

Review

Reviewed Work(s): Measuring Spoken Language Proficiency by James R. Frith

Review by: Alicia Pousada

Source: *Language*, Vol. 58, No. 1 (Mar., 1982), p. 254

Published by: Linguistic Society of America

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/413568>

Accessed: 31-10-2018 22:16 UTC

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at

<https://about.jstor.org/terms>



JSTOR

Linguistic Society of America is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Language*

In general, the papers provide evidence that first and second language reading share many strategies, and that adults and children pass through similar developmental stages in reading acquisition. All the contributions to the volume illustrate the active, problem-solving nature of reading in ways that can assist teachers in examining their own teaching practices, as well as in monitoring individual students. They will also be of interest to researchers in the fields of reading, psycholinguistics, bilingualism, and language learning. [ALICIA POUSADA, *Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños, CUNY.*]

Measuring spoken language proficiency. Ed. by JAMES R. FRITH. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1980. Pp. vi, 69. \$3.95.

Papers presented as part of the preliminary sessions of the 1980 Georgetown Roundtable on Languages and Linguistics make up this slender volume. Participants included representatives from the Foreign Service Institute, Defense Language Institute, Educational Testing Service, Central Intelligence Agency Language School, Public Service Commission of Canada, American Council on Education, and Pomona College. They address the pressing need for better ways to measure language skills, and for the establishment of clear competency or proficiency standards through examination of particular instruments and techniques.

All the papers are concerned directly or indirectly with the Foreign Service Institute (FSI) oral interview, which has served since its development in 1956 as a benchmark in the field of language testing. M. L. Adams (pp. 1–6) and R. T. Clifford (27–30) attempt to ascertain the relative weight of the factors of accent, comprehension, fluency, grammar, and vocabulary in determining the global FSI score. F. A. Cartier (7–14) and P. Lowe & R. T. Clifford (31–9) present tests which try to overcome the basic drawback of the FSI—the fact that, in field situations, it is often impossible to find highly-trained personnel for face-to-face interviews.

J. Clark (15–26) outlines the procedures necessary for the development of a uniform proficiency measure which can be used in diverse settings with the results reported on a single uniform scale. R. E. Mareschal (40–59) reports on the functional approach used for the evalua-

tion of communicative competence in Canada, where the government's bilingual policy mandates proficiency in English and French for individuals employed in official capacities.

The volume closes with two brief papers (D. Whitney, 60–63; H. T. Young, 64–9) concerning the potential use of the FSI ratings for university placement, creditation, grant screening, exit criteria etc.

In sum, the papers contained here (though quite abbreviated) offer some insight into current concerns within the field of language proficiency measurement, and into the future envisioned by its practitioners. [ALICIA POUSADA, *Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños, CUNY.*]

Style: Ten lessons in clarity and grace.

By JOSEPH M. WILLIAMS. Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman, 1981. 288 pp. \$8.95.

This book will be of special interest to linguists, since Williams draws on linguistic theory as the basis for many of his analyses and descriptions of English style. And because many linguists work in English departments where they teach English composition in addition to linguistics, this book will satisfy their need for a linguistically sophisticated composition textbook.

The book is divided into ten lessons. Each lesson opens with a discussion of the general principle of writing covered in that chapter, and then goes on to break the principle down into a number of stylistic devices for readers to apply in their own writing.

W's explanation of the relation between passives and context is unique in composition texts. He discusses (107–9) the relationships between subject and agent, verb and action, and object and goal. Rather than ruling out passives (as many style guides do), W shows how the context of a sentence often requires them. He also relates passives (110–12) to new and old information.

W defines 'metadiscourse' as the way we 'directly or indirectly tell our audience how they should take our ideas' (47). His examples of this—changing the subject, announcing the certainty of an idea—recall the work of J. R. Ross, John Austin, and others on performatives and speech acts. W divides metadiscourse into three stylistic groups: 'Hedges and emphatics' (48–9), e.g. *perhaps, as everyone knows;* 'Sequencers and topicalizers' (49–51), e.g. *Where X is con-*