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Multidisciplinary Approaches

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Preface

French is still the most widely studied foreign language in the UK and in many other countries around the globe. For those learners whose motivation is not purely instrumental, French is valued for its history, refinement, and civilisation. Kinginger (2004), in her study of the autobiographical novels of Nancy Huston, an American who emigrated to Paris in the 1960s, observes that, for Huston, 'the French language, learned in adulthood, is valued for the quality of the alternative frame it provided, one that is associated with adult affect, self-control, and subtle artistry' (p. 173). Similarly, Pavlenko notes that for Natasha Lvovich, a Russian Jewish woman who had studied French in Moscow in the 1970s, French provided an alternative frame. Travel restrictions made it impossible for her to travel to France:

> Instead, associating French with intellectualism, sophistication, and nobility, she created an imaginary French identity for herself, learning to speak with a Parisian accent, memorizing popular French songs, reading French classics and detective stories in argot, mastering numerous written genres, cooking French food (from locally available ingredients), and even dipping 'the imagined croissant into coffee' (Lvovich, 1997: 2). For her, this was the only possible escape from the political reality' (Pavlenko, 2003: 326).

In her study on metaphors of language learning, Kramsch was struck by a student's metaphor that 'learning French is like eating regurgitated pâte', which is related to the commonly shared belief in the refinement of French cuisine as well as to an equally shared belief in the drudgery of learning French grammar, or as another student put it: 'learning French is like having phlegm stuck in the back of my throat' (Kramsch, to appear). French is often perceived by learners to be a difficult language to acquire because of the complexity of the grammar.

It is true that French poses some interesting challenges to foreign learners: the gender system is notoriously difficult to master; tense, aspect and verb morphology are complex; the acquisition of adverbs is an arduous task; learners at all levels have to overcome syntactic obstacles: beginning

learners struggle with word-order and the use of the two bound morphemes *ne* and *pas* for negation and more advanced learners still struggle with the omission of the *ne* in certain registers. At some point the learners are expected to dislodge 'the phlegm stuck in the back of their throat' and become fluent speakers of French.

All these struggles are particularly interesting for researchers in French as a foreign language, and they are the focus of the studies in the present book. This is the first volume in English, to my knowledge, which is solely devoted to the acquisition and the production of French interlanguage. The contributors to this book are of French, British, Swedish, Irish, Polish and Belgian origin and all have crossed linguistic, cultural and theoretical boundaries. Clive Perdue and Daniel Véronique crossed a channel and an ocean to reach France, where their academic careers flourished. They brought a breath of fresh air to second language research in France. They also remained in permanent contact with researchers outside France and participated in the first big pan-European linguistic project funded by the European Science Foundation (Perdue, 1984), which looked at the acquisition of various target languages by immigrants from European and non-European countries. This research provided the research community with the first complete descriptions of the 'Basic Variety' (the original studies on French were recently re-edited in Giacomi, Stoffel and Véronique, 2000).

Mireille Prodeau and Marzena Watorek did their doctoral research under the supervision of Daniel Véronique and Clive Perdue, and adopted their supervisors functionalist and interactionist perspectives. They brought their own multilingual, multidisciplinary and multicultural experiences: Mireille Prodeau was a teacher of mathematics and worked in the United Kingdom, in the United States and in Germany before settling down in Paris and converting to Second Language Acquisition (SLA). Marzena Watorek obtained her first degrees in French philology at the University of Kraków, Poland, before crossing the Iron Curtain and finding a new home in Paris.

The Swedish researchers represent different generations in the rich tradition of Scandinavian philologists and Francophiles with a strong knowledge of the latest developments in the Anglo-Saxon SLA world. Victorine Hancock and Nathalie Kirchmeyer obtained their PhDs recently at the University of Stockholm, where they worked on the Interfra project under the supervision of Inge Bartning. Victorine Hancock spent a year of research in Paris; Nathalie Kirchmeyer is of French nationality and moved to Stockholm some years ago. Jonas Granfeldt obtained his PhD at the University of Lund in 2003 under the supervision of Suzanne Schlyter.

The two Irish contributors share the same theoretical perspective, i.e. variational sociolinguistics, which is not surprising given the fact that

Martin Howard obtained his PhD under the supervision of Vera Regan at University College, Dublin. Both are Irish-born and also very cosmopolitan. Vera Regan obtained her PhD in France and spent prolonged study periods in the United States; Martin Howard studied and worked in France, Germany and the Netherlands.

