L2-Learner Varieties by Moroccan Adolescents in French and Dutch

Petra Bos
Free University Amsterdam

1. Introduction

In earlier work on second language acquisition by adults, Klein & Perdue (1997) have shown that L2-learners tend to create their own language system. They do this, not only by trying to follow the grammatical rules of the L2, but also by imposing on their new language system a number of constraints. If the learners do not violate these constraints, chances are that their utterances will be correct and will be understood. Klein & Perdue (1997) call the 'interlanguage' that the learners create in this way The Basic Variety. In their study, usually referred to as the ESF-project (European Science Foundation), they based their results on language production data from 40 adult learners of Dutch, English, French, German and Swedish (Klein & Perdue, 1992). They all were in daily contact with the language of their new social environment but they did not receive any second language training in or outside a classroom.

The speakers of the Basic Variety are recognizable as non-native speakers rather easily because these constraints can be violated without any problem in the target language. The Basic Variety is simply a reflection of the most frequently used utterance structures and organizational principles. Hence, they use a restricted system that is recognizable right away as that of a non-native speaker of the language in question. On the basis of the analyzed utterances of the ESF-database, Klein & Perdue defined three types of self-imposed constraints: "*phrasal constraints* which define the patterns in which lexemes may occur, *semantic constraints* which attribute arguments to particular positions and *pragmatic constraints* which organize information in connected discourse" (Jordens, 1997:292).

In this paper it is investigated if other groups of L2-learners also show fossilization-features. I looked at Moroccan-Arabic speaking learners of Dutch and French as a second language. There were three groups: 12-16 year old learners of L2-French (early years of secondary education), 16-20 year old learners of L2-Dutch (later years of secondary education) and 20-25 year old learners of L2-Dutch (university students). All these learners have a higher education than the informants of the ESF-database. Two of these groups learned their second language without any formal training and the third group followed an intensive one-year course in Dutch as a second language. The data consist of grammaticality judgments in the L2 of the learners and of picture description and film fragment description.

The theoretical starting point of investigating these constraints is the idea of modular linguistics. According to this approach language consists of a number of modules (such as phonology, syntax, semantics, pragmatics). Not all modules are acquired simultaneously, nor do they all have the same status: some are language specific (e.g. semantics) and others are believed to be universal (e.g. pragmatics). In this paper I focus on the semantic constraints (which are about argument structure, what I would call pragmatics) as formulated by Klein & Perdue (1992) because they offer an interesting opportunity to investigate what happens at the interface of the modules syntax and pragmatics: the syntax of the L2 says it is no problem to violate these constraints but pragmatics tells the L2-learner it is wiser to not violate the constraint. However, if we assume that the learner wants to acquire the language to a level that is comparable to that of a native speaker, (s)he will somehow have to overcome this collision. That is the moment that acquisition could take place and therefore it is also the focus of this paper.

1.1 The semantic constraints of the basic variety

In this study I am mainly interested in the so-called semantic constraints. These constraints all have to do with argument structure and the way this is organized in the speech of L2-learners, has to do with the notion of *control.* In natural speech usually the NP that has control, is placed at the beginning of the sentence. However, this is not necessarily always the case. The first constraint is described as follows:

I The NP-referent with highest control comes first

The NP with highest control can be seen as "the one who performs an action, is able to perform an action, wants to perform an action, et cetera, usually a human being or something animate" (Perdue, p.c.). Examples of English sentences that do not violate constraint I are simple sentences with a canonical word order:

(1)   the boy breaks the glass
(2)   the coach threw the soccer player out of the team

Violations of this constraint are usually somehow marked sentences: a sentence in which the NP-referent at the beginning of the sentence is not the controller of the action. The first thing that comes to mind, are passive sentences, such as:

(3)   the glass is being broken by the boy
(4)   the soccer player was thrown out of the team by the coach

Furthermore, we could think of sentences with so-called 'psych verbs'. In these sentences the only animate NP is not the controller of an action, because there is no real action in the sentence. These also are violations of constraint I:

(5)   this idea really shocked me
(6)   the new house pleases me very much

In examples (5) and (6), 'me' is the only animate NP, but can certainly not be seen as an actor in either one of these sentences. But also sentences in which there is no controller at all, are typically utterances that were not found in the ESF-database, because they were violations of semantic constraint I, for example:

(7)   this car drives nicely
(8)   this computer works very fast
(9)   these shoes walk very comfortably
(10)   these potatoes peel easily

Although these sentences may not all be grammatically correct in English, their Dutch equivalents are. In these sentences, the actual actors/ controllers are not mentioned. Respectively, they are: the driver of the car, the person working at the computer, the person wearing the shoes and the person peeling the potatoes. These types of sentences were also not found in the L2-utterances in the ESF-database. They too are violations of semantic constraint I.

