24.949
Language Acquisition

Class 6
Passives

Relatedness of structures

- Part of knowing a grammar is to know which type of grammatical structures are related and in what way

(1) a. Mommy will kiss the baby.
b. The baby will be kissed by Mommy.
c. Will Mommy kiss the baby?
d. Who will kiss the baby?
e. Who will Mommy kiss?

Passives as a litmus test for grammatical knowledge

- Linguists have used command of reversible passives (in languages like English) as a canonical test of grammatical knowledge
- Only if your grammatical knowledge allows you to parse the sentences correctly will you be able to generate a meaning for these sentences that is grammatically sanctioned

(1) The chicken was chased by the cat

(2) The chicken chased the cat

Today

- Problems in the acquisition of passives

Background on (English) passives

- Issues in morphosyntax
  - special morphology on the verb (*-en*)
  - demotion of external argument (either disappears or surfaces in a *by*-phrase)
  - promotion of some other argument (gets NOM case, ends up in Spec, TP)

Background on (English) passives

- Issues in semantics/pragmatics
  - interpretation of external argument in the absence of a *by*-phrase
  - special discourse requirements (subject = topic)?

Theoretical disagreements

- What is *-en*?

Theoretical disagreements

- What is *-en*?
  - a “clitic” (Baker, Johnson & Roberts 1989)
  - low Aspect head (Embick 2004, maybe Collins 2005)
  - head of dedicated Passive voice (Bruening 2012)

Theoretical disagreements

- What is the *by*-phrase?

Theoretical disagreements

- What is the *by*-phrase?
  - an adjunct, like nominal *by*-phrases (Bruening 2012)
  - the external argument (Collins 2005)
  - something magic? (Baker, Johnson and Roberts 1989)

Theoretical disagreements

- What is the status of the external argument?

Theoretical disagreements

- What is the status of the external argument?
  - Syntactically realized in Spec, vP (Roeper, BJR, Embick, Collins…)
    - Can serve as antecedent for reflexive-binding:

(1) Es wurde einander gedankt [German]
It was each.other thanked.

    - Can control PRO:

(2) a. The ship was sunk [PRO to collect insurance]
b. It was decided [PRO to leave]

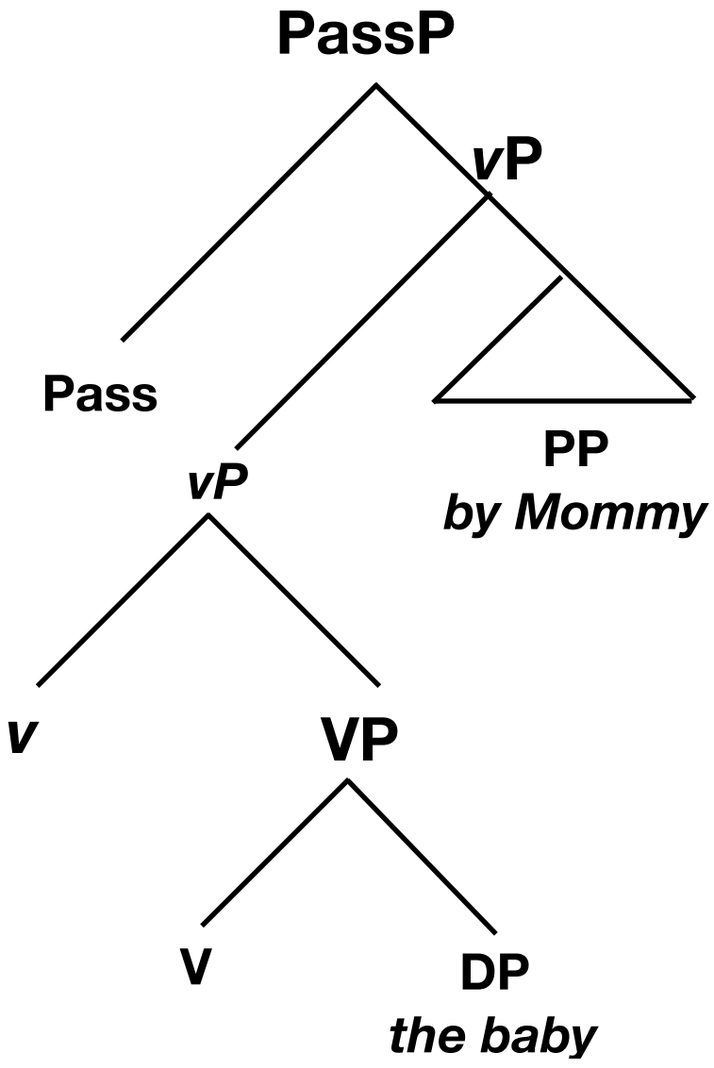
    - Can license agent-oriented adverbials:

(3) The book was torn deliberately/on purpose.

  - occupied by *-en*
  - occupied by *by*-phrase
  - occupied by PRO

Theoretical disagreements

- What is the status of the external argument?
  - Not syntactically realized (Bruening, Williams)
  - Passive *v* doesn't project an external argument
  - Some variant of analysis from Dowty (1982) where the open argument slot is existentially quantified over by the Pass morpheme



Where there is agreement

- Requires a certain kind of *v* (one that can introduce an agent or cause)

(1) a. kunju karanj-u
baby cry.INTR-PST
b. *karaya-**peTT**-u
cry-PASS-PST

(2) a. amma kunjine karay-**ichch**-u
mom baby cry-CAUS-PST
‘Mom made baby cry.’
b. (amma-aal) kunju karay-**ikka**-**peTT**-u
mom-by baby cry-CAUS-PASS-PST
‘The baby was made cry by mom.’ [Malayalam]

Where there is agreement

- Requires a certain kind of *v* (one that can introduce an agent or cause)
  - Some languages allow for passivization of unergative intransitives, suggesting that promotion of internal arg. may not be obligatory in these languages, possibly related to variation w.r.t. EPP on T

    (1) Es wurde getanzt.
    It was danced.

  - No language allows for languages allow for passivization of unaccusative intransitives, suggesting the definitional nature of the demotion-of-ext-arg component

    (2) a. In de zomer wordt er hier vaak gezwommen.
    'In the summer it is swum here frequently.'
    b. *In de zomer wordt er hier vaak verdronken.
    'In the summer it is drowned here frequently.'

Some related structures

- Adjectival passives
  - String-identical, but structurally distinct (S-homophones)

(1) The door was opened.
  a. [$_{TP}$The door [$_{AUX}$was [$_{PASSP}$-ed [$_{VP}$open [~~the door~~]]]]]
  b. [$_{TP}$The door[$_{AUX}$was [$_{ADJP}$ opened]]]

- Interpretive difference: (1b) is a description of the state of the door, whereas (1a) is a description of a breaking event

- Syntactic difference: adjectival passives do not take *by*-phrases (there is no external argument), cf.

(2) The door was unopened (*by my roommate).

Some related structures

- Get-passives

(1) a. They got arrested by the police last night.
b. Poor John got run over by a truck while crossing the road yesterday.

- *Get* as a raising verb that selects for an adjectival passives (Fox and Grodzinsky 1998)

(2) [$_{TP}$They [$_{VP}$ got [$_{SC}$ ~~they~~ [$_{ADJP}$ arrested]]]]

Passives in acquisition

Early passives in production

- Israel, Johnson and Brooks (2001): corpus study of 7 children
- Earliest passives consistently stative
- systematic stative > eventive progression = adjectival passive > verbal passive?

