

find out more about the Constraints on Production in L2?' considers the productions of two groups of adult learners of French from a traditional psycholinguistic perspective. Jonas Granfeldt, in chapter 8, 'The Development of Gender Attribution and Gender Agreement in French: A Comparison of Bilingual First- and Second-Language Learners', compares adult second language learners with young bilingual first language users of French using a Universal Grammar framework.

Chapter 9, by Vera Regan, 'From Speech Community back to Classroom: What Variation Analysis can tell us about the Role of Context in the Acquisition of French as a Foreign Language', reports on the long-term effects of a stay in the native speech community on the acquisition of sociolinguistic competence by Irish learners of French.

Chapter 10, by Richard Towell and Jean-Marc Dewaele, 'The Role of Psycholinguistic Factors in the Development of Fluency amongst Advanced Learners of French', considers the development of fluency among 12 adult British learners of French.

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## Chapter 1

# Psycholinguistic Studies on the Acquisition of French as a Second Language: The 'Learner Variety' Approach

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## Introduction

In this chapter we propose to discuss some studies on adult language acquisition undertaken within the *learner variety approach*, concentrating on French as a target language (TL). The studies range from an analysis of the initial stages of acquisition (Benazzo, 2000; Starren, 2001), around the so-called 'basic variety' (Klein & Perdue, 1997), right up to the advanced, quasi-bilingual stage (cf. Carroll & von Stutterheim, 1993, 1997; Lambert, 1997; Watorek & Perdue, 1999).

We are interested in the recurrent phenomena attested in these studies, namely the 'idiosyncratic' productions (cf. Corder, 1967, 1971) that characterise early stages on the way to the TL, and the 'grammatical' but nonetheless inappropriate (or 'unfluent') productions characterising the very advanced stages (cf. Bartning, 1997). We start by outlining the particularities of the 'learner variety' approach, before summarising some results from the studies cited above.

## The 'Learner Variety' Approach

We draw on some results from a large body of empirical work undertaken from a functional, longitudinal and cross-linguistic perspective, which takes into account both communicative factors 'pushing' acquisition and structural factors 'shaping' it, in an attempt to explain the process of acquisition. In general terms, the cognitive and linguistic predisposition of the learner interacts with the formal characteristics of the L2 input in

shaping the acquisition process, but a further set of factors – communicative factors – intervenes in pushing the learner to acquire the L2.

Two recurrent phenomena will be of interest in the following section: the type of utterance the learner constructs in order to convey her/his meaning, and the orders of acquisition reported. First, we have a fresh look at an old acquisitional chestnut, 'aspect before tense', and then at learners' utterance patterns and use of anaphoric devices in the construction of descriptive discourse.

### Communicative factors

The type of communicative factors of interest here are those intervening in the learner/user's need to express recurrent relational meanings between items of vocabulary that languages grammaticalise to a greater or lesser extent – for brevity we will call these '(grammatical) functions' – relations such as assertion, temporal reference and determination. Such functions are numerous (but not unlimited), and the ones mentioned involve the interaction of sentence grammar, discourse grammar and context-relating rules. There is little reason to assume that they are all equally important for the learner when communicating. The relative communicative importance of expressing such functions is thus held to be a determining factor for acquisition.<sup>1</sup> Another communicative factor of relevance to the examples below is Levelt's (1981) 'linearisation problem', that of arranging the information for production in temporal order, between utterances and within each utterance. Some of the principles underlying the speaker's linearisation of information will be discussed in more detail in the section below.

### Formal factors

Languages develop devices to express grammatical functions to different degrees of specification – one speaks for example of 'aspect-prominent languages' as opposed to 'tense-prominent languages'. Different languages therefore give different formal priorities to functions which are nevertheless shared (temporal reference is accomplished in aspect-prominent languages, and vice versa). The learner who by virtue of her SL competence understands how to apply these functions, has to find some means of expressing them in the TL.<sup>2</sup> It is therefore necessary to understand which are the linguistic means used at first, and how the means used for expressing a particular function change – and possibly grow more complex – over time. Note that the grammatical organisation of the SL, or characteristics of the TL input, individually or in tandem, may make certain aspects of the input highly salient, and others less so.

