

Editor's overview

BOOK REVIEWS

With one exception (D. Crystal's text), literacy (reading and writing) and language learning (second language acquisition and American Sign Language) are the themes treated in the books reviewed in the present issue of *AP*. Clearly, at the frontiers of applied psycholinguistics is the new field of writing research, as exemplified in the important collection of papers in Gregg and Steinberg's edited volume *Cognitive Processes in Writing* which is reviewed here by Wilkes-Gibbs and Black. Black, it should be noted, has recently (Black, in press) reviewed applied psycholinguistic literature in this field. In addition to questions concerning writing processes and their development, and the relationship between reading and writing, researchers in this field are interested in determining

1. the impact of first language competence (i.e., syntactic, semantic, morphological, lexical, phonological, and pragmatic knowledge) and first language performance (i.e., speech planning and execution processes; language comprehension processes) on writing processes and development;
2. how writing and prior nonlinguistic cognitive development are related;
3. whether the development of writing influences in any way subsequent linguistic and nonlinguistic cognitive development; and
4. the nature of writing disorders and how best to treat them.

The following books are now being processed for review.

- Arnold, G. E., Winckel, F., & Wyke, B. D. (Eds.), *Clinical aspects of dysphasia*. New York: Springer-Verlag, 1981.
- Bhatnagar, S. C. *A neurolinguistic analysis of paragrammatism: A study of three Hindi aphasics*. Edmonton, Alberta: Linguistic Research, Inc., 1980.
- Dale, P. S., & Ingram, D. (Eds.), *Child language - An international perspective*. Baltimore: University Park Press, 1981.
- Fay, W. H., & Schuler, A. L. *Emerging language in autistic children*. Baltimore: University Park Press, 1980.
- Gerber, A., & Bryen, D. N. *Language and learning disabilities*. Baltimore: University Park Press, 1981.
- Kavanagh, J. F., & Venezky, R. L. (Eds.), *Orthography, reading, and dyslexia*. Baltimore: University Park Press, 1980.
- Levine, E. S. *The ecology of early deafness*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1981.
- Schiefelbusch, R. L. (Ed.), *Nonspeech language and communication: Analysis and intervention*. Baltimore: University Park Press, 1980.

Schiefelbusch, R. L., & Bricker, D. D. (Eds.), *Early language: Acquisition and intervention*. Baltimore: University Park Press, 1981.

Schiefelbusch, R. L., & Hollis, J. H. (Eds.), *Language intervention from ape to child*. Baltimore: University Park Press, 1979.

Wilbur, R. B. *American sign language and sign systems*. Baltimore: University Park Press, 1979.

ARTICLES

The problem areas addressed in the present issue of *AP* reflect the varied interests of applied psycholinguists: adult aphasia (Grober & Kellar), reading disorders (Byrne), learning disability (Donahue), the assessment of communicative competence (Coggins & Carpenter), and language impairment (Graybeal). One of these articles is a methodological report (Coggins & Carpenter); the remainder report results of experiments.

Differentiating linguistic competence along lines suggested by contemporary linguistic theory (e.g., into a syntactic component, a lexical semantic component, and a relational within-sentence and between-sentence semantic component) and differentiating psycholinguistically between language production and language comprehension performance modes have been particularly fruitful in recent years in helping to identify the symptomatology of adult aphasic patients (see, for example, Berndt & Caramazza, 1980; Caramazza & Berndt, in press). These developments are evident in the present study of semantic (and secondarily syntactic) aspects of pronominalization processes in adult aphasics by Grober & Kellar, with a specific emphasis on sentence comprehension. Interestingly, their aphasic subgroups encountered similar difficulties in their tasks that were centered on syntactic rather than semantic cues to pronoun assignment. Grober and Kellar's speculations regarding possible aphasic sentence comprehension strategies, in their attempt to account for these findings, should serve to generate additional research in this area.

The notion that difficulties in learning to read are a reflection of a more basic problem with the development of first language maturity (i.e., competence and performance), rather than a problem of a nonlinguistic information processing nature, appears to be gaining momentum in the literature, according to Byrne and others (see Vellutino, 1979, and Vellutino, in press, for reviews). Byrne's interest, specifically, is in the mastery of certain late-maturing syntactic structures in elementary school age good and poor readers and in whether the ways in which they are processed are consistent with the claim in the literature that problems in learning to read can be traced to "deficient use of a phonetic memory code." His present findings lead him to conclude that "a better characterization is one that places poor readers further down on the linguistic development scale, relatively dependent upon strategies acquired early in language mastery . . . and upon heuristic devices, including knowledge of what is usual in the world."

The ability to engage in communicative exchanges using natural language

is dependent apparently not only on speakers' and listeners' shared knowledge of the structure of the language that is being used (in particular, on how such communicative functions as obtaining information, giving information, negating propositions, demanding action, and signaling given and new information are mapped onto syntactic, intonational, and other linguistic structures), but also on such factors as social development, nonlinguistic cognitive development (including general information processing capabilities and knowledge of the world), rules for conversational turn taking, and procedures for signaling and repairing conversational miscommunications. The purpose of Donahue's study of communication in the present issue "was to examine the ability to adjust requesting strategies to listener characteristics in a group of children who have been found to experience difficulty in both language and social development, that is, learning disabled children."

The most striking of her findings was that learning disabled boys produced requesting strategies that were less appropriate than those of nondisordered male controls, "even though their repertoire of linguistic forms for conveying politeness was not deficient." Thus it appears that in these learning disabled boys, an aspect of communicative performance lagged behind the development of relevant linguistic knowledge.

An important feature of communicative development in human beings, as Coggins and Carpenter's review of the relevant literature indicates, is that evidence of intentional communication can be found in the prelinguistic activities of children and that their communicative behavior during the stage of single-word utterances reveals a variety of intentions. In view of these findings, and because early communicative intentions "may be important for the acquisition of later communicative interactions," Coggins and Carpenter have created a device for assessing early intentional communication for use in a clinical setting. Their article describes the background for this device and its purpose, content, administration, scoring, reliability, and validity.

Method, theory, and findings of the verbal learning and memory laboratory are brought to bear by Graybeal upon the task of trying to understand the nature of information processing deficits in moderately language-impaired children whose major symptom is language development that lags behind nonlinguistic cognitive development. The phenomenon under investigation by Graybeal was the recall of the semantic content or gist of stories, and she discovered that language-impaired children differed from normal age- and sex-matched control subjects primarily in terms of the amount of content recalled, with differences favoring the normal subjects. The design of her study eliminated possible contamination by differences in short-term memory capacity and comprehension of the materials, and an estimate of nonverbal IQ was found not to be related to recall performance.

Thus the language-impaired children in this study appeared to be suffering from a memory deficit the origin of which, as Graybeal indicates, is still to be determined. Because of the importance of memory in the classroom and elsewhere, this is a finding that applied psycholinguists should make every effort to explain. In the meantime, knowledge of its existence should alert teachers and clinicians to the potential for problems among moderately

language-impaired children in tasks in which memory for the input is important. Graybeal herself urges "Direct remediation, perhaps through the teaching of appropriate listening/retrieval strategies. . ."

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