



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

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Outline

- ▶ Introduction
- ▶ Theoretical background
- ▶ A case study
 - ▶ Study goals
 - ▶ Methodology
 - ▶ Results
- ▶ Directions for future research

▶ 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* ***ran*** *down* *into* *the house*
 Figure *Manner* *Path* *Path* *Ground*

Motion events: Talmy (1983, 1985, 2000)

Typological classification based on the locus of Path:

Satellite framed languages
(Germanic and Slavic languages)

Verb framed languages
(Romance languages)

Ex. S

The bottle	<i>floated</i>	<i>into</i>	the cave
	manner	path	

Ex. V

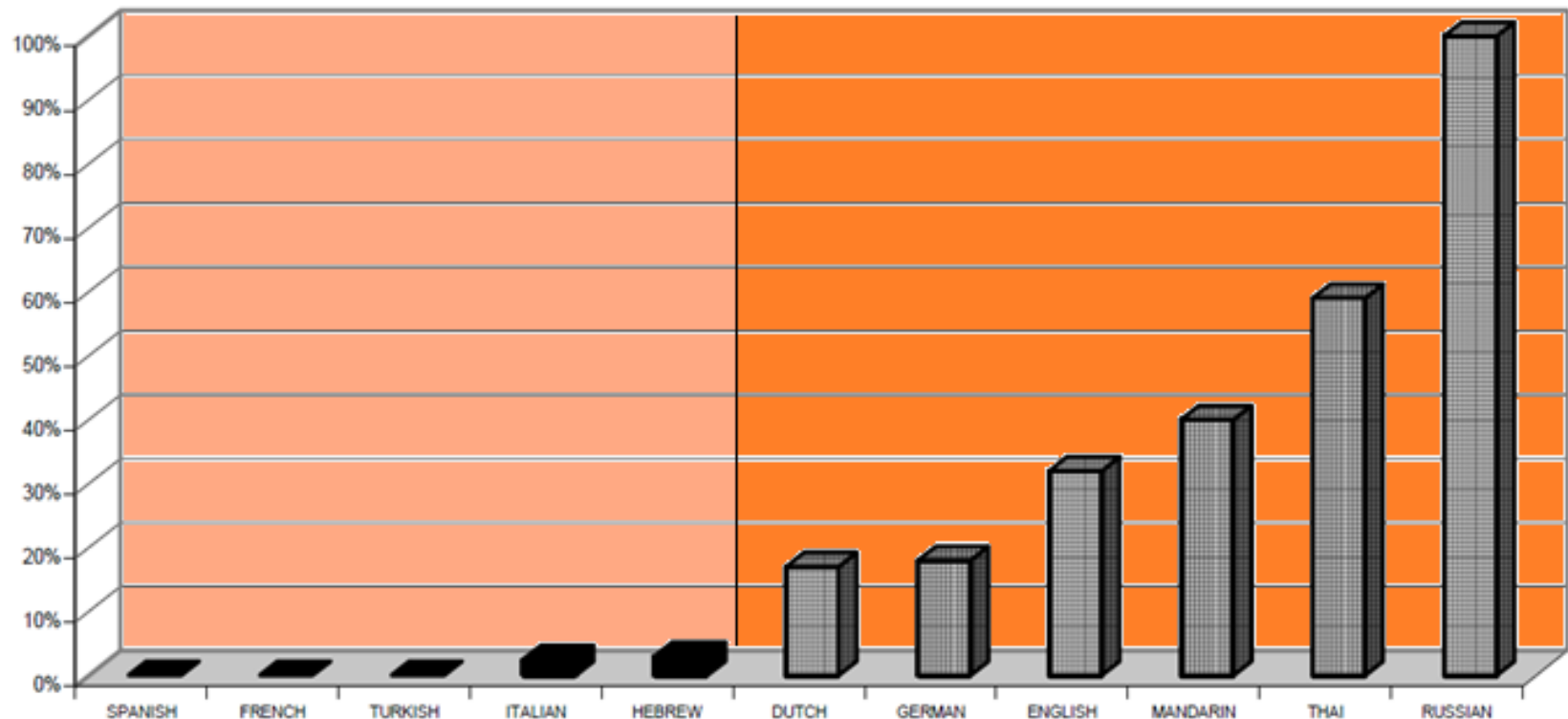
La botella	<i>entró</i>	a la cueva	<i>flotando</i>
	path		manner

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 ramlar 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

Syntagmatic verb

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

« Typological characterizations often reflect *tendencies* rather than *absolute differences* between languages » (Berman & Slobin, 1994 :118)

→ 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)

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

(cf. Cadierno 2004, 2017; Cadierno & Ruiz 2006, Hendriks et al. 2008; Hendriks & Hickman 2011, etc.)

