

## A cross-linguistic investigation of early locative morphology

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In the acquisition of locative prepositions and case markers cross-linguistically, an interaction between the conceptual and the linguistic is apparent. Conceptually, early perceptual biases such as the preference for GOAL over SOURCE paths (e.g. Pléh, Vinkler & Kálmán, 1997) are reliable predictors of locative production. Linguistic factors such as agglutination and syncretism have also been argued to contribute to early case marking production (e.g. Slobin, 1973). Mikes (1967), for example, found that bilingual children were able to learn the agglutinating Hungarian locative case system almost a year earlier than the syncretic Serbo-Croatian preposition + case system, suggesting a role for linguistic complexity in early locative development.

The present study, then, begins to tease apart the contributions of the lexical and conceptual by comparing the development of the morphologically diverse locative systems of Hungarian, Slovenian, and English-speaking 2-year-olds. The data for this study consist of previously unanalyzed longitudinal data from the Kranjc (1999) corpus for 19 Slovenian children between 1;11 and 3;0 (2;4 mean at start), as well as longitudinal and cross-sectional data from the CHILDES database (MacWhinney, 2000) for 6 Hungarian children (2;0-2;11), and 5 English-speaking children (2;0-2;11).

To investigate the role of linguistic complexity and assess its interaction with conceptual development, the following relation types have been analyzed in each corpus: IN, ON, AT, UNDER, BETWEEN, NEXT TO, IN FRONT OF, and BEHIND. Where they are reliably distinguished, path distinctions (GOAL vs. STATE vs. SOURCE) are also assessed. The outcome measure of this investigation is the production of locative markers in obligatory contexts, following the criteria of Brown (1973).

Preliminary results indicate that linguistic complexity does independently contribute to productive locative marking in 2-year-olds. Hungarian case markers are used more frequently than adpositions or complex markers in any language. Isolating adpositions across all three languages, as well, are produced less frequently than case markers, but with comparable frequency to each other. Finally, the production of Slovenian preposition + case amalgams is the least accurate in this dataset, with the preposition frequently being omitted. Additionally, variability both within and across languages is apparent, as would be expected from the presence of multiple contributing factors. These results will be discussed in the context of the interaction between conceptual and linguistic development.

Word Count: 369

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