Chapter 5

Appropriate complexity

Gabriele Pallotti

University of Modena and Reggio Emilia

One of the most widespread assumptions in SLA research is that complexity grows over time, so that increasing proficiency in a second language would imply that one's productions become more and more complex. However, this assumption needs to be qualified and further investigated. Firstly, complexity does not grow at the same rate in different linguistic sub-domains (e.g. lexicon, syntax, morphology). Secondly, linguistic complexity varies across tasks and modalities, so that it is not always the case that "the more, the better" – there are adequate levels of complexity, and sometimes more can actually mean worse, at least for certain linguistic structures and sub-domains. This chapter presents results from a longitudinal four-year project involving adolescent learners, together with native speaker controls, performing a number of oral communicative tasks. The analysis looks at the complexity of telephone calls, demonstrating that the degree of syntactic complexity depends on the task's interactional requirements. More specifically, higher levels of syntactic complexity compete with the need to rapidly exchange turns and to direct the interlocutor's attention. As learners progress in the L2, their syntactic complexity in this task tends to decrease, while they develop more sophisticated pragmatic and interactional skills. Similar results are found using the conversation-analytic notion of Turn Constructional Unit (TCU) to compare syntactic complexity in telephone calls and in a narrative retelling task. The conclusion is that linguistic complexity must be interpreted, not just measured. Nowadays several tools are available to calculate dozens of complexity measures, and there is a risk of accumulating results with little reflection about how they should be understood in terms of language development and communicative adequacy. This has pedagogical implications, too, for language teachers must see complexity not as an objective in itself, but in a wider context of linguistic proficiency and functional appropriateness.

Gabriele Pallotti

1 Introduction

Second language acquisition (SLA) is clearly a multidimensional phenomenon. The introduction of the triad Complexity, Accuracy, Fluency (CAF) a few decades ago (Skehan 1998, Wolfe-Quintero et al. 1998) displayed precisely this awareness, by identifying three main, conceptually independent dimensions to describe language development. This was certainly an improvement from a naive conception seeing the acquisition of a new language as merely a matter of accuracy, that is, equating learning with making fewer mistakes. However, it has also been noted that the three dimensions, important as they are, do not exhaust all the aspects inherent in language learning. In particular, they do not take into account the communicative adequacy of linguistic productions: these might be very complex, accurate and fluent, although completely ineffective in achieving a communicative purpose; conversely, a message could be perfectly functional even if it is minimally complex, accurate and fluent (Pallotti 2009). Communicative language proficiency, i.e. the ability to communicate adequately and functionally, underpins all modern language teaching approaches and is one of the key constructs of current language tests, yet it has been neglected by most SLA research so far.

In this chapter, I will specifically discuss the relationship between linguistic complexity and communicative adequacy. Nowadays, measuring complexity is not a problem (at least for English and a few other languages), with several online tools available for calculating a gamut of scores and indices. The real problem is the way in which these scores are interpreted. Once we learn that mean length of words or clauses, vocabulary range, number of dependents per head, etc. have higher values in text A than in text B, what do we do with it? Can we take this to mean that text A is more advanced, sophisticated, "better" than text B, that it indexes a higher level of linguistic and communicative competence? Are there cases in which more complexity is not necessarily better, which raise the question of what is the appropriate, optimal level of complexity?

This chapter will try to address some of these questions, firstly from a conceptual point of view and then by presenting a study challenging the assumption that "the more complexity, the better", on a relatively under-explored domain, that is, telephone calls in an additional language.

2 Background

As mentioned, for several decades now, much SLA research has included linguistic complexity among the key variables to be measured, relating it in particular

to general interlanguage development and to various characteristics of communicative tasks. There are now several syntheses of these studies, which have also highlighted some critical issues and unresolved problems. One of the recurring points concerns the theoretical and operational definition of the construct. Several authors have noted that the term "complexity" is polysemic, indicating both structural intricacy and cognitive difficulty (Pallotti 2009, 2015, Bulté & Housen 2012). In this chapter we will restrict use of the term to the first, formal-structural meaning, having to do with the number of elements in a linguistic structure and the intricacy of their relationships. Secondly, construct operationalization has been called into question, too (Norris & Ortega 2009, Bulté & Housen 2012, Pallotti 2015). For example, many studies under-represented the language complexity construct by identifying it with a single measure, e.g. the subordination index, while in other cases redundant measures were used, such as the subordination index and the number of clauses per higher unit (for a review of these issues, see Norris & Ortega 2009, Bulté & Housen 2012). Furthermore, some measures reported to be about complexity are in fact related to difficulty, such as word rarity or the order of acquisition of grammatical rules.

As regards the results accumulated by this line of research, many studies report that lexical, morphological and syntactic complexity grow over time and with increasing linguistic proficiency, so that more advanced coincides in many cases with more complex (e.g. Crossley et al. 2011, Bulté & Housen 2018, Vercellotti 2018, Barrot & Agdeppa 2021). Other studies also noticed that higher levels of complexity tend to be associated with higher scores in holistic ratings (e.g. Yang et al. 2015, Kyle & Crossley 2018, Lahuerta Martínez 2018, Bi & Jiang 2020). Thus it would seem that, in general, the more complexity, the better, or, in other words, that a more complex text indexes a more advanced (that is, typical of later stages of acquisition) and sophisticated (that is, typical of more skilled language users) linguistic system.

However, this general assumption has at times been called into question. Biber et al. (2016: 648) for instance note that "there are numerous grammatical devices associated with complexity, and so texts can be complex in very different ways in addition to being complex to differing extents". To substantiate this point, in a series of corpus-based studies, Biber et al. (2011, 2016, 2020) showed that the subordination ratio, one of the most widely used indicators of linguistic complexity in SLA research, is not appropriate for assessing progress in academic writing in English. In this language, more competent writers (native users or very advanced learners) tend to produce texts that do not contain many subordinate clauses, but prefer another type of complexity, at the level of phrasal embedding. Biber and colleagues conclude that the assessment of complexity must always be related to

a particular register and textual genre and that developmental trajectories may vary, e.g. between the production of oral conversations and the writing of academic texts.

A similar hypothesis was also formulated by Ortega (2003, 2012) and Norris & Ortega (2009), who, based on a number of studies mostly dealing with English, hypothesized three stages in the development of syntactic complexity. Initially, it increases at the level of coordination, and is then followed by an increase in subordinate structures; the last level of complexification concerns phrases, which become longer and semantically more intricate, for instance with the use of nominalizations. Kyle & Crossley (2018) later demonstrated that fine-grained phrasal complexity indices are better predictors of overall writing quality than general measures of syntactic complexity as well as fine-grained measures at the clausal level. Even the "subordination" construct should not be treated in a unified manner. For example, Lambert & Nakamura (2019) noted that, in a picture description task, novice learners of English tend to use more nominal clauses, such as *I think that…*, while advanced learners employ a wider range and number of adverbial and relative clauses. As regards first language (L1) development at different ages, Nippold et al. (2005) found that subordination rate remains constant between ages 11 and 29, although in this age span nominal clauses tend to decrease while relative clauses increase.

These and other studies show that syntactic complexity is in fact a multidimensional construct: not only is it conceptually incorrect to describe it with a single measure such as the subordination ratio, but its development over time must be described in more nuanced ways than a generic trend such as "complexity increases", because different types of complexity and different genres and registers must be differentiated. Moreover, the few studies we have reviewed concern English. Even narrowing the field down to academic written communication, research on contrastive rhetoric shows that levels of syntactic complexity that are deemed optimal vary across languages and cultures. For instance, while academic English favors a style with little subordination and relatively simple and short multi-clausal units, academic prose in other languages, such as Italian, Spanish or German, may have different orientations (Connor 2002, 2018, Ortega 2012).

