L3 acquisition of the German determiner phrase: The role of L1 Japanese and L2 English


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Abstract

The second language (L2) acquisition of determiner phrase (DP) properties not present in a learner's first language (L1) has been shown to be problematic, with learners exhibiting variability in the suppliance of forms. This book extends the investigation from L2 acquisition into the field of third language (L3) acquisition, by examining Japanese L1 speakers with L2 English, acquiring L3 German, using a variety of written and oral tasks. The features or properties under investigation are grammatical gender and number agreement (on nouns, articles and attributive adjectives), definiteness on articles, and the suppliance or omission of articles. The data obtained are considered in relation to the role of the L2 proficiency, and also in relation to current hypotheses, such as Full Transfer/Partial Access (Hawkins & Chan, 1997) and Full Transfer/Full Access (Schwartz & Sprouse, 1994, 1996), linking to the Missing Surface Inflection Hypothesis (Prévost & White, 2000); the Prosodic Transfer Hypothesis (Goad & White, 2004); and the proposal of Distributed Morphology (Harley & Noyer, 1999). This book will find appeal with generative linguists interested in both L2 and L3 acquisition.

Item Type: Book

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The role of transfer from the first language (L1) in second language (L2) acquisition is well-documented (Dechert & Raupach 1989; Ellis 2006; Gass & Selinker 1992; Odlin 1989; Schwartz & Sprouse 1996, among many others). Cross-linguistic transfer is also attested in third language (L3) acquisition. Unlike in L2-acquisition, however, transfer in L3-acquisition can have different sources. Transfer may occur only, or predominantly, from the L1 to the L3 (Bouvy 2000; Leung 2006). (For alternative syntactic accounts of the English/Romance difference, see Vergnaud and Zubizarreta 1992, Longobardi 2001). In the case of BrP, Schmitt and Munn (1999, 2002) have argued (contra Müller 2002) that both bare and definite plurals can be kind-denoting. The smallest phrase consists of two words. The phrase may become a sentence if it acquires its features. The phrase is differentiated from a sentence, because it is not a unit of communication. Like a word a phrase is a unit of nomination, but unlike the word the referent of a phrase is of a composite character: an object + its character (red pencil); an action + its character (do immediately). The notion of the phrase is based first of all on syntagmatic relations. The phrase is any syntactically organized group of words in a syntagmatic line. The phrase is a language unit characterized by the plane of expression and the plane of content. Words of functional parts of speech don’t change the lexical meaning of the notional word. In L2 acquisition, vocabulary learning often involves the acquisition of a new phonetic form for an old concept. Categorical/lexical differences: argue. The result of language acquisition … is subconscious. We are generally not consciously aware of the rules of the languages we have acquired. Instead, we have a ‘feel’ for the correctness. Grammatical sentences ‘sound’ right, or ‘feel’ right, and errors feel wrong, even if we do not consciously know what rule was violated. [Krashen 1982: 10]. We will use the term ‘learning’ henceforth to refer to conscious knowledge of a second language, knowing the rules, being aware of them, and being able to talk about them. In nontechnical terms, learning is ‘knowing about’ a language, known to most people.