



Population-level variation in word and morpheme order is driven by individual-level cognitive biases

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A foundational goal of linguistics has been to understand why languages vary in the ways they do. We know that languages are shaped by a range of forces, from limitations on our cognitive system, to cognition-external facts about language history. But attempts to determine exactly how each of these forces might drive specific features of language have been historically contentious. In this talk, I highlight my own approach, which uses artificial language experiments to link individual-level biases to cross-linguistic trends in language structure, i.e., typological universals. Using word and morpheme order as case studies, I will show how a range of different paradigms and learner populations allow us to make progress on this crucial issue in the cognitive science of language.