

the results. The rate of auxiliary omission did not differ significantly in any subcondition in the children with SLI. In Section 14.1.6, we will examine Jakubowicz' (2005) Derivational Complexity Metric whose aim is to quantify derivational complexity by counting the number of Merge operations involved in the derivation (essentially, the more overt movements, the more complex the derivation).

### 3.2.3 Conclusion

We have seen in this section that children with SLI experience problems with past tense similar to those experienced by TD children, but for a much longer period of time. Interestingly, this obtains in both production and comprehension data, although comprehension results are better. Root infinitives can also be quite frequent in children with SLI, and can be found until the age of 5, while they usually drop out by the age of 2;6 in TD children. In contrast, agreement errors, especially person agreement, are less frequent. Therefore, errors involving tense and the persistent use of nonfinite forms could be considered clinical markers of SLI. At the theoretical level, several hypotheses have been proposed, such as Underspecification of Tense, Truncation, inflectional impairment, and computational complexity. As we will see in upcoming chapters, data from the development of subject and object pronouns, determiners, and questions will argue in favour of the computational complexity approach.

Given that most studies involved only a small number of subjects studied for only a short time, it would be interesting to collect more longitudinal data to confirm the findings reported so far. In particular, the incidence and the properties of RIs should be further investigated. While some researchers argue that RIs produced by children with SLI have the same properties as those found in TD monolinguals, including a modal interpretation, others have tried to relate them to difficulties with tense. Since individual variation in the production of RIs has also been reported, it would also be interesting to see whether there is a correlation between the use of RIs and that of non-present tense. Do the children who use few RIs tend to have fewer problems with past tense, or do they use other verb forms, such as the present, to express past tense? What is the difference, then, between the production of RIs and erroneous use of present tense?

## CHAPTER 4

# The verbal domain in French L2 acquisition

This chapter addresses the development of inflectional morphology and verb placement in French L2 acquisition by children and adults. The boundary between child and adult L2 learners was placed at the pre-adolescent period, around age 12, while the age of four was taken as the point after which acquisition of another language is considered L2 acquisition (Schwartz 2004).

## 4.1 The verbal domain in child L2 acquisition of French

Much like children learning L1 French, child L2 French learners take little time to master the inflectional morphology of the target language, although they do use default forms for a while, such as nonfinite verbs. Moreover, verb placement is largely correct from the outset, especially with respect to negative adverbs such as *pas* 'not'.

### 4.1.1 Inflectional morphology in child L2 French

#### 4.1.1.1 Development of finite inflection in child L2 French

Some studies report that finite forms are used in initial stages of acquisition, with present forms developing first, followed by past and future forms. Moreover, agreement is largely correct in early child L2 French, although 3rd person singular forms are often overgeneralized, as in child L1 French.

Grondin and White (1996) investigated spontaneous production data from two anglophone children, Kenny and Greg, who learned French in Montreal. At the time of their first interview, Kenny was 5;4 and Greg, 5;8, and they had had very limited exposure to French. Adopting Meisel's (1994) criterion for acquisition of finiteness (see Section 3.1.1.3), Grondin and White report that the two children have acquired finiteness, as they use a variety of verbal forms early on, including auxiliaries and lexical verbs, such as imperatives, infinitival verbs, past participles and finite forms. This is illustrated in (1). They also use the same verbs in different forms, as in (2).

- (1) Infinitives: *sauter* 'jump.INF', *monter* 'climb.INF' (Kenny, L1=English, month 3)<sup>45</sup>  
 Participles: *fait* 'done'  
 Imperatives: 2SG = *regarde* 'look.2SG'  
                   2PL = *regardez* 'look.2PL'  
 Present: 1SG = *sais* 'know.1SG'  
               2SG = *fais* 'do.2SG'  
               3SG = *est* 'be+3SG', *aime* 'love.3SG'  
 Past: 3SG = *était* 'was+3SG'
- (2) a. J'ai petite famille. (Greg, L1=English, month 5)  
       I have+1SG little family  
       b. Moi avez/er.  
           Me have.2PL/INF

Moreover, subject clitics are present in the earliest recording samples, and are used only in appropriate clitic positions, that is, together with finite verbs (see Section 8.1.1.1). Assuming that clitics are morphological markers, their presence suggests that verbal morphology is acquired rather quickly. Verbal agreement is also largely correct when used. In particular, irregular verbs *aller* 'go', *avoir* 'have', and *être* 'be' are usually correctly inflected: the accuracy rate is 94.6% in Kenny's data (470/497) and 92% in Greg's (324/352) (Prévost 2001). As in child L1 French, most errors involve an overgeneralization of 3rd person singular forms, such as *a* 'has', *est* 'is' and *va* 'goes', as illustrated in (3).<sup>46</sup>

- (3) a. Les cinq animaux i(ls) va là. (Greg, L1=English, month 14)  
       the five animals they go+3SG there  
       b. Tous les méchants animaux est noirs. (Kenny, L1=English, month 8)  
           all the naughty animals is black

Not all researchers agree with this picture, however. For Paradis, Le Corre and Genesee (1998), for example, tense is acquired after agreement. Paradis et al. (1998) investigated the development of tense and agreement in production data from 15 anglophone children learning French (mean age 6;7) and a group of 10 native child speakers (mean age 7;3). The children were interviewed once a year for three years. The L2 learners were attending French-language schools in the Montreal area. At the time of their first recording, they were at the end of grade one and had been exposed to French for two years. The control group were grade-matched monolinguals. The interviews were designed to elicit use of present, past, and future tenses. As shown in Table 1, during the first two years, significant differences were found between the learners and the native speakers with respect to the use of tense-related elements, whereas the two

groups did not differ significantly with respect to agreement, where agreement was primarily established on the basis of subject clitic use. The authors report that at least 95% of clitic subjects produced by the learners were used with finite verbs at each year. Moreover, the two groups did not differ with regard to verb movement (across negation), which was almost systematically correct. It is important to point out that the production of present forms was investigated via the incidence of the 3rd person plural form of certain verbs, i.e. irregular forms such as *ils vont* 'they go' and forms with an audible final consonant, such as *ils prennent* [pren] 'they take.3PL'. Such forms were chosen because they are among the few that are audibly distinct in the present tense, although, arguably, they are also associated with agreement.

Table 1. Development of tense and agreement in child L2 French (L1=English) (from Paradis et al. 1998)

	Verb movement	Subject clitics	Present (3PL)	Past	Future
Learners 1	.947	.859	.138	.327	.255
Learners 2	.929	.943	.197	.669	.347
Learners 3	.959	.953	.375	.706	.424
Natives 1	.984	.972	.846	.872	.718
Natives 2	.992	.986	.934	.924	.882
Natives 3	.992	.982	1.00	.948	.898

Very little is known about the development of tenses other than the present in child L2 French. In her studies of acquisition of French by English-speaking children enrolled in early French immersion programs in Canada,<sup>47</sup> Harley (1989, 1992) has shown that children make early distinctions between the present, the past and the future based on auxiliaries such as *avoir* 'have' and *aller* 'go' which are used as temporal cues. However, use of infinitival and past participle forms is not always target-like early on. Harley also observes the frequent production of [3e] initially, which may be used as an unanalysed chunk rather than the target *je* + auxiliary form *j'ai* 'I have'. Aspectual distinctions between *passé composé* and *imparfait* also pose tremendous difficulties for the children. For a while, verbs occurring in the *imparfait* are restricted to typically durative verbs such as *avoir* 'have', *être* 'be' and *savoir* 'know'. Action verbs which should appear in the *imparfait* in the target language are either used in the present or the *passé composé*. Finally, the conditional is reported to develop relatively late in the children; instead, the analytic future is frequently used to express hypotheses. In addition to these findings, no study has systematically investigated knowledge of tense and aspect development in child L2 French within the generative paradigm.

