As someone with only a scant background in systemic functional linguistics (SFL), acquired in passing through my work with teachers of English to speakers of other languages, I was curious to see how far this volume achieved its stated aims of describing a relatively accessible set of tools for discourse analysis informed by SFL and enabling discourse analysts to use them. My previous encounters with SFL suggested that these aims were worthy but ambitious. Indeed, although the back cover reassures us that the reader needs “no prior experience of functional linguistics,” the book is in fact written more like a handbook for readers already drawn to and familiar with the paradigm rather than as an introduction for those who are curious but uninitiated. This impression comes chiefly from the monologic stance that the authors acknowledge they have taken. That is, to make a particular “set of tools more available than they have been in the past” they have concentrated on “a tool-kit informed from just one point of view” (p. 273). The result is a resource that will be enormously useful for those who already know that they want to use these tools but less convincing for neophytes who need first to be persuaded of their usefulness.

The structure of the book has been carefully thought out, and the content is helpfully recycled and tabulated. The first chapter makes clear the underlying view of language as a social phenomenon and introduces the major concepts and categories in the approach and the three families of genres (story, argumentation, and legislation) used as illustration in the remaining chapters. The three “metafunctions of language in social activity” (p. 6) basic to SFL—the interpersonal, the ideational (related to the representation of experience), and the textual (used to organize text)—are briefly outlined, as are the five discourse systems around which chapters 2–6 are organized. These are appraisal (negotiating attitudes), ideation (representing experience), conjunction (connecting events), identification (tracking participants), and periodicity (information flow). Each is treated in some depth and illustrated through analysis of the texts introduced in the first chapter. In chapter 7, these five key discourse systems are applied to longer texts, and in chapter 8, their relationships with the models of social context introduced in the first chapter are discussed in more depth. It is in chapter 8 that the authors argue for the importance of the five systems in multimodal and critical discourse analyses. Overall, the book is beautifully crafted and remarkable for the degree of clarity that is brought to a highly complex system.

On one level, the authors have achieved the accessibility they intended: The style is lucid, and the tools for discourse analysis laid out as clearly as possible in a work of this size. These are considerable strengths. However, in my view, these very strengths have also encouraged a weakness in the book: a lack of evidence and argumentation in favor of using these tools rather than others. Unlike Eggins and Slade (1997), for example, who set out to accomplish a similar task with the discourse analysis of spoken language, Martin and Rose neither argue for the usefulness of their approach by exploring the strengths and weaknesses of other approaches to discourse nor do they force the reader to first analyze the example texts for themselves in order to create a need for the tools they offer. Although this position has made for clear, uncluttered descrip-
tions and explanations, it may also potentially fan the flames of rebellion among those who need persuading that a leap into the unfamiliar is worth the effort.

REFERENCE


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Optimality Theory in phonology is a textbook for an advanced-level phonology course that contains excerpts from 33 important articles and manuscripts on Optimality Theory (OT). For each chapter, McCarthy adds brief introductory notes and a list of study and research questions. The introductory notes provide background information and short remarks on the significance of the selected works. The study and research questions help readers to understand the material, and some questions are challenging enough to lead to interesting topics for research. Given the rapid development of OT in the past decade, it is not an easy task to compile such a reader. Overall, McCarthy makes excellent selections, and this book would be a useful textbook for many phonology classes. This text would also be appropriate for independent study, but those who are not familiar with OT may want to read Kager’s (1999) introductory textbook before reading this volume. For an in-depth survey and overview of OT and an extensive list of references, the reader is referred to McCarthy (2002).

Optimality Theory in phonology consists of five parts. Part 1, “The Basics,” contains three chapters from classic works that set the foundation and mark the major theoretical developments of OT. Chapter 1, an extended excerpt from the first monograph-length technical report on OT by Prince and Smolensky, introduces the basic tenets and major theoretical and technical aspects of OT. Two major groups of constraints are presented for the analysis of syllable structure and its typology: faithfulness constraints, which regulate input-output identity, and markedness constraints, which demand unmarked structures in the output. The next two chapters introduce alignment constraints, which require the edges of grammatical and prosodic categories to coincide, and correspondence constraints, which require identity between two corresponding representations (e.g., input and output, base and reduplicant). The three chapters in part 2, “Formal Analysis,” present formal modeling of computation (chapters 4 and 6) and learnability in OT (chapter 5). Part 3, “Prosody,” consists of seven chapters dealing with issues and analyses related to stress and tone (chapters 7–13). There are eight chapters (chapters 14–21) on segmental processes and patterns in part 4, “Segmental Phonology,” the topics of which range from postnasal voicing, vowel harmony, dissimilation, assimilation, and neutralization, to chain shift, feature theory, and phonetically driven phonology. “Interfaces,” the final section of the book, includes 11 chapters that focus