

## Laurel Perkins

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### Research Interests

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Behavioral and computational study of syntax and semantics acquisition: argument structure, *wh*-movement, verb learning and event representations, computational models of learning and parsing in development

### Positions

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2020 - Assistant Professor, Department of Linguistics, University of California, Los Angeles  
2020 Postdoctoral Fellow, Laboratoire de Sciences Cognitives et Psycholinguistique, Ecole Normale Supérieure

### Education and Training

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2014-2019 Ph.D. in Linguistics, University of Maryland, College Park  
Dissertation: "[How Grammars Grow: Argument Structure and the Acquisition of Non-Basic Syntax](#)." Advisor: Jeffrey Lidz  
2013-2014 Research Assistant, Language Acquisition Research Center, Hunter College, CUNY  
PI: Virginia Valian  
2005-2010 Honors B.A. with High Distinction in Literary Studies, University of Toronto  
Minors: Italian Language, Near & Middle Eastern Civilization  
2008-2010 Artist Diploma with Honors in Vocal Performance, University of Toronto

### Grants, Fellowships, and Awards

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2024-2027 NSF Grant, "Collaborative Research: Non-local syntactic dependency acquisition in infancy" (NSF #BCS-2236013/2236014). Lead PI, with Jeffrey Lidz. \$220,100.  
2024-2025 [UCLA Society of Hellman Fellows Award](#), "Topic-Comment structure in thought and language acquisition." \$19,400.  
2024-2025 [UCLA Social Impact Collaborative Exploratory Grant](#), "Diversifying language development research in Los Angeles: Learning Spanish and English in children from 0-6." With Victoria Mateu. \$10,000.  
2023-2025 NSF Doctoral Dissertation Improvement Grant, "Doctoral Dissertation Research: Computational Investigation of Extralinguistic Cognition in Developmental Parsing" (NSF #BCS-2314618). With Katya Khlystova. \$8,720.  
2023 Faculty Research Grant, "Children's acquisition of intransitive verb classes in Spanish," UCLA Academic Senate. \$7,760.  
2020 Postdoctoral Study Grant, "Representing subjects and objects in infancy: A behavioral and computational investigation," [Fyssen Foundation](#). With Anne Christophe. €30,000.  
2020 [Robert J. Glushko Dissertation Prize](#), Cognitive Science Society. \$10,000.  
2018-2020 NSF Doctoral Dissertation Improvement Grant, "Doctoral Dissertation Research: Behavioral and Computational Investigation of Transitivity in the Acquisition of Non-Basic Syntax" (NSF #BCS-1827709). With Jeffrey Lidz and Naomi Feldman. \$15,653.  
2019 Howard Lasnik Award for Distinguished Teaching by a Graduate Student, University of Maryland Linguistics Department  
2015-2019 Fellow, [NSF-NRT Training Program](#), "NRT-DESE: Flexibility in Language Processes and Technology: Human- and Global-Scale" (NSF: #DGE-1449815), University of Maryland

