

Center for Cognitive Science

University at Buffalo, State University of New York

Presents

Distinguished Speaker Series

Thursday, March 14, 2002

Slee Concert Hall, North Campus

3:30 pm – 5:00 pm

"Possible Stages in the Evolution of the Language Faculty"

Ray Jackendoff, Ph.D.

Program in Linguistics and Cognitive Sciences, Brandeis University

The human ability to learn language is a human cognitive specialization, encoded (in some unknown way) in our genes. The evident adaptivity of linguistic communication suggests that this capacity arose through natural selection. It is therefore a challenge for linguistics to find a plausible route by which the features of language could have evolved step by step. I will propose such a route, using evidence from child and adult language acquisition, from aphasia, from pidgin and creole languages, from "language"-trained apes, and from "fossils" of earlier forms of the language capacity still found in modern-day languages.

Ray Jackendoff is Professor of Linguistics at Brandeis University, where he has taught since 1971. He is a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, President-Elect of the Linguistic Society of America, and past President of the Society for Philosophy and Psychology. He is author of *Semantics and Cognition*, *Languages of the Mind*, *Consciousness and the Computational Mind*, and (with Fred Lerdahl) *A Generative Theory of Tonal Music*. His most recent book, *Foundations of Language*, is being published by Oxford University Press this winter.

Co-Sponsored by:

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