2 Person and object reference in Dutch, English and French

2.1 Introduction

In Chapter 1 it has already been mentioned that speakers can make use of several morphosyntactic forms to refer to the same entity, for example ‘dress’ in (1):

(1) Different morphosyntactic forms in reference to ‘dress’ (English)
   A: I’m going to buy the dress that I saw in Oxford Street yesterday.
   B: Oh yeah, it was really nice! You really should buy it!

The choice of a particular morphosyntactic form for reference is part of the linguistic subfield of pragmatics and depends on the referent’s cognitive status. This is the assumed representation of the referent in the speaker’s and hearer’s memory and the extent to which the referent is active in their memory (Gundel, Hedberg & Zacharski, 1993, see §2.3). For example, by using the definite determiner in the first reference to ‘dress’ in (1), speaker A signals that she assumes the listener to be familiar with the dress. In other words, she assumes the listener to already have a representation of this particular dress in memory. Once the referent ‘dress’ has been mentioned and is in the focus of attention of the conversation participants, speakers of English often choose a pronominal form to refer, as reflected by speaker B’s use of it. Cognitive status is also important in Dutch and French, although more specific properties of the referential expression chosen might differ between these three languages (§2.4.2). In Dutch, speaker B would probably choose the demonstrative pronoun die instead of a personal pronoun in both references to ‘dress’, as in (2).
In §1.1, three pragmatic factors that influence the cognitive status of referents were identified: (1) whether the referent is a specific or non-specific entity, (2) whether the referent has been mentioned before and is therefore given in discourse or is new to discourse and (3) for referents that are new to discourse, whether the referent is assumed to be familiar to the listener on the basis of previous knowledge or physical presence. Children’s (developing) sensitivity to these pragmatic factors in their choice of referential expressions is the focus of the current study.

This chapter discusses basic theoretical notions that are relevant to this study. It is not the aim to offer new theoretical insights or to give a complete overview of all issues in the grammatical systems of these languages or in the study of reference. The focus will be on those aspects that are relevant to the current study. The morphosyntactic devices that are available for person and object reference in adult Dutch, English and French and that will be studied here are described in §2.2. Relevant typological differences between these languages are also highlighted. In §2.3, the three pragmatic factors of specificity, givenness in discourse and familiarity of discourse-new referents are discussed in more detail. The pragmatic factors will be related to several pragmatic functions of referents in discourse, such as discourse-new or discourse-given reference. Finally, the patterning of pragmatic functions with morphosyntactic forms in adult Dutch, English and French is discussed in §2.4. Differences between the languages in form-function combinations will be described in §2.4.2.

2.2 Morphosyntactic forms for reference in adult Dutch, English and French

Dutch, English and French are related, Indo-European languages: Dutch and English belong to the Germanic branch, whereas French is a Romance language. The referential devices that are available in these languages fall into the following categories: nouns (with or without determiners), pronouns and proper names (§1.1). This section gives an overview of the different determiner types (§2.2.1) and different types of pronouns (§2.2.2) in Dutch, English and
French. There is no specific section on proper names, since syntactically, these forms have similar properties across the three languages, that is, they generally appear without a determiner (§1.1).

Despite being related, there are some cross-linguistic differences in the determiner and pronouns systems of these languages. The difference in frequency and consistency of determiner use (§1.2.1) is most relevant to this study and will therefore be discussed in more detail. The overview of determiner and pronoun types will contain descriptions of their morphological properties in terms of number and gender encoding. There are also cross-linguistic differences between the languages in this area. It is, however, important to keep in mind that the different number and gender forms of determiners and pronouns are only included in the following description in order to be complete. The role of number and gender in the acquisition of reference, and possible cross-linguistic differences, will not be further examined. The description thus mainly serves as background for the interpretation of the examples in the remainder of this thesis.

### 2.2.1 Nouns and determiners in adult Dutch, English and French

In this study, the influence of pragmatic factors on the use of different determiner types will focus on indefinite articles, definite articles and on demonstrative and possessive determiners. Demonstrative determiners also encode spatial distinctions (proximal versus distal) in Dutch, English and French, but this is not examined and not described here either. The properties of possessive determiners are illustrated by means of the third person singular masculine form in the overviews for all languages. The full paradigms of possessive determiners are comparable to that of possessive pronouns and described in the section on pronominal forms (§2.2.2).

#### 2.2.1.1 Nouns and determiners in Dutch

Dutch nouns have a two-way gender distinction (neuter and common) and a two-way number distinction (singular and plural, see Table 2.1). Gender is an inherent property of every noun in this language, but it is not expressed in all

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1. In describing the properties of referential devices in the languages studied, this overview deals with the standard varieties. The children studied (see §4.2) acquire Standard Dutch, American-English, Standard French and Belgian-French.
2. If attributively used demonstrative and possessive pronouns precede a noun, they are referred to as demonstrative determiners and possessive determiners respectively.
3. Common nouns are either feminine or masculine. Determiners are, however, generally not marked for this distinction and speakers do not often distinguish between masculine and feminine nouns in subsequent pronominal reference either (Audring, 2006).
determiners. Only definite and demonstrative determiners of singular nouns are explicitly marked for gender.

Table 2.1. Overview of indefinite, definite, demonstrative and possessive determiners in Dutch

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Indefinite</th>
<th>Definite</th>
<th>Demonstrative</th>
<th>Possessive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Singular</td>
<td>Common</td>
<td>een wortel</td>
<td>de wortel</td>
<td>deze/die wortel</td>
<td>zijn wortel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neuter</td>
<td>een konijn</td>
<td>het konijn</td>
<td>dit/dat konijn</td>
<td>zijn konijn</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plural</td>
<td>Common</td>
<td>ø wortels</td>
<td>de wortels</td>
<td>deze/die wortels</td>
<td>zijn wortels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neuter</td>
<td>ø konijnen</td>
<td>de konijnen</td>
<td>deze/die konijnen</td>
<td>zijn konijnen</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes. The determiner form is underlined.

Indefinite and possessive determiners that precede singular nouns are not marked for gender. The one exception to this rule is shown in example (3). The first person plural possessive has two forms: onze for common singular nouns and ons for neuter singular nouns. Possessive determiners also encode the natural gender of the possessor in third person singular (see 4).

(3) Encoding of grammatical gender on the first person plural possessive determiner (Dutch)

a. Onze wortel
   our.comm carrot.comm
   ‘Our carrot’
b. Ons konijn
   our.neut rabbit.neut
   ‘Our rabbit’

(4) Encoding of natural gender of possessor on possessive determiners (Dutch)

Zijn/haar konijn is grijs met wit.
His.masc/her.fem rabbit is grey with white
‘His/her rabbit is grey and white’

Determiners do not mark grammatical gender before plural nouns in Dutch (Table 2.1). Moreover, number is only expressed by means of a plural suffix on the noun and not by means of a special determiner form. Determiners that precede plural nouns are similar to the singular common form for definite, demonstrative and possessive determiners.

The expression of determiners before nouns is not consistent in Dutch, since some forms can occur as bare nouns, for example the indefinite plural (Table 2.1). Bare nouns are also grammatical in the case of nouns indicating masses or
substances, although mass nouns can also occur with a definite, demonstrative or possessive determiner (see 5).

(5) Mass nouns without and with determiner (Dutch)
   Ik hou niet van ø melk in mijn thee.
   ‘I don’t like milk in my tea’

Finally, nominal forms can combine with numerals in Dutch, as in example (6). The numeral ‘een ‘one’ overlaps with the singular indefinite determiner in Dutch orthography and thus in the transcribed data used in this study (§4.2). There is a difference in pronunciation between ‘een as an indefinite determiner and as a numeral: the former is pronounced with a schwa, as /ən/.

(6) Nouns preceded by a numeral (Dutch)
   Eén konijn en vier wortels.
   ‘One rabbit and four carrots’

In sum, nouns in Dutch carry both gender and number, but these features are not systematically expressed on all determiners. Moreover, indefinite plurals and mass nouns (can) appear as grammatical bare nouns in Dutch.

2.2.1.2 Nouns and determiners in English

Nouns do not carry grammatical gender in English. The determiner system is therefore less complex than in Dutch, most notably for the definite and demonstrative determiner (Table 2.2). The indefinite singular determiner has two forms in English: either a or the allomorph an, depending on whether the initial phoneme of the following noun is a consonant or vowel. As in Dutch, the possessive determiner reflects the natural gender of the possessor in the third person singular (see §2.2.2 for the full paradigm). Combinations of numeral and noun are also possible in English.

Table 2.2. Overview of indefinite, definite, demonstrative and possessive determiners in English

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Indefinite</th>
<th>Definite</th>
<th>Demonstrative</th>
<th>Possessive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Singular</td>
<td>No gender</td>
<td>a rabbit</td>
<td>the rabbit</td>
<td>this/that rabbit</td>
<td>his rabbit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plural</td>
<td>No gender</td>
<td>ø rabbits</td>
<td>the rabbits</td>
<td>these/those rabbits</td>
<td>his rabbits</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes. The determiner form is underlined.
English has a two-way number distinction on nouns, which is generally expressed by means of a plural suffix. Determiners are not systematically marked for number. The definite or possessive determiner before a plural noun is similar to the determiner form before a singular noun. Nevertheless, the demonstrative determiner is encoded for number: this/that is used before a singular noun and these/those before a plural noun. As in Dutch, not all nominal forms are preceded by a determiner in English. The indefinite plural is expressed by means of a grammatical bare noun. Bare nouns can also be used for mass nouns.

In sum, English nouns and determiners do not carry gender. Number does not play a large role in the determiner system either. Determiner production before nouns is not entirely consistent in this language, since bare nouns are grammatical for indefinite plurals and mass nouns.

