Abstracts of Presentations at the Psycholinguistics Circle of New York, 1985–1986

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INTRODUCTION

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*. Researchers interested in speaking at or becoming members of the circle should write to Doris Aaronson, Psychology Department, New York University, 6 Washington Place, Room 858, New York, New York 10003. Below are abstracts of the 1985–1986 program.

Development of the Ability to Interpret Coreferential and Control Relations

*Jennifer Ryan Hsu*

It has been reported that children manifest similar response patterns when asked to interpret complex sentences containing either pronouns (coreference) or missing complement subjects (control). Similarities in proposed restrictions governing coreference and control relations support

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the plausibility of such a finding. In order to further investigate the development of control and coreference relations, 81 children ranging in age from 3-years and 1-month to 8-years and 0-month were asked to act out 44 complex sentences containing either pronouns or missing complement subjects. In contrast to previous research, the results suggest that the restrictions governing control and coreference develop independently in children's grammars. The implications of these findings will be discussed. In addition, findings regarding the development of restrictions governing coreference will be presented. The work represents a joint effort with Helen Smith Cairns, Sarita Eisenberg, and Gloria Schlisselberg.

**Testing Models of the Word Frequency Effect in Lexical Decision**

David Dorfman³

List composition effects are changes in subjects' performance on words of a given frequency as a function of the frequency of other words presented in an experiment. They are of considerable theoretical interest since they can modify the effect of normative word frequency, generally one of the most powerful and reliable psycholinguistic variables. In particular, they are a critical test of theories of the word frequency effect in lexical decision since all current models predict that any list composition effects will be speed/accuracy trade-offs. In Experiment 1 it is shown that list composition effects in lexical decision cannot be interpreted as speed/accuracy trade-offs, thus falsifying these models. A dual-process model is developed which can account for these effects. In Experiment 2 it is shown that list composition effects are also a phenomenon of recognition memory. It is further shown that the model used to account for the lexical decision results can be extended to recognition memory.

**Conditional Reasoning and Semantic Context**

Henry Markovits⁴

Conditional (if-then) reasoning is one of the more important forms of propositional reasoning. However, both children and adults frequently

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