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Variation in Xenolects (Foreigner Talk)

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1. Introduction

The way we talk to people who do not understand and speak our language, or more precisely even, who we think do not understand and speak our language, is different from the language we normally use. It has long been a mystery, however, just how, and to what extent, people adapt to the challenges of unequal and restricted communication conditions: There are reports – often anecdotal and speculative in nature though – on the use of a highly ungrammatical and largely condescending register that native speakers use when addressing non-native speakers. Other studies report different degrees of adaptations in different realms of the language, while yet another group of studies have not been able to identify any structural adaptation patterns at all and hence question the existence of such patterns (Stocker-Edel 1977; Arthur et al., 1980). Overall, the fact that this area of intercultural communication has not been researched very well and relies largely on anecdotal evidence and speculation contributes to the rather blurred and inconsistent picture. Two main factors stand out in distinguishing the studies and thus explaining the lack of consistency in their results: methodology and research objectives.¹

First and foremost, the methodology used in eliciting data can be clearly linked to whether or not, and to what degree, adaptations are found (see Beebe/Cummings 1996 and Houck/Gass 1996 for further references). Generally, conversational settings where speakers are aware of being recorded and their language use is being monitored (for instance interviews, or questionnaires) or where "linguistic etiquette" appears to be required (e.g. in many sales or customer service conversations recorded in North America and in

¹ I would like to express my gratitude to Patsy Duff for her insightful comments on an earlier draft of this contribution.

classrooms and other public spaces) rarely yield structural modifications that go beyond conversational adaptations such as paraphrases and repetitions. The speech of fictional characters – the most prominent of which include *Robinson Crusoe*, *Tarzan* and *George of the Jungle* – contributes little to leading researchers out of the jungle of confusion as its primary purpose is to mark foreignness rather than to serve as a means of communication. As a result, fictional speech is often inconsistent within itself and deviates significantly from the speech used in authentic non-fictional conversations. The largest inventory and range of adaptations has been observed in data elicited from authentic conversations between native speakers and non-native speakers where participants do not consciously focus on their speech (e.g. in participant observation, recordings for non-linguistic purposes, hidden recordings with retroactive permission). The fact that this kind of speech, like any other aspect of sociolinguistic and pragmatic variation, is indeed very difficult to observe without compromising its authenticity explains the relatively small number of reliable studies overall.

Second, the objectives of the study always have a direct impact on what data researchers collect and how they analyse it. As such, they have also a bearing on the methodology of data elicitation (see also Kasper/Kellerman 1997:11–12). After all, the study of how we communicate with “foreigners” can be approached from different angles:

- As a set of structural phenomena to study linguistic reduction, universals or processes of simplification: the terms *foreigner talk* and *foreign register* are mostly associated with this early approach to investigating syntactical and lexical features as well as morphological and phonological parameters of non-native/native speaker conversation, often using short phrases, anecdotal observations and literary sources as the basis of analysis. Foreigner talk in this context is thus placed in relationship to other registers such as *baby talk*, *teacher talk*, *caretaker talk/motherese* and *telegraphese*. Colloquial labels used to illustrate the context in which the register is mostly used and to reveal the data sources include *Tarzanca* in Turkish, *Petit Français* or *Petit Nègre* in French, *Cocoliche* in an Italo-Spanish description, and *Ausländerdeutsch*, ‘wrong’ or ‘backwards’ in German. Some of the more thorough studies include Ferguson 1971, Heidelberger Forschungsprojekt 1975, Ferguson 1975, Meisel 1977, Hatch et al. 1978, Clyne 1978, Werkgroep taal buitenlandse werknemers 1978, Mühlhäusler 1981, Roche 1982, Hinnenkamp 1982, Mühlhäusler 1984.
- As a social phenomenon to illustrate stratification and status marking in societies. Studies include Ammon 1972, Ferguson 1977, Valdman 1981, Ryan 1983, Fasold 1984 and Hinnenkamp 1985. Often, the condescending and stigmatising effects of “talking down to foreigners” have been stressed. Occasionally, the speakers’ motivation has been characterised as a deliberate attempt to exclude foreigners from participating in the target culture by preventing full access to the target language (Bodeman/Ostow 1975). However, such claims remain controversial as studies often used anecdotal data and fictional sources for support or ignored important pragmatic evidence.
- As input to second-language-acquisition: either as a means of providing comprehensible input, as the source of pidginisation or as evidence for the universal ability to acquire languages without the proper models in the input. Research includes studies on communicative adaptations such as the Heidelberger Forschungsprojekt 1977, Snow et al. 1981,

Roche 1982, Hatch 1983b, Long 1983, Gass/Varonis 1985, Py 1986 and Bremer et al. 1988. Meisel 1975 and Schumann/Stauble 1983 discuss pidginisation processes, Chaudron 1985 and VanPatten/Sanz 1995 are among the studies discussing issues of intake processing and effects of providing specific input on language acquisition, and Corder 1977 proposes a developmental hypothesis on the relationship between foreigner talk and learner language. White 1989 is representative of the nativist approach to input.

- As a system of code variation to study the pragmatics of intercultural communication (Roche 1989). The term *xenolect* has been suggested to reflect the complex variational system found in this realm of intercultural communication. As such, it also marks a departure from the mainly structural and conversational studies of the sixties, seventies and early eighties. The variation observed in pragmatic studies of *xenolects* points to parallels in code switching in bilingual communication. It has been shown there how code switching systematically functions as a linguistic means of expressing intentions and marking different types of activity (Auer 1984; 1986). As such, code switches enrich conversations and play a constitutive and constructive role in communication. It has been argued that the code switches in *xenolects* are a means of ensuring that people can begin or continue to communicate at all (Roche 1988).

