

Book Reviews

Paul Bloom (Editor) (1994)
Language Acquisition: Core Readings
Cambridge, MA: MIT Press
622 pages

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In his preface to this collection of eighteen re-produced papers, Bloom notes that, contrary to the title of the volume, the book's focus of study is not so much language *acquisition* as language *acquisitions*: such diverse learning behaviours as the acquisition of lexical items, the processing of syntax and semantics, and the mastery of morphology cannot, in Bloom's view, sensibly be modelled as unitary phenomena, but must instead be treated as separate aspects of language learning. Be that as it may, the subtitle 'Core Readings' is certainly accurate: The book succeeds in bringing together a set of papers which pinpoint major theoretical issues in a number of the identifiable 'acquisitions'. The collection provides a fairly up-to-date survey of current thinking in the field; although the oldest paper in the collection was originally published in 1985, two-thirds of the contributions first appeared in or after 1990.

The structure of the volume is as follows. After the editor's preface and introductory chapter, the book is divided into six sections—The Onset of Language Development (chapters by Fernald on infants' responsiveness to the maternal speech register; Petitto on the early stages of acquisition in spoken and signed language), Word Learning (Baldwin on social and cognitive influences on the referring process; Markman on the assumptions which seem to govern children's concepts of word meaning; Gleitman on the exploitation of syntactic-semantic mappings by children; Huttenlocher and Smiley on a comparison of naming in young children and older language users), Syntax and Semantics (Clark and Carpenter on the errors made in the processing of the passive construction; Gropen, Pinker, Hollander and Goldberg on the role of lexical semantics; Bowerman on the acquisition of prepositional systems in English and Korean; Crain on parameter setting

and maturation; Cromer on language development without feedback), Morphology (Rumelhart and McClelland with their connectionist model of past tense acquisition; Pinker's response to the connectionist position; Gordon's application of level-ordering theory to acquisition), Acquisition in Special Circumstances (Goldin-Meadow and Mylander on children deprived of normal linguist input; Newport on maturational effects the acquisition of first and second languages), and Alternative Perspectives (Karmiloff-Smith on innateness and modularity; Marler on birdsong).

Within each of these sections, the papers provide complementary, and on occasion, opposing views of the phenomena being discussed. For example, in the section on morphology, Rumelhart and McClelland's paper 'On the learning of the past tenses of English verbs', which makes a case for connectionist modelling of the process, is contrasted with Pinker's 'Rules of language', which takes the stance that at least some aspects of linguistic competence are encoded as rules rather than associations. In the section on the onset of language, Fernald's view (presented in an evolutionary framework) that infants are particularly responsive to maternal vocalisations, and in particular the prosodic aspects of speech, is interestingly juxtaposed with Petitto's work on the acquisition of sign language. In the section on syntax and semantics, the contributions by Carpenter and Clark and by Gropen, Pinker, Hollander and Goldberg tend towards the universalist position on language acquisition, but Bowerman's account of the similarities in the acquisition of two radically different prepositional systems—English and Korean—seems to be in conflict with the assumptions and predictions of this view. Each section contains similarly stimulating contrasts, too numerous to mention in detail.

The decision to compartmentalise the various aspects of language acquisition does not, of course, disguise the fact that a number of intersecting themes run through the book and link contributions which are not necessarily assigned to the same section. For example, the issue of modularity, central to much debate within contemporary psycholinguistics, turns up in Petitto's account of early sign language acquisition, in Pinker's argument for rule-based linguist representations in the mind and in Karmiloff-Smith's discussion of innate constraints; both Petitto's and

Goldin-Meadow and Mylander's papers focus on language acquisition in the deaf; Fernald's paper introduces comparative, biological considerations to the debate, as does Marler's; perspectives on interaction between the social and cognitive influences on language development are present in many papers; and so on.

