Chapter 2: (Second) Dialect Acquisition

2.1. Introduction

This chapter is a general introduction to the field of (second) dialect acquisition. We begin with a brief discussion about first dialect acquisition, focusing on the question whether the acquisition of a dialect as a mother tongue is fundamentally different from the acquisition of a standard language (see section 2.2). Next, we show that second dialect acquisition can be the result of children moving from one dialect region to another or of parents raising their children in the standard language (see section 2.3). In section 2.4, we present the main differences and similarities between 'normal' second language acquisition and second dialect acquisition. We then move on to a discussion of a number of themes that recur in many studies on second dialect acquisition (section 2.5). The conclusions of this chapter will be summarized in section 2.6.

The present study is limited to the study of second dialect acquisition by children. For adult second dialect acquisition, we refer the reader to, for example, Shockey (1984) and Conn & Horesh (2002).

2.2. First dialect acquisition

In times when dialects were not yet subject to functional dialect loss, the acquisition of the local dialect as a first language was the most common situation.[1] Usually, children first came into contact with the standard language when they started going to school. Nowadays, the reverse situation frequently occurs: a growing number of children is raised in the standard (or a substandard) language by their parents (see chapter 1), and they come into contact with the local dialect through the interaction with peers (often at nursery school). The first situation involves first dialect acquisition followed by the secondary acquisition of the standard language, whereas the second situation involves the acquisition of the standard language as a mother tongue followed by second dialect acquisition. In the next section we deal with the differences and similarities between the secondary acquisition of a non-dialect variety (i.e. Second Language Acquisition) and the secondary acquisition of a dialect (i.e. Second Dialect Acquisition). For now, we consider the question whether there are any differences between the acquisition of a standard language as a first language (i.e. First Language Acquisition) and the acquisition of a dialect as a first language (i.e. First Dialect Acquisition). In order to answer this question, we should first determine whether a dialect can be considered a language. The answer is affirmative: the notions of 'language' and 'dialect' both refer to "independent discrete systems" (cf. Hoppenbrouwers 1990:13-14; my translation, K.R.).

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[1] The notion of *functional dialect loss* (also 'dialect shift') refers to "the gradual giving up of the dialect in favour of another language variety" (Hinskens et al. 2005:11).

According to Hoppenbrouwers (1990:14), both linguistic systems (i.e. standard language and dialect) are characterized by their own grammatical and lexical core, despite a number of common features. Since a dialect is a full-fledged language with a grammar of its own, we may say that in theory there is no difference between the acquisition of a standard language as a mother tongue and the acquisition of a dialect as a first language.

One difference between a standard language and a dialect is that the latter is usually not codified. According to Vousten (1995:2), the absence of a written variant "makes dialect more sensitive to change than a standardized variety." Exactly this sensitivity to change may be a distinguishing factor between first dialect acquisition and first (standard) language acquisition. As is well known, an ongoing process of dialect levelling takes place in most dialects. Dialect levelling (also referred to as structural dialect loss) is "the process which reduces variation both within and between dialects" (Hinskens et al. 2005:11). This intra- and inter-dialect variation is reduced because dialects are gradually moving into the direction of the standard language. Since dialects have been subject to dialect levelling for the last few decades, the dialect used by the parents in raising their children usually has undergone dialect levelling to some extent. This implies that children learn an 'imperfect' (i.e. not authentic) form of the local dialect. Put differently, it is possible that they learn a language variety that has already moved into the direction of the language variety which they will learn at a later stage (i.e. the standard language). As a result of dialect levelling, there may in fact be a lot of inter- and intra-speaker variation: not all speakers have adjusted their dialects to the standard language to the same degree (i.e. inter-speaker variation) and one speaker may variably speak more or less dialectically depending on the situation (i.e. intra-speaker variation). So, parents raising their children in the local dialect may display intra-speaker variability. This implies that, at present, children learning a dialect as their first language may be confronted with a large degree of variation in the input. Probably, children learning a standard language as their mother tongue are confronted with a smaller degree of variation in the input, since they learn a codified language variety (cf. Vousten 1995:2; see also section 2.3).

We may conclude, then, that first dialect acquisition is not fundamentally different from 'normal' first language acquisition. One possible difference is that children learning a dialect as their mother tongue may be confronted with more (inter- and intra-speaker) variation in the input. This may have consequences for the acquisition process.

Roberts, who has carried out a lot of research into first dialect acquisition in Philadelphia (cf. Roberts & Labov 1995; Roberts 1997a, 1997b), emphasizes the importance of the input in the following quote:

"Finally, the integration of findings from second dialect acquisition research into that of first dialect acquisition would appear to be fruitful for both areas of study, particularly as some of the more complex dialect features (e.g. short (a) in Philadelphia (…)) appear to *require an intensity of*

input that may become increasingly rare in more mobile populations or those in which dialect leveling may be occurring." (Roberts 2001:344; my emphasis, K.R.)

Roberts here refers to the Philadelphia dialect feature of short *a*. In sections 2.5.3 and 2.5.4, we discuss this dialect feature extensively and we show that this dialect feature is very difficult to acquire for children learning the Philadelphia dialect as a second language (cf. Payne 1980). Actually, Payne (1980:174) found that "[u]nless a child's parents are locally born and raised, the possibility of his acquiring the short-*a* pattern is extremely slight, even if he were to be born and raised in King of Prussia [i.e. a suburb of Philadelphia, K.R.]." This indirectly indicates that the input of the parents is very important for a successful acquisition of the more complex features of the target dialect. A second condition is that the dialect of the parents should not be affected too much by dialect levelling. Interestingly, the acquisition of the Philadelphia short-*a* pattern was also examined as part of first dialect acquisition by Roberts and Labov (1995). Their results reveal that "[i]n spite of the complexity of the Philadelphia short *a* system" (Roberts & Labov 1995:110), children as young as three had already acquired the pattern. So, whereas this complex dialect feature is successfully acquired by children learning the Philadelphia dialect as their mother tongue, it is acquired only to a limited extent by children who learn the Philadelphia dialect as a second language. In section 2.5, we discuss the various factors mentioned by Payne (1980) that play a role in the acquisition of the short-*a* pattern by second dialect learners (i.e. age of arrival, see section 2.5.2.1; role of the first dialect, see section 2.5.4).

The remaining part of this chapter is devoted to second dialect acquisition. In the next section, we will first deal with the question what the most important characteristics of second dialect acquisition are.

2.3. What is Second Dialect Acquisition?

A large part of this chapter is devoted to the literature on second dialect acquisition. It is important to note that not all of the relevant studies involve similar situations of dialect acquisition. What all studies have in common is that they examine the acquisition of a dialect occurring chronologically later than the acquisition of the first language (i.e. they involve consecutive rather than simultaneous language acquisition). However, there are also differences among these studies.

A first difference concerns the definition of 'dialect'. Recall from chapter 1 that in the present study, a dialect is defined as "a linguistic variety, displaying structural peculiarities (often referred to as *dialect features*) in more than one component, usually of relatively little prestige, lacking codification and mainly used orally in a geographically limited area" (Hinskens 1998:156). In Flanders, for example, dialects differ from village to village, so that each village can be considered as having its own dialect. Some studies discussed in this

chapter use the notion of 'dialect' in this sense (cf. Kerswill 1994; Vousten 1995; Berthele 2002). In the Anglo-American literature, however, the term 'dialect' is used to refer to different varieties of English, for example British English as opposed to American English (cf. Chambers & Trudgill 1980:3). In this respect, the Anglo-American notion of 'dialect' differs from our concept, since we do not refer to Standard Dutch as a dialect of Dutch. However, even in the Anglo-American tradition, the notion of dialect can be used to refer to a language variety which is confined to a particular area, although these areas are generally rather expansive, e.g. the dialect of Southern England (cf. Chambers 1998), the dialect of Philadelphia (cf. Payne 1980), the dialect of New York City (cf. Payne 1980), etc. As we have mentioned before, our definition of dialect is somewhat narrower than the Anglo-American one.

A second aspect in which the studies discussed in this chapter differ is the age of first contact with the target dialect, which in turn, is related to the child's place of birth. The present study (as well as Vousten (1995)) focuses on children who acquire the dialect of the place where they have been living for their entire lives. They acquire this dialect at a later age (i.e. as a second language), because they were raised by their parents in a standard or substandard variety of the same language. This implies that they learn a dialect (in this case the Maldegem dialect) which belongs to the same language (i.e. Dutch) as their L1 (i.e. Standard Dutch). This situation may arise for various reasons: it may be the case that the parents were born and raised elsewhere and therefore have no proficiency in the local dialect, or the parents may be locals who decide to raise their children in the standard language because of the higher (overt) prestige of this variety (see section 2.4.1). A result of this situation is that the dialect-learning children were confronted with the target dialect at a very young age. This age of first contact depends on whether the child was confronted with the local dialect through interaction with other people than its parents (e.g. grandparents, uncles, aunts, nannies, etc.) before it started going to school or not. Since Flemish children usually start going to school between the ages of 2 and 3, we might assume that the children involved in the present study had their first contact with the local dialect somewhere around this age.

Many studies discussed in this chapter deal with a different situation: they focus on children who were born outside the research area and then moved to a new dialect region at a later age (cf. Payne 1980; Kerswill 1994; Chambers 1998; Berthele 2002). As a result, the children involved show more variation with respect to the age of first contact with the target dialect. Another difference with the present study (as well as with Vousten (1995)) is that the children were not raised by their parents in the standard variety (e.g. standard American English) but in another dialect (e.g. New York City English). This may imply that factors of prestige (i.e. the higher overt prestige of the standard language versus the lower overt prestige of dialects; see section 2.4.1) are less important in these studies than in the present study.

2.4. Second Dialect Acquisition and Second Language Acquisition: a comparison

The acquisition of a non-standard variety as a second language (i.e. second dialect acquisition, abbreviated as SDA) can be compared to second language acquisition (abbreviated as SLA) in general.[2] Such a comparison reveals some important differences, but also a number of similarities. Below, we first deal with the differences between SLA and SDA (section 2.4.1). Next, we discuss the similarities between both processes (section 2.4.2).

2.4.1. Differences between SDA and SLA

According to Vousten (1995:2, 20), there are four characteristics of SDA which distinguish the process from 'normal' SLA. Not all of these characteristics are unique to SDA when considered on their own. It is rather the combination of these four characteristics that makes SDA different from SLA.[3] Below, we discuss the four differences between SDA and SLA as defined by Vousten (1995).

