Morphological convergence as on-line lexical analogy

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Abstract

The English past-tense contains pockets of variation, where regular and irregular forms compete (e.g. learned/learnt, or weaved/wove). Individuals vary considerably in the degree to which they prefer irregular forms. This paper examines the degree to which individuals may converge on their regularization patterns and preferences. We report on a novel experimental methodology, using a cooperative game involving nonce verbs. Analysis of participants’ post-game responses indicates that their behavior has shifted in response to an automated co-player’s preferences, on two dimensions. First, players regularize more after playing with peers with high regularization rates, and less after playing with peers with low regularization rates. Second, players’ overall pattern of regularization is also affected by the particular distribution of (ir)regular forms produced by the peer.

We model the effects of the exposure on participants’ morphological preferences, using both a rule-based model and an instance-based analogical model (Albright & Hayes, 2003; Nosofsky, 1988). Both models contribute separately and significantly to explaining participants’ pre-exposure regularization processes. However, only the instance-based model captures the shift in preferences that arises after exposure to the peer. We argue that the results suggest an account of morphological convergence in which new word forms are stored in memory, and online generalizations are formed over these instances.1

Keywords: morphology, convergence, computational modeling, language variation and change, Generalized Context Model, Minimal Generalization Learner

1 Introduction

Investigations of verbal inflection – with a particular focus on the English past tense – have been a mainstay in linguistics for several decades. Variation between the regular and irregular past tenses has provided the basis for longstanding debates over language acquisition and innateness, the nature of linguistic representation and generalization, and processes of language change (Bybee & Slobin, 1982; Bybee & Moder, 1983; Rumelhart & McClelland, 1986; Plunkett & Marchman, 1991; Hare & Elman, 1995; McClelland & Patterson, 2002; Albright & Hayes, 2003; Seidenberg & Plaut, 2014).

The regular past tense form is more productive than any of the irregular past tenses. However, the irregular past tenses can be productive for novel verb stems to some extent. This extent depends on how many existing stems are similar to the irregular form, and in what ways; the details of this variation are precisely what different theories undertake to explain. Variation across individuals or contexts has

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2All data and code are available in the online Supplementary Information at https://github.com/petyaracz/RaczBecknerHayPierrehumbert2019.
been rather less explored. While numerous developmental studies explore the child’s path towards the typical adult pattern, there is also a great deal of variability amongst adults. Some adults prefer regular forms more pervasively than others. This variability provides an opportunity to develop a connection between quantitative models of verbal inflection and a key phenomenon in sociolinguistics, namely convergence between speakers. Convergence occurs when speakers who begin an interaction with differences in their linguistic systems use more similar forms as the interaction progresses. By studying convergence, we can gain insights into how the cognitive system represents and manipulates variability in morphology.

Our paper considers the degree to which preferences in verbal inflection are affected by interaction between speakers. For example, if your conversational partner says *wove* as the past tense of *weave*, are you more likely to use the irregular past tense of another variable stem (e.g. *dove* for *dive*)? Will you generalize to similar novel stems? To address such questions, we use an innovative experimental methodology to expose participants to different (ir)regularization patterns in a cooperative task. We then observe how these different patterns of exposure affect their subsequent past-tense preferences. Our results have broad relevance for the study of morphology and the lexicon.

The paper is organized as follows: Section 2 provides an overview of the existing literature on linguistic convergence, morphological models, and the English past tense in particular. We outline our hypotheses in Section 3 and then turn, in Section 4, to an outline of our experimental paradigm, which involves exposing people to different versions of the English past tense distribution using novel past tense forms, and then observing the effects on their subsequent past-tense preferences. The results are discussed in Section 5. The results show that individuals are influenced not only by the overall level of regularization in the set of words they are exposed to, but also by the details of the particular distribution of these words. In Section 6 we consider how these shifts in preference can be accounted for by two different classes of model, one involving analogical generalization over instances (Nosofsky, 1988), and one involving the inference of more abstract rules (Albright & Hayes, 2003). We find that both make statistically independent contributions in explaining participants’ initial preferences, indicating that English past-tense formation is governed by a combination of ‘rules’ and ‘analogy’. However, only the analogical model is able to capture participants’ shifts in preferences, based on the new forms to which they have been exposed. The consequences of these results are discussed in Section 7.

2 Background

2.1 Morphological Convergence

Interlocutors tend to converge. That is, as people use language to communicate with each other, they tend both to sound more similar to each other, and to make more similar choices of words and phrases (Giles & Coupland, 1991; Garrod & Pickering, 2004; Pickering & Garrod, 2004, 2006). Convergence has been attested in a wide variety of linguistic domains, including naming preferences (Brennan & Clark, 1996; Roberts, 2010), syntax (Bock, 1986; Estival, 1985; Gries, 2005; Hall et al., 2015), and basic phonetic properties like speech rate (Webb, 1972) or fundamental frequency (Gregory Jr. et al., 1993; Babel & Bulatov, 2012). For instance, in a range of studies, Babel (2012, 2010) shows that, when a speaker has a range of phonetic realizations of a vowel available to them, they shift toward the realization displayed by an interlocutor. In a study of transcribed telephone conversations, Boulis and Ostendorf (2005) find that people modify their lexical choices depending on the gender of the person they are talking to.

Researchers in this area have been concerned with demonstrating that such shifts take place at all, and in examining the degree to which they may be socially mediated (cf. e.g. Gregory Jr & Webster, 1996). No previous work has examined how shifts are distributed across the range of lexical items produced by a speaker.

Morphology offers a domain in which generalizations sometimes compete, and multiple morphological variants can be available to speakers (e.g. *weaved* and *wove* as past tense variants of *weave*) (Haber, 1976; Fehringer, 2004; Säily, 2011; Thornton, 2012). It is therefore feasible to investigate whether a speaker’s morphological choices are influenced by the choices of interlocutors. Surprisingly, despite the considerable literature on convergence across multiple linguistic domains, convergence in morphology has been relatively understudied. Convergence in word selection has been the subject of active research (Boulis & Ostendorf, 2005; Horton, 2007; Horton & Brennan, 2016; Ibarra & Tanenhaus, 2016; Brandstetter et al., 2017), and, in general, word-formation processes are otherwise an area of considerable theoretical debate. Thus, convergence patterns in morphology may shed light on fundamental questions of representation and generalization.
Though relatively rare, a few exceptions in the literature exist, which indeed suggest that morphological convergence is amenable to research. Szmrecsanyi (2005; 2006) investigates English future marking, where an auxiliary verb (will see) competes with a lexicalized construction (gonna see). He finds that the choice between the two variants persists in discourse, even across speakers – the variant used in one instance is a significant predictor of which variant will be selected in the following instance. Beckner et al. (2016) study morphological imitation in an experimental setting, by asking participants to provide the past tenses of English verbs using a peer pressure paradigm modeled on Asch (1951). Beckner et al. (2016) find that: (i) speakers can converge to a morphological pattern, generalizing observed behavior to new words; (ii) convergence is affected by the speakers’ baseline behaviors, since they are less prone to produce variation on lexical items that do not otherwise vary in their own lexicon; and (iii) morphological convergence is a socially mediated process – speakers converge to humans, but not to humanoid robots.

2.2 Morphological Models

Any explanation of morphological convergence effects is tied to a larger tradition that considers the extent to which the language system has access to the details of its input, and the degree to which these details influence said system and its outputs. This tradition goes back at least to Louis Hjelmslev (1961 [1953]) (advocating a radical abstractionist view) and Hermann Paul (1995 [1880]) (stressing the importance of individual words in language variation and change – see also Auer et al. 2015).

Broadly speaking, one set of theories, following Hjelmslev, is rule-based. It assumes the lexical system to be an inventory of words and a set of abstract rules. This approach has been modified and extended over time to accommodate variable and gradient effects. A key work of the rule-based approach is Prasada & Pinker (1993), who posit a dual route model of English past tense formation. In this model, irregular behavior is determined by analogy based on similarity to existing forms. Regular behavior is driven by a single regular rule that has no phonological conditioning. Albright & Hayes (2003) propose a next-generation model in which a learning algorithm creates rules of variable scope over a lexical inventory. In their model, regular behavior is determined by a rule or rules that are sensitive to the phonological makeup of their target words.

The second view of the lexical system, following Paul, is analogy-based. It is more focused on variability in word behavior. Generalizations emerge from the inventory of words as consequences of the word frequencies and their similarities in form and function. Some instance-based models (Bybee, 1995; Todd et al., 2019) implement this approach directly. A related group of connectionist models (Rumelhart & McClelland, 1986; Plaut & Gonnerman, 2000) advocate distributed representations for words, but still shares the claim that generalization is based on experience with whole words and displays cumulative effects of similarity and frequency (Dell, 2000).

To evaluate how this spectrum of theoretical approaches can capture our observed patterns of morphological convergence, we focus on three specific proposals – two based on rules and one based on analogy. Anchoring the analysis, we evaluate one prediction of a simple rule-based model (Prasada & Pinker, 1993), namely that (a) convergence might occur by strengthening or weakening the context-independent regular suffix rule (the default rule). This would predict that, whenever convergence in past-tense preferences occurs, this convergence would affect all past-tense forms to an equal degree. Any finding that convergence patterns are more word-specific would require a different explanation.

We also compare two proposals supporting whole-word updating of the lexical system: (b) the rule-based model of Albright & Hayes (2003) and (c) an analogy-based model in the tradition of Paul, which applies Nosofsky (1988) (Dawdy-Hesterberg & Pirelburtle, 2014). The predictions of these two models differ in complex ways and we devote Section 6 to exploring them.

Models (b) and (c) both respond to experimental findings suggesting that all inflectional patterns arise from a stochastic architecture that generalizes over whole words (Bybee & Slobin, 1982; Plunkett & Marchman, 1993). It is widely agreed that clusters of related past tense irregulars (such as dive/dove, ride/rode, freeze/froze) are productive to varying degrees, and that such lexical ‘gangs’ can attract new members based on similarity and type frequency (Bybee & Moder, 1983; Stemberger & MacWhinney, 1986; Cuskley et al., 2014; Hayes et al., 2009; Kapatsinski, 2010). There is evidence that this picture also extends to regular patterns. Alegre & Gordon (1999a) reports that regular past tense forms are processed faster if they are high in token frequency, suggesting that these are stored in the lexical system. Albright & Hayes (2003) reports lexical gang effects for regular patterns.

