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Turkish and Moroccan children in the Netherlands: acquisition of complex syntax in a first and second language

Language development in children at school age can be characterized by a growing command of discourse. Gradually, developmental shifts take place from intra- to intersentential devices, from basic structures to additional functions and from extra- to intralinguistic abilities. With respect to bilingual development at school age, it is still unclear what sort of operating principles children use. It is also unclear under what conditions processes of language transfer occur. Moreover, the studies that have been conducted so far were limited in their scope, given the fact that the languages under consideration were highly related (cf. Grosjean, 1982; McLaughlin, 1985). The analysis of children's data in two typologically unrelated languages will give new perspectives on the role of structural properties of these languages in the process of acquisition. In this paper some preliminary data of a research project on first and second language acquisition by ethnic minority groups in the Netherlands will be presented[1]. The proposed research project aims at a scientific interpretation of the narrative development among Dutch, Turkish and Moroccan children in the Netherlands at school age. For an overview of the project see Verhoeven (1993). In the present paper two linguistic domains will be explored: anaphoric reference and relativization.

In the domain of anaphoric reference the developmental patterns of bound and free anaphora in the children's first and second language will be compared. The distinction between the two types of anaphora refers back to different principles in the standard binding theory of Chomsky (1981). In a variety of studies the acquisition of lexical anaphors and pronouns have been studied in languages such as English and Dutch. With respect to bound anaphors, a fast pattern of acquisition could be evidenced, while the development of free anaphor resolution showed a much more irregular and delayed development. However, the outcomes of studies referring to languages that are typologically very different from English seem to challenge Chomsky's claims. More recently, the acquisition of anaphoric reference

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was explored in a bilingual context. On the basis of empirical data on L2 acquisition of anaphora among Japanese and Spanish learners of English, Flynn (1987) concluded a primacy of the head-initial/head-final parameter's role. In the present study the acquisition of anaphoric reference in Turkish and Moroccan children in L1 and L2 will be studied by means of a series of experiments. The experimental set-up involves a one sentence/four pictures multiple choice task that is similar to the one used by Deutsch, Koster & Koster (1986).

The second domain under consideration is relativization. With respect to relativization there is a large body of literature on the processing of relative clauses in various unrelated languages. From such reviews as Hakuta (1981), Clancy, Lee & Zoh (1986) and MacWhinney & Pléh (1988) it is clear that several intricately interacting factors determine the processing of relative clauses: (1) the grammatical role played by the head of the relative clause, (2) the use of word order configurations in surface structure, (3) the interruption of processing units, and (4) the use of grammatical markers as cues to processing. From studies across Indo-European languages the general finding is that for children at school age subject-subject sentences are relatively easy, subject-object sentences relatively complex, while object-object and object-subject sentences take an intermediate position. Data on the acquisition of relative clauses in typologically different languages have proved to be rather scarce: Hakuta (1981) on Japanese, Clancy, Lee & Zoh (1986) on Japanese, Korean and English, Slobin (1986) on Turkish and English, and MacWhinney & Pléh on Hungarian (1988). The attempts so far to relate typological differences to sentence processing difficulties underscore the need for cross-linguistic studies on the acquisition of relative clauses. In the present study the acquisition of relative clauses in Turkish, Moroccan Arabic and Dutch will be examined in bilingual subjects at school age level. It will be determined in what order the various types of grammatical relations in relative clauses are acquired and which determining factors do account for difficulty in the processing of relative clauses in the three languages.

Design of the study

Informants

The present study has a pseudolongitudinal design, based on first and second language data collection with groups of 45 Turkish, 45 Moroccan and 45 Dutch children of 8 years old. For the sake of control only informants have been selected with parents of a low socio-economic and educational level. All Turkish and Moroccan children visit a Dutch primary school and have been living in the Netherlands for at least two years. A total of 20 schools participates in the project. Most of these schools have a high percentage of L2-learners of Dutch, mainly Turks and Moroccans. The Turkish children come from families in which Turkish is the preferred language, the Moroccan children originate from primarily Moroccan Arabic-speaking families. The minority children in the present project belong to a third genera-

tion of immigrants who initially moved from rural sites in Turkey and Morocco to industrialized areas in the Netherlands.