Naturally, despite their differing theoretical stances, the papers all build on common assumptions about the general developmental sequence in language acquisition, the nature of the input to the child, etc. For the uninitiated, this background is provided by Bloom himself in his introductory overview chapter. In the same chapter, he sets out to identify the main controversies in the language acquisition literature—questions such as the role of syntactic cues on word meaning, the continuous and discontinuous theories of the emergence of syntax, parameter setting, the general cognitive architecture of language development. Though an excellent introductory overview in itself, this paper, which, like the others, had previously been published elsewhere, was less successful as a unifying chapter than a specially-written contribution, deliberately matched to the material in the main sections, might have been. Alternatively, a set of short introductory pieces, geared to each of the sections, might have been provided.

In terms of presentation, this is on the whole a well-produced book, attractively laid out and helpfully organized. The index is fairly comprehensive, though I must note that a spot check of a few of the concepts and terms which were central to a couple of articles did yield one which was not indexed ('evolution', one of the key issues in Fernald's paper; on the other hand, the much more specialized evolutionary term 'exaptation' was listed—useful for the specialist, but less so for the beginner!).

Inevitably, some readers will identify gaps. For example, no contribution focuses on the acquisition of the phonological system per se; discourse-level processes receive little attention; and with a few minor exceptions, insights into the innateness issue which have been gained from studying children with brain injury and other neurological defects are not substantially represented. However, given the already ambitious scope of the book, it would be unreasonable to suggest that its coverage should be wider still.

In all, then, the contributions provide a reasonably comprehensive and up-to-date overview of the current issues in language acquisition research,

and bring together a set of genuinely important contributions to the language acquisition literature. The volume would make an excellent introduction for any reader wishing to gain an insight into the differing theoretical stances in the subject; it could also usefully serve as a course text in advanced courses on language acquisition.

Sik Hung Ng & James J. Bradac (1993)
Power in Language: Verbal communication and social influence
Newbury Park: Sage Publications
ISBN 0-8039-4423-3

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From the outset this book generates a high level of expectation. It is published in the Sage *Language and Language Behaviour Series* of which Howard Giles, as Series Editor, says: '[it] is unique in its sociopsychological orientation to "language and language behaviours" ... volumes are ... accessible for advanced students ... valuable resources for seasoned researchers ...'. And it appears at a time when there is a growing interest among psychologists, whether for practical or theoretical reasons, about the role of language in the establishment, maintenance and challenging of power. As titled it is clearly intended to build on that interest.

The work is organised in a manner familiar to psychologists, building from the 'simplest' case—*influence by monologues*—to conversations and more political relationships. Chapters 2 and 3 are collectively titled *Signs of Power* and discuss factors that have been shown to enhance the influence of speakers: style, nonstandardness (of speech), lexical diversity, speech rate and language intensity. A brief discussion of power and gender is included in which the authors conclude that powerlessness produces the kind of speech Lakoff identified as the feminine register. The majority of the references in this discussion are from the 70s and 80s, chosen to explicate the links between the previously identified Signs of Power and gender. I found the discussion unsatisfying

because there is no consideration of why particular styles or modes of speech are invested with power and how that dominance is sustained. Recent researchers, for example Ehrlich and King (1992) and Tavis (1993) have explored such issues and their absence is regrettable. As is the failure to refer to Holmes (1992) and her clear discussion of the effect of the speaker's gender on the willingness of woman to participate in subsequent discussions.

Chapters 4 to 7 discuss influence attempts by speakers who are in conversations and other relationships. The discussion of conversations (Ch 4) is a pleasure to read. The authors have brought together the notions of roles—speaker and hearer—casting and leading, turn taking and topic maintenance or change in a refreshing way. It certainly would provide a good introduction for students but is hardly likely to inform seasoned researchers. Subsequent chapters are more complex, the authors discussing strategies available to speakers who want to mask either their authority or their message. In Ch 5 Grice is introduced, the processes by which hearers are believed to understand indirect message presented and the benefits of such messages for the speaker identified. Devious and misleading messages (Ch 6) are placed in the context of propositional communication and the potential for slippage between pragmatic and semantic meaning of utterances explored. This material is more demanding than that in earlier sections and the brevity of the exposition creates an abstract, academic tone. The abstract quality is heightened by the use of generated, rather than 'real world' examples, as is common in linguistics texts. I feel strongly that the inclusion of some conversational excerpts where the processes were displayed would have done much to increase interest and comprehension.