In order to evaluate (b) and (c), we implement them to assess against our data. In doing so, we assume that all new words encountered are simply
3 Research Questions

This paper explores three inter-related research questions:

1. Does morphological convergence occur?

2. Is convergence sensitive to the overall distribution of lexical forms produced by the interlocutor?

3. Can rule-based and/or analogically-based categorization models account for observed convergence patterns?

These questions are answered through an experiment using the English past-tense.

In order to answer (1), we investigate whether individuals are affected by the overall regularization rate of a peer. If you are exposed to a peer whose rate of regularization is high, for example, does this lead you to increase your own regularization rate?

In order to answer (2) we examine whether exposing individuals to different lexical distributions of regularization (while controlling for the overall rate) leads to different patterns of convergence. If the answer to (2) is ‘yes’, then this would provide evidence against a simple account based on the re-weighting of a default affix (i.e. option (a) in 2.2), and in support of an account that relies on whole-word updating of the lexical system (options (b) or (c)).

The results outlined in Section 5 provide good evidence that the answer to (1) and (2) is indeed ‘yes’.
This leads us to conclude that morphological convergence can occur, and that the underlying mechanism is lexically sensitive.

We then turn to research question (3), which asks what kind of process might best account for our results. We assume that participants store the forms that they are exposed to, and we attempt to model how these new forms would influence subsequent regularization preferences. We implement two candidate models – one analogical, and one rule-based, and test which model best predicts the overall pattern of results observed.

4 Methods

We test our three research questions using a task, hosted on Amazon Mechanical Turk, in which participants play a word matching game with a partner. The task consists of three parts. In the PRE-TEST, the participant picks regular or irregular past tense forms from nonce verb prompts using a forced-choice button paradigm. In the ESP MATCHING TASK, the participant plays along with a ‘peer’ whose behavior is a controlled variation on the participant’s pre-test behavior. The behavior of this peer is the treatment in our experiment, as it differs across participants, and we expect participants to react to it. In the final part, the POST-TEST, the participant goes back to picking regular or irregular forms for prompt verbs without the presence of a peer. The term ‘ESP’ was proposed by Von Ahn & Dabbish (2004), who originally developed this type of paradigm – we discuss this in more detail later in this section.

We expect participant behavior to change in the task, and that this change will be observable in the participant’s post-test choices: how many verbs they regularize and, specifically, whether there is consistency in what these verbs look like. Analyzing the post-test data across the different types of peer behavior can address research questions (1) and (2): whether convergence occurs and, if so, whether it is sensitive to the distribution of lexical forms. The use of categorization models to model participant behavior in the post-test allows us to test question (3): whether rules or analogy (or both) describe participant behavior better.

In the following section, 4.1, we describe our stimuli. Then, in 4.2, we explain the experiment structure in more detail. Finally, in 4.3, we give a description of our participant sample.

4.1 Stimuli

We created the nonce verb stimuli used in the ESP experiment based on the formal characteristics of existing, varying irregular verbs in English. The verbs are drawn from 4 different classes, representing English verb schemas that exhibit morphological variation. The classes are as follows:

- **SANG**: verbs that have a nasal coda and form the past tense by a vowel change from [i] to [æ], such as sing-SANG, swim-swam (e.g. zim, gring).
- **BURN**: verbs that end in [e]/[a]/[i] and a sonorant and that form the past by adding a [t], with no change in the vowel, such as burn-BURN, learn-learnt (e.g. hurn, dwill).
- **KEPT**: verbs that form the past by adding a final [t] and changing the stem vowel from [i] to [e], as in keep-KEPT, mean-meanant (e.g. kreen, streel).
- **DROVE**: verbs that form the past tense with a vowel change from [ai] or [i] to [ou], as in drive-DROVE, weave-wove (e.g. strine, beeve).

The classes were based on Bybee & Slobin (1982) and Moder (1992), with slight adjustments (see the Supplementary Information, with additional details in Appendix A). To inventory the relevant forms, we used the CELEX lexical database (Baayen et al. 1993, based on the COBUILD corpus, Sinclair 1987). The aim was to capture the ‘lexical gangs’ that show these specific irregular patterns in English. Lexical gangs can vary in their homogeneity, and different members of the same gang can resemble one another along different phonetic dimensions (see Alegre & Gordon 1999b; Bybee & Moder 1983; Stemberger & MacWhinney 1986). To give an example, the base form of ride shares a nucleus with drive and drive shares a coda with weave. All three verbs can form the past tense with a vowel change (to [ou]). They are members of the same lexical gang (along with rise, freeze, speak), connected through family resemblance. While such disjunctive classes increase the set of acceptable descriptions, their use has extensive motivation in studies of phonological data and diachronic processes (Mielke, 2008).

This construction of the stimuli means that the experiment involves five different potential output types (four irregular types, plus the regular), grouped into two response categories, irregular and regular.

A baseline experiment was used to establish quantitative rankings for nonce verbs used in the main ESP experiment. The baseline is a forced-choice task in which participants, completing the task alone,
are presented with 316 nonce verbs (e.g. spling), and asked to choose a regular (splinged) or irregular (splang) past tense form. Stimuli are presented visually; participants see a prompt and have a choice between buttons showing the regular past form and the irregular form.

While forced-choice tasks may be different from open-choice tasks in important ways (cf. Treiman et al. 2015) they have been shown to be statistically sensitive and robust for well-formedness judgments (Sprouse & Almeida, 2017). In the present study, they allowed us to analyze binary responses across several verb classes.

For the baseline experiment, we gathered data from 233 participants on Amazon Mechanical Turk. Overall, 31 participants were discarded, 11 for not being speakers of American English, and 20 for failing to meet attentiveness benchmarks during the experimental tasks. Responses from the remaining 202 participants provided us with a rich dataset about the rate of regularization of our nonce verbs. These data were used to select three matched stimulus lists (randomized across participants for the three stages of the main ESP experiment). The resulting ranked lists are shown in Table 1, which shows the 156 verbs selected into each of three matched stimulus lists (see below for an explanation of the separation into three lists). The verbs are presented alongside their regularization rate from the baseline experiment, sorted such that the most-regularized verbs appear at the top.

Participants showed individual, structured variation in their preferences. Inspection of verb distributions across participants reveals a consistent hierarchy. That is, if a given individual regularized only 10 verbs in the list, it would be very likely that these were amongst the top-ranked (most often regularized) verbs, and very unlikely that they would be amongst the bottom-ranked (least regularized) verbs. Additionally, more frequent regularizers extend regularization further down the ranked list than less frequent regularizers. For example, the verb *fim* has a baseline mean of 0.772 – it is regularized by 77% of the participants in the baseline task. The verb *spride* has a baseline regularization rate of 0.347. A participant that regularized *spride* was very likely to regularize *fim*, but a participant that regularized *fim* might or might not regularize *spride*.

In creating our stimulus lists, it was our intention to span a wide range of nonce verbs, showing a wide distribution of probability of regularization. We also wanted the same number of verbs to occur from each schema. Pilot work demonstrated that 156 verbs would be a reasonable size for a 30-minute experiment, and thus we set out to cull the extra items from our baseline set. Each verb class (SANG, BURNT, KEPT, DROVE) was sorted according to verb baseline mean, and ties were removed at regularly spaced intervals to yield 39 nonce verbs per class. Trios of similarly-scored verbs from the same category were grouped as a matching set, and each verb from that set was assigned (randomly) to list 1, list 2, or list 3. The items from each verb category (39/3 = 13 per list) were merged into a stimulus list, with 13 x 4 = 52 verbs, as shown in Table 1.

This process yielded three lists of 52 nonce verbs each, with each list showing a wide span of variation in regularization across native speakers. The assignment of lists to roles (pre-test, ESP, or post-test) was balanced across different runs of the main ESP experiment.

### 4.2 The design of the main ESP experiment

Our baseline experiment was used to estimate the rate of regularization for our nonce-word stimuli. Our ESP experiment, run subsequently and with different participants, was used to test our hypotheses on morphological convergence.

The participants complete the ESP experiment on their computer. The experiment uses orthographic stimuli, and consists of three phases (see Figure 1). All three lists in Table 1 are used in the experiment, with one list per phase. The allocation of lists across phases is randomized per participant, and verbs from within each list are presented in random order during each phase.

The **pre-test** is a forced-choice task. The player is presented with English nonce verbs (like *spling*) and has to pick either the regular past tense or the irregular past tense form (*splinged/splang*). The player responds to fifty-two targets and receives no feedback.

This is followed by the **ESP matching phase**. This is similar to the pre-test, except that there are two players: the participant, and a bot peer. This phase uses a simple interactive matching game based on the ‘ESP’ paradigm (Von Ahn & Dabbish, 2004). ESP was originally developed as a crowd-sourcing technique for image labeling. Our ESP task asks players to attempt to predict their co-player’s responses, over fifty-two trials with English nonce verbs. The ESP task thereby offers a controlled plat-
4 METHODS

Table 1: Three lists of stimulus verbs, ordered according to regularization rate in the baseline experiment. All verbs are associated with one of four classes with respect to the irregular form presented: Burnt (b), Kept (k), Sang (s), or Drove (d).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>rank</th>
<th>verb</th>
<th>baseline mean</th>
<th>class</th>
<th>List 2</th>
<th>verb</th>
<th>baseline mean</th>
<th>class</th>
<th>List 3</th>
<th>verb</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>fim</td>
<td>0.772</td>
<td>s</td>
<td>strill</td>
<td>0.772</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>will</td>
<td>0.772</td>
<td>b</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td>snurn</td>
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<td>b</td>
<td>drurn</td>
<td>0.748</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>chim</td>
<td>0.743</td>
<td>s</td>
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<td>cheen</td>
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<td>skrill</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>swurn</td>
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<td>rurn</td>
<td>0.731</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>jeyen</td>
<td>0.723</td>
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<td>yill</td>
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<td>jurn</td>
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<td>b</td>
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<td>pline</td>
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<td>sneem</td>
<td>0.713</td>
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<td>swide</td>
<td>0.356</td>
<td>d</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

form for manipulating morphological exposure.

