Since the publication of the first edition of this book, new approaches to the physical management of children with cerebral palsy (CP) have emerged. Focus on evidence-based practice and expansion of the World Health Organization’s International Classification of Impairment, Activity and Participation were the driving forces behind these changes. There has also been an increase in availability of new assessments and interventions specifically designed for children with CP. With the pressures of accountability and the task of keeping abreast of new information, practicing clinicians will appreciate having one text that synthesizes state-of-the-art service delivery for this population.

Perhaps the best way to introduce this book is to give an overview of the main topics contained in the various chapters. The first two chapters provide the reader with a solid foundation by outlining key questions facing the practitioners providing therapy, and reviewing the classifications within the spectrum of CP. Current statistics on the causes of CP are included, as well as known preventative strategies. It is refreshing to see one of the initial chapters of the book focus on family-centred service, emphasizing an equal partnership between parents and professionals. As so adeptly stated by the author, parents are ‘the world’s experts on their child and the constant in their child’s life’.

Building on the concept of collaboration with parents, Chapters 4 and 5 outline strategies to measure changes in the child over time. Graphs of assessment before and after intervention are provided in addition to an outline of the psychometric properties of effective measures. An assessment model is also presented that will assist the practitioner in addressing different levels of function (impairment, activity, participation) when establishing their own evidence-based practice. No volume would be complete without an overview of current findings in the areas of neural plasticity, motor learning principles that can affect change in children, and current interventions in the management of spasticity. Readers will find a well-developed review of these neurorehabilitation topics in Chapters 6 and 7. Next, the orthopaedic concerns of the child with CP are addressed, with two chapters devoted to the mechanisms of deformity and management strategies for issues related to deformity, i.e. postural stability, pain, function, gait, and cosmesis.

Additional chapters provide a review of historical and current interventions (Bobath, Conductive Education, hippotherapy, alternative therapies, etc.) as well as intervention based on multiple levels of evidence: reducing and preventing impairment while enabling the individual to function optimally in a state of wellness and fitness across the lifespan. Readers will also be pleased to see a chapter addressing the issues of adults with CP, an area often overlooked in the care of this population. Lastly, a chapter is devoted to therapeutic possibilities and future directions in research. Therapists, parents, physicians, and others involved in the care of children with CP will find this an excellent resource text for their library.

DOI: 10.1017/S0012162205210691

Patricia Burtner

Constructing a Language: A Usage-based Theory of Language Acquisition
By Michael Tomasello
Cambridge, USA and London, UK: Harvard University Press, 2003, pp 408, £29.95, US$45.00
ISBN 0 674 01030 2 (Hardback)

Michael Tomasello eloquently reminds the reader that in order to understand the hows and whys of children's language acquisition, one has to appreciate the purpose of human communication. In this sense, the book works particularly well for a more general readership at its start, persuasively arguing that language develops from usage. Intention-reading (theory of mind) and pattern finding (categorisation) underpin the acquisition of linguistic symbols. This book includes an authoritative historical account of the major linguistic theories, seminal experimental paradigms, and observations made in the field of child language. Although it is quite technically dense it is a very enjoyable read; however, the middle section on early and abstract syntactic constructions was rather challenging. Nevertheless, it was worth the effort for the reward of understanding the processes involved in structuring language. The book concludes with an excellent discussion of the biological, cultural, and ontogenetic processes in child language acquisition.

My conclusion is that this is a book for the clinician, working in child development and neurology, who wishes to benefit from an excellent scholarly exposition of the major thinking in child language from allied fields such as linguistics and developmental psychology. If you are such a clinician, the book can be thoroughly recommended.

DOI: 10.1017/S0012162205220698

Anne O'Hare