

David Ruskin

Assistant Professor
University of Guam

Research Keywords:

Language Evolution; Pidgin & Creole Linguistics; Probabilistic Decision Making;
Historical Linguistic Simulations / Laboratory Experiments; Miniature Languages

E-mail Address: ruskind@triton.uog.edu

Work Address: 118F English & Communications Building
University of Guam
UOG Station
Mangilao, GU 96923

Mailing Address: PO Box 25580
Barrigada, GU 96921

Education:

- Ph.D. University of Rochester
Brain and Cognitive Sciences, 2014
- M.A. University of Rochester
Brain and Cognitive Sciences, 2011
- B.S. University of Wisconsin – Madison
Linguistics, 2006

Dissertation:

Cognitive Influences on the Evolution of New Languages (2014)
Several laboratory experiments investigate how adults reproduce and reduce free variation across different grammatical categories when learning a novel language. Comparisons are made to the historical development of pidgin and creole languages.

Supervised by: Elissa Newport
Committee: Patrick Davies (Chair), Elissa Newport, Richard Aslin,
Jeffrey Runner, Scott Paauw

Teaching Experience:

At the University of Guam:

Instructor:

Introduction to Language

LN 101

Fanuchånan 2018. Enrollment: 17

A sister course to Introduction to Linguistics. Covers aspects of Sociolinguistics, Historical Linguistics, Language Origins, Animal Communication, Language Processing, and Linguistic Identity.

Introduction to Linguistics

LN 300

Fanuchånan 2018. Enrollment: 15

Language analysis from the ground up: Phonetics, Phonology, Morphology, Syntax, Semantics, and Pragmatics. Additional material covering Language Acquisition, Language and/in the brain, and Careers in Linguistics.

Topics in Linguistics: Pragmatics

LN 440b (undergraduate) / 440g (graduate)

Fanuchånan 2018. Enrollment: 8

Theories and studies investigating the non-literal use of language, and all that it entails, presupposes, and implicates. A focus on situated dialogue and underlying factors that facilitate conversation.

At the University of Rochester:

Instructor:

Foundations of Cognitive Science

BCS 111 / PSY 111

Spring 2018. Enrollment: 125

Origins to present-day. Emphasis is placed on scientific literacy – evaluating data from primary sources, considering where that data comes from, using it to form new hypotheses, and piecing these together to form an overall picture of the mind.

Language Development

Linguistics 208 / American Sign Language 208 / BCS 259 / PSY 259

Spring 2018. Enrollment: 65

How do we learn languages? Compares acquisition by children and adults, as well as radical situations, like pidgin/creole formation. Students also design a research project, collect corpus data, and present their findings to their peers.

Foundations of Cognitive Science

BCS 111 / PSY 111

Fall 2017. Enrollment: 175

[Description above]

Foundations of Cognitive Science

BCS 111 / PSY 111

Spring 2017. Enrollment: 125

[Description above]

Language Use & Understanding

Linguistics 241 / BCS 261 / PSY 261 –

Spring 2017. Enrollment: 30

A close look at theories and models of language comprehension and production, evaluated alongside a handful of special topics. Students design a semester-long research project, collect & analyze conversational data, and write-up their results.

Foundations of Cognitive Science

BCS 111 / PSY 111

Fall 2016. Enrollment: 150

[Description above]

Language Use & Understanding

Linguistics 241 / BCS 261 / PSY 261 –

Spring 2015. Enrollment: 25

[Description above]

Senior Seminar / Senior Seminar with Honors

BCS 310 / 311

Spring 2015. Enrollment: 15

Course designed with Prof. Celeste Kidd.

What are best practices for presenting scientific data clearly and concisely?

Students workshop their own materials, and critically evaluate writeups of scientific studies in popular media. Additional practical advice on graduate

school applications.

Music & the Mind

Music 162 / Music Theory 260 / BCS 260

Fall 2014. Enrollment: 65

How is music built up? How do we process it, perceive it, and produce it? How is it represented in the brain, and what basic rhythmic and melodic abilities do we share with other animals?

Foundations of Cognitive Science

BCS 111 / PSY 111

Fall 2014. Enrollment: 150

[Description above]

Capstone: Field Methods

Linguistics 389

Spring, 2014. Enrollment: 10

A Guinean speaker of Fulbe acted as a linguistic informant in the classroom.

Students used their knowledge of linguistics to elicit and analyze data, and then to write a basic grammar of the language.

Guest Lecturer:

Foundations of Cognitive Science

BCS 111 / PSY 111

Summer 2013. Lecture on Animal Communication.

Language Development

Linguistics 208 / American Sign Language 208 / BCS 259 / PSY 259

Spring 2013. Lecture on Pidgins & Creoles.

Language Development

Linguistics 208 / American Sign Language 208 / BCS 259 / PSY 259

Spring 2012. Lecture on Pidgins & Creoles.

Language Development

Linguistics 208 / American Sign Language 208 / BCS 259 / PSY 259

Spring 2011. Lecture on Pidgins & Creoles.

Teaching Assistant:

Animal Minds

BCS 183 / PSY 183

Spring, 2010. Enrollment: 70 (Instructor: David Holtzman)

A comprehensive review of animal cognition, including topics of consciousness, communication, and theory of mind.

Animal Minds

BCS 183 / PSY 183

Fall, 2008. Enrollment: 70 (Instructor: David Holtzman)

[Description above]

Cognitive Psychology

BCS 112

Spring, 2008. Enrollment: 150 (Instructor: Ben Faber)

How are fundamental systems of the mind (such as memory, attention, and consciousness) realized in the brain? Special focus on cutting-edge research.