The very mention of 'communicative factors' reveals that we are inter-

ested in the learners' real-time communicative activity (restricted to language production in this chapter). The analyst attempts to retrace over time how the learner succeeds, or does not succeed, in the communicative task s/he is engaged in, and this reconstruction allows one to identify what the learning problem was at any given time during the acquisition process. The acquisitionist therefore looks first at the way the learner's linguistic repertoire is organised at a given moment, how this repertoire is put to use in particular communicative tasks, and how the repertoire changes over time in respect to the same tasks. Acquisition and use – or rather, use and acquisition – are therefore not dissociated. The object of investigation is the L2 learner/user. We further assume, for argument's sake, that real-time communicative activity forms part of the goals of any L2 learner, be s/he an adult economic immigrant (2.1), or a university student of a foreign language (2.2).<sup>3</sup>

### 'Idiosyncratic' Utterances

We look in this section at an old debate in acquisitional studies: whether temporal or aspectual distinctions are acquired first – but with the difference (from some published studies) that the expressive means analysed (the 'alternatives of expression') are not limited to verbal morphology. By 'aspect' we mean grammatical aspect, which we define following Klein's (1994) model.

Klein defines tense and aspect by appealing to a semantic function of finiteness. Finiteness is traditionally associated with the morphosyntactic categories of person and tense. However, Klein distinguishes between the *concept* of finiteness and the way languages *mark* it. The European languages typically mark finiteness by verb morphology – one speaks of finite versus non-finite verb forms – but such is not the case for a language like Chinese, for example (see Klein, Li & Hendriks, 2000), nor – and this is of immediate concern – for early learner varieties.

The semantic function of finiteness involves the speaker's claim about a time span. Klein (1998: 227) illustrates this with the following example:

- (1) The book WAS on the table.

In this example, WAS is marked by contrastive stress, and the contrast can involve either the time-span ('the book WAS on the table, but isn't any longer'), or the claim ('you said it wasn't, but in fact the book WAS on the table'). Klein (1994) calls the time span for which the speaker makes a claim the 'topic time' (TT), in contrast to the time of situation (TSit), i.e. the interval occupied on the time axis by the situation talked about. The notional category of *tense* then expresses the relation of TT to the deictically



functioning of *toujours* in these examples. However, this is less possible for Turkish, the other L1 studied by Starren:<sup>7</sup> learners of Dutch with Moroccan and Turkish as a L1 show the same use of these adverbials. Moreover, the same distribution can be found in the production of Spanish-speaking learners of French, with other temporal adverbs.<sup>8</sup> The following is an extract from a conversation between Bernarda and a native speaker (NS), whose theme is when Bernarda works in a canteen:

- (4) NS: ça c'était à midi  
'that was midday'  
BE: à midi non + à midi [nepa] moi la cuisine ( . . . ) à midi [se] un garçon la cuisine  
'midday no midday is not me the kitchen ( . . . ) midday is a man the kitchen'  
NS: et en septembre?  
'and in September?'  
BE: en septembre [se] moi à midi [asoesoir]  
'in September is a me midday (and) evening'  
NS: et en octobre?  
'and in October?'  
BE: seulement [asoesoir]  
'only evening'

The general regularity is therefore the following: an adverb denoting TT in utterance-initial position has scope over the adverb denoting TSit, which is placed close to the expression denoting the situation. What we have is a more or less direct reflection of the way information structure is reflected by linguistic structure – the source language pulling more or less in the same direction – and the hypothesis is that the more direct this reflection is, the more 'language-neutral' (Kellerman, 1987) the structure is (implicitly) judged to be by learners, and the more they will have recourse to it. We have, perhaps, a syntactic reflection of Kellerman's 'psychotypology', which he himself fleshed out for idioms and lexical items.

