SYNTACTIC ABILITIES OF BILINGUAL AND MONOLINGUAL CHILDREN WITH SLI – TENSE AND AGREEMENT

Language Acquisition in Special Circumstances
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Root Infinitives - The phenomenon

- Up to the age of three children use the infinitival form of the verbs in indicative matrix clauses in 50% of their verbal utterances in English (Wexler 1994), and to a lesser extent in other languages (Armon-Lotem 1996a, Hyams 1995, Rhee & Wexler 1995, Rizzi 1994a).
- Finite sentences are produced at the same time.
- Children seem to know the grammatical properties of finiteness and non-finiteness (e.g., Deprez & Pierce 1994)

1) a. It only write on the pad
   b. He bite me
   c. My finger hurts

2) M: ma at osa?
   what you do
   'what are you doing ?
   L: tapuax lishtot
   apple to-drink
   'I drink an apple'

- Infinitival forms constitute only 5% of the Italian data.

>>> Extensive use of root infinitives correlates with non-null subject languages.
- “A language goes through an OI stage if and only if the language is not an INFL-licensed null-subject language.” (Wexler 1996)

Extended Optional Infinitives

Agreement-and-Tense-Omission Model.
TD children omit either TNS or AGR or neither up to the age of 3. In SLI children this is extended until the age of 7-8. (Wexler K, Schütze C & Rice M, 1998)

Unique Checking Constraint
TD children check all the relevant functional categories in a phase. Children with SLI check a single functional category (Wexler 2003)

Hebrew - The morphological richness hypothesis (Dromi et al. 1993, 1999)

SLI children have a limited processing capacity. They focus on the most salient aspects of the language they acquire. For example, in English they focus on word-order and ignore the morphology, while in German they focus on morphology and ignore the word order.


Method: Spontaneous speech samples of the same children

Findings:
- No difference between SLI and NDL in the level of inflections
- No difference between SLI and NDL in the mastery of inflections
- Out of all forms in Pa‘al (80% of verbs), 90% were tensed.
- SLI used more bare (stripped) forms – significant, but the numbers are small.
- SLI and NDL had similar errors, but SLI had more.
- In natural settings children do what they know and avoid the difficult forms.

Passive Participle vs. Regular Past Tense


The girl pushed the boy.
The boy got pushed by the girl.
- EOI account: different
- The surface account: same

Method

Subjects
- 12 of the children (aged from 4.6 to 6.10) with SLI
- 12 ND-A
- 12 ND-MLU

Sentence completion tasks:
- the use of past tense verb forms
- the use of passive participle verb forms
Summary

- The inconsistency with which children with SLI produce past -ed cannot be due to the surface property of this inflection. Its grammatical function probably plays the central role.
- Children with SLI have special problems with verb morphology, even when tense is not involved. The passive participle -ed proved to be one such area of weakness.

  
- 28 monolingual TLD and 39 L2ers with L1 Turkish (6-9)
- TEGI – Production (“Here is a teacher. Tell me what she does”).
- Word monitoring task for grammatical inflections (Mary really likes to bake. Every day she bake(s) cakes and sometimes cookies and muffins)
- Comparison with SLI from Leonard & Montgomery

Accuracy in the production of tense morphemes

- Main effect of group and morpheme
  - -s < -ed for L2
- Moderate correlation between LoE and -s
Main effect for:
- group (L2>L1)
- morpheme type (non-tensed>tensed)
- grammaticality (ungrammatical>grammatical)

RT on non-tensed morphemes
No interaction > the two groups were equally good at detecting ungrammaticality

- Two groups by scores on TEGI: below and above the criterion score.
- For –s : sig dif for age and LoE
- For –ed: sig dif for LoE
- No effect for group for RT

Paradis (2008)
- Only L2 children generalize the use of BE, in order to fill a gap between their communicative demands and their knowledge of the L2 with a morphosyntactic expression.
- Both the high proportions of commission errors and the overgeneralization of BE single out L2 children from children with SLI.


Moran


Haguit
Paradis, Crago, Genesee, and Rice. 2003

- French-English bilingual children with SLI - monolingual age mates with SLI, in each language.
- All SLI children showed greater accuracy with non-tense than with tense morphemes.
- All SLI children had similar mean accuracy scores for tense morphemes. The bilingual children did not exhibit more profound deficits in the use of these grammatical morphemes than their monolingual peers.
- SLI may not be an impediment to learning two languages, at least in the domain of grammatical morphology.


- 14 participants with SLI (7 bilinguals Turkish-German)
- Ages: L1: 6;7, SD: .81; L2: 5;8, SD: 1.1
- Numbers of recordings: 24 for L1, 29 for L2
- MLU: L1: 3.13, SD: .47; L2: 2.84, SD: .45

Table 3. Mean correctness scores (and standard deviations) of the inflectional forms in the two SLI groups.

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<th>L1</th>
<th>L2</th>
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<td>74.17 (12.40)</td>
<td>75.71 (18.04)</td>
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<td>-e</td>
<td>62.00 (25.78)</td>
<td>67.59 (22.00)</td>
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<td>-t</td>
<td>91.19 (14.23)</td>
<td>94.97 (8.54)</td>
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<td>93.33 (16.33)</td>
<td>85.01 (22.94)</td>
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<td>-nt</td>
<td>63.06 (25.91)</td>
<td>65.77 (32.34)</td>
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<td>94.63 (6.40)</td>
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Table 4. Inflected forms by morphosyntactic context: L1.

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Table 5. Inflected forms by morphosyntactic context: L2.

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