
Related research and language study

Psycholinguistics

97–390 Balcom, Patricia (Moncton U.). Why is this happened? Passive morphology and unaccusativity. *Second Language Research* (London), **13**, 1 (1997), 1–9.

Zobl discussed inappropriate passive morphology ('be' and the past participle) in the English writing of second language learners, linking its occurrence to the class of unaccusative verbs and proposing that learners subsume unaccusatives under the syntactic rule for passive formation. The research reported here supports and amplifies Zobl's proposal, based on a grammaticality judgement task and a controlled production task containing verbs from a variety of sub-

classes of unaccusatives. The tasks were administered to first-language Chinese university students learning English and a control group of English native speakers. Results show that subjects both used and judged as grammatical inappropriate passive morphology, with all verbs falling under the rubric of unaccusativity. The article concludes with linguistic representations which maintain Zobl's insights but are consistent with current theories of argument structure.

97–391 Byrne, Brian (U. of New England). The learnability of the alphabetic principle: children's initial hypotheses about how print represents spoken language. *Applied Psycholinguistics* (Cambridge), **17**, 4 (1996), 401–26.

This research examines the hypotheses about how print represents the speech that preliterate children select when they receive input compatible with several such hypotheses. In Experiment 1, preschoolers were taught to read *hat* and *hats* and *book* and *books*. Then, in generalisation tests, they were probed for what they had learned about the letter *s*. All of the children were able to transfer to other plurals, but only those who knew the sound of the letter *s* prior to the experiment were able to decide, for example, that *bus* said 'bus' and not 'bug'. The failure to detect the phonemic value of *s* on the part of alphabetically naive children was replicated in Experiments 2, 3, and 4, which instituted a variety of controls. In Experiment 5, it was found that, although preschoolers who had been taught to read pairs of words distinguished by the comparative affix *er* (such as

small/smaller) were able to generalise to other comparatives (e.g. *mean/meaner*), they could not generalise to pairs where *er* had no morphemic value (e.g. *corn/corner*). A similar failure to detect the syllabic, as compared with the morphemic, status of the superlative affix *est* was found in Experiment 6. Overall, the results indicate that most preliterate children fail to select phonologically based hypotheses, even when these are available in the input. Instead, they focus on morphonology and/or semantic aspects of words' referents. The research is couched in terms of the Learnability Theory, which provides a convenient framework for considering a series of interrelated questions about the acquisition of literacy. In particular, it is argued that, if the data available to the child include the pronunciation of written words, the alphabetic principle may be unlearnable.

97–392 Finney, Malcolm A. (U. of Ottawa). Markedness, operator movement and discourse effects in the acquisition of purpose clause constructions in a second language. *Second Language Research* (London), **13**, 1 (1997), 10–33.

This article appraises the effects of gap position and discourse information in the acquisition of purpose clause constructions (PCs) by adult Francophones learning English as a second language (L2). First language acquisition studies reveal children having little difficulty interpreting a PC with a subject gap only (SPC), while a PC with an object gap (OPC) has been problematic to interpret. This may be the result of the number of syntactic operations – including operator movement – involved in its derivation, plus lexically specified restrictions on the matrix verb. There are grounds for hypothesising a late emergence of OPCs in English for French speakers. They

are not allowed in French and, in addition to lexical restrictions associated with the choice of matrix verb, are marked semantically and typologically; an OPC with a prepositional object gap is additionally syntactically marked. This may thus result in the late acquisition of OPCs relative to SPCs. An additional hypothesis addresses whether L2 learners are adept at using discourse clues to interpret syntactic structure. Results indicate initial difficulty interpreting only PCs with prepositional object gaps, providing support for the hypothesis that syntactically (structurally) marked constructions may create initial learning difficulty in L2 acquisition.

97-393 Genesee, Fred, Boivin, Isabelle and Nicoladis, Elena (McGill U.). Talking with strangers: a study of bilingual children's communicative competence. *Applied Psycholinguistics* (Cambridge), **17**, 4 (1996), 427-42.

An important component of the communicative competence of proficient bilinguals is the ability to use each of their languages differentially and appropriately according to relevant characteristics of the interlocutors and communicative situations. The research reported here examined the communicative competence of four young children (average age of 2;2 average Mean Length of Utterance (MLU) of 1.56) who were acquiring English and French simultaneously in the home. The children were observed using their languages with monolingual strangers and with their bilingual parents. Specifically, the chil-

dren's use of English-only, French-only, and mixed (English and French) utterances with the strangers during naturalistic play situations was compared with patterns of use with their parents, also during play sessions. It was found that all of the children made some accommodations that could be linked to the monolingualism of the stranger; some of the children were more accommodating than others. The results are discussed in terms of young bilingual children's ability to modify their language on-line in response to the particular language characteristics of their interlocutors.

