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L's treatments of the Clintons and O. J. Simpson would probably be of less interest to readers of this journal than to students of literary criticism. The constant theme here, as elsewhere in the book, is that established elites control the narratives about public life, are threatened by alternative narratives, and are hostile to those who offer these alternatives. Because their marriage defies traditional narratives of gender, reaction to the Clintons has been especially hostile. Hillary Rodham Clinton has been subjected to 'continual public interpretation, reinterpretation, misinterpretation, and overinterpretation' (185), and both the Clintons are regarded as outsiders by official Washington, part of THEM, not us. Bill Clinton is regarded as a 'hill billy' (276), but he also threatens official Washington because he is racially indeterminate. L describes this as 'culturally black' (275), which explains the way the media have tried to hypersexualize their treatment of Clinton much as Republicans tried to do to Anita Hill. The same theme appears in L's treatment of the Simpson trial although here we see the country divided because African Americans do not share the same narratives about the justice system as does the establishment.

I enjoyed reading this book. L is not only a fine linguist, she is a witty and insightful writer. I am saddened that it will probably not reach a wider audience and be read by people who are neither linguists nor even academics. At the very least, I myself will use it in my classes so that my students, most of whom will not become professional linguists, will get an idea of the contributions linguists can make to public life.

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New horizons in the study of language and mind. By NOAM CHOMSKY. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000. Pp. xvii, 230.

Reviewed by D. TERENCE LANGENDOEN, *University of Arizona*

This is a collection of seven essays based on lectures and articles by Noam Chomsky from 1992 to the present, together with a foreword by Neil Smith. C has published a number of books like this one over the years, which attack the empiricist philosophy of language of Quine, Putnam, Davidson, and others and which defend his own 'naturalist' and 'internalist' views. This book also traces developments in the philosophy of language from the time of Sir Isaac Newton, and thus picks up where *Cartesian linguistics* (1966) leaves off. C points out that the problem of reconciling the 'mental' with the 'physical' was fundamentally altered by Newton's demonstration that Cartesian mechanism is untenable. The ultimate solution to the 'mind-body problem', if it is found at all, is not likely to involve a reduction of the mental to the physical. Rather, the mental should be studied just like the physical, using whatever tools, methods, and insights are available, without arbitrary stipulations such as those of the philosophers mentioned above who limit the study of language in particular to correlations with observable behavior. Many, if not most linguists, C observes, ignore the strictures of these eminent philosophers, so that their efforts amount to nothing more than the harassment of the practitioners of an emerging science.

Since 'natural language' is what develops naturally in the course of language acquisition without instruction, the internalist and naturalist study of language does not consider those aspects of language which result from the imposition of community norms nor does it consider specialized uses which must be explicitly taught. For example, the common mass noun *water* does not mean 'H₂O' in any natural language (thus rendering irrelevant to the study of natural languages such thought experiments as Putnam's 1975 'twin earth' thought experiments), and the consideration of what *water* does mean in a natural language leads to the conclusion that its reference cannot be determined extensionally. The same is true for every referring expression in a natural language, including proper nouns. Further, C maintains that the meanings of most lexical items in a natural language are far more elaborate than what is normally recorded in dictionaries and suggests that lexical structure is best explored within a decompositional framework such as that of Moravcsik 1990 or Pustejovsky 1995 as a kind of abstract syntax.

In the first essay, C traces the evolution of his own conception of grammar, beginning with transformational-generative grammar in its various forms; continuing with the 'principles and parameters' framework, which he considers a more significant 'revolution' than transformational-generative grammar, the latter being a continuation of both traditional and structuralist ideas; and culminating in the 'minimalist program'. In the principles and parameters framework, an internalized grammar (an I-language) is considered, in the words of the fifth essay, to be 'an instantiation of the initial state [with the parameters fixed], idealizing from the actual states of the language faculty', which are 'the result of the interaction of a great many factors, only some of which are relevant to the inquiry into the nature of language' (123). The development of the minimalist program was motivated by two closely related questions. First, 'to what extent [can] the principles themselves . . . be reduced to deeper and natural properties of computation' (123); and second, 'to what extent [is] language . . . a "good solution" to the legibility conditions imposed by the external systems with which it interacts' (9)?