The second semantic constraint is closely related to the first one. When there are two or more NP-referents in a sentence that could be an actor (for instance, two human beings, as in examples (2) and (4)), a further constraint has to be defined. This constraint has to do with 'source state' and 'target state'. In the source state, one NP has control and in the target state the other NP has control. Learners tend to always follow the principle of natural order: what comes first is mentioned first. Thus, the learners will mention the source state before they mention the target state. The following constraint was observed:

II Controller of source state outweighs controller of target state

Examples of sentences that do not violate constraint II are:

(11)   the man gives flowers to his sister
(12)   the woman sends a letter to the board of directors

If the 'receiving party' is put at the beginning of the sentence, this is a violation of the second semantic constraint:

(13)   the woman got flowers (from her brother)
(14)   the board of directors received a letter (from the woman)

Sentences like (13) and (14) were not found in the ESF-database, neither with nor without mentioning the source states, such as 'from her brother' and 'from the woman'.

The third constraint has to do with sentences in which a theme undergoes a movement from a source to a target. These are sentences with verbs of causative motion, such as *to give* and *to put*. Also here, the source state is mentioned first. Therefore, the third constraint that was observed, is:

III theme before relatum in target position

Examples of sentences in which this constraint is not violated, are:

(15)   he threw the roses to the queen
(16)   I put the book on the table

In these sentences, 'roses' and 'book' are the themes that undergo an action from a source state ('with him' and 'with me') to a target state ('to the queen' and 'on the table'). Also, the sentences contain verbs of causative motion ('throw' and 'put'). Violations of these constraints look like this:

(17)   to the queen he threw the roses
(18)   on the table I put the book

These types of sentences were not found in the ESF-database. Bierwisch (1997:355) argues that this constraint "can obviously be generalized to verbs of position, to prepositions and it is not restricted to target position" and therefore sentences like *on the table is a book* and *the box contains three apples* are also violations "that cannot easily be dismissed from the BV as marginal". However, Klein and Perdue clearly stated that semantic constraint III was only observed for sentences with verbs of causative motion. Klein and Perdue never pretended to formulate predictors for other cases than those that were observed in the ESF-database, nor did they ever state that their constraints could be generalized to other cases. They studied the utterances of these 40 learners and described the organizational principles they all adhered to. Therefore I will only consider sentences like examples 17-18 as real violations of semantic constraint III.

Most of the utterances in spontaneous, natural speech do not violate the above-mentioned semantic constraints. However, large numbers of sentences with violations can be constructed, which also sound very natural and which are grammatically correct. The adult learners did not produce these types of sentences. We do not know if they thought these sentences were wrong, or that they simply did not want to produce them because they were too difficult, or that the equivalent of these sentences is incorrect in their L1 and they transferred that knowledge to their L2. We also do not know if they understood these sentences when they heard them.

2. The present study

There are 3 groups of core informants in this study. They are all Moroccans with a Moroccan-Arabic speaking background. The first group is in the *collège* in France, aged 12 to 16 years old. They were all born in France. The second group is aged 16 to 20 years old. Some of these informants were in the final years of secondary education while others were already working. These informants were born in the Netherlands. Both groups received no formal instruction in French/ Dutch as a second language, but they went/ were going through the complete French/ Dutch primary and secondary school system. In France and in the Netherlands most schools with children who speak French/ Dutch as a second language, 'submersion' in the L2 is the key word and there are minimal to no extra support-lessons in the L2. These first two groups can be seen, generation-wise, as the "children" of the informants in the ESF-database. Added to these two groups there were also two control groups of French and Dutch monolingual classmates of the core informants. The third group consists of 20-25 year old Moroccan university students that followed a one-year intensive course of Dutch as a second language in order to prepare themselves for a Master program at a Dutch university. They are now in the Netherlands for approximately 4 years.

In the present research the learners are very different from the learners in Klein & Perdue's research. We want to investigate if L2-learners of a more advanced level still impose the above-mentioned constraints on their language. If the French/ Dutch of these learners is not comparable to that of monolingual French/ Dutch peers, this means they must have fossilized at some point. The question is if this fossilization shows traces of the semantic constraints or if it goes back to other problematic learning areas of second language learning in general or to language-specific issues in French and/or Dutch. The questions we ask ourselves here are:

1. Are these learners willing to accept and able to produce violations of the semantic constraints?
1a. If they are not, is their L2 comparable to that of the informants in the ESF-database?
1b. If they are, is their L2 comparable to that of their monolingual classmates?
Ad 1b. If not, what more is needed tot become (near-)native speakers?

