

## IASCL - Child Language Bulletin - Vol 24, No 1: June 2004

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## Xth Meeting of the International Association for the Study of Child Language

**July 25-29, 2005**

**Berlin**

Meeting URL: <http://www.ctw-congress.de/iascl/>

Meeting Email: [mail@ctw-congress.de](mailto:mail@ctw-congress.de)

*Crosslinguistic and Intercultural Aspects of Unimpaired and Impaired Language Acquisition:  
A Window on Universal and Language Particular Learning Mechanisms*

The Xth meeting of IASCL is hosted by the Freie Universität in Berlin, one of Germany's most important research universities, in cooperation with the Humboldt-Universität, the Universität Potsdam and the Zentrum für Allgemeine Sprachwissenschaft, Typologie und Universalienforschung Berlin.

Participants are invited to submit abstracts for oral or poster presentations or organization of a symposium until 15 NOVEMBER 2004.

**Abstracts for papers and posters** should provide basic information about the leading question, the data, the methods, and the results of the presentation. The abstracts are limited to 500 words.

**Abstracts for symposia** should briefly describe the question and specific aim of the symposium, list name, affiliation of the contributors and should include a brief abstract of each contribution. The symposium abstracts should not exceed 1200 words.

For presentation by each submitter a maximum of 1 first authored paper/poster and a maximum of 2 papers/posters in any other authorship status will be accepted.

If you intend to submit an abstract (English Language), please use the internet abstract form (<http://www.ctw-congress.de/iascl/papers.html>).

**Abstracts submitted by fax, mail or e-mail are not accepted.**

*Specific Topic Areas within the Special Emphasis Topic:*

- Methods of crosslinguistic and intercultural research in language development
- Conceptual and lexical development
- Bootstrapping mechanisms
- Models of learning
- Interaction between morphosyntactic and lexical development
- The neurocognitive basis of language learning
- Genetic aspects of language acquisition
- Language acquisition in children with genetic syndromes
- Origins of specific language disorders
- Bilingual acquisition
- Similarities and differences between the acquisition of sign language and spoken language
- The acquisition of Pidgins and Creoles

## **FROM INFO-CHILDES**

### **NEW LANGUAGE CORPORA**

#### **New addition to the Yip-Matthews corpus**

A fifth child has now been added to the Yip-Matthews Chinese University corpus of bilingual Cantonese-English children. The child's name is Charlotte. Like Llywlyn and Kathryn, all of Charlotte's files for both Cantonese and English sessions have fully linked audio that can either be downloaded and replayed from CLAN, or browsed directly on the web.

#### **New Thai corpus**

New corpus studying the development of language and communicative interactions in Thai children from 6-24

months. This corpus is the collaboration of the Centre for Research in Speech and Language Processing (CRSLP), Chulalongkorn University, Thailand led by Assistant Professor Dr. Sudaporn Luksaneeyanawin, and MARCS Auditory Laboratories, University of Western Sydney, Australia led by Professor Dr. Denis Burnham. To recognize this collaboration, we call it the CRSLP-MARCS corpus.

The data consist of video-linked transcriptions of 18 Thai adult-child dyads from the child age of 6 to 24 months, at three monthly intervals. Sessions at each age were of 20 minutes duration and for CHILDES these have been split into 10 minute files, a total of 242 files.

The data comprised the major part of a doctoral thesis by Sorabud Rungrojsuwan - *First Words: Communicative Development of 9- to 24-Month-Old Thai Children*. Data were collected by Sorabud Rungrojsuwan and Nirattisai Krajaikiat, postgraduate research assistants at CRSLP, during the period January 2000-January 2002, using a SONY Digital Handicam DCR-TRV320E video camera. The videotaped data were then computerized and converted into 242 video files (in .mpg format) using the Ulead Video Studio 4.0 SE Basic program. Using the CLAN program (CHAT mode), Sorabud transcribed the data in Thai script. Roman phonological representations of these Thai transcriptions were automatically added by the use of a Thai text-to-phonological representation program developed by the CRSLP, by Assistant Professor Dr. Sudaporn Luksaneeyanawin.

The transcripts can be found at <https://childes.talkbank.org/data/eastasian/thai/>

And the video can be browsed from the “directly browsable” link at <https://childes.talkbank.org/data/>

Even if you cannot speak Thai, the videos should be of rather universal interest for exploring ideas about early vocalizations and mother-child interactions.

