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Referent introducing strategies in advanced L2 usage: a bi-directional study on French learners of Chinese and Chinese learners of French

Ludovica Lena
ludovica.lena@inalco.fr
Inalco, Paris – La Sapienza, Rome

Abstract: This bi-directional study examines the referent introducing strategies adopted by French learners of L2 Chinese and Chinese learners of L2 French. Chinese and French L1 use similar devices for referents introductions: in French the common pattern is the bi-clausal *il y a* 'there is' construction (from *avoir* 'have') and in Chinese new referents are typically encoded by the *yǒu* 有 'have' bi-clausal structure. Our data show that in the L1s, as expected, new referents are most frequently introduced into discourse by the HAVE structure. Besides, a variety of presentational structures, along with the introduction of new referents as preverbal definite subjects (via a bridging operation) are observed. In addition to several characteristics common to both L2 groups (the scarce usage of bridging, a reduced inventory of presentational structures and the tendency to associate one form with one single pragmatic function), learners' productions diverge drastically. Chinese learners use the HAVE presentational structure to a lesser extent, more often choosing the unmarked S-V word order (including indefinite preverbal subjects). Conversely, French speakers of Chinese L2 overuse the HAVE structure, even in those cases where native Chinese speakers systematically employ the passive BEI 被 construction. This shows that L1>L2 directionality may result in different outcomes, and that the presence of a similar (pragmatically-motivated) form in the L1 does not necessarily lead the speaker to use the 'corresponding' form in the L2. Finally, the role played by learners' metalinguistic representation is taken into account.

Keywords: *L2 referent introduction; L2 pragmatics; Chinese learners of French; French learners of Chinese*

1. Introduction

This study focuses on the acquisition of pragmatic principles relating to the structuring of information at the syntactic level. Specifically, we observe the patterns used to introduce referential entities into discourse by Chinese learners of L2 French and French learners of L2 Chinese. The research is based on the notion that French and Chinese native speakers use very similar syntactic strategies to fulfill this function. In French the most common pattern for referent introductions is the bi-clausal *il y a* 'there is' construction (from *avoir* 'have'), while Chinese speakers rely on presentational structures introduced by the semantically related existential verb *yǒu* 'have'. The aim of this study is to show that bi-directional combinations of the source and the target language may result in different outcomes.

Previous studies have shown the impact of the source language in organizing pragmatic information. Hendriks and Watorek (2008) show that adult learners structure their discourse in topic units through linguistic means that are modelled on those available in their source language. Lambert et al. (2008) studied the influence of the L1 in complex verbal task resolution, showing that learners' productions are characterized by systematic divergences in the structuring of information in speech, which reflects the influence of the source language regardless of the level of linguistic proficiency. In a study on English learners of L2 French, Leclercq (2008) shows that quasi-bilingual learners are still influenced by the conceptual structuring of the source language.

Specifically related to referent introductions, Lambert and Lenart (2004) pointed out that the L1 can strongly influence the way new referents may be introduced into discourse in the L2. Turco (2008) studied the acquisition of the syntactic structures used to introduce and identify referents by French advanced learners of Italian L2. She shows that these speakers can easily use the Italian split presentational structure '*c'è* NP *che*...' ('there is NP who...') that corresponds to the *il y a*

presentational structure available in their source language. However, French learners of Italian seem to avoid the Italian V–S structure polysemy, using it only to introduce new referents into discourse. This is because the appearance of the verb–subject order (V–S) is conditioned by several factors such as the status of the referents, the semantic properties of the verb and the pragmatic context.

In general, it is known that the presence in the source language of a similar structure in the L2 should facilitate learners' usage in that L2, which has been shown to be the case for Spanish learners of Italian V–S structures (Chini, 2008), or French speakers when they produce the above-mentioned split presentational structures in Italian L2 (Turco, 2008) for referent introductions. Sometimes, however, L2 learners have been shown to over-rely on presentational structures when introducing new referents, favouring an explicit anchoring mode (Lambert & Lenart, 2004). For example, Leclercq (2008) observes in French learners' L2 English a number of forms that are not attested in a native speakers' corpus, such as the presentational 'I can see...' and the frequent use of relative clauses introduced by *who*. In general, French advanced learners tend to rely heavily on syntactic clefts, while native English speakers mostly use prosodic-type variations to structure information in speech.

Another good example is French speakers' use of the Italian split structure (even in case of unaccusative verbs), while L1 Italian speakers tend to employ V–S word order (Turco, 2008):

IT2_ FR1 ***C'è*** *la polizia* ***che*** *arriva*
Lit: 'There is the police who arrives'

IT1 ***Arriva*** *la polizia*
Lit: 'Arrives the police'

In our contribution, we propose to study how Chinese advanced learners adapt to pragmatic constraints in French as a target language and, conversely, how French advanced learners do the same in their L2 Chinese. We believe such an investigation is crucial, since the appropriation of pragmatic principles is often evoked as the last goal to be achieved before successful acquisition of the target language (Perdue, 1993). The main research questions that lead our study are the following:

RQ1) Does the presence in the target language of the same type of presentational structure (in particular the HAVE structure and the V–S order) in the source language trigger its use by learners?
RQ2) How do learners adapt to the pragmatic constraints specific to the presentational structures of the target language?
RQ3) Does directionality (FRL1>CHL2 vs CHL1>FRL2) play a role? In what manner and why?

