

IN THIS ISSUE

- [BUCLD report](#)
- [Update on IASCL 2008 in Edinburgh](#)
- [Forthcoming conferences and workshops](#)
- [Conference calls](#)
- [Book announcements](#)
- [New Corpora](#)
- [From the editor](#) - Book award for the best contribution to the next IASCL bulletin
- [IASCL donation drive](#)
- [Membership](#)

CONFERENCE REPORT

The 31st Boston University Conference on Language Development, Boston University, November 3-5, 2006

Francesca Filiaci

The University of Edinburgh

The thirty-first annual Boston University Conference on Language Development took place this year between the 3rd and the 5th of November. Scholars from all over the world gathered at Boston University to discuss a wide range of topics from first language (L1) and second language (L2) acquisition from a number of different theoretical perspectives; the topics covered data from populations of both child and adult learners and typical and atypical language development.

A total of 87 twenty-minute papers and 66 posters were presented in three parallel sessions; the presentations were selected from among 526 submissions, yielding an acceptance rate of 29%; this is the lowest acceptance rate in history in spite of additional twenty poster presentations in comparison to previous years. In addition to the oral and poster presentations, plenary and keynote addresses were delivered by invited speakers on Friday and Saturday evenings. The keynote address by Roberta Michnick Golinkoff (*University of Delaware*) and Kathy Hirsh-Pasek (*Temple University*) was entitled '*The Emergentist Coalition Model of infant word learning*' and focused on the acquisition of L1 lexicon by young children and their use of multiple input sources during the different stages of development. The plenary talk delivered by Jürgen Meisel (*University of Hamburg and University of Calgary*), entitled '*Multiple first language acquisition: A case for autonomous syntactic development in the simultaneous acquisition of more than one language*' argued about the possible problems and limitations that cross-linguistic interaction could pose on multiple first language acquisition.

In addition, there was what has now become a tradition at the conference *A Saturday Lunchtime Symposium* that was in its year centred on the topic of ‘*Future directions in search of genes that influence language: Phenotypes, molecules, brains and growth*’.

Among the presenters of both papers and posters there were many post-graduate students; this year as many as 25 students received grants towards their travel expenses thanks to *the Paula Menyuk Travel Award*, partly funded by the NSF and the NIH. This year, *the Yele v’Yalda Research Institute* also offered a prize to the best student presentation relevant to the Institute’s research interests. The prize was awarded by the Institute co-director, Isabelle Barrière, to Lauren Swensen (*University of Connecticut*) who presented a co-authored paper with Letitia Naigles and Deborah Fein (both of *University of Connecticut*), entitled ‘*Maternal input affects the language of children with autism*’. The association Yele v’Yalda, based in New York, is a not-for-profit social service that offers a range of educational programs and social services for the family. The prize, aimed at promoting the communication between the world of academic research and that of education and health professionals, consists of a return ticket to New York, a night in a hotel and the opportunity to visit YvY and present the work to the parents and professionals involved with the association’s work.

The conference was preceded by the *Annual Symposium of the Society for Language Development*. The symposium consisted of talks on the topic of verb learning, and the four invited speakers included Lila Gleitman (*University of Pennsylvania*), Cynthia Fisher, (*University of Illinois*), Adele Goldberg (*Princeton University*) and Dedre Gentner (*Northwestern University*). The presentations discussed verb learning from different angles, using different experimental paradigms and analysing data from diverse theoretical perspectives.

The Friday evening keynote address by Roberta Michnick Golinkoff and Kathy Hirsh-Pasek was entitled ‘*Language development: The view from the radical middle*’. In this talk, the authors summarized their ground-breaking work in the field of first language acquisition with the introduction of the preferential looking paradigm. The preferential looking paradigm, they explained, has allowed researchers to shift focus of research from production to comprehension and individual sources of input to more complex interactions between a number of different factors. These findings have led to the Emergentist Coalition Model, a model that assumes that the child uses *multiple* cues to learn language. However, the important assumption of the model is that the way in which the available information is used in fact varies along the course of development. From a methodological point of view, the findings from studies using the preferential looking paradigm reveal that initially infants learn to associate new words to new objects relying on perceptual salience and temporal contiguity; towards 24 months children then start to rely more heavily on social cues (e.g., eye movement and social interaction) and around 34 months they become eventually able to use syntactic and morphological cues in their language acquisition. The authors also pointed out the relevance of their model for researchers looking at how the impairment of different cognitive abilities (e.g., perception or the ability to understand social

intention) might lead to delays in the development of language skills during the different stages outlined in the model.

