

## 3 The acquisition of English

*Wolfgang Klein*

### 3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, we will describe how Italian and Punjabi learners manage to express temporal relations in English. The chapter has four parts. In this introduction, we will briefly sketch informants and data, and then give short descriptions of the English, Italian and Punjabi system of temporality. Section 3.2 is devoted to the Italian learners, and section 3.3 to the Punjabi learners. In section 3.4, their development is compared, and explanatory factors are discussed.

#### *3.1.1 Informants and data*

The bulk of the data are informal conversations between informants and (mostly) project members on various topics. They include a number of narratives of personal experiences as well as descriptions of future plans, which allows us to study reference to the past as well as reference to the future. Sometimes, the personal narratives are rather short and barely allow a proper analysis of the temporal structure of coherent text. In these cases, we also include film retellings.

The core informants are Santo and Lavinia, with source language Italian, and Madan and Ravinder, with source language Punjabi. The Italian data set was supplemented by conversations with two more informants, Andrea and Rudolfo, but no such additional data were available for the Punjabi informants. We give a survey of the data, together with the abbreviations used for reference throughout this chapter. The average distance between two recordings is about a month. This may seem a long time, but as will become clear later in this chapter, the developmental process is so slow that the risk of missing important changes is almost non-existent. The length of the various recordings varies considerably.

On the average, a conversation is about 1000-1200 turns long, of which about one third stems from the informant. 14 samples were analysed for Lavinia, 12 for Santo, and 11 each for Andrea and Rudolfo.

### 3.1.2 *Some notes on temporality in English, Italian and Punjabi*

#### *English*

A brief description of the English tense and aspect system was given in chapter 2.4. This system is supplemented by a number of adverbial constructions - simple adverbs (*then, now, still, later*), prepositional phrases (*after the autopsy, at Christmas*), bare noun phrases in similar function (*last summer, all night*), and finally subordinate clauses (*when I was in Italy, before my husband arrived*). A precise functional characterisation of these various types of adverbials is not easy. For present purposes, three types are of primary importance (again, see chapter 2.5):

TAP: temporal adverbials which specify the **position** of some interval on the time axis, such as *now, yesterday, in spring, after this summer, three minutes ago, before he left*, etc.

TAD: temporal adverbials which specify the **duration** of some temporal interval, such as *for seven hours, all week*, etc.

TAQ: temporal adverbs which specify the **frequency** of some temporal interval(s), such as *sometimes, often, two times a week*, etc.

In addition, there are a number of adverbs and adverbial constructions of contrast (TAC) whose function is more difficult to describe, but which are relatively rare in the learners' developing systems.

The importance of TAP, TAD and TAQ lies in the fact that they allow the speaker to specify some particular time span, the RELATUM, at which some event, process or state the speaker wants to mention is temporally localised. One such RELATUM can always assumed to be given in a conversation - the time of utterance (= TU). Other RELATA are typically related to TU by deictic or - if there is an entire chain of intervening time spans - by anaphoric devices. We shall see that this property of English and probably all languages is at the very heart of the learners' temporal systems.

#### *Italian*

Italian exhibits strong a dialectal fragmentation which, however, does not unduly affect the expression of temporality. The only substantial exception -

the gradual loss of the 'passato remoto' in the northern dialects - can be ignored here, since none of our informants comes from this area. Form and function of adverbials is more or less as in English. It should be noted, though, that many temporal prepositions are actually compound: they consist of an adverb and the simple preposition *di* or *a*, such as *prima di* "before", *fino a* "until". In contrast to German and, to a somewhat lesser extent, English, it is almost impossible to modify the inherent temporal features by adding particles or (German) prefixes (such as *to eat up* or, in German, *aufblühen* "to start to flower"). So far, Italian and the two relevant target languages of the project, English and German, are quite similar with respect to the expression of temporality. There are somewhat greater differences when we go on to examine the verb system. Italian has a very rich system of inflexional and periphrastic verb forms, whose formal properties are complicated (as in English, there are 'regular' and 'irregular' forms) but at the same time very well explored. There is much less clarity about the exact meaning of these forms. In what follows, we only give a rough sketch, which is mainly based on Lepschy and Lepschy (1977), Pusch (1983) and Schwarze (1988).

The system is a mixed tense-aspect system (note that the English glosses are only approximations):

(a) TT AFTER TU

There is a simple future (*canterò* "I shall sing") and a compound future (*avrà cantato* "I shall have sung").

(b) TT AT TU

There is only one present form: *canto* "I sing, I am singing".

(c) TT BEFORE TU

This domain shows the richest variation. There are three basic forms: Imperfetto *cantava*, passato remoto *cantai*, passato prossimo *ho cantato* (here formed with the auxiliary *avere* "to have", other verbs select *essere* "to be"). The difference between these three forms is aspectual. The imperfetto is generally said to be imperfective, whereas the two other forms are perfective; the exact difference between the two 'perfectives' is difficult to grasp and a matter of dispute. Both 'perfectives' have a past variant, i.e., a pluperfect (trapassato remoto *ebbi cantato* and trapassato prossimo *avevo cantato*, both with the approximate meaning "I had sung").

In contrast to English, the aspectual variation between 'completed' and 'on-going' is limited to the past. But Italian provides its speakers with frequently used periphrastic constructions which allow speakers to mark an action as on-going or progressing, if this is to be highlighted. Most important among those

are constructions with the quasi-auxiliaries *stare* "to stay" and, if a continuous change is implied, *andare* "to go" in combination with the gerund, for example *sta cantando* "he 'stays' singing", *il tempo va migliorando* "the weather 'goes' improving".

Given these facts, we cannot assume that Italian speakers bring along a very specific preference for marking either aspect or tense. Both exist in their own language, both are marked by inflexion and periphrastic means.

### *Punjabi*

In remarkable contrast to other modern Indo-Aryan languages such as Bengali, Gujarati or Hindi, all of which have very complex tense systems, the Punjabi system is very simple and transparent. There are two participles, both formed by adding a suffix to the base form. The difference is purely aspectual: imperfective vs. perfective. Both forms are marked for gender and number. They can but need not be followed by a copula with two forms, one for present and one for past. In addition, there are several possibilities for expressing modality by changing the verb form, one of which (the suffix *ga*) often assumes a future reading. Hence, relation to the time of utterance is most often not expressed except by adverbials.

Punjabi is therefore an aspect-prominent language. Only one Punjabi verb - the postverbal copula - marks time deictically. Punjabi focusses on the internal temporal constituency of situations rather than their external relation to time of utterance or a secondary reference point; context, adverbials and discourse principles thus play an important functional role in temporal reference and relations.

The prominence of aspect has implications for utterance structure, as well. Punjabi has what has come to be known as "*split ergativity*". Briefly and rather simply, this phenomenon involves:

- (a) An intransitive verb agrees with its agent- or experiencer-NP;
- (b) A clause containing a transitive verb expressing imperfective aspect shows agreement with the agent-NP and nominative-accusative marking, whereas a clause containing a transitive verb expressing perfective aspect shows agreement with the patient-NP and ergative-absolutive marking.

According to Delancy (1981), this agreement with one NP or another indicates the "point of view" from which the situation denoted by the verb is described by the speaker: in perfective transitives, viewpoint is with the patient, in imperfective transitives and with intransitives, viewpoint is with the agent, the natural starting point of attention flow. For perfectives, to use the Sanskrit expressions that Indian linguists have (according to Bhardwaj, Dietrich and Noyau

1988) used for centuries - when an action is viewed as complete or as actually or potentially completed, the "fruit of the action" and the (patient) NP which is the "substratum of the fruit of the action" become semantically more significant than the doer of the action.

### 3.2 From Italian to English

It will be helpful to start with some background on the core informants.

#### *Andrea*

Andrea is an Italian in his early thirties. He finished the *scuola media* (receiving some tuition in French), then obtained a professional qualification as a technician. He came to England for personal reasons, having separated from his wife, leaving her and their son behind in Italy.

He was employed in Central London successively as a waiter and barman, working long hours on shift with mainly Italian colleagues. With the exception of one English person, his friends are also Italian. On arrival, he followed English Foreign Language classes for a period of 4 months, 10 hours a week.

The first interview examined here took place in March, 1983 (just after the EFL course, six months after his arrival in England), the second in November of that year, the third in January, 1984, and the last one in December, 1984.

#### *Lavinia*

Lavinia came to England from Trieste in her early twenties with her Italian husband and a small child. In Italy she had not worked. In England she first worked as a waitress, but after data collection had started she attended English language courses.

She progressed very quickly from ESL classes to pre-vocational classes and finally to a clerical/English language skills course. In-between courses she had two separate jobs as an unskilled worker in the rag trade.

Her main contacts with the TL outside these courses were through the children (she had a second child at the end of the project), that is health care, child care, schooling. However, despite being a very outgoing person she found it extremely difficult to make friends and felt very isolated.

