

From Syntax to Discourse



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This book investigates typical phenomena of early child language from a cross-linguistic perspective. The investigation centers on the acquisition of pronominal clitics in production and comprehension, and especially on the well-known phase of infinitive production and subject omission. Other areas such as early negation and question-formation are treated in the context of the above phenomena. The book provides a unique comparative database for these areas of language acquisition from the point of view of Romance and Germanic languages in presenting results on Danish, Dutch, English, French, German, and other languages. On the basis of these broad and detailed empirical results, the author proceeds to evaluate current models and hypotheses advanced for the above phenomena from a theoretical perspective. A formal investigation of the semantics and pragmatics of pronouns and tense leads to the conclusion that discourse anchorage, which is problematic for young children, is mediated by syntax and by functional material in particular so that the development of the syntax-discourse interface is largely driven by developments in syntax. In relating

unusually comprehensive cross-linguistic child data to unusually fine-grained formal analyses, the book thus succeeds in providing new insights not only into language development but also into linguistic theory.

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