

**Boston University
School of Education**



The Eighth Annual Boston University Conference on Language Development

**Meeting Handbook
October 7, 8 and 9, 1983
George Sherman Union**

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October 7, 8 and 9, 1983
George Sherman Union**

**Organized by the students of The Program in Applied Psycholinguistics,
Boston University School of Education**

Chaired by Suzanne Irujo and Judy Levin-Charns

George Sherman Union, 775 Commonwealth Avenue, Boston, Massachusetts 02215

FOREWORD

It is our pleasure to welcome you to the Eighth Annual Boston University Conference on Language Development. This year there have been changes in both staffing and program. For the first time since 1976, there are two people chairing the Conference. This has proven to be a rewarding and pleasurable experience; responsibilities and ideas were shared and a friendship developed. Instead of special sessions, the concept of symposia was introduced to include invited papers as well as papers selected through the blind review process. We were pleased to receive a large number of submissions; unfortunately this entailed having to turn down many good papers. We thank the members of the Review Committees, listed on the next page, for doing this difficult job so well.

The Conference is organized and managed entirely by graduate students. Its continuing success is due to the dedication and effort of the students in the Applied Psycholinguistics and Language Behavior programs. The following students deserve special recognition for their commitment in serving on various committees: Meryl Green, Kathy Quill and Candy Mitchell, Program; Linda Ferrier and Marie Chesnick, Publicity; Pamela Spillatore, Advertising and Exhibits; Sara Thomas, Handbook; Irma Rosenfield and Barbara Krieger, Facilities; Raymond Schmidt, Registration; and Judy Mouny, Sign Language Interpreters. We extend special thanks to the people who covered the office during the summer months as well as to all those who made the mailing party in August an unqualified success.

We want to thank the faculty of both programs for their support and suggestions. In particular, Professor James Paul Gee provided invaluable advice, moral support, good humor and help during his first year as Conference advisor; like Calvin Coolidge, he also knew when to stay out of the way. Thanks also go to the administration of the School of Education. It is gratifying to have such strong continuing support from Dean Paul Warren and the members of his staff. In addition, recognition is due to Paul Tafe for his cooperation in meeting all our needs for facilities, to Kazia Navas for her kind and courteous help in meeting our publications deadlines, to Evelyn Alvero for service above and beyond the call of work-study duty, and to Martin Charns for giving true meaning to the notion of computer literacy.

We hope that you enjoy the Conference and find it a stimulating and rewarding experience.

Suzanne Irujo
Judy Levin-Charns
Conference Co-chairs

The Conference wishes to thank the following members of the Review Committees for their aid in the selection of this year's papers:

Anthony Bashir (Children's Hospital Medical Center)
Marie Chesnick (Boston University; Children's Hospital Medical Center)
Geoffrey Coulter (Northeastern University)
David Dickenson (Tufts University)
Linda Ferrier (Boston University; Children's Hospital Medical Center)
Melanie Fried-Oken (Boston University)
Sharon Goldsmith (President, Communication Education Systems)
Barbara Gomes (Boston University)
Suna Hall (Boston University)
Sarah Hawkins (Massachusetts Institute of Technology)
Jan Hirschberg (Harvard University)
Peggy Hoyt (Boston University)
Blanche Korngold (Consultant/Education Associate)
Paul Krueger (Northeastern University)
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Janie Simmons de Garcia (Harvard University)
Carol Smith (University of Massachusetts, Boston)
Bill Stokes (Lesley College)
Kristine Strand (Children's Hospital Medical Center)
Elizabeth Thomas (Applied Language Technologies; Massachusetts General Hospital)
Elise Trumbull (Boston University)
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Thought & Language Language & Reading

EDITED BY
MARYANNE WOLF
MARK K. MCQUILLAN
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PREFACE BY
JEANNE S. CHALL

Two decades of research in reading, linguistics, and cognition.
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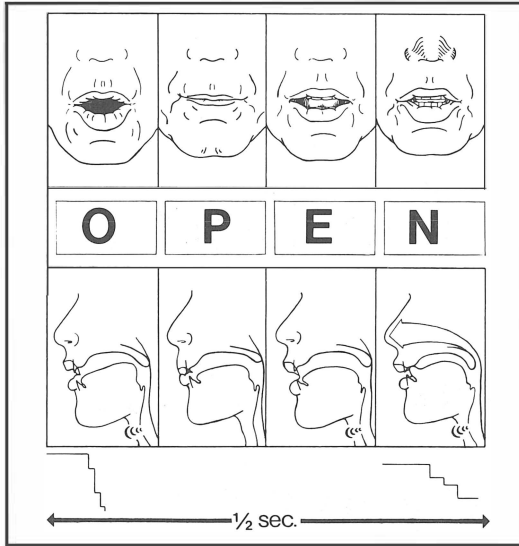
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General Information and Conference Program

GENERAL INFORMATION

REGISTRATION

Registration will be held Friday, October 7, from 2:00 to 5:00 p.m. and 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. and Saturday, October 8, from 8:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. in the Stone Lobby, on the second floor of the George Sherman Union.

LOCATION

All sessions will be held in the Boston University George Sherman Union building at 775 Commonwealth Avenue unless there are posted changes.

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Professor John J. Gumperz, University of California, Berkeley, will deliver the keynote address at 8:30 p.m. on Friday, October 7, in the Ballroom on the second floor.

RECEPTION

A wine and cheese reception will be held on the Third-Floor Balcony following Dr. Gumperz's address.

NEW ENGLAND CHILD LANGUAGE ASSOCIATION (NECLA)

NECLA will convene its annual business meeting at 1:00 p.m. on Saturday in the Conference Auditorium. Please feel free to bring your lunch.

PUBLISHERS' EXHIBIT

There will be a publishers' exhibit of books and publications on Saturday and Sunday in the Ziskind Lounge of the George Sherman Union.

SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETERS

Sign Language Interpreters will be available for all sessions. Please inquire at the Registration Desk when you arrive.

ADDITIONAL HANDBOOKS

Additional handbooks may be purchased for \$3.00 each (checks only!!) at the Registration Desk. We are sorry, but we cannot replace lost handbooks free of charge. A limited number of copies of the 1977, 1978, 1979, 1980, 1981, and 1982 handbooks are also available for purchase at \$3.00 each. A complete set of handbooks is available for \$15.00.

CHECKROOM

Coats and luggage may be checked at the cloakroom in the Stone Lobby.

DAY AND TIME	BALLROOM	CONFERENCE AUD.	TERRACE LOUNGE	ZISKIND LOUNGE
FRIDAY				
3:30		Symposium on Sign Language Acquisition		
8:00	Welcoming Address			
8:30	Keynote Address			
SATURDAY				
A.M.				
8:30	First Language Acquisition: Syntax & Semantics	Symposium on Ethnography in the Classroom	Language Disorders	Publishers' Exhibits
9:00				Poster Sessions
11:00				
SATURDAY				
P.M.				
1:00		NECLA Meeting		
2:00	First Language Acquisition: Intonation & Input	Symposium on Neurolinguistics	Reading and Writing	
SUNDAY				
8:30	First Language Acquisition: Pragmatics & Metalinguistics	Sign Language	Second Language Acquisition	
9:00				

EIGHTH ANNUAL BOSTON UNIVERSITY CONFERENCE ON LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

October 7, 8 and 9, 1983

CONFERENCE PROGRAM

FRIDAY AFTERNOON

Symposium on Sign Language Acquisition

Conference Auditorium

Chair: Robert Hoffmeister (Boston University)

- 3:30 p.m. Invited Paper: The early bird gets the word: Effects of age of acquisition on the structure and processing of sign language. (Susan Fischer, National Technical Institute for the Deaf)
- 4:00 p.m. Invited Paper: ASL structure: Towards the foundations for a theory of case. (James Gee, Boston University; Judy Kegl, Northeastern University)
- 4:30 p.m. Metaphorical extension in cognition verbs in American Sign Language (ASL). (Emily R. Dexter, Northeastern University)
- 5:00 p.m. The acquisition and development of morphologic structures in the sign language of deaf children. (Wendy Goodhart, Boston University)
- 5:30 p.m. Discussion

FRIDAY EVENING

Ballroom

- 8:00 p.m. Opening Remarks
Welcoming Address
Introduction of Keynote Speaker
- 8:30 p.m. Keynote Address: Communication, social inequality and second language acquisition. (John J. Gumperz, University of California, Berkeley)
- 9:45 p.m. Reception

SATURDAY MORNING

First Language Acquisition: Syntax and Semantics

Small Ballroom

Chair: Steven Pinker (Massachusetts Institute of Technology)

- 8:30 a.m. Semantic vs. syntactic clues: The proper-common distinction in 2-year-olds. (Susan A. Gelman and Marjorie Taylor, Stanford University)
- 9:00 a.m. On markedness and binding principles. (Celia Jakubowicz, MIT Center for Cognitive Science and Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, Paris)
- 9:30 a.m. Overgeneralization--Does it have a role in the development of grammar? (Sharon M. Klein, Neuropsychiatric Institute, UCLA)
- 10:00 a.m. BREAK
- 10:30 a.m. The use of nonce words tests in assessing children's verbal knowledge. (Yonata Levy, The Hebrew University, Jerusalem)
- 11:00 a.m. Verb classifications of 3- to 5-year-olds: Preliminary experimental evidence. (Alec Marantz, Harvard University Society of Fellows)
- 11:30 a.m. The role of "local cues" in assigning gender to new nouns in Icelandic. (Randa Mulford and James L. Morgan, Institute of Child Development, University of Minnesota)
- 12:00 noon The minimum distance principle reconsidered: A new explanation for previous findings. (Janet Cohen Sherman, Massachusetts Institute of Technology)