45. Month x indicates the number of months of exposure to French.

46. Note that in Quebec French, the variety of French being learned by the two children, the sequence *je va* 'I go.3SG' is acceptable in informal speech. Its use was therefore not considered an error.

47. These programs start in kindergarten with a half-day in French. In elementary schools, schooling is entirely in French as of grade one.

#### 4.1.1.2 Root infinitives in child L2 French

According to some studies, children learning L2 French go through an RI period in the early stages of acquisition, as is observed in monolinguals (Paradis & Crago 2000; Prévost 1997; Prévost & White 2000a). Analysing data from Kenny and Greg (see above), Prévost (1997) reports that RIs are used during the first 18 months of acquisition, as shown in Table 2. Examples are given in (4).

Table 2. Finite and nonfinite root declaratives in child L2 French before and after month 18 (L1=English) (from Prévost 1997)

Child	Before month 18	After month 18
Kenny	76/504 (15.1%)	3/527 (0.6%)
Greg	58/659 (8.9%)	4/911 (0.4%)

- (4) a. Moi jouer avec le train. (Greg, L1=English, month 5)  
       me play.INF with the train  
       b. Toi faire ça. (Kenny, L1=English, month 8)  
       you do.INF this

Prévost reports that the RIs produced during the 18-month period have the same properties as those produced by monolingual children. First, they rarely occur with clitic subjects or DP subjects, as shown in Table 3 (see also Paradis et al. 1998). Instead, RIs are generally found with strong pronoun subjects (which bear default case in French) or null subjects.

Table 3. Subject types found in child L2 French RIs (L1=English) (from Prévost 1997)

Learner	Finiteness	Clitics	DPs	Strong pron	Null
Kenny	+Finite (n=428)	159 (37.1%)	115 (26.9%)	65 (15.2%)	87 (20.3%)
	-Finite (n=76)	3 (3.9%)	6 (7.9%)	45 (59.2%)	23 (30.3%)
Greg	+Finite (n=591)	411 (69.5%)	99 (16.7%)	32 (5.4%)	59 (10%)
	-Finite (n=58)	13 (22.4%)	0 (0%)	15 (25.9%)	31 (53.4%)

In addition, nonfinite forms are quite rare in the finite context of CPs. Of the 147 questions and embedded clauses Kenny produced, only 9 exhibit a nonfinite verb (6.1%). For Greg, the ratio is 6/160 (3.8%). Third, the vast majority of RIs the children produced have a modal interpretation, in contrast to their finite utterances, which generally receive a purely temporal reading, as shown in Table 4. Table 4 further shows a relationship in the child L2 data between finiteness and verb type: RIs appear almost exclusively with eventive verbs; noneventive predicates occur almost exclusively in finite utterances.

Table 4. Interpretation and verb types in child L2 French root declaratives (L1=English) (from Prévost 2001)

Child	Finiteness	Interpretation		Verb types	
		Past/Present	Future/Modal	Eventive	Noneventive
Kenny	+Finite	86 (89.6%)	10 (10.4%)	69 (66%)	36 (34%)
	-Finite	20 (35.1%)	37 (64.9%)	73 (100%)	0
Greg	+Finite	166 (93.8%)	11 (6.2%)	78 (43.5%)	99 (56.5%)
	-Finite	11 (22.9%)	37 (77.1%)	56 (98.3%)	1 (1.7%)

Finally, nonfinite verbs are placed to the right of negative adverbs in negative RIs. This is observed in the 18 negative RIs produced by Kenny and the 6 found in Greg's data (e.g. *Pas ouvrir ça* 'Not open.INF this', Kenny, month 5).

Other studies of child L2 French report a low production of RIs. In a study on L2 French acquisition on the part of two children, Elisa and Lorenzo, whose L1s were German and Italian respectively, Belletti and Hamann (2004) report that RIs represent at most 2% of all declaratives in spontaneous speech. Elisa and Lorenzo were aged 4;0 and 3;5 when data collection began and they were followed for seven months. Crucially, they had been exposed to French for 13 and 14 months, respectively, at the time of the first interview, which is much more than Kenny and Greg. They may therefore have already gone through an RI period. Clearly more investigation needs to be undertaken on this topic.

#### 4.1.1.3 Finite forms in nonfinite positions in child L2 French

Although children use nonfinite forms instead of target-like finite verbs, the opposite is not systematically observed. In other words, in positions requiring a nonfinite form (following a preposition, an auxiliary, or another verb), target-like nonfinite verbs are correctly used, as shown in Table 5. Use of nonfinite forms in nonfinite contexts is illustrated in (5) through (7).<sup>48</sup> Note that although the forms may not be 'native-like', as shown in (5b), where an infinitival form is used instead of a past participle, they at least respect the finite/nonfinite distinctions of the target language.

48. The children were found to produce a number of utterances involving *c'est va* 'it's go.FIN', as in *C'est va là* 'It's go.FIN there' (Kenny, month 11). This sequence seems to qualify as a routine in the children's speech. First, the finite form *va* only replaces the infinitive *aller* when used with *être*. With any other verb, the target-like form *aller* is used, as in (i). Second, other occurrences of *va* indicate that this form is considered finite by the children, especially when it is used with a negative adverb. In this case, it always precedes the adverb, as in (ii). *C'est va* utterances are not taken into account in Table 5.

**Table 5.** Incidence of finite forms in nonfinite positions in child L2 French (L1=English) (from Prévost 2001)

	Greg		Kenny	
	- Finite	+ Finite	- Finite	+ Finite
Prep + V	8	0	7	1
Aux + V	213	6	111	7
V + V	40	0	15	0
Total	261 (97.8%)	6 (2.2%)	133 (94.3%)	8 (5.7%)

- (5) a. Kenny a crié. (Kenny, L1=English, month 4)  
K. has scream.INF
- b. Moi j'ai écrire. (Greg, L1=English, month 11)  
me I have+1SG write.INF
- (6) a. Il va dans ça pour dormir. (Kenny, L1=English, month 18)  
he go.FIN in this to sleep.INF
- b. C'est pour jouer. (Greg, L1=English, month 14)  
it is to play.INF
- (7) a. Le crocodile peut manger le tigre. (Kenny, L1=English, month 7)  
the crocodile can.FIN eat.INF the tigre
- b. Moi vais mettre le hibou brun. (Greg, L1=English, month 10)  
me go.FIN put.INF the owl brown

Interestingly, the low rates of finite verbs found in nonfinite positions (2.2% for Greg and 5.7% for Kenny) are extremely close to the low percentages of nonfinite forms in finite contexts: 2.8% for Greg (19/683) and 4.2% for Kenny (18/430). In other words, although both children produce RIs, they seem to have knowledge of finiteness.