➤ 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

S-language

English

go out
(exit)

V-languages

Italian

andar fuori
uscire

French

(aller dehors)
sortir



Satellite pattern, especially in boundary crossing constraint
(**syntagmatic verbs**: Simone 1997, 2008; Iacobini & Masini 2006; Cini 2008)

Ex. *andare via* (go away)
 correre via (run away)
 venir fuori (come out)

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

(cf. Basic Variety, Klein & Perdue 1997; Perdue 2002)

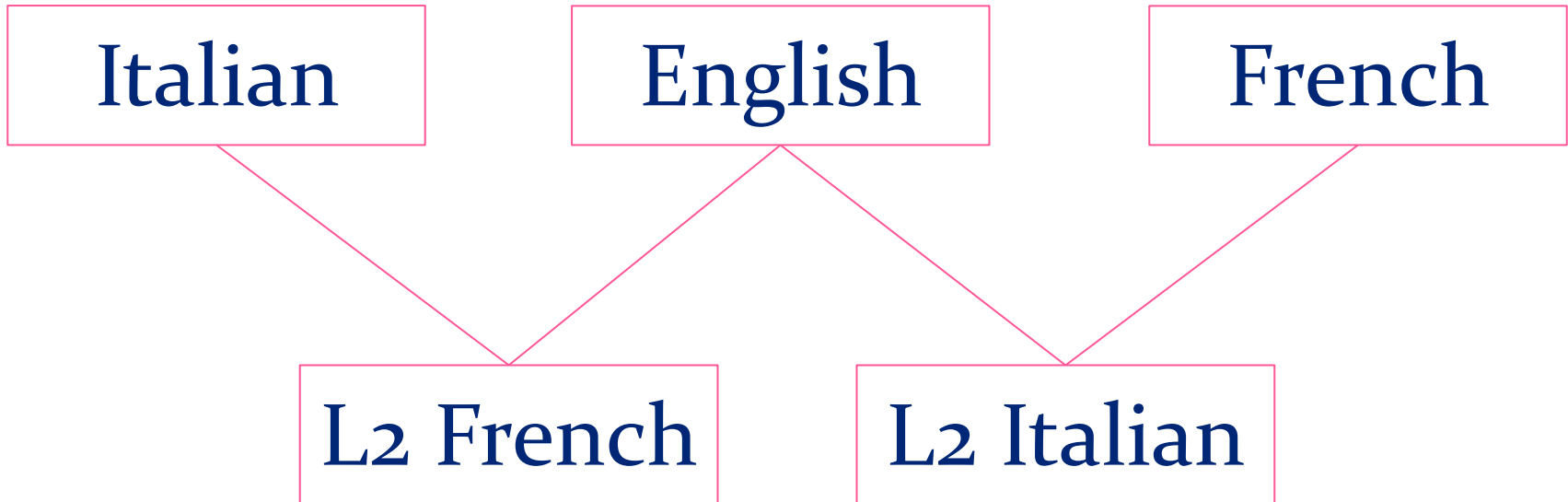
✓ INT/ADVANCED : stronger impact of L1, *transfer* of L1 spatial conceptualization

(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

Participants (2)

			n° clauses
Native speakers	English	10	771
	French	10	580
	Italian	10	599
FRENCH L2	L1 ANG Int	10	740
	L1 ANG Adv	10	660
	L1 Ita Int	10	432
	L1 Ita Adv	10	541
ITALIAN L2	L1 ANG Int	10	740
	L1 ANG Adv	10	694
	L1 FRA Int	10	354
	L1 FRA Adv	10	486
TOTAL		110*	6255

- Corpus **DISCOSS** available on the **Ortolang** repository
<https://hdl.handle.net/11403/disc-oraus-semi-spontanes>