The following section includes a brief theoretical presentation of the strategies available in the L1s, before I outline the methods used in the present study.

2. Referent introduction in French and in Chinese

Regarding the devices used by speakers to anchor new referential entities into discourse, the most well-described strategy in the relevant literature is that of the presentational structure, governed by the existential operator HAVE, in French (Léard, 1986; Lambrecht, 1988; Ashby, 1995 *inter alia*) as well as in Chinese (Chao, 1968, p. 727; Li & Thompson, 1981, p. 509; Huang, 2013). In both languages, the HAVE structure can take either a 'simple' (HAVE + NP) or a 'complex' (HAVE + NP + VP) form, that is, the latter involving a second verb (V2), as seen for *arriver* in Example (1). In the latter case, the most obvious morphosyntactic difference between the HAVE structures of the two languages is the absence of a relative pronoun in Chinese.

(1) FR1 *ils sont tous les deux par terre*
il y a *un attroupement* [Existential structure]
et ***ya*** *un policier* ***qui*** *arrive* [Presentational structure]

Lit: 'They're both lying on the ground
there is a gathering
and there is a policeman who comes'

In Chinese, what differentiates the existential and the presentational structure is the presence of a V2, of which the NP introduced by *yǒu* 有 is the semantic agent (2). Sometimes, a personal pronoun (namely, third-person pronoun *tā*) is inserted between the post-*yǒu* NP and the V2, as in (3). When the prosodic profile is unitary (no pause intervening between the NP and the pronoun), we analyze such examples as presentational (i.e. 'complex') structures.

(2) CH1 看! 有人偷你的面包!
Kàn! ***Yǒu*** *rén* ***tōu*** *nǐde miànbāo!*
Look HAVE people steal your bread
'Look! There's someone [who] stole your bread!'

(3) CH1 有一个人他送面包进来
Yǒu *yí-ge rén* ***tā*** *sòng miànbāo jìn-lai*
HAVE one-CL[1] people 3S send bread enter-come
Lit: 'There is someone he delivered the bread inside'

In addition, the Chinese verb *yǒu* 有 is invariable, unlike the *il y a* sequence (*il y a, il y avait* lit: 'there *has*, there *had*' etc.) and in French the V2 needs to be conjugated as well:

(4) FR2_CH1 *Donc,* ***il y avait*** *une femme qui est passée devant une boulangerie*
so it there had a.F woman REL.S is passed in.front.of a.F bakery
Lit: 'So, there was a woman who passed by a bakery'

Let us now turn to verb-subject (V–S) 'inverted' word order. That is, the postposition of the nominal subject to the verb, resulting in the non-canonical V–S word order. Notice that we speak of inverted or non-canonical word order just in terms of frequency, not implying any sort of derivation from a 'core' S–V structure. V–S formulations are, in the languages that concern us here, less frequently used and linked to specific information structure articulations. In both French and Chinese, V–S is typically used to introduce a new referential entity into discourse, and can take the form of a locative inversion when a locus noun phrase appears in preverbal position, or that of an absolute inversion.

(5) CH1 这个时候来了一位警察
Zhè-ge shíhou lái-le yí-wei jǐngchá
this-CL moment come-PFV one-CL police

就问发生什么事情
jiù wèn fāshēng shénme shìqing
then ask happen what matter
'In that moment came a policeman and asked what happened'

[1] See the end of the chapter for a list of abbreviations used in glosses.

Importantly, we are dealing here with a difference of register: while in Chinese, the V–S structure is a syntactic formulation that is commonly employed not only in the written language but also in the spoken register, the same cannot be said for French. Indeed, if French V–S structures are typical of the literary genre (ex: *Alors sont arrivés trois hommes en armes* 'Then arrived three armed man'; Marandin, 2003, p. 3), they are quite rare in the spoken language, where the entity-anchoring function is rather carried by bi-clausal presentational structures such as those described through this paper. In both languages, and cross-linguistically, predicates appearing in V–S structures are often motion verbs or verbs denoting appearance.

In sum, given that HAVE structures are the most commonly used syntactic device to express the discursive function of referent introductions in both Chinese and French L1, will this facilitate learners' production in the target language? In addition, considering that V–S structures are used in both languages, but with a difference in terms of their register and frequency of use, how do learners adapt to this constraint?

