

# The Acquisition of Topicalization in Mandarin

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Friedmann et al. (2021) pointed out that language acquisition follows the geometry of syntactic tree. Children acquire the lower parts of the syntactic tree in the early stage, and then gradually acquiring the higher parts of the syntactic tree. In this article, the authors corresponded the three stages of child language acquisition with the functional levels of the syntax tree. The first stage of language acquisition is mainly at the IP level, including the lexical and inflectional layers. In the second stage, children acquire the lower parts of left periphery (up to QP). In the third stage, children fully acquire the left periphery (higher CP field). Among them, topicalization acquisition appears in the third stage.

This result is based on the data of Hebrew monolingual children, so there is a question: can we also apply this model to other languages?

Mandarin Chinese, in contrast to subject-prominent languages like English, has a canonical SVO word order and is a topic-prominent language in terms of typology because of the significance of the topic and the predominance of the topic-comment structure. (Li & Thompson 1976; 1981). In recent years, several researchers have discussed the acquisition of topicalization of Mandarin monolingual children, including Erbaugh (1992), Chen (2009), Liu (2020), etc. The results indicate that Mandarin monolingual children had acquired topic structure no later than four; although Chinese is topic-prominent, topicalization shows low frequency and variety in their spontaneous speech production.

This research is corpus-based. By analyzing data from longitudinal corpus of 4 children, we will start with the acquisition of topicalization of Mandarin monolingual children and discuss the relationship between syntax acquisition and the cartography of syntax structure.

The preliminary conclusion of this paper is that the situation in Mandarin can be mutually confirmed with the results of Friedmann et al. (2021). Meanwhile, we also find that there are some differences between the situation in Mandarin and the “three stages” assumption provided by Friedmann et al. (2021).

**Keywords:** Topicalization; Language acquisition; Cartography; Left periphery

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