

## The Negative Structures Acquired by Lithuanian Children in Early Childhood

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**Abstract.** This paper is a study in the domains of developmental psycholinguistics and lexical competence of Lithuanian children as first language learners. In the research that follows the author has attempted to see whether and how the negative structures develop and mature in very young children as they learn their native language as well as to set up rules for changes in each stage. The data were processed by means of the generative, conversational and comparative methods of analysis.

The research has proved that young children are operating with internalized "rules" that do not correspond to those of the adults. Nevertheless, all negative children's utterances are structured in every detail of sound and sentence. The maturation process in child language is precisely characterised by the acquisition of additional rules and the refinement of already acquired rules, i.e. the construction of a larger and more complex grammar. This realisation is a powerful antidote to current theories suggesting that some children's speech is less structured and meaningful than that of other children.

### Introduction

Of all gifts and talents a man is born with, none is more remarkable than his/her capacity to learn to speak. This explains why the study of the child speech development has been a centre of interest in the past few years. The intense study of children's acquisition began around 1960's. Since then a great number of books has been published concerning the nature and origin of language; as well as the way language is acquired. However, few reports have been presented by Lithuanian linguists discussing the acquisition and development of native language by Lithuanian children.

In what follows the author propose to investigate the negative structures in the speech of Lithuanian children in early childhood in order to examine some of these aspects of language development. In addition, the author will try to prove that the language of children has its own systematicity, and that the sentences of children are not just an imperfect copy of those of adults. The analysis of negation is based on the research by Bellugi Klima and Edward Klima, who investigated negation in the speech of English children (Klima, 1996: 321).

### Theories of Language Development

Various theories have been proposed to explain how children acquire language.

To begin with, most researchers believe that the path to language acquisition begins in the womb, where unborn babies grow accustomed to the sounds and rhythms of their mother's voice. Evidence in support of this Nativist perspective comes from Noam Chomsky, the American scholar, who claims that "children seem to be innately equipped with special abilities which allow them to learn any language that they are exposed to" (Baron, Naomi, 1998: 1) It was his **Nativist theory** of language acquisition that provoked the modern revolution in language and cognitive science.

To support this theory, a great number of experiments have been carried out since 1960. The experiment performed by P. Juszysk and his colleague J. Mehler provides supporting evidence to the fact that infants may have some knowledge of their mother's language. The psychologists have shown that four-day-old French babies suck harder to hear French than Russian, and pick up sucking more when a tape changes from Russian to French than from otherwise. This experiment is an incredible proof of the fact that the melody of mothers' speech carries through their bodies and is audible in the womb (Pinker, 1995: 264).

Another theory of language acquisition postulates **physiological—maturational** processes in language acquisition. Eric Lenneberg must be credited for his theory of "language universality" claiming that "language is a form of behavior present in all cultures of the world, its onset is age-related in all cultures, and there is only one acquisition strategy for babies everywhere (Fromkin & Rodman, 1974: 278). In other words, all children acquire language equally well and at about the same rate, assuming normal health. Even children classified as retardates display adequate linguistic competence, although gross differences in vocabulary size and language styles do exist.

Meanwhile, Piaget and Vygotsky approached the acquisition of knowledge as a process of transformation and growth, and considered all **cognitive** acquisition, including language, to be the outcome of a gradual process of construction. Vygotsky's approach has often been labelled as "interactional" one as the Russian scholar conceived of the child's development embedded in a social environment in which interaction with the more expert adult aids the child to master increasingly complex cognitive structures.

Another theory of language acquisition suggests that in learning language, children acquire much through **imitation**, i.e. by copying the language item that is modelled for them. According to this view, children learn their parents' dialect, inflection, intonation, rhythm,

mannerism, and ways of expressing feelings. To acquire this complex communication system, children, as a rule, spend the first year of life (Fromkin & Rodman, 1974: 317).

Furthermore, learning theorists such as Skinner maintain that language is acquired by **reinforcement** (Baron, Naomi, 1998: 1). According to this theory the child learns to produce "correct" sentences because he is positively reinforced when he says something right and negatively reinforced when he says something wrong. This view assumes that the child is being constantly corrected for using "bad grammar" and patted on the head when he uses "good grammar". However, from this theory it is not clear how the child constructs the correct rules (Aichitson, 1992: 160).

Finally, there are linguists who claim that it is **motherese** or "**parentese**" – the exaggerated, drawn-out form of speech that people use to communicate with babies – that can solve the mystery of why so many children go through the definite stages in the acquisition of language and aid in future pronunciation (Baron, Naomi, 1998: 1). The international study "Motherese", published in the journal "Science", (August 1, 1997) showed that American, Russian and Swedish infants are so good at analysing their parents' speech that by the age of 20 weeks they are beginning to produce the three vowel sounds common to all human languages, such as "ee", "ah", "uu" (Baron, Naomi, 1998: 3). What is more, some researchers have proposed that parents have an inbuilt sensitivity to their children. According to this view, parents gradually increase the complexity of their speech as the child becomes ready for each new stage (Aichitson, 1983: 151).

### Stages of Language Acquisition

The child does not wake up one morning with a fully formed grammar in his head. The language is acquired by stages, each one more closely approximating the grammar of the adult language. Observations of children in different language areas of the world reveal that the stages of language acquisition they pass through are very similar, probably universal. Though normal children can differ by a year or more in their rate of language development, the stages they pass through are generally the same (Pinker, 1995: 265).

To begin with, not much of linguistic interest happens during the first two months, when babies produce reflexive cries, grunts, sighs, and clicks, associated with breathing, feeding, and fussing, or during the next three, when coos and laughs are added. From the very beginning, all babies seem to pay particular attention to the human voice, as opposed to other environmental sounds such as music, the doorbell, etc. Infants are particularly sensitive to their own mother's voice, having heard it so often while still in the womb. For example, one-month-old Robertas<sup>1</sup>, still unable to babble, always accompanied his mother while she was singing a lullaby to him.