Both the participant and the peer pick a past-tense form, with the additional instruction that the goal is to guess the other player’s answer in advance. While

the participant is making their choice, the bot peer is ‘thinking’ – its pick is only revealed after the player makes their selection. If the participant and the peer responses match, the participant is awarded a point.
There are no deductions for mismatch.

The ESP task is forced-choice, which means that in every case, the participant sees both the regular and irregular forms on the screen. Influence during the ESP test therefore does not arise merely from word presentation, but is dependent on the effects of prediction and selection.

We do not explicitly tell the participant that the other player is a bot or a human. Playing against the computer in video games is extremely common and natural.

The last part of the task is the **post-test**. As in the pre-test, the player has to choose the regular or irregular past tense forms for 52 English nonce verbs, with no peer, and with no feedback.

As summarized in Table 2, the experimental manipulation occurs in the ESP matching phase, which has two across-participant factors in a 3 X 3 crossover design. The first one is the bot peer’s **regularization shift** in the ESP test. The peer’s behavior is based on the human player’s behavior in the pre-test. Under different across-participants conditions, bot peers will regularize (i) the same percentage of forms as the human player in the pre-test, (ii) 40% more, or (iii) 40% fewer. Given a human player’s regular response count of \( k \), bot regularization is \( k = n \), \( k = n + 0.4n \), or \( k = n - 0.4n \). For example, if the player regularized 10 verbs in the pre-test, then in the ESP test, the bot peer will regularize (i) 10, (ii) 14, or (iii) 6 verbs. This dynamic element of the design presents the complication that, for some participants, the peer cannot increase or decrease regularization by 40%, due to ceiling or floor effects. We explain our solution to this problem below in Section 4.3.

The second factor is the bot peer’s **lexical typicality**. The peer may regularize the forms that human players are (i) most likely to regularize (typical peer), (ii) least likely to regularize (reversed peer), or (iii) random forms (random peer). We could not customize peer lexical preferences for individual players because the sample of the pre-test was small and intentionally wide. This did not allow us to generalize individual verb regularization preferences to a new list. Instead, peer lexical preferences were modeled on the typical human player, created using regularization rankings from the baseline data (as shown in Table 1). If peer behavior is typical, the list is sorted according to regularization ranking, and the peer regularizes the \( k \) forms at the list head – those baseline participants were most likely to regularize overall. If the peer is reversed, it regularizes the \( k \) forms at the list tail – forms baseline participants were least likely to regularize. Finally, if it is random, the peer selects \( k \) verbs at random.

Consider the example in which a participant is playing with a peer who produces regular forms at a rate of 60%. If they are in a typical condition, the peer during the ESP test will regularize the top 60% of forms from the relevant list (verbs 1-31). If they are in a reversed condition, the peer will regularize the bottom 60% of forms from the list (verbs 21-52). And in a random condition, the peer will regularize 60% of forms, choosing at random from across the list. Thus, it is only in the typical condition that participants are exposed to a distribution resembling typical human player behavior.

The **regularization shift** factor allows us to test for the presence of morphological convergence in the ESP experiment, addressing research question (1). An observed shift in the post-test is likely due to the effect of the bot peer’s behavior in the ESP matching task. The lexical typicality factor allows us to look at research question (2): whether there is an effect of lexical distributions on morphological convergence. That is, this manipulation tests whether convergence goes beyond shifting rates of use (e.g. higher/lower regularization) and is sensitive to the specific morphological forms encountered.

The aim of this ‘faux’ ESP design is to create an interaction in which experimenters can carefully control the parameters. It may be compared to the **map task**, an established experimental method of studying linguistic convergence (Bard et al., 1989; Anderson et al., 1991; Pardo, 2006). In the map task, two participants navigate a map together. The map, or maps, are designed to include specific objects, placed so that participants are steered towards a specific set of lexical choices. This ability to influence language use while allowing for relatively natural conversation is the main advantage of the map task over other methods.

While the ESP design is more rigid – conversation is replaced by clicking on online buttons and the set of lexical choices is severely restricted – it allows for absolute control over the lexical choices presented to the participant and the variants the participant is exposed to. These are necessary in an experiment examining fine-grained morphophonological variation across a distribution of related forms. While this comes at the cost of naturalistic interaction, our results clearly show that participants rely on linguistic knowledge in making their decisions. Participants’ pre-test and post-test behavior are both strongly correlated with (i) predictions of categorization models trained on the English lexical inventory (cf. Section 6) and (ii) participant behavior in the simple baseline experiment (cf. below). Participants in the ESP experiment respond to treatments based on existing
Phase I.

| Single player Baseline test |

Phase II. (new participants)

| Single player Pre-test | Multiplayer ESP matching task | Single player Post-test |

Figure 1: Structure of the ESP experiment. In the ESP Matching Task, participants play with a peer with one of 9 possible behaviors, as outlined in Table 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regularization shift</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Typical n-0.4n highest ranked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Random n-0.4n random</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reversed n-0.4n lowest ranked</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Across-participant conditions in the ESP matching task

patterns of similarity in the English lexicon (cf. Section 5).

We also note that the ESP game instructions explicitly ask participants in the interactive round to copy the response patterns of their co-player. Given this, the inter-speaker mechanisms at work here are not identical to those explored in studies of spontaneous convergence in conversation (e.g., Pardo 2006). However, any subsequent shifts in behavior during the post-test round will nevertheless be of interest; in the absence of ongoing feedback, shifts in preferences cannot be directly attributed to explicit instruction, but would represent persistent influence of the interaction. This dynamic parallels studies of real-world interactions which find that, in language acquisition, positive reinforcement (smiling, proximity) can prompt linguistic changes that persist beyond the interaction (Goldstein et al., 2003). Moreover, in second-language contexts, seeking of extrinsic rewards (in addition to other factors) can increase motivation and facilitate long-term language learning (Gardner & MacIntyre, 1991).

4.3 Participants

For the main experiment, we collected data from a total of 331 participants on Amazon Mechanical Turk (AMT). We choose to collect data using AMT because it is known to provide large and reliable datasets (Snow et al., 2008), which are generally highly correlated with data from laboratory experiments, albeit more variable (Balota et al., 2001; Wurm et al., 2011; Crump et al., 2013). One possible reason for this variability is that, while the accessible AMT pool is not necessarily much larger than the subject pool at a large university, it is somewhat more diverse and closer to the general adult population (Stewart et al., 2015; Ipeirotis, 2010). This diversity may address the limitations of data coming from university subject pools (Henrich et al., 2010).

All participants had to be native speakers of English from the United States, 18 years or older. Participants were paid $3 for their participation. Initial analysis of participants required several individuals to be removed, as follows: three participants failed to complete the task; five players showed suspicious tendencies to linger on the same button for many trials in a row on the post-test, indicating inattentiveness; four participants were discarded for learning English outside of the USA. Removal of these individuals leaves a pool of 319 participants.

Participants regularize verbs to varying degrees in the pre-test. We removed the left and right tail of the distribution of average participant regularization to keep the effect of the co-player consistent across participants, relative to the pre-test. In the increase condition the peer regularizes 40% more verbs in the ESP than the participant did in the pre-test, and 40% fewer verbs in the decrease condition. To ensure every participant experiences a proportional increase/decrease, participants whose regularization rate was too high/low were removed to avoid ceil-
ing/floor effects. For example, suppose participant A regularizes 10 verbs in the pre-test, participant B regularizes 20 verbs, and participant C regularizes 50 verbs. In the ESP increase condition, participant A sees 14 regular verbs, participant B sees 28 regular verbs, and participant C sees 52 regular verbs (the total number of verbs in the set). While A and B see a proportional increase of 40%, C does not experience the same change in rate of regularization. Consequently, in order to interpret our results consistently, participant C is removed from the final analysis. We removed over- and under-regularizers in all conditions. Since participants, on average, are more likely to regularize verbs in the pre-test (mean rate of regularization = 0.59), the distribution is skewed, and we needed to remove more over-regularizers than under-regularizers. In the analyses that follow, across all conditions, we include only participants with a participant pre-test mean in the range between 0.06 and 0.70. These values represent thresholds at which the peer is at risk of encountering the floor/ceiling, due to the regularization shift manipulation (which applies multiplicatively, rather than additively). This filtering step removes 2 participants who regularize less than 6% in the pre-test, and 95 participants who regularize more than 70% in the pre-test, resulting in a final pool of 222 participants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>-40%</th>
<th>no change</th>
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<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reversed</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>30</td>
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</table>

Table 3: Participants per 3 X 3 subcondition

Table 3 lists the number of participants per sub-condition, after our dataset has been filtered as described above. The mean age of participants is 32.93 (sd = 10.22). 107 participants are women, and 115 are men. In comparison, 117 women and 84 men took part in the baseline task, with a mean age of 34.04 (sd = 10.12). The mean duration of the experiment was 11.66 minutes (sd = 3.82). The trimmed dataset has no overall bias towards regularization (the overall mean pre-test regularization is 0.49).

5 Results of the experiment

As a precursor to analyzing the post-test responses, we first verify the balancing of pre-test scores with respect to the experimental conditions. To do this, we fit a logistic mixed-effects regression model on the pre-test data to see if there is any significant difference between participant pre-test responses depending on across-participant conditions (including relevant interactions) to make sure that the prior states of the participants are balanced across the design. We find no significant patterns, suggesting that participants do not differ significantly as a function of condition in the pre-test – individuals, on average, regularize to different degrees, but the pre-test distributions are the same for all conditions. Since participant means are distributed equally in the pre-test, any differences in post-test distributions must be attributed to the effects of the ESP test.

One alternate approach would be to analyze pre-test and post-test data in a single regression model; this approach would allow us to omit the participant’s pre-test regularization (see below) from among the predictors. However, such an approach would necessitate starting models with a four-way interaction, accompanied by complexities in visualization and difficulties in model convergence.

We fit a logistic mixed-effects regression model on the post-test data, with participant response (regular vs. irregular) as the outcome variable. The predictor variables were VERB BASELINE MEAN (representing the average regularization for each nonce verb in our baseline study, cf. Section 4.1); PARTICIPANT PRE-TEST MEAN (a participant’s average regularization rate in the pre-test), LEXICAL TYPICALITY OF THE ESP PEER (typical, reversed, or random), and REGULARIZATION SHIFT of the ESP peer (+40, -40, or no-change). These factors are summarized for reference in Table 3. Additionally, the model includes random intercepts for participants and items, and a random slope for VERB BASELINE MEAN by participant. We build the model in a stepwise fashion, starting with all three-way interactions for these variables, and removing interactions that are not significant. The model summary appears in Table 5.

