

The Department of Linguistics
is pleased to present

Charles Yang

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speaking on

Learnability vs. Grammar

Friday, April 19, 2019

1:20 PM

Location: HUM 1 - Room 210

Abstract:

Both the linguist and the child are tasked with capturing significant linguistic generalizations, which gives rise to a tension between learning and the theory of grammar. In this talk, I explore a learnability based approach to grammar, focusing three well-studied topics in English: certain selectional restrictions in derivational morphology, the verbal and adjectival passives, and the dative constructions. In all three cases, generalizations believed to be significant turn out to be marginal, and thus not worthy of codifying in the architectural principles of grammar. If successful, a learnability-based approach will, at least in part, shift the burden of explanatory adequacy away from the machinery of UG, leading to a less complex conception of language and its place in cognition.