SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING IN ADULT MIGRANTS IN AUSTRALIA

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SECTION A: DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

PURPOSE

The aim of the research is to develop a new approach to second language teaching based on a systematic study of the speech of adult learners of English within the framework of recent linguistic theory.[1]

Existing programs for second language teaching, despite improvements in teaching methodology over the past few years, are frequently ineffective. This is especially the case in the area of course content. A fundamental cause of ineffectiveness is that existing programs are not built upon secure theoretical foundations. At a conference held in 1975 in the United States on the problems of teaching minority languages it was stated that 'There is very little research on second language acquisition in the school setting that can provide direction or guidelines for curriculum development'. Derek Bickerton sums up the situation even more graphically in his remark that 'For all the thousands of works which deal with second language *teaching*, there are only a handful which deal with second language *learning*, and indeed, to the best of my knowledge, none at all which deal with the learning of second languages by untaught adults' (Bickerton 1975:170).

An understanding of the processes of second language teaching is necessarily dependent on an understanding of the process of language learning. This, in turn, is dependent on an adequate understanding of the skill being learnt, that is, what it actually means to learn a language.

Lack of such rationally-based programs has obliged second language teachers to often operate on a trial and error basis and to devise programs on assumptions which are frequently unjustified. While the behaviouristic approach of inducing conditioned responses by constant drilling is gradually dying out, there are still considerable grounds for dissatisfaction with current programs. One of the most important of these is that the sequential presentation of material to students is arranged in ways which patently run counter to the order in which the various structures of language are naturally acquired. Needs-based, thematic and functional-notional approaches to teaching, while far superior to the traditional grammar-based behaviourist programs as regards teaching methodology, frequently display the same expectations about the type of language

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Michael Clyne, ed. *Australia, meeting place of languages*, 197-221. *Pacific Linguistics*, C-92, 1985.

which can be learnt at a given stage. The need for research on orders of acquisition thus remains. It should be stressed that the outcome of such work would not result in the revival of some sort of 'structural' approach to teaching. Rather, the findings could be used to enhance the effectiveness of a variety of the newer approaches. Knowledge of developmental sequences would enable teachers and course designers to form realistic expectations about student speech for the different levels over a wide range of communicative tasks and to determine at which points new rules and items should be introduced and existing 'non-standard' structures modified.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

It should be pointed out that an adequate exposition of this is not possible in the limited space available.

(i) Knowing a language consists in having tacit knowledge of a finite system of rules capable of mapping the infinite set of sentences of the language to their meaning.

(ii) Acquiring a language consists in internalising that particular system of rules.

(iii) The speech of second language learners is rule-governed in the above way and, regardless of how it deviates from the target language, constitutes a system. So-called errors merely reflect differences between the learner's system and that of the target language.

(iv) There are implicational relationships between various linguistic rules so that there are certain aspects of languages which cannot be acquired until other aspects have been acquired.

(v) The actual process of rule acquisition can be described in terms of C.-J. Bailey's wave model theory of language change and variation (Bailey 1973). That is, rules originate in a single context and spread through a series of contexts which are arranged in an implicational scale. This is an important theoretical innovation because it overcomes the problem of determining the difference between 'formulae' and rules which have actually been internalised. The Bailey model provides a step by step mechanism for understanding how rules are actually incorporated into a grammar in a gradual fashion. Much previous research on language acquisition, because it lacked such an account of rule generalisation, was forced to establish quite arbitrary cut-off points for saying that a rule had been acquired (for instance, it has to operate in, say, 90% of obligatory contexts). Ability to account for variability in speech is vital to any theory of language learning.

(vi) A language teaching program which based the sequential presentation of different types of structures on an understanding of the natural order in which rules underlying these structures are acquired, and of their interrelations, would be more effective than one not so based.

RESULTS TO DATE

Work done so far strongly indicates that our initial hypotheses were fruitful and we have now made considerable headway.

After an initial six month period of data collection (see Methodology) work on analysis commenced. The aim of the analysis was, as previously stated, to determine the natural order in which rules and elements were acquired in a given area of syntax as learner speech approximated more and more to standard English. This was initially done through comparison of speakers judged to be at different stages of English competence, and as time passed and longitudinal study became possible, by plotting the development of individual informants. (These two procedures appear to give very similar results.) At this stage of our work we are analysing the data under roughly the following syntactic headings: Negation, Question Formation, Tense and Aspect/Verb-marking, Be and Have/Existentials, Auxiliaries, Complementation/Subordination, Prepositions, Connectors, Pronouns, Quantifiers, Indefinites, Possessives, Comparatives, Plurals, Sentence Structure and Discourse.

We now have reasonably detailed information for a number of these areas, including those which seem to bear the heaviest functional load in typical communication situations. In the first instance, our results were based on the speech of Spanish speakers learning English. However, in 1978 work was also done on the speech of Turkish speakers. This latter research was motivated by the necessity of determining in what way and to what extent 'interference' from the first language facilitates or inhibits learning. Turkish was chosen as the first language background because, of the 'community' languages spoken in Australia, it is the most unlike Spanish in terms of word order typology and its many associated syntactic correlates. As well, in the area of phonetics and phonology, differences between Spanish and Turkish were expected to help resolve questions about the part phonetic difficulties played in inhibiting the acquisition of various rules, such as tense making, since where Spanish speakers appeared to have phonetically-based difficulties Turkish speakers should not have had as many.

METHODOLOGY

Since the research is concerned with the speech produced by learners of English in typical unstructured discourse situations, data are collected by interviews conducted as informally as possible with one or more informants. In this way real needs and performance can best be determined. The data are recorded and transcribed, either phonetically or conventionally, according to the area of investigation.

As outlined above, the informants have been drawn from two language groups, Spanish speakers and Turkish speakers, so as to facilitate conclusions about mother tongue interference.

The informants were also chosen so as to provide a range of levels of competence in English, from beginner level to that of speakers able to deal with everyday matters with confidence and to converse to some extent on more abstract topics.