Note that the continuous predictors, participant pretest mean and VERB BASELINE MEAN, are mean-
5 RESULTS OF THE EXPERIMENT

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Coefficient</th>
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<td>12.04</td>
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<td>0.56</td>
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</tr>
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<td>0.17</td>
<td>3.31</td>
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<td>-2.59</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>verb baseline mean:lexical typicality = reversed</td>
<td>-2.13</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>-2.23</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5: Experimental Data, Post-test Regression Model Summary. Model formula: post-test regular response \( \sim \) verb baseline mean \( \times \) lexical typicality + participant pretest mean + regularization shift + (1 + verb.baseline.mean | participant) + (1 | verb)

centered in this model to counteract collinearity between main and interaction terms. Additional details about the model selection procedure can be found in the Supplementary Information.

The average propensity of each participant to regularize verbs (as assessed by our pre-test) and the average propensity for each verb to be regularized (as assessed by our baseline study) are the strongest predictors of post-test behavior. This means that participants who are inclined to regularize in the pre-test are also inclined to do so in the post-test. Verbs which are good candidates for (ir)regularization, as determined by the baseline test, tend to also be (ir)regularized in the post-test. Thus, the ESP task does not prompt participants to completely abandon their prior biases in post-test responses.

However, the experimental conditions in the ESP task (regularization shift and lexical typicality) do have the expected effects in the post-test. The peer’s overall rate of regularization influences participant behaviors in the expected directions, as shown by the highly significant variable regularization shift. An overall increase in peer regularization in the ESP test prompts an increase in participant regularization in the post-test. Likewise, a decrease in the ESP task prompts a decrease in the post-test. This main effect is illustrated in Figure 2.

The results show that participant responses to specific verbs are also influenced by the peer behavior seen in the ESP test. Recall that a peer that exhibits typical behavior makes selections that respect baseline verb rankings, i.e. the peer selects the \( k \) best verbs to regularize on the basis of verb baseline mean. A reversed peer reverses these rankings (by selecting the \( k \) worst verbs), and a random peer selects \( k \) verbs at random. In other words, typical ‘peers’ show a preference for regularizing forms with high baseline means. Reversed peers show a preference for regularizing forms with low verb baseline means.

As previously noted, participants’ preferences for individual verbs are well-predicted by the verb’s rate of regularization in the baseline. However, the verb baseline mean is a weaker predictor for participants exposed to a reversed or random peer, compared to the typical condition. Participants who played with the reversed or random peers are more likely to regularize low baseline forms, and less likely to regularize high baseline forms, compared with participants who played with typical peers.

Re-ordering the factors indicates that there is no significant difference between the interaction of verb baseline mean with random peers versus reversed peers. The relevant interaction plot appears in Figure 3, showing that the adherence to verb baseline mean biases is somewhat flattened out among participants who were paired with a reversed or random peer. In summary, ESP interaction with a typical peer reinforces baseline tendencies, whereas interaction with a less typical peer counteracts these tendencies.

Note that if participants were influenced only by the specific choices of the peer, we might expect the reversed line in Figure 3 to slope in the opposite direction, with low baseline forms having high regularization. For example, if the peer selected the irregular form snurnt for snurn during the ESP task, this might cause the participant to select drurnt for drurn (an item with the same low rank) in the post-test. If the peer selected sprided for spride, the participant might select swided for swide (a item with the same high rank) in the post-test. The fact that this doesn’t happen shows that participants’ generalization per-
5 RESULTS OF THE EXPERIMENT

Effect of co-player rate of regularization on post-test responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>co-player regularization shift</th>
<th>Player post-test regularization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>nc</td>
<td>0.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-40%</td>
<td>0.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+40%</td>
<td>0.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>0.65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

nc −40% +40%

Figure 2: Effect of regularization shift: Model predictions of how participant responses in the post-test are affected by the regularization shift of the peer during the ESP task. Error bars represent the 95% confidence interval of model predictions for each regularization shift condition.

Effect of co-player lexical typicality on post-test responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>co_player_lexical_typicality</th>
<th>Verb baseline average</th>
<th>Player post-test regularization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>random</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reversed</td>
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<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>−0.2</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>−0.1</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

co_player_lexical_typicality
typical
random
reversed

Figure 3: Effect plot of verb baseline regularization mean x peer lexical typicality: Model predictions of how post-test responses to verbs with different baseline means are affected by the lexical typicality of the peer choices.

performance in the post-test is influenced by general or prior knowledge as well as by the peer choices (similar to e.g. phonetic convergence, see Pardo 2006).

One might also expect the slope of the response to the random peer to sit between those for the typical and reversed peers, due to the random peer making some typical choices and some reversed choices. However, this expectation is not borne out; in our experiment, exposure to the random peer leads to the same type of distribution as exposure to the reversed peer.

In the discussion we speculate that this may relate to different words having different degrees of influence in the experiment. What remains clear is that, based on the above analysis, verb distributions do have an overall effect on participant behavior.

Additional questions may be considered regarding the roles of particular verb classes (Sang, Burnt, Kept, Drove) in the results described above. Verb classes are clearly relevant to participant behavior; for instance, Burnt verbs are more likely to be regularized in baseline than Drove verbs (as can be seen from surveying Table 1). Thus we performed followup mixed-effects modeling to determine whether the results are driven by specific verb classes. These subsequent investigations show that there is no significant interaction between verb class and regularization shift, and no significant interaction between lexical_typicality * baseline * verb class. Thus, the post-interaction influence from regularization shift and peer item preferences are not isolated to just one or two verb classes. Of course, verb classes are still integral to participants’ morphological generalizations in the experiment. We incorporate information about English verb classes in the learning models in the next section.

In sum, participant behavior in the post-test is affected by peer behavior in the ESP test. We set out to test for two possible effects of morphological convergence. First, we wanted to test whether an overall preference for regularization would be influenced by peer lexical choices. The significant effect of the regularization level (regularization shift) shows that it is. Second, we wanted to test whether convergence would be sensitive to the overall distribution of forms produced by the ESP peer. The significant interaction between verb baseline mean and peer typicality shows that differing peer behavior influenced participants to deviate from baseline tendencies in different ways.

We have therefore demonstrated an effect of morphological convergence, which is highly influenced by
the distribution of forms to which the individual is exposed. In sum, the answer to both research questions (1) and (2) is ‘yes’. This supports a model of morphological convergence in which the lexical system is constantly updated on the basis of new experiences, and generalizations are formed over whole words in a rapid, on-line manner. As discussed in Section 2, lexical updating (when considered at the processing level) does not necessarily involve the rapid incorporation of novel word forms into the lexical inventory. However, we retain this idealization in order to go on and investigate the level of detail available for the convergence mechanism.

We now turn to research question (3), examining the degree to which participant behavior can be modeled by two different categorization models, under the assumption of rapid lexical updating.

6 Rule-based and analogical categorization models

We have now established that morphological convergence occurs, and that it does not arise from a straightforward re-weighting of a default regular affix. Participants do not simply increase or decrease their rate of use of the regular past tense affix. Rather, the nature of the particular lexical items that a participant is exposed to has an important effect on their tendency to be (ir)regularized, supporting accounts that involve lexical updating.

In order to attempt to pinpoint more precisely what the consequences of lexical updating are for subsequent past-tense regularization patterns, we now consider the process through which morphological generalizations arise from the lexicon. In this section, we explore our research question (3): Can rule-based and/or analogy-based models account for the observed convergence patterns? This question takes us beyond the issue of morphological convergence per se, requiring us to address more fundamental questions regarding the relationship between the lexicon and morphological generalizations.

We focus on two stochastic models explored in detail by Albright & Hayes (2003) – the Generalized Context Model (GCM, Nosofsky 1990), and the Minimal Generalization Learner (MGL, Albright & Hayes 2003). Both models have been previously used to explore patterns of long-term learning and generalization over an existing lexicon. The former relies on processes of item-based analogy, while the latter infers abstract morphological rules from the patterns in the lexicon. Crucially, these models both differ from earlier dual-mechanism accounts (Prasada & Pinker, 1993; Clahsen, 1999), in which regular forms are handled, in an all-or-nothing manner, by a regular rule. In contrast, these stochastic models are consistent with evidence that participant ratings of both regular and irregular forms are affected gradiently by phonological similarity to the base forms of other regular/irregular verbs in the lexicon. The two models treat regular forms differently as a result of the difference in their architectures. The MGL assumes broad generalizations based on a large number of similar regular verbs in the lexical inventory, while the GCM focuses on narrow lexical gangs of irregulars defined by similarity, and takes account of the degree to which regular verbs resemble each gang.

Below we provide more background on the GCM and MGL in Sections 6.1 and 6.2, respectively.

In our analysis, we first fit these models to our baseline data (Section 6.3), to account for how well each of the models contributes to participants’ preferences for the regular form, across different verb types. This is not unlike the types of datasets and long-term learning problems that these models have been used for in the past.

We then explore, in Section 6.4, what predictions the models make for the post-test responses, under the assumption of lexical updating. If we assume that participants placed the nonce forms we exposed them to in their lexicons, and then updated their analogical generalizations (GCM) or abstract rules (MGL) respectively, what predictions would these models make about subsequent regularization patterns? Can changes in the model behavior following lexical updating account for the changes in participant preferences that we observe?

