

EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION

The Project on Acquisition of Finnic Languages (Suomalaiskielten omaksumisen tutkimushanke) organized a symposium on first language acquisition at the University of Turku. In two days 24 papers in English were presented to audiences of 40-50 scientists and students. The rector of the university, Professor Keijo Virtanen, opened the symposium, and the key-note speaker was active Professor Ann Peters (Hawaii). The scientific organizers were Professor Jorma Toivainen and university lecturer Kirsti Toivainen.

In his opening talk on “The scenes of the child and the morphemes of the language”, Jorma Toivainen (Turku) using Finnish child language materials as a starting point, supported the view that the so-called grammatical meanings may be associated with “lexical” meanings, especially when speaking about the acquisition of Finnish inflectional morphology. The Finnish child begins with endings which include unstressed long vowels, e.g. partitive cases in nouns and 3rd person present verb forms. This marking is more iconic than grammatical in nature at first.

The paper of Sari Kunnari, Satsuki Nakai and Marilyn Vihman (Bangor), “Cross-linguistic evidence for acquisition of geminates”, included long consonants, by children acquiring Finnish and Japanese compared to their earlier data from English and French. Their preliminary findings suggest that Finnish and Japanese infants may have separate targets for singleton and geminate consonants at the end of the single-word period.

Semantic categories were treated by some researchers: e.g. on possession in English and Finnish by Ari Parikka (Turku Swedish University Åbo Akademi), Swedish past tense by Ulla Veres (Gothenburg) and spatial adverbials in Russian by Victoria Kazakovskaya (St. Petersburg).

Sophie Gonnand (Lyon) conducted a study on “Development of content recall in different narrative texts”, and found significant differences between long- and short-memory recall with children. Åsa Nordqvist reported investigating three-year-olds’ use of direct and indirect speech in two types of activities, namely “Doll house play” and “Frog story”. This paper has been already published in the 1/2001 issue of this journal.

Two final articles in this issue deal with morphopragmatic and morphophonemic aspects of Finnish child-directed and child speech (by Klaus Laalo, Tampere), and phonological analyses of South Estonian baby talk (by Karl Pajusalu, Tartu).

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