

perplexed student who has been taught that *Herr* demands a formal verb ending (-en/n) should not be an individual whose threshold of ambiguity is low.

We do learn something about the multisensory structured metacognitive instruction that the author proposes, but by the time we become interested in the presented information we are weary of the presentation style. The teacher who does not have the option of offering sustained one-on-one student instruction or remediation will feel that the scant six-page summary in the conclusion falls far short of the author's assertion that "MSML [multisensory structured metacognitive language] instruction could be applied to classroom settings" (p. 217). Indeed, this is precisely the place where the reader would welcome a chapter of informational strategies or an expansion of existing sections to illustrate the author's views and findings and apply them concretely.

In summary, the book is a questionable purchase. The important message that it seeks to bring to the reader is lost in contradictory or imprecise sentences, missing and misnumbered sections, and an overreliance on the reader to be patient until the point is made. The minor quibbles on matters of style become major to the reader who wishes to spend precious time on a topic of importance for the profession. As Ganschow, Sparks, and other colleagues have demonstrated in their work, we who promise to teach all students have much to learn. Lamentably, this book will not aid in continuing the dialogue on learner-centered teaching.

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YOUNG, RICHARD, & AGNES WEIYUN HE. (Eds.). *Talking and Testing: Discourse Approaches to the Assessment of Oral Proficiency*. Philadelphia: Benjamins, 1998. Pp. x, 395. \$69.00, cloth.

This volume brings together 12 studies of the discourse of oral language proficiency interviews (LPIs). The book begins with an introductory chapter, "Language Proficiency Interviews: A Discourse Approach," by He and Young that anchors the collection. He and Young orient readers to the construct of interactional competence (rhetorical scripts, specific lexis and syntactic structures, strategies for managing turns, management of topics, and signaling boundaries) and

issues of testing (reliability, construct validity, authenticity, and interactivity). The introduction pays special attention to authenticity (LPIs as interviews, institutional discourse, and crosscultural encounters) and interactional competence, and these emerge as two dominant themes of the volume. In addition, the introduction provides an orientation to different approaches to discourse analysis; namely, conversational analysis/ethnomethodology, ethnography of speaking, speech acts, and Gricean principles. The book is an interdisciplinary account of LPIs that brings together analysis of tests with analysis of talk. Some of the authors are testers, some are discourse analysts, and some are both.

The volume is divided into four parts. Part 1, "Language Proficiency Interviews and Conversations," includes "Re-analyzing the OPI: How Much Does it Look like Natural Conversation?" (Johnson & Tyler), "Evaluating Learner Interactional Skills: Conversation at the Micro Level" (Riggenbach), and "What Happens When There's No One to Talk To? Spanish Foreign Language Discourse in Simulated Oral Proficiency Interviews" (Koike). Part 2, "Turns and Sequences in Language Proficiency Interviews," consists of "Answering Questions in LPIs: A Case Study" (He), "Framing the Language Proficiency Interview as a Speech Event: Native and Non-Native Speakers' Questions" (Moder & Halleck), and "Miscommunication in Language Proficiency Interviews of First-Year German Students: A Comparison with Natural Conversation" (Egbert). Part 3, "Knowledge and Communication in Language Proficiency Interviews," offers "Knowledge Structures in Oral Proficiency Interviews for International Teaching Assistants" (Mohan), "The Use of Communication Strategies in Language Proficiency Interviews" (Yoshida-Morise), and "Meaning Negotiation in the Hungarian Oral Proficiency Examination of English (Katona). Part 4, "Language Proficiency Interviews as Cross-Cultural Encounters," presents "Maintaining American Face in the Korean Oral Exam: Reflections on the Power of Cross-Cultural Context" (Davies), "Confirmation Sequences as Interactional Resources in Korean Language Proficiency Interviews" (Kim & Suh), "Divergent Frame Interpretations in Oral Proficiency Interview Interaction" (Ross), and "'Let Them Eat Cake!' or How to Avoid Losing your Head in Cross-Cultural Conversations" (Young & Halleck).

