

Interlanguage and developmental sequence analysis



Part 1: Developmental Sequence*Developmental Sequence of Focus: Question Formation*

Line	Statement	Developmental Stage														
15	I can say whatever I want?	2														
17	What's the first question?	4c														
56	Miss what's your favorite place to go?	4c														
58	What's your favorite animal?	4c														
60	Where do you live?	5b														
62	Where are you from?	4c														
64	Who's your favorite person?	4c														
66	What's your favorite place to eat?	4c														
68	What's your favorite song?	4c														
70	What's your favorite color?	4c														
Stage	1a	1b	2	3a	3b	3c	4a	4b	4c	5a	5b	5c	6a	6b	6c	Total
Count	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	8	0	1	0	0	0	0	10

Percenta

ge 0% 0% 10% 0% 0% 0% 0% 0% 0% 80% 0% 10% 0% 0% 0% 0% 100%

Part 2: Interlanguage Analysis

Form of Focus: -d/-ed morpheme; past tense marker

Line	Incorrect Form in Context	Line	Correct Form in Context
27	When I move [muv]to the U. S. two and a half years ago.	40	The lesson I learned is that is [ɪz]. Better move schools
48	The third one is when I ignore [ɪgnɔːr]someone.	43- 44	The lesson I learned is that you can learn how survive [səˈvaɪv]without someone.
		46	It was the. Worst thing that happened to me.
		48- 49	The lesson I learned is that you have to ignore people who always have to say something at you.

Part 3: Discussion of Findings

Introduction/Overview

Milly is the subject of these analyses. She is one of my former students. Milly is a 13-year-old girl in Springfield, Massachusetts. She has lived in Springfield, after moving from Puerto Rico, for three and a half years. She started learning English at the same time she moved to the United States. She is a rising 9th grader who has ESL services. After the ACCESS exam this year, she was placed at a Level 2 for the second year in a row; however, she <https://assignbuster.com/interlanguage-developmental-sequence-analysis/>

appears to have more of an intermediate language proficiency. The following analyses appear to support this fact.

In terms of her personality and approach to learning, Milly is extremely outgoing, and she is usually one of the first students to volunteer to answer a question in class. She cares a lot about her academics and how she appears to others. She can be self-conscious about her learning, and when she makes mistakes she likes to try to pretend she knew that was wrong in the first place. However, making mistakes does not stop her from continuing to practice her language skills.

For these analyses, there are two major areas of focus. My initial area of focus is on developmental sequences broadly and question formation more specifically. My second area of focus is on interlanguage. I perform an interlanguage analysis with a focus on the morphemes -ed and -d; both are used to mark past tense. I am able to analyze both of these focus areas due to Milly's participation in a casual conversation with me that her mother allowed me to transcribe and analyze.

Developmental Analysis: Question Formation

In order to discuss the significance of these findings, it is important to first give a brief context for the developmental sequence of question formation. Tarone and Swierzbin note the order for question formation has been largely researched and the numbers that represent each stage have been created by linguistic researchers Pienemann, Johnston, and Brindley. The same researchers claim that Stage 1 and Stage 2 questions, though they occur initially in the question formation process, are known to "... continue to

appear in the speech of highly proficient learners (and native speakers too).” They then clarify that not all of the early question forms continue occurring, and the ones that are actually ungrammatical are phased out of learners’ language by the time they reach a higher level of proficiency (2009, p. 46).

The findings from this analysis are interesting and initially seem very straight forward. Milly should be at an intermediate stage in her language acquisition, and the questions she asks appear to reflect that. The most frequent question stage seen from this transcript is 4c, which is right in the middle of the question stages. That matches the intermediate stage Milly’s oral language is at according to the ACCESS exam. However, upon closer inspection, Milly appears to be reusing the same question format. She shows a strong acquisition of wh- questions with copula, but that appears to be where her comfort level stops when asking questions.

One thing that I discovered about Milly based on this transcript was that she has entered question stage 5b. Before this specific “ interview”, I had not heard Milly ask questions with a “ do” operator. This shows that Milly might be ready to move on to more complex question structures, and that is an important thing to know as her teacher.

Interlanguage Analysis

This transcript provides a clear example of Milly’s interlanguage. Tarone and Swierzbin explain that, “... The learner’s IL can only be observed when he or she is focused on the meaning of the message” (2009, p. 12). That is the case in this conversation and interview due to the strength of my teacher-student relationship with my former student, Milly. Additionally, this

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conversation didn't take place as part of a graded assignment, which might have led to Milly focusing more so on grammatical accuracy versus communicating meaning.

After doing the interlanguage analysis, one thing became clear very quickly. Milly had more instances of correct past tense use with -ed/-d than without. While this initially shows that she has a solid acquisition of past tense markers, I realized that there was a pattern upon closer inspection. A majority of her correct uses of past tense with the -ed/-d ending are within the same sentence construction: "The lesson I learned is..." This sentence construction is familiar to me because it's the same sentence starter I gave my students when they had to complete their memoir final project. It appears that Milly memorized this sentence starter and has learned how to use it in the correct context. While that is a great development, and it reflects that sentence starters are a great way for students to acquire correct grammatical constructions, it is not really a true representation of a rule that Milly is applying in her interlanguage.

