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An interview with the new President, Elena Lieven

by Barbora Skarabela



Elena Lieven

Elena Lieven was elected the new President of the Association. Elena is a Senior Research Scientist in the Department of Developmental and Comparative Psychology at the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology in Leipzig and she holds an Honorary Professorship at Leipzig University. She is also Professor of Psychology at the University of Manchester where she is Director of the Max Planck Child Study Centre in the School of Psychological Sciences. She is one of the leading researchers on child language development, with primary interest in the role of input in language development, particularly the construction of grammar, and individual differences. She is the author and co-author of many journal articles and has co-edited several books.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Elena on her new post and to ask her few questions about her vision and plans for the Association, the next Congress, and her experience living and working in two different places.

Barbora Skarabela: *The Association has experienced several significant changes in the last three years, one of which is its charitable status. What are the main advantages of this move for the Association?*

Elena Lieven: Over the last few years the Association has gone through the process of becoming a limited company and gaining charitable status as an educational organisation. The main advantage is that this puts the planning of congresses on a proper financial basis, rather than individual officers and local organizers having to provide personal guarantees during the planning stages and being responsible if there are losses. These losses can now be insured against provided we conduct ourselves in a financially responsible way, and this is achieved by having a Board of the Company with responsibility for financial oversight. In the longer term it should mean that we can use any profits that we make on congresses and sales to make more bursaries available as well, perhaps, to think creatively about other possible innovations: the funding of small theme-based workshops, prizes for posters at congresses and/or for the best published paper by young researchers are all ideas we could explore.

Barbora Skarabela: *The Association has grown significantly since its creation in 1970. Do you anticipate that the goals of the Association may change in near future?*

Elena Lieven: I don't think the job of the Association has really changed. Our goals are to bring together researchers in the pure and applied sciences as well as practitioners whose work is relevant to children's communicative and language development and to do this on a truly international scale. As our understanding increases, so we have to create more dynamic links between pure and applied research on the one hand and between researchers who, though they are not studying communicative development, are pursuing ideas that are relevant to our concerns.

Barbora Skarabela: *The last IASCL congress in Edinburgh implemented several changes to the function and structure of the meeting, including peer-review processing of abstracts and limiting the number of presentations, rather than accepting almost all submissions as in some previous years. Furthermore, it eliminated individual paper presentations. These changes are viewed by some of the members of the Association as unnecessarily radical. The main concern is that having a strict selection process in place might prevent some members from participating in IASCL meetings. What is your view of this? How do you and Montreal organizers envision the next congress? Can you share your plans?*

I am meeting Henri Cohen, the organiser of the next IASCL congress, which will be in Montreal in 2011, and Martha Crago, our Vice President in a few days to discuss the organisation of the Congress, so I can't give much

detail now. The congress only happens every three years and obviously we want to bring together as many people from as many countries as we possibly can. I know that most people will only get even some funding if they have a paper or poster accepted. It is always a balance between the pressure to accept as many submissions as possible, the maximum size of the available venue, the maintenance of scientific standards and making sure that the congress has some innovative edge. I have heard complaints that Berlin was too inclusive and Edinburgh was too exclusive – and I think it is always going to be difficult to satisfy everyone, but each Congress is an opportunity to learn from the past and to try to get this balance right. One possible suggestion to help in the submission and reviewing of abstracts is that we provide guidelines or perhaps a pro forma for structuring them. A pro forma for abstracts could help people to write the kind of abstract that makes clear what their research is about and what they have actually done and it might also help reviewers to make fairer comparisons. Another suggestion is that papers in symposia that are rejected could be considered for posters.

Barbora Skarabela: *You have one job in the UK and another position in Germany. How do you divide your time between the two places?*

Elena Lieven: I spend roughly two-thirds of my time in the Psychology department of the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology and the other third in the Max Planck Child Study Centre in the University of Manchester (when I'm not away at conferences or giving talks!).

Barbora Skarabela: *How do these two environments compare academically?*

Elena Lieven: Max Planck Institutes are very well resourced and, with the exception of research Masters and PhD training, there is no teaching. This is in strong contrast to the difficulties encountered by colleagues working in Universities, both in Germany and in the UK, who usually have considerable amounts of undergraduate teaching and administration with often limited resources. As far as PhD training is concerned, my impression is that over the last years, this has become much more standardised in the UK and is perhaps less so in Germany. However German universities are now instituting 'Graduate Colleges' where faculty from a range of related disciplines come together to provide intensive teaching for PhD students. This is somewhere between the specific discipline-based course requirements of PhD programmes that students in some countries have to take (for instance, the USA) and the generic research masters provided in the UK. If it were available to all German graduate students, I think it would be an excellent way to go. The other difference that I see between German and UK academia is the nature of the career structure. While there are many problems in the UK, I do prefer a career structure that allows a reasonable number of good young researchers to gain tenure-track jobs and start out on a career that provides clear steps to achievement. This is much less clear in Germany where there are a smaller number of top Professorships and, in between, a range of usually non-permanent positions. This leads to a great deal of insecurity and moving around. I also think it means that many good young scientists leave Germany. Some of my colleagues would probably argue that it promotes

excellence and they may be right, but I am constitutionally opposed to trying to get performance out of people through competition and insecurity!

Barbora Skarabela: *How about your own students? How involved are you as mentor in their work?*

Elena Lieven: As far as my own PhD students are concerned, I usually have about 12 at any one time, divided between Leipzig and Manchester. When I am in either place I see them very regularly, at least once a week or fortnight. When I'm not, we keep in touch by email and phone – and I chase them if they go silent!

Barbora Skarabela: *What is your second favourite conference to attend and why?*

Elena Lieven: My second favourite conference is actually a little residential workshop that we started years ago for staff and PhD students working on child language in Manchester and Bangor, in departments of Psychology, Linguistics and Education. It has now expanded to involve people from Liverpool, Sheffield, Lancaster, York and other places. We meet for a day every two months or so and then once a year in a beautiful spot somewhere in the country. We always invite an 'outsider' to talk to us and provide their views on our research (Martin Atkinson, Ulrike Hahn, Annette Karmiloff-Smith and Michael Thomas are some previous keynote attendees). It's a great atmosphere, just the right degree of agreement and disagreement in a group of not more than 30 people.

Barbora Skarabela: *You once mentioned that you were originally meant to study physics. How did you end up in child language development?*

I went up to Cambridge to study Physics but for various reasons decided to change to Psychology at the end of my first year (I had missed a whole term due to an accident and in any case didn't feel that my maths was strong enough). In those days Experimental Psychology at Cambridge had only four lectures on Developmental Psychology in the whole two years of the course and two of them were on language development. I was hooked from that moment. There is something fascinating about watching children develop into language-using members of their communities: it is so obviously a process in which interaction and cognition are inextricably entwined. And while we are a long way from knowing how it works (particularly for languages other than English), it remains an endlessly engrossing subject of study for me.