The following survey provides a synopsis of findings of previous research and a presentation of different parameters that may influence variation in *xenolects*, in particular speaker-specific, addressee-related and pragmatic variation. The term *xenolect* is used here in order to reflect the multifaceted variation observed in “native speaker/non-native speaker” speech and to distinguish it from the restricted register-like language use commonly referred to by the term *foreigner talk*.

2. *Xenolectal inventories*

The generic features associated with *xenolectal inventories* of English and other languages include the following:

- *phonological features*

pauses between syllables and words, in particular before key words
 longer pauses between phrases and sentences
 slower rate of delivery
 more use of stress to emphasise elements
 more careful articulation
 wider pitch range/exaggerated intonation
 speaking louder
 more use of full forms/avoidance of contractions

- *morphological and syntactical features*

shorter utterances (fewer words per utterance)
 more regularity/use of canonical word order
 coordination preferred over subordination
 less inversion
 more retention of optional constituents
 more overt and analytical marking of grammatical relations (fewer contractions)
 more well-formed utterances/fewer disfluencies
 more questions, in particular
 more yes-no questions/fewer WH-questions
 more “or” and tag questions
 more questions marked by intonation only
 more verbs marked for present/fewer for non-present temporal reference
 omission of endings
 omission of words

- *semantical and lexical features*

limited lexicon
 lower type-token-ratio
 higher proportion of content words/fewer function words
 higher average lexical frequency of nouns and verbs
 higher proportion of copulas to total verbs
 high frequency of paraphrases, alternative formulations and repetitions
 more overt and analytical marking of semantic relations
 fewer idiomatic expressions
 high use of deictic elements
 non-marking of default references
 marked use of lexical items such as foreign or foreign-sounding words

- *content features*

narrower range of topics
 preference for prominent topics
 briefer treatment of topics (fewer information bits per topic/lower ratio of topic-initiating to topic-continuing moves)
 preference for here-and-now-topics

- *interactional structure*

open topic control including

- more abrupt topic-shifts
- more willing relinquishment of topic-choice to interlocutor
- more acceptance of unintentional topic-switches
- more tolerance for ambiguity

clear marking of new topics

more use of questions for topic-initiating moves

more question-and-answer strings

closer monitoring of non-native speaker's comprehension including

- more comprehension checks
- more confirmation checks
- more clarification requests

more confirmation of own comprehension

more repetition (self- and other-, exact and semantic, complete and partial)

more expansions

more decomposition

more gesture and mimics

This list of common features expands the composite list given by Larsen-Freeman/Long (1991:125–126). Similar lists providing a rough orientation of the kind of adaptations that may occur in xenolects have been proposed by Hatch (1983a), Ellis (1986, in particular 135–136) and Archibald (1995). Somewhat puzzling is the fact that they also include diametrically opposed features such as omissions and expansions as well as features which also occur in the standard language. Due to the fact that in principle virtually everything can be observed in xenolectal conversations, attempts have been made to classify the variety of observed features as different types of foreigner talk. Ellis (1986: 133–134) lists three different types: 1. talk consisting only of interactional adjustments, that is without formal simplifications; 2. talk consisting of both interactional and grammatical adjustments; 3. talk consisting of interactional, grammatical and ungrammatical adjustments. Often, general parameters such as the speaker's preferences, the addressee's proficiency, the setting, the topic of conversation or roles and age of the participants are believed to be responsible for a specific type of adaptation. However, none of the lists or categorisations gives a more accurate account of the broad range of variation that occurs even within a particular speaker or a given conversation between two speakers. If any of the rather general parameters were responsible for a certain level of adaptation, one must ask, why would a speaker switch between different levels in the same conversation or use different strategies in similar settings? Obviously, the tools most widely used to describe communication between target and non-target language speakers do not catch the subtleties of variation that are so characteristic of xenolectal communication.

3. Variational systematics

In order to get a sense of when, where, how and why adaptations occur, or do not occur, when people use their own language to make themselves understood to people they believe have not mastered that language, it is instructive to look at some authentic recordings of coherent and extended conversations. The following description and analyses are based on authentic (naturalistic) data which were recorded in authentic settings in both Germany and Canada. The settings include informal face-to-face work place conversations among peers (e.g. in factories), sales conversations (in department stores), story telling (in personal conversations) and some random encounters between people speaking different languages. In addition, some of the Canadian recordings were made available by the Ontario Folklife Centre housed at York University. The purpose of the Ontario Folklife Centre recordings was of a non-linguistic nature, namely to conduct interviews on immigration to North-America. Based on the empirical observations of the data the structural properties of xenolectal utterances can be grouped in four – surprisingly distinct – categories:

- a level of colloquial structures (*a-utterances*)
- a level of largely phonological adaptations (*b-utterances*)
- a level of minor modifications or omissions where rarely more than one element per utterance is affected (*c-utterances*)
- and finally a level of largely non-inflected content elements arranged in strict topic-focus patterns (*d-utterances*).

Note that these types refer to the utterance level and thus differ from the conversational macro categories proposed by Ellis.

- *a-utterances*

This type of utterance can be observed in any xenolectal conversation that goes beyond very limited (anecdotal) exchanges. It comprises utterances which display no visible/recognisable, adaptations in the grammatical structure. These utterances agree with the speaker's normal colloquial language or dialect and, therefore, can be considered standard utterances:

*... the door won't close,
that's too complicated.*

However, as is the case with the second example, they may reveal a semantic, lexical or conversational adaptation, in the sense of

I think it is too difficult for me to explain this to you.

The fact that standard utterances occur in xenolectal environments may appear contradictory at first. However, as will be shown below, the alternation with other types of utterances

illustrates the great range of variation found in xenolects and shows that such conversations go well beyond the widespread stereotypical characterisations.