Table 3. *Stages in the morphosyntactic development of participles*

	Abe	Adam	Eve	Naomi	Nina	Peter[a]	Sarah
Stative passives	2;6	2;4	1;8	1;11	2;1	1;11	2;6
Alternations	2;6	2;4	2;0	1;11	2;5	2;0	2;6
Novel participles	3;0	3;3	–	2;11	3;2	1;10	3;3
Eventive passives	2;11	3;7	–	4;8	3;0	2;9	4;11

Early passives in production

Abe, Kuczaj corpus

Stative predications (204 tokens)

it's broken.	2;6.6
and it's all dried out Daddy.	2;6.10
Mom, why this is glued?	2;7.15

Alternations

somebody broke it. I want paper.	2;6.4
this is broken, Mom.	2;6.6
what that's cut, all cut?	
you cut those.	2;8.18
ok I can crack them.	
uhhuh funny and silly Daddy, those things are cracked.	2;8.29

Novel participles

no I was just teasing you I don't wanna be get.	2;10.30
no then we're going home [#] that part is brokened.	3;0.7
we played with this and it got brokeded.	3;0.25
ok I got em all sort up now.	3;1.22

Clear eventives (18 tokens)

no I was just teasing you I don't wanna be get.	2;10.30
do you want ta be horned?	2;11.2
I'm trying to get this up so high so I won't be hurted when I jump.	3;2.29
are we gonna go to that burned fire store that was all burned.	3;4.19
no a monarch butterfly was killed by a bird.	3;7.21

Passive delay

- Bever (1970) was among the first to empirically document children's difficulties in the comprehension of passive sentences
  - Children at least as young as 2;6 comprehend active sentences like (1)

    (1) Alex kissed Jesse

  - But they seem to have difficulty comprehending semantically equivalent, but syntactically distinct passives like (2)

    (2) Jesse was kissed by Alex

Passive delay

- Replication in de Villiers and de Villiers (1973):
- Method: Act-out
  - children given toys and asked to act-out test sentences like: “Make the boy hit the girl”(active), and “Make the boy be hit by the girl”.

Table 2 Results from de Villiers and de Villiers

		Active		Passive	
Stage	# of children, ages (MLU)	% correct	% reversed	% correct	% reversed
1	8, 19–23 months (1.06–2.99)	45.8	10.4	25.4	30
2	10, 24–27 months (1.06–3.94)	65.8	16.9	39	37.3
3	9, 28–31 months (2.24–4.16)	78.9	15.5	31.8	50.4
4	6, 32–37.5 months (2.86–4.25)	87.8	12.2	34.4	65.6

Passive delay

- Bever's proposal: Difficulty due to Agent-V-Patient strategy for non-canonical word orders

- NB: there are recent variants of this idea, e.g. Huang et al. (2013)

Passive delay

Problems…

- Children do not have issues with other structures that mess with the Agent-V-Patient order, e.g. object *wh*-questions:
  - Guasti (2000): of 2,809 object wh-questions in child English, only 41 are in situ (all echo questions)
  - Stromswold (1995), Hirsch, Hartman, & Wexler (2005): no difference in production or comprehension of subject vs. object questions
- Children do not have issues with very similar *get*-passives (Crain et al. 1987, Messenger and Fisher 2018)

Verb type effect

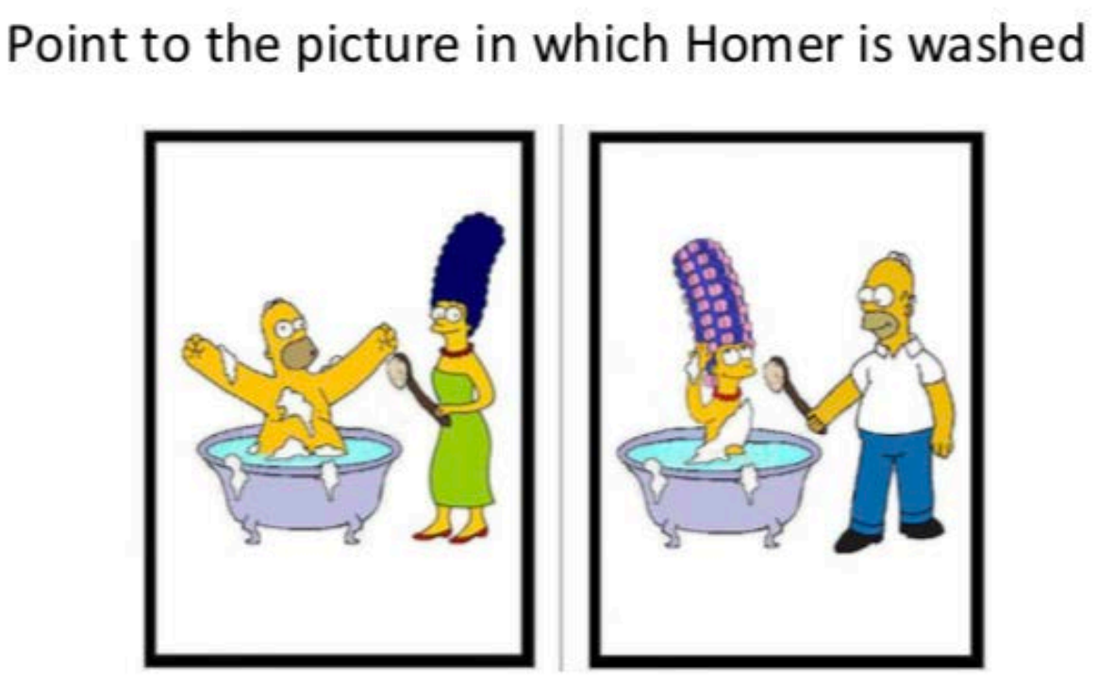
- Maratsos et al. (1985)
  - asymmetry between “actional” and “non-actional” verbs
  - where “actional” = kick, kiss, chase, etc. and “non-actional” = see, hear, forget, like, etc.

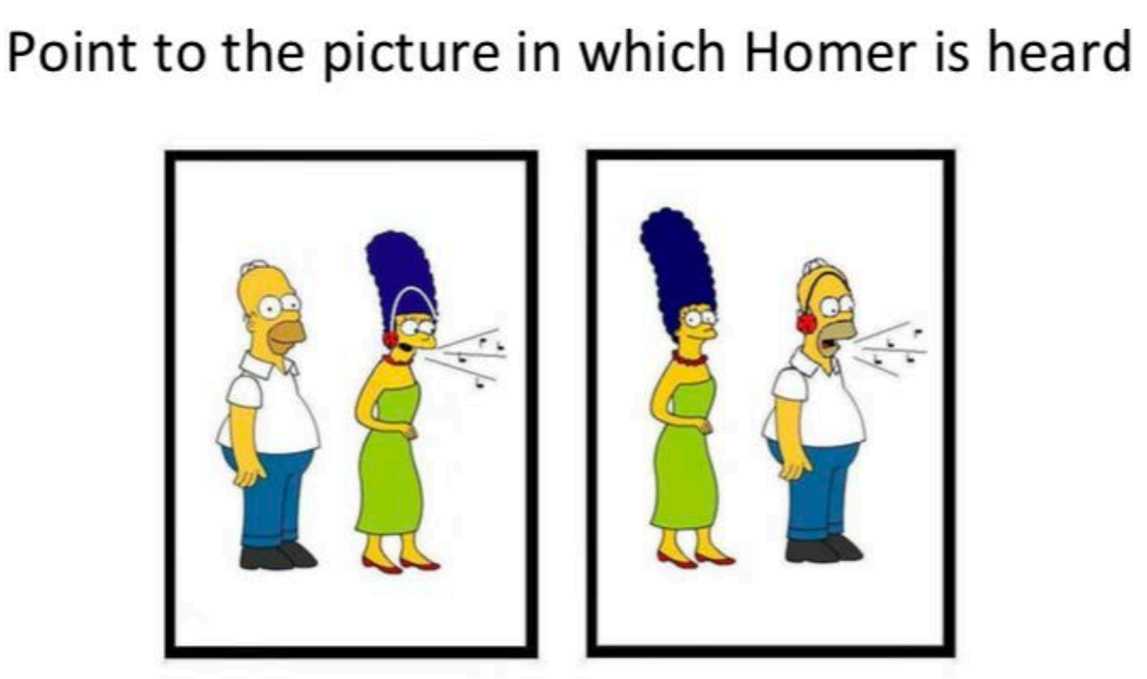
Table 3 Percent correct responses to a picture selection task testing active and passive sentences with actional and non-actional verbs (Maratsos et al. 1985)

