Children's comprehension of presuppositional *you* 'again' in Mandarin Chinese

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Background: The repetition-denoting adverb *again* in (1) triggers the presupposition that John sneezed at an earlier time. Most previous acquisition studies have focused on *again* in languages like English and German, reporting that knowledge of its presupposition is acquired by the preschool years (e.g., Wittek 2002, Xu & Snyder 2017). In the current study, we examine the acquisition of *you* 'again' in Mandarin, which differs in important ways from *again* in these other languages. Like English *again*, Mandarin *you* can denote repetition and trigger a presupposition that the event denoted by the predicate happened earlier (2). However, it differs from its English counterpart in the following ways: (i) it precedes the predicate (see (2)); (ii) apart from repetition, it has a variety of other interpretations, e.g., temporal continuation (3a), rhetorical use (3b), depending in part on whether *you* is stressed; (iii) in some cases it is interchangeable with other additive particles such as *ye* 'too' (4) and *hai* 'still' (5). The complexity of the semantics of polysemous *you* in Mandarin raises interesting questions about its acquisition. In the current study, we focus on the repetition-denoting meaning of *you*, which is the most typical and salient interpretation when *you* is stressed.

Previous studies: Only one set of studies that we know of has examined knowledge of stressed *you* in Mandarin-speaking children. Liu (2009, 2012, 2015) used a Truth Value Judgment Task in which children listened to short stories and judged a puppet's utterances containing stressed *you*. For example, in a story where a monkey ate a banana and later an apple, children aged >3;06 rejected the puppet's utterance that "the monkey ate a banana again" (in Mandarin). Based on this result, Liu concludes that young children are sensitive to the presupposition of *you*. However, children could simply have rejected the test sentences on the basis of a false assertion, i.e. that the monkey ate a banana (at that second time point in the story), regardless of the presupposition (that the Monkey had eaten a banana before).

Planned study: *Procedure & materials:* We have designed a question-answer task to examine whether Mandarin-acquiring children are sensitive to the presupposition of stressed *you*. Participants will listen to a series of stories told through illustrated pictures, alongside a puppet whom they are told is still very little and may need help understanding the stories. Each story involves two contrasting characters, only one of whom ultimately satisfies the presupposition of *you* (by carrying out an action twice). At the end of each story, the puppet will ask the participant for help recalling what happened in the story; specifically, the puppet will ask about the identity of the character who did the action twice, using a wh-question containing stressed *you* (see sample story in (6), translated into English). If participants are sensitive to the presupposition of *you*, they will answer with the character who did the action twice; if participants are not sensitive to the presupposition, or if they ignore *you*, they will either respond at chance between the two characters or name both characters. Participants will see 4 test trials in total, as well as 4 filler trials that do not contain *you*. *Participants:* While COVID has delayed the start of data collection, we plan to test 30 3- to 5-year-old children in the Beijing area and 30 adult native speaker controls. *Planned analysis:* We will investigate whether children in this age range demonstrate adult-like mastery of the presupposition of *you*. Responses to target items will be coded as either target or non-target; we will then fit a mixed effect logistic regression model to the data with Group (adult vs. child) as a fixed effect, with random intercepts for participant and item.

Summary: Previous studies of *again* have to date focused on English and German. By investigating this presupposition trigger in a typologically unrelated language, in which the trigger moreover differs both syntactically and semantically from English *again*, we can gain further insight into the acquisition of presuppositions across languages, and the role of language-specific properties (e.g., word order) on the acquisition of presupposition.

(1) John sneezed again.

(2) Zhangsan **you** da-penti le   (boldface indicates stress)
     Zhangsan again sneeze Asp

(3) a. Ta xi-wan yifu, you qu zuo fan.   (*you* is unstressed)
       He wash-finish clothes, then go cook meal
       After he was done with the laundry, he went to cook meals.   (temporal continuance)
    b. Ta you bu shi laohu, bu yong pa ta   (*you* is unstressed)
       He you not be tiger not need afraid him.
       He's not a tiger. You do not need to be afraid of him.   (rhetorical)

(4) a. Ta **zuotian** chi-le yi-ge pingguo, **jintian** you chile yige.
       He yesterday eat-asp one-CL apple, today again eat-asp one-CL
    b. Ta **zuotian** chi-le yi-ge pingguo, **jintian** ye chile yige.
       He yesterday eat-asp one-CL apple, today too eat-asp one-CL
   a-b: He ate an apple yesterday and ate another one today.

(5) a. Ta zuotian chi-le yi-ge pingguo, jintian **you** xiang chi.
       He yesterday eat-asp one-CL apple, today again want eat
    b. Ta zuotian chi-le yi-ge pingguo, jintian **hai** xiang chi .
       He yesterday eat-asp one-CL apple, today still want eat-asp
   a-b: He ate an apple yesterday and still wanted another one today.

(6) Today Cat and Fox were playing with some very ticklish magical feathers in the forest. They made up a game: even if a feather tickles you, you can't sneeze! Cat tickled Fox's nose with a feather. Fox let out a big sneeze, "Ahhh-choo!" Then Cat tickled Fox's nose with a feather. Cat managed not to sneeze. Soon, the sun set and it was evening. The friends decided to play one last game. Cat found a feather and tickled Fox's nose. Fox let out a big sneeze, "Ahhh-choo!" Then Fox tickled Cat's nose with a feather. Cat let out a big sneeze, "Ahhh-choo!"

Experimenter: So we know Cat and Fox played with feathers before and after the sun set. Who sneezed again after the sun set: Cat, Fox or both?
Target response: Fox

(Pictures depicting outcome of sneezing game before sunset (left) and after sunset (right))

Selected references:
Liu, H. 2009. *Additive particles in adult and child Chinese* (Doctoral dissertation, City University of Hong Kong). | **Wittek, A. 2002.** *Learning the meaning of change-of-state verbs: A case study of German child language*. Berlin: de Gruyter. | **Xu, T. & Snyder, W. 2017.** There and back again: An acquisition study. *Language Acquisition*.