
幼い子どもが間違っただ言葉の使い方をしているのを耳にすることはよくありますが、彼らの間違いの中には「意味のある」間違いもあるようです。

次の英文を読んで、設問に答えよ。

Children between the ages of two and four often say things like “You have dirty ‘foots’” or “Tom ‘stealed’ my toy.” ⁽¹⁾Adult speakers usually find these mistakes silly, and some even repeatedly correct them. But *there is much more to these children’s mistakes than meets the eye.

5 Children’s mistakes clearly suggest one important fact about their ability to learn language. Children are very observant and creative students of language. ⁽²⁾Simply by listening to adults talking, they not only figure out the rules of a language by themselves, but also start applying them to other situations.

10 Although forms like ‘foots’ and ‘stealed’ in children’s speech are incorrect and may sound silly, they clearly indicate that small children already possess a good knowledge of ⁽³⁾the most fundamental rules in English grammar: how to form a plural and how to change the tense of a verb.

Children’s mistakes also suggest that the ability to learn and use language
15 is already there when people are born. And if this is correct, then ⁽⁴⁾we [forced / there is / will be / to / conclude that] absolutely nothing silly about those errors in children’s speech.

(注) there is more to A than meets the eye : Aには見かけ以上のものがある