Barbora Skarabela: *What do you do when you want to take your mind off your work?*

Elena Lieven: Life is pretty busy but I relax by reading, playing the piano (I have one in both Leipzig and Manchester), going to concerts, opera and art galleries, gardening in our garden in Manchester and on my balcony in Leipzig, cooking and entertaining and spending time with the people closest to me which includes a lot of children and 'ex'-children. I try to keep fit by running and doing Yoga and Pilates and on holiday we spend a lot of time walking in the hills which I love.

Barbora Skarabela: *Thank you for your time, Elena!*

Obituary: Remembering Celia Jakubowicz

On 15 January 2008, as editor of this newsletter, I was forwarded a message from Isabelle Barriere of the Yeled v'Yalda Early Childhood Center in New York. Isabelle was sharing the sad news that Celia Jakubowicz passed away on 10 January in Paris.

Celia was born in Argentina where she received her Licencia de Psicología from the Universidad de Buenos Aires in 1963. She continued her studies in Paris, first at Université René Descartes and later at the Centre National de Research Scientifique (CNRS). At CNRS in 1971 she completed her thesis on language development, focusing on the comprehension of negative sentences. She then returned to Buenos Aires and was appointed co-director of the Instituto de Investigaciones en Epistemología y Psicología Genética and also joined the university as Professor of Developmental Psychology. After the military coup in 1976 she left Argentina and relocated to France. She went back to Université René Descartes to study language production and comprehension. Her research interests radically changed after her meeting with Noam Chomsky at the Royaumont Conference in 1980 where she is said to have approached him with a few questions that she herself later described as 'naïve'. Nonetheless, Chomsky invited her to MIT where she began to examine his theories in light of child language data. She returned to Europe to pioneer his approach in language development.

Her research in the 80's tested the assumptions of one of the components of generative grammar, Binding Theory, with cross-linguistic data from child language. Her later years were devoted to evaluating The Minimalist Programme and the idea of interfaces and the role of experience and general cognitive development in the context of Specific Language Impairment (SLI). Her research topics included the acquisition of anaphoric relations, clitics, tense and agreement morphology, and wh-questions in typically-developing children as well as children with SLI. Her research was primarily focused on the acquisition of French and French SLI. For most of her life, she was situated at CNRS, Paris Descartes, but she collaborated with colleagues from all over the world, some of whom kindly agreed to share their memories in this issue.

I never met Celia Jakubowicz, but reading these memories, I regret that my paths did not directly cross with hers. I missed an opportunity to meet an inspiring colleague and mentor, a researcher of enviable intellect and energy, but also a woman of style and passion.

Isabelle Barriere, Yeled v'Yalda Early Childhood Center

The day I first met Celia was a mild September day in Paris. I was back from a stay in Toulouse where I was collecting data for my PhD on the acquisition of the French clitic SE. I was excited to meet the one established researcher who had published on this topic before I started working on it. A doctoral student of Celia had organized this meeting. They both welcomed me with warm smiles in her office on rue Serpente. We went for a walk and many cigarettes and questions later- she wanted to “know everything” (“tout savoir” - was one of her frequent expressions) including where I was doing my PhD, under whom, how I became interested in my dissertation topic... When we departed from each other, she gave me a big hug and concluded our meeting with another of her favorite expressions “it gives me very much pleasure” that I was to hear many times during the 10 subsequent years we bumped into each other in Paris and other cities at various conferences. She pronounced the French word for *very* ('très') with a trilled 'r' and an 'è' (between 'e' and 'è') in a way that reminded me of Dalida, the Egyptian-born singer of Italian origins who made her career in France. Our encounters were passionate, exhausting and exhilarating: they often involved heated arguments about clitics, binding principles, argument structure, morphological syncretism ... but after she had tirelessly examined the strengths and weaknesses of each of our analyses, viewpoints and arguments, she would always conclude that it “had given her much pleasure” to hear what I was up to and to share her passion. She took the liberty to tell me off about combining my work on the acquisition of morphosyntax with studies on the history of our field but never missed a presentation I gave at a conference on each topic!

The last time I saw Celia in February 2007 was different. She had heard I was giving a talk in Paris at her laboratory. She was too tired to attend but had contacted my host and insisted he should tell me to ring her at her house, which I did. I went to visit her on a Sunday morning. Apart from an exchange of our last publications, we did not talk about French clitics. What she “wanted to know everything about” was my project on the acquisition of Yiddish. As I was getting ready to share a slide presentation with her, she shook her head. Celia “wanted to know everything from the very beginning”: why and how after a PhD on SE, a project on the acquisition of British Sign Language and a postdoc at Johns Hopkins spent mostly investigating the acquisition of French subject clitics, I had settled in NY and was investigating the acquisition of Yiddish - a language I did not speak - by Hasidic¹ children when I had no ethnic, cultural or religious ties with this community? I had to explain every single details of my complicated journey toward this project. By the time I finally managed to share my slides with her, Celia was smiling and each slide triggered between 10 and 20 questions. After we went through the last slides, she made this unexpected comment: “I could not do what you are doing”. It was surprising for at least two reasons. Not only Yiddish was Celia’s first language (I can’t remember how I learned this, just like I don’t remember the first time she shared her passion for the author Borges) but as a researcher in developmental psycholinguistics, her curiosity for different languages knew no limit: she had pioneered studies on the acquisition of the morphosyntax of French and had also investigated Spanish, Danish and other languages. She took a palpable pleasure in discovering and analyzing the features of many different languages. I knew that her statement had nothing to do with her astonishing analytical skills so I could not resist. It was my turn to ask why and how. For the first time, I “heard” Celia being silent for a long long time. When the answer

finally slowly emerged it was charged with emotion and was expressed in the mixture of Spanish, French and English that characterized her speech. Yiddish was the only language she spoke until she was 4 and yet she could not remember it. She explained her Bundist² childhood in Buenos Aires and her first school years under teachers who were all holocaust survivors. Celia evoked Yiddish again and its association for her with the almost disappeared world of the Bund and the interesting minds that had shaped her early educational years. She also talked at length about one's complicated relationship with one's first/native language/mother tongue. What defines it, makes it special, so easy to acquire and at the same time so vulnerable, so easy to lose. Despite the fact that she was extremely tired at the end of our meeting, she remembered to give me the names and contact numbers of the many people connected with Yiddish in Paris most of whom had been members of the same Bundist world and now had important positions in the Yiddish branch of the French National Library. Researchers familiar with either the almost-soviet character of French libraries or the political divisions in the world of Yiddish studies will appreciate how precious this favor was. After we hugged, she said knowing that the acquisition of Yiddish was being investigated gave her "very much pleasure". With a more serious expression she added "it is a very very important project so you will get your grant to pursue it" (she sounded extremely enthusiastic and more confident that anyone could ever be about obtaining funds) "and I will come to visit you and your children (ie the Yiddish-speaking participants in my project) in NY". We both pretended to believe this for a moment. She smiled and then her face expressed some concern as she made allusion to the Hasidic dress code for women: "Will I have to wear a hat and a long skirt?" "Of course", I replied having noticed that tailored pant suits were much more her cup of tea. And we both laughed.

