Consider Principle A again

• **Principle A.** An anaphor must have a higher antecedent in some domain.

• **Parameter:**
  – Option (a): domain = smallest clause containing the reflexive pronoun (English, …)
  – Option (b): domain = entire sentence containing the reflexive pronoun (Japanese, …)

Wait… how can a kid set this parameter?

• Every sentence a kid learning English hears is consistent with both values of the parameter!

• If a kid learning English decided to opt for the “sentence” version of the domain parameter, nothing would ever tell the kid s/he had made a mistake.

• s/he would end up with non-English intuitions.

Wait… how can a kid set this parameter?

• A kid learning Japanese can tell right away that their domain is the sentence, since they’ll hear sentences where *zibun* refers to an antecedent outside the clause.

Wait… how can a kid set this parameter?

• A possible way out for a kid would be to start supposing the English parameter setting (the subset) and move to the Japanese setting if there is evidence for that in the Primary Linguistic Data.

   Sentences allowed in Japanese (domain = sentence)
   Sentences allowed in English (domain = clause)

Wait… how can a kid set this parameter?

• The set of relevant sentences allowed in English is a *subset* of the set of sentences allowed in Japanese. Starting with the English value, you could learn the Japanese value, but not vice-versa.

   Sentences allowed in Japanese (domain = sentence)
   Sentences allowed in English (domain = clause)

Subset principle/defaults

• Hypothesis: A child obeys the Subset Principle and selects the most restrictive parametric value consistent with experience.

• A similar hypothesis: A child starts out with a *default* setting for the parameter (the default being the subset setting), changing the setting only if presented with evidence.
What it takes to set a parameter

- Subject drop parameter
  - Option (a): Subject drop is permitted.
  - Option (b): Subject drop is not permitted.
- Italian = option a, English = option b.

What it takes to set a parameter

- The Subset principle says that kids should start with the English setting and learn Italian if the evidence appears.
- English-learning children do indeed start off producing a lot of sentences without subjects; perhaps this is why…? (Hyams 1986)

Points

- Language is complex beyond what kids are taught growing up; kids learn L1 quickly and uniformly.
- This is made possible by UG, which delimits the set of possible languages; UG provides parameters by which languages may differ, LAD sets those parameters based on PLD.
- L2 acquisition is typically “less successful” presuming the goal is native speaker-like knowledge of the language. Also typically harder.
- L2 acquisition is affected by various things (motivation, intelligence, strategies, confidence) which don’t seem to affect L1A.

Coming up

- Seems like almost a “no-brainer”— whatever UG is doing for us in L1A, it seems not to be doing for us in L2A. All signs seem to point to L2A as a general learning process.
- Next week, we’ll see some more-or-less recent history of L2A research (primarily 1960s and 70s)
- Then we’ll look at issues related to a “critical period” for language—a window of opportunity within which L1A must occur if it is to occur properly—and its possible implications on L2A.
- People have actually argued that UG is still driving L2A, though, and we’ll spend a couple of weeks exploring why; this is one of the most active areas in L2A research today.