

Comparing the acquisition of finiteness. A cross-linguistic approach.¹

1 Introduction: semantic and morphological finiteness

It may seem strange at first blush to submit a chapter dealing with first language acquisition to this volume, which pays homage to the sociolinguist and second language expert who is Norbert Dittmar. But the aspect of Dittmar's work we wish to highlight in this contribution is that he was among the first to take seriously the very first stages of second language acquisition – 'proto-modals', etc. – as a necessary prerequisite to understanding the whole of the acquisition process. In particular, he did not wait around until verb-argument structure was in place before attempting to characterise the organisational principles underlying the learner's first attempts at arranging words in simple utterances. This is precisely what we try to do here, in describing the two- and three-word utterances of some young children acquiring German, Dutch, French and Japanese.

Finiteness is traditionally associated with the morpho-syntactic categories of person and tense. In this paper we distinguish, however, between the *semantic concept* of finiteness and the way languages *mark* it, for example with the help of verbal morpho-syntax as in standard Dutch or German.

Following Klein (1998), semantic finiteness results from two separate pragmatic operations which we term here 'anchoring' and 'linking'. *Anchoring* provides the spatio-temporal and/or personal co-ordinates into which the rest of the utterance is embedded (e.g. the topical place and time and/or person about which the utterance makes a claim), and *linking* validates the state of affairs expressed in the utterance for these co-ordinates. Linking expresses that this state of affairs is indeed true² for the particular spatio-temporal and/or personal anchorpoint talked about.

While both anchoring and linking functions are fused in one finite verb form in the target languages under investigation, child and adult language learners clearly separate the two. Initially, the items used to express linking (e.g. particles and adverbials) do not adapt their form to the anchoring information. Example (1) from a second language learner of Dutch illustrates the point in case.

- (1) *Ik wél hard rijden.*
I indeed fast drive
'Indeed I can drive fast.'

1 We are most grateful to Christine Dimroth and Petra Gretsch for many helpful comments on an earlier version of this paper. Address for correspondence: p.jordens@mpi.nl.

2 Or questions whether the state of affairs holds, or requests that the state of affairs hold, see below. In this paper, we largely restrict ourselves to assertions.

Here *wel* ('indeed') is used to indicate a particular claim, while anchoring with respect to tense obtains no explicit formal expression. Only later in the acquisition process is this done with the adequate target language means of morphological finiteness. It allows the learner to express the spatio-temporal anchoring information, too.

A shared property of L1 Dutch and German learner varieties is the expression of a topic (explicitly or implicitly) and a state of affairs, such that the state of affairs is claimed to hold for the topic. This relation is established through what we have called a *validation* or *linking device*. It is this relation of linking which receives different linguistic expression at consecutive stages of language acquisition.

The first linking expressions do not stem from the category of verbs. Lexical verbs are used in the part of the utterance that refers to the situation expressed, for example *hard rijden* ('drive fast') as in (1), but they are not made finite. At this early stage of acquisition, purely functional carriers of finiteness (e.g. auxiliaries) are absent, too. Learners do not use the complex verbal morphology that involves both markings relevant to tense and formal adaptations like person and number agreement. Instead, they prefer lexical solutions when linking needs to be marked explicitly. It is only at later stages of acquisition that learners develop linking elements that can carry the specific combination of information relevant to the *semantic concept* of finiteness in one form, namely finite verbs. At the same time, learners also work on the devices for context embedding, since the form of the finite verb depends on the kind of (temporal and/or personal) anchoring chosen.

Linking is the complex of operations which allows the speaker to assert, question or request a state of affairs in relation to a topic. Grammatical finiteness (as one prominent possibility to express linking) is taken to be an (abstract) category that operates on an informationally-structured proposition. Its function is to validate the relation between the state of affairs described in the predication part of this proposition and its topic, which necessarily comprises a temporal reference point and perhaps other components, as we have seen.

The most straightforward relation is a speaker's assertion that some predicate holds for the topic. But linking can also take place with some different illocutionary force (it is possible to ask if the predicate is or is not true for the topic, or to request that the predicate be or be not true for the topic, etc.). Furthermore, the linking relation can be made more informative with the help of particles and adverbials such as Dutch and German *ook, auch* ('too'), *weer, wieder* ('again') or *zelf, selbst* ('myself'). Some of the elements that can semantically enrich the linking function of finiteness turn out to be the precursors of grammatical finiteness marking in early stages of acquisition (Penner, Tracy & Wymann, 1999).

