

Paula Menyuk

- Born in New York City
- B.S. in Speech Sciences (1951) New York University, M.Ed. in Speech and Hearing (1955) Boston University, D.Ed in Psycholinguistics (1961) Boston University

Major Employment:

- Director, Division of Counseling, Reading, Language Development & Special Education, 1981-1984, Director of Language Behavior Program, 1986 – 1987, Co-Director of Applied Psycholinguistics Program, 1972 – 1994, all at Boston University



Major Areas of Work:

- Language development in normally developing and language disordered children
- Language development and reading
- Developmental language problems and reading problems

SRCD Affiliation:

- Member since 1962

SRCD ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

Paula Menyuk

Interviewed by Judy Rosenblith
July 30, 2003

Rosenblith: Paula, could you describe your family background along with any childhood and adolescent experiences that may be of interest. Please include both educational and occupational characteristics of your parents. Where were you born; where did you grow up; what was your schooling like; did you have any military experience, or early work experience? That's quite a list.

Menyuk: It is. So I'll start first with being born. I was born in New York City; I was the only daughter, only child, of two Russian immigrants who came at various times to first Canada. My father was 19 when he immigrated to Canada. My mother was six when she immigrated to the United States. Growing up in New York City was a very special experience. I was exposed to theater, ballet, opera, which I didn't really like when I was very young, and also going to high school in a magnet school called Hunter High School, where I made many, many friends from all over the city. And even the children of some who worked at the United Nations. And early work experience was I became a sales girl in Gimbel's Department Store and learned very early on that sales persons who are not organized into labor unions were very, very poorly paid. And that I think had an influence on me as well. My family were very much pro-labor party, and so my political bent started very, very early in life. When I graduated from college, I went to New York-

Rosenblith: Let's back up a second.

Menyuk: Okay.

Rosenblith: You say you were working as a sales person in a store. What age were you then?

Menyuk: Illegally, I was 15. I messed up my birth certificate so that they wouldn't know that I was underage. So I started working in the, well, summertime work in this department store. I think they knew that I was sort of hedging on my age, so they put me in what they call the flying squad, going from various aisles of the store. And then they discovered I was a very good sales person; they put me in jewelry and I sold very expensive items of jewelry. But

because the salary of my fellow worker persons was so terrible, I gave them the sales so that they could get the commission. I think they were making something like 20 or 21 dollars a week, and even, you know, even in those days that was low, that was low. So, then what?

Rosenblith: Well, after high school, what was your education?

Menyuk: I went to New York University and I got my undergraduate degree in speech and hearing sciences and did student teaching as a speech pathologist in various high schools and prepared myself then to become a speech teacher in various high schools.

Rosenblith: Did you actually do that?

Menyuk: Yes. I became a speech teacher in, first, Washington Irving High School, which was an all girls' high school in Manhattan. And then for the second semester, became a speech teacher in a boy's vocational high school in the Redhook section of Brooklyn. The two situations were remarkably different from each other. The children who came to Washington Irving with not only all girls, but they came from middle class families, some from low SES families, but many from middle class families. In the Redhook section of Brooklyn, they all came from working class families and interesting ethnic groups: Polish, Italian, Irish. And they were boys, all of them were boys. And it was a tough place to work; there was no question about it. And the thing that really saved me was I had a group of older students, essentially juniors and seniors, who liked me and were very protective towards me. And I learned an enormous amount about how you deal with a situation where the kids in the class had no aspirations whatsoever for college, and yet some of them were the children of plumbers, carpenters and so on. And they very carefully explained to me, Mrs. Menyuk, I was married at the time, Mrs. Menyuk, how much do you earn a year? And I told them and they laughed. And they said, well, when we graduate from high school we will become members of a union, carpenters, plumbers, etc., and we will make three times what you make, so there's no reason to go to college. And yet some of them were so, so bright. I felt very sad about that. They were not going to go on and see whether or not they could become scientists, philosophers, and so on. So in some sense it was a little sad.

Rosenblith: I gather that this experience in your early adult teaching life was important to your intellectual development?

Menyuk: Very, very much so. I learned a great deal about the potential of all children from this group. One of my greatest successes was I had this youngster from a Spanish speaking family, and he was interested in nothing, and I discovered that he was an enormous fan of bull fighting. It came to him genetically. And when I discovered that, I started to investigate books about bull fighting, fiction primarily, and I was able to give him a book on bull fighting, and I really lighted up his life. And even though it seemed like a very difficult ambition to pursue, nevertheless, it got him reading and I thought that was really a triumph. The other thing I did when I was a high school teacher is I put on Finian's Rainbow, an unheard of experience in the boy's vocational high school. I needed some girls, so I got some girls from the girls' vocational high school to participate, they were actually more difficult than the boys, and we had a raging success. Including the lights going out in the scene where the change occurs in the very, very prejudiced senator, when the senator turns from white to black in Finian's Rainbow. So, you know, I look on that semester as being very special in my life and really letting me know a great deal about diversity and potential. And I've never forgotten that lesson, I think.

Rosenblith: Obviously not. What about your collegiate experiences?

