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***SPLIT IP IN L2. ON THE VERB MOVEMENT FEATURE AND  
ADVERBS***

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**Abstract**

*The paper provides an analysis of parameter resetting in second language learning, focusing on one of the key diagnostics for verb movement, namely adverb positioning. Verb raising, as one of the central properties of the split IP parameter, contributes to distinguishing between [+ split IP] languages such as Romanian, in which the lexical verb raises, and [- split IP] languages such as English, in which the lexical verb stays in situ. When speakers of Romanian learn a foreign language such as English the question that arises is whether they set the L2 parameter from the beginning or whether they transfer the L1 value and then undergo a process of parameter resetting. In the latter case, there is a further question, namely whether parameter resetting can be complete. The present paper offers evidence that learners transfer the L1 values and attempt to reset the parameters but complete resetting is not possible.*

**Key-words:** second language acquisition, split IP, parameter, resetting, generative

**Introduction**

Starting from the analysis of the split IP parameter proposed by Bobaljik and Thrainsson (1998), the present paper aims at investigating the process of parameter resetting in second language learning with respect to this particular parameter. The paper will focus on the central properties of the parameter related to verb movement and adverbs, and on the analysis of the

resetting from the (+) value of the parameter in Romanian to the (–) value of the parameter in English in the case of Romanian adult learners of English.

The organisation of the paper is: in section 1, there is a presentation of the Split IP parameter characteristics in Romanian and English with respect to the verb raising characteristic; in section 2, I make predictions related to the valuation of this parameter in second language learning; in section 3, I present some experimental data testing the hypothesis of No Parameter Resetting (Tsimpli and Roussou 1991) within the Full Transfer/Full Access to Universal Grammar framework (Schwartz and Sprouse 1996), in second language learning, in terms of the verb movement feature of the Split IP parameter.

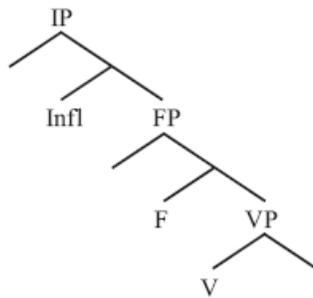
## **1. Split IP in Romanian and English**

### **1.1. The characteristics of the split IP parameter (Bobaljik and Thrainsson 1998)**

Assuming that the inventory of functional projections dominating VP is not universal, e.g. the presence of Agreement Phrases is a point a parametric variation, Bobaljik and Thrainsson (1998) proposed a new theory on verb raising in which different surface positions of the finite verb across languages reflect differences in phrase structure in a principled manner. More specifically, they proposed that there are two types of languages, i.e. languages with a split IP and languages with a simple unsplit IP. Under this analysis, the IP is decomposed into two projections in some languages but not in others. The two projections are: Agreement Phrase (AGRP) and Tense Phrase (TP), where AGR selects TP. Both projections are headed by inflectional elements. Whether the language has two distinct projections for Tense and Agreement or only one is a point of parametric variation related to verbal morphology and verb raising. In particular, the Split IP parameter includes a cluster of properties related to verbal morphology, verb movement and specifier positions. In this paper, I will focus on verb movement and more specifically on one of the key diagnostics for verb movement, i.e. the position of adverbs.

In terms of verb movement, there is obligatory finite verb raising in languages which have two distinct projections: TP and AGRP, i.e. [+ split IP] languages:

(1)



(from Bobaljik & Thrainsson 1998: 42)

Bobaljik and Thrainsson (1998) state that I and V have features which require checking against each other. Checking is local, i.e. it does not involve movement, V remains under the VP. V merges with I under adjacency, i.e. if nothing intervenes between I and V.

But, if inflection is split, there is a functional projection FP which intervenes between VP and IP, preventing the feature checking operation; Merge can no longer take place because the adjacency condition is not observed:

IP – FP – VP

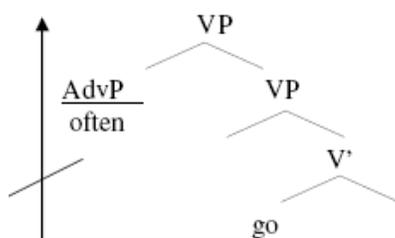
This will force V to move out of VP.

On the other hand, V remains in situ in simple IP – VP configurations, i.e. in [- split IP] languages, such as English.

