Psycholinguistics

97–539   Ambalu, D. (East Herts. NHS Trust), **Chiat, S. and Pring, T.** (City U. of London). When is it best to hear a verb? The effects of the timing and focus of verb models on children's learning of verbs. *Journal of Child Language* (Cambridge), **24**, 1 (1997), 25–34.

This paper explores the effects of certain aspects of verb input on verb acquisition. It has been observed that the timing of a verb model affects children's learning of the verb, and also that the focus of the event to which the verb refers affects the argument structure children assign to the verb. The experiment reported here investigated the interaction between the timing of verb models and the focus of the events to which they refer. Thirty children aged from 2;3 to 3;6 heard two novel verbs, one movement focused and other result focused. Half heard the verbs before the event (impending condition) and half after it (completed condition). An interaction of verb timing and verb focus was found. The movement verb was learned better in the impending condition and the result verb in the completed condition. The contribution of this finding to the understanding of the processes involved in verb acquisition is considered.

97–540   Beck, Maria-Louise (U. of North Texas). Regular verbs, past tense and frequency: tracking down a potential source of NS/NNS competence differences. *Second Language Research* (London), **13**, 2 (1997), 93–115.

Earlier research indicates that adult second language (L2) learners have difficulties determining the relationship between obligatory verb-raising and verbal inflection; and this observation has led to the conclusion that Universal Grammar is not available to the adult L2 learner. The experiments reported here address a more parsimonious explanation for this observation, namely, that L2 competence includes a deficit that affects only the lexical or morphosyntactic mechanisms involved in verb-raising. Specifically, the studies examine one of two possible loci of this deficit and indicate that this possibility may be ruled out.

97–541   Bialystok, Ellen (York U.). The structure of age: in search of barriers to second language acquisition. *Second Language Research* (London), **13**, 2 (1997), 116–37.

This article examines recent evidence that has been offered to support the notion of a sensitive period for second language acquisition. An analysis of that research leaves several questions unresolved. Two small-scale studies are described which attempt to explore some of these issues. In both cases, it is found that the correspondence between language structures in the first and second language is the most important factor affecting acquisition. The age at which second language acquisitions begins is not a significant factor in either study, but the length of residence, indicating the amount of time spent speaking the second language, is significant in the second study. It is concluded that there is insufficient evidence to accept the claim that mastery of a second language is determined wholly, or even primarily, by maturational factors. Some suggestions are made for an alternative interpretation based on processing differences between older and younger language learners.

97–542   Davidson, Denise and others (Loyola U., Chicago). Monolingual and bilingual children's use of the mutual exclusivity constraint. *Journal of Child Language* (Cambridge), **24**, 1 (1997), 3–24.

The use of the mutual exclusivity constraint was examined in three-year-old and six-year-old children who were either monolingual in English ($N = 32$) or bilingual in English/Urdu ($N = 32$) or in English/Greek ($N = 32$). Three tests of the constraint were used: disambiguation, rejection, and restriction. On the disambiguation test, the mutual exclusivity bias was significantly more evident in five- and six-year-old monolingual children than in the same-age bilingual peers. Monolingual children were also more

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likely than bilingual children to reject a new name for a familiar object. However, using a restriction test, neither monolingual nor bilingual children readily accepted and restricted typical names for hybrid objects. Developmental differences were also found, as older (five- to six-year-old) monolingual children's responses on the tests were generally more consistent with the constraint than younger (three- to four-year-old) children's responses. Nevertheless, bilingual children did use the constraint, but not to the extent of monolingual children.

97–543   Santos Maldonado, Carmen (Edinburgh U.). Lexical processing in uneven bilinguals: an exploration of Spanish-English activation of form and meaning. *Edinburgh Working Papers in Applied Linguistics* (Edinburgh), **8** (1997), 76–97.

This article looks at the organisation of the bilingual mental lexicon. The first half briefly reviews relevant literature in bilingual research in relation to whether semantic information is language-specific or language-independent. Three major hypotheses are examined: the Shared Semantic Store, the Separate Semantic Store and the Shared-&-Separate Semantic Store. Other factors having an influence on the organisation of the bilingual lexicon are the degree of topological difference between two languages, the degree of dominance of one language over another and the demands imposed by the experimental tasks. The second part reports on a lexical decision experiment with repetition priming carried out with Spanish-English bilinguals. Four independent variables were looked at: language (Spanish and English), second language proficiency (low intermediate and advanced), degree of cognates (same and different) and repetition (repetition within languages, repetition between languages, and no repetition). Significant differences in reaction times were observed for all variables except cognates. Results are discussed in the context of recent studies. A line of research is proposed to examine activation of bilingual lexical items as a function of form and meaning combined.

97–544   Weist, Richard M. (SUNY Coll., Fredonia, NY) **and others**. The interaction of language and thought in children's language acquisition: a crosslinguistic study. *Journal of Child Language* (Cambridge), **24**, 1 (1997), 81–121.

