

A-bar anaphoric pronouns for topic-shift Dutch - French - Italian

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Comparative grammar and language acquisition

The talk consists of two parts

- ✓ A comparison between anaphoric pronouns for **topic-shift** and **topic-maintenance** in Dutch, French and Italian
- ✓ A comparison between their **acquisition steps**

We make the following distinction

- ✓ **situation-bound anaphor**: an anaphor whose antecedent is physically present in the situation and can be referred to by pointing (gesture-sustained)
- ✓ **discourse-bound anaphor**: an anaphor whose antecedent has been introduced linguistically

Two kinds of pronouns: A-pronoun and A-bar pronoun

Languages may distinguish two kinds of pronouns
(Van Kampen 1997)

A(rgument)-pronouns in argument position

- personal pronouns (*he, she, it, him, her*)

[_{IP} *he* loves [_{VP} *her*]]

(A-position: a position in the syntactic tree where only arguments (object/subject) can occur)

A-bar pronouns in derived position, related to an argument

- question *wh*-pronouns (*who, what, where*)

[_{CP} *who* does [_{IP} *he* love [_{VP} t_{wh}]]]

(A-bar position: a derived position in the syntactic tree where only non-arguments (wh-words/topics) can occur)

A-pronouns and A-bar pronouns in Dutch

A-pronouns in Dutch

- **personal pronouns** (*hij, zij, het, hem, haar*)

A-bar pronouns in Dutch

- question *wh*-pronouns (*wie, wat, waar*)
- **topic *d*-pronouns** (*die, dat, daar*)
- relative pronouns (*die, dat, wie, wat, waar*)

Both **personal A-pronouns and topic A-bar *d*-pronouns**

- 1) are referential signs D^0 (determiner)
- 2) are anaphoric pronouns
- 3) may have a DP discourse antecedent

BUT they represent different discourse devices

Discourse device of the A-bar pronoun: topic-shift

- ✓ The A-bar topic *d*-pronoun represents a discourse device: topic-shift (a change of topic) as opposed to the topic-maintenance A-pronouns (V. Kampen 1991, Comrie 2000)
- ✓ The acquisition of this topic device makes language situation-free (and discourse-bound).
- ✓ The < \pm shift> topic device is slightly different in different languages. (Van Kampen 1997, 2004)
(we will consider here Dutch, French and Italian)
- ✓ Early child language uses only the topic-shift form: each sentence names its own topic, because there is no linguistic context yet.

A-bar *d*-pronouns in Dutch (Van Kampen 1997)

Function

- They indicate a topic-shift
- Their antecedent is preferably the focus of previous sentence (a referent that carries the sentence stress)

Form

- appear in the specifier of CP
- are a characteristic of V2nd languages ('CP languages')
- are derived from the demonstratives
- lack the $\langle \pm \text{proximate} \rangle$ feature

demonstratives

$\langle \pm \text{proximate} \rangle$

dit/dat $\langle +\text{neuter} \rangle$

deze/die $\langle -\text{neuter} \rangle$

A-bar *d*-pronouns

dat $\langle +\text{neuter} \rangle$

die $\langle -\text{neuter} \rangle$

A-bar d-pronouns for topic-shift

- no topic-shift / A-pronoun
- 3rd person pronoun

Laura wierp een kushandje naar Johan

ze	}	(Laura)	was	'm	}	(Johan)	niet	vergeten
* die				*die				

(Laura blew Johan a kiss. *that/she hadn't him/*that forgotten)

- topic-shift / A-bar pronoun
- d-pronoun (in Spec,CP)