Another pattern I uncovered from this transcript is that when Milly would lead utterances with the phrase "When I...", she would fail to use the necessary past tense markers or morphemes. In Spanish, these instances would use the imperfect tense whereas her correct uses of the past tense would be the preterite tense in Spanish. This could mean that she hasn't yet made the connection that verbs in the imperfect tense in Spanish also translate to the English past tense. It would require more study to make any definitive claims.

Conclusion

This transcript made me realize that Milly's acquisition of the past tense is not as strong as I had previously believed. In other instances in the conversation, she correctly used irregular past tense forms. This makes me think that it is less likely that Milly has truly learned the grammatical rules that govern linguistic systems and that she has instead memorized which words she should use with the past tense. As a language educator, I would work to teach Milly the actual grammatical rules that govern the past tense in an effort to increase her metacognition and her self-monitoring of her language production.

Additionally, as a language educator, I would support this learner by pushing her to use and practice more complex question types. She exhibits a lot of comfort with *wh-* questions, and from the one more advanced question she asked, it appears that she is ready to move on to later stages. I would model more complex questions for her frequently in class before providing her with more "interview" opportunities to practice her questioning skills.

Limitations

One key limitation of performing error-based analyses is that, with the focus on incorrect forms, it becomes easier to overlook correct uses of language produced by the target learner. Tarone and Swierzbin further clarify the benefits of being able to look at the full picture of what a learner can do by saying, "... If we can systematically identify those instances where a learner gets a form right, then we may have gained some pedagogical leverage in figuring out how to extend that accuracy to more problematic instances"

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(2009, p. 29). In other words, it is easier for an educator to help learners recreate their success when they have worked to identify the success.

Works Cited:

Tarone, E., & Swierzbin, B. (2009). *Exploring learner language*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Appendix:

Livesay: Okay, Milly. You need to think about a time when you did something fun with a friend.

Milly: Okay. One with Jessica. She's my bestie

Livesay: Okay, that's a good start. When were you last with Jessica?

Milly: Um. I'm not sure... Saturday

Livesay: What did you do?

Milly: We eat, dancing, and using my phone

Livesay: And where were you?

Milly: At my house. We were at my house

Livesay: How did you feel?

Milly: Happy. And ex-ci-ted

Livesay: How long were you together?

Milly: A few hours I think

Livesay: Okay let's move on. I'm going to ask you some more questions now.

All of these questions are about you, so there's not a right or a wrong answer

Milly: I can say whatever I want?

Livesay: As long as it answers the question yes

Milly: Okay. What's the first question?

Livesay: What is the best thing that has ever happened to you?

Milly: Pfft that one is easy. Having a big sister

Livesay: Oh that's very sweet you should tell her that

Milly: Also having you as a teacher

Livesay: (Laughter) Okay let's move on. What is the worst thing that has ever happened to you?

Milly: Oh. The worst thing was when I lost [lbsd] my dog in Puerto Rico.

Livesay: Oh I'm so sorry, that is pretty bad.

Milly: I was. Sad

Livesay: That makes sense. Okay. The next question is what event has changed your life?

Milly: Pffft that's easy. When I move [muv] to the U. S. two and a half years ago.

Livesay: That does make sense. Okay. Who is your favorite person?

Milly: My. Best Friend because she is one of the person [pɜrsən] that is always there for me in good and. Bad times. And we always go to places together like next week we are going to the movies.

Livesay: That's great! Is there anyone else you want to talk about?

Milly: Oh. Yes. My sister because she is the. Best and I go with her everywhere. And she get me out of the trouble. And she is always there for me in good and. Bad times like my. Best Friend They are the only Persons that are always there for me.

Livesay: Okay, Milly, now I'm going to ask some harder questions. It's okay if you need time to think before answering. First... What was an important life event for you? And what lesson did you learn?

Milly: My first one is going to different schools. That was important because of the different language. The lesson I learned is that is [ɪz]. Better moving schools and state [steɪt] because you can learn more and get a better job.

Livesay: Great answer. What is another important life event for you?

Milly: The second event is losing someone. The lesson I learned is that you can learn how to survive [sərvvaɪv] without someone.

Livesay: That does sound very important.

Milly: It was the. Worst thing that happened to me.

Livesay: It does sound very bad. Can you think of any other important life events?

Milly: The third one is when I ignore [ignɔr] someone. The lesson I learned is that you have to ignore the people who always have to say something about you.

Livesay: What do you mean by that?

Milly: You know the people who always have something to say and it [it] always mean.

Livesay: I hope you don't have anyone in your life who talks about you behind your back anymore.

Milly: No not anymore they were too fake

Livesay: Okay Milly now you can ask me questions about my life

Milly: Miss what's your favorite place to go?

Livesay: My favorite place to go is my mom's house because I love her and I miss her.

Milly: What's your favorite animal?

Livesay: My favorite animal is a dolphin.

Milly: Where do you live?

Livesay: I live in Worcester, Massachusetts.

Milly: Where are you from?

Livesay: I am from Honolulu, Hawaii and I grew up in San Diego, California.

Milly: Who's your favorite person?

Livesay: My favorite person is my sister.

Milly: What's your favorite place to eat?

Livesay: Chick Fil A.

Milly: What's your favorite song?

Livesay: Something Good Can Work by Two Door Cinema Club.

Milly: What's your favorite color?

Livesay: My favorite color is teal.