### 2.2.1.3 Nouns and determiners in French

Nouns carry masculine or feminine gender and singular or plural number in French. Gender is explicitly marked on determiners that precede singular nouns (Table 2.3). There is a masculine and feminine form for the singular indefinite, definite and demonstrative determiner. Both the masculine and feminine definite determiner appear in their reduced form *l'* if the initial phoneme of the following noun is a vowel. The masculine form *le* is contracted with the prepositions *à* and *de* to *au* and *du* respectively.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Indefinite</th>
<th>Definite</th>
<th>Demonstrative</th>
<th>Possessive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Singular</td>
<td>Masculine</td>
<td>un lapin</td>
<td>le lapin</td>
<td>ce lapin (-ci/-ça)</td>
<td>son lapin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Feminine</td>
<td>une carotte</td>
<td>la carotte</td>
<td>cette carotte (-ci/-ça)</td>
<td>sa carotte</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plural</td>
<td>Masculine</td>
<td>des lapins</td>
<td>les lapins</td>
<td>ces lapins (-ci/-ça)</td>
<td>ses lapins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Feminine</td>
<td>des carottes</td>
<td>les carottes</td>
<td>ces carottes (-ci/-ça)</td>
<td>ses carottes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Notes.* The determiner form is underlined.

Possessive determiners that precede singular nouns are marked for grammatical gender in their first, second and third person form, as in (7). The encoding of grammatical gender on the possessive determiner in French contrasts with Dutch and English, where the possessive determiner reflects the natural gender of the possessor in the third person singular.
Determiners that precede plural nouns are not marked for gender. There is a separate plural form of all determiner types in French (Table 2.3). The plural definite determiner is contracted if it is preceded by the prepositions à or de to aux and des respectively. Nouns can also be preceded by a numeral in French. Example (8) shows how the numeral ‘one’ overlaps with the singular indefinite determiner.

(8) Nouns preceded by a numeral (French)

Un lapin et quatre carottes.

‘One rabbit and four carrots’

Determiner production before nouns is more frequent and consistent in French than in Dutch and English, since the use of bare nouns is more restricted in French (Roodenburg, 2004). Indefinite plural nouns are not expressed as bare nouns in French, but are preceded by the indefinite plural determiner. Mass nouns are not expressed by means of bare nouns either in French. These are preceded by the partitive determiner, which does not exist in Dutch and English. The partitive determiner is discussed in more detail in the next section.

2.2.1.4 Cross-linguistic differences in nouns and determiners

It is clear that there are cross-linguistic differences between Dutch, English and French in gender and number expression on determiners. Generally speaking, number and gender is more elaborately marked in French than in Dutch and English. This makes the French determiner paradigm more complex in terms of the amount of different forms. The complexity of the determiner system in the input might have an influence on the speed of acquisition. Proposals in this area range from an advantage to a disadvantage in learning a complex and elaborate system (Avrutin & De Lange, 2004; Kupisch, 2006a). The influence of the complexity of the determiner system on acquisition will not be investigated in this study however. The focus lies on the influence of the frequency and consistency with which determiners are produced before nouns in the input. That is, if children frequently hear nouns without a determiner, this may impact on children’s ability to discover the regularities of determiner...
use and as such on the speed of determiner acquisition (§1.2.2 and §3.2.1). The earlier sections have shown that there are cross-linguistic differences between Dutch, English and French in this respect. The indefinite plural is expressed by means of a grammatical bare noun in Dutch and English and by means of a plural determiner in French (see 9). Moreover, mass nouns can also be expressed grammatically as bare nouns in Dutch and English (see 10). In French, a partitive determiner is used in these cases. The partitive determiner carries gender before singular nouns (du versus de la), but not before plural nouns (des). Before a vowel, both the masculine and feminine singular form is reduced to de l’. Whether these differences in frequency of determiner use play a role in the speed of determiner acquisition in Dutch, English and French will be explored in §5.3.2.4.

(9) Expression of indefinite plural in English and Dutch (bare noun) and French (determiner)
   a. Gerard has bought books, because there was a sale at the bookstore.
   b. Gerard heeft boeken gekocht, want de boekhandel hield uitverkoop.
   c. Gérard a acheté des livres/*livres, parce qu’il y avait des soldes dans la librairie.

(10) Expression of mass nouns in English and Dutch (bare noun) and French (partitive determiner)
   a. Do you want beer or wine?
   b. Wil je bier of wijn?
   c. Tu veux de la bière/*bière ou du vin/*vin?

The languages studied also differ in their use of genitives. In Dutch and English, nouns can occur in a genitive construction to encode a dependency relation between two referents (e.g. possession, see 11a-b). In both languages, the construction is expressed by means of the clitic –s. In Dutch, however, the genitive –s is a marked construction. In colloquial speech the possessives zijn or z’n, as in (11c), are more often used. Moreover, dependency between referents is often expressed in a periphrastic construction in Dutch, as in (12a). This is also the case in French (see 12b), in which the genitive construction does not exist at all.

4 Bare nouns are grammatical in Dutch and English and also French in more contexts than cited here, for example in newspaper headlines and in fixed expressions, such as go by car in English or aller en voiture in French (for more exceptions, see Roodenburg, 2004). These instances were, however, not included in the analysis of this research and are therefore not relevant here (see §4.3.2).
(11) **Nouns in a genitive construction (English and Dutch)**

a. The rabbit’s carrot.
   
   b. Het konijn’s wortel.
   
   c. Het konijn z’n wortel.

(12) **Periphrastic construction to encode dependency between referents (Dutch and French)**

a. De wortel van het konijn.
   
   The carrot of the rabbit
   
   ‘The rabbit’s carrot’
   
   b. La carotte du lapin.
   
   The carrot of-the rabbit
   
   ‘The rabbit’s carrot’

Finally, there is a tendency to combine nouns that denote body parts with possessive determiners in Dutch and English and with definite determiners in French (see 13). This phenomenon is known as the *inalienable possessive construction*.

(13) **Determiners before nouns denoting body parts (English, Dutch and French)**

a. Lukas wipes his nose.
   
   b. Lukas snuit zijn neus.
   
   c. Lukas s’essuie le nez.

In sum, all three languages have indefinite, definite, demonstrative and possessive determiners (Table 2.4). However, in Dutch and English (both Germanic languages) bare nouns are grammatical as indefinite plurals or mass nouns. Determiner production is more consistent in French, since nouns are usually preceded by a determiner in this language (see Roodenburg, 2004 for exceptions). The languages also differ in how possession is expressed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2.4. Overview of available determiner forms in Dutch, English and French</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bare noun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indefinite determiner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definite determiner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrative determiner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possessive determiner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Numeral determiner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partitive determiner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genitive construction</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes. + = form is available in this language ; - = form is not available in this language. -! = form is available in this language under some restrictions (see Roodenburg, 2004 for exceptions).
2.2.2 Pronouns in adult Dutch, English and French

Five different types of pronominal referential devices are studied in this thesis: personal, possessive, reflexive, demonstrative and relative pronouns. Numerals will also be analyzed and included in the category of pronouns. Indefinite (e.g. *any*) and interrogative (e.g. *which*) pronouns are excluded, since these pronouns do not have clearly established referents and are therefore less relevant for the topic of this study. Many of the pronominal forms studied are marked for number, gender and case in all three languages. In addition, various researchers make a two-way distinction for personal pronouns between strong and weak/reduced forms in spoken Dutch, English and French (Kayne, 1975; Jakubowicz, Muller, Kang, Riemer & Rigaut, 1996; Cardinaletti, 1999; Cardinaletti & Starke, 1999). Strong pronouns act syntactically as lexical nouns, that is, they can be coordinated, accentuated, modified and can occur in isolation (see 14). In contrast, weak pronouns do not have these properties (see 14'). Furthermore, weak pronouns are assimilated to another element in the sentence, most often the verb, and are phonologically unstressed.

(14) Strong and weak pronouns (Dutch)

a. 
Ik heb **hem** en Nelly een boek gegeven. 
'I gave him and Nelly a book'

a'.
Ik heb *'m en Nelly een boek gegeven. 
(coordinated weak pronoun, ungrammatical)

b. 
Hij [!] houdt niet van romans.  
‘He (stress) does not like novels’

b'.
*i[e] [!] houdt niet van romans.  
(accentuated weak pronoun, ungrammatical)

c. 
Zelfs *hij* wil dit boek lezen.  
‘Even he wants to read this book’

c'.
Zelfs *ie* wil dit boek lezen.  
(modified weak pronoun, ungrammatical)

d. 
Wie heeft dit boek gelezen? **Hij**. 
‘Who read this book? He did’

d'.
Wie heeft dit boek gelezen? *'ie*.  
(isolated weak pronoun, ungrammatical)

In order to present a total overview of pronominal forms that might occur in the examples in the remainder of this thesis, the different number, gender and case forms of pronouns are described, as are the different forms of weak and strong pronouns. It is, however, important to remember that the role of these features in

---

5 In fact, Cardinaletti & Starke (1999) argue for a further distinction between weak pronouns and clitics in French. Under this assumption, subject pronouns are analyzed as weak forms and object pronouns as true syntactic clitics. There is currently no consensus about the status of subject pronouns in French. For example, some authors have argued that the three-way distinction only applies to formal or written French and not to the spoken variety, which is investigated in this study (e.g. Jakubowicz et al., 1996).
the acquisition of reference will not be further investigated. This study focuses
on the use of pronouns as opposed to nouns and proper names and on the choice
of different types of pronouns (personal, demonstrative, possessive pronoun etc.,
see §4.4) in third person reference. For the sake of completeness however, first
and second person pronouns are also included in the overviews of pronominal
paradigms in each of the three languages (§2.2.2.1–§2.2.2.3). A summary of
cross-linguistic differences is given in §2.2.2.4.

2.2.2.1 Pronouns in Dutch

Dutch has a three-way gender distinction for third person singular personal
pronouns: masculine, feminine and neuter (Table 2.5). The Dutch personal
pronouns are also marked for case. There are distinct object forms for the masculine
and feminine third person personal pronoun. As pointed out earlier, the subject
and object forms of personal pronouns can appear as strong or weak forms in
Dutch. The weak form of the masculine third person pronoun, ie, originates from
the common gender demonstrative die (Audring, 2006). This form is assimilated
to the preceding verb and only can only appear post-verbally, as in (15).