In very early learner languages, frequently no validation device is expressed at all. We often find some topic and predicate in a juxtaposition relation and even predicates occurring alone. Predicates are commonly realized by a full noun, an adjective or a verb particle rather than by a verb. If modal operators are used, they are precursors in the acquisition of the functional properties of finiteness. Characteristic is the use of the negator *nee* ('no') in L1 Dutch and *nein* ('no') in L1 German. It functions as a modal operator with scope over the clause structure as a whole.

2 Conceptual ordering in Dutch and German

The term *conceptual ordering* refers to the fact that both the selection and the sequential ordering of constituents in learner grammar is determined by principles of information structuring. At the relevant stage of acquisition child utterances consist of three structural positions each for constituents with a particular informational function. As we said, the *topic* occurs in initial position, functioning as an anchoring element. The predicate occurs in final position. It refers to a particular state of affairs which holds for the topic element, the relation between the two being established by a linking element. This linking element occurs between the topic and the predicate.

Linking devices are thus used to validate relations between the predicate and the topic. They constitute a closed class of lexemes which can be classified along three broad pragmatic categories: (a) the expression of positive and negative assertion, (b) the expression of assertive force in the use of scope particles, and (c) other illocutionary forces as indicated by the fixed expressions which occur as precursors for grammatical imperatives or modal verbs. As the default value of interpretation, only the positive assertion occurs covertly.

Prototypical examples are given in (2).

(2) Linking devices in L1 Dutch and German

L1 Dutch (examples from Jordens 2002: 724ff.)

Topic	Link	Predicate	
	kanwel	optille. (Jasmijn 1;10)	can-do up-lift
Mijnie	kanniet	drinke melk drin. (Jasmijn 1;11)	M cannot drink milk in-it
Jaja	mag	dop opdoen. (Andrea 2;0)	J may lid on-do
poppie	nee	ape. (Andrea 2;0)	doll no sleep

L1 German (examples from Dimroth et al. 2003: 73ff.)

Topic	Link	Predicate	
des	auchnoch	rausmach. (Lisa 2;0)	that too out-do
nein, ich	kannich	osse würfel,	no, I cannot big dice,
den	damannich	essen. (Valle1;11)	that can-one-not eat
dann ich	kann	bum bum dann. (Benny 2;9)	then I can bum bum then

The two aims of this paper are (i) to investigate what kind of validation devices are expressed at which stage of development in other child languages; namely, French and Japanese and (ii) to determine how language specific effects (such as a different surface word order) affect the conceptual ordering stage in each language. In French and Japanese, there is a word order variation for syntactic as well as pragmatic reasons.

The paper is organized as follows. Section 3 introduces characteristics of the target languages, focussing on a basic word order, what kind of discourse condition changes this word order, and different validation devices expressing volition, assertion, negation and question. Different word orders involving topic in utterance-initial position, anti-topic, and topic in utterance-final position are also discussed. We move to children's

spontaneous production data in section 4. We will discuss what kind of data we used, what the linguistic repertoires of the children were (including their MLUs) and how we analyzed the data. Throughout the paper, we focus on the conceptual ordering stages in French and Japanese.

3 Characteristics of the target languages Japanese and French

3.1 French

Spoken French utterances are characterised by a pragmatic ordering of the full arguments of the verb, with pre-verbal clitics spelling out the syntactic relationship of argument and verb. Trévisé (1986) gives 30 different ways of expressing “John likes apples” in spoken French. We give the 10 most relevant to the present study. Note that there is just one intonation contour on (3)a-j, which indicates that these are single utterances.

- | | | |
|-----|---|--------------------|
| (3) | | |
| a. | Jean aime les pommes.
J. likes the apples | (SVO) |
| b. | Jean il aime les pommes.
J. he likes the apples | (topic) |
| c. | Jean les pommes il les aime.
J. the apples he them likes | (topic) |
| d. | Les pommes Jean il les aime.
the apples J. he them likes | (topic) |
| e. | Il aime les pommes Jean.
he likes the apples J. | (anti-topic) |
| f. | Il les aime les pommes Jean.
he them likes the apples J. | (anti-topic) |
| g. | Il les aime Jean les pommes.
he them likes J. the apples | (anti-topic) |
| h. | Les pommes il les aime Jean les pommes.
the apples he them likes J. the apples | (topic/anti-topic) |
| i. | Les pommes il aime ça les pommes Jean.
the apples he likes that the apples J. | (topic/anti-topic) |
| j. | Ya Jean il les aime les pommes.
there-is J. he them likes the apples | (presentational) |

We can see from the examples that the full arguments of the verb can appear in any order with respect to the verb, and to each other: dislocated to the left (so-called ‘topic’ patterns), to the right (so-called ‘anti-topic’ patterns) or explicitly presented by ‘*ya*’ (a variant of written *il y a* ‘there is’). Topic and anti-topic patterns attest either one or both arguments to the left/right of the verb. The pre-verbal clitics *il* (‘he’) and *les* (‘them’) specify the semantic role relations of the arguments to the verb.

