***Challenges in the L2 acquisition of motion event construal***

***Where are we now?***

Simona ANASTASIO

Université de Lille – UMR 8163 STL CNRS

Space represents a crucial domain of human cognition and all human beings experience spatial representations in their everyday life (Klein 1989). Given the need for all human beings to construct and represent spatial representations, one might suppose that linguistic systems treat space in a universal way (Levinson 2003). Nevertheless, the literature clearly shows that languages differ in how they express space, more specifically motion.

Research about space in language is cross-linguistic in nature and based predominantly on the typological framework proposed by Talmy (1985, 2000), who shows the lexicalization patterns in the expression of motion events in various world languages. In particular, the author distinguishes between satellite-framed languages (e.g., Germanic) coding Motion and Manner/Cause in the main verb (e.g., *jump*) and Path in the so-called ‘satellites’ (e.g., *out*) vs verb-framed languages (e.g., Romance) expressing Path and Motion in the main verb (e.g., *entrer*) and Manner elsewhere (*en courant*). It is well known today that this typological classification presents several weaknesses, since languages may offer hybrid lexicalization strategies for motion (e.g., Cini 2008, Anastasio 2019, 2021, in press, for Italian). This is why some researchers prefer to replace a rigid typological dichotomy with a clinebased on the salience of spatial components (e.g., Slobin 2006; Ibarretxe-Antuñano 2009; Spreafico 2009; Beavers et al. 2010; Hendriks and Hickmann 2011; Anastasio 2019, 2021, in press).

In recent decades, the study of motion has been extended to second language (L2), where scholars have shown the challenges learners face in restructuring the ways that motion is represented in their mother-tongue (L1) into the spatial perspective of the L2 (e.g., Cadierno 2004; Cadierno and Ruiz 2006; Hendriks and Hickmann 2011). Up until now, many studies have stressed that learners’ difficulties in motion event construal are mainly related to objective differences between languages and to the proficiency level. These results are not easy to compare, due to differences in a) the type of motion observed (voluntary vs caused), b) the population examined, c) methodology and d) the type of data analysed.

In this talk we focus on motion event construal in a story-telling task (*Frog story*, Mayer 1969) produced by L2 university learners of French and Italian (corpus DISCOSS), whose L1 is either typologically close (Italian or French) or distant (English) from the TL. The purpose is to examine (a) the way learners get closer to the target preferences in coding motion events (focus, *locus* of information, semantic density), (b) the role of crosslinguistic influence (CLI; see, among others, Odlin 1989, 2005; Jarvis and Pavlenko 2010) according to proficiency (intermediate vs advanced; Bartning & Schlyter 2004) and the typological properties of the languages in contact. It will be shown that common tendencies related to general acquisitional principles (i.e. use of idiosyncratic verb and prepositional forms) exist for L2 intermediate learners. CLI is only found at the advanced level when the SL-TL have formal analogous structures, i.e. verb-particle constructions (*transfer to somewhere*, Andersen 1983). The findings will also illustrate that the effect of language proximity (between French and Italian) can be facilitative in lexical terms at intermediate stages but can also postpone the learning of other target-like devices which are functionally similar (see also Benazzo and Andorno 2017 for the use of temporal adverbs in L2 French by Italian and German learners).

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