	Actional		Non-actional	
Age	Active	Passive	Active	Passive
4	97	85	92	34
5	99	91	96	65
7	99	92	97	62
9	100	96	99	87
11	100	99	100	99

Verb type effect

- Replication (Hirsch & Wexler 2004):





Verb type effect

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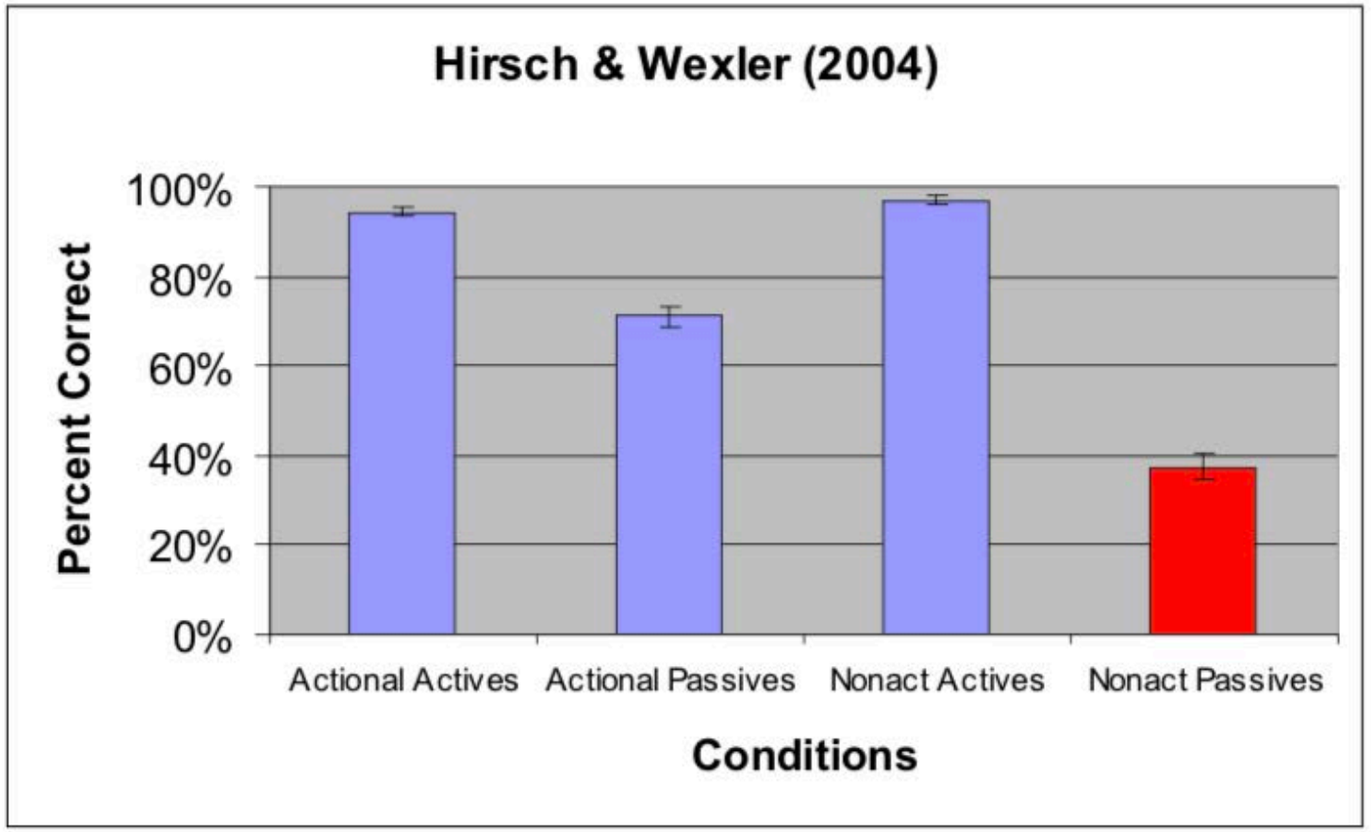


Summary

- Children have difficulty with passive sentences (comprehension and production) when they do not have difficulty with the counterpart active sentences.
- Children have even more difficulty with non-actional passives.
  - Children seem to comprehend actional passives in adult-like ways at ~4ya
  - Children seem to comprehend actional passives in adult-like ways at ~7ya

Questions

- What is behind children's difficulty with passives?

- What is the nature of the verb-type effect? ("non-actional" is not a grammatical distinction)

- Do English data generalize?

Frequency effects

- Passives are very infrequent in English children's input (0.5%), and even rarer for non-actional passives (Gordon & Chafetz 1990)
    - 92% of the passives produced by caregivers are actional

- Extreme rarity means that children have less exposure to this noncanonical sentence type, and by common sense, the passive would be learned later than other more common sentence types

Frequency effects

- Not all languages
- Demuth (1989), Demuth, Moloi and Machobane (2010):
  - In Sesotho (Southern Bantu, spoken in Lesotho), independent structural requirements of the language ensures that the passive occurs fairly commonly, even in child-directed speech
  - Sesotho acquiring children produce adult-like passives from 2;6 onwards
  - Sesotho acquiring 3-year-olds comprehend actional and non-actional passives at rates above 70%
- Similar patterns for Inuktitut (Allen and Crago 1996); K'iche' Mayan (Pye and Quixtan Poz 1988)

Frequency effects

- However, even in Sesotho, an actional/non-actional distinction in the input: 99% of the passives were actional