Socio-biographical information

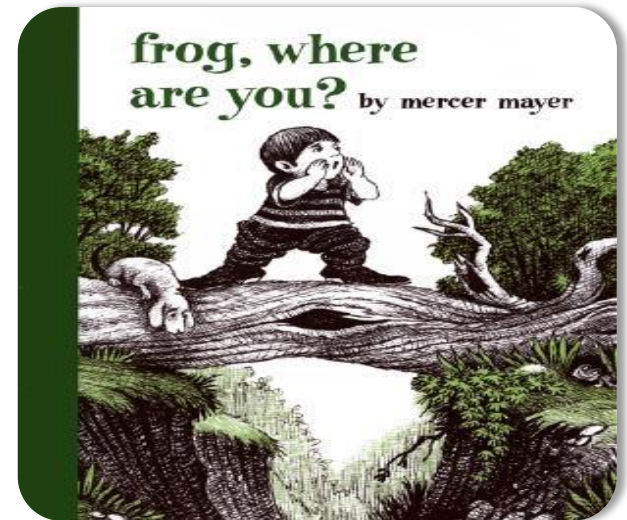
subjects	language	age	instruction	Other L2s	recorded
NS	English French Italian	20-35	University degree	+	Ireland France Italy
L2*	English L1, French L1, Italian L1	18-30	University students	+	University College Cork, Université Avignon Università Napoli

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 abundant 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:

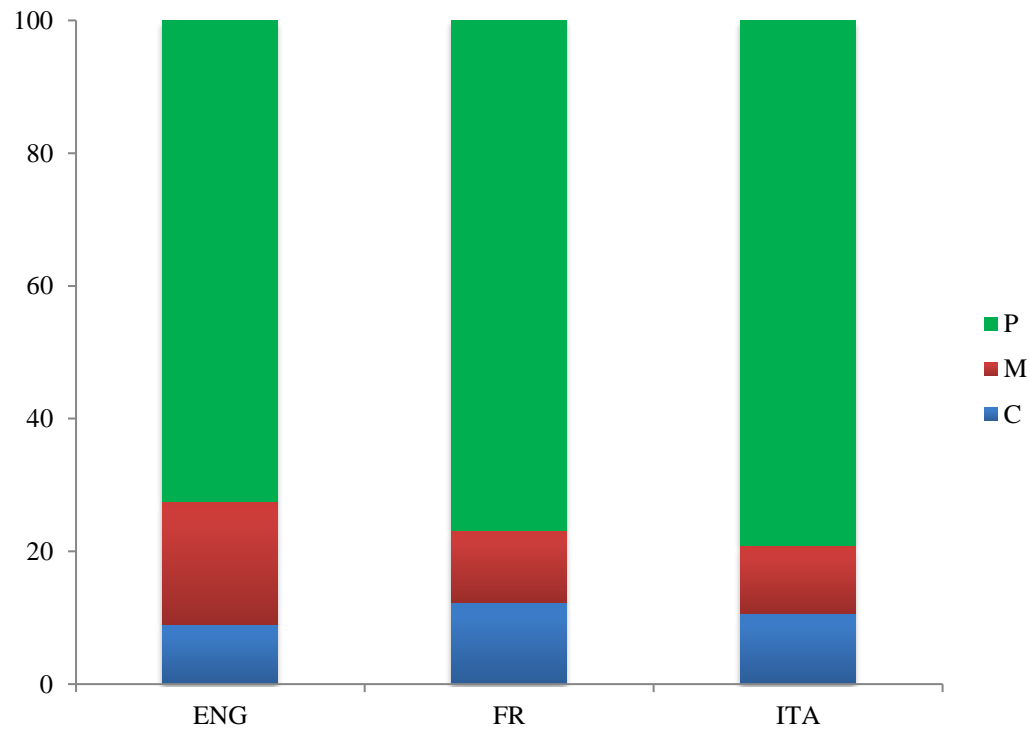
- [a) typological proximity/distance
- [b) proficiency

Comparison between groups by means of *Pearson's X^2 test*
(L1 vs. L2; Int vs. Adv; # L1 vs. same L2)

