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Review of *Children's Language* Vol. 4, edited by Keith E. Nelson

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MLU of social-context speech tended to be more stable across the successive sessions. The next sets of analyses present group and individual data, session by session, on the frequencies of the individual practice types in crib speech and in social-context speech, and within the latter setting some analyses distinguish a-communicative and communicative speech. The rank ordering of practice-type frequencies is also examined as a function of model type, i.e. self or other speaker. For most analyses, the common finding was that of individual variability – in respect to preferred practice types, to their relative frequencies in solitary or social contexts, and to the choice of model in own or in other's speech.

Some trends, however, did emerge. First, a higher percentage of crib speech than of social-context speech was devoted to the linguistic practice types. Build-ups occur more commonly based on the child's own prior utterance; breakdowns are the more common practice type following an adult utterance as model. Exact reproductions tended to be the most frequent type of practice and completions the least frequent. Again, however, in the absence of linguistic transcripts, I find it difficult to interpret these results, especially for the socially directed speech. The single occurrence of one of the practice types, a 'breakdown' or an exact or partial imitation, for example, could well be functioning in interactive speech as an appropriate conversational response, its form and role constrained by the discourse rather than by the child's interest in exploring or practising the linguistic structure or meaning.

Kuczaj's study is the first to investigate systematically the phenomenon of linguistic practice in crib speech and in social-context speech. Despite the questions he has chosen not to pursue, this volume would be of considerable use to any reader wanting an introduction to the topic or to anyone intending to study the significance of children's spontaneous linguistic practice.

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KEITH E. NELSON (ed.), *Children's language.* Vol. 4. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum, 1983. Pp. xv + 479.

This book is the fourth volume in a continuing series devoted to theory and research in child language. The theme which ties together almost all the

chapters is that language is a medium of social, interpersonal communication. Thus this volume reflects many recent trends in child-language research: the concern with pragmatics; the study of discourse; the investigation of propositional meaning; and the exploration of the interrelationships between language, social and cognitive development. While each chapter provides something of interest, too many chapters suffer from over-indulgent inclusion of unnecessary information and an insufficient crafting of the material.

Three papers in the volume concern mother–child discourse. In 'Talking about the there and then: the emergence of displaced reference in parent–child discourse', Sachs discusses how the child learns to converse about displaced events and objects. Using case study data, she illustrates how parents use recurrent routines and 'scaffolding' (à la Bruner) to help the child talk about absent objects and past events (e.g. routinized conversations such as Q: *Where's daddy?* A: *At work*, and the use of conversational 'wedges', such as the parent saying *What did you do? You bumped your knee*). Snow's paper, 'Saying it again: the role of expanded and deferred imitations in language acquisition', argues that children use large numbers of expanded imitations in everyday conversation, e.g. Mother: *Mummy has to do pee-pee now.* Nathanial: *Nathanial has to do pee-pee now too.* Additionally, many child utterances in recurrent situations such as book-reading are deferred imitations of earlier maternal utterances. In conclusion, both of these chapters make some important theoretical contributions, present some interesting case-study data, and provide some good suggestions for future studies.

In 'Mother–child language in the natural environment', Prorok looks at temporal pacing of mother–child discourse. While the author presents too much data in too many confusing tables, some intriguing results emerge. For example, mothers of 2-year-olds pause longer before speaking than the mothers of 1-year-olds or 3-year-olds, as if they are aware that children just beginning to use syntax need time to form their utterances. Both mothers and children pause longer before replying if their partner has produced an unintelligible or exceedingly complex utterance, indicating that mother–child discourse is a finely tuned feedback system.

Verbal and gestural symbolic functioning are the topics of the chapter 'Names, gestures, and objects: symbolization in infancy and aphasia' by Bates, Bretherton, Shore & McNew. The major point made is that 'manual names' (e.g. drinking from a toy cup) are elicited more easily than verbal labels in younger children, but that verbal symbols gradually become predominant because of their greater potential for decontextualized and combinatorial use. After reviewing a mass of their published data, the authors make what seems like an overly simplistic attempt to relate their work to aphasia – an attempt which seems ill-conceived given the length and density of the chapter. Finally, the chapter concludes with a thoughtful model emphasizing the action/object/event script context of language acquisition.