Starren (2001) goes further: she also shows that the major communicative limitation of the above interplay of adverbs is that it does not alone suffice to dissociate TT and TSit. Learners thus cannot focus on the pre-state of an event (prospective: TT < TSit) or the post-state of an event (perfect: TT > TSit). In order to be able to do this, learners must go beyond the basic variety and develop a verbal morphology which allows for the independent specification of TT.

The overall picture that emerges from Starren's study is of a developing system which first allows temporal relations to be marked by discourse means and simple adverbs, through a stage where finer temporal distinc-

tions can be expressed through the interplay of adverbs marking both TT and TSit, in conjunction with the internal temporal characteristics of the event denoted in the utterance, to the development of verbal morphology which alone allows TT and TSit to become dissociated, and grammatical aspect expressed. Temporal reference is achieved before the first aspectual distinctions within perfectivity, and for aspect to become fully productive, some verbal morphology must be acquired. But 'tense before aspect' is a spin-off from the main question Starren is asking, which is: 'What temporal functions can be expressed by the learner's repertoire at a given time?'

This study may be compared to that of Benazzo (2000), who examined the use of additive and restrictive scope particles in English, French and German L2 in longitudinal data from the ESF corpus. She also looked closely at temporal adverbs expressing iteration and at temporal adverbs of contrast, and found that adverbs marking the iteration of an event (*encore [une fois]*, and translation equivalents in the other languages) are used before temporal adverbs of contrast ('TACs': *déjà, encore*<sup>9</sup>). TACs only appear at relatively advanced stages, when verbal morphology has been acquired.

Benazzo found that learners of the same L2 use the same particles in the same way at each stage examined, and that at a given stage of utterance organisation, learners of all L2s studied show similar behaviour. This is a remarkable correspondence, and it has to do with the nature of the constituents that at each stage of development are in the 'scope' of the particle. Iterative particles characteristically express the repetition of an event, which happens again, at a later time interval. They quantify over events, referred to by V and its complements. To be repeated, an event has to be bounded (perfectly presented), and the expressive means for temporality of the basic varieties allow this: TT and TSit coincide. This is why they appear at basic variety level, but not before. The central forms are *encore (une fois)*, *noch(mal)*, *nog*, but other more idiosyncratic forms are also used, as *\*otra\* fois* in the following example:

- (5) SF: Alberto (charlot) [ale] à la prison \*otra\* fois  
'Chaplin go to the prison another time'

These adverbs indicate that the event denoted by the utterance containing them is of the same type as that of a previously mentioned utterance; they quantify over that event and occur adjacent to the expression denoting it. In other words, their distribution is identical to that of the temporal adverbs modifying TSit, which we have already seen in Starren's study.

But temporal adverbs of contrast relate two different time intervals (phases) of the same event. These time intervals have to be signalled, and for this it is necessary to master the relevant verbal morphology. In the

following example of Alfonso, a Spanish-speaking learner of French who developed a fully functional verb morphology:

- (6) SF: Alberto      tous les gens que j'ai déjà dits  
                              'all the people that I have already mentioned'

TT = TU > TSit, the use of *déjà* associates with the TSit, and the finite *ai* ('have') is necessary to specify the TT. In other words, a pre-requisite for the productive use of this adverb of contrast, which functions to dissociate TT from TSit, is that independent means are available for fixing the TT. It is therefore only used productively when a functional verbal morphology is in place.

This last example shows that 'communicative need' is but one side of the coin; for the efficient expression of this communicative need, there are structural prerequisites: a functional verbal morphology must be available. This example contrasts with the conclusions of Schlyter (this volume), and we return to it in the discussion below.

