investigation of an Arabic Qur’an (and perhaps Hadith or other Arabic texts) that does not focus on pronouns, per se, but is noteworthy. These chapters’ arguments regarding Muslim conceptions of Allah, Muhammad, and al-‘umma ‘nation, community’ rest chiefly on two types of evidence. First, certain constructions of possession (iдаафа) and definiteness, characteristic of Arabic, are claimed to singularize both Allah and Muhammad throughout the Qur’an and thus in the hearts and minds of Muslims. And second, recurrent rites, obligatory prayer (صلاة), and patterning of certain phrases in the Qur’an are said to impose both a personal spiritual accountability and the keys to communal participation for Muslims. This latter rationale would benefit from a more explicit theory of “orthopraxy,” if indeed the author’s theological interpretation of Islam seeks to make space for the nonurban, nonelite and nonliterate. For researchers interested in semantics, though, the tenuous handling of Arabic’s iдаафа and forms of definiteness may inspire genuine study.

It is clear that pronouns, items long scrutinized by linguists and philosophers, have gained a broader recognition as purveyors of social meaning. Exactly how they do so within and across texts and contexts may not be as well understood by (or serve the purposes of) other types of writers. Pronouns-as-identities (and the Internet-as-society, for that matter) may now be considered free-floating cultural objects, completely uncoupled from theoretical roots in deixis or dialogue. Therefore, it is difficult to say whether this book represents a mishmash of “sexy” lures or, to borrow a term from Urban 2001, a crude “secondary replication” of scholarship along the lines of Buber 1958 or Mühlhüsl er & Harré 1990. Perhaps it is both. We can, of course, envision a more successful exploration of religious identity through pronoun use within texts such as those mentioned above – one that (i) clearly presents the texts under examination, (ii) addresses the issues involved in translation and the rationale supporting such translation, (iii) situates interpretation of patterns within relevant cultural and historical contexts, and (iv) then relates this interpretation to present social group concerns. Without some of these supports, this theoretical house is built on sand.

Other, more successful humanistic works share the goal of transcending material existences through unabashedly creating fictions, and the focus on the pronoun is invaluable in these endeavors. For example, the love poetry of Pedro Salinas quite intentionally constructs dialogue between the poet’s speaking voice and us readers, all the while enticing us into this new reality:

\[
\begin{align*}
Y \text{ nunca te equivocaste,} \\
\text{más que una vez, una noche} \\
\text{que te encaprichó una sombra} \\
—\text{la única que te ha gustado—}.
\end{align*}
\]

Una sombra parecía.

\[
\begin{align*}
Y \text{ la quisiste abrazar.} \\
Y \text{ era yo.}
\end{align*}
\]

And you never made a mistake except once, one night when a shadow caught your fancy— the only one you’ve ever liked.

It seemed a shadow.

And you wanted to embrace it.

And it was me.

(Salinas 1974:17)

Of course, the beauty of starting with a blank slate is that a poet maintains strict control, each pronoun colored by and alongside its unfolding context. Social scientists and historians do not have the luxury of manufacturing the contexts in which their subjects appear. But the courtesy of writing accounts with a strong regard for actual readers – an eye to the dialogism so inherent in culture – is among the analytical tools that successful works of humanism have imparted to social science.

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(Received 3 September 2003)
In *Representing rape*, Ehrlich provides a detailed linguistic account of a sexual assault trial. The data for this study come from two sources: a university tribunal and a criminal trial in which complaints were brought against a single man, pseudonym Matt, on behalf of two women. While focusing in each chapter on particular linguistic details, Ehrlich traces their use across several contexts within the legal proceedings – direct testimony, cross-examination and the delivery of judgments. In doing so, the author shows how the details of language use feed into larger frameworks of meaning and legal practice.