If we want to answer these questions, we will have to look at both language comprehension and language production of these informants. In order to be able to focus on the syntax-pragmatics interface, I will confine myself in this paper to semantic constraints I and III. They are more clearly on argument structure than semantic constraint II which is more on perspective-taking. In addition to that, they offer interesting opportunities for investigating if there are universal principles at work at the syntax-pragmatics interface or that language-specific features (also) play a role. Semantic constraint I cannot be violated in Moroccan Arabic as it can in French and Dutch. Passive sentences are not frequently heard in daily-life speech. Constraint III, however, cannot be violated in French (or with great difficulty), but is no problem in Dutch or Moroccan Arabic. In Dutch, word order is relatively free in this case and in Moroccan Arabic, a sort of topicalization or dislocation takes place. Although in spoken French, dislocations are used rather frequently, this construction could not be used in the tasks I used, as we will see below.

2.1 Tasks

In order to find out if these learners impose one or more of the semantic constraints on their L2, Dutch, I designed four tasks: Two judgment tasks and two description tasks.

In the judgment tasks the informants were presented with sentences that violate the constraints and they were asked if there were any errors in these sentences (see question 1). In the first task, they had to judge *isolated sentences without context* and the second task involved *sentences with context*: they were part of a story. The informants were asked to write down where the errors were, if there were any, in their point of view.

The second set of tasks involved the elicitation of language production (see question 1). The informants are asked to describe a number of pictures and to describe a film fragment. In the first task the pictures were designed to find out if the informants were able to produce sentences in which they

were "forced" to violate one (or more) of the semantic constraints. These, again, were *isolated sentences without context*. The film fragment was chosen in such a way that there were ample opportunities to produce (spontaneous speech-)sentences with constraint-violations, such as passive sentences (because they were part of a story, they were classified as *sentences with context*).

In this paper I will focus on the design of the third task (language production of sentences without any context - picture description), on the data that I collected with this task and on the results of this task. Elaborate descriptions of the data that were collected by means of the other tasks, can be found in Bos (2004).

2.1.1 Design of the description task

For the description task, 12 pictures were designed. The learners had to describe these pictures. There was one restriction on the way they were allowed to describe the pictures: the first words were already given. This first element was the part of the sentence that was not allowed to be put at the beginning of a sentence, according to either semantic rule I or III. This means neither the controller nor the theme could be mentioned first. In this way, the learners were forced to either violate one of the constraints, or find another way out. It was already mentioned by Klein & Perdue (1997:329/330) that, in these cases, the learners have to either 'override' one of the constraints or they have to develop specific means to accommodate the 'competition'. If they take the first option, this means that acquisition beyond the Basic Variety has taken place and if they choose for the second option, it is possible that they have reached a fossilization point in the acquisition of that specific structure in the target language.

In order to see if they had any problems with violating the constraints in their L1, they were also asked to describe the pictures in Moroccan Arabic. The informants of the control groups (French and Dutch) of course only described the pictures in their first language. This created the opportunity to see if monolinguals were able and willing to produce violations of the constraints and also to see what a major part of the daily language input of our core informants consisted of (peer-input).

The 12 pictures were presented randomly and 5 distraction-pictures were added. They were also presented in combination with pictures of other tasks, therefore it was not to be expected that the learners would find out what kind of sentences I was looking for. It was an oral task. The picture was shown to them, together with the words their description had to begin with. The following 4 pictures were used (among others) as an instrument to elicit sentences with a violation of constraint I:

1. This picture shows a man who is looking quite angry. He is breaking a pencil in two. The words that the description has to start with, are "the pencil …". Obviously, the man has control and according to constraint I he should be put at the beginning of the sentence. It takes quite an effort to construct a sentence that is not in the passive voice.

2. A picture of a boy who is pushing a girl (he is standing behind her) and she is falling, her face looks shocked. The first words of the description are given. They are: "the girl …". Here it is quite easy to find a way out, to use a so-called strategy in order to avoid using a passive; instead of saying "the girl is being pushed", the informants could easily use "the girl falls/ is falling", which is also a very adequate description of this picture.

3. The third picture shows a woman who is being bitten in her leg by a dog. The description has to start with "the woman …". The woman, although a human animate and therefore a very likely candidate for having control, is not in control here. The dog clinging to her leg is. This means the description has to start with an NP which is not the controller. In this picture it is almost impossible to create something different from a passive sentence.

4. In this picture a man with typical criminal features (whatever they may be…) is being cuffed by a police officer. The informants have to start the description with "the thief …". There are two human NPs in this sentence, but the police officer is obviously in control of the action in this picture. By

forcing the informants to start with "the thief …" they have to violate constraint I and the picture hardly leaves any room for a strategy in order to avoid a passive sentence.