Richard Towell is an ardent francophile who spent most of his academic life in Salford (UK). He obtained his PhD there and became professor in French Applied Linguistics. I crossed the Channel from the continent to London after obtaining my PhD at the Free University of Brussels under the supervision of Hugo Baetens Beardsmore.

The book comprises 10 original chapters that cover the full range of learners and users, from beginners to advanced learners (cf. Bartning, 1997), from different linguistic backgrounds. It will be of interest not only to researchers, students and teachers working in FSL (French as a Second Language) but also to those who work in the field of second or foreign language acquisition and production in general.

The volume starts with a chapter by Marzena Watorek and Clive Perdue entitled 'Psycholinguistic Studies on the Acquisition of French as a Second Language: The 'Learner Variety' Approach'. The authors adopt a functionalist approach to consider idiosyncratic productions in the speech of beginners up to highly advanced users, focusing on spatio-temporal reference and aspect.

Chapter 2, by Victorine Hancock and Nathalie Kirchmeyer, 'Discourse Structuring in Advanced L2 French: The Relative Clause', deals with the development of complexity and the structuring of discourse in the French interlanguage of Swedish learners.

Chapter 3, by Suzanne Schlyter, 'Adverbs and Functional Categories in L1 and L2 Acquisition of French', looks at how adverbs and functional categories develop in L1 and L2 acquisition of French by Swedish learners.

Chapter 4, by Martin Howard, 'The Emergence and Use of the Plus-Que-Parfait in Advanced French Interlanguage', considers the development of the use of tense in advanced French interlanguages from Irish learners using a variationist perspective.

Chapter 5, by Florence Myles, 'The Emergence of Morpho-syntactic Structure in French L2', analyses the emergence of the verb-phrase among young English learners of French within a Universal Grammar perspective.

Chapter 6, by Daniel Véronique, 'Syntactic and Semantic Issues in the Acquisition of Negation in French', focuses on the development of negation in the basic variety of naturalistic learners with Arabic as an L1.

The two following chapters look at the phenomenon of agreement and gender assignment in different populations using contrasting approaches. Mireille Prodeau, in Chapter 7, 'Gender and Number in French L2: Can we

find out more about the Constraints on Production in L2?' considers the productions of two groups of adult learners of French from a traditional psycholinguistic perspective. Jonas Granfeldt, in chapter 8, The Development of Gender Attribution and Gender Agreement in French: A Comparison of Bilingual First- and Second-Language Learners', compares adult second language learners with young bilingual first language users of French using a Universal Grammar framework.

Chapter 9, by Vera Regan, 'From Speech Community back to Classroom: What Variation Analysis can tell us about the Role of Context in the Acquisition of French as a Foreign Language', reports on the long-term effects of a stay in the native speech community on the acquisition of sociolinguistic competence by Irish learners of French.

Chapter 10, by Richard Towell and Jean-Marc Dewaele, 'The Role of Psycholinguistic Factors in the Development of Fluency amongst Advanced Learners of French', considers the development of fluency among 12 adult British learners of French.

A word of thanks finally to the many friends and colleagues who acted as reviewers for the contributions in the present volume: Inge Bartning, Susan Carroll, Gessica De Angelis, Jonas Granfeldt, Anna Herwig, Alex Housen, Roger Hawkins, Scott Jarvis, Raymond Mougeon, Colette Noyau, Aneta Pavlenko, Clive Perdue, Katie Rehner, Suzanne Schlyter, Liz Temple, Daniel Véronique, and Martha Young-Scholten. Thanks also to Moira Courtman, my loyal proof-reader.

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Chapter 1

Psycholinguistic Studies on the Acquisition of French as a Second Language: The 'Learner Variety' Approach

MARZENA WATOREK AND CLIVE PERDUE

Introduction

In this chapter we propose to discuss some studies on adult language acquisition undertaken within the *learner variety approach*, concentrating on French as a target language (TL). The studies range from an analysis of the initial stages of acquisition (Benazzo, 2000; Starren, 2001), around the so-called 'basic variety' (Klein & Perdue, 1997), right up to the advanced, quasi-bilingual stage (cf. Carroll & von Stutterheim, 1993, 1997; Lambert, 1997; Watorek & Perdue, 1999).

We are interested in the recurrent phenomena attested in these studies, namely the 'idiosyncratic' productions (cf. Corder, 1967, 1971) that characterise early stages on the way to the TL, and the 'grammatical' but nonetheless inappropriate (or 'unfluent') productions characterising the very advanced stages (cf. Bartning, 1997). We start by outlining the particularities of the 'learner variety' approach, before summarising some results from the studies cited above.

