

## **The validity of a parental-report measure of grammar in Czech: Acquisition of verb and noun forms**

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The parental-report method (e.g. Fenson et al., 1993, 2007) has been widely used for studying language acquisition in recent years. This method is predominantly used for assessment of vocabulary, nevertheless some aspects of grammar are assessed by parental reports as well. The main objective of our study is to further extend the use of parental reports to the assessment of function words and grammatical morphemes in a morphologically rich language such as Czech, and to examine the validity of this method for assessment of grammar. The paper is part of a larger project which additionally aims to obtain some descriptive data about the acquisition of grammar, since there is a lack of empirical research in Czech concerning this topic.

The study examines the acquisition of verb forms and case inflection of nouns spontaneously produced by children between 18 and 48 months of age. In Czech, there are three verb persons in singular and plural for each tense, as well as seven noun cases in singular and plural form (nom., gen., dat., acc., voc., loc., instr.). The data were collected through two web-based questionnaires completed by the children's mothers. Besides the grammatical phenomena, the questionnaires also included demographic questions about children and their family backgrounds. Overall, we collected data on 117 children for nouns. The data collection for verbs is still ongoing. We currently have data on 108 children.

The paper presents developmental data about acquisition of individual verb forms and noun cases. We determined the order of verb and noun forms acquisition using fixed effect estimates from mixed logistic models. The order will be more discussed in the paper. Furthermore, we used linear model analyses to examine the effects of various demographic factors on the order of acquisition, e.g. child's gender, birth order, parental education. Contrary to many studies (e.g. Bleses et al., 2008; and Arriaga et al., 1998), these demographic factors did not affect the acquisition of noun forms in our research. We expect to obtain similar results for verb forms.

In order to validate parental reports for the assessment of grammar, we compared our data from the parental-report questionnaires with the data from the transcripts of spontaneous mother-child conversations recorded at home (5 children studied longitudinally) and/or in lab settings (50 children). These studies included different children. We correlated the aforesaid fixed effect estimates for verb and noun forms obtained from the parental-report data with the frequency of the forms in the children's transcript data. The preliminary results showed that the data from the parental reports correlate with the data from the spontaneous speech samples (e.g. for noun forms, the correlation between the parental-report data and children's transcript data from the lab was 0.85).

The study indicates that the parental-report method is a satisfactory tool even for the assessment of acquisition of grammatical words and forms. This method at least captures a similar picture of developmental trends as spontaneous speech samples.

### **References**

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