The setup

- UG is required in part to explain how kids learn language so quick and reach such a reliable steady state on the basis of impoverished input that varies across children.
- What happens to UG in the process?
- What happens to UG afterwards?

Three “views” on the role of UG in L2A

- **No-access** (to UG in L2A). L1A and L2A are fundamentally different.

- **Partial-access** (to UG in L2A). UG contributes, but limited in particular ways, e.g., how the parameters were set in L1.

- **Full-access** (to UG in L2A). With respect to UG, L2A is just like L1A.

No-access and the CPH

- The no-access view is perhaps a reasonable followup to the Critical Period Hypothesis (discussed more next week), that says that you are predisposed to learn language up to a certain age, after which you aren’t.

UG vs. LAD

- **However**, “UG” (Universal Grammar, the human faculty for language) is not conceptually the same thing as the “LAD” (Language Acquisition Device).
- **UG** can be thought of as constraining grammars, requiring that they have certain properties (rules that obey Subjacency, say), and perhaps allowing for parameters of variation.
- The **LAD** is what is responsible for setting the parameters based on the data.

UG vs. LAD vs. CPH

- So, it is certainly conceptually possible that there is a critical period, it affects the operation of the LAD, and after a certain age, the “automatic parameter setting system” becomes unavailable.

- And this is all separate from the question of what kinds of natural languages people can learn/represent (UG).
No-access and the CPH

- Learning a second language without UG means learning by learning rules, learning by analogy.
- EFM point out that learning by analogy doesn’t provide a very good model of how people come to know what is ungrammatical in the L2—yet, L2’ers seem to fare pretty well in grammaticality judgment tasks too.
- Analogy: Who did you see John with? vs. *Who did you see John and?…?
- Creative use: “L2’ers achieve mental states that go well beyond available data and explicit teaching…”?

EFM (rightly) attack…

- It is clear that there is no content to saying “the learner will expect the language being learned to be a human language” without also providing a means of determining what a human language is (that is, UG). It is also clear that it’s ridiculous to claim that you can derive universals by looking at large-scale properties of an instance.
- The “expectations” go beyond “having a syntax,” “having a morphology”—the expectations include having a natural language syntax, morphology, etc.
- “Knowing what language is like” is basically what UG is all about.

Clahsen (& Muysken)

- L1 differs from L2; in L1A we are setting parameters, in L2A we are applying information processing and problem-solving.
- Developmental sequences differ between L1A and L2A.
- C&M suppose that L2’ers learning German posit rules to move participles, nonfinite verbs, etc. to final position in embedded clauses.
- EFM don’t contest the results and don’t talk much about this, except to suggest that maybe L1 adult German also has a verb movement rule—to a head-final Infl.

Partial-access

- The idea is basically this: UG forms the basis for L1 but is transformed into L1, the parameters are permanently set during L1A and only L1 and its parameter settings can be used to inform L2. (UG via L1).
- The defense would be basically this: But you see non-L1 parameter settings being learned (…and nonparametric options not taken in L1 can be used in L2).

New parameter settings

- Japanese vs. English = SOV vs. SVO.
- EFM make a mysterious statement:
  - “Left-headed C” correlates with right-branching adjunction and right-headed C with left-branching adjunction
  - …followed by an example of how English allows both left and right adjunction.
- What EFM must mean is that SVO language-speakers prefer postponed adverbial clauses.
  - The worker called the owner [when the engineer finished the plans].
  - [When the actor finished the book] the woman called the professor.

Bley-Vroman in a weak moment: “…the learner will…expect…the foreign language is not an utterly different sort of thing from the native language”
New parameter settings

- And then EFM proceed to report that Japanese speakers don’t significantly prefer preverbal adverbial clauses (purported SOV preference), and even eventually prefer postverbal adverbial clauses (purported SVO preference).

- But preferences are not parameter settings in any obvious way. Nothing is ruled out in any event—this is not a very useful result (see also Schwartz’s response).

Differently instantiated UG principles

- What they envision here is basically the scenario Kanno was dealing with.
- “If in the L1, a UG principle applies vacuously to a certain construction, the partial-access hypothesis predicts that the learner will not be able to apply this principle nonvacuously to the corresponding construction in L2.”
- I can’t see how this isn’t just false. It certainly isn’t in the spirit of the proposals concerning the relevant principles (Binding, ECP, Subjacency, etc.), which are not supposed to be construction-specific.

Martohardjono 1993

- Interesting test of relative judgments.
- It is generally agreed that ECP violations…
  – Which waiter did the man leave the table after spilled the soup?
- are worse than Subjacency violations
  – Which patient did Max explain how the poison killed?
- Do L2’ers get these kinds of judgments?

Martohardjono 1993

- Turns out, yeah, they seem to.
- But it turns out that speakers of languages without overt wh-movement had lower accuracy on judging the violations overall.
- So: L1 has some effect (although EFM don’t really talk about this much, something which occupies much of the peer reviewers’ time), but getting these judgments cannot be coming from the L1 alone.