(SATURDAY MORNING)

Symposium on Ethnography in the Classroom

Conference Auditorium

Chair: Karen Watson-Gegeo (Harvard University)

9:00 a.m. Invited Paper: Spontaneous repairs in "sharing time" narratives: The intersection of metalinguistic awareness, speech situation and narrative style. (Courtney Cazden, Harvard University)

9:45 a.m. Invited Paper: Long-term issues in classroom ethnography. (Jenny Cook-Gumperz, University of California, Berkeley)

10:30 a.m. Discussion

Poster Sessions

Ziskind Lounge

11:00 a.m. The use of requests by mildly mentally retarded and nonretarded preschool children. (Sheryl Jacobs and Maris Rodgon, University of Illinois at Chicago)

Recognition memory in deaf and hearing readers. (Madeline Maxwell and Marybeth Lartz, The University of Texas at Austin)

Shifting sands: The conversational content of young peers at play (Susan Seidman, C.U.N.Y. Graduate Center)

Maternal contingency to what the child didn't say. (Lorraine Rocissano, New York University)

Individual differences in reading style among dyslexic boys. (Rebecca Treiman, Indiana University; Kathy Hirsh-Pasek, Swarthmore College)

(SATURDAY MORNING)

Language Disorders

Terrace Lounge

Chair: Michelle Banker (Boston University)

- 9:00 a.m. Development of attenuation patterns in the controlling communicative function. (Candice Bray, Ann Colquhoun, Betsy Posnick, Shannan Vines and Alice Watkins, Boston University)
- 9:30 a.m. Symbolic play abilities of normal and language disordered 4- to 6-year-olds. (Sheelagh Callaghan, Alberta Children's Hospital)
- 10:00 a.m. Contextual influences on mentally retarded and nonretarded children's production of directives. (Leonard Abbeduto, Vanderbilt University)
- 10:30 a.m. BREAK
- 11:00 a.m. The relationship between adult speech and conversational inadequacy in autistic children. (Jeanne Paccia and Frank Curcio, Boston University)
- 11:30 a.m. The relation of metamemory to memory performance in language-impaired children. (Kristine Strand, Children's Hospital Medical Center, Boston)
- 12:00 noon The hyperverbal profile: Characteristics and implications. (Jeni E. Yamada, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill)

SATURDAY AFTERNOON

1:00 p.m. NECLA Meeting

Conference Auditorium

First Language Acquisition: Intonation and Input

Small Ballroom

Chair: Jean Berko Gleason (Boston University)

- 2:00 p.m. The role of crib speech in the acquisition of language. (Marsha DeForest, University of California, San Diego; Catherine Echols, University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana)
- 2:30 p.m. The role of children in determining the nature of their linguistic input: Some evidence from blind and sighted children. (Linda S. Kekelis and Elaine S. Anderson, University of Southern California)
- 3:00 p.m. A theoretical model for the description of the relation between discourse functions, intonation and syntax: Implications for language development. (Linda Ferrier, Children's Hospital Medical Center and Boston University)
- 3:30 p.m. Discrimination of Chinese and American infant vocalizations by adult American listeners. (Ginger Kuehn, Central Institute for the Deaf)
- 4:00 p.m. Higher pitch in BT is not universal: Data from Quiche Mayan and its implications. (Nan Bernstein Ratner, University of Maryland, College Park; Clifton Pye, The University of British Columbia)
- 4:30 p.m. The relationship between vocal fundamental frequency characteristics and developmental levels of language acquisition in young children. (Michael P. Robb and John H. Saxman, Syracuse University)

(SATURDAY AFTERNOON)

Symposium on Neurolinguistics

Conference Auditorium

Chair: Paula Menyuk (Boston University)

- 2:00 p.m. Invited Paper: Language and cognitive factors affecting school achievement. (Harold Gordon, Western Psychiatric Institute)
- 2:30 p.m. Invited Paper: Cross-language neurolinguistics. (Loraine Obler, Boston University School of Medicine and Boston VA Medical Center)
- 3:00 p.m. Selective preservation of syntax in Alzheimer's dementia. (Daniel Kempler and Susan Curtiss, University of California, Los Angeles)
- 3:30 p.m. Discussion

Reading and Writing

Terrace Lounge

Chair: Vivian Zamel (University of Massachusetts, Boston)

- 2:00 p.m. The relation of oral language processing to reading disability: A study based on a speech shadowing technique. (Nancy Jordan, Harvard University)
- 2:30 p.m. Reading as an interactive process. (Larry Miller and Dale Burnett, Queen's University; Rena Uptis, Harvard University)
- 3:00 p.m. "Alligator eats hat": A child-adult-computer interactive approach to reading/writing development in preschool deaf children (phase II). (Keith E. Nelson and Philip M. Prinz, The Pennsylvania State University)
- 3:30 p.m. Reading comprehension: The effects of story grammar and summarization training. (Elizabeth J. Short and Keith Owen Yeates, Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill)
- 4:00 p.m. Phonetic aspects of first graders' creative spellings of consonants. (Rebecca Treiman, Indiana University)

SUNDAY MORNING

First Language Acquisition: Pragmatics and Metalinguistics

Small Ballroom

Chair: Meryl Green (Boston University)

- 8:30 a.m. The development of speech acts in autistic children. (Rebecca Mermelstein, University of Illinois at Chicago)
- 9:00 a.m. Holding it together: Preverbal children's play in a scripted setting. (Marylou Boynton and Lucia French, University of Rochester)
- 9:30 a.m. Asking questions: Individual differences and developmental trends. (Harriet S. Wetstone and Lael E. Foster, Institute of Living, Hartford)
- 10:00 a.m. Multifunctionality in illocutionary coding schemes. (Anne van Kleeck, Madeline Maxwell and Cheryl Gunter, The University of Texas at Austin)
- 10:30 a.m. BREAK
- 11:00 a.m. Acquiring conditionals: How language and cognition interact. (Judy Snitzer Reilly, University of California, Los Angeles)
- 11:30 a.m. A diary study of very early emerging metalinguistic skills. (Anne van Kleeck and Deborah Bryant, The University of Texas at Austin)

Sign Language

Conference Auditorium

Chair: James Gee (Boston University)

- 9:30 a.m. One-to-one morpheme correspondence versus phonemic analysis in ASL. (Geoffrey R. Coulter, Northeastern University)
- 10:00 a.m. When do signs begin and end? Defining the boundaries of signs in American Sign Language: Implications for the acquisition of ASL. (Kerry Green, Northeastern University)

(SUNDAY MORNING)

(Sign Language)

10:30 a.m. BREAK

11:00 a.m. Historical change in the laboratory: The interaction between phonetic reduction, stylistic variation and language acquisition. (Judy Kegl, Harlan Lane, Mordechai Rimor and Trude Schermer, Northeastern University)

11:30 a.m. Learning pronoun functions: The acquisition of narrative reference in American Sign Language. (Ruth C. Loew, National Technical Institute for the Deaf)

Second Language Acquisition

Terrace Lounge

Chair: Maria Estela Brisk (Boston University)

8:30 a.m. Adult L2 acquisition of anaphora: Contrast or construction? (Suzanne Flynn, Massachusetts Institute of Technology)

9:00 a.m. Bilingual language acquisition: Its influence on parent and child. (Naomi S. Goodz, Dawson College)

9:30 a.m. Lara, Lorena, Erika: Monolingual and bilingual development patterns. (Teresa H. Johnson, Saint Louis University)

10:00 a.m. BREAK

10:30 a.m. Avoidance and the problem of metalinguistic awareness. (Terence Odlin, University of Texas at Austin)

11:00 a.m. But how do you feel about that? The second language learner's perception of emotion in speech. (Ellen M. Rintell, University of Houston)

11:30 a.m. The "pro-drop" parameter in adult second language acquisition. (Lydia White, McGill University)

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ABSTRACTS

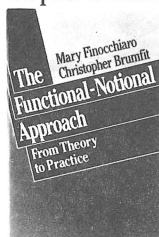
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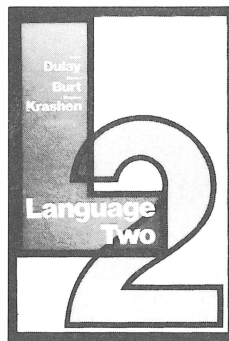
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- definitions of terms
- characteristics of the approach
- lists of functions and notions
- step-by-step techniques
- communicative activities
- the role of grammar
- suggestions for discussion

Language Two

Heidi Dulay, Marina Burt,
and Stephen Krashen

This book is one of the most comprehensive course texts on second language acquisition. The authors cover such topics as the effects of environment, age, and personality on second language acquisition; the role of the first language; and error analysis. Chapter summaries, study questions, and suggestions for further research follow each unit. The book includes numerous tables, graphs, and charts, an extensive glossary, a bibliography, and an index.



