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Mothers' Speech for Children's Intention-reading: a Cross-linguistic Study of the Deictic Verbs 'Come' and 'Go'

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‘Deictic’ expressions

Deictic expressions are words, phrases and features of grammar that have to be interpreted in relation to the situation in which they are uttered.

(Griffiths, 2006, p.14)

Previous studies of acquisition of deictic verbs

"come" and "go"	"kuru (to come)" and "iku (to go)"
1) Clark & Garnica (1974)	1) Ohkubo (1967)
2) Richards (1976)	2) Iwabuchi (1968)
3) Macrae (1976)	3) Maeda and Maeda (1996)
4) Tanz (1980)	4) Masataka (1999)
5) Winston (1988)	5) Takahashi (2009)

Usage-based approach of language acquisition

Three important skills for language acquisition

Tomasello (2003)

- Intention-reading
- Joint attention
- Cultural learning in the form of role reversal imitation

Research questions

What kinds of input do children receive during their interactions with their caregivers?

→Are there any characteristics of adults' speech containing 'come' and 'go' when they speak to children?

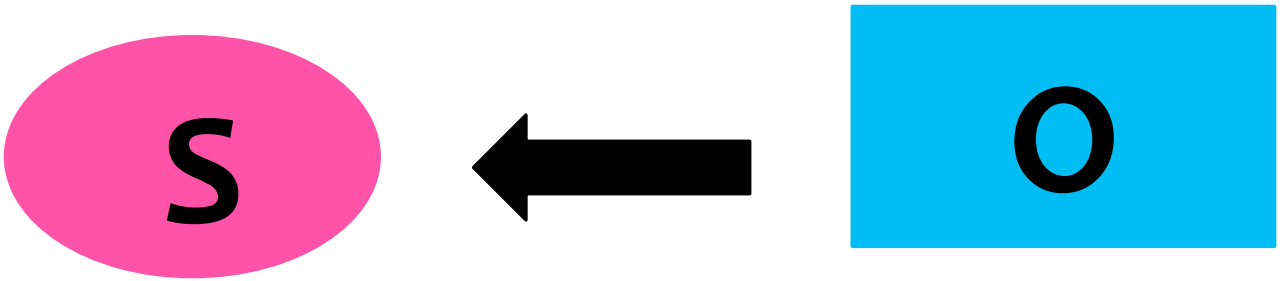
→Is there a difference between the use of 'come' and that of 'go'?

Purpose of the study

To investigate mothers' speech containing the deictic verbs, and to analyze if there are any characteristics of adults' speech containing the verbs when they speak to children

Basic motion of “come”

(1)



（S: speaker O: listener or person(s) or thing(s)

“Come” indicates motion toward the location of either the speaker or the addressee at either coding time or reference time.

(Fillmore, 1997,p.87)

Come here.

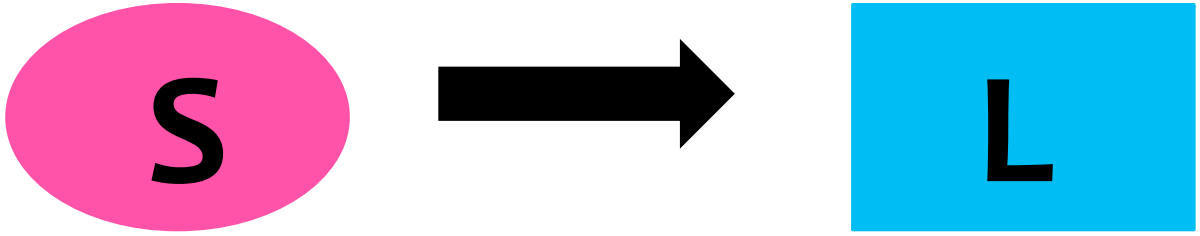
Here comes the train.

Mr. Sato came to the office today.

Mike usually comes home around 8 o’clock.

Basic motion of “come”

(2)



（S: speaker L: listener ）

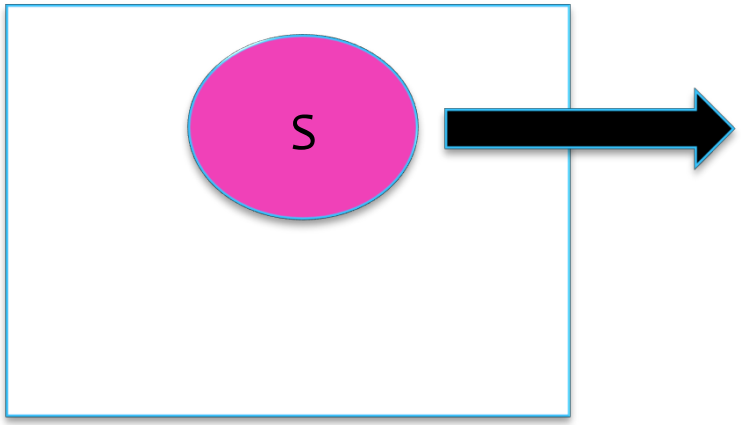
“Come” indicates motion toward the location of either the speaker or the addressee at either coding time or reference time.