### Inappropriate Productions

At the other end of the acquisitional scale we find a phenomenon which Lambert (e.g. 1997), and Carroll & von Stutterheim (e.g. 1997) have been investigating in detail: learners' utterances are grammatical, but the result is not right. Carroll and von Stutterheim (1997: 84) find that 'les écarts entre natifs et apprenants sont peu visibles lorsqu'on envisage de manière isolée les connaissances lexicales, la syntaxe, la morphologie, etc., car peu d'aspects de la performance divergent notablement de la norme'.<sup>10</sup> What does emerge from close examination of advanced learners' productions are differences with respect to natives in the way they organise information across utterances in building up a coherent text – in the way the different levels of knowledge interact.

We will discuss this phenomenon with examples from TL French, and from two studies on advanced Italian learners (Watorek & Perdue, 1999) and Polish learners (Watorek, 2003). Both these studies are concerned with the analysis of spatial descriptions; both groups of learners, and a group of French native speakers, were asked to describe a poster on which figured a town square. The main structure utterances in this type of task are required (spatially) to relate a figure to a ground (Talmy, 1983), so that the interlocutor can understand what is where.

- (7) KAT (native francophone)  
(a) alors *par rapport au bâtiment jaune tobleron en allant vers la droite* il y a une espèce de petit square avec 5 arbres.

- 'so in relation to the yellow tobleron building and going towards the right there is a sort of little square with five trees'
- (b) *au milieu un kiosque où il y a marqué tabac.*  
'in the middle a kiosk where it's written 'tobacco'
- (c) *avec une vieille dame qui tricote.*  
'with an old lady who is knitting'
- (d) *à gauche du kiosque trois enfants s'amuse sur les échasses.*  
'to the left of the kiosk three children are having fun on stilts'
- (e) *et devant il y a un monsieur qui donne à manger aux pigeons.*  
'and in front (of it) there is a man who is feeding the pigeons'
- (8) VIC (Italian L1)  
(a) *après il y a une place.*  
'then there is a square'
- (b) *où il y a beaucoup de gens.*  
'where there are many people'
- (c) *il y a des voitures.*  
'there are cars'
- (d) *il y a aussi des arbres.*  
'there are also trees'
- (e) *il y a un tabac.*  
'there is a tobacco kiosk'
- (f) *il y a aussi un homme qui lit le journal.*  
'there is also a man who is reading the paper'
- (9) ANG (Polish L1)  
(a) *une place*  
'a square'
- (b) *il y a des gens qui qui se promènent.*  
'there are people who are walking'
- (c) *il y a une femme au tabac qui vend des journaux.*  
'there is a woman in the tobacco kiosk who is selling newspapers'
- (d) *il y a des gens des enfants qui jouent qui s'amuse.*  
'there are people children who are playing who are having fun'
- (e) *il y a aussi des des gens qui font du vélo.*  
'there are also some some people who are cycling'

The learners' L1s are typologically different, yet their L2 production, which consists of grammatical utterances, shows striking similarities to each other's rather than to that of the French native speaker. The learners' texts consist of grammatical utterances, but are 'unfluent'. The native speaker uses a rich repertoire of spatial expressions (italicised in the examples: *au milieu, à gauche, devant, en allant vers la droite*), whereas the

learners limit themselves to one each, italicised in (8b) and (9c). On the other hand, the learners use *aussi* (8d, f), (9e), an anaphoric additive particle, whereas the native speaker does not. The typical utterance pattern for this type of text: PrepP + V<sub>exist</sub> + NP (where the existential verb in French is typically *il y a*), is used systematically by the learners with the PrepP 'understood' – left implicit – and recoverable from (8b) and (9a). Absence of PrepP and use of *aussi* go hand in hand, as *aussi* functions to create an anaphoric link between its utterance and a previous utterance (Watorek & Perdue, 1999). Finally, the native speaker once uses (7d) a simple utterance pattern, which includes not only the spatial relation between figure and ground, but also the activities of the figure. Elsewhere in the texts, this figure's activity is separated off in a relative clause (7c, e), (8f), (9b–e).