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Leonard Abbeduto, Vanderbilt University

Contextual Influences on Mentally Retarded and Nonretarded Children's Production of Directives

This study investigated the influence of the communicative context on the directives produced by retarded children and nonretarded kindergarteners. The two groups were matched on MA and on measures of the linguistic complexity of their spontaneous speech. In a prompted-production task, each child could produce all linguistic forms appropriate for the experimental task. In the experimental task, directives were elicited in role-playing situations involving dolls. The situations differed on three dimensions: age of addressee, reason for issuing the directive, and goal of the directive. As measured by directive politeness, the retarded and nonretarded children were influenced similarly by the contextual manipulations. However, the retarded tended to be less polite. Moreover, they relied on different linguistic forms to convey directives than did the nonretarded, although both possessed similar repertoires of forms from which to choose. The implications for language remediation in the retarded are discussed.

* * * * *

Marylou Boynton and Lucia French, University of Rochester

Holding It Together: Preverbal Children's Play in a Scripted Setting

How do preverbal children maintain coherence in their play? Newman 1978 speculated that children needed language to sustain coherent play. However, longitudinal observations of preverbal toddlers demonstrated that children could sustain play without language.

Fourteen toddlers were videotaped bi-weekly for five months. At the beginning of the study their ages ranged from 19 to 37 months, with a mean age of 24.2 months.

Spontaneous play in the housekeeping corner was coherent. The children engaged in activities which were comprehensible in the context of meal preparation.

The housekeeping corner supported play about meals. The children's scripts for meals enabled them to perceive the information in the setting, and to display in actions their understanding of the setting. Children utilized themes to develop sustained coherent interaction.

* * * * *

Candice Bray, Ann Colquhoun, Betsy Posnick, Shannan Vines and Alice Watkins, Boston University

Development of Attenuation Patterns in the Controlling Communicative Function

This paper presents the results of qualitative analysis of attenuation (the softening of a speech act) patterns used by normally developing, learning disabled and developmentally delayed populations. Data was obtained through elicitation of speech acts in the Controlling communicative function component of the Let's Talk Inventory for Adolescents (Wiig, 1982). Analysis of the data indicated that attenuation may be accomplished by both structural and semantic devices such as use of a modal, embedded main verb, complex verb, addition of modifiers, apology and/or other speech acts, vocabulary choice, inferred intent and question forms. Results indicated that: 1) the normally developing population demonstrated developmental patterns in their use of attenuation; and 2) the disordered populations differed both quantitatively and qualitatively in their use of attenuation strategies. Examples of attenuation patterns used by each population and implications for therapy will be discussed.

* * * * *

Sheelagh Callaghan, Alberta Children's Hospital

Symbolic Play Abilities of Normal and Language Disordered 4- to 6-Year-Olds

The sequence of play development with corresponding language development has been proposed by numerous authors (Bates et al, 1979; Lowe & Costello, 1976 and McCune Nicholich, 1981). Examination of children's play skills concomitant to their mastery of linguistic symbols for multi-word utterances has been examined in a group of language disordered and normal preschoolers. Comparison of the two groups for differences in level and amount of symbolic play, specifically at a level of internally directed or planned symbolic play (Nicholich, 1977), revealed no significant quantitative differences. Although the experimental group as a whole showed evidence of level 5 play, individual's differences resulted in highly variable performance. Qualitative analysis of the two group's play behaviors at the highest level proposed by Nicholich (1977) also showed significant variations in aspects of planning, object substitutions, animacy and role playing. Implications for use of a symbolic play assessment designed for younger children with language disordered children of comparable language ages is presented. Discussion of qualitative differences between the groups is also included.

* * * * *

Courtney Cazden, Harvard University

Spontaneous Repairs in "Sharing Time" Narratives: The Intersection of Metalinguistic Awareness, Speech Situation and Narrative Style

Spontaneous repairs in children's speech are one expression of metalinguistic awareness. Phonological, morphological and syntactic repairs "for the system" have been analysed in young children's speech by Clark and Anderson. These aspects of the linguistic system are no longer problematical by the time children are in the primary grades, and repairs "for the listener" become more frequent. Sarah Michaels, Patton Tabors and I have analysed spontaneous repairs in Sharing Time narratives. Some repairs substitute a more informative name for a particular referent: he - my father; others insert background information into the middle of a narrative clause: and my - and you've gotta pick this name out - and my father's name got picked. These repairs occur in narratives told by both white and black children, and can be partly explained by the conventions of the Sharing Time speech event.

* * * * *

Jenny Cook-Gumperz, Institute of Human Learning, University of California, Berkeley

Long Term Issues in Classroom Ethnography

This paper argues for classroom ethnography as a way of providing valid insights into the day-to-day learning experience. On the other hand, it cautions that classrooms cannot be seen as self-contained worlds, separate from the school, the school systems and society's educational philosophy and policies. Thus the major methodological question is how classroom proceedings can be studied in such a way as to highlight the interaction of everyday occurrences with wider societal issues. Illustrations from recent research at Berkeley will be given.

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Geoffrey R. Coulter, Northeastern University

One-to-One Phone Morpheme Correspondence Versus Phonemic Analysis in ASL

While there has been considerable interest in the structure of signed languages such as ASL, there is as yet no consensus concerning the relevance of the techniques of phonemic analysis. One of the major problems is the apparent frequency of one-to-one phone morpheme correspondences based on an iconic relationship. However, it is argued here that while there are many ASL morphemes consisting of only a single phoneme, phonemes which occur in only a few morphemes, and phonemes which are iconically related to the meaning of the morphemes they occur in, none of these characteristics is particularly rare in the world's languages, and they therefore provide no support for the rejection of a phonemic analysis for ASL. Moreover, the iconic relationships are irrelevant or detrimental to various aspects of language processing. For example, they are usually not known by the child during first language acquisition, and experimental evidence has shown that knowledge of these relations impedes the acquisition of new lexical items by second language learners.

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Marsha DeForest, University of California, San Diego; Catherine Echols, University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana

The Role of Crib Speech in the Acquisition of Language

This work is part of an ongoing longitudinal study designed to compare communicative and noncommunicative speech and the possible role of the latter in the acquisition of language. The data reported here indicate that not only is noncommunicative speech practiced by all children 12-to-36-mos., but that it includes predictable patterns of repetitive play and practice. Whereas the content of the speech varies from phoneme-like sound play at 18 mos. to monologues at 30 mos., regardless of their exact age or stage of language development, children use the same devices to operate on language. These operations either build up or break down whole units of the adult language. Much of this practice or play with language is of a form that is unlikely to occur within the constraints of communicative speech. These data suggest that noncommunicative speech plays an important role in the acquisition of language.

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Emily R. Dexter, Northeastern University

Metaphorical Extension in Cognition Verbs in American Sign Language (ASL)

American Sign Language, a language articulated in 3-dimensional space, is particularly suited to express meanings related to location and motion. Gee and Kegl (1982) propose a grammatical analysis of ASL verb structure which includes verb roots of motion and location, and nominal elements such as classificatory handshapes. These verb roots, as morphemes, bear specific basic semantics, and the lexicon is expanded by "metaphorical extension" of these basic concepts of motion and location, to convey meanings related to abstract, non-spatial semantic domains. In this study, the Gee and Kegl analysis of ASL verb structure was applied to a corpus of signs related to the abstract domain of cognition. Standard ASL signs related to activities and states of the mind were decomposed into verbal and nominal morphemes, in order to extract and identify dominant metaphors of motion and location which ASL uses to express meanings related to cognition. Consistency between metaphors within the same semantic domain, and between metaphors that cross semantic domains, are described, and the findings are discussed with attention to the implications for the study of language acquisition and conceptual development.

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Linda J. Ferrier, Children's Hospital Medical Center and Boston University

A Theoretical Model for the Description of the Relation Between Discourse Functions, Intonation and Syntax: Implications for Language Development

A theoretical model is proposed to describe the relationship between a set of discourse functions and their realization by syntactic and intonational systems. These discourse functions establish joint focus of attention, specify the strength of requirement of a response, rectify breakdowns and define illocutionary intent. They are mapped onto the phonetic substance by realization rules which select from alternative linguistic systems, syntactic and intonational. The relationship between functions and realization systems is an indirect one. Two functions may share the same exponents in the system and alternatively one function may have different realizations which operate redundantly. The implications of this theoretical model for the acquisition of language in general and specifically for the development of intonation will be explored. The model will also be used to explore current findings on the effects of motherese.

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Susan Fischer, National Technical Institute for the Deaf

The Early Bird Gets the Word: Effects of Age of Acquisition on the Structure and Processing of Sign Language

American Sign Language (ASL) is an exceptional language in many ways, the most obvious being the channel in which it is communicated. Another important way in which ASL differs from more mainstream languages is the context in which it is learned: the majority of ASL users begin acquiring ASL at least several years after most children begin acquiring language and are more likely to be exposed to it from peers rather than parents. This delay, coming as it does during an important cognitive and linguistic growth period for the child, may have profound consequences not only for what is acquired but also for how the signer processes linguistic information. This is borne out by studies that have been done in the recent past on grammar, perception, and higher level processing; the time at which ASL is learned by many signers and the effects of age of acquisition on their linguistic functioning has interesting consequences for theories of a critical period for first and second language acquisition.

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Suzanne Flynn, Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Adult L2 Acquisition of Anaphora: Contrast or Construction?

Of much current interest in the field of adult second language (L2) acquisition is the extent to which hypotheses about the target L2 are determined by knowledge of the L1. In this paper we present the results of an experimental adult L2 acquisition study which argue that regardless of language-specific facts of anaphora in the L1, adult L2 learners generate comparable hypotheses about anaphora in the L2. Specifically, data are adduced which argue that adult L2 learners conflate hypotheses about pronominal and null anaphora in environments such as those in sentences 1 and 2, and that adult L2 learners generalize restrictions which hold on pronominal anaphora to hold on null anaphora as well, and thus fail to observe language-specific restrictions which hold on null anaphora and not on pronominal anaphora.

