

Tense and Aspect in Child Language

Instructor: Ioana Stoicescu

The goal of the course is to introduce students to a vibrant area of child language research, namely the acquisition of two of the verbal categories: tense and aspect. The course will provide a revision of key notions (tense, grammatical aspect, situation type aspect) and will present the mechanisms through which children build their grammar of tense and aspect. We will be discussing questions such as the following:

- a) Why are two-year-old English-speaking children more likely to produce utterances like *Daddy gone out* rather than *Daddy going out*, while Romanian-speaking children are very keen on *perfect compus* eventive utterances (*a ieşit*) rather than *prezent* eventives (*iese*)?
- b) Why are the children's root infinitive utterances (*Dormir petit bébé*) more likely to be eventive than stative?

The course also touches on larger issues related to the study of child language (e.g., language as a bioprogram or a cultural artefact), with a focus on the relevance of language acquisition research for general linguistic theory.

Topics

- 1: An introduction to language acquisition
- 2: Tense, grammatical and situational aspect
- 3: The Aspect First Hypothesis (Antinucci and Miller 1976, Bloom *et al.* 1980)
- 4: The Semantic Complexity Hypothesis (Slabakova 2002, van Hout 2008)
- 5: The Morphology Sensitive Model (Bertinetto *et al.* 2015)
- 6: The acquisition of verb semantics – manner vs endstate boot strapping
- 7: Transitivity and its impact on the acquisition of telicity; predicate effects
- 8: Non-finite clauses in early child speech and their aspectual properties
- 9: The past tense debate
- 10: The acquisition of grammatical aspect and tense

Course requirements: attendance and participation

Final grade: 20 % attendance and participation
80 % final home assignment

Maximum number of students: 35