
This is a book about using discourse analysis of prisoners’ autobiographical narratives to try to understand their perspectives on criminal activities and acts of violence, their positioning of themselves in relation to moral agency and the potential of such narratives for therapeutic work that could move prisoners towards rehabilitation. Patricia O’Connor provides a fine-grained analysis of narratives drawn from her in-depth interviews with 19 inmates in a US maximum security prison in Washington DC. All the interviewees are African American men (99 per cent of prisoners in Washington DC are African American although the city itself is only 65 per cent African American). O’Connor taught English composition and literature courses in the prison for six years prior to doing her research, which helped her to gain the trust of the prison authorities and inmates. In the interviews, she used questions designed to illicit narratives, for example, ‘Can you recall a time when you were in danger of death?’ (after Labov 1972), ‘Can you recall a time when you were blamed for something you did not do?’, ‘How did you end up at Lorton (the prison)?’. O’Connor suggests that, in the narratives produced by prisoners in response to her questions, inmates reconstructed their past experience and constructed a past ‘self’ within this storyworld. At the same time, they used devices to engage the listener’s empathy and, most significantly, at key points in the narrative they used discursive strategies to reflect back on and evaluate elements of their past experience and of their past selves. For O’Connor, these moments of reflective evaluation provide potential starting points for therapeutic dialogue.

The first part of the book discusses relevant literature and research to establish O’Connor’s theoretical starting point that personal narratives do not just represent the self and social experience, but also construct them.
She uses the notion of ‘participation framework’ (Schiffrin 1987) to describe the interactive positioning of interlocutors and their negotiation of meaning in relation to each other and to the utterance. O’Connor also reviews writing on imprisonment and provides statistical information on incarceration in the US and on the frequent incidence of violent assaults within prisons (a central topic in two narratives she later analyses).

The main substance of the book is contained in three central chapters, which each deal, in turn, with three aspects of discourse where she sees evidence of evaluative reflection in the prisoners’ narratives: verb position, the indexicality of pronouns and the breaking of the narrative frame. For O’Connor, these contribute to the grammatical construction of varying degrees of agency within the prisoners’ stories.

In the first of the three central chapters, O’Connor compares the ways in which prisoners use verb position to place themselves in relation to an event – through the claiming of direct agency (‘I shot him’), the problematizing of agency (‘I don’t know whether instincts had me shoot him’) or deflected agency (‘We had to exchange gunfire’). The prisoners often used directly agentive language in describing their criminal activities, but many concluded their narratives with phrases that passivized their experience and deflected responsibility, representing themselves as more acted on than agentive (for example, ‘we ended up getting caught’). However, O’Connor suggests that in the second position – problematized agency – there is evidence of the speaker reflecting on as well as displaying his actions and that this reflection, for instance the grappling with motives in ‘I don’t know whether instincts had me shoot him’, provides a potential point for further reflection and personal change.

O’Connor uses extracts from two lengthy narratives about stabbing incidents to provide a detailed analysis of the narrators’ switches from the pronoun ‘I’ to ‘you’ at key moments to create a sense of shared agency and experience with the listener, while still indexing themselves. She argues that when prisoners switch to using ‘you’ (e.g. ‘I learned from this experience you have to take a chance with people and trust someone’ or ‘the knife was very cold and … it was like you could feel it through the skin partly but you couldn’t do nothing about it’) they are, firstly, distancing themselves from the experience, secondly, involving the listener and, thirdly, as it were addressing themselves in their own past. ‘You’ is thus used simultaneously interpersonally and intrapersonally and O’Connor argues that both these uses are important to the (re)construction of the self. The complete transcripts of the two stabbing narratives are included in O’Connor’s 1994 article – on which this chapter is based – but not, sadly, in the book.

The third aspect of discourse on which O’Connor focuses in the narratives is when prisoners break out of the story frame to provide an evaluative or reflective comment like ‘that added to my ignorance of
thinking I could never get caught’ or ‘I don’t know what good I was thinking about at that point’. Reflexive evaluation can also be conveyed through the use of irony, metaphor, repetition, and reconstructed dialogue. O’Connor is here closely following Labov’s definition of evaluation. Labov’s work on narrative is a strong influence throughout her study, although she unfortunately omits the category ‘resolution’ between ‘complication’ and ‘coda’ in her discussion of his narrative structure, on pages 32–4. Labov defines evaluation as ‘the means used by the narrator to indicate the point of the narrative, its raison d’être, why it was told and what the narrator is getting at’ (Labov 1972: 366). O’Connor particularly stresses the narrators’ use of evaluative devices to position themselves and others in relation to moral agency. Here again, she suggests, is a productive starting point for rehabilitative talk, which could focus discussion on motivations, intentions and significant omissions.

