Chan & Tardif (2013) Questions

1. I have a gut feeling that in some parts of China (and Hong Kong), people are even more individualistic than Westerners. They understand the (stereotypical) differences between Western and Eastern cultures, and try very hard to learn from, and act as Westerners. They are independent, self-confident, expressive, egalitarian, democratic … Also, many teachers in Southern China (and Hong Kong), especially those who received Western-style education, adopt a child-centered approach and advocate Western values. The relationship between teachers and students is equal and democratic, and students actually feel quite comfortable questioning teachers’ beliefs and sharing their own views. I think this may, to some degree, account for the counterintuitive findings of the study.

2. For the Chan article, I was wondering what others thought about the operational definition of knowledge in this experiment. I feel like what they call "weak knowledge" could just be seen as an ambiguous, unclear stimulus that does not allow children at all to draw on previous knowledge? Of course, if they have no knowledge, they have to seek it somewhere else? The researcher labels this case of endorsement of "endorsement of conflicting labels" but WITHOUT prior knowledge, kids just have to trust whatever the teacher says. Maybe recency of label (the teacher was the last to provide the label) plays a role here too!

3. Are there other reasons that might explain why the results of the studies yielded somewhat conflicting results (i.e., different methods, different labs conducting conceptual replications)? Can we be sure that the differences that arise are due to actual differences, or methodological differences?

4. Don’t like the inhibition explanation- what do they mean by inhibition? Is it practice induced or an automatic process?

5. The Chan & Tardif article challenges a simplistic view of the cultural dimension of individualism vs collectivism, since American children showed more compliance to authority. Could American children be described, not just as “trusting”, but perhaps “gullible”? While the researchers plausibly suggest this may be due to Chinese values of early autonomy and show some convergence with age, I wonder if some differential may persist.

6. Chan & Tardif (2013) found that Chinese kindergartners, in comparison to their American peers, are more willing to endorse conflicting labels of objects when they had strong prior knowledge about the objects. The researchers attributed these results to cultural differences in the emphasis placed on self-reliant learning. I wonder if these cultural differences affect the developmental trajectories of other social learning skills. Specifically, I wonder if there is a developmental trajectory difference between American and Chinese children's abilities to accept a testimony that conflicts with their own knowledge when the informant has better access to information.

7.
Chen (2013) found that Chinese kindergarteners are less likely to endorse a conflicting label than their American counterparts. What are the potential reasons for this? Is it possible that there are differences in the way that parents in America label objects? Is there a difference with regard to how often they correct their child when an incorrect label is presented?

8. Do sibling interactions come into play? Although Hong Kong is exempt from the one child policy, perhaps kindergarteners on average have more siblings in which they “learn” from.

9. Do American Kindergarteners lack confidence in their own knowledge?

10. Does parenting style influence (perhaps both directly and indirectly) affect children’s executive functioning and inhibitory control? 

Eg. more Authoritarian parenting styles (China) emphasize discipline, strict rules, and repetition when learning (eg. math, instruments etc). Even if they have not had formal schooling, their environment demands them to have greater inhibitory control.

11. In America, unstructured playtime is common (even in daycare / preschools) which may allow children to utilize common objects which they have strong knowledge of, and transform them into other objects, or parts of object (buttons become a wheel to a toy car, or eyes on a stuffed animal). Note: adults will adopt new labels for these objects in a particular context (eg. when sewing a teddy bear, doing an arts and craft project). Perhaps they adopt teacher’s “incorrect label” because they lack confidence in their own labels, or adopt another potential label from someone who is deemed to be more knowledgeable?

Vázquez, Delisle and Saylor (2013) Questions

1. Participants know what honest means but they don’t know what saucy means (i.e., the name of the doll) - could this have affected the results (because saucy is not as concrete a term as honesty)?

2. Would be interesting to test other maxims and look at age differences in children's understanding.

3. Children’s choices in the present study may not be reflective of their spontaneous responses in naturalistic settings. In the present study, the partner assessment questions and the conversation partner comparison questions were asked immediately before word-learning trials. This could cause a priming effect – the evaluation and the comparison highlighted the differences in the informants' pragmatic ability,
reminding children that one of the informants was better than the other one, and influencing children’s choices in the following word-learning trials. It is hard to know whether children, without this “reminder”, can still use pragmatic competence as a criterion for evaluating the credibility of informants.

4. In the beginning of the Vasquez article the authors mention manner and quantity as to more maxims for conversations. I wonder if we can discuss (or speculate) more reasons why kids have problems identifying these? Would adults even be able to identify violations of these very accurately? What skills/cognitive capacities are kids lacking that makes it hard to identify the "relation" violation and almost impossible to identify "manner" and "quantity"?

5. In the Vasquez article, I wonder if we can dig a bit deeper into the differences between why kids identify quality but not relation violations as well. Two things come to mind that I think could have been discussed more in the discussion section of the article a) Quality just seems to be a better indicator of labeling an object than relation. Even as an adult I could reason that someone who generally speaks the truth but sometimes throws in random, meaningless sentences could generally still be seen as a good source of object labels (albeit an annoying conversation partner)? b) I wonder if liking of the conversation partner plays into it maybe 4 and 6 year olds like different kinds of conversation (aka. 4 year olds like random conversations better than 6 year olds) and therefore react to relation violation differently.

Combined/General Questions

1. In social cognitive research, where is the line drawn between cognitive factors and social factors? When does one count more than another and why? I struggle with this distinction because I come from cognitive research labs with no focus on social aspects.

2. What is the connection between pragmatic information and object label learning? Does pragmatic competence necessarily indicate an individual's intelligence? Or does it perhaps indicate social competence?

3. What is the evolutionary purpose of a bias to trust? Do children have a bias to trust because understanding lying might require a more developed theory of mind?

4. What cognitive capacities are necessary or sufficient for the explicit recognition of the different values of sources that obey the gricean maxims?

5. Is there an implicit preference for sources that obey gricean maxims that may have very different “content” from explicit recognition, particularly for children?

6. I’m curious about how children’s filtering of information transfer (choosing what they adopt as true) compares with aspects of transmission of ideas in general, i.e. how information gets transmitted vertically (from elder to younger generation, e.g. learning) vs. laterally (within a generation, e.g. flow of ideas, gossip). In the latter, aspects like emotional content (sensationalism), relative importance (usefulness), and
minimal counter-intuitiveness (mostly reasonable, but somewhat surprising) are key factors. There are also personality factors such as authoritarianism and openness.

7. The researchers found that 6-year-old children recognized when a speaker followed the maxims of relation and quality, and subsequently they were more likely to trust the speaker who adhered to the maxims of relation and quality. 4-year-old children, on the other hand, showed the same pattern but only for the speaker who followed the maxim of quality. I wonder if we can indirectly uncover preferences for the speaker who follows the maxim of relation among 4-year-old children? Previous research shows that children assume that previously accurate individuals are 'nicer' and 'smarter'. I wonder if this effect can be extended to speakers who follow maxims of relation and quality. Specifically, I wonder if both 4 and 6 year old children will prefer a speaker who follows the two maxims of relation and quality?