The following 4 pictures were used as an instrument to elicit sentences with a violation of constraint III:

5. The fifth picture features a girl who gives a fish to a cat. The fish is the theme and the cat is the relatum. By forcing them to start their description with "to the cat …", they are forced to violate the third constraint which says 'theme before relatum'.

6. The sixth picture is quite similar to the fifth. In this picture a girl is giving a bone to a dog. Instead of giving them the freedom to put the controller first and to put the theme before relatum, the informants were told to start the description with "to the dog …".

7. In this picture there is a woman standing in a little mobile flower shop. She is hanging a plate on the door. On the plate the word 'open' is written. Here the theme is the plate and the door is the relatum. Following the third constraint a language learner will only want to produce a sentence in which the plate is mentioned earlier than the door. But of course they had to start the description with "to/on the door …".

8. In the last picture there is a man sitting at a table in a café. The waiter is putting a cup of coffee in front of him on the table. Here again, the informants were forced to put the relatum before the theme, by telling them to start the description of the picture with the words "on the table …".

2.1.2 Results

For each of the 8 pictures described above, I will present and discuss a number of descriptions that were produced by the informants and that could be seen as illustrative of the total amount of utterances. After the number of the example, there is a combination of two letters which indicates the language that is produced. FR stands for French, NL for Dutch and MA for Moroccan Arabic. Remember that Dutch and French can be uttered by the Moroccan core informants as well as by their monolingual classmates. The combination of letters and numbers at the end of the utterances explains the group that the informant belongs to. MA-gr1 stands for a Moroccan informant from the group in France, FR-gr1 stands for a monolingual French classmate of this informant. MA-gr2 means a Moroccan informant from the 16-20 year old group in the Netherlands and NL-gr2 stands for a monolingual Dutch classmate of this informant. MA-gr3 means that the informant belongs to the group of Moroccan university students in the Netherlands.

It was quite easy to describe picture 1 without constructing a passive sentence (as in examples (20) and (22)), but some informants used passive sentences anyway, as in example (19):

Picture 1. het potlood ... (the pencil ...)

(19) FR   est cassé par l'homme (is broken by the man)   MA-gr1

(20) NL   breekt van die meneer (breaks from that man)   MA-gr2

(21) MA   qettɛ-u r-rajel (he-broke-it the-man)   MA-gr2

(22) NL   breekt. de man is heel kwaad en daarom breekt ie de potlood
            (breaks. the man is very angry and that's why he breaks the pencil)   NL-gr2

(23) NL   is gebroken (is broken)   MA-gr3

Example (22) also shows that the informant still felt the need to make a natural, 'normal' active sentence with the controller at the beginning of the sentence. This utterance was made by a monolingual informant and it also shows something that was observed throughout the whole data collection: monolingual informants produced much longer sentences than bilingual informants. It seemed that the monolinguals were taking pleasure in adding to the description, in context, or in using difficult words or in describing the emotional state of the persons in the pictures. This (more) elaborate register was also observed in other studies in this field, also with younger informants, such as bilingual and monolingual children in primary school (cf. Bos, 1997).

Example (22) shows another remarkable feature that is recurring in the database: the monolingual Dutch informant says *de potlood* while it should be *het potlood*. There are two definite determiners in Dutch: *de* for non-neuter nouns and plurals and *het* for neuter nouns and diminutives. It is a fact that the Dutch determiner system is difficult to learn; even monolingual children aged 6 were found to still make some mistakes occasionally. This contrary to French children, for instance who did not make any mistakes in the choice between *le* and *la* (Van der Velde, 2002). But, a 17-year old is not expected to make these kinds of mistakes anymore. This was not an isolated case for this informant, however, and other Dutch monolingual informants were found to make mistakes in the determiner system as well (and, so were the Moroccan informants).

It is no problem to describe the second picture with an active sentence (e.g. the girl falls), so the informants were not really forced very hard to produce a violation of constraint I. But still, some passives were produced without any problem (examples (24), (26) and (29).

Picture 2. het meisje ... (the girl ...)