2014-2019 [Flagship Fellow](#), University of Maryland

## Publications

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### Papers

- Under review **L. Perkins** & T. Hunter. “Modeling regularization in language acquisition as noise-tolerant grammar selection.” [[lingbuzz](#)]
- Under review **L. Perkins**, N.H. Feldman, & J. Lidz. “Mind the Gap: Learning the surface forms of movement dependencies.” [[lingbuzz](#)]
- 2024 **L. Perkins**, T. Knowlton, A. Williams, & J. Lidz. “[Thematic content, not number matching, drives syntactic bootstrapping.](#)” *Language Learning and Development*, DOI: 10.1080/15475441.2024.2372663.
- 2024 E. Khlystova, A. Williams, J. Lidz & **L. Perkins**. “[Visual perception supports 4-place event representations: A case study of TRADING.](#)” *Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society, Volume 46 (CogSci 2024)*.
- 2023 **L. Perkins** & T. Hunter. “[Noise-tolerant learning as selection among deterministic grammatical hypotheses.](#)” *Proceedings of the 6<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Society for Computation in Linguistics (SCiL 2023)*.
- 2023 S. Maitra & **L. Perkins**. “[Filtering input for learning constrained grammatical variability: The case of Spanish word order.](#)” *Proceedings of the 6<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Society for Computation in Linguistics (SCiL 2023)*.
- 2023 V. Mateu, **L. Perkins**, & N. Hyams. “[Learning unaccusativity: Evidence for split intransitivity in child Spanish.](#)” *Proceedings of the 97<sup>th</sup> Linguistics Society of America Annual Meeting*.
- 2022 **L. Perkins**, N. H. Feldman, & J. Lidz. “[The power of ignoring: Filtering input for argument structure acquisition.](#)” *Cognitive Science*, 46 (1) e13080; DOI: 10.1111/cogs.13080.
- 2021 **L. Perkins** & J. Lidz. “[Eighteen-month-old infants represent nonlocal syntactic dependencies.](#)” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 118 (41) e2026469118; DOI: 10.1073/pnas.2026469118.
- 2020 J. Schneider, **L. Perkins**, & N. H. Feldman. “[A Noisy Channel Model for Systematizing Unpredictable Input Variation.](#)” M. M Brown & A. Kohut (eds.), *Proceedings of the 44th Annual Boston University Conference on Language Development: 533-547*. Cascadia Press.
- 2020 **L. Perkins** & J. Lidz. “[Filler-gap dependency comprehension at 15 months: The role of vocabulary.](#)” *Language Acquisition*, 27(1): 98-115.
- 2018 J. Lidz & **L. Perkins**. “[The importance of input representations.](#)” *Linguistic Approaches to Bilingualism*, 8(6): 743-748.
- 2017 **L. Perkins**, N. H. Feldman, & J. Lidz. “[Learning an Input Filter for Argument Structure Acquisition.](#)” *Proceedings of the 7th Workshop on Cognitive Modeling and Computational Linguistics*.

### Chapters

- 2023 **L. Perkins** & J. Lidz. “[Behavioral Acquisition Methods with Infants.](#)” J. Sprouse (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Experimental Syntax*.
- 2018 J. Lidz & **L. Perkins**. “[Language Acquisition.](#)” J. Wixted (ed.), *The Stevens’ Handbook of Experimental Psychology and Cognitive Neuroscience*, Fourth Edition, Volume 4.

### Volumes Edited

- 2016 **L. Perkins**, R. Dudley, J. Gerard, & K. Hitzenko (Eds). *Proceedings of the 6<sup>th</sup> Conference on Generative Approaches to Language Acquisition North America (GALANA 2015)*.

## Presentations

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### Conference Talks

- 2024 E. Khlystova, A. Williams, J. Lidz & **L. Perkins**. “Visual perception supports 4-place event representations: A case study of TRADING.” Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society (CogSci 2024), Rotterdam.
- 2023 S. Maitra & **L. Perkins**. “Filtering input for learning constrained grammatical variability: The case of Spanish word order.” 6th meeting of the Society for Computation in Linguistics (SCiL 2023), Amherst.
- 2021 **L. Perkins**, Y. Ying, A. Williams, & J. Lidz. “Object *wh*-questions with unknown verbs are transitive for 20-month-olds.” 46<sup>th</sup> Boston University Conference on Language Development (BUCLD 46), Boston/Online.
- 2021 **L. Perkins** & J. Lidz. “Non-Local Syntactic Dependencies in Infancy: *Wh*-Question Representations Develop Between 14- and 18-Months.” Symposium on “Beyond Categories: Infant Syntax Above the Word Level” (**L. Perkins**, chair, & J. Lidz, discussant), 2021 Biennial Meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development (SRCD), Minneapolis/Online.
- 2020 M. Hirzel, **L. Perkins**, & J. Lidz. “19-month-olds parse *wh*-questions incrementally.” 45<sup>th</sup> Boston University Conference on Language Development (BUCLD 45), Boston/Online.
- 2019 A. Williams, **L. Perkins**, & J. Lidz. “Transitive clauses can describe 3-participant events: Evidence against one-to-one matching between arguments and participants in verb learning.” 44<sup>th</sup> Boston University Conference on Language Development (BUCLD 44), Boston.
- 2019 J. Lidz & **L. Perkins**. “The Development of *Wh*-Question Representations in Infancy: Evidence from 15- and 18-Month-Olds.” 44<sup>th</sup> Boston University Conference on Language Development (BUCLD 44), Boston.
- 2019 J. Schneider, **L. Perkins**, & N.H. Feldman. “A noisy channel model for systematizing unpredictable input variation.” 44<sup>th</sup> Boston University Conference on Language Development (BUCLD 44), Boston.
- 2019 H. Muller, P. Gaston, B. Dickerson, K. Durvasula, M. Hirzel, K. Hitczenko, M. Kandel, A. Liter, P. Lyskawa, J. Nelligan, M. Papillon, and **L. Perkins**. “Gender bias in representation and publishing rates across subfields.” 93<sup>rd</sup> Annual Meeting of the Linguistics Society of America, New York.
- 2017 **L. Perkins**, N.H. Feldman, & J. Lidz. “Learning to Filter Non-Basic Clauses for Argument Structure Acquisition.” 42<sup>nd</sup> Boston University Conference on Language Development (BUCLD 42), Boston.
- 2017 J. Lidz, A. Williams, & **L. Perkins**. “Conceptual correlates of transitivity in early verb learners.” Symposium on Event concepts and early word learning, 42<sup>nd</sup> Boston University Conference on Language Development (BUCLD 42), Boston.
- 2017 **L. Perkins**. “Perceiving transitivity: consequences for verb learning.” 7th Annual Mid-Atlantic Colloquium of Studies in Meaning (MACSIM), Washington, D.C.
- 2017 **L. Perkins**, N.H. Feldman, & J. Lidz. “Learning an Input Filter for Argument Structure Acquisition.” 7<sup>th</sup> Workshop on Cognitive Modeling and Computational Linguistics (CMCL), Valencia, Spain.
- 2016 **L. Perkins**, A. X. He, A. Williams, R. Dudley, S. Björnsdóttir, & J. Lidz. “Can intransitive clauses name 2-participant events? A new test of Participant-to-Argument Matching in verb learning.” Pre-CUNY Workshop on Events in Language & Cognition 2016, Gainesville.

