Title

Verb arguments in Japanese picture books

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Abstract

Previous experiments have demonstrated that Japanese children can use the number of arguments and the case markers to learn novel verbs. However, these cues are mostly omitted in child-directed speech. We revisit this gap between the ability of children to use syntactic cues and the deficiency of such input by examining a different mode of input in the form of picture books. We built a Japanese picture book predicate-argument structure corpus containing annotations of predicate-argument structure and non-linguistic information. The analyses show that Japanese picture books contain more overt arguments and accusative case markers, and that these cues have significant influence on the prediction of verb transitivity. In addition, this study demonstrates that non-linguistic information (animacy and the numbers of potential referents) could help predict transitivity if learners are able to use these cues to infer the presence of null arguments.