

Transfer from L1 in immigrant subjects: the domain of the verb



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INTRODUCTION

The following work aims at presenting the way in which Ukrainian and Romanian immigrant children in the critical age (6 to 11 years old) learn verbal morphology in the Italian language. The pivot of the research is the hypothesis according to which, during this process, the L1 of the subjects in question, the Ukrainian and the Romanian, can affect generating transfer phenomena.

OBJECTIVES

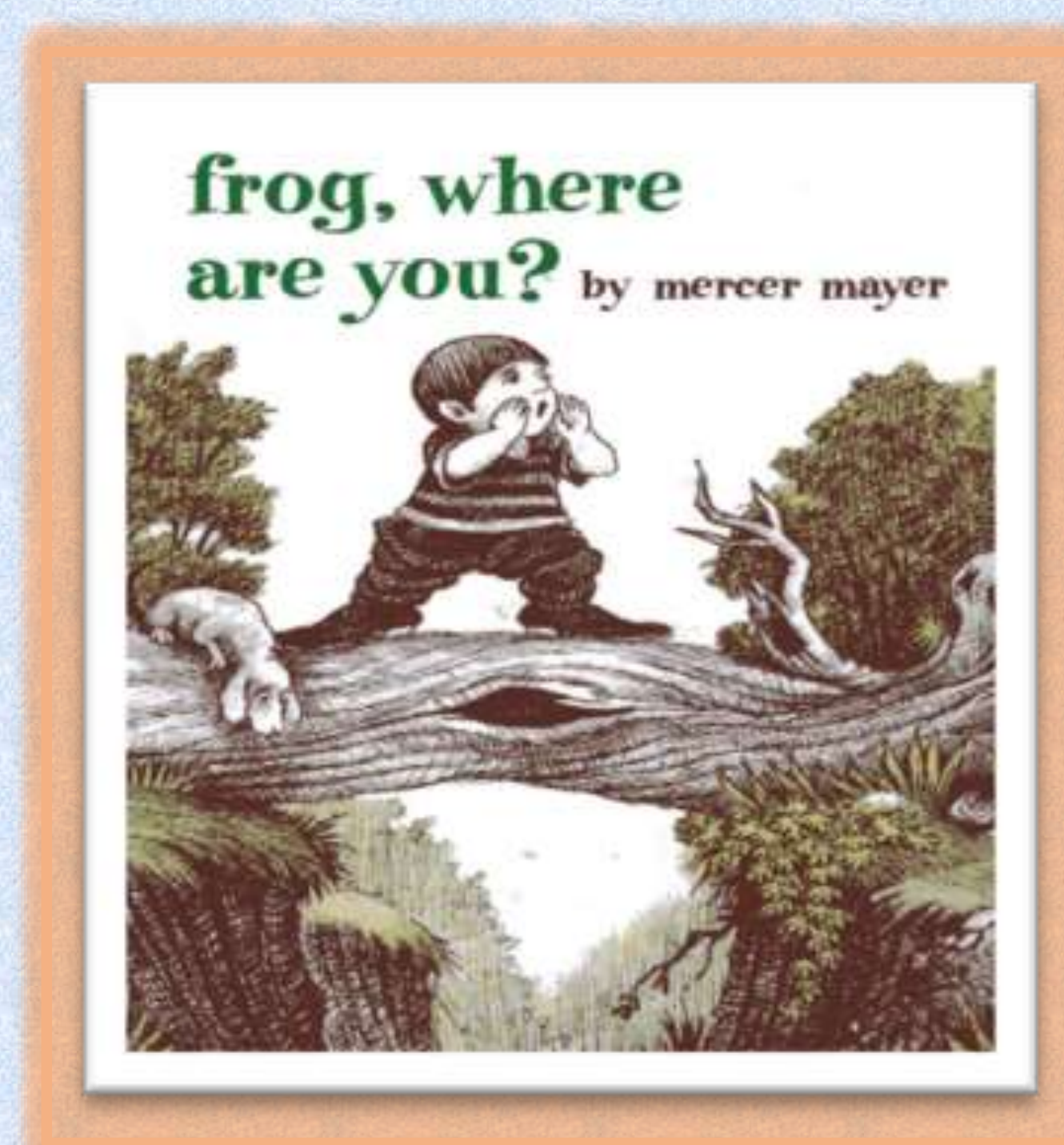
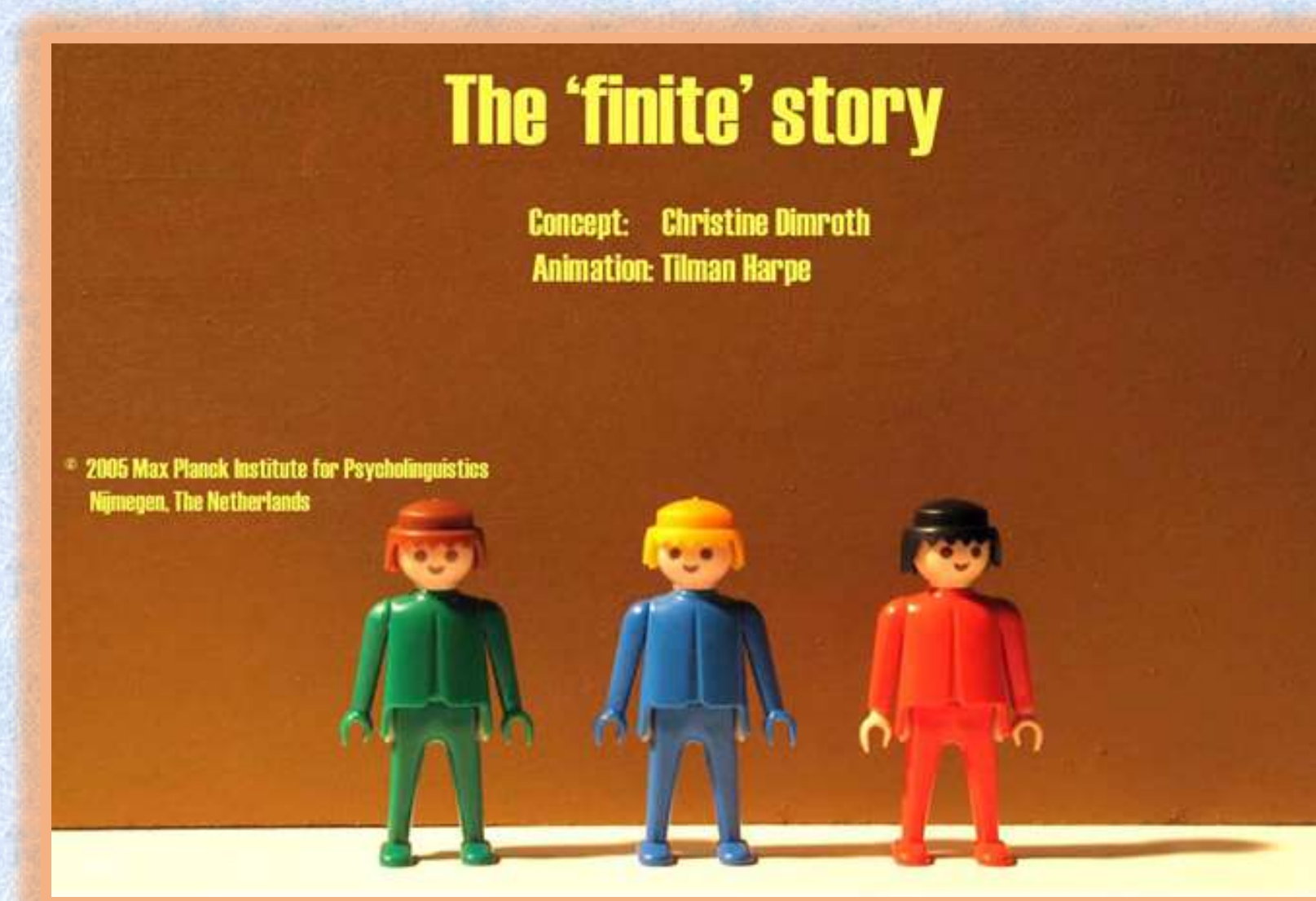
The goal is to analyze the interlanguage of immigrant children coming from immigrant families settled in Italy in a stable manner. The subjects learn Italian in a completely natural way since they attend Italian school. The domain we focused on is that of verbs, taking into account not only psycho-social and biographical factors, but, above all, the influence that the L1s have had during the acquisition process.

