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Lena Dal Pozzo

New Information Subjects in L2 Acquisition: Evidence from Italian and Finnish

FIRENZE UNIVERSITY PRESS
2015

New Information Subjects in L2 Acquisition: Evidence from Italian and Finnish / Lena Dal Pozzo. – Firenze : Firenze University Press, 2015
(Biblioteca di Studi di Filologia Moderna ; 27)

http://digital.casalini.it/9788866558705

ISBN (online) 978-88-6655-870-5
ISSN (online) 2420-8361

I prodotti editoriali di Biblioteca di Studi di Filologia Moderna: Collana, Riviste e Laboratorio vengono promossi dal Coordinamento editoriale del Dipartimento di Lingue, Letterature e Studi Interculturali dell'Università degli Studi di Firenze e pubblicati, con il contributo del Dipartimento, ai sensi dell'accordo di collaborazione stipulato con la Firenze University Press l'8 maggio 2006 e successivamente aggiornato (Protocollo d'intesa e Convenzione, 10 febbraio 2009 e 19 febbraio 2015). Il Laboratorio (<http://www.lilsi.unifi.it/vp-82-laboratorio-editoriale-open-access-ricerca-formazione-e-produzione.html>, <laboa@lilsi.unifi.it>) promuove lo sviluppo dell'editoria open access, svolge ricerca interdisciplinare nel campo, adotta le applicazioni alla didattica e all'orientamento professionale degli studenti e dottorandi dell'area umanistica, fornisce servizi alla ricerca, formazione e progettazione. Per conto del Coordinamento, il Laboratorio editoriale Open Access provvede al processo del doppio referaggio anonimo e agli aspetti giuridico-editoriali, cura i workflow redazionali e l'editing, collabora alla diffusione.

Editing e composizione: LabOA con Arianna Antonielli (caporedattore), Lena Dal Pozzo e la tirocinante Alessandra Scali.

Si ringraziano i Direttori della riviste «FULL Finno-Ugric Languages and Linguistics» e «Grammatica & Didattica» per la gentile concessione alla riproduzione di alcune parti dei capitoli 2 e 3.

Progetto grafico di Alberto Pizarro Fernández, Pagina Maestra snc.

Università degli Studi di Firenze
Firenze University Press
Borgo Albizi, 28, 50122 Firenze, Italy
www.fupress.com

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PREFACE

Lena Dal Pozzo's book is a nice example of how acquisition studies can be linked with solid theoretical analyses and guided by them. It also shows that important insights can be gained by adopting a refined comparative perspective, consistently assumed in the researches presented. The book originates as a revised version of Lena Dal Pozzo's doctoral dissertation, defended at the University of Siena in the summer 2011. I am personally very glad that Lena Dal Pozzo's work is now made available to a larger public in its entirety.

The book offers a fresh perspective on aspects of L2 acquisition by adopting a comparative approach both in the sense of language--comparison – Italian and Finnish in their different setting of the null subject parameter – and in the sense of comparing different L1-L2 directions of language combinations. It also addresses the issue of the earliness of the acquisition of answering strategies in young bilingual children through a pilot design adapted for small children; finally it touches upon a possible situation of attrition in adult L1 Finnish – L2 Norwegian speakers.

The original and rare language combination Italian/Finnish, which constitutes the core of the research, and the subtle distinction in the setting of the null subject parameter realized by the two languages as fully null subject (Italian) vs partially null subject (Finnish)make the comparative study particularly appealing. This is even more so given the experimental setting adopted, which allows for minimal controlled comparisons concerning exactly the same empirical domains, i.e. the proper mastering of pronominal subjects and, most of all, the proper mastering of new information subjects in answering strategies by the different populations investigated. This work is thus also a very original close approximation to an experimental complex laboratory experience.

Both linguists interested in the theoretical issues at the basis of the experimental research conducted as well as researchers interested in issues in L2 acquisition will find this book extremely rich. And, last but not least, language teachers dealing with different L2 populations will benefit a lot from the insights they will gain from this volume in domains that are in general not directly addressed in current textbooks, in particular

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at non--advanced levels. The proper distribution of null and overt subjects and the proper mastery of new information subjects in answering strategies (in Finnish, but it can be extended to other languages as well) are two such domains.

This book can thus have an impact, stimulate discussion and open new paths on various interrelated subfields of research in theoretical-descriptive linguistics, language acquisition, language teaching.

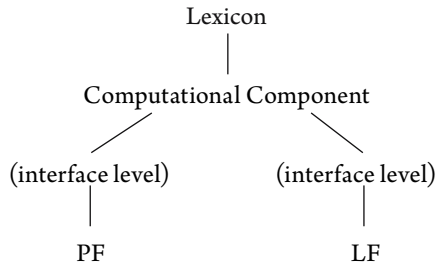
Adriana Belletti
Geneva, October 12, 2015

INTRODUCTION

Linguistic research on language development can be greatly enriched by studies on second language acquisition (SLA). The L2 interlanguage grammar can hardly be identical to the grammar of the target language. In other words, a "complete" language attainment is rarely reachable in adult SLA. As stated in Sorace (2003: 135), what looks like incompleteness may turn out to be systematic divergence between the L1 grammar and the L2 interlanguage grammar. Rather than in core syntax, it is at the interface level that the divergence between native and non-native grammars has been shown to be more prominent. The studies presented in this book will continue a line of research in second language acquisition started in the last years, according to which the interface between syntax and discourse is a domain that shows residual problems even at very advanced levels of language attainment (Sorace 2000a, 2005; Sorace and Filiaci 2006; Belletti *et al.* 2007).

An interface can be defined and represented in various ways in different approaches, which nevertheless mainly share the core idea of interface as the place where two different components of grammar or different cognitive aspects involved with language come into contact. Two of the most well-known representations are showed in Figure 1 and Figure 2, which were first presented by Noam Chomsky (1995) and Ray Jackendoff (2003a), respectively.

Figure 1 - Chomsky's Proposal of Language Architecture



adapted from Chomsky (1995)

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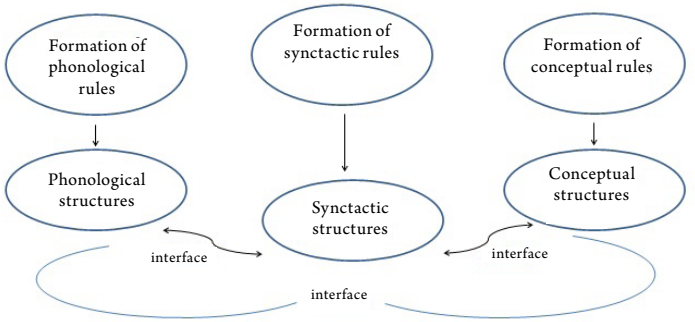
Figure 2 - Jackendoff's Proposal of Language Architecture



adapted from Jackendoff (2003a, <http://goo.gl/qEO99M>, 07/2015)

In the model represented in Figure 1, Chomsky (1995) suggests that the starting point of the system is the lexicon, from which lexical items endowed with a bundle of features (e.g. phonological features, semantic features) are drawn. Then, the lexical items go through the process of Numeration: sentences are built and lexical items are selected and concatenated through the operations of *merge* and *move* (creating sentences). Once the derivation arrives at Spell-Out, phonological features are sent to the PF component (Phonetic Form). Formal features that remain after Spell-Out continue the derivation until LF (Logical Form). Slightly different models have also been proposed, such as the one presented in Bessler *et al.* (1993), who assume a further interface level between lexicon and syntax which is needed to process lexical items at the computational level. In this model, lexical items are considered to be bare uninflected forms that are assigned inflectional features at the lexicon-syntax interface. Instances of such realizations consist for example of cliticization and verbal inflection.

In a different spirit, the Parallel Architecture model proposed by Jackendoff (2003a) assumes that each component of the system consists of smaller subcomponents linked together by interface rules (e.g. thematic structure with information structure, etc.), as illustrated in Figure 2. For a sentence to be well formed it needs to have well-formed structures at the syntactic, phonological and conceptual levels and the different levels need to be connected through well-formed links at interfaces (cf. also Sharwood-Smith 2013 for an introduction to this account).

In some recent studies, Sorace sums up the different positions stating that the term interface can refer to both (a) the components that link sub-modules of language, and (b) the link between language and non-

linguistic cognitive systems (2011: 6). We adopt here the interpretation of "interface" along the lines of Sorace (2011, 2012), who defines it as a descriptive device used to capture different types of conditions on syntactic realization (for a discussion on interfaces in second language acquisition see also White 2011). Under this approach, "the meaning of the term therefore denotes the fact that these conditions have to be satisfied in order for the structure to be grammatical and/or felicitous" (2011: 6). Specifically, in the present work we will deal with the syntax-discourse interface which, in agreement with previous findings, will reveal to be a particularly vulnerable domain in various areas of language development:

- advanced and intermediate L2 acquisition;
- L1 grammar influenced by the L2 (attrition);[1]
- early bilingualism;
- child monolingual L1 development.

The heterogeneous data here presented is shown to be consistent with previous research and further strengthens the possible optionality allowed for syntax-discourse constraints (cf. Sorace 2005 for optionality in second language acquisition and L1 attrition). Non-target divergent patterns are assumed to be constrained, at least partially, by Universal Grammar.

The present work aims at dealing with language acquisition and development in a broader comparative perspective. To this purpose, we will present different corpora consisting in novel data. In addition, we will try to contribute to the (neverending) debate on whether late adult L2 learners can ever reach a native-like L2 competence (cf. Hyltenstam and Abrahamsson 2003, among many others) discussing the role of UG in L2 acquisition and framing the discussion within the recent debate on interfaces (Sorace 2011; White 2011, among others). The data are analysed along the lines of current research within the cartographic approach (Rizzi 1997, 2004; Cinque 2002) cast in the generative framework. The core idea that is thus assumed is that the discourse-pragmatic aspects are directly expressed in syntactic structure; in other words, the (pragmatic) interpretation provided by a certain word order is a direct reflex of its syntactic configuration. In particular, the analyses proposed by Rizzi (1997) for contrastive focus and topic constructions and those by Belletti (2001, 2004, and 2005) for sentences with new information focus will be discussed when dealing with sentence structure (see Chapter 3).

Data was gathered using the same methodological procedure and experimental task for both children and adult populations, in order to observe

[1] With the term "language attrition" we refer to the phenomenon for which the L1 grammar has undergone some changes due to the influence of the L2.

subtle syntactic-pragmatic factors responsible for distinguishing between native and non-native language competence. As for children, an adaptation of the elicitation task was implemented in order to make the task more user-friendly and empathic. The goal of the tasks is to elicit spontaneous, though controlled speech and the topic under investigation concerns focalization of subjects of new information and the available "answering strategies" (Belletti 2009, Chap. 10) adopted by L1/L2 speakers in new information contexts. Table 1 resumes all the groups of participants that will be presented later (for more detailed information on the participants see Appendix II).

Table 1 - Participants

Subjects	L1	L2	Level of attainment in the L2	Tested in
15 adults	Finnish	Italian	highly advanced	Italian
10 adults	Finnish	Italian	intermediate	Italian
15 adults	Finnish	--	--	Finnish
10 adults	Italian	Finnish	low-intermediate	Finnish
15 adults	Finnish	Norwegian	highly advanced	Finnish
3 children	Bilingual Italian/Finnish	--	--	Italian
3 children	Italian	--	--	Italian (control)
15 adults	Italian	--	--	Italian (control)

The studies presented in this book provide novel evidence on a rather poorly investigated language pair, Finnish and Italian, which has not been extensively studied, to my knowledge, in any of the domains under scrutiny here: L2 acquisition at two different levels (advanced and intermediate) and bilingualism. The experimental design was adapted to Finnish in order to provide novel data in Finnish L1, Finnish L2 at an intermediate level and Finnish L1 under attrition. Finally, in addition to the relevance of this survey for research in the language development domain, the Finnish L1 data enriches the current studies on Finnish syntax in the domain of subject focalization.

The book is organized as follows: Chapter 1 looks at some of the main issues on language development and describes different types of language acquisition in the light of current studies. Then, we provide an introduction to the relevant assumptions of the cartographic approach, the theoretical framework under which the current study is carried out. The last part of Chapter 1 describes the experimental design adopted across L1/L2 populations and summarizes previous investigations carried out on new information subjects in L2 acquisition. Chapter 2 reviews some of

the relevant syntactic properties of Italian and Finnish. Alongside with a discussion on some broad grammatical aspects, such as the canonical word order, clitic pronouns and transitivity/intransitivity/unaccusativity in Finnish, particular attention is paid to the distribution of null and overt subjects and to the status of Finnish as a partial null subject language (cf. Holmberg *et al.* 2009), and the different structures adopted by native speakers of Finnish in contexts in which the subject is new information are analysed along the lines of the cartographic framework. In Chapter 3 we present data of Italian L2 at advanced (near-native) and intermediate levels of attainment. The data gathered from the bilingual Finnish/Italian and from monolingual Italian populations through the adaptation of the experimental task are discussed. It is shown that variability in the distribution of preverbal and postverbal subjects, besides being a residual area of difficulty in L2 acquisition, is also present in child L1 as well as bilingual language development. From an acquisitional perspective the results can be interpreted under various approaches, such as Hulk and Müller's (2000) hypothesis, or the Interface Hypothesis presented in Sorace and Filiaci (2006) (cf. § 3.1). Chapter 4 moves from the Italian adaptation of the experimental design to the Finnish one and data gathered from low-intermediate Finnish L2 and Finnish L1 under influence of the L2 Norwegian is presented. In particular, the data on Finnish L1 attrition is discussed in light of recent studies on language attrition (Van Els 1986; Gürel 2002; Tsimpli *et al.* 2004; Sorace 2005). Finally, Chapter 5 discusses the relevance of accounting for the syntax-discourse domain in second language teaching and proposes a possible implementation of the experimental design in a second language classroom environment.

Last but not least, I would like to thank all those who have made possible the realization of this book. First of all, I wish to thank Adriana Belletti for her constant presence and guidance since the inception of my doctoral studies, and for writing the preface to the book. It was a true pleasure to have her assistance and collaboration throughout my work.

I am very grateful to Beatrice Töttössy, who has always believed in the accomplishment of this project since its very beginning. Without her encouragement and support, the volume wouldn't have been realized.

I am deeply indebted to the Department of Languages, Literatures and Intercultural Studies at the University of Florence for accepting my proposal and giving me the extraordinary opportunity to publish this work.

Special thanks go to Arianna Antonielli, whose competence and efficiency were of invaluable help during all the stages of the editorial workflow, to the trainee student Alessandra Scali and to the Laboratorio editoriale Open Access (LabOA) in general, whose proofreading and editing greatly helped the readability of my work.

During the last years I also enjoyed many discussions with colleagues and scholars which have surely enriched this volume in many ways. I won't never forget the time and patience of all the L1 and L2 speakers who participated as subjects in the experiments here presented.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge the journals «FULL Finno-Ugric Languages and Linguistics» and «Grammatica & Didattica» for allowing the publication in Chapters 2 and 5 of a revised version of the two articles appeared respectively in numbers 1, 2012 and 4, 2012.

1

SETTING THE BACKGROUND: RELEVANT ACQUISITIONAL AND THEORETICAL ASPECTS

We assume, along the lines of much literature, that language acquisition is possible thanks to an innate language faculty and that it is constrained by Universal Grammar (UG) which is the initial state in child first language acquisition (Chomsky 1981; Pinker 1994; White 2003 and subsequent literature). In the course of linguistic development, language specific parameters of UG are set through positive evidence and follow more general (non-language specific) principles. The exact role of UG in second language acquisition (SLA) is harder to pin down, since L2 learners already have a steady grammar to rely on. In fact, there is much ongoing debate on the division of labour between the role of the L1 on the one hand, of UG on the other hand, and also of other cognitive aspects involved in SLA. White (2003: 22) brings the following argument as a strong proof for the important role played by UG in SLA: L2 learners can acquire subtle linguistic properties which (i) could not have been learned from the L2 input (somehow in a similar way to "poverty of the stimulus"[1] in L1 acquisition), (ii) could not have been transferred from the L1, nor (iii) have they been the topic of explicit (classroom) instruction. Thus, there is underdetermination with respect to both L1 and L2 grammars which, however, still allows the L2 learners to develop an interlanguage grammar which is a possible grammar (in the sense that it does not violate any innate UG principle and is consistent with them). In fact, the L2 interlanguage can be different from the target L2 and from the L1; nevertheless it does not have infinite options for variation. In what follows, different types of language development will be sketched out on the basis of the relevant literature: first language acquisition (child L1), early second language acquisition (child L2), late second language (adult L2 acquisition), and bilingualism.

[1] "Poverty of the stimulus" is one of the most well-known and strongest arguments postulated by Chomsky (1980, 1987) in support of an innate mechanism for language acquisition based on the fact that children learn grammatical properties that go far beyond the received input, which therefore is insufficient to account on its own for the completeness of L1 acquisition.

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1.1 *First and Second Language Acquisition*

The first important distinction to be emphasized from the very beginning of this chapter is the one between first and second language acquisition. Many scholars have criticized the parallelism often made in the literature between first and second language acquisition, and we agree with the idea that the two processes cannot be truly paralleled. It is attested that non-native speakers may develop an interlanguage which is a natural language following the UG principles, but which differs in some aspects from the target language. It might hence be misleading to compare first and second language acquisition considering them equally capable of reaching the same end state and completeness (cf. Sorace 2003). Nevertheless, at least in some respect, similar acquisitional and cognitive processes seem to be involved in both L1 and L2 acquisition.

First language acquisition is the process of language acquisition that takes place from the very beginning of human life and during early childhood. It is generally assumed that L1 acquisition is mostly completed by the age of four or five. First language acquisition is an automatic process if compared to adult second language acquisition: the child does not make any explicit or conscious effort to learn his/her first language, differently from what happens in SLA, especially in adult learners.

SLA is by definition successive to first language acquisition: there is already a first language which has developed; this means that the L2 learner already has a linguistic knowledge, namely a grammar of reference, independently of the age in which L2 acquisition starts. First and second language acquisition are also different in terms of completeness and final attainment: typical L1 acquisition is always complete, whereas adult L2 learners do not show native-like competence, not even at the highest levels of proficiency, a fact which emerges in e.g. fossilization effects (cf. § 1.2) and the impossibility of making native-like grammaticality judgements. Moreover, variation and optionality in the final states of interlanguage grammars of adult learners is very common, something which is never observed in typical L1 acquisition.

A linguistic phenomenon to which both child and adult L2 learners are sensitive is *transfer* from the L1 to the L2. Several studies demonstrate transfer effects for both child and adult L2 interlanguage grammars (see Haznedar 1997; Whong-Barr and Schwartz 2002 among others for child L2 transfer). Moreover, the results coming from these studies support the claim that there is a difference between child L1 and child L2 acquisition, since transfer effects can only be observed in L2 acquisition (from the L1).

The issue regarding the possible parallelisms between first and second language acquisition is puzzling. One common point is that both the L1 learner and the L2 learner are exposed to *positive evidence* but not really to *negative evidence* (cf. White 2003). In other words, the input to which

learners are exposed is formed by grammatical utterances (i.e. positive evidence), rather than by ungrammatical utterances (i.e. negative evidence). However, L2 learners hardly reach native competence in the L2. The attested cases of very advanced L2 learners who arrive at a native-like competence require sensibly more time and effort if compared to the effortless and unconscious L1 acquisition. Moreover, at a more detailed observation the L2 competence even at near-native level usually differs from the target language in many aspects, such as wideness of the lexicon, syntax, and phonology, the area in which it is the hardest to acquire a native-like competence and the most affected one by residual L1 transfer effects.

Second or late language acquisition can be further classified into child and adult SLA. Child or early second language acquisition takes place early in life but after the first language is already established. A strongly debated issue concerns the cut-off age between child and adult SLA and the existence of a critical period ("Critical Period Hypothesis", CPH) or the presence of maturational constraints both in first and second language acquisition. One of the most influential proposals in the literature, put forth by Lenneberg (1967), takes puberty as the end of the critical period in L1 acquisition. He was the first scholar to name the period between 2 years of age and puberty as "critical period". Lenneberg observed a biological predisposition for language acquisition during the aforementioned life timespan, which he considered lost after the hemispheric lateralization in the brain is completed, which, according to Lenneberg, takes place around puberty. One of the strongest arguments used by Lenneberg in favour of lateralization is the contrasting evidence coming from cases of linguistic recovery of children and adults with left hemisphere operations: adults' brains were not capable of restructuring language functions in other areas of the brain, whereas children's brains showed a greater neuroplasticity and could recover the relevant functions. Subsequent research has argued that on the one hand lateralization can take place even earlier, and that on the other hand lateralization is not the only factor involved in this loss of sensitivity, even though it is clearly very important (Corballis 1991 and others). Another considerable body of evidence for the CPH comes from the well-known cases of children deprived of linguistic input in childhood (Curtiss 1977; Shattuck 1980; Rymer 1993, among others). The cases of Genie (cf. among others Curtiss 1977), Chelsea (Curtiss 1988, 1989) and Isabelle (Davis 1947), who suffered of language deprivation in childhood, suggest that there is a strong decrease in L1 acquisition between the age of 7 and puberty. However, other scholars have provided evidence for even lower age limits for native-like attainment, as reported in the study of Ruben (1997) on children suffering of otitis in their first year of life and hence receiving less linguistic input with respect to their peers and consequently failing to reach a native-like linguistic competence (Hyltenstam and Abrahamsson

2003). A relevant re-statement of the critical period is given by Birdsong (1991) who claims, in a more neutral way, that the developmental period in which it is possible to acquire a language to native-like levels is limited. Based on these proposals, many scholars have subsequently considered puberty as the cut-off point between child and adult SLA (note that the critical period proposed by Lenneberg concerns first language acquisition and only successively has it been extended to SLA).

More recently, several authors have assumed on the basis of empirical studies that the cut-off point between early and late L2 acquisition is much earlier than puberty. Byalistok and Miller (1999), De Keyser (2000), Schwartz (2004), Unsworth (2005) among others assume that child or early L2 acquisition ends between the ages of 7 and 9. According to these scholars, child or early L2 acquisition can take place between the ages of 3-4 and 7-9, whereas adult or late L2 acquisition starts from the age of 7-9 years on. A less strict definition of the critical period hypothesis is its reformulation in terms of a progressive loss of sensitivity over a longer period instead of a clearly defined span of time after which the possibility of acquiring a language in a native-like fashion disappears (Long 1990; Harley and Wang 1997). Ultimately, both approaches assume that maturation does have an effect on language acquisition. A sensitive period exists and it is characterized by the interaction between the relevant brain areas and the linguistic input the child receives. However, the two approaches differ in how the maturational constraints actually work and, more specifically, they differ in the characterization of the offset of a period of heightened sensitivity for language acquisition.[2]

As briefly pointed out above, all interpretations of the CPH in L2 acquisition have been highly debated in the past decades. Furthermore, not all scholars agree on the actual existence of a critical period, regardless of its definition in terms of timespan. The main piece of evidence against the CPH comes from the existence of children who do not acquire an L2 in a native-like manner and of adults who, on the contrary, show a native-like achievement of the L2 (Stern 1976; Snow 1989; Ioup 1989; Harley and Wang 1997). These scholars strongly criticize the assumption of puberty as a cut-off point in language acquisition and propose that *if* a sensitive period exists, it is at the age of 4 or 5 or even earlier, when all the main language variables have reached their maturation. In addition, this view is further supported by the claim (cf., among others, Martohardjono and Flynn 1995) that adults can also reach a target-like ultimate attainment in their L2 thanks to full access to principles and parameters of syntax.

[2] Cf. Seliger (1978) for the interesting suggestion of multiple critical periods. According to the author, language acquisition has different onsets and offsets for different subcomponents (e.g. phonology, morphology, etc.).

Early SLA is assumed to further differ from adult or late SLA because the cognitive systems involved in language processing are constantly developing and the changes observed in cognitive abilities across life correlate with different L2 achievements (Bialystok and Hakuta 1999). Children are undoubtedly more efficient learners than adults: until the age of about 9, they can learn directly from the input and not via the L1 as it happens from this age on. This was first noted by Penfield and Roberts (1959), based on neurological observations on the flexibility of the brain. Unlike the unconscious and involuntary L2 learning process in children, adults must make conscious and voluntary language learning efforts. This observation is related to the "Fundamental Difference Hypothesis" (Bley-Vroman 1989, 1990), which states that children are still capable of learning and implicitly accessing the language acquisition device provided by Universal Grammar and they can acquire a second language from mere exposure (cf. § 1.2). In contrast, learning is no longer involuntary or unconscious later on; hence, adults need to resort to other cognitive abilities such as problem-solving abilities. Under this approach, it is assumed that adult learners do not have access to UG, even if it is not completely excluded that at least some of the UG principles are available to adult learners, too, but only via the L1 grammar. Thus, the fundamental difference between early and late language acquisition lies in the crucial fact that Universal Grammar is accessible in child L1 acquisition but it is no longer fully accessible to adult learners (see also Clahsen and Muysken 1986; Schachter 1989).

Schwartz (1992) among others proposes that both child L1 and L2 acquisition are driven by UG and the difference is that general learning mechanisms and cognitive abilities are more relevant for adults. More specifically, a comparison of the developmental sequences of child L2ers and those of adult L2ers can shed light on UG involvement in adult L2 acquisition and on the involvement of more general problem-solving abilities. Child data can be helpful in multiple ways as they would make it possible to test L2 hypotheses based on adult data only, and acquisition processes may be better pinned down through comparison of child and adult L2 acquisition in relation to the involvement of biological and cognitive factors. Moreover, as Schwartz (1992) suggests, the comparison between child and adult L2 acquisition is crucial to the ongoing discussion on maturational constraints. The author provides a review of the most important previous studies which are still relevant for discussion, in particular studies that compare child and adult L2 acquisition based on spontaneous production. The author observes that all L2 learners go through the same developmental stages in their L2 acquisition, regardless of the age in which L2 acquisition starts. Also, lack of completeness (in all aspects: phonology, syntax, morphology, etc.) observed in both child and adult acquisition strengthens the assumption that children and adults undergo similar ac-

quisitional processes. Hence, there is strong evidence for the presence of (or access to) UG in both early and late L2 acquisition. As summarized in Unsworth (2005), more recent studies based on elicited L2 production (e.g. Gilkerson 2006) show that the L2 acquisition process in children and adults seems to proceed in a parallel way. However, this view is not uncontroversial, as strong claims have been made for relevant differences in child and adult L2 acquisition (Blom-Polišenská 2006). These differences in the findings are explained by Unsworth (2005) through failures and incompleteness in the research methodology. Overall, her research can be regarded as further support for considering UG as central in second language acquisition.

1.2 *Adult Second Language Acquisition and UG*

Adult L2 acquisition generally shows more variability and incompleteness than L1 acquisition and child L2 acquisition. As mentioned earlier, an adult L2 learner already has a steady grammar in place to which s/he can refer and other learning mechanisms and cognitive abilities on which s/he can rely on when acquiring an L2. This assumption makes it harder to pin down the exact role of UG in L2 acquisition. The issue comes down to the following questions: does UG influence L2 acquisition? If yes, how and to what extent? What sort of interaction is there between language learning and other cognitive abilities? If UG is not accessed in L2 acquisition, how does SLA take place? In the last decades much research and debate have focused on the theories that concern UG access and SLA. Some of the main proposals discussed in the literature will be briefly presented below:

(i) *Chomsky and subsequent works: Nativism/Innatism*
The nativist approach assumes an innate linguistic knowledge for L1 acquisition, which cannot be simply acquired through experience in the external world. This innate linguistic knowledge is the so-called Universal Grammar (UG), which is part of the language faculty. UG "places requirements on the forms of grammars" on the one hand and it "constrains the functioning of grammars" on the other hand, thus determining the principles grammars must obey (White 2003: 2). Even though the first formulation of this approach concerned L1 acquisition only, several scholars have subsequently investigated the role of UG in second language acquisition based on Chomsky's proposal.

(ii) *Mac Whinney (2004), Ellis (2006): Emergentism*
Under this approach, the L2 learner acquires his/her L2 competence and grammar by picking up grammatical representations from experience through (non-linguistic) cognitive abilities. The most important as-

sumption is that these abilities are non-linguistic. These innate cognitive abilities have a crucial role in the pre-linguistic and linguistic communication. More specifically, language acquisition is assumed to be a continuum from pre-linguistic to linguistic abilities. Under this approach, Karmiloff-Smith (2002) proposes that the received input activates specific modular structures which are innate.

(iii) *Bley-Vroman (1989), Schachter (1990, 1996): No Access to UG*
The Fundamental Difference Hypothesis is the strongest argument in this approach for assuming that access to UG is no longer possible after puberty. More specifically, it is assumed that children access UG and set parameters while adults do not, as shown by the incompleteness of their L2 interlanguage. Hence, parameter setting is considered to be the crucial diagnostic for access to UG in SLA (cf. also Epstein *et al.* 1996; Herschensohn 2000 for discussion).

(iv) *Epstein* et al. *(1996, 1998): Continuous Direct Access to UG*
This view strongly challenges the critical and sensitive period hypotheses: it is claimed that there is no optimal age for language acquisition, whether L1 or L2. Hence, it is predicted that during language acquisition there is continuous and direct access to UG. In this way, this approach is the opposite of the preceding one.

(v) *Vainikka and Young-Scholten (1994, 1996): Minimal Tree Hypothesis*
This approach postulates that only part of the L1 grammar constitutes the initial state in L2 acquisition and, following the Weak Continuity Hypothesis (Vainikka 1993, 1994; Clahsen *et al.* 1996), it is assumed that an initial grammar for both L1 and L2 acquisition is present. This grammar lacks functional categories, in the sense that they are not recoverable through UG. Initially, only lexical categories can be transferred from the L1 to the L2 and the interlanguage of the L2 learner develops successively all the missing categories (such as IP, CP, Agr, complementizer system and verb raising). This relatively strong approach has been questioned later on by Vainikka and Young-Scholten themselves (Vainikka and Young-Scholten 1996) and they suggest an adaptation in which the functional categories are not missing *tout court* in the early interlanguage grammar but are rather inhibited.

(vi) *Eubank (1996): Weak Transfer/Valueless Features Hypothesis*
This hypothesis argues for a defective initial L2 grammar, differently from the L1. Both lexical and functional categories transfer from the L1 to the L2, but the parameter settings associated with the functional categories do not. In Herschensohn (2000), Eubank's theory is used to explain the intermediate state of L2 acquisition characterized by underspecification,

namely a UG-constrained period of inconsistency after the initial state but before the correct adoption and use of the L2 values.

(vii) *Schwartz and Sprouse (1994, 1996): Full Transfer/Full Access Hypothesis*
Full Transfer means that the L1 represents the initial state for the development of the L2 interlanguage grammar. Full Access considers the UG to be accessible in case the L1 is not sufficient to assign a representation to the L2 input data. Hence, the options made available by UG are necessary to restructure the system. In other words, the L2 learner can access any aspect of UG in order to find an adequate solution by means of parameter resetting, functional categories and feature values, hence *restructuring* the interlanguage grammar, which is thus UG-constrained. Note that under this approach the resulting interlanguage grammar does not need to correspond exactly to the target grammar. This approach is grounded on two basic facts that can be observed in L2 acquisition: the presence of L1 properties in the L2 interlanguage grammar and the presence of properties in the interlanguage grammar which are not part of either L1 or L2.

