

DE GRUYTER  
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*Isabel Repiso*

# THE CONCEPTUALIZATION OF COUNTERFACTUALITY IN L1 AND L2

GRAMMATICAL DEVICES AND SEMANTIC  
IMPLICATIONS IN FRENCH, SPANISH AND ITALIAN

SOLA STUDIES ON LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

Isabel Repiso

**The Conceptualization of Counterfactuality in L1 and L2**

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Isabel Repiso

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French, Spanish and Italian

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*To those teachers who are enthusiastically committed  
to their classes, and who encourage creativity and  
critical thinking in their students*



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“No political revolution is possible without a radical shift  
in one’s notion of the possible and the real.”

Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, xxiii





# Introduction

Counterfactual reasoning is a universal cognitive process, whereby reality is compared to an imagined vision of what might be (Kahneman & Tversky 1982). On such reasoning rest everyday dealings such as decision-making, risk minimization, or blame assignment. Taken more broadly, it has been situated in relation to erotic desire (Perel 2013, Illouz 2012)<sup>1</sup>. Although the areas affected by counterfactual reasoning are indeed varied, it seems obvious that an L2 learner would need to express *what might be* at some point in his acquisitional path. How, then, is such reasoning expressed? Through which constructions and grammatical means? Through which combinations of such constructions and grammatical means? Are there principles governing that communicational task? And if so, what might they be? Such are the questions this volume is going to seek to answer.

Psychology views counterfactual reasoning as an evaluation strategy, whereby alternatives to reality are imagined (Wells & Gavanski 1989)<sup>2</sup>. What do we know of its acquisition? For decades, research in L1 and L2 has been designed to describe acquisition of hypotheticality through conditional constructions such as *if A (then) B*. Within that framework counterfactuality has been studied using a semantic scale that expresses varying degrees of probability in conditional clauses – a *continuum of hypotheticality*, in Comrie’s terminology (1986). Two phenomena have, in general, been acknowledged:

1. Counterfactual *if-constructions* emerge later than predictive *if-constructions* or those related to the future (Bowerman 1986, Bernini 1994, Chini 1995);
2. In both L2 and L1 acquisition, the subject produces symmetrical verbal morphology<sup>3</sup> in the main and the subordinate clauses (Lavandera 1976, Bates 1976, Wald 1993, Chini 1995, Schouten 2000, Haiman & Kuteva 2002).

---

<sup>1</sup> These scholars consider desire as an expression of identity in individualistic societies, and imagination, as a critical component of erotic intelligence. “Erotic intelligence is sexuality transformed by the human imagination and a crisis of desire is often a crisis of the imagination” (Perel, 2013).

<sup>2</sup> Over the past few years, counterfactuality has become a focus of studies in the neurosciences and psychological research, leading to promising results such as how the right hemisphere is involved in the processing of counterfactual information (Nieuwland 2012), or to the positive impact of additive counterfactual conditionals in learning, in the course of negotiations (Kray *et al.* 2009).

<sup>3</sup> Here, symmetrical verbal morphology in *if*- constructions will refer to repeating a single verbal tense in both the subordinate and the main clauses. In Chapter 2, we are going to be examining the symmetrical conditional, (for example, *Si vous m'auriez ennuyé, je vous l'aurais dit* – Had you bored me, I would have told you, literally: If you would have bored me, I would have told

From the observation of those generalities, some scholars working in the L1 area have wondered whether late emergence of counterfactual conditionals in the child may be due to the syntactic complexity of the constructions, or to factors that are of a semantic order (Bates 1976, Kuczaj & Daly 1979, Bowerman 1986). The answer put forward by certain scholars, is that the ability to contemplate counterfactual alternatives depends on other cognitive skills, such as a grasp of uncertainty (Wing & Scholnick 1981)<sup>4</sup>.

## Counterfactuality

Counterfactual reasoning implies the mental construction of alternatives, relative to the actual state of affairs (Wells & Gavanski 1989). Counterfactuality has been situated in the context of:

- causality, through the causal relationship which may exist between the main and the subordinate clauses of *if-constructions*;
- epistemic modality, through the speaker's degree of confidence, belief or knowledge upon which a clause is based;
- irreality, through the non-actualization of the contents expressed in the main clause of some *if-constructions*<sup>5</sup>.

The three approaches have transformed counterfactuality into a blanket notion, in general associated with a conversational Gricean implicature (Lewis 1993, Stalnaker 1991, Comrie 1986, Van Linden & Verstraete 2008) and a speech-act function (Dancygier & Sweetser 1996). The analysis of simple counterfactual clauses as a semantic effect arising from the combination of the expression of potentiality and non-actualization of the expressed contents (Van Linden & Verstraete 2008) has likely provided the fullest explanation of its origins<sup>6</sup>.

---

you) or the symmetrical indicative (for example, *Si t'es une femme, je t'assure que tu réagis différemment* – Were you a woman, you'd react differently – literally: If you are a woman, believe me you react differently).

**4** Haiman & Kuteva (2002) explain symmetrical conditionals owing to their parallelism with correlative or proportional clauses (*i.e.*, the deeper he plunges into the nature of speech, the less satisfied he is with conventional wisdom).

**5** *If-constructions* with a potential value tend to be placed in a context of non-exclusion of factuality (Pietrandrea 2012).

**6** Van Linden & Verstraete's analysis (2008) is of interest essentially owing to how it deals with counterfactuality, as they introduce counterfactuality as a category that may be expressed through means other than *if-constructions*. (Cf. section 2.2.2).

## The influence of L1

The idea that the L1 categories and structures shape the speaker's mental activity and thereby, his way of formulating ideas (Whorf 1952) led to the first studies of counterfactuality in L2 (Bloom 1981). Within that framework, it has been attested that a lack of grammatical markers to encode counterfactuality in L1 affects the grasp of a statement as conditional or temporal in L2 for the Chinese source-language to the English target-language configuration (Bloom 1981, Yeh & Gentner 2005). With Dutch-speaking learners of L2 English, Schouten (2000) has observed a transfer-strategy, with the use of the symmetrical conditional of the *if-constructions* (e.g., *If I would be stopped [...], I think I still would say my own name*). These results would appear to suggest that comparing reality to *what might have been* in L2, will be shaped in line with the L1 prevailing grammatical traits and constructions. Lack of information as to how native French, Spanish and Italian speakers encode counterfactuality in general, beyond *if-constructions*, has led us to gather our own data. The corpus which forms the basis of the present volume is the first of its kind in oral production, which targets counterfactuality in the psychological definition of the term (*i.e.*, comparing reality to an imagined vision of what might have been, Kahneman & Tversky 1982) through a mutation task<sup>7</sup>. In the light of those characteristics, the present volume presents a considerable interest, as a contribution to answering linguistic or psychological questions.

## Aims and Rationale

Two main concerns have guided the studies devoted to counterfactuality: confirming the existence of language constraints dependent upon the child's cognitive development in L1 (Bates 1976, Bowerman 1986), and ascertaining whether the grammatical constructions and means available in L1 affect understanding in L2 (Bloom 1981, Au 1983, Liu 1985, Yeh & Gentner 2005). In the present study, we are not going to be locating our results in the context of developmental and cognitive constraints, nor in that of the domain of perception. The main contribution of the present volume to the domain of language acquisition involves the analysis of counterfactuality from a broader standpoint, well beyond the

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<sup>7</sup> Earlier studies in L1 and L2 examined counterfactuality through the analysis of *if-constructions*, based on written questionnaires (Bloom 1981, Au 1983, Liu 1985, Schouten 2000), spontaneous or semi-guided conversations (Bowerman 1986, Chini 1995, Katis 1997, Schouten 2000), repetition tasks and *What if*-questions (Bates 1976, Reilly 1982, Harris *et al.* 1996).

conditionality of *if-constructions*; therein lies the originality of our research<sup>8</sup>. Given that premise, this study aims at describing:

1. All the constructions and grammatical means encoding the production of alternative scenarios, in French, Spanish, and Italian, and in French as a Foreign Language (FFL);
2. The ways in which those constructions and grammatical means are combined, in order to enable counterfactual interpretations.

Amongst the ingredients of counterfactuality, there are lexical traits such as modal verbs, syntactical traits, such as *if-constructions* and inflectional traits, such as tenses and verbal moods. In the present volume, we intend to describe the expression of counterfactuality by analysing three points:

- The grammatical means and constructions which encode counterfactual scenarios (henceforth, mutation cores<sup>9</sup>). We are going to pay special attention to the following uses: indicative tenses other than the conditional, the conditional, the subjunctive, nominalisations and/or non-finite forms, *if-constructions* and modal verbs;
- Verbal morphology of simple and complex *if-constructions*.

---

**8** Unlike earlier acquisition studies – Bates (1976), Bowerman (1986), Slobin (1996), Bartning (1997), Bartning & Schlyter (2004) – our methodological approach includes, as a stimulus, a narrative with a causal chain of events leading up to an unfortunate output (Wells & Gavanski 1989). Once the stimulus was read, we asked the informants to suggest three changes to the story, designed to prevent the unhappy outcome (Cf. section 4.5.3 for the instructions and the initial English text; Cf. section 4.7 for a discussion of the textual typology).

**9** The notion of mutation core is critical to the understanding of our results. That notion is linked with the type of the task presented to the participants in our study: i.e. the mutation task. Before beginning that task, the participants read a story, with an unhappy ending. The mutation task involved suggesting three modifications based on the story of the stimulus, designed to prevent the unhappy outcome. Each answer to the mutation task involved an information core, designed to convey the modification at issue (henceforth, mutation cores).

# 1 Counterfactuality: a theoretical overview

## 1.1 Introduction

The notion of counterfactuality is a transversal one, considering that the starting-point for its analysis in philosophy, linguistics and psychology has been conditionality. Despite the many studies on conditionality, it has not yet been defined in such a way as to be satisfactory, overall, in the various disciplines where it has been a concern. The syntactic structure *If A (then) B*<sup>1</sup> has been the sole characteristic used for the purpose of identifying it. In retrospect, the 1980s were a turning point in the study of conditionality since for the first time, it was focussed upon as an inter-disciplinary issue<sup>2</sup>. Our intention here is not to report on every approach, every theory that has dealt with counterfactuality. In the present chapter we are going to look at three central notions that form its framework – causality, modality and irrealty – and at several properties assigned to *if*-constructions, notably using their definition as topics (Haiman 1978), implicatures (Lewis 1993, Stalkaner 1991, Comrie 1986) and semantic primitives (Wierzbicka 1997).

## 1.2 The ingredients of counterfactuality

The idea of counterfactuality as a conceptual sub-category of irrealty, independent of modality (Pietrandrea 2012) is relatively new. Historically, counterfactuality has been studied as a sub-domain of causality since Hume (1748), and as a sub-domain of modality during the twentieth century<sup>3</sup>. As a rule, those traditions have examined counterfactuality in the framework of conditionality in *if*-constructions<sup>4</sup>.

---

<sup>1</sup> “Until a satisfactory definition for a category exists, the sole criterion for identification of its supposed members is common superficial form: in the case of conditional clauses, the presence, in English, of a common conjunction *if*; in other languages, of a corresponding conjunction, word-order, verbal desinence, or whatever” (Haiman 1978).

<sup>2</sup> The first conference on conditional constructions attended by linguists, logicians and psychologists was held at Stanford University in December 1983 (Akatsuka 1985).

<sup>3</sup> In 1924, Jespersen introduced the idea that the choice of the verbal mode may express the speaker’s attitude to the propositional content produced (Jespersen 1992, 313). Although Jespersen did not relate the speaker’s subjectivity to counterfactuality, Palmer (1986) took up the idea to introduce modality as a grammatical category.

<sup>4</sup> Exceptionally, Athanasiadou & Dirven (1997) have raised the issue of how hypotheticality and counterfactuality operate beyond conditionality. They assert that those notions may be expressed by using non-conditional conjunctions that convey a wish (*if only, only*), concession (*even if, however much, whether... or*) and similarity (*as if, as though*). They also acknowledge

It has therefore been seen in relation to notions of truth, falsity, subjectivity and hypotheticality. Amongst the studies which have taken conditionality as their starting-point for analysing counterfactuality, one can distinguish between three main tracks: the first, which places it in the domain of causality (Hume 1739, Lewis 1973, 1991, Mackie 1974); the second, in the domain of modality (Lyons 1977, Palmer 1986, Fauconnier 1984, 1996, Sweetser 1996, Dancygier & Sweetser 1996, 2005); and a third one, in the domain of irrealty (Steele 1975, Pietrandrea 2012). Although these borders are not hard-and-fast, and overall, the studies on conditionality point to causal and modal implications, that classification does allow one to outline an orderly State of the Art. In reliance upon that division, we hope to elucidate an area which is often deemed complex (Harris 1986, Athanasiadou 1997, Pietrandrea 2012), confusing (Wierzbicka 1997) and problematic (Goodman 1991).

### 1.2.1 Causality

The relation between counterfactuality and causality as established by Hume (1748) flows from the way he defined *cause*:

*We may define a cause to be “an object, followed by another, and where all the objects similar to the first are followed by objects similar to the second”». Or in other words “where, if the first object had not been, the second object never had existed” » (Hume 1748, 115).*

To Hume, causality was a fundamental link in reasoning (1739). Amongst the principles which articulate the causes and effects he observed were:

- Contiguity, in the sense that cause and effect must be contiguous in space and time;
- A certain order, or chronological principle, since the cause must precede the effect;
- A kind of constant or standing relationship between cause and effect (Hume 1739, 173).

Lewis (1973) proposes a counterfactual analysis of causality. The value of counterfactual clauses lies in their appropriateness for conveying eventual alternatives to

---

that conditionality may be expressed without an *if*-construction, through adverbial phrases introduced by *without*, adverbial constructions introduced by *otherwise*, relative clauses that include *and/or* and a relative subordinate clause. Haiman & Kuteva (2002) acknowledge that conditionality may be conveyed through parataxis (*i.e.*, *Paese che vai, usanza che trovi*; Once in the country, its customs you will find!).

a factual state of affairs; alternatives where factual laws may or may not be altered. Lewis takes up Hume's idea of *necessity* when he insists that every effect flows from a minimum set of factual conditions that, taken together, are sufficient. In that framework, a cause is a differentiating factor; if lacking, what actually happened might have been otherwise (Lewis 1973, 194). For Mackie (1993), a cause is a necessary though insufficient part of a condition that though sufficient, is not essential to the production of an effect<sup>5</sup>. The principles on the basis of which the speaker chooses one specific cause from a list – principle of normality and conversational principle (Cheng & Novick 1991, 1992) – later came to be the core of the distinction drawn between causes and enabling conditions in psychology.

A considerable number of logical analyses have dealt with the verbal mood of *if*-constructions and more specifically the indicative and subjunctive in English. On the whole, it is acknowledged that the intuitive response to the following statements differ:

- (1) If Oswald did not kill Kennedy, then someone else did it
- (2) If Oswald had not killed Kennedy, then someone else would have

Although (1) will create some consensus, (2) will create doubt. Jackson (1991) has indicated that the difference occurs at the level of the material implications that characterise conditionals in the indicative as opposed to counterfactual conditionals, in which material implications are either lacking or hard to assign<sup>6</sup>.

For Lewis (1993), the conditions of truth of conditionals in the indicative are of a material order, whereas the conditions of truth of counterfactuals pertain to possible worlds. Lewis defines indicative conditionals as constructions which are functionally true, and which imply a kind of a hard-core at the level of the antecedent.

Stalnaker (1991) rejects the material analysis of conditional constructions and explains them in conversational terms, and in terms of the pragmatic principles underlying discourse. Within the purview of possible worlds, he considers *If A (then) B* constructions to be assertions on the truth of the main clause (*B*)

---

<sup>5</sup> The classic example of that definition refers to a lightning-bolt, which along with oxygen and certain fuels, will start a fire.

<sup>6</sup> For Jackson (1991), the material implications of a statement of the type *S'il avait plu, le match aurait été annulé* (Had it rained, the match would have been cancelled) would be hard to take seriously.



not necessarily in the world as it is but in the world as it could have been, had the subordinate clause (A) been true<sup>7</sup>. The conditionals in the subjunctive mood in English indicate that knowledge shared amongst participants in a conversation is suspended, and that the speaker's intention to communicate lies outside the contextual framework:

*In that case [where the antecedent of the conditional statement is counterfactual, or incompatible with the presuppositions of the context] one is forced to go outside the context set, since there are no possible worlds in it which are eligible to be selected (Stalnaker 1991, 145).*

Belief relative to the truth or falsity of the consequent (B) thus depends on a mental process, whereby the speaker adds the antecedent (A) to his own store of beliefs:

*First, add the antecedent (hypothetically) to your stock of beliefs; second, make whatever adjustments are required to maintain consistency (without modifying the hypothetical belief in the antecedent); finally, consider whether or not the consequent is then true (Stalnaker 1991, 33).*

### 1.2.2 Epistemic modality

Palmer (1986) considers counterfactual conditionals a formal characteristic – one common to several languages – of modality. In this scholar's analysis, counterfactuality has been integrated as a grammatical tool which indicates the degree of the speaker's commitment to what she is saying (epistemic modality). The description of unreal conditionals as structures that convey modal values is based on the "unlikely" or "unknown" factors as enunciated in the subordinate clause (Palmer 1986). One should stress here that this nuance allows Palmer to draw a distinction between those conditionals where the contents of the subordinate clause contradict the actual state of affairs – the counterfactuals – from those conditionals, where the speaker is uncertain of the contents of the subordinate clause. Among the grammatical means for encoding irrealty in *if*-constructions, Palmer points to verbal morphology in the past tense, to the subjunctive mood and to modal verbs. He does however refer to the use of the

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<sup>7</sup> The theory of possible worlds as an explanatory framework for rational activity rests upon the alternative way in which things may occur or may perhaps have occurred (Stalnaker 1991). That comparison is seen as the foundation for many of human actions, such as exchanging information, bargaining, looking to the future, or justifying either one's own behaviour or that of others, and so forth. Those who advocate this theory see reality as but one world amongst other possible worlds (Lewis 1973/1976).

indicative in Latin, in a context where the subjunctive would normally be preferred<sup>8</sup>. As for Spanish, the imperfect subjunctive in the subordinate clause and the conditional or imperfect subjunctive in the main clause are verbal combinations often associated with an unreal reading of the *if*-constructions. For example:

- (3) Si yo tuviese/tuviera bastante dinero, comprara/compraría otro automóvil  
*Had I enough money, I would buy another car.*

Unlike English and German in equivalent situations, Spanish makes no use here of modal verbs (Palmer 1986). Including factuality as a grammatical component of modality in English was first introduced by Lyons (1977), who did not restrict his analysis to unreal conditionals, but rather broadened it to include wishes that were not fulfilled in the past<sup>9</sup>. In that framework, a counterfactual clause discloses the speaker's commitment to the falsity of the propositional contents whereas a non-factual clause commits the speaker neither to the truth of the contents nor to its falsity (Lyons 1977). For Lyons, the counterfactual effect arises through the grammatical means which indicate its commitment to the falsity of the contents expressed, such as for example modal verbs, modal adverbs (e.g., *peut-être* – *perhaps*) or modal adjectives (e.g., *possible*). Iatridou (2000) takes up the idea that counterfactual constructions – which may be either conditionals or wishes fulfilled neither in the present nor in the past – indicate the speaker's point of view on the unlikelihood of the propositional contents expressed. This scholar sees the verbal morphology of the past as the main element which would point to a counterfactual reading, despite she reports other elements as well (i.e., the subjunctive mood and the imperfective aspect)<sup>10</sup>.

Analysis of conditional constructions in Japanese allows Akatsuka (1985) to define counterfactuality and uncertainty as epistemic attitudes. The counterfactual

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**8** Insofar as the Latin language is concerned, Hanford (1947) explains the use of the indicative in contexts where one would in theory expect a subjunctive, because a stylistic or even metrical license (cited in Palmer 1986). Jespersen (1992, 313) notes that at times, a choice of verbal mode will be determined, not by the speaker's attitude, but by the nature of the clause at issue and its relation to the main clause. Thus, to Jespersen, subjunctives dependent on a volitional verb or verb of opinion in French – *Ma femme veut que je lui obéisse* (My wife wants me to obey her) or *Ma femme ne croit pas qu'il vienne* (My wife does not expect him to come) – disclose no information as to the speaker's attitude.

**9** For example: *I wish he had been to Paris*. Cf. Iatridou (2000) for an analysis of the syntactic and semantic correspondences of this structure.

**10** Mode and aspect will not, however, systematically be necessary ingredients to counterfactuality (Iatridou 2000).

interpretation of a statement would hence the speaker's negative conviction about the accomplishment of the contents being expressed. Adverbs of time along with the context help to disambiguate the temporal or conditional interpretation of a clause that includes the morpheme *-tara*, which corresponds to the French *quand* (when) and *si* (if). Unlike English, Japanese does not distinguish the indicative from the subjunctive by grammatical means. This makes the disambiguation between potential and counterfactual readings difficult without knowing the context. For Akatsuka (1985), the opposition between reality and irrealty is structured throughout a *continuum* where the speaker locates herself.

Comrie (1986) distinguishes between what conditional constructions mean, and how they are interpreted, which enables him to separate the semantic values of a statement from its conversational implicatures. On that idea rests the *continuum* of hypotheticality – likelihood that the expressed contents actually occur – to which *if*-constructions pertain. In that *continuum*, factuality represents a low degree of hypotheticality whereas counterfactuality represents a high degree of hypotheticality. For Comrie (1986), the choice of verbal forms in conditionals is determined by the speaker's subjective assessment, rather than by the semantic values of truth. The implicature of counterfactual conditionals would appear to be more marked in English, when the clause involves verbal morphology in the past tense. He explains this by the fact that the speaker is more certain about past events than about those to come, and accordingly, a past non-factual situation is a likely counterfactual while a future non-factual situation is simply open-ended. From a morphosyntactic standpoint, the conjunction *si* (*if*) is the marker of conditionality *par excellence*.

For Van der Auwera (1983), the choice of verbal mode in *if*-constructions expresses the possibility of what is eventually true or potentially false, but under no circumstances true or false *per se*. His analysis corresponds to a semantic scale with two overlapping levels, one being values of truth, indeterminacy and falsity and the other values of necessity, contingency and impossibility. The distinction between conditionals in the indicative and in the subjunctive lies in how one expresses values of strong possibility for the former and weak possibility for the latter. More specifically, conditionals in the subjunctive literally express a low degree of indeterminacy relative to the antecedent. In other words, they stand at the crossroads between a neutral indeterminacy and a limited falsity. In the conditional in the subjunctive mood, Van der Auwera draws a distinction between counterfactual use (4) and problematic use (5):

(4) This is not Brussels.

Well, if it were Brussels, then I would be in Belgium.

- (5) This might be Brussels, but it is unlikely.  
Well, if it were Brussels, then I would be in Belgium.

The counterfactual effect of (4) arises from the combination of the conjunction of sufficiency and the possibility of the antecedent (since even if the antecedent false, it is being represented as possible). The problematic effect of (5) comes from the combination of the conjunction of sufficiency and the low degree of indeterminacy of the antecedent<sup>11</sup>.

Unlike Stalnaker (1991), for whom *if*-constructions are the framework for possible worlds, Dancygier & Sweetser (1996) believe that *if*-constructions introduce mental spaces. Each and every construction in *if* evokes, according to the latter scholars, two alternative mental spaces. Thus, (7) would define a mental space where it rains, and the match is cancelled, and another space, where it does not rain and where the match will go ahead<sup>12</sup>. Counterfactual conditionals have been defined in the theory of mental spaces by their predictive nature<sup>13</sup> and by the negative epistemic value they convey from the speaker's point of view (Dancygier & Sweetser 1996). Let us look at these examples:

- (6) *If it rained tomorrow, they'd cancel the game*  
(7) *If it rains tomorrow, they'll cancel the game*

The past tense in the antecedent of (6) is interpreted by Dancygier & Sweetser (1996) and Sweetser (1996) as the speaker marking her distances relative to the truth expressed in the subordinate clause, since the semantically preferred scenario is the one being left out: it is not raining, and the match can go ahead. Conversely, the present tense in the antecedent of (7) would point to the speaker's neutral stance. More generally, these scholars claim that all subordinate clauses

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**11** Van der Auwera (1983) takes an approach that relies upon two premises. The first is that all constructions of the type *If A then B* are assertions about the fact that *A* is a sufficient condition for achieving *B* (sufficient conditionality thesis). The second is that all constructions of the *If A then B* type are assertions about the fact that *A* is possible (possibility of the antecedent thesis).

**12** The mental spaces are not equivalent to the possible worlds, in the sense that the first concept operate locally: the contingent conditions relative to which the speaker commits herself are not, overall, all the possible conditions but rather a limited number of them, notably those made explicit in the subordinate clause.

**13** Since they share the function of connecting their propositional contents in such a way that the contents of the main clause may be predicted from that of the subordinate clause (causal relationship).

where the verbal form is in the past tense, have to do with the speaker's epistemic distance<sup>14</sup>.

In the analyses of Dancygier & Sweetser (1996, 2005), counterfactuality is not considered a semantic category cutting across several grammatical structures including, *inter alia*, the *if*-constructions. An initial analysis by these scholars describes counterfactual conditionals in the light of the verbal morphology of the subordinate clause and more specifically, of a past tense (Dancygier & Sweetser 1996). That assumption also appears in Fillmore (1990), for whom the past subjunctive is a characteristic of counterfactual subordinate clauses where the contents are bound together in the past tense<sup>15</sup>. Dancygier & Sweetser (1996)'s classification of conditionals into four types – contents, epistemics, conditionals of the speech act (Van der Auwera 1986, Sweetser 1990) and metalinguistics – helps to elucidate the relation between conditionality and causality, at the core of the philosophical debate since Hume (1748). According to Dancygier & Sweetser (1996), the propositional contents of the subordinate clause and of the main clause are not always linked by a causal relationship. On this observation rests the differentiation between the conditionals of content and the other conditional constructions<sup>16</sup>. The definition given by these scholars, for conditionals of the speech act, implies formal constraints which have been more specifically stressed by Fauconnier (Dancygier & Sweetser 1996)<sup>17</sup>.

An interesting hypothesis in that theoretical framework concerns epistemic conditionals and speech act conditionals, supposed to involve less restrictions on the level of verbal morphology than conditionals of content (Sweetser 1996). A later analysis by de Dancygier & Sweetser (2005) no longer defines counter-

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**14** Except in the case of the subjunctive *were* (Sweetser 1996). The issue of a discrepancy existing between the verbal form which emerges on the surface and the grammatical category in English conditionals, has been an object of study for some decades now. The question of the polysemy of *had* + past participle, which may be interpreted either as a pluperfect or as a subjunctive, has often been raised (Fillmore 1990). Similarly, *would* and *could* may operate as modals in the conditional or as the past tense of the modals *will* and *can* (Fillmore 1990).