(24)	FR	est poussée par le jeune homme (is pushed by the young man)	MA-gr1
(25)	MA	defεat l-weld (she-pushed the-boy)	MA-gr1
(26)	NL	wordt geduwd door de jongen en ze valt (is being pushed by the boy and she falls)	MA-gr2
(27)	MA	tahet fe-l-erd hit wahed l-weld dfeε-ha (fell on-the-ground because a-boy he-pushed her)	MA-gr2
(28)	NL	valt omdat de jongen haar duwt (falls because the boy pushes her)	NL-gr2
(29)	NL	wordt geduwd door een jongen (is being pushed by a boy)	MA-gr3

In example (25) we see a problem that a number of Moroccan informants in the Netherlands as well as in France, seemed to have. They had problems with constructing the right gender-agreement in the verb. This always had to do with cases where the informants tried to produce a topicalization or dislocation. In Moroccan Arabic, it is not common (except for a small, fixed number of verbs) to create passive sentences in daily speech. There is, however, the possibility of producing a sentence like "the-boy she-pushes-him the girl". Although the girl is the actor in the sentence, the boy is made the topic (topic in the sense of "the thing which the proposition expressed by the verb is about, Lambrecht, 1994:118). The -him is a direct object that is co-indexed with the boy and it is stuck to the verb. From a learner point of view, this, of course, is a more difficult construction than a simple canonical sentence such as "the girl pushes the boy". This can also be formulated in Moroccan Arabic but then the girl is the topic of the sentence. The informants in French as well as the informants in the Netherlands seem to have difficulties with these kinds of constructions, as can be illustrated by example (30). This description is supposed to be in Moroccan Arabic but Dutch (in italics) is used as well:

The description that the informant uses here is inadequate. It should be "dfeε-ha wahed l-weld" (he-pushes-her, a boy). These kinds of mistakes were found in groups 1 and 2, not in the group of university students. This makes sense because they grew up in Morocco, went to school there and left just a limited number of years ago. They can be seen as 'true' native speakers of Moroccan Arabic. The informants in groups 1 and 2 acquired Moroccan Arabic in a French or Dutch context, which obviously

does not lead to the same level as that of native speakers who lived in Morocco for at least the first 16 years of their lives.

(30) A: l-bent … *ja, da's echt moeilijk hoor!*   (the girl … *yeah, that's really difficult!*)
       A: l-bent uh …   (the girl, er …)
       A *weet u het zelf ook?*   *(do you know it yourself?)*
       P: mhm.   (mhm)
       A*: nou , ik niet*   *(well, I don't)*
       A: defɛat-u wahed l-weld   (she-pushes-him, a-boy)
       A: *'k weet niet*   *(I don't know)*
       A: *iets in die richting, sorry*   *(something in that direction, sorry)*
       (MA-gr2)

For picture 3 it was not so easy to find a way to avoid using passive sentences. The informants hardly had any trouble with this: they just used passive sentences to describe this picture (examples (31) and (34)). In example (32) we see the same problem as in (25) and (30). The informant should have said " ɛedd-ha wahed l-kelb" (he-bites-her, a dog), but this turned out to be too problematic. The Dutch description in (33) again shows that the sentences produced by monolinguals on average are longer than the sentences produced by bilinguals, but it also presents a nice way of avoiding a passive sentence. It is a bit similar to example (22), in that the informant first makes a grammatically correct sentence in which the action in the picture is not described yet, but an emotional state of the NP that has to come first. After that the 'normal' active sentence is produced.

Picture 3. de vrouw ... (the woman ...)

(31) FR   est mordue par le chien (is bitten by the dog)   MA-gr1

(32) MA   ɛeddat wahed l-kelb (she-bit a-dog)   MA-gr1

(33) NL   is bang voor honden. en die hond die voelt dat dus die bijt in d'r been
            (is afraid of dogs and that dog feels that and so he bites in her leg)   NL-gr2

(34) NL   wordt door de hond gebeten (is being bitten by the dog)   MA-gr3

The fourth picture, like the third, is rather difficult to describe by means of an active sentence. The informants are really forced to place the NP that is not the controller at the beginning and to produce a passive sentence. They almost all do. As speakers of Moroccan Arabic hardly ever use any passive sentences, they can use the topicalization construction in these cases, as we can see in (37). In (36) we also see an example of a recurring mistake by the Moroccan learners of Dutch: the wrong determiner is used. It should be *de politie* instead of *het politie.*

We have seen in general that, although sometimes avoidance strategies were used (examples (22) and (33)), most informants had no problems with producing passive sentences and therefore did not have any problems with violating semantic constraint I.

Picture 4. de dief ... (the thief ...)

