**I. LANGUAGE DIVERSITY** Moodle

**1.** 1. Despite the sameness of human mind and its **basic cognitive machinery**, why diversity of languages?

2. Isn’t it taxing for one’s mind to handle multiple languages?

3. What cognitive reasons back up acquisition of multiple languages?

4. Despite cognition opting to deliver thoughts efficiently (compositionality), why do we speak in diverse languages?

5. What are the mind principles supporting acquisition of the human language i.e., of what does the “basic cognitive machinery” for language consist?

**2.** 1. How diverse can language SYSTEMS be?

2. Is learning a language w. rare and unusual features more demanding for the mind than learning one with common and ordinary features?

3. Does the mind impose limits on languages, despite its adaptability to language environments and brain’s plasticity?

4. Define “language diversity”

**3.** 1. Could cultural values/mentality determine particular linguistic features and ways of thinking be “stamped” into a language?

2. Could our language constrain how we think and shape thinking of new learners?

**4.** How does M. Pagel tie language diversity to the spread of agriculture (10,000 yrs ago)?

5. 1. In what way is industrialization and habitat extinction linked to language loss, if at all?

2. Where on earth does diversity prosper?

3. Can language loss be stopped by people retreating back into self-contained habitats? Is the current pandemic, in this sense, an opportunity?

4. What’s the purpose behind revitalizing languages? Is it the way to enforce diversity? If not, what is?

**II. LANGUAGE UNIVERSALS**

1. Are they cognitively meaningful/ explained by cognition and limits on learning?
2. Why bother with considering universals?
3. From how many languages did Joseph Greenberg draw data for his universals in 1963 cf. Michael Dryer in 1992? 478-9, Fig.12.2
4. What are the cognitive biases and limitations that determine what sort of language our brain could learn? Can they explain why languages are like-minded?
5. What is the origin of strong word order correlations? And what could explain them?

(1) in-born settings that constrain choices;

(2) preferences for patterns that suggest an ease of processing;

e.g. keeping WO in patterns that are consistent

6. Do easy-to-learn patterns correlate with these word order settings?

Where do they occur geographically? 479-81, Fig. 12.3

1. How common are the easy to-learn-patterns across languages?
2. What experiments were carried out to test it?

Where are morphemes that change word meaning typically added, the front or the back of words?

1. Or, are strong word order correlations merely a reflection of a shared history/ genetic language family?

Do CROSSLINGUISTIC SIMILARITIES have historical or cognitive basis, i.e., explainable by a shared ancestry or shared cognitive machinery (M. Dunn 2011)?

**III. TYPOLOGY: LEARNING BIASES of our cognition**

**…and speakers’ unconscious choices for structures easier to produce**

**TYPOLOGICAL PATTERNS of verb-object ordering, p. 479**

1. Could their distribution reflect patterns that are “easier” to process and thus prefered by speakers?
2. In what ways do these biases show up in language types?
3. Do rare and weird features (i.e. “difficult to learn”) correlate with kids’ progress in learning them in their mother language? Does it take them longer to control a weird and rare feature or inconsistent patterns?
4. What sort of structures could be compared to decide?

e.g., What strategy did children and adults use in learning inconsistent patterns of an artificial language (the study quoted on p. 482)? Table 12.2

5. What’s meant by **gaps between patterns in the input that learners get to process and their output**? i.e., Do learners follow the input and build a system based solely on the input? Or, is more involved in the learning that takes place?

**Examples and summary p. 483-5 and Figure 12.4**

6. Is there evidence that “normal” & common patterns affect how learners regularize?

Can we prove that people generalize common patterns more eagerly across languages than rare ones?

What’s the evidence that not all patterns have the same status in the mind?

What’s implied in the statement that learning biases correlate closely w patterns (their frequency) available among languages?

Does it take longer for kids to learn and control a weird (and rarely encountered) feature? How do they cope with a real but inconsistent pattern?

7. Does it imply that LEARNING BIASES account, in part, for contours of HL? How to explain them?

As gifts of “innate language”, cognitive bent, or a recognition of patterns that are easy to notice or remember?

Can it be confirmed cross-linguistically that speakers **prefer structures** that are easier to produce?

**Are some linguistic forms systematically easier to produce than others?**

Could this search for easier structures cause an intergenerational language shift (since new learners are already bent to overregularize the input they hear) causing the “harder” structures to drop out eventually and the easier strs to be preserved?

When studying Ls, do linguists find cross-linguistically more structures that are easy to produce rather than structures that are cognitively taxing?

8. Do **production pressures** play a role in these crosslinguistic tendencies?

Could that explain why SVO (Subject first) is the most common order (it works even under production pressure and is easy to produce) and OVS or OSV rare?

Could this SVO word order result from learners preferring SVO and regularizing it because they hear it most often in the input?

**What’s responsible for the fact that languages prefer marking inflectional info (tense, gender, etc.) by suffixing rather than prefixing?**

What do speakers find easiest to retrieve from memory? Perhaps, what’s primed somehow by typically going first (visually by a flashing light) or what’s visually salient (concrete objects)?

Are subjects (instigators of action) and animate nouns (typically subjects) the easiest to retrieve?

1 What are the “cognitive demands to **producing language on the fly”?**

**Figure 12.6, p. 489 – MAP of distribution of all the 6 possible WO structures of S- O- V cross-linguistically**

**IV. Communicative efficiency**

1. **What does communicative efficiency mean?**

… that speakers exploit options to make processing of the input easier?

… that speakers desire to avoid communicative breakdown?

**2. What assumes the disambiguating function in the given language?**

CONCLUSION: Selective presence of markers (e.g. inflection) suggests that languages come to their full potential if speakers are freed of unnecessary complexity and steered by the grammar to provide enough info to avoid confusion in hearers.

**EXPERIMENT p. 492: artificial language with SOV or OSV structures**

Q: Will learners reproduce a grammar based solely on the input, or, will their cognition step in?

and redistribute the case-markers to be helpful and “informative” rather than just “be”?