

1 Utterance structure

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1.1 Introduction

This chapter deals with the way in which learners put their words together - that is, with the 'syntax' of learner varieties.¹ The term 'syntax' is normally used to refer to particular formal constraints on the structure of utterances, stated in terms such as verb phrase, subject, case agreement, and similar ones. Thus, syntactic descriptions of a particular language consist of statements such as

- the finite verb is clause-final;
- genitive attributes precede their head;
- verbs of type x govern an indirect object;
- an indirect object is morphologically marked as dative;
- the subject immediately precedes the finite verb;
- there is number agreement between finite verb and direct object;
- adjectives agree in person, number and gender with their head nouns,

which have constituted ever since Priscian, a descriptive language which every linguist is held to understand. But they are of limited use in investigating learner varieties, as we may illustrate by a short look at what such a learner variety typically looks like. Imagine you are an Italian learner who has been living and working in England for about six months. Then, you might know from everyday contact

- a number of proper names, such as *John, Peter, Mary,*

¹This chapter is a synthetic and necessarily simplified summary of joint work by Mary Carroll (the acquisition of English and German), José Coenen (Dutch), José Deulofeu (Moroccan learners of French), Thom Huebner (English), Wolfgang Klein (Dutch and German), Clive Perdue (English and French) and Anne Trévisé (Hispanic learners of French) brought together in the Final Report VI to the European Science Foundation (Klein and Perdue 1988). It comprised a pilot study, which has since been published (Klein and Perdue 1990) and a main study, also published (Klein and Perdue 1992), as well as numerous articles by all these authors (see the ESF Bibliography in Volume I).

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- a number of noun-like words, such as *beer, bread, work,*
- a number of verb-like words, such as *work, love, see, give;*
- a few adverbial-like words, such as *then, Christmas, today;*
- a few numerals, *one, two, three;*
- and a few complex rote constructions, such as *how are you?*

At this stage, your learner variety most likely has no inflexion, hence no case morphology, no finite morphology and no agreement whatsoever. Further, it will have no, or very few, function words, such as determiners or prepositions (for case marking). In such a variety - and this is a variety through which virtually all untutored learners pass - 'syntactic' constraints in the Priscianian sense play no role at all or a relatively minor one. Even if you happen to have concepts such as 'finite verb', 'agreement' or 'dative marking' from your first language, you cannot apply them in your second language production. Many early productions even lack verbs. Therefore, government by the verb cannot be operative, except to the extent to which it is inferable from the context. The same is true for prepositions and NPs governed by them.

Does this mean that learner varieties are just chaotic collections of words, thrown together at random? This is, at first blush, an empirical question. But a closer look soon shows it not to be the case. The utterance structure of learner varieties is governed by other organisational principles, which are also present in fully-fledged languages, but with less weight - for instance principles based on what is maintained from a previous utterance and what is freshly introduced ('referential shift'), on what is topic information and what is focus information, on the semantic role property ('thematic role') of an entity, etc. So utterances rather follow a constraint such as 'focus last' or 'new information first' or 'agent precedes patient' than a constraint such as 'finite verb is clause-final'. Hence, any serious investigation of the internal structure of learner varieties, and as a consequence, any deeper understanding of the nature of ALA, requires going beyond purely 'syntactic' constraints in the narrower sense and including organisational principles of the latter type.

The central idea of the present investigation, then, is this: *There is a limited set of organisational principles of different kinds which are present in all learner varieties, including the borderline case of fully-fledged languages. The actual structure of an utterance in a learner variety is determined by an interaction of these principles.* The kind of interaction and hence the specific contribution of each principle may vary, depending on various factors, for example the

speaker's language of origin. In particular, the interaction changes over time. Picking up some components of verb morphology from the input may cause the learner to modify the weight of purely 'syntactic' factors in his utterance organisation. From this perspective, learning a new feature is not adding a new piece to the puzzle which the learner has to put together. Rather, it entails a - sometimes minimal, sometimes major - reorganisation of the variety, where the balance of the various factors change in a way which, eventually, brings it close to the balance characteristic of the target language.

This approach holds that the utterance organisation in learner varieties is characterised by a two-fold systematicity. There is, first, a 'horizontal' systematicity - the balance between various principles which obtains at any given point in time; it is this balance which constitutes the 'syntax' (in the broader sense of the word) of a given learner variety. There is, second, a 'vertical' systematicity which leads from one learner variety to the next. Such a change is induced by the intake of new information from the input - so long as the learner is able to take new input in. For some learners, this process comes to an early halt. They are either unable or unwilling to further modify their system: their language fossilises. Fossilisation in this sense does not necessarily mean that the learning process has come to an absolute halt. The learner may still enrich his vocabulary, for example. But he does not add features which would lead to a potential structural reorganisation. Other learners however, may do so: they modify the balance reached at some point, and set out to construct a different type of interplay between the various organisational principles. Such a venture is a risk, and this might explain why so many learners are reluctant to abandon a variety which, though still far from the target, allows them to express themselves in a way they feel sufficient for their communicative needs.

The approach we take here is quite different from perspectives dominant in ALA research in at least two ways. First, it does not look at the acquisition process from the end - the alleged properties of the target language - but rather at the internal structure of a learner variety at a given point in time. A learner variety is not so very much viewed as a rudimentary, imperfect or faulty simulation of the target but *as a system in its own right*, ruled by a particular interplay of the same principles as any other language. Second, these principles are not confined to Priscianian syntax (i.e., properties such as the ones mentioned above), but include any type of constraint which might influence the structure of an utterance.

The reason why we have taken this perspective is not so very much a general discontent with Priscianian syntax but the simple fact that we see no other way to understand what is systematic about early learner varieties, and what is systematic about the way in which later learner varieties emerge from them. In more practical terms, the investigation has taken the form of a number of *inductive and hypothesis-guided* case studies. Based on a first, explorative study with three learners, we developed a number of hypotheses of what learners with different source languages *could* do to put their words together. Then, we studied what they *did* do.

The remainder of this chapter is organised as follows. In section 2, we shall briefly characterise the informants and data used for this particular study. Section 3 presents the *hypotheses* for organisational principles - those observed in the explorative study. Section 4 contains the general results and a discussion of possible causal factors, for example source language influence.

1.2 Informants and data

For various reasons, the Swedish data could not be included in the study. For all other SL/TL pairs, a minimum of two informants were analysed in detail over a period of three cycles. Occasionally, data from other informants were included in accordance with the 'procedure of mutual compensation' explained in Volume 1:3.1. The main informants are: Madan, Ravinder, Santo, Lavinia, Tino, Angelina, Çevdet, Ayshe, Ergiin, Mahmut, Fatima, Mohamed, Abdelmalek, Zahra, Berta, Gloria and Paula, who are described in Appendix B of Volume I.

Since it was simply impossible to exploit the whole range of data collected and available, we decided to concentrate on *film retelling*, described in detail in Volume 1:6.3. An abridged version of Chaplin's *Modern Times* was used, whose plot may be found in Appendix C of Volume I, together with text samples. The procedure is particularly interesting for present purposes. Firstly, it is a complex verbal task, in which the learner retells a series of events whose relationship to each other must be specified. Within each event, he has to say who did what to whom, introducing new characters and maintaining characters who are already on stage. The main characters are male (Charlie Chaplin) and female (the young girl), and they act and are acted upon. Therefore, the informant has to deal with referent in-

traduction and maintenance in a wide range of semantic functions. Secondly, we have some control over the learner's retelling of the story, in that we have the (abridged) film to compare his production with.

Each learner did the retelling three times (once per cycle: see Volume 1:5.3), at an interval of about ten months on average. His or her retelling was recorded and transcribed for analysis. Depending on informant and cycle, the length of this transcription varied between thirty and three hundred utterances. The word (token and lemma) count for thirteen of the learners analysed here may be found in Table 8.7 of Volume I.

1.3 The pilot study

In a first, exploratory study, we had a close look at the learner varieties of three informants, who are not part of the main sample: Vito (Italian-German), Rudolfo (Italian-English), and Ramon (Spanish-French), concentrating on the 'shipyard episode', in which Charlie causes the premature launching of a ship. The idea of this pilot study was to develop some 'guiding hypotheses' on which principles *might* underly the learners' utterance organisation. In what follows, we illustrate the procedure in some detail for one informant, Vito. In section 4, we sum up the 'guiding hypotheses', resulting from the entire pilot study.