97-394 Hickmann, Maya (U. Rene Descartes, Paris) **and others**. The marking of new information in children's narratives: a comparison of English, French, German and Mandarin Chinese. *Journal of Child Language* (Cambridge), **23**, 3 (1996), 591-619.

This study examines children's uses of nominal determiners ('local markings') and utterance structure ('global markings') to introduce new referents. Two narratives were elicited from pre-schoolers, 7-year-olds, 10-year-olds, and adults in English (N=80), French (N=40), German (N=40), and Chinese (N=40). Given typological differences (e.g. richness of morphology), these languages rely differentially on local vs. global devices to mark newness: postverbal position is obligatory in Chinese (determiners optional), indefinite determiners in the other languages (position optional). Three findings recur across languages: obligatory newness markings emerge late (7-year-olds); local markings emerge

first, including Chinese optional ones; local and global markings are strongly related. Crosslinguistic differences also occur: English-speaking pre-schoolers use local markings least frequently; until adult age global markings are rare in English, not contrastive in German and not as frequent in Chinese as in French, despite obligatoriness. It is concluded that three factors determine acquisition: (1) universal discourse factors governing information flow; (2) cognitive factors resulting from the greater functional complexity of global markings; (3) language-specific factors related to how different systems map both grammatical and discourse functions onto forms.

97-395 Martin, Deirdre (Birmingham U.) **and others**. Phonological awareness in Panjabi/English children with phonological difficulties. *Child Language Teaching and Therapy* (London), **13**, 1 (1997), 59-72.

This paper reports the performance on phonological awareness tasks across both languages of four children (aged 6-8), bilingual in Panjabi and English, three of whom have phonological difficulties. The child without difficulties accesses, retrieves and manipulates phonological representations across both languages, but not at ceiling level, despite being

6 years of age. The other children show difficulties in distinct ways, throwing more light on the nature of their phonological development, with implications for therapy intervention. Links between their phonological difficulties and literacy development in English are established; and a wider study on bilingual phonological awareness is recommended.

97-396 McQuillan, Jeff (American Lang. Inst., USC, Los Angeles). Reading, language acquisition, and the 'Din in the head': involuntary mental rehearsal in the first language. *ITL* (Louvain, Belgium), **113-4** (1996), 305-20.

The phenomenon of involuntary mental rehearsal or 'Din in the head' has been associated by researchers with second language (L2) acquisition, primarily

with beginning learners. This study claims to provide new evidence for Din in association with the acquisition of new linguistic elements from a differ-

ent population of language acquirers, advanced first language readers. The subjects were four adults who read frequently for pleasure, often reading literature in their native language considered difficult or above a 'popular' level. It is suggested that the results lend support to the claims made by Krashen concerning

the nature of first (L1) and second language acquisition, and indicate a connection between acquisition and the perceived pleasure of the Din phenomenon. Possible implications for the selection of L1 and L2 classroom activities are discussed.

97-397 Murphy, Victoria A. (U. of Hertfordshire). The effect of modality on a grammaticality judgement task. *Second Language Research* (London), **13**, 1 (1997), 34-65.

Typical experiments investigating the accessibility and/or role of principles of Universal Grammar (UG) in adult second language acquisition (SLA) use a written grammaticality judgement (GJ) task to infer knowledge of principles of UG. This investigation examined whether subjects would judge sentences differently in the aural modality from the visual. It was hypothesised that subjects in the aural condition would be less accurate and slower at judging sentences than subjects in the visual condition. Four language groups were tested: ESL (English second language), FSL (French second language), L1.E (English first language) and L1.F (French first language). Subjects were assigned to either an aural or a visual condition. The target sentences presented to the subjects were declarative sentences involving

embedded questions, as well as ungrammatical *wh*-questions which violated Subjacency. The presentation times for all sentences were matched across conditions. Accuracy and reaction time to grammaticality judgement were measured. The hypothesis that subjects would be slower and less accurate in the aural condition than the visual one was supported. Furthermore, subjects were less accurate and slower to judge violations of Subjacency than other sentences, in both modalities. The detrimental effects of the auditory task on judgements were most pronounced for the L2 learners. These results are discussed in the context of the informativeness and validity of outcomes derived from GJ tasks, and the ways in which they are presented.

97-398 Muysken, Pieter, Kook, Hetty (U. of Amsterdam) and **Vedder, Paul** (Leiden U.). Papiamento/Dutch code switching in bilingual parent-child reading. *Applied Psycholinguistics* (Cambridge), **17**, 4 (1996), 485-505.