The last two chapters move into a more structured social world. Chapter 7 discusses the mechanisms such as nominalization, generalization and abstraction that speakers use to mask their authority or agency. And Chapter 8 discusses language dominance and how such dominance is routinized and challenged using male dominance as a case study. It is here that the authors' brevity and their emphasis on describing what is—as distinct from why or how that situation came to be—is most frustrating. *Linguistic Routinization of Male Dominance* (p181-187) presents a brief summary of the volumes of work done on words, 'he-man' language, and syntax but does not employ the bitter arguments that have accompanied this work

to demonstrate the discursive processes previously described.

Through most of the work language is taken as a given, a set of symbols and rules for combining them to convey meaning. The authors describe the flexibility created by choice among the symbols and by exploitation of the mechanisms by which hearers understand what is said. But they do not, probably because they are committed to description, discuss the power struggles that occur around definition of the symbols and issues of usage. The word woman is just one example—remember how female competitors were always involved in 'The Ladies Event(s)'? The section entitled *Linguistic Representations of Reality* (p145-152) provides an opportunity to explore such issues that is not taken. It also creates an expectation that the authors will explore how some speakers are able to privilege their representations of reality to their advantage. But, apart from some hints, there is no sustained presentation of this critical issue. Yet this is central to much of the research on sexist language and the analysis of other forms of oppression.

The greatest value of this book may lie in the way it displays the problems created when attempting to analyse the interdependence of language, people and their social context using the tools and perspective of traditional experimental psychology. Speakers are presented primarily as individuals, their social relations reduced to their turns in a conversation. They do not appear as active members of communities whose discursive practices are simultaneously shaped by and shaping their social practices and structures. Such a focus on individuals abstracted from their social contexts places language use in a rather fairy tale society that is like the 'level playing field' beloved of market economists and early assertiveness courses. Yet the authors present evidence that talk and language are rigged to favour some users rather than others. And they acknowledge that all who wish or need 'power and influence' must use these 'particular ways' if they are to be successful. Others, for example Fairclough (1989) have pointed out that if you merely identify the dominant and powerful ways you imply that the powerless have only themselves to blame if they do not succeed in their attempts at influence because they stupidly persist in using their own 'particular ways'.

Wetherell and Potter (1992) present a comparable criticism of psychological approaches to rac-

ism. Increasingly I am coming to believe that psychology's fundamental commitment to the isolated individual is profoundly unhelpful when we attempt to analyse the relationships between social structures and personal practices. In Ng and Bradac this commitment to psychology either masks or discourages the authors from investigating why 'the particular ways' are as they describe. It is refreshing to compare Fairclough's (1989) examination of the same territory. His title is similar; *Language and Power*, but he makes an early (p1) commitment to '... explain these conventions (of talk and consequence influence) as the product of relations of power and struggles for power.' This commitment requires him to explore the ideological assumptions embedded in the various conventions that have been identified. He proceeds by considering both discourse practices—the subject of Ng and Bradac—and the social practices that they legitimate and are sustained by. For Fairclough both speaker and hearer are understood to operate in a social context that both shapes and is shaped by the language and linguistic resources the people can employ.

There are psychologists (Gavey, 1992; Wetherell & Potter, 1992) who acknowledge the complexities and interdependencies of language, behaviour and social structures in their work. For such researchers Ng and Bradac will be a disappointment. For students and others coming to this difficult area it could provide a gentle introduction, although I would prefer Potter & Wetherell (1987) for that purpose. The weaknesses of this book outweigh its strengths and it falls short of delivering on the reader's expectations. But I retain the hope that, by making the limitations of our 'psychological' approach so clear, the authors will have contributed to a fundamental change in the way our discipline approaches these important issues.

