

IASCL - Child Language Bulletin - Vol 23, No 1: May 2003

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FROM INFO-CHILDES

NEW LANGUAGE CORPORA

The Fernández Vázquez- Aguado Alonso corpus

Marta Fernández Vázquez (Pamplona) and Gerardo Aguado Alonso (Pamplona) have recently contributed a large corpus of Spanish child language data to CHILDES. The corpus follows 50 children at three time periods (3;0, 3;6, and 4;0) in a set of structured situations. The corpus is called fernaguado.zip and is available at the following URL: <https://childes.talkbank.org/data/romance/spanish>

Many thanks to Marta and Javier for this excellent contribution.

The Yip-Matthews corpus

The third instalment of the Yip-Matthews corpus on three Cantonese-English children in Hong Kong is now available on CHILDES at <https://childes.talkbank.org/media/audlinked/YipMatthews/>. This new corpus, the Kathryn corpus, has a full set of files in both primarily English and primarily Cantonese linked to the audio.

The full documentation for this fascinating new data set can be found at the following

URL: <https://chilides.talkbank.org/media/audlinked/YipMatthews/Kathryn/OKathryn.doc>.

RESEARCH DATABASE ON DUTCH CHILD LANGUAGE

The Dutch child language organization 'NET-werk' maintains an updated database of ongoing research projects at the following URL: <http://cnts.uia.ac.be/NET>

FILM DATABASE

Brian MacWhinney has placed a summary of the info-chilides discussion of films regarding child language, language, and language learning at the following URL: <https://chilides.talkbank.org/html/tips.html> (sixth item).

If you have any other films to add to this list, please contact Brian at macw@cmu.edu and he will add your entry.

WUGS ON-LINE

Jean Berko Gleason has kindly sent us her original copies of the famous set of 27 wug pictures from Berko, J. (1958) The child's learning of English morphology. *Word*, 14,150-177.

The jpeg versions of these pictures are not available for non-commercial use from <https://chilides.talkbank.org/topics/>.

Many thanks to Jean for this nice contribution.

AN INTERVIEW WITH EVE CLARK

Ludovica Serratrice

Professor Eve Clark is Chair of the Department of Linguistics at Stanford University. She has worked extensively on lexical acquisition, on principles of word formation, and on semantic and pragmatic issues from a cross-linguistic perspective. Her latest book First Language Acquisition recently published by Cambridge University Press, presents a comprehensive overview of the mechanisms underlying language acquisition and language use. In this interview Professor Clark talks about the state of the field and its future.

Ludovica Serratrice: *You obtained your first degree in French Language and Literature and you then went on to do a PhD in Linguistics on children's description of events in time. What prompted you to become a linguist specializing in language acquisition?*

Eve Clark: I moved to Linguistics largely because, when I finished my degree in French, I wasn't really interested in doing literary criticism or in taking a job in the Foreign Office (those appeared to be my two main options at the time) -- and I had been fascinated by a phonetics course I'd taken earlier, so I decided to find out more about linguistics.

Once I did that, I became very interested in how language might develop, and, in particular how young children managed to acquire complex sentence structures, with the kinds of embedding found in temporal adverbial clauses, so for my dissertation, I worked on how children talked about sequences of events, related in time -- that is, how they acquired the necessary syntax for doing this. Then, later, I also did some research on the semantics of conjunctions like 'before' and 'after'.

L.S.: *Who have been your greatest influences academically?*

E.C.: In first place, I must put John Lyons: he taught me an immense amount about linguistics and about being a scholar. I count myself very fortunate to have had him as my supervisor for the Ph.D.

Another person I found inspiring both as a researcher and as a writer was Roger Brown, and he was always very generous in his responses to younger people entering the field. The third person who had a profound influence on the direction I ended up taking was Joseph Greenberg, who gave me free rein to work on acquisition while I was a member of his Universals project just after I finished my Ph.D.