### Conference Posters

- 2024 **L. Perkins**, V. Mateu & N. Hyams. “28-month-olds use inferred thematic relations to bootstrap intransitive verb meanings.” 49<sup>th</sup> Boston University Conference on Language Development (BUCLD 49), Boston.

- 2023 **L. Perkins** & T. Hunter. “Noise-tolerant learning as selection among deterministic grammatical hypotheses.” 6th meeting of the Society for Computation in Linguistics (SCiL 2023), Amherst.
- 2023 V. Mateu, **L. Perkins**, & N. Hyams. “Learning unaccusativity: Evidence for split intransitivity in child Spanish.” 97<sup>th</sup> Linguistics Society of America Annual Meeting (LSA 2023), Denver/Online.
- 2022 **L. Perkins**, & T. Hunter. “Word order acquisition from immature representations: A model for noise-tolerant learning of deterministic grammars.” 47<sup>th</sup> Boston University Conference on Language Development (BUCLD 47), Boston.
- 2020 M. Hirzel, **L. Perkins**, & J. Lidz. “19-month-olds represent and incrementally parse filler-gap dependencies.” 33<sup>rd</sup> Annual CUNY Human Sentence Processing Conference, Amherst/Online.
- 2019 **L. Perkins**, N.H. Feldman, & J. Lidz. “Mind the Gap: Learning the Surface Forms of Movement.” 44<sup>th</sup> Boston University Conference on Language Development (BUCLD 44), Boston.
- 2018 **L. Perkins**, T. Knowlton, A. Williams, & J. Lidz. “Matching number vs. linking roles: Using 3-participant scene percepts to understand infants' bootstrapping.” 43<sup>rd</sup> Boston University Conference on Language Development (BUCLD 43), Boston.
- 2018 T. Knowlton, **L. Perkins**, A. Williams, & J. Lidz. “Getting a grip on infants' event representations: participant number in TAKE and PICK-UP.” The XXI Biennial International Congress of Infant Studies (ICIS), Philadelphia.
- 2017 A. Williams, **L. Perkins**, A. X. He, S. Björnsdóttir, & J. Lidz. “A New Test of One-to-One Matching Between Arguments and Participants in Verb Learning.” 42<sup>nd</sup> Boston University Conference on Language Development (BUCLD 42), Boston.
- 2017 J. Lidz & **L. Perkins**. “Vocabulary Predicts Filler-Gap Dependency Comprehension at 15 Months.” 42<sup>nd</sup> Boston University Conference on Language Development (BUCLD 42), Boston.
- 2017 **L. Perkins**, T. Knowlton, M. Hirzel, R. Dudley, A. Williams, & J. Lidz. “Linguistic and Conceptual Structure in Verb Learning.” The James S. McDonnell Plenary Workshop on the Ontogenetic Origins of Combinatorial Thought, San Diego.