3. The current study: Method

Our study is based on a video-retelling task. We collected four corpora, composed of the retellings of 15 French native speakers; 15 Chinese native speakers; 15 French learners of L2 Chinese, and 15 Chinese learners of L2 French. The stimulus employed is an extract from Charlie Chaplin's silent film *Modern Times* developed as part of a European Science Foundation project (see Klein & Perdue, 1992). Following Turco (2008) and Sun (2008) *inter alia*, we selected the sequence comprising the bread robbery scene, where the appearance of several characters in the story enables us to observe how speakers encode them linguistically. Roughly, the storyline can be described as follows:

A hungry girl steals a loaf of bread on the street.
A lady who saw it said it to the baker.
The baker runs after the girl,
who bumps into Charlie Chaplin,
and the two fall to the ground.
A policeman arrives with the baker.
Chaplin says he stole the bread.
The policeman brings him away.

We interrupted the video at this point and then added a final sequence (Chaplin comes out of the police station and the girl is outside, waiting for him. They are happy to meet again.) in order to study the expression of reintroduced referents which leave the stimulus for a period before returning later. In sum, the participants had to introduce five characters:

1. Thief girl (main character)
2. Baker
3. Snitching lady
4. Chaplin
5. Police

In what follows, we present the results for these referent introductions, beginning with the L1 Chinese and L1 French groups.

4. The current study: Results

4.1. Referent introduction in the L1s

Table 1 shows the types of the structures employed by L1 French and L1 Chinese speakers when new referents are first introduced in the narration. Note that presentational structures coexist with utterances in which the relevant NP (i.e. the NP denoting the new referential entity) appears in its 'canonical' preverbal position.

Table 1. *Distribution of the syntactic structures linked to referents introduction in the L1s and L2s*

	French L1	Chinese L1	French L2	Chinese L2
HAVE structure	**22**	**20**	14	**39**
Perception Presentational	8	3	8	5
BE Presentational	7	2	1	3
V-S	3	4	–	–
S-V	17	19	**29**	9
V-O	15	14	15	15
Passive construction	–	10	4	–
Other forms*	3	3	4	4
TOTAL	75	75	75	75

* These include utterances where the relevant NP is introduced within a prepositional phrase (ex. after French *avec* 'with' or Chinese *chèn* 趁 'while')

As expected, in the L1 groups referent introductions are mainly achieved by means of the presentational HAVE structure, as in the following examples:

(6) FR1 *derrière elle* ***il y a*** *la voiture* ***qui*** *vient livrer le pain*
behind 3S.F it there has the.F car REL.S comes deliver the.M bread
'Behind her there is the car who delivers the bread'

(7) CH1 旁边有面包店的师傅从他车里面搬货物进店里
pángbiān ***yǒu*** *miànbāodiàn de shīfu cóng tā chē lǐmiàn*
side HAVE bakery SUB master.worker from 3S car inside
bān huòwù jìn diàn-li
move merchandise enter shop-in
'Next [to her] there is the baker who moves the merchandises from his car and enters the shop'

Other presentational structures are observed, namely: Perception presentationals, BE presentationals, and the postposition of the nominal subject to the verb, resulting in the verb-subject inverted word order. In Perception presentationals, the NP denoting the new referent is introduced by a verb of perception – namely a SEE type verb (Lambrecht, 2000):

(8) FR1 *Alors dans cette vidéo* ***on peut voir*** *une- une jeune fille*
so in this.F video we can see a.F a.F young girl
qui *se promène dans la rue*
who.S REF walks in the.F street
'So in this video we can see a young girl who walks in the street'

(9) CH1 我看到一个女儿，她看上是很饿
Wǒ kàndào *yí-ge nǚ'ér, tā kànshàng shì hěn è*
1S see one-CL girl 3S appear be very hungry

'I see a girl, she looks very hungry'

Of course, the nature of the linguistic experience that we are dealing with – that is, one based on a visual stimulus – may trigger the choice of a perception presentational, and between the perception verbs possible it is the vision verb See that is more likely to be used. However, the video stimulus is not the only reason triggering their use, since Perception presentationals are more common in French than in Chinese, and come in the *figées* forms *on voit* 'we see' or modalized *on peut voir* 'we can see'. In fact, such introductory elements of Perception, as *c'est* or the HAVE existential formula, allow French speakers to introduce the relevant NP – denoting the new referential entity – into discourse by avoiding the unmarked preverbal position – the position which is by default associated with topical entities. At the same time, this newly introduced NP can become the head of the following pseudo-relative clause governed by the relative pronoun *qui.* The following explains what these introductory formulas have in common:

Structure:	*[Introducer*	+	*NP*	+	*Pseudo-relative clause]*
Example:	*il y a* there has *c'est* it is *on voit* we see (…)		*une femme* a lady	*qui* who	*se promène dans la rue* walks in the street

We will see that, beyond the sentence level, French L1 speakers globally manage their discourse precisely by means of the relative pronoun *qui*, a strategy which is not fully mastered by L2 learners.

