

ACQUISITION OF MORPHOLOGICAL RULES FOR PLURAL ALLOMORPHS IN KANNADA—A PILOT STUDY

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Abstract

This study was conducted to evaluate the acquisition of morphological rules in children using a test developed in Kannada. This test is based on the "Wug Test" developed by Jean Berko in English. Fourteen children (seven boys and seven girls) were used as subjects. The age range of these children was 9-10 years. Three kinds of plural allomorphs which are used by both adults and children to indicate plural forms were studied. 'Cloze' technique was used to assess knowledge of morphological rules. The results have been analysed and discussed.

Introduction

Morphological markers are used to indicate a change in gender, tense, number and case, etc. There are a number of morphological rules which govern the usage of various morphological markers. There are some morphological rules which can be applied to all forms of a particular grammatical category. On the other hand, there are few rules which are applicable to only few forms of a particular grammatical category. Children acquire these rules gradually during their language development.

In our country studies have not been done on the acquisition of morphological rules in children.

The present pilot study was an attempt to evaluate the development of morphological rules (plural markers) in children whose mother-tongue is Kannada language.

For the purpose of evaluation of acquisition of morphological rules in children, a test is necessary. In our country such a test was not available neither in Kannada nor in any of the Indian languages.

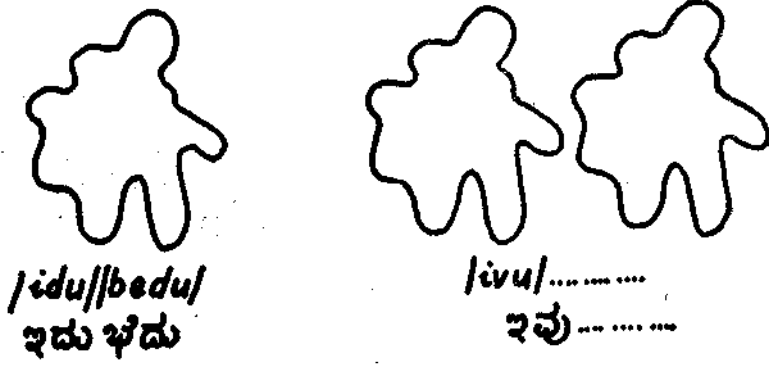
As part of the study a picture word test was constructed based upon 'Wug Test' originally developed by Jean Berko.

Methodology

In order to construct a test to evaluate the knowledge of morphological rules under varying phonological conditions, a number of nonsense words were made

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up using phonotactic rules of Kannada language. For the purpose of construction of nonsense words only CVCV combinations have been used. Later, pictures to represent these nonsense words were drawn. Even pictures used were also nonsense pictures.



In this study three kinds of plural allomorphs were studied, which are frequently used by children and adults whose native language is Kannada. These are /galu/, /aru/ and /andiru/ allomorphs. Geometrical forms which did not have any resemblance to the actual pictures were drawn on one side of the page and by the side of this picture sentences were written which included nonsense word as a key word. Only singular forms of these key words were written and the plural forms of these key words were left blank.

The children were expected to predict the missing forms using the knowledge of the morphological rules already have and with the help of these pictures, i.e., Cloze Technique was used to assess knowledge about morphological rules of Kannada language.

The subjects included fourteen children, seven boys and seven girls. The age range of these children was 9 to 10 years. These children were studying in V standard, whose native language was also Kannada.

Results and Discussion

. In Kannada language the plural forms are indicated by adding /galu/, /aru/; and /andiru/ allomorphs to singular forms.

Table showing different responses given by children

Expected response from children	Percentage of correct responses	Responses other than expected response
1. bedugalu	100%	
2., thangagalw	92.86%	tangaru (7.14%)
3. rugugaju	85.71%	ruguru (14.28%)
4. da: rugalu	92.86%	da : ram (7.14%)
5. faiyegalu	85.71%	faiyeru (14.28%)
6. gamsuga(u)	78.57%	

	2. /aru/allomorph		
1. peteyaru	—	petegaḷḷ	(92.86%)
2. fenyaru	—	tɛnigalḷ	(100%)
3. jusiyaru	7.14%	jusigalḷ	(85.71%)
4. kaifaru	14.28%	kaifagalḷ	(78.57%)
5. Chetiyaru	14.28%	chetigalḷ	(78.57%)
	3. landirujallomorph		
1. to: ʔandiru	—	to: sḷgalḷ	42.85%
		to: sḷru	21.42%
2. ju: kandiru	—	ju: kagalḷ	71.42%
		ju: karu	21.42%
3. tɛchandiru	—	tɛchagalḷ	64.28%
		tɛcharu	7.14%
4. dɔwkandiru	—	dɔwkagalḷ	42.85%
		dɔwkaru	42.85%
5. dɔwtḷandiru	—	dɔwt ḷrugalḷ	7.14%
		dɔwtḷaru	28.57%
6. lannandiru	—	lannagalḷ	35.71%
		lannarugalḷ	7.14%
		lannaru	28.57%

All but four children used *the/galḷ*/ form correctly. These four children used */aru*/ instead of */galḷ*/ in all the conditions. Most of the children did not have any difficulty with this form. They not only used */galḷ*/ form appropriately but also used this form in places where other forms were expected.

Four out of fourteen children used */ara*/form appropriately. Most of the children used */galḷ*/ instead of *\aru*.

All the children had difficulty with */andiru*/ form. In place of */andiru*/ they used either *\aru* or */galḷ*/ forms. Here also they used *mostly/galḷ/ form*. */andiru*/ is restricted in its use in the sense it is suffixed to words denoting kinship relations. This restriction in its domain might have contributed to this difficulty.

The poor performance by the children may not have been wholly due to lack of knowledge of these rules but may have been due to other factors also.

(a) The pictures were not real pictures. Perhaps they might not have been meaningful to the children. They could not get any clue out of these nonsense pictures.

(b) The children exhibited difficulty with the pictures in differentiating between animals and people. They also had difficulty in differentiating between animates and inanimates.

(c) The pictures as well as the key words were nonsense ones. Because of this, perhaps the task was complicated to the children.

(d) Because the children were expected to respond in writing, instead of responding to key words, they responded to other words.

(e) Another problem was the pictures were not drawn individually. Several pictures were drawn together. The response to one set of pictures might have influenced the responses to other set of pictures,

(f) When the children are expected to respond in writing, perhaps this might have led to a formal testing situation and thus the performance of the children might have been affected.

The study will be continued with certain modifications of the test, In the modified test the following changes will be made:

- (a) The children will be asked to respond orally instead of in writing.
- (b) Meaningful pictures will be drawn instead of nonsense pictures.
- (c) Pictures will be drawn individually each one of them on a separate card.
- (d) Practice trial will be given instead of starting with the real test directly.

However, with the help of the available data, a general hierarchy in terms of substitution may be suggested.

/gal u/ occurs wherever */gal u/* should occur

/aru/ may be substituted by */gal u/*

/andiru/ may be substituted by */aru/*

This phenomenon suggests the manner by which the equilibrium is upset and also the process of how equilibrium is slowly regained.

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