records Corson's empirical investigations in Britain and Australia aimed at testing the lexical bar theory. He developed two measuring instruments for the purpose: the Measure of Passive Vocabulary and the G-L Instrument. He also used cloze. The procedures adopted are carefully outlined and the findings presented. Although these findings do not establish a clear cause and effect relationship, they do document a strong link between an active written and oral access to the specialist lexis of English and educational success or failure.

Language planners and those involved in curriculum studies should take careful note of chapter six. Evidence of the ability to use words remains and should remain a principal instrument of evaluation within the educational selection process. However, this should highlight for us certain hidden inequities within the education system. A telling illustration is provided on p.81 in the answers to the same question given by two pupils of matched reasoning ability. One pupil seems decidedly inferior in reasoning ability to the other because his answer lacks precision, explicitness and syntactic cohesion. He is a victim of the lexical bar. Ways must be found of giving access to alternative conceptual frameworks so that pupils like this will not mistakenly be viewed as innately inferior and unsuitable for further education. This may involve allowing more time at high school for children whose social or cultural backgrounds place them at a disadvantage, as they may accelerate in their lexical development a year or two later than others.

Chapter seven is largely exploratory. It focuses on the relationship between lexical structuring patterns and verbal storage systems in the brain. Researchers will find that Corson provides a useful overview of psycholinguistics in presenting his model of the arrangement of the mental lexicon.

In chapter eight he explores the ways in which processing difficulties may hinder even passive vocabulary acquisition and suggests ways in which an individual's learning of polymorphemic words may be made easier. He firmly contends that the crucial factor is a learning environment which provides stimulating and appropriate non-linguistic experiences, affording rich encounters with words in context so their rules may be deduced. This view will be of special interest to proponents of English Across The Curriculum and those teaching technical and scientific subjects—to all who have seen the role that comprehension plays in success or failure.

Chapter nine presents a revised theory of the lexical bar which accords a role to ethnicity, questioning social class as an accurate predictor of lexical orientation on its own. It also indicates that word learning is not affected by the etymological provenance of words, and that there is more to difficult texts than that they contain words difficult in access. Words of Graeco-Latin origin principally but not exclusively present processing difficulties in the mental lexicon. However, a rich language environment in the school could promote all children's lexical sophistication.

This book provides a useful model for research and presents exciting challenges to researchers and policy makers. My one quibble is that a book which offers such useful insights into the lexical bar should itself be unnecessarily obscure. It is difficult to read.

E. Ridge

William Rowlinson

Personally Speaking … Teaching Languages for Use. Oxford University Press: 1985. (Paperback, 150 pp.)

This book attempts to re-assess the objectives of second language teaching today. Although the author uses the various French courses taught in Britain as the basis of his study, most of his criticism and conclusions are relevant to second language courses generally, including those in South Africa.

From the sub-title: *Teaching Languages for Use*, it is apparent that Rowlinson favours a communicative approach. However, this book does not suggest new ways of teaching communicatively, but attempts to give a perspective of old as well as more recent methods in the light of the professed aims of second language teaching. For this reason, it is divided into two parts: *Ends* and *Means*.

In Part one, *Ends*, the author identifies what he considers to be the major problem in second language teaching today: "the lack of clarity about

where we are going, and how, and even why". What we teach depends on why we are teaching it. Thus he concludes that the only lasting motivation on the part of pupils is "the knowledge that the skills they have learnt can be used to some personal profit". He identifies several shortcomings in previous language courses (e.g. "the lack of personal involvement of the learner"), stressing the need for course differentiation. Some important issues raised are the role of grammar ("it seems clear that the long-term learner will need an explanatory framework of grammar, whether his course materials are explicitly organized to help him develop this progressively or not") and the comparative importance of the spoken and written word ("almost all language teachers would agree ... that ability to use the written word for all except a tiny minority of learners is a goal useless in its own right").

In the second chapter: *The Historical Ball and Chain*, Rowlinson criticises those who hold the "progressive" view that modern language teaching practice is automatically an improvement on what has gone before. He demonstrates that much of what is supposedly "new" is often merely a variation of an older method, and concludes that "methods and materials are necessarily a reflection of aims and purposes which in turn lie in the changing structure and values of the society around us".

Chapter three, on the role of language learning in the school curriculum, suggests various contributions that a second language course should make to the pupils' overall education, such as the development of an aesthetic sense and the elimination of cultural chauvinism.

It is, however, in the second part of the book, *Means*, that Rowlinson addresses himself to practical considerations of second language teaching. He devotes separate chapters to a discussion of three second language (French) courses: the language experience course, the specialist course, and the more advanced 'sixth form' course. In the first of these, he suggests a basic functional approach consisting of three overlapping stages: input, reproduction of new material and autonomous use of new material. He also provides examples of pair work and language games for use in the third stage.

The specialist course should aim at making English a usable tool for students, and the author outlines various ways of achieving this goal. The advanced course, he feels, should introduce the second language as it is spoken by mother-tongue speakers, and the student should now use the spoken word not just for everyday exchanges, but also to express ideas, put forward opinions and sustain an argument.

In the chapter on the problems of language testing, the author advocates tests based on listening and oral communication, in order to bring the examination system more into line with the objectives of language teaching. He also discusses the merits of using intensive and extensive reading in this regard.

The chapter on classroom aids, although relevant, offers nothing original and its inclusion is hardly justified. In the last chapter, various ways of putting language to use beyond the classroom are suggested.

Personally Speaking is a book which should prove useful to new and experienced teachers alike, but especially to those who have lost perspective and need some of their old beliefs re-affirmed, while at the same time extending their vision. No biographical details concerning the author are supplied, but I can recommend his work for its sensible ideas and logical arguments, presented clearly and concisely in carefully linked chapters. In short, a very readable and thought-provoking book.

J.J. Swartz

Michael Swan

Basic English Usage. Oxford University Press: 1984. (Paperback, 288 pp.)

Basic English Usage is a shortened and simplified version of Michael Swan's *Practical English Usage*. The author describes his book as "a practical guide to common problems in English grammar and usage" for use by "foreign students who would like to know more about English, and who want to avoid mistakes". It contains 370 short entries which attempts to explain, in fairly simple language, those parts of English grammar and