1. Reeva helped Rebecca when she walked through the yard.
2. Reeva helped Rebecca when ∅ walking through the yard.

In this study, 51 adult speakers of Spanish and 53 adult speakers of Japanese learning English as a second language were tested. All Ss were administered both a production and a comprehension test of complex sentences which varied systematically in terms of the type of anaphor, pronominal (sent. 1) and null (sent. 2).

Results are discussed in terms of their significance for Contrastive and Constructive theories of L2 acquisition. Results are also more generally related to similar findings in L1 acquisition (Lust, Solan, Flynn, Cross, and Schuetz, 1981), and discussed in terms of their significance for unified theories of language acquisition.

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James Paul Gee, Boston University; Judy Anne Kegl, Northeastern University

ASL Structure: Toward a Theory of Abstract Case

In Gee and Kegl (1982a,b) we argued that American Sign Language (ASL) has a number of properties that enable its grammar to give us insights into universal grammar. That it is made in space allows it to offer clear evidence for the "locative hypothesis" (the claim that all linguistic structures and meanings are ultimately founded on talk about space and movement in space). Furthermore, ASL is "semantically perspicuous", that is, its physical realization (its "phonetics")

structurally reflects (in fact, is a near isomorphism of) its morphological and semantic representation. Thus, ASL can yield crucial insight into the nature of semantic representation.

In this paper, we show how ASL can give us the foundation of a theory of "abstract case" (semantic roles like "Agent", "Patient", "Source" and "Goal"). Virtually all current linguistic theories accept the need for such semantic roles, but there is little consensus on the nature of case theory. We argue that ASL has a case system that is close to the "minimal" or "unmarked" system available in universal grammar.

ASL grammar shows that case roles do not constitute a uniform set. Rather, cases are assigned by different principles at different levels of the grammar: Level 1 (Lexicon), assignment of the case LOCATIVE to intransitive verb stems, further differentiations of this notion being predictable on the basis of the meaning of the verb stem; Level 2 (Lexicon), construction of transitive verb stems with two case roles (Source and Goal); Level 3 (Lexicon), assignment of the case THEME (FIGURE) to a nominal incorporated into the verb stem; Level 4 (Logical Form), a semantic interpretation rule of "Theme Reconstruction" building a uniform interpretation out of several different THEMES incorporated into different structurally related verb stems; and Level 5 ("SR-2"), the construal of notions like Agent, Patient, Causation and Perspective in a system that is not part of grammar per se, but rather a larger system where grammar interacts with discourse and systems of knowledge and belief. At this level we appeal to three different continua: a continuum of control (defining notions of Agent and Patient), a continuum of responsibility (defining the notion of Cause) and a continuum of perspective or empathy (defining the notion of Role Prominence). We show how these continua are ultimately related in linguistic theory to notions of "topic" and "subject".

The theory we develop has implications for current linguistic theory in that it demonstrates the primacy of case relations over grammatical relations, and it supports a strong version of Chomsky's θ -criterion. In addition, it has implications for the theory of language acquisition, both for the order of acquisition of case relations, but more importantly, for the nature of the system that is acquired and its relationship to broader cognitive systems.

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Susan A. Gelman and Marjorie Taylor, Stanford University

Semantic vs. Syntactic Clues: The Proper-Common Distinction in 2-Year-Olds

When children hear a new noun, they must decide whether it refers to the object as a category member (e.g., a dog), or as an individual (e.g., Lassie). Children could use either semantic or syntactic clues to make this distinction. The present study investigated children's sensitivity to syntactic clues, clarifying and extending work summarized in Macnamara (1982). Thirty-two 2-year-olds were each taught a new noun, either proper (e.g., Zav) or common (e.g., a zav), for either a stuffed animal or a novel block-like toy. Then, children's interpretation of the new noun was assessed. With stuffed animals, children appropriately interpreted proper and common nouns differently. Common nouns for the block-like toys were also interpreted correctly. However, when a block-like toy was labeled with a proper noun, half the children acted as if the word referred to a particular animal. The importance of both semantic and syntactic clues is discussed.

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Wendy Goodhart, Boston University

The Acquisition and Development of Morphologic Structures in the Sign Language of Deaf Children

This study compares the acquisition of verbal morphology in deaf children of hearing parents (DCHP) to that of deaf children of deaf parents (DCDP). Acquisition studies of DCDP show they pass through the same developmental stages in acquiring American Sign Language (ASL) as hearing children acquiring a spoken language (Bellugi and Klima, 1972; Boyes-Braem, 1973; McIntire, 1975, 1977; Hoffmeister, 1977, 1978; Kantor, 1977, 1982; Ashbrook, 1977; Supalla, 1982 and others). However, little study has been done of the sign language of DCHP. Most DCHP are now acquiring some form of a sign system at a very young age. The sign language that DCHP are exposed to and interact with is highly variable and inconsistent; from ASL to a rigid coding of English. What effect does this have on their language development? What do they acquire? What is the role of the bioprogram? These are just a few of the questions posed in this study.

The model of ASL structure upon which this analysis is based is Gee and Kegl (1982). Verbs of motion and location are the focus for this comparison. The verbal morphemes investigated are: 1) incorporated classifier theme, 2) agreement marker (LOC), and 3) INDEX on the agreement marker.

Developmental stages of acquisition for DCDP and DCHP (ages 2;9 to 9;6) are discussed as well as commonalities and differences in patterns of language development.

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Naomi S. Goodz, Dawson College

Bilingual Language Acquisition: Its Influence on Parent and Child

An important question about early bilingualism which concerns both parents and researchers is the degree to which one language may interfere with another. This question rests on an implicit assumption that learning of more than one language must always produce confusion and/or interference between (or among) the languages. Although many naturalistic studies have been addressed to this issue, no firm answers are yet available from the conflicting results obtained. Several factors appear to be responsible for the contradictory evidence, including the small numbers of subjects in each study, the large number of different language combinations of varying similarity which have been examined, and the variety of linguistic input situations (e.g. sequential bilingualism, language separation between home and school, parent/language separation, etc.) which have been observed.

The primary goal of the present research is to attempt to resolve some of the previously reported conflicts by studying a larger number of children of the same age range learning the same two languages, namely French and English. A second goal is to characterize the linguistic input available to a child growing up with two languages. A third goal is to determine whether the presence of two languages influences the linguistic behaviour of the parents. Preliminary analyses of the data show that a large proportion of parents, even those firmly committed to maintaining a strict separation of language by parent, model linguistically mixed utterances for their children. This finding suggests that children's early mixing does not reflect interlinguistic confusion. Rather, it suggests that the child is formulating hypotheses about language based on the data available, i.e. that using the language of both father and mother in a single utterance is acceptable.

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Harold W. Gordon, Western Psychiatric Institute and Clinic

Language and Cognitive Factors Affecting School Achievement

A number of studies have demonstrated that normally intelligent children with learning disabilities not only perform better on tests of visuo-spatial, construction skills (normally associated with the right hemisphere) than on verbal or sequential skills normally associated with the left hemisphere, but they perform these visuo-spatial tasks better than average. We wondered how normal public school children with different cognitive profiles would perform on standard achievement tests. Will those individuals whose abilities on visuo-spatial tests exceed abilities on verbal and sequential tests perform less well on standard achievement if overall ability is accounted for?

Our results showed that children who performed better on visuo-spatial tests were significantly worse on standard reading and spelling but not mathematic achievement tests than children who performed better on sequential/verbal tests. Although while some achievement scores and the Denver Auditory Phonemes Test differentiated between the "right" and "left" hemisphere groups, other language tests such as the picture vocabulary or the one-word expressive vocabulary did not. Nor did a measure of intellectual functioning distinguish between the groups. These studies suggest that intellectual capability and some language tests may not be the best predictor of achievement, at least not without additional information in the cognitive profile.

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Kerry Green, Northeastern University

When Do Signs Begin and End? Defining the Boundaries of Signs in American Sign Language: Implications for the Acquisition of ASL

The experiments reported in this paper are a preliminary attempt to answer the following two questions: do deaf signers agree on the location of sign boundaries in American Sign Language?; where in time are the boundaries located? In the first experiment, thirty-five ASL sign sequences were edited out of sentence contexts and slowed to 1/10 normal speed. Six deaf observers were asked to view each sequence and to judge the beginning and ending of a specific test sign in each sequence. The results indicated that deaf observers do agree on the location of sign boundaries. Furthermore, the signers tended to rely on such dynamic events as a change in facial expression, hand configuration, or a sign's movement characteristic, as visual cues for the boundaries.

In the second experiment we presented the same videotape used in the first experiment to hearing subjects with no prior experience of sign language and asked them to judge the beginning and end of the test signs. Comparing the hearing subjects data with those of the deaf signers indicated that the deaf signers were using their linguistic knowledge of ASL and not a general perceptual strategy when making their judgments of the locations of sign boundaries. These findings raise questions related to the acquisition of sign language. Specifically: how and when do deaf children learn to attend to those cues for sign boundaries specified by the linguistic system, and ignore those related to the visual processing of events?