(2) John often goes to the cinema.

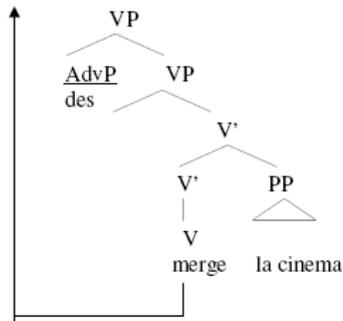
(3) \*John goes often to the cinema.

(4)



In [+ split IP] languages, the verb raises to check its tense and agreement features. For [- split IP] languages, feature checking is local and no raising occurs.

(5) Ion merge des la cinema.



## 1.2. Split IP in Romanian and English – on verb movement

In Romanian, a [+ split IP] language, the finite verb raises out of VP. Evidence for such a claim comes from the position of aspectual, time and negative adverbs as well as floating quantifiers.

### 1.2.1. Frequency Adverbs

(6) Ion vine adesea la mine.

Ion comes often to me.

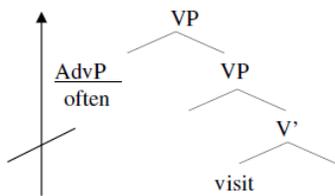
'Ion often comes to my place.'

The example in (6) shows that the verb moves past the adverb(s) *adesea* 'often' to a higher position.

In English, verb raising of lexical verbs is not possible, as can be seen in (7):

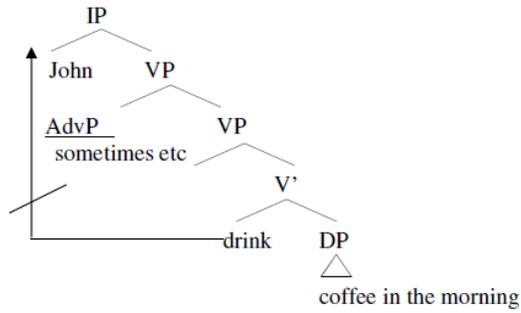
(7) a. John often visits his friends.

b. \*John visits often his friends.



Consider also:

(8) John sometimes/never/always drinks coffee in the morning.

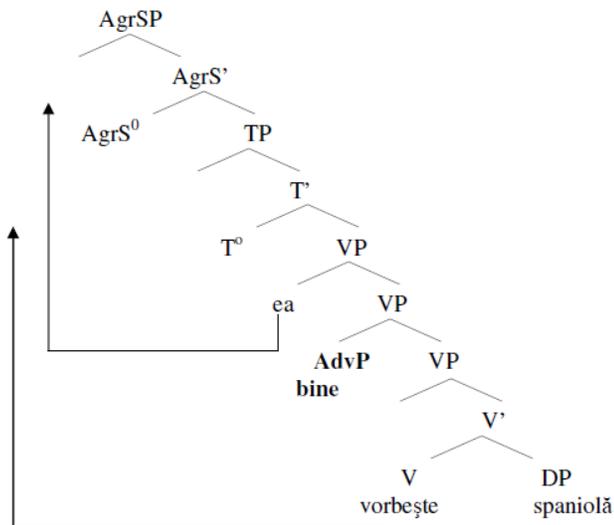


**1.2.2. The verb-object sequence:**

As a consequence of verb raising, in Romanian it is possible to place a constituent, usually an adverb, between the lexical verb and its direct object:

(9) Ea vorbește bine spaniolă.

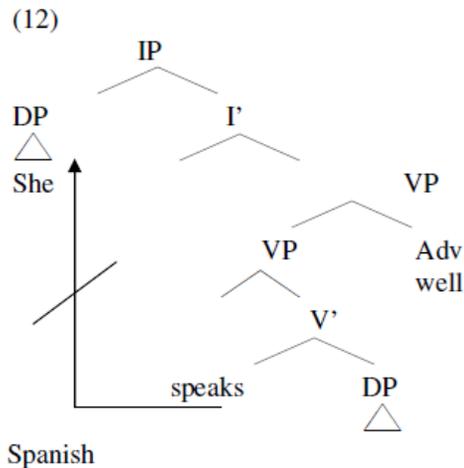
(10)



In English, the lexical verb remains in situ, therefore no constituent can intervene between the verb and its direct object:

(11) \*She speaks well Spanish.

(12) She speaks Spanish well.



