

Introduction

Philippe F. Paquier

*Departments of Neurology and Neuropsychology,
Erasmie University Hospital U.L.B., Brussels, Belgium*

On October 20, 2001, an international symposium on case studies in neurolinguistics was held at the medical campus of the Free University of Brussels (V.U.B.) in order to pay tribute to Yvan Lebrun and his inspiring work in the field of neurolinguistics.

Yvan Lebrun was professor of neurolinguistics and psycholinguistics at the Flemish-speaking and French-speaking free universities of Brussels (V.U.B. and U.L.B.), and Head of the Department of Neurolinguistics at the V.U.B. In the preface of his *Selected Writings* (Lebrun, 2001), Bijleveld et al. (2001) summarized his life-work as follows:

“In the early 1970s, he founded the ‘Belgian School of Neurolinguistics’, as a Postgraduate Master Program at the Free University of Brussels (V.U.B.). This School and its program constituted a unique initiative in Belgium and Europe. Unique was also the way theory was inseparably tied to diagnosis and therapy in this educational program. His School very quickly became internationally well-known. Its reputation attracted students from all over the world, and a close co-operation with other European universities was established.

In his lectures, his huge scientific knowledge and wide spread general culture found a passionate way of transmission. Speech-language pathology was fed by cultural references, and non-pathological speech and language was often clarified by examples from speech-language pathology. He liked to show that the margin between normality and pathology is indeed small.

As a teacher he transmitted his passion for neurolinguistics and enthusiastically inspired many of his students to follow in his footsteps. His careful listening and judicious advice was much appreciated, and to many Yvan became a friend. It is here that the classical meaning of ‘School’ acquires its whole dimension. As a matter of fact, Yvan delivered his lectures as discussions with his students.

As a researcher, he has definitely marked the development of thinking and research in the field of Neurolinguistics. One of his main concerns has always been to observe and describe clinical symptoms in an objective way, allowing the contradictions to come out. He never tried to cover contradictory facts, but rather used them to demonstrate the

complexity of mental processes and the underlying brain mechanisms. He fostered the scientific value of thoroughly studied cases.

Throughout his professional career Yvan has always shown a broad interest in a variety of topics covering almost the entire field of voice, speech, and language pathology. His interests have been focussed on developmental as well as on acquired disorders. He published important papers on dyslexia, dysorthographia, developmental and acquired aphasia, and mutism. He studied speech and language in congenital disorders and in neurodegenerative diseases. Aside from his interests in speech and language pathology, he was attracted by the richness of normal, individual speech output. With this attention to the individual expression of language, he has illustrated the importance of 'the hidden dimension' of speech, as E. T. Hall uses to call the world of culture transmitted with individual speech output."

In the current issue of *Stem-, Spraak- en Taalpathologie* it is my pleasure to introduce a selection of papers presented at the October celebration meeting, that deal with several topics Yvan Lebrun also explored during his rich clinical and scientific career, such as stuttering, dysphonia, and neurogenic speech/language disorders. In the first paper, Henny Bijleveld (pp. 7-13) addresses the complicated issue of differentiating developmental, neurogenic, and psychogenic stuttering. She discusses two case studies of resurgence of stuttering in adulthood in light of the diagnostic dilemma speech and language pathologists may be confronted with when treating persons who stutter. In the next contribution John van Borsel (pp. 14-21) goes further into the matter of persons who develop a dysfluency beyond the typical childhood period. Discussing his patient I.V., a 15-year-old girl who started to demonstrate dysfluent speech almost one year after she suffered a cerebral trauma, the author focuses his presentation on the topic of psychogenic stuttering.

Two articles highlight different aspects of voice disorders. Renata Whurr and Marjorie Lorch (pp. 22-29) investigate a number of perceptual features of spasmodic dysphonia across different languages. The authors' analysis of six French- and one Chinese-speaking subjects with spasmodic dysphonia suggests that the phonotactic properties of a specific language may affect the manifestation of pathology in neurogenic voice disorders. Then Jan Raes, Marc de Bodt, Floris Wuyts, and Peter Clement (pp. 30-37) illustrate the practical utility of the Dysphonia Severity Index (DSI) used with a percentage scale by presenting three patients studied with it. The case reports demonstrate that communicating the improvement of vocal quality and function in terms of percentages is experienced as very motivating by the patients, and that DSI percentages are also very useful for performing expert, forensic voice evaluations.

Finally, the authors of the last two papers turn their attention to the neurology and neurolinguistics of acquired speech/language disorders. Maria Pachalska, Henryk Kurzbauer, and Bruce Duncan MacQueen (pp. 38-46) discuss the neurolinguistic

findings in a unique and particularly interesting case of acquired organic mutism in a patient clinically diagnosed with the Heidenhain variant of Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease. At last but not at least, Peter Mariën, Sebastiaan Engelborghs, Franco Fabbro, and Peter de Deyn (pp. 47-57) address the role of the cerebellum in language. In agreement with the findings of studies indicating a topographical organization of the cerebellar structures involved in language pathology, they advance the concept of a 'lateralized linguistic cerebellum'. In their view, crossed cerebral diaschisis processes, reflecting a functional depression of supratentorial language areas due to reduced input via cerebello-cortical pathways might represent the relevant pathomechanism for linguistic deficits associated with cerebellar pathology.

This collection of graciously submitted papers witnesses quite well the affection Yvan's colleagues and pupils feel for him. His methodological approach, based on meticulous observations and in-depth documentation, has been the model and stimulus for many of us. All those who attended the symposium join me in congratulating Yvan on his teaching and insights.

Yvan retired from his academic duties some time ago, and as a distinguished professor emeritus he is actually enjoying a well-deserved and peaceful country life. On behalf of his friends, colleagues, and students I would like to thank him for having pioneered neurolinguistics in Belgium and throughout the world, and for having opened the doors of neurolinguistics to us. I wish him every success and happiness he may dream of in his new life.

Nous te souhaitons tous bon vent, Yvan.

References

- Bijleveld, H., Mariën, P., Paquier, P., Raes, J., & Van Borsel, J. (2001). Preface. In Y. Lebrun, *Brain Function and Neurolinguistics: Selected Writings* (pp. xi-xii). London: Publish on Demand Ltd.
- Lebrun, Y. (2001). *Brain Function and Neurolinguistics: Selected Writings*. London: Publish on Demand Ltd.