

Children say the funniest things

Workshop

Things children say

[One] [More than one]

No (se) Nose

Toes Toeses

Child talking to Teddy:

All the others are have. Why don't you be have?

(Be good, Be nice, Be quiet)

Clever Mistakes come in lots of different shapes and sizes

“Little Bo Beep has lost her
sheeps”



“Santa **bringed**
me lots of
presents”

'Un-ing' words



“I hate you and I’m never going to **unhate** you!”

“He tiptoed to the graveyard and **unburied** her”



Clever Mistakes a Sign of Progress



Child has learned
something quite
complicated
about English

Thing -s

Dogs, Cats, Shoes

Action -ed

Hopped, Skipped,
Jumped

Un- action

Undo, Untie,

Unlock

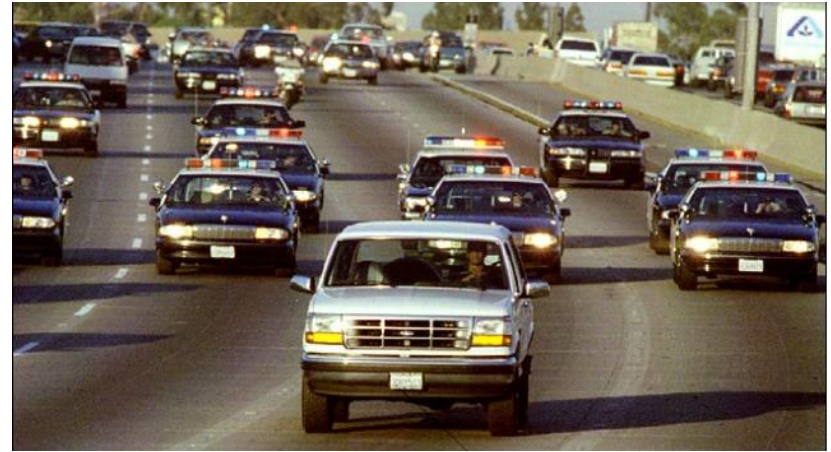
Spotting clever mistakes

Right or wrong? How do you know?

- Don't move that
- Marge filled petrol into the tank
- Shall I give you something?
- Don't giggle me
- Homer poured beer into his glass
- Shall I say you something?

How do children learn to tell the difference?

“Stay your eyes
on that car in
front”



“Don’t say me
that or you’ll
make me cry”

Why clever?

Child has found a **pattern** in the language

- “ your eyes”
- “Don’t me that”



Why a mistake?

Child is putting a word in a pattern where it doesn't quite fit

- “**Stay** your eyes”
- “Don't **say** me that”



Clever Mistakes a Sign of Progress



Child is using what he has learned to express **a new meaning**

Break the toy
Bounce the ball
Move your arms



Stay your eyes (on the car in front)

Words that can and words that can't

The Boy ...

Broke the stick

Bounced the ball

Moved his arms

The Boy ...

Giggled the girl

Smiled his brother

Laughed his Mum



You can't
expression
someone

Children doing it for themselves

Can ...

Break the stick

Bounce the ball

Move your arms

Can't ...

Giggle your sister

Smile your brother

Laugh your Mum



You can't
expression
someone!

What's going on?

How do we find out what's going on?

What causes these errors?

How do children leave them behind?

How to capture errors

- Diary studies
- Naturalistic recordings
- Experiments

Naturalistic Recordings

Child 4: First tags at 2;10

You don't like dohdi (=dummy), han't you?*

You've not seen that, han't you?*

You han't seen my pram, han't you?*

You've not seen that, have you?

She's seen that (to M) Han't you? (to I)

You've not seen this one, han't you?*

Problem: Difficult to capture rare errors or rapid development

Diary studies

Problem: Difficult to write everything down unless focussed on a particular, well-defined feature.

