

A. Bar-Adon & W. F. Leopold (eds.), *Child language: a book of readings*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1971. Pp. xvi + 477.

1971 has certainly been a year for language acquisition students. Running a course in the subject has been extremely difficult over the past few years, because the literature has been so scattered, and a great deal of the potentially interesting material unpublished. But now, within twelve months, we have the first real attempt at a textbook (Menyuk, 1971), volumes by McNeill and Slobin which have been generating expectancy in the forthcoming catalogues for a number of years, and the present book of readings, also the first of its kind.

To begin with some basic information about the extracts which comprise this collection. There are sixty in all, arranged more or less chronologically. It is possible to group them into three general 'periods': the pioneering and largely pre-scientific work of the early part of this century and before, the 'classical' work of the middle decades, and the largely generative-inspired studies of the sixties. Under the first heading we are given extracts from Tiedemann, Sigismund, Schleicher, Taine, Darwin, Schultze, Preyer, Tracy, Dewey, Sully, Ament, Franke, Wundt, Stern, and Buhler – but it should be noted that the majority of these are less than a thousand words in length. Under the second we have Jespersen, Piaget, Lewis, early Jakobson, Velten, Grégoire, Leopold (twice), Pike, McCarthy, Chao, Cohen, Kaczmarek, the Albrights, Fischer, Berko, the Kahanes, Burling, Luria, and Carroll. That takes us up to page 212. In the third section (212–472) we are given recent Jakobson, Jakobson & Halle, Lenneberg, Weir, most of the Braine/Bever–Fodor–Weksel debate, Braine again, Menyuk, Vildomec, Bar-Adon (twice), Brown & Bellugi, Huttenlocher–Miller–Ervin, Chomsky (twice), Slobin, McNeill, Olmsted, Gruber, Brown–Cazden–Bellugi–Klima, and Klima & Bellugi–Klima. The whole thing is sandwiched between a short introduction, some further reading, a topical table of contents, and Leopold's 1948 review article, 'The study of child language and infant bilingualism' at the beginning, and at the end an appendix of topics for reports, term papers, and major research projects.

Anyone who has edited a book of selected readings knows that the task is not much easier than writing a book. You know in advance that you are bound to upset half your readership, whose background, courses, and tastes differ from yours. Unless something or someone absolutely crucial has been omitted from a selection, then, there is not much to be gained by complaining about the representation. In fact, the coverage is excellent, as one would expect from a book of this size. The absence of anything by O. C. Irwin caused me mild indigestion (oddly, Leopold ignores the work of this group in his review article cited above, too). And seeing as the editors view the Sterns' joint work as being 'of paramount importance' (46) – which I agree it is – it is a bit odd to see no extract from it. But on the whole the names one would expect to see in a contents list are there. It is particularly good to see items out of the mainstream of thinking here – Chao's analysis of the Cantian idiolect, for instance, or Kahanes and Saporta's paper on 'Development of verbal categories in child language'. On the other hand, the proportion of space devoted to the work of certain authors is not at all satisfactory. The editors have felt it appropriate to devote just over one-sixth of the total space in the book to work by themselves. One paper – a rambling, uneven discussion by Bar-Adon of syntactic structures in Hebrew child language – takes up forty pages – by far the longest paper in the volume. This is not right. Editors need exceptional justification for including more than one item by any author, in collections of this kind. It is always possible to refer the reader to

other work by the one man in a preamble to the text, and it is far more beneficial for the student to be brought into contact with as wide a variety of views as possible. The editors are justified in including more than one item from Braine, Brown *et al.*, Jakobson, Chomsky, and Leopold, as in these cases the scholars are of agreed international reputation, and their work has a multiplicity of claims dating back many years that warrant multiple selection. I can see no such justification for Bar-Adon's dual presence, and one of Leopold's three papers and one of Jakobson's could have been omitted without loss. Cutting down here would have allowed the claims the volume makes to represent the INTERNATIONAL state of the art to be better founded – for example by including a modern British or Soviet linguist's work on children. It would have been most interesting to see some of Gvozdev here, for instance. Dan Slobin has done an invaluable job bringing us news of Soviet research; but the sooner we have some primary data on which to work, the better. Also, cutting down on multiple representation would have allowed rather fuller extracts to be given, particularly of some of the older scholars. It is a pity, too, that the debate on 'contextual generalization' is presented in such a truncated form, with only summaries of the later contributions by Braine *et al.* Students can learn a lot from seeing the way that this debate degenerates in its later stages.

Scanning the contents page of this book, then, provides a good initial impression; but, sadly, this quickly evaporates on closer examination. For serious students, the intended audience of the book, this collection is unusable. The 'curious reader' (xiv) may indeed be attracted to further study of the subject by reading this volume, but anyone wanting to get on with some serious project-work or research had better beware. There are three main reasons for this.

