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How to solve a complex verbal task: Text structure, referential movement and the quaestio

0. Introduction

Speaking und understanding a language, be it the first or second, does not mean knowing its inflectional paradigms or its phrase structure. It means knowing how to transform, upon a given occasion, a complex thought into soundwaves and vice versa. It means being able to solve a more or less complex verbal task, which, in turn, involves many subtasks. And learning a language means learning a particular way in which such tasks are typically solved by a social community.

This is not the way in which linguists tend to look at linguistic competence. Over two and a half millenia, a tradition was formed according to which this competence can be segregated into various types of structural components, such as phonology, morphology, syntax, or the lexicon. This is surely not false; after all, solving a complex verbal task such as telling a story, arguing with someone about a rise in salary, or giving directions as to the best way to reach the best restaurant in the neighbourhood, involves all of this structural knowledge. But it should be clear that conventional wisdom, as enshrined in traditional as well as in modern linguistic theory, reflects only one possible perspective on this capacity. As with any particular perspective, it tends to focus on some specific aspects and to ignore others; moreover, it is determined by certain methods which appeal to grammaticality judgments, for instance, and certain analytic processes such as distributional analysis or systemic contrasts between certain morphemes.

In this paper, we sketch a somewhat different way of looking at what a speaker must be able to do – we look at how he or she solves a complex verbal task, or more precisely, on how the way in which he or she solves such a task is constrained. This perspective is not incompatible with the conventional view; it just highlights other aspects. We not only believe that it adds another dimension to what is usually done but that it allows a better understanding of what is going on in the process of language acquisition, and second language acquisition in particular. Sections 1-4 are devoted to the general framework; in section 5, it is applied to data from second language learners.

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1. Global and local constraints in text structure

A text, such as a route description, a personal narrative, a judge's opinion during a verdict, differs in two respects from an arbitrary collection of utterances:

(A) It obeys certain *global* constraints which primarily result from the fact that the utterances in their entirety serve to express, for a given audience and to a given end, a complex body of information, a GESAMTVORSTELLUNG, as we shall say.² The components which belong to this GESAMTVORSTELLUNG, as well as the relations which obtain between them may be different in nature. Thus, a judge's opinion is based on a GESAMTVORSTELLUNG whose individual components – the specific facts of the case, generic statements of the law, previous decisions, moral evaluations, etc. – are essentially held together by (hopefully) logical relations. The GESAMTVORSTELLUNG which underlies a narrative primarily consists of singular events whose main relationship is temporal, in contrast to, for example, a room description, where the components are some physical entities which are spatially connected, and so on. The nature of the GESAMTVORSTELLUNG, on the one hand, and the specific purpose the speaker intends to realise in expressing it, on the other, impose specific constraints on the overall organization of the text.

(B) The way in which the text proceeds from one utterance to the next obeys *local* constraints, depending on which information is introduced, maintained or elaborated on. This *referential movement* from utterance to utterance becomes apparent in the choice of specific linguistic means, such as the use of definite vs. indefinite noun phrases, anaphoric elements, word order, intonation or lexical items like “too”.

Each utterance selects a segment from the GESAMTVORSTELLUNG and puts it into words. The way in which this is done depends not only on what has to be expressed but also on what can be taken over from the preceding utterance(s) and what must be freshly introduced. The most obvious and best studied kind of referential movement concerns the introduction and maintenance of participants, for example the characters of a narrative (see, among many others, Tomlin 1987); but clearly, it also applies to other possible domains of reference, such as time, space and others.

Global as well as local constraints can be violated. Thus, we can easily imagine a text with the overall structure of a narrative, where adjacent utterances do not fit together, and we can imagine a text where each utterance is appropriately hooked up to the adjacent one but where there is no higher organization. This suggests that both aspects of text structure may be studied independently, and this indeed has been done in most, though not all, of the literature.

²There is no received term for the complex cognitive structure which underlies a text. Indeed, there is not one such structure but various levels of representation, and text production is but the last step in a series of transductions from one level to the next. Take, for example, a narrative of an event, in which the speaker was involved. There is first the *real* event (level 0), which is experienced and perceived, hence transformed into some *percept* (level 1) and then somehow stored in long-term memory (level 2), where it quietly warps. It is then recalled on a given occasion (level 3), components of it are selected, linearized and possibly enriched by fictitious additions (level 4), and eventually, the resulting *discourse representation* is put into words (level 5, text). On the comprehension side, the listener extracts the meaning of these words (level 6), combines it with contextual information (level 7), and enriches the resulting interpretation by all sorts of inferences, based on his world knowledge (level 8). The number and nature of these levels as well as the ways in which they are related to each other are a matter of much dispute. We will not go into this controversial issue here but simply speak, with deliberate vagueness, of GESAMTVORSTELLUNG, which is meant to include all levels of representation on the speaker's side. The term GESAMTVORSTELLUNG (entire representation) is borrowed from Wundt (1912).

Global constraints, for example, have been stated in terms of scripts, frames, *story grammars*, macro-structures, and similar notions. A great deal of what is termed here as local constraints has been investigated under labels such as *coherence*, *cohesion*, *thematic progression*, and many others. What has been much less studied is how, in a well formed text, both types of constraints interact or, more specifically, how the local constraints follow from the global ones. The core idea of the approach developed below may be stated as follows:

Global constraints, which result from the nature of the GESAMTVORSTELLUNG and the *text question* (in a sense to be explained), can be stated as restrictions on possible referential movement and, as a consequence, on the use of the language-specific means which serve to express reference and referential movement.

This will now be explained.

2. Main Structure and Side Structures of a text

Narratives of personal events belong to the best-studied text types; therefore, we will take them as a starting point for our considerations. They give an account of some event that happened somewhere sometime to the speaker (or to a third person). The GESAMTVORSTELLUNG (henceforth GV) consists of a set of sub-events which are above all temporally but also spatially or causally related to each other and which in their entirety constitute a singular event constellation, that can be situated in time and space. The single utterances which constitute the narrative, answer in their totality a – real or fictitious – question, the QUAESTIO³ of the text, roughly: *What happened (to you) at this time at this place?* In answering this question, the speaker has a certain freedom in selecting the sub-events he wants to report, and in the way in which he arranges them. But in any event, the text must render a certain *event structure*, i.e. a set of sub-events and the temporal relationship between them. This is the central characteristic of a narrative. The speaker may choose to add supplementary material. Thus, a narrative most often contains information about the time and place of the entire constellation (*orientation*) as well as comments, explanations, evaluations etc.. These general characteristics of any narrative may be reflected in global constraints on its structure, for example:

- (A1): Whatever the selection of sub-events may be, they must be presented in the order in which they happened (*principle of chronological order*).
- (A2): At the beginning, the event constellation must be situated in space and time.
- (A3): Usually, evaluations etc. must be inserted immediately before or after the sub-event to which they belong.

³ The idea of characterizing the overall function of a text by such a QUAESTIO is clearly not new. At least for argumentative texts, it is to be found in ancient rhetoric (see the quotes in v. Stutterheim 1997, chapter 2). But it also applies to many other texts, e.g. route directions (*How do I get from x to y?*), to apartment descriptions (*What does your apartment look like?*), to recipes (*How to prepare a paella?*), etc. Three points should be noted, however. First, the QUAESTIO of a text need not be identical with the real question which may have elicited the text in the given case: but very often, there is no explicit question at all. Second, it may be more appropriate for some texts to characterize them by a pair or even a triple of QUAESTIONES, rather than by one. And third, for some texts of a more loose nature (small talk, for example), it does not make much sense to characterize them by a QUAESTIO at all. This corresponds to the fact that they have no, or only a very weak, global structure: their organization is merely local.

Constraints of this sort have been stated by various authors in various forms.⁴ They impose a fixed overall scaffold, a MAIN STRUCTURE – on the text (A1); this main structure may be completed at designated points by various SIDE STRUCTURES (A2, A3).

There have been several attempts to capture the observations which give rise to this distinction, the best-known being the contrast between utterances which provide *foreground information* and those providing *background information* in a narrative. In the next section, we will discuss these concepts.

2.1 Foreground and background

The foreground-background distinction comes from gestalt theories of perception, and although its application to texts is not new, it is anything but whether this is more than a metaphorical extension. Hopper (1979, p. 213), for example, states:

“It is evidently a universal of narrative discourse that in any extended text an overt distinction is made between the language of the actual story line and the language of supportive material which does not itself narrate the main events. I refer to the former – the parts of the narrative which relate events belonging to the skeletal structure of the discourse – as FOREGROUND and the latter as BACKGROUND.”

Similarly, Reinhart (1984), p. 781-782) writes:

“... narrative texts are organized obligatorily along a temporal axis, which is the sequence of narrative clauses (or units). This temporal axis is called by Labov the narrative ‘skeleton’ of the text. The non-narrative ‘flesh’ which is organized ‘around’ this skeleton provides the necessary details for reconstructing the represented world and for determining the meaning and the purpose of the text [...] We will call what Labov had defined as the ‘narrative skeleton’ the ‘foreground’ material of the text, and the non-narrative material (under this definition) – ‘the background’.”

Foreground and background, as defined here, relate to the overall organization of a narrative – to its *skeleton* and its *flesh*. But they also bear on the way in which the information is displayed in the individual utterance. For example, foreground clauses are regularly marked by perfective aspect, background clauses by imperfective aspect, where there is such a distinction in the language; subordinate clauses regularly contribute to the background; some languages use different word order for foreground and background clauses; others may indicate the difference by specific particles, etc..

The distinction between utterances that push forward the action and those that don't allows to interrelate global and local constraints within a narrative text. The overall structure – the narrative skeleton – is given by those utterances which, roughly speaking,

- refer to a singular event that normally can't be maintained from a previous utterance and
- move ahead the time compared to the time of the previous utterance (if there was a previous utterance).

All other utterances are only *locally* connected to their environment, i.e. background clauses may be hooked up at any place of the skeleton. (This, admittedly, simplifies the picture,

⁴The *principle of chronological order*, for example, was explicitly stated in ancient rhetoric, albeit negatively: the *hysteron proteron*, i.e. the prior reporting of the later event, is considered to be a violation of regular text structure, which is only allowed for specific rhetoric effects.

because there may also be global constraints where specific types of background clauses may appear; but this does not affect our general point).

This way of relating global and local features of text structure to each other is clearly a step forward, when compared to, for example, *story grammars*, in which the local organization is largely neglected, or to *Markovian* approaches, in which only anaphoric relations, topic continuity and similar features are considered. Still, it is insufficient in at least three respects:

- the foreground-background-distinction, as defined here, is not sufficiently general: similar distinctions obtain in *non-narrative* texts whose underlying GV involves no temporal order between its components
- it is unclear how the global constraints – the existence of a skeleton on the one hand, of supplementary material on the other – derive from the nature of the GV with its particular properties
- it is not clear, how the local constraints follow from the global ones, i.e. *why*, for example, background information is marked by imperfective aspects, by clauses in the passive or by subordinate clauses

In the following three sections, we will discuss these problems and develop a somewhat different approach.