Between 5 and 7 months babies begin to play with sounds, or use them to express their physical and emotional states.

Between 7 and 8 months, babies suddenly begin to babble in real syllables, to repeat what may be described as consonant-vowel combinations, that may be gross precursors to actual articulations, as for example, pa-pa-pa, ma-ma-ma, ba-ba-ba. Infants everywhere seem to make the same variety of sounds, even children who are born deaf (Pinker, 1995: 265). When the infant first starts to babble, the sounds he produces have no linguistic significance. He seems to be getting his vocal organs under control, possibly learning to produce any sounds that his vocal cords happen to produce (Fromkin & Rodman, 1974: 317).

Between 8 and 15 months (it varies from child to child and has nothing to do with how intelligent the child is) the child utters his first words. At this point he has learned that sounds are related to meanings. Most children seem to go through the "one word = one sentence" stage. Such one-word sentences are called **holophrastic** sentences [Fromkin & Rodman, 1974: 317]. The majority of scientists agree that the words that children utter for the first time in their life everywhere seem to be the same. For example, about half of the words Lithuanian babies utter are words indicating objects: food (siu "juice", sausai "cookie"), body part (akis "eye", nosis "nose"...), vehicles (di-di "car", "boat"), toys (lelia "doll"), animals (au-au "a dog", miau-miau "a cat", cyp-cyp "a bird"), and people (ba-ba "grandmother", tia-tia ("father" or any other male), ma-ma "mother or any other female"). There are words for actions, motions, and routines, like o-pa (a-pa) "up", duo "give", adi "open", va "eat", teik "come", eik "go", and modifiers, like karsta "hot", dar "more", ka-ka "dirty", and salta "cold". There are routines used in social interaction, like a-ha "yes", ne "no", niõ "want", a-tiã! "bye-bye", etc. All the above words indicate movable objects. Thus, children seem to name what interest them, and what interest them are things that have salient properties of change-roll, run, meow and go di-di. In other words, children initially learn about the world by interacting actively with it, not by passive observation.

The major peculiarity of the holophrastic stage is that the first children's utterances are single words (i.e. only one word in length) that represented an entire sentence.<sup>2</sup> For example, pani "milk" uttered by a toddler Miglë, might represent the sentence: "I want milk. Please, give me some". During this period, young children frequently cannot be understood without reference to the immediate context. Thus, the same one-word utterance might have different interpretations. For example, fifteen-month-old Robertas uttered di-di to express any one of the following meanings:

1. I see a car.
2. There is a car in the yard.
3. It is daddy's car.
4. I want to go by car.
5. I want to play with my car.
6. Where is my car? etc.

<sup>2</sup> Children's one-word utterances are called holophrastic sentences (from holo "complete" or "undivided" plus phrase "phrase" or "sentence") (Aichitson, 1987: 318).

<sup>1</sup> The examples are cited from my practical observation



These examples evidently illustrate that at one-word stage a child's conceptual capacity, generally, is not fully reflected in his speech. He may think of any of the ideas or concepts expressed by sentences (1-6) yet lack the linguistic competence to express those ideas.

Around eighteen months, children begin to string two words together; hence, language takes off. This is the first step toward syntactic competence. During this period the rate of vocabulary acquisition is accelerating rapidly. In the

book *Words in the Mind: An Introduction to the Mental Lexicon* Aichitson has pointed out that on average, a two-year-old picks up possibly over ten words a day and actively uses around five hundred words (Aichitson, 1992: 154).

Children's two-word microsentences show definite syntactic and semantic relations. Based on R. Brown's classification, the following set of "minimal two-term relations" uttered by Lithuanian children are distinguished (Brown, 1974: 128).

**Table 1.** Semantic Relations of the Lithuanian Children Utterances

No	Pattern	Example
1. Nomination	Ten/čia+N Ta(s)+N	<i>ten knyga</i> , there is a book, <i>šita mašina</i> , that car, etc.
2. Notice	Atia +N	<i>Ate! aatia! mama/teti/baba</i> Bye! mommy/daddy/grannie etc.
3. Recurrence	Dar+N Dar+V	<i>dar+pani, šaušai, papiesk, pu-pu t.t.</i> "More+milk, cracker, candy, draw, swim", etc.
4. Disappearance and nonexistence	Nėra/Baba+N Nėra/Baba+V	<i>nėr/baba mą, mama, gėrti</i> "All gone+a car, mother, drink"..
5. Attributive	Adj+N N+Adj.	<i>ma o-ho! (didelė mašina</i> "a big car"), <i>knygutė įdomi</i> "an interesting book", etc.
6. Possessive and possession	N+N	<i>Mamos skara</i> "mother's scarf" <i>tia-tia di-di</i> "father's car"
7. Locative	Adv.Mod.+N N+Adv.Mod.	<i>ten vu-vu/di-di</i> "a car over there" <i>šliurės kampe</i> "slippers in the corner"
8. Action and Location	V+Adv. Mod.	<i>eime ten</i> "come there" <i>lipa į medį</i> "climbs into a tree"
9. Agent-Action	N+V	<i>meška sėdi</i> "a bear sits", <i>Miglė valgo</i> "Migle eats", etc.
10. Agent-Object	V+N	<i>Nori kisielio/pieno/mašinos</i> "I want some paste/milk/car" etc.
11. Action-Object	V+N	<i>spirk kamuolį</i> "hit a ball", <i>paskaityk knygą</i> "read a book", etc.
12. Experiencer-State	N+V	<i>aš girdžiu</i> "I hear",
13. Datives of Indirect Object	V+N	<i>duok mama</i> "Mommy, give"
14. Comitatives	N+V	<i>mama einu (einu su mama</i> "walk with mother"),
15. Instrumentals	N+V	<i>šluota šluoja</i> "a broom sweeps".

