Identifying Areas of Difficulty in the Comprehension of Recursion
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Abstract The capacity for recursion may be what underlies our linguistic creativity as a species (Hauser et al., 2002), but a wide range of linguistic phenomena can be considered "recursive." One of these phenomena, indirect recursion (Roeper, 2011), denotes our capacity for self-similar syntactic embedding. Phrases like *Cheylah's sister's bike* or *the cake on the plate on the hat on the cat* exploit this capacity in English, using recursive possessives and prepositional phrases respectively. Children, however, do not successfully comprehend indirect recursion until quite late (Roeper, 2010). In this presentation, I will attempt to identify some developmental prerequisites for the comprehension of indirect recursion. I will focus on two possible areas in which could pose a problem for children. First, I will review a proposal by Pérez-Leroux et al. (2018) relating to derivation by phase (Chomsky, 2000) and the necessary capacity of a workspace involved in processing indirect recursive structures. Then, I will turn to what happens beyond the syntax, namely, the role that interfaces play in achieving the target interpretation of indirect recursion. I will conclude by re-assessing the prerequisites for comprehending indirect recursion and the implications these may have for monolingual and bilingual acquisition.

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