L.S.: *Your latest book "First Language Acquisition" is a very comprehensive textbook written with a student audience in mind. How have your experiences as a teacher and as a researcher influenced each other in the course of your career?*

E.C.: I have always found that I understand arguments much better after I've had to explain them to someone else, so teaching has always been important to me in assessing ideas and theories, and in working out how best to relate new findings to what is already in the field. Also, one great pleasure of teaching is getting students interested in research that they begin to see both the fascination and the complexity of studying language in general, and first language acquisition in particular. And seminar discussions often reveal problems and issues in particular studies that one may not notice on first reading. So teaching often helps one understand the issues more clearly within particular approaches as well as in the field as a whole.

Doing research in acquisition as well as in lexical structure more generally keeps me very involved from an interdisciplinary point of view: one needs to keep track of a lot of the findings in cognitive and perceptual development, attention, memory, social development, and theory-of-mind to understand the broader picture for language acquisition. And that has been important both for the kind of research I do (a broad mix of observational and experimental studies) and the kinds of questions I would identify as critical. Here, of course, I'd put the acquisition of meaning first, and that demands attention to the pragmatics of language use common

to adults and children, attention to the relevant perceptual and cognitive skills that are also developing along with language; attention also to the role of learning (just what has to be learnt and evidence for learning along the way), and, more precisely, what children 'get' from the language spoken to them in terms of content as well as form. Meaning always spills over--from the lexicon to constructions, and from language per se to non-linguistic phenomena like gesture, stance, and gaze. So one ends up with a much broader perspective on how children communicate at each stage, and also a broader perspective on how adults do too.

L.S.: How would you characterise your theoretical and methodological approach to linguistics and language acquisition?

E.C.: I am interested in what develops and how this happens. So I am necessarily interested in questions of learning, learning mechanisms (specialised or not), and the full range of claims about innateness in relation to language. Theoretically, I try to combine insights from pragmatics and social development with those from perceptual and cognitive development, but I have not adhered to any one particular account of syntax, for example, since the kinds of predictions made by any one account are both very complex theoretically--just what is the relation between a static account of a product [a set of constructions, say, in some language] and a dynamic, developing process? At the moment, for example, I am working on how adults and children achieve a joint locus of attention from which they can each add new information that can then be grounded (made part of the common ground on that occasion) so they can take part in conversational exchanges. Joint attention and the identification of a joint locus of that attention is a complicated matter to capture, and essential for any kind of communication. In all this, pragmatics is critical, yet it is typically either underestimated or ignored still in a lot of psycholinguistic research.

In my own research, I always find it useful to combine longitudinal observation of children's development, where one necessarily focuses more on language production, with cross-sectional experimental studies, where one can look in detail at specific questions with denser data from much larger numbers of children. Experimental studies also allow one to ask questions about both production and comprehension, in order to untangle some of the details that contribute to complexity and to order of acquisition -- in lexical acquisition, in word-formation, in inflectional morphology, in syntactic constructions, and in the construction of genres and of registers for different occasions and different addressees.

L.S.: What is your perception of the current state of language acquisition studies? Do you see a way in which generative and constructivist approaches can be reconciled?

E.C.: My sense here is that there is rather a gulf between generative and constructivist approaches to first language acquisition. First of all, the goals of the two kinds of inquiry are very different. Broadly speaking, generativist approaches tend to be more concerned with specific predictions from one version of syntax, say, and with just when children show that they 'know' whatever it is. Constructivists, on the other hand, are very

concerned with what develops and hence all the steps along the way, including all the errors of commission and omission observable during acquisition. So one could say that generativists are concerned with demonstrating that children (in some sense) have the adult system from the start, and constructivists are concerned with just how children build up to the adult system.

These two approaches also differ greatly in what counts as data and how they analyse data. Generativists don't often look outside their own framework for alternative explanations of their findings, and they sometimes rely on rather small numbers of observations. But it is important to look at all the data, and to look at different possible explanations, especially in dealing with developmental changes. If one stops with one specific approach, one can easily overlook critical alternative explanations. At the same time, theory is central because it helps one ask precise questions, and make precise predictions. Perhaps, though, we should think carefully before assuming that theories for one domain (the structure of a language, say) can necessarily be applied to another domain - the process of acquiring a language from scratch. And in making assumptions about process, we need to weigh what evidence might be relevant to testing and validating any assumptions, rather than simply setting them up as matters of belief.

