

**The ‘greek’ Null Subject Parameter in the germanic languages.  
Its acquisition by Greeks acquiring German as a L3**

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This poster investigates the *Null Subject Parameter* (NSP) in *Greek, English and German* from a psycholinguistic perspective. Specifically, we will present experimental data from Greeks (L1), who have already acquired English as their *first foreign language* (L2), acquiring German as a *second foreign language* or *third language* (L3). The three languages involved seem to have different values in NSP (Chomsky 1981, Rizzi 1982, 1990).

This, among other properties on the surface structure of language, implies that in Greek, a typical *Null Subject Language*, a pronoun does not necessarily have to be realized in subject position, overt grammatical subjects may be omitted, (e.g. both *ego pezo* and  $\emptyset$  *pezo* are correct) (Alexiadou & Anagnostopoulou 1998, Anagnostopoulou 2013, Philippaki-Warbuton 1985, Tsimpli 1990). On the contrary, in English, a *Non Null Subject Language* (NNSL), the pronominal subject must always be explicitly implemented in order to constitute a grammatically correct sentence (e.g. *I play* but not  $\ast\emptyset$  *play*). German is classified by many researchers as a NNSL, since in most cases German does not allow the omission of the overt grammatical subject (e.g. *ich spiele* but not  $\ast\emptyset$  *spiele*). Nevertheless, in the Passive Voice of specific verb classes the omission of the overt grammatical subject is permitted (e.g. *Sonntags wird nicht gearbeitet*) (Holmberg & Platzack 1995). Consequently, current theoretical approaches classify German among *Expletive Null Subject Languages* cf. D’Alessandro 2014, Roberts & Holmberg 2010. Furthermore, unlike Greek, both English and German allow pleonastic subjects (e.g. *There fell down some stones, Es wurde dem General nicht gern gehorcht*) (Cardinaletti 1997).

In order to clarify which of the already acquired languages is the source of linguistic transfer in the interlanguage of *non-native speakers* (NNS) of German, a psycholinguistic experiment consisting of two tasks, a Grammaticality Judgement Task and a Preference Task, has been conducted. These tasks have measured the judgements and preferences, respectively, of three groups of 73 participants, namely two groups of Greeks with different proficiency levels in German (basic and advanced), but with the same (advanced) proficiency level in English and a group of Germans who served as a control group. They were asked to characterize 288 experimental utterances by choosing a mark from a 5-point Likert scale. (This presentation does not investigate topic-drop phenomena in any researched language).

The research hypothesis was the following: If the choices of the NNS were more successful in the experimental condition when the subject of the finite verb can be omitted (e.g. in Passive Voice), then we assume that the L1 has more influence on their interlanguage. Conversely, if the judgements of the NNS were more successful in the experimental condition in which German has the same syntactic properties with English (e.g. expletive subjects), then we assume that the L2 has greater influence when acquiring the L3.

The study results show that both languages already acquired seem to play an equally important role in L3 acquisition. Therefore, the theoretical model that best describes their interlanguage is that of Flynn et al. (2004), namely, the ‘Cumulative-Enhancement Model for Language Acquisition’.

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