

# Beyond chunks and rules: exploring uses of partial knowledge in grammar development

**Dr Colin Bannard**  
(University of Liverpool)

Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> November 2014, 12.00 – 13.30  
Lecture Theatre 9, Management School  
Lancaster University

**ALL WELCOME**

## **Abstract**

It has long been recognized that there is an early stage in children's development of multiword speech in which their knowledge consists at least partially of speech formulas, often described as "unanalysed chunks". In recent years this knowledge has been put at the heart of some theories of development, with grammar being claimed to emerge from the knowledge of familiar sequences. The details of this process, however, remain almost entirely obscure. Furthermore, while it is often implicitly assumed that formulaic knowledge atrophies once the child becomes productive, recent research suggests that such knowledge continues into later childhood and even adulthood. Any account thus faces the challenge of explaining how such formulaic routines and productive knowledge coexist. In this talk, I will discuss multiple recent experimental studies that begin to probe this ground between rote imitation and productivity. I will situate this within a more general discussion of what it means to have partial knowledge of a domain of behaviour, and why developing better ways to describe and examine such knowledge is essential.

## **Speaker Biography**

Colin Bannard is Lecturer in Psychology at the University of Liverpool. He received his PhD from the School of Informatics at the University of Edinburgh for work in Computational and Psycholinguistics. He then did a postdoc in the Department of Psychology at the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology in Leipzig, where his work switched to focus exclusively on child language acquisition. Prior to arriving in Liverpool he was an Assistant Professor in the Linguistics Department at the University of Texas at Austin. His interests include children's statistical learning, the relative contributions of habitual and intentional process in language use, and individual differences in how children turn the finite sample of language they hear into a productive system for communication. Much of his work focuses on using corpora of child-directed speech to make predictions about early language production, which are then tested in the lab.

## **Directions**

Details for getting to Lancaster University can be found on their [website](#). The Management School is building number 52 on the [Lancaster University Campus Map](#).

## **Further information**

For further information about this seminar, please contact [k.twomey@lancaster.ac.uk](mailto:k.twomey@lancaster.ac.uk) or about LuCiD, please contact [helen.allwood@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:helen.allwood@manchester.ac.uk)

The ESRC International Centre for Language and Communicative Development (LuCiD)  
is a collaboration between the Universities of Lancaster, Liverpool and Manchester, funded by ESRC grant ES/L008955/1



The University of Manchester