First, it is difficult to be confident in the book's accuracy of reproduction. Child language is a field filled with statistics, transcription, and the irregular forms of children. Editorial accuracy is essential, but in this volume, this is precisely what we do not get. Almost every page of the book contains misprints, some of which are ridiculously obvious (like 'techniqies' (112), 'exam'le' (142), 'a great of generalizaion' (97), and 'cowrkers' (107)). In one column you may find several, e.g. on page 50 there is 'gorws', 'nanghly' (I think for 'naughty') 'intimately' and 'childre's'. Some errors involve sense changes, e.g. 'series' for 'sense' (16), 'rate' for 'rote' (164), 'to' for 'the' (84). Some sentences are quite unintelligible, e.g. the middle of column two on page 105 'when . . .'. In footnote 11 on page 83, there is an extra word put in; over the page (85, fn. 20), there is one left out. I did not dare proof-read Velten, or the Albright's article, for fear of what I would find. As it is, I will never use myself the various articles for bibliographical or reference purposes, for data citation, or quotation, and I shall recommend colleagues and students likewise. It is a great shame that more care could not have been taken. In particular, it is frustrating when one is not sure whether the representation of the children's utterances is accurate – for example,

is *ater* correct on page 47 (for 'father' in German)? That the editing has been casual is clear too from a number of other slips. The reader is referred to a book 'due in 1970' in extract 49, despite this collection's appearance in 1971; Jakobson's *Child language* . . . is given as printed by Mouton on page 200, but by Humanities on page 75; on page 218, *Phonology and phonetics* is printed in such a way that it seems to be a book by Jakobson & Halle; on page 242, Bever, Fodor & Weksel's article is given two titles within the same introductory comment. Also, how can extract 58 be both a reprint and a completely revised paper, as is claimed (412)? I have not been able to judge the accuracy of the translations, but I am thankful that the editors have tried to turn everything into English. I would never have had any direct contact with Vildomec or Kaczmarek otherwise! The only bad move was to use Barwell's translation of Stern, which turns the children's irregular German utterances into 'analogous' English ones – as the editors add (45) 'which makes them easier to digest for the English reader'. But this is hardly the point, and the translation is awful anyway (see the last paragraph of page 49, for instance). The editors themselves produce a very disjointed translation, by following the foreign language too literally (e.g. the sentence beginning 'He resorts . . .' on page 94). And I am dubious about the value of using Preyer's abstract of Sigismund's work (extract 3): it does give a rough idea of what was said, but one expects more than a translation of someone else's summary of an author in a scholarly book.

A second limitation on the value of this book for scholarly purposes is that no information is given about the nature and amount of material excised in various selections. A liberal use of the convention '. . .' may help the casual reader, whose interest may be flagging; but it is solely frustrating for the specialist, who may well value the omitted section (see for instance the way Tiedemann and Schultze are treated). I agree with the editor's policy of avoiding selections from books where possible, but in cases where they did omit sections, a paraphrase of the content and indication of the length omitted would enable the student to see whether he needs to go and look up the original. As it is, he will have to anyway.

The third and major limitation of the book is the lack of an index. This is absolutely indispensable – particularly when a collection of readings uses a chronological principle of organization, and thus fragments thematic developments. The editors' topical table of contents is only a dozen lines long, and it is phrased in too general terms to be of any help (cf. headings like 'general studies on language acquisition and development'!). It would be of real value to be able to take a specific concept – say intonation – and have at a glance the various loci of discussion. A person index is a staggering omission also. I have in fact been through the collection gathering together the various references to intonation (there were far more than I had expected, particularly in the early period); but it took me a long time, and throughout there was the nagging thought that if the editors had done their job properly, it would not have been necessary. I

doubt whether most students will bother. Likewise, combining bibliographies into a single list – as in Lyons (1970) – is extremely helpful. But in the present book, some references are in footnotes, some at the ends of papers, and there is considerable repetition from one paper to the next.