### **New Japanese corpus**

New Japanese child language corpus contributed by Naomi Hamasaki of Chukyo University in Nagoya with the support of Susanne Miyata. The corpus is a case study of a child Taro with recording every three weeks from 2;2 to 3;4. The files have both Roman and Japanese orthographies. Although there are links to the sound files, the sound is not available at this time.

### **New Dutch corpus**

New corpus of transcripts from four children aged 4;9-5 learning Dutch. This corpus was contributed by Annick De Houwer. One emphasis in the study is on features unique to the Antwerp dialect. Audio is available for the corpus although the audio has not yet been linked to the transcripts.

The corpus consists of 15 recordings transcribed orthographically and phonetically. Some transcripts also contain variety codes, speaker codes, addressee codes and utterance numbers (see further below). Participants are four children between the ages of ca. 4;9 and 5;0 (two boys Dieter and Michiel, and two girls Kim and

Katrien) and their families, with some other persons on occasion present as well. The families are lower-middle to middle-middle class. All children are addressed in some form of Dutch common around the city of Antwerp and go to school fulltime (second year of nursery school). They are being raised monolingually. The interactions are mostly free and spontaneous, but include some structured interactions as well, in which the mother or father had a conversation with the 4-year-old about the past day at school, or prompted the child to describe a picture and tell a picture book story.

Researchers wishing to use these data should cite this publication:

- De Houwer, Annick (2003). Language variation and local elements in family discourse. *Language Variation and Change* 15: 327-347.

### **Two new Spanish corpora**

The first corpus is from César Aguilar and Rebeca Barriga Villanueva of the Colegio de México in Mexico City. It includes 10 frog story narrations from 6-year-olds and 10 from 12-year-olds.

The second corpus is from Donna Jackson-Maldonado of the Universidad Autónoma de Querétaro and Donna Thal of San Diego State University. This large corpus was collected at two urban sites and one village in central Mexico, as well as San Diego, California. All subjects were monolinguals. Children were sampled at 10, 12, 20, 28, and 36 months with 32, 28, 48, 57, and 30 subjects at these ages.

The project was supported by the MacArthur Foundation and CONACYT. Additional details are available in the manuals on the web.

### **Video link for the Llinàs-Grau/Orea corpus**

The Llinàs-Grau/Orea Yasmin (Castilian, Catalan, English) corpus is now available for linked video playback from <https://chilides.talkbank.org/data/>. Just click on the "Yasmin" link in the fourth column. You need a reasonably fast Internet connection for this type of playback, although it may work even with some slower connections.

Brian MacWhinney would appreciate feedback about people's ability to play back this corpus, as well as the others in the browsable columns.

### **First Basque corpus**

The first Basque corpus has been contributed by Maria-Llanos Luque Sánchez of the University of the Basque Country in Donostia/San Sebastián. The children are 2-4 years old and are being schooled in Basque nursery schools. Most children were observed 3 times across this period.

Eventually, we hope to add video for these files too. They can be found in the "Other Languages" directory under "Basque".

## CONFERENCE REPORT

### 32nd Stanford Child Language Research Forum

April 16 – 17, Stanford University

*Evan Kidd*

*Max Planck Child Study Centre*

*University of Manchester*

The 32nd meeting of the Stanford Child Language Research Forum focussed on one specific topic – ‘Constructions in Acquisition’. Until 2000 the meeting was held annually and was broader in focus. Since the 2002 meeting (Space, Time & Motion, see (<http://www-csli.stanford.edu/~clrf/archive/program2.html>)) the conference has been held biennially, with all attendees presenting research on a current topic in child language research. The conference began with a panel session on the Friday night, where invited talks were given by Adele Goldberg, Peter Culicover, and Ivan Sag (moderated by Arnold Zwicky). The following day there were 12 oral papers and 9 poster presentations. The small size of the conference ensured that all attendees had the opportunity to see all the presentations.

Since many construction-based theories argue for a general-cognitive basis to the linguistic system, constructional approaches to language have become popular among child language researchers who work from a cognitive-functional perspective. The general-cognitive bases of acquisition, and the extent to which general mechanisms can explain the acquisition of grammar, was a theme in both Adele Goldberg’s and Peter Culicover’s panel talks. Goldberg began by considering the exact definition of a construction: ‘learned pairings of form with function, including morphemes, words, idioms, partially lexically filled and fully general linguistic patterns’. Goldberg suggested that language acquisition is a form of categorisation, where children learn the conventionalised forms of the language with reference to their function, and presented data from some recent research. In one line of research adults and children were taught a novel construction. The results showed that even children (5 – 7-years) are able to generalise novel form-meaning correspondences beyond the input with very little training. This was especially evident when participants were presented with exemplar constructions with high token frequency.

