

The Structure of Learner Varieties



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The Structure of Learner Varieties

edited by

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The Structure of Learner Varieties: Introduction to the volume¹

Henriëtte Hendriks

1. A way of looking at (second) language acquisition

Over the last few decades, the field of second language research has grown dramatically. Theoretical approaches are plenty and are often linked to very different interests. Some were born out of an interest in the relation between language and society and how this affects acquisition, some try and look for universal vs. language-specific influences on acquisition, some try to explain acquisition from a functional perspective, a cognitive perspective, and yet others try to the availability of a language acquisition device (in the UG sense) to second language learners. This introductory chapter serves to make explicit the framework in which the contributors to this volume operate, to introduce some common terminology and definitions, and to give the reader a sneak preview of the articles to follow.

In 1997, Klein and Perdue advocated the following perspective for language acquisition research, as characterised by four assumptions:

1. During the acquisitional process, the learner passes through a series of learner varieties. Both the internal organization of each variety at a given time as well as the transition from one variety to the next are essentially systematic in nature.
2. There is a limited set of organizational principles of different kinds which are present in all learner varieties. The actual structure of an utterance in a learner variety is determined by a particular interaction of these principles. This kind of interaction may vary, depending on various factors, such as the learner's source language. With successive input analysis, the interaction changes over time [...].
3. Under this perspective, learner varieties are not imperfect imitations of a 'real' language, the target language, but systems in their own right, error-free by definition, and characterised by a particular lexical repertoire and by a particular interaction of organizational principles. Fully developed languages are simply borderline cases of learner varieties. They represent a relatively stable state of language acquisition - that state where learners stop learning because there is no difference between their variety and the input, the variety of their social environment.

4. If all learner varieties, including the final one, are manifestations of the human language capacity, then the study of this capacity should not start with the most complex of these manifestations, and go from there to the simpler ones. Rather, it is advisable first to study the various organizational principles of human language and their interplay in relatively simple cases, those where the various form-function relations are more elementary and transparent.

Some of these assumptions have been around in second language acquisition research for a long time. Corder (1967) first advocated this type of approach, and Selinker (1972), who baptised learner varieties with the name *interlanguage*, gave the approach its more common name. Some of the assumptions, however, and in particular the latter part of the third assumption and the fourth are more specific to Klein and Perdue.

This volume presents ten articles studying and discussing the structure of such learner varieties at various levels of the proficiency scale (very early learner varieties, the Basic Variety, and varieties which are so close to the borderline / target language variety that we call speakers of those varieties near-natives or quasi-bilinguals) and in a range of source-target language combinations (from Polish/German to Moroccan-Arabic/French). The learners are mostly non-guided learners, that is, they learn the language through everyday communication, in a natural fashion, free from systematic and / or intentional guidance. The authors of the articles all adhere to the *learner variety* approach, as it is called and thus analyse the structure of such varieties as systems in their own right, error-free by definition. They search for the logic underlying those systems as well as for the logic underlying the transitions from one system (or variety) to the next one.

The articles have originated from a five-year research project, a follow-up to the ESF financed project on *Second Language Acquisition by Adult Immigrants* (Perdue 1993)². The project was known under the name "The Structure of Learner Varieties", hence the title of this volume, and all contributors (the authors of the discussion articles excepted) participated in it.

Apart from the above four assumptions, one more common assumption reunites and directs the research in this group. It is felt that the main function of language is communication, and that given this fact, language acquisition should preferably be studied in situations in which the learner is trying to use language for communicative purposes (rather than studying the learner's capacity to fill in gaps in an exercise, or to judge the acceptability of certain target language constructions for example). As Klein (1986) already argued, the non-guided learner is in a seemingly paradoxical situation as far as

communication is concerned. In order to communicate, he will have to learn some of the language, but for language learning this particular type of learner only has communication as a reliable tool. Of course, Klein points out, this is only seemingly the case, because human beings have many more tools at their disposition for communication than just language (facial expression, gestures, etc.). Still, in many cases language is clearly the most effective and precise tool.

Producing language is a complex activity. If we take a look at Levelt's (1989) model of language production, for example, it is suggested that there are four components that all have to be mastered at least to some extent in order for a verbal message (read communication) to be successful: conceptualisation; formulation; articulation and self-monitoring.

During the *conceptualisation* phase, preverbal messages are being generated. It is during this phase that the speaker has to take decisions concerning the intent of the message, the selection of information allowing that intent to be realised, and the linearisation of the information at utterance and text level. These decisions taken, this leads to the existence of a so-called preverbal message. The preverbal message serves as input for the *formulation* phase. During this phase, items are extracted from the mental lexicon and grammatical relations reflecting the conceptual message are being generated. The product of this set of operations is called the surface structure, which again serves as input for the phonological encoding. During the *articulation* phase, the phonetic plan is realised in form of a series of instructions for the articulatory organs, thus resulting in external discourse. Finally, during the entire production process the speaker *monitors* the correspondence between his communicative intentions and his internal and external discourse. This allows him to detect any eventual correspondence problems, and to provide self-corrections.

Given the complexity of the entire production process, Levelt (1982) proposes to use so-called *complex verbal tasks* as experimental material for the study of language in use. Complex verbal tasks imply the production of extended, coherent discourse. Such tasks (film retellings, route-directions, stage instructions) allow the researcher to observe all four components of language production, given that a speaker will have to make choices concerning the information to be provided for the communicative intent and the interlocutor involved; to linearise the information according to discourse-pragmatic principles; and to encode all such information with the linguistic means as available in the target language. Native speakers have been shown to occasionally have problems with any of the four components of the production task, so it is to be expected that learners will have such problems as well.

All research in this volume has used complex verbal tasks to elicit its data across languages. The project as a whole is therefore discourse oriented more than sentence oriented in its approach. The articles, within a common framework to be discussed below, all address the following general questions, which show the functionalist interest of the researchers, questions asked in the hope to get a better insight in the organisational principles of learner varieties and the constraints on those principles:

1. How does the learner express and integrate information from different semantic domains (time, space, persons, events), when producing a coherent text at a given time?
2. How do his procedures change over time?
3. Which causal factors (cognitive, age-related, universal vs. language - specific) determine these changes?

2. Previous project: what we can take as “given”

As mentioned above, the Structure of Learner Varieties project was preceded by a large cross-linguistic project financed by the ESF and coordinated at the Max-Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics in Nijmegen. This project took the issue in the fourth assumption above seriously, i.e., that in order to understand more about the human language capacity one should start by looking at very early varieties rather than looking at fully-fledged varieties. It analysed the very first and early acquisition of non-guided second language learners, just after their arrival in the country of the target language with no prior knowledge of that target language (cf. Perdue 1993 for a detailed discussion of the project, the subjects and results). The main results of the previous project can be summarised as follows. First, a limited set of organisational principles operating in the learner varieties could be identified. These were mainly constraints on three levels: phrasal, semantic and pragmatic. The constraints were found to interact, and it is this interaction that determines the actual organisation of a learner variety at a given point in time. The kind of interaction, and hence the specific contribution of each principle may vary depending on source language influences or on the level of proficiency of the learner. As a result, the interaction may change over time.

Second, learners seemed to pass through three stages. Overall they started out with the so-called *nominal utterance organisation* (also pre-basic variety, Perdue 1996). At this stage, spontaneous utterances would mainly involve seemingly unconnected nouns, adverbs and particles. The main reason for the

impression of disconnectedness is probably the lack of verbs, which would have allowed to impose some kind of implicit organisation on the elements in the utterance, for example through shared knowledge about the argument structure of the verb used. This stage was followed by an *infinite utterance organisation*, or the so-called *Basic Variety*. In the Basic Variety, recognizable verbs start to occur in utterances. As mentioned, this presence of verbs allows the learner to implicitly or explicitly assign roles in the argument structure. The Basic Variety was found to be at least partly independent of any of the languages under study. It represents a self-standing if limited system of communication, which has a universal status (at least for the ten linguistic cases of acquisition studied). As such, it provides insight into a 'basic' procedure for organising information in (connected) speech available to any adult speaker, learners or natives (for more elaborate descriptions of the basic variety, cf. Klein and Perdue (1992, 1997)). As long as the semantic, pragmatic and phrasal constraints that organise it can be reconciled, the Basic Variety works. However, when the sets of constraints contradict each other this provides an excellent motive for learners to acquire more specific structuring devices for their target languages, and they move towards a *finite utterance organisation* (post-basic variety). This third phase can be characterised by the occurrence of the distinction between the finite and non-finite components of the verb (hence its name). Not all learners in the project reached this stage, given that the Basic Variety turned out to be a point at which learners seem to fossilise more easily. The transition from one stage to the next was always found to be slow and gradual.

Finally, it seemed to be the case that initial steps in development were dominantly guided by universal principles, whereas factors attributable to specifics of source and target languages seemed more characteristic of later stages of development.