On Saturday afternoon Jürgen Meisel gave his plenary talk on *'Multiple first language acquisition: A case for autonomous syntactic development'*. The talk dealt with early bilingual first language acquisition (2L1), arguing that children acquiring two languages simultaneously develop, early on, two separate and independent grammars and that any interaction between the two will affect only certain areas of language (namely interface areas, that is where core syntactic knowledge has to be coordinated with semantic knowledge or discourse/pragmatic information) and will be limited to the level of processing and production. This interaction, he speculated, will not affect the level of representation of grammatical knowledge. The author supported his claim presenting longitudinal data from a Spanish-Basque bilingual child showing independent development of Wh-constructions with finite verbs, i.e., the child followed the same pattern of development of these structures in each language as is observed in monolingual children. He pointed out that if the cross-linguistic influence took place at the level of representation rather than processing it would be more pervasive and systematic; the empirical evidence currently provided by 2L1 studies is not strong enough to support the claim that grammatical knowledge can be altered, unless the child is exposed to qualitatively different input. The author also stressed the importance of this claim for its pedagogical implications.

Some of the key points singled out by Meisel, like the need for more research on the interface areas and processing mechanisms as problematic areas in language acquisition but also in language loss, were picked up by other presenters. For example, R. Silva and H. Clahsen (*University of Essex*) presented a study on priming effects of regular past tense forms and de-adjectival nouns in English in L2 acquisition. They showed that the full effects obtained with L1 learners both with inflection and with derivation are only partial or inexistent with L2 learners, suggesting that they have a different representation and different processing mechanisms for these forms.

Saturday Lunchtime Symposium, which explored the genetic foundations of language, featured talks by Mabel Rice (*University of Kansas*), Helen Tager-Flusberg (*Boston University*), and Simon Fisher (*Oxford University*). Gary Marcus (*New York University*) was in the role of a discussant. The first two presentations focused on how the study of hereditary disorders (i.e., Specific Language Impairment (SLI) and Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD)) and the way in which these disorders tend to overlap can help shed light on the relation between genes and the neurological mechanisms involved in the development of language. Rice presented data on the acquisition of morpho-syntax by children with SLI. These children show a delay in the onset of acquisition and greater variability compared to normally developing children, although acquisition follows the same pattern as in normally developing children when it starts. Tager-Flusberg discussed how ASD tend to overlap with SLI (i.e., about three quarters of the ASD children in her study also displayed impaired language abilities and tended to belong to families where other members were affected by SLI) and then focussed on the behavioural and

neurological aspects of the disorders. In his talk, Simon Fisher suggested that genetic studies open possibilities for the understanding of the neuro-physiological mechanisms at the basis of the language ability in our species. He explained how his ongoing research aims at understanding how mutations in FOXP2, recently linked to SLI, affect the development of the molecular mechanisms that, in humans, have an impact on speech. This is being done either by studying how the linguistic abilities of individuals and families carrying the mutant gene are affected (as it was illustrated by the first two talks), or by investigating the neuro-physiological changes occurring in non-linguistic species (e.g., rats) when the gene is manipulated.

The relevance of the themes discussed at the symposium for current research was confirmed by the presence of several presentations investigating atypical language development. Some talks explored to what extent language is impaired in the individuals affected, for example, in their presentation A. Hestvik, R. Schwartz and L. Tornyoova (*CUNY Graduate Center*) suggest that SLI is related to on-line processing deficits rather than a grammatical knowledge deficit, and H. van der Lely (*DLDC Centre, UCL*) and E. Fonteneau (*Goldsmiths College, University of London*) found that ERP measurements of Grammatical-SLI subjects show a selective impairment of the neural circuitry to grammatical processing. Other talks dealt with the developmental delays and patterns of acquisition in ASD children, e.g., L. Swensen, L. Naigles and D. Fein (*University of Connecticut*) found that ASD children's inability to use maternal input provokes a delay in the onset of acquisition, but, supporting the findings of Rice, when the process of acquisition eventually starts, it is qualitatively similar to that of typically developing children, in that it follows the same patterns and the same developmental sequences.