### Invited Talks

- 2023 **L. Perkins**. “How to grow a grammar: Noise-tolerant syntax learning in infancy.” Department of Linguistics, University of Maryland, College Park, MD.
- 2022 **L. Perkins**. “Linguistic and event representations in early verb learning.” Integrated Language Science and Technology Seminar, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA.
- 2022 **L. Perkins**. “Filtering input for grammar acquisition.” Summer School on Computational Cognitive Modelling for Language, UC Irvine, Irvine, CA.
- 2022 **L. Perkins**. “Syntactic development in infancy.” Department of Linguistics, University of Rochester, Rochester, NY.
- 2022 **L. Perkins**. “How to grow a grammar: Syntactic development in infancy.” Department of English Literature and Language, Dongguk University, Seoul/Online.
- 2021 **L. Perkins**. “Linguistic and event representations in early verb learning.” Cognitive Development Center, Central European University, Budapest/Online.
- 2021 **L. Perkins**. “How to grow a grammar: Syntactic development in infancy.” Centre for Language Evolution, University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh/Online.
- 2021 **L. Perkins**. “How do grammars grow? Wh-dependency development in infants.” Department of Linguistics, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, Urbana/Online.
- 2020 **L. Perkins**. “How grammars grow: Argument structure and the acquisition of non-basic syntax.” Glushko Symposium, 42<sup>nd</sup> Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society (CogSci 42). Toronto/Online.

- 2020 **L. Perkins.** “How to grow a grammar: Syntactic development in 1-year-olds.” Lectures en linguistique expérimentale, Laboratoire de linguistique formelle, CNRS / Université de Paris, Paris/Online.
- 2019 K. Hitczenko & **L. Perkins.** “Introduction to Bayesian Modeling in Linguistics.” 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the Society for Computation in Linguistics (SCiL), New York.
- 2017 **L. Perkins.** “Perceiving transitivity: consequences for verb learning.” Harvard Language and Cognition Seminar Series, Cambridge, MA.
- 2017 **L. Perkins.** “Perceiving transitivity: consequences for verb learning.” Rutgers Workshop on Word Learning and Linguistic Theory, New Brunswick, NJ.
- 2017 **L. Perkins, N.H. Feldman, & J. Lidz.** “Learning to Filter Non-Basic Clauses for Argument Structure Acquisition.” MIT Workshop on Simplicity in Grammar Learning, Cambridge, MA.

## Teaching

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### UCLA

- Winter 2025 LING254: Topics in Linguistics; Bayesian Models of Language Learning (graduate).
- Winter 2025 LING264: Psycholinguistics/Computational Linguistics Seminar (graduate)
- Fall 2024 LING185A: Computational Linguistics I (undergraduate)
- Fall 2023 LING213A: Grammatical Development (graduate)
- Fall 2023 LING185A: Computational Linguistics I (undergraduate)
- Spring 2023 LING209A: Computational Linguistics I (graduate)
- Winter 2023 LING213A: Grammatical Development (graduate)
- Winter 2023 LING264: Psycholinguistics/Computational Linguistics Seminar (graduate)
- Fall 2022 LING185A: Computational Linguistics I (undergraduate)
- Fall 2022 LING254: Topics in Linguistics; Computational Models of Learning (graduate). With Tim Hunter.
- Spring 2022 LING209A: Computational Linguistics I (graduate)
- Winter 2022 LING185A: Computational Linguistics I (undergraduate)
- Fall 2021 LING254: Topics in Linguistics; Linguistic Knowledge and Extralinguistic Cognition in Grammar Development (graduate)
- Fall 2021 LING264: Psycholinguistics/Computational Linguistics Seminar (graduate)
- Spring 2021 LING185A: Computational Linguistics I (undergraduate)
- Winter 2021 LING254: Topics in Linguistics; Models of Syntax Learning and Learnability (graduate)

### University of Maryland

- Spring 2018 LING449R: Topics in Psycholinguistics; Syntactic and Semantic Arguments in Language Acquisition (undergraduate)
- Fall 2016 TA for LING444: Child Language (undergraduate)
- Spring 2016, Fall 2015 TA for LING200: Introductory Linguistics for Non-Majors (undergraduate)

## Advising

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### Graduate

Doctoral dissertation (chair): Ekaterina (Katya) Khlystova, UCLA. “Extralinguistic Cognition and Verb Argument Structure in Development: Learning and Processing.” (2024)

Doctoral dissertation (committee member): Kalen Chang, Lily Xu, Christian Muxica (ongoing)

MA thesis (committee member): Kevin Liang (2024)

