

## The Real Story of Child Language Acquisition

Day 6

0. Questions

- Theory of mind: [REDACTED]

"False-belief task": children younger than 4: not very good. Children 4 and older: good  
Roessler, Johannes (2013). "When the Wrong Answer Makes Perfect Sense - How the Beliefs of Children Interact With Their Understanding of Competition, Goals and the Intention of Others". University of Warwick Knowledge Centre. August 2014. Retrieved 2013-08-15.

Premack, D. G.; Woodruff, G. (1978). "Does the chimpanzee have a theory of mind?". *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 1 (4): 515–526.

Mitchell, P. (2011). Acquiring a Theory of Mind. In Alan Slater, & Gavin Bremner (eds.) *An Introduction to Developmental Psychology*: Second Edition, BPS Blackwell.

- If a child hears two languages of different linguistic groups at the same frequency, do they tend to mix those languages? [REDACTED]

- I couldn't understand why verbs should be divided into activity type and accomplishment type? [REDACTED]

A) We do not know "why." This seems to be the way we speak.

- Children are using a lot of strategies to learn their language. Do parents adjust their speech to make it easier for the children to apply these strategies? [REDACTED]

A) In many cases, parental reaction to children's speech is unconscious about these strategies, as far as I can see.

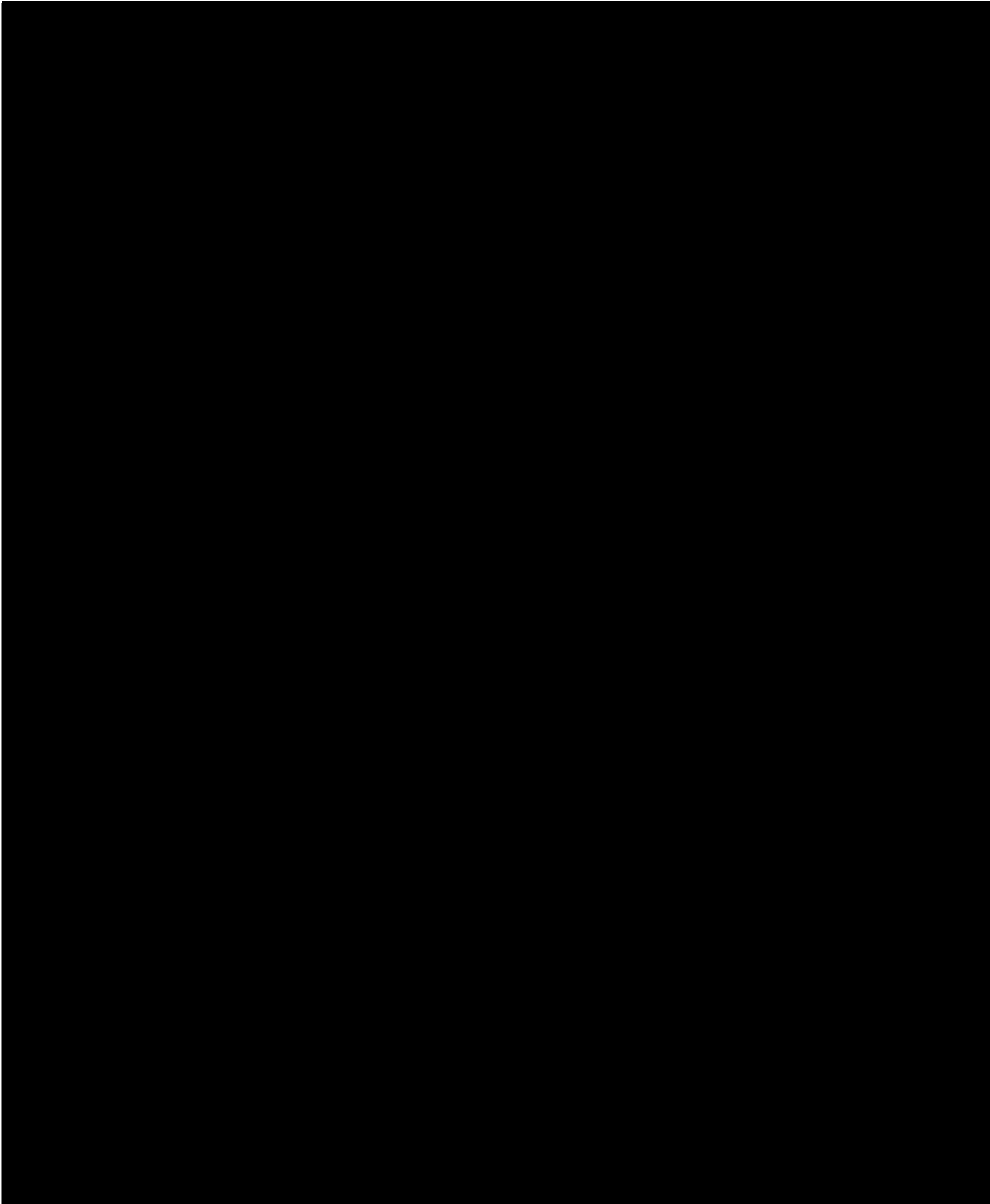
- If parents told a child "broke" just after the child said "broke", I think the child will realize that "broke" is not correct. [REDACTED]

