

REVIEW

LINGUISTICS AND ANTHROPOLOGY. Georgetown University Round Table on Languages and Linguistics 1977. M. Saviile-Troiike (ed.) Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press.

This useful collection resulted from the 28th annual Round Table, which focused on language in its cultural context. Participants included both well-known writers on the topic (such as Ferguson, Gumperz, and Fishman) and others (as yet) less recognized. Their seventeen papers range from relatively abstract considerations of theoretical models, to detailed empirical descriptions, to recommendations for language testing and teaching. The book organizes them by the headings and the order in which they were originally presented; I will follow a somewhat different approach.

A heading of probable interest to readers of *Language Learning* is "Applications of Linguistics and Anthropology." Judging this book by the articles there, however, would be unfortunate. The paper by Munby is at times labored, at times ad-hoc; the one by Seelye is superficial. Only the Taylor article contrasts with this generally disappointing series: it features incisive insights into how standardized tests "presuppose that the test taker has a knowledge of the language, culture, and values of the test maker(s)." Speakers of nonstandard dialects, accordingly, tend to score lower on such tests, providing "objective" support for prejudice against them. Taylor calls on linguists to become more active in combatting this problem and proposes a strategy of reform: specifying exactly which item on which test is likely to penalize nonstandard speakers will pinpoint where and what changes should be made.

Also there are papers in other sections of the book which have much to say about applications of linguistics and anthropology. For instance, Blount examines links between parental speech and child language acquisition. He claims that most earlier research on this topic showed little connection between parents' input and children's output, largely because of the researchers' concern with the acquisition of syntax. In contrast, Blount hypothesizes that parental activities are crucial, for they engage children in social interactions (ultimately, in conversations) which they progressively enrich and guide as the children develop communication skills. He describes a longitudinal study of interactions in two languages which revealed ethnic and sexual differences in parental speech to

infants, and he closes by affirming that "parental activities establish the groundwork for language socialization by providing children with the fundamental behavior pattern for discovering their language and its appropriate use." Whether or not the reader accepts parent-child interactions as the model for a linguistic discovery procedure, it seems reasonable to agree that children learn their native languages within communication contexts shaped in large part by parental activities. Interestingly, the paper by McClure finds an analogous constraint on the speech of young Mexican-American bilinguals. Such children code-switch primarily according to their perceptions of the participants in a conversation. That is, they consider factors like the proficiencies, preferences, and social identities of the speaker and hearer(s) in choosing which language to use. This informative paper also describes other situational and stylistic, as well as syntactic, constraints on code-switching. For instance, children apparently develop the ability to handle "cross-language ellipsis" (roughly, non-congruence of structures between languages) progressively with age. However, this ability may also be affected by many other factors and constitutes an important focus for further research (see Huxley, *in press*). Both the Blount and McClure articles, then, emphasize how participants in social interactions can constrain the communication which occurs between them. Teachers could apply this insight by designing language programs so as to draw on the social and linguistic competence which students have already developed. Burling (1978), for example, describes such an approach to teaching reading in a foreign language.

The article by Heath is relevant to an interest in applications in a different way. Her paper boils with ideas about multilingualism, literacy, and "legalese" (i.e., technical language used by bureaucracies) in the U.S., as seen from historical, legal, and sociolinguistic perspectives. She shows that the developing importance of newspapers and the dispute over national versus regional loyalties helped make 1850 a temporal divide between earlier American policies fostering oral communication and multilingualism and later ones emphasizing literacy and English as THE national language. Her comments on legalese are also well taken: this form of communication grows with the increasing regulation of modern life: schools don't teach citizens how to comprehend or produce legalese; elites deal with the situation by requesting clarifications in officially approved manners or by hiring "interpreters" (i.e., lawyers and CPA's). The paper ends with a series of recommendations about topics for research, of which the most

urgent concern methods for assessing strategies of language teaching and for testing language fluency and dominance.

Those readers interested in a more theoretical view of linguistics and anthropology will find the Ferguson and Gumperz articles a good introduction. Ferguson provides a general overview of anthropological linguistics: it is a discipline which employs elicitation, naturalistic observation, and participant observation to gather data on language and (other parts of) culture; then it analyzes this data by holistic, cross-cultural (or comparative), and historical methods. The article also lists several topics currently being studied by each of these ways of gathering and analyzing data. Gumperz's paper, in contrast, uses a reverse approach: it concentrates on a particular topic – how participants in a conversation interpret each other's activities in context – and recommends combining aspects of three different research traditions to study it. The resulting method is then applied to analyze two conversations: in the intra-ethnic one, participants correctly inferred that the speaker was joking; in the inter-ethnic one, they misinterpreted the speaker as being rude. Gumperz says that participants' coordination of nonverbal communication (e.g., "body language") can be examined to locate such misinterpretations, and he closes the paper by explaining how problems based on one such mistake were corrected.

