



Colloquium on
Language Acquisition and Change
Across the Lifespan and across
Generations

Abstracts Booklet

June 12 – 13, 2008

University of Hamburg
-- University Guest House --

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Language Acquisition and Change: Across the Lifespan and across Generations

University of Hamburg
Collaborative Research Center on Multilingualism
June 12 – 13, 2008.

Venue: Gästehaus der Universität, Rothenbaumchaussee 34
http://www.uni-hamburg.de/services/gaestehaus/index_e.html

Ever since Hermann Paul (1880), it has been suggested repeatedly that first language acquisition is the *locus* of grammatical change. Formulated in terms of more recent theorizing about diachronic change, the claim is that the language learning child is the principal agent of grammatical reanalysis, since this type of change does not seem to happen in mature grammars. On the other hand, other types of changes do happen across the lifespan; see Sankoff (2004). The changes in question may be due to the acquisition of new knowledge or skills, but they may also result from attrition or loss of skills and perhaps of knowledge. At any rate, the task of explaining diachronic change has been shifted to a large extent to studies of language acquisition and attrition. From this it follows that the plausibility of any scenario suggested as an explanation of grammatical change needs to be tested against what is known about the mechanisms of language development and courses of development itself.

The purpose of this workshop is to bring together a small group of researchers from different subfields of developmental linguistics, e.g. bilingual acquisition, including child second language acquisition, language attrition, and diachronic change. They are invited to present and discuss issues of common interest, focusing on syntax, morphology, and phonology.

Program

June 12, 2008

- 08.30-08.35 Monika Rothweiler (Chair of the Research Center on Multilingualism):
Welcome address
- 08.35-09.00 Jürgen M. Meisel:
Language acquisition and diachronic change – introductory remarks
- 09.00-09.50 Gillian Sankoff:
Lifespan change and language change: Real-time evidence for three trajectory types
- 09.50-10.30 Martin Rakow, Conxita Lleó & Javier Arias Navarro:
Bilingual acquisition of VOT across the first years of life and beyond

Coffee break

- 10.50-11.30 Conxita Lleó, Susana Cortés & Ariadna Benet:
Comparing on-going sound change in Catalan across generations in two districts of Barcelona
- 11.30-12.10 Monika Rothweiler:
Subject omissions in German successive bilingual children

Lunch break

- 14.00-14.50 Christina Flores:
Language attrition in Portuguese-German bilinguals
- 14.50-15.30 Aldona Sopata:
Finiteness in child second language acquisition
- 15.30-16.10 Claudia Stöber:
The acquisition of clitic subject and object pronouns in early child L2

Coffee break

- 16.30-17.10 Frédéric Isel & Christian Büchel:
Does the cortical representation of the mental lexicon “change” according to the age of onset of language acquisition? fMRI evidence from successive and simultaneous French-German bilingual readers
- 17.10-17.50 Monique Kügow:
Hearing adults with deaf parents: bimodal-bilingual language impact on the brain

Coffee break

18.10-19.00 Fred Weerman:
Rules and frames in change: the case of grammatical gender

20.00 *Conference dinner*

June 13, 2008

09.00-09.50 Mary A. Kato:
The 'grammar' of literate Brazilian adults at the turn of the century

09.50-10.30 Lukas Pietsch:
Changes across the lifespan in the written record? Case studies
from 19th-century letter writers

Coffee break

10.50-11.30 Steffen Höder:
When did who change what? Observations from late medieval
Swedish and their implications for historical linguistics

11.30-12.10 Martin Elsig:
Quantitative patterns of language change as indicators of
grammatical change

12.10-13.00 David Lightfoot:
Complexity in language change

13.00-13.15 Esther Rinke:
Closing remarks

Quantitative patterns of language change as indicators of grammatical change

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In this paper, I will discuss a case of syntactic variation and change. Focusing on the variability within the interrogative system of Québec French (based on data stemming from both the 20th century *Ottawa-Hull French Corpus*, cf. Poplack 1989, and the 19th century *Récits du français québécois d'autrefois*, cf. Poplack & St-Amand 2007), I will first address the question as to how the coexistence of a multitude of different word order variants can synchronically be accounted for on the assumption of an underlying homogeneous linguistic knowledge on the part of the speakers. My main argument will relate to the possibility that different word order variants are actually based on an identical syntactic derivation. What differs in each of these variants, is rather the question whether a certain (interpretable or uninterpretable) interrogative feature correlates with a phonetically realized item or not. In cases where a word order variant undoubtedly coincides with a different syntactic derivation, a code-switch towards a more formal style is likely. Instead of arbitrarily stipulating this code-switch, it is suggested by independent empirical evidence.