3. The new project: The Structure of Learner Varieties

The new project and hence work presented in the present volume, built on the findings available from the first project. It now had a reliable way of characterizing learner varieties at different proficiency levels, knowing what possible utterance structures are available at these various stages, what pragmatic and semantic constraints rest on a learner's production at a given stage, and what the meaning of utterances may be when structurally constraint in a particular way. The Structure of Learner Varieties (SLV) project also made

extensive use of the data base that resulted from the previous project (as will become clear in the volume).

The organisation of the SLV project, however, was very different from its predecessor. Where the ESF project had been very strictly organised in terms of data collection, type of analyses, etc., the Structure of Learner Varieties project was more loosely organised. Not every one made use of the same database; not all members researched learner varieties of similar proficiency levels, etc.

The project set out to further the research in two specific sub-domains: Referential movement in texts, and the use of scope in learner varieties. It wanted to understand more about the interaction of principles organizing the macrostructure of the text, and those principles structuring individual utterances. The sub-domain of scope was chosen because it had not been dealt with at all in the ESF project, and it does involve this particular link between macro- and micro structure of text (see below for more detail). Referential movement had been looked at before, and was furthered in this project by looking more specifically at the integration of information from different conceptual domains (time, space, person, event, and modality) in the speaker's construction of a coherent text, by looking at a larger range of learner varieties, comparing adult second language learners with child monolingual and bilingual learners (thereby introducing the age factor), and by looking in more depth at issues that were found to be important during the ESF project, but for which no time had been left to study them more thoroughly (for example the issue of granularity).

4. Part One: Referential movement in language production

The first part of the volume on *referential movement* includes five articles, and is concluded by an article discussing the issues from the five articles from a point of view outside of second language acquisition (Hickmann). Where the topics dealt with in this part of the volume may seem to be rather diverse: reference to person (Ahrenholz; Chini), reference to space (Hendriks), and reference to time/events (Noyau et al.; von Stutterheim and Lambert), all of them are dealt with within one common framework, known as the *Quaestio* model. As a result, articles know a common terminology / language, and comparability of the analyses and results is high and straightforward.

4.1. The *Quaestio* model

The *Quaestio* model as formulated by Klein and von Stutterheim (1987) provides an interface between the conceptualisation and the formulation of a text (cf. also Levelt's production model as discussed above), and accounts for both coherence and cohesion of texts. It is an analytic framework for the cross-linguistic studies of languages, and was used as a basis of analysis also during the ESF-project. According to the *Quaestio* model, the structure of all coherent texts is constrained on both global and local levels by the nature of the (implicit or explicit) question - the *Quaestio* - which the text in its entirety is meant to answer. Examples of such questions are: "What happened to Charlie Chaplin"?, "What entities are where on the poster"?, etc. According to this approach, any utterance in the text integrates information from a combination of domains (person, space, time, events, and modality), the particular *Quaestio* influencing the way in which possible domains of reference are realised in utterance and text and the development of the domains across utterances. As a result, a narrative will, for example, be mainly organised through the temporal domain, three other domains also being crucially involved, however, namely: *spaces*, *persons* (and objects), and *events*. For a route description, the domain of space will more important. The *Quaestio* thus imposes constraints upon (a) the macro structure of the text, which concerns aspects such as linearisation of information, and the partitioning of utterances into background and foreground. But it also imposes constraints on (b) the concrete form of the individual utterance, where it largely determines which information in the utterance is new and which information is maintained; moreover, it (largely) determines which part of the utterance is topic information and which part is focus information. This two-fold partitioning of the entire information to be expressed has strong consequences on linguistic form.

To exemplify this, consider the following communicative situation: When asked (the *Quaestio*) "What did you do on holiday this year?" a speaker could answer: "We went to Scheveningen on the Dutch coast and spent our time swimming, walking along the beach, and eating fish. We had a very nice apartment".

This answer contains various bits of information, some of which seem to directly answer the *Quaestio*, i.e., we went to the Dutch coast, we swam, we walked, we ate fish, and others which do not seem to answer the *Quaestio*, but rather give some other relevant information (we had a nice apartment). Those parts of the response directly answering the *Quaestio* (we swam, ate fish, etc.) are qualified as foreground (the skeleton of the text) by the framework, whereas the other parts are qualified as background.

The *Quaestio* also influences how information is *introduced* and *maintained* in a text, in that objects, for example, will usually be introduced and spatially contextualised in the foreground in living room descriptions, whereas they may occur in the background in another type of text.

The *Quaestio* defines *topic* and *focus* within each utterance in that, as any question, it raises a set of alternatives. The answer will specify one of these alternatives. The set of possible alternatives raised by the *Quaestio* is called the topic, and the one alternative which is selected and specified is the focus of the utterance. Thus, to return to the above example, the topic component in the answer will include the protagonists and the time given (we and reference to the past), whereas all the events listed (go, swim, eat, etc.) form the focus.

4.2. *The individual articles in short*

The focus in this first part of the volume will be on the basic variety and development beyond. In earlier projects on referential movement, a lot of attention has been given to the acquisition of the individual linguistic means necessary to refer, and to their very early uses in discourse whilst the learner tries to execute the complex communicative tasks he is confronted with. Those (earlier) projects made detailed analyses, amongst others, of the various linguistic means needed to refer to persons and entities, to spatial situations and to sequence events in time, and they have provided us with the knowledge about acquisition orders of the encoding of spatial concepts, the gradual build-up of the noun phrase, knowledge about the order of acquisition and use of pronouns, and order of acquisition of verbal morphology and its usage by learners for marking subject-verb agreement and temporal information.

With proficiency, the two types of knowledge to be acquired

1. language specific forms and grammaticalisation
2. matching of the various functions on utterance and discourse level with these language-specific forms

change in order of importance. At the lower proficiency levels the acquisition of forms is immanent. However, the more proficient the learner becomes, the more one can take his knowledge of the target language forms for granted. Advanced learners do not, as von Stutterheim and Lambert phrase it (this volume), “have to struggle for words, but master the formal system to a larger extent”. At that point, matching forms with functions in a target-like manner (taking into account the pluri-functionality of the forms) becomes the main job

of the language learner. One of the specific hypotheses to be tested in the light of this idea is the presupposition that, having acquired the grammatical means of the target language, a further level of proficiency may be identified for those learners who use the means for creating discourse cohesion following the target language patterns.

As a consequence, the data in this part, although not excluding early varieties, concentrates mainly on learners who are attempting to or have advanced beyond the basic variety, an attempt seen in this project as motivated by two reasons: a need to escape from the expressive constraints of a simpler system on the one hand, and a wish to match the target-linguistic environment more closely on the other hand. Furthermore, all papers focus more on the acquisition of the target-language specific discourse functions held by the particular forms acquired by the learners, rather than by the acquisition of the forms as such. Thus, the papers by **Ahrenholz** and **Chini** not only discuss the acquisition of forms for referring to person and objects as acquired by the learners, but, more specifically, discuss how source and target languages differ in their choice of particular forms for discourse cohesion, and test hypotheses concerning the particular problem the learners may have to appropriately match form and function in the TL as a function of markedness and saliency of the forms, typological differences between source and target languages (\pm pro-drop), etc. **Hendriks'** paper on reference to space is concerned with discourse cohesion as reinforced by the presentation of spatial information in narratives, rather than with the acquisition of the actual forms. Again, it focusses on choices of forms at the utterance level which are motivated either by language specific differences or by a more global discourse level organisation (cf. also von Stutterheim and Lambert), i.e., decisions concerning the level of explicitness of the spatial locations referred to, and the explicitness of the packaging of spatial information. The main questions asked are: how well and how fast do child learners of a first vs. adult learners of a second language adjust to target language specific patterns in this domain of reference where the underlying discourse pragmatic principles are similar, but their rendering in language is variable. This paper thus introduces another variable, namely, the effect of *age* of the learner. Finally, the papers by Noyau et al., and von Stutterheim and Lambert, although both mainly focussing on reference to time and events in discourse, in fact provide us with studies of the organisation of information structure on a more global (reference domain independent) level. Both investigate the conceptualisation and verbalisation of complex event representations in texts, given a constant, non-linguistic complex of events. Thus, **Noyau et al.** propose to look at two key aspects of the conceptualisation of event structures in texts, namely granularity (the degree of temporal

partitioning of a situation), and condensation (the degree of hierarchical organisation of event structures). These authors hypothesise that the degree of granularity is closely related to the development of lexical means and will thus allow to distinguish early proficiency levels of language acquisition. Once the acquisition of linguistic forms stabilised, granularity will become a free variable for the more advanced learners as it is for native speakers of a language. Condensation will be important in more advanced learner varieties only, and it is hypothesised that learners although they will show a general development from accumulative presentation of information towards a gradual command of hypotaxis, will be influenced by L1 usage of condensation rather than follow the patterns of the L2. By comparing different learners (child vs. adult L2) Noyau et al., similar to Hendriks, introduce the age variable. Finally, **von Stutterheim and Lambert** are interested in the decision taken by very advanced learners (a variety still largely unknown) as to what events to select for verbalisation and how to present the events once chosen. They list a number of options that are available in various languages for the representation of events, and look at the native and non-native choices of these options, the options being:

- topic-time management (how are situations related to time)
- level of granularity
- choice of the amount of information specified per event unit
- perspectivation of the events.