Chap. 1, “The institutional coerciveness of legal discourse,” begins with a discussion of recent work in language and gender studies. Here Ehrlich argues for a constructivist, performative, and anti-essentialist concept of gender, drawing on the work of scholars within feminist linguistics and interactional sociolinguistics. She goes on to show the convergence between such work and notions of institutional coerciveness, suggesting that law and other institutions constrain and shape the practices through which gender is constructed. Drawing together early work on sexist language and gendered representations with more recent work on gendered practice, the author characterizes her task as one of exploring the “way that the linguistic representation of gender in the third person shapes the enactment of gender in the first person” (p. 10). In later chapters, this relationship is sometimes described in terms of subject positions that legal participants (defendant and complainants) come to occupy. In the later part of the first chapter, Ehrlich turns to consider legal discourse and the work of feminist legal scholars. Here we are introduced to an important distinction between law-as-practice and law-as-statute, which in many ways justifies the type of study provided here. “In spite of sweeping legislative reform to sexual assault and rape statutes, other aspects of sexual assault legal processes continue to be informed by culturally powerful interpretive frameworks that legitimate male violence and reproduce gendered inequalities” (22). Ehrlich’s argument here is persuasive: Actual legal practice is underdetermined by statute, and, as such, an understanding of what is going on requires that the analyst attend to the situated activities (police investigations, interrogations, trials, lawyers consultations, jury deliberations, judge’s decisions) that together constitute the practice of law.

In chap. 2, Ehrlich provides an analysis of the defendant’s testimony, focusing on, as she puts it, his grammar of “non-agency.” This is a wonderfully detailed
analysis in which Matt’s use of particular grammatical constructions to mitigate, diffuse, obscure, and indeed eliminate his own agency is critiqued. Particularly important to Matt’s strategy here are agentless passives (all our clothes at one point were taken off) in which an agent is implicit but unrealized in the surface form of the sentence, and unaccusative constructions (The sexual activity started escalating even further) in which the agent is eliminated altogether. These unaccusative sentences frequently have grammatical subjects that are themselves nominalizations. Ehrlich writes, “As the subjects of unaccusative verbs, they depict their referents as spontaneous sexual events, as happenings that have taken their natural course without any particular cause or agent” (50). Later in the chapter, Ehrlich shows what might be considered a deviant case, in which Matt pushes the limits of contextual appropriateness by claiming that my shirt came off. Revealing an orientation to the very issues of agency and causation that Ehrlich analyzes, the lawyer follows up with when you say your shirt came off, how did your shirt come off? One of the real strengths of this chapter and of the book in general is the way in which the author traces the connections between testimony and the process of adjudication. In chap. 2, then, Ehrlich suggests that the judge’s decision was informed by an interpretation of Matt’s grammar of non-agency via what she calls “the male sexual drive discourse.” So with Matt’s own agency effectively obscured or eliminated, the judge was able to locate the cause of the events in male hormones. Ehrlich provides the following quotation from the judgment: young women must realize that when a young man becomes aroused during sexual activity there is a danger that he will be driven by hormones rather than by conscience (57).