**15** For Fillmore (1990) the verbal morphology in *if*-constructions in English is both predictable and always grammatical, flowing as it does from the “unified” interaction of the manner whereby epistemic values and syntactic and semantic descriptions operate.

**16** For English, here are examples that do not include causal relationships between the main clause and the subordinate clause: *If you're so smart, when was George Washington born?* (speech act); *If he typed her thesis, (then) he loves her* (epistemic); *My ex-husband, if that's the right word for him, was seen in Vegas last week* (metalinguistic).

**17** Dancygier & Sweetser consider that speech act conditionals are not predictive, which leads them overall, to reject the possibility of the speaker using a subordinate clause conjugated in the past tense there.

factuality from a formal standpoint, but rather as the contextual inference arising from the combination of these forms. That being said, they still consider that the choice of verbal tense in the conditional constructions pertains to the speaker's epistemic point of view.

A definition of counterfactuality closer to that of Kahneman and Tversy (1982) is that given by Fauconnier (1996), who refers to its appropriateness for establishing an imaginary state of affairs differing from the factual one by means of the subordinate clause of the construction *if A (then) B*. In the theory of mental spaces, the conjunction *si* introduces a hypothetical space ( $W^1$ ) relative to a referential parent space ( $W^0$ ). Apart from the conjunction *if*, other markers associated with counterfactuality in French are the past conditionals of the verbs *vouloir*, *souhaiter*, *aimer* (to will, to wish, to love) and the modal verbs – *devoir*, *pouvoir* (to have to, to be able to) – in the conditional (Fauconnier 1984). For the latter, the variation of grammatical tenses in the subordinate clause is what lends shading counterfactual interpretation, by making it stronger, or weaker<sup>18</sup>. The theory of mental spaces operates from the access principle, or the principle of identification, which links an expression referring to an entity with a second entity (target) in another domain, bearing in mind that the latter domain is cognitively accessible from the former, and that there is a connection between the initial entities and the target entities (Fauconnier 1996)<sup>19</sup>.

Van Linden & Verstraete (2008) indicate that one of the characteristic properties of counterfactuality is the inversion of polarity, whereby *if*-constructions with a positive polarity include the negative clause in their interpretation and vice-versa<sup>20</sup>. However, the inversion of polarity is not the sole property associated

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**18** For Fauconnier, the grammatical tense noted on the surface contains a hypothetical as well as a temporal value. For example: *Si Boris était venu, Olga aurait été de bonne humeur* (or Olga l'est ; Boris doit être dans le coin : B versus mais Olga est triste : ~ B), Had Boris come, Olga would have been in a pleasant mood (but Olga is [in a pleasant mood]; Boris must be somewhere about: B versus but Olga is downcast): ~ B). The values of truth or falsity of the propositional contents of the subordinate clause will, as a rule, dictate the choice of the grammatical tense; whenever that is not so, the temporal reference will be ambiguous (Fauconnier 1984).

**19** For example, a painting of a seascape allows a cognitive access to a hypothetical ocean and likewise, the image of a restaurant may prompt a cognitive access to costumers and orders.

**20** For example: *S'ils avaient agi et envoyé la police, d'après le rapport, le bain de sang aurait pu être évité* (Going by the report, had they intervened and sent in the police, a bloodbath could have been prevented) = *S'ils n'avaient pas agi ni envoyé la police, d'après le rapport, le bain de sang n'aurait pas pu être évité*. (Going by the report, had they neither intervened nor sent in the police, the bloodbath could not have been avoided). That idea had already appeared in Dancygier & Sweetser (1996) and Fauconnier (1996).

with counterfactual interpretation since to express simple non-occurrence, languages make use of negation. The value added in a counterfactual reading is: *Event X did not occur despite contrary indications*. In other words: *Event X was a potential but it did not materialise*. Here, we find two semantic traits: on the one hand non-occurrence of event X and on the other hand, its potentiality. These scholars' counterfactual analysis pertains to simple clauses. For example:

(8) *The police should have done something to prevent the killing*

In this type de construction, the value of non-actualisation will, as a rule, be supplied by the use of a verbal form in the past tense. The potential value is supplied by a marker which may be epistemic in nature (when the speaker locates herself relative to the plausibility of event X), deontic (when the speaker makes it known whether she deems that event desirable) or dynamic (when the speaker refers to the agent's intentions). The function of a modal marker is to create a distance between the propositional contents and factuality, and to place the propositional contents in the framework of potential and uncertainty, while a past tense functions precisely to moor it in the real and in factuality<sup>21</sup>. A counterfactual interpretation would thus pertain to evoking a potential event, the occurrence of which has not yet materialised. Van Linden & Verstraete (2008) show that overall, counterfactuality is not encoded by the use of one single 'dedicated' marker in particular, but rather by a combination of several elements, whose functions would be different in another context. The compositional semantics of the past and of the potential triggers an implicature based on Grice's maxim of quantity<sup>22</sup> (i.e., make your contribution as informative as possible), where the counterfactual effect originates.

### 1.2.3 Irreality

Steele (1975) has defined irreality as the lack of reality. To put it more precisely, irreality excludes that which is deemed to be factual and more importantly still, the modal notions of possibility and likelihood, deemed to be assertions made by the speaker in respect of a potential reality. Steele nonetheless affirms that the notions of past and of irreality are semantically related. The inferences of possibility and likelihood are dependent upon a sliding scale, accessible

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<sup>21</sup> This is possible because the past is a better-known domain than the present and the future. Van Linden & Verstraete (2008) do however point to a tendency to use the combination of a modal marker and a past marker to cover present counterfactual contexts as well.

<sup>22</sup> Grice (1991).

through a morpheme-system. Steele shows that the past and irrealty share a dissociative semantic primitive, to the extent that both fulfil the function of putting a distance between the speaker and the propositional contents expressed<sup>23</sup>.

Pietrandrea (2012) defines counterfactuality as a sub-category of irrealty. She too defines irrealty as a full-blown semantic category, comparable, in its complexity, to modality. Differing from the tradition started by Lyons (1977), Pietrandrea does not define irrealty in modal terms<sup>24</sup>. In that framework, the most prominent characteristic of irrealty as a hypercategory is not the value of the propositional content as truth or false, but the degree of factuality relative to the propositional contents expressed, which may be connoted as counterfactual, as an option amongst other alternatives (non-exclusion of factuality, non-referentiality) or by non-specification of spatial or temporal data (non-referentiality)<sup>25</sup>. That being said, the definition of counterfactuality as a conceptual notion independent of modality does not exclude the interaction of these categories nor the possibility for counterfactuality and modality to be grammaticalised differently, depending upon the language under study. For instance, Italian will thus tend in general to encode the non-exclusion-of-factuality by using the marker *magari* combined with other constructions, such as conditionals (Pietrandrea 2012).

Verstraete (2005) affirms that the semantic trait characteristic of counterfactuality is the certainty of the non-actualisation of an event, whereas the semantic trait characteristic of potentiality is precisely that of the actualisation of an event. By underlining this divergence between counterfactuality and potentiality, Verstraete raises the issue of why these two categories are so often associated,

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**23** To grasp the idea, one should examine the past and the present as two systems within the *non-future*. The difference between “Will you pass the salt” and “Would you pass the salt” lies in the speaker’s effect of abstraction relative to her request, insofar as the example with “would” is concerned. The *future*, again, may be relied upon to explain clauses that pertain to non-exclusion-of-factuality in Iatridou (2009), who places the use of a counterfactual past within the category of ‘Future less vivid’ (i.e., *If he took this syrup, he would get better*) compared to the example *If he takes the syrup, he will get better* (‘Future neutral vivid’).

**24** One of the reasons for dealing separately with modality and counterfactuality is that the first explicitly conveys the speaker’s presence, which is not the case with counterfactuality. From that standpoint, the assumption that the speaker is partially committed to the truth of the propositional content is seen as a pragmatic inference, since the counterfactuality-markers do not as such convey information on the speaker’s subjectivity (Pietrandrea 2012).

**25** Pietrandrea’s taxonomy distinguishes between the negation of the actualization of a State of Affair (i.e., counterfactuality), the indication that the actualization of the depicted State of Affair is not to be excluded on a par with other mutually exclusive options (i.e., non-exclusion of factuality), and the lack of spatio-temporal specifications concerning the occurrence of a State of Affair (i.e., non-referentiality).



and explains it by the fact that the domain of non-actualisation is a fertile one for releasing implicatures that pertain to the domain of the potential:

*When located in a temporal domain that is inherently knowable and therefore in the realm of certainty, use of an expression of potentiality is in salient contrast with a more informative expression of certainty and therefore triggers the implicature that the event described did not take place, i.e., an implicature of non-actualization (Verstraete 2005, 251).*

#### 1.2.4 Semantic primitives and topics

Wierzbicka (1997) rejects Comrie's proposal (1986), according to which there would be a semantic scale or *continuum* of hypotheticality, in conditional constructions. She identifies the counterfactual conditionals in English by the construction *if* + pluperfect + *would* and affirms that from a semantic standpoint, the most striking counterfactual core is found when these constructions include a double negation. For example:

(9) If X had not happened, Y wouldn't not have happened (1997, 29)

Wierzbicka (1997) considers that man's ability to think in these terms is a universal<sup>26</sup> and that the morpheme *if* may be qualified as a semantic primitive. For Haiman (1978), conditional clauses are topics – information which is known or given – and like the latter, their function is to create a frame<sup>27</sup>. Amongst the similarities between topics and *if*-constructions one finds: their position at the head of the clause, and the fact that speakers have selected them from infinite lists, according to the principle of relevance. Harris (1986), like Haiman, adopts the idea that *if*-constructions mark the topic of the statement, whereas the main clause marks the commentary (1986, 280). Harris (1986) distinguishes two parameters that may define *if*-constructions: semantic values linked to hypotheticality – factual, potential and irrealty – and verbal tenses in these constructions. Harris defines the potential and irrealty depending respectively on the speaker's assumptions about (i) the unlikelihood of the antecedent and (ii) the impossibility of its propositional content. He also asserts that the choice of the verbal tense depends on the implicit assumption *vis-à-vis* the statement in particular, or *vis-à-vis* its adverbial value.

<sup>26</sup> Here, she concurs with Traugott *et al.* (1986) for whom the constructions *If A (then) B* reflect the uniquely human ability to reason about alternative scenarios and possible correlations between events and their likely outcomes.

<sup>27</sup> Haiman's article relies upon data in English, Turkish, Hua (Papua) and Tagalog.

### 1.3 Conclusion

The interest in conditionality in the form of *if*-constructions has long hindered consideration of counterfactuality as a full-blown category. The concepts of truth, falsity, causality and modality as a starting point for dealing with counterfactuality have made of it a notion that cuts across several disciplines despite the lack of a consistent definition. The speaker's subjectivity and the logical relationship between the subordinate and the main clause are but two traits, on the basis of which counterfactuality has been defined as a sub-item, which serves conditionality. In section 1.2, we saw how the definition of counterfactuality evolved over the past few decades: it was initially moored on formal criteria – verbal morphology in the past tense – but then over the past decade or so tended to be looked as a contextual notion.

Attempts to place conditionality into the broader framework of the conceptualisation process, have led to the project of identifying the conceptual categories of this conditionality<sup>28</sup>. The interest in conditionality arose thanks to its properties for “reasoning on alternative situations, making inferences based on incomplete information and imagining correlations between situations” (Traugott *et al.* 1986). However, the focus on conditionality has neglected the study of the remaining grammatical means which encode counterfactual reasoning where *if*-constructions are lacking. Restricting the production of alternative scenarios to conditionality is reductionist and misleading. Our own stance in this debate is a critical one, and the same holds for the explanation of counterfactuality through a limited repertory of verbal tenses and modes. That explanation, still current in the 1990s, seems to be anachronistic nowadays when one takes into account the fact that since 1982, Kahneman and Tversky's definition considers it as a communicational task (*i.e.*, the comparison between reality and what might otherwise have occurred). The definition of counterfactuality, not in modal terms but as a sub-category of irreality (Pietrandrea 2012), is a promising framework to which our research might contribute.

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<sup>28</sup> This project concluded with the publication of a collective work, *On Conditionals Again* (Athanasiadou & Dirven 1997). Its intent was to establish continuity with a work published a decade or so earlier in *On Conditionals* (Traugott *et al.* 1986). In the introduction, Athanasiadou (1997) presents conditionality as a semantic and morphosyntactic universal in which verbal tenses and moods play a central role in building hypotheticality and counterfactuality.

## 2 Expressing conditionality in French, Spanish and Italian

### 2.1 Introduction

Historically, the hypothetical system has been described through an analysis of conditionality, based on constructions of the *if A (then) B* type (Chevalier *et al.* 1964, Riegel *et al.* 1994, Renzi *et al.* 1991, RAE 2009). Here is an example from our corpus:

- (1) Si Karen avait averti son supérieur [...], il aurait pensé à commander quelque chose sans alcool. *Had Karen notified her superior [...], (if she had notified her superior), he would have thought to order something alcohol-free.*

This type of construction is comprised of two clauses: the subordinate clause, introduced, in general, by the morpheme *si* (if), and the main clause, where the verb is conjugated in the conditional. Both traits are found with conditional clauses in French, Spanish and Italian. Although all three languages are derived from Latin, in French the verbal morphology of the subordinate clause has undergone changes relative to the use of the subjunctive mood, which continues to prevail in Spanish and in Italian. French prefers the indicative mood in this context (Cf. 2.3.2). As French, Spanish and Italian are Romance languages, we are going to briefly describe how Latin articulated verbal moods in the main and in the subordinate clauses (section 2.2.1) in the Archaic period (up to the First Century BC) and in the Classical Period (up to the Second Century AD). Our aim here is not to establish an exhaustive description of verbal morphology in conditional clauses but rather to present the verbal moods and tenses most often associated with a counterfactual value<sup>1</sup>.

### 2.2 Conditionality

Along the hypothetical scale, conditional constructions may express different semantic values. In that framework counterfactuality conveys the semantic values

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<sup>1</sup> In this chapter, we are going to use the term “symmetrical” for certain verbal correlations in *if*-constructions, characterised by one single verbal tense being repeated in the main and the subordinate clauses. We are going to refer to the use of the symmetrical conditional (e.g. *Si vous m’auriez ennuyé, je vous l’aurais dit* – had you (if you had) bored me, I would have said so), deemed ungrammatical in L1 French, Spanish and Italian.

of very faint probability relating to the past or present (Comrie 1986)<sup>2</sup>. In some of the references cited in this chapter, counterfactuality may pertain strictly speaking to irreality (Salvi & Renzi 1991, Bosque & Demonte 1999, RAE 2009)<sup>3</sup>, as it may pertain to potentiality, as well as to irreality (Grevisse & Goosse 2008)<sup>4</sup>. We are going to specifically examine counterfactuality as a value of irreality relative to a past, known state of affair or event, where any potential interpretation would clash with the statement's context. This, for reasons of coherence with the data in our corpus (Cf. Chapter 4).

### 2.2.1 Latin

The indicative mood was used in Latin subordinate clauses to denote the factual character of the propositional contents, in combination with a main clause where one finds either the indicative or the subjunctive (Harris 1986). The factual interpretation of *if*-constructions is canonically defined in written documents by the use of the indicative, while an interpretation from a subordinate clause in the subjunctive is ambivalent, to the extent that it may pertain to a counterfactual meaning or to a potential meaning. In theory, the potential interpretation would have to do with the use of the present subjunctive in the subordinate clause and in the main clause (2), while the counterfactual interpretation would be accessible through the use of the pluperfect subjunctive in the subordinate clause and in the main clause (3). The use of the imperfect (4) could encode a potential fact pertaining to the past, or a counterfactual fact relating to the present. For example:

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2 Several scholars deny the existence of counterfactual conditionals pertaining to the future: since the future has not yet taken place, it cannot be seen as contradicting factual states of affairs (Palmer 1986, Fillmore 1990, Iatridou 2000, Dancygier & Sweetser 2005).

3 Salvi & Renzi (1991, 757) place counterfactuality in the hypothetical system of the unreal. In their view, counterfactuality relates to hypothetical correlations that convey a falsity, of which the speaker is certain (thereby excluding correlations that express “possible falsity”. Bosque & Demonte (1999, 3667) distinguish conditionals of irreality from potential conditionals where the speaker does not commit to materialisation of the contents expressed. The *Nueva gramática de la lengua española* (RAE 2009, 3572) presents potential as a hypothetical period, that expresses open situations which may occur, and counterfactuality as an inference whereby the speaker deems true a state contrary to that which has been asserted. That description coincides with the idea of inversion of polarity explained at Chapter 1 above (Cf. Van Linden & Verstraete 2008). The combination of the conjunction *si* and the subjunctive in Spanish is presented as a very common argumentative resource to express that reversal of polarity (RAE 2009, 3572).

4 “With a condition presented as imaginary or as non-factual, after *si*, in ordinary speech, one employs the imperfect or pluperfect of the indicative, while the main verb will ordinarily appear in the present or past conditional (depending on whether the facts concern the present, the future or the past)”, Grevisse & Goosse 2008, 1516.

- (2) *Si veniat, me videat*  
If he/she should come, he/she would see me
- (3) *Si venisset, me vidisset*  
If he/she had come, he/she would have seen me
- (4) *Si veniret, me videret*  
If he/she were coming, he/she would see me

That being said, the correspondences between verbal morphology and the semantic values of *if*-constructions has not always been perfectly clear, especially in Archaic Latin where the present subjunctive often denoted factuality, while the pluperfect subjunctive was rarely found. During that period, the imperfect subjunctive was the verbal tense most often used to denote counterfactuality relating to the past. The Classical period favoured the pluperfect subjunctive for counterfactuals relating to the past, while the imperfect subjunctive rather tended to be used to denote the speaker's lack of information in respect of the factuality of the antecedent (Harris 1986, 260). The latter considers that in modern French, Spanish and Italian usage, the choice of a compound tense in an *if*-construction marks the propositional contents as past.

### 2.2.2 French

Historically, the use of the subjunctive mood in a subordinate clause derives from Latin. Here one finds it being used in a complex *if*-construction in Old French:

- (5) *Se je ne fusse en tel prison, bien achevaise cest afere*  
(Le Vair Palefroi, s. XIII, 612-13)<sup>5</sup>  
Si je n'étais pas en pareille prison, je mettrais fin à cette affaire  
(Were I not in such a gaol, I would put an end to this matter)

One sees that the verbs above are in the subjunctive mood in the subordinate clause and in the main clause. In French, the subjunctive in the subordinate clause fell increasingly into disuse from the 13th Century onwards, as it gradually came to be replaced by the imperfect indicative. One does however still come across the subjunctive in 17th Century literature (Brunot & Bruneau 1949). The currently used canonical verbal morphology – made up of the pluperfect indicative in the subordinate clause and the past conditional in the main clause – became widespread from the 16th century. Relying on a model derived from Latin,

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<sup>5</sup> Winters M.E., (2013) « *Grammatical Meaning and the Old French Subjunctive* », in *Research on Old French: The State of the Art*, Deborah L. Arteaga (ed.), Springer Science+Business Media Dordrecht, pp. 351–6.

its use prevailed thanks to the *Académie française*, that explicitly encouraged it to the detriment of the subjunctive in the 18th century (Brunot & Bruneau 1949).

We are going to give several examples below to illustrate the verbal correlations most often associated with an irrealty interpretation (6 to 10) and correlations which, though less often found in traditional grammars, may nevertheless be interpreted as counterfactual (11 to 13).

- (6) Si tu admettais cette opinion, tu aurais tort (Grevisse & Goosse 2011, 1580)  
*Were you to acknowledge that opinion, you would err.*
- (7) Si tu avais admis cette opinion, tu aurais eu tort (Grevisse & Goosse 2011, 1580)  
*Had you acknowledged that opinion, you would have erred.*
- (8) Si vous m'auriez ennuyé, je vous l'aurais dit (Grevisse & Goosse 2011, 1579)  
*Had you bored me, I would have told you.*
- (9) Si Sophie le quittait, André avait du chagrin (Barceló & Bres 2006, 74)  
*Were Sophie to leave him, André would doubtless suffer.*
- (10) Sophie le quitterait, André aurait du chagrin (Barceló & Bres 2006, 74)  
*Assuming Sophie were to leave him, André would suffer.*

Traditional grammars describe the conditional circumstantials introduced by *si* (if) as constructions governed by verbal correlations denoting a chronological nuance. The use of the French imparfait in the subordinate and the present conditional in the main clause would thus (6) indicate that the process is moored in the present or in the future, while the “Pluperfect + Past conditional” correlation (7) would locate the process in the past (Riegel *et al.* 2009, 557; Grevisse & Goosse 2011, 1580; Barceló & Bres 2006, 74). However, interpreting the contents expressed in the main clause as a potential or some irrealty would depend on the context (Riegel *et al.* 2009, 557) and on the speaker’s standpoint (Riegel *et al.* 2009, 558). From a formal viewpoint, the use of the past in the main clause (7) is presented, as a rule, as conveying an irrealty-dimension of the past (Riegel *et al.* 2009, 559; Chevalier *et al.* 1964, 358; Grevisse & Goosse 2011, 1580).

Possible verbal symmetries that involve the use of the conditional in the main clause and in the subordinate clause (8) are seen as colloquial usage (Grevisse & Goosse 2011, 1579), but now increasingly widespread (Champaud 1983)<sup>6</sup>. In the

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<sup>6</sup> This symmetrical conditional is sometimes explained in terms of morphological similarity with certain hypothetical, concessive structures in which *si* is lacking (Riegel *et al.* 1994). Example: *J'aurais un peu d'argent, je m'achèterais l'intégrale de Mozart* (Had I the money, I would buy Mozart’s complete works) (Riegel *et al.* 1994, 558), which is equivalent to (10), from a morphological standpoint.

Ottawa-Hull variety of French (Canada), this symmetrical conditional is used to denote the potentiality of the propositional contents while the indicative in the subordinate clause marks off the propositional contents as counterfactual (Le Blanc 2009). When a symmetrical conditional appears, without there being a *si* (if) in a juxtaposition (10), it is considered to encode either a potential or a counterfactual value.

**Table 2.1:** Verbal Moods and Tenses in French: a Summary<sup>7</sup>

	Verbal mood	Subordinate clause	Main clause	Considered by grammarians as	Ex.:
<i>If-</i>	INDp + CONDq	IMP	COND	Canonical	(6)
		PLP	Cond. Perfect		(7)
	CONDp + CONDq	Cond. Perfect	Cond. Perfect	Substandard	(8)
	INDp + INDq	IMP	IMP	Standard	(9)
Present		Present	Substandard	(13)	
∅	CONDq + CONDq	COND	COND	Standard	(10)
	CONDq	–	Cond. Perfect	Standard	(11)
				Standard	(12)

In conditionals introduced by *si*, the symmetrical imperfect in both the main and subordinate clauses (9) does not exclude a possible irreality interpretation of the past, semantically equivalent to the canonical statement *Si Sophie l'avait quitté, André aurait eu du chagrin*<sup>8</sup>, i.e. (Had Sophie left him, André would have suffered). Reliance upon the present indicative in the antecedent of an if-construction with counterfactual value (13) has not been unanimously received, when it comes to judging its grammaticality. For example, Corminboeuf (2009) considers that (13) is correctly constructed – despite the fact that the addressee is a man – while for other scholars, the structure *si* + indicative in which *p* = untrue, is incorrectly constructed (Cf. Corminboeuf 2009, 299).

Apart from constructions in *si*, simple statements with a past conditional (11) or a modal verb in the conditional (12) have been cited by Hellberg (1971) and Fauconnier (1984) respectively, as constructions that express a value of irreality relative to the past.

<sup>7</sup> Title: COND = Conditional; IMP = *Imparfait*; IND = Indicative; PLP = Pluperfect indicative; p = subordinate clause; q = main clause. The column headed *Considered to be* refers to usage deemed by grammarians ungrammatical (or substandard); grammatical but not held to be normative or associated with spoken French (standard); correct and preferred (canonical).

<sup>8</sup> However, the most accessible interpretation would *a priori* be that of an iterative temporal order: *Lorsque / Chaque fois que Sophie le quittait, André avait du chagrin* (When / Whenever Sophie left him, André suffered), (Barceló & Bres 2006, 74).

- (11) J'aurais fait le tour de France sans bouffer (Hellberg 1971, 107)  
*I would have done The Tour de France without eating.*
- (12) Jean aurait pu être quelqu'un d'autre (Fauconnier 1984, 144)  
*Jean might have been someone else.*
- (13) Si t'es une femme, je t'assure que tu réagis différemment  
(Corminboeuf 2009, 299)  
*If you were a woman, believe me, you would react otherwise.*

The use of the past conditional as in (11) above, denotes an imaginary fact (and thus non-factual) or a conjectural fact pertaining to the past. As a rule, this will be a future fact relative to the past (Grevisse & Goosse 2011, 1150). The use of modal verbs in the conditional past (12) signifies that the fact at issue has not materialised, despite the very real obligation, possibility or intention (Grevisse & Goosse 2011, 1151).

### 2.2.3 Spanish

In the canonical system of conditionals of irreality, the subjunctive mood defines a framework for the subordinate clause through the use either of the imperfect (14) or the pluperfect (15), followed, in the main clause by the present or the conditional, respectively. The verbal correlation of (14) has in general been presented as arising from the potential period, but is also used in counterfactual turn-taking (RAE 2009). As for conditionals of irreality relative to the past, the “imperfect subjunctive + past conditional” correlation would appear to be less often heard in oral communication than the double pluperfect subjunctive in the subordinate clause and in the main clause (16) (Bosque & Demonte 1999, 3671). A frequent use of (16) has been noted in the Mexican variety of Spanish (Wald 1993). The combination of the pluperfect subjunctive in the subordinate clause and the conditional present in the main clause (17) is another possibility as well.