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Trehub, A. (1991)
The Cognitive Brain
Bradford/MIT Press, 1991

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Since the publication of the two volumes of *Parallel Distributed Processing* (McClelland, Rumelhart & the PDP Research Group, 1986; Rumelhart, McClelland & the PDP Group, 1986); information-processing theories of cognition have been largely superseded by connectionist models. Box-and-arrow models have given way to networks that have at least some of the properties of actual neural systems; where the earlier metaphor for the mind was the digital computer, the modern metaphor is the brain itself. This reflects in part a growing realization of the limits of artificial intelligence—computers don't turn out to be so clever after all—and in part the spectacular advance of knowledge in fundamental neuroscience.

Arnold Trehub has been working on neural models since the late 1960s, a good deal longer than most present-day connectionists. In this book he builds a fairly comprehensive model that deals primarily with vision and visual cognition, including high-level pattern recognition. A basic unit of his model is what he calls the synaptic matrix, an adaptive network that maps patterns of input onto single output units. Synaptic units are able to learn to recognize patterns, and through a feedback mechanism can form, 'images' in the absence of actual input. Synaptic matrices can be connected in hierarchical fashion to enable the learning of higher-order concepts. The model as a whole neatly captures many of the properties of visual learning and cognition, including visual illusions (although Muller-Lyer's name is doubly misspelled—an odd illusory twist), visual imagery, attention, and the role of motivation.

Despite its title, this is not a book for the reader eager to catch up on developments in that currently fashionable discipline known as cognitive neuroscience. Rather, it develops a slightly idiosyncratic version of connectionist modelling to fairly selective aspects of cognition. It is not an easy book, especially for those not versed in this

area, although it is not so obtuse or formula-ridden as to be inaccessible to the general reader patient enough to follow the plot. It represents one man's view of how to at least begin to build a mind from parts that at least resemble neurons, and in terms of what it sets out to do I think it is largely successful. But what is built is not so much a cathedral for the mind as an apartment block—a nice place to live, perhaps, but you mightn't want to visit there.

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Richard Nelson-Jones (1992)
Lifeskills Helping. A text book of practical counselling and helping skills. (3rd edition)
Sydney: Holt, Rinehart and Winston
423pp, ISBN 0-7295-1273-8 (paper)

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In *Lifeskills Helping* Nelson-Jones presents his five stage counselling model which conforms to the acronym DASIE. The stages are: (1) Develop the relationship, identify and clarify problems, (2) Assess problems and redefine in skills terms, (3) State working goals and plan interventions, (4) Intervene to develop self-helping skills, and (5) End and consolidate self-helping skills.

A major attainment of the model is that it gives due regard to all three aspects of personal functioning: feelings, thoughts and actions. However, DAISE represents much more than an integration of existential, humanistic, cognitive and behavioural theoretical traditions. The model is principally an operating schema for helping agents who deal with the multitudinous, and multifaceted, problems of living experienced by clients.

The model aside, *Lifeskills Helping* contains some excellent stand alone chapters. Chapters 3 and 4, which deal respectively with counsellor

characteristics (such as motives and values), and establishing a counselling relationship, are notable cases in point. In Chapter 3 Nelson-Jones considers professional ethics and states the view that an ethical helping practitioner has a commitment to competence and to the elimination of any potentially damaging personal tendencies, like breaking confidentiality for the sake of a good story.

This textbook has a tendency to wordiness and some readers may consider the tone a little too exhortory at times. These minor criticisms are the flipside of the book's strengths. *Lifeskills Helping* is recommended as a comprehensive, purposeful and practical introduction to counselling skills.

Daniel Chapelle (1993)
Nietzsche and Psychoanalysis
Albany: State University of New York Press.
258 pages

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I am not a man I am dynamite.

Fredrich Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, p.48.

This future, which the dreamer pictures, has been moulded by his indestructible wish into a perfect likeness of the past.

Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, p.783.

