

Book reviews

Maya Hickmann: *Children's Discourse: Person, Space, and Time across Languages*.* Cambridge Studies in Linguistics 98. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002. xvii + 392 pp. ISBN 0-521-58441-8.

This volume represents a comprehensive review of a series of crosslinguistic experiments geared towards uncovering how children develop discourse organization. The studies are based on well-controlled, crosslinguistic experiments of four languages (Chinese, English, French, and German) from four different age groups (4–5 year olds, 7 year olds, 10 year olds, and adults). It is rare to find such an extensive work on any topic in first language acquisition by a single author. Hickmann not only describes how children's narratives are organized in terms of animate entities, space, and time, but tries to build a bridge between forms, functions, and formal theory.

The eleven chapters of the book can be divided into two sections. The first part (Chapters 2–6) explains current theories, how discourse can be organized, and how the languages under study differ in incorporating animate entities, space, and time. The second part (Chapters 7–11) is filled with more original materials: a description of an experimental design, and a presentation and a discussion of the experimental results. Below, I provide a short summary of each chapter.

The preface of the book addresses the questions that the book aims to explore. Hickmann describes these issues from a functional perspective and is interested in how structures and functions in each language influence children's narrative development. Although a lot of the research I am accustomed to deals with the development of children's grammar only at the sentence level, Hickmann observes the issues at both sentence and discourse levels.

Chapter 1 includes an overview of the topic, defining entities, space, and time, and previewing competing theories as to how language is acquired. Here, the author sets out a goal of the book as "... provid[ing]

explanations in which development is centrally determined by functional factors, while making room for complex innate predispositions and endogenous processes”.

The debates between nativists and behaviorists among other theoretical debates are discussed in Chapter 2. The most interesting part in this chapter is the explication of discourse cohesion, new vs. old information, and foreground vs. background in discourse (from p. 43 onwards). This chapter makes it clear how important animate entities, space, and time are in grounding information in narratives, and how interesting it is to see children’s treatment of those entities in foreground and background of discourse. For example, Hickmann writes that the foreground is chronologically ordered; however, the background does not have to be. We must expect to see a different pattern of the use of referent noun phrases, static vs. dynamic predicates, spatial entities, as well as tensed verbs in these two discourse grounds.

Chapter 3 focuses on how the four target languages differ in the morphological marking as well as in the spatial descriptions. This chapter is similar to a concise grammar of the four languages and discusses less about child language. The author refers to Talmy’s (1985) famous classification of satellite-framed vs. path-oriented languages. Page 84 includes a summary of the chapter, which I found extremely useful.

A generative linguist such as myself will find Chapter 4, which includes an overview of the studies examining children’s discourse organization, very informative indeed. Hickmann stresses the equal importance of the two main aspects of discourse organization: coherence and cohesion. As she points out, there are many studies that focus on only one or other of these aspects. This chapter also discusses children’s sensitivity to coherence and cohesion in normal and anomalous stories. It is interesting and surprising at the same time that such young children (age three) notice when the organization of narratives is anomalous.

Chapter 5 includes a summary of past research on referring expressions and clausal structure in formal, semantic, and pragmatic accounts. Section 5.1.1.3 includes a discussion of some problems with the formal parameter-setting hypothesis; however, the most recent article cited is Sano and Hyams (1994). Since then, other influential proposals have been advanced; these include, for example, the “truncated structures” approach of Rizzi (2000) and the “optional infinitives” proposal associated with Wexler (1993, 1998); see also Hoekstra and Hyams (1998), as well as Snyder (2001), for a different approach to parameter setting.

The experimental section starts in Chapter 7. This chapter provides a detailed account of how the data collection proceeded; we are again reminded of how carefully the elicited production task was controlled and

carried out. Here, there are significant parallels between this book and *Relative Events in Narrative* by Berman and Slobin (1994). Table 7.1 (p. 186) gives extensive information about the participants in this study, while the Appendix (pp. 343–344) is very useful for seeing how the data collection was performed.

