Bilingual children's reuse of formulaic phrases encountered in storybook reading: the effect of rich definition, parental reuse, and parent-initiated reuse

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Abstract: The aim of the study is to examine the effects of several variables on children's learning and re-use of formulaic phrases. Within the context of an ongoing longitudinal study of the language development of my own four French-English bilingual children, with emphasis on the role of stories, songs, rhymes, television and cinema for children, the study presented here compares the effects on the acquisition of formulaic phrases of different techniques used during and after storybook reading. Two storybooks were read to the children over the same period of time. While reading the first storybook, I provided rich definitions of selected formulaic phrases (definitions, synonyms, referring to illustrations, gestures, giving examples of usage). I then reused the phrases in other contexts, and organized a role-play. None of these techniques were used with the second storybook. Two stories were selected for similar themes, characters, length of text and target audience. Reading sessions and the role-play were filmed and transcribed. Parental reading techniques and examples of children's reuse are analysed and the relationship between the two is discussed. The relationship between formulaicity and the acquisition of phrases is discussed in terms of the study described here as well as in view of applications to classroom-based second language learning.

Résumé: Le but de ce travail est d'examiner les effets de quelques variables sur l'apprentissage et la réutilisation par des enfants des séquences préfabriquées. Faisant partie d'une étude de cas longitudinale du développement langagier des mes quatre enfants bilingues français-anglais, avec une attention particulière au rôle des contes, comptines, chansons, de la télévision et du cinéma pour enfants, l'étude présentée dans cet article compare les effets sur l'acquisition de séquences préfabriquées que peuvent avoir différentes techniques employées pendant et après la lecture partagée d'albums. Les enfants ont écouté la lecture de deux albums durant une période donnée. Pendant la lecture du premier album, j'ai fourni aux enfants des définitions riches d'une sélection de séquences préfabriquées (définitions, synonymes, référence aux illustrations, gestes, exemples d'usage). Ensuite, j'ai réutilisé les séquences dans d'autres contextes, et organisé un jeu de rôle. Aucune de ces techniques étaient employées lors de la lecture du deuxième album. Les deux albums ont été sélectionnés pour les thématiques, personnages, longueurs de texte, et lecteurs cibles similaires. Les séances de lecture et de jeu de rôle ont été filmé puis transcrites. Les techniques de lecture parentales et les exemples de réutilisation par les enfants sont analysés et le rapport entre les deux sont discutés. Le lien entre la nature préfabriquée de séquences et l'acquisition de séquences de mots est traité dans le contexte de la présente étude et en vue d'une éventuelle application en didactique des langues.

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Mots clés : acquisition bilingue, définitions riches, didactique des langues, lecture d'albums, séquences préfabriquées.

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1. Introduction

Over the past century, many studies have documented and analysed the acquisition of two languages by young children. While research has taken into account the role of input in the acquisition process, up till now no studies have been carried out to examine the precise role of Musical, Audio-visual, Poetic and Narrative Input on the acquisition and development of bilingual child language. This particular type of input, which will be referred to with the acronym MAPNI, forms the framework for a longitudinal study I am carrying out into the relationship between input and language production in my own four children, all simultaneous French-English bilinguals growing up in France in a bilingual family context. MAPNI refers to sources of input such as stories, songs, rhymes and television for children. The study was inspired by observations of the children's reuse, in their own utterances, of language encountered in such sources, most specifically formulaic phrases. The emphasis is on the children's experience and development of English, since they are growing up in a French-dominated environment where most of their input in English comes from myself or MAPNI. Therefore, I propose that MAPNI provides a framework within which the relationship between input and language acquisition can be examined since it facilitates the identification of probable sources of linguistic input in the analysis of the children's speech.

As part of my ongoing longitudinal research, I carried out a smaller, more controlled, experimental study which is the object of the present paper. For this study, my aim was to examine whether parental reading techniques in explaining target phrases and parental reuse of the phrases in other contexts can help the children to learn new phrases. The focus on the learning of phrases, rather than words, is important, since my observations of the children's language development points to the significant role of phrases, including formulas, in that process and so the linguistic theory of formulaic language is a central aspect of my work. I hope that the present study will also make a contribution to research into the effects of storybook reading on the acquisition of phrases by young bilinguals. I have not yet come across any studies which specifically examine the effect of home reading practices on the acquisition of vocabulary by young children in a bilingual family context. Furthermore, research into vocabulary learning has so far not only focused mostly on monolingual children in classroom contexts, but it has also examined the learning of single words, not phrases.

1.1 Studies in vocabulary learning

According to Weizman and Snow (2001) the variability in total vocabulary acquisition across children of the same age can be explained by differences in the amount of input to which children are exposed during their early years so that greater lexical input leads to larger vocabulary. “Early vocabulary development has been linked to participation in social interactional routines, in particular book-reading (Ninio, 1980, 1983; Ninio &Bruner, 1978) and to routinised games between mother and young child (Bruner, 1975, 1983; Ratner &

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Bruner, 1978) in which the child has predictable expectations and interpretable contexts in which to use new lexical items. Scaffolded social and personal instruction within the child's zone of proximal development can contribute critically to a child's vocabulary acquisition (Vygostky 1978)" (Weizman and Snow 2001: 266). Low-frequency or sophisticated vocabulary learning is fostered by contextually supportive settings, such as book-reading and joint attention episodes, particularly when accompanied by discussion of meaning and repeated and varied exposure. Research centred on the frequency of book reading has shown that "a relation exists between frequency of being read to and children's later receptive vocabulary, verbal precocity, and knowledge of print" (Reese and Cox: 20). Reese and Cox's study into the effect of adult book reading on children's emergent literacy focuses on the effect of quality rather than frequency. Specifically, they look at "the potential benefits of children's interactions with an adult reader during book reading"(p. 20). Of relevance to the present study is their review of research into the variety of adult reading styles with young children, including dialogic book-reading style (Whitehurst et al. 1988; Whitehurst, Arnold, et al 1994; Whitehurst, Epstein et al. 1994), describer style, comprehender style, and performance-oriented style (Haden, Reese, Fivush 1996) Reese and Cox point out that "the styles vary on two critical dimensions: the demand level and the placement of commentary during reading" (p. 21).

