

Pačesová, Jaroslava

[Weir, Ruth Hirsch. *Language in the Crib*]

Sborník prací Filozofické fakulty brněnské univerzity. A, Řada jazykovědná.
1965, vol. 14, iss. A13, pp. 212-216

Stable URL (handle): <https://hdl.handle.net/11222.digilib/100380>

Access Date: 29. 11. 2024

Version: 20220831

Terms of use: Digital Library of the Faculty of Arts, Masaryk University provides access to digitized documents strictly for personal use, unless otherwise specified.

bilinguisme.⁵ En s'appuyant sur une méticuleuse documentation, l'auteur „proteste contre l'assertion qui dit que le bilingue est un arriéré; il y a des bilingues arriérés, mais ce n'est pas à cause du bilinguisme, c'est à cause de l'ensemble des facteurs économiques et sociaux qui jouent dans la détermination de la situation de bilingue“. L'étude est importante non seulement du point de vue pédagogique, mais aussi du point de vue du linguiste qui y trouvera bien des remarques sur les emprunts des mots d'une langue à une autre langue. On doit même être d'accord avec l'auteur que la question du bilinguisme devient de plus en plus importante, parce que „l'extension croissante des bilinguismes dans le monde doit conduire à un intérêt grandissant pour les problèmes linguistiques, sociaux et psychologiques qui s'y rattachent.“

La *bibliographie générale* par laquelle l'ouvrage se termine, enrichit la fameuse bibliographie de Werner F. Leopold. Tous ceux qui voudront désormais s'occuper de l'étude du langage enfantin ne pourront point se dispenser de la lecture du présent livre et ils seront reconnaissants à M. Cohen de l'avoir publié.

Karel Ohnesorg

Ruth Hirsch Weir: Language in the Crib, Mouton & Co, The Hague, 1962, pp. 216

The present book is a very interesting and valuable contribution to the study of the child's acquisition of language. It deals with certain aspects of the language of a two-and-one-half year old boy. The investigation focuses on language, both as a skill, that is, in its distinctive function, and as a means of communication, that is, in its significative function. The child's language is studied here as a self-contained system under special circumstances, namely, when he talks to himself just before falling asleep. Some comparison is made between the child's language of these pre-sleep monologues and his day language on the one hand, and the language of the adults around him on the other. (This is certainly in agreement with Marcel Cohen who calls for comparison between the child's language and the language of the adults around the child.) The child's language in the recordings is completely spontaneous, that is to say, he was at no time aware that his speech was recorded. Thus the question of the child's awareness of being observed and the consequent validity of data often discussed in literature on child's language, is not relevant here. The basic corpus underlying this study are nine tapes recorded at a period of two months, transcribed and analyzed. The author supposed it to be more convenient to start the phonemic analysis from larger units, and, by breaking them up, to arrive at the minimal functional unit, the phoneme and its constituent features. This is also more consistent with the linguistic development of the child, which does not proceed from using single phonemes to arrive at larger units but starts with a larger unit which is then broken up into phonemic constituents and contrasts.

Under prosody, the author includes intonation, pauses and stress. The length, on the other hand, is taken up together with complex syllabic nuclei since its patterning is in variation with them.

It is frequently noted in observations on the linguistic development of the child that intonation is one of the earliest linguistic feature acquired by a child. The present study confirms the fact as far as the purely imitative phonetic aspect of language acquisition is concerned. It seems, however, that the previous investigations have not tried to analyze intonation from a structural point of view. Ruth Weir's study, on the other hand, is a piece of valuable research in this respect. She finds three pitch levels in her boy's speech, which are, however, not used contrastively. A fourth level occurs, higher than any others, in calls and urgent requests. In terms of contours, the most frequent one is *falling*; next in frequency is a *rising* contour; a *sustained* one is found least frequently. But here again the author is unable to discover a functional relationship among them. Nevertheless, intonation does perform a certain function, but on a different level: it serves as a marker of sentence boundaries. The syntactic structures found in the corpus are varied, but a sentence can most readily be defined by an intonation contour with either a final fall or final rise, or by a sustained pitch, each followed by pauses of varying length.

