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Elite Olshtain

Introduction

Anat Stavans and Irit Kupferberg

In this volume we have gathered twenty-one articles by leading scholars from all over the world who work in the area of language education, planning and policy, as well as multilingualism, immigration and identity. These contributions are a tribute to Elite Olshtain, who has dedicated a lifetime of research, innovation and intervention to the applied aspects of language and linguistics. Elite (for so she insists we call her) has been a personal and professional inspiration for students and colleagues for four decades. As such, the sections and individual articles of this volume touch upon Elite's vision of the "what" and the "how" of language education in rich, multicultural, age-diverse, multifunctional environments. The authors of these chapters have divergent backgrounds and disciplines, and their contributions converge into a mosaic of the forms and functions of language between societies, within communities and among individuals, relating to language, literacy, psycholinguistics, culture and education.

Both categories, *language* and *education*, encompass a wide range of phenomena and practices; combined, they include the forms of language as manifested in its sounds, words, sentences and texts, in written and spoken forms, within a range of social and functional contexts of formality, purpose and necessity. The forms of language are shaped according to various needs – communicative, educational, developmental and cultural – as these are dictated by ethnic groups, scholastic environments, technology, profession and education.

The work in this volume creates a continuum between language as it occurs or is acquired by the individual from infancy to adulthood in one or more languages; through its shaping as community language, both within the country of origin and in immigrant populations; and finally to its fostering in the educational system, where teacher training and empowerment impact on children's scholastic development, and issues of language policy and planning are intertwined not only with ethnic communitarian perspectives but also with a national educational agenda.

The contributions in this volume tackle the interfaces of some of these questions around the world and in particular in Israel, where Elite has done most of her work. The studies presented here are inspired by the theoretical and methodological frameworks of different approaches to language and education. Most of all, these studies generate relevant knowledge that is easily translated into applied and instrumental action – in line with Elite’s approach to academic endeavors.

The book is divided into three main parts, with two or three sections within each part. The sections contain two or more contributions on related subjects. Part I, Language Acquisition and Multilingualism, has two sections, one devoted to studies on monolinguals and the other to multilinguals. Part II, Language and Education, also contains two sections – one devoted to teaching and the other to learning. Part III, Language Policy and Planning, consists of three sections dealing with these issues at the national, institutional and individual level.

Part I, Language Acquisition and Multilingualism, consists of two clusters of chapters. The first cluster revolves around studies dealing with language acquisition and development in monolinguals with a special focus on Hebrew-speaking children from kindergarten to adulthood. The chapter by Blum-Kulka examines the pragmatic means by which children use requests in peer talk in Israeli preschools. Shoshana Blum-Kulka shows that children’s requests are highly sophisticated and resemble adult’s requests in terms of the social considerations they encompass, and seem to be modeled on an adult communicative world. Blum-Kulka concludes that peer talk, which is deeply embedded in childhood culture, allows for requests imbued with politeness as a social force. The power of words then moves from extended speech acts, such as requests in preschool, to vocabulary development in adolescents, as shown in the chapter by Bracha Nir-Sagiv, Laly Bar-Ilan and Ruth Berman. They investigate the use of English lexical items by primary school children, adolescents and young adults in texts to show the role such lexicon plays across ages, schooling and discourse types. The study examines content words in expository and narrative spoken and written texts. Nir-Sagiv, Bar-Ilan and Berman conclude that vocabulary is a reliable and valid measure of “text quality,” yielding a clear hierarchy of text types with narratives eliciting less densely complex and less formal language than expository texts. From the lexicon we move to larger units of language, with Dorit Ravid’s and Ronit Saban’s contribution on syntactic and meta-syntactic development in Hebrew-speaking children, adolescents and adults.

Ravid and Saban espouse the “encyclopedic” view of language development by examining a range of late emerging metasyntactic phenomena across the ages. They conclude that there are general developmental patterns in the acquisition of later syntactic competence as evidenced in Hebrew speaking individuals of different ages, and that this syntactic growth is intertwined with lexical, semantic, prosodic and literacy abilities so as to reveal a slightly different developmental pattern. From the syntactic unit of analysis we move to figurative discourse among adolescents. Irit Kupferberg, David Green and Izhak Gilat explore possible relations between adolescents’ figurative language produced at the peak of an on-going national crisis and their expression of emotions. Qualitative and quantitative analyses of the tropes showed that girls expressed fear while boys showed anger and disgust. In addition, both adolescent boys and girls used happiness-displaying tropes as expressions of the unique adolescent humor that emerged under stress. The study emphasizes that figurative language offers an effective evaluative device that can be used to explore mental life, especially in crisis situations.

