Boudledidge:
A Contribution to
Language Game Typology

Mary Ann Walter
MIT

- Phonologists claim that language games are governed by grammatical principles

- They extend, modify, or exaggerate natural language processes (Pound 1963, McCarthy and Prince 1986, Bagemihl 1988, 1989, Alderete et al. 1999, Botne and Davis 2000, Nevins and Vaux 2003)

If language game processes correspond to natural language ones, can any natural language phonological process be used in a language game?

- The answer seems to be NO –

- Apparent restriction to segment deletion, insertion, reordering, substitution, and (rarely) stress/tone change.

- Boudledidge is a counterexample.

- Developed by Unity and Decca Mitford as children in mid-1920s.

- 50 forms attested in biographical materials.
  (Mitford 1960, Pryce-Jones 1977, Guinness and Guinness 1984, Lovell 2001)

- **<u>Decca's description</u>:** (Pryce-Jones 1977)

  We were starting it at about the age of 7, and went on perfecting it until about 10. The language had to go with the facial expression, which was one of great sorrow, and the noise was pressed out of the side of the mouth.

- **<u>A nephew's description</u>:** (Guinness & Guinness 1984)

  It had to be uttered while making a miserable, frowning and rather costive-looking grimace with the mouth pulled sharply down to one side. Hopeless yearning was the keynote, together of course with deadly seriousness. The language was English with the *vowels distorted*, the *consonants softened* and *extra syllables* inserted.

- ## Segment Insertion

  o Insert [d] after stressed vowels.
  o Applies to monosyllables with sonorant codas, and polysyllabic forms (2 voiced velarity exceptions).

	English Orthography	Boudledidge Orthography	~IPA
1)	Robin	rudbin	rʌdbɪn
2)	still	dzdiddle	dzdɪdl̩
3)	dear	deedr	dijdr̩
4)	appeal	abbidle	əbɪdl̩
5)	smoking	zdmudkung	zdmʌdkʌŋ
6)	pal	boudle	bawdl̩
7)	old	oudle(d)	awdl̩(d)
8)	Tommy	Tuddemy	tʌdəmij
9)	time	deedem	dijdm̩
10)	from	vrudub	vrʌdʌb
11)	comm(unist)	cuddum	kʌdʌm
12)	Ann	Idden	ɪdn̩

  o No insertion before coda [t/d/dz].

13)	enclosed	engludzed	ɛnglʌdzd
14)	commit	gommid	gʌmɪd

o Insertion of [dl] before intervocalic [l], [d], (tapped) [r]
o Onset-filling with [d]/excrescence before [r].

15)	pallish	boudledidge	bawdl̩dɪʤ
16)	jolly	juddledy	jʌdl̩dij
17)	body	buddldy	bʌdl̩dij
18)	Sarah	Dzeedldra	dzijdl̩drə
19)	appear (on)	abeedldr	əbijdl̩dr̩

• <u>Consonant Voicing</u> (1 word-medial, 2 word-initial exceptions)

20)	check	jegg	ʤɛg
21)	force	vudz	vʌdz
22)	sex	dzegs	dzɛgz
23)	each	idge	ɪʤ
24)	stage	dzdedge	dzdɛʤ
25)	picture	bigjure/bigjer	bɪgʤr̩
26)	chair	jer	ʤɛ(r)
27)	it	id	ɪd
28)	objectionable	objegzionable/ obdgegjoinable	əbʤɛg(z/ʤ)…

• <u>Affrication</u>

o Of [s/z/j] to [ts/dz/tʃ] (exception #22, #6 plural)

29) yes   jaub   ʤab
30) your   je   ʤə
31) grows   grads   gradz

o Direction of affrication is opposite of expected.
o Only 5 fricative   affricate processes in PBase.
o All involve stop excrescence after sonorants.
o Fricative affrication does occur in sound-symbolic processes of West North American languages (Nichols 1971).
o And also in early child language (Preisser et al. 1988).

- # Vowel Quality

  o More idiosyncratic.
  o Tendency to laxing and diphthong simplification.

[ɪ], [ɛ], [ʌ], [uw] ⟶ no change   ([e]>[a] exception in yes, [ɪ]>[ʌ] in smoking)

[ɒ] ⟶ **[ʌ]** (jolly, body, force, Robin, Tommy, cuddum)

[aj] ⟶ **[ij]** (I, I'm, my, time)

[ej] ⟶ **[ɛ]** (stage)

[ij] ⟶ **[ɪ]** (appeal, each)
       ⟶ no change (appear, dear, Tommy)

[æ] ⟶ **[ij]** (Sarah, barer)   [əʊ] ⟶ **[ʌ]** (smoking, enclosed)
     ⟶ **[ɪ]** (Ann)   ⟶ **[a]** (grows)
     ⟶ **[aw]** (pal(lish))   ⟶ **[aw]** (old)
                                              ⟶ no change (no)

- # Summary

  o <u>Segment Insertion</u>: typologically common in lg games
  o <u>Consonant Voicing</u>: typologically common **in general**
  o <u>Fricative Affrication</u>: typologically **un**common
     § but attested in sound symbolism/diminutivization and child language
        Language games and diminutivization both require unfaithfulness
        This differs from 'normal' language, where it only happens when forced
        So their similar behavior here is not surprising
  o <u>Vowel Quality</u>: inconsistent, but seems to minimize articulatory effort

- # Conclusion

- Boudledidge departs from previously described language games with its use of featural alternations as well as segmental operations.

- Yet it conforms to claims in the language game literature in that its alternations are grammatically governed, and also present in natural language phonology

Boudledidge extends rather than contradicts phonological accounts of language games.

• <u>References</u>

Alderete, John, and Jill Beckman, Laura Benua, Amalia Gnanadesikan, John McCarthy, and Suzanne Urbanczyk. 1999. Reduplication with fixed segmentism. *Linguistic Inquiry* 30, 3. 327-364.

Bagemihl, Bruce. 1988. *Alternative phonologies and morphologies*. Ph.D. dissertation, University of British Columbia.

-----. 1989. The crossing constraint and 'backwards languages.' *Natural language and linguistic theory* 7, 4. 481-549.

Botne, Robert and Stuart Davis. 2000. Language games, segment imposition, and the syllable. *Studies in Language* 24, 2. 319-344.

Lovell, Mary S. 2001. *The sisters: The saga of the Mitford family*. Norton: London.

McCarthy, John and Alan Prince. 1986. Prosodic morphology. Ms, University of Massachusetts-Amherst and Brandeis University.

Mielke, Jeff. 2004. *P-base: Database of sound patterns*. http://aix1.uottawa.ca/~jmielke/research/pbase.html.

Mitford, Jessica. 1960. *Hons and rebels*. Gollancz: London.

-----. 2006. *Decca: The letters of Jessica Mitford*. Ed. by Peter Y. Sussman. Knopf: New York.

Nevins, Andrew and Bert Vaux. 2003. Metalinguistic, shmetalinguistic: The phonology of shm-reduplication. *The Proceedings of the 39th Chicago Linguistics Society*. 702-721.

Nichols, Johanna. 1971. Diminutive consonant symbolism in western North America. *Language* 47, 4. 826-848.

Pound, Glen M. 1963. *Phonological distortion in spoken secret languages: A consideration of its nature and use*. Ph.D. dissertation, Indiana University.

Preisser, Debra A. and Barbara W. Hodson, Elaine P. Paden. 1988. Developmental phonology: 18-29 months. *Journal of speech and hearing disorders* 53. 125-130.

Pryce-Jones, David. 1977. *Unity Mitford: An enquiry into her life and the frivolity of evil*. Dial Press: London.