
Preface

Talking is one of our dearest occupations. We spend hours a day conversing, telling stories, teaching, quarreling, . . . and, of course, speaking to ourselves. Speaking is, moreover, one of our most complex cognitive, linguistic, and motor skills. Articulation flows automatically, at a rate of about fifteen speech sounds per second, while we are attending only to the ideas we want to get across to our interlocutors.

This fascinating human skill has not received the attention it deserves within psycholinguistics. Psycholinguistics is the science of human language production, comprehension, and acquisition, but the main body of research and teaching relates primarily to the latter two topics. Language production is the stepchild of psycholinguistics. Butterworth's (1980c, 1983b) excellent two-volume anthology is the only source on the subject; there is no text and no coherently written handbook.

When the European Science Foundation invited me to lecture on "speaking" at a summer course in psycholinguistics to be held in Brussels in 1985, I gladly accepted and began writing what I thought would be an introductory text. A year and a half would suffice, I thought, in view of the rather limited psycholinguistic literature on the subject.

My main discovery was that the literature on speaking is gigantic. But the majority of it is not to be found in standard psycholinguistic sources. Other disciplines have asked the questions that psycholinguists have ignored. Students of conversational analysis, pragmatics, discourse semantics, artificial intelligence, syntax, phonology, speech communication, and phonetics have contributed myriad theoretical insights and empirical findings. The major problem with this huge literature, however, is that it is compartmentalized—phoneticians ignore phonology, conversational analysts ignore discourse semantics and phonetics, students of AI ignore psycholinguistics, and so on.

The present book gives a bird's-eye view of this highly heterogeneous research field. It is an effort to provide a theoretical integration of hitherto disparate approaches to the speaker in us, but without relaxing the psycholinguist's main objective: to understand the mental information processing that underlies our capacity for speech.

The book's organization is straightforward. After an introductory chapter on the speaker as information processor and a subsequent chapter on the speaker as interlocutor, the text follows the generation of speech step by step. The steps consist of message generation, grammatical encoding, phonological encoding, and articulation. The final chapter deals with the speaker's self-monitoring and self-repair. Each processing step computes its own kind of output or representation, and I always discuss these representations before discussing the issues of processing themselves. Not surprisingly, the representational chapters or sections have a more strongly linguistic flavor than the parts of the book that discuss processing.

My strategy in this book has been to exemplify theoretical issues rather than to formalize them. The text contains few formulas and acronyms, little computer jargon, and few statistics, but many worked-out cases, many examples, and much graphic support. It should be readable not only by psycholinguists and their advanced students, but also by anyone interested in the other disciplines mentioned above.

While plowing through the mound of literature, I decided that neither you nor I should bite off more than we can chew. The book concentrates on the normal spontaneous speech production of adults. It does not cover the neurological basis of speech and language. In particular, it contains nothing on aphasia and other relevant neurological disorders, nor does it discuss reading (although there are occasional references to experimental work in which reading materials have been used). Reading aloud differs from spontaneous speech in many important ways, and results on reading therefore cannot, as a rule, be generalized to conditions of spontaneous speech. Speaking is usually accompanied by gestures, gaze patterns, body movements, and so forth. In spite of its communicative importance, this so-called paralinguistic behavior is not reviewed. The book, finally, does not deal with the history of research in speech and speaking, despite occasional references to Wilhelm Wundt, Karl Bühler, and other pioneers.

What people can do with words is incredible, and its psychology is still largely a mystery. By necessity, this book is incomplete and theoretically wanting, even in the areas on which it focuses. I look forward to the day when it can be replaced by something better.

Acknowledgments

This book emerged in the stimulating circle of the Max-Planck-Institut für Psycholinguistik and Nijmegen University. Numerous colleagues can't give up educating me in matters linguistic and psycholinguistic, and I would be at a loss without them. Also, many distinguished visitors from all over the world have given me help and advice. I am sincerely grateful to all of them.

Some, from within and without this circle, have taken the effort to read drafts of chapters and to formulate comments, either orally or in writing. Before mentioning them, I must say that each of these efforts has deeply touched me. Time and again I experienced it as a great privilege to be taken so seriously and with so much friendship. In alphabetical order, these angels were Manfred Bierwisch, Melissa Bowerman, Herbert Clark, Anne Cutler, Jane Edwards, Lyn Frazier, Merrill Garrett, Gerard Kempen, Wolfgang Klein, Aditi Lahiri, and John Marshall. I would also like to thank Gerard van Galen, who gave me a special tutorial on psychomotor theory.

Though I typed the manuscript myself with two index fingers on a terminal, finishing touches have been made by Uschi de Pagter and Edith Sjoerdsma, especially in completing the bibliography. Our librarian, Karin Kastens, also helped me on countless occasions. Many thanks to all three of them.

The graphic work was done by Wil Maas during three months of ideal cooperation.

Nijmegen, February 29, 1988