

Editor's overview

A NEW FEATURE OF AP

One of the functions of the *Editor's overview* is to help readers keep abreast of major trends in the field. There is another way, however, in which the Editor can help readers keep up with major developments in applied psycholinguistics, namely, by inviting major contributors to its literature to prepare integrative reviews of their work for publication in the journal. I am pleased to announce that the editorial office of AP has initiated a program of invited review articles of the sort mentioned and hopes to have one or two such articles ready for publication in the remaining pages of Volume 1.

A MODIFICATION OF THE "INSTRUCTIONS TO AUTHORS"

AP's "Instructions to Authors" indicate that manuscripts submitted for review should not exceed 50 typed (double-spaced) pages including everything. It has been brought to the Editor's attention, however, that the work of some of the potential contributors to the journal cannot be adequately reported unless the present constraint on length is relaxed. Thus it has been decided, in consultation with the publisher, that AP will publish worthy articles whose length exceeds the present limit. On the basis of available information, it is anticipated that the kind of long article we are speaking of is not likely to take up more than half the *printed* page allotment for a given issue of the journal. Potential contributors who have questions concerning long articles that have not been answered here should contact the Editor.

VOLUME 1, NUMBER 2

Three questions (and the interrelationships among them) appear to motivate most of the applied psycholinguistic research and theory in a given sub-area of the field of language disorders. These are:

- 1) What is the nature of the language disorder in the given sub-area;
- 2) How should one go about attempting to assess linguistic maturity and communicative competence in individual members of the given language-disordered population; and
- 3) What intervention procedures are likely to enhance linguistic and communicative functioning in individual members of the given language-disordered population?

An aspect of 2) where little work has been done, however, is the assessment of conversational capabilities, and because of this, the article by

Blank and Franklin that appears in the present issue of AP was received in the editorial office with considerable interest. These investigators describe, and demonstrate the use of, with non-language-disordered children and their mothers, a system for assessing dyadic conversational interactions that is likely to prove to be applicable to a variety of language-disordered populations. Blank and Franklin's article is an excellent example of the application of basic research and theory in psycholinguistics and related areas of cognitive psychology to a problem of interest to applied psycholinguists. The reader will recognize, however, that the system in question is a complex one (primarily because of the aspects of communicative development it attempts to assess), and will want, therefore, to send for a copy of the coding manual that is referred to in Note 4 of Blank and Franklin's article.

The crucial role that the assessment of linguistic maturity plays in the evaluation of language training programs for language-delayed children is made clear in the article by Friedman and Friedman. More than this, however, we are shown how traditional analysis of variance designs can mask relations between some dimensions of individual differences and the effects of different language training programs, and we are given a glimpse of how difficult it is to conduct controlled experimentation on large-scale language training programs. On the substantive side, these investigators reported, among other things, that the less "repetitive or drill-like" of the two language training procedures studied appeared to be more effective for children whose scores on a measure of intelligence were high. On the other hand, it made little difference which training procedure was used with the children who received the lower scores on the intelligence measure. The reader interested in this finding should also be interested in Bowerman's (1976, 169–173) discussion of the role of negative feedback in non-language-impaired children and its possible implications for language intervention programming.

A question of considerable interest to Weber-Olsen and Ruder was whether aspects of first language acquisition (in the lexical domain in this instance) would transfer to second language learning in children and/or adults. Gray and Cameron, on the other hand, were interested in determining whether evidence (quantitative and/or qualitative) could be found that being taught a second language during the elementary school years influences the development of the inflectional morphology of one's first language. Questions of methodological and second language differences aside, it is interesting to note that interlanguage transfer was evidently not the only, or even the dominant, strategy utilized by the children and adults in Weber-Olsen and Ruder's study, and that Gray and Cameron found no evidence to indicate that a second language immersion experience influences inflectional development in the first language. Unfortunately, discussion of the implications of these findings would require much more space than can be made available for an *Editor's overview*.

The claim that there is a strong innate, specifically linguistic, biological component in language acquisition is one that must still be taken seriously (see, for example, the discussions in Miller & Lenneberg, 1978, and Walker,

1978). Questions concerning the origin of universal linguistic forms and many of the details of first language acquisition continue to evade treatment in terms of environmental shaping (e.g., mothers' "baby talk": Newport, Gleitman, & Gleitman, 1977) plus pacing of linguistic development by prior nonlinguistic cognitive development (Folger & Leonard, 1978).

