

Both of these dictionaries are produced in the usual attractive manner of Pacific Linguistics, clearly set out with effective use of various type faces, good printing, a sturdy hard cover and a reasonable price. There appear to be very few errors. Two were noted in the Yagaria dictionary, viz., '23' should be '24' phonemes on page ix and 'in' should be 'is' about ten lines from the foot of page xi.

To conclude, these two volumes are valuable contributions to the recording of the lexical wealth of the languages of the island of New Guinea.

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H.G. Widdowson Explorations in Applied Linguistics.
Oxford : Oxford University Press, 1979. pp x + 273.

This book is a collection of twenty previously published papers by H.G. Widdowson. Since these papers first appeared, many language teachers have jumped on the 'communicative approach' bandwagon advocated by the author. But the purpose of this book is not to keep the bandwagon going or to pick up any new riders, but to bring it in for a good check-up and possible servicing. Widdowson explains in the introduction (p.2): "I am particularly anxious to stress the exploratory and illustrative character of these papers because there is a danger at the present time that the approach which they deal with is being accepted without sufficient examination."

The major explorations in the book are in three main areas: theoretical linguistic description, the role of applied linguistics, and the job of the language teacher. Widdowson objects to the narrow definition of linguistic enquiry as proposed by Chomsky. Instead, along with Firth and others, he believes language must be studied in its social context. Linguists should move from the study of the sentence to the study of discourse where meanings are negotiated through interaction. The work of applied linguistics, he says, is to mediate between theory and practice, but there is no reason why the linguists' model of language should serve as the underlying model for language teaching. He believes, therefore, that applied linguists should develop their own model of linguistic description relevant to language teaching. Language teachers should also go beyond the

sentence. They should help students to develop "communicative strategies and cognitive procedures" (p.159) to interpret language in context. This can be done by stimulating what the learner already knows from his linguistic experience. For example, students will be aware of how language is used in other school subjects and several times throughout the book Widdowson suggests using the content of other subjects in language teaching.

The book is divided into eight thematic sections of one to four papers each. Topics cover the whole range from theoretical to practical and nearly every section begins with a paper laying a theoretical foundation for the more practical applications which follow. The first section, entitled "Prelude", has only one paper in which the author draws the distinction between usage and use, usage being what is acceptable according to the grammatical rules of the language, and use being what is acceptable in social communication. He points out that if only usage is taught, use will not simply come by itself, especially to learners outside the cultural tradition of the target language.

Section 2 deals with English for Science and Technology. The papers in this section develop the theme that language teachers should make use of what the students already know about language in general. Widdowson says that there are "universal modes of communication which cut across individual languages" (p.23), for example, technical and scientific language. The teacher can appeal to the students' knowledge of scientific discourse in their own language and show how textualization of this kind of discourse is done in English compared to their own language. Thus, Widdowson proposed some exercises which involve L1, the students' first language. In Section 3, the author presents two other useful exercise types: rhetorical transformation (eg changing instructions to reporting) and information transfer (eg from diagrams to written description and vice versa).

Section 4, "Discourse", strongly advocates the study of language in its social context and presents ways of looking at language beyond the sentence. Again, terms are defined and the distinction is made between text (sentences in combination) and discourse (sentences in use). Another distinction is made between cohesion (how sentences fit together grammatically) and coherence (how sentences fit together rhetorically in performing acts of communication). Also in this section, the work of the ethnomethodologists is described. On the practical side, use of translation in language teaching is recommended. Discourse is also the subject of Section 5, but this time from the point of view of the language user. The point is made again that language teaching must develop in the learner a technique for deriving the value and meaning of linguistic elements in context. Teaching texts for use in ESP or EAP situations do not have to be completely authentic if they are to be used for developing such analytic techniques. For example, they can be altered to reduce idiosyncratic effect and to bring out important points such as the intentions of the author.

Section 6 is concerned with "Simplification", which Widdowson defines as "the process whereby the language user adjusts his own language behaviour in the interests of communicative effectiveness" (p.196). The most interesting and controversial paper in this book, "The Significance of Simplification", is best summarized by the author in the introduction to this section:

"This deals with simplification as a learning strategy. It reviews certain ideas current in the literature on error analysis and suggests that a distinction needs to be made between code rules, which define what the learner knows and context rules, which represent strategies for communication acquired in learning the mother tongue... When the learner produces forms which are simplified in reference to code rules of the language, the teacher sees them as errors and therefore as signs of failure in learning. But these forms can also, and more satisfactorily, be seen as the learner's assertion of his own communicative strategies and therefore as signs of success in developing context rules in the foreign language" (p.183).

Widdowson also goes into universal tendencies of simplification reflected by language learners. On the practical side, he again proposes using materials from other subjects which also simplify content for communicative purposes. In the final paper in the section, he proposes two opposing forces in language, the referential force acting in the direction of content, and the poetic force, acting in the direction of expression, with a pidgin and a babu at the respective extremes.

The last two sections of the book go back to discussion of the role of applied linguists and reclarification of the communicative approach to language teaching which "does not simply consist of representing language as notions or functions but involves extending the learner's ability to realize discourse from his mother tongue to the language he is learning" (p.245).

Explorations in Applied Linguistics certainly is successful in its aim of stimulating critical examination of the whole spectrum of applied linguistics from the theoretical to the practical. However, I think the book has one major shortcoming is that it does not deal with the whole spectrum of language teaching situations. Rather, it concentrates on foreign language teaching, especially of English (EFL), in the European context, glossing over EFL in non-European situations, and ignoring altogether the teaching of English as a second language (ESL). Thus, many of the practical suggestions and exercises in the book are not at all relevant to ESL situations or to students of non-European cultures who may have no background of Western scientific enquiry and whose first languages may have no written tradition. For example, in a country such as Papua New Guinea, there is no secondary 'scientific culture' except for what students have recently learned through English. And none of the more than 700

languages has any written tradition of history dealing with the concepts of Western science. Therefore, any exercises involving L₁ or translations (such as the ones proposed by Widdowson in Sections 2 and 4) would be meaningless.

In Section 3, Widdowson does say that "the teaching of communicative functions, then, necessarily involves the teaching of cultural values" (p.66). He recognizes that a notional syllabus designed in Europe may not be relevant to other countries and says "... I think that we have to accept that in many countries and for some considerable time to come English teaching will continue to be based on the familiar structural syllabus, though perhaps modified..." (p.68). He then goes on to suggest other ways of making learners aware of the communicative functioning of language. One of these is the information transfer exercise using diagrams, as described above. But again, I would question the suitability of such exercises in the non-European context as the understanding of diagrams also varies from culture to culture.

Thus, it appears that the language teacher in a non-Western ESL situation would have to spend a great deal of time teaching the socio-cultural knowledge that goes along with language. This difficult task is relatively unexplored in Widdowson's book. Perhaps what is needed is a sequel, Explorations in Applied Anthropological Linguistics, which would hopefully follow Widdowson's excellent open-minded, practically orientated approach to language in its social context.

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