

Curriculum Vitae

NAME: Misha Karen Becker
ADDRESS: Linguistics Department
University of North Carolina
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Chapel Hill, NC 27599-3155
PHONE: (919) 962-1192 (department office)
E-MAIL: mbecker@email.unc.edu
<http://www.unc.edu/~mbecker/>
CITIZENSHIP: U.S. citizen
LANGUAGES: English (native), German (fluent), Italian (proficient)

CURRENT POSITION

Associate Professor of Linguistics at UNC Chapel Hill

Affiliations:

Psychology Department (Developmental), UNC Chapel Hill
Center for Developmental Science, UNC Chapel Hill

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

Linguistic Society of America
Society for Language Development

EDUCATION

graduate: 1995-2000 UCLA doctoral program in Linguistics
Ph.D. completed Aug. 2000. *The Development of the Copula in Child English: The Lightness of Be*, directed by Nina Hyams and Edward Stabler
M.A. completed Jan. 1998. *Acquiring a Grammar with Covert Head Incorporation: The Case of Have as a Complex Verb*, directed by Edward Stabler
undergraduate: 1991-1995 Wellesley College, *magna cum laude*, honors B.A. in Language Studies
1-6/1994 UC Irvine (linguistics and literature, no degree sought)
fall 1993 Goethe Universität, Frankfurt, Germany (psycholinguistics, no degree sought)

ACADEMIC HONORS AND FELLOWSHIPS

- 2009 Nominated for Faculty Award for Excellence in Doctoral Mentoring
- 2005 Nominated for teaching award, University of North Carolina
- 2000–2002 Postdoctoral Fellow at the Institute for Research in Cognitive Science, University of Pennsylvania
- 1999–2000 Dissertation Year Fellowship, awarded through UCLA Graduate Division
- 1997 Summer Research Fellowship, awarded through UCLA Graduate Division
- 1996–98 Cognitive Science Research Training Grant, funded by NIH, awarded through UCLA Psychology Department, Dr. Rochel Gelman, P.I.
- 1995–96 Dean’s Fellowship, UCLA
- 1995 Phi Beta Kappa; NSF Fellowship honorable mention

ACADEMIC SERVICE

Editorial Work

- Associate Editor, *Journal of Child Language*
- Editorial board member, *Language Acquisition*

Journal Reviewing

- *Language Acquisition*
- *Language Learning and Development*
- *Language*
- *Journal of Child Language*
- *Journal of Pidgins and Creoles*
- *First Language*

Conference Reviewing

- West Coast Conference on Formal Linguistics (WCCFL; since 2000)
- Western Conference on Linguistics (WECOL; since 2004)
- Generative Approaches to Language Acquisition (GALA; since 2005)
- Generative Approaches to Language Acquisition–North America (GALANA; since 2004)
- Linguistic Society of America (LSA; since 2008; session chair at 2007 LSA)
- Boston University Conference on Language Development (BUCLD; since 2008)

Other Service

- Director of Undergraduate Studies, Linguistics (2009–pres.)
- Department Honors advisor (2003–2009)
- Served on Faculty Council (fall 2005)
- Reviewer for National Science Foundation (NSF)

PAPERS AND PUBLICATIONS

REVIEWED JOURNAL ARTICLES

SUBMITTED

Becker, Misha and Bruno Estigarribia. Harder Words: How children learn abstract verbs with opaque syntax, submitted to *Language Learning and Development*

PUBLISHED

Mitchener, W. Garrett and Misha Becker (2011) A Computational Model of Learning the Raising–Control Distinction, in *Research on Language and Computation*, 8(2), pp. 169–207, DOI: 10.1007/s11168–011–9073–6.

Becker, Misha (2009) The Role of NP Animacy and Expletives in Verb Learning, *Language Acquisition*, 16(4), pp. 283–296.

Kirby, Susannah and Misha Becker (2007) Which *It* is It? The Acquisition of Referential and Expletive *It*, *Journal of Child Language*, 34(3), pp. 571–599.

Becker, Misha (2006) There Began to Be a Learnability Puzzle, *Linguistic Inquiry*, 37(3), pp. 441–456.