Had Celia become so interested in explaining first language acquisition because her first language had somehow escaped her? Had the Bundist ideas that had impregnated her childhood influenced her humanistic research agenda- in the sense that explaining the acquisition of what makes us human has to be underpinned by basic humanist assumptions? Humanist she had also demonstrated she was by overcoming the ideological divisions between the Bundist world of her childhood which had shaped her and to which she was still attached and the Hasidic world in which I am conducting my project- at the core of which lies the distinct cultural and linguistic status of Yiddish- by doing everything she could to support the project on the acquisition of Hasidic Yiddish.

I have also come to realize something else that is extraordinary about Celia. She came from a world that has virtually disappeared and was first shaped by people who had resisted destruction... and yet elegantly, with passion and very much on her own (to state that Chomsky's linguistics was not appreciated in France in the 80s is a euphemism) she established a whole new field in the country she decided to settle in. So I know that when I struggle to understand a four-year old's utterances addressing me in Celia's first language in the Yiddish-speaking preschool class I immerse myself in once a week; when I find it difficult to remember the many different Hebrew spellings and pronunciations in different Yiddish varieties of the words I am learning; when I am analyzing the different pronominal systems used in Polish, Hungarian and Russian Yiddish and feeling

overwhelmed by the ridiculous number of sociolinguistic variables that may impact this essentially psycholinguistic project, the memory of Celia's "very much pleasure" and "very very important" filled with trilled r's will carry on resonating in my head and fill me in turn with strength and energy.

¹ *"Hasidism is a movement of spiritual rebirth that developed in Eastern European Jewish communities at the end of the 18th century"* (Baumgarten, 2006 translated by IB). Two distinctive features characterize the Hasidim: a) the organization of its followers in independent courts led by religious leaders ("rebbe") that prescribe rules of conduct (in different domains including education, bioethics etc) and b) the different status assigned to Hebrew- the Holy Language used in religious settings- and Yiddish used as a vernacular in both its written and spoken forms (Isaacs, 1999, 2004, Baumgarten, 2006).

² The Bund is a socialist anti-zionist Jewish movement that started in Vilnius (the Polish city where Celia's family came from before settling in Argentina) at the end of the 19th century that rejected the reactionary character of traditional Jewish life in Eastern Europe and promoted the status of Yiddish as the common languages of Eastern European Jews.

Antonella Sorace, University of Edinburgh

My best memories of Celia are associated with the Boston Conference on Language Development where we used to meet almost every year. I remember her warmth, her generosity, her sense of humour, and the special 'Latin' friendliness and empathy that made communication between us so easy. Our conversations were in many languages: she spoke Spanish to me and I spoke Italian to her with a bit of French and English on the side. We talked about data, and theories, and language acquisition, and also about many other things.

The last time I saw her was at a restaurant near Saint-Michel in Paris, where she and I and my two sons had dinner together. We all had fun, and then we hugged each other like many other times, and I couldn't imagine that I wouldn't see her again.

Tom Roeper, University of Massachusetts, Amherst

Celia will be missed. She was a beacon in France and Europe for pursuing three important dimensions of acquisition work with rigor at every level. First, she faced the challenge of exploring new domains and adding to the acquisition agenda by seeing how children master a whole variety of different structures with often novel experimental techniques. Second, she sought to bring the most sophisticated theoretical perspectives to bear on acquisition results. Third, she carried the results to the domain of applied work in SLI. At UMass and with Jill deVilliers at Smith, we enjoyed many visits from her which led to various collaborations--- it is very sad that several ongoing efforts, particularly in the study of complex questions, could not be carried further. Her

spirit will continue in many collaborations -- most notably in the EU-supported COST project, connecting SLI work in 17 European dialects.

Yonata Levy, the Hebrew University

I met Celia many years ago when she invited me to give a talk to her group in Paris. At that time, and even more so in later years I was doubtful with respect to answers that generative theories offered to the central questions raised in work on language acquisition and on language pathology. Yet, Celia was such a great believer in the generative approach and full of confidence that if one did the right experiments there will be interesting answers too. One could not help but become engulfed in her enthusiasm and start to believe at least to some extent in what she believed in. And so I found myself in the years to come sitting in talks she gave, reading her work and having coffee and lunches with her - that is, she smoked and I had lunch- and enjoying her intellect and her wonderful, warm and friendly personality. I shall miss her very much.

Johanne Paradis, University of Alberta

Two recollections come to mind when I think about Celia. The first was at Boston University Conference on Language Development in 2000. After a talk was finished, I was showing a photo of my 1-year-old daughter to some people beside me, who glanced at the photo quickly and got up to go to the next talk. Celia was sitting behind me, and she stood up, took the picture from me and really gazed at it. She continued to stand there as people hurried around her and commented on my daughter's hair colour, eye colour, facial features, and speculated on her character. I was deeply touched at how much attention she paid to this photo, and I think it illustrates one of the best aspects of Celia, her interest in her colleagues as people. Celia was never an "only business" colleague, she always asked about people's personal lives and shared her own experiences with us. I truly appreciated that about her.

The second recollection I would like to pass on took place at the SRCLD/IASCL conference in 2002 in Madison. In a symposium on the acquisition of French, Celia gave what she described as her first PowerPoint talk. She had the most unusual PowerPoint slides I had ever seen before or since - lots of diagrams, animations, and moving arrows. It was delightful to watch, so quirky and original, and I recall thinking that it was such a true expression of Celia herself.

Heather van der Lely, University College London and Andriana Belletti, Università di Siena

I first met Celia relatively recently in 1997, when she started to take seriously an interest in Specific Language Impairment (SLI) and what it could contribute to core theoretical issues such as domain-specificity, modularity and the genetic basis to grammar. We both challenged each other's ideas and hypotheses, and she would engage in valuable discussion and critical commentary on work in the field, including mine. Good quality criticism (even in academia!) is rare but of inestimable benefit-- and Celia's attention to detail was critical in

moving the field forward. She used to say that SLI/atypical development constitutes a special magnifying glass, which allows one to look on how development works in the typical case as well. She loved her work, she was very imaginative in the creation of her experimental designs; she sincerely enjoyed being with her experimental subjects, children. She loved her two boys, she was a very concerned and dedicated mother. And she was a dedicated teacher. Overall, she was a very independent person intellectually, very rich, motivated and generous from a human point of view. (And on the quiet, we would enjoy a gossip about our shared interest in Paris fashion and dress! I hope one is allowed to say such thing – as I think it was part of Celia – I will: Celia was always "well dressed" with a flair that, dare I say, is not always found in academic circles!) We will all miss her dedication, her intellectual energy and her original approach toward research.

Laurie Tuller, François Rabelais University, Tours

I'm sure that one of the qualities Celia will be remembered for is how she gave so willingly and warmly of her time and of her friendship, with particular attention to those of us who were starting out in psycholinguistics. I am also certain that I am not the only one who will say that my work on acquisition and in particular on atypical acquisition probably would not have happened without her guidance and collaboration. It was Celia who opened up her lab to me, letting me use her experimental material, and then helping me create my own: Linguistic research on language acquisition in Tours began because of her. It was Celia who invited me to my first acquisition meetings, and who literally took me by the arm to introduce me to colleagues and to tell them what I was working on. It was also Celia who asked me the most fundamental questions about hearing loss, about epilepsy, the kind that you thought you knew the answers to, but didn't realize how little you knew about before you had to try to answer her insistent queries. And, Celia didn't have her name appear on publications merely because her experiments had been used in the research; she had re-read every sentence and discussed every detail of syntactic analysis. Working with her was a privilege I will never forget; enjoying her friendship was a pleasure I will continue to miss.

