RESULTS OF A CASE STUDY IN THE ACQUISITION OF THREE TYPES OF MORPHEMES IN ENGLISH BY A BILINGUAL CHILD

Abstract:

This is the case study of Itzel who has been raised as a bilingual child. Based on the fact that children learn their first language naturally and without instruction, the one-parent one-language approach (OPOL) was used with Itzel (Baker, 2011; Barron-Hauwaert, 2004; BarronHauwaert,2010).

The Wug test was applied to the subject to determine the level of acquisition of the plural morphemes, third person singular morphemes, and past tense morphemes of regular verbs. Finally a comparison of 2011 Wug test and 2014 test is made to determine mastery of these morphemes in a period of three (3) years. As Berko (as cited in Rosenbaum, 2014b) has explained the wug study proved that children are not simply learning bits and pieces of the adult linguistic system but are

constructing generative systems of their own and that this results not from adult instruction

but from the children's inborn grammatical capacity.

The main objective of presenting the results of this case study is to look closely at the bilingual first language acquisition of a Costa Rican child who was raised through OPOL (One Parent One Language) and Minority Language at Home (mL@H).

Research Question

Can a simultaneous bilingual (Spanish-English) acquire the plural, third person singular, and regular past tense morphemes in English naturally?

Methodology

For this study, a descriptive method/case was used. This paper analyzes Itzel´s English production of three different morphemes: plurals (s,z, iz), past tense endings (/t/, /d/, /id/, and use of the third person singular (s, z, iz) though the Wug Test. A comparative study using the Wug test (Berko, 1958) was done during two stages of her life, when she was four years old and when she turned seven.

The results proved that the subject did acquire naturally the studied morphemes, and the Wug test shows some aspects of the interlanguage development related to the acquisition of morphemes done by the subject of the study.

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Allen Quesada Pacheco, Ph.D
Escuela de Lenguas Modernas, UCR

He publicado en dos de las revistas de la Facultad de Letras, En la UNA, en los Estados
Unidos, en Canadá, y en Brasil. Tengo más de 30 publicaciones y un capítulo de un Libro.
EL mayor logro ha sido la ceración del proyecto de investigación Cyberlab para el MEP.
Este proyecto sigue vigente por más de 10 años y es utilizado en todo el mundo por medio
de la Internet.