Becker, Misha (2005) Learning Verbs Without Arguments: The Problem of Raising Verbs, *Journal of Psycholinguistic Research*, 34(2), pp. 165–191.

Becker, Misha (2004) Copula Omission is a Grammatical Reflex, *Language Acquisition*, 12(2), pp. 157–167.

Becker, Misha (2004) *Is Isn't Be*, *Lingua*, 114(4), pp. 399–418.

Becker, Misha (2002) The Development of the Copula in Child English: The Lightness of *Be*, *Annual Review of Language Acquisition*, vol. 2, pp. 37–58.

BOOKS

Becker, Misha (in prep.) *The Acquisition of Syntactic Structure: Animacy and Thematic Alignment*, Cambridge University Press.

EDITED VOLUMES

Becker, Misha, John Grinstead, Jason Rothman and Bonnie D. Schwartz (eds.) (in prep.) *Generative Linguistics and Acquisition*, John Benjamins.

Becker, Misha (ed.) (2007) Special issue of *Language Acquisition* on Aspect and Finiteness in Child Grammar. *Language Acquisition*, vol. 14:3.

Gilkerson, Jill, Misha Becker and Nina Hyams (eds.) (2001) *Language Development and Breakdown 1*, *UCLA Working Papers in Linguistics*, no. 5.

CHAPTERS IN EDITED BOOKS

Becker, Misha and Susannah Kirby (to appear) The Acquisition of A-Movement, to appear in J. Lidz, J. Pater and W. Snyder (eds.) *Oxford Handbook of Developmental Linguistics*, Oxford University Press.

Becker, Misha and Jeannette Schaeffer (under review) Animacy, Argument Structure and Unaccusatives, in *Generative Linguistics and Acquisition*, ed. by M. Becker, J. Grinstead, J. Rothman and B.D. Schwartz, John Benjamins.

Becker, Misha (2007) Comments from the Guest Editor: Exploring the Interface Between Aspect and Finiteness in Child Grammar. Introduction to a special issue of *Language Acquisition* on Aspect and Finiteness in Child Grammar. *Language Acquisition*, vol. 14(3), pp. 219–229.

Hoekstra, Teun, Nina Hyams & Misha Becker (1999) “The Role of the Specifier and Finiteness in Early Grammar,” in D. Adger, S. Pintzuk, B. Plunkett & G. Tsoulas (eds.) *Specifiers: Minimalist Approaches*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 251-270.

WORKING PAPERS

Becker, Misha (2002) “English Has Two Copulas,” in E. Kaiser (ed.), *University of Pennsylvania Working Papers in Linguistics: Current Work in Linguistics*, vol. 7.2, 1-27.

Becker, Misha (2001) “The Syntactic Structure of Predicatives: Clues from the Omission of the Copula in Child English,” in G. Jäger, A. Strigin, C. Wilder and N. Zhang (eds.), *Papers on Predicative Constructions: Proceedings of the Workshop on Secondary Predication*, vol. 22, ZAS Papers in Linguistics: Berlin.

Becker, Misha (2001) “Children’s Acquisition of Function Morphemes: Syntactic and Prosodic Influences,” in J. Gilkerson, M. Becker & N. Hyams (eds.) *Language Development and Breakdown 1, UCLA Working Papers in Linguistics*, no. 5.

Becker, Misha (1999) “The *Some* Indefinites,” paper presented at Colloque de Syntaxe et Semantique de Paris, October 1997. In G. Storto (ed.) *Syntax at Sunset 2*, UCLA Working Papers in Linguistics vol. 3.

THESES

Becker, Misha (2000) “The Development of the Copula in Child English: The Lightness of *Be*” Ph.D. dissertation, UCLA.

Becker, Misha (1998) “Acquiring a Grammar with Covert Head Incorporation: The Case of *Have* as a Complex Verb,” MA Thesis, UCLA.

Becker, Misha (1995) “The Acquisition of Syntax in Child German: Verb Finiteness and Verb Placement,” B.A. honors thesis, Wellesley College.

CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

Becker, Misha and Bruno Estigarribia (forthcoming) “Drawing Inferences about Novel Raising and Control Verbs,” in *Proceedings of Generative Approaches to Language Acquisition—North America 4*, Somerville, MA: Cascadilla Press.

Becker, Misha (2007) “Animacy, Expletives, and the Learning of the Raising-Control Distinction,” in *Proceedings of Generative Approaches to Language Acquisition—North America 2*, ed. by Alyona Belikova, Luisa Meroni and Mari Umeda, Somerville: Cascadilla Proceedings Project, pp. 12-20.

- Becker, Misha (2006) “Acquisition of A-movement,” in *Proceedings of the Inaugural Conference of Generative Approaches to Language Acquisition—North America*, Honolulu, HI, ed. by K.U. Deen, J. Nomura, B. Schulz and B.D. Schwartz, Storrs, CT: University of Connecticut Occasional Papers in Linguistics, 4, pp. 65–75.
- Becker, Misha (2005) “Raising, Control and the Subset Principle” in *Proceedings of WCCFL 24*, ed. by John Alderete, Chung-hye Han and Alexei Kochetov, Somerville, MA: Cascadilla Proceedings Project, pp. 52–60.
- Becker, Misha (2004) “Learning Verbs that Lack Argument Structure: The Case of Raising Verbs,” in *Proceedings of GALA*, edited by Sergio Baauw and Jacqueline Van Kampen, pp. 115–125.
- Becker, Misha (2002) “*Seem*, and Other Hazards of the Lexicon,” in *Proceedings of the Chicago Linguistic Society* (CLS 38), ed. by Mary Andronis, Erin Debenport, Anna Pycha and Keiko Yoshimura, pp. 79–90.
- Becker, Misha (2000) “The Acquisition of the Copula in Child English,” in R. Billerey and B. Lillehaugen (eds.) *Proceedings of the West Coast Conference on Formal Linguistics*, (WCCFL 19) Somerville, MA: Cascadilla Press, pp. 57-70.
- Becker, Misha (2000) “The Acquisition of the English Copula,” in S. Catherine Howell, et al. (eds.) *Proceedings of the 24th Annual Boston University Conference on Language Development*, Somerville, MA: Cascadilla Press, pp. 104-115.
- Becker, Misha & Nina Hyams (2000) “Modal Reference in Children’s Root Infinitives,” in E. Clark (ed.) *Proceedings of the Thirtieth Annual Child Language Research Forum*, Stanford: CSLI, pp. 113-122.
- Becker, Misha (1999) “Syntactic and Metric Constraints on Children’s Function Morphemes,” in A. Greenhill, H. Littlefield & C. Tano (eds.) *Proceedings of the 23rd Boston University Conference on Language Development*, Somerville, MA: Cascadilla Press, pp. 80-92.
- Becker, Misha (1998) “Acquiring Grammars with Complex Heads: A Model Using *Have* as a Complex Verb,” in M. A. Gernsbacher & S. Derry (eds.), *Proceedings of the Twentieth Annual Conference of the Cognitive Science Society*, Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, pp. 132-137.
- Becker, Misha (1998) “Why Children Omit Function Morphemes: Metric vs. Syntactic Structure,” in B. Bergen, M. Plaucé & A. Bailey (eds.) *Proceedings of the 24th Annual Meeting of the Berkeley Linguistics Society*, Berkeley, CA, February 1998, pp. 13-23.
- Hoekstra, Teun, Nina Hyams & Misha Becker (1997) “The Underspecification of Number and the Licensing of Root Infinitives,” in E. Hughes, M. Hughes, and A. Greenhill (eds.), *Proceedings of the 21st Annual Boston University Conference on Language Development*, Somerville, MA: Cascadilla Press, pp. 293-306.

MANUSCRIPTS, OTHER

- Becker, Misha (2002) “Verbs on the Fringe: Raising Verbs as Lexical Hazards” IRCS Tech Report #02-01.
- Becker, Misha (2001) “The development of the copula in child English: The lightness of *be*” dissertation summary (reviewed by Jacqueline van Kampen), published in *Glott International*, vol. 5, Number 7.
- Becker, Misha (1999) “The Use of Modal Verbs and Modality in Child German,” UCLA ms.