A) A very good point, but the reality is not that simple. This type of parental response is called "recast". We are going to see what is going on in these cases in a later chapter in the course.

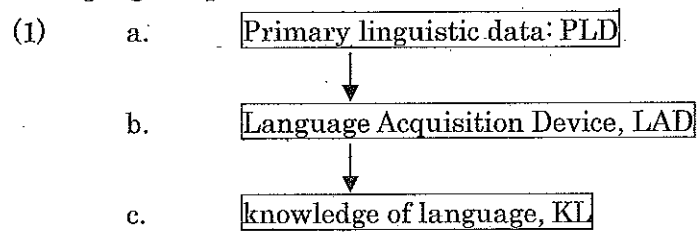
HW Review

Good example

[REDACTED]



<Language Acquisition Model>



- (2) Children acquire:
- a. words
  - b. meaning of words
  - c. how to build a sentence (using words they know)
  - d. how to compute the meaning of a sentence
  - e. speech sounds

Today's topic: (2b) How Children Acquire the Correct Meaning of Words (Part 3 of 3)

- (3) nouns and verbs
- a. **The Whole Object Assumption**  
A new word refers to a whole object.
  - b. **The Type Assumption**  
A new word refers to a type of thing, not just to one particular rabbit.
  - c. **The Basic Level Assumption**  
A new word refers to types of objects that are alike in basic ways.
  - d. **The Social Strategy**  
To figure out what new words mean, think like other people think.
  - e. **The Mutual Exclusivity Assumption**  
Things should have only one label/name.
  - f. **Syntactic bootstrapping**  
Use some syntactic frames to make a good guess on the meaning of the verb.

### 1. How to Learn Meaning of Adjectives (pp.67-72)

- (4) Learning the meaning of a new adjective is easy when it is used to describe:
- a. an object that differs from another object in just one way, or
  - b. two objects that are alike in just one way. (p.68)

(See text pp.67-68.)<sup>1</sup>

"This is biff, and this is not biff."

"This is biff, and this is biff, too."

#### 1.1 Size

- (5) HW 5 (C): review
- a. *big*: used for overall size
  - b. *tall*: size on the vertical dimension
  - c. *long*: size on the horizontal dimension

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<sup>1</sup> Waxman, S.R. and R. Klibanoff. 2000. The role of comparison in the acquisition of novel adjectives. *Developmental Psychology* 36, 571-81.

- (6) Among 3-5 year old children who participated in the experiment,<sup>2</sup>
- the younger children are “more sensitive to overall size,” and
  - many of the older children are “focusing on the vertical dimension.”  
(p.69)
- In pair (a) picture (p.69), they assume that the right one is bigger than the left one.
- (7) To know whether something X is big (or tall or long), you have to know the “standard” size of the object X modified by size adjectives.<sup>3</sup>

Quiz: What would be the average size of a flower pot?

(8) Class work 6 - 1

How are Japanese adjectives *ookii* ‘big’, *takai* ‘tall’, and *nagai* ‘long’ used to describe the size of physical objects?

- Think of examples in which you can use only one of them.  
e.g., Basketball wa soccer ball yori ookii (\*takai/\*nagai)
- Think of examples in which you can use two of them.  
e.g., Tokyo SkyTree wa Tokyo Tower yori ookii/takai.
- Try to think of the similar examples in your native language.