(viii) *Herschensohn (1998, 2000): Constructionism*
In Herschensohn (1998, 2000), one of the main guidelines is the assumption, first proposed in the minimalist framework, that cross-linguistic variation is morpholexical, hence the L2 learner initially can initially only acquire lexicon and morphology.[3] Under this approach, a multi-competence model is proposed based on (i) underspecification, (ii) Full Transfer/Full Access and (iii) morphological processing deficits (Lardiere 1998) that can account for the variability of the L2 interlanguage grammar and for the different stages in the process of L2 acquisition. More specifically, the L2 learner moves from individual lexical items to a single morpholexical class and finally "constructs" all relevant morpholexical classes (Herschensohn 2000: 111). Hence, we can observe an initial state in which L1 values persist (which can be best explained through the Schwartz and Sprouse Full Transfer/Full Access model), followed by an intermediate state characterized by underspecification of feature values in which the target L2 features are gradually acquired (as proposed in Eubank's model), and a final expert state in which the mastery of the morpholexicon is consolidated and the target L2 values are reached.

This proposal favours a minimalist approach to second language acquisition over a parameter resetting approach. Basically, it postulates that the set of universal syntactic principles is very restricted, and "parametric variation is understood as a function of morpholexical feature differenc-

[3] Cf. also the Lexical Learning Hypothesis presented in Clahsen (1994).

es between languages", in the sense that "the control of an L2 parameter [is] a direct function of the mastery of the features of a given functional category" (Herschensohn 2000: 82). Hence, it proposes that the acquisition of the target language takes place through the progressive mastery of morpholexical constructions, which are reflected in the cross-linguistic variation and which are harder to acquire with respect to core syntactic properties. Under this view, access to UG from the beginning as well as incompleteness are two givens in SLA (*contra* Bley-Vroman 1989; Schachter 1990, 1996). The fact that UG is available from the initial state is evinced from the status of different interlanguage grammars: no matter the competence level, they are all possible grammars of human languages. Incompleteness and differences between L1 and L2 acquisition are explained through different grades of completeness that can be reached in the control of lexicon and morphology at the lexical-syntactic interface.

To conclude this section, we recap some of the most widely used notions in the literature on second language acquisition which will also help the reader to follow the studies presented in this book and all the issues related to the current discussion on SLA with greater ease.

Initial state:
The initial state (of language acquisition) and the consequent role of the L1 and of the access to UG have been central for many theories in SLA. The term "initial state" indicates the state from which the L2 learner starts his/her L2 acquisition process and refers to the linguistic competence already in place (in the L1) through Universal Grammar.

Ultimate attainment:
Ultimate attainment in adult SLA has been the topic of much research. As discussed in Hyltenstam and Abrahamsson (2003), it is possible to point out three main alternatives regarding the level corresponding to ultimate attainment:

(i) Only early starters can reach a native-like competence.
(ii) Both early starters and some late starters can reach native-like competence.
(iii) Native-like competence cannot be reached by L2 learners, neither early nor late.

Recent research and observations have led the authors to suggest that the third possibility might be on the right track. As a matter of fact, there are no attested cases of L2 learners which are native-like in all aspects of the target language. Hyltenstam and Abrahamsson (2003) investigated the interlanguage grammar of near-native speakers of Swedish with different L1s. Three tests were implemented in their study: a cloze test,

a grammaticality judgement test, and a white noise test.[4] Their results showed that not even in cases of child or early L2 learners a native-like ultimate outcome is achieved across all areas of L2 competence. Under this proposal, the mechanism that makes the acquisition of a second language possible quickly deteriorates after birth if not properly stimulated.

Lack of ultimate attainment:
This notion is related to the previous one and implies that adult L2ers can reach very high levels of proficiency but are never able to master the L2 in a native-like fashion.

Near-nativeness:
This term generally indicates an end-state in L2 acquisition in which the L2 competence reaches native-like levels. This concept is strictly related to ultimate attainment and to the maturational constraints which prevent late L2 learners from reaching a native-like competence. See White and Genesee (1996) and Sorace (1993, 2003) among others for insightful discussion.

Fossilization:
The term was first used by Selinker (1972) to indicate both a process and a product for (permanent) non-native-like attainment, but its use varies a lot in literature. It generally indicates the development of an interlanguage grammar which has stopped at a certain point, or for certain aspects, in adult L2ers. This point is usually far from ultimate attainment but nevertheless sufficient for communication. In other words, the term "fossilization" is used to indicate a state of very advanced interlanguage grammars in which the interlanguage is incomplete for specific aspects (which, however, do not compromise communication). On deeper scrutiny, this definition is too simplistic, as evidenced by the difficulty of answering questions such as: how can we determine the exact point in time in which it is possible to talk about fossilization? How can we be sure that the interlanguage grammar is not developing anymore and how can we differentiate between "temporary stabilization" and "permanent fossilization"?[5] Long (2003) discusses the correctness of this terminology basing his criticism on the fact that the studies to date have always assumed but not demonstrated fossilization, due to the difficulties of testing fossilization both as a process and as a product. Hence, he suggests that it would be preferable to focus on "stabilization" rather than fossilization,

[4] Repetition of sentences presented with increasing amounts of sound waves with a uniform frequency spectre.

[5] Cf. Selinker (1993) for discussion on this empirical problem.

which, he suggests, has several advantages in terms of existence of the phenomenon, permanence (stabilization is temporary), and testability.

Grammaticality judgements/language intuition:
Tasks based on grammaticality judgement are often used to measure L2 competence and language intuition in L2 speakers. What generally emerges is that even very advanced adult L2ers can hardly provide native-like judgements about their L2. The difficulty in providing grammaticality judgements for L2ers can be considered one of the basic differences between L1 and L2 acquisition.

Language attitude and motivation:
Even though the relevance of these factors is sometimes disregarded in the SLA field (due e.g. to the difficulties in measuring them), since they are generally confined to the psychological aspects of language education, it is undeniable that both language attitude, in the sense of the whole of affective factors towards the language to be learnt, and motivation can be highly relevant in second language acquisition. A positive attitude and a high motivation are indeed relevant for successful acquisition. Notice, however, that they play a much more important role in adult L2ers than in children, independently of the status of the language as L1 or L2 (and intending adults as L2 speakers after puberty).

Implicit and explicit learning:
Implicit learning refers to the ability of learning unconsciously from the input. This process is typical of first language acquisition and of contexts of second language acquisition in which the L2 learner is immersed in the target society. Explicit learning typically indicates classroom learning contexts in which the L2 speaker consciously learns the grammar of the target language. As a matter of fact, things are not so straightforward and questions arise especially concerning the real "unconsciousness" of implicit learning. An interesting, and not extensively discussed, issue concerns the division of labour between implicit and explicit learning, the possibility that both are present in L2 acquisition (cf. Byalistok 1994; Hulstijn 2000, among others) and the extent to which processes such as "noticing", i.e. attention to the received input, are relevant in adult second language learning. This is also related to the relevance of a metalinguistic awareness in L2 acquisition (see also Ellis 2005 and the discussion therein on different tasks for tapping implicit vs. explicit knowledge).

In conclusion, the majority of studies suggest that a native-like mastery of the L2 seems to be impossible and incompleteness is part of L2 acquisition, in particular by adult learners. In spite of all the debates on the cut-off point of a critical period, or better, a sensitive period, there is quite

broad agreement on the fact that the incompleteness observed in adult L2 grammars is due to progressively reduced possibilities (deterioration) of the mechanisms involved in language acquisition. It is undeniable that maturational constraints in general play a major role in SLA, as stated by Hyltenstam and Abrahamsson (2003: 574): "maturation can account for the overall and general decline in learning potentials with increasing AOs (age of onset) whereas the variability between exceptional and average L2 learners with the same AO is accounted for best by non-maturational factors". Nevertheless, the role of other variables, such as sociolinguistic, psychological and cognitive factors, cannot be excluded. As also stated in Herschensohn (2000: 52), it is important to distinguish the facts which can explain this incompleteness in biological and non-biological: the former hints at the Critical Period Hypothesis previously discussed, the latter refers to all the sociolinguistic aspects, motivation, attitude, and many others factors involved in adult L2 acquisition, which are different for each individual.

In the present work, a UG based approach is adopted, leaving aside other approaches such as the functional-developmental and usage-based approaches to language acquisition. As we have seen, the issue regarding the role of UG is still debated and many scholars have argued for and against it under different frameworks.[6] Specifically, we follow the lines of the biolinguistic approach in considering language as an innate faculty, and grammar (in the sense of UG) as a cognitive system which is necessary for acquiring language, as first proposed by Chomsky (cf. the discussion in Chomsky 2004). With particular reference to SLA, we follow the assumption that the L2 speaker's endpoint of his/her L2 interlanguage grammar need not be identical to the grammar of the target language, as far as it is a possible human grammar in terms of Universal Grammar (Herschensohn 2000; White 2003 and references quoted there).

There is a particularly complicated issue related to the terminology used in the different hypotheses proposed for the (possible) access to UG that a L2 learner can have (White 1989, 2003 for a complete discussion). The lack of consensus regarding the terminology is partially reflected in the difficulty of having a univocal and exact definition of the role played by the L1 and by UG in L2 acquisition. We agree with the claim that there is some interplay with other cognitive domains and that in L2 acquisition *there is* access to UG. This assumption is supported by cases in which L2 learners

[6] Among others cf. Karmiloff-Smith (1992) for the emergentist view, Bates and MacWhinney (1981) for functional linguistics, Langacker (1987, 1991) for cognitive linguistics. Cognitive-functionalism (Tomasello 2003, among others) proposes that language is acquired through non-language specific mechanisms such as imitation and use of analogies, which help the child learn given expressions at first and afterwards allows him/her to structure regularities and rules in the language.

acquire the relevant properties of the target language – and hence (re)set new parameters or gain a new value for already set parameters – which are not present in their L1. It may also be the case that in the beginning of the SLA process, access to UG takes place through the L1, as suggested by the Full Access/Full Transfer Hypothesis (Schwartz and Sprouse 1994, 1996), see also Cook and Newson (1996) and White (2003). The role of UG is also apparent from the fact that it is possible to acquire properties of natural languages different from the L1 and from the target L2 but which are available options in some human grammars, so in this sense failure to acquire some properties of the L2 could still imply UG. Thus, UG is constant and distinct from any particular grammar, even from the L1 grammar, and it constrains the interlanguage grammars. For White, availability of UG can be tested in three areas: (i) poverty of the stimulus effects, (ii) constraints on the interlanguage grammar, and (iii) acquisition of linguistic properties in the target language which are not present in the L1. This assumption is taken further by Herschensohn (2000) in her minimalist approach to second language acquisition. In her view, access to UG can be postulated on the basis of: (i) the possibility of setting a new value for a parameter, (ii) the native-like ultimate attainment that can be reached by advanced L2 speakers, (iii) the fact that all levels of the interlanguage grammars are UG constrained, in the sense that they are possible grammars, and (iv) poverty of stimulus effects, as also originally proposed in White (2003).

Second language acquisition is often also related to bilingualism. Let us now observe the main differences among these two distinct language acquisition processes.

1.3 *Parallelisms and Differences between SLA and Bilingualism*

The term "bilingualism" is widely used in the literature to indicate various kinds of second language acquisition in different contexts. In the present work, "bilingualism" will indicate the simultaneous acquisition of two languages from birth, unless otherwise specified. In this sense, it is similar to first language acquisition with the only difference that the child is exposed to two languages from birth under the same conditions of quantity and type of linguistic input.

There is a lively debate on the cut-off age in child acquisition between what, given two input languages, can be considered to be "simultaneous language acquisition" (bilingualism) or "successive language acquisition" (child or early L2 acquisition). On the one hand, it has been proposed that the cut-off point between the two types of language acquisition is around 3 (McLaughlin 1978) or 4 years of age (Unsworth 2005), based on relevant observations on phonological and morphological principles (Guasti 2002; Unsworth 2005). Hence, according to these authors, the possibility of being bilingual (i.e. learning two languages simultaneously) exists until the age of

4. After that point in time, it is more appropriate to refer to the acquisition of one of the two languages as child or early second language acquisition. A classification of different types of bilinguals can be made depending on which factors are taken into consideration (i.e. context of acquisition, age of acquisition, relationship between the two languages, language dominance, and language status). For example, we can classify balanced bilinguals in contrast to unbalanced ones, and coordinate *vs* compound bilinguals (Cook 2001, among others). In short, balanced bilinguals show a similar knowledge and competence in both languages in contrast to unbalanced ones that have one language dominant over the other.[7] A coordinate bilingual usually refers to a speaker that has two different semantic systems and linguistic codes for the two languages and s/he has typically acquired the two languages in different linguistic environments, whereas a bilingual speaker with one semantic system but two linguistic codes often learned in one and the same context is defined as a compound bilingual. A detailed description and discussion of bilingualism and its advantages (cf. Costa, Hernández, Costa-Faidella 2009; Sorace 2011; Gold *et al*. 2013, among others) is beyond the purpose of this work and we will not pursue this issue any further; let us just remark that in the present work, we consider bilingual language acquisition as ultimately differentiating from second language acquisition in the following respects: (i) age onset and initial state: the acquisition of two languages that leads to bilingualism starts from birth and is as effortless as monolingual L1 acquisition, whereas SLA is by definition successive to first language acquisition; (ii) completeness: bilingual acquisition can be complete, differently from SLA, which is characterized by incompleteness, as it was discussed earlier. Under the approach followed in this work, we consider both bilingualism and SLA as involving access to UG.

Table 1.1 - Summary: Types of Language Acquisition

	Age of first exposure	Completeness	Type of learning and input
Child L1	0-4	complete	Implicit – input received from the environment
Child L2	4-8	incomplete	Can be implicit or explicit – input received from the environment/in classroom
Bilingual	from birth	complete	Implicit - in the environment
Adult L2	from 8 onward	incomplete	Explicit – input received in classroom as well as from the environment in some cases.

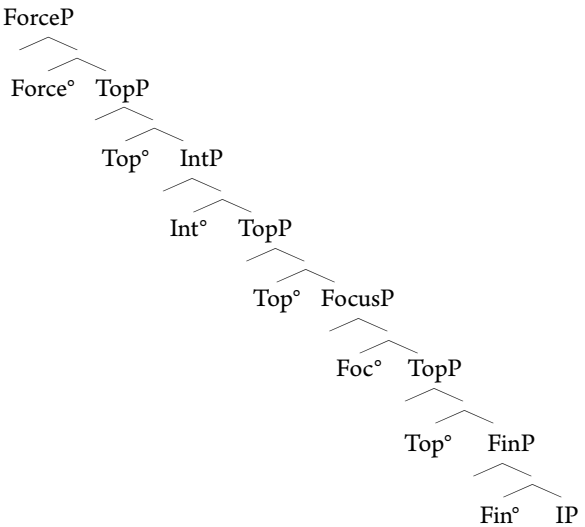
[7] For language dominance, refer for example to Cantone *et al.* 2008.

1.4 *The Theoretical Background*

As introduced above, the theoretical background of the present work regarding subject focalization in different L1/L2 populations is set within the cartographic approach. In particular, we will present two of the main cartographic contributions which are relevant for all the studies we carried out and which constitute the body of the present work.

The first major claim in the cartographic approach is that the left periphery of the clause is an articulated area made up of distinct functional heads and their corresponding projections. Rizzi (1997, 2001) has proposed the structure in (1) for the complementizer system (CP) based on the interaction of different elements in the left periphery of Italian:

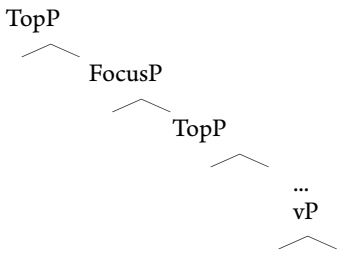
(1)



The CP system represented in (1) consists of two different components: a fixed and an accessory one. According to Rizzi (1997: 288), the accessory component is activated when necessary, whenever a constituent has a focus (or topic) feature to be satisfied by a Spec-head criterion.

The second relevant contribution we refer to is similar in spirit to Rizzi's "split" analysis discussed above. Belletti (2001, 2004 and subsequent works) proposes an articulated vP periphery with a FocusP preceded and followed by Topic projections as represented in (2):

(2)



Most importantly, the structure in (2) accounts for the phenomenon of "free inversion" observed in null subject languages such as Italian and illustrated in (3a-b):

(3) a. Ha parlato Gianni
has spoke Gianni
b. È partito Gianni
has left Gianni

The postverbal subject in (3) can be interpreted in different ways depending on the context: as new information focus, (4), as contrastive focus, (5), or as topic, (6). Moreover, a postverbal subject is pragmatically correct also in all-new contexts, (7).

(4) a. Chi è partito / ha parlato?
who has left / has spoken
b. È partito / ha parlato Gianni
has left / has spoken Gianni

(5) a. Chiara ha letto il libro.
Chiara has read the book
b. No, l'ha letto Lucia.
no CL has read Lucia

(6) a. Che cosa ha poi fatto Gianni?
what has then done Gianni
b. Ha (poi) parlato, Gianni
has (then) spoken Gianni

(7) a. Che cosa è successo?
what has happened
b. Ha telefonato Pietro
has telephoned Pietro

Belletti mainly investigates the syntax of new information subjects. Given the position of the postverbal subject in Italian, it is shown that a new information subject (SNI) is located very low in the clause, as it always follows adverbs such as *completamente* 'completely', *bene* 'well', which are low adverbs in the spirit of Cinque (1999), and floating quantifiers such as *tutto* 'all'.

(8) a. ?Capirà completamente Maria.
understand-FUT3sg completely Maria
b. ?Spiegherà completamente Maria al direttore.
explain-FUT3sg completely Maria to the director
c. ?Capirà/spiegherà bene Maria (al direttore).
understand/explain-FUT3sg well Maria (to the director)
d. Capirà/spiegherà tutto Maria (al direttore).
understand/explain-FUT3sg everything Maria (to the director)

(9) a. *Capirà/spiegherà Maria completamente (al direttore).
understand/explain-FUT3sg Maria completely (to the director)
b. *Capirà/spiegherà Maria bene (al direttore).
understand/explain-FUT3sg Maria well (to the director)
c. *Capirà/spiegherà Maria tutto (al direttore).
understand/explain-FUT3sg Maria everything (to the director)

One of the basic assumptions of the cartographic approach is that the interpretation of new information focus results from its being in the Spec position of a dedicated head, namely a Focus head. Hence, a postverbal subject occurring very low in the linear order of the clause should be located in a low phrase internal focus position.

Assuming the vP periphery introduced in (10), Belletti (2001, 2004, and 2005) proposes that in Italian a sentence with SNI, as in (4b), has the structure in (11). The subject is in Spec, FocP in the vP periphery, the verb moves to a head higher than FocP and the null subject *pro* satisfies the EPP requirement in the canonical preverbal subject position.

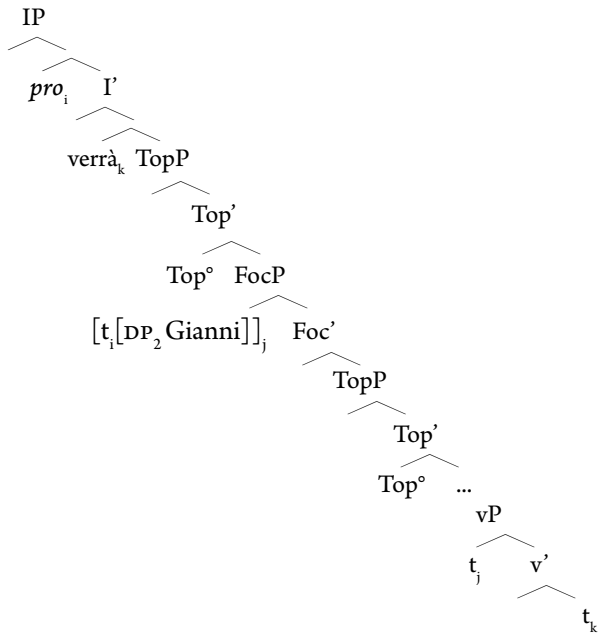
(10) $[_{CP} \ldots [_{TP} \ldots\ldots\ldots [_{TopP} \ldots [_{FocP}$ Foc $[_{TopP} \ldots \ldots$ vP]]]]]

(11) $[_{CP} \ldots [_{TP}$ *pro*... ha parlato ... $[_{Top} [_{FocP}$ Gianni $[_{TopP} [_{VP} \ldots]]]]]$

In order to account for nominative case assignment to the postverbal subject, Belletti (2005) postulates a Big DP, a doubling derivation inspired by the analysis in Sportiche (1988) for floating quantifiers (FQ). This analysis can account for various structures that have two nominals with the same case and thematic role (i.e. clitic doubling, clitic left dislocation, clitic right dislocation, and the so-called strong pronoun dou-

bling), in which a subject and a *pro* are base-generated.[8] Following this line of reasoning, *pro* moves to the position in which it is assigned nominative case and the rest of the Big DP containing the overt subject moves to Spec, FocP in the vP periphery, as shown in (12):

(12)



It is further assumed that the *pro* element involved in the inversion structures is referential and not expletive and that it shares the same features with the postverbal noun phrase. Thus, as *pro* shares the same features with the noun phrase in the vP-peripheral focus position, verbal agreement with the postverbal subject as well as nominative case assignment follow from the presence of the referential *pro* in the canonical preverbal subject position.

[8] For different accounts on FQ see Torrego (1995), Kayne (1994), Rouveret (1989). Doubling constructions with subject clitics are discussed along different lines among others in Poletto (1996), Manzini and Savoia (2002), Cardinaletti and Rapetti (2004).

Summarizing, there are two main assumptions of the cartographic approach that are relevant for the studies presented in this work. The first one postulates the movement of the postverbal subject to the Focus position of the vP periphery. The second one assumes the availability of a referential *pro*. A further assumption that consequently follows is that the focalization of the subject in a postverbal position should not take place in non-null subject languages (NNSL) such as English and French, as shown in Belletti (2009). NNSL typically focalize the subject in two different configurations: (i) SV structures with a particular intonation on the subject (signalled by italics here), as in English (13a-b), and (ii) (reduced) cleft sentences, as in French (14a-b).

(13) a. Who came?
b. *John* came.

(14) a. Qui a parlé?
who spoke
b. C'est Jean.
ce is Jean
'It's Jean (who spoke).'

As pointed out in Belletti (2009), the new information subject in (13) has a very different prosody from a contrastive subject, as in (15a), which suggests a different syntactic configuration for the two kinds of preverbal subject: *in situ* focalization and activation of a DP internal focus position for the new information subject, and left peripheral focalization in the CP domain (cf. Rizzi 1997) for the contrastive subject (as well as for other contrastively focalized constituents, (15b).

(15) a. JOHN came (not Mary).
b. AN APPLE I ate (not a cake).

1.5 *The Experimental Design: the Task and the Participants*

1.5.1 *The Task: a Video Test for Elicited Production and its Adaptation*

The experimental task that we used was first created by Belletti and Leonini (2004) and then also used by Belletti, Bennati and Sorace (2007).

The task consists of 22 short videos in indoor settings with female and male actors (see Appendix II for the complete list of items). It aims at creating the ideal discourse-pragmatic conditions for question-answer pairs in which the subject is new information focus. The task was presented individually through a PowerPoint presentation. The original language of

the video task is Italian. The videos were dubbed into Finnish[9] to collect the data that will be presented in Chapter 2 for Finnish L1 and in Chapter 4 for Finnish L2 and some (residual) L1 attrition effects from the L2 (Norwegian in the present study). Using the same experimental design cross-linguistically makes it such that the discourse-pragmatic contexts in which the subject of the clause is focalized as a new information subject can be compared for different groups of speakers.

Each video shows a situation in which something happens and one of the actors asks a question about what happened in the video. The participant has to answer the question orally in the most spontaneous way. Afterwards, one to three recorded questions are presented to the participant. The test also includes filler questions. Following common practice, the participants were not informed about the aim of the experiment. The participants were given two instructions: 1) answer in the most spontaneous way, and 2) use the verb when answering. Each participant was tested individually and recorded from the beginning to the end of the test. The time factor was an irrelevant factor for the present experiment and in general the test took about 15 minutes per participant. The answers were transcribed afterwards and only sentences containing a verb were considered. The verbs were classified in transitives (n=19), unergatives (n=9) and unaccusatives (n=4 for Italian, n=3 for Finnish). A relevant point for the present collection of data is that exactly the same methodology was employed across all groups.

In order to make the video task more accessible to young children, it needed modifications. A new experimental design was created in which the investigated topic remained unvaried, whereas the items and the methodological procedure were modified. I created 25 laminated flash cards with familiar characters such as Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck, which could be easily and comfortably handled by young children. The cartoons were shown to each child separately and the investigator asked a question about the subject in the scene (e.g. "Who opened the letter?"). First, a warm-up was done and a puppet was used to show how to answer with "many words", then the experiment itself was carried out. The test consisted of 20 items and 5 fillers and it included 8 transitive verbs, 6 unergative verbs, 6 unaccusative verbs (see Appendix 2 for details on the elicitation tasks).

[9] See Guesser (2007) for a similar adaptation in Brazilian Portuguese, Kras (2010) for Croatian, and Dal Pozzo and Guesser (2011) for a crosslinguistic discussion on Brazilian Portuguese and Finnish, two partial null subject languages in the sense of Holmberg *et al.* (2009).

1.5.2 *The Participants*

As said above, in studies concerning adult L2ers, it is important to take into account also individual and sociolinguistic factors such as motivation, language attitude (emotional factors) and language aptitude (ability in learning), personality, differences in cognitive processes. In this section, we will present the different participants that took part in the studies in L2 that will be discussed later on. The participants are divided into groups on the basis of their L2 competence (more detailed information is provided when each study is described later on; see also Appendix I). Notice that the distinction between L2 and Foreign Language (FL) is made here in order to keep the speakers of a FL who have learnt the language through "immersion" in the country where the L2 is spoken distinct from those speakers of a FL who have (mainly) learnt the L2 in a classroom environment in their home country, which is the country where they still live. The classification of the groups will become clearer through the definitions that follow, along the lines of the terminology used in Baker (2006).

L2 SUBJECTS: they are native speakers of Finnish who have acquired Italian in Italy and have been living in the target culture from a minimum of 1 year to a maximum of 40 years (mean: 20,49). They all have acquired the L2 in adulthood (after high school) and have reached a highly advanced L2 attainment, also in cases of a shorter period of time spent in the target country (Italy). All the speakers were recruited and tested in Italy through the Finnish-Italian cultural association of Florence. The *ability* that they have in the L2 can be defined by a very productive competence: they actively write and speak in the L2. The *domain* in which the L2 is used is very different from the Foreign Language (FL) group: differently from the FL speakers, the L2 speakers use the L2 at home, at work, with friends, on the street, on the phone, etc. They have a *bicultural or multicultural competence*, since we can observe a "knowledge of language cultures, feelings and attitudes towards those two cultures, behaving in culturally appropriate ways, awareness and empathy, and having the confidence to express biculturalism" (Baker 2006: 4). We can say that they live in an *endogenous context*, since the use of the L1 and of the L2 occurs on an everyday basis. The linguistic *context* can be said to be additive as the L2 is acquired at no cost to the first language. Furthermore, the L2 speakers can also be described as *élite* or *prestigious bilinguals* (different for example from other linguistic communities perceived as "disadvantaged" in the L2 socio-cultural environment and/or there are language policies that favour the replacement of the L1 by the L2, which is the majority language). They also are *circumstantial bilinguals* because they learn the L2 in order to live in the majority language (L2) society, the Italian one in this case, which surrounds them.

Foreign Language learners: this group of speakers was recruited and tested in Finland, at the Turun Työväenopisto (the Educational Centre for Workers of Turku). They have an intermediate L2 competence. They are all adults and have learnt the target language, Italian, in a classroom environment through explicit instruction. All of them have studied Italian for a minimum of 1 year to a maximum of 10 years (only one participant), mean 4,35. First of all, we can say that they have a receptive ability in understanding and reading rather than a productive competence. The *domain* in which the L2 is used and heard is limited to the classroom environment, with some possible – even if not common – exceptions. They live an *exogenous context*, which means that the L2 language community is absent. Finally, they can be described as *elective bilinguals* because they have chosen to learn the L2. The group of Finnish L2 speakers recruited at the University of Florence (L1 Italian) can also be considered as FL learners and show the same characteristics presented above for the Italian FL (L1 Finnish) group. The Finnish L2 speakers have been studying Finnish for 1-2 academic years at the time of data collection.

Norwegian L2: the L1 of this group of speakers is Finnish and the L2 is Norwegian. They have been living in Norway for a mean of 22,1 years and have learnt the L2 as adults (Age of Acquisition mean 26 years). The participants were all recruited and tested in Norway (more specifically, in Tromsø, where the majority of them have learnt the L2). The language of testing was Finnish and the main goal was to investigate the (possible) attrition effects from the L2 on the L1. These speakers can probably be described as *recessive bilinguals*, because one language is decreasing, resulting in temporary or permanent attrition (in contrast with ascendant bilingualism, that is the situation in which a learner's L2 is developing; this could have well been a stage in the acquisition process of these speakers, too, even though fossilization was not tested). This group of speakers also lives in an *endogenous context* (cf. FL learners). Furthermore, they are *circumstantial bilinguals* because they learn the L2 to live in the L2 linguistic community that surrounds them and their L1 is potentially in danger of being replaced by the L2. This can be described as a *subtractive context*.

Bilingual Italian-Finnish children: three bilingual children, aged 5 to 8, participated in the test. On the basis of the amount and the quality of language input and use and family/school contexts, these children seem to (still) be balanced bilinguals. The sociolinguistic context in which they live is similar for all of them: the mother is a native speaker of Finnish and the father is a native speaker of Italian. The parents followed the "one person-one language" rule and the mother, besides spending a lot of time with the children and speaking only Finnish to them, takes care of the family contacts with Finnish relatives, who come to visit and whom

they visit on a regular basis. In this context, the dominant language at school is Italian. It is therefore possible that in the future one of the two languages will become clearly dominant and most likely it will be Italian language (notice however that language dominance was not separately tested). The children were tested in Italian and the video test was specifically modified into a Mickey Mouse picture description task eliciting new information subjects. A peer group of three monolingual Italian children also participated to the test. See § 3.4 for further details.

Note that all the participants, except the bilingual children, had approximately the same Age of Onset (AO). The variability that can be observed among L2 learners (who have the same starting age, in our case, in their twenties) may be the result of a combination of non-maturational factors, such as the amount and type of instruction, metalinguistic awareness, language attitude (i.e. affective variables), language aptitude (the ability to learn, cf. e.g. Carroll 1973), analytical and problem-solving abilities, and willingness to integrate in the target culture and society.