Instruments

The anaphoric reference task consists of 24 short sentences, either with a bound, reflexive anaphor or with a free, non-reflexive anaphor. The test sentences each contain one of these six verbs: (the Dutch, Turkish, and Moroccan Arabic equivalents of) *to wash, to scratch, to defend, to pinch, to tie up* and *to release.* Two friends, named *Martijn* (a typically Dutch boy's name) and *Karim* (a Turkish/ Moroccan boy's name), served as potential antecedents for the anaphoric pronouns. Thus, three factors were varied in the test sentences:

(1) type of anaphor, 3rd person singular masculine:

	Dutch	Turkish	Moroccan Arabic	English
reflexive	zich	kendini reflexive suffix	raṣu	himself
pronoun	hem	onu	-u	him

Turkish has two types of reflexives. First there is the reflexive suffix -(İ)n-, which can be placed after the stem of the verb. The verb *yıkamak* means *to wash (someone or something)* and *yıkanmak* means *to wash oneself.* A second type is verb + *kendini (himself)* in direct object position.

In Moroccan Arabic the noun *ras* (literally: *head)* + possessive suffix indicates a reflexive action (sometimes *nefs* (literally: *soul, spirit)* + possessive suffix). In the case of third person singular masculine this is *raṣu (his head).* Thus, *ka-yerbet ras-u* means *he ties himself up* (literally: *he ties his head up).* The suffix for the direct object third person singular masculine is *-u.* Thus, *ka-yrebt-u* means *he ties him up.*

(2) verbs:

Dutch	Turkish	Moroccan Arabic	English
wassen	yıka(n)mak	ka-yeġsel	to wash
krabben	kaşı(n)mak	ka-yxebbeš	to scratch
verdedigen	koru(n)mak	ka-ydafe^{c} ^{c}la	to defend
knijpen	çimdiklemek	ka-yeqreṣ	to pinch
vastbinden	bağlamak	ka-yerbet	to tie up
bevrijden	kurtarmak	ka-yfekk	to release

In Moroccan Arabic the durative aspect of the verb is characterized by prefixing the particle *ka-* (sometimes *-ta)* to the imperfect tense of the verb. The prefix for the third person singular masculine imperfect tense is *y-*. *ʿla* is a preposition meaning *on, upon, over, against, to, about,* etc. and stands in collocation with *ka-ydafeʿ* in order to express the meaning *to defend.*

(3) antecedents: *Martijn* and *Karim.* Each test sentence contains a proper noun (Martijn or Karim) and the relationship term *de vriend van (the friend of).* In Turkish the noun *arkadaş* is used and in Moroccan Arabic *saheb.*

(i) and (ii) are examples of test sentences that are being used in the experiment.

(i)	Dutch:	de vriend van Karim knijpt zich
	Turkish:	Karim'in arkadaşı kendini çimdikliyor
	Moroccan Arabic:	saheb Karim ka-yeqres rasu
	English:	the friend of Karim pinches himself
(ii)	Dutch:	de vriend van Karim knijpt hem
	Turkish:	Karim'in arkadaşı onu çimdikliyor
	Moroccan Arabic:	saheb Karim ka-yqersu
	English:	the friend of Karim pinches him

Four pictures are assigned to each sentence. The task is administered to the child in two languages (in different sessions): either Turkish and Dutch or Moroccan Arabic and Dutch. The interviewer (native speaker of the language in question) reads aloud the test sentence and the child is asked to point to the picture that matches the sentence. Only one of the four pictures shows the situation described in the test sentence. The other three pictures show actions that differ systematically from the 'right' picture: one shows the right actor but the wrong action (anaphoric error), another one shows the wrong actor but the right action (antecedent error) and the third one shows the wrong actor and the wrong action (anaphoric and antecedent error).

The relativization task has also been administered in the first language of the children as well as in Dutch and by native speakers of the languages in question. In each of the three languages 32 relative clauses were constructed, involving several nouns as actors and several action verbs. The nouns were all animals:

Dutch	Turkish	Moroccan Arabic	English
beer	ayı	debb	bear
leeuw	arslan	sbeʿ	lion
aap	maymun	qerd	monkey
poes	kedi	mišš	cat
hond	köpek	kelb	dog
muis	fare	far	mouse

The verbs were four different action verbs:

Dutch	Turkish	Moroccan Arabic	English
slaan	dövmek	ka-yedreb	to hit
aaien	okşamak	ka-yemseh	to stroke
kussen	öpmek	ka-ybus	to kiss
knijpen	çimdiklemek	ka-yeqres	to squeeze

There are four logically possible sentence types: SS, SO, OS and OO (where the first letter refers to the grammatical role (**S**ubject or **O**bject) of the complex noun in the main clause, and the second letter refers to the role of the head noun within the relative clause). For example, in the English SS-sentence in (iii) *the bear* is both subject of the main clause and of the relative clause. In (iv) *the bear* is subject of the main clause and object of the relative clause. In (v) *the lion* is object of the main clause and subject of the relative clause. In (vi) *the lion* is object of both clauses.