Although she had welcomed the chance that the move to the UK had given her to play a role outside the home, the difficulty both she and her husband had in finding appropriate employment, plus housing difficulties, forced them to

return to Italy.

Although Lavinia only had a limited command of English when she arrived, her acquisition of the TL was very fast. She was obviously very motivated to learn and made full use of the language courses she attended. By the end of the data collection she was very fluent indeed.

### *Rudolfo*

Rudolfo is an Italian in his mid-twenties. After his "maturita", or high school diploma, in Italy, he worked for some time in an accordion factory, and then went to London, where he had been for 15 months at the time of the interview. After some months' work in an Italian restaurant, he found a job in a coffee-house where the language spoken is English. This job is his main contact with English, others being sport with English friends and one term of courses at a college of further education.

### *Santo*

At the time of data collection, Santo was in his mid-twenties. He was born near Naples and completed eight years of schooling in his home town. In January 1983, he came to England, expecting to stay indefinitely. His first interview was recorded in August 1983. At that time, he was renting a room in a house shared by people from various nationalities, he was working in an Italian restaurant, and he had an Italian-speaking girlfriend. He reported using Italian at work, with his girlfriend and with his family.

### *The initial repertoire*

All Italian learners began with a simple repertoire of linguistic devices whose characteristic traits are as follows:

- (a) Utterances consist either of simple nouns, or of a verb with some nominal complements; they can be completed by adverbials in initial or final position (sometimes, especially in answer to a question, there are only adverbials).
- (b) Verbs show up in a single form, the **base form**. This is usually the bare stem.
- (c) There is no copula.
- (d) Adverbials are mostly of TAP-type, i.e., they specify a position. They can be deictic (*now*), anaphoric (*before*) or 'absolute' (*Sunday*, *Christmas*). But there are also TAD and TAQ at this early point.

We shall call this repertoire the **basic variety**. For some learners (for example Rudolfo in our sample), this basic variety is more or less the final system, too.

But most develop it in the direction of the target language; this development is relatively similar, but learners differ considerably in how far they get.

In what follows, we shall first characterise the basic variety in more detail and illustrate its functioning with a number of examples (section 3.2.1). Most of these examples stem from Santo who manages to tell relatively complex stories with this system. He is, so to speak, a master on the one-string guitar. Next, further developments will be described (section 3.2.2). Here, we mainly rely on Lavinia since she is the one who advances most towards Standard English.

### 3.2.1 *The Basic Variety*

Throughout the first three encounters, Santo's system is very restricted and shows no noticeable development. It can be characterised as follows;

1. His utterance structures are very simple. In the terms of Klein and Perdue (1992), they vary from 'nominal utterance organisation' (NUO) to 'infinite utterance organisation' (IUO), i.e., they are at the transition from simple noun phrases and adverbials to elementary verb-argument-structures. There are no finite constructions (except in some rote forms, see below) and there is no case-marking.
2. If there is a verb, it shows up in a base form, usually the stem (=  $V_0$ ). In addition, there are very few *-ing* forms, such as *going*, *liking* (= *Ving*), etc. There is no copula whatsoever.
3. There is a rich repertoire of temporal adverbials.
4. The forms *finish* (sometimes in the variant *finished*) and *start* are used to mark the 'right boundary' and the 'left boundary' of some situation, e.g. *work finish* (= after I have/will have finished working).
5. In addition, we find a small number of complex constructions such as *here you are*, *I don't know*, *I don't like x*, *what time is it*, which are apparently unanalysed rote forms. In what follows, we shall ignore these constructions.

This does not leave very much for the expression of temporality. Essentially, Santo can draw on (a) the morphological contrast between  $V_0$  and, at least in some cases, *Ving*, (b) adverbials, and (c) the boundary markers *finish* and *start*.

#### (a) $V_0$ VS. *Ving*

This distinction is dysfunctional at this point:  $V_0$  and *Ving* are in free variation. His normal form is  $V_0$ , used for past, present, future singular reference, as well as

for generic reference; *Ving* is much rarer, but it appears in the same functions, and often, there is variation between  $V_0$  and *Ving* from one utterance to the next without any noticeable change in meaning.

(b) *Adverbials*

These are by far the most important formal device to express temporality. All major categories TAP, TAD and TAQ are represented. But whereas the latter two are restricted to a few prepositional and nominal constructions, his repertoire of position-specifying adverbials is very rich. We find:

TAD: (*for*) NUM *hours*, (*for*) NUM *days*, (*for*) NUM *months*, where NUM is some numeral (like *four*); he also has a question phrase for duration, (*for*) *how many time/hours*.

TAQ: *every night*, *every day*, *every week*, *sometime(s)*, *five days a week*.

Very often, it is difficult, if not impossible to say whether duration or frequency are specified; for example, *three day* can mean 'for three days', but also 'on three days (within a week)'.

TAP: He has virtually no restriction on clock-time and calendaric expressions, although their form is different from standard English. He mostly uses bare nominals, such as *five o'clock*, *October*, *summer*, *holiday*, although prepositions like *at* or *in* are not totally absent.

More interesting are the context-dependent adverbials, which allow him to specify the position of some time span in relation to some other time span which is assumed to be known. They include deictic as well as anaphoric expressions:

- deictic: *now*, *today*, *tomorrow*, *last night*, *last year*, *next week*, *next year*, *last Christmas*, *seven years ago*, and similar ones.
- anaphoric: here, he systematically uses *before* and *after*, where the RELATUM is either contextually given (= before that, thereafter) or explicitly specified (such as *after month October*). No other anaphoric adverbials are found.

In addition, he has one subordinate construction - *when*, for example *when holiday*, *when work finish*. Interestingly enough, this *when* is not used as a question word. Instead, he uses *what time?* Finally, time spans are often specified by space adverbials, such as *in Italy* - with the contextual meaning "when I was in Italy" or "when I will be in Italy" or "whenever I am in Italy".

This repertoire allows Santo to specify almost any time span he wants to talk about - either with reference to some other time span or with reference

to calendaric and clock time. As we shall see, this possibility is basic to the functioning of his system of temporal reference.

We finally note the complete absence of other temporal adverbials, such as *again*, *still*, *already* and similar ones. In other words, his repertoire of adverbials allows him to specify the position of time spans (in relation to other time spans), their duration as well as their frequency. But he has no means to mark the fine-grained temporal differentiations which, in Standard English, are expressed by TAC.

(c) *Boundary markers*

As was mentioned above, *finish* and *start* serve to mark the end and the beginning, respectively, of some state or event; marking of the right boundary is much more frequent. Sometimes, the form *finished* is used instead of *finish*, but there seems to be no functional difference.

The basic variety does not allow for tense marking nor for aspect marking. Compared to the rich expressive tools for temporality in English or Italian, this seems to impose strong restrictions on what can be expressed. But this impression is premature. What the basic variety allows the speaker to do is specify some time span - a RELATUM -, its position on the time line, its duration and (if iterated) its frequency. The situation to be situated in time is then simply linked to this RELATUM; all the speaker has to do then, is to shift the RELATUM if necessary. More systematically, we can describe the functioning of the basic variety by the following three principles.

I. At the beginning of the discourse, a time span - the initial Topic time  $TT_1$  - is fixed. This can be done in three ways:

- (a) By explicit introduction on the informant's part (e.g. *when Italia* 'when I was in Italy'); this is regularly done by a TAP in utterance initial position;
- (b) by explicit introduction on the the interviewer's part (e.g. *what happened last Sunday?* or *what will you do next Sunday?*);
- (c) by implicitly taking the 'default topic time' - the time of utterance; in this case, nothing is explicitly marked.

$TT_1$  is not only the topic time of the first utterance. It also serves as a RELATUM to subsequent topic times  $TT_2$ ,  $TT_3$ , ...

II. If  $TT_i$  is given, then  $TT_{i+1}$  - the topic time of the subsequent utterance - is either maintained, or changed. If it is maintained, nothing is marked. If it is changed, there are two possibilities:

- (a) The new topic time is explicitly marked by an adverbial in initial position;

(b) The new topic time follows from a principle of text organisation. For narratives, this principle is PNO 'Order of mention corresponds to order of events'.

In other words,  $TT_{i+1}$  is some interval more or less right-adjacent to  $TT_i$ .

As was discussed in chapter 2, this principle does not govern all text types. It is only characteristic of narratives and text with a similar temporal overall organisation - texts which answer a *quaestio* (Klein and Perdue 1992) like 'What happened next?' or 'What do you plan to do next?'. Even in those texts, it only applies to 'foreground sequences' or, as was said in chapter 2, to the main structure of the text, i.e. those parts which directly answer the *quaestio*. In other text types, such as descriptions or arguments, PNO does not apply, nor does it hold for side structures in narratives, i.e. those sequences which give background information, comments etc. For those cases, changes of TT must be marked by adverbials.