Consider also other similar examples, involving different types of adverbial constituents:

(13)\*I like very much apples.

(14)\*I eat often apples.

(15)\* I drink in the evening a glass of water.

(16)\*I told him yesterday the truth.

(17)\* I saw yesterday Mary.

In conclusion, in terms of verb movement and the position of adverbs, the main difference between Romanian and English is that because the lexical verb raises in Romanian but not in English, Romanian allows post-verbal frequency adverbs as opposed to English and also, another consequence is that Romanian allows an adverb between a verb and its direct object.

## 2. Second Language Learning and Parameter Resetting

Building on this analysis, some predictions can be made with respect to the valuation of the verb movement characteristic of the [split IP] parameter for second language learning, in particular for speakers of a [+ split IP] language such as Romanian learning a [-split IP] language such as English.

One common question in the domain of second language learning targets the availability of UG in L2 learning, on the one hand, and the nature of parameter setting, on the other hand. The question is far from trivial, especially when the subjects are adult learners of L2, i.e. they have already set values to the parameters of UG in their L1. In order to understand the nature of L2 learning, it would be extremely important to understand whether parameter values in L2 are set on the basis of the input, with no L1 transfer, or whether the (initial) parameter values in L2 are set via L1, i.e. whether the initial values are the ones in L1.

In the former case, the prediction is that L2 learners should go through the same stages as L1 learners with respect to the split IP parameter irrespective of their own L1. In our case, this would predict that a L2 learner of a [-split IP] L2 whose L1 is of the [+split IP] type will value the parameter as negative, with no interference of L1. The stages the L2 learners go through, the errors, the avoidance strategies should be identical to the ones observed for the valuation of the same parameter in the acquisition of the target language as L1. In the latter case, the initial values of the parameter in L2 will be the ones in L1. L1 effects would have to be investigated as well as the (un)successful resetting of parameters.

An analysis investigating the valuation of the split IP parameter in a [-split IP] L2 by learners whose L1 is of the split IP type, for example, Romanian speakers learning English as L2, would help us understand the L2 learning process at a deeper level; it will help us see whether the way in which parameter values in L1 differ from those in L2 is relevant for the valuation of this parameter. In the analysis, we would have to focus on verb raising related properties and also possibly object raising phenomena.

The Full Transfer/Full Access (Schwartz & Sprouse 1996) hypothesis argues that in the beginning learners transfer all the L1 parameter settings but they still have access to UG directly and as they progress there is a process of parameter resetting. If that were true, we would expect to see evidence of transfer in the beginning of L2 learning and gradual disappearance throughout the process. If, on the other hand, Tsimpli and Roussou's (1991) hypothesis that parameter resetting is not possible were true, we would expect to see evidence of L1 value transfer in the L2 with advanced learners as well.

Considering the differences between Romanian and English presented above, the prediction is that learners of English as a Second Language will show evidence of transfer of the L1 parameter settings. The question is whether these transfer effects disappear as learners advance in their learning. We would expect to see fewer, desirably none, such errors at advanced levels.

The present study looks at verb raising related phenomena such as:

- a. the position of frequency adverbs;
- b. the verb-object sequence

The errors related to the properties under investigation that are expected to appear in their production of L2 are:

- a. raising the lexical verb past the frequency adverbs and, consequently placing them freely, either in the middle, after the verb or at the end of the sentence; placing the

frequency adverb in the beginning of the sentence, transfer from the Romanian construction, eg.:

- (18) a. Întotdeauna mă trezesc la 7.  
b. \*Always I get up at 7.

b. placing adverbs/other words between the verb and its direct object.:

- (19) \*I eat often apples.  
(20) \*She speaks very well Spanish.

### 3. The study

This paper uses data from a cross-sectional experiment, involving beginner and intermediate learners of English.

The purpose of the experiment is to see whether L2 learners transfer the L1 [+ split IP] parameter setting with respect to adverb placement and whether they reset these values as they advance in their knowledge of L2.

There were 9 beginner subjects and 9 intermediate subjects, all adult learners of English, with ages from 30 – 45.

The level of the subjects was determined according to a placement test and the structures tested in the experiment had been formally taught beforehand.