The introduction to the collected data starts in Chapter 8 and continues until Chapter 10. These chapters are organized according to the particular phenomena studied in children's narratives: Chapter 8 presents the results on animate entities; Chapter 9 deals with space; Chapter 10 deals with time. Overall, I found the author's style of data description very detailed, but sometimes overwhelming. Each chapter has a summary section at the end and this helped me a great deal to follow the numerous detailed graphs introduced in each chapter. The author covers the whole range of phenomena and describes the results in a thorough manner; however, the book sometimes missed a detailed enough explanation as to why these results were obtained. This is, presumably, due to the extensive range of topics that the author tried to cover; there are a limited number of pages available for discussing each of the findings. This book is very useful, however, in finding out about young children's general narrative organization and serves as a good starting point for us to find out which topic is of interest and which topic requires further investigation.

At certain points, I found the results hard to digest, because all I could see were proportions without supporting statistics. For example, Hickmann writes "local markings clearly increase with age in all languages. This increase is significant between four–five and seven years in English (29% vs. 57%), in Chinese (53% vs. 79%), and in German (40% vs. 76%)" (p. 195). It is impossible to follow here how the author concludes the increase to be significant without any statistical analyses. This continues though to Chapter 10. There, I do not see the justification for the author's conclusion that French four-year-olds differ significantly from ten-year-olds (57% vs. 89%), but not from seven-year-olds (71%) (p. 196). The results would have been even more compelling had they been statistically supported.

The results in Chapters 8 to 10 include many interesting developments in narrative organization. I especially found the use of mixed narratives very interesting. Hickmann introduces the uses of both past and non-past inflections in children's (as well as adults') narratives and tries to pin down what causes the switch between the two tenses or aspects (p. 305). Again, for a linguist who is often interested in one sentence at a time, these issues and the questions they raise are very novel and quite intriguing. Besides these, of course, there is an extensive discussion of children's lexical development (such as the use of different types of predicates, of

aspect, tense, and definite and indefinite articles). There are many aspects of the data that show children's early sensitivity to crosslinguistic differences. For example, the use of classifiers and aspectual markers are observed early in young Chinese children's narratives, while German participants across different age groups use postverbal positions for both first and subsequent mention of NPs. Chapter 9 discusses a couple of crosslinguistic differences in terms of predicate use. It is pointed out that only French children focus more on static situations than to motion, and that dynamic predicates encode manner with direction in English and German, only manner in Chinese, and manner alone or direction alone in French.

On the other hand, other developments are more uniform in the four different languages; for example, first mention of NPs tends to be postverbal in all four languages, or explicitness of spatial grounds develop uniformly with age in all the languages (p. 253). Chapter 10 discusses many issues involving temporality; here again, we see a crosslinguistic similarity as well as a difference. English, French, and German children all use three types of narratives: exclusively using non-past, past, or the mixed use of both past and non-past forms; however, English speaking children use past forms much more often than French and German speaking children. Hickmann continues to investigate what factors are responsible for the mixed narratives. For example, the majority of shifts are found when the participants are describing something, introducing referents, or when two events overlap with each other. Under those circumstances, we saw that the participants use different tenses as well as grammatical aspects. Here, I wished a Slavic language had been included among the four languages under study. It would be extremely interesting to find out how these children mix both perfective and imperfective aspect in narratives (in describing, introducing, explaining, and commenting). It would be useful to compare these results with those in Vinnitskaya and Wexler (2001), for example.

Since it is not the author's stated aim to deal with purely formal issues, it is perhaps unfair to criticize the book this way; however, the reader should know that the data in this book do not speak to any of the grammatical constraints (such as binding conditions, ECP, etc.) that generative linguists tend to be interested in. It is difficult even to figure out whether or not these young children always produced grammatical utterances. Also, there was only sparse mention of the role of structurally-realized nominal or temporal antecedents, and little information about how the children dealt with these types of anaphoric relations.

In spite of these slight reservations, overall, this book remains one of the most impressive in the field of language acquisition. The richness of the data from four different languages is truly striking, and linguists in

almost any subfield of linguistics are guaranteed to learn much of value from this book.

Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics,
Nijmegen

AYUMI MATSUO

Note

- * I would like to thank Wolfgang Klein, Clive Purdue, and Ann Kelly for introducing this book to me. I also benefited a great deal from comments given by Nigel Duffield, Marianne Gullberg, and Barbara Schmietová.