1. First, the acquisition of a dialect is not (normally) supported by any formal education, whereas 'normal' second language acquisition may be supported by a form of education. Note that both SLA and SDA can take place in a natural setting without any form of formal instruction: this is, for example, the case when someone moves to a new area and is immersed in the L2-speaking community. The individual may then attempt to speak the L2, either as a foreign language or as a new dialect. However, the acquisition of a foreign language may be supported by formal instruction (e.g. the newcomer may take lessons in the foreign language), while this is not normally the case for the acquisition of the new dialect. We believe, however, that this is a rather trivial difference between SDA and SLA, since it has been argued in second language acquisition research that immersion is by far the most successful way for children (and adults) to acquire a second language (cf. second language *acquisition* vs. second language *learning*; see Krashen 1988).

2. The process of second dialect acquisition described in the present study (as well as in Vousten (1995)), involves a strong linguistic relationship between the first (L1) and the second language (L2): both are varieties of Dutch, viz. Standard Dutch (L1) and a dialect

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[2] In section 2.2 we compared first dialect acquisition to first language acquisition. Section 2.4 compares second dialect acquisition to second language acquisition. Differences and/or similarities between second dialect acquisition and first dialect acquisition (cf. Roberts & Labov 1995) are referred to in this chapter if they are relevant to the discussion.

[3] Actually, a clear distinction between SDA and SLA can only be made if a difference could be defined between a (standard) language and a dialect. There is, however, no such difference: dialects are as much languages as any standard(ized) language (cf. Hoppenbrouwers 1990; see section 2.2).

of Dutch (L2).[4] There is, for example, a relatively strong overlap between the vocabulary of the dialect under investigation (i.e. the Maldegem dialect) and the vocabulary of Standard Dutch. This is generally not the case with respect to the relationship between the L1 and the L2 in processes of 'normal' SLA (e.g. the vocabulary of Dutch differs considerably more from that of English than it does from the vocabulary of the dialect under investigation).[5] SLA generally relates to the acquisition of a 'foreign' language. In this case, there is (usually) a more distant structural kinship between the first and second language, even though there may be a historical relationship between both varieties.

It should be noted that a stronger linguistic relationship between the L1 and the L2 in processes of acquisition does not necessarily lead to a better acquisition of the L2. It is, for example, very difficult for a Flemish speaker to acquire the Dutch standard language as it is spoken in the Netherlands (i.e. Northern Dutch). This is due to the small phonetic differences between the Flemish accent and the Northern accent (see also chapter 6, section 6.3). In order to be unrecognizable as a 'non-native' speaker of the Northern variety of Standard Dutch, a Flemish speaker has to acquire very subtle phonetic features of the Northern accent, which is a relatively tough task (cf. Flege 1981; Bohn & Flege 1992).

3. Second dialect acquisition implies the acquisition of an uncodified variety. A dialect is (normally) used only as a spoken language. The availability of a written variant is a factor which increases the consolidation of a language variety. Vousten notes: "This makes dialect more sensitive to change than a standardized variety. Dialect therefore constitutes a more unstable language system with a certain degree of internal variability" (Vousten 1995:2; my translation, K.R.). Note that the lack of codification does not have a direct effect on an individual's process of dialect acquisition (e.g., in theory, the dialect learner may be an illiterate), but the absence of codification makes dialects more susceptible to change, which implies that second dialect learners (as opposed to second language learners) may be confronted with more variation in the input (see also section 2.2).

4. Another difference between second dialect acquisition and (normal) second language acquisition is the *prestige* of the target variety. SDA implies the acquisition of a language variety which generally has a lower (overt; cf. below) prestige than the first variety (L1). Usually, the standard variety (L1) enjoys a higher (overt) prestige in society than a dialect (L2).

However, this claim should be put into perspective. Although many modern parents (in Flanders) regard dialect as an unsuitable variety for raising their children, this does not

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[4] Note that not all dialects of Dutch display an equally strong structural relationship with Standard Dutch. With respect to pronunciation differences, for example, Heeringa (2004:276) has shown that the dialects of Friesland and the uttermost Southeast of Limburg exhibit the largest phonetic distance towards Standard Dutch, whereas the dialect of Haarlem for example is phonetically closest to Standard Dutch.

[5] It should be noted that the linguistic relationship between some languages (e.g. Danish and Norwegian) is stronger than between other languages (e.g. Norwegian and Dutch).

necessarily mean that they have a clear-cut negative attitude towards dialect. Dialect does not necessarily have a lower prestige than the standard language. It enjoys a relatively high prestige in some respects, especially among the young. This can be explained by the distinction between *overt prestige* and *covert prestige*, which was first introduced by Labov (1982). Chambers & Trudgill (1980) note the following about this distinction:

> "We find here a conflict between [overt, K.R.] PRESTIGE – status as it is more usually regarded as reflecting mainstream, predominantly middle class and overt societal values – and COVERT PRESTIGE. (…) This, then, is prestige in the sense of being favourably regarded by one's peers, and of signalling one's identity as a member of a group." (Chambers & Trudgill 1980:98-99)

We believe that this opposition between overt prestige, which is associated with the standard language, and covert prestige, which is associated with dialect, probably is the most important point of difference between SDA and SLA. Learning a dialect as a second language implies the acquisition of a variety that has less overt, but more covert prestige. Vousten (1995) also argues that the relative social inequality between standard language and dialect is most characteristic of the contact between both varieties. He refers to Brown's (1965) theoretical model in which a distinction is made between two norms which determine social interaction: a status norm and a solidarity norm. According to Brown (see Vousten, 1995:9), relationships of status are characterized by elements like superiority, power and influence or inferiority, dependence and powerlessness, whereas relationships of solidarity are characterized by elements like solidarity, sympathy and intimacy or non-solidarity, detachedness and indifference (my paraphrase, K.R.). With respect to this distinction, Vousten (1995:9) also refers to Ryan (1979), who claims that a standard variety is regarded as having higher status, while a non-standard variety is regarded as having higher solidarity. This was already suggested in chapter 1, where we argued that language users generally think of the standard language as posh, formal, detached, etc., while they regard dialects as entertaining, informal, amicable, etc. (cf. Deprez & De Schutter 1981; Münstermann & Van Hout 1988). Note that the standard variety is regarded as having higher status especially in situations between parents and child (i.e. parents being concerned that raising their children in the local dialect may interfere with the acquisition of reading and writing skills; see chapter 1), whereas the higher appreciation for non-standard varieties especially occurs in situations among peers. Young people in particular are very sensitive to the distinction between status relationships and solidarity relationships. Showing solidarity with the peer group is a way of making oneself 'popular'. Solidarity with the peer group involves, among other things, talking like the peer group does. So, the pursuit of belonging to the peer group is an important reason why children may want to learn the variety that is higher on the solidarity scale, i.e. dialect. This is

reinforced by the fact that children and adolescents are in a different way concerned about social status than adults.

Along the same lines, Trudgill (1986) argues that, in situations of language contact, speakers sometimes converge linguistically "in a socially downward direction" (Trudgill 1986:3). This so-called 'short-term accommodation' occurs when a speaker modifies particular features of his native variety to those of a lower-prestige variety. Trudgill points out that this sometimes causes a speaker to be evaluated as "kinder and more trustworthy than if they do not converge" (Trudgill 1986:3). Applying this idea to the present study, we can argue that the accommodation of children (raised in Standard Dutch or substandard) to the local dialect is a form of short-term accommodation which is caused by the wish to be positively evaluated by the peer group. This short-term accommodation may take on a more permanent character, i.e. a child may start to speak more and more dialect in more situations. The accommodation may also, however, retain its short-term character.[6]

So far, we have only discussed the main differences between SDA and SLA, i.e. (1) SDA is not usually supported by formal instruction, (2) SDA usually involves a strong structural relationship between the L1 and the L2, (3) SDA involves more variation in the input due to the absence of codification, and (4) SDA involves the acquisition of a language variety that has more covert prestige than the standard language. There are, however, also a number of similarities between the processes of SDA and SLA. These are discussed in the next section.

2.4.2. Similarities between SDA and SLA

Second dialect acquisition has a number of features in common with 'normal' second language acquisition. One of the similarities between the two processes is that second language/dialect learners have an *interlanguage grammar* (cf. Selinker 1972), i.e. a grammar which is influenced by the first as well as the second language and which exhibits features of both language varieties. Below, we list a number of features that occur in such an interlanguage grammar and we show that these features occur in the interlanguage involved in SLA as well as SDA.

The influence of the L1 on the interlanguage grammar can be seen in *transfer errors* (cf. Corder 1967), i.e. "the process whereby a feature or rule from a learner's first language is carried over to the IL [i.e. Interlanguage] grammar" (Archibald 1998:3). Phonological transfer occurs, for example, when a Dutch learner of English pronounces the word 'five' as [faif] instead of [faiv]: the learner applies the Dutch rule of Final Devoicing to the English word.

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[6] The present study does not intend (and does not allow us) to draw conclusions about the short-term or long-term character of an informant's accommodation to the local dialect. We are primarily interested in the degree to which an informant has acquired different dialect features (i.e. his competence); our focus is not on the question whether these dialect features occur in his daily language use or not (i.e. his performance). In order to answer the latter question, a considerable amount of spontaneous speech would be required.

Transfer can also occur in the interlanguage of second dialect learners. Consider the following example from our data. In a dialect conversation between two girls, one girl pronounces the phrase *ook wel* '(probably) as well' as [ˈo.ʔwæː]. The girl clearly has the intention to speak dialect, since she produces two local dialect features, viz. laryngealization of /k/ to [ʔ] (see section 6.4.3) and deletion of /l/ with compensatory vowel lengthening (see section 6.4.1).[7] However, with respect to the vowel in *ook*, the 'correct' dialect variant is not produced: the girl transfers an L1 segment into the L2: she pronounces the word with Standard Dutch [o.] (actually, slightly shorter than SD /oː/) instead of dialect [uə] (see section 6.4.14).

Another characteristic of an interlanguage grammar is the occurrence of *developmental errors* (cf. Corder 1967). These are the same sorts of errors that children make in first language (L1) acquisition. An example of developmental errors are *overgeneralization errors* (see chapter 3, section 3.5). Overgeneralizations are traditionally (i.e. in rule-based theory) described as the overapplication of a feature or rule which the learner already knows from the L2 (see chapter 3, section 3.5 for an alternative, exemplar-based account of overgeneralizations).