As for the stress, two contrastive levels can be identified in the boy's linguistic system, phonemically *stressed* and *unstressed*. The child uses contrastive stress in accordance with standard English consistently and correctly. But he does have a tendency to overuse the feature of stress that is to place it on an additional syllable to the one bearing stress.

⁵ L'auteur a publié sur ce sujet encore d'autres études: *L'acquisition du français écrit par des enfants de langue maternelle dialectale allemande* (Le Courrier de la Rech. Pédag. 1959, No 10). — *Problèmes psychopédagogiques du bilinguisme*. (Rev. Inter. Pédag. 1960, 6, No 1).

In order to arrive at a more revealing picture of the child's structure of vowel and non-vowel phonemes, it is essential to view these phonemes as being constituted of bundles of articulatory features.

With vowel phonemes, the author took the following independent articulatory movements into consideration: tongue height, with three positions in relation to the oral cavity, called *high*, *mid* and *low* respectively; tongue position, named *front*, *central* and *back*; relative tautness of the organs of speech, *tense* or *lax* respectively; position of the lips during the vowel production, the lips *rounded* or *unrounded*; the relative duration of the vowel produced — its *length*.

The author proceeds to offer a thorough description of each vowel phoneme existing in the boy's repertoire, with its phonetic variants represented graphically, described phonetically and charted as to the frequency and place of occurrence. She finds five vowel phonemes at the cardinal points of the vowel triangle, namely *i*, *e*, *a*, *o*, *u* each of them having a number of positional variants. These reduced vowel system can be expected in view of the findings of other investigators of child's language generally.

To summarize the role of articulatory features in her boy's vowel system, the author offers these conclusions: the feature of *rounding* has been well learned. In regard to tongue position, the contrasts are basically *high* versus *non-high* and *back* versus *non-back*, with small exception, disregarding the intermediary positions of *mid* and *central*. The feature of *tense* versus *lax* is still very unstable and is not used contrastively. The phonemic status of *length* is also highly dubious. In terms of a phonemic analysis it can be said that the feature of length is imperfectly learned and is not used contrastively at this stage of language development.

To close the chapter on vowel phonemes, the author gives the proportions of the occurrences of the vowel phonemes. Another figure shows the occurrences of the vowel phonemes in their order of frequency. She tried to compare her statistical findings with those contained in some relevant studies of standard English, but due to the widely differing analysis the data for vowels are not truly comparable. The only thing which could be said with some validity is that the non-back vowels *E*, *I* are far the most frequent ones.

As for the phonemic fluctuation of vowels, the most striking instability with the boy was the fluctuation between *A* and *O* (due most probably to the dialectal variation caused by the different dialects spoken in the family). Less widespread but still considerable was the fluctuation of *A* and *E* (which again can be explained by imitating different dialects at home.) Five instances of *I* and *E* were found and one example of *E* and *O*. In summary then, the original five point vowel triangle can still be reduced further to a three point triangle *U*, *A*, *I*, the same as given by Jakobson as the first vocalic split, opposing the single *compact A* to the *diffuse* and *grave U* and the *diffuse* and *acute I*, or, in the author's articulatory terminology the preservation of only two features: *high* versus *low*, and *front* versus *back*.

The system of consonant phonemes presents a much simplified picture in terms of variants than did that of the vowels. Bearing the consonant phonemes of standard English in mind, the findings here are parallel to a considerable extent, with the exception that some of the standard phonemes are found only as variants in the child's system. Since the phonemic analysis of standard English consonants show agreement, a comparison of the author's findings with those of standard English is feasible.