In chap. 3, the questions of lawyers and tribunal members are analyzed in terms of the “control” they exert (over witnesses’ answers, the evidence presented, the ideological frame which they invoke), the presuppositions they carry, and the beliefs they convey. The analysis is certainly insightful, and the focus on the lawyer’s presentation of “options” clearly illustrates the “utmost resistance standard” that Ehrlich is concerned to illuminate. However, the focus on single questions also obscures somewhat the place these turns occupy in a “line-of-questioning” (see Atkinson & Drew 1979). Moreover, the author suggests that presuppositions embedded in questions are difficult to deny, but the interactional issues implied here are not fully engaged. An alternative analysis of the same data might draw on the concepts of turn-design and preference. From this perspective, questions such as Ehrlich analyzes do not exert “control” but rather prefer certain answers. From the perspective of conversation analysis, such questions are built toward a type-conforming and confirming answer. The notions of preference and type-(non)-conformity might be employed to specify just what interactional work a dispreferred or non-type-conforming response entails for the witness. Sacks 1987 and more recent work by Raymond 2000 point the way here.
Chap. 4 analyzes the complainants’ own expressions of agency focusing, as in chap. 2, on the grammatical constructions they employed in producing both direct and cross-examination testimony. Ehrlich is once again persuasive in making the case that, while lawyers attempt to portray complainants as ineffective, their own testimony draws on notions of fear so as to contest the dominant framework of the “utmost resistance standard.” “When they did represent themselves as initiators or causers of actions (i.e. as agents or actors) their causal role was severely diminished; otherwise they represented themselves as experiencers of cognitive or emotional states or as patients – entities that were acted upon” (97). Thus, when asked why they did not exercise some option which they are compelled, in the course of cross-examination, to recognize as an option, complainants suggest that in the context of sexual assault, it was their fear and drive toward self-preservation that caused them to act the way they did. Ehrlich here suggests that, against the liberal model of the rationally choosing and intending agent, complaints are drawing on a notion of action that attends much more to the situated particulars in which it is embedded. Here “what drives (i.e. causes) the women’s actions is not the free will of an autonomous individual, but rather the strong emotions of fear, shock, and confusion engendered by Matt’s sexual aggression” (113). Ehrlich once again follows these themes through the testimony and on to the adjudication. Rather than recognize the importance of self-preservation and the role that fear may have played in the sexual assault, the adjudicators characterize complainants as not sensible, ineffective, and even irrational.

In chap. 5, Ehrlich turns to consider these legal proceedings as a whole and argues that a notion of miscommunication underlies the adjudication process. She finds evidence in both the lawyers’ questions and the judgments to suggest that sexual assault was understood to result from a failure on the part of the women to effectively communicate their rejection of Matt’s advances. Matt then is cast in the role of one who simply misunderstood ambiguous signals. Ehrlich thus shows the ways in which theoretical models current in sociolinguistics converge with explanatory accounts offered within the context of the legal proceedings. The book ends with a short concluding chapter in which Ehrlich outlines the main theoretical arguments of the preceding chapters.

This is an excellent book which not only provides a highly original, persuasive, and detailed analysis of these particular legal proceedings, but at the same time offers an insightful application of feminist linguistics, socio-grammatical analysis, and critical discourse analysis. Seasoned scholars will find it a very valuable contribution to current theoretical debates in sociolinguistics and discourse analysis. At the same time, given the clarity with which complex analyses and arguments are presented, the book would make an excellent addition to undergraduate or graduate courses on language and gender, language and law, language and power, or discourse analysis.

(Received 5 September 2003)

DOI: 10.1017/S0047404505303059


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Bilingualism is a mainstay of current sociolinguistic and psycholinguistic research, and it has successfully migrated from the narrow concerns of “applied linguistics” to the very core of theoretical linguistic debate and argumentation. Research on bilinguals at both the societal and individual levels is now contributing to a deeper understanding of the place of language in human interaction and cognition. By its very nature, the study of bilingualism requires that researchers become involved with speakers at the level of communication, often in field situations that require subtle sociological and psychological insights relating to language choice and language switching as speakers attempt to establish personal and group identity.

It will probably surprise few researchers that bilingualism and multilingualism were standard features of many ancient societies. What may come as a surprise to many, however, is that the topic of bilingualism in ancient societies has attracted the attention of scholars for generations (Schuchardt started out as a Latinist), as specialists explored the data of bilingual texts as a means of gaining insight into linguistic structure and history. Furthermore, in recent years modern sociolinguistic concepts and analytical techniques have been put to effective use to explore the effects of linguistic pluralism on ancient societies, which in turn has added to the massive database on bilingual societies and the speakers who inhabit them. Bringing together the two utterly opposite fields of classical philology and sociolinguistics seems an unlikely undertaking, especially when one considers the interactive fieldwork or experimental conditions that underlie current research paradigms in the field of bilingual research. But such work can be and increasingly has been carried out, often by Indo-Europeans trained in dialectology and sociolinguistic principles, such as Neumann & Untermann 1980,
Campanile, Cardona & Lazzeroni 1988, or Dunkel 2000; or by classical philologists who have mastered the methods and approaches of sociolinguistic theory, such as Flobert 1992 or Biville 1998. Much of this recent activity is represented in a volume which in many ways can be considered a companion to the one under review, the collection of Adams, Janse & Swain 2002.