L.S.: *What do you consider the major developments in the field over the last thirty years?*

E.C.: Let me just list a few --

Child-directed speech: extensive research on the forms of input, and the absence of errors in such input addressed to very young children, were critical in showing that some early assumptions about acquisition were unfounded. More recently, there has been more research on the content of child-directed speech as well, where we start to see what kinds of information about meaning and usage adults offer young children in the course of conversation.

Phonological representations: research on what children represent for comprehension (they need to recognise words and expressions the next time, from a range of speakers) compared to what they represent for production, whether the production of a single word, a phrase, or a longer utterance. Here, motor development and such factors in planning as metrical structure play major roles. This is an area where we have learnt an immense amount in the last few decades, both about asymmetries in representations for comprehension vs. production, and about the process of production itself, and how it changes over time for young children as they build up a larger stock of linguistic forms.

Pragmatics and meaning: There is a growing movement to take account of pragmatic factors in meaning development in the lexicon as well in research on language use in acquisition. Among other things, this should lead to more experiments that are pragmatically natural and so less likely to elicit specialised strategies for responding. Research on pragmatics is also yielding new accounts of what's involved in language, in

conversational structure, and in interaction more generally. And pragmatics offers a framework for looking at non-linguistic as well as linguistic dimensions of communication.

Dense corpora: Intense sampling of child language over short periods of time, combined with fine-grained analyses of what both what children produce and what they hear from the adults talking to them, is beginning to offer new insights into how long it actually takes children to make generalizations about inflections and constructions, and how broad in scope those generalizations are. (Earlier research on syntax and morphology appear to have over-estimated here.)

L.S.: *How do you see the future of language acquisition research?*

E.C.: I think we need more research on pragmatics in language acquisition at the level of word and utterance meanings.

We also need more research on the acquisition of syntax, with close attention not only to the forms children use at different stages, but also the functions these forms are assigned (especially where this may differ from child to adult), and to the registers and genres in which specific forms predominate; that is, more research on more complex constructions and on exactly how these constructions are used.

And there are so many interesting questions that have yet to be asked, on almost every topic.

L.S.: *What are your current and future research plans?*

E.C.: I am working now on three main topics: first, on the kinds of inferences children can make about the meanings of unfamiliar words. There, I have been analysing the inferences that are possible, given what adults say as they offer new words, and then designing experimental studies in which to test out what can be seen in the course of natural interactions.

Second, I am working on grounding in conversation, and just how new information gets added to common ground. This is something we take for granted in adult-adult exchanges most of the time, and we therefore don't notice just how it is done. So I am analysing how adults manage this with one- and two-year-olds, the role played by attention (what counts as joint attention), and how one establishes joint attention in talking to a one-year-old. This has led me to focus on how gesture and gaze are related to adult speech to children, and the contributions each makes in any adult-child (and adult-adult) exchange.

Third, I have been working for some years on the general information about language use adults provide when they are talking to children. This can take the form of what I've called pragmatic directions, often explicit directions on when and how to talk appropriately and when to be quiet). But these also come in more subtle form, such as adult reformulations of children's errors, where the reformulations present the conventional

adult with ways of saying what the child seems to mean, and present children with a consistent source of negative evidence -- evidence that they have made an error and just what the error is. Adults reformulate via side sequences and embedded corrections, both everyday elements in conversation, and so not disruptive to the general goals of an exchange. Just as with the work on children's inferences about unfamiliar meanings, this research too depends on the pragmatics of what follows what within conversational exchanges.

L.S.: Professor Clark, thank you very much for your time.

CONFERENCE REPORT

The Fourth International Symposium on Bilingualism, Arizona State University, April 30-May 3, 2003

Simona Montanari

University of Southern California

This year marked the *Fourth International Symposium on Bilingualism (ISB4)*, which was held at Arizona State University between April 30 and May 3. The symposium, widely regarded as “the premier international forum for the discussion and dissemination of research on bilingualism,” was a real success: scholars from nearly fifty countries presented their work in plenary sessions, paper and poster presentations, and workshops, and in the final count, 653 people registered at the event.