#### 4.1.2 Development of verb placement in child L2 French

In the vast majority of cases, verb forms are correctly placed with respect to negation in child L2 French, as in child L1 French. For instance, in 321 of the 331 finite

- (i) a. C'est va aller juste là. (Greg, L1=English, month 10)  
it is go.FIN go.INF just there
- b. Je va aller à la toilette. (Kenny, L1=English, month 4)  
I go.FIN go.INF to the toilet
- (ii) a. Moi je va pas là. (Greg, L1=English, month 5)  
me I go.FIN not there
- b. Moi j'y va pas. (Kenny, L1=English, month 10)  
me I there go.FIN not

negatives found in Kenny's data, the finite verb is correctly placed to the left of the negative adverb (97%). A similar ratio obtains in Greg's corpus (447/449 = 98%). This is illustrated in (8). Similar findings are reported in Devitt's (1992) study of (finite) verb placement in the corpus of five English-speaking children. Data collection started shortly after the children arrived in France (between ages 8 and 11;6).<sup>49</sup>

- (8) a. Ça c'est pas ma maman. (Kenny, L1=English, month 2)  
this it is not my mummy
- b. Moi je veux pas. (Kenny, L1=English, month 3)  
me I want.FIN not
- c. Ça c'est pas le ferme. (Greg, L1=English, month 5)  
this it is not the farm
- d. Non j'ai pas joué avec. (Greg, L1=English, month 9)  
no I have+1SG not played with

Moreover, target-like verb placement with respect to negation seems to be acquired relatively early. Devitt (1992) reports that negative sentences with lexical verbs are used productively as early as sample 2 in his data. However, for most examples reported in the literature on early verb placement in child L2 acquisition, including those in (8a-c), it is possible that the children treat them as unanalysed chunks. Few studies address the question of the productivity of verb placement with respect to negation, that is, whether it occurs with different verbs or not.

Verb placement with respect to adverbs and floating quantifiers is reported to be correct in child L2 French, although evidence is scarce, and examples with adverbs and quantifiers are not observed until later in longitudinal data (see (9)).

- (9) a. Ils ont toujours un parachute. (Kenny, L1=English, month 27)  
they have+3PL always a parachute
- b. mais en hiver i' prend tous des pantalons.  
but in winter he/they take.FIN all some pants  
(Kenny, L1=English, m 29)

In general, there is a very strong contingency between verb form and verb placement in child L2 French: nonfinite forms are restricted to nonfinite positions, such as following a preposition, negation or another verb (including auxiliaries), whereas finite verb generally appear in finite contexts (e.g. above negation).

49. Devitt (1992) also reports 6 cases of *ne-V* (with no *pas*) in which one cannot be sure whether or not verb movement has applied, since *ne*, when it is produced, always precedes the verb in adult French.

### 4.1.3 The content of child interlanguage grammars of French

There are several views on the content of initial child L2 grammars and their subsequent development. Some researchers consider child L2 learners to have knowledge of finiteness from the outset, which means that initial child interlanguage (IL) grammars possess at least one functional category usually assumed to be Infl. This is sometimes held to be the result of transfer from the L1 (see Section 8.1.1.3 for more discussion). The idea that child L2 learners have knowledge of finiteness is based on several observations: finite verbs are produced initially, subject clitics are correctly used with finite verbs, and verb forms are correctly placed with respect to negation, prepositions, and other verbs (including auxiliaries). Consider Kenny, for example. His very first recordings contained NPs, with only a few verbal utterances, but this was rather short-lived. He started using verbs, finite and nonfinite forms, as well as subject clitics quite rapidly.

Child L2 learners' success in appropriately placing the verb with respect to negation suggests that the target strength of Infl features is acquired relatively quickly by children and thus that parameter (re)setting takes place early in child L2 acquisition. Indeed, these facts appear to call into question approaches claiming that the L1 grammar makes up the very first IL systems (see Schwartz & Sprouse 1996), but more data should be gathered on verb placement with respect to adverbs and floating quantifiers in the early stages of child L2 French before a definitive judgment can be made.

Other researchers, Paradis et al. (1998) for example, argue that knowledge of finiteness is absent from initial grammars. As in L1 acquisition and bilingual acquisition, the formal distinction between knowledge of Tense and knowledge of Agreement is not always made in studies on child L2 French, but Paradis et al. (1998) looked at the development of tense and agreement separately. They argue that, as in bilingual acquisition, Agr is part of initial grammars (where it realizes agreement and acts as a host for verb movement), but T is not. They also argue that acquisition of functional categories is lexically driven, with Agr acquired before T in L2 French because of the rich input about agreement to which learners are exposed (mostly due to the frequency of subject clitics, which Paradis et al. consider to be agreement markers). Interestingly, seven of the 15 child learners Paradis et al. interviewed showed evidence of acquisition of past and future tenses in the first interview. For these children, therefore, it is impossible to know whether or not Agr was acquired prior to T. The authors also report that future morphology is acquired after past tense, but offer no explanation for this fact. It might be due to problems with the lexical forms of tense, rather than to the lack of T in early grammars. Finally, the fact that the learners struggled with 3rd person plural forms may be an indication of a problem with (number) agreement, rather than with tense.

It is important to point out that the hypothesis that child learners have knowledge of functional categories early on does not imply that these categories are systematically

projected. For example, the utterances including RIs produced by Kenny and Greg have been argued to support a Truncation analysis of early grammars: for a while, children project either VPs, yielding (truly) nonfinite declaratives, or IPs/CPs yielding finite utterances (Prévost 1997; Prévost & White 2000a). This approach has recently received additional support from a study examining the incidence and nature of verbless utterances in child L2 French (Prévost 2008). Prévost's investigation of Kenny's and Greg's data reveals that verbless sentences, and in particular sentences with copula omission, are found and that they disappear roughly at the same time as RIs, at around month 18. Verbs are also rarely omitted in CP-related clauses, namely in exactly the same contexts from which main infinitival verbs are largely excluded (see Section 4.1.1.2). Assuming that the copula is a grammatical reflex of finiteness and Tense, these findings suggest that utterances in which the copula has been dropped lack T and are represented as root NPs, APs, or PPs (see Caprin & Guasti (2006) for a similar proposal for copula omission in child L1 Italian).<sup>50</sup>

Finally, child L2 facts have interesting implications for theories of L1 development. In particular, the properties of RIs in L1 French and L2 French argue against the concept of maturation as an explanation for the end of the RI period in L1 French because maturation cannot explain the end of a similar period, with similar properties, in L2 French. Instead, the inflectional variability that RIs represent could be argued to result from similar difficulties in both acquisition contexts, perhaps related to the restricted computational capacities of children. Konhert, Windsor, and Danahy Ebert (2009), for instance, found that children aged 8 to 13 learning L2 English performed worse than control children on working memory tasks in English. Assuming that the computational load becomes heavier as more structural layers are projected, children may sometimes fail to project the full representation until they can better handle the multiple computations that it implies. As seen earlier, reduced computational capacities in children have also been argued to constrain language development in young children, especially in the case of SLI populations (see Jakubowicz's (2004, 2005) Computational Complexity Hypothesis, among others).

### 4.2 The verbal domain in adult L2 acquisition of French

In contrast to child learners, adolescents and adults learning L2 French seem to struggle with inflectional morphology. They produce RIs for a much longer period and their RIs have different properties from those produced by children. In particular,

50. This analysis differs from Ionin and Wexler's (2002) interpretation of copula omission as missing surface inflection in child L2 English.

adult learners seem to use nonfinite markers as substitutes for finite inflection. In other words, they use RIs as default finite markers. With respect to verb placement, knowledge of verb raising in French is attested in negative utterances, with the verb appearing above the negative adverb, but verb placement with respect to adverbs and floating quantifiers is much less accurate.

#### 4.2.1 Inflectional morphology in adult L2 French

##### 4.2.1.1 Development of finite inflection in adult L2 French

Development of inflectional morphology can take quite a long time in adolescent and adult L2 learners. In the initial stages, verbless sentences, as in (10), and formulaic expressions such as *c'est X* 'it is X', *il y a* 'there is' and *je ne sais pas* 'I don't know' are frequent.