In the paper on developmental sequences which we have included in this report (cf. Section B) we make reference to a seven-point proficiency scale for indicating the ranking of speakers and correlating syntactic development in the different areas under study. On this scale, zero indicates no knowledge

TABLE 1: A.M.E.S. SYLLABUS DEVELOPMENT PROJECT – SPEAKING PROFICIENCY DESCRIPTIONS (MARCH 1979)

	Vocabulary	Fluency	Syntax	Comprehension	Effect on listener	Examples
0.5	Knows only a few words connected with immediate priority areas (e.g. local geography, transport, food.)	Utterances often consist of one word. Speaker tends to lapse into native language.	No grammatical knowledge. Isolated lexical items and a few fixed phrases (e.g. greetings)	Can understand only a few simple questions related to immediate needs. Needs to be spoken to very slowly and deliberately. Gestures, etc. usually necessary to communicate message.	Would not be able to communicate verbally with most native speakers. Frequent communication breakdowns even with persons used to dealing with migrants with little English. Speaker often very nervous, unsure. Sometimes unintelligible.	Can give name, nationality. May know some numbers, days of week, months.
1.0	Limited to areas of immediate need (e.g. family, work) and everyday items which may have been learned at school. Some common greetings and courtesy expressions.	Utterances tend to be very short (3-4 words) though some speakers can construct longer sequences. Speech very hesitant, with frequent pauses and recourse to native language.	Very fragmented. Extremely limited grammatical knowledge. Word endings often omitted. Generally dependent on memorised sentence-types and learned formulae.	Can understand limited repertoire of items. Responds to requests for basic personal information. Frequently requires repetition. Can understand only when spoken to slowly and deliberately. Dependent on face-to-face interaction for understanding. May rely on gestures to aid communication.	Great concentration necessary on the part of the listener. Errors in pronounciation and lack of grammar and vocabulary constantly require interlocutor to verify or paraphrase. Can be understood by persons accustomed to 'interpreting' migrant speech.	Can state name, basic facts concerning family work, place of residence Can ask very simple questions. (You marry? etc.) Can give appropriate yes/no answers to simple questions. Familiar with number system, days of week, months of year.
1.5			Beginning of autonomy of expression. First attempts to transfer grammatical knowledge.			
2.0	Adequate to handle most requests for basic personal information with confidence. Can supply details of job, accommodation, family, etc. but often lost for vocabulary when conversation is outside these areas. Has great difficulty expressing and justifying opinions and dealing with abstract topics.	Speech hesitant but some capacity for self-correction. Delivery slow, with repetitions and reformulations. Has difficulty connecting discourse.	Quite inaccurate but a few basic patterns beginning to appear (e.g. be and have). Grammatical limitations still force speaker to adapt content of message to forms at his/her disposal. At a loss to deal with unforseen communication needs.	Can understand most questions concerning very familiar topics if phrased simply, but often has to ask for repetition. Has difficulty understanding faster rates of utterance.	Can be understood by most native speakers with effort, but patient understanding necessary in conversation. Some verification and paraphrase necessary on the part of the hearer owing to lack of cohesion in narrative, heavy 'foreign accent', and misplaced stress and intonation.	Can express likes, dislikes, desires. Can give simple information about house, family, job, etc. Can relate events in temporal sequence. Can initiate, but has difficulty sustaining, conversation.
2.5			Beginning of cohesion in discourse. Can attempt to construct logical sequence in English.			

3.0	Vocabulary for everyday matters fairly sound, but often has to grope for words when discussing more complicated matters. Could not participate in a group discussion with other native speakers at normal speed.	Can transmit chain of everyday factual information without long pauses, though sometimes has to reformulate owing to inadequate grammar or vocabulary. Discussion of abstract topics, expression of opinions, marked by long hesitations.	A wider range of structures appears (e.g. some tense marking, greater regularity in be and have, more complex negation patterns). Discourse markers used with greater frequency (then, so, but, etc.). However errors still very frequent.	Can understand questions relating to familiar subjects spoken by native speaker at normal speed. Repetition sometimes required. Has difficulty understanding longer utterances containing more complex structures. No appreciation of register requirements.	Can be understood by most native speakers without undue difficulty when discussing familiar topics but some strain on listener when more abstract ideas are involved and when detailed explanation or reasoned argument is required. Pronunciation occasionally causes hearer to verify.	Can relate events connected with job, family, immediate situation in Australia. Can give opinions, with hesitations, on familiar issues, but has difficulty justifying them. Lack of confidence still evident in social situations. Can give and follow simple instructions.
4.0	Wide enough to permit speaker to express himself/herself about most non-technical subjects. In more specialised areas may have to ask for help of interlocutor or resort to circumlocution or paraphrase. Would have difficulty participating in group discussion with native speakers.	Notably fewer hesitations more spontaneity, confidence in delivery. At ease when dealing with familiar topics. Some circumlocution and hesitation when discussing more complicated matters, but not often forced to silence by limitations of grammar or vocabulary.	Quite accurate in some basic patterns, but still has problems connecting discourse. Speech still 'foreign' with numerous grammatical errors, but these rarely interfere with understanding.	Able to follow speech in non-colloquial register but may miss points of detail. Careful attention necessary when listening. Can extract essential information from speech directed at him/her but experiences difficulty with longer chains of discourse, especially where colloquial register is used. May require repetition or explanation.	Can convey most types of information with little risk of confusion in listener, though some misunderstanding may arise from inappropriate vocabulary or grammatical error. Interaction with native speakers usually possible without imposing undue strain on either party. Faults of idiom and style occur. Beginning awareness or register.	Can handle common social situations (introductions, small talk, etc.) with confidence but not facility. Can sustain conversation on familiar topics with native speakers without undue difficulty. Can cope with some difficult linguistic situations but lack of register control may lead to misunderstandings.
5.0	Though at a disadvantage when compared to native speakers, can express ideas in all issues relevant to his/her learning experience. May occasionally seek help of interlocutor when discussing unfamiliar topic and lacking a word, but can always find a way of paraphrasing. Could participate effectively in group discussion.	Degree of fluency and spontaneity which enable speaker to handle most frequently recurring language situations with ease and variety. In continuous speech still needs to plan what is said and to adjust expression or to reformulate to find more effective way of communicating ideas. Can describe events in detail.	Able to construct complex utterances using a wide range of modifying devices. Reduction in frequency of grammatical errors but speech still obviously 'foreign'. Errors do not interfere with understanding and are rarely gross.	Can understand most speech directed at him/her without requiring repetition or explanation except where highly colloquial register is used or where subject is very specialised.	Speech entirely adequate to be understood by native speakers without seeking clarification, though this may happen sometimes when subject is complicated or grammatical errors could create misunderstanding. Native speakers not often obliged to reformulate or modify register to be understood, except if very colloquial register is used.	Can handle most common social situations with confidence and facility Can present and debate own ideas. Can make use of the telephone and receive/convey information accurately. Can relate sequences of events in detail.
6.0	Though not as wide as that of a native speaker vocabulary entirely adequate to discuss any topic and to switch levels where appropriate. Able to reformulate some ideas in different linguistic forms for emphasis, polemics, etc. May misuse some colloquial forms.	Can participate in any conversation with high degree of fluency and precision of vocabulary. Can express himself/herself with confidence and conviction. Very rarely has to hesitate or grope for words. At ease in English.	Grammatical errors rare and unsystematic. Speaker can usually correct them in retrospect.	Can with concentration, follow all forms of speech understood by native speaker, though may have difficulty with some varieties of Australian English involving high frequency use of colloquialisms and cultural references outside her/her immediate experience. Less ability than native speaker to follow sudden change in topic and style.	Interlocutor would react as to a native speaker. Accent, though still 'foreign' does not impede understanding in any way.	Can convey exact meaning unrestricted by lexical or grammatical deficiencies. Has sufficient range to modify speech according to occasion. Can construct long chain of coherent connected discourse with native-like sentence structure. Can appreciate verbal humour and stylistic effects.
7.0	As for educated native speaker.	As for educated native speaker.	As for educated native speaker.	As for educated native speaker.	As for educated native speaker.	As for educated native speaker.

