

Preface

 <https://doi.org/10.1075/sibil.7.01pre>

Pages ix–xii of

The Acquisition of Temporality in a Second Language

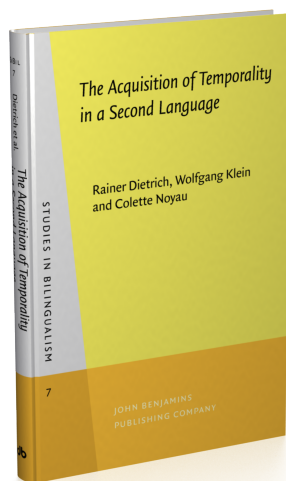
Rainer Dietrich, Wolfgang Klein and Colette Noyau

[*Studies in Bilingualism*, 7] 1995. xii, 288 pp.

© John Benjamins Publishing Company

This electronic file may not be altered in any way. For any reuse of this material written permission should be obtained from the publishers or through the Copyright Clearance Center (for USA: www.copyright.com).

For further information, please contact rights@benjamins.nl or consult our website at benjamins.com/rights



Preface

This study is part of a larger project organised under the auspices of the European Science Foundation (ESF) in which the second language acquisition of adult immigrants was investigated longitudinally and cross-linguistically in five European countries. The aims, scope and layout of the project as a whole are described in detail in chapter 1.2.

The concept of time has been investigated by scholars of many disciplines, from psychology to physics. Why one should look at temporality through the severely restricted instrument of a beginner's second language, however, deserves some explanation. We briefly consider three areas of research for which empirically based insights into the organisation of temporality in early learner languages might be relevant or of interest.

(1) The question as to how a second language is acquired has been studied from different perspectives for about a half century. After periods devoted mainly to pedagogical and, later, theoretical questions, there emerged in the late sixties a psycholinguistic interest in second language acquisition with a strong focus on the adult learner. With a better understanding of the structural properties and regularities of learner languages, the scope of SLA research widened and more functional analyses were undertaken. Since the expression of the temporal circumstances and properties of events plays an important role in all linguistic communication, it was quite natural to make "temporality" one of the six major research topics of the present project in the hope and expectation that our results in this area will contribute to a better general understanding of language acquisition.

(2) We analyse the way an adult learner, without substantial exposure to classroom teaching, breaks down the complex concept of time as it is encoded in the target language, how he/she (for reasons of simplicity henceforth 'he') expresses temporal categories in his elementary learner language, how more complex temporal meanings develop, and how the various linguistic means interact at different stages of development.

In the comparative, cross-linguistic framework of analysis adopted here, such findings should also provide original evidence on the way in which temporality is organised in language.

(3) It is common knowledge that we do not have direct observational access to the entities, structures and processes of human cognition and that linguistic behaviour is ascribed a window function in this respect. Data from first language acquisition research in particular have been used as a tool to study the development of concepts in the human mind, and there is good reason to think that an adult learner's struggle with the semantics of time in a second language will shed some light on the structure of the underlying concepts as well.

Acknowledgements

In part this book is based on a report to the European Science Foundation (*Second language acquisition by adult immigrants. An Additional Activity of the European Science Foundation. Final Report V.* Strasbourg 1988); chapters 2 and 4 are completely rewritten, most other parts are substantially revised. Listed below are the authors of the different sections of the text:

- Chapter 1 Introduction
Rainer Dietrich and Clive Perdue
- Chapter 2 Frame of analysis
Wolfgang Klein
- Chapter 3 The acquisition of English
Wolfgang Klein
- Chapter 4 The acquisition of German
Rainer Dietrich
- Chapter 5 The acquisition of Dutch
Wolfgang Klein, Josée Coenen, Korrie van Helvert and
Henriëtte Hendriks
- Chapter 6 The acquisition of French
Colette Noyau, Et-Tayeb Houdaïfa, Marie-Thérèse Vasseur and
Daniel Véronique
- Chapter 7 The acquisition of Swedish
Colette Noyau, Beatriz Dorriots, Sören Sjöström and Kaarlo
Voionmaa
- Chapter 8 Conclusions
Wolfgang Klein, Rainer Dietrich and Colette Noyau

The final revision of the entire book was done by Clive Perdue, who not only turned the authors' English into English but also tried his best to harmonise their thinking and writing. Although all authors follow the same approach, the reader will note that the individual chapters show many traces of their individual style.

All of this work was made possible through the friendly collaboration of the informants during three years of data collection, the patient work of source and target language interviewers and transcribers, and the numerous discussions we had with other researchers from the research teams.

We also wish to thank Helmut Feldweg, Marlene Jonas and Marianne Starren (Max-Planck-Institut) for their efficient and friendly help. Finally, particular thanks are due to Sylvia Aal, who did a masterly job (again!).

Transcription and presentation of recorded data

Transcriptions are orthographic except where the written code imposes an *a priori* analysis on the relevant stretch of speech; in these cases, broad phonetic transcription enclosed in [] is used. For example, the ending [e] on a French verb has at least five spellings in standard orthography, all of which are *a priori* too specific for at least the first stages of the acquisition of French.

Examples of the production of learners of Dutch, French and German (and occasionally of English!) are assigned English glosses between ‘ ’. These glosses are merely intended to give the reader the general meaning of the utterance, and should by no means be interpreted as a grammatical analysis.

Other **transcription conventions** are as follows:

- / indicates a speaker's self-interruption;
- \ indicates a speaker's interruption by the interlocutor;
- () enclose sequences which are difficult to identify; inaudible sequences are indicated by (xxx);
- < > enclose a transcriber's or analyst's comment;
- * * enclose a sequence in a language other than the target language;
- + indicates an unfilled pause; ++ indicates a longer unfilled pause;
- ↑ indicates rising intonation; ↓ indicates falling intonation;
- ... indicates that a short sequence, sometimes of a metalinguistic nature (...M...) has been edited out.
- CAPS words transcribed in CAPITALS were pronounced emphatically.

Technical terms are to be found in the subject index. They are defined as they are introduced into the text.