Cornelia Hamann, University of Oldenburg

The way I remember Celia best is as a pure form of focused energy. Her sharp mind and never ceasing probing and questioning often advanced an otherwise still rather intuitive proposal of mine. She would not stop talking SLI and linguistic theory when in the Metro or in a busy Paris street, buying food in the market, fixing or eating dinner. Very inspiring and sometimes - exhausting. Yet, she would never stop taking care of people: "Where did you put your Metro ticket?- You'll need it when we get out" was an aside while deep in the discussion of Romance clitics, or even more important that quick grab of my sleeve to stop me crossing a Paris street trusting the pedestrian green (which Celia taught me never to do) -still or again discussing Romance clitics. Celia was slim and elegant, she was bright and lively, warm and motherly and such an amazing scientist! This is how I will always remember her.

Thank you all contributors for their memories and time.

Phon 1.3: Current Features and Short Term Outlook

by Yvan Rose, *Memorial University of Newfoundland*



Yvan Rose

1. Introduction

Phon, one of the latest additions to the *CHILDES* software toolkit, is designed to facilitate a number of tasks related to the transcription and analysis of phonological data. Built to support research in early phonological development (including babbling), second language acquisition, and phonological disorders, *Phon* can also be used in virtually all types of investigations based on phonological data (e.g. loanword phonology, fieldwork). *Phon* is available to the community as free, open-source software (<http://phon.ling.mun.ca/phonstrac/>). It facilitates data exchange among researchers and is currently used for the elaboration of the *PhonBank* database (<https://childes.talkbank.org/data/PhonBank/>), which already provides a large corpus of babbling and phonological development data. We will describe these data in greater detail in the next issue of the Bulletin. The development of *Phon* is currently supported through a grant from the National Institute of Health to Brian MacWhinney and myself, in which about 40 phonologists have joined together to both provide their input for the development of *Phon* and commit their data to *PhonBank*. Through our consortium, which has been growing at a steady pace, a large number of people have already been involved in the development and testing of *Phon* and the development of *PhonBank*. If you have interests in either of these projects, you are more than welcome to join by [contacting Brian](#) or [myself](#). We also encourage you to subscribe to the discussion group (no Gmail account is required to subscribe):

<http://groups.google.com/group/phon?lnk=sg>

- To join the group, click on the “Apply for group membership” and follow the instructions.
- Group’s email address (for message posting): phon@googlegroups.com

Programmed in *Java*, *Phon* works on both Mac OS X and Windows platforms. Because it is Unicode and XML compliant, files can be transferred across computers without changing the fonts or file format. The design and programming work has been achieved primarily at Memorial University of Newfoundland by Greg Hedlund (chief programmer), in close collaboration with Franklin Chen, Leonid Spektor, and Brian MacWhinney from the *CHILDES* team at Carnegie Mellon University. I am mostly involved with defining the requirements of *Phon*'s main functions, in close liaison with members of the consortium.

The 1.3 version of *Phon* was released on time for the IASCL conference in Edinburgh last summer, during which Brian and myself provided a demonstration of the software and offered an outlook on ongoing and future projects. Since then, we have continued to develop *Phon*'s functionality. In the paragraphs below, I provide more detail on *Phon*'s key features and current work on their refinement. This discussion is followed by a quick outlook on more substantial, future additions to the project.

2. *Phon*'s key features

In its current version, *Phon* offers full support for the development of corpora of phonological data. The functions are organized around a logical workflow which can be tailored for the special needs of the researcher. The next subsections are organized according to this general workflow.

2.1 Media linkage and segmentation

The first two functions, through which the user can identify portions of the recorded media that are relevant for research (typically, words or utterances) and directly access them from the associated transcript, are similar to the ones found in *CLAN*, with the exception of cosmetic differences. For example, the *Phon* user has access to a graphical user interface (GUI) to playback the segmented utterances and modify their start or end times. In addition, given a recording with multiple speakers, the user can now perform full segmentation of a single speaker and later perform segmentation of the other speaker(s). *Phon* has functions to resume segmentation for each speaker as well as to reorder the segmented records so that they appear in chronological order in the transcript.

2.2 Phonetic transcription and validation

To our knowledge, *Phon* offers the first fully-integrated system for multiple-blind IPA transcriptions. Using this system, an unlimited number of transcribers can perform their transcriptions without access to other transcribers' work. This system also supports password protection for blind transcriptions. However, the decision to use password protection, which may be overkill in many situations, is left to the user.

The use of multi-blind transcriptions implies the need for validation. The user (or, ideally, team of users) responsible for transcript validation can visualize and compare all blind transcriptions for each utterance. The

transcription deemed the most accurate is selected with a simple mouse click and can be further modified as needed.

The use of multi-blind transcription and associated validation systems is optional. Depending on research needs, the user can decide whether to use these functions. Only validated transcriptions are included in the transcript for research; other, non-validated transcriptions are saved as part of the project file but cannot be used for research. If the user decides not to use multi-blind transcriptions, the transcriptions are entered directly into the transcript. Except from the mode of entry into the session editor (multi-blind or direct), the interface for multi-blind transcriptions or direct data entry is identical.

Whichever mode of transcription the user prefers, *Phon* provides useful functions to streamline the inherently time-consuming process of transcription. For example, a built-in IPA map is provided, which interacts with the session editor in a way that reduces the amount of mouse clicks to a minimum. In order to further streamline the work involved with transcription, we recommend that users incorporate an IPA keyboard layout such as *IPAKeys* (Mac OS X) or *Keyman* (Windows), available from the Unicode sections listed on the *CHILDES* main portal (<https://chilides.talkbank.org/>).

Phon also supports built-in dictionaries of pronounced forms, which provide quick access to generic target (adult) forms. Already present in the 1.3 version are dictionaries for Catalan, English, French and Spanish. We are now in the process of incorporating the *Fonilex* dictionary of Dutch (Flemish) pronounced forms, thanks to an initial contact by Steven Gillis and a very positive response from Piets Mertens. Also, in collaboration with Maarten Janssen from the Instituto de Linguística Teórica e Computacional and the Portuguese team led by Maria João Freitas at Universidade de Lisboa, we are also working on adding a European Portuguese dictionary.

2.3 Division of the transcribed utterances into Word Groups

Research in phonology often requires a segmentation of transcribed utterances into smaller domains such as phrases or clitic groups, all of which are potential domains for phonological processes. The *Phon* user can break the transcribed utterance into domains which we call ‘word groups’. This further division of the utterance, controlled at the level of the orthographic transcription, is automatically reflected in the IPA Target and Actual tiers, or any group-aligned user-defined tier such as the “Morphology” tier in the example below (note also the absence of bracketing in the notes tier, which is not group-aligned).

