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## REVIEW

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*Teaching Linguistics: Reflections on Practice*, edited by Koenraad Kuiper (KK), is an exciting and eclectic book. It was exciting for me to be asked to review it because I love teaching, I love linguistics, and I love talking and reading about both. As I read, I became aware of the eclectic and even eccentric nature of this volume. The reader is treated in 17 chapters (and an introductory chapter) to a multitude of teaching stories. This is indeed what teaching is like: we all bring our own styles, biases, and messages to our students. The range of voices reflects the diversity one finds within a linguistics program, as well as across institutions.

KK's introduction tells us that we will encounter "the philosophical side, the planning side, and even the personal side" of the teaching of linguistics (p. x). We find chapters that are "curricular in nature...technique-oriented... [and] with materials to use" (p. x). In other words, the contributors offer not only reflections on being teachers of linguistics, but also how-to guides for the novice, horror and hero stories, pep talks, warnings, and a large part of the joy they get from their work. Each contributor also shares a short autobiographical blurb about the paths that took him or her to linguistics (although oddly some are in the 3<sup>rd</sup> person). In fact, these vignettes would have been a good chapter starter. (Full disclosure: my text *Language in the Real World* begins each chapter with similar notes from the contributor(s) to the reader.)

Several issues arose for me, however, that I would have liked KK to answer in his relatively short introduction. An expanded explanation of what the reader should expect, and how he or she would explicitly benefit from the book, could have addressed these issues and smoothed some of the inconsistent edges. For example, sometimes the book seems to be specifically about teaching linguistics and sometimes about teaching in general. In other words, sometimes what is being discussed transcends the discipline; it's just a really good teaching tip. Other times, what the authors are discussing only applies to the course at hand. Sandra Chung in Chapter 5, for example, offers these teaching pointers about syntax: "Try to encourage everyone to participate; do not let the discussion be dominated by just a few" and "Grade the homework quickly" (p. 37). I would say this advice is true of most teaching, not just linguistics, let alone syntax.

Another question I had was what *type* of linguistics teacher each chapter is for. KK implies that new teachers and veterans alike will benefit. Chapter 2 (by Jen Hay) seems aimed at a teacher of an undergraduate, lower level (in US terms) phonetics course. Here are very concrete, low-cost demonstrations that I could use in my "Acoustic Phonetics" course the very next session. In contrast, Chapter 3, (by Andrew Carstairs-McCarthy) uses a different prose style. For example, "Let us suppose that in English a version of the Obligatory Contour Principle ranks high, enforcing 'schwa-insertion' between coda obstruents that are identical in their supralaryngeal feature values" (p. 17). Perhaps this chapter is addressing the instructor of a graduate course in phonology. Fair enough, but the shift in voices was jarring. A section of KK's introduction guiding each type of reader to the appropriate chapters would have been a welcome addition; in other words, a section called, "How to Read This Book."

A further inconsistency is how much any one chapter stays on the topic of the teaching of linguistics vs. teaching linguistic content to the reader. Chapter 4 (by Laurie Bauer), for example, might have better reinforced the message that good teaching is hands-on with an organization that first gave us a lesson plan and then the teaching notes on the material. In other words, take us through a lesson.

Some authors assume the average reader knows the terminology and use it freely; others spell it all out. Does a teacher of "Linguistics 101" necessarily know about the acoustic properties of phonemes? Should the book offer up a definition of formant frequency? I'm not sure, but the range of accessibility could have been exploited a bit more effectively with (again) a readers' guide.

Because of the varied voices, some contradictory statements are evident. Chung in Chapter 5 claims syntax is the best unit to start with when teaching new linguistics students. Hay, however, in Chapter 2 says phonetics has the most wow factor. Chapter 17 finds Wes Collins proclaiming that “language acquisition studies have it all” (p. 137). After years of teaching, I prefer to lead with morphology.

Chapter 6 (by Barbara Partee) starts off as a teaching memoir. My favorite part of this chapter has to do with her student evaluations. Since Partee was more fluent in semantics than the other topics she was covering, she actually received lower ratings in that unit—yes, it makes sense and she explains it well. Further, there was a big payoff to feeling freer to roam in the semantics unit: since Partee refused to give pat answers to semantics questions, she wound up influencing a student to switch majors into linguistics when that student realized that the field held questions still to be answered (and asked).

Chapter 7 (Christopher Potts) is more a memoir of a course than a teacher, and we learn why “Controlling the Discourse” was developed, named, organized, and implemented. One doesn’t often get to witness the making of a course. I appreciated the meta-lesson on curricular development.