6.1 Generalized Context Model

The Generalized Context Model (GCM, Nosofsky 1988, 1990) is an instance-based analogical model. Instance-based models assume that people complete analogies using richly detailed categories comprised of instances. For the GCM, the process of selecting a response category entails the comparison of a new instance to previously encountered ones. The number and type of instances in memory co-determine the outcome of categorization. The GCM is a highly successful instance-based analogical model of human categorization (McKinley & Nosofsky, 1996; Maddox & Ashby, 1998). It has been successfully adapted to explain the ways humans incorporate new versus old information in processing (Donkin & Nosofsky, 2012; Nosofsky et al., 2014), and has been widely used in linguistic modeling (cf. e.g. Krott et al. 2001; Nakisa et al. 2001; Albright & Hayes 2003; Dawdy-
To assign category membership to a novel instance, the GCM first calculates its similarity to instances in pre-existing categories in a given training set. In morphophonology, the target instances are words. In our example, they are base forms assigned to past tense categories (‘regular’/ ‘irregular’, see Appendix A). (Our implementation considers these categories in the verb’s morphological class, see below.) Calculating the overall similarity between two words depends on aligning their segments and then finding how similar the corresponding segments are. For example, the calculated similarity of *splice* to *strive* reflects the fact the first segment and the last two segments are identical ([s], [arv]), while the second and third segments ([pl] v. [tr]) are similar. The GCM selects as the output for a novel instance the category with the most members that are the most similar (Nosofsky, 1990). For *splice*, the support for the regular outcome *spliced* rests on the comparisons to existing regular verbs (e.g., *hived, signed*), and the support for the irregular outcome *splive* rests on the comparisons to existing irregular verbs (e.g. *strode, strove, smote*). The overall regularity score is based on which set of verbs offers more total support.

The particular implementation of the GCM we use is based on Dawdy-Hesterberg & Pierrehumbert (2014). The training inventory is based on the CELEX corpus (Baayen et al., 1993). The model’s irregular class of comparison consists of irregular English verbs that display the target irregular alternation. The regular class of comparison consists of phonologically similar regular verbs as well as ‘miscellaneous’ regular verbs outside our schemata. Segmental similarity is calculated using the method developed by Frisch et al. (2004). Since the range of responses in our tasks is 0-1, we standardize GCM predictions to match this range. Further mathematical details are provided in Appendix A.

In our GCM baseline model, *splice* has a regularity score of 0.57 – the GCM regards it as a relatively regular verb. Compare this to its actual rate of regularization in our baseline experiment: 0.42.

### 6.2 The Minimal Generalization Learner

The Minimal Generalization Learner (MGL, Albright & Hayes 2002, 2003), uses more abstract generalizations (referred to as *rules* in the model’s terminology), rather than the richly detailed instances used by the GCM. These rules are based on sets of forms in the training data that show similar behavior. The MGL builds on the work of Mikheev (1997), whose approach to bootstrapping morphological rules has been widely used in the statistical natural language processing literature. The MGL has been shown to be highly accurate in modeling the behavior of nonce forms in the English past tense. Albright and Hayes argue that the MGL outperforms the GCM in predicting participant behavior in a nonce-verb production task they conducted.

The MGL iterates over pairs of words in the lexical inventory, hypothesizing generalizations conservatively on the basis of any phonological features that are shared across the words. It then iterates over rules, attempting to collapse rules into a more general rule when possible. A rule is scored according to how many words it applies to in the inventory, weighted against cases in which the inferred phonological context is present but the rule fails to apply. The resulting system consists of a catalog of weighted natural class-based generalizations which compete with one another, and which are more or less likely to apply in various phonological contexts (for REGULAR as well as IRREGULAR verbs).

The Minimal Generalization Learner is implemented here from materials made available by Albright and Hayes (Albright & Hayes, 2003), along with the segmental similarity metric of Frisch et al. (2004). The particular details of our implementation of the MGL are provided in Appendix B.

Let us take our previous example, the nonce verb *splice* in the DROVE class. The MGL recognizes a number of rules that could have this verb as their input. The two that are relevant are the ones that create the two choices in the task, regular *spliced* and irregular *splive*. Following Albright & Hayes (2003), we can calculate the MGL regularity score of this verb by dividing the adjusted confidence of the regular rule by the summed adjusted confidence of both rules (for details, see Appendix B).

When trained on CELEX, the MGL regularity score of *splice* is 0.73.

In our analysis, the training set for both the MGL and the GCM is the English lexical inventory – the set of existing English verbs. The GCM uses individual verbs to categorize new verbs, while the MGL creates overlapping rules for sets of verbs and assigns a relative strength to each rule. Both models impose restrictions on the training set. As a consequence, neither model uses all available verbs in this inventory for inference. The number of forms (with a token frequency of ten or above) in our CELEX dictionary is 3156. Across the four verb classes and the miscellaneous regular verbs, the GCM makes decisions on the basis of 1427 forms. The MGL creates generalizations over and makes decisions on the basis of 401...
forms.

The difference arises because the GCM operates on a large regular set by default and uses distance weighting to account for the attraction of a small set of highly similar irregulars. In contrast, the MGL builds rules from the bottom-up and stops when these rules provide optimal coverage under starting parameters. (We discuss this in Appendices A-B and the Supplementary Information.)

6.3 Modeling Past-tense Preferences: Model fits on the baseline data

In this section we assess the performance of the two models on our baseline data. This provides some insight into how well they can capture past tense regularization preferences in the absence of peer influence.

To generate the model predictions, we assume that each individual’s starting point is the same: complete familiarity with the same set of regular and irregular verbs listed in the CELEX corpus (Baayen et al., 1993). While this is a simplification, it is a reasonable approximation. English irregular verbs constitute a relatively small set and are all relatively frequent (Cuskley et al., 2014), so that a native speaker is likely to know them all. The model also makes the assumption that all participants behave in exactly the same way, based on the verb types they (all) know. This is clearly not true, as participants vary considerably in their rate of regularization, both in the baseline task and in the pre-test of the ESP task. This individual variation very likely comes, in part, from socially motivated preferences between individuals (e.g. variation by gender, age, and social class), which we have not considered in this study. It may also be due to broader cognitive factors: individuals vary widely in various learning tasks (Siegelman & Frost, 2015) and individual behavior in a given task can be hugely affected by the individual’s cognitive style (Lleras & Von Mühlener, 2004). Substantial across-participant variability has been found in other language learning tasks as well (Rácz et al., 2017; Schumacher et al., 2014).

We abstract away from these factors and work with idealized participants in order to keep the number of parameters reasonable in our model. We train the models on sets of real verbs, derived from CELEX, and fit them on our 256 nonce verbs, the relevant forms in the baseline task. We then compare the models’ regularization scores with participants’ choices to regularize/irregularize the verbs in the baseline experiment, and use these data to calculate concordance indices (Harrell, 2013). A concordance index, \( C \), measures the probability of agreement between a gradient predictor and a binary outcome; that is, comparing over all pairs of items in the data, \( C \) represents the proportion of trials in which the continuous predictor correctly predicts the categorical response. In this case, the continuous predictor is the regularization score assigned to each nonce verb by the model of interest (GCM or MGL), and the binary outcome is the participant’s choice of the regular or irregular verb form.

The concordance index \( C \) of the MGL scores and participant responses is 0.59, and 0.58 for the GCM. On the face of it, the MGL slightly outperforms the GCM, but the accuracy of the two models is similar.

A separate question is whether the MGL and the GCM explain variation in our data independently (that is, whether either or both of them effectively predict participant behavior). To test this, we conducted mixed effects logistic regression models of participants’ choices in the baseline task, and used a standard residualization procedure to test whether the MGL and the GCM have separate explanatory power. A residual is the amount of variation left over after we take a predictor’s effect into consideration (cf. e.g. Gelman & Hill 2006). Using residualization, we can test whether the GCM accounts for variation not accounted for by the MGL and vice versa. We find that the MGL and the GCM have independent predictive power; they both explain different parts of how participants regularize verbs in the baseline experiment. This means that the MGL and the GCM contribute independently towards explaining variation in the baseline data. This, in turn, suggests that both instance-based analogy and more abstract generalization plays a role in shaping English past-tense variation. (We discuss this analysis in detail in the Supplementary Information.)

6.4 Modeling Convergence: Model fits on the post-test data of the ESP experiment

In this section we fit the categorization models on data from the ESP experiment. Rather than using the experimental manipulations to predict participant behavior directly (as we did in Section 5), we ask whether it is also possible to use shifts in the predictions of the GCM and/or the MGL to capture participants’ changing behavior. Our analysis has shown that participant behavior changes on a lexical level due to exposure to the ESP peer. If the basis of this is lexical updating, this should be reflected in the way the categorization models behave when exposed to the same stimuli as the participants.

In the baseline analysis described in the previous
The models are trained on existing English verbs. Each model is fitted once, on the ‘ideal’ participant responding in the baseline task. In the post-test analysis, the models are trained on existing English verbs and the responses of the bot peer in the ESP test – these verbs constitute the novel information to which the participant converges. We assume that individuals update their lexical inventories with the nonce words presented to them. We also assume that during the ESP test, the specific words seen by the player are added to the regular or irregular categories, depending on the peer’s exposure. We thus add the specific words and categorizations the player encounters to a player-specific inventory alongside the real English verbs from CELEX. As every participant receives a unique set of stimuli, we are able to generate unique predicted regularization preferences for each participant, based on the MGL and GCM models generated from these updated inventories. We are able to compare two sets of predictions generated by the two models for the post-test forms.

The updated part of the inventory is different for every player, because word lists and verb forms vary across all players in all conditions. The contents of this new part of the inventory are affected both by the regularization shift factor (whether the player is in the +40, -40 or NO CHANGE condition), as well as the lexical-typicality factor – i.e. whether the distribution of the peer’s regular forms is chosen to be TYPICAL, REVERSE, or RANDOM.

We will refer to the models that are trained on existing English verbs from CELEX, and are shared for all participants, as the CELEX-MGL and CELEX-GCM models. We will refer to the models that are trained on individualized post-ESP-test inventories as INDIVIDUAL-MGL and INDIVIDUAL-GCM models. These are unique to each participant.

This approach makes a number of simplifications. First, as noted above, our models proceed as if all participants started the experiment with the same baseline lexical inventory. While we know that variation will exist across individual lexicons, for this simulation we use corpus-derived data to represent the initial state of all speakers. Second, it is unlikely that the words encountered during the ESP test are stored in the lexical inventory right away with the same effect on category structure as existing verbs of the language. It remains true, however, that new words can be integrated into the lexical system relatively quickly (see Section 2). Third, learning is likely incremental in the ESP test, with regularization rates shifting dynamically as new stimuli are presented. In contrast, our analysis compares two discrete models – one in which there has been no exposure to the ESP words, and one in which there has been full exposure.

We inspected our data using four different techniques. Each technique points to the same pattern – the individual-GCM outperforms the CELEX-GCM in predicting individual post-test performance, while the individual-MGL offers no improvement over the CELEX-MGL. The specific details of the four techniques and the conclusions drawn from each are described below.

