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Rapport de mission

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La société allemande de Linguistique organise tous les ans un colloque de grande envergure qui a lieu à chaque fois dans une université différente. Le colloque est essentiellement structuré autour d'ateliers thématiques qui se déroulent sur 3 jours.

J'ai participé à l'atelier « Information structure in language acquisition », organisé par Barbara Höhle et Christine Dimroth, où j'ai présenté, en collaboration avec Cecilia Andorno (Università di Pavia) la communication suivante : *Contrasting Entities, Contrasting Predicates : Perspective taking in native & learner production* ». L'abstract est reporté plus bas.

J'ai eu ainsi l'occasion, d'une part, d'assister à d'autres communications d'excellente qualité portant sur l'impact de la structure informationnelle dans l'acquisition des langues (L1 et L2) et, d'autre part, j'ai pu avoir un retour sur le travail de recherche en cours, qui concerne la production d'apprenants très avancés du français L2.

Andorno Cecilia & Benazzo Sandra

**Contrasting entities, contrasting predicates:
Perspective-taking in native and learner production**

Abstract

From a textual perspective, the information flow of the on-going discourse sets limits to the way speakers can organize the single utterance information structure. However, the on-going discourse acts in a non-deterministic way, as in the same context speakers can adopt different perspectives, and different information structures, in order to convey the same linguistic content. Moreover, lexical and morphosyntactic means, in providing ready-to-use marking devices, can steer speakers of different languages towards different perspectives (cf. Slobin's *thinking for speaking*).

In this presentation we concentrate on the selection of the utterance focal information, taking into account contexts where, given the previous information flow, two elements within the utterance (the main entity and the predicate polarity) could in principle assume the focal status; namely when speakers have to express that a situation previously occurring for some entities – in (1) 'jumping out of the window' – does not apply to a new entity (1 iv.).

- (1) i. The house of Mr Red, Blue and Green is on fire.
ii. Mr Blue jumps out of the window
iii. Mr Green jumps of the window
iv. Mr Red on the other hand does not want to jump

In iv. at least two perspectives can be adopted in the utterance information organization, either focussing on the new entity for which the situation holds (focus on the entity), or focussing on the fact that the situation does in fact hold for some entity (focus on the polarity value).

With respect to such specific information configuration, we compare native and learner narrative production data elicited with the support of the video *Finite story* (Dimroth 2006), in order to tackle the following research questions :

- which specific means do native speakers use when competing focal points are concerned? Are there clearcut crosslinguistic preferences related to typological differences?

- which means do L2 learners adopt in the same contexts? does L2 production reflect the L1 preferred information organization?

The analysis of native speakers' retellings for German, Italian, French and Dutch (20 subjects for each language) reveals remarkable crosslinguistic differences. Speakers of Germanic languages heavily rely on particles like *doch/toch* in order to focus on the polarity contrast, while speakers of Romance languages show a number of different devices (adverb(ial)s as *invece, par contre*, strong pronouns and marked syntactic structures such as cleft sentences) mainly to highlight the entity contrast. Moreover, differences between Italian and French can be seen both in the frequency of the different means and in the syntactic structures produced. We now intend to analyze data of L2 French (Italian and German learners) and L2 Italian (German and French learners) of both intermediate and advanced learners in order to answer the second set of questions. Our hypothesis is that, independently of the source language, learners will initially rely on lexical means (particles, adverbials), while marked syntactic devices will appear only at very advanced stages.

References

Andorno C., Benazzo S., Dimroth Ch. & J. Verhagen (in prep.) Discourse cohesion in narratives: crosslinguistic differences in the scope of anaphoric linking devices.

Dimroth, C. 2006. The Finite Story. Max-Planck-Institute for Psycholinguistics, http://corpus1.mpi.nl/ds/imdi_browser?openpath=MPI560350%23

Klein W. & Ch. von Steutterheim 1991. Text structure and referential movement, *Sprache und Pragmatik* 22,1-32.