whatsoever of English and 7.0 indicates educated native proficiency. Originally, we employed a three-group system of ranking. However, as results became more detailed and a work group within the Adult Migrant Education Service looking into evaluation procedures and syllabus development became interested in our work, the more elaborate seven-point scale was adopted. This scale was developed for the AMES work group by Geoff Brindley after conducting a survey of various already extant proficiency scales and is basically derived from David Wilkins' seven-point proposals for Level Definitions (Wilkins 1977). A copy is included as Table 1 (p.200-201).

In all, we have used 21 informants, of whom 13 are Spanish speakers and the remainder Turkish.

SECTION B: PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

1. UTTERANCE STRUCTURE

The term 'utterance' is used in order to encompass spoken units varying in length and complexity from single words to stretches of discourse. We deliberately do not focus on the notion of 'sentence structure' in the standard sense, as while we find this helpful in analysing the output of the intermediate range of speakers (levels 1.0 - 3.5) we find the notion to be deficient in the cases of speakers above and below this range. This finding alone points to a serious defect in the standard pedagogic texts, which generally limit themselves to the level of the sentence and thereby exacerbate a number of learning problems in ignoring on the one hand elementary utterances and on the other discourse features. The question of how discourse features relate to grammatical organisation on the level of the morpheme, the clause, the sentence and the 'paragraph' requires far more attention that it has so far had. Most of the examples of speech given in standard texts involve dialogues consisting of brief exchanges of questions and answers and thus do not provide an opportunity for exploring this relationship in the classroom. Even the more advanced speakers in our data display a significant lack of control of discourse features over extended utterances and consequently lack coherence, and while such a situation undoubtedly reflects the inherent difficulty of learning to handle discourse features rather than the failings of teachers themselves, a higher degree of pedagogic awareness about the relationship between syntax and speech acts should help in some measure to facilitate the development of communicative competence at all levels of language development.

First, we propose to trace the development of very broad syntactic structure from the most elementary to the most advanced speaker in our corpus. This represents a development from minimal grammatical categories and no full sentences to fully worked out complex sentences and patterns of discourse, albeit with the shortcomings already mentioned. What is acquired then, in the various stages, are rules for the construction of simple (one verb) sentences, the co-ordination and subordination of such sentences and the maintenance of coherence over a series of sentences.

At level 0.5 we find only one-word or one-phrase utterances, mostly as answers to questions, and almost nothing comprehensible containing a verb except formulas like

I donno (13/1/070)

Interviewer: ...and what were you doing in Chile?

13 : Oh...estyudent. (13/1/015)

The reply here is ambiguous between studying and (I was a) student, and indicates that the subject does not have the syntax to distinguish the two. Other examples are:

dyou merry? (*married*) (13/2/220)
dyou age? (13/2/208)
dyou estuden? (13/2/275)

This lack of distinguishing noun/verb/adjective morphology and syntax can also be found in the output of informant 10.

Interviewer: ...do you work?

10 : Yeah, work. (10/1/205)

Interviewer: You weren't studying?

10 : Oh yeah study, ...no...no work.

Interviewer: And what study was that?

10 : e'lectricia(n), e'lectricia(n) (10/1/095)

All...Southamerica...twel more...is europe (10/1/085)

Informant 10's use of study and work, as with 13, display vagueness as to the grammatical category of the words used.

At this stage the conjunction an' appears. Its use below level 1.0 seems to be solely as a connector of nouns or non-complex NPs, that is, it functions on an intraclause level alone.

my sister merry (*sister's husband*) an my broder and my sister children (13/1/050)

three sister...a:n one brother (10/1/120)

We have found no evidence then, that an' functions as a connector of larger syntactic elements, such as clauses, at this early stage.

Three other discourse connectors show up on our data for 0.5 speakers. These are o' (*or*), por/for (*because*) and if. The first two, it is safe to conclude, are lifted straight from Spanish. It seems that there is a tendency for speakers in the very early stages to use certain types of words, such as prepositions, articles and connectors, in their mother tongue form, much more so than other types. This state of affairs probably reflects the relative unimportance of such word categories to communication at this level.

The third connector if occurs only in echo contexts and as a result of direct cueing from a Spanish text and cannot therefore be considered as an example of spontaneous production.

By the time of his second interview 10 has moved from level 0.5 to level 1.0 and at this stage he produces a number of recognisable sentences. These sentences contain verbs (as yet almost entirely unmarked) and one or more NPs in various relations to the verb. The NPs are sometimes marked with an appropriate preposition and sometimes not.

...I go wis my girl fren... ( ) to walk for...
de stree(t)...m...I come here...to my house...
nine o'clo...ten o'clo... (10/2/220)

(See section on prepositions for a treatment of the acquisition of these elements.)

Except for the misconstrued example to walk (*for a walk*) mentioned above, 10 uses no constructions displaying subordination spontaneously. He does use a conditional construction in an echo of the interviewer's question.

Interviewer: ...but if your mother is sick, or something like that?

10 : ...if my mother is sick...eh...no cook! (10/2/260)

By level 1.0 there has also been further development in the area of discourse connectors. An' begins to function as a joiner of clauses as well as simple NPs.

I habe workee an estudiant (4/1/B 010)

(Syntax unclear, probably *I worked and studied.*)

an I studin (10/2/32)

9 : mih, yeah de...eat...de eat...
es eh...es har(d)
(i.e. *the food is inedible*)

Interviewer: hard, it's not very good (?)

9 : No very goo(d)...an de...libih...is very goo(d) (9/1/200)

It can be observed that for this speaker at least while an' has emerged as a connector of clauses its semantic near-relative but is still absent. Thus we may expect sometimes to find an' functioning as both and and but at this level. In any case bu(t) itself soon emerges, as can be seen from this example, also from a level 1.0 speaker.

bery cousin bu(t) I libe wi(th) moder only (4/1/B 025)
(i.e. *I had a lot of cousins but I lived alone with my mother*)

Another connector of considerable importance which emerges at level 1.0 is because. (We have seen it emerge earlier in Spanish form.) For one speaker apart from its standard semantic function because seemed to serve as a generalised device for introducing answers to various types of questions.