2.2 Foreground and background in non-narrative texts

The distinction between foreground and background of a narrative is not based on communicative importance, although the connotation of these two words suggest this; it may well be, however, that the whole point of the story is in the background utterances. Thus, literary texts, as a stylistic device, sometimes reverse the relative weight of communicative importance, which we tend to assign to both components: there is a plot line with a series of sub-events, but what is really interesting happens in the background.

An utterance belongs to the foreground, if and only if it belongs to the *narrative skeleton*. All other utterances belong to the background. Hence, background utterances form a quite heterogenous class. There is a more serious problem, however: This definition of the foreground cannot be extended to other types of texts, either because they have no temporal structure at all (such as opinions, arguments, picture descriptions, etc.), or because they have a temporal structure whose individual components, rather than being singular events, are generic events, states, possible happenings, etc., for which it is less obvious to follow a rigid chronological thread – for example those which answer questions such as *What do you remember from your childhood?*, *How was the wedding party last Sunday?*, *What are your plans for the future?*, etc. In all of these cases, however, there is a clear MAIN STRUCTURE which functions as a scaffold for the whole text, and various SIDESTRUCTURES which are hooked up at different points of the MAIN STRUCTURE and which may have different functions. Let us illustrate this by three examples.

(a) Future plans

QUAESTIO: *How do you imagine your future?*

Text: “I have no clear plan yet. Well, first I will finish high school. *Actually, thats not so sure,*

because what I would really like to do is to become a musician; but my father won't allow me to. So, I will go to the university and study something, probably French. And then, I will become a teacher, although the chances are bad right now. And then of course, I will marry and have children. I am very traditional here, and love babies. There is something else I definitely will do: travelling through East Asia, for at least a year. Maybe I can do this between High School and University."

The QUAESTIO specifies which kind of information has to be given in the text, albeit in a not very restrictive way: what has to be expressed, are events, activities, states which are all in the future and which are more or less certain: in short, possible or desirable events rather than singular, real ones, as in a narrative, and the relation between them is, or may be, temporal; but the QUAESTIO does not impose a strict chronological order. Nevertheless, the text clearly contains utterances which directly relate to the QUAESTIO and hence belong to the MAIN STRUCTURE, on the one hand, and others which give additional, though often important information; these are underlined in the text above. In this case, the distinction between MAIN STRUCTURE and SIDE STRUCTURE is not always straightforward, because the constraints which the QUAESTIO imposes on the answer are less obvious than in narratives with their clear temporal sequencing.

(b) Route directions

QUAESTIO: "Can you tell me, where the Goethehouse is?"

Text: "*Yes, but let me think for a moment. I was there myself last week. Yeah, you go down here about three hundred meters, then turn left behind the church. Then, after another three hundred meters, you will come to a square, a very beautiful square. You cross it, carry on and then turn right. You really can't miss it. Then it is the second street to the left, and there you can see it. It is yellow, or yellowish. Okay?"*

The GV on which a route description is based is again not a temporally ordered set of singular, real events but a spatial configuration – a *cognitive map* on which some salient spots ("landmarks") are spatially interrelated. An appropriate selection of these landmarks (including the deictic origin and the target) and their appropriate arrangement constitute the backbone – the MAIN STRUCTURE – of a route description. Both selection and arrangement of the landmarks follow certain principles, which we will not discuss here (cf. Klein 1979). In any event, the backbone is completed by additional information (underlined in the text above). These SIDE STRUCTURES may have quite different functions; the introductory *yes*, for example, indicates that the speaker is willing and able to answer the QUAESTIO; there are comments on the difficulty of the task, a control question (*okay?*), etc. Obviously, SIDE STRUCTURES of this type may have an important communicative function within the total exchange that constitutes a successful route direction; but they do not belong to the MAIN STRUCTURE as induced by the QUAESTIO to the text (for an analysis of route descriptions in this sense, see Carroll 1993, Klabunde 1999).

(c) Opinion (of a verdict)

QUAESTIO: Why is the prior court's decision to take away Mrs. K.'s driving license unfounded?

Text: "*The court is not in agreement with the previous decision ... Our expert's calculations convincingly show that the speed at which witness L. was driving was at least 85 km/h and at*

most 95 km/h at the time of the collision. Had the driving of L. been more careful, then Mrs. K. would have been at least 5 m over the crossroad. *L.'s driving must be regarded as a gross violation of any traffic rule, and it is indeed disputable whether the fine of 500.– which was inflicted is appropriate to this totally irresponsible conduct.* On the other hand, Mrs. K. does not need to reckon with the possibility that a driver exceed the speed limit by 40 km/h, especially in a narrow street ...”

The GV on which such an opinion is based consists of propositions which are primarily connected by logical relations. The propositions themselves are of somewhat different nature. Some concern the matters of the case at issue and hence normally to some real happening in the past, which in turn may consist of a complex of subevents. Others concern attitudes and evaluations of the people involved; these attitudes may also be relevant for the verdict (was the behavior intentional or just careless? Which motives are involved? etc.) Others concern generic, normative givens – such as the legal regulations, including their interpretation on other occasions. This makes the GV quite heterogenous, and since the QUAESTIO is not too restrictive, either, it is sometimes difficult to decide which utterance directly contributes to answer the *why* and hence belongs to the MAIN STRUCTURE induced by that QUAESTIO. Nevertheless, most utterances in an opinion can be easily assigned either for foreground or to background (see Katzenberger 1999 for an analysis of expository texts).

Let us briefly sum up at this point. The foreground-background-distinction, as it is usually defined, turns out to be a special case of a more general distinction between the MAIN STRUCTURE of a text and various SIDE STRUCTURES whose form and function may vary. This immediately raises the of how to define these two types of structure – especially the MAIN STRUCTURE, since the SIDE STRUCTURES are a heterogenous class anyway – if we can't have recourse to the chronological principle, as in the foreground definition of Hopper or Reinhart mentioned above.⁵ In what precedes, we already suggested a possible solution which we will pursue now in more detail.

2.3 Quaestio, focus condition, topic condition

Defining the MAIN STRUCTURE in terms of a chronological thread of events, is only possible when the nature of the GV allows for such an ordering as is indeed the case for narratives. But this presupposition is not sufficient. Someone's childhood, for example, also consists of temporally ordered events (and the corresponding feelings and experiences). But a question such as *What do you remember from your early childhood?* elicits quite a different kind of text than from a question such as *What happened to you there and then?*, as in the case of a narrative (although, of course, a listener may *interpret* the first question in such a restrictive

⁵ There are also some problems with the chronological principle within narratives, for example when two sub-events are explicitly marked as being simultaneous. Thus, *Charles opened the door. At the same time, the phone started ringing* are clearly narrative clauses which belong to the narrative sequence; but the corresponding events do not follow each other, and hence, the utterance violates the Labovian criterion. It is far from being trivial to adapt the definition accordingly, because a more liberal definition which would also admit simultaneous events immediately runs into trouble with typical background-foreground sequences such as *We were sitting in the office. The telephone started ringing*. In other words: Two utterances which express (totally or partly) simultaneous events, may both belong to the foreground, or one may belong to the background, the other to the foreground. (They may also both belong to the background, obviously). These possibilities are regularly distinguished by different forms, such as different aspect marking, but this *indicates* the difference and can't be the base of the definition. So, this shows again that the chronological principle is just a special – and often very useful – instance of a more general principle.

way that it amounts to the second question). Similarly, a route direction and a sightseeing description of the same spatial area have different text structure, although they draw on the same stored spatial information: they *foreground* (and *background*) different components of the same GV.

The MAIN STRUCTURE and, as a consequence, the SIDE STRUCTURES of a text are determined by the nature of the underlying GV, on the other hand, and the QUAESTIO of the text, on the other. The QUAESTIO marks specific components as particularly pertinent for the text to be produced. As was mentioned above, the QUAESTIO need not be asked explicitly; it may result, for example, from the whole communicative context. But even if there is an explicit question, then it may be relatively unspecific, and the *QUAESTIO at issue* results both from what is explicitly asked, on the one hand, and additional contextual constraints, on the other.

The function of a question in relation to a text is in principle not different from the function of a normal question in relation of an appropriate answer on utterance level. We may illustrate this function with an old example of Hermann Paul's (1896, p. 218). A sentence such as

(1) Peter went to Berlin yesterday.

may be used to answer different questions, and while its grammatical structure (except intonation) remains constant, its *psychological structure*, to use Paul's term (there has been some terminological progress since) changes according to the question which it answers:

- (2) (a) Where did Peter go yesterday?
 (b) When did Peter go to Berlin?
 (c) Who went to Berlin yesterday?
 (d) What did Peter do yesterday?
 (e) What happened?

After each of these questions, (1) decides on an alternative at issue (the term *alternative* taken in a broad sense: it may comprise more than two candidates). What is different, is the alternative which has to be, and actually is, decided on. After (2) (a), the alternative is the set of places to which Peter could have gone yesterday, and this alternative is specified by *Berlin*, after (2) (b) it is the set of (contextually relevant) time spans at which he could have gone to Berlin, and this alternative is specified by *yesterday*, and after (2) (e), it is the set of (contextually relevant) incidents that could have happened at a certain (contextually given) occasion – this alternative being specified by the whole utterance. Such a set of candidates from which one has to be specified we will call the TOPIC, and the specification itself we will call the FOCUS, of a given utterance.

The terms TOPIC and FOCUS, as used here, refer to components of the entire information expressed by some utterance, rather than to the words or constituents which express this information. In other words, we must distinguish between TOPIC and TOPIC expression, FOCUS and FOCUS expression. In the example above, the five questions already define what the five *alternatives at issue*, the five TOPICS are, from which the FOCUS has to be chosen. The corresponding answers express this TOPIC again (except in the last case, see below) and then specify it – i.e. express the FOCUS. Thus, the TOPIC defined by the first question is the set of places to which Peter could have gone yesterday; in the answer, this TOPIC is referred to again by the partial expression *Peter went ... yesterday* (= TOPIC expression), and the FOCUS expression *Berlin* specifies this TOPIC by giving Berlin as the FOCUS. Obviously, the TOPIC expression in the answer is redundant here, and in fact, it could have been omitted. The

relation between TOPIC and TOPIC expression (and similarly FOCUS and FOCUS expression) may be much less straightforward than in this case. In (2) (e), the alternative at issue is between several possible *happenings* at some relevant occasion⁶ and all we know about these happenings is that they are in the past (due to the tense morpheme of *happened*). This component of the TOPIC, namely being in the past, is expressed again in the answer, but there is no independent TOPIC expression in the answer, unless one counts the inflection of *went* as such. We shall return to this problem in section 3.3.