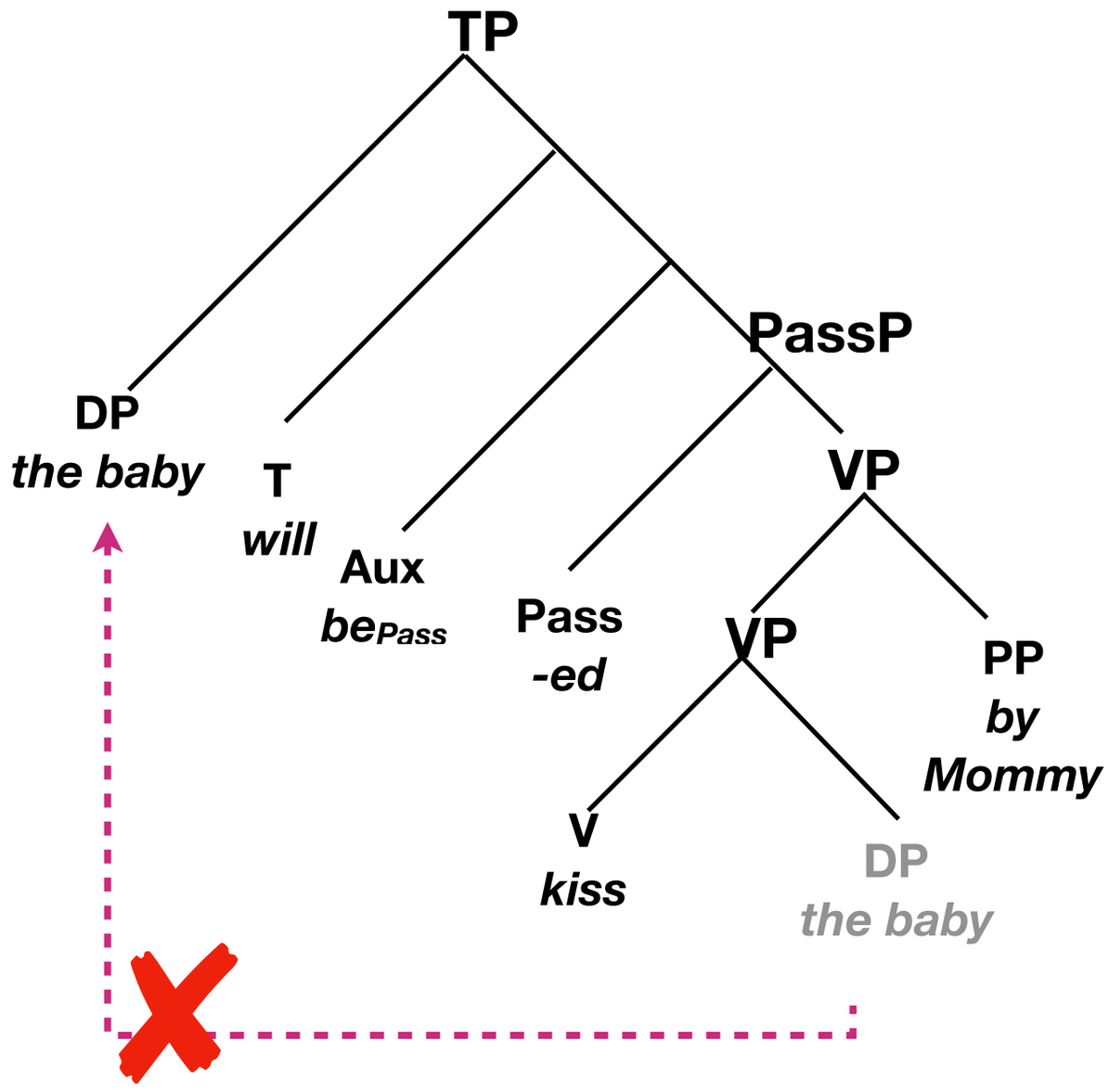
- Why do the frequency profiles look the way they are?

Frequency effects

- Complex interaction between frequency and passive acquisition:
  - In English, passives of all sorts are missing from child's input, and non-actionals are even rarer, but asymmetric delay with non-actionals
  - In Sesotho, passives of actionals are frequent in child's input, non-actionals missing, but success with all passives

A-Chain Deficit Hypothesis (ACDH)

- Borer & Wexler (1987):
  - Children under ~6 cannot carry out A-movement
  - The passive delay falls out as a consequence



A-Chain Deficit Hypothesis (ACDH)

- This straightforwardly accounts for children’s problems with non-actional passives, but what about actional passives?

Adjectival strategy

- Actional verbs tend to allow good (better?) **adjectival** passives

(1) a. The doll seems combed. (≈ is combed)
b. *The doll seems seen. (≈ is seen)

(2) a. The combed doll
b. *The seen doll

- B&W: Children analyze verbal passives as (homophonous) adjectival passives (which lack the difficult type of A-movement).

- Consequence: superficial success on action passives, but no means of interpreting non-actional ones.

Adjectival strategy

- Strong predictions:
  - Children can only represent an adjectival passive
  - Adjectival passives are stative, not eventive
  - Children’s passives have stative meanings

Adjectival strategy

- Some support: in languages where verbal and adjectival are not syntactic homophones, superficial success on actional passives disappears

- Terzi & Wexler (2002): Greek

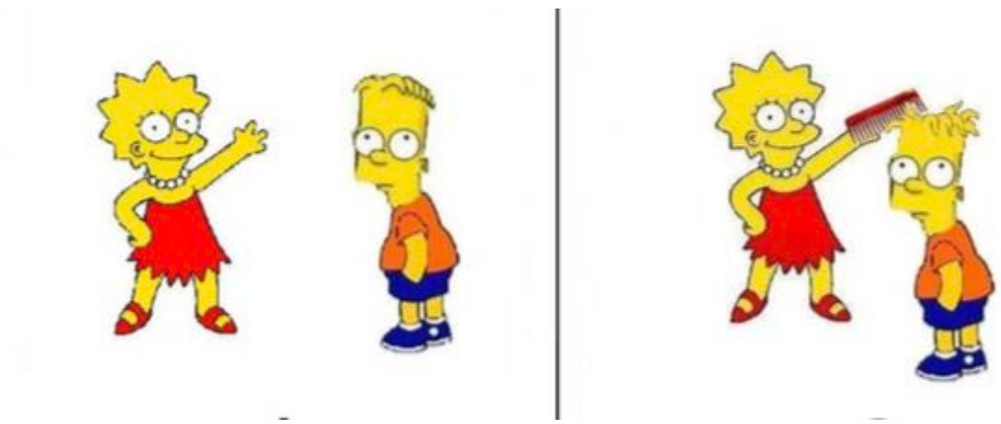
Age	English (H&W)	Greek (T&W)
3 years	60%	3%
4 years	69%	33%
5 years	84%	44%

Figure: Actional Passive comprehension in English and Greek

Adjectival strategy

- Some support: in languages where verbal and adjectival are not syntactic homophones, superficial success on actional passives disappears

  - Oliva & Wexler (2018): Spanish (*ser* for verbal, *estar* for adjectival)



1. El niño es peinado (verbal)
2. El niño está peinado (adjectival)

Group	Verbal passives	Adjectival passives
3 y.o.	27.5%	68.3%
4 y.o.	37.5%	71.7%
5 y.o.	35.0%	80.8%
6 y.o.	40.8%	83.3%
Average	35.1%	76.0%

Summary

- Delayed syntactic knowledge of the passive is attributed to children lacking the necessary syntactic means to represent such structures

- Nonactional Passive Comprehension:
  - Poor comprehension due to inability to derive a meaning using adult syntactic means.

- Actional Passive Comprehension:
  - Involves deducing and applying a strategy that derives representation for actional passives but not nonactional passives.

Challenges to ACDH: conceptual

- Fox & Grodzinsky 1998
- VP-internal subjects
- A-movement in children’s get-passives

Challenges to ACDH: conceptual

- Fox & Grodzinsky 1998
- Argues that there evidence that (at least for some children) only **full non-actional passives** are delayed, unpredicted on ACDH

Fox and Grodzinsky

- TVJT

  “An example sentence/story pair begins when a koala bear finds an abandoned egg. He says, “Here is an egg. But there is no one to hatch it. How will it stay warm? I know. I will keep it warm.” The koala bear hugs the egg. Then, in walks the rock star. He says, “I have a show in ten minutes. I need a drum. Where can I find a drum? Here, the koala bear is holding a drum. I’ll take that.” The rock star grabs the egg from the koala bear. The bear protests, “Don’t take that, I need to keep it warm.” At this point the rock star starts running away with the egg and yells back, “It’s not an egg. It is a drum, and I need it. Sorry.” The koala bear screams, “I won’t let you go. I will chase you until I get the egg back.” And he starts chasing the rock star.”

  Match (M)
  Puppet: I know what’s happening. The rock star is being chased by the koala bear.

  Mismatch (MM)
  Puppet: I know what’s happening. The koala bear is being chased by the rock star.

