I am interested in first language acquisition, the acquisition of meaning, acquisitional principles in word-formation compared across children and languages, and general semantic and pragmatic issues in the lexicon and in language use. I am currently working on the kinds of pragmatic information adults offer small children as they talk to them, and on children's ability to make use of this information as they make inferences about unfamiliar meanings and about the relations between familiar and unfamiliar words. I am interested in the inferences children make about where to 'place' unfamiliar words, how they identify the relevant semantic domains, and what they can learn about conventional ways to say things based on adult responses to child errors during acquisition. All of these 'activities' involve children and adults placing information in common ground as they interact. Another current interest of mine is the construction of verb paradigms: how do children go from using a single verb form to using forms that contrast in meaning -- on such dimensions as person, number, and tense? How do they learn to distinguish the meanings of homophones? To what extent do they make use of adult input to discern the underlying structure of the system? And how does conversation with more expert speakers (usually adults) foster the acquisition of a first language? I am particularly interested in the general role of practice along with feedback here.
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• MA Hons, University of Edinburgh, French Language & Literature (1965)

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