(iii) SS — the bear that kisses the monkey, strokes the lion
main clause [S V O]
relative clause [S V O]

(iv) SO — the bear that the monkey kisses, strokes the lion
main clause [S V O]
relative clause [O S V]

(v) OS — the bear strokes the lion that kisses the monkey
main clause [S V O]
relative clause [S V O]

(vi) OO — the bear strokes the lion that the monkey kisses
main clause [S V O]
relative clause [O S V]

In Dutch relative clauses a postnominal pronoun precedes the verb and only one word order occurs: SVO. A problem arises in SO and OO sentences where use of agreement is required to avoid ambiguity:

SS de beren die de aap kussen, aaien de leeuw
the bears that kiss the monkey, stroke the lion
SO de beren die de aap kust, aaien de leeuw
the bears that the monkey kisses, stroke the lion
OS de beer aait de leeuwen die de aap kussen
the bear strokes the lions that kiss the monkey

OO de beer aait de leeuwen die de aap kust
the bear strokes the lions that the monkey kisses

Turkish relative clauses are prenominal. Two suffixes can be attached to the verb stem to make non-finite verb forms: (1) -An (present participle) to make SS and OS sentences, as in:

ayı-yı / döv-en / maymun
bear-OBJ / hit-PART / monkey
the monkey that hits the bear

(2) -DİG- (personal or possessed participle) to make SO and OO sentences. The subject is expressed by an obligatory possessive suffix attached to the -DIG-form and an optional preceding noun + genitive case, as in:

ayı-nın / döv-düğ-ü / maymun
bear-GEN / hit-PART-POSS / monkey
the monkey that the bear hits

In Turkish four types of word order are possible: SOV (being the unmarked word order), SVO, OSV and OVS. Turkish has clear grammatical markers for subject and object to be used as cues in the processing of sentences. In total there are 16 configurations of relative clauses:

SOV SS ayıyı döven maymun arslanı öpsün
SOV SO arslanın okşadığı ayı maymunu çimdiklesin
SOV OS arslan ayıyı okşayan maymunu dövsün
SOV OO maymun arslanın çimdiklediği ayıyı öpsün

SVO SS arslanı okşayan ayı çimdiklesin maymunu
SVO SO maymunun öptüğü arslan dövsün ayıyı
SVO OS maymun okşasın arslanı öpen ayıyı
SVO OO ayı çimdiklesin maymunun dövdüğü arslanı

OSV SS arslanı maymunu çimdikleyen ayı dövsün
OSV SO ayıyı arslanın okşadığı maymun öpsün
OSV OS maymunu okşayan ayıyı arslan çimdiklesin
OSV OO arslan ayıyı okşayan maymunu dövsün

OVS SS maymunu okşasın ayıyı öpen arslan
OVS SO arslanı çimdiklesin maymunun dövdüğü ayı
OVS OS ayıyı döven arslanı öpsün maymun
OVS OO maymunun çimdiklediği ayıyı okşasın arslan

In Moroccan Arabic, which has postnominal relative clauses, the same four sentence types are possible. Although the unmarked word order in complex sentences (such as relative clauses) in Moroccan Arabic is SVO, OVS word order is also possible, but requires a prestated object and a coreferential pronoun suffixed to the verb (in the main clause):

SVO OS s-sbe^{c} / ka-yedreb / l-qerd / lli / ka-yemseh / d-debb
the lion (S) / hits / the monkey (O/S) / that / strokes / the bear (O)
the lion hits the monkey that strokes the bear

OVS SS s-sbe^{c}, / ka-yderb-u / l-qerd / lli / ka-yemseh / d-debb
the lion (O) / hits-him / the monkey (S/S) / that / strokes / the bear (O)
the monkey that strokes the bear hits the lion

