

The expression of temporal relations by Thai and English children and adults.

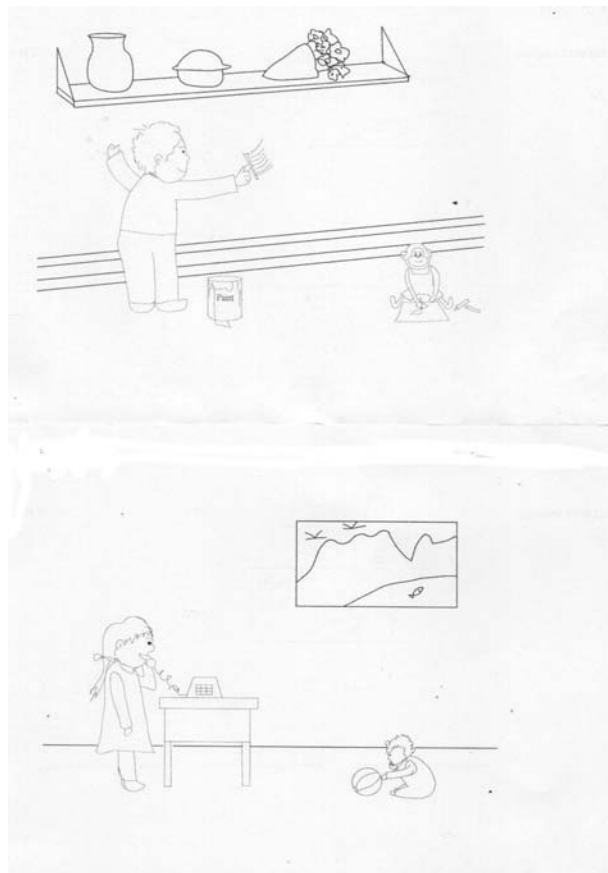
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Abstract

In relation to *thinking-for-speaking*, research has focused on the spatial domain, in particular Satellite- and Verb- framed languages (e.g. Slobin 1996, 2003, 2004), however, much less attention has focused on the temporal domain. In the temporal domain two distinct language typologies have been identified, based on whether languages have grammatical marking of both poles of the imperfective-perfective aspectual contrast or not (Berman & Slobin 1994). In Spanish, Turkish and English which have distinct grammatical or obligatory marking of the imperfective-perfective aspectual contrast, narrators tend to make use of these options to encode overlapping events depicted in Pictures 2 and 12 of the *frog story* picture book. In contrast, in German and Hebrew, which lack this aspectual contrast, but instead have the option to mark this aspectual distinction through other more indirect linguistic means, narrators tend not to distinguish the temporal contours of the overlapping temporal events depicted. In addition, German and Hebrew narrators do not tend to “compensate” using other devices, such as temporal connectives or adverbials. Hence, there appear to be differences in what temporal experiences are encoded by speakers from these two language typologies. Thai offers an interesting comparison as it has a rich aspectual system including the imperfective-perfective contrast, but aspectual marking is not obligatory (Koenig & Muansuwan, in press).

Data will be presented on how Thai in comparison to English children and adults express temporal relations. Instead of a picture book, short animations depicting varying degrees

of overlap between two actions were used to elicit spoken language from ten Thai and ten English speaking children from each of the following age groups; 4 years, 5 years, 6 years and 7 years and a comparison adult group. The animations are for example of ‘a person painting a wall and a monkey painting on a piece of paper’, or in another animation ‘a girl is talking on the phone and a baby crawls into the room and plays with a ball then exits’ (see pictures below). The different patterns and linguistic devices that children use at different ages to express these temporal relations will be compared and contrasted in these two typologically distinct languages. This forms part of a larger cross-linguistic study.



References

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