(Fillmore, 1997,p.87)

“I’m coming.”

“I came to your house two hours ago, but you weren’t at home. So I had to wait outside.”

Basic motion of "go"



Motion from one place to another

Goal

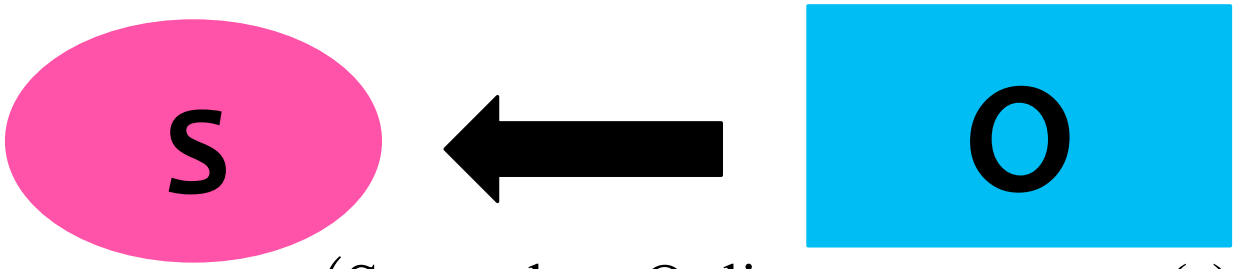
The speaker is not located at the Goal at coding time.
The speaker is not located at the Goal at reference time.

(Fillmore, 1972)

"Go upstairs and clean your room!"

"I went home at around ten o'clock yesterday."

Basic motion of “kuru” (to come)



(S: speaker O: listener or person(s) or thing(s)

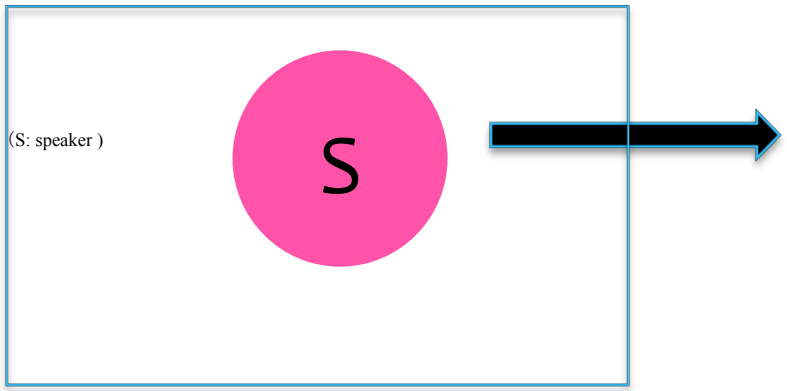
Movement toward the speaker

Speaker is located at the goal at coding time.

Speaker is located at the goal at the actor’s arrival time.

Basic motion of “iku”(to go)

(A)



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Goal

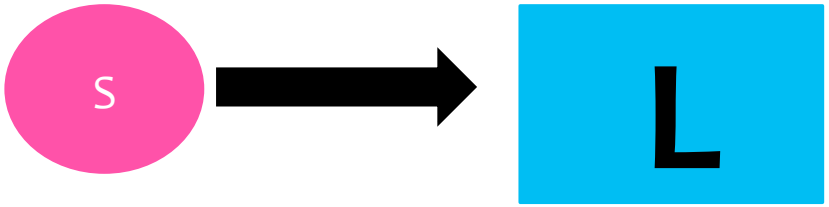
The speaker is not located at the Goal at coding time.

“ jimu-ni iku-no?”

gym-DAT go-Q

‘Are you going to the gym?’

“come”



“kuru”

（S: speaker O: listener or person(s) or thing(s)

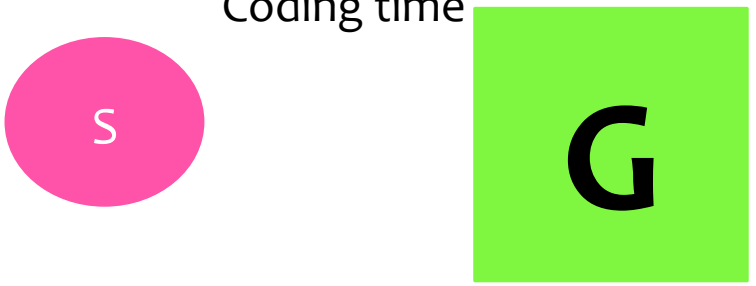
“go”

Coding time

Reference time

“iku”

Coding time



Reference time

Data Analysis

- We analyzed the spontaneous speech of American mothers, whose children are 1;8 – 4;9, containing "come" and "go" in the CHILDES database (MacWhinney, 2000).

