(1980/2017). In A. Bunger (Ed.)., *Special volume: Reissue of Innovations in Linguistic Education Volume 1. IULC Working Papers in Linguistics*, Vol. 17, No. 2.

REVIEW

of

Language Files (Preliminary Edition). Edited by Sheila Graves Geoghegan, F. Christian Latta, John W. Perkins and Deborah B. Schaffer. Reynoldsburg, Ohio: Advocate Publishing Group, 1979.

by

John Newman

University of California, San Diego

Language Files (*LF*) is an aptly named collection of assorted materials which have been used over the years in the teaching of an undergraduate course 'Introduction to Language' at Ohio State University. The files which make up this collection were contributed by Graduate Teaching Associates, Graduate Research Associates and faculty members in the Linguistics Department. In all, there are 73 separate files, and as one might expect from this kind of collective effort, there is a rich assortment of materials—more than would be used in one quarter of teaching.

Before turning to a discussion of the content of the files, it is important to understand what *LF* purports to be and what it does not purport to be. The files are categorized by the editors into eight types: (1) problems; (2) summaries of key concepts and definitions; (3) information on topics not treated in the usual textbooks; (4) handouts to accompany lectures; (5) handouts to accompany films or tapes; (6) field projects; (7) background for class discussion; and (8) practical material, e.g. a file on how to write an answer to an essay question. Thus it is not meant as either a textbook (at O.S.U., at least, it is used in conjunction with a textbook or book of readings), or a workbook (a number of files consist of text which could be studied). *LF* is a mixed bag of supplementary materials which ideally would eliminate the need for specially prepared handouts. This is a novel idea, and clearly benefits student and instructor alike—the student is guaranteed a perfect copy of what otherwise might be an imperfect handout; the instructor does not have to spend time preparing handouts for class. Furthermore, the instructor avoids some of the petty annoyances of teaching, such as the situation where a student is not in possession of a handout (and consequently may not have done a homework assignment) because of non-attendance in class. A second way in which the book makes a novel contribution to the teaching of linguistics is that it is expressly designed for lower-division undergraduates who are NOT linguistic majors (these being the people primarily

served by the 'Introduction to Language' course at O.S.U.). As the editors point out in the Preface, such an audience requires special consideration:

> ...on the one hand, problems must be less linguistically complicated and concepts of linguistic theory must be presented in a less technically formidable way, but at the same time, material must be presented in a more interesting and even exciting way than it is usually presented to the linguistic major. (p. i)

I will proceed by giving some idea of the variety and depth of the materials, and then consider how well the collection addresses the non-major.

The files are grouped into the following sections:

Section	Title	No. of files
0	Introduction to the Study of Language	6
1	Animal Communication	2
2	Language in a Wider Context	6
3	Phonetics	8
4	Phonology	5
5	Morphology	7
6	Syntax	7
7	Child Language Acquisition	6
8	Regional Varieties of Speech	7
9	Black English Dialects	5
10	Social Varieties of Speech	4
11	Historical Linguistics	3
12	History of English	6
13	History of Writing	2

Although, of course, an instructor would be free to choose from among the files, the collection would be most valuable in courses which have a similar bias to that which underlies this collection. Areas which are explored most are: phonetics/phonology (13 files), sociolinguistics (16 files) and historical linguistics (9 files). Though there are only two files devoted to writing, they are made up of continuous text, and probably would be considered an adequate introduction. There are no files relating to formal rules either in phonology or syntax, and there are no

files specifically designed to support a discussion of semantics (although various files relating to sociolinguistics, writing, sound-symbolism, etc., will necessarily involve a discussion of semantic notions). The files relating to phonetics and phonology are especially useful, and constitute in themselves an introduction to these areas. They contain concise and accurate descriptions of English vowels and consonants, an overview of acoustic phonetics, discussion of some allophonic processes in English, English phonotactics and an explanation of the phoneme. In addition, there are diagrams of the vocal tract, a sonogram, a phonetic chart for the English consonants, a vowel chart showing English vowels, and exercises based directly on the material introduced in the files. The diagrams showing the vocal tract in different positions (to be used as exercises), and the sonogram, are especially worthwhile since it is often difficult to reproduce these as clear handouts. Phonetic transcriptions play an important role in other sections (e.g., sociolinguistics and historical linguistics), and it is appropriate that the material pertaining to phonetics and phonology should be given the extensive and solid treatment it receives. The files on sociolinguistics consist of very little text, but much supportive material—surveys on North-American pronunciation/lexical items/syntax, excerpts in Black English, corpus of O.S.U. slang, exercise on sex difference in language use, etc. Presenting students with this kind of material may well be the most effective way, at this level, of leading students to a better understanding of these issues, and I doubt whether requiring students to read about the same issues in a textbook would achieve anything more than these exercises. The sections on historical linguistics contain some simple but well-written essays on 'The Family Tree' and 'Wave Models of Language Change', 'The Comparative Method' and 'The Indo-European Origin of English' (the last-named is written by Calvert Watkins and reprinted from *The American Heritage Dictionary*). In addition, there are files with exercises on reconstruction, The Lord's Prayer from different periods of English, the Germanic Consonant Shifts, the Great Vowel Shift, and others.

