

# Parameter re-setting in instructed English L2 learners of French

Vivienne Rogers

Newcastle University  
University of Oxford

EUROSLA 3rd - 5th September 2009

# Outline

- 1 Rationale
  - Structure of French and English
  - Theories of L2 acquisition
  - Research questions
- 2 Methodology
  - Task
  - Participants
- 3 Results
- 4 Analysis and Discussion

# Background

- Looking at the acquisition of negation, adverbs, object clitics.
- Examine if structures are acquired individually or if they cluster together.
- Cross-sectionally at different points in development
- Phd funded by AHRC (ref: 2005/120142) and was part of the AHRC funded FLLOC project (ref. 112118)
- Lead by Florence Myles (Newcastle) and Ros Mitchell (Southampton)
- [www.flloc.soton.ac.uk](http://www.flloc.soton.ac.uk)

## Word order differences: negation

### French

- Marie (ne) lit pas le livre.  
*M. (ne) reads not the book*  
S-V-Neg-O
- \*Marie (ne) pas lit le livre.  
S-Neg-V-O

*BUT* S-aux-Neg-V-O

- Marie (ne) a pas lu le livre.
- Marie has not read the book.

### English

- \*Marie reads not the book.  
S-V-Neg-O
- Marie does not read the book.  
S-do-Neg-V-O

## Word order differences: adverbs & object clitics

### French

- Marie lit souvent le livre.  
*M. reads often the book*  
S-V-A-O
- \*Marie souvent lit le livre.  
S-A-V-O
- Marie le lit.  
S-CI-V
- \*Marie lit le.  
S-V-CI

### English

- \*Marie reads often the book.  
S-V-A-O
- Marie often reads the book.  
S-A-V-O
- \*Marie it reads.  
S-Pro(noun)-V
- Marie reads it.  
S-V-Pro

## Word order differences: parameter

According to Pollock (1989) these differences are the result of different verb placement.

## Word order differences: parameter

According to Pollock (1989) these differences are the result of different verb placement.

In English the verb remains in VP.

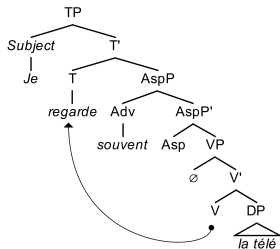
In French the verb raises from VP to TP.

French has strong uninterpretable Tense feature.

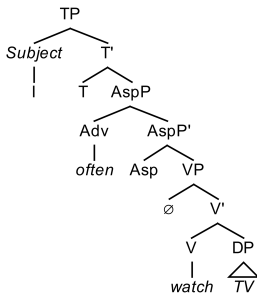
English does not.

# Underlying phrase structure (adverb), Pollock 1989, Cinque 1999

French.



English





# Theories of L2 acquisition

## ① Initial State:

- Organic Grammar/Minimal Trees (Vainikka and Young-Scholten 1996, 2005)
- Full Transfer/ Full Access (Schwartz and Sprouse, 1996)
- Modulated Structure Building (Hawkins, 2001)

# Theories of L2 acquisition

## ① Initial State:

- Organic Grammar/Minimal Trees (Vainikka and Young-Scholten 1996, 2005)
- Full Transfer/ Full Access (Schwartz and Sprouse, 1996)
- Modulated Structure Building (Hawkins, 2001)

## ② Development:

- Missing Surface Inflection (Prévost and White, 2000)
- Failed Functional Features (Hawkins and Chan, 1997)
- Feature Reassembly (Lardière 2008)

# Research Questions

- 1 Do instructed learners of French raise the verb over negation, adverbs and with object clitics?

# Research Questions

- 1 Do instructed learners of French raise the verb over negation, adverbs and with object clitics?
- 2 Is there evidence of clustering of properties associated with the verb raising parameter?

# Predictions of L2 theories

## Failed Functional Features

- 1 Learners may not reset the parameter to allow verb raising.

# Predictions of L2 theories

## Failed Functional Features

- 1 Learners may not reset the parameter to allow verb raising.
- 2 Learners may use other UG constrained options available in the L1 to show the appearance of verb raising.

## Predictions of L2 theories

### Failed Functional Features

- 1 Learners may not reset the parameter to allow verb raising.
- 2 Learners may use other UG constrained options available in the L1 to show the appearance of verb raising.
- 3 The underlying syntactic representation of the L2 will be the L1.

# Predictions of L2 theories

## Failed Functional Features

- 1 Learners may not reset the parameter to allow verb raising.
- 2 Learners may use other UG constrained options available in the L1 to show the appearance of verb raising.
- 3 The underlying syntactic representation of the L2 will be the L1.

## Feature Reassembly

- 1 English learners of French will first transfer the verb raising features from the L1 into the L2. In other words they will only permit verb raising with auxiliaries and modals.



## Predictions of L2 theories

### Failed Functional Features

- 1 Learners may not reset the parameter to allow verb raising.
- 2 Learners may use other UG constrained options available in the L1 to show the appearance of verb raising.
- 3 The underlying syntactic representation of the L2 will be the L1.

