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Published in:
Second Language Research

DOI:
[10.1177/026765839501100208](https://doi.org/10.1177/026765839501100208)

Publication date:
1995

[Link to publication in Tilburg University Research Portal](#)

Citation for published version (APA):
Broeder, P. (1995). Acquisition of pronominal reference: A longitudinal perspective. *Second Language Research*, 11(2), 178-191. <https://doi.org/10.1177/026765839501100208>

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Acquisition of pronominal reference: a longitudinal perspective

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This article is based on a large corpus of data collected as part of the European Science Foundation Project on Second Language Acquisition by Adult Immigrants (Perdue, 1984; 1993). In this study, some empirical observations are discussed from a follow-up on the ESF project. This follow-up study dealt with the conceptual domain of people (Broeder, 1991; 1992). Mostly, the encoding of reference to people is done through nouns and pronouns. Nominal reference involves a set of proper names and more or less complex noun phrases (e.g. Ahmet, my brother, my neighbour's sister). Pronominal reference is based on an exhaustive list of frequently used and predominantly monosyllabic words (e.g., I, you, he, etc.). Learners necessarily have to use a restricted set of nouns and pronouns as efficiently as possible in daily interactions with native speakers. This study examines the acquisition of pronouns. The relevant questions are: how do people start out encoding pronominal reference, how does their repertoire of pronouns develop and why do they make the choices they make?

I Pronominal reference

Pronominal reference is a promising topic for developmental crosslinguistic research. In many languages the pronoun system constitutes a delimited and fixed set of referential devices, which are essentially the same for all speakers of a particular language. Moreover, pronouns occur frequently and can be identified rather easily in language data. The following distinctions are lexicalized in the Dutch pronoun system (see Broeder, 1991: 26–36, for a detailed description):

<i>Person</i>	Dutch distinguishes between 1st, 2nd and 3rd persons;
<i>Case</i>	Dutch distinguishes between subject pronouns, object pronouns and possessive pronouns;

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<i>Number</i>	Dutch distinguishes between singular pronouns and plural pronouns;
<i>Status</i>	In the 2nd person, Dutch distinguishes between formal and informal pronouns;
<i>Gender</i>	In the 3rd person, Dutch distinguishes between male and female pronouns.

The learner's task is to discover the forms/functions within the target pronoun system on each of the lexicalized distinctions. The intriguing question is which forms and functions they will begin with and why. In Broeder (1991: 43–125) the Dutch learner varieties of four Turkish and four Moroccan informants were analysed: there were 27 sessions per informant, each session lasting 1½ hours (n total = $8 \times 27 = 216$ sessions and 828 372 word tokens).

On the basis of a typological comparison of the Dutch, Turkish and Moroccan-Arabic pronoun systems, the following areas for L1 transfer were identified: case and status distinctions in Dutch were expected to be easier, for L2 learners with Turkish as their source language, than for those with Moroccan-Arabic as their source language. In contrast, gender distinctions in Dutch were expected to be easier for Moroccan adults. It turned out that the developmental set of personal and possessive pronouns in Dutch constituted a fairly homogeneous subset in the learner variety which were not easily penetrated by properties of the source system. In the Dutch learner varieties of the Turkish and Moroccan adults, striking coherent developmental patterns could be observed. The acquisition orders evidenced for 1st person, 2nd person and 3rd person reference is summarized in Table 1 (cf. Broeder, 1991: 177).

Table 1 Order of acquisition of pronouns

1st person	ik → mijn → mij → wij → on(s/ze)	(I-my-me-we-us/our)
2nd person	jij → jullie → jou(w) \ → jou(w) → jullie	(you-you/your)
3rd person	hij → zij → hun	(he-she-their/them)

Besides these similarities a number of unexpected differences between the adult learners emerge. The remainder of this study focuses on Fatima, a Moroccan woman. For Fatima some intriguing observations can be made in the process of acquiring the Dutch pronoun system.