- (10) Taxi dans la bois. Après, pluie pluie pluie. (Henry 1, beginner, L1=Swedish)  
 taxi into the wood then rain rain rain [=we took a taxi to go into the  
 wood, but then it started raining all the time] (Schlyter 2003)

Myles (2005) followed the acquisition of French morphosyntax by 14 anglophone adolescents aged 12–13 at the time of their first interview (year 1). By then, they had been exposed to French for one year in a classroom context. A second recording took place a year later (year 2), with the same experimental task, namely an elicited verbal narrative based on a cartoon story. Myles reports that the incidence of verbal utterances is quite low at year 1, averaging 54.6% of all utterances produced by the children. For seven of the learners, the incidence of verbal utterances is below 50%. At year 2, the mean of verbal utterances rises to 75.7%.

In initial stages, many verbs often appear in just one form regardless of tense and person, such as *comprendre* 'understand' in *je comprendre* 'I understand.INF' and *la dame comprendre* 'the lady understand.INF' (Henry 1, beginner, L1=Swedish) (Schlyter 2003). This tendency decreases with time. Similarly, Myles (2004) argues that many of the first utterances containing inflected verbs are unanalysed chunks, many of them involving *j'* 'I', such as *j'adore* 'I adore', *j'habite* 'I live', and *j'aime* 'I like' (see also Myles, Hooper, & Mitchell 1998). Myles (2004) reports that of the 329 occurrences of such chunks in the speech of beginner (English-speaking) learners of French, nearly half were overextended to other persons, as in *Monique j'aime* 'Monique I like = Monique likes'. Moreover, *j'* appeared outside of these chunks only three times. For Myles, learners start to break down chunks as they start mastering the pronominal system, that is, when they try to relate the verb with a subject pronoun other than the one appearing in the chunk (in particular 3rd person pronouns).

A similar overgeneralization happens with respect to tense, with past forms often expressed by an infinitive or a present form (typically a 3rd person singular

form), as in *Il y avait quelques-uns qui a oui* 'There were some who has yes' (Yvonne 1) (Bartning 1997; Schlyter 2003). Such erroneous uses decrease as acquisition proceeds. In particular, recourse to auxiliaries increases, quite rapidly in some learners. However, Schlyter (2003) reports that for most learners target-like tense morphology, at least for *passé composé*, is not in place before about two years. Other past tenses such as *imparfait* and *plus-que-parfait* are acquired later. Indeed, Coppieters (1987) reports that aspectual properties of *imparfait* may fail to be fully acquired, even by very advanced learners. However, his conclusions are based on a preference task involving only five sentences. Moreover, these sentences are decontextualized, which, according to Birdsong (1992) is an important methodological shortcoming. Therefore, much more thorough investigation of the development of aspect in L2 French is required before firm conclusions can be drawn.

Other studies do show evidence of auxiliaries and subject verb agreement very early on, as illustrated in (11) (data in (11a–b) are from Prévost 2004).

- (11) a. J'ai étudié heu secondaire. (Ann, beginner, L1=English)  
 I have+1SG studied secondary  
 b. Elle est boire du thé. (George, beginner, L1=English)  
 she is drink.INF some tea  
 c. Je suis vingt-deux (Lisa, beginner, L1=Swedish)  
 I am twenty-two (Schlyter 2003)

There is also correct placement of the verb with respect to the negative adverb *pas*, such as *Je (ne) comprends pas* 'I don't understand' (Lisa 1, beginner, L1=Swedish), although it is not always easy to decide whether learners are producing unanalysed chunks or fully analysed utterances.

Leung (2002) is one of the few studies that looked at knowledge of tense and agreement in elicited and judgment data. Two groups were investigated: a group of 12 Vietnamese speakers who were learning French in Montreal (at the beginner level) (the L2 French group) and a group of 84 Cantonese speakers learning French in Hong Kong (at three different levels). The latter learners also had advanced knowledge of English (the L3 French group). Chinese does not have overt tense and agreement markers, and there is debate over whether or not T is present in Chinese at all (e.g. Huang (1984) vs. Hu, Pan & Xu (2001)). In her work, Leung assumes that it is not and that, likewise, finiteness and tense features are also absent. Chinese sentences, Leung assumes, have AspP instead of TP. In contrast to Chinese, Vietnamese has tense markers, such as *sẽ* and *dã*, which (optionally) mark future and past, respectively (N'Guyen 1997). They can therefore be considered to instantiate finiteness and tense features, along with T. However, like Chinese, Vietnamese does not have agreement markers.

Knowledge of tense in French was tested via a written composition task (e.g. asking the learners about their past summer holiday) and a preference task where participants

were asked to select appropriate tense forms in sentences set either in the past or the present (e.g. *Sophie a beaucoup parlé/parle beaucoup à la réunion hier* 'Sophie spoke/speaks a lot at the meeting yesterday'). In the written production test, accuracy in tense selection in obligatory contexts was a high 80% in the two groups, including the beginner learners. The results of the preference task are given in Table 6. The L2 French group's performance was lower than that of the beginner L3 learners, whose overall accuracy was close to 80% (as in the production task). However, all beginners, as well as the intermediate L3 learners, struggled with [+past] marking, in comparison to [-past]. The advanced learners' performance was similar to that of the controls.

**Table 6.** Accuracy at selecting target-like tense in adult L2/L3 French (L1 = Vietnamese or Chinese) (preference task) (from Leung 2002)

Group	L1	[+past]	[-past]	Total
L2 French Beginn (n=12)	Vietnamese	69.3%	76.2%	72.7%
L3 French Beginn (n=44)	Chinese	74.9%	82.6%	78.7%
L3 French Interm (n=30)	Chinese	78.9%	87%	83%
L3 French Adv (n=10)	Chinese	98.3%	93%	95.7%
Controls (n=30)	French	93.1%	95.6%	94.3%

Agreement was tested via the same preference task as above (e.g. *J'aime/aimons écouter de la musique* 'I like.1S/like.1P to listen to music') and via a sentence completion task in which participants were asked to place (and adapt) missing words into a sentence (e.g. *aller au* 'go.INF to+the' in *Marc et Pete ... cinéma* 'Mark and Pete ... cinema'). As shown in Table 7, accuracy on agreement was very high in the L3 group, above 90% accurate, while the performance of the L2 group was much lower, below 65%.

**Table 7.** Accuracy at production and selection of agreement in adult L2/L3 French (L1 = Vietnamese or Chinese) (from Leung 2002)

Group	L1	Sentence completion	Preference
L2 French (n=12)	Vietnamese	61.5%	64.2%
L3 French Beginn (n=44)	Chinese	96.9%*	94.1%*
L3 French Interm (n=30)	Chinese	99.1%	97.7%
L3 French Adv (n=10)	Chinese	100%	96.7%
Controls (n=30)	French	100%	98.8%

As mentioned above, Chinese and Vietnamese do not mark agreement overtly. However, English does, at least in the 3rd person singular. Since the Chinese native speakers had an advanced knowledge of English, they had presumably acquired Agr. This category, or at least the agreement features, could have transferred to their L3 French grammar, which would explain their better results (Leung 2002).

#### 4.2.1.2 Root infinitives in adult L2 French

The incidence of RIs can be quite high in the speech of adult L2 French learners with different L1s, such as English, Moroccan Arabic (MA), Spanish, and Swedish (Myles 2004; Prévost 2004; Prévost & White 2000a; Schlyter 1997, 2003). In addition, RIs are not restricted to the early stages: they are also found in more advanced learners, although their ratio tends to decrease with proficiency. In Myles' (2004) study, only half of the verbs are finite at year 1 (65/126 = 51.6%) and a little more than half the following year (105/186 = 56.4%), which is a small but significant difference.

