ENGLISH ABSTRACTS

THE EDUCATIONAL SETTING, MATERNAL PEDAGOGICAL BELIEFS,
A MOTHER'S ESTIMATION OF HER CHILD'S LITERACY, AND THE
NATURE OF HER WRITING MEDIATION AS PREDICTORS OF
PRESCHOOLERS' EARLY LITERACY

Dorit Aram and Orit Bastaker

The study examined socio-cultural factors that predict early literacy. In line with Bronfenbrenner's Model (1977), we categorized four socio-cultural factors, from the furthest to the closest to the child: educational setting, maternal pedagogical beliefs regarding literacy practice, a mother's estimation of her child's early literacy knowledge and the nature of her word-writing mediation. The participants were 40 middle SES preschoolers (*trom chova*) and their mothers (17 boys and 23 girls). The children's age range was 52 to 60 months (M = 56.70, SD = 2.09). Half of the participants studied with older children (chova), and the other half studied with younger children (*trom trom chova*). In their preschools, the children's early literacy was assessed individually (word writing, letter knowledge, and phonological awareness). At home, the mothers' pedagogical beliefs regarding early literacy practice were assessed via a questionnaire. In order to tap the mother's estimation of her child's early literacy knowledge, each mother completed at home the same three literacy tasks that were given to her child in the preschool. Finally, to assess the nature of maternal writing mediation, each mother was videotaped while helping her child to write six unfamiliar words. It was found that mothers hold positive pedagogical beliefs regarding literacy practice at home. In general, although mothers were aware of their child's literacy level, they still overestimated their child's ability in letter knowledge and phonological awareness, but not in word writing. We found a positive correlation between all the environmental factors (with the exception of the educational setting) and the children's early literacy scores. According to our expectations, hierarchical regression analyses indicated that a mother's estimation of her child's literacy contributed to all early literacy skills beyond the contribution of maternal pedagogical beliefs, and the quality of the mother's writing mediation predicted the child's early literacy to a greater degree than all other socio-cultural factors.

THE PRAGMATICS OF WORD LEARNING

Smadar Patael and Gil Diesendruck

This paper addresses cognitive mechanisms available to children for learning the meanings of words. It will evaluate the capacities enabling children to narrow down the possible meanings of a word in order to select its appropriate referent. For this purpose, we will describe five different approaches: 1) the Input approach, which emphasizes the role of the environment; 2) the Constraints approach, which postulates the existence of a series of *a priori* lexical principles; 3) the Syntactic approach, which focuses on the grammatical form of words; 4) the Attention and Learning approach, which emphasizes the importance of general capacities such as memory, attention, and pattern detection; and 5) the Socio-Pragmatic approach, which suggests that inferences pertaining to speaker's intentions help children's word learning. The paper will review studies supporting each of these approaches.

   Following this general review, we will discuss evidence supporting the socio-pragmatic approach, which posits that typically developing children prefer to rely on an understanding of intentions over any of the other mechanisms. We will also address the question of whether it is possible to acquire words without relying on an understanding of intentions, by reviewing evidence of word learning in different populations. We will conclude with an analysis of the substantial differences between the acquisition of words via a pragmatic mechanism versus other mechanisms.

CONDITIONAL SENTENCES IN CHILDREN'S LANGUAGE:
An Empirical and Developmental Study

Dorit Ravid and Dana Doron Geller

Conditional constructions require semantic-pragmatic knowledge about tense and mood, and constitute part of the acquisition of complex syntax in the middle school years. The current study aimed to shed light on Hebrew-speaking children's learning of formal and semantic aspects of conditional constructions. Five groups of participants – children aged 3-8, and a control group of adults (80 altogether) – were administered five different experimental tasks of repetition, selection, judgment and repair, and production of conditional constructions.

Results indicate that the bulk of conditional learning takes place between the ages of 5-8, although more complex aspects of conditional constructions are still under way in later language development during the school years. Moreover, realis precede irrealis conditionals in acquisition, and the semantics-pragmatics of conditionals are learned before formal morpho-syntactic structure

DEVELOPMENTAL LETTER POSITION DYSLEXIA

Einav Rahamim and Naama Friedmann

Letter position dyslexia (LPD) is characterized by the migration of letters within words. So far, only cases of acquired LPD have been reported. For the first time, this study presents LPD in a selective developmental form, and examines its characteristics in eleven individuals with developmental LPD, compared to eleven matched controls. The study explores the types of errors made and the effects on reading caused by dyslexia. It tests the way diacritics affect reading, and examines aspects of phonological output. The findings indicate that, as with adults with acquired LPD, individuals with developmental LPD find difficulty in encoding letter position within a word – a deficit that manifests itself mainly in the migration of the middle letters. More migration errors occur in words with a lexical potential for middle letter migrations. Diacritic markers are either ignored or induce even more errors in reading. For ten of the participants, migration errors occurred only in words but not in numbers. These findings contribute to the understanding of reading with LPD, and to the creation of effective diagnosis and intervention. They also shed light on the process of single word reading, especially of the position-encoding function in the orthographic-visual analysis system.

FIGURATIVENESS, OPTIMAL INNOVATION, AND PLEASURE

Noa Shuval and Rachel Giora

Two studies (Giora, Fein, Kronrod, Elnatan, Shuval & Zur, 2004; Giora, Kotler & Shuval, in press) show that, contrary to the classical (Aristotle, 350 BCE) and contemporary views (e.g. Sopory & Dillard, 2002), figurativeness is neither a sufficient nor a necessary means of inducing aesthetic pleasure. Instead, such effects are brought about by optimal innovativeness.

According to the Optimal Innovation Hypothesis (Giora, 2003; Giora et al., 2004), an optimally innovative stimulus that invokes a new response while allowing for the recovery of a salient, qualitatively different one (Giora 1997, 2003), will be more pleasing than both more-and-less familiar stimuli, regardless of figurativeness. Thus, in Giora et al. (in press), we show that the metaphoric interpretation of new metaphors, which, by definition, is optimally innovative, was more pleasing than their more salient literal meaning. By contrast, no difference in pleasure ratings was found between the metaphoric and the literal meanings of familiar metaphors whose literal and metaphoric interpretations share the same degree of salience. In Giora, Fein et al. (2004), we further investigated the case of highly familiar metaphors whose metaphoric meaning is more salient than their literal interpretation. Such metaphors yielded inverted pleasure ratings: the optimally innovative, literal interpretations were rated as being more pleasing than their metaphoric counterparts.

METAPHOR – BETWEEN SIMILARITY AND RE-CATEGORIZATION

Yeshayahu Shen

The paper develops a stronger version of the idea (initiated by Glucksberg and Keysar's 1990 paper) that metaphor comprehension involves the construction of a new conceptual structure: an ad-hoc category. According to this strong version, the "ad hoc class" created by metaphors is a rather "natural" category. What makes it natural is its conformity to principles underlying natural common taxonomic categories, such as birds, pieces of furniture, etc.Three such principles are discussed, relevant to three aspects of categorization: the basis of grouping or categorizing a set of objects into a category; the internal structure of categories; and the function of categories. Some empirical findings supporting this proposal are introduced and discussed.