Elliptical constructions: a possible bridge between the two-word-stage and complete sentences at around age 24 months.
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¿WHAT IS ELLIPSIS?

ELLIPTICAL SENTENCES (EPS) = a part of the sentence is omitted which is being expressed simultaneously in the speech context and/or in the previous dialogic utterance. They are otherwise correct, fully grammatical sentences. Categorized as EPS.

4 EXAMPLES

Situational Ellipsis in child´s or mother´s speech

1- Mendía 10, age 1;9-1;10
*CHI: é: [: es] pú:a [: pupa]? (is an owie?)
[touches MOT´s arm]
CHI touches a hurt in mother´s arm and looks at her afterwards

2- Mendía 31, age 2;3
*MOT: ahí si cabe (it does fit there)
*CHI: ¿la pelota? (the ball?)
*MOT: la pelota (the ball)

Discoursive Ellipsis in child´s or mother´s speech

1-Mendía 25, age 2;1
CHI busca a su alrededor más pelotas (child is looking around her for more balls)
*MOT: a ver # más. (let´s see…more)
*MOT: más pelotas. (more balls)
*CHI: no hay. (there aren´t)

2-Mendía 31, age 2;3
*MOT: en este puzzle no se caen. (in this puzzle they don´t fall off)
*CHI: no.
*CHI: esa sí: (that one does)
*MOT: esa si se cae? (does that one fall off ?)

HYPOTHESIS

Expected at this ages, and mainly during 4 first Time slots (1;8 to 2;1), are one or two or multiword utterances with no syntactic organization ("two-word stage"): in our study: **NOR**

¿WHY LOOK AT ELLIPSIS DEVELOPMENT?
When coding data, too many *difficult-to-code* productions were found. Those were perfectly adult-like elliptical constructions. Aim at exploring their possible basic role in earliest syntactic development.

METHOD

-Dense longitudinal study <u>one</u> child learning Spanish (Madrid) during ages 20 to 27 months (data by Silvia Nieva 2008)
-Five points in Time: T1, T2, T3, T4 and T5. Roughly corresponding to ages 1;08 (T1), 1;09-1;10 (T2), 1;11 (T3), 2;01 (T4), and 2;03 (T5). Two or three successive 45 minute sessions* inside each T (time point). *one week separating each session.

Five Categories of Syntactic Construction:
1-NOR: (Non-Sentence. One, two or multiword utterances with no syntactic structure)
2-EPS: see above
3-NEP: an EPS which contains <u>one</u> morphosyntactic error;
4-PROTOR: an articulatory immature full sentence, only understandable by parents
5-ROR: fully developed correct sentence.

-Types and Tokens separated in all data counts, and in all analyses. Results similar in both cases
-"Imitated" and "Spontaneous" data separated in all data and all analyses. Results similar in both cases
-Statistiscal analyses on Syntactic Construction: Chi square analyses on Time (T1, T2, T3, T4, T5).
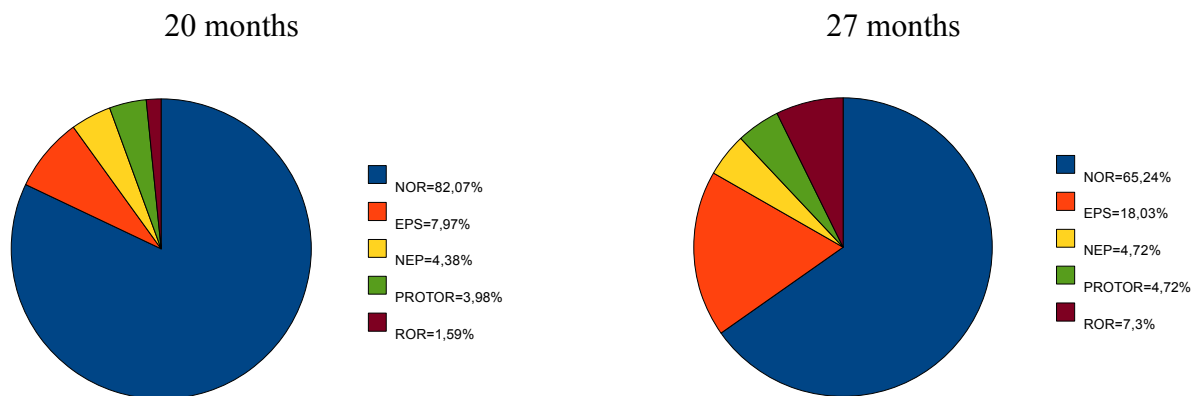

CONCLUSIONS

-The significant development of ***EPS*** suggests a new hypothesis on how might "two-word children" move into their first simple syntactically correct phrases.
-We do not suggest that in this T1-T5 period (1;8-2;3) the child "knows" the linguistic rules regulating the use EPS in Spanish. We assume these data on correct EPS production points to a child´s adaptation to her syntactic processing limits.
-We seem to have tapped on a process of **local** apprenticeship of syntactic construction. Presumably, the child will, little by little, learn to generalise and expand her EPS into full combinatorial sentences.
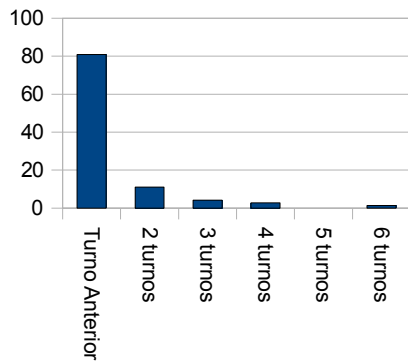

RESULTS

20 months

NOR=82,07%
EPS=7,97%
NEP=4,38%
PROTOR=3,98%
ROR=1,59%

27 months

NOR=65,24%
EPS=18,03%
NEP=4,72%
PROTOR=4,72%
ROR=7,3%

p<0,001

As expected, most of the child´s constructions at all these ages were NOR. These, as expected, **decrease** significantly along Time.
As non-expected, some child´s constructions at all these ages were EPS. These **increase** significantly along Time.

