

Plenaries

September 10th, Saturday

9:30-10:30

Moving Generative SLA from Knowledge of Constraints to Production Data in Educational Settings

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This talk will begin by reviewing generative-based research from the past ten years. It will highlight some of the key findings and methodological tools from sentence processing research (e.g., Juffs & Rodriguez, 2014) and morphological processing (e.g., Clahsen et al, 2010; Diependale et al., 2011). Based on these findings, I will suggest that many questions that have concerned formal SLA ('access to UG', issues regarding 'shallow' processing and morphological 'insensitivity') are being resolved in favor of a view that, given time and exposure, adult L2 learners can demonstrate knowledge that approaches (bilingual) 'native speakers' (see also Slabakova et al., 2014). However, I argue that to remain relevant to a broader audience of applied linguists, L2 research based on linguistic theory should account not just for knowledge of constraints on language, but also for what students produce in output over time. Based on data collected in the English Language Institute at Pitt, I will make the case that corpus-based research that is informed by (formal) linguistics is necessary in a field that is dominated by scholars who see frequency and input as the (main) determining factors in acquisition. I will present data from lexical, phonological, and morpho-syntactic development from students who have studied in an intensive English program over three semesters and show that the level of detail a linguistic analysis provides is one that can be useful to SLA research and language educators alike.