A well-known example of overgeneralization in L1-acquisition is the past tense formation in English. Children learning English as their L1 sometimes produce forms like *goed* (instead of *went*) or *leaved* (instead of *left*). Traditional, rule-based models account for these forms by saying that the child overapplies the common rule of past tense formation, i.e. adding the suffix *–ed*. The *dual route model* of Pinker & Prince (1988), for example, accounts for the English past tense formation by proposing that the past tense of highly frequent and irregular verb forms is stored in a "memory storage device" and that "a rule-based system appends the appropriate allomorph of /ed/ to the stem of the verb to form the past tense" (Plunkett 1995:38). This model accounts for overgeneralization errors as "the interference of the two mechanisms": "the memory storage device fails to block the application of the regular rule to an irregular stem" (Plunkett 1995:38). In contrast, the *single route model* of Rumelhart & McClelland (1986) assumes a single mechanism for the acquisition of the regular as well as the irregular forms of the past tense. This mechanism has the shape of "a single layered neural network, i.e. it has a set of input units connected directly in a simple feedforward fashion to a set of output units" (Plunkett 1995:39). We will return to this issue in chapter 3, but for the present discussion it is important to note that overgeneralization errors do not only occur in L1-acquisition, but also in second language acquisition and in second dialect acquisition.

So, the occurrence of overgeneralization errors is another point of similarity between SLA and SDA. Consider the following examples of overgeneralizations from our data. In the same conversation as mentioned above, one girl formed the plural of *juffrouw* 'teacher, Miss' with

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[7] Laryngealization of /k/ can also be referred to as glottalling.

the suffix *–s* (i.e. *juffrouws*) instead of using the correct suffix *–en* (i.e. *juffrouwen*). In the dialect under investigation (i.e. the Maldegem dialect), the domain of application of the plural suffix *–s* is more extensive (e.g. *zoons* 'sons', *teens* 'toes') than it is in Standard Dutch, but even in this dialect, the plural of *juffrouw* is formed with the suffix *–en*. So, the form *juffrouws* can be regarded as an overgeneralization at the morphological level.

An example of overgeneralization at the phonological level is the realization of the word *overlaatst* 'recently' as [o.vərlɔ̞ᶜtst] instead of the 'correct' dialect variant [o.vərlɑ(t)st] (see section 6.4.21). In this case, the common correspondence between L1 /a:/ and L2 /ɔ̞ᶜ/ (e.g. in *water* 'water', *tafel* 'table', *maan* 'moon', etc.) is overgeneralized to a word that does not display this correspondence. In section 3.5, we will elaborate on the issue of overgeneralizations.

Another feature of learners' interlanguages, both in SLA (cf. Herschensohn 2003) and SDA, is the occurrence of *intermediate forms*. Phonologically intermediate variants may also occur in the context of dialect contact (cf. 'fudged dialects', Trudgill 1986:60-62; see also Hinskens 1993a:section 12.2.1). According to Trudgill (1986), intermediate forms (in the case of dialect contact) are due to partial accommodation of a given dialect form to the target dialect. Applying this idea to a situation of second language/dialect acquisition leads to the assumption that intermediate forms occur when the learner only partially accommodates to the L2 variant. Consider the following example from our data. One girl realizes the phrase *'k heb zilver gehaald* 'I won a silver medal' as [kæ̞ˈzɛvərhɔ̞ᶜ:t]. What we see here is that the /l/ in *zilver* is deleted, but the accompanying compensatory lengthening of the preceding vowel does not occur (see section 6.4.1). So, the accommodation to the target dialect is partial. Interestingly, this informant only partially accommodates to the target dialect in the word *zilver*, whereas accommodation is complete in the word *gehaald* (i.e. deletion of /l/ and compensatory lengthening). This brings us to another characteristic of the interlanguage of second language/dialect learners, viz. the variability of the output.

Archibald (1998:6) argues that "[o]ne of the characteristics of the output of second language learners is that it is quite variable." He illustrates this point with the following hypothetical example of a learner of English: "I <u>didn't</u> like that movie so I told her <u>I no want</u> to go [th]ere" (Archibald 1998:6; my underlining). Archibald points out that it is perfectly possible that a learner of English gets one of the negations right (i.e. <u>didn't</u>), while incorrectly forming the other negation (i.e. <u>I no want</u>). Archibald notes that this *intra-speaker variation* raises the question whether a learner has the knowledge of how to express negation in English or not. He concludes that this variability should be interpreted as variability in linguistic 'performance' rather than linguistic 'competence'.

Instances of intra-speaker variation can also be found in our data on SDA; consider the following examples. One informant produces the phrase *'k denk het ook hoor* 'well, I also

think so' as [gdæŋkət'oːkuə]. In this phrase, the dialect learner gets the dialect pronunciation of SD /oː/ right in the word *hoor* (i.e. [uə]), whereas he does not realize the dialect variant (but the Standard Dutch variant) in the word *ook* (i.e. [oːk]) (see section 6.4.14). Another example is the phrase *dat we hier zo zitten zo* 'that we are sitting here like this', which is pronounced as follows: [dɑwɪrzuə'zɛtn̩zoː]. In this case, the inconsistency occurs in one and the same lexical item: the informant first realizes the word *zo* 'like this' with the dialect variant (i.e. [zuə]), but uses the Standard Dutch variant (i.e. [zoː]) the second time.

So far we have argued that the similarities between SLA and SDA consist of the fact that in both processes learners have an interlanguage grammar which generally exhibits the same features, such as transfer errors, overgeneralization errors, intermediate forms and intra-speaker variation. Apart from this, the similarity between SLA and SDA can also be seen in the factors affecting both processes. Archibald (1998), for example, mentions *affective factors* (i.e. concerning the emotions of the individual learner) and *age*, among other things, as factors that play a role in the success with which individuals learn a second language. With respect to affective factors (e.g. empathy, anxiety), Archibald focuses on *motivation*. He refers to the distinction between instrumental and integrative motivation (cf. Gardner & Lambert 1972). He describes these two types of motivation as follows: "Instrumental motivation involves wanting to learn the L2 for a specific goal or reason" (e.g. to get a certain job), whereas "[i]ntegrative motivation (…) involves wanting to learn the L2 in order to learn more about a particular culture or fit into it better" (Archibald 1998:16). Archibald argues that certain studies (cf. Gardner, Day & MacIntyre 1992, among others) have shown that there is a positive correlation between the degree of integrative motivation and the degree of success in language learning. There are similar findings for the effect of instrumental motivation.

Attitudinal factors also affect the degree of success in second dialect acquisition (see section 2.5.2.3). Moreover, the present study implements attitude/motivation as an independent variable predicting the success in second dialect acquisition. The same holds for the factor 'age', which is also discussed by Archibald. We elaborate on these factors (and other ones) in the following section.

In the present section, we have discussed the main differences and similarities between 'normal' second language acquisition and second dialect acquisition. The following section is devoted to some major issues that have been addressed in the literature on (second) dialect acquisition.

2.5. Main issues in second dialect acquisition research

2.5.1. Introduction

Second dialect acquisition is relatively unexplored in comparison to 'normal' second language acquisition. Much research in the field of second dialect acquisition was carried out in the Anglo-American tradition (cf. Payne 1976, 1980; Chambers 1998; Kerswill & Williams 2000). At present, there is a growing interest in second dialect acquisition, also in continental Europe (cf. Vousten 1995; Berthele 2002; Rys 2003, 2006; Ghimenton & Chevrot 2006). A number of issues have been focused on in several studies on second dialect acquisition. In this section we discuss these issues and point out their relevance to the present study. The discussion is not exhaustive. Certain issues from the literature on second dialect acquisition will be discussed in later chapters.

We first discuss a number of factors related to the individual child's degree of success in dialect acquisition (section 2.5.2). Next, we deal with the degree of complexity of dialect features and the effect this has on acquisition (section 2.5.3). Finally, we move on to the impact of the first language on the acquisition process and the learning mechanisms underlying second dialect acquisition (section 2.5.4).

2.5.2. Factors affecting the individual child's degree of success in second dialect acquisition

In the literature on second dialect acquisition much attention has been paid to factors which directly or indirectly affect a child's degree of success in acquiring the local dialect, such as the age at which the child is first exposed to the local dialect (e.g. the age of arrival in a new dialect region), its position in the peer group and orientation towards the peer group, and attitudinal factors, such as the child's attitude towards dialect use and speakers, and its motivation to learn the local dialect. The present section discusses these factors.

2.5.2.1. Age of first contact

A number of studies in second dialect acquisition are devoted to the relation between the age of first contact with the new dialect and the success of dialect acquisition. This question can be related to the so-called *critical age hypothesis*, which says that the period during which language acquisition takes place successfully and naturally comes to an end at a certain age and that people who have passed this age have considerably more difficulties in (second) language acquisition. This hypothesis predicts that it is possible for children to come into contact with the target language/dialect 'too late', i.e. after their critical period of language learning.

2.5.2.1.1. The critical period of language acquisition

The issue of critical age was first discussed with respect to first language acquisition. Lenneberg (1967) drew on research on brain lateralization (cf. Penfield 1965) to propose a critical age in first language acquisition: this research had demonstrated that brain damage affecting the language ability was less harmful in children younger than 12 than in older children and adults. According to Penfield, this was due to the greater *plasticity* of the brain of young children: "the younger brain is plastic in that it can adapt to damage" (Archibald 1998:20), for example, by transferring the language ability from the left hemisphere to the right hemisphere. As a child grows older, however, its brain becomes more lateralized, resulting in less plasticity. Both Penfield (1965) and Lenneberg (1967) concluded that brain lateralization is completed by puberty. These findings were used by Scovel (1969), when introducing the idea of a critical period in second language acquisition. Scovel and other researchers had observed that children succeeded in attaining native-like pronunciation in a second language, whereas adults did not. Moreover, it appeared that if second language acquisition started after the onset of puberty, native-like pronunciation no longer could be achieved. Scovel related this finding to Lenneberg's proposal that brain lateralization was completed by the age of 12.

Later, however, the idea of brain lateralization as the cause of the decline of language learning has been criticized. A reanalysis of Lenneberg's data by Krashen (1973), for example, revealed that all children whose language ability was recovered after brain damage, suffered this brain damage before the age of five. He therefore concluded that brain lateralization is completed by the age of five. This implies that Scovel's proposal of a causal relationship between the ability to acquire native-like pronunciation, which starts to decline at the onset of puberty, and brain lateralization is difficult to maintain. Hence, Krashen's results casted doubt on the idea that lateralization is responsible for the decline in children's language abilities. Counterarguments also came from Segalowitz (1983), who found that there was no increase in lateralization in children between two and seven years old. He concluded that "lateralization and plasticity are not related" (Archibald 1998:21). These findings indicate that we must not seek for a biological explanation of the critical period of language learning.[8]

Even the idea of a critical period of language learning has been questioned. However, the idea that the ability to achieve native-like proficiency in a second language seems to decline as one grows older, is not controversial. Hakuta et al. (2003) state it as follows:

> "The claim that there is an age-related decline in the success with which individuals master a
> second language is not controversial. The diminished average achievement of older learners is
> supported by personal anecdote and documented by empirical evidence (…)."