Fox and Grodzinsky

- 6 types of sentences:

  i. The rock star is being chased by the koala bear.
  [actional, be-passive, by-phrase]

  ii. The rock star is getting chased by the koala bear.
  [actional, get-passive, by-phrase]

  iii. The rock star is being chased.
  [actional, be-passive, no by-phrase]

  iv. The rock star is getting chased.
  [actional, get-passive, no by-phrase]

  v. The rock star is being heard by the koala bear.
  [non-actional, be-passive, by-phrase]

  vi. The rock star is being heard.
  [non-actional, be-passive, no by-phrase]

Fox and Grodzinsky

- F&G find 3 types of children: Group 1 (n=2) exhibited adult-like behavior, Group 2 (n=8) exhibited difficulties only with long non-actional passives; Group 3 (n=3) also exhibited diificulty with truncated non-actional passvies.

Table 1
Group 2, total responses per condition (8 children × 2 sentences per condition)

Condition 1: Nonactional *be*-passives (nontruncated)		
	Reward	Punish
Match	5	11
Mismatch	8	8
		40.6% correct

Condition 2: Nonactional *be*-passives (truncated)		
	Reward	Punish
Match	16	0
Mismatch	0	16
		100% correct

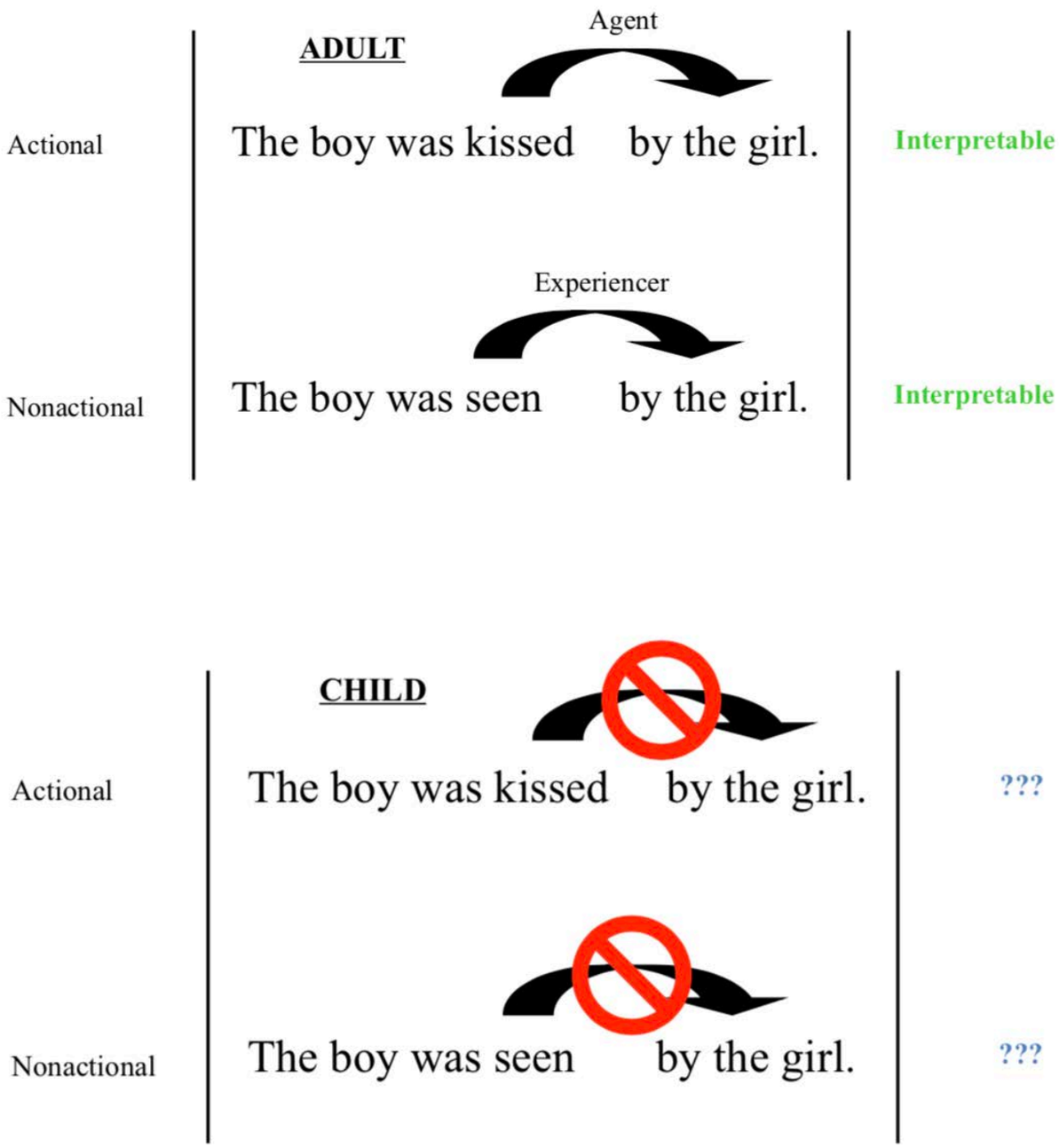
Fox and Grodzinsky

- For adults, in the passive, by does not assign a theta-role (this is done by the verb).

(1) a. Sophocles was kicked by Euripides. (agent)
b. The package was sent by Sophocles. (source)
c. The letter was received by Euripides. (goal)
d. Sophocles is feared by all students. (experiencer)

- **Claim:** Children's problem is in transmitting the external theta-role to the by-phrase.

Fox and Grodzinsky

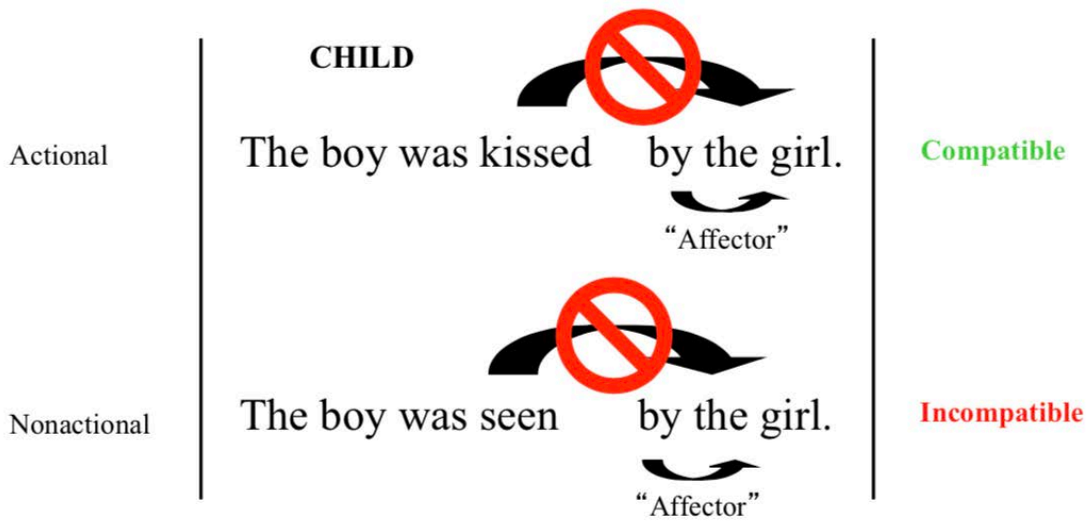


Fox and Grodzinsky

- Nominal *by,* however, does assign a theta-role to its complement: "affector"

(1) a. The book by Morrison.
b. The destruction of the city by the Romans.

- In English, the preposition by is ambiguous:
  – Semantically empty in passives.
  – Semantically contentful in nominals.