Peter Culicover entertained the audience with his “Constructionalist Manifesto” – a light-hearted look at the history of syntactic theory through the eyes of Engels and Marx. He presented an overview of the work he has conducted with Ray Jackendoff and Andrzej Nowak. Culicover’s latest work, *Dynamical Grammar* (with Nowak, Oxford University Press), uses the Dynamic Systems Theory as a meta-language to categorise grammar. The work is important since it imports dynamic considerations into linguistic theory, and so can be naturally

extended to psycholinguistic problems such as parsing and acquisition, which require time-dependent solutions to the various problems these sub-disciplines pose. Culicover then presented preliminary results from a computational model he hopes will instantiate the particular architecture he proposed.

The final panel discussant, Ivan Sag, discussed the definition of 'Construction', and proposed a rule-based definition of 'grammatical construction': "A grammatical construction is a rule in a recursive system that determines the well-formedness of constructs from one or more component signs." Working within the framework of Head Driven Phrase Structure Grammar (HPSG), Sag suggested that constructions are production rules distinguishable from words and phrases. Sag illustrated his approach by discussing so-called wh-movement and filler gap dependencies, showing how non-transformational construction-oriented theories such as HPSG can account for what have traditionally been conceptualised as movement phenomena.

The Saturday session kicked off bright and early at 9am. The papers in the first session all considered very young children's emerging grammatical knowledge. Danielle Matthews, from the Max Planck Child Study Centre, presented two studies she conducted investigating the acquisition of the transitive construction, one with English-speaking children and the other with French-speaking children. She showed that the frequency with which a given verb appears in a transitive frame plays an important role in acquisition of this construction type. Barbara Kelly, from Stanford University, spoke next on the development of constructions through gesture. This was an intriguing paper, where Kelly suggested that some of children's very early word combinations can be reliably traced back to gesture use, suggesting that constructions arise long before children begin to combine words into sentences. The final paper in the first session was by Simona Montanari, from University of Southern California, who spoke about early multi-word combinations by a trilingual child. Montanari investigated the extent to which this child showed syntactic differentiation in each of her languages from her earliest word combinations. Her results showed that the child was quite adept at reproducing the target word orders of each of her target languages, even in instances of code switching.

The second session concentrated on the acquisition of complex sentences and non-sentential utterances. Hiromi Ozeki and Yasuhiro Shirai, from University of Tokyo and Cornell University respectively, presented research in the acquisition of relative clauses in Japanese. Their data suggested that acquisition of relatives in Japanese is strongly affected by typological features of the language. Unlike English-speaking children, Japanese children acquire relatives with apparent ease, which Ozeki and Shirai suggest is due to the continuous nature of relative clauses and adjectival modifiers in Japanese. Evan Kidd, from the Max Planck Child Study Centre, presented a paper on children's acquisition of complement clauses. Kidd presented children with grammatical and ungrammatical complement clause constructions using the sentence repetition technique. He showed that when correcting ungrammatical sentences children use high frequency complement taking verbs more often than low frequency verbs, often even if the verb choice changes the intended message of the original test sentence. The final paper in this session was on the acquisition of non-sentential utterances, by

Jonathan Ginzburg and Dimitra Kolliakou, from King's College and the University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne. These are sentences that are intuitively complete, but lack an overtly realised verbal constituent. A comparison of naturalistic data from Greek and English children showed similarities in children's patterns of ellipsis, which they argued were explained best by a constraint-based grammar that integrates syntactic, semantic, and contextual information.

After this session the conference broke for a well-deserved lunch break. Posters were available for perusal throughout each break. Space limitations prevent me from giving a thorough account of all the posters, but needless to say the standard of the posters was easily as high as the papers (see full list at: <http://www-linguistics.stanford.edu/~clrf/program.html>). The topics of the posters included computational approaches to acquisition (Chang, Dominey), crosslinguistic comparisons of how children encode events (Bowerman et al.), and various other papers investigating a diverse set of languages, from Tzeltal (Brown) to Thai (Ratitamkul et al.), and, of course, English (Foursha et al., Galasso).