Interviewer: ...how did you find the hostel?

9 : ...m...

Interviewer: How did you find it, was it alright, was it bad?

9 : becau...because eh...my son...m...everyday go to de school (9/1/180)

Interviewer: but if you...if you cannot go...and work after this three months, what happens?

9 : er...because is...no better

Interviewer: Yes, alright, so suppose...suppose it is not better in three months' time, what happens then?

9 : er...

Interviewer: if in three months you cannot work, what do you do?

9 : because m...(unclear)...I will...sick

(9/1/460)

Even when because is being used in the standard way, by far the most favourable context seems to be in answer to questions.

Interviewer: Yeah, but you don't like it.

3 : noh

Interviewer: Why is that?

3 : eh...because...eh...no beri gu...noh

(3/1/125)

Interviewer: Why...before...they didn't give you clothes?

3 : because de...de ferd (*first*) day no a neber... a neber...(unclear)...after two weeky

From the above observations we can probably assume that level 1.0 speakers are still not in a position to connect large enough stretches of discourse in such a way that because would occur in an utterance medial position. The acquisition sequence for this connector probably involves its initial use as a focussing device for answers to questions, followed by its restriction to fields in which causal connection is definitely involved in the answer, followed then by its use as a connector to establish a causal link between two propositions in the one stretch of discourse.

Between level 1.0 and level 1.5 we can observe a variety of attempts to use subordinate constructions. (Some of these are dealt with more fully in other sections, e.g. Complements.)

I know I go to de jo(b) (9/1/067)

Attempts to use sequence markers also begin to be in evidence.

an den I...wen to...Liverpool hospital

(9/1/306)

I will for a mons estay in Australia eh
I tak d job...job en Bicta factory (9/1/205)
(i.e. *I'd been in Australia for a month when I took the job in the Victa factory*)

apta (*after*) I will have ode jo...I wan(t) a car (3/3/109)

As can be seen, success is varying. The Victa factory example, in which the speaker is quite confused about verb marking and seems to lack the sequence marker before is not an isolated one of its type and points to the importance of inculcating sequence markers before verb marking, since even with correct verb marking time adverbs are often necessary. (It should be noted that speaker 9 has had no formal instruction in English, so that his errors cannot be attributed to faulty teaching.)

Relative clauses, though infrequent, are another example of subordination which occurs at the level 1.0 - 1.5 stage.

> he habe very soun (*songs*) beautiful...what
> speak of de...love...what speak of costumbres
> de chile (4/1/180)

The sequence 'what speak of' here seems to be fairly clearly a relative clause.

> de problem...de I habe is de wer (3/1/190)

By level 1.5 we find an example of who being used as a relative pronoun.

> an I have many...frens who...dey habe a car
> (3/3/106)

In general level 1.5 witnesses a consolidation of the tendencies already pointed out. The noun/verb distinction is by now fairly consistent, and thus most utterances are recognisable attempts at English sentence patterns. While examples of subordinate and co-ordinate constructions of the kinds exemplified above occur they are by no means frequent, and speakers at this level are still substantially restricted in their output to the level of the simple sentence and its subparts.

Some further examples of subordinate structures are the following:

> eh dey make an table for eh...work on
> extractor (Purpose Clause) (3/2/260)
>
> today dey say...egryday overtih de...
> ha(lf) pa(st) three ar (*to*) happas sik
> (Reported Speech) (3/2/282)
>
> I understan woner (*when*) de teacher eh
> dice sone (*some*) many question (3/3/265)

From this point (1.5), then, speakers have reasonable control of simple sentence structures and some control of complex sentence structure, but what is striking is the consistent lack of discourse features. Much more work needs to be done on this area and what follows is no more than a sketch. However, it may serve to illuminate some of the factors involved. To this end we turn now to an examination of some representative discourse from a level 2.5 speaker, informant 5, and informant 2, who at level 4.5 is the most advanced speaker in our corpus.

> um...I went to...one factory...de tol(d) me:
> no Bacancy...I wen to, dyou know, confection...
> Katy's, you know, for make dres...a pik factory
> ...en de city...I wen to de personal office dey
> tol(d) me: no Bacansyh...always

I wake up very early en de mornin, I go to every factory: tol(d) me no, no...after I wen to de Hilton hotel, I write a form, de tol(d) me: after I feled fo(ne) fyou...but I wri(te) bef(ore)...one dyea ago, but never call meh... eh for nothi(ng)...I write for nothi(ng)...I don sometime give a dyob, someti(me) dyou waih for nothi(ng) (5/1/330)

Well, I think er it's been affected more de... women dan de men...because de...dere are lot of unemploy women dat er been sack lately... spesyally migrant...an dey have to sort of sept it an den dey don...half anybody where to sort of wan(t) complain...an dey...can(t)... go and comp...tell de dyunion because de language barreras...and also because de... union are not sort of interestin on gettin de migrant eh involf in de tra(de) union...I mean ...dey don put...mush attention...on gettin de ...espesyally de migran gwomen (2/2/260)

There is a marked difference between the standard of the discourse of 5 and 2, as represented in these passages. The only hedge (hesitation marker) 5 has is you know, whereas 2 has well, I mean, I think and sort of. The passage from 5 consists of very short simple sentences mainly just juxtaposed in a sequence roughly determined by chronology. When she does use connectors, they are but and after, but the predominance of unconnected clauses gives a jerky, incoherent quality to her discourse. On the other hand 2 attempts more difficult syntactic constructions: comparatives (been affected more de...women dan de men), because clauses, relative clauses and passives (unemploy women dat er been sack lately), qualified indefinite (anybody where to sort of wan(t) complain), qualified adjective (interestin on gettin migrant eh involf in de tra(de) union). Though she does not always succeed in mastering these constructions, the attempts she makes allow her much greater flexibility of expression than is available to 5. However, it is still noticeable that even 2 hardly uses such common discourse connectors as although, however, anyway, in case, for the sake of, in terms of, as far as, so far, as well, in spite of, as like, so, just, whenever and so forth.

Further examples where particular discourse features are lacking are the following:

no...no es good...is...isn' good money...is de same money...bu(t) is...en...bery clean jo... very clean, is...isn' he...more bar because I must eh...I mus...I mus be aywes (*always?*)... be choo mas (*too much*) eh say, car...safety about oder people a...anoder...de oder people is workin in de area...dar is a good job... (12/1/220)

Speaker 12 is here comparing his present job with the one he had before, saying it is better in some respects and worse in others. Because he does not have however, or anyhow and cannot construct the relative phrase who are working in the area his discourse is severely hampered: he has to constantly repeat and seemingly contradict himself. Roughly translated the passage might be:

> *No, it's not good money, it's the same money, but it is a very clean job. Still, it's a bit harder because I've always got to be careful about other people working in the area. All in all, though, it's a good job.*

Another example comes from speaker 1.

