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NICOLAI VAN WIJK DEDICATA

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C.H. VAN SCHOONEVELD

Indiana University

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CHILD LANGUAGE APHASIA AND PHONOLOGICAL UNIVERSALS

by

ROMAN JAKOBSON

HARVARD UNIVERSITY AND
MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

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Til min venn Alf

PREFACE

It is now a quarter of a century since the first appearance of Roman Jakobson's *Kindersprache*, probably the most characteristic of his writings on phonology. My impression is that it has never been as well known as it ought to be in this country, and that it is not as well understood as it should be, either. Whatever the reasons for this might be, if in fact it is the case, an English translation is obviously the best remedy. There are, in addition, however, other reasons which warrant a translation.

I mentioned that the *Kindersprache* is perhaps the most representative of Jakobson's phonological writings. It is certainly the most comprehensive, as it is his fullest and most detailed discussion not only of phonological typology, but of the related problems of language acquisition and phonemic regression. And although most of the problems in these areas have been discussed in English versions by Jakobson, this is the only work to integrate them so fully within the same volume. One should remember that comprehensiveness is in many ways the essence of Jakobson's investigations, which provide explanations for a wide variety of facts that would otherwise remain disparate and only accidentally related.

Finally, the importance and influence of such a classic work as the *Kindersprache* are significant, and in fact, have grown rather than diminished in recent years, at least for a great many researchers in linguistics, psychology and language pathology. The reason for this, I think, is that one finds for the first time, in the *Kindersprache*, a formal linking of the problems of linguistic universals and of language acquisition, i.e., the view that any explanation of the latter is to be found in the innate character of the former. The inter-relating of these problems has become, of course, one of the

crucial tasks of recent inquiries into the relation of linguistic structure to language acquisition, so that many of the questions so important to Jakobson, and treated in his 1941 monograph, have in a sense re-emerged again as focal problems in current thinking. To some degree, therefore, Jakobson's monograph can be considered as one of the first really insightful contributions to problems that have now become among the most important and stimulating ones in linguistic research.

I am indebted to Roman Jakobson for generously giving his time for discussion of the translation and to Professors Herbert A. Youtie and Gerda Seligson, who read the entire manuscript and made considerable criticisms and corrections, as well as Nancy Dorian, Anne G. Miller and Shirley Barlow for their invaluable help.

A. R. Keiler

Seattle, Washington
March, 1967

CONTENTS

PREFACE.	7
 I. THE PHONOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT OF CHILD LANGUAGE AND APHASIA AS A LINGUISTIC PROBLEM	13
1. Types of Linguistic Activity	13
2. Interaction between Child Language and the Lan- guages of the World	13
3. Occasional and Constant Agreements.	18
4. Recording and Analysis of the Beginnings of Child Language	19
5. Principle of Least Effort and Cessation of Babbling Sounds	20
6. Emergence of the Speech Sound	24
7. Interjectional Sounds	25
8. Supposed Exceptions to Order of Phonological Development	27
9. Dissolution of the Phonological System.	31
10. Sound and Meaning Disturbances	34
11. Linguistic Character of Aphasic Sound-Deafness and Sound-Muteness	38
 II. STRATIFICATION OF THE PHONOLOGICAL SYSTEM	46
12. Relative and Absolute Chronology of Phonological Development	46
13. Minimal Consonantismus and Minimal Vocalismus	47

14. Identical Laws of Solidarity in the Phonological Development of Child Language and in the Synchrony of the Languages of the World	51
15. Late or Rare Phonological Acquisitions	57
16. Relative Degree of Sound Utilization	58
17. Panchrony of the Laws of Solidarity	59
18. Laws of Solidarity and Speech Pathology	59
19. Normal Speech Disturbances	62
20. Uniformity of Stratification	64
III. FOUNDATION OF THE STRUCTURAL LAWS.	67
21. Atomistic Attempts at Explanation	67
22. Inherent Direction of Development	68
23. Split Consonant∞Vowel	68
24. Opposition Nasal-Oral in Consonants and Vowels	71
25. Splitting of Consonants into Labials and Dentals and Vowels into Wide and Narrow	73
26. Splitting of Consonants into Front and Back	79
27. Agreements Between the Systems of Sound and Colour	82
28. Classification and the Structure of Higher Units	84
29. Place of the Dentals in the Consonant System	87
30. Secondary Gradations of Phonological Oppositions	89
IV. CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS	92
31. Prospects	92
32. Glottogony	93
33. Principle of Language Change	93
BIBLIOGRAPHY	95

What is truly unifying are the relationships of foundation.

HUSSERL

There is no difference in principle in the phonetic systems of the world, although there are, naturally, many phonemes with relatively limited distribution.

ALF SOMMERFELT (1928)