In a country that incarcerates 682 out of 100,000 people and where 1,860,520 people were in prison or jail mid-year 1999 (Beck 2000: 2), O’Connor argues that it is important to pay attention to inmates’ own accounts of their lives and experiences of crime, especially if there is to be any serious commitment to therapeutic and rehabilitative work with prisoners. Although it has been suggested to O’Connor that the prisoners could have in some way fabricated the stories they told her, they had the ring of truth for me. Of course all stories are constructed for particular occasions and particular audiences, and I wished that O’Connor had explored the dialogic context, and the dialogic potential, of these narratives in more detail. In terms of their dialogic context, it would have been interesting to know how far the particular question that prisoners were answering encouraged or discouraged reflection and evaluation in their narrative. This and other aspects of the dialogue are important because O’Connor argues that it is through ‘new conversations’ with people from outside prison that inmates may begin to construct new selves. O’Connor is barely visible as an interlocutor in the narratives she presents, apart from pointing out that the men she interviewed used some African American discursive strategies and relatively ‘clean’ language (in deference to her status as a university teacher). Yet her account of participation frameworks would suggest the need for a more substantial analysis of the role of the audience in the construction of the narratives. For instance, I would suggest that the contrast in style and moral positioning in the oral narratives O’Connor collected in her interviews – as opposed to the much more artful, macho stabbing story she quotes from John Abbott’s published correspondence with Norman Mailer (Abbott 1991) – arises not just from the fact that Abbott’s story was part of a written letter but also because it is part of a ‘conversation’ with Mailer, who is more interested in research for his book *The Executioner’s Song* than in prisoner education and rehabilitation.
The interactive role of both partners in a dialogue is also important to Vygotsky’s notion of the ‘zone of proximal development’ (ZPD), which O’Connor suggests can be applied to the reflective elements of prisoners’ narratives. Vygotsky defines the ZPD as the difference between what children can achieve unaided and what they can achieve with guidance and support from a teacher or more capable peer. He argues that understandings constructed through the dialogues that may provide part of this guidance are then internalized to become part of a child’s individual conceptual development (Vygotsky 1978). By analogy, O’Connor is arguing that prisoners can change as people through therapeutic dialogues with interlocutors who facilitate and develop the kinds of reflective moments she has identified in her data. I feel, however, that she needs to develop her discussion of the ZPD in more depth in relation to prisoner therapy, in order to provide a convincing argument that this kind of activity would be successful. Vygotsky’s concept is used somewhat loosely and O’Connor does not address the role of the facilitating interlocutor in any detail. In addition, the goal of developing an agentive and morally responsible self through dialogue begs many questions about the contextual factors affecting prisoners’ incarceration and their possibilities for rehabilitation, for instance the disturbing over-representation of African Americans in the Washington DC prison population.

As a meticulous and engaging study of reflective discursive strategies in prisoners’ autobiographical narratives, O’Connor’s book should appeal both to those with an interest in discourse analysis and to those interested in prisoner education and welfare. Two previously published articles (O’Connor 1994, 1995) provide clear and succinct discussions of the discourse analysis on which the book is based.

REFERENCES

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Susan Ehrlich’s book, Representing Rape: Language and Sexual Consent, is a pragmalinguistic analysis of two separate but related rape trials. The purpose of this analysis is to demonstrate how women’s experience of sexual violence is transformed into an act of consensual sex in the context of adjudication. Situated within the theoretical framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), Ehrlich provides the reader with a detailed case study of how language ideologies come together with legal and gender ideologies to give the appearance that women have consented to the sexual activity that they claim to have experienced as unwanted sexual aggression. From Ehrlich’s analysis, we conclude that this transformation of experience is achieved because of pervasive ideological notions through which we interpret men, women and sexuality. These ideological notions posit that men cannot control their sexual drives. It follows that unless women are able to control men’s sexual drives through resistance ‘to the utmost’, consensual sex is a likely interpretation by adjudicators.

