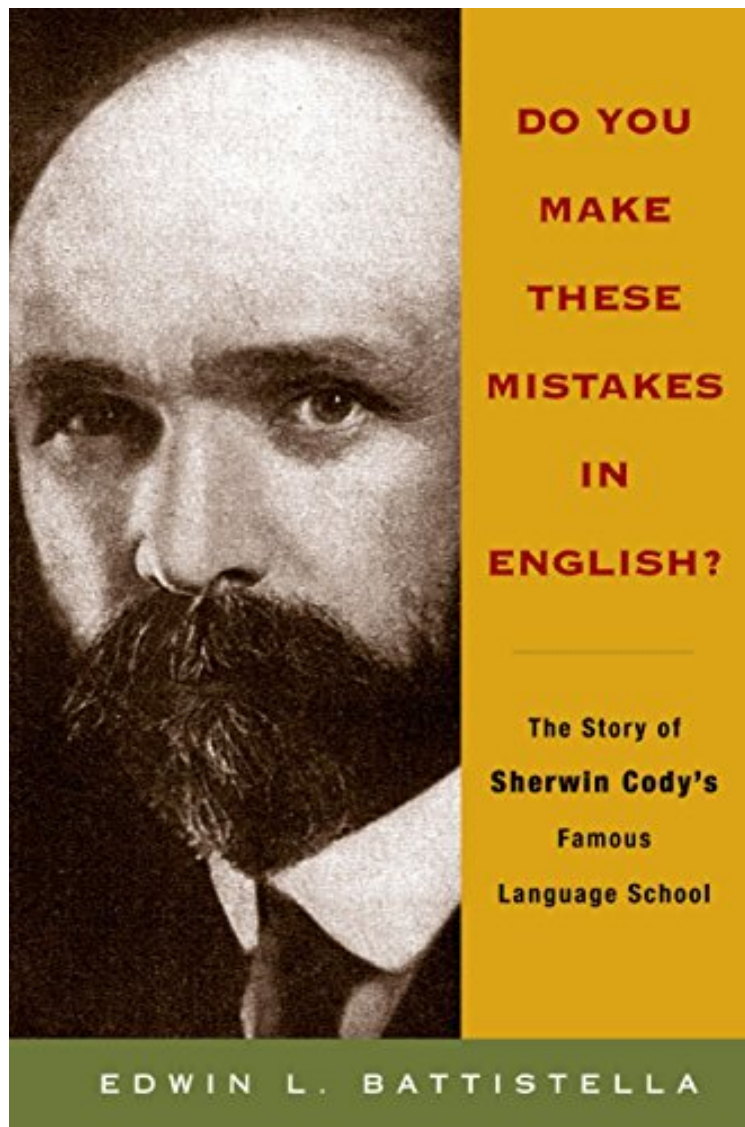


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## Do You Make These Mistakes in English?: The Story of Sherwin Cody's Famous Language School

*Edwin L Battistella*

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**Edwin L Battistella : Do You Make These Mistakes in English?: The Story of Sherwin Cody's Famous Language School** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Do You Make These Mistakes in English?: The Story of Sherwin Cody's Famous Language School:

In the early 1900s, the language of America was becoming colloquial English—the language of the businessman, manager, and professional. Since college and high school education were far from universal, many people turned to correspondence education—that era's distance learning—to learn the art of speaking and writing. By the 1920s and 1930s, thousands of Americans were sending coupons from newspapers and magazines to order Sherwin Cody's 100% Self-correcting Course in the English Language, a patented mail-order course in English that was taken by over 150,000 people. Cody's ubiquitous signature advertisement, which ran for over forty years, promised a scientifically-tested invention that improved speaking and writing in just 15 minutes a day. Cody's ad explained that people are judged by their English, and he offered self-improvement and self-confidence through the mail. In this book, linguist Edwin Battistella tells the story of Sherwin Cody and his famous English course, situating both the man and the course in early twentieth century cultural history. The author shows how Cody became a businessman—a writer, grammatical entrepreneur, and mass-marketer whose ads proclaimed "Good Money in Good English" and asked "Is Good English Worth 25 Cents to You?" His course, perhaps the most widely-advertised English education program in history, provides a unique window onto popular views of language and culture and their connection to American notions of success and failure. But Battistella shows Sherwin Cody was also part of a larger shift in attitudes. Using Cody's course as a reference point, he also looks at the self-improvement ethic reflected in such courses and products as the Harvard Classics, The Book of Etiquette, the Book-of-the-Month Club, the U.S. School of Music, and the Charles Atlas and Dale Carnegie courses to illustrate how culture became popular and how self-reliance evolved into self-improvement.

"Well written in a tone that would be easily digested by undergraduates and engaging for an interested non-academic reader. Battistella has done an outstanding job engaging the scholarship of history, marketing, the history of education, the history of English pedagogy, and the development of the self-help industry." -- Jeffrey Reaser, North Carolina State University "Contextualizing Cody's work culturally and historically, in terms of both linguistics and business, the author shows that, though never recognized as an eminent linguist, Cody had a significant influence on 20th century notions of correctness as they relate to personal success. As Battistella demonstrates, Cody was a practical grammarian whose methods, both prescriptive and descriptive, allowed students to identify and correct their own recurring errors. Recommended." --Choice About the Author Edwin L. Battistella is professor of English and writing at Southern Oregon University. He is the author of three previous books on grammar and language, *Bad Language Are Some Words Better than Others?*, *The Logic of Markedness*, and *Markedness: The Evaluative Superstructure of Language*.