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*Perspectives on the Development of Memory and
Cognition*, and D.G. Bobrow and A. Collins (Eds.),
*Representation and Understanding: Studies in Cognitive
Science*

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Review of R.V. Kail, Jr. and J.W. Hagen (Eds.), *Perspectives on the Development of Memory and Cognition*, and D.G. Bobrow and A. Collins (Eds.), *Representation and Understanding: Studies in Cognitive Science*

Abstract

The use of narrative and other prose forms as a tool for investigating mental processes is not new. Psychologists such as Jean Piaget and F.C. Bartlett both used stories in research on complex cognitive skills in children and adults. However, with the advent of Ebbinghaus' monumental work on memory using "non-sense syllables," theoretical psychology turned away from the use of meaningful material. With the use of nonsense syllables, researchers hoped to isolate the variables of memory and individual content associations. Recently, there has been a renewal of interest in the study of narrative and memory due to the recognition that narrative taps certain processes that syllables and isolated words do not. In addition, narrative and memory studies have generated interest among those researchers concerned with the applicability of memory studies to educational settings.

Disciplines

Child Psychology | Cognitive Psychology | Early Childhood Education | Education | Educational Psychology
| Language and Literacy Education

BOOK REVIEWS

Perspectives on the Development of Memory and Cognition

By R. V. Kail, Jr. and J. W. Hagen (Editors).

Hillsdale, New Jersey: L. Erlbaum, 1977.

498 pp. \$20.00

Representation and Understanding: Studies in Cognitive Science.

By D. G. Bobrow and A. Collins (Editors).

New York: Academic Press.

427 pp. (Price unavailable).

—Reviewed by Amy Shuman and Daniel A. Wagner,
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The use of narrative and other prose forms as a tool for investigating mental processes is not new. Psychologists such as Jean Piaget and F. C. Bartlett both used stories in research on complex cognitive skills in children and adults. However, with the advent of Ebbinghaus' monumental work on memory using "non-sense syllables," theoretical psychology turned away from the use of meaningful material. With the use of nonsense syllables, researchers hoped to isolate the variables of memory and individual content associations. Recently, there has been a renewal of interest in the study of narrative and memory due to the recognition that narrative taps certain processes that syllables and isolated words do not. In addition, narrative and memory studies have generated interest among those researchers concerned with the applicability of memory studies to educational settings.

While no single volume yet exists devoted solely to the study of narrative and cognition, several important studies have appeared in recent books. In "Notes on a Schema for Stories" (in Bobrow and Collins), Rumelhart develops a scheme for the structure of narrative based on the work of the folklorist Vladimir Propp. Specifically, Rumelhart outlines a simple story grammar, explains its components, and hypothesizes that more structured stories are easier to recall than less structured stories. Unfortunately, Rumelhart's story grammar is oversimplified and does not reflect structural and formal analysis beyond Propp. Rumelhart's work is complemented by other, more sophisticated, research on specific aspects of story structure as related to recognition and recall memory. For example, Stein and Glenn's, "The Role of Structural Variation in Children's Recall of Simple Stories," investigates the hypothesis that various causal relationships within stories

influenced subsequent accuracy of recall of those stories. Other chapters of potential interest in the Bobrow and Collins volume include: Schank's, "The Structure of Episodes in Memory" and Kuiper's, "A Frame for Frames."

In Kail and Hagen's, *Perspectives on the Development of Memory and Cognition*, narrative plays an important part in the investigation of a variety of cognitive processes in children. In particular, narrative is used in research on inference, sequential structure, logical reasoning, and metamemory. In most cases, the narratives used in such studies are simplified, sequentially ordered sentences, and are best considered for their contribution to cognition rather than narrative research. In Flavell and Wellman's paper entitled, "Metamemory", the authors have found that even very young children are able both to describe how they would go about remembering and to assess how well they might remember. Flavell and Wellman give rich descriptions of ontogenetic change in metamemory abilities. This work parallels recent studies by folklorists and others into a developmental approach to verbal genres (*c.f.* Sutton-Smith in this issue of *Keystone Folklore*). In another chapter in Kail and Hagen, Paris and Lindauer ("Constructive Aspects of Children's Comprehension and Memory") delineate how the implied and explicit statements in a story are elaborated in children's recall. Other chapters that will be of interest to folklorists include, Cole and Scribner's, "Cross-Cultural Studies of Memory and Cognition" which includes a brief report of studies utilizing narrative, and Rohwer and Dempster's "Memory Development and Educational Processes", which, unfortunately is only marginally concerned with the practical problems of applying memory research to education.

The psychological interest in narrative and memory has generated numerous articles and conference sessions. Although most of the research has utilized narrative as a resource for understanding memory, some studies have also included investigations into the subject of narrative itself, and the use of narrative as a teaching device. Folklorists might benefit from the psychological investigation of the cognitive components of narrative; at the same time, folklorists might criticize these studies for their narrow selection of stories and for their insensitivity to those very elements of diversity in narrative structure, such as repetition and elaboration, which might influence cognitive analysis. The study of narrative and memory is a potential forum for the collaboration of folklorists and cognitive psychologists.

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Recall of Simple Stories. Paper presented at the
Society for Research in Child Development,
New Orleans.

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Response to the call for papers for the Folklore and Education Issue was great; publication of a double issue could not accommodate all of the material received. Featured in the next issue of *Keystone Folklore* will be Dennis Coelho's article "The Folklorist as Folk Artist in Residence." We are pleased to be able to present this case of folklore in the schools, and thus continue the discussion of the place of folklore in educational systems, and curricula, as well as in educational theory and philosophy.

—The Editorial Board