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New Trends in Language Acquisition Within the Generative Perspective

Springer

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Introduction[1]

This book, entitled *New Trends in Language Acquisition Within the Generative Perspective*, intends to be a comprehensive, state-of-the-science treatment of language acquisition in different contexts (more precisely, L1, L2, L3/Ln, bilingual/multilingual language, heritage languages, and language acquisition under specific conditions) conducted within the generative framework. It brings together several innovative approaches to the study of language acquisition representing the latest trends in the field which are likely to set the agenda for the years ahead, from both a theoretical and a methodological perspective. Particularly, the present volume stands at the crossroads of formal and experimental linguistics, and contributes to our understanding of both the language faculty and language development across the lifespan. While the present volume defines and strengthens the field of generative SLA, it is instrumental in validating current proposals of theoretical linguistics as they relate to language development. The present volume includes a wide range of topics in multiple language combination scenarios and explores language acquisition processes in different populations going "beyond the traditional principles and parameters." The chapters in this volume, which can all be linked to current generative theorizing acquisition, are organized in three parts whose overarching themes are directly related to new lines of current research within the generative grammar with the aim of contributing to the ongoing theoretical discussion on the structure of grammar.

The first part of this volume contains four chapters which focus on the study of several grammatical structures and features. We find this new trend an adequate starting point for the volume, as the history of principles and parameters' research is representative of the long tradition of generative acquisition. This section

[1]We would like to thank Lyn Franzier, Thomas Roeper and Kenneth Wexler, General Editors of the Springer Series *Studies in Theoretical Psycholinguistics*, and their team including their assistant editors for all the help and guidance from the start of this project. We would also like to thank the contributors and reviewers who make possible this research endeavor and last but not least the presenters and audience at GALA13 (13th Generative Approaches to Language Acquisition). The articles include herein a selection of papers given at GALA13, held at the University of the Balearic Islands, Spain, in September 2017.

constitutes an overarching of new trends in the field for the importance of studying the relationship of "pure" syntax in relation to other language components and the consideration of processing problems in order to properly account for acquired knowledge. This new research remains a fruitful line of research which can still provide new insights and continue to inform us on the nature of interlanguage grammars. As such, the chapters included in this first part would contribute to further study the interface hypothesis by adding new phenomena to evaluate, at the same time, some of the claims made by Sorace (2011 and references therein). The chapters included in this first part clearly illustrate mapping challenges that L2 learners with different L1 backgrounds may confront regarding a range of linguistic phenomena. In particular, the acquisition of syntactic features allows the authors to investigate whether learners are able to recognize a different behavior and nature of these features, and to explore whether the difficulties in attaining them are due to any underlying syntactic deficit. The chapters herein argue that learners can acquire subtle features and challenge the predictions of current generative theorizing hypothesis such as the interpretability hypothesis (Hawkins and Hattori 2006) and the feature reassembly hypothesis (Lardiere 2008, 2009). Against this background, **Putnam** shows the limitations of endoskeletal models of grammar in language acquisition and maintenance and develops the basics of a distributed exoskeletal model. Alternatively, he proposes an architecture of features within a series of abstract functional heads, which vary according to the different grammars. Also in theoretical terms, contributions explore crucial aspects of language acquisition in adult learners by analyzing specific linguistic features and revising different theoretical approaches. The most recurrent one is the feature reassembly hypothesis by Lardiere (2008, 2009), which proposes that L2 learners reassemble the sets of lexical features of the native language into feature bundles appropriate to the L2. This is applied in this volume to findings from recent research into the acquisition of evidentiality in L2 Spanish by L1 French speakers (**Ahern, Amenós-Pons, and Guijarro-Fuentes**). By contrast, **Diaubalick, Guijarro-Fuentes, and Schmitz** challenge FRH through the analysis of overt marking of grammatical aspect in Spanish and German in advanced L2 learners of Spanish, who resort to target-deviant strategies in the expression of aspect, showing therefore an unsuccessful feature reassembly process. Another hypothesis which is tested is the interface hypothesis (IH, Sorace 2011). **Genevska-Hanke** suggests modifications for this hypothesis to explain the effects of L1-attrition and L2-acquisition through the analysis of the use and knowledge of pronominal subjects in spontaneous speech production of a bilingual speaker of a pro-drop L1/a non-pro-drop L2. In sum, the chapters included herein open up new angles for the discussion of currently debated issues such as the role of universal grammar in constraining development, developmental sequences in L2, maturational influences on the "growth" of grammar, critical period effects for different linguistic domains, initial state and ultimate attainment in relation to length of exposure, and L1-transfer in relation to age of onset. These issues are explored using longitudinal, cross-sectional, and experimental data from multilingual adults and children together with adults L2 learners acquiring a range of languages.