Now comes Adams’s *Bilingualism and the Latin language (BLL)*, a book that can only be described in superlatives for its depth, sophistication, and detail. *BLL* is an undertaking carried out on a scale never even hinted at by the most dedicated workers in the field of ancient bilingualism, the first truly comprehensive and systematic attempt to deal with an entire ancient period (the Roman era, down to about the 4th century CE). It is arranged essentially into two parts: Broadly, chaps. 1–4 cover theoretical and methodological issues; chaps. 5–8 report on specific locales and situations; and chap. 9 presents conclusions. The work covers an amazingly large number of languages and contact situations, including data from and about Oscan, Umbrian, Venetic, Messapic, Etruscan, Gaulish, Punic, Libyan, Berber, Aramaic, Hebrew, Germanic, “Hispanic,” Egyptian, Getic, Sarmatian, Thracian, and, especially and prominently, Greek. Discussions range from the micro-analysis of inscriptions, a multifaceted discussion of code-switching in inscriptions and texts (including a lengthy discussion of code-switching in Cicero’s letters), issues of solidarity, identity, language choice, and language and power. There is a detailed treatment of borrowing, with case studies from many of the abovementioned languages brought in to illustrate points of interest. The discussion of borrowing is particularly instructive, not only for its sociolinguistic and societal dimensions but also for the elaborate treatment of the effects of borrowing on the structural core of the recipient language. Adams goes into great technical detail on accentual and other phonetic features that have been transferred from language to language, as well as morphology, syntax, and the more easily handled features of vocabulary. The morphological and syntactic discussions are particularly welcome because they tackle some traditional chestnuts of Greek/Latin contact changes which are given an extensive airing, such as gender exchanges, case usage, various substitutions of both inflectional and derivational morphology, and other structural matters. One general point worth remembering about Greek/Latin bilingualism is that while Romans displayed a fascination with Greek throughout history, and while it was not uncommon to find Romans who were trained in Greek and spoke it reasonably well, it was the rare Greek who bothered to learn Latin. The intellectual and cultural prestige of Greece was a far more powerful sociolinguistic force than was the military power of the Romans. Greek always played a special part in Roman cultural life, to the point that it was even used as an official language in the Eastern Empire. Adams notes (p. 545) that the Romans did not make an aggressive attempt to impose their language in any part of the Empire, which is to say that there was no official language policy for conquered lands. What seemed to happen is that, in most cases, Latin simply won out by default owing to the practical circumstances of
administration and military domination; but Greek enjoyed a special status not
shared, for example, by Oscan, Umbrian, or Gaulish.

The second half of the book begins with a wide-ranging chapter on Latin in
Egypt, drawing on the numerous inscriptional, textual, and other materials that
attest to Latin/Greek community bilingualism (there is no systematic evidence
for Latin/Egyptian bilingualism). Egyptian played a limited role in Roman life in
Egypt, but Greek played a significant one, in particular in the army, which is
discussed in detail (599–622). There is a chapter on patterns of bilingualism on
the Greek island of Delos from the 2nd century BCE as revealed by a variety of
inscriptional materials; and a chapter on Gaulish/Latin commercial bilingualism
at La Graufesenque, a Latin-Gallic pottery production center where some bilin-
gual inscriptions have been uncovered, which Adams analyzes in terms of bilin-
gual code-switching.