It is important to point out that tremendous variation can be observed across learners, including beginner learners. The incidence of RIs, for example, can be quite high for some (higher than what is found in child learners), whereas for others it is very low. For instance, among four beginner anglophone learners in a language-course setting followed over a year, Prévost (2003a) reports that RIs amount to 42% of the declarative clauses produced by one person (Mary: 39/93), and only 2.9% for another (Ian: 4/140). Similarly, in cross-sectional data, the incidence of RIs can be over 25% for some learners, and lower than 5% for others at similar proficiency levels (Prévost 2004).<sup>51</sup>

Regardless of these variations, the nature of adult RIs seems to differ from child nonfinite declaratives. While child RIs are truly nonfinite and are structurally determined (that is, they are VPs underlyingly), adult RIs seem to have finite properties. In particular, as shown in Table 8, nonfinite forms are used in finite contexts, such as with clitics or DP subjects (see the examples in (12)); in contrast, they almost never appear with a strong pronoun subject. Table 8 summarizes findings of a longitudinal study that began when the learners were at the beginner level (Prévost 2003a); compare with the child data reported in Table 3. Such results are confirmed in cross-sectional studies (Prévost 2004). Note that some tokens of the copula used as an infinitive are reported in the adult L2 data (12e), which never occurs in child L2 corpora.

51. Herschensohn (2001) reports few RIs in a longitudinal study of spontaneous production from two English-speaking teenagers (Emma and Chloe). The learners were between 16- and 17-years old when data were collected for the first time and had been studied French for several years. Each learner was interviewed three times over a six-month period. Only nine RIs were found in Emma's data out of a total of 215 root declaratives (4.2%) and in Chloe's, only seven out of a total of 228 (3.1%). However, these learners were considered to be at the intermediate level at the time of their first interview, so it is impossible to know about their early development of inflectional morphology.

Table 8. Subject types in adult L2 French declaratives (from Prévost 2003a)

Learner	L1	Finiteness	Clitics	DPs	Str. pron.	Null
Abdelmal. <sup>a</sup>	MA	+Finite	532 (81.5%)	53 (8.1%)	13 (2%)	52 (8%)
		-Finite	168 (61.8%)	15 (5.5%)	19 (7%)	67 (24.6%)
Zahra <sup>a</sup>	MA	+Finite	392 (65.3%)	71 (11.8%)	26 (4.3%)	111 (18.5%)
		-Finite	120 (50.8%)	32 (13.6%)	23 (9.7%)	60 (25.4%)
Frank	English	+Finite	163/191 (85.3%)	34/303 (11.2%)	0	4/303 (1.3%)
		-Finite	25/30 (83.3%)	3/38 (7.9%)	0	0
Mary	English	+Finite	125/193 (64.8%)	47/237 (19.8%)	0	5/237 (2.1%)
		-Finite	37/63 (58.7%)	14/70 (20%)	1/70 (1.4%)	11/70 (15.7%)
Jane	English	+Finite	421/596 (70.6%)	108/631 (17.1%)	5/631 (0.8%)	42/631 (6.7%)
		-Finite	39/87 (44.8%)	18/94 (19.1%)	0/94 (0%)	27/94 (28.7%)

a. data from the European Science Foundation project on L2 acquisition (Perdue 1984)

- (12) a. Tu boire. (Abdelmalek, month 27, L1=MA)  
 you drink.INF  
 b. Tu couper tout. (Zahra, month 24.5, L1=MA)  
 you cut.INF everything  
 c. Il laver les serviettes. (Frank 1, L1=English)  
 he wash.INF the towels  
 d. Le bateau faire beaucoup de bruit. (Jane 7, L1=English)  
 the boat do.INF much noise  
 e. Il être marié. (Joe 1, L1=English)  
 he be.INF married

In addition to being used with finite subjects, nonfinite forms may also appear in CPs (13) and above negation (14), which is rarely observed in child L2 French (see also Meisel 1997; Rule & Marsden 2006). For instance, nonfinite verbs are found in around one third of Abdelmalek's and Zahra's CPs (Prévost 1997).

- (13) a. Combien tu rester ici? (Abdel., month 24, L1=MA)  
 how(long) you stay.INF here  
 b. Et Malika, pourquoi téléphoner à toi à la maison?  
 and Malika why call.INF to you at the house  
 (Zahra, month 38.5, L1=MA)  
 c. parce qu' il trouver le sable rapide (Jane 6, L1=English)  
 because he find.INF the sand quick

- d. Quand on être dans la # la 'eller' dans la pays (Lisa 4, L1=Swedish)  
 when one be.INF in the the 'or' in the country  
 (14) a. Consulat du Maroc tu donner pas de feuille.  
 consulate of Morocco you give.INF not some paper  
 (Abd., month 24.5, L1=MA)  
 b. Maintenant payer pas deux mois. (Zahra, month 36.5, L1=MA)  
 now pay.INF not two months  
 c. Il ne venir pas. (Joe 1, L1=English)  
 he NEG come.INF not  
 d. Je ne connaître pas. (Lisa 2, L1=Swedish)  
 I NEG know.INF not

Finally, in contrast to child L2 data, there is no apparent relationship between finiteness and modal interpretation in adult production: the vast majority of both finite and nonfinite declaratives have a temporal interpretation, as shown in (15) (see also Herschensohn 2001). It is not the case that RIs have a future or modal reading (at most 20% in Prévost's (2003a) study), which corroborates the idea that RIs do not have nonfinite properties in adult language. In adult L2 French, infinitival markers seem to be employed as a substitute for finite inflection. According to Schlyter (2003), the opposition between finite and nonfinite forms is established at the same time as the present/nonpresent distinction. However, this predicts that finite and nonfinite forms should alternate in nonfinite positions for a while, contrary to fact (see Section 4.2.1.3).

- (15) a. Il dormir. (Jane 1, L1=English)  
 he sleep.INF  
 [J. is describing a picture]  
 b. Mon frère visiter aussi. (Mary 1, L1=English)  
 my brother visit.INF too  
 [M. is talking about her brother's visit the preceding Christmas]

Crucially, for adults, just as for children, the production of nonfinite verb forms does not stem from a lack of knowledge of finite morphology. Indeed, when finite inflection is used, it is used correctly, as illustrated in Table 9. Of the few agreement errors that are observed, the majority involve overgeneralization of 3rd person singular forms, such as *a* ('has') and *est* ('is') (see also Bartning 1997):

- (16) a. J'a fait la bagarre avec lui-même.  
 I have+3SG made the fight with him  
 (Abdelmalek, month 52.7, L1=MA)  
 b. Quand moi est pas là. (Zahra, month 39.5, L1=MA)  
 when me is not there

**Table 9.** Accuracy in verbal agreement in adult L2 French (L1=MA) (from Prévost & White 2000b)

Verb form	Abdelmalek		Zahra	
	Correct	Incorrect	Correct	Incorrect
Regular affixation	447 (94.7%)	25	552 (93.4%)	39
homophonous inflection	445 (94.7%)	25	538 (93.2%)	39
distinctive inflection	2 (100%)	0	14 (100%)	0
<i>être, avoir</i> and <i>aller</i> forms	264 (97.8%)	6	156 (98.7%)	2
Total	711 (95.8%)	31	708 (94.5%)	41

In her study, Leung (2002) investigated knowledge of finiteness via the same sentence completion task and preference task (e.g. *Je rencontre/rencontrant beaucoup de monde chaque jour* 'I meet.1SG/meet.PrP a lot of people') as described in Section 4.2.1.1. The preference task represented the first attempt to collect data on finite vs. nonfinite declaratives using a methodology that did not involve production. The results, reported in Table 10, show that the L3 French learners performed significantly better than the L2 French group, even at the beginner level. Accuracy was over 80% at all levels in the L3 group. All participants showed higher accuracy on the sentence completion task than on the preference task.

