

**Child language acquisition - Kendall A. King**

**1.** The Child Language Data Exchange System (CHILDES) and its transcription system known as CHAT, are important and useful advances in the field of language acquisition. This database of transcribed child language data can be analyzed using a set of computer programs, known as CLAN, and allows child language researchers around the world to share tools, data and findings. The following links provide more details about these research tools: <http://childes.psy.cmu.edu/> and <http://childes.psy.cmu.edu/clan/>. By downloading CLAN and Quicktime, you can browse for conversations of different types. For example, you can start CLAN and go to the “Windows” pull-down menu and select “WebData,” then double-click the “CHILDES” button. Select the appropriate corpus and browse files. When the file opens, put your cursor at the top of the file and type escape-8. (That is an escape key, then a release of the escape key, and then the 8 key). To stop, put your cursor in the QuickTime window, click and close with control-W and then close the transcript with control-W. (Command-W on an Apple computer).

**2.** The idea of a “true” or “balanced” bilingual is more of a myth than a reality. As discussed in the textbook chapter, bilingual individuals are not “two monolinguals in one.” This is because bilinguals’ linguistic competencies reflect their particular learning experiences and patterns of language use. Can you think of anyone you know who might be considered a “true” or “balanced” bilingual? Think of ways in which their proficiency in each of their languages may differ. For instance, if you know someone who speaks one language at home and another in school, ask her how she would feel about writing an academic paper in her home language. Or ask her whether she’d be able to have a really big fight with a family member only in her school language. Keeping this in mind, do you think it is appropriate to hold a “balanced bilingual” as the “gold standard” in terms of bilingualism? What implications might this have for research comparing bilinguals to monolinguals?

**3.** Child-directed speech (CDS) is often described as the special type of speech that is directed towards infants and children, which includes exaggerated intonation, simpler sentence structures, and an emphasis on the “here and now.” Listen to the excerpt (downloadable from this section ‘Sound file: father-son talk’) of conversation between a father and his 17-month-old son. What aspects of CDS do you hear in the father’s language? What else do you notice? Why has the term ‘motherese’ fallen out of fashion?