The Construction of Hungarian Grammar: Insights from Language Acquisition Research

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Although cross-linguistic research has long been central to the study of language acquisition, Finno-Ugric languages have been relatively underrepresented. In recent decades, research on Hungarian has increased significantly, offering important data on typologically diverse developmental patterns and on how language-specific features influence morphosyntactic development. With its rich inflectional morphology and discourse-configurational syntax, Hungarian provides a useful context for examining how children acquire grammar in a language structurally different from widely studied Indo-European languages.

This talk draws on findings from experimental studies, naturalistic corpora, longitudinal data, and standardised assessments to examine how Hungarian-speaking children acquire key elements of morphosyntax. Topics include early morphological productivity, morphophonological variation and allomorphy, developmental shifts in cue use for thematic role assignment, the acquisition of verbal agreement and aspectual marking, and the development of focus and topic structures. The talk also addresses methodological difficulties in studying languages with rich morphology and flexible word order. Data from both typically developing children and those with language disorders show how general learning mechanisms interact with the specific grammatical features of Hungarian.

The findings presented in this talk give an overview of how children acquire grammar in Hungarian, and also point to the importance of including typologically varied languages in acquisition research. It also offers a glimpse into a new volume on *First language acquisition in Finno-Ugric languages (Kirjavainen, Lukács, Vihman)*, which presents a broader survey of phonological, lexical, and morphosyntactic development across Finnish, Estonian, Hungarian, and North Saami.