

## Ronald Carter: *Language and Creativity. The Art of Common Talk*

Routledge, London 2004, xiii + 255 p. [www.routledge.com](http://www.routledge.com)

### A Review

“Every language user is linguistically creative” is a truism, yet the literature on linguistic creativity is not as extensive as one would expect. Thus, a search for works published in English on the “creative aspect of language use” (to quote Noam Chomsky’s famous phrase from his book *Cartesian Linguistics*, 1966), would feature David Crystal’s *Language Play* (Penguin, 1998) and Guy Cook’s *Language play, Language learning* (Oxford, 2000). Interestingly, 27 years ago Don Nilsen and Alleen Nilsen published a pioneering volume for students of Linguistics: *Play. An introduction to linguistics* (Newbury House, 1977). In the 70s, *creativity and language* teaching were brought together in pioneering publications such as the newsletter *Creativity. New Ideas in Language Teaching*, published by the São Paulo-Brazil-based Centro de Lingüística Aplicada, from 1973 through 1979, and the book *Jeu, langage et créativité. Les jeux dans la classe de français*, by Jean-Marc Caré and Francis Debyser (Paris: Hachette et Larousse, 1978).

In a still conspicuously absent history of *creativity in/and language education: a world view*, it would be most revealing to share data on how users of languages exercise their right to be linguistically creative. In that respect, Ronald Carter’s new book is realistically up-to-date in that he relies on selected corpora of spoken English to substantiate his cogent point that “linguistic creativity is not simply a property of exceptional people but an exceptional property of all people” (Carter 2004:13).

*Language and Creativity* has a List of Illustrations (3 figures and 8 tables), 2 Epigraphs, Acknowledgements (note the author’s reference to *the field of language and creativity* (ibid.:xii), a Note on CANCODE – The Cambridge and Nottingham Corpus of Discourse in English, an 11-page Introduction (featuring sections on The genesis of the book, Questions on a conversational extract, and The organization of the book), and 3 Parts:

- I – Background and theories (2 chapters),
- II – Forms and functions (2 chapters),
- III – Contexts and variations (2 chapters), 3 Appendices, 18-page References, and a 7-page Index.

Members of the FIPLV network will be attracted by the section (alas too brief: 2 pages!) on creativity and the language classroom (note that a

book titled *Creativity in the language classroom* was co-authored by Irene Stanislawczyk and Symond Yavener, Newbury House 1976), in which Carter reminds us that “it is not only in the teaching of literature and culture where research into learner’s exposure to more open-ended and creative aspects of language use is developed” (Carter 2004:213) but also for “expressing their social and cultural Selves” (ibid.:214). A look at the entry for *creativity* in the book’s Index will give readers an additional convincing reason for delving into this volume. Among topics dealt with are: degrees of creativity, ordinary language and creativity, psychological approaches to creativity, spoken creativity, creativity in writing, play and creativity.

The book’s comprehensive and up-to-date bibliography is enhanced with a 3-page list of CANCODE publications, 1994-2003.

In short, a must for language teachers and for all those who share the fascinating, challenging mission of educating/training teachers creatively for a world so much in need of *creative change*, especially of *communicative peace* through the use of *languages*.

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