

Book review:

Jeroen Aarssen, *Relating events in two languages. Acquisition of cohesive devices by Turkish-Dutch bilingual children at school age.*

**Tilburg: Tilburg University Press 1996
[Studies in Multilingualism 2], 203 pp.**

The Tilburg University Press initiative to start a new series on bilingualism and multilingualism ("Studies in Multilingualism") is to be congratulated. After the book of Ad Backus (*"Two in one. Bilingual speech of Turkish Immigrants in the Netherlands" Vol. 1*), the second volume of the series, the book of J. Aarssen, presents another aspect of bilingualism – the bilingual narrativity. The series publishes the most recent studies and results from different research in the area of psycho- and sociolinguistics. Both publications were defended as doctoral dissertations at the University of Tilburg.

The study by J. Aarssen "focuses on the relation between form and function from a cross-linguistic and developmental perspective. It investigates how in a group of bilingual speakers forms and functions in both their languages develop and interact" (p. 4).

In the Introduction Aarssen gives definitions of bilingualism and uses Romaine's (1995) six categories of early bilingualism. The investigated children in the study fit to the following two categories:

- non-dominant home language without community support;
- mixed languages.

The author makes an overview of the most important publications for the last 15 years in the area of first language (L1) Turkish and second language (L2) Dutch acquisition in the Netherlands, which are later used in the study as a basis for comparison with the findings of his own research.

The second chapter of the book ("Design of the Study") gives information about the investigated groups of children, their number and domicile. Three main groups of children were investigated: bilingual informants (Turkish children from the Netherlands), monolingual Dutch informants and monolingual Turkish informants. The narrative data were collected by means of the picture storybook, "Frog where are you" (Mayer, 1969). In the book the acquisition of two types of anaphors (sentence-internal and discourse (sentence-external) anaphors) in Turkish and Dutch are explored.

Chapter 3 ("Acquisition of sentence-internal anaphors") presents the acquisition of sentence-internal anaphors. The author tries to give an answer to the following research questions: 1. How do bilingual Turkish children in the Netherlands in the age range from 4 to 10 understand the coding devices for bound and free anaphoric reference in their first and second language; 2. Is there evidence of transfer? What similarities or differences in developmental patterns of anaphor acquisition can be found when the results of the bilingual informants are compared with those of the monolingual groups (Turkish children in Turkey for Turkish, and Dutch children for Dutch). To answer these questions the author organizes an experiment with bilingual children. The children are given a one sentence/ four picture multiple-choice task, consisting of 24 short sentences in each language. Using statistical analyses (ANOVA and MANOVA) the author found that the bilingual informants showed better performance on free anaphor items than on bound anaphor items until the age of 7. No differences were found between bilingual and monolingual Turkish

informants as far as correct scores of bound and free anaphor items are concerned. The development in Turkish can be outlined as follows: at the beginning of primary school the Turkish children in the Netherlands start off with a reasonable performance on free anaphor items and a low result on reflexives. There is a little development on both reflexives and pronominals across the age range (age 4 to 7) the performance on bound anaphor items reaches the level of scores on free anaphor items from age 8 to age 10. The development of anaphors in Dutch by Turkish children in the Netherlands is similar to that in Turkish.

Chapter 4 ("Acquisition of relativisation") answers the following research questions: 1. How do the bilingual Turkish children in the Netherlands in the age range from 4 to 10 learn to understand different types of relative clauses in Turkish and in Dutch? 2. What are the similarities and differences when the results of the bilingual informants are compared with those of monolinguals? To answer these questions the author carried another experiment, where he reads out the test sentences one by one. The children had to act out these sentences using toy animals. In the production data it is found that the bilingual children use more Turkish relative clauses than Dutch relative clauses. On the comprehension task, however, they perform better in Dutch than in Turkish although the difference is not so marked for older children. When the monolingual groups are compared the scores in Turkish turn out to be lower than scores in Dutch.

