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### Review Of "Everyday Magic: Child Languages In Canadian Literature" By L. Ricou

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# Linguistic Society of America

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Review

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beginning. R&W attempt to show how linguistics can illuminate the sources of those errors and thereby help teachers and researchers understand why they occur. For example, Ch. 10 offers four competence-related criteria for analyzing word-level errors: failure to understand (1) the phonological composition of a word; (2) the syntactic valences of a word; (3) the semantic information about a word; and (4) the semantic connotations surrounding a word. Ch. 11 directly discusses the role of error analysis. And Chs. 12–14 suggest how linguistics might help teachers and researchers understand such difficult concepts as syntactic variation, clarity, conciseness, cohesion, and coherence. The fourth and final section, Ch. 15, offers guidelines for appropriate and inappropriate uses of linguistics. Clearly, the application of linguistics to any competence-related error or problem at the word, sentence, or discourse level is appropriate. Problems not related to competence, such as determining what to write about or whom to write for, are inappropriate.

The chief contribution of this book lies in the authors' welcome reminder of the potential that error analysis research has when supported by a basic understanding of linguistics. However, there are problems. Fundamental to error analysis is the distinction between an error and a mistake. An error represents a conscious deviation from some standard, while a mistake is a performance-related slip. Some of R&W's samples seem more like mistakes than errors. Also, and more significantly, while R&W claim that their book is 'a thorough study of the specific problems in rhetoric and composition which linguistics can shed light upon or the ways in which linguistics can, and should, go about doing that' (xiii), they discuss only a handful of composition problems in any detail, and they offer little information about the methodology of linguistic analysis. Finally, the book is hard to read. R&W's effort at accommodating two disciplines in a single work never achieves the 'flow' or the 'continuity' that they recognize as important. [RICK EVANS, *Texas A&M University*.]

**Everyday magic:** Child languages in Canadian literature. By LAURIE RICOU. Vancouver: The University of British Columbia Press, 1987. Pp. xv, 158.

Ricou considers the rendering and the uses of child languages in adult literature by Canadian writers. He makes a point of using the word *LANGUAGES*, in the plural, partly because any given child's language is continually changing and partly because children (like everyone, I believe) have sets of languages, where one language might be used in one context and another language in a different context.

In discussing the rendering of child languages, R examines instances of a variety of phenomena generally held to be common in child languages, including the generalization of the meaning of specific words to refer to many other objects (which is close in effect to the use of deliberate metaphor in literature); an egocentric point of view demonstrated often through assuming shared knowledge when it is inappropriate to do so (which, although R doesn't point it out, can have an effect similar to the use of an *in medias res* opening for a work of fiction); an incomplete understanding of standard meanings of ordinary phrases; deviations from syntactic norms; and many others.

In discussing the uses of child languages, R goes into detailed comments about specific works of many Canadian writers, including fiction writers (Alice Munro, Margaret Laurence, Clark Blaise, W. O. Mitchell, Ernest Buckler, Emily Carr), lyric poets (P. K. Page, Dorothy Livesay, Miriam Waddington), a playwright (James Reaney), and 'magician-poets' (Dennis Lee and Bill Bissett), as R calls the more experimental poets. R discusses the effect that uses of child languages have on him, as a reader, and what he believes are the effects intended by the various writers.

All of the phenomena that R looks at could well be of interest to the linguist, especially since R is careful to point out that child languages are entirely spoken (at least up to a certain age) and almost entirely learned through speaking (again up to a certain age). However, R does not focus on what his study might tell us about language or about the mind in any technical sense, but rather seems to offer a somewhat disjointed statement of appreciation for the magic of child languages and a celebration of the attempt of certain writers to capture that magic on paper. As a parent and as a writer of children's fiction I value his celebration, but I'm not sure that the linguist in me finds value here.

R also often looks at the relationship between language and memory, pointing out that memory is not to be identified with knowledge and

looking at the value of songs and hymns as a pivot for memory. These side remarks are intriguing, as is his comparison of the child in the midst of language acquisition to an immigrant puzzled with the language of a new country.

