

## LING 641 - Psycholinguistics II

Colin Phillips

Monday/Wednesday, 12:30-2:00 (or slightly earlier), 1108B Marie Mount Hall

### OBJECTIVES

This course is concerned with classic and contemporary challenges in the study of language learning and language processing, and with possible ways of combining these areas.

Traditional rationalist approaches to grammar learning (e.g., in the *Principles and Parameters* approach) have reached a crisis point, because (i) learning models are not as straightforward as anticipated, (ii) cross-language variation is more acute than was assumed previously, and (iii) developmental evidence for parameter setting is less than overwhelming. However, underlying learning problem (e.g., need for abstract generalizations) has not changed significantly, and the recent wave of research on distributional learning has tended to avoid the hard problems that motivated parameter setting models. Nevertheless, this line of research has uncovered important insights that may turn out to be invaluable in resolving the ‘hard’ problems.

Meanwhile, research on real-time language processing has seen important developments in recent years. More refined questions are being asked about how grammatical information is encoded, how information is accessed and retrieved from memory, how speakers compare expectations with input, and how they process ungrammatical input. Many of these findings are potentially relevant to understanding existing findings about grammatical development and to framing the language learning problem.

Continuing the goals of Psycholinguistics I (LING 640) the course covers the issues and results of psycholinguistics and also the nuts and bolts of psycholinguistic methods. However, the course has a greater focus on exploring directions for new research. The course also presupposes more background in linguistic theory than was the case for LING 640.

### REQUIREMENTS

(i) Be prepared and be engaged in the course (15%)

(ii) Lab and writing assignments ((ii) + (iii) together 85%)

(iii) Main class project: development and write-up of a novel group research project

The class project will be on a topic that we will develop together. In the past this has sometimes led to conference presentations or to publications (e.g., Conroy et al., 2009, *Linguistic Inquiry*; Omaki et al. 2007, CUNY Conference; Kush et al. 2009, CUNY Conference).

### READINGS

Readings will be available electronically, either through the university libraries or from a class readings page. Location to be announced in class. Please save trees!

### GRADES

In order to give you more opportunity to receive credit for ‘going the extra mile’, the course will use a grading scale that allows for a greater spread.

A = 80%+      A- = 75-80%  
B+ = 70-75%    B = 65-70%    B- = 60-65%      etc.

(Note that Graduate School rules require a GPA of B or higher for continued enrollment.)

## SCHEDULE [sure to evolve]

1. Jan 26	Introduction - Overview	Homework 1
2. Jan 28	Learning: Defining the problem	Chomsky 1975 (ch 1); Gallistel 2007; Pinker 1989 (ch 1); Goro 2007 (ch 1, ch3)
3. Feb 2	What children know (... and how we find out)	Homework 2/Lab: Experimental design (due Feb 11); Lidz 2007; Crain & Nakayama 1987; Fox & Grodzinsky 1998
4. Feb 4	What children know (... and how we find out)	Conroy et al. 2009; Goro 2007 (ch 2); Zukowski & Larsen 2007
5. Feb 9	Challenge I: learning models	Snyder 2007 (excerpts); Fodor & Sakas 2004; Yang 2002 (excerpt)
6. Feb 11	Challenge II: cross-language variation	Bresnan & Nikitina 2007; Dabrowska 1997; Han et al. 2007
7. Feb 16	Challenge III: learning models	Scholz & Pullum 2006; Perfors et al. 2007
8. Feb 18	Challenge III: learning models	Lidz et al. 2003; Regier & Gahl 2004; Pearl & Lidz 2007; Foraker et al. 2007
9. Feb 23	TBA	
10. Feb 25	TBA	
11. Mar 2	Learning studies: distributional learning	Gomez & Maye 2005; Gomez & Lakusta 2004; Thompson & Newport 2007
12. Mar 4	Learning studies: structural priming	Branigan (in press); Savage et al. 2006; Thothatiri & Snedeker 2006; Chang, Dell, & Bock 2006.
13. Mar 9	Language Processing	Townsend & Bever 2001; Phillips 2004; Berwick & Weinberg 1984 [excerpts]
14. Mar 11	Parsing: Generation & Selection	Van Gompel & Pickering 2007; Boland & Cutler 1996; Ferreira & Clifton 1986; Frazier & Fodor 1978
15. Mar 23	TBA	
16. Mar 25	TBA	
17. Mar 30	Parsing: Generation & Selection	Tanenhaus et al. 1995; Garnsey et al. 1997;
18. Apr 1	Parsing: Generation & Selection	Boland et al. 1995; Traxler & Pickering 2003; Aoshima et al. 2004
19. Apr 6	Grammatical Accuracy	Phillips & Wagers 2007; Wagers & Phillips 2009
20. Apr 8	Grammatical Accuracy	Sturt 2003; Runner et al. 2005; Badecker & Straub 2002; Kazanina et al. 2007
21. Apr 13	Grammatical Accuracy	Wagers et al. 2008; Ferreira & Patson 2007
22. Apr 15	TBA	
23. Apr 20	Memory encoding and retrieval	Jonides et al. 2007; McElree 2006
24. Apr 22	Memory encoding and retrieval	McElree et al. 2003; Lewis & Vasishth 2005; Xiang et al. 2009
25. Apr 27	Production: Grammatical Encoding	Ferreira & Slevc 2007
26. Apr 29	Production: Grammatical Encoding	Bock et al. 1992; Pickering & Branigan 1998; Pickering & Garrod 2007
27. May 4	Child language processing	Trueswell et al. 1998
28. May 6	Child language processing	Snedeker et al.
29. May 11	Wrap-up	