The label 'BE presentationals' embraces broad-focus *c'est* structures in French and those structures in which the relevant NP is introduced by the copular verb 是 *shì* 'be' in Chinese[2].

(10) CH1 首先呢是一个年轻的女孩子她看到橱窗里面

Shǒuxiān ne ***shì*** *yí-ge niánqīng de nǚháizi* ***tā*** *kàndao chúchuāng lǐmiàn*
beginning NE be one-CL young SUB girl 3S look window inside
Lit: 'At the beginning is a young lady she looks inside a window'
'The story begins with a young lady who looks into a shop window'

(11) FR1 *Alors* ***c'est*** *une jeune fille* ***qui*** *est pauvre*
so it is a young lady REL.S is poor
Lit: 'So it is a young girl who is poor'
'So this story is about a young girl who is poor'

It should be noted that broad focus *c'est* structures in French are formally identical to narrow focus *c'est* structures, which typically serve to express identificational focus, that is one in which the clefted NP stands in opposition with a set of alternative elements (*c'est moi qui ai volé la baguette* 'it was me who stole the bread'). We believe that this is a crucial factor determining the avoidance of such structures by Chinese learners as a possible tool to introduce new referents into discourse in their L2 French productions: learners associate *c'est* structures with identificational focus, and thus the structure polysemy is not taken into consideration, following the 'unicity of functions' principle that

[2] We included the few cases of partially set expressions such as French *c'est l'histoire d'* NP 'It is the story of...' or *zhè-ge gùshi jiǎng de shì* 这个故事讲的是 NP 'What this story tells is...' in Chinese.

has already been documented with regards to L2 learners' production (see Bartning & Kirchmeyer, 2003). We shall return to this issue later.

Regarding V–S order, both V–S in text-initial position and text-internal V–S clauses (Sasse, 2006, p. 285) are observed. A few cases are attested in the French L1 corpus, being mainly examples of a locative inversion:

(12) FR1 *Devant elle* ***s' approche*** *quelqu'un*
in.front.of 3S.F REF gets.closer someone
Lit:'In front of her approaches someone'

(13) FR1 *De l' autre côté de la rue* ***vient*** *Charlot* ***qui*** *marche*
from the other side of the.F road comes Charlot REL.S walks
Lit:'From the other side of the road comes Charlot who is walking'

Regarding the unmarked S–V word order, a closer look at the data tells us that the S–V configurations mainly include NPs whose referents bear a particular status with regard to their inferability. Between the S–V structures altogether, the vast majority involve a definite preverbal NP in L1 data (including preverbal bare nouns in Chinese which trigger a definite reading in this context).

We will now consider the distribution of presentational structures linked to each one of the five characters in the video (Table 2). For the sake of clarity, the characters are not necessarily discussed in chronological order.

The encoding of the first character appearing in the storyline, the thief girl, is the one who presents a higher degree of variability in both the L1s. In fact, even if we observe a preference for the Perception presentational in French L1, a wide range of structures are mobilized to introduce this referential entity. These include the the HAVE structure and the be presentational (in both languages) and the V–S inverted word order (in Chinese). Note that the unmarked S–V word order is also observed in the Chinese L1 group.

The character of Chaplin is systematically expressed as a verbal object (V–O) in both languages by virtue of his semantic properties. In fact, he is the prototypical patient: as soon as Chaplin makes his appearance in the story, the girl bumps into him and they both fall on the floor.
As for the policeman and the baker, these two characters are likely to be introduced as definite NPs though a bridging operation. The baker is linked to the BAKERY context (*semantic frame,* Fillmore, 1982; *schema,* Chafe, 1987, p. 29). The police officer can be introduced as a 'given' entity by virtue of the extra-linguistic common knowledge. This brings variability with regards to speakers' choices:

(14) FR1 *En même temps la police* ***arrive***

(15) FR1 *et juste après* ***il y a*** *un policier* ***qui*** *arrive*

As for the snitching lady, the encoding of this character is highly informative and gives us greater insights about referent introductions in Chinese and French L1s as well as the adaptations that will be needed by L2 learners of those languages. Recall that the snitching lady (a) appears in an unpredictable and sudden way and (b) brings a negative contribution to the story: she is the one who informs the baker about the robbery. As a matter of fact, the strategies adopted by the two groups of speakers when introducing this referent are radically different. On the one hand, this character is the one most systematically encoded by the HAVE structure in French. On the other hand, Chinese speakers massively choose the passive construction where the relevant NP is introduced by the BEI 被 particle:

(16) CH1 她被一个路人看到了
Tā ***bèi*** *yí-ge lùrén kàndao-le*
3S PASS one-CL passerby see-PFV
'She was seen by a passerby'