Example Record:

Orthography: [I love] [to study] [child language]

IPA Target: [ˈaɪ ˈlʌv] [tə ˈstʌdi:] [ˈtʃaɪld ˈlæŋgwɪdʒ]

IPA Actual: [a ˈlaf] [ə ˈtadi] [ˈtʃaɪ ˈjæwɪʒ]

Morphology: [pro V] [P V] [N N]

Notes: This is just an example

Word Group alignment effectively provides a system for ‘vertical’ analysis across target and produced forms within each utterance, which can also be used to narrow down searches to particular domains. Because of non-trivial constraints, however, nested or overlapping word groups are currently unsupported. We have no plans to tackle this issue at this stage.

2.4 Automatic segmental feature labelling

Each symbol of the IPA, including diacritics, entered in IPA Target or Actual transcriptions, is associated with a set of descriptive features. This association is effective in the background (invisible to the user). Features and feature combinations can be used in many types of queries. *Phon*’s feature set is as general and redundant as possible, in order not to impose any bias on the analysis.

We are planning to incorporate in a future version a feature set editor, in order to give the user the ability to add or remove features for a given symbol, and also add additional symbols to the set. This latter function will be useful for the transcription of sounds which have no clear correspondence with the IPA. For example, once the editor is in place, the user will be able to add a cover symbol such as “F” in the transcript, and associate the feature set {Labial, Continuant} to it, irrespective of other potential specifications such as {Voiced} or {Labiodental}.

2.5 Automatic syllabification

Within the IPA Target and Actual tiers, *Phon* automatically breaks down each transcribed word into syllables, and provides a syllable constituent label (e.g. onset, nucleus, coda) to each segment. The syllabification is derived through an algorithm using a deterministic cascade of rules, in a way similar to traditional theories of syllabification. In cases when the algorithm produces spurious results, for example when dealing with an unusual sequence of segments, the user can modify the syllabification directly from the GUI, using a contextual menu. We currently provide syllabification algorithms for languages such as Catalan, Dutch, English, French, European Portuguese and Spanish, including a number of different algorithms for many of these languages. We are working directly with users to add support for additional research needs, for example an algorithm for Gurindji, to be released with version 1.4 of the application. While we are not considering this a pressing priority at this time, we are considering the possibility of giving the user access to the editing of syllabification algorithms in future versions.

2.6 Automatic phone alignment

In addition to syllabification, *Phon* also performs automatic alignment of IPA Target and Actual phones. This function relies on a ‘best-guess’ dynamic programming algorithm. The alignment is confined within word groups, considered to be independent domains of analysis but however transcends syllable boundaries within the groups. This enables, for example, the alignment of [s], syllabified in the coda of the first syllable in ‘pasta’, with the [s] syllabified in the onset of the reduced form ‘pasa’.

2.7 Search functions

Phon offers a powerful system to query transcribed data as well as other information contained in the transcript (e.g. participant name or age). In a nutshell, the user can make inventories of target and/or actual phones, syllable types and stress patterns as well as search individual data tiers, aligned phones and aligned word groups. *Phon* also incorporates support for the detection of consonant and vowel harmony as well as consonant metathesis. In each relevant case, the user can take advantage of the *Phonex* language to search for detailed phonological information (e.g. features, syllable positions), or build text-based queries using regular expressions. Up until version 1.3, we have favoured heavy GUI support for these searches. However, although GUI support makes many aspects of queries more user-friendly, it also imposes extremely limiting constraints on the types of queries that can be made, especially for queries that combine different types of information from different types of data. To alleviate this problem, Greg has designed a brand new system of queries based on *Javascript*. This script-based system is both extremely powerful and much more efficient than the search methods available in *Phon* 1.3. We are currently testing this function in collaboration with a number of *Phon* users, to whom we are deeply grateful. In order to make our script-based system as friendly as possible, we will incorporate built-in scripts of different kinds in our next release of *Phon* and maintain a discussion forum, through which we will support our community of users and gather feedback for additional refinement.

The data returned by *Phon*’s query functions can be visualized directly in the application (and further edited if needed), saved as independent transcript files, or exported as CSV (comma-separated value) text files or Excel spreadsheets. In CSV or Excel exported results, a summary of the search is produced alongside the detailed results. Once our script-based search is finalized, the user will be able to specify which information should be returned in the exported report. This will facilitate the management of search results as well as their transfer to other applications for further processing.

3. Future outlook

Looking into the future, we have also begun testing of an updated system to read and write files that is bringing us closer to full compatibility with the CHAT file format utilized by *CLAN*. Once we complete this testing phase, users will be able to migrate their data from *CLAN* to *Phon* using the *CHAT2XML* application programmed by Franklin Chen. This, alongside the other improvements described above, will be the last significant

development included in the upcoming version 1.4 of *Phon*. After the release of that version, we will tackle the next major step, the design of a new module to support acoustic measurement data imported from *Praat*(<http://www.fon.hum.uva.nl/praat/>). This module will enable the researcher to store acoustic data alongside phonological information (e.g. features, syllabification, alignment) and thus perform research on the phonetics and phonology of various phenomena using an integrated data coding and query system.

Implicit to many aspects of the discussion above is the fact that much of our development efforts would have been much less fruitful without feedback and support from the community. Your response has been tremendous thus far. We look forward to working with you on the further advancement of this exciting project.

NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

FORTHCOMING CONFERENCES AND WORKSHOPS

***What:* Relating Asymmetries between Speech and Comprehension in the Acquisition of Language (RASCAL) Conference**

When: 24-25 January

Where: University of Groningen, the Netherlands

Details: <http://www.rug.nl/let/RASCAL2009>

***What:* Interfaces of Bilingualism and SLI Workshop**

When: 1-5 February

Where: Jerusalem, Israel

Details: <http://www.as.huji.ac.il/workshops/isf/bilingualism/>

***What:* The 10th Tokyo Conference on Psycholinguistics**

When: 13-14 March

Where: Keio University, Mita, Tokyo

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

***What:* The 22nd Annual CUNY Conference on Sentence Processing (CUNY-2009)**

When: 26-28 March

Where: University of California, Davis, USA

Details: <http://cuny2009.cmb.ucdavis.edu/>

What: First and second languages: Exploring the relationship in pedagogy-related contexts

When: 27-28 March

Where: University of Oxford, Oxford, United Kingdom

What: Experimental Pragmatics Conference 2009 (XPrag 2009)

When: 23-25 April

Where: Lyon, France

Details: <http://xprag.l2c2.isc.cnrs.fr/XPrag/>

What: Linguistic Interfaces & Language Acquisition Workshop

When: 30 April-2 May

Where: Iowa City, Iowa, USA

Details: <http://www.uiowa.edu/interfaceworkshop>

What: AFLiCo III: Grammars in Construction(s)

When: 27-29 May

Where: Paris, France

Details: <http://aflico.asso.univ-lille3.fr>

What: 7th International Symposium on Bilingualism ISB7

When: 8–11 July, 2009

Where: Utrecht University, Netherlands

Details: <http://www.let.uu.nl/isb7/>

What: Multimodality of communication in children: gestures, emotions, language and cognition (MultiMod 2009)

When: 9-11 July

Where: Toulouse, France

Details: <http://w3.eccd.univ-tlse2.fr/multimod2009/>

CONFERENCE AND WORKSHOP CALLS

What: 33rd Child Language Research Forum (CLRF)

When: 10-12 July

Where: Berkeley, CA, USA

Details: <http://lsa2009.berkeley.edu/Events.html>

Call Deadline: 31 December

NEW CHILDES CORPORA

Catalan Corpus

A new Catalan corpus contributed by Aurora Bel of the Universitat Pompeu Fabra. It contains data from a monolingual Catalan girl aged between 1;7 and 2;6.