Among the areas which receive lesser treatment, the section on child language acquisition represents a modest but useful study-package: a summary of the stages of development (reprinted from Dwight Bolinger's *Aspects of Language*), a handout to accompany the film *Out of the Mouths of Babes*, three files containing data on acquisition of phonology and one file containing data on the acquisition of syntax taken from Klima and Bellugi-Klima's corpus. The section on syntax is helpful, and includes an explication of a number of traditional syntactic terms and interesting exercises on word-order, verb-phrase deletion in English and Spanish, and a problem from Samoan—none of which presupposes familiarity with a specific theory of syntax. The exercise on word-order involves comparing phrases/sentences in Hindi, French and Japanese, and leads naturally into a discussion of implicative universals. The presentation of the data in this exercise could be improved by keeping the content of the phrase/sentence constant across languages. Instead, the student is asked to make comparisons between, for example, a Hindi sentence meaning 'Rama is going',

a French sentence meaning 'he has eaten' and a Japanese sentence meaning 'John can speak English'. The morphology section illustrates morphological phenomena from Tagalog, Hungarian, Swahili, Spanish, Sora, as well as other languages. There are morphology problems based on Quiché and Swahili. A couple of files are designed to teach students the distinctions free *vs.* bound, derivational *vs.* inflectional, content *vs.* function. These distinctions are drawn very sharply, without any provision for gradation, and would quickly lead to pseudo-problems in analysis (though the accompanying exercise avoids any problematic cases).

Turning to the question of how appropriate *LF* is for the non-major, I believe there can be no doubt that this collection achieves the goals described by the editors and quoted above. The multifaceted nature of the materials, quite apart from their actual content, is bound to make some kind of impact on all but the most inert student. As far as the content is concerned, ideas are presented clearly and succinctly and there is nothing one would call technically formidable. Throughout, there is an obvious attempt made to engage the student, and it may be of interest here to mention some of the unusual material which even the most determinedly uncooperative undergraduate would have difficulty ignoring.

A file on animal communication is an article on teaching apes to speak, reprinted from a 1977 issue of *Rolling Stone* magazine. The article is written in a journalistic style, and strays into some uncommon aspects of ape behavior: a researcher confronts a chimpanzee over a pile of feces which leads to the chimpanzee repeatedly telling lies about the feces until she finally owns up to them as being her own and apologizes (for lying, or for defecating?); an experiment is reported upon in which female chimpanzees have their genitals massaged with a gloved hand or dildo, the aim of the experiment being to determine whether or not female chimpanzees have orgasms (the question arises as to whether female chimpanzees will lie about their orgasms); a report of Washoe swearing at a macaque, calling it a 'shitty monkey', and then extending the term to selected humans. The article, it should be said, is broader in scope than these excerpts might suggest. In any case, there is sufficient kinkiness in it to guarantee a full hour's discussion and more. The files in section 2 could also be relied upon for generating general discussion. They involve errors in speech production and perception, sound symbolism, onomatopoeia (including a chart comparing representations of eleven sounds in eight languages), paralanguage, kinesics and proxemics (with appropriate exercises). Ambiguity is explored in the syntax section by requiring the student to elaborate on the role of ambiguity in riddles of the sort: 'What's black and white and red all over?', 'What bird is in lowest spirits?', etc. Unfortunately the answers are not provided: 'we will fill them in in class.' There is an imaginative language planning exercise which could have immense entertainment and educational value. The file is a kind of scenario for a convention to decide upon an official language for a soon-to-be-independent nation, Moronia. The students are required to familiarize themselves with the material before class and then fight it

out in class. The file on sex difference in language use is bound to generate lively discussion. Part of the file involves assigning features to 39 terms for men and 62 terms for women. The features to be assigned include A = animal, O = object, F = food, S = explicitly sexual. The list includes some words which are closely related in form and/or literal meaning, but which have very different connotations when applied to humans: *hen - chick, cookie - tart, bitch - dog, tomato - peach, nymph - nympho*, etc. Some of the examples require particular care in the assignment of features and can be very effectively used to make interesting points about the semantics of lexical items (consider, for example, *prick* and *asshole* with respect to the feature 'explicitly sexual'). Even historical linguistics is given a new relevance—Proto-Indo-European *pɛrd, 'fart', is one of the 22 roots used to illustrate cognate sets in Indo-European.

LF is an imaginatively compiled package of stimulating, at times titillating, material aimed at the non-major. It will be appreciated most in a course where the primary aim is to kindle an interest in, and create an awareness of, a wide range of language phenomena. It will be less useful in a course for the more committed students (i.e. majors), where rigor in linguistic analysis and argumentation needs to be emphasized. Regardless of the bias of the instructor, however, *LF* would be useful as a resourcebook. Even an experienced instructor, with an accumulated set of teaching materials, would profit from having a peek at this collection.