(17) FR1 *Sauf qu' entre temps* ***il y a*** *une passante* ***qui*** *l' a vu faire ça*
except that in.the.meantime it there has a.F passerby.F REL.S OBJ has seen do that
Lit: 'But in the meantime there is a passerby who saw her doing that'

With regards to this referential entity, French speakers select the first characteristic (the 'out-of-the-blue' appearance) while Chinese speakers focus on the negative contribution. Thus, the HAVE presentational structure is more suitable to express this kind of referential introduction in French[3], while the unfortunate nature of this referent's introduction offers the perfect context for employing the passive structure in Chinese where the post-BEI NP denotes the agent (cf. Hashimoto, 1988, p. 336). Once again, L2 learners of either language will be confronted by an interaction of semantic and pragmatic factors when introducing this referent.

4.2. Referent introduction in the L2s

As can be seen in Table 1 above, the strategies adopted by French learners of L2 Chinese and those of Chinese learners of L2 French appear to be strikingly different. In fact, Chinese learners use the HAVE presentational structures – and presentational structures in general – less frequently, more often choosing the unmarked S–V word order. Conversely, French speakers of Chinese L2 make extensive use of HAVE structures.

As it turns out, both strategies, i.e. avoidance and overuse, may equally result in a pragmatically infelicitous outcome. A good example is the encoding of the 'snitching lady' character (Table 3). In particular, recall that by virtue of her negative contribution to events and her sudden appearance, such a character is systematically encoded by the passive BEI construction in L1 Chinese and by means of the HAVE-presentational structure in L1 French accordingly. Besides 4 instances of the passive construction in Chinese learners' L2 French (not attested in the French L1 group), the S–V pattern is systematically employed to introduce this referent. On the other hand, French learners use extensively the *yǒu* structure (14/15 introductions) in a way that reminds their L1 principles. Hence, in the learners' data, both the choice of an unmarked S–V word order and the HAVE presentational strategy fail to result here in a native-like formulation, and thus reflect a pragmatically inappropriate choice.

What remains is to explain why L2 learners' outcomes diverge from natives' in such a way, and, at the same time, why the L2 groups diverge one from another – that is, why Chinese speakers in L2 French and French speakers in L2 Chinese seem to make radically different choices when it comes to referent introductions, despite their source and target languages providing a structure strongly associated with such a function. For the time being, let us explore the common properties that characterize the two learners' groups.

4.3. L2 learners' groups common characteristics

A lack of variety?

Recall that in L1 production, besides the HAVE construction, a wide range of presentational structures are found. In L1 Chinese, the V–S order is frequently used along with the *yǒu* structure to anchor new referents into discourse. Moreover, when the semantic context demands it, the passive BEI construction is to be used. In L1 French, a full inventory of introductory formulas (as *il y a, c'est, on voit*) exist, and V–S order might be used as well.

When compared to the natives' production, L2 narratives stand out in that they manifest a relative lack of variety regarding the structures used to introduce new referents into discourse. That

[3] On the link between *il y a* presentational structures and the expression of an abrupt, 'surprising' event, see Lambrecht (1988).

Table 2. *The structures associated to the introduction of each character in the L1s*

	S–V		**Perception**		**HAVE**		**BE**		**V–S**		**V–O**		**Passive**		***Other forms***	
	CH1	FR1	CH1	FR1	CH1	FR1	CH1	FR1	CH1	FR1	CH1	FR1	CH1	FR1	CH1	FR1
Thief girl	4	1	2	7	5	3	2	4	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Baker	4	8	1	1	7	4	–	–	1	–	–	–	–	–	2	2
Snitching lady	2	3	–	–	2	10	–	–	–	–	–	–	10	–	–	–
Chaplin	–	–	–	–	1	–	–	–	–	2	14	13	–	–	–	–
Police	7	5	–	–	5	3	–	3	2	1	–	2	–	–	1	1
TOTAL	17	17	3	8	20	20	2	7	4	3	14	15	10	–	3	3

Table 3. *The structures associated to the introduction of each character in the L2s*

	S–V		**Perception**		**HAVE**		**BE**		**V–S**		**V–O**		**Passive**		***Other forms***	
	CH2	FR2	CH2	FR2	CH2	FR2	CH2	FR2	CH2	FR2	CH2	FR2	CH2	FR2	CH2	FR2
Thief girl	–	5	5	5	8	4	2	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Baker	3	7	–	3	9	5	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	2	–
Snitching lady	1	8	–	–	14	3	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	4	–	–
Chaplin	–	–	–	–	3	–	–	–	–	–	12	13	–	–	–	2
Police	5	9	–	–	5	2	–	–	–	–	3	2	–	–	2	2
TOTAL	9	29	5	8	39	14	3	1	–	–	15	15	–	4	4	4

* This is an occurrence of the *il s'agit de l'histoire de* NP (lit: 'it's about the story of NP') structure which we consider comparable to the *c'est l'histoire de* NP ('it is the story of NP') type observed in the L1 groups (see footnote 2). However, notice that strictly speaking we are not dealing with the broad focus *c'est* structure

is, if almost all structure types are attested in the L2 productions, when one considers the general picture, the two learners' groups show a clear preference towards one linguistic pattern: the HAVE construction in French learners' L2 Chinese (39/75 introductions) and the S–V order Chinese learners' L2 French (29/75 introductions). This tendency is reflected in the avoidance of structures available in the L1 that would be equally felicitous in the L2 – an obvious example being the absence of V–S word order in both learners' groups.