Another area where the principle "the more the better" does not always apply is textual cohesion. At school, students are often taught, both in their mother tongue and in additional languages, to use a large number and variety of textual connectives, because this is supposed to characterize high-level academic prose. However, even this is not always true. For instance, Crossley et al. (2011) found that younger L1 English writers, and those receiving lower proficiency ratings,

tended to employ more cohesive devices, while more advanced writers produced more complex phrases. These findings on L1 development echo the following ironic remarks on second language (L2) teaching:

> Sometimes (though not always!) in language teaching, what you teach gets learned, and what you do not teach does not get learned. In the late 1970s, when much attention was given to teaching cohesion, one sometimes found the strangest examples of student writing as a result. An essay might contain very many (unnaturally many, in fact) sophisticated "link expressions", such as *however, moreover, nevertheless, on the other hand.* But between these elegant link expressions might be the most awful English, full of errors. This was the result of teaching the joining-together skills and not much else. Beautiful joints, holding nothing together. (Johnson 2018: 294)

The same may apply for vocabulary, too. Durrant & Brenchley's (2019) results challenge the widely held assumption that, as children get older, they use an increasingly sophisticated vocabulary with rarer words. In their large-scale study of the writing of 6–16 year-olds in the UK, they noted that the proportion of rare words in texts did not increase with age. A closer analysis shows that this is due to the fact that younger L1 writers use more low-frequency nouns (e.g., *caldron, fairy, hideout, wisp*), but tend to repeat them more often; older children use a greater variety of low-frequency adjectives, verbs and adverbs. This shows, once again, that global constructs such as "lexical complexity" are too coarse and that developmental tendencies occur at the level of sub-constructs such as different word classes (nouns vs. verbs and adjectives) or types of complexity (diversity vs. word frequency). In a follow-up study based on the same cross-sectional corpus of written essays, Durrant & Durrant (2022) explicitly raise the issue of the "appropriateness" of lexical choices, introducing a further level of distinction, that between different school subjects (English, Science, Humanities) and genres (academic, fiction, news). The evolutionary path does not simply consist of an increase in rare or "academic" words, but in a gradual convergence towards lexical choices appropriate to each writing genre and subject area, implying greater lexical diversification when required by the context and topic. This is also the conclusion reached by Leńko-Szymańska (2021: 222) in her study comparing objective-analytic forms of vocabulary assessments, such as word diversity and frequency, with holistic ratings by human judges: "Sophisticated words used in a text should also be appropriate for the register selected by the writer and the content of an essay. If the whole text is written in conversational style, sophisticated words may not fit. As suggested by the judges, advanced words are also inappropriate to express banal ideas; then they can sound 'forced and contrived'."

All these studies call into question the simplistic assumption that "the more complexity, the better", showing that in some cases the optimal complexity level does not coincide with the highest. From a practical point of view, however, how can one determine whether and to what extent a certain level of complexity is "appropriate", or more appropriate than another?

First of all, an ample body of research shows that linguistic complexity systematically varies across communicative tasks and genres, for both first- and additional-language users (e.g. Foster & Tavakoli 2009, Ellis 2011, Michel 2011, Michel et al. 2019, Pallotti 2019, Larsson & Kaatari 2020). Thus, one should alway speak of complexity that is appropriate for a specific task. Even restricting the scope to one specific task, the question remains how to establish what levels of complexity are appropriate for that task, and when one can talk of under- or over-complexification. A first solution would be asking expert judges to rate the quality of linguistic productions and then see what complexity levels are associated to the highest ratings. Several studies have adopted this approach, providing raters with a series of descriptor scales to assess various dimensions of text quality and then correlate objectively calculated complexity levels with these subjective ratings (e.g. Lahuerta Martínez 2018, Bi & Jiang 2020). A second possibility, which may be considered as a shortcut with respect to the first, is to look at language users who are *a priori* assumed to produce high-quality texts. Traditionally, these are identified with native speakers, although this category has been repeatedly called into question (for a review, see Dewaele et al. 2021). Pallotti (2019) proposes the more neutral term "top language performers", although this again implies the first way of establishing appropriateness – a top performer is one achieving high quality scores, regardless of their biographical profile. While this approach remains the most valid from a conceptual point of view, it requires the empirical identification, for each task and communicative situation, of a reference sample of participants scoring at the highest level. A more practical alternative rests on the fact that several studies have shown that native speakers, that is, people who started using a language from birth and kept using it regularly for all their life, invariably perform at top levels, at least in what Hulstijn (2015) calls "core language proficiency", involving linguistic structures common to all registers and varieties (Granena & Long 2013, Dąbrowska 2019). When it comes to more formal and academic language uses, native speakers exhibit more variation, so that the assumption that they all perform at top levels become more questionable (Andringa 2014, Hulstijn 2015, 2019, Dąbrowska 2019).

In this chapter, native language users will be taken as a reference for establishing appropriate complexity levels. In fact, the tasks we will be looking at all

involve mundane language where native speakers are expected to form a rather homogeneous category. Furthermore, both native and non-native speakers belong to a larger population of high school students, so that their educational levels can be assumed to be similar. The distinction between native and non-native speakers is convenient and it follows a long tradition. However, this does not preclude that in future studies a more effortful but valid classification may be produced, based on text quality assessment without regard to biographical characteristics.

3 The study

Previous research has mainly focused on how different levels of complexity may be appropriate for academic communicative contexts, such as essay writing or oral proficiency interviews. In this chapter the scope will be broadened by discussing syntactic complexity in a rather unexplored genre, telephone conversations, a highly interactive, unplanned everyday practice. The aim is to show that, in this domain, too, higher levels of syntactic complexity are not necessarily associated to higher skills or more effective performance.

Data come from the VIP corpus (*Variabilità dell'Interlingua Parlata* [Variability of Spoken Interlanguage]; Pallotti et al. 2011). Informants aged 15–20 at the beginning of data collection took part in the study, which tracked their linguistic development over a period of four years, with recording sessions held every year. 14 were intermediate-advanced L2 learners of Italian with a variety of L1s, while 10 were native Italian speakers, who were tested twice at about 2 years' distance. Native speakers were slightly younger in order to match class level of the learners, most of whom started high school late or had to repeat one or more school years. Written consent was collected from all participants and, in the case of informants under 18 years of age, also from their families. All names were replaced by pseudonyms.

Data transcription and coding is still under way, so that only a subset of data is currently available for analysis. The present investigation will consider four language learners and two native speakers (Table 1). It is thus a small-scale study, whose main goal is not to make inferential generalizations but to suggest new avenues for expanding the debate on complexity and its appropriateness.

Participants performed a variety of oral communicative activities, so that their linguistic skills could be assessed in a range of contexts. The procedure consisted in two sessions on two different days. The first session involved a series of essentially monologic tasks and began with a semi-structured interview, followed

Table 1: Participants in the study

	Country of origin	L1	Years in Italy at T1	Age at T1
Pandita	India	Punjabi	4	17
Catherine	Ghana	Twi	6	19
Eden	Eritrea	Tigrinya	6	19
Shirley	Nigeria	English	6	15
Elisa	Italy	Italian	–	15
Valentina	Italy	Italian	–	15

by retelling a silent film and a picture story, then by a map task with the adult interviewer. The second session proposed more interactive tasks, with participants working in pairs. There was another map task, this time with the peer, and two information-seeking activities, one requiring the participants to plan a school trip, the other to select a present for a friend. Both of these tasks required making a number of phone calls to shops, travel agencies, restaurants and hotels, and to a list of "experts" (both youths and older adults), who were asked to provide advice and information. All these phone calls were real, in the sense that real businesses and homes were contacted, so that there was no staging and advanced planning of the interaction. However, all participants, including phone calls receivers, signed a consent form declaring that they were willing to be recorded in the coming weeks. Apart from the initial ice-breaking conversation, all the other tasks were presented in a counter-balanced order in different sessions. To minimize task repetition effects, the tasks performed every year had similar characteristics to ensure comparability, but varied in content. For example, every year a new video clip for the story retelling was presented, but their duration and narrative complexity were held as constant as possible. Likewise, maps in the map task varied every year, as well as the destinations for the school trip or the type of present to select.

