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participants in what might be described as lon-
gitudinal embedding, as well as Bilmes’s linking
of MCA to taxonomic analysis. González-Lloret’s
paper on synchronous computer-mediated com-
munication argues the case for using CA in online
environments.

The editors have ensured that all contributions
are based on solid methodological and theoreti-
cal foundations, which makes this an excellent re-
source for students or novice researchers. It is also
encouraging to see that the nonverbal dimension
is included in a number of analyses, the paper by
Hauser being a good example. Suzuki’s contribu-
tion also demonstrates that in this respect a little
can go a long way: There is only one reference
to visual evidence in the paper, but it is a telling
one.

Inevitably, the diversity of a collection with
this range must raise questions of focus, but the
level of engagement with fundamental issues in
research on talk-in-interaction in this book ren-
ders such criticism churlish, especially given that
the opening chapter highlights these issues and
frames the collection as a whole. Nevertheless, I
should have liked a brief introduction along tra-
ditional lines, providing an easily accessible ori-
entation and overview. This minor reservation,
however, should not detract from the virtues of
an outstanding publication that is both penetrat-
ing and richly varied. It will be valued by anyone
with an interest in conversation analysis, spoken
discourse, cross-cultural interaction, language ac-
cquisition, or language teaching.

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NORRIS, JOHN M., JOHN MCE. DAVIS, CASTLE
SINICROPE, & YUKIKO WATANABE. (Eds.). To-
ward Useful Program Evaluation in College Foreign
Language Education. Honolulu, HI: National For-
eign Language Resource Center, 2009. Pp. viii,

Foreign language programs in the United
States are under considerable pressure to show
their effectiveness to different stakeholders—
administrators, colleagues from other programs
and departments, colleagues from other foreign
language programs, parents, students, among
others—and are now feeling growing pressure to
engage in critical evaluation, particularly in the
current times of global economic crisis and bud-
get restrictions. In this climate of uncertainty, the
better a foreign language program can show its
efficiency and competence, the more likely it is to
survive and even expand. This is why Norris et al.’s
collection of case studies on engaging in produc-
tive self-evaluation is a much-needed resource for
any foreign language practitioner. Thus, the prin-
cipal value of this bold enterprise lies in the fact
that the editors provide not only a comprehen-
sive analysis of how college foreign language pro-
grams conceptualize evaluation (ch. 1) but also
seven concrete examples of how engaging in eval-
uation has actually improved the quality of differ-
ent language programs (chs. 2 through 8). The
last chapter (ch. 9) provides a general overview
of program evaluation as a field of inquiry and re-
ects on its present and future value in overall aca-
demic life and the identity of those who perform
it. The theory and experiences described in this
volume are part of the Foreign Language Program
Evaluation Project (FLPEP), which was developed
at the University of Hawai‘i and funded through
a U.S. Department of Education International
Research and Studies Grant between 2005 and
2008.

The book opens with Watanabe, Norris, and
González-Lloret’s report on a project aimed at
understanding the priorities and needs that for-
egnign language programs face regarding eval-
uation. Through open-ended interviews with
foreign language educators and a Web-based sur-
vey, the authors identify some of the main con-
cerns regarding evaluation: the external pressure
that can cause programs to lessen the quality of
their education, time and resource constraints,
and lack of institutional and disciplinary support.
In chapter 2, Milleret and Silveira explain the un-
derpinnings of the evaluation of the Portuguese
program at the University of New Mexico, which
resulted not only in the creation of some new ex-
perimental courses, such as Portuguese for Span-
ish speakers, but also in improved course delivery.
Perhaps more important, the program is grow-
ing and, as a result of the evaluation, administra-
tors have been persuaded to support this growth.
The third chapter is an example of evaluation
undertaken to support curricular change. Accord-
ing to Loewensen and Gómez, one of the rea-
sons for the low registration and retention of
students in the undergraduate major in their
department was that stakeholders did not un-
derstand its unique nature. Through a survey
distributed to faculty, students, alumni, and em-
ployers, the authors could base the introduc-
tion of a major in Spanish on real data, instead
of anecdotes, speculations, or individual preferences. In addition, the expertise acquired in this process will be used again to start an accreditation-mandated departmental program review.

In chapter 4, Zannirato and Sánchez-Serrano address the thorny issue of training foreign language teaching assistants whose main area of interest and research is literature, a common scenario in U.S. universities. The evaluation’s main goal was to design a foreign language teaching methods class, and the evaluation process consisted of class observations and questionnaires directed at section heads, directors of graduate studies, language coordinators, and graduate students.

In chapter 5, Walther provides a detailed overview of the planning stages of an evaluation at Duke University to assess language proficiency, as well as cultural knowledge and understanding. In chapter 6, Grau Sempre, Mohn, and Pieroni provide a statement of 10 student learning outcomes, as well as the results of their innovative portfolio assessment procedure.

In chapter 7, Ramsay reports on the evaluation of two study abroad programs through classroom observations, meetings with directors and administrators, interviews with students, and analyses of teaching materials and graded assignments. The dissatisfaction revealed by the evaluation led to the cancellation of the programs. Finally, Pfeiffer and Byrnes summarize the evaluation of the German program at their institution through questionnaires addressed to alumni and enrolled students, which provided recommendations for future action.

The seven chapters illustrate the heterogeneity of experiences with evaluation in different foreign language departments. In each case, the impetus for starting the evaluation process and the defined goals differed, but all shared the desire to take a critical look at their practice and outcomes. In the final chapter, the authors argue that the optimal approach to conducting evaluation is characterized by local ownership of the undertaking—that is, evaluation done by and for people within the program (p. 211). This approach, however, was not followed in chapter 7, and that is probably why it had the most extreme and dramatic consequences of all the cases reported.

It is a brave act of honesty and ethics to inquire whether your program’s performance is satisfactory or can be improved, but it is even braver to make the process and results public. Critical evaluations of foreign language programs usually take the form of an internal report that is rarely disseminated beyond the institution that generated it, which is why this volume is a particularly refreshing novelty and a much-needed reference for professionals who are planning on engaging in program evaluation.

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