versations is concerned, as one that gets sharply backgrounded relative to other parameters such as intimacy and affection. With true intimates, both power and politeness are so backgrounded but not so as to be irretrievable. What goes on when friends have a row? Cheepen and Monaghan's corpus does not include such cases, though they do discuss some kinds of "trouble" and "scapegoating."

The book is also a timely reminder than several rich issues still resist adequate explanation. On the question of topic, for instance, Cheepen and Monaghan show that speakers have a number of means of preparing for termination of a topic and for shift to a new topic. But we do not yet have an integrated account, for any natural language, of all the most common resources, constraints, and topic-nesting probabilities that seem to be involved. Only when we do have such a "grammar" can this aspect of intercultural and interlingual conversational difficulty be adequately treated. This lack of satisfactory grammars for kinds of discourses – even for quite frozen kinds of written discourse – is a fundamental problem in the field. For some, the problem's persistence points on the misguidedness of just those theoretical aims of seeking to deduce a grammar that is both explanatory and predictive. On the other hand, the normative pressures on talk are arguably so extensive that more predictive models, at least for localized kinds of talk (cf. expert knowledge modelings in natural language processing), seem to be imaginable.

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GEORGE DILLON, Contending rhetorics: Writing in academic disciplines. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991. Pp. x + 175.

In the last decade or so, academics of many disciplines have been looking at how their own and other disciplines carry out their work of making knowledge through various textual practices. Academic discourses are socially located uses of language par excellence, embedded within institutions, communities, and projects. As such, academic writing can provide a rich research site for many questions about the constitution of society through language and about the constitution of specialized language within structured settings. Academic writing also raises fundamental questions about the relationship among experience, representation, belief, and knowledge and the processes that conjoin them. Moreover, because the statements constructed as academic knowledge have tremendous influence in our society, they potentially reveal linkages between language and power.

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This analysis of academic discourse (done under such rubrics as rhetoric of science, rhetoric of inquiry, and discourse analysis), however, has been largely carried out by researchers with rather direct stakes in the language uses they have examined. Desire to foster reforms in one's own discipline's practice or to advance one form of textual practice over another or to decrease the authority of certain forms of knowledge has led the majority of analyses to issues of the legitimacy and foundation of academic discourse. So rather than examining what disciplinary language is or what it does, we get inquiries into whether it does what it claims to do, debunking of philosophically ungrounded practices, and projects for mending its authoritarian errors. The issues often become ought we do it another way, ought we to have it at all, or is it possible even to have it without oppression and delusion?

Despite the general tenor of many of the studies, many illuminating results have been produced. Several studies have gained greater ground on current discontents to examine the underlying dynamics of academic writing, and other ax-grinding studies have honed some fine and incisive edges. Nonetheless, the contentiousness about the legitimacy of academic discourse ensures that anyone entering this literature will find a tangled and brambled path, which will constantly tempt one into one epistemic dispute or another.

Armed with a professed belief in (but only partial argument in favor of) Habermas's rational communicative action, Dillon attempts an overview of a selection of the work on the rhetoric of the disciplines in order to criticize various delegitimating turns the research has taken and to reestablish academic discourse as a rational enterprise. *Contending Rhetorics* is a well-read secondary discussion, moving forward by summarizing and evaluating representative studies. Through conversation with selected texts, Dillon ultimately develops a position that academic discourse differs from other discussion in that it has means of reaching closure, but he does not reveal these nor does he himself reach closure on any of the issues he raises. Rather, he ends with tentative continuing dialectic, with us seemingly caught in the middle of an as yet unresolved set of rational communicative actions.

Chapters cover such topics as reason, objectivity, irony, argument, historical representation, and dialectic. Each chapter typically discusses three studies covering a range of positions, although not necessarily arrayed on any particular spectrum nor providing anything like a comprehensive survey of the literature available. Thus his chapter on historical representation moves from Hexter to White to LaCapra just as three separate episodes in history's coming to terms with its own textuality. These moments are discussed and compared, but no primary conclusion emerges from the excursion.

Although the discussion is filtered through Dillon's linguistic and rhetorical training, this is not a place to find detailed language analysis nor even a summary of language-oriented findings. Rather, it is a place of conversation for those who, having entered into the puzzle of whether academics can

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actually produce legitimate rational knowledge, want to see how someone else is puzzling through those issues and maintaining the faith.

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NATALIE LEFKOWITZ, *Talking backwards, looking forwards: The French language game* Verlan. (Language in Performance 3.) Tübingen: Gunter Narr, 1991. Pp. xiii + 158.

When the publication of *Talking Backwards, Looking Forwards* was announced, I was looking forward to a book-length treatment of a single language game. Up to now, language games have not received the attention they deserve. Although there are a certain number of reports scattered across the relevant literature, almost all of them are rather brief and deal with individual, relatively specific aspects. A monograph on one game thus led me to expect an in-depth analysis of the multifaceted nature of this type of human behavior. My initial excitement turned out to be proportional to my final disappointment. The book, apparently the preliminary outcome of a dissertation project, is just not original enough for the greater part, contenting itself mainly with reviewing other people's opinions. Its methodology is severely inadequate and many of its results are questionable and/or meager.

A few remarks on why language games are worthy of scientific study are in order. Basically, the following three approaches can be taken: the sociolinguistic, the psycholinguistic, and the theoretical linguistic. From the sociolinguistic perspective, it is asked in what contexts language games are played, by whom, and for what purpose. More generally, the focus is on the role games take as patterns of human interaction in social situations. Psycholinguists have developed an interest in language games because these may be taken as evidence of productive linguistic patterns.[1] Because playing a language game involves the application of certain rules, it can be argued that the speaker's output is dynamic in the sense that it is actively constructed with the help of mental operations rather than static in the sense that it is retrieved as such from long-term memory. Making this critical background assumption is justified to the extent that language games can be shown to be played spontaneously on linguistic elements that have never undergone these transformations before. In a word, the game must be used creatively.

The linguistic side concerns the adequate formulation of the rules that transform a "standard" item into its "mutated" form. It is important to point out that the rules posited by linguists need not be identical to those posited by psycholinguists. This is because the criteria that lead to the formulation of rules are not necessarily identical for the linguist and the real speaker. Lin-

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