This book will not tell the linguist anything new about language acquisition or, perhaps, any other area of linguistics. And I am unable to judge what this book would teach the literary critic. But the book stimulated me to think about my own personal memories of childhood and how I might try to verbalize those memories if I wished to be as true as I could be to the child's voices inside my past. I think this book can help the reader to reconsider self. And that is, without a doubt, valuable. [DONNA JO NAPOLI, *Swarthmore College*.]

**Linguistique latine et linguistique générale.** By GUY SERBAT. (Bibliothèque des Cahiers de l'Institut de Linguistique de Louvain, 39). Louvain-la-Neuve (Belgium): Peeters, 1988. Pp. 74.

This short book contains printed versions of a series of lectures delivered by S at the Université Catholique de Louvain-la-Neuve in 1987. The contents are as follows: 'Linguistique latine et linguistique générale' (7–13); 'Le temps' (15–21); 'Aperçu sur la deixis et l'anaphore' (23–28); 'Remarques sur les procédures d'analyse des "subordonnées complétives"' (29–36); 'Le relatif et la relative' (37–43); 'Le génitif partitif' (55–62); 'La dérivation nominale' (63–72). There is an index of names, but no general index and no composite bibliography.

Each topic is treated as distinct, so there is no single theme which binds the presentations of the book together. Most of the eight chapters deal with fairly narrow subjects that are of interest primarily to the specialist. Two, however, are likely to interest a wider audience, and I will restrict my comments to these two in this note.

In 'Linguistique latine et linguistique générale' S re-establishes his long-held position on the historical component of linguistic analysis. One of the distinctions of S's long career is that, unlike many of his Francophone colleagues, he has never been content to follow slavishly in the steps of the *grands maîtres* of French linguistics. In this inaugural paper of the volume, he is particularly harsh on Benveniste and Guillaume, though Saussure and Meillet also re-

ceive their share of critical remarks. S focuses on some of the pitfalls inherent in the standard Saussurean dichotomy of synchrony and diachrony. Citing the Romance languages as a paradigm example, S points out some of the insurmountable difficulties one would encounter in eliminating the historical component from the analysis of Romance structure and lexicon. By further illustration, S cites the vast number of exceptions and unproductive formations in Latin as a way of showing that a language is not in fact an ensemble where 'tout se tient'. Rather, it is a system which is encumbered with large numbers of formations and constructions from earlier synchronies which make the separation of synchrony and diachrony a false one, or at least one that can be pushed to illegitimate extremes. The classical languages, S claims, allow us a privileged look at systems with deep pasts, rich presents, and long futures, laboratories for general linguistics.

More technical but still of interest to the general linguist is 'le génitif partitif'. More than any other in this collection, the paper demonstrates the applicability of issues in Latin to broader matters of concern to linguists in general. The Latin partitive is a complicated and controversial topic which is traditionally characterized as indicating the whole of which a part is mentioned: *magna pars EXERCITUS* 'a large part OF THE ARMY'; *tu maxime OMNIUM* 'you most OF ALL'; *quantum VOLUPTATIS* 'how much (OF) PLEASURE.' The partitive is typically viewed as a syntactic function of the genitive case, usually accompanied by some quantifier as in the above examples. S looks at a variety of Latin examples in which the partitive notion is carried solely by the genitive ending, with no supporting quantifier, e.g. Cato, *Agr.* 74: *in mortarium indito, AQUAE paulatim addito ...* 'pour meal into a bowl, add WATER gradually ...'; Plaut., *Poen.* 641: *BONI de nostro tibi nec ferimus, nec damus ...* 'we neither bring, nor give, (anything OF) GOOD to you of our own ...' S advances such examples as well as others in which partitives occur in a wide variety of syntactic positions (subjects, dependent nominals, etc.) to support a bold claim: the partitive is not a syntactic function; it is asyntactic, and the genitive case form is not a case-marker. Rather, partitive is a number category which can occur, as do the singular, plural (and dual) in a wide variety of syntactic positions. The partitive, S claims, expresses the category FRACTION.

Though the arguments are a bit hazy and may