

Repair in Children's Language Acquisition: Universal Principles and Patterns of Variation

Liudmyla Feurstein

University of Zurich, Zurich, Zurich, Switzerland

Sabine Stoll

University of Zurich, Zurich, Zurich, Switzerland

Abstract

We study repair in child-directed, child-surrounding and child speech in longitudinal corpora of 4 languages: English, Russian, Chintang and Indonesian (age range: 2;01-3;04). We distinguish open requests (e.g. 'huh?'), restricted requests (e.g. 'you saw what?'), and restricted offers (reformulation or recast, e.g. 'you saw a bird?'). Our results indicate that in the aggregated model, clarification requests develop in children independently from adult speech, pointing to early universal emergence. When we analyse repair types separately, only restricted offers in both CDS and CSS are significantly predictive factors for the number of reformulations in child speech. Since this repair type is used by caregivers to provide both positive and negative feedback to children, they follow a special path of acquisition dependent on input distributions. Therefore, we propose that early repair acquisition relies on individual cognitive development of children as well as language exposure to the recast frequency in the caregiver speech.