This study will focus on two tasks: the film retelling and telephone call openings. Retelling a silent movie is an elicitation procedure widely employed in SLA research, as it allows researchers to observe relatively long stretches of monologic speech, with a good balance between spontaneity and standardization. Telephone calls, on the other hand, have hardly ever been the object of systematic investigation in L2 studies (see however Nuzzo & Gauci 2012, Thörle 2016, Fant & Lundell 2019), although the literature on them in L1 speakers is extensive, especially as regards their opening phases (Schegloff 1986, Luke & Pavlidou 2002). These two tasks represent two poles of a continuum of interactionality. The film

retelling is a highly monologic task, where the interlocutor normally just provides a few backchannels, while telephone call openings are characterized by a rapid exchange of very short turns, with both participants contributing to the establishment of a "ritual state of ratified mutual participation" (Goffman 1963: 100) before they move on to the main business of the call.

Transcription followed a modified version of the Chat-CA system (see Appendix A), with English glosses trying to capture the original Italian text, including non-standard forms. Transcribed data were prepared for quantitative analysis by first dividing them into clauses and AS-Units. The latter can be defined as "a single speaker's utterance consisting of an independent clause or sub-clausal unit, together with any subordinate clause(s) associated with either" (Foster et al. 2000: 365). A sub-clausal unit, in turn, is a "phrase which can be elaborated to a full clause by means of recovery of ellipted elements from the context [three, to the office]... or a minor utterance or "nonsentence" (Quirk et al. 1985)", like *Oh poor woman, Thank you very much, Yes* (Foster et al. 2000: 366). A slightly modified version of AS-Unit, more suitable for Italian, was adopted, as discussed by Ferrari (2020).

The following excerpts (from Foster et al. 2000) exemplify the units:

```
| when I was in the university :: er I have specialized in this
er subject | (1 AS-Unit, 2 clauses; :: indicates clause boundary)

| three months for this one | (1 AS-Unit, 1 sub-clausal Unit)
```

This segmentation was carried out by students and research assistants on about 60% of the data, and then checked by the principal investigator; after some initial training and discussions, inter-rater agreement was always over 85%. The remainder of the data were coded by the principal investigator only.

Telephone call openings were also segmented into Turn-Constructional Units (TCU, Sacks et al. 1974), that is, "the smallest interactionally relevant complete linguistic units in their given context" (Selting 2000: 512). The term is commonly used in conversation analysis to indicate units of interaction, which may coincide with syntactic units, such as phrases or clauses, although this is not always the case. Their fundamental characteristic is that they constitute "blocks" of language which may constitute a complete turn, and whose end may thus allow for the beginning of a new turn by another speaker. In other words, "each TCU is a coherent and self-contained utterance, recognizable in context as "possibly complete". Each TCU's completion establishes a Transition-Relevance Place (TRP) where a change of speakership becomes a salient possibility that may or may not be realized" (Clayman 2012: 151).

Syntactic complexity was assessed using the following measures:

Words per AS-Unit (words/AS-U). The length in words of each AS-Unit (including clauses, multi-clausal and sub-clausal units).

Words per clause (words/clause). The length in words of each complete clause, that is, a syntactic structure minimally consisting of a verb and all its necessary arguments. This category includes clauses with zero subjects, which are grammatical in Italian, but not sub-clausal units such as *in the evening* or *really?*

Dependent clauses per AS-Unit. All clauses depending on a matrix clause, divided by the total number of AS-Units. The criteria for establishing what is a dependent clause are those exposed in Ferrari (2020), which only partially match Foster et al.'s (2000) approach.

Dependent clauses per clause. All clauses depending on a matrix clause, divided by the total number of clauses. This is the standard subordination ratio.

The first two measures tap length of syntactic unit, while the last two concern the degree of clausal embedding. For both sets, the denominator is either the clause or the AS-unit. While this introduces some redundancy (clause-based and AS-unit-based measures are clearly correlated), there are some reasons for retaining both operationalizations. Clause-based measures, in fact, refer to a purely linguistic, syntactic unit such as the clause, while the AS-unit is an interactional unit, relating more to the notion of conversational move and including a number of syntactically incomplete, though pragmatically fully appropriate, sub-clausal units. The two types of units also allow one to compare results with previous research on written and oral productions, and are thus relevant to answer questions about appropriate levels of complexity in different modalities.

4 Results

The next pages will present the results of the study, with a quantitative analysis and a qualitative discussion of some excerpts (a preliminary and complementary description of individual and group developmental trajectories may be found in Ferrari 2012). The quantitative analysis will be based on the averages of the four learners relative to the four years of the study (T1–T4), in order to observe any developmental trends, while the native speakers' column reports the average scores over the two data collections for the two Italian participants. We will first discuss syntax, with classical measures of complexity such as unit length and various subordination indices. This will be followed by an analysis of interactional dynamics based on the notion of TCU.

4.1 Syntactic analysis

Table 2: Film retelling – syntactic complexity (group average and min-max range)

	T1	T2	T3	T4	NS
words/AS-U	5.73	5.77	6.22	5.66	6.97
	(4.56−7.28)	(4.89−6.41)	(5.56−6.83)	(5.04−6.10)	(4.86−8.36)
words/clause	4.55	4.97	5.61	4.90	5.68
	(4.31−4.91)	(3.96−5.63)	(5.00−6.83)	(4.80−5.08)	(4.58−6.73)
dep cl/AS-U	0.37	0.31	0.26	0.30	0.42
	(0.22−0.53)	(0.23−0.39)	(0.22−0.33)	(0.20−0.38)	(0.21−0.69)
dep cl/clause	0.29	0.27	0.23	0.25	0.33
	(0.21−0.36)	(0.20−0.33)	(0.19−0.26)	(0.19−0.30)	(0.25−0.43)

In the narrative task, native speakers' productions were syntactically more complex than the learners' were. Table 2 shows that both their AS-units (6.97 words, vis-à-vis values between 5.66 and 6.22 for the learners) and their clauses (5.68 words vs 4.55−5.61) were longer. They also produced more dependent clauses per AS-Unit (0.42) and per total number of clauses (subordination ratio = 0.33). The learners did not seem to follow a linear developmental pattern, as their scores for both length of unit and subordination fluctuated over the four years, without displaying an increasing or decreasing overall trend, although they always remained below native speakers' values. These were intermediate-advanced learners and previous research has shown that subordination and length of unit tend to increase mostly in the initial stages of L2 acquisition and then stabilize in a plateau (Verspoor et al. 2012), which might also be the case for this group of participants.

Things are rather different regarding telephone call openings (Table 3). Here, too, native speakers tend to produce longer AS-units, with an average length of 4.97 words, higher than any of the learners' values over the four years. Their average clause length (6.48) is slightly higher, too, although it lies within the learners' range of values over the four years (between 5.65 and 6.71). The main difference concerns subordination. Native speakers produce very few dependent clauses per AS-Unit (0.08) and per clause (0.11), while these are more frequent in learners' speech, with values between 0.09 and 0.19 and 0.13 and 0.21, respectively. This propensity to subordinate is particularly striking in the first year, when learners produce almost twice as many dependent clauses per AS-Unit and per clause than native speakers. This subordination ratio drops considerably in the second year and remains constant for the three subsequent years, which

somehow resonates with Ortega's (2003, 2012) remarks on written language development.