Laura wierp een kushandje naar Johan

* 'm	}	(Johan)	was	ze	}	(Laura)	niet	vergeten
die				*die				

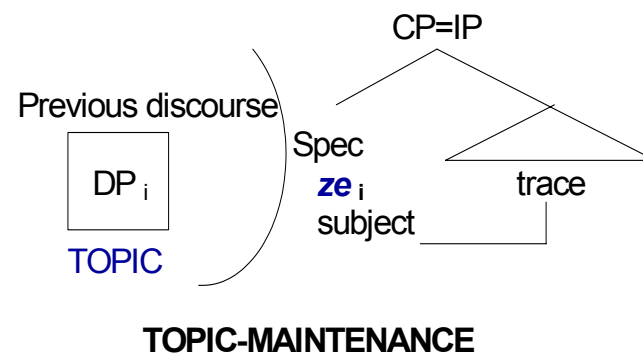
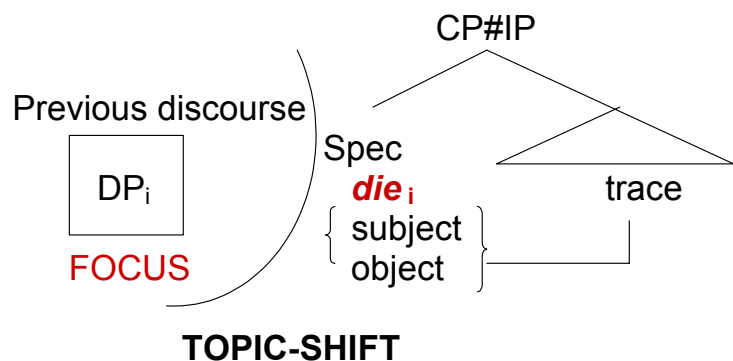
(Laura blew Johan a kiss. #him/**that hadn't she**/*that forgotten)

Structural conditions for topic-shift in Dutch

- ✓ The A-bar *d*-pronoun binds an empty A-position (trace)
- ✓ The A-bar *d*-pronoun can bind **any** A-position (+subject or –subject)

A-bar *d*-pronoun: subject/object

A-pronoun: subject (CP=IP)



- ✓ A-bar *d*-pronoun in Spec,CP → indicates a topic-shift
- No topic-shift → no A-bar *d*-pronoun in Spec,CP

A-bar and A-pronouns in French, Italian

- ✓ The distinction between the two kinds of free anaphoric pronouns (A-/A-bar) also holds for French and Italian

French

- ✓ A-pronouns are clitics in argument structure.
- ✓ A-bar pronouns are full pronouns in dislocated position. They are doubled by a clitic in argument structure.
(The dislocated element can also be a noun)

Italian

- ✓ A-pronouns are null (*pro/Agr*) when subject; and they are clitics when object. Both in argument structure.
- ✓ A-bar pronouns are full pronouns in dislocated position. They are doubled by *pro/Agr* or a clitic in argument structure.
(The dislocated element can also be a noun)

For reasons of exposition we concentrate on subject anaphoric pronouns

Anaphoric A- and A-bar pronouns in French

- no topic-shift / A-pronoun
- single clitic in argument structure

Michel_i jetta un baiser à Jean_k (M. blew J. a kiss)
 il_i } (Michel) ne l'avait pas oublié (he hadn't forgotten him)
 *lui, il }

- topic-shift / A-bar pronoun
- dislocated 3rd p. pronoun doubled by the clitic

Michel_i jetta un baiser à Jean_k
 lui_k, il } (Jean) rougeait de pied en cap (he blushed up to his ears)
 *il_k }

See Van Kampen (2004)

Anaphoric A- and A-bar pronouns in Italian

- no topic-shift / A-pronoun
- *pro*-drop in argument position

Laura_i mandò un bacio a Gianni_j

<i>pro</i> _i	}	(Laura)	non lo aveva dimenticato
# lei _i <i>pro</i> _i			non lo

- topic-shift / A-bar pronoun
- dislocated 3rd p. pronoun doubled by *pro*

Laura_i mandò un bacio a Gianni_j

lui _j	}	(Gianni)	diventò tutto rosso
* <i>pro</i> _j			

See Grimshaw (1995), Grimshaw & Samek-Lodovici (1998)