- *b-utterances*

These utterances are differentiable with respect to their significantly slower speech rate and *their + clear + pause + structure within the syllable, the word and the sentence* ‘-’ represents a short pause between syllables while ‘+’ represents a pause of approximately 1 second in this kind of transcription. Since this study does not look at pause structurings in detail, the absolute length measured in milliseconds is not indicated here. The approximate length of pauses is marked only to show interruptions in the flow of speech which are unusually long when compared to the usually less affected flow of colloquial speech. This type of utterance may also show some hypercorrections such as the full pronunciation of syllables which are often shortened or dropped in colloquial language. There are no “ungrammatical” adaptations with respect to the colloquial norms. However, fossilised formulae such as *türkischmann* (for *Türke* ‘Turk’ in German) or *double dogi* (referring to a *foot-long hot dog*) usually not found in standard varieties may occur as well. While a number of such expressions are commonly used by many speakers in xenolects, others may actually be idiosyncratic and shortlived.

- *c-utterances*

In contrast to this, the third type of utterances does show grammatical adaptations compared to colloquial language, which, however, are usually restricted to one element or two joint elements (e.g. article and preposition) per utterance:

I go to the bus, you go (to the) car

Furthermore, adaptations are discrete in that they do not necessarily affect other occurrences of the same or similar elements in the same utterance or elsewhere. The example given above where *to the* is dropped when referring to *car* while it is kept in *to the bus* is representative for this kind of utterance.

- *d-utterances*

This type of utterance shows among other things a clear separation between framing segments, topic, and focus, with almost no inflectional morphology or function words.

This is very real. It will hurt you/It hurts

is thus condensed to

very real + hurt

or

this coffee container goes to the storage, the tablecloths need to be washed, but leave the table here

becomes

this go storage + wash + leave table here

in a xenolectal instruction given to a Caribbean employee by an English-speaking North-American supervisor in Florida. Some d-expressions such as

you capiche?

or

long time – no see

have even been integrated into colloquial North-American speech and are now accepted as normal expressions. Although this type of utterance may be considered syntactically “ungrammatical” or “chaotic” when compared to any form of standard speech, a more sensitive analysis shows that utterances follow syntactic principles which can be convincingly explained within a functional-pragmatic framework. These common structuring principles are illustrated below in an utterance taken from the German data base where the German informant tells his Turkish co-worker (T18) that he is in the process of going to the office to submit a suggestion for an improvement. The casual conversation between the two male co-workers (which will be quoted again below) was recorded during a break in a factory that supplies parts to the European automobile industry. A reconstructed colloquial formulation of the utterance would be as follows in German:

Ich gehe jetzt ins Büro, um einen Verbesserungsvorschlag zu machen.

Note the obligatory verb-second position in the main clause (*gehe*) and the obligatory verb final construction (*um ... zu machen*) as well as the compound *Verbesserungsvorschlag* in the subordinate clause. To be sure, there are different ways of phrasing this utterance in German. Nevertheless, any grammatically acceptable structure would involve some kind of subordination or coordination, and the linearisation of the elements in the utterance would normally be governed by the specific sentence type (e.g. verb last position in subordinate clauses). Not so in the d-utterance produced by the German informant. He says:

*Ich jetzt gehen Büro + Verbesserung
(I now go office + improvement)*

This utterance has two main components clearly separated by a one-second-pause: the topic (*ich jetzt gehen Büro*) and the focus (*Verbesserung*). The verb, realised as an infinitive rather than showing the obligatory first person morphology, is in the third position, a structure not found in standard German. The topic itself is clearly separated into four distinct bits of information which build upon each other in an incremental way from topic to focus as the speaker moves on to produce the utterance. This can be compared to a modular exposition providing information on the who, when, what and where of the situation.

In fact, this clearcut modular principle of structuring utterances is often preceded by a module which marks the modality and/or frame of the following utterance. This module may contain markers of quantity (e.g. *viel/many*), modality (e.g. *muß, kann/must, can*) or negation (*niks/no*). Given information that is not perceived pertinent (thematic) for the utterance is usually not made explicit at all. Similar principles of a functional-pragmatic structur-

- is just very basic +*
you go from here +
and then when you go to this one here +
see
this one has a three speeds +
and a washer
its watertemperature +
but that one you can't do much with is
 ES: *okay is much simpler*
 Salesman: *yeah +++*

Apparently, this salesman has initial problems addressing the customer in an appropriate way as the number of uncompleted starts clearly shows. However, the uncompleted utterances at the beginning of the excerpt and some in the middle (*and then when you go to this one here*) also show colloquial use of the language. Others such as *this one has a three speeds* or *is just very basic* show some modifications while yet others are very condensed (*this very basic, no delicate, no permanent press, its watertemperature ...*). In a way, one-word-phrases such as *okay?* and *see* also belong in this category as they are supposed to summarise or express a more extended, often implied, proposition.

In the following conversation MF (a male English-speaking Canadian student in his early twenties) tries to explain the concept *Mennonite* to GZ (a male immigrant from Estonia, retired at the time of the recording) who is interviewed by MF for the Canadian immigration study characterised above. (FLC-Data MF24-045-055)

Mennonite

- GZ: *are you catholic? or?*
 MF: *no I'm not I'm not catholic no*
 GZ: *ah*
 MF: *I'm kind of a ++*
my mother is +
my family is basically ähm ++
mennonite?
you know mennonites? +
ähh
Kitchener Waterloo ++ ähm area
down ä south
in the south äh ++
mennonites
they're from + Germany and Switzerland
 GZ: *yes yes yes*
 MF: *and they wear black and +++*
very old old fashioned people
they they + they ride on horses and buggies still even

you know?
I come from that + group + of reli of religion +
yeah
but I + I know a little bit about + catholicism and what's involved (...)

Again, the informant is struggling to find the right beginning as the number of uncompleted, albeit unmodified, utterances show. This changes when he tries a condensed one-word (d-) utterance on the addressee, the expression that encompasses the whole story: *mennonite?*. In a way, this condensed expression frames the ensuing portion of the conversation: it functions as title of the following topic, and it summarises what he deems important to carry over into the broader conversation. He quickly follows up with a somewhat expanded colloquial question (*you know mennonites?*) in an attempt to secure a common foundation for what he was going to explain, but apparently senses that this is not understood by the addressee. The extended hesitation (*āhh*) indicates a reevaluation of his approach. Subsequently, he dissects the concept *mennonite*, which he was going to use in the first place, by spotlighting different aspects of the whole concept. He chooses geographic aspects (*Kitchener, Waterloo*) obviously in the belief that they may be concrete enough to be recognisable by the addressee who has lived in Ontario for many years. After all, the whole area of Southern Ontario around Kitchener and Waterloo is well known to be the home of mennonites. As the towns' names, realised as d-utterances, do not achieve the anticipated results he moves on to explain this subconcept by using another d-utterance (*down south*) which he subsequently paraphrases in a less condensed fragment (*in the south*). He then tries to close the frame by using the same expression (*mennonites*) with which he opened it. As the feedback from the addressee seems somewhat inconclusive to him he opens up the concept in question again by adding more information, this time in colloquial language though (*they're from Germany and Switzerland*). The fact that the addressee is now signaling some understanding may be responsible for the much lesser degree of adaptation in the ensuing explanations (*and they wear black and ... they ride on horses and buggies still even, you know? ...*). With the exception of the parenthesis *very old old fashioned people*, which functions as a summary for certain aspects of the story, the remaining utterances are realised in colloquial language.

4. Speaker-Specific Variation

Switching between different levels of adaptations is not idiosyncratic to a few speakers. Rather, it has been observed in many speakers and in different languages. Roche 1989 investigated different xenolect speakers for their preferences of different linguistic adaptation strategies. The conversations were recorded in a semi-controlled setting. The addressee T18, a 35-year old male guestworker from Turkey, and his male German co-workers ranging in age from 25 to 55 are employed by a large automotive supplier. They have known each other for some time and get along very well. All conversations were casual conversations on work-related matters or aspects of the informants' lives recorded at or near the workplace. Note that the addressee remains the same in all conversations while the Ger-

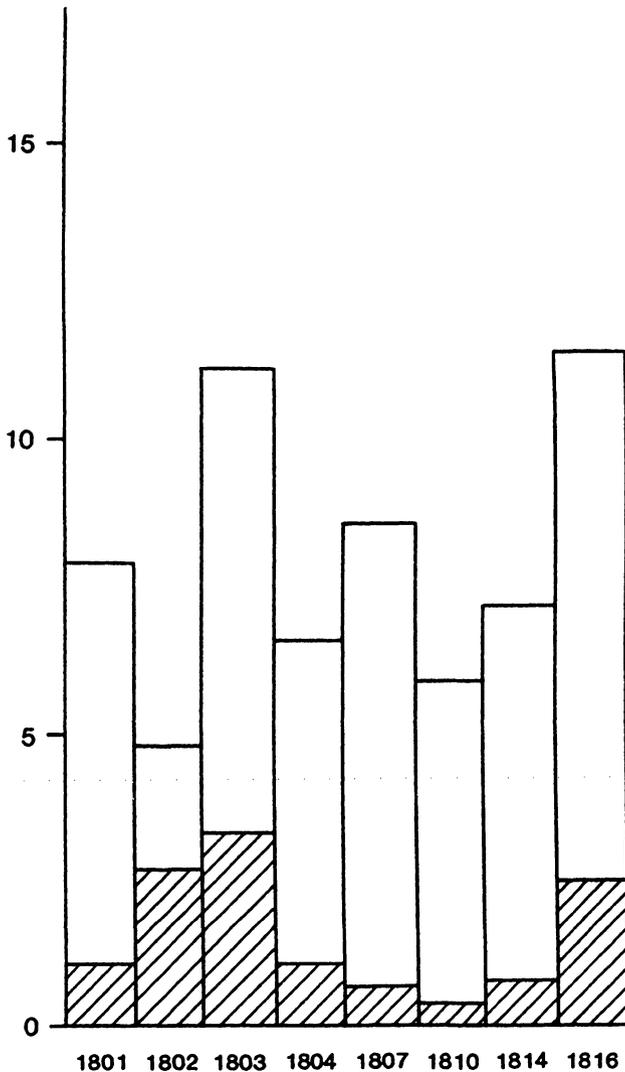


Figure 2

Preferences for xenolectal adaptations (per 100 words of speech) recorded in eight conversations with T18; white bars: d-utterances, striped bars: use of non-standard infinitives. (Roche 1989:58)

man speakers vary in this study. The following two figures depict the compiled data of eight different speakers in conversation with the Turkish addressee (T18).

The two evaluated features, selected for illustration purposes here, are d-utterances (white) and non-standard use of infinitives (striped) in Figure 2, and lexico-semantic simplifications

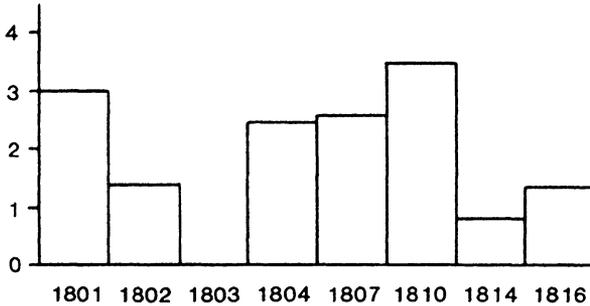


Figure 3

Lexico-semantic simplifications in all utterances per 100 words. (Roche 1989:61)

in Figure 3. Occurrences are measured per 100 words of the informants' speech. As can be seen, the German speakers use the evaluated features to a differing degree indicating different preferences for adaptation strategies. While all of the speakers use the strongest adaptations possible (d-utterances) not all use the rather mild lexical and semantic simplifications which are realised in standard or colloquial language. This is not to say that speakers do not know and use such strategies elsewhere. It only illustrates, in three exemplary features, the large range of speaker-specific variation found in similar (identical) conversational settings.

5. Addressee-Related Variation

In order to determine to what extent an addressee might be responsible for triggering adaptations in the speech of the target language speakers the command of German of several foreigners was first rated by a control group of target language speakers. The results of the rating are shown below.

It01 is a male 52 year-old Italian guestworker who speaks little German; It02 is a male 55 year-old Italian guestworker who uses German more fluently than It01 but not necessarily grammatically more correct; T13 is a female 43 year-old Turkish cleaning lady with rudimentary knowledge of German; T12 is a male 35 year-old Kurdish nurse with a fairly good command of German; T11 is a male 25 year-old Turkish student who also works in a factory to earn some money, his pronunciation of German is advanced; Pe01 is a male 26 year-old black Peruvian student of German who speaks slowly but for the most part correctly.

Next, the informants were asked to meet, in random order and over a period of several weeks, with several sales persons in big department stores in South-Western Germany in order to enquire about different brands and makes of washing machines. All informants received the same instructions and were given the same list of questions they had to ask, such as *how does the machine work, how much does it cost, how much water and electricity does it consume, what are the warranty conditions, how difficult would it be to get parts for the ma-*

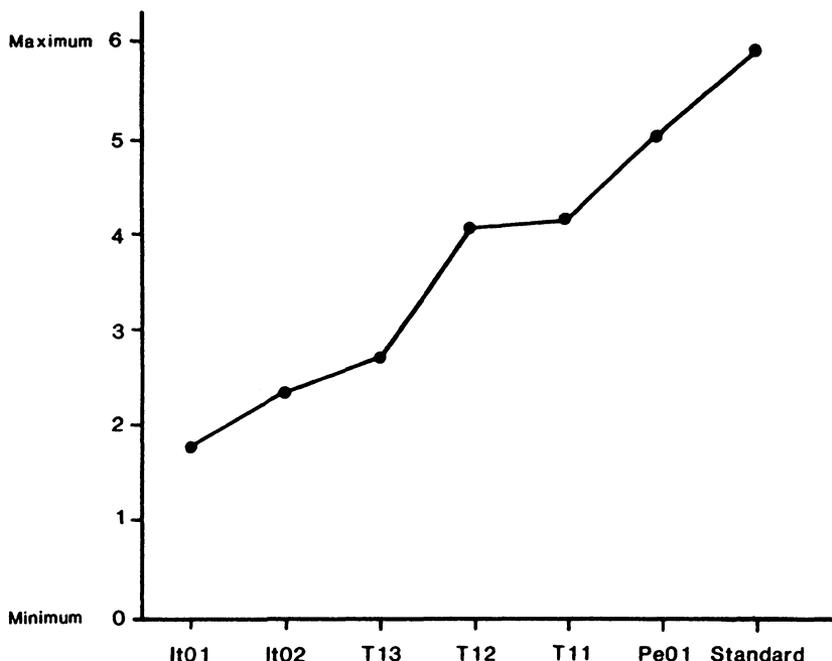


Figure 4

Subjective rating of six foreign addressees and a native speaker with respect to their command of German as the target language by a control group of native speakers of German. The rating is based on an evaluation of the addressees' intelligibility on a scale of 0 to 6. (Roche 1989:145)

chine, could the machine operate in the immigrant's home country and how difficult would it be to export it. According to the ratings of the addressees' command of German one would expect xenolectal adaptations to increase in proportion to the addressee's decreasing level of command of German. In other words, the lower the command of German the more xenolectal adaptations one would expect to find in the native speakers' speech. Surprisingly enough, this is not what happens all the time. The results of D101, a salesman of washing machines in his forties, while particularly prominent are representative of the collected data.

The four selected features provide some surprising insights into the adaptation strategies of the speaker. As could be expected, he uses the most radical adaptations in conversations with the addressee who received the lowest ranking. However, he also uses radical adaptations when speaking to the highest ranked addressees. Since the average length of a d-utterance is approximately 3.5 words, 21 occurrences of d-utterances per 100 words (29 utterances) equal approximately 70% of all utterances. That is, more than two thirds of the utterances the informant uses when talking to It01 are d-utterances. However, while the data shows that both the preferences of the speakers and the perceived requirements of the addressees have an impact on xenolectal variation these parameters alone do not fully explain the variation that occurs within a given conversation.

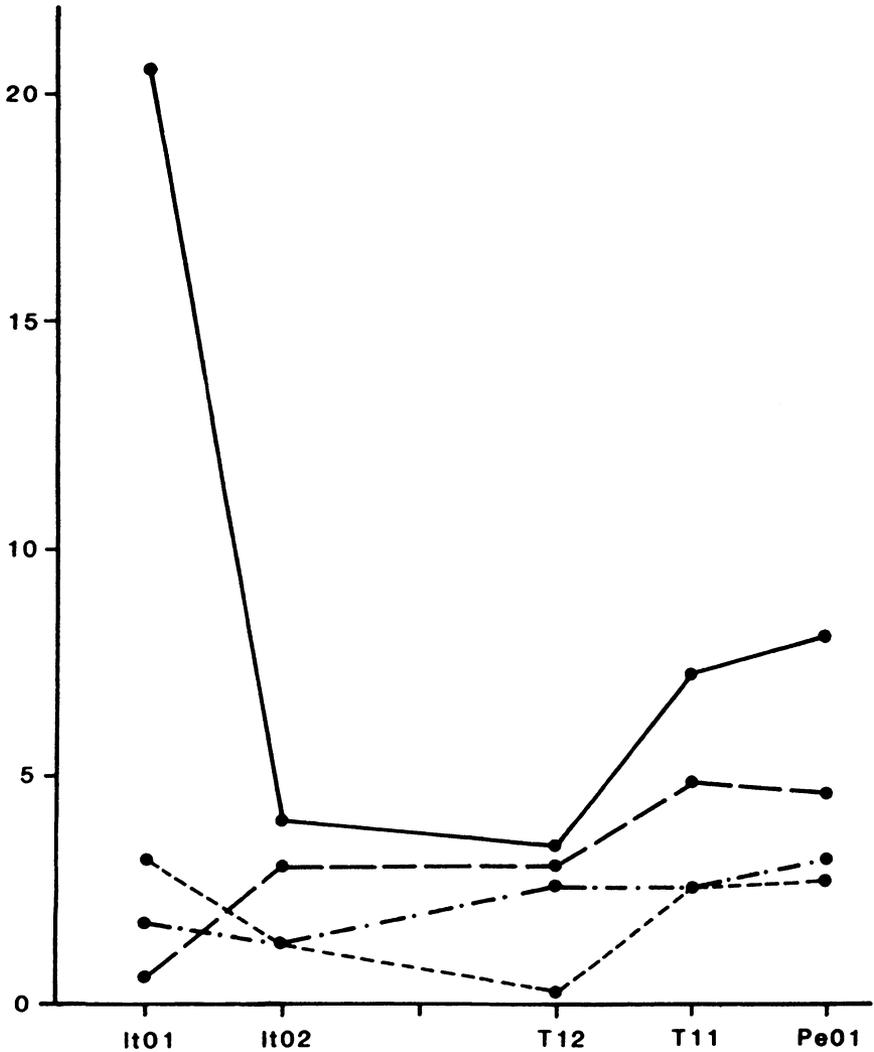


Figure 5
 Addressee-specific adaptations made by informant D101 (per 100 words)
 — d-utterances
 - - - omissions of article, copula and pronouns
 - - - morphological generalizations
 - · - · lexico-semantic simplifications (Roche 1989:148)

6. Pragmatic variation

A closer look at the pragmatic contexts of the conversations sheds more light on the large degree of variation which occurs in xenolects. This variation can not be explained in terms of the speaker's idiosyncrasies or the addressee's perceived foreignness alone. For instance, such broad parameters do not account for the fact that D101 and Pe01 were engaged in a more thorough discussion of the list of topics. Rather, the variation can be compared to the systematics of code-switching in general (Auer 1984; 1986; cf. Lüdi, this volume). The following short text segment taken from the factory data base described above and the approximate translation into English serve as a dramatic illustration of the kind of pragmatic variation found in xenolects. The German co-worker (D), in his late twenties, tries to explain to his Turkish colleague (T18) why he does not like his work as much as he used to.

Symbols	
C	= German ich-sound
x	= German ach-sound
ß	= English sh-sound
c	= schwa-sound (as in <i>Laute</i>)
z	= voiced s-sound
q	= ng (as in <i>swing</i>)
ä, ö, ü	= German umlauts
duplication of sounds	= double length
+, ++, +++	= speech pauses of approximately 1, 2, or more than 3 seconds

- 15 T: *abär duu hiir a aux guut arbit?*
 16 D: *++ najaa abär*
 17 T: *niks arbit maxcn +++*
 18-1 D: *dii lätstc tsait is +++*
 18-2 *iC habc foor läqrär tsait*
 18-3 *iC hap bctriübsraat gchoolt +++*
 18-4 *där klainc türkißman dahintcn*
 18-5 *däs +*
 18-6 *känst cn? +*
 18-7 *mit däm iß in naxtßißt arbit +*
 18-8 *där naxtßißt ++*
 18-9 *mäsär unt bärc am (...) ++*
 18-10 *kaam hiir angctsoogcn + mit mäsär un mit bärc +*
 18-11 *hap iC glai bctriübsraat /gehoolt maistär gchoolt*
 18-12 T: *du bisCän laqzaam + lan iß +*
 18-13 *vais duu das iß bin ausländär*
 18-14 *niC zoofil färßtee duu bisCä laqzaam zaagc miir*
 19-1 D: *da is ain türkißman +++*

- 19-2 *mit mäsär unt mit ßärc volt är auf miC loos ++*
 19-3 *s + jätst naxtßißt arbaitcn ++*
 19-4 *NAME-R vas vilst duu? +*
 19-5 *hap miC zoo rum gcßtält +*
 19-6 *hat mäsär gchapt unt ßärc*
 19-7 *hap iC gcsat vas vilst duu? +*
 19-8 *hap iC nuur zoo gcmxt +++*
 19-9 *naja da hap iC + betriübsraat komc lascn ++*
 19-10 *maistär gckomcn +*
 19-11 *GUSTAV komcn +*
 19-12 *MARTIN gckomcn ++*
 19-13 *naja mus iC mir däs gcfaln lascn? +++*
 19-14 *iC hap niks geegcn türkißman + virkliC niC +*
 19-15 *aux geegcn türkißfrau näks ++*
 19-16 *abär ++ droon mit mäsär un mit ßärc? +++ (...)*
- 15 T: *but you here um also good work?*
 16 D: *++ sure, but*
 17 T: *no work do*
 18-1 D: *the last bit has been +++*
 18-2 *some time ago i*
 18-3 *i got union rep +++*
 18-4 *the little turkishman back there*
 18-5 *this +*
 18-6 *know 'm? +*
 18-7 *with whom i work nightshift +*
 18-8 *he nightshift ++*
 18-9 *knife and scissors um (...) ++*
 18-10 *came marching up + with knife an' with scissors +*
 18-11 *i immediately got union rep got supervisor*
 18-12 T: *you a little bit slow + sl i +*
 18-13 *know you i foreigner am*
 18-14 *not so much understand you little bit slow me tell*
 19 D: *there's a turkishman +++*
 19-2 *he wanted to go at me with knife and with scissors ++*
 19-3 *this + now nightshift work ++*
 19-4 *NAME-R what do you want? +*
 19-5 *turned around like this +*
 19-6 *had knife and scissors*
 19-7 *said what do you want?*
 19-8 *just did like this +++*
 19-9 *so then i + got union rep to come ++*
 19-10 *supervisor come +*
 19-11 *GUSTAV come +*

- 19-12 *MARTIN come ++*
 19-13 *so do i have to take that? +++*
 19-14 *i've nothing against turkishman + not at all +*
 19-15 *nothing against turkishwoman either ++*
 19-16 *but ++ threaten with knife and with scissors? +++*

It is obvious that this conversation again contains a wide range of adaptations and colloquial speech. This is most evident in the diverse realizations of two of the central figures in this story, the *Betriebsrat* (union reps, either referring to individuals or the institution in German) and the antagonist *Türke* (*Turk*). While *Betriebsrat* appears without article in 18-3, 18-11 and 19-9 the listing of the individual representatives of the union (19-11 and 19-12) are even further condensed into d-utterances. *Türke* undergoes even more modifications: it starts out as *turkißman* (18-4), which is a xenolect-specific expression not normally used in colloquial speech, and gets condensed to the neutralized *däs* (18-5), which would be considered “ungrammatical” in colloquial language (*er/der*). In the following utterances (18-6 and 18-7) the pronominal references correspond to colloquial norms (*den, dem*). Also *där* in 18-8 is a correct pronominal reference albeit realized in a d-utterance format. In the following utterances the reference remains implicit as it does not change. Although D repeats the story with modifications after the addressee’s interference (18-12 to 18-14) the reference to the Turkish antagonist follows the same pattern as the first telling. In the broader pragmatic context of this conversation as well as in xenolectal communication at large the following consistent pattern of pragmatic variation emerges:

Narrative sequences and those parts of the conversation which play a central role in the transmission of information (e.g. explanations) generally undergo the most radical modifications. In the sample conversation above, those sequences include the core events of the story and its players (in particular 18-1 to 18-9 and 19-3 to 19-12). Interestingly, informants who introduce a narrative sequence which is realized in a certain utterance type typically return to this same utterance type after having blended in another speech act such as a comment or quoted speech. This is also true for other instances such as explanations in sales conversations where the speaker returns to a previous script after what may be a significant lapse of time.

In addition to this, three types of *condensations* stand out in the xenolectal repertoire: text sequences *condensing a given proposition or message*, text sequences *explaining a proposition* through additional information, and text sequences which attempt to *anchor certain facts* by introducing a variety of conceptual reference points. Examples in the conversation above include d-utterance condensations of the antagonist, the Turkish attacker, in 18-5, 18-8 and 19-3 and the introduction of the union representatives in 19-10 to 19-12. Another example is the speaker’s attempt to explain the concept of *Mennonite* by localizing it in different towns in Southern Ontario in the excerpt above. The types of condensations described here are related to a number of lexicalisation strategies used by second language learners, such as lexical decomposition, circumlocution, paraphrase, approximation and overextension (see Duff 1997 for an in-depth discussion and illustration of learners’ lexicalisation strategies and semantic competence).

Framing sequences, such as 18–1, and *embedded sequences, responses to requests for clarification, comments* (including *swearing*) and *excurses*, as well as *evaluations, confirmation requests* and *metalinguistic introductions to reported or quoted speech*, are generally presented in less adapted utterances or even standard speech (a-utterances). 18–6 for instance is a colloquial confirmation request built into the condensed telling of events, and 19–7 includes a dialectal introduction to direct speech. In 19–13 the speaker switches quickly from d-utterances in the previous sequence to a colloquial utterance type while stepping out of the story and evaluating the events. In yet another way, both *directly- and indirectly-quoted speech* are generally represented in standard utterances or the presumed original form of the quoted speaker's speech. Examples from the conversation above include 19–4 and the second part of 19–7 which are colloquial utterances within a c-utterance environment.

The allocation of a certain utterance type, level of adaptation or code to one of the specific functions listed above is subject to a number of external factors. Xenolectal communication settings are shaped by a variety of parameters typical to the interlocutors. Personal adaptation preferences and the perceived adaptation requirements of the addressee can clearly be identified as contributors to the broad range of variation that can be observed in xenolects. As such, xenolectal communication is principally not different from any other communication. The difference though may be found in the type and degree of adaptations employed by native speakers. Furthermore, xenolects like any other form of speech are subject to social norms such as what is considered acceptable, helpful, funny, polite or insulting in a given culture or sub-culture. This may explain why occurrences of xenolectal modifications may vary from language to language. Languages possess different means for adaptations to foreigners and allow realizations to different degrees. Whereas radical adaptations are, for instance, used openly and widely in German-speaking cultures they are generally considered less acceptable in North-American cultures. Post-recording interviews conducted with informants of the Canadian study indicate that speakers often feel bad about such adaptations when they occur, and express their preference for strategies such as paraphrasing or speaking louder over syntactical adaptations.

However, the communication enhancing effects of xenolects should not be underestimated. A previous paradigm shift towards a less orthodox view of the motivation for, and usefulness of, adaptation strategies in the parent talk debate (see contributions in Snow/Ferguson 1977) has prompted Hatch (1983b) and others to argue that foreigner talk and caretaker talk have the same basic functions, to promote communication, establish affective bonding and serve as an implicit teaching mode. Comments by learners confirm such views suggesting that "simplified input" is appreciated as long as it is in fact intended and needed to ease communication. Authentic data, such as the data presented here, can help develop a multifunctional view of the constructive processes at work in intercultural communication. It supports the hypothesis that the use of adaptation strategies primarily reflects the evaluation of communicative relevance, as determined by the speaker's goals and intentions and the perceived uptake by the addressee. In other words, *the higher the estimation of the communicative relevance of information, the greater the structural modifications in the respective utterances*. The evaluation of communicative relevance, however, is a subjective process which is dependent on a number of interrelated parameters and may not

always meet the real needs of the addressees. The severity of adaptations in xenolects is hence subject to processes of verification and modification. This is especially evident in the great range of (trial and error) variation observed in the “negotiation processes” when conversation partners first meet. It is the (more or less) comprehensive and secure assumptions developed in the course of a conversation and in further conversations which may finally lead to relative stability of verbal expression.

7. Xenolectal variation and second language acquisition

Simplified input has often played a role in formulating hypotheses in second language acquisition models. Such hypotheses generally assume that the input learners are confronted with is, at least initially, grammatically reduced as well as linguistically and semantically less rich compared to the input addressed to fully competent speakers of the target language (“native speakers”). This assumption has led to different conclusions though. On the one hand, it has been assumed that mutual imitation of learners and xenolect speakers leads to pidginisation or fossilization of the learners’ interlanguage, a kind of vicious circle with no exit option. On the other hand, the alleged under-specification (“underdetermination” and “degeneracy”) of the input has been used to support nativist models of language acquisition (White 1989). If the learners do not hear all the structures and elements of the target language but acquire them nevertheless it is assumed that they must be retrieved from some kind of innate grammar. This “universal grammar” is believed to exceed the universality of functional and processing principles and the learners’ ability to extract generalizations from the input. It is furthermore assumed that the simplified input “fails to exemplify all sorts of complex properties of language, making the acquisition problem worse rather than better” (White 1989:12). Input hypotheses derived from this research approach do, however, have major shortcomings: It is assumed that the input is largely uniform and homogeneously simplified. This assumption can not be confirmed by the more comprehensive data available now. Rather, it must be assumed that input is extraordinarily rich and diverse in *structures* providing a wide range of adapted and colloquial structures, in particular to the beginning learner. It has also been shown that *interactional* or *conversational adjustments* common to native speaker/non-native speaker conversations can have a positive impact on second language acquisition as a provider of comprehensible (manageable) input (Larsen-Freeman/Long 1991: 134ff; Klein 1986; Hatch 1983b).² Adjustments are considered most effective if they are the result of negotiations of referential meanings in which the learner exerts a fair amount of control over how much modification of the original input is needed (Kasper/Kellerman 1997). Still, too little is known about how learners access input and what the actual intake is, that is whether comprehension actually takes place, when acqui-

² In a broader context, it has also been shown that the process of language acquisition is susceptible to instructional measures in general (Mellow 1996, VanPatten/Sanz 1995).

Nativist hypotheses and acquisition models have also been criticised for other severe shortcomings. In discussing different parameters of a theory of second language acquisition Klein 1991, for instance, provides a sweeping critical account of the central claims of universalist approaches to language acquisition, in particular the inconsistencies found in parameter setting and the binding domains.

tion occurs and if it does, whether or not it leads to longer-term retention and use. Input research still lacks longitudinal studies of the actual *processes* taking place in intercultural communication, such as the initial negotiation of input levels and the interaction between target speaker input and learner output over time.

On the basis of the broad variation found in authentic xenolects and the available evidence on negotiation strategies in xenolects it appears rather unlikely that the input plays the kind of major role it is often believed to play in restricting or fossilizing “natural” second language acquisition. The findings reported here, do not support the assumption that input in untutored second language acquisition is generally simplified or underspecified in a way that only an innate grammar could compensate for the shortcomings. Furthermore, despite the fact that code negotiations can be observed between speaker and second language learner, there is no indication that the input matches the learner’s acquisition level in the sense of Krashen’s *i+1* hypothesis (1985). Rather, xenolects appear to offer a wide variety of access routes to the input, both simplified and complex. These routes are used to negotiate an approximate communication level which allows to obtain and provide the right input. Where the need arises, xenolect speakers may actually provide input which may be below the addressee’s own competence level. Often it is far ahead. The analysis of authentic data suggests that xenolects function as a pedagogic tool for teaching a foreign language in a “natural” setting. Once an access level has been established, e.g. a c-utterance or d-utterance level, the learner is generally led back to, or provided with, target-like structures as well. By and large xenolect speakers appear to adapt to the addressee’s communicative needs in a versatile and flexible manner while managing their own resources necessary to control adaptations.

8. Conclusion

Research on xenolects has often been content with anecdotal data or data and data collection methods which are restricted in their ability to provide insights into the more fundamental layers of this communication mode. As a consequence, relatively little is known about xenolects, which in turn has led to premature conclusions about their nature. More recent data explores the different parameters of the broad range of variation observed in xenolects allowing for a better understanding of the pragmatics of communication (in particular code switching), the sociological processes involved in intercultural communication and the nature of input in second language acquisition. The research reported here stresses the constructive functions of xenolects in establishing and maintaining communication and illuminates the assistance xenolects may provide to language learners. As all other forms of communication operating under similarly restricted conditions xenolects, too, provide windows to the general principles under which communication operates.

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