(15) Use of the weak masculine personal pronoun ie (Dutch)

Een mooi boek heeft-ie geschreven!
A nice book has-he written
‘It’s a nice book he has written’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person/Number</th>
<th>Personal pronouns</th>
<th>Possessive pronouns</th>
<th>Reflexive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1sg</td>
<td>ik / ’k</td>
<td>mijn / ’m</td>
<td>me, mezelf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2sg</td>
<td>jij / je</td>
<td>jouw / je</td>
<td>je, jezelf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3sg masc.</td>
<td>hij / ie</td>
<td>zijn / z’n</td>
<td>zich, zichzelf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3sg fem.</td>
<td>zij / ze</td>
<td>haar / d’r</td>
<td>zich, zichzelf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3sg neut.</td>
<td>het / ’t</td>
<td>zijn / z’n</td>
<td>zich, zichzelf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1pl</td>
<td>wij / we</td>
<td>ons, onze</td>
<td>ons, onszelf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2pl</td>
<td>jullie</td>
<td>jullie / je</td>
<td>je, jezelf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3pl</td>
<td>zij / ze</td>
<td>hun, hen / ze</td>
<td>zich, zichzelf</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes. Weak (clitic) forms are given after the slash and in italics. Form variants that have the same
phonological status are separated with commas. A variant for the second person personal pronoun
singular and plural is ‘u’. This is the polite form.

Gender is also marked on third person singular possessive pronouns. A
distinction is made between attributive and predicative possessive pronouns
Possessive pronouns that are used attributively function as possessive determiners (see example 16a and §2.2.1.1). This determiner form, however, also clearly refers to a person/object. It will therefore not only be included in the analysis of determiner forms and nouns as referential expressions in this study, but also in the pronominal analysis. The predicative use of possessives (see 16b) is marginal in Dutch. Speakers will most often opt for the attributive use of possessives or for a periphrastic construction with the preposition van ‘of’ and the object form of the personal pronoun, as in (16c).

(16) Possessive constructions (Dutch)

a. Haar boek.
   ‘Her book’

b. Het boek is het hare.
   ‘The book is hers’

c. Het boek is van haar.
   The book is of her
   ‘The book is hers’

Gender marking is not completely systematic across pronominal forms for third person reference in Dutch. Singular reflexive pronouns are unmarked for gender, as are all of the third person plural forms of personal, possessive and reflexive pronouns. Moreover, demonstrative and relative pronouns are marked according to the neuter-common distinction, which is also found for nominal forms in Dutch (Table 2.6 and §2.2.1.1). The singular common forms of the demonstrative pronoun are also used in plural reference. Numerals are not at all marked for gender or number. In (17a-c) examples are given of the use of demonstrative and relative pronouns and of numerals in reference.

Table 2.6. Overview of demonstrative and relative pronouns and numerals in Dutch

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Demonstrative</th>
<th>Relative</th>
<th>Numeral</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Common</td>
<td>deze/die</td>
<td>die</td>
<td>een, twee, drie etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neuter</td>
<td>dit/dat</td>
<td>dat</td>
<td>een, twee, drie etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(17) Demonstrative and relative pronouns and numerals (Dutch)

a. Ik heb twee cadeautjes gekocht. Dit is voor Herman en dat is voor Nelly.
   ‘I have bought two presents. This one is for Herman and that one is for Nelly’

b. Het boek dat ik net gekocht heb, is een cadeautje.
   ‘The book that I have just bought, is a present’

c. Dit is een mooi boek. Ik koop er twee, dan kan ik er een cadeau doen.
   ‘This is a nice book. I’ll buy two of these, then I can make a present of one of them’
Speakers of Dutch quite often use demonstrative pronouns where personal pronouns could also have been used. The use of demonstrative pronouns is, as with personal pronouns, in part determined by topic continuity, as in (18a-b).

(18) Use of demonstrative pronoun instead of personal pronoun (Dutch)

a. A: Weet je waar mijn portemonnee is?
   ‘Do you know where my wallet is?’
   B: *Die* zag ik gisteravond op tafel liggen.
   ‘I saw it on the table yesterday evening’

b. A: Hoe laat komt je broer?
   ‘What time will your brother be here?’
   B: *Die/hij* is net van huis weggegaan, dus dat duurt nog wel even.
   ‘He has just left home, so that will take some time’

Additionally, Audring (2006) argues that speakers of Dutch favor demonstrative pronouns over personal pronouns because of the rather complex system for gender agreement in this language. Most importantly, the two-way gender paradigm of nouns (§2.2.1.1) does not match with the three-way gender paradigm of personal and possessive pronouns in Dutch. For instance, in (18a), the noun *portemonnee* ‘wallet’ carries common gender, which does not have a one-to-one match with either the masculine or the feminine form of personal pronouns. The common demonstrative pronoun *die* might therefore be used as an avoidance strategy. For animate referents, gender agreement is motivated by the natural gender of the referent. The use of personal pronouns is therefore less problematic. Demonstrative pronouns can, however, also be used for animate referents in Dutch, as in (18b). Detailed properties of gender agreement are not discussed here, since the role of gender in reference is not the focus of this study (see Audring, 2006 for an overview). It is however important to keep in mind that, because of the avoidance strategy described here, the Dutch language input to children might contain more demonstrative pronouns for reference than the English and French input. The current study hopes to clarify this.

This section has given an overview of the different pronominal forms in Dutch. It is important to keep in mind that in Dutch, the demonstrative pronoun is frequently used for reference where personal pronouns are also appropriate.

2.2.2.2 Pronouns in English

As in Dutch, English personal pronouns are marked for case and some can appear as phonologically reduced forms. There is a three-way gender distinction for third
person singular personal pronouns and for third person singular possessive pronouns (Table 2.7). Gender is also evident on the third person singular reflexive forms, which is not the case in Dutch. There is no distinction in gender forms for third person plural pronouns in English.

Table 2.7. Overview of personal, possessive and reflexive pronouns in English

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person/Number</th>
<th>Personal pronouns</th>
<th>Possessive pronouns</th>
<th>Reflexive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Subject</td>
<td>Object</td>
<td>Attributive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1sg</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>me</td>
<td>my</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2sg</td>
<td>you / ’y’</td>
<td>you / ’y’</td>
<td>your</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3sg masc.</td>
<td>he</td>
<td>him / ’m’</td>
<td>his</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3sg fem.</td>
<td>she</td>
<td>her / ’r’</td>
<td>her</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3sg neut.</td>
<td>it</td>
<td>it / ’t’</td>
<td>its</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1pl</td>
<td>we</td>
<td>us</td>
<td>our</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2pl</td>
<td>you</td>
<td>you</td>
<td>your</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3pl masc.</td>
<td>they</td>
<td>them / ’m’</td>
<td>their</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes. Weak (clitic) forms are given after the slash and in italics.

Attributively used possessive pronouns function as a determiner but will, as in Dutch, also be included separately in the pronominal analysis. The predicative possessive pronoun (see 19) seems to be more widely used in English than in Dutch, where a periphrastic construction is often preferred (§2.2.2.1).

(19) Predicative possessive pronoun (English)

This friend of mine who lives in London has a bike on which she rides in the city.

The gender agreement rules of pronominal forms for reference are not discussed in detail here (see Mills, 1986 for an overview). It is, however, important to note that neuter gender is more consistently marked in the English paradigm than in the Dutch paradigm. In Dutch, the neuter form coincides with the masculine form for possessive and reflexive pronouns. In English, there is a separate neuter form for these types of pronouns. Neuter gender pronouns are consistently used to refer to inanimate entities and impersonal animate entities, such as plants. The neuter personal pronoun might therefore be more frequent and possibly more salient in the input to children acquiring English as compared to Dutch.

The three-way gender distinction is not consistently marked on all pronominal forms in English. Demonstrative pronouns are marked for number (singular versus plural), but not for gender. The demonstrative pronouns this
and *that* are the singular forms, whereas *these* and *those* are the plural forms. Demonstrative pronouns can only be used for inanimate referents, as in (20a), or for impersonal animate referents. In reference to humans, demonstrative pronouns are only allowed as an introductory subject, as in (20b). In spoken conversation, reference to countable entities is often clarified by the addition of *one* or *ones*, as in (20c) (Biber, Johansson, Leech, Conrad & Finegan, 1999). Finally, relative pronouns and numerals are not marked for gender or for number in English.

(20) Demonstrative pronouns (English)
   a. I want to buy *that*!
   b. *This* is Kyra.
   c. *This one* is much nicer than *that one*.

This section has given an overview of the pronominal forms in English. It is important to keep in mind that neuter personal pronouns might be more frequently used in this language than in Dutch.

2.2.2.3 Pronouns in French

The French pronominal system (Table 2.8) is more complex than the Dutch and English systems in terms of number of forms. The distinction between strong and clitic/weak personal pronouns has been discussed earlier and is clearly reflected in this language. Subject and object personal pronouns can appear as strong or weak/clitic forms.

Subject and object clitics differ in how they affect the word order of the sentence in French. The canonical word order in this language is SVO (see 21a). Object clitics, however, always appear preverbally in declaratives (see 21b) and in negative imperatives. Clitic subjects and objects also play a role in dislocated structures in which a noun phrase is placed in front or at the end of the sentence (see §2.2.3 for more details). The dislocated element is usually co-referential with a clitic pronoun in the predication.

(21) Preverbal position of object clitic (French)
   a. André lit un livre. (full noun as object)
      ‘André reads a book’
   b. André le lit. (clitic object)
      André it reads
      ‘André reads it’
Personal pronouns have a two-way gender system in French: masculine and feminine (Table 2.8). Gender is systematically expressed in both singular and plural forms (lui/elle and ils/elles). Attributive and predicative possessive pronouns are marked for the grammatical gender and number of the possessed item in French (see 22a-b). In addition, there are separate forms to express the natural number of the possessor (e.g. son versus leur, Table 2.8). The marking of grammatical gender on possessive pronouns in French contrasts with gender marking in Dutch and English. In the latter two languages, possessive pronouns reflect the natural gender and number of the possessor. The predicative possessive pronoun is commonly avoided in spoken French and replaced by a periphrastic construction with a preposition and strong personal pronoun, as in (22c). Gender and number are not marked on third person reflexive forms.

