

Fairness in Reviewing: A Reply to O'Connell

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O'Connell's (1992) review of my 1989 book *Speaking* requires a brief reply. I shall not respond to the alleged theoretical shortcomings, like the neglect of intention, as we can rest assured that O'Connell will shortly supply the theory of intention that the Western intellectual tradition has been waiting for for a millenia or two. But I must correct some inaccuracies in the review, especially as they appear to support the view that "the manuscript was not yet ready for publication."

1. *The International Phonetic Alphabet*

"Levelt's use of the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) is disastrous". What's wrong? "Symbols are used (pp. 2 & 338) that are not given in the IPA appendix." There is such a symbol indeed on page 2. How come? I am giving a literal citation from Svartvik and Quirk (1980) that contains a non-IPA phonetic symbol. O'Connell may know that it is unethical to make changes in an explicitly cited text. Because the symbol is non-IPA, it doesn't appear in the appendix.

What about the other one? On page 338 I use the symbol /3r/. It can be found in the second column of my appendix.

"English sounds are simply misidentified." O'Connell lists 9 pages where this occurs; it involves eight different items. I agree with the four items on pages 325, 347, 357/458, and 434. All other examples precisely follow the transcription in *The Random House Dictionary of the English Language* (unabridged edition), an authority I happen to trust more than

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O'Connell's. Four ill-transcribed items in a 570 page book—not good enough for sure, but it scarcely warrants the description “disastrous”.

2. *The Book's English*

The book was “still in need of a native-speaking editor.” I worked closely with my excellent MIT Press editor; nevertheless infelicities may of course remain, as in any work. But among the few examples O'Connell then provides are these:

- “the use of inappropriate English examples such as *gave it him... .*” This form is perfectly acceptable in dialects of English other than the reviewer's, especially British ones.
- “...and *Where's the lions?* (p. 378).” Here I am explicitly citing from Kaisse (1985, p. 43). Kaisse's example is, moreover, fully acceptable with the appropriate contextualization (this requires, of course, some modicum of imagination).

Typographical or spelling errors do of course occur, but within the normal rates for any printed work.

All this seems scant provocation for the opinion that “Such errors are of much more than passing interest in a textbook of psycholinguistics. They provide marvellous classroom experiments on proofreading and other language-related production and perception phenomena.”

3. *Anachronisms*

My final category concerns what I will call “anachronisms” in the review. One example is this: O'Connell criticizes me about my interpretation of Gee and Grosjean's (1983) results. “But, as I have elsewhere (O'Connell, 1988) observed:...” (here follows a citation that gives a different interpretation). The book appeared in early 1989. I had handed in my manuscript in January 1988. I feel sorry to have missed O'Connell's important book. Another example: “it is certainly not the case that Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974) discovered ‘the basic and perhaps universal rules for turn taking in conversation’ (p. 31). O'Connell, Kowall, and Kaltenbacher (1990) have radically rejected both the descriptive and prescriptive components of these rules for turn-taking.” How stupid of me not to have waited another 2 years before publishing my book!

These rather inaccurate accusations of inaccuracy and sloppiness might seem to suggest by inuendo that the book is rather deeply flawed. But that cannot be the reviewer's intention (well, caution is in order till

O'Connell's important theory of intention appears), since he concludes that "Levelt's book is a brilliant analysis of the cognitive, experimental evidence regarding speaking." It may or may not be brilliant, but it is actually in English, without more than its share of typos, with reasonably consistent applications of the IPA, and with a fairly comprehensive set of citations. That at least potential readers should know.

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