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Sheryl Jacobs and Maris Rodgon, University of Illinois at Chicago

The Use of Requests by Mildly Mentally Retarded and Nonretarded Preschool Children

The purpose of this study was to examine a pragmatic skill, requesting, by mildly mentally retarded and nonretarded preschool children with similar syntactic skills. Fifteen dyads consisting of a retarded and nonretarded child and 15 dyads consisting of two nonretarded children interacted in a semistructured play situation. Analyses of the data indicated that a similar pattern of request and response use occurred for the retarded and nonretarded children. Children generally produced requests for an action, they primarily used verbal modes when requesting, and they tended to use direct requests more frequently than indirect requests. Both verbal and nonverbal modes tended to be used when responding, and in general, responses were appropriate. Nonretarded children were found to use more nonverbal modes of requesting with retarded children, and fewer direct requests with nonretarded children. Factors contributing to these differences are discussed.

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Celia Jakubowicz, MIT Center for Cognitive Science and Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, Paris

On Markedness and Binding Principles

Experimental research on the comprehension of overt pronouns and anaphors by English speaking children was carried out to determine whether a universal principle of development, based on markedness considerations (Chomsky 1981), accounts for the direction of language development. The results of two experiments have shown that initially children do not differentiate anaphors and pronouns from a notional point of view. But formal operations, for which the language learner seems to have very little choice, put conditions on how unknown non-referential expressions are interpreted. That is, linking through c-command in a local domain is present since the beginning of the process; in an English-like language no example where each other or himself is not locally bound ever occurs, then, the default hypothesis is retained, whereas for pronouns, positive evidence shows that the default hypothesis is incorrect. Thus, Binding Principles automatically apply when, triggered by positive evidence, the entire set of lexical properties of the expressions here considered, is known. We can then conclude that a general property of language development such as the "Subset Property" (Berwick 1982), enters into the process of language growth. Moreover, that it is a configurational property which determines linking operations, even at a time when incomplete knowledge of the lexical properties of anaphors and pronouns prevents full application of the Binding Principles.

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Teresa H. Johnson, Saint Louis University

Lara, Lorena, Erika: Monolingual and Bilingual Development Patterns

Final report of ideographic study of three female subjects age four at the beginning of research through age nine. Monolingual English, monolingual Spanish, bilingual English/Spanish.

In order to assess similarities and differences in monolingual and bilingual development and the variations in patterns of language dominance in bilingual child, several measures were used: Auditory comprehension, morphological and syntactic development, temporal analysis of spontaneous speech (speech rate, hesitation phenomena). Formal testing was supplemented with observations of the children's speech in natural settings. Testing sessions were conducted approximately every six months. Data was collected both in the United States and in Mexico.

While findings indicate certain similarities in monolingual and bilingual development, some may be due to the languages under study. Bilingual development was both enriched and affected negatively by the constant exposure to two languages: enrichment took place in vocabulary and facility with language, while morphology and syntax were affected negatively.

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Nancy Jordan, Harvard University

The Relation of Oral Language Processing to Reading Disability: A Study on a Speech Shadowing Technique

A speech shadowing task was used to investigate the relationship between oral language processing and reading disability. Seven- and eight-year-old average and below average readers were compared on their ability to shadow ongoing speech samples. Analysis of shadowing performance revealed that the average readers reproduced a significantly greater number of words in an exact manner than did the below average readers. The two groups also were compared on tasks which measured sentence comprehension and vocabulary. The vocabulary test brought out a highly significant difference between the two reading groups and correlated positively with shadowing. The sentence comprehension task showed a positive relationship to both reading and shadowing, although significance was not reached. The correlation between vocabulary and sentence comprehension was positive and significant. The results suggest a strong relationship between reading disability and language processing more generally. Speech shadowing, a technique which requires listeners to anticipate, process, and reproduce speech in a highly efficient fashion, appears to be a useful and revealing tool for studying language processing abilities in reading-disabled children.

Judy Kegl, Harlan Lane, Mordechai Rimor, and Trude Schermer,
Northeastern University

Historical Change in the Laboratory: The Interaction Between Phonetic Reduction, Stylistic Variation and Language Acquisition

Historical change in American Sign Language is characterized by a variety of disparate processes which share in common the fact that they conspire to facilitate ease of articulation and ease of perception. We show that similar changes can be induced by laboratory simulation techniques of serial transmission and speeded discourse (Experiment 1) and, furthermore, that synchronic variation between formal and informal signing styles exhibits a comparable relationship between non-reduced and reduced variants of signs (Experiment 2).

Taken together, the two experiments offer strong evidence that natural phonetic processes are at work in both diachronic change and synchronic variation. The types of reductions noted occur in both signs and non-linguistic pantomimes for both signers and non-signers. Therefore the questions of interest to linguists and psycholinguists concern not only if and how signs reduce, but more importantly how the phonetic reduction of signs leads to true linguistic diachronic change. How much can signs reduce before their non-reduced counterparts are no longer recoverable and reanalysis of the underlying representation of the sign occurs? And, what additional factors affect this recoverability?

We will argue that linguistic change involves an interaction between natural phonetic processes of reduction (induced in our experiment by speeded discourse) and the real world equivalent of serial transmission (language acquisition). One factor influencing whether or not reanalysis will occur concerns the accessibility which the language learner has to the non-reduced variant of the sign in question. Since formal signs tend to retain historically more archaic forms, or at least more carefully articulated variants, a learner's access to signing models with a command over both formal and informal register (style) may be the key to recoverability of the form of the non-reduced sign. Where access to both the reduced and the non-reduced variants of a sign is impossible, we would expect a greater likelihood of reanalysis and consequently diachronic linguistic change.

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Linda S. Kekelis and Elaine S. Anderson, University of Southern California

The Role of Children in Determining the Nature of Their Linguistic Input: Some Evidence from Blind and Sighted Children

Using data from a longitudinal study of 4 visually impaired and 3 sighted children, this paper examines a variety of discourse features in caregiver-child interaction to demonstrate how children play an active role in determining the language addressed to them. Analyses of topic focus and management and of the nature of discourse contingency suggest that: 1) adults initiate a greater proportion of topics when children do not provide visual cues as to focus of attention or fail to provide social cues that invite response; 2) topics will be more or less child-centered depending on the child's ability to direct and express interest in others; 3) differences in contingency increase as interaction relies less on routines and the "here & now"; 4) the greatest differences in contingency between blind and sighted children involve topically relevant vs. discourse appropriate utterances; 5) degree of contingency in children's language affects the richness and variation in partners' turns.

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Daniel Kempler and Susan Curtiss, University of California at Los Angeles

Selective Preservation of Syntax in Alzheimer's Dementia

This paper reports on a study of 30 subjects with Alzheimer's dementia who were administered tasks specifically designed to compare grammatical (syntactic and morphological), semantic, and pragmatic production. The tasks administered included (1) an elicitation task scored for grammatical, semantic, and communicative appropriateness, (2) spontaneous conversation evaluated for grammatical form, semantic appropriateness and pragmatic skill, and a homophone disambiguation task assessing each subject's ability to make use of semantic vs. syntactic cues. Analysis of the data indicates that our subject population demonstrated (1) intact productive control over the grammar across all 3 tasks, and (2) intact control over the grammar in the presence of impaired semantic and communicative ability. Our data lend empirical support to linguistic and neurolinguistic models which argue that the computational aspects of the linguistic system are represented independently from other components of language knowledge.

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Sharon M. Klein, Neuropsychiatric Institute, UCLA

Overgeneralization - Does It Have a Role in the Development of Grammar?

The central thesis of this paper is that Overgeneralization, as it is usually defined in the acquisition literature, is not an essential feature in the child's development of grammar. Neither does the appearance of errors usually described as the result of overgeneralized Transformational Rules present an "embarrassment" to a view of language development that presumes grammar-specific universal constraints and an absence of negative evidence relevant to the operation of the constraints.

It is shown that a restricted definition of Transformational Rule does not provide for overgeneralization to specific classes of lexical items. Moreover, the phenomena usually described as the result of overgeneralized Transformations are shown to be the function of the construction of the lexicon. As such, they are argued to be available to negative evidence of the sort that can be shown to exist.

The construction and reconstruction of intermediate grammars entailing syntactic phenomena outside of the lexicon are further shown to reflect the interaction of non-negative data and grammar-specific constraints that are assumed in the theory of grammar described in Chomsky (1981) and presumed to be part of acquisition.

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Ginger Kuehn, Central Institute for the Deaf

Discrimination of Chinese and American Infant Vocalizations by Adult American Listeners

Vocalization samples approximately ten seconds in length were collected and edited from 16 infants, 1 Chinese and 1 American, at each of the following ages (months): 6, 10, 12, 13, 15, 18, 20 and 24. Four age groups were created: 6/10, 12/13, 15/18 and 20/24. Two auditory tapes were created: Tape I: 6/10 and 12/13 month groups; Tape II: 15/18 and 20/24 months. Each tape consisted of 16 trials presented twice (A/B and B/A) creating 64 trials, with equal numbers of trials from same and different language environments. Thirty-two untrained adult American listeners made auditory discrimination judgments. Results suggest that the ability of American adult judges to discriminate American English from Chinese infant vocalizations increases significantly with increasing age of the child. Results

lend support to the hypothesis that the vocalizations during the babbling phase are influenced by the specific language environment and, therefore, suggest that the babbling phase plays a linguistically relevant role in language development.

