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”  

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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:  
Department of Anthropology, Samuel P. Capen Chair of Anthropology, Dept. of Computer Science and Engineering, Dept. of Linguistics, Dept. of Philosophy, English Language Institute, NCGIA/The IGERT Program/GI Sciences  

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