

SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION WORKBOOK

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UNIVERSITAT DE BARCELONA



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INTRODUCTION

This book contains a collection of problems on language acquisition. They are based on authentic and original data that were gathered in different contexts by the authors and their students, in the doctorate programme of the Department of English Philology (UB) and in the undergraduate programme of the Department of English Philology both at the UB and the URV, throughout several years.

The book is divided into three parts. The first part presents problems on first and bilingual language acquisition in a naturalistic situation. The second part presents problems on second language acquisition, both in a naturalistic and in an instructed situation. The third part of the book presents problems based on scenes of the video *Talking in second language*, produced in 1966 with the help of the Gabinet d'Avaluació i Innovació Universitària of the Universitat de Barcelona (GAIU). English is the target language, and Spanish and Catalan the first languages, in most cases, although other languages are also represented, mainly as first languages. The problems cover a wide range of topics in language acquisition, from error analysis or communication strategies to teacher talk and data elicitation methodological issues. All the problems present the same structure: first, the relevant information on aims, subjects, and background; second, the data; and, finally, several questions to guide students in the analysis.

The aim of the book is twofold. It tries to provide students and teachers-to-be at different language acquisition courses in our universities with authentic material from our own language acquisition context. At the same time, its examples from real data may also be of interest to researchers in the fields of language acquisition and applied linguistics as the basis for discussion and further research.

Barcelona, July 1999

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PART I: CHILD LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

LANGUAGE AWARENESS AND CREATIVITY

Problem LA-1

Aims: To identify strategies in creating vocabulary.

Subjects:

Age: 3:4 to 3:10

Native Language: Spanish

Background Information: A mother and her son are having spontaneous conversations in different situations. Although the native language is Spanish for both the mother and the child, they live in a bilingual community and they often use Catalan in everyday life. The language used at school is Catalan.

Data Source: Spontaneous utterances

Data:

(C = Child; M = Mother)

Excerpt 1

(playing with toys)

C: tengo una idea. Hacemos que éste era el pitador.

M: ¿el pitador?!

C: sí, el que hace así piii

Excerpt 2

(looking at some toys)

M: me parece que éste es un motorista

C: un barcacista, ay no, un esquiador

M: ah, es verdad.

Excerpt 3

(going home after spending the morning on the beach)

C: ¿cuándo traeremos una toalla de mar?

M: ¿una qué?

C: una toalla de mar

M: ¿una toalla de mar?

C: sí eso que se hincha y va por el agua

M: ah! una colchoneta!

Excerpt 4

(mother and child sitting at a table in a cafeteria)

C: no hay fumero

M: ¿qué es un fumero?

C: pues lo de fumar

Questions:

1. The four conversations show the child's use of strategies to make himself understood. Identify the strategy used in each case and say whether it is effective or not.
2. Are there any instances of correction on the part of the mother?

Problem LA-2

Aims: To comment on vocabulary and language awareness.

Subjects:

Age: 3:10 to 10:11

Native Language: Spanish

Background Information: Spontaneous utterances of a mother and her son and the latter's brother, age 7:6, in excerpt 1. Although the native language is Spanish for both the mother and the children, they live in a bilingual community and they often use Catalan in everyday life. The language used at school is Catalan.

Data Source: Spontaneous conversations

Data:

(C = Child; M = Mother; B = Brother)

Excerpt 1

C 3:10

(talking about the closing session of the swimming class at school)

C: a mi me dieron un plomo

M: un plomo?!

B: sí, un diploma

M: ah! El diploma

Excerpt 2

C 4:0

(the child wants to take a video tape to school)

C: podré llevar Peter Pan al cole porque no es más lenta

M: no es violenta

Excerpt 3

C 8:4

(talking after school)

M: ¿qué habéis hecho en piscina?

C: hemos hecho carreras con el testamento

M: ¿con el testamento? Será pasando el testigo, no?

C: sí, eso, con el testimoni.

Questions:

1. "Plomo", "más lenta", "código penal" and "testamento" are grammatically correct units but pragmatically inappropriate. What do these forms reflect?

Problem LA-3

Aims: Thinking about language.

Subjects:

Age: 4:0 to 6:0

Native Language: Catalan

Background Information: The child is a Catalan/Spanish bilingual, whose dominant language is Catalan. From the age of approximately 4:6 he begins to answer in Spanish when he is addressed in this language.

Data Source: Excerpts 1-3 come from spontaneous conversation with his mother. Excerpts 4 and 5 come from observations made aloud while reading a book by himself.

Data:

(M = Mother; C = Child)

Excerpt 1

C 4:0

M: tú no saps el que és pensar

C: sí. Pensar vol dir que vols dir una cosa

Excerpt 2

C 4:10

M: aquí està la Casa de la Vila

C: qui és la Vila?

Excerpt 3

C 5:6

M: això és una cinta mètrica

C: per què serveix?

per metrar les sabates?

Excerpt 4

C 6:0

C: està equivocat

diu: *Barbablava, molt enfadat*

i hauria de dir *Barbablava està molt enfadat*

Excerpt 5

C 6:0

C: mira que diu *Perquè tu els has espantat quan del mar has tret el cap*
si el diguessim nosaltres es faria un embolic

Questions:

1. What does each of these excerpts tell you about this child's thoughts about language?
2. Why does the child dislike the italicized expressions?

Problem LA-4

Aims: To reflect upon speech segmentation.

Subjects:

Age: 3:4, 5:7, 6:1

Native Language: Catalan

Background Information: Same child from problem 3

Data Source: Spontaneous conversation

Data:

(C = Child)

Excerpt 1

C 3:4

C: vull pà pànglès

Excerpt 2

C 5:7

C: vull menjar peritiu

Excerpt 3

C 5:7

C: té dos bitacions

Excerpt 4

C 6:1

C: vull menjar sagna, com tu

Questions:

1. Can you reconstruct the words the child intended?
2. What do these excerpts tell you about this child's segmentation of the stream of speech?

Problem LA-5

Aims: To comment on the use of non-linguistic strategies.

Subjects:

Age: 3:10

Native Language: Spanish

Background Information: The child is playing with his mother, asking her to set the clock hands.

Data Source: Spontaneous conversation

Data:

(C = Child; M = Mother)

C: ponlo en el dos *u*

M: qué?

C: (doing it himself) aquí, en el dos *u* (and he places the hands on number 11, which looks like two ones)

Questions:

1. How does the child succeed in getting his message across?

Problem LA-6

Aims: To analyse language awareness.

Subjects:

Age: 3:0

Native Language: Spanish

Background Information: Although the child's L1 is Spanish, he attends school in Catalan and also uses Catalan quite frequently with some relatives. In this excerpt, the boy is looking at a cookery book with his mother. Obviously, at this age the child cannot read so he asks his mother about the written words.

Data Source: Conversation between mother and child

Data:

(C = Child; M = Mother)

C: ¿aquí que dice?

M: "premio"

C: ¿y aquí?

M: ¿aquí? "señor"

C: ¿adónde pone esto? (pointing at a picture)

M: ¿espinacas? Aquí. "Pastel de espinacas"

C: ¿aquí?

M: mm, mm

C: (looking at the words) Pastel de es-pi-na-cas

M: muy bien, sí señor

Questions:

1. Why do you think the child is able to split the word into syllables?