In order to construct SO and OO sentences (either in SVO or in OVS word order) a prestated object and a coreferential pronoun suffixed to the verb are required in the relative clause. This leads to 8 configurations of relative clauses:

SVO SS d-debb lli ka-ybus l-qerd, ka-yemseh s-sbe^{c}
SVO SO s-sbe^{c} lli ka-ybus-u l-qerd, ka-yedreb d-debb
SVO OS s-sbe^{c} ka-yedreb l-qerd lli ka-yemseh d-debb
SVO OO d-debb ka-yeqres s-sbe^{c} lli ka-yderb-u l-qerd

OVS SS l-qerd, ka-ymesh-u s-sbe^{c} lli ka-ybus d-debb
OVS SO d-debb, ka-ybus-u l-qerd lli ka-ymesh-u s-sbe^{c}
OVS OS d-debb lli ka-yemseh l-qerd, ka-yqers-u s-sbe^{c}
OVS OO s-sbe^{c} lli ka-ybus-u l-qerd, ka-ymesh-u d-debb

For each sentence the child is asked to act out the action with toy animals. The interviewer writes down the actions performed by the child.

Procedure

The experimental tasks for anaphora and relativization were administered by a researcher in a separate room in the school in two sessions with an interval of at least one week. Half of the anaphora task and half of the relativization task were administered in the first session and the other two halves in the second session.

Afterwards, the subscores on the two tasks which were distinguished in advance were computed. The question was whether the different types of subscores do indeed represent different levels of difficulty. In order to test temporal and structural aspects of the acquisition of anaphora and relativization in a bilingual context, for the Turkish and Moroccan group separate multivariate analyses of variance on the mean number of correct subscores of each informant were conducted. The within-subject factors were language and type of subscore. On the anaphora task, the latter

factor concerned the distinction between principle A and principle B sentences. On the relativization task, this factor referred to the distinction between subject-subject, subject-object, object-subject and object-object sentences.

For the Dutch versions of the tasks, a relevant question was whether the order of difficulty of subscores on each task is similar for each ethnic group. To test these assumptions, for each task a two-way analysis of variance was computed on the mean number of correct subscores of each informant. The between-subjects factor was ethnic group, and the within-subject factor was type of subscore.

Results

Anaphoric reference

The means and standard deviations for the subscores on the anaphora task in both L1 and L2 are given in Table 1. It can be seen that for the two minority languages the scores on principle A items tend to be higher than on principle B items. For the Dutch language, there appears to be no uniform pattern. The mean subscores on the anaphora task (principle A vs. principle B) for Turkish, Moroccan and Dutch children are graphically displayed in Figure 1, 2 and 3 respectively.

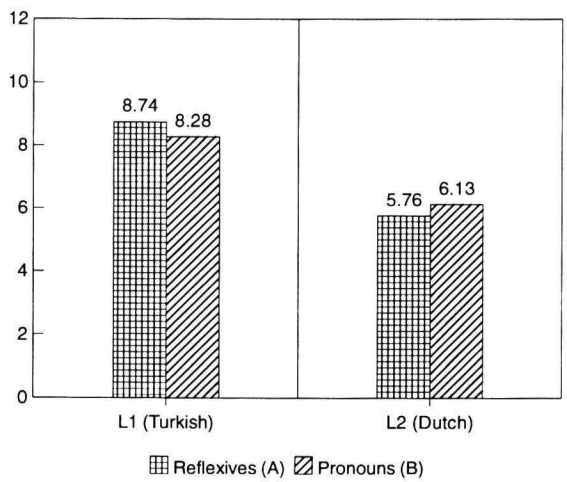

Figure 1. Mean subscores on the anaphora task for Turkish children.

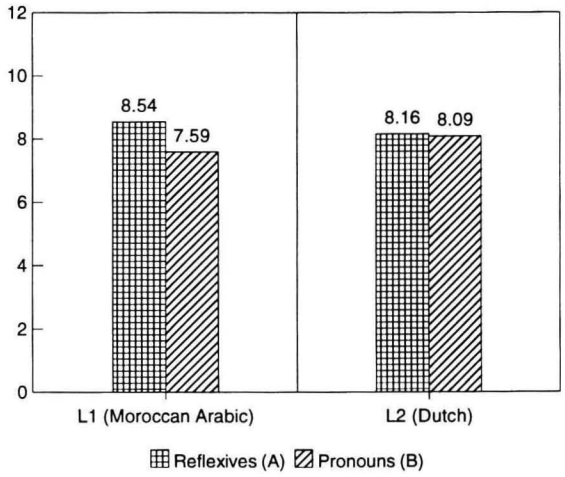

Figure 2. Mean subscores on the anaphora task for Moroccan children.