In a second step, the diachronic development of these patterns of variation will be considered. Based on a quantitative assessment of interrogative tokens from late Middle and Classical French literature and plays (collected and analyzed within the research project on the Historical Syntax of Romance Languages, established at the Collaborative Research Center on Multilingualism, University of Hamburg), it will be shown that even though the same word order variants may be found in earlier periods of French, their quantitative distribution and patterns of conditioning suggest a different underlying structural system. These observations may best be captured by assuming V^o-to-C^o and wh-to-SpecCP movement in earlier periods of French, and V^o-to-T^o and wh-to-SpecTP movement in Modern Québec French.

In this case study, syntactic change affecting the core grammar of the speakers becomes visible when comparing the Middle French with the

Modern Québec French interrogative system. Changes of the usage of particular word order variants in twentieth century Québec French, such as the gradual replacement of Pronominal inversion by *tu*-questions, however turn out not to affect the core grammar proper. They rather represent alternate phonetic ways of verbalizing the same underlying derivation. This illustrates that in order to qualify the exact nature of the language change under consideration, it is necessary to determine at which linguistic level the observed variability actually applies.

Language attrition in Portuguese-German bilinguals

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Focussing Language Attrition, the present study attempts to investigate the linguistic competence of Portuguese-German bilingual speakers who have lost regular contact with their L2 (German).

The analysis concentrates on two brothers, Sérgio and Rui, who grew up bilingually in Germany and moved to Portugal with their mother at the age of 15 and 9, respectively. The boys were tape-recorded at two different moments of their life: 1) a few months after their return, when their favoured language was still German; 2) two years after the first recording sessions, when their dominant language was already Portuguese and they had lost regular German input.

The available data allows us to explore two different questions: On the one hand, can we observe the emergence of L2 attrition after 2 years without regular German input? On the other hand, are there visible differences in the competence of the brothers, which can be linked to the factor "age of return"?

The analysis focuses on some word order phenomena, like verb placement in main and subordinate clauses, the adjective-noun order within the NP, the position of *nicht* in negative sentences.

The results are complemented with the data of a larger study on bilingual returnees, based on a corpus of 16 participants, who are grouped according to their age of return: 1) speakers who came to Portugal in childhood (ages 7 – 11); 2) speakers who returned in adolescence or late childhood (after age 12).

The comparison between both boys is in accordance with the analysed data of the 16 speakers: the period around age 11 seems to be a critical phase in language development. The speakers who lost L2 input earlier than age 11/12 show significantly more syntactic deficits than the speakers who came to Portugal after age 12.

When did who change what? Observations from late medieval Swedish and their implications for historical linguistics

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According to the Uniformity Principle, nothing that is now impossible can have been the case in the past and vice versa. Thus, it is essential for historical linguistics to investigate and compare language change phenomena from both the past and the present. However, while language change in earlier linguistic stages is usually described and explained as due to long-term developments, recent changes are often shown to occur quite unexpectedly, suddenly, and rapidly.

This contradictory picture is a challenge particularly for historical linguistics, since we should expect (and try) to find similar phenomena before the 20th century as well. In my talk, I will focus on some contact-induced syntactic innovations in late medieval Swedish. By investigating a balanced diachronic corpus of medieval Swedish texts, these innovations can be shown to become frequent or even dominant constructional variants in Swedish within less than a century (primarily different finite and infinite subordinating constructions). Since both earlier and later sources can be demonstrated to represent the same text types, the same social groups and similar networks of adult Latin-Swedish bilingual individuals, we can assume that these particular changes are examples of language change across these speakers' lifespan.