These differences betray not so much a difference of repertoire (learners 'have' a wider range of spatial prepositions than these texts evidence, the native speaker 'has' *aussi*) as a difference in the way the information to be conveyed is organised for expression.<sup>11</sup> The native speaker introduces the global space to be described – the square – and then subdivides it in order to locate the entities it contains: the middle (7d), the left-hand space in relation to the kiosk (7c), and the sub-space in front of the kiosk (7e). This division into subspaces leads the speaker to encode different types of (topological and projective) spatial relations. The learners, on the other hand, give a list of entities within the global space, with no subdivisions. The space provided by the square affords a salient (topological) ground within which a series of figures are included, the ground being maintained from utterance to utterance.

We see, then, a close interrelation between the organisation and linearisation of the information to be expressed, and the linguistic means accessed to do so. The 'prototypical' treatment of the spatial task (Watorek, 1996) adopted by the learners – a list of figures included in one relatum by repetition of the same spatial relation made explicit by *aussi* – is directly reflected in the linguistic means used:

LINGUISTIC MEANS USED	>	SELECTION AND LINEARISATION OF INFORMATION
(PrepP) V <sub>exist</sub> + NP <i>aussi</i>	>	choose a salient ground, figure-ground relation of inclusion

We now see why the learners' productions are relatively poor in spatial expressions: the prototypical way they go about solving the task, using a

basic utterance pattern and implicit reference maintenance, does not require them. We see that choice on one level of the production process has ramifications for other levels.

## Discussion

Even as briefly described as they have been, the studies just mentioned show how formal and communicative factors mentioned in the introduction intervene together in the acquisition process. These studies come down on the side of 'tense before aspect', but from the functional viewpoint of the difference between temporal reference and aspectualisation. Deictic and anaphoric temporal reference is more urgent than aspectual distinctions; temporal adverbs are sufficient to specify temporal reference, are indeed much more precise than morphology for marking temporal reference, and so are acquired first. But – the other way round – temporal adverbs are central to the means for expressing temporality (all languages have them, whereas not all languages have verbal morphology); they are full lexical items, are easier to perceive and take in than morphology, and so are acquired first, which is why temporal reference is acquired first. The aspectual distinctions are decisive in this respect. There exist aspectual adverbs (TACs), and they are not acquired first. Temporal adverbs work if the event or state they specify is perfectly presented. If, however, a learner expresses aspectual distinctions (TT-TSit dissociations in Klein's terminology), then s/he needs verb morphology. Verbal morphology is more efficient for aspect. As temporal adverbs of contrast associate with and reinforce aspectual distinctions, their use becomes productive only when verb morphology is in place. There are structural constraints on the order of acquisition of different semantic sub-classes of temporal adverbs. This sequence is not reserved for learners who acquire French outside the classroom; it is clearly reflected in the results of Brum de Paula's (1998) study on the learning of French as a foreign language in Brazil.

We came back to this example because it allows us to contrast the learner variety approach with a more strictly formal approach, as exemplified in Schlyter's contribution to this volume. She uses Cinque's (1999) syntactic hierarchy of functional categories expressing tense, aspect and modality in order to contrast child and adult acquisition processes, and points out that the hierarchy allows very precise hypotheses to be formulated with respect to acquisition orders: the child builds up the hierarchy *ab initio*, whereas the adult, who masters the underlying concepts in the L1, does not follow the hierarchy. The perspective is by definition target-orientated, as Cinque is interested in what is grammaticalised in the (adult) languages of the world. Thus the approach does not take into account the communicative potential

of a learner's linguistic repertoire at a given time, which imposes learner-specific constraints on the acquisition process. This is why we spelled out the 'communicative factors' and the 'formal factors' in the introduction to this chapter, since important and interrelated questions for the learner variety approach are: (a) how do communicative limitations<sup>12</sup> incite the learner to go beyond the linguistic repertoire she has?; (b) and what are the structural prerequisites for acquiring the linguistic means?

