

Lexico-Grammatical Development of an Early-aged Child: Case Study

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This thesis examines the patterns of case marking — as opposed to the lexical and syntactic development — during early stages of ontogenesis. The study considers one individual case (a case study)—and is conducted on the basis of longitudinal observations during a period from 8 to 30 months.

This work analyzes in detail the emergence of case inflection on the basis of the material of tokens pronounced during the initial stage of the emergence of the grammatical system and maps the development of its elements. We expect to find connection between the appearance of case inflections, early phrases and active vocabulary in the speech of the child. We also expect to find the special patterns in case marking of the individual lexemes.

The results of the study indicate that:

1. The appearance of the first phrases preceeds the appearance of case markings; case markings develop alongside the active development of phrasal speech and coincide in time with vocabulary spurt.
2. Some individual features such as the ‘three step model’ of emergence of first case markings as well as the prevalence of the lexico-semantic component over the morphological one were noted in the speech of our informant.
3. The emergence of the lexemes does not coincide in time with the emergence of case markings.

We see some connections with the regularity of the noun paradigm, the relevance of the word to the child, its presence in the input in different realizations; and to a lesser extent—the emergence of the word is determined by its phonological complexity. No connection has been found with the time of the first appearance of the word in the active vocabulary of the child.

The particular words can be first acquired in some specific, more frequent forms. We can distinguish between several groups depending on which form of what case has first emerged in the speech of the child. We have also noted some lexical-semantic differences between different groups as well as some analogies among them, which add another argument in favor of the user-based approach of language acquisition [Tomasello, 2003].

These conclusions can be drawn only on the basis of the present investigation conducted on the basis of the speech performance of this particular child during particular time of his language development.

References

- [1] Tomasello M. Constructing a language. A Usage Based Theory of Languageacquisition. Cambridge (MA); London: Garvard University Press, 2003.