Challenges in the L2 acquisition of motion event construal.
Where are we now?

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Outline

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► Theoretical background

► A case study
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Introduction
Space as a crucial domain for human cognition

Human beings need to construct and represent spatial representations they experience everyday (Klein 1989)

All languages equip their speakers with means to talk about space, and in particular about change in space (motion)

But languages do not treat space in a universal way
Theoretical background
What is motion (in linguistics) (1)

Change of location of an entity in space (Talmy 1985)
What is motion (in linguistics) (2)

Internal components:
- Motion: motion per se
- Figure: a moving or a conceptually movable entity
- Ground: an entity with respect to which the Figure moves
- Path: the semantic core of a motion event

Co-events:
- Manner
- Cause

Ex: Jans \textit{ran} down into the house
    \begin{itemize}
    \item Figure \quad \textit{ran}
    \item Manner \quad \textit{down}
    \item Path \quad \textit{into}
    \item Path \quad \textit{the house}
    \item Ground
    \end{itemize}

Typological classification based on the locus of Path:

Satellite framed languages
(Germanic and Slavic languages)

Verb framed languages
(Romance languages)

Ex. S
The bottle floated into the cave
manner path

Ex. V
La botella entró a la cueva flotando
path manner
Motion events: Slobin (2004, 2006)

Continuum based on Manner salience

low manner salient languages (V. languages)  high manner salient languages (S. languages)
« Typological characterizations often reflect tendencies rather than absolute differences between languages »

(Berman & Slobin, 1994: 118)
Intra typological variations within the same group, even in closely related languages

- S-Languages: **Icelandic vs Swedish** (Ragnasdóttir & Strömqvist 2004: 126-127)

Ex. Icelandic

  *Og svo datt hundurinn og strakurinn ofan-ì-sjò*

And then fallPST dog.DEF and boy.DEF up-into sea. ACC

‘And then the dog and the boy fell from the above into the sea’

Ex. Swedish

  *Pojken ramlà ner*

Boy fall.PST down

‘The boy fell down’
Intra typological variations within the same group, even in closely related languages

➢ V-languages: Italian vs French (Simone 1997; Cini, 2008; Iacobini & Fagard, 2011; Anastasio, 2018, 2019)

Ex. Italian

1. La rana **scappa via** dal barattolo
   frog escape away fromDEF Jar
   The frog runs away from the jar

2. La rana **scappa** dal barattolo
   Frog escape fromDEF jar
   The frog escapes from the jar

Ex. French:

1. La grenouille **s’échappe** du bocal
   Frog escape fromDEF jar
   The frog escapes from the jar
Adopting a cline based on the salience of spatial components
(e.g., Slobin 2006; Ibarretxe-Antuñano 2009; Spreafico 2008, 2009; Beavers et al. 2010; Hendriks and Hickmann 2011; Anastasio 2018, 2019, 2021)

“Typological characterizations often reflect tendencies rather than absolute differences between languages” (Berman & Slobin, 1994:118)
Motion in L2 acquisition (1)

The learner’s task: recognizing and learning target-like ways to talk about motion → learning to re-think for speaking (Slobin 1996)

Ideally:

- From a S-l. to a V-L.: less attention to Manner
- From a V-l. to a S-l: more attention to Manner and a detailed Path

But what really happens?

Motion as a prone domain for cross-linguistic influence (CLI)
(Jarvis & Pavlenko 2010)
Motion in L2 acquisition (2)

3 main criteria for classifying the research on motion events:
- the type of motion studied: voluntary vs caused-motion
- the type of participants (bilinguals, adults learners)
- the type of data (production, gesture, reception)

3 main criteria for studies based on production:
- the type of transfer examined: unidirectional vs bidirectional
- the typological relationship between language pairs
- the proficiency
Some research in L2 (1)

Studies on beginners (Becker & Carroll 1997 in ESF Project): learners quickly adopt the minimal spatial devices of the TL.

