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KNOWING A LANGUAGE AND KNOWING TO COMMUNICATE
A CASE STUDY IN FOREIGN WORKERS' COMMUNICATION

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1. Introduction

One of the most striking observations to be made in second language acquisition studies is the fact that there might be and often is an enormous gap between the language means a speaker has at his disposal, such as vocabulary, syntax, morphology, on the one hand, and his ability to communicate, on the other. This discrepancy may take two forms. First, there is this classical victim of academic language teaching with his repertoire of ten thousand French words and all forms of the irregular "subjunctif II" who is unable to buy a bread when first coming to Paris; this case is well known. But secondly, there is also the case of people living in a foreign country for years whose mastery of the formal means of that language is still very poor yet whose communication is relatively efficient.

In the main part of this paper (section 4), I will consider an example of the second type - the case of a Spanish worker in Germany whose verbal repertoire in terms of vocabulary, syntax and inflectional means is, after five years, still extremely restricted, but who is playing his one-string harp with remarkable skill. It will be shown that he takes advantage of some general features of natural language organization. The analysis given there is preliminary and selective; moreover, it is a linguistic analysis, though perhaps not in the most narrow sense of the word "linguistic". Before turning to this analysis, I would like to make some more general remarks on the role which linguistic studies of second language acquisition in natural context may play, and should play, in second language teaching.

2. Some elementary requirements for improving second language teaching

In 1974, some friends of mine and I started a project on the language and

communication of foreign workers. More specifically, we studied how Italian and Spanish workers learned German by everyday contact, and without explicit teaching. The project became known under the perhaps not too fortunate label "Heidelberger Forschungsprojekt 'Pidgin-Deutsch'". According to the original proposal, it had two basic aims which we felt to be closely linked:

- (1) The analysis of the language behavior of foreign workers at different stages of language fluency;
- (2) the use of the results of this analysis to improve language teaching for foreign workers.

The project ended in 1979, at least officially; in practice it still goes on to some extent, and a large follow-up project is being planned. Looking back on what was intended and what was reached in the Heidelberg project, I think it is fair to say that the first aim was achieved to a large extent, and the second one was not; that is, we have found out a lot about how foreign workers acquire a second language in social context, and how they use it - not enough, of course. On the other hand, the project did not really succeed in giving a more justified and reliable foundation to language tuition for foreign workers, and this clearly was one of our ambitions. Assuming for the moment that this outcome is not due to bad linguistic methods as such - and I think that the results of our linguistic analysis proper justify this assumption - there seems to be an obvious conclusion: linguistics is fine as an academic discipline, but it is of no help for language teaching. Maybe this has to be differentiated to some extent, but it is the gist of a widely shared opinion both of linguists and of second language teaching experts, and the fate of our project seems to be another striking confirmation of this view. It appears to be even more confirmed by the fact that most of the people involved in the project were very engaged in applying their expertise to teaching; actually, some of them gave language courses for Italian and Spanish workers during the project time.

I think this conclusion is basically wrong. I think it is wrong although I fully admit that linguistic was, is, and probably still will be for a long time without any immediate practical use in this domain. But I am convinced, too, that without a systematic and careful linguistic analysis of how a second language is acquired, no serious and well-founded advancement in language teaching is possible. This is an ambitious claim, and it needs some explication.

First, I do not think, of course, that linguistic analysis of second language acquisition is a sufficient condition; it is a necessary one, but

there are others, as well. And second, what I have in mind is definitely not a criticism or even a devaluation of non-linguistic, atheoretical, practical language teaching, quite the contrary. I think the best advice, that, at present, could be given to a language teacher, is: trust your own and your colleagues' practical experience, and your common sense. But don't trust what is sold to you in handbooks as a scientific base of second language teaching. If it is good, it is generalized practical experience, but scientific research in this field has not reached a state where it would constitute a reliable base for practical advice. Doubtless, there is a vast literature in this area, but as a matter of fact, we simply don't know how a second language is learned and on which variables, including particular methods of teaching, it depends how well and how fast it is learned. We have some hints, some guesses, and a few results, no more .

Obviously, second language acquisition is an extremely tedious and complex activity, which is influenced and determined by numerous factors, ranging from the processing mechanisms of the human mind to the kind of language material the learner is faced with; it is crucial to realize that teaching is just one of these factors. It is not even indispensable, though often important. It is less important, however, than some other factors, for example the extent to which the learner is able to discriminate sound chains, to develop phonemic systems, to detect syntactic structures in the input, etc., because all these factors are indeed indispensable in any kind of language acquisition. There are numerous factors of this sort, and if teaching has a special role among them, then this is due to the fact that it permits *intentional intervention* into the whole process of language acquisition. But if such intervention is to be successful, the general regularities of language learning must be known; otherwise, any success is just a matter of chance - or of gift or practical experience.