Diary study: tag questions (Anna Theakston)

Child aged 2;8 – 4;4 approx. 3300 tags

- My say no when my a baby ,, won't me ?
- My like going swimming ,, won't me ?
- I have be really careful and put it just there ,, won't me ?
- My found two the same ,, did me ?
- My do(ing) it wrong ,, are me ?
- Your didn't find two the same ,, did you ?
- And then I put these on ,, can me ?
- I will be at nursery when Granny and Grandpa will come, won't me ?
- I'm not very silly ,, are I ?
- I not wearing a scrunchie ,, are I ?
- I think Lxxx can have one of these necklaces and a medal ,, shouldn't she?
- I was going to read that ,, weren't I ?
- it was Amy and Laura ,, wasn't there ?
- shall I go and tell D Lxx's awake and him can get Lxx ,, can't he ?
- this is could be his bed ,, couldn't it ?
- this is could be the way to shopping ,, couldn't it ?
- we haven't got no chicken ,, have we ?
- I think Daddy probably talking today ,, aren't he ?

Diary study: Koymen & Lieven

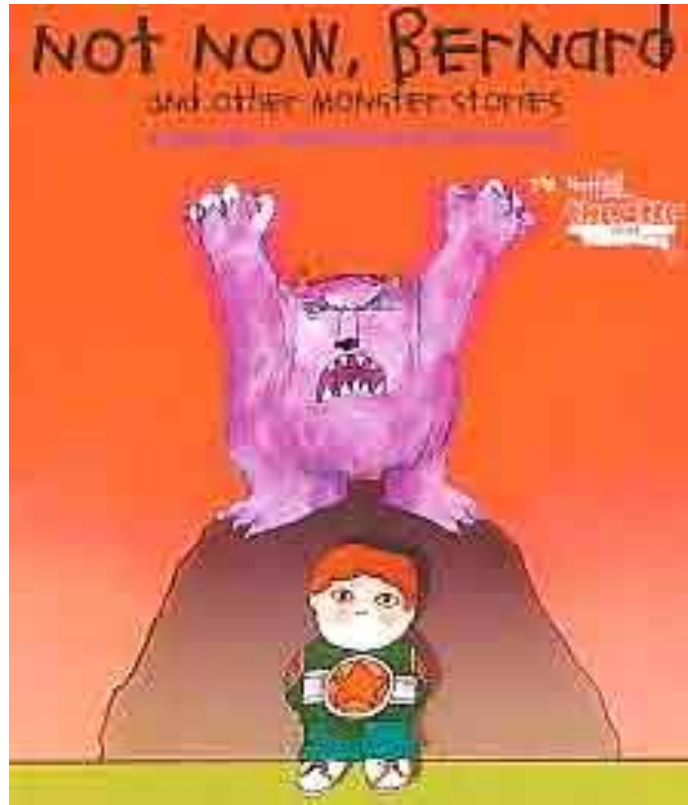
- | | | |
|----|---|---------|
| a. | I hope your car stalls . | 2;01;23 |
| b. | I hope my pooh in bathtub . | 2;01;23 |
| c. | I hope not make pee bathtub . | 2;01;24 |
| d. | I hope I make pooh nother one . | 2;02;06 |
| e. | Hope Andi feel better . | 2;02;06 |
| f. | I hope peanuts catch a big dove . | 2;02;21 |
| g. | I hope peanuts catch a dove . | 2;02;21 |
| h. | I hope my chair uh tipped . | 2;02;21 |
| i. | Hope those cats fighting . | 2;03;21 |
| j. | Daddy i hope those cats was fighting . | 2;03;21 |
| k. | I hope my chair um um tipped . | 2;03;21 |
| l. | Hope Winnie the pooh 's in there . | 2;03;25 |
| m. | I hope Corney catch a bird . (2X) | 2;04;00 |
| n. | I hope Collie dog 's there . | 2;04;12 |
| p. | Hope this room get on fire . | 2;04;21 |
| q. | Hope my room get on fire right Dev ? | 2;04;26 |
| r. | Hope fire get in my room . | 2;05;21 |
| s. | I hope I don't choke on carrot . | 2;05;21 |
| t. | I hope I don't . | 2;05;29 |
| u. | I hope apple juice in it . | 2;06;13 |