Molly F. Collins' 2010 article 'ELL preschoolers' English vocabulary acquisition from storybook reading' is an important reference for the present study. Collins investigates the effects of rich explanation, baseline vocabulary, and home reading practices on sophisticated vocabulary learning from storybook reading. The participants of the study were 4- and 5-year-old native Portuguese speakers who were English language learners (ELL) in the United States. In the review section, Collins points out that the acquisition of vocabulary from storybook reading is well documented in native English speakers in preschool, kindergarten and third grade contexts. Studies have reported positive effects of both implicit exposure and explicit teaching followed by the use of new vocabulary in curricular activities. Also, preschool exposure to rare vocabulary and supportive talk about words with adults affects kindergarten vocabulary which later influences reading comprehension. Collins reports on classroom-based research into factors that affect vocabulary acquisition in young monolinguals such as the number of exposures to a word, the provision of explanation and prior general vocabulary knowledge. She states that these factors also play a role when reading takes place in the home, and suggests that more work is needed on the nature of home reading practices in the domain of English language learners' vocabulary learning. The participants in Collins' study were mostly children of Portuguese immigrants who spoke no or little English at home. Collins' experimental protocol "consisted of the researcher providing rich definitions of inserted target vocabulary during the reading of the story. Rich definitions consisted of the following:

1. pointing to the illustration of the target word
2. providing a general definition of the word
3. providing a synonym
4. making a gesture of the word, when applicable

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5. using a word in a context different from that of the book"(p. 88)

Collins selected as her target vocabulary rare words that would be unfamiliar to the children and inserted them into the text of eight picture books. "The control protocol consisted of the researcher's reading the text with inserted target vocabulary words but without providing any components of the rich input described above" (*ibid*). Vocabulary tests were carried out before and after the period of reading. In addition, questionnaires on home reading practices were completed by the parents, which Collins analysed with a focus on frequency of reading and language of reading. "Results show that home reading frequency impacts new word learning by influencing L2. In effect, the more one reads, the more developed the L2, which affects sophisticated vocabulary learning...No effects were found when language of home reading was in Portuguese only or, unexpectedly, in both Portuguese and English" (p. 92). For Collins, her results suggest that "L1 lexical knowledge..does not influence L2 target vocabulary acquisition when L2 targets are not cognates of words in the L1" (p. 94). She also identifies rich definition as being "the strongest contributor" to target word learning. Among the other factors she discusses are motivation to learn new words and memory. "The demands of memory would seem to be higher for second language learners than for monolinguals, given that children must create two lexicons - one in each language – of sufficient breadth and depth to support the addition of more sophisticated words in both languages" (*ibid*). While the question of bilingual cognitive distribution of L1 and L2 lexicons has not yet been satisfactorily resolved, there is some evidence for increased processing demands in bilinguals due to both lexicons being activated, even during monolingual comprehension and production tasks (see, for example, de Groot, Delmaar, & Lupker, 2000; Thierry & Wu, 2004). An argument could also be made for the increased cognitive demands on bilingual children learning formulaic phrases, which according to the theory of formulaic language, constitute an element of the lexicon.

1.2 Formulaic language and language learning

Some of the most interesting examples of child reuse of MAPNI in my corpus demonstrate the reuse of whole phrases. I believe examples of this nature lend force to the claim that language is not systematically analysed into, and generated from, its smallest possible parts or sub-parts such as words or parts of words, but rather we prefer prefabricated strings that are stored whole in memory and retrievable and re-useable as whole units. In this way, we can cut down on processing and only make the effort to analyse when necessary. Alison Wray defines such strings as Morpheme Equivalent Units, "a word or word string, whether incomplete or including gaps for inserted variable items, that is processed like a morpheme, that is, without recourse to any form-meaning matching of any sub-parts it may have" (Wray 2008: 12). She argues that not only can the lexicon contain internally complex items, but "we can question the plausibility of models of a lexicon of atomic items and complicated rules" (*ibid*: 14). Furthermore, the native child learner will only break down and analyse language from the input if there is a specific reason to do so. For the child, many strings will remain un(der)analysed if meaning or function can be assigned to them without analysis, and if there is no evidence of paradigmatic variation within the string (*ibid*: 17).

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Therefore, when we consider the way young children acquire phrases, as part of the language development process, we can distinguish between fixed unchanging expressions and frames with variable gaps. In the first instance little or no grammatical analysis is required, although a degree of pragmatic analysis is necessary if the child is to learn to understand and use the phrase in a contextually appropriate manner. An example of such an expression from my corpus would be Child 2's[1] reuse of "Oops a daisy", a fixed idiomatic formula encountered in a storybook. An example of a frame with a variable gap would be the second part of the expression that Child 2 first reused as it was, "Oops a daisy, mop it up", and then identified the variable gap in order to adapt the string to her own needs, giving "Oops a daisy, pick it up". Through exposure to input, children also learn which pairs of words go most frequently together and may learn and use collocations as single units, so collocations can be included in the category of formulaic language.

Clark and Wong (2002) note that research into Child Directed Speech has identified the formulaic nature of certain utterance 'frames' produced by adults who are talking to children. In their study of adult offers of words and relations, they list deictic frames such as 'this is a + noun' and question – answer frames such as Qu + doing + Ans or What's x doing? He's V-ing. In direct word offers, adults consistently rely on deictic terms. However, according to a study of interaction during book-reading (Ninio 1985; Ninio & Bruner 1978), "the majority of adult offers are probably indirect, offered in context in such a way that child addressees can readily compute what a new term refers to" (Clark & Wong 2002: 193). Despite this possibility, Clark and Wong conclude that children are highly attentive to words offered directly. They add, "there is growing evidence that early acquired syntactic structures are initially linked to specific lexical items, and that they may in fact be learned as parts of the meanings of individual words. For instance, a syntactic construction may be tied initially to just one verb and so occur only in construction with that verb and no others. Learning that the same construction also occurs with other verbs takes place on a one-by-one basis, and it may be months, or even years before one can reasonably claim that the child KNOWS a particular syntactic construction" (*ibid*:208). In other words, children learn syntactic knowledge by comparing formulaic frames and possible gaps. If I can demonstrate, even in a small way, that children can also learn fixed phrases and syntactic frames from storybook reading with adults, such evidence may contribute to our understanding of formulaic language and the way children's acquisition of it participates in their acquisition of language more generally. This study may also shed light on the way storybook reading contributes to the development of metalinguistic skills, such as defining words. The evidence presented here can also contribute to a reflection on the relationship between culture-specific conceptual properties and word-specific semantic properties.

1.3 Relevance of bilingual element of study

In their study of how vocabulary size in two languages relates to efficiency in spoken word recognition by young Spanish-English bilinguals, Marchman and Hurtado (2010) claim that "bilinguals...serve as a sort of natural experiment in which different degrees of lexical

1 See section 2 below

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knowledge can be achieved in two different languages although the language learner remains the same, i.e. 'holding the child factor constant' (Pearson, Fernandez, Lewedeg and Oller 1997: 43)" Marchman and Hurtado 2010: 819). In the present study, the children's bilingualism enables us to isolate to some extent the relationship between exposure to particular phrases in a particular instance of input and the children's production of the same phrases in their language output. The simple fact of their limited and observable exposure to English language input, can reduce the possibilities of them encountering the same phrases in other contexts, in a similar but more natural manner to controlled experiments with rare or invented words.

1.4 Aims of the current study

The study described here is part of my ongoing doctoral research into the relationship between input and language development in four bilingual siblings, my own children. My longitudinal case-study focuses on the children's reuse of phrases encountered in input in the form of songs, stories, rhymes and television. With the smaller storybook case-study presented here, I aim to examine more closely, and in a more controlled manner, the relationship between exposure to target phrases in the input and the reuse of those target phrases by the children. As with the wider ongoing longitudinal study, I expect the children to pick up on at least some target phrases and reuse or attempt to reuse them in their own output. Will the children's reuse be related to the nature and quantity of exposure to the target phrases in the input, and can parental strategies in explaining and demonstrating target phrase use influence children's own use of the phrases? Or will other factors, such as the nature of the phrases, or the age, gender, preferences, and linguistic competence of each child, come into play to determine which phrases the children choose to re-use and the manner in which they do so?