They conclude that whereas “these learners clearly master the syntactic constraints holding between lexical items at sentence level, the way they select and present information and relate events is evocative of global strategies of L1 discourse organisation”.

The discussion paper by Hickmann, who is looking at the five articles from an acquisitional (but not just second language acquisitional) perspective, discusses how the articles contribute to ongoing research, focusing on the following three central questions in acquisition research;

1. What are universal vs. language-specific aspects of acquisition?
2. What are language-internal structural vs. functional determinants of acquisition? And
3. what are language-external determinants of acquisition?

5. Part Two: Scope in learner varieties

Studies concerning scope are being dealt with in the second part of the volume. It includes five papers and a discussion paper which puts the findings in a perspective exterior to second language acquisition (Ricca). Scope phenomena traditionally include:

- negation
- additive and restrictive scope particles such as *only*, *also*, and *even*
- frequency adverbials such as *often*, *mostly*, *twice*, *several times*, and
- quantified expressions such as *many* books, *all* girls.

Some of these phenomena (especially scope particles) have been rather neglected in second language acquisition research. To some extent, this may be a consequence of the fact that detailed knowledge about the interpretation of such scope phenomena is lacking even in the target languages, which in turn may be a result of the fact that scope phenomena concern optional rather than obligatory elements of utterances, that is, although these elements fulfil important communicative functions, they are structurally not “necessary”. As a result, they will occur less frequently in languages (less true for negation), and may therefore have been discussed less frequently. They present an important learning problem, though, in that L2 learners have to reconcile the logical structure of their utterances with the syntactic specifics of the language being learned. In the following articles, therefore, two of the above phenomena will be studied in more detail: *negation* in Italian as an L2 (Bernini), French as an L2 (Giuliano and Véronique), and German as an L2 (Becker), and *additive and restrictive scope particles* in Italian as an L2 (Andorno) and in German and French advanced L2 varieties (Watorek and Dimroth).

The Structure of Learner Varieties, as a project, set out to answer the following questions:

1. Are there circumlocutory possibilities for expressing the meaning carried by a scope particle before that particle is acquired?
2. What is the order of acquisition of scope particles? Does one observe a similar order of acquisition across languages, and if so, why?
3. Is there a developmental order in the use of utterance-level particles versus constituent-level particles, and in observed combinations of particles?
4. What are the principles governing the use of negation and scope particles in context at a given moment of the acquisition process? Is it the case, for example, that the learner first uses an iconic placing of the particle adjacent

to the material under scope, before the syntactic specifics of the relevant target language are acquired, i.e., is there a basic use of negation and scope particles showing strong cross-linguistic similarities?

The articles concerning scopal features all set out to look at one or more of the above questions and other more specific questions. In order to find answers, researchers in the project all worked, again, within one framework, as proposed by Dimroth and Klein (1996). The framework is based on a number of premises, the main one of which being that scopal elements, despite them being optional, follow clear structural constraints.

5.1. *The framework*

According to Dimroth and Klein, five concepts are necessary in order to adequately describe scope phenomena in a given language. The first of those concepts is the so-called *preliminary structure* (*Ausgangsstruktur*). This is the pre-existing structure on which the optional scope element operates and which meaning it modifies to a certain extent. The second concept is the *potential or maximal scope* (*Wirkungsbereich*). This is the part of the preliminary structure that can be effected by the optional element. This potential or maximum scope, which depends on the position of the scope particle and, in some languages (e.g., German) on its stress, is considered to be a syntactic phenomenon in the target language. The integration of the scopal element into the preliminary structure and the thereby defined *domain of application* (scope) may therefore be more or less straightforward, depending on the language in question. Languages, moreover, allow a further restriction of the elements within the scope of the particle that are *actually* affected by the particle. When this happens, this more restricted group of elements, called the *focus* (*Fokus*), is a part of the particle's maximal scope, and can be especially accentuated through language specific means such as intonation or word-order. It is important to stress that the delimitation of this actual domain of application depends on the information structure of the relevant utterance in context. Particles can only affect information that is contrastive with respect to earlier utterances, that is, information that meets one of the classical definitions of focus. An assumption made by Dimroth and Klein (1996) is that the information structure of a preliminary structure doesn't change through the insertion of a particle. It is thus the preliminary structure's focal or contrastive part that can be affected by a particle. Independent of this, the particle's maximal scope can include other elements.

A further concept in the Dimroth and Klein framework is the so-called *set of alternatives* (*Auswahlmenge*) (cf. also the *Quaestio* model above). The set of alternatives consists of all meaningful elements that can sensibly replace the Fokus part of the preliminary structure. Note however, that, even when theoretically sensible, not all elements will always be in this set. The set will usually be restricted by the utterance context and world knowledge. In the preliminary structure, the speaker chooses one of the members of the set of alternatives. The scopal particle placed in the preliminary structure informs us of the relation between that chosen element and all other elements in the set of alternatives, that is, are there other elements in the set for which the utterance can be valid, are there more likely elements in the set than the one in the utterance, is the element in the utterance the only one possible, etc. Which of the relations we are concerned with is expressed in the lexical meaning of the particles. To give an example:

- (1) a. John drank a beer
- b. John *only* drank a beer
- c. John *also* drank a beer

We can consider 1a to be a preliminary structure. That being the case, 1b shows an added optional scope particle, *only*. It is inserted before the finite verb. The domain of application lies to the right and is adjacent to the scope particle. It thus includes “drink a beer”. Included in the set of alternatives may be all actions for which John is the agent: play the piano, eat with chopsticks, etc. The lexical meaning of the scope particle *only* expresses that only the chosen element of the set of alternatives corresponds to what John did. None of the other possible elements of the set would accurately describe John’s actions. In 1c, all structural features stay the same, but the lexical meaning of the particle *also* suggests that there are other activities in the set of alternatives that John has been the agent of, apart from drinking a beer.

Both for the description of scope phenomena in a given language, and in order to acquire a certain language, two problems have to be solved:

- a. One has to discover the lexical meaning of the particular scope particle.
- b. One has to discover how that particular particle interacts with the preliminary structure i.e., which position/stress pattern corresponds to which scope.

When studying fully-fledged varieties (target languages), the possible preliminary structures existing for the speaker to choose from, including Fokus

phenomena, even though sometimes extremely complex, in principle are known to the linguist. In learner varieties, it will be of essence for the linguist to get himself acquainted first and foremost with the scala of preliminary structures available at a given point in time to the learner, the semantic and pragmatic sense expressed by such structures, and the existence of Fokus-structures available to the particular learner. Only after having established this knowledge can one start speculating about such a learner's use of scope elements.

The ESF project, having studied precisely this type of information for the learner varieties involved (cf. section 2 above), has provided the researchers with a reliable way of characterizing the learner varieties along those line. All the contributors to this volume use the categorisation proposed in the earlier project into pre-basic variety learners, basic variety and post-basic variety learners.

Meaning and structural qualities of the individual particles cannot be presupposed known to either L1 or L2 learners, nor, often, to the linguist attempting to describe a full grown target language. Therefore Dimroth and Klein propose to not try and code occurrences using a pre-fabricated coding scheme, but rather to list possible meanings and uses. They suggest that, when accumulating evidence in such a way, patterns will naturally become clear to the researcher. The advantage of proceeding in this way is that one is not likely to be guided by preconstructed beliefs about the functioning of scope particles either in the specific target languages, or in languages in general.

5.2. The individual papers in short

Given that all five articles have used this framework, this introduction should make reading of them easier. As you will find by reading the articles in detail, mostly questions 2 to 4 were answered. Overall results show that both negation and additive and restrictive particles occur very early in the learner data, irrespective of the fact that they are optional. This shows how important their communicative functions must be. The project being of a cross-linguistic kind, you will also find that the results of the various articles allow one to recognise universal vs. language-specific trends very clearly.

As far as *negation* is concerned, all three articles (**Bernini, Giuliano and Véronique and Becker**) allow the conclusion that learners, irrespective of the source and target languages will start out using holophrastic negation. Again, across languages, some initial basic universal principles seem to reign at the early stages of acquisition, making the learner place the negator adjacent and to

the left of the negated element. This strategy has been claimed to be consistent with cognitive principles, and it is also the cross-linguistically most frequent placing of the negator.

Depending on the actual placement of the negator in the target language (pre-finite in Italian, post-finite in French and German), the acquisitional path is obviously going to differ, in that not much structural development is found in Italian (Bernini), but development is clearly found in French and German, where it is suggested that development might be tied to the development of finiteness on the one hand (Giuliano and Véronique; Becker), and be influenced by the source language on the other (Giuliano and Véronique).