As for the stops and nasals, the author finds a voiceless and a voiced stop phoneme at the bilabial, alveolar and velar points of articulation (*p*, *b*, *t*, *d*, *k*, *g*). The voiceless stops are usually highly aspirated and often finally released. All of them occur initially, medially and finally. The proportions are charted again in figures. It is interesting to note that the occurrence of these six stop phonemes account for almost half of all consonant occurrences in the text. This is at great variance with the data dealing with standard English where the stops account for only slightly more than 18% of all consonants. It is, however, in agreement with Robbins Burling's findings (cf. R. Burling, *Language Development of a Garo and English Speaking Child*, Word, Vol. 15, 1959) and closely corresponds to the pattern which is characteristic of this stage of speech of any child generally.

A further break-down shows the proportion of bilabial stops as compared to alveolar and velar ones. It is interesting to note that the velar stops are somewhat more frequent than the labials, a fact true only of the oral stops but not of the nasals. In view of the fact that the dentals (alveolars in this case) are retained longest by the aphasics, it is perhaps not surprising that almost fifty percent of the child's stops are alveolar. A similar correlation is found in the nasals where *n* occurs most frequently, followed by *m*, another consonant lost late by aphasics.

In terms of features, the *stop articulation* has been well learned by the child, which is consistent with all the findings on the child language generally. This applies also to the feature of *frontness* versus *backness* where the child shows a greater predilection for the front stops as

compared to the back ones, which again can be confirmed by the conclusions arrived at in earlier works in this field. *Aspiration* and *release* are two other well learned features (again in agreement with other authors, e.g. Burling). It is, however, the feature of *voicing* which shows greatest instability and is therefore of interest. The fluctuation, typical also of sibilants, is mostly confined to the final position but occurs in other positions as well. Evidence for the loss of the feature of voicing is adduced by nearly all works dealing with the child's language (the latest contribution on this problematic is to be found in *Zeitschrift für Phonetik und Kommunikationswissenschaft*, 1964 p. 265-268).

The preponderance of stop phonemes is to be expected in the light of Jakobson's theory of the development of the phonemic system. He establishes as the first dichotomy learned by the child that of a *consonant* versus *vowel*, the consonant actually used being a stop. Next, the consonantal sphere is broken up into *oral* versus *nasal*, which is again confirmed by the present study.

As for the liquids, it is surprising that the author finds relatively great stability of *l* and *r*. This is rather at disagreement with the findings of most investigators in this field who speak of the late appearance of liquids (*r* particularly). — A probable late acquisition of the liquids is borne out also by the fact that they are lost early by aphasics.

Both voiceless and voiced labiodental spirants occur, presenting a very interesting picture. The voiceless spirant *f* also substitutes for the interdental *θ* thus showing the instability of the feature of *interdentality*, a fact which is pointed out, e.g., by Jakobson. (In the speech of aphasics the interdentals are absent very early.) The voiced labiodental *v* is to be considered a separate phoneme since it is consistently used contrastively. Its functional yield is low and therefore the author assumes that it is just being learned as a distinctive unit. This is confirmed by a great deal of fluctuation between *v* and *b*, which has been established by other works as well.

Both interdental spirants, *θ* and *ɣ*, occur, but quite rarely. The fluctuation between *θ* and *f* has been mentioned, the remaining *θ* and *ɣ* can be classified as the variants of *t* and *d* respectively. As for the sibilants *s*, *ʃ*, in spite of the relatively few occurrences *s* clearly contrasts with *ʃ*, with the only fluctuation caused by the influence of the Danish member of the household in whose native tongue the *s* versus *ʃ* contrast does not exist. Most other linguist offer parallel findings on sibilants as to their relatively later development and the instability of *f* and *z* contrasts. We find it rather surprising that the affricates *tʃ* and *dʒ* should be phonemes in the author's interpretation of the data. Other observations as well as the early loss of *tʃ* and *dʒ* by aphasics would point to their late acquisition by the child.