2 Method

2.1 The participants and their linguistic environment

The subjects of the study are three siblings (2 males and 1 female) who have heard French and English since birth. As we are dealing with the simultaneous acquisition of two first languages, also known as Bilingual First Language Acquisition, I will refer to the children's two languages as Language A and Language Alpha (see De Houwer, 2009: 2). At the time of the study, Child 1 was aged between 7;10,13 and 8;0,6 Child 2 was aged between 5;8,9 and 5;9;27 and Child 3 was aged between 4;1,24 and 4;3,12. (Child 4, who was aged between 0;1,28 and 0;3,16 at the time of the study is not reported on in this paper, although she was present at all the reading sessions.) In order to fully account for the children's linguistic behaviour, we must consider their linguistic environment. (See Grosjean (2008, 2010) and De Houwer (2009) on the importance of describing children's linguisitic environment in studies of bilingual acquisition.) The study was conducted in our home, which is in a French-speaking village in the northwest of France. A one-person-one-language (1P/1L) policy is mostly used in the home with each parent speaking their native language to the children, that

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is the father speaking French (LA) and the mother speaking English (Lalpha). Our home is a bilingual home and the mother and children switch freely and regularly between languages; the father speaks almost exclusively in French but understands the English that is spoken to him sometimes by the mother and occasionally, though rarely, by the children, as well as the English he overhears. Although the 1P/1L strategy was consciously adopted with the birth of Child 1, our linguistic behaviour has evolved over time to adapt to the reality of our bilingual family life. 1P/1L is not a rule and the children, while encouraged to speak English, are never forced to do so. I no longer pretend to be monolingual when the children speak French (strategy employed with Children 1 and 2), but I often propose an English equivalent to a French utterance or request a language switch either explicitly or implicity, for example by asking for a reformulation or inviting the child to complete a proposed reformulation. I frequently reply in English to a child's French utterance, in a way that Lanza (1995) has identified as communicating to the child that such bilingual behaviour is permitted. Both parents discuss the advantages of being bilingual with the children in terms of being able to communicate with extended family and monolingual English-speaking friends, and we suggest that the best way for them to remain bilingual is to keep practising in the home.

De Houwer (2009: 97) proposes the notion of linguistic soundscape, to describe the languages that children hear, both addressed directly to them and overheard in conversation or in the form of audio-visual media. She also refers to linguisitic landscape to describe the written languages that people see around them, for example on sign posts. Both of these notions are relevant to this study as the children are exposed to bilingual soundscapes and landscapes. The children have access to films, songs and books in both languages. At the time of the study, only Child 1 had direct access to the text of books, as Child 2 and Child 3 did not know how to read, so access to the text of books was through listening to an adult or Child 1 reading out loud. The children go on holiday to stay with family in Wales about twice a year. Their French-speaking father is often present on only one of these visits, which means that the other visit is an occasion for English language immersion. We also receive regular visits from English-speaking family members. We have close friends nearby, whom we see regularly, who are also raising their child as a French-English bilingual, and several other English-speaking friends we see occasionally. We are active members of an association for bilingual families, *Café Bilingue*, which provides opportunities to discover other languages and cultures, to share cultural practices, and to be aware that our family is far from unusual in its bilingualism. Such friendships and activities serve to show the children that their bilingualism is valued, and not exceptional. They also provide opportunities to use their LAlpha in contexts outside of the home and with speakers other than myself. It is difficult to quantify the children's exposure to English, particularly as it changes over time depending on their level of schooling and the amount of time I am able to spend with them during any given period. It is useful to adopt the notion of a continuum of linguistic discourse behaviour with monolingual LA and monolingual LAlpha at opposite ends; continuum along which bilinguals travel depending on the context and other speakers. For example, when at school the children are at the monolingual LA end of the continuum, when at home with both parents they are in the bilingual middle of the continuum. When at home alone with their mother, they are closer to the monolingual LAlpha end of the continuum although still in bilingual mode to some extent.

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They remain in bilingual mode since although I speak to them almost exclusively in L Alpha, and openly express a preference for the children's use of LAlpha in communication, they know that I speak and understand both LA and LAlpha, and that they are able to use LA with me. At the time the experiment took place, I was at home on maternity leave, and the period also included two weeks of school holiday, so they spent a lot of time with me. An approximate calculation reveals that during an average school week the children spent 12% of their time with only the mother, in a mostly LAlpha context, 34% of the time at school, in a monolingual LA context, and 54% of the time in a bilingual context. During the two weeks of holiday (out of a total of seven weeks concerned by this study), the percentages were 43% L Alpha, 56% LA + LAlpha.

The children are aware that their mother is a researcher in linguistics and that my job involves trying to understand how children learn language. However, for the purposes of the study presented here, they were not explicitly told what I was trying to do or informed of the results I was hoping to observe. They were aware that our reading and role-play sessions were being recorded, but did not know it was for my work. Being a mother-researcher has advantages and disadvantages. From a practical point of view, I have detailed knowledge of the L2 input to which they are exposed and I am able to follow their language development closely, taking notes of instances of language use that are relevant to my study. I can also carry out 'experiments', such as the one described here, in the natural context of the home and family life. On the other hand, it may be considered a problem that the children are aware of my research interest and this might affect the results I obtain. Also, it is probable that as a linguist with an interest in bilingual acquisition, I am playing a more pedagogical rôle than a mother might ordinarily. However, I believe that many parents who choose to bring their children up with two languages play this rôle and actively manipulate and participate in their children's exposure to the minority language. Concerning the ethical considerations of studying children, particularly one's own children, I do try to ask their permission when recording them, although I must admit to secret recordings on some occasions and most note-taking is not explained. (See Emily Oster's forward to Katherine Nelson's *Narrative from the crib* for a reflection on being a child research subject.)

2.2 Materials

2.2.1 Texts

As in Collins' study, I selected books with animal protagonists, both dogs, and similar themes. Book A, *Dumpling*, was written by Dick King-Smith and illustrated by Jo Davies. The book has a total of 965 words over 26 pages. The illustrations form an integral part of the story, present on every page, above, below, or alongside the text. The story is told in a classic third person, past tense, narrative style and includes dialogue between the animal characters as well as the speech of their human owner. In the story, Dumpling, a young dachsund puppy, is shorter than her two brothers and is identified as not having the shape a dachshund should have. She is unhappy and wishes to be longer. She encounters a witch's cat who grants her wish, but as her body becomes unmanageably long, she seeks the cat's help to return to her

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original shape. At the end of the story she is content to be a short dachshund. King-Smith's text is overflowing with formulaic, often very idiomatic, phrases, and Davies' illustrations portray the plot and the characters' feelings, making it the ideal book for our study. Book B, *It's A Dog's Life*, was written by Michael Morpurgo and illustrated by Patrick Benson. The story has a total of 1078 words over 29 pages. The illustrations are on every page or form a double page spread, and the text is often printed within the illustrations, sometimes in small sections next to the corresponding part of the illustration, creating an effect of text-illustration integration. The story is told in the first person, and present tense, by the main protagonist, a dog called Russ. Russ goes through an ordinary day as a working farm dog, until the evening when his beloved mistress receives a pony for her birthday. His jealousy is expressed in some bad behaviour until his mistress reminds him how important he is to her. His language often takes the form of simplified sentences, where the first person pronoun is missing, for example, "Ear's itching. Have a good scratch. Lovely." Sometimes sentences do not contain a main verb either, for example, "Back up the lane, through the hedge, over the gate." Such language is reserved for describing the dog's actions and movements, giving a sense of stream of consciousness, enabling the reader to feel she is inside the dog's mind, with quick thoughts that correspond to his quick and purposeful movements. Dialogue is mostly reserved for humans, although Russ does bark a complaint about his situation to his dog friend across the valley, and receives a reply. Many examples of formulaic phrases are present, in addition to the title, such as "can't hang about", "well, I'm not having that", or "show them who's boss!" Both stories seem to have messages about being oneself, appreciating oneself for who one is, and being appreciated by the ones we love just as we are.