Ex: learners of V-L. tend to code Path in the main verb (entrer in French)

Learners of S-L. tend to resort to directional particles to express it (up, down in English)

But CLI is already perceptible when talking about caused motion events in L2 French (Hendriks et al. 2008; Hendriks & Hickmann 2011)
Some research in L2 (2)

Studies on intermediate/advanced learners:

- CLI is predominant at intermediate level → satellization of locative constructions in L2 Spanish (Danish/English L1 in Cadierno 2004, Cadierno & Ruiz 2006)

  Advanced learners are more target-like

- CLI is also attested at advanced learners of L2 English and German (French L1 in Carroll et al. 2012) by using locative expressions as in their L1 (ex. A car is driving on a road instead of A car is driving along a road)

- CLI is also attested with intratypological differences between L1 and L2 (Italian L2 of Germanic vs Romance L1; Bernini et al. 2006; Spreafico & Valentini 2009)
Current literature (1)

Variation across studies:

- Language pairs (L₁/L₂)
- type of motion investigated (voluntary vs. caused)
- task used
- L₂ proficiency level
- input


➢ L₁ TSF is extremely difficult to restructure even at advanced level (von Stutterheim 2013; Han & Cadierno 2013)
Current literature (2)

Much attention to the actual differences between languages

but still very little attention addressed to the impact of the L1 when language pairs are typologically/genetically close

(however, see Benazzo and Andorno 2017; Anastasio 2019, 2021, 2022; Hijazo-Gascón 2021)
A case study
✓ SLA: expression of motion events in L2 French and Italian by adult learners

→ Impact of L1 typological properties in L2 oral production

a. Spatial cognition-SLA relation
   *Thinking for Speaking hypothesis* (Slobin 1996, 2000):
   To what extent do learners restructure their L1 spatial conceptualisation?

b. What about the effect of language proximity in SLA?
A case study

Study goals
1. Coding motion events in an oral narrative task by university learners of French and Italian L2 who differ for:

   a) participants’ L1 (English, French, Italian)
   b) participants’ proficiency (intermediate vs. advanced; cf. Bartning & Schlyter 2004)

2. Assessing the role of CLI according to:

   a) their L2 proficiency
   b) the typological properties of language pairs (S-languages vs V-languages)
A case study

Methodology
Typology of languages studied

Satellite pattern, especially in boundary crossing constraint

(\textit{syntagmatic verbs}: Simone 1997, 2008; Iacobini & Masini 2006; Cini 2008)

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textbf{Ex.} \textit{andare via} (go away)
  \item \textit{correre via} (run away)
  \item \textit{venir \ fuori} (come out)
\end{itemize}
Motion events in L2

RQ & Hypothesis
L₁ impact on L₂? (hyp. thinking for speaking):
1. Evolution according to the L₂ proficiency?
2. Role of typological proximity/ distance during SLA?

✓ BEGINNERS: ‘neutral’ organizational principles’, minimal response to the task

✓ INT/ADVANCED: stronger impact of L₁, transfer of L₁ spatial conceptualization
  (Carroll et al. 1997, 2000, 2003; Jarvis & Pavlenko 2010) but not for all the spatial components (Cadierno & Ruiz 2006)

✓ CLI also depending on the learner’s perceptual language proximity/distance between L₁-L₂ => psychotypology and the
tendency to look for similarities
  (Kellerman & Sharwood-Smith 1986, Ringbom & Jarvis 2009)
Participants (1)

2 levels:
- INTERMEDIATE
- ADVANCED

Italian

English

French

L2 French

L2 Italian
## Participants (2)

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<tr>
<th></th>
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<th>nº clauses</th>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>French</strong></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Italian</strong></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FRENCH L2</strong></td>
<td><strong>L1 ANG Int</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>L1 ANG Adv</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>L1 Ita Int</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>L1 Ita Adv</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>L1 ANG Adv</strong></td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>L1 FRA Int</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>L1 FRA Adv</strong></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>110</strong></td>
</tr>
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</table>