The clitic system allows pronoun copies of oblique indefinites, but nominative clitics only copy definitely referring NPs. Thus (4a) is scarcely attested.

- (04)a. *Un monsieur il a parlé a Jean.
a mister he has spoken to J.

However, nominative clitics may copy indefinite NPs in presentational form, as in (4)b.

- (04)b. Ya un monsieur il a parlé à Jean.
 there's a mister he has spoken to J.

This use of the presentational makes it very rare for a specific, indefinite NP to be found utterance-initially.

The pre-verbal clitic-auxiliary sequences of spoken French comprise complex ordering and co-occurrence constraints as well as morphological person/number/tense/case markings, and are held to be hard to perceive and acquire. The alternation which will most concern us in this paper is between the 'canonical' SVO order, the topic- and the anti-topic pattern.

The SVO pattern as in (3a) is used in connected discourse in contexts of reference maintenance where S is a pronoun. The topic pattern as in (3b-d) is used in discourse contexts where mutually known (or inferable) referents are in potential contrast. This context includes the case where a known referent is re-introduced into the discourse thus replacing a more recent topic, or where a referent is extracted from a (given) set of referents (a sub-case of which is the well-known 'contrastive topic'). The example (5) illustrates the latter case.

- (05) Q: Est-ce que tes parents viendront?
 'Are your parents coming?'
 A: papa il viendra, mais ma mère elle aime pas le rugby.
 'Dad, he will come, but my mother she doesn't like rugby'

Contrast is not possible with the anti-topic pattern as in (3e). The difference between the SVO pronoun pattern and the anti-topic pattern is that whereas both are used with a referent which is not in contrast, the anti-topic is used of a referent that needs to be named to be identified. This referent is "backgrounded" (in final position) to "emphasize" the focus information, as in the famous *ils sont fous, ces Romains!* ('They're crazy, these Romans!') of *Astérix le Gaulois*.

3.2 Japanese

The basic word order in Japanese is assumed to be SOV; however, the availability of flexible positioning of verbal arguments makes it possible to have various word orders. See examples (6) to (10).

- | | | | | |
|------|---------------------|----------|--------------|-------------------|
| (06) | Taro-ga | hon-o | yomu. | (basic SOV order) |
| | Taro-Nom | book-Acc | read-Present | |
| | 'Taro reads books.' | | | |
| (07) | hon-o | Taro-ga | yomu. | (OSV order) |
| | Book-Acc | Taro-Nom | read-Present | |
| | 'Taro reads books.' | | | |
| (08) | hon-wa | Taro-ga | yomu. | (topic: OSV) |
| | book-Topic | Taro-Nom | read-Present | |
| | 'Taro reads book.' | | | |

- (09) Taro-ga yomu, hon-o. (anti-topic: SVO order)
 Taro-Nom read-Present, book-Acc
 'Taro reads books.'
- (10) hon-o yomu, Taro-ga. (anti-topic: OVS order)
 book-Acc read-Present, Taro-Nom
 'Taro reads books.'

To complicate matters, Japanese allows Topic-drop, in other words, Taro in (6) can be dropped as in (11) if Taro is an already established Topic.

- (11) Taro-wa totemo hon-ga suki da.
 Taro-Topic very book-Nom please-Present
 'Taro likes books very much.'
 mainichi hon-o yomu.
 everyday book-Acc read-Present
 'He reads books every day.'

To interpret a language with a flexible word order such as Japanese, one can rely on the case particles *-ga* (nominative marker), *-ni* (dative marker), *-o* (accusative marker), and *-no* (genitive marker) that serve grammatical functions; however, some of these are optional in colloquial speech.

