Review of: Time in Child Inuktitut: A Developmental Study of an Eskimo-Aleut Language

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The problem that won’t go away by Ásóom P. Sá-lem (157–76). Grammatical change (177–98) makes an attempt to capture the modal meanings of the subjunctive in Hindi using the formal apparatus of modal logics.

The last six chapters document how young children learning Inuktitut as a native language master increasingly more complex tense-aspect structures. The first verb forms acquired are zero-marked for tense-aspect. Among these, telic verbs tend to be used to express past completed events, while atelic verbs express present ongoing events. S shows how children later add suffixes marking viewpoint aspect, as well as suffixes marking degrees of temporal remoteness in the past or future. The results are particularly illuminating when compared to existing studies of European languages since this represents the first study of child acquisition of morphemes marking temporal remoteness. S uncovers a number of patterns that pose a challenge to previous assumptions about universal tendencies in child language acquisition. All of these, however, find explanation in light of the system of time reference characteristic of adult Inuktitut. For example, because Inuktitut encodes a basic future/nonfuture distinction rather than the more familiar past/nonpast dichotomy characteristic of European languages, the Inuit children surveyed naturally developed future markers before past markers. They also used overt past tense markers with atelic verbs first rather than with telic verbs. These findings contrast with studies based on the acquisition of European languages, where past tense marking with telic verbs is primary, and future markers appear later than markers of past tense. S’s results clearly testify to the importance of examining as broad a typological range of languages as possible before drawing conclusions about universal tendencies in child language acquisition.

The book ends with suggestions for future research, including the need to measure passive knowledge of tense reference mechanisms in young Inuit children, as well as to examine acquisition in older children acquiring Inuktitut as a native language. Finally, one can only hope this study will stimulate investigations into how children acquire other complex morphologies. [Edward J. Vaida, Western Washington University/Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology.]


This introduction to the pronunciation of English deals in turn with metric feet, stress, intonation, spelling-to-pronunciation rules, vowels, consonants, and finally, connected speech processes. What makes it rather unusual is not just the presentation of stress...