In all of these examples, the TOPIC of the utterance is explicitly raised by a general context, or its expression may be totally left to the utterance itself. All languages provide different devices to refer not only to a place, for example, but also to mark that this reference belongs to the FOCUS (or is the FOCUS) or to the TOPIC, for example intonation, word order or specific particles. If there is a contextually given TOPIC, then these means must be used in accordance with this contextual requirement, of course; otherwise, the utterance is contextually inappropriate.

Let us return now to the QUAESTIO of a text, in contrast to the QUAESTIO of an utterance. In principle, the function of a text QUAESTIO is not different, except that it does not call for the specification of a single referent – for instance, one specific place, time, person, action – but for the specification of a whole structure of such referents and the specification of this structure is distributed over the utterances of the text. Each single referent is taken from the underlying GV, and the QUAESTIO imposes restrictions on the possible referents and their arrangements: it narrows down the set of candidates which are admissible for specification within an utterance, and it restricts the way in which this specification of referents may proceed from one utterance to the next.

The MAIN STRUCTURE of a text results from a restriction on referential movement. It is based on the underlying GV, on the one hand, and the QUAESTIO, on the other. This restriction has two components which we will call FOCUS conditions (FC) and TOPIC conditions (TC), respectively. For narrative texts, these conditions may be roughly stated as follows.

2.4 Main Structure of a narrative

FC: Each utterance specifies a singular event which occupies a definite time interval t_i on the real time axis.

TC: The time interval of the first event is explicitly introduced (unless contextually given); all subsequent ones follow chronologically, i.e. the interval belonging to the event reported in the n^{th} -utterance is not before the interval which belongs to the event reported in the $(n-1)^{\text{th}}$ -utterance.

To put it somewhat differently: The QUAESTIO is a question-function q_i where i ranges over time intervals and each question corresponds to an *utterance-question*:

What happened (to you) at t_i ?

What happened (to you) at t_{i+1} ?

What happened (to you) at t_{i+2} ?

⁶In all of these cases, there are context influences of a more global nature. Thus, a question such as *What happened?* would be asked in a certain situation, and depending on this particular situation, only certain *happenings* would be acceptable as specifications of the TOPIC. If your friend comes to your room, pale, trembling and covered with sweat, the question *What happened?* clearly means: *What happened that made you pale, trembling and covered with sweat?*

Each of the subsequent utterances of the text contains an answer to the *what* – it specifies one event from the set of those that could have happened (to the speaker) at that time. Thus, the primary restriction on the events is the definite time interval, although other restrictions are, of course, not excluded. Both FC and TC may be violated by an utterance. This leads to SIDE STRUCTURES of various types, depending on the kind of violation and the nature of referential linkage to the mainstructure which still exists. Let us consider some examples of such side structures.

An utterance (or a clause) may serve to specify a time interval in explicit terms, rather than have it simply given by TC. A typical case of this type of SIDE STRUCTURES are *background clauses* such as *Nous etions a l'etude*⁷ or to use the example from note 5 again, *We were sitting in the office*. Most often, subordinate temporal clauses serve exactly this function, and this is the reason why they contribute to the background: They answer the question *When did hevent a happen?* rather than the question *What happened to some person at some time t_i ?*

Other utterances don't violate TC, but they do not specify an event, as required by FC. Typical SIDE STRUCTURES of this type are comments and evaluations, such as *He wouldn't have thought so* or *It was creepy*, etc. There may be some argument here as to what counts as a singular event; for example, an utterance such as *The sky was all red* is normally interpreted as describing a state; but it may be used to refer to an event, as in *Suddenly, the sky was all red*. But neither ambiguities of this kind nor semantic problems of how to define events (in contrast to states, processes, etc.) affect the general principle.

Still other utterances may violate both conditions, for example generic statements inserted at some point in the narrative, such as *Well, that's how life is* or *There is always someone who wants to object*. This loose typology of SIDE STRUCTURES could be refined in various ways; but we think the general point is sufficiently clear. It is important to keep in mind that SIDE STRUCTURES may indeed have, and normally do have, some referential linkage to the MAIN STRUCTURE, as reflected in the use of anaphoric elements, of word order, or merely lexical relations.

We can illustrate what has been said so far in a diagram which shows the relation of MAIN STRUCTURE and SIDE STRUCTURES. Q_1, Q_2, \dots are the arguments of the question function Q_i *What happened (to someone) at t_i ?*, where t_i refers to definite time intervals; A_1, A_2, \dots are the corresponding answers, e_i, e_j, \dots the events. B refers to SIDE STRUCTURES, which are optional (with the possible exception of the first one, unless the first time specification is contextually given):

(4)	Q_1	Q_2	Q_3	Q_n				
(B)	A_1	(B)	A_2	(B)	A_3	(B)	A_n	(B)
	t_1	e_1	t_2	e_2	t_2	e_3	t_n	e_3

⁷As the reader will have noticed, this is the introductory clause of *Madame Bovary*. The full sentence *Nous etions a letude quand le proviseur entra (...)* is, by the way, a neat illustration of the fact that the subordinate clause may express foreground information, the main clause background information. This is a special case, however, in that this whole sentence introduces the story. Note that our formulation of TC is such that *Nous etions a letude* would not violate TC, since it refers to the first time interval. An alternative way may be to characterize a narrative by two QUAESTIONES *When and where did the total event happen? What happened (to you) at t_i ?* where t_i are sub-intervals of the *when* of the total event.

Note, incidentally, that the event specifications need not be different, although they normally are. But in *Peter rang. Then, he rang again*, two subsequent events are described by the same information.

So far, we have dealt with the first two inadequacies of the foreground-background distinction, suggested a more general approach, which seems to overcome these insufficiencies, and illustrated it for narratives. Let us turn now to the third problem, the question *why* MAIN STRUCTURE utterances are marked by specific linguistic means, SIDE STRUCTURES by others.

2.5 Referential movement and linguistic means

The constraints on referential movement, as induced by QUAESTIO and GESAMTVORSTELLUNG, apply to the specification of specific contents, not to the linguistic means which are used to express them. But they have consequences for the expression, too: They indirectly restrict the choice of linguistic devices. The nature of these latter restrictions depends on the specific language and the linguistic means which it offers for expression. We shall illustrate this again for narrative texts. In section 5 below, it will then be discussed how learners approach the particular system.

The focus condition stated above requires that each utterance of the MAIN STRUCTURE has to specify a singular event, which occupies a definite time span on the real time axis – in contrast to habitual events or to states. An utterance which satisfies this condition and hence belongs to the MAIN STRUCTURE may then have the following linguistic features (depending on the language in question):

- it is normally marked by perfective aspects (or similar means), in order to indicate that the event occupies a definite time span on the time axis
- the lexical verb is not in the scope of certain quantifying or modalizing operators, such as *usually, almost, not*⁸
- the subject must not be marked as generic, because otherwise, the whole utterance is normally interpreted as generic, too; this in turn may have consequences for article selection, word order etc.
- the tensed verb must not be in the *habitual* form (if there is such a marking in the specific language)

etc. Whenever these conditions are violated, the utterance in question is recognisable as contributing to the BACKGROUND.

Consider another somewhat less straightforward example. Suppose a language has no syntactically determined constituent order but the constituent (or constituents) which corresponds to the TOPIC comes first, the one (or ones) which correspond to the FOCUS comes

⁸There are cases, though, in which a negated verb can be interpreted to denote an event, in the sense of FC. Take an example such as *And then, he didn't show up*, where the event is simply, that something which was expected or plausible did not happen.

last. If Latin were such a language, then the answer to the question *Quis cantat?* would be *Cantat Petrus*, whereas the answer to the question *Quid facit Petrus?* would be *Petrus cantat*. In such a language, all utterances which belong to the MAIN STRUCTURE of narratives must have the word order *Petrus cantat* (under the assumption that the verb relates to a singular event). This restriction on the word order of MAIN STRUCTURE utterances operates *within* the syntactically admitted word order patterns. Conditions such as FC and TC cannot outweigh obligatory syntactic rules, but they can use the options left by these rules.

2.6 Temporal projection

Before elaborating on the idea of referential movement, we will briefly deal with a possible complication of the general picture-temporal projection.

Every text transforms, in accordance with the requirements of the QUAESTIO, a set of information taken from some GV into a linear sequence of utterances. Not everything from this GV need or should be expressed – either because the speaker is entitled to assume that the listener has access to the information anyhow, or because he thinks that, given the QUAESTIO, this information is irrelevant. Whatever survives this process of *selection*, the speaker must in any event transfer a complex set of information into a linear sequence of utterances (*linearization*). How straightforward this linearization is, depends on the nature of the information. In the case of narrative texts, the relevant units are sub-events of a total event, and those sub-events are ordered along the time axis. Some complications aside (see note 5), this order *a then b* of events can be transferred to the order *a' then b'* of corresponding utterances, hence the nature of the GV itself suggests a straightforward linearization of the utterance. Linearization is much more problematic when the underlying GV, as in the case of route directions, apartment descriptions, etc., is a multi-dimensional spatial structure whose units are physical objects; in this case, a multi-dimensional arrangement must be projected onto a one-dimensional array of utterances. A convenient way to solve this problem is the introduction of an ancillary temporal structure. In route directions, this ancillary structure is an *imaginary wandering* (Klein 1979), that is, a sequence of *possible actions* of a participant (for example, of the person who asks for route directions); these actions can be chronologically ordered and thus constitute a projection principle which allows the speaker to solve the linearization problem. A similar principle applies in apartment descriptions (Linde & Labov 1975) and often, but not always, in room descriptions, except that in the latter case, the imaginary wandering is replaced by a – real or imaginary – *gaze tour* (see Ehrich 1979, Carroll 1993, Buhl 1997).

This technique presupposes that such a *temporalization* makes sense. In instructions for games (QUAESTIO *How to play bridge?*) or recipes (QUAESTIO: *How to prepare a gazpacho andaluz?*), this is possible only in part, because they must specify material or ingredients as well as the individual activities to be performed; but only the latter allow for a natural temporal projection; one solution is to separate the two parts of the tasks, as typically happens with recipes.

The use of an ancillary temporal structure is virtually impossible in the case of essentially *logical* texts, such as an argumentation or an opinion (as it was discussed in 2.1). There is no uniform principle of how linearization is achieved in these cases, although in practice, there are a number of guide-lines (see for argumentation Klein 1980, for linearization in general, Levelt 1982).

If there is such a projection principle, whatever its precise form may be, it has to be included in the definition of the MAIN STRUCTURE: In this case, the global constraints, such as FC and

TC explained above, do not directly result from the nature of the GV (its components and the relations between them), on the one hand, and the QUAESTIO, on the other, but a special form of projection, such as temporalization, may intervene. How this is done in different types of texts, is a matter of empirical research.