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[8] See Archibald (1998:21-23) for further discussion.

Hakuta et al. point out that this decline in language learning does not necessarily relate to a critical period. They argue that "a critical period requires evidence for a clear discontinuity in learning outcome around a specified age" (Hakuta et al. 2003:6), but according to them, most research reveals only a "monotonic decline with age" (Hakuta et al. 2003:5). They further note that

"Defense of the position that language learning is constrained by a critical period requires specifying the point in time, and ideally the reason, that language learning potential changes at that maturational stage. However, there has been little consensus about what age constitutes the critical point and reasons for proposing different ages have rarely been offered. Claims about the age at which the critical period terminates have included 5 years (Krashen, 1973), 6 years (Pinker, 1994), 12 years (Lenneberg, 1967), and 15 years (Johnson & Newport, 1989)." (Hakuta et al. 2003:5)

Hakuta et al. (2003:5) also discuss an alternative interpretation to the critical period hypothesis:

"that second language learning becomes compromised with age, potentially because of factors not specific to language that nevertheless interfere with the individual's ability to learn a new language. These might include social and educational variables that influence learning potential and opportunity, and cognitive aging that gradually erodes some of the mechanisms necessary for learning a complex body of knowledge, such as a new language."

Hakuta et al. (2003:6) point at studies which demonstrated that older learners may have more difficulties with language learning because of a decline of their cognitive capacities in general (e.g. "more difficulty encoding new information"). Under this assumption, the language learning ability declines across the lifespan and does not involve a critical period.

In order to test whether an abrupt discontinuity in language learning (which would be evidence of a critical period) occurs, Hakuta et al. examined the English of a large sample of second language learners who were first exposed to English at very different ages. They use both "15 years and 20 years as hypothesized cut-off points for the end of the critical period" (Hakuta et al. 2003:14), but they do not find evidence of abrupt discontinuity at these points in time. Instead, they observe that "the degree of success in second language acquisition steadily declines throughout the life span" and they conclude that "the factors implicated in normal cognitive aging appear to be plausible sources of this effect" (Hakuta et al. 2003:14, 15).

2.5.2.1.2. The role of age of first contact in second dialect acquisition

Despite the criticism of the critical age hypothesis, many studies in second dialect acquisition refer to the concept of a critical period of language learning and examine the effect of the age of first contact with the new dialect on the degree of success in dialect acquisition.

Payne (1980), for example, examines the effect of age of arrival on the degree of success in second dialect acquisition of children who have moved from one dialect region to another one (i.e. King of Prussia, a middle class suburb of Philadelphia (Pennsylvania)). The families that were selected by Payne can be divided into three groups: "*(a)* families with local-born parents and children; *(b)* families with local-born children and out-of-state parents; and *(c)* families with out-of-state-born children and parents" (Payne 1980:145). The out-of-state parents spoke their own (out-of-state) dialects, which, according to Payne (1980:144) "were known to have high or neutral prestige." Payne points out that the children from group (b) can provide data that allow for a comparison of parental influence versus peer group influence, since these children never lived outside King of Prussia.

Payne divided the children who were born elsewhere and then moved to King of Prussia into three groups on the basis of the age at which they came to live in King of Prussia: 0-4 years, 5-9 years, and 10-14 years. She then analysed the degree to which each of the children from these groups had acquired a number of phonetic features of the Philadelphia dialect. Her data revealed "that the tendency appears to be that the earlier a child moved to King of Prussia the more successful he was in acquiring the Philadelphia phonetic variables" (Payne 1980:154). There appeared to be an interaction, however, with the number of years a child had lived in King of Prussia, which differed from child to child since Payne interviewed children of different ages. Payne concluded that children "who moved to the area by the age of 4 and who had lived in King of Prussia for anywhere between 4 and 16 years, and children who have lived in King of Prussia for 8-16 years and moved between the ages of 5 and 8 have approximately the same degree of success in acquiring the Philadelphia phonetic variables", whereas those "who moved to King of Prussia between the ages of 5 and 8 and who have lived in the area for only 4-7 years show a slightly lower degree of success of acquisition" (Payne 1980:155-56). Payne's findings might tempt us to conclude that second dialect acquisition is more successful when the child moves to the new dialect region during a critical period of language learning. However, we must be very careful in drawing any conclusions about the role of age on the basis of Payne's results, since a reanalysis of her data (cf. Payne 1976) by Labov (2001) reveals that "[n]o significant effect of age, age of arrival, or years spent in Philadelphia appears in any re-configuration of the regression analysis" (Labov 2001:430). Instead, Labov discovers another factor which does seem to affect the success of acquisition of Payne's subjects, viz. the child's position in the peer group. We come back to Labov's findings in the next section (section 2.5.2.2).

The effect of the age at which children moved to a new dialect region is also examined by Chambers (1998). Chambers carried out a developmental study of six Canadian children in two families who moved to southern England. On the basis of his data, he proposes eight principles "as a set of empirically testable hypotheses about the determinants of dialect acquisition" (Chambers 1998:148). The principles that are relevant to the present study will be discussed in this and the following sections. Chambers organized a series of interviews, two years apart, so that longitudinal aspects could be revealed. To be sure about the question whether native children use the southern England English (short: SEE) features themselves, and in that way provide the necessary input for the dialect learners, Chambers also interviewed a control group of native speakers.

One of Chambers' principles of dialect acquisition is that "[a]cquisition of complex rules and new phonemes splits the population into early acquirers and later acquirers" (Chambers 1998:158). Chambers illustrates this principle with his results on the acquisition of *Low Vowel Merger*, a complex phonological rule of Canadian English.[9] Low Vowel Merger refers to the merger of "the two low back lax vowels" (Chambers 1998:158) in Standard Canadian English (short: CE), which does not occur in Standard SEE. Consequently, homophones appear in the following CE word pairs: *bobble / bauble*, *tot / taught*, etc. Both members of these word pairs "are pronounced with the same vowel in Canada, but they have different vowels in SEE". Therefore, a Canadian child learning SEE, "must differentiate the two groups and learn to pronounce a new phoneme" (Chambers 1998:158), or in other words, the child must no longer merge the two vowels. Chambers' results reveal that only the two subjects who moved to the region at a young age (before age 11) score high for unmerging, whereas the ones who moved to the region at a later age, do not succeed in acquiring this complex feature of SEE. This leads Chambers to the conclusion that the acquisition of this complex feature "splits the Canadian youngsters into early and late acquirers" (Chambers 1998:159).[10]

On the basis of these results, Chambers formulates another principle of dialect acquisition, i.e. that "[t]he difference between early and late acquirers is clearly age-graded" (Chambers 1998:160). Chambers (1998:160) further argues that "[t]he fact that age [i.e. age of arrival in the new dialect region, K.R.] is critical in dialect acquisition will hardly be surprising in view of the well-known advantages of youth in both first-language and second-language acquisition". So, the fact that complex rules and new phonemes are only acquired successfully by the children who moved to southern England at a young age, is adduced by Chambers as evidence of the critical period of language acquisition. He demonstrates that similar effects of age appear from studies by Sibata (1958) and David & Montgomery (1988). Furthermore, he refers to Payne (1980), who, according to Chambers (1998:161), "supplies dramatic corroboration", since in her study she found age-grading effects within one and the

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[9] In section 2.5.3 we elaborate on Chambers' (1998) view on the complexity of phonological features.
[10] Chambers speaks of 'late acquirers', but actually, these children had not acquired Low Vowel Merger at all at the time of the interviews.

same family, in that the younger children were more proficient in the new dialect than their older brothers or sisters. Recall, however, that Labov (2001) showed that Payne's conclusions on the effect of age can be re-analysed. In addition, Chambers bases his conclusions about the effect of age of arrival on a very small number of cases: only two (out of six) children (who came to live in Southern England before age 11) acquired Low Vowel Merger successfully.

The effect of the age of arrival in the new dialect region on the degree of success of dialect acquisition is also examined by Kerswill (1994, 1996). Kerswill (1996:191-198) compares the influence of peer groups on preadolescents (aged 6 to 12) with that on adolescents (aged 12 to 17). He argues that the most dramatic changes occur in the adolescent period. Further, Kerswill proposes that "the critical age for dialect acquisition may have to be set a little higher (perhaps to 16)" (Kerswill 1996:197). These propositions are based on his 1994 study of adult rural migrants in Bergen (Norway). This study investigates accommodation to and acquisition of the Bergen dialect by people who moved from rural areas to the city of Bergen. Kerswill observes a striking distinction between the accommodation behaviour and acquisition of early movers (i.e. people who moved to Bergen between the ages of 12 and 16), and that of late movers (i.e. people who have migrated at 17 or older), in the sense that "[n]one of the 31 late movers was as 'Bergenized'" as the eight early movers (Kerswill 1996:198). Therefore, Kerswill (1996) proposes that the critical age of dialect acquisition should not be set too early. Kerswill accounts for this relatively late critical age as follows: "Adolescents are clearly significant bearers of change; their networks allow them to have wider contacts than younger children, and their desire for a distinct social identity means that they are willing to modify their speech" (Kerswill 1996:198).

In this section we have addressed the concept of a critical period of language learning. We have discussed some studies which provide arguments in favour of such a critical period (cf. Lenneberg 1967; Scovel 1969), but we have also discussed some counterarguments (cf. Hakuta et al. 2003, among others). We have also shown that references to a critical period occur in studies on second dialect acquisition (cf. Payne 1980; Kerswill 1994, 1996; Chambers 1998). These studies argue that the age of first contact with the new dialect influences the degree of success with which the new variety is acquired.

Recall that the children who participated in the present research all became exposed to the target dialect at about the same age (i.e. between 2 and 3 years old), since it concerns children who went to school in the research location (i.e. Maldegem) for their entire lives. So, 'age of arrival' is not a relevant factor in the present study. The above discussion is relevant, however, because it shows that the age of first contact is crucial to the degree of success with which a child learns the second dialect. In the present study, this first contact with the local dialect occurred at a very young age for all children, which means that they should all have equal chances of learning the local dialect. We have selected children of different ages (i.e. nine-, twelve- and fifteen-year-olds). This allows us to examine whether the dialect

proficiency of a child keeps improving until the age of fifteen or not. We will come back to the factor age when formulating our hypotheses in chapter 4.

2.5.2.2. Orientation towards and position in the peer group

In the literature on second dialect acquisition, much attention has been paid to questions such as whether a child mainly focuses on the language variety spoken by its parents or on the language variety of the peer group (i.e. the local dialect). Does the child's degree of orientation towards the peer group affect its degree of success in second dialect acquisition? Does the position of the child in the peer group reveal something about its degree of dialect proficiency? In this section, we discuss a number of studies that have addressed these questions.