- Corpus **DISCOSS** available on the [Ortolang repository](https://hdl.handle.net/11403/disc-oraux-semi-spontanes)
### Socio-biographical information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>subjects</th>
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<th>instruction</th>
<th>Other L2s</th>
<th>recorded</th>
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<tr>
<td>NS</td>
<td>English, French, Italian</td>
<td>20-35</td>
<td>University degree</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>Ireland, France, Italy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L2*</td>
<td>English L1, French L1, Italian L1</td>
<td>18-30</td>
<td>University students</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>University College Cork, Université Avignon, Università Napoli</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

L2* = institutional environment + heteroglot context + training semester in L2 country for some students

**Proficiency:**

a) written grammar and vocabulary tests (French tests – U. Lille & OPT for Italian)

b) degree of morpho-syntactic complexity of oral narratives
The task

- Complex verbal task → oral narratives for the analysis of spatial information from the moment of conceptualization to its verbalization (Levelt 1989)

- Narrative data collected by means of the ‘frog story’ made of 24 wordless pictures (Frog, where are you? , Mayer, 1969)

- Attention to the abondant translational situations (motion events) of the stimulus
Analysis procedure

- Data transcribed in CHAT format (CHILDES, Mac Whinney 2000)
- Identification of Motion clauses and their analyses along different lines:

1) **Focus**, spatial information expressed in all parts of speech: *Path, Manner, Cause*

2) **Locus**: distribution of the 3 spatial components between the verb root (type of motion verbs) and the other linguistic devices (particles, adverbs, prepositional phrases)

3) **Semantic density (SD)**: the number of spatial components expressed within the same clause
Analysis procedure

- For all the participants: How do speakers code motion?
- For L2: common trends or CLI?

2 variables considered:
- a) typological proximity/distance
- b) proficiency

Comparison between groups by means of *Pearson’s X² test*
(L₁ vs. L₂; Int vs. Adv; # L₁ vs. same L₂)
Results
Results in L1

1. **Confirmation of the INTER-typological variation** (*Talmy + Slobin*): *Focus on Path* for all the L1s
Results in L1

2. Confirmation of the INTER-typological variation (*Talmy + Slobin*): *Locus*

**ENG** ⇒ *satellite-framed patterns* + attention to M systematically expressed in the verb (*P* < 0.05; tiptoe, spike, tumble, pop, sneak)

**FR / ITA** ⇒ *verb-framed patterns*: P in the verb (*tomber, sortir, cadere, uscire*)

**but** M, if expressed, seldom coded outside the verb (*il gufo volò, il bambino cascò*)
**INTRA-typological variation** L1 FR / ITA

*Italian as more satellite-framed than French: hybrid-framed language // path-salient language:*

- Coexistence of verb and satellite constructions (the latter by means of SV used especially in spoken language, cf. Simone 1997; Iacobini & Masini 2007; Cini 2008)

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**ENG.** The frog *jumps out* of the jar → PART

**IT.** La rana *salta via* dal barattolo → PART

vs.

**IT.** La rana *scappa* dal barattolo → V

**FR.** La grenouille *s’échappe* du bocal → V
3. SD: as expected, L₁ utterances are slightly denser in English than in French/Italian

**ENG**: SD₂ and SD₃ $\rightarrow$ he falls (P) out (P) of the tree (P source) (SD₃)

**FR / ITA**: SD₁ and SD₂ $\rightarrow$ ils atterrissent (P) dans une marre (P goal) (SD₂)
INTER. learners – common trends