## CITATIONS (selected)

- Branigan, H. (in press). Syntactic priming. *Language and Linguistics Compass*.
- Bresnan, J. & T. Nikitina. (2007). The gradience of the dative alternation. In: L. Uyechi & L. H. Wee (eds.) *Reality exploration and discovery: Pattern interaction in language and life*. Stanford: CSLI Publications.
- Chomsky, N. (1975). *Reflections on language*. NY: Praeger. [chapter 1]
- Conroy, S., E. Takahashi, J. Lidz, & C. Phillips. (2008). Equal treatment for all antecedents: How children succeed with Principle B. *submitted*.
- Crain, S. & M. Nakayama. (1987). Structure dependence in grammar formation. *Language*, 63, 52-543.
- Dabrowska, E. (1997). The LAD goes to school: A cautionary tale for nativists. *Linguistics*, 35: 735-766.
- Ferreira, V. & L. R. Slevc. (2007). Grammatical encoding. In G. Gaskell (ed.), *Oxford Handbook of Psycholinguistics*, pp. 453-470. Oxford UP.
- Fodor, J. D. & W. G. Sakas. (2004). Evaluating models of parameter setting. *Proceedings of BUCLD 28*. Somerville, MA: Cascadilla Press.
- Foraker, S., T. Regier, N. Khetarpal, A. Perfors, & J. Tenenbaum. (2007). Indirect evidence and the poverty of the stimulus: The case of anaphoric *one*. *Proceedings of CogSci 29*.
- Fox, D. & Y. Grodzinsky. (1998). Children's passive: A view from the by-phrase. *Linguistic Inquiry*, 29, 311-332.
- Gallistel, C. R. (2007). Learning organs. Published in French in J. Bricmont & J. Franck (eds.), *Cahier #88: Noam Chomsky*, pp. 181-187. Paris: L'Herne.
- Gómez, R. L. & J. Maye. (2005). The developmental trajectory of non-adjacent dependency learning. *Infancy*, 7, 183-206.
- Gómez, R. L. & L. Lakusta. (2004). A first step in form-based category abstraction by 12-month infants. *Developmental Science*, 7, 567-580.
- Goro, T. (2007). *Language-specific constraints on scope interpretation in first language acquisition*. PhD dissertation, U. of Maryland. [chapters 1-3]
- Han, C., J. Lidz, & J. Musolino. (2007). V-raising and grammar competition in Korean: Evidence from negation and quantifier scope. *Linguistic Inquiry*, 38, 1-47.
- Lidz, J. (2007). The abstract nature of syntactic representations. In: E. Hoff & M. Shatz (eds.), *Handbook of Language Development*, pp. 277-303. Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- Lidz, J., S. Waxman, & J. Freedman. (2003). What infants know about syntax but couldn't have learned: Experimental evidence for syntactic structure at age 18-months. *Cognition*, 89, B65-B73.
- Pearl, L. & J. Lidz. (2007). When domain general learning succeeds and when it fails: Identifying the contribution of domain-specificity. *submitted*.
- Perfors, A., J. Tenenbaum, & T. Regier. (2007). The learnability of abstract syntactic principles. Ms.
- Phillips, C. & M. Wagers. (2007). Relating structure and time in linguistics and psycholinguistics. In: G. Gaskell (ed.) *Oxford Handbook of Psycholinguistics*, pp. 739-756. Oxford UP.
- Pinker, S. (1989). *Learnability and cognition*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. [chapter 1]
- Regier, T. & S. Gahl. (2004). Learning the unlearnable: The role of missing evidence. *Cognition*, 93, 147-155.
- Scholz, B. & G. Pullum. (2006). Irrational nativist exuberance. In R. Stainton (ed.), *Contemporary debates in Cognitive Science*, pp. 59-80. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Snyder, W. (2007). *Child language: The parametric approach*. Oxford UP.
- Thompson, S. P. & E. L. Newport. (2007). Statistical learning of syntax: The role of transitional probability. *Language Learning & Development*, 3, 1-42.
- van Gompel, R. & M. Pickering. (2007). Syntactic parsing. In: G. Gaskell (ed.) *Oxford Handbook of Psycholinguistics*, pp. 289-307. Oxford UP.
- Yang, C. (2002). *Knowledge and learning in natural language*. Oxford UP.
- Zukowski, A. & J. Larsen. (2007). *Wanna-contraction in typical children and people with Williams Syndrome*. *submitted*.