Menyuk: Well, the two professors that I remember from my undergraduate are, Letitia Robicheck and Dorothy Mulgrave, and they were really terrific ladies. Both of them, professors at New York University, and very different in terms of what they taught and what they were interested in. Dorothy was very much interested in the art aspects of speech, and therefore she taught courses about public speaking and so on. And Dorothea, I'm sorry, Letitia, was very much interested in schools and what speech teachers could do in schools. So both of those ladies made a quite marvelous impression on me. As far as my collegiate experience is concerned, in terms of peers, I also got involved in the NYU theater experience, and many of the young people that I worked with in getting theatrical productions ready for performance, I learned a great deal about directing. And I thought at one point in my life I'd become a director, but I abandoned that. I thought, well, okay, that's something that I really cannot pursue and earn a living. And coming from the kind of family that I did, earning a living was very, very important. So I had to turn to a

practical career. One of the friends that I made, Phillip Nasta, I have remained friends with all my life. He is now, he now resides in the Netherlands. He was a dancer on Broadway and he studied at NYU to get his master's degree in anthropology and dance. And oh yes, my high school experience in Hunter, I met a girl in freshman year and she and I have remained friends throughout the years and are still to this day friends. Very different in terms of what I learned from each of these peers.

Rosenblith: When do you think you, when and why I guess, that you began to focus in on the speech and language, which inevitably, in your case, brought you to child development in a way?

Menyuk: That was really very, very early. When I was in high school, Hunter High School was across the street from the Lexington School for the Deaf. And one of my teachers asked if I would like to volunteer to work with a deaf youngster. This was a little boy who, at the time, was about eight years of age. Enormously bright, but who had an enormous amount of difficulty in communicating in speech. And he and I used to play together when I went over to work with him. And I learned early on that such a condition as deafness meant nothing in terms of cognitive development. Because this youngster was enormously bright, and whatever game we played, as long as it did not require verbal response, he would catch on to. And I look back on this experience as, yes; there is so much to do for children who have expressive difficulties, or speech difficulties, that this is what I'm going to concentrate on if I follow my professional path.

Rosenblith: You say that was when you were in high school?

Menyuk: Yes.

Rosenblith: How far in high school?

Menyuk: I guess I was a junior.

Rosenblith: So actually you would describe this deaf boy as one of the individuals who was important to your intellectual development wouldn't you?

Menyuk: Yes I would. Yes I would, because I learned a great deal about being deaf doesn't mean you're dumb. And that was a very important lesson.

Rosenblith: And were the teachers that you had at time important to your intellectual development too?

Menyuk: Yes. But you want to know something? I don't remember many of them. The only teacher I remember was a music teacher who had studied with Toscanini at one point; she was very, very impressive. And another teacher who was in a totally different field, biology, she was the sister-in-law of Oppenheimer, the very famous physicist. I think on reflecting, it seems to me that those teachers, most of them women, in Hunter High School, because Hunter High School was an all girls high school, were those teachers who were independent, who loved what it is that they taught. And I was impressed by how well they taught and how well they stimulated their class and how well they, I think it's the independence of those teachers that were most impressive.

Rosenblith: When did you become interested in research? And who were your mentors for that?

Menyuk: Well, my husband was a student of Walter Rosenblith, and Walter contacted my husband and said to him, you know, there are openings at MIT Lincoln Laboratories. Why don't you think of doing this? And Norman came up to Boston and interviewed at Lincoln Laboratories and then he and I took off for France for nine weeks, which was a marvelous experience, and then returned to Boston. And, as a matter of fact, lived with Walter and Judy Rosenblith) for a period of time before we got our own apartment. And Norm was very happy at MIT Lincoln Labs doing research in his field, and I started practicing speech pathology at Massachusetts General Hospital in what they called the Language Clinic. And both Walter and Judy, you know, said to me, what is it that you want to do with your life? And I, I sort of introspected and said, well, I'm not sure what I, what I want to do. I mean I enjoy doing the speech therapy, but it is the case that one of the questions that rose very early in my life was, why do some of these youngsters that I see at the language clinic have problems learning to speak. It was clear that the adults had problems because they had brain damage, they were aphasics. Also there were stutterers who came to the clinic, and at that time the prevalent theory was that this was because there was a bad reaction to their nonfluency. So the