The title of Ehrlich’s book suggests its theoretical underpinnings as well as its understanding of the cognitive, linguistic and cultural functions of perceiving, defining and delimiting social acts and phenomena. Her approach to representation is akin to one proposed by Verschueren (1999): before something can be represented, it must first be perceived. Ehrlich presents empirical evidence to substantiate claims that sexual aggression and violence, as these are perpetrated towards women in our societies, are largely imperceptible at the level of representation. This inability to see acts of sexual aggression has its impetus in our cultural expectations of heterosexuality.

The problem of representation and sexual assault lies in the complex processes of translating the felt experience of sexual violence into narrative form. Representation, the result of allowing language to stand in for experience is, as Ehrlich points out, always culturally constrained, and sometimes in numerous ways. Representing Rape reveals how such constraints have consequences for complainants in each individual case and for society more generally, because what we know about sexual violence as well as how we learn about it are limited by hegemonic representations of male/female sexuality.

Ehrlich’s data consist of trial transcripts from a university tribunal and a Canadian criminal law court. Interestingly, the complainants (two female college students) and the defendant (a male college student) are the same people in both settings. In the university tribunal, the complainants and the defendant were questioned by a group of professors whose job it was to hear testimony, to clarify any misunderstandings with regard to that tes-
timony and then, ultimately, to make a decision regarding the action the University should take in the case. In the criminal case, a judge presided over the proceedings, while the attorneys for the complainants and the defendant asked questions of the witnesses and of the accused.

The multiple actors and two venues in which these individual acts – experienced by the college women as sexual violence, and, presumably, by the college man as consensual sex – make clear the complexities of the workings of language, representation, women’s sexual rights, and men’s sexual privilege over women’s bodies. The case Ehrlich chooses is eye-opening because testimony – in the form of oral narrative – is the only available forensic medium for understanding what occurred on the nights in question. Also compelling about Ehrlich’s data is the fact that no party to the case takes issue with the fact that certain sexualized activities were performed. The disagreement comes only from the participants’ differing interpretations of how the event marked by sexual activity, i.e. the sexualized event, came to happen.

Rather than focusing on the linguistic reproduction of rape (cf. Matoesian 1993) that achieves a ‘second assault’, Ehrlich examines the way sexual consent and rape are represented (i.e. defined and delimited). She looks at how complainants and their attorneys present sexual violence as a legal case through nothing more than a linguistic recapitulation of what occurred. From there, Ehrlich examines how that same historical, sexualized event is subjected to subsequent linguistic presentations or representations. Such subsequent linguistic presentations are not merely linguistic renditions of the same event simply reiterated by others. Rather they are (re)constructed by the defendant, his attorney, the university tribunal and the judge to look like consensual sex.

Ehrlich argues that in each of these interested and supposedly disinterested representations of the sexualized event, the experience of rape is confined by rigid regulatory frames (Butler 1990) that both support and are supported by gendered and sexual ideologies of male/female and victim/perpetrator interaction. The focus throughout the book is on the importance and influence of language and power dynamics in shaping what is perceived to be social reality.

Taking the concept of gender as an identity construct, or, as is suggested by Butler (1990), something that is ‘tenuously constituted in time’, the first chapter discusses the role of language in the performance of gender. However, in line with other feminist linguists, Ehrlich argues that institutions, through framing devices, usually insist on culturally dominant performances of maleness and femaleness. This argument that institutions coerce certain gendered identities is supported through a review of the literature on language and gender that builds a theory of how sexist and androcentric assumptions come to be embodied in both language and law, in order to create the frames through which social phenomena are interpreted.
In Chapter two, "My shirt came off – … I gather that I took it off – …", Ehrlich turns to an analysis of how social and cultural ideologies are carried in the use of lexical items and grammatical structures. She begins by reminding the reader of the illuminating work of Danet (1980). And as a lead-in to her own analysis, she reviews studies of speakers’ syntactic choices that can expose and/or obscure agency and responsibility (among others, Henley et al. 1995; Trew 1979; Sykes 1988; Van Dijk 1988).

In Ehrlich’s study, the grammatical structures used by the complainants (pseudonymously, Marg and Connie) to represent the defendant (also pseudonymously, Matt) as the sexual aggressor, are compared and contrasted with the defendant’s own attempt to (re)present himself as a social actor engaged in consensual sex. Empirical data are presented to show how the women use grammatical constructions that implicate the defendant as an agent of sexual violence. Other data indicate how the defendant’s linguistic strategies ‘mitigate, diffuse, obscure, and/or eliminate his agency in the initiation of sexual acts of aggression that could be construed as non-consensual’ (p. 41). More interesting and shocking than the strategies used by the defence to (re)present the defendant’s lack of agency is the analysis of the (re)presentations of the events and their actors by the neutral adjudicators.