Even within the context of typical language development, attention was drawn to the fact that much individual differences can be observed in infants' processing abilities. Two longitudinal studies — L. Singh and S. Nestor (*Boston University*) and A. Fernald, V. Marchman, N. Hurtado and R. Zangl (*Stanford University*) — addressed this issue by examining whether such variability is systematic at the earliest stages of language acquisition and consequential to later development. Both studies arrived at the conclusion that variability in infants' performance in speech processing task (e.g., word segmentation) is indeed internally reliable in that the individual differences tend to be maintained throughout the development. More importantly, the variability predicts later differences in other areas of development such as lexicon size and grammatical skills

The conference proceedings, with the full text of the papers, will be published by Cascadilla Press in Spring 2007. Written versions of the poster presentations will be published in the online supplement of the conference proceedings. Information about BUCLD is available through the conference website at <http://www.bu.edu/linguistics/APPLIED/BUCLD>.

Update on the IASCL conference in Edinburgh 2008

Mits Ota

Edinburgh University

Update on speakers, presentation format, student travel award, and important dates

The organizers of the IASCL conference in Edinburgh 2008 – Antonella Sorace, Mits Ota and Barbora Skarabela – met with the President of the association – Gina Conti-Ramsden – on December 13th to discuss the conference progress.

As previously announced, the 2008 IASCL conference entitled '*Language, cognition, and experience in child language development*' will take place from Monday, July 28th to Friday, August 1st in the central area of the University of Edinburgh. The conference organizers have secured four plenary speakers: Prof. Mark Hauser of Harvard University, Prof. Rachel Mayberry of the University of California, San Diego, Prof. Andrew Meltzoff of the University of Washington and Prof. Núria Sebastián-Gallés of the University of Barcelona. All plenary talks will be delivered at a newly renovated McEwen Hall.

In response to the feedback provided by the attendees of the 2005 IASCL conference in Berlin, the 2008 conference organizers and the President have agreed to adjust the format of presentations and the number of participants. The 2008 conference will include two types of presentations: symposia and posters. Symposia will run in four parallel sessions. Posters will be presented at independent time slots that do not interfere with symposia. This arrangement aims to highlight the **equal status of poster presentations and symposia presentations.**

The conference organizers are also happy to announce that the IASCL committee have agreed to establish a special scholarship fund to provide financial support for postgraduate students to attend the 2008 Conference. Eligible students will be Master's and doctoral students who will be presenting their work at the Conference. The scholarship will provide selected students with a waiver of registration fees and some contribution to their travel expenses. Details of how to apply for the scholarship will be announced in the Call for Papers. The information will also be included on the conference website. Please let your students know of this new exciting opportunity to join the Conference in 2008.

Mark your calendars! It has also been agreed that the IASCL Business Meeting in 2008 will take place on Thursday, July 31st during lunchtime from 1.15-2.15 pm.

All the details on the 2008 conference will be provided in the call for papers to be distributed to all members in February 2007. In addition, the information will be available at the conference website which is currently under construction is anticipated to be available in February. The website will also include information about the city of Edinburgh as well as accommodation facilities and details of the venue.

Important dates for IASCL 2008:

- First call for submissions: February 2007
- Deadline for submissions: October 15th, 2007
- Notification of acceptance: February 2008
- Deadline for early registration: March 2008
- IASCL 2008 Conference in Edinburgh: Monday, July 28th to Friday, August 1st, 2008
- IASCL Business Meeting: Thursday, July 31st, 2008
- IASCL 2011 Conference in Montreal: Monday, July 18th to Sunday, July 24th, 2011

NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

UPCOMING CONFERENCES AND WORKSHOPS

(Organized by date)

Title: The eighth Tokyo Conference on Psycholinguistics (TCP2007)

When: 16 – 17 March 2007

Where: Keio University, Mita, Tokyo

Contact: Yukio Otsu (tcp2007@otsu.icl.keio.ac.jp)

Details: <http://www.otsu.icl.keio.ac.jp/tcp/>

Title: The Emergence of Language in the Child and in the Species (organized by the International Linguistic Association)

When: 30 March – 1 April 2007

Where: Hunter College, New York, New York, USA

Contact: Kathleen McClure (cathymcclure@yahoo.com)

Details: <http://www.ilaword.org>

Title: Workshop on Speech Prosody in Atypical Populations

When: 2 April 2007

Where: University of Reading, United Kingdom

Contact: Vesna Stojanovik (v.stojanovik@reading.ac.uk)

Details: http://www.rdg.ac.uk/epu/cls_event.htm

Title: AFASIC 4th International Symposium

When: 2 – 5 April 2007

Where: University of Warwick, United Kingdom

Contact: Carol Lingwood (carol@lingwoods.demon.co.uk)

Details: <http://www.afasic.org.uk/sympsite.index.htm>

Title: Acquisition Workshop at GLOW XXX

Theme: Optionality in the Input: Children's Acquisition of Variable Word Order

When: 11 April 2007

Where: CASTL, University of Tromsø, Norway

Details: <http://www.hum.uit.no/glow/>

Title: Linguistic Ethnographies of Children and Youth (part of Linguistic Ethnography Seminar)