explanations for these two populations were clear, but for the young population, these youngsters, there were no clear explanations. And I discussed this not only with Walter, but also with a linguist friend of his, Morris Halle. And Morris said to me, you know, you really ought to find out about language if you want to do something to help these children. And I said, okay, yes, I should find out more about language and I became a special student in both linguistics at MIT, and psychology at Harvard. At that point in my life there was no field called psycholinguistics, so I put those two strands together and studied, as I say, psychology at Harvard and linguistics at MIT. The theory at, at MIT that was most exciting to me was Chomsky's theory of grammar. And the reason why it was so exciting to me, it was because the child was the focus of attention. The child's competence in acquisition of language was the focus of attention. Norm (Chomsky) called it the innate ability of the child and I was very persuaded by this in terms of trying to understand the language problems of children. Morris also was a great influence on me because he said, look, you know, you have to understand language development before you can study non-normal language development. And so for my dissertation, I did a study of language development in children from three to seven years, which then became the book, *Sentences Children Use*. And Morris was on my dissertation committee, although, I was getting my doctorate degree at Boston University in speech and hearing. And they would not allow him to sit in on my final hearing. So this was a great blow to both of us because I thought he was a very prestigious linguist, he could be named as an outside reader on my committee. But I worked with him very, very closely as I did also at a later time, with Norm Chomsky. I also took courses with Roman Jakobson, who was this wonderful linguist, and found out a great deal about speech development which was of great concern, especially with children who were having a lot of problems in developing speech. So early on, after I had finished my dissertation, I did a study of the language development of children three to seven years who had problems, who had speech development problems. And all of a sudden things became clear to me, I should be a researcher. So I got a research position at MIT in both the linguistics and the speech communication groups. I was studying and doing research at the same time. I got an NIH pre-doctoral fellowship in preparation for my doctoral studies, and then a post-doctoral fellowship at MIT so I could continue studying linguistics, speech and psychology. It was a wonderful experience because I had three children at the time, so I could, so I could be free to do research and yet take kids to doctors appointments, dental appointments, buy shoes for them, go to their school and watch plays and so on. It was a wonderful experience. So pre-doc and post-doc, it was six years of sheer joy at MIT and Harvard, and then later at MIT solely.

Rosenblith: Did you have any significant colleagues in this period other than Morris and Norm?

Menyuk: Yes. I had Ken Stevens, who was another professor at MIT, and some of the other students who were there at the same time I was, like Jerry Fodor, Jerry Katz, these were philosopher linguists who later went on to do very, very important research. And also I became acquainted with Ignatious Mattingly from Connecticut, and through him Al Lieberman, a very, very famous speech scientist. I was surrounded by both students and faculty that were enormously stimulating. One of the nice experiences that I had at MIT was I took a course in brain and language with Walter Rosenblith and, again, not only was Walter a very inspiring teacher, but also my fellow students were also inspiring; very bright young people at MIT.

Rosenblith: You've mentioned the political events concerning unionized workers versus non-unionized. But what else might you tell us about the political and the social events that have influenced your research and writing or teaching?

Menyuk: I think that one of the things that certainly influenced my, my thinking about the whole area of language development, was the civil rights movement, and also researchers who were interested in the language development of black kids and kids from various socio-economic classes. And I remember at the time that I served on a committee for the American Speech, Language and Hearing Association, then called the American Speech and Hearing Association, on the language problems of urban populations. And the chair of that committee was Orlando Taylor, who is a black man and obviously very interested in the language development of black children and his student, Fay Vaughn Cook, who later became my student when I started teaching. So one of the things, one of the influences in my life and my research was the civil rights movement where suddenly people became aware of the fact that children were not all middle class, they were not all white, they were, you know, they came from various backgrounds, ethnic and economics. And, as I say, I served on this committee and also became involved in research with children from various backgrounds. This was a very, very exciting time. The politics was exciting, my first presidential election, when I could vote, was the Adlai Stevenson and Dwight Eisenhower campaign, which was a great disappointment because Adlai Stevenson didn't win. And I discovered that sometimes your candidate doesn't

win, which was very, very distressing when you're starting out, which did not prevent me from voting in every subsequent election.

Rosenblith: Ws your teaching influenced very much by the same events?

Menyuk: Yes. Both my writing and my teaching were influenced by these events. For example, there was a movement in the United States to talk about language deprivation, and there were books written about it and suggestions made about teaching those who were deprived. And one of the things that I contributed to as a researcher in the field of language development was this notion of deprivation as being incorrect. Difference was something that we could talk about. This is not to say that I did not understand that poor children had more difficulty in adapting to school, in learning, in accomplishing and going on. But that the basic competence was there was evident in their language development. And so there were studies that were carried out that indicated that these children were capable of acquiring language. The language was different, but not deprived. And this I thought was a very important lesson to convey to my students.

Rosenblith: We're still having trouble learning it I think.

Menyuk: I agree. I agree. We all have trouble learning it, although you say it again and again. And I must say linguists had made an important contribution in understanding the difference between deprivation and difference. So I feel good about that. And psycholinguists have played various roles in this, some of it very positive, talking about difference, and others talking about deprivation. A famous one, of course, is Basil Bernstein. And when I went to Australia on a Fulbright Fellowship, I obviously met many educators and psychologists and psychiatrists who were very much influenced by Basil Bernstein, you know, coming from England and so on. And I think I shocked them a little bit when I talked to them about the fact that there is difference and not deprivation. And I remember giving a talk at Latrobe, one of the 26 talks I gave in 21 days in Australia about difference and deprivation, and I think I shocked them a little bit. But those in the audience who listened to what I said, I think were impressed by what I had to say, or at least I like to think that they were impressed.

Rosenblith: You've obviously had a very full plate in your research and teaching. But would you characterize the development of your ideas in the field of childhood development as evolving in a sort of straight-line fashion, or rather more that one involves sharp turns, either in your theoretical or your research style.