- (14) Si yo volviese a nacer, pues yo sería naturista  
(Esgueva y Cantarero 1981, 228)  
*If I were born again, I would be a naturist.*
- (15) Si hubiese usado mis imágenes mentales... , habría pensado en las reses que cuelgan en una carnicería (*El Europeo*, octubre 1988, 70)  
*If I had used my mental images, I would have thought in the beef tenderloins that hang up in butchery.*



- (16) Si no hubiera sido por la salud, hubiera seguido adelante  
(Esgueva y Cantarero 1981, 5)  
*If I were healthy, I would have continued ahead.*
- (17) Si hubiese escuchado a mi hermano a estas horas estaría en Hollywood  
(Bosque & Demonte 1999, 3672)  
*If I had listened to my brother, today I would be in Hollywood.*

**Table 2.2:** Verbal moods and Tenses in Spanish: a Summary

	Verbal mood	Subordinate clause	Main clause	Considered to be	Ex.:
<i>If</i>	SUBp + CONDq	IMP Subj.	Cond. Present	Canonical	(14)
		PLP Subj.	Cond. Present		(15)
		PLP Subj.	Cond. Perfect		(16)
	SUBp + SUBq	PLP Subj.	PLP Subj.	Standard	(17)
	SUBp + INDq	PLP Subj.	IMP	Standard	(18)
		IMP	IMP	Substandard	(19)
INDp + INDq		Present	Present	Standard	(20)
		Cond. Perfect	Cond. Perfect	Substandard	(21)
∅	Uninflected form	–	Past INF	Standard	(22)
	SUBq	–	PLP Subj.	Standard	(23)

The use of the indicative in the main clause (18) will habitually be attributed to a spoken variant (Alarcos-Llorach 1999), where its role would be that of a modal neutraliser (Bosque & Demonte 1999, 3672). When the pluperfect indicative turns up in the subordinate clause too (19), this is seen as substandard usage, sometimes pointing to the most under-privileged of socio-cultural groups or communities (Bosque & Demonte 1999, 3672). The use of the indicative in the subordinate clause has been noted in contexts with a potential reading, relating to the present and the future in the Covarrubias variety (Silva-Corvalán 1985)<sup>9</sup>. The present indicative in the subordinate clause and in the main clause (20) is used to convey irreality arising from the past. The double conditional in the subordinate clause and in the main clause (21) is deemed ungrammatical. Such usage is nevertheless commonly found in Buenos Aires (Lavandera 1976) and in some varieties of peninsular Spanish (Silva-Corvalán 1982, Alarcos-Llorach 1999)<sup>10</sup>.

<sup>9</sup> Covarrubias is a Spanish village in the province of Burgos (Castilla y León).

<sup>10</sup> Lavandera (1976) suggests that the imperfect subjunctive is increasingly being replaced by the conditional in the Buenos Aires variety and in potential readings, or readings that cannot be confirmed related to the past. She concludes that this replacement contributes to disambiguating

- (18) Si nosotros hubiéramos querido, lo habíamos dado, ¿ eh ?  
(Esgueva y Cantarero 1981, 434)  
*If we had wanted, we would have given it, right?*
- (19) Si había ganado esa oposición, habíamos hecho una gran fiesta  
(Bosque & Demonte 1999, 3672)  
*If I had had that position, we would have had a great party.*
- (20) Se produjo una inquietante escena que, si la ven en el Parlamento europeo, nos aspan (Bosque & Demonte 1999, 3672)  
*A bizarre scene took then place that, if saw by the European politicians, we might get punished.*
- (21) Si habría tenido dinero, habría ido a España (Campos 1993, 163)  
*If I would have had money, I would have gone to Spain.*

Apart from conditionals introduced by *si*, counterfactual values may be conveyed by iterative statements with the past infinitive (22) and the pluperfect subjunctive (23). For example:

- (22) ¡ Haber venido ayer ! (RAE 2009, 3572)  
*You better have come yesterday*
- (23) No te hubieras demorado tanto (RAE 2009, 3136)  
*You better have rushed*

Table 2.2<sup>11</sup> outlines the verbal correlations discussed in this section for *si*-constructions, and for some simple clauses which encode counterfactual values in Spanish.

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the semantic value of the propositional contents. Silva-Corvalán (1982) finds that (21) is often used in the Spanish spoken at Covarrubias and explains that because of the geographical proximity to the Basque Provinces: in Basque the conditional is used in contexts in which Spanish calls for the subjunctive.

**11** Title: COND = Conditional; IMP = *Imparfait*; IND = Indicative; INF = Infinitive; PLP = Pluperfect; SUB = subjunctive; p = subordinate clause; q = main clause. The column headed *Considered as* refers to usage historically deemed by grammarians to be ungrammatical (or substandard); grammatical but not held to be normative or associated with spoken Spanish or with certain local varieties (standard) [except for (22) and (23), constructions that are grammatical but not predominant when it comes to expressing hypotheticality]; correct and preferred (canonical).

### 2.2.4 Italian

Counterfactuality is presented as a complex semantic effect, arising from the verbal morphology of the subordinate and main clauses of the *if*-construction and the linguistic and extra-linguistic context.

« La controfattualità non è quindi un significato rigidamente connesso ad una determinata concordanza di modi e tempi verbali, ma un effetto semantico complesso, che deriva dall'interazione della morfosintassi (congiuntivo imperfetto più condizionale semplice o congiuntivo piuccheperfetto e/o condizionale composto) con il contenuto proposizionale di protasi ed apodosi e con il contesto linguistico ed extralinguistico » (Renzi & Salvi 1991, 758)<sup>12</sup>.

The advantage to the definition above is that it avoids boxing a counterfactual reading into use of one particular verbal tense or mood, rather than another. Standard Italian calls for the pluperfect subjunctive in the subordinate clause and the past conditional in the main clause (24). Meanwhile, the colloquial variety of the system allows for replacing the subjunctive or conditional by the imperfect indicative (25 and 26, respectively). In oral communication, one frequently finds a symmetrical imperfect in both the subordinate and main clause (27).

- (24) Se fossi venuto alla festa, ti saresti divertito moltissimo  
(Renzi & Salvi 1991, 754)

*If you had come to the party, you would have had a lot of fun.*

- (25) Se lo sapevo prima, sarei arrivato in tempo a salutarti  
(Renzi & Salvi 1991, 754)

*If I had known it earlier, I would have come in time to say good bay to you.*

- (26) Se l'avessi saputo prima, arrivavo in tempo a salutarti  
(Renzi & Salvi 1991, 754)

*If I had known it earlier, I would have come in time to say good bay to you.*

- (27) Se venivi alla festa, ti divertivi un sacco (Renzi & Salvi 1991, 754)  
*If you had come to the party, you would have had a lot of fun.*

The substandard system includes, amongst uses deemed ungrammatical, the symmetrical pluperfect subjunctive in the subordinate and main clauses, attributed to

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<sup>12</sup> Counterfactuality is not a meaning rigidly linked to a certain combination of tenses and verbal moods but rather a semantic complex effect which comes from (i) the interaction of morphosyntax components – the *imperfetto* subjunctive followed by the present conditional or the pluperfect subjunctive and/or the past conditional–, (ii) the propositional content in the protasis and apodosi, and (iii) the linguistic and nonlinguistic contexts.

dialectal varieties and more specifically, to the spontaneous speech of Southern Italy (28), and the use of the conditional (29), frequently heard amongst young children (Renzi & Salvi 1991).

- (28) Se io fossi uomo ci andassi ogni sera  
(D. Dolci, *Conversazioni*, Torino, 1962, 290)  
*If I were a man, I would go every evening.*
- (29) Io sono sicuro che se farei il boia riuscirei bene (*Io speriamo che me la cavo. Sessanta temi di bambini napoletani*, a cura di M. D’Orta, Milano, Mondadori, 1990, 41)  
*I am sure that if I were a murder, I would do it very well.*

Leaving aside the conjunction *se* (if), other common introducers include: *qualora*, *purché*, *ove* and expressions such as *posto che*, *ammesso che* (assuming that), *a condizione che*, *a patto che*, *nel caso che* (in the case that), *nell’eventualità che*, *nell’ipotesi che*, (Dardano & Trifone 1997).

**Table 2.3:** Verbal Moods and Tenses in Italian: a Summary<sup>13</sup>

	Verbal mood	Subordinate clause	Main clause	Considered to be	Ex.:
<i>If</i>	SUBp + CONDq	PLP Subj.	Cond. Perfect	Canonical	(24)
	INDp + CONDq	IMP	Cond. Perfect	Standard	(25)
	SUBp + INDq	PLP Subj.	IMP	Standard	(26)
	INDq + INDq	IMP	IMP	Standard	(27)
	SUBp + SUBq	PLP Subj.	PLP Subj.	Substandard	(28)
	CONDq + CONDP	COND	COND	Substandard	(29)

## 2.3 Comparison of *if*-counterfactual constructions

Verbal morphology *per se* does not suffice to confer a value of irrealty to the propositional contents of constructions in *if*, whether in French, Spanish or Italian. The use of the indicative mood in the subordinate clause in Spanish and in Italian, although associated with the spoken variant, co-exists with the normative subjunctive. In French, the use of a symmetrical conditional in the

<sup>13</sup> Title: COND = Conditional; IMP = *Imparfait*; IND = Indicative; PLP = Pluperfect indicative; SUB = subjunctive; p = subordinate clause; q = main clause. The column headed *Considered to be* refers to usage historically deemed by grammarians to be ungrammatical (or substandard); grammatical but not held to be normative or associated with spoken Italian or with certain dialectal varieties (standard); correct and preferred (canonical).

subordinate and in the main clauses would appear to be frequent in oral communication. However, a contrastive analysis of canonical verbal morphology in all three languages, points to a major difference: when Spanish and Italian call for the subjunctive mood (as Latin does), French uses the indicative.

Section 2.2 outlines some attempts to classify counterfactual uses of *if*-constructions relative to a pair of complementary semantic poles: the first one opposes the present to the past, and the second one opposes the potential to irreality. The most complex analyses from a morphological viewpoint, like that of Harris (1986) in Latin, explain the verbal morphology of *if*-constructions by the various combinations of these four values (i.e., present, past, potential, *irrealis*).

**Table 2.4:** Comparative analysis of canonical counterfactuals introduced by *si*

	Subordinate clause	Main clause	Example
FR	IND	COND	Si tu avais admis cette opinion, tu aurais eu tort <i>Had you allowed that opinion, you would have erred</i>
SP	SUB		Se fossi venuto alla festa, ti saresti divertito moltissimo <i>Had you come to the party, you would really have enjoyed yourself</i>
IT			Si te hubieses quedado, habrías visto algo bueno <i>Had you stayed, you would have seen something worthwhile.</i>

## 2.4 Conclusion

The present Chapter has described the verbal morphology through which French, Spanish and Italian express counterfactual values in *if*-constructions. Incidentally, it describes certain constructions that encode counterfactuality when the conjunction *si* is lacking in the three languages. In general, traditional grammars have presented counterfactuality as a semantic effect pertaining to irreality, arising from the verbal morphology of the construction *if A (then) B* and from the context. This approach raises problems in respect of the semantic domains covered by that “irreality”, which is on occasion evoked in those examples where the speaker is simply unaware of the actualization of the propositional content. The definition of counterfactuality as a semantic category expressing certainty regarding the non-actualisation of the propositional contents (Verstraete 2005), allows one to separate it from the potential (Cf. section 1.2.3). One should note here that traditional grammars have not made the comparison explicit on which the psychological notion of counterfactuality rests (Kahneman & Tversky 1982): an imagined view in which reality is compared to what might have been.

# 3 Acquisition of counterfactuality in L1 and L2

## 3.1 Introduction

Preceding studies dealing with the acquisition of counterfactuality in L1 and L2 have raised interesting scientific questions. Bates (1976) and Bowerman (1986) have examined the language constraints which are dependent upon the child's cognitive development, while for Bloom (1981) and Au (1983), the question is whether the lack of grammatical devices to denote counterfactuality in L1 might have an influence on its being understood in L2. Conditional constructions have a long history of pioneering work, which has then moved forward thanks to study of modal markers, particularly deontic and epistemic (Akatsuka & Clancy 1993, Chini 1995)<sup>1</sup>. There is a two-part structure to the present Chapter: in the first, we present the studies that have focussed on the child's acquisitional *continuum* in terms of *if*- constructions in L1 (section 3.2), while in the second we present the work that has described how adults understand and acquire *if*- constructions in L2 (section 3.3). The question we shall need, in concluding, to reflect upon is whether adults reproduce in L2 the acquisitional stages found in children in L1 and, to what extent the two processes differ (section 3.4).

## 3.2 Counterfactuality in L1: Previous studies

As early as the age of 2;1 years, children have been known to produce simple propositions with a counterfactual value, through use of a lexical repertory that denotes non-factuality (Bowerman 1986). The examples below are representative of the preconditional stage, and show that a child can express uncertainty despite the lack of *if*- constructions.

\*SBJ: *I wish Christy have a car. I wish me have a airplane.*

\*SBJ: *I think daddy could do it.*

That is the period in which the child begins to produce *if*- constructions whose propositional content pertains to the future (Bowerman 1986). Production of counterfactual *if*- clauses has been attested in children under the age of 2;6 (Katis 1997). For example:

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<sup>1</sup> Psychology has explored the relationship between late emergence of counterfactual conditionals and grasp of erroneous beliefs in children aged three to five (Riggs *et al.* 1998, Perner *et al.* 2004).

\*SBJ: *If it rained, we wouldn't have gone out.*

However, the frequency of such occurrences is merely anecdotal (2%), compared to *if*-constructions pertaining to the future (76%), to an indefinite situation in which temporal values are not specified (16%) and to conditional speech acts (6%)<sup>2</sup>. English-speaking children can answer counterfactual questions by producing simple conditional propositions from the age of two on (Reilly 1982). For example:

\*INT: *What if it rained last night?*

\*SBJ: *Everything would get wet.*

The proportion of answers bearing the markers *would/should* is 19% in the population of two-year-olds, 28% in the three-year-olds and 87% in the four-year-olds (Reilly 1982). Despite the emergence of such markers – which characterise the conditional tense in English – the sample of children aged three will, as a rule, respond in the negative when faced with a task involving exchange of roles:

\*INT: *What if you were a snake?*

\*SBJ: *I'm not a snake. I'm Janine.*

The same effect has been attested for Italian-speaking children aged between 2;0 and 3;11, while children aged 3;11 to 5;6 will most often answer using present indicative verbal forms (Bates, 1976). For example:

\*INT: *E se Valeria fosse una scimmia che farebbe ?*

And what if Valeria was a monkey, what would she do?

\*SBJ: *Mangio la banana.*

I eat the banana.

Use of the conditional *-mangerei*; (I would eat)– becomes predominant, only with the group of children who have reached the age of 5;6 to 6;2<sup>3</sup>. Through

<sup>2</sup> Katis (1997).

<sup>3</sup> Kuczaj and Daly (1979) and Chini (1995) give similar examples of over-employment of the present indicative in answers that include the conditional. Here is the example given by Kuczaj and Daly (1979) in a child aged 3;2: \*INT: *What would happen if you fell out of an airplane?* \*SBJ: *I fall and fall and fall.* And here is Chini's example (1995) in a child aged 3;1: \*INT: *Che cosa mangeresti se fossi una pecorella?* \*SBJ: *Mangio l'erba* (\*INT: What would you eat, were you a little lamb? \*SBJ: I eat grass. In children aged from 5;9 on, the conditional found in the input will regularly be taken up (Chini 1995).

a similar task, Harris *et al.* (1996) show that children aged 3;6 on average, are perfectly able to express hypothetical predictions in English L1<sup>4</sup>. It is worthwhile noting that between use of the present indicative and the emergence of the conditional, a child aged from 2;5 to 2;8 will make excessive use of the future<sup>5</sup>:

\*INT: *What if daddy drank really hot soup, last night?*

\*SBJ: *It will burn my daddy*

The future is the most frequently-used tense in the population of two year olds, when replying to the tasks *What if*, independently of the instruction's verbal tense (Reilly 1982).

Acquisition of *if*- constructions has been explained in three periods covering the ages between 2;7 to 4;9: the pre-hypothetical period, the hypothetical period and the counterfactual period (Chini 1995). In the pre-hypothetical period (2;7–3;1), *if*- constructions are implicit, with the construction *se no* (i.e. if not). For example:

\*SBJ: *Meno male che non ero un topo, se no mi mangia un gatto*<sup>6</sup>  
Thank God I wasn't a mouse, otherwise a cat would have eaten me up

Literally: Thank God I wasn't a mouse, otherwise a cat eats me up

In that period, a child produces markers of prohibition, permission and obligation by combing the verb *dovere* (should) and the negation (2;10), the verb *potere* (could) (3;0) and declarative statements with the verb *dovere* (should) (3;2). Almost simultaneously (2;9) the child begins to express a certain distance relative to the truth of the propositional contents expressed through the adverbs *forse* (perhaps) and *magari* (provided that), which are employed in analogous contexts.

In the hypothetical period (3;2 to 3;8), the child mainly produces *if*- constructions relating to the future, where the verbal morphology nevertheless pertains to the present indicative:

<sup>4</sup> This outcome is based on answers to the question: *What if Carol had taken her shoes off, would the floor be dirty?* (Harris *et al.* 1996).

<sup>5</sup> Reilly (1982, 101).

<sup>6</sup> Chini (1995) reports her examples, bearing in mind the child's pronunciation difficulties (i.e., « *Meno male che non \*elo\* un topo...* »). To make the reading of his examples easier, we have reported them here without the phonological details.



\*SBJ: *Se ce n'è a Roma, dopo gliene regalo uno.*

If there are any at Rome, then I'll give her one!

During this period, the repertory of epistemic adverbs broadens out, with production of the verb of opinion *penser* (to think) (3;5).

During the counterfactual period (from 3;2 to 4;9), the child produces *if*-constructions relating to the present and past by use of a great variety of verbal tenses, including the symmetrical imperfetto in the subordinated sentence and main sentence (often heard in Italian speech), the subjunctive mood in the subordinated sentence and the conditional tense in the main sentence (considered canonical) or the conditional in the subordinated sentence (considered ungrammatical). Here are three examples of this, respectively:

\*SBJ: *Se non avevo la mia gomma per cancellare, ero distrutta.*

(If I hadn't had a rubber on me to erase it, it would have been a disaster.

Literally: If I had no rubber on me to erase it, I was destroyed)

\*SBJ: *Se fosse suo, l'averebbe già portato via.*

(Had it been his, he would have gone off with it by now.

Literally: Were it his, he would already have taken it away)

\*SBJ: *Se \*saresti un elefante, che bello !*

(What fun it would be, were you an elephant!

Literally: What fun, if you would be an elephant!)

During that period, the child produces, in regular fashion, the adverb *sûrement* (certainly, surely) (3;11) and the verbs *sembler* (seem, to appear) (4;3) and *croire* (to believe) (4;6)<sup>7</sup>. Owing to the variety of verbal combinations below, the symmetrical verbal forms in the subordinated sentence and the main sentence are, in general, attested at this stage of acquisition<sup>8</sup>. In Chini's corpus (1995), a

<sup>7</sup> Chini (1995).

<sup>8</sup> We shall henceforth be using the qualifier "symmetrical" in referring to certain verbal correlations within *if*-constructions characterised by repetition of one and the same verbal tense in both the main and subordinated sentences. In that sense, we shall distinguish between the symmetrical conditional (*Si vous m'auriez ennuyé, je vous l'aurais dit* – If you would have [Had you] bored me, I would have told you) and the symmetrical indicative (*Si t'es une femme, je t'assure que tu réagis différemment* – If you are a woman, believe me, you react otherwise).

symmetrical conditional is attested between the ages of 6;0 and 6;7. Here is the example for a symmetrical indicative<sup>9</sup>:

\*SBJ: *Se l'ombrello era aggiustato te lo davo.*  
Had the umbrella been repaired, I should have given it to you.

Literally: If the umbrella was repaired, I gave it to you.

In terms of perception, it has been shown that children find it harder to grasp subordinated sentences that include a tense in the indicative mood, than those with a tense in the subjunctive mood (Wing & Scholnick 1981). In a task calling for judgment, a group of native English speakers aged eight-year old found easier to evaluate disbelief in subordinated sentences with (if) + the subjunctive mood, compared to uncertainty in subordinated sentences with (if) + the indicative, whereas both types of construction continued to pose a problem for a group of native English speakers aged six-year old, suggesting that the latter are unable to distinguish between disbelief and uncertainty.

The modal markers in *if*- constructions in English (i.e., *should, must, may*) have brought forth analyses of the frequency of deontic *if*- constructions compared to *if*- constructions that are unmarked from a modal standpoint. Japanese and Korean have deontic markers which, when used in *if*- constructions, pertain to the speaker's judgment of an event's being positive or negative<sup>10</sup>. Akatsuka and Clancy (1993) have shown that the first *if*- constructions to be produced include deontic markers in Japanese L1<sup>11</sup>. They point to the responsive, emotional burden of the deontic conditionals as one of the reasons for their early appearance as speech acts that convey permission, prohibition, instructions and commands. Secondly, they point to the frequency of such constructions in the *input* to which the children are exposed.

Use of forms pertaining to the future has been attested in English (i.e., *gonna, will*) in production of hypothetical-value statements with children between the ages of 2;10 and 4;8 (Kuczaj & Daly 1979). The following example corresponds to a child aged 3;7:

<sup>9</sup> Bates (1976).

<sup>10</sup> The English translation for these markers has been supplied by Akatsuka and Clancy (1993): "If you do it, it's GOOD/BAD". In their study, the authors analyse the frequency of *if*- constructions with deontic markers (i.e., "If you take from here, it's no good") as opposed to the rest of *if*- constructions (i.e., "Even if I ride on it, it won't break").

<sup>11</sup> Akatsuka and Clancy's results (1993) for Korean confirm this point only for one of the two participating informers. The emergence of the first deontic *if*- clauses is attested at age 1;11 and 2;1 in L1 Japanese for two different subjects. The emergence of the first non-deontic *if*- clauses is attested at age 2;1 and 2;3 for the same subjects, respectively.

\*INT: *What would happen if the girl didn't want her ears pierced?*

\*SBJ: *Then she won't get pierced ears. Or she will cry.*

During that period, the child can produce declarative statements, whose propositional content pertains to the past through use of deontic markers (i.e., *we should have gotten some from you*)<sup>12</sup>. Even if statements with counterfactual value –like that in the example immediately above– emerge in a child's interlanguage, they are less frequent than predictive statements pertaining to the future. These scholars show that children are less accurate to disambiguate hypothetical references produced during replies to questions put to them, as compared to hypothetical references they themselves initiate. This suggests that they find it harder to take on a hypothetical framework, than to define one themselves. Late production of counterfactual statements relative to potential statements –pertaining to the future– can be explained, in part, by the child's inability to displace reasoning relative to her “myself”, which makes it hard for her to mark the hypothetical reference and then sustain it throughout a sequence of related events (Kuczaj and Daly 1979).

As for epistemic markers, Champaud *et al.* (1993) have proven that a group of native French speakers aged four-years old produce less explanatory comments on others' mental state –for example: *elle sait, she knows, il pense, he thinks* – compared to six-year-olds. The categories that denote a child's refusal to take responsibility for an assertion concerning an event he had not himself witnessed –for example: *I would have said that I don't know*– are attested not merely in the group of six-years old: the frequency increases with age. Champaud *et al.* (1993) attribute to four-year-olds a realistic representation of certainty, characterised by difficulty in distinguishing between their own state of knowledge and that of third parties.

In adult L1 production, Hellberg (1971) reports that the commonest way of expressing hypotheticality in French is the present or past conditional within simple propositions for the oral corpus of Basic French (37.6% of 1,539 analysed occurrences) and for parliamentary speech (33.7% out of a total of 551). For example:

J'aurais fait le tour de France sans bouffer.

*I'll have gone right round France without eating.*

J'aurais voulu demander à M. le ministre.

*I should like to put a question to the Minister.*

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<sup>12</sup> Kuczaj and Daly (1979) attest an initial use of this type of statement at age 2;9 and consider the child competent, in terms of the contexts in which to use the form, by age 3;4.

*If*-constructions constitute the second commonest device in Basic French (26,4%), as with the sample of Parliamentary speech (22,8%). In most of the analysed occurrences (10,739), simple propositions in the conditional represent 31.7% of the total, while *if*-constructions represent 20.7%<sup>13</sup>. These results point to the lack of correspondence between spoken French, and that which was taught at the time of her survey (Hellberg 1971, 136)<sup>14</sup>.

### 3.2.1 Summary on L1 results

The studies on the acquisition of *if*-constructions among children come to the common conclusion that statements with predictive value emerge earlier than those with counterfactual value (Kuzjac et Daly 1979, Bowerman 1986, Chini 1995). Between production of the first simple counterfactual propositions and acquisition of canonical verbal morphology of *if*-constructions, over the course of several years, the child moves through a *continuum* (Bates 1976, Bowerman 1986, Reilly 1982, Chini 1995). The time-lapse between production of the first counterfactual *if*-constructions and master of verbal forms has been explained in terms of conceptual or semantic, rather than syntactical deficits, because of the child's inability to decentring her thoughts during the egocentric period (Bates 1976, Kuczaj and Daly 1979). This would explain the refusal of three-year-olds to make themselves available for tasks that involve an exchange of roles (Reilly 1982). A child can answer a counterfactual question by producing a simple clause carrying the conditional tense from age two on (Reilly 1982). However, even in the child's third year, she will more often tend to respond in the present indicative (Bates 1976, Kuczaj and Daly 1979, Chini 1995). At age five, she will regularly begin to take the conditional tense used in the input (Bates 1979, Chini 1995).

In some languages where the expression of conditional tenses is mixed with certain deontic markers, it has been proven that the deontic-value *if*-clauses precede the production of other *if*-clauses<sup>15</sup>. This result has been explained by the emotional burden of these constructions as speech acts that express prohibition or permission, inter alia, and by the type of input to which the child is habitually exposed (Akatsuka and Clancy 1993). Precocity of deontic conditionals

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**13** In addition to Basic French and parliamentary speech, Hellberg's analysis (1971) takes into account written French, through study of several works by Racine, Simenon, Camus as well as journalistic and administrative documents.

**14** The author stress that owing to its frequency, the hypothetical system of *if*-clauses has been selected to be taught over simple sentences carrying the present conditional or the past conditional by the *Commission du CREDIF (Centre de Recherche et d'Études pour la diffusion du français)*.

**15** Cf. Akatsuka and Clancy (1993) for Japanese and Korean.

is less clearly observable in Italian, where production of epistemic and deontic markers coincides with *if*-clauses shortly before the child's third year (Chini 1995).

Scholars do not take a unanimous view of the reasons for which *if*-constructions generally emerge at a later stage in the child's grammar. Bates (1976) refers to cognitive and pragmatic factors. Bowerman (1986) however argues that since the child can already express non-factuality at the preconditional stage, late emergence of conditionals cannot be explained in cognitive terms. On the other hand, since the child can utter speech acts and comments since she first began oral production; neither can such late emergence be explained in pragmatic terms. Late emergence of counterfactual conditionals has been linked to the child's flawed understanding of erroneous beliefs, at ages 4;0 to 4;5 (Riggs *et al.* 1998). The categories that express suspension of the assertion in L1 French normally emerge at the age of six, to become more frequent by the age of eight, while at the age of four, the child's representation of certainty is fairly realistic (Champaud *et al.* 1993).