> dey continue to import a lod of...er commodities ...particular from de asian region...well because it is...cheaper...cheaper cos(t) produce... respecto Australia, an...das de...explanasyon why...in dis momen...dere are about four hundred sousan of people unemployed...an de migration is ...close down...m...dere is no perspective...to reopen de migration to Australia. (1/3/225)

One doesn't consistently use anaphoric pronouns, which are very important in discourse ('cheaper cost produce' versus 'cheaper to produce them there') and lacks the comparative construction compared with, lapsing at that point into Spanish (respecto Australia). He also has recourse to periphrastic expressions (das de explanasyon why) as a result of insufficient flexibility in manipulating and juxtaposing structures — he could have said migration has been cut off, with no prospect of reopening it.

A further example from the same speaker involves the function of relative clauses in helping to sustain a single topic through a stretch of discourse.

> Well...I sin dat for Mister Fraser and his goverman...eh...dis...one an hallf year dat his been at office...it has been de mos difficult times for him... (1/3/380)

He has made two topics, Mister Fraser and his goverman and dis...one an hallf year dat his been at office, whereas the former should strictly have been subordinated in a relative clause: the one and a half years that Mr Fraser and his government have been in office have been very difficult for him.

We take the opportunity to mention in passing here one other grammatical area that all speakers in our data have trouble with, namely, phrasal verbs. In the passage cited from informant 5 she does use wake up and wait for, but she uses write for fill in, following a common practice of avoiding phrasal verbs where a one word verb is close enough. It seems that it is difficult to learn a range of phrasal verbs until the semantics of the particles themselves (of, away, along, etc.) have been mastered in discourse. Until this occurs, the task of learning phrasal verbs is similar to that of learning any extended paradigm, with the added complication that minimal differences in morphology can mark very wide differences in meaning (consider all the phrasals that have give or get as their stem).

Clearly, discourse features are neither easy to learn nor to teach and it would be imprudent to claim that the various problems pointed out in this paper can be overcome in any simple fashion. Nevertheless, the general orientation of teaching materials and practices to the level of the sentence and/or its subparts cannot but have a negative effect. Standard English texts have, to date, taught only those aspects of language that their authors could readily identify and describe, with little regard either to the overall patterns of native speech or the particular needs of learners. Hence the disproportionate

amount of time spent on morphology, the main precinct of traditional grammar. The new orientation towards teaching communicative language use seems to be a promising alternative to older practices but a great deal of work — in the realm of theory and in the classroom itself — needs to be done so that both teachers and students can develop an awareness of how language functions on the discourse level and of how discourse situations affect what happens on the syntactic level. It is perhaps in these areas that research can make one of its most positive contributions to second language teaching.

2. THE DEVELOPMENTAL SEQUENCE IN NEGATION

After the use of no by itself, the first real patterns of negation emerge with the placing of no before various words (level 0.5). When this process first begins it is not always clear what categories to assign to a speaker's grammar at this stage. Thus it is not clear at times whether we are dealing with nouns or verbs or any other traditional part of speech.

Consider the following dialogue:

Informant : .....my moder...ma(ke) de cook

Interviewer: .....but if your mother is sick, or something like that?

Informant : .....if my moder is sick...he...no cook! (10/2/260)

As the noun/verb distinction becomes clear, no still continues to serve as a general negator. For example:

no understan (13/1/017)
no everynight (10/2/435)
no gut (13/1/151)

This is a state of affairs at about level 1.0. The one apparent exception to it is the expression donnoh, which we come across quite frequently. Since don occurs nowhere else in the speech of level 1.0 speakers, we can dismiss donnoh as 'formula', a phrase without internal structure, meaning the opposite of know. However, we should be careful when talking about 'formulae', since we run into all sorts of problems in determining how and when formulae cease to be formulae and become respectable, rule-produced, structured utterances. Formulae should in fact be seen as constituting a very important initial step in the learning process. Researchers into language change and variation have found that when new rules enter a linguistic system they frequently do so first by appearing in a single context and gradually spreading to others, until finally they might operate right across the board. In this process, the formula is the first step, the rule operating in a single context. Thus we could say that while level 1.0 donnoh does not really provide evidence for don as a negator, the phrase itself is the seed-bed for the growth of this new element. This process of analysing things learnt as single units into constituent parts is one of the most characteristic and important in language learning.

By level 1.5 we can actually see this process of rule-generalisation occurring. Speakers at this stage begin to use don as a negator of other verbs. For example:

my family no...don like comin here (8/1/117)

Some verbs are affected earlier than others (provide more favourable contexts for the operation of the rule), so that while the above speaker negates like with don on several occasions she also produces utterances like the following:

I no remember (8/1/68)

This sort of behaviour should not be seen as inconsistent.

A little before level 1.5 some interesting things happen with the negation of verbs be and have. At an earlier stage these verbs are often omitted and we find utterances like no good. When the verb appears it is placed before the negator to produce utterances such as:

no...es no good (3/2/354)

I habe no...problem (3/2/235)

It seems that in the system of such speakers, given their earlier use of verbless phrases like no good, the negator no is analysed as 'belonging with' the noun or adjective, etc. rather than with the verb at this stage. A little later, probably when the speaker has resolved the question of whether the negator 'goes with' the noun or verb in favour of the latter we find the contracted forms such as:

now no...isn' difficool (3/3/100)

haven' should also occur at this point. It is interesting to note that the speaker quoted above used have and no in the first two interviews and then switched to no + have in the third.

I no have oder job (3/3/233)

This could well be a result of his 'decision' to treat have like other verbs and use a preverbal negator with it, thus prefiguring the alternative standard pattern of negating have with don.

In line with the appearance of post-verbal negation of be and have we also find that the negative modal cannot appears.

I cannos tell you (8/1/142)

One other development of interest at this stage is the appearance of donnoh with a complement or object.

I donnoh when (8/1/130)

By level 2.0 don has become the general verbal negator and no seems to almost entirely disappear in this capacity, at least in present contexts.

You don espeak (7/1/100)

I don remember (7/2/220)

It is still not clear, however, that speakers at this level have analysed don into do and not. Thus, when asked to produce a question which required won't to be used, an informant came out with the following:

If you will...if you will don
...van son days to back to
Italia (7/2/165)

Interestingly, even at this level ability to signify agreement with a negative statement by a negative response still seems to be absent despite the fact that Spanish has the same question-answer system as English.