The afternoon session began with Yarden Kedar, from Cornell University, presenting research investigating 24-month-old children's sensitivity to the syntactic role of determiners in English. Kedar presented results from the preferential looking study, showing children are more successful at looking at picture referents when they heard a grammatical sentence (e.g., *Can you see the ball*) than when they heard an ungrammatical sentence (e.g., *\*Can you see and ball*). Kedar and his co-authors, Marienella Casasola and Barbara Lust, interpreted their results to be consistent with the Full Competence hypothesis, which suggests children operate with the full complement of syntactic categories from birth. The next presenter, Robert Maslen, from the Max Planck Child Study Centre, presented data on the acquisition of the transitive construction. Maslen's data was from one child, sampled densely over a period of approximately a year. He investigated the efficacy of two approaches to the development of the transitive, Ninio's pathbreaking verb hypothesis and Slobin's suggestion that children are attuned to verbs that have 'high transitivity'. He concluded that neither could fully explain the data, but that the child's production of transitives in their various guises appeared to follow the discourse constraints of preferred argument structure. The final speaker for this session, Nitya Sethuraman, from Indiana University, also presented work on the acquisition of the transitive. In collaboration with Judith Goodman, Sethuraman used naturalistic data to test the prediction that children generalise argument structure patterns from initial item-based knowledge. She showed that although children hear a variety of verbs in the transitive construction, parents simplify their language to children, which is mirrored in children's utterances.

The final session of the conference began with Jidong Chen's (Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics) paper on the acquisition of verb compounding in Mandarin-speaking children. Chen presented both comprehension and production data, which suggested that although children have knowledge of verb compounding early, they do not learn the semantic restrictions the language imposes until around 6-years. Chen interpreted this to suggest that although children find construction patterns early, full mastery is a much longer process. In what

was one of the more entertaining presentations of the day, Jean-Phillipe Marcotte (Stanford University) gave a theoretical paper on construction paradigms and argument alternation errors. Marcotte suggested that traditional claims of innateness to compensate for the apparent lack of negative evidence in the input are not required under a constructionist conceptualisation of acquisition. He then gave an account of how this new approach can predict and explain the argument alternation errors reported in the literature. The final paper of the day was given by Nitya Sethuraman, again with Judith Goodman. This paper focused on the role of light verbs in the acquisition of verb argument structure and their role in generalising verbs to new syntactic environments. The results showed that children extended light verbs to other syntactic environments more often than other high frequency verbs, suggesting that frequency alone does not contribute to children's ability to extend verbs. Sethuraman argued that the semantic generality of light verbs allow them to be used frequently in many syntactic contexts, making them easily extendable by children.

The conference came to end at 5:30pm, which for this conference attendee meant a well-earned local brew. The conference was a pleasure to attend, not only due to the high quality of the presentations, but also because of the hard work put in by the CLRF-2004 organising committee: Eve V. Clark, Max Abelev, Bruno Estingarribia, Florian Jaeger, Barbara Kelly, Jean-Phillipe Marcotte, Tanya Nikitina, Rebecca Starr, Kirsten Thorpe, and Rebecca Williamson (see picture). Eve Clark would also like to thank the support of the staff in the Linguistics Department at Stanford University, Natalie Mendoza, Allen Scitutto, and Socorro Relova, and Michele King and Laura Burns-Wood from CSLI. One left the conference with the feeling that much important information had been disseminated, and that this particular approach to language acquisition is all the better for it.

## BOOK NOTICES

Badry, Fatima (2004).

*Acquiring the Arabic lexicon: Evidence of productive strategies and pedagogical implications.*

Bethesda, MD: Academica Press.

Marcus, Gary (2003).

*The birth of the mind: How a tiny number of genes creates the complexity of human thought.*

New York: Basic Books.

Marinis, Theodoros (2003).

*The acquisition of the DP in Modern Greek.*

Amsterdam: John Benjamins.