The second cluster in this part centers on language acquisition and development in multilinguals, with special focus on the distinction between bi/trilingualism from infancy into adulthood. Mira Goral and Loraine Obler review current research on multilingual processing with specific focus on transfer, code-switching and cross-language activation as representations of the multilingual’s languages embedded in a single brain. They argue that what is known about bilingual processing may not always be generalizable to multilingual processing and that the studies of multilinguals may contribute further to the understanding of language processing in the brain. They provide an optimistic conclusion to the study of the developmental consequences of acquiring three or more languages, providing insight into broader issues of the relations between brain and language. Looking closely at how infant simultaneous trilingualism emerges, Anat Stavans and Charlotte Hoffmann compare the formal and functional aspects of code-switches produced by two trilingual children, recorded at two different stages of their development, in an attempt to establish whether certain forms and functions of code-switching constitute a “core” of trilingual language behavior while others are prone to change. Their study sheds light on specific trilingual production processes underlying trilingual competence. They conclude that it is easier to code-switch than to code mix, and that the relative scarcity of trilingual code-mixes may be accounted for, at least in part, by the competence required to alternate between the different units of linguistic

analysis (phonology, morphology, syntax and lexicon) across and within three (as opposed to two) linguistic systems.

Part II, Language and Education, consists of two clusters of chapters. The first cluster contains studies dealing with language teaching with a special focus on second and foreign language instruction. This section deals with issues relating to what is and what should be taught in different contexts – formal and informal – as well as what needs to be accounted for and taken into consideration when engaging in foreign/second language instruction. Andrew Cohen and Cynthia White present an account of students' responses to being and becoming language consumers. They report on the experiences of language learners in exercising choice in order to find and make optimal combinations of language learning opportunities to suit their needs. Cohen and White argue that potentially successful language learners are those who are equipped to make informed judgments about how they can best invest their physical and intellectual resources in learning. Dorit Kaufman discusses linguistic resources in learners' first languages that could enhance second language acquisition and even revive first languages that have atrophied. She argues that educational contexts often neglect these linguistic resources. Kaufman proposes alternative educational practices that will encourage the maintenance of the first language and culture as an asset in second language instruction. She further suggests that teacher training programs should encourage a collaborative language maintenance practice to empower and rejuvenate the first language resources among linguistically diverse populations as scaffolding for individual and group second language learning. In a slightly different vein, Marianne Celce-Murcia proposes teaching grammatical structures within context and discourse. She argues that without the context which is often embedded in discourse, it is impossible to describe, explain, learn, understand or use most grammatical structures. She examines the case of teaching the present perfect progressive from situational contexts and authentic discourse.

The second cluster in this section deals with mirror issues to those in the first in that it presents studies dealing with language learning with a special focus on second and foreign language instruction, and from very similar perspectives. Parallel to the informed language consumer in terms of what method of instruction to choose, Bella Kotik-Friedgut discusses how to enhance autonomous language learners. She argues that a successful language learner is actively involved in learning over time by combining language-learning awareness with the suitable learning style for each learner.

Kotik-Friedgut advocates the enhancement of strategic teaching. Similar to Kaufmann's approach of using the first language as a resource for teaching a second, Batia Laufer and Nany Girsai explore the effects of contrastive analysis and translation activities in the learning of single words and their collocations. They argue that translation can be a means to improve second language proficiency and that this may have implications on second language teaching practices. Laufer and Girsai conclude that a judicious use of translation strategies may incorporate form-focused instruction for effective second language learning. Lea and Ely Kozminsky analyze the word-definition skills in Hebrew as first language of school children. They compare regular students with learning disabled students and show that regular students improve their definitional skills on both lexical and structural aspects from fifth to seventh grades, and when they receive guided assistance their definitions contain richer lexical and informational units. Students with learning disabilities, in contrast, improve their lexical aspects only until the fifth grade, and guided assistance had a detrimental effect on the structural aspects at this age group but a positive impact on the structural aspects at the seventh grade level. Kozminsky and Kozminsky conclude their chapter – in similar fashion to Celce-Murcia – with practical suggestions on instructional routines.

