
Three Year-Olds Response To A Second Language

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Research and Multilingualism

- The answer to any research question is:
'It depends on.....'

The aspect of language examined

The language learning context

The language pair

Aspects of Spoken Language

□ Speech

- Articulation (/s/)
- Phonology (poon)

□ Grammar

- Morphology: plurals, tense
- Syntax: Rules for sentences

□ Meaning

- What words mean – ‘yesternight’
- What phrases mean – ‘stir the possum’ (idiom)

Catherine's Speech: A Case Study

- Born in Hong Kong
- At 6 months moved to Australia with parents and 2 brothers (8, 16)
- Cantonese spoken at home
- Exposed to English from 2;3

- Successive bilingual

Comparison of Two Phonologies

	<i>English</i>	<i>Cantonese</i>
□ Vowels and diphthongs	20	8
□ Word initial consonants	23	17
□ Final consonants	21	8
□ Consonant clusters	29	2
□ Lexical Tones (6+3)	None	9
□ Syllable/word structure	$C_{0-3}VC_{0-4}$	$C_{0-2}VC$

Catherine Started Childcare at 2;3

- Only English spoken at childcare.
- 18 hours a week
- Catherine had no English words

Data Collection

- After 3 months at childcare.
- At 4-week intervals in a 2 hour session.
- 10 times over 11 months (2;3 - 3;1).
- All assessments involved an adult interacting with Catherine.

Assessment (A_x) Sessions

- At A_x s 1 & 2, there were two SLTs: a native Cantonese and a native English speaker.
- Parents observed, and elicited Cantonese speech samples in subsequent A_x s.
- Sessions split into two blocks, with a gap between, one for Cantonese and one for English.

Speech Sample Data

- Spontaneous speech while playing
- Single word picture naming
- /kw/ is the only legal Cantonese cluster, so *quack*, *queen*, and *quiet* were included
- Initially, English words were imitated.

Stage 1: *2;3 to 2;6*

- Initial response to childcare was **silence**.
- She did not talk to teachers or other children for **SIX** months.
- But, Catherine participated and understood.
- Started to try out English words at home.
- Enthusiastic about Cantonese A_x but most English words were imitations.

Stage 2: 2;8 to 2;11

- Age appropriate English language comprehension.
- At 2;8 Catherine clearly said
"Who me? Couldn't be!"
at childcare in a game of *"Who stole the cookie from the cookie jar?"*
- Started to use English with others at childcare.
- In A_x , spontaneous English utterances increased.

Stage 3: 3;0-3;1

- In the final two assessment sessions:
 - increased willingness to interact in English
 - occasional English words in Cantonese A_x .
 - most English speech was spontaneous.

- Catherine made few speech errors in Cantonese.

Error Analyses: Cantonese and English

- ***Age appropriate***: like normally developing monolingual children of the same age;
- ***Delayed***: like normally developing monolingual children of a younger age;
- ***Atypical***: used by less than 10% of the normally developing monolingual population.

Cantonese Errors 2;3-3;1

- Up to 2;8 **ALL** speech errors were typical
- From 2;8 -3;1 some errors were atypical in Cantonese development

initial consonant deletion [ek] for /lek/	addition [tsip] for /tsi/
Voicing [van] for /fan/	Backing initial consonants [ki] fir /ti/
Aspiration [khi] for /ki/	/l, n, j/ confusion

English Errors 2;8-3;1

- From when Catherine began to speak English she made speech errors that are atypical of English development.

'backing' "back" for <i>bat</i>	'affrication' "watch" for <i>wash</i>
'voicing' "gat" for <i>cat</i>	'initial consonant deletion' "own" for <i>phone</i>
'addition' "geg" <i>egg</i>	

Summary for Catherine

- Atypical error patterns only appeared in Catherine's Cantonese after she began to speak English spontaneously.
- She used atypical error patterns in English as soon as she started using non-imitated speech.
- Atypical errors persisted longer in English than Cantonese but were transient in both languages.

Max

- Born in Hong Kong
 - Moved to Australia at 18 months
 - Only Cantonese spoken at home, parents and elder sister spoke English, but never at home, even after Max started childcare
- Childcare for 35 hours per week from 2;6

Max's Speech Development

- 5 atypical patterns in Cantonese at 2;9, three months after starting childcare
- 7 atypical patterns in English, many persisting when he was assessed at 3;6.
- He made fewer errors in Cantonese than English
- Max made more errors than Catherine did once she started to talk.

Max's Language Development

- ❑ Did not fall into clear-cut stages
- ❑ Copied the speech of other children
- ❑ Interacted easily /talked Chinglish loudly
- ❑ Used English in 3-5 word utterances within 3 months
- ❑ Performed about one year below his age at 3;0 on English comprehension assessments (which is excellent after 6 months exposure).

Two Main Learning Strategies

- Saville-Troike, 1988
- “Predominant focus on the message.”
(Max’s strategy)
- “Predominant focus on the language code.”
(Catherine’s strategy)

Real life is more complex ...

- In London, now, the SLTs face the challenge of providing services for children speaking scores of different languages.
- It is difficult to tell apart those children who have speech and language disorders from those who have had little exposure to English.
- Every child brings their own set of strategies to the problem of not speaking the ambient language.