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### **On the notions of topic and topic markers in interlanguage**

This presentation challenges Huebner's claim that markers "in a topic prominent interlanguage, we would expect to find deletion employed as an anaphoric device more frequently and in more environments than it is employed in English" (Huebner 1983:80). Absence of subject in the interlanguage discourse can be due to: (1) co-referential deletion of the grammatical function of subject; (2) zero anaphora due to the pragmatic function of topic; (3) obligatory deletion in serial verb constructions (Korpi 2006).

This paper examines both zero anaphora and Huebner's claim of topic markers in the interlanguage of his informant in a longitudinal study over a period of one year. The hypothesis by Huebner that interlanguage begins as a topic prominent language and moves to a subject prominent language is challenged, arguing that his analyses were flawed. In particular, his analysis of a topic marker in his data consistent with the Li and Thompson criteria for topic prominent languages is argued to be empirically and theoretically unsound.

I first examine the notion of a topic marker in natural languages. After a review of Huebner's data and argument, I argue for a different analysis using definiteness and specificity. The paper concludes by examining other studies which have proposed topic markers in the interlanguage.