

How children with L1 and L2 German use pleonastic constructions to express PATH and GROUND in a serious-game based assessment tool

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In this talk, I will share work-in-progress from a study on children's expression of path (direction of motion) in L1 and L2 German. German employs various constructions for conveying path information, such as prepositional phrases (PP) or directional particles (PART). The study focuses on the German-specific pleonastic path construction (PLEO) in which the path information from the PP is duplicated in a PART and therefore appears somewhat pleonastic (e.g., *die Kinder rennen [in das Haus_{PP} rein_{PART}]_{PLEO}* lit. 'the children run in the house into'). PLEO are used mainly colloquially and have therefore received only little attention in the past literature. However, Bryant (2012) suggests that PLEO are motivated and used differently in the acquisition of German as a L1 and a L2. My study takes Bryant's observations as a starting point and aims at adding further to the investigation of this particular type of path construction. Findings may inform intervention materials supporting children's spatial language proficiency, a crucial skill linked to mathematical thinking and understanding (Möhring et al. 2021).

I will use (already transcribed) data from a 2019 conducted pilot testing (n=117) of a recently developed game-based language assessment tool for preschool children with German as a L1 and L2 (Roche et al., 2016) which provides children authentic communicative settings to evaluate their language capacities in the conceptually challenging domain of spatial language. Throughout the test, children are encouraged to instruct the main character (the dog *Wuschel*) to find lost items and to navigate through the game.

Theoretically grounded in usage-based approaches to language acquisition, the study will address children's use of PLEO quantitatively (e.g., Are there differences in the usage frequencies of PLEO between L1 and L2 children?) as well as qualitatively (Do we find semantically mis-matching PLEO in the data, e.g., *bei X drin* 'at X into'? Are they used by both L1 and L2 children, or rather only by L2 children?). The talk is intended to provide a basis for discussion for the projected study in terms of methodology and possible implications for future research on child language.

References:

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