Informant : .....dey no noh dehy don receive

Interviewer: .....don't receive?

Informant : .....don receive any money

Interviewer: .....any money at all?

Informant : .....*dyes,* no dey haven any (5/1/130)

It can be seen, however, from this dialogue that at this level don has finally been analysed into its constituent parts. Thus, by level 2.5 - 3.0 the major rules for correct negation in English appear to have been learnt.

3. THE DEVELOPMENTAL SEQUENCE IN QUESTION FORMATION

0.5 At this stage there is in general no very clear distinction between the different grammatical categories of noun, verb, adjective, etc. Questions produced by learners at this level often appear to be 'verbless', though in view of the lack of categorial distinctions referred to above, such a description is not entirely satisfactory.

dyou age? (13/2/208)
dyou merry? (13/2/220)
how broder...dyou? (13/2/230)

Clearly, there can be no question of inversion or do-insertion occurring at this early stage where category distinctions are still forming.

Question intonation, however, is present in some form from the outset.

1.0 With the emergence of category distinctions questions take on a form which is recognisably closer to the standard one. 'Verbless' questions still appear, however, but are less frequent.

how many...dyou how many broder? (10/2/020)

Yes/no questions do not display either inversion or do-insertion.

you habe boy? (10/2/017)

dyou libe this...wi(th) you family? (10/2/030)

Wh-questions, on the other hand, do begin to provide some instances of inversion, with be as the first environment for this process.

(H)ow old...are you? (10/2/010)

Where is you family? (10/2/112)

Other verbs besides be can act as environments for inversion in wh-questions.

What time finish de entrevista? (*interview*) (10/2/160)

This, of course, results in questions which are not well-formed according to the rules of standard English. It might be argued that the patterns observed to date, which have been exemplified from the speech of Spanish speakers, can be explained as the result of rule transfer from the mother tongue, since in Spanish wh-questions display inversion obligatorily, whereas in yes/no questions inversion is optional. However, this seems

not to be the case, as the same patterns emerge in the speech of Turkish speakers, whereas Turkish has question formation rules which do not involve inversion or wh-word fronting.

You marry? (15/1/090)

how many...working me? (15/1/100)
(*how many items was I making?*)

A clue to a possible explanation for this phenomenon is provided by another tendency to be observed in the question formation process at this stage. This is that wh-questions formed on objects frequently appear without any subject pronoun. Thus:

Where live in simmy? (10/2/125)

gwhere wolkin aft...before in you gwork today? (4/2/150)
(*where did you work before the place you work now?*)

What this latter phenomenon perhaps indicates is that there is a universal tendency for wh-words to be attracted to the verb and to form a strongly bound constituent with it. Wh-words, as has been suggested by Chomsky and others (Bach 1971) are related to indefinite words like something, someone, etc., and indefinites in many languages are also attracted to the verb, and generally immediately precede it. For example:

(1) English:

Cats eat meat.
Cats are meat-eating animals. (Madirussian 1975)

(2) Turkish:

(i) Definite versus indefinite subject.
Haber Mehmet ten geldi.
(*The news from Mehmet came.*)

Mehmet ten haber geldi.
(*From Mehmet news came.*)

(ii) Definite versus indefinite object.
Eti kasaptan aldim.
(*The meat from the butcher I bought.*)

Kasaptan et aldim.
(*From the butcher meat I bought.*)

In Turkish, also, wh-words occupy this immediately preverbal position. For example:

(i) Orhana ne soylediniz?
(*To Orhan what did you say?*)

(ii) Mehmet ne yazdi?
(*Mehmet what did he write?*)

Thus, we can hypothesise, the learner is exhibiting a universal linguistic tendency in yoking the wh-word and the verb, and is then faced with the problem of developing a strategy for locating the subject NP or pronoun.

One solution is to put it after the verb; another is to omit it entirely. Interestingly, as we have seen, omission and inversion both come into evidence at the same stage.

To sum up, at level 1.0 instances in inversion and subject deletion in wh-questions are to be seen, but not in yes/no question.

1.5 Inversion becomes more common in wh-questions, and cases of auxiliary-subject inversion also occur.

How long have you been in Australia? (4/2/150)

Instances of do-insertion also begin to appear.

Where do you live? (4/2/150)

before where do you work...working? (3/3/030)

Do-insertion may also appear in embedded questions:

How long in gwere do you live? (4/2/170)
(*How long have you been living where you live now?*)

It appears that certain verbs, such as live, go and work provide the most favourable environments for the operation of the do-insertion role.

In wh-questions formed on objects, subjects NPs or pronouns are still missing.

At this stage there is little evidence of either inversion or do-insertion in yes/no-questions.

2.0-
2.5 Both inversion and do-insertion begin to appear in yes/no-questions.

are you marry? (7/2/115)

do you li(ke) dis country? (7/2/140)

Be and have, of course, provide the most favourable environments for inversion and verbs such as like provide the most favourable environments for do-insertion.

At this stage there are some puzzling contradictions in our data, as while the majority of informants at this level and 2 above still provide more instances of inversion and do-insertion in wh-questions there is one informant who has the two rules operating regularly in yes/no-questions, but only the inversion rule in wh-questions. It is not clear why this should be the case, but at any rate it still seems safe to say that a speaker who exhibits inversion and/or do-insertion in yes/no-questions is level 2.0 or above.

any may appear in questions at this stage, but is not common.

Have you any children? (8/2/015)

It should be noted that tense/aspect distinctions are not made yet in questions (or elsewhere) and thus do functions where did would be correct in standard English.

3.0-
4.0 In general, speakers at these levels generally support the hypothesis that do-insertion and inversion are more advanced in wh-questions than in yes/no-questions for a given environment. Do-insertion can still be quite irregular in yes/no-questions for some speakers.

4.5-
5.0 By this stage, questions are overwhelmingly well-formed. There may be some difficulties with verb marking in tenses other than the present with negative questions and with questions in which the question phrase or subject NP is especially long.

did you estudied dere while chou were living?	(1/3/015)
did you estudyin while dyou were living dere?	(1/3/020)
what sort of job...you have got?	(18/1/X)

4. THE DEVELOPMENTAL SEQUENCE IN COMPLEMENTATION

0.5 Complements are rare at this stage. Verbal complements may appear after like or can. (At this point the standard distinction between modals and other verbs appears to be unmotivated.)

you li(ke) wolky?	(13/2/260)

The only complementisers to appear are the null and -ing complementisers and correct use of the latter is probably accidental.

1.0 Complements are produced more frequently at this stage.

I can wri(te) application	(4/1/080)
I wan gworkin	(4/1/070)

Apart from the verbal complements exemplified above, sentential (that-type) complements may also appear.