Menyuk: No, I wouldn't call it strict, because I hope that I learned over time some other factors that may play a role in child development. Initially I was totally entranced by the notion that if the child has innate competence, and this is the principle factor in their development, and forget all the other stuff. And over the years what I have discovered is more and more influences that can play a role. For example, culture can play a role. So what they learn about language as far as how to communicate with others is very important in terms of the particular culture that they come from. So I'm no longer a strict innatist, but obviously was very influenced by Norm Chomsky and Morris Halle and even Roman Jakobson to some extent, who was also, I think, an innatist but he was also a culturist and etc. etc. So that has affected my research and my teaching. To talk about various factors that play a role, one of them being cognition. I learned an enormous amount about both cultural influences and cognitive development and its role in language development of both normally developing children and children with developmental problems. And so I think my view has broadened over my years of research and teaching; I like to think that this is the case. That is not to say that I have not always felt that the competence that a child is born with plays an enormous role in their acquisition of all kinds of knowledge. And in the case of some children who have real constraints on their competence, such as children who are autistic, children with Down Syndrome and so on, that there are constraints on what it is they can acquire about language. And so I've always had a very deep interest in the relationship between brain and language, keeping in mind also the other factors that can play a role. Later in my life I became very interested in reading, and this is probably because I was surrounded by faculty who were interested in reading when I was at the University. And I felt their position, vis-à-vis reading, did not place enough emphasis on normal language development and its role in reading. And that opened a whole new area of research for me, and I published a number of papers on language development in reading and to this day, of course, maintained a great deal of interest in this.

Rosenblith: I suspect that you think that you have characterized your work and have given us the reasons why already, so we won't ask that last question, why do you characterize your work in this way. Would you agree?

Menyuk: Say it again. I don't quite understand the question. Which one are you reflecting on? Which one?

Rosenblith: The last part of five—

Menyuk: Please reflect on your research—

[Both speaking at once]

Rosenblith: No, the last part of question five.

Menyuk: Five, up there?

Rosenblith: Yes.

Menyuk: Oh, okay, sorry. Why do I characterize your work, my work, in this way? Well, because I, it's what I think I did?

Rosenblith: As I said, I think—

[Both speaking at once]

Menyuk: I answered it.

Rosenblith: --really have already answered it. The next set of questions deal with your personal research contributions. And, again, as is often the case in interviews, you have covered some of the ground that could as easily been covered in this section had it been asked first. But I'll ask the questions as they stand anyway. What were your primary interests in child development in the beginning of your career? You can just refer back to something briefly if you wish.

Menyuk: Yeah. I would say at the beginning, my career, my primary interest, was in children who were having problems acquiring language. This was the focus of my attention to begin with and it was what I did early in my career as a speech therapist, this is what I was doing, helping children, I hoped, who had language problems.

Rosenblith: What are the continuities in your work that you think are most significant?

Menyuk: The continuities are that I have continued to do research with children who have language development problems and I hope I've contributed to a greater understanding of the nature of their problems. And what shift occurred, I talked about some of the shift, the shift in terms of what I viewed as the causes of language, development explanations for language development. I have broadened over the years as I've learned more and studied what other people have contributed and what I found myself in my own research. And what events were responsible, I think were life's events, carrying out my research, reading, discussing and so on. So, as I say, my view was broadened.

Rosenblith: The next question asks you to reflect on the strengths and, parenthetically perhaps, weaknesses of your research in theoretical contributions, the impact of your work and its current status.

Menyuk: What was the strength? I think that I had a thorough grounding in both child development and in linguistics, which certainly contributed to my work in the field of language development. The weakness is probably that I started out with a theoretical bias. So initially I sort of viewed the process as attributable to one point of view and I think over time I changed this, as I indicated. And what were the theoretical contributions. Well, I look back on now a long life and think the thing that I did that had the greatest influence was to discuss language development, not speech development, as being the focus of attention of those who do work with children with language disorders.

I think some of the work that I did with fellow professionals in speech and hearing science influenced younger researchers in the field, younger teachers in the field, younger speech pathologists, to think of language as a whole, not as just something that comes out of the mouth. And I remember many instances when I challenged a speech therapist to think about the children that they were working with and why they had difficulty. And I think that the work that I did and the work of others in the field that introduced the notion of language versus speech, was the change in the name of the Association. It became not the American Speech and Hearing Association, but the American Speech, Language and Hearing Association, and I think I played some role in that change in title. And what is the impact of my research on the current status. I think, again, it's the influence of my research and others who followed the same bent as I. For example, Larry Leonard is a very active researcher in the field of speech pathology; our work had a lot of influence on what is being done now. The journal of the Association has three parts now; it has a speech part, it has a hearing part and it has a language part, and that language part is composed of studies on the language of children who are normally developing and those who have developmental problems.

Rosenblith: The work that you did fits into a large canvas I would say, of change in the field.