A supplement: White, Travis, Maclachlan (1992)

- wh-question formation Malagasy->English L2’ers.
- Malagasy: subject-object asymmetry from English appears to be reversed (which can be explained by reference to the syntax of this VOS language):
  – *Who does Rasoa believe [t will be buying rice]?
  – Who was [that t will be buying rice] believed by Rosoa
- In fact only the subject can be extracted in simple wh-questions:
  – Who t buys rice for the children?
  – *What does the man buy t for the children?
  – What is bought t for the children by the man?

WTM 1992

- Question: Do M->E L2’ers get the English restrictions?
- The restrictions differ in both directions—just learning object extraction is ok in English won’t be enough.
WTM 1992

• 38 adult M speakers taking English.
• Broken by course level and professor ratings into high intermediate (18) and low intermediate (20).
• Grammaticality judgment task, and question formation task:
  – Sam believes that Ann stole his car.
  – *What does Sam believe the claim that Ann stole?
  – What does Sam believe that Ann stole?

WTM 1992

• Results: High intermediates were nearly as good as the controls at accepting grammatical sentences and rejecting ungrammatical ones (and avoiding violations when forming questions).
• One place a big difference appeared is in accepting/producing that-trace violations (compared to controls) in production, yet in GJ task, controls actually accepted about 30% of the that-trace violations—so maybe this is a preference issue (controls prefer not to “violate that-trace”, L2’ers haven’t nailed that preference yet)

WTM 1992 conclude…

• Carrying over the settings from L1 won’t explain how the Malagasy speakers get the English grammaticality facts so closely (since the pattern is reversed, in places, but not everywhere).
• The idea: There is still some “access to UG”—the options concerning what kinds of languages there can be re: wh-extraction are still around.

EFM: *V&YS

• EFM come down hard on Vainikka & Young-Scholten, but it seems like (as V&YS indicate in their response too) there’s a simple assumption that defuses basically all of EFM’s complaints:
• Speakers are maintaining several grammars; perhaps not so different from knowledge of register in “monolingual adults” in fact. A “VP-stage” grammar generates only VP structures, an IP-stage grammar generates only IP structures—not VP structures. But as the learner proceeds, the IP grammar gains strength, it is used more often, and the VP structure weakens.

EFM: V&YS=partial access?

• Many were mystified by EFM’s classification of V&YS as a partial-access hypothesis. V&YS dealt very little with the issue, but we would have no reason to think that they weren’t full-access—particularly because part of their argument was that L1A proceeds in the same way—we know at the least that the VP parameters can be transferred and then re-set, indicating that the options (=UG) are still available.

EFM: *V&YS—performance?

• EFM: Just seeing people make mistakes doesn’t tell us whether it is rooted in the competence or the performance.
  – The rat the cat the dog bit chased died. Poor rat.
• But how likely is that adult production of, say, morphological endings is as hard as this?
EFM: *V&YS: % correct morphology?

- There are two conceptually distinct components to producing the correct morphological endings.
  - Syntax (Spec-head configuration)
  - Morphological realization (pronunciation) of features

- L2'er might have syntax perfect and morphology backwards—so % correct might be a little bit dangerous as a measure.
- EFM’s point seems to be: Even if they never get it right, this won’t imply that they don’t know it.
- Hmm.

EFM: *V&YS: VP-stage

- Continuing on…
- There are some IP structures. EFM assign a great deal of importance to this…
  - “Does the syntactic inventory of the subjects’ grammar of German contain functional categories, or doesn’t it?”
- But we know the answer to that, at least according to V&YS…

EFM: *V&YS: IP-stage

- More complaints about occurrences of non-IP elements and “retentiveness” which are easily dismissed…

- EFM complain about the “Full House Principle” (which we didn’t see in the V&YS paper we read), and to a certain extent this is justified—posing non-target principles that will have to abandoned upon success in acquiring the L2 is sub-optimal.

EFM: *V&YS: IP-stage

- EFM’s counter-proposal is that we assume that L2’ers have a full German CP structure in the IP stage, and the verb raises to C, not to some underspecified Infl functional head.
- Of course V&YS didn’t like that because none of the other evidence for C you’d expect to see was showing up. No yes/no- or wh-questions with inversion, no embedded sentences with an overt complementizer.
- EFM’s response: Maybe the L2’ers haven’t figured out which phonology goes with C’s features…

EFM: *V&YS: AgrP-stage

- EFM’s basic complaint here is just about co-existing stages and the fact that people don’t seem to be consistent about which stages co-exist.

- EFM’s alternative? Very unclear. EFM say: V&YS require in the IP-stage that the V move to (empty) Infl when Infl is present; EFM would prefer obligatory V->I, but shouldn’t this result in verb-final utterances (since EFM would also prefer head-final IP)? So “IP-stage” must also have movement to C sometimes if it is going to cover V&YS’s data? (But why no other reflexes of C?) And why is movement to C apparently optional? EFM seem to have no alternative at all…

EFM: *V&YS: VP-stage

- Elicited imitation, Japanese speakers learning English (33 kids, 18 adults).