![Table 2.8. Overview of personal, possessive and reflexive pronouns in French](image)

**Table 2.8. Overview of personal, possessive and reflexive pronouns in French**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person/Number</th>
<th>Personal pronouns</th>
<th>Possessive pronouns</th>
<th>Reflexive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Weak/clitic forms</td>
<td>Strong forms Attributive</td>
<td>Predicative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Subject</td>
<td>Object</td>
<td>moi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1sg</td>
<td>je, j’</td>
<td>me, m'</td>
<td>toi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2sg</td>
<td>tu, t’</td>
<td>te, t’</td>
<td>lui</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3sg masc.</td>
<td>il, le, l’</td>
<td>lui</td>
<td>son, sa, ses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3sg fem.</td>
<td>elle, la, l’</td>
<td>elle</td>
<td>son, sa, ses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1pl</td>
<td>nous</td>
<td>nous</td>
<td>nous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2pl</td>
<td>vous</td>
<td>vous</td>
<td>vous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3pl masc.</td>
<td>ils, i</td>
<td>les</td>
<td>eux</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3pl fem.</td>
<td>elles</td>
<td>les</td>
<td>elles</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes.** Weak (clitic) forms are given in italics. Form variants that have the same phonological status are separated with commas.

**22) Possessive constructions (French)**

a. *Leur voiture/leurs voitures.*
   - their.sg car/their.pl cars
   - ‘Their car/their cars’

b. *Ce livre-ci est le mien et celui-là est le sien.*
   - This book-here is mine.MASC and that one-there is his.MASC/hers.MASC
   - ‘This book is mine and that one is his/hers’
person and object reference in dutch, english and french

The two-way gender and number system is also evident for the paradigm of demonstrative pronouns in French (Table 2.9). In addition, there is a neuter singular form (ça and clitic ce), which is the most commonly used demonstrative pronoun in spoken French. The most frequently used relative pronouns, qui and que, are not marked for gender or number. The difference between the two forms lies in their syntactic role in the relative clause. Generally, qui is used as the subject and que as the object of the relative clause.

Both natural (semantic) and grammatical gender play a role in gender agreement in French. Natural gender is usually decisive for animate referents. Inanimate referents agree in gender with the grammatical gender of the corresponding nominal form.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Demonstrative</th>
<th>Relative</th>
<th>Numeral</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(-ci/ là)</td>
<td>qui/que/dont/lequel</td>
<td>un, deux, trois</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Masculine</td>
<td>celui</td>
<td>qui/que/dont/lequel</td>
<td>un, deux, trois</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Feminine</td>
<td>celle</td>
<td>qui/que/dont/laquelle</td>
<td>une, deux, trois</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Neuter</td>
<td>ça (ceci/cela)</td>
<td>qui/que/dont</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Masculine</td>
<td>ceux (-ci/ là)</td>
<td>qui/que/dont/lesquels</td>
<td>deux, trois</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Feminine</td>
<td>celles (-ci/ là)</td>
<td>qui/que/dont/lesquelles</td>
<td>deux, trois</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes. Weak (clitic) forms are given after the slash and in italics. - = form does not exist.

This section has given an overview of the pronominal forms for reference in French, including different number and gender forms. In the further analyses, the influence of these features on reference will however not be investigated.

2.2.2.4 Cross-linguistic differences in pronouns

The preceding sections have shown that there are differences in the pronominal paradigms of Dutch, English and French, mainly with respect to gender and number marking. The influence of these features on the acquisition of reference will, however, not be investigated in this study. There might, however, also be some differences between the three languages in the expected frequencies of particular types of pronouns.

First, demonstrative pronouns are expected to be more frequently used in Dutch than in English and French (§2.2.2.1). To avoid divergence between the
common/neuter gender of nouns and the masculine/feminine gender of personal pronouns, speakers of Dutch often refer by means of a demonstrative pronoun, which also carries common/neuter gender (see 23a). In English and French, the most natural referential expression in this context is a personal pronoun (see 23b-c). This study hopes to clarify whether there is indeed a difference between these languages in the frequency of demonstrative and personal pronouns for reference, both in the input and in child language.

(23) Demonstrative pronoun in Dutch, personal pronoun in English and French
   a. Zie je de auto van de buren daar? Die heeft een mooie kleur.
   b. Do you see the neighbor's car over there? It has a lovely color.
   c. Regarde la voiture des voisins. Elle a une belle couleur.

Second, possessive pronouns in predicative position are expected to be more frequent in English than in Dutch and French (see 24). In the latter two languages, speakers are expected to more often choose a periphrastic construction to express possession.

(24) Cross-linguistic differences in expressing possession
   a. This book is his.
   b. Dit boek is van hem.
   c. Ce livre est à lui.

If an input-driven model of language acquisition is adopted (§1.2.2), the frequency of forms should influence acquisition and children might already reflect these two cross-linguistic differences in their early pronoun use.

2.2.3 Morphosyntactic forms as part of dislocated structures and cleft constructions

Dislocations are syntactic structures in which an element appears at the left or right boundary of the clause (De Cat, 2002). This element is usually resumed by another element inside the clause (see 25-26). Dislocations thus contain two morphosyntactic forms, which both refer to the same entity. In person and object reference, the dislocated element is a nominal or strong pronominal form. The resumptive element is always a (weak) pronoun. Dislocations occur in all three languages studied, but are most frequently used in the French child and input data in this study (§4.4.3). This cross-linguistic difference in frequency of dislocations was also found in an earlier study in which the use of
dislocations in Dutch, English and French child language and in the input was investigated (Notley, Van der Linden & Hulk, 2007).

(25) Left dislocation (Léa, 3;3, French)

%sit: Making paper boxes with glue. Léa has got out an old dismantled box from behind the toys.

GRM: Tu vas réparer une boîte?
‘Are you going to repair a box?’

CHI: C(e) est juste que la [/] la boîte, elle (ne) colle plus bien.
‘It is just that the box, it doesn’t stick well anymore’

(26) Right dislocation (Philippe, 3;0, French)

CHI: Il est gros ce robot.
‘It is big, this robot’

There are various pragmatic motivations for using a dislocation in adult French (see Ashby, 1988; De Cat, 2002 for overviews). In language acquisition research, dislocations have received most attention with regard to the topic/focus distinction (De Cat, 2002; Notley et al., 2007). Topics are commonly defined as ‘the entity that a proposition is about’, whereas the focus of a proposition adds information to the speaker’s knowledge (Lambrecht, 1994; Dik, 1997). Just like adults, young children acquiring French already make considerable use of dislocations to express topics, although children initially use more right dislocations, whereas adults prefer left dislocations in adult-adult conversation (Van der Linden & Sleeman, 2007). The topic/focus distinction does, however, fall outside the scope of this study. The current study examines whether the assumed cognitive status of referents, which is related to the pragmatic factors of specificity, givenness in discourse and familiarity of discourse-new referents, influences children’s choice of referential expressions.

In this light, it is, however, important to decide how to assess the referential value of morphosyntactic forms that occur in dislocations. The two morphosyntactic forms in dislocation structures might after all convey divergent information about the assumed cognitive status of the referent. As will become clear in §2.4, the resumptive pronoun il in (26) indicates that the referent ‘robot’ is accessible and should be easy to recognize, whereas the dislocated nominal ce robot signals a less accessible status to the listener. This study follows Lambrecht (1994: 184-188) in the assumption that the dislocated
element establishes the reference. The morphosyntactic form chosen for the dislocated element reflects, therefore, the assumed cognitive status of the referent for speaker and hearer. The resumptive clitic pronoun serves to indicate the semantic and syntactic role of this referent as an argument in the proposition.

Referential expressions can also appear in it-cleft-constructions, again mostly in the French data (§4.4.3). Example (27) shows that this construction consists of a pronominal form (ce) and a copula (est) as a presentational construction, followed by a full noun or (strong) pronoun and a relative clause.

(27) Cleft construction (input to Philippe, 2;6, French)

%sit: Talking about the colors of a toy car.

MOT: Rouge et noire et encore jaune dedans?

‘Red and black and also yellow underneath?’

CHI: Jaune là.

‘Yellow there’

MOT: Oui, c’est les roues qui sont jaunes, et c’est le monsieur qui est en jaune.

Yeah, it is the wheels that are yellow, and it is the man who is (dressed) in yellow

‘Yeah, the wheels are yellow and the man is yellow’

According to Lambrecht (2001), the it-cleft is a bi-clausal strategy to express a single proposition. The presentational part is considered to be a grammatical element that assigns the pragmatic role of focus to the following referential expression. The following nominal or pronominal element indicates the cognitive status of the referent and will therefore be analyzed in this research, as will the relative pronoun. The presentational part is not included in the analysis of referential expressions.

In sum, combinations of a dislocated element and resumptive pronoun will be interpreted as one reference and morphosyntactically analyzed according to the form of the dislocated element in this study. In cleft constructions, the presentational part is not analyzed, since it mainly functions as a grammatical element assigning focus.

2.2.4 Section summary

This section served to give an overview of the morphosyntactic forms that are available for reference in Dutch, English and French. In all three languages, nouns with different types of determiners can be used. There are
cross-linguistic differences in the extent to which gender and number are expressed on determiners, but these features will not be further investigated in this study. There are also differences in the frequency and consistency of determiner production before nouns. Dutch and English allow bare nouns as indefinite plurals or mass nouns, whereas French does not. The difference in frequency of determiners in the input might influence the speed of determiner acquisition in these languages. Speakers of Dutch, English and French can also use different types of pronominal forms in reference. Language differences in number and gender encoding and in the use of weak or strong pronominal forms, fall again outside the scope of this study. Expectations as to differences in the frequency of use of demonstrative pronouns and possessive pronouns have also been discussed and will be further investigated. Finally, speakers of French frequently use referential expressions in dislocations or cleft-constructions. These structures usually contain more than one referential expression for one and the same referent. It has been argued that only those referential expressions will be analyzed which reflect the assumed cognitive status of the referent.