**Table 10.** Accuracy at production and selection of finiteness in adult L2/L3 French (L1 = Chinese and Vietnamese) (from Leung 2002)

Group	L1	Sentence completion	Preference
L2 French (n=12)	Vietnamese	79.1%	70.3%
L3 French Beginn (n=44)	Chinese	97.6%*	83.1%*
L3 French Interm (n=30)	Chinese	98.3%	83.3%
L3 French Adv (n=10)	Chinese	100%	94.2%
Controls (n=30)	French	100%	99.2%

#### 4.2.1.3 Incidence of finite forms in nonfinite positions in adult L2 French

Another difference between child and adult L2 French is that verbs that superficially look finite may occur in nonfinite positions in adult data, especially in the early stages of acquisition, as shown in Table 11. These are present forms that do not bear any overt person or number marker, as in (17); no instance of overt agreement marker is reported in such positions, as in (18).

**Table 11.** Finite forms in nonfinite positions in adult L2 French (L1 = English) (from Prévost 2004)

Level	Finiteness	Prep+V	Aux+V	Mod+V	V+V	Neg+V	Total
Begin (n=5)	- finite	5	14	6	2	0	27
	+ finite	3	17	4	0	1	25 (48.1%)
Int 1 (n=5)	- finite	55	146	92	8	18	319
	+ finite	3	16	7	1	2	29 (8.3%)
Int 2 (n=6)	- finite	130	269	192	17	29	637
	+ finite	14	16	11	1	3	45 (6.6%)
Int 3 (n=5)	- finite	181	278	158	19	28	664
	+ finite	3	3	4	2	1	13 (1.9%)

- (17) a. J'ai difficile demande des questions. (Ann, beginner, L1=English)  
I have+1SG difficult ask.FIN some questions
- b. Il est prépare pour dormir. (George, beginner, L1=English)  
he is prepare.FIN for sleep.INF
- c. Comment tu vas arrive à mon travail?  
how you go.FIN arrive.FIN to my work  
(Jen, Interm 1, L1=English)
- d. .. mais je ne peux pas parle ... (Sophie, Interm 1, L1=English)  
but I NEG can.FIN not speak.FIN
- e. qui uh j'ai rencontre à Nouvelle-Ecosse (Jill, Interm 2, L1=English)  
who I have+1SG meet.FIN in Nova-Scotia
- (18) a. \*pour mangeons (unattested)  
for eat.1PL
- b. \*pour suis (unattested)  
for am

Similarly, Rule & Marsden (2006) report a nonnegligible production rate of *pas+V<sub>finite</sub>* sequences in an elicitation task administered to 60 English-speaking adolescents (age 13–16) learning French in England. The learners were divided into three groups according to their schooling in French, and about 180 negative clauses were collected in each group. The percentage of *pas+V<sub>finite</sub>* was highest (10.8%) for those learners whose proficiency was presumably the lowest, with production ratios declining to below 10% afterwards (see also Section 4.2.2.1).

Crucially, the use of finite forms in nonfinite contexts is not observed in all L2 French learning situations. In particular, the errors reported above are mainly attested

in L2 French acquisition by English native speakers, that is, learners whose L1 does not exhibit any overt infinitive marker. It is therefore possible that the finite forms used in nonfinite contexts in French are in fact considered nonfinite by the learners, based on the morphological properties of their L1. Almost no such forms are used by learners whose L1 possesses overt infinitival markers. For instance, only rare cases of *pas*+ $V_{\text{finite}}$  orders are reported in L2 French data from native speakers of Spanish (Meisel 1997; Prévost 2006b; Trévisé & Noyau 1984) and similar facts are reported in the acquisition of L2 German by Spanish and Portuguese learners (Prévost & White 2000b). In other words, the production of finite forms in nonfinite contexts seems to be affected by the presence (or absence) of the relevant morphology in the L1.<sup>52</sup> Further research is needed to pinpoint exactly what factors are involved, including, possibly, the influence of L1 phonology, as suggested in Lardiere (2003) and Goad, White & Steele (2003).

#### 4.2.1.4 Theoretical analyses

As we have seen, the incidence of verbless utterances and RIs can be high in the initial stages of L2 acquisition by adult learners. Moreover, many verbs are used in only one form and tense is expressed via present forms. At first sight, this looks like evidence that there are no functional categories in initial adult IL grammars (Vainikka & Young-Scholten 1994, 1996, 2005). Under this view, these grammars contain only lexical categories, which are transferred from the L1. Myles (2004) argues that the majority of the 12- to 14-year-old anglophones she interviewed twice over two years failed to project IP, at both recording sessions. In particular, over 40% of the verbal utterances produced at year 2 were still nonfinite. Myles assumes that the lack of functional categories is due to processing problems caused by the projection of verbs and their argument structure. Evidence for IP is found in only three learners, who used finite forms and clitic subjects productively (at year 2). To explain the transition from the VP-stage to a functional stage, Myles suggests that the copula and auxiliaries *être* and *avoir* act as a trigger for the projection of functional layers (see Hawkins 2001).<sup>53</sup> Prior to the VP-stage, Myles argues, L2 learners produce utterances that receive no syntactic analysis. They

52. Some cases are mentioned in Swedish learners of French (Schlyter 2003), but it is difficult to evaluate their overall incidence since statistical counts are not provided.

53. In the same vein, Klein & Perdue (1997) argue that the initial stages of adult L2 acquisition are best characterized as the Basic Variety (BV), 'a well-structured, efficient and simple form of language' used by learners acquiring the language in naturalistic setting (Klein & Perdue 1997: 301). The BV mainly consists of (uninflected and often phonologically distorted) open-class items. Strikingly absent from the BV are (a) free or bound morphemes with purely grammatical function and (b) complex hierarchical structures, in particular, subordination (Klein & Perdue 1997: 333). From this point of view, evidence for functional categories is rare in the BV.

are simple mappings between semantic representations and phonological strings, for example [give name] = [*je m'appelle*] (Myles 2004: 20). This would account for the unanalysed chunks that L2 learners use initially to break into the communicative situation. At that stage, many utterances consist only of juxtapositions of NPs, as in *Nom... le garçon?* 'Name... the boy?'. VPs appear later, according to Myles, because they are more structurally complex than NPs. A similar view is shared by Rule and Marsden (2006) who report a high rate of Neg+NP utterances in a production task meant to elicit verbal negatives (e.g. *Elle non télévision* lit. 'She no television'). Such verbless sentences represent about 30% of the negatives obtained from the least proficient learners. Moreover, these learners were found to produce a large number of Neg+VP sentences (e.g. *Il ne pas jouer au basketball* lit. 'He not play basketball'), and a large proportion of the target  $V_{\text{finite}}$ -*pas* sequences observed in their production data were analysed as chunks by the authors (e.g. *Je n'aime pas* 'I don't like'). These facts are taken to indicate the absence of functional categories in early interlanguage systems.

