

## PRONOMINAL REFERENCE

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PSYCHOLINGUISTICS

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LAWRENCE SOLAN

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*To Anita*

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## PREFACE

Linguistic theory has seen a substantial shift in focus during the past decade. Whereas early research in generative grammar sought descriptive adequacy through the proliferation of transformational rules, recent efforts have concentrated on defining systems of principles that restrict the application of a greatly simplified system of rules of grammar. These principles, because of their broad application within a particular language, and their appearance in a wide range of languages under investigation, are claimed to reflect innate cognitive structures often termed *universal grammar*.

Accompanying this new, and very interesting research in linguistic theory is an interest in certain aspects of the language acquisition process that relate to the theoretical claims. As new insights allow us to hypothesize both more specifically and more plausibly about linguistic universals, the actual facts about linguistic development in young children become increasingly relevant as additional data on which to formulate and test new ideas. This book looks closely at a particular set of linguistic structures with respect to both linguistic theory and language development, exploring the relationship between the theoretical claims and the results of a series of language acquisition experiments. Although work of this sort is often called interdisciplinary, the issues addressed are clearly defined, although not all of them are answered. This book should be of particular interest to linguists, and to psychologists concerned with linguistic and cognitive development. While some of the discussion is quite technical, the linguistic theory is carefully presented to make it accessible to those with little background in linguistics.

After an introductory chapter that deals in considerable detail with the issues addressed in the above two paragraphs, the volume contains two sets of alternating chapters. Chapters 2 and 4 concern themselves with theoretical analyses of principles governing structural principles limiting pronominal reference and the relationship between focus and pronominal reference, respectively. Chapters 3 and 5 discuss experimentation designed to test the claims made in the theoretical chapters about the language acquisition process. Chapter 6 is a brief conclusion, which summarizes some of the major findings. Generally, the sorts of claims that linguistic theory has made about the language acquisition process are supported by the experimental data.

This book grew out of my 1978 doctoral dissertation at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. Much of its content is new, and because of its long history, many colleagues, some of whom are former teachers, have contributed ideas, insights and suggestions. Emmon Bach, Carol Chomsky, Noam Chomsky, Chuck Clifton, Bob Freidin, Helen Goodluck, Wayne Harbert, Susumu Kuno, Barbara Lust, Alec Marantz, Tom Roeper, Susan Tavakolian and Edwin Williams are among those whom I wish to thank. A special note of gratitude goes to Noam Chomsky, Helen Goodluck, Howard Lasnik and Tom Roeper for their most valuable comments on earlier drafts of the manuscript. Small portions of this work appear in my article, 'The Acquisition of Structural Restrictions on Anaphora', in *Language Acquisition and Linguistic Theory*, S. Tavakolian (ed.), 1981, and are reprinted with the kind permission of MIT Press. Portions of Chapters 4 and 5 are revised from my article, 'Contrastive Stress and Children's Interpretation of Pronouns', *Journal of Speech and Hearing Research* (1980).