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)
  \([_{IP} \text{he loves } [_{VP} \text{her}]]\)
(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)
  \([_{CP} \text{who does } [_{IP} \text{he love } [_{VP} \text{t}_{wh}]]]\)
(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 $D^o$ (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 <±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 $<\pm$ proximate $>$ feature

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>demonstratives</th>
<th>A-bar d-pronouns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$&lt;\pm$ proximate $&gt;$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>dit/dat</em> $&lt;+$neuter$&gt;$</td>
<td><em>dat</em> $&lt;+$neuter$&gt;$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>deze/die</em> $&lt;-$neuter$&gt;$</td>
<td><em>die</em> $&lt;-$neuter$&gt;$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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$_k$  \( \downarrow \)
\[ \text{il} \quad (\text{Michel}) \text{ ne l’avait pas oublié} \quad (\text{he hadn’t forgotten him}) \]
\[ *\text{lui, il} \]

- topic-shift / A-bar pronoun
- dislocated 3$\text{rd}$ p. pronoun doubled by the clitic

Michel$_i$ jetta un baiser à Jean$_k$
\[ \text{lui$_k$, il} \quad (\text{Jean} \text{ rougeait de pied en cap}) \quad (\text{he blushed up to his ears}) \]
\[ *\text{il$_k$} \]

See Van Kampen (2004)
Anaphoric A- and A-bar pronouns in Italian

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

Laura<sub>i</sub> mandò un bacio a Gianni<sub>j</sub>

*pro<sub>i</sub> (Laura) non lo aveva dimenticato
# lei<sub>i</sub> pro<sub>i</sub> non lo

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

Laura<sub>i</sub> mandò un bacio a Gianni<sub>j</sub>
lui<sub>j</sub> *pro (Gianni) diventò tutto rosso

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 (not an empty place (trace)) NO
Saliency hierarchy for anaphoric pronouns

less salient $\rightarrow$ most salient

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>null (pro)</th>
<th>clitic</th>
<th>full pronoun</th>
<th>$d$-pronoun</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dutch</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$\times$</td>
<td>$\times$ (A-bar)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td></td>
<td>$\times$</td>
<td>$\times$ (A-bar)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>$\times$(agr)</td>
<td>$\times$</td>
<td>$\times$ (A-bar)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

✓ 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 ($D^o$) (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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase 1</th>
<th>Phase 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No topic-maintenance device</td>
<td>Topic-maintenance device</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>anaphoric pronouns</td>
<td>anaphoric pronouns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gesture-sustained</td>
<td>discourse-bound</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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* hoefe 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

Van Kampen (2004)

✓ 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>age in weeks</th>
<th>a. determiners</th>
<th>b. single subject clitic</th>
<th>c. subject clitic + topic noun (in % w.r.t single clitic)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>il</td>
<td>elle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>93</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>94</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>98</td>
<td>3%</td>
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<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>105</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>112</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>117</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>125</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>127-129</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

gray area
[deteminer 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 $\langle \pm \text{shift}\rangle$-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 3\textsuperscript{rd} pers. pronouns/clitics and 3\textsuperscript{rd} 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.
References


