Introduction to the special section "Psycholinguistics"

The discipline of psycholinguistics tries to explain how humans are able to use such an exquisitely complex system as the human language, mainly from the perspective of the information processing approach within psychology. To do so involves the description of typical and unsuccessful or deviant language use, by the way of databases and norms that document the frequency of certain language elements (words, grammatical constructions, words in context etc.), it involves the development of more or less formalized theories, the empirical testing of such theories, and the development of methods and instruments to measure language abilities. This special section on psycholinguistics contains examples of all of these investigative activities. One could say: *Business as usual*. However, the significance of this collection of articles lies in the fact that the research groups behind them are situated in four Ibero-American countries: Portugal, Brazil, Mexico, and Colombia (thereby slightly pushing the envelop provided by the journal's name *Advances in Latin American Psychology*). Now, this is a bit unusual, given that psycholinguistics is dominated - like so many other fields of psychology - by researchers from Northern America and Western Europe. In that sense, the five articles united in this special section are a hopeful sign, evidence that there are people in Ibero-America interested in psycholinguistic issues - even though they may not have known of each other until now. Hopefully, this virtual coming together of Ibero-American psycholinguistics can promote the exchange of ideas and collaborations, not only among the research groups participating directly, but also including readers who always had an interest in this field or are starting to have an interest now.

This special section expands the horizon of psycholinguistics in another way, given that four of the five articles presented here involve work done in the Spanish or Portuguese language. As already mentioned, psycholinguistics is an endeavor mainly supported by researchers in Northern America and Western Europe, which means that research is predominantly carried out in the languages spoken there. Given the obvious differences that exist between languages - not only in vocabulary, but in syntax, phonology and associated writings systems - it seems mandatory to broaden the scope of languages used in psycholinguistic research. Taking into account language-specific aspects is important to be able to differentiate between universal and language-specific mechanisms and, in addition, gains special relevance in more applied psycholinguistic work, like the analysis of deviant language use and the measurement of language abilities.

So, what do we have to offer in this special section? The first three articles are reviews related to typical and deviant language development and language use. Araújo, Faísca, Petersson, and Reis (Universidade do Algarve, Faro, Portugal) make the start, discussing the role of rapid naming tasks in the theorizing about dyslexia. In rapid naming, participants have to name a series of objects (e. g., color patches, objects, letters, written words) as fast as possible. Persons diagnosed with dyslexia, or at least a subgroup of them, have difficulties with this kind of tasks. The question is whether these difficulties reflect an underlying phonological deficit (corresponding to the presently dominant theory about dyslexia) or rather an additional, independent deficit that occurs in a subgroup of persons with dyslexia. Araújo and colleagues take the latter stance, discussing the relevant literature and also referring to their own work carried out in Portuguese.

Corrêa (Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio de Janeiro, Brazil) takes up one of the classic topics of psycholinguistics, that is, the relation between generativist theories of syntax and empirical research on the on-line processing of language. She suggests that the latest version of Chomskyan syntactic theory, the Minimalist Program, is much better suited than previous versions to lead to a fruitful cooperation between linguistic theory and empirical psycholinguistic research. To make her point, she gives an overview

of the work she and her collaborators have done on the acquisition of syntactic knowledge and syntactic processing within the framework of the Minimalist Program, in Brazilian and European Portuguese and River Plate Spanish. On an applied note, Corrêa also shows how Minimalist assumptions might relate to deviant language acquisition and use in Specific Language Impairment.

Arroyo and Baquero (Universidad Nacional de Colombia, Bogotá) review a series of articles targeting language-related aspects of Tourette Syndrome, a condition characterized by motoric and vocal tics. The most notorious language-related phenomenon in Tourette Syndrome is perhaps coprolalia, that is, the use of swear words and obscene language in inappropriate circumstances. However, the literature review shows that it is far less typical for Tourette Syndrome than commonly thought. Other studies included in the review treat the status of speech disfluencies in persons with Tourette Syndrome and the possible neural basis of the tics.

The next two articles are providing contributions to the methods used by professionals and researchers working with language. Flórez, Castro, and Arias (Universidad Nacional de Colombia, Bogotá) present a study of the psychometric properties of the test *Evaluación del Procesamiento Fonológico* (PROFON; Evaluation of Phonological Processing), which measures phonological abilities relevant for learning to read and write. More specifically, the article provides analyses of the validity and reliability of two subscales of the test, namely, phonological awareness and phonological memory. The analyses are based on data from 478 Colombian children between the ages of four and seven.

Finally, Rodríguez-Camacho, Prieto-Corona, Bravo, Marosi, Bernal, and Yáñez (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México) offer us sentence completion norms for 278 Spanish sentences, based on a sample of 420 Mexican children aged nine to twelve. In this kind of studies, participants read sentences lacking the last word and have to provide that missing element. Think, for example, of an ending for the sentence: *It had rained all day, so the dog was very ...* One can then determine how often a particular word appears at the end of the respective context sentence and how constraining that context sentence is, that is to say, the degree to which it allows only a very specific ending or various, more or less equally plausible endings. Such sentences, presented with expected or unexpected endings, can then be used to investigate to what extent people use context to predict upcoming semantic content, syntactic elements or even specific word forms (imagine: *... , so the dog was very westernized*) and what happens in the case of the violation of such expectations. Rodríguez-Camacho and his colleagues provide us with a valuable tool for research on these topics in Spanish-speaking children, something not readily available before.

The articles presented in this special section provide evidence of the increasing interest psycholinguistic research enjoys in Ibero-America, of the advances made in the field by Ibero-American researchers, and of the great potential of psycholinguistic researchers from this region. There is still much to be done, though, so we hope that this special section helps to increase the visibility of psycholinguistics and to inspire further efforts along these lines.

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