II Fatima

1 Database

a Sociobiographical profile: In Kenitra, a town in western Morocco, Fatima attended primary school for only two years, after which she received sewing and knitting lessons. For some years she was a successful seamstress. She had a little shop and taught other women. At the age of 24 she married a Moroccan who had been living in The Netherlands for 12 years. She joined him in Tilburg. At the time of the first encounter in the ESF project, Fatima had been living in The Netherlands for one year and her proficiency in Dutch was almost zero, although she had taken part in a voluntary training course for migrant women for two hours a week, and continued to do so. This was a very basic course and had a primarily social function. She had a part-time job as a cleaning woman in the kitchen of a motel with other Moroccan and Turkish women. Her contacts with native speakers of Dutch were very limited, except for a short period at the end of the first year of her stay in The Netherlands when her husband was abroad. Her son was born when she had been in The Netherlands for two years.

b Language activities: The data collection took place over a period of 27 months starting in September 1982 and ending in December 1984. Apart from summer holidays and other interruptions, there were regular intervals of 25–35 days between each moment of data collection, resulting in 27 two-hour sessions per informant. The first session was held 12 months after their arrival in The Netherlands. In the sessions a variety of language activities took place which varied in the degree of control (cf. Perdue, 1984: 174–78). The basic types of language activity are as follows:

- Free conversation marked by loosely structured dyadic interactions between an informant and a native speaker of Dutch.
- Play scenes were prestructured formal interactions in which the informant was asked to play a specific role, such as applying for a job, or asking for a house.
- Film scenes consisted of retelling/commenting on several video-clips derived from silent movies (i.e., Charlie Chaplin movies).

The data collection was cyclically organized: the 27 sessions were divided into three cycles of nine sessions each. Therefore Fatima could be observed three times in the same language-use situation. A detailed description of the ESF database, sociobiographical profiles of informants, the language activities and the data collection is given in Broeder (1991: 12–21).

2 Method

The data collected for Fatima consisted of 76 596 words, i.e., 31 952 words used by Fatima and 44 644 words used by Dutch native speakers. For each of the 1738 personal pronouns used by Fatima the form-function relation was established. This means that for each pronoun the following aspects are taken into account in the analysis:

- The hypothesized learner meaning; the referential intention with which Fatima uses a pronoun. As a result each form-function relation can be operationalized with respect to the pronominal distinctions involved in terms of standard-like use of a pronoun (i.e., normatively according to the use of the target language by native speakers) vs. generalized use of a pronoun (i.e., a different use compared to native use).
- The context of distribution; whether or not the use of a pronoun is restricted to specific context(s), e.g., only in combination with specific words.
- The consistency of use; generalized use of a pronoun (e.g., 'he' for male as well as female referents) alongside the standard-like form (e.g., 'she').
- The productivity of use; to distinguish between sporadic use of a pronoun (which are sometimes just slips of the tongue) and systematic use of a pronoun.

3 Pronoun profile

In this section, an overview is presented of the form-function relationships found in Fatima's Dutch. Most of the tables are self-explanatory. They display the acquisition of the pronouns for 1st, 2nd and 3rd person reference. Important and typical instances as well as peculiar and deviant ones are illustrated through sequences derived from the relevant sessions with Fatima.

a 1st person reference: The pronominal form-functions for 1st person reference occurring in the 27 sessions which took place with Fatima are given in Table 2.

1st person singular In subject function the subject pronouns *ik* ('I') and *ikke* ('I') are used as early as the first sessions. In object function the object pronoun *mij* ('me') is used from session 5 onwards. An example is given in sequence (1):

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Table 2 Pronominal 1st person reference by Fatima

<i>Cycle 1</i>	s1	s2	s3	s4	s5	s6	s7	s8	s9	Total	English
Subject:											
Sg: ik	12	6	79	13	23	35	49	42	26	285	I
ikke	—	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	I
Pl: jullie (= wij)	1	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	—	3	you (= we)
Object:											
Sg: mij	—	—	—	—	1	4	3	—	1	9	me
ik (= mij)	—	—	1	—	—	—	1	—	—	2	I (= me)
Possessive:											
Sg: mijn X	—	3	—	1	18	5	1	17	10	55	my X
ik mijn X	2	—	4	—	2	—	—	1	1	10	I my X
X van mijn X	—	—	—	—	5	—	—	—	—	5	X of my X
mij X (= mijn)	—	—	6	—	—	2	5	2	5	20	me X (= my)
ik mij X	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	1	—	2	I me X
X mij	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	X me
van mijn (= mij)	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	1	of my
jouw X (= mijn X)	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	—	1	3	your X (= my)
<i>Cycle 2</i>	s10	s11	s12	s13	s14	s15	s16	s17	s18	Total	English
Subject:											
Sg: ik	8	15	33	59	23	48	33	68	43	330	I
ikke	1	1	1	2	—	—	—	4	—	9	I
Pl: wij	2	2	1	—	—	—	—	1	—	6	we
Object:											
Sg: mij	1	—	1	3	2	7	7	6	6	33	me
ik (= mij)	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	—	—	2	I (= me)
Possessive:											
Sg: mijn X	2	—	6	27	6	3	6	2	2	54	my X
X van mijn X	—	—	—	3	—	—	1	—	—	4	X of my X
mij X (= mijn)	—	—	2	—	—	—	5	2	—	9	me X (= my)
X van mij X	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	1	X of me X
jouw X (= mijn)	—	—	1	3	2	—	—	1	—	7	your X (= my)
<i>Cycle 3</i>	s19	s20	s21	s22	s23	s24	s25	s26	s27	Total	English
Subject:											
Sg: ik	31	61	27	77	17	41	46	59	36	395	I
ikke	9	1	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	11	I
Pl: wij	—	—	—	—	—	4	2	—	1	7	we
Object:											
Sg: mij	1	2	1	—	4	6	2	10	3	29	me
Pl: ons	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	2	4	us
Possessive:											
Sg: mijn X	7	8	—	3	3	16	3	2	3	45	my X
mij X (= mijn)	—	8	4	1	—	1	—	—	1	15	me X (= my)
X van mij X	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	X of me X

