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Corrective input

8.1 Previous research on corrective input

This section deals with adults' comments on children's non-target-like linguistic productions. There is a broad literature on adults' reactions to non-target-like child utterances and the extent to which they are helpful for children's language acquisition. Explicit corrections by adults are more related to the meaning of children's utterances than to their form (Brown & Hanlon 1970). Adults tend to react with different forms of recasts (repetitions with corrections) to children's errors, which can serve as negative evidence for the children, and can positively influence their course of acquisition (Farrar 1990). Saxton (1997) found that this is especially the case when those utterances are presented directly after the child's error. In their longitudinal study of children acquiring English and French, Chouinard and Clark (2003) reported as much as 65 per cent of child errors to be directly followed by recasts. The rates were similar across different types of errors (phonological, morphological, syntactic and lexical). Less effective is negative feedback such as clarification questions (Saxton 2015). Opposed to negative evidence, negative feedback does not model the correct form. However, for both forms of feedback, there is not much research for non-WEIRD languages. Nevertheless, the existing research suggests that there is variation between language communities. Schieffelin (1990), for example, reports that Kaluli mothers use *elema* 'say it like this' to prompt the children to correct their non-target-like utterances, a much more explicit strategy. Explicit corrections are also what adults in Raunsepna report when they are asked how they correct

children (Marley (2013); see Section 2.2.4). They expressed the opinion that children's errors have to be corrected, even if other people's children produce them and one happens to hear it (see (69)).

- (69) *kuasik taqurlani, dap nyitaqan taqurlani*
 kuasik taquarl-ani, dap nyi=taqen
 NEG like_this-DIST but 2SG.SBJ.NPST=talk
 taquarl-ani
 like_this-DIST
 'Do not talk like this, talk like that!' (AMS, Int_AMS_ARL)

However, they also describe a strategy like negative feedback as in the Tok Pisin utterance (70), which was provided as an example for me during the interviews (see Section 2.2.4).

- (70) *Mi no save long hap tok hia yu tokim mi long em, yu tokim mi gut!*
 'I do not know the word you said to me, tell me properly!'
 (BCP, Int_BCP_ARN)

In her study on language use in Raunsepna, Marley (2013: 134) reported that the actual practice was very different from what speakers claimed in the interviews, with regard to correcting children. She presents preliminary evidence that indicates that clarification questions are the prevalent strategy.

8.2 Adults' reactions to non-target-like child utterances

8.2.1 Methods

For the current study, the corpus was searched for errors (in grammar, lexicon or pronunciation) produced by children. These were identified with the help of transcribers' judgements. However, there are quite a few child utterances that were excluded because they were not intelligible at all, or they were ignored by the adults. In other cases, it was not clear what type of error was produced by the child, as in example (71b) below. It is not clear if XAT was trying to imitate his father or produces something entirely different. None of the transcribers, among them ARL and XAT's mother, AMS, had any idea what *apelki* means, but ARL assumed it was an unsuccessful imitation of *hoski* 'horse'.

- (71) a. ARL: *de kena.. kenama.. hoski*
 de ke=ne
 CONJ 3SG.M.SBJ.NPST=from/with
 ke=ne=ama=hos-ki
 3SG.M.SBJ.NPST=from/with=ART=horse-NC.SG.F
 ‘with.. with a.. with a horse’
 b. XAT: *apelki*
 ?
 ?
 c. ARL: *hoski!*
 hos-ki
 horse-NC.SG.F
 ‘Horse!’ (PearARLP 13-15)

8.2.2 Approval and ignoring

In the whole corpus, there are 28 non-target-like utterances produced by children. All but two of these are instances of unsuccessful imitation. Table 8.1 shows adults’ reactions to these child utterances. There are three types of reactions: mostly, adults ignore the child’s utterance altogether, or they express approval while ignoring the form. Only three adults provide negative evidence by recasting the children’s utterance. I will illustrate these types of reactions with reference to examples.

Table 8.1: Adults’ reactions to non-target-like child utterances.

