

The summaries of recent trends and reports are very clear and succinct, and the political constraints in which so much debate has been carried on in recent years comes across very clearly. The range of entries, and their widely varying lengths, display the personal interests and experience of the author, and the book should not be read as a systematic or balanced guide to the field; but given the important role Carter has played in the development of educational linguistics in recent years, it is precisely this personal bias which makes it an interesting read.

## **Language education in the National Curriculum**

**Christopher Brumfit, editor**

*Oxford: Blackwell, 1995. xviii + 239 pp.*

The topic of language education sounds so simple, but when we examine all its implications, the scale of the task quickly becomes apparent. As this book demonstrates, it includes English as a mother tongue and as a second language, foreign languages, bilingualism, community languages, drama, literature, literacy, media studies, and knowledge about language. What the ten contributors of this book have tried to do is provide an overview of the relevant legislation, discussing it critically in the light of educational and linguistic principles, and drawing out of it practical implications for teaching. It begins with a succinct account of the curriculum legislation, and annotates the 25 or so government reports since 1975. The opening chapters (Part 1) treat of two general issues: language in the curriculum, and the national curriculum as a language policy. Specific areas are then dealt with in Part 2: English teaching, reading, literature, drama, media education, bilingualism, the first foreign language, other foreign languages, and language awareness. A short Part 3 deals with language after school. The book closes with a bibliography, and adds suggestions for further reading. I found the chapters rather uneven in coverage (an 8-page treatment of bilingual issues sits alongside a treatment of the first foreign language which is three times as long). I also thought the history of ideas was treated somewhat selectively. I have several books on my shelves, written during this period, which are well known to teachers, but which are not mentioned – Perera, Bryant and Bradley, Tough, Stubbs, Crystal, Wilkinson, Czerniewska . . . No reference is made to special needs. The 1972 Quirk Report, whose influence extended well beyond speech therapy at government level, certainly ought to get a mention. But nonethe-

less, I have to agree with the series editor, Michael Stubbs, when he says: 'It is the only book I know which provides a coherent criticism of all [*pace* special needs, DC] the major areas of interest to language teachers'. The compilation is certainly impressive in its breadth and insightful in its commentaries, and the editor's guiding hand has given it coherence. I imagine it will be of particular value to those people from outside Britain who want to understand what on earth has been going on in this country in recent years.