It may be illustrative to compare this to the development of medicine as a scientific discipline. Medicine is clearly determined by a practical goal, that of curing people, or rather of helping people to become (or to remain) healthy. Now, if curing should not only rely on the doubtlessly important, often long transmitted practical experience of people who are busy with this job, then it first must be explored how our bodies function, which biological principles determine their changing states, and how the processes happening in them can be influenced. Precisely this course was taken by the science of medicine; it may well happen that this way leads away for some time from the immediate practical task, but otherwise, medicine would still be a practice based on naive experience, with cupping glasses and enemas as its main

techniques and the doctrine of *humanes corporis* as its theoretical foundation.

Let me come back from this somewhat drastic comparison and turn to the role of linguistic analysis to give a better base to second language teaching. It has to be explored how this mechanism of second language acquisition really works, before systematic and effective techniques to intervene into it can be elaborated. Now, if someone starts to learn a second language, his ideal aim - which in practice may go far beyond what he is really aiming at - is achieved, if his language behaviour is identical to that of native speakers of that language. This is perhaps not a clearly defined state, since native speakers themselves differ to a considerable extent in this language behaviour. It seems a rather exceptional case that this ideal aim is achieved; in practice, it matters to come as close as possible to this *target behaviour*. Thus, we may consider second language acquisition a process which provides someone - the learner - with a new repertoire of skills. This process is directed and follows certain regularities; it leads from an initial stage, from a starting behaviour, in the direction of a certain target behaviour. In the course of this process, the distance to the target behaviour diminishes, although the development does not always follow a straight course; but on the whole, it moves into the behavioural neighbourhood of the native speaker. How this process looks in detail may vary to a large extent. This depends on numerous factors; to isolate these factors, to determine their influence on the process of second language acquisition, and to describe this process are the basic tasks of language acquisition research. And since the phenomenon to be described is changing language behaviour, linguistic analyses are indispensable in this domain.

Just as with many other processes, this one is to some extent accessible to intentional intervention. If this intervention should be effective, at least the following four conditions must be fulfilled:

- (3) 1. The just mentioned tasks of second language acquisition research must be solved, at least in part: so long as it is unclear what influence certain factors have, how they advance or hamper the acquisition of target behaviour under certain conditions, then language teaching remains an art, which, due to practical experience or a special talent, is perfectly mastered by some people, but whose methods cannot be called scientifically founded.
2. If this base is established, methods must be developed that guarantee effective intervention, or rather maximally effective intervention relative to the given circumstances. This task,

carried out without the necessary basic knowledge about the process of second language acquisition, has been the main topic of second language teaching research up to now.

3. We must know what the target behaviour should be; what is usually offered as such is the codified norm of some reference grammar, perhaps with some additional hints on "everyday speech"; this is perhaps somewhat overdone, and modern language courses often try to give a more realistic picture of the language to be mastered; but as a matter of fact, we - and that is, the linguists in particular - do not have satisfactory and accurate accounts of the language behaviour of native speakers, and hence we cannot offer an accurate description of what should ideally be acquired. This again is clearly a challenge for linguistic research.
4. All this has to be applied under numerous and severe factual restrictions, such as limited number of lessons, rebellious pupils, and too large classes. These conditions constitute a frame to which theoretically optimal methods must be adapted. Numerous techniques and devices are necessary to do this, and many have been suggested in the various handbooks of language teaching.

These four requirements are not independent from each other. To apply methods in practice, they must have been developed, hence 4. presupposes 2.; 4. also presupposes that it is known what should be reached; therefore the target behaviour must be known to some extent. The second condition in turn presupposes the first, which proves to be the basis of all others. Developing and applying teaching methods without knowing the fundamental principles of the language acquisition process resembles that medicine which applies drugs, whose functioning it does not know, to bodies, whose functioning it does not know, either.

3. Some background information about the Heidelberger Forschungsproject 'Pidgin-Deutsch'

As mentioned above, one of the aims of our project was indeed to model the process, or some aspects of the process of second language acquisition. In the next section I shall report some of its more recent results. It seems useful, however, to first give some background information about data, methods and

what else was done . We only studied adult Spanish and Italian workers, and two complementary techniques of data collection were used:

1. *Participant observation.*

Four members of our group worked for about two to four weeks in typical contact fields: two worked in factories, one as a waitress in a pub, and one at the immigration office. In this time, they made more or less systematic observations about intensity of interaction, about who talked when to whom about what, about the kind of language use - foreign talk, dialect, etc. - and other interaction phenomena.