(35) NL   werd in de boeien geslagen (was handcuffed)   MA-gr2

(36) NL   wordt gearresteerd door het politie (is being arrested by the police)   MA-gr2

(37) MA   shedd-u l-bulis (he-captured-him the-police)   MA-gr2

(38) NL   wordt met handboeien gebonden (is being tied with handcuffs)   NL-gr2

(39) NL   wordt in de boeien geslagen omdat hij iets heeft gestolen
            (is being handcuffed because he has stolen something)   NL-gr2

(40)   NL   is gearresteerd (is arrested)   MA-gr3

The following examples were produced for describing pictures 5-8. These pictures were designed to elicit violations of constraint III. Some of the informants clearly had some trouble describing these pictures. They either said so explicitly but still came up with an acceptable description of the picture, or clearly tried to avoid the description of the action in the picture (which also led to avoiding the production of a violation of constraint III). This held especially for the informants that had to describe these pictures in French.

In example (41) we see that this French monolingual informant adds a small remark about the state of mind of the cat ('who is hungry') before she finishes the sentence. This could be because she is a native speaker and therefore she makes more elaborate descriptions. But it could also be the case that the sentence sounds less odd to her than *au chat Melanie donne un poisson*. Some of the French monolinguals even said it was impossible to produce a sentence like this in French. Example (43) shows a nice avoidance strategy of this informant. She uses the word *aan* in Dutch not in the meaning of 'to' (directional) but in the meaning of 'on' (also possible in Dutch), which is a locative. After that she can produce a 'normal' sentence: the cat gets a fish. For Dutch, we see that the informants do not find many problems in violating semantic constraint III. We do, however, observe the wrong use of a determiner in (42). Instead of *de meisje* the informant should have said *het meisje*. It is a well-known fact that L2-learners of Dutch make mistakes in the determiner system, but it does seem rather strange that these mistakes are even observed in highly frequent words as 'the girl'. Just as for French, these kinds of sentences are difficult in Moroccan Arabic as well. The difference between saying 'the cat' *(l-qett)* and 'to the cat' *(le-l-qett)* is so very small that most informants treated the sentence as if they said *l-qett* (as in (44).

Picture 5. aan de poes ... (to the cat ...)
(41)   FR   qui a faim Melanie donne un poisson (who is hungry Melanie gives a fish)   FR-gr1

(42)   NL   geeft de meisje de vis (gives the girl the fish)   MA-gr2

(43)   NL   zitten haartjes en de poes krijgt een vis (are little-hairs and the cat gets a fish) MA-gr2

(44)   MA   ɛtat l-ha l-bent l-hut (she-gave to-her (i.e. to the cat) the-girl the-fish)   MA-gr2

(45)   NL   gaf het jongetje een vis (gave the boy a fish)   NL-gr2

(46)   NL   wordt een vis gegeven door een meisje (a fish is being given by a girl)   NL-gr2

(47)   NL   wil het meisje het visje geven (the girl wants to give the little fish)   MA-gr3

For the sixth picture, which is very similar to the fifth, we see the same image emerging. In (48) we see the same informant as the girl that produced (41), infixing a relative clause, in order to make the description nice and elaborate but may be also because the short sentence *au chien Marie donne son os* sounds peculiar to her. In (53) we see the Dutch monolingual informant producing an elaborate description as well. And in (51) we see the same strategy as in (43), where the (same) informant uses the word *aan* as a locative, enabling herself to produce a less complex sentence ('he gets a bone from his boss').

Picture 6. aan de hond ... (to the dog ...)
(48)   FR   que Marie aime beaucoup elle lui donne son os
               (that Marie loves a lot she gives him his bone)   FR-gr1

(49)	FR	est donné un poisson (a fish is being given)	MA-gr1

| (50) | NL | wordt een bot gevoerd (a bone is being fed)) | MA-gr2 |

| (51) | NL | zitten allemaal beestjes maar toch krijgt hij van zijn baas een, hoe heet zo'n ding, een uh, een bot (there are a lot of little animals but still he gets a, what's its name, a er, a bone from his boss) | MA-gr2 |

| (52) | MA | ka-yakul *botje, o ja*, ɛdem (he-eats *little-bone, o yeah*, bone) | MA-gr2 |

| (53) | NL | wordt een bot gegeven door het meisje dat erbij staat, dat baasje (a bone is being given by the girl standing next to him, that little-boss) | NL-gr2 |

Using prepositions as part of the first obligatory element of the descriptions caused some problems in sentence 5-8. I was obliged to use them if I wanted to test if the informants were able to violate semantic constraint III, because the constraint was formulated in combination with action verbs and the moving of an entity from one place to another. However, the Dutch proposition *aan* and the French proposition *à* can both be used as locatives but also in combinations with verbs of direction. This also holds for the Moroccan Arabic *fe* (in, on) and *ɛala* (on, at). Therefore it turned out to be very difficult to really force the informants to interpret the first words in the way they were meant to be interpreted by me. However, describing picture 7 hardly caused any problems. Most of the informants were able very well to produce a sentence in which they violated constraint III. The only remarkable thing here is that the Moroccan informant in (56) uses the masculine form for 'hanging' and it should be the feminine counterpart *mɛellqa*. The informant does use the feminine suffix *-ha* later in the sentence so he knows the word *werqa* (paper) is feminine. Maybe he, at this point in the sentence, is still thinking about how to formulate the description and therefore temporarily pays no (or less) attention to the gender-agreement.

