

Cooperation as a developmental milestone in bilingual language acquisition

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Abstract

Grice's cooperation principle (1975) and the related conversational maxims are the point of departure for many empirical projects in the field of pragmatics and discourse analysis. However, non-experimental studies on cooperation as a part of language acquisition are still rare, particularly when it comes to early L1-acquisition (children 0 to 4 years old).

The bilingual speech production of young children seems even more difficult to investigate, since language shift as a conversational conduct is very sensitive to the observer's paradox (see also Grantyn I., Knauer G. 2013) as first described by Labov. The present study, based on the regular observation of bilingual communication (one couple of twins, protocols and recordings), aims at describing the development of cooperation strategies in early bilingual language acquisition (German, Spanish) as well as the violation and flouting of this principle. Samples of different periods of language acquisition were compared and related to the 'Theory of Mind' i.e. the faculty of a speaker to make correct assumptions about the inner state of knowledge (and possible implications) of the listener. The results show that the cooperation principle follows a clear pattern which is closely related to the acquisition of deictic dimensions and their respective linguistic entities.

Keywords: *bilingual language acquisition, cooperation principle, conversational maxims, bilingual communication*