Faculty advisor, [Graduate Summer Research Mentorship](#) fellowship: Kerri Devlin (2021)

## Undergraduate

Honor's Thesis (advisor): Shalinee Maitra, Department of Linguistics, UCLA. "Word Order Acquisition and Subject-Verb Agreement in Spanish." (2022)

Honor's Thesis (co-advisor with Naomi Feldman): Jordan Schneider, Department of Computer Science, University of Maryland. "A Noisy Channel Model for Systematizing Unpredictable Input Variation." (2019)

Research assistants, UCLA: April Alvarez, Itzel Cerecedo, Jocelyn Cortez, Xinyue Cui, Sofia Duffy, Tina Fotouhi, Emily Freedman, Nicole Fuches, Serena Guttridge, Elaine Heidmann, Gabriela Hernandez, Isabella Latcham-Radusky, Ingrid Lopez, Shalinee Maitra, Alexander Gonzalez Paz, Aileen Rodriguez, Ana Sofia Rodriguez, Wendy Rodriguez, Jose Angelo Urrutia, Hanyu Zhou

Research assistants, University of Maryland: Alexander Shushunov, Erika Arrigo, Lillianna Righter, Gbemileke Soyoye, Abigail Kameny, William Simpson, John-Paul Teti

[PULSAR](#) Graduate Fellow (Program for Undergraduate Language Science Ambassadors in Research), University of Maryland Language Science Center. Co-instructor for a seminar to introduce undergraduate students to language science research opportunities in the university. (2015)

## Service

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2024-2025	Search Committee, ladder faculty position in psycholinguistics, UCLA Linguistics Department
2021-	Undergraduate Faculty Advisor for <a href="#">Linguistics &amp; Computer Science Major</a> (with Tim Hunter), UCLA Linguistics Department
2023	Website Committee, UCLA Linguistics Department
2022	Mentor, LSA Committee on Gender Equity in Linguistics <a href="#">Pop-up Mentoring Program</a> , 47 <sup>th</sup> Boston University Conference on Language Development (BUCLD 47), Boston.
2022-	Faculty Awards Nominations Committee, UCLA Linguistics Department
2020-2021, 2023-	Student Research Funds Committee, UCLA Linguistics Department
2021-2022	Chair, Subcommittee on Interdisciplinary Issues, Climate Committee, UCLA Linguistics Department
2018-	<a href="#">Bias in Linguistics Working Group</a> : inter-departmental working group studying issues of representation and equity in the field of linguistics
2017	Organizing Committee, <a href="#">Workshop on Language and Poverty: Home, School, and Society</a> , University of Maryland Language Science Center and Field Committee on Developmental Science
2017	Organizing Committee, <a href="#">Semantics and Linguistic Theory (SALT) 27</a> , University of Maryland
2016-2017	Co-Chair (with Kasia Hitzenko), <a href="#">Outreach Committee</a> , University of Maryland Language Science Center
2015-2017	Colloquium Committee, University of Maryland Linguistics Department
2015-2016	<a href="#">Language Science Day Committee</a> , University of Maryland Language Science Center
2015	Program Committee and Organizing Committee, <a href="#">6<sup>th</sup> Bi-Annual Conference on Generative Approaches to Language Acquisition – North America (GALANA 6)</a> , University of Maryland
2015	Working Group Co-Leader (with Juliana Gerard), "Extralinguistic Contributors to Language Acquisition," <a href="#">Winter Storm</a> , University of Maryland Language Science Center

**Ad-Hoc Manuscript Reviewer**

*Cognitive Psychology, Cognitive Science, Glossa, Glossa Psycholinguistics, Infancy, Journal of Memory and Language, Journal of Experimental Psychology, Language Acquisition, Language and Cognition, Language Learning and Development, Nature Human Behaviour*

**Ad-Hoc Abstract Reviewer**

Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society (CogSci), Conference on Computational Natural Language Learning (CoNLL), Generative Approaches to Language Acquisition North America (GALANA), International Conference on Computational Linguistics (COLING), International Congress of Infant Studies (ICIS), Learning Language in Humans and Machines (L2HM), Society for Computation in Linguistics (SCiL)

**Ad-Hoc Proposal Reviewer**

National Science Foundation Linguistics Program - Doctoral Dissertation Research Improvement Grants (DDR1)

**Professional Memberships**

Association for Computational Linguistics, Cognitive Science Society, International Congress of Infant Studies, Linguistics Society of America

[last updated 1/8/2025]