

Samoan Ergatives: Analysis and acquisition

Full presentation

Dr. Helen Charters
University of Auckland.

Processability Theory (PT) is a theory of language acquisition which seeks to account for the order in which syntactic structures emerge in the spontaneous speech of learners in terms of the relative processing demands of different structures (Pienemann, 1998, 2005), as predicted by structural analysis in the formal framework of LFG (Bresnan, 1982, 2001). To date, PT has been applied primarily to Nominative-Accusative languages of Indo-European origins. This paper reports on an analysis of data from child speakers of an Ergative Austronesian language, Samoan in the framework of LFG.

In particular, it considers how we might explain the relatively early emergence of certain ergative-marked structures of Samoan in terms of their semantic and pragmatic characteristics, rather than syntactic processing.

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Contact Details

Helen Charters

DALSL

University of Auckland, Private Bag 92019 +649 373 7599 extn. 87086

H.charters@auckland.ac.nz