



Language Science Colloquium 2016-17

Monday, June 5th

Time: 11:00-12:30 pm

Location: 1321 Social and Behavioral Sciences Gateway Building

Lunch will be provided.

Lisa Pearl, University of California, Irvine

“The development of verb classes: A computational adventure with implications for linguistic theory”

The process of language acquisition draws on a variety of information sources, including conceptual, syntactic, and thematic cues. In this talk, I investigate the development of verb classes, which capture the distribution of linguistic contexts that verbs can be used in and aid rapid generalization of verb knowledge. I evaluate existing representational theories synthesizing conceptual, thematic, and syntactic cues in different ways by embedding these theories in a computational model of the acquisition process. Through modeling, we can then see which theories allow acquisition to proceed the way we observe in children. This computational evaluation involves specifying several aspects of acquisition concretely, including (i) what children know already, (ii) what data children are learning from, and (iii) what children seem to learn when. I discuss current findings about the theoretical proposals that are best able to match the developmental trajectory of children’s behavior from three to five years old.

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