- A total of 46 mothers' and caregivers' spontaneous speech to their children
- We searched the database for the utterances containing "come" and "go".

Data Analysis

- We analyzed the spontaneous speech of Japanese mothers, whose children are 1;0 – 2;11 and 3;11 - 4;11, containing “kuru” and “iku”.

(MacWhinney, 2000) and (Kokuritu Kokugo Kenkyujo, 1982)

- A total of 9 mothers’ and 1 father’ spontaneous speech to their children
- We searched the database for the utterances containing “kuru” and “iku”.

Adults utterances with come

Come here. + Sentence	Come over here
Come here and a sentence	Come over and a sentence
130	23

come to PL	come to a person	come with a thing	Come on.	How come	come +V	S ocmes	Here comes	come out	come in come on in
14	1	3	108	51	24	22	8	34	20

come outside	come off	come back	come home	come to V	come inside	come and V	come in	come into	come down
1	14	50	4	7	1	16	1	0	8

come alive	come up with	come up	come from	come	come apart	come in here	come again	come through	others
0	0	4	13	8	5	1	1	2	31

Adults' utterances containing 'kuru'

	S kuru	oommand	te command	te request	te kuru	te kuru?	PLに kuru	Vに kuru
1:;0-4;11	68	20	18	12	169	4	5	1

Adults' utterances containing 'iku'

	iku?	commnad	ikitai?	request	iku	te de ikku	verb ni iku	de（手段） iku	place ni iku	invite
1;00^1;11 3;0-4;11	72	5	7	26	52	62	36	16	72	5

Results of data analysis

Some characteristics of adults' speech containing 'come'

1. Intention for the motion toward the speaker is clearly stated by the speaker.

"Come here." followed by another sentence.
"Come here and " followed by another sentence.

Examples: "Come here. Pick up your toys."
"Come here and show me the book."

* It clearly states what the listener (the child) needs to do at the goal place.

Some characteristics of adults' speech containing "come"

2. It clearly states destination. ➔' *here'*

3. "*come*" + particle

come back / come out / come with a person

come from / come in / come off / come down

4. Others

"Come on." *"How come ~ "*

Some characteristics of adults' speech containing "go"

1. "go " + specific places

"What do you say when you go to bed?"

"Mommy went to the university this morning to get some books."

Some characteristics of adults' speech containing 'go'

2. "go" + another verb

"Go get a tissue."

- It does not include a destination but states <u>purpose</u> for the motion.

3. It does not include a destination.

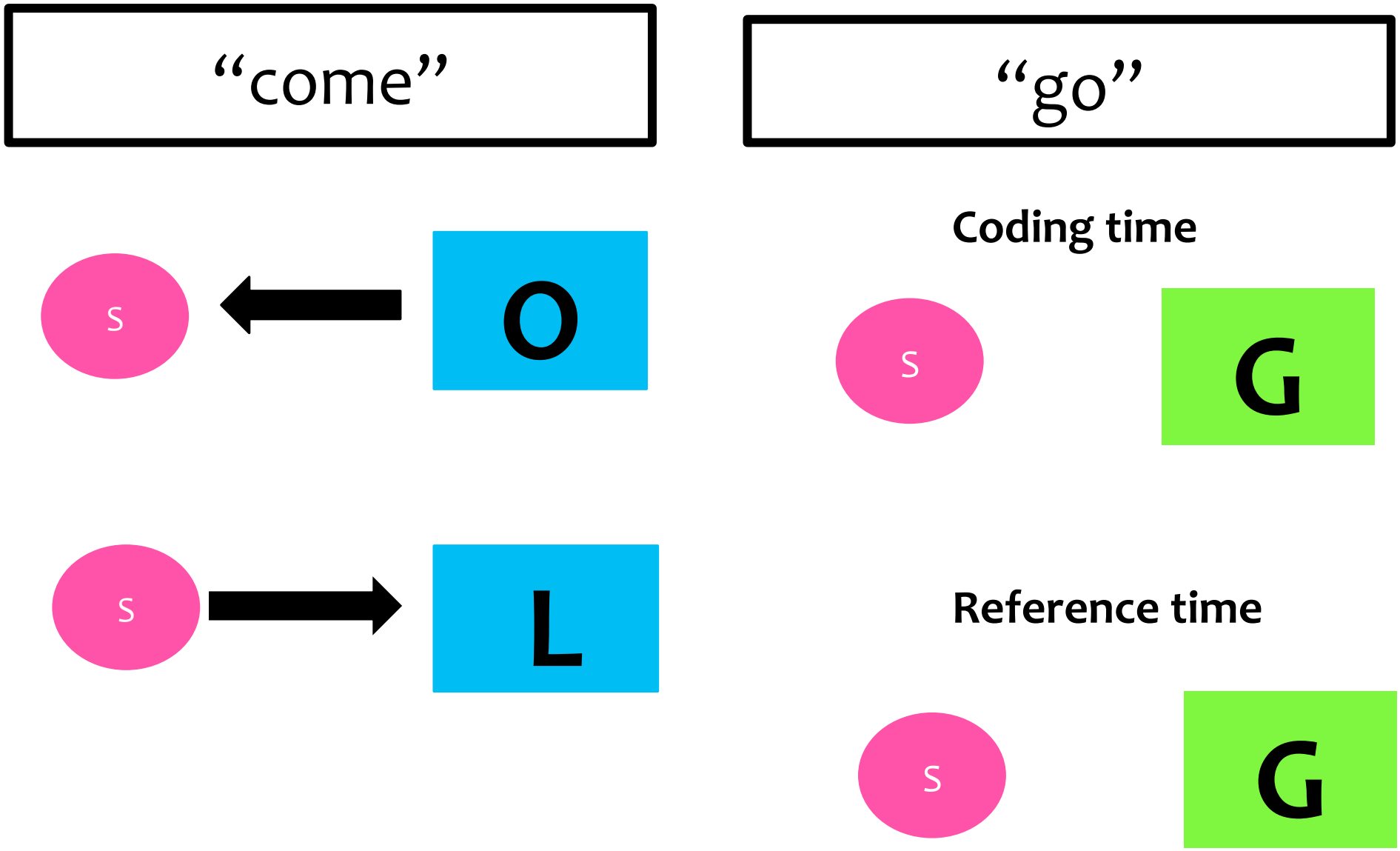
"Do you want to go next week with Daddy, too?"