The 'Learner Variety' Approach

We draw on some results from a large body of empirical work undertaken from a functional, longitudinal and cross-linguistic perspective, which takes into account both communicative factors 'pushing' acquisition and structural factors 'shaping' it, in an attempt to explain the process of acquisition. In general terms, the cognitive and linguistic predisposition of the learner interacts with the formal characteristics of the L2 input in

shaping the acquisition process, but a further set of factors – communicative factors – intervenes in pushing the learner to acquire the L2.

Two recurrent phenomena will be of interest in the following section: the type of utterance the learner constructs in order to convey her/his meaning, and the orders of acquisition reported. First, we have a fresh look at an old acquisitional chestnut, 'aspect before tense', and then at learners' utterance patterns and use of anaphoric devices in the construction of descriptive discourse.

Communicative factors

The type of communicative factors of interest here are those intervening in the learner/user's need to express recurrent relational meanings between items of vocabulary that languages grammaticalise to a greater or lesser extent – for brevity we will call these '(grammatical) functions' – relations such as assertion, temporal reference and determination. Such functions are numerous (but not unlimited), and the ones mentioned involve the interaction of sentence grammar, discourse grammar and context-relating rules. There is little reason to assume that they are all equally important for the learner when communicating. The relative communicative importance of expressing such functions is thus held to be a determining factor for acquisition.[1] Another communicative factor of relevance to the examples below is Levelt's (1981) 'linearisation problem', that of arranging the information for production in temporal order, between utterances and within each utterance. Some of the principles underlying the speaker's linearisation of information will be discussed in more detail in the section below.

Formal factors

Languages develop devices to express grammatical functions to different degrees of specification – one speaks for example of 'aspect-prominent languages' as opposed to 'tense-prominent languages'. Different languages therefore give different formal priorities to functions which are nevertheless shared (temporal reference is accomplished in aspect-prominent languages, and vice versa). The learner who by virtue of her SL competence understands how to apply these functions, has to find some means of expressing them in the TL.[2] It is therefore necessary to understand which are the linguistic means used at first, and how the means used for expressing a particular function change – and possibly grow more complex – over time. Note that the grammatical organisation of the SL, or characteristics of the TL input, individually or in tandem, may make certain aspects of the input highly salient, and others less so.

The very mention of 'communicative factors' reveals that we are inter-

ested in the learners' real-time communicative activity (restricted to language production in this chapter). The analyst attempts to retrace over time how the learner succeeds, or does not succeed, in the communicative task s/he is engaged in, and this reconstruction allows one to identify what the learning problem was at any given time during the acquisition process. The acquisitionist therefore looks first at the way the learner's linguistic repertoire is organised at a given moment, how this repertoire is put to use in particular communicative tasks, and how the repertoire changes over time in respect to the same tasks. Acquisition and use – or rather, use and acquisition – are therefore not dissociated. The object of investigation is the L2 learner/user. We further assume, for argument's sake, that real-time communicative activity forms part of the goals of any L2 learner, be s/he an adult economic immigrant (2.1), or a university student of a foreign language (2.2).[3]

'Idiosyncratic' Utterances

We look in this section at an old debate in acquisitional studies: whether temporal or aspectual distinctions are acquired first – but with the difference (from some published studies) that the expressive means analysed (the 'alternatives of expression') are not limited to verbal morphology. By 'aspect' we mean grammatical aspect, which we define following Klein's (1994) model.

Klein defines tense and aspect by appealing to a semantic function of finiteness. Finiteness is traditionally associated with the morphosyntactic categories of person and tense. However, Klein distinguishes between the *concept* of finiteness and the way languages *mark* it. The European languages typically mark finiteness by verb morphology – one speaks of finite versus non-finite verb forms – but such is not the case for a language like Chinese, for example (see Klein, Li & Hendriks, 2000), nor – and this is of immediate concern – for early learner varieties.

The semantic function of finiteness involves the speaker's claim about a time span. Klein (1998: 227) illustrates this with the following example:

(1) The book WAS on the table.