2. *Interviews.*

They had the form of cautiously prestructured, but still relatively spontaneous conversations with foreign workers. Their length varied from one to two hours, approximately, and they took place in the informant's home. Their function was to provide us both with authentic language material and with background knowledge about the informant, such as education, age at time of immigration, kind of job, intensity of contacts with German, etc. The interview language was German, of course, but occasionally the worker's language was used, as well.

We interviewed 24 Spanish and 24 Italian workers, one third of them women. They were divided into four groups, according to their duration of stay in Germany: less than 2,5 years, 2, 4 - 4,4 years, 4,5-7 years, and more than seven years. Since the language these workers are acquiring is not standard German, it was necessary to collect authentic material from their learning environment as well, that is, from the vernacular of Heidelberg workers. This "target language" is an east-palatian dialect; we interviewed 12 Heidelberg workers who speak this dialect and who have regular contact with foreign workers. In addition, we repeated our interviews with 18 of the 24 Spanish workers after two years, in order to counterbalance to some extent the disadvantages of a cross-sectional study. All interviews were partially transcribed in phonetic notation and then analysed.

Our methods of analysis varied according to the different linguistic domains which were studied - phonology, syntax, lexicology, pragmatics. The project initially had its focus on syntax, and we developed a very exact type of formal grammar ("variety grammar") to describe variability and development of syntactic structures (cf. Klein, 1974). A very detailed and accurate account of how our workers develop their German grammar is something like the

core result of the first three years of our project (see, for example, Klein & Dittmar, 1979). In the second phase, we made various studies of lexical development and of some pragmatic skills, such as telling narratives (see Heidelberger Forschungsprojekt (1978), and for a survey Klein, 1979). All of this has been reported elsewhere, and I shall not go into it here.

One of the feelings we had with all of these studies, precise and accurate as at least some of them may be, was, that we were missing to some extent what is really going on in communicating with a foreign worker. Almost everything that a foreign worker is learning is learned in communication, basically in everyday contacts (in Germany, only about five percent of the foreign workers get language tuition). This leads the foreign worker into a paradoxical situation: in order to communicate, he has to learn the language, and in order to learn the language, he has to communicate. This is no real paradox, of course, since communication may run on different levels of language fluency. Thus, in order to understand learning by communication, it appeared to be important to complete syntactical and lexicological studies by deeper case study analyses of communication with foreign workers. Moreover, we often noted a considerable gap between mastering the formal means of a language - richness of vocabulary, knowledge of syntax, correct pronunciation, etc. - and communicative efficiency. The learner seems to be able to develop certain strategies to express himself in the absence of those expressive devices the language to be learned provides. And it seems plausible that precisely these strategies govern at least the early stages of language acquisition in social context.

These two considerations caused us to have a more profound look into the conversational strategies in one of our interviews. We chose an interview with a Spanish worker whose mastery of the expressive means of German is, after a stay of five years, still extremely poor, but whose communicative skills are remarkably well developed. In general, taking an interview for this kind of analysis has both advantages and disadvantages. The advantages are that we have a good and reliable recording - and this is by no means trivial - that we have all kind of background information, and - this is the most important point - that all participants are willing to understand each other and willing to adapt their language behaviour to each other; so, the informant is challenged and has a fair chance to display all his communicative devices. The disadvantage is, obviously, that an interview is not just the most common type of conversation for a foreign worker, and the whole situation might strongly embarrass him. This is a very good objection in general, but it does not hold in this case. The informant did not seem to be hampered by the

Situation, and if he was, his communicative abilities in other situations must be miraculous, because he displayed in this interview a full range of admirable communicative skills. In any event, it should be clear that this is a case study, and all generalizations are premature.

Our study included various aspects of communication, such as turn taking, avoidance strategies, adaption of language from both sides, and others. In what follows, we pick out three aspects of the informant's language, namely the overall structuring of his utterances, the way in which he situates in time what he wants to express, and the way in which specific modalities of events or facts are signalized .

4. Playing the elementary register

The informant is a Spanish worker who came to Germany when he was 42; at the time of the interview, he had been in Germany for more than five years. He had between two and three years of elementary school in Spain; after that, he worked as a farm hand; in Germany, he always had a job as an unskilled worker in a quarry and cement factory near Heidelberg. His family - he is married and has four children - is living in Spain. He has regular contacts with Germans, but they are weak, particularly in leisure time, since he lives in a kind of dormitory, together with other foreign workers.

His German is extremely poor: half of his utterances have no verb whatsoever, he never uses an auxiliary or a modal together with a verb form, he never uses a copula. Most of his noun phrases consist of names or simple nouns, which are occasionally completed by a determiner or a quantifier. He has no inflection whatsoever. His vocabulary is very restricted, too; during the whole interview, he used about 12 different verbs, about ten different adjectives, four or five adverbs, and two prepositions.