### Feature Reassembly

- 1 English learners of French will first transfer the verb raising features from the L1 into the L2. In other words they will only permit verb raising with auxiliaries and modals.
- 2 Learners will be able to reassemble the verb raising features of English to the French settings. Therefore we would expect to find that when learners raise the verb over negation with lexical verbs, they should also do so with adverbs and vice versa.

# Tasks

Each student completed two types of tasks:

- 1 Oral production task
  - one task elicited negation and adverbs, another object clitics
  - 15 obligatory contexts for each structure.
  - each student completed the production task before the judgement task
- 2 Grammaticality judgement task
  - 64 tokens on task
  - equally weighted between grammatical and ungrammatical
  - students had to circle whether a sentence was very good/  
good/ bad/ very bad/ don't know

## Example of negation task

Student had to give a short sentence saying the person was not doing the activity.

Target: Elle ne joue pas au golf.



## Example of adverb task

Student had to give a short sentence including the word given.

Target: Elle lave souvent le chien.



## Example of object clitic task

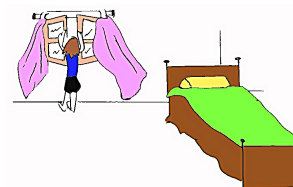
Student was told a story and asked questions.

Object clitic most felicitous answer.

Question: Qu'est-ce qu'elle fait avec la fenêtre?

Target: Elle l'ouvre.

Adapted from Grüter (2005).



# Subjects

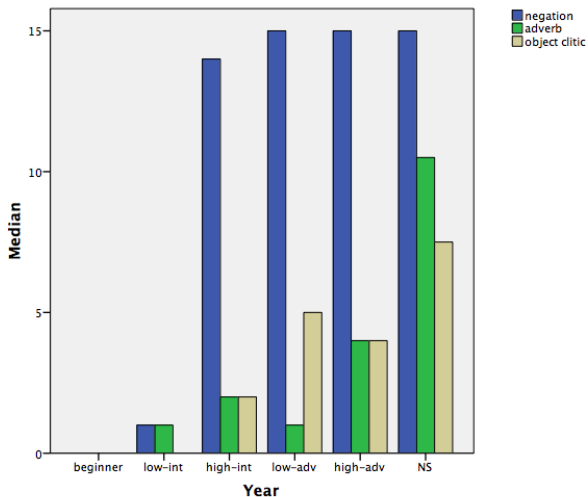
- 5 groups of 15 instructed English native speakers learning French in UK school and university environments
- high advanced students had all spent at least 5 months residency in France
- 10 native speaker controls (ERASMUS students in UK)

	begin	low-int	high-int	low-adv	high-adv
N	15	15	15	15	15
years of study	1	4	6	8	10
age	12-13	15-16	17-18	19-20	21-23

# Oral production results:table

		beg	low-int	high-int	low-adv	high-adv	NS
V-Neg	<i>median</i>	0	1	14	15	15	15
	<i>sum</i>	0	44	179	214	210	150/150
	<i>range</i>	0	0-12	0-15	12-15	5-15	15-15
auxNeg	<i>median</i>	2	0	0	0	0	0
	<i>sum</i>	69	25	0	0	2	0/150
	<i>range</i>	0-13	0-8	0	0	0-2	0

# Oral production results:graph





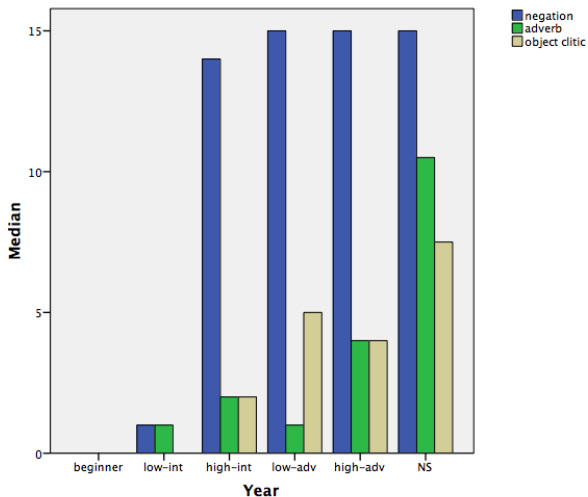
## Oral production results:table

		beg	low-int	high-int	low-adv	high-adv	NS
V-Neg	<i>median</i>	0	1	14	15	15	15
	<i>sum</i>	0	44	179	214	210	150/150
	<i>range</i>	0	0-12	0-15	12-15	5-15	15-15
auxNeg	<i>median</i>	2	0	0	0	0	0
	<i>sum</i>	69	25	0	0	2	0/150
	<i>range</i>	0-13	0-8	0	0	0-2	0

