

Babatsouli, E. & Pollock, K. (2020). History of the International Child Phonology Conference. In E. Babatsouli (ed.), *On Under-reported monolingual child phonology*. Bristol, UK: Multilingual Matters.

# History of the International Child Phonology Conference

Elena Babatsouli and Karen Pollock

Research advances in child phonological development may be presented in several language-related conferences. What child phonologists consider to be a conference specifically catering to their interests is the *International Child Phonology Conference (ICPC)*. This is an annual conference, initially intended to rotate among US universities undertaking research in child phonological disorders. Early informal gatherings date back to 1976 in the Midwest of the US. Though the Child Phonology conference has now an international standing, it still remains the only conference of its kind. Also, while ICPC is well-known among researchers in the field, its origins are less known. The first time that the editor of this volume (first author) attended ICPC was during the 2011 meeting hosted by Marilyn Vihman at the University of York. The editor herself subsequently organized ICPC 2018 in Chania, Crete under the auspices of the Institute of Monolingual and Bilingual Speech. This led to the present collaboration with Karen Pollock on the history of the conference.

Elena Babatsouli is grateful to a number of child phonologists, all regular ICPC participants and organizers, for making it possible to get hold of historical information regarding the history of the *International Child Phonology Conference*. Special thanks are due to A. Lynn Williams for encouraging and assisting the initial exploration of this question and to Barbara May Bernhardt for advising to find the complete list of the Child Phonology meetings from first to current. As a result of that, responses to an inquiry posted on the info-childes *google* discussion group helped provide the missing information. In particular, Karen Pollock (second author) has been instrumental in filling in the gaps regarding the exact dates and locations of convening and names of organizers for pre-2000 meetings based on both her own thorough records and her subsequent active involvement in contacting people and searching for remaining missing information. She also pointed out that the original conference was referred to as ‘Child Phonology Meeting’ rather than ‘Child Phonology Conference’. All other word-of-mouth information is presented next; among the informants are: A. Lynn Williams, Phil Connell, Karen Pollock, Carol Stoel-Gammon, Richard G. Schwartz, Marilyn Vihman, David Ingram, and John Locke.

Based on recounts by A Lynn Williams’ PhD supervisor, the late Mary Elbert, as well as those by Phil Connell, the *International Child Phonology Conference* started out as the Midwestern/Midwest Child Phonology Meeting in the United States, a conference initially intended to rotate among the Midwestern universities that were involved in research in child phonological disorders. The idea occurred during a conversation

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between Mary Elbert (Indiana University), Phil Connell (Northwestern University) and Leija McReynolds (University of Kansas), which subsequently became a specific plan during their meeting at the 1976 ASHA convention in Houston.

Phil Connell and Mary Elbert were doing research on their separate campuses with linguists (him-Fred Eckman, and her-Dan Dinnsen), and they thought that a conference that exploited the connection between SLP practice and linguistic theory would be successful. Leija was far less enthusiastic about a conference on theory and practice than them, because she was a rather strict behaviorist who had little respect for linguistic theories. In spite of that she never imposed her opinion but instead listened to and encouraged people, while quietly remaining convinced that linguistic theories had nothing at all to offer articulation therapy. Also, Phil Connell was more in favor of making the meeting's focus broader than child phonology and, thus, to include syntax and morphology, but Mary Elbert and Leija McReynolds wanted to focus on child phonology exclusively, at least at first. So, the compromise plan was to begin with child phonology and build from there if necessary, even though that never became necessary. Phonological and syntactic theories, much like linguists and SLPs, were then and have remained relatively separated (e.g. Ingram, this volume, Babatsouli & Ball, 2019).

The inaugural meeting was held in 1980 at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign campus. It was organized by John Locke, who, through his contacts with Dan Dinnsen and Mary Elbert at various conferences, was intrigued by the idea of a conference on theory and practice, and who had the enthusiasm, space and financial support to host it. The conference had about 15–20 participants, among whom were: John Locke, Mary Elbert, Phil Connell, Leija McReynolds, Larry Shriberg, John Bernthal, Roy Eberling, Barbara Rockman, Elaine Paden, and others. John Locke is known to be a master at encouraging discussion and participation, so most people had an opportunity to present their point of view. There was a lot of listening and talking but most who participated in discussions did not formally present. The papers actually presented at this first meeting were not published nor shared, though copies may have been sent at a later date. This having been a good conference, in which interesting ideas were freely discussed, led to everyone present being willing to make it a regular event in the end.

