The order of acquisition of spatial prepositions in Russian

Grabovskaya M.A.

National Research University Higher School of Economics, Moscow, Russia

magrabovskaya@gmail.com

In Russian the location of the object is expressed by both prepositions and cases. Prepositions are acquired gradually (Leikin 1998). The purpose of this research is to study the age of acquisition of spatial prepositions and the order of this acquisition (the first stage described in (Grabovskaya 2015)¹). Two experiments were conducted: experiment on comprehension and experiment on production. Our expectation is to find the difference between ages which indicates the acquisition of the preposition. All respondents are Russian monolingual native speakers. The stimuli were a modified set of pictures from (Bowerman & Pederson 1992); some of the children participated in the experiment twice with a one year delay, the results from the second year are analyzed separately. The comprehension test had 35 participants (18 male; 20 children - 3 years old, 15 - 4 years old), 7 of them participated in the test twice. The study focused on the comprehension of the prepositions pered ‘in front of’, nad ‘above’ and za ‘behind’. The results were analyzed using logistic regression with age and gender as predictors; paired Student’s t-test was used to compare the results from the two stages of the experiment. Analysis using R indicates a significant difference between ages for the comprehension of pered ‘in front of’ (0,00846 **) which means the new level of acquisition of pered ‘in front of’ by 4 years. The prepositions nad ‘above’ and za ‘behind’ are not acquired by 4 years. The test on production had 37 participants 5-6 years old (analysis in process).

Keywords: language acquisition, spatial prepositions, Russian language

¹ The author would like to thank Tatyana Nikitina for helpful advices during the work on this project.