The number of interviews analyzed in the chapters ranges from a single interview to 20. The chapters investigate different types of oral texts, including the ACTFL oral proficiency interview

(OPI) conducted by ACTFL-certified testers, national language exams such as the Hungarian state exam, departmental exams, and a conversational interview between two roommates. The test languages include English, Spanish, German, and Korean. One of the two chapters that examine tests of Korean discusses the characteristics of discourse produced by Korean-American heritage learners of Korean, providing information that should be of interest to anyone who works with heritage language learners. The first languages represented include Chinese, English, Hungarian, Japanese, Korean, Spanish, Amharic, Farsi, Polish, Tamil, Telugu, Tigrinya, and Urdu. The chapter by Moder and Halleck not only examines the OPIs of 10 nonnative speakers of English but also includes an analysis of the OPIs of 10 native speakers of English interviewed by an ACTFL-certified tester.

The chapters employ different theories of discourse and analytic frameworks, including but not limited to frame analysis, turn-taking and characteristics of turns, conversational analysis, knowledge structure, communication strategies, Gumperz's theory of conversational inference, Hymes's SPEAKING framework, and topic structure analysis (Young & Halleck). The introductions to the frameworks in each of the chapters make the volume accessible to a range of readers. Similarly, the chapters do a good job of describing the LPIs that comprise the data and the levels of proficiency determined by the tests, explicitly stating the guidelines for the ratings. Within any chapter the reader feels well oriented. This also enables the chapters to stand alone, accessible to readers looking for information on specific topics.

Because of my work with institutional talk of nonnative speakers, I was particularly interested in the chapters that treat language proficiency exams as interviews (as opposed to conversations). The chapters by Moder and Halleck, Davies, and Ross employ the framework of interview-as-institutional talk. As Agar (1985) showed, an interview, as institutional talk and an unequal status encounter, has certain characteristics.

Many of the characteristics of LPIs fall out naturally from the fact that they are institutional encounters. Within the framework of institutional talk, we expect that one of the participants (the interviewer/tester) has a specific role (to collect a ratable language sample) and that the encounter is one of unequal status. The higher status of interviewers in LPIs derives from the fact that the interviewer has greater status than the client through greater language proficiency, the responsibility to determine the rating and make a recom-

mendation, and the obligation of the client to take the exam. Moreover, the guidelines of many LPIs put the interviewer in control of topics.

Ross's paper on interpreting the unelaborated responses of Japanese respondents in English as ambiguous in two and possibly three ways raises important issues. Unelaborated responses by learners may be the result of (lower) proficiency, of not interpreting the interview frame appropriately as one in which they must give information, or of cultural reluctance or discomfort in providing the type of information requested. This interpretation contrasts interestingly with Moder and Halleck's analysis of nonnative speakers of English at the advanced level or higher as being more adept at the OPI than native speakers of English with respect to providing elaborated responses to interviewer questions. As a result twice as many interviewer questions to native speakers are needed in order to elicit the same amount of information from native speakers as from the nonnatives. The nonnative speakers, who have taken language tests before, approach the interview knowing that it is an opportunity to display their language knowledge. The native speakers have yet to learn this particular aspect of the interview speech event. The advanced nonnative speakers in the Moder and Halleck study may have learned something about the interview frame that the learners in Ross's study have not yet learned. Davies shows how Americans maintain American face by providing turns in accordance with their interpretation of the interview. In an academic culture that sees a student's contributions as a measure of cooperativeness, Davies observes that "all of the utterances and noises produced so painfully by the struggling novice illustrate the incredible pressure to produce that American students feel" (p. 286).

The article by Young and Halleck, which closes the volume, discusses the chapters by Kim and Suh and by Ross and continues the cultural theme of the chapter by Davies, while also contributing a new study to the volume. This final chapter tests Ross's hypothesis that unelaborated responses may be due to either proficiency or culture (or both) by comparing interviews of Mexican and Japanese students at three levels of proficiency.

A significant contribution of the book is that it provides a description of the language of LPIs that goes beyond the articulated objectives of the tests. This description leads to a better understanding of LPIs as tests and texts.

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