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Language Acquisition, Language Loss, and Psycholinguistic Theory

The Wexler ab/Normal Language Lab seeks to understand the nature of the computational system of human language in its many guises. We study most aspects of linguistic structure, including syntax, semantics, pragmatics and morphology. In pursuing these goals, we take as our primary linguistic data abnormal language, by which we mean nothing more than any system of language that seems to differ from standard adult language for biological reasons, including lack of maturation, difficulties in learning, and genetic variation.

Thus we study immature language in the child (the development of language), language learned at an unusually late age where there might be lack of plasticity (second language acquisition), aphasia (language loss) and unusual language due to genetic factors (Specific Language Impairment, Downs & Williams syndrome, autism, etc). In addition, language learning (e.g. parameter-setting) is studied via precise computational models.

The lab integrates insightful ideas from current linguistic theory with intensive and extensive experimental investigations. At the same time, our theoretical and experimental results often feed back into and influence linguistic theory, for there is much evidence about the nature of the computational system of language that is unavailable to traditional linguistic inquiry, but is available under conditions of abnormal language.

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Research Figures



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