

ABSTRACT

Simultaneous Acquisition and the Bioprogram:
A Case Study

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This study examines a child's simultaneous acquisition of English and Spanish articles, past marking, progressive marking, and the acquisition of the *ser-estar* distinction in Spanish, with particular reference to Bickerton's Language Bioprogram Hypothesis.

The analysis of article development shows the initial syntax to consist of a single system. There were no functors except for a relational filler syllable, [e], used ubiquitously. Gradually this filler was restricted to article environments, and finally represented English articles only.

The process of article development followed Slobinian Operating Principles. The strategies of "flooding" and "trickling" were also used. These represented the changing hypotheses of the language acquirer.

Both past and progressive forms were acquired by memorization for some time before productive rules were formulated.

In a general way, the bioprogram categories of specific-nonspecific, punctual-nonpunctual, and state-process were relevant to the child-language corpus examined: Specific references emerged before nonspecific references, punctual events before nonpunctual past events, and process verbs before statives. However, no evidence

was found supporting Bickerton's claim that the bioprogram seeks ways to keep the categories formally apart.

The distinction between *ser* and *estar* is related to the state-process distinction. Acquisition of this distinction among monolingual Spanish-speakers is error-free, which could constitute evidence for the state-process distinction. Acquisition by the child of this study was not error-free: The distinction was at first conflated as it is in English.

If a bioprogram for language does exist that is manifested in creoles originally formed from insufficient input, it is argued that evidence is less likely to be found in bilingual acquisition. The more types of input there are the more child language will be skewed in the direction of the input languages.