Interestingly, in Japanese colloquial speech (but not written text) a wide variety of post-verbal and usually sentence-final particles are used to mark illocutionary force (Clancy 1985, Kamio 1997). Here, we introduce three types of sentence-final particles: particles of (i) *insistence*, (ii) *confirmation*, and (iii) *rapport* (Kamio 1997, Iwasaki 2002). Particles of *insistence* are *ya*, *yo*, *yoo*, *ze*, *zo* and *wa*. The particle of insistence *yo* is used by male speakers (Sachiko and McGloin 1991) in declarative sentences as in (12) to strongly assert information which belongs to the speaker's territory.

- (12)
 Speaker A:
 Wolfgang-wa hon-o kesshite yomanai.
 Wolfgang-Topic books-Acc never read-NEG-Present
 'Wolfgang never reads books.'
- Speaker B:
 E?! Takusan yomu yo.
 No! a lot read particle of insistence
 'No! He reads a lot.'

Particles of insistence in Japanese are used similarly to 'indeed' in English.

Particles of *confirmation* are *ne*, *na*, *no*, *nee*. As illustrated in (13), they are used to remind the addressee of certain information or to confirm the speaker's information with the addressee. The English equivalent of the particles of confirmation are tag-questions.

- (13) Wolfgang-wa hon-o yomu nee.
 Wolfgang-Topic books-Acc read-Present particle of confirmation
 'Wolfgang reads books, do you agree?'

Particles of rapport are *ne*, *na*, and *wa*. *Wa* as a particle of rapport is found in female speech (Sachiko and McGloin 1991). Particles of rapport are used to elicit the addressee's attention during conversation. This type of particles can be found across phrasal boundaries in addition to sentence-final position as in (14). This is rather similar to 'I guess', 'you know' and 'I mean' in English.

- (14) Wolfgang-ga *ne*, takusan hon-o *ne* ugokasita *ne*.
 Wolfgang-Nom part many books-Acc part move-Past part
 'Wolfgang moved many books, I guess.'

On a developmental note, Clancy (1985) reports that the first sentence-final particle appears in child language between 1;6 and 2 years. These particles appear at the same time as the early two-word utterances, but earlier than the case particles which appear around 2;1 years old.

There are other particles such as a particle of question *ka*, a particle of addition *mo* and a topic particle *wa*. The particle of question is a useful particle that changes any affirmative sentence into an interrogative sentence just by adding *ka* as in (15).

- (15) (a) Wolfgang-wa hon-o takusan motte-imasu.
 Wolfgang-Topic book-Acc a lot own-Present
 'Wolfgang owns a lot of books.'
 (b) Wolfgang-wa hon-o takusan motte-imasu ka.
 Wolfgang-Topic book-Acc a lot own-Present Q
 'Does Wolfgang own a lot of books?'

The particle of addition *mo* usually replaces a case marker such as *ga* and *o*, as in example (16).

- (16)
 Jon-wa ringo-otabeta, sosite momo-mo tabeta.
 John-Topic apples-Acc t eat-Pas and peaches-also eat-Past
 'John ate apples and also peaches.'

In (16), the particle of addition shows that John ate apples as well as peaches. Finally, as shown in various examples discussed so far, including (8), (11), (12), (13), (15), (16) an NP can appear with the topic marker *wa*, which has a role of establishing an NP as a discourse topic.

To summarize this section, although Japanese is SOV and allows topic drop, and French is SVO and does not, both languages allow identifiable topics to occur in utterance-final position, both allow flexible verb-argument orders, and both have devices – case-markers in Japanese, clitic pronouns in French – to express the syntactic relationship of argument and verb. These properties allow surface word orders which are at variance with the information structure Topic - Link - Predicate which concerns us here. Note, however, that the basic Japanese constituent order SOV is more at variance with this structure than French SVO which maps onto it more straightforwardly. The question to be pursued is to establish to what extent the spoken target input from each language influences the organization of early child utterances.

4 Data for the present study

4.1 A note on methodology: how to interpret very early utterances?

For Japanese L1, we relied on the video recordings that the subject's father provided (Ishii 2003). The investigator's/transcriber's comments were also useful but they were very limited compared to the French files. There were many utterances that we could not understand in the earlier files (even with video recordings). We include the data analysis from age 1;11.7, by which time the subject's utterances were more interpretable.

For French L1, we relied on two main sources of interpretation, namely, the subject's mother, and the investigator, both of whom were present during all the audio-recordings. They provide very systematic scaffolding for the little boy, which includes paraphrases of what (they think that!) he has just said, and keep up a running metalinguistic conversation between themselves. Furthermore, the comment line of the transcript is quite detailed, with 'rich interpretation' of the utterances in context, and phonetic transcriptions of the subject's utterances where the transcriber deems this necessary. We did not however have access to the original recordings. Interpretation needs to be handled warily, nevertheless. We have systematically added the investigator's/transcriber's comments from the %com line of the CHAT transcription (MacWhinney 2000), where available.