TALKS AND PRESENTATIONS (NOT LISTED ABOVE)

- 2007 Becker, Misha and W. Garrett Mitchener, “Algorithms for learning the raising/control distinction from semantic information,” presented at the Workshop on Psychocomputational Models of Human Language Acquisition, Nashville, TN, August 1, 2007.
- 2007 De Marneffe, Marie-Catherine, Scott Grimm, Uriel Cohen Priva, Sander Lestrade, Gorkem Ozbek, Tyler Schnoebelen, Susannah Kirby, Misha Becker, Vivienn Fong and Joan Bresnan, “A statistical model of grammatical choices in children’s productions of dative sentences,” presented at Formal Approaches to Variation in Syntax, University of York, May 10–12, 2007.
- 2006 with Susannah Kirby, “Which *It* is it? The Acquisition of Expletive vs. Pronoun *It*”, paper presented at the 82nd meeting of the Linguistic Society of America, Albuquerque, January 2006.
- 2005 “Learning Without Subsets: The Puzzle of Raising vs. Control”, poster presented at BUCLD 30, November 2005.
- 2005 with Susannah Kirby, “Semantics or Subcases?: The Acquisition of Expletive *It*,” paper presented at the International Congress for the Study of Child Language meeting, Berlin, July 2005.
- 2005 “Animacy and the Syntax of Raising and Control,” paper presented at the PIONIER Workshop on Animacy, Nijmegen, May 2005.
- 2003 “The Acquisition of Raising Predicates,” paper presented at the 79th meeting of the Linguistic Society of America, Atlanta, January 2003.
- 2002 “*Seem*, and Other Hazards of the Lexicon,” paper presented at the 26th Penn Linguistics Colloquium, Philadelphia, March 2002.
- 2001 “*Is* Isn’t *Be*,” talk given at the Workshop on Microvariation in the Syntax of Auxiliaries, Societas Linguistica Europea 34, Leuven, Belgium, August 2001.
- 2001 “*Is* Isn’t *Be*,” paper presented at the 25th Penn Linguistics Colloquium, Philadelphia, March 2001.
- 2000 “Production and Omission of the Copula in Child English,” paper presented at the 76th Annual Meeting of the Linguistic Society of America, Chicago, January 2000.
- 1999 “The Acquisition of Copulas,” paper presented at Generative Approaches to Language Acquisition (GALA), Potsdam, Germany, September 1999.
- 1999 “The Acquisition of Modals and Modality in Child German,” paper presented at the 75th Annual Meeting of the Linguistic Society of America, Los Angeles, January 1999.
- 1998 “The Acquisition of Languages with Complex Heads,” poster presented at the Utrecht Congress on Storage and Computation in Linguistics, Utrecht, The Netherlands, October 1998.

PUBLISHED REVIEWS

- 2009 Book review of *Child Language: The Parametric Approach* by William Snyder, published in *Lingua*, vol. 119, no. 1, pp. 128–130.
- 2008 Book review of *Language and the Learning Curve* by Anat Ninio, published in *International Journal of Language and Communication Disorders*, vol. 43, no. 4, July 2008, pp. 482–483.

GRANTS RECEIVED

- Associate Professor grant, July 2008–June 2014
- Junior Faculty Development grant, Jan.–Dec. 2006
- Grant from Bill and Mary Jo Stephenson, May 2004

- University Research Council award, June 2004–May 2006
- Faculty Partners Grant from UNC Chapel Hill, fall 2002

INVITED TALKS

“Animacy and the Categorization of Abstract Predicates” invited for Spring 2012, University of Maryland.

“Children’s Knowledge of Animacy and the Learning of Sentence Structure” invited for Spring 2012, College of Charleston.

“Inanimacy in the Input: How a very infrequent cue can still be very powerful” Workshop on Input and Syntactic Acquisition, part of the Linguistic Society of America annual meeting, January 2012, Portland, OR.