This year’s symposium featured a vast program of talks on bilingual language acquisition, attracting some of the most visible members in the field. Some session titles included “Bilingual child language acquisition and syntax;” “Syntax, acquisition and language contact;” “Morphology and phonology in child bilingualism;” “Early mixes: is there a pre-grammatical stage in bilingual language development?;” “Studies of pre-verbal dual language learning;” “Exploring the flexibility of pre-school children’s language choice;” “Discourse, pragmatics and proficiency in bilingual children” etc. This report is not an attempt to describe all these sessions; rather, it is an overview of the work presented in two distinct areas: syntactic development, and pre-verbal learning.

The conference opened with a keynote address by Fred Genesee (McGill University) on the topic “Bilingual acquisition: Exploring the limits of the language faculty.” Genesee reviewed and discussed the growing body of recent research on language acquisition in simultaneous bilingual infants, with a special focus on children’s ability to differentiate their languages both pre- and post-verbally. Current evidence from these studies, as shown by Genesee, clearly disconfirms the early view that the human capacity to learn language is challenged by dual or multiple language exposure; rather, recent findings portray a developing infant who has all the capacities to differentiate his/her languages from very early on, and thus to acquire two or more languages simultaneously.

Genesee's talk was followed by a session on bilingual child language acquisition and syntax, which featured four paper presentations by renowned investigators in the field. Shanley Allen (Boston University), in collaboration with Fred Genesee, Sarah Fish (Boston University), Elizabeth Zwanziger (Boston University), and Martha Crago (McGill University), presented the first paper titled "Code-mixing in child Inuktitut-English bilinguals: Nonce borrowing as strategy?" The authors investigated the nature of and possible motivation for seeming violations of linguistic constraints in the code-mixing of six English-Inuktitut bilingual children aged 1;8-3;9. While previous research focused solely on mixed utterances, new analyses were performed both on mixed and non-mixed utterances, and the results that emerged indicated that, once the monolingual utterances were taken into account, the percentage of mixing, and hence of constraint violation, was relatively small. Moreover, new analyses suggested that such violations could be accounted for by taking into consideration the strategy of nonce borrowing as possibly a means to avoid constraint violations.

The second paper, "Transfer at the syntax-pragmatics interface: The case of overt subjects," was presented by Ludovica Serratrice (University of Manchester). Serratrice examined subject realization in the spontaneous Italian production of an English-Italian bilingual child aged 1;11-4;6 (MLUw 1.5->4.0), and in six monolingual Italian children aged 1;7-3;3 (MLUw 1.3->4.0). The results indicated that the bilingual child differed from the monolinguals in that he used a number of pragmatically inappropriate third person singular subject pronouns when null subjects were normally required. These findings, as the author suggested, can be interpreted as evidence that cross-language influence in simultaneous bilingual acquisition can occur when syntactic constraints contrast with, and thus override, pragmatic constraints.

Johanne Paradis (University of Alberta), in collaboration with Martha Crago, Fred Genesee, and Mabel Rice (University of Kansas) presented the third paper titled "Does bilingualism put additional limits on language learning for children who have SLI?" This study examined the production of specific morphosyntactic elements by French-English simultaneous bilingual children with SLI with respect to monolingual French- and English-speaking peers with SLI. The goal was to investigate whether the bilingual children exhibited more pronounced deficits than their affected monolingual peers in each language. The findings revealed that the bilinguals did not have more difficulty with the morphemes under study than their monolingual age mates, suggesting that bilingualism is not an impediment to the acquisition of morpho-syntax for children with SLI.

Finally, the last paper in this session, "Root infinitives in the spontaneous speech of two bilingual children: evidence for separate grammatical systems," was presented by Julia Berger-Morales, Manola Salustri, and Jill Gilkerson (all from the University of California, Los Angeles). Their research reported on the production of root infinitives in the speech of two bilingual children, one simultaneously exposed to German and Italian, and the other to English and Spanish. Root infinitives are argued to occur only in the production of children acquiring languages that lack rich syntactic agreement (such as Germanic languages), but not acquiring languages such as Spanish and Italian. Both children in this study were found to produce root infinitives in only one of their

languages (i.e. German and English), thus providing evidence for the claim that they were developing separate grammatical systems.

While the above studies focused on production data from children aged two-years or older, the colloquium titled “Studies of pre-verbal dual language learners” presented research on speech processing/language production in bilingual-to-be infants. The goal of this colloquium was to investigate the capacity of pre-verbal infants to process dual language input in language-specific ways, and to examine the developmental patterns of dual language acquisition in the pre-verbal stage.