Structural conditions for topic-shift in French, Italian

as in Dutch/V2nd languages

- ✓ A-bar pronoun → topic-shift YES
- ✓ The A-bar pronoun refers preferably to a non-topic of the preceding clause YES
- ✓ The A-bar pronoun, a non-clitic free anaphor, cannot appear in an argument position YES
- ✓ The A-bar pronoun binds a clitic or *pro*/Agr NO
(not an empty place (trace))

Saliency hierarchy for anaphoric pronouns

less salient → most salient

	null (<i>pro</i>)	clitic	full pronoun	<i>d</i> -pronoun
Dutch			X	X (A-bar)
French		X	X (A-bar)	
Italian	X(agr)	X	X (A-bar)	

- ✓ The A/A-bar opposition for topic-shift makes use of a **single opposition** along a saliency hierarchy for anaphoric pronouns

The acquisition of the referential system

- ✓ Children start with situation-bound anaphoric reference that is still discourse-free (no reference to previously mentioned antecedent).
- ✓ articles and discourse anaphoric pronouns are lacking
- ✓ Articles and anaphoric pronouns are referential signs (D^0) (Postal 1968).
- ✓ The acquisition of these elements betray the acquisition of argument structure and a referential system.
- ✓ Acquisition graphs show that the acquisition of discourse anaphoric pronouns and articles are closely related. Both depend on argument structure.