Chapter 5 ("Acquisition of topic continuity") is based on Karmiloff-Smith's three phases in the representational changes in memory (1985). The first phase, which she called the procedural phase, is characterized by the fact that the children's behavior is stimulus-driven. When asked to describe a picture book story, phase-one children give local descriptions of the stimuli. Definite articles and pronouns are used in deictic function, i.e. as if they were demonstratives. In the second phase, called the metaprocedural phase, children's narratives are controlled by a top-down process. Children become ready to organize internal representations by a defining analogies of form and function. Phase three represents a dynamic interaction between the stimulus-driven and top-down processes of phase 1 and 2 respectively. Children use the internal representations from phase 2 to reassess the input data and to update their representational system. This systematic organization enables the child to use a rich variety of forms for a whole range of functions.

The author's predictions were that, in creating a coherent story, the child introduces a character by means of a nominal form and develops towards indefinite article plus noun. This prediction is confirmed in both Turkish and Dutch data of the bilingual informants. The second prediction is that the younger informants switch reference by means of zero anaphors of deictic pronouns in the Turkish data. For older informants nominals become the preferred form. Prediction 2 also claims that younger informants use pronouns which take the function of demonstratives in their Dutch narratives. Prediction 3 concerns the use of devices for reference maintenance. In the Turkish data a preference was expected for zero anaphors for reference maintenance, becoming more salient with age. This was confirmed with respect to reference to the main character. The fourth prediction in the study concerns the comparison of the bilingual informants with monolingual peers. It can be concluded that the results of the bilingual children point in the same direction as those of the monolingual Turkish and Dutch children. Furthermore, differences between reference to main and secondary characters were predicted. At age 4, no differences are found but at age 5, the narratives as a whole become shorter. Prediction 6 states that young

children tell the story from the perspective of the main character. Older children employ more elaborate means. Other characters than the main character are mentioned as actor, or verb forms with multiple argument places such as causatives, are used.

From the data it also appears that younger informants may not yet have acquired the ability to give a hierarchically organized representation of the events depicted in the picture book. They are, for instance, not able to establish a main character in their narratives. By using deictic means for reference, and by not being able to distinguish between foreground and background, their frog stories seem to be static descriptions of single pictures. This conception of the task of retelling the frog story is notably different from that of older children.

In chapter 6 ("Acquisition of temporality") two issues relating to temporality in narratives were considered: the development of temporal anchoring of texts, and the development and use of devices expressing simultaneity of events. Both issues were found to be related to a more general developmental trend: change in type of discourse, from static description of isolated pictures at age 4 to the dynamic narration of related events at age 10. The use of infinitives only in some narratives of young children, and the absence of verb forms in other narratives, show that some children at age 4 and 5 do not give account of events but instead give static description based on the pictures in the frog booklet. Moreover, the stories in which the children mix present and past tense also support the claim that 4-year-olds give static descriptions of isolated pictures, instead of relating successive or simultaneous events into a coherent narrative. In this chapter the author answers the following research question: How do bilingual children temporally organize their narrative in both languages? How do bilingual children express the temporal relation of simultaneity at different ages in both Turkish and Dutch? What are the differences and similarities with monolingual control groups?

In the Turkish data, no structural differences between bilinguals and monolinguals were found. There are only very few forms that monolingual children use, which are not used by bilingual children. In the Dutch data, however, the monolingual Dutch children use more forms and many are used earlier as compared to the bilingual children.

Chapter 7 ("General conclusions and discussion") summarizes the results from the research on the level of syntax and on the level of discourse. The findings of Turkish-Dutch bilingual children are compared with the findings of other cross-linguistic studies on Turkish-German and Turkish-French bilingualism.

Aarssen's research on Turkish-Dutch bilingualism is a continuation of the cross-linguistic studies on narratives and gives new information on the language proficiency of bilingual children. It is interesting reading for all interested in bilingual child language development.

References:

- Karmiloff-Smith, A. (1985) Language and cognitive processes from a developmental perspective. *Language and Cognitive processes*. 1, 61-85.
Romaine, S. (1995) *Bilingualism* (2nd edition). Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd.

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