From all these constructions, it may be noticed that young children can cope with different types of meaning relationships and express certain relationships between words in a consistent way. There does not seem to be any "three-word" sentence stage. When a child starts stringing more than two words together the utterances may be two, three, four words or longer. However, these first complex sentences have a special characteristic. Usually the small "function" words such as prepositions, articles, conjunctions are missing; only the words, which carry the main message – the "content" words – occur. This stage is called a **telegraphic speech** (Fromkin & Rodman, 1974: 318). For instance: *Baba Stasė girdi* ("Baba Stasė hears"), *Duok pieno* ("give some milk").

Eventually, between the late twos and the mid-threes, the children's sentence length increases steadily, and the number of syntactic types increases greatly, doubling every month, reaching the thousands prepositions and inflections to indicate the categories of tense, person and number, and case. By five years of age, children are able to produce most of the essential grammatical categories. This is the **transformational** or by some linguist (for example,

Aichitson) called the **morphological** stage, when the previously omitted "obligatory" functional morphemes are used. Passives and other complex transformations have yet to be acquired. The child has mastered the language (Pinker, 1995: 269).

### Relevant Models of Language

In the book *Explorations in the Functions of Language* Halliday introduces seven models of language that the child internalises as a result of his own experience. These are the instrumental, the regulatory, the interactional, the personal, the heuristic, the imaginative, and the representational model of language (Halliday, 1977: 10). Each of these models will be discussed in greater detail in the following subchapter.

The simplest of the child's models of language is the **instrumental** model, when language is used for the satisfaction of material needs, and is brought in to serve the function of "I want". Success in this use of language does not depend on the production of well-formed adult sentences (Halliday, 1977: 10). Thus, there is no very clear

dividing line between, for example, a noise made on a commanding tone as [*da*], pronounced by Robertas (1;6), demanding more bread and a full-dress imperative clause *noriu gerti*, uttered by Mykolas (2;0).

Closely related to the instrumental model is the **regulatory** model of language that determines the child's specific awareness of language as a means of behavioural control, especially control of his peers and siblings. This in turn provides the basis for the language of rules and instructions. Whereas at first the child can make only simple unstructured demands, he learns as time goes on to give ordered sequences of instructions (Halliday, 1977: 12). For example: *ma, ei!* ("Mother, let us go"), *Mama, nupiesk masiną* ("mother, draw a car"). The child's regulatory model of language continues to be elaborated with every stage of his development (Halliday, 1977: 12-13).

The **interactional** model refers to the use of language in the interaction between the self and others (Halliday, 1977: 13). The child's interaction with other people, adults and children, is very obviously maintained as well. For example, children shout *mama/tete/baba!* as soon as their parents or grandparents need to be in touch with them.

**Personal** model refers to the child's awareness of language as a form of his own individuality. In the process whereby the child becomes aware of himself, the development of his personality, language plays an essential role. For example, Domas, (a year-and-eleven-months-old boy) used the following sentence structure: *buvau aš* ("was I"), *patinka man*, ("I like it"), *mesiu aš* ("I will throw"). From the pragmatic point of view, it is the way for Domas to make public his own individuality.

The fifth model of language is a **heuristic** model that refers to language as a means of investigating reality, a way of learning about things in his environment (Halliday, 1977: 14). By constantly asking questions, the child is seeking not merely for the facts but explanations of the facts. For example, a three-year-old Lithuanian child is most likely to be capable of constructing the questions as *Kur eini?* ("Where are you going?"), *Ką daro mama?* ("What is mummy doing?"), *Kas čia yra?* ("What is it?") – *Ar galiu X valgyti?* ("Can I eat X?"), etc.

In the **imaginative** model, the child is using language to create his own environment, a world of his own making. This model provides some further elements of the metalanguage, with words like *story*, *make up* and *pretend*. Poems, rhymes, riddles, and much of the child's own linguistic play (like a house built of playing cards in which face values are irrelevant) reinforce the imaginative model of language.

Finally, the last model of language Halliday has distinguished is the **representational** model of language, the "I have something to tell you" functions. The following extract from Miglė's telephone talk to her grandmother is a perfect illustration of the representational model. *Labas! Tai atvažiuoji rytoj... Mama verda kiaušinius tuoj... Miglė buvo lauke... Šliurės stovi prie lovų... ("Hullo!" "Are you coming tomorrow?" "Mommy is boiling eggs soon"...*

"Miglė was in the yard"... "Slippers are by the sofa"...). The extract evidently shows that a child tends to convey message through a stream of sentences with disconnected thoughts.

### Methods of Collecting and Adapting Data

Data for this research are from a developmental study of Lithuanian children: Jonas, Domas, Aušrinė, Miglė, Mykolas, and author's son Robertas. The families were totally unacquainted and independent of one another, and each child heard a different set of sentences as "input". The three children (Aušrinė, Miglė, Mykolas) were beginning to string words together in structured utterances on the beginning of the study. The other three children under author's observation (Jonas, Domas and Robertas) were still at the babbling stage. Children of different ages were deliberately chosen so that the author could draw a comparison of the evolution of language (we should bear in mind that the research lasted a limited period of time – two years).

Tape recordings of mother-child interchanges were made regularly in the children's homes. The recordings were spontaneous. Language was elicited in various stimulus situations: (1) responses to the projective test, (2) conversation with an adult (the experimenter), and additional questions introduced by the experimenter, and (3) conversation with adults generated by role playing in a family setting. However, testing children turned out to be far more difficult than testing adults. That is why all the parents were asked to keep diaries of their children's speech, particularly paying attention to negative structures.

The transcription process underwent several stages. The 1<sup>st</sup> step was to watch the video recordings and to listen to the audio recording. Then, from the total speech, negative statements were isolated for analysis and the verbal communication (including self-edition and overlaps) were transcribed. Finally, the 3<sup>rd</sup> step included a more detailed description of the context and non-verbal behaviours like grimaces, nods, gestures, as well as the paralinguistic aspects of communication such as pauses, cries, and laughs. The translation from Lithuanian into English was kept as literal as possible, with minor modification in order to preserve conversational style.