Ehrlich closes this chapter with somewhat of a challenge. That is, she asks the reader to reinterpret the defendant’s use of these constructions that diminish his own agency in the context of a sexualized event as contextually inappropriate, or, as she says, as pushing ‘the limits of contextual acceptability’ (p. 60). Why they may be pragmatically inappropriate is not entirely clear, but the challenge to think about them as such implies the force of ideology so that the powerful can continue to maintain his position of power. In this case, the argument is that as such pragmatically inappropriate utterances are left intact, the adjudicators act complicitously with the defendant to re-present sexual aggression and violence as consensual sex that occurs because women get themselves into situations where men are unable to control themselves. According to the analysis of the adjudicators’ representation of the events, this may mean that the defendant’s behaviour was inappropriate, leading to an unfortunate outcome; but this outcome is nonetheless expected and thus cannot be called rape.

Working in concert with the way the defendant and his attorneys represent his actions and thoughts during the past sexualized event are the ways in which the defence attorneys, the alleged victims themselves and the adjudicators present and re-present the defendant’s acts of sexual aggression and the complainants’ acts of resistance. Chapter three, “I see an option – … I simply want to explore that option with you”, draws on previous sociolinguistic, conversation analytic and anthropological work. Here, Ehrlich marries language ideologies, as reinforced through inter-
pretive frames, with gendered ideologies that are often invoked to determine if a woman is acting appropriately for a ‘victim’. In particular, Ehrlich explores how the legal standard requiring that women be considered victims of rape only if they can show that they fought the abuser ‘to the utmost’ (i.e. the utmost resistance standard) is itself a gendered ideology that frames the women’s acts of resistance as ineffectual. Her analysis shows that the questions asked by defence attorneys and the so-called neutral tribunal members presuppose that what the alleged victims did was not sufficient to have stopped their own rape. While Ehrlich’s findings are not discussed in terms of the way such questions index a victim’s blame, they actually reveal rather convincingly what it is about the language used by adjudicators, which holds women responsible for their own victimization. The linguistic techniques utilized by defence attorneys and tribunal members, which achieve this shift in blame from the perpetrator to the victim, include strategic questioning, presuppositions and selective reformulations. Such techniques accomplish the creation of hypothetical scenarios that the adjudicators seem to believe would have altered the course of events. They also serve to reformulate and even minimize the women’s fears. This section of Ehrlich’s analysis is intriguing. She shows how the emotion of fear, a sentiment discussed by the women as having stretched over the entire event, was trivialized by the adjudicators’ efforts to pin-point it to specific moments in the complicating actions of the women’s narrative representations of the event. In so doing, the adjudicators manage to disable any interpretation of the women’s acts of resistance as strategic and agentive within a context in which the defendant’s advances are creating a context of terror (see Elaine Scarry’s (1985) discussion of the structure of torture).

While Chapter three focuses on the way the complainants are constructed through the accomplishment of ideological work that is embedded in both the questions asked and those not asked, Chapter four, “I didn’t yell – … I didn’t scream ...” is an attempt to recover the meaning in the women’s utterances. The question this chapter tries to answer is: if the complainants’ acts of resistance were not interpreted through the ‘utmost resistance standard’, how else could their own representations of themselves and of what happened be understood?

Here, Ehrlich shows how the questions from the previous chapter that were analysed as doing ideological work also function to coerce answers from the complainants that create for them a stereotypical identity of femininity. That is, these questions that presupposed a multitude of (better) options, that suggested that the action the complainants did take was ineffective or, more generally, that made the complainants appear as though they really did not know what they wanted from the defendant, also tended to elicit defensive responses from them. These coerced, defensive responses reinforce the presuppositions embedded within the questions,
making it seem all the more naturalized that the women could have done more to fend off the defendant’s sexual aggression. Consequently, the complainants come across as experiencing cognitive or emotional states, that is, as patients acted upon, rather than agents in action.