Vito was born in 1948 near Palermo (Sicily). He went to Germany in 1981. The data on which the present analysis is based were recorded about one year and a half after his arrival. At this time his command of German was still highly limited. This is due to the fact that he did not have very much contact with the German population. He worked in a kitchen of an Italian restaurant, was married to an Italian woman and had no children.

On the other hand, he was talkative, self-confident, lively and very interested in questions of language. As a consequence, his metalinguistic behaviour during the retelling is quite elaborate. He often interrupts himself and asks for a word or expression, mostly with a formulaic question: *Was ist der Name?* 'What is the name?', *Was Name diese?* 'What name this?'. Occasionally, he checks whether his own expression is correct: *Richtig spreche?* 'Correctly speaking?'. There are other, less apparent but more interesting traces of his metalinguistic awareness. Very often, his production gives the

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impression of being carefully planned, with clear prosodic phrasing of each word. It is also interesting to note that quoted speech, another 'metalinguistic' device which he often uses (as other informants do) appears to be closer to the German standard than utterances in which he reports events or provides background information. Thus, three types of utterances were kept apart in analysis:

- (a) Purely metalinguistic speech which largely consists of 'rote forms' such as *Was ist der Name?*. Their inclusion would have led to a distorted picture of his own utterance organisation.
- (b) Direct narration, including both events and background information.
- (c) Quoted speech which is not totally different but a bit more advanced towards the German standard.

The difference is best illustrated by the use of the copula. It never occurs in type (b) utterances, that is, in his 'genuine' production. It occurs sometimes in type (c), and it is rather frequent in type (a), due to its presence in rote forms.

Vito's linguistic repertoire

The following description of Vito's repertoire relates to the entire retelling (he retold the shipyard episode in thirty-one utterances).

Morphology

Vito has no inflexional morphology, hence no case marking, no agreement, no tense.

Lexicon

It is obviously impossible to estimate the exact size of Vito's lexicon on the base of the text studied here, since his active use is clearly determined by the nature of the task. Still, it gives us some idea of how his vocabulary is composed. For some of the following forms, there are a number of phonological variants; we give only one. The word class assignment given here is highly problematic and should be treated with caution especially with respect to closed class forms.

- Nouns: He uses sixty different nouns, the most frequent ones being *Mädchen* (referring to the girl, twenty-seven occurrences within 1050 words of running text), *Polizei* (or *Policia-Mann*) 'policeman' (22x) *Frau* 'woman' (17x), *Gefängnis* 'prison' (15x), *Auto* 'policecar' (13x),

Holz 'wood' (13x), *Brot* 'bread' (12x), *Schiff* 'ship' (10x). Clearly, the main protagonists and features of the film show up most often. The name 'Charlie Chaplin' occurs twenty-four times; Chaplin is by far the most important referent, mostly denoted by a personal pronoun, *sie*.

Verbs:

He uses about forty different verbs, some of them with a rather overgeneralised meaning (nouns, in contrast, are rarely overgeneralised, as far as the data allow any conclusions here). The most interesting forms are:

- (a) *Gucke* is the most frequent verb and means 'to perceive', 'to realise', 'to look for' or 'to look at', even 'to imagine'.
- (b) *Spreche* 'speak' (18x), *rufe* 'call' (2x) basically introduce quoted speech; *spreche* may be used with an addressee (*sie spreche diese* 'he said to this one') or without ('he said'); it is interesting to note that he never uses *sage* 'say', the most common verbum dicendi in other German learner varieties.
- (c) *Komme* 'come' (23x), *geht* 'goes', *nehme* 'take', *bringe* 'bring' (1x). He totally misses the deictic component of these verbs;
- (d) *Mache* 'make', *höre* 'hear', *lasse* 'let', *brauche* 'need', *rauche* 'smoke' and some others roughly correspond to standard usage.
- (e) *Habe* 'have' is used only as a full verb, never as an auxiliary.
- (f) There are two modals, *muß* 'must' and *wolle* 'will'.
- (g) There is one perfect participle form, *gefunden* 'found', but no corresponding present form (*finde*); hence, there is no reason to assume that it is used to mark past or perfectivity in opposition to present; it is interesting, though, that a verb with inherent perfective meaning is the first attested perfect form.
- (h) He uses a number of compound verbs, such as *rausgucke* 'look-outside', *aussteige* 'get-out',

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wegmache 'get-rid-of'; sometimes, the separable particle is used alone, in varying positions.

- (i) There are no auxiliaries (*sein, haben, werden*), except in rote forms and sometimes in quoted speech (see above). Hence, there is no passive, although one occurrence could be interpreted as a past passive.

Negation: *Nix* (16x) and *keine* (7x) are used interchangeably as sentence negation; sometimes they are used together.

Adjectives: He uses about a dozen adjectives, both in attributive and in predicative function; in the former, they may be before or after the noun.

Adverbs:

(a) Spatial: *weg* 'off/away' (20x) and *zurück* 'back' are rather frequent; basically, they are a kind of verb remnant (*weggehen, wegnehmen, zurückgehen, etc.*); there is one occurrence of *hinten* 'behind'; but the most striking fact is the lack of deictic spatial adverbs;

(b) Temporal: there are only four of them, *sofort* 'at once' (8x), *dann* 'then' (8x), *später* 'later' (2x) and *immer* 'always' (1x); again, the lack or rare use of deictic forms is rather striking. Most narratives in learner varieties (and elsewhere) are structured by 'and then' and related connectives, which Vito almost never uses.

(c) Others: among the five or six other adverbs, two are particularly interesting: *vielleicht* (9x) means something like 'something like' or 'approximately'; *zusammen* (10x) often replaces the personal pronoun 'they', e.g. *zusammen spreche* ('they talked to each other').

Determiners: He regularly uses three determiners: *diese* (50x), which marks definiteness, *de* (36x), with many phonological variants, which marks definiteness, too - the difference will be discussed below - and *eine* (32x) for indefiniteness.

Quantifiers: They are very rare: *viel* 'many, much', (5x), *all* 'all' (3x), *zwei* 'two' (1x).

Pronouns: *Sie* (28x) means 'pronoun third person' - it mostly refers to Charlie Chaplin; *ich* I (13x), *du* 'you' (3x), *mir* 'to-me' (2x) - only with prepositions - and *seine* 'his/her' (9x).

Conjunctions: *Und* 'and' (13x), *oder* 'or' (3x), *aber* 'but' (1x).

Prepositions: There is only one frequent preposition, *in* (30x), which, just as the six or seven other ones he occasionally uses is strongly overgeneralised to denote all sorts of spatial relations.

There are a number of other words, which are rare, however, and hard to classify. He very rarely uses Italian words, with one exception: **alora** is used about ten times to mark a restart.

So much about his words. How does he put them together, given that he has no case, no agreement, no case-indicating prepositions? In what follows, we will illustrate the way in which he proceeds by a closer look at the first ten utterances of the shipyard episode. These utterances are somewhat 'edited', that is, we have omitted obvious false starts and breakdowns, hesitations, interjections, and metalinguistic comments. In addition, random phonological variants are 'standardised' to one (the most frequent) form. Obviously, this 'falsifies' the original transcript; but otherwise, a sensible analysis is almost impossible. (All utterances are numbered; + denotes a short pause, xxx a short, acoustically unclear passage, ...M... an omitted metalinguistic passage.)

The informant had been asked to start with the scene where Chaplin left the prison with a letter of recommendation. Both Chaplin and this letter had been mentioned in the immediately preceding utterance of one of the interviewers.

- (1) *sie habe brief + brief für gefängnis*
'she have letter + letter for prison'

The intended meaning is quite clear: Chaplin has/had a/the letter - the letter from prison. If we ignore the attributive complement *brief für Gefängnis* for a moment, the utterance structure is NP1-V-NP2. We will consider these three components in detail:

- (a) NP1 refers to Chaplin. The form *sie* corresponds to a pronoun of the target language; its appropriate form there would be *er*; it is unclear whether *sie* is derived from the corresponding feminine or from the corresponding plural form - both are *sie* in

standard German. It sounds peculiar to start a story with a personal pronoun; but in this case, its use is simply explained by the fact that Chaplin was mentioned immediately before by the interviewer; hence the informant uses anaphoric elements in first position, at least if the referent was thematic immediately before.²

- (b) V denotes a stative relation; hence, it makes no sense to call NP1 an 'agent'.
- (c) NP2 refers to an entity which in Standard German could be denoted either by a definite or an indefinite NP (*den Brief* - *einen Brief*), depending on whether the speaker shapes his expression on what has been said before or not. Since he has done so in case of NPj, we would have to assume that this language behaviour is inconsistent when assuming that NP2 is indefinite; hence we should assume that 'bare' NPs may - but need not - be definite.

