The expression of temporality in early L2 varieties and adult home signs

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In the debate on language genesis, interest for:

- pidginization, creolization,
- first and second language acquisition,
- elaboration of homesign systems, etc.

- observable processes of language emergence / development
- evidence on the functioning of “simple systems”
  (prior to the complex devices of full-fledged languages)

\[\downarrow\]

used to gain insights on intermediary steps in language evolution
(status of “windows”)


Expression of Temporality
(temporal and aspectual relations)

Early L2 varieties
untutored adult learners

Homesigns systems
deaf subjects not exposed to
conventional Sign Languages

Aims:

- Attest to which extent these simple systems are comparable (cf. different circumstances of emergence and different modality)
- Explore implications for language genesis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agents</th>
<th>L2 learners</th>
<th>Homesigners</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Previous language</td>
<td>Yes, L1</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TL model</td>
<td>Yes, L2</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>modality</td>
<td>spoken</td>
<td>Signed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Early L2 varieties (ESF project)

- Adult untutored learners
- Crosslinguistic design ⇒
- Longitudinal data (30 months)

very similar linguistic systems
largely independent of SL/TL specifics:


L2 English German Dutch French Swedish

L1 Punjabi Italian Turkish Arabic Spanish Finnish

Homesign systems

3 adult deaf subjects living in Brazil (Fusellier 2004)
+ reference to child home signs
L2 Prebasic Variety = lexemes (TL-like nouns, adj., adverbs) + pragmatic principles (focus last)

(cf. Dietrich et al. 1995)

- Scaffolding
- Reliance on contextual inference

✓ Calendric expressions (Sunday, 1977, yesterday, etc):
  displace temporal ref. from the one introduced by NS or a contextual now:

(1) (what about your husband?)
   *en el * hopital
   demain ++ permis
   et lundi à l’hôpital (Sp.>French L2)
   *Sp. in the* hospital
tomorrow permit (=to leave the hospital)
and monday to the hospital

✓ Iconic Principle of natural order (implicit AFTER = consecutive relation)

(2) petit chien et garçon + à glace
    et garçon + e: boum glace
    et chien ++ sos (Polish > French L2)
    small dog and boy + to ice
    and boy + e: boom ice
    and dog ++ sos
L2 Basic Variety = uninflected verbs, their arguments, adverbials + pragmatic & semantic pr. (focus last / agent first)

✓ LEXICAL ASPECT (verbs + arguments)

✓ Temporal ADVERB(IALS) expressing:
  position on time axis: absolute (1975), deictic (last week) and anaphoric value (later, after, before)
  frequency (always, 3 times, again)
  duration (2 hours, 4 days)

✓ BOUNDARY markers: right (finish, fertig, çayest…) & left (start…)

(3) nine o’clock in er + work start
    half past two finish

(4) monday i gone in the hospital and speak doctor
    for i chop my nail last month
    i going hospital + two hours in the room operation

(5) avant je [travaj] / maintenant non
L2 Basic Variety

- Temporal reference still implicit
  - if established in previous discourse
  - in case of a default ‘present’ reading
  - inferrable from discourse organiz. principles (PNO)

- Role of Pragmatic inferences

  (5) (a Chilean learner working as kitchen helper)
  are you good at cooking?
  seulement ici       only here (= now, in France)
  jamais je [travaj] au Chili   never I work in Chili (= in the past)

  (6) Pendjab I do agricultural farm   (= when I was in Pendjab….)

  (7) when in Italy I go Rome   (single case, habitual or generic reading?)
Further development

Prebasic to Basic Variety

LEXICAL means

- misunderstandings (if time ref. is not indicated lexically)
- impossible to focus on the prestate (prospective)
  or the poststate (perfect) of a situation,
  or presenting it as ongoing (imperfective)

⇒ Postbasic Variety

GRAMMATICAL means

to encode tense and / or aspect according to the TL
  finite verb morphology
  subordination

4 deaf children, 2 yrs longitudinal observation (age range covered: 2;3 to 5;1).

Displaced reference: ability to refer to information that is spatially & temporally displaced from the location of the speaker & the listener
- Non present objects, actions, attributes (around 2;7)
  - Proximal events tied to present context
    - Distant or non-actual events (around 3;5)

Explicit devices:
• **pointing** over shoulder [= past] (1 sbj.)
• **AWAY** [= both spatial-temporal displacement] (2 sbj.)
  presented as a narrative marker [ex. = past]
• **WAIT** [= immediate future] (3 sbj.)