I know I go	(9/1/070)

Only the -ing and null complementisers appear at this level.

The number of complement-taking verbs used up to this point is strikingly restricted: like, want, can, learn, know.

1.5 As for level 1.0, except that the to complementiser makes an appearance.

I wan to go to my country (echo)	(8/1/130)
Y' sing go to de Australia ...you sing tu go of Australia (*Are you thinking of leaving Australia?*)	(3/3/140)

As can be seen from these examples this item is not very well established.

2.0-
2.5 Stage 2.0 is marked by various developments. One new complement type emerges. This is the complement of a verb of perception, and its appearance is interesting as all previous complements have been ones in which the subject of the higher verb is also the subject of the lower verb (i.e. same subject or equicomplements) whereas this complement type has a different subject for each verb.

I remember you writing (7/2/200)

The for ... component of the for ... to complement also makes an appearance.

if it is possible for start (7/3/350)

While there are some correct examples of complement/complementiser combinations; there are still various cases of complementisers being misused.

Correct: I try to foun (*find*) (7/3/080)

I remember you writing (7/2/200)

Incorrect: You need do (7/1/70)

You can't buying (7/1/090)

I wan' say dis (7/2/250)

You must be writing (7/2/230)

Try to writin' (7/3/010)

There is, however, a considerable increase in the range of complement taking verbs:

need see difficult try
must remember hard

3.0-
4.0 One feature which might distinguish this stage is the appearance of different subject complements of verbs which express the speaker's attitude to or desire as regards the actions of others. (Previous different subject complements have been with verbs of perception only.)

I don like people say me (11/1/320)

This development is important, because it opens the door, as it were, to the spread of a structure vital to the communication of the speaker's likes, dislikes, intentions, etc. as regards the actions of others.

Data for this level is somewhat incomplete at the moment, but we can surmise that a gradual increase in the range of complement taking verbs occurs.

4.5+ The main development by this stage is the spread of different subject complements of what Paul Postal calls W-verbs (that is verbs such as want, wish, prefer, hate, intend, like, mean, need, etc.)

de boss ask to go fast (1/3/130)

de dyunta has call de companies
to come back (1/1/177)

dey ask her to hurry up (2/1/320)

As regards complementisers the main developments by this stage are:

(1) The appearance of the for ... to complementiser.

is very difficool for Australia to export (1/3/280)

(2) The appearance of the that complementiser.

we can say dat dere is nothing (1/3/150)

(3) A reduction in the number of incorrect null and -ing complementisers.

To sum up, it is possible to present a rough typology of complement structures in the order in which they are acquired.

Same subject, equiverb, complements are the first to be acquired, at about level 1.0, or a little earlier.

I can write (4/1/080)

You like wolky? (13/2/260)

Also at level 1.0, or a little later, sentential (that-type) complements may appear.

I know I go (9/1/070)

- a wider range of these structures can be observed at level 2.0, and above.

I know is bery har (12/1/360)

I sink is finish (7/2/210)

The next complement type to make its appearance is the different subject complement of verbs of perception. This takes place at level 2.0.

I remember you writing (7/2/200)

I saw you playing guitar (12/1/B070)

(Correct use of the -ing complementiser here, given the prevalence of -ing marking in other contexts, may be accidental.)

At level 3.0 we encounter the first examples of different subject complements with verbs which express attitudes or desires the speaker has towards the actions or potential actions of others.

I don like people say me (11/1/130)

A wider range of such examples can be found after level 4.0.

de boss ask to go fast (1/3/130)

che sort of shout er...very often to hurry up (2/1/380)

Interestingly, causative constructions seem to be very rare, even at level 4.0+.

dey not let eh...at de work, at de eschool, at de estuden eh...made estrike (at = that) (11/1/142)

he doesn' permith dath de...trade union movement fight (1/3/370)

Moreover, they do not occur in the raised form which is normal in English.

Looking back from this point, it is possible to form a hypothesis which might explain the order of acquisition of the different subject complement types. This is that different subject complement types are acquired in an order which reflects the degree to which the subject of the higher verb is 'associated' with the action of the subject of the lower verb. Structures in which the activities of the two subjects are closely linked (either causally or through the element of volition) seem to be acquired later than structures where their relationship is not so close. Thus causatives are hard to acquire, because of the direct link between the actions of the two underlying subjects. Complements of W-verbs, where the connection is volitional rather than causal and the action of the lower subject is not a presupposed consequence of that of the higher subject, are acquired somewhat earlier. Complements of verbs of perception where both causal and volitional elements are lacking, but where the act of perceiving and the perceived act still retain a degree of closeness (hence the 'collapsed' structure), come earlier still. Sentential complements, which display neither causal, volitional or perceptual connections are the first potentially different subject complement types to be acquired. Some extra support for this hypothesis comes from the fact that different subject complements of W-verbs, especially, often appear with the subject of the lower verb deleted in surface structure. Thus,

de boss ask to go fast (1/3/120)

The subject of the lower verb in such a structure is also the subject of the higher verb, or, in semantic terms, is both an actor and a patient. Learners have difficulty in formalising this dual state of affairs and sometimes try to resolve the problem by omitting explicit reference to the actor/patient.

5. THE DEVELOPMENTAL SEQUENCE IN TENSE AND ASPECT AND VERB MARKING

0.5 At this level there is no evidence of tense marking and, indeed, little indication that the category of verb has really emerged.

Time adverbs are not used.

1.0 As a rule, verbs are not marked in any way and when they appear do so in stem form.

I arribe...eh twel' of febre (3/1/100)

Often, even pronominal marking is absent.

like...like job (15/1/048)

However, at this stage one marking device does appear. This is the -ing suffix. At first this may appear simply as the invariant form of a single verb:

no working (15/1/097)

Work or come are the most likely verbs for the first appearance of -ing marking. Later, -ing marking spreads to other verbs. -ing marking at this stage appears to be a purely categorial phenomenon. Examples of -ing marked verbs can be found in both present and past contexts.

I workin...now...in...water boar(d) (9/1/230)

before me working year...Presto (17/1/257)

Nevertheless, such marking may be more frequent in non-present contexts. These contexts include not only past contexts but syntactic contexts, such as that of a verbal complement.

I wan gworkin (4/1/070)

You can' buying (7/1/090)

In these latter contexts -ing marking persists, irregularly, until even level 4.5.

de boss was'...was' (*wanted*) de
res of de worker askin (2/1/320)

The use of -ing marking seems to indicate that learners feel the need for a system of marking and adopt a morphological marker before they have actually evolved a coherent system of their own or learnt the standard one. -ing is probably chosen as the first morphological marker because it is readily perceived by learners, as it is syllabic, unlike regular past /t/ or /d/, and is not subject to reduction unlike auxiliaries and modals (e.g. 'll, 'd).