More interesting, however, is the second part of the chapter in which Ehrlich examines what it is the complainants did do, and how their strategic attempts to save themselves from social mortification, physical violence and perhaps even injury or death get pushed to the side as the ideological work done by adjudicators keeps the focus on what they did not do. In addition to an exploration of the contextual acts of resistance that the women enacted to save themselves in the rape incident, Ehrlich shows how the complainants – by resisting certain assertions, by commenting on and characterizing their own acts and through their direct testimony – linguistically resist the dominant ideological framing of them as unfortunate, but also ineffectual victims.

In the final analytical chapter, “The signals – ... between men and women are not being read correctly”: Miscommunication and acquaintance rape’, Ehrlich examines, in a very novel way, how linguistic notions of different ways of speaking among men and women serve as the most recent explanation for acquaintance rape. She argues that this explanation inevitably reinforces male-centred notions of sexuality and sexual consent. Recapping prior chapters, Ehrlich moves on to analyse how the defendant (re)presents the events, and in so doing, how he essentially redefines consent. Ehrlich concludes: ‘According to the defendant, unless the complainant showed strong resistance after each sexual advance, his sexual aggression was welcome’ (p. 123).

This entire chapter, as does much of the book, provides empirical support for claims that men and women are judged by different standards. Part of the defendant’s (re)definition of consent, for example, relies on his linguistic presentation of the moment-to-moment interaction in which he intimates that his expectation for one of the complainants would have been resistance to his each and every advance. This part of the analysis is striking when contrasted with how the women’s fear is pin-pointed to a specific moment in time by the adjudicators. That is, the male defendant considers every act to create a new context for the sexual assault, while the female complainants are supposed to ignore certain acts that serve to create the overarching context of sexual aggression that produces their fear. Moreover, Ehrlich’s analysis reveals that though the miscommunication model of sexual advance/acceptance between men and women in date rape situations was invoked by the defendant and the adjudicators, the discourse of the adjudicators shows sympathy for only one part of that seemingly innocuous equation. Only the women are held accountable, through critique and admonishment, for their inability to make the defendant understand that they did not want to engage in the sexualized acts. The defendant is never criticized for his failure to read the symbols.
Interestingly, he himself shrugs off any responsibility on his part to engage in the communicative equation by stating that he could not read the women’s minds. Yet there exists the implication that the female complainants should have been able to read Matt’s mind. That is, the adjudicators imply that the women should have known that the hypothetical scenarios they proposed – i.e. kicking the defendant out of the room, putting him on the floor or announcing to their friends something like, ‘Hey you guys, Matt is trying to rape me!’ – would not have further endangered or humiliated them.

While more focused on how rape trials and tribunals delimit and define both rape and male/female sexuality in general, Ehrlich’s book, as do others like it (cf. Matoesian 1993, 2001; Conley and O’Barr 1998), also presents a convincing case as to how victims of rape come to feel blamed for the acts of sexual aggression that they report. The two cases Ehrlich analyses provide crystal-clear case studies through which we may begin to answer the famous question raised by Gayatri Spivak: can the subaltern speak? Obviously the complainants in this study speak, but what they say is interpreted according to hegemonic notions of male/female sexuality that privilege men’s rights to women’s bodies. Through a linguistic study couched in Critical Discourse Analysis, what the women say, what the defendant and his advocates and what the neutral adjudicators have to say about the events can be ‘made strange’ enough to understand how ideologies silence people in less powerful social positions.

Ehrlich’s work, enlightening and thorough, will be of interest to law and language researchers, feminist theorists and critical discourse analysts. Her book is dense, yet clear. It could easily be required reading in law and social science courses, on language and gender syllabuses, and in sociolinguistic curricula. Moreover, the theoretical discussion of legal, linguistic and gendered ideologies is so well done that it leads the reader to notice how language is employed in this re-presentation of experience in ways that Ehrlich’s own analysis does not touch upon. This is not a criticism, merely a commentary regarding the result of a well-reasoned and applied theoretical framework. With this framework, when presented with the data, every reader can become an analyst in the excavation of the subaltern’s voice.

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This is the second book by the author on forensic phonetics and is expressly intended as a follow-up to the first, this time focusing on speaker identification. The author cites four reasons for writing the book, among them ‘to review … developments’ (i.e. those since the late 1980s) (p. vii). I shall return to that presently.

