

EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION

The present number of the journal comprises articles based on longitudinal studies of children acquiring different languages: English, French, Polish, and Ukrainian. In the section *Short Communications* a reviewed book (Meng, 2001) deals with the evolution of Russian-German bilingual acquisition by immigrants. The variety of languages to which the authors refer in their texts makes this issue interesting in the light of language-specific as well as universal factors.

The issue opens with a study of the development of verbal argument constructions in children by Anat Ninio from the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. The starting point of the study was Tomasello's Verb Island hypothesis with two radical claims: 1) strict insularity of lexical items, and 2) strict constructivism of developmental processes. According to this hypothesis, the developing lexical verb "knows" only its own antecedent grammar, but is "blind" to the already-learned grammar of other verbs. In other words, learning can only be "vertical", but not "horizontal". The case study is a diary study of Travis, Tomasello's daughter acquiring English (her multiword sentences were recorded between the ages 1;3.20 and 1;8.08). Tomasello's results seem in direct contradiction to earlier findings showing the role of transfer and facilitation from one verb to another in developing verb argument constructions. Returning to Travis' corpus Anat Ninio retraced the antecedents of three-and-more-word utterances, focusing on the emergence of verb argument structure constructions. She found that forty percent of the verbs appearing in the Subject-Verb-Object pattern had not been used at all in combination before the first SVO sentence. These results do not support the insularity element of the Verb Island hypothesis and show a child's linguistic system with items interconnecting systematically by various dimensions of similarity.

The second article is based on the analysis of longitudinal study of two children between 1;3 and 2;3, acquiring French. Edy Veneziano (University of Paris V – CNRS), the author of the article, explores the emergence of noun and verb categories in the acquisition of French. She analyzes the empirical material in order to answer the question whether the child's early vocabulary shows signs of organization into word categories. It turned out that the differentiation between noun-words and verb-words appears progressively and manifests itself in different ways and at different levels:

1) at the level of production of "Prefixed Additional Elements", produced differentially for nouns and verbs;

2) at the level of phonomorphologically relevant variations, where they appear to affect only verb-words;

3) the organization of words into formal classes facilitates rule-based, and thus more systematic, combinations of words, both within and across constituents.

The next article, entitled *Early productivity in derivation. A case study of diminutives in the acquisition of Polish*, is written by Ewa Haman (University of Warsaw). The diary data (from the so called *Szuman diaries*) of a girl Inka were gathered from 0;10 to 7;8. The analysis comprised all data from the period 1;0-2;02. The main goal of the study was to establish the starting point of productive use of diminutives. Significant developmental changes, not only in frequency but particularly in proportion of various indicators of diminutives, showed that during the analyzed period diminutives start to be a productive category in child speech. At the same time (from the age of 1;5), the child starts to combine massively stems and formants in diminutives. The result was a rapid enlargement of diminutive types. The data suggest that the child has gained insight into the structure of the category of diminutives.

In the final article the case study of an Ukrainian-speaking child (Mykyta) is presented by Roma Chumak-Horbatsch (Ryerson University, Toronto). This important article is based on the analysis of acquisition of Ukrainian, little studied and relatively unknown in the child language literature. The author analyzes the most striking error of early child language, i.e. reversal of personal pronouns in the conversational context. The child repeated uses of the 2ps pronoun *ty* (you) for self-reference over a twelve-month period from 2;0 to 3;0. His reversal behavior, unlike the inconsistent reversals noted in other reports, emerges as a unique, prolonged, atypical error within an otherwise advanced language system. Including the personal pronoun *ty* for emphasis or omitting it altogether, is described by the author as “an affective linguistic choice facing children acquiring the Ukrainian personal pronominal system. A child acquiring the English pronominal system, by way of contrast, where personal pronouns are rarely omitted, does not have such a choice” (Chumak-Horbatsch, in this issue, p.73). This recalls the native language effect and shows the importance of language-specific features in children’s pronominal acquisition.

The issue ends with the review (by Małgorzata Staroń, University of Warsaw) of an important book by Katharina Meng (2001), entitled *Russlanddeutsche Sprachbiografien – Untersuchungen zur sprachlichen Integration von Aussiedlerfamilien*. The author explores the evolution of Russian-German bilingual acquisition by Russian-German immigrants. She shows the problem of families returning to their ancestral homeland, a problem is not limited to Germany but also of vital importance in other European countries.

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