First, by inspecting the individual-GCM and individual-MGL (which incorporate what the participant has seen in the ESP test), we find that the individual-GCM (C = 0.68) performs considerably better on the post-test than the CELEX-GCM (C = 0.6), whereas the individual-MGL (C = 0.63) is not much better at predicting the ESP post-test data than the CELEX-MGL (C = 0.61) (see the Supplementary Information). This suggests that the updated GCM model may be capturing some of the change that we see in participant behavior.

Second, we directly tested for any significant improvement provided by the individual models. If the categorization model is able to approximate the change in a participant’s representation after the ESP treatment, the model should perform significantly better on the post-test data if it was trained on real English verbs plus information from the ESP test, as compared to a version of the model that was only trained on real English verbs. We test for this the following way: for a given post-test response by a participant to a nonce verb, we take the CELEX-MGL/GCM score and subtract it from the individual-MGL/GCM score. (The CELEX score for nonce verbs will not be affected by a participant’s exposure in the ESP test). The resulting score represents the extra information gained by adding the ESP test to the model’s training set. We can then use this score as a predictor in a mixed-effects regression model of responses in the ESP post-test, to see if it explains any extra variation over the CELEX model. As outlined in the Supplementary Information, this analysis shows that the extra information from the individual-GCM is a significant predictor of post-test responses, beyond the CELEX-GCM score (est = 2.61, ste = 0.47, p < .001). The individual-MGL also adds some information over and above the CELEX-MGL, but this effect is much weaker (est = 0.30, ste = 0.14, p < 0.05). This suggests that the participants’ convergent behavior is largely influenced by analogical generalization over a lexicon that includes the nonce words that we have exposed them to, rather than by a more abstract, rules-based method of generalization. However, this is an indirect comparison of two estimates.
Third, we used regression to ask whether ‘rules’ play any role in predicting post-test behavior, once
the updated GCM predictions are taken into account. This provides a direct comparison between predictions of the two learning models.

While we have no evidence that rules have been ‘updated’, it is still possible that the original, pre-
manipulation rules continue to play a role in influencing participant choices. Indeed, an analysis using
residualization of predictors, along the lines of the analysis conducted of the baseline data (see the Sup-
plementary Information) reveals that the best mod-
els of the post-ESP data contain contributions from the Celex-MGL and the updated individual-GCM
scores. As these are not problematically correlated with one another, this leads us to a final overall best
model in which no residualization is necessary (VIF < 2), as shown in Table 6.

Note that the Celex-GCM and individual-MGL components are not significant predictors, and are
excluded from the model.

Fourth and finally, we inspected correlation pat-
terns between different predictions for the same verbs,
to try to understand why the updated individual-
GCM scores captured participant responses better
than the updated individual-MGL scores did. While
the GCM assigns an individual regularization score
to each verb, the MGL assigns a set of rules with
varying degrees of confidence to each verb, and sets
of verbs share rules. This means that the regular-
ization scores of given verbs will reflect the various
rules they share with other verbs. According to the
MGL, the probability that a verb will be regularized
is determined by the strength of the regular and the
irregular rules that have it as their input.

Given new information, the GCM will individually
change the regularization score of every instance, re-
sulting in incremental change in the rate of regular-
ization. In contrast, the MGL will generate new rules
that incorporate the new information as well as the
old information. As a result, the rule structure can
shift drastically, which results in drastically shifted
regularization scores for the individual verbs. The
MGL regular rules are not ‘paired’ with the irregu-
lar rules in any way to resemble the GCM categories.
Regular rules, built on a higher number of regular
forms, can be larger and more robust (and more in-
flexible) when exposed to new stimuli.

It appears that the behavior of participants in our
experiment reflects gradual, instance-based adjust-
ments in category space rather than abrupt, rule-
-based shifts.

The MGL predicts less variation than the GCM. This can be easily seen for the models trained on
Celex. For the 156 verbs that occur in the ESP experiment, the GCM generates one regularity score
for each verb. In contrast, 44 MGL rules cover these verbs, effectively grouping them together based on
formal overlap.

It is remarkable that the MGL has the same accu-
ricy as the GCM on the baseline verbs, given that
it uses a more restricted set of predictors. This has
an adverse effect, however, when individuals are ex-
posed to orderly heterogeneous variation. Par-2787

ticipants show subtle shifts in response to their ex-
sposure of the various verb distributions. The individual-
GCM is able to capture the general patterns in the
shift, whereas the individual-MGL will make rapid
adjustments based on a changing rule structure. This
can be clearly seen if we compare the Celex model
scores and post-ESP individual scores for the MGL
and the GCM, and compare them to real data. These
relationships are shown in Figure 4. This figure shows
three relationships: the baseline and post-ESP aver-
age rates of regularization by our participants (top-
left panel), the baseline and post-ESP average regu-
arity scores predicted by the GCM (top-right panel)
and the MGL (bottom panel). The plot thus allows
us to compare the effects of a typical vs. reversed
peer; differences in regularization shift conditions are
ignored in this plot.

Averaging real data of binary responses should be
interpreted cautiously. What is more, we average
over three different rates of regularization – albeit
the conditions are balanced in the experiment. At
the same time, average plots provide a useful illus-
tration of the underlying patterns of regularization.
The actual model comparisons, discussed above, all
use binary responses as outcome variables (and these
models take stock of all the independent variables).

What Figure 4 shows is that in the real data, there
is a correlation between the baseline data and the
post-test data, and that this is echoed in the relation-
ship between the Celex-GCM and the individual-
GCM. This pattern is present for the MGL, but with
more residual variation.

The new verbs introduced in the ESP test lead to
adjustments in individual patterns in the post-test,
but do not completely change them. As outlined in
the analysis above, the adjustments predicted by the
individual-GCM are significantly predictive of partic-
ipants’ actual behavior. For the MGL, the relation-
ship between the Celex predictions and the post-test
individual predictions is more erratic. Some verbs
that received high regularity scores in the Celex
model received low scores in the individual models,
and vice versa. These changes in prediction are not
Table 6: Regression Model Summary, with GCM and MGL predictors. Model starting formula: post-test regular response ∼ Celex-MGL + individual-GCM + participant pretest mean + (1 + Celex-MGL + individual-GCM | participant ) + (1 | verb)

<table>
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<th>Coefficient</th>
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<td>Celex-MGL (rescaled)</td>
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<td>9.36 ***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual-GCM (rescaled)</td>
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<td>7.37 ***</td>
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<td>participant pretest mean</td>
<td>5.44</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>9.30 ***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

significantly related to participants’ actual behavior. The forms introduced during the ESP test reduce the individual-MGL’s performance – even when those forms are produced by a typical peer. Finally, we can see from the figure that the individual-GCM captures the predicted difference in slope between the typical and the reversed condition. The MGL does so too, but, again, to a lesser extent.

In sum, both the MGL and the GCM contribute separately to predicting the baseline data, suggesting that both ‘rules’ and ‘analogy’ play a role in determining participant regularization preferences for individual verbs. However, by all our metrics, the GCM is much more successful in capturing the rapid shifts we observe in these preferences, based on exposure to new lexical items. This suggests that the morphological convergence behavior we observe arises from rapid on-line generalization over lexical forms.

7 Discussion

This paper set out to test three research questions.

The first question was whether morphological convergence occurs. The answer provided by our experiment was ‘yes’. Participants increased or decreased their regularization rates, in response to the behavior of a bot peer.

The second question related to the computational mechanism underpinning convergence. Is convergence sensitive to the overall distribution of lexical forms produced by the interlocutor? The answer to this is also ‘yes’. Participants adjust not just their level of regularization, but also their distribution of regular forms across verbs. If convergence in this task involved the re-weighting of a regular affix, or adjusting an overall baseline regularization rate to better reflect a peer, then we would see an adjustment to the rate of regularization which is constant across lexical items. However, this was not observed.

Convergence was also not narrowly item-specific. Our result cannot be caused by remembering the specific past-tense form produced by the peer, and then reproducing that form when those items are re-encountered. This explanation could not underpin the observed behavior, because the experiment was set up so that no individual lexical item was seen twice.

Our third research question attempted to probe the relationship between the lexicon and morphological structure, in order to understand exactly how updating the lexicon could affect morphological generalizations. We showed that both rules (implemented via the Minimal Generalization Learner) and analogy (via the Generalized Context Model) appear to shape people’s overall preferences for past-tense forms, but only analogical effects are manifest when the participants rapidly update their lexicon in response to new items.

Despite the considerable existing literature on linguistic convergence, very few investigations of morphological convergence have been reported. This paper provides strong evidence that morphological convergence can occur. Players exposed to different past-tense forms show different degrees and types of shifts in their past-tense preferences in a subsequent task. The convergent behavior extends beyond the immediate interactive task, to a subsequent task in which there is no interaction with a peer.

This study, then, adds morphology to the list of linguistic levels on which convergent behavior has been observed. However, it also goes beyond past studies of linguistic convergence, by closely examining how the convergent behavior is distributed across a range of different lexical items. This enables us to provide a greater level of insight into the mechanisms that underpin linguistic convergence.

Post-exposure, our participants’ preferences appear to be driven by a combination of rules derived from ‘real’ English words, and on-line analogy over existing forms in the lexicon, including the nonce forms to which they have just been exposed. While a rapidly updating GCM captures the convergent behavior elegantly, it is undoubtedly not the only model
that could do so. What would be difficult, however, is to capture the results in any model which did not allow for ongoing experience with new lexical items to affect morphological generalizations in an on-line manner. Our results clearly favor an interpretation where morphological convergence is based on rapid on-line adjustments of the lexicon, based on ongoing language experience.

The use of nonce words in our experiment enabled us to detect changes in morphological preferences more easily than if we had used real words as targets. This is because for real words, changes in analogical or rule-based pressures would compete with the strength of stored item-specific representations. This does not mean that we would not expect to observe any changes in real words. However, more extensive exposure over a longer period of time would probably be needed to affect representations of already-known words. In order to uncover the subtle analogical effects that we have shown here, the analysis would need to disentangle the effects of the experimental exposure from the variable strength of particular stored forms. Beckner et al. (2016) have shown that individuals adjust their regularization rate for real verbs in a peer-pressure task where human peers show abnormally high regularization rates. This means that
regularization patterns for existing verbs are at least somewhat malleable.