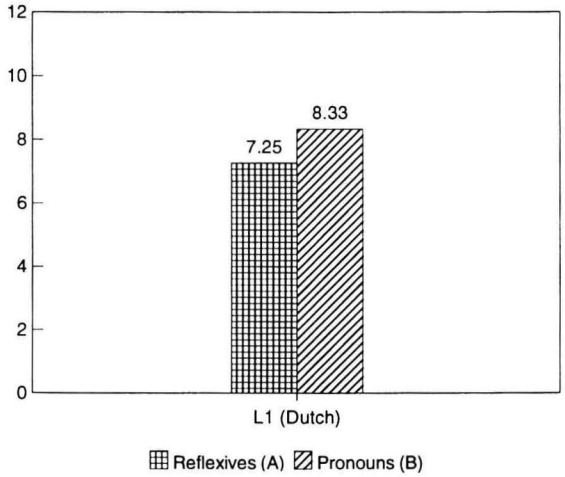

Figure 3. Mean subscores on the anaphora task for Dutch children.

Table 1. Means and standard deviations for the subscores on the anaphora task: principle A vs. principle B

	Minority language				Dutch			
	A		B		A		B	
	Mean	Sd	Mean	Sd	Mean	Sd	Mean	Sd
Turks	8.74	2.13	8.28	2.59	5.65	3.27	6.21	2.89
Moroccans	8.54	2.74	7.59	2.73	8.16	2.96	8.09	2.26
Dutch	–	–	–	–	7.25	3.64	8.33	2.57

Multivariate analysis of variance was conducted with Ethnic Group (Turkish vs. Moroccan), Principle (A vs. B) and Language (L1 vs. L2) as factors. The Group factor turned out to be significant ($F(85,1)=4.39$, $p<.05$), indicating that Moroccan children generally obtained higher scores than Turkish children. The factor of Language was also significant ($F(85,1)=26.89$, $p<.001$), as was the Group by Language interaction ($F(85,1)= 29.37$, $p<.001$). The factor of Principle was not significant, nor was the interaction between Principle and Group.
However, there was a significant interaction between Principle and Language ($F(85,1)=5.68$, $p<.05$). The latter results seem to indicate that the scores on principle A items tend to be higher than on principle B items, in the first language.

Separate multivariate analyses of variance for Turkish and Moroccan children were carried out with the factors Principle and Language. For the Turkish children Language was a significant factor ($F(42,1)=48.05$, $p<.001$), but the factor of Principle was not significant. Some, though not significant, interaction between Principle and Language was found. For the Moroccan children the only significant factor was Language ($F(43,1)= 145.53$, $p<.001$).

Multivariate analysis of variance was also conducted on the minority languages with Principle and Group as factors. A significant effect was found for Principle ($F(85,1)=6.53$, $p<.05$).

Another multivariate analysis of variance was conducted on the Dutch language subscores with Ethnic Group (Turkish vs. Moroccan vs. Dutch) and Principle (A vs. B) as main factors. A significant effect was found for Ethnic Group ($F(136,2)=11.61$, $p<.001$), showing that Moroccan and Dutch children obtained higher scores than their Turkish peers. No significant effect was found for Principle, nor for the interaction between Principle and Ethnic Group. Thus, we may conclude that there is no principle effect in anaphoric reference in Dutch as a first and second language.

Relativization

Table 2 presents the means and standard deviations for the subscores of Turkish and Moroccan children on the relativization task in L1. It can be seen that the scores for Turkish tend to be much higher than those for Moroccan Arabic.

Table 2. Means and standard deviations for the subscores of Turkish and Moroccan children on the L1 version of the relativization task.

	SS		SO		OS		OO	
	Mean	Sd	Mean	Sd	Mean	Sd	Mean	Sd
Turks	5.05	1.79	5.30	1.21	4.88	1.98	5.12	1.72
Moroccans	3.21	1.88	1.58	1.38	3.42	1.58	1.61	1.50

In Table 3 the means and standard deviations for the subscores of Turkish, Moroccan and Dutch children on the Dutch version of the relativization task are given. It can be seen that the subscore patterns are highly comparable, while in general the scores for the Turkish children are somewhat lower than those for the other ethnic groups. In Figures 4, 5 and 6 the mean subscores on the relativization task are graphically displayed.