To summarize the status of articulatory features of the consonant phonemes, the instability of the feature of *voicing* is striking. It is only fairly stable in the case of an even greater instability of another feature, namely, that of *interdentality*. With few exceptions the place and manner of articulation are quite stable, as are the *release* and *aspiration*.

In the same way as with the vowel phonemes the author gives the proportions of the consonant phonemes and their relative occurrences. She finds a striking preponderance of consonants produced in the front of the mouth, which may suggest a further representation of the relationship of bilabials, labiodentals and alveolars as opposed to palatals and velars. In regard to manner of articulation, the oral stops account for 48,5% of all consonant occurrences, and with the addition of the nasals, occlusives constitute 66,1% of the consonants found. To carry the analysis further, the author compares all consonants in all positions occurring in pairs of voiceless / voiced. This is the only time that voiceless consonant predominate, due to the loss of the feature of voicing of the marked member of the pair. If, however, all non-vowel phonemes, including nasals and liquids, are taken into consideration, then the voiced consonants are by far more frequent than voiceless ones (64,6% : 35,4%).

A comparison with the studies of standard English reveals a striking fact that the first three most frequent phonemes coincide (*e*, *i*, *t*). In regard to liquids the total of over 15% in the present study parallels the totals of standard English, but the proportions of *l* and *r* are just the reverse (*l* being more frequent in the present data). In the case of spirants, the author finds the nasals and affricates parallel to those of standard English. Due to the child's devoicing of consonants paired by the voiceless versus voiced feature (which is to be attributed to the influence of his mother's speech, who is not English-born), it is not surprising that the proportion of occurrences of the voiceless member of the pair is about 20% higher than standard English occurrences. However, in comparing all voiced with all voiceless consonants, the present findings parallel closely the proportions of standard English.

Due attention is paid to clusters. Two, three and four consonant combinations are discussed according to position where they occur in the word, each of these groups being illustrated by examples.

The next chapter deals with the phonemic shapes of words. In terms of their length, the

words in the corpus can be divided into three groups: monosyllabic, disyllabic and trisyllabic words in the following proportions: 68,8 % : 28,1 % : 3,1 % respectively. This fact, however, does not seem to be characteristic of children's language alone, but of English in general.

As for the shapes of the words, the author offers an analysis of their consonant and vowel sequences. The most frequent shape in her findings is CVC, next in frequency are CV and VC, CVCV coming fourth. The CVCC, CVCVC and CCVC shapes are also quite common as might be expected on the basis of standard English.

The author also mentions several occurrences of telescoping, some side by side with longer forms. Gregoire makes similar observations on omission of syllables in polysyllabic words and so do nearly all investigators of child's language, the first to do so most probably being Jespersen in *Language, Its Nature, Development and Origin*, London, 1922.

The next chapters of the book under review are devoted to the grammar and discourse analysis. Due attention is drawn to the problem whether the development of morphology precedes that of syntax, or vice versa. Ruth Weir's findings — in agreement with other scholars in this field — speak for the fact that the syntactic relationships are mastered earlier than morphologic inflection, both in the pre-sleep monologues of the child and even more so in his day speech. As in the chapters dealing with phonology, the author presents some statistical information on the types of words and the types of sentences including their length. The imperative sentences are the most frequent type, followed by declaratives and interrogatives, with a great number of structurally ambiguous sentences which due to their elliptic constructions cannot be readily classified. As to the sentence length, two and three word sentences are the most frequent; four- and five-word sentences show a considerable drop-off, six-word sentences are rare and there are no true sentences beyond the seven-word length, which of course, can be stated generally in regard to children's speech.

In the morphology of the noun, the possessive case is restricted to „personalized“ nouns. The adjectives are not inflected, no gradation appears. In regard to verbs, the -ing form has been mastered grammatically but not fonetically and it is a true paradigmatic form. The past, however, shows a paradigmatic awareness within the marked and unmarked form of a particular verb only and the past paradigm as a whole has not yet been generalized in the child's linguistic system. On the level of derivation, new-formations with bound morphemes are practically non-existent, but the compounding of words has been learned fairly well. In comparing word events (running words) with word designs (different words) the proportion of noun events and verb events is about the same. In terms of designs, however, nouns outnumber verbs considerably.

