



# Disorders of Syntactic Comprehension (Issues in the Biology of Language and Cognition)

*David Caplan, Nancy Hildebrandt*

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On the basis of a decade's work on syntactic-comprehension disorders, primarily in the Neurolinguistics Laboratory of the Montreal Neurological Hospital, David Caplan and Nancy Hildebrandt present an original theory of these disturbances of language function. They suggest in this wide-ranging study that syntactic structure breaks down after damage to the brain because of specific impairments in the parsing processes and a general decrease in the amount of computational space that can be devoted to that function. Disorders of Syntactic Comprehension includes detailed single-case analyses and large-group studies, as well as a broad review of the literature on aphasia. It also provides introductions to syntactic structures and parsing for the reader unfamiliar with these subjects. It develops a general framework for viewing disorders in this area and for identifying a number of specific aspects of the breakdown of syntactic comprehension. The authors' richly detailed empirical linguistic database and their careful use of experimental materials enable them to bring the results of their research to bear on several aspects of theories of syntactic structure (Chomsky's theory) and parsing (the Berwick-Weinberg parser) and to use these theories to describe and explain aphasic phenomena. Moreover, the combination of population and group studies allows them to investigate the neurological basis of syntactic disorders in addition to the psychological and linguistic aspects. David N. Caplan is Associate Professor of Neurology and Linguistics at McGill University. Nancy Hildebrandt is in the Neurolinguistics Laboratory at the Massachusetts General Hospital. Disorders of Syntactic Comprehension is included in the series Issues in the Biology of Language and Cognition, edited by John C. Marshall.

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