Findings concerning the acquisition of *scope particles* in Italian (**Andorno**) show that here too the basic universal and maybe cognitively guided principle “operator immediately in front of the affected element” is valid. The need to maintain the group consisting of the particle and its affected element is stronger than other principles which seem to prevail in languages such as French, i.e., “do not interrupt the basic structure”. The principle does occur early in acquisition when scope particles are placed at the external positions of the utterance, but later on in acquisition the group principle prevails.

The work by **Watorek and Dimroth**, finally, takes the questions a step further in that they do not look at the interaction between the scope particle and the preliminary structure on the utterance level, but they go beyond that level, and try to analyse the function of scope particles on the discourse level, thereby linking the first and second parts of this volume. Learners in this study are relatively far advanced (using Bartning’s 1991 criteria), in that their language production in many respects is similar to language produced by native speakers, except that the learners show areas of fragility in the domain of discourse. It has been shown previously (Watorek and Perdue, 1999) that additive particles can play a role in discourse cohesion in that they allow speakers to implicitly maintain reference to a same entity, as exemplified in (2). The square, although not explicitly mentioned again, can be easily inferred as the meant location for the trees.

- (2) In the square is a fountain
And there are *also* some trees

The usage of additive particles in learner languages for such purposes forms the subject of the Watorek and Dimroth study. Results show that if such simplifying solutions as in (2) above which permit the omission of additional spatial information to be made explicit, are *readily* available in the target language (for example in French L2), learners will prefer such options over the

more explicit (and therefore more complex) ones. However, when a simplification exists but is highly infrequent and constraint by other syntactic rules, learners will chose not to use such structures even though it forces them to acquire more complex utterance structures (German L2).

Finally, we invited Davide Ricca to discuss this second set of articles, Ricca bringing in a more overall linguistic rather than acquisitional perspective. Ricca discusses various questions in the area of scope, such as the role of typological markedness in acquisition, and the role of intonational saliency in the acquisition of sentence negation. He also compares the acquisitional paths as found in replacing negation and focus particles, thereby providing an explicit comparison of the two scopal elements.

Notes

1. I would like to thank Christine Dimroth for her valuable input concerning the description of the framework used in the scope project. Thanks also go to Tim Hoy for checking my English. All remaining mistakes are, of course, mine.
2. Note that the project is also well known as the "ESF project", and may be referred to as such in all the articles in this book, and even outside of it by non project members.

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Part I: Referential movement

Reference to persons and objects in the function of subject in Learner Varieties

Bernt Ahrenholz

1. Introduction

How do language learners refer to persons and objects in the function of subject? More specifically, which pronominal means do speakers of pro-drop languages use when they acquire a non-pro-drop language such as German? The present article reports the findings of a case study of an Italian learner of German. The theoretical framework is provided by the quaestio model and its categories of “reference”, “referential movement”, “topic” and “focus”. The Quaestio model distinguishes five domains of reference, one of which is reference to persons and objects in the function of subject.¹ In German there are a variety of ways to refer to this domain: names, nouns, nominal phrases and various kinds of pronouns can function as explicit references. Implicit reference, expressed by zero anaphora and corresponding morphological marking of the verb, is only possible under very restricted conditions in German, whereas it occurs frequently in pro-drop languages. It is therefore of particular interest to analyse how learners of pro-drop languages (like Italian) acquire languages in which explicit reference to the subject is obligatory (like German). In the present paper, the following aspects will be explored in detail:

- which linguistic devices can be used for the domain of reference “persons and objects in the function of subject” in German and Italian,
- which pronominal devices are used by an Italian learner of German,
- how these devices are acquired over time,
- which functions do these devices have.

Reasons for the observed developments in learner varieties will also be discussed.

2. The domain of reference “Persons and objects in the function of subject”: Linguistic devices in German and Italian

Firstly, various possible ways of realising the subject function in German will be described in as far as they are relevant to the analysis of the learner varieties under investigation.² For this analysis, it is useful to distinguish between ways of referring to the first and second person on the one hand and the third person on the other. To a certain extent, this distinction reflects the distinction between deictic and anaphoric pronouns, which has proven to be important in studies on second language acquisition (see below).³

2.1. *First and second person*

2.1.1. First person

In German, the pronouns *ich* in the singular and *wir* in the plural are obligatory for the first person.⁴ However, there are some exceptions:⁵

- When the referent is unambiguous, in the prefield,⁶ subject ellipsis of the first and second person singular may occur under certain interactional conditions:

- (1) *kommst du - Ø [ich] komme gleich*⁷
 come you? - Ø [I] come immediately
 ‘Are you coming? [I’ll] be right there’

- There are a number of formulaic expressions with no explicit subject reference, e.g., for the first person singular: *verstehe* ‘[I] understand’, *gratuliere* ‘congratulations’.
- Subject omission also occurs in co-ordinated sentences under certain conditions (see example 2 below and section 1.3. for more detail).

2.1.2. Second person

In general, the second person must also be referred to explicitly.⁸ The respective pronouns are *du* ‘you’ in the singular, *ihr* ‘you’ in the plural, and the polite *Sie* ‘you’ in the singular and plural. Again, there are some exceptions:

- Subject ellipsis is acceptable in certain co-ordinated sentences.

- (2) *jetzt nimmst du die aktentasche*
 now take you the briefcase
und Ø [du] gehst zu dem grünscharzen stuhl
 and Ø [you] go to the green-black chair
 'Now you take the briefcase and go to the green-black chair'

- With the exception of *Sie*, there is no explicit lexical reference to the second person (singular/plural) in imperatives:

- (3) second person singular: *komm Ø bitte!*
 'come please!'
 second person plural: *kommt Ø bitte!*
 'come please!'

2.1.3. Italian

The Italian pronominal system is very similar to the corresponding German system; even the sound of some of the pronouns is similar (*ich – io, du – tu*). A central difference, however, is that the use of pronouns is rarely obligatory in Italian. Consequently, free pronouns are often not realised.⁹

- (4) *Vieni ? - Vengo!*
 come? - come!
 'Are you coming? - I am coming!'

Grammatical descriptions of the Italian pronominal system thus refer mainly to contexts in which these pronouns are realised. According to Cordin and Calabrese (1988), the Italian pronoun has a number of different functions, including the following:¹⁰

- it is used to emphasise the referent,
- it can be necessary with verb ellipsis,
- it occurs when the utterance is co-ordinated with another nominal phrase,
- it occurs as expression of surprise.

Thus Italian personal pronouns are used especially for emphasis, disambiguation of referents, topic-focus structuring, and other such syntactic purposes:¹¹

- (5) NS:¹² *per spedire il pacchetto + Ø dovresti*
 to send the parcel (you) should
 tirarlo fuori e costruirlo (h)
 pull it out (of the bag) and construct it
 EXP: mhm
 NS: *e io dovrei dirti come si fa a costruire*
 and I have to tell you how to construct (it)
 (NS Giusi, instruction “constructing a parcel”)

2.2. Third person

2.2.1. German

There are a number of possible ways of referring to the third person in German:¹³

- noun phrases (names, nouns, more or less complex noun phrases and numerals),
- the anaphoric use of personal pronouns (*er, sie, es* for the three genders in the singular and *sie* for all genders in the plural),
- the deictic use of personal pronouns,
- the pronominal anaphoric use of *der, die* or *das* for the three genders in the singular and *die* for all genders in the plural,
- the deictic use of *der, die, or das*,
- the pronominal use of the demonstrative pronoun (*dieser, diese, dieses*),
- the pronominal use of the indefinite article (*einer, eine, eins*),¹⁴

Further possibilities are:

- the expletive *es*,
- the impersonal pronoun *man*,
- the reflexive pronoun *sich*,
- zero anaphora.

The most important contexts for zero anaphora in the third person are again co-ordinated clauses. As the rules operating here are not very easy for learners to understand, the conditions for sentence co-ordination with subject ellipsis will be explained in greater detail in section 1.3.

2.2.2. Italian

In Italian, it is again the case that third person pronouns are generally not used if it is obvious to whom the utterance refers.¹⁵ This applies to maintained reference as well as to reintroduced or shifted information.