Principles I and II provide the temporal scaffold of a sequence of utterances - the time spans about which something is said. The 'time of situation' of some utterance is then given by a third principle:

III. The relation of TSit to TT in the basic variety is always 'more or less simultaneous'. TT can be contained in TSit, or TSit can be contained in TT, or both, i.e., they are really simultaneous. In other words, **the basic variety provides no formal devices for aspectual differentiation.**

This system is very simple, but extremely versatile. In principle, it allows the easy expression of when what happens, or is the case - provided there are enough adverbials, and that it is cleverly managed. As to the latter point, informants vary considerably. This is most strikingly illustrated by a different data type - film retellings, as studied in Klein and Perdue (1992, chapter 1.3). In these experiments, the informants - among them Santo - had to re-tell a passage from a Charlie Chaplin film. Santo's first retelling is hardly comprehensible; the sequence of events is not clear at all. In his second retelling, about nine months later, his linguistic repertoire is essentially the same - it is still the basic variety (with some minor changes). But now, he skillfully masters this system, and consequently produces a (relatively) clear and understandable story.

Given the relative efficiency of the basic variety, why should a learner bother to elaborate it? In fact, many second language learners do not (quite in contrast to first language learners): their means for expressing temporality fossilise at this point. This is reported for a number of learners in the literature on second language acquisition (Klein 1981 and especially von Stutterheim 1986); it is also the case for Rudolfo in our sample. But other learners progress, to some extent at least.

Two reasons might push this further development. First, the basic variety strongly deviates from the language of the social environment: it may well be simple and communicatively efficient, but it stigmatises the learner as an outsider. For first language learners, the need for such **input mimicking** is very strong; otherwise, they would not be recognised and accepted as members of their society. For second language learners, this need is less strong, although this may depend on the particular case. Second, the basic variety has some clear shortcomings that affect communicative efficiency. Four of these are particularly important:

- (a) The absence of some adverbials, notably *again*, *still*, *already* constrains the expressive power of the system;
- (b) It does not allow for the marking of at least some types of aspectual variation. There is no way, for example, to differentiate between *he was going* and *he went*, i.e. between 'TT included in TSit', and 'TSit included in TT'. It is possible, though, to differentiate between 'TSit AT TT' and 'TSit BEFORE TT': In the latter case, the situation at issue is marked by *finish*, for example *work finish* 'after having worked';
- (c) The pragmatic constraints on the positioning of TT easily lead to ambiguities. Suppose there are two subsequent utterances without any temporal adverbial, and suppose further that  $TT_1$  - the topic time of the first utterance - is fixed. Where is  $TT_2$ ? If the two utterances are part of a static description, then  $TT_2$  is (more or less) simultaneous to  $TT_1$  - there is normally no shift in, say, a picture description. If the two utterances belong to a narrative, then it depends whether both utterances belong to the main structure or not; if so, then  $TT_2$  is AFTER  $TT_1$ ; if not,  $TT_2$  is simply not fixed. So long as the speaker is not able to mark the difference between 'foreground' and 'background', for example by word order, ambiguities are easily possible, and are indeed often observed in learner's utterances, to the extent that the entire temporal structure of the text becomes incomprehensible;
- (d) There is no easy way to mark the difference between 'single case reading' of some event (or 'situation' in general) and 'habitual' or 'generic reading'. An utterance such as *when Italy, I go Roma* can mean 'when I was in Italy, I once went to Rome', but also 'when I was in Italy, I used to go to Rome'. In both cases, TT is in the past; but it may include one or many TSits. In fact, most present time references in Santo's conversations are of the habitual type - they do not describe what he is doing at some point, but what he habitually does at present. Some learners feel the need to discriminate between semelfactive and habitual reading, and do so by an initial adverbial

*normal(ly)*, which, when interpreted literally, often sounds somewhat odd (*normal + go disco*).

All of these problems affect the efficiency of the basic variety, and may easily lead to misunderstanding and even breakdown of communication. If the learner considers it important to increase his communicative capacity, he has to improve the system. This can be done in two (not mutually exclusive) ways. He can either try to adopt as many rules of the target variety as possible. Or he can enrich the internal systematicity of the system by 'home-made' rules and devices which he assumes to be functional: he can turn his basic variety into a sort of 'fluent pidgin' and learn how to make optimal use of it. The latter way leads to a more or less fossilised but relatively efficient version of the basic variety, the former towards the norms of the language of the social environment. Note that only the problems mentioned under (a) and (b) above are easily overcome by progressing towards Standard English. The problems mentioned under (c) are not directly affected by such progress, because the pragmatic constraints are the same in the basic variety and in the fully developed language, and English does not formally discriminate between 'habitual' and 'semelfactive'. But they are indirectly solved: aspect differentiation, for example, is a major device for discriminating between 'foreground' and 'background' (cf. Hopper 1979; Klein and von Stutterheim 1992), and paraphrastic constructions like *used to* allow the advanced learner to mark habituality, if there is need.

It seems plausible that both the subjective need for input mimicking and the lack of communicative efficiency further push development; but their relative weight is hard to estimate. We shall now consider some further developments of the temporal system and then return to this question.

### 3.2.2 *Further development*

Among the four Italian learners, Rudolfo stays with the basic variety, Santo develops it to a lesser extent than Andrea, but Lavinia, especially, makes considerable progress towards the English standard. We will therefore concentrate on Lavinia. First, we will trace her development in some detail from recording to recording; then, the main trends of this development will be summed up; finally, we will have a glance at Santo and Andrea.

*Lavinia, step by step*

**Lavinia1** (+6 months)

In the first encounter, about six months after her arrival in England, Lavinia's system is the basic variety. There are two differences between her and Santo, though:

- (a) In about half of the cases, Lavinia marks the third person singular by *-s*, i.e., *he like* and *he likes* co-occur, often in two subsequent utterances. We can already note at this point that the rate of correct usage constantly increases although instances of the *s*-less form are found even in the last recording. The opposite mistake (*-s* for second or first person) does not occur at this point, although it occasionally shows up in later recordings;
- (b) She often uses the present tense copula, and if so, the correct forms are used.

Both features point to the fact that Lavinia is about to go beyond the basic variety.

**Lavinia2** (+7 months)

There are three past tense forms, all of them irregular: *said*, *went*, *was*. They are used to refer to events in the past, whereas the normal 'past form' is still  $V_0$  or - very rarely - *Ving*. Otherwise, her system is the same as before.<sup>1</sup>

**Lavinia3** (+8 months)

The bulk of utterances still show the basic variety (with the copula now being completely regular in the present tense). But there are two developments:

- (a) In four cases, she uses present perfect forms. Consider the following question-answer sequence:

(1) [Did you buy your furniture here?]

*I have bought here*

[Did you buy a TV set]

*no + I want to buy because has broken that one*

At least the first instance shows that she has no watertight functional contrast between 'simple past' and 'present perfect' at this point. There is no increase in past forms.

- (b) There is one isolated future tense form:

(2) [Is that all right?]

*I shall see.*

Finally, it should be noted that the *Ving* forms increase in number. But, as in Santo's system, they are interchangeably used with  $V_0$ .

#### **Lavinia4** (+9 months)

There is no noticeable change. We observe a number of present perfect forms (some irregular in form, like *I have find, my son has write*), as well as *-ing* forms; but the former are used like the simple past, and the latter like  $V_0$ . Still, the outer appearance of her language resembles Standard English more and more, as is illustrated by the following extract:

(1) [*do you make cakes?*]

*yeah + sometime + but now + my oven isn't working very well + when I start + I don't know + is good + I put <the oven> on six or maximum+ and after two minutes+ it's on the minimum.*

This impression is slightly misleading, however; the contracted negations, for example, are still rote forms, and whilst the continuous form is quite appropriate here, there are other examples which show that she does not yet master it.

#### **Lavinia5** (+11 months)

There is no categorial change, but a distinct quantitative change: TT in the past is now dominantly marked by simple past forms - but only for **irregular** verbs (including all forms of the copula and of the auxiliary *to have*). There is still no single *-erf-past*. Consider the following extract:

(1) *when I was young + I had a job in a shop + I spoke a bit*  
[Serbocroatian].

Aspectual marking - simple perfect vs. simple past or *-ing* vs. simple form - has not developed.

#### **Lavinia6** (+13 months)

The recording contains the first occurrence of a weak simple past:

(1) *she explained <it to> me on the phone*

While this is still an exception, the simple past of strong verbs is regularly used (there is only a single instance of irregular  $V_0$  with past reference).

This is also the recording with the first use of the adverbial *again*. She also starts using some TAC which do not show up in the basic varieties of the other informants, for example *until june*.

**Lavinia7** (+14 months)

No observable change.

**Lavinia8** (+16 months)

There are three noticeable developments:

(a) There is an increased use of regular past, as in the following example (her son had been to a dentist):

(1) *they said 'no' + the pain stopped + there was no pain after this + but they said to me: ...*

(b) Her use of the aspectual forms approaches the Standard; this holds for the continuous form as well as for the simple past. Consider the following two examples;

(2) *monday + we went to the dentist for the last time + for some filling + and now <he> has stopped until September for a check-up.*

Clearly, one could not use the simple past in the last utterance.

