

Child language development

00-362 Akhtar, Nameera (U. of California, Santa Cruz, USA; *Email: nakhtar@cats.ucsc.edu*). Acquiring basic word order: evidence for data-driven learning of syntactic structure. *Journal of Child Language* (Cambridge, UK), **26**, 2 (1999), 339-56.

Recent studies indicate that young English-speaking children do not have a general understanding of the significance of SVO (subject-verb-object) order in reversible sentences; that is, they seem to rely on verb-specific formulas (e.g., NP_{pusher} - form of the verb PUSH - NP_{pushed}) to interpret such sentences (Akhtar & Tomasello, 1997). This finding raises the possibility that young children may be open to learning non-SVO structures with novel transitive verbs. This article reports an experiment to test this hypothesis in which 12 children in each of three age groups (two-year-olds, three-year-olds, and four-year-olds) were taught novel verbs, one in each of three sentence positions: medial (SVO), final (SOV), and initial (VSO). The younger age groups were equally likely to use the novel (non-English) orders spontaneously as to correct them to SVO order, whereas the oldest children consistently corrected these structures to SVO order. These results suggest that English-speaking children's acquisition of a truly general understanding of SVO order may be a gradual process involving generalisation (learning) from examples. The findings are discussed in terms of recent data-driven learning accounts of grammar acquisition.

00-363 Strapp, Chehalis M. (Western Oregon U., USA; *Email: strappc@wou.edu*). Mothers', fathers' and siblings' responses to children's language errors: comparing sources of negative evidence. *Journal of Child Language* (Cambridge, UK), **26**, 2 (1999), 373-91.

The role of linguistic input or 'negative evidence' in grammatical development remains a central issue dividing accounts of language acquisition. Despite previous work showing that mothers, fathers, and siblings provide negative evidence regarding children's grammatical errors, the role of linguistic input remains controversial. Since most work in this area has concentrated on negative evidence in the mother-child dyad, the study reported here extended prior work by comparing mothers', fathers' and siblings' corrective repetitions to children's errors across different family settings. Fourteen children (2; 3) were videotaped interacting with their mothers, fathers, and siblings (4; 1) in dyad, triad, and tetrad settings. Analyses revealed that mothers and fathers provided more corrective repetitions than siblings did. Although the size of the setting did not differentiate responding, when specific configurations were examined differences emerged. Analyses of individual families revealed that all children received feedback following syntax errors. These results are discussed in terms of current negative evidence research.

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bilingualism

00-364 Álvarez, Esther-Ana (Universitat de Barcelona, Spain). The role of language dominance in two narratives of a 7-year-old Spanish/English bilingual. *Aile* (Paris, France), **Special Issue**, vol. 1 (1999), 83-95.

This paper reports some findings from an ongoing study of the development of narrative skills in a Spanish/English bilingual child from age 6;11 to 8;11. The author had hypothesised that the child's greater command of Spanish (the community language) at age 7 would be reflected in a more complex discourse structure - this did not turn out to be the case, however. Language dominance does not seem to play a significant role in the quantity of backgrounded information that the child includes in the two narratives of a picture-story; neither does it make a significant difference to the degree of syntactic complexity. It is more apparent at the stage of grammatical encoding, as the selection of past tense morphology is not as yet fully automatic in the child's weaker language. The author concludes that there is a need to study non-balanced bilinguals in several different types of performance, as the degree of weakness of a language may vary according to the task.

00-365 Cline, Tony (U. of Luton, UK) and **Frederickson, Norah**. Identification and assessment of dyslexia in bi/multilingual children. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism* (Clevedon, UK), **2**, 2 (1999), 81-93.

When slow progress is made by children who are learning to read and write in their second or third language, it is often assumed that they simply have a language problem: if they knew the target language better, they would find it easier to learn to read. This paper argues that, while that is often true, there is a risk that learning difficulties associated with dyslexia will sometimes be overlooked. In support of this argument the authors present evidence that pupils from linguistic minority communities are under-represented in specialist teaching provision and show how traditional approaches to identifying dyslexia are likely to under-identify bilingual children with dyslexia. The article proposes how good practice may be developed in the assessment of dyslexia with bilingual children and highlights the value in this context of recent approaches to defining dyslexia which do not depend upon exclusionary criteria or an IQ-achievement discrepancy.

00-366 Deuchar, Margaret (U. of Wales, Bangor, UK; *Email: M.Deuchar@bangor.ac.uk*). Are function words non-language-specific in early bilingual two-word utterances? *Bilingualism: Language and Cognition* (Cambridge, UK), **2**, 1 (1999), 23-34.

This paper investigates 'mixed' early two-word utterances by bilinguals, in order to determine whether