2.2.2 Target phrases

Eleven target phrases (TP), including idiomatic phrases, formulaic frames and a collocation, were selected from book A (presented here in the same order in which they appear in the book):

1. **Oh, how I long to be long.**

This formula was selected for its nature as a frame with a variable gap, which can be expressed as [(How) + I long to be + adj]. The subject pronoun is also variable and may require subject agreement on the verb *long*, verb which can also vary in tense. In order for the children to vary the subject and tense in a frame like this one, they must master subject and tense agreement. The frame can also be formed as a question, as in "What do you long to be?" or "(Why) does she long to be + [adj]?" In parental reuse of this frame, it will therefore be interesting to introduce variations of sentence form, subject, tense and adjective and to see whether the children pick up on these possibilities and try to produce their own variations, and if so whether they do so in a grammatically correct manner. The children are used to hearing "I wish I could.." or "I'd love to.." so although the formula in TP1 is not familiar to them, it should be relatively easy for them to understand, thanks to its similarity to phrases they already know, while also being easy to spot in a reuse as it will be a novel form in their output. Also, the original phrase juxtaposes *long* as a verb with *long* as an adjective, and for

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the children introduces *long* as a verb probably for the first time. This may be the cause of some confusion for them, particularly as TP2 includes *long* as an adjective.

2. How long you are getting.

Target phrase 2 is also a frame with a variable gap: [How + adj + (pro)noun + be + getting]. As with TP1, manipulation of the variables in this frame requires understanding the nature of those variables and the rules which govern them. It will be interesting to observe how the children cope with such variations.

3. Time will tell.

TP3 is a fixed idiomatic formula. The children are used to hearing equivalents such as “wait and see” or “you'll see”, equivalents which will serve as synonyms during the explanation of TP3. Any parental reuse of this TP will probably be noticed as novel by the children, and they may recognise the source and realise what I am doing.

4. Think deeply, thought deeply, thinking deeply

These three forms of this collocation are present in the text of *Dumpling* and are used to describe the actions of Thinker, one of Dumpling's brothers. The collocation is an identifying characteristic of the puppy and his personality, which also accounts for his name, in the same way as Dumpling is so named because of her physique, and Joker, the third puppy, is so named because of his playful nature. In this way, the story demonstrates the way an animal's name can represent an aspect of its nature. The same could be said of nicknames applied to people, and although this possibility is not present in the story, it could be a subject of discussion during storytelling. It will be interesting to see if the children pick up on this collocation, which is fairly common and native-like.

5. Oh, I beg your pardon!

In our regular family language use we are unlikely to use this formula, preferring to simply say “sorry” when we bump into someone, which is the context for Dumpling's use of the formula.

6. Easy as winking.

Here is a lovely idiom that I am not familiar with and have never used. Furthermore, in my opinion, winking is not that easy for small children, so it contains an element of hyperbole for them, despite it's meaning for most adults as “easy, or very easily”. The children have already learned the expression “easy peasy (lemon squeezy)” and use it sometimes.

7. I shouldn't wonder.

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TP7 is an idiomatic formula that is not part of my everyday speech, although it sounds native-like. This phrase will require definition as I believe its meaning will not be transparent for the children. It will be useful for them to associate it with the familiar equivalent, "I wouldn't be surprised" which is the way I usually express this notion.

8. **At the top of her voice.**

I imagine it will be easy to find suitable reuse opportunities for this target phrase, probably in the form of a reproach such as, "there's no need to shout at the top of your voice!"

9. **Some people are never satisfied.**

This fixed formulaic phrase can be presented as a synonym of "there's no pleasing some people", which is the variation with which the children are familiar in my speech. They also know the French equivalent, "on ne peut pas plaire à tout le monde".

10. **As a matter of fact.**

It would be beneficial for the children to learn this phrase and to use it to replace the not very native-like or childlike "in fact", which is what we have developed the habit of saying, probably as a result of transfer from the French, "en fait".

11. **That's about the long and the short of it!**

I have never used this idiom before and the children are sure to notice if I start to do so, but will they do the same?

2.3 Procedure

Over a period of 43 days, I read both storybooks to the children five times. On day 1 and day 2, I read book A followed by book B (recordings 1 and 2). On days 7 and 14, I read book B followed by book A (recordings 3 and 4). I then waited a month until day 43, before reading book B followed by book A and then engaged the children in a role-play of book A (recording 6). Five days earlier, Child 3 picked up the books used in the study, which had been left on the coffee table, and told himself the stories aloud. In true mother-researcher, on-the-spot fashion, I grabbed my camera and tried to discretely record him (recording 5, day 38). Unfortunately the sound quality of the recording is very poor and only some of his storytelling was audible enough for transcription.

2.4 Recordings and transcripts

The recordings of the readings sessions and role-play session represent a total of 166 minutes of film. The transcriptions were analysed in order to identify and classify the kind of language we used during our storybook interaction. I identified parental reading techniques and types of

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offers, and the children's responses to them, and different ways in which the children contributed to the storytelling and commented on the stories and the language discussed. The numbers and types of parental and child reuse during the reading and role-play sessions were also analysed. Meanwhile, I tried to reuse the target phrases in as natural a way as possible in other contexts and noted any examples of children's reuse that I heard. While reading, I consciously tried to include a variety of rich explanation techniques, but I did not pay attention to the sentence forms I used when doing so, remaining as natural in my language use as possible. (In fact, I purposely put off studying parental offer styles until after I had transcribed the recordings, so as to limit the influence my knowledge of such techniques might have on my natural use of them.)

3 Results

The following results show that there might be a link between child participation during reading and child reuse in other contexts since Child 2 and Child 3, who participate most, also produce the most examples of reuse. However, the target phrases do not seem to have become part of their long-term lexicon since no reuse of them was observed in the year following the experiment. Child 1, on the other hand, demonstrated long-term acquisition of one target phrase by reusing it a year after the experimental period. Analysis of the transcripts reveals a relationship between the quantity of rich definition, parental reuse of a target phrase, and especially the initiation of conversations which encourage child reuse, and uptake by the children. (In the examples, Mot is an abbreviation of Mother.)

3.1 Parental offer styles, reading techniques and reuse during reading sessions

3.1.1 Parental offer styles

Analysis of the transcripts revealed the following types of parental offer styles while reading. In brackets is the number of each type over all sessions.

- Question + Answer: (9) (Question: Do you know what [TP] means? Do you know what [TP] is? What does [TP] mean? What do you think [TP / deictic] means?)
- Deictic / [TP] + means + definition (7)
- Deictic / [TP] + is like + synonym (6)
- Deictic / [TP] + reference to illustration (6)
- [TP] + demonstration (gestural) (6)

Table 1 shows the different types of rich definition techniques that I employed during reading sessions for each target phrase; examples of each type are provided in Table 2.

