Elicited language tasks can provide an efficient method to evaluate children’s language abilities. The use of elicited production tasks of language production has been designed to elicit a simple sentence with a third person present (3S) subject, if the child produces the subject of the clause and not just the main verb. The examination of tense marking in elicited imitation tasks has been offered as alternatives to sufficient data per child for analyses. Elicited production tasks and elicited imitation tasks have been used in the study of complex syntax in typically developing children (Schuele, 2009; children responding on Regular and Irregular Past Tense Probe of the Rice/Wexler Test of Early Grammatical Impairment (TEGI; Rice & Wexler, 2001) were analyzed.

### Methods

#### Task

In the PT probe, children were shown 20 pairs of pictures (2 demonstration, 18 trials): the first picture in each set of pictures depicts a person engaging in an activity. The examiner provided a description of the picture (e.g., Here the boy is raking the leaves). The second picture in each set depicts the activity completed. The examiner provided the information now here is done and prompted the child to describe the completed action (Tell me what he did). The task is designed to elicit a simple sentence with a third person subject-to-verb agreement. The child’s production of the past tense in obligatory contexts (e.g., He raked the leaves).

#### Data Analysis

Based on the TEGI manual, a response is not scorable if an unmarked verb phrase is produced in the absence of a clausal subject (e.g., rake). Scorable responses include a marked verb and a subject plus a marked or unmarked verb (e.g., raked, he raked, he raked).

#### Results

Responses included a subject plus verb marked for past tense (42 responses, 65%), a subject plus unmarked verb (23 responses, 35%). The majority of responses include the same verb (59/65 or 91%).

### Discussion

This study continues a line of inquiry focused on the development and use of elicited tasks of language production. A prior investigation from our lab examined the necessary components in a child’s response to ensure a valid measure of grammatical performance on the third person present (3S) structure (Eisenband, Schuele, & Barako Arndt, 2011). In this study, we have examined this question with respect to the study of PT tense/argument agreement. Specifically, we questioned whether children’s responses to the PT probe structure (e.g., Cat should eat the cookies) in the TEGI PT probe, a valid measure of PT marking requires that the child produce the subject of the clause and not just the verb phrase and its complements or adjuncts.

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