The Acquisition of Clitics in Swahili

Kamil Ud Deen
kamil@hawaii.edu

The Study

Research Questions
1. When is SA acquired?
2. When is OA acquired?
3. When do children acquire the Specificity Condition on OA?

The Data
- Naturalistic data
- 4 children of varying ages
- Data collected in Nairobi, Kenya
- Transcribed, coded, verified by three native speakers.

Table 1: Subject Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Child 1</th>
<th>Child 2</th>
<th>Child 3</th>
<th>Child 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stage 1</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 2</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 3</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 4</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Table 2: Division of files into stages

- Files from Bawa 2-2-5
- Files from Bawa 2-2-6
- Files from Bawa 2-2-7
- Files from Bawa 2-2-8

Research Question 1: When is SA acquired?

- Lot's of Omission! (see figure 1)

Figure 1. Rate of SA in obligatory contexts.

Answer to Research Question 1:
SA is acquired relatively late - even by stage 4, children are only providing SA in about 70% of obligatory contexts.

Research Question 2: When is OA acquired?

The overall rate of OA in the corpora is relatively low, ranging from 5% to 16%.

Table 3: Rates of OA in each stage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Stage 1</th>
<th>Stage 2</th>
<th>Stage 3</th>
<th>Stage 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tokens of OA</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal complex remains a unit</td>
<td>99.60%</td>
<td>99.60%</td>
<td>99.60%</td>
<td>99.60%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

But this is meaningless, because these are not obligatory contexts.

Figure 2. Rate of OA in obligatory contexts.

Problem
How do you tell when specificity and OA are obligatory?
Context: a toy is on the bed near the child, and child says: “I want toy.”
Possible solutions:
- I want the toy
- I want that toy
- I want a toy
- I want any toy (just give me one!
- I want a different toy.

Specificity is hard to determine from naturalistic contexts.

Answer to Research Question 2:
Because OA is dependent on specificity, we can’t tell when OA is acquired (not from this data).

Figure 3. Rate of OA in Transitive and Intransitive Clauses

Conclusions

- OA is acquired relatively early, unlike SA.

References


Summary

1. Subject Clitic is AGREEMENT
2. Object Clitic is AGREEMENT
3. Specificity Condition applies to Object agreement.