In 'Perceptual constraints on the use of language by young children', Lempert & Kinsbourne make the reasonable argument that young children often make mistakes in decoding linguistic stimuli because they are distracted by the nonverbal context. Unfortunately, the authors attempt to make their case by summarizing a heterogeneous mixture of dubious linguistic examples. Several of Lempert's studies on comprehension of passive sentences and recall of subject vs. object nouns allow numerous interpretations, and the clearest studies make points which are rather obvious – for example, that children's comprehension can be influenced by pretraining.

In 'Getting others to do what you want them to do: development of children's requestive strategies', Levin & Rubin present data showing that 8-year-olds were most successful and 4-year-olds were least successful in obtaining compliance with direct requests. In a second study, successful request strategies were somewhat associated with perspective-taking ability in 4-year-olds, but not in 8-year-olds. Although this paper ends with the authors tossing out rival hypotheses to explain somewhat inconclusive experimental findings, the chapter's theoretical review and interesting approach make it worthwhile reading.

The Ferguson & Macken paper, 'The role of play in phonological development', is a readable and loosely integrated descriptive overview. The authors argue that babbling and early speech are closely intertwined, but that more data are needed to understand fully how babbling activity contributes to word acquisition. The chapter also illustrates various ways in which older children play with sounds, such as rhyming and alliteration in preschoolers and rule-based languages (e.g. Pig Latin) in older children.

The Macken & Ferguson chapter, 'Cognitive aspects of phonological development: model, evidence, and issues', is a much more complex and dense paper. While the chapter has an excess of technical material and its theoretical exposition is often obscure, the authors demonstrate that phonological development is a hypothesis-testing cognitive process. For example, children select favourite phonological sounds for their lexicon, coin novel phonological combinations and overgeneralize new phonological rules.

The two papers in this volume using story grammar methodology lead one to wonder whether the technical paraphernalia of information-processing computerese really adds significantly to an understanding of the intriguing topic of how children use story schemas. In Johnson's excessively long and recondite paper, 'What do you do if you can't tell the whole story? The development of summarization skills', the main finding is that first-graders (6-year-olds) summarize less well than older children because they are less efficient at deleting minor details and at imposing superordinate reorganization. In the more readable chapter 'Developmental differences in schemata for story comprehension', written by McConaughy, Fitzhenry-Coor & Howell, the main finding is that fifth-graders (10-year-olds) make fewer

psychological-motivational attributions in summarizing stories than do adults. Both these papers would be more meaningful if the authors had related the findings more broadly to other work on children's 'metacognitive' processes and to developmental studies of social/moral judgements.

The last two papers in the volume deal with handicapped children. Maxwell's chapter, 'Language acquisition in a deaf child of deaf parents: speech, sign variations, and print variations', summarises one deaf child's acquisition of six 'languages' over a five-year period. This is too much information to present effectively in one chapter, particularly when the technical details of ASL, finger spelling, and sign print are unfamiliar to most readers. However, some of the anecdotes showing how the child combined sign and speech are quite intriguing.

The final paper in the volume is by Caparulo & Cohen and is entitled 'Developmental language studies in the neuropsychiatric disorders of childhood'. Although the first half of the paper is quite fragmented and disorganized, the second half contains some fascinating and vivid observations on the language functioning of three bright autistic adolescents. Even when these autistic youngsters eventually acquired language, their grasp of word meanings was too literal; idioms and slang were difficult to comprehend; prosody, intonation and affective coloration were strange; and conversational inappropriateness was common. The authors' attempt to explain their findings by neurochemical processes is unconvincing and tangential. However, their interesting discussion of the communicative and expressive deficits manifested by autistic children makes a nice conclusion to this volume.

On balance, this book provides a number of interesting and stimulating papers. The editor's introductory remarks provide a good overview, although the device of weaving his comments around a poem seems somewhat forced. However, the book would be more useful and impressive if the authors and the editor had been more hard-headed and critical when it came to deleting superficial digressions, simplifying and pruning data presentation, and imposing clarity of structure.

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