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What's New In Language Acquisition?

Chairs: Steven Pinker & Kenneth Wexler, MIT

Linguistic facts that our parents never taught us. *Stephen Crain, Department of Linguistics, University of Connecticut.* I present the findings of several studies of young children's knowledge of grammatical phenomena for which there is no corresponding input from the environment. The findings are interpreted as support for the principles of Universal Grammar.

Feature Blindness: An Inherited Disorder of Grammar. *Myrna Gopnik, Department of Linguistics, McGill University.* I discuss a syndrome of inherited developmental dysphasia that selectively impairs the productive use of morphological features, and that appears to be controlled by a single dominant gene.

Why do children overregularize? *Steven Pinker, Department of Brain and Cognitive Sciences, MIT; Alan Prince, Program in Linguistics and Cognitive Science, Brandeis University; Michelle Hollander, John Kim, Gary Marcus, Sandeep Prasada, Michael Ullman, Department of Brain and Cognitive Sciences, MIT.* Why do children make errors like *breaked*? Why do they get worse as they get older? How often do they make them? Why do they make more errors with some verbs than others? When do they get better, and why? We present new data on all these questions, and discuss their relevance to the debate about rule-based and associationist theories of language acquisition.

The Development of Structural Relations in Child Language: Binding and Types of Movement. *Kenneth Wexler, Department of Brain and Cognitive Sciences, MIT.* Results are presented of experiments which show young children's knowledge of the abstract principles of structural binding and movement. Questions relating to the learning of language-specific properties and of the maturation of linguistic principles are discussed.