This is not very much. What can you say with such a repertoire? A lot, if you know to use it. In the case of our informant, it suffices for a two-hour conversation, in which he gives a lot of information about his life, his feelings, his opinions, in which he talks about what happened, what could happen, and what he would do, if this and that happened; and in which he even tells a number of complex and admirable stories. We shall consider now some of his techniques.

4.1. *Overall organisation of utterances*

German grammar has various sentence patterns; with some exception they all have a verb (or a copula), a subject, between zero and three other noun

phrases - depending on the verb used - possibly some adverbials and some particles.

Our informant has no copula, has no verb in half of the cases, and often omits the subject; for example, all pronominal subjects - except *ich* and *du* - are left out. Obviously, the usual rules of German syntax can't apply to his language. The principle by which he organizes his utterances is completely different; his elementary sentence pattern is a kind of "theme-rheme-structure", where both components are marked by intonation and are interrupted by a break:

(4) theme - break - rheme

The first part is in general marked by high pitch at the end; the second part is marked by falling pitch. I have used the word "theme" for the first part, although the function of this part does not exactly correspond to what is referred to by "theme" in the literature - namely, what is "given" as opposed to what is "new", or else what the message is "about"; "theme", as used here, may have these two functions, but most often, it has the function of introducing a background or setting, and within this setting, the "rheme" gives the specific information the speaker wants to give. A few examples will clarify this use - to some extent.

The utterances of our informant highly deviate in their phonetic form from standard pronunciation. We have transcribed them in a phonetic notation⁴. Since phonetic problems are of no particular interest in the present context, we give all examples in an "edited" and normalized orthographic version; elements in parentheses are added to help understanding; in addition, we give an interlinear English translation. Note that the German examples most often are no less "deviant" than the English versions. To give an impression of how the unedited phonetic version sounds: the first example below is in IPA: [i kinda ni **fɪ:l mɔne:ðə ɛspanjə**]

- (5) (a) ich Kind - nicht viel moneda Spanien
I child - not much moneda Spain
- (b) ich nicht komme Deutschland - Spanien immer (als) Bauer arbeite
I not come Germany - Spain always (as) farmer work
(that is: before I came to G., I always worked as a farmer in Spain).
- (c) arbeite (für) andere Firma - obrero eventual
work (for) other factory - obrero eventual
(i.e., when you are working for other people, you are a casual labourer)
- (d) autonom) - nicht viel Geld
autonomo - not much money

(i.e., as an independent worker, you don't own very much).

- (e) fünfundsechzig Jahre - Pension
sixty-five years - pension.

These examples clearly illustrate the principle: something is introduced as a background, a setting, or a topic - and within this background, or about the introduced topic, something is stated. To call this whole schema a "theme-rheme-structure" is admittedly vague and insufficient; but it indeed seems to represent a sort of general pattern underlying the speaker's utterances.

This most elementary pattern may now be modified and elaborated in various ways. The first and most radical change is the complete omission of the first part. This typically happens after questions, but also in other cases, when the speaker is entitled to assume that the theme is already set. The second modification consists of chain formation of the subparts, that is, of theme or rheme; the whole theme, for example, is made up of a series of subthemes standing in an "and"-relation among each other; similarly for the rheme. A third technique is the repetition of the whole pattern; in this case, there is typically an opposition between the repeated patterns. And finally, the theme or else the whole pattern may be marked by a modalizing particle. Very often, these possibilities to elaborate the basic pattern are used simultaneously, as in the following examples (I don't give examples of omission of theme) :

- (6) dieses Jahr Winter gut, nicht kalt, nicht Schnee, verstehst du
this year winter good, not cold, not snow, understand you
- immer fort, Zement fort. Vielleicht Schnee, vielleicht kalt.
- always away, cement away. Perhaps snow, perhaps cold.
- Zement nicht fort, keine Arbeit.
- cement not away, no work.

(Since the winter was good this year, it was not cold and there was no snow, do you see - we always sold, we sold all the cement. If there is snow, however, if it is cold - then no cement is sold, there is no work.)

The first pattern reports what happened in this year: first, the ground is set by a series of contiguous themes - then, it is said what happened. The second pattern reports an alternative, which is marked as fictive or possible by the particle "vielleicht"; again, the whole ground is introduced by two subthemes, and the speaker then states what would happen in this case by two contiguous rhemes.

Let us consider another case, where the structure of the thematic part

seems somewhat more complex:

- (7) ich, mein Vater kaputt, vier Jahre - (zu) meiner Oma komme;
I, my father 'kaputt' - four years - (to) my granny come;
meine Mutter wieder komme heirate - ich zurück Mama
my mother again come marry - I back Mama
(when my father died - I was four years old then - I came to my
grandmother; when my mother married again, I came back to her).

The three parts of the first theme are just juxtaposed in this case, however, their interrelation goes beyond the pure "and"-relation. But nothing of this sort is made explicit; it is left to the interpretation of contiguous elements.