Code-switching between Papiamento and Dutch was studied in bilingual parent-child reading sessions in Antillian migrant families (who were to some extent bilingual in Papiamento and Dutch) in the Netherlands. Mothers were asked to read three picture books to the child; one in Dutch, one in Papiamento, and one without text. The code-switching in the data is studied from three perspectives: its relation to bilingual competence, its structural properties, and the implications for language change through lexical borrowing. The data confirmed the results of earlier studies, which found that intimate code-switching within the clause is

characteristic of fluent bilinguals. In the present study, this held in particular for knowledge of Papiamento. Structurally, the type of code-switching encountered was predominantly insertional (with Papiamento as the dominant language), thus conforming to the constraints proposed for this type of switching. The single Dutch words that were frequently inserted into Papiamento utterances by the mothers could easily be interpreted by the child as Papiamento and are likely to become borrowings in the next generation. The article concludes with some remarks about the functions of code-switching in the data.

97-399 O'Gorman, Elizabeth. An investigation of the mental lexicon of second language learners. *Teanga* (Dublin), **16** (1996), 15-31.

A model of storage and retrieval systems in the mental lexicon of second language (L2) learners would assist vocabulary teaching and learning. In order to broaden understanding of the structure of the L2 lexicon in Hong Kong learners of English, and to

compare it with that of the first language (L1) lexicon, an investigation was carried out using a word association test in both L1 (Chinese) and L2. Results showed that responses in the L1 tended to converge (i.e. there was a marked similarity between

them), whilst L2 responses tended to diverge; that the associative links between words were semantically dissimilar in L1 and L2; and that the prompt words which elicited high frequency responses in L1 were dissimilar to those in L2. These findings suggest that there is no common semantic space and similar links underlying the vocabulary items of the L1 and L2, and thus do not support the common

underlying proficiency model. The idea that the L2 learner's lexicon will increasingly mirror that of the L1 native speaker as proficiency advances is questioned. The author suggests that links formed in the L2 lexicon may be specific to the learning situation and the learner's culture, and that different languages produce different storage and retrieval systems.

97-400 Sasaki, Yoshinori (U. of New South Wales). Material and presentation condition effects on sentence interpretation task performance: methodological examinations of the competition experiment. *Second Language Research* (London), **13**, 1 (1997), 66-91.

Ten native English learners of Japanese, ten intermediate native English learners of Japanese and ten native Japanese speakers of English (all university students) were each requested to report what they thought was the subject or action of a series of English Noun-Verb-Noun (NVN) word strings, in which case marking and lexical-semantics cues were systematically manipulated. These NVN strings were aurally presented first alone, and subsequently the same strings were presented for the second time together with noncanonical NNV and VNN strings.

Similarly, their counterpart Japanese NNV strings were first presented alone, and secondly with non-canonical VNN and NVN strings. The results revealed that (1) a greater animacy effect ('animacy noun as a subject' bias) was detected when the sentence verb was *see* rather than *eat* (or each of their Japanese counterparts); (2) English accusative pronouns generally created greater case biases than nominative ones; and (3) native English speakers interpreting Japanese word strings responded differently under the two presentation conditions.

97-401 Schnitzer, Marc L. and Krasinski, Emily (Puerto Rico U.). The development of segmental phonological production in a bilingual child: a contrasting second case. *Journal of Child Language* (Cambridge), **23**, 3 (1996), 547-71.

A longitudinal diary-and-videotape study of the production of phonological segments by a Spanish-English bilingual child, age 1;6-4;6, revealed a consistent separation of the phonological systems of the two languages from the earliest period, with minimal interference at later times. These results are in contrast to results obtained from

another child in an earlier, similar study by the authors. The relevance of these data to the issue of whether bilingual children first use a single system before acquiring two discrete languages is discussed, as is the general question of how to interpret the early phonological production of bilinguals.

97-402 Ying, H. G. (Arizona U.). Multiple constraints on processing ambiguous sentences: evidence from adult L2 learners. *Language Learning* (Cambridge, MA), **46**, 4 (1996), 681-711.

Forty-five adult second language learners of English participated in this study, which investigated syntactically ambiguous sentences in which a prepositional phrase is interpreted as either an NP (noun phrase) attachment or VP (verb phrase) attachment (e.g. 'The cop saw the spy with binoculars'). One group of 23 students performed comprehension tasks, first by listening to the sentences produced with no distinction in intonation favouring the NP or the VP interpretation, then by listening to the sentences produced with an intonation that favoured the NP

interpretation. A second group of 22 students performed comprehension tasks, first by reading the sentences with no preceding context, then by reading them preceded by a referential context. The students also did two sentence-completion tasks, one manipulating 'action verbs', the other 'psych and preparation verbs', to evaluate the verb-based lexical biasing effect. Statistical analyses of the results showed lexical, syntactic, prosodic and contextual constraints on processing of ambiguous sentences.