### 3.3 Counterfactuality in L2: Previous studies

In the introduction to this Chapter, we raised the question of whether adults, in L2, move through the same acquisitional stages as children in L1. As naïve as that may seem, the question was provoked by an experiment Bloom reports (1981). At Hong Kong, whilst working on a questionnaire, he reports three similar answers from three different informers (SBJ1, SBJ2, SBJ3):

\*INT: *If the Hong Kong government had passed such a law, how would you react?*

\*SBJ1: *But the government hasn't.*

\*SBJ2: *It can't.*

\*SBJ3: *It won't.*

The negative answers of the adult respondents above recall those of the children Reilly had interviewed (1982). The L1 of the adults in Bloom's enquiry was Chinese<sup>16</sup>. Based on that observation, Bloom (1981) wondered whether lack of

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<sup>16</sup> *If*-constructions in Chinese may be interpreted as temporal clauses introduced by *when*- or as conditional clauses. Unlike English, Chinese does not mark counterfactuality by grammatical means related to the subjunctive mood. Under those circumstances, the speaker's knowledge of

grammatical devices to mark counterfactuality in Chinese L1 made it problematic to grasp the notion in Chinese L1 and in English L2. The answer to the question is affirmative, if we are to go by his results<sup>17</sup>. He draws the conclusion that linguistic structures contribute to shaping abstract thought, in such a way as to create a cognitive distance between speakers whose L1 is different. That result is coherent with the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis<sup>18</sup>, one of the main ideas of which is this:

“... *the background linguistic system (in other words, the grammar) of each language is not merely a reproducing instrument for voicing ideas but rather is itself the shaper of ideas, the program and guide for the individual's mental activity, for his analysis of impressions, for his synthesis of his mental stock in trade* », (Whorf 1956, 212).

Au (1983) has shown that lack of a grammatical marker to express counterfactuality in Chinese does not prevent native speakers from thinking in counterfactual terms, nor from arriving at a counterfactual reading in L2. The author attributes Bloom's results (1981) to Chinese versions of tests used as a stimulus, considered less idiomatic than the English versions presented to the control groups. Liu (1985) has shown that the more or less idiomatic character of the stimuli used by Bloom (1981) and Au (1983) is a significant factor in performing the task, and she concludes that even children aged 9;5 years are able to disambiguate counterfactual contents, once acquainted with the stimulus<sup>19</sup>. Here again, in view of contributing to the issue of linguistic relativism, Yeh and Gentner (2005) have shown that speakers whose L1 is Chinese are less competent when it

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the context becomes critical to disambiguate the proposition's meaning. A common strategy to facilitate counterfactual reading is to have the *if*-construction preceded by an assertion. For example: *Mrs. Wong not knows English. If Mrs. Wong knows English, she then can read the NYTimes*; and its equivalent in English: *Mrs. Wong does not know English. If Mrs. Wong knew English, she would be able to read the NYTimes*, (Au 1983).

**17** Part of Bloom's results (1981) rests on a comparison between three groups of native Chinese speakers (Taiwanese academics, Hong-Kong academics, and Taiwanese adults who were not academics) and an English-speaking control group. Another part of Bloom's results (1981) rests on a comparison between a group of monolingual speakers whose L1 is Chinese, and a bilingual group whose L1 is Chinese and L2 is English. 43% of the bilinguals provided a counterfactual interpretation to a stimulus in English, while 25% of the monolinguals provided a counterfactual interpretation to a stimulus in Chinese.

**18** Edward Sapir and Benjamin Lee Whorf introduced the notion of linguistic relativism, to refer to the principle according to which “*the same physical evidence will not lead all observers to the same representation of the universe, unless their linguistic resources be either similar, or may in some way be adjusted*” (Whorf [1940] 1956, 214).

**19** Liu's sample (1985) is based on written answers from 744 Taipei students aged 9;5 to 20 (average age of the population = 14).

comes to grasping counterfactual statements in non-transparent –or relatively new or unpredictable– contexts, compared to transparent contexts. In non-transparent contexts, comprehension of counterfactual statements is less problematic in English L2 than in Chinese L1, which suggests that languages affects processing of counterfactual information (Yeh and Gentner 2005).

Bernini (1994) has analysed acquisition of hypothetical *if*- constructions with uneducated individuals learning Italian for the first time. Production of the conjunction *se*- (*if*-) has been precociously attested from the second month's immersion in the target language environment, for three English-speaking learners, and from the third and/or fourth month for six learners from other geographical areas. Counterfactual reading of verbal forms produced by these learners first becomes accessible through the discursive context in the form of a past participle or present indicative. For example:

\*SBJ: *Anche latino se io cominciato in seconda, è lo stesso*

\*SBJ: Latin too if I started in secondary school, it's the same<sup>20</sup>

\*INT: *Se lui fosse stato veramente appoggiato all'albero [...],  
che cosa sarebbe successo ?*

\*INT: Had he actually been leaning against the tree [...],  
what would have happened?

\*SBJ: *L'albero cade così*

\*SBJ: The tree falls like this<sup>21</sup>

In the corpus analyzed by Bernini –as part of the *Progetto di Pavia*– the most frequent counterfactual values are expressed through future-tense verbal forms (*sarò, finirò, tornerò, troverò, continuerò, andrò, verrò*)<sup>22</sup>, significantly less through the conditional (*sarebbe, potrebbe, potrei, manderei, sarei andato/tornato, avrei avuto/sentito/detto*)<sup>23</sup> and less still, through the subjunctive mood (*avessi, fosse tornato*). Bernini (1994, 289–90) observes that the imperfetto (*c'era, c'erano, andava, cadeva, sapevo, venivo*)<sup>24</sup> is often used in narrative contexts, and suggests that the reason for its integration into the learner's grammar, is not the high

<sup>20</sup> The counterfactual interpretation in Italian has been made explicit by Bernini (1994): « *Anche il latino, se io l'avessi cominciato in seconda, sarebbe stato lo stesso* » ; “Latin too if I had started in secondary school, it would have been the same”.

<sup>21</sup> « *L'albero sarebbe caduto così* » ; “The tree would have fallen like this” (Bernini 1994).

<sup>22</sup> I will be, I will finish, I will come back, I will pursue, I will go, she/he will see.

<sup>23</sup> It would be, it could, I could, I would send, I would be gone/come back, I would have had/ felt/said.

<sup>24</sup> It was, it were, she/he walked, it fall, I knew, I came.

frequency of the counterfactual imperfect in spoken Italian input –as suggested by Renzi & Salvi (1991), Cf. section 2.2.4– but rather the learner’s use of a quotation-strategy.

Schouten (2000) has analysed acquisition of *if*- constructions by native Dutch university students learning L2 English<sup>25</sup>. Symmetrical use of the conditional (*would*) in the subordinated and main sentences is the second most attested verbal combination, representing 23.6% of the 1,066 *if*- constructions analysed. As an example:

\*SBJ: *If I \*would be stopped because the lights on my bike don’t work, I think I still would say my own name* (Schouten 2000, 155)

Schouten (2000) explains this symmetrical conditional by a transfer strategy from L1<sup>26</sup>, whose transferred construction would be of this type:

*Als hij nu zou leven, zou hij reclames hebben gemaakt* (Schouten 2000, 103)  
Were he still alive today, he would have made advertisements

However, canonical verbal morphology in English (*i.e.*, *if my parents hadn’t pushed me so hard [...], I’d probably have taken a year out*) prevails, representing 73.4% overall. In the control group, frequency of subordinated sentences including the conditional –*zou(den)*– is higher in *if*- clauses where the propositional contents pertain to the non-past (44%), compared to counterfactual contexts (9%). For the latter, the commonest verbal combination is the symmetrical pluperfect (65%). As for Dutch learners of FFL<sup>27</sup>, prevalence of canonical morphology (indicative in the subordinated clause + conditional in the main clause) has been attested in all *if*- clauses, for contents pertaining to the non-past as well as for counterfactual contents<sup>28</sup>. Schouten (2000) explains this result

<sup>25</sup> Her sample is made up of 79 learners of L2 English at three different skill-levels, and a L1 Dutch control group, made up of 197 participants.

<sup>26</sup> Dutch as a morpheme (*als*) that may be associated with two different values: temporal (when) and conditional (if). To give a conditional reading, the conditional –*zou(den)*– may be used in the subordinated sentence. Symmetrical use of the conditional in both the main and subordinated sentences is common in Dutch. Unlike English, such symmetrical use is not deemed ungrammatical.

<sup>27</sup> Her sample is made up of 62 learners of FFL at two different skill-levels, and a L1 Dutch control group, made up of 197 participants.

<sup>28</sup> Of the 892 *if*- constructions analysed in FFL, 77.8% include the canonical verbal morphology and 16.6% the conditional tense both in the main and the subordinated sentences. The symmetrical conditional in FFL has been attested mainly in non-past *if*- clauses (123 occurrences), and less often in counterfactual *if*- clauses (25 occurrences).



by arguing that unlike the Dutch, the French verbal system is inflectional, and by the type of tasks proposed to FFL learners, based on written tests (whereas the results of L2 English learners are based on a guided oral interview).

### 3.3.1 Summary on L2 results

The studies aiming to test the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis in the context of counterfactuality have brought forth conflicting results. The lack of grammatical markers to encode counterfactuality in Chinese L1 adversely affects disambiguation of counterfactual information in L2 (Bloom 1981) particularly in new or unpredictable contexts (Yeh and Gentner 2005). This negative effect vanishes once the Chinese speakers are acquainted with the stimulus' contents (Liu 1985). There are few studies describing acquisition of hypotheticality in L2 and the fact that they approach the question through *if*-clauses relegates counterfactuality to a modest part of their conclusions<sup>29</sup>. However, two major results are worth to be borne in mind. The first is that future verbal forms are used with counterfactual values by learners who do not master the conditional tense (Bernini 1994). The second is that the symmetrical conditional in FFL is attested mainly in potential contexts –i.e., related to an uncertain future–, and less in counterfactual contexts (Schouten 2000).

## 3.4 Conclusion

It is quite obvious that adults using L2 do not operate within the same cognitive constraints as a child in her L1 (Bowerman 1986, 298). That being said, acquisition of counterfactuality implies for both groups first identifying the forms most often associated with predictive, potential and counterfactual values in the target language concerned. Amongst the phenomena which converge in acquisition L1 and L2, we find in both the child and the adult, production of future forms in contexts that call for counterfactuality (Reilly 1982, Bernini 1994). What is more, both children and adults produce symmetrical verbal forms in the subordinated and main sentences at a certain stage of acquisition (Bates 1976, Chini 1995, Schouten 2000). However, for the use of the conditional tense

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<sup>29</sup> One of the hypotheses that inspired our Ph. Dissertation (Repiso 2013) is that *if*-constructions are but one possible means amongst others to encode counterfactuality. The results presented in this volume are designed to test this idea, while its eventual confirmation would render incomplete the studies that have dealt with conditionality in an *a priori* fashion, as the *ad hoc* conceptualization to express alternatives to factual events and/or state-of-affairs.

in both the main and the subordinate sentences, the two groups differ in frequency of use. Its use represents 16.6% for FFL learners (Schouten 2000) and 1.7% for Italian-speaking children (Chini 1995)<sup>30</sup>. The symmetrical conditional is considered ungrammatical in French as it is in Italian (Cf. section 2.3). The difference between the frequencies of use observed in the two studies suggests that in the case of the child, use of the symmetrical conditional will likely become residual, whereas in the adult learner's grammar, the symmetrical conditional may become fossilized. Our data concerning the production of the symmetrical conditional in the Italian control group and FFL learners is meant to test this idea.

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**30** If one takes into account the totality of *if* constructions (both simple and complex), the percentage of occurrences carrying the conditional tense in the subordinated clause represents 6.25% of the 112 constructions elicited by Chini (1995).

# 4 Methodology

## 4.1 Introduction

Coming up with a method that would allow us to elicit counterfactual responses proved something of a challenge. The complete lack of earlier acquisition studies dealing with counterfactuality beyond *if*-constructions led us towards research in psychology. We shall propose here a synthesis of the methods applied in earlier acquisition studies (section 4.2), present the questions underlying our research and indicate which ingredients of counterfactuality our analyses would cover (4.3). We shall present the participants in our study (4.4), the various tasks of the guided interview (4.5) as well as the statistical analyses and transcriptions on which the results are based (4.6). And finally, we shall conclude with considerations on the type of texts obtained (4.7).

## 4.2 Previous studies

Preceding studies on acquisition of counterfactuality in L1 relied upon spontaneous data collected in the child's domestic surroundings (Bowerman 1986, Chini 1995, Katis 1997) and on guided interviews where the instruction was an interrogative *if*-construction (Reilly 1982, Harris *et al.* 1997). The mentioned studies above have contributed to describing oral production of conditional constructions in English, Italian and Greek in childhood. In L1 French, Hellberg (1971) has reported the use of *if*-constructions and the conditional tense in simple clauses taken from literary texts –works by Camus and Simenon–, as well as from journalistic texts, and from a corpus of oral data<sup>1</sup>.

In the L2 domain, comprehension of counterfactuality in English by Chinese learners has been the object of a whole battery of written texts and questionnaires, where participants were given five options and told to tick off one or more boxes (Bloom 1981, Au 1983)<sup>2</sup>. Oral production data has relied upon spontaneous conversations where Italian was the target language (Bernini 1994) and upon guided interviews in English L2, completed by questionnaires judging acceptability in written form (Schouten 2000). Schouten's study (2000) compared differing skill levels and grammatical traits pertaining to verbal morphology within conditional constructions. In L2 French, she has based her results on several written

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<sup>1</sup> Basic French is a corpus created between 1951 and 1955. The oral part includes 275 recordings which correspond to just over 300,000 transcribed words.

<sup>2</sup> Research by Bloom (1981) and Au (1983) come to opposite conclusions (Cf. section 3.2).

exercises<sup>3</sup>. Wald's conclusions (1993) in relation to *if*- constructions and modal markers amongst California's Spanish-speakers are based on spontaneous conversations.

In the area of psychology, the studies on counterfactual judgement are based upon written texts, followed by a written questionnaire (Mandel and Lehman 1996, Kahneman and Tversky 1981) or by a task involving the production of a written list (Kray *et al.* 2009, Wells and Gavanski 1989). Most studies in the neurosciences area have presented counterfactuality through conditional constructions, which the participant is expected either to read (Nieuwland 2012, Urrutia, Gennari & De Vega 2012), or read and listen to (Kulakova *et al.* 2013, Urrutia, De Vega and Bastiaansen 2012), after which she is asked to answer *Yes* or *No* to a question.

### 4.3 Research questions

The questions underlying our research happen to be fairly new, since they lie outwith the theoretical approach whereby counterfactuality is examined solely in the context of *if*- constructions. We have gone on the assumption that counterfactuality –as a semantic notion expressing the comparison between reality and *what might have been*– can be expressed beyond conditional constructions *If A (then) B*. Starting from that premise, here are the questions this volume will be concerned with:

- I. What are the grammatical devices and constructions employed for the purpose of encoding counterfactuality in French, in Spanish, in Italian and in French as a foreign language (FFL)?
- II. In what ways are these constructions and grammatical devices combined so as to enable counterfactual interpretation?
- III. Through which devices and constructions do non-advanced learners express counterfactuality in FFL?

Our description of how counterfactuality is expressed will rely upon two points of observation or areas which will be the subject of our analyses in L1 and L2 French:

- Grammatical devices and constructions that encode counterfactual scenarios (henceforth referred to as mutation cores). We shall pay close attention to the following uses: the conditional tense, other tenses from the indicative,

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<sup>3</sup> The participants in Schouten's study are Dutch learners, while those in Bernini's study are from varied backgrounds (English, Cantonese, Chinese, Tigrinya, Arabic, Chichewa, French).

tenses from the subjunctive mood, nominalisations or/and non-finite verb forms, *if*-clauses and modal verbs. We shall seek to ascertain, through use of statistical tests, whether frequency of use of the various grammatical devices at issue –and their differences– are due to chance (null hypothesis) or whether the differences are statistically significant. Our study is thereby designed to provide explanations as to distribution of grammatical devices for expressing counterfactuality (Chapters 5 and 6).

- Verbal morphology within simple and complex *if*-clauses in L2 French.

## 4.4 Participants

90 subjects took part in our study: 30 native French-speakers, 30 native Spanish-speakers and 30 native Italian-speakers. The participants were recruited at universities, notably from the Faculty of Law and the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Aix-Marseille, in part, from the *Maison Méditerranéenne des Sciences de l'Homme* (MMSH) and from the Faculty of Medicine<sup>4</sup>. The data was collected mainly at Aix-en-Provence and Marseille's areas, and to a lesser extent at Nijmegen in the Netherlands, at the Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics. Our study is based upon conversational data gathered in the course of guided interviews. The experiment was conducted once only with native French-speakers and twice for the Spanish and Italian speakers: once in L2 French and another in their L1<sup>5</sup>.

### 4.4.1 French-speaking group

The French control group is comprised of 20 women and 10 men between the ages of 17 and 57. In this group, the individuals' average age was 28.3; they are studying at university. Of the 30 participants, 2/3 are from South-Eastern France – 17 from the region Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur (PACA), two moved there as children, and one was born at Nice. The remaining five are from the Paris area, two from Northern France (Normandy, Nord-Pas-de-Calais), two from Eastern France (Burgundy, Franche-Comté) and one from Quebec.

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<sup>4</sup> The students were contacted by circulating Round-Robin e-mail requests to participate. With thanks to Stéphanie Clerc and Daniel Véronique (University of Aix-Merseille) for allowing me to introduce myself, at the beginning of class to their students, and circulate my requests.

<sup>5</sup> The order for passing FFL-L1 or L1-FFL was randomly attributed (Cf. the Tables summarising Spanish-speaking and Italian-speaking participants in sections 4.4.2 and 4.4.3, respectively).

**Table 4.4.1:** Summary of French-speaking participants

Subject	L1	Sex	Age	Geographical provenance
1	French	F	21	Southeast France
2	French	F	22	Southeast France
3	French	F	21	Southeast France
4	French	F	56	Paris
5	French	F	20	Southeast France
6	French	F	25	Southeast France
7	French	F	20	Southeast France
8	French	F	55	Southeast France
9	French	M	26	Northern France
10	French	F	26	Southeast France
11	French	F	52	Southeast France
12	French	M	28	Paris
13	French	M	39	Southeast France
14	French	F	29	Southeast France
15	French	M	30	Eastern France
16	French	M	17	Southeast France
17	French	M	22	Southeast France
18	French	F	21	Quebec
19	French	M	33	Paris
20	French	M	33	Paris
21	French	M	29	Eastern France
22	French	F	28	Southeast France
23	French	F	23	Southeast France
24	French	F	30	Northern France
25	French	F	27	Southeast France
26	French	F	25	Southeast France
27	French	M	25	Southeast France
28	French	F	23	Southeast France
29	French	F	23	Southeast France
30	French	F	21	Southeast France

#### 4.4.2 Spanish-speaking group

The Spanish-speaking group is made up of 15 women and 15 men whose age ranges from 21 to 44. The data we present in tables II and III have been obtained directly from the participating informants, who filled out a questionnaire<sup>6</sup>. On average, the group's profile corresponds to that of an individual 31.2 of age,

<sup>6</sup> In the questionnaire, the participants were asked to state how long they have been studying French. In most cases, the participants added up how many years or months they had taken French lessons in the country of origin (the Spanish-speaker SBJ15 and the Italian-speakers

studying at university. Of the 30 participants, 16 are Spaniards, 6 Colombian, 5 Mexican, 5 Peruvian and one Chilean. Of the 16 Spaniards, 5 are from the central plateau (3 from Madrid and 2 from Valladolid), 4 from the Northern seaboard (two from the Basque Provinces, one from Asturias and one from Cantabria), 3 from the South (two from Seville and one from Murcia) and two from the Eastern seaboard (Valencia). On average they had studied FFL for 5.6 years, with average length of immersion in France being 5.6 years as well.

The group's members are not homogeneously integrated into French society: some informants have chosen to stay in France, others are here only temporarily. Amongst the informants who have lived in France for some time for academic or business reasons, there are Erasmus students (SBJ2, SBJ11, SBJ12 and SBJ13), PhD students on scholarship, who have come to study abroad for three months at most (SBJ7 and SBJ19), an assistant teacher of Spanish Foreign Language (SFL) employed in a *Lycée* for one school year (SBJ8), and a SFL lecturer who taught at University for two school years (SBJ14). Amongst the informants settled in France indefinitely, one finds individuals whose children were born and go to school in France (SBJ3 and SBJ27), or who have sat for State examinations (SBJ17 and SBJ18).

Another factor in relation to heterogeneity within the group is whether or not participants had earlier been exposed to French. Before reaching France, SBJ7 and SBJ10 had, in their country of origin, attended a bilingual school (the *Lycée français*), while SBJ22 had been in contact with Basque and French since childhood, given how close his place of residence was to France. As for SBJ1, SBJ5, SBJ6, SBJ9, SBJ10, SBJ15, SBJ16, SBJ21, SBJ23, SBJ24, SBJ28 and SBJ30, they were all studying for a Degree (BA, MA, PhD) at French universities, before the recording was made.

The time of immersion in France corresponded to 9 years or more for 8 informants –SBJ3, SBJ16, SBJ17, SBJ18, SBJ22, SBJ24, SBJ27 and SBJ30–, while for 12 informants immersion corresponded to 12 months or less (SBJ1, SBJ2, SBJ7, SBJ8, SBJ9, SBJ10, SBJ11, SBJ12, SBJ13, SBJ15, SBJ19 and SBJ26). As for guided learning in French, the threshold for 8 informants represented 9 or more years' study –SBJ3, SBJ5, SBJ7, SBJ10, SBJ16, SBJ17, SBJ18 and SBJ30–, while for 5 informants the threshold represented one year or less (SBJ14, SBJ19,

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SBJ13, SBJ15, SBJ17 and SBJ22 had never taken French lessons before moving to France). The case of the Spanish-speaker SBJ16 is an exceptional one: she moved to France with his family when she was four, and has studied in France all along. Also exceptional: the case of Italian-speaker SBJ12, who claims to have studied French for 46 years, owing to his personal views on teaching, and on learning an L2 (he teaches his own L1 in France); he sees himself as a curious, self-taught learner, and believes that one is never done with learning.

**Table 4.4.2:** Summary of Spanish-speaking participants

Subject	L1	Sex	Age	Geographical provenance	Time of FFL studies	Time of immersion	Random order
1	Spanish	M	26	Colombia	7 ans	1 an	L1-FLE
2	Spanish	M	24	Southern Spain	4 ans	3 mois	L1-FLE
3	Spanish	M	35	Colombia	9 ans	9 ans	FLE-L1
4	Spanish	F	33	Southern Spain	7 ans	4 ans	L1-FLE
5	Spanish	F	33	Mexico	9 ans	6 ans	L1-FLE
6	Spanish	F	27	Colombia	3 years	2 years	L1-FLE
7	Spanish	F	28	Northern Spain	20 years	1 month	FLE-L1
8	Spanish	F	23	Southern Spain	8 years	1 year	L1-FLE
9	Spanish	F	29	Colombia	4 years	1 year	FLE-L1
10	Spanish	F	30	Colombia	15 years	1 year	FLE-L1
11	Spanish	M	22	Northern Spain	3 years	3 month	FLE-L1
12	Spanish	F	25	Madrid	2 years	5 month	L1-FLE
13	Spanish	M	23	Eastern Spain	2 years	3 month	FLE-L1
14	Spanish	F	28	Northern Spain	6 months	2 years	L1-FLE
15	Spanish	F	32	Chile	0	1 year	FLE-L1
16	Spanish	F	21	Madrid	15 years	17 years	FLE-L1
17	Spanish	F	44	Northern Spain	11 years	24 years	L1-FLE
18	Spanish	F	44	Northern Spain	12 years	24 years	FLE-L1
19	Spanish	M	33	Eastern Spain	5 months	8 month	FLE-L1
20	Spanish	M	38	Mexico	2.5 years	4 years	L1-FLE
21	Spanish	F	27	Madrid	5 years	5 years	FLE-L1
22	Spanish	M	24	Northern Spain	2 years	15 years	L1-FLE
23	Spanish	F	37	Northern Spain	5 years	19 month	FLE-L1
24	Spanish	M	36	Mexico	1 year	9 years	L1-FLE
25	Spanish	M	29	Mexico	2 years	4.5 years	FLE-L1
26	Spanish	M	37	Southern Spain	4 years	6 month	L1-FLE
27	Spanish	M	34	Mexico	1 year	10 years	FLE-L1
28	Spanish	M	38	Colombia	1 year	6 years	L1-FLE
29	Spanish	M	43	Chile	3 years	9 years	FLE-L1
30	Spanish	M	33	Peru	12 years	9 years	L1-FLE

SBJ24, SBJ27 and SBJ28). By crossing these two variables we can easily identify a sub-group of potentially-advanced learners, given their experienced status with immersion and FFL studies: SBJ3, SBJ16, SBJ17, SBJ18 and SBJ30.

Owing to the differences amongst the Spanish-speaking learners, in terms of socio-biographical background, we expect to find varying skill-levels in L2 French. *A priori*, it is logical to assume that FFL production for SBJ7 –bilingual studies since childhood at the *Lycée français* and 20 years of FFL studies overall– will differ from that of SBJ19, with 5 months’ guided learning at the time of the recording. Similarly, one may advance the hypothesis that the informants at



a similar immersion threshold may resemble each other when it comes to the grammatical devices used to discuss irreality (for example, SBJ3 and SBJ30, who have been nine years in France). We shall return to these socio-biographical differences when discussing our results.

#### 4.4.3 Italian-speaking group

The Italian-speaking group is made up of 20 women and 10 men aged 20 to 56. On average, the group's profile corresponds to that of an individual aged 26.6 years, studying at university. Of the 30 participants, 13 are from Northern Italy (9 from the Veneto, 3 from Liguria and one from Lombardy), 14 from Southern Italy (8 from Campania, 3 from Basilicata, one from Puglia, one from Calabria, and one from Sicily), and 3 from central Italy (one from Tuscany, one from Emilia-Romagna and one from Latium). On average, the group's members have studied FFL for 4.6 years, and average immersion is 1.5 years<sup>7</sup>. Compared to the more-experienced Spanish-speaking group, the relative average of immersion represents a fundamental difference for the Italian speakers.

In the Italian-speaking group, immersion for 22 informants corresponds to 12 or less months<sup>8</sup>. Based on that factor, one may state that the Italian-speaking group is more homogeneous than the Spanish-speaking one (in the latter, immersion for 12 learners corresponds to 12 or less months, while for 8 learners, it corresponds to 9 or more years)<sup>9</sup>. As for guided learning in FFL, 4 informants' study-threshold corresponds to 12 or less months (SBJ14, SBJ18, SBJ19, SBJ23) while 4 informants have never studied French (SBJ14, SBJ15, SBJ17, SBJ22). The sum of these two variables allows for identifying a sub-group of learners, who are likely not advanced: SBJ14, SBJ15, SBJ17, SBJ18, SBJ22 and SBJ23. Compared to the Spanish-speaking group, the majority of the Italian-speaking group would appear to be comprised of informants who are in France on a temporary basis only.

