Editorial

The last two years have seen a number of changes for *Prospect*, which have included a change in the editorship, and a new design both to the cover and the presentation of articles. This edition heralds another change, with the introduction of a new section on practical teaching ideas. This results specifically from requests from the readership survey we conducted last year. We are certain that this will be a particularly valuable section of *Prospect* and we would like to encourage our readers to grasp the nettle and send in some of those successful ideas they have used in the classroom.

The articles in this issue all report on studies that have focused on learners of English in Australia or New Zealand in a range of teaching contexts. The first article, by Neville-Barton, explores the complex factors in students’ home lives which impact on their motivation to learn English, and highlights the dynamics of family relationships as a crucial motivation which has so far received little attention in the literature. Students interviewed for the study reported that an important motivation for them to start and persist with the study of English was the maintenance of lines of communication within the family. Their children, who had become proficient in English and integrated into an English-speaking peer group, were increasingly reluctant to speak in their native language, and so English was rapidly becoming important for inter-generational communication. As Neville-Barton argues, this insight into the motivations learners have for persisting with English study can be most helpful for program planners and teachers of adults.

Moir and Nation investigate the beliefs and strategies that learners draw on to guide their vocabulary learning on an intensive ESL course. Although the learners in the study were all highly motivated and were following a vocabulary program designed to increase their awareness of what is involved in vocabulary learning, most engaged in inefficient learning behaviours and performed poorly in tests. They spent a long time learning vocabulary that was low-frequency and of no particular interest to them, focused almost exclusively on word-meaning to the exclusion of other aspects of word knowledge, and relied on rote learning without adequate revision, despite time spent in class introducing them to other strategies. Moir and Nation conclude that this behaviour resulted from their failure to take personal responsibility for their learning and to relate it to their own long-term goals. They suggest that time spent explicitly discussing the goals of a language program will help teachers and learners arrive at an understanding of what their common purposes are and of the strategies that can be used to achieve them.

The predictive validity of the IELTS test is addressed in the paper by Dooey and Oliver. With increasing numbers of second language students
enrolling in tertiary courses, the relationship between their ability to succeed in their studies and their level of English language skill at entry, is an important one. Conducted at Curtin University in Western Australia, this investigation adopts a qualitative approach to address questions about the appropriateness of the IELTS scores required for entry to the university, the extent to which academic success can be predicted by these scores, and whether the ability of the test to predict future academic success varies depending upon whether students are undertaking courses in more linguistically demanding courses (eg Business) or less linguistically demanding courses (eg Science and Engineering). The findings suggest that a range of factors, of which language skill is only one, impact on a student’s ability to achieve successfully at university.

A qualitative approach to the investigation of web-based literacy skills is also taken by Sutherland-Smith. With the increasing dependence on the Internet both as an information source, and as a research tool, it is important that second language instruction includes the teaching of computer skills. The participants in this study are children enrolled in two grade six classes in New Zealand primary schools, and a class of ELICOS adults. The study focuses on the children’s perceptions of the differences between web-based, and print-based, reading and the use they make of these tools in working through a classroom research project. The author approaches this investigation through a range of different data collection techniques, and uses Corbel’s (1999) categories to analyse her data. The article points to the importance of rethinking the way in which we approach the teaching of literacy skills to include the range of skills required for web-based literacy.

The final article in this issue, by Cope, argues for the use of text-type as the basis for curriculum design in the critical reading module of an English language program preparing non English-speaking background students for university study in Australia. Cope draws on both theoretical insights from the literature on critical literacy and media discourse analysis and his own practical experience of implementing such a program in an Australian university, to argue that the news reports of the ‘hard news’ genre in newspapers can be used effectively to improve standards of academic literacy.