To the best of my knowledge, the implications of the innateness hypothesis for developmental language disorders have as yet not been dealt with fully in the literature. An aspect of one version of the innateness hypothesis – the critical-period hypothesis (Lenneberg, 1967) – however, has received, and continues to receive, attention in the area of second language acquisition, as is evident in the article by Weber-Olsen and Ruder in the present issue of AP. Weber-Olsen and Ruder's observations and those of others appear to indicate that adults, when compared with children who are acquiring a second language, are not at a disadvantage, and, more important, may be at an advantage, when they attempt to acquire certain aspects of a second language. Thus it is possible that a (non-language-disordered) human being's innate capacity for language acquisition is typically available throughout life and augmented after childhood by the development of powerful general-purpose information-processing capabilities.

Little is known about the speech planning and execution processes and their development in non-language-disordered individuals (Foss & Hakes, 1978; Rosenberg, 1977) except for certain of the peripheral aspects of execution, and, thus, it is not surprising that even less is known about how these processes and their development might be disrupted in language-disordered individuals (again, except for certain of the peripheral aspects of execution). It is encouraging, therefore, to witness attempts such as the one by Buckingham in the present issue of AP to understand these processes in one population of language-disordered individuals, adult aphasics. Buckingham's analysis of the organization of the speech errors of non-language-disordered individuals and certain adult aphasics appears to have implications not only for our understanding of the speech planning and execution activities of these aphasic patients, but for the question of the content and organization of the grammar they are utilizing as well.

SOME CONCLUDING REMARKS

At the heart of the field of applied psycholinguistics is a concern with individual differences, and the origin of individual differences, in linguistic and communicative competence and linguistic and communicative performance. This is true not only in the area of language disorders but in other areas of applied psycholinguistics as well, as a consideration of the contents of the present issue of AP and the previous one (Volume 1, Number 1) will demonstrate. How often, for example, do we find it necessary to examine individual differences and their origin in a population of language-disordered children, and to do so, moreover, in the context of what we know about individual differences and their origin in non-language-disordered children?

Yet, to make sense out of individual differences in language competence and performance, and, indeed, in the language acquisition process itself, we need to attempt to characterize, although sometimes (because of the complexities involved) in an idealized fashion, the competencies and performance capabilities that individuals *share* (see the discussion of *idealization* by Chomsky, 1977, which begins on p. 53; see also the discussion of language variation in Chapter 9 of Smith and Wilson, 1979).

This latter view, of course, is challenged in the literature as is evident in some of the papers in a collection that was assembled recently by Fillmore, Kempler, and Wang (1979) under the title *Individual Differences in Language Ability and Language Behavior*.

REFERENCES

- Bowerman, M. Semantic factors in the acquisition of rules for word use and sentence construction. In D.M. Morehead and A.E. Morehead (Eds.), *Normal and deficient child language*. Baltimore: University Park Press, 1976.
- Chomsky, N. *Language and responsibility*. New York: Pantheon, 1977.
- Fillmore, C. J., Kempler, D., & Wang, W. S-Y. (Eds.), *Individual differences in language ability and language behavior*. New York: Academic Press, 1979.
- Folger, M. K., & Leonard, L. B. Language and sensorimotor development during the early period of referential speech. *Journal of Speech and Hearing Research*, 1978, 21, 519-527.
- Foss, D. J., & Hakes, D. T. *Psycholinguistics*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1978.
- Lenneberg, E. *Biological foundations of language*. New York: Wiley, 1967.
- Miller, G. A., & Lenneberg, E. *Psychology and biology of language and thought*. New York: Academic Press, 1978.
- Newport, E. L., Gleitman, H., & Gleitman, L. R. Mother, I'd rather do it myself: Some effects and non-effects of maternal speech style. In C. E. Snow and C. A. Ferguson (Eds.), *Talking to children: Language input and acquisition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977.
- Rosenberg, S. (Ed.), *Sentence production: Developments in research and theory*. Hillsdale, N.J.: Erlbaum, 1977.
- Smith, N., & Wilson, D. *Modern linguistics*. Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1979.
- Walker, E. (Ed.), *Explorations in the biology of language*. Montgomery, Vt.: Bradford Books, 1978.

SHELDON ROSENBERG
February, 1980