





## *ENGLISH ABSTRACTS*

### *E PUR SI MUOVE:* TREATMENT OF SYNTACTIC MOVEMENT IN SLI

*Hagar Levy and Naama Friedmann*

In this article, we describe a study of syntactic intervention administered to a 12;2 year old with syntactic SLI who had difficulties in the comprehension and production of structures containing syntactic movement such as relative clauses, “Wh” object questions, focalization sentences and sentences with verb movement. The 16-session intervention was grounded in syntactic theory and included explicit teaching of syntactic movement, based on a type of syntactic knowledge that was intact – the argument structure of the verb. The participant’s performance was assessed before and after the intervention, and, for some tests, during the treatment and 10 months following the intervention. Performance was assessed using various tasks that targeted comprehension, repetition and elicitation of semantically reversible sentences. Following the intervention, the participant’s performance on all structures with syntactic movement showed substantial improvement compared to baseline; in many of the tasks reaching the performance of the age-matched control group. Treatment of phrasal movement resulted not only in improvement in treated structures, but also in generalization to untrained structures. Although phrasal movement was only treated directly for relative clauses and focalization structures, the comprehension of “Wh” object questions, which also include phrasal movement, improved as well. The high performance level was maintained 10 months after the intervention.



LEARNING OF LETTER NAMES AND SOUNDS  
AND THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO WORD RECOGNITION

*Iris Levin, Sivan Shatil-Carmon and Ornit Asif-Rave*

This study investigated preschoolers' knowledge and learning of letter names and letter sounds, and their contributions to word recognition. Of the 123 preschoolers examined on letter knowledge, 65 were taught both letter names and sounds in a counterbalanced order. Prior to training, children matched letters with their names better than they associated them with their sounds, and could only provide the letter sound of a letter when they were able to name the letter. However, children learned to associate letters with sounds more easily than they learned the letter names. Training only letter names improved performance on letter sounds, but the sounds produced were extended (CV) rather than phonemic. Learning letter sounds facilitated the later learning of those letters' names, but not vice versa. Training either letter names or letter sounds improved word recognition and their explanation of how they recognized words. The findings are discussed regarding the cognitive and societal factors affecting letter knowledge acquisition; features of the Hebrew alphabet and orthography; and educational implications.

REGISTER DIFFERENTIATION AS A FEATURE DISTINGUISHING  
SCHOOL-AGE USAGE ACROSS THE VARIABLES OF GENRES  
(NARRATIVE/EXPOSITORY) AND MODALITY (WRITTEN/SPOKEN)

*Bracha Nir-Sagiv, Marit Shternau, Ruth Berman and Dorit Ravid*

The topic of linguistic register considered in this study is analyzed by examining how schoolchildren, adolescents, and adults vary the texts they construct across the dimensions of modality (spoken / written discourse) and genre (narrative / expository discourse). Our analyses focus on Israeli Hebrew, a language that evolved under peculiar sociohistorical circumstances. An original procedure for characterizing register – as low, neutral, or high – was applied to four text types produced by the same speaker-writers. We found that neutral items constituted the bulk of the material; the lexicon accounted for some 80 percent of variation; acquisition of fully flexible register variation continues beyond adolescence; and text types range on a cline from everyday colloquial usage in oral narratives to more formal, high-level language in written expository essays.

ON THE CHALLENGES POSED BY DIGLOSSIA TO THE ACQUISITION  
OF BASIC READING PROCESSES IN ARABIC

*Elinor Saiegh-Haddad*

The paper offers a conceptual framework of diglossia (Ferguson, 1959) as a sociolinguistic phenomenon, and discusses the defining features of a diglossic context. It then describes Arabic as a typical diglossic context with emphasis placed on two features: a) linguistic distance between spoken Arabic vernaculars and Standard Arabic in all domains of language (phonology, morpho-syntax, and lexicon), and b) sociofunctional complementarity between the two linguistic codes, with spoken Arabic being the language that all children who are native speakers of Arabic acquire as a mother tongue, and standard Arabic being the language of literacy. It is argued that these features have a direct impact on the acquisition of basic reading processes in Arabic.

The paper then reviews recent psycholinguistic research that empirically addresses the effect of diglossia on the acquisition of basic reading processes in Arabic. Based on this review, it is concluded that diglossia does not support the natural acquisition of basic reading processes in Arabic. The paper closes with directions for future research.

BOOK READING, LOOKING AT PHOTO ALBUMS AND HOME  
LITERACY ENVIRONMENT  
A COMPARISON BETWEEN TWO SOCIAL GROUPS

*Ofra Korat, Ora Segal-Drori and Yael Landau*

This study compared: (a) maternal mediating to a child in story-book reading and while looking at a photo album; (b) maternal mediation of these two activities in low and high SES groups; (c) the home literacy environment in these two groups. In addition, (d) the relationship between all these variables across and within SES groups was examined.

Ninety-two mothers (46 from low SES and 46 from high SES groups) and their kindergarten children participated in this research. At the first meeting,

mothers were videotaped while reading a book to their child and while looking at a photo album with him/her. At the second meeting, mothers were interviewed regarding their demographic backgrounds and home literacy environments. While, in the high SES group, mothers presented similar levels of mediation in the two activities, no such results appeared in the low SES group.

In addition, maternal mediation and home literacy environment were higher in the high SES than in the low SES group. Regression analysis across both groups showed that SES contributed more to maternal mediation level than home literacy environment. Our discussion focuses on the importance of the family's socioeconomic context in constructing parental mediation level to their young children in various activities.

"PACKING SHIRTS BEFORE SADNESS"  
ON ONE ASPECT OF THE RELATION BETWEEN POETICS AND  
COGNITION

*Yeshayahu Shen*

The paper introduces a novel cognitive theory – the cognitive constraints theory – the goal of which is to account for certain structural universal regularities found in various figures of speech or descriptive phrases (e.g., metaphor, simile, synaesthesia, oxymoron, zeugma) used in poetic discourse. In particular, this theory addresses the question: what is the relation between stylistic properties of figurative expressions that appear in poetic discourse on the one hand, and the cognitive principles and processes involved in understanding them, on the other?

Unlike previous approaches, which have emphasized the fact that poetic structures interfere with cognitive processes, the present theory highlights the conformity of poetic structures to normal cognitive processes and constraints.

The cognitive constraints theory is illustrated by detailed analysis of a figure of speech termed “zeugma” (e.g., “He packed his shirt and sorrow”). This device is assumed to constitute an ad hoc category (e.g., “things one packs”) in which one of its members (“shirt”) is more prototypical than the other (“sorrow”). I claim that poetic discourse, across languages and periods, exhibits a universal preference for the “more prototypical first” structure (e.g., “He packed his shirt and sorrow”) rather than the inverse (“He packed his sorrow and shirt”). This claim is supported by a large-scale field analysis of several poetic corpora.



I then introduce a series of experiments supporting the premise that the more frequently-used structure in poetic discourse conforms to cognitive processes, and represents a more basic and simpler conformity than the reverse case. These findings are taken to support the cognitive constraints theory.