In spite of these arguments, there is evidence for early use of auxiliaries and subject/verb agreement in beginner learners of French. Although it is true that the ratio of RIs can be quite high in some cases, when finite morphology is produced, it is largely correct. This includes suppletive forms of verbs such as *être*, *avoir*, and *aller*. In the data investigated by Myles (2005), although the incidence of subject clitics is low (less than 25%), they almost always occur with a finite form across both recordings (31/33 = 93.4%). There is also tremendous variety across learners. As Myles (2005) acknowledges, at least 75% of the verbs produced by three of her learners at year 1 are in the finite form (see also Prévost 2003a). In Leung's data, tense accuracy in production is a high 80% for the beginner learners. Taken together, these facts suggest that functional categories cannot be altogether absent from early IL grammars.<sup>54</sup>

Furthermore, we have seen that knowledge of functional categories cannot be determined based solely on the production of inflectional morphology; syntactic consequences of the projection of such categories must also be investigated. For instance, while the incidence of RIs is high in Myles' data, the relationship between finiteness and verb position is strong (with nonfinite forms occurring in nonfinite positions and finite forms restricted to finite contexts) and verbs are correctly placed with respect to negation, both of which suggest knowledge of finiteness. We have also seen that (apparently) nonfinite forms may appear in finite contexts (such as above negation and with clitic subjects), which suggests that they are not within VP, but rather are hosted by a functional category, presumably Infl. In addition, although it may be true, as argued by Rule and Marsden (2006), that some  $V_{\text{finite}}$ -*pas* sequences are used as

54. In Myles' (2004) study, some learners produce *être* and *avoir* forms at year 2, but are not considered to be in the IP-stage. It would be interesting to know how the utterances in which such forms occur could be accounted for under Myles' assumptions.

chunks by beginner L2 learners of French, it does not quite follow that such sequences necessarily lack functional structure. The learners may simply experience lexical gaps, which leads them to produce what looks like systematic and inappropriate sequences (with respect to what is expected), but such sequences nonetheless exhibit target word order and target inflectional marking. These facts further argue against the idea of an initial stage at which functional categories are absent from IL grammars.

If, contra Vainikka and Young-Scholten (1994, 1996, 2005), we posit the presence of functional categories in initial IL grammars, how can we explain the incidence of infinitival forms in positions where finite morphology is normally required? A number of possible responses to this question have been proposed. One possibility is that L2 learners have knowledge of underlying syntactic properties (including functional categories), but that they have problems with the overt morphological realization of these properties. This approach, known as the Missing Inflection Hypothesis, was originally proposed by Haznedar and Schwartz (1997) and was renamed the Missing Surface Inflection Hypothesis by Prévost and White (2000a) to highlight the fact that the problem lies at the superficial level. This approach makes a clear distinction between abstract morphosyntactic properties, such as the [+finite] feature, and their morphophonological realization, such as *-ons* '1PL' (see also Beard 1995). Another hypothesis is that adult L2 learners have problems mapping morphology and syntax (Lardiere 1998, 2000). Finally, drawing on Distributed Morphology (DM) (Halle & Marantz 1993), which distinguishes between abstract features, on the one hand, and forms, which are part of the Vocabulary, on the other, Prévost and White (2000b) propose that default nonfinite forms are underspecified with respect to finiteness in IL grammars. In other words, nonfinite forms are not [-finite] or [+finite], but [0finite]. In DM, the forms of the Vocabulary are associated with a bundle of features, such as finiteness, person, number, gender, etc. Once the syntactic derivation is complete, these forms must be inserted into the representation, which requires that there be a correspondence between the features of the forms and those of the terminal nodes targeted. So, a Vocabulary form specified as [+verb, +finite, +1st person, +plural], such as *mangeons* 'eat.1PL', could be inserted in a terminal node associated with these features.<sup>55</sup> If there is a mismatch in features, insertion cannot take place. This would prevent, for example, the insertion of nonfinite forms (that is, forms specified as [-finite]) into finite positions (positions specified as [+finite]). If, in (adult) L2 acquisition, nonfinite forms are underspecified for finiteness ([0finite]), they should be able to appear in

55. Total matching between features is not obligatory. The inserted form may be associated with only a subset of the features of the host node. Prior to insertion, a competition takes place between several forms of the Vocabulary, with the winner having the highest number of matching features.

finite or nonfinite positions without triggering any feature mismatch with the [+finite] or [-finite] specification of the host node (either Infl or V). This would explain why infinitival verbs may be found in finite positions (e.g. above negative adverbs) or nonfinite ones (e.g. following a modal). A similar approach could be adopted to account for (finite) present forms used instead of past tense verbs, under the assumption that such present forms are underspecified for tense ([0tense]), but specified for finiteness. Finally, forms that are obviously finite, i.e. that bear an overt finite marker, are associated with [+finite], which means that they can only appear in finite positions: insertion into a nonfinite node would yield a feature mismatch and the derivation would crash. This explains the ungrammaticality of (18) above. Interestingly, this hypothesis could also explain how, in Leung's (2002) (preference) judgment task, nonfinite forms could be wrongly selected as main verbs. In Leung's study, accuracy at selecting a finite form was at 70% for the beginner L2 French learners, and accuracy was overall higher on the sentence completion task than on the preference task. If nonfinite forms are underspecified for finiteness in the learners' grammars, the fact that RIs are rated grammatical by the beginners is not problematic. It remains unclear why there should be a difference between the two tasks, however. Perhaps it is due to only some individuals, or to particular sentences that were problematic. Unfortunately, not enough detail is provided to assess such possibilities.

We also saw that English speakers learning French may produce finite and nonfinite forms in both finite and nonfinite contexts. At first sight, this seems to go against the claim that there is knowledge of finiteness on the part of adult L2 learners because finite forms should be restricted to finite contexts. These data seem instead to favour impairment views of IL grammars according to which there is no relationship between verb form and position (Beck 1998; Eubank et al. 1997; Meisel 1997). According to Meisel, for instance, given that finite forms almost never occur in nonfinite positions in child L1 production, and assuming that L1 learning is UG-driven, the fact that such errors are found in L2 speech suggests that L2 acquisition differs fundamentally from L1 acquisition. In other words, UG is not the guiding force underlying the acquisition of a second language. However, in contrast to what an impairment hypothesis would predict, it is almost exclusively English-speaking learners who make such errors. Learners whose L1 has overt infinitival marking on verbs rarely use finite forms in nonfinite positions in their L2 French. This difference across learning situations suggests that the errors committed by the English-speaking learners do not stem from a lack of abstract knowledge of finiteness. Rather, it suggests that the bare forms that appear in nonfinite contexts are specified as [-finite] in their IL grammars.<sup>56</sup> Meisel (1997) also argues that

56. Alternatively, these forms could be [0finite], which would mean that they could appear in either finite or nonfinite contexts.

the few cases where finite forms arise in nonfinite positions in adult L2 data indicate that verb placement is unrelated to finiteness in L2 acquisition, but in that case, one would not expect to find such a discrepancy between the incidence of nonfinite forms in finite contexts (which is quite high) and that of finite forms in nonfinite positions (which is very low). Meisel's (1997) Impairment Hypothesis predicts much more variation in error types than is observed.

The data also argue against the so-called Failed Functional Features Hypothesis (FFFH) (Hawkins & Chan 1997; Hawkins & Hattori 2006; Hawkins & Liszka 2003). According to this approach, L2 features that are not activated in the L1 cannot be acquired, since the activation of new functional features is assumed to be subject to a critical period that ends at adolescence. The absence of a feature from the IL grammar is held to render its overt realization approximate and to lead to morphological variability. Let us take the example of the L3 French learners investigated by Leung (2002). As previously discussed, Leung assumes that Chinese lacks T, and hence [ $\pm$  past] features. On the other hand, English and French, the two languages learned by the Chinese-speakers involved in the study, do have T and temporal features. According to the FFFH, these learners should not be able to acquire [ $\pm$ past] features in either the L2 or the L3.<sup>57</sup> However, the results reported by Leung argue otherwise. In particular, past tense morphology was accurately selected over 93% of the time by the advanced learners in the preference task (Table 6). This score, which was not significantly different from the French native speakers, suggests that the [ $\pm$ past] features have been acquired by the learners.

