‘Delay of Principle B’: The issue

There is experimental evidence that children sometimes overrule principle B, whereas they do not overrule Principle A.

Mama Bear washes $her_i$

is interpreted as

Mama Bear washes $herself_i$

This interpretation is excluded by principle B: if there is coreference between arguments then reflexive marking is obligatory.
Experimental effects

Children before around 5 years old may accept a picture of a Mama Bear in the bathtub washing herself as corresponding with the sentences

Picture of Mama Bear washing herself

* Mama Bear washes her (star in the adult language)  

Children’s acceptance  
50% acceptance
Children sometimes drop principle B, whereas they do not drop principle A.

Experiments have been set up in various ways for several languages. The result stands.

- The failure of principle B is induced by experiments (it is called ‘the delay of principle B’)

- There are no mistakes in spontaneous speech
‘Delay of Principle B’: Questions

Why has this phenomenon got so much attention?

Principle A and B are universal principles

- They hold in all languages and they complement each other
- They are part of UG and may be inborn

- If so, why does principle A better than principle B?
- How could this be predicted?
  - Is principle B more intricate?
  - Does principle B require an additional procedure that must be learned?
The experiments can be interpreted such that principle B is not directly affected.

\[
[Mama \, Bear]_i \text{ washes herself}_i
\]

\[\downarrow \text{reference}\]

the real Mama Bear

The reflexive *herself* is only interpretable by means of its grammatical antecedent (bound variable)
The experiments can be interpreted such that principle B is not directly affected.

Goldilocks washes her

\[ \text{reference} \]

the real Mama Bear

Goldilocks thinks that she sleeps

\[ \text{reference} \]

the real Mama Bear

The pronoun may be interpreted by an antecedent
The pronoun may be interpreted by the situation
Re-interpretation of the experiments

There is a re-interpretation of the experiments such that principle B is not affected.

Mama Bear washes her
\[ \downarrow \quad \downarrow \]
the real Mama Bear

The pronoun may be interpreted by means of the situation. Principle B is not violated directly. There is no illegitimate antecedent binding.

Questions

✓ How then can principle B be violated ever? and
✓ What is wrong with ‘Mama Bear washes her?’
Rule I (Reinhart & Reuland)

There is an additional rule (Reinhart/Reuland 1993)

**Rule I:** If you might have used a reflexive, do not get away with a free anaphor

Rule I compares two variants of the same LF (semantic) representation $[\text{Mama Bear}_i \text{ washes pronoun}_i ] = \begin{cases} \text{reflexive} \\ \text{free anaphor} \end{cases}$

The more specific unambiguous reflexive blocks the use of a simple free anaphor.
Rule I as Blocking

Rule I (to my mind) is a variant of the Blocking principle: If there are two or more grammatical (PF) forms that express the same meaning (LF), choose for the lexically more specified one.

Examples (see Tuesday):

a. brings blocks *does bring
b. is blocks *bees (cf. ‘he frees the prisoners’)
c. brought blocks *bringed
d. himself blocks *him

In all cases of blocking there is a comparison of lexical forms, morphological paradigms and syntactic alternatives with the same grammatical function.
There is a blocking hierarchy. More construction-specific forms require more lexical information. They will block the lexically less specified forms, but of course they require more learning experience in frequency. (Van Kampen 1997, 2003)

*Blocking hierarchy:*

the more lexical specification, the more blocking

\[
 [+F, \, ?] \ < \ [+F, \text{word}] \ < \ [+F, \text{morpheme}] \ < \ [+F, \text{suppletive}] \\
\text{pro memoria} \ \text{underspecified} \ \text{phrasal licenser} \ \text{inflection} \ \text{suppletion}
\]
Blocking: learning hierarchy

Blocking is the opposite of the Subset principle.
The superset (free anaphor positions) is partly blocked by the subset of more specific reflexives.
Rule I as Blocking

Suppose we have principle A and the Blocking principle

\(<\text{reflexive}> \iff \text{identity of co-arguments (bound variable)}\)

The Blocking Principle leads to the specific variant
Rule I: if it can be done by a reflexive
       it must be done by a reflexive

Principle B is now superfluous.
Specific cases: no optionality

Children apply rule I strictly if the antecedent is grammatically marked by <+wh> or by a quantifier

Which bear$_i$ washes \{ *him$_i$, himself$_i$ \}

Each bear$_i$ washes \{ *him$_i$, himself$_i$ \}

The grammatical highlight on the antecedent seems to inspire overall awareness
Specific cases: no blocking

Long reflexives (see Tuesday) in Dutch, and elsewhere, allow a reduced free anaphor $h’m/d’r$ (‘h(i)m/h(e)r’)

Jan had het geld bij \[
\begin{align*}
& h’m \\
& \text{zich}
\end{align*}
\]

This may be due to the preposition (Van Kampen 2003).

- If the preposition is $<+$predicative$>$ it constitutes a predicative chain and \textit{zich} is obligatory.
- If the preposition is (optionally) $<-$predicative$>$ there is no predicative chain and \textit{zich} is not possible. The free anaphor $h’m$ appears.
The so-called ‘Delay of Principle B’ leads to the postulation of a Rule I. It compares two constructions.

Rule I, a Blocking rule, seems to regulate all variants by itself without a principle A or B.

The Blocking effect works for full co-arguments, less so for extended co-arguments.

Blocking is a UG acquisition principle.

But Blocking is not always effective.