The next section will focus on the pragmatics of reference. In §2.4, the morphosyntax-pragmatics interface in reference will be discussed.

2.3 The pragmatics of reference

This study will investigate children’s sensitivity to the cognitive status of referents in their use of morphosyntactic forms as referential expressions. In §1.1 it has been discussed that cognitive status is the assumed representation of a referent in the speaker’s and hearer’s memory and the current level of activation of this referent in their consciousness (Gundel et al., 1993). Cognitive status is not a black and white issue. Various researchers view the cognitive status of referents as a scale, ranging from referents that are assumed to be present and highly activated in memory to referents that can only be identified as a type of entity and not as a particular one. Different terminology is used in the literature to indicate these different degrees of cognitive status. For instance, Prince (1981) uses the term ‘familiarity’, Ariel (1990) refers to different degrees of ‘accessibility’, and Gundel et al. (1993), from whom the term cognitive status in this study is taken, use ‘givenness’. Finally, the term ‘identifiability’ is used, to indicate the extent to which the speaker and hearer are assumed to be able to form, or already have, a unique cognitive representation of the intended referent (Lambrecht, 1994: 77; Lyons, 1999: 6).
As was already discussed in §1.1, different degrees of cognitive status are, amongst other things, related to the three pragmatic distinctions that will be the focus of this study: (1) whether reference is to a non-specific or specific entity, (2) whether the referent is new or given, that is, whether or not it has already been mentioned in the discourse and (3) for a referent that is new to discourse, whether it is assumed to be unfamiliar or familiar to the listener, based on mutual knowledge or physical presence of the referent in the non-linguistic context. The terminology used to refer to different degrees of cognitive status can be connected to these three pragmatic factors.\(^6\) The non-specific/specific distinction is about identifiability, that is, the speaker and hearer’s ability to identify a particular entity. Accessibility will be related to the distinction between new/given in discourse in this study. Referents that are new to discourse are less accessible to the conversation participants than referents that have already been mentioned. Finally, familiarity will be used to indicate the extent to which the hearer is assumed to already have a representation in mind for a referent prior to its first mention. Familiarity can therefore be viewed as the source that enables the hearer to form a representation of the referent and can arise from, for example, previous, shared knowledge or the non-linguistic context (Lyons, 1999; Epstein, 2001). To assess the familiarity of a referent to the listener, the speaker must be able to take the perspective of the listener.\(^7\)

In the remainder of this section different, degrees of cognitive status of referents, and more specifically, the three pragmatic distinctions of (1) non-specific/specific, (2) new/given in discourse and (3) familiar/not familiar will be discussed. The three pragmatic factors will be connected to different pragmatic functions of referents in discourse. These pragmatic functions are outlined in Figure 2.1 and will be discussed below. Although not necessarily psychologically real, Figure 2.1 can be seen as a decision tree of binary choices between opposing pragmatic functions, resulting in the choice of a particular morphosyntactic form. These form-function combinations are further discussed in §2.4.

\(^6\) Gundel’s term ‘givenness’ is, however, rather confusing in terms of the current study. As will become clear below, givenness is used in a more restricted sense here, indicating only referents that have already been mentioned in the discourse.

\(^7\) In the remainder of this thesis, the pragmatic aspect of familiarity will also be referred to as ‘listener’s perspective’.
Figure 2.1. Overview of pragmatic functions of referents in discourse related to the pragmatic factors specificity, givenness and familiarity.

**Non-specific reference**

The non-specific/specific distinction is connected to the pragmatic function of non-specific reference in discourse. *Non-specific reference* means that the speaker (presumably) has no particular referent in mind when mentioning a person or object. The cognitive status of the referent is low, since both the speaker and the hearer can only form a representation of the type of referent, not of a particular exemplar (Gundel et al., 1993). It is important to note that specificity is thus interpreted as a pragmatic notion in this research, following Lambrecht (1994: 81) and Lyons (1999: 173). It is not interpreted as a semantic notion as in, for example, Enç (1991). In example (28) the discourse context indicates that the speaker does not (yet) have particular necklaces in mind. She is referring to necklaces that might be made. Neither the speaker nor the hearer can therefore identify a specific referent. Both can only identify the type of entity described.

(28) **Non-specific reference** (input to Anne, 3;3, French)

%sit: The investigator is asking Anne what she usually does at school.

**inv:** Ah tu fais des petites perles?
‘Oh, you make little beads?’

**inv:** Tu fais des colliers alors?
‘So you make necklaces?’

The identification of types of entities, in contrast to particular entities, is related to generic reference, as in (29). Genericity is, as is the non-specific/specific distinction, generally taken to be a semantic value of noun phrases and not as a pragmatic one. Moreover, the two are often seen as independent
of each other in semantic terms (Lambrecht, 1994: 82; Krifka, Pelletier, Carlson, ter Meulen, Chierchia & Link, 1995: 15).

(29) Generic reference in English

a. A cat is a mammal.
b. The cat is a mammal.
c. Cats are mammals.

Generic reference is, however, related to the pragmatic account of non-specific reference applied in this study. Generic noun phrases refer to an entire class or generalize about properties of the whole class of entities (Lyons, 1999: 179). In terms of identifiability, only the class or type of referent (‘cat’ in 29) is therefore identifiable to speaker and hearer, since the speaker abstracts away from particular objects or individuals (Krifka et al., 1995: 4). This makes generic reference comparable to non-generic, non-specific reference as defined in this study.

Specific discourse-new reference

In example (30), the discourse context indicates that the mother has a particular referent, an elephant, in mind. The referent is thus specific and identifiable to the speaker. The assumed cognitive status of the referent to the hearer then depends on the distinction between new/given in discourse and the presumed familiarity based on mutual knowledge/no mutual-knowledge and physical presence/absence. These distinctions will be discussed following the proposed decision tree in Figure 2.1.

(30) Specific discourse-new referent, mutual knowledge (input to Philippe, 2;3, French)

%sit: Philippe is showing his mother a toy elephant and asks her about the elephant’s trunk.

chi: Que ce c’est ça maman?
‘What’s that, mummy?’

mot: La trompe de l’éléphant.
‘The elephant’s trunk’

mot: C’est son nez.
‘That’s his nose’

mot: Il a un nez très très long, ça s’appelle une trompe.
‘He has a very long nose, that’s called a trunk’

mot: Tu te souviens, tu l’as vu au jardin un jour le gros gros elephant qui mangeait avec son [/], sa trompe.
‘Do you remember, you have seen this very, very big elephant once in the zoo, who ate with his trunk’
A referent that is identifiable and specific to the speaker, but mentioned for the first time in the current discourse, is termed *discourse-new*. The cognitive status of the referent then depends on the assumed degree of familiarity of the referent to the hearer (listener’s perspective). First, the referent may be part of the common ground between speaker and hearer prior to it being mentioned in discourse. This is called *mutual knowledge* (mk) here (Clark & Marshall, 1981; Clark & Bangerter, 2004). mk can arise on the basis of, amongst other things, previously shared knowledge about the referent between the conversation participants. For instance in (30), the mother refers to a mutually known elephant that she and the child saw in the zoo some time ago. General world knowledge (‘the queen’), uniqueness (‘the sun’) or bridging inference (‘the wheels of a car’ or ‘the check-out at the supermarket’) can also be the basis of mutual knowledge. In the case of no mutual knowledge (nmk), the cognitive status of the referent is much lower. The referent is not familiar to the hearer prior to its mention. He can only form an adequate representation if the speaker introduces the referent with an appropriate referential expression. This is most often a noun with an indefinite determiner, as in (31) (see also §2.4).

(31) *Specific discourse-new referent, no mutual knowledge (Peter, 3;3, English)*

INV: You have a hole in your sock?
CHI: Yeah.
CHI: I fell down and make the hole.
INV: Oh.
CHI: And there was a stick there and broke it really hard and it make the hole.

Familiarity with a discourse-new referent can also arise if the referent is physically present (exophoric reference, exp). In this case, the referent is accessible in the non-linguistic context. If there is joint attention for the referent, mk and a higher cognitive status arise. In example (32), the mother has no problems identifying the book about the bear, since it is present in the non-linguistic environment and mother and child have shared attention. If the referent is physically absent (endophoric reference, end), the hearer cannot rely on the non-linguistic context to identify the referent. The speaker must take account of this by choosing a linguistic device that signals low cognitive status and that is lexically informative enough to enable the hearer to form a representation of the referent (see §2.4).
(32) Specific discourse-new referent, physically present (Sarah, 2;9, Dutch)

%sit: Mother encourages Sarah to pick a book so that the child can tell a story.

MOT: Nee, niet mamma’s boek, hoor, eentje met plaatjes.
‘No not Mummy’s book, one that has pictures’

MOT: Hier staan geen plaatjes in #.
‘There are no pictures in this one’

CHI: Deze van de beer.
‘This one about the bear’

MOT: Die <van de beer>?
‘The one with the bear?’

MOT: Hoe heet die beer?
‘What’s the name of that bear?’

In assessing familiarity on the basis of \( \text{mk}/\text{nmk} \) and physical presence/absence, the speaker must take account of the perspective of the listener. This is often referred to as part of the Theory of Mind (ToM): the insight that other people have intentions and beliefs that are different from one’s own. ToM is strongly developing in children until at least four years of age (see Wilde Astington & Baird, 2005 for an overview). The need to take account of the listener’s perspective in expressing a discourse-new referent stands in contrast to what is needed in expressing the pragmatic function of non-specific reference. In non-specific reference, the speaker can evaluate the cognitive status or identifiability of the referent from an egocentric perspective. The speaker only needs to evaluate her own ability to form a unique representation of the referent. Subsequently, she chooses a referential expression on the basis of this egocentric evaluation (§2.4). In discourse-new reference, however, the referent is uniquely identifiable and therefore familiar to the speaker, but the referent’s cognitive status might be different for the hearer. She must now take the listener’s perspective, assess the referent’s assumed familiarity to the listener and subsequently choose a referential expression on the basis of her assumption about the referent’s cognitive status to the listener. This clearly requires extra steps in choosing a morphosyntactic form for reference and children might experience difficulties here (see §3.4).