Indonesian Corpus

A new addition of a very large corpus of data on the acquisition of Jakarta Indonesian contributed by David Gil and Uri Tadmor of the MPI-EVA in Leipzig. The study tracks eight children with an age range, varying by child, from 1;6 up to 8;9. This is the first corpus from an Austronesian language. In addition to a transcription in conventional (romanized) orthography, each utterance is also phonetically transcribed, glossed, and translated into English, so no prior familiarity of Indonesian is required. Each of the eight children was recorded at, on average, 10-day intervals for two to four years. As such, this is an ideal database for longitudinal studies.

New Italian Corpus:

D'Odorico Corpus

A new Italian corpus contributed by Laura D'Odorico and Mirco Fasolo of the Università degli Studi di Milano-Bicocca with assistance from Nicoletta Salerni and Alessandra Assanelli. The corpus includes six children who were observed three times each during the period between 1;0 and 2;0. The corpus contains videorecorded mother-child play sessions. The Italian CDI was also used to assess development.

Two new English corpora:

Fredonia Corpus

This corpus is a contribution from Richard Weist at Fredonia. It contains six children learning American English: Ben (2;4 – 3;3), Emily (2;6 – 4;5), Emma (2;7 – 4;7), Jillian (2;1 – 2;10), Matty (2;3 – 5;0), and Roman (2;2 – 4;7). The children were audiotaped in either a laboratory setting or in their homes twice a month for approximately 30 minutes. The audiotapes were transcribed into the CHAT format, and the transcriptions were completely checked for accuracy.

Soderstrom Corpus

This corpus was contributed by Melanie Soderstrom of the University of Manitoba. This corpus focuses on two mothers of preverbal children and the transcripts are fully linked to audio. The mothers and their babies were visited at (semi)-regular intervals from 6-10 months (14 hours and 8.5 hours), along with two one-hour recordings each at 12 months. The data were transcribed in basic CHAT format with no phonetic detail.

PhonBank corpora

Those interested in child phonology should note that there is now a separate directory within the CHILDES

database for corpora that have been transcribed phonologically in a folder called *PhonBank*. These files were contributed by Sophie Kern of the University of Lyon and Babs Davis of the University of Texas. The current versions in this part of the database will be undergoing ongoing reformatting.

Four other corpora with extensive phonological coding are Carterette, Cruttenden, Providence, and Lyon. These corpora can be found in the respective main language areas (Eng-UK, Eng-USA, and French) as they include full interactions and dialog.

Foudon's corpus of autistic French-speaking children

The corpus consists of 8 children with autism between 3;9 and 9;2 at the beginning of the study. All children were recruited at the Isatis department of the Saint-Jean-de-Dieu hospital (Lyon, France) where they were initially diagnosed with DSM-IV (1994) Autistic Disorder. They had a mean Child Autism Rating Scale Score (CARS) of 38.64 (standard deviation = 12; range = 35-47) and developmental age between 12-16 months and 28-32 months at the beginning of the study (January 2007). Children have been (and will continue to be) recorded approximately every three months for 3 years at the Isatis and Tarentelle medical daycare centers. Children are recorded in three types of situations (work, lunch-time and play-time).

Publications making use of these data should cite the following article: Foudon, Nadege, Reboul, Anne, & Manificat, Sabine (2007). Language acquisition in autistic children: A longitudinal study. *CamLing2007*: University of Cambridge Postgraduate Conference in Language Research.

BOOK ANNOUNCEMENTS

Author: Annick De Houwer

Title: Bilingual First Language Acquisition

Publisher: Multilingual Matters

ISBN-13: Hbk 9781847691491, Pbk 9781847691484

Key Features

- Analyses existing studies in the field and suggests directions for future research
- Chapter summaries, study questions and recommended reading at the end of each chapter

Increasingly, children grow up hearing two languages from birth. This textbook explains how children learn to understand and speak those languages. It brings together both established knowledge and the latest findings about different areas of bilingual language development (sounds, words, sentences, language choice) in a perspective that emphasizes the role of children's language learning environments.

Contents

Chapter 1: Introducing Bilingual First Language Acquisition

Chapter 2: Bilingual children's language development: an overview

Chapter 3: Research methods in BFLA

Chapter 4: Socializing environments and BFLA

Chapter 5: Sounds in BFLA

Chapter 6: Words in BFLA

Chapter 7: Sentences in BFLA

Chapter 8: Harmonious bilingual development

Annick De Houwer is Research Professor at the University of Antwerp in Belgium and Collaborative Investigator to the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (U.S.A.). Her PhD in Linguistics from the Free University of Brussels (1988) was based on a dissertation on bilingual acquisition, a topic she has since continued to work on steadily. Her first book, *The Acquisition of Two Languages from Birth* (CUP, 1990), is widely cited in the bilingual acquisition literature. Dr. De Houwer has also published on Dutch child language, attitudes towards child language, teen language, and intralingual subtitling. She has extensive editorial experience.

Author: Heike Behrens (editor)

Title: Corpora in Language Acquisition Research: History, methods, perspectives. (Trends in Language Acquisition Research 6)

Publisher: John Benjamins

ISBN: 9789027234766

Corpus research forms the backbone of research on children's language development. Leading researchers in the field present a survey on the history of data collection, different types of data, and the treatment of methodological problems. Morphologically and syntactically parsed corpora allow for the concise explorations of formal phenomena, the quick retrieval of errors, and reliability checks. New probabilistic and connectionist computations investigate how children integrate the multiple sources of information available in the input, and new statistical methods compute rates of acquisition as well as error rates dependent on sample size. Sample analyses show how multi-modal corpora are used to investigate the interaction of discourse and linguistic structure, how cross-linguistic generalizations for acquisition can be formulated and tested, and how individual variation can be explored. Finally, ways in which corpus research interacts with computational linguistics and experimental research are presented.

Author: Tom Roeper

Title: The Prism of Grammar: How Child Language Illuminates Humanism

Every sentence we hear is instantly analyzed by an inner grammar; just as a prism refracts a beam of light, grammar divides a stream of sound, linking diverse strings of information to different domains of mind - memory, vision, emotions, intentions. In *The Prism of Grammar*, Tom Roeper brings the abstract principles behind modern grammar to life by exploring the astonishing intricacies of child language. Adult expressions provide endless puzzles for the child to solve. The individual child's solutions ("Don't uncomfortable the cat" is one example) may amuse adults but they also reveal the complexity of language and the challenges of mastering it. The tiniest utterances, says Roeper, reflect the whole mind and engage the child's free will and sense of dignity.