To recap: firstly, the organisation of the learner's current repertoire excluded the productive use of temporal adverbs of contrast.<sup>13</sup> Secondly, the use of an utterance pattern with reference to the ground conveyed implicitly or, indirectly, by *aussi* largely obviated the use of explicit spatial expressions in the learner's utterances. These types of constraints on learners' production have been characterised by Carroll & von Stutterheim (1993, 1997) in terms of grammatical choice. Not only in terms of processing (see Pienemann, 1998; Towell, 2002), but in terms of grammatical choice – their idea is also more constraining than 'thinking for speaking' (Slobin, 1991). We give one of their examples, again from spatial descriptions, to emphasise this point. German has a grammaticalised paradigm of expressions for maintaining reference to spaces built around *da* ('there'), for example: *davor* ('there in front'), *dahinter* ('there behind'), *daneben* ('there next to'), *darüber* ('there above'), *darunter* ('there beneath'). As the glosses indicate, this paradigm is much less productive in English, and less central to the grammar of reference maintenance. German native speakers thus tend to conceptualise spatial descriptions around spaces. This is 'thinking for speaking', in Slobin's sense, but the story does not end here. German speakers consequently systematically place expressions referring to the ground in utterance-initial position, followed by the expression referring to the figure. Reference is then maintained, adverbially, to the ground:

- (10) (a) vor dem Café ist ein Brunnen  
(b) **daneben** ist ein Zeitungskiosk

The English reference maintenance system in such texts is based on entities – *it* rather than *there*. (*There* is part of the existential expression, see below.) Reference maintenance to the ground is therefore achieved by a full PrepP, with the existential and the NP referring to the figure in different possible positions, as this translation of (10) illustrates:

- (11) (a) in front of the café is a fountain.  
(b) **beside the fountain** there is a newspaper stand.  
(b') there is a newspaper stand **next to it**.

Use of the spatial anaphor *there* in these contexts is 'unfluent':

- (b'') ?beside there there is a newspaper stand.

These authors propose a 'conceptual transfer' during the conceptualisation phase (Levelt, 1989) to explain why even very advanced English learners of German produce spatial descriptions where the referential domain of entities is used for reference maintenance, this choice having grammatical ramifications throughout the utterance:

- (12) (a) es gibt einen brunnen **vor dem Café**  
(b) und **neben ihm** gibt es einen Zeitungskiosk

(12) is a grammatical sequence in German, but is 'unfluent' to a native for a double reason: the existential *es gibt* (which is largely absent from native productions), which either relegates the ground expression to the end of the utterance (12a), or which has to invert (12b) to keep the finite verb in second position given the use of the utterance-initial PrepP containing the anaphoric pronoun *ihm*. Notice also that (12a) illustrates a linguistic structure that goes against the informational organisation of the main structure of this text-type, where ground-expression normally precedes figure-expression.

The examples discussed here have sufficed, we hope, to suggest that at the early and also the very advanced stages of L2 acquisition, the learner's variety has its own systematicity, manifested by an 'idiosyncratic' interaction of organisational constraints. Hence, use of one form inevitably has ramifications for what can combine with it in the utterance.

### Conclusion: The Significance of Learners' Errors

If we return to the 'basic stages' of acquisition, where temporal specification is carried only by adverbs and discourse organisation principles, we encounter highly recurrent structures with sub-classes of temporal adverbs in utterance-initial position, specifying TT, which are learner-specific. Corder (1971) would have said 'idiosyncratic'.<sup>14</sup> All learners show this structure, which seems communicatively necessary, early on in the acquisition process. The examples from the advanced stages underline the multi-level interaction of constraints: conceptual choices at utterance level have ramifications for the construction of discourse. As Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford (1995: 125) put it, the learner has to master both 'grammatical features that contribute to the structure of the text and, conversely (. . .) contextual features that determine the use of grammatical features'; and for the analyst, this interaction may not 'be accessible through the analysis of sentence-level production'. We hope the examples discussed in this chapter have suggested that learner-specific organising principles, and their specific interaction, may constrain the path 'towards' the TL. In a way,

we have fleshed out Corder's (1981) insight that the learner has her/his own, grammatically-based, 'internal syllabus'.