The language sample produced by each child was analysed by means of *the generative model*, that is, the rules for generating each sentence, both those that produced completely well formed structures and those that did not, were postulated. The latter rules were termed the rules restricted to children's grammar. The methods of conversational and comparative analysis served to reveal the regularities of negative structures among six Lithuanian children.

Negative sentences are described in stages of language development. The first level is **the babbling** stage, where body language is employed as a means of communication. The second level is **one-word or the holophrastic** stage, when first utterances (verbal symbols) appear. The third level is **two-word (the telegraphic stage)** utterances, where kernel or simple-active-declarative sentences are



formulated from rules for stringing together parts of speech. Later, **transformations**, where more complex sentence types are generated and where inflectional rules dependent on the previous sequences are applied. Each period represents a multitude of child's utterances. Capturing these stages in rules is not easy, and the author would not insist that her rules for negative sentences mirror every detail of the children's speech processes. However, it is perfectly clear that these sentences have structure; the rules in the following study will try to prove it.

### Negation in Lithuanian

In the following chapter the author will touch on some of the linguistic facts about the terminal state toward which the children are progressing, that is, the syntax of Lithuanian negatives. The author will consider *Neg* as a formant, which combines with parts of the sentence to constitute negation in the sentence. Among the realizations

**Table 2.** Rules for Negation in Adult Lithuanian

Pattern	Example
<b>1. Negation and the verb phrase, including the verb <i>būti</i> "be":</b> (1.1) <i>S-[NP+(Neg)ne+(T-VP)+Obj.]</i>	<i>Nepirksiu automobilio.</i> "I will not buy a car"
(1.2) <i>S-[NP+(Neg)ne+(būti "be" — PP)+VP+Obj]</i>	<i>Nebuvau matęs tokio reginio.</i> "I have never seen such a glorious view, such as the one you have seen"
(1.3) <i>S-[NP+(Neg)ne+Adv.Mod]</i>	<i>Vaikai nebuvo/neliko namie.</i> "The children did not stay at home"
<b>2. Negative Imperative:</b> <i>S- [(Neg)ne+Vimp +inf.] +Obj!</i>	<i>Neužmiršk atnešti knygos!</i> "Do not forget to bring the book (to me)!"
<b>3. Negation and indefiniteness. Double negation:</b> <i>S- [Neg Prn/Neg Adv.+(Neg)ne+būti "be"/MV]+Obj.</i>	<i>Niekur nebuvo žmonių.</i> "There were no people"
<i>S- [NP+(Neg)ne+VP+Attr.]</i>	<i>Duktė nebuvo negraži.</i> "The daughter was not not-pretty. (= "She was pretty")
<b>4. Negation with obligatory infinitive:</b> <i>S- [NP+(Neg)ne+VP+inf]+ Obj</i>	<i>Jis nemėgsta rašyti laišku.</i> "He does not like to write letters"
<b>5. Negation with reduplicated conjunction <i>nei...nei</i> "neither...nor":</b>	<i>Negaliu pasakyti tiesos nei tau, nei kitiems.</i> "I cannot tell the truth either ("neither") to you or ("nor") to anyone else"

The above constructions represent the underlying structure after certain transformations (the details of which are not important in this study).

### Negative Sentences in Lithuanian Children's Speech

#### Period 1. Babbling Stage

In the babbling stage, to express negation and all kinds of refusal, denial, all children (100%) under author's observation used extremely limited means – a sharp cry and body language.

**Example 1.** (Robertas 9 months, Mother).

Mother: *Na, mažiau, eikš pas mane...Kodėl nenori užsidėti pampersiuko? ..Reikia... Juk eisime į lauką... Kur daug paukštelių cyp cyp ir katyčių miau miau, na, tuoj tuoj, mažuli, dar truputėlį...*

OK, darling, come to me...why don't you want to be put on the diaper?... You have to...we'll go for a walk...where there are many birds cyp-cyp, and cats miau-miau... wait, wait, darling, wait a bit...

of *Neg* are the negative particle *ne* "not" and a small set of negative words including the negative pronouns *niekas* "nobody"/"nothing" (as for example, *niekas neatėjo* "nobody came"), the negative *nė* (*Miestelyje (nėra) nė žiburėlio*. "In the town (there is) not a light."), the negative adverbs, *niekadà/niekadòs/niekuomèt* "never", *nė kiek* "not at all, not any" and *niekur* "nowhere" (Ambrasas, 1997: 667). Although there are many complexities in the total picture of negation in adult Lithuanian that do not occur at all in the early periods of children's speech, the basic facts about negation in simple sentences are all relevant — in particular the form and position of the negative formant. Table 1 presents the basic set of rules that capture the system of negation used by Adult Lithuanians.

### Rules for Negation in Adult Lithuanian

The following possible set of rules for negation is distinguished in adult Lithuanian:

Robertas is incessantly crying and shaking his hands.  
A few minutes later the baby starts to calm down.

Mother: *Na štai, jau viskas... viskas mažuli, viskas...eikš pas mane... eime į laukutį...*

That's it...honey...come to me...let's go for a walk...

This example illustrates the child's refusal to put on the diaper. Besides, the mother used a simplified form of speech to communicate with the baby – i.e. short sentences, repetition of lexical items (*viskas... viskas mažuli, viskas*), diminutives (*mažuli, eime į laukutį*), restricted vocabulary, special "baby" words as *cyp cyp* for a bird, *miau miau* for a cat. All these linguistic and cohesive devices are characteristic of **motherese** that aid small children to absorb and acquire the speech they hear around. During this stage, the author did not observe more relevant facts for her linguistic investigation.

## Period 2. One Word/The Holophrastic Stage

The sentences the author wants to describe from Period 2 and all the following periods are taken from the protocols of all six children.

**Period 2. One-word utterances:** *Ba/babá, nè, nelá* (=nèra "all gone"), *nevá* (*nevalgysiu* "I will not eat"), *neim* (*neimsiu* "I will not take", *neimk* "do not take"), *neniõ* (*nenoriu* "I do not want"), *nei* (*neisiu, neinu, nejau* "I will not go"), *nè* (*nèra* "all gone"), etc.