In this example, WAS is marked by contrastive stress, and the contrast can involve either the time-span ('the book WAS on the table, but isn't any longer'), or the claim ('you said it wasn't, but in fact the book WAS on the table'). Klein (1994) calls the time span for which the speaker makes a claim the 'topic time' (TT), in contrast to the time of situation (TSit), i.e. the interval occupied on the time axis by the situation talked about. The notional category of *tense* then expresses the relation of TT to the deictically

given time of utterance (TU), and the notional category of grammatical *aspect* expresses the relation between TT and TSit. Starren (2001) uses the metaphor of the video camera to explain TT – it is the time the camera is 'shooting'. Imagine you are a witness in court, and the judge asks you, 'What did you see when you entered the room?' The crucial time span corresponds to your entering the room, and just this time span is filmed by the camera. You answer, 'A man was trying to open the safe. He looked Japanese.' The time span occupied by 'man trying to open safe', and indeed the time span occupied by 'man looked Japanese' – the 'situation times'- are considerably longer than it took you to enter the room. It would indeed be surprising if the man did not still look Japanese as you speak. But this was not what you were asked. The TT is your entering the room, and your, and the judge's, use of past tense puts this TT (but *not* necessarily the TSit) before the time of utterance. The time of the action of trying to open the safe, TSit, encompasses the TT. This aspectual relation is imperfective, and explains the use of the past progressive aspect in your answer.

Imperfective aspect contrasts with perfective aspect, where TSit is within, or coincides with, TT; this coincidence of TT and TSit is found in subdistinctions of perfectivity such as habituality or continuity. Two further grammatical aspectual distinctions may be drawn: prospective, where the topic time is in the 'pre-state' of the situation time (TT < TSit), or perfect, where topic time is in the 'post-state' of an event (TT > TSit).[4] The crucial distinction between perfective aspect, on the one hand, and the others is that perfective aspect shows no dissociation between TT and TSit, whereas the others do.

Right from the beginning of the acquisition process, it is necessary for an adult to express temporal relations. These relations can be inferred from discourse organisation principles, or simply left implicit, in which case the relation is by default contemporaneous with the moment of speech. Very early learner varieties ('basic varieties') have as a defining characteristic that they completely lack the usual grammatical means[5] to express tense and aspect, as they are devoid of morphological marking. (Adult) learners nevertheless manage to produce sophisticated temporal structures in their discourse with the means available, which allow the specification of some time span and certain relations between time spans. What elementary learners do at the beginning of their discourse is establish an initial TT, either: implicitly, by taking over the time proposed by the interlocutor or using the time of utterance (TU) as a default case; or: explicitly, by means of an utterance-initial adverb, as in (2a). This initial TT serves as a point of departure, and is maintained or shifted, depending on the type of discourse. If it is shifted (as in a narrative, for example), then this shifted

time may be marked by an initial anaphoric adverb, as in (2b), or follows on from discourse-organisational principles such as the principle of natural order (PNO, Clark, 1971), whereby events are recounted in the order in which they occur.

(2) (a) SF: Gloria **aujourd'hui** ici + quatre familles
'today, there are four families here'
(b) MF: Abdel **après** + avec la police
'afterwards, the police arrived'

As we see, the utterance-initial adverb, in bold type in the examples, specifies the TT of the (rather minimally expressed) state of affairs of the utterance. Starren (2001) analyses the many early productions of Moroccan learners of L2 French from the ESF corpus (Perdue, 1984), and finds a regular use of a *second* adverb of time (underlined in the examples),[6] specifying the time span filled by the state of affairs, i.e. TSit:

(3) (a) MF: Zahra toujours moi [fe] la cuisine ce soir
'always me make the cooking this (= in the) evening'
(b) MF: Zahra **toujours** il [fe] la crise chaque jour
'always he has his crisis every day'
(c) MF: Abdel **hier** le capitaine bateau toujours [regarde]
'yesterday the captain the ship always look'
(d) MF: Zahra **quand [lepeti]** toujours malade
'when (he was) little (he was) always ill'

Starren's analysis of many such early utterances allows a distinction to be drawn between the aspectual values of habituality and continuity, by the interplay of adverbs denoting TT and TSit. For habituality, as in (3)a, b: for all the subintervals of *toujours*, I cook in the evening (3a), or he has his crisis each day (36); (3c), which contains an activity verb, expresses continuity (the time span *yesterday* is filled by the activity of supervising); and (3d), which expresses a state, also expresses continuity (the time span *when little* was filled by his being ill). Thus even at this basic level, it is possible to make some aspectual distinctions, by means of an adverb distribution which owes nothing to the specifics of either SL or TL organisation. The utterances of (3) are truly idiosyncratic in the sense that the adverb distribution of *toujours* cannot be unequivocally traced either to SL or to the TL.

It is worth devoting a paragraph to the word 'unequivocally' of the previous sentence. As a reviewer rightly pointed out, the language pairing of (3) is Moroccan Arabic-French; in this language pairing it would be possible to appeal to certain distributional facts of Moroccan to explain the