I hope X

(not X)

Learning the right word

The monster **eated** Bernard



The monster **ate** Bernard

Experiment: Saying things in the past



- (walks) *I don't know what she did*
- (sleeps) *Sleaped*
- (jumps) *Bounced*
- (draws) *Drawed*
- (kicks) *Kicked*
- (eats) *Eated*
- (cuts) *Cut*
- (runs) *Runned*

Problem: Difficult to make the situation natural enough while still keeping control over the design

Errors with questions



- Where he will go?
- Why he can do that?





- We think that children make errors like:

– Why he can do that?

- When they don't have a pattern that they can use to produce the correct question
 - Why can ...?
- Instead they put two bits together
 - Why + He can do that



How can we test this idea?

- With a little ingenuity
 - i.e. some questions to which the child does not know the answer



- And a talking dog
 - i.e. a cuddly dog, with a speaker fitted inside it and an MP3 player



Resistance to correction

Child: *Dat my fis*

Adult: *Is that your fis?*

Child: *No, it's my fis*

Child: Want other one spoon, daddy.

Father: you mean you want the other spoon.

Child: Yes. I want other one spoon, please, daddy.

Father: can you say 'the other spoon'?

Child: Other ... one ... spoon.

Father: say other.

Child: Other.

Father: spoon.

Child: spoon.

Father: Other ... spoon.

Child: Other ... spoon. Now give me other one spoon.

Child: Nobody don't like me.

Mother: No. say 'nobody likes me'.

Child: Nobody don't like me.

This exchange is repeated eight times and then:

Mother: No. Now listen carefully; say 'nobody likes me'.

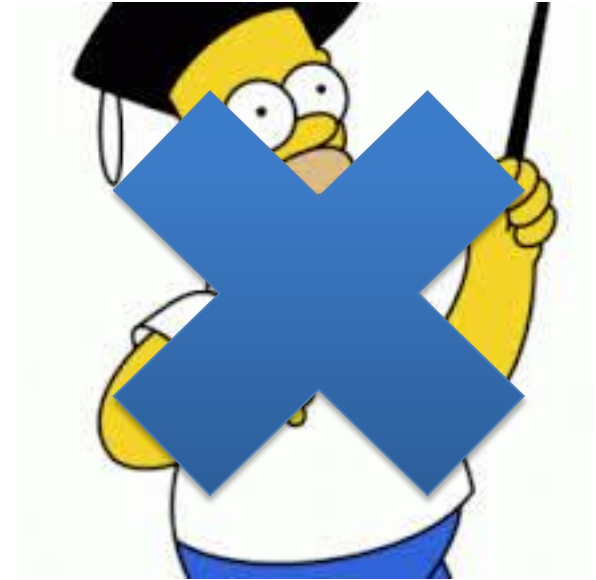
Child: Oh! Nobody don't likes me.

In response to his linguist father trying to correct 'wented' to 'goed'

I say it this way, Papa says it that way

Kids say the funniest things

But they learn **not** to say them without much help from adults



So don't stop to correct them.
Keep on talking!

Parents can support this

The monster **eated** Bernard



The monster **ate** Bernard, did he? And then what happened?

There are errors to worry about – as children get older

Story told by a four-and-a-half-year-old

The man got on the boat. He jump out the boat.
He rocking the boat. He drop his thing. He drop his other thing.
He tipping over. He fell off the boat.

Sentences produced by a teenager

Then he went home and tell mother — tell what he doing that day.
Then about noontime those guy went in and eat and warm up.
That boy climbing a rope to get to the top the rope.