Menyuk: I think so. I think so. And I, I think both my research and my teaching, because my initial teaching at Boston University was to a lot of speech pathologists who came to get advanced degrees with me. And this certainly affected their research as they left the institution with their doctorates. And many of my students do research in the language of children with developmental problems, so their focus was broadened, I think, by my teaching as well as my research. I have to throw in a bravo here. I have 12 students who are now tenured faculty members at universities throughout the United States, and this is a matter of great pride to me. Some of them teach in departments of communication disorders, some in special education, some in psychology. And I think that this broad perspective on the process of language development has affected them and what they have done with their careers. Just recently a student who is now in California, San Diego State, just received a special honor for her research on children with bilingual and second language backgrounds and their problems in language, and I think that's wonderful. I think this is grand.

Rosenblith: We'll get more specific now and ask what published or unpublished manuscripts best represent your thinking about child development?

Menyuk: Well, I have a monograph and I have two texts, and two books. The first book I wrote was, Sentences Children Use. It brings a smile to my lips because Roger Brown, who is a very famous psychologist, psycholinguist, once said to me, Paula, what do you mean, Sentences Children Use? What about the ones they don't use? Roger, I think, was such a wonderful person all around, he was not only brilliant but he was funny and literate and so on. So that's just an aside, which I will never forget. You want to turn it off honey so we don't waste this—

Rosenblith: Don't have to--.

Menyuk: --on both recording devices?

Rosenblith: Yep. Yep. Looks like-- Which of your studies seem the most significant to you now?

Menyuk: The two studies that seem most significant to me now, are my initial study of language development from three to seven years, in terms of syntax, because as it turns out, one of the areas of greatest difficulty for children with language learning problems is syntax. That was my initial study, and then a more recent study that looked at predicting whether or not children would have reading problems because of their early language abilities. Those two studies, I think, are the best of what I have done. And my book was published by M.I.T. Press and the paper was published in the Journal of Speech and Hearing Research. So in those two areas, I think, is my greatest impact, I think.

Rosenblith: Seems reasonable. Now, which contributions do you think were wrong-headed?

Menyuk: I can't think of a single one that I think is wrong-headed. Because, obviously, although I've changed and my focus has changed and so on and so forth, I think none of it was wrong-headed in terms of how I approached a problem, I tried to solve the problem, how I wrote about the problem and so on. So I don't know if there were any that were wrong-headed.

Rosenblith: Next question is a major leap because it asks you to reflect on your experiences with the research funding apparatus over the year. And further to comment on your participation in shaping research funding policy. And then we'll be asking what are the particular areas in which you have done that. And in what areas have you secured support for your own work and related matters. Just a little bit.

Menyuk: Yeah. Okay. Very early on, I need to refer now, I became a member of various committees that were working with the National Institutes of Health. First in a study of deafness and language development, and then for many years I was a consultant on, first, the program project committee, and then the field research committee, on the National Institute of Neurological Diseases and Stroke. I have to make a side comment because as, I said when I retired from my last consultancy, for a few years I was the only woman on these committees. I was the only woman, and I was very struck by this and often said to the secretaries of these various committees, there must be women out there who you can call on to come and participate in this activity. And eventually there were; there were women who were invited to serve on these committees. But initially, I was the lonely woman on these committees.

Rosenblith: But I bet you weren't a token.

Menyuk: Well, I don't know. I hope not, but I'm not sure. At any rate, I think the greatest influence that I had on these committees was that I discovered that if I exercised my judgment, vis-à-vis, the design of studies, careful planning, statistical analysis, you know, and so forth, very rigorous studies. In those areas in which I was called on to evaluate, some of these projects would get dumped and they wouldn't receive funding. They didn't meet the cut-off point. And then I saw other studies that didn't seem to be very, very good at all that were reviewed by other members of the committee that were getting high ratings and I would say to myself, why are these, you know, getting high ratings. Peer review is the best way to go, there's no question in my mind. But there's also the buddy system. So, if you have members of your committee, for example members of the medical profession, they really are very, very generous to their fellow members. So I learned to be judicious in my criticism. If I thought a proposal was good in terms of what it might reveal in terms of how the various groups, I was less critical about those studies. And I certainly think that my contribution, again, was in terms of those research projects that were concerned with the psycho-linguistic development of children with various handicaps. My own research was funded by the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, and I served on some of their committees as well. But I was very active in the National Institutes of Health. I was a member of that Neurological Diseases and Stroke Committee for six years in various ways. And then I became a member of the advisory board of the new institute, National Institute of Deafness and Other Communication Disorders. I also reviewed for the National Science Foundation and the Fulbright Committee and, I'm looking at my vita now. I was advisor to the University of Texas at Dallas, to the Callier Speech and Hearing Center; I was an advisor on the National Foundation of March of Dimes for Birth Defects Behavioral Sciences Advisory Committee. And so I was advisor on many national committees and state committees that were concerned with communication problems of various populations. But I myself got funding primarily from the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services. I got funding from the National Institute of Education, I got funding in the last really big grant that I got from that National Institute of Deafness and Other Communication Disorders.

Rosenblith: Well, that's quite a large load. And again, indicates along with your work, I think, that you made a major contribution to your field. But now—

Menyuk: I thank you, Dr. Rosenblith.

Rosenblith: My gratuity has come-- Now it turns to the question of your institutional contributions, which of course part of them were just covered above. But if we focus on maybe summarizing the institutions where you worked, the dates that you worked there, and the capacity in which you worked there, it will help pull some of this material together.