Adams next takes up the matter of “The Latin of a learner” by discussing the
extant materials of two native Greek speakers, one translating Greek fables, the
other writing letters home, each in their nonnative Latin tongue. Adams parses
out features of bilingualism and interference from Greek in the words of each
writer, carefully distinguishing bilingual interference from simple vulgar or im-
properly learned Latin. He concludes the book with a thematic summary which
discusses such issues as identity (a major theme throughout the volume), lan-
guage death, the effects of slavery as an institutional force in the spread of bilin-
gualism (Romans kept slaves of many nationalities), literacy, and features of
“Hellenized” Latin, especially among the upper classes of Roman society.

Bilingualism and the Latin Language is a dense technical document, not for the
casual reader or the traditionally trained sociolinguist or psycholinguist with a cu-
riosity about the ancient world. For them, Adams, Janse & Swain 2002 will prove
a better choice, though the reader committed to learning about Latin bilingualism
specifically might be able to wade through the first four chapters of BLL. To il-
ustrate, Greek linguistic material, which is abundant throughout the volume, is
printed in the Greek alphabet, and the scores of complicated literary and epigraph-
ical examples from Greek and Latin are not only left untranslated but are discussed
in terms that only a classicist or classically trained linguist can appreciate. Fur-
thermore, non-Greek inscriptions are cited using traditional conventions such as
bold roman type for material written in non-Latin alphabets (e.g., Etruscan or
Oscan), dots under uncertain letters, and other specialist epigraphical practices.
So unless the reader has the benefit of extensive training not only in the Greek and
Latin languages but also in epigraphy and classical history and culture, much of
this book will prove impenetrable. For the classical philologist or the linguist
specializing in classical languages, who are its real audience, the book will prove
invaluable, and worth all the considerable effort it will take to read and digest it.
It is bound to become the standard by which any work on the topic of bilingualism
in the ancient world will be judged: exhaustive, theoretically current, philologi-
cally exacting, and methodologically rigorous – a landmark publication.
REVIEWS

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(Received 3 September 2003)

DOI: 10.1017/S0047404505313055


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This book is a collection of 10 articles treating different aspects of francophone rap music and hip-hop culture. Despite the facts that the first French rap recordings date from 1984 and that France has since become a center of rap music second only to the United States, this is the first book devoted to the subject. André Prévos begins the volume with a history of French rap music from its origins through the 1990s. Here we are introduced to many of the names that appear in later chapters. The following chapters treat the regional specificity of Marseilles rap (Jean-Marie Jaco); rap audiences in Marseilles (Anthony Pecqueux); the politics of French rap (Paul Silverstein); rap as a social movement (Manuel Boucher); hip-hop as an aesthetic subculture (Anne-Marie Green); an ethnography of tagging (Alain Milon); hip-hop dance (Hugues Bazin); rap in Libreville, Gabon (Michelle Auzanneau); and rap in Québec (Roger Chamberland). All the chapters except those by Prévos, Silverstein, and Chamberland were translated from French.
The title, *Black, blanc, beur*, refers to the multiracial composition of most French banlieues or housing projects, and it is mentioned in passing that all of IAM’s members are foreign or of foreign origin. Nevertheless, the métissage aspect of French rap is one of the things that sets it apart from the American scene, and this was not as clear as it could have been. The book would have benefited from a chapter on the recent history of immigration to France. I also expected to see a more directed discussion of Islam, which is a growing topic of discussion in both French and American rap music.

Given the interests of the readers of *Language in Society*, I will concentrate on the two chapters that give us the most insight into the role of language in francophone hip-hop culture. Several authors mention the use of slang, or *verlan*, and borrowings from English and immigrant languages, especially Arabic. Paul Silverstein situates language use within the present scope of economic globalization that has engendered a backlash of French cultural protectionism, including linguistic surveillance. Laws like the 1994 Toubon Law, which specifies that foreign words must be excluded in the public sphere when an appropriate French word or expression exists, cast an illegal tint on rap music. Silverstein explains that the vocal style of rapping mimics everyday speech by youth in the housing projects in word choice, rhythm, enunciation, and prosody, and often this speech indexes very specific localities and origins (p. 53). Doing an ethnography of voices within rap songs, Silverstein talks about rappers “changing their flow” and playing other characters: hardcore gangsters, immigrants just off the boat, bourgeois Frenchmen, police officers. They also “sample” journalist’s reports and political speeches. In so doing, Silverstein explains, French rap groups effectively normalize the argot of the housing projects as unmarked in contrast to the contextually marked speech forms of mainstream France. This is a beautifully written article that stands out in the book.