(3) *... woman who work/who has been working*

Here, she apparently corrects to the (contextually appropriate) continuous form of the present perfect.

(c) TT in the future is now often marked by *will* or *shall*.

This recording also contains a first occurrence of habitual *used-to*:

(4) *you used to work*

**Lavinia9** (+11 months)

There are now a number of correct uses of the continuous form, such as

(1) *now I am waiting for an answer ... I am waiting because he asked me for the/mine national insurance number + and <I> didn't have one.*

Note the correct *didn't*.

(2) *now + I am going for the interview*

In addition, there is a first occurrence of the prospective:

(3) *we are going to pay*

She has also worked on her repertoire of adverbials. The first *yet* appears, and she has complex constructions like *any time now*.

**Lavinia10** (+18 months)

No major change, but the first *already* is used. There are now many forms of the prospective, still in the present (*is-going-to*).

**Lavinia11** (+21 months)

The present perfect is now regularly used as an aspect, as in

- (1) *the career officer has been there for thirty years*

In the context where this utterance occurs, neither the simple past nor the present could be used. This recording also gives evidence that she indeed uses the prospective as an aspect rather than as a tense variant to the simple future:

- (2) *I was going to say I know people who doesn't speak/don't speak to me because I can't speak english*

Finally, there is a first clear pluperfect:

- (3) *I don't know if I had understood the question very clearly*

All of this gives evidence that she is now close to mastering the English aspect system and its interaction with the tense system.

**Lavinia12** (+22 months)

No noticeable change, but the first negated future is used:

- (1) *but if I don't pass the exam + I won't be able to work*

**Lavinia13** (+23 months)

As a rule, all aspect and tense forms are correctly used, including the continuous form in all tenses (except the future, but this is probably accidental). We say 'as a rule', because there are still some instances of backsliding to the basic variety.

**Lavinia14** (+29 months)

This last conversation, which was recorded about six months after Lavinia13, shows close-to-perfect mastery of the English temporal system. This does not necessarily mean that her competence is indeed at the level of a native speaker: there are occasional errors, and it may well be that she misrepresents some aspects of the English system. But if this is the case, it does not become apparent from her production. Judging from what she says and how she interacts in English, she has reached the target - at least as regards the expression of temporality.

*Lavinia, general trends*

The data analysed here are limited in scope and type, and the interpretation of individual utterances is often problematic. Still, the general picture of Lavinia's development beyond the basic variety is very clear, and can be summed up in three points:

- (A) Development is slow and gradual; this applies both for adverbials and for morphological marking of tense and aspect. As a consequence, we often observe the co-occurrence of different forms, such as  $V_0$  and *Ving*,  $V_0$  and simple past, simple past and present perfect, without any noticeable difference in function. There is an important corollary of this fact: **Form often precedes function**. The informant may well use the *-ing* form, but apparently, it does not serve to mark any functional contrast, and certainly not the one which it has in the target language;
- (B) **Tense marking precedes aspect marking**. In the basic variety, all tenses and aspects are conflated in one form -  $V_0$ , with *Ving* as a (rare) variant. Thereafter, this form is gradually differentiated. First, TT in the past is marked by simple past forms. The same function is also expressed by present perfect (although this is much less frequent). Next follows future marking. Only then are the already existing forms *have + participle* and *Ving* used to express perfect and imperfective aspect. At about the same time, the prospective aspect *be-going-to V* is acquired. The last form occurring in the data is the pluperfect, i.e., a combination of tense and aspect. (No future perfect is observed, but this may be accidental.);
- (C) In past tense marking, **irregular forms precede regular forms**, i.e. the normal *-ed* marking of the simple past shows up after forms such as *bought, left, was, had*, etc. No overgeneralisations of regular forms are observed (although some false forms, such as *he has find* occur).

There are a number of more detailed findings, such as the rather late appearance of common adverbs such as *again, yet* etc.; but it is hard to make general statements about adverb elaboration, except to observe that the repertoire is slowly enriched and refined.

The three major findings on development beyond the basic variety are partly in remarkable contrast to what is known about the acquisition of temporality by children. In the first language acquisition literature, it is most often assumed that function precedes form, and the appearance of a new form indicates a functional differentiation (Clark 1987).

This is clearly not the case here: two forms may co-occur for a very long time without any palpable difference in function. Secondly, it is often assumed

(but also often disputed) that aspect precedes tense, in fact, that tense forms are originally used to mark aspectual differences (for a review, see Weist 1986). Again, this is definitely not the case here: tense marking clearly precedes aspect marking. This is the more remarkable as Italian has no preference for tense (as would be the case in German): as we saw, both aspectual and tense differences are systematically marked by verb morphology. Thirdly, it is well-known that children also start with irregular past (and past participle forms. So far, there is no difference, but children, then, tend to overgeneralise to the regular form, a fact which has given rise to innumerable theoretical discussions. No such overgeneralisation is observed here - regular past is learned later, but no systematic attempt is made to squeeze the irregular forms into this mould.

So far, we have only considered Lavinia's development beyond the basic variety. We shall now have a brief look at the other three Italian learners.

#### *Rudolfo, Santo, Andrea*

The first and most important point is clear: there is no difference in the development beyond the basic variety, but the other learners stop earlier.

This is trivial for Rudolfo, who does not move on at all. After more than three years in England, his temporal system is still the basic variety.

Santo, by contrast, makes some progress. He reaches the level of past tense marking; all his past tense forms are irregular, i.e., he never uses a form like *worked*. In addition, he uses *-ing* forms and some present perfect forms; but the former, which tend to become quite frequent at the end, remain functionally equivalent to  $V_0$ ; and the latter are functionally equivalent to the simple past. He does not produce future tense forms. In other words, his acquisition process (to the extent to which it was observed here) ends at the level of **Lavinia4**.

Andrea gets one step further ahead. He also ends up with simple past, but his final production also includes some **regular** past tense forms (including one overgeneralisation, the form *taked*). Towards the end, there is also a considerable increase of *Ving* in his utterances. Although there is still no clear functional contrast to the simple forms, this may indicate that he is at the verge of acquiring this aspectual contrast.

### 3.2.3 *Summary of Italian learners*

The way in which Italian learners express temporality in their learner varieties can be described in two steps. First, they form a very elementary but functional

**basic variety**; then they gradually move beyond this variety into the direction of the target language. They do so in the same way, but to a very different degree.

### *The Basic Variety*

The basic variety is essentially characterised by three features:

- (A) The verb is not modified for tense or aspect; it normally has the form of a bare stem ( $V_0$ ), sometimes - without functional difference - of *Ving*; the copula is most often missing.
- (B) The beginning and end of the situation can be marked by special verbal constructions, normally *start* and *finish*.
- (C) There is a very rich repertoire of temporal adverbials which allow learners to specify the position of a time span; there is also a repertoire of temporal adverbials which allow them to specify the duration of a time span and the frequency of time spans; other temporal adverbials are still absent.

This system seems highly restricted, compared to both the source and the target languages. Still, when efficiently used, it allows the expression of relatively complex temporal constellations. A major component of this efficiency is the clever use of 'discourse principles', such as the principle of natural order in narratives.

This system corresponds very much to what previous research has shown for fossilised learner varieties of German (Klein 1981; von Stutterheim 1986). We also find similar systems in other studies of second language acquisition (see the survey in Schumann 1987). In fact, the reader may have noted that the basic variety is not far removed from the temporal system of some fully-fledged languages. Chinese is a case in question, except that the basic variety only has means to mark the beginning or end of an 'action', whereas Chinese has a number of particles to mark, for instance, completed (*le*), long-ago-completed (*guo*) or on-going action (*zhe*) (cf. Li Ping 1989).

### **Further development**

Learners may more or less fossilise at the level of the basic variety, as Rudolfo in the present sample. Others move ahead. This development can again be characterised by three features:

- (D) It is slow and gradual, with the co-occurrence of form variants, i.e. different forms can be used without difference in function. Thus,  $V_0$  may still be used for past reference, although the learner in principle masters the morphological simple past. Furthermore, we often find forms which do not yet serve

the function which they have in the target language. In general, we may say that **forms often precede functions**.

Tense marking appears before aspect marking; first, the simple past is correctly used (with the present perfect as a form variant); future appears distinctly later and remains rare; at about the same time, learners begin aspectual differentiation of perfect and imperfective (i.e. continuous form); prospective (*be-going-to*) and pluperfect come at the very end.

Irregular past forms precede regular past forms, i.e., forms such as *bought, left, went, had, were* appear before *worked, laughed* etc.; when regular forms are used, they are hardly ever overgeneralised.