To summarize these four observations in brief: the learner has no syntax in the usual sense of "German grammar", but he clearly has some principles which underlie the overall organization of his utterances. The basic pattern is "theme-break-rheme", where the two parts are indicated by rising and falling. This elementary pattern can be elaborated in various ways; some of the possibilities, as used by this particular informant, are omission of theme under certain contextual condition, chain formation of the sub-parts, repetition of the pattern, and modalization - which, after all, is just a special case of setting a background. It should be clear that what has been said here is just a first glimpse of how utterances are organized in the early or rudimentary acquisition stages; but it seems plausible that the whole acquisition of syntax has its offspring in these basic patterns.

4.2. *The expression of temporality*

Space and time are usually considered to be equally fundamental categories of human experience, and reference to space and time belongs to the most basic characteristics of human language; but for some mysterious reason, temporality seems to have a privileged status; whereas reference to space is completely left to the speaker's particular communicative intention, temporal reference is very often an obligatory feature of all, or almost all, utterances; in indoeuropean languages, the inflected verb regularly involves a reference to time; there are exceptions, of course (such as headlines), and there are all kinds of ambiguities, but in principle, temporal reference is one of the most salient features of languages like Spanish and German.

The most common devices to express temporality are adverbials and the morphological tense marking of the verb. Our informant omits the verb in half of his utterances, and he has no inflectional morphology at all. He has only

four or five adverbs, no temporal preposition and no temporal conjunction. But he tells fascinating stories, with all sorts of sub-events, he speaks about his youth and compares it to the present time, and he is able to take events or facts out of the normal flow of time - such as general or fictitious givens. How does he achieve that?

In order to understand his strategy, we must have a look into how reference to time usually functions in natural language. We can summarize the necessary ingredients as follows:

- (8) The successful expression of temporality in natural language presupposes:
 1. a shared conception of time
 2. shared "origins" or "basic reference points", such as the calendar origin or the deictic origin;
 3. expressions for time intervals and time relations, such as adverbials and tense markers
 4. pragmatic principles, in particular
 - (a) discourse rules based on a certain "world knowledge" about the nature of events and how they are usually structured;
 - (b) the usual conversational maxims.

It seems that, in our cultures, we imagine time to be a kind of flow in which actions, events, situations - in brief: events - may be situated. This is done in relation to a certain designated point within this flow; this "origin" may be given by an arbitrary event which is thought to be important, such as the birth of Christ, the hedshra, some revolution, or whatever; it may also be given by the speech act itself. In the first case, we speak of a "calendar origin", and in the second case, of a "deictic origin". Time intervals may be seconds, hours, years, periods, eras, etc., and time relations are relations between certain intervals during which events happen; we may say that event a is *before* event b, *after* event b, *simultaneous* to event b, *overlapping* with b, or *contained* in b, to name the most important ones; all of this can be given a precise definition, but this need not concern us at the moment. All natural languages have simple and compound expressions to denote intervals and relations; often both functions are combined, for example in a word like "yesterday", which means something like "at the day before the day which contains the deictic origin". These few remarks may suffice here to explicate points (8) 1. - 3.; all of this is well known, though not uncontroverial, of course. In the present context, however, point (8) 4. is

much more important. It is also less familiar. What is meant by "discourse rules" is best illustrated by a well-known example. In each of the following coordinate sentences,

(9) Kate married and she became pregnant

and

(10) Kate became pregnant and she married,

the same two events are reported, one in each clause, but we interpret the temporal order of both events differently in (9) and (10). There seems to be a general discourse rule which says that, if two events are reported, and their temporal relation is not specifically marked, then the event reported first is *before* the event reported after; that is, the linear order of clauses corresponds in the unmarked case to the temporal order of what is reported. Stated in this way, the rule is clearly false. In

(11) They played a wonderful string quartet. Peter played the violin, John played the cello, Mary played the viola d'amore, and Henry the bass

we don't assume that they played the one after the other. We simply *know*, that they played, more or less, at the same time; that is, our world knowledge, of string quartets in this case, tells us that the time relation between the events reported in the linearly ordered clauses is *simultaneous*. This is what is meant by point (8) 4.(a); 4(b) is rather trivial; it is these conversational maxims that make an answer like "very often" to the question "did you see my glasses" somewhat inappropriate, whereas it would be well put after a question like "did you ever eat a frog".

The examples given in (9) - (11) clearly demonstrate the important role of discourse rules in the sense just explained for temporal reference. But nobody has ever made a serious attempt to work them out. It seems, however, that in German, at least the following rules hold:

- (12) Let α and β be expressions denoting events a and b, respectively:
1. If a, b are coordinated to α and β or as a, β , then the time relation a *after* b must be marked, if world knowledge admits a *after* b, a *before* b, and a *simultaneous* b.

