

15:30h-17:00h

Desarrollo del discurso y la pragmática - Discourse and pragmatic development -

Desenvolupament del discurs i la pragmàtica

The Acquisition of Temporal Connectives in Hungarian Children

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In this contribution we discuss an experiment with Hungarian children aged 4;4–7;0. We assume a stage theory of acquisition for temporal expressions, in which the acquisition of connectives is said to follow the acquisition of tense forms (Smith 1980, Van Geenhoven 2006, Weist 1986); during this stage children learn to use connectives in building a network of temporal anaphora. That is, the acquisition of connectives is not confined to their lexical entries (learning what kind of temporal relation is conveyed by *before* or *after*), but knowledge of these entries is put to use in building a temporal model of discourse.

Method

In the experiment, 15 children aged 4;4–7;0 were shown three picture sequences in personal interviews. Each sequence consisted in three pictures depicting daily events that could be understood in a narrative sequence. 9 questions were asked (3 for each sequence): 3 forced-choice questions, 3 elicited production questions, and 3 fillers.

Results

Overall, children used *utan* 'after' in 46%, and *elott* 'before' in 28% of responses. Elicited answers exhibited a greater divergence: children used *utan* 'after' in 27% of those responses where in fact *elott* 'before' was expected, while only 7% of responses used 'before' where 'after' was expected.

In addition, in 15% of responses children invented an additional scene, which was intended to precede the event in the first picture of the sequence they were shown. They linked this (invented) scene to the first picture of the sequence with *utan* 'after', instead of using *elott* 'before' to connect the first picture to the second. That is, their invention enabled them to evade responses with *elott*.

Discussion

Results show that Hungarian children prefer *utan* 'after' to *elott* 'before' as a discourse-building device. Their responses indicate that they understand the meaning of *elott* 'before', but they do not judge it as an appropriate means of constructing temporal relations.

References

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