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## ABSTRACT

Nine transcripts of recorded conversation of German children ranging from 10 through 19 years of age are of special interest to linguists working on child language. The recordings, made in Heidelberg, Berlin, Hanover, and Urach/Wurttemberg, include elicited behaviors called "linguistic activities". The interviewers attempt to elicit: (1) expressing intentions, (2) making comparisons, (3) telling someone how to do something, (4) giving reasons, and (5) making predictions. Direct questions, indirect questions, and use of pictures and photographs constitute the essential methodology employed in elicitation. Transcriptions are coded to indicate change of speaker. A detailed commentary of the project and of its objective is included. (9L)

GERMAN  
CHILD LANGUAGE SURVEY

Collected transcripts of recordings made in  
Heidelberg, Berlin, Hanover and Urach/Württ.

Edited by  
Ania Wybraniec

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## PREFACE

These transcripts represent for me the raw material with which I have been carrying out my research work into the language of German schoolchildren for the last ten months. They are now being published, as it was felt that they could be of interest to linguists interested in children's language, and in particular in German, and also to teachers of German who would like to know how their pupils' German contemporaries speak, and what they like to do and talk about. These transcripts make a modest attempt to satisfy these interests, but of course they represent samples of the language of only some thirty German children from four different parts of the country. I make reference in the introduction to the Nuffield English Child Language Survey. This is on a much larger scale than the German one, as I have been trying to complete the first stage of this survey within a time limit, and could not cope with the extent of the materials of the English Survey. I hope, nevertheless, that these transcripts will be of interest, given their more modest scope.

I am most grateful to the Organiser of the Nuffield Foreign Languages Teaching Materials Project - Mr. A. Spicer - for having given me the facilities for carrying out this piece of research, and to Mr. Antony Peck of the Nuffield German Project, for whose use the research has been undertaken. I should also like to thank Mr. Richard Handcombe and Mrs. Jean Handcombe of the English Child Language Survey for all their encouraging help and sound advice, and Mr. Bill Prescott of the Nuffield Research Section for many invaluable suggestions. We are grateful, too, for our helpers in Germany who helped to make the recordings, and for the time they spent in interviewing. I am personally grateful for the help I received in making my recordings in Urach this year - to the staff of the Berufsschule in Urach, to Mr. Wilhelm Viesel for arranging the recordings, and to Sieghart Viesel for his help in planning and conducting the interviews. We should also like to thank Mr. W. Preibusch of the Pädagogisches Zentrum, Berlin and Professor Meyer of the Pädagogische Hochschule, Heidelberg, for giving permission to publish the transcripts of recordings made in Berlin and Heidelberg. Finally, I should like to thank Miss Ursula Penitzka for her help in checking the transcript and in typing them out prior to duplication.

Ania Wybraniec

Leeds, September 1967

When I began work on an analysis of the language of German schoolchildren in November 1966, there were already three sets of recordings made in Germany in the hands of the Nuffield German Project. The Project had decided to get hold of recordings of German children's speech even before a research worker had been employed to analyze them, in the hope that the work done on the Project's English Child Language Survey and started by CREDIF on the French Survey would at some date be extended to the language of German schoolchildren. For reports of the work done on the English survey, please see the transcripts published as Occasional Papers by the Project, and in particular the preface and introduction to:

The Language of Eight-Year-Old Children, Transcript No. 1A

Recorded by R. Hasan - Report and Occasional Paper No. 5.

Please see also:

Topics of Conversation and Centres of Interest in the Speech of Eleven- and Twelve-Year-Old Children by R. J. Handscombe.

Report and Occasional Paper No. 8.

and:

The First Thousand Clauses: A Preliminary Analysis by R. J. Handscombe.

Report and Occasional Paper No. 11.

The first set of transcribed recordings of nine-year-old French children is published in:

Enquête sur le langage de l'enfant français. Report and Occasional Paper No. 2

The Nuffield Project is primarily interested in collecting samples of children's language as reference material for the planning of courses for the teaching of a second language to English schoolchildren. The English survey was carried out so that there would be material for comparison between the speech of English children and their near-contemporaries in the country of the second language and to supply information to compilers of children's courses of English as a second language. The French and German surveys provide reference material in the shape of a language "model" to which course-writers and planners for these languages can refer. It had been suggested that the planners of the various Nuffield Foreign Languages courses might use as their models the language of children two or so years older than the English children learning from Nuffield materials. Whatever the advantages or disadvantages of using children's language as a model might be, at least we have reasonable restrictions as to the model chosen. "Reasonable" in that we do not decide to teach English fourteen-year-olds the language of German eight-year-olds, or the language of German bricklayers or retired coal-miners. Certain "restrictions" have to be made, because we cannot hope to investigate or teach what we might call the "German language". As a result of the policy of analysing the language of children a couple of years older than our English pupils, the German survey does not take into account eight- and nine-year-olds, as does the English survey, since the children learning from Nuffield materials are nearly all of Secondary School age. For the same reason our samples of ten-year-olds' speech are perhaps not so useful as the recordings made with fourteen- and fifteen-year-olds.