At this point, many would be inclined to say that *sie* is the subject and *brief* the object of this utterance; but the only argument at this point is *that this is so in the corresponding target variety*; hence we would automatically assume, succumbing to the 'closeness fallacy', that the same regularities that characterise standard German also obtain in this learner variety. But any such assumption is at best a useful heuristic, given that those characteristics that mark 'subject' and 'object' in German - such as case, agreement, position - either do not apply in this learner variety (case marking) or are dubious (agreement, position).

NP2 is actually more complicated, since it also contains, or is related to, the complement *brief für gefängnis*. It is hard to see, at this point, whether this construction is simply a kind of 'postscript' or rather a disguised relative clause '...letter - the letter from...' as opposed to '...the letter (which was) from ...'. In any case, it is interesting to note that *gefängnis* again is definite and has no determiner.

- (2) *komme in eine baustell*
'come in a building site'

The intended meaning is clear again: Chaplin comes to a building site. The structure is V-PP, where PP is directional. We will comment on the 'missing' agent, on V and on PP.

²This term is used here in a non-technical sense. A referent is thematic if it has been referred to or pointed to, or if any normal speaker would unambiguously infer it, in the specific context.

- (a) There is an agent here, since *komme* denotes an action, and it is clearly Charlie who does it. This is not made explicit, however. The agent is the same individual that was referred to in initial position in the immediately preceding utterance. Note that this does not allow us to state that (2) has a 'zero anaphor' in first position. What we have so far, are two hypothetical conditions for leaving a referent unexpressed.
- It was thematic immediately before (see note 2);
 - It was in initial position before.

We shall return to these conditions below. It is interesting, though, that an analysis according to which there is a 'subject', realised by zero, in first position, comes so naturally. But any such assumption about a learner variety includes various uncontrolled presuppositions and is possibly more the result of a language-specific interpretative bias than of factual evidence. Italian, the source language in this case, easily allows the 'subject' in non-initial position; hence, there is no sufficient justification to assume that the learner, were he to borrow from his first language here, indeed places his empty subject in first position. German, on the other hand, has a certain preference to have the subject first if there is no adverbial that could take that position. But it would be overinterpreting to say that the learner already 'has' the German strategy at this point. This is the closeness fallacy at work.

- (b) The verb clearly denotes an action; *komme* seems to have the standard German meaning here.
- (c) The PP corresponds to the target language pattern, except that it is not case-marked. Note that the referent of the NP *eine baustell* was not thematic before. It is marked, as should be the case, by an indefinite article.

- (3) *baustell* *vielleicht*
 'building site perhaps'

The intended meaning is something like 'a sort of building site' (actually, it is a shipyard). Prosody clearly marks this utterance as being separated from the preceding one; it cannot be a syntactically integrated part of a complex NP *in eine baustell + baustell vielleicht*; rather it is a kind of postscript (cf. example 1 above). Note that the

contextually given part of the construction, *baustell*, comes first here; it is not marked by any article.

- (4) *diese mache schiff*
'this make ship'

There are two possible readings here, depending on whether *mache* is given a specific or a generic reading: 'this one was building a ship', or 'this one was one of those that builds ships'. Both interpretations are justifiable in this context. Given the whole plot the speaker could mention that 'they' are building a particular ship; but he might also elaborate on what he had said before: it was a sort of building site, one of these places where they build ships. There is no way to decide which of these two interpretations is more appropriate. The structure is clearly NP1-V-NP2. We will briefly comment on all three positions:

- (a) The NP₁ *diese* refers to an entity, the shipyard, that was already thematic in the immediately preceding utterance, but in a different position, and with a different function. Hence, we might say that *diese* goes with 'reference maintenance' but 'position shift' and 'role shift', leaving aside the question of what 'role' precisely means in this learner variety. Note that in this respect, *diese* corresponds to at least one of the uses of the demonstrative pronoun *diese* in standard German.
- (b) *Mache* clearly denotes an action, hence *diese* is an agent, although one would not normally consider a shipyard to be an agent; hence, standard semantic processes that allow us to go from the shipyard to the people at the shipyard also apply to *diese* in this learner variety.
- (c) *Schiff* introduces a new referent; it is unclear whether it is specific or generic, likewise whether it is singular or plural. According to the two interpretations mentioned above, the Standard German counterparts would be '... *baute ein Schiff* and '...*baute Schiffe*', respectively. So, we again must leave open whether there is a special function to the 'zero article'.

- (5) *kleine schiff mache*
'small ship make'

Just as in the preceding utterance there is a specific and a generic interpretation, roughly corresponding to 'The shipyard was building just a small ship' and 'It was a shipyard for small ships'. Clearly,

the latter interpretation is much less natural here; one small ship is shown in the film, and so we will assume the first interpretation.

The structure is clear (NP-V) but perplexing. The verb is in final position, the NP refers to an object; the agent is still the shipyard, but it is not referred to explicitly. Note that both conditions from (2) above for having a referent unexpressed are satisfied. Again, there is no clear evidence for putting a 'zero subject' in a specific position, for example before *kleine schiff*. Note that any such assumption would have immediate consequences for the positioning of objects and the relation of the learner variety to the target variety. In Standard German, an object may precede the (finite) verb in simple sentences, but the subject must then follow the verb: the verb must not be preceded by two major constituents. But it is not clear whether Vito's learner variety also disallows this, especially as his variety does not have tensed verbs; having a zero anaphor in initial position may well be compatible with the structure of his variety.

It is hard to see why he prefers this order rather than having *'mache kleine schiff*. It might be random and hence uninteresting. If it is not random, several possibilities come to mind:

- (a) There might be a structural principle roughly saying that, if there is only one NP, that NP comes before the verb, irrespective of its possible function. This is clearly falsified by (2) and by numerous other examples, as we shall see.
- (b) It may indicate a special function of the constituents involved. Now, the NP *schiff* in (4) seems to be in a similar sense 'direct object' of *mache* as *kleine schiff* in (5). Hence, the function 'objecthood', is not associated with the choice of position. A more plausible reason for the different arrangement in (4) and (5) might be a difference in the 'given-new-distribution'. Now, the verb *mache* is clearly 'given' in (5) and 'new' in (4), and the only new part in (5) is *kleine*, that is, a part of the object NP. Hence, the arrangement in (5) is clearly at variance with standard assumptions about 'given-new-order': it goes from 'new' to 'given'. Interestingly enough, in Standard German a sequence such as *Sie baute ein Schiff. Ein kleines Schiff baute sie* sounds at least as natural as *Sie baute ein Schiff. Sie baute ein kleines Schiff* if the second sentence is meant as a specification, rather than a correction, of the first sentence. Standard assumptions about given-new-order are perhaps too gross.

To sum up, (5) clearly contradicts two straightforward views about

utterance structure in learner varieties:

- Grammatical functions, such as being a direct object, are clearly related to positions.
- Utterances proceed internally from 'given' to 'new'.

We will see below that there is an interpretation of (NP-V), which fits a number of other utterances.

- (6) *chef arbeiter rufe 'charlie chaplin'*
 'boss-worker call 'Charlie Chaplin''

The intended meaning is obvious - the foreman called 'Charlie Chaplin'. It is clear from the intonation that *chef arbeiter* is one constituent (Vito uses a similar strategy elsewhere: a station-master is *kaiser bahnhofin* his variety), and that the second NP *Charlie Chaplin* is a vocative, rather than an object.

The structure is quite clear. The NP introduces a new protagonist, and this is done by a lexical NP without an article. Clearly, this NP is definite, although the referent has not been explicitly introduced; what is meant is 'the foreman of the shipyard', the latter not explicitly referred to again. The verb denotes an action, hence the NP denotes an agent.

- (7) *ich brauche eine holz*
 T need a wood' <=log>

The intended meaning is clear; the whole construction, as often in quoted speech, corresponds to the target language pattern. The structure which is again NP1-V-NP2. NP1 is realised by a deictic pronoun, denoting the speaker introduced in the preceding utterance. The verb is clearly not agentive, hence *ich* is no agent. The object NP is *indefinite*, its referent being freshly introduced.