2.7 A brief interim summary

A text is based on a GESAMTVORSTELLUNG and a QUAESTIO (or some QUAESTIONES), which impose restrictions on its global and local structure: They determine its MAIN STRUCTURE (*foreground*), with the possible intervention of some projection principle. The MAIN STRUCTURE includes two kinds of restrictions on what is referred to and how this information is maintained or changed (*referential movement*): FOCUS condition, and TOPIC condition. Both conditions can be violated; this leads to different types of SIDE STRUCTURES (*background*). FOCUS condition and TOPIC condition also bear on the choice of linguistic means in MAIN STRUCTURE and SIDE STRUCTURE utterances; these means vary from language to language – a fact which leads to specific learning problems that will be illustrated in section 5.

3. Referential movement

The point of a text is the fact that the entire amount of information to be expressed is distributed over a series of utterances, rather than being patched into a single one. This distribution is not done at random, but is governed by several principles which impose a certain structure on the text.⁹ In particular, they constrain which information is to be displayed within an utterance relative to the preceding one. Let B be the utterance in question, A the preceding one; as a special case, A should also include the *empty* utterance, such that B is the first utterance of the text.

Then, the TOPIC condition (TC) states that, in the case of narratives,

- (a) B must include a reference to a time interval t_j in the real time axis;
- (b) this time interval t_j must be after the time interval t_i referred to in A (although not necessarily adjacent to that time interval);
- (c) this time reference may be implicit; but if it is implicit, it must not be marked as contributing to the FOCUS of B.

⁹There may be, and often are, non-accidental features of text structure above and beyond the principles studied here. For example, there may be cultural habits such as to begin every text of a certain type with *Praise the name of the Lord*; Grimm type fairy tales often end with *Und wenn sie nicht gestorben sind, dann leben sie heute noch* (and if they didn't die, they're still alive). A more interesting case are prayers or magic formula whose underlying organisational principles are largely unknown. We simply do not know why, in a love magic, the utterances must be ordered in a certain way to achieve the intended effect. – To avoid misunderstandings, it should be emphasized that the constraints we are talking about here do not totally *determine* the text structure; they rather narrow down the options in a certain way, and depending on the case, these restrictions may not be particularly tight, anyway. – Cross-linguistic work on text organisation in this framework has shown that languages often have marked preferences for a particular way to structure a text, see, e.g. Carroll & v. Stutterheim 1993, von Stutterheim & Lambert 1999).

The FOCUS condition (FC) states that

- (a) B must include a reference to an event (in contrast to a state, for example);
- (b) this event must be marked as singular and factual (in contrast to generic or possible events);
- (c) the event referred to must be marked as contributing to the FOCUS.

Moreover, the general idea of information distribution over the utterances normally requires B to contain some *new* information with respect to A: B must achieve some progress, compared to the state reached after A. It should be kept in mind that all of these constraints may be violated, of course, thus giving rise to SIDE STRUCTURES.

The constraints which FC and TC impose on utterances of the MAIN STRUCTURE are of two sorts. Firstly, they prescribe or exclude specific contents in some domains of reference, for example temporal reference in this case; other domains of reference, such as reference to place or to persons involved are not constrained, although this may be different in other text types than narratives. Secondly, they prescribe whether a certain component of the total content of the utterance goes to its TOPIC or to its FOCUS. Thus, both time and event referred to in a MAIN STRUCTURE utterance of a narrative cannot be maintained from the preceding utterance, but the shift in the former domain concerns the TOPIC, whereas the new event specification goes to the FOCUS.

In what follows, we will first have a look at the various domains which may be affected by these constraints (section 3.1) and then at the various ways in which reference *within* such a domain may move from one utterance to the next (section 3.2); finally, we will discuss a number of open problems (section 3.3).

3.1 Referential domains and their interrelation in utterances

With every utterance, the speaker puts a segment of the underlying GV into words. This segment may include an event, a state of affairs, some spatial arrangement, or whatever – depending on the nature of the GV. We will call such a segment a SACHVERHALT (*state of affairs*, the term is borrowed from Wittgenstein). We will not consider here what qualifies a specific clustering of components from the GV as a SACHVERHALT which may be expressed in an utterance, although this is clearly not a trivial question. In any event, a SACHVERHALT is some arrangement of various temporal, spatial, personal and other features which are interrelated in a specific way.

Not every ingredient of a given SACHVERHALT is indeed expressed. Suppose the underlying GV is a witnessed accident, and the speaker has to give an eyewitness report of that accident (with the QUAESTIO *What did you hear and see?*). Then the utterance

(3) She drove against the signpost.

reports a segment of the underlying GV – a SACHVERHALT. But clearly, it does not express everything that belongs to that SACHVERHALT and that the speaker could have packed into it. For example, it does not mention

- the speed at which she was driving
- the kind of vehicle

- the place where all of this happened
- the direction from which the driver came
- the shape of the signpost
- the approximate age of the driver
- the fact that she was not wearing sun glasses

and so on – to mention only a few features, each of which could be highly relevant in an eyewitness report. The speaker has selected particular bits of information among the many he could refer to in his utterance.¹⁰ This choice depends on (a) what he thinks to be important for the listener to know, (b) what he assumes not to be accessible to the listener from other sources of knowledge (context information), and (c) on the structural constraints of the language in question (English normally requires reference to a subject and to the event time, although these may be irrelevant or redundant).

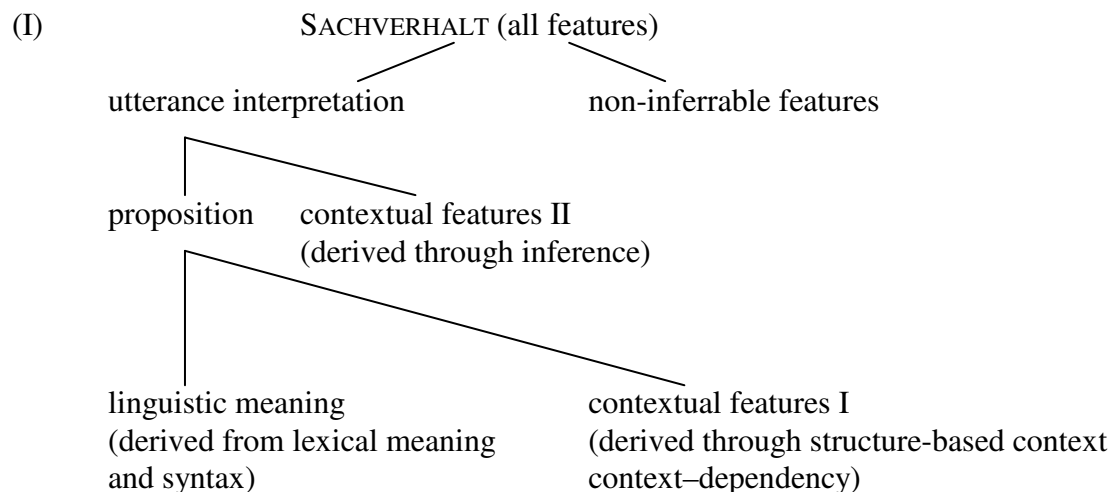
It is crucial, therefore, that the speaker systematically monitors the listener's perspective when solving the given complex verbal task. The listener will know some but surely not all of bits of information which are not made explicit. For example, he may know from previous utterances what the place of the whole event is and that *she* refers to an elderly lady; similarly, he may infer from the whole context that she was driving a limousine, rather than a bulldozer. It seems useful to distinguish two types of contextual information which complete the listener's interpretation of the utterance, above and beyond what is made explicit by linguistic means. First, there is contextual information which is directly linked to context-dependent verbal elements in the utterance, such as deixis, anaphora, ellipsis. The interpretation of an utterance such as *Me, too* is based on knowledge of the meaning of deictic words and the rules of ellipsis in English, on the one hand, and on access to the necessary contextual information, on the other (roughly, the listener must be able to identify who is speaking, and must have heard the previous utterance). In these cases, we will talk of *structure-based* or *regular* context-dependency. The integration of linguistic information proper and of what can be derived by structure-based context-dependency provides the listener with a first interpretation, which we will call *proposition*. In addition, the listener may *infer*, with varying degrees of certainty, other features of the SACHVERHALT, such as the type of vehicle or the appropriate speed; this *global* context-dependency or *inference* is not directly linked to structural means but related to the proposition in a less explicit way. Therefore, inference is less accessible to linguistic analysis than structure-based context-dependency; but it is no less important for text organisation and more specifically, for referential movement. Consider a sequence of two utterances such as

(4) Yesterday, I went to Heidelberg. My parents-in-law celebrated their silver wedding.

The first utterance introduces, among other things, a place – the target position of the movement. The second utterance contains no spatial reference at all. Still, we tend to infer that this wedding party is in Heidelberg: the spatial reference, taken from the FOCUS of the previous utterance, is maintained. This inference is not certain (the second utterance could continue ... *and I tried to escape the party*), and if the speaker had wanted to avoid this uncertainty, he could have chosen another maintenance technique, for example by adding a spatial anaphor like *there*, thus relying on structure-based context-dependency rather than on inference.

¹⁰Note that this is in principle not different for fictitious GESAMTVORSTELLUNGEN, where the underlying information, or parts of it, do not stem from perception and memory, but from imagination.

Let us sum up what has been said so far: When talking about the meaning expressed in an utterance within a text, we must distinguish between four complex clusters of temporal, spatial, personal and other features: the *linguistic meaning* based on the lexical meaning of the words and on the way in which these words are fused into higher units (i.e. syntax), the *proposition*, where structure-based contextual information is added, the *utterance interpretation*, which enriches the proposition by all sorts of inferrable information, and the SACHVERHALT, which comprises also non-inferred information.¹¹ In a diagram:



Referential movement, as understood here, is on the level of utterance interpretation, and in order to understand how referential movement works, we must look at the way in which this interpretation proceeds from utterance to utterance. In what follows, however, we shall not be particularly concerned with those processes which lead from the proposition to the utterance interpretation since they are more on a cognitive than on a linguistic level. Whenever necessary, we will briefly say *by inference*. So, we will be mainly concerned with the transition from proposition to proposition.

A proposition selects some of the many features which constitute the SACHVERHALT and integrates them in a particular way. Consider, for example, the proposition which is expressed when (5) is uttered in some context:

(5) Yesterday, the Hammelwades left for Heidelberg.

The proposition contains a specific event which includes, among others, the following features:

- time interval, within which the event happened (expressed by *yesterday* and by verb inflection)
- a participant (the Hammelwades, encoded by the grammatical subject);

¹¹There is a familiar distinction between sentence meaning and utterance meaning, where the former roughly corresponds to our *linguistic meaning* and the latter to our *proposition*. We have avoided this terminology, especially the term *sentence meaning*, since we also want to include the meaning of utterances such as *Me, too* or *She him* or *Why four?*, which one would not consider to be sentences, but which may function as perfect utterances in a text.