Two points of warning should be added here. First, as we have repeatedly said, these findings are based on a limited set of data, and it may well be that additional data would force us to revise this picture. Second, what is described here is the **overall development**; there may be smaller deviations in individual recordings; but at least in the present data, such deviations are extremely rare.

#### *Some causal considerations*

Which factors determine this development? This question can be understood in two ways: Why this overall developmental course from a basic variety towards the Standard language?, and: Why the different endpoints of development?

Let us begin with the second question. In fact, only Lavinia really approaches the Standard. Santo and Andrea stop far behind, and given that they had been in the country for several years when the last recording was made, it is not very likely that they developed significantly afterwards. The answer to the question may seem fairly obvious. For about ten months, Lavinia had gone to several courses, including a course on English as a second language. But two facts make this simple explanation somewhat dubious. First, almost all of her development beyond the the basic variety took place at a time when she had stopped attending the English course. Second, there is no known syllabus which would first teach the irregular forms of the past and then the regular ones. But Lavinia begins clearly with the **irregular** past.<sup>2</sup> It seems much more plausible to assume that this learning process is based on direct input processing. The perceptual difference between, for example, *bought, left, was* and *buy(s), leave(s), is* is much larger than the perceptual difference between *worked, laughed* and *work(s), laugh(s)*.<sup>3</sup> Hence, language acquisition based on input-processing would predict, or at least render plausible, the observed order. We should assume therefore that Lavinia's remarkable progress is not so much a direct consequence of the language course she went to but of the general motivation to advance - to take courses of all

types, to talk to people, to improve her social status in the host society.

So far about the reasons which determine the endpoint of development. What about the factors which determine the developmental course? For a learner who wants to make himself understood without necessarily imitating the input as closely as possible, the basic variety offers a number of advantages. It is simple in structure, easy to acquire, natural to handle, and allows the expression of all necessary temporal relations. Therefore, it should not come as a surprise that second language learners build up such a system, and often maintain it. This is never the case for first language learners: children not only want to make themselves understood but have to become members of their social environment. For them, it is important to mimick the input as closely as possible.

Why do some second language learners then go beyond this system? Again, there might be two reasons: communicative problems, and 'becoming like the others'. Our limited evidence is not sufficient to weight the relative importance of these two factors, but it does allow some speculation. In section 3.2.1, we mentioned some of the possible shortcomings of the basic variety. It turns out however that the frequent communicative problems of our learners (cf. Bremer *et al.* 1993) hardly ever stem from these shortcomings.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, we are inclined to give more weight to the second factor. This is also in accordance with the relative advancement of Lavinia. As far as we can judge from the data, she has no communicative problems due to temporality, but she is extremely interactive, and wants to improve her social status. To this end, it does not suffice to understand and to make oneself understood - one must also speak like the others. We have not noted any particular influence from the source language. Italian marks both tense and aspect, and the fact that tense marking clearly precedes aspect marking cannot be directly attributed to source language influence.

### 3.3 From Punjabi to English

Two informants were analysed in detail, Madan and Ravinder. It will be useful to give some biographical information first.

#### *Madan*

Madan arrived in England in February 1981 at the age of 25 for his arranged marriage to a Punjabi woman of British citizenship who had lived in England for 18 years. Madan had eight years of primary school in his native village in the Punjab (including one year of English as a foreign language and three years

of Hindi) and then worked on the family farm there. Before arriving in England, he had spent varying lengths of time in Afghanistan and Syria as a labourer but claims to have learned no other language during this period. At the time of the study which began 20 months after his arrival, he was working as a press operator in a factory. He lived in a private house shared with the family of his wife. His wife speaks English very well, but he reports having little exposure to English: mostly at work, in the evenings at his brother's shop, and on television.

### *Ravinder*

At the onset of the study, Ravinder was 21 years old, married with one child. After attending primary school in the Punjab, he worked on the family farm. He had had two years of instruction of English as a foreign language at school, and professed some knowledge of Hindi. Like Madan, he had come to England for an arranged marriage to an Indian-born Punjabi speaker of British nationality. In England, he lived in a flat owned by his sister and worked in a fish and chip shop and as an ironmonger's assistant, both family businesses. His contacts with speakers of English were minimal. He was first interviewed thirteen months after arrival in England, at which time his command of English was still extremely poor.

### 3.3.1 *Madan*

#### *Early steps*

The first encounter took place 20 months after Madan's arrival. This may seem a long time. But as regards his language acquisition, not very much is missed. In the first encounter, Madan's language is still at a very elementary stage, the entire interaction is strongly scaffolded by the interlocutor, and the organisation of his utterances varies between 'nominal' and 'verbal' - they either consist of simple noun phrases together with some adverbials, or of some uninflected verb with the appropriate arguments (see Klein and Perdue 1992 for a detailed description). The following selection, in which Madan describes what he did before he came to England, is very typical:

**Madan11:**

- (1) *punjab + I do agriculture farm*  
*before I go + seventy five + in the arab country*  
*afghanistan [...]*  
*afghanistan to turkey*  
*to antakia*  
*to syria*  
*to lebanon*  
*after there go syria*  
*yeah + jordan go india*  
*I work in the indian house*

Temporality is only made explicit by adverbials such as *before*, *after*, *seventy five* and *punjab*, where the latter, although a local adverb here means something like 'when I was in the Punjab'. The relative order of events is only indicated by PNO. This easily leads to ambiguities, especially since he does not mark the difference between foreground and background utterances. At this point, we may sum up his repertoire as follows (we only consider features of his language which directly relate to temporality):

- there are a small number of verb stems, which do not show any trace of inflexion;
- there is no copula, except one isolated occurrence of *is*;
- there are only two adverbials, *after* and *before*; their RELATUM can be anaphoric (before that) or deictic (before now); *before* may also mean something like *in the beginning*.

Clearly, this is a very simple version of the *basic variety* described for the Italian learners in section 3.2.1.

In the remaining encounters of the first cycle (= Madan12-Madan16), Madan elaborates on this system in four ways. First, he increases his lexical repertoire. This is the most salient and most important change. This development includes verbs, nouns and, particularly interesting here, adverbials; at the end of the cycle, he has acquired some TAD and TAQ. Second, some forms of the simple past and of past participles appear. Third, he uses quite a number of *-ing* forms. And fourth, he uses *start* and *stop*, *finish* to mark beginning and end, respectively. In other words, he shows a basic variety which is largely identical to the basic variety of the Italians.

*Madan's basic variety*

At the end of the first cycle, i.e., after 26 months of stay, Madan's language can be characterised as follows (again, we only consider features directly relevant to temporality):

- (a) His utterances are very simple, and they are still at the transition from simple nominal constructions to verb-argument constructions. There are no finite verbs (with the usual exception of some rote forms such as *I am alright*).
- (b) If there is a verb, it is normally the stem  $V_0$ . In addition:
  - there are two forms of the simple past, *told* and *said*. They refer to the past, but they are infrequent, and normally *say* and *tell* are used in this function;
  - there are three past participles, namely *tired*, *fed up* and *gone*. They are used without a copula or auxiliary;
  - about ten verbs are also used in the *-ing* form, for example *reading*, *working*, *coming*, *going*, *looking*, *setting*.
- (c) There is a rich repertoire of temporal adverbials. These include:
  - calendaric and clock time expressions, usually bare noun phrases such as *four o'clock*, *lunch time*, *seventy five*, etc.;
  - deictic and anaphoric TAP, in particular *before*, *after*, *now*, *today*, *last week*;
  - a few regularly used TAQ, in particular *everyday*, *any time*, but not common adverbs such as *always*, *often*, *rarely*;
  - again a few TAD, usually bare NPS such as *(for) about three four weeks*, *(for) one year*.
- (d) The verb stems *start* and *finish*, *stop* are used to mark the left and right boundary of an action. Typically, and in contrast to the Italian learners, these verbs precede the verb which denotes the action as such (if this latter one is mentioned at all and not just left to the context), e.g., *finish work*.

If we compare this to Santo's basic variety (cf. section 3.2.1), the only differences seem to be a slightly more frequent occurrence of the continuous form and the use of some past forms. The functioning of the basic variety is exactly on a par with Santo's, and like Santo's, it is remarkably efficient. The question, then, is whether the two differences are just within the range of variation noted for all learners, or whether they indeed reflect some influence of the two different source languages. The past tense and past participle forms are too few in number to say anything about this point. By contrast, *-ing* forms are slightly more common, but a look through all examples does not yield a consistent functional difference between  $V_0$  and *Ving*, except a negative one: their use does not correspond to the English Standard. Take the following two examples:

**Madan2:**

- (1) *He say 'alright, he coming'*  
 (2) [What happened here?] *Police coming.*

In the first example, the quoted speech passage means something like 'alright, I'll come' or 'Alright, I'm coming'. Here, and also in the second example, the continuous form would also be possible in standard English. But now consider the following case, used in an instruction:

**Madan3:**

- (1) *Can you reading?*

What he wants to say here, is 'Can you read this?' (= "please read this"), and it is hard to see why he uses *Ving* here, instead, as he usually does in instructions,  $V_0$ . One clearly gets the impression that he knows that there is such a formal variation but has no idea of how to make use of it. We shall take up the point in the next section. But at this point, we tentatively conclude that **there is no clear difference in the formation of a basic variety between Madan and the Italian learners**. If there are differences due to source language influence, they show up in further development.