However, the Italian-speakers do present differences in terms of the level of insertion within the target-language milieu, with 13 informants being Erasmus students (SBJ6, SBJ8, SBJ10, SBJ11, SBJ14, SBJ21, SBJ22, SBJ23, SBJ24, SBJ26, SBJ27, SBJ28 and SBJ29); two who have worked as assistant teachers in a *lycée*

<sup>7</sup> The average number of years' study of FFL has been calculated for 29 subjects in the Italian-speaking group. We have left out subject 12, with 46 years' study of FFL.

<sup>8</sup> SBJ1, SBJ3, SBJ4, SBJ6, SBJ7, SBJ8, SBJ9, SBJ10, SBJ11, SBJ14, SBJ15, SBJ17, SBJ18, SBJ21, SBJ22, SBJ23, SBJ24, SBJ26, SBJ27, SBJ28, SBJ29 and SBJ30.

<sup>9</sup> This sub-group, experienced in immersion terms, is not represented in the Italian-speaking sample, since no Italian-speaking informers have had nine years' immersion.

**Table 4.4.3:** Summary of Italian-speaking participants

Subject	L1	Sex	Age	Geographical provenance	Time of FFL studies	Time of immersion	Random order
1	Italian	M	30	Campania	10 years	1 year	FFL-L1
2	Italian	F	29	Liguria	7 years	2 years	L1-FFL
3	Italian	F	24	Veneto	8 years	1 year	L1-FFL
4	Italian	M	24	Veneto	10 years	1 year	L1-FFL
5	Italian	F	28	Liguria	18 years	8 years	FFL-L1
6	Italian	F	24	Veneto	5 years	5 months	L1-FFL
7	Italian	M	26	Basilicata	4 years	1 year	L1-FFL
8	Italian	F	25	Veneto	8 years	4 months	L1-FFL
9	Italian	F	26	Tuscany	4 years	4 months	FFL-L1
10	Italian	F	20	Campania	5 years	5 months	FFL-L1
11	Italian	F	23	Liguria	3 years	3 months	L1-FFL
12	Italian	M	56	Sicily	46 years	7 years	FFL-L1
13	Italian	F	32	Calabria	0	4 years	L1-FFL
14	Italian	M	22	Campania	6 months	3 months	FFL-L1
15	Italian	F	26	Apulia	0	1 year	FFL-L1
16	Italian	F	34	Veneto	6 years	5,5 years	L1-FFL
17	Italian	F	34	Campania	0	1 year	L1-FFL
18	Italian	F	23	Veneto	6 months	1 months	L1-FFL
19	Italian	M	37	Veneto	2 months	3 years	FFL-L1
20	Italian	F	28	Campania	5 years	6 months	FFL-L1
21	Italian	F	21	Campania	2 years	2 months	L1-FFL
22	Italian	F	21	Lombardy	0	1,5 months	L1-FFL
23	Italian	M	21	Veneto	1 year	2 months	FFL-L1
24	Italian	F	20	Campania	3 years	2 months	FFL-L1
25	Italian	F	33	Campania	5 years	7 years	FFL-L1
26	Italian	F	20	Emilia-Romagna	7 years	2 months	L1-FFL
27	Italian	M	25	Basilicata	8 years	3 months	FFL-L1
28	Italian	M	21	Basilicata	8 years	2 months	FFL-L1
29	Italian	M	21	Lazio	3 years	2 months	L1-FFL
30	Italian	F	26	Veneto	5 years	1 year	L1-FFL

for one school year (SBJ9 and SBJ30) and at least two whose partner is a native French-speaker (SBJ4 and SBJ16). As for previous exposure to French, SBJ5 took an undergraduate degree at Nice University, while SBJ13 studied for his PhD at the University of Aix-Marseille. Prior to our recording, SBJ3 and SBJ4 had finished their first year of a Master's degree at the University of Aix-Marseille, in Law and Arabic, respectively. SBJ7 and SBJ15 had lived France for a year prior to the recording, during which time they worked as assistant teachers in a *lycée*. However, in daily life they spoke L1 with their live-in partner. None of the learners who took part in our study speak Occitan.

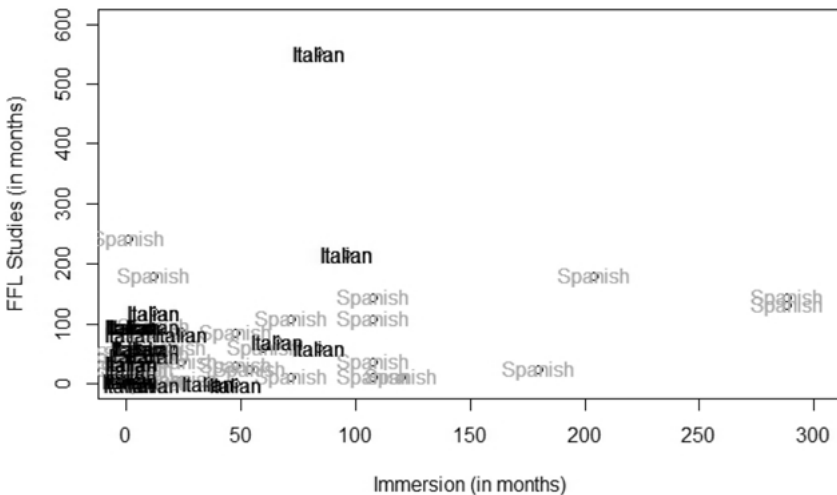
Given the group's socio-biographical heterogeneity, one would logically expect to find some variability in terms of proficiency level in FFL (although less than with the Spanish-speaking informants). It may well be the case that production of SBJ12 –who has been in France for 7 years and studied French

very conscientiously– will prove closer to the native French-speaker pattern, than informants SBJ15 and SBJ17, who have but one year’s immersion, and have never studied French. We shall return to these socio-biographical differences when discussing our results.

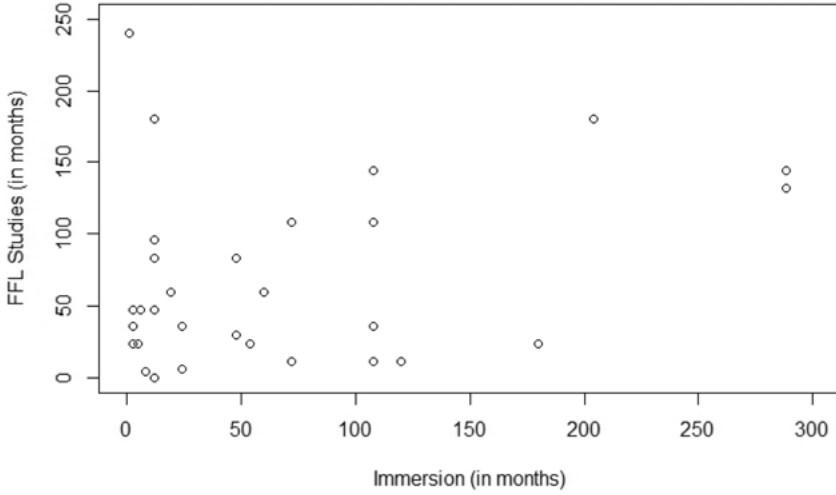
#### 4.4.4 Differences between the learners’ groups

Figure 4.1 illustrates the informants’ heterogeneity in terms of immersion and guided studies. The distribution of the Italian learners –highlighted in black– is mainly concentrated in the bottom left of the graphic, whereas the distribution of the Spanish learners –in grey– is spread from left to right. This is because 23 out of the 30 Italian learners had an immersion inferior or equal to 12 months at the time of the data collection. At first sight, the Spanish group seems to be less homogeneous than the Italian group.

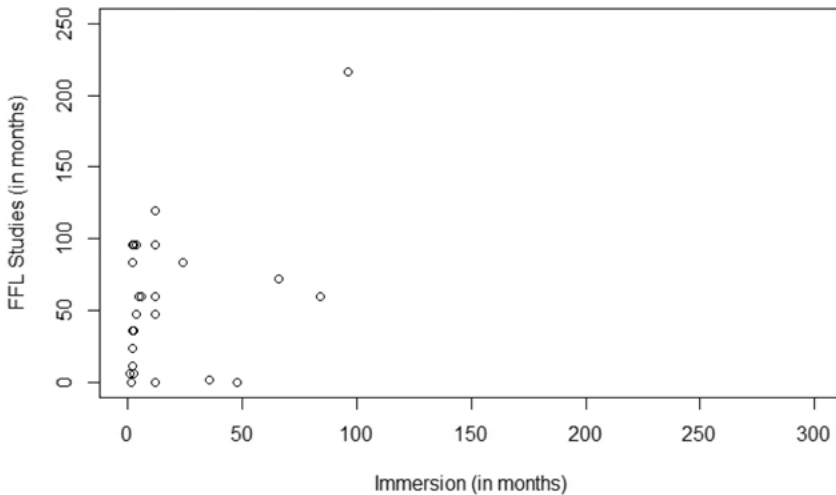
The Spanish group accounts for a variability of sociolinguistic situations. If we trace two imaginary lines parallel to the y-axis and x-axis, we find some points along. This indicates that some learners with little or no training in FFL studies were immersed in France since two years back or more. Conversely, some learners being in France for a period equal or inferior to six months had two, three or four years of FFL studies. Unlikely the Italian group, we did not have a huge concentration of unexperienced learners on both variables. Figure 4.2 contains also some points that are perpendicular to the y-axis and x-axis, confirming the presence of experimented learners with exponential values of



**Figure 4.1:** Sociolinguistic variables per learner

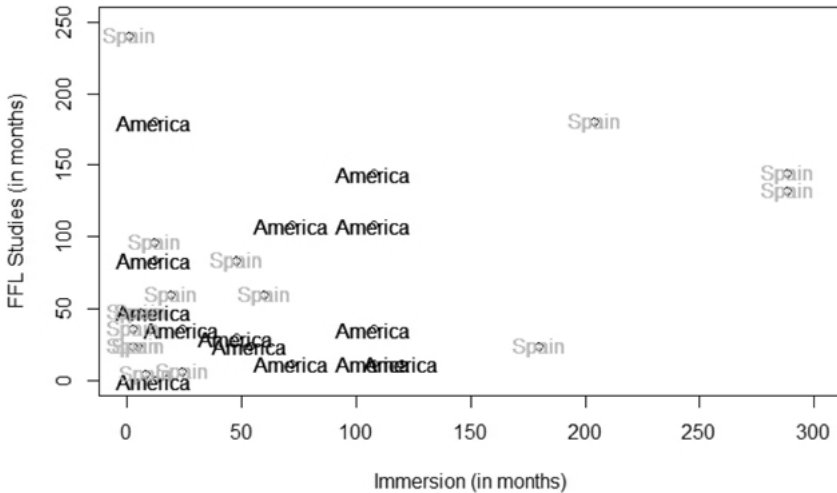


**Figure 4.2:** Sociolinguistic variables: Spanish learners



**Figure 4.3:** Sociolinguistic variables: Italian learners

immersion and FFL studies (Spanish subjects 4, 5 and 30). The most experienced learners in terms of immersion are illustrated by two points at the right side of the graphic and correspond to two full-time university professors of Spanish Foreign Language. As for the varieties of Spanish spoken within the group, Figure 4.4 shows the distribution of the learners according to their geographical origins by distinguishing those coming from Latin America or



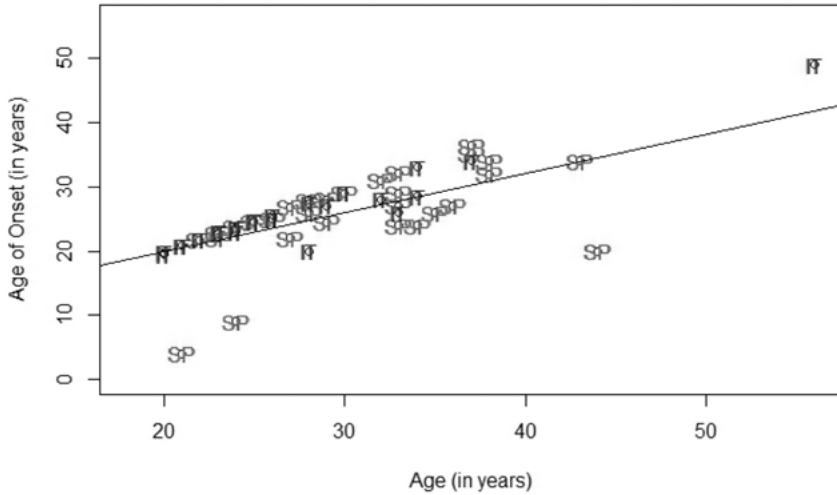
**Figure 4.4:** Varieties of Spanish in the learners' group

Spain (14 and 16 subjects respectively). Both subgroups account for a diversity of individual situations.

As for the variable FFL studies, the mean of the Spanish learners is 68.1 months and the amount of dispersion within the group is 61.6. As for the immersion, the mean's group is 67.4 months and the dispersion or standard deviation is 80.6. This means that within the variable immersion there is a greater variation compared to the variable FFL studies. In other words, the data points regarding the learners' amount of FFL studies are clustered more closely around the average than those of the learners' immersion, whose values are spread slightly further from the average.

The Italian group is more homogeneous compared to the Spanish group. 23 out of the 30 Italian learners accounted for an immersion equal or inferior to 12 months and any of them had lived in France for a period superior to 8 years. Concerning FFL studies, two-thirds of the group had no more than 6 years. Figure 4.3 presents 25 graphical points covering 29 individual situations or learners. This is because four pairs of learners, 1 & 4, 6 & 10, 15 & 17, and 24 & 29, shared the same values on both sociolinguistic traits<sup>10</sup>. Because the particular conditions

<sup>10</sup> Subjects 1 & 4 had 12 months of immersion and 10 years of guided learning in French; subjects 15 & 17 had 12 months of immersion and no prior studies in French as a Foreign Language (FFL); subjects 24 & 29 had two months of immersion and 36 months of FFL studies whereas subjects 6 & 10 had five months of immersion and 60 months of FFL studies.



**Figure 4.5:** Age of onset per learner

of Italian subject 12<sup>11</sup> –and our decision to make figures representing a maximum of 300 units for x-axis and 250 units for y-axis–, he does not appear in Figure 4.3 although he does at the top of Figure 4.1.

As for the variable FFL studies, the mean of the Italian learners is 56.3 months and the amount of dispersion within the group is 48.8<sup>12</sup>. As for the immersion, the mean's group is 18.9 months and the dispersion or standard deviation is 27.6. This reveals that both variables contain similar variation values within.

Figure 4.5 shows the distribution of the Spanish & Italian learners from the perspective of their age. To obtain this graphical representation, we crossed each one's age at the moment of the data collection and each one's age when first arrived in France (onwards, age of onset). Because all our learners had spent some time in France previously to being recorded, the age variable present always higher values than the age of onset variable. Figure 4.5 allows us to see some evidence of heterogeneity (change in spread points) for the Spanish group of learners. In particular, three Spanish learners are far below the black line which represents the general pattern. This is because in general our learners were recorded at an age relatively close to their arrival in France, which is not the case for the Spanish learners 16, 17, 18 and 22. Subjects 17 and 18 both arrived in France at the age of 20 years old and both were 44 years old when

**11** In the bio-linguistic questionnaire he introduced himself as an autodidact with 46 years of FFL studies.

**12** These values have been calculated omitting the 46 years of autodidact learning of subject 12.

recorded. Both of them worked at Aix-Marseille University in the Spanish department. Subject 22 was 24 years old when recorded. He grew up in a region of the Basque country very close to the French border and from the age of nine he incrementally spent time in the French part of the Basque country. Subject 16 was born in Spain but moved with her parents and elder sister to France at the age of four. The prominent language at home was Spanish.

## 4.5 Stimulus and instructions

For the enquiry's purposes, we have taken as the stimulus a narrative with a causal chain, leading to an unfortunate outcome (Wells and Gavanski 1989)<sup>13</sup>. Each interview was taped. Once the informant had read the stimulus, we launched the recording. We then conducted a guided interview, including a total of 8 instructions that concern different communicational tasks<sup>14</sup>. Responses were transcribed using the CLAN editor for Chiles. Statistical results were obtained using R from Excel files input data.

The use of a decision-making task seemed to us very appropriate to encourage responses from the semantic domain of counterfactuality. The mutation task has been regularly used in the past by a branch of psychological studies interested in the simulation heuristic (Kahneman & Tvesky 1982, Kahneman & Miller 1986, Wells & Gavanski 1989, Miller & Gunasegaram 1990, Mandel & Lehman 1996). The predictive task was used to encourage the production of *if*-clauses or some kind of hypothetical reasoning marked by forms from the conditional tense. In order to complete the predictive task, the learner has to return to the three modifications made in the mutation task and develop them. This places the learner in a continuation task where (s)he can still make use of the lexical repertoire of the stimulus.

In the first instruction, participants are asked to suggest three modifications, to prevent the narrative's unfortunate outcome (mutation task). In the tables below, we have underlined the task in bold text, since it constitutes the basis on which much of our results rest. Taken as a whole, the guided interview enabled us to obtain a significant number of *if*-clauses and expressions of counterfactuality through the indicative (section 5.2.1), *inter alia*.

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<sup>13</sup> Wells and Gavanski's original text (1989) was translated from the English, then corrected by two native French-speakers, two native Spanish-speakers and two native Italian-speakers (Cf. sections 4.5.1 and 4.5.2 for the Spanish and Italian versions, and section 4.5.3 for the initial English version).

<sup>14</sup> Instructions 1 and 3 are from a test used in psychology by Wells and Gavanski (1989) and instructions 7 and 8 are from tests used by Kahneman and Tversky (1982) and Mandel and Lehman (1996). We added the other instructions (2, 4, 5 and 6). Our role as interviewer was to obtain a response for each instruction.

Karen was an assistant editor for a small publishing firm. She had a rare hereditary disease called Karpinson's hemotrysoma, characterized by the lack of an enzyme that normally breaks down certain proteins in the digestive system. Because of this, fermented drinks such as wine and liqueurs can cause a severe allergic reaction in someone with the disease.

Karen had just received a promotion so her boss, Mr. Carlson, took her to an expensive French restaurant to celebrate. Mr. Carlson had been to this restaurant several times, so he ordered for both of them. As he looked over the menu, Mr. Carlson considered what to order for Karen. He first thought about ordering the Coquilles Saint-Jacques, but at the last moment decided on the Moules Mariniere instead. Although Mr. Carlson did not know this, the Moules Mariniere was made in a wine sauce whereas the Coquilles Saint-Jacques did not contain any wine.

Karen enjoyed her meal greatly, but began to feel ill shortly after finishing. Within minutes, she went into convulsions and was rushed away in an ambulance. She died on the way to the hospital.

Wells & Gavanski (1989)

*Karen était assistante à l'édition dans une petite agence de publicité. Elle avait une rare maladie héréditaire, l'hémotrisoma de Karpinson, caractérisée par le manque d'une enzyme qui normalement divise certaines protéines du système digestif. En raison de cela les boissons fermentées comme le vin ou les liqueurs pouvaient lui causer des sévères réactions allergiques.*

*Karen avait eu une promotion dans son travail et son supérieur, monsieur Carlson, l'avait emmenée dans un restaurant français plutôt cher pour l'y fêter. Etant donné que monsieur Carlson avait mangé plusieurs fois dans ce restaurant il commanda pour les deux. Pendant qu'il regardait le menu il considérait quel plat commander pour Karen. Il pensa d'abord aux coquilles Saint-Jacques mais au dernier moment il choisit les moules marinières. Monsieur Carlson ne le savait pas mais les moules marinières étaient cuites dans une sauce à base de vin tandis que les coquilles Saint-Jacques ne contenaient pas de vin.*

*Karen savoura son plat mais elle commença à se sentir mal peu après avoir fini. Quelques minutes plus tard elle souffrit de convulsions et elle fut transportée en ambulance. En chemin pour l'hôpital elle mourut.*



## Guided Interview

Instructions	Type of task
<p>1 <b><i>Proposez trois modifications qui auraient pu empêcher la mort de Karen et expliquez pourquoi elles auraient empêché sa mort.</i></b></p> <p>Imagine three modifications that could have been different in the story to avoid Karen's death.</p>	Mutation
<p>2 <b><i>Quels effets auraient eu vos modifications sur le rapport entre Karen et Carlson ?</i></b></p> <p>What would have been the effects of your modifications on the relationship between Karen and Carlson?</p>	Predictive
<p>3 <b><i>Quels ont été les causes principales de la mort de Karen ?</i></b></p> <p>List the most important causes of Karen's death.</p>	Causal list
<p>4 <b><i>Dans la mort de Karen, quel rôle a joué le choix du plat de la part de Carlson ?</i></b></p> <p>What role did Carlson's choice of dish play in Karen's death?</p>	Assignment of blame
<p>5 <b><i>Croyez-vous qu'il l'a fait express ? Pourquoi ?</i></b></p> <p>Do you think he did that deliberately? Why?</p>	Assignment of mental states
<p>6 <b><i>Quels raisons pourrait avoir Carlson de vouloir se débarrasser de Karen ?</i></b></p> <p>What reasons might have led Carlson to want to get rid of Karen?</p>	
<p>7 <b><i>Comme il est normal dans de telles circonstances, le mari de Karen a fréquemment pensé « si seulement » les jours suivant le décès de Karen. Comment a-t-il continué ses pensées?</i></b></p> <p>As commonly happens in such situations, Karen's husband often thought "if only" during the days that followed Karen's death. What kinds of thoughts do you think he had?</p>	
<p>8 <b><i>Comme il est normal dans de telles circonstances, Monsieur Carlson a fréquemment pensé « si seulement » les jours suivant le décès de Karen. Comment a-t-il continué ses pensées?</i></b></p> <p>As commonly happens in such situations, Mr. Carlson often thought "if only" during the days that followed Karen's death. What kinds of thoughts do you think he had?</p>	Assignment of mental states

#### 4.5.1 Stimulus and instructions in Spanish

Karen era asistente a la edición en una pequeña empresa de publicidad. Padeía una rara enfermedad hereditaria llamada hemotrisoma de Karpinson, caracterizada por la falta de una enzima que normalmente divide algunas proteínas en el aparato digestivo. Por ello las bebidas fermentadas como el vino o el licor podían causarle graves reacciones alérgicas.

Karen había sido ascendida de manera que su superior, el señor Carlson, la llevó a un caro restaurante francés para celebrarlo. El señor Carlson había comido en dicho restaurante varias veces, así que pidió por los dos. Mientras miraba el menú se preguntó qué pedir para Karen. Primero pensó en pedir unas vieiras pero en el último momento se decidió por los mejillones a la marinera. Aunque el señor Carlson no lo sabía, los mejillones a la marinera llevaban una salsa a base de vino mientras las vieiras, no.

Karen disfrutó de la comida pero empezó a sentirse mal poco después. En cuestión de minutos sufrió convulsiones y fue socorrida en una ambulancia. Karen murió de camino al hospital.

- 1 **Propón tres modificaciones que hubieran evitado la muerte de Karen y explica por qué habrían evitado su muerte.**
- 2 ¿Qué efectos habrían tenido tus modificaciones en la relación entre Karen y Carlson?
- 3 ¿Cuáles han sido las causas principales de la muerte de Karen?
- 4 En la muerte de Karen ¿qué papel ha jugado la elección del plato por parte de Carlson?
- 5 ¿Crees que él lo hizo a propósito? ¿Por qué?
- 6 ¿Qué razones podría tener Carlson para querer deshacerse de Karen?
- 7 Como es normal en tales circunstancias, el marido de Karen en los días siguientes a la muerte de su mujer se ha repetido muchas veces “si solamente”, como un reproche. ¿Qué ha podido decirse, si solamente... qué?
- 8 Como es normal en tales circunstancias el señor Carlson en los días siguientes a la muerte de Karen se ha repetido muchas veces “si solamente”, como un reproche. ¿Qué ha podido decirse, si solamente...?

#### 4.5.2 Stimulus and instructions in Italian

Karen era un'assistente editoriale di una piccola ditta di pubblicità. Aveva una strana malattia ereditaria chiamata emotrisoma di Karpinson, che si caratterizza per la mancanza di un'enzima che normalmente divide certe proteine nell'apparato digerente. Per questo motivo le bevande fermentate come il vino o i liquori potevano causarle gravi reazioni allergiche.

Karen era stata promossa al lavoro e il suo capo, il signor Carlson, l'aveva portata a cena in un ristorante francese piuttosto caro per festeggiare. Siccome il signor Carlson aveva mangiato varie volte in quel ristorante, ordinò per entrambi. Mentre guardava il menu, considerava quale piatto ordinare per Karen. Prima pensò alle capesante ma all'ultimo momento si decise per le cozze alla marinara. Benché il signor Carlson non lo sapesse, le cozze alla marinara erano cotte in una salsa a base di vino mentre le pellegrine di San Giacomo non contenevano del vino.

Karen gradì il suo piatto ma incominciò a sentirsi male poco dopo aver finito. In pochi minuti le vennero delle convulsioni e fu soccorsa dall'ambulanza. Karen perse la vita durante il tragitto verso l'ospedale.

- 1 **Immagina tre modifiche per la storia che avrebbero potuto evitare la morte di Karen e spiega perché l'avrebbero evitata.**
- 2 Che conseguenze avrebbero avuto le tue modifiche sul rapporto tra Karen et Carlson?
- 3 Indica le tre cause principali della morte di Karen.
- 4 Che ruolo ha giocato nella morte di Karen la scelta del piatto da parte del Carlson?
- 5 Credi che Carlson l'ha fatto apposta?
- 6 Quali ragioni potrebbe avere Carlson per voler disfarsi di Karen?
- 7 Come succede spesso in queste circostanze, nei giorni successivi alla morte di Karen suo marito ha pensato frequentemente "se solamente", come un rimprovero. Che ha potuto dirsi, se solamente... che cosa?
- 8 Come succede spesso in queste circostanze, nei giorni successivi alla morte di Karen il signor Carlson ha pensato frequentemente "se solamente", come un rimprovero. Che ha potuto dirsi, se solamente... che cosa?

## 4.6 Gathering and analysing the data

Thanks to the technical support from the *Laboratoire Parole et Langage* (CNRS UMR 7309), which lent us the equipment to conduct the audio recordings, data-collection was enabled. The collection stage lasted between December 2010 and February 2013. We had initially adopted a longitudinal approach, which we gave up on in June 2011, owing to the re-test effect noted in the texts from several

learners' second and third recordings<sup>15</sup>. The audio data was saved in the form of WAV archives. Overall, we obtained 150 texts: 30 from the French control group, 30 from the Spanish control group, 30 from the Italian control group, 30 from the group of Spanish-speaking learners and 30 from the group of Italian-speaking learners. Transcription and analysis of the results was made possible thanks to financial support from the Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics (Nijmegen) and more precisely to the Language Acquisition department, headed by Prof. Wolfgang Klein. For the transcriptions, we used CLAN Childes (Child Language Data Exchange System), and we used R software<sup>16</sup> for statistical processing of our data and their graphic representation.