The major achievement found in the children's speech at this stage was that they already employed "symbols" or words to express negation, usually the CV clusters *ne*, (used to denote denial or prohibition to do smth), *bá*, (later on the reduplicated phrase *ba-bá*). Sometimes the children's refusal to obey the adults was strengthened by the use of a loud (almost shouting) or angry voice, stamping of the feet and the repetitive clusters *ne-ne*!

### Example 2. (Aušrinė 1;7, Mother)

Mother:	<i>Aušrine, apsiaukim kelnytes. Apsiausim?</i> Aušrine, we'll put on your trousers, won't we?	
Aušrinė	<i>Ne!</i>	"No!"
Mother:	<i>Kodėl?</i>	"Why?"
Aušrinė	<i>Nene!</i>	"Nooo!"
Mother:	<i>Taigi šalta. Ei...</i> "But it is cold, outside. Listen..."	
Aušrinė	<i>Neaaa!</i>	"Nooo!"
Mother:	<i>Šalta!</i>	"It's cold!"
Aušrinė	<i>Neaaa!</i>	"Nooo!"

This extract, used in the *instrumental* function of language introduced by Halliday, (the use of language "I don't want X" show that a year-and-a half-old child knows very well how to use language to express his attitude) (Halliday, 1977: 17).

The survey showed that single word utterances, used to express negation, represented a great deal of information. Semantically, the same word could be interpreted in different ways. For example, depending on what was happening in a concrete situation, eighteen-month-old Robertas uttered *ba-bá* to express the following illocutionary acts:

1. Something has fallen from the table.
2. I cannot open the door,
3. My tricycle has fallen down.
4. I cannot take the keys from the hole.
5. I am wet.
6. Something has disappeared, etc.

### Example 3. (Robertas 1;6, Mother).

Mother:	<i>Robertuk, kur yra tavo raudona mašinytė?</i> "Robertuk, where is your red toy-car?"	
Robertas:	<i>Ba-bá! ...ba-bá!...</i> (the boy looks around and notices his toy-car standing in the corner). <i>Ten! ten! ... ten!</i> "There!"... "there!"... "there!" (joyfully shouts Robertas, pointing at the red toy-car).	

Here, the boy reduplicated the syllables, probably to practice phonetic identity, and showed certain preferences, as in the above example, using voiced consonants initially and voiceless consonants finally.

Around 9-13 months, the children began to use the negative particle *ne* ("no"), plus a notional verb (usually the stem, (*nevá* (*nevalgysiu*)...*neniõ* (=nenoriu)), in many cases accompanied by body language. It is worth noticing that during this stage the children had not yet learned the main morphological categories – the category of tense, person, mood, number and aspect. From the phonetic point of view, initial clusters or the stressed clusters were acquired by children at this stage. This may be explained by the fact that, because of a limited memory, the children usually shortened adult words by omitting final consonants, reducing consonant clusters, and deleting unstressed syllables. Thus, for example, the word *nei* uttered by 15-month-old Aušrinė indicated the present, past, or the future tense, or indicated the directive used in the imperative mood *neik!* In this case, it is the context that helps to understand the required form of the verb.

### Example 4. (Aušrinė 1;3, Mother).

**Situation:** Aušrinė is playing in the yard with her mother.

**Mother:** *Aušrine, ateik pas mane. Duosiu kibirėlį...*  
Aušrine, come to me...I'll give you a bucket...

**Aušrinė:** *neea! Nei... neii!*  
Noo! Won't go!

**Mother:** *Aušrinyt, ateik pas mane...ar girdi...atiduok berniukui kibirėlį...Imk savo...(griežtai)*

Aušrinyt, come to me...listen...give the bucket back to the boy...take yours...(sternly).

**Aušrinė:** *neaa! neaaa! (bėga nuo mamos).*  
Noo! Nooo! (runs away from her mother).

### Example 5. (Aušrinė 1;3, Mother).

**Situation:** Mother wants to go out. The girl does not want to be left alone with her grandmother.

**Aušrinė:** *nei, nei...(verkia)...neaa!...mii-mii...neaa!*  
Do not go, not go...(cries)....nooo!...mi-mii...nooo!

In Example 4, Aušrinė expressed her refusal to obey the mother's order to come to her so that she could give the girl her own bucket. The word *nei* in this case indicated the future tense (*neisiu* "I will not come"). This utterance was used in the instrumental function of language proposed by Halliday. Meanwhile, in Example 5, the girl used the imperative form *neik* "don't go" and asked her mother to stay along with her, thus, expressing the interactional function of language, that is the "me and my mummy" function.

There is clear evidence that small children used the same phonological utterance to express two different lexemes (*homophones*) (Yules, 1985: 118). As for example, *nei*, might in one case indicate the willingness not to go *neiti* and in the other prohibition to take something *neimti*. Again, it is the context that played an essential role in describing the required meaning of the verb.



Similar to English children, the Lithuanian children being observed had not yet realized that the negative form of the verb consists of *two* elements. To them, *neniõ* "I do not want", *nei* "not go", *nevá* ("not eat") were single negative units, not a combination of the *Neg ne* "no"/"not" plus a verb.

To sum up, at the holophrastic stage the children used primitive rules for negation. More sophisticated negative rules were found in the next, two-word stage or telegraphic stage.

### Period 3. Two-word/Telegraphic Stage

The survey showed that at the two-word stage (the age of 16 and 22-24 months) the children under author's supervision expressed negation in several ways. Like English children, as observed by B. Klima and E. Klima, Lithuanian children often put the *Neg ne* "no" or "not" at the beginning (*Ne+S*) or end of the whole sentence (*S+Ne*). The children's two-word utterances manifested themselves in limited structures, i.e. the sentences consisted largely of nouns and verbs. At first, these simple two-word constructions carried no indication of tense or number, inflections, prepositions, adjectives, adverbs. However, by the age of two years in some children's speech these functional elements began to occur. Since those stages are identical, but differ in functional elements mentioned above, the author considered no need to repeat them. The brackets indicate the later development of inflections in the children's utterances.