When: 14 April 2007

Where: Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, Madrid, Spain

Contact: David Poveda (david.poveda@uam.es)

Title: UWM Linguistics Symposium on Formulaic language

When: 18 – 21 April 2007

Where: The University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, USA

Contact: Michael Noonan (noonan@uwm.edu)

Details: <http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/English/conferences/fsl/index.html>

Title: Neurocognition of Developmental Language Disorders: A CBBC Workshop

When: 4 May 2007

Where: Georgetown University, Washington DC, USA

Contact: Michael Ullman

Details: <http://cbbc.georgetown.edu/workshops/2007DLD.html>

Title: The Lexical Bases of Grammar: Issues on the Lexis-Grammar Interface (Part of the 2nd International Conference of the Association Française de Linguistique Cognitive (AFLiCo))

When: 10 – 12 May 2007

Where: University of Lille 3, Lille, France

Contact: Susanna Bartsch (bartsch@zas.gwz-berlin.de)

CALLS FOR PAPERS

(Organized by submission deadline)

Title: The 9th Annual International Conference of the Japanese Society for Language Sciences (JSLS 2007)

Submission deadline: 26 January 2007

When: 7 – 8 July 2007

Where: Miyagi Gakuin Women's University, Sendai, Japan

Contact: Kei Nakamura (kei@aya.yale.edu)

Details: <http://ichat.cyber.sccs.chukyo-u.ac.jp/JSLS/index.html>

Title: The 17th Annual Conference of the European Second Language Association (EUROSLA 2007)

Theme: Interfaces in Second Language Acquisition Research

Submission deadline: 15 February 2007

When: 11 – 14 September 2007

Where: Newcastle University, UK

Details: <http://www.ncl.ac.uk/niassh/eurosla17>

Title: Workshop on First Language Acquisition hosted by the Swiss Linguistics Society (SSG/SSL) 2007

Submission deadline: 28 February 2007

When: 3 – 7 September 2007

Where: Basel, Switzerland

For registration contact: sekretariat-haecki-germa@unibas.ch

Title: The 30th Child Language Seminar 2007 (CLS 2007)

Submission deadline: 1 March 2007

When: 18 – 20 July 2007

Where: University of Reading, United Kingdom

Contact: Theo Marinis (t.marinis@reading.ac.uk)

Details: <http://www.reading.ac.uk/cls/cls2007.html>

Title: Generative Approaches to Language Acquisition (GALA) 2007

Submission deadline: 15 March 2007

When: 6 – 8 September 2007

Where: Barcelona, Spain

Details: <http://www.gala2007.uab.es/>

Title: The Third Conference on 'Constructivism and Education' (organized by Geneva's Educational Research Unit)

Submission deadline: 4 April 2007

When: 10– 12 September 2007

Where: Geneva, Switzerland

Contact: Jean-Jacques Ducret (jean-jacques.ducret@etat.ge.ch)

Details: <http://www.geneve.ch/sred/colloc>

Special announcement: Thanks to the generosity of Oxford University Press, I am happy to offer a book prize for the best contribution to the **next** IASCL issue to be published in May 2007. I encourage particularly students in the field to contact me with their contributions; these can range from book reviews to opinions on different issues relevant to child language or conference and workshop reports. The best contribution will be awarded a

copy of Anat Ninio's book '*Language and the learning curve – A new theory of syntactic development*' (see below for details).

BOOK ANNOUNCEMENTS

Ninio, A. (2006). **Language and the Learning Curve – A new theory of syntactic development.**

Oxford University Press.

ISBN-10: 0-19-929982-X

ISBN-13: 978-0-19-929982-9

Language development remains one of the most hotly debated topics in the cognitive sciences. In recent years we have seen contributions to the debate from researchers in psychology, linguistics, artificial intelligence, and philosophy, though there have been surprisingly few interdisciplinary attempts at unifying the various theories. In '*Language and the Learning Curve*', a radical new view of language development is offered. Drawing on formal linguistic theory (the Minimalist Program, Dependency Grammars), cognitive psychology (skill learning) computational linguistics (Zipf curves), and Complexity Theory (networks), it takes the view that syntactic development is a simple process and that syntax can be learned just like any other cognitive or motor skill.

