Although these types of models still constitute the primary explanatory approach to contemporary aphasia research (and have motivated and guided Goodglass's own work), much of this book is devoted to detailing their limitations.

As an alternative, Goodglass looks to connectionist computer models that advocate the adoption of interactive activation mechanisms for parallel and multidirectional communication among information sources. More surprisingly, he also adopts from connectionism the idea of distributed, association-based learning (and retention) of information, allowing the argument, for example, that entities such as a "lexicon" of abstract word representations can be jettisoned in favor of patterns of learned associations among components of meaning and sound. The adoption of parallel-processing mechanisms in no way requires the assumption of completely distributed representations, although they appear here as necessarily linked. The advocacy of a distributed, association-based activation mechanism in the realm of language processing is highly controversial. The challenge, for Goodglass and others advocating such radical alternatives to linguistically defined, modular components, is to find ways of formulating such notions into falsifiable hypotheses.

There is much to argue about in the author's attempts to synthesize the diverse results that constitute the "state of the field." In fact, he has made no attempt to avoid the troublesome controversies that have dominated aphasia research for the past ten years: the proper role of aphasia classification in research; the relative importance of linguistic theory and cognitive science in understanding aphasia; the effect of premorbid differences among individuals on the development of aphasic symptoms. His views on these and other issues, which are clearly stated, should stimulate discussion among aphasiologists for some time to come.

This volume thus serves not merely as a summary of this fascinating and contentious field from a man who helped to shape and define it. It constitutes a scholarly yet practical description of aphasic phenomena and the history of their study at the same time as it breaks new ground in attempting to fit the diverse pieces of the puzzle into a coherent theoretical framework. Understanding Aphasia provides an accessible introduction to the topic for the interested scientist while raising many substantive issues for debate among aphasia researchers.

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