Unicity of functions

A consequence of the previous point is that in L2 learners' production we observe the tendency to associate one precise function (here: referent introductions) to one single structure, following the principle of *unicity of functions* (Bartning & Kirchmeyer, 2003). Therefore, as mentioned above, when French learners in L2 Chinese seek for an L2 presentational structure allowing them to anchor new referents into the narration, the *yǒu* structure will be picked up to carry this function. In other words, all the structures available in the source language for this purpose – and of which some may be felicitous in the target language – merge into the *yǒu* structure in L2 Chinese.

Another good example concerns the *c'est* structure, which is chosen only to express identificational focus in Chinese learners' L2 French. The following are examples of the identificational focus *c'est* structure in Chinese learners' productions. Importantly, not a single learner fails to use this structure when the context requires it, nor do they misuse the S–V word order instead.

(18) FR2_CH1 *le monsieur a dit que* ***c' est*** *<u>lui</u>* ***qui*** *a piqué la baguette*
the.M gentleman has said REL.O it is him REL.S has stolen the.F baguette
Lit: 'The gentleman said that it was him who stole the baguette'

(19) FR2_CH1 ***ce n' est pas*** *<u>la fille</u>* ***qui*** *a volé le pain*
it NEG is NEG the.F girl REL.S has stolen the.M bread
c'est *<u>lui-même</u>* ***qui*** *a volé*
it is him self REL.S has stolen
Lit: 'It is not the girl who stole the bread, it is himself [the one] who stole [it]'

However, not one single example of presentational *c'est* (see the following example) is observed in their corpus.

(20) FR1 *Donc,* ***c'est*** *<u>une- une fille</u>* ***qui*** *regarde des pâtisseries en vitrine*
Lit: 'So, it is a girl who looks at some pastries inside the window'

In our view, several possible explanations arise. First, the identificational *c'est* structure corresponds to the narrow focus *shì* 是 structure in L1 Chinese. Secondly, the *c'est* configuration is prototypically associated with the expression of narrow identificational focus in French (see Lambrecht, 2001) contrary to presentational structures which, in some cases, commute with the unmarked S–V word order, and their felicitous use derives from a successful pragmatic consideration.

Thirdly, as mentioned, learners associate one structure (i.e. the *c'est* structure) with one function (i.e. the expression of identificational focus) and are thus reluctant to use it in a different context (i.e. the introduction of new referential entities into discourse). This is also the case with learners' acquisition of V–S word order in Italian, the polysemy of which is problematic.

Finally, as Bartning and Kirchmeyer (2003) have pointed out, 'continuative' relative clauses (expressing information that makes the story move forward) are acquired later than 'descriptive' relative clauses (i.e. expressing discourse-given background informational content). The narrow focus *c'est* structure typically includes a clefted focused element and a descriptive relative clause. On

the other hand, presentational *c'est* structures involve by definition a 'continuative' relative clause. This could be a reason why Chinese learners produce the former kind of *c'est* structure, but not the latter.

Scarce usage of bridging

In both learner groups, the bridging of new inferable referents is not a common strategy. To begin with, French learners of L2 Chinese, as we said, massively use the *yǒu* structure in order to introduce new referents into discourse. Only a very few cases of definite preverbal NPs are found, intervening to encode the referents of the baker and the police, as expected.

It should be noted that French learners tend to underline the definitude of such NPs with the demonstratives 这个 *zhè(-ge)* 'this' or 那(个) *nà(-ge)* 'that', as also seen for speakers of other article languages in Crosthwaite et al. (2018).

(21) CH2_FR1 然后就那个警察来了
Ránhòu jiù <u>*nà-ge jǐngchá*</u> *lái-le*
after then that-CL police come-PFV
'And then the police came'

Chinese learners, on the other hand, resort to the 'unmarked' S-V word order more often; however, preverbal NPs are mostly indefinite.

(22) FR2_CH1 *A ce moment-là* <u>*un homme*</u> *livrait une- un plateau de pains*
at that time a.M man deliver.IMP a.F a.M plate of breads
dans la boulangerie
into the.F bakery
'At that time, a man was delivering a plate of breads to the bakery'

Operating at the (morpho-)syntax/pragmatics interface, bridging is documented to be a difficult phenomenon for L2 learners to acquire (Crosthwaite et al. 2018) and our data confirms this. Note, incidentally, that the few cases of definite preverbal NPs in the L2 corpora properly concern the referents of the baker and the police officer, i.e. those referents that by virtue of a semantic frame and the extra-linguistic common knowledge, respectively, are likely to be introduced by a bridging operation.