- Italian
- English
- French

L2 French
L2 Italian

‘neutral’ response to the task
Independently of the L1 typological properties

❖ **Focus on PATH**

**awareness of Path salience in a motion event**

a. Int Ang > It L2: adesso il ragazzo **cade** sul terra

b. Int It> Fr L2: le chien et le garçon **tombent**

**Minimal response to the task** (cf. ESF project)

“a highly efficient way of dealing with the task of communicating in L2 with only the minimal amount of linguistic means at learner’s disposal (efficient communication)” (Hendriks & Hickmann 2011:333)

=> No L1 Thinking for Speaking in L2
INTER. learners – similarities in Romance L1

- A more diversified motion verb vocabulary
  L₁ Romance > L₂ Romance (IT>L₂FR, FR > L₂ITA)

- Effect of the high degree of lexical transparency between French and Italian
  (fr. *venir* /it. *venire*)
NARRATIVES: Increase of longer narratives, decrease of loan words, borrowings (L1 or L2) and idiosyncratic forms

- Int Fr > Ita L2: e le api follow
- Int Eng > Fr L2: le chien tombe *au fenêtre
**ADV. learners – common trends**

- **Motion events**: complex spatial perspective
  - => Number and complex motion verbs
    - *arrampicarsi* (M+P), *faire tomber* (C+P)
  - => Semantic density: INT DS 1-2 vs. ADV DS 3-4
    - c. Int Eng>L2It: il ragazzo va **al tronco dell’albero** (P) **(SD1)**
    - d. Ava Eng>L2Fr le garçon et le chien **tombent** (P) **de la falaise** (P) **dans un étang** (P) **(SD3)**
ADV. learners – differences

- **Italian**
- **English**
- **French**

L2 French

L2 Italian

Attested only in L1 ENG > L2 ITA => Positive transfer

❖ **Syntagmatic verbs in L2 ITA** (p < 0.05: andare via, andare fuori, correre via)
Formal proximity in satellite constructions ENG-ITA

ADV L1 ENG > L2 ITA
= particles /SV
(p < 0.05)

- a. la rana sta andando **fuori** dal vaso
- b. Bambi correva **via**
- c. il ragazzo sta cadendo **giù** dall’animale
CLI – In sum

- **INTERM.**: very similar and ‘neutral’ productions
  - No L1 Thinking for Speaking in L2 effect
    (p.ex. absence of Manner salience in English learners)
  - But slight lexical advantage L1-L2 Romance learners

- **ADV.**: ‘late’ emergence of transfer (L1Eng > L2IT)
  - Need of more linguistic devices to transfer lexicalisation strategies from SL into TL
    (cf. équipe d’Heidelberg: von Stutterheim 2003; Jarvis & Pavlenko 2010)
  - Transfer only if analogous structures shared by SL/TL
    (transfer to somewhere principle, Andersen 1983)
Tendency to look for similarities?

Yes and no!

Effect of L1/L2 contact and proficiency

**ENGLISH => L2 ITALIAN**

Typological distance (S-L vs. V-L)

*But* similarities in satellite constructions

- *similarity effect*
  
  Psychotypology?
  
  Weak frequency in institutional input

+ *similarity effect*
  
  Emergence of SV

**FRANÇAIS => L2 ITALIAN & ITALIAN => L2 FRANÇAIS**

Typological and genetic proximity (V-L)

*But* difference: satellization in IT

**SL/TL**

INTER. learners

+ *similarity effect*
  
  (lexical transparency for motion *Verbs*)

ADV. learners

- *no search for differences*
  
  *absence of SV in IT*

ITA L2: ENG more target-like than FR for the expression of motion events.
Directions for future research
Increase of studies:

- including intra-typological comparison
- with multilingual speakers
- with longitudinal data
- different types of tasks simultaneously
- on ME in written productions vs oral productions (see Altca Project, Demagny & Anastasio 2022-24)
Thank you!

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References (Selection)


Anastasio, S. (accepted/2022). Motion event construal in L2 French and Italian: from acquisitional perspectives to pedagogical implications. IRAL, Special Issue: Motion event construal and language learning.


