

The Minnesota Psychological Association cosponsors Distinguished Scholar Lectures with Macalester College's Psychology Department

DISTINGUISHED SCHOLAR LECTURE

Tuesday, April 10, 2018

Words, Sentences and Conversations:
How Children Use Sentence and Discourse Structure to Learn About Words

Cynthia Fisher, Ph.D.

Registration: 5:00 – 5:30 p.m.

Program: 5:30 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.

Location: Macalester College, John B. Davis Lecture Hall
in the Campus Center
62 Macalester Street, St. Paul, MN 55105

This session is at the intermediate level and is designed for psychologists and other mental health professionals.

About the Program:

This program qualifies for 1.5 continuing education credits.

In just a few years, children learn thousands of words. Traditional accounts assume that children learn word meanings largely by linking each word to the objects or events it accompanies. The research conducted by Dr. Fisher and her suggests that children use at least two other sources of information to learn the meanings of words. One source is syntax. From an early age, children begin to learn the syntactic rules that govern how words in their native language can be combined. Their research shows that syntax guides early word learning. When learning verbs in particular, children begin with a bias to map distinct nouns in sentences onto distinct participant-roles in events; as a result, toddlers conclude that "He's blinking him" means something different from "He's blinking." The second source of information is discourse continuity. Young children expect sentences in a conversation to be meaningfully related. The current work shows that this expectation allows children to use the conversational context to recover missing parts of sentences. For example, toddlers use the context question "What's Mom doing?" to make sense of a partial answer, "Blinking the baby!" In this way, partial knowledge of sentence structure, and of the structure of conversation, as well as the objects and events in view, guide early word-learning.

Participants will be able to:

1. Describe various processes that guide children's word-learning.
2. Explain how children use syntactic rules to learn the meaning of different word combinations.
3. Discuss how conversational context influences children's understanding of partial information.

About the Presenters:

Cynthia Fisher, Ph.D. is a Professor of Psychology and Linguistics at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. She is also a faculty member of the Illinois Language and Literacy Initiative at the Beckman Institute, a center for interdisciplinary research at the University. She received her Ph.D. in Psychology from the University of Pennsylvania.

Professor Fisher has received a number of awards, including The American Association of University Women Fellowship, the Arnold O. Beckman Research Award, and the Shannon Director's Award from the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. She was also a visiting scholar at the Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics in the Netherlands. Her work has been funded by the National Science Foundation and the National Institutes of Health.

Please note: You must attend the full 1.5-hour program to receive continuing education credit.

About Distinguished Scholar Lectures:

The Minnesota Psychological Association is approved by the American Psychological Association to sponsor continuing education for psychologists. The Minnesota Psychological Association maintains responsibility for this program and its content.

FEES: Admission is free to all members of the community; a small fee will be assessed for those who wish to receive a continuing education certificate (\$20 for professionals or \$5 for full-time students).

CONFIRMATION/CANCELLATION: Registrations are confirmed by receipt of forms on a first-come, first-served basis. You will receive an emailed confirmation of your registration. You will be notified by mail, e-mail or telephone if your selection is filled or cancelled.

REFUND POLICY: A 100% refund will be made if the event is cancelled. Refunds, less a \$5 handling fee, will be given if a written cancellation is received at least two working days before the scheduled program begins. Transfer of fee to another program is granted if written cancellation notice is received at least one day before the program. No refund or transfer is given the day of the program.



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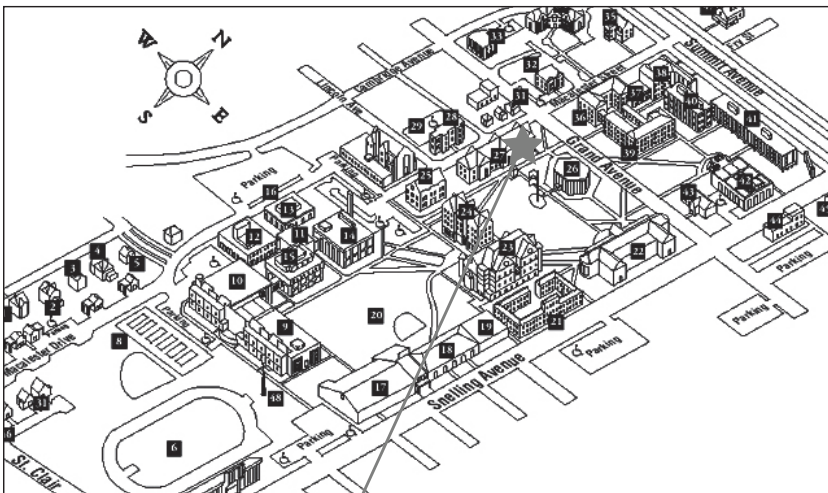
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