► Results

Results in L1

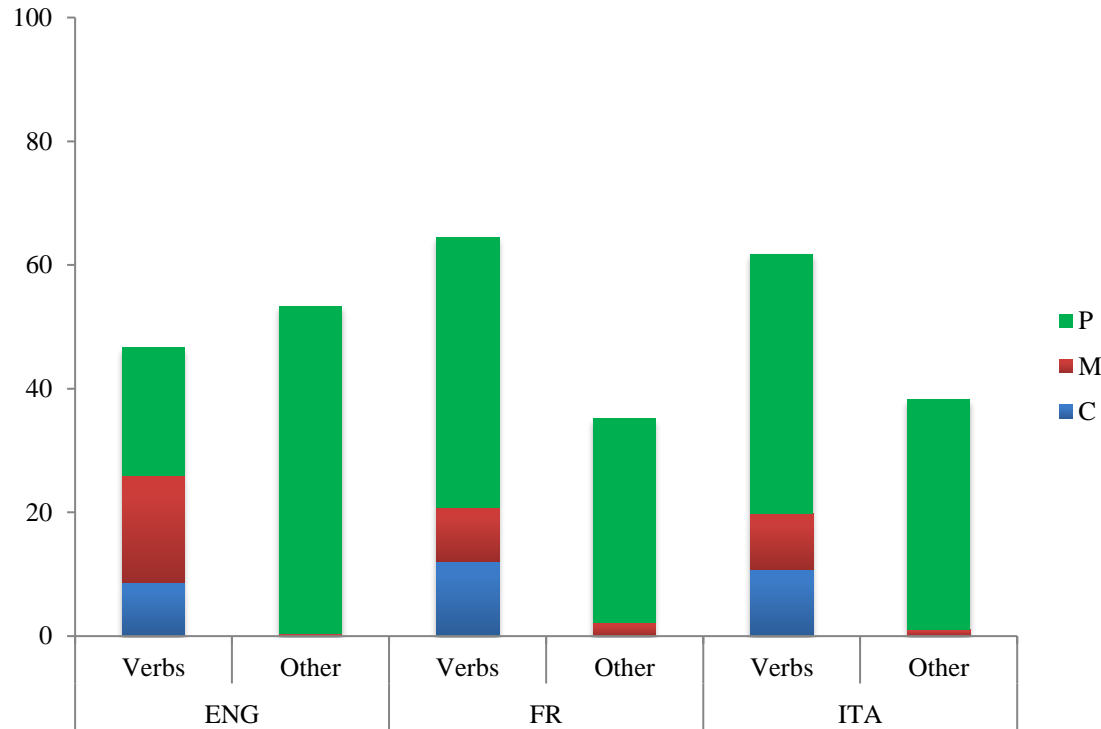
1. **Confirmation of the INTER-typological variation** (*Talmy + Slobin*):
Focus on Path for all the L1s



Results in L1

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

Locus



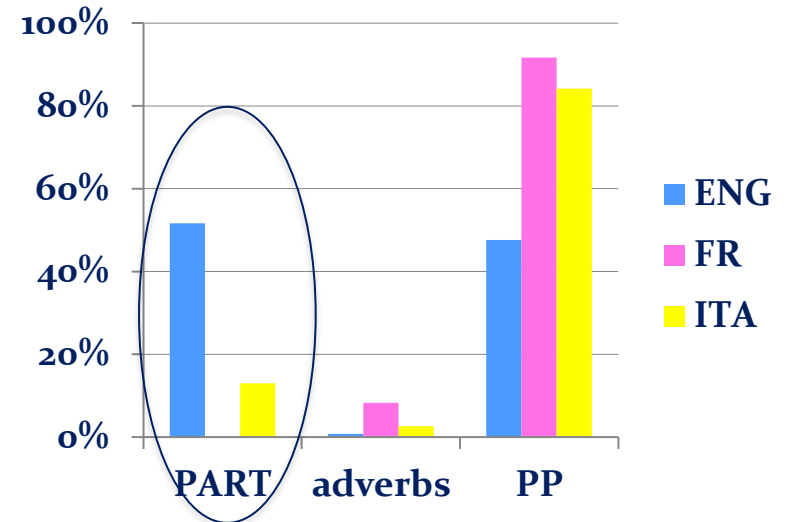
ENG => *satellite-framed patterns* + attention to M systematically expressed in the verb (**P** < 0.05; *tiptoe, spike, tumble, pop, sneak*)

