

EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION

The present number comprises five texts: three long articles and two short communications. They refer to studies on language use by children or adults, by normally developing subjects or autistic ones, schizophrenic patients, and patients with a cerebellar lesion.

The issue opens with a study of young children's naming processes by Maciej Haman (University of Warsaw). In his article entitled *Reaction time study of shape and texture bias in preschoolers' naming*, the author considers two basic hypotheses, one of the shape bias as a "dumb attentional mechanism" specific to naming (Landau, Smith, and Jones, 1988) and the second of "children's theory of naming", perceptually based (according to Imai et al, 1994). Two experiments were designed to test a conceptual explanation of shape and texture biases in naming processes against the hypotheses considered as the starting point. The experiments provide support for the model of a conceptual mechanism of perceptual biases in naming. No substantial difference in reaction times for category-based and perceptually-based choices was found, even in the real time stress condition. However it is possible that Haman's explanation of perceptual biases in naming applies only to a later stage of lexical development (children studied in the reported experiments were older than those in Landau, Smith, and Jones' research), and for the early developmental stages the Landau et al hypothesis may still be valid. The reported study leaves this problem open and generates new important questions on the perceptual and conceptual bases of lexical development.

The second article in this issue was prepared by four authors – Edy Veneziano (University of Paris V – CNRS) and her co-workers: Marie-Helene Plumet, Sylvia Cupello, and Carole Tardif. Entitled *Pragmatic functioning in natural setting and the emergence of 'theory-of-mind' in autistic and control children: A comparative study*, it focuses on the production and comprehension of justifications occurring in oppositional episodes, where contrasts of intentions or opinions between children and their interlocutors arise. Autistic children, whose cognitive and verbal level is much lower than their chronological age, show greater retardation in their pragmatic functioning. They differ both from verbal age-matched normally developing children and from more advanced autistic children. The more advanced autistic children are similar to their matched controls in their ability (a) to offer justifications of oppositional moves, and (b) to adapt their subsequent moves according to the online unfolding of conver-

sational exchange in the oppositional contexts. These and other results shown in the text provide a valuable contribution to our understanding of autistic children's communicative competencies and of their implicit knowledge of mind.

The third article by Jerzy Trzebiński (Warsaw School of Social Psychology), entitled *Narrative deficits in schizophrenia*, presents a study in which schizophrenic subjects were asked to describe a well-remembered personal history that happened during the previous year. These descriptions were separately evaluated by two judges on a narrative scale.

The author has attempted to verify three hypotheses derived from the literature: Schizophrenia is related to 1) lower elaboration of self-knowledge, 2) lower narrative understanding of personal events, and 3) lower structurization of simulated narrative understanding of events by the partner. Elaboration of self-knowledge plays an important mediating role both in the case of self-narratives and of partner's simulated narratives. The data show consistently that narrativity of personal stories is lowered in schizophrenic subjects as compared to the general population. This difference is revealed both in the recall of personal experiences and in the mental simulation of hypothetical personal stories. The results support the hypotheses about narrative deficits in schizophrenia and their underlying mechanism.

Two short communications follow the articles described above. The first one is prepared by Małgorzata Staroń (University of Warsaw, University of Paris V) and Michèle Kail (University of Paris V – CNRS). Entitled *Off-line sentence comprehension in Polish monolinguals: Developmental study based on the Competition Model*, it presents the processing of morphosyntactic and semantic cues for agentivity in simple transitive sentences (noun-verb-noun) in Polish. Most results from the study confirm the Competition Model (MacWhinney & Bates, 1989) predictions. The reported research program for Polish language is the first one based on the Competition Model. No other one has yet provided an articulation of this model for Polish. The final text in this issue is a short communication entitled *Deficits of communication in children with a cerebellar lesion*, by Agnieszka Maryniak (Children's Memorial Health Institute, Warsaw). The subjects of the study were children who had undergone surgery for cerebellar astrocytoma pilocyticum. The results show communicative disorders, such as problems in speech initiation and conversation. The slow verbal reactions of these children make communication with them difficult and unsatisfactory, both for the child and his/her interlocutor. Although the cerebellum has been associated mainly with motor control so far, the reported study extends its role to child's language use as well.

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