- the *activity as such*, i.e. the leaving for Heidelberg, which is in turn compound of various features – minimally a target position (Heidelberg) and a change in position

In addition, there are several other bits of information which belong to the SACHVERHALT and perhaps to the utterance interpretation but which are not referred to in (5), in particular

- the place at which the activity begins (the source position of the movement);

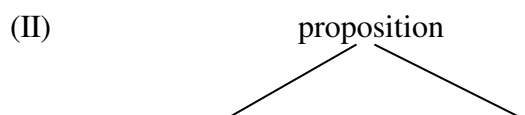
These four types of information belong to different *referential domains*; a proposition is a complex of information taken from these domains.

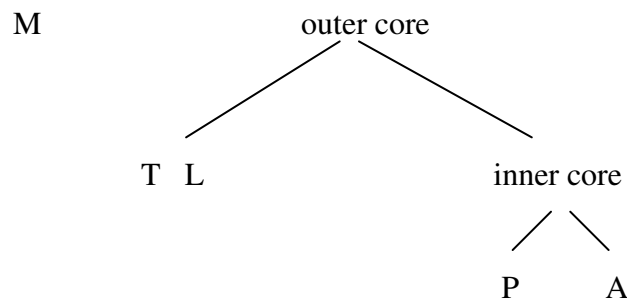
Not all utterances express specific events. They may also render specific states (as *Yesterday, the Hammelwades were in Heidelberg*), property assignments (*The Hammelwades are sweet*), generic or habitual events (*During the winter, the Hammelwades live in Heidelberg*), and maybe others. To account for this, we need two refinements. First, we will replace the referential domain *activity* by the more general *predicate* which will also include property assignments, states, processes etc. Second, we shall assume that an utterance also contains a reference to a modality; roughly speaking, it is somehow related to a real, a fictitious, a hypothetical world. Admittedly, this is simply a way to circumvent a whole range of complicated problems, but it will do for our present purposes. This leaves us with five, rather than four, referential domains:

- (1.) R_t : temporal intervals or *times*
- (2.) R_e : places
- (3.) R_p : participants
- (4.) R_a : predicates of various types
- (5.) R_m : modality (real, fictitious etc.)

An utterance integrates information from these domains into a proposition. Note, however, that not all domains must be represented in each utterance. In *It was raining* or *There will be dancing*, no participant is referred to although there may be one in the SACHVERHALT. On the other hand, information from one domain may show up several times in either the same or different functions; cf. utterances such as *Yesterday, they left at five* or *In Heidelberg, they walked from the station to the castle* or *The man at the castle looked like an alien*. Moreover, reference to time, to place, to circumstances may be conflated in one concept, as in *On many occasions, there was dancing*, to mention but a few of the complications. In what follows, we shall first sketch a sort of *basic structure* and then come back to some complications.

Traditionally, it is often assumed that reference to a participant P from R_p (often encoded by the grammatical subject) and reference to a predicate A from R_a (often encoded by the grammatical predicate) constitute something like the *inner core* of a proposition, which is then further characterized by a time T and a space L; the resulting structure, the *outer core*, is then related (M) to some real or fictitious world. We will adopt here this conventional picture, arguable as it may be. This gives us a *basic structure*:





Depending on the nature of the underlying SACHVERHALT, this basic structure may be reduced by one or several components. A mathematical theorem, for example, does not have a time or a place to be referred to; so, its basic structure is reduced by at least two of the components in (I). This is not to be confused with a basic structure in which some domain is not *explicitly referred to*, although the Sachverhalt itself as such would allow such a reference. Compare again the propositions expressed by the utterances *It was raining* and *There was dancing*. In the first example, no participant is involved, hence the basic structure is reduced by this component; in the latter case, there is a participant involved – the dancer or dancers –, but it is not explicitly referred to; the basic structure, however, is that of (I).

Note that (I) relates to the way in which the underlying proposition is organized, not to the way in which the utterance is constructed. The way in which time, place, participant etc. are indeed expressed depends on the language-specific means chosen by the speaker. It may also be that the expression which has this function is very complex and uses features from some other referential domain. For example, reference to the participant may use spatial or temporal information, as in *The man at the corner* or *Poets from the 19th century*. We will return to this point in a moment. A most elementary realisation of a basic structure like (I) would look like

(6) There and then, she did such and such.

where *there* refers to the place, *then* to the *time*, *she* to the participant, *did* to the modality (and the time and, perhaps, the predicate, too) and *such and such* to the predicate. In this case, the linguistic meaning contributes hardly anything to expression of the proposition. This does not mean that the proposition itself is poor in content; rather, most of what the listener can know about it stems from structure-based context-dependency. Normally, the linguistic contribution is richer, of course, and we shall return to this issue in section 3.3 below.

3.2 Types of referential movement

We may think of the components of a basic structure as *open slots* to be filled appropriately in order to yield a proposition: a place must be referred to which specifies position L of the basic structure; similarly a time which specifies position T of the basic structure, and so on. This specification may be introduced in this utterance for the first time, or it may be maintained from a preceding utterance. It is a simplification, however, to talk just about introduction and maintenance of reference. In what follows, we will give a somewhat refined typology of referential movement.¹² This typology does not relate to the specific linguistic forms which

¹²In fact, it may often be *too* fine for empirical analyses, because the relevant distinctions do not surface in the

express the reference in question, but to content only.

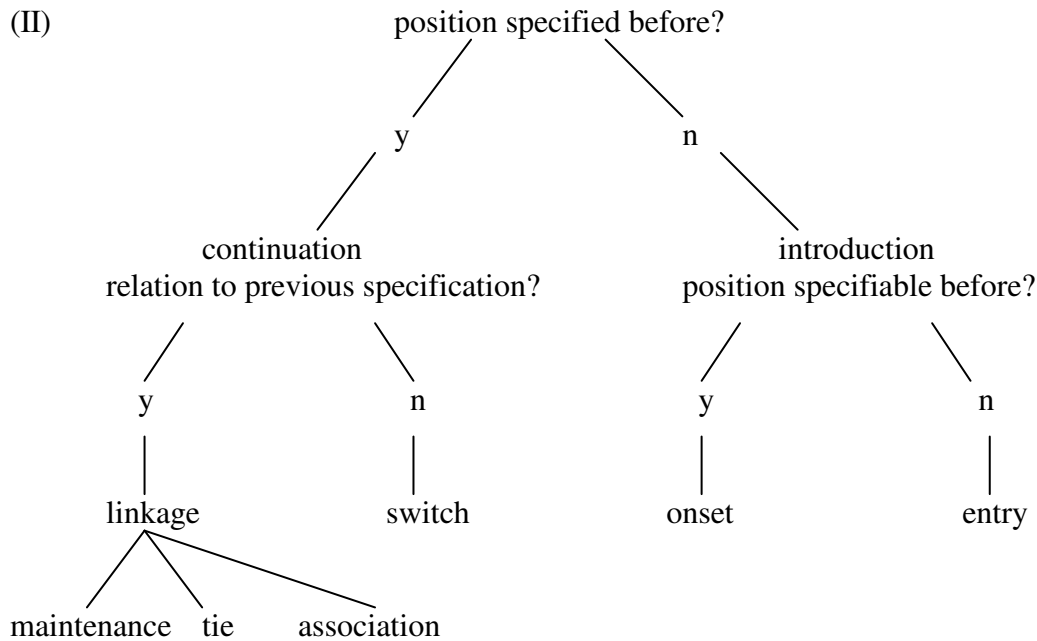
First, we must distinguish as to whether a certain referential domain, say R_p , was specified in the preceding utterance or not. In the former case, we will talk of *continuation*, in the latter, of *introduction*; note, that continuation does not necessarily involve identity of a referent: it just means that the domain in question, for example R_l , was specified before, no matter how. In the case of an introduction, it may be that a specification in the previous utterance was impossible, because the SACHVERHALT itself excludes it (for example, if there is no position P in the basic structure) or because there is such a position but for some reason, the speaker did not specify it. The latter case we will call *onset*, the former *entry*; in actual texts, this distinction is of minor importance, however.

Consider now the various possibilities of continuation. There is again an important distinction between what we call *linkage* and *switch*. In the former case, the specification is related to the content of the previous specification, although this relation need not be identity; in the latter, there is a change of specification without referring back, or using the previous specification. There are at least three types of linkage. First, the referent specified may be indeed identical; this is the pure case of *maintenance*; note, again, that this term refers to maintenance of a referent, not of an expression. Maintenance may indeed be expressed by identical repetition of an expression (*Mary – Mary*), but also by an anaphoric term (*Mary – she*) or even by another descriptive expression which refers to the same entity (*Mary – my ex-wife*). Next, it may be that there is an anaphoric linkage, but still, a new referent is introduced; we shall call this type *tie*. Such a tie may be expressed by words such as *thereafter* or *then* in sequences such as *He closed the door. Then, he opened it again*, where *then* means something like *at a time t_j after the time t_i referred to before*.

Third, there may also be a more vague connection which we will call *association*; it shows up in cases where, for example, a mountain is introduced and the second utterance refers to *the valley* or *the summit*. Linguistically, this type of linkage is hard to grasp; but its importance for referential movement and for text structure in general is obvious. A *switch*, finally, is in a sense comparable to an introduction, except that the position in question was specified before. Therefore, a switch often has a contrastive function. Thus, in a sequence such as *It was strange. Peter cleaned the dishes*, the reference to the participant *Peter* is an introduction (more precisely, an entry), whereas in *Mary slept. Peter cleaned the dishes*, it is a switch.

Let us sum up this typology in a diagram:

particular text, or they do show up but are rare or not particularly relevant for the purpose of the investigation. Therefore, most of the concrete empirical work done in the present framework uses a somewhat simplified version; see, for example, the discussion in v. Stutterheim 1997 (chapter 3).



Among the possible continuations, we group all of those together (as *linkages*) which maintain at least part of the preceding specification. We might as well take those together in which at least part of the information is changed – tie, associative linkage, switch – and label them as *shifts*, in contrast to full maintenance.

3.3 Some complications

Referential movement goes from one proposition to the next, each proposition being a complex web of informations which belong to different referential domains; this web results from an interplay of linguistic meaning – lexical meaning of the words and the way in which these are put together – and context. In a fairly abstract utterance such as (5), the various referential domains are neatly separated, that is, there is one expression (*she*) for reference to the participant, one expression for reference to the place (*there*), etc., and only *did* merges some of the referential domains. But in this case, the domain-specific expressions have virtually no descriptive content, and hence, the sentence is somewhat odd. The lexical meaning of *there*, for example, makes clear that the referent is a place, and if this reference is understood indeed, then this is only due to the fact that the place in question was referred to before. Normally, successful reference needs much more descriptive information. This information is provided by words with a richer lexical content or by syntactically compound expressions, or both. Then, however, the relation between expressions and features expressed becomes much less straightforward than in (5). This has many consequences for referential movement, three of which will be discussed in the sequel.