Table 3: Telephone calls – syntactic complexity (group average and min-max range)

	T1	T2	T3	T4	NS
words/	4.01	4.05	3.99	3.99	4.97
AS-U	(3.42–4.91)	(3.40–5.16)	(3.14–5.25)	(2.84–5.41)	(4.31–6.11)
words/	5.65	6.71	6.14	5.78	6.48
clause	(4.54–6.68)	(4.25–10.33)	(5.07–7.87)	(5.53–6.23)	(5.74–7.10)
dep cl/	0.19	0.09	0.11	0.10	0.08
AS-U	(0.13–0.33)	(0.00–0.15)	(0.04–0.20)	(0.03–0.18)	(0.00–0.22)
dep cl/	0.21	0.13	0.13	0.14	0.11
clause	(0.13–0.35)	(0.00–0.26)	(0.05–0.26)	(0.02–0.25)	(0.00–0.22)

These quantitative trends may be better understood by looking at a few examples. The first two excerpts (Tables 4 and 5) show how participants with Italian as an L1 typically opened their phone calls. They uttered rather short turns, consisting of independent clauses (*I wanted to ask some information; do you sell cell phones?*) or sub-clausal units (*the sagem MYX 52?; to london; a class of young people*). This differs from the learners' openings, which, especially in the first period, contained many long and complex syntactic structures, such as *I'd like to know how much simsang SGHA 800 costs* (Table 6) or *we're a group of four friends who would like to go on a trip to london* (Table 7) or *I need the information to go to barcelona* (Table 8).

After a few years, the learners de-complexified their openings, which became more similar to native speakers'. For instance, they often prefaced their requests with a pre-request, such as *can I ask you some information* (Table 9) or *excuse me I've got to ask me some information* (Table 10).

In this last example, Table 11, Eden's opening at Time 3 contains many short clauses and sub-clausal units, and the most complex syntactic structure comes at the end in the form of a very standard pre-request formula (*I'd like to know if*) followed by a simple clause (*you have rear window*, i.e. the famous film by Alfred Hitchcock). §4.3 will be specifically devoted to discussing the dynamics of these interactional moves which gradually lead participants to the main concern of the phone call.

Table 4: Ex. 1: Elisa, NS

SH4: telecom buongiorno ?#	SH4: telecom good morning ?#
ELI: .hh e:: buongiorno. volevo chiederle un'informazione, #0_2	ELI: hh e:: good morning. I wanted to ask some information, #0_2
ELI: e: vendete cellulari?	ELI: e: do you sell cell phones?
SH4: sì?	SH4: yes?
ELI: .h e:: sì.	ELI: h e:: yes.
ELI: volevo sapere alcune informazioni su due due cellulari. #0_2	ELI: I wanted to know some information about two two cell phones. #0_2
SH4: se li abbiamo volentieri	SH4: certainly, if we have them
ELI: e:: okey. il sagem emme ipsilon ics cinquantadue?	ELI: e:: okay. the sagem MYX 52?

Table 5: Ex. 2: Valentina, NS

AG2: moito viaggi #	AG2: moito viaggi #
VAL: buonasera	VAL: good evening
AG2: sì	AG2: yes
VAL: volevo chiederle informazione #	VAL: I'd like to ask you information #
AG2: sì	AG2: yes
VAL: e: per londra #	VAL: er: to london #
AG2: sì	AG2: yes
VAL: una classe di: ragazzi	VAL: a class of young people
AG2: mh mh	AG2: mh mh
VAL: e: qualcosa di conveniente che:: # che c'è	VAL: er: something inexpensive that:: # that's available

Table 6: Ex. 3: Pandita, NNS, T1

```
SH4: pronto .              SH4: hallo .
#0_5                       #0_5
PAN: pronto                PAN: hallo
PAN: buonasera: . #        PAN: good evening #
SH4: buonasera: .          SH4: good evening.
PAN: vorrei sapere quanto costa   PAN: I'd like to know how much
simsang esse gi acca a ottocento  simsang SGHA 800 costs .
.
```

Table 7: Ex. 4: Shirley, NNS, T1

```
AG3: moito viaggi?         AG3: moito viaggi?
SHI: .hhh #0_8 buonasera   SHI: .hhh #0_8 good evening
#0_5                       #0_5
AG3: buonasera             AG3: good evening
SHI: allora noi siamo un # SHI: ok we're a # group of four
gruppo di quattro # amici che #  # friends who # would like to go
vorremmo far un viaggio # a      on a trip # to london
londra                     #0_4
#0_4
AG3: [sì                   AG3: [yes
SHI: [perciò volevamo chiedere   SHI: [so we wanted to ask the
il costo dell'aerio e gli #      price of the plane and the #
orari #0_5                 schedule #0_5
```

Table 8: Ex. 5: Eden. NNS, T1[a]

```
AG1: ci bi esse buongiorno sono   AG1: ci bi esse good morning
daniela.                    daniela speaking.
ST4: buongiorno. ho bisogno  ST4: good morning. I need the
dell'informazione per andare a   information to go to barcelona
barcellona
```

---

[a]This example comes from a learner, Aisha, who was not included in the sub-corpus used for quantitative analyses in this chapter.

Table 9: Ex. 6: Pandita, NNS, T3

SH4: mediaworld buongiorno #	SH4: mediaworld good morning #
PAN: buongiorno # scusa posso chiedere un'informazione	PAN: good morning # escuse me can I ask you some information
SH4: sì #	SH4: yes #
PAN: io vorrei sapere se magari lei sa # un titolo di un ci di # mana #	PAN: I'd like to know if by any chance you know # the title of a CD by # mana #
SH4: vi passo il reparto un attimo eh	SH4: I'll put you through the deparment just a minute eh
PAN: okey	PAN: okey

Table 10: Ex. 7: Catherine, NNS, T3

SH3: ricordi mediastore buongiorno sono marco	SH3: ricordi mediastore good morning marco speaking
CAT: pronto buongiorno	CAT: hallo good morning
#0_5 .	#0_5 .
CAT: hhh	CAT: hhh
SH3: prego	SH3: please
CAT: eh mi scusi mi devo chiedere un un'informazione	CAT: eh excuse me I've got to ask me some information
#0_2	#0_2
SH3: prego	SH3: please
CAT: l'ultimo cidi di norah jones	CAT: the last CD by norah jones
SH3: sì	SH3: yes
CAT: che si intitola not too [late	CAT: entitled not too [late
SH3: [too late # sì sì ce l'abbiamo	
CAT: quanto costerà secondo lei	SH3: [too late # yes yes we've got it
#0_2	CAT: how much will it be in your opinion
	#0_2
SH3: e::::: uf dovrebbe essere venti euro e novanta #0_8	SH3: e::::: uf it should be twenty euros ninety #0_8
[...]	[...]

