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Morphosyntactic patterns in adult learners with limited literacy

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Language and literacy in migration context
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Erasmus+

Research background

- Research on the development of Italian interlanguages (ItaStra)
 - «New migrants» in Palermo
 - widespread illiteracy (around 30%)
 - plurilingualism (endogenous and from mobility)
 - segregating contexts in the various stages of migration
 - low exposure to local linguistic input

Research background

- Peripherality of acquisition research in migratory contexts
 - Biased samples (and WEIRD learners)
- Large-scale studies in the 1980s
 - Naturalistic acquisition, low exposure, low schooling
 - No focus on literacy

Andringa & Godfroid 2020; Henrich et al. 2010; Tarone & Bigelow 2005

Becker et al. 1977; Clahsen et al. 1983; Klein & Perdue 1992; Perdue 1993

Research background

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- **Research on the role of literacy/schooling on a few L2**
 - Isolation of variables not always clear

Bigelow & Tarone 2004; Janko 2020; Janko et al. 2019; Julien et al. 2016; Oldenkamp 2013; Sanders et al. 2014; Tammelin-Laine 2014, 2015; Tarone & Bigelow 2005, 2007; Tarone et al. 2006, 2009; Vainikka & Young-Scholten 2007; Vainikka et al. 2017; Van de Craats 2011

Research questions

- What influence (if any) does literacy have on the development of L2 morphosyntax (particularly L2 Italian)?
 - Defining literacy
 - Other related variables (schooling, exposure)

Methodological options

- Existing analysis tools (for replication study)
 - Pavia Project
 - Functionalist approach ('basic variety')
 - Longitudinal perspective
 - Verb morphosyntax

➔ But by isolating the 'literacy' variable

Dedicated test (any system/language)

Group 1 no literacy

Group 2 partial literacy

Group 3 literacy (continuum)

Sample

LEARNER	AGE	COUNTRY OF ORIGIN	L1 /OTHER LANGUAGES	SCHOOLING	EARLY LITERACY (L1 / SCHOOL LS)	RESIDENCE	COURSES IN ITALY	L2 ITALIAN	LATE LITERACY IN ROMAN ALPHABET
AC	20	Nigeria	Ika; English, Pidgin Eng.	12 years	Group 3 English	18 months	6 months	pre-basic	-
AL	27	Nigeria	Urhobo; Bini, English, Pidgin	10 years	Group 3 English	18 months	5 months	basic	-
AO	24	Nigeria	Esan; English, Pidgin Eng.	12 years	Group 3 English	12 months	2 months	basic	-
BD	18	Guinea	Pulaar; Wolof, French	2 years (Q)	Group 1	11 months	5 months	post-basic	Group 2
CO	26	Nigeria	Ika; Igbo, English, Pidgin E.	12 years	Group 3 English	12 months	10 months	post-basic	-
GO	27	Nigeria	Esan; Yoruba; English, Pidgin Eng.	16 years	Group 3 English	16 months	9 months	post-basic	-
HL	25	Nigeria	Esan; English, Pidgin Eng.	-	Group 1	11 months	3 months	none	Group 1
ID	25	Ivory Coast	French, Kojaka; Bambara Malinki	12 years	Group 3 French	11 months	8 months	post-basic	-
LO	25	Nigeria	Igbo; English, Pidgin Eng.	-	Group 1	11 months	none	pre-basic	Group 1
MC	18	Gambia	Mandinka; Krio	3 years	Group 1	21 months	10 months	basic	Group 2
MD	30	Senegal	Mandinka; French, English	10 years (Q)	Group 2 Arabic	11 months	10 months	post-basic	Group 2 French
MF	28	Mali	Bambara; French	-	Group 1	12 months	7 months	basic	Group 2
MJ	24	Nigeria	Igbo; English, Pidgin Eng.	11 years	Group 3 English	11 months	11 months	post-basic	-
MLG	25	Burkina Faso	Bissa; Mòoré, French	5 years (Q)	Group 1	11 months	6 months	post-basic	Group 2
MT	23	Mali	Bambara; French	-	Group 1	11 months	6 months	post-basic	Group 2
MTR	25	Ivory Coast	Bambara; Senufo, Wolof, French	2 years (Q)	Group 1	11 months	9 months	post-basic	Group 2
OT	23	Gambia	Mandinka; Wolof, English	12 years	Group 3 English	16 months	4 months	basic	-
RC	18	Bangladesh	Bengali	8 years	Group 3 Bengali/English	13 months	9 months	post-basic	-
SM	27	Bangladesh	Bengali; English	12 years	Group 3 Bengali/English	12 months	none	basic	-
YS	30	Senegal	Pulaar; Wolof, French	2 years (Q)	Group 1	10 months	5 months	post-basic	Group 1

Verb development in Italian L2

	Variety		
	Pre-basic	Basic	Post-basic
Lexical categories	-	Verb/Noun	Verb, Noun etc.
Morphology	-	Basic forms (uninflected/ pseudoinflected)	Inflected forms
Utterance organisation	Pragmatic (information structure)	Semantic-syntactic (argument structure)	Syntactic
Context dependence	High	Low

Basato su Banfi & Bernini 2003: 84, con adattamenti

Verb development in Italian L2

Phase	Present	Perfective past	Imperfective past	Future	Non-factual
1	Present	Present/infinitive	Present/infinitive	Present/infinitive	Present/infinitive
2	Present/infinitive	Past participle	Present	Present	Present
3	Present/infinitive	Past participle (± auxiliary)	Imperfect	Present	Present
4	Present/infinitive	Past participle (± auxiliary)	Imperfect	Future	Future