1) N:	'n flat	A flat.
FAT:	Ja.	Yes.
N:	Voor zeshonderd gulden + daar kan ik misschien over drie maanden aankomen.	For six hundred guilders + I may be able to get that (for you) in three months.
FAT:	Zestien guld?	Sixteen guild?
N:	Voor zeshonderd gulden.	For six hundred guilders.
FAT:	Nee + veel voor mij.	No + a lot for me.
- (session 7)

There are a number of instances in which Fatima generalizes the subject pronoun *ik* ('I') in object function (see sequences 2 and 3 for some examples):

2) FAT:	Afspraak ik makkelijk.	Appointment I easy.
- (session 7)
-
3) FAT:	Haar man	Her husband
N:	Ja.	Yes.
FAT:	doen voor ik + broer zus alles.	do for I + brother sister everything.
N:	Oja.	Really.
FAT:	Mij vader niet doen.	Me father do not.
- (session 16)

In possessive function Fatima most commonly uses the possessive pronoun *mijn* ('my'). The object pronoun *mij* ('me') is regularly generalized in possessive function (see sequences 4 and 5):

4) FAT:	Mij man woon die breda.	Me husband lives that breda.
- (session 6)
-
5) FAT:	Maar moeilijk voor uh mij zoon.	But difficult for er me son.
- (session 24)

Fatima sometimes uses the pronouns *ik* ('I') and *mijn* ('my') together for expressing possession. Some examples are given in sequences (6) and (7):

6) FAT:	Ik mijn vriend	I my friend
N:	Ja.	Yes.
FAT:	hier werken.	work here.
- (session 3)
-
7) FAT:	Die altijd ziek. Niet goed.	That always ill. Not good.
	Ik mijn vader ook uh veel *cigare*.	I my father also er much *cigars*.
- (session 5)

Such adjacent pairs are only found in cycle 1. Moreover, the forms *ik* ('I') and *mijn* ('my') are used adjacently to *man* ('husband'), *vader* ('father'), *vriend* ('friend') and *broer* ('brother'), which are all kinship/friendship terms. It is a reasonable conjecture that these pairs concern 'unanalysed wholes' (formulaic expressions).

Fatima also generalizes the 2nd person pronoun *jouw* ('your') for 1st person possessive reference. The occurrences are mostly the result of immediate repeats of a preceding N-utterance (see sequence 8):

8) FAT:	Mijn familie niet goed.	My family not good.
N:	Jouw familie niet?	Your family not?
FAT:	Ja jouw familie niet.	Yes your family not.
- (session 7)

However, also nonrepeated occurrences of pronoun reversal with *jouw* ('your') can be noted (see sequence 9):

9) N:	Ze werken niet in marokko?	They do not work in morocco?
FAT:	Nee moet ik hier uh jouw man hier ander twee uh kinder hier. Twee niet goed	No do I have to here er your husband here other two er kids here. Two not good.
- (session 9)

The generalized use of *jouw* ('your') for 1st person reference can only be observed in cycles 1 and 2.