- (6) NS: *questo:: frate (h) voleva eh:: vuole eh::*
 this monk wanted wants
 rapire il il bambino
 to kidnap the the child

EXP: mh(hm)

- NS: *quindi che Ø è entrato + eh:: in casa*
 therefore [he] is entered into (the) house
 dalla finestra rompendo il vetro
 through (the) window breaking the glass
 (NS Stefano, narrative 'doll's house')

Similar to the first and second person, third person pronouns are mainly used for emphasis, to disambiguate reference, or to underline the topic-focus structure.¹⁶

2.3. Zero anaphora in German

In German, the omission of explicit lexical reference to the subject is limited to the context of sentence co-ordination and topic continuity, as shown in the following example:

- (7) NS: *jetzt nimmst du die aktentasche* (re-introduced)
 now take you the briefcase
 und Ø gehst zu dem grünschwarzen stuhl (maint.)
 and Ø go to the green-black chair
 und Ø stellst die aktentasche links neben dich
 and Ø put the briefcase left beside you (maint.)
 'Now you take the briefcase / and (you) go to the green-black chair /
 and (you) put the briefcase on your left'
 (NS Christa, instruction 'ashtray')

There are some constraints on constructions such as this with co-ordination and zero anaphora.¹⁷

also dass **er** die rechnung nicht begleichen kann
 (maint., side structure, subord.)
 Well that he the bill not pay can
 und **Ø** wird dann abgeführt
 (maint., end of 'canteen' segment)
 and **Ø** is then taken away
 (NS Christa, film retelling Charlie Chaplin)

There are different reasons for the use of constructions like the one above:

- They create high text cohesion.
- They allow the speaker to segment different parts of ongoing events and bundle them into one complex event.

However, zero anaphora are not as optional as one might think. Explicit reference to the subject in these constructions would lead to a slight shift in meaning:

(9) (7') jetzt nimmst **du** die aktentasche (re-introduced)
 now take you the briefcase
 und **du** gehst zu dem grünschwarzen stuhl (maint.)
 and you go to the green-black chair
 und **du** stellst die aktentasche links neben dich (maint.)
 and you put the briefcase left next you
 'Now **you** take the briefcase and **you** go to the green-black chair
 and **you** put the briefcase on the left beside you'

If the utterance were produced as in example (9), the subject would become part of the focus, even if it is not stressed. The meaning would be to underline that this specific subject, rather than anyone else, has to fulfil the instructions — a possibility which is excluded in the contextual setting.²¹

Moreover, there are some restrictions on the omission of the subject in German; the most important are as follows:

- If the connector *und* is used with an adverbial (e.g., *und jetzt* 'and now', *und dann* 'and then', *und so* 'and therefore'), inversion occurs and the subject has to be realised explicitly:

- (10) NS: *er rennt noch hinter-m zug her^*
 he runs still after-the train
aber Ø kriegt ihn nich mehr
 but Ø gets him not more
und dann versucht er halt
 And then tries he
auf anderen wegen dahin zu kommen
 on different ways there to come
 'He runs after the train, but doesn't make it, and then he tries to
 get there in another way'
 (NS Paul, film retelling Harald Lloyd)

However, it is possible to use adverbs in a different position, i.e., after the verb. This permits subject-drop constructions. This phenomenon is illustrated in example (8) (*und Ø geht dann vorne an die theke*).

- In secondary sentences, the explicit lexical use of the subject is always required, whether or not it is part of the main structure:

- (11) NS: *nächste scene is*
 next scene is
wie charlie dann auf der strasse steht (re-introd.)
 how Charlie then on the street stands
und Ø nich wees (maint.)
 and (he) not know
was er machen soll (maint., side structure)
 what he do should
 'The next scene is how Charlie is then standing on the street
 and (he) does not know what he should do'
 (NS Martin, film retelling Charlie Chaplin)

3. Previous research

Non-target-language-like subject omission was reported as a specific feature of some German learner varieties already in very early studies (cf. Clyne 1968; HPD 1977; Keim 1984), but only few studies have centred on the acquisition of reference to the subject in German (Klein and Rieck 1982). Nevertheless, there are some studies, especially investigations of syntax, in which this aspect is included in the analysis. Klein and Rieck (1982) studied the acquisition of personal pronouns by Italian and Spanish migrants on the basis of data

collected from 27 informants in the Heidelberg corpus. Rieck (1989) studied nine adult Spanish learners of German in a longitudinal study. In the ZISA project, the acquisition of the subject reference was investigated in conjunction with the development of syntactic structures (Clahsen, Meisel, and Pienemann 1983). A study conducted by Pienemann (1981 and 1998) on the acquisition of German by three eight-year-old Italian girls took a similar approach. Kuhberg (1990) studied two eleven-year-olds with Turkish and Polish as their source languages. Broeder's extensive study of the acquisition of pronouns by Turkish and Moroccan learners of Dutch (Broeder 1991) also considered the acquisition of German possessive pronouns by Turkish and Italian learners. And finally, Ulbricht (1987) discussed the conditions under which subjects can be omitted, based on an error analysis of the written and oral productions of Hungarian learners of German, who often tend to omit the subject reference in subordinate clauses. Finally, Kuhs (1989) studied the written German narratives composed by 18 children of Greek immigrants.

Nearly all of these studies considered the acquisition of German by learners with a pro-drop source language. It seems that there are barely any studies of learners with a non-pro-drop source language such as Dutch or English. We were only able to find a single case study of an Australian student learning German in Pienemann (1998).²² Diehl et al. (2000) have studied French-speaking pupils.²³

The most detailed study on the acquisition of German pronouns was conducted by Klein and Rieck (1982). This research on the Heidelberg corpus revealed that:

- deictic pronouns are acquired before anaphoric ones,
- the article *das* is the first anaphoric form used,
- anaphoric reference is partly substituted by the anaphoric use of the nouns,
- not all pronouns are restricted to their function in the target language (*ich* is also used for the first person plural),
- there is a slow change from omission of the reference to explicit reference, with both forms coexisting for a long time,
- there are learner-specific functions of pronouns which do not occur in the target language (*mir* for subject reference),
- during stages of acquisition in which learners dispose of appropriate devices for explicit reference, cases of target-language subject omissions, used frequently by the native speakers, are rare in the data.

The late development of anaphoric devices is probably connected to the fact that the pronouns in question are not very salient; they are not necessarily perceived at all in the input.

Based on the findings of Klein and Rieck (1982), Klein (1990) argued against the UG view, stating that the obvious difference in the acquisition of deictic and anaphoric pronouns suggests that functional aspects are more important for the acquisition of second languages than syntactic ones.

In her discussion of Klein (1990), Lalleman (1993) argued that deictic and anaphoric pronouns have different functions; deictic pronouns identify a person, and there is no other choice of linguistic device, whereas anaphoric pronouns refer to persons, objects, etc., and there is a choice of possible devices. In her "functional approach to markedness", pronouns are seen as being more marked than nouns, which explains why they are acquired later.

Dittmar and Skiba's (1992) investigation of the acquisition of German by three Polish learners (P-MoLL project, cf. Dittmar, Reich, Schumacher, Skiba and Terborg 1990) also found that *ich* and *du* were used in the very first recordings, whereas the third person pronouns were not used until much later.²⁴

Pienemann (1979) and Clahsen, Meisel, and Pienemann (1983) explored the extent to which the omission of the subject is linked to the development of syntactic structures. The temporary omission of the subject was seen as an attempt to avoid syntactic conflicts involving a change in word order ("permutation") before inversion has been acquired. Other cases of subject omission were interpreted as "reduction of the grammatical system" (Clahsen, Meisel, and Pienemann 1983: 196; similarly, Pienemann 1998). Kuhs' (1989) attempt to corroborate these findings with her data on Greek learners failed because there were only very few subject omissions, and only three of them could be interpreted in the context of word order.²⁵

The findings of Broeder (1991), who conducted a study into the acquisition of Dutch within the ESF *Adult Language Acquisition* project, were similar to those of Klein and Rieck (1982): the pronouns for the first person singular are acquired first, followed by those for the second, and then those for the third person singular. Singular forms are used before plurals (this applies to the first/second person and, with certain restrictions, to the third person), masculine forms tend to be used before feminine forms, and subject forms before object forms.²⁶

Furthermore, reduced forms seemed to be used quite late in learner varieties, and were often produced as unanalysed chunks (cf. Young-Scholten 1993).

Hong (1995; cf. also Clahsen and Hong 1995) investigated the problem of zero anaphora. On the basis of grammaticality judgements and reaction time

tests of Korean learners of German, Hong attempted to show that, contrary to the assumptions of parameter theory, there is no relation between subject-verb-agreement and the acquisition of zero anaphora. Davies (1996) was also unable to demonstrate a relationship between the use of zero anaphora and subject-verb-agreement in his research on English as a second language.

Hendriks (1998) analysed reference to persons and spatial reference in the narratives of Chinese learners of German (and, for comparative purposes, the acquisition of German and Chinese as L1 by children), and showed that Chinese learners of German use mainly syntactic devices to differentiate between new and given information.

Klein and Perdue (1992) conducted a comprehensive study on the development of syntactic structures in early learner varieties. Their research involved Italian and Turkish learners of German, and focused on the functional, semantic and syntactic principles of the production of utterances. Where the use of pronominal devices is concerned, marked differences between learners can be observed. Some learners acquire the complete pronominal system, whereas others have barely any anaphoric devices at their disposal.