“Children’s Acquisition of the Raising–Control Distinction” Università di Milano, March 2006.

“Determining the Structure of Sentences: The Case of Raising and Control” Duke University Psychology Department, February 2006.

“Strategies for Learning the Raising–Control Distinction” Stanford University Linguistics Department, January 2006.

“The Search for Structure: How Learners Distinguish Raising from Control” University of Maryland Linguistics Department, March 2004.

“The Hazards of Learning Verbs” UNC Psychology Department Developmental Lunch Series, October 2003.

“Verbs on the Fringe: Raising Verbs as Lexical Hazards” CUNY Graduate Center, May 2002.

“*Seem*, and Other Hazards of the Lexicon,” University of Delaware Linguistics Department, March 2002.

“*Seem*, and Other Hazards of the Lexicon,” University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Linguistics Department, February 2002.

“The Distribution of the Copula in Child English (And Related Issues),” Workshop on Copular Sentences, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, November 2001.

“The Acquisition of the Copula in Child English,” Johns Hopkins University, Department of Cognitive Science, April 2000.

ADVISING

PH.D.

- advisor Inmaculada Gomez Soler, UNC Linguistics, expected 2012. Thesis title: *Learning Spanish at the interfaces: The L2 acquisition of psych-verbs*
- advisor Susannah Kirby, UNC Linguistics, 2009. Thesis title: “*Semantic scaffolding*” in first language acquisition: *The acquisition of raising-to-object and object control*
- reader Li Yi, Duke University, Psychology, 2009. Thesis title: Why do Young Children Fail in False Belief Tasks: Linguistic Representations and Implicit Processing.
- reader Yu Li, UNC Linguistics, 2007. Thesis title: *Differential Acquisition of Phonemic Contrasts by Infant Word-Learners: Does Production Recapitulate Perception?*

- reader Julie St. John, UNC Linguistics, 2004. Thesis title: *The Semantics of English Manner Adverbs*
 reader Youngon Choi, Duke University, Psychology, 2003. Thesis title: *Preschool Aged Children's Use of Prosody in Sentence Processing: The Case of Korean Children*

MA

- advisor (co-chair) Lisa Domby, UNC Linguistics, in progress. Thesis topic: Acquisition of 3sg -s morphology in child English
 advisor Halley Wilson, UNC Linguistics, 2011. Thesis title: *Child Acquisition of Passive Sentences: Building upon Animacy Assumptions from UG*
 advisor Inmaculada Gomez Soler, UNC Linguistics, 2009. Thesis title: *The Morphosyntax-Lexicon Interface Breakdown: An Aspectual Account of the L2 Acquisition of ser and estar by L1 English Speakers*
 advisor Jenna Mory, UNC Linguistics, 2008. Thesis title: *Verbal Acquisition in L2 Spanish*
 advisor Susannah Kirby, UNC Linguistics, 2005. Thesis title: *Semantics or Subcases? The Acquisition of Referential vs. Expletive It.*
 advisor Heidi Angel, UNC Linguistics, 2005. Thesis title: *ASL Classifier Predicate Acquisition by a Deaf Child with Delayed Linguistic Input.*
 reader Hayden Stack, UNC Linguistics, 2004. Thesis title: *Analysis of Output Opportunities in a First Grade Spanish-English Dual Language Program*
 advisor (co-chair) Erin Eckhouse, UNC Linguistics, 2003. Thesis title: *Onset-Rime Awareness in Children's Reading*
 reader Neal Snider, UNC Linguistics, 2003. Thesis title: *Tongan Raising: A Minimalist Analysis*
 reader Maki Takahashi, UNC Linguistics, 2003. Thesis title: *Acquisition of Mora in Japanese Children: Do They Develop Vowel-Length Contrast Before Coda Segments?*