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Yonata Levy, The Hebrew University, Jerusalem

The Use of Nonce Words Tests in Assessing Children's Verbal Knowledge

Since the introduction of the nonce-words technique for the assessment of children's knowledge of various grammatical rules it has been used with a wide range of age groups. The results have been interpreted as relevant for the description of the course of natural language development. In this study, thirty-one seven-year-old Hebrew speakers whose natural language showed no inflectional errors, were tested for their knowledge of gender and number inflections on nonce "nouns" and verbs. It was found that seven-year-olds radically depart from an independently established pattern of acquisition of inflections and make errors which were neither typical of their practice with real nouns nor was it predicted from the previously observed sequence of acquisition.

It is suggested that the cognitive structure of the linguistic knowledge of a fluent speaker predisposes him to treating a nonce-words test as a problem-solving situation rather than as a natural language situation. The nonce word test may not be adequate for assessing the knowledge of a system that is an already well-established linguistic procedure.

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Ruth C. Loew, National Technical Institute for the Deaf

Learning Pronoun Functions: The Acquisition of Narrative Reference in American Sign Language

In American Sign Language (ASL) story-telling, reference includes both indexing (the use of reference locations) and role play. In the adult language, a character is associated throughout a story with a location and/or with certain role play traits which serve to identify that character.

The present study is a longitudinal investigation of the acquisition of ASL narrative reference strategies by a deaf child of deaf parents between the ages of three years, one month (3;1) and 4;9. It is found that initially, many of the reference mechanisms of adult ASL are used

with a contrastive, rather than an identifying, function. Spatial and behavioral distinctions are used to set off mime from signing or role play from narrative, or to contrast consecutive references to different characters, without being stably associated with particular characters. These distinctions do not identify characters consistently until 4;9. The implications for the analysis of adult ASL reference in contrastive terms are discussed.

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Alec Marantz, Harvard University Society of Fellows

Verb Classifications of 3- to 5-year-olds: Preliminary Experimental Evidence

Whether young children control a unified class of verbs (V's) is important for a number of issues in language development. Considerations of grammatical relations have led Braine and Marantz to predict sharp distinctions between transitive (tr.) and intransitive (intr.) V's. Prototype accounts of grammatical categories expect action V's to be "better" V's than non-action V's. The experiments reported here indicate that 3- to 5-year-olds do have a superclass of verbs cutting across tr./intr. and action/non-action subcategories. If children have a syntactic tr./intr. or action/non-action distinction, it is not robust.

Subjects (S's) are read sentences (sent's). First, an experimenter (E) manipulates a puppet and repeats the V from the sent. Then it is the S's turn to play the puppet. In Ex. I, half the S's were read only sent's with tr. V's when the E was the puppet, half only sent's with intr. V's. All S's heard sent's with both types of V's when they played the puppet. The major result is that S's generalize from tr. V's to intr. V's and vice versa at all ages. In Ex. II, all S's were trained with only tr. V's and tested on only intr. V's. No effects (or trends) for action vs. non-action or for underlying transitivity were observed.

These findings place reins on the interpretation of Braine's and Marantz's results and call into question certain prototype accounts of grammatical categories.

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Madeline Maxwell and Maribeth Lartz, The University of Texas at Austin

Recognition Memory in Deaf and Hearing Readers

This study investigated the ability of deaf and hearing children to draw inferences from text. Subjects were 30 children reading at third grade level - 20 deaf and 10 hearing. The hearing children and half the deaf children were in third grade. The other 10 deaf children were in fifth grade. The children read eight brief stories and determined whether sets of four other sentences had appeared in the stories: 1) true premises, 2) false premises, 3) true inferences, 4) false inferences. Although error rates indicated similarities in the third graders, responses for both groups of deaf subjects were contradictory. The deaf readers did not seem to construct a representation of semantic meaning or even to identify new surface structure as an indicator of difference, relying instead on surface similarity of noun order.

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Rebecca Mermelstein, University of Illinois at Chicago

The Development of Speech Acts in Autistic Children

This study compared 19 autistic children with 21 normal and 19 retarded controls, on their use of speech acts thought to develop in the second and third year of life. Subjects were matched on MLU (mean MLU = 2.25) and pre-tested for non-linguistic mental age using the Leiter International Performance Scale. Two 25-minute spontaneous play sessions were videotaped. In the first, the child played with his teacher and in the second, all subjects interacted with an examiner who was blind to the experimental hypothesis. Data from these sessions were analysed in terms of the number and kinds of speech acts used (Dore's classification) and in terms of the level of syntactic development (Lee's Developmental Sentence Test). In a third session, a set of 12 structured pragmatic tasks designed to elicit imperatives and declaratives was administered. Data from this session was analysed according to the concept of presupposition developed by Bates.

Results indicated that there was a significant discrepancy in the performance of the autistic vs. control groups in the kinds of speech acts used in the spontaneous sessions, with autistic children showing mostly responses in 2 categories: responses to wh and yes/no questions and requests for actions. Controls showed a wider range. On the structured tasks, autistic children were less able to attend to the novel stimuli but showed no differences on the imperative tasks. The comparison of syntactic and pragmatic development showed the autistic children to be more delayed in pragmatics than in syntax.

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Larry Miller and Dale Burnett, Queen's University; Rena Upitis, Harvard University

Reading as an Interactive Process

This study examined the linguistic strategies of grade three and six pupils in the context of Rumelhart's (1977) interactive model of the reading process. A linguistic prediction task was devised to investigate pupils' use of orthographic constraints, syntactic redundancy, and syntactic and semantic knowledge. A program was written for the IBM 5100 computer so that the prediction task could be presented as a progressive cloze activity. The data was examined by a two-way analysis of variance as well as by constructing detailed descriptions of individual protocols. Results indicated no significant differences in the performance of the groups on the task when interactive linguistic knowledge could not be used in predictions. However, when interactive linguistic knowledge could be applied, the more able pupils, regardless of grade, performed significantly better. Protocol analysis revealed the strategies used by the pupils in the task as well as their metalinguistic knowledge. An important feature of this report is a careful comparison between the types of information one obtains by statistical approaches as contrasted with that obtained from qualitative protocol approaches. Such a comparison reflects the current debate on quantitative versus qualitative analysis as recently described by Light and Pillemer (1982).

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Randa Mulford and James L. Morgan, Institute of Child Development,
University of Minnesota

The Role of "Local Cues" in Assigning Gender to New Nouns in Icelandic

Previous research on Icelandic children's developing grammatical gender systems suggests that they may have a preference for attending to grammatical cues that are closely related syntactically to an unfamiliar noun (i.e. "local cues") versus equally informative cues that are more distant (e.g. outside of the noun phrase or sentence containing the novel noun). This possibility is explored through examination of two types of data: (1) results of an experimental study with 72 Icelandic children, ages 3 to 6 years, where the syntactic relationships between grammatical gender cues and nonsense nouns have been systematically varied to evaluate how syntactic "localness" affects children's ability to assign correct gender to new words; (2) introductions of new words in transcribed natural conversations between 2- to 3-year-olds and adult Icelanders, with particular emphasis on how types and configurations of gender information in the adult input may influence the gender-appropriateness of children's productive responses. We argue that adopting a strategy of attending to "local cues" may help children as they attempt to apply their knowledge of grammatical gender in new situations.

* * * * *

Keith E. Nelson and Philip M. Prinz, The Pennsylvania State University

"Alligator Eats Hat": A Child-Adult-Computer Interactive Approach to Reading/Writing Development in Preschool Deaf Children (Phase II)

Recently there has been an increased interest in the use of microcomputers in developing language and reading programs for children. The present research involves a new method for teaching young deaf children (2 to 6 years) to read prior to the primary grades. The study incorporates the use of a portable microcomputer in the classroom to allow the child to initiate communication from the onset of instruction. The children have been trained to use a novel interactive microcomputer system with a special interface keyboard which builds in perceptual salience, individualized vocabulary, and animation of pictures and color graphic representations of signs from American Sign Language (ASL). The learning mechanism underlying this novel instructional system is best characterized as responsive, interactional and exploratory, reflective of the way in which most children acquire a first language. Results of the study have

demonstrated a significant improvement in word and phrase identification, reading comprehension and basic sentence construction or writing. The increase in writing and reading communication skills is attributed to exploratory learning - not solely programmed instruction - which allows the child to flexibly investigate the representation of various printed forms which relate to the child's own primary mode of communication.

* * * * *

Lorraine K. Obler, Boston University School of Medicine and Boston VA Medical Center

Cross-Language Neurolinguistics

Over the past century, neurolinguistics has achieved a gross understanding of how language is organized in areas of the human brain. Individual differences in brain representation of language related to brain damage have been observed and documented; differences related to structures in the actual languages spoken (language-specific effects) have, by contrast, been postulated, but study of them is just beginning.

Different voice onset time boundaries for stop consonants, for example, result in different categorization of the same sound by speakers of Hebrew and English. Different morpho-syntactic burdens - in analytic languages like English versus synthetic languages like Turkish - result in different forms of agrammatic aphasia for speakers of those languages. And different relations between a language and its orthography - especially between phonological orthographies like Spanish and ideographic ones like Chinese - result in different types of reading disturbance in brain-damaged patients.

On the basis of such differential types of language behavior, the neurolinguist infers differential language-specific organizational systems and processing mechanisms.

