

Don L.F. Nilsen and Alleen Pace Nilsen. *Language Play: An Introduction to Linguistics*. Rowley, Massachusetts: Newbury House Publishers, 1978. xii + 249 pp. Paperback.

'Language Play', as the authors define it, is 'any use of language that is creative and unusual; that has a purpose beyond the mere communication of basic information' (p. 28). In spite of the generality of their sub-title, the Nilsens are aware of some of the limitations of their *Introduction to Linguistics*:

Using language play as the basis for an introductory text in the study of language probably would not have been feasible twenty years ago. And even today it would probably not work for many languages other than American English. It is only with the development of the mass media supported through the extensive advertising that exists only in an affluent, competitive society that it has become possible to collect and² study the kinds of language play which will be used as examples in many parts of this book.

(p. 29)

Although this statement reflects a somewhat parochial attitude (other countries too are influenced by the language of the media and, in particular, of advertising), the powerful American cultural bias, its emphasis on slogans, bumper stickers and lapel buttons, begins to pall as one proceeds.

The American slant in the examples chosen is not, in my opinion, one of the book's major weaknesses: in a book that purports to discuss the creative aspects of language use, the examples are almost exclusively culled from the ephemera of a synthetic culture. Creativity is, in this book, word-play of only the most basic kind.

The chapter on metaphor is a case in point. Although it give numerous examples, mainly of 'dead' metaphors, it is in essence superficial. On one of the few occasions when the authors attempt to discuss the most creative of all uses of language, literature, they begin as follows:

Some complex metaphors with several abstract relationships are thought of as literary symbols, and they appear in the literature of our greatest authors. There is probably no metaphorical symbol better known or more often used than that comparing the seasons of the year to the life of a person. whereby spring represents youth and romance, summer represents the prime of life, autumn represents a slowing down, and winter represents old age and death.

(p. 162)

'Metaphors in Literature' is allocated a page that never rises above the trite and the clichéd. The identification of 'some complex metaphors' and 'literary symbols' is misleading even in a book that aims to be a broad introduction for college students.

'Metaphoring is a universal process' (p. 158). And so is 'eponyming' (p. 168). Such ugly coinages direct one to another unfortunate aspect of this book: its lack of sensitivity to language. Proof-reading and printing errors are not an issue here, although they do occur: 'people' (p. 5); 'speech act' (p. 11); and the omission of a complete line (or lines) from a paragraph on p. 164. I am more concerned, for example, at the frequency of errors of concord:

The ways the speech organs move to make these sounds is called *articulation*. (p. 55)

... there is almost unlimited possibilities for language play ... (p. 139)

... but what French provided was terms ... (p. 151)

Such statements are ironic when they deal with trivia which seems beneath God's proper concerns ... (p. 190)

One is struck also by the inconsistent use of 'media':

Probably the mass media is partially responsible. (p. 2)

But today the mass media at least introduces listeners and readers to extensive and clever language play. (p. 29)

... our mass media has brought about a centralization of ideas ... (p. 214)

The mass media are comparatively new influences on language. (p. 23)

If, in the interests of 'science', linguists are using 'media indiscriminately as both singular and plural, it must be as a result of the dictates of usage. I am not totally convinced, however, that this is true and my doubt is confirmed when I read:

With some other words such as *agenda*, *data*, *media*, *news*, and

(*gambling*) odds, there is usually no distinction made between singular and plural.

(p. 149)

I am not sure what this means but suspect that 'The news *are* ...' may be lobbying for approval.

'The Importance of Writing in Language' is the mystifying heading that illustrates the problem of this book:

A study was once made in which children were instructed to select words from a long list that went well together.

(p. 68)

We usually get more meaning from seeing the performance of a play than we do from reading the script.

(p. 225)

Much of this book is a disappointment, especially because it has some interesting ideas: the chapter on Advertising language, for example, is one that South African teachers may find useful. The use of objectives to open each chapter ('From this chapter you should learn:') complements the three categories of exercises at the end: Observation-Collection, Analysis and Creativity-Production. In general, however, the book covers too wide a field too superficially.

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A.C. Gimson. *An Introduction to the Pronunciation of English*. London: Edward Arnold, 1980. xvi + 352 pp. Paperback, £5,75.

Professor Gimson's introduction to phonetics has justifiably achieved widespread recognition and has proved invaluable to many students of RP. For the Third Edition, he has appended a chapter on the problems of teaching the pronunciation of English to foreign learners. This is a welcome addition as it reflects both the importance of phonetics to foreign-language learning and the increasing interest in TEFL.

This chapter begins with a discussion of 'The Place of Pronunciation', in which Professor Gimson makes the point that 'high adequacy in lexis and grammar can be negated by incompetence in the signalling phase, when the prime medium is speech' (p. 299). The numerous models of pronunciation are adequately handled and