I will argue, however, that the innovations did not affect the Swedish language system as a whole, but rather led to the emergence of a highly prestigious in-group variety which dominated the late medieval text production and, as a result, played a major role in the later development of a written standard language. Thus, in order to fully understand short-term developments in historical language stages, we have to emphasize the intralingual variability of all human languages.

*Does the cortical representation of the mental lexicon
“change” according to the age of onset of language
acquisition? fMRI evidence from successive and
simultaneous French-German bilingual readers*

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The present study investigates whether the visual processing of concrete nouns in first- (L1) and second (L2)-language involves overlapping neuronal networks in the bilingual brain. We examined to what extent the age of onset of acquisition (AOA) of L2 has an effect on (1) the magnitude of overlap between the neuronal networks, and (2) the L2 word recognition strategy. The functional magnetic resonance adaptation paradigm was used in simultaneous (acquisition of both languages before the age of three-years) and in successive (acquisition of L2 after the age of ten-years) French-German bilingual speakers. Words were repeated across language [e.g. valise^(suitcase)–Koffer^(suitcase)] and participants performed a semantic categorisation task (natural/artificial) on the second word of the pairs, i.e. the target [e.g. Koffer]. Critically, if French and German word processing involves neuronal networks that largely overlap, then a repetition-related effect should be observed on the target words. Whereas simultaneous bilinguals showed a repetition enhancement (RE) effect in the left superior temporal gyrus (lexical processing), successive bilinguals showed a RE effect in the left anterior insula (phonological processing) and in the left middle frontal gyrus (language switching). Our data suggest that both the extent of the overlap between the neuronal networks assumed to support words in L1 and L2 and the L2 word recognition strategies might depend on the age of acquisition (AO) of L2. Taken together, the present results lend support to dual route models of reading words that postulate two different routes for accessing a mental lexicon: a direct lexical route and a phonologically mediated route.

The 'grammar' of literate Brazilian adults at the turn of the century

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Written language has been often studied as an object distinct from spoken language, the former involving a process of instruction and the latter a process of selection. In this study I intend to discuss this dichotomy, formulating for the written language questions parallel to three of the well-known questions put forward by Chomsky (1986/1995:17) regarding L1: ((i) what does Jones know when he has a particular language?(ii) how did Jones acquire this knowledge? and (iii) how does Jones put this knowledge to use?

Regarding the first question, I will consider three hypotheses: a) considering that written language is more conservative, the grammatical knowledge of a literate Brazilian is similar to that of an individual in some past period, b) his knowledge is similar to that of the European Portuguese speakers since Brazilian written norms are mostly based on European ones, and the one I will defend here, c) it is a knowledge distinct from the other two in its core properties.

As for the second question, it will be shown that the grammar of the written language is acquired as a second language, with an indirect access to UG through what the speaker knows of his first grammar. However, in order to learn the forms that are inexistent in his L1, the learner goes through the possibilities provided by UG, but inexistent in the input, either oral or written.

I will defend that the literate speaker's knowledge has a distinct core grammar from past periods and from that of the Portuguese speakers, but it also has a marked periphery with other possible forms in UG, but acquired through instruction, as rules, and not through parameter setting. The speaker shows such knowledge in the use of the well-known phenomenon of code-switching, which characterizes the use of L1 and L2 by bilinguals.

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*Hearing adults with deaf parents:
bimodal-bilingual language impact on the brain*

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The study of hearing people from deaf families offers the opportunity to analyze bimodal bilingualism in which the person knows a sign language from birth and the spoken language of a larger hearing society. So far most neurolinguistic studies have focussed on bilingualism on single-modality bilinguals, who are using two spoken languages (Wartenburger et al., 2003; Proverbio et al., 2002; Moreno & Kutas, 2005).

Semantic and syntactic sentence anomalies in German Sign Language (DGS) were presented to deaf and hearing native signers who learned German Sign Language as a first language. Written German sentences with comparable violations were presented to hearing native signers and hearing non signers. For both violation types anomalous sentences compared to well formed sentences yield distinct patterns of neural activation. The neural correlates are measured with the technique of event-related potentials.