Some characteristics of adults' speech containing "go"

4. "go" with another meaning

"Where does that go?"

"in here."


“come”
“go”
Coding time
S
O
S
G
S
L
Reference time
S
G

Results of Data analysis

Some characteristics of adults' speech containing 'kuru' (to come)

1. It indicates the motion toward the speaker (the mother)

   example: *kocchi irasshai.*

   here come

   ' Come here.'

2. It does not state what the listener (the child) need do at the goal place.

3. There are a lot of utterances with the pattern of ' verb-te- -iku '.

Some characteristics of adults' speech containing 'kuru' (to come)

4. It shows variation of the actors in the movement in the utterances such as the child himself, things or a third person.

5. It has a variety of patterns indicating a command.

kinasai. *irasshai.* *oide.* (Commands to say "Come.")

Some characteristics of adults' speech containing 'iku' (to go)

1. It indicates a person or a thing leaving a current position

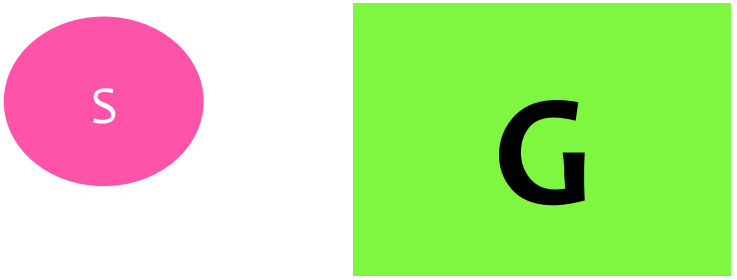
2. It does not include destination in many utterances.

3. There are many interrogative sentences.

“kuru” (to come)

“iku” (to go)

Coding time



Reference time

Discussion

- Mothers' speech containing the verb in both languages indicates the basic meaning of each verb. Mothers clearly state intention for the motion so that young children (toddlers), who are developing their cognitive skills, can understand what to do.

- There are differences between English and Japanese from the perspective of the possible factors which make learning the deictic verbs difficult for children.

English-speaking children need to pay attention to variety of phrasal verbs and idioms containing "come" and "go".

Japanese-speaking children need to pay attention to the verbs' ending positions. That is because the verbs are conjugated in Japanese. There are many forms that children need to learn.

Conclusion

This paper analyzed mothers' spontaneous speech containing the deictic verbs "come" and "go" and their Japanese equivalents.

From the results of the analysis, it is suggested that adults' speech contains very basic meanings of the verbs so that young children can understand the speakers' intention. There are, however, some differences of adults' speech style between English and Japanese.

Moreover, there are reasons why children need to take time to learn the verbs' meanings from the point of language specific characteristics.

As for the issue of how children acquire the adult usage of the verbs, it is clear that we need to investigate what and how they learn the verbs in kindergarten and at elementary school.

Thank you for your attention.