

Acquisition of Russian embedded yes-no questions by monolinguals and heritage speakers

In this paper, typical development and the role of bilingualism in acquisition of Russian embedded yes-no questions is investigated. This construction involves focus-driven movement in Russian, but not in English. Another such construction in Russian, multiple *wh*-fronting, is not fully acquired even at age 6 (Grebenyova, 2012), therefore, late acquisition of embedded yes-no questions can be expected.

In the preferred structure for embedded yes-no questions in Russian (1), the complementizer *li* cliticizes on the focused element moved to Focus Phrase in the left periphery (Schwabe, 2004). There is also a colloquial structure without a complementizer, not fully embedded, preserving interrogative intonation.

- (1) Ja sprosi-l det-ey, l'ub^j-at li oni ščita-t^j.
I ask-PAST children-ACC like-3SG LI they count-INF
'I asked (the) children if they like to count'

In Experiment 1, 24 Russian monolingual 5-8 year olds, 24 same-age heritage speakers of Russian in Toronto, Canada, and eight Russian adults in Russia converted direct questions into embedded ones in an elicited production task. Adults produced *li* most of the time. Monolingual children produced mostly the no-complementizer structure, sometimes with focus movement. Bilinguals produced both the no-complementizer structure (never with focus movement) and an ungrammatical English-like structure, overextending the conditional complementizer *yesli* and the structure associated with it to embedded questions.

Experiment 2 was a combined imitation-correction task: repeating sentences if correct, and correcting if incorrect. Stimuli included grammatical and ungrammatical embedded questions. In addition, the subjunctive clitic *by* was included to test clitic placement; multiple *wh*-fronting, to test focus movement; case and agreement, to test general grammatical knowledge in Russian. Adults never omitted *li*, and almost always inserted it in no-complementizer sentences. Both child groups omitted *li* (22-30%), and inserted it in no-complementizer sentences less often. Both child groups produced no-complementizer sentences at the same rate (both when imitating them and when omitting *li*), but monolinguals produced *li* more often than bilinguals. The latter showed English influence, sometimes replacing *li* or no-complementizer structures with *yesli*; monolinguals never did this. All bilinguals accepted at least some sentences with *yesli*, while monolinguals rarely accepted them. Mastery of clitic insertion and focus movement predicted development of *li*, but not use of *yesli* in bilinguals.

Therefore, the embedded yes-no questions first emerge in the no-complementizer form. Focus movement is mastered before *li*. Acquisition of the structure with *li* is not complete in the early school age, and bilinguals show a delay and interference.