Title: Language Acquisition and a Process-Centered View of Language Change
Speaker: Jordan Kodner (Stony Brook University)
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I argue that the actuation of a diverse range of diachronic phenomena in phonology, morphology, and syntax can be subsumed under the process of generalization learning during child language acquisition. These include, among others, a secondary split in 20th century Menominee and instance of phonemicization by phonological `rule reversal' in Middle High German (Richter, 2021), the sporadic `irregularization' of Early Modern English past tense forms (Ringe & Yang, 2022), the analogical extension of minority inflectional patterns at the expense of statistically predominant patterns in Late Latin past participles (Kodner, 2022) and Iranian Armenian aorists (Kodner and Dolatian, *in prep*), `Dative Sickness' ongoing in Icelandic morphosyntax (Nowenstein, 2021), and the proliferation of the *to*-dative construction (Kodner, 2020) and argument structure change for psych-verbs (Trips & Rainsford, 2022) in Middle English. But learning in itself is an insufficient explanation for population-level change, both because one does not entail the other and because not every change is apparently child learner-driven (cf. Labov, 1994; Labov, 2007). Combining insights from competing grammar accounts (Kroch, 1994), the sociolinguistics of peer-oriented early childhood interaction (e.g., Roberts & Labov, 1995; Nardy et al., 2014; Loukatou et al., 2021), and experimentation on leveling and matching of variable input by children and adults (e.g., Hudson Kam and Newport, 2005; Newport, 2020; Austin et al., 2022), this yields insights (Kodner, 2023) into how and why some innovations may progress through actuation and gain a foothold in a population while others may not. This in turn provides a means for distinguishing instances of child-driven from adult-driven change in cases where direct observation is no longer possible.

Taken together, this has broad implications for how we conceptualize language change: an ontology of effects in language change will not line up with an ontology of processes. An approach to the study of change which focuses on *processes* or *mechanisms* (including but certainly not limited to generalization learning) rather than outcomes and effects stands to bring clarity to a confusing tangle of descriptive phenomena. It reconceptualizes the problem space in a way that cross-cuts and reduces traditional taxonomies of effects (analogical leveling, extension, phonemicization, secondary splits, grammaticalization, bleaching, etc.) and opens the door for new insights into when, why, and how language change occurs.