predictions made by some pundits of globalization about the death of all that is local and distinctive, sociolinguistic research suggests that pronunciation serves an important identity marking function, perhaps more so than vocabulary or syntax. Thus, we find that the trend in long-term phonological evolution as a whole is towards increasing divergence with respect to British and American English, as well as with respect to other varieties of English around the world in general. Studies of sound change have found that the dialects of Boston, Los Angeles, London, and Sydney are now more different from one another than they were 100 years ago. The limited influence of popular media on actual speech behavior suggests that what is crucial is actual social interaction rather than passive exposure through mass media such as television. Experts on globalization, such as Thomas Friedman (1999), have consistently underestimated the strength and persistence of local identities. Although globalization has been conceptualized as a struggle between increasing homogeneity vs. cultural and linguistic diversity, the reality is that globalized markets have created more and not fewer choices for consumers. The same may be true for accents.

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Susan Goldin-Meadow: The Resilience of Language: What Gesture Creation in Deaf Children Can Tell Us about How All Children Learn Language. New York: Psychology Press, 2003. 300 pp. ISBN 1-8416-9026-0.

The Resilience of Language by Susan Goldin-Meadow is an inspiring and stimulating read for the linguist and lay-person alike. The book is the

product of twenty-five years of research on data from a group of con-
genitally deaf children of hearing parents who were not exposed to a lan-
guage model from birth. Despite this unimaginable disadvantage, the
children manage to communicate with those around them using a system
of self-styled gestures. While the creation of such a system of commu-
nication is not remarkable in itself, the fact that the gesture system cre-
ated by these particular children bears striking resemblance to the natural
languages of the world is extraordinary. In this book, specific descriptions
of the self-created language system of the children are skillfully used to
draw conclusions regarding the acquisition of language in general.

The Resilience of Language contains nineteen chapters and is divided
into three parts. In the first part, consisting of five chapters, Goldin-
Meadow deals with current understanding of the task of language acqui-
sition. She discusses ''natural'' experimental contexts and their relevance
for exposing linguistic ''resilience.'' These are contexts such as children
learning languages in di¤erent parts of the world, children learning lan-
guages of di¤erent modalities, and children learning the same language
with di¤ering levels of input. Although she provides the reader with back-
ground and remaining questions in language acquisition with which to
take on the remainder of the book, in the interest of space, Goldin-
Meadow is forced to merely scratch the surface of some of the main
points. Thus, for readers already familiar with many of these issues, the
sparse treatment of some areas coupled with the absence of others, for ex-
ample, the relationship between the emergence of communicative intent
and pointing gestures (Clark 1978; Zinober and Martlew 1985) might be
frustrating.

In the first half of the second part of the book, Chapters 6 through 11,
Goldin-Meadow describes the population with whom she worked — ten
deaf children born to hearing parents — and compares their self-styled
gestural communication system to that of typically developing children.
In her analysis, certain properties of language emerge as common to
both groups; these are the properties she refers to as ''resilient.'' She finds
parallels in the universality and stability of the lexicon, development of
morphology with initial use of unanalyzed wholes followed by produc-
tive combinations of hand shapes and motions, similar combinations of
word/gesture strings with actions involving transfer of objects and actors,
actions on objects, possession, knowledge about thematic roles, ergative
patterning, and use of shared referents to reduce redundancy.

With such similarities, Goldin-Meadow concludes that a common de-
sire to communicate particular things governs lexical development, and
that all children come to the task of language learning with knowledge
of the frameworks needed by language and ready to extract regularities

from the system they are presented with. What is extraordinary about the deaf children is that they are analyzing gestures and extracting regularities from signs they themselves created. Furthermore, Goldin-Meadow uses her observations to inform theories based on the acquisition of spoken language, for example, that newness of referent does not determine marking on intransitive agents and patients. Finally, by analyzing the diﬀerences between typical and atypical learning, Goldin-Meadow is able to show evidence of ''context sensitive'' properties (Newport et al. 1977), for example, existence of syntactic branching preference.