The sentences produced at this stage might be described as the coexistence of the rules at Period 2, and a new system. The structures *babá, ne+VP* were still widely used in the children's utterances. However, the major characteristic of the children's two-word utterances was the combination of *a verb and a noun*, which identified some object, person or animal they saw every day. The negation system at **Period 3** can be considered as follows (the utterance in the square brackets is one sentence):

- (2)  $S \rightarrow [babá+NP]$  *babá mamá* (mother is gone)  
 (2.1)  $S \rightarrow [(Neg)ne+NP]$  *ne Miglès* (not Miglè's)  
 (2.2)  $S \rightarrow [Nè(ra)+NP]$  *nè(ra) lialès* (a doll is gone)  
 (3)  $S \rightarrow [NP+babá]$  *mamá babá*, (mother is gone)  
 (3.1)  $S \rightarrow [NP+Nè(ra)]$  *mašinos nè(ra) didi baba* (all gone/no car)

There were a number of sentences with negative *ne* "no" or "not" followed by a transitive verb *norėti* "to want" and an object or the infinitive. This kind of construction can be shaped by the following rules:

- (4)  $S \rightarrow [(Neg)ne+VP \text{ norėti}]+Obj.$ : *nenoriu košės*, ("do not want porridge").  
 (5)  $S \rightarrow [(Neg)ne+VP+the \text{ infinitive}]$ : *nenoriu eiti/miegoti/gerti*. ("do not want to go/to sleep/to drink").

The latter construction was generally almost identical to the one by adults used in the *instrumental* function of

language, implying the negative meaning of "I do not want to do smth."

It is interesting to note that there was a girl under author's supervision, Miglè, who created her own rules for negation during this period. Up to the age of two-years and three months the girl used sentences, in which the *Neg* followed the predicate. Her own rules for negation could be shaped in the following way:

- (5.1)  $S \rightarrow (NP)+[VP+(Neg)ne]$ : (*Miglè*) *nori ne, valgys ne*, etc. ("Miglè wants no, eats no").

#### Example 6.: (Miglè 2;7, Mother)

Mama: *Miglute, ar nori, užvilksiu tau megztinuką. Juk lauke šalta.*

Miglè, come to me and I'll put a coat on. It is cold outside"

Miglè: *nori ne* (= *nenoriu*).  
 "want no" (= "I do not want").

This example shows that at the two-word stage the children already considered the negative verb as consisting of two components – a *Neg ne+a verb*. Besides, it is clear from the above example that language is not directly acquired through imitation, since Miglè's mother has never used such a deviant form of construction. It is only after being constantly corrected by her parents that the girl improved her language and learned to use the correct form of negative structures.

By the two-word stage, the children's grammar had become considerably more advanced. Around the 30 months of age the majority of the observed children began to use inflections to indicate the categories of tense, number and person. Consequently, the negative constructions at this period became more complex. Basic structures of negative utterances found in data were the following:

- (6)  $S \rightarrow [(Neg)ne+VP+NP]$ : *neganè piemuo* ("the shepherd did not pasture (the cock)"), *neiškepè bandutės* ("did not bake a roll").

In addition to the above-mentioned structures, the children also produced a number of negative utterances by using the third person as an agent. The rule for such structures is as follows:

- (7)  $S \rightarrow [NP+(Neg)ne+VP]$ : *Mykolas nenori* ("Mykolas does not want").

This rule usually manifested itself in the utterances of three children under author's observation (50%).

While speaking about themselves, the children almost in all cases indicated the third person, instead of the first. However, the survey showed that, being **reinforced** by their parents, the same children could use the right category.

#### Example 7. (Miglè 2;0, Mother)

Mother: *Ar buvai vakar parduotuvėje?*  
 "Were you in the shop yesterday?"

Miglè: *nebuvai*.

“(you) were not”

Mama: *Migle, ne nebuvai, o nebuva. Pakartok!*  
 “Migle, not you were not, but I was not, repeat”.

Miglė: *nebuva.*  
 “I was not”.

As I noticed, the use of the third person Sg instead of the first person Sg, in most cases, was the outcome of the imitation of the parents’ speech. For instance, “*Ar nori Miglė eiti su tėte į parduotuvę?*”, etc. (“Does Miglė want to go with the daddy to the shop?”). Thus, the children simply imitated their parents’ model of speaking or transformed declarative forms into negative ones, using their own rules of grammar.

Another interesting tendency was noticed in the way the children expressed negation. Some of them (mainly, Domas, Mykolas and Jonas) used a VP in a declarative sentence accompanied by the shaking of the head. This kind of negation can be expressed in the following structure:

(8) *S → [VP (in a declarative sentence) + body language]*

Example 8: (Domas 1;6, Mother).

Mama: *Domai, nori valgyti?*  
 “Domai, do you want to eat something?”

Domas: *noriu (purto galvyte) = nenoriu.*  
 “want” ((is shaking his head) = “I do not want”).

Such constructions evidently illustrate the fact that children do not imitate entirely the speech of their parents, but often create new, anomalous rules for their grammar.

Finally, the survey showed that the negative imperative appeared in the speech of all six children (100%), in the following form:

(9) *S → [ne+Vimp!]+(pers.pr.): neliesk!, neik (tu)!, etc.*  
 (“Do not touch! Don’t (you) go!”)

To conclude, the rule for negation presented above serves many negative functions in the Lithuanian children’s speech at Period 3.

#### Period 4. Transformational/Morphological Stage

In what follows, analysis will be given to the sentences that occurred in the speech of all six children.

Period 4. *Aš nenoriu valgyti. Aš nenoriu daugiau pieno; Aš nemačiau/nėjau/negirdėjau. Aš nebuva parduotuvėj. (Aš) nenorėjau lova (nenorėjau prilaistyti į lovą).*

(Aš) nevalgysiu košės! Aš neisiu į lauką! (Aš) nevažiuosiu! Aš nepiešiu! Aš nenoriu piešti! Aš nemyliu tavęs!