Nietzsche and Psychoanalysis sets out to equate Nietzsche's doctrine of Eternal Return with Freud's notion of repetition compulsion and transference, and winds its way through a terrain sprinkled with literary, psychological and philosophical landmarks, ending in an overarching archetypal and cosmological interpretation of the endeavour. Daniel Chapelle, a psychologist in private practice, describes his book as an exercise in *serio ludere* or serious playfulness, a speculative enterprise to establish an identity where none may exist, predicated on a Nietzschean 'willing suspension of disbelief'. Chapelle is wary of adopting a reductionist standpoint, such as 'reading' Nietzsche through Freud, but instead negotiates the 'tension of difference' between the philosophic and the psychoanalytic.

Apparently, the idea of Eternal Return came to

Nietzsche as a sudden revelation in 1881, while walking in the woods of Northern Italy. It may be summarized as the belief that whatever happens has happened infinitely many times already and will occur again in exactly the way it is happening. In other words, it can be understood as the belief that the life one has now is the only life one has, and that one has it forever. For Nietzsche, Eternal Return was to provide the 'turning point in history', the opportunity to create a wide open future for a 'new type of philosopher who would engage in unbridled and life-affirming experimentation and playfulness (Chapelle, p.3)'. In Nietzsche's world God is dead and there is no limit to what humanity can achieve by following the 'highest' ideals and acting on them moment by moment, as what one does now will recur through eternity. Heidegger (1984) labels the doctrine as the 'fundamental thought of Nietzsche's metaphysics'. Fundamental: yes; simple, no.

Compulsive repetition, as experienced in a psychoanalytic setting, is the psychological locus in which Eternal Return is spontaneously enacted. Transference, such a necessary condition for psychoanalytic cure, can be defined as the process in the relationship between analyst and analysand 'in the important and meaningful episodes of his affective life' (Ricoeur, 1970, quoted in Chapelle, p.103). That is, transference turns life itself into an endless circle in which everything leads nowhere but back to itself. The purpose of the repetition compulsion is a paradoxical one: to function simultaneously as a form of remembering and forgetting. While it is the most powerful form of resistance, it also functions as the key to treatment.

Chapelle argues for thinking of Eternal Return in the context of concretely lived experience. Indeed, he constantly uses adjectives that fix the essay in the concrete (as if wary of the abstract and speculative nature of the essay), stating that 'a skeptical reader ... will find it easy to resist its suggestion' (p.13).

Chapelle concludes the work by moving to an archetypal/cosmological plane, influenced by the work of contemporary Jungian analyst James Hillman. The final section outlines an ontology of meaning, in that all things and all events are renewed manifestations of recurring archetypal happenings. He builds links between Nietzschean metaphysics, depth psychology (using the examples of Freudian free association and Jungian word association) and the myth of Hades, the Greek

Underworld. All are examples of that which lies *underneath*. Beneath the appearance of reality exists a world of active and autonomous imagination, the world that 'speaks' us, the distorted mirror image of the everyday.

While erudite and lucid, it is this archetypal section that I have the most difficulty with, particularly as it attempts to establish Eternal Return as a modern covenant of cosmology, closing off the fruitful speculative practice which pervades the book. It is as if Chapelle backs off from the radical implications of his thesis in order to furnish us with a 'theory of everything', a distinctly non-Nietzschean endeavour. Nietzsche was more interested in attacking the teleological history of cause and effect that overwhelms human psychological energy. Rather than valorising one transcendental purpose (as defined in archetypal psychology, in which 'all meaningful human activities are informed by archetypal models, of which they are renewed editions and materializations' [p.177]), Nietzsche can be read as eliminating the requirement that meaning is derived from a fixed set of values.

The doctrine of Eternal Return has always been the most resistant to interpretation of Nietzsche's philosophy; either dismissed as quasi-mystical or without political relevance. However, it is possible to interpret the notion as an affirmation of becoming and different. We, as subjects, are split, both participating in, and observing our lives. By participating, we are affirming our existence, recognising that all moments are moments of becoming, in a world of flux and chaos.

With the quibbles of world-view and my own reservations about the justified application of archetypal psychology extant, *Nietzsche and Psychoanalysis* remains a fascinating flight of fancy into the possibilities of the therapeutic stage. It provides a systematic and learned introduction to two very different yet immensely valuable conceptual notions, notions which are obscure (if not unknown) to most psychologists.

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