In processes of second dialect acquisition (and other kinds of linguistic accommodation) by children and adolescents, the peer group plays an important part. From a certain age onwards, children are very sensitive to influence from their peers, also linguistically. Kerswill & Williams (2000:68) find a relationship between children's ability to accommodate linguistically to their new environments and "the changing social psychology of the child from infancy to post-adolescence", that is, the rapid development of children's "social identities": from initial attachment to their caregivers (mostly the parents), they move on to adolescence and finally "arrive at the verge of adulthood".[11] Kerswill & Williams also argue that "[e]ach stage is reflected in differences in language use that are associated particularly with changes in the child's orientation to other people" (Kerswill & Williams 2000:68). In other words, when children move on to adolescence, they are mainly oriented towards their peers, or as Kerswill & Williams put it, older children are "eventually forming distinctive teenage peer-groups, with their attachment to youth culture and opposition to adult norms. Linguistically, this is reflected in a greater preference for non-standard speech in the mid-teens (…)" (Kerswill & Williams 2000:68). We may thus assume that the children's wish to belong to the peer group (often reinforced by their opposition to adult norms) is a strong motivation to learn the dialect of that peer group.

The relation between children's social networks and their degree of dialect proficiency is discussed by Labov (2001). On the basis of a reanalysis of Payne's (1976) results (see also section 2.5.2.1), Labov (2001) draws some interesting conclusions about the effect of a child's position in the peer group on its degree of success in second dialect acquisition. Recall that Payne (1976, 1980) found that the younger a child was when moving to King of Prussia – preferably younger than 9 – the better its chances of success of acquiring a number of phonetic features of the new dialect. However, Labov's analysis (2001) sheds new light on Payne's results.

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[11] Kerswill and Williams (2000) describe the development of a new language variety created by dialect contact. Their research was carried out in Milton Keynes, a 'New Town' about 75 kilometres north-west of London.

Labov describes how Payne (1976) tries to account for the individual differences among her subjects by taking into account a number of social factors. In order to quantify these factors, Payne (1976) examined "the number of peers mentioned by a child in the interview, the number of times the child was mentioned by others, and the number of times that siblings and parents were named" (Labov 2001:430). This is a sociolinguistic method used to establish the child's social network and its own position within the group (see also Berthele 2002). According to Labov (2001:430), "Payne reported that the major social variable was age of arrival in the Philadelphia community. While she had expected that the child's place in the local peer group would affect the acquisition of phonetic features, she found no such effect." However, Labov's reanalysis leads to very different results. The multiple regression analysis performed by Labov, reveals that "[t]he most significant independent variable was the number of times that the speaker was mentioned by peers – which is the most sensitive index of the density of the speaker's social network" (Labov 2001:430), whereas the analysis does not reveal a significant effect of age (of arrival) (see section 2.5.2.1). Labov concludes that the peer group structure is strongly related to a child's success in the acquisition of certain dialect features.

Another study which strongly focuses on the influence of the peer group is Berthele (2002). Berthele uses the same methods as Payne (1976) to find out children's social network and he arrives at similar conclusions as Labov (2001). Berthele's (2002) paper on the acquisition of a second dialect reports on research that was carried out in Fribourg, a Swiss town that is characterized by its multi-lingual (French-German) and multi-dialectal setting. Berthele interviewed 14 nine-year-old children from German-speaking families who had moved to Fribourg from other parts of Switzerland or Europe (Bern, Zurich, Italy and France, among others). Berthele discusses the secondary acquisition of the Swiss German dialect, which is spoken among the schoolchildren. About the varieties spoken at school, Berthele notes: "In the school context, the diglossic situation in Switzerland leads to the parallel use of two varieties: Standard High German as the official language of instruction and Swiss German as the language of informal exchange among the children and between teachers and children" (Berthele 2002:328-329). Berthele focuses on the dialect acquisition of children who speak a Swiss German dialect at home which differs from the "prestige" variety which is used by the peer group at school.[12] Children who attempt to learn this variety, are trying to show their solidarity with the peer group, or, as pointed out by Berthele, the subjects' linguistic choices are "acts of identity in a small group of peers" (Berthele 2002:328).

Berthele examines to what extent the individual learners have acquired different phonological features of the second dialect. In order to explain the differences in the success

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[12] Since Berthele is concerned with a school context, in which 'belonging to the peer group' is prominent, we believe that we have to interpret the notion of 'prestige' here, as covert prestige (see section 2.4.1), that is to say, "prestige in the sense of being favourably regarded by one's peers, and of signalling one's identity as a member of a group" (Chambers & Trudgill 1980:98-99).

of dialect acquisition among the different informants, Berthele performed sociological research which aims at revealing the social network within the class of schoolchildren. For this purpose, Berthele asked all children the same questions about their preferences within the group (cf. Payne 1976). On the basis of the "sociogram" thus created, Berthele concludes that "the degree of social integration" is generally reflected in "the degree of linguistic conformity": "The general (…) pattern is that the more a child is situated at the center of the social network within the class of schoolchildren, the fewer variants from other than the target dialects will be found in his/her idiolect" (Berthele 2002:341-342). So, again there are indications that the child's position in the peer group has a decisive influence on its degree of success in second dialect acquisition.

Next to the paramount influence of the peer group on the degree of linguistic accommodation (e.g. dialect acquisition) of children, the influence of the parents should not be underestimated either. This is pointed out by Kerswill & Williams (2000):

> "We must also bear in mind the contribution of the parents' dialects to the mixture. (…) Children brought up in a migrated family have, as primary input, language varieties originating elsewhere, albeit modified ones; and it would be surprising if this fact did not have consequences for their future language development." (Kerswill & Williams 2000:69)

According to Labov (2001), this linguistic influence of the parents is especially relevant in the first four years of the child's life. On the basis of an analysis of Kerswill & Williams' results, he concludes that "[t]he break between parental and peer group influence is clearly located between the ages of 4 and 8" (Labov 2001:427). However, it can be expected that, in spite of the growing influence of the peer group, the parents continue to have a certain effect on the language of their children. The present study involves children with parents from different origins (i.e. from the research location or from elsewhere; see chapters 4 and 5). The investigation of the exact degree of linguistic influence of the parents on their child would require a good knowledge of the relative dialects of the parents, which we do not have. However, our data allow us to examine whether the origin of the parents has any effect on the degree of success with which children acquire the target dialect.

Summarizing, we can say that the child's social network is a clue to its degree of dialect proficiency: the more 'popular' the child is, the better its dialect proficiency. We have shown that the so-called 'sociogram' is a valuable method to establish the social network of children. In the present study, we have not performed sociographic tests, e.g. asking children for their preferences within the group, mostly because of practical reasons: the large number of children involved (i.e. 164) makes it very difficult to make an inventory of the social networks of the children. We have also argued in this section that, apart from peer group influence, the influence of the parents is important as well. The present study examines the effect of the origin of the parents on children's degree of dialect proficiency.

In the next section, we discuss another factor that is supposed to affect the degree to which children and adolescents accommodate (linguistically) to their peers.

2.5.2.3. Attitude and motivation

Recall from section 2.4.2 that one of the similarities between 'normal' second language acquisition and second dialect acquisition is the role of the motivation to learn the second language variety. Several studies have reported that there is a positive correlation between the degree of (instrumental and integrative) motivation and the degree of success in language learning (cf. Archibald 1998). Furthermore, language users, and in particular the young ones, consider dialect to be more amicable and entertaining than the standard language (see chapter 1 and section 2.4.1). Dialect scores high on the 'solidarity dimension', which implies that speaking the local dialect is a way of showing solidarity towards the peer group. It follows that children who are strongly oriented towards the peer group will make more of an effort to acquire the dialect of the peer group (see section 2.5.2.2). A child with a strong orientation towards the peer group will most likely have a more positive attitude towards dialect use and a stronger motivation to learn the local dialect.

The role of motivation and attitude was addressed in Vousten's (1995) study on second dialect acquisition. Vousten (1995) examines the acquisition of a Limburg dialect (viz. that of Venray) as a second language by children who were raised in Standard Dutch. A large part of his study reports on an attitude and motivation test in which he made use of the *Attitude/Motivation Test Battery* (AMTB) of Gardner (Gardner 1985), of Spolsky's identity scales (Spolsky 1969) and of a matched-guise experiment (cf. Lambert et al. 1960). Vousten selected 151 informants, who participated in the attitude and motivation test. Note that Vousten did not examine the actual dialect knowledge of all of these participants. Instead, he selected them on the basis of their answers to the following questions: "Can you speak the local dialect?" and "How often do you speak the local dialect?" On the basis of their answers, Vousten classified the participants in a group of dialect learners (i.e. children raised in Standard Dutch at home, who claim that they speak the local dialect with their friends) and a group of non-learners (i.e. children raised in Standard Dutch, who claim that they never speak the local dialect). Vousten intended to examine whether there are significant differences between the attitude and motivation of the dialect learners and that of the non-learners.

Vousten's AMTB results revealed significant differences. The dialect learners appeared to be more strongly motivated and to be inclined to put more effort into acquiring the local dialect than the non-learners. Their attitude towards dialect was also more positive than that of the non-learners, while the latter had a more positive attitude towards the standard variety and had more 'fear' to speak the dialect. Both groups experienced a similar degree of stimulation to speak the dialect from their dialect-speaking environments. And both groups declared that their parents hardly stimulated nor discouraged them to speak the local dialect. The matched-

guise experiment showed that "[t]he dialect is evaluated more positively on the solidarity dimension, while the standard language is given the highest scores on the status dimension" (Vousten 1995:149) (cf. overt vs. covert prestige; see also Deprez & De Schutter 1981:32-36).

Vousten further examined the effect of the attitude and motivation on the degree of success in dialect acquisition in 38 children who were selected from the group of dialect learners (i.e. children who reported that they spoke the local dialect) and in a control group of native dialect speakers. He did not, however, find any significant relationship between the affective factors (i.e. attitude and motivation) and the degree of dialect proficiency of children (see Vousten 1995:125). Vousten argues that this might be due to shortcomings in his methods used to 'measure' the affective factors (i.e. AMTB, identity scales and matched-guise experiment), or that there indeed was no relationship between attitude and motivation on the one hand and degree of dialect proficiency on the other. However, Vousten argues that the latter possibility is not very plausible.