Table 11: Ex. 8: Eden, NNS, T3

```
SH3: libreria (memoli) buonasera    SH3: (memoli) bookstore good
sono tatiana                        evening tatiana speaking
#0_2                                 #0_2
EDE: eh::: buonasera                 EDE: eh::: good evening
#0_5                                 #0_5
EDE: allora # voi vendete            EDE: now # do you sell DVDs?
divudi::?
#0_5                                 #0_5
SH3: si::::.                         SH3: yes::.
EDE: si::                            EDE: yes::
#                                    #
EDE: okey                            EDE: okey
#                                    #
EDE: volevo sapere se avete:: #     EDE: I'd like to know if you
la finestra sul cortile             have::# rear window
[...]                                [...]
```

4.2 Learning syntactic variation

Ferrari (2012) looked at the development of complexity, accuracy and fluency in the same four participants observed in this study. Her analysis included two more tasks, the interview and picture-story retelling, and also discussed the individual learners' trajectories over time. In her conclusions, she states that "Italian students exhibit a high degree of variation across tasks with respect to measures of syntactic complexity and fluency. On average, this variation is less pronounced in L2 learners and there seems to be little change for the group as a whole over the three years of the study" (Ferrari 2012: 291)[1]. However, she did not provide an explicit quantitative account of these claims, which will be the object of this section.

Table 12 shows the differences between scores for film retellings and telephone calls, in the four longitudinal data collection points for the learners and in the two data collections for the native speakers. The column labeled "NNS 4yrs" reports the learners' average score over the four years. Phone calls are syntactically less complex (negative values) than the narratives for all measures except words

---

[1]By "three years" Ferrari means the years following the first one, thus totaling four years as in this contribution.

per clause. This may be explained by the fact that this score refers to complete clauses only, thus disregarding sub-clausal units, which are instead included in the AS-Unit count. Although phone calls contained many short sub-clausal units, which is reflected in their lower AS-Unit length, the few complete clauses they had tended to be slightly longer than those in the film retelling, of about one word (1.06 for learners and 0.80 for native speakers). This measure is outstanding in another regard, as it is the only one where the difference between film retelling and phone calls is larger for learners than for native speakers. In all other cases, the spread of values across the two tasks for native speakers is larger than that for the L2 users. The spread between the two tasks did not vary much for the learners over the four observation times, as suggested by Ferrari (2012), although her more fine-grained analysis shows that this group pattern may be further divided into two sub-patterns, at least as regards the subordination ratio. Pandita and Catherine, who were less advanced at the beginning of the study, increased the difference in subordination between monologic and dialogic tasks over time, while Eden and Shirley went in the opposite direction. Ferrari hypothesizes, with the necessary caveats due to the very small number of observations, that, after reaching a certain proficiency level, syntactic complexity choices become a matter of individual style and preferences, less constrained by task features and demands.[2]

The degree of subordination is indeed a prime example of what Pallotti (2015: 120) calls "stylistic complexity", which "is always, at least to some extent, a matter of speaker's or writer's choice". In another study based on the VIP corpus, looking at the 10 native speakers, Pallotti (2019) found in fact that, in five different communicative tasks (film retelling, phone calls, interview, map task, discussion among peers) the inter-individual coefficient of variation was always larger for syntactic complexity measures, such as length of AS-Unit and subordination, than for other complexity dimensions such as lexical and morphological complexity. It thus seems that syntax – and subordination more specifically – is the linguistic domain leaving more room for individual stylistic variation, although, even here, different tasks tend to activate on average different levels of complexity.[3]

---

[2]As many other authors, Ferrari does not give any exact indication as to this proficiency threshold where the change would take place. This remains a challenge for research in this area, which would greatly benefit from studies collecting fine-grained measures of both learners' proficiency and linguistic features like complexity. Normally, proficiency is operationalized in terms of CEFR levels or scores in standardized tests, which provide only a coarse grained characterization.

[3]Although Pallotti's (2019) corpus was larger than in the present study, including the two native

Table 12: Variation between film retelling and telephone calls

	T1	T2	T3	T4	NNS 4yrs	NS
words/AS-U	−1.72	−1.73	−2.23	−1.67	−1.84	−2.00
words/clause	1.11	1.74	0.53	0.88	1.06	0.80
dep cl /AS-U	−0.18	−0.22	−0.15	−0.19	−0.18	−0.35
dep cl/clause	−0.08	−0.14	−0.10	−0.12	−0.11	−0.22

4.3 Interactional analysis

Most SLA research on complexity deals with various forms of linguistic complexity, such as lexical, morphological, syntactic. However, dialogic oral communication may also be analyzed in different terms, looking at how interaction unfolds in a series of "moves" whereby participants co-construct courses of (inter)action. This is the perspective taken by conversation analysis and interactional sociolinguistics, and may complement the linguistic perspective we have discussed so far (for applications of this approach to SLA, see Pekarek Doehler & Lauzon 2015, Pekarek Doehler & Pochon-Berger 2015, Véronique 2017b, Skogmyr Marian & Balaman 2018 and the Special issue of *Modern Language Journal*, 2022, S1). Analysis in this section rests on the notion of Turn-Constructional Unit (TCU) introduced before. However, this notion does not necessarily coincide with syntactic units like the clause or phrase; although it depends on them in most cases, as syntactic completeness is one of the major indicators that a turn can be concluded and that a transition to next speaker is potentially relevant (Selting 2000). Another important construct is that of "pre-". Many conversational moves, such as requests, refusals, or proposals, are not produced directly, but get introduced by some linguistic and non-linguistic signals that prepare the ground for the main action to come. For example, a request for information is rarely produced directly,

---

speakers considered here together with eight more participants of the same group, he looked at a smaller number of measures, so that the two studies are not entirely comparable. However, the two measures that can be compared, that is words/AS-Unit and dependent clauses/AS-Unit, confirm our results. Compared to the learners in this study, the ten participants in Pallotti (2019) produced longer AS-Units with more dependent clauses in the film retelling, while in telephone calls their AS-Units were shorter and with fewer dependent clauses than the learners' at T1. It is important to note that these are group tendencies rather than categorical distinctions – the values for some individual learners fall within the range of native speakers, which is also due to the high inter-individual variation in syntactic behaviors.

as in *Do you have rear window?*, but is normally prefaced by a series of pre-request moves, as done by Eden in Table 11, such as *Do you sell DVDs?* or *okey*. This allows the listener to gradually orient to the request and process it, as it were, bit by bit. In an interplay between syntax and interaction (Couper-Kuhlen & Selting 2017, Pekarek Doehler & Eskildsen 2022), pre-requests by native speakers tend to occur as separate TCUs, allowing the receiver to step in even for a very brief acknowledgment token, like the *yes* and *mhmh* produced by the shop assistant while Valentina, a native speaker, builds her pre-request and request step-by-step (Table 5). In these cases, both parties converge towards a "ritual state of ratified mutual participation" (Goffman 1963: 100) in a coordinated fashion, which implies the ability to gain and yield the floor several times in a rapid turn exchange. L2 learners, especially in the first year of observation, followed this strategy less frequently. For instance, Pandita at T1 (Table 6) uttered a single complex TCU containing both the pre-request (*I'd like to know*) and the request proper (*how much simsang SGHA 800 costs*). Likewise, Aisha at T1 (Table 8), produced a long TCU directly containing the request (*I need the information to go to barcelona*). In these cases, the listener must wait until the whole pre-request+request sequence is produced before a Transition-Relevant Place is reached.

Quantitative analysis confirms these insights (Table 13). Native speakers produced very few pre-requests embedded within a larger TCU (14.29%), while this proportion was much larger in non-native speakers, especially at T1 (71.43%; at this time there were also several instances, 21.43%, that could not be readily classified as belonging to either category, given the difficulty of segmenting them into syntactic units), and then gradually decreased over time at T2–T4. This shows a trade-off between syntactic complexity and interactional fluency. Initially, learners preferred more complex syntactic structures, packing into one single unit both the pre- and the request, which accounts for their high subordination ratio at T1. This sort of syntactic embedding requires a certain degree of grammatical competence, which was already attained by these intermediate-advanced learners, but lowers interactional demands, as learners don't run the risk of losing the floor and having to regain it immediately afterwards. This, apparently, seems to require higher interactional skills that these participants, at least at the beginning of the observation period, did not seem to possess, or doubted possessing. As their interactional competence grew, they were more at ease with taking and yielding turns, even very short ones, and thus de-complexified their productions from a syntactic point of view, while at the same time making them interactionally more fluent.