- (8) *ich brauche eine ...M... keil*
 'I need a wedge'

The preceding pattern is exactly repeated.

- (9) *sie nix verstehn*
 'she no understand'

The meaning of (9) is not fully transparent. It could mean 'He was not understood'; with *sie* referring to the foreman; this is somewhat unlikely since the informant never uses the passive elsewhere. The other and more plausible interpretation is 'He did not understand', with *sie* referring to Charlie. But this forces us to assume that a

personal pronoun, in this variety, may jump over an appropriate referent, here *chef arbeiter*, and take up another referent introduced some utterances before.

(10) *nix komme eine keil* +
no come a wedge'

(11) *eine holz + lang + zu lange*
'a log + long + too long'

Again, several interpretations are possible. (10-11) could correspond to Standard German *er bekam nicht einen Keil*, (*er bekam*) *ein Holz*... 'he did not get a wedge (he got) a log', or *es kam nicht ein Keil* (*es kam*) *ein Holz* 'it wasn't a wedge that came (it was) a log'. There is no way to decide between these alternatives. Note, however, that in the second case, a 'subject' would appear in final position; this is not unlikely with verbs that express something like 'appearance on a scene', such as *komme*, as we shall see. The whole construction is interesting in that it actually consists of two adversative components, roughly 'come not wedge - come wood', the latter NP being expanded by a post-posed attribute. It is interesting to note that the negation *nix* precedes the whole first clause although it only applies to the NP *eine Keil*. Note that both NPs are marked by an indefinite article although at least the first one was mentioned before; but this would be possible in the target language, too (in this case, both definite and indefinite NP would be appropriate).

These remarks may suffice to illustrate the analysis procedure, which is extremely time-consuming, as the reader may imagine. But we think that this is the only way to understand what underlies the structure of utterances in early learner varieties. The general results of such an in-depth analysis are essentially three types of observational facts:

- (a) Observations on the distribution of *phrasal patterns*. They concern:
- the order of major constituents; we have observed, for example, V-NP, NP-V, NP-V-NP, but not NP-NP-V or V-NP-NP;
 - the form of these major constituents; we have observed, for example, NPs such as bare N, Det N, Adj N, but not Det N Adj, although the learner's native language would allow this.
- (b) A set of observations on semantic and pragmatic factors; they include, for instance, animacy of referents, role properties such

as agentivity, referent introduction and reference maintenance, and others.

- (c) A set of observations on exceptions, complex cases, ambiguities, and others.

Observations of these kinds are an interim result. The researcher's task is to 'condense' them to a set of - at this point hypothetical - general principles whose interaction determines the utterance structure of learner varieties. In the next section, we present what we assume to be the organisational principles, as based on the pilot analysis of three informants.

1.4 Guiding hypotheses

We hypothesise that there are three types of organisational principles, which we call *phrasal*, *semantic* and *pragmatic*, respectively.

Phrasal constraints

Any description of possible phrasal constraints depends on which phrasal categories we assume to exist in a given learner variety. This is no trivial problem. The pilot study suggests that there are at least the lexical categories N, V, Det(erminer), Adv(erb), Pro(noun), P(reposition), Cop(ula) as well as the syntactic categories NP and PP. Other categories, such as VP, are disputable. For one of the three learners, we also note AUX(iliary). We then have basically the following patterns, depending on whether an utterance has a V (which governs one or two NPs) or a Cop (indices on NPs are introduced for ease of reference, see below):

- I. The basic pattern with V is

$NP_1-V-(NP_2)$

except in presentationals, where the pattern is

$V-NP_2$

- II. The basic pattern with Cop is

$NP_1-Cop-\left\{ \begin{array}{l} PP \\ Adj \\ NP_2 \end{array} \right\}$

except again in presentationals, where the pattern is

$$\left. \begin{array}{c} \text{PP} \\ \text{Adv} \end{array} \right\} \text{-Cop-NP}_2$$

Presentationals are constructions in which some referent is first introduced (such as in Standard English *there came a man* or *a dog was barking*). We leave open at this point whether we should consider this to be an exception or just as an alternative pattern whose distribution is explained by special pragmatic factors. All patterns may be preceded by a conjunction. All V-constructions may be completed by a locative, temporal or modal adverbial, Adv or PP. This adverbial is normally utterance-final, but there are also some utterance-initial occurrences. Both Cop and V can be missing. Whereas V and Cop are normally simple non-finite forms (for details, see part 1, chapter 3 on temporality), NPs occur in very different forms. We have observed the following patterns:

	Vito	Rudolfo	Ramon
NP ₁	Ø	Ø	Ø
	<i>sie</i>	<i>he, they</i>	<i>il, el</i>
	<i>diese</i>	-	-
	<i>de</i> (N)	<i>the</i> N	<i>le</i> N
	<i>ein</i> N	<i>one/a</i> N	<i>un</i> N
	N	N	N
	name	name	name
NP ₂	all forms but Ø,	all but Ø,	all but Ø, <i>il</i> ;
	<i>sie</i>	<i>he, they</i>	in addition PREP+ <i>lui</i>

In other words all informants have three types of lexical NPs, namely *the/a* N (and equivalents) and bare N, which occur as NP₁ and NP₂; they have proper names in both positions; they have (minimally) two types of anaphorical NPs, Ø and *he* (and equivalents). Some of them may also have additional constructions, such as demonstratives.

Semantic constraints

If a learner of English wants to express, for example, that Charlie has seen the girl, rule I provides him with some, but not all necessary information how to put his words together. It tells him to put *see* between the two NPs, but it does not tell him which NP comes first. Native speakers of English would almost inevitably place the

expression for Charlie in front of V, but this may be very different for speakers of other languages (such as German, where both NPs are possible candidates for initial position).

What kind of information tells the speaker to place the expression for 'Charlie' in a particular position? The pilot study showed that semantic information is relevant here. Semantic factors may have to do either with inherent semantic properties of the referent - animate, human, abstract, whatever - or with properties relating to the verb or the whole activity, such as agentivity; we shall call the latter properties 'role properties'. The results of the pilot study were very clear here. It is role properties which are decisive, and the fact that animate entities tend to come in first position, for example, is only a consequence of the fact that agentivity and animacy often co-occur.

The pilot study also suggested that it is a scale of a particular role property rather than categorical distinctions such as 'agent' 'patient' etc., which is decisive here - the 'degree of control'. This scale reflects the degree to which one referent is in control of, or intends to be in control of, the other referents. The control asymmetry varies with the (non-negated) relation, as expressed by the verb. Thus *to hit* or *to make* provide us with a stronger asymmetry in the degree of control than, for example, *to own* or *to see*. Sometimes, the asymmetry is virtually non-existent, and then, characteristically, the informants get into problems. In the general case, however, the control asymmetry allows us to formulate the following semantic constraint on utterance structure in learner varieties:

S. The NP-referent with highest control comes first.

We shall refer to S. as the 'controller-principle'.

Pragmatic constraints

The pragmatic constraints observed in the pilot study have to do with three factors:

- (a) *Familiarity*. Is a referent assumed to be known to the listener, either by world knowledge or by contextual information of some sort? This factor is least important, it basically decides about the use of indefinite and definite NPs.
- (b) *Maintenance versus introduction*. Is a referent maintained from some preceding utterance or is it first introduced? Note that maintenance in this sense implies familiarity, but not vice versa. This factor plays a role for the form of NPs (for example the

choice between *a* N, *the* N or pronoun), but also for word order, as we shall see in a moment.

- (c) *Topic-focus-structure*. Does a constituent contribute to the topic component of the utterance or to the focus component? This distinction is of major importance for word order.

It is these latter two factors which are of particular importance for utterance structure in learner varieties. Therefore, we shall briefly explain how they are analysed here.

An utterance such as *Charlie went to the shipyard* can be used to answer different questions, for example (a) *Who went to the shipyard?*, (b) *Where did Charlie go?*, (c) *Did Charlie go to the shipyard or to the prison?* or (d) *What happened next?* Each of these questions raises a particular alternative, and the answer specifies one of the 'candidates' of this alternative. After (a), for example, the alternative is the set of persons who, on that occasion, could have gone to the shipyard, and *Charlie went to the shipyard* specifies the one who did so. After (b), the alternative is the set of places to which Charlie could have gone on this occasion, and the shipyard is selected. After (c), the alternative is narrowed down to two possible such places, and again, the shipyard is the one chosen and specified in the answer. After (d), the alternative is the set of events that could have occurred at a specific time - and the answer specifies the particular event. We shall call *topic* of an utterance the set of alternative candidates, and *focus* of an utterance that particular candidate which is selected and specified.