## Oral production results:table

		beg	low-int	high-int	low-adv	high-adv	NS
V-Neg	<i>median</i>	0	1	14	15	15	15
	<i>sum</i>	0	44	179	214	210	150/150
	<i>range</i>	0	0-12	0-15	12-15	5-15	15-15
auxNeg	<i>median</i>	2	0	0	0	0	0
	<i>sum</i>	69	25	0	0	2	0/150
	<i>range</i>	0-13	0-8	0	0	0-2	0
SVAX	<i>median</i>	0	1	2	1	4	10.5
	<i>sum</i>	4	18	48	45	68	101/150
	<i>range</i>	0-2	0-7	0-11	0-9	1-11	6-13

# Oral production results:graph



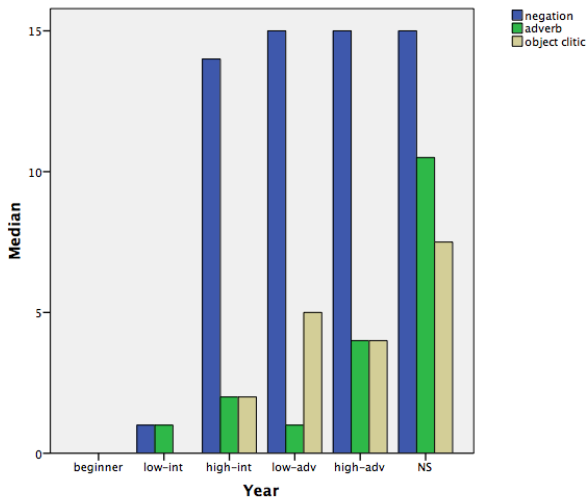
## Oral production results:table

		beg	low-int	high-int	low-adv	high-adv	NS
V-Neg	<i>median</i>	0	1	14	15	15	15
	<i>sum</i>	0	44	179	214	210	150/150
	<i>range</i>	0	0-12	0-15	12-15	5-15	15-15
auxNeg	<i>median</i>	2	0	0	0	0	0
	<i>sum</i>	69	25	0	0	2	0/150
	<i>range</i>	0-13	0-8	0	0	0-2	0
SVAX	<i>median</i>	0	1	2	1	4	10.5
	<i>sum</i>	4	18	48	45	68	101/150
	<i>range</i>	0-2	0-7	0-11	0-9	1-11	6-13

## Oral production results:table

		beg	low-int	high-int	low-adv	high-adv	NS
V-Neg	<i>median</i>	0	1	14	15	15	15
	<i>sum</i>	0	44	179	214	210	150/150
	<i>range</i>	0	0-12	0-15	12-15	5-15	15-15
auxNeg	<i>median</i>	2	0	0	0	0	0
	<i>sum</i>	69	25	0	0	2	0/150
	<i>range</i>	0-13	0-8	0	0	0-2	0
SVAX	<i>median</i>	0	1	2	1	4	10.5
	<i>sum</i>	4	18	48	45	68	101/150
	<i>range</i>	0-2	0-7	0-11	0-9	1-11	6-13
SCV	<i>median</i>	0	0	2	5	4	7.5
	<i>sum</i>	2	4	29	79	67	65/150
	<i>range</i>	0-2	0-3	0-7	0-13	0-9	1-11

# Oral production results:graph



# Oral production results

- ① Negation:
  - beginners and low-intermediates are significantly different from each other and everyone else
  - high-int group significantly different from native speaker controls.
  - both advanced groups and native speakers not significantly different from each other
- ② Adverbs:
  - use of SVAX is low in all learner groups.
  - beginners are significantly different from high-int, advanced and native speakers
  - native speakers are significantly different from everyone else
- ③ Object clitics:
  - not often used by any group but use increased with proficiency.
  - beginners & low-int significantly different from other groups but not each other
  - high-int significantly different from NS

# Oral production: correlations

	Negation	Adverb	Obj CI
Negation	-	.592**	.616**
Adverbs	.592**	-	.391**
Obj CI	.616**	.391**	-



# Q1: Do instructed learners of French raise the verb over negation, adverbs and with object clitics?

- Yes.

## Q1: Do instructed learners of French raise the verb over negation, adverbs and with object clitics?

- Yes.
- Most accurate with negation. Probably due to lack of alternative placement for negation.
- postverbal adverbs and preverbal clitics are attested although to a lesser extent than negation.
- Due to (grammatical) alternatives - e.g. sentence-final adverbs, DP object instead of clitic.

## Q2: Is there evidence of clustering of properties associated with the verb raising parameter?

- Yes

## Q2: Is there evidence of clustering of properties associated with the verb raising parameter?

- Yes
- All the items correlate. There are no instances of 'wild' grammars.

# Conclusions

- Parameter re-setting is possible.
- Possible that feature re-assembly from negation triggers raising in other structures.
- Possible artifice of educational setting as negation is explicitly taught much earlier.
- However, adverbs are present in input from early stages if less frequently.

Thank you

[vivienne.rogers@newcastle.ac.uk](mailto:vivienne.rogers@newcastle.ac.uk)

[vivienne.rogers@education.ox.ac.uk](mailto:vivienne.rogers@education.ox.ac.uk)

[www.flloc.soton.ac.uk](http://www.flloc.soton.ac.uk)