

‘Wenn du deine Augen zumachst, dann kann dich keiner sehen.’

On the semantics of conditionals in L1 acquisition

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Among the most recent attempts to explain the semantics of conditional clauses is the analysis as referential (or definite) descriptions of possible worlds (cf. Schlenker 2004, Bhatt and Pancheva 2006, Schulz 2012). It is based on several commonalities between (free) relative clauses (RC) and conditional clauses (CC) (i.e. *abstraction over variables*, *Condition C effects*, *correlative structures* and functionality as (*sentence*) *topics* (cf. Schlenker 2004, Bhatt and Pancheva 2006). The main scope of my work is to investigate, whether the very assumptions based on this theory are reflected in and supported by early language acquisition data.

To this end, I analyze the most dense German L1-corpus (Leo on CHILDES) (cf. Behrens 2006). In this talk, I present the results of my investigation concentrating on structural parallels between CCs and RCs as well as on the order and the course of acquisition of CCs and RCs, with a special focus on correlative structures (called CRC and CCC, respectively). It will be shown that most of the acknowledged parallels between CCs and RCs can be observed in the course of L1 acquisition. When analyzing the data however also surprising findings showed up: In contrast to what is suggested in the literature (Bhatt and Pancheva 2006), both RCs and CCs occur in the Leo corpus in structures which should, in principle, give rise to Condition C effects. Because these effects are unexpected in the corpus, they will require further discussion.

All in all my presentation provides new evidence from L1 acquisition data which, in principle, can be taken to support the referential approach to CCs. This is perhaps most evident with respect to the order and the course of acquisition of (C)RCs and (C)CCs.

References: Behrens, H. (2006): The input-output relationship in first language acquisition. *Language and Cognitive Processes* (21). 2–24. • Bhatt, R. & Pancheva, R. (2006): Conditionals. In: *The Blackwell Companion to Syntax*, Everaert, M. & van Riemsdijk, H. (eds.). Blackwell Publishing. • Schlenker, P. (2004): Conditionals as definite descriptions (a referential analysis). *Research on Language and Computation*

2(3). 417-62. • Schulz, K. (2012): *The semantic anatomy of conditional sentences*. ms.