Phase 1

No topic-maintenance device

anaphoric pronouns

gesture-sustained

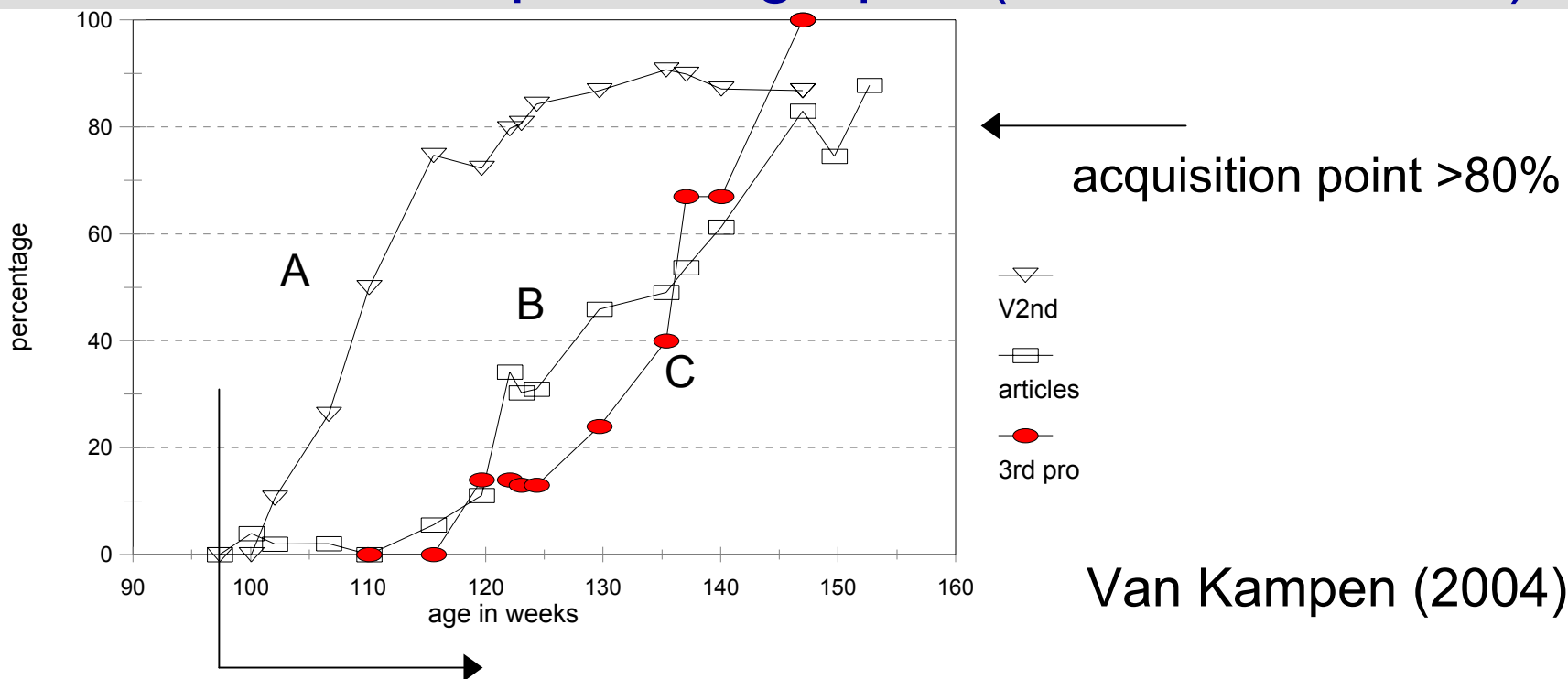
Phase 2

Topic-maintenance device

anaphoric pronouns

discourse-bound

The Dutch acquisition graphs (Sarah CHILDES)



Van Kampen (2004)

demonstratives (situation-bound)

Graph A: finite verbs in V-second position

Graph B: articles before nouns

Graph C: A-pronouns (3rd p. pronouns *hij/zij/het* 'he/she/it')

Note that - Graphs B and C coincide (more or less)

- The use of demonstratives runs ahead of graph C

Phase 1: Situation-bound anaphoric pronouns

Dutch Sarah: week 100-120

- ✓ Use of gesture-sustained contrastive demonstratives, related to a referent in the situation (not considered: presentationals)
 - **50** examples in sentences with a predicate (in 7 recordings)
- ✓ No use of A-pronouns (3rd p. pronouns), nor use of A-bar *d*-pronouns referring to a linguistic discourse antecedent.

Anaphoric pronouns: gesture-sustained

- a. (playing Memory; one card doesn't match) (week 107 / 2;0.17)
Sarah: **die** kan niet mee(r).
(that cannot anymore)
- b. (looking at a picture) (week 116 / 2;1.10)
Sarah: oehoe, uilen op het dak. (oehoe, owls on the roof)
mother: ja, twee uilen op het dak. (yes, two owls on the roof)
Sarah: **deze** hoefte niet op (h)et dak.
(these need not (go) on the roof)

Phase 2: Discourse-bound anaphoric pronouns

Dutch Sarah: after week 120

- ✓ Rise in the use of articles before nouns between week 120-140
- ✓ A parallel rise in the use of 3rd p. pronouns (A-pronouns).
- ✓ The 3rd p. pronouns are used for topic-maintenance.
- ✓ *die* and *dat* 'demonstratives' are now also used as A-bar *d*-pronouns for topic-shift.