*Further development*

In cycles II and III, Madan's language shows a distinct development; which can be characterised by three global features:

- (A) It is slow. Very often, there is no noticeable change from one encounter to the next, or to put it slightly differently, the variation within an encounter is often stronger than the variation between encounters.
- (B) It is gradual. There is no abrupt change, no sudden insight leading to a major revision of his language.
- (C) It is highly selective. Some features, such as noun inflexion or agreement, are not worked upon at all, whilst others are. Most salient is a steady increase in vocabulary, but there is also a selective development of features which concern the expression of temporality, which will be discussed presently.

It seems unrewarding to trace this kind of development step by step in the absence of real steps. But this does not mean that the final result is not noticeably different, quite to the contrary. This is best illustrated by a selection from the last encounter, in which he re-tells the story of this travels before coming to England, and which can be compared to the story of Madan1.1, quoted above:

**Madan18:**

- (1) *twenty seventh junes + right + seventy seven*  
*I go to the kabul + afghanistan*  
*from delh/ new delhi to kabulstan + right?*  
*kabulstan I stay + nearly five six month*  
*no work there*  
*I sitting in the hotel + right?*  
*no money in my pocket*  
*after + I ask my brother*  
*my brother stay in india + new chandigar*  
*I ask my brother + my/*  
*I want money*  
*I go every/anywhere*  
*he said 'how much you want?'*  
*I say <perhaps: 'said'>: seven + eight thousand pound +*  
*rupees + indians + you know*  
*he give the money by post*  
*when I take money + I go to the turkey*  
*from kabul to turkey*  
*<by air?> yeah + by air*  
*kabul I stay ++ I thinks one/one day one night*  
*no + sorry <in turkey?> in turkey, yeah*  
*after + I take/catch the coach from turkey to antakia*

We can stop his story here. The story goes on for about another 60 utterances in the same style. What seems remarkable about his language at this stage is how much it has developed, and at the same time how little it has developed. The first point becomes immediately clear when we compare this very fluent and understandable story to the poor rendering of the same events in the first encounter. Madan has managed to work out a relatively versatile communicative system which allows him to make clear what he wants to say, and to react appropriately if something is unclear to the interlocutor. On the other hand, this system is still very far from Standard English, and this after no less than five years of regular contact with the local population. Although we have no recording of his development after this last encounter, dramatic changes seem highly unlikely. We might expect the slow and gradual development to go on for a while, but he will never approach the Standard in the same way as, for example, Lavinia did.

This system is what might be called an 'elaborate basic variety'. Its essential formal and functional characteristics are still the ones described above for Madan and in greater detail in section 3.2.1 for the Italian learners. It differs from this

variety in five respects (we only consider temporal features):

- (a) He has a richer repertoire of temporal adverbials. This development is not spectacular, but nevertheless noticeable; it corresponds to the overall increase in his vocabulary. It is remarkable that there is only one subordinate conjunction - *when*.
- (b) There are a few traces of present tense inflexion, such as *says, gives, thinks*, but they are limited to five verbs, very rare, and nowhere used for a functional contrast. The only exception are copula forms: as soon as they appear in the middle of the second cycle, they appear in inflected form. Even in the last encounter, the copula is most often omitted.
- (c) Six verbs occasionally occur in the simple past: *said, told, got, gave, sat (down), didn't*. These forms have contrasting  $V_0$ -variants, such as *say, tell*, etc., and these are the normal forms. This formal contrast is not functional. Reference to the past is normally done with the base form, and the only occurrence of *took* is neither to past nor present, but to the future. We may conclude, therefore, that this is another example of formal contrasts preceding functional ones. Two additional points are worth mentioning here. First, wherever simple past forms occur, they are strong. There is no single incidence of the *-ed* past. Second, his 'elaborate basic variety' is so robust at this point that when repeating an utterance from the English interlocutor, he tends to replace simple past by his base form, as the following short sequence from Madan18 illustrates:

**Madan18:**

(2) <And you stayed in a hotel there?>  
*yeah + I stay hotel*

- (d) He uses a slowly and steadily increasing number of past participles, in particular: *broke(n), fed up, gone, married, tired*.
- (e) He uses an increasing number of *-ing* forms. Although their use is limited to some verbs and never goes beyond about 10% of all occurrences (of verb forms), they look like a salient feature of his 'elaborate basic variety'.

We do not observe (d) and (e) in Santo's and the other Italian learners' stabilised varieties. Therefore, it seems worthwhile to have a closer look at them.

Past *participles*

Past participles show up very early in Madan's language, but they are not frequent, and their token frequency does not increase. What is perhaps more interesting is the fact that they never combine with an auxiliary, such as *has* or

*had*. A closer look at the various forms reveals that they are regularly used to describe a state. This state is the result of a some previous action, but the action as such does not play a particular role in the context in which they occur. The examples mentioned above make this very clear: similarly, *gone* means something like *away*, *broke(n)* means something like German *kaputt* (out of order), *married* means something like the counterpart of *bachelor*; even in Standard English, *tired* is probably not so very much understood as the result of a preceding process of 'tiring' but simply as a state in which someone is at some time and *fed up* is a participle, but means something like *now angry*. Languages often use this possibility to present a state. This is well illustrated by the common designations for the two possible states of a door - open and closed. The former is an adjective, the latter a past participle.

In Punjabi, the participle strategy is most common. Therefore, the fact that the only past participles used by Mangat are of exactly this type does not reflect so very much a movement towards the acquisition of the English temporal system than a transfer from the source language. Accordingly, we do not find this usage in the language of the Italian learners.

### *Ving*

*Ving* forms show up very early in Madan's language. Their frequency (both type and token) steadily increases up to the middle of the second cycle and then remains more or less constant until the end of the observation period.<sup>5</sup> The distribution is not text-type dependent, i.e., retellings and personal narratives do not differ in this regard.

As was said in section 3.2.1, we also find *Ving* in the basic variety of the Italian learners; but there, it is exceptional. We also noted that Lavinia works out an increasing number of *Ving*, but gives clear preference to tense marking. It seems plausible, therefore, that this difference is due to source language influence, the more so since Punjabi is an aspect-dominant language.

The number of types which appear in *-ing* form is limited. Altogether, there are about 20. They do not form a semantically homogeneous class; we observe forms such as *going*, *coming*, *working*, *supporting*, *sitting*, *fighting*. All of these forms have a  $V_0$ -counterpart, i.e. *go*, *come*, *support*, *sit*, *fight*, etc. This should allow Madan to make functional use of this formal contrast, but surprisingly enough, he does not.

At the beginning of this section, we gave some randomly chosen examples of his *-ing* forms in Madan2 and Madan3; no functional contrast could be seen there. This may have changed, of course, with the gradual development of this formal option. The best way to test this possibility is a look through a series of

examples from late encounters.

What could the formal contrast  $V_0$  : *Ving* be used for? Three possibilities come to mind. It could be used to express the normal aspectual differentiation between simple form and continuous form in Standard English. I shall call this the target language type contrast, in brief 'TL-contrast'. Or, it could be used to express some function which is specific to this learner-variety, for example the difference between foreground and background clauses. Let us call this 'learner variety type contrast', in brief 'LV-contrast'. Or lastly, it could reflect some source-language-specific function; for example, one form could mark an 'external, distant perspective' on the action, whereas the other form moves the speaker in the midst of the action, irrespective of the position of this action on the time line. We may call this 'SL-contrast' (source language type contrast). It should be noted that these three possibilities are different, but not necessarily incompatible.

