women reacting completely differently to Kate Chopin’s “Story of an Hour”; a novice teacher responding to a student’s essay on threatening his sister with a butcher knife), complete with vivid characters and compellingly realistic dialogue, makes this book very readable.

Another attraction is the authors’ willingness to write about moments of failure. Even moments of success are shown to be ambiguous, and some of the best stories are about the worst experiences. For example, Lynn Z. Bloom describes “the worst course I ever taught” (p. 117). Wendy Bishop writes about “What We Don’t Like, Don’t Admit, Don’t Understand . . .,” acknowledging the feelings teachers usually suppress, such as strong emotional reactions—both positive and negative—to certain students. And in excruciatingly honest self-revelation, Ruth Vinz shares a horror story about the most disruptive student she ever had, the ways in which his behavior invaded her class and mind and life, and her fantasies about revenge.

These narratives are powerful both because of their specificity and because of their universality. Any teacher reading them will experience a sense of recognition. And despite the authors’ refusal to present an artificially cheery, positive view of teaching, their love of teaching and their belief that they can make a difference are evident. Thus this book is, albeit indirectly, a true celebration of the teaching life.

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Errors in Language Learning and Use: Exploring Error Analysis.

The continuing popularity of error analysis (EA), according to James, comes from its methodology for dealing with actual instances of language data. Errors in Language Learning and Use summarizes EA’s history and acknowledges those who have contributed to EA’s development as it provides a comprehensive analysis of its current status and relevance for language teaching and learning.

The book is divided into nine chapters. Chapters 1–3 provide a rationale for EA. Chapter 1 examines related terminology and establishes the field’s parameters. Chapter 2 argues that EA is pertinent to both L1 and L2 learning. Chapter 3 explores the various ways researchers have defined error.

Chapters 4–9 describe EA procedures. Chapters 4 and 5 characterize language errors. Chapter 4 details ways of identifying and describing language errors, and chapter 5 provides examples of some of the 60
types James uses to classify them. Chapter 6 moves from the description of errors to a diagnosis of why they occur and an explanation of the forms they take. Chapter 7 discusses standards used to determine the importance of different errors and the way those involved in language teaching and learning feel about errors. Chapter 8 explores issues involved in error correction, and chapter 9 provides a sample EA to demonstrate the complete process.

Depending on the theoretical bandwagon in vogue, the significance of errors in language learning has had a variable and, at times, controversial history. James considers this book a companion volume to his 1980 work on contrastive analysis (CA). His original focus on CA and later emphasis on EA reveal his more traditional theoretical orientation.

James succeeds admirably in critiquing earlier scholarly works in his examination of EA. He brings much and often disparate information together in a balanced, coherent, and readable fashion. James is perhaps overly self-critical of his efforts in the final chapter’s sample EA, but he indicates that its tentativeness should encourage future developments in EA. A brief summary chapter might have assisted readers in putting the larger picture together.

James does not view errors from a deficit perspective, that is, as an indication solely of what learners cannot do. He sees much promise for EA in the British language therapy technique of profiling, a procedure used to describe and classify features present or absent in a language sample. Although developed to explain pathological cases, profiling could also be used to specify L2 learners’ achievement levels and the areas in which they fall short of the L2 target. By extension, profiling could also be used for L1 learners. The sample EA in chapter 9 includes a profile; its chart format quickly reveals features present or absent from the sample. James considers significant errors to be serious for the teacher and learner but is not unduly concerned with minor violations of standard language.

*Errors in Language Learning and Use: Exploring Error Analysis* is a useful resource for both L2 teachers and L1 language arts teachers. The book provides an extensive bibliography as a guide for more in-depth study of the topics presented.

REFERENCE


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