Interestingly, while the pattern of responses following the typical peer were different from the pattern of responses to both the random and reversed peer, the random and reversed peer did not have significantly different effects. The overall sensitivity to baseline shift was equivalent in all three cases - i.e. the degree of increased or decreased regularization affected participants in the three conditions equally. But participants in the random and reversed conditions both showed an increased tendency to regularize typically irregular forms, and to irregularize typically regular forms. Our hypothesis, and indeed the GCM (cf. Figure 4, top-right panel), would predict this tendency to be stronger for the ‘reversed’ participants than the ‘random’ participants.

We do not have a definitive answer concerning the lack of difference for this distinction. One possibility is that different exemplars may influence participants’ behavior differently. The random condition includes more non-expected forms than the typical condition, and the reversed condition includes even more non-expected forms. The research literature on human cognition shows that anomalous input can have different effects from more expected input for encoding, memory, and subsequent judgments or actions. But these effects are complex and can work in different directions. In priming experiments, unexpected forms can produce stronger priming (see e.g. Jaeger & Snider 2013; Bock 1986; Peter & Rowland 2019). However, anomalous forms can also be at a disadvantage in being stored in memory (see review: Todd et al. 2019), and as a result may even fail to produce priming at longer time scales (Clopper et al., 2016). Furthermore, even children tend to disregard input from a source that they have found to be generally unreliable (Yow & Li, 2018). This complex situation suggests that trade-offs amongst multiple effects may be responsible for the lack of a significant difference between the random condition and the reversed condition. Exploring such effects is an important direction for future research. In particular, it would be desirable to dynamically track the trajectory of changing preferences over the course of exposure, and to vary the temporal relationship of the exposure and the post-test.

In terms of what the results might imply for convergent past-tense behavior in real interaction, most real interactions do not involve exposure to completely novel word forms. If our past-tense usage is influenced by our peers’, it is less likely to be via new words, and more likely via changing probabilities for familiar words. We may have both weeped and wept in our lexical inventory, for example, and exposure to one or the other form might increase the probability of one at the expense of the other. This remains true even if we acknowledge that, given the malleability of the noun-verb distinction in English, speakers do frequently encounter novel denominal verbs, and what is more, lexical gang effects are far more likely to influence the morphology in languages with rich (inflectional) morphology (see, for example, Daland et al. 2007).

As we point out in Section 2, our computational implementations of both the GCM and the MGL make the strong assumption that the lexical system is updated by storing and relying on nonce verbs encountered in the experiment. However, they use the information differently in the post-test, where the GCM accesses words, and the MGL accesses only abstract generalizations, which are affected to a lesser degree by the novel words introduced in the experiment.

A number of algorithmic implementations of the GCM are possible, including connectionist implementations (Kruschke, 1992; Ashby & Rosedahl, 2017). This situation raises the possibility that the processing mechanism for the whole-word effects we have demonstrated is not the rapid addition of nonce words to the lexical inventory, but rather modification of the activation patterns for existing words. For example, after encountering spride/sprode, the processing mechanism might just increase the activation levels for similar verbs (e.g. stride/strode, ride/rode). This amounts to an explanation of our data based in whole-word lexical priming as a processing mechanism. Word-level priming of irregular past-tense patterns by nonce forms has been demonstrated in an experiment that manipulates semantic factors but not phonological factors (Ramscar, 2002). It could be described in an instance-based processing model that uses attentional weighting, such as Kruschke (1992). A neural network model of structural priming such as Plaut & Gonnerman (2000) would be capable of modeling such a process without explicit reference to word-sized units.

Our data do eliminate the possibility of context-independent priming of the regular past-tense affix, because this process would produce global reweighting of the affix. However, they do not effectively distinguish between instance-based models in which nonce words are added to the lexical inventory, and instance-based or neural network models in which patterns of connections are facilitated or inhibited. It is entirely likely that such a processing model could be developed. However, deciding on and evaluating the specifics of the model would best be done using experimental data on lexical processing that exceed
Another important area for future research is the nature of the relationship between the short-term convergent behavior we observed and long-term adaptation and learning. There is clearly some link between convergence in interaction and long-term adaptation. In sociophonetics, accent change over the course of the lifetime is claimed to result from the cumulative effects of short-term convergence in many interactions (see, e.g. a review in Foulkes & Hay 2015, though see also Sonderegger et al. 2017). It would not be surprising for this phenomenon to occur in other linguistic domains as well. But when do short-term convergence effects feed into long-term learning, and when are they inherently short-term and context-specific? Would repeated exposure to our bot-peer shift an individual’s overall preferences in the ‘real world’, or are we simply seeing short-term contextual learning? Our post-test results indicate that the convergence has some effect beyond the direct interaction which triggers it; in a short-term adaptation task, on-line linguistic generalization over recently experienced forms appears to drive behavior. This is congruent with the observation that the ability to adapt to the interlocutor (discussed extensively in our introduction) is one of the hallmarks of human linguistic competence. What we cannot know from our results is what happens thereafter. Would a period of lexical embedding (e.g. with sleep) eventually cause the new forms to affect ‘rules’ at a more abstract level, or not? For our experiment, given the hollow semantics of the nonce words, the time scale of the experiment, and the fact that the post-test takes place in a similar setting as the ‘gamified’ ESP test, it does seem likely that the convergence effects we observe are restricted in time and space.

It does not follow from our results that all short-term or context-specific learning will be purely analogical. In adapting to novel speech patterns, people are capable of rapid remapping of the relationship between an allophone and a phoneme both in production (German et al., 2013) and perception (Cutler et al., 2010). Our experiment differs from these studies both in target level of the linguistic system (morphology rather than allophony) and in the experimental manipulation in the training phase. Instead of an absolute shift in the outcomes for just one or two categories, our study had probabilistic shifts in the outcomes for a larger number of verb classes. It is possible that we do not observe the updating of abstract rules in our study because either of these factors, or both together, reduce the impact on the ‘core’ lexicon and on the abstractions that are built from that lexicon. Alternately, it could be that the process of updating morphological abstractions is simply not so rapid, or requires a greater degree of genuine lexical embedding (McClelland et al. 1995; O’Reilly & Norman 2002; Gaskell & Dumay 2003; Kumaran et al. 2016; see also Section 2). The scope of the present study allows us to observe that short-term morphological convergence can arise from an analogical process over a rapidly updating lexicon. Establishing the precise relationship between such short-term convergent behavior and longer-term learning will be an important direction for future work.

The fact that our participants are sensitive to the distribution of regular past tense forms over lexical items also informs the more general debate about the nature of inflectional morphology in general, and the English past tense in particular. The English past tense has been a testing-ground for a wide range of theories and predictions regarding the nature of lexical representations, in particular the representation of inflectional patterns as rules or as generalizations over specific items (Bybee & Slobin, 1982; Rumelhart & McClelland, 1986; Plunkett & Marchman, 1991, 1993; McClelland & Patterson, 2002; Albright & Hayes, 2003; Seidenberg & Paut, 2014). Our results lend strong support to a view of past tense formation as including both an abstract component, and a component involving on-line generalization over specific items. Moreover, they suggest that the set of relevant items is constantly being updated, and that the nature of past tense generalization is thus highly malleable. Abstract rules play a role, but these appear to be less malleable, and thus less likely to be implicated in morphological convergence. Just as hybrid models of phonology showing that multiple levels of representation and abstraction underpin sound systems (cf. Pierrehumbert 2016), our results indicate that morphological productivity, well-formedness, and variation are also governed by influences at multiple levels.

In sum, the morphological convergence we observed does not result from a simple adjustment of preference for one variant over another. Rather, it is the result of updating, in real time, the distributions of morphological variants that our generalizations rely on. This paper thus provides a very clear case of morphological convergence, together with evidence that the convergent behavior emerges through an analogical process over a rapidly updating lexicon.
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A IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GENERALIZED CONTEXT MODEL

A.1 Outline

Our implementation of the GCM evaluates the competition between two categories, regular and irregular, for each nonce verb base form. The framework of Nosofsky (1990) is adapted to morphophonology by using a segmental similarity calculation based on natural classes (Frisch et al., 2004). The same treatment of segmental similarity is used in the implementations of the GCM in Albright & Hayes (2003) and Dawdy-Hesterberg & Pierrehumbert (2014). We build on Dawdy-Hesterberg & Pierrehumbert (2014) in that we define our categories based on formal similarity.

A.2 Training data

Participants are presented with a sequence of nonce verb base forms, and have to pick either a regular or an irregular past tense form for each. The irregular past tense form is pre-determined by the class for the stem, so that, for a given verb, the participants can only choose between the regular past tense form and the irregular past tense form we assigned to the verb. (So, for instance, for splive, a verb in the DROVE class, they can choose either splived or splove, but not splift or sploven, etc.) For a given class (such as DROVE verbs), the GCM has a choice between two sets of verb types.

The irregular set consists of verb types in CELEX that form their past tense according to the pattern captured by the class (such as an \{[a]\},[i]} → [ou] alternation). The regular set consists of verb types that have base forms that are similar to these irregular forms but have a regular -ed past tense form as well as miscellaneous regular verbs – those that do not belong to any of our schemata. We narrow the regular set to monosyllabic forms. However, all polysyllabic irregular forms that could serve as a point of comparison are compounds based on monosyllabic forms (an example is overwrite, a compound form of irregular write). A compound form might be more regular than a simplex form, but CELEX will list both the regular and the irregular variant in both cases. Table 7 shows the descriptions of the verb classes using regular expressions.

Our starting point for the training set, following Albright & Hayes (2003), is the list of verbs in the CELEX corpus (Baayen et al. 1993, based on Sinclair 1987) with a token frequency of 10 or above, encompassing 3156 forms. However, similarity requirements restrict the respective training sets. We use the DISC transcription in which each contrastive segment of English is represented by a unique character (dr2v equals [drav]).

Table 8 shows the number of verbs in CELEX that were used as training sets for our verb classes. The irregular set consists of forms that match the schema and are irregular. The regular set contains schema matches which are regular, in addition to miscellaneous irregulars. The miscellaneous set consists of monosyllabic verbs that do not belong to any of the schemata and are regular. These are included in the regular training set of each verb class.