Part III, Language Planning and Policy, contains three sections pertaining to establishing, describing and implementing language planning and policies, mainly in Israel and in the US. The first cluster of chapters deals with language policy and planning at the national level. Elana Shohamy critiques the gap between language policy and the realities in Israel today, considering that LP does not relate only to political systems of nations and states but also to larger and smaller systems, such as international and global markets, local communities, neighborhoods, families and even individuals. She focuses her argumentation on language education policies (LEP), referring to the effect of such decisions on schools and universities regarding the language(s) of instruction, the language(s) that should be taught, when (at what age), for how long (number of years and hours of study), by whom and for whom (who qualifies to teach and who is entitled and/or obligated to learn) and how (which methods, materials, tests, etc.). In his article, Elliot Judd frames the case for English as a Global Language within a national language policy, with direct implications on the pedagogy of the language within the US and abroad. Judd asks whether the spread of English is imperialistic and/or hegemonic, with special attention to the development of local Englishes

and the issue of mutual intelligibility among these varieties of English. Judd further discusses the question of teaching English culture in classrooms and the controversy over who are better language teachers – native or non-native speakers of English – concluding with suggestions for how educators can deal with the English language in their classrooms. Chaim Adler presents a recent debate regarding the educational system of Israel in light of the Dovrat Public Commission appointed to review the entire educational system and propose steps for its improvement. Adler highlights some of the issues in the final recommendations of the commission and calls for the policy makers to think systematically about ways to improve the quality of teaching and to improve life and learning quality in the schools before proceeding to all-inclusive structural reforms whose outcome cannot be foretold.

The second group of papers focuses on issues of policy and planning at the institutional level. Naama Sabar-Ben-Yehoshua looks at the unique emigration path of novice teachers, and reveals the implications for teacher-training policy planning. Her article focuses on the process of novice teachers' adjustment to the teaching profession and to school culture in Israel, suggesting that the transition and adaptation that novice teachers need to make in their new schools has much in common with that of immigrants in a new country. She outlines the similarities and the differences between the two groups and points to the implications for novice teacher induction, teacher training, and attitudes of school principals. Tamar Horowitz, Shmuel Shamai and Zinaida Ilatov discuss the transition from extracurricular activities to systemic changes in the educational establishment made by the Russian immigrant community in Israel. Horowitz, Shamai and Ilatov show how two major forces that account for the integration of new immigrants – the ability of the educational system to change, and the inherent cohesiveness of the community – were utilized by the wave of Russian immigration to Israel in the 1990s to generate a desired change within the Israeli educational system. They conclude that the change wrought by the Russian immigrant community on the Israeli centralized educational system is without parallel in the educational history of Israel.

The third group of chapters pertain issues of language policy and planning on a more individual level. Gabriel Horenczyk focuses on the adjustment of adolescent immigrants in Israel, examining the extent to which two aspects of immigrants' adaptation – psychological and socio-cultural – are related to two major variables in the newcomers' acculturation – namely, cultural

identity (minority vs. majority) and perceived discrimination. Horenczyk concludes that adopting a minority identity tends to contribute to socio-cultural adaptation, but as part of a bicultural orientation which integrates two positive cultural identities. Moreover, perceived discrimination is also negatively correlated with immigrants' adaptation. Moving from the individual child into the next social circle to which s/he belongs, Moshe Tatar discusses the relationship between parents or homes and schools. Tatar presents several studies of the complexities and conflicts in the relationship between parents and schools, and concludes that while there are no hard and fast rules that practitioners and schools can use to establish productive relations and parental involvement, a partnership between the two must be established as being naturally responsible for the child's education, so that schools must see parents as an asset while parents should be sensitive to the efforts schools make in educating their children. Bernard Spolsky analyzes how family language management has a bearing on language policy and planning, and vice versa. Spolsky believes that the common "top-down," complex analysis of language planning established at the national level consists of an incipient stage no less complex which occurs within a smaller social unit – the family. Spolsky talks of language policy as managed within the family, focusing on issues such as the decision which language should be spoken to the children, and whether or not to maintain the language of origin or make way for the language of the majority group. Rita Watson closes this section and the entire volume with a review and analysis of language, thought and culture as it is manifested in several aspects of language processing, use, interpretation and control. She looks at the interface of spoken and written language and cognition across cultures, within educational frameworks and within the uses of a single individual.

The present volume in all its parts is a collegial and academic celebration of Elite Olshtain's contribution to the fields of applied linguistics and education. The parts and their organization in the book are characteristic of Elite's four decades of academic and educational activity in that they deal with the smallest unit of intervention to the largest, from the individual to the circles where language is a critical tool for existence and growth in education, to the spheres where language and society converge at all levels – national, institutional and finally back to the individual. Starting with language development and ending with language policy at the individual level brings us full circle to the type and texture of issues that have informed and shaped Elite Olshtain's work.