

L1 transfer and adverb placement in English L2 learners of French

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This paper examines the role of L1 transfer in the acquisition of French adverb placement by instructed English speaking learners. French and English adverb placements are generally characterised as a minimal pair.

1. Jean (*souvent) regarde souvent la télé.
2. John often watches (*often) TV.

The difference in word order is accounted for by universally fixed adverb positions and verb movement/raising (Pollock, 1989). French allows all verbs to raise due to its strong uninterpretable Tense feature whereas English's weak feature prohibits lexical verb movement.

However, both languages allow certain adverbs to appear sentence finally.

3. Jean regarde la télé souvent.
4. John watches TV often.
5. *Jean regarde la télé probablement
6. *John watches TV probably.

Laenzlinger (2002) argues that in French the object can also raise over certain adverbs - low-object scrambling.

This study will examine data from three groups of instructed learners and a control group of 10 native French speakers.

Group	Beginners	Intermediate	Advanced
n	15	15	15
Years of study	1	6	10

I will present evidence from an elicited oral production task and a grammaticality judgement. I will argue that L1 transfer is evident in the beginning learners as they both use and accept sentences like (7) but that is gradually replaced by target like verb raising.

7. Je souvent faire du vélo.

However, these results support an object scrambling account of adverb placement in the advanced learners:

- a sentence final adverbs are characteristic of the advanced learners (58%) who already have verb raising over negation (NegP) in place (100%) and not of the beginning learners who do not (5%),
- b advanced learners overgeneralise the types of adverbs which can appear sentence finally unlike the L1.

I conclude that L1 transfer appears in the early stages of L2 acquisition but that it does not account for the word order of the advanced learners.