Anaphoric pronouns: discourse-bound

Topic-maintenance

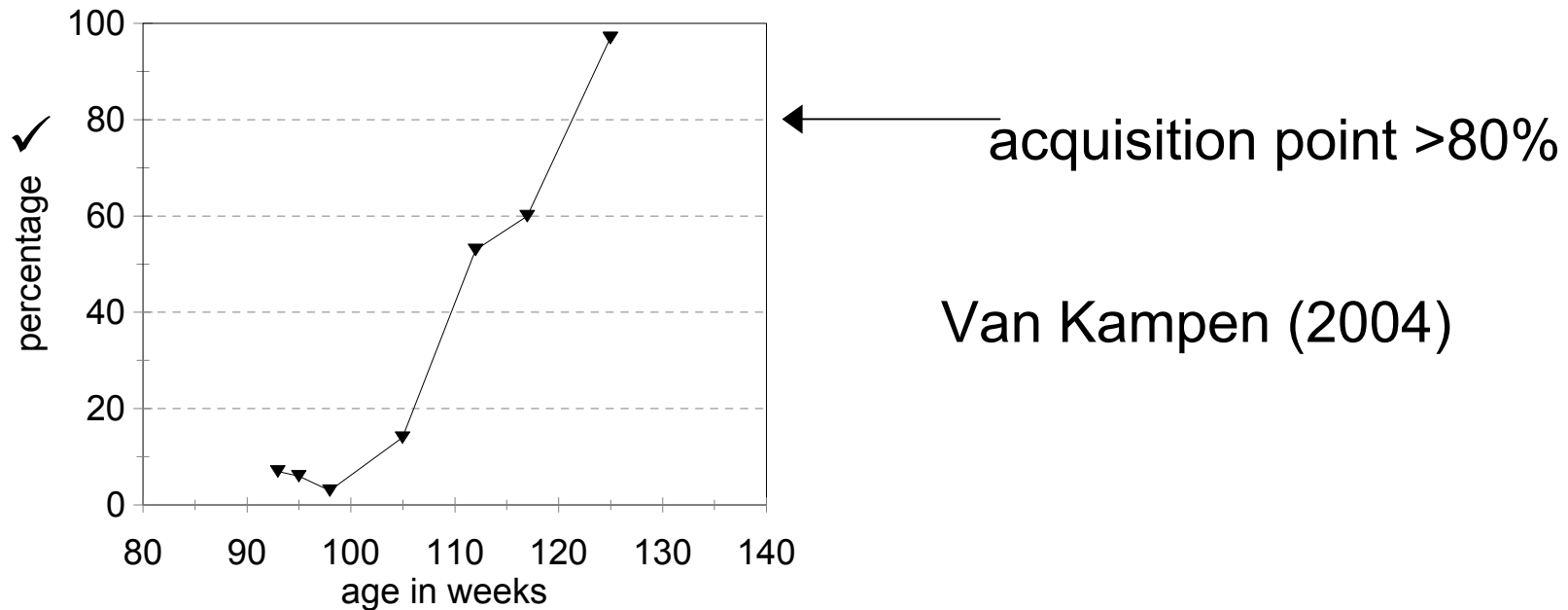
- a. (talking about a bird in a picture-book) (week 125/2;4.27)
mother: ja, hij heeft de schaar, de vogel. (yes, he has the scissors, the bird)
Sarah: schaar ["] vogel ["]. teen! **hij** heb een teen, he.
(scissors ["] bird ["]. toe! he has a toe, isn't it.)

Topic-shift

- ✓ (shifting the attention to a picture at a jigsaw puzzle)
mother: dan past die (=stukje) misschien daar? (then that (piece) fits there?)
Sarah: **die** is voor pappa, die hondje. (that is for daddy, that doggie)

The French acquisition graph (Grégoire, CHILDES)

Articles are used systematically after week 120



- ✓ The rise of articles indicate the growing use of nouns as referential arguments in linguistic discourse
- ✓ How do the French single clitics do in the mean time?

The rise of articles and single subject clitics

French Grégoire: anaphoric subject clitics for topic-maintenance

age in weeks	a. determiners	b. single subject clitic		c. subject clitic + topic noun (in % w.r.t single clitic)	
		<i>il</i>	<i>elle</i>		
93	7%	0	1	8	89%
94	6%	0	2	7	78%
98	3%	0	2	7	78%
105	14%	0	0	19	95%
112	53%	0	0	3	--- **
117	60%	2	4	8	61%
125	97%	19	0	11	37%
127-129	100%	66	28	51	35%

gray area

[determiner acquisition] > precedes [non-doubled clitic acquisition]

- ✓ The sudden rise of single subject clitics indicates the acquisition of discourse structure reflected by topic-maintenance
- ✓ Unlike the pronouns in Dutch, French clitics appear (right) after the determiners. Probably, because they imply the acquisition of a different construction in addition to the pronominalization.