4.2 L1 French: Grégoires repertoire

The data set consists of the first 2 recordings of Grégoire from the CHILDES data base (MacWhinney 2000: 327-8), made available by Christian Champaud. The recordings took place over a period of ten days, when Grégoire was aged between 1;9.18 and 1;9.28, with notes taken by Champaud on the days in between. These two recordings have been chosen because much of the morpho-syntax traditionally associated with finiteness is absent from them: the period is characterized by complete absence of 1st and 2nd person pronouns, and virtual absence of definite and indefinite articles. But we do find a demonstrative pronoun *ça*. The only verb-types that show incipient morphological oppositions are *manger* ('eat') and *fermer* ('shut'); all others appear in invariant form. There are a dozen tokens of holophrastic *non* ('no') four tokens of the unanalysed *apu* (French *il n'y en a plus* = 'allgone'), but only one token of sentence negation *pas* (plus one that is a direct repeat). MLU is 1.87.

Patterns

Grégoire has many one-word, two-word and three-word utterances, which map onto the information-structural Topic - Link - Predicate (called hereafter 'Pattern A'). We give some examples, before looking in more detail at the linking words. The glosses try to give an idea of the discourse context.

(17) Pattern A: no link

	Topic	Link	Predicate
(17)a.	0 '(This)	0 (is)	lampe (a) light.'
(17)b.	pinpin 'Pinpin	0 (is a)	lapin rabbit.'
(17)c.	là-bas 'Over there	0 (is a)	voiture car.'
(17)d.	télé '(The) TV	0	papa (belongs to) dad.'
(17)e.	crocodile '(The) crocodile	0 (is) pretty.'	joli
(17)f.	puzzle '(The) puzzle	0 (is)	cassé broken'

We see that the topic can be realized as noun (N), adverb (Adv) (or the demonstrative pronoun, see 18a), and the predicate as noun (N), adjective (Adj) or a verbal form.

The linking item

As for the linking items, there are three elements used regularly [e], [(v) œ], [(i)ja], and two – *aussi* ('also') and *va* ('go(es)') - which are each used a few times. By far the most frequently used is [e], which both investigator and transcriber comment on. Here are some examples.

(18) Pattern A: explicit link

	Topic	Link	Predicate
(18)a.	ça 'That	[e] is	[māze] for food/to eat with'
(18)b.	singe 'Monkey	[vœ] want(s)	monter (to) climb up'
(18)c.	christian 'Christian	[ija] has	cheveux hair'
(18)d.	[ekok] '(The)crocodile	aussi (has) also	dents teeth'

Investigator and transcriber both notice an element transcribed as [e], which can occur between the topic and the predicate (cf. 18a). This item is very frequently commented on, as "its function seems dubious".

(19) *CHI: maman est beau ! 'Mummy is beautiful'

%pho: /mamā E bo !/

%com: notice the e or E in <mamā E bo>, its function seems still dubious

The element [e] corresponds to *est* 'is', *et* 'and' and *ai* 1st sing. 'have' in French. It is transcribed by Champaud as *est* ('is') when the context would impose *est* on an adult speaker, in identificational and predicative sentences, amongst which we include resultative past participles. Thus in the first recording, there are 20 tokens of *est* in the freq from the *CHI tier of the first recording, 17 of which have either *tombé* 'fallen' or *cassé* 'broken' as the predicate. Other items in the same context are transcribed [(i)ja] ('il (y) (a)') and [(v)œ] ('veux?'). From our perspective, it seems justified to consider this set as

linking elements, asserting the validity of the predicate for the topic at the time of utterance. We also find one attempt by G. at the prospective *va* ('going to').

There is, as we said no clear example of the negator *pas* in the data set. G. directly repeats part of his mother's utterance *est pas là* ('is not there'), and the only spontaneous use of *pas* is in the following example, which we give with Champaud's comment.

- (20) @Situation: the kleenex is not clean
 *CHI: paprope [= pas propre] !
 %pho: /papwop/
 %sit: mother throws out a kleenex in the dust-bin
 %com: it is the first documented occurrence of the form "paprope" (dirty) maybe involving a negative prefix with the word "propre"

However, *apu* ('allgone') occurs (4x) in front of a noun *apu papa*. From this, admittedly slim, evidence, we can only observe that the negator is placed immediately before its domain of application, which is a predicate.