The method included elicited production and translation. In the elicited production part, the subjects were asked to arrange a set of words into sentences and also a set of cards into sentences. The aim of this task was to identify whether subjects place the frequency adverbs correctly and whether they observe the strict verb-object sequence in English. I used two types of task, i.e. arrange a set of words and a set of word cards. Task 3 resembles the process of selecting words from the mental lexicon and arranging them into sentences, therefore it is close to free production and could show interesting results.

#### Task 1: Please arrange the following words into sentences:

1. to the cinema/I/never/go  
lone.....
2. always/gets up/she/at 7 in the morning  
.....

#### Task 3:

Students were given some word cards and then they were asked to produce ten sentences using whichever words they liked. Examples:

I	never	go	to the theatre	alone
She	always	goes to bed	at 9	in the evening
I	like	Chinese food	very much	

There was also a translation task (task 2) which included 5 sentences in Romanian to be translated into English focusing on the same characteristics, i.e. frequency adverb placement and the verb-object sequence.

Example:

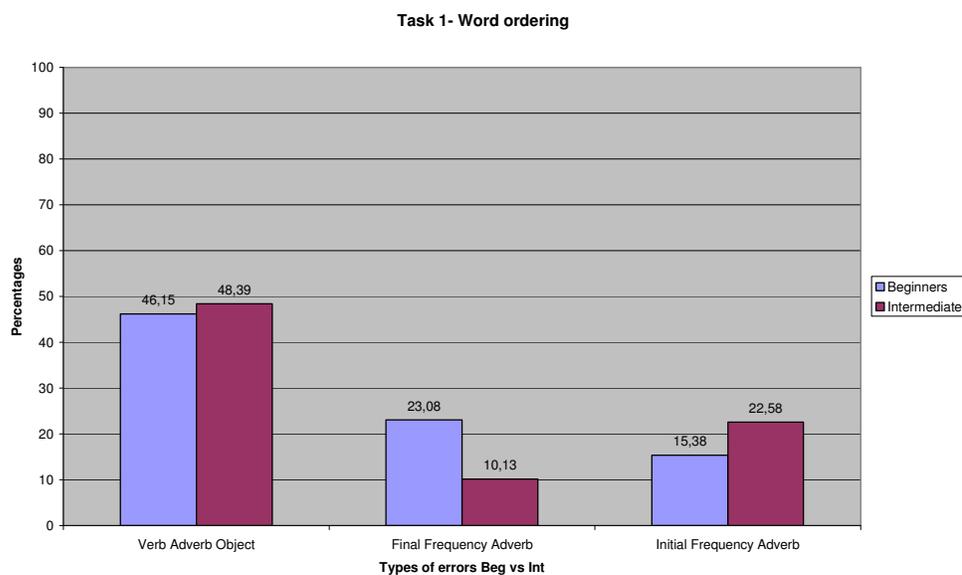
(21). Mă duc deseori în parc.

The purpose of this task was to see whether the learners can produce sentences with the target parameter setting or whether they transfer the values from Romanian.

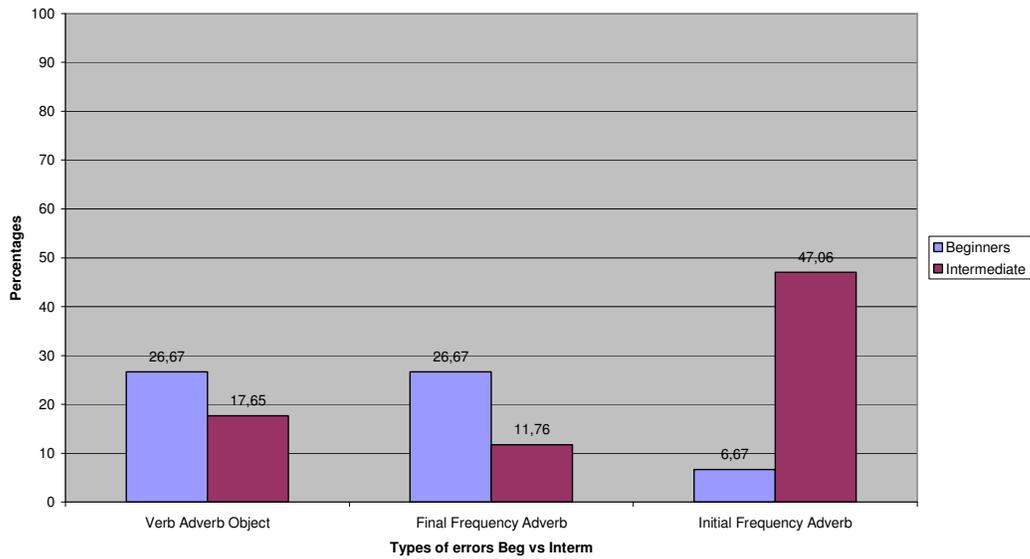
All the sentences in the experiment had a low level of lexical and structural complexity, as they were designed so that beginner learners could manage them, one of the goals being to identify how early we can see evidence of parameter resetting.