Let us now turn to the examples. The first sequence stems from the second Chaplin retelling, which was recorded during the tenth encounter. These data have the advantage that we know - at least to some extent - what Madan intends to say. In this episode, Charlie wants to be arrested and therefore eats a big dinner without paying:

Madan 10:

- (1) *charlie he go to the big restaurant*
- (2) *do the dinner*
- (3) *do the dinner up + full up*
- (4) *no money [...]*
- (5) *no money charlies pocket*
- (6) *restaurant manager say 'give me money'*
- (7) *he say 'no money'*
- (8) *one policeman go on with road*
- (9) *he say 'look at the window'*
- (10) *policeman see charlie*
- (11) *say 'come here + come on inside'*
- (12) *policeman coming*
- (13) *he say + police / er restaurant manager said 'he dont pay money'*
- (14) *policeman say 'why dont pay money?'*
- (15) *he say 'give me money + you give/pay money'*
- (16) *policeman says 'go on police station'*
- (17) *hes gone*
- (18) *next + policeman telephone police station*
- (19) *police car coming*

- (20) *next door + shop cigar + cigarettes + everything buy*  
 (21) *charlie say 'shopkeeper + give me one cigar'*  
 (22) *he give it*  
 (23) *he smoking*  
 (24) *after + two baby <= small children> coming*  
 (25) *hes coming*  
 (26) *charlie say 'what you want'*  
 (27) *charlie pickerup cigar/cigarette*  
 (28) *'here you are and here you are'*  
 (29) *'right + you go on'*  
 (30) *children go*  
 (31) *charlie say 'how much money?'*  
 (32) *shopkeeper say 'like this'*  
 (33) *charlie say policeman 'give the/this money'*  
 (34) *police station police car coming*  
 (35) *policeman say 'go on + stay in the car' [...]*  
 (36) *charlie stay in the car*  
 (37) *stand and there inside stan/sit down fat woman <=he sat  
 down on her>*  
 (38) *he <= she> pushing charlie*  
 (39) *charlie go other side*

Two points stand out. First, utterances without any verb or copula are rare, and they normally give background information. Second,  $V_0$  is the normal case. With the possible exception of (36), all occurrences of  $V_0$  report events which push on the plot line. What about the *-ing* forms? There are seven such forms, which we will now consider in turn.

The first example is (12). The normal interpretation would be: 'The policeman came in'<sup>6</sup>, i.e., the next event is reported. Hence, there is no functional difference to  $V_0$  at all. We **could** assume that (12) means something like 'When the policeman came in (he said)', i.e., that (12) is a kind of background clause. Nothing supports such an interpretation, but it is not excluded. Therefore, *Ving* could reflect a special LV-contrast, less so the TL-contrast, and surely not the SL-contrast: it would be very counterintuitive to assume a particular involvement of speaker or protagonist in (12), compared to (11) or (13).

The next occurrence is (18/19). Apparently, it means: 'The policeman called the police station and said that a police car should come'. Hence, the coming of the police car is a fictitious/desired event in the future. This neither reflects the TL-contrast nor the SL-contrast, and if *coming* has a LV-internal function here, then it must be a different one from (12).

The next occurrence is in (23). What is meant here is obviously: 'The shop-

keeper gave the cigar to Charlie. He smoked it' or perhaps 'He began to smoke it'. Hence no TL-function, no LV-function, no SL-function.

Consider now (24). Clearly, this is simply the next event: 'Then, two children arrived on the scene'. Normally, this function is expressed by  $V_0$ , and we can only speculate why he uses 'Ving here. This *coming* is repeated in (25), though the initial *hes* makes it harder to interpret: the form *hes* is not infrequent; it is a kind of conflated counterpart of *he is, he was, they have, he has* and perhaps others. It can be combined with  $V_0$ , *Ving*, past participle, but does not lend itself to a clear and consistent interpretation. We **cannot** exclude that the entire utterance is meant as a background clause, roughly 'When these children came' (cf. 12), but again, there is no positive evidence for such an analysis.

For (34), the by far most plausible interpretation is: 'Then, the police car came', i.e., the next event is reported. Again, it is not clear at all why he uses *Ving* instead of  $V_0$ . And this is true, too, for (38): Charlie sits down on the woman, she pushes him away, he goes to the other side. This is exactly the series of events in the film, and it is entirely unclear why he first uses  $V_0$  (*sit down*), then *Ving* (*pushing*), and finally  $V_0$  again (*go*).

The conclusion seems clear - judging from these examples,  $V_0$  : *Ving* neither expresses the TL-contrast, nor a LV-contrast, nor a SL-contrast. It is not functional.

It could be, though, that such a functional contrast only applies in special text types, for example in personal narratives, but not in retellings. Given the very similar distribution of  $V_0$ , *Ving* and no verb in these two text types, such an assumption is not very plausible. Nevertheless, let us have a look at another short selection from Madan18, in which he talks about his personal life.

### Madan18:

- (3) *when we coming here + right?*
- (4) *I thinking*
- (5) *I want +++*
- (6) *you know + I married before + right?*
- (7) *you know + after I stay in the separate + me and my wife*
- (8) *right? + and baby and/you know*
- (9) *I buy new house [...] here*
- (10) *you know + I thinking like this*
- (11) *I working very hard*
- (12) *pick up money too much*
- (13) *I give-you <= give> the my parents in india [...]*
- (14) *I give-you the money my dad + you know*

- (15) *like this + you know*  
 (16) *I thinking before*  
 (17) *the same thing thinking now*

[When we came here, I thought, I want ... well, I was married already, and afterwards, we stayed separate, me, my wife and the baby. I will buy a new house, here, that's what I thought, I will work very hard, pick up as much money as possible, I will give money to my parents, to my dad, you know, I thought so before, and I still think so].

Even in a sequence as short as this one, real events in the past are sometimes described by *Ving* (*I thinking*), sometimes by  $V_0$  (*I stay*), fictitious events in the world of his thinking are sometimes expressed by *Ving* (*I working very hard*), and in the next utterance by  $V_0$  (*pick up money, I give-you*). Clearly, this does not reflect the TL-contrast nor the SL-contrast, and it is hard to think of a LV-contrast which it would express in any consistent way. This is confirmed by many other sequences; but the point should be sufficiently clear from this one.

Summing up Madan's further development in cycles II and III, it appears that, apart from the slow and steady increase of his lexical repertoire, there are two features which make his 'elaborate basic variety' slightly different from the Italian basic variety. First, there are a number of past participles in a particular function, and this usage seems to be induced by the source language. Second, there is a relatively frequent usage of *Ving*, which **may** be induced by the source language, too. But the formal contrast between  $V_0$  and *Wing* is not systematically exploited, neither in the sense of the target language, nor in the sense of the source language, nor in the sense of some learner-variety specific usage. Here again, form precedes function.

### 3.3.2 Ravinder

#### *First steps*

The encounters started one year after Ravinder's arrival in England. At that time, his language was still at the level of 'nominal utterance organisation' (Klein and Perdue 1992), i.e., utterances hardly ever contain a verb, let alone a finite verb. They either consist of simple nominal constructions, rote forms (such as *you know, I don't understand*), and adverbials, including some temporal adverbials. Communication is heavily scaffolded by the English interlocutors. This means that Ravinder has virtually no means to express temporality, except for a few adverbials. These include TAP (mostly in form of bare nouns such as *sunday, night, morning*, but also deictic *now*), one TAQ (*sometimes*), NPS denoting duration

(*seven year*), and finally the adverb *again* (this latter may be part of a rote form, because he always uses it in the frequent locution *say again*). As was said already, verbs are very rare. It is remarkable, though, that the first verb form occurring is *Ving* (*money coming*, roughly meaning 'this gets money into the house').

There is no major change in the first five encounters. We note a slight increase in his vocabulary, including verb forms, but these remain exceptional. In Ravinder13, for example, he produces about 120 utterances, but only 10 of them contain a verb form: 6  $V_0$ , 4 *Ving*. There is no apparent difference in the use of  $V_0$  and *Ving*. The following sequence is an answer to the interlocutor's question about what happens at the club to which he goes:

**Ravinder13:**

- (1) *drink and singing*
- (2) *punjabi*
- (3) *and dancing*

It is not clear why he first uses  $V_0$  and then two times *Ving*. The first clear form of *to be* shows up in Ravinder15:

**Ravinder15:**

- (1) *I am not buy anything*
- (2) *I only buy yeah sometime*

What he wants to say here, is: 'Usually, I don't buy anything (my wife does it)'.

We note further that he starts using a contracted form *its*, probably derived from *it is*, but the function of this form is very unclear. We shall return to this important point below.

Encounter 6, whilst altogether not very different from the preceding ones, shows some interesting phenomena, for example complex adverbials such as *in the evening*, but also a construction with the continuous form:

**Ravinder16:**

- (1) *I am training for wrestling.*

Such an isolated form may not be very telling; but it could also foreshadow a developmental change. And in fact, this is the case. Ravinder17 looks distinctly different; in particular

- about half of the utterances (unless elliptic in direct answer to a question) have a verb form, mostly  $V_0$ , but also often *Ving*;
- he uses *start* and *finish* to mark beginning and end;

- there are many instances of copula/auxiliary, some, but not all of them in contracted form (*there's, that's, it's, he's*);
- there is a general increase in vocabulary, including adverbials, he now uses *after* and *before* in order to mark (anaphorical) temporal relations.

In other words, he has eventually achieved a system which resembles the 'basic variety' of Madan and (with the exception of the frequency of *Ving*) of the Italian learners.

Compared to Madan, this seems to be a late development. But in fact, Madan was first recorded 20 months after his arrival in England, and Ravinder17 was recorded 22 months after Ravinder's. It seems not unlikely, therefore, that Madan's first steps had looked very similar, and that what we observed in Ravinder11 to Ravinder16 is the general development towards the 'basic variety'.