Both terms relate to the meaning of an utterance, not the means by which the meaning is expressed (the topic expression and focus expression, respectively). In a question-answer-sequence such as *Who went to the shipyard? - Charlie went to the shipyard.*, the topic - the set of persons that could have gone to the shipyard - is actually expressed twice, first in the question, and second by a part of the answer (*x went to the shipyard*). The remaining part of the answer expresses the focus (*Charlie*). The particular status of an expression as focus expression or topic expression is often marked by specific devices, such as intonation or - a fact particularly important in the present context - by word order.

Now, not all texts are question-answer-sequences. But we may assume that any statement - also when occurring as a part of a longer text - is an answer to a possibly implicit question. We shall use the term *quaestio* for such explicit or implicit questions. In this sense, any declarative statement is an answer to a *quaestio* which may, but need

not, be explicit. We may further assume that the answer to such a quaestio is not given in a single utterance but in a series of utterances - a text. Thus, a quaestio such as *What did the girl look like?* might be answered by a single, possibly even elliptic, utterance (*like my younger sister*), but also by a complex text consisting of a series of utterances each of which specifies a particular property of the girl. Similarly, a quaestio such as *What happened to Charlie?* could elicit an entire narrative. Typically, such a narrative consists of utterances which directly relate to the quaestio, that is, specify some event that happened to Charlie, and also of utterances which give supplementary information (descriptions, comments, evaluations, etc.). We shall say that the former constitute the *foreground* or *main structure* of the text, the latter the *background* or *side structures*. Note that a similar distinction also applies to other text types. A description, for example, may contain utterances which do not directly answer the question *What did the girl look like?* but give additional comments, or even tell a (background) story.

Summing up, the quaestio of a text constrains its structure in at least three respects:

- it determines which utterances belong to the main structure and which ones belong to the sides structures of the entire text;
- for main structure utterances (those which are direct answers to the quaestio), it imposes constraints on what becomes topic and what becomes focus;
- similarly, the quaestio imposes constraints on the semantics of main structure utterances.

Consider again the quaestio *What happened to Charlie?* Main structure utterances of a narrative given in answer to such a quaestio must have an event specification as focus, and (among others) a reference to Charlie in topic position (see also chapter 3 of Part I of this volume). Hence, it requires event verbs and typically perfective aspect in the past. By contrast, a quaestio such as *What did the girl look like?* requires stative predicates in focus position - predicates which specify some property of the girl. The topic (of main structure utterances) throughout the text is the girl. This does not mean, though, that the topic *expression* has to be the same. This depends amongst other things on whether the topic is first introduced, re-introduced (for example after a side sequence) or maintained.

In our pilot study, the texts under investigation were film-retellings given in answer to the - most often explicitly asked - quaestio *What happened then to Charlie?* We noted a double constraint in main

structure utterances, the first concerning word order, and the second the form of noun phrases, sometimes in connection with word order.

All learners establish a formal reflection of the topic-focus-distinction, according to which focus expressions are grouped towards the end of their utterances:

P. F comes last

We shall call P. the 'focus principle'. In this form, it is gross. In particular, it does not take into account that topic component and focus component may have, and indeed must have, an internal organisation, but these refinements do not affect the validity of the principle. The form of a noun phrase depends mainly on a combination of whether its referent is maintained or introduced, and whether it belongs to focus or to topic.³

The exact constraints are less clear than, for example, in the case of *Focus comes last*. Hence, the following seven rules are typical but not without exceptions:

- M.1 Transition from nothing to T ('introduction in topic'): lexical NP.** This lexical NP can be definite or indefinite, depending on familiarity.
- 2 Transition from nothing to F ('introduction in focus'):lexical NP or name.** This case is rarely observed in our data.
- 3 Transition from T to T ('topic maintenance'): zero, anaphoric pronoun, definite lexical NP.** Zero regularly requires immediate adjacency of the two utterances with identical topic; apart from that, the choice between these possibilities is not entirely clear.
- 4 Transition from F to T (i.e., maintenance, but with role change): anaphorical pronoun, demonstrative NP (rare).**
- 5 Transition from T to F: probably lexical NP (again maintenance, with reverse role change).** There are only a few examples in our data.
- 6 Transition from F to F: probably lexical NP and name.** Again, there are only a few examples.

The M.-constraints are less clearly testable hypotheses than was the case for I. and IL, S. and P. But they seemed sufficiently clear to serve

As was said above, an additional factor is 'familiarity'. But the influence of this factor is comparatively small.

as guidelines. It should be stressed that these constraints are not deterministic: they are something like 'guiding forces' whose interplay shapes the utterance. In particular, they can be 'in competition' (Bates and MacWhinney 1987). What happens, for example, when a clear controller is in focus? Apparently, informants are quite skillful in avoiding such constellations. But they do occur, for example in a passage where the *quaestio* is *Who stole the bread?*. According to S., the controller should come first, but according to P., it should come last. In such a case, the relative weight of the various principles can be quite different, depending, for example, on the source language. It also appears that even at a very early stage, learners are quite sensitive in these conflicting situations to the specific balance which the target language favours. In the pilot study, Rudolfo and Vito have the same source language; but Vito, the learner of German, is much more willing to sacrifice rigid phrasal patterns in favour of semantic or pragmatic constraints than Rudolfo, the learner of English.

With these hypothetical constraints in mind, we went through all 50 film retellings. The results are presented in the following section.

1.5 General results

General statements based on in-depth case studies inevitably face two problems. They have to work with too little and too much information. In the present case, the available information was seriously restricted in two respects. First, we had to limit our analysis to one text-type, film retellings; there is good reason to assume that utterance structure is somewhat different in other text types, for example, in directions (Carroll 1990). Furthermore, only one text per data collection cycle was studied. This turned out to be less of a problem than we had expected, for the very simple reason that the developmental process in untutored ALA is apparently very slow, much slower than in first language acquisition, for example. Therefore, it was hardly ever necessary to complete the film retellings by additional data, such as personal narratives, from the encounters in between two retellings.

By contrast, the decision to 'interpret' the entire texts utterance by utterance (cf. the sample in section 3) yields a number of extremely detailed observations, some of which simply do not fit the general picture. These exceptions may have various causes. They may be due to some inherent inconsistency of the learner's particular variety, or even due to a speech error; others may indeed be indicative of

some general feature of the variety, and they are just not frequent enough to be recognised as such. In what follows, we tacitly pass over some of these possible exceptions and counter-examples.⁴ This is a methodological risk, no doubt. But without taking this risk, it would hardly ever be possible to come to interesting generalisations, and eventually to a theory of language acquisition. It is the price to pay when generalising over a number of comparable case studies (Volume 1:5.3).

The overall picture

Our main results can be summed up in five points:

A. Development goes from nominal via infinite to finite utterance organisation

All learners started with what we call 'nominal utterance organisation' (NUO). At this stage, spontaneous utterances (i.e., those which are not just rote forms) mainly consist of seemingly unconnected nouns, adverbs and particles (sometimes also adjectives and participles). What is largely missing in NUO is first any functional morphology, and second the structuring power of verbs - such as argument structure, case role assignment, etc. This is different in what we call 'infinite utterance organisation' (iuo). At this level, non-finite verb forms are attested. The presence of verbs allows the learner to make use of different types of valency; it allows him, for example, to rank verb arguments along dimensions such as agentivity, and to assign them places according to this ranking. This is also the stage at which prepositions occur, although they are still rare. What we do not find is the distinction between the finite and non-finite component of the verb, a distinction fundamental to all languages involved in the study. This distinction characterises the next level, called here 'finite utterance organisation' (FUO), which is not attained by all our learners. The three informants analysed in the pilot study are on iuo level: they have verbs, but only non-finite ones.

B. Transition from NUO to iuo and from there to FUO is slow and gradual.

We find a permanent coexistence of different types of utterance organisation. It is not uncommon that a learner who is normally beyond iuo slides back to that level on some occasion. Whereas coexistence and slow development are also found in first language acquisition - although perhaps to a lesser extent -, backsliding seems

Most of these cases are carefully listed and discussed in Klein and Perdue (1992).

to be restricted to ALA (Selinker 1972). It appears that the developmental process in ALA is much less characterised by a sudden change of linguistic knowledge than by a slow shift in the use of structural principles. It shares as many features with progress in learning how to play the piano as it does with increasing knowledge.