He offers numerous and novel "explorations" - many at the cutting edge of current work - that anyone can try, even in conversation around the dinner table. They elicit how the child confronts "recursion" - the heartbeat of grammar - through endless possessives ("John's mother's friend's car"), mysterious plurals, contradictory adjectives, the marvels of ellipsis, and the deep obscurity of reference ("there it is, right here"). They are not tests of skill; they are tools for discovery and delight, not diagnosis. Each chapter on acquisition begins with a commonsense look at how structures work - moving from the simple to the complex - and then turns to the literary and human dimensions of grammar. One important human dimension is the role of dialect in society and in the lives of children. Roeper devotes three chapters to the structure of African-American English and the challenge of responding to linguistic prejudice.

Written in a lively style, accessible and gently provocative, *The Prism of Grammar* is for parents and teachers as well as students - for everyone who wants to understand how children gain and use language - and anyone interested in the social, philosophical, and ethical implications of how we see the growing mind emerge.

Tom Roeper, Professor of Linguistics at the University of Massachusetts, has studied child language for thirty years, and is a co-author of the Diagnostic Evaluation of Language Variation (DELV), co-editor of *Studies in Theoretical Psycholinguistics*, and one of the founding editors of *Language Acquisition*. He has worked on numerous grants from National Science Foundation, National Institutes of Health in the US and other national science foundations in Canada, Europe and Asia. He has lectured all over the world on these topics.

Author: Barbara Zurer Pearson

Title: Raising a Bilingual Child (Living Language Series)

Publisher: Random House

ISBN: 9781400023349

Raising a Bilingual Child provides parents with information, encouragement, and practical advice for creating a positive bilingual environment. It offers both an overview of why parents should raise their children to speak more than one language and detailed steps parents can take to integrate two languages into their child's daily routine. The book also includes inspirational first-hand accounts from parents. It dispels the myth that

bilingualism may hinder a child's academic performance and explains that learning languages at a young age can actually enhance a child's overall intellectual development.

Author: Gary Marcus

Title: Kluge: The Haphazard Construction of the Human Mind

Publisher: Faber and Faber

ISBN: 0618879641

Author: Steven Pinker

Title: The Stuff of Thought: Language as a Window into Human Nature

Publisher: Penguin Books

ISBN: 0713997419

Author: Elma Blom

Title: The Acquisition of Finiteness

Series Title: Studies in Generative Grammar [SGG] 94

Publisher: Mouton de Gruyter *ISBN:* 9783110190830

Author: Jenefer Philp, Rhonda Oliver, Alison Mackey (editors)

Title: Second Language Acquisition and the Younger Learner

Subtitle: Child's Play?

Series Title: Language Learning & Language Teaching 23

Publisher: John Benjamine

ISBN: 9789027290564

Editor: Dalila Ayoun

Title: Studies in French Applied Linguistics

Series Title: Language Learning & Language Teaching 21

Publisher: John Benjamins

ISBN: 9789027289940

Author: Susanne Fuchs, H el ene Loevenbruck, Pascal Perrier, Daniel Pape

Title: Some Aspects of Speech and the Brain

Publisher: Peter Lang

ISBN: 978-3-631-57630-4

Author: Silvina A. Montrul

Title: Incomplete Acquisition in Bilingualism

Subtitle: Re-examining the Age Factor

Series Title: Studies in Bilingualism 39

Publisher: John Benjamins

ISBN: 9789027290410

Editor: Belma Haznedar

Title: Current Trends in Child Second Language Acquisition

Subtitle: A generative perspective

Series Title: Language Acquisition and Language Disorders 46

Publisher: John Benjamins

ISBN: 9789027253071

THESIS ANNOUNCEMENTS

Author: Susan Douglas

Title: The semantic and syntactic development of verbs in the language of children with autism

Institution: La Trobe University

This thesis investigates the acquisition of verbs in children with autism using an observational and an experimental study design. The observational study was primarily concerned with the semantic development of verbs, with a supplementary focus on prepositions. It was hypothesised that there would be evidence of atypical development in categories which encode concepts associated with cognitive impairments in children with autism such as psychological states. The corpus consisted of transcripts of conversational data from ten children with autism of varying ages and abilities. Verb use within semantic categories was profiled according to the following parameters: frequency of use within the individual lexicons of each child, expressed as a percentage of total verb use; lexical diversity; and, subjects encoded. Prepositions were analysed on the same criteria. The results indicate that, while often delayed, the path of semantic development does not appear to be atypical. It is argued that theory of mind ability appears to influence the rate of semantic development in children with autism.

In light of recent debate regarding the developmental relationship between language and cognition, the production of complex sentences with psychological state verbs by children with autism was examined. The data raised questions about the extent to which general cognitive development informs language acquisition. The experimental studies were chosen to further explore this issue. Five children with autism recruited for the observational study participated in three tasks: two experiments eliciting complex wh-questions and a theory of mind task. The results indicated that three children conformed to the syntactic constraints governing the formation of such questions, and two did so where the target questions could be elicited. Four of the five

children passed the theory of mind task. The implications of the results from both studies for theories of language acquisition in autism and typical development are discussed.

Author: Peter T. Richtsmeier

Title: From perception to production: Generalizing phonotactic probabilities in language acquisition

Institution: University of Arizona

BOOK REVIEW

I am pleased to include a review of Tom Roeper's book by William O'Grady. The review originally occurred in *Columbia Teacher's College Record* in October, 2007. It is reproduced here with the author's permission.

At a number of points in this unique book, Tom Roeper observes that an essential feature of language is the capacity for recursion, the capacity to reproduce something inside itself. *The Prism of Grammar* is itself an exercise in recursion - a book about language acquisition, inside a book about language, inside a book about humanism.

Roeper introduces the humanist orientation of his work in the first chapter, outlining his commitment "to confront the great issues of the age, the 'good' and the 'evil' of linguistics and of life" (p. 4) - a theme to which he returns at greater length in the book's final four chapters, which are grouped together in a section entitled "Finding Philosophy and Morality in Every Sentence." His central thesis is that respect for human dignity must be paramount (296) and that science incompatible with this ideal should be suspect. The science of language that Roeper envisions and practices implements humanist ideals to the fullest possible extent: systematic creativity, a defining feature of language, is also the hallmark of human nature. Indeed, Roeper goes so far as to claim that "grammarlike rules" underlie every thought and every action, permitting the exercise of free will and creativity in all areas of life (20).

Embedded inside this humanist matrix is a concern for how language is viewed by non-specialists, citizens and policy makers alike. "Knowledge of how language works," Roeper observes, "is part of what we need to eliminate or reduce our quick, prejudicial social judgments about accents and tiny grammatical differences" (4). An understanding of the systematicity and legitimacy of every language and every dialect is, he argues, a prerequisite for an egalitarian society. This point is developed at some length in section III, "Microdialects and Language Diversity." Acknowledging the deep emotional connection between language variety and identity, Roeper makes the case against linguistic prejudice with the help of two striking illustrations.