The author also takes up the frequency of the vocabulary occurring in the corpus. The choice of vocabulary in the monologues is very limited when compared with the child's lexical capacity during the day.

In the appendix we may find the complete corpus in rough phonetic transcription. The phonetic symbols are those commonly used in American linguistic works.

Let us close our review of Ruth Weir's interesting study with the words of Roman Jakobson, who says in the introduction to this book: „The half dream soliloquies of the two-and-one-half year old boy lead us into a fascinating and hitherto unexplored province of language. For linguistic study in the border zone of inner speech and dream speech the various specimens of reduction and condensation are particularly inviting. One could hardly find a more gratifying text for investigation of radical elipsis on the different levels of language — fragmentation not only of sentences, clauses and phrases but also of words used side by side in their full forms. Sometimes it is difficult to separate features typical of inner speech in general from those which specify the speech development in young children. Nonetheless, here one immediately detects new and valuable clues to the study of child language. According to Ruth Weir's subtle observations, the lowering of the cognitive, referential function in Anthony's soliloquies brings to the fore all other language functions. A typical property of child's speech is an intimate interlacement of two functions — the metalingual and the poetic one — which in adult language are quite separate. Although the pivotal role which in language learning belongs to the acquisition of metalanguage is well-known, the predominantly metalingual concern of the somnolent child with language itself comes as a great surprise. It shows us the ways in which language is gradually mastered. Many of the recorded passages bear a striking resemblance to the grammatical and lexical exercises in textbooks for self-instruction in foreign language.

Anthony's bedtime play with language as a condensed summary of his day imperatively calls for further investigation...“

And so do many other aspects of the child's acquisition of language. It is to be appreciated that for many years the child's speech has been studied in different countries and from different points of view. It has to be stated, however, that though our knowledge of children's articulation, retardations, developmental dyslalias, of children's vocabulary etc. has grown in recent years,

our knowledge of language behaviour in children and of the influences related to its development still shows considerable gaps. Comparative studies in different languages and cultures would provide other materials and thus help to determine the extent to which various factors affect the child's acquisition of language.

Jaroslava Pačesová

Rudolf Růžička: *Das syntaktische System der altslavischen Partizipien und sein Verhältnis zum Griechischen*, Akademie-Verlag, Berlin 1963, 395 s.

Důležitou součástí slavistických studií tvoří stále bádání o staroslověnském jazyce, jeho gramatickém systému a slovní zásobě. Charakteristickým rysem soudobých výzkumů v oblasti mluvnické stavby staroslověnštiny je zvláště silná snaha o poznání její syntaxe, neboť ta dosud nebyla probádána tak zevrubně jako třeba hláskosloví nebo morfologie. Zájem o stsl. syntax se projevuje nejen u nás, kde jej kromě dílčích studií jednotlivých dokládá výrazně akademický sborník prací *Issledovanija po sintaksisu staroslavjanskogo jazyka* z r. 1963, ale též v Sovětském svazu, kde se za poslední dobu objevila celá řada syntaktických prací o staroslověnštině z pera autorů jako Tolstoj, Pravdin, Skupskij, Chodova, Bunina, Suprun nebo Toporov, dále v Polsku, kde na tomto poli úspěšně pracuje Cz. Bartula a L. Moszyński, i na Západě, kde do syntaktické problematiky staroslověnštiny zasahují důležitými pracemi badatelé jako H. Bräuer, H. Birnbaum aj.