Picture 7. aan de deur ... (to/ on the door ...)
| (54) | NL | wordt een bordje gehangen waar 'open' op staat (a sign is being hung that says 'open') | MA-gr2 |

| (55) | NL | hang ik een bord (I hang a sign) | MA-gr2 |

| (56) | MA | mɛelleq wahed l-werqa u mektuub fe-ha 'mehluul' (is hanging a paper and on-it is written 'open') | MA-gr2 |

| (57) | NL | wordt een plaat gehangen met 'open' omdat de winkel open is (a plate is being hung with 'open' because the shop is open | NL-gr2 |

In the descriptions of the last picture we see that the problem of multi-interpretability of the prepositions starts playing a role. Instead of sentences like "the waiter puts a cup of coffee" (the 'ideal' description), we see avoidance strategies (as in (60)) and different interpretations of the prepositions. In sentence (58) only a locative relation is established between the preposition and table and the movement is being expressed by the verb form *donne*. In example (59) the whole action of the waiter has disappeared and the informant just produces a standard canonical sentence. In (61) and (63) we see another interesting phenomenon that is observed more often among L2-learners of Dutch: the use of the verb 'to lay down' instead of 'to put' for putting a cup of coffee on the table. However, also informants from the Dutch monolingual group were observed to use this expression.

Picture 8. op de tafel … (to/on the table …)

(58) FR numéro cinq le serveur donne du café (number five the waiter gives coffee) FR-gr1

(59) FR d'une restaurant un client prend un café (of a restaurant a customer takes a coffee) MA-gr1

(60) NL lag een kleed (was a rug) MA-gr2

(61) NL wordt koffie neergelegd (coffee is being laid down) MA-gr2

(62) MA l-garçon hett l-u wahed l-qehwa (the-waiter puts for-him a-coffee) MA-gr2

(63) NL legt, zet de ober een kopje koffie neer (the waiter lays, puts a cup of coffee) NL-gr2/ MA-gr3

(64) NL wordt een kopje koffie gezet door de ober omdat de man die besteld heeft
      (a cup of coffee is being put by the waiter because the man has ordered it) NL-gr2

Although we observed some avoidance strategies this does not mean the informants are not able to produce violations of constraints I and III. We saw many grammatically correct violations of the constraints. This means that the informants are able to apply pragmatics (being forced to start a sentence with a certain content in a certain way) to their syntax. Although they probably prefer to make standard canonical sentences (but so do monolingual speakers in daily-life speech), they do master the syntax up to such a level that they are able to produce grammatically correct sentences.

3. Conclusions and discussion

The L2-French and the L2-Dutch of the Moroccan informants in this research (born in either France or the Netherlands) shows a close resemblance to the French and Dutch of their monolingual peers. They showed no traces of fossilization in the area of the semantic constraints as formulated by Klein & Perdue (1992). This makes them very different from the informants in the ESF-project, who clearly fossilized at this point. Clearly only adult learners of an L2 tend to get stuck in the Basic Variety.

The first difference between the bilinguals and their monolingual peers is the fact that on average the sentences produced by the monolinguals were longer than those produced by the bilinguals. The monolinguals clearly tried much more to embellish their description, formulating something like a mini-story. The bilinguals only described the picture, as they were asked to do. The monolinguals have more words at their disposal and more ways to formulate a variety of sentence structures. This has been called an elaborate vs. a restricted register or code. At this point we do see a fossilization point in the L2-learner variety in both groups (in France and in the Netherlands). This holds only for the first two groups because the L2 of the informants in the third group has not stopped developing yet. They are taking courses at a university level at the moment. They already have a high level of education and are used to studying and picking up things by themselves. Also, they are very motivated to obtain a university degree in the Netherlands. This means they still learn more words and structures everyday. Although the first two groups are still in school as well, they are not very fond of studying. Therefore it is not to be expected that they will catch up with their monolingual classmates without any extra training in their L2.