Specific discourse-given reference

The cognitive status of a specific referent is also influenced by the third pragmatic factor investigated: givenness in discourse. The accessibility of the referent, which is defined as the extent to which the referent is active in consciousness (Ariel, 1990), is of great importance here. Discourse-given referents are generally easily
accessible and have a high cognitive status to both speaker and hearer because of their previous mention in the discourse. The level of accessibility can, however, vary between different discourse-given referents. One aspect that influences the variability in accessibility of discourse-given referents is the recency of mention (Ariel, 1996: 24; Epstein, 2001). In this research, a subsequent reference that refers to the same entity as the immediately previous reference, as in (33), is termed *discourse-given-maintenance*.

(33) **Discourse-given-maintenance (input to Mattheüs, 2;3, Dutch)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHI:</th>
<th>Hier nog d puzzel,</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Here another puzzle’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MOT:</th>
<th>Oh, moet die ook nog afgemaakt?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Oh, shall we finish that one too?’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INV:</th>
<th>Ja</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Yes’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MOT:</th>
<th>Maak die ook nog maar even af.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Just finish that one too’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In *discourse-given-shift* the distance between the two subsequent references gets larger and another referent intervenes between two subsequent mentions. For instance, in (34) the mother introduces the referent ‘caterpillar’ and after intervening references from both conversation participants (*dezelfde* ‘the same’, *ik* ‘I’), the child re-introduces the caterpillar again. Because of the larger distance, the cognitive status and accessibility of the referent is lower in shift than in maintenance. By distinguishing between discourse-given-maintenance and discourse-given-shift, this study follows earlier work on the acquisition of reference (e.g. Bamberg, 1987; Wigglesworth, 1990; Aarssen, 1996; Gomme & Johnson, 1997; Roelofs, 1998; Blankenstijn & Scheper, 2003). The results of the current study will elaborate on the findings from these earlier studies, especially with respect to the development of sensitivity to different degrees of givenness in discourse (§3.4).

(34) **Discourse-given-shift (Sarah, 3;3, Dutch)**

| %sit:  | Sarah and her mother are playing the game Memory. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MOT:</th>
<th>Een kikker.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘A frog’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MOT:</th>
<th>Ah, en een rups. [&gt;]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Oh, and a caterpillar’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHI:</th>
<th>Nee [&lt;].</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘No’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Finally, it is important to keep in mind that the pragmatic factor of familiarity to the listener, discussed above and based on the distinctions between \( \text{mk/nmk} \) and physical presence/absence, is less relevant to the pragmatic function of discourse-given. Discourse-given referents are always \( \text{mk} \), since both speaker and hearer are assumed to be familiar with the referent on the basis of the previous mention in discourse. A discourse-given referent is of course either physically present or absent, but as will become clear in §2.4, this does not influence the speaker’s choice of morphosyntactic forms for discourse-given reference as profoundly as it does for discourse-new.

**Labelling/identifying**

The pragmatic functions identified so far are non-specific reference, discourse-new-nmk, discourse-new-mk-exp, discourse-new-mk-end, discourse-given-maintenance and discourse-given-shift. There is a seventh pragmatic function that is also highly frequent in the adult-child conversations studied here and that cannot be easily captured under one of the pragmatic functions defined so far. This is the function of *labelling/identifying* (henceforth called ‘labelling’). In labelling, the speaker predicates class membership (35a) or names/identifies a specific entity (35b). Labelling typically occurs in a predicating construction as in (35), but other syntactic constructions are also possible (see §4.5.1).

(35) Labelling (Peter, 2;3, English)

a. \( \text{chi} \): It’s a see+saw.

b. \( \text{chi} \): It’s my fish.

The pronominal form in the labelling construction is the referring expression. The nominal form is an identifying expression: the hearer is able to identify a certain type of referent or a specific referent. The pragmatic function of labelling thus carries properties of both non-specific and specific reference. In the remainder of this thesis, labelling will therefore be discussed after non-specific and before specific discourse-new and discourse-given reference.

The function of labelling has been claimed to be important in vocabulary acquisition. It is seen as a sign that children have found out that words actually
refer to classes of things (Mervis & Bertrand, 1995; Elbers & van Loon-Vervoorn, 2000). In the age range studied (2;0-3;3), the children are still in the process of acquiring the vocabulary of their native language. It is therefore to be expected that the function of labelling will frequently occur in the data.

2.3.1 Section summary
In this section, three pragmatic factors were discussed that influence the cognitive status of a referent to speaker and hearer, that is, the assumed representation of a referent in the speaker’s and hearer’s memory and its current level of activation. The pragmatic factors were formulated as three distinctions: (1) non-specific/specific, (2) new/given in discourse, and for referents that are new to discourse (3) non-familiar/familiar to hearer on the basis of no mutual knowledge/mutual knowledge and physical absence/presence. The current study will focus on children’s developing sensitivity to these three pragmatic factors. The three pragmatic factors were linked to six pragmatic functions of referents in discourse: non-specific reference, discourse-new-nmk, discourse-new-mk-exp, discourse-new-mk-end, discourse-given-maintenance and discourse-given-shift. The pragmatic function of labelling/identifying was also added, since it is expected that this function will frequently occur in adult-child conversations. The following section explains how morphosyntactic forms are linked to cognitive status in general and to the pragmatic functions identified here in particular.

2.4 Interaction between morphosyntax and pragmatics in reference
It is widely recognized that referential expressions reflect different cognitive statuses and can as such be ordered along a continuum that ranges from high to low cognitive status (e.g. Levinson, 1983; Ariel, 1990; Gundel et al., 1993; Chafe, 1994; Schiffrin, 2006). Despite the theoretical and terminological differences between the various accounts, the position in these hierarchies of the referential expressions studied here is rather similar. The indefinite determiner generally indicates low cognitive status of the referent and is thus associated with non-specific reference or discourse-new-nmk. Definite, demonstrative and possessive determiners convey somewhat higher levels of cognitive status, whereas pronouns are at the extreme of the continuum. By choosing a pronoun as the referential expression, the speaker signals that she assumes the referent to be highly accessible to the hearer, because it is given in discourse or physically present in the non-linguistic context. Proper names are often treated as being
intermediate between pronouns and (indefinite and definite) nouns in referential hierarchies. In using a proper name, the speaker intends to enable the hearer to form a representation of a unique referent. Reference in such cases is thus at least specific, either discourse-new or discourse-given (Ariel, 1990; Ariel, 1996; Mulkern, 1996).

For the morphosyntactic forms investigated in this study, the following continuum can be devised, ranging from forms that indicate high cognitive status of the referent on the left side to low cognitive status on the right side (Figure 2.2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High cognitive status</th>
<th>Low cognitive status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pronouns &gt; proper names &gt; definiteN, demonstrativeN, possessiveN &gt; bareN, partitiveN &gt; numeral+N &gt; indefiniteN</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 2.2. Continuum of referential expressions according to the cognitive status of the referent**

To the extent that languages have these separate morphosyntactic forms, this scale is assumed to hold universally (e.g. Givón, 1983; Ariel, 1990; Gundel et al., 1993). The languages under investigation here, Dutch, English and French, are typologically closely related and make use of all of them (§2.2). Consequently, the languages pattern more or less similarly in the way cognitive status and pragmatic function are linguistically encoded. In the following section, the form-function combinations in adult Dutch, English and French will therefore be discussed together. The few cross-linguistic differences will be examined in §2.4.2.

### 2.4.1 Form-function combinations in adult Dutch, English and French

This section discusses the combinations of morphosyntactic forms with the pragmatic functions that are related to the three pragmatic factors of non-specific/specific, new/given in discourse and familiar/unfamiliar to the listener (§2.3). A distinction will be made between morphosyntactic forms that are ‘appropriate’ as a referring expression for a particular pragmatic function and forms that are ‘not appropriate’ or at least ‘not optimal’. In this regard, it is important to keep in mind that one-to-one combinations of forms and functions cannot be established (see also Ariel, 1990: 7). All morphosyntactic forms studied are used for different functions and functions can be expressed by means of several forms, some of which are more appropriate than others. The discussion of appropriate and not appropriate forms is mainly derived from theoretical literature, which usually takes data from written monologues (Smith, Pat Noda, Andrews & Jucker, 2005: 1866). Quantitative data on the use of referential expressions in dialogues are scarce. Moreover, no research
has been done so far as to how forms are associated with pragmatic functions in language addressed to children. This study hopes to fill this gap by investigating form-function combinations in the input (§1.2.2, Chapters 7 and 8). If an input-driven model of language-acquisition is assumed and if the form-function cues are frequent and consistent, children are expected to make similar form-function associations as the adults already from an early age.

**Forms for non-specific reference**

A pragmatic, speaker-based account of non-specific reference is adopted in this study (§2.3). That is, in non-specific reference neither the speaker nor the hearer can uniquely identify the referent. The referent is therefore only type-identifiable (Gundel et al., 1993). The non-specific reading might arise from the surrounding discourse context, as in (36). The low level of identifiability of non-specific referents entails low cognitive status. Following the scale of cognitive statuses of referential expressions in Figure 2.2, non-specific reference is therefore typically associated with indefinite nouns. In example (37), the child refers to one cookie out of many, and therefore not to a specific one, with an indefinite noun.

(36) **Non-specific reading arising from surrounding discourse-context**

I want to buy a new dress, so I’ll go shopping and see if I can find one tomorrow.

(37) **Non-specific reference with a noun with indefinite determiner (Abel, 3;0, Dutch)**

**chi:** Arjen moet ook een koekje.

‘Arjen must also have a cookie’

Although there is a very strong association between non-specific reference and indefinite nouns, all other determiner-noun combinations, bare nouns and even proper names can also be used for non-specific reference (Lyons, 1999: 170; Ionin, Ko & Wexler, 2004: 13). For instance in (38), non-specific reference is expressed by means of a definite determiner, numeral determiner and a proper name (examples (b) and (c) are taken from Lyons, 1999: 170).