Menyuk: Well, I was a member of the research staff at MIT in speech communications and linguistics from 1964 to 1972 and then continued on as a research associate in those groups from 1972 to 1989. I think I told you I was a post doctoral fellow at MIT from '61 to '64, I was a lecturer at Boston University in 1960, and then became professor of education and applied linguistics at Boston University until I retired in 1998, 1998 I think is when I retired. I was

68 just turning 69 when I retired as a professor. And as I told you, I was very involved in National Institutes of Health, the National Science Foundation, National—

Rosenblith: That sort of leads, I think, into the next question of your involvement with well-known research sites. You have already told us about your involvement in the, some of the different NIH sites, have you ever been involved with NIMH?

Menyuk: Yes. I had a very interesting experience with NIMH, I think it was NIMH but maybe it was National Institute of Child Health and Development, I'm not sure. We did a site visit in Minnesota to the institute there, and I was a member of the site visiting team. And I remember that Jackie Gibson was on the team, I was on the team, I think the chairperson was, I'm debating whether it was one of two, was it Dr. Yarrow, I'm not sure.

Rosenblith: Could have been.

Menyuk: Could have been, yes, it could have been. And essentially George Magheqian from the University of Texas at Dallas, who was an old friend, and we reviewed various aspects of the institute and what they were doing in their academic programs and so on. Which is a very, very nice experience. They—

Rosenblith: Well, we got the tape changed.

Menyuk: I forgot where we were.

Rosenblith: No, I don't think I do.

Menyuk: I said, at which institutions have you worked, dates, capacity, NIMH, we did that didn't we? Yeah. So we go to the second page—

[Both speaking at once]

Rosenblith: So, no, and why don't we go to question two in the institutional contribution, and we really covered that already.

Menyuk: Yeah, I think so.

Rosenblith: So we do go to the next page where it asks you to describe your experiences as a teacher of child development research and/or trainer of research workers. This question obviously comes out as a bit too narrow, I think, because, or a bit too broad, child development research is a very broad area and we've already seen that you are in a branch of child development research, I think. Does that seem appropriate to you?

Menyuk: Yes it does. It is the case that language development is influenced by other aspects of development as I learned over time. However, you could say that my specialty is language development, both normal and non-normal, and later in my research career, reading, the relationship between reading and language development. So that's fair enough.

Rosenblith: And what experiences have you had teaching these fields?

Menyuk: Well, I taught the courses at Boston University in both the language, culture and literacy department in the school of education and in the applied linguistics program in the graduate school of Boston University on language development, a course on universals of development. A course on language and cognition, which I enjoyed tremendously; a course on individual variation in language development, which I also enjoyed; and then, towards the end of my teaching career, I taught the dissertation proposal class across the board for students in both the graduate school and in the school of education. And towards the end of my teaching that course, the number of students who took that course grew, which I resented I must say. I had 25 students in the class the last time I taught it and there were a number of areas in which they were doing their dissertation. For example, distance teaching.

And I learned an enormous amount. One of the things that I can say is that teaching really taught me; I learned an enormous amount from teaching, for which I am very, very grateful.

Rosenblith: That course would seem to fit particularly the idea of your experiences as a trainer of research workers.

Menyuk: Well, I did more than that. I mean I had my students on my research projects, so they really had experience in doing research. So it's not just that course, but students working with me on my own research.

Rosenblith: In the course of your career, has there been tension between your teaching and your research?

Menyuk: No. I've always thought that my doing research was very, very important to my teaching. It, I think, kept me at the top of my field. In order to do research you really have to be aware of what's going on in your field. And I've always felt that good teachers are also good researchers. And there's a little speech.

Rosenblith: In many ways, what you've described in your career, I think, is, covers at least in part, what we would call applied child development research.

Menyuk: I agree. That's fair enough. Yes.

Rosenblith: Are your experiences different in the parts that you would call that, and other parts of your work?

Menyuk: I have not been an enormous contributor to theory. I always carried out my research from a theoretical point of view, but I don't think I did a great deal of research in examining the theories and whether or not they were fulfilled by research results. So in other words, I started from a theoretical position, I did the research, and then I examined the relationship.

Rosenblith: Right.

Menyuk: So, I don't know if I, I-- The only contribution is, I think, as far as theory is concerned is my, my influence in the field that if you want to look at applied issues, like language disorders or reading and so on, you have to examine all language development. Maybe that's a theoretical contribution, I'm not quite sure.

Rosenblith: And now the society would like to know about your experiences with that, when you joined it, what were your earliest contacts with it, and with whom, and, if you could, describe the first bi-annual meeting that you attended.

Menyuk: Well, I believe that I joined the society in 1963. And the reason I joined the society is because Judy Rosenblith suggested that I join the society. And the first meeting I went to, I was both interested and taken aback. Many of the sessions that were on language at that first meeting, had to do with word association. Many, many studies of word association and the influence of behaviorist theory on language development and so on. So I, initially I said to myself, what am I doing here? I seem to be in the wrong place. On the other hand there was, you know, fellow, you know, members, peers, who were also presenting papers that I thought were quite, quite good, and I think it was a shift period where gradually the strict adherence to stimulus response reward theory was shifting to other views of development. And so gradually over time the meetings became more and more congruent with my own thinking about child development.