C. On each level, utterance structure is governed by the interaction of a limited number of phrasal, semantic and pragmatic constraints.

The constraints in question are essentially those observed in the pilot study: a few phrasal patterns, 'Focus last', 'Controller first' and some constraints on the mechanism of introducing and maintaining information - to the extent to which the given repertoire allows them to be operative. If there is no verb, then there is no phrasal pattern based on verb position, and Topic-Focus structure has correspondingly more weight (see note 7 below).

These constraints have to be completed in two ways. First, as soon as finiteness comes in, phrasal constraints cannot just be stated in terms of V and Cop. Similarly, the appearance of prepositions may lead to new phrasal patterns. Second, there are verbs whose lexical content involves two different states for which the control asymmetry is different, as in *The girl gave the bread to Charlie*. In the 'source state', the girl is in control of the bread, and active in bringing about a 'target state' in which Charlie is in control of the bread. In cases of this sort, the simple principle 'Controller first' needs refinement. We shall come back to this point below.

It is the interaction of these principles which determines utterance structure. This interaction changes over time. If there are no verbs, then the control asymmetry cannot be operative. If the distinction between finite and non-finite verb is not yet made, then a TL rule such as (Dutch and German) 'one major constituent in front of finite verb component in declarative clauses' cannot be obeyed, and P. and S. reign unchallenged. This is the background of the development from NUO to iuo and from there to FOU. But even if all types of constraints are operative, their relative weight may differ. This becomes clear in cases of competition, for example, when the controller should be in focus. We note that conflicts of this kind are a major germ of development; they are also responsible for many of the syntactic complexities of fully-fledged languages, such as cleft constructions, topicalisation, right dislocation, etc.: these devices allow the speaker to overcome such conflicts.

D. The placement of adverbials and negation mainly depends on topic-focus structure and semantic scope

The development of these constituents was less intensively studied. It seems quite clear, though, that spatial and temporal adverbials occur regularly in initial or in final position, depending on whether they belong to the topic or to the focus component. Scope particles typically show up in front of the constituent (s) over which they have scope. It also appears that the transition point of topic and focus expressions plays a major role; it is the preferred place for negation in iuo, and perhaps even in FUU.

E. Initial steps in development are dominantly guided by universal principles, and factors attributable to specifics of SL and TL are more characteristic of later stages.

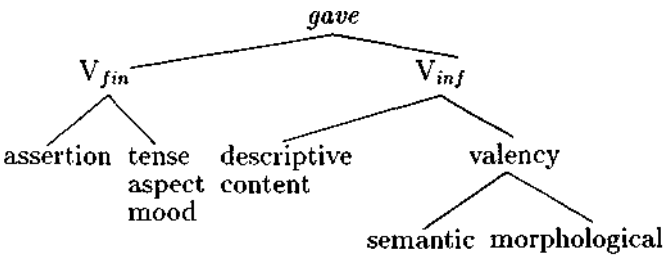
Not all learners studied here attain the level of FUU, and only a few come close to really mastering it. But they all reach iuo, and up to that point, their development is remarkably similar (although the form repertoire is different, of course, depending on the particular TL). They all develop a *basic learner variety* (to be discussed below). Many learners fossilise at this level. Others carry on, and only then do the structural peculiarities of the target language become visible.

We think this is an accurate picture of what we found. In what follows, we shall deepen this picture. In the next paragraph, we shall briefly discuss the role of the finite/non-finite distinction and the additional semantic constraint mentioned under point C above. The following paragraph deals in more detail with the 'basic variety'. In section 6, two aspects of the development beyond the basic variety will be discussed. Section 7, finally, is devoted to some causal considerations.

Finite and non-finite component of the verb and control asymmetry
An English verb form such as *gave* combines a finite and a non-finite component, which are clearly separated in the emphatic variant *did give* or in the corresponding present perfect *has given*. In these latter cases, we shall speak of V_{fin} and V_{inf} , respectively. In the case of *gave*, both components are morphologically fused in one form, which we will call V_{if} . Each of the two components, whether morphologically fused or not, includes several meaning features. The non-finite component of *give* first expresses a specific semantic content, which contrasts with that of *borrow*, *take*, *hand over*. Second, it has a

specific valency; it (normally) requires three arguments with specific semantic and morphological properties. The finite verb component, as expressed by *did*, *has*, or just by inflexion involves four meaning components: tense, aspect, mood, and 'assertion'. Since the last feature is perhaps less clear, it will be helpful to explain it by an example in which the finite component is void of lexical meaning, as is the case with the copula. If in an utterance such as *Charlie was in jail*, the copula *was* is stressed, then this can mark a contrast to *is* or *will be*, that is a tense contrast of past versus present or future. But it can also be stressed in contrast to *was not* (if someone else had claimed before that Charlie was not in jail). In this case, the 'assertive component' in the finite form is highlighted.⁵

So, the entire content of a verb form such as *gave* is this:



This distinction is of major importance in the acquisitional process. The positional constraints for V_{fin} , V_{inf} and V_{if} are different both in learner varieties and in fully-fledged languages. In Standard Dutch and Standard German, for example, V_{inf} is regularly at the end of the clause, whereas the position of V_{fin} varies with sentence type; in declarative main clauses, it follows the first major constituent, it is clause-initial in interrogatives and imperative clauses and in subordinate clauses, it is (mostly) placed after V_{inf} .⁶

If both forms are fused into one, V_{if} , it is the position of the finite component which is decisive. In other words, the 'full form', including finite and non-finite component, follows the rules for V_{fin} . Nevertheless, many regularities, for example the position of negation or adverbials, topic-focus marking and others, operate *as if* V_{inf} were

⁵In many languages, the finite verb is also marked for agreement in person or number. But this is just a formal marking, also found elsewhere (for example in determiners or adjectives), and not a part of the inherent meaning of the finite form.

⁶In reality, the rules are somewhat more complex, but this description suffices for present purposes. For a somewhat more detailed account, see Volume 1:5.2.

still in final position. This way of structuring utterances is not accessible to learners until they have the finite/non-finite distinction. Prior to the level of F_{UO}, for example in the basic variety, the position of V is largely, although perhaps not entirely, subject to pragmatic constraints. V may occur in initial position if, for example, there is only one NP argument which itself is in focus. Thus the acquisition of finiteness is not merely a question of adding some morphological features, in this case of verb inflexion, to the learner's repertoire. *It marks the transition from a type of utterance organisation which is dominated by semantic and pragmatic constraints, to a type of utterance organisation in which phrasal constraints (i.e., syntactic constraints in the narrower sense of the word) gain equal weight.* This is precisely what is meant by the transition from iuo to F_{UO}.

What matters for the 'control asymmetry' is *exclusively* the non-finite component, which is available at iuo level. The non-finite verb (including the copula, see below) may, but need not, define such an asymmetry, depending on its particular meaning and argument structure. In purely predicative constructions, such as *Charlie was in jail*, *The girl was sweet* or - less possible in English, but perfect in Dutch or German - *In jail was Charlie*, *Sweet was the girl*, there is no asymmetry. Hence, only the 'focus principle' and perhaps phrasal constraints operate. Next, we have verbs with one argument. This argument may well have a semantic role (cf. *Charlie was dancing*, *Charlie was missing*), but since there is only one argument, there is again no control asymmetry. Again, only focus constraint and phrasal constraints obtain. This is different for verbs with two arguments. Here, the strength of the asymmetry may differ considerably, ranging from 'strong' cases such as *The girl stole the bread* to very weak ones, such as *Charlie was in love with the girl*.

Accordingly, the weight of 'Controller first' may vary. Finally, there are also verbs with three arguments, in which the simple asymmetry is insufficient. These verbs are typically verbs whose lexical content involves two different states: a 'source state' and a 'target state'. The role properties of the arguments, and hence the control asymmetry, may be very different for both states. Thus, we may decompose *The girl gave the bread to Charlie* into the following two states:

source state

girl in control of bread
girl active in bringing
about target state

target state

Charlie in control of bread

The constraint 'Controller first' would place the girl in initial position for the source state, and Charlie for the target state. In these cases, S. has to be complemented by another principle which defines the relative weight of source state and target state. In the (few) cases observed in our data, learners invariably give priority to the source state. We may say, therefore:

S2. Controller of source state outweighs controller of target state.