3.3.1 Simple and compound reference

An expression such as *there* is simple in two ways. First, it is one word, in contrast to syntactically compound spatial expressions, such as *at the castle*, *in front of the house* or *between here and there*. Second, it contains only spatial features, in contrast to for example a

verb such as *to come*, which contains spatial, but also temporal features. Such a *clustering* of features also appears in syntactically compound expressions, and this fact often constitutes a problem for referential movement.

An expression such as *at the castle* is syntactically compound, but homogeneous: it refers to a place. This reference may *fill* the appropriate position of the basic structure. But it may also be used to support reference to a participant – for example in a complex expression such as *the man at the castle*. In this combination, *at the castle*, while still being a reference to a place, cannot fill the place coordinate of a basic structure, and hence cannot be maintained as the place reference of some subsequent proposition, for example by the use of anaphoric *there*:

(7) The man at the castle was better informed than our travel guide. *There, ...

In this example, *there* is appropriate only if it is clear from some other contextual information that the *locus* of the whole action is at the castle, but not as direct anaphoric maintenance from the first of the two utterances. It is not true, however, that anaphoric linkage could not cross the referential positions of the basic structure. Consider an example where a place reference functions as a part of the predicate reference, as in the compound predicate *being at the castle*:

(8) We were at the castle. There, ...

Here, anaphoric linkage is clearly possible, or, to put it slightly differently, the place introduced in the first utterance, where it is part of the predicate, is *accessible* to anaphoric maintenance within the basic structure. This is quite typical for compound predicates. It is difficult to say what is responsible for these differences in accessibility as exemplified by (7) and (8). The type of compoundness is one factor, but clearly not the only one. Moreover, accessibility to anaphoric maintenance often correlates with accessibility to other semantic processes, such as the possibility of being marked as TOPIC or modifiability by an adverb, to which we will turn now.

3.3.2 Accessibility of information to semantic processes

The SACHVERHALT expressed in an appropriate context by

(9) In 800, Leo crowned him.

may also be expressed by

(10) In 800, Leo put the crown on his head.

Time and participant are the same, and the grammatical predicate refers to the same action; but in the second case, some of the semantic features implicitly contained in *crowned him* are singled out and referred to explicitly. These are the object which is moved from some initial position to some target position (= the crown) and the target position (= on his head). Other components of the predicate are unaffected, such as the person involved as a receiver and denoted by *him/his*. This *singling out* of two components makes them accessible to anaphoric processes. Thus, (10) but not (9) allows the continuation:

(11) It looked splendid there.

Similarly, the decomposed predicate allows a more subtle TOPIC-FOCUS-assignment of features. In (9), all features of the predicate except the receiver belong either to the TOPIC or to the FOCUS. Thus, it cannot be used to answer the question *Where did Leo put the crown?* or *What did Leo put on his head?* whereas (10) allows for a much more selective assignment of features to TOPIC or FOCUS; hence it may be appropriately used to answer all of these questions (and some more).

Thirdly, when features are *encapsulated* in a single lexical item, they offer limited access to further modification. Thus, the *crowned* from (9) implies a crown, as is evidenced by the possible continuation *The crown was splendid* (with a definite article). But this implicit crown cannot be further specified so long as it is only implicit. This is not to mean that *no* feature within *crowned* is accessible; adverbials, such as *rapidly*, may easily address temporal characteristics of the predicate. Coming back to referential movement, it does not only matter whether a referent is introduced at all but also how – as an implicit feature of some lexical item, such as *the crown* in *crowning*, as a syntactically separate part of some semantically *heterogeneous* expression, such as the spatial reference by *at the castle* in *the man at the castle* or finally as some independently accessible, explicitly specified referent, as *the crown* or *in 800* in (10).

There is a third, in a sense complementary, problem with maintaining reference. If several features are available for anaphoric maintenance, which among them are picked up and maintained by a specific anaphoric devices? We will briefly discuss this *bundling* of features.

3.3.3 Bundling of maintained features

An utterance such as

(12) Yesterday, the Hammelwades left for Heidelberg.

introduces a complex proposition, including a time, a participant, and other information which is then – with the restrictions mentioned above – available for maintenance and further elaboration. An anaphoric term may pick out some referent in a selective way, such as *there* for place, *they* for the participant, etc. But there are also anaphoric terms which bundle various types of information, for example *this*. Consider the following four possible continuations:

- (13) (a) We may do this, as well.
 (b) This was a surprise. We thought they would go to Saarbrücken.
 (c) This was a surprise. We thought they had already left last week.
 (d) This was a surprise. Everyone thought they would stay in München.

In all of these cases, *this* picks up a different bundle of features among those which were introduced before. Thus, it is quite unselective with respect to referential movement: *this* maintains the *central* feature, or features, of a proposition, which are contained in the predicate, and an arbitrary share of *peripheral* features, namely all of those components of the basic structure which are *not* freshly specified.

4. A brief summary

Before turning to learner varieties, it may be useful to sum up in brief what has been said in the preceding sections. Any coherent text has its underlying QUAESTIO (or QUAESTIONES) which it is meant to answer. This QUAESTIO not only defines MAIN STRUCTURE and SIDE STRUCTURES of the text – its *foreground* and its *background*; it also imposes constraints on what belongs to the TOPIC and what to the FOCUS within an individual utterance of the MAIN STRUCTURE and how reference within certain domains proceeds from one utterance to the next. Any concrete attempt to state the conditions of referential movement has to face a number of problems which result essentially from the fact that there is no simple one-to-one mapping between these elements of the content, for which referential movement and TOPIC-FOCUS-assignment are defined, and the linguistic means which serve to express these content elements. In the next section, we will exemplify and discuss some of the problems which a learner has to solve when acquiring the complex mapping characteristic of the language to be learned.

5. Narrating and describing in L2

In essence, what has been said far about the principles of text organisation applies to adult second language speakers much in the same way as for native speakers. Confronted with a communicative task as telling a narrative, giving route directions or describing a picture, the L2 speaker must solve the same conceptual task in terms of selecting the relevant parts of her knowledge base, structuring, and linearising a complex body of information. The constructive function of the QUAESTIO and the constraints implied for the production of the answer text can be taken as pragmatic knowledge which an adult speaker of any language has at her disposal and which is not tied to specific linguistic means.

Differences between the two groups of speakers, however, arise when it comes to the linguistic devices available to the speaker. Here the L2 speaker can be far more restricted and she can even be forced to adjust her communicative intentions to her linguistic repertoire. As the worst consequence this might result in the fact that in a conversation a question posed by the interlocutor cannot be answered at all. In the given context we want to look at the relation between linguistic competence and complex text production for learners with very limited command of a second language. How is it possible that these learners are able to communicate information about complex states of affairs in the form of narratives or descriptions? More specifically, what is the role of the quaestio and its implications in the text production of L2 speakers and how is the selection of specific expressive devices guided by the structural properties of the texts?

In order to identify the function of the QUAESTIO constraints in text production we will look at learner texts of two different types: narratives and descriptions. The data are selected from a larger corpus elicited from Turkish migrant workers in Germany. They had been living in Germany for several years and had acquired German without the support of classroom teaching. The texts were recorded within the frame of an unguided conversation between the informant, a German interlocutor and in some cases also a Turkish bilingual student (cf. a detailed description of the data v. Stutterheim 1986). According to the definition of Klein & Perdue (1997) the L2 variety spoken by the two informants selected for this study can be classified as Basic Variety: it has hardly any morphology, only very few functional categories, and in particular no finite verb.

5.1 Narratives

The two narratives report personal experiences. They are produced as answers to an information question rather than to entertain a hearer. In the analysis below we will first sketch the constraints set up by the quaestio for the different domains involved. Then the text will be analysed with respect to the patterns of referential movement and the relation between explicit and implicit information components.

5.1.1 Text 1

(H refers to the German interviewer, I to the informant)

- 01 H was machst du
what do you do
- 02 wenn dein kind krank ist ...
when your child is ill
- 09 I erstmal ich Schaublorenz arbeit
first time I Schaublorenz work
- 10 das ist altmariendorf elektrische fabrik
this is Altmariendorf electric factory
- 11 eine woche arbeit
one week work
- 12 und letztes tage anrufen
and last day phone
- 13 das mädchen ein jahre
the girl one year
- 14 kindergartenlehrerin anrufen meine fabrik
nursury teacher phone my factory
- 14 das ist mein arbeitsplatz
this is my work place
- 16 bitte schnell
please fast
- 17 deine tochter viel krank und fieber
your daughter much ill and temperature
- 18 eine woche arbeit
one week work
- 19 ich neue das ist arbeitsplatz
I new this is work place
- 20 was machen
what do
- 21 ich gucke meine meister
I look my foreman
- 22 und mein meister guckt mein auge
and my foreman looks my eyes
- 23 was machen
what do
- 24 frau B. sie sind neue eine woche
frau B. You are new one week
- 25 kann ich nicht
I cannot
- 26 keine urlaub

- no holiday
 27 krankgeschrieben geht nicht
 sick leave not possible
 28 und ich
 and I
 29 naja gibse mir meine papiere alle alle
 okay give me my papers all all
 30 und ich gehen kindergarten
 and I go nursery
 31 und 2 tage das ist windpocken
 and 2 days this is chicken pocks

The introductory question of the interlocutor points at a general problem: *What happens when your child falls ill?* The speaker gives a brief general answer and then turns to narrating a personal experience to illustrate the situation (09). The shift from a general statement to a narration becomes apparent through the introduction of a specific temporal interval by *erstmal* (at first). Given this redefinition of the communicative task by the speaker we can paraphrase the underlying QUAESTIO as follows: *What happened when your child was ill?* The constraints which can be taken as a scaffold for the construction of the text affect the following domains. The speaker and her child function as topic elements, a specific time interval is introduced although not referentially fixed as the beginning of a sequence of temporally linked intervals, the predicate domain has to be filled by references to events, the validity status of main structure utterances is factual. Utterances which form the structural backbone of the text will obey these constraints.

Let us now look in detail at the construction of the text and the means used to convey the complex information structure. The speaker begins with a scene setting passage (09-10) in which she specifies that part of the question which refers to working conditions. By the temporal adverbial *erstmal* (at first) she establishes a particular time interval which serves the function to delimit the proposition as individually located in time from the preceding hypothetical propositions. Reference to the working place and the durative predicate *arbeiten* (to work) leads to a static interpretation. Utterance (11) in itself is not clear as to its function within the narrative. However, followed by the temporal adverbial *letztes Tage* (last day) in (12) its function becomes apparent. It serves as a temporal reference anchoring the beginning of the event chain.