4. The data

The case study to be presented here is based on data provided by an Italian learner of German (part of the longitudinal P-MoLL research project conducted by Norbert Dittmar; cf. Dittmar et al. 1990).²⁷ The data for the Italian adult learner *Franca* include 21 recordings made over a period of 3½ years. Oral productions were recorded for the discourse types “conversation, narrative, instruction, statement, problem solving, and description of pictures”, each with a series of different tasks. The discourse types and tasks were implemented in a three-cycle rotational design, making it possible to compare data from an early, a mid and a late stage of the acquisition process. Although the tasks were not designed for the elicitation of pronouns exclusively, the large amount of them ensures obligatory contexts for most of the pronouns to occur at least every second month. The only pronouns for which these obligatory contexts are not necessarily frequently present are the 2nd person plural *Ihr* and the politeness form *Sie*.

For the present study, the whole corpus was analysed with respect to pronouns in the function of subject using the computer program WordCruncher (cf. Müller 1992). Furthermore, the utterance units of the first cycle (about 3000) as well as the narratives recorded in the 26th and 35th month were cate-

gorised with respect to the subject function in order to ensure that non-pronominal devices and subject omissions were also captured.

5. Results

5.1. Deictical use of pronomina

Similar to learners in the HPD (cf. Klein and Rieck 1982) and P-MoLL projects (Skiba and Dittmar 1992) and learners of Dutch in the ESF project (Broeder 1991), the Franca data reveal a striking difference in the acquisition of deictic and anaphoric pronouns: Deictic pronouns are acquired at a very early stage, anaphoric pronouns distinctly later (cf. Tables 1 and 2 in the appendix). In Franca's variety the pronouns *ich* 'I' and *du* 'you' as well as *wir* 'we' appear markedly before *er* 'he' and *sie* 'she, they'. With respect to the pronouns which can be used anaphorically or deictically, we find only a late deictic usage of the article *das* in the Franca data, whereas the pronominal usage of the articles *der* and *die* is restricted to anaphoric functions.

5.1.1. *ich*

The pronoun *ich* is used from the very beginning of the recordings. The context (free conversation and Franca's narration of her biography as an immigrant) provides ample opportunity for the frequent use of *ich* in the very first recording (72 occurrences; see Table 1).²⁸ Indeed, *ich* is the most frequently used pronoun in the whole corpus (1536 occurrences). As shown above, neither the source language nor the target language provide options other than the explicit (sometimes clitic) realisation of the pronoun or the omission of the subject.

- (12) NNS: *ehm ich will-eh mh+ gehen in-eh schule^*
 Ehm I want-eh mh+ go in-eh school
*ehm *in ottobre %novembre*%*
 in october/ november
*wenn-eh+ Ø [ich] komm zurück^ ehm aus *italia**
 when come back from Italy
 'I want to go to a school in October or November when (I) come back from Italy'
 (NNS Franca, 4th month, free conversation)²⁹

As shown in this example, *ich* is always used to denote the first person singular. In addition to the frequent use of *ich*, however, subject omission of the first person singular occurs occasionally until the 18th month (cf. examples 12, 13 and Figure 1 in appendix). From the perspective of the target language, this is to be seen as a learner-specific use of subject omission.³⁰ Overall, the proportion of *ich* omissions is so small in the first months that certain explanations of this phenomenon, such as the connection with syntactic rules assumed in the ZISA project, do not seem to apply here.³¹ When the referential movement is taken into account, however, it is striking that in all cases of *ich* omission, the reference is either maintained (example 12) or reintroduced. Hence, it does not seem to be a pure transfer phenomenon, as subject omission is also possible in Italian when a referent is introduced for the first time.

Franca also omits *ich* in later stages of acquisition, but only in formulaic expressions such as *weiss nich* 'don't know' which also occur in the spoken German of native speakers (cf. Auer 1993).³²

- (13) NNS: *eh ja eh diese: kleine eh schwarze *coperchio**
 yes this small black lid
 @@ _ [*ich*] *weiss nich n: name*
 [I] know not name
 eh kanns du eh l/ eh lassen hier
 can you leave here
 'Yes, this small black lid - I don't know what it's called - you can leave it here'
 (NNS Franca, 14th month, "coffee machine" instruction)

5.1.2. *du*

The pronoun *du* for the second person singular is found from the very beginning of the data (cf. Table 1 and Figure 2 in appendix) and, from the semantic point of view, it is always employed as in the target language. The pronoun is used 487 times in the whole corpus, most often as subject pronoun in connection with a verb.³³ Very often, it is used in instructional discourses in which an experimenter is told how to perform a specific action (see below or example 15). In the other discourse types, *du* is used mainly in questions — even in the first recording:

- (14) NNS: ?*kennst du* <name>?
 know you <name>?
 'Do you know <name>?'
 (NNS Franca, 4th month, free conversation)

Although *du* is used from the very first recordings (4th month, example 14) it should be noted that the pronoun is used only rarely up to the 11th month. This may be partly due to the fact that utterances with *du* tend to be side structures³⁴ in most discourse types, and therefore are not to be expected in high numbers. But the same cannot be said of the instructions performed in the 6th, 11th and following months. Here, a limited number of subject references with *du* are to be expected on account of the tasks given; most of the instructions are agent-oriented (Ahrenholz 1998a; Kohlmann 1997; von Stutterheim 1997), i.e., most instructions (given by both native speakers and learners) refer to the listener as the person carrying out the action³⁵, as shown in the following example:

- (15) NNS: *du nehmen die tasche*
 you take the briefcase
du setzen oben stuhl
 you put on top chair
 'You take the briefcase you put it up chair'
 (NNS Franca, 6th month, instruction "ashtray", 1st cycle)

Indeed, most of the *du* occurrences in the Franca corpus are to be found here. Accordingly, the recordings with no instructions (21st, 24th and 34th months in Figure 2) have a very low rate of *du* occurrences. The use of *du* is not only dependent on the type of discourse, however. This is shown above, in the first instruction of the 6th month. Here, there are only few verbs in the lexicon, and verb morphology has not yet developed. By the 11th month, a richer verb lexicon and the acquisition of verb morphology seem to fulfil the preconditions for a broader use of *du*.

5.1.3. *wir*, *ihr* and *Sie*

The pronoun *wir* 'we' for the first person plural also occurs in Franca's variety from the very beginning. With a total of 100 occurrences in the Franca corpus, this pronoun is primarily used to refer to the joint activities of the informant and her partner. Furthermore, a total of 15 occurrences of the lexeme *ihr* 'you'

5.2.1 *er*

There is scattered usage of the pronoun *er* as early as the 4th and 5th month, but it is used more frequently from the 20th month on. It is striking that the pronoun *er* is used so rarely in the first cycle, because the narratives “Doll’s House” (8th month) and “Charlie Chaplin” (14th month) offer ample opportunities for its use, as shown by the relatively frequent occurrences in the second (24th and 26th month) and third (34th and 35th month) cycle (cf. Figure 3 in appendix).

Accordingly, there are numerous contexts in the first months of acquisition in which an explicit lexical reference by means of a noun or pronoun is required, but is missing (cf. Figure 3):

- (17) NNS: +2+ **mein bruder**[^] ehm + oh ah jetz-e ist-eh
 my brother now is
 non so come si di/ consulente finanziario[^]
 not(I) know how say consultant financial
 EXP: mhm
 NNS: ehm + arbeit[^]
 work
 eh Ø ist *sposato* mit eine kinder fünf jahre
 [he] is *married* with one children five years
 ‘My brother is now working as a - I don’t know how you say it -
 financial consultant (and he) is married with one child, aged five’
 (NNS Franca, 4th month, free conversation)

Here, as in almost all cases, examination of the referential movement shows that the reference is “maintained” or “reintroduced”. In other cases, subject omissions correspond to the use of subject omissions with co-ordinated utterances and referential identities in the target language.

The difficulties in the acquisition of anaphoric pronouns such as *er* are not only apparent in their scarcity of use and frequent omission. In the first recordings, various indications of learner problems are perceptible: for example, in the 4th month, Franca uses *er* with repetition as well as the corresponding Italian pronoun *lui*:

- (18) NNS: und-eh ehm + e/ + **er**[^] + %mh[^] **er**[^] *lui* mh[^]%er
 and he he *lui* he
 eh hab/ habe: mh + gespra/sprachen %gespra% (h)
 have spoken

mit-ehm +3+ mit-e <name> @*insomma*
 with with <name> @ [I] forgot
 @mit ehm + leute eh *di<name>
 with people *of* <name>
 'And he has spoken with the people from <name>'
 (NNS Franca, 4th month, free conversation)

In another case, there is double reference with both a name and a personal pronoun. Finally, there are occasional self-corrections of the alternatives *er* and *sie*:³⁹

(19) NNS: und so^ eh fure ehm + eine arbeit-eh
 and so for a job
 wie se/ als sekretärin eh finden (h)
 like as secretary find
 er/ e/ sie eh + muss + spreche/ gut sprechen^
 he she must speak well speak
 'And so she must speak well to find a job as secretary'
 (NNS Franca, 18th month, free conversation)

As in this example, all self-corrections concerning the choice of the pronoun are successful. With respect to the function, it can thus be stated that, in all cases, references made to previously introduced persons or objects correspond to the chosen pronoun in terms of gender.⁴⁰

5.2.2. *sie*

The lexeme *sie* has various functions in German. It is used as a deictic pronoun in the singular and plural in polite forms of address (see above). For feminine nouns, it is used to refer to persons (and objects) in the singular, to either persons or objects in the function of subject or accusative object. In the plural, *sie* is used to refer to nouns of all genders in the nominative and accusative cases.