2. If $\lceil \alpha \rceil, \lceil \beta \rceil$ are coordinated as $\lceil \alpha$ and $\beta \rceil$ or as $\lceil \alpha, \beta \rceil$, then the time relations a *contained in* b as well as b *contained in* a must be marked, if world knowledge admits a *before* b, a *after* b and *contained in*.
3. If $\lceil \alpha \rceil, \lceil \beta \rceil$ are noncoordinatively linked (e.g. in adjacent sentences), then the time relation a *after* b must be marked, if world knowledge permits a *before* b, a *after* b, a *simultaneous* b, and *contained in*.

These rules are very tentative, and I shall not try to justify them here. But they clearly illustrate the principle.

So much about the mechanism of temporal reference in general. Let us turn back now to our informant. We may assume that the first two of the four prerequisites in (8) are given; that is, we assume that the conception of time a Spanish worker has is not essentially different from that conception of time which underlies temporal reference in German, and we assume, too, that he disposes of the calendar origin ("Birth of Christ") and of the deictic origin. So these conditions pose no problem. The third prerequisite-expressions for time intervals and time relations - is almost completely missing; all he has are some means to express time intervals, like *Stunde, Jahr, heute-*, some of them include time relations, but he has no expressions for time relations as such. What is left, are the pragmatic principles, and a careful inspection of his utterances indeed shows that he is most systematically and economically using discourse rules. His strategy may be roughly described as follows:

- (13) Introduce a time interval a as a first reference time by an expression α , let $\beta, \gamma, \delta \dots$ follow in such a way that not b after g, not g after d, ... - that is, take the time of event a as a reference time for event b, that one of b as a reference time for g, etc., where the relation is *before* or *simultaneous*; if this is impossible, introduce a new basic reference time.

The best way to explain the functioning of this strategy is again to consider how it works in his texts. The first example is the beginning of one of his most marvellous stories:

- (14) In erste Jahr ich komme in Urlaub, in Madrid, eine Frau
In first year I come on vacation, in Madrid, (there was) a woman

naja (wie) du gross, (wie) ich, nee (wie) du. Ich komme,
well (as) you tall, (as) I , no (as) you. I come
ja, hier (deutet auf eine Stelle) Frau, Kollege nicht verstehen,
yes, here (pointing to a spot) woman, colleague not understand
Frau nicht verstehen; y meine Frau sage: "Name P..., esa
woman not understand; y my wife say: "Name P..., esa
mujer es alemana o francesa!" Ich sage: "guten Tag", buenas
mujer es alemana o francesa!" I say: "good day", buenas
tardes; y (zu) Kollege spreche Frau: "wieviel Uhr Zug Paris?"
tardes; y (to) colleague speak woman: "what time train Paris?"
Kollege spreche: "no te comprendo", nicht verstehen, no te comprendo
colleague speak: "no te comprendo", not understand, no te comprendo
nicht verstehen. Ich ...
not understand. I ...

What he does here, is to introduce one temporal interval "last year, when I was on vacation in Madrid", and within this interval, a second, more specific one is introduced by the rheme of the first utterance: "there was a woman", or "I met a woman" or "I saw a woman". And this interval then is the starting point of the following chain of events; at no point, the relation *after* or *simultaneous* is violated; hence, the whole story can run through without the necessity to introduce any explicit new reference time.

The second example is much more ambitious in this respect. He is comparing the school system at different times in Spain:

- (15) ("Und wo sind Sie zur Schule gegangen?") - ja, (als ich) klein
("And where did you go to school?") - well, (when I) little
(war) - nicht viel Schule. Heute - hundert Prozent besser
(was) - not much school. Today - 100% better
Spanien. Mein Sohn, zehn Jahre - immer Schule, alle Schule.
Spain. My son, ten years - always school, all school.
Ich vielleicht zehn Jahre - fort, arbeite, verstehn? (...)
I perhaps ten years - away, work, understand?
Heute - vier Schule neu, mein Dorf. Ich klein Kind - eine
Today - four school new, my village. I little child - one
Schule vielleicht hundert Kinder. Heute vielleicht ein Chef o
school perhaps one hundred children. Today perhaps one boss o
maestro (*Lehrer*) - vielleicht zwanzig Kinder o fünfundzwanzig
maestro (*teacher*) - perhaps twenty children o twentyfive
Kinder; ich Kind - vielleicht hundert Kinder alle Tag.
children. I child - perhaps one hundred children all day.

Here, he first introduces a reference time "when I was a child" and says how the situation was then. In the second pattern he switches to another time,

"today", contrasts the situation now to the former one and illustrates this with the example of his son. He then switches back again to the past, and this reference time has to be re-introduced; he does this with *Iah vielleicht zehn Jahre* - when I was about ten years old; and this constant back and forth goes on until the end of his long explanation.

