Chapter 1

Language Acquisition/Emergence in HPSG

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1 Introduction

HPSG inherited from GPSG a distaste for grandiose cognitive posturing and this applies in particular to language acquisition, where its practitioners have, on the whole, preferred to adopt an agnostic view towards the grand questions like nativism, inspired by Chomskyan assumptions (Chomsky 1965; Snyder 2007), v. emergentism/the usage based approach (Tomasello 2003).

Given certain foundational assumptions, one might assume that HPSG practitioners have a certain sympathy to emergentism: much nativist argumentation takes a transformational perspective as given and is based strongly on the *argument from the poverty of stimulus* the basis for which is highly questionable (A. Clark & S. Lappin 2010). Moreover, the nativist approach assumes the autonomy of syntax, whereas the usage–based approach takes constructions, conventionalized form-function units, as basic (though see (Bod 2009) for a withering critique); for nativism the role of learning is limited to words and how these relate to Universal Grammar , whereas the usage-based approach highlights the importance of domain-general learning mechanisms such as analogy, entrenchment, and automatization (Diessel 2013).

As things stand, however, neither nativist, nor the usage-based approach has advanced an explicit theory that would enable one to make clear predictions about how the grammatical system of a child evolves at various points as a result

of conversational interaction with her carers or as an observer of such conversations.

A potential challenge for frameworks like HPSG that aspire to provide broad coverage is to postulate both initial and end states for the grammar and combine this with a learning theory to yield a predictive theory of language acquisition/emergence. Needless to say, this challenge has not, as yet, been tackled in a large scale fashion. The rest of this chapter will, nonetheless, consider a few examples of components of such an enterprise, involving both HPSG and compatible frameworks.

2 Grammar Dynamics

Green (2011)

    Villavicencio (2011)

    DOP-HPSG: Arnold & Linardaki (2007) building on Bod & Kaplan (1998) which itself builds on Bod (1998)

    Grammar induction: Alexander Clark & Shalom Lappin (2013); Kolodny, Lotem & Edelman (2015); Kwiatkowski et al. (2012)

3 Empirical Studies of L1 and L2 acquisition using HPSG

3.1 Early child grammars

Wintner, Lavie & MacWhinney (2009)

    Ginzburg & Moradlou (2013); Moradlou & Ginzburg (2014)

3.2 The emergence of Non Sentential utterances

Ginzburg & Kolliakou (2009; 2018)

3.3 L2 and HPSG

Mellow (2006)

4 Prospects

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