

# Development of Some Morphological Categories in Kannada : A Study of Children 6-8 Years Age Range\*

SUBRAMANYAIAH, M. G.

Morphological markers are used to indicate change in number, gender and tense. There are a number of morphological rules using which the morphological markers are applied to the original form. There are some rules which can be applied to all the forms of a particular grammatical category. But there are other rules which hold good for only certain forms. Children acquire these morphological rules during their language development and they learn to use these rules gradually. In our country no study has been done to study the development and usage of morphological rules in children. As speech and hearing experts, we require such information for various reasons :

- to provide additional scientific evidence on the acquisition patterns of different Indian languages ;
- to have a better understanding of different language systems of Indian languages ;
- for devising language tests ;
- to study dissolution of language in aphasics ;
- for construction of therapy materials.

In order to study the development of morphological rules in children, a test is necessary. In Kannada such a test was not available. Therefore, in the present study a test was constructed in Kannada using nonsense words. The study was conducted in four stages :

- \* Construction of nonsense words and selection of nonsense pictures.
- \* Pilot study to evaluate the effectiveness of the test.
- \* Modification of the test.
- \* Administration of the test.

The test used in the present study was based on the "Wag Test" originally developed by Jean Berko (1958).

The test used to identify the development and usage of morphological rules consisted of picture cards of animals, and human beings with a sentence which depicted the picture.

For the purpose of the study thirty-two children of two age groups (6-7 years and 7-8 years), sixteen children in each group (eight boys and eight girls) and sixteen adults were tested to identify the development and usage of morphological rules in Kannada language. In the present study the application of morphological rules for three items were studied (plural, gender and tense). Children served as the experi-

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mental group and the adults as control group.

Cloze technique was used to elicit the responses from children. The responses were written.

Results of this study revealed that in case of plural allomorphs /gaļu/ was predominantly used by the children. /aru/ and /andiru/ allomorphs were not acquired in the children in the age range of 6-8 years. The order of acquisition of plural allomorphs was /gaļu/, /aru/ and /andiru/.

In case of gender allomorphs /-i/ and /aļu/ allomorphs were predominantly used by the children. The children had difficulty with /-e/ allomorph. The children had not acquired /-giṭṭi/ allomorph in the age range of 6-8 years. The order of acquisition of gender allomorphs was /-i/, /aļu/, /-e/ and /giṭṭi/.

In case of tense allomorphs children showed the ability to use future and past tense allomorphs. The rules for using these allomorphs will not be generalized in the age range of 6-8 years. The rules for tense allomorphs seemed to be more difficult to acquire than the allomorphs of number and gender.

The hypothesis that children acquire all the morphological rules for using plural allomorphs, gender allomorphs and tense allomorphs and use them appropriately by the age of six years was rejected.

The hypothesis that cultural differences affect the ability to apply morphological rules to unfamiliar situations could not be established.

The ability to use the morphological rules in case of irregular forms is limited was accepted.

## Conclusions

\*\* In case of plural allomorphs :

- (a) /gaļu/ allomorph was predominantly used by the children.
- (b) /aru/ and /andiru/ allomorphs were not acquired in children in the age range of 6-8 years.

\*\* In case of gender allomorphs :

- (a) /-i/ allomorph was predominantly used by children in the age range of 6-8 years.
- (b) /-e/ allomorph was used less frequently in children in the age range of 6-8 years.
- (c) /-giṭṭi/ allomorph was not acquired by the children in the age range of 6-8 years.

\*\* Tense allomorphs were more difficult to use than the other allomorphs of other categories namely, plural and gender.

\*\* There was a gradual improvement in the performance of children across the age groups.

## Recommendations

- (1) To study large number of children of different age groups.
- (2) To study the acquisition pattern of all the morphological rules of different grammatical categories.
- (3) To study the effect of bilingualism on morphological development.
- (4) To study the morphological development in children of different socio-economic status.
- (5) To study the usage of /aļu/ allomorph which is used to indicate feminine gender.