### Notes

1. This problem was called 'ranking of functions' in Perdue (1984).
2. This problem was called 'alternatives of expression' in Perdue (1984).
3. See Towell (2002) for a recent study of the narrative production in L2 French by English undergraduates.
4. If TT is contemporaneous with the time of utterance, then this configuration gives the well-known English present perfect.
5. For our purposes, 'usual' applies to target language French.
6. Transcription conventions are as follows: [ ] enclose broad phonetic transcription, (...) represents an irrelevant, omitted passage, + represents a silent pause. M = Moroccan, S = Spanish, F = French before the informant's name indicates his/her Source and Target languages. The English glosses should not be interpreted as a grammatical analysis.
7. Starren cites the study of Erguvanli (1984), who gives the standard word order of Turkish as S (Adv) O (Adv) V. The TT adverb is in second position when the subject is overt, but as the subject can often be left implicit, the adverb can appear initially. This account seems to exclude the order Adv S O V, attested in the L2 production of Turkish learners.
8. The same reviewer points out that the Spanish-speaking learners have a different (and idiosyncratic) lexical solution for expressing habituality.
9. Note that French *encore* is highly multifunctional. Compare: *je voudrais encore une bière* (additive – 'I would like another beer'); *il m'a encore insulté* (iterative – 'he has insulted me again'); *à dix heures il dormait encore* (contrastive – 'at ten o'clock he was still sleeping').
10. 'the deviations between natives and learners are scarcely noticeable if one takes separately each level of knowledge: lexis, syntax, morphology, etc., because few aspects of [learners'] performance clearly diverge from the norm.'
11. A reviewer pointed out that this remark would be 'even more convincing' if a richer repertoire of spatial expressions were found for the same learners in other tasks. We agree, and point to the fact that the learners of French in the ESF project (see for example Perdue & Schenning, 1996) show a richer repertoire of spatial expressions in contexts of movement than in contexts of static location.
12. Limitations that can be defined rather precisely in terms of 'competition' between different organising principles (see, for example, Perdue, 1995).
13. We assume that an adult learner has no more difficulties in understanding *déjà* and contrastive *encore* than she has with *hier* or iterative *encore*.
14. As regards utterance-initial frequency or duration adverbs think, for TL French, of the wealth of published grammatical interpretations of the remarkable (idiosyncratic) first sentence of Proust's *A la recherche du temps perdu*.

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## Chapter 2

# Discourse Structuring in Advanced L2 French: The Relative Clause

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### Introduction

In this chapter we will take relative clauses to illustrate clause combining in French interlanguage. We argue that the use of subordinators as a measure of syntactic complexity should be evaluated at two levels, a micro-syntactic level and a discourse (or macro-syntactic) level. We describe some relative structures that we claim are characteristic of the discourse structuring of the advanced learner, and which could thus contribute towards identifying advanced stages of acquisition.

A number of studies have investigated the domain of clause combining within the framework of SLA. This area of language learning is interesting as it reflects learners' competence to package utterances into more complex entities in order to hierarchise information and to build a more coherent text. The functional and typological approaches proposed by Givón (1990) and Lehmann (1988) constitute the basis of a number of studies in SLA (Chini, 1998; Ferraris, 2001; Giacalone Ramat, 1992, 1999, 2000; Sato, 1990). In these studies, language acquisition is described as a development from a paratactic mode (i.e. strongly context-dependent) to a syntactic mode (i.e. characterised by more integrated structures). The acquisition process is compared to the diachronic grammaticalisation process and would thus be a continuum that stretches from minimal to maximal integration, i.e. from juxtaposition via coordination and subordination to nominalisation.

However, an increasing number of studies in the field of spoken French have proposed a re-evaluation of the notion of subordination (Andersen, 1997; Blanche-Benveniste, 1990, 1997; Debaisieux, 1994; Deulofeu, 1995). These studies point out that a macro-syntactic approach is more fruitful as it better describes dependencies between elements beyond the sentence boundaries. The studies also question the sentence as a relevant unit for the