

Re: Why can't daddy?

Source: <http://sci.tech-archive.net/Archive/sci.lang/2006-05/msg00499.html>

- *From:* "Peter T. Daniels" <grammatim@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx>
 - *Date:* Wed, 10 May 2006 13:06:23 GMT
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Andr  G. Isaak wrote:

In article <17505.35504.364603.878266@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx>, Aidan Kehoe <kehoea@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx> wrote:

Your assertion is that all those who learned the language of the community around them during the critical period learned it perfectly? Detective Sergeant Maureen Watson of the Police Department of Seguin, in rural Texas, provides an easy counterexample to that:

Watson told News 4 WOAI, "We believe the gate of the cattle trailer came open, and the cow, for lack of a better phrase spilled out onto the Interstate. It was pretty chaotic for a while."

That is, she realised something wasn't right with using cow as a plural, but she couldn't come up with cattle in a comfortable amount of time, so she used the much marked for lack of a better phrase instead. That's imperfect command of a language, if anything is.

Three points:

- (1) I don't know of anyone who claims people learn language perfectly.

Didn't you read the message you replied to? That's exactly what I said, and it's the fundamental premiss of linguistics. Every native speaker is an absolute authority about their native language(s).

Aidan: turn off the fucking curly quotes.

—
Peter T. Daniels grammatim@xxxxxxx