This paper was based on my PhD dissertation research carried out at the University of California at Berkeley. I had long been intrigued by language processing, including the phenomenon of an 'auditory echo' of what one had just heard or said. This example of short-term memory is most startlingly apparent when one suddenly realizes that one has said something incorrect.

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"I believe that this work is cited so often for two reasons. First, it provided a method for studying memory for language and for changes in meaning that was much less cumbersome than other methods such as scoring accuracy of recall. Also, my study was cast in a theoretical context that was consistent with the developing Zeitgeist: a view of memory (all memory, not just for language) in terms of levels of processing. According to this view, incoming stimuli are recoded, and various aspects of the material may be retained, recast, or cast aside in processing.

"In addition to its contribution to a basic understanding of language processing and memory, this study had practical implications; for example, in the weighing of the credibility of legal testimony. Clearly, if an attorney asks a witness, 'What exactly did the defendant tell you...?', the witness's answer is unlikely to be an exact quotation, although it may be an accurate paraphrase.

"In recent years I have turned my attention to how children acquire their first language. In view of the considerable demands that retaining the form of an utterance has for adults, the processing demands upon infants who are learning their first language can be seen to be extraordinary."