Auzanneau also brings us many insights into the language of rap, but her focus is on the multilingual city of Libreville in Gabon, where languages from ten or more linguistic families are spoken as well as some English and several varieties of French. Her study is based on 81 songs from 10 Libreville groups. Within this corpus, she is looking at three levels of language: enunciatory (pronouns, terms of address, etc.), linguistic (the forms and reasons for choices of languages), and sociocultural (content, external context). Auzanneau analyzes a rap text by Siya Po’ossi X called “To kill La Wana.” The local variety of French used in the song is similar to other urban varieties developed by young people in Africa and in some French suburbs. It consists of French syntax and a composite lexicon including English and local vernacular languages, and French slang. Auzanneau opposes this “relexified French” to code-switching, which also occurs in the music. The degree to which different languages and varieties are used indicates the songwriters’ individual styles. The language used is partially determined by their ideologies and social positioning, but it also depends on the aesthetic and musical
constraints of a song and the social norms of linguistic behavior in society. For example, French is used to express themes of socioeconomic misery and socio-political critiques, while local languages are used for mysticism and tradition. Insults are usually given in nonstandard French or English.

Similar to Silverstein’s example of how rap normalizes the nonstandard French of the Parisian suburbs, Auzanneau sees the devalorized language of the Libreville youth revalorized in rap. In using this variety, Libreville youth mark their attachment to Gabonese culture at the same time as they mark their break with the values of both their own traditional society and dominant Western society. This is the beginning of a multi-sited ethnography focusing on how rap as a social movement and urban discourse reveals certain urban sociolinguistic dynamics at the same time as it takes part in them, so we have more important discoveries to look forward to.

It would not be honest to review this book without mentioning the unevenness of the editing and the often problematic translations. A global editorial policy on how original texts were to be handled would have been a big improvement. Quotes and italics are not used consistently, so it is not clear whether French rappers are using the English term or translating it. This makes most of the book difficult to use for even broad linguistic analysis.

We cannot expect French academics who are writing about France in French to change their style of writing or to know which points need more explanation for an American audience, but good translators should know and should be in communication with the authors to make sure that the meaning is clear and that register is respected to the extent possible. Sometimes the translations in this book disturb reading simply on the level of lexicon. For instance, we read “literality and metaphorality” instead of “literalness and metaphor.” More often, reading is choppy because of stylistic problems. Sentences such as the following one, which begins Boucher’s article, show a lack of communication among author, translator, and editor: “As I have shown in a previous research project regarding the protagonists of integration, the combination of logics (strategic, repressive, mediating, integrative, subjective) expressed by these actors reveals the face of a society riddled by rapport of domination and exclusion” (68). Translation of French academic style to American academic style is a thorny problem, but one that researchers of language and culture should be sensitive to. A more easily remedied problem is the deletion of original texts. The richness of the texts discussed in Auzanneau’s article was sadly lacking in several other articles, where no originals were provided and we were left with translations of rap songs such as “He’s my spitting image, my girlfriend thought it was I” (37). One can hardly imagine an American rapper using the “correct” subject pronoun in this situation.

(Received 10 September 2003)
In *Sista, speak!* Sonja Lanehart presents the language and literacy autobiographies of three generations of African American women. These women tell the stories of their education and aspirations, focusing on how their literacy and language were influenced by social, economic, and political forces within school, family and community. Lanehart interprets the rich descriptions in their stories by examining the ideological perspectives of “experiences and cultures and ecologies” that shaped the women’s views of themselves and their worlds” (p. 29).