Perhaps, the lack of a significant effect of attitude/motivation in Vousten's study is due to the fact that he confined himself to examining the effect of these factors on the dialect proficiency of children who reported that they spoke the local dialect. Recall that Vousten found a more positive attitude towards dialect and a stronger motivation to learn the local dialect in these children (i.e. the so-called dialect learners) than in the children who claimed that they did not speak the local dialect (i.e. the so-called non-learners). As a result, the 38 dialect learners investigated by Vousten probably exhibited highly comparable profiles with respect to the affective factors. We believe that the results might have been different if he had also examined the children who reported that they did not speak the local dialect, because these children displayed more negative attitudes towards dialect use. The present study therefore examines the effect of attitude and motivation on the degree of success in dialect acquisition of a large number of children (i.e. 164), who – according to their parents – have variable degrees of proficiency in the local dialect (see also chapters 4 and 5).

2.5.2.4. Conclusion

In this section we have discussed different factors which are supposed to affect the degree of individual success in second dialect acquisition, viz. the age of first contact with the new language variety, the orientation to and position in the peer group (with some attention to parental influence), and the child's attitude towards dialect (use/speakers) and its motivation to acquire the local dialect. These factors have been addressed in different studies in second dialect acquisition. The main conclusions that can be drawn from these studies are (1) that there is no consensus on the critical period during which second dialect acquisition should start in order to be successful (e.g. before age 9 according to Payne 1980; before age 16 according to Kerswill 1996); (2) that the child will seem to be more successful in acquiring the local dialect according to the centrality of his position in the peer group (cf. Labov 2001;

Berthele 2002); and (3) that children who claim to speak the local dialect generally display a more positive attitude towards dialect use or speakers and a stronger motivation to learn the local dialect than children who report that they do not speak the local dialect (cf. Vousten 1995).

2.5.3. The degree of complexity of dialect features

This section deals with an issue that is often discussed in the literature on second dialect acquisition, that is, the degree of complexity of several types of dialect features and the effects on the ease of acquisition of the relevant features. On the basis of examples from the literature, it will be shown which dialect features are generally considered to be complex. All examples concern the acquisition of phonological and phonetic dialect features. We should note that most of the studies discussed in this section use the notion of (phonological) 'rules'. This notion must be interpreted within the framework of generative grammar, i.e. as rules which generate surface forms from underlying representations.[13]

In general, phonological rules are considered to be complex when their output is "opaque" (cf. Chambers 1998) or unpredictable, for example, when there are many lexical exceptions to the rule (i.e. words to which the rule does not apply in spite of the fact that these words meet the structural conditions of the relevant rule). The concept of complexity of dialect features is important to the present study, since one of our research questions is whether certain phonological features are acquired better than others, and if this is the case, which factors determine the degree to which each feature is acquired. As we will see, however, the literature does not provide a clear-cut implementation of the factor of 'complexity'. In the present study, we assume that dialect features are more complex as they become more unpredictable. We argue that different factors contribute to the degree of predictability of dialect features (i.e. incidence, conditioning environment, competing variants, productivity, and average token frequency; see chapter 4). Our operationalization of some of these factors builds on the concept of complexity as described in the literature on second dialect acquisition.

Chambers (1998) addresses the complexity of dialect features as one of the factors determining the degree of success in second dialect acquisition. Recall that Chambers proposes eight principles "as a set of empirically testable hypotheses about the determinants of dialect acquisition" (Chambers 1998:148). One of these principles states that "[s]imple phonological rules progress faster than complex ones" (Chambers 1998:152). According to Chambers (1998:152-153), "[s]imple rules are automatic processes that admit no exceptions", whereas "[c]omplex rules have opaque outputs, that is, they have exceptions or variant forms

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[13] The studies in second dialect acquisition discussed in this section are not cast within a clear-cut acquisition theory, which implies that most of them are not explicit with regard to the question whether dialect learners actually make use of 'rules' to acquire the target dialect (see also section 2.5.4).
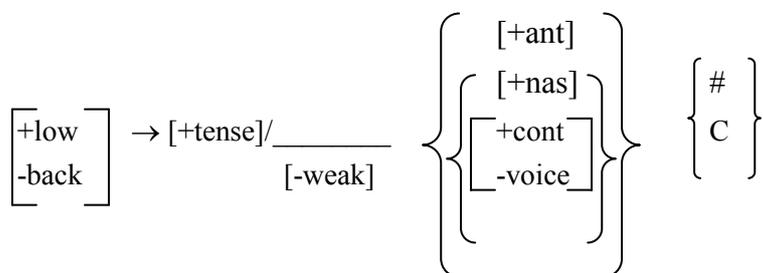
(…)." Chambers argues (p.c.) that the notion of 'opaque' includes rule opacity in the derivational sense as one of its cases, but that more generally, the notion 'opaque' refers to any outputs that are not completely predictable or regular.[14] A result of this opacity is the occurrence of surface forms which appear to violate rules in the phonology.

In order to illustrate the opposition between simple and complex rules, Chambers refers to Payne's (1980) study in the acquisition of the Philadelphia dialect. He argues that the phonetic variables examined by Payne are examples of simple rules: they are "straightforward, categorical phonetic adjustments" (Chambers 1998:155). Payne (1980) examines the acquisition of five phonetic variables of the Philadelphia dialect by out-of-state children; these concern (1) the fronting of (aw) to [æ], (2) the centralization of (ay) before voiceless obstruents, (3) the raising of (oy) to [u], and (4)(5) the extreme fronting and centralization of the nuclei of (uw) and (ow) except before /l/. These so-called "lower level rules" (Payne 1980:175) are considered by Chambers to be simple rules, because they are phonetic adjustments that are categorically applied (i.e. to all words that meet the conditions), leaving no opportunity for lexical exceptions (cf. postlexical rules, see section 3.2.3.1). Payne's results on the acquisition of these variables reveal that "[w]ith the exception of (aw), each variable has been completely acquired by 50% or more of the children, and very few children have failed to acquire the pattern at all" (Payne 1980:151).[15] Chambers considers the fact that Payne's informants are relatively successful in acquiring these phonetic variables as an argument in favour of his principle that simple rules progress relatively fast.

Chambers mentions Payne's (1980) short-*a* variable as an example of a 'complex' rule. In what follows, we discuss this variable rather extensively, since it is also relevant to the discussion in the next section.

The Philadelphia dialect rule of tensing and raising of short *a* is formalized by Payne (1980:158) as follows:

Fig. 2.1: The rule of tensing and raising of short *a* in the Philadelphia dialect

$$
\begin{bmatrix} +\text{low} \\ -\text{back} \end{bmatrix} \rightarrow [+\text{tense}] / \underline{\qquad}_{[-\text{weak}]} \left\{ \begin{array}{c} [+\text{ant}] \\ \left\{ \begin{array}{c} [+\text{nas}] \\ \begin{bmatrix} +\text{cont} \\ -\text{voice} \end{bmatrix} \end{array} \right\} \end{array} \right\} \left\{ \begin{array}{c} \# \\ C \end{array} \right\}
$$

---

[14] Opaque rules (in the derivational sense) are rules which are applied early in the course of derivation and of which the context is 'wiped out' by another rule later on, so that the ultimate surface form becomes 'opaque'.
[15] In Payne's (1980) study, the variable (aw) is the only phonetic variable that "shows a moderate percentage for nonacquisition" (Payne 1980:151). Still, even this variable is relatively well acquired.

The rule represented in figure 2.1 indicates that short *a* becomes tense when it does not occur in a weak word (i.e. "monosyllabic words whose nucleus may be reduced to schwa" (Payne 1980:158)), in positions before an anterior nasal (e.g. "*man, ham, hand*") or before an anterior voiceless fricative (e.g. "*glass, laugh, path*"), which in turn is followed by an inflectional boundary or another consonant. There are three words, however, that do not satisfy the structural description of the rule, but still undergo tensing and raising in the Philadelphia dialect, viz. "the three affective adjectives with final *d – mad, bad, glad*" (Payne 1980:158). Furthermore, there are three lexical exceptions to the rule: these concern strong verbs that satisfy the structural description of the rule, but do not undergo tensing and raising, viz. *ran, swam* and *began*. According to Payne (1980:158), this is only the "bare outline" of the Philadelphia short-*a* distribution, as there are a number of phonological environments in which /æ/ (i.e. short *a*) is invariably raised and tensed, as well as a number of environments in which /æ/ is invariably lax, but also a number of environments in which /æ/ is variable (see Payne 1980:158-159 for a description of these "subpatterns"). So, in order for a child to learn this rule of the Philadelphia dialect, it does not suffice to learn the phonetic conditioning formalized in (1); the child also has to learn one-by-one the other environments in which short *a* is tense, as well as those in which it is lax, and those in which it can be either tense or lax. Payne puts it as follows: "there are several serious structural consequences involved in the acquisition of the short-*a* pattern", since "a child needs to learn not only the phonetic conditioning of the short-*a* distribution (…), but also the grammatical conditioning and lexical exceptions" (Payne 1980:156).

Chambers argues that the short *a* variable basically involves the tensing and raising of /æ/ towards [e:ə], but that it is by no means a simple, straightforward rule, since it is considerably complicated by a "set of conditioning factors" (Chambers 1998:155). He summarizes the complexity of the rule as follows:

> "It never occurs in 'weak' words such as *am*, *and*, or modal *can*, or before voiced obstruents except for the three words *mad*, *bad*, and *glad*; but it occurs invariably before final anterior voiceless fricatives, as in *laugh*, *path*, and *class*, though never in, say, *smash*; and also invariably before final anterior nasals as in *ham* and *man*, though never in, say, *hang*. Elsewhere it occurs variably, before liquids, as in *pal*, and before nonfinal anterior voiceless fricatives and nasals, as in *traffic* and *hammer*." (Chambers 1998:155-56)

We may thus conclude that the rule of tensing and raising of short *a* is complex in that there are lexical exceptions and it sometimes applies variably, or as Chambers puts it, the rule has opaque outputs.

The general conclusion about the acquisition of the Philadelphia short-*a* pattern by out-of-state children is that it is "usually irregular, sporadic, and incomplete" (Payne 1980:175) and

that it is "very rare for a child to acquire the Philadelphia short *a*" (Payne 1980:174).[16] Chambers considers the fact that none of the out-of-state children in Payne's research mastered this Philadelphia short-*a* variable as an argument in favour of his principle that complex rules progress less fast than simple phonological rules.

Chambers (1998) also supports his principle with evidence from his own study on the secondary acquisition of Southern England English (short: SEE) by six Canadian children who moved to the south of England. Chambers shows that his informants made considerable progress in eliminating T-voicing from their accents. According to Chambers, T-voicing is an example of a so-called simple rule: it is the rule which voices medial /t/ to [d] "when it follows a vowel or /r/ and precedes an unstressed syllable" (Chambers 1998:154) (e.g. in *putting* → [pudɪŋ]). The rule is simple because it is exceptionless: voicing applies to all words with medial /t/ in Canadian English. In Southern England English, however, medial /t/ should not be voiced. So, the Canadian children have to eliminate this rule when acquiring the new dialect. It appeared that all children were successful with respect to the elimination of T-voicing.