On occasion, the transcriptions proved awkward, owing to the learners producing certain agrammatical or deviant forms. For example, we have attested lexical forms (*\*promouvée* instead of the past participle « promue » in L2 French by native-Spanish informant SBJ12)<sup>17</sup>. Such forms have been asterisked in the transcriptions. Unfortunately, French phonetics do not always make perfectly clear the agreement between a feminine subject, and a past participle or adjective. Where the gender mark can be phonetically discerned – for example, « Karen est morte » (*Karen is dead*) versus « Karen est \*mort » –, we have succeeded with disambiguation, provided the agreement were made<sup>18</sup>. The case

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**15** The longitudinal approach proved awkward on several levels. The learners we had recruited were only staying in France for a few months (the worst case being four, the best case October to June with a few trips back to the home country meanwhile). That temporal constraint forced us to hold two guided interviews at but a month's interval. That led to several difficulties: instances where the participant “jumped” the argument of a question we had not yet put to him, or attitudes indicating slack motivation (lateness, cancelled appointments). Furthermore, the longitudinal approach prevented us from establishing whether the expression of structures encoding counterfactuality in L2 French arose through a degree of acquaintance with the stimulus over an intensive stretch of time, or through length of exposure to the target language's input in general. In September 2011 we shifted to a transversal approach for data-collection. We made use nevertheless of the longitudinal approach's first guided interviews.

**16** With thanks to Dan Dediu for having guided us in converting conversation data to Excel archives, and more specifically, in translating non-numerical factors into numerical variables.

**17** Similarly, we have attested certain lexical forms pertaining to the influence of the learner's L1. For example: *\*honeste* instead of « honnête » or *\*attente* instead of attentive (feminine adjective form) (native-Italian informants SBJ18 and SBJ14, respectively).

**18** Through audio analysis of the occurrences « Karen est morte » (*Karen is dead*) and « les moules sont cuites » (*the mussels are cooked*) we have identified: a learner sub-group which practices gender agreement (Spanish-speakers SBJ4, SBJ5, SBJ10, SBJ11, SBJ12, SBJ14, SBJ16, SBJ17, SBJ18, SBJ22, SBJ23 and Italian-speakers SBJ3, SBJ4, SBJ5, SBJ11, SBJ12, SBJ16 and SBJ30) and a sub-group that does not (Spanish-speakers SBJ2, SBJ8, SBJ20 and SBJ28 and Italian-speakers SBJ1, SBJ8, SBJ9, SBJ10, SBJ14, SBJ15, SBJ18, SBJ19 and SBJ23). With the other learners, none of the two occurrences has been attested.

that proves most awkward in terms of the learner's phonetic utterance, is disambiguation of homophonous verbal forms which may pertain to the present indicative or present subjunctive, or to verbal forms where disambiguation depends solely on a morpheme. Such disambiguation proved especially tricky, in respect of the mutation task's mutation cores<sup>19</sup>. In the French control group, we checked that the mutation cores introduced by the conjunction *que-* included subjunctive forms (for example, « que monsieur Carlson n'impose pas » – i.e. *that Mr. Carlson not impose*), and have counted them as subjunctives in the Excel files used as *input* for statistical analyses on R. With the learners, whenever the present subjunctive and present indicative forms are homophonous and the mutation core at issue is introduced by *que-*, we counted them as subjunctives (for example, « je peux imaginer qu'elle refuse d'aller dîner avec son supérieur » (*I can see her refusing (that she might refuse) to dine with her superior*). Where both verbal tenses include a different morpheme, in terms of phonological utterance in French and that the learner's phonological utterance is unclear, we have classified made a personal judgement in classifying the verbal form<sup>20</sup>.

The quantitative outcomes presented throughout Chapters 5, 6 and 7 have been obtained through Welch's t-test and Pearson's *Chi-square test*. Both tests allowed us to verify the null hypothesis postulating equality between two coefficients or two data-items in a model. We have used Pearson's Chi-square test to conduct an experiment with the null hypothesis, relative to distribution of grammatical devices within a given group. For example, we used it with the Spanish control group to ascertain whether use of the subjunctive is significantly higher relative to other attested devices such as *if-* constructions or nominalisations. Bearing in mind that with the mutation task, we obtained a total of 90 answers by group (three modifications per speaker), Pearson's Chi-square test enabled us to ascertain whether the breakdown of the 90 values pertains to even-handed distribution. Tables of our result's chapters set out distribution of the different devices within a given group, each case corresponding to the P-value arising from comparison of two different devices<sup>21</sup>. Welch's t-test enabled us to compare

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**19** The notion of “mutation core” is linked to the *quaestio* of instruction 1 (mutation task, Cf. section 4.5). We share Klein and Stutterheim's idea (2006) that a text's function is characterised by the implicit question it answers. By mutation core, we refer to an information sequence charged with expressing the modification at issue. Each answer to the mutation task involves an informational core charged with conveying the modification (henceforth, mutation cores).

**20** An awkward case in this respect, concerns the second mutation core of Italian-speaking learner SBJ15, where the question involved disambiguating the present indicative « qu'elle n'obtient pas une promotion » (that she is not promoted) and the present subjunctive « qu'elle n'obtienne pas une promotion » (that she not be promoted). At the end of the day, we classified that form as a subjunctive, owing to the way it had been materialised phonologically.

**21** Cf. Tables 5.1 for French, 5.5 for Spanish, 5.9 for Italian, 6.1 for FFL by the Spanish-speaking group and 6.7 for FFL by the Italian-speaking group.

two unequal-variance samples, which is what happened with the *if*-constructions, where one finds a different absolute figure for each group (Cf. Tables 6.19 and 6.26 for a comparison between the French control group and Spanish- and Italian-speaking learners, respectively). We established a threshold of 0.001 to minimize statistical type I errors in the interpretation of our p-values. By setting this threshold we are accepting that there is a 0.1% probability of identifying an effect when actually there isn't one (i.e., incorrect rejection of a true null hypothesis).

## 4.7 Type of text

To identify the type of text on which our results rest, it is necessary to reflect upon our instructions' tasks. We share the view that a text's function is characterised by the implicit question to which it provides an answer (Klein and Stutterheim 2006). In the mutation task (instruction 1), that *Quaestio* is not a strictly narrative one, because the informer has not been asked to tell *what has occurred*<sup>22</sup>. Nor is it *stricto sensu* argumentative, since we have not asked the informer to tell *why such an occurrence (F<sub>1</sub>) took place*. The *Quaestio* put by the mutation task is to ascertain *what might been*. On the one hand, the stimulus that provides the interviewer's and speaker's background knowledge is a narrative text, that sets out a series of events (F<sub>1</sub>, F<sub>2</sub>...) in linear or chronological order<sup>23</sup>. And on the other, the events presented are causally linked (F<sub>1</sub> = Promotion, F<sub>2</sub> = Dinner, F<sub>3</sub> = Choice of dish). Again, instruction 1 includes, with the verb *éviter* (to avoid) a lexical element that conveys an impediment, a semantic notion that in general will have to do with causality (Reboul 2003, Wolff and Song 2003). The presence of a verb with causal connotations, the request for further argument in the instruction (i.e., "*tell me how your modifications might have prevented her death*") and overall, the stimulus' lexical repertoire<sup>24</sup> relate the mutation task's texts to an argumentative typology.

<sup>22</sup> Lenart and Perdue (2004) identify the *Quaestio* in a narrative plot as the implicit question *Qu'est-ce qui s'est passé pour p ensuite* (what happened then for *p*), where *p* represented the protagonist(s).

<sup>23</sup> In psychology, it has been shown that the commonest strategy deployed when dealing with a mutation task, involves suggesting modifications which restore the normal value of a variable (downhill changes), rather than introducing unlikely events or states of affairs (uphill changes, in Kahneman and Tversky terminology, 1982). In causal chains, the most mutable event – the one subject to the frequentest changes – is the one lying at the very beginning of the chain (Wells *et al.* 1987). For events where a causal relationship is lacking, the prevailing strategy involves cancelling the most recent event (Miller and Gunasegaram 1990).

<sup>24</sup> In the English version, one finds the causal conjunction *because*, the verb *to cause* (1st para.) and the consequential conjunction *so* (two occurrences in the 2nd para.).

It has been confirmed that a narrative task is significantly more readily perceived as easy, than one involving decision-making on the part of the speaker-participants (Gilabert 2007)<sup>25</sup>. This may be explained in terms of the underlying communication-intentions; to the extent that the narrative task's chronological structure determines the contents that may be communicated, unlike the case with a decision-making task. The mutation task's open nature distinguishes it from the narrative tasks heretofore used in view of obtaining data in relation to linear or chronological temporality. Gilabert *et al.* (2011) suggest that this quality of openness makes a decision-making task more cognitively demanding, since in responding, the speaker must become more deeply involved with the conceptualisation process. One should note here that the specific characteristics of the decision-making task on which Gilabert (2007) and Gilabert *et al.* (2011) base their results, resemble our mutation task. In both cases, the participants are being asked to come up with solutions: in the mutation task, the solutions are to prevent the main character's death, while in the decision-making task, the solutions are to prevent a fire from spreading.

The theory of mental spaces (Fauconnier 1984, 1996; Dancygier and Sweetser 1996, 2005) creates a framework within which one may better grasp the requirements for conceptualising a mutation task. Reporting *what might be* implies a comparison between a given space ( $M_0$ ) –in our methodology, presented by the stimulus in the form of a chronological narrative– and another space ( $M_1$ ), where the elements do not tally with one or more relations that have been explicitly specified in  $M_0$ . Within that framework, construction of the counterfactual space  $M_1$  would mean changing the conditions which structure the parent space  $M_0$ . The temporal framework, within which the mutation task's texts are situated, pertains to the past. Owing to the main character's death being irreversible, Wells and Gravanski's text (1989) cancels any potential interpretation relative to the occurrences obtained. As a result, the eventual propositional contents of the conditional constructions' antecedents (*if A*), is interpreted as being impossible to achieve. Here follows a description of that framework:

“(...) Irreality of the past affects a process located within an irretrievable past. At the point the speaker utters the statement, he knows either that the process cannot, at present, happen within the real world, or that it did not happen in the past”, Riegel *et al.* (2009, 558).

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**25** The decision-making task used by Gilabert (2007) and Gilabert *et al.* (2011) concerns counterfactualty. In that task, the stimulus is a drawing of a building partly engulfed in fire. The learner is asked to consider what steps to take, as though (s)he were commanding a firefighting brigade. (S)he is asked to describe the steps (s)he would take, in what order, and to justify her/his decisions relative to said order and steps.

## 4.8 Conclusion

This Chapter has been concerned with the problems that come up, whilst seeking a methodology designed to obtain counterfactual responses beyond *if*-constructions. We have referred to the methods used in previous studies in L1 and L2 acquisition (4.2), and proposed the questions underlying our research, along with the grammatical and macro-structural elements that will be covered in our analyses (4.3). We have also presented our study's participants, and their heterogeneity, insofar as their socio-linguistic characteristics are concerned (4.4), and the stimulus and instructions selected –based on psychological surveys– in view of obtaining counterfactual responses (4.5). We have, moreover, explained which software was used in coding the audio data and for statistical analyses, and have evoked certain problems that arose in transcribing the guided interviews (4.6). Special attention has been given to the mutation task's informative function, which may be seen as a crossroads for argumentative and narrative texts (4.7).



## 5 Results in L1 French, Spanish and Italian

In this chapter attention will be paid to the flexional features of the responses elicited. Five grammatical devices were found across the three languages analyzed: (a) verbal forms of the conditional, (b) indicative forms different from the conditional, (c) *if*-clauses, (d) subjunctive forms, and (e) nominalizations or non-inflected forms. For each grammatical device, examples are given in French (FR), Spanish (SP) and Italian (IT).

a. Verbal forms of the conditional:

(FR) Elle aurait pu choisir toute seule son plat

*She could have chosen her own dish*

(SP) Podría haber pedido las vieiras en lugar de los mejillones a la marinera

*She could have chosen the scallops rather than the mussels*

(IT) Avrebbe potuto guardare il menù per conto suo e ordinare da sola

*She could have taken a look at the menu and have ordered by herself*

b. Indicative verbal forms different from the conditional:

(FR) Karen est invitée par son patron [...] mais elle l'avertit qu'elle a une allergie et elle lui demande de choisir elle-même son plat

*Karen is invited by her boss [...] but she tells him that she has an allergy and she asks him if she can make her own choice*

(SP) Karen comió las vieiras, se empezó a sentir mal y en el propio restaurante había un médico que [...] la llevó directamente al hospital

*Karen ate the scallops and started feeling bad and right there in the restaurant there was a doctor that [...] drove her immediately to the hospital*

(IT) Karen viene soccorsa immediatamente dal capo e quindi lui è anche un medico e la sa salvare

*Karen is immediately aided by the boss and therefore he's also a doctor and knows how to save her*

c. *If*-clauses;

(FR) Si Karen n'avait pas eu de promotion, elle [ne] serait pas morte

*If Karen had not been promoted, she wouldn't have died*

(SP) Si no la hubieran ascendido no la hubieran invitado a cenar

*If she had not been promoted, she would have not been invited to diner*

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(IT) Se Karen avesse deciso di non partecipare alla cena [...] non sarebbe morta

*If Karen had decided not to take part to the diner [...] she would have not died*

d. Verbal forms of the subjunctive:

(FR) Bah, qu'il commande autre chose que les moules

*Ahm, he should order something other than the mussels*

(SP) Que el jefe hubiera pedido las vieiras en vez de los mejillones

*His boss should have ordered the scallops rather than the mussels*

(IT) Che il signor Carlson [...] chieda a Karen che cosa preferisce mangiare

*Mr. Carlson should have [...] asked Karen what dish she preferred to eat*

e. Nominalizations or non-inflected forms:

(FR) Le fait de ne pas manger des moules marinières

*The fact of not eating the mussels marinara*

(SP) La comunicación, por parte de Karen, de su enfermedad

*The report, by Karen, of her disease*

(IT) L'aver domandato al cameriere gli ingredienti del piatto

*Having asked the waiter the dish's ingredients*

Our results revealed that speakers of different languages encode counterfactuality by different devices. This was the case for French and Spanish. Chi-squared analyses within groups revealed that Spanish speakers privilege significantly the subjunctive mood (d) over the rest of grammatical devices,  $X^2(5, N = 90) = 118.75, p < .001$  (cf. Table 5.3). Conversely, French speakers privileged the combination of a past conditional and a modal marker (a) in a significant way over nominalizations (e),  $X^2(2, N = 90) = 18.193, p < .001$ , and other indicative forms different from the conditional (b),  $X^2(2, N = 90) = 13.265, p < .001$  (cf. Table 5.2). The lack of significant differences in the frequencies of French responses carrying the conditional tense, the subjunctive and *if*-clauses leads us to consider these devices as similarly salient in French counterfactuals,  $X^2(3, N = 90) = 7.491, p = 0.02$ . The distribution of the Italian responses revealed no significant differences between the five grammatical devices observed,  $X^2(5, N = 90) = 5.2778, p = 0.26$ .

**Table 5.1:** Distribution of grammatical devices in L1

	Conditional	Other indicatives	If- clauses	Subjunctive	Non-inflected forms	Total
French	33 36.6%	11 12.2%	19 21.1%	19 21.1%	8 8.8%	90
Spanish	3 3.3%	7 7.7%	10 11%	54 60%	16 17.7%	90
Italian	18 20%	24 26.6%	18 20%	17 18.8%	13 14.4%	90

**Table 5.2:** Significant differences within the French group

	Cond.	Other Ind.	If- clauses	Subj.	Non-inflected
Cond.	–	<b>0.0002*</b>	0.032	0.032	<b>1.99e-05*</b>
Other Ind.	<b>0.0002*</b>	–	0.161	0.161	0.627
If- clauses	0.032	0.161	–	1	0.036
Subj.	0.032	0.161	1	–	0.036
Non-inflected	<b>1.99e-05*</b>	0.627	0.036	0.036	–

**Table 5.3:** Significant differences within the Spanish group

	Cond.	Other Ind.	If- clauses	Subj.	Non-inflected
Cond.	–	0.329			0.003
Other Ind.	0.329	–			0.074
If- clauses			–	<b>2.149e-11*</b>	
Subj.			<b>2.149e-11*</b>	–	<b>1.54e-08*</b>
Non-inflected	0.003	0.074		<b>1.54e-08*</b>	–

## 5.1 Typological distance between languages

The frequencies of the formal devices encoding the mutation cores revealed no significant differences between French and Italian. However, Spanish proved to hold significant differences compared to French and Italian concerning (i) the higher use of the subjunctive in Spanish, and (ii) the higher use of the conditional in French and Italian. In addition, Spanish and Italian differed significantly at the frequencies of other indicative tenses different from the conditional. These demonstrated to be more frequently used in Italian counterfactual scenarios compared to Spanish.

**Table 5.4:** Significant differences between French and Spanish

	French	Spanish	T-test
Conditional	33	3	<b>1.41e-08*</b>
Other ind.	11	7	0.323
<i>If</i> -clauses	19	10	0.068
Subjunctive	19	54	<b>3.9e-08*</b>
Non-inflected	8	16	0.080

**Table 5.5:** Significant differences between Spanish and Italian

	Spanish	Italian	T-test
Conditional	3	18	<b>0.0004*</b>
Other ind.	7	24	<b>0.0007*</b>
<i>If</i> -clauses	10	18	0.101
Subjunctive	54	17	<b>4.49e-09*</b>
Non-inflected	16	13	0.545

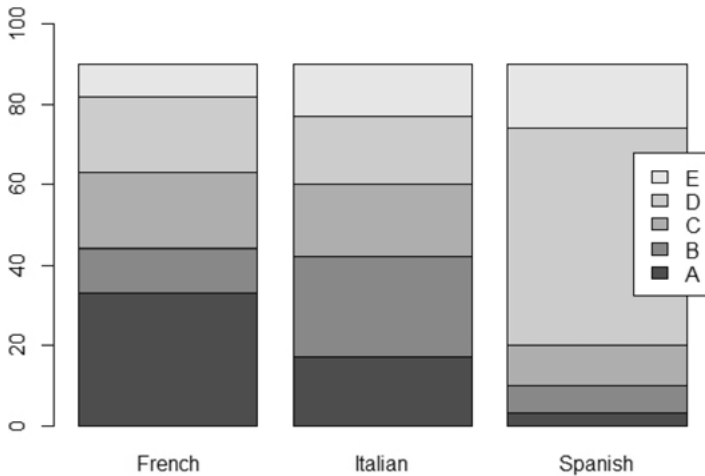

**Figure 5.1:** Distribution of the five grammatical devices across languages<sup>1</sup>

Figure 5.1 provides a visual representation of the distribution of these grammatical devices across French, Spanish and Italian. Among these languages, Spanish accounts for the highest number of counterfactual scenarios expressed

<sup>1</sup> A = Verbal forms of the conditional; B = Other indicative tenses; C = *If*-clauses; D = Verbal forms of the subjunctive; E = Nominalizations and non-inflected forms.

by nominalizations or non-inflected forms. Spanish is also the language in which verbal forms of a specific mood –i.e., the subjunctive– are produced in a massive way by speakers. At first sight, these observations might lead us to consider Spanish conceptualizations somehow polarized in counterfactual contexts. Our data suggest that Spanish speakers (i) have a relatively larger degree of freedom compared to French speakers when choosing between non-inflected responses and grammatical means, but (ii) whenever they go for the latter, their linguistic production is more predictable than their counterparts and they tend to opt for subjunctive forms.

## 5.2 Modal verbs across indicative tenses

Some of the occurrences accounting for the conditional tense in French, Spanish and Italian contained the modal verbs *pouvoir* / *poder* / *potere* (could) or *devoir* / *deber* / *dovere* (should). In these languages, modal verbs generally introduce the lexical verb responsible of the counterfactual modification. Within the French conditional responses (n = 33), only one occurrence was not marked by a modal verb.<sup>2</sup> In French, 28 conditional tenses were marked by the *pouvoir* past participle (equivalent form of the English *could*, cf. example (a)), and 4 occurrences by the *devoir* past participle (*should*), as in the example below:

Elle aurait dû demander au serveur la composition du plat

*She should have asked to the waiter the dish's ingredients*

A crucial difference between French and Spanish concerning modal verbs in our corpus had to do with the word-order of the verbal segment. In French, modals verbs were used as a past participle within the past conditional tense (n = 32, cf. example (a)), whereas in Spanish they were conjugated either to conditional tenses (n = 3) or to other indicative tenses (n = 5). The position of modal verbs within conditional tenses in Spanish varied from one speaker to another. In the first example below, the modal verb is a present conditional that introduces an infinitive periphrasis. Two occurrences of this sort were elicited in our corpus in Spanish. The second example replicates the position of modal verbs within the past conditional in French. Only one occurrence of this kind was elicited.

<sup>2</sup> Elle [n']aurait pas été promue donc elle [n']aurait pas eu l'honneur d'être invitée au restaurant; *She wouldn't have been promoted and thus, she wouldn't have had the privilege of being invited to the restaurant.*

Podría haber pedido las vieiras en lugar de los mejillones a la marinera

*He could have asked the scallops rather than the mussels*

Él también le habría podido preguntar qué es lo que quería tomar ella

*He also could have asked her what she preferred to take*

Beyond conditional sentences, modal verbs were also found in Spanish within the simple past ( $n = 4$ ) and the Spanish *imperfecto* ( $n = 1$ ). In the first example below, the modal verb *deber* (should) is conjugated to a simple past that introduces the mutation core's lexical verb (i.e., *preguntar* [to ask]) followed by a subordinated clause. In the second example, the modal verb *poder* (could) appears conjugated at the Spanish *imperfecto* and serves to introduce a periphrasis of infinitive whose main verb is again *preguntar* (to ask).

El señor Carlson debió preguntar qué prefería comer ella

*Mr. Carlson should have asked her what she wished to eat*

Carlson podía haber preguntado si los mejillones llevaban alcohol

*Carlson could have asked whether the mussels contained any alcohol*

In Italian, modal verbs were more frequently used combined with the conditional tense than with other indicative tenses. In all, 15 occurrences out of the 18 carrying a conditional tense were marked by a modal verb whereas 3 did not (e.g., *Sarebbe andata all'ospedale e sarebbe stata salvata*; *She would have gone to the hospital and would have been saved*). The position of the modal verbs within conditional tenses was, like in French, the past participle position (cf. example (a)). The past participle *potuto* (could) was elicited 14 times and *dovuto* (should) just once. Beyond the conditional tense, 24 other indicative tenses were elicited in Italian: 5 of them were combined with a modal verb and 19 were not (cf. example (b)). Unlike Spanish, the simple past was not targeted by Italian speakers to be marked with a modal verb. They always combined it with the Italian *imperfetto* as in the example below:

Poteva ordinare un'altra cosa

*[He] could ordered something else*

Table 5.6 resumes how modal verbs were spread out beyond conditional tenses in the three languages observed. According to our results, the French and Italian conditional tenses concentrated the highest frequencies of modal

verbs under the past participle form. Italian *imperfetto* was demonstrated to be sometimes marked by the modal verb *potere* (could). Unlikely, Spanish speakers were more inclined to use the modal *deber* (should) under simple past tense forms.

**Table 5.6:** Modal verbs across indicative mutation cores per language (n = 90)

	Conditional's past participle	Conditional introducing a periphrasis	Imparfait	Simple past	Total
French	32 35.5%	0	0	0	32 35.5%
Spanish	1 1.1%	2 2.2%	1 1.1%	4 4.4%	8 8.8%
Italian	15 16.6%	0	5 5.5%	0	20 22.2%

Chi-squared analyses were first run on the total of the modal verbs' occurrences per language (cf. Table 5.6, right column). Significant differences were found between French and Spanish ( $X^2(2, N = 90) = 17.400, p = 3.731e-05$ ). No significant differences were found between French and Italian ( $X^2(2, N = 90) = 1.7532, p = 0.185$ ), nor Italian and Spanish ( $X^2(2, N = 90) = 6.8626, p = 0.008$ ). In the aim of compare the word-order iconicity of the modal verbs, we run analyses on the figures accounting for the conditional's past participle (cf. Table 5.6, left column). We found no significant differences between French and Italian ( $X^2(2, N = 90) = 33.395, p = 7.521e-09$ ). However, we did find significant differences between French and Spanish ( $X^2(2, N = 90) = 6.8626, p = 0.008$ ), and between Spanish and Italian ( $X^2(2, N = 90) = 11.593, p = 0.0006$ ).

### 5.3 Morphological features within *if*- clauses in French

236 *if*- clauses were elicited in French from the 90 interviews made to the control group: 118 were simple sentences (*If P*) and 118 were subordinated sentences within conditional constructions (*If P (then) Q*). Indicative tenses were produced in 232 *if*- clauses (98%). In addition, we elicited one occurrence carrying the subjunctive (0.4%) and three carrying a conditional tense (1.2%). Below, some examples of the most frequent combination of tenses in the protase –i.e., the subordinated sentence– and the apodose –i.e., the main sentence–.

Si elle avait signalé qu'elle était allergique au vin, il aurait commandé autre chose pour elle

*If she had warned that she had a rare condition involving wine, he had ordered something else for her*

Si elle refuse sa promotion, elle ne va pas dans le sens de son patron donc ça peut brouiller leurs relations

*If she refuses her promotion, she does not fill her boss expectations therefore that could make their relationship difficult*

S'il [n']y avait pas du vin, si elle le savait, elle [ne] l'aurait pas mangé

*If there was no wine, if she knew it, she would have not ate*

Si elle a été promue dans son travail, c'est peut-être qu'enfin lui était satisfait de son travail et donc *a priori*, il y a pas vraiment de raisons [...] qu'il veuille s'en débarrasser

*If she has been promoted in her job, that's maybe that he was satisfied of her work and thus, there is no reasons [...] that he wished to fire her*

The examples above represent 87% over the 118 complex constructions elicited. All four examples carry an indicative tense other than the conditional in the subordinated clause: two of them are compounded tenses –i.e., the *plus-que-parfait* (first example) and the *passé composé* (fourth example)– and the others are the present tense (second example) and the *imparfait* (third example). As for the verbal forms of the main sentence, the past conditional was elicited following the *plus-que-parfait* (first example) and the *imparfait* (third example), whereas the present tense was elicited following the present indicative (second example) and the *passé composé* (fourth example).