We are delighted to include a new section on Practical Teaching Ideas in this issue of *Prospect*. The idea, sent in by Shem Macdonald, outlines an activity that can be used by teachers to raise learner awareness of three very important features of spoken language that crucially affect both comprehension and comprehensibility: pausing, linking and reduced forms. Macdonald offers a concrete example of a text that can be used for the activity and step-by-step instructions with notes to guide teachers. We hope that you will try out this activity, and look forward to receiving more of your teaching ideas for what we hope will be a very popular new section in *Prospect*.
Finally, this edition includes three book reviews. Robyne Reichel reviews the new edition of the popular book by Jack Richards and Theodore Rodgers *Approaches and methods in language teaching*, which is likely to prove a valuable resource for teachers. Julie Bradshaw’s review of *Research perspectives on English for academic purposes*, edited by John Flowerdew and Matthew Peacock, evaluates an extensive set of articles relevant to both practitioners and researchers with an interest in this area. The final review, by Bronwen Dyson, provides an incisive evaluation of Lyle Bachman and Andrew Cohen’s collection of edited essays addressing Interfaces between second language acquisition and language testing research.

**REFERENCES**


GILLIAN WIGGLESWORTH

LYNDA YATES
Book reviews

Approaches and methods in language teaching


Reviewed by Robyne Reichel

Language teachers are frequently confronted with what Stevick has called the ‘answerless riddles’ – such as, why do some language students succeed and others fail? And, why do some language teachers succeed and others fail? The approaches and methods used in the classroom clearly play a part in consideration of these questions. And now that there are so many ways – old and new – of teaching language, practitioners and would-be practitioners need clear, impartial guidance in order to make informed methodological decisions.

This revised and expanded edition of Richards and Rodgers’ excellent Approaches and methods in language teaching (1986) provides such a guide – giving updated description and analysis of 17 language-teaching approaches and methods current in the twentieth century, particularly in the past three decades. The proportions of the 1986 edition have been altered to reflect the rise and fall of some methods and the rise and rise of others. The new edition also benefits from being reorganised into three parts, each with an introduction, from a much-expanded index, and updated bibliographies and suggested readings at the end of each chapter.

Opening with a brief history of language teaching, Part 1 (Major language trends in twentieth-century language teaching) examines the mainstream movements of Audiolingualism, and the Oral Approach, and its development into Situational Language Teaching. In writing about these and other ways of teaching language, the authors use the model familiar to readers of the first edition in which method is examined at the level of approach (theories of language and language learning), design (objectives, syllabus, learning activities, roles of learners and teachers, and materials) and procedure (techniques, practices and behaviours). The use of this model enables the reader to compare different aspects of the 17 approaches and methods.

Part 2 (Alternative approaches and methods) examines alternatives to the orthodoxy of the approaches and methods outlined in Part 1. Some of these date from the 1970s and characteristically draw on diverse sources outside the fields of linguistics and applied linguistics such as raja-yoga and music therapy (Suggestopedia) and Rogerian Counselling Theory (Community Language Learning). The authors have condensed the chapters on ways of language teach-
ing which they consider now to be ‘of little more than historical interest’ (p 72). These are Total Physical Response, The Silent Way, Community Language Learning and Suggestopedia. However, because the sections which illustrate classroom procedures for each approach or method are uncut, readers still have sufficient material to judge these methods for themselves.

Conversely, new chapters have been added on approaches which have gained a place in language teaching during the past 15 years. These are Whole Language, Multiple Intelligences, Neurolinguistic Programming, The Lexical Approach and Competency-Based Language Teaching. This last chapter will be of particular interest to readers working in the Australian Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) area as it presents a succinct summary backgrounding the approach and presents the AMEP as the example of CBLT in action.

Although the last 15 years have seen the rise of new approaches and methods, Richards and Rodgers argue that it is an earlier approach – Communicative Language Teaching – which has been most influential in that period. In contrast to the one chapter on CLT in the 1986 edition, Part 3 of the new edition (Current communicative approaches) includes 90 pages of material on both ‘classic’ CLT and approaches that the authors call its ‘direct descendants’ (the Natural Approach, Cooperative Language Learning, Content-Based Instruction and Task-Based Teaching. Furthermore, the authors argue that because communicative methodology has become ‘self-evident and axiomatic throughout the profession’ (p 173), most of the new approaches and methods in Part 2 could also claim to practise aspects of CLT.