References

- Berman, Ruth A.; and Slobin, Dan I. (1994). *Relating Events in Narrative: A Crosslinguistic Developmental Study*. Hillsdale, NJ: Laurence Erlbaum.
- Hoekstra, Teun; and Hyams, Nina (1998). Aspects of root infinitives. *Lingua* 106, 81–112.
- Rizzi, Luigi (2000). Remarks on early null subjects. In *The Acquisition of Syntax: Studies in Comparative Developmental Linguistics*, M.-A. Friedemann and L. Rizzi (eds.). London: Longman.
- Sano, Tetsuya; and Hyams, Nina (1994). Agreement, finiteness and the development of null arguments. In *Proceedings of the 24th Annual Meeting of the North Eastern Linguistic Society*, M. Gonzalez (ed.). Amherst, MA: GLSA.
- Snyder, William (2001). On the nature of syntactic variation: evidence from complex predicates and complex word-formation. *Language* 77, 324–322.
- Talmy, Leonard (1985). Lexicalization patterns: semantic structure in lexical forms. In *Language Typology and Syntactic Description*, T. Shopen (ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Vinnitskaya, I.; and Wexler, Kenneth (2001). The role of pragmatics in the development of Russian aspect. *First Language* 21, 143–185.
- Wexler, Kenneth (1993). Optional infinitives, head movement and the economy of derivations. In *Verb Movement*, D. Lightfoot and N. Hornstein (eds.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- (1998). Very early parameter-setting and the unique checking constraint: a new explanation of the optional infinitive stage. *Lingua* 106, 23–79.

Stephen J. Nagle and Sara L. Sanders, editors: *English in the Southern United States*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003. 244 pp. ISBN 0-5218-2264-5.

This book brings together twelve essays on English in the Southern United States. In their introduction, the editors suggest that Southern

States English may be the most studied regional variety of any language (p. 1), as well as the most distinctive. Individual chapters revisit a number of issues which have engaged scholars over the past decades, for example, the British roots of Southern States English (Algeo, Wright), the relative innovative vs. archaic nature of some of its features (Schneider, Feagin, Wolfram, Tillery and Bailey), and the relationship between African-American English and the English of white Southerners (Mufwene, Cukor-Avila). As a whole, the collection offers a state-of-the-art report on research on Southern American English. It will be of interest to anyone concerned with Southern States English, dialect contact and change.

The first chapter by John Algeo (“The origins of Southern American English”) examines the multiple lines of descent and emphasizes that Southern American English is not a single entity, but itself encompasses many varieties. This should not be surprising considering that the South comprises about a dozen states, covering an area of more than half a million square miles, and contains a population of over fifty million people. He also points out that American English in effect “began with Southern” because the first permanent English-speaking settlement was in Jamestown, Virginia (p. 9). The early settlement of the American South was, however, unlike that of most of the early colonies, whose immigrants were primarily of the middle or independent working class. The bulk of the early Virginia settlers were illiterate male indentured servants from rural areas. Other waves of settlement brought a minority of upper class or upwardly aspiring people as well as the Scots-Irish. In addition, there were slaves from Africa, who made the southern plantation economy viable. Laura Wright’s chapter (“Eight grammatical features of Southern United States speech present in early modern London prison narratives”) documents some of the linguistic features found in the language of some of those sentenced by London courts to be transported to the Virginia colony.

Finally, Algeo points out that some features that are today distinctive of American English generally or Southern English in particular can be traced to variable forms in British English, for example, *fall* and *autumn*, but that we will never know why American English opted for *fall* in preference to *autumn*. Certainly, however, he is right in opining that the term “colonial lag” (i.e. the hypothesis that American English has preserved archaic features of British dialect) is “a label of dubious appropriateness, not an explanation” (p. 15).

