

Language Acquisition

Who did **Biden** ask to see **him**?

Who did **Biden_i** ask to see **him_{i/j}**?

Who did **Biden_i** ask to see **him_{i/j}**?
Why did **Biden** ask to see **him**?

Who did **Biden_i** ask to see **him_{i/j}**?

Why did **Biden_i** ask to see **him^{*}_{i/j}**?

Who did **Biden_i** ask ___ [to see **him_{i/j}**]?

Why did **Biden_i** ask to see **him*_{i/j}**?

Who did **Biden**_i ask _k [PRO_k to see **him**_{i/j}]?
Why did **Biden**_i ask [PRO_i to see **him***_{i/j}]?

Who did **Biden_i** ask _k [PRO_k to see **him_{i/j}**]?

Why did **Biden_i** ask [PRO_i to see **him*_{i/j}**]?

- *him* has to be free in the [...] domain
(*Principle B*)

Who did **Biden**_i ask ______k [PRO_k to see **him**_{i/j}]?

Why did **Biden**_i ask [PRO_i to see **him***_{i/j}]?

- *him* has to be free in the [...] domain
(*Principle B*)
- [...] always has a subject, though you can't see it in these examples...

Who did **Biden_i** ask ______k [PRO_k to see **him_{i/j}**]?

Why did **Biden_i** ask [PRO_i to see **him*_{i/j}**]?

- *him* has to be free in the [...] domain
(*Principle B*)
- [...] always has a subject, though you can't see it in these examples
- in the first example, the subject of [...] refers to *who...*

Plato's Problem: how do we know all this?

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- parents' priorities:

child: Momma isn't a boy, he a girl.

mother: That's right.

Plato's Problem: how do we know all this?

- parents' priorities:

child: Momma isn't a boy, he a girl.

mother: That's right.

child: And Walt Disney comes on Tuesday.

mother: No, he does not.

Plato's Problem: how do we know all this?

- parents' priorities:
child: Nobody don't like me.
father: no, say "Nobody likes me."

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(repeat six times)

Plato's Problem: how do we know all this?

- parents' priorities:

child: Nobody don't like me.

father: no, say "Nobody likes me."

(repeat six times)

child: Oh! Nobody don't likes me.

Plato's Problem: how do we know all this?

answer I've been pushing in this class:

Universal Grammar: as human beings, we can't help building our languages this way.

A lot of the class has been concerned with figuring out what exactly you know when you know your native language.

What exactly is innate, and what is learned?

Clearly, not everything is innate...

- languages aren't identical
- *critical period* (first 7 years or so)
 - “Genie”
 - “Chelsea”

more questions about that knowledge:

how is the knowledge acquired?

how is it represented in the brain?

how is it used in real time?

Language Acquisition

The study of what kids know, and when they know it.

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frequent discovery: they know more than you'd think.

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phonology (Japanese, 3;2)

mikaN	→	mitaN	‘orange’
poketto	→	potetto	‘pocket’
neko	→	neto	‘cat’

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mikaN → mitaN ‘orange’

poketto → potetto ‘pocket’

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tama → tama ‘ball’

terebi → terebi ‘television’

Language Acquisition

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mikaN → mitaN ‘orange’

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matʃi → matʃi ‘city’

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matanai	→	matanai	‘doesn’t wait’
matsu	→	matsu	‘waits’
matʃi	→	matʃi	‘city’
aki	→	ati	‘autumn’
kuuma	→	tuma	‘bear’

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...and about one of the conclusions of this work, which is that very young infants can distinguish sounds that adults later lose the ability to distinguish (e.g., Japanese infants can distinguish *l* and *r*).

Language Acquisition

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evidence that children use phonotactic statistics (Saffran et al 1996) and prosodic cues (Juszyk 1996)

upshot: children speak their first words by 10-12 months,
and (English-speaking) children know about 13,000 words
by the age of 6 (learning roughly 6-7 words/day)

Language Acquisition

syntax : optional root infinitive stage

Hun sove (Danish, 2;0)
she sleep.INF

Earst kleine boekje lezen (Dutch, 2;6)
first little book read.INF

Dormir petit bébé (French, 1;11)
sleep.INF little baby

Language Acquisition

syntax : optional root infinitive stage

Thorsten Caesar haben (German, 2;1)

Thorsten Caesar have.INF

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Thorsten Caesar **haben** (German, 2;1)

Thorsten Caesar have.INF

Ich **hab** ein dossen Ball

I have a big ball

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Ich möchte es **haben**(adult German)

I would.like it have.INF

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Thorsten Caesar have.INF

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I would.like it have.INF

Ich **habe** es nicht

I have it not

Language Acquisition

syntax : optional root infinitive stage

Andreas (2;1)

281 utterances: 231 finite/51 non-finite

	Finite	Infinitive
Verb second	216	7
Verb final	15	44

like a lot of kids, Andreas is confused about where he can use infinitives... but not about what to do with them!

Language Acquisition

This has all been about studying children's naturalistic output. Acquisition researchers also do 'consultant work'...

Language Acquisition

truth value judgment task:

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