1st person plural For plural references in subject function, Fatima uses the subject pronoun *wij* ('we') in cycles 2 and 3. This standard-like use is preceded in cycle 1 by a generalized use of the 2nd person plural pronoun *jullie* ('you'):

10) FAT:	Jullie [ruzie maak]	You [fight]
N:	[ja in Marokko] ja + wij.	[yes in Morocco] yes + we.
FAT:	Jij uh veel geld. Ik kan niet. Ik moet naar politie.	You er a lot of money. I cannot. I must go to police.
	...	
FAT:	Jij geld met uh politie of uh die/jullie zeg met uh *qadi*.	You money with er police or er that/ you call it er *judge*.
N:	Rechter/[n rechter]	Judge [a judge]
FAT:	[*wakil d-ula*] ja.	[*counsel for the prosecution*] yes.
- (session 7)

In object function the pronoun *ons* ('us') can be observed in cycle 3. This form is always used after the preposition *bij* ('at'):

- 11) N: Maar dit doen wij als je weggaat.
(gebaart) But this is what we do when you leave.
(gestures)
FAT: Nee bij ons zo. (gebaart) No with us like this. (gestures)
(session 26)

b 2nd person reference: The form-function relationships of the pronouns which Fatima used for 2nd person reference are given in Table 3.

Table 3 Pronominal 2nd person reference by Fatima

Cycle 1		s1	s2	s3	s4	s5	s6	s7	s8	s9	Total	English
Subject												
Sg:	jij	3	—	7	1	5	3	27	12	—	58	you
Pl:	jullie	—	—	—	—	2	—	1	—	—	3	you
Object:												
Sg:	jij(= jou)	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	1	you
	jou	—	—	—	—	—	—	3	—	—	3	you
Pl:	jullie	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	2	you
Cycle 2		s10	s11	s12	s13	s14	s15	s16	s17	s18	Total	English
Subject:												
Sg:	jij	3	4	6	4	2	5	9	12	5	50	you
	je	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	1	you
Pl:	jullie	1	—	1	1	—	—	—	—	1	4	you
Object:												
Sg:	jou	1	—	—	—	—	2	—	1	—	4	you
	jij (= jou)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	2	you
Possessive:												
Sg:	jouw X	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	1	—	2	your X
Cycle 3		s19	s20	s21	s22	s23	s24	s25	s26	s27	Total	English
Subject:												
Sg:	jij	2	5	5	7	5	4	1	19	—	48	you
Pl:	jullie	2	—	4	2	—	1	1	2	12	you	
Object												
Sg:	jou	1	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	1	3	you
	jij (= jou)	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	1	you
Pl:	jullie	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	2	you
Possessive												
Sg:	jouw X	—	2	2	—	2	1	—	1	—	8	your X

2nd person singular In subject function the full pronoun *jij* ('you') is used regularly from session 1 onwards. In session 13 the reduced pronoun *je* ('you') occurs in the formulaic expression *dankjewel* ('thank you').

In object function the standard-like use of the object pronoun *jou* ('you') can be observed regularly (see sequence 12):

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12) FAT:	Jij zien die huis misschien
goed voor jou of niet. | You see that house maybe good
for you or not. | (session 7) |
|----------|---|--|-------------|

However, Fatima also generalizes the subject pronoun *jij* ('you') in object function (see sequence 13):

13) FAT:	Zeg van charlo 'Ik uh + heeft
uh goeie praat voor jij. | Say about charlo 'I er + has er
good talk for you'. | (session 18) |
|----------|---|--|--------------|

In possessive function the possessive pronoun *jouw* ('your') is used regularly from session 14 onwards. Sequence (14) gives an example of this standard-like use:

14) FAT:	Mij broer ook heeft 'n dochter.	Me brother also has a daughter	
N:	Ja.	Yes.	
FAT:	Jouw haar/zelf jouw haar.	Your hair/same your hair.	(session 20)

2nd person plural For plural reference Fatima uses the pronoun *jullie* ('you') in subject function regularly from session 5 onwards (see sequence 15). A few times this form is also used in object function (see sequence 16):

15) FAT:	Jullie heeft uh bus?	You have er bus?	(session 12)
16) FAT:	Niet allemaal mensen ook
naar met uh kerk uh bij jullie
niet vijf dag met kerk.	Not all people also to with er
church er with you not five day
with church.	(session 8)

c 3rd person reference: The form-function relationships of the pronouns used by Fatima for 3rd role reference are given in Table 4.