Professional Memberships:

Current & Prior Memberships:

Cognitive Science Society
Linguistic Society of America
Society for Pidgin and Creole Linguistics
Society for Caribbean Linguistics
Society for Music Perception and Cognition
Archaeology, Astronautics & SETI Research Association

Professional Service:

Consulting linguist for a Marshallese sociolinguistics study, Present-2018
Reviewer, *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Learning, Memory, & Cognition*,
Present-2018
Academic advising to University of Rochester Undergrads, Present-2016.
Conference Reviewer, Society for Pidgin and Creole Linguistics. Summer 2013.

Professional Training:

Large Courses Teaching Group. University of Rochester. Spring, 2018.
Discussion group of instructors to share experience and ideas, and develop best practices.

Future Faculty Workshop, University of Rochester. January, 2014.
"Assessing Learning in the Classroom."

Future Faculty Workshop. University of Rochester. November, 2013.
"Learner-Centered Teaching."

Future Faculty Workshop, University of Rochester. April, 2013.
"What is a Mentor and What Good is Having One?"

Future Faculty Workshop, University of Rochester. April, 2010.
"How to Prepare for a Faculty Position."

Future Faculty Workshop, University of Rochester. April, 2010.
"Innovative Teaching Approaches."

Research Interests

How do very low-level, innate biases in the way we learn and handle information lead to dramatic historical language change? Are radical versions of language contact and language change, like pidginization and creolization, special processes? Or are they just amplified versions of typical processes? What are the different contributions of adult and child learners, and how do our processing biases change over the lifetime? Lastly, how do these psychological biases shape our social and economic interactions?

Lab Affiliations:

Newport Lab, Research Collaborator (with PI Elissa Newport)

Computational Language Lab (CoLaLa), Research Collaborator (with PI Steve Piantadosi)

Aslin Lab, Research Collaborator (with PI Richard Aslin)

Kidd Lab, Research Collaborator (with PI Celeste Kidd)

Research Experience

Current	Are iterated-learning models an accurate representation of historical change? Computer simulations suggest that chains of single individuals (that most models use) severely distort real-world learning processes
Current	Why do patients with radical cases of Broca's Aphasia tend to use a very reduced but specific set of phonemes? How do patterns of language acquisition interact with patterns of language loss? Work with Claire Turvill
Current	Models and simulations of free variation in pidginization / creolization. How do individual tendencies to stabilize variation [see dissertation below] interact with social pressures, like alignment or coordination, to produce observed historical trends?
Current	Classic probability-matching suggest individuals act irrationally. Do people act more rationally when making probability-based choices in groups? If so, what are the social mechanisms that affect these choices?
Present-2014	<i>Incremental Representativeness Hypothesis</i> When individuals are faced with making probability-based choices, they tend to reproduce the probabilities in their input. Careful examination of participants' early choices and value judgments suggest they aim to make their sample representative of the input with every choice they make. Work with Habiba Azab (U-Minn) and Celeste Kidd
2014-2011	<i>Dissertation</i> As pidgin languages develop, they start out highly variable, but quickly become more stable. Individual learners in a series of laboratory studies were shown to restructure their input and make it more stable, but in a different pattern than historical trends. This suggests an additional role of

	social interaction. Advised by Elissa Newport
2010-2007	Early stages of pidgin formation are characterized by the interaction of speakers from several different languages. Do new learners track individual variation when learning how to speak this new language? Laboratory studies show new learners do track the sources of variation, but ignore this information in their own productions. Work with Elissa Newport
2007-2006	If the surface form of a noun sounds plural, does that activate morphosyntactic structures associated with plural nouns? A laboratory study examining participants' production of particular constructions suggests that phonological form does interact with knowledge of a word's syntactic function. Work with Maryellen MacDonald (UW-Madison)

Conference Presentations, Invited Talks:

Society for Pidgin and Creole Linguistics. Winter 2018. "Modeling the Collapse of Variation in Pidgin Development."

Cognitive Science Society. 2016. "Incremental representativeness biases explain adults' probability-matching in multiple-choice tasks and maximizing in single-choice tasks." Work with Habiba Azab and Celeste Kidd, Presented by Habiba Azab.

Society for Pidgin and Creole Linguistics. Winter, 2013. "Learning and maintenance of variation varies with grammaticization." Work with Elissa Newport.

University of Massachusetts – Boston. January, 2013. "Pidgins and Creoles," and "Learning and maintenance of variation varies with grammaticization."

Society for Pidgin and Creole Linguistics. Winter, 2012. "Adults as creolizers: factors affecting regularization." Work with Elissa Newport.

University of Rochester. Spring, 2011. "Establishing their voices: experiments in speaker variation in creole formation." Work with Elissa Newport.

Publications:

Azab, H., Ruskin, D., & Kidd, C. (2016) Incremental representativeness biases explain adults' probability-matching in multiple-choice tasks and maximizing in single-choice tasks. *Cognitive Science*. 2016

Ruskin, D., & Newport, E. L. (in prep) Regularization varies with grammaticization: closed-class lexical categories promote reduction of free variation

Ruskin, D., & Newport, E. L. (in prep) Sentence-wide variability promotes regularization: increasing loci of variation raises system-wide regularization

Ruskin, D., & Newport, E. L. (in prep) Variation conditioned by speaker does not affect learners' tendency to regularize