



Semantics and Morphology of Early Adjectives in First Language Acquisition

Sabrina Noccetti

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This book is about how toddlers learn their first adjectives, such as, for example, red, big and tasty.

Adjectives denote properties and enter child vocabularies later than words for objects (such as apple and tree) and actions (such as eat and run), probably due to lower frequencies in parental speech and greater conceptual complexity.

Adjective acquisition has received relatively little attention in child language research. Furthermore, cross-linguistic studies of adjective learning are virtually non-existent.

This book represents the first systematic analysis of how children learning typologically different languages acquire adjective form, function and meaning. The cross-linguistic comparisons undertaken in the book provide valuable insights into universal and language-specific aspects of language acquisition.

For each of the languages studied in this volume, the development of adjective semantics is studied in tandem with the development of morphology by testing two hypotheses: (a) the acquisition trajectory in the domain of adjectival morphology is determined by the typological properties of the target language;

(b) irrespective of the languages being acquired, adjective learning is facilitated by universal conceptual mechanisms such as comparison and contrast.

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