Following some introductory remarks in Chapter one, Chapter two deals with the history of speaker identification. The account starts with a fictitious story from the Stone Age and goes on to Roman times (Quintilian) and then quickly on to the twentieth century. Chapter three covers listener-dependent variables influencing aural-perceptual speaker identification. Chapter four deals with the role of trained forensic phoneticians in the aural-perceptual domain. Chapter five is devoted to so-called ear-witness line-ups, i.e. the methodology to be applied when there is no incriminating recording, but only the statement of an earwitness, whose probative value is to be investigated by the forensic phonetician. Chapter six is devoted to voiceprinting, an ever-enduring problem primarily within US jurisdiction, which has fortunately only played a marginal role in Europe in the past 30 years. Chapter seven deals with ‘machine approaches’. Even though the author states at the outset that ‘it is not [his] intent to list or review all of the efforts that have been made to develop
machine-based SPID [speaker identification] methods’, he makes it quite clear that ‘only very few groups have persevered in their efforts to solve the problem and/or develop a system that operates reasonably well under forensic or field conditions’ (p. 135). The final chapter, which is the largest in the book, is exclusively devoted to the semi-automatic approach called SAUSI (Semi-AUtomatic Speaker Identification system), which was developed by the author at the University of Florida, Gainesville.

The casual style of writing (the author calls it ‘straightforward’, p. viii) may be unconventional in this genre, but by adopting one, Hollien has possibly found a way to arouse and maintain the interest of both the law enforcement and the scientific communities. Even though the book reads like a collection of crime stories at times, the author manages to incorporate findings from the impressive number of research projects he has carried out over several decades and which have a bearing on the forensic domain. He is clearly a brilliant researcher who – in his long career – has experimentally and theoretically dealt with an extremely wide variety of phonetic variables; an array that is probably unparalleled worldwide. He is also known as an excellent teacher, which is reflected in his writing style, and a forensic phonetician who has always – and he does so in his book – put a strong emphasis on ethics.

Since the area of machine approaches to forensic speaker identification is the one which currently shows the most striking developments (and to which Hollien devotes two large chapters), this review will concentrate on just that.

Hollien presents the reader with a somewhat arbitrary selection of machine approaches. Two projects were selected besides his own SAUSI. These are not new, nor have they been employed in very many forensic cases. The first is the one developed by Rodman and his colleagues at the University of North Carolina and the second has been developed in Poland since the late 1970s.

As far as the Polish system is concerned, one of the primary methods on which it is based is spectral analysis using 1/3 octave filters. This is an odd method to choose as it is well-established knowledge within the forensic phonetic community that this type of approach is essentially unfit for forensic analysis because of the influence of the telephone channel on spectral characteristics of the signal including the distortion of formant frequencies.2

The machine approach discussed in most detail is the author’s own Semi-AUtomatic Speaker Identification system. SAUSI has been around since the 1970s. At that time, it contained some intriguing new concepts in forensic speaker identification, e.g. building a database with which the questioned sample could be compared and also splitting it in two and comparing it with itself at the same time as comparing it with the database. A closer look, though, reveals that the telephone database used for SAUSI...
contains only 30 male and 30 female voices (p. 180). This clearly seems insufficient for forensic purposes, given the fact that well over 90 per cent of forensic speech samples are of telephone quality at best.

The ‘vectors’ utilized in SAUSI are LTAS (Long-Term Average Spectrum), SF0 (Speaking Fundamental Frequency), TED (Time-Energy Distribution), and formant tracking by way of LPC (Linear Predictive Coding). Speaking Fundamental Frequency has – within certain limitations – been a well-established parameter in the comparison of non-disguised voices, which is used in phonetic as well as semi-automatic approaches. Hollien himself talks with reserve about the TED vector. The problem about LTAS has been touched upon above. Furthermore, it has recently been demonstrated that the frequencies of certain formants are altered by telephone transmission. This is especially so for automatically extracted formants. In summary, while SAUSI offered some new and inspiring concepts at the time of its development, it seems that some of its basic elements call for updating.

On the other hand, in the second half of the 1990s, a rather new generation of research has been set off in several European countries (France, The Netherlands, Switzerland, Spain) as well as the US (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) and Israel, which has led to the development of systems that all operate roughly along the same lines. They use cepstral coefficients, sometimes in combination with F0, and advanced statistics, mostly Gaussian Mixture Models (GMMs), which allow conclusions to be phrased in terms of likelihood ratios. Another methodological breakthrough consists in the development of channel normalization procedures that are supposed to ensure that the program indeed recognizes the speaker and not the (telephone) channel. These systems have been presented and discussed at various international conferences, e.g. those organized by the International Association for Forensic Phonetics (IAFP), and a joint project run by the Dutch NFI (Netherlands Forensic Institute) and the German Bundeskriminalamt is currently underway which aims at developing an evaluation procedure similar to that of NIST (National Institute for Standards and Technology) for commercial speaker identification systems.

