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Research and Teaching Interests

Current research in my laboratory investigates two-year-olds' knowledge and use of language, second language learners' performance on similar tasks, native speakers' performance on similar sentences with different tasks, the role of input in syntax acquisition, gender differences in mathematics problem-solving. We are also investigating what interventions work best in improving gender equity in different types of organizations. In first language acquisition, my laboratory investigates the mechanisms of acquisition, including: the role of input; the separation of competence and performance; the contribution of domain-general and domain-specific processes; and learnability and theories of learning. In artificial language learning, we study the roles of frequency, reference, and prosody. In human sex differences in cognition and achievement the focus is on the contributions of biology, cognition, and social structure, and the implications of sex differences for professional achievement.

First and second language acquisition. In our work with two-year-olds we tape and transcribe their spontaneous speech, ask them to imitate sentences, test their memory of sentences, and ask them to understand sentences. In our work with non-native adult speakers we perform similar studies; we also measure their ability to read sentences presented very quickly on a computer screen (RSVP). In our work with native adult speakers we perform RSVP experiments, various pencil-and-paper experiments, and various problem-solving experiments.

Gender differences in math. We ask high school and college students to solve math problems of various types, mental rotation problems, and inference problems. All materials are computer-based.

Gender equity. We have various projects. One is to create web-based tutorials using voice-over narration with slides. Another is to create "report cards" rating science and humanities organizations according to their representation of women. A third is to create manuals analyzing interventions to improve the status of women in science

Selected Publications:

- Valian, V. & Casey, L. (in press). Young Children's Acquisition of Wh-Questions: The Role of Structured Input. *Journal of Child Language*.
- Grant, J., Valian, V., & Karmiloff-Smith, A. (2002). Is syntax intact in Williams syndrome? A study of relative clauses. *Journal of Child Language*, 29, 403-416.
- Rabinowitz, V. C. & Valian, V. (2000). Sex, sex differences, and social behavior. In D. LeCroy & P. Moller (Eds.), *Evolutionary perspectives on human reproductive behavior* (pp. 196-207). *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*.
- Valian, V. (2000). The advancement of women in science and engineering. In *Women in the chemical workforce: A workshop report to the Chemical Sciences Roundtable* (pp 24-37). Washington, DC: National Academy Press.