- (21) Pattern A: negative link
 Topic - Link - Predicate
 [] [Neg] {N, Adj, Adv}

To summarize, we have a small number of (aspectual/modal) assertion markers occurring between the topic and the predicate, and in the simple case of assertion, the link may be left implicit. Although the modal links are more restricted than in Dutch or German, and the sentence negation evidence is slim, the situation is otherwise comparable so far.

Exceptional cases

In the following example, the topic *Pinpin* in fact occurs twice, in initial and in final position.

- (22) CHI: Pinpin fait [?] dodo Pinpin.
 %pho: /pe~pe~ E dodo pe~pe~/
 'Pinpin is asleep Pinpin'

We subsume under "Pattern B" those utterances with the topic expression in final position. Pattern B allows for the anti-topic pattern discussed above in example (3) of section 3.1.

- (23) Pattern B
 Topic - Link - Predicate - Topic
 N [E] {N, Adj, V} N

Consider now the following example (24), together with the transcriber's comments.

- (24) @Situation: having lunch, sitting at table
 *CHI: [mãZe] salade Adrien .
 eat salad, Adrien
 %com: this kind of word order is systematic in Grégoire's utterances (with subject full NP in final position); according to his mother, it could be related to certain sentences in the input ("il mange sa salade, Adrien") but not to imperatives like "mange ta salade, Adrien".

An informal scan of the input does indeed show that these anti-topic utterances are prevalent in the adults' speech, but G. does not simply repeat the constructions, as example (25) shows.

- (25) *MOT: boumbadaboum!
 *MOT: la cocotte + minute est tombée.
 *CHI: est tombée cocotte.
 %pho: /E bobe: kokot:/
 %sit: the stew-pan falls
 %com: notice the form of mother's utterance, and of child's adaptation of it; notice also type of verb and tensed form.

In (25), the subject of the mother's utterance is pre-verbal, whereas G.'s utterance shows the order Link - Predicate - Topic.

- (26) Pattern B: anti-topic
 Link - Predicate - Topic
 [est] - [V-*t*] - [N]

Other verbs occurring with this pattern are the 17 examples of *tombé*, *cassé* already mentioned, and *monté* ('ascend') and *caché* ('hidden'). In Pattern B the predicate may also be nominal, and the link implicit. This is shown in (27).

- (27) GRE: voiture Pinpin
 car, Pinpin

The mother's comment to (27) is (in translation): "I don't know if it's 'Pinpin wants a car', or 'we'll put a car with Pinpin' ". In both glosses, it is clear that *Pinpin* is the established referent (topic), and, possibly, that the car is new information (predicate). Finally, the predicate in Pattern B may be an adverb. This is shown in (28).

- (28) GRE: dedans Pinpin!
 in there, Pinpin!

In sum, (variants of) the anti-topic pattern B are prevalent in G.'s production at this stage, apparently conforming to the target function of backgrounding an identifiable referent.

Discussion

Grégoire has got quite some way towards mastering the informational functioning of spoken French. In predicative utterances contrasts on the topic are utterance-initial, whereas the anti-topic pattern does not express contrast on the (established) topic. Non-contrastive, definite nominal topics thus occur initially or finally.

Ferdinand (1996) has analysed G.'s data from a generative perspective. She notes the restriction that only one constituent is possible in pre-verbal position both at this stage, and at a more advanced stage. She posits a "single focus first" rule which includes what we have called "contrastive topic", and notes at the later stage that the anti-topic is in complementary distribution with an utterance-initial focussed element: "...right-dislocated subjects cannot be contrastively focussed" (1996: 239). The anti-topic is base-generated (1996: 222). This (elegant) structural explanation meshes with the

hypothesis that the utterance-discourse interface is elaborated in line with cognitive development. Our analyses differ however in that Ferdinand restricts herself to utterances containing recognisable verbs, whereas we have seen that the predicate can have other structures than simply VP.