The authors use the completely new final chapter to restate their central dichotomy of approach – ‘a set of beliefs and principles that can be used as a basis for teaching a language’ (p 244) and method – ‘a specific instructional design or system based on a particular theory of language and language learning’ (p 245). The ways of teaching presented in the book are then classified as either approaches or methods. Summarising criticisms of approaches and methods, Richards and Rodgers argue that we are entering a ‘post-methods era’ in which teachers are more often developing their own ways of teaching outside the approaches/methods framework. Brief references in the first edition to the practice of ‘informed’ and ‘uninformed’ eclecticism (Richards and Rodgers 1986: 158) have been replaced by an acknowledgement that teachers choose from the range of approaches and methods which suit their particular purposes and are in line with their core beliefs about language teaching. To readers who are teacher-educators, the notion of a ‘post-methods era’ has implications – for not only will students need an initial and comprehensive grounding in methodology, they may also need more practical opportunities to begin to develop judgment about selective application of approaches and methods.
For this reader the book presents one major challenge – its central nomenclature. In spite of the authors’ intention to ‘clarify the relationship between approach and method’ (p 18), the distinction can easily slip from mind – especially as the terms are sometimes used synonymously in the literature and in common parlance. Moreover, the term *approach* is used in two ways: first, as one of the book’s two main concepts – *approach* as distinguished from *method*, and second, as method ‘at the level of approach’ (p.22) within the conceptual model of *approach*, design and procedure. Perhaps these two terms are more clearly conceptualised, not as a dichotomy, but as poles of a continuum – as more recently suggested by one of the authors (Rodgers 2001: 2).

*Approaches and methods in language teaching* is one of three significant ‘second-generation’ examinations of language teaching methodology. It joins Stevick’s *Working with teaching methods: What’s at stake?* (1998), a successor to his *Teaching languages: A way and ways* (1980) and Freeman-Larsen’s 2000 revision of her 1986 *Techniques and principles in language teaching*. Taken together, with their different emphases, these make up a fascinating corpus covering many aspects of recent language teaching methodology.

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Research perspectives on English for academic purposes


Reviewed by Julie Bradshaw

*Research Perspectives on English for Academic Purposes* is a compendium of 25 papers giving an overview of the current state of the discipline. The book aims for both breadth and depth, and is intended to serve as a resource for researchers and practitioners, and as a set text for a Master’s course in EAP.

The book is divided into two sections. The papers in the first section deal with theoretical issues, while curriculum concerns are the focus of Part Two. Each section is preceded by an introduction and an extensive issues paper written by the editors, in which they give a useful overview of current thinking in EAP. In the leading paper of Section One, ‘Issues in EAP: A preliminary perspective’, Flowerdew and Peacock define the field, and show how EAP developed out of General English and ESP. They raise key concerns, such as the debate over the merits of a narrow subject-specific focus versus a broader cross-subject design, and the role of subject specialists.

A number of papers take a historical perspective, showing how approaches to EAP have evolved, and locating the discipline in its wider sociopolitical context. Others show the interconnections between EAP and its theoretical foundations in genre analysis, language policy and planning, and work on second-language literacy. At the same time most papers present research findings, or describe the specifics of program development. This makes it a particularly useful book for students as it demonstrates research methods and findings, and practical curriculum innovations, in a context of carefully explicated theory. The level of technical knowledge which is presupposed is somewhat variable. For example, with no background in testing, I found the Brindley and Ross paper quite demanding. However, this is no disadvantage in a book at this level. In conjunction with some more basic textbooks such as Dudley-Evans and St John (1998) and Douglas (2000), this volume would be an admirable source for MA students.

In the first section, ‘Issues in English for Academic Purposes’, Kennedy’s paper explores the macro-level relations between language policy and planning, and EAP. He points to the need for EAP teachers to be aware of potential mismatches between language policies at the national, institutional and classroom levels.