The model calculates the similarity of a given nonce verb to the regular and the irregular set. Comparisons to stems in other classes are not calculated, as past tense markings for these classes were not available to participants in the forced-choice tasks.

A.3 Estimation

To calculate the similarity between two words, we first compute their dissimilarity. This is achieved using the string-edit (Levenshtein) distance, which is the smallest number of changes needed to transform one word into the other. Costs range from 0 (the corresponding segments are identical) to 1 (inserting or deleting an entire segment). Following Albright & Hayes (2003) and Dawdy-Hesterberg & Pierrehumbert (2014), costs between 0 and 1 are assigned to corresponding segments that are not identical, based on how much the segments differ.

All parts of the word are weighted equally, because despite evidence that past tense formation in English is predominantly driven by overlaps in word endings, onsets also play a role. (cf. the predominance of s-cont) onsets in irregular verbs forming the past tense with a vowel change, e.g. stink, sink, etc. – see Bybee & Moder 1983).

The following transformation, originating with Nosofsky (1990), is used to convert dissimilarity into similarity:

\[ \eta_{ij} = \exp(-d_{ij}/s)^p \]

In the equation above, \( \eta_{ij} \) represents the similarity between form \( i \) and form \( j \), while \( d_{ij} \) is the dissimilarity between the two forms. \( s \) and \( p \) are free parameters.

We explored a range of parameter settings and use \( s = 0.9 \) and \( p = 1 \) which provide the best model fit on the baseline data. (In contrast, Albright and Hayes
A.4 Output format

The overall score used in our analyses is the regularity score, which is the complement to the irregularity score and reaches a maximum of 1.0 when the output is certain to be regular. Unlike Dawdy-Hesterberg & Pierrehumbert (2014), there is no decision rule on top of the scoring, such that any form that is more likely than not to be regular is predicted to surface as regular all the time. This specific decision rule is statistically optimal, and was imposed in Dawdy-Hesterberg & Pierrehumbert (2014) in order to determine the ceiling performance for a computational model. The present paper, in contrast, analyzes data aggregated across human participants with differing decision thresholds. As discussed in Schumacher et al. (2014) and Schumacher & Pierrehumbert (2017), the input-output relationship in such aggregated data are typically reported to be nearly probability-matching.

We rescale the regularity score to match the range of participant responses: [0,1]. The modified score is interpretable as the probability that the outcome will be regular in aggregated data. It is also appropriate to attribute this type of gradience to people’s initial expectations about other people’s behavior, on the assumption that people realistically encode the variability they have encountered.

A.5 Example: splive

The nonce form splive belongs to the Drove class in our model. The two past forms of splive in the experiment are regular splived and irregular splove. It is compared to 1301 regular verbs – these are 83 verbs that match the Drove schema (e.g. side, hive, line) and 1218 miscellaneous verbs. It is also compared to 14 irregular verbs (e.g. drive, stride, smite) in this class. Overall, it is more similar to the regular set: its regularity score is 0.57.
B Implementation of the Minimal Generalization Learner

B.1 Outline

The Minimal Generalization Learner is an algorithm for forming input-output rules of varying generality, which then compete to generate the output.

The Minimal Generalization Learner is implemented here from materials made available by Albright and Hayes (Albright & Hayes, 2003). These include their Segmental Similarity Calculator, implementing the natural class based similarity metric due to Frisch et al. (2004), also used in the GCM implementation. Due to issues with the MGL code, we had to fit the MGL manually, using the graphical interface, for each separate participant. The pyautogui library in python was used to automate this, the code is available in the supplementary repository.

B.2 Training data

For our model fitted on our baseline nonce word stimuli, the MGL is trained on regular and irregular English verbs with a minimum frequency cutoff of 10 in CELEX (Baayen et al., 1993), encompassing 4160 past/present verb transcriptions.

The MGL builds rules based on all verb forms in CELEX with a token frequency of 10 or above. However, the structural descriptions of the resulting rules do not cover all these forms. Table 9 shows the number of unique forms covered by the structural descriptions of the ‘regular’ and ‘irregular’ rules that are relevant to each class.

The MGL generates multiple possible past tense forms for each nonce verb. We only consider to be relevant those rules that generate the past tense forms that appear in the experiment (e.g. splive : splived / splove). There is at most one relevant regular rule and one relevant irregular rule for one verb, but multiple rules can generate the (ir)regular forms for each verb class. We return to this in the next section.

Note that the sets of exceptions and related forms of each rule can overlap. As a consequence, the MGL rules apply to fewer forms than apparent from the table: 401 in total.

B.3 Estimation

The MGL begins by considering the relationship between each verb and its past tense as a ‘rule’. For each pair of verbs in the training data, it then attempts to create a more general rule. It does so by aligning the wordforms and analyzing shared phonetic features. For example, merging the word-specific rules for ring/rang and for stink/stank yields a more general rule that expresses the information that they share: [i] → [æ] / [+coronal] [ŋ]. Each rule inferred in this way is then further generalized on the basis of more comparisons; for instance, taking note of swim/swam expands the [i] → [æ] rule to specify that it occurs before all [+nasal] consonants.

The structural description for each rule has a scope, which is the number of verbs conforming to the description, to which the rule might apply. The number of hits is the number of such verbs where the rule generates the correct output. In our example, think and blink fall in the scope of the rule, but they are not hits, because their past tenses display other patterns (thought and blinked) The raw confidence of the rule is the ratio of hits to scope:

\[
\text{Raw confidence} = \frac{\text{hits}}{\text{scope}}
\]

The raw confidence is 1.0 if the rule applies to all forms that meet its structural description. It is less than 1.0 if some forms meeting its structural description have past tenses other than that predicted by the structural change. Raw confidence values of 0 are not found, because a rule needs to apply to two or more examples to be posited in the first place.

The MGL raw confidence metric is adjusted on the basis of user-specified confidence limits, to generate an adjusted confidence score that takes into account the amount and distribution of available data. The MGL’s lower limit affects how much confidence is assigned to rules that have a small number of instances; generalizations that are based on a smaller number of word types are penalized. The MGL’s upper limit curtails the application of seemingly general rules which are in fact driven by a more specific rule (Albright & Hayes, 2002). The MGL is implemented here with its default settings, with the exception of the algorithm’s confidence limits. We implement the MGL with lower and upper confidence limits of 55% and 95%, respectively, since these values afford the best fit to English verb data in Albright & Hayes (2003).

Note that the MGL algorithm automatically groups together verbs on the basis of shared phonological properties; thus, verbs are most likely to form strong generalizations with other verbs that share the same onset or rhyme. Attempts to merge diverse word-
forms under a single generalization would be more likely to incur penalties (i.e. exceptions). This feature of the MGL is important for comparing with the methods of the GCM. Both algorithms allow for category-specific similarities to play a role in rule formation.

**B.4 Output format**

Recall that in both our baseline and ESP experiment the trial task is prompted by a stem and offers a choice between a regular form and a specific irregular form, presented orthographically. In order to model this choice, we take the MGL rule for the stem that outputs the regular form (the relevant regular rule) and the rule that outputs the specific irregular form (the relevant irregular rule). If several regular / irregular rules generate the same form, we take the one with the highest adjusted confidence, following Albright & Hayes (2003). We use these rules to calculate the form’s relative (adjusted) confidence.

Out of 156 test verbs in the ESP post-test, the CELEX-trained MGL generates a relevant regular rule for every verb. It does not generate a relevant irregular rule for 28 verbs. These are all nonce verbs in the Kept category (see Section 4.1 in the main text). In this category, irregular forms are derived from the stem through a vowel change (e.g. greel → greelt). The verbs missing the relevant irregular rule all have bases ending in <m>, <n>, or <l>. This is because, in our implementation, there is an insufficient number of verb types in the training set to support these irregular rules. Decreasing the cutoff criterion for the model leads to the generation of more of the currently ‘missing’ irregular rules, but the overall model fit becomes worse (cf. below). Therefore, we keep the cutoff criterion and assume that the adjusted confidence of the irregular rule for these 28 verbs is zero.

For all forms, we then take the relative confidence of the regular rule as compared to the regular and the irregular rule for each verb and take this as the adjusted regular confidence of the given verb. (If the irregular rule is missing, the value of this adjusted regular confidence is 1.) This is given by the following equation:

\[
\text{Relative (adjusted) confidence} = \frac{\text{adjusted confidence of relevant regular rule}}{\text{adj. conf. reg. rule} + \text{adj. conf. relevant irreg. rule}}
\]

This relative adjusted confidence represents the MGL regularity score for an item, to be compared against the regularity score from the GCM (see Section A).

**B.5 Example: splive**

The two past forms of splive in the experiment are regular splived and irregular splove. The relevant regular rule that generates the regular past tense is ‘∅ → [d] / {ð, f, θ, s, v, z}’. The structural description indicates that this is a suffixation rule that can apply to forms that end in an anterior fricative (a natural class in our feature system). The raw confidence of this rule is 0.98. This is because this rule applies to most forms in its scope (698/712). The adjusted confidence is very similar: 0.968. This is because this rule applies to a large number of forms overall. The relevant irregular rule that generates the irregular form is ‘[aI] → [oU] / {ð, ʒ, dʒ, d, l, n, r, z}’. It applies to [aI] in the nucleus preceded by a voiced anterior consonant and followed by [v]. In CELEX, the rule applies to three forms (drive, strive, dive) and fails to apply to five (arrive, thrive, contrive, rive, connive). Its raw confidence is 0.375. Its adjusted confidence is slightly lower (0.366). This is because it applies to a smaller number of forms overall. The relative (adjusted) confidence of the predicted regularity of splive is 0.98/(0.98 + 0.37) = 0.73. (As with the GCM predictions – see Section A.4 of this SI – we rescale the MGL predictions for statistical analysis. The respective rescaled value is 0.363.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>category</th>
<th>rule.type</th>
<th>related forms</th>
<th>exceptions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Burnt</td>
<td>irregular</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drove</td>
<td>irregular</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kept</td>
<td>irregular</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sang</td>
<td>irregular</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burnt</td>
<td>regular</td>
<td>38</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drove</td>
<td>regular</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kept</td>
<td>regular</td>
<td>67</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sang</td>
<td>regular</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9: Number of forms in each verb class, MGL training data