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scribe the style and speculate on why it might have developed where it did. Consider ethnic preferences, dominant occupations in your area, and the socio-economic situation, as well as regional and climatological factors.

In just under 200 pages, Introduction to Folklore does not pretend to be a definitive study. But it does blend old familiar ideas with some new considerations. Laubach is onto something more than making folklore relevant—he has expanded it into what he calls “shared experiences”:

I hope that the chapters, readings, and projects in this book will introduce teachers and students to a world of shared experiences where past meets present, culture meets culture, and all of us meet ourselves.

I can’t help but believe that David Laubach’s contribution to this vital subject will do all of these things.

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COMPREHENDING ORAL AND WRITTEN LANGUAGE
by Rosalind Horowitz and Jay Samuels
Academic Press, 1989

The thirteen chapters in this collection are written “for researchers and graduate students who have an interest in theoretical and research questions associated with the relationships among oral and written language, listening and reading, and speaking and writing” (p. xv). While some classroom applications may be found in nearly all of the chapters, the material is clearly geared for an audience familiar with empirical investigations of cognitive research in language processes and the acquisition of literacy.

In this respect, Comprehending Oral and Written Language is different from, say, Exploring Speaking-Writing Relationships (Kroll & Vann, 1981), which was among the first collections on this topic to emerge from composition researchers and to be addressed to language arts specialists at the secondary and college levels. It is also different from the NCTE monograph Talking Into Writing (Rubin & Dodd, 1987), which describes a pedagogical approach for teachers of basic writing. Readers familiar with Variation Across Speech and Writing (Biber, 1988) or Deborah Tannen’s influential Spoken and Written Language: Exploring Orality and Literacy (1982) and Coherence in Spoken and Written Discourse (1984) will recognize similar themes in Horowitz and Samuels’ book, but will also appreciate the different focus these authors have sought. Whereas Tannen’s works have been concerned with analyzing the many features of oral and written language and their relationship to nonlinguistic contexts, Horowitz and Samuels focus on processing strategies used in comprehension. And whereas Tannen’s work takes a somewhat more sociolinguistic angle, Horowitz and Samuels’ follows a more psycholinguistic theme.

The book is divided into four parts, with an introductory chapter written by the editors. This introduction offers a useful survey of the range of issues covered in the book, as well as an orientation to the contrasts between their contributors’ various perspectives. Much of the research cited in the introduction is drawn from linguistics and reading psychology; if readers find that composition studies seem under-represented, they will at least notice that Horowitz and Samuels cite many of the same writers from whom composition specialists interested in oral-written relationships have drawn ideas—Chafe, Ferreiro, Gelb, Halliday, Havelock, Heath, Labov, Olson, Ong, Vachek, Vygotsky. Moreover, the composition research which these editors do include in their survey includes several cognitive studies in composition related to oral and written language: Bereiter and Scardamalia, de Beaugrande, Daiute, Emig, Frase, Kroll, Nystrand, and others.

Part One of the volume compares and contrasts the
many features of oral and written language and includes chapters by M.A.K. Halliday, and Wallace Chafe and Jane Danielewicz. Part Two addresses processing strategies and their rhetorical, social, and contextual constraints, with a chapter by Rosalind Horowitz that describes an empirical investigation of the effects of four common rhetorical structures on discourse processing. There is also a chapter by Teun A. van Dijk on episodic models and one by Martin Nystrand on the role of context in written communication.

Part Three focuses on perceptual and cognitive demands in listening and reading. David Townsend, Caroline Carrithers, and Thomas Bever report findings from a study of college- and middle school-age readers that indicates similar comprehension processes in reading and listening for students at a particular level of reading ability: differences exist primarily at the sentence level among middle schoolers but at the discourse-level thematic level among college readers. Peter Schreiber reports on an investigation that shows children’s reading and listening comprehension to be dependent on prosodic structure in demarcating syntactic constituents, a finding with implications for how oral reading is modeled in the classroom and how written texts are constructed for young readers. Joseph Danks and Laurel End compare the various approaches of a number of studies in listening and reading comprehension. Jay Samuels concludes Part Three with a chapter that contrasts diagnostic approaches for listening and reading.

Part Four concentrates on broader issues of literacy acquisition and schooling. Rita Watson and David Olson argue, as Olson has done in the past, that the decontextualized nature of written texts requires a differentiation of speaker’s meaning from literate meaning, with consequences that affect how well children from oral and literate cultures adapt to the school environment. Charles Perfetti follows a similar theme in discussing the roles of speech and print in acquiring literacy. In the final chapter, Sandra Stotsky provides a cogent comparison between two fundamentally different approaches to oral-written relationships and outlines developmental models of written language derived from each.

All of the papers in this collection serve to enrich our understanding of how extremely important it is to avoid generalizations about language that presume either an essential similarity or a simple dichotomy between the spoken and written. At present, the most one can conclude from the research is that generalities apply mainly to specific levels of analysis—and there are many levels.

Perhaps Halliday’s chapter makes this point clearest of all. Halliday challenges the accepted notion that speech is syntactically simpler than writing. It is only because “we look at spoken language through the lens of a grammar designed for writing,” he observes, that this appears to be true. Using data gathered from subjects who both told and wrote a message, Halliday shows that the spoken version contains a clause complex of four clauses, while the written version consists of one clause. Written texts, on the other hand, have a characteristically higher lexical density (proportion of content words to total number of words), which often gives written texts the appearance of greater complexity. Yet even this difference, Halliday argues, is one of kind, not degree, for the appearance of greater complexity is once again related to the fact that we tend to base our analyses on grammars designed for written products. A more even-handed comparison of the two modes, he writes, would compare not the final, edited form of a written product with the spontaneous free-flow of speech, but would use instead something like the writer’s rough draft against the speaker’s spontaneous utterance. Naturally, if comparisons were made at the moments of production for both oral and written modes, written and spoken discourse would reveal more clearly their different kinds of complexity.

Arguments such as Halliday’s, like many of those in this volume, lend both theoretical and empirical credence to the value that composition specialists place on

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integrated approaches to language arts teaching. That evidence for such integration is now emerging not only from research of social contexts but also from cognitively-based works like Horowitz and Samuels' is compelling, and is one good reason for giving this book a closer look.

References


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