Abstracts of Presentations at the
Psycholinguistics Circle of New York

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The Psycholinguistics Circle of New York is open to researchers concerned with language and its psychological aspects. Monthly meetings, held at New York University, include speakers, symposia, and debates on topics of interest to psycholinguists. Participants are invited to submit research and theoretical papers to the Journal of Psycholinguistic Research. Speakers for 1972-1973 include: Samuel Anderson, New York State Psychiatric Institute, "The Syllable: A Mental Fiction or a Unit of the Speech Code?"; Terry Winograd, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, "A Model for Language Understanding"; Tom K. Landauer, Bell Research Labs, "Word Frequency and Word Memory"; Herbert Rubenstein, Lehigh University, "The Storage of Inflectional and Derivational Forms in the Internal Lexicon"; Michael Studdert-Kennedy, Queens College, "Cracking the Phonetic Code"; David Meyers, Bell Research Labs, "Activation of Lexical Memory: Contextual Effects on Word Recognition"; Lois Bloom, Columbia University, "Spontaneous Imitation in Children's Speech." Researchers interested in speaking at or becoming members of the Circle should write to Doris Aaronson, Psychology Department, 4 Washington Pl., Rm. 858, N.Y.U., New York, N.Y., 10003.

Below are abstracts of some of the 1971-1972 programs. Abstracts from Art Reber and Tom Bever are from a debate on the topic: The Click Phenomenon: What is its Relationship to the Attentional &/or Linguistic Processing of Sentences?

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Exploration of the Effect of Information Density and the Specificity of Instructional Objectives on Learning from Text

Ernst Z. Rothkopf

Intentional and incidental learning was studied as a function of (1) the density in the text of sentences relevant to instructional objectives and (2) the specificity with which instructional objectives were described. The major findings were: (1) more intentional learning resulted from specific than broad objectives, but incidental learning was not affected by this factor; (2) increases in density of instructional objectives resulted in decreases in the likelihood that any intentional item was learned, but did not affect performance on incidental items. Intentional learning was generally greater than incidental. Performance on both intentional and incidental items was considerably higher when instructional goals were explicitly described than when directions similar to those commonly employed in learning experiments were used.

At least three factors were confounded in the variable characterized as information density in the initial experiment. These were: (1) the number of objectives presented to S, (2) the number of relevant sentences in the text, and (3) the ratio of relevant sentences to the total number of sentences in the text. Subsequent experiments indicated that the number of objectives presented to S and the ratio of relevant sentences to the total number of sentences in the text must play a relatively small role in producing the decreases in performance on intentional items that were found to be associated with increases in information density in the initial study. This conclusion must be limited to the texts varying in length between 500 and 1500 words that were used in our research. We have found that the probability of correct performance on any intentional item was constant for a given information density for passages approximately 500, 1000, and 1500 words in length. On the other hand, the likelihood of correct performance on an incidental item diminished with passage length.

Levels of Syntactic Realization in Oral Reading

Eric Brown

Two different perspectives on reading theory and research were reviewed. The first was characterized as the “visual” approach to the problem, where

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