Causal architecture of natural L2 German grammars: Stage-like vs. holistic representation

This paper pursues to answer the question whether the L2 clause structure is represented in stage-like/incremental fashion as proposed by the Organic Grammar approach (Vainikka and Young-Scholten, 1994, 1996, 2011) or more holistically being equipped with all functional projections as assumed by the Feature Reassembly approach (Lardiere 2008, 2009). For this purpose, natural L2 German acquirers who reached a matured stage of their L2 grammar (L1 Korean) performed two production tasks (sentence completion and loaded memory repetition) and an acceptability judgment task. Preliminary descriptive results of the first 20 participants who show a solid production of subordinate clauses speak in favor of the more holistic view of L2 grammars.

Previous research on natural L2 acquisition by adult immigrant workers suggests a stage-like, bottom-up development of the syntactic structure (e.g., *Organic Grammar*: Vainikka & Young-Scholten, 1994, 1996, 2011; *Processability Theory*: Pienemann, 1998; Basic Variety: Klein & Perdue, 1997; Clahsen, Meisel & Pienemann, 1983). Specifically, *Organic Grammar* (OG) suggests that phrase structure develops in the sequence VP > NegP > TP > AgrP > CP, with AgrP projecting for main clauses and CP projecting for subordinate clauses. For German, this means that the acquisition of the Germanic Verb Second (V2)-property in main clauses is a prerequisite of the acquisition of subordinate clauses where the verb occurs on final position (V-last), see examples (1) and (2) below.

(1) main clause, V2-property:
Heute Morgen   hat   Susanne   Kaffee   getrunken.
Today morning   has   Susanne   coffee   drunk.
'Susanne drank coffee this morning.'

(2) subordinate clause, V-last:
Ich   habe   gesehen,   dass   Susanne   heute Morgen   Kaffee   getrunken   hat.
I   have   seen   that   Susanne   today morning   coffee   drank   has.
'I saw that Susanne drank coffee this morning.'

The present study presents data from Korean immigrants to Germany who lived for more than 40 years in Germany with varying degrees of input and demand of their L2 German. Preliminary results show that the participants split roughly into three different groups: low-proficient, high-proficient, and near-native. The preliminary results focus on the clause structure of the high-proficient (Group 1, n=9) and near-native group (Group 2, n=11) as they show a substantial production of subordinate clauses with V-last, see Table 1. Whereas Group 2 shows a preference for V2 over XSV structures, Group 1 produces more XSV clauses than true V2-clauses in both production tasks–despite the apparent acquisition of subordinate clauses on CP-level, see Table 2. This finding is in line with data of a few individuals in Group 1 who exclusively produced XSV structures in main clauses. These initial data suggest that for Group 1 claims of OG cannot completely be supported because the V-last structure on CP-level does not necessarily entail the V2 structure on AgrP-level. Rather, if this trend is continued, these data support a more flexible and holistic view of L2 grammars such as Feature Reassembly (Lardiere, 2008, 2009) that incorporates the notion of gradience into language proficiency (Putnam and Sánchez, 2013).

Table 1. Preliminary, descriptive summary of subordinate clause production in the sentence completion task.

Production task 1: Sentence completion task

	Group 1 (high-proficient)	Group 2 (native-like)
V(fin)-last	85.71% (96 out of 112)	94% (172 out of 183)
SVO	14.29% (16 out of 112)	6% (11 out of 183)

Table 2. Preliminary, descriptive summary of main clause production in sentence completion and loaded memory repetition task.

Production task 1: Sentence completion task

	Group 1 (high-proficient)	Group 2 (native-like)
SVO	63.84% (112 out of 177)	54.14% (98 out of 181)
XSV	**19.72%** (35 out of 177)	11.6% (21 out of 181)
XV (true V2)	**16.95%** (30 out of 177)	34.25% (62 out of 181)

Production task 2: Loaded memory repetition task

	Group 1 (high-proficient)	Group 2 (native-like)
SVO	66.71% (259 out of 413)	51.32% (252 out of 492)
XSV	**30.27%** (125 out of 413)	14.46% (71 out of 492)
XV (true V2)	**7.02%** (29 out of 413)	34.22% (168 out of 492)

Selected references

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