BA HONORS THESIS

- advisor Teresa Schubert, UNC Linguistics, 2009. Thesis title: *It's All Geek to Me: Exploring Leet as a Play Language*
 reader Katharine Bouser, UNC Linguistics, 2009. Thesis title: *Communicative Repairs in Boys with Fragile X Syndrome, Down Syndrome, and Autism Spectrum Disorder.*
 reader Kellin McKinney, UNC Linguistics, 2007. Thesis title: *Expressive Morphosyntax in Boys with Fragile X Syndrome and Down Syndrome*
 reader Agnieska Gucwa, UNC Linguistics, 2007. Thesis title: *A Comparison of Narrative Abilities of Boys with Fragile X Syndrome and Boys with Down Syndrome*
 reader Eliot Raynor, UNC Linguistics, 2007. Thesis title: *Spanish Borrowings and Code-mixing in Ch'orti' Discourse*
 reader Colby Day, UNC Linguistics, 2006. Thesis title: *The Sociolinguistics of Physician-Patient Interactions: Factors Affecting Communication and Access to Healthcare*
 reader Benjamin Frey, UNC Linguistics, 2005. Thesis title: *Siyo! An Introductory Cherokee Grammar*
 reader Perry Sherouse, UNC Linguistics, 2005. Thesis title: *Linguistic Nationalism: From Script to Narrative in Post-Colonial Africa*
 reader Abby Shoun, UNC Linguistics, 2005. Thesis title: *Interpreting and Generating Formal Grammar: A Study of HPSG Phonology*
 advisor Lara Stephenson, UNC Linguistics, 2004. Thesis title: *The Toddler's Knowledge of Phonotactic Constraints: Evidence from a Novel Word Mapping Experiment*
 reader Katharine Melville, UNC Linguistics, 2004. Thesis title: *AOL Instant Messenger and the Rules of Discourse*

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

UNC Chapel Hill

8/2002–pres.	Linguistics 101:	Introduction to Linguistics
	Linguistics 101H:	Introduction to Linguistics (Honors)
	Linguistics 201:	Introduction to Transformational Grammar (undergraduate syntax)
	Linguistics 203:	Language Acquisition (undergraduate course)
	Linguistics 528:	Language Acquisition (graduate course)
	Linguistics 529:	Language Acquisition II: Acquisition of Syntax (graduate)
	Linguistics 530:	Syntax I (graduate)
	Linguistics 545:	Language and Mind (grad/undergrad)

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

6/2009	Began collaboration with Bruno Estigarribia (Psychology, UNC) on raising and control verbs
9/2005	Began collaboration with W. Garrett Mitchener (Mathematics, College of Charleston) and Charles Yang (Linguistics, University of Pennsylvania) on a project to model learning of the raising/control distinction using a computational learning algorithm
2005	Collaborated with Joan Bresnan (Linguistics, Stanford) on a project on children's acquisition of the double object construction
2/2005	Collaborated with Peter Gordon, Steven Reznick and Jennifer Arnold (UNC Psychology) on a grant proposal to study language deficits in children with autism
9/2002	Established the Language Development Lab at UNC-Chapel Hill to study children's language
9/00–7/02	Postdoctoral research experience in the psycholinguistics lab of Dr. Lila Gleitman and Dr. John Trueswell at the Institute for Research in Cognitive Science (University of Pennsylvania).
7/98–9/99	Research Assistant under Dr. Edward Stabler and Dr. Rochel Gelman, NSF grant on Learning and Intelligent Systems; participated in LIS seminar and researched the acquisition of <i>be</i> and <i>have</i> in English.
7–9/1997	Researcher with Dr. Edward Stabler through Summer Mentorship program (UCLA Graduate Division); developed a computational learning model for a grammar containing covertly complex heads.
6–8/1996	Research Assistant for Dr. Susan Curtiss, UCLA Linguistics Department; assisted with Pediatric Epilepsy project, collecting and coding data.
7–9/1995	Research Assistant for Dr. Nina Hyams; coded data from CHILDES (child language) files for finiteness correlations between verbs and subject determiners.
3–6/1994	Researcher for Dr. Barbara Landau, Associate Professor of Psychology at UC Irvine; researched crosslinguistic differences in spatial prepositions and acquisition of spatial prepositions in ESL by L1 Mandarin and Korean speakers.