(38) **Non-specific reference with a definite determiner, numeral determiner and proper name**

a. The new computer that we are going to buy must be much faster than our old one.

b. Tom plans to bring up three children on his own – but first he needs to find a woman to produce them for him.

c. Debbie’s still waiting for Mr. Right – I wonder when she’ll finally see there’s no such thing and settle with Bob.
Pronouns are not commonly associated with non-specific reference in the literature, since pronouns are deictic devices that depend on another element in the discourse or non-linguistic context for their interpretation. The dependency on physical context in particular, often leads to the identification of a specific entity. However, pronouns can also receive a non-specific reading. This is, for example, the case when the speaker refers to one instance out of many with a numeral, as in (39). In this example the mother suggests building a zoo for various toy animals. The child uses the numeral pronoun one<sup>8</sup> to indicate that she would like to have an animal out of the whole set, not a particular one.

(39) Non-specific reference with a numeral (Nina, 2;6, English)

**Mot:** Ok # shall we build a zoo for the animals?
**Mot:** What animals shall we put in the zoo?
**Chi:** I want one too.

Furthermore, when pronouns are used to refer to non-specific entities mentioned earlier, they may retain the non-specific reading of the discourse antecedent. For instance in (38b), the pronoun them keeps the non-specific reading that the antecedent three children also has: the children do not exist yet and therefore, the speaker cannot refer to particular individuals. However, in contexts like these, the factor that most strongly influences form choice is givenness in discourse. The non-specific referent has just been mentioned, is easily accessible, its cognitive status is therefore high and pronouns can be used felicitously, just as for specific referents that have been mentioned before in discourse (see below).

As discussed in §2.3, generic reference will be analyzed as non-specific in this study. Both singular and plural indefinite nouns are used to refer generically in Dutch, English and French. Moreover, nouns with a definite or partitive determiner or bare mass nouns can be used for generic reference. There are some differences between the languages studied in how they encode generic reference. This will be discussed in the section on cross-linguistic differences (§2.4.2).

In sum, all referential forms under investigation can be used for non-specific reference. According to the theoretical literature however, indefinite nouns are

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<sup>8</sup> This form can of course also be interpreted as an indefinite referring to any toy rather than exactly one. In the data the form is however coded as a numeral (§4.4.2).
most strongly associated with this pragmatic function. The analysis of input and child language in this study will show whether this is indeed the case in spoken conversations between adults and children.

*Forms for labelling/identifying*

The pragmatic function of labelling carries properties of both non-specific and specific reference (§2.3). Nouns with all types of determiners are considered appropriate to label or identify a referent, for example indefinite, definite or possessive determiners (see 40). Pronouns are expected to be infrequent for this function, since, as has been discussed above, these forms do not provide the name or label that is strongly associated with performing this pragmatic function.

(40) Labelling/identifying with nouns and different determiner types (Dutch)

a. chi: Oeh, dat is *een* koekje. (Abel, 3;0)

   ‘Oh, that’s a cookie’

b. chi: Dit is *de reus*. (Sarah, 3;0)

   ‘This is the giant’

c. inv: Is dat jouw bril? (input to Abel, 2;6)

   ‘Are those your glasses?’

*Forms for specific discourse-new reference*

The pragmatic factor of familiarity plays a role in the choice of morphosyntactic forms for discourse-new referents. The distinction between mutual knowledge (mk) and no mutual knowledge (nmk) is relevant to the choice of different determiner types. The physical presence or absence of the referent in the non-linguistic context influences the possibility of using a pronoun or not.

Discourse-new-nmk referents are familiar and identifiable to the speaker, but the hearer presumably does not yet have a representation of the referent. The cognitive status of these types of referents to hearer is therefore low and indefinite nouns are appropriate, as in (41) (Brown & Yule, 1983; Gundel et al., 1993; Schiffrin, 2006). Other forms that can be used for discourse-new-nmk are bare (mass or indefinite plural) nouns, nouns with a partitive, numeral or possessive determiner and the genitive construction. In using the latter two forms felicitously, it is of course necessary that the hearer is familiar with the referent of the possessive determiner or genitive. This might be a familiar third person entity, the hearer or the speaker, as in example (42).
Chapter 2

(41) Discourse-new-NMK with noun with indefinite determiner (Philippe, 3;0, French)

%sit: Philippe is telling the investigator what he usually does when he stays at his grandmother’s.

CHI: Eh ben, j’ai une petite chambre, tu te souviens?
‘Ehm, well, I have a small room, do you remember?’

INV: Ah non.
‘Ehm no’

INV: ‘T as une petite chambre?
‘You have a small room?’

CHI: Oui
‘Yes’

INV: Tout seul?
‘To yourself?’

CHI: Oui, avec un coffre à jouets.
‘Yeah, with a box with toys’

(42) Discourse-new-NMK with noun with possessive determiner (first person)

%sit: Peter is talking about a weekend at the shore.

INV: Did you go in the ocean?

CHI: Yeah ## ocean# and <it’s> [/] <I’m a> [/] I’m a get my pants wet.

If the speaker uses a morphosyntactic device that signals a higher cognitive status than is appropriate for a specific, non-familiar referent, comprehension difficulties on the part of the hearer might arise. Nouns with a definite or demonstrative determiner as well as proper names9 and pronouns are therefore not appropriate for discourse-new-NMK. In (43), the child Philippe uses a definite noun for a fairground machine that gave him a watch. A noun with an indefinite determiner (and a more elaborate description of the situation) would have helped the investigator to understand the referent. After some time, the child’s father finally explains the situation by, indeed, using an indefinite noun.

(43) Discourse-new-NMK with (not appropriate) definite determiner (Philippe, 2;6, French)

%sit: At the fairground, Philippe won a watch out of a machine in the shape of a train. His father asks him to get the watch and to show it to Madeleine, the investigator.

CHI: Elle est dans ma chambre.
‘It’s (= the watch) in my room’

%sit: Philippe and his father leave the room to get the watch.

9 Full proper names, that is, combinations of first and last name, can be used to introduce NMK-referents in written discourse. In the current data, however, full proper names do not occur: if a proper name is used, it is always the referent’s first name only. The use of first names requires the referent to be familiar to the hearer (Mulkern, 1996: 238-239).
In discourse-new-mk, the speaker assumes that the hearer is already familiar with the referent. This allows for the appropriate use of morphosyntactic forms that convey higher levels of cognitive status, such as nouns with a definite or demonstrative determiner and proper names (Ariel, 1990; Gundel et al., 1993; Schiffrin, 2006). As was discussed in §2.3, the possible sources of assumed familiarity prior to first mention are diverse: shared knowledge on the basis of shared experience as in (44), but also community membership or bridging inference.

(44) Discourse-new-mk-end with proper names (Matthijs 3;3, Dutch)

%sit: The child introduces two other children (Ieke and Thijs), who are not present at the moment of speaking.

mot: Hee, wie waren er nog meer bij in de speeltuin?

‘Tell me, who else was at the playground?’

chi: Nou, Ieke (en) Thijs waren # ook <in #> [/] in de speeltuin.

‘Well, Ieke (and) Thijs were also at the playground’

Physical presence of the referent can also be the basis for assumed familiarity. This is particularly important in the choice of pronouns as opposed to nouns and proper names in discourse-new-mk. Pronouns can be used deictically for discourse-new referents that are physically present (discourse-new-exp), if the speaker and hearer have shared attention for the referent or if the speaker directs the attention of the hearer to the referent. According to Clark and Marshall (1981: 42), demonstrative pronouns are very typical forms to refer deictically to discourse-new referents (see 45).

(45) Discourse-new-mk-exp with pronoun (input to Philippe, 2;3, French)

%sit: Philippe is very interested in the steam (which he calls ‘smoke’) coming from hot coffee.

chi: C’est la fumée +...

‘It is smoke...’

mot: C’est la fumée parce que c’est chaud.

‘It is smoke because it (= the coffee) is hot’
Pronouns are generally not appropriate for reference to discourse-new referents that are physically absent (discourse-new-end), since these do not give the hearer enough information to form a representation of the intended referent (see 46). The speaker should use a full noun for this pragmatic function. Occasionally, however, the use of a pronoun for physically absent discourse-new referents seems to be nevertheless possible. This is the case if the intended referent logically follows from the current topic in the discourse. In example (47), the referent of he has not been mentioned before, but clearly indicates Mary’s partner. In the majority of cases however, the use of pronouns for discourse-new-end reference is inappropriate.

(46) Discourse-new-mk-end with (not appropriate) pronoun (Grégoire, 2;0, French)

Chi: Où elle est.
‘Where is it?’

Inv: Qui ça. Qu’est-ce que tu cherches?
‘What. What are you looking for?’

(47) Discourse-new-mk-end with pronoun

%sit: Two social workers are discussing the life of a client.
A: I visited Mary this morning. She has just given birth to the baby.
B: Was he[!] there?

An overview of the appropriate use of all morphosyntactic forms for discourse-new reference is given in Table 2.10. The assumed level of familiarity of the referent to the hearer and the source of this familiarity play an important role in the choice of morphosyntactic forms for specific discourse-new referents. Speakers can use nouns with a definite or demonstrative determiner and proper names only for referents that are assumed to be familiar to the hearer, that is, mk in terms of this study. A pronoun can only be used for a discourse-new referent if this referent is physically present (exp).

10 I would like to thank Anne Baker for this example.
There are not many studies that offer quantitative data on the use of morphosyntactic forms for discourse-new-reference in spoken conversation. Smith et al. (2005) indicate that speakers often actively invoke relevant shared knowledge to anchor a new referent in discourse. Research on reference in narratives has shown that adult speakers of English and French strongly prefer indefinite nouns for discourse-new-nmk references (Hickmann, Hendriks, Roland & Liang, 1996). The current study will investigate the use of morphosyntactic forms for discourse-new reference in adult input to children. This will contribute to our knowledge of the use of different referential expressions for discourse-new-referents in conversations.