This research investigated the potential interaction of conceptual representations and linguistic systems in the process of language acquisition. Language-thought interactions were studied in 80 American, 48 Finnish and 48 Polish pre-school children, with the focus on the conceptual and linguistic development of space and time. The conceptual tasks measured the transition from experiential to inferential knowledge of space/time representations. In the linguistic domain, comprehension and production tests evaluated the children's capacity to understand mono- and bi-refential location in space and time, the former involving a single referent object/event with intrinsic properties (e.g. *in/on* or past/non-past), and the latter requiring two or more referent objects/events and relative perspective (e.g. deictic *front/back* or *before/after*). The tests revealed significant changes between two and five years of age, and measures of conceptual development were correlated with measures of linguistic development. As spatial and temporal representations became more structured, children were able to move from mono- to bi-referential location. A comprehension test revealed an interaction of language by dimension. Finnish children found spatial distinctions, and Polish children temporal distinctions, relatively easy. This was expected on the basis of the relative complexity of the morpho-syntactic coding in the spatial and temporal systems of the two languages. However, the argument relating the timing of acquisition to the transparency *vs.* opacity of the linguistic systems was not supported by the English language comparison. Finally, the Finnish children were relatively better able to accomplish the spatial conceptual tasks than the Polish children, which is consistent with a developmental concept of linguistic relativity. In general, the research indicates that spatial and temporal linguistic systems and representational knowledge interact during* development with the influence occurring in both directions.

97–545   White, Lydia and others (McGill U.). The researcher gave the subject a test about himself: problems of ambiguity and preference in the investigation of reflexive binding. *Language Learning* (Cambridge, MA), **47**, 1 (1997), 145–72.

There are methodological differences in investigating second language (L2) learners' knowledge of reflexive binding, particularly in the case of potentially ambiguous sentences where the learner or native speaker may have a preference for one interpretation over the other. This paper reports the comparison of two truth-value judgment tasks, one involving stories and the other pictures. In both tasks contexts were provided for different interpretations of potentially ambiguous sentences. A variety of sentence types was tested, including monoclausal sentences with subject or object antecedents (ambiguous in English) and biclausal sentences with local or long-distance antecedents (ambiguous in Japanese). Participants were intermediate-level Japanese-speaking and French-speaking learners of English as a second language (ESL), as well as native speaker controls. The story task yielded a significantly higher proportion of correct acceptances of object antecedents for reflexives, both in the case of ESL learners and native speakers. The results suggest that certain tasks can lead to an underestimation of learners' L2 competence, and that caution must be exercised in making assumptions about the nature of the interlanguage grammar on the basis of single tasks.

Sociolinguistics

97–546   Ayari, Salah (Coll. of Ed., Peik Hall, Minneapolis). Diglossia and illiteracy in the Arab world. *Language, Culture and Curriculum* (Clevedon), **9**, 3 (1996), 243–53.

This paper examines the negative impact of the linguistic situation in the Arab world, characterised as it is by the phenomenon of diglossia, on Arab children's ability to acquire reading and writing skills in Arabic; and hence on their academic attainment in general. Specific obstacles posed by contemporary Arabic diglossia to the acquisition of literacy are discussed, including the attitudes of parents and teachers to the colloquial and standard forms of Arabic. Some remedies are suggested. These include modification of the Arabic script, and improving the status of Arabic as a language of instruction in the schools, where it is often replaced by English or French. Above all, the paper emphasises the necessity to expose young children to literary Arabic, by means such as story reading to preschoolers, so that it is not, in effect, another language that they have to learn as soon as they enter school.

97–547   Boothe, Ken (Summer Inst. of Lings.) **and Walker, Roland** (U. of Texas, Arlington). Mother tongue education in Ethiopia: from policy to implementation. *Language Problems and Language Planning* (Amsterdam), **21**, 1 (1997), 1–19.

In spite of limited financial and human resources, Ethiopia is moving rapidly from policy-making to implementation in the provision of mother tongue education (MTE) for all its people within a short period of time. This article is a participant observer's description of the first three years of Ethiopia's bold programme for MTE, focusing on the process for developing mother tongue materials and on the effectiveness of the programme. For decades, Ethiopia's ethnic minorities were dominated by the emperors' Amharic-only policies for formal primary education. During the ensuing 17 years of socialism, the mother tongue was only allowed for programmes involving adult literacy. Since 1991, however, the Transitional Government has given ethnic groups the right to promote their cultures and develop their languages for primary education; and has also spent significant resources to facilitate MTE for all ethnic groups that desire it. Developing curricula and materials are major hurdles for nations with many languages who desire to offer universal MTE. In partnership with the local people and nongovernmental organisations, the government of Ethiopia has already brought hundreds of schoolteachers together to develop mother tongue materials for grades one through six, in each subject area, for the first eight of their more than 50 mother tongues. Language standardisation and orthography development have gone on concurrently, all at a rapid pace.

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