

INTRODUCTION TO THE VIRTUAL CENTER FOR CHILD LANGUAGE ACQUISITION RESEARCH

We are creating a Virtual Center for the study of Language Acquisition through the use of the internet to exchange materials and data across laboratories currently concerned with the study of child language acquisition. Through a recent NSF Planning Grant (BCS0126546) we initiated planning to develop the Infrastructure for this Virtual Center. In this planning stage, six US laboratories at six institutions which are concerned with first language acquisition in the child, including childhood bilingualism, and multilingualism, form the core of this Virtual Center. The Cornell Language Acquisition Lab, at the lead institution, is in turn linked to the Sackler Institute for Developmental Psychology at the Cornell Weill Medical College.

The proposed infrastructure is to be executed through the development and dissemination of new World Wide Web materials to support and develop collaborative cross-linguistic scientific primary research in all areas of language acquisition. These materials comprise a Virtual Linguistics Lab (VLL) which will include a set of internet-available materials to guide primary linguistic research in the area of language acquisition through a web based graphical user interface. These materials provide the basis for exchange of knowledge and data across laboratories leading to collaborative research and educational initiatives which can allow each individual laboratory at each institution new power and scope through interaction with the Center.

Ultimately, the proposed Virtual Center will be extended to networking with other labs which focus on second or multi-language acquisition in the adult, and to other labs

which are practicing neuroscientific methods of study of language acquisition. In addition, it will be networked with several international labs in India, Peru and Taiwan, as well as other countries, allowing a wide expansion of the exchange of knowledge (including both data and scientific methods) in the field.

The Virtual Center is designed to allow infinite and open-ended dissemination of materials and data ultimately. Through our NSF planning grant we are establishing the prototypes for the required infrastructure and the necessary preliminary interaction among collaborators in order to design and construct this infrastructure.