

L1 Acquisition of Japanese Deictic Verbs Iku Meaning 'to Go' and Kuru Meaning 'to Come': Focusing on Motion Event Descriptionⁱ

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This study investigates at what age children can use Japanese deictic verbs iku meaning 'to go' and kuru 'to come' to describe motion event in the same way as adult native speakers' use by applying the theory of usage-based models (Langacker 1988, Tomasello 2003).

Since the deictic verbs iku and kuru are basic motion verbs, children relatively start using them from an early age, and they repeatedly use these verbs in everyday situations. However, it takes a quite long time to acquire as accurately as adult native speakers. Some studies have shown that some children of 6 or 7 years old still make mistakes when they use these verbs (Clark 1974 on English, Masataka 1999 on Japanese). It has also been found that some adults native speakers' use of iku and kuru confuses for children to find the correct usage patterns of the exchangeable semantic types (Takanashi 2019). In some contexts, we can use either iku or kuru, which is a matter of constatural. Although research on the acquisition of deictic verbs has been being carried out, it has not been clarified when children can use iku and kuru as accurately as adult native speakers yet.

We conducted experiments to find out at what age children can use iku and kuru without making mistakes. In the experiments, 28 children from age 6 to 12 years were asked to answer 20 questionsⁱⁱ that they needed to choose iku or kuru depending on contexts. The same experiments were conducted for 10 adult native speakers to confirm the difference between adults and children's use. The questions were asked using slideshows on powerpoint to make children understand the scenes and contexts clearly.

The following specific issues were addressed:

- (1) When can children use iku and kuru to describe motion event as accuracy as adult native speakers?
- (2) How do children use iku and kuru of the exchangeable semantic types?

As a result of the experiments, these revealed that most children at the age of twelve could use iku and kuru to describe motion event as accurately as adult native speakers. However, some children of this age still make mistakes, and some were not confident which verb to use. Iku and kuru have the unique aspect of both ease and simplicity, and that complicity is inhered, which may affect the acquisition of these verbs.

To be more specific, the following results were identified:

1. Children around the age of twelve almost can use iku and kuru as accurately as adult native speakers when they describe motion event. However, some children still make mistakes, or in some cases, even they do not make mistakes, some were still struggling to use iku and kuru correctly. Adult native speakers answered the questions without taking time. However, children tended to hesitate and take time before answering questions.
2. Children tend to describe motion event subjectively for exchangeable semantic types. They tend to construe these verbs more subjectively compared to adult native speakers of Japanese.

References

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ⁱⁱ One of the questions asked on the experiment is as follows: Question1: 'Kore kara socchi ni () . (I am () there.)' 1. kuru ne (coming) 2. iku ne (going)