In Franca's variety, *sie* is first used as a pronoun for the third person plural in the 9th month. This is the case in the following example, where Franca is telling the experimenter that her brother and his family have been to visit her:

(20) NNS: oh aber eh + jetzt ein bisschen eh ehm besser
 but now a bit better

+ eh eh fur-e ehm + weihnacht (h) e/ +
 for Christmas
sie alle *komm/* ehm + *hatte gekommen* (h)ier
 they all come had come here
 'Now it's a little bit better / they all came here for Christmas'
 (NNS Franca, 9th month, free conversation)

The pronoun *sie* is frequently used for the plural from the 11th month on, and for the singular from the 14th month on. This sequence of occurrence in the data may be incidental. On the other hand, it may be linked to the inherent tendency for the plural form to be used more frequently, as *sie* can refer to all three genders in the plural. Then again, the fact that the singular form occurs later could also indicate difficulties with respect to the inflexion of the verb. Whereas the plural form corresponds to the unmarked form ending in “-en”, the third person singular ends with an “-t”, and sometimes requires a change of vowel in the stem:

- (21) NNS: *die mädchen^-eh ist-eh auch-eh ungrig_(h)*
 the girl is also hungry
und so^ ehm_ +4+ ge/ eh:m sie eh g/ hm +l+ eh
 and so she
 '?stohlt^ %stohlt + gestohlt &stohlt%?&
 stoles stoles stolen stoles

EXP: &ja stiehlt&
 Yes steals

- NNS: '*stielt^-eh ein-ehehm ein brot in einen wagen +*
 steals a bread in a car
 'The girl is also hungry, so she steals a loaf of bread from out of a car'
 (NNS Franca, 14th month, Charlie Chaplin retelling)

Even when the pronoun *sie* can be considered acquired, it is not used in all obligatory contexts (cf. Figure 4 in appendix):

- (22) NNS: *und-eh: charlie chaplin^-eh mit-eh die mädchen*
 and charlie chaplin with the girl
mit der mädchen^ (h) ehm + fa/ eh fallen-eh:
 with the girl fall

auch raus-%eh% in die strasse^ (h)
 also out into the street
und so^ können-eh Ø weg-e- gehen_ + in: + frei
 and so can away go in free
 'And Charlie Chaplin and the girl fall out into the street, and then
 (they) can get away'
 (NNS Franca, 14th month, Charlie Chaplin retelling)

The subject omission of *sie* is not only observed in plural uses (such as the example above), but also occurs in singular cases. Apart from these non-target-language-like subject omissions, there are some cases of subject omission in connection with co-ordinated clauses which would also be possible in the target language:

- (23) NNS: *aber e/ m/ wann-eh eine person + @*bestemmia* @*
 but when a person *curse*
oder (h) eh Ø is böse^
 or is angry
 'But when a person curses, or is angry'
 (NNS Franca, 9th month, free conversation)

In nearly all cases, *sie* refers to females or to objects with feminine gender. However, there are a few occurrences in which *sie* is used to refer to an institution, i.e., an impersonal agent. In these cases, although it would be possible to use *sie* in the sense of the third person plural in German, German native speakers would use the pronoun *die* (cf. Ahrenholz 2004) or a passive construction instead. Example (24), which deals with the issuing of a new passport at a consulate, illustrates this use of *sie* in the Franca variety:

- (24) NNS: *un-eh ich warte dass neuer papier neuer*
 and I wait that new paper new
passport ehm machen eh sie machen für mich
 passport make eh they make for me
 'And I'm waiting for them to prepare my new papers, my new passport'
 (NNS Franca, 11th month, problem solving)

- a) an anaphoric pronominal reference to nominal phrases with the neuter gender,
- b) an expletive *es* in sentences such as *es ist gut* 'it's good',
- c) a formal placeholder if the subject is part of the focus (*es* can be omitted under certain conditions here),
- d) a formal placeholder for subject or object phrases.

The Franca corpus comprises 205 occurrences of *es*, including 19 anaphoric pronouns, 7 placeholders in the prefield, 124 expletives (primarily in *es gibt*) and 55 clitic occurrences. Only in late stages of acquisition is the pronoun used more frequently. Up to the 18th month, *es* is used on only 7 of the 83 occasions in which it is required (cf. Figure 5 in appendix). This is true of anaphoric, but primarily of expletive use, as the latter occurs more frequently in the types of task given. As clitic forms generally are learned quite late (cf. Young-Scholten 1993), it is of note that numerous clitic forms can be found in Franca's utterances towards the end of the recording period. However, it seems that they primarily occur in formulaic expressions (in the formula *gibt's* from the 32nd month on).⁴²

- (25) NNS: *ja danach-eh (gib)/ eh gib-s/ eh 'krach-e*
 yes afterwards there's trouble
zwischen + eh + poliziste
 between police
und + eh arbeitlo/ a/ arbeitlosen
 and unemployed
 'Yes afterwards there's trouble between the police and the unemployed'
 (NNS Franca, 35th month, Charlie Chaplin retelling)

5.2.4. *der, die* and *das*

In the Franca data there is also anaphoric use of the pronouns *der, die* and *das*: there are 3 occurrences of the anaphoric *der* from the 26th month,⁴³ 19 of *die* from the 14th month, and 78 of *das* from the 11th month (cf. Table 2). It is evident that the pronoun *das* is used earlier and more frequently than the other two.

- (26) NNS: *er macht (auch) auf mein bild etwas*
 he makes (also) on my picture something
aber das gefällt mir nicht
 but that please me not
 'He also does something to my picture, but I don't like that'
 (NNS Franca, 32nd month, free conversation)

However, *das* does not seem to have the same significance for Franca as for the Heidelberg learners observed by Klein and Rieck (1982), for whom it was the first and most important device for anaphoric reference.

5.3. Subject omissions

The analysis of the acquisition of explicit lexical forms of reference in Franca's variety has shown that:

- pronominal devices are acquired very early,
- anaphoric devices are acquired after deictic ones, and
- learner-specific subject omissions can be observed from the outset, and continue to occur for a long period of time. Some of these learner-specific subject omissions occur even when the corresponding pronouns are already used in different contexts. At the same time, an increasing number of subject omissions corresponding to target language usage occur (cf. Figure 6).

When non-target-language-like subject omissions occur in the varieties of learners with a pro-drop source language, it would be reasonable to assume that this is caused by transfer. However, when Franca's recordings from the first cycle and her narratives from the 26th and 35th month are considered, it appears that the learner-specific subject omissions cannot be attributed to one single reason (i.e., transfer). In the following, the contexts of omission will be examined in closer detail.

a) Omission of *es*

The pronoun *es* is omitted particularly often. However, it is important to differentiate between the following types of omission:

- Subject omission of the expletive *es*. The use of *es* is obligatory here; its function is purely morphological and syntactic (cf. Eisenberg 1999: 174). It occurs, for example, with verbs which state the existence of something. In the present corpus, the verb *sein* is affected particularly often (about 70 omissions of the expletive *es* occur in utterances with copula):

(27) NNS: *und so ist Ø [es] warm*
 and so is Ø [it] warm
 ‘And that is why it is warm’
 (NNS Franca, 8th month, narrative)

Subject omissions of the (syntactical) *es* in the function of a formal placeholder. In these cases, *es* takes the place of the subject in the prefield, but is dropped when the prefield is occupied by an other element. Franca omits *es* irrespective of this condition:

(28) NNS: *Ø [es] sind viel leute eh wie/ wie ich^*
 are many people like I
 ‘There are many people like me’
 (NNS Franca, 14th month, conversation)

During the first cycle, about 30% of all subject omissions involve the expletive and syntactical *es*. It would thus seem reasonable to treat these uses of *es* as a distinct learning problem, as the expletive or syntactical *es* is a semantically empty, grammatical subject.⁴⁴

- Furthermore, in some cases an anaphoric reference to *es* (or *das*) is omitted.

(29) EXP: *?meinst du es war richtig was sie getan hat?*
 think you it was right what she done has?
 + *deiner meinung*
 in your opinion
 NNS: *Ø [es/das] kann/ kann sein richtig*
 Ø [it/that] can be right

‘Do you think it was right, what she did? in your opinion? May be right’

(NNS Franca, 20th month, expression of opinion)

b) Subject Omissions of Deictic Pronouns

Ich and *du* are used in most utterances with a deictic subject (see above). Nevertheless, learner-specific subject omissions do occur in some of the contexts in question. This is especially the case for deictic references with the article *das*, but also for the pronoun *ich*.