Schneider observes in his chapter (“Shakespeare in the coves and hollows?”) that a history of Southern American English remains to be written, noting in particular that virtually no serious text-based work has been undertaken on colonial American English (p. 17). He surveys a

number of sources of evidence in need of investigation to illuminate the history of Southern American English. The urgent need for such work is evident in some of Schneider's own assertions, which are contradicted by an examination of colonial texts. Schneider mentions a number of features of Southern States English for which no strong case for direct transmission can be made (p. 29), among them, the quasi-modal *liketa* (e.g. *she liketa died* 'she nearly died'). He claims that the use and pattern found in present day Southern U.S. English is "unique to the South, undocumented in Britain," and is thus an "innovation of Southern dialect" rather than a direct transmission from earlier forms of British English. Although Schneider suggests it is "futile" to search in British dialects for precedents for *liketa* in Southern American English, one does not have to look to dialectal usage in either Britain (see J. Wright [1898–1905: III, 601]) or the U.S. to find the roots of the construction. Examples are readily available in the usage of reputable educated authors writing in standard British English, such as Shakespeare, Addison, Steele, Defoe, Swift, Fielding, Richardson, Dickens, and many others. In her chapter, Laura Wright cites several instances of the construction in transcripts of petitions and declarations of persons brought before the Court of Governors of Bridewell. Within a few months after the founding of the Jamestown colony in 1607, the Bridewell court began to sentence people to transportation from London to the new colony. Although Wright's evidence suggests the construction was present in London vernacular, as most of these transportees were lower class, the above evidence confirms that its use was not by any means confined to nonstandard or regional English on either side of the Atlantic (see Kytö and Romaine 2005). Despite the vestigial status of the construction today, recent evidence of its once more widespread distribution in American English among educated persons can be found in Atwood (1953: 36), who found *liketa* nearly universal among older, more modern, better educated (though not "cultured") speakers from Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North and South Carolina, the eastern half of Georgia, northern Pennsylvania, most of New York, and New Jersey.

Mufwene's chapter ("The shared ancestry of African-American and American White Southern Englishes: some speculations dictated by history") takes up the contentious question of the relationship between African-American English and the English of white Southerners. His position is that the shared similarities are due to 200 years of interaction in households, on small farms, tobacco, and cotton plantations, while the differences are attributable to institutionalized segregation beginning in the nineteenth century. The opposing position is that African-Americans developed their own divergent variety in the early colonial period. Patricia

Cukor-Avila's chapter ("The complex grammatical history of African-American and white vernaculars in the South") provides a useful summary of the origins of the two positions and presents some results of a longitudinal study of black and white speech in a rural east-central Texas community. On the basis of 32 grammatical features examined, she found that black and white English were more similar in the first half of the 1900s than they are today. The majority (81%) of the features were shared at some point in time between the two varieties; only six are unique to African-American English, and two of these have emerged in the last 60 years (p. 93). However, it is important not to lose sight of individuals. Cukor-Avila (p. 92) mentions the case of the two oldest white female speakers in the study, who have similar social histories, but different linguistic profiles. The speech of one of the women is much closer to the speech of older African-Americans than that of the other. This finding is highly reminiscent of Milroy's (1980) comparison of two Belfast women, whom she calls Hannah and Paula. They both live in the same type of housing in the same area of Belfast and have similar employment, but nevertheless, behave quite differently from one another linguistically. Hannah is much more standard in her speech than Paula. The explanation lies in their socialization patterns, which are clearly very different. Paula, whose speech is more nonstandard, is a member of a local bingo-playing group and has extensive kin ties in the area. Hannah has no kin in the area and does not associate with local people. She stays at home a lot watching TV. Although Cukor-Avila mentions social network orientation as a factor in change among the younger generation, disappointingly, she does not offer any explanation for the differences found in the two oldest women. In a footnote (p. 105) she states only that the women are considered "Type I informants," who live primarily in rural communities with few, if any, social contacts outside the community.

Cynthia Bernstein's chapter ("Grammatical features of Southern speech: *yall*, *might could*, and *fixin to*") explores three grammatical features which she says are "uniquely Southern," namely *yall*, *might could*, and *fixin to*. Nevertheless, it would appear that only *fixin to* actually fits this categorization since double modals are found in other varieties of English, and *yall* evidently may be spreading beyond the South. It is phonology, George Dorrell argues, that is the most salient feature of Southern speech. However, his brief chapter ("Sounding Southern: a look at the phonology of English in the South") also reveals that there is no single set of features that distinguishes Southern phonology from the rest of the United States. Crawford Feagin ("Vowel shifting in the Southern states") presents a more detailed analysis of the so-called "Southern shift," comparing her own data from Alabama with those found in other studies.