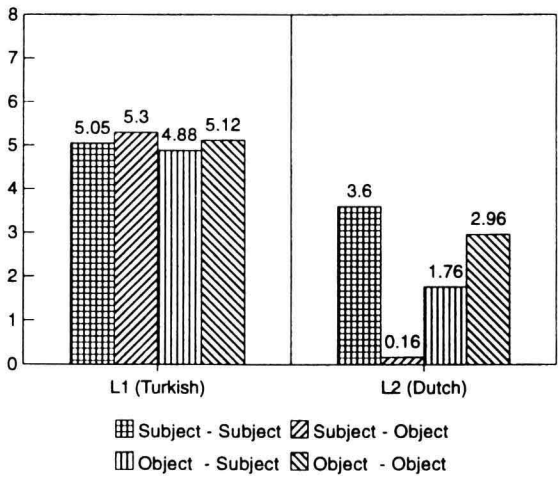

Figure 4. Mean subscores on the relativization task for Turkish children.

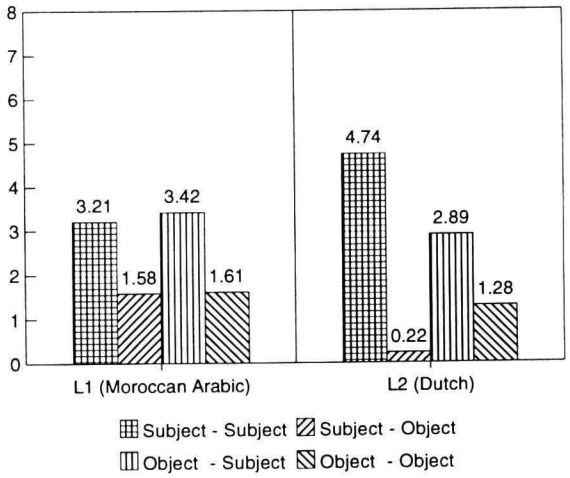

Figure 5. Mean subscores on the relativization task for Moroccan children.

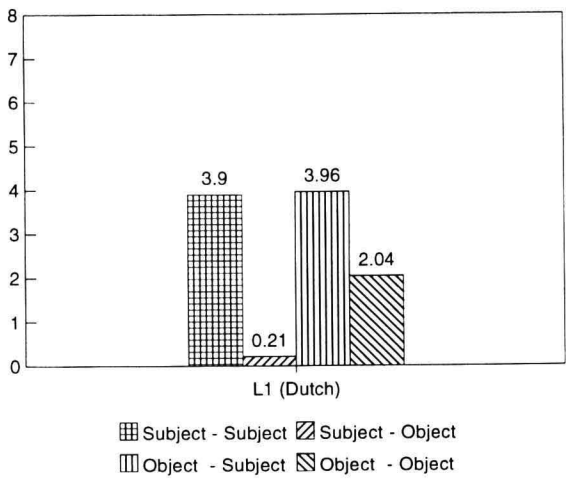

Figure 6. Mean subscores on the relativization task for Dutch children.

Table 3. Means and standard deviations for the subscores of Turkish, Moroccan and Dutch children on the Dutch version of the relativization task.

	SS		SO		OS		OO	
	Mean	Sd	Mean	Sd	Mean	Sd	Mean	Sd
Turks	3.60	2.83	.16	.37	1.76	2.22	2.96	2.79
Moroccans	4.74	2.92	.22	.47	2.89	2.88	1.28	1.75
Dutch	3.90	3.16	.21	.50	3.96	2.93	2.04	2.64

Separate multivariate analyses were carried out with Sentence Type (SS vs SO vs OS vs OO), Order (SOV vs SVO vs OSV vs OVS for Turkish and SVO vs OVS for Moroccan Arabic) and Language (L1 vs L2) as main factors, in order to test the differences in L1 and L2 subscores for Turkish and Moroccan children. For the Turkish group there was a significant effect for Sentence Type ($F(126,3)=8.22$, $p<.001$), Language ($F(42,1)=254,61$ $p<.001$) and for the interaction between Language and Sentence Type ($F(126,3)=27.56$, $p<.001$). For the Moroccan group there was no significant effect for Language. However, the effect of Sentence Type ($F(126,3)=32.56$, $p<.001$) and the interaction between Language and Sentence Type were significant ($F(126,3)=16.38$, $p<.001$).

