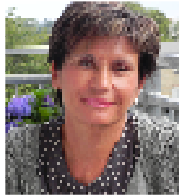


Variable verb placement in embedded clauses: comparing English and Norwegian children*

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“Dear Adriana – We wish you all the best on the occasion of this milestone in your life!”

This paper reports on two priming studies focusing on embedded word order in English and Norwegian, more specifically on subject-auxiliary inversion (SAI) in embedded questions in English and verb-adverb order (V2) in *that*-clauses in Norwegian. While the adult languages typically disprefer SAI or V2 in embedded contexts, spontaneous data show that these word orders are produced to a certain extent in specific contexts. Research on child language has shown that children go through a stage where these word orders are relatively frequent. A priming experiment was carried out in both languages, eliciting data from both adults and children. As priming is assumed not to affect ungrammatical structures, we expected there to be priming in the child data, indicating that these word orders are part of the child grammar, but potentially not in the adult data. The results show a clear and reliable priming effect in the English child data, but no priming in the Norwegian experiments.

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