The chapter contains a useful table of investigations which can be performed. The book is so thorough that it is able to highlight deficit areas of basic knowledge. This is especially apparent after reading the excellent chapters on adolescent disorders and delinquency. Similarly the chapter on non-delinquent conduct disorder mentions that responses from parents, school, and community are not adequately studied, and it does not take much reading between the lines to realise that we do not know how best to manage conduct disorders in society. Each chapter is an excellent review bringing the reader up to date without assuming too much basic knowledge and many of the chapters contain well over 100 references.

D. S. James

The Neuropsychology of Learning Disorders: Theoretical Approaches

This book incorporates the Proceedings of a NATO Conference held in 1975 to discuss various aspects of the neuropsychology of disorders of learning. The contributors were from a very wide variety of disciplines including biochemistry, physiology, and neuropsychology. The book is divided into seven sections of which the last is a summary and each of which is self-contained, discussing such aspects as Epidemiology and Social Implications, Genetic and Maturational Variables, Cerebral Dominance, but each illuminating important aspects of the overall problem.

In a short review it is not possible to consider individual papers in detail, and it is more appropriate to comment upon common themes throughout the book. One is impressed by the wide variety of models of learning disorder proposed by the contributors, ranging from developmental lag, through hemispheric asymmetry and cognitive and perceptual deficit, to attentional and arousal deficits. Although these models and theories each deal with very different aspects of learning disorders, the topics have been well chosen to integrate together in supplying an impressive conceptual overview of what is currently a very diffuse area. After reading this book, the most convincing model for studying the neuropsychology of learning disorders would seem to be a multivariate one allowing for many different kinds of learning disorders, each of a different underlying nature and each with a different presentation. Given that kind of model, the book serves as an excellent introduction to the problems of the neuropsychology of learning disorder, both for researchers who are new to this area, and to those who are familiar with some aspects of the problems. Although the conference was held in 1975, the papers have not, by and large, dated seriously, and at £13.95, this book should find a place on the bookshelves of paediatricians, neurologists, and clinical psychologists who work with learning disordered children.

D. N. Brooks


The first half of this book is devoted to an extensive and detailed summary of Luria’s views on the neuropsychology of communication, the second to a reconsideration of three types of aphasia. Despite its title there is next to nothing in the entire work on other equally important topics in neurolinguistics such as developments in the study of the neuropsychology of language and in the study of non-aphasic disturbances. It is regrettable also that Luria is led to make a number of misleading and inaccurate statements in the name of linguistics which at times seriously distort the import of his message.

A failing in the first half to, my mind, is the way in which he maintains that the speaker–hearer of a language uses the main features of a generative grammar in the production and comprehension of speech. Nowhere does he refer to the evidence that has been accumulating over the past 15 years or so which casts doubt on the validity of such a belief. Nevertheless, there are some thought-provoking formulations of various aspects of linguistic performance and these deserve attention by anyone seriously interested in this perplexing area of enquiry.

The second half introduces new material on conduction, transcortical motor and amnestic aphasia by way of lengthy and informative case discussions of selected patients, and the reader will probably find this part of the book the more rewarding as it extends and elaborates on views Luria has expressed elsewhere.

Basil Haigh deserves warm praise for the way he has expeditiously translated the 1975 Russian text even if the occasional blemish remains to obscure Luria’s meaning. The publishers, on the other hand, should be taken to task for the fact that they have allowed a book to go on the market containing several alarming features of production: items, often important ones, which are quoted in the text simply do not appear in the bibliography, misprints are legion, some of the figures lack even reasonably adequate explanatory legends, and on a humdrum level, the search for the notes at the end of each chapter requires a good deal of patience.

There is no doubt that in his long professional working life Luria contributed much to a firmer awareness by clinicians and others of the potential nature of neurolinguistic disturbances. But it is open to discussion whether we have in this book all the ‘basic problems’ or even the solutions thereto.

M. K. C. MacMahon

Books received