These two examples may suffice to illustrate how he overcomes the problems of expressing temporality in the absence of tense markers and most adverbials. He just makes a most systematic use of a discourse strategy based on discourse rules; these rules play a role in any expression of temporality, but they are less apparent in fully-fledged language use, as compared to the overt tense expressions.

4.3. *The expression of modality*

We often speak about events - in the most general sense of the word - which can be given a certain relative position in the flow of time, and this relative position is attributed to them in the way described in the last section. But not everything we speak about fits this elementary classification scheme; for example, we also want to speak about purely possible or about hypothetical events which don't occupy a certain and in principle well-defined place in the flow of time. This also holds if we want to speak about something like the normal, habitual course of events rather than about some specific event. Natural languages have developed a number of devices to express these different "modalities", in particular (a) the verb category of mood, (b) adverbials, like "perhaps, possibly, it might be that, ..., assume that ...", etc., (c) modal verbs like "must" and "can", and (d) constructions like "if ... then". There are languages, too, which have a special verb category to express "habitual" events or facts, but in German, only (a) - (d) matter. Now, our informant does not have the category of mood - remember that he has no inflection at all, but a canonical verb form in all cases; neither does he have a conjunction like "if" or "in case that"; he has *muss* and *kann*, but he rarely uses them, and he uses them never in connection with another verb form; and finally, he has only a very restricted number of adverbs. How, then, can he characterize the modality of what he speaks about, if at all?

He can, and what he does is to overgeneralize two adverbs, namely *vielleicht* - or *filai*, as he says - and *normal*. The German word "vielleicht" means "perhaps", and he uses it in this sense, too, but it is systematically overgeneralized to mark whole utterances or even sequences of utterances as only possible or hypothetical. We may roughly distinguish three grades of this overgeneralization, and we will illustrate them by some example (it should be

noted in advance, that the three are difficult to separate, and all examples are to some extent open to interpretation).

The first use corresponds to *it is possible that*

- (16) vielleicht sprechen Arbeitsamt - nicht mehr (Arbeit)
maybe speak employment office - no more (work)
- (17) vielleicht sprechen Arbeitsamt Arbeit - (dann) ich August
maybe speak employment office work - (then) I August
in Urlaub
on vacation

Both cases are still very close to the regular use of *vielleicht*; in the two following examples, what he speaks about is clearly hypothetical; *vielleicht* means something like *imagine the following situation*:

- (18) vielleicht diese Frau (zeigt auf eine Interviewerin),
imagine this woman (pointing to an interviewer),
vielleicht du verheiratet y (man) spreche, du arbeit heute
imagine you married y (they) say you work today
für mich
for me

He is explaining here the way in which jobbers got their work in Spain, when he was young: "Imagine this woman and you, you were married - *du*, though singular, is overgeneralized to plural here - then they would say, you two can work for me today". This is clearly a fictitious example, just as in the next case, where he was asked about his interaction with German colleagues at the work place:

- (19) einen Moment; vielleicht Kollege(n) deutsch, vier
one moment; imagine colleague(s) German, four
Kollegen deutsch. Vier Kollege, und rauche (und)
colleagues German. Four colleagues, and smoke (and)
rauche (und) rauch y rauche ich mein Paket Zigarette
smoke (and) smoke y smoke I my parcel cigaret

He evokes a fictitious example where four colleagues are smoking, or want to smoke, and he has (or can offer) a pack of cigarets. The third use represents an "if - then"-relation, for example:

- (20) vielleicht Kollege Deutschland keine Arbeit - (nach) Spanien
perhaps colleague Germany no work - (to) Spain

What he wants to express, is a general statement: if somebody can no longer get work - and working permit - he must go back to Spain.

The other important modal particle is *normal* it marks all that is in its scope as a sound course of events rather than as a single, real event; it may cooccur with *vielleicht* if the *normal* case is explained by a hypothetic instance. In the following two examples both *normal* and *vielleicht* cooccur:

- (21) normal vielleicht August nicht Urlaub - Dezember alles in Urlaub
normal: perhaps August not vacation - December all on vacation

What he wants to say, is: "Usually, things are as follows - if you are not on vacation in August - you go in December". The next case is more intricate:

- (22) normal ... Zementwerk vierzig Stunden Arbeit ...;
normal ... cement factory forty hours work ...;
vielleicht Reparatur - vielleicht mehr Stunden.
perhaps repair - perhaps more hours.

The normal case is forty hours of work (weekly) in the cement factory; but *if* there are some repairs to be done, then there *might be* more hours. These two modal particles are still a very restricted expressive repertoire, but he uses them very efficiently, and they clearly allow him to go beyond what is real to what is only possible, hypothetic, or usual.