Note that both for source state and for target state, the control asymmetry may be overruled by focus (as is nicely illustrated by the placement of French clitics or by English dative shift).

The basic variety

As was said in point E. above, all learners develop a particular way of structuring their utterances which seems to represent a natural equilibrium between the various constraints.⁷ This basic variety is particularly interesting for three reasons,. Firstly, it is largely independent of the structural peculiarities of source or target languages, and seems to reflect some very general principles of utterance organisation. Secondly, it is the final state of development for many learners. Thirdly, it shares many structural features with other types of 'reduced' types of languages, such as pidgins (Holm 1990), foreigner talk (Roche 1989), and agrammatical speech (Kolk and Heeschen 1992).

The basic variety lacks morphology, hence, there is no finiteness, no overt case marking, no agreement. The repertoire consists

- dominantly of elements with descriptive content: nouns, adjectives, verbs, adverbs (mainly temporal and spatial), a few prepositions with lexical meaning (again mainly spatial and temporal);
- a very small number of functional elements: copula, determiners (in particular definite and indefinite articles), negation, personal pronouns (where deictic pronouns such as *I*, *you* clearly precede anaphoric pronouns);
- a number of rote forms, which will not be considered in what follows.

⁷When we started recording, only some of our learners were completely at the level of NUO, i.e., before the basic variety. But since the transition is slow and gradual, many of our learners combined both NUO and IUO, with increasing tendency to the latter. With this limited data base, we may tentatively make the generalisation that the organising principles first available to the learners depend on Topic-Focus structure. Such a generalisation received empirical support in Perdue (1987), where the utterances of two absolute beginners, Paula and Berta, are analysed.

The richness of the repertoire varies considerably, and this variation mainly concerns the lexical elements. As we saw in Volume 1:8.2, the relative share of especially nouns, but also interjections, adjectives and adverbs, tends to decrease over time, whereas the relative share of especially verbs, but also of articles and conjunctions, tends to increase. These tendencies are clearly in line with the increase in the structuring role of verbs in *iuo*, compared to *NUO*.

Utterance structure is based on an interplay of phrasal constraints, mainly based on the position of V, on S., S2., and P. Three phrasal patterns are regularly observed:

A. **NP₁-V-(NP₂ (NP₂))**

B. **NP₁-Cop-** $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{NP}_2 \\ \text{Adj} \\ \text{PP} \end{array} \right\}$

C. **V-NP₂**

The difference between NP₁ and NP₂ is only that NP₂ must be lexical (bare N, Det N or name), whereas NP₁ can also be a pronoun or - under very specific conditions - an empty element. Note that NP₁ need not be what one would call the 'subject' of Standard English. There is no such category in the basic variety. In appropriate contexts, basic variety utterances like *bread take charlie; brot nehme charlie* (with the intended meaning 'Charlie took the bread') are clearly possible.

Pattern A with three arguments is rare. On the other hand, we occasionally observe a sort of counterpart to B, namely Adverbial-Cop-NP₂. Since only some learners show this pattern, we did not include it among the patterns typical of the basic variety.⁸ All patterns can be followed or preceded by an adverbial of time or space. Negation follows V or Cop. There are no examples of negation for pattern C, which is essentially restricted to 'presentationals' - i.e., utterances which answer the quaestio 'Who was next on stage?' or 'Who/what appeared next?', rather than 'What happened next?'

It is noteworthy that V-final constructions are limited to pattern A. with single argument, i.e. constructions of the type *Charlie go*. There is one exception, which is not observed for all speakers of the basic variety; we shall therefore discuss it separately in section 7 below. Everything else is taken care of by the following three principles:

S. **Controller comes first.**

S2. **Controller of source target outweighs controller of**

Remember that there are always some exceptions to the general constraints described here.

target state.**P. Focus comes last.**

It is S. which is responsible for the interpretation of *Charlie hit the police* as 'Charlie hit the policeman' - an interpretation which can be overruled by P. Thus, in answer to the question 'Who took the bread?', the answer *bread steal Charlie* would be perfectly appropriate, since Charlie is both the controller and in focus.

Ayshe (cycle 1) *diese brot nimmt charlie chaplin*
'this bread take Charlie Chaplin'

The exact way in which the relative weight of S. and P. is balanced is not uniform across learner varieties. Learners often get confused in such conflicting situations, and it is not uncommon that they correct themselves or offer several variants. Constraint S2. only operates for three argument cases of pattern A. In section 4 above, we also hypothesised a number of constraints on 'referential shift' (M1.-M6). These were not generally obeyed in the basic variety. We shall come back to this point in the following section.

Some learners never go beyond this basic variety. They only expand their vocabulary subsequently. But others do. This raises two questions: Why do some learners proceed, and not others?; and if learners proceed, what is their further developmental path? These two questions will be examined in the next section.

1.6 Beyond the basic variety*Why go beyond?*

Learning a second language is a major cognitive effort, and the reasons for undertaking this effort must be sufficiently compelling. In general, there are two such reasons which may push the learner beyond what has been achieved, in this case beyond the basic variety.

Firstly, the basic variety strongly deviates from the language of the social environment. It may be simple and communicatively efficient, but it stigmatises the learner as an outsider in the social community. For first language learners, the need for such *input imitation* is very strong, otherwise they would not be recognised and accepted as members of their society. For second language learners, this need is often less strong, although this may depend a lot on the particular case.

Secondly, the basic variety has some clear shortcomings that affect

its *communicative efficiency*. It may be communicatively inadequate because the lexical repertoire is severely restricted. This is clearly the case in the language of our informants. But this lexical inadequacy in itself is no reason to give up the type of utterance organisation described above, which seems to represent a fairly stable and natural equilibrium between semantic, pragmatic and phrasal constraints operative in any language. After all, it would suffice to add more nouns, verbs, adverbs, adjectives, lexical prepositions.⁹

This is indeed what happens in the case of fossilised basic varieties; their structure is relatively stable, but their lexical repertoire grows over time. There are, however, structural inadequacies, as well.¹⁰

One clear example is the lack of a refined system of NPs, which would allow the learner to handle the complex constellations of introduction and maintenance of reference observed in all fully-fledged languages (cf. the 'M-constraints' observed in our pilot study in section 4 above). Another clear case of structural inadequacy are conflicting constraints. The basic variety works well so long as phrasal, semantic and pragmatic constraints coalesce. But this is not always the case. For example, a frequently occurring context, already mentioned in section 4 above, is when the controller is in focus. Here, the learner must either violate P. or S., and as was said above, learners may have different priorities. But in order to overcome the problem, the learner has to work out new devices, such as intonational marking, particles, or various cleft constructions (*c'est ... que* in French, *it is ... who* in English), preposed *es* in German or *er* in Dutch. These latter constructions are those which contribute so much to the syntactic complexity of fully-fledged languages, such as the discrepancy between semantic and syntactic valency (theta roles and case assignment). Such problems also provoke the learner to develop grammaticalised categories such as subject or direct object, which are absent from the basic variety, which operates just with NPs with particular semantic and pragmatic functions. It is therefore these conflict cases which function as germs of development beyond the basic variety. This development is no longer uniform, as learners try to accommodate the particular devices which the target language offers.

⁹Note, however, that even such a process of lexical incrementation is subject to external constraints. A verb such as *receive*, for example, is in clear conflict with the semantic constraints of the basic variety.

¹⁰We do not consider every deviation from the target language to be a 'structural inadequacy'. When learners do not perfectly imitate the weird inflexional system of German noun phrases in their variety, then this is a reflection not of a structural inadequacy of their language but of Standard German.

Problems with the referential system and conflicts between controller and focus are not the only structural inadequacies of the basic varieties, but they are those with which our learners - to the extent to which they went beyond the basic variety - seemed to be most concerned.¹¹ Hence, we shall concentrate on these two aspects.

Development of the referential system

The basic variety has lexical NPs, names and the deictic pronouns *I, you, we* (and counterparts); it also has the third person pronouns *he, she*, less often *they, it*; it usually has no counterpart to the 'oblique' pronouns in all target languages. Such a system allows the learner to distinguish between introduction and maintenance. But it has two major shortcomings: (a) speaker and hearer can be referred to only in topic position; (b) maintenance in focus position is only possible with lexical NPs and names. The exact way in which both problems are solved depends on the particular target language. We shall here follow up the learners of French.