The analysis of the errors produced by the learners in the experiment shows that they transfer the L1 parameter settings and furthermore, that they cannot reset these settings at the intermediate level.

### 3. 1. Results



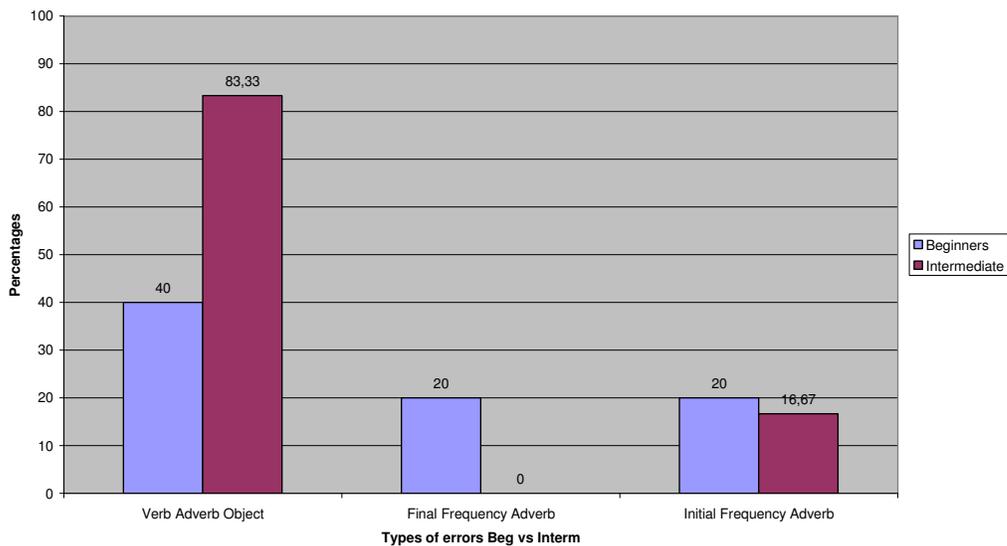
Task 3 Word Card Ordering



As the bar charts above show, with word ordering tasks, there is a somewhat consistent pattern of development from Beginner to Intermediate. If we can see a decrease in the placement of frequency adverbs in the final position, we can see an increase in the placement of such adverbs in initial position, with a significant 30% difference in the case of word card ordering. Such a task is closer to free production and this result may constitute evidence for fossilization of certain transfer errors with higher levels.

With the translation task, the results provide further evidence for error fossilization and transfer of L1 parameter values:

Task 2 Translation



As can be seen, intermediate level learners show 83% errors with placing an adverb between a verb and its object, thus showing evidence of raising the verb in English similarly to their L1, Romanian. With frequency adverb placement, while we do not find mistakes with positioning them at the end of the sentence, there are still mistakes with placing them in the beginning of the sentence – 10% with intermediate level learners as compared with 20% for beginners.

Overall, there is evidence of transfer in the case of beginners, with percentages ranging from 6 to 46 of all errors, across task types. Furthermore, complete parameter resetting is not achieved with intermediate learners as we can still find the same errors, some of which in lower percentages, i.e. ranging from 0% to 11% especially in the case of frequency adverb placement, but also, more interestingly, some of the errors increase in percentage as compared with beginners, i.e. from 47% to 83%, indicating fossilization.

## **Conclusion**

The paper has provided an analysis of one of the key diagnostics for verb movement in Romanian and English, namely the position of adverbs with relevance for the split IP parameter resetting in second language learning. The paper brings evidence for the No Parameter Resetting Hypothesis (Tsimpli and Roussou 1991) with respect to access to Universal Grammar in L2, i.e. the data presented suggest that parameter resetting is not possible and transfer errors do not disappear with the advancement of L2 knowledge, furthermore some of them may fossilize.

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