The combination of the *plus-que-parfait* in the subordinated sentence and the past conditional in the main sentence (first example) was the most frequent with 78 occurrences (66%). The second most frequent combination was the present tense both in the protase and the apodosis (second example), with 16 occurrences (13%). Other less frequent combinations were the *imparfait* in the subordinated sentence followed by the past conditional in the main sentence (third example), with 6 occurrences (5%) and the *passé composé* in the subordinated sentence and the present tense in the main sentence (fourth example), with 4 occurrences (3%).

Table 5.9 revealed significant differences between the frequencies of the *if*-clauses produced in L1 French. The combination of an indicative tense in the subordinated clause with a conditional tense in the main clause (INDs+CONDm) is more frequently used than the other combinations observed (i.e., indicative



**Table 5.7:** Distribution of tenses within *if*-clauses in French<sup>3</sup>

	Present indicative	<i>Imparfait</i>	<i>Plus-que- parfait</i>	<i>Passé composé</i>	Present conditional	Past conditional
–		11 (4,5%)	107 (45%)			
Present indicative	16 (6,5%)	2 (0,8%)		4 (1,5%)		
<i>Imparfait</i>	1 (0,4%)	1 (0,4%)		1 (0,4%)		
<i>Passé composé</i>		2 (0,8%)				
<i>Plus-que-parfait</i>			2 (0,8%)			
Present conditional			1 (0,4%)		1 (0,4%)	
Past conditional	1 (0,4%)	6 (2,5%)	78 (33%)			2 (0,8%)

**Table 5.8:** Formal patterns across the *if*-clauses in French

Total	INDs+INDm	INDs+CONDm	CONDs+CONDm
118 (100%)	29 (24,5%)	86 (72,8%)	3 (2,5%)

tenses other than the conditional both in the main and subordinated clause [INDs+INDm], and conditional tenses in both the main and the subordinated clause [CONDs+CONDm]). Even between the latter patterns there is a statistical difference which confirms that the symmetrical conditional is significantly less used compared to other symmetrical indicative tenses different from the conditional. As for the grammatical description of the *if*-clauses' verbal system (cf. Chapter 2) the control group presents a standard morphology accordingly with the grammarians' canonical description.

**Table 5.9:** Statistical analyses between patterns in French *if*-clauses

	INDs+INDm	INDs+CONDm	CONDs+CONDm
INDs+INDm	–	3.033e-13**	2e-06*
INDs+CONDm	3.033e-13**	–	<2.2e-16**
CONDs+CONDm	2e-06*	<2.2e-16**	–

(P values resulting from the  $\chi^2$  test)

**3** Vertical axis contains the tenses produced in the main clause, and y-axis contains those produced in the subordinated clause.

Up to now, we have analyzed the verbal morphology of the 118 *if*-clauses presenting a main and a subordinated clause (*If P [then] Q*). Our subsequent analyses will account for the overall of the 236 *if*-clauses produced by the control group, from which 50% are not explicitly related to a main clause (*If P*). We have classified the *if*-clauses in three groups: standard, symmetrical indicative and symmetrical conditional. We have classified as *Standard* (i) simple *if*-clauses carrying an indicative tense different from the conditional (e.g., *Si seulement j'avais su qu'elle était malade*, If only I had knew that she was allergic) and (ii) compound *if*-clauses where the main verb is a conditional tense and the subordinated verb is any other indicative tense different from the conditional (e.g., *Si elle avait signalé qu'elle était allergique [...], il aurait commandé autre chose*, If she had talked about her condition [...], he would have ordered another thing). We have classified as symmetrical indicative the compound *if*-clauses carrying an indicative tense other than the conditional both in the main and the subordinated clause (e.g., *Si elle refuse sa promotion [...], ça peut brouiller leurs relations*, If she rejects her promotion [...], that can confuse their relationship). Under the label 'CONDS' we have classified (i) simple clauses carrying a conditional tense and (ii) compound *if*-clauses carrying a conditional tense in both the main and the subordinated clause (e.g., *Si son patron aurait choisi les coquilles [...], ça (n')aurait pas changé grand-chose*, If her boss would have chosen the scallops [...], it wouldn't have changed that much).

**Table 5.10:** Verbal morphology across the *if*-clauses in French

Total	Standard	Sym. Ind	CONDS
236	204	29	3
(100%)	(86,4%)	(12,2%)	(1,2%)

**Table 5.11:** Statistical analyses between patterns in French *if*-clauses

	Standard	Sym. Ind.	CONDS
Standard	–	<2.2e-16**	<2.2e-16**
Sym. Ind.	<2.2e-16**	–	4.71e-06**
CONDS	<2.2e-16**	4.71e-06**	–

(P values resulting from the  $X^2$  test)

Table 5.10 reveals the prominent use of the standard or canonical verbal morphology (INDs or INDs+CONDm), the supporting role of the symmetrical indicative (INDs+INDm) and the rare use of the conditional tense following the morpheme *if* in French (CONDS or CONDS+CONDm). Chi-square analyses revealed different uses for each of these patterns. Standard morphology was significantly more

frequently used compared to the symmetrical indicative and to the *if*-clauses carrying a conditional tense. In addition, the frequency of the conditional tense in the French segment *If P* is significantly lower compared to the frequency of the symmetrical indicative<sup>4</sup>.

## 5.4 Morphological features within *if*-clauses in Spanish

171 *if*-clauses were elicited in Spanish. 88 of them were simple clauses (51.4%) and 83 were compound (48.5%). The subjunctive mood was used in 156 Spanish *if*-clauses to introduce a non-factual condition, representing 91.2% over the total. We obtained 14 occurrences of indicative tenses other than the conditional marking the segment *If P* (8.1%) and only one occurrence of a conditional tense (0.5%). Here, some examples of the most frequent combinations of tenses in the main and the subordinated clauses:

Si el señor Carlson no hubiera pedido su comida, [ella] no se hubiera muerto

*If Mr. Carlson had not ordered her meal, [she] had not died*

Si hubieran pedido las vieiras pues habrían vuelto a casa tranquilamente

*If they had ordered the scallops, then [they] would have returned to home quietly*

Si su jefe hubiera elegido las vieiras eso mostraría que conoce a Karen fuera del trabajo

*If her boss had chosen the scallops, it would have meant that [he] knows Karen outside the professional sphere*

Si Karen dice que no tiene hambre [...] igual genera un poco de tensión entre los dos

*If Karen says that she is not hungry [...] she might originates a little tension between them*

The examples above cover 86.5% of the compound *if*-clauses produced in Spanish. The first three examples carry the pluperfect subjunctive right after the

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<sup>4</sup> The small frequency of the conditional tense in the *If P* segment is not coherent with Champaud's claim on its relatively growing use (1983). The higher use of the symmetrical indicative over the symmetrical conditional in our results can be explained because the university background of the control group and the academic context where the data were collected (the Faculty of Law, the Faculty of Humanities and the research Lab *Parole et Langage* at Aix-Marseille University).

conditional morpheme *si-* but they differ in the tenses used in the main clause, which are: the pluperfect subjunctive again in the case of the first example, the past conditional in the case of the second, and the present conditional in the case of the third. We elicited 34 occurrences containing the symmetrical pluperfect subjunctive (40.9% over the total of the Spanish compound *if* clauses), 16 occurrences combining the pluperfect subjunctive in the subordinated clause and the past conditional in the main clause (19.2%), and 16 occurrences combining the pluperfect subjunctive in the subordinated clause and the present conditional in the main clause (19.2%). As for the use of other indicative tenses other than the conditional, the most used combination was the present indicative both in the main and the subordinated clause (7.2%).

**Table 5.12:** Distribution of tenses within *if* clauses in Spanish<sup>5</sup>

	Present indicative	Imper- fecto	Simple past	Passé composé	Past conditional	Subjunctive imperfecto	Pluperfect subjunctive
-					1 (0,5%)		87 (50,8%)
Pres. IND	6 (3,5%)	1 (0,5%)		1 (0,5%)			
Imp. IND		2 (1,1%)	1 (0,5%)				
Simple past							1 (0,5%)
Pres. COND.	1 (0,5%)						16 (9,3%)
Past COND.							16 (9,3%)
Pluperf. SUB.	2 (1,1%)					2 (1,1%)	34 (19,8%)

**Table 5.13:** Formal patterns across the *if*-clauses in Spanish

Total	INDs+ INDm	INDs+ CONDm	INDs+ SUBm	SUBs+ CONDm	SUBs+ SUBm	SUBs+ INDm
83 (100%)	11 (13,2%)	1 (0,5%)	2 (2,4%)	32 (38,5%)	36 (43,3%)	1 (0,5%)

<sup>5</sup> Vertical axis contains the tenses produced in the main clause, and y-axis contains those produced in the subordinated clause.

The Table below<sup>6</sup> suggests that, at the level of the main clause, the frequencies of the conditional and the subjunctive are similar within those *if*-clauses initially marked by the subjunctive (SUBs+CONDm = SUBs+SUBm). Each of these combinations is significantly more used than the rest of the combinations elicited (INDs+INDm, INDs+CONDm, INDs+SUBm, SUBs+INDm). The latter combinations did not present significant differences when compared. As for the grammatical description of the hypothetical verbal system (Chapter 2), our Spanish speakers use the canonical pattern SUBs+CONDm as much as the pattern SUBs+SUBm, which appears to be common in oral Spanish varieties (Bosque & Demonte 1999) and related to local varieties, such as the spoken Spanish of Mexico (Wald 1993).

**Table 5.14:** Statistical analyses between patterns in Spanish *if*-clauses

	INDs INDm	INDs CONDm	INDs SUBm	SUBs CONDm	SUBs SUBm	SUBs INDm
INDs INDm	–	0.006	0.020	0.0003*	3.554e-05**	0.006
INDs CONDM	0.006	–	[1]	5.4e-09**	2.287e-10**	[1]
INDs SUBm	0.020	[1]	–	2.443e-08**	1.085e-09**	[1]
SUBs CONDM	0.0003*	5.4e-09**	2.443e-08**	–	0.635	5.4e-09**
SUBs SUBm	3.554e-05**	2.287e-10**	1.085e-09**	0.635	–	2.287e-10**
SUBs INDm	0.006	[1]	[1]	5.4e-09**	2.287e-10**	–

(*P* values resulting from the  $X^2$  test)

Up to now, we have analyzed the verbal morphology of the 88 *if*-clauses presenting a main and a subordinated clause (*If P [then] Q*). Our subsequent analyses will account for the overall of 171 *if*-clauses produced by Spanish speakers, from which 48.5% are not explicitly related to a main clause (*If P*). We have classified the *if*-clauses in four groups: standard, symmetrical indicative, conditional and others. We have classified as *Standard* (i) simple *if*-clauses carrying a subjunctive tense (e.g., *Si solamente me hubiese hablado de su enfermedad*, *If only she had told me about her condition*), (ii) compound *if*-clauses where the main verb is a conditional tense and the subordinated verb is a subjunctive (e.g., *Si hubieran pedido las vieiras, pues habrian vuelto a casa tranquilamente*, *If they had ordered the scallops, then [they] would have returned to home quietly*), and (iii) compound *if*-clauses carrying subjunctive tenses both in the main and the subordinated sentence (e.g., *Si el señor Carlson no hubiera pedido su comida, [ella] no se hubiera muerto*, *If Mr. Carlson had not ordered her meal, [she] had*

<sup>6</sup> Legend: IND = indicative, COND = conditional, SUB = subjunctive, s = subordinated clause, m = main clause.

not died). We have classified as symmetrical indicative the compound *if*-clauses carrying an indicative tense other than the conditional both in the main and the subordinated sentence (e.g., *Si Karen dice que no tiene hambre, igual genera un poco de tensión entre los dos*, If Karen says that she is not hungry [...] she might originate a little tension between them). Under the label ‘Cond’ we have classified those *if*-clauses where the antecedent *If P* is marked by a conditional tense (e.g., *Si solamente no habría elegido yo su plato*, If only I wouldn’t have chosen her dish). We have labeled as ‘Others’ the rest of patterns produced by Spanish speakers (INDs+CONDM, INDs+SUBm, SUBs+INDm), which accounted for a total of 4 occurrences.

**Table 5.15:** Verbal morphology across the *if*-clauses in Spanish

Total	Standard	Ind. Sym.	Cond.	Others
171	155	11	1	4
(100%)	(90,6%)	(6,4%)	(0,5%)	(2,3%)

**Table 5.16:** Statistical analyses between patterns in Spanish *if*-clauses

	Standard	Ind. Sym.	Cond.	Others
Standard	–	<2.2e-16**	<2.2e-16**	<2.2e-16**
Ind. Sym.	<2.2e-16**	–	0.008	0.113
Cond.	<2.2e-16**	0.008	–	[0.367]
Autres	<2.2e-16**	0.113	[0.367]	–

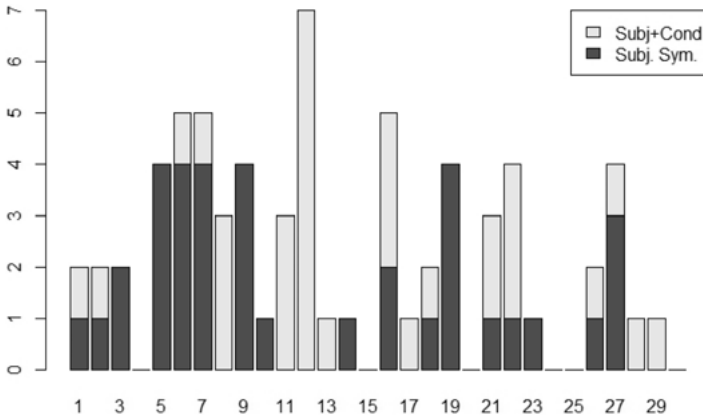
(*P* values resulting from the  $X^2$  test)

As showed in Table 5.16, standard verbal morphology is used significantly higher compared to the symmetrical indicative, the conditional tense marking the antecedent *If P*, and other subsidiary patterns. The frequencies of the symmetrical indicative and the conditional tense succeeding the Spanish morpheme *si*- do not hold significant differences. Figure 5.2 provides an additional insight to the standard morphology of the compound *if*-clauses in Spanish. More particularly, it shows the concurrent use of the Spanish subjunctive and the conditional tense at the level of the main sentence (SUBs+SUBm & SUBs+CONDM, respectively). Figure 5.2 shows that both patterns are used by 10 speakers<sup>7</sup>, whereas 7 speakers strictly used the pattern SUBs+CONDM<sup>8</sup>, and 6 speakers strictly used the pattern

<sup>7</sup> SBJ1, SBJ2, SBJ6, SBJ7, SBJ16, SBJ18, SBJ21, SBJ22, SBJ26, SBJ27.

<sup>8</sup> SBJ8, SBJ11, SBJ12, SBJ13, SBJ17, SBJ28, SBJ29.

SUBs+SUBm<sup>9</sup>. As said *supra*, the symmetrical subjunctive has been said to be a feature of the Spanish variety spoken in Mexico (Wald 1993). In order to test whether the preference between the subjunctive or the conditional in the main clause is related to the geographical provenance of our Spanish speaking participants, additional statistical analyses were run (cf. Table 5.17).



**Figure 5.2:** Subjunctive vs. conditional within the *if*-clauses' main sentence in Spanish

**Table 5.17:** Subjunctive vs. conditional depending on the speakers' geographical provenance

	American	Peninsular	t-test
SUBp+CONDa	5	27	0.0001*
SUBp+SUBa	19	17	0.036
t-test	0.0002*	0.044	

(P values resulting from the Welch t-test)

Results of Table 5.17 are calculated on a sample of 83 compounded *if*-clauses produced by native Spanish speakers (cf. Table 5.13). Figures of Table 5.17 refer to a subsample of 68 subjunctive *if*-clauses depending on a main sentence carrying either the conditional tense or a tense from the subjunctive. These sentences represented 81.9% of the compound sentences elicited in L1 Spanish. American Spanish-speakers produced 24 sentences of this kind from which 19 were marked by the symmetrical subjunctive. Peninsular Spanish-speakers produced 44 sentences of this kind from which 27 were marked by the pattern SUBs+CONDm. P-values of Table 5.17 are the results of comparing these two patterns within a larger set of patterns produced in L1 Spanish.

<sup>9</sup> SBJ3, SBJ5, SBJ9, SBJ10, SBJ14, SBJ19.

Results from the t-test analysis showed that the Latin American Spanish speakers and the Peninsular Spanish speakers behaved differently in what concerns the preference for one or another pattern. The former preferred to use the subjunctive tense again in the main clause (p-value = 0.0002), whether the latter proved a balanced use between the two patterns (p-value = 0.044).<sup>10</sup>

## 5.5 Morphological features within *if*- clauses in Italian

185 *if*- clauses were elicited in Italian: 80 were simple sentences (43%) and 105 were compound sentences (56%). Tenses from the subjunctive mood were produced in 163 antecedents introduced by the Italian morpheme *si-* (88%), whereas indicative tenses other than the conditional emerged in 21 occurrences (11%) and the conditional tense only once (0.5%). Here, some examples of the most frequent combinations along the main and the subordinated sentences:

Se lei non fosse stata promossa nella ditta non sarebbe mai invitata a cena dal direttore

*If she had not been promoted within the company [she] would have never been invited to dine by the boss*

Se Karen non ottiene la promozione quindi non nasce proprio nessun tipo di rapporto tra i due e non si va neanche a pranzo

*If Karen does not get the promotion then it does not exist any kind of bond between the two and they do not go out for a meal*

Se lei avesse scelto l'atro piatto non ci sarebbe nessun problema

*If she had chosen the other dish there would have had no problem at all*

These three examples cover 87% of the compound *if*- clauses produced by Italian speakers. The combination of the Italian *plus-que-parfait* in the antecedent and the past conditional in the main clause is the most frequent with 77 occurrences (73%). In addition, we elicited 8 occurrences carrying the present indicative in both the main and the subordinated clause (7%) and 6 occurrences carrying the Italian *plus-que-parfait* in the subordinated clause and the present conditional in the main sentence (5%). In Table 5.18, vertical axis contains the tenses

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**10** Results from Table 5.17 are to be taken cautiously because of statistical concerns. A t-test analysis can still be performed with unequal sample sizes, but the test's reliability is likely to decrease when one of the subsamples is equal or inferior to 10 cases. The elicitation of larger samples would help shed light on this particular.



produced in the main clause, and y-axis contains those produced in the subordinated clause.

Chi-square analyses revealed crucial differences between the Italian canonical pattern –i.e., in which the antecedent is marked by the subjunctive and the main clause is marked by a conditional tense (SUBs+CONDm), cf. Chapter 2– and the rest of patterns produced by Italian speakers. The canonical pattern is significantly more used than (i) indicative tenses other than the conditional in both the main clause and the subordinated clause (INDs+INDm), (ii) the combination of a conditional tense in the main clause and an indicative tense in the antecedent *If P* (INDs+CONDm), and (iii) the combination of an indicative tense in the main clause and a subjunctive in the antecedent (SUBs+INDm). The relatively small frequencies of these patterns suggest the non-prominent role of them in the counterfactual system within the Italian *if*-clauses.

**Table 5.18:** Distribution of tenses within *if*-clauses in Italian

	Present indicative	<i>Imparfait</i>	<i>Passé composé</i>	Past conditional	<i>Imparfait SUB</i>	Pluperfect SUB
–	1 (0,5%)			1 (0,5%)	1 (0,5%)	77 (41,6%)
Present indicative	8 (4,3%)	2 (1%)	1 (0,5%)			1 (0,5%)
<i>Imparfait</i>		2 (1%)				1 (0,5%)
<i>Passé composé</i>			1 (0,5%)			
Simple future			1 (0,5%)			
Present conditional		1 (0,5%)	1 (0,5%)			6 (3,2%)
Past conditional		2 (1%)				78 (42,1%)

**Table 5.19:** Formal patterns across the *if*-clauses in Italian

Total	INDs+INDm	INDs+CONDm	SUBs+INDm	SUBs+CONDm
105 (100%)	15 (14,2%)	4 (3,8%)	2 (1,9%)	84 (80%)

**Table 5.20:** Statistical analyses between patterns in Italian *if*-clauses

	INDs+INDm	INDs+CONDm	SUBs+INDm	SUBs+CONDm
INDs+INDm	–	0.016	0.002	<2.2e-16**
INDs+SUBm	0.016	–	[0.678]	<2.2e-16**
SUBs+INDm	0.002	[0.678]	–	<2.2e-16**
SUBs+CONDm	<2.2e-16**	<2.2e-16**	<2.2e-16**	–

(P values resulting from the  $\chi^2$  test)

Up to now, we have analyzed the verbal morphology of the 105 *if*-clauses presenting a main and a subordinated clause (*If P [then] Q*). Our subsequent analyses will account for the overall of 185 *if*-clauses produced by Italian speakers, from which 43.2% are not explicitly related to a main clause (*If P*). We have classified the *if*-clauses in four groups: standard, symmetrical indicative, conditional and others. We have classified as *Standard* (i) simple *if*-clauses carrying a subjunctive tense (e.g., *Se solo avesse saputo della malattia di Karen*, If only I had known about Karen's condition), and (ii) compound *if*-clauses where the main verb is a conditional tense and the subordinated verb is a subjunctive (e.g., *Se lei non fosse stata promossa [...], non sarebbe mai invitata a cena*, If she had not been promoted within the company [she] would have never been invited to dine). We have classified as symmetrical indicative the compound *if*-clauses carrying an indicative tense other than the conditional both in the main and the subordinated sentence (e.g., *Se Karen non ottiene la promozione [...], non si va neanche a pranzo*, If Karen does not get promoted [...] [they] do not go out for a meal). Under the label 'Cond' we have classified those *if*-clauses where the antecedent *If P* is marked by a conditional tense (e.g., *Se solo non avrei promosso Karen*, If only I wouldn't have promoted Karen). We have labeled as 'Others' the rest of patterns produced by Italian speakers (INDs+CONDm, SUBs+INDm), which accounted for 2 occurrences each.

**Table 5.21:** Verbal morphology across the *if*-clauses in Italian

Total	Standard	Ind. Sym.	Cond.	Others
185	162	17	2	4
(100%)	(87,5%)	(9,1%)	(1%)	(2,1%)

**Table 5.22:** Statistical analyses between patterns in Italian *if*-clauses

	Standard	Ind. Sym.	Cond.	Others
Standard	–	<2.2e-16**	<2.2e-16**	<2.2e-16**
Ind. Sym.	<2.2e-16**	–	0.0009*	0.007
Cond.	<2.2e-16**	0.0009*	–	0.680
Others	<2.2e-16**	0.007	0.680	–

(P values resulting from the  $\chi^2$  test)

Italian speakers used the standard verbal morphology more frequently in a significant way compared to (i) the conditional tense marking the antecedent *If P*, and (ii) to other non-prominent patterns. The frequency of the symmetrical indicative proved to be significantly higher compared to the frequency of conditional tenses within the subordinated clause.

## 5.6 Comparison between the *if*-clauses in French, Spanish and Italian

In prior sections we have described how native speakers of French, Spanish and Italian privilege different combinations of tenses for the compound *if*-clauses. Table 5.23 revealed significant differences between French and Spanish at this level. The marking INDs+CONDm seems to be a characteristic of the conditionality in French, whereas the Spanish fluctuates between the subjunctive and the conditional for those main sentences whose antecedent is marked by the subjunctive mood.

Symmetrical sentences carrying indicative tenses other than the conditional both in the main and the subordinated clause does not hold significant differences between French and Italian, although they don't seem to be prominent either. Table 5.24 shows that the crucial difference between French and Italian takes place for the *if*-clauses where the main sentence carries a conditional tense. Italian privileges the subjunctive mood to complete these sentences, whereas French privileges other indicative tenses different from the conditional. This result confirms the prominence of the canonical verbal morphology in the French and Italian samples we collected from native speakers.

**Table 5.23:** Comparison between the French and the Spanish *if*-clauses

	French	Spanish	$X^2$ test
INDs+INDm	29	11	0.071
INDs+CONDm	86	1	<2.2e-16**
INDs+SUBm	0	2	[0.321]
CONDs+CONDm	3	0	[0.393]
SUBs+INDm	0	1	[0.849]
SUBs+CONDm	0	32	8.065e-13**
SUBs+SUBm	0	36	1.266e-14**
Total	118/236	83/171	0.848

(P values resulting from the  $X^2$  test)

**Table 5.24:** Comparison between the French and the Italian *if* clauses

	French	Italian	$\chi^2$ test
INDs+INDm	29	15	0.078
INDs+CONDm	86	4	<2.2e-16**
CONDs+CONDm	3	0	[0.287]
SUBs+INDm	0	2	[0.426]
SUBs+CONDm	0	84	<2.2e-16**
Total	118/236	105/185	0.200

(P values resulting from the  $\chi^2$  test)

**Table 5.25:** Comparison between the Spanish and the Italian *if* clauses

	Spanish	Italian	$\chi^2$ test
INDs+INDm	11	15	1
INDs+CONDm	1	4	[0.518]
INDs+SUBm	2	0	[0.367]
SUBs+INDm	1	2	1
SUBs+CONDm	32	84	1.569e-08**
SUBs+SUBm	36	0	2.506e-13**
Total	83/171	105/185	0.148

(P values resulting from the  $\chi^2$  test)

The comparison between Spanish and Italian *if* clauses (Table 5.25) reveals a similar behavior between the native speakers of these Romance languages as for the frequencies of the symmetrical indicative in both the main and the subordinated clause. The two languages privilege the use of the subjunctive in the subordinated clause. However, the symmetrical subjunctive in both the main and the subordinated clause seems to be a feature characterizing only Spanish *if* clauses. The ambivalence between the conditional or the subjunctive in the Spanish hypothetical system is at the origins of the typological differences observed between Spanish and Italian.

Up to know the analysis of the French, Spanish and Italian *if* clauses has been based on patterns of tenses' combinations. In what follows, we classified the verbal morphology accordingly to the description of grammarians in each language (cf. Table 5.26 to Table 5.28). Obviously, the standard verbal morphology within French *if* clauses does not correspond to the tenses generally expected in standard Spanish *if* clauses. But still making comparisons based on grammatical concerns will allow us to test whether the native speakers participating in our survey are aligned in the use of standard verbal morphology.

**Table 5.26:** *If*-clauses' verbal morphology: Comparison between French and Spanish

	French	Spanish	Welch t-test
Standard	204	155	0.184
Symmetrical IND.	29	11	0.040
Conditional	3	1	0.463
Others	0	4	0.045
Total <i>if</i> -clauses	236	171	

(P values resulting from the Welch t-test)

**Table 5.27:** *If*-clauses' verbal morphology: Comparison between French and Italian

	French	Italian	Welch t-test
Standard	204	162	0.733
Symmetrical IND	29	17	0.305
Conditional	3	2	0.857
Others	0	4	0.045
Total <i>if</i> -clauses	236	185	

(P values resulting from the Welch t-test)

Welch t-test analyses did not revealed significant differences between French and Spanish at the level of the standard morphology<sup>11</sup>, nor for the symmetrical indicative, nor for the use of the conditional tense succeeding the morpheme *si*- (*if*-). No significant differences were found between the verbal morphology produced in French and Italian<sup>12</sup> across the *if*-clauses (Table 5.27), nor between Spanish and Italian<sup>13</sup> (Table 5.28).