Rosenblith: When it asks you to describe the history of your participation in the scientific meetings and publications of the society and other non-governing aspects of the work of the society, I would like-- it was appropriate for you to expand on that by saying which other societies you've been an active member of, but also let's answer the SRCD question.

Menyuk: I have been to SRCD meetings every time they took place until just after I retired that last meeting in Washington. How long ago was that? I was retired then wasn't I, I think. I had just retired I think. It's also the case that I have been at some infancy meetings as well, couple of infancy meetings. Been very active in the American

Speech, Language and Hearing Association, but rarely go to their national meetings because they now have 69,000 members and it becomes very difficult to communicate. Except when I'm invited, when I'm invited I usually go, except this last time. I was invited to be a mentor, you know, you get advertised and various students who are interested in your field come and discuss with you, and unfortunately this conflicted with another commitment that I made. Because I would have love to have gone and done that. I belong to the American Linguistic Society; I have been on their program committee and reviewed papers for their journal. I am not a member of the American Psychological Association, but I have reviewed submissions to their meetings, primarily in the area of autism, which is very interesting. And what other societies, I'm trying to think.

Rosenblith: Well, I—

Menyuk: The International Phonetic Association, some international—

Rosenblith: Which of all of these would you say you have attended most regularly?

Menyuk: Well two, SRCD and the American Speech, Language and Hearing Association. Those are the ones that I've gone to most faithfully.

Rosenblith: In other words, SRCD is one of your basic scientific meeting venues shall we say.

Menyuk: Yes, indeed, indeed. I must say one thing about SRCD, they, beginning when I first joined the society, one of the things I really liked about it was it was small. It was a small society, and the American Speech, Language, Hearing Association was never small. It was always much, much larger. But, I'll throw in a little kudo for me, I did receive their highest honors, that's the American Speech, Language and Hearing Association, about four years back, five years back, six years, I forget. At any rate, so I identified with them principally.

Menyuk: Norman, you have to turn it off because we have to answer the phone.

Rosenblith: Okay. Have you been active in the governments of SRCD?

Menyuk: No I have not.

Rosenblith: So we can skip that question then.

Menyuk: Yes.

Rosenblith: But you should have a view, I think, given your attendance, of what the most important changes that have occurred in SRCD and its activities during your association with it.

Menyuk: Yes. I think that one of the changes I've referred to earlier, the strict emphasis on looking at aspects of development from a behaviorist's point of view has shifted to, I think, an espousal of other theories of cognitive development and so on. The other thing that has changed, I think that has broadened its interest to many other disciplines as well, and I've found that particularly interesting and rewarding in terms of going to meetings. The last meeting I was at was, I thought, super-duper in the sense of not only the broadness of aspects of development being covered at the meeting, but also very, very careful looks. One session that I went to that had to do with culture and development was so exciting in terms of what they were talking about. It is the case that not only culture but, you know, philosophy of development and, I, just a broader view of development over time, which has interested and excited me in terms of my career as well. So it sort of kept pace with what I, you know, where my thoughts were going.

Rosenblith: And what would be your hopes or fears for the future of the field?

Menyuk: My hopes for the future of the field would be, my hopes are, that they will continue in this direction. That they will pursue the broadness of notions of development for many, many perspectives, and also applied areas. This I feel is very, very important. And they have been going in this direction as well, much more applied study. And my fears for the future of the field is, like all fields, is facing enormous funding difficulties. I was recently asked to

write to my senators, vis-à-vis NIH funding, and it sort of, you know, handwriting on the wall. But the issues are not only research funding but also applied funding. So, for example, now they're talking about changing Head Start. And these are matters of great concern to me, that a trend that was in place of improving not only the research that was taking place in child development and the funding for that research, but funding for applied programs that are the product of some of this research. That is my greatest concern, that is my greatest fear. And given the age that I am, I hope we'll recover from this before I pass away. And I'm kind of depressed about all of this.

Rosenblith: I'm sure many of us share that feeling.

Menyuk: Yes.

Rosenblith: I would like to adjourn now and we will get to the last question on the list after lunch.

[Tape paused]

Rosenblith: Okay, we're going to turn to the last section of the interview and it asks you to fill in things about your personal interests and your family and the ways in which they have had a bearing on your scientific interests and contributions, or on your applied contributions. But I would broaden that question a bit by saying not just a bearing on your interests but a bearing on the way in which you have conducted your career.

Menyuk: I think the greatest influence on my career has been my husband and my children. My husband has been a great support throughout the years. First for my returning to university to get two advanced degrees, one a master's degree, the other one a doctorate. Having three children has obviously influenced my life enormously. In terms of my scientific interests and contributions, it is the case that I think my friends, the Rosenbliths, have had an enormous influence on my life, my research life, and how to pursue my careers. I mean the whole issue of my becoming a teacher investigator I think blossomed during my friendship, my long friendship with Walter and Judy Rosenblith. And it's also the case that my applied contributions were very, very much effected by my children, their education. I've always been very interested in their education and visited their classrooms throughout their early educational careers. Now I have six grandchildren, and it is the case that a number of them have some problems. I'm not quite sure what they are. So in essence, let me say that some of these children have supported my previous interests and made me intrigued about other things. I have three grandchildren who have been diagnosed in various ways as learning disabled. And therefore I have read even more about the whole area of learning disabilities than I had previously read, or let me say I pursued my interests in learning disabilities because of the nature of some of the problems of my grandchildren.