With respect to his own research, Chambers mentions Vowel Backing as an example of a complex phonological rule. Vowel Backing refers to the "lengthening and backing of Middle English /ă/ ('short a') before voiceless anterior fricatives, as in *plaster*, *bath*, *laughing*, *brass* and *class* and before clusters of /n/ + obstruent as in *dancing*, *branch*, *France*, *plant*, and *t[r]ansmission*" (Chambers 1998:154). In Southern England English these words are all pronounced with [ɑ], whereas Canadian English has the variant [æ] in these words. The rule of Vowel Backing is complex because it has lexical exceptions (cf. lexical rules, see section 3.2.3.1): several words that meet the appropriate environment are invariably pronounced with the front vowel [æ], e.g. *cafeteria*, *pants*, *cancer*, whereas the rule is variably applied in some words, such as "*graph*, *plastic*, *stance* and *transport*" (Chambers 1998:155). Chambers finds that even the children from his control group do not score 100% on this variable (i.e. Vowel Backing). The degree of success of acquisition of this variable by the Canadian immigrants is very low (except for one nine-year-old). Chambers considers this result as an argument in favour of his principle that simple phonological rules (e.g. T-voicing) progress faster than complex rules (e.g. Vowel Backing). We should note, however, that there may be another factor determining the relative success of the acquisition of T-voicing. In one of his principles, Chambers states that "[e]liminating old rules occurs more rapidly than acquiring new ones" (Chambers 1998:166). Recall that the Canadian children have to learn to eliminate T-voicing (i.e. an 'old' rule) from their accents and thus, do not have to learn a

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[16] Payne observes that only the children whose parents were born and raised in Philadelphia themselves, i.e. the control group, were able to acquire the Philadelphia short *a* distribution successfully.

'new' rule. This may be an additional reason, next to the relative 'simplicity' of T-voicing, for the success with which this feature is acquired.

Like Chambers, Vousten (1995) proposes that the degree of complexity of dialect features is a factor which can influence the degree of success in the acquisition of a second dialect grammar. His results on the degree of dialect proficiency of 38 dialect learners reveal that "the acquisition of relatively simple rules is more successful than that of more complex rules" (Vousten 1995:151). Vousten draws this conclusion on the basis of the observation that his subjects get to grips with the dialect variant of Standard Dutch (short: SD) /ɛi/ better than with that of SD /œy/. According to Vousten, this is because /ɛi/ corresponds to only one dialect variant (i.e. [i]), while /œy/ corresponds to two different dialect variants (i.e. [u] or [y]) (Vousten 1995:121). In other words, the rule for the realization of /ɛi/ is "simple", whereas the rule for the realization of /œy/ is more "complex" (Vousten 1995:121). This example of complexity is also referred to by Chambers (1998:156-157) in order to support his principle that simple rules are acquired faster than complex rules, which indicates that Chambers' and Vousten's views on the complexity of phonological rules are comparable. With respect to the lower degree of acquisition of the dialect variants of SD /œy/ as compared to the acquisition of the dialect variant of SD /ɛi/ (cf. Vousten & Bongaerts 1990), Chambers (1998:157) concludes that "[t]he difference in (…) competence in acquiring these two features is consistent with the simplicity and complexity of the two features."

An important conclusion that can be drawn from the studies discussed in this section is that not all dialect features are equally easy or difficult to acquire in the process of second dialect acquisition. Put differently, some dialect features are more 'complex' than others. We have defined a complex rule as a rule of which the output is unpredictable, for example because there are lexical exceptions. It was also shown (cf. Vousten 1995) that when an L1 segment x corresponds to more than one dialect variant (e.g. L2 y and L2 z), the acquisition of the correct dialect realization of L1 x may be complicated.

The studies discussed in this section (in particular Chambers 1998) paid considerable attention to the degree of complexity of dialect features, but in none of these studies was there a structural attempt to operationalize the notion of complexity. Put differently, this factor has not yet been introduced as a predictor (i.e. independent variable) of learning success. In the present study, however, different factors which all contribute to the degree of complexity of dialect features are implemented as independent variables. The present study makes the assumption that dialect features have different degrees of complexity. We strongly focus on the factors which make some dialect features more difficult to acquire than others. In chapter 4, we propose that (highly) predictable dialect features are acquired better than less predictable features. We claim that five factors contribute to the 'predictability' of a dialect

feature, viz. (1) the incidence or type frequency of the feature, (2) the phonological conditioning of the feature, (3) the number of competing variants, (4) the (un)productivity of the feature, and (5) its average token frequency. Especially our implementation of the third factor builds on the idea of complexity as it is defined in the literature (cf. Vousten 1995; Chambers 1998) (see chapter 5).

2.5.4. The relationship between the L1 and the L2 and the learning mechanisms underlying second dialect acquisition

In this section we show that there are indications in the literature that the first language (i.e. L1) of second dialect learners (and second language learners in general) has an impact on the way in which they learn certain second language (i.e. L2) features. We show that the relationship between the L1 and the L2 can be related to the question which mental mechanisms are used by second dialect learners. As mentioned before, few studies in second dialect acquisition have concentrated on the question which mental mechanisms underly the process of dialect acquisition. Some attention has been given to this issue by Payne (1980), with respect to the acquisition of the short *a* pattern. Therefore, this section will be largely devoted to a further discussion of this phenomenon (see also section 2.5.3).

In the previous section, different phonological 'rules' were discussed to illustrate the concept of complexity. The rule of tensing and raising of short *a* (cf. Payne 1980) was formalized as a generative rule (see figure 2.1), that is, a rule which generates a surface form from an underlying form. The rule of Vowel Backing was described by Chambers as the "lengthening and backing of M[iddle] E[nglish] /ă/" (Chambers 1998:154) before voiceless anterior fricatives and before clusters of /n/ + obstruent. It should be noted that these formalizations of phonological rules are not intended to reflect the underlying learning mechanisms used by dialect learners. For example, learners of Southern England English, whether first or second dialect learners, have (usually) no knowledge of Middle English. So, they do not learn the rule of Vowel Backing as the "lengthening and backing of ME /ă/". This raises the question which mental mechanisms are used by (first and/or second) dialect learners to acquire the target dialect. In chapter 3, we further elaborate on this question by discussing rule-based and exemplar-based models of language learning. For now, we focus on the relationship between the L1 and the L2 and on the question whether the nature of this relationship has any effect on the acquisition of certain dialect features.

Consider again the rule of Vowel Backing discussed by Chambers (1998). Canadian children acquiring Southern England English have to learn that some words which have the segment /æ/ in their L1 (i.e. Canadian English) (e.g. *bath*, *dance*), have the back vowel /ɑ/

in the new dialect (i.e. SEE). So, one could argue that these children learn that there are correspondences between CE /æ/ and SEE /ɑ/ in certain words.[17]

Especially the example provided by Vousten (1995) (see section 2.5.3) is relevant for the idea of correspondences between the L1 and the L2: children who were raised in Standard Dutch (i.e. L1) have to learn that Standard Dutch /œy/ corresponds to two different dialect variants, viz. [u] or [y]. Vousten's idea that this complicates the acquisition of the dialect realization of /œy/ indirectly refers to the assumption that the dialect learner forms correspondences between his L1 and the L2 (see chapter 3).

Most studies in second dialect acquisition do not (directly) address the question which learning mechanisms are used by second dialect learners. One of the exceptions is Payne (1980), who pays some attention to the issue of learning mechanisms. She suggests that children from different dialect areas exhibit different "learning patterns" (Payne 1980:172) with respect to the acquisition of the distribution of Philadelphia short *a*.

Payne examined the degree to which children from different regions (and thus with different L1s) acquired the Philadelphia short-*a* distribution. She compared the results of three different groups of children: the New York City children, the children from "Nasal Dialect" areas and the Northern City children. These areas, together with Philadelphia, correspond to the four general types of short *a* patterns in Eastern United States dialects (see Payne 1980:156-157).

Payne focuses on the question how children from these different regions have to "restructure their dialects" (Payne 1980:156) in order to acquire the Philadelphia short-*a* pattern correctly. Payne (1980) uses the notion of 'restructuring' to refer to "any change in the dictionary representation of a morpheme" (Payne 1980:144). Her notion 'dictionary representation' indicates the underlying level of lexical representations in the grammar. So, 'restructuring' implies that dialect learners change their underlying forms in order to acquire the target dialect. Payne (1980:175) argues that there are limits to the restructuring of a child's grammar, which explains the difficulties in learning the short-*a* pattern. Moreover, Payne argues that this restructuring of a child's mental grammar is different depending on where the child comes from.

For example, "since the Philadelphia short-*a* core pattern fits within the New York City short-*a* core pattern" (Payne 1980:165), children who have moved from New York City to Philadelphia only have to learn a small number of extra restrictions on the tensing and raising of short *a*, or as Payne (1980:160) puts it: "the New York City children learn to correct only those short-*a* words that are tense in New York City". The New York City children must learn (1) to lax short *a* before /š/, and (2) to lax short *a* before /d/, except for the three affective adjectives *mad*, *bad* and *glad*. According to Payne (1980:160), one might predict that (1) is

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[17] In chapter 3 we elaborate on the idea of intersystemic correspondences as possible learning strategies (cf. Auer 1993; Taeldeman 1993) and also discuss an alternative theory of language learning.

easier to learn than (2), because (1) "requires a generalization of a rule to exclude BACK voiceless fricatives" (i.e. exclude /š/ from tensing), whereas the learning of (2) "requires some special diacritic in the dictionary to mark exceptions [i.e. *mad*, *bad*, *glad*] to the blocking rule" (i.e. the rule which blocks tensing of short *a* in positions before /d/). Payne's results reveal that "the acquisition of short *a* by most of the New York city children is low" (Payne 1980:162) and that most learners overgeneralize the laxing of short *a*. Against Payne's expectations, however, the New York City children show considerably more success in learning to lax short *a* before /d/ (i.e. (2)) than before /š/ (i.e. (1)). More overgeneralization occurs in the latter case, in the sense that the children generalize laxing not only in positions before /š/ but also in positions before the anterior voiceless fricatives /s, f, θ/. Payne therefore concludes that "for the New York City children, the lexical contrast of *mbg* with the other *d* words seems to help in learning and is actually easier to learn than the simple laxing rule laxing [æ] before /š/, which is a simple generalization" (Payne 1980:165).