1.2 Colors (pp.70-71)

- (9) Many experiments show that learning terms for colors is more difficult for children than learning terms for shapes or terms for animals.
- (10) Three-year-old children (when asked a name of color) either use the same name (e.g., red) for all colors, or randomly choose from color names they know.<sup>4</sup>
- (11) Possible reason:  
The referents of color terms overlap to some extent.<sup>5</sup>  
Cf. The referents of shape terms.

<sup>2</sup> Harris, P. and J. Morris. 1986. The early acquisition of spatial adjectives: A cross-linguistic study. *Journal of Child Language* 13, 335-52.

<sup>3</sup> Sharpe, Dean, Isabel Fronte, and Elisabeth Christe. 1998. Big mice, big animals, big problems: The acquisition of adjective interpretation rules. *BUCLD* 22, 675-83.

<sup>4</sup> Bornstein, Marc. 1985. On the development of color naming in young children: Data and theory. *Brain and Language* 6, 72-93.

<sup>5</sup> Braisby, Nick and Julie Dockrell. 1999. Why is color naming difficult? *Journal of Child Language* 26, 23-47.

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- (12) Developmental order for the use of color names:<sup>6</sup>  
red green black white orange yellow blue pink brown purple
- (13) First four colors are most often distinguished in many languages all over the world.<sup>7</sup>

### 1.3 Numbers (pp.71-72)

- (14) Many two year olds can count up to ten.
- (15) But they do not understand the actual meaning of the numbers.
- (16) Adult: Pick five animals for me.  
Child: OK, one, two, five!
- (17) Three and a half year olds understand the real meaning of the numbers.
- (18) Learning process:<sup>8</sup>
- one, and then two, and then three.
  - Then, children simultaneously learn the meaning of all the remaining numbers that they know.
  - Finally, they understand that counting actually determines the number of things in a set.
  - Around 4 to 6, children learn sequences of 20, 30, 40, etc.

### Class Work 6-2

Try to find any interesting/peculiar phenomenon in the number counting system in Japanese which may be difficult for foreign learners. Try hard.

### 2. How to Learn the Meaning of Prepositions (pp.72 - 75)

- (19) Prepositions indicate relations between words.
- (20)
- location*: Eat **in** the kitchen. / The books are **on** the desk.
  - origin*: The wine is **from** Italy.
  - direction*: climb **up** the wall / ski **down** the hill.
  - accompaniment*: Come **with** me.

<sup>6</sup> Rosch Heider, Eleanor. 1971. "Focal" color areas and the development of color names. *Developmental Psychology* 4, 447-55.

<sup>7</sup> Berlin, Brent and Paul Kay (1969/1993) *Basic Color Terms: Their Universality and Evolution* (Univ of California Press; Revised)

<sup>8</sup> Wynn, Karen. 1992. Children's acquisition of number words and the counting system. *Cognitive Psychology* 24, 220-51.

Bloom, Pau. 2002. *How children learn the meanings of words*. MIT Press.

Pollman, Thijs. 2003. Some principles involved in the acquisition of number words. *Language Acquisition* 11, 1-13.

- e. *benefit*: Buy the book for her.  
 f. *instrument/means*: Cut the cheese with the knife / go by bus  
 g. *possession/belonging*: The toy of mine
- (21) Prepositions in English are sometimes very salient in that they appear at the end of the sentence and with stress on it.
- (22) a. I want up/down/in/out.  
 b. I want this sweater on/off.
- (23) Two common errors in children's use of prepositions:<sup>9</sup>  
 a. omission (p.73)  
 b. commission (a wrong preposition used: p.74)
- (24) Common developmental order (easy to difficult)  
 a. in, on, under, beside  
 b. between  
 c. in front of, behind  
 => HW6 (A)
- (25) Class Work 6-3  
 (i) Which use of *on* is most basic, which is most abstract, and why?  
 a. The present is *on* the table.  
 b. He wrote a book *on* birds.  
 c. The anniversary is *on* March 20th.  
 (ii) Which use of Japanese *-de* is most basic, which is most abstract, and why?  
 a. chikatetu-*de* gakko-ni kita  
 b. shukudai-*de* isogasii  
 c. zutto tomodati-*de* iyoo  
 d. tosyokan-*de* sirabeta  
 (iii) Try to find any use of Japanese *-de* which may be difficult for foreign learners to learn. Try hard.
3. How to Learn the Meaning of Pronouns: *I* and *you* (pp.75 - 79)
- (26) One of the most noticeable meaning errors: "pronoun (I - you) reversal"<sup>10</sup>
- (27) a. I'll carry you. (meaning 'YOU carry ME')  
 b. Lift you up and you can see out the window. (meaning 'Lift ME ups and I can see out the window.')