Several other papers in the collection concern the research tradition known as the ethnography of speaking, defined by one of them as "a description in cultural terms (ethnography) of the patterned uses of language and speech (speaking) in a particular group, institution, community, or society." Sherzer's critical appraisal makes an especially important contribution: after reviewing the history of this form of analysis and mentioning current research employing it, he specifies several theoretical issues (lack of a framework for comparing studies, insufficient attention to universals, etc.) and methodological lacks (need for more quantitative data, need for studies where researchers have a native-speaker's competence) which must be dealt with if this research tradition is to continue. Bauman's paper places the development of this form of analysis in a broader chronological frame, summarizes some of the substantive work which has been accomplished using it, and describes research of his own on children's acquisition of riddle and knock-knock routines in English. Also, McClendon's paper on narratives in Russian and Eastern Pomo plausibly employs aspects of an ethnography of speaking to stress the importance of cultural presuppositions to interpreting narrative structures.

However, considering the crucial role given by this research tradition to the context in which folklore is performed, it is difficult to accept McClendon's conclusions about links between narratives and the social structures of groups which tell them unless and until we know how comparable were the narrative's contexts of performance.

Nida makes a similar point in stressing the many factors which can influence the form of a translation. He contrasts traditional philological and linguistic approaches to the problems of translation with his own sociolinguistic perspective, which focuses on translation as an act of communication, a link between source and receptor(s) that performs a complex combination of language functions – expressive, informative, etc. Finally, he considers how the lexical, grammatical, and rhetorical features (plus the literary genres in which they are culturally grouped) must be dealt with in translation to accomplish these various functions:

The Silverstein paper concerns dependencies among levels of linguistic and meta-linguistic analysis. Recalling Pike's argument that any phonemic account presupposes at least enough grammatical analysis to specify the free forms contrasted in minimal pairs, Silverstein claims that so also grammatical analysis depends on the breakdown of a "deeper" level of organization – culturally defined types of discourse. For instance, the personal pronoun *I* presupposes a social role (that of speaker); this role is defined by its similarities and contrasts with others in a closed set or system that the English-speaking culture has specified. Accordingly, any grammatical account of personal pronouns depends upon a logically prior analysis of the cultural specifications underlying them. Silverstein also describes other "cultural prerequisites" for grammatical analysis and criticizes attempts to investigate them through introspection. Such a procedure confounds folk and analytical models of the organization underlying speech, he says. Citing Whorf's insight that native speakers have only a limited awareness of the presuppositions underlying their communication behavior, Silverstein calls for a reformulation of linguistic theory in order to make them explicit.

Another of Whorf's reflections is taken up in the article by Key. She recalls his account of the differential behavior of workmen toward empty versus full gasoline drums – namely, that they were less cautious of fire and explosion around drums marked empty, even though those drums contained vapor and were thus more dangerous – to illustrate how people's language can affect their behavior. Similarly, the statutory reclassifications of job

titles and functions now occurring in the U.S. to remove verbal bias against females may also have an effect on how people think about and act toward women, Key says. This indeed seems plausible, but a more interesting paper would have resulted if she had provided evidence to show how precisely it is the case. The Brown paper, for instance, follows this approach: it considers data from many languages to examine the ways in which their speakers encode basic color classes (white, black, red, etc.) and botanical life forms (tree, grass, herb, etc.). This examination leads Brown to posit a "weak substantive universal" about the developmental order of this encoding. For example, if a language has a basic color term for red, it must have them for black and white, too. While recognizing that humans also have a special neural faculty for perceiving certain hues of color, Brown argues that the universal sequencing of lexical categories which he has documented provides support (*contra* Chomsky) for a more "general purpose" faculty underlying the human capacity for language.

The two papers remaining in the collection consider diachronic changes in different languages. Sankoff's article, entitled "Cliticization in New Guinea Tok Pisin," examines how a subject pronoun first lost its semantic content and functioned syntactically only to emphasize sentence subjects, then gradually has been losing even this syntactic function and becoming deleted during the 85-year period for which she has data. Despite this marked change in linguistic structure over time, speakers of the language have remained mutually intelligible, thus indicating that earlier views about language uniformity were simplistic and demonstrating that more sophisticated concepts and methods are now being employed to study variation. Fishman's paper is more programmatic, describing a study of how (mostly Western) societies have conceived of ethnicity, and its relation to language, since the days of ancient Israel and Greece. He provides a useful distinction between ethnicity and racism: whereas *ethnicity* involves both some innate, ascribed "essence" which is reincarnated through time and some characteristic way(s) of thinking and acting (including speaking), *racism* focuses on the innate, ascribed "essence" and necessarily ranks groups of humans by the worthiness of "their" essences. (One might say that ethnicity discriminates, while racism discriminates against.)

Thus the seventeen papers of this collection are varied in quality as well as in topical focus. I have attempted to review them by shared foci (applications, ethnography of speaking, etc.) but claim no innate superiority for proceeding in this manner. The editor of the book has provided useful abstracts for each of the papers as an introduction. Furnishing an index of the major topics treated, I feel, would be an additional and important help to the reader.

REFERENCES

- Burling, R. 1978. An introductory course in reading French. *Language Learning* 28, 2: 105-128.
- Huxley, F. In press. Contrasting semantic structures in English and Arabic and problems of second-language learning. In: *Essays on Ethnographic Semantics*. H. Scheffler (ed.).

Frederick C. Huxley
University of Michigan – Dearborn