Adult Reaction	Instances	Speaker code
Approve	14	ARL, AVD, BLN
Ignore	8	AVD, DCM
Recast	6	ABD, ARL, BLN, AMT

In (72), YMN tries to repeat the last parts of her father’s utterance. Instead of the correct form *angerlmamga* ‘father’ she produces *aemga*. Nevertheless, AVD agrees with *mm* ‘yes’.

- (72) a. AVD: *ma.. iaqama.. angerlmamga*
 ma ia-ka ama
 thus other-NC.SG.M ART
 a=ngerlmam-ka
 NM=man/father-NC.SG.M
 ‘So the.. the other.. man’

- b. YMN: *aemga?*
 a=ngerlmam-ka
 man/father-NC.SG.M
 'Man?'
- c. AVD: *mm*
mm
 YES
 'Yes' (PearAVDP 002-004)

All similar instances are produced either by DCM or by AVD. In the pear task, children were not expected to be narrators. AVD and DCM might therefore consider it inappropriate to take notice of what the children say. A talkative child, then, may be silenced with a quick confirmation like in example (72). This is supported by the fact that the two men are also the only ones explicitly prompting their child listeners to be silent (see (73) and (74)).

- (73) *sung nanyi dengusiit banyi!*
 sung ne-nyi de=ngu=siiit
 quiet from/with-2SG CONJ=1SG.SBJ=tell.story
 barek-nyi
 ben-2sg
 'Be quiet so I can tell you the story!' (PearAVDP 005)

- (74) *askerl kurli denyatu giasdem da?*
 as=kerl kurli de=nya=tu
 still=DEONT stay/leave CONJ=2SG.SBJ=put
 gia=sdem da
 2SG.POSS=ear true
 'Leave it and listen, okay?' (PearDCMP 086)

Another method to deal with unwanted child productions is evidenced in (75). YMN unsuccessfully repeats her father's utterance *deqamrirl sanget* by echoing *mesamet*. AVD nevertheless continues his story without further comment on his daughter's incorrect production.

- (75) a. AVD: *deqamrirl sanget*
 de=ka=mrirl se-nget
 CONJ=SG.M.SBJ=descend to/with-3N
 'And he descends with them'

8.2.3 Recast

Table 8.2: Recast per speaker and type of non-target-like form produced by the children.

Speaker Code	Expansions	Type of non-target-like utterance
ABD	1	pronoun choice
AMT	1	omission/pronunciation
ARL	2	omission, pronunciation
BLN	2	omission, preposition choice

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- (76) a. ARL: *amadepguas nara*
 ama=depguas ne-ta
 ART=three from/with-3 PL.H
 'Three of them'
- b. XAT: *demgarara?*
 ama=depguas ne-ta
 ART=three from/with-3 PL.H
 'Three of them?'
- c. ARL: *adepguas!*
 a=depguas
 NM=three
 'Three!'
- d. XAT: *adepguas?*
 a=depguas
 SPEC=three
 'Three?'
- e. ARL: *nara!*
 ne-ta
 from/with-3 PL.H
 'Of them!'
- f. XAT: *lara?*
 ne-ta
 from/with-3 PL.H
 'Of them?' (PearARLP 107-111)

In (77), ABD models the right form for her son ZGT who leaves out the subject clitic *ka* '3sg.m.sbj'. After she corrects him this way, she does not insist on a reaction from him, but turns her attention directly towards younger XCL.

- (77) a. ABD: *kesana?*
 ke=sana
 3 SG.M.SBJ.NPST=do_what
 'What does he do?'
- b. ZGT: *tramagam*
 tat ama=gam
 take/pick_up ART=seedfruit
 'Pick fruits'
- c. ABD: *katramagam!*
 ka=tat ama=gam
 3 SG.M.SBJ=take/pick_up ART=seed/fruit
 'He picks fruits!'

- d. ABD: *XCL!*
XCL
NAME
'XCL!' (ABDP 13-16)

Another instance of a grammar-related recast of a child's utterance is illustrated in (78). ZDL imitates his mother's utterance using the non-target-like preposition (*de* 'loc' instead of *met* 'in') and BLN models the right expression for him. ZDL does not repeat what she told him, and answers instead with the tag-question *da?* 'true?', but BLN nevertheless agrees with an affirmative *mm*.