The MAIN STRUCTURE starts with utterance (12), elaborated in (14). Given the telic predicate *anrufen* in combination with a specific time reference the utterance will be interpreted as referring to a singular event. The event line is continued implicitly by an event of direct speech, further on in (21) and (22). It is taken up in (24-27) by a not explicitly introduced sequence of direct speech, continued in (28) and finally in (30) and (31). These MAIN STRUCTURE utterances are complemented by SIDE STRUCTURES of different types such as explications and explanations. The type of semantic relation between main and side structure varies and although there is no explicit information as to how a side structure utterance has to be integrated (e.g. by conjunctions) the respective relationship becomes clear from the overall structure of the text and the specific semantics of the utterances in question.

Let us take (13) as an example. The noun phrase *das Mädchen* (the girl) refers to one of the two topic characters and is thereby located in the frame of the overall event. The noun phrase *ein Jahre* (one year) refers to a time interval which is presented as predication to the referent “girl”. Since there is no evidence for integrating this utterance into the chain of the events, e.g. as an elliptic noun phrase □ adverbial phrase construction, it can be interpreted as a descriptive side structure adding relevant information about the situation: “the girl was one

year old” – at the time of the narrated event.

Comparable processes of inferencing are at work when it comes to the interpretation of direct speech (16/17), (24-27), (29). As has been described in several studies on narratives (e.g. Labov 1972, Quasthoff 1980) direct speech is a frequent phenomenon in standard language, too. It serves the function “einer szenisch vorführenden, weniger sachlich darstellenden Repräsentation vergangener Handlungen”. (of presenting events in a staged rather than a neutral form; Quasthoff, 1980:27). This function might also be involved for the L2-speaker, it seems to be more important, however, that a direct quotation reduces structural complexity at utterance level. The perspective of the quoted person does not have to be anchored explicitly, all deictic parameters are fixed within a field of secondary deixis, as soon as the frame of quotation is established. This frame does not have to be introduced explicitly, it will be inferred – as in the given example – on the basis of the lexical means with deictic function (e.g. *bitte* (please), *Sie* (politeness form of you)) used in the text.

With respect to the global structure of the narrative text the passages of direct speech are implicitly integrated. Although the situations referred to in the quotes cannot be located within the chain of events it is the act of speaking which is part of the story line. So we get a situation in which the MAIN STRUCTURE event, the act of saying, is not expressed, but is added to the advancing plot line through inference. This inference is based on knowledge about the global structural properties of the text – as we will see below, a different type of global structure might lead to a different interpretation of the referential links between text units of the same linguistic form.

Which devices does the speaker use to convey the information structure? As can be seen in the text, the speaker has acquired very little verbal and nominal morphology, formally inflected forms such as *geht* (goes) or *kann* (can) do not contrast with other inflected forms of the same verbs and therefore have to be analysed as rote forms and not as finite verbs. The function of finiteness, lying in the modal and temporal anchoring of a propositional content, is taken over by the global frame values and lexical references. Conjunctions and other function words are absent in the text. The linguistic system the speaker has at her disposal consists of a lexicon of content words (with a few exceptions) and word order as grammatical device.

The speaker follows a strategy which allows him to convey macrostructural properties of the underlying information structure: Utterances are referentially complete to varying degrees. This is to say, even where the subject or the predicate could be inferred from the context the elements might be expressed for structural reasons. In general we can say that main structure utterances are more explicit containing subject and predicate (14, 21, 22, 30), whereas side structure utterances can be more reduced (e.g. 13, 18, 20, 26). This opposition between more or less reduced utterances with respect to the grammatically obligatory elements subject and predicate can also be observed in standard language texts (cf. v. Stutterheim 1997). The elliptic or reduced forms serve to signal dependency either of side structure material or within an hierarchically organised event structure.¹³

Let us summarise the observations so far. The sequence of utterances produced by the speaker can be interpreted as narrative although central linguistic devices for conveying coherence relations are absent. This is possible because of the scaffolding function of the globally established QUAESTIO parameters and because of the controlled integration of relevant presupposed knowledge.

¹³A brief comment is in order with respect to the form “das ist” which is frequently used by the two speakers Vp 1 and 2 in a non-target way. In depth analysis of a larger corpus (cf. v. Stutterheim 1986) showed that this expression is used to serve different functions. Mostly it can be found in relation to a focussed element, highlighting a specific piece of information.

5.1.2 Text 2

- 01 H du hast gekündigt oder die
did you give your notice or the others
- 02 I des is firma kündigen des krankenhaus
this is company given notice the hospital
- 03 aber ich lieb arbeit
but I love work
- 04 die schwester gesagt
the nurse say
- 05 das is bei mir helfen arbeiten
this is with me help work
- 06 und dann leute gesag
and then people say
- 07 das ist türkin ausländer
this is a Turk foreigner
- 08 warum schwester helfen arbeiten
why nurse help work
- 09 muß deutsche frau oder fräulein arbeiten helfen
must German woman or girl work help
- 10 dann alles ärger ärger ärger
then all trouble trouble trouble
- 11 und dann gehen se
and then go they
- 12 das ist chef sagen
this is foreman say
- 13 warum türkin schwester helfen arbeiten
why Turk nurse help work
- 14 und dann weiss nich
and then don't know
- 15 schlechte gesag oder gute gesag
bad say or good say
- 16 und dann gleich mein kündigung komm
and then promptly my notice come
- 17 und schwester ganz weinen
and nurse all cry
- 18 warum gehen
why go
- 19 warum kündigen
why let go
- 20 ich weiß nich
I do not know
- 21 keine ahnung
no idea
- 22 dann nachher ich gehen andre firma
then afterwards I go different company

The second example is also taken from a conversation about the informant's job situation. The narrative is elicited by the question "Did you hand in the notice (at the hospital)?" The informant's reply "no, the firm gave me the notice, the hospital" (02) states a fact for which she then narrates the preceding and causing events. So we can formulate the quaestio underlying the second text in the following way: "What happened at the hospital before they

gave you the notice?” This implies a number of constraints for the answer text:

- The speaker is the protagonist and the topmost candidate for unspecified (pronouns or zero-anaphora) references; people functionally related to the institution 'hospital' are potentially thematic and do not have to be introduced.
- Temporal reference is not specified. It is, however, clear that the events are located on the time axis before speech time. Linearisation of main structure events follows a temporal criterion.
- Spatial reference is introduced by the situational frame ‚hospital‘.
- The validity status of main structure utterances is factual, the predicates have to be of the event-type (two state-predicates or bounded states).
- In addition, a knowledge frame is activated which encompasses working conditions, in particular at hospitals.

As we can see in the data, the speaker bases the construction of her discourse on the basis that the aspects of the information structure mentioned above are part of common knowledge between speaker and hearer.

The narrative begins with a side structure utterance, which contains reference to a state “I like work”. This information builds a contrast to the introductory statement of the notice (explicitly marked by *aber* (but)), motivating the following story. The MAIN STRUCTURE utterances of the text mainly refer to acts of saying followed by larger passages of direct speech (04, 06, 12, 14, 17). Here, again the rhetorical device of direct quotation allows the speaker to present causally interrelated facts and opinions, which otherwise would have to be expressed by subordination and unambiguous referential devices.

When we look at the relation between explicit and implicit pieces of information we get the following picture. The speaker produces sequences of lexical items with hardly any explicit syntactic marking. At utterance level, the information which is carried by the finiteness of the predicate in the target language has to be inferred on the basis of the global frame. The core of the proposition, the predicate with its argument, is either made explicit as in *und Schwester ganz weinen* (and nurse all cry) (4), or parts are omitted when they can be inferred from context as in *dann alles ärger, ärger, ärger* (then all trouble trouble trouble) (10). As regards the text level, there are different sources the hearer can draw upon for the interpretation of inter-utterance relations. First there is an explicit device which is systematically used to mark main structure utterances. The temporal anaphor *dann* (then) can be found consistently in utterance initial position, reflecting the structuring function of the temporal linearisation principle. The relations between MAIN STRUCTURE and SIDE STRUCTURE utterances and within side structure segments remain unexpressed. They have to be inferred on the basis of the semantics of the lexical items used and general and specific knowledge about the situation presented in the text.

Bringing together what we have found in the two narratives the following conclusions can be drawn. Both speakers follow basically the same strategy. They present their narrative strictly within the frame of the global structure established by the *quaestio*. Events are organised in chronological order and are marked as temporally bounded, specific events by means of lexical forms (e.g. temporal adverbs) wherever contextual knowledge would not disambiguate more reduced constructions. SIDE STRUCTURE material is integrated on the basis of mutual knowledge about the overall situation and the specific relations between states of affairs in the real world (e.g. direct speech frames). On this basis, the interlocutor is able to reconstruct a story line, no matter how detailed the information about the single events actually is. In text 1 very little information is in fact presented in terms of event units, and still

the hearer gets enough material to develop a picture of a rather dramatic episode in the live of the speaker. What becomes clear from the two texts is, that the L2-speaker who has very limited linguistic competence relies on her pragmatic knowledge about how to organise a narrative. And it is this knowledge which lies behind the choice of explicitly presented versus implicitly attached content material.

We will now see whether a different text type allows for the same strategy and thereby the same communicative success.

5.2 Descriptions

Descriptions do not form a structurally homogeneous text type such as narratives (cf. v. Sutterheim 1997, v. Sutterheim & Klein 1989). They all answer a “how”-question, but the global constraints depend to a large extent on the subject matter to be described. The two texts chosen for illustration belong to the type description of activities. They both describe working conditions. What can be said about the structural properties of a text which answers a quaestio “How is your work organised?” or “what is your work like?”? It is asked for the specification of activities which have to be understood as habitual events. This has implications for – the temporal domain:; no specific time reference is called for;

- the domain of modality: the validity status is factual
- the domain of person/object: no specific personal reference is required, the predicates hold for a generic agent

With respect to the linearisation criterion the constraints are less clear than in the case of the narratives. The presentation of a sequence of activities will preferably follow a temporal linearisation principle, which is, however, not necessarily required. The speaker might, for instance, choose an overall organisation which follows a spatial criterion in that he specifies activities at different places.

The distinction between main and side structure is also less clearcut than in narratives. Main structures can encompass different predicate types (activities and states), only specific referential anchoring can be taken as an indicator for side structure utterances.

Compared to the text type narrative descriptive texts are less constrained, in other words, the production of a descriptive text calls for more structuring work on the side of the speaker. We will now see, whether this difference is reflected in the L2 data.