#### *Further development*

Ravinder's development through cycles II and III can be summed up in two general statements:

- (a) He stabilises the basic variety.
- (b) There is a slow and gradual development towards the Standard, especially with respect to richness of vocabulary.

Since this development is essentially like Madan's, we will not follow it up here in detail but concentrate on two features where Ravinder seems to differ from Madan. First, however, we shall have a look at his use of *Ving* vs.  $V_0$ .

Just as for Madan, the comparatively frequent use of *Ving* is a salient contrast to the Italian learners. For Madan, we have seen that this opposition is not functional - neither in the sense of a TL-, nor in the sense of a SL-contrast, nor as some LV-internal contrast. This seems to be the case for Ravinder, too. The following two quotes are from Ravinder22 (asked to describe what he did in the morning, he talked about working in two shops, a building suppliers and a fish and chip shop):

#### **Ravinder22:**

- (1) *yeah + first with + the other shop*
- (2) *this delivery cement and sand milton street*
- (3) *after + going in fish and chip shop*
- (4) *peel the potatoes*

The first two utterances are still verbless, but sufficiently clear. Then, he goes to the fish and chip shop, and this is described by *Ving*, although it is clearly a subsequent event. The next subsequent event is then described by  $V_0$ .<sup>7</sup>

After a short interruption by the interlocutor, he goes on:

**Ravinder22:**

- (5) *no + first is peel*
- (6) *and clean up*
- (7) *and got <= take, have> chipper*
- (8) *and cutting*

Again, it is not clear why all of sudden he uses *Ving*, rather than *V<sub>0</sub>*. There is also a mysterious *is* in (5), to which we shall return below.

These passages stem from his early attempts in the basic variety. As has been said above, he stabilises this variety, but not in the direction of a systematic contrast between *Ving* and *V<sub>0</sub>*. All in all, his development is in this respect like Madan's. But there are two differences, which we will now discuss. They are both connected to the use of the copula/auxiliary.

First, Ravinder shows a strong inclination to use the frozen form *its*. It shows up in all text types, but is most regularly observed in the film retellings. Compare the following passage from Ravinder34 (the interlocutor asked 'what happened to Charlie?'):

**Ravinder34:**

- (1) *its finish the job [...]*
- (2) *after + its going from there*
- (3) *try to go to back jail [...]*
- (4) *its try to back to jail because no job*
- (5) *and after its + what name? <girl>*
- (6) *yeah + and charlie its coming as well*
- (7) *its when he see +++ go away jogging + like*
- (8) *its when its me pinch bread*
- (9) *its go fast + running*
- (10) *and when its charlie coming as well*
- (11) *its like accident*
- (12) *its drop it on floor*
- (13) *its cakeman coming + bread*
- (14) *its another woman looking to that van*
- (15) *she say 'that girl is pinching bread'*
- (16) *its call police*
- (17) *police coming*
- (18) *and its going*
- (19) *cakeman said 'that girl is pinch my bread'*

Two things seem very clear. First, *its* is too frequent to be just random, and second, it cannot have the TL function of *it is*. It must have some learner

variety specific function. This function can perhaps be best paraphrased by 'it now happens that ...', or 'next, it happens that ...'. In other words, it roughly corresponds to *and then* often found in English personal narratives. The use of this construction in Ravinder's basic variety is very stable. As was said above, it is also found in other texts, such as conversations, but it is less frequent there, due to the fact that they include less coherent long narratives with clear sequences of events. Note that LV-specific device does not replace PNO but supports it. It is remarkable, and not easy to explain, that only Ravinder develops this device. We note in passing that *its* can be followed by  $V_0$  or by *Ving*, and there is apparently no systematic functional difference.

Ravinder's *its* illustrates 1 of the 2 (not mutually exclusive) ways in which learners can work on their basic variety (cf. section 3.2.3 above). They can enrich it by constructions which neither stem from source language nor target language and which serve specific functions which the learner, for whatever reason, considers to be important, and thus allow him or her to overcome certain communicative insufficiencies. The other way is to develop constructions which make it more similar to the target language. Ravinder also makes use of this second option. This becomes particularly manifest at the end of the second and throughout the third cycle in his liberal use of the copula/auxiliary. The result is often a complex verb form which looks surprisingly close to the Standard. But no less often, these attempts go astray. Here are some examples:

**Ravinder26:**

(1) *I'm go with him + you know*

This is to mean 'I will go with him' or 'I am going with him'.

**Ravinder26:**

(2) *I'm pass my test as well*

for 'I have passed my tests as well'. In Ravinder31, he answers the interlocutor's question 'Have you seen an accident?' by:

**Ravinder33:**

(1) *I'm seen only accident*

Apparently, he tries to produce - or imitate - the present perfect here.

**Ravinder35:**

(1) *I'm do it all the time same.*

This means 'I do it/did/am doing/was doing it always in the same way'.

As was said above, these attempts may also end up in seemingly correct forms:

**Ravinder36:**

(1) *I am already closing Sunday*

(2) *I am not working Saturday and monday.*

Both utterances are in the context of the planned wedding of his sister. In the context, he also uses two future forms which correspond to the Standard (*I'll go, I'll do*).

What these attempts give evidence of, is not so very much that Ravinder is indeed approaching the target language. It seems largely accidental whether they are correct or not. But they show that he feels that something is wrong with his variety, and that he should do something about it in order to become similar to the language of his social environment.

Such a feeling that somehow the input must be 'mimicked' may also be at the very heart of his and Madan's frequent use of the *ing-* form. They hear it all the time, and although it does not mean much to them, they feel that it somehow belongs to the language, and therefore should be used. This does not explain, on the other hand, why Italian learners do not feel this need, or do so to a lesser extent.

There is a final point in which Ravinder's further development differs from Madan's: With the exception of *tired* and *gone*, he does not regularly use past participles of the resultant state type. If this is indeed an influence of SL, then it does not apply to Ravinder.

Since this section already includes a comparison of Ravinder's and Madan's development, we shall not sum up the Punjabi learners but directly go to the summary of all learners.

### 3.4 Summary of TL-English

It may be worthwhile repeating that the data used here are rich, but still not sufficiently rich and often subject to interpretation. Within these limits, our findings can be condensed to four general conclusions:

- (A) All learners strive towards, and manage to develop, a **basic variety** with certain formal and functional characteristics. Since these characteristics were extensively described in the preceding sections (see especially 3.2.2), they will not be repeated here.
- (B) There is some learner-specific variation within the basic variety. This variation concerns, first, differences in lexical richness. Second, there is also some variation due to source language influence (mainly  $V_0$  for Italian learners, non-functional use of  $V_0$  and *Ving* by Punjabi learners). Third, learners may have different ways of 'stabilising' their basic variety (Ravinder's *its*).
- (C) Some learners fossilise their basic variety, others strive towards the Standard. Two causal factors seem to be operative here: **communicative efficiency**, and the social need to sound like the environment, which leads to **input mimicking** (cf. section 3.2.3). It appears that the latter cause is the stronger one. Communicative efficiency can also be improved by elaborating on the basic variety which, when used in a clever way, leads to very fluent and understandable texts. The fact that form often precedes function, cannot be explained by the tendency to make the language more functional, but reflects the wish to 'sound like the environment'.
- (D) It seems that the source language influence is minor. It does not affect the formation of a basic variety, although properties of the source language contribute to the variation within the basic variety. Moreover, they influence further development to some extent, but even here, the role of the source language is limited.

These four conclusions ignore a number of details and small exceptions. But all in all, they yield a surprisingly clear and consistent picture of the way in which learners learn to express temporality in an English-speaking environment.

## Notes

1. Since the texts, as well as a third retelling are analysed in Klein and Perdue 1992, we will not go into details here.
2. There are developments in other, non-temporal respects, which are not noted here.
3. As do Santo and Andrea. Andrea also attended ESL classes, but for a short time, and sporadically.
4. Especially for an Italian learner (Italian has no syllable-final consonant clusters).
5. Note, incidentally, that many languages, such as German, do not have aspectual differentiation, anyway.

6. With all caveats regarding statistics in this material, the following figures make the point clear. In Madan10 (after exactly the first half of the observation period), Madan retells the Chaplin film in altogether 310 utterances; of those, 40 have no verb (or copula) at all, 44 have an *-ing* form and the remaining 226 have either  $V_0$  or some other inflected form (is, gone, etc.). The very last encounter (cf. the selection Madan18.01 above) contains altogether 205 utterances: 36 have no verb (or copula), 25 have an *-ing* form, and the remaining 144 have  $V_0$  or some inflected form (other than *Ving*). These figures should not be overrated, since there are many problems of interpretation in the individual cases (e.g. utterance boundaries). But the overall picture is clear enough.
7. Huebner 1989, discusses and rejects the possibility that *coming* should be analysed *come+in*.
8. One might be tempted to interpret 3 as 'after going to the ...'. But this is not consistent with his general use of *after* in the sense of *later*, *afterwards*.

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