



Department of
Linguistics and Modern Languages

語言學及現代語言系

Understanding Early Child Grammar

Prof. Rushen SHI
Université du Québec à Montréal

Date: December 12, 2023 (Tuesday)
Time: 4:30pm - 6:15pm (Hong Kong Time, UTC +8)
Venue: Room 206, Lee Shau Kee Building,
The Chinese University of Hong Kong

Abstract

Functional categories are a crucial part of the grammar. These items are missing in children's early speech, which is dominated by lexical words. This telegraphic characteristic led to the conventional view that grammatical knowledge is absent during the initial years of life, and that children learn functional items late with the help of their knowledge of lexical words. In this talk I will argue for a contrasting account of grammatical acquisition: the prosody-functor bootstrapping model. I will present experimental studies demonstrating that infants begin to acquire functional items and use them to break into early grammar from the first year of life. My discussion will also concern the power and limit of distributional learning in language acquisition.

Speaker

Rushen Shi received her PhD in linguistics from Brown University, USA. She was then awarded the prestigious Izaak Walton Killam Postdoctoral Research Fellowship, and did her postdoc research in psychology at the University of British Columbia (UBC). Subsequently, she was a professor in the School of Audiology & Speech Sciences at UBC. She is now a professor in the Psychology Department and the Institut des Sciences Cognitives at the Université du Québec à Montréal. She is the director of the Groupe de Recherche sur le Langage (Language Research Group; <http://www.gr.uqam.ca>).

Professor Shi's research program focuses on early child language, especially the acquisition mechanisms and representations in infants from birth to 2-3 years of age. Based on her research contributions, she won a major award from the Canadian Foundation for Innovation (CFI). She has continuously received grants from the Canadian government, including the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC) and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC).

All Are Welcome

Enquiries

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