Two additional multivariate analyses of variance were conducted with Sentence Type and Order. For the Turkish group the effect of Order turned out to be significant ($F(126,3)=4.27$, $p<.01$), while the effect of Sentence Type was not significant. However, the interaction between Sentence Type and Order was significant ($F(378,9)=9.98$, $p<.001$). For the Moroccan group both the effect of Sentence Type ($F(126,3)=21.24$, $p<.001$) and Order ($F(42,1)=27,67$, $p<.001$), as well as the interaction between the two factors ($F(126,3)=14.94$, $p<.001$) turned out to be significant.

Thus, it can be concluded that there is a striking effect of order in L1 for both ethnic groups. With respect to sentence type there is only a significant effect for Moroccan Arabic.

Another multivariate analysis of variance was conducted on the Dutch data with Ethnic Group (Turkish vs Moroccan vs Dutch) and Sentence Type as main factors. A significant effect was found for Group ($F(136,2)=3.43$, $p<.05$), Sentence Type ($F(408,3)=55.27$, $p<.001$) and the interaction between Group and Sentence Type ($F(408,6)=4.82$, $p<.001$). However, from Figure 2 it can be seen that the patterns of subscore types for Moroccan and Dutch children are highly similar, while the only deviation for the Turkish group is a relatively high correct score for OO-sentences.

Conclusions

Dutch data

A preliminary analysis of the results on the experimental tasks involving the understanding of anaphora and the processing of relative clauses shows that Turkish and Moroccan children do not fall behind their monolingual Dutch peers. It seems that the pace of development of receptive skills in complex syntax of Dutch is more or less similar in first and second language learners.

From a structural point of view there was evidence that the two groups of L2-learners rely on highly comparable intralingual strategies. With respect to anaphora there was no significant difference in scores on items with free anaphora vs items with bound anaphora. The same result was found in the Dutch children. This is contrary to what Deutsch, Koster and Koster (1986) found. In 6-year-old Dutch monolingual children they found no significant effect for type of anaphora, but they did find a significant effect in the 8-year-olds. A possible explanation for this difference could be that the Dutch children in our project come from lower-class families and seem to lag behind in their development of the comprehension of the reflexive anaphor *zich*.

As regards relativization, it was found that for all children subject-subject sentences were relatively easy, subject-object sentences relatively complex, object-object and object-subject sentences taking an intermediate position. This finding corresponds with findings from earlier studies across Indo-European languages.

Turkish and Moroccan Arabic data

The proficiency scores of Turkish and Moroccan children on both anaphora and relativization tasks turned out to be higher in L1 than in L2. For anaphora, it was found that the understanding of principle A was not easier than the understanding of principle B in both Turkish and Moroccan Arabic. For relativization, no substantial difference in scores on the four types of sentences was evidenced in Turkish. All patterns turned out to be relatively easy. This finding can be explained from the fact that the nonfinite verb forms used to relativize nouns in Turkish are highly transparent. The effect for word order turned out to be significant. In Moroccan Arabic subject-subject sentences and object-subject sentences turned out to be relatively easy, subject-object sentences and object-object sentences relatively difficult. This can be explained from the fact that subject-object and object-object sentences require use of the prestated object and the coreferential pronoun in the relative clause. The unmarked word order (SVO) turned out to be significantly easier than the marked word order (OVS). This can be explained from the fact that in the OVS word order use of the prestated object and the coreferential pronoun is required in the main clause.

The results of the present study furnish new insights into the process of acquisition of complex syntax. For the linguistic domains of anaphora and relativization there is clear evidence that there is cross-linguistic variation in the patterns of ac-

quisition. For such unrelated languages as Dutch, Moroccan Arabic and Turkish both universal and particular characteristics in the understanding of anaphora and relativization could be evidenced. Moreover, it is shown that the strategies first and second language learners use in understanding complex syntax are highly comparable. In a follow-up study we will elaborate the present study in two ways. First of all, the present groups of informants will be tested at three additional moments with intervals of one year. Moreover, a second cohort of 4-year-old informants of the same ethnic origin will be tested over four moments, again with one-year intervals.

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