3rd role singular In subject function Fatima does not use the subject pronouns *hij* ('he') and *zij* ('she') until relatively late. Gender generalizations only concern the masculine pronoun *hij* ('he'). An example is given in sequence (17):

17) FAT:	Ja maaiké zeg uh/ uh/ + 'Ik
komt uh ++'. Hij zegt 'Ik
kom tilburg'. | Yes maaiké say er/ er/ + 'I come er
++'. He says 'I come tilburg'. | (session 11) |
|----------|---|---|--------------|

Table 4 Pronominal 3rd role reference by Fatima

Cycle 1		s1	s2	s3	s4	s5	s6	s7	s8	s9	Total	English
Subject												
Sg:	hij	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	he
Possessive:												
Sg:	haar X	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	her X
	jouw X (= zijn)	—	—	—	—	—	3	—	—	—	3	your X (= his)
	jouw X (= haar)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	your X (= her)
Pl:	haar X (= hun)	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	1	her X (= their)
Cycle 2		s10	s11	s12	s13	s14	s15	s16	s17	s18	Total	English
Subject:												
Sg:	hij	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	1	2	he
	zij	—	—	—	2	—	—	—	1	—	3	she
	hij (= zij)	—	1	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	2	he (= she)
	haar (= zij)	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	1	her (= she)
Pl:	jullie (= zij)	—	3	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	4	you (= they)
Possessive:												
Sg:	haar X	—	1	—	5	1	3	4	4	1	19	her X
	haar X (= zijn)	—	—	3	—	—	—	—	—	2	5	her X (= his)
	jouw X (= zijn)	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	your X (= his)
	jouw X (= haar)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	1	your X (= her)
Cycle 3		s19	s20	s21	s22	s23	s24	s25	s26	s27	Total	English
Subject:												
Sg:	hij	—	2	9	4	1	29	2	4	27	78	he
	zij	—	—	1	—	—	1	—	1	3	6	she
	hij (= zij)	—	—	—	3	1	—	—	7	4	15	he (= she)
Pl:	jullie (= zij)	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	4	5	you (= they)
Object:												
Sg:	hem	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	him
	hij (= hem)	—	3	1	1	1	1	—	—	3	10	he (= him)
	haar	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	1	her
	zij (= haar)	—	—	—	1	—	2	—	—	—	3	she (= her)
	hij (= haar)	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	1	he (= her)
Pl:	hun	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	1	their
Possessive:												
Sg:	hij X (= zijn)	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	he X (= his)
	X van hij	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	X of he
	haar X	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	1	her X
	haar X (= zijn)	—	1	2	—	—	1	—	—	—	4	her X (= his)
	jouw X (= zijn)	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	1	your X (= his)
	jouw X (= haar)	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	1	your X (= her)

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In object function, pronouns are used just as late as in cycle 3. The object forms *hem* ('him') and *haar* ('her') both occur only once. The subject forms *hij* ('he') and *zij* ('she') are especially generalized in object function (see sequences 18 and 19):

18) FAT:	Ik zeg voor hij 'Die melk ander'.	I say for he 'That milk other'.	(session 22)
19) FAT:	Ja die uh + buurvrouw.	Yes that er + woman nextdoor.	
N:	Ja.	Yes.	
FAT:	Nou die brief kom voor haar/ voor zij.	Now that letter come for her/ for she.	(session 24)

In possessive function, Fatima's use of the feminine form *haar* ('her') is striking. This form appears early, even before the subject form *zij* ('she'), and it occurs relatively often. Several times Fatima generalizes the pronoun *haar* ('her') by using it to refer to a man as possessor. Examples of this use are given in the following sequences:

20) FAT:	Ja die vader ook boos met uh + haar jongen.	Yes that father also angry with er + her boy.	(session 12)
21) FAT:	Die man uh	That man er	
N:	Ja?	Yes?	
FAT:	auto kocht. Nou haar vrouw uh kom.	bought car. Now her wife er come.	(session 18)

The masculine form *zijn* ('his'), however, does not occur in any of the 27 sessions. Only the subject form *hij* ('he') is generalized in possessive function (see sequence 22):

22) FAT:	Hij vader zeg voor uh ++ zoon 'Jij morgen'.	He father say for er ++ son 'You tomorrow'.	
N:	'Niet fietsen.'	'Not cycle.'	
FAT:	'Niet fietsen.'	'Not cycle.'	(session 21)

Finally, also the 2nd role pronoun *jouw* ('your') is used regularly for 3rd role reference in possessive function.