1.6 *Previous Studies and Results on Subject Focalization in Italian L2*

1.6.1 *Belletti and Leonini 2004*

The pilot study conducted by Belletti and Leonini (2004) investigated the use of null subjects and of postverbal subjects in contexts in which the subject is new information ("free inversion" structures, Belletti 2001 and subsequent works) in the L2 Italian of 26 speakers with different L1s (mainly NNSL, in particular German) and at an intermediate L2 level of attainment. The results showed that null subjects were correctly used to a wider extent than postverbal new information subjects, which means that a referential *pro* was licensed in the interlanguage grammar of the L2 learners, but the vP peripheral focus position (cf. 10-12 above), which is assumed to host the new information subject in null subject languages, was not (extensively) activated. Thus, the authors suggest that the two investigated phenomena are not correlated in the interlanguage grammar of the participants and that the interlanguage grammar at the interface between the computational system and discourse reflects some difficulties in the L2 learners.

1.6.2 *Belletti, Bennati and Sorace 2007*

A subsequent study by Belletti, Bennati and Sorace (2007) further refines the previous research and investigates the production and interpretation of null/overt pronominal and postverbal subjects in the interlanguage grammar of native speakers of English with a near-native level of attainment in L2 Italian (cf. White and Genesee 1996). Four different tasks, among

which the video task used in this work, were administered to L2 near-natives and monolingual controls. The results discussed in the study strenghten the previous conclusions and show that the distribution (and interpretation) of null and overt pronominal subjects is also influenced by discourse factors in null subject languages. It is thus assumed that the unbalanced correlation between the use of postverbal new information subjects and the use of null subjects cannot be considered to be a developmental effect since even at a near-native L2 level null subjects are correctly used at a significantly higher rate with respect to postverbal subjects.

2

FINNISH AND ITALIAN: SOME RELEVANT SYNTACTIC PROPERTIES*

Italian is a Romance language with no case morphology (only in the pronominal system, some forms are reminiscent of case). It has a basic SVO order, it marks definite and indefinite noun phrases through its article system, it has clitic pronouns and it is a null subject language, as shown in (1):

(1) __parto /__ parti /__ parte / __ partiamo /__ partite / __ partono domani.
leave-PRES1sg / 2sg / 3sg / 1pl / 2pl / 3pl tomorrow

The rich verbal morphology, which specifies person and number features, has been assumed to be crucial for the identification of null subjects.

In contrast to Italian, Finnish has a rich nominal morphology, it has no article system marking the [± definiteness] feature, no clitic pronouns, and is a partial null subject language, as will be discussed in § 2.2. Finnish is often defined as a "free word order language" (Vilkuna 1989, 1995 among others), mainly because the order of arguments can be inverted. This fact is usually reduced to the crucial role played by case marking in Finnish. However, SVO is the preferred unmarked word order and derived word orders are driven by discourse-pragmatic factors, as shown in (2), adapted from Boef and Dal Pozzo (2012) and based on Vilkuna (1989, 1995); see also Vallduvi and Vilkuna (1998); Holmberg (2002); Holmberg and Nikanne (2002); Kaiser (2006).

(2)

	Word order	**Context**			
a.	**SVO**	What happened?/ Who bought a book?/ What did Jussi buy?	Jussi Jussi	osti bought	kirjan book
b.	**SOV**	Did Maija (not Jussi) buy a book?/ Who bought the book? With special stress also: Did Jussi buy a newspaper?/ What did Jussi buy?	Jussi Jussi	kirjan book	osti bought

* Parts of the results discussed in this Chapter have been previously published in «FULL Finno-Ugric Languages and Linguistics» 1 (1-2), 2012a: 67-81; online: <http://full.btk.ppke.hu/index.php/FULL/index> (07/2015).

Lena Dal Pozzo, *New Information Subjects in L2 Acquisition: Evidence from Italian and Finnish*, ISBN (online) 978-88-6655-870-5 , CC 2015 Firenze University Press

c.	**OSV**	Did Jussi buy a newspaper?/ What did Jussi buy?/ With special stress also: Who bought a book? Did Maija (not Jussi) buy a book?	Kirjan book	Jussi Jussi	osti bought
d.	**OVS**	Who bought a book?	Kirjan book	osti bought	Jussi Jussi
e.	**VSO**	Did Jussi buy a book?/*What did Jussi buy? *Who bought the book?	Osti bought	Jussi Jussi	kirjan book
f.	**VOS**	Did Jussi buy a book?/*What did Jussi buy?*Who bought the book?	Osti bought	kirjan book	Jussi Jussi

2.1 *Subjects in Italian*

Italian is a null subject language, therefore it allows for both preverbal and postverbal subjects. The corresponding dedicated fields in the clause will be separately discussed below.

2.1.1 *Preverbal Subjects*

In her important work on subjects, Cardinaletti (2004) identifies a cartography for preverbal subject positions which is proposed to be quite uniform across languages and in particular there seem not to be any relevant differences between null and non-null subject languages.[1] In particular, the author assumes that there are two distinct projections, AgrSP and SubjP, in which the checking of phi-features on nominative DPs (grammatical features) and the "subject of predication" feature (a semantic feature), are respectively realized, as represented in (3):

(3) $[_{SubjP}\ [_{AgrSP}\ \ \ [\ldots\ [_{VP}\ ]]]]$

A thoroughly discussed topic in the literature on Italian syntax concerns the so-called "little" *pro*, the empty category which has all the properties of a pronoun, and that in Italian only appears in subject position. According to Cardinaletti (1997), *pro* is strictly preverbal in NSLs such as Italian. As evidence for the preverbal position of *pro*, the author compares *pro* to the French weak pronoun *il* and observes that the two have a similar distribution: both are strictly preverbal.

[1] The contrast between NSL and NNSL regarding the possibility of licensing NS is attributed in this approach to differences in the nature of the Agree head, responsible in the licensing of null/overt subjects.

This fact is also supported by evidence previously provided by Rizzi (1987) and Burzio (1986) on the behaviour of null subjects in existential structures and in clauses with floating quantifiers. Another class of pronouns having a similar distribution to *pro* is the *egli/esso*-class ('he'), which are weak pronouns in the sense of Cardinaletti and Starke's (1999); (cf. also § 2.1.3). Similarly to *pro*, they cannot appear in postverbal position, cannot be left-dislocated, cannot undergo long-distance movement and cannot appear in isolation. Ultimately, this kind of weak pronoun is shown to appear only in preverbal position. From this it follows that also *pro* should be located in preverbal position since it is a weak element, *contra* some of the previous studies (Bonet 1990; Contreras 1991; Roberts 1993, and others), as noted by Cardinaletti (1997).

As for overt subjects, it has been traditionally assumed that preverbal overt subjects in NSL are located in a different position with respect to preverbal overt subjects in NNSL, namely that they surface in a left-dislocated A-position (as an adjunct or a topic) in NSL and in an A-position in NNSL. Cardinaletti (1997) discusses a counterproposal according to which subjects in both NSL and NNSL are located in the same projection, namely in AgrSP and in particular, overt subjects in NSL need not be left-dislocated and hence do not co-occur with a null subject. Cardinaletti (2004) further refines the analysis suggesting the "specialization hypothesis": weak and full subjects occupy distinct specifier positions: strong subjects are located in Spec,SubjP, whilst weak subjects appear in Spec,AgrSP. *Pro* is weak and consequently it is assumed to be located in the specifier position of the Agr head, which is a lower position with respect to the SubjP head. This is represented in (4), adapted from Cardinaletti (2004).

(4) $[_{\text{Agr1P}}$ Gianni/lui/egli (strong/overt) Agr1° $[_{\text{XP}}$ ... $[_{\text{Agr2P}}$ *pro* /tu/il (French) (weak) V fin [ ]]]]

Hence, the cartography of subject positions is the one presented in (5), as proposed in Cardinaletti (2004: 136):

(5)	**Spec,SubjP**	**Spec,AgrSP**	**Spec,XP**	**Spec,XP**	**Spec,VP**
	DP	weak pronoun	weak pronoun	DP	DP
	strong pronoun	*pro*		strong pronoun	strong pronoun
		weak pronoun ('egli/esso')			predicate DP

Italian preverbal subject positions are the Spec,SubjP and the Spec,AgrSP for strong and weak subjects, respectively.[2] The filling of

[2] See Cardinaletti (1997, 2004) for a discussion on the evidence that support the specialization hypothesis; we refer in particular to floating quantifiers and non-*pro*-drop phenomena in subjunctive clauses in Italian.

one of the two specialized subject positions prevents the other one from being filled (namely, a subject DP in Spec,SubjP never co-occurs with a pro in Spec,AgrSP).[3]

In conclusion, according to Cardinaletti, NSL and NNSL share many properties: the distribution of weak subject pronouns (including *pro*), the position of preverbal DP subjects, and the assignment of nominative case involved in the preverbal position. Most importantly, the Italian preverbal subject is not a left-dislocated topic as sometimes proposed in literature.

2.1.2 *Postverbal Subjects*

As for postverbal subjects, Moro's contribution (1997) is worth mentioning here. Moro's work focuses on predicative copular structures and he assumes an analysis for sentences with postverbal subjects in which *pro* is the subject of the small clause selected by the copula, as shown in (6). The proposal differs from the literature that considers *pro* either as an argument (as in [*pro* telefona] 's/he calls') or as an expletive binding an argument (as in [*pro* telefona Gianni] 'Gianni calls').

(6) $[_{IP}\ [_{DP}\ pro_i\ [_{I}\ \underset{V}{sono_j}\ [_{VP}\ t_j\ [_{SC}\ \underset{Subject}{t_i\ DP}\ ]]]]]$

This kind of structure is presented as an instance of the inverse copular sentence, thoroughly discussed in Moro (1997), in which the subject is *in situ* and the predicative DP is raised to Spec,IP. In Moro's terms, *pro* can not only be a null subject, but also a null predicate, a "*pro*-predicate" (Moro 1997: 65). The claim made in Moro (1997) is that if *pro* can be licensed, then it must be licensed. It is assumed that *pro* is present in Spec,IP in all kinds of sentences, hence when occurring, the overt preverbal subject should necessarily be located in a position higher than Spec,IP.

A different analysis is proposed by Cardinaletti (2004) who assumes that in null subject languages postverbal subjects stay in their thematic position, namely Spec,VP. Some languages, such as Spanish, allow for what is called a "middlefield" subject position: the subject is postverbal,

[3] The literature on *pro* and the Null Subject Parameter is very rich and only few approaches are presented here. For some different positions on the realization of *pro* refer to Platzack (1995), Alexiadou and Anagnostopolou (1997), Manzini and Savoia (1997, 2002). More recently, Biberauer (2010) extensively investigates, within the Minimalist Program, expletives in NSL and a subset of PNSLs is discussed with regard to the nature of Spec,T. A categorial difference between expletives in NSLs and NNSLs is proposed as well. In the same spirit, Roberts (2010) suggests an alternative analysis to the Rizzian one for null subjects in consistent NSLs based on Holmberg (2005); cf. also Holmberg (2010) who proposes a refinement of the traditional analysis on NS couched within the Minimalist Program in terms of definiteness.

but it appears linearly before other arguments of the verb. To account for crosslinguistic differences, Cardinaletti suggests the existence of more than one "middlefield" subject position, based on a possible parallelism with the Germanic Transitive Expletive Construction, and on the possible occurrence of "middlefield" pronominal subjects in Italian infinitival clauses and in negative equative sentences in Hebrew (Shlonsky 2000). Finally, the "middlefield" subject positions are shown to follow a hierarchical order, as schematized in (7) (Cardinaletti 2004: 120), in which the elements that are linearly rightmost appear in Spec,VP, the preceding ones in the specifier position of yet unspecified projections.

(7) Weak pronouns/pro > DPs/strong pronouns/Predicative DPs > DPs/strong pronouns

Belletti (2001, 2004 and related works) further refines the analysis for postverbal subjects observing their distribution in NSLs such as Italian, based on the cartographic assumptions presented in Chapter 1, § 1.4. Particular attention is paid to the informational value of the Free Inversion structures repeated in (8):

(8) Ha parlato Mario/il ragazzo.
has spoken Mario/the boy

The postverbal subject is associated to the new information focus, in contrast with preverbal subjects which are indeed pragmatically inappropriate in new information contexts, as exemplified in (9):

(9) a. Chi ha parlato?
who has spoken
b. #Mario/il ragazzo ha parlato.
Mario/the boy has spoken

Hence, the peculiar status of postverbal subjects in a NSL such as Italian is accounted for by projecting a focus position lower in the clause- in the vP periphery,[4] which is assumed to be parallel to the rich CP periphery discussed in Rizzi (1997), as shown in (10). The Free Inversion structure thus involves the activation of a vP peripheral focus position and the presence of a null expletive pronoun in the canonical subject position, Spec,TP. Updating the terminology of the traditional account (e.g. Rizzi

[4] See also Jayaseelan (2008) for evidence on a low VP-peripheral Focus position. However, in Jayaseelan's work, this Focus position is assumed to be dedicated to contrastive and wh-elements, based on Malayalam data.

1982), we can say that a "little" *pro* satisfies the relevant EPP property of the relevant high subject position of the clause.

(10) $_{CP}$... [$_{TP}$ *pro*... ha parlato ... [$_{Top}$ [$_{FocP}$ Mario [$_{TopP}$ [$_{VP}$...]]]]]

Finally, the presence in Italian of pronominal forms such as object clitics may further make the production of postverbal subjects with transitive verbs by L2 speakers of Italian more complex.

2.1.3 *(Pronouns and) Clitic pronouns*

The Italian pronominal system consists of three classes of pronouns, as extensively discussed in Cardinaletti and Starke (1999): strong (of the *lui/lei/loro* series), weak (as *egli/esso*) and clitic pronouns (such as *lo/la/ne*). This classification results in the hierarchy represented in (11), in which each class of pronouns is syntactically, morphologically and phonologically reduced with respect to the preceding one, in other words clitics are deficient with respect to weak pronouns (both marked with $_{D}$) which in turn are deficient with respect to strong pronouns.

(11) $Z_S > Y_D > {}_XD$
strong weak clitic

This section will briefly introduce clitic pronouns and more specifically object clitics, which are the ones that are used, and expected to be used, in the elicitation task administered to all Italian L1/L2 groups in the experimental studies discussed in this book. In particular, we are dealing with object clitics in proclisis structures, of the type exemplified in (12):

(12) L'ha mangiata la signora.
CL aux3sg eat-PAST.PRT the woman
'The woman ate it.'

Clitic pronouns differ in their syntactic, morphological, phonological and semantic properties from both weak and strong pronouns. The main characteristics of clitic pronouns are listed below (cf. Cardinaletti and Starke 1999, 2000):[5]

[5] As evidence for this, the authors bring forward the contrast between (i) and (ii) where a clitic pronoun but not a weak pronoun is possible.
(i) Nous te foutons une claque à ce mec.
(ii) *Foutons-toi une claque à ce mec.

- just like weak pronouns, clitics cannot introduce new referents in the clause
- they occur as "benefactive" datives
- they are heads
- they are arguments but they cannot surface in the canonical VP-internal object position (nor in other argument positions, cf. Kayne 1975), more specifically they appear at the left of the highest inflected verb of the clause
- they are "reduced" forms and cannot bear stress.

For the sake of completeness, Tables 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3 below show the forms of clitic pronouns in Italian. Notice that only the forms in Table 2.1 will be relevant in the current study.[6]

Table 2.1 - Italian Accusative Clitic Pronouns

	Accusative
Masculine sg	lo
Masculine pl	li
Feminine sg	la
Feminine pl	le

Table 2.2 - Italian Dative Clitic Pronouns

	Dative[7]
1st person sg	mi
2nd person sg	ti
3rd person sg	gli
1st person pl/locative	ci
2nd person pl/ locative	vi

Table 2.3 -Italian Genitive/Partitive Clitic Pronoun

	Genitive/Partitive
	ne

Along the lines of much literature starting with Kayne (1975), we assume that the surface position of clitics is derived via A-movement,[8] as

[6] For discussion on the other forms of clitic pronouns, in particular *ne*, see Cardinaletti and Giusti (1992), Belletti (1993), Cardinaletti and Giusti (2006).

[7] For 3rd person plural there is not a proper dative pronoun: the 3rd person singular form *gli* can be used before the verb and the pronoun *loro* can be used after the verb.

[8] See Sportiche (1992) and Manzini and Savoia (1998, 2002, and 2004) for example on different non-movement proposals, where the clitic is assumed to be directly inserted in specialized functional categories or in the surface position, respectively.

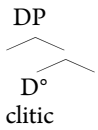
proposed on the basis of effects typical for structures involving movement, such as the impossibility of extracting clitics from a PP or from a DP with a demonstrative.

(13) a. *L'ho parlato dopo ___
CL have1sg spoken after

b. *Ne ho visto questa foto
CL have1sg seen this picture
(Cardinaletti 1999: 42)

In Cardinaletti and Starke (1999), deficient pronouns do not contain functional case-features and must therefore be displaced in order to be associated with them. The surface position of clitics can be derived through XP-movement as required for case-feature assignment, followed by X° movement, a necessary step for the clitic to enter in the prosodic domain at the syntax-phonology interface. Furthermore, the *ranking of deficiency* (Cardinaletti and Starke 1999) represented in (11) above, and ultimately the morphological reduction, are strictly related to syntactic structure: the more deficient form has less structure than the less deficient form. In this spirit, clitics can be assumed to be D°s of impoverished DPs, as represented in (14) (see also Belletti 1999; Hamann 2002).

(14)



Displacement of clitic pronouns can be accounted for in different ways. Another relevant contribution on the analysis of clitics is presented in Belletti (1999). Along the lines of Belletti (1999), it is assumed that clitics do have strong case features that need to be checked before Spell-Out – through movement – in order to be interpreted. She proposes that the accusative object clitic first moves to a V-related functional head, namely AgrO,[9] through head-movement, then a further step is taken together with the verb to AgrSP, where the latter checks its phi-features. Thus, the clitic correctly surfaces to the left of the inflected verb, as schematized in (15):

[9] This approach differs from the traditional assumption which goes back to Kayne (1975) that considers clitics as adjoined to the verb.

(15)
[AgrSP Lisa$_i$ [Agr' lo$_j$ pensa$_k$ [TP [AgrOP t$_j$[DP[t$_j$]] [AuxP [AgrPstPrtP [VP t$_i$ [V' t$_k$ [DP t$_j$]]]]]]]]]
Lisa it-CL think-PRES3sg

In the approaches briefly introduced above, movement is involved to obtain the surface position of the clitic pronoun, which is in proclisis with an inflected verb. Despite the differences of the approaches as regards the landing site of the clitic and the exact reason for movement, what is ultimately relevant is that the clitic undergoes movement in order to check some case features (in Cardinaletti and Starke 1999 in order to be associated with a case feature and in Belletti 1999 in order to check accusative in AgrOP) and hence it is not base-generated in its surface position.

2.2 *Null/Overt Subjects in Finnish*

Finnish is a partial null subject language (cf. Holmberg *et al*. 2009) and it therefore differs from Italian in this respect. Regarding the licensing of postverbal subjects, Italian has a null referential *pro* which allows for postverbal subjects; in Finnish, however, postverbal subjects are licensed only if there is an overt preverbal element. Thus, in the experimental contexts discussed in the present work postverbal subjects are limited to (XP)VS and cleft structures, as will become clear later in the chapter. The most evident fact regarding the partial null subject nature of Finnish is that it allows a null referential subject for first and second person singular and plural, but not for third person. Observe the paradigm in (16):

(16) a. (minä) tule-n
(I) come-PRES1sg
b. (sinä) tule-t
(you) come-PRES2sg
c. hän tule-e
(s)he come-PRES3sg
d. (me) tule-mme
(we) come-PRES1pl
e. (te) tule-tte
(you) come-PRES2pl
f. he tule-vat
they come-PRES3pl

Note that the optionality of an overt 1st or 2nd person pronominal subject might only be apparent: the use of an overt pronoun is often interpreted as stressed, as far as our informants reported. There exists however a difference between standard and colloquial Finnish: in colloquial Finnish a shortened pronominal form is commonly used and stress does

not seem to be involved.[10] Standard Finnish thus results to be similar to NSLs for 1st and 2nd persons and to NNSLs for 3rd person. However, the pattern for 3rd person pronominal subjects is not univocal. In fact, null subjects are allowed under special circumstances:

(i) in subordinate clauses when the subject is co-referential with the subject of the main clause. Notice the different interpretation between the null subject in (17a) and the overt one in (17b). In sentences such as (18) the subject of the subordinate clause can refer to the first noun (*Jussi*) or to the second one (*vaimosta* 'wife') when overt but it can only refer to the closest noun when null.

(17) a. Jussi$_i$ sanoi, että ___$_{i/*k}$ soittaa myöhemmin.
Jussi-NOMsg say-PAST3sg that ___ call-PRES3sg later
'Jussi said that he will call later.'

b. Jussi$_i$ sanoi, että hän$_{i/k}$ soittaa myöhemmin.
Jussi-NOMsg say-PAST3sg that (s)he-NOMsg call-PRES3sg later
'Jussi said that s/he will call later.'

(18) Jussin$_i$ vaimosta$_k$ oli mukavaa, että hän$_{i/k}$/___$_{*i/k}$ pääsi aikaisin töistä.
Jussi-GEN wife-ELA was nice-PART that (s)he-NOM came early job-ELA
'For Jussi's wife it was nice that s/he came early from work.'
adapted from Holmberg (2005: 539)

(ii) in generic sentences when the 3rd person null subject is referring to a generic "one":

(19) Jos ___ syö terveellisesti ___ voi paremmin.
If ___ eat-PRES3sg healthy ___ feel-PRES3sg better-NOM
'If one eats healthy one feels better.'

Finally, a null expletive pronoun is found in extraposed clauses, (20a) and with weather verbs, (20b). Notice that in colloquial Finnish the expletive pronoun can optionally be overt in both cases (21a-b).

[10] We are referring to the colloquial variety spoken in the Southern part of Finland around Helsinki. Here, a non-overt pronoun would not be the preferred choice according to native speakers' judgements. Further research on the topic is needed in order to define the status of colloquial Finnish regarding the *pro*-drop parameter. At first sight, colloquial Finnish appears to be (or to be developing into) a NNSL.

(i) mä tuun huomenna *colloquial*
(ii) (minä) tulen huomenna *standard*
'I come tomorrow.'

(20) a. ___ oli kiva, että soitit.
be-PAST3sg nice that call-PAST2sg
'It was nice that you called.'
b. ___ sataa.
rain-PRES3sg
'It rains.'

(21) a. Se oli kiva, että soitit.
EXPL be-PAST3sg nice that call-PAST2sg
'It was nice that you called.'
b. Se taas sataa.
EXPL rain-PRES3sg again
'It rains again.'
adapted from (Holmberg 2005: 540)

The examples above bring us to observe, along the lines of Holmberg (2005), that Finnish displays an embedded null subject (17), a generic null subject (19), and an expletive null subject at least in its standard variety (20). Interestingly, besides having null subjects Finnish also has an overt expletive pronoun, *sitä*[11] (Holmberg and Nikanne 2002; Holmberg 2005) which is typical of the colloquial register:

(22) Sitä viihtyy saunassa.
EXPL feel-good sauna-INEsg
'It feels good in the sauna.'

The use of the expletive pronoun *sitä* in (22) is related to the well-known fact that Finnish does not allow verb initial sentences when the sentence is impersonal or when there is a potential topic that can appear sentence-initially.[12] Hence, the possible ways to recover (23a) are shown in (23b-e); (23e is limited to the colloquial variety). At a first sight, this seems similar to what is well known as the V2 phenomenon, as will be briefly discussed in § 2.4.1.

(23) a. *puhui Jussi eilen kokouksessa
speak-PAST3sg Jussi-NOMyesterday meeting-INE
b. kokouksessa puhui Jussi
meeting-INE speak-PAST3sg Jussi-NOM
c. eilen puhui Jussi
yesterday speak-PAST3sg Jussi-NOM

[11] *Sitä* is the partitive case of the demonstrative pronoun *se* ('this/it').

[12] This characteristi has been interpreted as a consequence of the assumption that Finnish is a topic-prominent language: the external argument can be any category that can be the topic of the sentence. Consequently, the EPP can be satisfied by any such category (Holmberg and Nikanne 2002). Holmberg and Nikanne (2002) also discuss the grammaticality of some verb initial sentences.

d. Jussi puhui kokouksessa
Jussi-NOM speak-PAST3sg meeting-INE
e. sitä puhui Jussi kokouksessa
EXPL speak-PAST3sg Jussi-CASE?? meeting-INE
'Jussi spoke at the meeting yesterday.'

Impersonal verb initial sentences can also be recovered through an expletive (see also 22):

(24) a. *leikkii lapsia
kadulla
play-PRES3sg children-PARTpl street-ADE
b. sitä leikkii lapsia pihalla
sitä-EXPL play-PRES3sg children street-ADE
'There are children playing in the street.'
(Holmberg and Nikanne 2002: 6)

Summing up, we have observed that Finnish is a partial null subject language in the sense that it allows 1st and 2nd person null subjects but it does not allow 3rd person null subjects nor verb initial sentences, when in 3rd person. Moreover, it has an expletive pronoun which can be used in subjectless constructions, such as expressions with non-referential subjects (extraposed clauses, weather verbs, impersonal sentences) in the colloquial register. We will not deal with the nature of this expletive pronoun any longer[13]; the interested reader is referred to Holmberg and Nikanne (2002, 2008), Holmberg (2005), for extensive discussion.

The ultimate classification of Finnish as a partial null subject language comes from Holmberg *et al.* (2009). The scholars investigate the properties of (null) subjects in Finnish, Brazilian Portuguese and Marathi and they identify three properties that seem to characterize a language as a Partial Null Subject Language (PNSL) across linguistic families and typological differences:

- when the subject is non-thematic
- when the subject is a generic pronoun corresponding to English "one'
- when the subject is controlled by an argument in a higher clause

Hence, Finnish is representative of a PNLS as, among other characteristics, subject omissions are allowed under the three aforementioned conditions.

[13] If standard and colloquial Finnish were to be considered as having distinct grammars, it would not be surprising, under the theoretical framework assumed here, that colloquial Finnish (at least in the Southern variety around Helsinki) is non *pro*-drop and does have an expletive pronoun.

2.3 *A Note on Transitivity, Intransitivity and Unaccusativity in Finnish*

Another issue which is worth clarifying for the following discussion on the data from Finnish concerns the criteria used to classify the Finnish verbs that are present in the video task. For a complete list of these verbs see Appendix II.

Finnish has only one auxiliary verb, hence the common criterion used for example in Romance languages to classify verbs does not apply. Apparently, Finnish transitive verbs do not pose any problems: transitive verbs are all those verbs that have an external argument (the subject) and an internal argument (the object) in accusative or partitive case. Moreover, a transitive verb can be transformed in an agentive participial, as exemplified by the alternation in (25a-b).[14]

(25) a. Mummo leipoo kakkua.
grandma-NOMsg bake-PRES3sg cake-PARTsg
'Grandma bakes the cake.'

b. Mummon leipoma kakku on hyvä
grandma-GENsg bake-AG.PRT cake-NOMsg be-PRES3sg good
'The cake baked by grandma is good.'

Intransitive verbs do not select an internal argument in accusative/partitive case. However, we soon encounter some problems with this broad classification: first, how can we classify transitive verbs that appear without an internal argument (is it a "silent" argument? Do they represent a different verbal class?). The second point concerns the fact that intransitive verbs can occasionally take an internal argument. These cases however seem to be almost all idiomatic expressions. Hence, the possible analyses for verbs such as *polttaa* 'to smoke', *lakaista* 'to sweep', *siivota* 'to clean/tidy', which allow an agentive participial construction, are: a) these verbs are either transitive or intransitive on the basis of the context; in other words they are classified as transitive if they have an internal argument and as intransitive if no internal argument is present; b) all verbs that can potentially take an internal argument are transitive. In the present work the analysis in a) is assumed.

As for unaccusative verbs, all verbs that allow an existential construction (with a partitive plural postverbal subject), that have a Patient subject and can never take an accusative/partitive object belong to the unaccusative class in the view adopted here. Following these criteria, we have 3 unaccusative verbs in the Finnish version of the video task, namely *puhua* 'to speak', *yskiä* 'to cough' and *nousta* 'stand up'. The former two verbs allow more easily an existential construction but do not have a Patient subject.

[14] Note that the agentive participial in (25b) can only be translated as a past participle in a passive construction in English.

However, it is hardly possible to have an existential sentence with the verb *nousta* 'stand up', whose Italian counterpart *alzarsi* 'stand up' is unaccusative. The issue will not be pursued any further, even though the discussion about intransitivity and unaccusativity in Finnish is certainly worth of more attention.

2.3.1 *Is there (residual) V2 in Finnish?*

As it is common to V2 languages, such as Breton and Celtic languages (cf. Schafer 1994), and Scandinavian languages (cf. Holmberg and Platzack 1995), Finnish generally requires some constituent to front in root clauses. There is no strict word order requirement, and any constituent, except for the third person verb, can appear in sentence-initial position, as shown in (26):

(26) a. *tuli opettaja kokoukseen
come-PAST3sg teacher-NOM meeting-ILLsg
'The teacher came to the meeting.'

b. Kokoukseen tuli opettaja.
meeting-ILLsg come-PAST3sg teacher-NOMsg
'The teacher came to the meeting.'

c. Jos/Kun tulee opettaja, tunti alkaa.
if/when arrive-PRES3sg teacher-NOMsg lesson-NOMsg start-PRES3sg
'If/when the teacher arrives, the class will start.'

However, in contrast with rigid V2 languages, the "no initial V" - requirement is limited to third person with the exceptions discussed in § 2.2. As a matter of fact, it is generally assumed that Finnish is not a V2 language. Nevertheless, it seems to have a non-rigid residual V2, reflected by the fact that the third person verb cannot surface in first position but it is not necessarily in second position:

(27) a. Luultavasti Jussi luki kirjan.
probably Jussi read a book

b. Kirjan Jussi luultavasti luki.
a book Jussi probably read

Note that a subject in sentence-initial position is unmarked (unless a special stressed intonation is associated with it), differently from a fronted object which acquires a marked interpretation (which can be topic or contrastive focus). The Finnish "no initial V requirement" is explained by Holmberg and Nikanne (2002) in terms of topic prominence (along the lines of Kiss 1995, 1997) rather than as a residual V2 phenomenon, which they exclude, by looking at the nature of Wh-movement which does not require V-to-C movement. More specifically, it is assumed that an argument is externalized, whenever it can be a topic, and that movement is semantically triggered.

2.4 *Data from Finnish L1: NSL or NNSL Pattern?*

The Finnish adaptation of the elicitation task was administered to 15 adult native speakers of Finnish.[15] The relevance of data collection is twofold: on the one hand, this group works as the control group for Finnish L2 data. On the other hand, to my knowledge, this is the first effort to collect elicited speech data in Finnish on answering strategies and the syntactic-pragmatic occurrence of new information subjects.

The preferred answering strategy in the present corpus is overwhelmingly SV(O), as evident from Figure 2.1. Nonetheless, other answers are not excluded. In particular an O/Adv VS order is available, where O/Adv is the topic/known information and S is new information focus. The clause-initial direct object is generally a pronoun which is co-referent with the DP in the question. Other strategies include clefts, reduced clefts and existential clefts.[16] Examples (28)-(33) are directly drawn from the collected data and show the possible answers.

(28) a. Kuka tuli? SV(O)
'Who came?'
b. Poika tuli.
boy come-PAST3sg
'The boy came.'

