1. Introduction- Definition

Bridging is a language operation that allows the speaker to use a definite DP without previous mention of a corresponding indefinite DP. The new DP creates an inferential bridge that is based on semantic and pragmatic bonds and not on direct reference. E.g. *I saw a movie yesterday. The director has won an Oscar price*. Basically, bridging is a kind of anaphora in which the referent has as an antecedent an entity that is not explicitly mention in previous discourse, but the listener has to draw inferences based on contextual assumptions, or knowledge of the world.

2. Approaches- Past studies

Clark (1974) was the first one to use the term "bridging" and the researchers have approached this phenomenon pragmatically ever since (Matsui, 2000· Zu & Xia, 2012). Therefore, different approaches have been developed in order to find the one that clarifies this phenomenon:

- Scenario-based Approach, Sanford & Garrod (1981)
- Location Theory, Hawkins (1978)
- Focus-based approach, Sidner (1983)
- Relevance Theory, Sperber & Wilson (1995)

In early studies of language acquisition bridging was treated as one of the functions of the definite article (Maratsos, 1976· Schafer & de Villiers, 2000· Hondrogianni & Marinis 2014). These studies include two different semantic contexts for the definite article, the anaphoric and the bridging.

Anaphoric context:

Experimenter: A bird and a cat were sitting by a tree. One of the animals flew into the sky. Guess which!

Child (expected answer): The bird.

Bridging context:

Experimenter: Mary wanted to eat a banana but first she had to remove something. What did Mary need to peel off?

Child (expected answer): The skin.

The participants in these studies showed higher accuracy on the bridging compared with the anaphoric context. Avrutin and Coopmans (2000) investigated whether young children demonstrate the ability to connect definite DPs to semantically related indefinites in the presence of two competing sources of reference: linguistic (contextual) and non-linguistic (deictic). The researchers used visual stimuli in their study and the utterances had this form:

    a.   A car is passing by. The door is green.
    b.   A car is passing by. The door is red.

    3.   Aim of the thesis

First aim of this thesis is to investigate bridging as an operation in language acquisition. We assume that our results will be very interesting about the ability of Greek-speaking children to use and have the control of this operation, since there is no other equivalent study in Greek. In previous studies of bridging reference, bridging was treated as one of the functions of the definite article (Maratsos, 1976· Schafer & de Villiers, 2000· Hondrogianni & Marinis, 2014) and not as an independent linguistic operation. Also, a remarkable feature of bridging is that it is located in the interface of three different linguistic domains, semantics, syntax and pragmatics. The use of bridging needs encoding and decoding not only syntactic and semantic information, but also pragmatic references. It is for this reason that we propose the extension of this study to children with autism, because of their pragmatic deficits. In addition, there are no other studies about the acquisition of bridging in children with autism. However, we assume that they will show lower scores in a bridging task than the TD (typical development) children because of these pragmatic deficits.

Furthermore, it would be very interesting the study of bridging acquisition in children with Specific Language Impairment (SLI) compared with children with autism. Hondrogianni and Marinis (2014) noticed in a previous study that children with SLI showed lower accuracy in the bridging condition than the TD children. We can make an early the assumption that there will be deficits in SLI children but our assumption

is not safe because there are no previous studies to compare these two groups. Finally, the use of bridging and the construction of these referential bridges acquires the ability to understand your interlocutor and his point of view. This ability is required also in the Theory of Mind. Therefore, the last aim of this thesis is to investigate the connection between bridging and Theory of Mind.

The methodology we suggest in order to fulfil the aims of the thesis, will be based on Avrutin & Coopmans's (2000) method: a task with the use of visual stimuli and the presence of two competing sources of reference. The condition of bridging will be one: indefinite DP to definite DP. E.g.

(1) A boy holds a train. The blouse is pink/blue.

4. Bibliography

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