PREFACE

This issue of *Seminars in Speech and Language* examines the nature of interactions between communicatively impaired children and the significant adults in their environment. As the articles in this issue demonstrate, a better understanding of adult-child verbal interaction in this population has the potential to significantly change the ways in which such children are identified and aided in their efforts to master language skills.

I was extremely fortunate to have the efforts of a number of eminent child language researchers in constructing this volume. Marilyn Newhoff and Elizabeth West have contributed an insightful critique of our evolving understanding of the nature of adult interactions with children whose communicative development lags behind age expectations. They stress that although little evidence suggests that parental style can lead to deficits in language development, a child's language handicap can force adjustments in the normal pattern of parent-child interaction, which may further hinder the child's ability to profit maximally from parental input in learning language.

Two contributions examine a new and exciting revolution in early identification and appraisal of communicative development in toddlers. Leslie Rescorla details the development of the Language Development Survey, which facilitates the identification of children in need of intervention services as early as two years of age. Though the children themselves at this age are difficult to test reliably, parental estimations of vocabulary and sentence structure at 24 months are proving to be surprisingly robust predictors of later language performance, thus enabling clinical intervention at increasingly young ages. In a similar vein, Pamela Hadley and Mabel Rice describe the development and use of the University of Kansas Speech and Language Assessment Scale in assessing the scope of children's communicative abilities in the preschool years. Hadley and Rice emphasize that use of parents to identify children's communicative strengths and weaknesses creates an environment for greater collaboration between parents and clinicians

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in establishing realistic therapy goals and plans.

Gina Conti-Ramsden summarizes both theoretical and empirical bases for increasing the participation of parents in language intervention programs. After surveying styles of interaction known to affect the progress of language learning, she provides helpful guidelines for more actively involving parents in the therapeutic process.

Evidence that normally developing children's language may be fostered by joint bookreading activities with their parents may be exploited to aid children who are experiencing difficulty in language learning. Ways in which parents and clinicians can use joint bookreading interaction to augment more traditional forms of language intervention are outlined in a contribution that Betsy Parker, Paige Gardner, and I offer for consideration.

Whenever the nature of parental interaction is studied, in either normal or atypical communicative development, the focus is almost exclusively on the behaviors of mothers with their children. However, fathers are also certainly important models for child language learning. Rivka Perlmann and Jean Berko Gleason provide a refreshing analysis of the potential role that fathers can play in helping children attain communicative competence.

Finally, although the literature on parent-child interaction and language development is now quite extensive, little effort has been expended in analyzing the ways in which clinicians and children negotiate the therapeutic process. Judy Duchan steps back from issues regarding the content of language remediation plans to critically evaluate whether some common approaches to language therapy meet the challenge of establishing a collaborative, maximally supportive environment for increasing communicative competence.

Children with language-learning disabilities affect and are affected by the nature of adult interactions with them, both in and out of the clinic. The authors of this issue join with me in emphasizing the continuing need to understand the broader contexts in which language learning occurs and the role that adult language expectations and behaviors play in helping such children achieve communicative competence.

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Guest Editor

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