(29) a. Kuka söi omenan? OVS
'Who ate the apple?'
b. Omenan söi vaalea nainen.
apple-ACCsg eat-PAST3sg blond woman-NOMsg
'The blond woman ate the apple.'

(30) a. Kuka puhui videossa? AdvVS
'Who spoke in the video?'
b. Videossa puhui se poika.
video-INE speak-PAST3sg that boy-NOMsg
'That boy spoke in the video.'

(31) a. Kuka vastasi? Cleft
'Who answered?'
b. Se oli tuo tyttö, joka vastasi.
it was that girl-NOMsg who-NOMsg answered
'It was that girl who answered.'

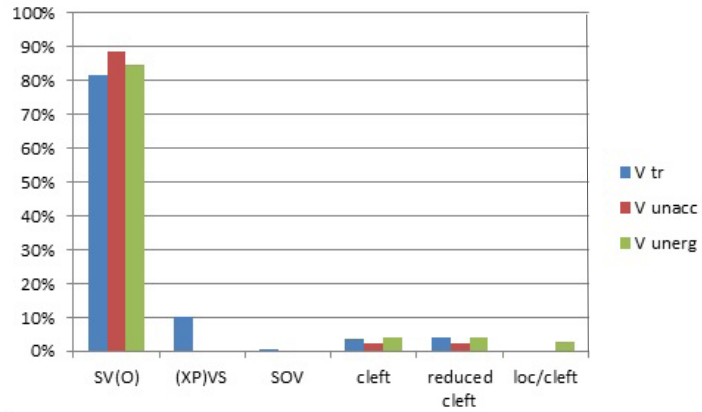
[15] A version of this part of the study has been published in Dal Pozzo (2012a).

[16] The term existential cleft is proposed here in order to differentiate these structures both from locative sentences and from cleft structures. See section 2.6.1.

(32) a. Kuka soitti? Reduced cleft
'Who called?'
b. Se oli Kaisa.
it was Kaisa-NOM
'It was Kaisa (who called).'

(33) a. Kuka on lakaissut? Existential cleft
'Who swept?'
b. Siinä oli yksi tyttö, joka lakaisi.
there was one girl-NOMsg who sweep-PAST3sg
'There was one girl who swept.'

Figure 2.1 - Strategies of Subject Focalization in Finnish L1



The following table provides the total amount of answers classified for verb type and type of answers:

Table 2.4 - Finnish L1: Total Amount of Answers

Verb class	SV	AdvVS	O(DP)VS	O(pr)VS[17]	SO(pr)V	Cleft	Red. Cleft	Exist. cleft	Tot.
Transitive	82% 234	0% 0	1,7% 5	8% 24	0,3% 1	3,8% 11	4,2% 12	0,0% 0	287

[17] The labels stand for:
S: subject
V: verb
O(DP)VS: DP object
O(pr): pronominal object
Adv: adverbial/locative
Red. Cleft: reduced cleft
Exist. cleft: existential cleft

Unaccusative	88,4% 38	7% 3	0% 0	0% 0	0% 0	2,3% 1	2,3% 1	0,0% 0	43
Unergative	84,9% 129	4,6% 7	0% 0	0% 0	0% 0	3,9% 6	3,9% 6	2,6% 4	152

As expected, Free Inversion (FI)/VS of the type found in NSLs is not observed under the same discourse-pragmatic circumstances. The result is consistent with elicited data collected through the same experimental design in Brazilian Portuguese (BP) (Guesser 2007; Dal Pozzo and Guesser 2011) and it supports the assumption that a referential (3rd person) null subject, which neither BP nor Finnish have, is a required condition to instantiate FI/VS structures in addition to fulfil (new information) discourse conditions, which were controlled for by the contexts of the elicitation task.

We suggest that the SV(O) order in Finnish is an instance of *in situ focalization*, a subject focalization strategy to which typically NNSLs such as English resort (see cited references), represented by the derivation in (34). The subject is in its canonical preverbal position[18] (Spec, FinP according to Holmberg and Nikanne 2002 and as also assumed in Kaiser 2006), in which it is focalized as new information.

(34) $[_{CP}\ [_{FP}\ \ \mathbf{S}_1\ \ [_{NegP}\ [_{TopP}\ [\ldots[_{TP}\ \mathbf{T}\ [\ldots[_{Top}\ \ldots[_{vP}\ \mathbf{V}\ [\ \mathbf{O}\ ]]]]]]]]]$
FOC *in situ*

Assuming the representation in (34) for SV(O) for the position of new information subjects, this apparently supports the idea that Finnish can be assimilated to NNSLs: the new information S is focalized in its canonical preverbal position and no FI/VS (nor activation of the dedicated vP-peripheral focus position) emerges. However, SV(O) is not the only strategy observed in our data. The second quantitatively relevant strategy consists of the XPVS order, in which we postulate that the low vP-peripheral position dedicated to new information elements is activated, as discussed in the following section.

2.5 *XPVS*

The XPVS order is attested in 10,1% (29/287) of the total amount of answers with transitive verbs, resulting in OVS, and in 4,6% and 7% with unergative and unaccusative verbs respectively, resulting in AdvVS. At

[18] Cardinaletti (1997, 2004) identifies a number of subject positions in the preverbal field which are assumed to be quite uniform across languages. In mapping the IP at least two different positions are identified (Spec,AgrSP for the syntactic subject and Spec,SubjP for the the subject of predication), cf. § 2.1.1.

the discourse level, XPVS is possible when XP is a topic in the sense of known/given information and S is new information (cf. Vilkuna 1995; Holmberg and Nikanne 2002).

Turning the discussion to the OVS order, at least two alternative syntactic analyses come to mind: (i) first OV is obtained by topicalization of the object to the low part of the clause and then the OV chunk is fronted into the left periphery, as in (35), where S is in the same preverbal position as in (34); (ii) the new information subject is in the low vP-peripheral focus position just like in a consistent NSLs like Italian, as repeated here in (36).[19]

(35) $[\ [_{CP}\,[OV_1]\,[_{FP}\,S\,[...t_1...\,]]]$

(36) $[_{CP}\,\ldots\,[_{TP}\ldots\,[_{TopP}\,\ldots\,[_{FocP}\,\mathbf{Foc}\,[_{TopP}\,\ldots\,{}_{vP}]]]]]$

The analysis in (35) is soon ruled out by word order facts. As a matter of fact, sentences such as (37a-b) show the impossibility of such a representation for XPVS orders:[20]

(37) a. Tämän kirjan on (varmaan) kirjoittanut Graham Greene.
O Aux (Adv) V S
this book has (surely) written Graham Greene
'Graham Greene surely wrote this book.'

b. Tätä kirjaa ei ole kirjoittanut Graham Greene.
O Neg Aux V S
this book not has written Graham Greene
'Graham Greene did not write this book.'

c. Onko tämän kirjan kirjoittanut Graham Greene?
has-Q this book written Graham Greene
'Did Graham Greene write this book?'

Postulating movement of the OV chunk to a topic position in the clausal domain with the subject in the preverbal position would exclude having Aux or Neg Aux between O and V. These are nevertheless grammatical sentences. (38) illustrates the basic (neutral) word order:

[19] At first sight, another alternative consists in assuming a structure parallel to V2 languages, as in (i):

(i) $[_{CP}\,O_1\,V_2\,[_{TP}\,S_3\,[t_1\,t_2\,t_3\,]]]$

This is, however, immediately falsified by examples such as (37), where the subject is preceded by the auxiliary and main verb, and by other sentential material.

[20] I thank an anonymous reader of a first version of the text for raising the issue and suggesting a possible way to account for the facts exemplified in (37).

(38) a. Graham Greene on (varmaan) kirjoittanut tämän kirjan.
Graham Greene has (surely) written this book
b. Graham Greene ei ole kirjoittanut tätä kirjaa.
Graham Greene not has written this book
'Graham Greene did not write this book.'

A better way to account for these structures comes from the alternative analysis outlined in (ii), which assumes that the vP-peripheral focus position is activated. I suggest that it is in this position that the new information subject is located in XPVS structures. Finnish does not have a referential *pro* which could satisfy the EPP. If we assume that the EPP can also be satisfied by other lexical elements (see Holmberg 2010), it is the XP element that satisfies the EPP in the Finnish XPVS structure.[21] This is reminiscent of Holmberg and Nikanne's (2002) proposal of Finnish as a topic prominent language. Consequently, the orders in (37) can be derived by assuming movement of the object to the preverbal EPP position. Fronting of the object to the left-periphery is also correlated to discourse factors: in (37a-b) the object can be interpreted as known/given or contrastive/corrective (depending on the intonation). Hence, we can formulate the following:

(39) Subject-Verb inversion:
a. Consistent NSLs do have a referential *pro*, which is a condition to satisfy the EPP and to allow FI/VS structures.
b. In the absence of a referential *pro* (e.g. PNSLs), the EPP can be satisfied by another constituent (resulting in XPVS in the case of Finnish).

Note that (39) is intended under the discourse contexts in which the subject is new information, as discussed earlier. Also note that this is a tentative generalization and a more extensive discussion based on data from different PNSLs is left for future research.[22]

[21] XPVS structures also recall the Locative Inversion structures typical of e.g. English (Collins 1997). Locative Inversion typically occurs with intransitive verbs which take a locative argument, as represented in (i) for English and in (ii) for the equivalent in Finnish:
(i) In the corner sat a man.
(ii) Nurkassa istui mies.

[22] An open question arises from sentences such as (i) and (ii) below: FI seems to be excluded in Finnish also with first and second person, in which cases a silent subject pronoun is always available. The equivalent sentences are pragmatically appropriate in the same contexts in Italian.
(i) a. Kuka puhui?
who spoke?
b. #Puhuin minä
spoke I

Thus, the assumption put forth by Belletti (see references cited above) can be further developed in the following way:

> Only full NSLs allow for FI/VS in contexts of (new information) subject focalization. NNSLs typically adopt different strategies such as *in situ* focalization (English) and cleft strategies (French, Brazilian Portuguese). PNSLs such as Finnish can have a 'mixed pattern' consisting of *in situ* focalization and focalization of the new information subject in the vP-peripheral postverbal position by using a different way to satisfy the EPP.
> (Dal Pozzo 2012a: 76)

In conclusion, two possible ways to account for new information subjects in Finnish were discussed: *in situ* focalization, which seems to be the preferred strategy, and activation of the dedicated focus position in the vP periphery. Most importantly, postulating *in situ* focalization (similar to NNSLs such as English) for SV(O) structures is not in contrast with an activation of the vP-peripheral focus position in XPVS structures. Moreover, this position dedicated to new information elements seems to be also active in the cleft structures that emerged in the data. Hence, PNSLs such as Finnish (and BP) seem to have a wider set of possible strategies to adopt, compared to NSLs and NNSLs, under the discussed discourse contexts.

2.6 *Cleft Structures*

Cleft structures, including reduced and full clefts, are perfectly correct options at the level of both syntax and discourse-pragmatics for focalizing new information subjects under the circumstances of the elicited production task. In the present work, it is proposed that cleft structures with new information subjects can be analysed as illustrated in (40), along the lines of Belletti (2009, 2010).

(40) $[_{TP}$ se … $_{T}$ $[_{FocP}$ $[_{vP}$ olla $[_{CP}$.. [EPP Jussi $[_{FinP}$ joka [soitti]]]]]]]
expletive *be* subject *that* V

We can observe that:
- the copula selects a CP endowed with a [+ focus] feature;
- the CP complement is reduced; it is a 'small' CP, whose higher position is assumed to be FocusP (cf. Rizzi 1997);

(ii) a. Kuka siellä (on)?
who there (is)
b. #Olen minä
is I
'It' s me.'

- the CP complement contains an EPP feature, which expresses a relation of predication between the subject in CP and the rest of the clause. This position is also responsible for the impossibility of focalizing an object as new information (for further discussion cf. Belletti 2009, 2010);
- the subject first moves to the EPP position; afterwards, it moves to the Spec,FocP in the vP periphery of the copula;
- the copula moves to a higher functional head;
- the preverbal subject position is occupied by the overt expletive *se* in Finnish.

Finally, reduced clefts are derived from leaving the part of the sentence following the focalized subject unpronounced, as illustrated in (41):

(41) $[_{TP}$ se oli $[_{FocP}$ S $[_{vP}$ $[_{CP}$ EPP $[_{FinP}$ ~~joka~~ $[_{TP}$ ~~S~~...]]]]]]
EXPL *was* subject *that* subject

(Reduced) cleft structures in Finnish would merit a deeper discussion which is beyond the scope of this work.

2.6.1 *Existential Clefts*

A structure that has been limitedly adopted (2,6%) as an answering strategy in SNI contexts but is nevertheless possible and grammatical is the existential construction exemplified in (42).

(42) a. Kuka kaatui portaissa?
'Who fell down the stairs?'
b. Siinä oli yksi poika (joka kaatui).
there be-PAST3sg one-NOM boy-NOM (who fell down)
'There was a boy (who fell down the stairs).'

This type of sentence will be labelled *existential cleft* here. Finnish existential sentences have been a lively discussed topic since Airila (1924), see also Siro (1943), Ikola (1954), Penttilä (1955), G. Karlsson (1963), Helasvuo (1996) and the excursus in Tiainen (1997). Adopting the stricter view on the main properties of existential sentences (adapted from *VISK – Iso suomen kielioppi* (The Big Grammar of Finnish), we can assume that:
- the verb of existential sentences is the auxiliary *olla* 'to be'[23];
- the verb doesn't agree with the postverbal subject;
- a locative (pronoun or adverb) occurs in sentence initial position;
- the postverbal subject is in nominative for singular or in partitive for plural in case it is a countable nominal expression. However, the rule is

[23] Notice, however, that following *VISK – The Big Grammar of Finnish*, other intransitive verbs meaning existence or coming into existence are not excluded.

not strict and nominative is not totally excluded for plural, too. The subject can be new or old in the discourse.

Existential clefts are different from both AdvVS sentences and cleft structures, repeated in (43a-b), respectively:

(43) a. Videossa puhui mies.
in the video speak-PAST3sg a/the man-NOMsg
b. Se oli mies (joka puhui)
EXPL was a/the man who spoke

In AdvVS type of sentences, it is possible to have all kinds of intransitive verbs (even adopting the looser view presented in *VISK – The Big Grammar of Finnish*, according to which *puhua* 'to speak' should not be considered as a possible verb for existential sentences). Furthermore, the verb can agree with a postverbal plural subject, (44):

(44) Videossa puhuivat miehet.
in the video speak-PAST3pl men-NOMpl

A possible parallelism with cleft structures might be more attractive. In both (43b) and (45b) the (expletive) pronoun *se* 'it' is in sentence initial position: in (43b) it is in its nominative form whilst in (45b) it is in its locative form. In both examples there is a subject relative clause, which can be silent thus resulting in a reduced form. However, the crucial difference seems to be in the different status of the verb *olla* 'to be': in cleft structures, either full or reduced, it cannot be replaced by other verbs, whereas this is an option in existential sentences. Observe the contrast in (45a-b):

(45) a. *Se puhui Jussi
EXPL speak-PAST3sg Jussi-NOM
b. Siinä puhui Jussi.
there speak-PAST3sg Jussi-NOM

Note that (43a) and (45b) look very similar. It might be worth wondering whether structures of the type AdvVS and existential sentences could otherwise be instances of PP fronting or topicalization of a locative element. In particular, it seems possible to consider the AdvVS sentence type as an instance of Locative Inversion (LI), in parallel to the English locative inversion sentence (cf. Bresnan 1994 for discussion on LI in English) (46a-b):

(46) a. In a corner sat the man.
b. Nurkassa istui mies.
corner-INE sit-PAST3sg man-NOM

Locative Inversion is typically possible with intransitive verbs which take an (optional) locative argument. Hence, the locative is not a mere adjunct and the postverbal subject has some focus features ("presentational focus" in Bresnan 1994). In LI structures there is a referential locative, in other words an expletive such as *there* in English is replaced (but is parallel) to a locative expression, as exemplified in (47a-b).

(47) a. There hangs a huge portrait.
b. On the wall hangs a huge portrait.

A unique analysis for the Finnish sentences in (42b), (43a) and (45b) is not possible. If we consider them as all instances of LI, this would not fully account for the differences between the three structures: the first has a locative pronominal form, the copular verb *olla* 'be' and a (optional) relative clause (thus being a type of "locative-cleft"), the second has a sentence-initial locative adverbial, an intransitive verb and a sentence-final new information subject, and the third has a locative pronominal form followed by an intransitive verb and no possibility for a relative clause. The three structures are repeated again in (48) for convenience.

(48) a. Siinä oli yksi poika (joka kaatui).
there be-PAST3sg one-NOM boy-NOM (who fell down)
b. Videossa puhui mies.
in the video speak-PAST3sg a/the man-NOMsg
c. Siinä puhui mies (*joka istui sohvalla).
there speak-PAST3sg mies-NOM (who sat on the sofa)

From a merely descriptive point of view, it is reasonable to consider (48a) as a different instance of locative structures due to its "cleft nature". (48b-c) could possibly be analysed in a similar way, namely as existential sentences in which the subject is focalized in the postverbal focus position at a discourse-pragmatic level.

2.7 *Subject and Object Drop: Topic Drop*

For the sake of completeness on the results of the video test, it is worth mentioning that few cases of third subject drop are attested in the data collected from the experiment on Finnish L1 under the special circumstances of co-reference provided by the question-answer context.

(49) Mitä hän oli tekemässä? – ____ leikkasi peukaloa.
what (s)he was doing – ____ cut-PAST3sg finger-PARTsg

Parallel cases of object drop are attested in the same set of data to a larger extent. Notice that the dropped object can be indifferently a full DP or a pronoun.

(50) Kuka toi nämä kukat? – Minna toi ____.
who brought these flowers – Minna brought ____.

The instances of subject omission were sensibly less than those of object omission, 1,8% (10/555) and 15% (45/300), respectively. The omission of the object can be analysed as a type of topic drop occurring in contexts in which a relationship of topic continuity is attested. I suggest that in cases such as in (49) the otherwise unexpected omission of 3rd person subjects takes place for the same reason: the overt subject in the question is felt as a direct, and near enough, antecedent. Hence, subject omission in these contexts could also be analysed as a topic drop phenomenon, parallel to object omission.

2.8 *Summary*

The chapter began with some relevant observations on the main properties of subjects in Italian (§ 2.1), a null subject language in which both preverbal and postverbal subjects are licensed. Clitic pronouns were introduced as their presence makes the correct mastery of VS structures in L2 Italian even more complex. Then, the occurrences of null referential subjects in Finnish were investigated and current discussion on the status of Finnish as a partial null subject language was presented. Subsequently, we analysed the data on subject focalization in light of the traditional theories on the null subject parameter and of the more recent analysis in the cartographic framework on subject focalization previously presented in Chapter 1, § 1.4. In light of the observations made in Chapter 1, § 1.4 and in this chapter, the relevant differences between Finnish and Italian can be summarized as follows:

Table 2.5 - Relevant Facts in Finnish and Italian

	Italian	Finnish
Basic Word Order in declaratives	SVO	SVO
Basic Word Order in answers (Subject as new information)	(Ocl)VS	SV(O)
New information subject (Belletti 2001, 2004)	in the low vP periphery	possibly *in situ*
Contrastive focus	in the Focus projection of the left periphery (CP layer)	in the Focus projection of the left periphery (CP layer)
Clitic pronouns	yes	no
Null-subject	yes	only for 1st and 2nd persons (PNSL)

The data coming from the experimental study on Finnish L1 show that different answering strategies are possible. The overwhelmingly preferred

strategy is SV even if other strategies, such as XPVS and (reduced) clefts, are not excluded. The SV strategy has been analysed as an instance of *in situ* focalization, parallel to what happens in non-null subject languages like English, as discussed along the lines of Belletti (2009). As for XPVS strategies, we observed that Finnish differs from null subject languages and from non-null subject languages, as XPVS is only allowed with a preverbal object or an adverbial, namely a topic. Nevertheless, this kind of structure is analysed along the cartographic approach in Belletti (2001, 2004, and 2005) and activation of a dedicated position in the vP periphery seems to be a plausible option. However, the XPVS order does not have the very same kind of derivation proposed for VS structures in languages like Italian in the subject of new information contexts and it is proposed that in a PNSL such as Finnish, the EPP can be satisfied differently with respect to NSLs such as Italian. Then, from the analysis on cleft strategies it follows that: (i) the subject is focalized in the vP periphery of the copula, and (ii) a referential *pro* is not involved. The discussion of the results provides further support to the analysis proposed in Belletti (2001, 2004) and, in particular, to the assumption that a "pure" VS strategy is related to the presence of a referential *pro* in the language (Belletti 2005). The chapter ends with some observations on Finnish existential (cleft) sentences and on instances of object drop.

3

EXPERIMENTAL STUDIES: DATA FROM ITALIAN L2

As previously discussed in Chapter 2, the L2 speakers come from an L1 that is a partial null subject language, which does not allow VS Free Inversion (FI) in Subject as New Information (SNI) contexts and which does not have clitic pronouns. This chapter concerns the extent, if any, to which the target FI (focalization of the new information subject through a VS structure) is instantiated in the interlanguage of the advanced and intermediate L2ers of Italian, respectively. The discussion will also take into consideration the mastery of clitic pronouns in Italian L2 as their acquisition is strictly related to the target production of VS structures with transitive verbs. Finally, the potential correlation between the postverbal new information subject and the use of overt subjects is observed in both L2 groups. In current literature the possibility of licensing VS has usually been related to the availability of null referential subjects. In the study of Belletti and Leonini (2004) and Belletti *et al*. (2007; cf. Chapter 1, § 1.4 and 1.6) the two properties have shown partial dissociation in the interlanguage of speakers who have a non-null subject L1: null pronominal subjects appeared to be available to a significantly larger extent with respect to postverbal new information subjects in the L2 interlanguage grammar (Italian). Hence, it was suggested that the licensing of *pro* is a necessary but not sufficient condition for the availability of VS structures. In addition, the discourse-conversational features which license FI need more time and are harder to be acquired with respect to the "resetting" of the *pro*-drop parameter. Recall that in the approach adopted here (cf. Belletti 2001, 2004, and 2005 in Chapter 1), FI involves the activation of a vP-peripheral focus position, which is the position of the subject in SNI contexts, as reported in (1):

(1) $[_{\text{TopP}}\ \text{Top}\ [_{\text{Foc}}\ \mathbf{S}\ [_{\text{Top}}\ \ldots\ \ldots_{\text{VP}}]]]$

Through the collected data, we aim at observing whether the assumed vP-peripheral focus position is exploited in the L2 interlanguage grammar of the L2ers who have a PNSL as their L1. The peculiar status of Finnish as a partial null subject language might further contribute to the discus-

Lena Dal Pozzo, *New Information Subjects in L2 Acquisition: Evidence from Italian and Finnish*, ISBN (online) 978-88-6655-870-5 , CC 2015 Firenze University Press

sion on the null subject parameter and on its possible "resetting" in the interlanguage of L2 learners.[1]

3.1 *Italian L2 High Competence*

3.1.1 *Participants*

Two groups of participants were included: 15 L2 advanced (near native) speakers and 15 adult native speakers of Italian. The L2 speakers' group consisted of adult native speakers of Finnish who have learned Italian mainly in a naturalistic environment and in an implicit way through daily contact with the language in the L2 environment.

Table 3.1 - Participants: Italian Advanced L2ers

Italian L2 - advanced	
Number of Participants	15
Age (mean)	44,7 years
Length of Residence (mean)	20,5 years

Most of them (11 out of 15) have also obtained an education degree in Italy (see Appendix 1 and Chapter 1, § 1.3.2 for details). The participants were recruited through the *Firenzen Suomi-seura*, the Finnish-Italian cultural association of Florence. Their L2 proficiency was evaluated with an interview which focused on the length of time spent in Italy and the effective use of the language in everyday life. Moreover, an impressionistic method was used (conversation with the interviewer) in order to classify the L2ers as very advanced, based on the guidelines of the European Common Framework of Reference for Languages.[2] As a more articulated method was not adopted, it does not seem terminologically correct to classify them as near-native speakers of Italian (cf. White and Genesee 1996; Sorace 2003; Dal Pozzo and Matteini 2015), although their ultimate attainment strongly hints at it.[3]

[1] We adopt here the terminology proper to the Principle and Parameters theory. In the minimalist approach proposed in Herschesohn (2000) *pro*-drop would rather be addressed as a "morpholexical property", which is part of the properties that vary from one language to another and are harder to acquire with respect to core syntactic properties (see Chapter 1).

[2] <http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/source/Framework_EN.pdf> (07/2015).

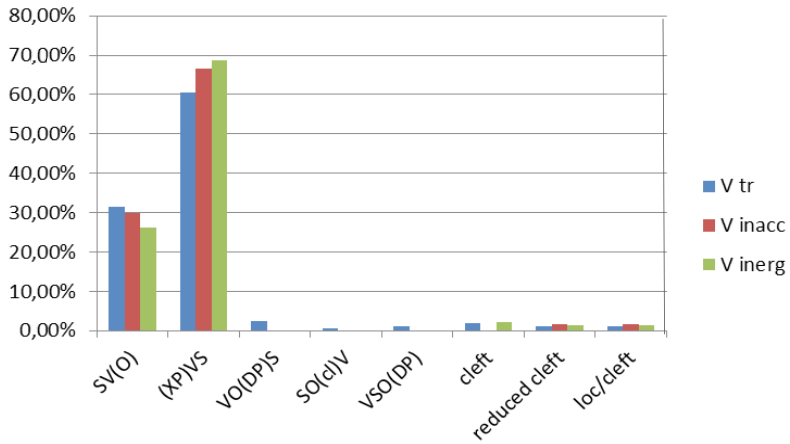
[3] Part of the subjects (n=9) were successively screened in Dal Pozzo and Matteini's (2015) research on article acquisition in Italian L2 and where classified as near-native L2 speakers. The screening procedure is based on White and Genesee (1996), Sorace (2003), Belletti *et al.* (2007) and it evaluated morphology, syntax, fluency and lexicon of the L2 interlanguage.

3.1.2 *Available Strategies in SNI (Subject as New Information) Contexts*

The reader is referred to Chapter 1, § 1.5 and Appendix 2 for a detailed description of the experimental design. The overall results will now be presented.

The L2 speakers with high L2 attainment correctly produce postverbal subjects across all verb classes, as shown in Figure 3.1. Nevertheless, the SV order is still adopted independently of the verb class and other answering strategies emerge at a very low rate.

Figure 3.1 - Answering Strategies in Advanced Italian L2



	Transitive Verbs[4]	Unaccusative Verbs	Unergative Verbs
SV(O)[5]	31,45% (89/283)	30% (18/60)	26,24% (37/141)
(XP)VS	--	66,7% (40/60)	68,8% (97/141)
VO(DP)S	2,5% (7/283)	--	--
SO(cl)V	0,7% (2/283)	--	--

[4] Invalid answers were excluded for all verb classes (n.v.: transitive verbs 9/300; unaccusative verbs 0/60; unergative verbs 10/151). Passive sentences were also excluded (transitive verbs 8/300).

[5] The labels stand for:
S: subject
V: verb
O(DP): DP object
O(cl): object clitic pronoun

VSO(DP)	1,1% (3/283)	--	--
CLEFT	1,8% (5/283)	--	2,1% (3/141)
REDUCED CLEFT	1,1% (3/283)	1,7% (1/60)	1,4% (2/141)
EXISTENTIAL CLEFT	1,1% (3/283)	1,7% (1/60)	1,4% (2/141)

The following examples directly drawn from the data illustrate each answer type observed in the data set.

(1) a. Chi ha telefonato?
who has phoned
b. Una ragazza ha telefonato. SV
a girl has called

(2) a. Chi ha telefonato?
who has phoned
b. Ha telefonato una ragazza. VS
called a girl

(3) a. Chi ha buttato via i fiori?
who has thrown away the flowers
b. Li ha buttati via la signora. O(cl)VS
CLpl has thrown away the lady
c. I fiori ha buttato via la mamma. O(DP)VS
the flowers has thrown away the mother
d. Ha buttato via i fiori la signora. VOS
has thrown away the flowers the mother
e. La signora li ha buttati via. SO(cl)V
the lady CLpl has thrown away

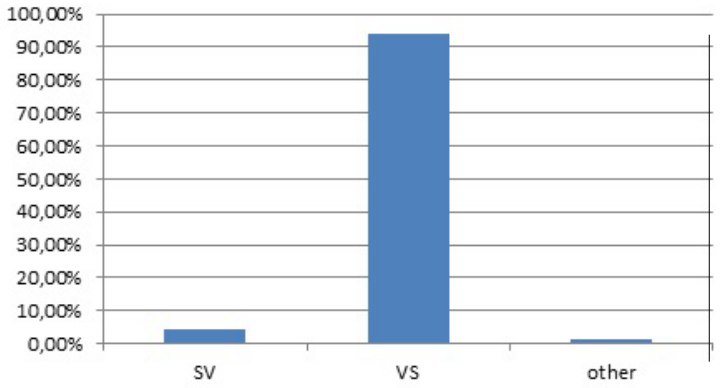
(4) a. Chi ha fumato in questa stanza?
who has smoked in this room
b. È stato quel signore che ha fumato. Cleft
was that man that has smoked
'It was that man who smoked.'
c. È stato il babbo. Reduced cleft
was the dad
'It was dad.'
d. C'è stato un signore anziano […]. Existential
there was an old man

(5) a. Chi ha mangiato la mela?
who has eaten the apple
b. La mela è stata mangiata dalla mamma. Passive
the apple has been eaten by the mother

(6) a. Chi ha parlato nel video?
who has spoken in the video
b. Solo il ragazzo n.v. (non valid)
only the boy

Very advanced L2 speakers adopt the target like (Ocl)VS strategy at a high rate, which however is at ceiling level in native speakers' production, as evident from the comparison with the control group illustrated in Figure 3.2. Data coming from the control group clearly confirms that in Italian the (Ocl)VS order is the most appropriate answering strategy in the contexts used in the elicitation task in which the subject is new information focus.

Figure 3.2 - Answering Strategies in the Italian L1 Control Group



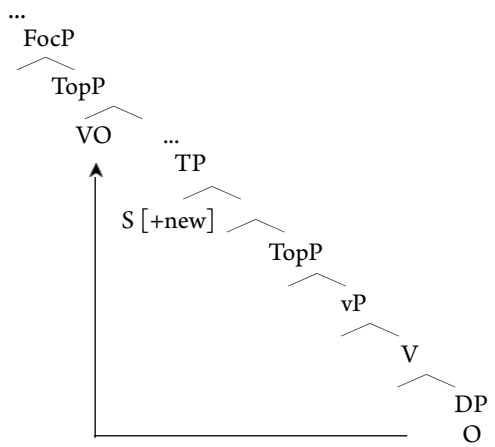
The second most adopted strategy is the SV(O) order, which we have seen to be typical for Finnish under the discourse-pragmatic contexts elicited in the task. Hence, it seems plausible to explain the wide use of the SV strategy as a phenomenon of *transfer* from the L1 of the L2 speakers. In this way, the informational value provided by the Italian "free inversion" in SNI contexts is obtained through the preferred L1 strategy, namely focalization *in situ* of the subject in the SV order (cf. Chapter 2, § 2.4).