Summary

In this section, we discussed a number of characteristics that the two learner groups have in common: a lack of variety with regards to the choices of presentational structures; a tendency towards a 'unicity of functions,' where one function tends to be associated with only a single form; and the scarce usage of bridging as a strategy to introduce new referents. Now, we will turn to the main difference between the French learner group and the Chinese learner group, trying to explain why the former overuse presentational structure in their L2 productions while the latter, on the opposite, tend to avoid such structures in French L2 and reestablish the 'unmarked' S–V word order.

4.3.2. Explaining overuse and avoidance in L2 learners' production

As detailed above, Chinese speakers more often introduce new referential entities by using the canonical S–V word order, thus avoiding the HAVE structure in their L2 French. By way of

explanation, we must acknowledge the structural complexity of French *il y a* structures compared to *yǒu* 有 constructions, as the sequence *il y a* is not (entirely) fixed and demands agreement with the second verb (cf. example 23). This potential difficulty explains the preference manifested by Chinese learners towards simple vs. complex HAVE structures in L2 French as well as their general tendency to avoid bi-clausal presentational structures. Sometimes, Chinese learners might omit the relative pronoun *qui*, a formulation that is not attested in the French L1 corpus:

(23) FR2_CH1 *pendant ce moment* ***il y a*** *le patron du magasin*
ø *était en train de transporter... les produits*[4]

In addition, we believe that Chinese speakers more often reestablish the S–V order in French because it is perceived as the 'canonical' word order of this language. In other words, we must take into account the role played by metalinguistic knowledge, both as educated learners of one's L1 and as educated learners of the target language.

French learners, on the other hand, strongly rely on the *yǒu* 有 construction as a *ready-to-use device* that can help them to structure the discourse without demanding any syntactic adjustment or major global planning. As French overuse of presentational structures has been documented in other L2s (English, Italian), our study has showed that transfer of L1 patterns may occur even in an L2 such as Chinese, where the presentational structure does not involve a relative pronoun.

Secondly, *yǒu* 有 structures seem to encompass the presentative function, which is achieved via a more diversified inventory of constructions in French L1. Thus, French learners seem to assign this function to the *yǒu* 有 structure following a tendency towards the 'unicity of functions' typical of L2 production.

Our findings also suggest L2 learners do not employ V–S order. This is an interesting finding as studies on Chinese speakers of basic Italian (Chini, 2002) found that learners can correctly use the V–S order in L2 Italian. Valentini (1992, 2003) also finds the V–S order in beginning Chinese learners of Italian, and suggests that the L1 plays a major role in shaping the sentence word order, in that learners whose L1 allows a more flexible order (such as Chinese) would more easily acquire the use of correspondent V–S order sentences in the L2. However, we believe that our Chinese learners (that is, advanced learners who benefit from an enhanced L2 metalinguistic knowledge) do not produce V–S order in the French target language because they do not conceive it as a possible choice in the syntactic inventory of French. In other words, if the source language has a form (V–S in this case) which could be felicitously employed in the L2 under similar a context, learners seem to avoid its usage if such a form is not conceptualized as an alternative pattern to what is considered to be the prototypical L2 order, i.e. the S–V word order.

4.3.3. Insights from the expression of "reactivated" referents

Contrary to the Chinese L1 group, French native speakers may use presentational structures (mostly the HAVE construction and sometimes the V–S order) to encode 'reactivated' referents, i.e. those referents that come back into the scene of discourse (that is, referentially 'known' but relationally 'focal'):

(24) FR1 ***il y a*** *la fille* ***qui*** *l' attend à la sortie*
it there has the.F girl REL.S OBJ waits at the.F exit
Lit: 'There is the girl who waits for him at the exit'

[4] Lit: 'In this moment there is the owner of the bakery ø was delivering the products'

(25) FR1 *et là au coin de la rue **l' attend** la femme*
and there at.the.M corner of the.F road OBJ waits the.F woman
Lit: 'And there, at the corner waits for him the woman'

In this case, both learner groups follow the discursive principles of their source language, that is: Chinese learners never assign this function to the HAVE structure, while French learners do so.[5] It is worth highlighting that Chinese learners do produce examples where the NP encoded by the *il y a* structure is definite, therefore, it does not seem to be a constraint at the morphological level. However, the referent denoted by the definite NP is always one that appears for the first time into discourse:

(26) FR2_CH1 ***il y avait** le personnel de la boulangerie **qui** vient de sortir quelque chose d'un-d'une grande voiture*
Lit: 'There was the employee of the bakery who just took something out of a big car'

Therefore, at the pragmatic level, learners fail to associate the HAVE structure with a function (namely the encoding of reactivated referents) that is not found in their L1. It might be the case that similarity in HAVE structures found across French and Chinese L1s influences L2 learners' production, in that the need for a conceptual rearrangement is less salient.