Table 13: Percentage of pre-'s realized as separate TCUs or within a TCU

	pre in TCU	pre as TCU	?
NNS - T1	71.43	7.14	21.43
NNS - T2	55.56	44.44	0.00
NNS - T3	22.22	77.78	0.00
NNS - T4	33.33	66.67	0.00
NS	14.29	85.71	0.00

5 Conclusions

This study, albeit limited in scope and with no claim to statistical generalizability, contributes to the debate on appropriate complexity. In line with other contributions, the conclusion is that, for complexity, more is not always better.[4] Complexity and appropriateness are related constructs in many ways, but they are not isomorphic and it is important to keep them conceptually apart and then describe how they interact. This needs to be borne in mind from a research and a pedagogical perspective, both of which have always been central in Daniel Véronique's work.

From a research perspective, Véronique's work has coherently followed a functionalist orientation (see e.g. Véronique 1995, 2013, 2017c). This means starting from observing the communicative purposes of messages and then studying the forms through which they are realized. Such a functionalist orientation is lacking in much CAF research, and it is only in recent times that the relationships between the performance dimensions of complexity, accuracy and fluency, and indicators of communicative effectiveness – such as functional adequacy (Pallotti 2009, de Jong et al. 2012, Kuiken & Vedder 2022, Special issue of *Task*, 2022) or quality judgments of linguistic productions (Kyle & Crossley 2018, Lahuerta Martínez 2018, Bi & Jiang 2020) – have become the object of more systematic investigations. It also means seeing linguistic competence in the context of a larger discourse competence, which is a key theme in the French approach to Second Language Acquisition (Lenart & Leclercq 2021) – the analysis needs to go beyond the level of the individual clause or sentence, to investigate how these and other linguistic structures play a role in monologic and dialogic texts.

---

[4]Noticing that native speakers' turns and utterances were interactionally more fluent does not imply that learners' contribution were completely inadequate. Indeed, they often got their message across, although perhaps in a more effortful and convoluted way.

Daniel Véronique has also constantly been concerned with how SLA research may interact with language teaching (see e.g. Véronique 2005, 2017a, Laurens & Véronique 2017), which leads us to discuss some pedagogical implications of the present study. The main conclusion seems to be that, rather than "teaching complexity", we should teach appropriateness – to task, register, situation – and students should not learn complexity as an objective in itself, but in terms of when, how and why it is appropriate to be more or less complex; always allowing for a certain degree of individual stylistic variation.

Learning appropriate task-related variation thus becomes one of the main objectives of a communicative approach to language teaching, and our results show that it takes many years to achieve an appropriate range of variation across tasks. A similar observation was made by Wiklund (2002), in her study on native and nonnative Swedish-speaking adolescents. Each youth produced a written academic composition and was interviewed orally; both texts were analyzed with the same set of "verbal sophistication" measures regarding word length and word variety. The results show that native speakers had a higher verbal sophistication index than non-native speakers in written compositions, while it was lower in interviews. In other words, the difference between one text type and another was greater in native speakers, and the author considered the magnitude of this difference to be indicative of the "capacity to adjust to different repertoires" (p. 82).

Findings like these are in line with those of the present study concerning variation in syntactic complexity between film retelling and telephone calls, and make clear that the educational goal should become promoting the capacity to *adjust complexity*, that is, to move at ease in a (socio)linguistic space made up of varieties, genres, registers, each with its appropriate complexity levels. As we have seen, sometimes linguistic complexity may be intertwined with other levels of communicative competence, for example, with interactional fluency (Peltonen 2020), as the present study shows with regard to telephone call openings. To attain appropriate levels of interactional fluency, syntactic complexity might have to be reduced, not increased. This resonates with what Lambert & Kormos (2014: 612) state about learning how to write: "It is frequently the case that expert speakers and writers express complex ideas more simply than novices. This is not due to the availability of linguistic resources but rather to practiced mastery in efficient and effective message formation."

The point is not teaching the "optimal level of complexity", with a normative orientation prescribing values like "between 5 and 6 words per clause" or "a subordination ratio around 0.45". The point is that teachers should become aware of how complexity levels vary across genres and registers. This means they should

not urge students to be more complex for the sake of it or provide negative feedback if their productions are not complex enough, when in fact they may be perfectly adequate, possibly because of their simplicity. As regards students, at least after a certain age and proficiency level, rather than being taught how to be "ideally complex", they should be enabled to reflect on how different genres, registers, communicative situations may imply different complexity levels. This will turn them into self-regulated, autonomous learners, who appreciate sociolinguistic variation, choose where to stand in the language space and are aware of the communicative consequences of their linguistic actions. In order to do so, they may analyze the complexity of their texts, or others they may want to take as possible models, using approaches and instruments that currently belong mostly to the research domain. For example, they may consult some of the complexity analysis tools available online, thus becoming student-researchers who consciously reflect on their learning experience and meaningfully use language to discuss about language.

Acknowledgements

Transcription conventions

A modified version of the CHAT-CA system was used for transcribing data (ca. talkbank.org). CAPITAL LETTERS are used to indicate high volume only, and not for proper names, sentence beginnings etc. as in standard orthography.

SHI, PAN, VAL, etc	participants' names
AG1, AG2, SH4, etc	travel agencies' or shops' codes
#1_2 , #0_5, etc	pause length, in these case 1.2 and 0.5 seconds

#	micropauses, shorter than 0.2 seconds
.hhh	audible inbreath
hhh	audible outbreath
wo:::rd	word lengthening
[	overlapped speech
.	falling intonation
?	raising intonation
,	suspended intonation

References

Andringa, Sible. 2014. The use of native speaker norms in critical period hypothesis research. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* 36(3). 565–596. DOI: 10.1017/S0272263113000600.

Barrot, Jessie S. & Joan Y. Agdeppa. 2021. Complexity, accuracy, and fluency as indices of college-level L2 writers' proficiency. *Assessing Writing* 47. 100510. DOI: 10.1016/j.asw.2020.100510.

Bi, Peng & Jingyang Jiang. 2020. Syntactic complexity in assessing young adolescent EFL learners' writings: Syntactic elaboration and diversity. *System* 91. 10.1016/j.system.2020.102248, 102248.

Biber, Douglas, Bethany Gray & Kornwipa Poonpon. 2011. Should we use characteristics of conversation to measure grammatical complexity in L2 writing development? *TESOL Quarterly* 45(1). 5–35. DOI: 10.5054/tq.2011.244483.

Biber, Douglas, Bethany Gray & Shelley Staples. 2016. Predicting patterns of grammatical complexity across language exam task types and proficiency levels. *Applied Linguistics* 37(5). 639–668. DOI: 10.1093/applin/amu059.

Biber, Douglas, Randi Reppen, Shelley Staples & Jesse Egbert. 2020. Exploring the longitudinal development of grammatical complexity in the disciplinary writing of L2-English university students. *International Journal of Learner Corpus Research* 6(1). 38–71. DOI: 10.1075/ijlcr.18007.bib.

Bulté, Bram & Alex Housen. 2012. Defining and operationalising L2 complexity. In Alex Housen, Folkert Kuiken & Ineke Vedder (eds.), *Dimensions of L2 performance and proficiency: Investigating complexity, accuracy and fluency in SLA*, 21–46. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Bulté, Bram & Alex Housen. 2018. Syntactic complexity in L2 writing: Individual pathways and emerging group trends. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics* 28(1). 147–164. DOI: 10.1111/ijal.12196.