Moving on now to other things: if one asks, 'What does one get out of a book of readings other than the actual texts?', the answer is surely 'Editorial matter: a good, discursive introduction, and comments and background about the individual selections – and, of course, the aforesaid indexes'. But in this book there is no general introduction – apart from a page describing how the book came to be written – and the pre-text remarks are a muddle. The editors thoughtfully provide us with an indication of which of them wrote which introductions, so it is easy to be fair in any criticisms. (Actually, two of the pre-text comments, for extracts 19 and 56, are not identified, but it is clear from the internal evidence (cf. below) that the first was written by Leopold, the second by Bar-Adon.) The blurb defines the purpose of these comments as follows: 'Each reading is prefaced by an introduction that provides information about the author's background, his work, and the problems he encountered. Often, a short summary and additional reference sources are included as well.' The editors' practice, unfortunately, frequently does not live up to these principles. It is interesting to compare the totally different approaches of the two editors, who share the task of introduction-writing. (Leopold does twenty-two of the extracts – almost all in the first part of the volume, apart from his own articles, upon which great praise is lavished by Bar-Adon. Bar-Adon does almost all the recent papers. Two extracts (18 and 20) are co-authored, and two (43, 44) are summaries of papers, with no separate comments attached.) Leopold lives up to the first sentence of the blurb very well: he does give background information, and the perspective he provides is both relevant and scholarly. Bar-Adon CAN do this (e.g. extract 54), but on the whole his introductory remarks are irritating and of little value. They largely contain paraphrases or actual quotation of what the author of the paper says – which the reader would be able to get for himself merely by casting his eye further down the page. Look at extract 50, for instance, where Bar-Adon rewrites the author's own separate abstract for us; or extracts 55, 35, 37, 39 etc. In the introduction to extract 40, he introduces a threefold distinction, and then gives a detailed illustration of one of the concepts distinguished, even though the extract selected is not explicitly concerned with this theoretical issue. Probably his most vacuous comment appears at the end of extract 58: 'It sheds new light on some of the problems which have been discussed in other selections, as the student will be glad to learn.' One should hope so! He also tends to polarize issues (e.g. over mentalism and behaviourism), both in his own work (e.g. 435), and in the extract introductions, e.g. 41, where his final paragraph excludes the possibility of having a non-mentalistic version of generative grammar.

Between the two authors, then, the level varies considerably. At one extreme,

there is the gentle, teacher's tone of Bar-Adon's comments about Fischer (extract 31), which end with suggested elementary reading in sociolinguistics; at the other, there is the learned detail provided by Leopold in the early selections. But there are some general criticisms which apply to both. The editors could usefully have been more critical of the work they collect. The student wants more than to be told that we are all good sincere chaps, contributing to knowledge, etc. He wants critical comment as well – but he will find none here. The nearest we get is Bar-Adon's reference to Leopold's 'evaluation' of Jakobson's paper (extract 20), which is hardly an evaluation at all. He could have referred the student to Olmsted's comments, for instance (e.g. 362), which are much more helpful. As it is, students are not helped to develop their critical abilities in this reader. This would not have been difficult to do. For instance, the dangers involved in analysing data without clear sociolinguistic controls could have been referred to in a number of places – in connection with Velten, or Burling, or much of the early European work, where the children studied are of multi-lingual backgrounds of various kinds. The editors could have very easily raised the question of the reliability of the normative generalizations made.

A related point is that the editors do not look forward enough in their comments: we are not given their views as to where things are NOW, or where things are going, or where they SHOULD be going. There is going to be much more interest in the sociolinguistics of children's speech over the next few years, for instance, but there is only one article on the subject in this collection (Fischer's), and no mention of this as an area which is attracting the attention of child language scholars NOW. Or again, what about a reference (failing a selection) to the work on baby-talk, characteristics of parental language, etc.? One would also like to know what the authors included in the volume are doing now – those that are still alive, that is. The student would like to know whether Olmsted's project, mentioned on page 364, was ever completed: the editors could have told him.

The editors could also have given more reasons than they do for making the reader do things. We are often told to 'cf.' other work, but not told why (e.g. in extract 55). In extract 38, it is said that the student 'will find it interesting' to compare extract 20. But why? What should he be looking out for? Part of the editors' job is to give some guidance. As it is, their comments frequently express attitudes which are going to confuse rather than guide. Three quotes must suffice: Leopold (39) comments that Ament devised 'a brief but complete grammar of child language'; on page 60 he states that Piaget's method 'will appeal to many at the present time because he operates with statistics'; and Bar-Adon, on page 433, characterizes telegraphic speech as 'close to "speaking" base structures'.

On the bright side, the book places a salutary emphasis on the early work in child language studies. It is easy to be sweeping in criticisms of early scholarship, or to ignore it altogether, but all too often we find that our insights were theirs,

and that they have much which they can teach us. There is more on intonation in Bühler, for instance, than one gets in most of the past decade. There is a wise concern over the arbitrariness of word classification in Dewey. For every ten who have heard of imitative processes *à la* Brown & Bellugi, there may be one who knows of Jespersen's discussion of 'echoism' (58). We tend to forget how good some of the phonetic expertise was: the extracts of Schleicher and Tracy show. Franke was very clear about the need to integrate phonology and grammar in developmental study. There is an excellent balance of theoretical discussion with descriptive detail in Wundt. The faults of the early period emerge too, of course, but they have often been inventoried, and do not need repeating here.

This reader will make many people more aware of the depth and complexity of the subject of children's language: it is a pity that a little more effort could not have been expended on the enterprise, to make it academically worthwhile.

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