Individual Differences

Sources of Variation
Performance: biologically determined individual capacities
Environment: variation in input
Linguistic: options available in Universal Grammar

Linguistic Variation
Pro Drop Parameter
- subjects of sentences may be optional
  e.g. English requires subjects (not a pro drop language)
  *'(I) speak English”
  e.g. Spanish does not (pro drop language)
  “hablo ingles”

Why do English children delete subjects in early stages of grammatical acquisition?
e.g. “going home” = I’m going home

Performance variation? -> unlikely
Input? -> maybe, but how is rule learned?
Linguistic? -> possible

- initially, children expect languages to have optional subjects
- English children need to notice this is not the case
- some children may notice this before others
Examples of Individual Differences

Onset and rate of acquisition

Referential vs. Expressive

Imitation

Analytic vs. Synthetic
  Analytic: learn words and put them together
  Synthetic: learn phrases and sentences and take them apart

Pronominal vs. Categorical
  Pronominal: child prefers pronouns to nouns (subject, object)
    e.g. “I eat it”
  Categorical: child prefers nouns
    e.g. “baby eat cookie”

Children are not at the same stage
Difference is still likely one
Why?
  Performance
  Environment
  Linguistic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relation</th>
<th>Categorical</th>
<th>Pronominal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agent</td>
<td>Gia go</td>
<td>I go</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possession</td>
<td>Gia ball</td>
<td>my ball</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Object</td>
<td>kiss Gia</td>
<td>kiss me</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Two ways to indicate semantic relations

Summary
Range of individual differences
3 possible reasons
Each kind of variation needs to be examined separately