As the descriptor 'minimalist' suggests, C seeks a theory which is stripped to bare essentials. A language must contain phonetic and semantic features, a way of bundling these together into lexical items, and a way of combining lexical items together into larger expressions. It must also interact with other systems of the mind/brain which are responsible for producing and recognizing its expressions both phonetically and conceptually. An ideal or 'perfect' I-language is one whose computational apparatus consists only of entities and operations that are necessary to insure that the expressions it generates are 'legible' to the relevant sensorimotor and conceptual systems and that the latter gets what it needs to carry out its tasks of thought and action. C states that 'there are . . . indications that the language faculty may be close to "perfect" in this sense; if true, this is a surprising conclusion' (9), and one that would require us to discard most of the theoretical apparatus that has been developed (much of it by C himself) over the past 50 years.

C identifies two potential imperfections in the design of language: the existence of features that lack both phonetic and semantic value, such as structural case; and the 'displacement property', that 'phrases are interpreted as if they were in a different position in the expression' (12). He then observes that '[o]n the assumption of optimal design, we expect them to be related, and that seems to be the case: uninterpretable features are the mechanism that implements the displacement property' (12). However, it turns out that the latter is not an imperfection at all but is 'motivated by interpretive requirements that are externally imposed by our systems of thought' (13). But then the existence of uninterpreted features is not an imperfection either since they are needed to implement the displacement property.

If all this seems to be too good to be true, it probably is. First, since the displacement property is not an imperfection, the expectation that it should be related to a real imperfection, namely the existence of uninterpreted features, vanishes. Second, the attempts to formally relate displacement operations to the existence of uninterpreted features have resulted in such highly intricate and arcane systems of analysis that we seem to be no closer to the goal of eliminating conceptually unnecessary entities and computational devices than we were before.

However, the goal is laudable, and C is to be congratulated for leading us down the path of seeking the simplest theory that is adequate to the task of explaining natural language. Let us hope that we can discover it.

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How language comes to children: From birth to two years. By BÉNÉDICTE DE BOYSSON-BARDIES. Translated by MALCOLM B. DEBOISE. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999. Pp. 274. Originally published as *Comment la parole vient aux enfants* (Éditions Odile Jacob, 1996).

Reviewed by JULIEN MUSOLINO, *University of Pennsylvania*

In trying to define what makes us human, we often point to a trait unique to our species: our capacity to acquire language. What is remarkable about language is its universality; every normal child learns to talk, and only extreme circumstances can hinder the development of this capacity. No less impressive is the ease, rapidity, and uniformity with which all children acquire language in spite of the considerable latitude in their linguistic and cultural experience. Nevertheless, these observations often conspire to mask our appreciation of how spectacular an accomplishment language acquisition really is. After all, what can be so hard about something that happens so naturally?

In *How language comes to children*, Bénédicte de Boysson-Bardies skillfully conveys the sense of awe inspired by infants' linguistic accomplishments. Human infants are indeed gifted creatures, but what is the nature of this gift? What role does the environment play in its development? What do children know before they talk, and what do they absorb from the speech of others? These are the central questions that B sets out to investigate in her book, following infants from birth until around age 2 when they produce their first sentences, 'an attempt to show how the initial capacities possessed by all human beings are organized in successive and definite stages by which the *infants* becomes a speaking subject' (11).

This book is a clear and authoritative guide to early language acquisition well-suited to an audience from a wide variety of backgrounds, from students of psycholinguistics and related disciplines to parents and general readers with an interest in language and its development. What makes this book particularly attractive is that it is one of only a handful of texts to offer a picture of language development which is broad in scope and lucid while at the same time remaining highly accessible. The material is well-organized and the text, written in a clear and engaging style, contains numerous well-chosen examples, diagrams, and illustrations. The book also contains a number of useful and original features such as a glossary (227–38) providing a list and a succinct definition of the technical terms and concepts used throughout the text. Another feature that I found particularly useful is the summary, in Appendix A (217–20), of 'The principal stages in the development of speech from before birth to two years' arranged in the form of a chronological table listing babies' perceptual and productive abilities at different stages in development. Also, Appendix B (221–23) provides the International Phonetic Alphabet, another useful feature especially for the less phonetically inclined.

Part of the originality and appeal of this book comes from B's emphasis on issues too often neglected in other accounts such as individual and cross-linguistic differences in developmental