A transfer effect was also observed in the German and French populations tested in Belletti and Leonini (2004), who transferred SV and cleft strategies respectively to their L2. Interestingly, although Finnish allows for a wide range of possible answers in focus of new information contexts, only the most widely adopted SV strategy is consistently transferred from the L1 to the L2.

Two very marginally adopted strategies are O(DP)VS (1,1%) and VOS (2,5%). Here, the new information subject is focalized in sentence final position. Two possible analyses can be proposed for the VOS order: (i) to consider the sentence-final subject as focalized *in situ* and preceded by a

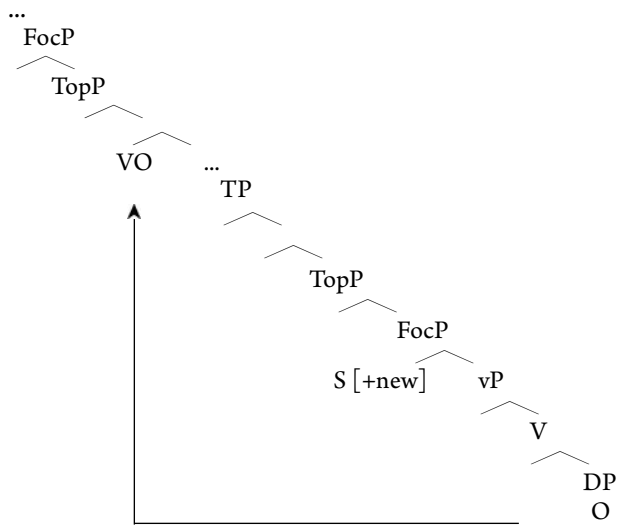
topicalized VO chunk in a higher position, as represented in (7), which is consistent with the Finnish L1 data:

(7)



Belletti (2004) suggests that the VOS order can indeed involve topicalization of the VO chunk in a Topic position dominating the vP-peripheral Focus projection, but it is the specifier of FocP that is assumed to host the postverbal (new information) subject, as represented in (8);

(8)



An alternative analysis is (ii) to consider the O(DP)VS as a step towards the target-like O(cl)VS strategy: the linear order and the occurrence of sentential arguments is correct, but there are still some residual difficulties in the realization of the clitic pronoun with transitive verbs. This seems to be an interesting example of the acquisition process of the L2ers: word order and arguments are correctly realized but the phonological realization of clitic pronouns is still in progress.

The wider range of possible answering strategies if compared to monolingual L1 Italian is typical of adult L2 grammars and can be analysed as based on different conditions of economy: monolingual speakers access one grammar and select the most economical strategy for that grammar (which does not exclude the existence of other grammatical options). Differently, L2 speakers access two grammars, thus they can resort to more than one economic strategy.

3.1.3 *Use of Clitic Pronouns*

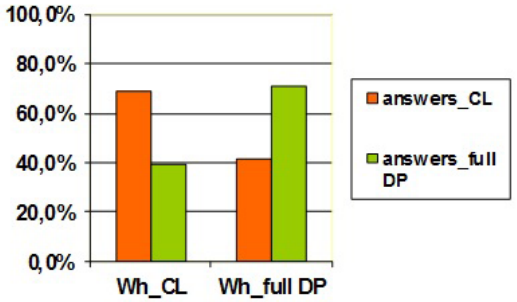
In Figure 3.1, we saw that the target-like answering strategy with transitive verbs, namely O(cl)VS, was adopted in the 59,4% of cases by L2 speakers of Italian. Hence, clitic pronouns still appear to be an area of residual difficulty even for highly advanced L2ers. Notice, however, that clitics were never misplaced in the present data, consistent with previous observations in L2 acquisition of object clitics: they were either used or omitted. When used, they were correctly placed in proclitic position, the right location with tensed verb forms in Italian. When they were omitted, the L2 speakers realized the object as a full DP rather than a strong pronoun. This strategy can be interpreted as an avoidance strategy in clitic production, as it is never adopted in L1 monolingual production, where clitics are consistently produced (cf. Figure 3.2).

In order to test a possible influence of the presence of clitics in the input on the production of clitics in the L2 output, the items of the video task containing a transitive verb were further divided into questions with a full DP and questions with a clitic pronoun, as exemplified in (9a-b), respectively.

(9) a. Chi ha mangiato la mela? Wh_full DP
who has eaten the apple

b. Chi l'ha spenta? Wh_CL
who CL has turned off
'Who turned it off?'

Figure 3.3 - Answers with and without a Clitic Pronoun



From the graph above, we see that the presence of the clitic in the question sensibly influences its use in the answers of the L2 speakers.

Another observation that emerges from the collected data is that only intermediate level L2 speakers optionally drop the object (at a rate of 15%, 28/190) producing non target answers such as (10b) to questions such as (10a). The target-like answer would be (10c), in which the object is expressed through a clitic pronoun and the subject is postverbal.

(10) a. Chi l'ha trovato?
who CL has found
'Who found it?'

b. *Chiara ha trovato
Chiara has found

c. L'ha trovato Chiara.
CL has found Chiara
'Chiara found it.'

In light of the observations about Finnish L1, where we saw that the object was occasionally dropped, the pattern in (10b) seems ascribable to a transfer phenomenon from the L1, where a full DP object can be dropped in this kind of discourse-syntactic contexts, as observed in § 2.7. This seems to be a transitory stage as advanced L2 learners have a target-like behaviour and never drop the object in a native-like way as attested in the Italian control group.

3.1.4 *Overt Subjects*

In previous studies (Belletti and Leonini 2004; Belletti *et al.* 2007), it was proposed that the source of non-target behaviour in L2 speakers of Italian was caused by the mismatch between the correct re-setting of

the null subject parameter and the non-target like computation of new information focus subjects at the syntax-discourse interface. The current elicitation task allows us to also observe the production of null/overt subjects in the L2 interlanguage. Recall the status of Finnish as a partial null subject language in which null subjects are allowed for 1st and 2nd person singular and plural but not for 3rd person singular and plural. The target items consisted of 14 questions (13 with third person subjects and 1 with first person subject). The advanced L2ers produced overt subjects in the 26,7% (56/210) of cases, the majority of which were full DPs (68%) rather than pronouns.

In Belletti *et al.* (2007), the overuse of overt pronominal subjects was analysed as a possible access by the near-native speakers of the overt weak pronoun rather than of the null referential pronoun, given the proximity of the two sets of pronouns and the attested use of weak pronouns in the L1 of the L2ers (English) under parallel discourse-pragmatic circumstances. Interestingly, in the present data, the advanced L2ers mostly use a full DP, which is parallel to strong pronouns for what concerns the syntactic position in the cartography of subject positions discussed in Cardinaletti (1997, 2004). This might suggest that Finnish lacks weak overt pronouns *tout court* and when the null subject is not (readily) available, L2ers resort to strong pronouns or full DPs.[6] The issue remains open for future research.

It is worth noting that in the reformulation of the Avoid Pronoun Principle (Chomsky 1981) presented in Cardinaletti and Starke (1994), it is proposed that, following general economy principles, weak pronouns (including the null *pro*) are preferred over strong pronouns in null subject languages. This means that in Italian *pro* is preferred over strong *lui/lei* 'he/she'. In fact, a null subject is used instead of a weak overt pronoun under various circumstances, such as in expletive, quasi-argument and impersonal subjects structures. As discussed previously, in adult SLA the use of overt subjects is observed in contexts in which monolingual Italians would use a null subject. This hints to an ongoing developmental process in intermediate (or low) L2ers or, in cases of high level of L2 proficiency, to a possible stabilization of these pragmatically non target-like forms (even though grammatically correct). In the current study, we suggest that the non-target-like pattern is due to transfer from the L1 to the L2: the L2ers resort to strong pronouns or full DPs as this set of pro-

[6] In Dal Pozzo (2007), Finnish pronouns (with particular reference to the possessive pronouns) were discussed in both standard Finnish and colloquial Finnish. Despite first sight appearances, the conclusion went towards the classification of both sets of pronouns as strong. This is consistent with the observations concerning the choice of overt pronouns in the present L2 population.

nouns exists in both their L1 and L2, differently from weak pronouns, which are missing from their L1.

In this respect, important studies have been undertaken in child bilingual acquisition, too. Hulk and Müller (2000) investigate the crosslinguistic influence in bilingual children at the interface between syntax and discourse pragmatics and come to the following assumption: crosslinguistic influence can take place at the interface of two modules in the C-domain (i.e. syntax and discourse in the present case) whenever there is overlapping of a structure in the two languages at the surface level; in other words, if language A has the properties α and β and language B only has the property α, there is an overlap of the property α, which is the one instantiated in both languages. Subsequent studies show that overt subject pronouns are more likely to be accepted and produced by bilingual children in contexts in which their monolingual peers would rather choose a null subject pronoun, not only when the two languages have different settings for the *pro*-drop parameter but also when both languages share the same null subject property (Serratrice *et al*. 2004; Hacohen and Schaeffer 2007; Sorace *et al*. 2009). Moreover, the same pattern was observed in adult late bilinguals, namely Spanish speaking adults learning Italian (Bini 1993; Sorace 2005). It is thus shown that interface levels are prone to more variability than narrow syntax is, the latter being an autonomous and more rigid system (see Sorace *et al*. 2009 for discussion). Mastering two languages generally implies a more costly processing load and consequently an overt subject might be chosen as a kind of compensatory default strategy.

Based on our experiment results, I suggest extending Hulk and Müller's (2000) hypothesis to adult L2 acquisition, which would mean that L2ers may adopt syntactically correct but pragmatically inappropriate forms, as it was the case in the present study for the SV order observed in SNI contexts and the more extended use of overt 3rd person subjects in L2 Italian with respect to monolingual Italian. The results of the video task are consistent with previous findings and provide further evidence not only to Hulk and Müller's (2000) assumption but also to the Interface Hypothesis proposed in Sorace and Filiaci (2006)[7] (cf. also Sorace and

[7] The Interface Hypothesis in its original formulation (the so-called Strong Interface Hypothesis) predicted that near-native speakers were not expected to show residual difficulties in mastering phenomena which involved the interaction of internal grammatical components (syntax–semantics, syntax–morphology, morphology–phonology interfaces). Rather, they show protracted instability in mastering phenomena which imply the interaction of linguistic and extra-linguistic factors, e.g. syntax-discourse interface phenomena. Successively, several studies confirmed that internal interface phenomena are more likely to be completely mastered than those related to the external interface (Sorace and Serratrice 2009), the latter showing protracted instability and residual variability in near-native speakers' performances (Belletti *et al.* 2007, among others). A reanalysis of

Serratrice 2009; Tsimpli and Sorace 2006), whereby syntactic dependencies can be processed more easily at near-native level of attainment whilst discourse-based dependencies, such as the correct distribution of null and postverbal subjects, cannot.[8]

3.2 *Italian L2 Intermediate Competence*

3.2.1 *Participants*

Ten adult native speakers of Finnish learning Italian in Finland participated in the study.

Table 3.2 - Participants: Italian Intermediate L2ers

Italian L2 (intermediate)	
Number of Participants	10
Age (mean)	55,2 years
Length of Exposure (mean)	4,4 years

The group of Italian native speakers presented in 3.1.1 functioned as the control group. At the time of testing, the participants were learning Italian at an Adult Centre of Education in Turku, Finland, and had learned Italian mainly in Finland (see Appendix 1 and Chapter 1, § 1.3.2 for further details). The participants were all in the intermediate/advanced class of Italian.

An additional set of tasks consisting of a grammaticality judgement task (GJT) and a translation task (TT) were implemented. Both were written offline tasks and timing was not relevant.

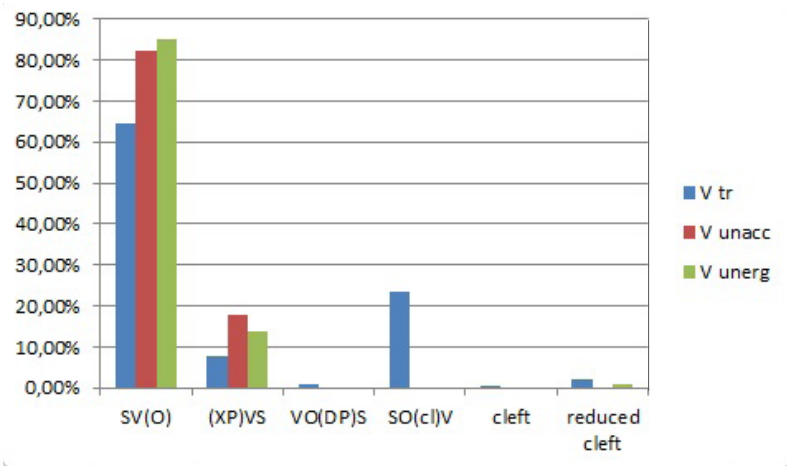
3.2.2 *Available Strategies in Subject as New Information (SNI) Contexts*

The L2 intermediate group shows a very poor use of postverbal subjects across all verb classes. The preferred answering strategy is overwhelmingly SV(O), which is the most widely adopted strategy in the Finnish L1 corpus, too. The results are summarised in the following graph; detailed data is given below it.

the Interface Hypothesis has recently been proposed in which interface phenomena are reconsidered in light of a less strictly defined bipartition of internal *vs* external interfaces (the Gradient Approach to the Interface Hypothesis, White 2011; Sorace 2011, 2012; Montrul 2011) in favour of a complex interplay of several linguistic, non-linguistic and computational factors.

[8] *Contra* Clahsen and Felser (2006) who assume that non-target patterns are the consequence of a representational deficit with respect to syntax.

Figure 3.4 - Answering Strategies in Intermediate Italian L2



	Transitive Verbs[9]	Unaccusative Verbs	Unergative Verbs
SV(O)	65% (119/183)	82,1% (32/39)	84,9% (79/93)
VS	--	17,9% (7/39)	14% (13/93)
VO(DP)S	1,1% (2/183)	--	--
O(cl)VS	7,1% (13/183)	--	--
O(DP)VS	0,5% (1/183)	--	--
SO(cl)V	23,5% (43/183)	--	--
cleft	0,5% (1/183)	--	--
Reduced cleft	2,2% (4/183)	--	1,1% (1/93)

Observing the data gathered from intermediate L2 learners of Italian, we again interpret the wide use of the SV strategy as a transitory phenomenon of transfer, through which the informational value provided by the Italian verb-subject Free Inversion in SNI contexts is obtained by employing the preferred L1 strategy, namely *in situ* focalization of the subject, which results in the SV order.

The most relevant non-target answering strategy that emerges is SO(cl) V, which is indeed a grammatical option in Italian, even if it is never attested in the L1 monolingual control group. Note that a clear shift in the use of SO(cl)V is observed between the intermediate L2 group (23,5%)

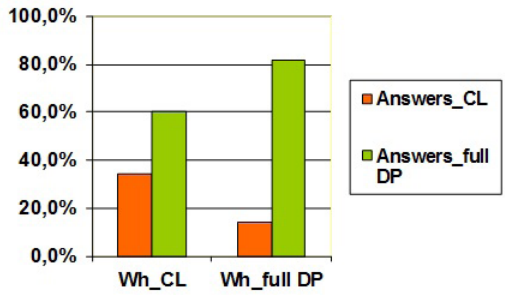
[9] Invalid answers were excluded for all verb classes (n.v.: transitive verbs 8/190; unaccusative verbs 1/40; unergative verbs 7/100).

and the advanced one (0,7%). The SO(cl)V strategy thus seems to be a transitional phase in the interlanguage from the L1's SV(O) towards the target-like O(cl)VS structure. Here, the object is represented as a clitic pronoun and is correctly moved to a proclitic position but word order computation is still non-target-like. In the sentence structure, this means that the new information subject is located in the canonical subject position, in the SO(cl)V order, following the pattern typical to Finnish. Therefore, the vP peripheral focus position is not exploited and the subject is focalized *in situ*.

3.2.3 *Use of Clitic Pronouns*

As expected, intermediate L2 speakers show a rather poor performance in the production of clitic pronouns which are attested at a lower rate than in advanced L2 learners. Nevertheless, the occurrence of clitic pronouns in the two L2 groups share some similarities: (i) the presence of the clitic pronoun in the question seems to have an overall influence on the production of a clitic pronoun in the answer (also for intermediate L2 speakers), and (ii) clitic pronouns were never misplaced and when omission occurred, the clitic was replaced by a full DP, never by strong pronouns.

Figure 3.5 - Production of Clitics in Intermediate L2ers



3.2.4 *Overt Subjects*

The use of explicit subjects does not appear to directly correlate with the wider use of SV structures in intermediate L2 speakers. Overt subjects are not produced consistently more often by intermediate L2 learners than by advanced L2 learners, 33% (34/103) vs 26,7% (56/210), respectively.

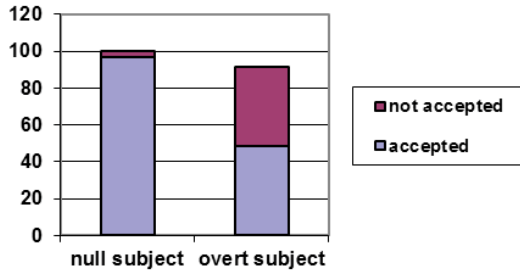
The results confirm the dissociation between the formal properties (related to the *pro*-drop parameter) and the discourse factors playing a role at the syntax-discourse interface (cf. § 3.1.3). The results also show that the transfer effect from the L1 Finnish to the L2 Italian – which we assume to be responsible for the large use of the SV order – is more robust in the intermediate L2 group.

3.2.5 *Additional Tasks*

Two additional tasks were implemented, a Grammaticality Judgement Task and a Translation Task, in order to have a better overview towards understanding the acquisition and mastery of the L2 grammar in the intermediate L2 group. The discussion of the data concerns the preference of explicit subjects over null subjects. In Italian, an explicit subject is not strictly speaking ungrammatical in these contexts; nonetheless, it is not pragmatically correct as also confirmed by the native speakers' group.

In the Grammaticality Judgement Task (GJT) the participants were presented with 25 written Italian sentences, which they had to evaluate (the given options were: good/not good/I don't know). An additional space for possible comments was included on the answer sheet (see Appendix 2 for the tasks). Only items concerning null/overt subject interpretation were considered: 6 items were sentences with overt subjects and 3 items had null subjects. The following graph shows the results.

Figure 3.6 - GJT for Null/Overt Subjects



	NULL SUBJECTS	OVERT SUBJECTS
ACCEPTED	96,7% (29/30)	48,4% (29/60)
NOT ACCEPTED	3,4% (1/30)	43,4% (26/60)[10]

If knowledge of the *pro*-drop properties of the L2 were solidly in place, we would expect acceptance of null subjects on a par with rejection of overt subjects in the contexts under investigation; but this is not the case here: the results show that while a null subject is correctly accepted at above chance level in a target-like fashion, the presence of an overt subject is not overwhelmingly rejected. Once again, the gathered data confirm that the interlanguage of adult L2ers is more prone to variability and that overt subjects in particular are more easily produced and accepted.

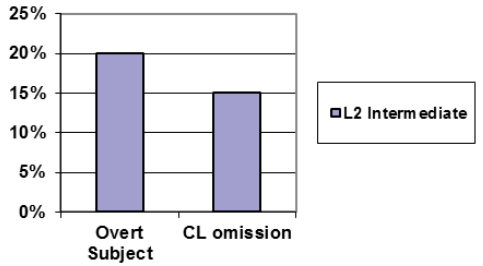
As for the Translation Task (TT), a set of 20 items was created with the main aim of investigating in particular the production of null/overt 3rd person subjects (6 items) and the use of clitic pronouns (6 items), plus 8 fillers. In (11) and (12) an illustration of the task for null/overt subjects and clitic pronouns respectively is provided:

(11) a. Anna ja Mirko ovat sairaita. He eivät lähde huomenna Italiaan.
b. Anna e Mirko sono malati. ___ non partono per l´Italia domani.
'Anna and Mirko are sick. They will not go to Italy tomorrow.'

(12) a. En ole nähnyt hanta eilen.
b. Non l'ho visto ieri.
'I didn't see him yesterday.'

Overall, overt subjects are produced at a rate of 20% in contexts in which a null subject would be the pragmatically correct choice in L1 Italian. Clitic pronouns are omitted in only 15% of cases, thus showing good knowledge of pronominal clitic forms even though not in a native-like way, in contrast to the elicitation task, in which the occurrence of clitics was rather poor.

Figure 3.7 - Non Target Patterns in the Translation Task



The results of these written tasks suggest a "task effect": the GJT and the TT do not seem to straightforwardly reveal the residual difficulties at

[10] 5 answers were invalid ("I don't know").

the discourse-syntax interface at this level of attainment. Written offline tasks of the type used here typically activate metalinguistic consciousness (about grammar and rules) and allow the participant to retrieve information in a different way with respect to the online tasks, such as oral elicitation. As a matter of fact, oral elicitation tasks of the sort used here seem to be more accurate in pinpointing the (residual) problematic areas (cf. Ellis 2003, 2005, among others).

3.3 *Final Remarks on L2 Grammars*

Both the very advanced and the intermediate Italian L2 groups are shown to have a divergent grammar from the target one, and their divergence is crucially visible in the different exploitation of the low vP-peripheral focus position dedicated to new information subjects. Crucially, and consistently with previous research, the correct distribution of new information subjects concerns a grammar domain which is at the interface between discourse and syntax, an attested locus for divergence between the L2 and the target grammar and for optionality in L2 grammars. Summing up the individual results for the L2 intermediate group, it can be observed in Table 3.1 that the control group and the L2 intermediate group have a quite homogeneous pattern, while there are some major discrepancies within the advanced L2 group: even if the tendency is that of a high rate (even though not native-like) of VS-type answers, the interlanguage of single speakers may differ in a significant way.

Table 3.3 - Individual Data for Advanced and Intermediate L2ers

Subject	VS	SV	Group
S1	100%	0%	Control
S2	92%	5%	Control
S3	100%	0%	Control
S4	95%	3%	Control
S5	100%	0%	Control
S6	100%	0%	Control
S7	97%	0%	Control
S8	100%	0%	Control
S9	97%	0%	Control
S10	95%	5%	Control
S11	100%	0%	Control
S12	97,1%	2,9%	Control
S13	70,6%	20,6%	Control
S14	76,5%	17,6%	Control
S15	79,4%	14,7%	Control

S16	14,7%	85,3%	L2 Advanced
S17	100%	0%	L2 Advanced
S18	12,5%	76,5%	L2 Advanced
S19	100%	0%	L2 Advanced
S20	79,4%	14,7%	L2 Advanced
S21	82,4%	17,6%	L2 Advanced
S22	94,1%	5,9%	L2 Advanced
S23	64,7%	20,6%	L2 Advanced
S24	85,3%	14,7%	L2 Advanced
S25	26,5%	67,6%	L2 Advanced
S26	67,6%	26,5%	L2 Advanced
S27	76,5%	11,8%	L2 Advanced
S28	70,6%	29,4%	L2 Advanced
S29	17,6%	35,3%	L2 Advanced
S30	52,9%	23,5%	L2 Advanced
S31	6,1%	75,8%	L2 Intermediate
S32	0%	90,9%	L2 Intermediate
S33	0%	93,9%	L2 Intermediate
S34	9,1%	81,8%	L2 Intermediate
S35	15,2%	81,8%	L2 Intermediate
S36	0%	93,9%	L2 Intermediate
S37	0%	100%	L2 Intermediate
S38	3%	97%	L2 Intermediate
S39	0%	97%	L2 Intermediate
S40	75,8%	14,7%	L2 Intermediate

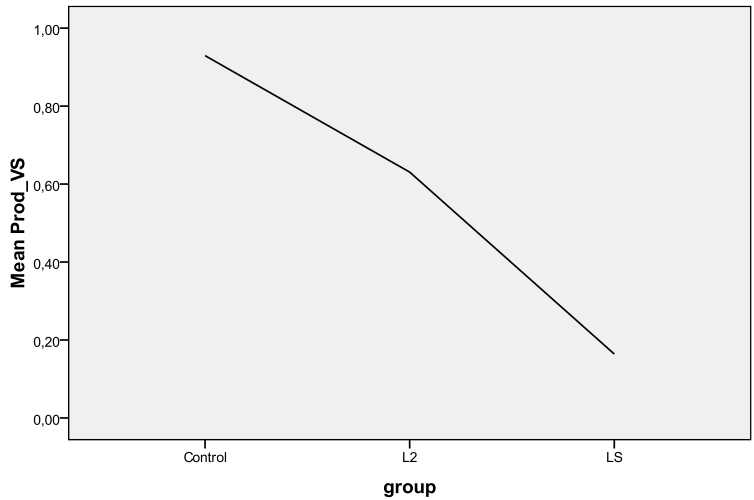
The individual differences observed in very advanced L2 speakers may be explained in various ways, taking the role of extra-linguistic factors into account: some speakers are more motivated to acquire the L2 correctly, or more sensitive to the input or could have a better language aptitude; others may simply receive a reduced input (poorer in terms of quality and quantity). Another important aspect in very advanced adult L2 speakers is the steady state possibly reached in some aspects of their interlanguage. This state, which does not involve all L2 speakers and is usually restricted to some aspects of the L2 grammar, is also referred to as "fossilization" (Selinker 1972) or "stabilization" (see Long 2003 for discussion), as introduced in § 1.2. "Fossilization" can be defined as a permanent non-native state of the interlanguage grammar characterized by the use of non-target forms and their stabilization in the L2 grammar. Long (2003) suggests that the term "stabilization" is preferable since "fossilization" refers to something that is hardly developing anymore. It is however difficult to assess if a particular

phenomenon in the interlanguage of L2 learners has completely stopped developing or if it is a temporary (even if very long) state.

A striking difference between the advanced L2 speakers of Italian and the intermediate group consists in the availability of different answering strategies: intermediate L2 speakers tend to transfer the SV strategy from the L1 and do not adopt the VS target-like strategy, nor are other options exploited. In contrast, the advanced L2 group adopts a wider range of grammatical choices with respect to both the L1 control group and the intermediate L2 group.

A statistical analysis (one-way ANOVA) was run for the production of VS structures in the three different populations (controls, L2 advanced and L2 intermediate).[11] The data analysis shows that the production of VS is significantly different across groups, $F(2,37) = 29{,}529$; $p < 0.001$, as shown in the following figure:

Figure 3.8 - VS Production across Groups



[11] Successively, also a mixed model was implemented in order to obtain a more rigorous analysis. The results confirm that there is a main effect for group in the production of SV and VS structures: L2 highly advanced (near-native) speakers produce significantly more VS structures with respect to L2 intermediate speakers. No interaction effects were observed between SV/VS and verb types across groups.

	Estimate	*SE*	*z value*	*Pr(>|z|)*
Intercept	1.42	0.78	1.82	0.067
Group	-5.79	1.39	-4.16	3.15e-05 ***

The results confirm the pattern observed in previous research (Belletti and Leonini 2004; Belletti *et al.* 2007): although advanced L2 speakers adopt the VS strategy to a significantly higher extent than intermediate L2 speakers, they still show a non-native-like use of postverbal subjects. Note that the advanced L2 speakers with Finnish L1 used the VS target-like strategy to a sensibly wider extent when compared to the results in Belletti *et al.* (2007) from near-native speakers of Italian with English as their L1 (namely a consistent non null subject language), as illustrated in Table 3.4.

Table 3.4 - Production of VS Structures in Near-Native Grammars

	Highly advanced L2 Italian (Dal Pozzo 2011)	Near-Native L2 Italian (Belletti *et al.* 2007)
Transitive verbs	60,4% (171/283)	14% (24/170)
Unaccusative verbs	66,7% (40/60)	32% (27/85)
Unergative verbs	68,8% (97/141)	34% (58/170)

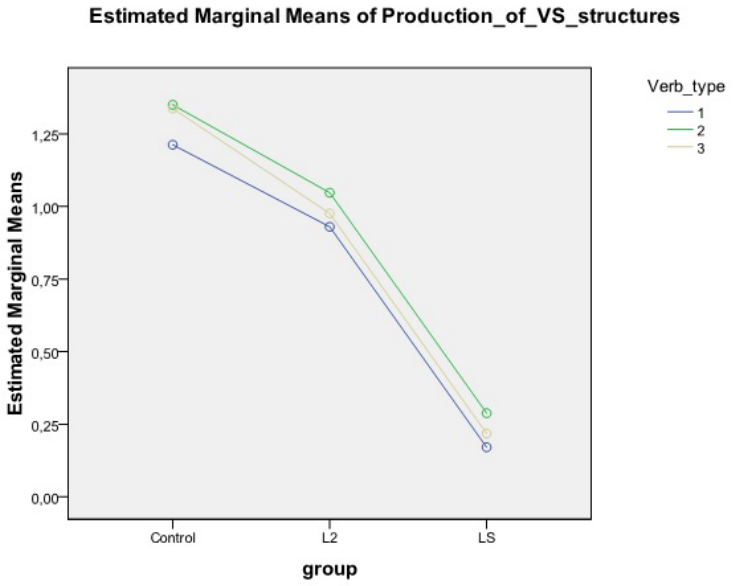
The reasons for this discrepancy could be multiple. From a syntactic point of view, one could reasonably argue that the different nature of English and Finnish regarding the null subject parameter could have influenced its "resetting" in the interlanguage of the L2ers. The issue is left for future research. Note also that due to the pilot nature of both studies the reasons for such differences could also be (at least partially) ascribed to individual and extra-linguistic variables such as motivation, education level, etc., as discussed in Chapter 1.

In Belletti *et al.* (2007) it was suggested that the non-target-like production of SV structures (interpreted as a *transfer* effect from the L1) together with the availability of null referential subjects proved to be evidence for the dissociation in the interlanguage of the L2ers between the formal licensing conditions (of *pro*) on the one hand, and the discourse conditions (activating the vP-periphery for new information subjects) on the other hand. The data in the present study further supports this analysis in two ways: (i) although it is clear that the discourse conditions for the activation/full exploitation of the vP-periphery are harder to pin down and integrate into the L2 interlanguage grammar, the present data refines the discussion on the divergence of native and non-native grammars; in particular, our results suggest that the focus position in the vP-periphery is not completely unavailable to highly advanced L2 speakers of a PNSL such as Finnish (recall that it is exploited in the L1 in cleft structures, § 3.5.2), as evident especially from the performance of subject S17 and S19 in Table 1 above; (ii) from the comparison of the intermediate and ad-

vanced L2 speakers, we can observe that the activation of the vP-peripheral focus position is a process which seems to take place in a progressive way in adult L2 acquisition.

Furthermore, the effect of the verb type on the VS production across the three groups was observed by means of one-way ANOVA. Data analysis shows no significant effect, as represented in the graph below. In previous findings (cf. Belletti and Leonini 2004; Belletti *et al.* 2007) a less extended use of VS with transitive verbs was observed, mainly due to the difficulty represented by clitic pronouns for L2 learners of Italian. Finally, a significant effect for groups emerged ($F(2,27) = 18{,}753$; $p < 0.001$).

Figure 3.9 - Production of VS Structures for Verb Type across Groups



Let us make a final note on VS structures in existential *ci*-constructions: all L2 speakers in the present study correctly produce VS structures in this kind of context, independently of the level of attainment in the L2. Again, this is consistent with previous findings, in which it was moreover observed that the VS order was produced in *ci*-existential sentences, independently of the L1 (Belletti and Leonini 2004; Belletti *et al.* 2007).