Rosenblith: Earlier on, were your children a handicap to you pursuing-- You said your husband was a help, were your children a handicap?

Menyuk: No. I don't think they were a handicap. I didn't let them be a handicap. Maybe I was very selfish. There was always time for me to do my thing. But, it is the case that I did not accept full time employment until my youngest child was 10. So I was a research associate at MIT for many, many years and in those two groups. So I would be available for doctor's appointment and dental appointments and so on and so forth. And I consulted at Children's Hospital in the communication disorders department, but those were things that I could blend in with care giving. And when that youngest child was 10, I became full time, both in terms of MIT and Children's Hospital and of course I became a professor at Boston University, which was full time employment. But to that extent my children have affected my career path, and I can't say in a negative way, it was positive across the board, even though they had their problems, like all children. It was fun being a mommy.

Rosenblith: Well, I guess that concludes our interview and it certainly would seem that you have a very productive and relatively long career in these fields and have followed, and some case led, developments in them. Thank you very much.

Menyuk: I want to add just a postscript. I want to say that I'm still working on two books. One of the books has to do with advances and minute development research over the past century, and if I ever get it done, will be published by Erlbaum. And the second book is on language development and education, and I'm really having fun with that

book. I'm writing it with a colleague in bilingualism and second language acquisition. And that's gonna be published by Palgrave MacMillan, I'm giving myself a plug. That's a British-American publishing company--

[Both speaking at once]

Rosenblith: Very good. Thank you so much.

Menyuk: You're very welcome. And let me thank my interviewer. Thank you interviewer.

Rosenblith: I'm thanked.

Menyuk: The first thing that I wanted to add was that, when I came to Boston with Norman, I could not teach in the Boston Public Schools because they did not allowed married women to teach in the Boston Schools at that time. Yes, it was that long ago that this was going on. The other thing I wanted to add is that a very important part of my life was my interaction with Portuguese colleagues. In about 1985, Boston University got a World Bank grant with the Ministry of Education to work with students who were foreign language teachers, or high school teachers, to work on their master's degrees so that they could teach in schools of education in Portugal. And I have some 17 of them and they were in the field of foreign language teaching. It's a marvelous experience. The students were all very dedicated, very bright, very hard working, and I felt somehow that I was in on a very important change in Portuguese education. I worked with those students, both in Portugal to find out what their interests were, and then when they came to the United States for finishing up and doing their master's theses, which they had to do to be acknowledged in Portuguese universities as having a master's degree. I had them tell me what they were interested in and when they came they had a long reading list that I had prepared for them. This was very important because the materials available in Portugal were extremely limited. I should say that this has changed now. Many, many more sources of journals, books, etc. Also, what was a very important part of my experience was that I met two scholars, one I had known before who had come to the United States to study with me, who wanted me to come to Portugal on a Fulbright. I couldn't come on a year's Fulbright Fellowship. I was far away from sabbatical, but with the help of Walter Rosenblith, I found out about Fulbright serial grants and I got one of those serial grants. And so for three consecutive years in the later 80's and beginning 90's, I went to Portugal for a month and a half every summer and worked with these two women, Inaz Sim-Sim, from Lisboa, and Fatima Sequiera from Braga, on teaching courses in the various schools of education on language development and reading and writing and so on. It was a wonderful experience; I learned a great deal. Those two scholars came to visit me in the United States and spent a couple of months with me using library facilities and consulting with me about research projects. I established a very, very warm working relationship with the Portuguese and have been back to Portugal every year since then working with scholars at the University of Lisbon and elsewhere working with linguists and educators in Portugal. This, the last two years I have not gone, but for every subsequent year after 1990, I've been in Portugal. So this has been a very, very important part of my professional life. The other thing I clearly ought to add is that some 27 years ago I received a grant from the W.T. Grant Foundation to help support a language development conference at Boston University that is run by students with help, with faculty mentors. And throughout the years, the number of people who attend has grown. We now have attendees from all over the United States and from Europe. We cover many areas of language development, normal development, and aspects of that, syntax, lexicon, phonology. We have second language acquisition; we have sessions on language disorder of various kinds, and now very strong strand in sign language development. Every year the monies that we gather from attendees is used to support the next language development conference. Two years ago something very nice happened to me, and that is that I had some money that was collected from students who wanted to buy me a gift when I retired. And I donated that money to the language development conference, and that money was more than matched by the National Institutes of Health and National Science Foundation to support what is now called the Paula Menyuk Travel Grant, so that students who have difficulty attending the conference because of financial constraints and are presenting an extremely worthwhile paper are given support from this travel grant to attend the conference.

End of Interview