Phase 1: Situation-bound anaphoric pronouns

French Grégoire: week 93-120

- ✓ Use of dislocated nouns doubled with a clitic to indicate a referent in the situation.
 - **58** examples in sentences with a finite verb (in 7 recordings)
- ✓ Also use of gesture-sustained contrastive demonstratives, related to a referent in the situation (presentationals not counted)
- ✓ No use of A-pronouns (single clitic pronouns), nor use of A-bar pronouns (dislocated pronoun doubled by a clitic) referring to a linguistic discourse antecedent.

Anaphors: gesture-sustained

- a. (looking at a picture in a book) (1;9.28/week 95)
crocodile, il mange (crocodile, he eats)
- b. (holding a car) (1;11.22/week 103)
elle roule, **la voiture** (she goes, the car)
- c. **celle-là, elle** est petite (that one, she is small) (2;1.25/week 112)
- d. c'est é canard et **ça** roule (it's a duck and it goes) (2;3/week 117)

Phase 2: Discourse-bound anaphoric pronouns

French Grégoire: after week 120

Use of subject clitics related to a referent in the linguistic discourse

- ✓ There is a sudden rise of single (non-doubled) clitic pronouns
- ✓ Clitic pronouns doubled by a DP are now used for topic-shift

Anaphors: discourse-bound

Topic-shift versus **topic-maintenance**

(inventing a story)

(2;5.27/week 129)

Grégoire: maman, elle m'a protégé pour écraser la jeep.

(mummy, she has protected me from (being) crashed by the jeep)

Grégoire: **la jeep, elle** a écrasé ma maman.

(the jeep, she has crashed my mummy)

investigator: mais qu'est ce qu'elle faisait cette jeep au bord de la mer?

(but what did that jeep do at the see?)

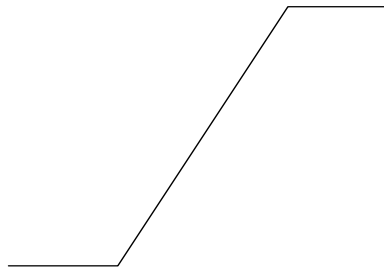
Grégoire: **elle** a roulé sur la mer.

(she has gone on the see)

The acquisition of Italian: Work in progress

- ✓ We expect to reconstruct the Grégoire table for Italian.
- ✓ The interesting point would be that the acquisition of the notorious *pro*-drop gets precisely located, following the acquisition of articles. (Van Kampen 2006)
- ✓ Early child Italian may use verb-forms that look like finite verb e.g. *piange* ('cries'). These may at first not be structurally analyzed as finite verb + 3rd person *pro*
- ✓ It is arguably a phenomenon different from *pro*-drop for topic-maintenance, defined by a previous acquisition of the specifications for person/number (**phi-features**).
(*piang-e* → agreement = 3rd person sing.)

The topic-shift/-maintenance device in acquisition



Acquisition graph
for articles/argument structure

- ✓ The **Dutch** topic-shift/maintenance device rises with the articles
- ✓ The **French** topic-shift/maintenance device rises right after the acquisition of articles
- ✓ PREDICTION: The **Italian** topic-shift/maintenance device (including *pro*-drop with phi-features) rises right after the acquisition of articles

The **<±shift>-topic device makes language discourse-bound, rather than gesture-sustained**

Conclusions

Comparative grammar

- i. The anaphoric system in Germanic and Romance languages makes use of an A/A-bar distinction.
- ii. The use of the A-bar pronoun serves discourse grammar. In the present case topic-shift versus (the A-pronoun for) topic-maintenance.

Language acquisition

- iii. Early child language uses only the topic-shift form. Each sentence has its own topic, since there is no linguistic context.
- iv. The unstressed 3rd pers. pronouns/clitics and 3rd pers. *pro*-drop are acquired later, because they rely uniquely on discourse reference.
- v. The discourse device with A-bar/A-pronouns can only be acquired later, because it requires the acquisition of articles, and further the grammatical marking of argument structure

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