

**LEARNING WHAT NOT TO SAY: THE ROLE OF CATEGORIZATION,  
STATISTICAL PREEMPTION AND AGE  
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Recent experimental work has investigated how speakers are able to learn arbitrary distributional restrictions in their language—i.e., how they learn what *not* to say. Results suggest that learners categorize their input. Familiar formulations can statistically preempt other formulations that have roughly the same function; speakers are additionally able to extend the information gleaned from preemptive contexts, applying it to other instances of the same category. At the same time, speakers are impressively adept at ignoring alternative formulations when they can be attributed to some irrelevant factor (Boyd and Goldberg 2011; Goldberg 2011).

A second set of experiments by Boyd and Goldberg (to appear) explore the role of age in the ability to generalize from exemplars. Evidence suggests that younger children are less able to recognize abstract categories and are therefore less able to generalize to new exemplars than are older children and adults.

2011a. Jeremy K. Boyd and Adele E. Goldberg. Learning what not to say: categorization and statistical preemption in ‘a-adjective’ production. *Language* 87 1:1-29.

2011b. Adele E. Goldberg. Corpus evidence of the viability of statistical preemption. *Cognitive Linguistics* 22 1: 131-153.

To appear. Jeremy K. Boyd and Adele E. Goldberg. Young children’s failure to generalize when exposed to the same input as older learners. *Journal of Child Language*.