- (78) a. BLN: *davaaiaik dequasik metki*
dap aa=ia-ki
but 3SG.M.POSS=other-NC.SG.F
de=kuasik met-ki
CONJ=NEG in-3SG.F
‘But the other one there was nothing inside’
- b. ZDL: *da?*
da
right
‘Really?’
- c. BLN: *mm*
mm
yes
‘Yes’
- d. ZDL: *kuasik demgi?*
kuasik de-ki
NEG LOC.PART-3SG.F
‘Nothing there?’
- e. BLN: *kuasik metki!*
kuasik met-ki
NEG in-3SG.F
‘Nothing inside’
- f. ZDL: *da?*
da
right
‘Really?’
- g. BLN: *mm*
mm
yes
‘Yes’ (BLNP 158-162)

Before I summarise the results from this chapter in Section 8.3, I will present a last example indicating that recasting might not be the only way to correct in Qaqet. While feedback to non-target-like child utterances is, if at all, only provided in the form of recasts, there are two examples of negative feedback related to an inaudible utterance produced by the child, both produced by ABD. In (79), ABD asks her son about the fruits on the tree from the film. His answer is too low in volume; therefore, she repeats the same question again to show that she did not hear her son's utterance. As he repeats it louder but omits the obligatory article, she agrees and recasts his utterance, adding the omitted form.

- (79) a. ABD: *aginget?*
 a=gi-nget
 NM=thingy-NC.C
 'What are they?'
 b. XCL: *[inaudible]*
 ?
 ?
 c. ABD: *aginget?*
 a=gi-nget
 NM=thingy-NC.N
 'What are they?'
 d. XCL: *[whispering] gam*
 gam
 seed/fruit
 'Fruits'
 e. ABD: *ee, agam*
 ee a=gam
 yes nm=seed/fruit
 'Yes, fruit'

8.3 Summary: Imitation and recast

The current chapter has demonstrated that most child errors are produced when children try to imitate adults' productions. In Section 6.2.1, I introduced the children's habit of imitating the ends of adults' utterances by turning them into polar questions. In Section 7.3.2, I discussed the imitation routine as a form of backchannelling behaviour used by children to signal that they are listening to the adult narrator. The evidence from the current chapter suggests that imitation is also used as a form of negative feedback, signalling the children's need for clarification.

Despite the reports of explicit correction by adults from Raunsepna, there are no instances of those found in the pear corpus. This supports previous research that suggests this form of feedback is infrequent (Brown & Hanlon 1970).

Opposed to evidence from other languages, however, most non-target-like forms of children are ignored (Chouinard & Clark 2003). Likewise, many adults answer with affirmatives, regardless of erroneous linguistic form. This is partly explained by the roles of adults as speakers and children as listeners during the pear task. It also confirms previous evidence from other languages suggesting that adults often react to the content, rather than the linguistic form, of children's utterances (Brown & Hanlon 1970).

However, if adults notice and comment on child errors, they do this by recasting the children's utterance in a correct form. There are six of these instances following different types of non-target-like child productions, both in grammar and pronunciation. Among the children, only XAT repeats the modelled forms. ZDL, instead, reacts with tag-questions. The narrators do not or approve explicitly, but they tend to just continue their stories.

In addition to the recasts following child errors, negative feedback is used by one woman to signal that she did not understand what her child said. ABD uses clarification requests following inaudible child utterances and her children repair those by speaking louder. While witnessed only twice in the current data, these instances are still an indication that this technique exists in Qaqet CDS. In a larger corpus, it might appear as feedback towards non-target-like child utterances.

To summarise, I have presented evidence on negative evidence and negative feedback in Qaqet CDS. Moreover, I have shown that children are sensitive to those forms of feedback. Adults (both male and female) correct different non-target-like forms produced by children, although most of these are ignored. This can be explained considering the children's role as listeners in this study.

Speakers' reports of their language practice are only partly congruent with what they actually do. In line with Marley's (2013) observation, speakers report that they correct children in an explicit manner, but the actual corrections found in the data are rather implicit. A similar discrepancy will be discussed again in Chapter 9 on special forms in the lexicon.

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