Discoursive EPS occurs mostly at the immediately next turn: only one turn of distance, though distances of 2 and more turns do exist.
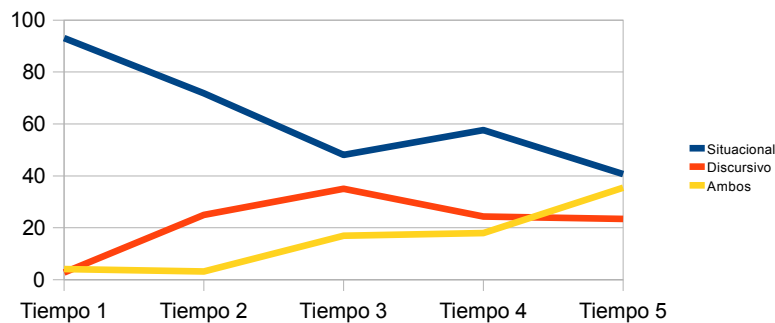
P<0,001

at T1 (age 1;8) **almost ALL Elliptical productions are situational**
at T2 (age 1;9-1;10) **discoursive Ellipsis significantly appears**
by T3, T4 and T5 (ages 1;11-2;3) the three types of EPS: discoursive, situational, both share the child´s EPS productions

➔ this movement from context-bound to discourse-bound points to underlying learning processes
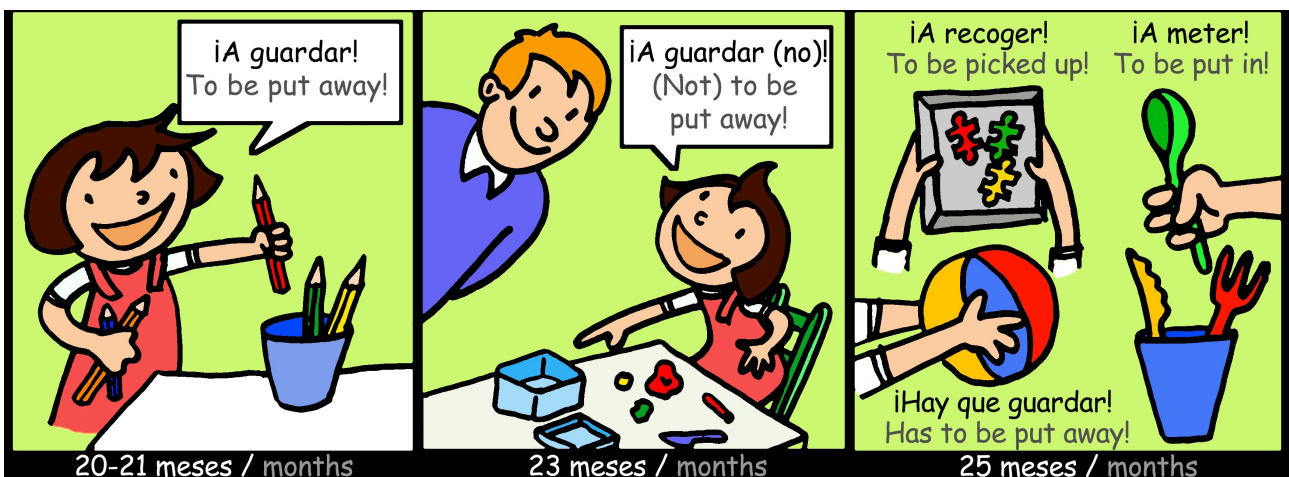
The follow-up of one single type (" a guardar") shows, at first, a very literal association between that type and **only one** specific situation. Along time two things change:
a) the contexts of use of "a guardar" generalize to novel relevant situations and
b) the types conveying the "a guardar" meaning are enriched with several other equivalent ones (*expressive options* Veneziano).

ERROR Analysis (NEP)

The morphosyntactic errors the child commits when attempting an EPS (the NEP category) are as frequent (very few) along ALL Times: always in the 4,3% to 8,9% range of total productions.

The nature of those errors, though, changes along Times, affecting a very rich variety of (mainly) morphological structures.

➔The change in grammatical error types along EPS development reflects parallel ongoing morphological learning processes.

FURTHER:

-EPS in mother´s speech to the child, during this same period

-EPS in equivalent French learning and English children

-What are the omitted categories, and what is their developmental pattern

-Are early T5 ROR (full sentences) an "expansion" of T3 and T4´s EPS?: an evaluation of a *frame & slot* (Lieven) syntactic learning hypothesis.

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