* * * * *

Terence Odlin, University of Texas at Austin

Avoidance and the Problem of Metalinguistic Awareness

Error analysis research has shown that certain structures are not produced frequently by second language learners in situations designed to encourage their use. Invariably, this underproduction of certain structures has been considered as evidence of avoidance. However, the concept of avoidance remains somewhat ambiguous: on the one hand, it

can mean that learners deliberately avoid a particular construct - for example, object-of-comparison (OCOMP) relative clauses in English - while on the other hand, it can mean that learners avoid using a construct such as OCOMP relative clauses simply from being unaware that the construct exists in English. This paper distinguishes between the two possible types of avoidance, conscious and unconscious, and presents evidence that neither type alone can explain all cases where particular types of errors are infrequent in production data. The significance of this distinction is important not only for developing finer-grained approaches to error analysis, but also for clarifying some of the issues related to explicit and implicit linguistic knowledge.

* * * * *

Jeanne Paccia and Frank Curcio, Department of Psychology, Boston University

The Relationship of Adult Speech to Conversational Adequacy in Autistic Children

This study investigated whether the adequacy of autistic children's verbal replies to adult questions was related to certain features contained in these questions. In particular, it was hypothesized that response adequacy would increase when the eliciting utterance contained certain positive features, i.e., when it was a yes/no question, conceptually simple and semantically contingent to the child's speech. Dyadic conversations between 4 autistic children and 2 familiar adults (mother and teacher) were analysed. At a group level of analysis, it was found that the percent of adequate responding significantly increased with an increase in the number of positive features in the eliciting utterance. Analyses for individual dyads were less clear-cut, with only 4 of the 8 dyads achieving a marginal level of significance. The findings are discussed in terms of their implications for language intervention with autistic children. In particular, the relevance of analyses derived from group versus individual data and comparisons between mothers and teachers will be considered.

* * * * *

Nan Bernstein Ratner, University of Maryland, College Park; Clifton Pye, The University of British Columbia

Higher Pitch in BT Is NOT Universal: Data from Quiche Mayan and Its Implications

Of the many features of baby talk (BT) or caretaker register which have been described, the most commonly mentioned is higher pitch. In this paper, we present a post hoc analysis of the pitch characteristics of Quiche Mayan babytalk, a language register which does not employ higher pitch, although it shares other features with BT registers described previously. Utterances from three Quiche mothers to adult and child (0;9 - 2;0 yrs.) listeners were subjected to fundamental frequency extraction. All mothers used lower pitch when addressing their children than when addressing adults. We discuss these findings in relation to four hypotheses which assume universality for higher pitch in BT. Instead of innateness assumptions and the attribution of various psychological motivations, we propose a "sociolinguistic" interpretation of pitch alterations which allows them to vary freely among languages and registers as an expression of pragmatic interpersonal variables such as deference and affection. For Quiche, higher pitch's use as a deference marker conflicts with the possibility of using it as a BT marker.

* * * * *

Judy Snitzer Reilly, University of California, Los Angeles

Acquiring Conditionals: How Language and Cognition Interact

Data from the initial stages of conditional acquisition are used to demonstrate how children integrate the grammatical and semantic elements, as well as the underlying cognitive notions, required in the adult conditional system.

Naturalistic and experimental data were collected from eight English-speaking children who were just beginning to produce conditionals (ages 2,6 - 3,2).

The data show that the children differ in their order of acquisition: some acquire the morphology before they comprehend the corresponding semantic notions. Other children first comprehend the semantics and implicitly, the underlying cognitive structure before they acquire the appropriate morphological marker. These different approaches to entering the adult grammatical system suggest that for an individual child, different systems (e.g. morphology and semantics) mature on different timetables. Further, although the developmental sequence within a particular system is predictable, growth in adjacent systems is not necessarily parallel.

* * * * *

Ellen M. Rintell, University of Houston

But How Do You FEEL About That? The Second Language Learner's Perception of Emotion in Speech

An important aspect of the second language learner's functional linguistic ability is the ability to use language to express and perceive emotion. This aspect of communicative competence is considered to be part of pragmatic competence.

This paper reports on part of an ongoing study in which adult second language learners were asked to listen to English conversations and identify the emotional themes of those conversations. Among the questions asked are: just how difficult is it for learners to understand emotional messages in speech? What is the influence of native language and culture on this ability? What is the relationship between this ability and English language proficiency as measured by standardized tests? Do male or female learners do better on this task?

The analysis of our data with respect to the above questions will be described, and the implications of the study for future research and for second language teaching will be discussed.

* * * * *

Michael P. Robb and John H. Saxman, Syracuse University

The Relationship Between Vocal Fundamental Frequency Characteristics and Developmental Levels of Language Acquisition in Young Children

Fundamental frequency (F₀) values are reported for 14 children between the ages of 11 and 25 months, an age period characterized by changes in physiological and linguistic development. Both average F₀ and F₀ variability were found to decrease as subject age increased. Average F₀ change reflects increased physical development with age. F₀ variability change is discussed relative to the interaction of age and linguistic development.

* * * * *

Lorraine Rocissano, New York University

Maternal Contingency to What the Child Didn't Say

Mothers' responses to children's focus of attention, even when that focus was not expressed in an utterance, were described. Ten mother-child pairs were video-taped when the children's MLU was below 1.5. The contingency and non-contingency of maternal replies to child actions was recorded. Results showed that mothers were very likely to respond with a contingent (topic related) reply to child actions that themselves continued the mother's topic. When children did not do or say something to continue the mother's topic, individual variation among maternal strategies was observed. Some mothers produced contingent replies even after child topic-breaks. Other mothers were more likely to respond to child topic-breaking with non-contingent turns of their own. These two maternal strategies had important effects on the children's language production in the following turn. Children were less likely to speak after non-contingent than contingent maternal turns. When they did speak after non-contingent turns, their utterances were rarely related to the mother's topic.

* * * * *

Susan Seidman, C.U.N.Y. Graduate Center

Shifting Sands: The Conversational Content of Young Peers at Play

This study examines the hypotheses that the content of young children's conversations varies within a single context, that older and younger preschoolers differ in their conversational content, and that the themes of children's talk have specific functions in the

construction of peer conversations. Ten preschool dyads, aged 3, 4, and 5 years, were audio tape-recorded during 12-minute sessions of sandbox play. Category schemes were applied to their transcribed talk to assess both conversational quantity and the theme and informational content of all conversational episodes. Older dyads (M = 4.8 years) had more utterances, more relevant utterances, and longer conversational episodes. Older children added more new propositions, while young dyads (M = 3.9 years) incorporated their partner's ideas into their utterances to a greater extent. There were marked differences between the dyads in the percentage of their discourse within specific theme categories. The results are discussed in terms of what they reveal about peers' development and maintenance of interactive tasks through their discourse.

* * * * *

Janet Cohen Sherman, Massachusetts Institute of Technology

The Minimum Distance Principle Reconsidered: A New Explanation for Previous Findings

In this paper we report results from an experimental study designed to test children's sensitivity to lexical and syntactic properties necessary to interpretation of complement subjects in sentences such as (1) "John promises/tells Bill to leave". Although there has been considerable study of children's comprehension of the verbs "promise" and "tell" in sentences such as (1) (e.g., Chomsky, 1969; Maratsos, 1974; Hsu, 1981) there are major unresolved issues with regard to the role of the lexicon and of the structure of these sentences. A frequently suggested explanation for the established finding that children aged 3 to 10 often assign object control to the verb "promise" as well as "tell" is the Minimum Distance Principle (MDP) by which children generally choose the object (i.e., "Bill" in (1) above) as controller of the missing complement subject since it is the noun phrase nearest to it. While results of the present study replicate the previous finding of object control in VP complements, evidence is presented which shows that this correspondence is based on children's sensitivities to specifically structural and lexical principles, and not surface distance calculations. The results are interpreted for their relevance for previous studies on control as well as for current theories of first language acquisition.

* * * * *

Elizabeth J. Short and Keith Owen Yeates, Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Reading Comprehension: The Effects of Story Grammar and Summarization Training

Reading achievement may depend in part on children's ability to employ strategies whereby they monitor their comprehension - that is, on children's use of metacognitive skills. An experimental intervention program designed to foster such skills was evaluated. The self-instructional procedure consisted of two components: story grammar training, designed to increase strategic reading behavior; and summarization training, designed to increase explicit and observable comprehension monitoring. Fourth grade (N=20) and fifth grade (N=18) children were randomly assigned to experimental and control groups. Skill acquisition was assessed through free and probed recall (for story grammar training) and summarization (for summarization training) on brief narrative passages; skill generalization was assessed through free and probed recall of more extensive expository passages, which were designed to require both strategic and summarization skills for adequate comprehension. Skill acquisition, on the one hand, was clearly demonstrated; trained readers were able to recall and summarize brief narrative passages better than untrained readers. Skill generalization, on the other hand, was more equivocally evidenced; although trained readers' free recall of longer expository passages was significantly better than that of untrained readers, their probed recall was not. The provision of metacognitive skills that promote active comprehension monitoring, then, appears to provide children with the tools needed for independent reading; programs designed to provide such skills may aid efforts to prevent reading failure.