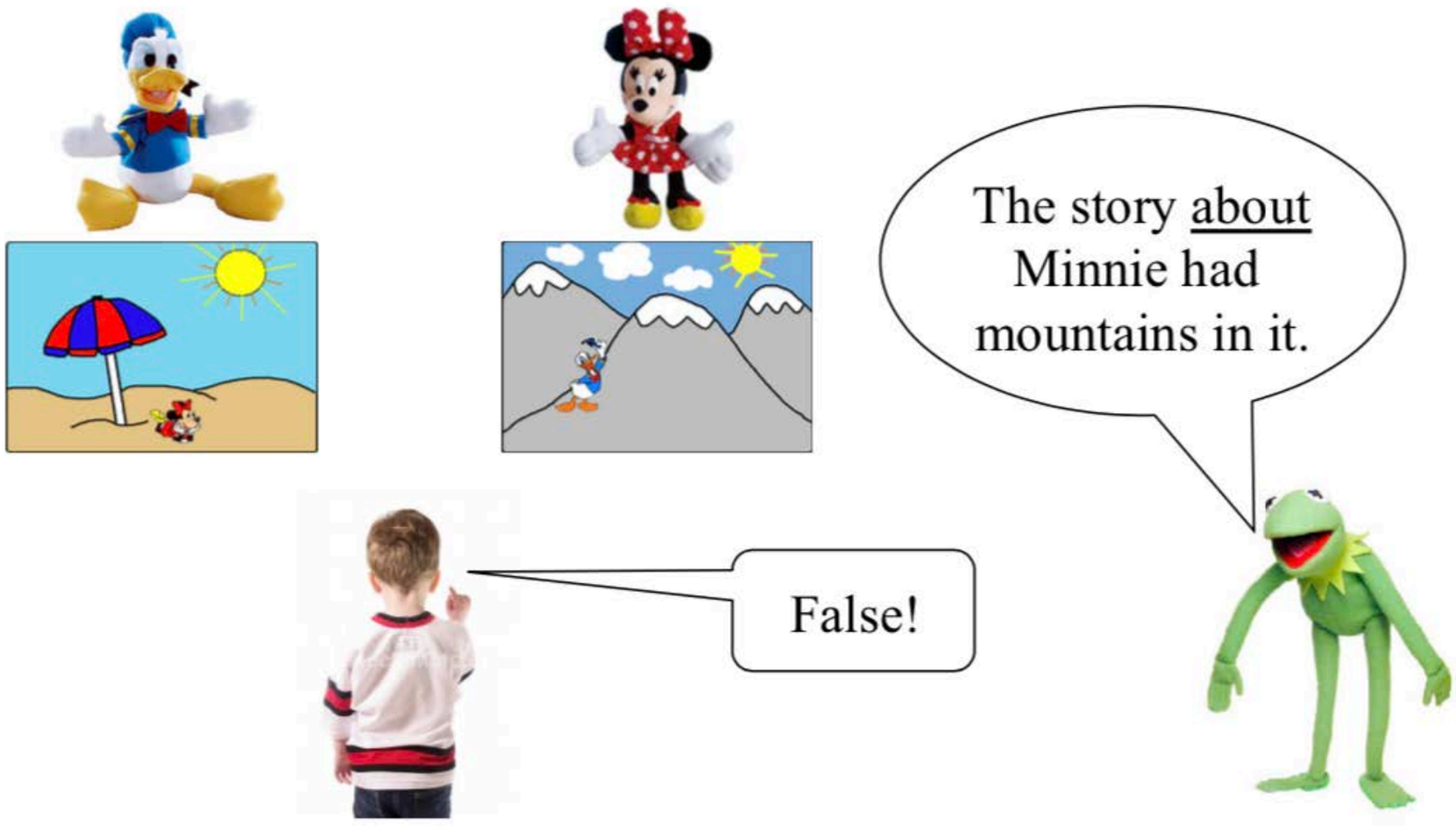


Problems

- Results aren’t robust
  - Gordon and Chafetz 1990
    - Comprehension task, pictures+story w/ questions
    - 35% vs. 43% on non-actional full vs. truncated passives
  - Messenger et al. 2011
    - Priming task
    - Short passives primed production of full passives more so than actives (though authors did not distinguish between *get*/*be*-passives)

Problems

- Hirsch & Wexler (2005): by-comprehension in kids



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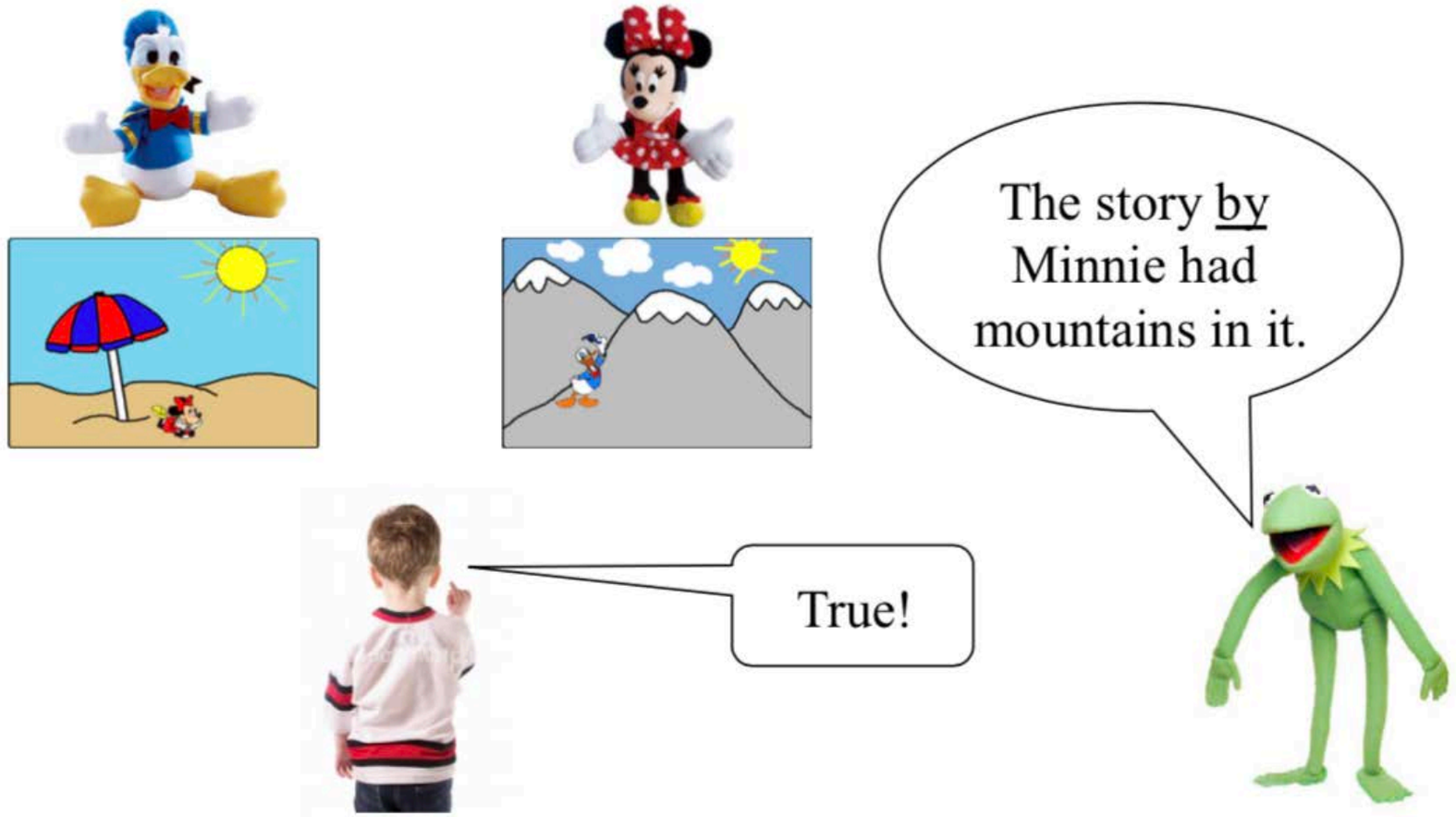