## **FORTHCOMING CONFERENCES**

### **Sixth Annual International Conference of The Japanese Society for Language Sciences**

Aichi Shukutoku University, Nagoya, Japan

17-18/07/04

<http://cow.lang.nagoyau.ac.jp/jsls/2004/cfpe.htm>

### **International Conference on Language, Culture and Mind: Integrating perspectives and methodologies in the study of language**

University of Portsmouth, England

18-20/07/04

[www.unifr.ch/gefi/GP2/Portsmouth](http://www.unifr.ch/gefi/GP2/Portsmouth)

### **Child Language Seminar**

University of the West of England

12-14/07/04

<http://www.uwe.ac.uk/hlss/faculty/news/cls/clsindex.shtml>

### **Tenth National/International Professional Conference on Williams Syndrome**

Hosted by the Williams Syndrome Association

25-26/07/04

Email: [doyle@lcn.salk.edu](mailto:doyle@lcn.salk.edu)

### **COLING-2004**

#### **Psychocomputational Models of Human Language Acquisition**

Geneva, Switzerland

28/08/04

<http://www.colag.cs.hunter.cuny.edu/psychocomp/>

### **The Romance Turn: Workshop on the acquisition of Romance languages**

University of Madrid

16-18/09/04

<http://www.uned.es/congreso-romance-turn/>

### **The Science of Aphasia**

University of Potsdam, Germany

16-21/09/04

<http://www.soa5.de>

#### **CSDL-2004**

##### **7th Conference on Conceptual Structure, Discourse, and Language**

University of Alberta Edmonton, Canada

8-10/10/04

<http://www.ualberta.ca/csdl2004/>

##### **The 29th Boston University Conference on Language Development**

Boston University

5-7/11/04

<http://www.bu.edu/linguistics/APPLIED/BUCLD>

##### **Generative Approaches to Language Acquisition-North America**

The University of Hawai'i at Manoa's

17- 20/12/04

[www.ling.hawaii.edu/galana/](http://www.ling.hawaii.edu/galana/)

##### **AILA 2005 World Congress**

##### **14th World Congress of Applied Linguistics**

University of Madison, Wisconsin, USA

24-29/07/05

<http://www.aila2005.org>

#### **RECENT PHD THESES**

Nicholas G. Riches (2004).

*Verb and verb schema learning in children with Specific Language Impairment.*

University of Manchester.

Email: [nicholas.riches@stud.man.ac.uk](mailto:nicholas.riches@stud.man.ac.uk)

#### **IASCL DONATION DRIVE**

The IASCL is a worldwide organisation, which means that it aims to serve child language researchers in all countries of the world. Child language research is important everywhere, both from a theoretical perspective (cf. for instance the significance of cross-linguistic evidence) and from a more applied point of view (cf. for instance the need for good description to allow for the assessment of language learning problems).

Unfortunately financial considerations are often a hindrance to the development of scientific disciplines in

countries with severe economic problems. The IASCL has always been supportive of would-be IASCL members working in such countries by waiving membership fees for them.

IASCL funds are limited, though. In the past, donations from regular IASCL members have been very helpful in supporting colleagues from economically disadvantaged countries. In order to continue offering that support, your donations are very welcome indeed. Each donation, whatever the amount, will be acknowledged by a receipt signed by the IASCL Treasurer (useful perhaps for tax purposes). You may send donations in either pounds sterling or American dollars.

(1) Cheques in pounds sterling payable to IASCL can be sent to:

*Dr Anna Theakston*  
*IASCL Treasurer*  
*University of Manchester*  
*Department of Psychology*  
*Oxford Road*  
*Manchester M13 9PL*  
*UK*

Cash payments in pounds sterling can also be made by prior arrangement with Dr Theakston ([theaksto@fs1.fse.man.ac.uk](mailto:theaksto@fs1.fse.man.ac.uk)) at the above address.

(2) For American dollar amounts, please send your donations to:

*Prof. Judith Becker Bryant*  
*IASCL Assistant Treasurer*  
*Department of Psychology, PCD 4118G*  
*University of South Florida*  
*Tampa, FL 33620-7200*  
*U.S.A.*

The IASCL as a whole will be sure to benefit from the more diversified nature of its membership as a result of your donations. Many thanks in advance!

Anna Theakston, IASCL Treasurer  
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**FROM THE EDITOR**

The **Child Language Bulletin** is the newsletter of the International Association for the Study of Child Language. It is distributed free to all members of IASCL and it is published twice a year.

The Bulletin is available on the IASCL Web page <http://iascl-www.uia.ac.be> and all members of the association will receive an e- email message each time a new issue of the Bulletin is published. A hard copy of the Bulletin will only be sent to those members who ask for it by sending a message to the editor.

I encourage members to submit news and information that might be relevant to our research community. I would especially like to hear from doctoral students on new theses being completed. They are often a wonderful source of new data and new ideas that are not always easily accessible before publication.

Please do send any items to the address below. I am looking forward to your submissions!

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