Syntactic Development (WS 2007/8)

Seminar type: Hauptseminar  
Time: Fr 10:15 – 11:45  
Room: SR 601 + EAP 8 MMZ 204  
Instructor: Prof. Holger Diessel  
Office hours: Mi 14:00  
Email: holger.diessel@uni-jena.de

During their second year of life, children produce their first simple utterances, which soon develop into more complex structures. In this seminar we will investigate the acquisition of morphosyntax in English. In the first part of the class, students will learn to work with the CHILDES database to do their own empirical analyses. The CHILDES database is an electronic corpus of child language that is freely available on the internet (http://www.cnts.ua.ac.be/childes/). In the second part of the class, we will discuss different theoretical approaches to the study of language acquisition and consider some of the empirical work on the development of morphosyntax. At the end of the semester, students will present the results of their empirical investigations.

Students who have taken my seminars on first language acquisition are welcome to attend the class (provided there is enough room), but they cannot take this seminar for credit.

Requirements

Empirical term paper  
CHILDES exercises  
Short presentation

Course schedule

1. Introduction

2. Introduction to CHILDES

3. Experimental methods  
   Karmiloff & Karmiloff-Smith 2001: chap 2

4. Theories of language acquisition  
   O’Grady 1997: chap 13  
   Goldberg to appear  
   [Diessel 2004: chap 2 ]  
   [Bates & Elman 2002]
5. Item-based constructions
   Clark 2003: chap 7;
   Tomasello 2003
   [Tomasello and Brooks 1999]

6. ‘Subject drop’, passive sentences, and questions
   Dabrowska 2000

7. The English Verb-particle construction 1
   Diessel & Tomasello 2005a

8. The English Verb-particle construction 1
   Diessel & Tomasello 2005a

9. Adverbial and complement clauses
   O’Grady 1997: 107-123
   Diessel 2004: chap 4-5

10. Relative clauses
    Diessel 2004: chap 6
    [Diessel and Tomasello 2005b]

11. The acquisition of the English past tense
    Ingram 1996: 435-443
    McClelland & Patterson 2002

12. Syntactic category acquisition
    Redington et al. 1998

13. Student presentations

14. Student presentations

15. Student presentations
Readings


