

The study

We investigate a possible L1-influence on the L2-acquisition of German PPs – complex phrases built from several functional categories, possibly involving various morpho-syntactic features. (► Panel 1)

To test these hypotheses, we conducted an empirical study with school children with Turkish and Italian L1. In contrast to German, Italian has no case marking in DPs (only on pronouns) and therefore neither case-government in the PP nor 2-way prepositions. Turkish uses either case-marking without overt Ps for ‘prepositional meaning’, or it employs postpositions with case-government. Turkish PPs do not have real determiners. (► Panel 2)

Based on these morphosyntactic differences, the following tendencies are expected given a L1-influence.

1. The Turkish subjects omit determiners and prepositions more frequently, postpone prepositions and have problems with respect to gender marking.
2. The subjects with Italian L1 are in contrast expected to have more difficulties with case marking.

The study consisted of four different tasks, involving (i) a ‘personal interview’ with questions to elicit PPs, (ii) the narration of a picture story, (iii) the description of pictures with various locative relations, (iv) the description of pictures requiring the 2-way prepositions *in* ‘in(to)’ and *auf* ‘on(to)’.

The tasks were conducted with four different subject groups. Two primary test groups of elementary school children (grade 1st-4th) with Turkish and Italian L1; and two German-L1 control groups: one of the same age as the test groups, and a younger group. (► Panel 3)

We extracted a total of 3.438 PPs from the data (T: 1.749; I: 686; G1: 1198; G2: 295). As expected, the L2ers are less proficient than the German control groups. (► Panel 4, Tab. 1)

The data does not support an influence of L1. Even if the Turkish L1ers omit D and P more often and make more errors with respect to gender, the differences to the Italian L1ers are not significant. The Italian speakers do not make significantly more errors in case marking. (► Panel 4, Tab. 2-4)

Surprisingly, we could not attest any postponed preposition. This can be explained by a harmony principle on head parameters, as the FOFC of Biberauer et al. (► Panel 5)

An additional outcome of our study is that across all subject groups, the order of acquisition does not concur to the hierarchical ordering of the functional projections, since the higher PathPs are less error-prone than the lower PlacePs. (► Panel 4, Tab. 2-4)

1 The PP in German

(1) PP → [P [XP]] XP ∈ {DP, AP, AdvP, PP, CP}
 ► DP is prototypical

- P assigns case to DP; case concord at D and N (and A).
- N has inherent grammatical gender; D (A) mark it.

(2) [PP mit [DP d.em rot-en Fahrrad]]
with the.DAT.NEUT red-DAT.NEUT bike.DAT.NEUT

- Locative 2-way prepositions govern either DAT or ACC
 ► Case effects meaning.

(3) Sophie reist [PP in [DP die/der Schweiz]]
Sophie travels in the.ACC/DAT Switzerland
 “Sophie travels to/in Switzerland”

- PPs have two functional projections for PATH and PLACE.

(4) [PathP directly [from [PlaceP six feet [under [DP the table]]]]]

- At least 3 functional categories to be learnt.

2 Comparison

	German	Italian	Turkish
gender	3	2	X
case	4	X	6
articles DEF	6 forms	6 forms	X
INDEF	6 forms	3 forms	(1 invariant form)
position of P	P DP	P DP	DP P
overt P	✓	✓	partly
case government	✓	X	✓
2-way Ps	✓	X	✓

3 Subjects

L1	n	1st gr.		2st gr.		3st gr.		4st gr.	
		∅	σ	∅	σ	∅	σ	∅	σ
Turkish	40	7;7	2,5	8;7	2,5	10;1	10,0	10;9	3,3
Italian	16	7;7	2,5	8;7	2,5	10;1	10,0	10;9	3,3
German	16	7;5	2,2	8;6	2,4	9;7	2,8	10;3	3,6
kindergarten									
		∅	σ						
German	8	4;0	6,9						

Selected references



Gutzmann, D. & K. Turgay (2011): Funktionale Kategorien in der PP und deren Zweitspracherwerb. *Zeitschrift für Sprachwissenschaft* 30.2, 169–221. doi: 10.1515/ZFSW.2011.008.



Turgay, K. (2010): The German Prepositional Phrase in Second Language Acquisition. A Research Report. Ms.

Biberauer, T. & A. Holmberg & I. Roberts (2010): A syntactic universal and its consequences. Ms.

4 Results

	Germ. I	Germ. II	Ital.	Turkish
case	94,0 %	86,7 %	59,3 %	65,5 %
D° occurrence	95,5 %	93,6 %	84,3 %	77,5 %
P° occurrence	97,2 %	98,6 %	91,5 %	89,8 %
P° choice	98,6 %	96,9 %	76,6 %	74,9 %
overall	86,8 %	77,3 %	34,4 %	36,8 %

Table 1: Overall Correctness by features

		fixed case	2-way case
German I	PathPs	100 %	97,1 %
	PlacePs	92,1 %	91,2 %
German II	PathPs	100 %	93,1 %
	PlacePs	84,6 %	81,4 %
Italian	PathPs	92,9 %	81,1 %
	PlacePs	50,0 %	46,7 %
Turkish	PathPs	95,5 %	88,3 %
	PlacePs	65,2 %	55,4 %

Table 2: Correct case marking (only DPs with D counted)

		fixed case	2-way case
German I	PathPs	1,3 %	4,8 %
	PlacePs	0 %	5,4 %
German II	PathPs	3,4 %	6,1 %
	PlacePs	7,7 %	6,3 %
Italian	PathPs	22,4 %	12,7 %
	PlacePs	60,0 %	15,2 %
Turkish	PathPs	17,1 %	20,7 %
	PlacePs	12,5 %	22,8 %

Table 3: Omissions of D°

		fixed case	2-way case
German I	PathPs	6,5 %	2,8 %
	PlacePs	8,3 %	1,0 %
German II	PathPs	2,8 %	1,7 %
	PlacePs	0 %	0,8 %
Italian	PathPs	19,4 %	2,5 %
	PlacePs	25,0 %	9,1 %
Turkish	PathPs	15,1 %	9,0 %
	PlacePs	22,2 %	8,4 %

Table 4: Omissions of P°

5 FOFC

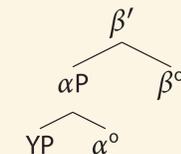
(5) Final-over-Final-Constraint

- If α is a head-initial phrase and β is a phrase immediately dominating α , then β must be head-initial.
- If α is a head-final phrase, and β is a phrase immediately dominating α , then β can be head-initial or head-final.

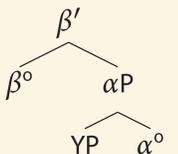
- Since the DP is head-initial in German and already acquired by the Turkish L2ers, postponing the P would lead to an unharmonic final-over-initial structure.

(7) *[PP [DP [D° dem] Fahrrad] [P° mit]]

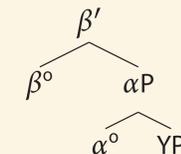
(6) a. final – final:



c. initial – final:



b. initial – initial:



d. *final – initial:

