

Jørgen Gimbel

*Center for Multicultural Studies,
Royal Danish School of Educational Studies,
Copenhagen*

Priljeno: 02. 11. 1988.

IMMIGRANT DANISH – A MULTITUDE OF LANGUAGES*

SUMMARY

The study deals with immigrant pupils' command of Danish word order. The respondents were 4th and 6th form Turkish, Pakistan and Yugoslav children receiving their education in or near Copenhagen.

It starts from *the problem*, focussing on the variation in educational achievement among children of immigrant workers and refugees; in this connection, three hypotheses are put forward. In the next section, *the method*, some examples of elicitation material are provided, covering the most frequent deviations in the immigrants' Swedish and Danish word order. Under *data*, the example is described, and primary and background variables are provided. *The statistical analysis* included item- and multi-variate analyses. The results of the tests are outlined in table 1. No connection between, on the one hand, sex, age, school, and, on the other hand, command of word order, could be found. However, a correlation was exhibited, in varying degrees, between the occurrence of fully correct subtests and length of stay, nationality, and mother tongue respectively. Table 2 shows the percentage of pupils who answered all items in a given sentence type correctly. The respondents are divided into 3 groups of increasing command of word order. There follows a section containing the author's discussion, with the findings of this research supporting only the first and third hypotheses behind it, which are summarized under a), b) and c). It is assumed that the cause of the grouping of pupils is the social and educational status of their parents, while it could not be assigned to either nationality or mother tongue. On the basis of this result, which is considered as the most important, in the final section, *educational perspectives*, pedagogical developmental work including bilingual education is proposed, starting from the pupils' cultural and linguistic background.

The following article deals with a study on immigrant students' command of Danish word order. The experimental subjects were 159 4th and 6th form pupils in schools in or near Copenhagen. Their nationalities were Turkish, Pakistani and Yugoslav, and their mother tongues were Kurdish, Turkish, Urdu, Punjabi, Serbo-Croatian, Albanian, and Macedonian.

The main result of the study is that the pupils separated into 3 groups following neither nationality nor mother tongue. It is assumed that the cause of this grouping is the socio-economic status and education of the pupils' parents. As a practical consequence, pedagogical developmental work including bilingual education is proposed.

* The author wishes to express his gratitude to Professor J. Norman Jørgensen for many helpful and inspiring suggestions. Without his enthusiasm this article would have never been completed. J. G.

1. The problem.

The pupils in the public school in Denmark have traditionally been considered to constitute a rather homogeneous ethnic group. But since the late nineteen-sixties the Danish school has received several new groups of pupils: children of migrant workers and refugees. Still they are a comparatively small part of all the pupils in the public school, below 2%! The largest groups were citizens of the following countries (out of a total of 11,815 minority pupils, Nov. 1, 1985):

Turkey	4,038	pupils
Pakistan	1,949	-
Yugoslavia	1,237	-
Vietnam	799	-
Morocco	569	-

Immigrant pupils in the Danish schools are often referred to as one minority group. A series of studies show, however, that their educational achievement varies considerably – even when attention is focused on refugees and children of immigrant workers from third world nations. The variation in educational achievement has among other things been pointed out through surveys based on teachers' evaluation, achievement tests administered by the educational authorities of Copenhagen, and a survey of pupils finishing school in Copenhagen (v. 5 for details).

A common feature of the studies was that among the largest groups of immigrants, the Turkish pupils reached the lowest educational achievement, while the Yugoslav pupils were generally the most successful in the Danish school.

The immigrant pupils' command of Danish is of fundamental importance to their general level of education, and in the present investigation two hypotheses were advanced on account of these differences between the immigrant pupils' Danish skills:

1. The longer the pupils have stayed in Denmark, the better their command of the Danish language will be.
2. The native language of the immigrant pupils is of importance to the level of their Danish skills.

Furthermore, the following hypothesis was advanced to compare with Hyltenstam's research on adult immigrants in Sweden (7).

3. The acquisition of a second language, as reflected in the frequency of errors in Danish word order, will develop from simple to still more complex structures.

2. The method.

The study reported on here consisted of a test of linguistic minority pupils' skills in Danish word order. As elicitation material a Swedish test developed by Hyltenstam was used (v. 7). This takes the form of a cloze-test with 72 different sentences, in which the respondents were to insert a given word in one of two slots, as shown by the following example,

Han *I morgen* *kommer* *hjem*.
He Tomorrow comes home.
(i.e. He will be coming home tomorrow).

The material included 7 different sentence types. The problems were selected in a way which covered the most frequent deviations in the immigrants' Swedish and Danish word order. The word order problems were:

- A1: The placement of negation in non-subordinate clauses [12]
- A2: The placement of negation in subordinate clauses [12]
- B: Inversion in yes/no questions in non-subordinate clauses [12]
- C: Inversion with fronted non-subject in non-subordinate clauses [12]
- D1: Subject – verb placement in interrogative subordinate clauses [6]
- D2: Subject – verb placement in declarative subordinate clauses [6]
- E: Placement of object and final adverb [12].

Word order causes problems for many immigrants because syntax in a limited number of north-western European languages (among these, the Scandinavian languages) primarily has a function in the sentence structure, while in most other languages the function is one of information structure (v. 3; 6).

The test thus concerns a feature which discloses whether the pupils have realized the typological difference between Danish and their mother tongue.

3. Data.

The collection of data-material was carried out in Copenhagen and Ishøj in February–May 1984. In Ishøj 11 Turkish pupils from the 6th form in two of the schools participated. A majority of the respondents were living in Copenhagen. They were chosen from a survey of linguistic minority pupils, which the Department of Educational Statistics in Copenhagen had prepared, based on generally administered proficiency tests in 1983. Yugoslav, Pakistan and Turkish pupils in 4th and 6th forms were chosen. According to the survey there was a total of 189 pupils of the nationalities referred to in these age groups, and out of the 189 pupils, data were collected from 176. From this group, some children were sorted out. They were children whose parents had different mother tongues, Pakistanis with British citizenship and Pushto and Persian speaking pupils. This left 159 linguistic minority pupils in the study. At the same time data was collected from 172 Danish pupils, randomly chosen from the same forms. The distribution of the pupils according to nationality and mother tongue appears from the following outline:

	Total	Minority Language speaking 159	Danish speaking 172
Form:	4th form	78	92
	6th form	81	80
Nationality:	Danish		172
	Turkish	64	
	Pakistani	48	
	Yugoslav	47	
Mother tongue:	Danish		172
	Kurdish	18	
	Turkish	57	
	Urdu	24	
	Punjabi	24	

	Serbo-Croatian	11
	Albanian	14
	Macedonian	11
Background variables were:	Form	
	Sex	
	Nationality	
	Mother tongue	
	Age	
	Length of stay in native country	
	Duration of school attendance in Danish school	
	School attended at the time of the study.	

As the information about mother tongue was given by the pupils with no possible verification, there might be some uncertainty as to the distribution of pupils in the different mother tongue groups. This is especially the case in the Turkish-Kurdish and Urdu-Punjabi groups because of the socio-linguistic conditions in the native countries.

4. The Statistical Analysis.

The statistical analysis was made by the research officers Jens Johanes and Svend Kreiner from the Danish Institute for Educational Research.

The analysis included an item-analysis and a multi-variate analysis.

The item-analysis showed that the 7 subtests cannot be used as a common measure for syntactic competence, but that they seem to concern different competences. However, there is reason to believe that subtests A1, A2, C, D1 and D2 are related in a way which resembles syntactic development in general whereas the competence measured by subtests E and B seems to be somewhat special.

The results of the tests are outlined in table 1.

Table 1: Correctness percentage: percentage of pupils who have answered all items in a given sentence type correctly.

Sentence types	Correctness percentage						
	A1	A2	B	C	D1	D2	E
Minority Language speaking	91%	57%	31%	79%	71%	87%	66%
Danish speaking	95%	94%	42%	93%	96%	97%	82%

No connection between, on the one hand, sex, age, school, and, on the other hand, command of word order, could be found. Some of the subtests show, however, a significant correlation between the occurrence of fully correct subtests and length of stay, nationality and mother tongue respectively. This was most evident in the case of length of stay; the longer the stay in Denmark, the better command of word order in subtests A1, A2, C and D1. Significant relations were also found between nationality and occurrence of fully correct subtests B, C and E. The Yugoslavs often had the best score, and the Pakistanis seemed to score above the Turks.

The only significant relation between mother tongue and occurrence of fully correct tests was found in connection with subtest E.

Finally, a collapse-analysis was carried out in order to examine which groups, defined by nationality and mother tongue, showed significant differences as regards competence in word order. The result of this analysis can be seen from table 2, in which groups which do not differ have been combined, and the double lines in the table mark the major differences.

Table 2: Correctness percentage: percentage of pupils who have answered all items in a given sentence type correctly.

Sentence types		Correctness percentage						
		A1	A2	B	C	D1	D2	E
Nationality	Language							
Turkish	Kurdish	75%	33%	10%				26%
Yugoslav	Albanian	=====			60%	55%	69%	=====
Turkish	Turkish	92%	45%					
Pakistani	Urdu/Punjabi	=====			35%	=====		71%
Yugoslav	Turkish							
	Serbo-Croatian	100%	86%		100%	86%	100%	
	Macedonian							

The respondents can be divided into 3 groups according to increasing command of word order:

1. Turks speaking Kurdish and Yugoslavs speaking Albanian.
2. Turks speaking Turkish and all Pakistanis.
3. Yugoslavs speaking Turkish, Serbo-Croatian, or Macedonian.

5. Discussion.

The study showed that even the Danish pupils demonstrated deviations from standard Danish word order. The deviations were, however, distributed differently in the Danish group compared to the immigrants. Thus with the Danish pupils, a marked fall in the average number of errors could be seen from the 4th to the 6th form. This was not found with the minority groups. Furthermore, the number of errors concentrated increasingly within a small group of Danes from the 4th to the 6th form, which was not the case with the immigrants. This is interpreted in the following way: the deviations of the Danish pupils are due to faulty guesses during reading, whereas the deviations of the immigrants have (other) linguistic reasons as well.

The first and the third of the hypotheses behind the study were thus supported whereas hypothesis two cannot be confirmed on the present basis.

Hypothesis two is concerned with the role of the mother tongue in the acquisition of a second language. One reason why the transfer-theory cannot be confirmed by this study, may be that certain linguistic areas are more open to linguistic consciousness than others, and this is one of them (4 : 194).

The acquisitional sequence is interpreted on the basis of the frequency of deviations and is shown in figure 1.

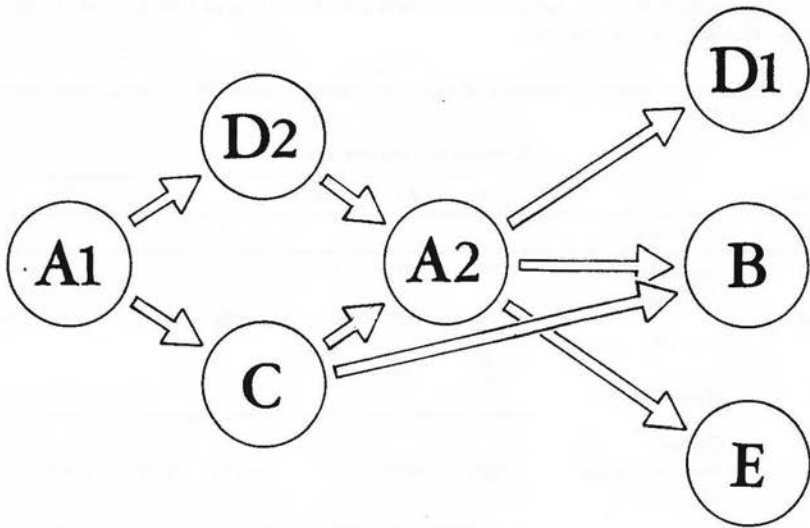


Fig. 1. The order of acquisition of Danish sentence types by linguistic minority students. The types first acquired are on the left-hand side. The more »complex« a structure is, the later it is acquired (see 4 : 3, for details).

The principal trends can be summarized as follows:

- a) The Hyltenstam thesis is confirmed. It states that the development in the interlanguage moves from the structurally simple to the more complex. In this connection the »simple structure« is taken to be the most frequent structure, and the one that Danish children will meet first, i.e. non-subordinate clause with fronted subject. The more this structure is changed, the more complex the syntax is supposed to be.
- b) The syntactical acquisition of Danish as a second language follows the linguistic development of Danish children in several respects.
- c) In second language acquisition there appears to be interference between different linguistic rules of production. I.e. sentence type D1 is acquired comparatively late, in spite of the fact that the structure in this case is the same as for type A1. This may be due to interference from type B, as both types are interrogative.

In this study, no connection between age and acquisition of Danish word order has been found. Nevertheless, a significant connection between length of stay and the acquisition of sentence types A1, A2, C and D1 was observed. It is, however, worth mentioning that no connection could be established between length of stay and the acquisition of sentence types D2, E and B. The largest occurrence of deviations appeared in E and B. From this study, it cannot be made out why this is so.

Perhaps the structure of the pupils' mother tongues deviates from Danish in these respects, perhaps these are linguistic areas which are not sufficiently included in classroom teaching. Perhaps these, the most complex types, take longer time to learn than most of the respondents had had at their disposal.

The correlation between fully correct subtests and the combination of language and nationality (table 2) is of interest, too. Neither mother tongue nor nationality alone is decisive. In this way, Turks speaking Turkish and Yugoslavs speaking Turkish are found in different groups, just as Yugoslavs speaking Albanian are clearly separated from other Yugoslavs.

The discussion of these results may draw on Cummins' attempt to explain similar results from American and Canadian research (2), but neither Cummins' own attempt to explain causes, nor Ogbu's or Feurestein's attempt (Cummins refers to both) are found to be sufficiently exhaustive or exact. The same can be said about the inter-group model which is described by Ball, Giles and Hewstone (1).

All these theories, however, ascribe decisive importance to individuals' and groups' conception of their own status in relation to the majority group.

Further to this, it is interesting to note that both of the two minority groups, who when combined constitute the weakest group in the study, are in fact groups of lower status in their native countries (v. e.g. 9). Apparently, the parents' social and educational status plays an important part.

This may very well be related to the social imbalance in educational intake in Denmark. Such an imbalance was demonstrated during the 1960's and 70's by The Danish National Institute of Social Research. Here, a connection was found between the attitudes of individuals and their educational level – and thereby a mechanism of importance to the social imbalance within the educational system.

6. Educational Perspectives.

The observation just mentioned is regarded as the most important result of the study. This is also the central point in the discussion of the educational perspectives. As one result of the surveys of The Danish National Institute of Social Research, a new school act was carried into effect by the Danish Parliament in 1975. This introduced a comprehensive school system with the intention of creating equal opportunities within education for all social groups. The basic ideas were fellowship and individualization. No streaming of pupils was to take place within the first 9 years of school, but the teaching was to be organized with a starting point in the pupils' background.

This paper ventures to argue that the same educational ideology should be the basis of the teaching of linguistic minority pupils. This implies aiming at a shared social school life for these pupils and the Danes, but at the same time it implies that the teaching of the immigrant pupils must start from their cultural as well as their linguistic background.

In other words, it means carrying out projects of educational development in which different kinds of inter-cultural and bilingual education are established. Only in this way the schools can demonstrate how valuable contributions the immigrants offer to Danish culture. Thus the schools may ascribe them enhanced status – and

consequently self-confidence. This may also lead to improved opportunities for the development of their mother tongue⁽⁸⁾.

DANSKI JEZIK U DOSELJENIČKE DJECE – MNOŠTVO JEZIKA

SAŽETAK

Ovo istraživanje bavi se poznavanjem reda riječi u danskom jeziku doseljeničke djece. Ispitanici su bili turski, pakistanski i jugoslavenski učenici 4. i 6. razreda, koji se školuju u Kopenhagenu ili okolici.

Polazi se od *problema*, u središtu kojeg se nalazi raskorak u školskom uspjehu djece radnika doseljenika i izbjeglica u odnosu na domaću djecu. Slijedi pasus *metoda*, u kojem se iznose neki primjeri rečenica iz primijenjenog testa, sa najčešćim odstupanjima od uobičajenog reda riječi danskoga i švedskoga, što se opaža u doseljenika. Pasus *podaci* opisuje uzorak i iznosi primarne i pozadinske varijable. *Statistička analiza* sastojala se od »item« analize i multivarijantne analize. Rezultati testiranja iznijeti su u tablici 1. Nije ustanovljena veza između, s jedne strane, spola, dobi, škole i, s druge strane, poznavanja reda riječi. No pronađena je korelacija, u većoj ili manjoj mjeri, između čestote posve ispravnih podtestova naspram materinskog jezika. Tablica 2 pokazuje postotak učenika koji su ispravno riješili sve probleme u svim rečenicama. Ispitanici su rangirani u tri skupine (neuspješnih, srednje ili prosječno uspješnih i uspješnih) s obzirom na poznavanje reda riječi. U pasusu *diskusija* nalaze se rezultati istraživanja (sažeti kao a), b) i c), što potkrepljuje samo prvu i treću od tri hipoteze što su bile iznijete u prvom pasusu. Autor pretpostavlja da je uzorak provedenog rangiranja učenika socijalni i obrazovni status njihovih roditelja; ono se nije moglo pripisati njihovoj nacionalnosti ili materinskom jeziku. Na temelju ovoga nalaza, što ga autor smatra najvažnijim, u posljednjem pasusu, *odgojne i obrazovne perspektive*, predlaže se pedagoški rad koji uključuje dvojezično obrazovanje i polazi od kulturnih i jezičnih temelja doseljeničkih učenika.

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