

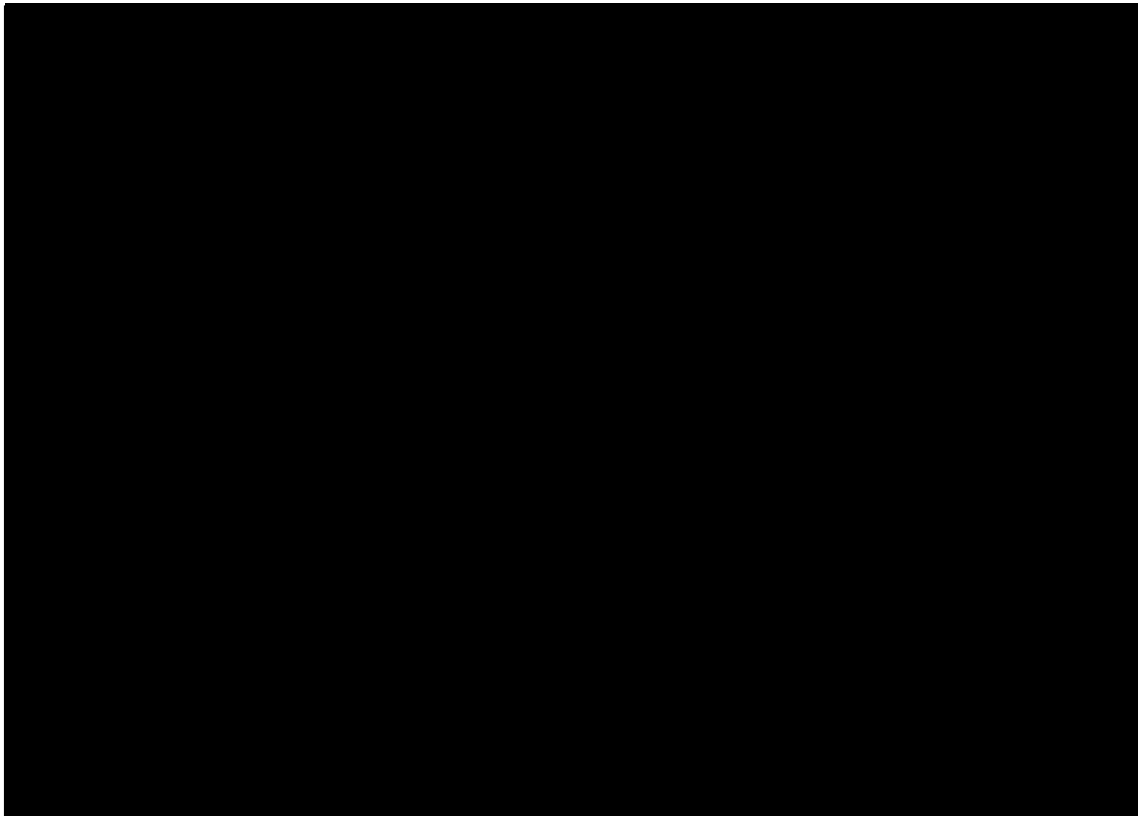
The Real Story of Child Language Acquisition

Day 9

0. Questions

Do the children of very talkative parents learn more words or learn words faster than the children of not so talkative parents? ██████████

HW Review: Good example



<Language Acquisition Model>

- (1)
 - a. Primary linguistic data: PLD
 - ↓
 - b. Language Acquisition Device, LAD
 - ↓
 - c. knowledge of language, KL
- (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: (2c) How children acquire sentence-building skills (part 3 / 3)

1. Who? What? Where? (pp.102-106)

- (3) Every language has ways to ask "wh-questions", but specific wh-items may vary among languages.

Cf. Wh-~~th~~ president is J.F. Kennedy?

- (5) Developmental order for *wh*-words in English speaking children.¹

where, what 26 months old

who 28

how 33

why 35

which, whose, when after 36 (p.102)

- (6) *Where, what, who* are frequently used in PLD.²

Easy cognition of "place" (where), "thing" (what), person (who), than "reason" (why), etc.

- (4) Class Work 9-1: How do you ask a question (in English and in your native language)?

(A) You and your friend are going out for lunch and you ask your friend's preference.

_____ would you like to eat?

(B) You have four pens, one of which you can give to your friend. Showing them to your friend, how do you ask your friend's preference?

_____ would you like?

(C) You have two pens, one of which you can give to your friend. Showing them to your friend, how do you ask your friend's preference?

_____ would you like?

- (7) Subject Wh-question

Who is helping Max?

- (8) Object Wh-question

Who is Max helping?

¹ Bloom, Lois, Susan Merkin, and Janet Wootten. 1982. *Wh*-questions: Linguistic factors that contribute to the sequence of acquisition. *Child Development* 53, 1084-92.