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3.1.2 Parental reuse during reading sessions

Analysis of the transcripts reveals few examples of parental reuse of target phrases during the reading sessions, with the exception of recording 6, during which I reused the frame [How + [adj] + PRN + be + getting] 13 times during a discussion I intiated in order to present such variations within the frame. Other than this, I reused TP4 once and TP11 twice in their original form. I used TP5 with the form “I do beg his pardon” and three variations on the TP1 frame.

3.1.3 Parental reuse in other contexts

In between reading sessions, I tried to reuse the target phrases in my everyday conversation with the children. This was much more difficult to do than I had imagined, and some target phrases were reused more than others (TPs 1,2 3, 6), some not at all (TPs 7, 8, 10). It was also difficult to note, and therefore quantify, the examples of parental reuse in other contexts, mostly because of the busy nature of family life. It is worth commenting that the advantages of carrying out research in the home, studying the daily language use of one's own children, can be counterbalanced by the difficulties of maintaining a detached, objective approach. Also, on one occasion, as I was trying to reuse several phrases from book A, Child 1 noticed and commented on my behaviour: “Why are you saying those things from the book?”. I believe Child 2 also noticed my attempts to reuse the target phrases but instead of commenting on them, played along and tried to do the same. The differences in reaction may be explained by the children's different ages, and also their different personalities. Child 2 tends to enjoy convergent behaviour whereas Child 1 prefers to differentiate himself and his behaviour from that of others. Child 3 did not appear to notice what I was doing, and I believe this was because of his young age. Child 1's reaction to my resuse of target phrases had the effect of making me feel uncomfortable about what I was doing and caused me to be reluctant to reuse the target phrases in my own speech, despite the important role such reuse was hypothesised to have. Such difficulties led me to question the nature of the experiment, where I was trying to transform what had so far been a process of incidental learning into one of explicit teaching. I was forced to consider in more depth the ethical aspect of 'experimenting' with my own children, as well as to wonder about the validity of any results I may obtain. I concluded that it is important, when interpreting these results, to take into account the children's reactions to the experiment.

Table 1: Types of rich definition used during reading sessions

	TP1	TP2	TP3	TP4	TP5	TP6	TP7	TP8	TP9	TP10	TP11	other
Question about meaning			1	1		1		1	1			
Apply to self/child		12		2								

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Q&A definition	3				1	1	1				1	
Answer ch's Q							1					13
Answer Q with Q			1									
Definition	2						2	1			1	1
Illustration		1		2		1						3
Synonym	1		4		1						1	
Demonstration	1					5						
Discussion						1	1					
Totals	7	13	6	5	2	9	5	2	1	0	3	17

Table 2: Examples of each type of rich definition

Question about meaning	Mot: “What do you think 'time will tell' means?”(R2, TP3)
Apply to child	Mot: “Do you like to think deeply?” (R3, TP4)
Q&A definition	Mot: “What does he mean? He means “I wouldn't be surprised if I did see you again. So he thinks he *is* going to see the dog again (R1, TP7)
Answer child's question	Ch2: Who's Smarty? Mot: I think he's another dog. (R2, BB)
Answer Q with Q	Ch3: what means “time will tell” means? Mot: What do you think “time will tell” means? (turns to Ch2) Ch2: “time will tell” means “wait and see” (R2, TP3)
Definition	Mot: That's about the long and the short of it means that's it, that's all. There's nothing else to say. (R2, TP11)
Illustration	Mot: “Easy as winking,” said the cat, winking. Look, you can see in the picture, the cat's winking (R3, TP6)
Synonym	Mot: That's like when I say “you'll see”, time will tell. (R1, TP3)
Demonstration	Mot:Let me see. Easy as winking! Let me see (looks at Ch2 who winks) If we practise we might get good at it and then we'll be able to say “easy as winking”, won't we?(R2, TP6)
Discussion	Mot: It's quite hard to wink, I think, but the cat says “easy as winking” which means that she can grant the dog's wish, she can grant Dumpling a wish as

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	easy, as easily as she can wink. I think winking's quite hard, I'm not sure it is that easy. Ch1: It might be an expression. (R1, TP6)

3.2 Child utterances during reading sessions

While reading book A, I used a variety of rich definition techniques and the children and I discussed the language in the book as well as the story. They instantly picked up on this change in my reading style, as I usually read without much discussion or explanation. They were very enthusiastic in asking questions and talking about the text. So enthusiastic that they assumed we would do the same for book B, which was rather awkward for me as the procedure I intended to follow involved no rich definition for the second book. Hence the change of reading order for sessions 3 and 4. Already on day 2, Child 2 began to pre-empt my offers of definition or explanation, as in the following example:

Mot: “I shouldn't wonder,” said the cat.
Ch2: Do you know what it means? It means I shouldn't think so.

In this example, Child 2 provided a definition which demonstrated that she hadn't understood the target phrase, so I went on to explain it more fully. As you can see from table 3 below, Child 2 provided far more definitions than her brothers. She also repeated text more and asked more questions. Table 3 and the list of utterance types per target phrase confirm what we could already have guessed, that TP4 *think deeply* and TP6 *easy as winking* were particularly suited to demonstration and reference to the illustrations. Also, Table 3 shows that Child 1 has recourse to translation but not Child 2 or 3. It is important to note that for a total number of 162 child utterances listed in this table, only 36 of them referred to target phrases. Therefore we must not forget that the children were very interested in all the text of the stories and the learning of non-target phrases is a probable effect of such interest and interaction.

3.3 Child reuse during reading sessions and in other contexts

Table 4 shows each child's reuse of the target phrases, classified as immediate repeats of a parental reuse, attempted but incorrect reuse, and correct reuse, in three different contexts: during reading, during role play and other contexts. We can see from these figures that Child 2 produced the most examples of reuse during reading and in other contexts. The high number of repeats and attempted reuses during reading is a reflection of the way she seemed to use the reading sessions and discussion around target phrases as a context for practising the phrases as if she were consciously trying to learn them. Child 3 also produced a lot of reuse during reading and made five attempts at reuse in other contexts. The fact that Child 3's attempts at spontaneous reuse in other contexts were unsuccessful may be related to his age and stage of language acquisition. Child 1 produced the highest number of correct reuses during the role play and two correct variations using the verb *to long*, indicating he may have a better short term lexical memory, as well as more developed language skills and grammatical knowledge

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than his younger siblings. The two examples of reuse of the verb *to long* by Child 1 in other contexts occurred a year after the experiment took place, whereas the other children seemed to forget the target phrases once I stopped reading the stories and using the phrases myself. This seems to indicate that Child 1 in fact acquired from TP1 knowledge of the verb *to long* as part of his long term lexicon. This may be related to his age at the time of the experiment, or perhaps his capacity for short term memorisation of the phrase in some way helped the transferral of its main verb to long term memory. We can also hypothesise that some level of relevant grammatical knowledge is required in order to produce a syntactically correct reuse of a phrase. We are reminded here of the way small children will resist correction, and can wonder if the ability to correctly reuse a phrase does indeed require some element of analysis of its parts.

