

Besides, in spite of his insistence on the importance of looking at on-line processing when studying language, he offers nothing in the way of a theory of utterance interpretation which could accommodate his intuitions. *Mapping* seems to be all there is to it but it is not clear what kind of operation this is and, in fact, it is probably one more instance of the confusion between the processes involved in comprehension and the products of inter-

pretation, which the author had warned us against. On the whole, though, Gibbs has a lot to offer to all those interested in language understanding and naturally, to those working in pragmatics.

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Michael MCCARTHY. *Discourse Analysis for Language Teachers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991. x + 213 pages.

Teachers following a communicative approach to the teaching of English as a foreign language are naturally very much concerned with how language is used in real-life situations in both speech and writing and endeavor to bear this in mind when they are involved in the development of materials and their exploitation in the classroom. Because discourse analysis is «... fundamentally concerned with the relationship between language and the contexts of its use» (page 10), a book aimed at introducing this area of linguistics to practicing teachers is to be welcomed. I think it is true to say that discourse analysis has for too long been restricted to a subject slot on an MA course in Applied Linguistics and thus seen by many practitioners as a nebulous theory far removed from the day-to-day routine of classroom teaching and learning.

The author has been involved in publishing materials for ELT both in an advisory role and more directly as a writer, especially in the field of vocabulary teaching and learning (see references). As a result, he treats language teachers with respect, recognizing that they use their experience of what works and what does not work in their classrooms when trying to take on board any new developments

in the field of applied linguistic theory and research. A lot of teachers' attitudes and beliefs concerning language teaching and learning are based on instinct. What McCarthy would argue is that instinct is not enough and that what teachers also need is to be reasonably well-informed as to the numerous insights that research into discourse has thrown up over recent years: the organization of texts beyond the sentence level, the regular patterns found in conversational exchanges in a variety of different situations, the role of intonation in communication, and the way the underlying rules of discourse and their realizations in language differ from culture to culture.

In Chapter 1, McCarthy introduces the concept of discourse, pointing out the lack of a one-to-one correspondence between grammatical form and communicative function and that the latter depends on the context of language use. We are led quickly through Sinclair and Coulthard's model of spoken interaction based on classroom exchanges between teachers and pupils and its limitations in more informal contexts. We are then briefly introduced to what ethnomethodologists have contributed in the study of adjacency pairs (two types of turn in a

conversation that typically occur together), turn-taking, conversational openings and closings, how topics enter and disappear from conversations and so on.

In dealing with written discourse, the author clarifies the difference between cohesion and coherence (terms that are easily confused by teachers) and emphasizes the fact that the reader is involved in a creative process in interpreting and bringing coherence to the text. The concept of a segment is introduced when dividing up a text for analysis, which is not necessarily the sentence: it could be a clause, sentence or even a whole paragraph.

In the remaining chapters of the book, McCarthy goes on to reassess the basic areas of language teaching as they are conventionally understood. Chapters 2-4 look at the levels of language description, namely grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation, whereas chapters 5 and 6 focus on the skills of language use, i.e., speaking, listening, reading and writing.

At regular intervals throughout the book there are a series of activities which consist of brief, engaging tasks to be completed by the reader. Once these have been done, there are suggestions for appropriate responses at the back of the book, which provide extra feedback and guidance, and are therefore very welcome.

The way the book is organized makes it easily accessible for the language teacher; the fact that familiar-sounding terms such as grammar and vocabulary merit chapter headings makes the book more user-friendly. The opening chapter is, as I have said, a succinct introduction to what discourse is all about and whets the reader's appetite for what is contained in the rest of the book.

It is clearly the case that McCarthy sees the insights that discourse analysis can provide as a complement to current

teaching practices and not as a radical alternative approach. Teachers' intuitions are not to be slighted, but the usefulness of research in the area is constantly referred to. One example is the three basic functions of the present perfect in English which investigations have highlighted: (1) conveying «hot news», (2) expressing experiences, and (3) relating to present effects of changes and accomplishments. There is nothing strikingly new here, but it is comforting for teachers to know that research supports their own intuitions.

What I find refreshing in the book are the references to the L1 of the learner and how judicious contrasting of English and the learner's mother tongue can help the latter to become more aware of language at the level of discourse. McCarthy also seems to believe in the effect of positive transfer from L1 to L2 (for instance, in the case of anaphoric reference devices) where learners can be assumed to have the necessary discourse skills in their own language. Teachers are also encouraged to observe their students when they are engaged in classroom activities and note differences that exist between the language they are producing and what a native speaker would say.

The book also has suggestions for changes in methodological practice. A case in point is role play, a much-used technique in the communicative approach. McCarthy stresses the importance of activity design here: pair and group work activities should encourage turn-taking and recreate reciprocity and thus avoid the interviewer-interviewee mode, where the interviewer, in a «journalistic role», does not use follow-up moves and so does not act as an equal participant in the conversation.

One problematic area of language teaching which could well benefit particularly from the insights of discourse analysis is that of advanced-level teaching. I found suggestions for a rethink when it

comes to teaching and expanding grammar, vocabulary and phonology with advanced students. Here a discourse approach promises to make useful contributions to help teachers to become more aware of precisely why such learners remain very non-native-like in their linguistic production. Modality (in grammar), relexicalisation (in vocabulary) and prominence (in phonology) are just three areas that spring to mind after reading McCarthy.

Before finishing, I would like to make a criticism of what is generally a very helpful and practical book. Whereas the book does contain some hints for classroom practice and references to published materials, these are not exemplified in the text. Also, does McCarthy only have knowledge of materials that have been published by the same publisher? Would it not have been more useful for teachers to see examples of a variety of activities from different sources and then helped to assess these in light of the insights discourse analysis throws up? An earlier book for teachers on the same topic by Guy Cook does this much better.

To sum up, this book provides the language teacher with an excellent introduction to what discourse analysis is and its relevance to his or her teaching situation. The thinking practitioner is encouraged to pick and choose what he or she may find useful from the research re-

ported here. The top-down approach suggested by discourse analysis by no means rules out the need to adopt a bottom-up approach with its focus on lexico-grammatical forms when this helps the learner to acquire more linguistic competence. In fact, elsewhere Cook has argued for a place for a focus on form through repetition and learning by heart, and this is thought-provoking coming from a specialist in discourse analysis! Indeed, it is probably true to say that McCarthy himself would seem to be a proponent of a balanced approach to language teaching and learning. We can learn a lot from discourse analysis, but we do not have to throw the baby out with the bathwater.

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Suzanne ROMAINE. *Language in Society. An Introduction to Sociolinguistics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994. xv +235 pages.

In the preface, Romaine explains why she called her book *language in society* as opposed to *language and society*, this being «to emphasize the fact that the study of society must accord a place to language within it at the same time as the study of language must take account of society.» (p. ix). The underlying message of this

work is definitely that while the field of sociolinguistics is a multi-faceted one, no subdivision can be made that does not look at the socio and linguistic as a holistic concept.

The first chapter is an introduction to this idea. In it the terms language and dialect are introduced and lively exam-