Spatial static description in Chinese L2: How to organize the flow of information?

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In this study, we analyse a type of discourse called "static spatial description" (Carroll & von Stutterheim 1993, Carroll *et al*. 2000, Hendriks & Watorek 2008) and the interactions that exist between the morpho-syntactic, information and discursive structures in Chinese and French L1 and in Chinese L2. The research questions that we assess are based on Levelt's (1989) language production model: Does the structure of the language in which the speaker produces his speech have an impact on the selection and linearization of the information expressed? And if so, what happens during production in a foreign language? The database consists of 4 groups of 18 speakers: French native speakers, Chinese native speakers, Chinese L2 beginner and intermediate level groups. The informants were asked to describe a poster showing an old center of a town to an unknown interlocutor who was unfamiliar with the picture. The analysis is carried out within the framework of a semantic model of information organization, the *Quaestio* model (von Stutterheim & Klein 1989). It was observed that: (1) the two groups of native speakers showed significant differences at the three structural levels; (2) beginner level learners performed a very basic description of the picture because of a lack of language means; (3) intermediate level learners showed a development toward the target language patterns in respect to morpho-syntactic forms, but they also exhibited a significant difference in respect to the way they organize and shape the flow of information between utterances. We can conclude that the morpho-syntactic means of a language (NP, PP, adverbs) have an influence at the discursive level in the L1 speech. Learner's productions show a clear evolution between the two groups. The main persistent difficulty at the intermediate level occurs in the organization of the information.

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