MATERIALS & METHODS

To collect the data needed for the analysis, we interviewed ten subjects who attended the 1st, 2nd or 3rd classes of Italian primary school. The children were given several oral semi-spontaneous tasks. The latter were intended to stimulate oral productions of descriptive and/or narrative nature. The interviews had a longitudinal character, with two cycles of meetings held six months apart. Some factors made our results very interesting.

For example, the distance between the cycles, the advancement of a class by children (interviews were held in May/June and December) and especially the closure of the school for summer holidays, during which many of the subjects went to their country of origin.

The tasks were designed in such a way as to highlight the evolution of the language skills of the subjects over time.



RESULTS & CONCLUSIONS

From the analysis of the data obtained, it was found that in subjects with the Ukrainian language as L1, no transfer phenomenon appeared during the acquisition of the L2. The situation is different for speakers with Romanian as L1. The transfer phenomena have been several, but here we will show only two examples.

Constantin (ROM: 6;8) uses the progressive periphrase "*stare + gerundive*" so often, only a few times with the real intention to indicate an action in progress at a given time, but rather in place of other tenses, as in the example:

*SBJ: *E dopo le api stav +//. stava andando sul cane # e il bambino stava chiamando qualc +//. qualcuno dentro il l'albero ##*

In the Romanian language, the gerundive is used very often, especially with the verbs of perception, but in general in all the contexts, much more than it is used in the Italian language.

The fact that Constantin uses the gerundive in the L2 much more often than necessary, represents a clear example of transfer from his L1.

On the other way, Cristina (ROM: 7;8), often uses reflexive pronouns where, in the Italian language, they are not provided, as in the following example:

*SBJ: *Un bambino quale si gioca con una rana # il cane si guardò la rana come si gioca con il bambino #*

The Romanian language is one of the few languages to have preserved the "cases" from the Latin, among which we find the accusative, often used in its reflective form, with a reflexive particle very similar to that in Italian, *se*, with constructions of this type:

He goes home (reflexive accusative: brings himself) : *El se duce acasă.*

The presence of this feature within the corpus produced by Cristina clearly indicates the transfer between L1 and L2.

It is therefore evident that there are phenomena of transfer from L1 to L2 during the acquisition process, phenomena which can be linked both to explicitly linguistic factors but also to factors external to the acquisition process, such as reduced input phenomena, more or less extroverted personality, or the absence/presence of an appropriate socio-biographical context.