Neliesk (mano) mašinos! Neliesk manęs! Netrukdyk (man)! Nepaleisiu! Taip negalima!

Aš nieko nematau. Aš nieko nenoriu. Aš nieko nepiešiu. Nieko nėra. Aš nemyliu tavęs! Aš nieko nemyliu. Ir vėl tetia nieko nesutvarkė.

Čia Miglės, o ne tavo. Ne mamam, o mama Agnė. Neimk, čia ne tavo (jūsų), o mano. Mamyte, neimk, čia ne tavo, o tėtės! Čia ne Toyotos, o Audi raktai, etc.

From the examples examined above we can see that negative utterances at Period 4 are the residue of the elements of the previous systems. More complex sentence forms appeared, including relative clauses and conjunctions. Almost all children used inflections, distinguishing the category of person, number and tense. There were many sentences with indefinite determiners, pronouns, personal and impersonal pronouns, possessive pronouns, and adjectives. In addition, almost all children (85%) used double negation as *aš nieko nematau* (I do not see anything). Such constructions as *ne...o/bet*, (“not...but”) were noticed in the speech of older children. *Mamyte, neimk, čia ne tavo, o tėtės!* (“Mummy, don’t touch! It is not yours, but daddy’s!”). The children often used this construction with opposites. For instance: *Ne balta, o raudona* (“Not white, but red one”).

When the children were extremely angry, they often used negation with reduplicated conjunction *nei...nei* “neither...nor”.

Example 9. (Miglė 3,0)

Situation: three-year-old Miglė refuses to draw.

Miglė: *Aš nepiešiu. Aš nenoriu piešti! Aš nieko nepiešiu!*  
*Nei močiutės, nei tavęs, nei Dambio, nei Nikos...*  
 “I won’t draw. I don’t want to draw! Neither grandmother, nor you; neither Damby nor Nika...”.

The survey showed that at this period the child used negatives to contradict the previous proposition either expressed or implied.

Example 10: (Miglė 2;5, Father)

Father: *Ar buvai parduotuvėje?*  
 “Did you go to the shop?”

Child: *Ne, aš buvau kieme.*  
 “No, I was in the yard”.

It is clear that the child at this period already understood the negative embedded in sentences.

Example 11. (Domas 2;5, Father)

Father: *Neturim sausainių.*  
 “Oh, we do not have any crackers”

Child: *Reikia nupirkti.*  
 “We have to buy some”

There were a lot of examples when the children under author’s supervision deliberately contradicted their parents and showed some kind of stubbornness, pushing their parents sometimes into a desperate situation. For instance:

Period	Mother	Children
Holophrastic stage	<i>Valgyk: Eat!</i>	<i>Neaa!</i> (“Noo!”)
Telegraphic stage	<i>Neimk! Don’t touch!</i> <i>Nedaryk taip! Don’t do so/that!</i>	<i>Imsiu!</i> “I will!” <i>Darysiu!</i> “I will!”
Morphological stage	<i>Ateik čia!</i> (“Come here!”) <i>Pakviesiu policininką!</i> (“I’ll call a policeman!”)	<i>Neisiu!</i> “I won’t!” <i>Ir pakviesk!</i> (“Wellcome!”).



This kind of stubbornness and refusal was extremely noticeable during the so-called "three year crisis", when the children deliberately or not negated almost every parent's request, order or directive. In author's opinion, by contradicting their parents, children tried to express their own individuality and self-independence.

The summary of the development of negation in Lithuanian children's speech is presented in Table 3 (Appendix).

## Conclusions

The findings of the present research illustrate that the Lithuanian children at the early period learned language through active and *creative rule-forming* process rather than through passive imitation. The acquisition of negative structures by the children was the output of grammar – a system of internalized rules, which sometimes did not correspond to those of adults.

Besides, the children acquired language in stages. Progress toward adult negative structures is a gradual process of readjusting additional rules, the refinement of already acquired ones and adding to the previous grammar. By the age of three, three-and a half-year, the children had already mastered negative and volitional sentences that were very similar to those of adults. This implies that at the advanced stages of language development children more extensively learn to use words in appropriate contexts. However, the sentences produced by the children at any point are determined by their own grammar, not by adult grammar.

Finally, the longitudinal data demonstrate that the development of negative structures from simple to more complex ones indicate the degree of language acquisition the children had reached. This implies that human language develops in an elementary way - as a kind of

Birutė Kazlauskienė

**Neiginių struktūros, kurias lietuvių vaikai vartoja ankstyvoje vaikystėje**

## Santrauka

Šio darbo tikslas – išnagrinėti kaip lietuvių vaikai įsisavina bei įvaldo neigimo sakinius ankstyvoje vaikystėje bei įrodyti, kad vaikų kalba turi savitą kalbos įsisavinimo sistemą.

Kalbos pavyzdžiai išanalizuoti, pasitelkus generatyvinį metodą. Siekiant apibrėžti vaikų kalbos sistemos ypatumus, taikyti lyginamasis bei pokalbio metodai. Neigimo raiškos sakiniai pateikiami kalbos vystymosi stadijomis. Pirmoji - **gugavimo stadija**, kai vaikai panaudoja kūno kalbą norams bei neigimui reikšti. Antroji - **vieno žodžio stadija**, kada vaikai pradeda vartoti simbolius (žodžius). Trečioji - **dviejų žodžių stadija**, kai vaikai jungia du žodžius bei sudaro paprastus sakinius. Ketvirtoji - **transformacijos stadija**, kada vartojamos sudėtingos gramatinės struktūros.

Tyrimas parodė, kad vaikų kalba vystėsi *aktyviai* jiems bendraujant su aplinka, o ne pasyviai stebint joje vykstančius įvykius. Neigimą vaikai įsisavino palaipsniui, pereidami nuo paprastų garsų iki sudėtingų gramatinių struktūrų. Pagrindinius gramatikos dėsningumus vaikai įvaldė trečiaisiais, ketvirtaisiais gyvenimo metais. Šios gramatinės struktūros beveik atitiko suaugusiųjų vartojamas struktūras.