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

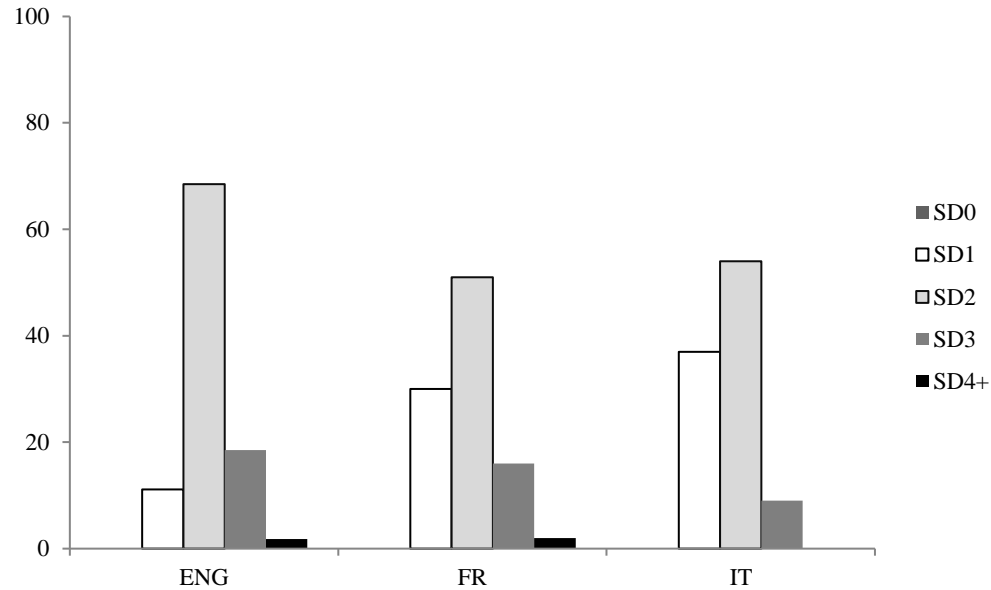
*Italian as more satellite-framed than French:
hybrid-framed language // path-salient
language:*

- 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)



ENG.	The frog <i>jumps out</i> of the jar	→ PART
IT.	La rana <i>salta via</i> dal barattolo	→ PART
	vs.	
IT.	La rana <i>scappa</i> dal barattolo	→ V
FR.	La grenouille <i>s'échappe</i> du bocal	→ V

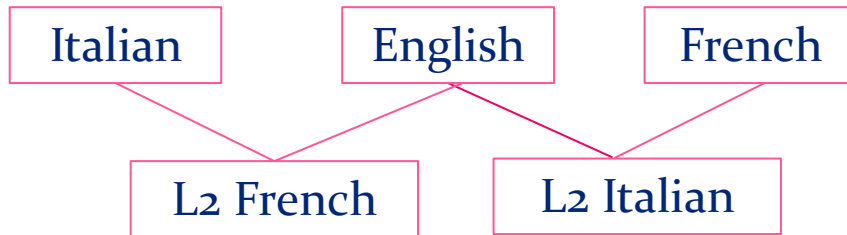
3. **SD**: as expected, L1 utterances are slightly denser in English than in French/Italian



ENG: SD2 and SD3 → he falls (P) out (P) of the tree (P source) (SD3)

FR / ITA: SD1 and SD2 → ils atterrissent (P) dans une marre (P goal) (SD2)

INTER. learners – common trends



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

❖ Focus on PATH

awareness of Path salience in a motion event

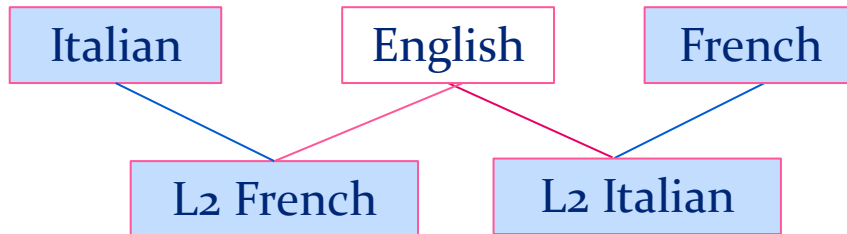
- a. Int Ang > It L2: adesso il ragazzo cade sul terra
- b. Int It > Fr L2: le chien et le garçon tombent

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

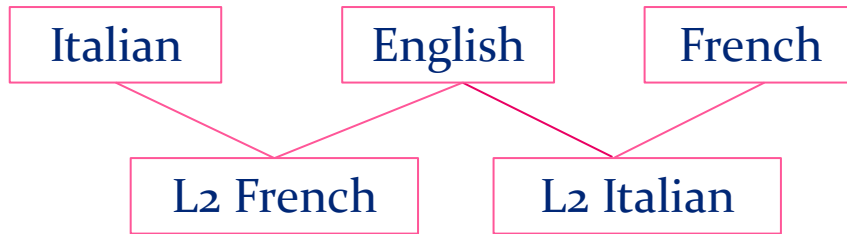


Lexical transparency
ITA/FR vs. ANG
(linguistic proximity)



- ❖ **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*...)