Table 3: Types of utterance during story reading for each child

	Child 1		Child 2		Child 3	
Type of utterance	Total	Target Phrase	Total	Target Phrase	Total	Target Phrase
Question about story	3		11		8	
Request for meaning			6	TP7 :1	4	TP3 :1
Discuss vocabulary	4	TP6 :1	1	TP1 :1	3	
Provide definition	4	TP4 :1 TP7 :1	12	TP3 :1 TP7 :1 TP8 :1	2	TP3 :1
Answer question	4		6		1	
Provide translation	6	TP1 :1 TP4 :1 TP5 :1 TP9:1				
Provide synonym			1	TP5 :1	2	TP5 :1
Refer to illustration	1		5	TP4 :1	7	TP6 :1
Provide demonstration	4	TP4 :2 TP6 :1	9	TP4 :3 TP6 :3 TP8 :1	6	TP4 :1 TP6 :4
Explain, comment, discuss story	2		8		14	

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Repeat text	1		10	TP3 :1	6	TP1 :1 TP6 :1
Provide text			8		3	

Type of utterance per target phrase
TP1 : definition, translation, demonstration, repeat
TP3: request meaning, definition, repeat
TP4: definition, translation, illustration, demonstration
TP5: translation
TP6: discuss, illustration, demonstration, repeat
TP7: request meaning, definition
TP8: definition, demonstration

Table 4: Reuse of target phrases for each child in varying contexts

	during reading			during role play			other contexts		
	Ch1	Ch2	Ch3	Ch1	Ch2	Ch3	Ch1	Ch2	Ch3
Immediate repeat	1	10	7					1	
Attempted reuse		12	5	1				1	5
Correct reuse		6	3	5	4	1	2	3	

During the very first recording, Child 3 produced a spontaneous reuse of a non-target phrase from Book A. He had decided to be in charge of the video camera and when we were ready to start reading Book B he said, “Abra-cat-abra! *On commence!*” (“Abra-cat-abra” is what the witch's cat says when granting Dumpling's wish). During the third recording, Child 2 reused TP4 in response to a parental question about it and Child 3 demonstrated TP4 with a gesture and then attempted to use TP1:

Mot: Do you like to think deeply?
Ch2: I'm starting to **think deeply**.
Mot: Are you?
Ch2: Yeah
Ch3: Yeah. (Looks up and strokes chin.) **What I want to be long**.

Then followed a discussion in which Ch2 made several attempts to reuse TP1, but only managed it successfully once, in a form which Ch3 had already produced.

Mot: We could think deeply (put finger on chin and looks up thoughtfully) Oh I long to be
Ch2: big
Mot: big? Do you long to be big?
Ch2: I long to be um
Mot: Oh how I long to be fast asleep in my nice warm bed

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Ch3: **I long to be a baby** like you
Ch2: Oh how I long to be ****
Mot: What? You long to be a what? A boy?
Ch2: No! How I long to to be *Mickey.* How I long to be
Mot: Mickey mouse?
Ch2: (a bit cross with Mot for not understanding) How I long to licky (?)
Mot: Licky?
Ch2: **How I long to be a baby**.
Mot: A baby, really? Aawww (hugs Ch2)
Ch2: I want to stay all my life like a baby (hugs Mo and kisses Ch4)
Ch3:Mummy, **I long to be a baby**
Mot: What about you, Owen, what do you long to be?
Ch3: I'd like to long to be a baby with you (hugs Mo)
Mot: You'd like to be long like a baby?
Ch2: I long to be long to be (takes book) I long to be
Mot: Do you know what it means "I long to be"? It means I really really want to be
Ch3: Long
Mot: What would you really really like to be?
Ch3: er I'd like to be lon long
Ch2: I would love
Mot: What, like Dumpling?
Ch3: yeah
Ch2: I would love to ******* and to have make up on. I would love I would love I would long to be I would long to be a kitten
Mot: Oh you long to be a kitten
Ch3: Me as well

This transcript extract illustrates how difficult it is for Child 2 to reuse the TP1 frame correctly. At first she may simply be having trouble thinking of an idea to express with the frame. Child 3 produces a perfect variant, but did not have my attention at the time so I did not really notice what he had said. Child 2 probably did and reuses his example herself. Even though Child 3 repeats his correct phrase, he then gets muddled up when I ask him a direct question to elicit the frame and fuses *I long to* with *I'd like to*. My misunderstanding only confuses things further when I reformulate using *I'd like*, provide a definition with *I want* and then ask a question using *would like.* We can see the extent to which the children are sensitive to the language I am using and the fact that using several different forms to express the same idea does not help them to achieve correct usage of the target form, although it might increase their awareness of the similarities between the forms and their understanding of the target form.

In Table 5, are listed all the examples of child reuse of target and non-target phrases on the day they occurred with Day 1 being the day of the first recorded reading session. The examples of reuse listed in table 5 can be classified as follows:

Spontaneous reuse of a non-target phrase from Book A: Examples 1 and 4
Intentional parent-initiated reuse of TP 1: Examples 2 and 3, and TP 6: Example 7
Unintentional parent-triggered reuse of a non-target phrase from Book A: Example 5
Spontaneous reuse of phrases from Book B: Examples 6 and 8
Spontaneous reuse of TP 2: Examples 9, 10, 11, 12

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Spontaneous reuse of TP 9: Example 13
Spontaneous reuse of TP 1: Examples 14 and 15

3.4 Reuse of formulaic frames

It is interesting to examine in detail the progression of the formulaic frame (TP2) *How long you are getting* : [How + [adj] + PRN + be + getting] throughout the experiment period as it illustrates the way a phrase can be presented and reused by an adult and the parallel process of the children's learning of the phrase. On day 2, the second reading session was recorded. I explained TP2 by referring to the illustration and I demonstrated its meaning with gesture. On day 6, I reused the phrase with Child 2 saying, "How long your legs are getting". On day 22, I recorded Child 3 'reading' Book A to himself. He said, "How you **ing you getting long said the /w/**" (where *** represents unclear speech due to the poor quality of the recording) (reuse example 8). Between days 22 and 42, I reused the frame with variations in other contexts. On day 43, during the recorded reading session 6, I explained and discussed the phrase with the children, and gave five examples of variations within the frame. I encouraged the children to do the same. During this discussion and practice session Child 1 produced no variations of the frame. Child 2 produced 1 repeat and 5 attempts at variations of the frame. Child 3 produced 1 repeat and 3 attempts at variations of the frame. I then initiated a role play of Book A. We role played the story four times. During the first role play, Child 2 said, "How long are you getting". During the second role play, I said, "Look how long you are getting!" During the last role play, Child 2 said, "How are you getting long!" On day 44, Child 3 produced a spontaneous attempt at the target phrase, saying to his baby sister, "How a little girl you are getting" (Reuse example 10). The next day, on day 45, Child 2 produced a spontaneous reuse when she said to me, "How gappy I'm getting, Mummy!" (Reuse example 11). A day later, on day 46, Child 3 again attempted a spontaneous reuse when he said to Child 2, "How big you getting" (Reuse example 12).

