Prediction as a key mechanism in language acquisition

Prediction has been proposed to be a fundamental aspect of cognition. Some have proposed that language acquisition also happens through prediction (e.g., Chang, Dell, & Bock, 2006). Nevertheless, there is currently little direct evidence that children generate predictions rapidly enough to allow for learning through prediction, and no evidence that these expectations can guide the learning of novel linguistic information. I will present a series of studies conducted with infants and children from 18 months to five years of age, which show that young children do not only update their predictions about what speakers will say next, but they also use their adapted predictions to learn novel information.