

Individual Paper Session 22
Syntax/Morphology
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The Acquisition of German Verb Paradigm and Its Syntactic Implication by Thai women immigrants in Switzerland

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In German, the verb morphosyntax is very complex. A verb in use varies in form according to tense, mood and voice and must agree with the subject in person and number. Using a correct form throughout the verb paradigm requires the understanding of all these verbal categories. Native speakers of Thai, an isolating language, always have difficulties to cope with the verb morphology and its syntactic implications in German language, since there is no cognitive perception for such morphosyntactic categories in their first language at all.

The central questions of these paper are:

- Which verb categories are successfully acquired, which are not?
- Which kind of strategies is used as alternative for each of the verbal category unacquired?
- Is there any observable correlation between the finiteness concept and the acquisition of verb morphosyntax?
- Is there any observable correlation between the acquisition of verb morphology and the acquisition of verb placement?

In order to answer these questions, a cross-sectional study dealing with the development of German verb morphosyntax was conducted. Spontaneous conversations in standard German with 16 Thai women immigrants were recorded and transcribed.

The following linguistic aspects were to be observed:

- all the verb forms used;
- all observable strategies used in stead of grammatical morphemes to express the German verb categories;
- the distribution and co-function of finite and non-finite verbs;
- verb placement in relation to the state of acquisition of verbal categories

Based on the corpus, it appears that not all verb categories are acquired. Some complex forms were not found at all. The results regarding forms and functions of each verb category, the correlation between the emergence of finiteness and the verb placement as well as the role of phonological constraints in the acquisition of verb morphology will be shown and discussed.