The following year an informal meeting was held again at Urbana-Champaign. The 1982 meeting was hosted by Mary Elbert at Indiana University to return there again in 1986, after having moved to Purdue University, hosted by Richard Schwartz, for three consecutive years. At Purdue, the meeting expanded beyond its Midwest base to include some of the “Stanford Child Phonology group” and others from across the US. Charles Ferguson was there, as were Marilyn Vihman, Carol Stoel-Gammon and Mary Louise Edwards. Karen Pollock recalls: ‘Imagine being a new PhD student at Purdue, focusing in child phonology, and having this conference and all of these amazing leaders in the field come to you for three years in a row.’ Based on her recollections, during those earlier years and at least through 2000, the conference remained relatively small and informal with no concurrent sessions, no invited speakers and no poster presentations.

Discussions were initiated by informal presentations of new data, investigations in progress, theoretical issues, clinical issues, or methodological issues. Registration fees were minimal or non-existent. Information about upcoming meetings was sent to individuals on the mailing list, and the growing list was passed from the current

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meeting's chair to the next year's chair. Information was also shared by word of mouth, as there was no email or conference website in those days. Presentations typically ranged from 15 to 30 minutes, and there was always a focus on having time for discussion.

According to Carol-Stoel Gammon, in the first 10 years or so, there was *no selection process* for presentations. Those who wanted to present simply submitted the title of the paper and it was added to the list. In a number of cases, the presenter talked about a topic quite different from the one that had been proposed. The 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary meeting was held at Northwestern University in 1989. Interestingly, the title of John Locke's talk at that meeting was "Urbana '80: Reflections on our 'initial state'". The 1990 conference, hosted by Larry Shriberg at the University of Wisconsin - Madison, was scheduled back-to-back with the Symposium on Research in Child Language Disorders, as many participants regularly attended both meetings.

The Child Phonology conference assumed international status, also reflected in the change of its name, in 1999 when Marilyn Vihman organized it at Bangor University, Wales. Seven more international meetings have taken place, of which three were held in Europe (in 2011 at York by Marilyn Vihman; in 2013 at Nijmegen by J.P.M. Fikkert; in 2018 at Chania by Elena Babatsouli) and four in Canada (in 2003 at Vancouver by Barbara May Bernhardt and Joseph Paul Stemberger; in 2006 at Edmonton by Karen Pollock; in 2015 at St. John's by Yvan Rose; and in 2019 at Montreal by Andrea A.N. MacLeod. At the Vancouver meeting in 2003, poster sessions were introduced for the first time. Ultimately, ICPC has kept up with gradual developments in the field, like increasing research in child bilingual phonology (Babatsouli & Ball, 2020).

A point worth mentioning is that the conference has never been formally associated with any organization, association, or institution, but has been kept alive (for 40 years) by members of the group passing information from one conference chair to the next. There have been numerous attempts to organize communication - from the early 'mailing list' that was modified and passed on year to year, to the yahoo group coordinated by Brian Goldstein starting in May 2002, and more recently a google group coordinated by Yvan Rose, Andrea A.N. MacLeod, Fangfang Li and Karen Pollock. But there is still no institution or organization affiliated with the conference.

Since its start to the present day, ICPC has been near and dear to the heart of its participants and organizers who keep returning to it (some undertaking its organization more than once), because of the amazing opportunity it has provided over the years to publicize research endeavors and findings, to get knowledgeable feedback and to network with others in the field. As David Ingram remembers 'I first went in 1991 in Iowa and it was still very informal, more a discussion than the presentation of papers. I liked it because you could get up and get feedback on something you might be researching without collecting any data yet. It did start morphing into more formal papers, and I missed the informal aspect.' (Babatsouli, pers. comm.).

For many, including the authors of this, ICPC has been a place where in Karen Pollock's words, one 'felt supported' and where 'some of the best and most lasting friendships and collaborations were either born or nurtured'. Due to the unanimous support of such colleagues, a complete list of the meetings of the *International Child Phonology Conference* was made possible and appears next.