What G. has not yet mastered is the (preverbal) pronoun-auxiliary system, i.e., the morpho-syntactic means of the target language to link the predicate to the topic by subject-verb agreement and tense. We may say, though, that his utterances are *semantically* finite: they assert the here-and-now validity of a predicate for a topic entity. We have noticed four explicit 'linking words': [E] (which is frequently commented by the investigator) and [(i)ja] express simple assertion which can also be left implicit; [(v)æ] and [va] have a prospective value. Note that no time adverbials are used – they are not part of the system. G.'s reference time always coincides with the time of utterance, a fact which is concordant with his lack of verb morphology, and of a clitic pronoun and article system. Ferdinand (1996), looking at data from a later stage, interprets these linking words as auxiliaries *être, avoir, aller, vouloir* base-generated under VP, with an "abstract" tense (1996: 88–89), in effect restricting temporal interpretation to the here-and-now. Where our analysis has recourse to an implicit assertion marker, she postulates that "non-finite root sentences have an interpretation that includes a null element with an aspectual or modal meaning" (1966: 109). However, these structural and functional analyses are not incompatible.

4.3 L1 Japanese: Jun's repertoire

The Japanese data set consists of the 12 files of the Jun corpus which were made public by Ishii (2003) in the CHILDES database (MacWhinney 2000). Jun is a boy with two older siblings. The family members all speak in Kyoto dialect. Each bi-weekly recording is around 15 minutes long. Currently, there are 61 files available; however, we discuss the data from the relevant age range, i.e. files 31–43). Jun was 1;11 in file 31 and 2;2 in file 43. Compared to the French subject discussed earlier, Jun's MLU is much lower. The influence of the input must be great; this is shown by the fact that Jun makes use of argument drop freely. Jun's MLU of file 31 (age 1;11) is 1.29 and it slowly goes up to 1.57 when Jun reaches 2;2 years old.

As in Clancy's (1985) data, Jun already uses various kinds of sentence-final particles in file 31 (1;11.7). Among them are particles of *insistence* (*wa, ya yo, yoo*), particles of *confirmation* (*ne*) and a particle of *question* (*ka*). Particles of *addition* (*mo*) do not appear until 19 days later (1;11.26). As pointed out by many developmental psycholinguists including Clancy (1985), the case particles appear later compared to the sentence-final particles. However, in the earliest file (1;11) we analyzed Jun's repertoire already includes the topic marker *wa* (see 29e). The nominative case marker *ga* appears a little later in file 41 (age 2;2.5).

As discussed in section 3.2, Japanese basic word order is SOV. This surface order of input utterances clearly influences Jun's information structuring (Topic-Link-Predicate) and contrasts to the order observed in V2 languages such as Dutch and German. That is, particles that are used as linking elements to mark illocutionary force occur in utterance-final position. Jun's utterances from 1;10.15 and 2;0.2 include structures with

Predicate alone (29a), Link alone (29b), Predicate-Link (29c), Topic-Predicate (29d), Topic-Link (29e) and Topic-Predicate-Link (29f).

(29)	Topic	Predicate	Link	
(29)a.		atta.		(1;10) 'Here it is.'
		koko!		(1;11.7) 'Here!'
(29)b.			iya.	(2;0.2) 'I don't want to.'
(29)c.		hikooki	ya.	(1;10) 'It's a plane.'
		ookii densha	ya.	(1;11) 'It's a big train.'
		non	no?	(...) 'Are you going to ride (in a train)?'
(29)d.	kore-wa	ookii.		(1;11) 'This is big.'
	kore-wa	buubuu.		(2;0) 'This is a car.'
	[FAT: piipoo piipoo doko itta? 'Where did the ambulance car go?']			
	piipoo	nai.		(2;0) 'The ambulance car is gone.'
(29)e.	[FAT: dore ga kowai no? 'Which one is scary?']			
	koko		mo.	(2;0) 'Here is also (scary).'
(29)f.	zoo	ookii	yaa.	(1;11) 'The elephant is big.'
	kankan	kowai	yoo.	(2;0) 'The crossing is dangerous.'
	wanwan	nai	yo.	(2;0) 'The dog is gone.'

The frequency of each order (29a-g) differs according to which stage Jun is at. The most frequent combination is the Predicate-Link combination. This constitutes one half of the analyzable utterances in the earlier files when Jun is 1;11. Predicate alone is also common in situations where Jun is engaged in naming pictures, objects, toys etc. (as high as 70%). However, this goes down to 20% at age 2;0.23. A full-fledged Topic-Predicate-Link order becomes more frequent in file 36 (2;0.23). The percentage goes up from 0.7% to 5%. This order seems to be less frequent because topic drop is very common.

As expected the interaction between syntax and discourse constraints influences children's utterance formation. Such a phenomenon is observed in the example (30) which has a topic in utterance-final position. It is similar to the French anti-topic construction.

- (30) buubuu issho, buubuu. (2;0.23)
'The car, it's the same, the car.'

