

Early Stages of the Acquisition of Verbal Grammar by Russian-speaking 1-to-3-year-old Children

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Background literature

- **Aspect:** imperfect forms are acquired earlier than perfect
- **Tense:** present tense — earlier than past and future
- **Person:** the order of acquisition of person is 3→1→2
- **Number:** singular forms are acquired earlier than plural
- There is a big number of infinitives and imperatives in children's speech, which is decreasing by the time
- Grammatical properties of the children's speech are similar to those of the child-directed speech
- Input remains comparatively unchanged

Method

- Recordings of the children (a boy Y. and a girl T.) from 2 different families
- Families recorded the daily interaction of a child with an adult for an hour every two weeks using a video camera
- The data is new and unpublished, it was recorded since 2016
- On-going work for T.
- We divided each corpus into 3 periods and looked both at the output and the input
- 4 verbal categories observed: aspect, tense, person and number

Total volume of Y. corpus:

Hours: 12

Output: 24270 (2957 verb forms)

Input: 32914 (6228 verb forms)

Total volume of T. corpus:

Hours: 8

Output: 9377 (1384 verb forms)

Input: 27875 (5389 verb forms)

Results

Present tense is acquired earlier than past and future ✓

Singular forms are acquired earlier than plural ✓

There is a big number of infinitives and imperatives in children's speech... ✓

... which is decreasing by the time ⊗

The number of imperatives decreased, while the number of infinitives increased

Imperfect forms are acquired earlier than perfective ⊗

During the first period in Y. corpus perfective verbs prevailed over the perfect ones

The order of acquisition of person is 3→1→2 ⊗

According to our data the order is 1→3→2

Results: input

Grammatical properties of the children's speech are similar to those of the child-directed speech:

- In both corpora, both in output and input, there are more imperfect verbs than perfect ones
- The singular form is more frequent than the plural one in both corpora, both in the output and in the input
- A big number of infinitives and imperatives in input is reflected in output

Input remains comparatively unchanged during all the 3 periods

Discussion

- Differences in **aspect** acquisition: this can indicate natural variance between participants. So, we need more participants to observe the better results
- Differences in **person**: previous data was divided by **person + number**, we explored person and number separately
- **Infinitives**: the growth of their number was not expected
- **Input**: its statistical features do not significantly change during the 3 periods