<sup>9</sup> Johnston, Judith and Dan Slobin. 1979. The development of locative expressions in English, Italian, Serbo-Croatian and Turkish. *Journal of Child Language* 6, 529-45.

<sup>10</sup> Chiat, Shulamuth. 1982. If I were you and you were me: The analysis of pronouns in a pronoun-reversing child. *Journal of Child Language* 9, 359-79.

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- (28) Most common pattern:<sup>11</sup>  
A child uses YOU to refer to himself/herself.
- (29) Everyone around the child uses YOU to refer to the child.
- (30) Everyone around the child uses *I* to refer to him/her (ie. speaker).  
Hence, the child figures out that *I* is used for any speaker.
- (31) Second-born children produce correct pronouns earlier than first-borns.  
They observe that YOU is used to someone other than themselves (i.e. their elder brother/sister) as well as to themselves.
- (32) Children who did well on the perspective-shifting task seem to have fully mastered the I/you distinction.<sup>12</sup>
- (33) What does the other person see? (p.78)
- (34) What children have to realize are:
- the child should call himself/herself "I" and call others "you."
  - and
  - others use "I" for themselves and "you" for the child.
- (35) **Class Work 6-3**
- (i) Suppose you are the giver, which of the following is correct when you speak?
- kore-o ageru yo.  
this-ACC give YO '\_\_\_ will give this to \_\_\_.'
  - kore-o kureru no? 'Will \_\_\_ give this to \_\_\_?'  
give Q
- (ii) Suppose you were the listener (not the reader), which of the following is correct when you speak?
- kore-o yonde ageta  
read give
  - kore-o yonde moratta  
read give
- (iii) If a Japanese speaking small child has not yet understood the perspective-shifting well, what would be possible mistakes concerning the use of *ageru* vs. *morau*. Give specific examples imaginable.

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<sup>11</sup> Dale, Philip and Catherine Crain-Thoreson. 1993. Pronoun reversals: Who, hen, and why? *Journal of Child Language* 20, 573-89.

<sup>12</sup> Loveland, Katherine. 1984. Learning about points of view: Spatial perspective and the acquisition of "I/you." *Journal of Child Language* 11, 535-56.

4. **Summary**

- (36) The meanings of adjectives
- a. shapes: difference/similarity comparison
  - b. sizes: overall/vertical/horizontal  
relativity
  - c. colors: basic colors  
overlap
  - d. numbers
- (37) The meanings of prepositions
- a. relations among objects
  - b. omission and commission
- (38) Problem of Perspective shift
- a. "I/you" pronouns in English
  - b. "ageru/morau" in Japanese
- (39) Again, children are in challenging situations:  
but all of them acquire the meanings of these types of words eventually.

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**HW6**



## Homework Assignment 6

### 1. Turn in by Tuesday 12:30

via Email (MSWord file attached to email)

Make the name of the file as [ID\_your name\_hw6]



\*If you have trouble sending your files attached via Email, let me know.

2. Write as concisely as possible. Write the number of words at the end of each Q.
3. Restrict yourself to A4 paper one page long.

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- A. Read pp.74 (below the pictures) – 75 of the text. Then, summarize the point. What kinds of prepositions are easier and what harder, and why? Be concise. Write the number of the word at the end. (use about 100 words)
  - B. In Class Work 6-3, we saw that the same prepositions can have various different meanings (i.e. semantic functions). What is the semantic function of Japanese *ni* in the following examples. Write the number of the word at the end. (use about 80 words)
    - a. tomodachi-*ni* au
    - b. Tokyo-*ni* iku
    - c. sensei-*ni* homerareru
    - d. ookina oto-*ni* odoroku
  - C. Read the section *Tracking the growth of sentences* (pp.83 – 85) and summarize the point. Write the number of the word at the end. (use about 120 words)
  - D. (Optional) Report any particular characteristics in counting from 1 to 20 in your native language (which might be difficult to learn).
  - E. Any comments/questions on this homework assignment and/or the last class discussion.
  - F. Read the text up to page 92.