* * * * *

Kristine Strand, Children's Hospital, Boston, Massachusetts

The Relation of Metamemory to Memory Performance in Language-Impaired Children

The purpose of this study was to more clearly define the nature of developmental interactions between metamemory and memory performance in language-impaired children. Normally developing children and language-impaired children were seen individually for two sessions. At the first session, 24 familiar pictures were presented, and the child was instructed to do anything with the pictures in order to remember them. A series of questions was asked to assess the child's

awareness of the strategy developed to remember the pictures. At the second session scheduled one week later, the child's retrieval abilities were assessed in three conditions: 1. free recall, 2. cued recall, and 3. recognition. Both groups showed developmental changes in the types of metamemory strategies preferred, in the patterns of memory performance seen, and in the interconnections between the two. Overall, language-impaired children showed delays both in development of metamemory skills and in memory performance abilities. In addition, some important qualitative distinctions were noted in children's approach to the tasks.

* * * * *

Rebecca Treiman, Indiana University; Kathy Hirsh-Pasek, Swarthmore College

Individual Differences in Reading Style Among Dyslexic Boys

Previous studies have found that children vary in the way in which they pronounce individual printed words. Children at one end of the continuum, dubbed "Phoenicians", rely heavily on spelling-sound correspondence rules. Children at the other end of the continuum, "Chinese", are more likely to use rote, word-specific associations. The present study extended previous work on individual differences to a new population - children diagnosed as dyslexic. Subjects were 37 boys with a mean age of 11 years, 9 months and a mean reading level of 2.8 on the Gilmore test. Subjects were asked to read aloud a list of regular (e.g., "dome"), exception (e.g., "come"), and nonsense (e.g., "gome") words. Individual differences were found such that children who scored well on nonsense words also tended to score well on regular words ($r = .93$). Ability to read nonsense words correlated less highly with ability to read exception words ($r = .81$), suggesting that these two types of words require somewhat different processes. In addition, children who were skilled at rules tended to overgeneralize them to exception words, as when they pronounced "come" to rhyme with "dome". The individual differences found among this population of dyslexics paralleled those found among normal readers.

* * * * *

Rebecca Treiman, Indiana University

Phonetic Aspects of First Graders' Creative Spellings of Consonants

This paper reports some results of an ongoing analysis of first graders' spellings. These first graders attended a "language experience" classroom that provided little direct instruction in spelling. The daily writings of 43 children were collected, yielding a large (5,618 word) data base of creative spellings. Many of these spellings revealed the children's awareness of phonetic details, an awareness similar to that seen among preschool children who invent their own spellings (Read, 1975). This report focuses specifically on the children's spellings of consonants. Like the children studied by Read, these first graders sometimes represented the affrication of /t/ before /r/, spelling /t/ as CH in this context. Also, /č/ was sometimes spelled with T, reflecting its phonetic nature. Other phonetic details in the children's spellings included the spelling of intervocalic flaps as D and the phonetic spelling of past tense and plural markers.

* * * * *

Anne van Kleeck and Deborah Bryant, The University of Texas at Austin

A Diary Study of Very Early Emerging Metalinguistic Skills

Parents of eight children were trained to keep diary data on several categories of very early emerging metalinguistic behavior over a twelve month period. The children's ages at the beginning of data collection ranged from 18 to 28 months. Numerous categories of metalinguistic skill were exhibited by 88 to 100% of the children, while a small number of categories were found only in a small subgroup of children. It was found that some behaviors first emerge earlier than others, with four general stages postulated. The results indicated both general patterns of development across children as well as individual differences between children in this age range on early metalinguistic skill development.

* * * * *

Anne van Kleeck, Madeline Maxwell, and Cheryl Gunter, The University of Texas at Austin

Multifunctionality in Illocutionary Coding Schemes

Obtaining adequate reliability levels when coding illocutions in adult-child interaction often presents problems. One reason is that coding protocols require choosing only one function per utterance while the actual utterances may serve more than one function simultaneously. This study looked at coding behavior of 30 graduate students to address this issue. Subjects coded each utterance in two videotaped (and transcribed) adult/three-year-old child interactions, first selecting the most appropriate or salient illocution, then selecting other possible categories, and finally indicating the level of difficulty in coding each utterance. They also provided reasons for coding for a subset of utterances. From several types of analyses of this data, it was concluded that less than half of the utterances were in fact uni-functional with respect to illocutionary force. Coding utterances for a single illocutionary function is a widespread research methodology that is seriously called to question by these data.

* * * * *

Harriet S. Wetstone and Lael E. Foster, Institute of Living, Hartford

Asking Questions: Individual Differences and Developmental Trends

There is surprisingly little information on children's production of questions in contrast to comprehension and the role of interrogative sequences in child discourse. The only major study of children's production of questions is now fifty years old (Smith, 1933). The purpose of this paper is to present a descriptive catalogue of 600 questions produced by 45 normal 3- to 5-year-olds and 8 communicatively impaired 4- to 7-year-olds. Children's questions were gathered during informal play sessions with a familiar adult and categorized according to type, function and content. Data replicate

1933 findings as to frequency of questions and development of wh types, but differ substantially as to distribution of question types. In this study, wh questions were twice as frequent as yes/no questions. The majority of questions were requests for information relevant to activities at hand; requests for clarification and for assistance, attention, etc., were less frequent. Developmental differences were subtle and more apparent in content than in distribution of type or function. Individual differences were striking with impaired children representing exaggerations of normal variations in style. Data accentuate the importance of individual differences as well as developmental trends in understanding normal and deviant development.

* * * * *

Lydia White, McGill University

The "Pro-drop" Parameter in Adult Second Language Acquisition

In this paper, it is proposed that adults learning second languages have particular problems when their mother tongue has activated a parameter of universal grammar which is not operative in the second language. It is suggested that the learner will carry the parameter over from L1 to L2, causing interference errors. This proposal was tested on adult native speakers of Spanish, learning English as a second language. Spanish, unlike English, is a "pro-drop" language, having the following properties, all related by the so-called "pro-drop" parameter: (i) missing subject, (ii) subject inversion, (iii) "that trace" effects. Subjects were asked to make grammaticality judgments on a number of English sentences, including some with "pro-drop" characteristics, i.e. they would have been grammatical in Spanish but were ungrammatical in English. It was found that Spanish speakers did accept such sentences as grammatical, compared to French-speaking controls, who did not, and that they showed improvement with increasing level.

* * * * *

Jeni E. Yamada, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

The Hyperverbal Profile: Characteristics and Implications

This paper discusses aspects of a case study in which the linguistic and nonlinguistic abilities of a "hyperlinguistic" or "hyperverbal" mentally retarded adolescent were documented. The unusual performance profile and its implications are discussed with particular focus given to the type of language which can potentially emerge despite severe cognitive deficits.

Marta's performance in nonlinguistic areas (as judged by formal testing and informal observation) is generally quite poor. In contrast, her expressive language is sophisticated syntactically, albeit deficient semantically and pragmatically. Her language is definitely productive, as exemplified by her ability to produce complex, novel (and sometimes bizarre) forms, and by her errors. One intriguing aspect of Marta's expressive language is her frequent use of speech formulae.

The High Language/Low Cognition profile indicates that language can develop in spite of extremely deficient nonlinguistic cognitive abilities, many of which have been hypothesized to be prerequisite to language or to reflect underlying principles common to both nonlinguistic and linguistic development. As such, this profile bears on our views of the language and cognition relationship and ultimately, on a theory of language acquisition. The data presented support the recent trend toward an integrated model of language acquisition, i.e. one which assumes the involvement and interaction of numerous cognitive systems, but also posits learning mechanisms and organizing principles which are unique to language.

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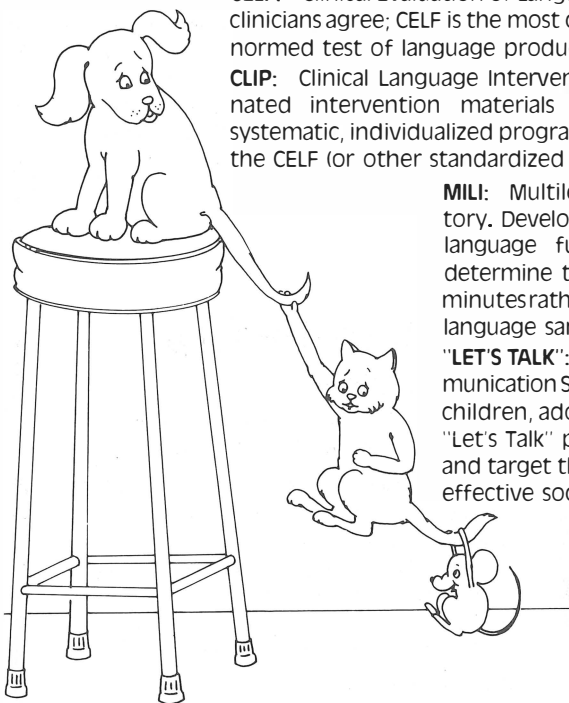
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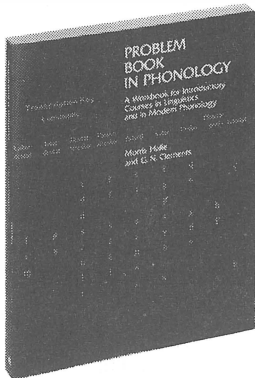
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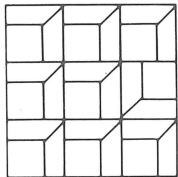
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ERRATUM

Madeline Maxwell was mistakenly omitted from the Directory of First Authors. Copies of her paper may be obtained by writing to:

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RESTAURANTS

The following restaurants will be open for lunch on Saturday, October 9, and Sunday, October 10, 1983.

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Kristo's Submarines, 714 Commonwealth Ave.

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