Problems

- Hirsch & Wexler (2005): by-comprehension in kids

- *About* Trials (*The story about Minnie . . .*)
  - Age Group (Totals)

3 year-olds	4 year-olds	5 year-olds
93.5%	89.1%	92.5%

- *By* Trials (*The story by Minnie . . .*)
  - Age Group (Totals)

3 year-olds	4 year-olds	5 year-olds
26.6%	33.3%	28.3%

Problems

- Hirsch & Wexler's (2005) conclusions:
  - Children comprehend nominal *about*-phrases, but not nominal *by*-phrases.
  - Children consistently interpret nominal *by*-phrases as if they were *about*-phrases.
  - Children cannot be using a nominal *by*-phrase affector-role strategy to comprehend passives.

Problems

- Do we want to rest the theory on theta-transmission?

Still

- Conceptual challenges are real: probably can't say that children can’t do A-movement

- Response in Wexler (2004): children have stricter notions of phasehood than adults

  - Universal Phase Requirement: all *v*Ps, including passive and unaccusative ones, are phasal

- Consequence: A-movement out of spec, vP is fine, but movement of internal argument is not

Further challenges to ACDH: methodological

- Criticism: Children's failures, including the selective failures on non-actional passives, may be task-specific
  - Confusability factors in picture-selection
  - Imageability of certain eventualities compared to others
- Bencini & Valian (2008), Messenger et al. (2012): success as young as 3 using structural priming method

Structural priming

- **Priming** is a process whereby the presentation of one stimulus (called the prime) allows faster and/or more accurate reaction to a second, related stimulus (called the target).

- **Structural priming:** Abstract syntactic patterns can prime even in the absence of any lexical/content overlap (Bock 1986)

  - Crucially, successful structural priming entails structural knowledge (otherwise, why should a prime have any effect?)

  - Thus, if a given structure successfully primes, it can be taken as evidence for knowledge of a particular sentential pattern, such as the passive.

Bencini & Valian 2008

- 53 English speaking 3-year-olds
- Two groups: active vs. passive (+No Prime control).
- Each child heard a sentence (passive or active) that described a picture, e.g., *the spoon stirs the coffee*, *the coffee is stirred by the spoon*.
- The child then saw a different picture (e.g., a picture of a knife cutting an orange) and was asked to describe it. They could respond either in the active or the passive.
- **Rationale:** if children have structural knowledge of the passive, then when primed by a passive sentence in the first picture, children should show a tendency to describe the second picture with a passive sentence.

Bencini & Valian 2008

- No Prime control group never produced passives
- Active prime = 2% passive
- Passive prime = ~15% passive

Messenger et al. 2012

- Question: Does the actional vs. non-actional asymmetry replicate when using priming methodology?

Messenger et al. 2012

- Different types of non-actional verbs

- Observation: not all non-actional passives are equally infrequent in adult speech

- **Subject experiencer verbs**
  [Psycho] fears/loves/hates [the neighbor’s dog].

  EXPERIENCER

- **Object experiencer verbs**
  [The neighbor's dog] frightens/angers [Psycho].

  EXPERIENCER

Messenger et al. 2012

- Different types of non-actional verbs

- Observation: not all non-actional passives are equally infrequent in adult speech

- **Subject experiencer verbs**

(1) a. Psycho fears the neighbor’s dog.
b. The neighbor’s dog was feared by Psycho.

?

- **Object experiencer verbs**

(2) a. The neighbor’s dog frightens Psycho.
b. Psycho was frightened by the neighbor's dog.

Messenger et al. 2012

- Two priming experiments
  - N=20, Exp.1; N=24, Exp.2
- 2x2 within-subjects:
  - active vs. passive prime
  - verb-type1 vs. verb-type2
- Scoring: “passive” iff: complete sentence that appropriately described the picture’s event, contained a subject bearing the patient role, an auxiliary verb (*get* or *be*), a main verb, a preposition *by* and an object bearing the patient role

Messenger et al. 2012

- Q1: Does object-experiencer passives prime agent-patient passives?

Fig. 1. Agent–patient (*hit*) and theme–experiencer (*shock*) verb prime items and target item (*scratch*).

NB: progressive aspect used in primes to dissuade an adjectival interpretation

Messenger et al. 2012

- Q1: Does object-experiencer passives prime agent-patient passives?

Table 1
Frequency of Active, Passive, and Other (Reversed Passive) target responses by Group, Verb Type and Prime Condition in Experiment 1.

Group	Verb type	Prime	Target responses		
			Active	Passive	Other (of which reversed passive)
Children	Agent–patient	Active	73	8	37 (4)
		Passive	41	31	42 (10)
	Theme–experiencer	Active	77	11	29 (3)
		Passive	47	29	43 (12)
Adults	Agent–patient	Active	103	10	4 (0)
		Passive	79	35	4 (0)
	Theme–experiencer	Active	99	11	10 (0)
		Passive	80	28	10 (1)

Adults: passives prime passives across verb-type

Messenger et al. 2012

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		Passive	79	35	4 (0)
	Theme–experiencer	Active	99	11	10 (0)
		Passive	80	28	10 (1)

Children: passives prime passives across verb-type

Messenger et al. 2012

- Q2: Does subject-experiencer passives prime agent-patient passives?

Fig. 2. Theme–experiencer (*shock*) and experiencer–theme (*love*) verb prime items and target item (*scratch*).

Messenger et al. 2012

- Q2: Does subject-experiencer passives prime agent-patient passives?

Table 4
Frequency of Active, Passive, and Other (Reversed Passive) target responses by Group, Verb Type and Prime Condition in Experiment 2.

Group	Verb type	Prime	Target responses		
			Active	Passive	Other (of which reversed passive)
Children	Experiencer–theme	Active	79	10	46 (5)
		Passive	54	25	58 (15)
	Theme–experiencer	Active	87	8	42 (6)
		Passive	53	30	52 (9)
Adults	Experiencer–theme	Active	119	12	6 (0)
		Passive	106	22	9 (1)
	Theme–experiencer	Active	126	13	5 (1)
		Passive	95	34	8 (0)

Adults: passives prime passives across verb-type

Messenger et al. 2012

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Children: again, passives prime passives across verb-type

Summary

- Structural priming methods reveal knowledge of the syntactic means to derive passives

- Even non-actional verbs prime actional passives, suggesting that the two representations are similar in relevant ways for the child

- Claim: actional/non-actional distinction an experimental artifact, due to imageability differences in picture-matching tasks

Summary

- Partial/imperfect primes (e.g. priming effect of *by*-phrase alone)

- Is there a true experiencer (as opposed to agent) in the purported subject-experiencer sentences?