As seen above, evidence for the presence of functional categories in early IL systems disconfirms the existence of an initial lexical stage in L2 acquisition. The question then arises as to the origin of such categories. In principle, they could be transferred from the L1 grammar (see, e.g. Schwartz & Sprouse 1996) or come from direct access to UG, without transfer, combined with exposure to the relevant input (as argued by Epstein et al. 1996). In many learning situations reviewed so far, both the L1 and the L2 share similar FCs, so while the early availability of FCs may be viewed as a simple case of L1 influence, it is not totally incompatible with the direct-access-to-UG account either. However, when comparing different learning situations involving L1s that are either similar to, or different from French with respect to particular functional properties, the transfer approach is clearly supported. In Leung's (2002) results on agreement in L2 French, a better performance was displayed by beginner learners whose previously acquired language has agreement (English) than

by learners whose L1 does not (Vietnamese).<sup>58</sup> Many other instances of L1 influence will be exposed throughout the book (for a more general discussion on transfer in L2 acquisition, see White 2003).

Finally, the question of the impact of instruction on acquisition can be reviewed in the studies discussed above. Schlyter (2003) noted that the impact of instruction was limited, and these studies tend to confirm that. Instruction seems to have a limited impact on the production of target inflectional morphology. In particular, the incidence of RIs can be quite high, regardless of whether acquisition is taking place in formal settings or more natural immersion environments. For example, RIs were frequently used by some of the English-speaking learners investigated by Prévost (2003a, 2004), Myles (2004), and Rule & Marsden (2006) who were all taking French classes, and by the learners investigated by Prévost & White (2000a) who were learning the language in natural settings. However, no study has specifically looked at the impact of the learning conditions over the acquisition of inflectional morphology in the long run. Another issue that might affect the reported results is the *amount* of input to which the learners are exposed. We know that tremendous variation may exist across learners in that respect, even in apparently similar learning conditions. For instance, when learning takes place in a country where the L2 is being spoken by the community, although all learners could, in principle, have extensive access to the target language, some of them may seek exposure to various sources of natural L2 input, while others may remain in groups with other speakers of their L1 and be exposed to the L2 mainly through classes. It seems plausible that the poor performance reported for learners with limited access to French outside of the classroom may stem from a lack of access to the kind of primary linguistic data necessary for language development. Lack of exposure to appropriate linguistic data may also have an impact on the duration of the RI period. This may explain the differences in the results reported by Myles (2004) and Prévost (2003a, 2004) on the performance of beginner English-speaking learners of French. In these studies, the learners had roughly received the same amount of in-class instruction prior to the first recording session, about 150 hours. According to Myles (2004), this corresponds to the very first stages of acquisition. However, the participants to her study were learning French in the United Kingdom, with limited access to French outside of the classroom, while the ones investigated by Prévost were immersed in the French-speaking community

57. Hawkins and Liszka (2003) also looked at the acquisition of English by Chinese native speakers. Although they assume that T is active in Chinese (contra Leung), they nonetheless hold that [ $\pm$  past] features are not (on a par with Leung).

58. Although Epstein et al.'s (1996) hypothesis was originally proposed for L2 acquisition, it should in principle be true of all subsequent language learning, since UG is held to be available to adult learners. In L3 acquisition, this means that there should be no evidence of influence of the L1 or the L2; acquisition remains a combination of direct access to UG and relevant triggering data in the input.

of Quebec City. This natural exposure may have allowed these learners to advance more quickly than Myles'.

#### 4.2.2 Acquisition of verb placement by adult L2 learners of French

Most studies focusing on the acquisition of verb placement in adult L2 French have investigated the positioning of the verb with respect to negation, frequency and manner adverbs, and floating quantifiers such as *tous* 'all' on the part of English-speaking learners. English and French have different settings of the verb movement parameter, which raises the question of whether learners can acquire the target value of the parameter and abandon their L1 setting. Furthermore, given that each parametric value is associated with mutually exclusive clusters of properties, if learners have acquired the French value, not only should they produce or accept orders such as V-Neg, V-Adv, and V-FQ with finite verbs, they should also reject Neg-V, Adv-V, and FQ-V, which are typical of languages without verb raising, such as English. The discussion of the acquisition of the L2 value of the verb movement parameter goes hand in hand with the question of the status of functional categories and their features in early IL grammars. In particular, if there is an initial stage with no functional categories, verb movement should not be observed and the only orders allowed should be Neg-V, Adv-V, and FQ-V. In general, results suggest that English-speaking learners have little difficulty placing the finite verb above negation, in contrast to their L1. However, verb placement with respect to adverbs and FQs is not always target-like: although learners may acquire the fact that finite verbs can appear above adverbs and FQs, they do not always reject their L1 order. In experimental studies looking at the acquisition of other parametric values, such as the location of finiteness features in either Infl or in C (as is the case for German- and Dutch-speaking learners of French), it is reported that resetting can eventually take place (Hulk 1991).

##### 4.2.2.1 Production data

Studies of adult spontaneous production mostly report on verb placement in negative constructions. Generally, too few relevant utterances are produced to assess verb placement with respect to adverbs and floating quantifiers. It is widely reported that in negative utterances involving a simple verb and the negative adverb *pas*, the order is V-*pas*. This is the case regardless of the form of the verb, finite or infinitival. Under the assumption that RIs in adult L2 data are truly finite, then the conclusion is that placement of finite forms with respect to negation is largely correct in L2 French.

Negation has also been found to be solely expressed by the negative particle *ne* in adult L2 speech, as in *je ne parle bien* lit. 'I NEG speak well' (M2) (Trévisé & Noyau 1984). Such utterances are target-deviant since in French negatives, a negative adverb

is obligatory (e.g. *pas* 'not', *rien* 'nothing'), while *ne* is optional, especially in informal speech. However, *ne* negatives are mostly used by learners whose L1 expresses negation via a preverbal element phonologically close to French *ne*, such as Spanish *no* (e.g. *no quiero vino* 'NEG want.1SG wine'). Although variation between individuals is great, *ne*-negatives were found to range from 11% to 58% in negative utterances produced by three of the eight Spanish-speaking learners interviewed by Trévisé and Noyau. By comparison, Prévost (2004) found only four instances of *ne*-V pattern out of a total of 293 negatives (1.4%) produced by 21 English speakers learning French at the beginner and intermediate levels. Crucially, when *ne*-negatives were found, they never represented more than 10% of the negatives produced by the learners.

In Rule & Marsden's (2006) study of elicited production obtained from English-speaking learners, group results show that the verb (regardless of whether it is finite or not) may occur either before or after *pas*. Crucially, however, it is reported that both orders are almost never found in the same production sample. In other words, learners either use Neg-V, presumably due to L1 influence, or V-Neg, the target order.

##### 4.2.2.2 Experimental data

Experimental investigation of verb placement provides data on the various constructions subsumed under the verb movement parameter. In general, studies report target-like verb placement with respect to negation, as is the case in spontaneous production, but problems with word orders involving an adverb or a floating quantifier.<sup>59</sup>

Hawkins, Towell & Bazergui (1993) administered a 124-sentence grammaticality judgment (GJ) task to 104 English-speaking learners of French. The learners were placed into two groups according to how long they had studied French formally and how much time they had spent in a francophone country. Note that the age of the participants is not mentioned; they were simply labeled adult learners. A group of 37 controls, native speakers of French, was also included in the study. The task tested all three properties of verb placement, with both finite and nonfinite verbs. Results reveal variability across groups, properties and finiteness, as shown in Tables 12 and 13. As far as finite verbs are concerned, both experimental groups correctly accepted grammatical verb placement in French to a large extent, except in cases involving the quantifier *tous*. Moreover, advanced learners were better at rejecting ungrammatical sentences than lower proficiency learners. In other words, they were better at rejecting properties typical of their L1. However, the accuracy rate depended on the property being tested: performance was higher on negation than adverbs, and it was the lowest on *tous*, as can be seen in Table 12.

59. This pattern of results is similar to L2 acquisition of English (e.g. White 1992).