

FOREWORD

THIS BOOK is addressed to teachers, other educators, and researchers in the many disciplines related to language learning. It comprises essays written while I was preparing *A Student-Centered Language Arts Curriculum, Grades K–13: A Handbook for Teachers*, to which it is meant to be a companion volume. Whereas the handbook proposes in some detail an experimental curriculum made up of particular practices and assignments for different ages, the present book sketches a pedagogical theory of discourse that may provide both a fuller rationale for the curriculum, if the reader is familiar with it, and, quite independently, a set of ideas to help advance the current task of reconceiving education in the native language. These essays represent one teacher's efforts to theorize about discourse expressly for teaching purposes. Whereas much that is of value has been said about the subject recently and in the past, very little theory has originated in a concern for how one *learns* to discourse. What follows in these pages must, as an individual endeavor, be very imperfect; the ideas await correction and completion by other minds.

Other minds, in fact, have already contributed considerably to these ideas. In the earlier stages of thought, William Schwarz, George Bennett, and Kenneth McElheny, former colleagues at Phillips Exeter Academy, helped me considerably to understand what I was trying to say. Associations with both the Society for General Semantics and the Institute of General Semantics provided very powerful stimulation for which I am much indebted. Fellow members of the School Language Group and other colleagues of the Harvard Graduate School of Education have filled in my knowledge and adjusted my thoughts in sorely needed ways.

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J.M.