Misunderstanding the modal function of these particles, or neglecting them, may destroy the whole communication. Let me conclude with an example in which all understanding breaks down and all attempts to restore it fail, because the modalizing character of *vielleicht* is not realized by the German speaker. The following text is taken from an interview with a different speaker, called A, who is at about the same level of language acquisition, however; B is the German interviewer. A was asked whether he sometimes had problems in speaking with Germans:

- (23) A: Ich vielleicht krank. Ich fahre Doktor; nicht verstehen;
I perhaps sick. I drive doctor; not understand;
viel Probleme, viel Komplikation.
much problems, much complication.

B: (...)

- A: Doktor vielleicht ein Papier (...) ein Papier schreibe
doctor perhaps a paper a paper write
Deutschland (= auf Deutsch); ich gucke, nicht verstehen,
Germany (= in German) ; I look, not understand,

viel Komplikation.
much complication.

B: War das ein Rezept?
Was this a prescription?

A: (does not understand)

B: War das Papier ein Rezept? una -
Was the paper a prescription? una -

A: (versteht nicht) Papier vielleicht - ja, receta -
(does not understand) paper perhaps - yes, receta -

B: ein Rezept
a prescription

A: receta - meine Auto schreibe - viel Komplikation
receta - my car write - much complication

B: Was hatten Sie? Oder was haben Sie? Sind Sie krank?
What did you have? Or what do you have? Are you sick?

A: Ich *vielleicht* krank, fahre - däs oben, eine Doktor;
I *perhaps* sick, drive - that above, a doctor;
ich gucke Doktor; sage, viel spreche, aber -
I look doctor; say, a lot talk, but

B: (unterbricht A) Der Doktor spricht viel?
(interrupting A) The doctor talks a lot?

A: Däs Doktor spreche, aber ich nicht verstehn.
That doctor speak, but I not understand.

B: Was tut Ihnen weh?
Where do you have pain?

In order to illustrate his language problems, A introduces a hypothetic example: "suppose I am sick and I go to a doctor, then I don't understand, and there will be a lot of problems." B does not react appropriately, and A goes on, stressing again the hypothetic character of his example: "Imagine he will write a prescription, ...". B's reaction, then, shows that he missed the point: he is asking whether this was a prescription, that is, he is assuming that A tells a factual story. Now, A does not understand. B understands that A does not understand, but he attributes it to the lack of clarity of his question, and he repeats it in a more explicit way. A is still somewhat confused, and he tries to make clear again, that this is a fictitious, not a real event: "Papier vielleicht - ja, receta". Now, B thinks he has understood - it really was a prescription; but it only was the word "Rezept" that was confirmed by A. A now goes on and switches to another, quite analogous example - if he has to write something in connection with his car, or if he gets a form concerning his car; this example is not explicitly marked as hypothetic, but A is still in the world of fictitious examples. But B is completely lost now, and he tries to clarify the matter: "Were you sick? Are you sick? What's the case?"

A now realizes the problem, and he explicitly stresses the hypothetic character of his first example: "Ich *vielleicht* krank, fahre - däs oben, ...". But B does not know the modal function of this particle, he is still in the real world, and despite the following attempts, it is impossible for A to get his message through.

5. Conclusion

In the preceding section, we have considered three strategies the speaker applies to overcome communicative problems for which he lacks the expressive means usually provided by the language to be learned. I would like to conclude these considerations with two remarks. First, it seems quite apparent that the presentation given here is no more than a first glimpse of the phenomena. And second, it might well be that even knowing these elementary devices is of a certain practical help; in particular the last cases strikingly demonstrate what may happen if the specific function of a particle in the learner's language is not realized. Studying these devices and how they develop may have considerable practical value in communication with foreign workers.

NOTES

This paper, as all other work of the Heidelberg project, is largely a product of joint research; I would like to restrict my responsibility to its deficiencies; in particular, I am grateful to Angelika Becker and to Bert-Olaf Rieck for their help. Thanks also to Elena Levy, who corrected my English, and to Marlene Arns, who typed the manuscript.

For a good survey of the state of the art, cf. the anthologies of Hatch (1978), Felix (1980) and the two special issues of *Linguistische Berichte* 64 and 65.

More detailed accounts are to be found in Heidelberg Forschungsprojekt 'Pidgin-Deutsch' (1975, 1976, 1977, 1979) and in Klein & Dittmar (1979).

For other aspects, see Heidelberger Forschungsprojekt 'Pidgin-Deutsch' (1979), ch. III.

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This incredibly tedious job has been done by Angelika Becker, in this case. The whole phonetic transcription is to be found in Heidelberger Forschungsprojekt 'Pidgin-Deutsch' (1979) Appendix.

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