The *Interface Asymmetry* Research Group

is pleased to present

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Title*:* **Morphological Cues for Syntactic Operations**

Date: **MONDAY, May 16, 2005**
Time: **12:30 p.m.**
Room: **DS-6365**
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Experimental work on language acquisition has not cast much light on the nature of the primary linguistic data (PLD). Much of this work has shown that children have essentially the properties of adults as soon as they can be tested for specific grammatical properties. In that case, the idealization of instantaneous learning may not be far off the mark and conventional experimental work will not tell us how experience determines mature grammatical properties. Similarly, we will not learn about PLD from more theoretical learnability studies, because they standardly make children into "input-matchers," converging on grammars that generate what they hear.

On the other hand, we have learned about the PLD from historical work, examining the conditions under which different grammars have emerged, seeking to link grammatical shifts to prior changes in the kind of linguistic experience that children are exposed to.

Grammatical properties might be triggered by apparently unrelated phenomena and syntactic properties may arise as a function of morphological phenomena. For example, it is often said that grammars with rich morphology allow null subjects, as if learning rich morphology entails null subjects. Likewise, if grammars have rich agreement, they have verbs raising to higher functional positions, but not otherwise. I shall scrutinize some of these ideas, examining the consequences of loss of morphological endings in a variety of languages.

I shall argue that inflectional endings on verbs entails verb raising, but that the converse does not hold: languages without rich verbal morphology do not necessarily lack verb raising. I shall examine similar ideas for the treatment of nominal inflection, case endings, and argue that nominal morphology needs to be viewed very differently.