The three German transcripts referred to in the first paragraph above are reproduced in this collection and are referred to by the codes: Ha., Ha.l., Ha.ll., Ha.lll., and B. The Hannover transcript is composed of recordings made with three different groups of children. They are transcribed into standard German orthography, but the language is not "edited", in the sense that hesitations, corrections or "ungrammatical" utterances are not altered or omitted in accordance with the rules of any particular grammatical model. We have here transcribed "raw material" - the only processing involved is that of the actual transcription.

The punctuation is consistent. I rejected the principle of "no punctuation" favoured in some linguists' transcriptions, because I feel that no punctuation is often misleading to the reader, and makes the text extremely difficult to read fluently. In a crude way I have tried also to give markers as to intonation and tone by use of exclamation marks and question marks and other devices of punctuation, although of course these will only be meaningful to speakers of German. Where one speaker interrupts another I have indicated this by the use of three dots thus:

- "Und meine Untertanen ..."
- Nein:
- ... "werden sich an dir rächen!"

The first three dots indicate the exact place in the first speaker's utterance where the second speaker "cut in".

"TU" indicates that part of the spoken material has been omitted from the transcription. The letters stand for "Text unverständlich". I do not feel that it would be interesting for the reader to know exactly why the "Text" is "unverständlich" in each particular case - it is sometimes due to children all talking at once, sometimes to them speaking inaudibly or whispering, sometimes to outside noise interference - such as furniture being moved, something being dropped, or even, in one case, to claps of thunder.

Each new speaker is introduced by a dash beside the beginning of his utterance thus:

- Bitte schön!

Where the dash is preceded by a small x, this indicates that the speaker is an adult. For example:

- x - Erzählt uns erstmal, wie ihr heißt und wie alt ihr seid, ja?

I have used the convention of "äh" where the speaker is hesitating, although in fact this is not always the exact quality of the vowel as found in standard German: "Ahhen". It would be impossible, and not very useful, to convey the exact vowel quality of each hesitation, without resorting to a narrow transcription. I have therefore kept to this convention throughout, where in a phonetic transcription we should have transcribed by means of a symbol for a schwa vowel.

The convention: "h̄r," or Hm, hm" indicates that the speaker's vocal cords are vibrating, while his lips are closed in neutral position, and air is allowed to pass through the nasal cavity. Often the sounds are produced on two tones - rising - usually a major third or a major second apart.

The following are some of the features which would not appear in standard written German, except where the writer wished to quote from the spoken language, and convey the "sound" of the utterance to some extent:

- " 'n" for "ein"
- " 'ne" for "eine"
- " 'nem" for "einem" etc.
- " 'is' " for "ist"
- " des" for "das"
- " N̄" or "Nee" for "Nein"
- " mr" for "wir" (Bilabial nasal and schwa vowel)

These are all conventional ways of conveying the sounds concerned in written form, and the use of them should not affect readability of the transcripts.

#### Description of the individual transcripts:

He. This recording was made in 1964 in the demonstration classroom of the Pädagogische Hochschule, Heidelberg. The sound recording was taken from a video tape. The whole recording was prepared by a student of the PH on teaching practice. The pupils were in a free-play situation. (Please see the reports of the English Child Language Survey for discussions on methods of using "free-play" as a means of obtaining samples of children's speech). In this case, however, the children did not have completely free rein as to choice of plot and characters, as they were referred to visuals in the shape of pictures painted by pupils of the same age but in a different class, which were affixed to the blackboard in the room. The children make occasional reference to the visuals. For example:

"Steht doch auch da drüben! ... An der Tafel".

Nevertheless, it is quite clear that the play is largely the children's own invention and the product of extremely lively imaginations.

The recording falls into three sections. There is no adult participant, except briefly where a woman enters the room to clear some space for the children to act out their play.

Section 1 consists of the children planning and discussing a play which they later act out in Section 2. They argue and make decisions as to plot and characters amongst themselves. I am unable to say how much control on their decisions was exercised by the visuals present. At the end of Section 1 they cast the play and prepare the room for acting. In Section 2 they act out the play. The acting dialogue is interspersed with "prompts", stage-directions and other whisperings. Towards the end of Section 2 the main character - a tramp - returns home to his friends to recount all his travels. In Section 3 the tramp relates his story as a monologue and is cross-examined and challenged by his listeners. The recording ends with all participants acting out the appropriate "Happy-end".