

ric in *American Colleges, 1850-1900*. The two works together offer a comprehensive view of nineteenth-century North American rhetorical theory and practice at the university level. This publication by Southern Illinois University Press (along with their commitment to publishing definitive editions of works from figures of this period) will promote needed scholarship in this area.

—Lynne Lewis Gaillet
Texas Christian University

Grammar and the Teaching of Writing: Limits and Possibilities—Rei R. Noguchi; NCTE; 1991; 125 pp. ISBN 0-8141-1874-7.

Pinckert's Practical Grammar: A Lively, Unintimidating Guide to Usage, Punctuation and Style—Robert C. Pinckert; *Writer's Digest*; 1991; 229 pp. ISBN 0-89879-441-2

Written for two very different audiences, these two books addressing grammar instruction share a certain practical orientation, both writers recognizing the status-conferring qualities of correct usage. Their approaches differ markedly, however. Noguchi, writing for specialists, dispenses with as much of the traditional vocabulary and rules of correct usage as possible; Pinckert, writing for a general audience, retains them.

Noguchi preaches the new orthodoxy, and few up-to-date readers will quarrel with his desire to reduce the amount of formal grammar instruction in writing classes and to make the most productive use of that instruction to improve student writing. Nor is anyone likely to object to his finding that grammar instruction is most effective in matters of style. Likewise, Noguchi's call for a minimalist "writer's grammar" consisting of four elements—sentence (or independent clause), subject, verb, and modifier—will likely seem a sensible compromise to both the traditionalists and the anti-grammar faction he describes. Most useful, too, are his suggestions for using native-speaker competencies in place of traditional grammar instruction. Anyone who has watched students struggle to identify the subject of a sentence, for example, will benefit from reading about the way adding a tag question can draw on a student's unconscious knowledge of sentence structure to isolate the subject as a pronoun at the end of that tag (e.g., "Jim and Sue can dance the tango" becomes "Jim and Sue can dance the tango, can't they?").

Unfortunately, to reach such genuinely useful material, readers will first have to read a good deal else that might well have been dispensed with. Noguchi often presents a straightforward, uncontroversial state-

ment and then "proves" it at length, usually employing several illustrations where only one or two would be sufficient. Moreover, there is substantial repetition among the chapters (e.g., studies by Maxine Hairston and by Andrea Lunsford and Robert Connors are summarized several times; whole sets of examples are repeated from one chapter to another; the final chapter summarizes at some length what has already been said several times in the rest of the book). In short, readers would have been better served with an article than with a monograph. As Noguchi himself concludes, "In the end, less is more" (121).

And, on a different level, it's discouraging to read a book on grammar and style that employs adverbial clauses as subjects and misplaces modifiers so unstylishly: "Just because formal grammar overlaps significantly with style, however, does not necessarily mean that formal instruction in grammar belongs in the school curriculum" (12); "By turning the last independent clause of the sequence into a tag question, the run-on or comma splice is changed from a sequence of statement plus statement to a sequence of statement plus question" (82). Perhaps the minimalist's list should be extended to include the gerund.

Irreverent and often wickedly funny, *Pinckert's Practical Grammar* is much more readable. Moreover, Pinckert's wit has the ring of truth: "Dialect speakers have to shift to the dialect of the ruling class, or become the rulers theirselves" (93); "You must learn about apostrophes, not because they're worth knowing, but to protect yourself" (73); "Hemingway wrote well on boring, silly topics—shooting big game, killing bulls, war" (147). This down-to-earth sensibility carries over to matters of usage as well, for Pinckert refuses to make a fetish of mere correctness when informality is called for. In addition to grammar, usage, and style, Pinckert also provides lively, informative sections on prewriting, revising, and argumentation.

Though not designed for use in the classroom, *Pinckert's Practical Grammar* can be recommended to our mature, motivated students who want to learn to manipulate the prestige dialect to their own advantage. (Instructors may also want to raid it for good one-liners.) Teachers of less-motivated students will find some worthwhile strategies in *Grammar and the Teaching of Writing*, but its usefulness is limited by the shortcomings listed above.

—Joe Law
Texas Christian University