The first paper in this colloquium, “Developmental changes in the discrimination of vowel contrasts in bilingual infants” was presented by Laura Bosch and Núria Sebastián-Gallés (University of Barcelona). By testing 4-, 8-, and 12-month-old monolingual and bilingual infants with a familiarization-preference procedure on three different vowel contrasts [/e/ - /o/; /o/ - /u/; /e/ - /u/], the authors aimed at analyzing (i) the impact of bilingual exposure on the perception of native-sound contrasts, and (ii) the early building of language-specific contrastive categories. Interestingly, the results yielded unpredictable patterns for the bilinguals, challenging the view that mere exposure is sufficient for the child to maintain the capacity to perceive many different phonetic contrasts as in the early months of life.

Megha Sundara and Linda Polka (McGill University) presented the second paper in this session on “Word segmentation in bilingual infants acquiring two rhythmically different languages.” While studies on monolingual children have shown that they can segment bi-syllabic words that exhibit the same stress pattern as their native language but fail to segment bi-syllables in rhythmically different languages, the present research revealed that infants raised bilingually in two rhythmically different languages were able to segment bi-syllabic words in these two languages at the same age as their monolingual peers. These results, as argued by the authors, portray an infant that has all the capacities for language acquisition in a multilingual context.

The next paper, “Bilingual early word learner’s ability to access phonetic detail in word forms,” was presented by Christopher T. Fennell, in collaboration with Linda Polka, and Janet F. Werker, (all from the University of British Columbia). The authors’ previous research has shown that 17- and 20-month-old infants make use of their fine phonetic discrimination abilities when acquiring new words; however, the same is not true for 14-month-old infants, who, as “novice word learners,” need to devote all their cognitive resources to the word learning task at the expense of attending to new words’ fine phonetic detail. The present study, which extended the same work to bilinguals, indicated that the 17-month-old bilingual infants did not make use of their fine phonetic discrimination abilities when acquiring new words as their monolingual peers; rather this ability appeared with the 20-month-old children. The authors interpret these results as adaptive behavior: infants’ longer period of inattention to phonetic detail might help them quickly learn new words despite the more demanding nature of learning vocabulary in two languages.

B. Maneva and Fred Genesse (McGill University) presented the last paper in this colloquium, "A case study of babbling in bilingual first language acquisition." Previous research with monolingual children has shown that children's babbling start to assume the features of the target language around 10-11 months of age. In the present investigation, the babbling of a child simultaneously exposed to French and English from birth was recorded from age 10 to 15 months in different language contexts. Analyses of utterance and syllable structure, temporal organization, and vowel and consonant inventories of the child's babbling across language contexts were compared and the results revealed that the babbling was more French-like when the child was "interacting" in the French context, while it had more English features in the English context. This is once again evidence, as argued by the authors, that differentiation in speech production emerges early on, even before the production of first words.

In sum, ISB4 saw this year some extremely diverse and very high quality research by colleagues spanning the globe. As the chair of the organizing committee Jeff MacSwan put it in his closing remarks: "although it has only now completed its fourth iteration, ISB is without a doubt the premier scholarly conference on bilingualism worldwide."

ISB5 will take place at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona in 2005, where Melissa Greer Moyer will serve as the chair of the organizing committee. See you all there!

BOOK NOTICES

Tomasello, Michael (2003).

Constructing a Language. Harvard University Press

Froude, Jenny (2003).

Making Sense in Sign. A Lifeline for a Deaf Child. Multilingual Matters.

FORTHCOMING CONFERENCES

The Fifth Annual Conference of the Japanese Society for Language Sciences (JSLS 2003)

July 5-6 2003, Takigawa Memorial Hall, Kobe University

<http://cow.lang.nagoya-u.ac.jp/jsls/2003/conf-e.htm>

The 2003 Annual Child Phonology Conference

July 1-4 2003, University of British Columbia Vancouver, BC, Canada.

