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AG 5: Categories and Categorization in First and Second Language Acquisition

What is the nature of categories in learner languages? Since children do not use language in the full specification of the target language, some researchers proposed to name their early categories differently (e.g., pivot-grammar, Braine 1963). But since the mechanisms of the transition from non-target to target categories remained unclear, proponents of nativist accounts proposed continuity between learner- and target language (e.g., Pinker 1989). This, in turn, calls for a specification of the nature and range of innate categories, the processes that activate innate categories, the intermediate states from non-targetlike to target-like usage, and the interaction between universal and language-specific categories. Current emergentist approaches to language acquisition, in contrast, do not consider fixed categories as the basis for syntactic processes, but rather as the result of categorization processes (Tomasello 2003, Smith 2005). In such a perspective, part-of-speech categories are the epiphenomenon of a word's occurrence in various constructions. Universal tendencies would be the result of the cognitive processes of schematization and categorization, including embodiment.

As learner categories change with development, the main challenge is to account for the processing, storage, representation of learner categories, be it in terms of underspecification under the continuity assumption, or in terms of graded representations as in emergentist approaches. We invite theoretical, corpus-based and experimental contributions on categories and processes of categorization dealing with linguistic storage and representation, language processing, first and second language acquisition, artificial language learning, cognitive linguistics, and developmental psychology. Of particular interest are studies that address

- processes of categorization, schematization and (over-)generalization
- degrees of abstractness, generalization and variability of specific categories over developmental time
- exemplar and prototype models
- input and frequency effects
- priming methods
- the acquisition of part of speech categories
- the acquisition of verb-argument structure classes (syntax-semantics interface)

Call for Papers: Authors should submit abstracts of up to 500 words (including references) in a 12 point font (e.g., Times New Roman). Relevant tables and figures may be provided on a second page. References should be formatted according to the APA guidelines.

Talks will be given 30 or 60 minute slots including discussion, depending on the program. Please specify your preferred length in your submission. The workshop languages are German and English for both abstracts and talks. Abstracts should be submitted in .pdf format to karin.madlener@unibas.ch (subject: DGfS 2014 Categories and Categorization).

Deadline for submission: August 15, 2013
Notification of acceptance: September 10, 2013