This approach will allow to assess a possible correlation between modality through which language (German Sign language and German) is acquired and neural organisation of language in the same individual. First preliminary results will be presented.

Complexity in language change

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People's speech changes over the course of their lifespan and this affects the external language (E-language) that children hear (Chomsky 1986: §2.1-2). New E-language might trigger new grammars, internal languages (I-languages), but under what conditions? In other words, what are the Primary Linguistic Data, a subset of E-language, which trigger the growth of a grammar in a child?

Standard generative approaches make children's language acquisition sensitive to SETS of sentences in the E-language, but this cannot be right (Lightfoot 2006: §4.1).

Cue-based approaches to language acquisition, in contrast, are more I-language oriented and make children sensitive to the structures expressed by E-language, the cues. Those structures DERIVE the immense complexity of a person's language capacity, an infinite set of occurring and potential sentences. Then the question arises: how does E-language express cues? Language change is a source of insight on this question, perhaps the best source of insight, when we can identify a change in I-languages AND preceding changes in E-language that may have triggered the I-language change. The relationship between new E-language and the expression of a cue sometimes turns out to be complex and indirect. We shall illustrate by identifying plausible causes for two well-known and well-understood changes from the history of English: the introduction of a category of modal auxiliaries and the loss of verb movement to a higher inflectional position.

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Comparing on-going sound change in Catalan across generations in two districts of Barcelona

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In the last few decades, the phonology of Catalan in Barcelona seems to be developing towards the loss of some of its phonemes. This change affects Catalan segments that do not exist in the language it is in contact with, namely Spanish. Those segments that only occur in Catalan are more vulnerable to change due to frequency effects. Examples of such segments are the mid-vowels /ɨ/ and /ɨ/, the unstressed vowel [ə], and the voiced sibilant /z/. As some studies have already pointed out, the pronunciation of such segments by Barcelona Catalan speakers seems to be diverging from what has generally been considered the norm. That is, the vowels /ɨ/, /ɨ/ and [ə], are being merged with /e/, /o/ and /a/, respectively, and the sibilant /z/ is being merged with /s/.

In order to describe and try to explain such a behavior, the speech of three age groups, namely G1 (children between 3 and 5 years old), G2 (young adults between 19 and 23 years old) and G3 (adults between 32 and 40 years old) from two different districts in Barcelona was recorded and analyzed. The two districts are Gràcia and Nou Barris, differing in relation to the degree of Spanish usage, which is much greater in Nou Barris.

A combination of auditory and acoustic analysis was used to explore the data. The results show that the two oldest generations (G3 and G2) in Gràcia display a similar behavior for all contrasts maintaining most of them apart. Differences are mainly found between G1 and G3: The production by G1 maintains some contrasts that are not kept by their respective parents in G3. It appears that children are following the models they hear at school from their teachers rather than those they hear at home. However, the results for the two younger generations in Nou Barris (G2 and G1), especially the youngest one, reach very low percentages of production of those segments only existing in Catalan. We tentatively conclude that on-going change is only taking place in the district with more usage of the Spanish language.

*Changes across the lifespan in the written record?
Case studies from 19th-century letter writers*

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A corpus of dialectal English letters written to and from Ireland in the 18th and 19th centuries offers some opportunities of tracing changes in grammatical performance across the lifespan of an individual letter writer. Such data can be particularly interesting in cases where the family correspondence between emigrant Irish people and their families at home has been recorded across a span of several years or even decades, sometimes involving several members of the same family who came to live or grow up in different linguistic environments. Such situations raise interesting sociolinguistic issues regarding the loss or maintenance of local non-standard forms of speech by individuals who have moved across geographical space and social environment. In consequence, they may also raise questions regarding the malleability of grammatical competence in adult speakers.