Clayman, Steven E. 2012. Turn-constructional units and the transition-relevance place. In Jack Sidnell & Tanya Stivers (eds.), *The handbook of conversation analysis*, 150–166. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.

Connor, Ulla. 2002. New directions in contrastive rhetoric. *TESOL Quarterly* 36(4). 493–510. DOI: 10.2307/3588238.

Connor, Ulla. 2018. Intercultural rhetoric. In John I. Liontas & Margo DelliCarpini (eds.), *The TESOL encyclopedia of English language teaching*, 1–7. Malden: John Wiley & Sons. DOI: 10.1002/9781118784235.eelt0528.

Couper-Kuhlen, Elizabeth & Margret Selting. 2017. *Interactional linguistics: Studying language in social interaction.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Crossley, Scott A., Jennifer L. Weston, Susan T. McLain Sullivan & Danielle S. McNamara. 2011. The development of writing proficiency as a function of grade level: A linguistic analysis. *Written Communication* 28(3). 282–311. DOI: 10.1177/0741088311410188.

Dąbrowska, Ewa. 2019. Experience, aptitude, and individual differences in linguistic attainment: A comparison of native and nonnative speakers. *Language Learning* 69(S1). 72–100.

de Jong, Nivja H., Margarita P. Steinel, Arjen F. Florijn, Rob Schoonen & Jan H. Hulstijn. 2012. Facets of speaking proficiency. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* 34(1). 5–34. DOI: 10.1017/S0272263111000489.

Dewaele, Jean-Marc, Thomas H. Bak & Lourdes Ortega. 2021. Why the mythical "native speaker" has mud on its face. In Nikolay Slavkov, Sílvia Melo-Pfeifer & Nadja Kerschhofer-Puhalo (eds.), *The changing face of the "native speaker"*, 25–46. Berlin: De Gruyter. DOI: 10.1515/9781501512353-002.

Durrant, Philip & Mark Brenchley. 2019. Development of vocabulary sophistication across genres in English children's writing. *Reading and Writing* 32(8). 1927–1953. DOI: 10.1007/s11145-018-9932-8.

Durrant, Philip & Ayça Durrant. 2022. Appropriateness as an aspect of lexical richness: What do quantitative measures tell us about children's writing? *Assessing Writing* 51. 100596. DOI: 10.1016/j.asw.2021.100596.

Ellis, David. 2011. *The role of task complexity in the linguistic complexity of native speaker output.* Washington: University of Maryland. (Doctoral dissertation).

Fant, Lars & Fanny Forsberg Lundell. 2019. Keeping up appearances: Impression management in native and non-native speakers of four languages. *Intercultural Pragmatics* 16(1). 1–25. DOI: 10.1515/ip-2019-0001.

Ferrari, Stefania. 2012. A longitudinal study of complexity, accuracy and fluency variation in second language development. In Alex Housen, Folkert Kuiken & Ineke Vedder (eds.), *Dimensions of l2 performance and proficiency: complexity,*

accuracy and fluency in sla, vol. 32 (Language Learning & Language Teaching), 277–298. Amsterdam: John Benjamins. DOI: 10.1075/lllt.32.12fer.

Ferrari, Stefania. 2020. L'AS-Unit come unità di produzione per l'italiano parlato in L1 e L2: Problemi di applicazione e possibili soluzioni. *Italiano LinguaDue* 11(2). 142–165. DOI: 10.13130/2037-3597/12767.

Foster, Pauline & Parvaneh Tavakoli. 2009. Native speakers and task performance: Comparing effects on complexity, fluency, and lexical diversity. *Language Learning* 59(4). 866–896. DOI: 10.1111/j.1467-9922.2009.00528.x.

Foster, Pauline, Alan Tonkyn & Gillian Wigglesworth. 2000. Measuring spoken language: A unit for all reasons. *Applied Linguistics* 21(3). 354–375. DOI: 10.1093/applin/21.3.354.

Goffman, Erving. 1963. *Stigma*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.

Granena, Gisela & Michael Long. 2013. Age of onset, length of residence, language aptitude, and ultimate L2 attainment in three linguistic domains. *Second Language Research* 29(3). 311–343. DOI: 10.1177/0267658312461497.

Hulstijn, Jan H. 2015. *Language proficiency in native and non-native speakers*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Hulstijn, Jan H. 2019. An individual-differences framework for comparing nonnative with native speakers: Perspectives from BLC theory. *Language Learning* 69. 157–183. DOI: 10.1111/lang.12317.

Johnson, Keith. 2018. *An introduction to foreign language learning and teaching*. 3rd edn. London & New York: Routledge.

Kuiken, Folkert & Ineke Vedder. 2022. Measurement of functional adequacy in different learning contexts: Rationale, key issues, and future perspectives. *TASK. Journal on Task-Based Language Teaching and Learning* 2(1). 8–32. DOI: 10.1075/task.00013.kui.

Kyle, Kristopher & Scott A. Crossley. 2018. Measuring syntactic complexity in L2 writing using fine-grained clausal and phrasal indices. *The Modern Language Journal* 102(2). 333–349. DOI: 10.1111/modl.12468.

Lahuerta Martínez, Ana Cristina. 2018. Analysis of syntactic complexity in secondary education EFL writers at different proficiency levels. *Assessing Writing* 35. 1–11. DOI: 10.1016/j.asw.2017.11.002.

Lambert, Craig & Judit Kormos. 2014. Complexity, accuracy, and fluency in task-based L2 research: Toward more developmentally based measures of second language acquisition. *Applied Linguistics* 35(5). 607–614. DOI: 10.1093/applin/amu047.

Lambert, Craig & Sachiko Nakamura. 2019. Proficiency-related variation in syntactic complexity: A study of English L1 and L2 oral descriptive discourse. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics* 29(2). 248–264. DOI: 10.1111/ijal.12224.

Larsson, Tove & Henrik Kaatari. 2020. Syntactic complexity across registers: Investigating (in)formality in second-language writing. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes* 45. 100850. DOI: 10.1016/j.jeap.2020.100850.

Laurens, Véronique & Georges Daniel Véronique (eds.). 2017. *Recherches sur l'acquisition et l'enseignement des langues étrangères: Nouvelles perspectives* (Le français dans le monde, Recherches et application 61). Paris: Didier.

Lenart, Ewa & Pascale Leclercq. 2021. L'acquisition de la compétence discursive et l'organisation informationnelle. In Pascale Leclercq, Amanda Edmonds & Elisa Sneed German (eds.), *Introduction à l'acquisition des langues étrangères*, 195–210. Louvain-la-Neuve: De Boeck. DOI: 10.3917/dbu.lecle.2021.01.0195.

Leńko-Szymańska, Agnieszka. 2021. *Defining and assessing lexical proficiency*. New York & London: Routledge.

Luke, Kang Kwong & Theodossia Pavlidou (eds.). 2002. *Telephone calls: Unity and diversity in conversational structure across languages and cultures*. Philadelphia, PA: John Benjamins.

Michel, Marije C. 2011. Effects of task complexity and interaction on L2 performance. In Peter Robinson (ed.), *Second language task complexity: researching the cognition hypothesis of language learning and performance*, vol. 2 (Task-Based Language Teaching), 141–174. Amsterdam: John Benjamins. DOI: 10.1075/tblt.2.12ch6.