ADV. learners – common trends

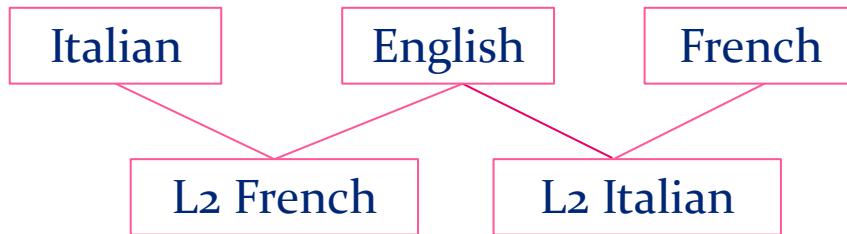


Effect of proficiency:
Developmental Trajectory
INTER > ADV

❖ **NARRATIVES:** Increase of longer narratives, decrease of loan words, borrowings (L1 or L2) and idiosyncratic forms

- a. Int Fr > Ita L2: e le api follow
- b. Int Eng > Fr L2: le chien tombe *au fenêtre

ADV. learners – common trends



Effect of proficiency:
Developmental Trajectory
INTER > ADV

❖ MOTION EVENTS : **complex spatial perspective**

=> Number and complex motion verbs

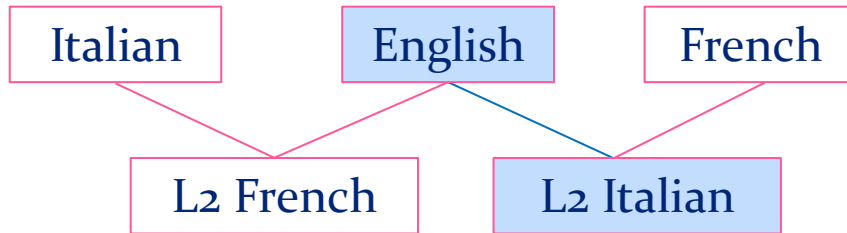
arrampicarsi (M+P), faire tomber (C+P)

=> Semantic density : INT DS 1-2 vs. ADV DS 3-4

c. Int Eng>L2It: il ragazzo va **al tronco dell'albero** (P) (SD₁)

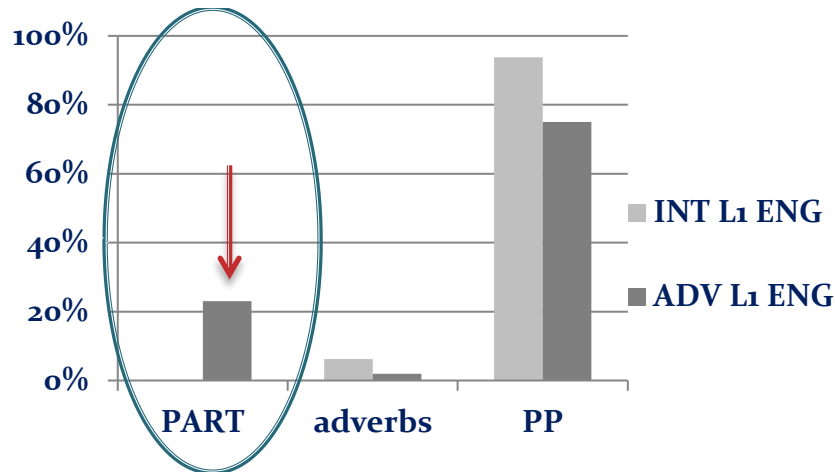
d. Ava Eng>L2Fr le garçon et le chien **tombent (P) de la falaise (P) dans un étang (P)** (SD₃)

ADV. learners – differences



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

($p < 0.05$)

- la rana sta andando *fuori* dal vaso
- Bambi correva *via*
- 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

ENG => L2 ITA

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



ITA L2 : ENG more target-like than FR for the expression of motion events

FR => L2 ITA & ITA => L2 FR

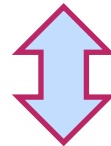
Typological and genetic proximity (V-L)
But difference: satellization in IT

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

-no search for differences
absence of SV in IT

SL/TL

INTER.
learners



ADV.
learners

► **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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