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Different L1s, same difficulties? Path Encoding in L2 German by Spanish and Danish learners

Based on previous research on Motion Events in an L2 (see Cadierno 2017 for an overview), the presented PhD project examines the expression of Path in L2 German by learners of two typologically different L1s, namely Spanish and Danish. In German and Danish, both satellite-framed languages, Path is mostly encoded outside the verb. However, while German features a wide variety of linguistic devices to encode Path (PPs, directional adverbs, combinations of both PP and directional adverbs, and particle or prefix verbs), Danish mostly encodes this component by means of combinations of particles/adverbs and PPs. Conversely, in Spanish, a verb-framed language, Path is generally encoded in Path-verbs, which can be combined with a reduced set of prepositions.

The aims of the presented PhD project are (i) to investigate to what extent the two learner groups differ from German native speakers and from each other; (ii) to determine if the Danish learners encounter less difficulties than the Spanish ones; (iii) to examine which difficulties can be attributed to crosslinguistic influence and which ones are due to the complexity of Path encoding in German; (iv) to document which linguistic means and strategies are used at the different stages of acquisition. To this end, a twofold methodology was applied: oral retellings of the cartoon *Canary Row* and written descriptions of 42 video clips depicting 14 different types of Path. Data were collected from 45 Spanish and 45 Danish learners (from beginner to advanced level), as well as from 30 native speakers of German, Spanish and Danish, respectively.

As the poster will show, the data analysis indicates that Danish learners encode Path more easily and correctly than Spanish ones. However, both learner groups differ from German native speakers and encounter difficulties when encoding Path in German. While some difficulties seem to be restricted to one learner group (e.g. path encoding in the verb root), the lack of distinction between the different satellites or incorrect case marking are observed in both groups. Furthermore, the data also show that possible avoidance strategies, such as static descriptions or code-switching, cannot be only observed by beginners but also by intermediate and advanced learners. Finally, the comparison with other studies focusing on L2 learners of German (e.g. Becker 2001; Bauer 2010; Scheirs 2015) should provide a more comprehensive picture of the evolution of the expression of path in L2 German.

References

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