Swales presents a historical overview of the intellectual foundations of EAP in the development of genre analysis, and highlights contemporary critical concerns with the determinism implicit in the apprenticeship model of the
acquisition of academic discourse. The next chapter by Paltridge also takes a historical perspective, looking at changes in approaches to EAP writing in the context of shifting linguistic perspectives, particularly in discourse analysis. He also provides a case study of effective supervisory guidance with a student writing a Master’s thesis.

The paper by Clapham provides research evidence to support an argument that texts vary widely in their degree of subject specificity, just as students vary widely in their background knowledge. She concludes that EAP teachers would therefore be wise to select materials from a common core of academic writing rather than choosing field-specific texts.

The vital question of whose English is to be taught, and the changing status of new Englishes, is addressed in the paper by Wood in relation to international scientific English, by Hamp-Lyons and Zhang in relation to rhetorical patterns, and by Canagarajah in relation to discourse in the periphery. Wood posits the existence of an international scientific community transcending native/non-native boundaries, and argues convincingly that it is their discourse which should be the target of language programs for science students. This allows us to circumvent the specious privileging of native-speaker discourse.

Hamp-Lyons and Zhang argue that L2 cultural norms need to be taken into account in the assessment of writing. They show that raters who share cultural assumptions with student writers assess their work more positively than those who do not. They attribute this to ideology, rather than to divergent rhetorical patterns, thus mounting a challenge to the contrastive rhetoric hypothesis expounded by Kaplan (1966, 1987) and others.

In a detailed case study of a novice thesis writer, Canagarajah claims that marginalised discourses can be developed for creative purposes, if the social and discursive background of the student is understood. He argues that literacy for language minority students can only be critical literacy. Starfield also takes a critical-literacy approach, applying the perspective of Bourdieu to the marking process in an academic department. In the marking meeting studied, some voices dominate, other are marginalised, with consequences both for the marks assigned, and for the markers’ careers.

Brindley and Ross give an overview of EAP assessment, and then present a case study of an EAP listening course where the integrated use of proficiency measures and achievement assessment provides a yardstick for program evaluation. Their study shows that EAP listening is a distinct skill from reading and writing, and they show listening gains resulting from lecture simulations and skills instruction in, for example, note-taking. Such gains are not found when the class work focuses on conversational interaction.
The second section, ‘The English for Academic Purposes curriculum’, is a collection of studies with a more direct focus on pedagogical concerns in needs analysis, curriculum development, implementation and assessment. Flowerdew and Peacock again open the section with an issues paper, *The EAP curriculum: Issues, methods and challenges*, in which they stress the integration of all of these components. The papers in this section of the book also examine spoken language needs, EAP writing, language-learning strategies, and the place of grammar in content instruction.

George Braine takes a personal approach to needs analysis, as he engaged with it in Sri Lanka in the 1970s, in the USA in the late 1980s, and in Hong Kong in the late 1990s. He shows how his personal intellectual journey as recounted in the three case studies reflects the path taken by the developing discipline.

Stoller’s paper advocates curriculum renewal and provides a case study of its implementation over ten years in a program at Northern Arizona University. She documents 12 changes which were introduced as a result of staff and student feedback. The liaisons between EAP teachers and discipline teachers are classified by Dudley-Evans into three categories: cooperation, collaboration or team-teaching. He demonstrates the effectiveness of team-teaching in a course for transport engineers at Birmingham, while arguing that in other contexts, especially outside the UK, a collaborative approach may be more effective than team-teaching.

The study by Brinton and Holten uses student evaluations and teachers’ curriculum reviews to show that grammar and vocabulary teaching can be neglected in a content-based curriculum. The paper argues persuasively for their systematic inclusion and stresses the need to train teachers to integrate language and content. Coxhead and Nation divide the lexicon into high frequency words, academic vocabulary, technical vocabulary and low frequency words. They argue that academic vocabulary items are common in texts across academic disciplines but are less easy for learners to acquire than more technical, discipline-specific vocabulary. They therefore argue that the teaching of academic vocabulary should be targeted in EAP programs.