### Forms for specific discourse-given reference

Specific, discourse-given referents have a high cognitive status, since they have been mentioned in the previous discourse. The pragmatic factor of givenness in discourse plays a role in the choice of different determiner types as well as in the choice of pronouns as opposed to nouns or proper names.

As was discussed in the previous section, nouns with an indefinite, numeral or partitive determiner as well as bare (mass and indefinite plural) nouns convey low cognitive status (see also Figure 2.2). These forms are, therefore, not appropriate for discourse-given reference. The definite determiner in (48), and also demonstrative and possessive determiners, signal higher cognitive status and can therefore all be used felicitously for discourse-given reference.
(48) Discourse-given-shift with noun with definite determiner (input to Peter, 2;3, English)

| INV: | You have to turn the screw. |
| INV: | Not the wheel. |
| INV: | Turn the screw. |
| INV: | That’s right. |

In addition to nouns with particular determiners, proper names and pronouns are also appropriate for discourse-given reference. These forms do, however, differ from each other with regard to the cognitive status they signal. Nominal forms and proper names mark lower accessibility of the referent than pronouns and within the category of pronouns, strong pronominal forms mark lower accessibility than clitic forms (Ariel, 1990). The accessibility of discourse-given referents is, amongst other things, influenced by the recency of its previous mention. This leads to the distinction between referent maintenance and referent shift in the current study (§2.3). On the basis of the scale in Figure 2.2, it is reasonable to argue that full nominal forms and proper names should be favored for referent shift, whereas pronouns are more appropriate for maintenance (see 49).

(49) Discourse-given-maintenance with pronoun (Abel, 3;3, Dutch)

| CHI: | Toen kwam een tijger. |
| CHI: | ‘Then a tiger came along’ |
| INV: | Ja? |
| INV: | ‘Yeah?’ |
| CHI: | Die (i)s heel eng. |
| CHI: | ‘He is very scary’ |

Proper names and nominal forms can then be considered to be not optimal forms for discourse-given-maintenance, since the referent’s accessibility is higher than conveyed by the form (Epstein, 2001). This position can be traced back to the maxim of quantity: *do not make your contribution more informative than is required* (Grice, 1975: 45). In fact, when a speaker decides to use a noun where a pronoun would have been appropriate too, as in (50), she follows a nominal strategy and can be seen as being ‘over-explicit’ in reference (Bamberg, 1987; Roelofs, 1998; Blankenstijn & Scheper, 2003). Experiments measuring reading comprehension have found that repeated use of full nouns where pronouns could have been used, leads to delays in interpretation (Gordon, Grosz & Gilliom, 1993).
It is important to note that there are contexts in which the use of nouns or proper names for referent maintenance is in fact more appropriate than the use of pronouns, for instance, if there is semantic ambiguity between potential referents of the same gender. In such contexts, the use of a pronoun is ambiguous and adult speakers use more nouns than where no such ambiguity exists (Schiffrin, 2006). In (51), both the child and the mother refer with a proper name to the one of his two brothers who made Grégoire jump and who got spanked as a result. The brothers are not present at the moment of speaking, so deictic reference is impossible and using a pronoun would be ambiguous between which of the two brothers is meant.

The speaker’s choice of a noun, proper name or pronoun is influenced by other factors than recency of mention alone. One such factor, which is not studied here, is animacy or the level of individuation of the referent (Yamamoto, 1999). Entities that are ranked lower on the animacy or individuation scale are more often referred to with nominal forms. Since not all factors that influence referential choice are taken into account, it is not expected that speakers only use pronouns for maintenance. However, it is expected that (adult) speakers generally prefer to use pronouns for referent maintenance. The use of morphosyntactic forms for discourse-given referents is summarized in Table 2.11.
Table 2.11. Appropriate, inappropriate and not optimal morphosyntactic forms for (specific) discourse-given reference in Dutch, English and French, according to the recency of mention of the referent

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form</th>
<th>Maintenance</th>
<th>Shift</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indefinite noun</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Numeral determiner</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bare (mass) noun</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partitive determiner (F)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possessive determiner</td>
<td>+?</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definite determiner</td>
<td>+?</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrative determiner</td>
<td>+?</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genitive construction (D/E)</td>
<td>+?</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proper name</td>
<td>+?</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pronoun</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes. + = form is appropriate for function; - = form is not appropriate for function; +? = form is not optimal for function; D = Dutch; E = English; F = French.

There are some quantitative studies on the use of referential expressions for discourse-given referents in adult language. Schiffrin (2006) has shown that adult speakers of English indeed avoid using indefinite nouns for discourse-given referents. Moreover, they strongly prefer to use pronouns for recent referents, comparable to referent maintenance here. Referent shift or, more generally speaking, larger distance between two references to the same entity is associated with the use of more nouns and proper names (Hickmann & Hendriks, 1999). It is not known whether the patterns described above are also evident in input to young children. The current study hopes to clarify this.

2.4.2 Cross-linguistic differences in form-function combinations

In this section, cross-linguistic differences in form-function combinations between Dutch, English and French will be discussed. First, in a colloquial narrative style, speakers of English can use a noun with a demonstrative determiner for not mutually known discourse-new referents (see 52). By using the demonstrative determiner, the speaker signals that the referent will subsequently be maintained as the most central entity in the subsequent narrative (Lambrecht, 1994; Lyons, 1999). It is not clear whether this is possible in Dutch and French.11

11 The use of nouns with a demonstrative determiner to refer to discourse-new referents in these contexts in Dutch and French is to my knowledge not mentioned in the literature. Individual grammaticality judgments from native speakers of Dutch and French vary from ‘possible’ to ‘impossible’. This suggests that the use of nouns with a demonstrative determiner to introduce not mutually known referents to discourse is less common in Dutch and French than in English. For the current study, however, this was not problematic, since both the child and adult subjects never used demonstrative determiners for discourse-new referents in this way.
Discourse-new-nmk with noun with demonstrative determiner (colloquial English)

I met this guy yesterday and he asked me for a date on Friday. He suggested going to the movies.

A second difference concerns the use of indefinite as opposed to definite determiners in generic reference. Generics often receive a non-specific interpretation, since they do not refer to specific individuals but to kinds (§2.3). Lyons (1999: 192) claims that the definite determiner has a much wider range of usage in generic reference in French than in English. Especially plural generic noun phrases tend to take the definite determiner in French and the indefinite in English and Dutch (see 53a-c).

Cross-linguistic difference in the use of determiners for non-specific, generic reference

a. Dutch students always have a job on the side.
   Nederlandse studenten hebben altijd een bijbaantje.

b. Les étudiants néerlandais ont toujours un petit boulot.

Finally, there is a difference expected in the use of pronouns between Dutch on the one hand and English and French on the other hand. In §2.2.2, it was shown that speakers of Dutch often use a demonstrative pronoun in reference to animate entities, as in (54a). Speakers of English and French would probably choose a personal pronoun in this context (54b-c).

Cross-linguistic difference in the use of personal/demonstrative pronouns

a. Where is your sister-in-law? She has just given birth to a baby, so she won’t come.
   Waar is je schoonzusje? Die is net bevallen van een kindje, dus die komt niet.

b. Où est ta belle-soeur? Elle vient d’accoucher, donc elle vient pas.

It is, therefore, expected that speakers of Dutch make more use of demonstrative pronouns than speakers of English and French. This might be especially salient for discourse-given reference. In discourse-new-nmk, demonstrative pronouns are universally more often used than personal pronouns (§2.4.1).

2.5 Summary

This study investigates sensitivity to the cognitive status of referents in the choice of morphosyntactic forms in child language and input. The current chapter has outlined the theoretical notions and descriptive models which are relevant to the remainder of this study.

In §2.2, the morphosyntactic forms for reference that will be studied, were
discussed for Dutch, English and French. The focus lies on nouns with different types of determiners and on pronouns in contrast to nouns and proper names. The determiner systems of the languages were described in §2.2.1. There are differences in the frequency and consistency of determiner production before nouns. Dutch and English allow bare nouns, whereas determiners obligatorily precede nouns in French. There seem to be also some differences in the use of pronominal, possessive or demonstrative pronouns across these languages (§2.2.2).

The cognitive status of a referent has been defined as the assumed representation of the referent in the speaker and hearer’s memory and its current level of activation in memory. In §2.3, it has been shown that the cognitive status of referents is influenced by the three pragmatic factors that are the focus of this study: (1) the distinction between non-specific/specific reference, (2) the distinction between referents that are new/given in discourse (including different degrees of givenness) and (3) the distinction between referents that are assumed to be not familiar/familiar to the hearer on the basis of mutual knowledge and physical presence. The three distinctions have been shown to operate in different pragmatic functions of referents in discourse: non-specific reference, discourse-new-nmk, discourse-new-mk-exp, discourse-new-mk-end, discourse-given-maintenance and discourse-given-shift. The pragmatic function of labelling was also added, since this function is expected to occur frequently in conversations between young children and adults. The relation between morphosyntax and pragmatics in reference was discussed in §2.4. It has been shown that morphosyntactic forms can be ordered along a continuum on which indefinite nouns suppose low cognitive status and pronouns high cognitive status. The morphosyntactic forms studied can be associated to pragmatic factors and functions. Specificity plays a role in determiner choice. Givenness in discourse and the assumed familiarity of the referent influence both determiner choice and the choice of a pronoun as opposed to a noun or proper name. On the basis of theoretical models, appropriate, inappropriate and not optimal combinations of morphosyntactic forms and pragmatic functions have been described. Some cross-linguistic differences were also discussed. If an input-driven model of language acquisition is assumed (Tomasello, 2003, §1.2.2), one would expect children to make similar form-function combinations as adults in child directed speech. There is, however, little quantitative information on how morphosyntactic forms are used for pragmatic functions in adult language in general and in the input to children in particular. This will be taken up in the current study.