The first is that the seeds of many grammars can be found inside English - elements of German verb-second word order show up in the high-register use of negative patterns such as *It matters not*, aspects of Spanish

subject ellipsis in the casual *Looks good*, and a hint of Chinese object ellipsis in *OK, everybody push!* We are in this sense all “bilingual” - the grammar of cherished “standard English” is composed of a variety of subgrammars manifesting the very patterns that we might find strange or unsophisticated in another language.

Roeper offers an equally provocative and insightful treatment of African-American English, using it to illustrate how a dialect with roughly the same words as “standard” English can have a different grammar for the expression of event-related contrasts. He be playing baseball encodes an element of habituality not found in standard English *He is playing baseball*, and *I done played baseball* has a stative meaning that differentiates it from *I did play baseball*.

The heart of *The Prism of Grammar*, and what ultimately makes it a must-read, is Roeper’s treatment of language acquisition - a suite of six chapters that presents one striking grammatical phenomenon after another, complete with do-at-home experiments that allow readers to see for themselves just how intricate language is and just how skillful children are at (eventually) figuring it all out.

Some of Roeper’s examples focus on children’s early successes. Two year olds have no problem distinguishing between *boathouse* and *houseboat* (60). Three year olds have figured out that *Everyone went home* permits a “distributed” interpretation in which everyone goes to his own home (162). Five year olds know that *Mom likes not singing* is the right sentence to use when Mom has a sore throat and that *Mom likes no singing* is right when she wants some peace and quiet (90).

Other examples highlight children’s early missteps and shortcomings. Pre-school children often have trouble understanding and producing recursive possessives such as *daddy’s daddy’s name* or *Cookie Monster’s sister’s picture* (114ff). Five year olds know the difference between the *there* in *There is a dog* and the one in *A dog is there*, but two year olds don’t (84-85). Children as old as six or seven who are asked whether a dog has tails will answer “yes,” whereas adults say “no” (164). Many preschool children who are shown a picture of several girls each wearing a sweater will point to just one of the girls when asked *Who is wearing a sweater?* (p. 174), they’ll provide just one answer when asked *Who ate what?* in situations that call for multiple answers (“John ate the cookie, Mary ate the cake, ...”) (180), and they’ll deny that every boy is riding a bike if shown a picture in which each of three boys is riding a bike and one bike has no rider (185).

Still other examples raise questions that remain to be answered - perhaps with the help of experiments that Roeper invites his readers to do for themselves. Do children grasp the difference between *all* and *every*? Show them a group of boxes and a group of circles, then ask them to do two simple things: point to all the boxes and point to every circle. Children who have figured out the *all-every* contrast will point to the entire group of boxes, but to individual circles. (94-95)

Have children figured out the effect that *not* has on the interpretation of *all*? Show them three plates - one containing just nickels, one containing just pennies, and the other containing a mixture of two types of coins. Then ask, "Show me the plate where the coins are not all pennies" (92).

Children know from a young age that a sentence such as *John saw his mother and so did Bill* can mean either that Bill saw John's mother or that he saw his own mother, but do they know that *John saw his mother and Bill saw his* can mean only that Bill saw his own mother? There's a way to test that too. There's even a way to figure out whether children know the difference between *Ooops* and *Uh-oh!* (40-41).

Roeper's discussion is full of contrasts like these, all designed to awaken the reader to the subtle complexities of human language and its importance for our understanding of human nature. As he has done throughout his career, he calls upon Universal Grammar, which he calls "a biological gift" (83), to help explain why language is the way it is and how children are able to acquire it with such success and apparent ease. Grammar, Roeper suggests, "is just like our arms and legs - an apparatus that we have from birth, whose uses we refine by experience" (247).

Readers need to know that this hypothesis is more contentious and controversial than Roeper would have us believe when he estimates that Universal Grammar is "accepted by the vast majority of linguists" (13). But beyond this caveat, I have no criticism to make of *The Prism of Grammar*. It is a superb book worthy of the attention of anyone committed to an understanding of language and its place in the larger study of development, cognition, and humanity.

William O'Grady is Professor of Linguistics at the University of Hawaii. He is the author of several books on child language development, including *Syntactic Development* (1997), *Syntactic Carpentry: An Emergentist Approach to Syntax* (2004) and *How Children Learn Language* (2005).

More feedback on *The Prism*:

The Prism of Grammar provides a source of inspiration and interest in language for diverse audiences. The book proves to be a good way to get students into experimental work in a casual way at first (and, not surprisingly, Prof. Roeper himself uses the book as a text in his acquisition class). He has discovered that college students enjoy carrying out experiments introduced in the book on other students. He finds that the most interesting and tantalizing results come from using some of the explorations with L2 speakers.

The book would be a good source for language experiments with elementary school children, as these informal explorations into language are bound to bring language alive in the classroom. Tom Roeper's informal discussions show that, for example, children around 8 or 9 love to discuss the difference between "uh-oh" and "oops". The book has in fact been used by a junior high school teacher, who has been exploring how to talk

about grammar with 7th graders. Furthermore, one doctor has shown interest in connecting the explorations introduced in the book to tests on language done by paediatricians.

But non-linguists and non-teachers also get inspired by the book. A non-linguist in Russia discovered the book and commented that it had a really interesting perspective on people and language. Because he enjoyed the book so much, he scanned it and offered it for free on the internet. When The MIT Press was informed of this, they chased down the owners of the website and got them to take the copy down. As the author of *The Prism* remarks: 'I guess it is an unusual sort of support for a book.' The book was published by The MIT Press in 2007 and more details are available on their website at <http://mitpress.mit.edu>.

FURTHER ANNOUNCEMENTS

The 2009 Eleanor Maccoby book award

Nominations are invited for the 2009 Eleanor Maccoby book award given by APA Division 7 (Developmental). The award is made to the author (not an editor) of a book in psychology that has had or promises to have a profound effect on the field of developmental psychology or any of its areas. Co-authored books may be nominated. Books published in 2007 and 2008 are eligible for the award this year.

Nominations should be sent to the chair of the Book Award Committee, [Katherine Nelson](#). They must include the author's name and address, the name of the book, publication date, publisher's name and address, and a brief description of the book's content and contribution to the field. **Nominations must be received by February 1, 2009.** Self nominations are welcome.

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 approximately twice a year. The Bulletin is available on the IASCL web-page at <http://www.iascl.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 a wonderful source of new data and new ideas that are not always easily accessible before publication.

Please 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.

I am looking forward to receiving your submissions!

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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
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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

If you did not attend the IASCL conference in Edinburgh, and you have not yet renewed your membership, you can do so now. Current membership fees are £50 for regular members, and £27 for students. Members are eligible for a substantial discount for volumes 1-6 of TiLAR, and for a reduced subscription fee to the following journals: the Journal of Child Language, First Language, and the International Journal of Bilingualism. Your fees will contribute to the organization of the upcoming Congress in Montréal and they will be especially valuable in the provision of student travel bursaries. You can renew your membership by contacting [Anna Theakston](#), Treasurer. For more information, please visit <http://www.iascl.org/join.html>.