Lanehart introduces the narratives with a story of how her teachers’ emphasis on “good” English prompted her to “constantly correct the way my parents or others in my family spoke” (16). The women’s stories highlight the complex role of language, literacy, and schooling in the lives of all members of our literate society, but especially in the lives of those who have been marginalized by the racist policies and structures, overt and hidden, that exist in our educational institutions. Excerpts from published works of Black female authors introduce each section of the book, adding an extra layer of richness to this study. These stories invite teachers to reconsider the ways we respond to the language, literacy experiences and opportunities of learners. They invite linguists and anthropologists to consider further the impact of literacy, language, and schooling on all members of society.

Lanehart’s introduction is a highlight of the book as it explores various perspectives on the relationship among race, language, and education. In her conclusion, Lanehart acknowledges the complexities she discovered: “We just can’t seem to let go of who we know we are – culturally and linguistically rich – how we are seen by the majority not like us – dumb, ignorant, lazy, shiftless – we are treated socially, politically and educationally – disenfranchised, dispossessed, disinheritied – nor can we embrace who we want to be or should be – acknowledged, respected, valued and vindicated – just because we are all human no matter what our cultural, ethnic and linguistic differences are” (223).
In Part 1, Lanehart presents transcripts of oral and written narratives by five members of her family, revealing their insights into education, language, literacy, and personal goals. We hear from Maya, the oldest of the five, mother and grandmother of the other women. Maya grew up in the segregated South, didn’t finish high school, and “had the least amount of education” and “the most difficulty life” (22) of all the participants. Maya wished for a better education: “I could use my language right and … write letters and put ‘em in the right sentences and whatever. . . . I don’t know all that, how to do that” (38). Yet according to Lanehart, Maya “is most comfortable with who she is and where she is in life” (22) of all the other narrative voices we come to know. To her granddaughter, she is “the most resilient woman I have ever known” (22).

Grace and Reia, Maya’s two daughters, represent the next generation. Grace, Lanehart’s mother, is central to the study because the author had “most interactions with her on the subject of language and uses of literacy” and “because she is most concerned about these issues” (23). Although Grace code-switches to “sound proper” depending on her audience, she does not want to forget where she came from and considers that some people she knows use linguistic styles that are “pretentious, snippety, mechanical, haughty, White” (23). Grace yearns for an education she never got: “We didn’t have a lot of subjects that a lot of kids had as far as the kids went to private school and the children went to White school” (64). Grace wonders what influences an enabling teacher would have had on her life: “I feel teachers should try to find out why children are not doing well in class” (153).

Reia, Grace’s half-sister and Lanehart’s aunt, has the most education of her generation. Yet, Lanehart reports, her sound is “distinctly Southern” (25). She worked for a bank and took a junior college program in architectural drafting, but she wanted to help “people who were hurting and needed to be loved” (24). She therefore completed a college degree in psychology. She states her personal goals: “I would like to write a few books in the field of behavior and social science. I want to one day build a foundation that will be a solution to the declining Black community” (88). As the youngest of Maya’s eight children, Reia had family support and teachers who encouraged her to “to see her self worth and strength” (167).

Deidra and Sonja, the author, represent the third generation. Deidra, Sonja’s younger sister, was raised by her paternal grandparents and later moved in with Grace when Sonja went off to college. Grace “made Deidra aware of her problems” and constantly “corrected” her. As a result, Deidra struggled with her self-image and attitudes about her literacy and language. Deidra “is uncomfortable in situations where talking ‘proper’ might be expected” (26). At the same time, Deidra has specific goals and the influence of a supportive professor: “I wanna be able to do the things that she can do. She get up in front of the class and it’s like she just had it together and that kinda made me want to strive more . . . give a little
more into my studies . . . to do better” (100). Diedra was the one participant who admitted to having a literacy problem. Through her analysis of Diedra’s stories, Lanehart reconsidered her own perceptions about Deidra’s views of herself and literacy.