The next part of the proposed volume presents three studies that deal with language acquisition under specific conditions, such as Down syndrome (**Wimmer, Witecy, and Penke**), deafness/lack of early exposure to sign language in ASL-English bilinguals (**Herbert and Pires**) and trilingual acquisition (**Sivakumar, Müller, and Arnaus Gil**). The question of how children acquire one or more languages under specific conditions such as developmental disorders, sensory disabilities, or different ages of onset in L2-acquisition has always been of interest (see Tager-Flusberg 1994). The papers in this section contribute to it by investigating phenomena within the generative framework, in the case of **Herbert and Pires,** by providing an analysis of the effect of degraded auditory input and lack of early exposure to sign language by deaf ASL-English bilinguals, and in the case of **Wimmer et al.**, by looking at syntactic phenomena and examining how particular syntactic error patterns are specific for the population under study—in this case, Down syndrome—and eventually deviate from typical acquisition. Finally, the contribution by **Sivakumar, Müller, and Arnaus Gil** compares the degree of code-mixing in bilingual and trilingual children from birth and the role that linguistic typology can play on code-mixing in early trilingualism. To date, the theory on language acquisition in bilinguals has been applied to trilinguals, but differences in the process of acquisition have been reported (Quay 2011) between bilinguals and trilinguals, so there is a need to develop a theory of trilingual first language acquisition.

The volume closes up with a section on first language acquisition. A major debate in this field has been how children acquire the capacities of the language from the linguistic input they receive. As is well known, one of the main tenets of generative linguistics is conceiving language acquisition as a process constrained by the biological characteristics of the human brain (Chomsky 1981, 1986, etc.). The acquisition of syntax has been one of the most recurrent topics in this field. However, contemporary L1 acquisition research has extended to the acquisition of features which activate different interfaces (De Villiers 2007). This is the purpose of this section of the volume, which comprises six contributions with research focussing on different aspects which have been hot topics in first language acquisition. **Ito and Wexler** choose the interpretation of comparatives by Japanese speakers. They show that the younger the speakers the poorer the performance in the interpretation of comparatives, and put these results down to the acquisition of semantic features such as maximality and definiteness. The interface between semantics and grammar is also the topic of analysis in **Agostinho and Gavarró**. They focus on control verbs and the acquisition of implicit control in European Portuguese. Their results complement previous research on the topic in that they show that the behavior of children is determined by the lexical verb (controller), rather than by the structure itself. Although the scope of the study is different, the lexical verb also becomes relevant in **De Villiers, Kotfila, and Roeper's** contribution. They test children's parsing of recursion in three-clause examples, and they show that first resort is not characteristic of children's responses to wh-questions, especially in recursive embeddings. Instead, children at 4 and 5 are remarkably adultlike in providing long-distance answers. At the interface between grammar and

discourse, **Corrêa's** study provides an update to the issues of domain specificity and domain generality (Frensch and Buchner 1999) by concentrating on possible intervention effects in object relative clauses and null subject coordinate clauses. Within L1 acquisition, a set of papers deal with the integration of information across grammar and pragmatics. Such is the paper by **Bosch, Zuckermann, and Pinto**, who analyze the phenomenon of "bridging" applying the coloring book task, a new experimental method developed by the authors to test comprehension in children. They demonstrate that this method is more sensitive to children's actual interpretation than other traditional methods such as the truth-value judgment task, therefore more appropriate to test language comprehension of children. Finally, **Smeets and Meroni** focus on scalar implicatures. The innovative conclusion of their study is that scalar implicatures are that prosody (together with context) plays a crucial role in the interpretation of scalar implicatures.

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