While it could have hardly been expected of the author to include an exhaustive description and scientific appraisal of these projects at the present time (given the time lag between the completion of a manuscript and publication), it is indeed unfortunate that none of this research is mentioned at all. Instead, the approaches that are presented can clearly be regarded as outdated. A more scrupulous selection would have been desirable, together with an ironing out of embarrassingly incorrect details – such as the comment on C. Basztura’s scientific abilities in the present tense (p. 147) well after his death (Basztura passed away on 14 October 2000; an obituary was published in The Phonetician 2000–2, the journal
Some further points call for detailed comment:

- Even though the use of mobile phones and digital recording devices (e.g. digital chips built into answering machines) have created new problems for forensic speaker identification, the subject is not touched upon at all in the book.
- Within the US, considerable attention has to be given to the evidential status of scientific evidence in general and voice identification evidence in particular. It seems that the latest development to be recognized by the author was the Daubert decision by the US Supreme Court in 1993 (Daubert v. Merrell Dow Pharmaceuticals, Inc., 509 US 579 [1993]). It would have been helpful to discuss the post-Daubert developments in forensic evidence (e.g. US v. Starzecpyzel 880 F Supp 1027; SDNY 1995 and Kumho Tire Co. v. Carmichael, 119 S.Ct. 1167 [1999]). While this is not an issue within European jurisdictions, it would have merited mention for the benefit of the American law enforcement community.
- The IAFP (of which Hollien is a member) is – somewhat condescendingly – mentioned as having started to establish criteria for people to be considered competent in the field (p. 89). The fact of the matter is that a procedure for accreditation has been in place since the year 2000 and that several individuals have been examined.
- In relation to the so-called voice line-ups, the author lists a set of rules for carrying out voice parades. It is surprising that no mention is made in the text of a much more detailed set of guidelines that was developed in The Netherlands by Broeders and others several years ago and which has successfully been applied in numerous cases. (Even though that work appears in the references, it is not discussed in the text.)

When looking at the text in more detail, one comes across a striking number of errors and oversights. These concern the spelling of technical terms and proper names as well as the references. It is somewhat annoying – for a European reviewer at least – to find the names of Neville Chamberlain, Adolf Hitler, Charles Lindbergh, Benito Mussolini and Quintilian all misspelled, sometimes in more than one way. It is equally disquieting to find that references are handled in a rather negligent way. Some of them are degraded to the point where it becomes impossible to retrieve the book or article in question (e.g. reference #21 on page 207). Examples are abundant, but one may serve as an exemplar: Francis Nolan’s dissertation, an often referred to work on forensic speaker identification, is listed four times in four different ways in various chapters (pp. 200, 205, 208, 217), none of them correct.

The book gives the impression of having been written with an American
readership in mind. Developments inside Europe are neglected, if not ignored. Nonetheless, it makes good reading for anyone interested in the phonetic contribution to forensic speaker identification and in the history of the field. What it fails to provide, however, is the rendition of the latest developments in the field, which is promised at the outset.

NOTES
4 Cf., for example, Hermann J. Künzel, Sprechererkennung. Gündzüge forensischer Sprachverarbeitung (Heidelberg: Kriminalistik-Verlag, 1987).
6 Cf. Künzel, ‘Beware of the “Telephone Effect”’.
7 The lack of channel normalization procedures had been the principal reason for previous research to be discontinued, e.g. a project run by the German Bundeskriminalamt in the late 1970s/early 1980s as well as the CAVIS (Computer Assisted Voice Identification System) project, jointly organized by the Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department, the National Institute of Justice and the US Secret Service (discontinued in 1992).

10 On page 119, the relevant paragraph is entitled ‘The Sonograph’ [sic]. Sonography is an ultrasound method used in medical diagnosis in order to establish structural deficiencies in soft tissue such as muscles or tendons – it has nothing in common with sound spectrograms or sonagrams providing a three-dimensional analysis of a given speech signal. In the remainder of the chapter, the spelling varies.


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