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2018

https://hdl.handle.net/10539/28400

Judin, Simone Gene (2018) 2 A cross-linguistic analysis of predicate construction in early language development, , University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, <http://hdl.handle.net/10539/28400>

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A CROSS-LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF PREDICATE CONSTRUCTION IN EARLY LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

By

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Abstract

Early language and lexical acquisition is a field within psycholinguistics in which extensive research has been undertaken. In literature it is stated that children acquire their different linguistic categories in various stages during early language acquisition. One debate that has always existed, regarding the phases in which children learn language, involves the verb grammatical construction and other predicate structures. This research explores some of these well-known linguistic theories. In the study these theories are contrasted with empirical evidence from contemporary research on typologically different languages, in other words Italian, Japanese, Canadian English, Italian Sign Language and isiZulu. This report also contains a separate case study on isiZulu.

The assessment tool that was used to assess these languages is called Picture Naming Game (PiNG). It allows one to assess a child's predicate development in comprehension and production at the same time.

The contribution of the current study is to show that most of the above-mentioned languages prove what the universal theory reveals about predicate development. It highlights some language-specific semantic features. Overall, the study seeks to assess predicate development in young children and presents specific aspects of this development for isiZulu.