Významným vkladem do tohoto úsilí světové slavistiky je i recenzovaná monografie o syntaxi nt-ových a s-ových particiipií v stsl. evangelích, v níž R. Růžička, profesor lipské university a ředitel jejího jazykovědného institutu, zachycuje a interpretuje na impozantním materiálu (1379 číslovaných komentovaných stsl. dokladů s řeckými předlohami) celý systém syntaktických konstrukcí participia praes. act. a praet. act. ve stsl. evangelích kodexech. Škoda, že sem autor nezařadil i pojednání o dativu absolutním, kterému věnoval studii samostatnou, a zbavil tak svou knihu atributu úplnosti. Cílem práce je vyložit systematicky a do všech podrobností soustavu stsl. participiálních vazeb a jejich vztah k řeckým předlohám na základě stavu v památkách, tedy funkčně a synchronně, ale v úsilí o maximální úplnost a komplexnost výkladu jsou do práce vloženy i pasáže týkající se geneze jednotlivých konstrukcí a participiálních obrátů vůbec. Řekneme hned úvodem, že tento všestranný výklad syntaxe stsl. aktivních particiipií je ve svém celku úspěšný a velmi zdařilý.

V genetických pasážích vychází Růžička z velmi dobré znalosti české syntaktické školy (Zubatý, Trávníček, Havránek) a jejího učení o nominálních větvích a z jemné analýzy materiálu též v mnoha případech neobyčejně zajímavé poznatky o genetických souvislostech mezi různými typy participiálních konstrukcí i nové argumenty pro uznání jejich jmenně větňého původu.

Ve funkční analýze zkoumaných vazeb se hlásí k odkazu ruské školy v její potebňovské linii (Potebňa, Ovsjaniko – Kulikovskij, Istrina), ale podstatným způsobem její určení rozvíjí a překračuje, poučen metodologickými výsledky pražského strukturalismu (s prospěchem např. buduje svůj výklad na principu asymetrické korelace příznakových a nepříznakových členů) i soudobými metodami transformace apod.

Základní konstitutivní antinomii v systému stsl. particiipií spatřuje R. mezi particiipií jmennými a složenými: příznakovým členem této korelační dvojice je participium v tvaru složeném; jeho příznakem je nepřísudkovost. Bezpříznakový člen (tj. jmenný tvar participia) vystupuje v celé řadě různých konstrukcí, v nichž má různé funkce — od predikativní až po atributivní, přičemž podle autora není možno v každém jednotlivém případě přesně a beze zbytku odlišit jednu od druhé. To je zjištění nepochybně správné, a proto sotva přesvědčí autorovy vlastní ojedinělé pokusy přece jen v některých konkrétních dokladech „atributivní“ a „predikativní“ užití participia rozlišit; nepodařilo se mu zde v hodnocení jednotlivosti vyhnout se vždy skupině subjektivismu — není např. zcela jasné, proč by mělo mít atributivní povahu participium v dokl. 167 na str. 43 (*i vsi ljudbe viděvše. vřzdaše chvalo bvi* L. 18.43), ale predikativní povahu participium v dokl. 168 (*i abe vsz narodz. viděvše i usaz se* Mr 9.15). Autor je si ovšem plně vědom vážnosti kritérií při řešení této otázky, a proto provádí vnitřní dělení celé první skupiny podle příznaků formálně syntaktických. Rozlišuje především konstrukce s jmennými particiipií v nom. a s jmennými particiipií v nepřímých pádech a uvnitř nominativních particiipií uplatňuje jako systematizační hledisko jejich postavení vzhledem k přísudkovému slovesu (příznaková prepozice a bezpříznaková postpozice). Pojednává vždy nejprve o konstrukcích s jedním participiem (monoparticipiálních), na nichž demonstruje podstatné a celkové znaky probíraného typu, a pak o konstrukcích s více particiipií (polyparticipiálních), u nichž si všímá komplikovanějších a často rozmanitě kombinovaných vztahů mezi particiipií a verbem finitem i mezi particiipií samými v rovině syntaktické i sémantické. Je to vskutku značné a úctyhodné rozpětí záběru od jevů