It seems that Child 2 and Child 3 were very receptive to the explicit encouragement and practice I gave them with this frame. After much difficulty and many attempts, Child 2 eventually produced her own correct reuse "how gappy I'm getting" although it must be noted that this variation is based on an example I provided her with two days earlier, "how gappy you're getting" (referring to the fact that she had lost several milk teeth). The examples produced by Child 3 are interesting because they may show the frame in the process of acquisition. On day 44 he produces a near correct form but inserts a noun phrase into the adjective slot, which produces an understandable but clearly incorrect sentence. On day 46, he omits the verb *be* which is more acceptable since the phonological difference between *you* and *you're* is so slight.

Table 5: Days, Recordings and Examples of Reuse

Day	Rec.	Ex	Reuse
1	1	1	Ch3: **Abra-cat-abra!** *On commence!*

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2	2		
7		2	Ch3: What do you want to be? Mot: I long to be a bird. What do you long to be? Ch2: **I long to be a horse.** [TP1]
7	3	3	Ch3: **I long to be a baby** like you. Ch2: **I long to be a baby.**
11		4	Ch3: Listen to my song. It will make you very long. **Abra-cat-abra**! I will change you. Help! Help! Come back cat!
14	4	5	Ch3: She's like Stumpy. The one in Stumpy. **Always playing silly games.**
22		6	Ch3: Ask **a silly question**. Ch2: Of course. **It's the day after yesterday and the day before tomorrow.**
23		7	Mot: I can do it. It's easy as winking! Ch2: **Easy as winking** [TP6]
25		8	Ch3: Mummy, **it's the day after yesterday and the day after tomorrow.** Mot: Yes. **It's the day after yesterday and the day *before* tomorrow.** Ch3: Just like in the book. **The day after yesterday and the day after..**.. Ch2: **It's the day before tomorrow**. (sings) day after, day before...
38	5	9	Ch3: How you **ing you getting long said the /w/** [TP2]
43	6		
44		10	Ch3: **How a little girl you are getting**, [TP2].
45		11	Ch2: Gappy girl! **How gappy I'm getting**, Mummy! [TP2] Mot: Yes, you are. Ch2: I'm getting gappier!
46		12	Ch3: **How big you getting**, [TP2].
48		13	Ch2: You've got some washing to do. Mot: I've always got washing to do. It's never ending. It's never ending, it is. Ch2: **Some people are never satisfied!** [TP9]
+11m		14	Ch1: Plume! **How I longed to stroke you**!
+12m		15	Ch1: **I long to ride a pony.**

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We have already noted the way the children attempted to learn the frame of TP1 *How I long to be long*: [(How) + I long to be + adj]. A whole year later, Child 1 demonstrated long-term acquisition of the main verb of the frame when he produced two examples of reuse, both times placing intonational emphasis on the main verb *long* (reuse examples 14 and 15):

Ch1 (8;11,13): (upon being reunited with his cat after a weekend away from home) Plume! How I longed to stroke you!
Ch1 (9;0,18): I long to ride a pony!

What is particularly interesting about these examples, is that this verb is not common usage so not only did the examples stand out as being different from Child 1's everyday speech, but their source was easily identifiable. In our daily communication, we are much more likely to use the expressions 'I'm dying for / to....' or 'I can't wait for / to'. Perhaps the 'long to' construction was borrowed along with the powerful, almost magical meaning linked to desire and wishing for something, associated with it in this particular story. Also, the long vowel gives the verb an attractive iconic quality. Whereas 'I beg your pardon' has become regular usage for me following the experiment described here (this was a not a novel formula for me, but one that I had lost the habit of using), 'I long + V' did not become part of my speech with the children once I stopped reusing it in the context of this study, and as a result they no longer heard it. Despite this, and which may be considered surprising, I have yet to notice one of the children say 'I beg your pardon', which I consider to be more applicable to everyday speech than 'I long to +V'. Child 2's spontaneous reuse of TP9 *Some people are never satisfied!* (reuse example 13) was, on the contrary, particularly satisfying to hear. It had been the object of only one instance of rich definition, whereby my question about meaning was answered with a translation by Child 1:

Mot: What does that mean, 'some people are never satisfied'?
Ch1: *Ils sont jamais content*. (R6)

While the translation provided by Child 1 is quite adequate, the French word *content* does not fully express the English term *satisfied* and I feel this is reflected in the way Child 2 reuses the phrase a few days later. Although she uses the phrase in a contextually appropriate way and with the correct intonational pattern and achieved communicational intent, there is still something a little awkward about using it in this way, something that could be called either not quite native-like, but which I prefer to call not quite adult-like. In order for Child 2, or any child, to learn the finer subtleties of such a phrase, she would need to be exposed to it being used in different contexts by different people, perhaps many times. Otherwise, her understanding of it, as well as the way she uses it, may remain a little strange, a tell-tale sign of the manner in which she acquired English, that is as a *sort* of native speaker in a very limited English-speaking environment. The not-quite-right use of idioms such as this is perhaps one of the things that can make simultaneous child bilinguals' language sound a little odd. They clearly speak English, yet their English is not the same as the English spoken by a

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child who is exposed to the language of an English-speaking community all the time. There are some obvious examples of this in the corpus, which can be explained as syntactic transfer from French, such as Child 2's repeated use of 'at' in combination with the verb 'play', when saying things like, “I want to play *at* Uno”. Other aspects of this 'oddness' are more difficult to pin down, yet provoke occasional comment by English-speaking friends upon hearing the children speak. Some comments have referred to Child 2's perceived French accent, others to Child 1's marked English accent. Since both have been exposed to roughly the same input, it is interesting to note the way they are developing different phonological accents and different degrees of interference from LA.

3.5 Reuse of non-target phrases

Of a total of 15 reuse examples, 10 are target phrases or variations of target phrases and 5 are examples of non-target phrases. Within these 5 examples are the phrases, “Abra-cat-abra” and “always playing silly games” both of which are from Book A. Child 3's reuse of “always playing silly games” was triggered by me saying “playing such silly games” to Child 2. Child 3 instantly referred to *Dumpling*, saying, “she's like in Stumpy. Like the one in Stumpy, always playing silly games”. The other two non-target phrases that were reused come from Book B. When Child 3 said “Ask a silly question” I do not believe he made the association with the full expression “ask a silly question and you'll get a silly answer” which a more experienced native speaker of English would. I believe he was just remembering out loud, a form of childish quoting. Child 2 remembered the 'silly answer', “it's the day after yesterday and the day before tomorrow” and a few days later Child 3 tried hard to reproduce it in a conversational context but couldn't remember the correct form (reuse examples 6 and 8), which shows that there was more an element of memorisation in his reuse than of understanding of the separate parts of the phrase.

4 Discussion

4.1Parental reading techniques and re-use

It seems clear that rich definition can heighten children's understanding and experience of phrases. However it is not possible to conclude from this study that such reading techniques or reuse really lead to acquisition of the phrases in question. Rather, it is the exercise of constructing or co-constructing new variations within frames which seems to have a positive impact on the acquisition of those frames. In other words, it is not enough to listen to an adult tell you about a phrase, or even to hear the adult use it. In order to acquire a phrase, the child must use it; a bit like riding a bike.