One interesting grammatical test case is the use of non-standard subject verb agreement, following the pattern of the so-called "Northern Subject Rule" (NSR, cf. Pietsch 2005). This local non-standard feature may have commonly been subject to loss, as emigrants moved into communities where it was not the norm, or more generally as people tried to adapt their written performance to the supraregional standard. However, even more interestingly, there may also be documented cases where people adopted the NSR in adulthood, on moving into a speech community where it served as a social marker. It has been claimed (Boling 2003: 655) that such was the case with Irish-American Quaker communities, and that the use of the NSR in southern Irish Quakers represents a dialectally foreign element. However, this hypothesis needs to be re-assessed against findings by McCafferty (2004), who reports that the NSR was generally more common in southern Irish varieties than sometimes assumed previously.

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Bilingual acquisition of VOT across the first years of life and beyond

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This paper examines the acquisition of voicing in German/Spanish bilingual children, using the acoustic measurement of Voice Onset Time (VOT). Both German and Spanish have voiced /b, d, g/ and voiceless stop consonants /p, t, k/ but the phonetic basis underlying the voicing distinction is different in the two languages. In Spanish, utterance-initial voiced stops are characterized by vibration of the vocal cords preceding the release of the closure (lead voicing), whereas in German, voicing coincides or occurs shortly after the release of the closure (short lag). Voiceless stops, in Spanish, are characterized by vibration occurring shortly after the release of the closure (as in German voiced stops) whereas in German, voicing occurs after a time interval of 60-80 milliseconds (long lag).

In order to examine whether bilingualism influences acquisition of these phonetic differences, VOT values in several bilingual subjects (aged 2;0 to 5;0) were analyzed and compared to VOT in monolingual German and Spanish children of a similar age. All measurements were based on utterance-initial stops extracted from naturalistic longitudinal speech recordings. Our results reveal several tendencies: A slight delay in the phonetic realization of voicing, as two bilingual children acquired long lag stops in German later than the German monolinguals. Lead voicing was acquired considerably later by the bilinguals than by the monolinguals. Finally, some evidence of cross-linguistic influence was present: At a very early age, bilingual children tended to produce greater numbers of voiced stops with lead voicing in their German productions than monolingual German-speaking children. Furthermore, most bilingual children went through a relatively long period, in which voiceless stops were produced with long lag in Spanish.

Furthermore, one of the bilingual children's VOT has been examined later on, at sixteen years of age: whereas the production of stops in German was not different from that of monolinguals, in Spanish

voiceless stops were produced with slightly longer lags than those of monolinguals, and lead voicing was hardly present.

Subject omissions in German successive bilingual children

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One relevant topic in this workshop is the role that the language-learning child plays in diachronic change. Children may be the principal agents of grammatical reanalysis and in this sense an origin of contact-induced change and of the emergence of new language varieties. One group of potential relevance in this sense is that of children acquiring a second language (see Meisel 2007).

The question examined in this paper is whether the acquisition of German as child L2 (cL2) leads to grammatical structures different from those observed in L1 acquisition. The specific grammatical phenomenon investigated here is subject omission. In L1 acquisition, subject omissions are frequent and subject realization is optional before the CP is acquired (Blom 2004, Clahsen & Penke 1992, Hamann 2004). If child L2 follows the same pattern as first language acquisition, subject omissions would be expected to disappear as soon as the CP is acquired. If cL2 development differs from L1 acquisition of German, it may be a relevant factor or the first step in the emergence of new language varieties.

An interesting piece of background information pertaining to this research question is that an ethnolect has developed in Germany which is used by bilingual young people of migration backgrounds, mostly Turkish. Young people call this ethnolect "Gemischtsprechen" ('speaking mixed'; 'mixing') and it is used to indicate group identity and/or socio-cultural identity. This ethnolect or variety of German exhibits special grammatical features such as the omission of (especially local) prepositions and of articles and the occurrence of pronoun omissions, subjects as well as objects, and a variety of other grammatical, lexical, prosodic and phonetic features, including code-switching and language mixing (cf. Kallmeyer & Keim 2004). These features seem to be the result of Turkish influence, Turkish being a pro-drop language without articles or prepositions (but with postpositions and locative case). If a causal relation in fact exists between cL2 German (children with L1 Turkish) and this ethnolect, we would expect these features to persist after the acquisition of the relevant functional

categories. With respect to pronominal subjects, we would expect subject omissions to occur in cL2 even after the acquisition of the CP. The data analyzed in our study are appropriate for investigating this topic because none of the children has a mixed language input. Therefore, possible differences to L1 German can be seen as the result of cL2 acquisition and/or the influence of Turkish.