A research study of learner strategies in Hong Kong by Peacock finds differences between physics, computer mathematics and engineering students. Physics students used fewer cognitive strategies, while computing mathematics students used fewer metacognitive strategies. Gender differences also emerged on individual strategy items. Peacock also presents teachers’ and students’ perceptions of which strategies were likely to be successful.

Davidson and Cho describe the history of language testing at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign from the university’s beginnings in 1867. They
give a situated account of how and why language testing has changed, and of the practical constraints under which testers operate.

Ferris examines teacher feedback on students’ written drafts and asks what forms of feedback lead to effective revision. She argues that teachers need to be more precise in their feedback. The forms of feedback which seemed most effective were ‘(a) specific questions asking for information from students’ personal experiences, (b) requests for summarised or paraphrased information from another author’s text and (c), comments which called for relatively simple changes at the word- or sentence-level’ (p 307).

An attempt to teach vocabulary to ESP students in Oman is documented in the paper by Cobb and Horst. They created a computer concordance program with a specially designed interface to make it accessible to learners. The students used the concordance program to compile a personal list of new words from a target list of 200 words to be learned each week.

Reading is the focus of Hirvela’s paper. He argues for the incorporation of reading in the writing class and, on the basis of a study of learners’ reading preferences, he recommends the use of a range of materials to stimulate students’ interest, including literary as well as academic texts.

Robinson, Strong, Whittle and Nobe focus on course design for developing speaking skills, and compare the effectiveness of skill-based and task-based approaches, the latter with or without focus on form. They show that Japanese learners benefit from focus on form, either through direct skills teaching or as part of a task-based approach. They also show that non-verbal features of talk are more difficult to teach than lexical and grammatical features.

The paper by Tauroza presents the findings of a study of the role of prediction in naturalistic EAP listening. He identified features of lectures and used these features to construct simulations for classroom use. He then examined the effectiveness of giving students either the title or specific features from the lecture in advance, and asking them to make predictions.

The focus of the paper by Waters and Waters is study competence. This is seen as a deeper level than study skills, and consists of information processing strategies, an understanding of knowledge status, and emotional balance. Their paper gives examples of problem-solving tasks designed to develop study competence.

In the final paper, Lynch focuses on the need for learner autonomy and outlines the development of a set of independent materials designed to teach students to exploit their own social and academic discourse, and to continue learning beyond the language classroom.

Overall the volume effectively locates the reader in a map of contemporary EAP thinking, as well as detailing the historical development of current perspectives. There is some inevitable overlap between the literature surveyed in a
number of the papers, but this is not problematic as the direction then taken in each paper is distinct, and students and colleagues unfamiliar with the literature will benefit from the cumulative effect of different representations of similar theoretical concerns. I had one minor irritation with the reference list, which is presented as a compilation at the end of the book. In some cases two different authors are listed with the same surname and publication date (for example, Lynch 1996) and these are not distinguished in the papers. This could usefully be revised in future editions of the book. In sum, though, this book is a welcome addition to the EAP literature, most notably for its strong research focus.

REFERENCES
Interfaces between second language acquisition and language testing research


Reviewed by Bronwen Dyson

This publication originated from an article by Bachman entitled *Language testing – SLA research interfaces*, published in 1988. In 1992 a colloquium was organised and attended by researchers involved in investigating both Second Language Acquisition (SLA) and Language Testing (LT). To provide a common thread, contributors were asked to read Bachman’s article.

The book, which was published following the colloquium, has two strengths: the contributors’ expertise in both LT and SLA, and a number of very good articles. Its weaknesses are, first, that much of the research is quite dated; for instance, there are very few references from the mid- or late nineties. Second, it appears to be addressed to a small minority of experts, since the only groups mentioned as audience in the preface (p xiii) are SLA and LT researchers. Third, LT and Bachman’s LT model of communicative language ability exercise an undue influence in a book that intends to address interfaces.

