

Partitive pronouns in contact: the influence of Dutch *ER* on the L2 acquisition of French *EN*

Petra Sleeman and Tabea Ihsane

University of Amsterdam/University of Geneva & University of Zurich

Sleeman & Hulk (2013) and Berends et al. (to appear) show that in L1 acquisition the French so-called partitive pronoun *en* emerges before the Dutch quantitative pronoun *er*. In this paper, we investigate whether French *en* is also easy to acquire for Dutch L2 learners of French, who furthermore already master the use of a comparable pronoun in their L1. The question is thus whether the L2 acquisition of a pronoun like *en* is facilitated or not by the presence of a similar, but not completely equivalent, pronoun in the L1 of the learners.

On the basis of acquisition data elicited in a Grammaticality Judgment Task, we show that the answer to this research question is: “yes and no”. Our results indicate that transfer is only positive if the ‘partitive’ pronoun is used in the same context in both languages. However, if the ‘partitive’ pronoun is used differently in the two languages, there is negative transfer from L1. Even advanced learners are unable to overcome the negative influence of their mother tongue, which shows that the presence of a ‘partitive’ pronoun in the L1 does not only facilitate but also hinder the complete acquisition of this pronoun in the L2.

References

- Berends, S., Hulk, A. & Sleeman, P. (to appear). The emergence of the pronouns Dutch *er* and French *en* in child L1 and the role of complexity. In E. Aboh (Ed.), *Complexity in human language*, special issue of *Language Sciences*.
- Sleeman, P. & Hulk, A. (2013). L1 acquisition of noun ellipsis in French and in Dutch: Consequences for linguistic theory. In S. Baauw, F.A.C. Drijkoningen, L. Meroni & M. Pinto (Eds.), *Romance Languages and Linguistic Theory 2011: selected papers from "Going Romance" Utrecht 2011* (pp. 249-266). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.