This paper concentrates on the results taken from successive bilinguals (AO 3; Turkish-German). Subject omission was investigated at different developmental stages, i.e. before the instantiation of CP (no SVA, no wh-questions, no object topicalizations) and after the instantiation of CP. The data deliver evidence against the claim that the described ethnolect is based on child L2 acquisition. The results of this particular study, however, are not sufficient for determining what would happen if the described ethnolect were the main language input for the children.

*Lifespan change and language change:
real-time evidence for three trajectory types*

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For the past 40 years, studies of language variation and change have reported that change is usually incremental at the community level across time. In other words, sociolinguists' investigation of diachronic materials has generally confirmed the apparent time construct, which interprets incremental change across age groups sampled at one point in time as reflecting incremental displacement of the old by the new across successive age cohorts. According to this model, the grammars of individual speakers remain stable (usually in this research, stably variable) over time.

But is it possible that language change is represented in individual grammars, and if so, how? At the level of individual speakers, most linguists would probably situate change primarily within first language acquisition, but few studies have investigated this issue empirically. The present paper reports on different patterns of stability and change in the usage patterns of individuals after the age of 15, with the goal of modeling the relationship between language change and life stage of speakers. Sixty speakers of Montreal French were recorded in 1971 and 1984, and 12 of them were followed for another decade (until 1995). Studying a range of mainly phonological and morphological features, three different patterns are observed: (1) In the case of auxiliary selection, the community is changing toward increasing use of *être* while the grammars of individuals are stable across their lifespans. Primary language acquisition would seem to be the appropriate model for the locus of change in this case. (2) Some changes continue to progress among a sizeable minority of older speakers. This is the case for the change from apical to posterior /r/, and for the diphthongization of long vowels. (3) In some cases long term change over many decades or even centuries is indicated by the historical data, and most individuals are stable, but a particular minority – upper class, highly educated speakers – shows retrograde change across the lifespan. This is the case for the omission of negative *ne* and for the replacement of the inflected future with the periphrastic *aller* 'to go' + infinitive.

Considering the linguistic and social processes underlying the three patterns, the paper makes use of the distinction between transmission and diffusion as proposed in Labov (2007) to better understand the differences among them. The first pattern is what linguists would tend to expect, and what an 'apparent time' interpretation predicts. In the second pattern, however, apparent time underestimates the rate of change to some degree, and in the third, may slightly overestimate it. How might the distinction between diffusion and transmission help to explain the differences among the three patterns? In the diffusion of linguistic features across dialects, adults are more likely than children to have the social contacts that lead to change, yet adults' grammars are much less malleable than those of children. Speakers exposed in adulthood to ongoing change in their own speech communities present a case very similar to that of second dialect contact: since adult L1 grammars are assumed to have been set since puberty or before, adult contact with younger speakers might yield a pattern more typical of diffusion, rather than transmission. However, adults faced with ongoing change in their own communities differ from those who move to another dialect area in one important respect: they have been exposed to change seamlessly, rather than abruptly, in a local dialect that is otherwise thoroughly familiar to them. The input they receive from younger speakers may thus lead instead to the kind of incrementation more typical of the internal, child-related change typical of the transmission process. In the last part of the paper, I put forward the view that the changes reviewed here are an integral part of the grammar, rather than simply changes in "usage".

Finiteness in child second language acquisition

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Many differences among various types of language acquisition are due to the different age of onset of acquisition. Adult second language acquisition (aL2) differs in fundamental ways from first language development (L1). This paper explores the nature of the differences between the child second language acquisition (cL2) and L1 on the one hand, and the cL2 and aL2 on the other hand. The aim of this paper is to identify, through the analysis of the acquisition of finiteness in German as second language (L2), the grammatical features characterizing cL2. The data used in this study consists of longitudinal data of three 4-year-children, who were first exposed to German around age 4 and recorded from the third to the eighth month of exposure to their L2.