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incessant, step-by-step approximation to the adult system of grammar. As the child grows and as his verbal matter expands in his memory, his language becomes more developed and the constructed rules of grammar become more complex.

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## APPENDIX

**Table 3.** Negative Sentences in Lithuanian Children's Speech

Period Number	Pattern	Example	Improvement
Period 1, Babbling stage		Nnnh nnnh!	Sharp cry, body language, a stream of Phonemes
Period Number	Pattern	Example	Improvement
Period 2  One-word utterances/Holophrastic Stage.	1. (Neg.) ne to express all kinds of refusal and denial. 2. ba (ba-bá)+gestures 3. Negative with the Verb Phrase $S \rightarrow [(Neg) ne+VP]$ . 4. Negative Imperative $S \rightarrow [(Neg) Ne! (imp.)]$	Ne "all gone"  Babá  <i>Nevá (nevalgysiu "I will not eat"), nenio (nenoriu "I do not want"), nei (neisiu, neinu, nėjau "I will not go"), nē (nēra "all gone"), etc.</i>  <i>Ne! (in the meaning "do not do that!")</i>	Negation is already expressed verbally implying the negative element <i>ne</i> "no" Single negative words represent a great deal of information. Negative verbs are considered to be single units, not a combination of the Neg <i>ne</i> +Vb. Initial or stressed clusters acquired without indicating morphological categories.
Period Number	Pattern	Example	Improvement
Period 3  Two-word utterances.  Telegraphic Stage	1. Negative preceding the Noun Phrase (1.1) $S \rightarrow [babá+NP]$ (1.2) $S \rightarrow [(Neg)ne+NP]$ (1.3) $S \rightarrow [Nē(ra)+NP]$ 2. Negative following the Noun Phrase (2.1) $S \rightarrow [NP+babá]$ (2.2) $S \rightarrow [NP+nē(ra)]$ 3. Negative with the Verb Phrase (and the dir.Object) (3.1) $S \rightarrow [(Neg)ne+VP]+Obj.$ (3.2) $S \rightarrow (NP)+[VP+(Neg)ne]$ (3.3) $S \rightarrow [(Neg)ne+VP+NP]$ (3.4) $S \rightarrow [NP+(Neg)ne+VP]$ 4. Negation with obligatory Infinitive $S \rightarrow [(Neg)ne+VP+the inf]$ 5. Negative Imperative $S \rightarrow [(Neg)ne+Vimp.] + (prs.prn)$ 6. $S \rightarrow [VP(in a decl.sentence)+body language]$	<i>Babá mama (mummy is gone)</i> <i>Ne Miglės (not Miglė's).</i> <i>Nēra liaiės/tėtės (a doll/daddy is gone)</i>  <i>Mama babá (mother is gone).</i> <i>Mašinos nē(ra) (a car is gone)</i>  <i>Nenio(riu) ko(šės) (don't want any porridge);</i> <i>(Miglė) nori ne, miegos ne, (Miglė wants no, sleeps no);</i> <i>neiškėpė bandutės (didn't bake the roll);</i> <i>Jonas negirdi, (Jonas doesn't hear),</i> <i>nenio(riu) miegoti/valgyti (don't want to sleep/to eat)</i> <i>Neliesk! (Do not touch!)</i> <i>Nekalbėk! (Don't talk!)</i> <i>Eisiu (purto galva)= neisiu (go (shaking head)= not go)</i>	Simple sentences, consisting of two words.  The use of two words, joining a negative element with a verb phrase and a noun phrase, or the infinitive.  Some attempt to use inflections to indicate the categories of tense, person and number of the verb.  The use of transitive verbs (a verb plus a required object).  A clear manifestation of negative imperative.  The use of deviant (anomalous) structures
Period Number	Pattern	Example	Improvement
Period 4. Transformational stage.	1. Negation and the verb phrase, including the verb <i>būti</i> "be": (1.1) $S \rightarrow [NP+(Neg)ne+(T-VP)] + Adv.Mod.$ (1.2) $S \rightarrow [NP+(Neg)ne+VP]+Obj$ 2. Negation with obligatory infinitive: $S \rightarrow [NP+(Neg)ne+VP+the Inf]$ 3. Negative Imperative: (3.1) $S \rightarrow [(Neg)ne+Vimp+(Prn)+Obj!]$ (3.2) $S \rightarrow [(Neg)ne+Vimp+Prn!]$ 4. Negation and indefiniteness. Double negation: $S \rightarrow [Prn(neg)+(niekas "nobody"/"nothing")+VP]$ 5. Negative construction <i>Ne....bet/o "not...but"</i> 6. Negation with reduplicated conjunction <i>nei...nei "neither ...nor"</i>	<i>Aš nebuvaui kieme (I wasn't in the yard)</i> <i>Aš neisiu į lauką (I won't go out)</i> <i>Aš nenoriu pieno (I don't want milk)</i>  <i>Mykolas/Aš nenori(u) miegoti. (Mykolas/I doesn't/don't want to go to sleep)</i>  <i>Neliesk mano mašinos! (Don't touch my car!)</i>  <i>Neliesk manęs! (Don't touch me!)</i>  <i>Aš nieko nematau (I don't see anything)</i>  <i>Mamyte, neimk, čia ne tavo, o mano/tėtės! (Mother, don't touch it, it is not yours but mine/father's)</i> <i>Aš nepiešiu nei močiutės, nei taves (I will draw neither grandmother nor you)</i>	Complex structures, similar or almost identical to adults' ones.  A clear distinction between the categories of tense, person and number.  Complete sentences, consisting of the principle (subj. pred.) and secondary (obj, adv.mod.) parts  The use of transitive and intransitive verbs.  Double Negation  Negative Sentences with ind.determiners or pronouns: personal, impersonal possessive pronouns and adjectives.



