

INTRODUCTION

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The present special issue of *OSLa* presents preliminary outcomes of cross-linguistic and cross-institutional research on adnominal possessives viewed from the perspective of L2 acquisition. The following researchers participate in the project: Bergljot Behrens, Cathrine Fabricius-Hansen, Hans Petter Helland, Anneliese Pitz (all from ILOS, U Oslo), and Oliver Bott (U Tübingen), Barbara Mertins (TU Dortmund), Torgrim Solstad (ZAS, Berlin), and Katarzyna Stachowiak (U Warsaw). The *POSS* project is part of a broader research project on *Language as Product and Process/Språk som produkt og prosess (SPROSS)* under the leadership of Bergljot Behrens.¹

The first paper in the present volume (CATHRINE FABRICIUS-HANSEN ET AL.) gives an overview of adnominal possessive systems across a number of European languages and forms the background for our research project. The languages can be grouped relative to whether they distinguish between a reflexive and an irreflexive form. For the learner whose mother tongue does not distinguish between the two forms, acquisition of the more complex system is predicted to create difficulties, as they have to restructure their grammar to take account of the reflexivity parameter.

The predictions presented in the first contribution are further elaborated in the two following contributions: In the second paper, ANNELIESE PITZ ET AL. establish explicit hypotheses on learning difficulties related to the language pair German/Norwegian. On the one hand, errors in German learners of Norwegian are hypothesized to occur to a large extent due to the fact that Norwegian makes the reflexive/irreflexive distinction, whereas German does not. On the other hand, German and Norwegian are closely related languages, and cognates (here German *sein* and Norwegian *sin*) are shown to affect L2 acquisition for this language pair even further. Empirical data from translation between the two languages in both directions and by both groups of learners are presented to support the hypotheses presented. Section 4 of this paper furthermore reports on an offline experiment designed by Oliver Bott, Torgrim Solstad and Robin Hörnig, with contextualized sentences intended to test the interpretation of the reflexive versus the irreflexive

[1] See <http://www.hf.uio.no/ilos/english/research/projects/language-as-product-and-process/index.html>.

form by native speakers and learners. A discussion follows relating to general learner effects versus transfer effects.

The third paper, by HANS PETTER HELLAND, discusses L2 acquisition of the possessive systems for the language pair French/Norwegian. Norwegian has a morphologically more complex possessive system than French, yielding transfer effects both from L1 Norwegian and L1 French. Results from a number of comprehension, production and judgment tests conducted on French learners of Norwegian and Norwegian learners of French are presented which support a specific set of hypotheses.

The final paper in this volume takes a different perspective: two experiments on the processing of translation from English into Danish and Norwegian respectively are presented, in which possessives in different syntactic environments appear in the texts. English does not make the reflexive/irreflexive distinction, in contrast to Norwegian. The research question raised by BERGLJOT BEHRENS in this contribution is whether translation into Norwegian (the more complex system) is found to create problems even for L1 speakers of the target language. Discussion also revolves around a potential instability of the target system itself.

This volume as a whole is meant as preliminary to further studies on the cognitive mechanisms that are at work in foreign language acquisition. Well-grounded hypotheses have been developed here, which will form the basis for cognitively oriented experiments in the next step.