² Clark, Herbert and Eve Clark. 1977. *Psychology and language: An introduction to psycholinguistics*. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

- (9) Overall, children seem to use (7)-type more often than (8)-type.
- (10) Research question
Are subject *wh*-questions easier for children than object *wh*-questions?
- (11) Yoshinaga's experiment to test (10)³
- (12) Looking at the picture on p.104, the experimenter asks:
"Someone is pushing the pig, and Elmo knows who. Can you ask him who?"
- (13) Looking at the picture on p.105, the experimenter asks:
"The monkey is pushing someone, and Elmo knows who. Can you ask him who?"
- (14) Result
- a. No trouble with producing the subject *wh*-question.
"Who is pushing the pig?"
- b. For the object *wh*-question,
two-year-olds got mostly wrong
three-year-olds got the correct form less than 50% of the time
(See the chart on p.105)
- (15) The design of this experiment is very good in several respects, to test (10):
whether subject *wh*-questions are easier for children to produce than object *wh*-questions.
In what respects is this experiment well-designed?
- (16) a. No risk of simple repetition of the adult's (experimenter) speech.
If the experimenter says "Ask who is pushing the pig," the child may repeat what s/he said.
But the experimenter said "Ask Elmo who."
- b. Less stress for children
helping adults / not being tested
E.g., "What do you say if you ask Elmo who?"
- (17) Note: (18a) is easier for children than (18b) (= (8)), even though both are object *wh*-questions.
- (18) a. What is Max drinking?
b. Who is Max helping? (= (8))
- (19) animate vs. inanimate

³ Yoshinaga, Naoko. 1996. *Wh*-questions: A comprehensive study of their form and acquisition in Japanese. Ph. D. dissertation. University of Hawaii.

2. Yes-no questions (pp.106-110)
- (20) tense (aux) doubling: pp.106-107
→ HW8(C)
- (21) This may suggest that yes-no questions and the corresponding declarative sentences are syntactically related. → movement analysis.
- (22) Prediction (Nakayama)⁴
Children should make more errors in complicated questions than in simple ones.
- (23) Experiment to test the prediction in (22)
→ HW9 (A)
3. Other Constructions (pp.110 – 113)
- (24) a. Bobbie went. <= simple S V
b. Bobbie likes eating. <= verb + verb
c. Bobbie likes eating popcorn. <= verb + “predicate”
d. Bobbie knows she is sick. <= verb + [sentence]
- (25) Some verbs can have a predicate or a sentence-like phrase as their complement. Once you acquire verbs like these, you can make many complex sentences.
- (26) a. I wanna go.
b. You gonna stay.
c. Watch me go.
d. Let me go.
- (27) a. Want lady open it. (19 months)
b. Want teddy drink. (28 to 30 months)
c. I don't know who it is. (28 to 30 months)
- (28) *By age two and a half* want, need, like, watch, see, lookit, let, ask, say,
make, gonna (p.110)
- (29) *By age three:* think, tell, guess, know, hope, show, remember, finish,
wonder, wish, help, say, pretend, decide, forget
- (30) Sentence connectives start showing up from two to two and a half years old.
a. *and*
b. *then, when, because, where, but, if, that, so, etc.*

⁴ Nakayama, Mineharu. 1987. Performance factors in subject-auxiliary inversion. *Journal of Child Language* 14, 113-26.

Child Language Acquisition

- (31) arrival of relative clauses which modify the preceding noun.
- a. Look at that noise ... you're making again. (31 months)
 - b. I want something that the cow(s) eat. (33 months)
 - c. This is the dog that worried the cat that killed the rat that ate the malt that lay in the house that Jack built.

(32) Small children usually do not use a long sentence with a relative clause. This, however, does not mean that we cannot check whether they have not acquired the way how to make a sentence with a relative clause.

(33) elicited production task.

How can we do it? → HW9 (B) (pp.112-113)

(34) Class Work 9-2

Yes-no question formation rule in English

Rule 1: Move the auxiliary verb (e.g. *is*) to the front of the sentence

- a. John is happy.
- b. Is John ___ happy?
 ↑
 └───┘

Task 1: Revise Rule 1 so that it correctly excludes (c) and rules in (d).

John is sure that Mary is smart.

- c. * Is John is sure that Mary ___ smart?
 ↑
 └──────────────────────────┘
- d. Is John ___ sure that Mary is smart?
 ↑
 └───┘