5.2.1 Text 3

- | | |
|------|--|
| 01 I | ich gute arbeiten
I good work |
| 02 | und gleich lernen
and immediately learn |
| 03 | das is eine plan
this is a plan |
| 04 | weisst du
you know |
| 05 | das is schwester plane schreiben
this is nurse plan write |
| 06 | das is alles station
this is all ward |

- 07 station alle krank
ward all ill
- 08 das essen gehen
this eat give
- 09 H ja
yes
- 10 I dann ich plane sehe lese
then I plan see read
- 11 und dann de ich alles ekistra nehm
and then I everything extra take
- 12 das ekistra nehm
this extra take
- 13 ich alleine mache
I alone do
- 14 H aja
- 15 I schwester nich
nurse not
- 16 schwester gesag
nurse say
- 17 sie alleine
she alone
- 18 das is alle leute komm bei mir
this is all people come by me
- 19 ich ein litre
I one litre
- 20 das is essen
this is eat
- 21 das is kochen essen
this is cook food
- 22 vollmilch oder milchschleim oder gemüse alles
full fat milk shake or vegetable all
- 24 H jeder etwas anderes
each one something else
- 25 I ja ich alleine gemacht
yes I alone do
- 26 ein litre und zwei litre
one litre and two litre
- 27 und alle teller voll
and all plates full
- 28 und eimer voll
and bucket full
- 29 tee holen
tea get
- 30 kaffee hol
coffee get
- 31 ich alleine gemacht dann
I alone done then
- 32 dann gleich lernen
then straight away learn

The text selected as illustration is taken from the conversation with the informant on her working conditions. It follows the passage discussed above (text 2). With the evaluative statement “I work good, I learn immediately” (01/02) the speaker introduces a thematic frame

which refers to her working abilities. In the following description she fills this frame with information about her daily routines at the hospital. The quaestio underlying this text could be paraphrased as follows: “*What was it you had to do, what was it you had to learn at the hospital?*” This implies a number of constraints for the answer text, in particular:

- (a) Topic elements, valid for the MAIN STRUCTURE, are the temporal and spatial frame (the time of her work, the place of her work), the aspectual value of the propositions as habitual, non-specific, the agent (the speaker) and the validity status 'factual'. These parts of the information structure do not have to be made explicit, they will be taken to hold as long as the speaker does not explicitly say otherwise.
- (b) The quaestio requires to specify information about activities and the people and objects involved. There is no linearisation criterion introduced by the QUAESTIO.
- (c) As regards the amount of relevant shared knowledge, very little can be presupposed.

Let us now see how the speaker operates within these constraints. The description involves different levels of granularity. At the top level there is the interaction between the nurse and the informant referred to repeatedly in the course of the text (05-08, 13-18, 25, 31). The level below is constituted by the activities the informant has to carry out according to the nurse's directions (10-12, 19-22). A third level can be distinguished at which detailed information about the specific activities is provided (23, 26-30).

As the survey already shows, the speaker does not follow a consistent principle in organising the global structure. Rather, the text consists of smaller segments, some of which are presented repeatedly. This phenomenon points to the fact that the description of the working situation is a difficult task for the speaker, which she tries to solve by repeating central information.

When we now look at the relation between explicit and implicit parts of the information structure we get the following picture. Some of the frame parameters, fixed by the QUAESTIO, are not expressed. Temporal and spatial location as well as the modal value are taken as shared knowledge and are not referred to throughout the whole text. Still, the difference between referentially more explicit or less explicit forms is used to provide structural information. Those parts of the information structure which form something like the backbone of the description (level 1 and 2, see above) are presented by complex constructions (05, 10, 11, 19, 22, 31). They contain a subject and a predicate; more importantly, they are linked by explicit devices. The speaker uses the anaphoric form *dann* (then) and the idiosyncratic focussing particle *das is* (this is). Here it is important to note that the adverb "then" has no temporal function. It does not serve the function of establishing a temporal shift-in-time-relation, rather it links the propositional content in an additive fashion. This interpretation results from the globally valid constraints introduced by the QUAESTIO and it is only on this basis that we can explain the difference in interpretation between narrative and descriptive texts with respect to the same linguistic devices.

Coming back to the relation between explicit and implicit parts of the information structure, we find that information which can be located at a level of higher granularity is presented in formally reduced utterances. Those passages in the text which serve the function to specify the activities carried out by the speaker (e.g. 29, 30) are extremely reduced. For these utterances, an interpretation can only be given on the basis of the scaffolding function of the frame parameters. And still, some of the utterances cannot be interpreted at all. Since there is no consistent ordering principle which allows for the sequential integration of the information

given into an overall meaning structure, there are utterances for which the relational embedding remains unclear.

Let us conclude the analysis of the first descriptive text by a summary of the major points. Just as in the case of the narrative, the speaker uses the scaffolding strength of the quaestio constraints extensively. Topic elements remain implicit, on this basis the speaker draws upon a strategy which uses the relation between complex and reduced forms to signal structural properties of the underlying information. There is no question, that the descriptive text is more difficult to understand than the narrative, some passages remain totally unclear. This seems to be due to the fact, that the structuring potential of the quaestio is weaker in the case of descriptions. Therefore the L2 speaker has less to lean on, he would have to be more explicit especially about inter-propositional relations and this is something his language competence does not allow for.

5.2.2 Text 4

- 01 H ja aber was machen sie
yes but what make you
- 02 I akkord
piece work
- 03 und privat extra
and private separate
- 04 wieviel meter schneiden bauholz oder krummholz verstehst du
how much meter cut
- 05 brennholz schneiden
firewood cut
- 06 lohn extra machen
salary separate make
- 07 regen komm
rains comes
- 08 un dann akkord ende
and then piece work finish
- 09 prozent anfang
percentage start
- 10 meine lohn oben
my salary high
- 11 prozent hier weiter
percentage here continued
- 12 ja jeden tag hier meine 5 meter brennholz
yes every day here mine 5 meter firewood
- 13 aber ich hier 10 meter auch hier schneiden
but I here 10 meter also here cut
- 14 geht meine geld
goes my money
- 15 nicht forstgeld
not money
- 16 kiefer schneiden
pinetree cut
- 17 meter 35/25 mark meter sto/stock
meter 35/25 mark meter
- 18 und dann hier eiche schneiden
and then here oaktree cut

- 19 36 mark
36 mark
- 20 oder bauholz auch extra
or also separate
- 21 firma kaufen lang
firm buy long (wood)
- 22 ich schere machen immer
I scissors make always

This informant is a man who had been working at the forestry department in Berlin for several years. Still, his level of language command is very basic. Like the other two informants he has not acquired grammatical morphology, the only syntactic device found in his language variety is word order.

The text selected as example is taken from a conversation on the informant's working conditions. The *QUAESTIO*, preceding the text is explicitly stated by the interlocutor: *Was machen Sie?* Expanded by the already given contextual frame this could be paraphrased as: *What is your work like at the forestry department?* This implies basically the same global constraints which were formulated for the first description.

Temporal, spatial and modal frame parameters remain constant throughout the text, reference to the speaker takes the agent role – if not stated otherwise. All of these parameters are topic elements of the information structure, which means that they do not have to be expressed. The focus information to be specified has to be given in the predicate domain as habitual activities. With respect to the linearisation criterion there is no constraint established by the *quaestio* and the subject matter to be described does not suggest itself an apparent linearisation principle.

As regards the amount of shared knowledge, very little can be taken as 'silent contribution' to the information structure to be communicated. Most people do not have detailed knowledge about the working situation of a forestry worker. So the task of the informant is more difficult than in all other cases discussed so far. How does he solve it?

The text contains a number of informational units, which refer to different aspects of the working situation: in most part of the text, the speaker outlines the paying conditions, which implies a description of temporal aspects of his activities. In some instances the speaker talks rather detailed about the type of work he has to carry out. We get a number of repetitions distributed across the text. With respect to the global structure it remains unclear which principle the speaker follows in organising his description. Rather, the text appears as a collection of different pieces of information held together by the general frame parameters.

If we now look at the relation between explicit and implicit parts of information we find the same picture as in the first description. Temporal and spatial reference remain unexpressed, the validity status 'factual' has to be inferred on the basis of the global constraints. Reference to the speaker as agent is expressed in two utterances (13, 22), in some of the other utterances it remains unclear what the subject of the construction could be (e.g. 03, 04, 08, 09, 11), they contain predications which cannot be added specifically to the information structure developed up to that point but rather will be related in a very general way to the global knowledge frame. This level of underspecification also implies that a clear functional distinction with respect to the categories *MAIN-/SIDE STRUCTURE* is sometimes difficult to make. There is no consistent organising principle which would guide the interlocutor in his interpretation of the specific relations holding between the pieces of information provided by the utterances. The speaker combines elements of the dynamic type *process description* with elements of the static type 'object description' without explicit marking of the internal relationship.

In the case of this text, the communicatively necessary balance between explicitly expressed information and implicitly attached information is not hold. The global constraints do not reach far enough to provide the background for the necessary processes of inferencing. On the other hand, the linguistic competence of the speaker is too limited to verbalise the necessary relational concepts. The result is that the description produced by this speaker does not enable the hearer to develop a ‚matching‘ GESAMTVORSTELLUNG.

5.3 Discussion

In the discussion of the results for the basic variety speakers we will focus on two findings. The first is that communication of complex textual structures *can* be achieved on the basis of very elementary linguistic means. The second empirical result concerns a difference between the text types investigated. Descriptive texts are more difficult to understand than narratives. Both aspects will be addressed in turn.

Comparing the texts produced by L2 speakers with texts of another type of learner, namely children, we find an interesting difference. Children master the linguistic system long before they are able to produce a text with all its facets of global and local interrelations (cf. Berman & Slobin 1994). What they have to acquire in addition to the linguistic system proper are principles which guide the selection and organisation of information with respect to a given communicative task. This acquisitional process goes on until the age of about 12 or even longer. The adult learner, in contrast, might be at a very elementary level of grammatical and lexical competence, but those general cognitive principles which we summarise under the term ‚organisation of information‘ are part of his knowledge base. The L2 speaker can rely on them and he can presuppose them as part of mutual knowledge in a communicative act. We have tried to show in detail how this knowledge is used in the course of text production. The clue for the integration of contextual knowledge seems to be the QUAESTIO, the communicative task with its structural and substantial implications. Given this frame, the speaker can provide very limited information explicitly and still the overall picture of a subject matter can be reconstructed by the interlocutor.

The second result concerns the difference between descriptions and narratives. We assume that the difference is due to exactly those general principles mentioned above. Since descriptions as text type are less constrained the scaffold provided by the quaestio is less supportive. This calls for more explicitness on the part of the speaker – and this is what an L2 speaker at a basic level of language competence cannot do. So we find restrictions for L2 performance depending on the type of quaestio to be answered.

Coming back to our introductory question we can now say that the scaffolding function of the general principles of information organisations as triggered by a specific quaestio implies a chance and a barrier for the learner. The chance lies in the fact that much can be left implicit if the scaffold is strong – this was the case in the narratives. The other side of the coin is that the L2 speaker cannot extend the amount of explicitly given information in the same way as the standard speaker can do. If the scaffold is weaker – as in the case of the descriptive texts – the learner cannot ‚compensate‘ by raising the level of explicitness.

This is a phenomenon we can observe in our own experience. Some types of communication are easier, some are more difficult in a second language.

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