Chapter 8 (Harold Koch) covers the teaching of historical linguistics. I don’t teach much of this, definitely not a full term. I felt like a schoolgirl thinking, “Is it okay to skip this chapter?”

Chapter 9 (Miriam Meyerhoff) on sociolinguistics is something I do teach. Meyerhoff takes us through the real-world decisions professors need to make, sometimes on the spot. Her chapter works well beyond the particular five-week intensive format she profiles.

Chapter 10 (Paul Warren) on psycholinguistics provides a useful data set of slips of the tongue and other error examples. Here, the volume returns to the concept in Chapter 2, offering a toolbox for the reader to use in the next class meeting.

Chapter 11 (Diana Van Lancker Sidsis) also supplies a useful data set in her discussion of nonliteral language. The chapter sometimes veers away from the *teaching* of the subject, as when we find a literature review in the middle of the chapter and a very lengthy eight pages of references. That’s fine (and the subject is fascinating), but the meaning of “us” and “we” starts to get confusing. Is she talking about her co-researchers? Her students? Are they one in the same?

Chapter 12 (Susan Foster-Cohen) on foreign language acquisition (note that the table of contents has the title wrong, something to fix in the second

run) posits a very crucial question: what does the student need to know before registering for a FLA course? Should “Linguistics 101” be required? I’m not sure, however, how many institutions leave such a decision up to the individual. Sometimes the professor doesn’t have any say in the matter. But this chapter, as do others, wrestles with the problem of what to teach in a limited period of time (be it weeks or months).

Chapter 13 (David Mendelson) on ESL/EFL drives home the scary reality that many such teachers are working with no linguistics training. While I am with him on this all the way, Mendelson nonetheless makes a case that can convert skeptics. Both Chapters 12 and 13, in fact, stress the fact that language is more complicated than it appears to the layman.

As with Chapter 2, Chapter 14 (Alison Wray) offers material that you can use Monday morning in your class. Here, we are walked through four simulation games to teach language evolution and change. The fully-loaded appendix gives us the materials for the students and the teaching notes.

Chapter 15 (KK) discusses teaching the “Linguistics 101” type course. I wonder why this chapter appears so late in the volume, where it might well have led off the book. As I found in prior chapters, much of what KK says is true of teaching in general, such as tips on when to lecture, and when to assign hands-on tasks.

Chapter 16 (Janet Holmes) discusses supervising post-graduate (in US, graduate) students in their research. Much of what Holmes covers could, again, apply to teaching as well as research supervision, and can go beyond linguistics.

Chapter 17 (Wes Collins) covers Field Methods. I wanted him to define his terms up front. His is not the field methods of my courses but instead one type: foreign language sampling and analysis. This chapter, starting with the heading, “What to expect in this chapter,” made me return to prior chapters to check for how they too began. Again, there were inconsistencies, some using bullets and others numbered headings.

Chapter 18 (Kate Burridge) on metaphors works as a final reflection on linguistics and how to engage students in metaphors. I could also see this chapter working early on in the volume since it could cover material that can open up the world of language to students without prior need for technical terminology. Burridge offers us the megametaphor of language as a garden and linguistics as gardening. Good opener; good closer.

KK chooses a chapter order typical of an introductory linguistics text: phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, pragmatics, and the

applied subfields: historical, socio-, psycho-, ESL, etc. Since the silo-problem of linguistics (each subfield on its own; linguistics separate from other sciences) or as Potts calls it “selective viewing” (p. 55) is raised often, a more overt explanation of Why This Organization, with cross-referencing, would have helped combat the problem of chapters not speaking to one another.

Despite the questions it raises and the inter-chapter inconsistencies—which detract from the cohesion necessary with 17 voices-- I truly enjoyed this book, which I believe might be unique in its concept. I’ll go back to it again and again, for those specific lessons, websites, and for inspiration. KK achieves his goal: convincing the reader of his message that more students in linguistics make more future teacher-scholars.

The passages that veer between pedagogy and linguistics, in their way, highlight the teacher-scholar lurking in all of us. As with any academic field, linguistics can reach out and claim you as a scholar, but here we have 17 teacher-scholars. KK says in his introduction that this collection is a kind of *festschrift* for Scott Allan, an esteemed colleague, scholar and exemplary teacher. I find it very appropriate to celebrate a teacher with a celebration of teaching.

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