Studies on acquisition of German as L1 have demonstrated that from the first stages of L1 acquisition, the difference can be seen between the finite and non-finite form of the verb with respect to movement. In aL2 of German there is no close relationship between the acquisition of finiteness and verb placement as observed in L1. The analysis of data from cL2 acquisition has revealed that children starting the acquisition of L2-German at the age of 4 produce certain amount of sentences with non-finite verb-forms in the second position and finite verb forms in the third position. From these observations one can draw the conclusion that the mechanisms of language acquisition begin to change in the early childhood and the "critical period" in language acquisition is to be understood as a sensible phase.

The acquisition of clitic subject and object pronouns in early child L2

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In this presentation I investigate the acquisition of clitic object and subject pronouns in French of monolingual German children (age of onset: 3;00-4;00 years).

A number of researchers, like Meisel (2007), assume that this age span falls within the critical period. This means for language acquisition that the innate ability to acquire an L1 continuously starts fading out. The result is that a number of children show different morpho-syntactic patterns, resulting in a type of acquisition in which both elements from L1 and from L2 are found (Schwartz 2003). Kroffke & Rothweiler (2006) find, in their study of Turkish children learning German at age of onset 3;-4,0 and 5;0-6;0 respectively that the younger children behave like L1 learners while the older children clearly exhibit the profile of L2 acquisition.

The central question is if these findings are confirmed in the present study and if young children acquiring a second language from the age of 3;00 to 4;00 years still behave like L1 children.

It is known from adult L2 learners of French that they often use clitic object and subject pronouns in positions where only strong pronouns are allowed (Granfeldt & Schlyter 2001, Schwartz & Sprouse 1996). Bilingual children use strong pronouns in combination with non-finite verbs, but they never use non-finite verbs with subject clitics (Kaiser 1994).

The data which I will present here show that the children behave mostly like (2)L1 learners, but they also produce typical constructions known from L2, i.e. they sporadically use non- finite verbs with subject clitics. Nevertheless, the children don't use "typical" L2 constructions like postverbal object clitics, but they prefer DP objects instead of object clitics. The cases in question will be examined in detail and compared to monolingual and bilingual language acquisition, as well as to typical adult learning patterns.

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Rules and frames in change: the case of grammatical gender

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In much work language change is explained by early acquisition (i.e. child L1 acquisition). Whereas an older generation acquires one particular setting of a parameter (during childhood), a next generation of L1 children may set the parameter differently, basing themselves on the input of their parents, which may lead to a different output.

For obvious reasons this argumentation had to be based on theoretical rather than empirical work on language acquisition.

Recently we have more knowledge of empirical details of acquisition. In this talk I will show that these recent findings show that the argumentation that L1 acquisition is the trigger is incomplete at best. In particular with respect to the process of deflection, as for instance the loss of grammatical gender distinctions, several forms of 'late' acquisition (i.e. child L2, adult L2 but also 'late L1' acquisition, in the sense of accommodation) seem to be crucial rather than child L1 acquisition.

Briefly, the central observation is that L1 children are capable to pick up even the opaque aspects of the inflectional system of the target language very early. If so, it is very unlikely that they will deviate from the input (under normal conditions). However, it can also be shown that this capacity to acquire inflection rapidly decreases, so that 'late' learners do deviate from the target (and hence may trigger change).

The empirical distinction between 'early' and 'late' acquisition is relevant for our understanding of language change in another way, leading to the second central claim of this paper. It is undeniable that variation and optionality are needed to describe the process of change. A parameter does not change from one setting to the other over night. In recent years the idea is developed fruitfully that a competition between the two settings may account for variation and optionality.

I will not argue against this approach, but again my point will be that this does not suffice. I will defend that variation and optionality may also result from the fact that two qualitatively different systems underlying language interact. Roughly, the one system is input driven and is characterized by lexical and statistical learning of frames, whereas the other is rule governed. 'Late' acquisition tends to be based on the former type, while the latter is more central in 'early' acquisition. Again, this will be illustrated for grammatical gender.

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