In this review I begin with a discussion of the appendix (the reprint of Bachman’s original article) and introduction to the book, co-authored by Bachman and Cohen – and then consider the other six chapters.

It needs to be said at the outset that Bachman’s 1988 article shows insight in initiating a formal exchange across these two technical sub-fields of applied linguistics. Bachman recognises that the differences in the research designs or focuses of research should not preclude dialogue and that similar research questions and instruments made it increasingly desirable. He provides a clear summary of the differences in research approach. For example, he notes that SLA research ‘takes a longitudinal view’ while LT research observes a ‘slice of life’ and that SLA research is concerned with ‘the antecedents of proficiency’ while LT research has observed ‘the results of acquisition’ (p 177).

While understanding these differences, Bachman’s article gives scant recognition to the value of SLA’s approach compared to that of LT. In discussing the reasons for exploring the interfaces, he argues that SLA can provide empirical support for the multicomponential LT model that he has been instrumental in developing. It can do this by either adopting LT research designs such as *ex post facto* correlational designs or by contributing methodologies and findings to LT. It is, indeed, contradictory of Bachman to promote his LT model at the expense of SLA since, as he states, one of the two reasons for cross-

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102 *Prospect* Vol. 17, No. 1 April 2002
fertilising with SLA is ‘the lack of a sound theoretical basis for measures of language proficiency’ (p 181) in current language tests.

Bachman and Cohen’s editorial introduction to this book aims to provide a current version of Bachman’s original analysis, and consequently LT remains the main theoretical force via the pivotal role of the updated communicative language ability construct. At this point, I want to make it clear that many SLA researchers, including contributors to this volume, are guided by a view of language as a system of communication. To this must be added that many, in some cases the same, researchers also recognise that language acquisition involves cognitive or innatist properties that shape interlanguage. But this view, and the substantial SLA research into interlanguage development on which it is based, is marginalised in this introduction.

This is not the only problem with Bachman and Cohen’s contribution. Given the strong orientation towards the model of communicative language ability, I was expecting that this introduction would provide a clear resume of the current state of empirical support for its components. Instead, it gives a few examples of research into subcomponents of the model without explaining on what basis either the subcomponents or the research were selected.

The emphasis that is apparent in the chapters by Bachman, and Bachman and Cohen, is carried through in much of the rest of the book. There is, for instance, a more detailed treatment of context, discourse and lexical learning than of grammar and pronunciation.

Shohamy’s chapter gives a good overview of the interfaces in the study of discourse analysis. It identifies a number of ways in which LT and SLA can profitably interact to improve the general understanding of discourse and its testing. She concludes that there are many issues whose resolution requires cooperation – such as to what extent discourse competence is a separate competence or is related to other competencies. These are basic issues which Shohamy would have done well to focus on. She could, for instance, have drawn on SLA research into the acquisition of grammatical features such as pronouns to explore the relationship between grammatical and discourse development.

A contribution which is more theoretically motivated is Chapelle’s chapter, Construct definition and validity enquiry in SLA research. Taking as her focus research into vocabulary acquisition, Chapelle criticises two approaches which she identifies as current in SLA studies: first, the ‘trait’ approach which examines implicit knowledge and fundamental processes, and second, the ‘behaviourist’ approach which investigates the influence of context. Chapelle argues that both approaches lack validity because they focus only on either underlying characteristics or the environment.
For future research, she puts forward an ‘interactionist’ construct definition, that is, one in which the relevant aspects of both the trait and the context are specified. She believes that this definition, as well as enabling tests to be better predictors of ability, is more in keeping with the ‘interactionist’ approach of current applied linguistics. I agree with Chapelle that it is valuable to focus on the nexus between language development and its context. The main problem with the ‘interactionist’ construct, however, is its inability to measure general skills or knowledge because it aims to measure only context-specific abilities. It seems more informative to adopt the practice used in some SLA research, such as the approach used by Pienemann (1998), of assessing interlanguage use both in particular contexts as well as across different contexts.