4.2 Re-use as a measure of acquisition

The children were receptive to the TPs that they were encouraged to reuse in conversation, as with TPs 1 and 2. There was also reuse of some non-target phrases as well as one target phrase (TP9) that had received little attention in terms of definition or reuse. The target phrase

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(TP10) that was not subject to rich definition, parental reuse, or parent-initiated reuse was not reused or discussed by the children. Many other target phrases that did receive this treatment were not reused either. Do all these various reactions on the part of the children indicate whether or not learning of the phrases took place? To what extent is child reuse a measure of acquisition? Or the lack of reuse a measure of non acquisition? Perhaps we need to imagine a continuum of learning on which we can place being exposed to a phrase, receiving information about a phrase, understanding a phrase, being able to reuse a phrase and choosing to reuse a phrase. It is possible that, even if the child goes through all the phases except the last one, and never chooses to use the phrase, then they may forget it altogether. If a child chooses not to use a phrase, this may be because the phrase was not relevant to them and what they wished to communicate, rather than because they didn't understand it or couldn't reproduce it. Nevertheless, while we can only speculate on the reasons for lack of reuse, the reuse of a phrase does seem to indicate that it has been, or is being, learned. The learning process, however, may be short-term if the phrase in question does not continue to be presented in the input and if the children are not encouraged to continue to use it. Loïc's reuse of the verb *to long* a year later may show that the long-term acquisition of a phrase, (or more strictly speaking in this case, a word), is possible. However we can only guess at why this word and not the original phrase, or any other phrases encountered during the experiment were retained. Perhaps he just liked the sound of it, or the kind of idea it could express. And the fact that he has not reused other phrases from the two books in question does not mean that he has forgotten them and does not still have passive knowledge of them.

4.3 The rôle of formulaicity in determining whether and how a phrase is re-used

We can speculate that some phrases may be more attractive or memorable than others, or some may have more potential for reuse than others. This could have something to do with the nature of the phrase or, as with TP10 “as a matter of fact,” it may be a direct result of the fact that the phrase received no special attention on the part of the adult reader. Clearly, for Child 2 “some people are never satisfied” was an attractive phrase that she felt happy to apply to another context. She was able to do this without error since its reuse involved only correct memorisation and some understanding of the meaning of the phrase in order to know when to use it. The two frames [(How) + long to be + adj] and [How + adj + (pro)noun + be + getting] are a different kind of formulaic language and their acquisition and reuse required more than memorisation and understanding the context of their use. In order to reuse these phrases, the children need to develop the grammatical knowledge required for the manipulation of the variable gaps and the effects that changes in the gaps might have on the grammar of the whole phrase. Some formulaic phrases may be difficult to reuse because of the idiomatic nature of their meaning as a whole, while others may be difficult to reuse because of their stucture and the relationships between the parts.

4.4 Implications for second language teaching

It is possible to apply the techniques of rich definition to the use of storybooks in a second language teaching activity, as Collins' article so convincingly demonstrates. In addition to the

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teaching of words, we can also envisage the teaching of whole phrases. Idiomatic fixed phrases could be taught through memorisation and reuse in specific situations set up through role play, for example. It would be necessary to include discussion of the meaning of the phrase and exposure to many examples of contexts in which it could be used. Variable frames could be a means of learning the grammatical information within the frame as well as the meaning and usage of the expression as a whole. It would be important to select frames with structures that correspond to the pupils abilities so that the manipulation of gaps and the creation of new variations would be possible and not a cause for frustration or sense of failure.

4.5 Limitations and future directions

The 'natural' experimental context of the home and mother-researcher with own-child-subjects does present difficulties as well as advantages. Not all the experimental protocol were carried out as scientifically and systematically as they should have been in order to produce reliable results. A similar study in the future would require stricter adherence to protocol, particularly concerning the parental reuse of phrases and the noting and quantifying of such reuse. Nevertheless, being on the spot enabled me to observe spontaneous child reuse, even a whole year after the experiment had taken place, and some interesting insights have been gleaned.

4.6 Conclusion

The study presented here suggests that both supported learning and incidental learning of phrases is possible through storybook reading in the home. One of the most important factors influencing the learning of words and phrases through child-adult interaction in storybook reading, is the attitude adopted by the adult regarding the activity. If the adult communicates, either explicitly or through her behaviour, that the activity being shared is a context for learning about language, The data appears to indicate that the children involved pick up on that message and take on the role of 'learner' rather than passive listener. Of course, learning language from stories can take place incidentally without any reference to the fact that it is occurring, as attest most of the examples from my longitudinal corpus as well as some of the examples from this study. In addition, the results of this study seem to point to the same process taking place when explicitly encouraged and supported by the adult. We might wonder, then, whether there is any motive for the explicit teaching of vocabulary through storybook reading. I would argue that supported learning through rich definition and the application of words and phrases to other contexts is a way to encourage children to take on an active role in learning fixed phrases and producing variations of phrases. By encountering and talking about phrases in this way, the more opaque idiomatic expressions that contribute to the shared cultural references of a speech community, and which can be so difficult for speakers who are not members of that community, may become more accessible to children who live apart from that community. Similarly, practising with variable gaps in frames might be a good way for children to acquire, not only the nativelike turn of phrase expressed by the frame, but also the grammatical knowledge embedded in the frame.

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At any age, we can sit back and read or listen passively to a story, recognising a word or a phrase here or there, making associations with past experiences and developing new personal experiences through our interaction with the story. Or we can think and talk about the events in the story and the language used to tell them. We can learn about the meaning of a particular phrase and about the cultural references it refers to. Our appreciation of the story may be enhanced by this extra knowledge. It may help us to appreciate further the next story we hear, as our enhanced knowledge and experience will enable us to understand the next set of cultural references and the language in which they have been expressed. In addition, we may feel more able to express our own new ideas, and be confident that the cultural references embedded in them will be understood by others.

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Catrin Bellay read Modern History at the University of Liverpool, UK. She spent her Erasmus year at the François Rabelais University in Tours, France. Upon completion of her BA, she passed a Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages certificate (Cert. TESOL) at Cardiff University. She completed her *Maîtrise* and Master 2 in English linguistics at Nantes University, both times specialising in child bilingualism. She is currently preparing her doctoral thesis at the same university on the subject of Musical, Audio-visual, Poetic, and Narrative Input in Bilingual First Language Acquisition : a Case Study. She has a wide range of professional teaching experience: in a bilingual nursery and primary school, in private language schools including for businesses, the Modern Languages Faculty of the Université de Nantes, and Nantes Engineering and Business schools.

Notice biographique

Catrin Bellay a étudié l'histoire à l'Université de Liverpool, Angleterre, et elle a passé son année Erasmus à l'Université François Rabelais, Tours. Après la licence, elle a été diplomée en tant qu'enseignante de l'anglais langue étrangère à l'Université de Cardiff, Pays de Galles. Elle est titulaire de d'une Maîtrise et d'un Master en linguistique anglaise, de l'Université de Nantes, avec des mémoires de recherche sur le bilinguisme chez l'enfant. Elle prépare actuellement sa thèse de doctorat, également à l'Université de Nantes, qui porte sur le rôle des contes, comptines, chansons et de la télévision pour enfants dans l'acquisition bilingue : une étude de cas. Son expérience professionnel d'enseignement est très varié : en école bilingue maternelle et primaire, en centres de formation linguistique, y compris en entreprise, à la Faculté des Langues et Cultures Etrangères de l'Université de Nantes, à l'Ecole Centrale de Nantes, et à Audencia Nantes.

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