

## **Quantifying language**

**Phil Schofield**

*Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 1995. x + 298 pp.*

This useful book is sub-titled: 'a researcher's and teacher's guide to gathering language data and reducing it to figures'. That sums it up very well. Schofield draws attention to the way many aspects of language these days are being subjected to measurement, in a wide variety of fields – child language disability of course being one. In his introduction (p. 2), he comments: 'Language teachers and speech therapists, especially those doing further training of the MA Applied Linguistics type, may find this book a help to clarify some concepts, heighten critical awareness of techniques they are called on to use, guide them when they assess pupils/patients, and even suggest things to measure the ways of measuring them that had not occurred to them'. It will. The book assumes little prior knowledge, and sticks to the well-established topics and techniques in the subject. Its author has taught courses in this area for many years, and his awareness of students' problems and questions is evident throughout. The result is a clearly written introduction to a domain which many people have found to be at best frightening and at worst impenetrable. When you have someone at your shoulder saying such gentle things to you as 'At this point it might occur to you to wonder why you should want to measure  $x$  variables in the "relative" way' (p. 97), the panic somehow recedes.