Her findings presage a coming homogenization out of which a modified, less distinctive Southern speech may emerge. However, in his chapter Walt Wolfram (“Enclave dialect communities in the South”) suggests that in some enclave communities, local dialect seems to be intensifying among the younger generation, while in other communities, it is receding. He looks specifically at dialect enclaves, noting that the speech varieties found there are, like other varieties of English, typified primarily by a constellation of features rather than distinctive dialect forms.

In a similar vein, Jan Tillery and Guy Bailey argue in their chapter (“Urbanization and the evolution of Southern American English”) that many of the stereotypes of Southern English are rather recent developments and most of the inherited features have been disappearing for some time. They attribute some of the major changes to urbanization over the last 125 years and the concomitant increase in dialect contact in cities.

Connie Ebler’s chapter (“The Englishes of Southern Louisiana”) provides an overview of varieties of English in Southern Louisiana. Although the vast majority of people in the region today are monolingual speakers of English, varieties of English have developed in the context of French, the dominant language two hundred years earlier.

In her chapter, Barbara Johnstone (“Features and uses of Southern style”) explores some discourse features of what she calls “Southern style,” which anecdotally has been characterized as softer, more indirect, and more polite than northern speech. Noting that research on regional variation in discourse structure and style is not very common, Johnstone’s observations rely on literary representations and comments found in a variety of sources. She says that the features of Southern style that have been remarked upon have to do with how interpersonal relations are indexed and negotiated in conversation (p. 192). One example is the use of the address forms *sir* and *ma’am*, and titles plus first name (e.g. *Miss Edna*) as a marker of deferential politeness. Johnstone also mentions the use of conditional syntax (e.g. *I wouldn’t look for’m to show up if I was you*) and evidentiality (especially negative forms of evidentiality as in *I don’t believe I’ve ever known one*) as mitigating devices to hedge assertions. She also presents a few extracts from her own research on the individual discourse style of Texas women. Despite this, the chapter is mostly a catalog of observations in need of systematic empirical research. Like other contributors to the volume, Johnstone also speculates whether some features of Southernness may be retreating in the face of pressure from globalization and in-migration of outsiders, or whether they will be exploited to index local identity.

Evidence from other sources in this volume as well as from elsewhere seems to suggest that the answer to both is yes. Despite the dire

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.

Merton College, University of Oxford

SUZANNE ROMAINE

References

- Atwood, E. Bagby (1953). *A Survey of Verb Forms in the Eastern United States*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Friedman, Thomas (1999). *The Lexus and the Olive Tree*. New York: HarperCollins.
- Kytö, Merja; and Romaine, Suzanne (2005). *We had like to have been killed by thunder and lightning*. The semantic and pragmatic history of a construction that like to disappeared. *Journal of Historical Pragmatics* 6(1), 1–35.
- Milroy, Lesley (1980). *Language and Social Networks*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Wright, Joseph (1898–1905). *The English Dialect Dictionary: Being the Complete Vocabulary of All Dialect Words Still in Use, or Known to Have Been in Use during the Last Two Hundred Years*. London: Henry Frowde.

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 congenitally deaf children of hearing parents who were not exposed to a language 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 communication is not remarkable in itself, the fact that the gesture system created 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 acquisition. She discusses “natural” experimental contexts and their relevance for exposing linguistic “resilience.” These are contexts such as children learning languages in different parts of the world, children learning languages of different modalities, and children learning the same language with differing levels of input. Although she provides the reader with background 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 example, 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 productive 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 desire 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.

*Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics,
Boston University*

AMANDA BROWN

References

- Clark, R. A. (1978). The transition from action to gesture. In *Action, Gesture and Symbol*, A. Lock (ed.), 231–260. London: Academic Press.
- Newport, E. L.; Gleitman, H.; and Gleitman, L. R. (1977). Mother, I'd rather do it myself: some effects and non-effects of maternal speech style. In *Talking to Children: Language Input and Acquisition. Vol. 1: The Data*, C. E. Snow and C. A. Ferguson (eds.), 109–150. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Zinober, B.; and Martlew, M. (1985). Developmental changes in four types of gesture in relation to acts and vocalizations from 10 to 21 months. *British Journal of Developmental Psychology* 3, 293–306.