Turning now to object clitic pronouns, we checked their use and the distribution of clitic pronouns in advanced and intermediate L2ers. In addition, the presence of the clitic in the question was considered to test whether it affects the use of a clitic pronoun in the answer. Three groups were considered: advanced L2 speakers, intermediate L2 speakers and an Italian L1 control group. The analysis of the results shows a significant

effect for groups, $F(2,47) = 10,255$; $p \leq 0.001$. As expected, controls differ from both Advanced and Intermediate L2 learners. Interestingly, an effect for the question type was also observed across groups, $F(1,27) = 31,598$; $p \leq 0.001$. Hence, the presence of the clitic in the question influences the use of object clitic pronouns in the answer.

3.4 *Data on Bilingual Finnish-Italian Children and Italian L1 Children*

The research on answering strategies and the use of postverbal subjects was further extended to young Finnish/Italian bilingual children (n=3)[12] and monolingual Italian controls (n=3) (see Appendix 1), who were all tested in Italian. The aim of the implementation of the video task was twofold: firstly, providing new data observing the pattern that could emerge for answering strategies on the subject of new information contexts, which is a new domain of research in bilingualism, to my knowledge, at least for the Finnish/Italian language pair. Secondly, the monolingual Italian control group provides new data on the developmental path as for the occurrence of postverbal subjects under the proposed circumstances. Both children groups were tested using an adaptation of the video test, namely an oral elicitation task with plasticised cartoons (cf. § 1.5.1 for the description of the task).

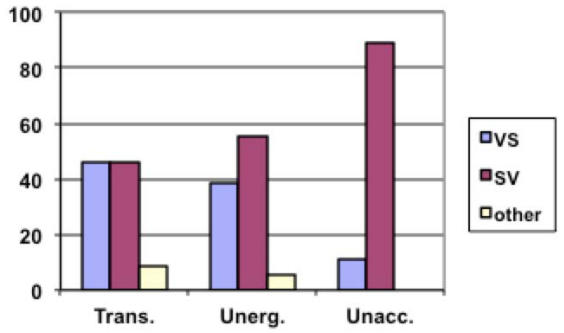
3.4.1 *New Information Subjects in Bilingual Children*

The results show that the SV strategy is the preferred choice, even though postverbal subjects are instantiated, although at a low rate, from early on. In light of the different properties of Italian and Finnish for answering strategies concerning the new information subjects previously discussed, the availability of postverbal subjects in the bilingual data show sensitivity to the discourse-pragmatic factors playing a role in their distribution. Moreover, this indicates the activation of the relevant new information focus position. An interesting pattern emerges from the individual data given below: the use of new information subjects in VS structures sensibly increases[13] with age.

[12] More children were actually tested, including some younger than five years of age but the gathered data could not be considered valid because the answers mostly consisted in a full DP only. In fact, it was extremely hard to administrate the task below the age of 3 and to obtain answers longer than one word.

[13] In the production of M. (age 5; 2)there is only one instance of a postverbal subject. The child's speech was further elicited through a story telling task (picture description) which confirmed the availability of postverbal subjects, even if at a sensibly lower rate with respect to preverbal subjects (14 SV, 2 VS).

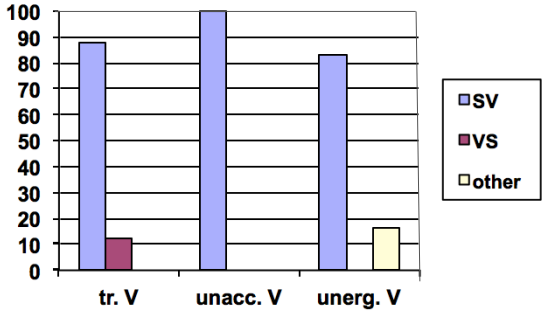
Figure 3.10 - Rates of SV/VS Production in Bilingual Children



	Transitive Verbs	Unaccusative Verbs	Unergative Verbs
VS	45,85% (11/24)	11,1% (2/18)	38,9% (7/18)
SV	45,85% (11/24)	88,9% (16/18)	55,6% (10/18)
Other	8,3% (2/24)	--	5,5% (1/18)

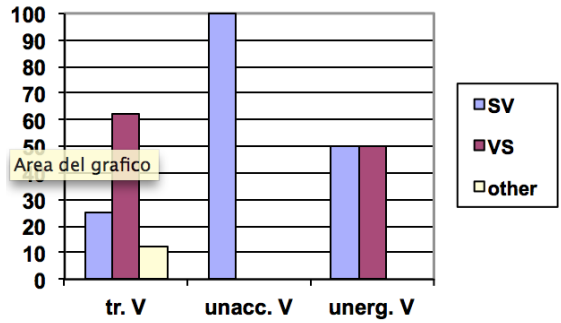
Individual data on bilingual Finnish/Italian children:

Figure 3.11 - Rates of SV/VS Strategies for M. aged 5;2



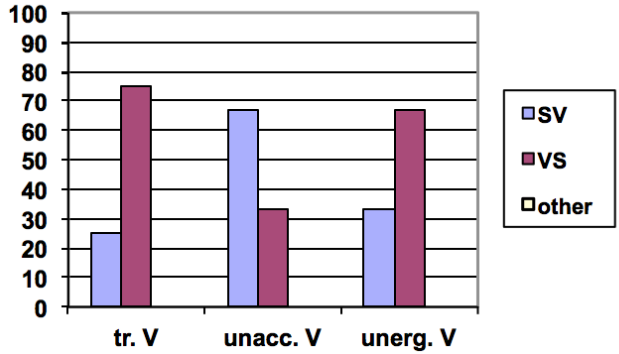
	Transitive Verbs	Unaccusative Verbs	Unergative Verbs
SV(O(DP))	50% (4/8)	100% (6/6)	83,3% (5/6)
SO(cl)V	25% (2/8)	--	--
(O(cl))VS	12,5% (1/8)	--	--
Non valid	12,5% (1/8)	--	16,7% (1/6)

Figure 3.12 - Rates of SV/VS Strategies for J. aged 5;6



	Transitive Verbs	Unaccusative Verbs	Unergative Verbs
SV(O(DP))	25% (2/8)	100% (6/6)	50% (3/6)
VO(DP)S	12,5% (1/8)	--	--
(O(cl))VS	50% (4/8)	--	50% (3/6)
Non valid	12,5%(1/8)	--	--

Figure 3.13 - Rates of SV/VS Strategies for C. aged 8;2



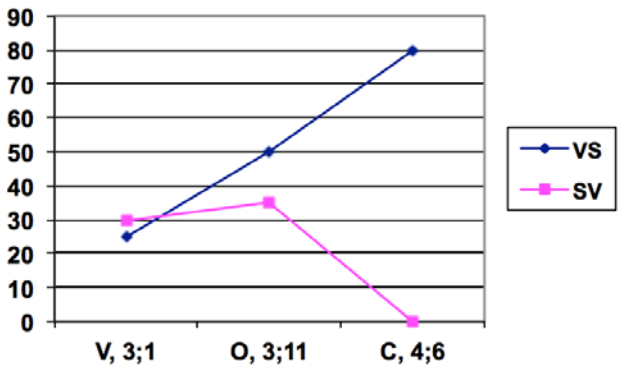
	Transitive Verbs	Unaccusative Verbs	Unergative Verbs
SV(O(DP))	25% (2/8)	66,7% (4/6)	33,3% (2/6)
VO(DP)S	25% (2/8)	--	--
(O(cl))VS	50% (4/8)	33,3% (2/6)	66,7% (4/6)

Comparing the bilingual data with the monolingual child data, it seems that a similar developmental path can be observed: in both child groups the occurrences of VS structures sensibly increase with time. It is plausible to assume that the development of syntactic properties and the maturation of other cognitive factors involved in language acquisition, together with the obvious prolonged exposure to the input, are highly relevant in the distribution of preverbal and postverbal subjects. The investigation concerning the developmental aspects in the discourse-pragmatics domain of child bilingualism is an interesting domain of research that needs to be further extended.

3.4.2 *New Information Subjects in Monolingual Italian Children*

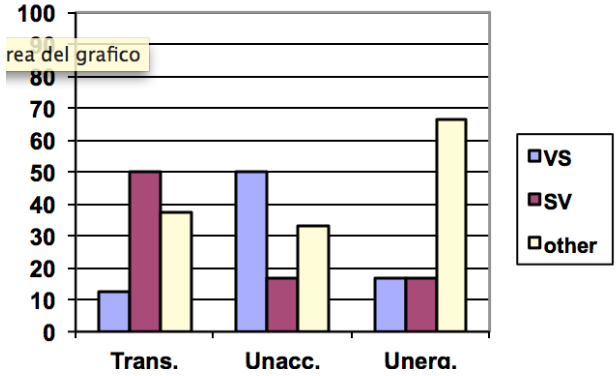
In addition to the results from the bilingual population, the data from the monolingual Italian control group seem to be quite interesting as well. As noted, gathering this kind of elicited spoken data required much effort with young children, as "multi-word" answers are hard to elicit in SNI contexts and one-word answers such as "Who arrives? – Mickey Mouse" are more easily obtained. The data were collected in young preschool children (n=3), whose ages were 3;1, 3;11 and 4;6 respectively, at the time of testing. Again, there seems to be a clear developmental path from the youngest child to the oldest one, as illustrated in the graph below. Specifically, the production of postverbal subjects in (Ocl)VS structures increases with age, even though they are not completely absent in the production of the youngest child (age 3; 1). Individual data is given below the descriptive graph.

Figure 3.14 - Rates of Postverbal Subjects in Child L1 Italian



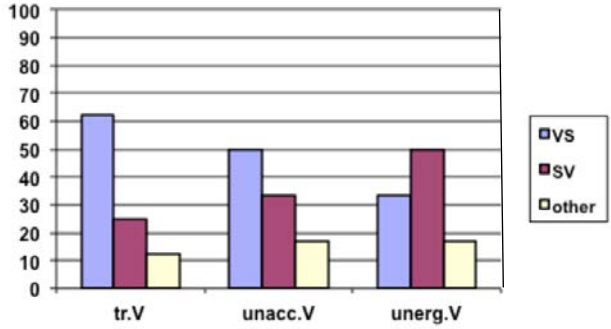
Individual data (monolingual Italian L1):

Figure 3.15 - Rates of SV/VS Strategies for V. aged 3;1



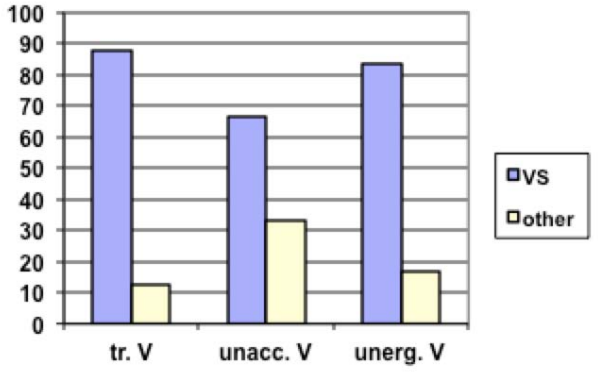
	Transitive Verbs	Unaccusative Verbs	Unergative Verbs
SV(O(DP))	50% (4/8)	16,7% (1/6)	16,66% (1/6)
(O(cl))VS	12,5% (1/8)	50% (3/6)	16,66% (1/6)
Non valid	37,5% (3/8)	33,3% (2/6)	66,66% (4/6)

Figure 3.16 - Rates of SV/VS Strategies for O. aged 3;11



	Transitive Verbs	Unaccusative Verbs	Unergative Verbs
SV(O(DP))	25% (2/8)	33,3% (2/6)	50% (3/6)
VO(DP)S	37,5% (3/8)	--	--
(O(cl))VS	25% (2/8)	50% (3/6)	33,3% (2/6)
Non valid	12,5% (1/8)	16,7% (1/6)	16,7% (1/6)

Figure 3.17 - Rates of SV/VS Strategies for C. aged 4;6



	Transitive Verbs	Unaccusative Verbs	Unergative Verbs
SV(O(DP))	--	--	--
VO(DP)S	25% (2/8)	--	--
(O(cl))VS	62,5% (5/8)	66,7%(4/6)	83,3% (5/6)
Non valid	12,5% (1/8)	33,3 % (2/6)	16,7% (1/6)

3.4.3 *Discussion*

From an acquisitional perspective, the Italian speaking child has to learn not only the syntactic constraints related to preverbal and postverbal subjects but also the discourse-pragmatic factors that regulate their distribution[14]. Similarly to other Romance null subject languages (see Villa-García 2011 for Spanish and the references therein), the factors related to discourse play a crucial role in the production (and acquisition) of null/overt subjects.[15] In particular, recent research on Spanish shows the difficulty in pinpointing the developmental path in the acquisition of postverbal subjects by Spanish-speaking children. Let us refer to just

[14] In Lorusso (2006) it is showed that children tend to produce significantly more overt subjects (generally in postverbal position) with unaccusative verbs than with transitive and unergative verbs, showing thus sensitivity to verb types and to the locus where the subject is generated.

[15] Cf. Serratrice (2005) on the distribution of null and overt subjects in a longitudinal study. The overall results show that Italian children are sensitive from an early age (MLW 2.0) to discourse pragmatic constraints that regulate the distribution of null/overt subjects in NSLs. Hence, it is suggested, that discourse pragmatic factors should be taken into account in models of language development, since only syntactic-based or performance deficit-based approaches cannot fully explain the observed acquisitional facts.

a few of the relevant studies. On the basis of the longitudinal data collected from a bilingual Spanish/English child, Casielles *et al.* (2006) propose that postverbal subjects are easier to be used for a Spanish speaking child since they stay *in situ* and thus need less effort from a computational point of view (no movement is involved, as opposed to preverbal subjects that move to TP and are assumed to be acquired later). Grinstead (1998, 2000), comes to different conclusions showing that in Catalan and Mexican-Spanish preverbal and postverbal subjects appear simultaneously in the production of young children. Similar findings upholding the assumption of a simultaneous emergence of preverbal and postverbal subjects are also reported in Villa-García (2011), and the results are corroborated by robust statistical evidence. A common point to their studies is that children seem to be sensitive to information structure from an early age, an assumption that we also adopt in the present work, in line with Serratrice (2005) and others.

In the collected bilingual Finnish/Italian and Italian L1 child data, postverbal subjects are produced from early on. An increase in the production of VS structure is evident with age, as illustrated in Figure 3.16. However, this does not seem to be the case in which postverbal subjects are acquired later with respect to preverbal subjects, as from the individual data we see that the former are already produced the age of 3; 1, thus showing sensitivity to the subtle discourse-syntax interface properties under investigation. This is a welcome output in light of the aforementioned observations on Spanish. We can conclude that, although children are sensitive to discourse factors related to new information focus since an early age, the complete mastery of the syntax-discourse properties that regulate the activation of the low vP-peripheral focus position (and in relation with the preverbal EPP position) is prone to maturational constraints.

3.5 *Summary*

The first part of the chapter presented and discussed data coming from highly advanced and intermediate L2 speakers concerning the focalization of new information subjects, which is related to the possible activation of the dedicated focus position in the L2 interlanguage grammar, the production of clitic pronouns and the potential overuse of overt subjects. The second part of the chapter was dedicated to bilingual Italian/Finnish and monolingual Italian child L1 data on answering strategies in contexts in which the subject is new information. In addition to providing novel data on both adult L2 and child bilingual and monolingual L1 acquisition, the overall results strengthen the relevance of discourse factors in the domain of language development investigated here.

4

DATA FROM FINNISH L2 AND L1 LANGUAGE ATTRITION

Chapter 3 focused on L2 Italian, Finnish/Italian bilingual and Italian monolingual child data. In this chapter we will now turn our attention to data collected from two other groups of participants using the Finnish version of the elicitation task. First the interlanguage of Finnish L2ers (L1 Italian) will be investigated and then possible attrition phenomena in Finnish L1 by very advanced (near-native) speakers of L2 Norwegian will be discussed.

4.1 *Finnish L2*

The Finnish adaptation of the video test was administered to 10 native speakers of Italian who have been studying Finnish as a foreign language for 1-2 academic years at the time of data collection at the University of Florence, Italy.

Table 4.1 - Participants: Finnish L2ers

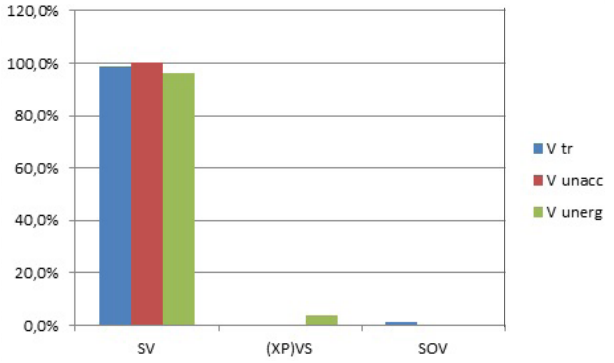
Finnish L2	
Number of Participants	10
Age (mean)	22,1 years
Length of Exposure (mean)	1,7 years

The L2 speakers are university students who have been exposed to a minimum of 80-120 hours of Finnish per year and, along the lines of previous discussions, their L2 proficiency thus relies to a great extent on explicit learning mechanisms. Specific comparative observations on the syntax and semantics of new information subjects have never been pointed out during teaching and, as we will see in Chapter 5, traditional course textbooks in general do not tackle the topic of (partial) null subjects in Finnish.

In light of the previous observations, it would not be unexpected to observe some crosslinguistic influence from the L1 Italian to the L2 Finnish at the syntax-discourse interface. Figure 4.1 reports the overall results for the three verb classes and the sentence in (1) shows a typical answer in Finnish L2.

Lena Dal Pozzo, *New Information Subjects in L2 Acquisition: Evidence from Italian and Finnish*, ISBN (online) 978-88-6655-870-5 , CC 2015 Firenze University Press

Figure 4.1 - Answering Strategies in Finnish Low-Intermediate L2



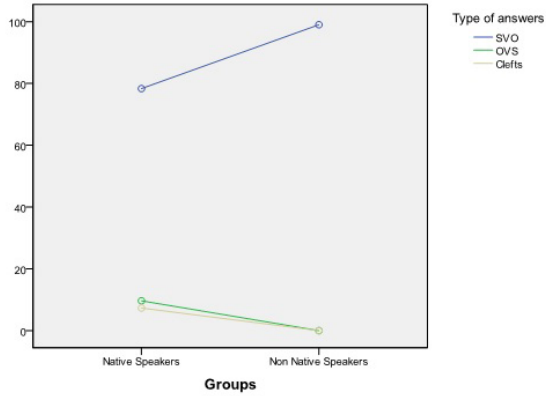
	Transitive	Unaccusative	Unergative
SV	98,5% 195/198	100% 30/30-	96,3% 105/109
VS	-	-	3,7% 4/109
SO(DP)V	0,5% 1/198		-
SO(PR)V	1 % 2/198		

(1) a. Kuka kaatui portaissa?
who fell down the stairs

b. Mies kaatui portaissa.
a man fell down on the stairs

Interestingly, no crosslinguistic influence is observed: the L2 speakers show a highly target-like pattern and resort mainly to SV(O). Moreover, the results hint at the fact that at this level of attainment the interlanguage grammar has less available strategies, as opposed to what we observed for Finnish L1 and for highly advanced (near-native) L2 speakers of Italian, who adopted a wider set of grammatical options than the native speakers of Finnish. The comparison of the Finnish L1 and Finnish L2 groups is shown in Figure 4.2 below (Significant effect for type of answers $F(2,46) = 122,263$; $p \leq 0.000$; effect size 0,842; observed power 1. Analyses of contrasts show that SVO differs significantly from OVS and Clefts ($F(1,23) = 114,057$; $p \leq 0.000$; effect size 0,842; observed power 1).

Figure 4.2 - Comparison of Native and Non Native Production



The preferred structure to which low-intermediate speakers of L2 Finnish resort is SV(O) at an above chance level. Thus, in the L2 interlanguage the subject is focalized *in situ* in the preverbal position in a target-like way (see Chapter 2 for discussion on the focalization of new information subjects in Finnish L1). The (XP)VS and cleft strategies, which are possible in L1 Finnish, as we observed in Chapter 2, are never adopted. In three cases the L2 speakers make use of the SOV structure, in which the old information object moves to a higher topic position across the verb and the subject is focalized as new information in preverbal position.

Italian speakers of Finnish L2 show a diametrically opposed pattern with respect to Finnish intermediate L2 speakers of Italian. Regarding the interlanguage grammar of the latter group, we observed a strong phenomenon of transfer from the L1 Finnish resulting in the focalization of the new information subject in preverbal (*in situ*) position. We remind that the pattern was still noticeable as residual transfer at a highly advanced level of attainment. On the contrary, L2ers of Finnish resort to the target-like pattern in L2 production. At this point, it seems important to investigate on a possible explanation of the differences between the two non-advanced L2 groups and try to see why only Italian L2 is affected by transfer. Recent studies on the production and comprehension of null/overt subjects in L2 acquisition show that the common non-target pattern in L2ers consists in overusing overt pronominal subjects, while no specific problems emerged with the correct production and comprehension of null forms. The same pattern was also observed in the interpretation of overt pronominal subjects in embedded clauses, for both backward and forward anaphora contexts (Sorace and Filiaci 2006). Hence, the non-target pattern appears to be unidirectional: overt subjects can be overused (thus replacing null subjects), but it is never shown that null subjects can replace overt forms in L2

grammars (see also Belletti *et al.* 2007). In (2) we provide an illustration of the above mentioned contexts (drawn from Sorace and Filiaci 2006):

(2) L'anziana signora saluta la ragazza quando lei/__ attraversa la strada.
the old lady waves at the girl when she/__ crosses the road

In the present study, these facts are correlated to the correct reformulation of the *pro*-drop properties in the L2 interlanguage grammars reflected in the use of VS structures in L2 Italian and of other strategies besides SV(O) in Finnish L2 (namely XPVS and cleft constructions). In both L2 Italian groups, the SV(O) structure is still widely adopted, in particular by the intermediate L2 group who produced more SV(O) structures than highly advanced speakers of L2 Italian. As expected, intermediate L2ers' interlanguage is also characterized by a wider use of overt subjects. These facts and the wide use of SV(O) structures in Finnish L2 confirm the above-mentioned observation that whenever a NSL and NNSL (or as here, a PNSL) are involved, L2 speakers are more prone to produce overt subjects in a NNSL-way. This is related to the large percentage of *in situ* focalization and the consequent weaker availability of FI/VS, as it emerged in the present data.

The L2 Finnish data show fewer available options when compared to native speakers of Finnish, differently from L2 Italian. Notice that it might be the case that (at this level of attainment) L2 speakers of Finnish have acquired Finnish as a non-null subject language rather than a partial null subject language. This is also suggested by the reduced quantity and by the quality of the input they are exposed to: under a close scrutiny, the main textbooks used in the language courses overwhelmingly provide instances of SV structures and use of overt subjects for all persons (cf. Chapter 5). Consequently, it would not be surprising to find an above chance exploitation of the SV strategy rather than other available options in SNI contexts, in a similar way to English.

4.2 *Language Attrition: Finnish L1/Norwegian L2*

In this section, we will discuss data collected from 15 Finnish L1 adult speakers who have been consistently exposed to a second language, Norwegian, living in the L2 country.

Table 4.2 - Participants: Finnish L1 under Attrition

L1 under attrition: L1 Finnish/L2 Norwegian	
Number of Participants	15
Age (mean)	48,1 years
Length of Residence in Norway (mean)	22,1 years

The prolonged and intensive exposure to the L2 started in adulthood for all participants. Thus, the L1 grammar has possibly been affected by some language attrition phenomena, in other words the L2 might have influenced some aspects of the L1. The linguistic environment in which the Finnish speakers have been living for (minimum) 5 years at the time of data collection is predominantly Norwegian. The use of Finnish is confined to the home context (i.e. with children) or with other relatives and some friends. The "attrited" speakers are overall much more exposed to Norwegian than to Finnish, but their native tongue is nonetheless present and has an important role in their lives. It is worth taking into account that in the present study both languages are perceived as equal from a sociolinguistic point of view of *prestige value*. This might be relevant since it indicates that there is no need or motivation to disregard the L1 over the L2, an attitude that has often been observed in migrant communities (especially in the second generation), who purposefully try to integrate in the new linguistic and social community to the detriment of the L1. Language attrition has been a widely studied topic in various domains such as foreign language teaching, psycholinguistics, and sociolinguistics.[1] In sociolinguistic research, attrition concerns language shift, maintenance and change in situations of language contact of speech communities and/or individual speakers. The terminology that one can find in the existing literature can be very confusing as definitions such as "language change", "shift", "loss", and "attrition" are used differently by different authors; sometimes they are even interchangeable synonyms, for example de Bot's (2001) definition of "attrition" as the intragenerational language "loss". On the basis of the terminology adopted in the literature, Köpke (2002: 7) considers the following to be the main characteristics of language attrition (as opposed to the other language contact phenomena): it is individual, intragenerational, non-pathological, and it also affects linguistic competence, not only language use. Along the lines of Köpke (2002), we consider effects of language contact observed in an individual, and not only in a speech community, to also correspond to the definition of "attrition".

In the present study we will focus on the linguistic aspect, namely the restructuring of the L1 due to L2 contact.

Attrition itself has been classified in various types depending on what is "lost" and where (namely, the environment in which) it is "lost" (Van Els 1986: 4):

a) loss of L1 in an L1 environment (i.e. dialect or minority language loss, such as indigenous community languages, often for social and/or political reasons)

[1] For other attrition studies on Finnish see also Larmouth (1974), Halmari (2005).

b) loss of L1 in an L2 environment (i.e. immigrants who move to the L2 country to study/work)
c) loss of L2 in an L1 environment (i.e. foreign language loss)
d) loss of L2 in L2 environment (i.e. L2 loss by ageing migrants)

The first type of attrition is widely studied in sociolinguistics and it is also related to language policies on a political and/or social level of the community of the dominant language. The second type of attrition is the one the present study investigates, a typical situation for migrants who start learning the L2 in the L2 environment and keep little contact with the L1 speaking community. Our participants are adult L2 speakers who already had the L1 in place when they moved to the L2 country. In particular, we will focus on aspects concerning the syntax-discourse interface in order to observe what kind of influence the L2 could have had on the L1, if any. The third type of attrition is strictly related to foreign language learning in a teaching environment, but it is also marginally relevant for the discussion on early and late L2 development (see also Chapter 1). Finally, the L2 loss in the L2 environment is also called "language reversion". Older L2 speakers, especially if they have not reached a very advanced/near-native ultimate attainment, can show a regression in their L2 competence (cf. de Bot and Clyne 1989).

4.2.1 *Previous Studies*

L1 attrition is currently still a rather new domain of investigation, as it is often the L2 grammar which is investigated more than the L1 grammar under the influence of one (or more) languages. Until recently, the L1 grammar has been generally assumed to be more stable (and less interesting) with respect to the developing L2 grammar.

Sorace (2000) is one of the first studies which take into consideration attrition phenomena within the generative framework in SLA research. In particular, Sorace (2000) investigated the optionality that emerges in L1 attrition/L2 acquisition of English and Italian. The author considers that the [±interpretable] feature is relevant in terms of optionality and attrition. In the Minimalist framework, it is assumed that the distribution of null/overt subjects depends on an interpretable feature. Following this analysis, null subjects exist due to the phonological realization of agreement features and strong determiner features on the T(ense) head, which is an instance of uninterpretable features on the verb. Moreover, null subjects typically have a [-Topic Shift] feature, differently from overt subjects in NSL which are characterized by the [+Topic Shift] feature. Hence, the predictions are: on the one side, null subjects will not be affected by attrition and they will correctly occur; on the other side, overt subjects will occur in contexts in which a null subject would be expected, in other words they will be characterized by the [-Topic Shift] feature typical of

null subjects. Interestingly, Sorace claims that this pattern is expected not only in SLA but also in the context of L1 attrition, hence native speakers of Italian with a near native L2 competence in English will show overuse of overt forms in their L1 grammar on a par with the L2 interlanguage of native speakers of English with a near-native attainment in L2 Italian. These facts are explained in terms of "markedness", in other words null subjects are the marked form as opposed to overt subjects which are the unmarked form. In her work on L2 acquisition and L1 attrition, Gürel (2002) investigates the L1 attrition/L2 acquisition in different populations of English/Turkish speakers in both ways: first, how and to what extent may the L1 English influence the L2 Turkish and then conversely the L2 English influence on the L1 Turkish. The research concerns null pronouns and binding properties. Specifically, the author tests the Subset Condition first presented in Manzini and Wexler (1987) according to which L1 transfer effects persist in the L2 interlanguage grammar and vice-versa, the L2 grammar influences the L1 grammar whenever the "influencing language" (namely the L1 in L2 acquisition and the L2 in L1 attrition) is the superset of the affected language. On the other hand, when L1 as the "influencing language" is the subset of the L2, then L2 acquisition will not be consistently influenced (or not so much) by the L1 and the L1 will be better preserved and show less attrition effects from the L2. Languages can also be part of separate "sets", which means that a property α is part of the grammar A but not of the grammar B, hence no overlapping occurs and the property is assumed to be easier to maintain/acquire. An illustration of the Subset Principle[2] is the following: Turkish is the superset of English since Turkish has both null and overt pronouns, compared to English which only has overt pronouns. Hence, L1 speakers of Turkish/L2 English will not show (residual) transfer effects in the L2 but they are however expected to show L1 attrition effects and overuse overt forms in their L1. The results presented in Gürel (2002) suggest that the Subset Condition can explain various instances of transfer effects.

A third relevant study for our discussion is Tsimpli *et al.* (2004) who investigate the L1 of Italian and Greek speakers, respectively (both null subject languages) who have reached a near-native level in English (a non-null subject language). The focus of the study is the interpretation and production of null and overt subjects and of preverbal and postverbal subjects, which require a different parametric choice in Greek/Italian on the one side and in English on the other side. The tested hypothesis is that no attrition should be expected in uninterpretable syntactic aspects concern-

[2] The Subset Principle recalls Hulk and Müller's (2000) more specific hypothesis according to which crosslinguistic interference in bilingual children only takes place when a property α is present in language A and language B and thus overlaps in the two languages.

ing subjects, whereas attrition effects could emerge in the distribution and interpretation of null/overt and preverbal/postverbal subjects, which are regulated by discourse-pragmatic interpretable features. Hence, the investigation provides evidence for the assumption that whenever observable, syntactic attrition appears at the level of morphosyntactic features that are interpretable at the LF interface but does not affect uninterpretable features in the domain of narrow syntax (Tsimpli *et al*. 2004).