Unlike the New York City dialect, the Nasal dialects and the Northern City dialects do not share a short-*a* core pattern with the Philadelphia dialect.[18] As a result, children from these areas follow other 'learning paths' to acquire the Philadelphia short-*a* distribution than the New York City children. Below, we only consider the results of the Northern City children, because Payne compares these results with those of the New York City children, whereas she does not do so for the Nasal dialect children.[19]

Since the Northern City dialects have tense short *a* in all environments, these children must learn to retain tense short *a* in certain environments (see figure 2.1 for the general rule of raising and tensing of short *a*), whereas they must learn to lax or variably lax short *a* in other environments (see Payne 1980:167). Payne (1980:168) summarizes as follows:

"If Northern City children attempt to use rules, these rules must block tense short *a* from occurring before /š/ and before /d/. At the same time they must mark the *mbg* [i.e. *mad*, *bad*, *glad*] lexical items with some special diacritic in the dictionary to exempt them from the laxing rule."

Recall that Payne predicts that learning to exclude /š/ from the tensing rule is easier than learning to mark *mad*, *bad* and *glad* as lexical exceptions to the rule of laxing of short *a* before /d/, because the first requires only the generalization of a 'rule' which excludes back

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[18] In the Nasal Dialects, short *a* is tensed and raised before all nasals in all environments, but is lax elsewhere (see Payne 1980:156-157). The New York City pattern was discussed above and the Northern City pattern is discussed below.

[19] Just like the New York City children and the Northern City children, the Nasal dialect children show a low degree of success in the acquisition of the Philadelphia short-*a* distribution (see Payne 1980:165-167).

voiceless fricatives, whereas the latter requires "some special diacritic" in the mental lexicon to mark exceptions. These predictions are confirmed by the results of the Northern City children (as opposed to the New York City children, cf. above). The Northern City children "show a slightly greater degree of success in learning to lax tense short *a* for the whole class /š/, than they do for marking *mbg* with special diacritic features in the dictionary" (Payne 1980:170-171).

A comparison of the results of the New York City children with those of the Northern City children leads Payne to the conclusion that "the Northern City children give every evidence of operating with phonetic rules", whereas the "New York City speakers are more attuned to lexical factors than rule formation" (Payne 1980:174). This conclusion is based on the fact that the New York City children are more successful in learning the correct Philadelphia realization of the lexical exceptions (to the rule of laxing before /d/) than in learning the "simple laxing rule" (Payne 1980:165) in positions before the non-anterior voiceless fricative /š/ (but not before the anterior voiceless fricatives /s,f,θ/), whereas the Northern City children exhibit the reverse pattern.

However, we believe that one must be very careful in drawing conclusions about children's mental learning mechanisms on the basis of the results on the acquisition of only one dialect feature (i.e. short *a*). A comparison with the acquisition of a considerable number of other dialect features would be required in order to examine whether the same learning patterns occur for the New York City and Northern City children. Still, Payne's suggestions are important in the light of the discussion about rule-based and exemplar-based models of language learning, on which we elaborate in chapter 3.

Chambers (1998) pays some attention to the learning mechanisms in second dialect acquisition as well. He suggests that the phonological acquisition of second dialect learners displays a 'lexical diffusion' pattern. 'Lexical diffusion' generally involves the idea that sound change starts in a few words only – in particular, words with a high frequency of usage – and then spreads through the lexicon word by word, on the basis of *analogy*.[20] Lexical diffusion patterns typically take on the form of an S-curve (cf. Chen & Hsieh 1971; Chen & Wang 1975; Chambers & Trudgill 1980:179; Labov 1981; McMahon 1994; Taeldeman 2006b), "with phonological changes occurring slowly for the first 20% or so of possible instances and then rising rapidly to about 80% before tailing off toward categoricity" (Chambers 1998:166). Chambers points out that this S-curve pattern is usually interpreted as follows: "speakers must sporadically acquire new pronunciations for about 20% of the available instances *as the basis for generalizing a rule*" and, "once the process becomes rule-

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[20] Kloeke (1927), for instance, provides a well-known example of lexical diffusion in the Dutch-speaking area: the diphthongization of West Germanic û [yː] into ui [œy] progressed earlier and faster in the word *huis* 'house' than in *muis* 'mouse', probably due to the higher frequency of usage of *huis* in interlocal communication. As a result, the diphthongization was first accomplished in the word *huis*. By analogy with *huis*, the vowel in *muis* also became diphthongized.

governed, about 80% of the instances will be affected immediately, with some portion of the remaining instances, usually the less frequent ones (…), resisting change and perhaps remaining as residue" (Chambers 1998:166; my italics, K.R.).

Applying the lexical diffusion pattern to the phonological acquisition by second dialect learners leads to the prediction that children first learn a particular second dialect feature in a word-by-word manner and that, when they have learned 'enough' words displaying the feature, they generalize a rule which allows them to correctly realize all words (apart from a few lexical exceptions) in which the feature occurs. Chambers assumes that his Canadian subjects learn the features of their new dialect (i.e. Southern England English) in this way, since he observes that the S-curve pattern occurs persistently in his data: it occurs in the results on the absence of T-voicing, the presence of Vowel Backing and the absence of Low Vowel Merger (see Chambers 1998:166). We can thus conclude that Chambers adopts a rule-based model of language learning. We return to this issue in chapter 3.

Summarizing, we may say that until now, studies on second dialect acquisition have not been cast within a clear-cut acquisition theory. Most of the studies in second dialect acquisition use rules to describe phonological acquisition, but are not explicit on the psycholinguistic reality of these rules. The basic assumption in Chambers (1998) is that second dialect learners rely on rule formation, but that word-by-word learning must first take place in order to be able to generalize a rule. Payne (1980) suggests that dialect learners may use different learning mechanisms depending on which dialect they have learned as their L1. The present study sheds more light on the question whether second dialect learners learn by rule or word by word.

2.6. Summary

In this chapter, we have discussed some general aspects of dialect acquisition. We have argued that first dialect acquisition is not fundamentally different from first language acquisition, except for the degree of variability in the input, which may be higher in the case of first dialect acquisition, due to processes of dialect levelling. Second, we have shown that a dialect feature which causes considerable difficulty for second dialect learners can be successfully acquired by first dialect learners (cf. Payne 1980; Roberts & Labov 1995).

The studies on second dialect acquisition that were discussed in this chapter report on two different situations. Second dialect acquisition may occur in a situation in which children are raised by their parents in the standard language and only later acquire the local dialect of the place where they have lived since their birth. On the other hand, second dialect acquisition may result from a situation in which children move from one dialect region to another at a later age. In the first situation, factors of prestige are more important since an opposition between standard language and dialect is involved. The second situation involves more variation with respect to the child's age of first contact with the target dialect.

Second dialect acquisition can be distinguished from 'normal' second language acquisition on the basis of a number of factors: (1) dialect acquisition usually takes place in a natural setting only, whereas second language acquisition may be supported by formal education; (2) the linguistic relationship between the standard variety and a dialect of the same language (e.g. Standard Dutch and the Maldegem dialect) is generally stronger than between two different languages (e.g. English and German); (3) dialects are not codified, as opposed to standard varieties; and (4) dialects are usually characterized by a low(er) overt prestige, but a high(er) covert prestige. We have argued that it is the combination of these factors which marks second dialect acquisition. Despite the differences between second dialect acquisition and 'normal' second language acquisition, there is also a great deal of similarity between both processes. One of these similarities is that learners produce a so-called interlanguage, which is characterized by, for example, transfer errors, developmental errors (e.g. overgeneralizations), intermediate forms and inter- (and intra-) speaker variation in the output.

The literature on second dialect acquisition has largely focused on the question which factors are responsible for the degree of individual success of dialect learners in attaining a good proficiency of the target dialect. Studies which report on second dialect acquisition as a result of moving to a new dialect region have paid much attention to the factor 'age of arrival'. There are indications that children who moved to a new dialect region after a certain age do not acquire the target dialect as well as children who have moved at an earlier age. These findings are related to the idea of a critical period of language learning. There is no consensus, however, about the age after which acquisition becomes more difficult: some studies argue that the critical point lies somewhere around the age of eight (cf. Payne 1980; Chambers 1998), whereas others assume that the critical age should be later (cf. Kerswill 1994). The present study involves children who were born in the research location, which implies that they all became exposed to the local dialect at a very early age. In spite of the fact that the age of first contact is more or less the same for each of our informants, the factor age is important to the present study to the extent that different age groups are involved (i.e. 9-, 12- and 15-year-olds), which allows us to examine whether a child's dialect proficiency (still) develops between the ages of nine and fifteen, and whether the degree of dialect proficiency keeps increasing until the age of fifteen. Apart from age, the child's degree of dialect proficiency is also determined by its degree of orientation towards the peer group and its position in the group of peers. On the basis of the literature (cf. Labov 2001; Berthele 2002), we have argued that a child's social network provides a clue to its degree of dialect proficiency: children with a central position in the peer group have a higher degree of dialect proficiency than more isolated children. A third factor affecting the individual degree of success in second dialect acquisition is the child's attitude towards dialect use or speakers, and its degree of motivation to learn the local dialect. Attitude/motivation is treated as an independent variable in the present study.

Studies in second dialect acquisition have also been concerned with the question whether certain dialect features are acquired better than others. It has been observed that 'simple' dialect features are acquired better and more rapidly than 'complex' features (cf. Vousten 1995; Chambers 1998). In the literature, dialect features are considered as complex, when their output is unpredictable (e.g. because of lexical exceptions). (Un)predictability is one of the factors that receives much attention in the present study. In the following chapters (chapters 4, 5 and 6), we will argue that several factors contribute to the degree of predictability of dialect features. The implementation of two of these factors (i.e. number of competing dialect variants and conditioning environment) builds on the idea of complexity as it is set out in the literature.

The literature on second dialect acquisition discussed in this chapter has not been much concerned with the mental mechanisms used by second dialect learners to acquire the target dialect. An exception is Payne (1980), who argues that the first language variety of second dialect learners can be decisive for the way in which they acquire certain target dialect features, i.e. by rule formation or by focusing on lexical factors (as in word-by-word learning). Chambers (1998) proposes that second dialect learners acquire features by forming rules, but that in order to form a rule, they must first be confronted with the relevant dialect feature in a threshold of words. The next chapter is entirely devoted to the discussion regarding rule-based and exemplar-based models of language learning.

Certain issues from the literature on second dialect acquisition have not been discussed in this chapter, but will be dealt with in following chapters, such as issues which are relevant to the hypotheses formulated in chapter 4 (e.g. frequency, the distinction between primary and secondary features, etc.).