French is particularly interesting in this respect because it has a double system of pronouns: *strong* pronouns which occupy the same position as lexical NPs, and *preverbal* pronouns cliticised to the verb or auxiliary. The fused clitic/auxiliary combinations pose analytic problems for all learners of French. Traces of these combinations first occur in learners' production as an (unanalysed) prefix whose form is highly variable (cf. Véronique 1983), but which is often realised as [le] before TL verbs conjugated with *être* ('be'):

Zahra (cycle 1) *le voleur [le parti]*
'the thief [le] runaway'

Berta (cycle 2) *le camion [le tombe]*
'the van [le] fallover'

(cf. TL *le voleur il est parti, le camion il est tombe*), and before TL verbs taking a dative complement: *say, ask, give, prepare*, etc.

Berta (cycle 2) *la femme [ke le prepare] ... des oeufs*
'the woman that [le] prepare ... eggs'

(cf. TL ... *qui lui prépare des oeufs*). Development in the first context tends towards a differentiated use of forms of *être*, and will not

¹¹Another problem is the absence of subordinate clauses; for their development, cf. Klein and Perdue (1992, chapter 7.4.3). We do not think, incidentally, that the development of finiteness is primarily due to a communicative inadequacy of the basic variety. It seems rather due to the need to imitate the input. After all, languages such as Chinese do very well without finite constructions - but not without refined systems of referential expressions or without particular focusing devices.

il le donne le mouchoir
'he to-her gives the handkerchief

(Further examples of Paula's use of oblique, dative and accusative, pronouns may be found in Appendix C.2 of Volume I.)

Focalisation devices

There are other passages in our data in which the various constraints are in conflict. The clearest example is a scene in the film in which various characters are accused of having stolen a loaf of bread. The utterances in question do not answer the *quaestio* 'What happened next?' but the *quaestio* 'Who stole the loaf?'. Hence, what is in focus is not the next event but the controller. Speakers of the basic variety either avoid the problem - they just skip the passage, or they sacrifice one constraint, or they become creative and develop new devices to solve the conflict.

Sacrificing can go either way, and learners seem to be strongly biased by their source language. This is best illustrated by Turkish and Italian learners of German. For the Turks, the focus principle clearly outweighs the controller principle, and in case of a clash, as in the breadstealing scene, they sacrifice the controller principle. This corresponds to the fact that among all learners, the Turks are most sensitive to complex topic-focus constellations, as is reflected, for example, in the choice of specific anaphoric devices (cf. Klein and Perdue 1992, chapter 4). Italian learners, on the other hand, tend to keep the controller in initial position even if this violates the focus principle in this particular case (see Appendix C.4 of Volume I). In any event, constraints are sacrificed very reluctantly, as many self-corrections and replannings in connection with the bread-stealing scene testify.

For about half of the learners, the competition provokes the development of some device to mark the relevant NP as being in focus. The exact choice of this device depends both on the source and on the target language. The two Moroccan learners of Dutch, Mohamed and Fatima, adopt a lexical solution - the word *zelf* ('-self'), for example *die meisje zelf doen* ('that girl - self do'). Here, the semantic principle is satisfied by initial position, and the quasi-suffix *zelf* marks that this NP is in focus.

Such a solution is an exception for our learners (although many languages have chosen it). A more frequent focus marker, available in all target languages of the study, would be a cleft construction, which extracts an argument from the basic sentence pattern and marks it

as being in focus. The disadvantage of this route is that it involves a major reorganisation of utterance structure. Still, many learners choose it, albeit in somewhat different form and with varying success. The initial strategy is regularly the use of an identification marker which is based on the copula:

Ravinder (cycle 2) *is she pinching*
 Santo (cycle 3) *is not charlie chaplin take the bread is the girl*
 Zahra (cycle 2) *[se] la fille [evole] le pain*
 "se" the girl steal the bread'

Italian learners of German and Moroccan learners of French further grammaticalise this device towards the end of the study by adding the particles [di] and [te], respectively, which are counterparts to the optional *that* of the cleft. By contrast, Spanish learners of French use from very early on a multifunctional particle [ke], which in Gloria's case is further analysed into nominative [ki] versus oblique [ke]. Compare the very last attempt of Zahra with that of Gloria:

Zahra (cycle 3) *[se] la dame [te] [vole] le pain*
 "se" the lady 'te' steal the bread'
 Gloria (cycle 2) *[se] lui [ki] a volé le pain*
 "se" he who has stolen the bread'

These examples illustrate that the relative complexification of learner utterances is due to a dissatisfaction with the limitations of the basic variety. Complete avoidance or simply ignoring some constraint will not do. Specific devices have to be acquired to mark a specific coalition of semantic and pragmatic constraints on utterance structure. The acquisition of cleft-like constructions, and in connection with them of some type of subordination, is not the result of merely imitating the input - it reflects the learners' attempts to solve some inherent structural inadequacy of their language at a given point in time.

1.7 Source language influence

It is very clear that neither basic variety utterances nor the utterances of more advanced varieties are directly modelled on the structure of the source or the target language. All learner varieties are productive systems in their own right, characterised by a specific repertoire and by a specific interplay of organising principles. This does not mean,

of course, that learner varieties are completely independent of source and target language. The lexical repertoire is essentially based on TL items (and some SL items, at least in the beginning), and in advanced varieties, the particular structural balance of the target language is successively - and selectively - approached. Less clear is the influence of the source language on the particular interplay of structural principles. We noted in the preceding section that the particular weight of, say, semantic as against pragmatic constraints is at least partly due to the language of origin. There is one other observation which points to source language influence. This is an additional phrasal pattern of the basic variety which has not yet been mentioned because its status is somewhat problematic:

D. NP₁-NP₂-V

It is the only clear case of a genuine V-final construction in the basic variety. Only some speakers of the basic variety use it. It is attested in the early utterances of Punjabi, but not Italian, learners of English, then it disappears. Early Turkish but not Moroccan learners of Dutch have it;¹² initially, it is even more frequent than the corresponding pattern A. NP₁ V NP₂, but then, the latter becomes dominant.

It seems highly plausible that these differences are due to source language influence: Punjabi is (dominantly) verb-final, not so Italian with its relatively free verb position. Similarly, Turkish is (dominantly) verb-final, but not Moroccan. For the learners of French, no such pattern is observed, because neither Moroccan nor Spanish are dominantly verb-final.¹³ All in all, however, we noted remarkably little 'structural transfer' from the source language.

1.8 Concluding remarks

The ways in which the learners studied here elaborate their utterance structure in the course of two and a half years show commonalities and divergencies. In this chapter, we have focused on the former - on the general traits of second language acquisition in an everyday context.¹⁴ The emerging picture is one of a *creative learner* who does

¹²It is not unlikely that early Turkish learners of German have it, as well (cf. Jordens 1988), but the Turkish learners of our sample were too advanced in our sample to use it.

¹³We do note, though, such a pattern for learners of French when *they start going beyond the basic variety*. This has very different reasons, though: it reflects a particular pattern of the target language structure, rather than source language influence.

¹⁴For a very detailed description of what the individual learners do, see Klein and Perdue (1992).

not try, item by item and as closely as possible, to replicate the various structural features of the input offered by the social environment, but rather draws on some of the material from the input and uses it to construct his or her own language. This construction is permanently challenged - by the permanent influx of new input, on the one hand, and by various structural inadequacies, on the other. The extent to which the learner tackles these challenges, and the way in which it is done, depends on the particular learner and on the particular languages involved. From this perspective, learners who really want to become undistinguishable from their social environment are a borderline case. In general, adults who have worked out their social identity are rarely that overadaptive, be it with language or with other types of social behaviour.

In this respect, adult second language acquisition in a social environment is quite different from first language acquisition, which is also language learning in everyday communication, and from second language acquisition in the classroom. In the former case, children must become non-salient members of the society they have to live in, and this includes having to reproduce the language of this community as faithfully as possible; otherwise, they would be social outsiders. Classroom acquisition, on the other hand, is indeed piecemeal learning of individual structural features, as presented by the teacher. Traditionally, little leeway is given to the creative language capacity of the learner, and the common way of thinking and theorising about second language acquisition is strongly influenced by this procedure: learning a second language is putting one piece of the puzzle in place after the other, until the replica is complete.

But we do not think that this is the way in which the human language capacity, including the learning capacity, works, and in this chapter, we have tried to give some evidence for a different view.

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