A related relevant work is the one carried out by Sorace (2005) on optionality in the L1 of speakers who have a near-native competence in another language. The study investigates the possible attrition effects from the L2 to the L1. Recall that at a near-native level purely syntactic features seem to be rather unproblematic whereas residual difficulty is attested at the interface levels, in particular at the discourse-syntax interface (see Chapter 3). Sorace (2005) shows that speakers who have been exposed to a second language for a long time show "emerging" optionality in their L1. Interestingly, the optionality phenomenon emerges at the same interface level as it was previously observed for near-native and highly advanced L2 learners, the syntax-discourse interface. In other words, the discourse features that may remain unspecified and thus appear to be problematic for very advanced/near native L2 speakers in their L2 interlanguage grammar are shown to be problematic for near-native speakers in their L1 grammar as well, differing from syntactic constraints which are properly retained (in L1 grammars) and acquired (in L2 grammars). The study of Sorace (2005) shows the (possible) parallelisms in optionality between the near-native L2 English of L1 Italian speakers and the L1 Italian of speakers who might show attrition effects from their L2 English. Moreover, other studies have shown that, with respect to the correct distribution of null/overt and preverbal/postverbal subjects, the same optionality pattern appears in the L1 grammar of speakers of L1 Italian-L2 English (near-native level) as well as in the L2 grammar of near-native speakers of Italian (Tsimpli *et al*. 2003, 2004; Belletti, Bennati and Sorace 2007). All this leads to the important generalization stated in Sorace (2005):

> *Narrow* vs *Interface* syntax:
>
> Features that are internal to the computational system of syntax proper are acquired successfully by adult L2 learners and are retained in the L1 under attrition; endstate (near-native) grammars converge with native grammars, and grammars under attrition do not diverge from monolingual grammars.
>
> Features that belong to the interface between syntax and other domains, such as the lexicon, discourse, or pragmatics, may never be completely acquired by L2 learners and may be vulnerable to the effects of attrition. It is among these features that one finds 'residual' L2 optionality due to the influence of the native language and 'emerging' optionality due to the influence of the second language.
>
> (Sorace 2005: 23)

With respect to the second point above, the analysis of individual data in Chapter 3, § 3.1 and 3.3 led us to suggest that very advanced L2 speakers can show target-like competence also at the discourse-syntax interface.

Following the approach presented in Sorace (2005), we can make the following predictions:

(i) Optionality is expected when the L1 instantiates the most "economical" option: for example, the use of referential subjects in English is more economical than in Italian, because only morphosyntactic knowledge is required in English whereas in Italian knowledge of the discourse-pragmatic conditions which regulate the distribution of referential subjects is also needed.

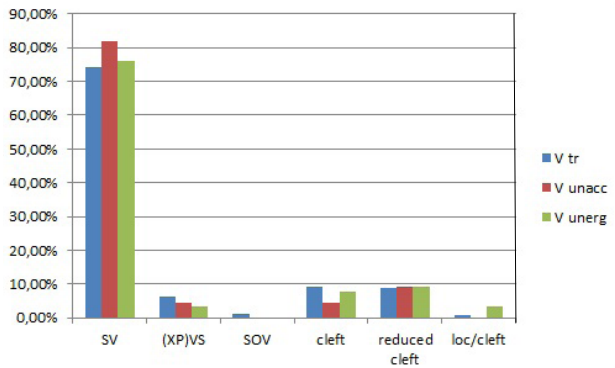
(ii) Whenever present, crosslinguistic influence is unidirectional as it goes from the less complex grammar to the more complex one, be it the L2 or the "attrited" L1 (e.g. can Norwegian be considered as a less complex or more economical language than Finnish with respect to the interpretation and production of new information subjects?)

(iii) An attrition effect might be expected from the L2 Norwegian to the L1 Finnish. What we can expect in the L1 under attrition is a wider set of grammatical options for focalizing the new information subject and/or a more robust use of the Norwegian-like preferred option in SNI contexts.

4.2.2 *Results and Discussion*

As already stated, data was gathered from two groups of participants: (i) Finnish L1 speakers under attrition (n=15) and (ii) a control group of Finnish L1 speakers (n=15). The same video task (Belletti and Leonini 2004, Chapter 1) adopted in the L2 studies previously presented in this work was used. Figure 4.3 shows the overall results.

Figure 4.3 - Answering Strategies under Attrition (L1 Finnish/L2 Norwegian)



[3] Invalid answers were excluded for all verb classes (transitive verbs: 30/301, unaccusative verbs:1/45, unergative verbs: 23/165).

	Transitive Verbs[3]	Unaccusative Verbs	Unergative Verbs
SV(O)	73,8% 200/271	81,8% 36/44	76,1% 108/142
VS	--	4,5% 2/44	3,5% 5/142
O(DP)S	1,5% 4/271	--	--
O(pr)VS	4,8% 13	--	--
SO(pr)V	1,1% 3/271	--	--
cleft	9,2% 25/271	--	7,7% 11/142
Reduced cleft	8,9% 24/271	--	9,2% 13/142
Existential cleft	0,7% 2/271	--	3,5% 5/142

The preferred answering strategy in L1 Finnish under attrition SNI contexts is SV(O). The XPVS order is present but sensibly less than in the Finnish L1 data, cf. Chapter 2, § 2.4 (where it represented the 10% of answers with transitive verbs, whereas here it is only adopted in 1,5% of the cases). The parallel AdvVS order, possible in Finnish L1 with unergative and unaccusative verbs, never emerges here. Note that a minor but relevant number of cleft structures were also adopted. Recall that clefts are not excluded in Finnish L1 and they are a grammatically and pragmatically correct option, even though they were used to a minor extent in the "attrited" L1 corpus as it is clear from the comparison with the relevant Finnish L1 data (see also Chapter 2, § 2.6):

Table 4.3 - Comparison of Answers in Finnish L1 and in Finnish L1 under Attrition (L2 Norwegian)

	Finnish L1	Attrited L1 (L2 Norwegian)
	(Reduced) Cleft	(Reduced) Cleft
Transitive Verbs	8 % (23/287)	18,1 % (49/270)
Unaccusative Verbs	4,7 % (2/43)	13,6 % (6/44)
Unergative Verbs	7,9 % (12/152)	16,9 % (24/142)

Interestingly, in Norwegian a reduced cleft seems to be the preferred choice for focalizing the subject as new information across verb classes under the investigated discourse-pragmatic conditions (as also discussed in Belletti 2009), as exemplified in (3)-(5):[4]

(3) a. Kem som kom?
who SOM came

b. Det var John.
it was John

(4) a. Hvem har åpna vinduet?
who has opened the window

b. Det var Maria.
it was Mary

(5) a. Hvem skreik?
who screamed

b. Det var Maria
it was Mary

In addition to reduced clefts, the other possible answers in such contexts for Norwegian are presented in the order of preference reported by the native speakers who were asked for judgement:

(6) a. Hvem har åpna vinduet?
who has opened the window

b. Det var Maria som gjorde det.
it was Maria who did it

c. Det var Maria som åpnet vinduet
it was Maria who opened the window

d. Maria gjorde det.
Maria did it

e. Maria åpnet vinduet.
Maria opened the window

Hence, besides reduced clefts all other type of clefts can be used in Norwegian for focalizing new information subjects and the canonical SV(O) order results as a possible but less natural option.

[4] The data on Finnish L1 under attrition and Norwegian L1 speakers' judgements were collected in the Northern part of Norway, in the area of Tromsø in Spring 2010. A special thank you goes to Kristine Bentzen and Per Erik Solberg for their help as native speakers of Norwegian.

Interestingly, structures which are not available in the L1 grammar are never adopted in the L1 under attrition. In fact, (reduced) clefts are a perfectly plausible answer in SNI contexts in monolingual Finnish, too. It follows that an answer of the type "Mary did it", which is typically present in Norwegian L1, never appears in the native grammar of L2 speakers of Norwegian, in a parallel way to monolingual Finnish L1, as it is not a pragmatically correct answer in Finnish. This is exemplified in (7).

(7) a. Kuka avasi ikkunan?
who opened the window

b. # Liisa teki sen.
Liisa did it

It might be worth noting that there are some individual differences between speakers. The preference for (reduced) cleft strategies was particularly strong in 4 speakers out of 15, but we can nevertheless say that the pattern was consistently present in this group of speakers, as only 2 out of 15 never produced (reduced) clefts. We can conclude that (reduced) cleft strategies were generally widely adopted across L1 Finnish speakers under attrition.

Overall, in the present study the L1 grammar (Finnish) under L2 (Norwegian) attrition does not seem to resort to more grammatical options than native speakers under no attrition do. This conclusion differs from what was observed for advanced L2 speakers, who showed a wider set of available grammatical choices in their interlanguage grammar. However, a certain influence from the L2 to the L1 is observed: the preferred option of the L2, which is a grammatical and pragmatically correct structure in the L1, is adopted to a wider extent than in the L1 corpus.

4.3 *Final Remarks*

Summing up, the results presented in this chapter attest an interesting parallelism between L2 acquisition and L1 attrition. In both acquisition domains, a residual transfer effect is attested. Transfer is intended here as the extension of the L1 options to the L2 (in L2 acquisition) and of the L2 options to the L1 (in L1 attrition), given that this would not violate grammatical constraints. An attrition effect is observed from the L2 Norwegian to the L1 Finnish, as the answering strategy mostly adopted in Norwegian is produced at a higher rate in the "attrited" L1 than in the monolingual Finnish group. Hence, the speakers tend to prefer the option which is shared by the L1 and the L2, an observation similar in spirit to Hulk and Müller's (2000) proposal for crosslinguistic interference in bilingual children (cf. Chapter 3, § 3.1.4), that was extended to adult L2 acquisition in the current study. Finally, the optionality observed in L1 Finnish under attrition can be interpreted in comparison to L2 data from the perspective of the relevance of input: the strength (in quantity and quality) of the input is crucial for both adult second language acquisition and for L1 maintenance or regression (cf. Sorace 2005).

5

FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE: SLA AND TEACHING*

This final chapter aims at introducing some of the relevant follow-ups that research in language development and more specifically in second language acquisition (SLA) can have in language teaching. Generally speaking, research in SLA can have direct applications in several fields, such as theoretical linguistics, language variation and language impairment studies. One of the most important related areas is second and foreign language teaching. In particular, three textbooks and one grammar book commonly used in Finnish L2 teaching will be examined, with special focus on the *pro*-drop property and on how and in which measure is the distribution of null and overt subjects taken into account in these textbooks.

5.1 *Introduction*

The present study is also set in the UG-based approach[1] adopted throughout the book. In short, it is assumed that the innate language faculty is separate from but interacts with other cognitive abilities, which makes it possible for the child to acquire the L1 in a systematic (and effortless) way through positive evidence present in the linguistic input, despite the complexity of the linguistic structures. L1 acquisition is thus constrained by the principles present in UG. In a similar way, L2 development is assumed to be UG constrained, even though to a different degree than L1 acquisition (cf. § 1.2 Schwartz and Sprouse 1994, 1996 and the Full Transfer/Full Access hypothesis, and Herschensohn 1998, 2000 and Constructionism, among others). It follows that the *quality* and *quantity* of input is highly relevant in L2 teaching, rather than the formal instruction of grammar rules.

* Parts of the results discussed in this Chapter have been previously published in «Grammatica & Didattica» 4, 2012b, Quaderni di Lavoro, Università di Padova: 42-59; online: <http://www.maldura.unipd.it/ddlcs/GeD/04DalPozzo-4.pdf> (07/2015).

[1] A different approach is represented for example by Cognitivism: language is considered as one of the "cognitive abilities" that humans develop by building patterns that are then strengthened through practice. Language is thus considered more as an instantiation of a behavioural pattern rather than a system of principles and parameters (Ellis and Schmidt 1997 and Myles 2002 for a brief review).

Lena Dal Pozzo, *New Information Subjects in L2 Acquisition: Evidence from Italian and Finnish*, ISBN (online) 978-88-6655-870-5 , CC 2015 Firenze University Press

In the last years, the focus of much L2 research has been on the aspects that may help the acquisition process and the development of the L2 interlanguage in explicit teaching contexts. Many studies have tested what kind of teaching, if explicit or implicit, and what kind of input is more effective in successful L2 acquisition, i.e. *input enhancement*, namely when the relevant aspect to be taught and learned is somehow highlighted in the input, or *input flood*, which relies on the amount of the received L2 input,.

Since Long's (1983) proposal that instruction makes a difference in L2 acquisition, when compared to naturalistic exposure, many studies on SLA and teaching have been undertaken. The most frequently addressed issues concern, among others, (i) the role of implicit and explicit teaching, the metalinguistic awareness in L2 acquisition, (i.e. is it more effective to draw learners' attention to relevant forms in the context of meaning-focussed lessons than to set the focus exclusively on meaning and content?); (ii) the role of negative feedback (positive/negative evidence in UG terms); (iii) the possibility of more effective results in successful L2 acquisition when the input is provided through psycholinguistically relevant ways rather than along the lines of explanations and practice traditional grammars; and (iv) the role of comprehension practice *vs* production practice for acquiring the relevant L2 structures.

Ortega and Norris (2001) identify three main lines of research addressing the issue whether L2 instruction can effectively influence, L2 development, and to what degree:

(i) no interface (starting from Krashen 1985; see also Paradis 1994): based on the fact that in all kinds of acquisition only positive evidence is present in the data; the scholars assume that profound linguistic competence is not affected by instruction.

(ii) weak interface (Sharwood-Smith 1993; De Graaff 1997 among others): under this approach, the processes of noticing and attention to stimuli are essential for a successful L2 acquisition: the acquisition of the L2 structures would be more successful if the relevant input stimulates further cognitive processing (e.g. through focalizing the attention of the L2er by contextualizing the L2 material in relevant episodes).

(iii) strong interface (McLoughlin 1990; De Keyser 1997 among others): implicit L2 knowledge may be successfully acquired through practice.

In their extensive work, Ortega and Norris (2001) review several studies carried out in the field of second language teaching between the '80s and the end of the '90s. They finally come to the conclusion that focused L2 instruction gives significantly better results (than e.g. exposure only) and that explicit types of instruction are more effective than implicit ones.[2] A

[2] The authors themselves acknowledge the difficulty of generalizing the observations and that a more "rigorous empirical operationalization" and "replication" of the L2 studies are needed (Ortega and Norris 2001:158).

typical explicit teaching approach may include rule instruction, practice and negative feedback, as opposed to an implicit approach, which may be based on simple exposure.

In the following section we aim at finding a correlation between the syntax-discourse aspects concerning focalization of new information subjects investigated in the various L2 groups discussed in this book and second/foreign language teaching issues. The topic might be particularly interesting, as it does not concern only core syntactic properties, i.e. grammatical "rules" generally taught in language classes, but an integration of syntactic and discourse-pragmatic competence in the L2 interlanguage grammar is required, something that is often left aside.

5.2 *Pro-drop and Word Order in Finnish L2 Textbooks*

Four textbooks dedicated to foreign learners of Finnish were examined: one grammar book which is (one of) the main point(s) of reference in Finnish L2 teaching, *Suomen kielioppia ulkomaalaisille* (Finnish grammar for foreigners, White 2006, henceforth SKU), and three widely adopted course books: *Kieli käyttöön 1* (Language in use, Kenttälä 2008, henceforth KK), *Hyvin Menee 1* (It's fine!, Heikkilä and Majakangas 2008, henceforth HM) and *Suomen kielen alkeisoppikirja* (Finnish beginner's book, Lepäsmaa and Silfverberg 2001, henceforth SKA). All books are entirely in Finnish and are not meant for learners of a specific language. The grammar book is intended for beginners as well as more advanced learners as it is organized in chapters which are complete units, each dealing with a specific topic (e.g. case morphology, interrogative pronouns, present tense, etc.). The three other textbooks address beginners starting from level A of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.[3] The first 10 units of each textbook were examined (except for the grammar book which was considered as a whole). In the current review, observations are narrowed down to the properties of the Finnish language that we have discussed in Chapter 2: Finnish has a basic SVO order, it can be defined as a partial null subject language (PNSL), along the lines of Holmberg *et al.* (2009), and it shows a flexible word order (Vilkuna 1995; Kaiser 2006 among others).

The peculiar distribution of null and overt pronominal subjects in Finnish is briefly described only in the grammar book and it is ignored in the three other textbooks taken into account here, in which the *pro*-drop property of Finnish is never discussed, neither as a descriptive rule nor in the examples and dialogues. A counterproposal could be that the use of overt pronominal forms at onset of a course book targeting beginner

[3] <http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/source/Framework_EN.pdf> (07/2015).

learners might be necessary to provide sufficient input to the L2 learner. In this way, pronominal forms and the corresponding verbal inflection are more easily acquirable. However, the occurrence of overt 1st and 2nd person subjects is not restricted to the first units, but it still occurs later on (e.g. Unit 13, p. 154 KK), even though a decrease in the use of overt forms is observable towards the end, as is evident, for example, in KK, Unit 18, p. 197. Null forms occur significantly more in progression in the HM book (cf. Unit 14, p. 115; some instances are already present in Unit 6, p. 55). Notice that the frequency of occurrence of overt pronominal forms is not a matter of colloquial *vs* standard register. Most of the samples at the beginning of the books reflect conversational situations, but the shortened (nominal and verbal) forms typical of (non-null subject) colloquial Finnish are not used. It appears that the course books, at least at the beginning, seem to treat Finnish as a non-null subject language (NNSL), on a par with English, for example. None of the three course books pays much attention to the following facts: (i) first and second person subject pronouns can be null or overt depending on the contrastive/emphatic value in the discourse; hence discourse-pragmatic rules govern their use (similarly to what happens in NSLs); and (ii) in contrast, third person subjects obey syntactic rules and need to be overt, except under the special circumstances outlined in Chapter 2. The only book in which a decrease in the use of overt subject is noticeable is SKA, especially from Unit 7 onwards.

The following examples illustrate the (over)use of overt 1st and 2nd person pronominal forms in non-contrastive contexts where a null form would be preferred as pragmatically more appropriate:

(1) **Minä** olen japanilainen opiskelija. **Minä** opiskelen keramiikkaa. **Minä** olen 29-vuotias. [...]
'I am (a) Japanese student. I study ceramics. I am 29 years old. [...].'
(KK: 28)

(2) **Me** olimme viime tiistaina Tallinnassa ja toissapäivänä **minä** olin Tukholmassa. [...]
'Last Tuesday we were in Tallinn and the day before yesterday I was in Stockholm. [...]'
(HM: 30)

In the grammar book it is mentioned that "Kun 1. ja 2. persoonan pronominit ovat lauseen subjektina, ne voidaan jättää pois, ellei niitä haluta erityisesti korostaa. 3. persoonan pronominit pannaan näkyviin" (SKU 2006: 115; it is possible not to use 1st and 2nd person pronouns when they are the subject of the clause, except if a special stress is needed. On the

other hand, 3rd person subjects need to be highlighted)[4]. A descriptive account is therefore adopted and the *pro*-drop property for 1st and 2nd person pronouns is correctly depicted. Overt pronouns contrast with the null counterparts in the same way as in null subject languages, namely in terms of stress (focus): null pronominal forms are considered neutral in contrast to overt forms that are interpreted as stressed/focalized. Third person pronouns are non-*pro*-drop and their distribution is constrained by syntax (cf. Chapter 2, § 2.2). Even if overt forms occur sensibly less in later Units of the textbooks, the different interpretation of null and overt pronouns is never taken into account and overt subjects can frequently be found in contexts in which they are not contrastively stressed, as exemplified in (3) and (4):

(3) **Minä** olen Markku Kääriäinen. **Minä** asun pikkukaupungissa. **Minä** asun Länsi-Suomessa. […] **Me** asumme yhdessä valkoisessa kerrostlossa. […]
'I am Markku Kääriäinen. I live in a small city. I live in West Finland. […] We live in a white block of flats. […]'

(KK: 154)

(4) **Minä** pesen vähän pyykkiä ja neulon villapuseroa. Entä **sinä**? Mitä **sinä** teet tänään illalla? – **Minä** näen Ollin. **Me** menemme elokuviin.
'I wash some clothes and sew a pullover. And you? What do you do tonight? – I meet Olli. We go to the cinema.'

(HM: 44)

Lastly, we looked at how word order and the informational value of the subject are represented in the textbooks and in the grammar book. Except for a few examples with weather verbs and existential sentences, no word orders different form the "canonical" SV(O) are introduced and the *flexible word order* which characterizes Finnish (Vilkuna 1989, 1995; Holmberg 2002; Kaiser 2006) and is responsible for different discourse-pragmatic values, is not mentioned in the grammar sections (explicit input) nor is it presented in the examples (implicit input). Hence, the L2 learner is never exposed to different linear word orders other than the canonical SVO. In contrast, the grammar book does provide a general descriptive account: "sanajärjestys on vapaa vain siinä mielessä, että lauseen kieliopillinen merkitys, lauseen sisältö, muuttuu harvoin, vaikka lauseen sanojen paikkaa vaihdetaakin […] sanan sijamuoto yleensä ilmaisee, mikä tehtävä sanalla lauseessa on […] sanajärjestystä vaihtamalla lauseeseen saadaan erilaisia sävyjä, nyansseja, painotuksia" (SKU: 310; word order is free in the sense that the content of the sentence rarely changes even if word order has usually changed […], the case of a word indicates its role

[4] The English translations of the quotations are mine.

in the sentence […] changing the word order results in different tones, nuances and stresses). Finally, cleft structures (full or reduced) are not illustrated anywhere in the grammar book nor in the textbooks, with a minor exception for existential clefts (Chapter 2, § 2.6.1), which can occasionally occur as locative sentences but which are not separately depicted (implicit input only).

Recall that in § 4.1 it was hypothesized that Finnish L2ers may have acquired Finnish as a PNSL, at least at the level of attainment of our participants in the data collection experiment. The data are directly connected with the observations above drawn from the textbooks and are further confirmed by text tokens produced by L2ers of Finnish,[5] as reported in (5)-(11).[6]

(5) Huhtikuulla ___ menen Norjaan, Bergeniin. ___ Lähten lentokonella ja saavun Osloon. Sitten **minä** menen Oslosta Bergeniin junalla. […] **Minä** jään Norjassa yksi viikoa. **Minä** luulin että tarvitsin passin menemaan Norjaan, mutta ___ keksiin että ei tarvitsee. **Minä** ei ole koskaan nähnyt Norjan, mutta ____ luulen että on paljon kaunis.

'In April I'll go to Norway, to Bergen. I'll go by plane and land in Oslo. Then I'll go by train from Oslo to Bergen. […] I'll stay one week in Norway. I thought that I'd need a passport to go to Norway but I found out that I don't. I have never seen Norway but I believe it's beautiful.'

(6) **Minä** tein matka elokuussa kaksi vuosi sitten. **Minä** menin Lontoolle, oli ensimmäinen kerta jolloin ___ olin mennyt ulkomailla. **Minä** lähtin yksyn lentokonella. […] **Minä** tutustuin monet ihmiset. On ollut paljon hauska ja jännittävä mutta kallis sillä ___ olen ostanut monta lahjaa ystävälleni ja perhelleni. **Minä** palaisin heti tuolla!

'I made a trip in August two years ago. I went to London. I travelled alone by plane. I get acquinted with many people. […] I met a lot of people. It was very funny but expensive because I bought many gifts to my friends and family. I would go back there right now!'

(7) **Minä** asun rauhallisessa kaupungissa Toskanan pääkaupunki laidalla […]. Sitten **minä** lähestyin blues, jazz ja rock-musiikkia ja ___ olen soittanut bassoa.

'I live in a quiet town near the main city of Tuscany […].
Then I got closer to blues, jazz and rock-music and I have played basso.'

(8) Ajattelen että **minä** on hyväluonteinen.
'I think I am good-natured.'

[5] The name initials and the names of places have been changed to keep the text samples anonymous.

[6] Overt first person pronouns are boldfaced whereas null subjects are indicated with ___.

(9) Aamulla **minä** herään ja pukeudun, sitten ___ menen keittiöön ja ___ syön aamiaisesta minun äitini ja isäni kanssa. **Minä** syön keksiä, ___ juon omenamehua ja cappuccinoa.

'In the morning I wake up and dress, then I go to the kitchen and have breakfast with my mother and my father. I eat biscuits, drink apple juice and cappuccino.'

(10) a. Viikonloppuna **mina** nousin myöhään. **Minä** join kahvia ja 2 palaa kakkua. Päivällä **minä** menin junalla Monteriggioniin koska **minä** halusin kävellä minun kaverini kanssa. **Me** puhuimme koko päivän ja illalla **me** tulimme Pistoiaan. Syönnin jälkeen **me** menimme baariin ja **me** joimme olutta ja siideria.

'In the weekend I woke up late. I drank coffee and had 2 pieces of cake. During the day I went to Monteriggioni by train because I wanted to stroll with my friend. We talked the whole day and in the evening we went to Pistoia. After dinner we went to a pub and we drank beer and cider.'

b. **Minä** olen A. ja ___ asun Pratossa. **Minä** olen 20-vuotias ja **minä** menen yliopistoon joka päivä. **Minä** opiskelen suomea ja unkaria. ___ rakastan suomalaista kulttuuria ja **minä** pidän suomalaisesta musiikista. **Minä** nousen seitsemältä ja yleensä **minä** syön leivosta ja ___ juon kahvia. Sitten **minä** menen yliopistoon junalla. **Minä** opsikelen joka päivä.

'I'm A. and I live in Prato. I'm 20 years old and I go to the university every day. I study Finnish and Hungarian. I love the Finnish culture and I like Finnish music. I wake up at seven o'clock and usually I eat a pastry and drink coffee. Then I go to the university by train. I study every day.'

(11) **Minä** olen B. **Minä** asun Luccassa. **Minä** opiskelen suomea. **Minä** rakastan Ville Valo. **Minä** pidän tietokone-peleistä.

'I'm B. I live in Lucca. I study Finnish. I love Ville Valo. I like videogames.'

5.3 *A Proposal*

The correct use of null and overt forms and the exploitation of the syntactic options in new information contexts is part of the pragmatic and discourse competence[7] of an L2er. On the basis of what we have seen until now (results on the video task on Finnish L2 in § 4.1, textbooks and L2ers' production in § 5.2), a proposal is now presented that aims at integrating the existing teaching material for Finnish L2 with particular reference to the aspects at the syntax-discourse interface discussed throughout the book and in particular devised for learners whose mother tongue is Italian (but exploitable by any other group of speakers).

[7] See also the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages and Matteini (2012) for a first proposal concerning the relevance of discourse pragmatics aspects in Italian L2 teaching within the present theoretical framework.

Properly acquiring this competence enables the L2 learner to produce sentences which reflect the relevant pragmatic aspects in the L2. This would lead to, for example, the use of a more appropriate option to focalize or topicalize a constituent. Following the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), these informationally relevant notions at a discourse level are acquired at B and C levels. This could explain on the one side the wider use of overt pronominal forms in the first teaching units and on the other side the progressive wider use of null forms in the books examined here. Nevertheless, I would like to suggest that an introduction to the *pro*-drop properties of Finnish, to the discourse-pragmatic values of null and overt subject forms, to its flexible word order and the related focalization/topicalization options ever since the beginning of the Finnish L2 study program could prove to be very important (cf. Matteini 2012 for a similar proposal for Italian L2) in order to acquire the discourse-pragmatic(-syntactic for 3rd person) properties that regulate the distribution of null/overt subjects in the L2, in particular when it diverges from the L1. Moreover, since text samples presented in the course books aim at being representative of everyday conversational situations, not only the canonical SVO but also the different sentence types and linear orders possible in Finnish should be taken into account and duly illustrated. Question-answer pairs that involve the use of new information subjects are in fact simple sentences and they are common in the input of Finnish L1 from the very beginning, as it is evident from the example in (12), drawn from the video task:

(12) Kuka tuli?
who arrive-PAST3sg

In what follows I would like to propose an activity that stimulates implicit learning and metalinguistic awareness along the lines of the weak interface hypothesis (Sharwood-Smith 1993; De Graaff 1997) presented in § 5.1, and that focuses on the syntactic properties of Finnish as a PNSL (Holmberg *et al*. 2009).

The video task used in the L2 studies presented in the previous chapters turned out to be particularly efficient in eliciting answers with new information subjects in controlled contexts. The proposal is to adapt the experimental task to the field of L2 teaching. The focus here is on Finnish, but the proposal is potentially replicable in every language. The contexts presented in the videos contain morpho-syntactic and lexical elements that can easily be used at A-levels of proficiency (i.e. beginners): interrogative sentences with Wh-elements, present and simple past tenses of the indicative, vocabulary of everyday life. The video task would be preceded by an introductory activity during which the L2er will receive input on the distribution of overt and null pronominal forms for all persons in Finnish. The main aim of the whole activity is to provide the L2er with

the tools to observe the properties of subject pronouns and the relevance of new/old information as related to the subject of the sentence.

5.3.1 *Structure of the Activity*

The activity addresses L2 learners of Finnish from level A2 onward of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. The first part of the activity consists in providing the L2er with appropriate linguistic stimuli (positive evidence) that focus on the different properties of subject pronouns. Specifically, sentences of the type in (13) need to be matched to vignettes.

(13) a. Huomenna menen torille ja ostan perunoita.
tomorrow go-PRES1sg market-ALLsg and buy-PRES1sg potato-PARTpl
'Tomorrow I will go to the market and I will buy some potatoes.'

b. Huomenna hän menee keskustaan ja ostaa uuden sanakirjan.tomorrow s/he-NOMsg go-PRES3sg downtown-ILLsg and buy-PRES3sg new-ACCsg dictionary-ACCsg
'Tomorrow s/he will go downtown and s/he will buy a new dictionary.'

c. Anja ja Mari lukevat tenttiin.
Anja and Mari study-PRES3pl exam-ILLsg
'Anja and Mari study for the exam.'

d. Matkustatteko Suomeen kesällä?
travel-PRES3pl-*ko* Finland-ILLsg summer-ADEsg
'Are you travelling to Finland this summer?'

e. Minä syön vadelmajäätelön ja sinä syöt hedelmäsalaatin!
I eat-PRES1sg raspberry ice-cream-ACCsg and you eat-PRES2sg fruit salad-ACCsg
'I eat raspberry ice-cream and you eat fruit salad!'

Then, pictures will be presented (4 pictures *per* sentence) for each possible interpretation of sentences such as (14) and (15).

(14) a. Jussi$_k$ kirjoittaa Maijalle$_i$ vaikka hän$_{k/i/j}$ / ___$_k$ ei tiedä mitään koko asiasta.
'Jussi writes to Maija even though s/he$_{k/i/j}$ / ___$_k$ doesn't know anything about the issue.'

b. Anja$_k$ soitti Marille$_i$, mutta hän$_{k/i/j}$ / ___$_k$ ei kertonut hyvästä uutisesta.
'Anja called Mari but s/he$_{k/i/j}$ / ___$_k$ didn't tell the good news.'

(15) a. Kun Anja$_k$ kävi tervehtimässä Raimoa$_i$ sairaalassa, hän$_{k/i/j}$ hymyili hellästi.
'When Anja went to see Raimo$_i$ in the hospital s/he$_{k/i/j}$ smiled gently.'

b. Kun kävin tervehtimässä Raimoa sairaalassa, ___ hymyilin hellästi.
'When I went to see Raimo in the hospital I smiled gently.'

At this point the teacher prompts the students to say whether they notice any peculiarities in the interpretations of the sentences. Building on their answers, the teacher will then point out all the possible meanings and highlight the relevant properties of pronominal subjects and their distribution in Finnish.

The second part of the activity is dedicated to the informational value of the subject according to its position in the sentence and the word order facts concerning topicalization and focalization. The L2er will be ideally presented 10 videos (based on the elicitation task used in the experimental studies presented in the previous chapters) in which s/he will watch interactions such as (16)-(20) and in the next 10 videos, similar in form and content, the L2er will be asked to answer in place of the actor of the video.

