**I. LANGUAGE DIVERSITY** Moodle

**1.** 1. Define “language diversity”.

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

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

4. 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. In what linguistic ways can language SYSTEMS be diverse?

2. Is learning a language w. rare and unusual features (or processing it) more demanding for the mind than learning one with common features?

3. What limits on languages does the mind impose, despite its adaptability to language environments?

**3.** 1. Could cultural values/mentality determine linguistic features to be coded in a language?

**4.** What is M. Pagel’s reasoning to 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?

4. Is the purpose of revitalizing languages to enforce diversity? Or what is?

**II. LANGUAGE UNIVERSALS**

1. Do you agree that they are cognitively meaningful (explained by 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 word order settings? 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., shared ancestry or universal 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 preferred 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 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? What else is involved in the learning?

**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 preference for easier structures cause an intergenerational language shift (since new learners are already bent to overregularize the input they hear) causing the difficult structures to drop out?

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

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

Could it explain why SVO is the most common order (followed under production pressure) 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?

Do speakers find easiest to retrieve from memory what’s primed by going first (visually by a flashing light) or what’s visually salient (concrete objects)?

Has it been shown that subjects (as agents) and animate nouns (typically subjects) are 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?**

… speakers exploit options to make processing of the input easier

… 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 communicative breakdown.

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 “informative” rather than just “be”?