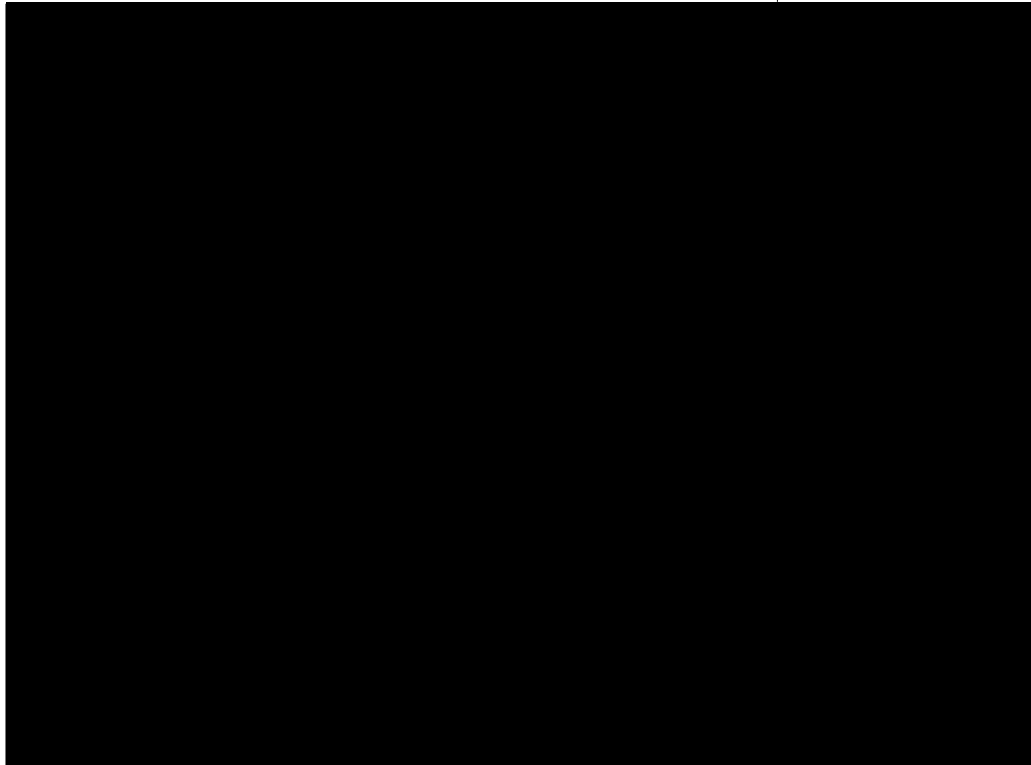
Rule 2: _____

Task 2: Check if your Rule 2 is correct on the following examples.

- e.
- f.

- (35) children's knowledge of structural dependency
- (36) Children usually do not produce complicated sentences in which the subject contains a relative clause. Hence, simple naturalistic observation would not give us the relevant data. We want to invite children to utter structures we need.
- (37) elicited production task
Test sentence: The man who is beating a donkey is mean.
- (38) Bad way
"Make yes/no question of this sentence, please."

- (39) Ask Jabba if the man who is beating a donkey is mean.
- (40) Conditions
Jabba is shy. He only answers questions asked by a small child.
The child can help. Then, (39).



4. Summary

- (41) children's acquisition of wh-questions
- a. where/what/who > how > why > which/whose/when
 - b. subject wh-questions > object wh-questions
 - c. what > who
- (42) PLD and/or development of cognitive ability
- (43) children's acquisition of yes/no questions
- a. subject-auxiliary inversion (structure dependent)
 - b. children's errors: auxiliary doubling, tense doubling
- (44) Other constructions
acquisition of conjunction and/or relative clause formation
→ power to generate/understand infinite numbers of sentences
- (45) Children know a lot more than what they actually produce.

HW9

Post Class Work

Homework Assignment 9

1. Turn in by Tuesday 12:30

via Email (MSWord file attached to email)

Make the name of the file as [ID_your name_hw9]



*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.

-
- A. Read pp.108 – 109 of the text. (i) What is the prediction to be tested in this experiment? (ii) what is the design of the experiment? and (iii) what is the result of the experiment? Summarize. (use about 100 words)

 - B. Read from *Children don't have that many ...* (p.112) to ... 85 percent of the time in some experiments." (p.113), and summarize the point of this experiment. (use about 80 words)

 - C. Read from p.116 to p.117 (before Section 2), which reports one-word-stage children's comprehension. Summarize the point. (i) What is the design of the experiment? (ii) What is the hypothesis (prediction) to test in this experiment? (iii) What is the result of the experiment? (use about 100 words)

 - D. Any comments/questions on this homework assignment and/or the last class discussion.

 - E. Read the text up to page 130.

Some feedback on Qs

Day 9

- Why did neglected children feel uncomfortable with writing? [REDACTED]

*In oral communication, it is generally true that you can use many resources; you can see the responses from the hearer and quickly change your strategy accordingly; you can use your body language and facial expressions. In a written communication, however, you have to put the relevant information in the optimal way so that any reader can understand what you want to say. Therefore, the grammatical structure is extremely important, as well as your selection of words to use. This is probably the reason why you are not very good at writing when you have some trouble with your grammatical faculty.

- Languages like Japanese/English are composed of phonetic spelling system, but for languages like Chinese, words are composed independently (kanji). Can the theory of grammar and content be applied in this kind of language, too? [REDACTED]

*First of all, all languages are basically spoken systems in the first place no matter what writing system they adopt. Hence, the core part of Universal Grammar must be the same across any human languages. Therefore, as far as we are talking about theory of grammar in this basic respect, there is no difference among languages.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

- Is there any evidence related to cognition or PLD that explains how a child, who has to learn two languages with very different grammatical structures such as English and Japanese since young, can overcome the differences and master them? [REDACTED]

*As far as I know, if the PLD is given in appropriate fashions (i.e., the natural way as the ordinary monolingual community), children acquire two or more languages naturally to some extent linguistically. The more serious matter seems to be social, not linguistic. For instance, the identity issue. Which community does the child want to be the part of.