- Acquisition sequence PRS/INF > (AUX) PP > IPFV > FUT > COND > SUBJ

Banfi & Bernini 2003: 93 (adapted)

Results

GROUPS 1-2	PRESENT/INFINITIVE	PP	COPULA/AUX	PROGRESSIVE	IMPERFECT	FUTURE	CONDITIONAL	SUBJUNCTIVE
BD	+	+	+	+	-	-	-	-
HL	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
LO	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
MC	+	+	+	+	-	-	-	-
MD	+	+	+	-	-	-	-	-
MF	+	+	-	-	-	-	-	-
MLG	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	-
MT	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	-
MTR	+	+	+	-	-	-	-	-
YS	+	+	+	+	-	-	-	-
GROUP 3								
AC	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
AL	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
AO	+	+	-	-	-	-	-	-
CO	+	+	-	-	-	-	-	-
GO	+	+	+	-	-	-	-	-
ID	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	-
MJ	+	+	+	+	-	-	-	-
OT	+	+	+	+	-	-	-	-
RC	+	+	+	+	-	-	-	-
SM	+	+	-	-	-	-	-	-

Analytical ways in the early stages

(1) io **tutti** va a lavori (AL_4_a)
ASP:HAB go to [labor-]

'We always go to work.'

(2) lavare dente **finito** :/ andare cucina (MF_2_a)
wash:INF tooth ASP:PFV go:INF kitchen

'They brushed their teeth and went to the kitchen.'

Mocciaro 2020; cf. Banfi & Bernini 2003; Mocciaro & Young-Scholten 2022 and in prep.

Analytical phase (be-C)

- TA (and PS) before the emergence of finiteness («protoauxiliaries»)

(3) ora **sono** fermare (YS_4_a)

now stop:PRS.1SG fermare:inf

‘Now I have stopped.’

(4) allora lui **era** **dormo** (MLG_5_c)

then he be:PRS.3SG dormire:INF

‘Then he was asleep.’

Analytical phase (do-C)

- ACTIVITY + V_{ACT} («verbaliser» or «'verbness' marker»)

(5) alle cinque **fare** **lavare** dentis (MF_2_b)

at 5 do:INF lavare.INF teeth

'At five o'clock, I brushed my teeth.'

(6) ieri /:: io mmh:: poi /:: **fatto** **lavare** (BD_2_b)

yesterday I then do:PST.PTCP lavare

'Then yesterday I washed.'

(7) fare dentifriciø 'Brushing teeth.' (MJ_2_a)

It expresses the predicative value of the purely lexical V that governs

Analytical phase and literacy (?)

SESSION	GROUPS 1/2			GROUP 3		
	PRE-BASIC STAGE	BASIC STAGE	POST-BASIC STAGE	PRE-BASIC STAGE	BASIC STAGE	POST-BASIC STAGE
1-2	-	<i>fare</i> (2)	<i>fare</i> (7) <i>essere</i> (2)	-	<i>fare</i> (1)	<i>essere</i> (2)
3	-	-	<i>fare</i> (2) <i>essere</i> (6)	-	-	-
4	-	-	<i>fare</i> (9) <i>essere</i> (4)	-	<i>fare</i> (1)	<i>fare</i> (1)
5	-	<i>avere</i> (3)	<i>fare</i> (9) <i>essere</i> (6)	-	-	<i>essere</i> (1) <i>avere</i> (1)

Role of input

- «Greater reliance on auditory memory than visual memory»
 - In speech, inflectional morphemes are not very salient
 - Phonologically (less than one phonological foot)
 - Physically (reduction phenomena in speech)
 - Contextually (redundancy, e.g., I walked yesterday)

Role of input

- «Greater reliance on auditory memory than visual memory»
 - Preference for (and persistence of)
 - Heavier forms perceptible in the input (functional words)
 - Specific morphosyntactic patterns (analytical constructions)

Be-C in other interlanguages and learner

- L2 Italian / adults L1 with Cantonese and Tigrinya (Pavia Corpus)

a) io **sono** **è** da razza cinese
 I be.1SG be.3SG from race Chinese
 'I'm Chinese.'

b) sono studiare
 be.1SG work.INF
 'I work.'

Be-C in other interlanguages and learner

- L2 German / children with Turkish L1
 - *hier das is kommen* 'Here that's coming.'
 - *hier is guck* 'Here (he) is looking.'
- L2 Dutch / adults with various L1s
 - dan is hij heeft werk aanvragen
then be.3SG it have.PST.3SG work ask.INF
'Then he asked for work.'

Do-C in other interlanguages and learner

- L2 german / children with L1 Turkish
 - *ich bin **tot machen*** (= ich werde töten [obj] ‘I will kill’)

- L2 Italian / adults with L1 Chinese
 - *bam 'bini? || bam 'bini qua cinesi | tutti 'fale: | an 'dale scuola*
children here Chinese all do:INF go:INF school

Pfaff 1992: 922; Di Pinto 2020: 176, adapted.

Emergence of L2 constructions

- Temporary grammatical solutions
 - Frequent forms in the input, general meaning, grammatical potential
 - They tend to disappear (or stabilise depending on contexts)
- Learners does not reconstruct but constructs
 - Reusing raw input material into autonomous form-function pairs

Bybee 1985 e successivi; Giacalone Ramat 1992; Goldberg 1995, 2006

To do

- Survey existing L2 corpora
- Collecting new and more systematic data (more oriented)
 - Collection data protocol
- Taking into account the position of Italian in language practices
 - Naturalistic data (but how natural is the exclusive use of Italian?)
 - Mistilingual practices (D'Agostino & Mocciaro in prep.)
 - Collection data protocol, again

Grazie!

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