Paper Title: Similarities and differences: the acquisition of morphology in Japanese between simultaneous and successive bilingual children

Yuki Itani-Adams
The Australia National University

Junko Iwasaki
Edith Cowan University

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Abstract
This paper compares the acquisition of Japanese morphology of two bilingual children who had different types of exposure to the language, namely simultaneous and successive bilingual language acquisition. The study addresses one of the ongoing debates in the field of language acquisition, that is, “whether different types of language acquisition are guided by the same language learning mechanisms”. The comparison is carried out from a perspective of language processing capacity using Processability Theory (PT) (Pienemann, 1998, 2005) as a common framework.

PT is a language acquisition theory that incorporates the hierarchy of processing procedures described in Levelt’s (1989) model of language processor and the Lexical Functional Grammar (LFG) (Bresnan, 2001). PT explains morphological development for each processing procedure in terms of the exchange of grammatical information, based on LFG’s notion of feature unification. The theory hypothesizes that language learners develop their language skills in the following order: lemma > category procedure > phrasal procedure > S-procedure. Within the framework of PT, Di Biase and Kawaguchi (2002; forthcoming) predicted Japanese morphological structures for each processing procedure being: single words, formulas (Lemma) > verbal morphemes (category procedure) > V-te V structures (phrasal procedure) > Non-canonical case marking in constructions such as passive/ causative/ benefactive (S-procedure). In this paper we examine and compare the acquisition of these Japanese structures by the
simultaneous and successive bilingual children, and illustrate the similarities and differences between them.

The corpus for this study consists of the naturally spoken production of two Australian children. One of them is a balanced bilingual child who had exposure to both Japanese and English simultaneously within a one-parent-one-language environment from birth, where the mother is a Japanese native speaker and the father an English native speaker. The other child had exposure to Japanese from the age 6;03 (six years and three months) after he had already acquired his first language, English. At the age 6;03, this child began attending a school for Japanese children in Australia. His parents are both English-speaking Australian, and he grew up only in an English speaking environment, hence spoke no Japanese until his enrolment in this school. He learned Japanese in a natural language learning environment of the school. Data collection for the simultaneous bilingual child was conducted from 1;11 to 4;10, and from 7;0 to 8;09 for the successive bilingual child. For both children interaction between the child and other speakers of Japanese was audio-recorded and transcribed.

The results show that both children acquired the verbal morphological structures in Japanese following the order predicted in PT. This indicates that the same processing mechanisms are at work for both types of language acquisition. However, the results also indicate that there are some differences between the two children, for example, the rates of acquisition and the kinds of verbal morphemes acquired. These differences may be explained by the different levels of cognitive development due to their different ages and different types of input they received.