Time adverbs – before, after and now – frequently serve as non-morphological tense markers at this stage.

Examples of irregular pasts like went may occasionally be encountered at this stage, but not necessarily in past contexts.

in de car wid my fader...I wen' wit...
with him (10/2/350)

(Context is present.)

The present perfect may appear in formula questions after how long...? but never appears to be generalised outside of this restricted environment.

2.0 Marking, as at all stages up to level 5.0, is still frequently absent. However, a number of irregular pasts in past contexts begin to emerge at this stage, came, said, told and went are the most likely candidates.

2.5 A wider range of irregular pasts is used at this level. Verbs such as made, saw and bought add themselves to the ones already mentioned.

In addition, very occasional regular pasts appear, with the /d/ marker appearing, not in a consonant cluster, but at the end of an additional syllable.

I looked but I didn' find (5/1/029)

Didn' (though not necessarily did) appears occasionally at this stage. Never also appears as a negative past marker.

SECTION C: CONCLUSION

1. THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

A number of the findings presented above can be explained by reference to the principle of functional load. In natural languages there is generally a good deal of redundancy built into syntax. Learners frequently simplify by stripping away these redundant features, since they are not essential to communication. They may also strip away non-redundant features which do not affect general meaning too radically. This principle of simplification according to functional loan probably explains the following phenomena: general lack of inflectional morphology, absence of filler verbs, like be and have, absence of inversion or do-insertion in questions, absence of prepositions and complementisers, omission of 'understood' pronouns, use of no as a universal negator, use of a single demonstrative, appearance of universal quantifiers first, appearance of definite article (which has a referring function) before indefinite article, and so on. Of course, our findings cannot always be explained in this way and some cases appear to be the product of complex interactions of semantic, syntactic and phonetic factors. However, we are beginning to arrive at conclusions about the relative weight of these different factors.

2. EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Our findings to date, as summarised above, have important critical and constructive consequences for the teaching of English as a second language.

(i) To take the critical aspect first. Our work indicates that in the early and intermediate stages (where the majority of migrants taking English courses are) much teaching effort is wasted on attempts to inculcate redundant and functionally unimportant features, which at that stage are neither produced nor probably even perceived. A great deal of time in beginner classrooms is misspent teaching inflectional morphology (such as tense/aspect and person marking), question transformations, complex patterns of negation, verbs like be and have, articles and so on. In addition, such things as deictics and articles are introduced in pairs, when one is in fact learnt much earlier than the other. Without a knowledge of developmental sequences teachers often try to suppress emerging structures which do not correspond to standard language patterns — for instance, in the areas of negation and verb marking — when such phenomena should be tolerated and even encouraged.

(ii) On the constructive side, the project can provide a detailed body of information about developmental sequences in syntax and also relevant information on the facilitating or inhibiting role of interference from different languages. Such information has a number of immediate applications.

(a) It could provide a basis for syllabus planners and course designers to devise structured programs which exploit natural orders of acquisition and introduce rules and elements in a readily assimilable form. Such internal structuring is a highly desirable feature in any program, regardless of the teaching methodology employed, and would be quite compatible with the newer thematic or functional-notional approaches to teaching.

It should also be noted that our information is derived from a study of migrant speech in Australia and therefore provides much needed information on language needs in this country, including such things as core vocabulary and syntax necessary for basic communication and social interaction.

(b) In the area of teaching methodology it could provide teachers with important information on how best to exploit natural learning processes. An example of this would be knowing what lexical items or expressions to use in introducing new rules.

(c) In the areas of evaluation and testing an explicit knowledge of developmental sequences allows the establishment of a centralised measure for rating student proficiency and evaluating student progress. While recognising the need for functional criteria in measuring student progress we believe that syntactic criteria, properly applied, provide an economical and readily accessible form of evaluation. This is especially relevant to the area of teacher evaluation of student progress in the classroom. It also provides a measure for the evaluation of programs themselves.

3. SUBSEQUENT DEVELOPMENTS

The Sample Project

The project described above was never completed due to funding difficulties. In 1982 the Commonwealth Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs funded a research project to be conducted by the author to enable the results described above to replicated with a larger and better organised corpus. This project, which bears the title *Syntactic and morphological progressions in learner English*, compiled a data base consisting of two approximately 45 minute interviews with 12 Polish and 12 Vietnamese speakers, with this cross-sectional study being supplemented by a further three interviews conducted over the space of a year with a subset of eight of the original 24 informants. The areas of syntax investigated in the SAMPLE project, as it is known, included the areas already documented above, plus others, such as articles, prepositions and lexis. The SAMPLE data base was typed into a computer, and in consequence, the analysis produced by the project was considerably more detailed: one notable feature of the analysis as a whole was its tendency to fall into implicational type

patterns, which of course very much reinforces the claims to value of this particular analytical tool. Once again, for most of the areas investigated, there was found to be little difference between the Polish speaking and Vietnamese speaking informants. The SAMPLE report runs to over 500 pages of text and tables and provides a quite substantial description of adult English learner language. The Commonwealth has now published the report in a limited edition.

The 'Explanations' project

During the writing up of the SAMPLE report the author began collaborating with Dr Manfred Pienemann of Sydney University on an explanatory model of language learning. Drawing on a theoretical model developed during the course of the West Germany ZISA project (see for instance, Meisel, Clahsen and Pienemann 1981) the authors found that they were able to 'predict' a number of findings in the SAMPLE data. This predictive model is built on the concept that learners must acquire a series of speech processing prerequisities if they are to be able to produce certain basic target language structures correctly. Working with the SAMPLE data, the authors found that they were able to refine the original speech processing model, and also increase its explanatory scope by extending it to morphological phenomena. A paper outlining the model for both German and English is currently in preparation. An effective predictive model for second language acquisition should have interesting consequences both for language learning theory and for language pedagogy, since in respect of this latter activity we are not in a position to make some very strong claims about the efficacy of particular curriculums. One further development of interest that has resulted from the 'explanations' work is the finding that language features not governed by speech processing prerequisites seem to be particularly prone to first language influence. Thus, our current research may also be able to contribute something to the complex question of under what conditions 'interference' or 'transfer' may take place.

In conclusion, it can be said that some interesting developments are taking place in second language acquisition research in Australia, and these developments are of increasing relevance to those engaged in language policy and language pedagogy.

NOTE

1. This is a revised version of a paper published in the *Australian Review of Applied Linguistics* 1980, 3/2:90-120. I thank *ARAL* for permission to publish this version here.

   I would also like to acknowledge the efforts and collaboration of Dr W.L. Bonney (Director of this project), Dr H. Wilson and Bruno di Biase in helping to shape this paper.