(16) a. Kuka söi omenan?
'Who ate the apple?'

b. Sen söi Kaisa.
it-ACCsg ate Kaisa-NOMsg
'Kaisa ate it'

(17) a. Kuka tuli?
'Who came?'

b. Yksi mies tuli.
one man came
'A man came.'

(18) a. Kuka soitti?
'Who called?'

b. Se oli Kaisa.
EXPL was Kaisa
'It was Kaisa.'

(19) a. Kuinka monta ihmistä näit huoneessa?
'How many people did you see in the room?'

b. Näin kolme naista.
Saw three woman-PARTsg
'I saw three women.'

(20) a. Joitko sinä minun kahvini?
'Did you drink my coffee?'

b. En minä sitä juonut, Kaisa joi!
not-PRES1sg me it-PARTsg drank, Kaisa drank
'I didn't drink it, it was Kaisa!'

At the end of the two parts the L2er will be (more) familiar with the status of Finnish as a PNSL, the discourse-pragmatic values of null and overt pronominal forms and the distribution of (new information) sub-

jects in Finnish. The outlined activity can be done in one, two or three different sessions and can be easily divided in sub-parts, since the different parts are logically related, yet independent. Overall, the activity stimulates language production in real time in controlled contexts and the linguistic input is more authentic than, for example, an exercise on a textbook or a simulated conversation would be.

In the proposed activity, an attempt is made at integrating a rule-based approach (inductive grammar teaching, grammar explanation, and consciousness-raising activities), an input-based approach (typological input enhancement), and a practice-based approach (input-processing instruction and output practice) in the teaching and mastering of aspects (i.e. distribution of null/overt pronominal subjects) located at the syntax-discourse interface. The main goal of an activity of this kind is to develop not only syntactic but also pragmatic competences (in terms of the Common European Framework) of the L2 grammar, which are further classified into discourse, functional, and design competence. In particular, discourse competence is the ability responsible for controlling the ordering of sentences on the basis of information such as topic/focus and given/new, which in the present proposal are related to the different distribution of topics and new information subjects in comparison to the L1 of the learners. The appropriate mastery of this kind of structures will ultimately lead the L2er to a more target-like and "natural" L2 competence. The constant metalinguistic analysis to be carried out during the activity and a comparative approach on the similarities and divergences of the relevant syntactic structures in the L1 and in the L2 of the learners are an essential part of a succesful acquisitional process. In this sense, a last important point to take into consideration which emerges in the proposal above is the possibility to adapt to language teaching (some) aspects usually discussed in theoretical linguistics and in second language research domain. I believe that this can be extended to other topics in L2 teaching in addition to the ones discussed here and can help to bridge a gap that can be perceived between theoretical research and language teaching.

5.4 *Concluding Remarks*

This work aimed at investigating a specific aspect of the syntax-discourse interface, namely the focalization of new information subjects in various areas of language development and finally at presenting a proposal for L2 teaching. It thus contributed to the study of Italian L2 and provided novel data to the research on Finnish L1 and Finnish L2 within the generative grammar framework and more specifically within the cartographic approach which seems to appropriately account for the facts discussed here. Table 5.1 resumes the presented studies.

Table 5.1 - Summary of the Studies

Groups	L1	Most exploited strategy	Eventual crosslinguistic influence
Advanced Italian L2	Finnish	(Ocl)VS	Yes (to a minor extent)
Intermediate Italian L2	Finnish	SV(O)	Yes
Finnish L1	Finnish	SV(O) ((XP)VS, clefts)	--
Finnish L2	Italian	SV	Yes
L1 Attrition/ L2 Norwegian	Finnish	SV(O) ((reduced) clefts)	Yes
Bilingual children	Finnish/ Italian	SV/VS	--
Monolingual children	Italian	SV/VS	--

To summarize, all the different areas of language acquisition investigated here display two main similarities: (i) they are affected by crosslinguistic influence phenomena (from the L1 in L2 acquisition and from the L2 in L1 attrition), and (ii) they are prone to variability at the syntax-discourse interface. In addition, the overall results confirm that L2 acquisition is UG constrained (cf. Schwarz and Sprouse 1994, 1996; Herschensohn 2000; Rizzi 2002; White 2003, among others) even if this was not separately tested, and they provide further support to theories of SLA which assume involvement of Universal Grammar. Access to UG is demonstrated by the correct target-like performance in the L2 production which however can show transfer effects from the L1 (cf. Chapter 3 and 4), as predicted by the Full Access/Full Transfer hypothesis. Hence, L2 acquisition seems to go through the L1 (cf. Schwarz and Sprouse 1994, 1996, and the work of Sorace and White cited in this work). Two research points were particularly relevant in this regard. First, the domain of investigation, namely the focalization of new information subjects, an aspect that in general is not explicitly taught in language classes (cf. White 1989 among others) and which involve subtle properties at the syntax-discourse interface. Second, the fact that the L1 and the L2 are different in terms of the properties concerning the distribution of null and overt subjects (the so-called null subject parameter). In particular, the results of very advanced L2 speakers of Italian showed that UG is accessible: the target-like postverbal subjects were produced at quite a high rate in order to focalize new information subjects, thus showing activation of the

focus position in the vP-periphery and licensing of *pro* in the canonical subject position, as suggested in Belletti's (2001, 2004, and 2005) analysis (cf. § 1.4).

As for crosslinguistic effects, on the one hand properties pertaining to narrow syntax can show non-target patterns at low-intermediate levels of L2 attainment. However, these are not assumed to be affected by crosslinguistic effects if L2 competence is at the final state (as in the very advanced L2 group in the present study or in near-native speakers in Belletti *et al*. 2007). On the other hand, aspects pertaining to the C-domain, namely to the interface between syntax and other components of grammar, are shown to be a residual area of difficulty. Non-target like patterns in L2 acquisition are the result of failed integration of the syntactic knowledge with information from different domains, such as the discourse domain in the present study. It follows that L2 learners resort to (non-target) default strategies, such as the use of preverbal new information subjects or cleft structures in Italian L2, and the use of cleft structures in Finnish L1 under L2 Norwegian attrition. Hence, L2 speakers have more options available. Crucially, the adopted non-target strategies are possible options in both the origin and the target language; in fact, only shared grammatical options appear to be potential candidates for crosslinguistic influence.

The L2 data, both Italian and Finnish, together with the L1 attrition data suggest a kind of *directionality hierarchy* from the "more complex" property (null subject) to the "less complex" one (non null subject) in terms of economicity, at least as far as the relevant aspects investigated in the present work are concerned, as represented in (21):

(21)	Italian	>	Finnish	>	Norwegian
	NSL		PNSL		NNSL

This is reflected in the observed transfer/crosslinguistic effects: Norwegian influences Finnish in the L1 attrition data. In a similar way, Italian L2 shows transfer effects from Finnish L1 and as expected Finnish L2 does not show any transfer effects from Italian L1.[8] A similar effect on the lack of transfer from Italian L1 (a NSL) into English (a NNSL) was first observed in Belletti *et al*. (2007), cf. § 1.6. From an acquisitional perspective, the following overall conclusion can be drawn: sustained practice and exposure to the input, which needs to be good both in quantitative and in qualitative terms, is a crucial factor in the acquisition and the maintenance

[8] Notice however that it is not perfectly clear if the L2ers of Finnish have acquired/are acquiring it as a non-null subject language, mainly due to the reasons discussed in Chapter 5. If this is the case, Finnish should be considered as a NNSL on a par with Norwegian.

of L2 and L1 grammars, respectively (cf. Sharwood-Smith and Van Buren 1993, Sorace 2005 among others), and in particular in the acquisition of subtle properties located at the syntax-discourse interface. Related to this, a proposal for teaching of L2 Finnish was made in this last chapter. The studies presented in this work also raised various topics that are left for future research, among which one of the most relevant is the acquisition of the *pro*-drop property in PNSL in a broader perspective and its potentially important role in L2 teaching. Further investigation into the acquisitional domain in both L1 (monolingual and bilingual) development and L2 acquisition could integrate the understanding related to null subject properties in general and in PNSLs in particular and might shed light on its implications in other domains such as second language teaching, as pointed out in the final chapter. Moreover, the application of the analysis based on recent assumptions within the cartographic approach (cf. Chapter 1 and 2) for the Finnish data seems particularly interesting as the syntax-discourse factors playing a role in the focalization of subjects of new information can be explained in an innovative way for Finnish.

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APPENDIX

1. *Participants*

Table 1 - Participants' Details: Advanced Italian L2ers

Subject	Age	Gender	Education in Italy	LoR (length of residence in Italy, in years)	Use of Italian at home	Use of Italian for working/ studying
S1	65	F	no	40	yes	yes
S2	48	F	yes (university degree)	18	yes	yes
S3	45	F	yes (university degree)	25	yes	yes
S4	26	F	yes (Erasmus student)	1,6	yes	yes
S5	43	F	yes (university degree)	23	yes	yes
S6	23	F	yes (Erasmus student)	0,9	yes	yes
S7	29	F	yes (university degree)	5	yes	yes
S8	65	F	no	40	yes	yes
S9	45	F	yes (university degree)	24	yes	yes
S10	40	F	no	9	yes	yes
S11	62	F	no	39	yes	yes
S12	40	F	yes (university degree)	20	yes	yes
S13	30	F	yes (Erasmus student)	2	yes	yes
S14	54	F	yes (university degree)	30	yes	yes
S15	55	F	yes (university degree)	30	yes	yes
mean	*44,6*			*20,5*		

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Table 2 - Participants' Details: Intermediate Italian L2ers

Subject	Age	Exposure to Italian at the time of testing (in years)	Use of Italian at home	Use Italian for working/ studying
S1	63	7	no	no
S2	60	3	no	no
S3	65	5	no	no
S4	60	3	no	no
S5	62	5	no	no
S6	66	5	no	no
S7	65	2,5	no	no
S8	25	1	no	no
S9	26	2	no	no
S10	60	10	no	no
mean	*55,2*	*4,35*		

Table 3 - Participants' Details: Finnish L2ers

Subject	Age	Gender	Exposure to Finnish (in academic years)	Use of Finnish at home	Use of Finnish for working/ studying
S1	20	M	2	no	no
S2	19	F	2	no	no
S3	20	F	2	no	no
S4	29	M	2	no	no
S5	28	M	2	no	no
S6	20	F	1	no	no
S7	21	F	1	no	no
S8	20	F	1	no	no
S9	21	M	2	no	no
S10	23	F	2	no	no
mean	*22,1*		*1,7*		

Table 4 - Participant Details: Finnish L1 under Attrition

Subject	Age	Gender	Education in Norway	LoR (length of residence in Norway at the time of testing, in years)	AoA (age of acquisition)	Use of Finnish/ Norwegian at home	Use of Finnish/ Norwegian for working/ studying
S1	42	F	yes (university degree)	22	20	Finnish with her son, Norwegian with husband	Norwegian
S2	63	F	yes (university degree)	36	27	Finnish with children, Norwegian with husband	Norwegian
S3	53	F	yes (university degree)	29	24	Finnish with children, Norwegian with husband	Norwegian and Finnish
S4	53	F	yes (specialization courses)	27	26	Finnish with children, Norwegian (and some Finnish) with husband	Norwegian
S5	34	F	yes (specialization courses)	5	29	Finnish with her son, Norwegian with husband	Norwegian
S6	53	F	yes (university degree)	32	21	Norwegian, Finnish only with Finnish friends	Norwegian
S7	37	M	yes (university courses)	13	24	Finnish with his children, Norwegian with his wife	Norwegian
S8	52	F	yes (university degree)	16	36	Finnish with children, Norwegian (and Finnish) with husband	Norwegian
S9	37	F	yes (university degree)	15	22	Finnish with children, Norwegian with husband	Norwegian
S10	46	M	no (except language courses)	11	35	Finnish with Finnish friends	Norwegian

S11	62	F	yes (university courses)	40	22	Finnish with children and relatives, Norwegian with husband	Norwegian
S12	45	F	yes (university degree)	20	25	Finnish with Finnish friends and daughter	Norwegian
S13	56	M	yes (university degree)	33	23	Finnish with some colleagues otherwise Norwegian	Norwegian
S14	43	F	no (except language courses)	17	26	Finnish with children, Norwegian with her husband	Norwegian
S15	45	F	no	15	30	Finnish with relatives and Finnish friends	Norwegian
mean	*48,1*			*22,1*	*26*		

Table 5 - Participant Details: Bilingual Finnish/Italian Children

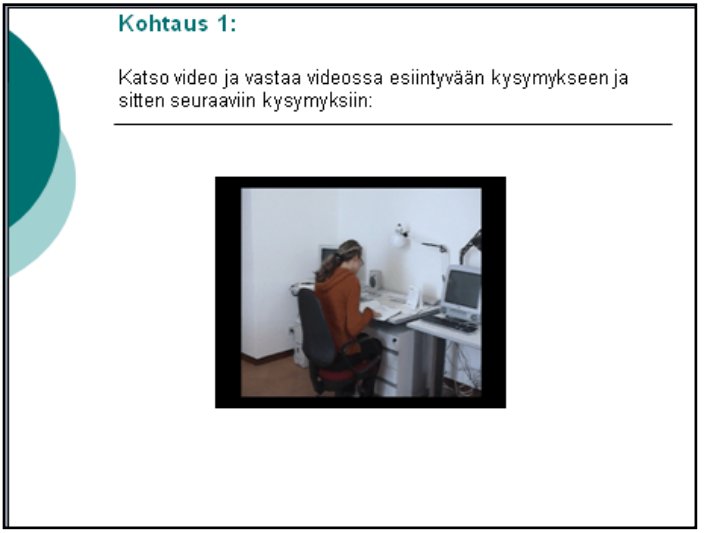
Subject	Age	Gender	L1/L2	Country
S1*	5,2	M	Finnish (mother), Italian (father)	Italy
S2	5,6	M	Finnish (mother), Italian (father)	Italy
S3*	8,2	F	Finnish (mother), Italian (father)	Italy

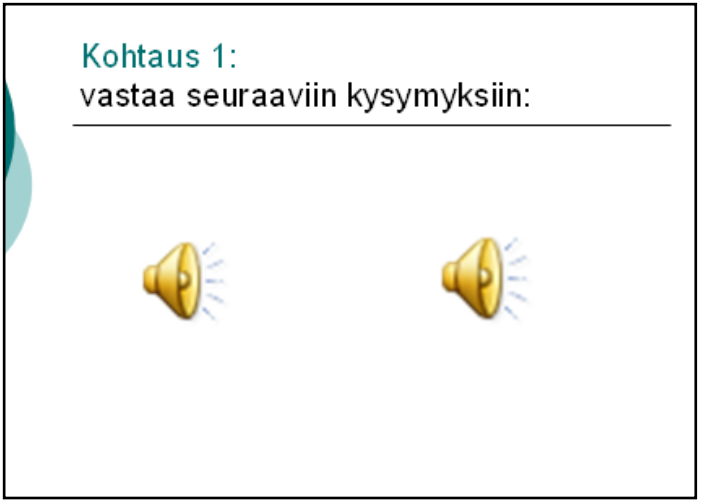
* The children live in the same family and are siblings.

2. *The Tasks*

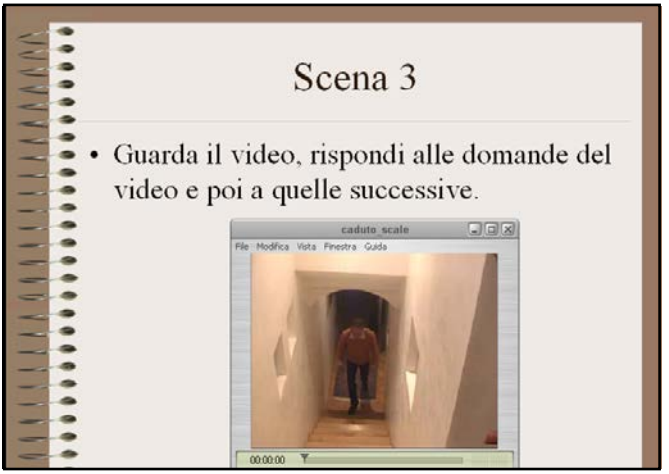
2.1 *Examples of the Video Task (Finnish and Italian adaptations)*

Scene: The phone rings.
Question: Who has called?





Scene: The boy falls down in the stairs
Question: Who fell on the stairs?



2.2 *Target Items of the Video Task for Italian (Belletti and Leonini 2004, Belletti, Bennati & Sorace 2007). English translation is given in the right column*

Video 1	*Video 1*
Chi ha telefonato?	Who has called?
Chi ha risposto?	Who has answered?
Video 2	*Video 2*
3) Chi ha aperto la finestra?	Who has opened the window?
4) Nel video, chi ha parlato?	Who spoke in the video?
Video 3	*Video 3*
5) Chi è cascato per le scale?	Who fell down on the stairs?
6) Chi l'ha soccorso?	Who has helped him?
Video 4	*Video 4*
7) Chi ha bevuto il mio caffè?	Who has drunk my coffee?
Video 5	*Video 5*
8) Chi è arrivato?	Who has arrived?
9) La porta, chi l'ha aperta?	Who has opened the door?
Video 6	*Video 6*
10) Chi ha buttato via i fiori?	Who has thrown away the flowers?
Video 7	*Video 7*
11) Chi è partito?	Who has left?
12) Chi l'ha salutato?	Who has greeted him?
Video 8	*Video 8*
13) Chi ha mangiato la mela?	Who has eaten the apple?
Video 9	*Video 9*
14) Chi ha tossito?	Who has coughed?
Video 10	*Video 10*
15) Chi l'ha perso il borsello?	Who has lost the wallet?
16) Chi l'ha trovato?	Who has found it?
Video 11	*Video 11*
17) Chi ha urlato?	Who screamed?
Video 12	*Video 12*
18) Il caffé chi l'ha preparato?	Who has prepared the coffee?
Video 13	*Video 13*
19) Chi ha fumato in questa stanza?	Who has smoked in this room?
20) Chi si è alzato in questa scena?	Who has stood up in this video?

Video 14	*Video 14*
21) Il quadro chi l'ha portato via?	Who has taken the painting?
Video 15	*Video 15*
22) Chi ha spazzato?	Who has swept?
Video 16	*Video 16*
23) Chi ha scritto questo biglietto?	Who has written this message?
24) Chi l'ha trovato?	Who has found it?
Video 17	*Video 17*
25) Chi ha suonato?	Who rang the doorbell?
26) Chi ha risposto?	Who answered?
Video 18	*Video 18*
27) Chi ha messo a posto la tavola?	Who has tidied up table?
Video 19	*Video 19*
28) Chi ha spazzato?	Who has swept?
29) La tavola chi l'ha messa a posto?	Who has tidied up the table?
Video 20	*Video 20*
30) Chi ha portato questi fiori?	Who brought these flowers?
Video 21	*Video 21*
31) Chi ha strappato il giornale?	Who has torn the newspaper?
Video 22	*Video 22*
32) Chi ha lasciato la televisione accesa?	Who left the television on?
33) Chi l'ha spenta?	Who has switched it off?
34) Chi l'ha chiamata?	Who has called her?

2.3 *Task Adaptation for Child Speech Elicitation*

WARM UP	
Chi è cascato sulle spine?	Who fell on the prickles?
Quanti paperi ci sono nella vignetta?	How many ducks are in the cartoon?
Chi fa il bagno nelle monete?	Who took a bath in the dollars?
Chi stava leggendo la lettera?	Who was reading the letter?
La radio chi l'ascolta?	Who listened to the radio?
Chi si è alzato?	Who stood up?
TARGET ITEMS	
Chi ha ricevuto la lettera?	Who has received the letter?
Chi strappa la busta?	Who ripped the envelope?
Chi stava andando via (dal palazzo di Paperone)?	Who was going away?
Chi ha letto il libro?	Who read the book?
Chi stava correndo via?	Who ran away?
Chi è cascato nel buco?	Who fell in the hole?

Chi ha sbadigliato?	Who yawned?
Chi mangia la polpetta?	Who ate the meatball?
Chi è salito sulla scala?	Who climbed up the stairs?
Chi è uscito dal cespuglio?	Who came out from the bush?
Chi versa il latte?	Who poured the milk?
Chi ha gridato?	Who screamed?
Chi è entrato?	Who came in?
Chi stava telefonando?	Who called?
Il baule chi l'ha aperto?	Who opened the trunk?
Chi ha spinto il sasso?	Who pushed the stone?
Il libro, chi ha l'ha preso?	Who took the book?
Chi stava dormendo?	Who was sleeping?
Chi ha messo a posto?	Who has tidied up?
Chi è scappato?	Who ran away?
FILLERS	
Quanti paperi hai visto nella vignetta?	How many ducks did you see in the cartoon?
Di che colore è il cane che trova Paperino?	What is the colour of the dog that Donald Duck found?
Quanti paperi c'erano sulla macchina?	How many ducks were on the car?
Cosa sta vendendo il ragazzo nel fumetto?	What was the boy selling?
Cosa trova il papero?	What does the duck find?

2.4 *Examples of the Cartoons from the Adaptation for Children*

2.4 *Grammaticality Judgement Task (Intermediate L2 Italian). English translation is given below the original*

Frase sentence	**va bene** good	**non va bene** not good	**non so** I don't know	**Eventuali note** Comments
Era la prima volta che vedevo Mirko. Lui mi sembrava un bel ragazzo. 'It was the first time I saw Mirko. He seemed like a nice guy.'				
- Ciao Anna! Quando vai a Helsinki? - Io parto la prossima settimana perché adesso io ho ancora molto lavoro. '- Hi Anna! When are you going to Helsinki? - I'm leaving next week because for now I still have a lot of work to do.'				
Mia sorella non ha cenato con noi perché è arrivata tardi. 'My sister did not have dinner with us because she arrived late.'				
Mirko è andato fino in Giappone ma lui ha speso solo 500 euro! 'Mirko went all the way to Japan but spent only 500 euros!'				
La persona cui ho telefonato era molto gentile. 'The person that I called was very nice.'				
Mirko e Anna sono due amici italiani e loro hanno una grande passione per i viaggi. 'Mirko and Anna are two Italian friends and they have a big passion for travelling.'				

Mirko le chiese se lei era mai stata in Finlandia. 'Mirko asked her if she had ever been to Finland.'				
Il paziente che il dottore ha visitato lui era molto malato. 'The patient that the doctor checked was very sick.'				

2.5 *Translation Task (Intermediate L2 Italian)*

Frase sentence	**Traduzione** translation
Hän näytti omituiselta. Ehkä hänellä oli jotain mielessään. 'S/he looked strange. Maybe s/he had something in mind.'	
Sanoin hänelle, ettei hän soittaisi enää minulle! 'I told him/her to not call me anymore.'	
Mirkolla ja Annalla on kaksi valkoista tietokonetta. Ne ovat työpöydällä. 'Mirko and Anna have two white computers. They're on the table.'	
Pöydällä oli paljon karkkeja. Söin yhden. 'There were a lot of candies on the table. I ate one.'	
Anna ja Mirko ovat sairaita. He eivät lähde huomenna Italiaan. 'Anna and Mirko are sick. They are not travelling to Italy tomorrow.'	
Mirko ei syönyt aamupalaa, koska hän heräsi liian myöhään. 'Mirko didn't eat breakfast because he woke up too late.'	
En ole nähnyt häntä eilen. 'I didn't see him/her yesterday.'	
Mirko sanoi, että hän rakastaa häntä (Annaa). 'Mirko said that he loves her.'	
Tämä kirja on mielenkiintoinen, sinun täytyy lukea se! 'This book is interesting, you have to read it!'	
- Kuka häntä odotti? – Häntä odotti pitkä nainen. 'Who was waiting for him/her? – A tall woman was waiting for him/her.'	

Anna kysyi häneltä oliko hän jo nähnyt uudet polkupyörät, jotka oli tuotu pihalle. 'Anna asked him/her if s/he had seen the new bikes that were in the yard.'	
He tekivät monta suoraa kysymystä. 'They did many straight questions.'	

3. *Detailed Analysis of the Finnish Textbooks*

Teaching Unit	Hyvin Menee 1, 2009 (tot. 24 units)	Kieli käytöön 1, 2006 (tot. 19 units)	Suomen kielen alkeisoppikirja, 2001 (tot. 15 units)
TU 1	Contents: Greetings and how to introduce oneself. Personal pronouns and 'to be'. Text type: short conversations. Notes: Extensive use of first, second, third subject pronouns. No mention of 1st and 2nd p. null forms.	Contents: Greetings, how to introduce oneself, interrogative pronouns, numbers, interrogative pronouns, question formation. Text types: short conversations. Notes: Extensive use of first, second, third subject pronouns. No mention of 1st and 2nd p. null forms.	Contents: personal pronouns, interrogative sentence, use and formation of partitive case, vowel harmony. Text types: short conversations. Notes: Extensive use of first, second, third subject pronouns. No mention of 1st and 2nd p. null forms.
TU 2	Contents: Asking price, politeness forms. Vowel harmony. Text types: Conversations at the market. Notes: alternation in the use of 1st person null/overt forms.	Contents: Telling about oneself. Cities and countries. Demonstrative pronouns (singular). Text types: short presentations of different characters. Notes: extensive use of overt pronominal forms (1st, 2nd, 3rd persons).	Contents: negation; verb types. Text types: short dialogues and texts (with only 3rd person pronouns). Notes: extensive use of overt pronominal forms (1st, 2nd, 3rd persons).
TU 3	Contents: Seasons. Hours and asking time. Interrogative pronouns. Past simple tense (affirmative). Text types: narrative. Notes: There are no verb forms for 1st and 2nd persons. Only weather verbs with 3rd person null subject pronouns. No explicit explanation on their use of null/overt 3rd person pronouns.	Contents: Food and drinks. Use and formation of partitive case. Vowel harmony. Text types: exercises (sentences, nominal declension). Notes: the texts of this Unit have not been considered as there is comparable text with the texts of the other units.	Contents: locative cases, some nominal roots. Some word orders (SVXP, existential sentence, interrogative sentence). Text types: narrative texts with overt 3rd person subjects. Notes: some word orders are presented but no explanation on the different discourse-pragmatic interpretations are given.

TU 4	Contents: Home and family. Interrogative pronouns. Adjectives. Text type: picture-based narratives. Notes: only 3rd person subjects. Simple sentences (no sentences in which 3rd person subjects should be null).	Contents: At the market. Interrogative pronouns. Nominative plural. Demonstrative pronouns. Text type: short dialogues. Notes: overt subjects for all persons (no contexts in which 3rd person subjects are accepted).	Contents: uncountable nouns. Demonstrative and interrogative pronouns. Consonant variation. Nominative plural. Text type: two narrative texts (1st and 3rd person subjects) and short dialogues. Notes: 1st person null and overt forms; 3rd person overt forms (no contexts in in which 3rd person subjects are accepted).
TU 5	Contents: the predicative possessive structure. Text type: dialogue. Notes: alternation of null and overt forms for 1st and 2nd person subjects (no 3rd person forms).	Contents: interrogative locative pronouns. Internal and external locative cases. Text type: dialogue and narrative text. Notes: extensive use of 1st and 2nd person overt subjects. Overt 3rd person subjects (no contexts in in which 3rd person subjects are accepted).	Contents: the cases of the direct object. Numerals. Some nominal roots. The nominal infinitive. Text type: narrative (1st person only) and short dialogues. Notes: use of null pronominal forms (1st and 2nd person). Dialogues: use of overt forms only (1st and 2nd person).
TU 6	Contents: hobbies and free time. Verb types and the present tense (affirmative). The interrogative particle –ko. Text type: narrative and dialogues. Notes: only overt forms for 3rd person subjects (no sentences in which 3rd person subjects should be null).	Contents: verb types and present tense. Negation. The partitive form of personal pronouns. Verb+verb structures. Text type: one narrative text, one dialogue in standard Finnish, one dialogue in colloquial Finnish. Notes: large use of overt subjects (1st and 2nd person) and some null subjects. No 3rd person subjects.	Contents: the genitive of personal pronouns. Interrogative pronouns. The relative pronoun. The predicative possessive structure. Some nominal roots. Text type: 2 narrative texts (3rd person subjects and generic sentences) and dialogues. Notes: narratives: no 1st and 2nd person subjects. All 3rd person subjects are overt (no sentences in which 3rd person subjects should be null). In the dialogues there are some instances of null subjects for 1st and 2nd person.

TU 7	Contents: jobs and professions. Negative conjugations. Text type: narrative. Notes: only 3rd person overt subjects except for one sentence (a possible null context, no explanation is provided).	Contents: consonant alternation. Generic sentences. Text type: narrative and dialogue. Notes: narrative: only overt 3rd person subjects (no sentences in which 3rd person subjects should be null); dialogue: 1st and 2nd person overt subjects. No 3rd person subjects.	Contents: third infinitive. The necessity construction. Ordinal numbers and some nominal roots. Text type: narrative and dialogues. Notes: narrative: only 3rd person overt subjects; dialogues: alternation of null and overt forms for 1st and 2nd persons.
TU 8	Contents: Diseases and human body. Verb+verb structures. Text type: conversations. Notes: extensive use of overt subjects subjects (no sentences in which 3rd person subjects should be null).	Contents: predicative possessive construction. Text type: narrative (only 3rd person) Notes: explicit 3rd subject subjects; no 1st and 2nd subjects; no contexts for null 3rd person subjects.	Contents: past simple tense. Some nominal roots. Text type: narrative and dialogues. Notes: narrative: only 3rd person subjects; dialogues: many instances of null pronominal forms.
TU 9	Contents: Shopping. The partitive of nouns and pronouns. Text type: conversations. Notes: null subject pronouns (1st and 2nd person) and overt subject pronouns (3rd person)	Contents: Partitive case. Some nominal roots and locative cases. Text type: only filling-in exercises (on nominal declension) Notes: the texts of this Unit have not been considered as there is comparable text with the texts of the other units.	Contents: all past tenses. Negative indefinite pronouns. Text type: narrative and dialogues. Notes: the use of null subjects is increasing and conversely overt subjects are used to a lower extent.
TU 10	Contents: verbs of feelings. Text type: conversations. Notes: large use of overt subjects (for 1st, 2nd, and 3rd person).	Contents: nominal roots. Interrogative pronouns. Locative cases. The partitive case. Text type: narrative and letter. Notes: narrative: only 3rd person overt subjects (no sentences in which 3rd person subjects should be null); letter: almost only overt subject pronouns for 1st and 2nd person.	Contents: conditional mood. Some nominal roots. Nominal derivation. Text type: narrative (only 1st person). Notes: as in the previous Unit, also here almost only null subject pronouns are used (only 1st person).

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DIPARTIMENTO DI LINGUE, LETTERATURE E STUDI INTERCULTURALI
COORDINAMENTO EDITORIALE DI
BIBLIOTECA DI STUDI DI FILOLOGIA MODERNA: COLLANA, RIVISTE E LABORATORIO

Opere pubblicate

I titoli qui elencati sono stati proposti alla Firenze University Press dal Coordinamento editoriale del Dipartimento di Lingue, Letterature e Studi Interculturali e prodotti dal suo Laboratorio editoriale Open Access

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