

# Re: Universal grammar

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Hans Aberg wrote:

I think the Babylonians also knew how to solve second degree polynomial equations, but only empirically, as a set of instructions for finding the answer.

Yes, they might have done that. Some cases are easy. For example  $aa + 4 = 4a$ . Try 1 for  $a$ , and you get 5 versus 4. Try 2, and you get 8 and 8. Bingo. They might even have found some clever strategies for tackling more demanding cases.

Back to language. What do you think of Rob Freeman's approach of a grammar based on examples instead of rules? I find it promising. That is the way I proceed in English. I don't consult grammar books, I rely on songlines and sentences I remember. Prepositions are a problem of mine: in the airplane? on the airplane? on an island? in an island? Dictionaries offer some examples, but never enough for me, so I began to google the groups for the correct use of prepositions, for correct grammar, also for slang words I find nowhere else. A billion of messages are my grammar book and dictionary. Examples instead of rules.

I wished there was something similar for mathematical purposes, an easily searchable electronic library of numbers and number sequences, together with the algorithms that produce them. Euler's memory for everybody, so to say.

Tools don't replace the human hand, they prolong the arm. Computers don