Narrative skills:
• **Temporal ordering** (3 sbj. around 5;0)
  (recounting events in the order in which they actually occurred)
## Adult Homesigns  (Fusellier-Souza 2004)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subjects</th>
<th>Jo</th>
<th>Ana</th>
<th>Ivaldo</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deafness degree</td>
<td>deep</td>
<td>deep</td>
<td>deep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education in spec. institut.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family members</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preferential interlocutor</td>
<td>A brother</td>
<td>A sister</td>
<td>His wife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional activity</td>
<td>Yes, in a pizzeria</td>
<td>No, but active in family houskeeping</td>
<td>Yes, sells fruit juices</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data collection
- free conversations with stretches of narrative discourse
- deaf subjects in interaction with an habitual interlocutor

Their systems
• Morphemic value of 4 parameters:
  handshape, location, movement, facial expression

• Sign typology:
  - stabilized gestural signs (quantifier, nom., verb, adject. value)
  - highly iconic gestures
  - pointing gestures
  - co-verbal gestures typical of Brazilian culture
Gestural signs with aspectual or temporal value
(table adapted from Fusellier 2004)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REPERTOIRE</th>
<th>ca. 15 min. video each</th>
<th>Ana</th>
<th>Jo</th>
<th>Ival</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Finish</td>
<td>accomplishment gest.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Before <em>(past)</em></td>
<td>pointing over shoulder or circular movement</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After <em>(coming = future)</em></td>
<td>idem opposite direction</td>
<td>4 (9)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>now / here</td>
<td>pointing downwards</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>every day <em>(generic or habitual)</em></td>
<td>repeated sleeping gest.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>longtime <em>(indefinite duration)</em></td>
<td>snapping fingers repeat.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>longtime ago <em>(distant past)</em></td>
<td>Idem + eye gaze up</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calendric expr.: june, sept., years, sunday</td>
<td>Sunday = cross</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>14/4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calendric expr. (time units): x days, x months, x year</td>
<td>day = sleeping sign</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>year = dec. sign</td>
<td>*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* = not quantified but attested
Attested Means for temporality

Expressions to indicate:

• POSITION of situations on time axis
  after / before / longtime ago (indefinite past/future)
  now/her
  June, Sept., Sunday, etc. (definite time span)

• DURATION: longtime (indefinite)
  X days, X months (definite)

• FREQUENCY: every day (= habitual or generic reading)

• BOUNDARIES: finish
And some examples....

Home signs

(1) (working situation) before good / now so so
(2) (about a team) before champion / now finish
(3) (fixing an appointment) sunday [starting point of a time line]
    3 working days (= 3 days later) end of the day GO

L2 (Basic V.) (a) before I work / now no

(b) 9 o’clock in er + work start
    half past two finish

• Construction of a time reference before predicking a property about it
• Reference to time implicit : if maintained from previous discourse
  or in case of a default present reading
  (but a contrastive “now” has to be expressed)
A longer stretch of narrative

• Principle of Natural Order
  The consecutive relation is left unmarked when events are recounted following their chronological order

• Modality-specific features?
  Hand + Facial expression:
  signing 2 overlapping activities for the same entity
  Jo going towards accident scene + watching Ivaldo’s son drinking a coke + noticing a girl
LEXICAL expressions to:

✓ LOCATE situations on time axis (absolute, deictic, anaphoric v.)
✓ quantify their DURATION or FREQUENCY
✓ signal (a right) BOUNDARY

Use in discourse: similar balance explicit/implicit time ref.
(PNO, construction of time ref. if different from the default one)

Spoken Target Languages

tense and aspect in verb morph.

Sign Languages

rich aspectual system

Fully fledged languages as elaborations of “simple systems”
(adding new means and making them obligatory = language diversity)
• How can we explain these similarities?

• How can they be interpreted in terms of language evolution?
On the expression of temporality

• Anchoring utterances in time
  from contextual dependence (unmarked here & now) sit.A
  --------------> S

to Ref. to a time span different from here & now
for which the predicate holds (temp. displaced reference)
  sit.A
  -[----]----!------->
  S
  --------!--[----]--
  S

at time span X sit. A is the case = static relation
situation viewed as a whole

• Giving a viewpoint on situations
starting with a right boundary marker:
  + A I - A
  ------------->[----]------>

(at time span X) sit. A “finish” = dynamic relation
transition + - phases of the same situation
on a temporal scale
On the development of a linguistic system

- Circumstances for their emergence?
  - predisposition to develop language (H L Faculty)
  - from the available raw material (speech / co-verbal gestures)
  - In interaction with other communicative partners

- Similar linguistic systems L2 / HS?
  - yes, to the extent that they allow the speaker to satisfy similar basic communicative needs (cf. adult subjects)
On language function

Debate on the emergence of language:
“inner thought” vs. “communicative purposes”

- Priority of “communicative function” for emergence
  and of “communicative activity” for further elaboration:

  - Goldin Meadow on child home signs
  - Fusellier on adult home signs
  - Nicaraguan experience
References