<http://www.linguistics.ubc.ca/CHPHON2003/>

Child Language Seminar

July 9-11 2003, University of Newcastle upon Tyne, England

<http://cls.visitnewcastlegateshead.com>

Congreso Internacional de Psicología

July 13-18th, Lima, Peru

<http://www.sip2003.org>

The 10th GALA conference (Generative Approaches to Language Acquisition)

September 4-6 2003, UiL-OTS/Utrecht University, The Netherlands. The general conference will be preceded by two workshops on Thursday morning, a 'Learnability Hierarchies and Input' workshop and a 'Child L2 Acquisition' workshop.

http://www.uilots.let.uu.nl/conferences/Gala/gala_2003_homepage.htm

Oral Language of School Children: Acquisition, Teaching, Remediation

October 23-25 2003, Institut Universitaire de Formation des Maîtres de l'Académie de Grenoble (I.U.F.M.) 30 Avenue Marcellin Berthelot, F-38100, Grenoble, France.

Email: oral2003@grenoble.iufm.fr

VIII Congreso de la Sociedad Latinoamericana de Neuropsicología (SLAN)

October 8-11, Montreal, Canada

<http://www.criugm.qc.ca/slan>

The 28th Annual Boston University Conference on Language Development

October 31-November 1-2, Boston University

<http://www.bu.edu/linguistics/APPLIED/BUCLD/>

American Association of Speech, Language and Hearing Annual Convention, ASHA

November 13-16, 2003, Chicago, USA

<http://www.asha.org>

RECENT PHD THESES

Cameron-Faulkner, Thea (2002).

The role of input in the early stages of language development. A usage-based account.

University of Manchester.

Email: t.cameron@man.ac.uk

Hick, Rachel F. (2003).

Language and memory development in children with Down syndrome and children with specific language impairment.

University of Manchester.

Email: r.f.hick@man.ac.uk

Joseph, Kate L. (2003).

Inflection machines or imitation machines?: Early morphological development in children with Specific Language Impairment and younger typically developing children.

University of Manchester.

Email: k.joseph@man.ac.uk

IASCL DONATION DRIVE

The IASCL is a worldwide organisation, which means that it aims to serve child language researchers in all countries of the world. Child language research is important everywhere, both from a theoretical perspective (cf. for instance the significance of cross-linguistic evidence) and from a more applied point of view (cf. for instance the need for good description to allow for the assessment of language learning problems).

Unfortunately financial considerations are often a hindrance to the development of scientific disciplines in countries with severe economic problems. The IASCL has always been supportive of would-be IASCL members working in such countries by waiving membership fees for them.

IASCL funds are limited, though. In the past, donations from regular IASCL members have been very helpful in supporting colleagues from economically disadvantaged countries. In order to continue offering that support, your donations are very welcome indeed. Each donation, whatever the amount, will be acknowledged by a receipt signed by the IASCL Treasurer (useful perhaps for tax purposes). You may send donations in either pounds sterling or American dollars.

(1) Cheques in pounds sterling payable to IASCL can be sent to:

Dr Anna Theakston

IASCL Treasurer

University of Manchester

Department of Psychology

Oxford Road

Manchester M13 9PL

UK

Cash payments in pounds sterling can also be made by prior arrangement with Dr Theakston (theaksto@fs1.fse.man.ac.uk) at the above address.

(2) For American dollar amounts, please send your donations to:

Prof. Judith Becker Bryant
IASCL Assistant Treasurer
Department of Psychology, PCD 4118G
University of South Florida
Tampa, FL 33620-7200
U.S.A.

The IASCL as a whole will be sure to benefit from the more diversified nature of its membership as a result of your donations. Many thanks in advance!

Anna Theakston, IASCL Treasurer
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FROM THE EDITOR

The **Child Language Bulletin** is the newsletter of the International Association for the Study of Child Language. It is distributed free to all members of IASCL and it is published twice a year.

The Bulletin is available on the IASCL Web page <http://iascl-www.uia.ac.be> and all members of the association will receive an e- email message each time a new issue of the Bulletin is published. A hard copy of the Bulletin will only be sent to those members who ask for it by sending a message to the editor.

I encourage members to submit news and information that might be relevant to our research community. I would especially like to hear from doctoral students on new theses being completed. They are often a wonderful source of new data and new ideas that are not always easily accessible before publication.

Please do send any items to the address below. I am looking forward to your submissions!

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