In the second article on the role of context, Tarone argues that LT should consider research on contextually based interlanguage variation. Studies show that the language production of learners varies systematically in grammatical accuracy as well as fluency, among other features, as a result of changes in contextual variables such as setting and interlocutor. In addition, Tarone raises doubts about the findings of SLA universals, such as the developmental stages hypothesised by Pienemann (1992) since, among other things, this research does not control contextual variation.

In evaluating Tarone’s claims, it is worth noting that the 1992 report by Pienemann and Mackey includes an extensive analysis of the influence of different tasks on learners’ use of grammatical structures. Also pertinent is Chapelle’s critique of the validity of ‘behaviourist’ approaches, such as Tarone’s, which fail to take into account underlying processes.

Another contribution on the role of context in LT is the chapter by Douglas, Testing methods in context-based second language research. According to Douglas, language testers should ‘capitalise’ on test methods by designing tests for particular groups of learners (p 153). This work on test methods is based on SLA research into ‘discourse domains’ which are the learners’ ‘internal interpretation’ of external context (p 146). Given that both Douglas and Tarone are arguing for language testers to consider the role of context, one wonders about the wisdom of including two such similar articles in this book.

Cohen’s chapter discusses the interface in methodology. He outlines ‘process approaches’ (p 107) to LT, especially the application of verbal report techniques in which test-takers inform the researcher of their approaches to test-taking. Cohen emphasises that this area is in its infancy but suggests that SLA researchers could use such techniques, of which he provides a number of examples, to validate their testing instruments. I would certainly not want to deny the usefulness of asking test participants about test experiences. But,
before we consider making this an ‘essential…part of pre-testing/post-testing’ (p 107), as Cohen suggests, it needs to be remembered that successful participation in verbal reports depends on being able to express oneself in the language used.

In his chapter, Brindley explores the question of the extent to which behavioural rating scales, for example ASLPR, can be justified in terms of our knowledge of SLA. Despite the general implication, and some claims, that scales reflect developmental universals, Brindley finds that they are currently not based either on coherent SLA research models or findings. In order to give rating scales the status of descriptions of SLA, he suggests a program of research into the various components. To carry this out, he proposes the use of implicational scaling which would enable researchers to check whether skills or competencies described as higher-order are acquired later than lower-order ones. There is considerable merit in this suggestion and I hope some researchers take it up.

To illustrate an approach to LT which can claim to represent developmental universals, Brindley outlines the Multidimensional Model (Meisel, Clahsen and Pienemann 1981) and its application to testing, Rapid Profile (Pienemann and Mackey 1992). As Brindley points out, the main finding of the research, developmental stages, has substantial empirical and theoretical support. In his evaluation of Rapid Profile, a procedure for assessing a learner’s developmental stage, Brindley notes that it enables a diagnostic approach to language assessment. Brindley acknowledges that the application of the Multidimensional Model to assessment involves both possibilities and questions for future research. In this context, he emphasises that the scope of Rapid Profile is different to a proficiency assessment ‘which involves a much more comprehensive assessment of a wide range of components of language in use’ (p 131).

This book makes the important point that SLA and LT will both benefit from interaction: primarily, LT will gain empirical support for its constructs and SLA will improve in its test construction. As well, it investigates the empirical support that SLA can provide the prevailing model for testing communicative language ability. In my view, however, substantial future progress depends on genuine recognition of the role of SLA in the LT–SLA interface. For example, a greater role for SLA research could help LT move towards the empirically supported developmental dimension which it is currently lacking. This would enable the formulation of ‘interlanguage-sensitivetests’ which, as the series editors Long and Richards point out, would ‘take the individual learner as the unit of analysis’ and ‘provide relevant criteria for student placement for the purpose of instruction’ (p ix). With this perspective, research at the interface could result in tests that are both communicative and developmental. This book is a step in that direction.
REFERENCES


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