4.3.4. A look at speakers' global discourse planning

As previously noted, a characteristic that all French presentational structures have in common is the following *qui*-clause. Indeed, a crucial point here is the possibility to encode the newly introduced referent by a pseudo-relative clause (Hendriks, 2003, p. 300). This is the way French speakers manage their discourse by organizing sequences of relative clauses governed by the relative pronoun *qui* relating to one referent.

(27) FR1 *donc et on voit la personne ou le boulanger*
*on sait pas trop **qui** c'est*
***qui**.. **qui** descend qui descend les les-*
***qui** prend les pains ou les pâtisseries dans le camion*
(qui est stationné devant la boulangerie)
*et puis **qui** rentre dans la boulangerie*[6]

However, in Chinese, referential continuity is achieved by means of the personal pronoun *tā* and by zero anaphor (marked by "Ø" in the text):

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[5] The means employed by Chinese learners to mark reactivated referents in French L2 (namely: demonstrative pronoun and dislocation) also directly reflect L1 strategies, and are not attested in native French corpus in this context.

CH1 这个女生她就在外面等他
*Zhè-ge nǚshēng **tā** jiù zài wàimiàn děng tā*
this-CL girl 3S then at outside wait 3S
Lit: 'This girl she was waiting for him outside'

[6] Lit: 'So and we see the person or the baker, we don't know who he is, **who** who takes down the the… **who** takes the breads or the pastries in the truck (which is parked in front of the bakery) and then **who** enters the bakery'.

(28) CH1 有一个女的 她 经过 一家面包店。
Yǒu *yí-ge nǚde* ***tā*** *jīngguò yì-jia miànbāodiàn*
然后她看到橱窗里面的点心，
ránhòu ***tā*** *kàndao chúchuāng lǐmiàn de diǎnxīn,*
她好像有一些饿，
tā *hǎoxiàng yǒu yìxiē è*
很想 吃，
Ø *hěn xiǎng chī,*
但是 可能没有钱买。
dànshì kěnéng ***Ø*** *méi-yǒu qián mǎi*[7]

Thus, the point to be made here is that a successful acquisition of L2 pragmatic organization cannot be confined to the sentence level (i.e. the 'presentational' structure *per se*), but necessarily takes into consideration global discourse strategies as used by native speakers.

5. Concluding remarks

In this study we explored the strategies for referent introductions adopted by Chinese learners of L2 French and French learners of L2 Chinese. To begin with, given two languages, L1>L2 directionality may lead to quite different outcomes. In particular, a form/function pairing in the L1 does not always favour use of the corresponding form in the target language. On the one hand French speakers overuse HAVE structures in their L2 Chinese, even in clearly inappropriate contexts (that is, instead of passive BEI structures and to express reactivated referents). Thus, French learners tend to overuse presentational structures to introduce new referential entities, even in the case of a target language without relative pronouns – namely Mandarin Chinese. On the other hand, Chinese learners' systematic use of the S–V word order in French L2 is observed. In this case, we believe speakers' metalinguistic representation of the target language grammar plays a major role as well.

In general, the present study confirms previous claims in that although learners may be highly proficient, their patterns in information selection still partially reflect the ones found in their L1, both at the micro- and macro-planning levels. In addition, given that the introduction of new referents is not exclusively associated with marked syntactic structures (as the range of S–V results in our L1 corpora showed), the acquisition of presentational structures may be particularly challenging for the L2 learner. While the identificational focus structure (corresponding to English *it*-clefts) appears to be unproblematic in both learners' groups, on the contrary, learners' felicitous selection of presentational structures reflects a preference instead of a categorical choice. This, therefore, requires a prior and deep understanding of the pragmatic context, resulting in increased difficulty for L2 learners.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS USED IN GLOSSES

1S	First person pronoun
3S	Third person pronoun
ACC	Pretransitive marker *bǎ* 把
CL	Classifier
CRS	Current Relevant State particle *le* 了

[7] Lit: 'There is a woman **she** passes by a bakery shop. Then, **she** looks at some pastries inside the window. **She** seems a little hungry, **Ø** really wants to eat [something], but probably **Ø** has no money to buy'.

F	Feminine gender
GEN	Genitive particle *de* 的
IMP	Imperfect
M	Masculine gender
NE	Pause particle *ne* 呢
NEG	Negation
PASS	Passive marker
PFV	Perfective aspect marker
PROG	Progressive aspect adverb *zài* 在
REF	Reflexive pronoun
REL.O	Relative object pronoun
REL.S	Relative subject pronoun
SUB	Subordinative particle *de* 的

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