  - e.g. subject-experiencer predicates are stative, and thus incompatible with progressive

- Difficulties with non-actional passives not limited to picture-matching tasks (e.g. F&G1998)

Nguyen & Pearl (2020)

- More on non-actionals…
- N&P: 23 4-year-olds in a Truth-Value Judgment Task
- 5 predicate types:
  - 1 actional
  - 4 non-actional, including object-experiencer & subject-experiencer predicates

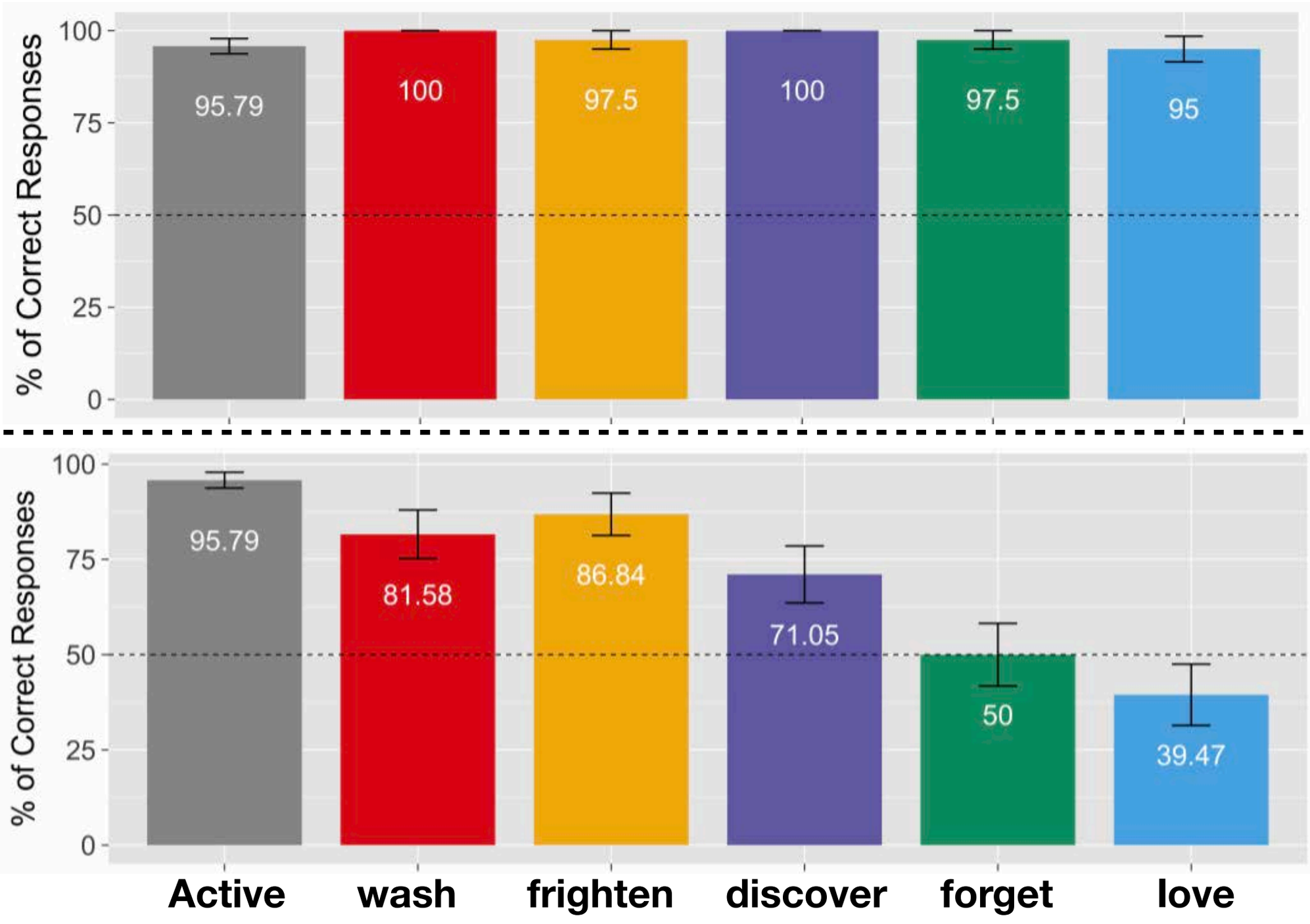
Nguyen & Pearl (2020)

Object Experiencer Story

Narrator: Owen and Jackie are at a costume party. Ladybugs frighten Owen but Jackie loves ladybugs and that's why she's dressed as one for the party.
Jackie: Owen, do you see my ladybug costume? Do I frighten you?
Owen [*frowning*]: Yes, Jackie, you frighten me. You know that I don't like ladybugs!
Test Sentence: Jackie was frightened by Owen. (False)

Subject Experiencer Story

Narrator: Jake and Isabelle are neighbors. They play with each other every day.
Isabelle: Jake, I don't love you because I'm jealous of your new clothes.
Jake: But I love you because you're my only friend, Isabelle!
Test Sentence: Isabelle was loved by Jake. (True)


% of Correct Responses
100
75
50
25
0
95.79
100
97.5
100
97.5
95
Adults
% of Correct Responses
100
75
50
25
0
95.79
81.58
86.84
71.05
50
39.47
Children
Active
wash
frighten
discover
forget
love

Delay of subject-experiencer passives

- On accounts discussed so far…
  - ACDH/UPR: both subject and object experiencers involve promotion of some VP-internal argument, so the asymmetry not predicted
  - *by*-phrase theta-transmission issue: predicted if in object-experiencer predicates but not subject-experiencer predicates, the external argument is compatible with an affector-role (but independent reasons to abandon the hypothesis?)
  - Imageability issues don't apply in this study, but experiences of all sorts are hard to depict!

An alternative hypothesis

- Syntax of passivization is in place; syntax of experiencers less stably so

Syntax of experiencers

- Experiencers as “mental locations” (Kuno 1971, Speas 1990, Arad 1998, Doron 2003, Landau 2010)

(1) a. I got angry but it went away.
b. ??I laughed but it went away.

(2) a. I tried to remember his name, but it wouldn’t come to me.
b. ??I tried to write his name, but it wouldn’t come to me.
(Speas 1990)

- Has the syntax of locatives
  - PPs (at least when internal arguments)

Syntax of experiencers

- 3 classes[1]
  - Class 1/NOM-experiencer: *love, fear, remember, see*

    (1) The baby loves broccoli.
  - Class 2/ ACC-experiencer: *amuse, worry, frighten*

    (2) The show amused the woman.

    (3) The doctor worried the patient
  - Class 3/DAT-experiencer: *appeal, depress*

    (4) The neighborhood appeals to the woman.

    (5) This issue matters to Bill.

[1]Belletti & Rizzi 1988, Pesetsky 1995, Landau 2010

Syntax of experiencers

- 3 classes
  - Class 1/NOM-experiencer: *love, fear, remember, see*
    - [*v*P EXPERIENCER [*v* [VP ….]
  - Class 2/ ACC-experiencer: *amuse, worry, frighten*
    - [*v*P CAUSE [*v* [VP …[EXPERIENCER]…]
  - Class 3/DAT-experiencer: *appeal, depress*
    - [v_{unacc} [VP …[EXPERIENCER]…[THEME]…]

- Syntactic consequences
  - Class I/Class II passivize, but Class III doesn't

Internally vs. externally generated experiencer subjects

- In many languages, Class III predicates surface with the experiencer in subject position ("quirky" subjects)

(1) Mær dámar mjólkina.
1.DAT like the milk [Icelandic]

(2) A Gianni è sempre piaciuta la musica.
to Gianni is always pleased the music [Italian]

Internally vs. externally generated experiencer subjects

- In some languages, the same verb can have both Class I and Class III structures, distinguishable by subject case

(1) Kunju paava-ye ishTappeDunnu
Baby.NOM doll-ACC likes

(2) Kunj-inu paava-ye ishTappeDunnu
Baby-DAT doll-ACC likes [Malayalam]

A possibility

- For young English-acquiring children, subject-experiencer predicates are unaccusatives, which cannot passivize.

Possible topics for the rest of the semester

- Unaccusatives
- Wh-questions
- Binding
- Negation
- Articles/quantifiers/numerals
- Implicatures

- Pick 4!