Dimroth et al. (2003) and Jordens & Dimroth (2004) argue for Dutch and German L1- and L2-data that illocutionary phrases that serve as linking elements include scope particles such as *ook* ('too') and *zelf* ('myself'). The Japanese equivalent of *ook* is the particle *mo*, which attaches to an NP or a VP over which it has scope. As shown in (31), it does not appear sentence-finally in adult Japanese.

- (31) kore-mo iya. (...)
this also don't want
'I don't want this, either.'

It is interesting to note, however, that Jun's utterances include an ungrammatical utterance such as (32) instead of (31).

- (32) *iya mo. (2;0.17)
 don't want also
 'I don't want this either.'

Here, it seems that Jun mistakenly treats *mo* to be a linking element as in Dutch and German.

To sum up, we have discovered that Jun's utterances are highly influenced by the surface word order and the characteristics of discourse structuring of his Japanese dialect. The main elements that appear in the conceptual ordering stage such as Topic, Link and Predicate remain constant between Japanese and the Germanic languages that have been studied so far. However, the ordering is different. There was no instance of Topic-Link-Predicate order in Japanese; the Link always appears after predicates.

5 Summary and discussion

We have attempted to build on concurring results from two closely related languages - German and Dutch - which show that there is a developmental stage in child language where semantically finite utterances are either interpreted as such from the context or are explicitly marked by devices linking the topic and predicate which signal the illocutionary force of the utterance. At this stage there is no true tense marking and no subject-verb agreement. In other words, the categories traditionally associated with finiteness (in European languages) are largely missing. Full utterances at this stage are thus composed of three informational units: the topic, a linking element and the predicate, produced in that order. The aim of the paper has been to ascertain, from this baseline, the extent of cross-linguistic variation in the production of two children of similar age (and whose linguistic repertoires indicate that they are at the same stage) one of whom is French and the other Japanese.

We found clear formal differences from the original scheme: Topic-Link-Predicate, reflecting those of the surface ordering of French and Japanese utterance-final topics in both languages and more rarely an utterance with the same topic form in both utterance-initial and utterance-final position. The two corpora differ between themselves in two main respects - the number of explicit topics in Japanese is considerably smaller than in French (the 'topic-drop' feature of Japanese); the respective ordering of Pred-Link and Link-Pred as a precursor of the head-initial vs. head-final typological differences between the two languages which will emerge later.

The similarities are obviously that the main constituents of the conceptual ordering stage - Topic-Predicate-Link - are constant across the four languages. The explicit topic expression in all four languages almost always refer to entities, and very rarely to time or place. We may say that whereas the two-year old child needs to identify the entities talked about, (s)he talks about them (in this data set at least) almost exclusively in relation to the here-and-now, thus the temporal-spatial grounding of the utterance can be left implicit. Gretsche (2003) discusses at length why there is such a paucity of temporal adverbs in young children's production and points out furthermore that in the contexts where one *does* find such information, it occurs to the left of the linking element: thus in child German, contrary to adult German, two major non-verbal constituents expressing temporal and personal information may be found at the

beginning of an utterance. All the linking elements have in common that they express the illocutionary force of the utterance, in addition, i.e. the prospective or completive aspect in relation to the here-and-now. None express purely temporal relations (non-coincidence of reference time to time of utterance), nor do they show any agreement relation with the topic entity. We therefore see no distributional reason to assign the status of grammatical subject to the initial expression referring to an entity.

We observe a difference in the linking elements used for a particular language: the modal particles of German, Dutch and Japanese are more varied than in French. For this language the only clear correspondence to the Dutch and German volitional modals is /voe/. The status of the Japanese additive particle *mo* with respect to linking topic and predicate is less clear than in other languages. But the same sentence types: predicative, identificational, modal, additive and negative occur - more or less frequently - in all corpora.

There are dangers in speculating about the results of so small a data set. Thus, we simply conclude with questions for future research:

- (1) The utterance type 'conceptual ordering' seems to be a creative construction of the children in all four languages: it is systematic and, despite the surface word order correspondence, has no direct equivalent in any of the target languages. This piece of evidence needs to be further explored and can contribute to arguments for and against the "continuity hypothesis" in L1 acquisition research.
- (2) More evidence is needed to (dis)confirm that marking illocutionary force is more fundamental a link than person or tense at the conceptual ordering stage.
- (3) It remains of course to relate the lexical and ordering analyses of this paper to a study of the intonation patterns of the utterances.

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