Sonja, the author/researcher, currently assistant professor of English language studies and linguistics at the University of Georgia, is the first in her family to earn a Ph.D. Although she speaks African American English, this ability is rarely acknowledged by other family members, who comment, “Oh she’s all proper on us” (115). Because of this prestige, her English is never corrected. She believes that “acceptance of the indoctrination of schooling” (28) influenced the ways in which she uses language.

In Part 2, Lanehart interprets each participant’s attitudes, self-identities, and most important, the attitudes of others in response to each woman’s goals. We come to understand how each participant established her unique literacy and educational history. We learn about the data that Lanehart collected to interpret the influences of the language, literacy, and schooling experiences on the lives of each family member.

The design of the study is explained in a final section called “Notes” that establishes the research context. It might be helpful to read the Notes section as well as the Appendices before reading the analysis in Part 2, because they prove very helpful for understanding many references discussed earlier in the book. We learn about the contexts in which Lanehart collected oral data and how she used these data to designate features of African American English. She documents how she collected the participants’ written data by sending questionnaires and requesting copies of their letters, essays, and creative writing. After analyzing the written samples, Lanehart conducted individual oral interviews, asking her participants to respond to specific quotations expressing various views about African American and “standard” English. Sometimes as we read the stories in the first part of the book, we are distracted by questions that become clear later. We still wonder why some of the texts include representations of oral dialect features and others do not, and why some written samples include unconventional spellings, punctuation, and grammatical forms and not others.

Lanehart gives her reader much to think about. The eloquent voices of five women explore their lives, their literacy identities, their educational autobiographies, and their “possible selves.” Perhaps Lanehart’s goal in including unconventional features in the text is to make visible the contrast between the beautiful and expressive language of the participants and the linguistic stereotypes that label certain features as “poor” English. We wonder if we might have learned more about their personal literacy histories from written materials more relevant to their daily lives. The reading and writing samples are similar for each participant even though their uses of literacy outside of the study are quite different.

Lanehart’s decision to start with the women’s stories and end with her research framework may reflect her own research journey to see a “bigger picture, a better
picture – a holistic picture in the issues surrounding why I do what I do.” She writes, “As I was going through the data one day after being overwhelmed by all the work I had done . . . and all the possibilities it held, I suddenly realized there were no easy answers . . . Some of the questions I asked did not fit neatly into the categories I delineated . . . I was going about this wrong, and doing it in a way I had argued against. Yes we can talk about language apart from literacy and vice versa. But what would be the point here? In my context, they are together. They are together because I am interested in something bigger than language, bigger than literacy” (208).

In Sista, speak!, Lanehart has “rendered visible” the voices and lives of women who are “conspicuously absent from major studies in most disciplines.” The stories of five African American women raise far-reaching issues and questions for language educators and researchers. Lanehart remarks early on, “I believe there is a relationship between confidence and literacy, confidence and language. Our perceptions of our language (and literacy) are integrated with our perceptions of ourselves. Because of that, when we talk about language and literacy we should also talk about identity and goals and possible selves . . . since they are at stake – or at risk” (28).

This is an orientation that teachers at all levels of schooling must take seriously. The belief that there is only one kind of appropriate oral and written English for classrooms and schools, including university settings, continues to permeate our culture of schooling. With such a prevalent view, the educational futures of women such as those whose voices we hear in Sista, speak! remain problematic.

As language and literacy usage are treated as correct or incorrect, proper or vernacular, language users must make decisions about the ways language becomes a marker of social identity. When scholars explore how people learn language and literacy, the influences of their personal attitudes and the influences of ideology often are not addressed. Personal attitudes and self-images involving language and culture are as important as any attempt to discover specific methods to teach language and literacy. The social cultural context of schooling with all its ramifications becomes the curriculum within which a learner is embedded. The beliefs and language policies of teachers, materials, programs, and schools cannot be separated from language learning. Early experiences, and how they are interpreted, reach beyond schools into families and communities and follow learners throughout their lives. Sista, speak! helps us understand this and much more.

(Received 18 September 2003)