The Moroccan informants in the Netherlands also show traces of learner varieties. For instance, the mistakes they make in the determiner system. An explanation for this cannot be found in the L1 of these learners. Although there is only one determiner in Moroccan Arabic, there is a difference between feminine and masculine nouns. Connected to them are differences in feminine and masculine adjectives and gender-agreement in verbs, so they are familiar with this division. It is known that all learners of Dutch have difficulties with the determiner system, but one would think that children who went through the complete Dutch school system, should have less problems with this. This in combination with the fact that even their Dutch peers make these same mistakes (to a lesser extent but they make them

anyway) led us to believe that may be there is something else, apart from an L2-learnier variety, that is playing a role here. The learners themselves told me that it is considered to be 'cool' in these groups of adolescents (with a rather low level of education) to sound like a 'foreigner'. This leads to the fact that the Dutch monolingual peers of these Moroccans not only make 'mistakes' in the determiner system, but sometimes also add some foreign accents to their speech and sometimes even code-switch between different languages, such as Moroccan Arabic, Turkish, Surinamese (Sranan) and Dutch. This vision is strengthened by the fact that these mistakes were not found in the group of university students, although they spent a much shorter period in the Netherlands than the other informants.

In the Moroccan-Arabic of the informants we see interesting problems arising as well. Although these children were raised in a monolingual Moroccan Arabic environment before they went to school, their mastery of Moroccan Arabic is not the same as that of monolingual peers. The difficulties they have with speaking their L1 (if we should even still consider it as their L1) is illustrated by the trouble one Moroccan informant in the Netherlands is expressing in example (30). The Moroccans in France and the Netherlands have problems with topicalization. In the Moroccan Arabic of monolinguals it is a very frequent construction. It does, however, involve suffixing a direct object to a verb and the direct object has to be co-indexed with the topicalized noun. There has to be gender- and number-agreement between topic and direct object. This non-canonical word order turns out to be causing problems for the informants in groups 1 and 2. Some of the informants told me that although Moroccan Arabic is the first language they acquired, they feel much more at ease in French or Dutch. They speak Moroccan Arabic in the home situation and master the vocabulary and constructions needed for that kind of communication, but if the conversation goes beyond the home situation, they encounter many problems. They have trouble constructing relative clauses or subordinate clauses and their vocabulary is not large enough.

The fact that the informants have problems in Moroccan Arabic also means that chances are not that high that we will find traces of transfer. If they feel more comfortable in their L2 it is not very likely that they will transfer rules from the weaker L1 to the stronger L2. Transfer could have played a role in violating constraint I because passives are hardly used in Moroccan Arabic. We have seen that the informants did not have any trouble with producing passives in French and Dutch, so indeed no transfer could be established in this domain.

The third group of informants, the Moroccan university students in the Netherlands, gives us some clues for explaining why the second group of informants, the Moroccan adolescents in or out of secondary education did not acquire the determiner-system to the full. It is known to be a difficult part of the Dutch language. The gender-differences between nouns is not visible anymore; it almost looks as if it is random. The third group however does not make that many mistakes in assigning the right determiner to the noun and if they do, they are quite conscious of it and still learning. The second group has fossilized at this point completely. There are some rules for deciding which determiner should be used (e.g. always *het* for diminutives) but they don't know the rules. The university students do know this rule. They followed an intensive Dutch as an L2-course and were taught these rules so they can apply them, also to new words. In the Dutch primary school system, however, there is hardly any attention for presenting these (limited) rules to the children. They are supposed to just "pick it up". Dutch monolingual children usually succeed at that because they have this overload of positive input all day. For the Moroccan children this just does not seem to be enough. It would probably be of great benefit to them if, in the first years of primary education, new words were presented to them in combination with the right determiner, like a chunk or a frozen element.

As we saw from the differences between the first and second group on the one hand and the third on the other, level of education or interest in education could play a role here. Motivation is also a part of that. If you use the wrong determiner you will still be understood, so the informants do not consider it as very important to pay attention to it. Even the teachers in the schools that these informants are attending do not think it is very important because these pupils usually do not opt for follow-up education after they have completed school. It is, however, not only very important for further education, but also for the possibilities they have in the job market. One girl told me she wanted to be a secretary. She asked the study counselor what she should do. He told her to work on her Dutch first. He did not consider this to be the task of the school, but her own responsibility. This shows how little attention is paid to the development of the L2 in the Dutch school system.

4. Outlook

Within this project more issues were studied. As mentioned in section 2.3, other tasks were administered to these informants, including grammaticality judgments of isolated sentences and of sentences in the context of a story. There were also combinations of pictures (short stories) that the informants had to describe. These were designed particularly to see if they would violate constraint II or not. There are also semi-spontaneous speech data from these informants. They all produced a retelling of a film fragment of 'Modern times' by Charlie Chaplin. Retellings of this film were also collected in the ESF-project; therefore comparisons can be made between these informants and production data from the informants of the ESF-project. These results can be found in Bos (2004).

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