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### **Meetings of the *International Child Phonology Conference***

2019, June 14–15, University of Montreal, Montreal, Canada  
*Andrea A.N. MacLeod*

2018, June 18–20, Institute of Monolingual and Bilingual Speech, Chania, Greece  
*Elena Babatsouli*

2017, May 31–June 2, The George Washington University, Washington DC, USA  
*Cynthia Core*

2016, June 22–24, Northern Arizona University, Arizona, USA  
*Anna Sosa*

2015, June 24–26, Memorial University, St. John's, Newfoundland, Canada  
*Yvan Rose*

2014, June 16–18, University of Montana, Missoula, Montana, USA  
*Amy M. Glaspey*

2013, June 10–12, Radboud University Nijmegen, Nijmegen, Netherlands  
*J.P.M. Fikkert*

2012, June 4–6, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA  
*Benjamin Munson*

2011, June 16–17, University of York, York, UK  
*Marilyn Vihman*

2010, April 9-10, University of Memphis, Memphis, Tennessee, USA  
*Kim Oller and Eugene Buder*

2009, June 8–9, University of Texas at Austin, Austin, Texas, USA  
*Barbara Davis*

2008, June 1–3, Purdue University, West Lafayette, Indiana, USA  
*David Ertmer and David Snow*

2007, June 22–23, University of Washington, Seattle, Washington, USA  
*Carol Stoel-Gammon*

2006, June 17–18, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada  
*Karen Pollock*

2005, June 16–17, Texas Christian University, Fort Worth, Texas, USA  
*Lynn Flahive*

2004, May 14–15, Arizona State University, Tempe, Arizona, USA  
*David Ingram*

2003, July 1–3, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada  
*Barbara May Bernhardt and Joseph Paul Stemberger*

2002, June, Wichita State University, Wichita, Kansas, USA  
*Barbara Hodson*

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2001, MGH Institute of Health Professions, Boston, Massachusetts, USA  
*Gregory L. Lof*

2000, June 9–10, University of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls, Iowa, USA  
*Ken Bleile*

1999, July 8–10, Bangor University, Wales  
*Marilyn Vihman*

[NB: the name changed in 1999 to *International Child Phonology Conference*]

### **Child Phonology Conference (only in the USA)**

1998, April 24–25, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia  
*Linda Swank*

1997, April 18–19, University of Colorado at Boulder, Boulder, Colorado  
*Lise Menn*

1996, April 19–20, University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa  
*Amy Weiss*

1995, May 12–13, University of Memphis, Memphis, Tennessee  
*Karen Pollock*

1994, May 20–21, Idaho University, Sun Valley, Idaho  
*Paul Deputy and Audrey Weston*

1993, May 14–15, Boys Town National Research Hospital, Boys Town, Nebraska  
*Arlene Carney*

1992 (May 8–9, University of Illinois, Champaign County, Illinois  
*Cynthia Johnson*

1991, May 10–11, University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa  
*Amy Weiss*

1990, May 30–31, University of Wisconsin - Madison, Wisconsin  
*Larry Shriberg*

1989, May 5–6, Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois  
*Bruce Smith*

1988, May 6–7, University of Illinois, Champaign County, Illinois  
*Cynthia Johnson*

1987, May 8–9, University of Nebraska – Lincoln, Nebraska  
*John Bernthal*

[N.B. the name changed in 1987 to *Child Phonology Conference*]

### **Midwestern/Midwest Child Phonology Meeting (in the USA)**

1986, May 2–3, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana  
*Mary Elbert*

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1985, March 29–30, Purdue University, West Lafayette, Indiana  
*Richard Schwartz*

1984, March 23–24, Purdue University, West Lafayette, Indiana  
*Richard Schwartz*

1983, April 8–9, Purdue University, West Lafayette, Indiana  
*Richard Schwartz*

1982, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana  
*Mary Elbert*

1981, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Champaign County, Illinois  
Attendees included Elaine Paden, Lawrence Raphael, John Locke, Carla Dunn, Carol Stoel-Gammon, and others

1980, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Champaign County, Illinois  
*John Locke, Mary Elbert, Phil Connell, Leija McReynolds, Elaine Paden, John Bernthal, Larry Shriberg, Roy Eberling, Barbara Rockman, and others*

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