
Preface

This is the first Neurosciences Research Program publication on language since Eric Lenneberg's 1974 *Bulletin* entitled *Language and Brain: Developmental Aspects*. In the interim, much has happened to sharpen our view of how we might best approach the biology of language. In particular, the linguist's description of language as an autonomous cognitive system, comprising the autonomous subsystems of phonology and syntax, has penetrated neighboring fields and raised the question of the extent to which this description might validly be extended into psychology and neuropsychology. The importance of this question for our understanding of the biological status of language was deemed sufficient to make it the focus of an NRP Work Session.

The first five parts of the book follow the organization of the Work Session: an introduction, perceptuomotor, lexical, and syntactic processes, and prospects for future neuro-anatomical studies by stimulation mapping and measures of cerebral metabolism. The sixth part of the book is a chapter of concluding comments. Within each of the first four parts at least one chapter treats the topic from a linguistic, psychological, or neuropsychological point of view; an exception is part II, for which Mark Liberman's chapter in part I may be read as offering a linguistic view. The parts themselves are revised and, in many cases, much expanded versions of the oral presentations made by the participants.

The comments that follow many of the chapters and that constitute part VI summarize and often elaborate on the original discussions. The editor prepared these comments from written summaries and tape recordings of the proceedings and from his own prejudices. With a few exceptions (where the remarks of a particular individual provided the main, or only, substantive points of discussion), the sources of the various arguments, comments, and criticisms are not indicated.

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