3rd role plural Fatima occasionally generalizes the 2nd role pronoun *jullie* ('you') for plural reference in subject function. In object function the form *hun* ('them') can be found once:

- 23) FAT: Ik uh hun bel van marokko. I er them phone from morocco.
(session 23)

In possessive function the form *haar* ('her') is used for plural reference. This form is used remarkably early (as early as session 5):

- 24) FAT: Die mensen veel geldΛ Those people much moneyΛ buy
koopt van uh + haar kinder. of er + her children.
(session 5)

4 Conclusion

From the pronoun profile presented for Fatima it is possible to make a more or less accurate judgement about the time at which a specific pronoun is acquired. On the whole this reveals that from the moment a pronoun is used in a standard way it has also been acquired. In other words, the order of acquisition can be derived from the moment of the first standard-like and nonformulaic appearance of a pronoun. The observed order of pronoun acquisition for Fatima is given in Table 5.

Table 5 Order of acquisition 1st, 2nd and 3rd person pronouns for Fatima

	1st	2nd role	3rd role
s1	ik	—	—
s1	—	jij	—
s2	mijn	—	—
s5	mij	—	—
s5	—	jullie (s)	—
s7	—	jou	—
s8	—	jullie (o)	—
s9	—	—	hij
	—	—	haar (p)
s10	wij	—	—
s13	—	—	zij (sg)
s14	—	jouw	—
s19	ons (o)	—	—
s20	—	—	hem
s23	—	—	hun (o)
s24	—	—	haar (o)

a 1st and 2nd person reference: Fatima starts with the basic pronouns *ik* ('I') and *jij* ('you') for 1st and 2nd person reference respectively, and regularly generalizes these subject pronouns in nonsubject function, even after the moment at which the standard object/possessive forms can be observed. It is worth noting that Fatima in the first cycle regularly uses the possessive construction '*ik-mijn-N*' ('I-my-N').

After acquisition of the basic subject pronouns, a differentiation on the case distinction can be observed. For 1st person reference this means that subsequently object and possessive forms are acquired, i.e., *mijn* ('my') and *mij* ('me'), respectively. In contrast, for 2nd person reference the case differentiation is only reflected in the generalized use of the subject pronoun (*jij* 'you') in nonsubject function.

Next, a differentiation of the number distinction can be observed. For 2nd person reference Fatima acquires the plural subject form *jullie* ('you'). However, Fatima does not complete the number differentiation by acquiring the plural form *wij* ('we'). In contrast, she starts working on the case distinction for 2nd person reference, i.e., *jou* ('you') and *jullie* ('you') in object function. Interestingly, it is exactly during this phase that she generalizes the 2nd person forms *jullie* ('you') and *jouw* ('your') for 1st person reference. The latter conclusion can be derived from a comparison of Tables 2 and 3.

Finally, Fatima acquires the plural form *wij* ('we'). She seems to work on the case distinction: first for 2nd person reference, i.e., *jouw* ('your'), next for 1st person reference, i.e., *ons* ('us'). In this phase Fatima acquires the plural subject form *wij* ('we'). Remarkably enough, she no longer generalizes the 2nd person pronoun *jullie* ('you') for 1st person reference, but for 3rd person reference.

b 3rd person reference: With Fatima only 3rd person pronouns, i.e., *hij* ('he') and *haar* ('her'), can be observed after she has acquired most of the forms for 1st and 2nd person reference. Fatima appears to use the homonym form *zij* ('she'/'they') exclusively for feminine reference. This form is never used by her for plural reference.

III Discussion

The study presented a longitudinal perspective on developing learner varieties in adult untutored language acquisition. During the early stages of language acquisition, learner varieties necessarily consist of a restricted set of linguistic devices which learners have to use as efficiently as possible in daily interactions with native speakers of the target language.

In the acquisition of Dutch pronouns by Turkish and Moroccan adults, similar preferences and developmental patterns emerge. Nevertheless, the pronominal preferences of Fatima illustrate that the variety of the target language used by the individual learner is dynamic and unique. This is reflected in the systematics of form-

function relationships. In subsequent acquisitional stages, fairly unexpected usage of pronouns shows how Fatima is involved in a process of dynamic (re)construction based on a continuous formulation and revision of hypotheses about the structure of the target language.

Acknowledgement

The research for this study was supported by the European Science Foundation (Strasbourg, France), and the Foundation for Linguistic Research, which is funded by The Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (NWO).

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