The book is unique in combining mainstream generative or Chomskian linguistics with learning theory, providing an original interdisciplinary approach to understanding syntactic development. It provides an unusually detailed theoretical background from linguistics, cognitive psychology, and complexity theory, thus familiarizing the reader with the key theories. In every topic covered, explicit reference is made to relevant work within computational linguistics, thus giving a rich account of the field of language development.

Anat Ninio is Joseph and Belle Braun Professor of Psychology at the Department of Psychology, The Hebrew University, Jerusalem.

Hoff, E. and Shatz, M. (2007). **The Blackwell Handbook of Language Development. Blackwell Publishing.**

ISBN: 9781405132534

ISBN10: 1405132531

The Blackwell Handbook of Language Development provides a comprehensive treatment of the major topics and current concerns in the field. Including new academic terrain such as brain development, computational skills, bilingualism, education, and cross-linguistic comparisons, this volume explores the progress of twenty-first-century research in language development while considering its precursors and looking towards promising research topics for the future. This balanced and accessible volume collects together the work of a generation of researchers who are enlarging the field to consider internal and external bases for language development and to address a wide range of language development outcomes.

Presenting recent research in the traditional topics of language development from infancy through early childhood, this book also expands upon those topics to include work on older children, exploring how linguistic knowledge develops with experiences such as learning a second language and acquiring writing skills. The expansive coverage of foundational and emerging topics makes this book an excellent resource for researchers, instructors, and graduate students in developmental psychology, linguistics, and education.

Erika Hoff is Professor of Psychology at Florida Atlantic University. She is author of *Language Development* (2005).

Marilyn Shatz is Professor of Psychology and Linguistics at the University of Michigan. She is author of *A Toddler's Life* (1994).

NEW CORPORA

'Conti4': A new corpus of adolescents with Specific Language Impairment (SLI) from Gina Conti-Ramsden and Ludovica Serratrice of the University of Manchester. The study includes 19 adolescents aged 13-15 and 99 typical controls. The participants were involved in both a narrative (frog story) and a spontaneous conversation. The new corpus is called Conti4, since it is the fourth corpus contributed by Gina Conti-Ramsden and her co-workers!

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 at <http://iascl.talkbank.org> and all members of the association will receive an e-mail 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. I would like to thank to all of those who email me this time with notifications of their recent publications.

Keep in mind that for the next issue your contribution might be awarded Anat Ninio's '*Language and the learning curve – A new theory of syntactic development*', courtesy of Oxford University Press!

Please do send any items that are of interest to the IASCL community to the address below – electronic mail is the easiest and fastest way to get in touch.

Barbora Skarabela
Linguistics and English Language
School of Philosophy, Psychology & Language Sciences
University of Edinburgh
Adam Ferguson Building, 40 George Square
Edinburgh EH8 9LL
Scotland, UK

barbora@ling.ed.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 arrangements with Dr Theakston (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

theaksto@fs1.fse.man.ac.uk

MEMBERSHIP

Memberships normally EXPIRE at the beginning of each congress, and congress registration includes membership for the next three years. If you did not attend the Congress in Berlin in July 2005, you are invited to (re)join the IASCL for 2005-2008. In addition to the congresses, the IASCL produces the Child Language Bulletin twice a year, with directory information, book notices, interviews, a conference calendar, and other useful information. The Bulletin is included in the membership fee. Members will also receive a free copy of TiLAR5 and TiLAR6 as part of their membership. Members are also eligible for a substantial discount for the first four volumes of TiLAR, and for a reduced subscription fee to the following journals: Journal of Child Language, First Language, and the International Journal of Bilingualism.

Membership (US\$75 or £50 for regular members; US\$40 or £27 for students) is for three years, and expires on the first day of the next triennial Congress, to be held in the summer of 2008 in Edinburgh. If you wish to (re)join, please send in the following information together with your payment (on how to pay, see below):

Name:

Institutional affiliation (if any):

Complete mailing address, including institution (if applicable):

Phone/Fax:

Email/web page:

Major research interests (one or two lines max):

I would like to donate: Yes / No

Members in countries with nonconvertible currencies or currency transfer restrictions or other economic difficulties should request a waiver of the membership fee. Please write to the Treasurer (see below).

Donations for the support of colleagues and program in countries with currency and/or economic difficulties are welcomed. You may pay either in US dollars, or in pounds sterling.

- **Payment in dollars:**

Please send your check payable to Judith Becker Bryant for US\$75 (regular members) US\$40 (student members*) and your information slip to:

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

- **Payment pounds sterling:**

Membership fees are £50 (regular members) or £27 (student members*). Please contact [Anna Theakston](#) for payment information:

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

We look forward to hearing from you!