- Trying to elicit sentences with things associated with functional categories (tense marking, modals, do-support for IP; topicalization, relative clauses, wh-questions for CP).
EFM’s experiment

- Kids did equally well in this repetition task as adults.
- Kids seemed to get around 70% success on IP-related things, around 50% success on CP-related things. The deeper topicalizations are harder than shallower topicalizations.
- EFM would have you believe:
  – Based on their data collapsing over all kids and over all adults, there are no stages.
  – CP is there just as much as IP is there, despite the higher success with IP, just because CP-related structures are intrinsically harder/more complex.
- It could be true, but it’s certainly not a knock-down argument against V&YS.

Some points from the audience…

- Only under pretty specific assumptions is lack of functional categories telling about how similar L2A is to L1A—there are views that have L1A lacking functional categories too (Radford, for example).
- You can comprehend a non-native-speaker’s utterance, presumably without assigning it a (correct?) syntactic structure. Doesn’t this have negative implications for the trustworthiness of an imitation task?

Some points from the audience…

- A number of reviewers mentioned that EFM failed to consider the initial state of L2A; that is, that both L1 and UG shape L2A, the L1 through transfer and UG through providing parametric options. This was, after all, one of the primary points of V&YS. (EFM respond: True, we couldn’t talk about everything…but how hard is this to at least mention?)

Some points from the audience…

- Given that much of L2A research focuses on how L2A differs from L1A, it’s strange that EFM didn’t address how they could differ at all.
- As mentioned before, LAD ≠ UG, and this could easily have big implications with respect to the existence and nature of the critical period and “accessibility of UG.”

Some points from the audience…

- UG is quite possibly nothing more than the description of the only way the human brain, for whatever reason can “hold language.” If so, there’s not going to be a non-UG way to store a second language in there, however it is implanted.

Some points from the audience…

- Some questions which seem important but were left undiscussed:
  - Is there an L2 steady state (for a given speaker)? There is one for L1, namely the native language.
  - Is this steady state roughly predictable from the target language alone?
  - Is this steady state roughly predictable from the target and source languages?
  - What is retained/transferred from L1? What isn’t? Why (not)?
Some points from the audience…

- You know, L2A seems pretty different from L1A—consider German. Poeppel & Wexler convinced the world that little German kids know about tense and V2 and have C. However, these L2’ers of German don’t seem to show the same properties. They sometimes use nonfinite morphology, but they put nonfinite verbs anywhere—final/after negation or in second position. L1A has close morphology-syntax connections that L2A just seems to lack.

Incidentally…

- Prévost & White (1999; BUCLD 23) looked at French and German L2’ers.
- They found that in nonfinite contexts, adults almost always used nonfinite verbs.
- They found that finite verbs pretty much always precede negation, and nonfinite verbs can appear on either side.
- When finite agreement is present, it is almost always correct.
- Conclusion: What’s happening is that adults who reach for and miss the finite inflected form are using the nonfinite form instead (with otherwise regularly finite syntax—it’s basically an issue of pronunciation).

Some points from the audience…

- Can you really distinguish the L2 knowledge “originating in L1” from that “originating in UG”?
- What we want is to find a UG principle and see if L2’er is constrained by it independently of L1.
- Structure-dependence is no good (too much evidence from every language), but Subjacency and ECP suffer a similar problem, since it’s hard to come up with a language that doesn’t have evidence for these somewhere—and if LF movement obeys them, it’s going to be hopeless.
- To accomplish what we want, we’ll need to find something without evidence in L1 or L2, but nevertheless show that it is nevertheless acquired and is constraining the L2’er.

Part of the response…

- “Another prevalent objection to the FAH consists of the pervasive, but in many cases anecdotal, claim that L2 learners, unlike L1 learners, often fail to achieve natively proficiency…” but it is “far from experimentally established that even full proficiency never occurs.”
- “Before we conclude or simply assert that L2 performance that diverges from ‘nativelike’ standards is the result of competence deficit(s),… we must first investigate whether differences in native and non-native performance might not be traceable to a host of possible performance or processing factors.”
- Maybe strictly true, but likely…?

Where are we?
(says me, anyway)

- UG constrains languages to have a certain “shape” in order to “fit” in the human brain. Languages have to be built a certain way, e.g., have only movements which obey Subjacency, etc. There is a very small and specific amount of “wiggle room”: The parameters.
- L1A involves setting parameters fast and effortless from noisy data.
- Adult L2A is not fast, not effortless, often unsuccessful to some degree, and may have marginally better data.
- Suggests something affected by maturation (critical period), but it specifically suggests that the LAD loses effectiveness, not that the “way humans store language” disappears.
For next time:

- Read Johnson & Newport (1991)
- Read White & Genesee (1996)
- Read Long (1990)
- Do a summary (like previous ones) on White & Genesee (1996)