Michel, Marije C., Andrea Révész, Danni Shi & Yanmei Li. 2019. The effects of task demands on linguistic complexity and accuracy across task types and L1/L2 speakers. In Zhisheng (Edward) Wen & Mohammad Javad Ahmadian (eds.), *Researching l2 task performance and pedagogy: in honour of peter skehan*, vol. 13 (Task-Based Language Teaching), 133–151. Amsterdam: John Benjamins. DOI: 10.1075/tblt.13.07mic.

Nippold, Marilyn A., Linda J. Hesketh, Jill K. Duthie & Tracy C. Mansfield. 2005. Conversational versus expository discourse: A study of syntactic development in children, adolescents, and adults. *Journal of Speech, Language, and Hearing Research* 48(5). 1048–1064. DOI: 10.1044/1092-4388(2005/073).

Norris, John M. & Lourdes Ortega. 2009. Towards an organic approach to investigating CAF in instructed SLA: The case of complexity. *Applied Linguistics* 30(4). 555–578. DOI: 10.1093/applin/amp044.

Nuzzo, Elena & Phyllisienne Gauci. 2012. *Insegnare la pragmatica in italiano L2*. Rome: Carocci.

Ortega, Lourdes. 2003. Syntactic complexity measures and their relationship to L2 proficiency: A research synthesis of college-level L2 writing. *Applied Linguistics* 24(4). 492–518. DOI: 10.1093/applin/24.4.492.

Ortega, Lourdes. 2012. Interlanguage complexity: A construct in search of theoretical renewal. In Berndt Kortmann & Benedikt Szmrecsanyi (eds.), *Linguistic complexity: Second language acquisition, indigenization, contact*, vol. 13 (Linguistic complexity), 127–155. Berlin: De Gruyter.

Pallotti, Gabriele. 2009. CAF: Defining, refining and differentiating constructs. *Applied Linguistics* 30(4). 590–601. DOI: 10.1093/applin/amp045.

Pallotti, Gabriele. 2015. A simple view of linguistic complexity. *Second Language Research* 31(1). 117–134. DOI: 10.1177/0267658314536435.

Pallotti, Gabriele. 2019. Assessing tasks: The case of interactional difficulty. *Applied Linguistics* 40(1). 176–197. DOI: 10.1093/applin/amx020.

Pallotti, Gabriele, Stefania Ferrari & Elena Nuzzo. 2011. A systematic procedure for assessing communicative competence. In Gerda Videsott & Werner Wiater (eds.), *New theoretical perspectives in multilingualism research*, 113–133. Bern: Peter Lang.

Pekarek Doehler, Simona & Søren W. Eskildsen. 2022. Emergent L2 grammars in and for social interaction: Introduction to the special issue. *The Modern Language Journal* 106(S1). 3–22. DOI: 10.1111/modl.12759.

Pekarek Doehler, Simona & Virginie Fasel Lauzon. 2015. Documenting change across time: Longitudinal and cross-sectional CA studies of classroom interaction. In Numa Markee (ed.), *The handbook of classroom discourse and interaction*, 409–424. Malden: Wiley-Blackwell. DOI: 10.1002/9781118531242.ch24.

Pekarek Doehler, Simona & Evelyne Pochon-Berger. 2015. The development of L2 interactional competence: Evidence from turn-taking organization, sequence organization, repair organization and preference organization. In Teresa Cadierno & Søren Wind Eskildsen (eds.), *Usage-based perspectives on second language learning*, 233–268. Berlin: De Gruyter. DOI: 10 . 1515 / 9783110378528-012.

Peltonen, Pauliina. 2020. *Individual and interactional speech fluency in L2 English from a problem-solving perspective: A mixed-methods approach*. Turku: University of Turku.

Quirk, Randolph, Sidney Greenbaum, Geoffrey Leech & Jan Svartvik. 1985. *A comprehensive grammar of the English language*. London: Longman.

Sacks, Harvey, Emanuel A. Schegloff & Gail Jefferson. 1974. A simplest systematics for the organization of turn-taking for conversation. *Language* 50(4). 696–735.

Schegloff, Emanuel A. 1986. The routine as achievement. *Human Studies* 9(2–3). 111–151. DOI: 10.1007/BF00148124.

Selting, Margret. 2000. The construction of units in conversational talk. *Language in Society* 29(4). 477–517. DOI: 10.1017/S0047404500004012.

Skehan, Peter. 1998. *A cognitive approach to language learning*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Skogmyr Marian, Klara & Ufuk Balaman. 2018. Second language interactional competence and its development: An overview over time. *Language and Linguistics Compass* 12(8). e12285. DOI: 10.1111/lnc3.12285.

Thörle, Britta. 2016. Turn openings in L2 French: An interactional approach to discourse marker acquisition. *Language, Interaction and Acquisition* 7(1). 117–144. DOI: 10.1075/lia.7.1.05tho.

Vercellotti, Mary Lou. 2018. Finding variation: Assessing the development of syntactic complexity in ESL speech. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics* 29(2). 233–247. DOI: 10.1111/ijal.12225.

Véronique, Georges Daniel. 1995. Acquisition des modalités en français langue étrangère et développementdes modalités dans les créoles français. In Anna Giacalone Ramat & Grazia Crocco Galèas (eds.), *From pragmatics to syntax: Modality in second language acquisition*, 59–82. Tübingen: Narr.

Véronique, Georges Daniel. 2005. Les interrelations entre la recherche sur l'acquisition du français langue étrangère et la didactique du français langue étrangère: Quelques pistes de travail. *Acquisition et interaction en langue étrangère* 23. 9–41. DOI: 10.4000/aile.1707.

Véronique, Georges Daniel. 2013. La dislocation, l'emploi de c'est et il y a et l'organisation topique – focus en français parlé : Des variétés d'apprenants aux usages natifs. *TIPA: Travaux interdisciplinaires sur la parole et le langage* 29. DOI: 10.4000/tipa.1022.

Véronique, Georges Daniel. 2017a. Vers l'énoncé complexe en français langue étrangère : Quelques voies de développement. In Pascale Hadermann, Alex Housen & Dan van Raemdonck (eds.), *ComplexitéS*, 101–122. Bern: Peter Lang.

Véronique, Georges Daniel. 2017b. Converser dans une langue étrangère pour apprendre. In Jose Aguilar, Lucile Cadet, Catherine Muller & Véronique Rivière (eds.), *L'enseignant et le chercheur au coeur des discours, des textes et des actions: Mélanges offerts à Francine Cicurel*, 175–192. Paris: Riveneuve. DOI: doi.org/10.4000/rdlc.2738.

Véronique, Georges Daniel. 2017c. La grammaire en français langue étrangère : Questions d'acquisition et d'intervention. *Lidil* 56. DOI: 10.4000/lidil.4734.

Verspoor, Marjolijn, Monika S. Schmid & Xiaoyan Xu. 2012. A dynamic usage based perspective on L2 writing. *Journal of Second Language Writing* 21(3). 239–263. DOI: 10.1016/j.jslw.2012.03.007.

Wiklund, Ingrid. 2002. Social networks from a sociolinguistic perspective: The relationship between characteristics of the social networks of bilingual adoles-

cents and their language proficiency. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 153. 53–92. DOI: 10.1515/ijsl.2002.005.

Wolfe-Quintero, Kate, Shunji Inagaki & Hae-Young Kim. 1998. *Second language development in writing : Measures of fluency, accuracy, & complexity*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.

Yang, Weiwei, Xiaofei Lu & Sara Cushing Weigle. 2015. Different topics, different discourse: Relationships among writing topic, measures of syntactic complexity, and judgments of writing quality. *Journal of Second Language Writing* 28. 53–67. DOI: 10.1016/j.jslw.2015.02.002.