- (30) NNS: Ø [*das*] ist eine nee küche *soggiorno*
 Ø [this] is a no kitchen *living-room*
 ‘That is not kitchen, it’s a living room’
 (NNS Franca, 5th month, description of picture)

- (31) NNS: *halb-e oktober eh komm* Ø [*ich*] *zurück*
 half October come Ø [I] back
 ‘I come back in the middle of October’
 (NNS Franca, 4th month, conversation)

Such omissions of *ich* can be attributed to the fact that the production of the pronoun is not yet fully automatic. With respect to the referential movement, omissions occur in the context of both “maintained” and “reintroduced” information. In a later stage of acquisition, however, subject omissions of *ich* can be interpreted as formulaic expressions also found in spoken German (*weiss nich*). Note, however, that as shown in example (32), the syntactic constraints of these forms are not necessarily taken into account: the use of *aber* ‘but’ does not allow the formulaic expression featuring the omission of *ich* in this case.

- (32) NNS: *aber* Ø [*ich*] *weiss nich*
 but Ø [I] know not
 ‘But I don’t know’
 (NNS Franca, 14th month, problem solving)

c) Subject Omissions with Anaphoric Reference

Many subject omissions occur with third person pronouns used in anaphoric contexts. This correlates with the later acquisition of anaphoric personal pro-

nouns. Correspondingly, the number of learner-specific subject omissions decreases over the course of acquisition (cf. Figure 6).

- (33) NNS: *aber hinter/ hinter der tram es gibt*
 but behind the tram there is
ein ande@re mann@ der hatte verschlaf/
 another man he had overslep/
ehm_ + ver/ äh (schm/) geschlafen^
 slept
und da hat-e Ø nicht bemerkt was passiert ist
 and there had Ø not noticed what happened is
 'But there's another man who had been sleeping behind the tram,
 and had not noticed what happened'
 (NNS Franca, 26th month, film retelling Harald Lloyd)

Subject omissions with anaphorical reference occur in the following contexts:

- Subject omissions when the prefield is occupied by adverbs

In approximately 50 of the 283 cases of learner-specific subject omissions analysed, the prefield is occupied by adverbs or complex adverbial expressions. Many of the cases in question involve constructions with *und dann* 'and then', *und jetzt* 'and now' and *und so* 'and therefore'. It might be assumed that Franca is experiencing difficulties in understanding the difference between this kind of "und + adverbial" utterance and co-ordinated utterances with *und* which do allow subject ellipsis in the case of referential identity.⁴⁵ However, no clear connection between the development of the syntax and subject omissions can be determined, contrary to the assumptions of Pienemann (1998) and Clahsen, Meisel and Pienemann (1983).

- (34) NNS: *ehm *dunque* ein mann^ ein morder ist-e*
 well a man a murderer is
ist-e + (h)eh gekommen eh in erste raum^eh a/ ehm
 is come in first room
*(h)at-e + kaputt^ ehm (h)ate *va beh* kaputt*
 has broke has okay broken
fenster^ un/ unt-e + at gefunden/ gefang/ gefunden
 window downstairs has found
eh das mann^ in erste raum_ unt-e:
 the man in first room downstairs

und dann-e^ (h)at-e Ø [er] gemo/ gemort/ gemort^
 and then has murdered

eh mann-e mit-e eine stuhl^
 man with a chair

‘Well a man, a murderer, came into the first room / broke the window downstairs / and then [he] murdered a man with a chair’
 (NNS Franca, 6th month, narrative dolls house)

- Subject omissions with subordinate clauses

Learner-specific subject omissions sometimes occur in conjunction with subordinate clauses. This applies to subordinate clauses placed after the main clause, as in example (35):

(35) NNS: *ich glaub-ehm mein vater i/ is nich + eh zufrieden*
 I believe my father is not satisfied

EXP: mh mh

NNS: *weil Ø [er] immer + in-eh in alle leben hat immer*
 because [he] always in in all life has always
ehm + ehm ge/ e/ gearbeitet viel ier ier
 worked much here here

‘Don’t think that my father is very satisfied because he spent all his life here working really hard’

(NNS Franca, 11th month, free conversation)

This also occurs in cases where subordinate clauses or infinitive constructions precede the main clause, as shown in the following example:

(36) NNS: *aber eh fur gehen in eh/ehm neue stadt-e*
 but for go in new town
muss-e Ø [er] geh +2+nah eine/ ein eh lange fluss^
 must Ø [he] go near a long river
 ‘But to go to the new town he has to go near to a long river (walk along a river)’ (NNS Franca, 8th month, narrative)

Here again, no regularity in the learner variety is clearly discernible: on the one hand, there are subject omissions in the context of subordinate clauses (16%, n=44 of all subject omissions). On the other hand, there are many constructions with subordinate clauses in which the subject is referred to explicitly, even in the case of maintained information.

d) Other Subject Omissions

Although there seem to be particular contexts in which subjects are more likely to be omitted (about one-third of all cases of non-target-language-like subject omissions involve the expletive or grammatical *es*, about half occur in the context of the copula, some in the context of adverbs in the prefield, some in formulaic speech, and some in subordinate clauses), there are also occurrences of subject omissions without any facilitating surface conditions, as shown in the following example with maintained reference:

- (37) NNS: *mein vater ehm nich arbeitet mehr +*
 my father not works more
 *e/ Ø [er] ist in *pensione^**
 Ø is in *retirement*
 ‘My father doesn’t work any more / (he) is retired’
 (NNS Franca, 11th month, conversation)

Here, as in other examples shown above, possible transfer is facilitated by the conditions of referential movement.

e) Target-Language-Like Subject Omission

In addition to learner-specific subject omission, target-language-like subject omission occurs at a very early stage.⁴⁶ The number of these subject omissions increases from the 8th month onwards, and they feature particularly often in narratives in the 14th and 26th month (cf. Figure 6). They occur parallel to the continuing learner-specific subject omissions and the use of pronouns.

- (38) NNS: *aber eine frau + `sieht-e + ehm die mädchen^eh*
 but a woman sees the girl
 und-eh eh Ø [sie] sagt-e eine: polizist
 and [she] tells a police officer
 ‘But a woman sees the girl and tells a police officer’
 (NNS Franca, 14th month, Charlie Chaplin retelling)

The increase in subject omissions which correspond to target language use (cf. Figure 6) first occurs in very short utterances (*und sagt*, *und fährt weg*, *und geht da*). With time the utterances in question become more complex. They occur mainly in co-ordinated clauses and in conjunction with the use of modal verbs (cf. Ahrenholz 1997, 2000). But even if one can observe a development in the use of target-language-like subject omissions, in the Franca data there is

a very frequent use of explicit reference to the subject for a long time, while in the productions of the German native speakers there is a significantly greater use of subject omissions (cf., e.g., example 8).⁴⁷

6. Summary and conclusion

With respect to the acquisition of linguistic devices for reference to persons and objects in the function of subject, it has been shown that the learner acquires a comprehensive and differentiated repertory of lexical referential devices. In the learner variety analysed, NPs, personal pronouns, learner-specific and target-language-like subject omissions all occur, but personal pronouns emerge as being of primary importance for this domain of reference.

In Franca's variety there is a clear difference with respect to the acquisition of deictic and anaphoric pronouns. Deictic pronouns, especially *ich*, but also *du*, are acquired very early, whereas anaphoric pronouns develop much later. This confirms what has already been demonstrated for other learner varieties (Klein and Rieck 1982). The pronouns *ich* and *du* are used from the beginning of the period of observation. *Ich* in particular shows a high number of occurrences, and is only rarely omitted. This, too, is in line with other research.

The late acquisition of the anaphoric subject pronouns seems to be substituted first by subject omission and — to a lesser degree — by an overextended use of NPs. If we were to assume anaphoric pronouns to be more marked than NPs, as suggested by Lallemann (1993), a higher frequency of NP usage would be expected.

Apart from personal pronouns, the articles *das*, *die*, and *der* are also used pronominally. This confirms the HPD (HPD 1977; Klein and Rieck 1982) findings that *das* is an important anaphorical device, although the pronominal use of these articles is not as widespread as in the HPD data.

The use of the pronoun *es*, and especially the expletive and syntactical use of *es*, appears to present a particular learning problem. This is probably due to the fact that it often has only a syntactic function and is semantically empty. From this point of view, the inclusion of the expletive use of *es* in experiments on zero anaphora (as practised by some researchers) would seem rather problematic.

All pronouns are used in correspondence with their meaning in the target language, with the exception of *sie*, which is occasionally used to refer generally to imaginary holders of office, a context in which native speakers would prefer the pronoun *die* or a passive construction.