In the remainder of the second part, Chapters 12 through 15, Goldin-Meadow deals with a variety of issues. First, she focuses on the trajectory of the deaf children from the single gesture stage to the development of a system. She observes that, like all natural languages, the children's gesture systems distinguish between nouns and verbs. Next, she concentrates on the existence of diﬀerent discourse types, where the gestures of the deaf children do enable commentary on the past, definite and possible futures, the expression of generalizations, and metalinguistic statements, albeit with a somewhat delayed onset in comparison to hearing children. Subsequently, Goldin-Meadow turns her attention to the gestures of the deaf children's hearing parents. Using two kinds of analysis — experimental and naturalistic — she concludes parents do not provide a gestural language model. Finally, she compares the self-created gesture systems of similar groups of deaf children of hearing parents in two countries: the U.S.A. and China. She found that although the two systems diﬀered in culturally determined realms, for example, vocabulary and semantic content, there were more similarities than diﬀerences, for example, preference for ergative syntactic patterns.

Part Two of The Resilience of Language describes a unique and inspiring case of language acquisition in the most inopportune circumstances. The analysis is thorough, coherent, and articulately presented. As in Part One, the only disappointment for the reader is in the economy of exposition. In Chapter 6, the stimulus material is not described in detail. Instead, the reader is referred to an alternative publication. Similarly, in Chapter 12, the reader is directed to additional material regarding contextual criteria for determining whether the noun–verb grammatical categorization was actually an object–action semantic one. In Chapter 13, the delay in the onset of use of diﬀering discourse types between children with self-created gesture systems and hearing children is mentioned; however, there is no reason posited for this delay or comparison of gesturers in a self-styled gesture system versus signers in an established sign language.

Chapter 16 in the third and final part of the book summarizes the findings of the research. The resilient properties of language include processes

such as segmentation of words, construction of paradigms, construction of sequences, and structures such as one, two, and three argument predicate frames, word classes, and ergative sentence patterns. Goldin-Meadow claims that her data allow determination of which language parameters are preset prior to the task of acquisition, for example, null subject, and which are neutral, for example, branching direction.

Chapter 17 reveals a hierarchical order in the resilient properties of language. In an experiment requiring hearing adults to perform a communicative task with and without speech, adults' gestures matched those of their deaf child counterparts with respect to ergativity and gestural order of thematic roles. However, the differences found in some domains — for example, hand shape — lead to the conclusion that even within the resilient properties of language, there is a hierarchy of resilience.

In terms of the innateness of language discussed in the following chapter, Goldin-Meadow claims language should be viewed as developmentally resilient, meaning that every human is predisposed to learn a language. Such resilience is validated externally, with respect to the wide variety of contexts in which a child is able to acquire language, and validated internally with respect to the range of individual-specific circumstances that do not thwart the process at least as far as the resilient properties are concerned. This validity is not more apparent than in the context under investigation, namely, deaf children of hearing parents. Goldin-Meadow concludes her book with discussion of the fragile properties of language — for example, tense marking — which require a language model for activation. She describes the group of Nicaraguan home signers who were brought together in 1980, where first generation signers exhibited the resilient properties of language one would expect, but second generation signers advanced the system unveiling even more properties of natural languages, considered context dependent.

The Resilience of Language is the product of an impressive research program. Step by step, with the aid of clearly marked chapters and subsections acting as a roadmap, the reader is guided through the system of communication created by the deaf children observed in this study. In an innovative move that new technologies allow, the book is accompanied by video clips of gestures easily accessible through the Internet, which illustrate specific points. In reading this book, we gather an understanding of just how remarkable the gift of language is. The compelling evidence presented by Goldin-Meadow leads us to the realization that even in the most difficult of circumstances (barring physical neglect or abuse), the emergence of language is our destiny as humans. We are not only provided with structural descriptions of the self-styled gesture systems, which are interesting in themselves, but also convinced of the importance of this

information for addressing some of the most fundamental issues in the field of language acquisition.

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