**11** In Table 5.26, the Standard row designates different combination of tenses for French and Spanish. For the former, it accounts for the combination of a conditional tense in the main sentence and the *imparfait*, the present tense or the *plus-que-parfait* in the subordinated clause. For the latter, it accounts for the combination of a subjunctive tense in the subordinated sentence plus a conditional tense or another subjunctive tense in the main clause.

**12** In Table 5.27, the Standard row designates different combination of tenses for French and Italian. For the former, it accounts for the combination of a conditional tense in the main sentence and the *imparfait*, the present tense or the *plus-que-parfait* in the subordinated clause. For the latter, it accounts for the combination of a subjunctive tense in the subordinated sentence plus a conditional tense in the main clause.

**13** In Table 5.28, the Standard row designates different combination of tenses for Italian and Spanish. For the former, it accounts for the combination a subjunctive tense in the subordinated sentence plus a conditional tense in the main clause. For the latter, it accounts for the combination of a subjunctive tense in the subordinated sentence plus a conditional tense or another subjunctive tense in the main clause.

**Table 5.28:** *If*-clauses' verbal morphology: Comparison between Spanish and Italian

	Spanish	Italian	Welch t-test
Standard	155	162	0.352
Symmetrical IND	11	17	0.332
Conditional	1	2	0.605
Others	4	4	0.910
Total <i>if</i> -clauses	171	185	

(P values resulting from the Welch t-test)

The lack of significant differences concerning the grammatical description of the *if*-clauses elicited in French, Spanish and Italian confirms that the native speakers of these groups do behave similarly. Specifically, they tend to privilege standard verbal morphology over the symmetrical indicative combination, as well as over the substandard use of the conditional tense in the antecedent (*if P*).

## 5.7 Effects of sociolinguistic factors on the L1 production

Up to now, we have seen some features of French, Spanish and Italian related to (i) the grammatical devices expressing counterfactual mutation cores (section 5.1), (ii) modal verbs across indicative mutation cores (section 5.2), and (iii) morphology features of the conditional constructions *If P (then) Q* (sections 5.2 to 5.6). In the present section, we will take into account some sociolinguistic factors –e.g., participants' geographical provenance– in order to see whether they can explain inter-individual differences at the level of the L1 production.

### 5.7.1 Geographical provenance

Since our data collection was mainly carried in the French cities of Marseille and Aix-en-Provence, we proceeded to divide the French group in the aim of testing whether the Southeastern variety of French spoken at the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur region –henceforth, PACA– presented a particular distribution across the grammatical devices encoding counterfactual mutation cores. Subsequently, we carried statistical analyses between a subgroup of 17 Southeastern speakers and a subgroup of 13 French speakers coming from other regions. T-test analyses revealed an inferior use of subjunctive tenses by Southeastern speakers ( $p$ -value = 0.0001, cf. Table 5.29). The French participants coming from the PACA region used less frequently the subjunctive tense, compared to the rest of the group ( $p$ -value = 0.0001, cf. Table 5.29).

**Table 5.29:** Grammatical devices depending on the geographical provenance: French L1

	PACA	Others	T-test
Conditional	25	8	0.003
Indicative	4	7	0.170
<i>If</i> - clause	14	5	0.082
Subjunctive	3	16	0.0001*
Nominalizations	5	3	0.727
Total	51/90	39/90	

(P values resulting from the Welch t-test)

The division across the L1 Spanish speakers led us to compare a subgroup of 14 Latin American speakers and a subgroup of 16 speakers from Spain. No significant differences were found at the level of the grammatical devices encoding the counterfactual cores in Spanish L1.<sup>14</sup> As for the Italian L1 participants, we proceeded to compare the production of 15 Northern speakers –coming from Liguria, Lombardy, Venetia, Friuli, Toscana & Emilia-Romagna– with the production of the rest of the group –i.e., 15 speakers coming from Latium, Campania, Basilicata, Puglia, Calabria & Sicily. No significant differences were found between the Italian subgroups.

**Table 5.30:** Grammatical devices depending on the geographical provenance: Spanish L1

	American	Peninsular	T-test
Conditional	0	3	0.083
Indicative	3	4	0.834
<i>If</i> - clause	3	3	0.867
Subjunctive	25	33	0.369
Nominalizations	11	5	0.057
Total	42/90	48/90	

(P values resulting from the Welch t-test)

<sup>14</sup> Nonetheless, these subgroups hold a significant difference regarding the preferred tense within the Spanish conditional constructions' main clause (cf. Table 5.19). Spanish speakers from America privileged subjunctive tenses, whereas speakers from Spain privileged conditional tenses.

**Table 5.31:** Grammatical devices depending on the geographical provenance: Italian L1

	Northern	Others	T-test
Conditional	11	6	0.182
Indicative	10	15	0.244
<i>If</i> - clause	9	9	1
Subjunctive	12	5	0.060
Nominalizations	3	10	0.036
Total	45/90	45/90	

(P values resulting from the Welch t-test)

## 5.8 Conclusions

The results showed in the present Chapter are quantitative. They have been organized in different sections highlighting various ingredients of counterfactuality, like the use of modal verbs or the morphological preferences within *if*- clauses. For each particular feature, results in French, Spanish and Italian have been presented. Additionally, comparisons have been carried out between pairs of languages in the aim of testing the presence of significant differences between them and thus, to obtain a more precise picture for their typological distance. In the following paragraphs, we summarize the main results of Chapter 5.

### 5.8.1 Construction of counterfactual scenarios

The three languages observed present different preferences when talking about *what might have been*. The conditional tense plus a modal verb is more frequently used in French in a significant way compared to Spanish. The frequency of other indicative tenses different from the conditional is significantly higher in Italian compared to Spanish. Conversely, the subjunctive is more frequently used in Spanish, compared to French and Italian.

### 5.8.2 The use of modal verbs

Modal verbs frequently marked conditional tenses in both French and Italian. Unlikely, this was rarely the case in Spanish. Both French and Italian share a common pattern when combining the conditional tense and a modal verb: native speakers of these languages use more frequently *pouvoir* / *potere* (could) over *devoir* / *dovere* (should). Another similarity involves the prominent position of modal verbs within the past conditional, which is the past participle position (*pu* / *dû* in French, *potuto* / *dovuto* in Italian). This 'dedicated' position of a



modal element within the conditional tense is a critical difference between French and Italian, compared to Spanish.

### 5.8.3 Verbal morphology within *if*- clauses

The French system differs from the Spanish and the Italian systems at the level of the conditional construction's subordinated clause, for which the *plus-que-parfait* and the *imparfait* are prominently used. The specificity of the Spanish system holds in the ambivalence of conditional tenses and subjunctive tenses in the main clause. This ambivalence may have its origins in the salient use of the subjunctive by the Latin American speakers, whereas in the production of the speakers from Spain the use of the conditional tense and the subjunctive tense are balanced.

### 5.8.4 The effect of sociological factors in L1 productions

The participants' geographical provenance proved to be critical for the French speakers. Subjunctive tenses were less used to express counterfactual modifications by those speakers having been raised at the Southeastern region of Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur. Within the Spanish group, the symmetrical subjunctive within *if*- clauses was more frequently used by the Latin American speakers.

## 6 Results in L2 French

This chapter focuses on the L2 French responses of native-speaking Spanish and Italian. 90 mutation cores were elicited per group. As in the precedent Chapter, responses were classified in five grammatical devices: (a) verbal forms of the conditional, (b) indicative forms different from the conditional, (c) *if*-clauses, (d) subjunctive forms, and (e) nominalizations or non-inflected forms. For each grammatical device, examples will be given first in L2 French by the Spanish group (SP) followed by the Italian group (IT).

a. Verbal forms of the conditional:

(SP) Elle aurait pu avoir reçu un traitement à sa maladie  
*She could have had a medical treatment for her condition*

(IT) Monsieur Carlson, entre les deux assiettes qu'il voulait choisir, au lieu de choisir les moules il aurait choisi les coquilles Saint-Jacques  
*Mr. Carlson –confronted to the choice of the two dishes he had considered–, instead of choosing the mussels he would have rather chosen the scallops*

b. Indicative verbal forms different from the conditional:

(SP) Karen ne a pas morte parce qu'elle ne a mangé pas la sauce à base de vin de les moules parce que finalement elle a mangé poulet  
*Karen was not dead because she didn't eat the mussels' wine sauce because she finally ate some chicken*

(IT) Karen était avait entre-temps guérie de sa maladie  
*Karen had healed of her disease in the meantime*

c. *If*-clauses:

(SP) Si elle \*n'aurait été pas\* choisie pour un poste de supérieur elle [ne] serait pas allée au restaurant avec lui

*If she had not been chosen for a higher position, she would have not gone out with him to the restaurant*

(IT) Si Karen n'avait participé au dîner, parce que par exemple elle avait d'autres choses à faire, elle [ne] serait pas \*mort\*

*If Karen had not taken part to the diner because for example she had other things to do, she would have not died*

<https://doi.org/10.1515/9781501507786-007>

## d. Verbal forms of the subjunctive:

(SP) Qu'elle [ne] soit pas malade, qu'elle n'ait pas la maladie

*[That] She was not allergic she suffered not from that condition*

(IT) Que cette maladie ne soit pas caractérisée par le manque d'un enzyme [...] donc que la maladie [...] qu'elle n'ait pas cette typologie d'effet

*[That] That disease was not characterized by the lack of an enzyme [...] so that the disease [...] that she did not suffered from that condition*

## e. Nominalizations or non-inflected forms:

(SP) Prendre les coquilles au lieu des moules

*To choose the scallops rather than the mussels*

(IT) Renoncer aller dîner, bon, trouver un prétexte pour ne pas aller avec son chef

*To refuse going out to diner, well to find an excuse to not going out with her boss*

Our results revealed that Spanish and Italian speakers had different preferences in the L2 French devices used to encode counterfactuality. Within the Spanish group, conditional tenses (example (a)) were used more frequently in a significant way compared to the subjunctive's verbal forms ( $X^2(2, N = 90) = 14.187, p < .001$ ). Chi-squared analyses within the Italian group revealed a significant use of indicative tenses different from the conditional (b) over the rest of grammatical devices,  $X^2(5, N = 90) = 60.335, p < .001$  (cf. Table 6.3). As seen in Chapter 5, French control group privileged conditional tenses (a) in a significant way over nominalizations (e),  $X^2(2, N = 90) = 18.193, p < .001$ , and other indicative forms different from the conditional (b),  $X^2(2, N = 90) = 13.265, p < .001$  (cf. Table 5.2).<sup>1</sup>

**Table 6.1:** Distribution of grammatical devices in L1

	Conditional	Other indicatives	If-clauses	Subjunctive	Non-inflected forms	Total
French	33 36.6%	11 12.2%	19 21.1%	19 21.1%	8 8.8%	90
French by SP	28 31.1%	20 22.2%	20 22.2%	7 7.7%	15 16.6%	90
French by IT	17 18.8%	55 61.1%	10 11.1%	6 6.6%	2 2.2%	90

<sup>1</sup> The lack of significant differences in the frequencies of the control group's responses carrying the conditional tense, the subjunctive and *if*-clauses suggests that these devices are similarly used in French counterfactuals,  $X^2(3, N = 90) = 7.491, p = 0.02$ .

**Table 6.2:** Significant differences within the Spanish group

	Cond.	Other Ind.	<i>If</i> - clauses	Subj.	Non-inflected
Cond.	–	0.238	0.238	0.0001*	0.035
Other Ind.	0.238	–	1	0.012	0.451
<i>If</i> - clauses	0.238	1	–	0.012	0.451
Subj.	0.0001*	0.012	0.012	–	0.191
Non-inflected	0.035	0.451	0.451	0.191	–

The numeric convergence between the L2 French Spanish group and the control group regarding the use of conditional tenses deserves a subsequent qualitative analysis. In section 6.1 we will describe in detail how the conditional is used by the Spanish learners. Our analysis should clarify whether Spanish speakers combine it with modal verbs in a native-like manner. In Section 6.2 attention will be paid to the overuse of indicative tenses different from the conditional by native-Italian speakers in L2 French. Two explicative factors will be explored: the competence's level within the Italian group in L2 French and the stylistic preferences to express counterfactuality in Italian.

**Table 6.3:** Significant differences within the Italian group

	Cond.	Other Ind.	<i>If</i> - clauses	Subj.	Non-inflected
Cond.	–	1.809e-08**	0.210	0.025	0.0006
Other Ind.	1.809e-08**	–	8.62e-12**	4.076e-14**	<2.2e-16**
<i>If</i> - clauses	0.210	8.62e-12**	–	0.432	0.036
Subj.	0.025	4.076e-14**	0.432	–	[0.277]
Non-inflected	0.0006	<2.2e-16**	0.036	[0.277]	–

## 6.1 Comparison between the control group's production and L2 French by Spanish speakers

T-test analyses revealed no significant differences in the distribution of the grammatical devices of the control group and L2 French by Spanish speakers. However, specific analyses run on the modal verb frequencies proved the existence of critical differences between these groups. In the following paragraphs, we will describe in a qualitative way the combination of a modal verb with the conditional tense. From a formal viewpoint, this combination is highly coded in the control group. The French native-way of combining these elements consists of producing the modal verb in the past participle position within a past conditional. In L2 French, we elicited 9 occurrences replicating this pattern (cf. example (a)). Other combinations of these elements were produced in L2 French by Spanish speakers, as showed in the following examples:

Qu'elle aurait pu choisir son repas  
*[That] She could have chosen her meal*  
 Elle pourrait avoir commandé elle-même  
*She could have ordered by herself*

The first example above contains a native-like combination of the modalized past conditional but it is introduced by the relative pronoun *que*, which generally works as a supporting element of the subjunctive in French, as well as in Spanish. In all, 6 occurrences of this kind were elicited. The second example contains the modal verb *poder* (could) not in the past participle position but as a present conditional introducing an infinitive periphrasis. We obtained 2 occurrences of this sort. In addition, we also elicited some mutation cores carrying a past conditional non-marked by a modal verb (cf. example below). In the control group's production we only elicited one occurrence of this kind, but in the L2 French production by Spanish speakers we obtained 11 occurrences, all of them introduced by the relative pronoun *que*.

Que son supérieur aurait choisi les moules  
*[That] Her boss would have ordered the mussels*

Qualitatively, the conditional forms produced by Spanish speakers proved to be different from the native-like responses because either the addition or the absence of two features: the relative pronoun *que* (+) and the modal markers *pu / dû* (-).

**Table 6.4:** Formal features of the conditional tenses elicited per group

	Control group	L2 French
COND (Auxiliary) + PP (Modal)	32	9
COND (Auxiliary) + PP	1	0
<i>Que</i> + COND (Auxiliary) + PP (Modal)	0	6
<i>Que</i> + COND (Auxiliary) + PP	0	11
COND (Modal) + INF (Auxiliary) + PP	0	2

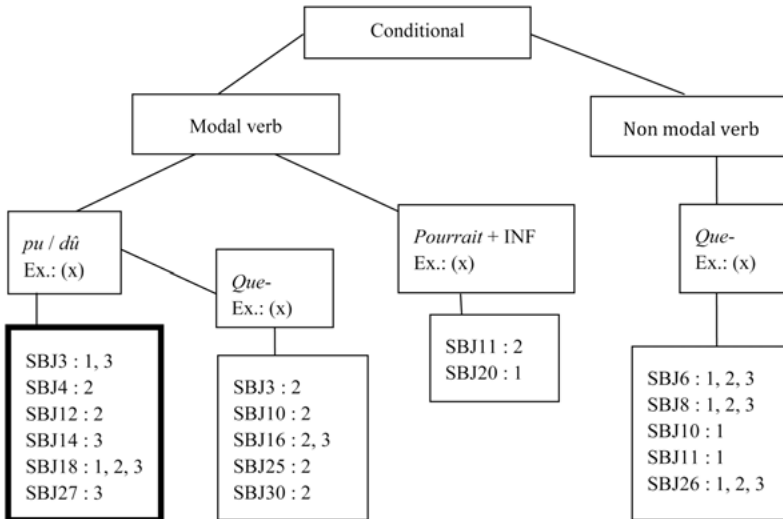
Table 6.4 offers a summary on the formal composition of the conditional tenses across groups to better understand the differences between them. In L2 French, the modal verbs in the past participle position were 15 and the conditional tenses introduced by *que*- were 17. As the relative pronoun *que*- was not a formal feature of the French natives' modalized conditional, we have set it apart in the subsequent chi-squared test analyses (cf. Table 6.5).

**Table 6.5:** Comparison of the modalized past conditional between groups

	Control group	L2 French	$\chi^2$ test
COND (Auxiliary) + PP (Modal)	32	9	9.236e-05*
Others	1	19	5.533e-05*
$\chi^2$ test	7.521e-09*	0.064	

Results shown in Table 6.5 come from analyses run on equal samples of 90 responses per group produced by native French speakers (control group) and by Spanish speakers in L2 French. Thus, p-values are the result of zooming within the 33 conditional tense' responses in L1 French and within the 28 conditional tense' responses in L2 French. Figures of Table 6.5 have been taken as proper grammatical devices –i.e., modalized conditional tenses and modal-free conditional tenses–, that have been related to a greater repertoire of grammatical means.

Table 6.5 offers a quantitative comparison of the modalized past conditional – i.e., Conditional (Auxiliary verb) + Past participle (Modal verb)–between groups. The  $\chi^2$  analyses revealed that (i) French natives associate more frequently the past participle as the position for modal verbs to being produced at, and that (ii) Spanish speakers introduce their conditional tenses differently compared to the control group (i.e., by means of the relative French pronoun *que-*). We will discuss these results in Chapter 8.



**Figure 6.1:** Summary on the uses of the conditional tense by Spanish speakers

In the Figure above, numbers from 1 to 3 refer to the response of each participant (SBJ) to the mutation task. The bold square corresponds to the most frequent response of the control group (i.e., 9 occurrences produced by 6 Spanish learners in L2 French).

### 6.1.1 The use of modal verbs in other indicative tenses different from the conditional

As for the use of other indicative tenses different from the conditional, three tenses were used by Spanish speakers to express counterfactuality in L2 French: the present indicative, the *imparfait* and the present perfect (the French *passé composé*, cf. example (b) at the beginning of the Chapter). Examples of the present indicative and the *imparfait* are given below. The frequencies of these tenses within the mutation cores in L2 French resulted to hold no significant differences compared to the control group's frequencies. In L2 French, 9 mutation cores carried the *passé composé*, 8 the present indicative and 3 the *imparfait*.<sup>2</sup>

Quand le serveur il est arrivé avec le plat, Karen elle dit « est-ce que vous avez utilisé quelque sauce avec du vin ou avec de l'alcool pour le cuisiner le plat? » et le serveur il dit « un moment, je vais demander » et après il revient et il dit « oui, en fait oui. »

*When the waiter has brought Karen's dish she says « have you used any wine's sauce or any alcohol to cook the dish?» and the waiter says “one moment, I'm gonna ask” and after he comes back and he says “yes, actually yes.”*

Elle était au courant, voilà, que... il y avait du vin voilà dans les moules  
*She was aware, yeah, that there was any alcohol in the mussels*

The macrostructure of the first example above is based on the use of the conjunction *et* (3 occurrences), 2 adverbs that aid to interpret the temporal sequence (*quand*, *après*), 3 direct speech segments (marked in the example by inverted commas) and 3 occurrences where the subject is followed by a clitic pronoun (*Karen*, *elle...* / *le serveur*, *il...*). These features make the fragment similar to linear or chronological narrations. Taken out of the context, a *naïve* reader could interpret it as factual. This is maybe why in the production of the control group the present indicative and the *passé composé* are significantly less used over the combination of a conditional tense and a modal verb. Like in L1 Spanish, in L2 French we elicited some modal verbs at the past participle position within the present perfect tense or *passé composé*. This use of the French modals *pu* / *dû*

<sup>2</sup> The control group's production accounted for 8 mutation cores carrying the present indicative and 3 the *passé composé*.

was not found in the control group's production. In all, we elicited 8 occurrences of this kind. For example:

Elle a dû parler à son patron, lui dire par exemple « j'ai une maladie, je [ne] peux pas boire de l'alcool. »

*She should have talked to her boss, say to him for example "I suffer from a rare condition, I can't drink any alcohol."*

In the Figure below, numbers from 1 to 3 refer to the response of each participant (SBJ) to the mutation task. The bold square corresponds to the most frequent response of the control group (i.e., one occurrence produced by one Spanish learner in L2 French).

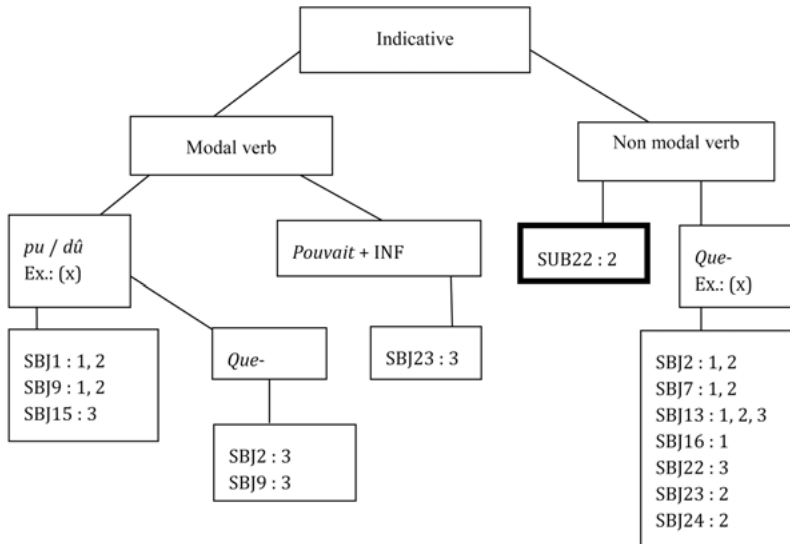


Figure 6.2: Summary on the uses of other indicative tenses by Spanish speakers

### 6.1.2 The use of the conditional tense within *if*- clauses

The conditional tense is sometimes used by the Spanish learners in a non-native way within *if*- clauses. 7 mutation cores carried a past conditional (e.g., *Si elle \*n'aurait été pas choisie pour un poste de supérieur, elle [ne] serait pas allée au restaurant avec lui*; If she \*wouldn't have been chosen for a higher position, she wouldn't have gone out with him to the restaurant), against 13 carrying other indicative tenses (e.g., *Si elle [n'] avait pas eu cette maladie, elle [ne] serait pas morte*; If she had not have this condition, she wouldn't have died). In French, the former use is considered ungrammatical, whereas the latter is not.



The 7 ungrammatical occurrences were produced by 5 learners. This subgroup of learners presents a mean regarding FFL studies of 2.1 years, which is inferior to the group's mean (5.6 years). The division of learners accordingly their geographical provenance and more particularly, their variety of Spanish –i.e., American *versus* Peninsular– did not reveal differences in what concerns the use of the conditional tense within the *if*-clauses' subordinate sentences in L2 French (p-value resulting from the Welch t-test = 0.58)<sup>3</sup>.

## 6.2 Comparison between the control group's production and L2 French by Italian speakers

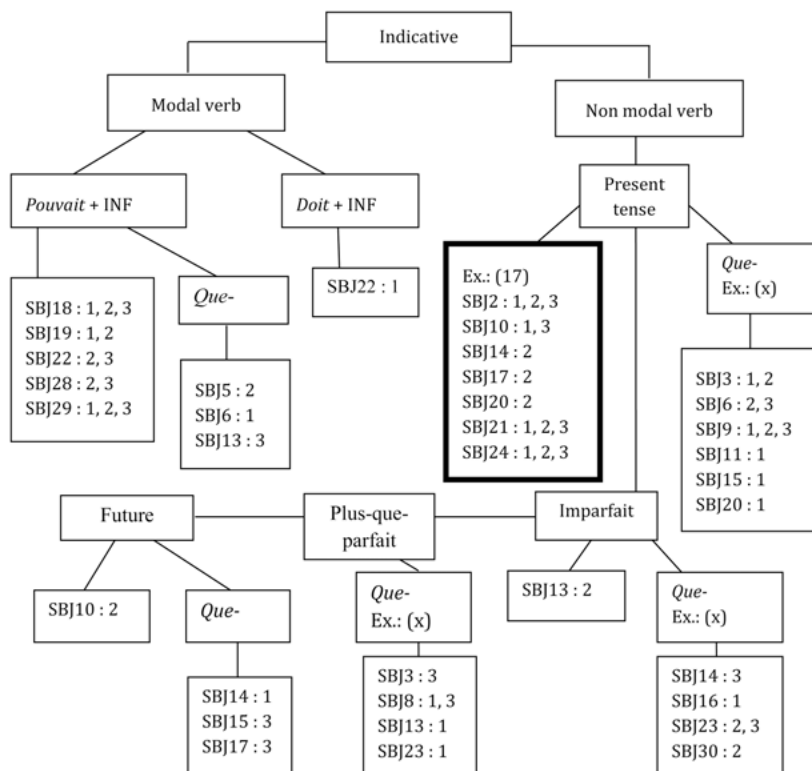
L2 French responses by Italian speakers presented an overuse of other indicative tenses different from the conditional, compared to the control group. This turned to be a significant difference between groups when running t-test analyses (cf. Table 6.6).

**Table 6.6:** Comparison between the control group and L2 French by Italian speakers

	French	L2 French	T-test
Conditional	33	17	0.007
Other ind.	11	55	6.168e-13*
<i>if</i> -clauses	19	10	0.068
Subjunctive	19	6	0.005
Non-inflected	8	2	0.051

As explained in Chapter 4, the Italian group was more homogeneous than the Spanish group in terms of immersion and FFL studies. Much of our Italian speakers had been lived in France for a period equal or less than 12 months. Could this result be linked to their L2 French level of competence? In order to answer this question, we analyzed qualitatively their responses to our second instruction; in which speakers were invited to tell us how the modifications they had made to the mutation task would have modified the relationship between Karen and Mr. Carlson. We will henceforth refer to this instruction as the predictive task.

<sup>3</sup> The replica of this analysis across the 224 *if*-clauses elicited from the entire guided interview in L2 French confirmed the lack of significant differences between the Spanish learners coming from America and Spain (p-value resulting from the Welch t-test = 0.814).



**Figure 6.3:** Summary on the uses of other indicative tenses by Italian speakers

The 55 occurrences of other indicative tenses different from the conditional were produced by 23 out of the total 30 Italian speakers in the mutation task. Figure 6.3 is a graphical representation of the distribution of these tenses across learners. Numbers from 1 to 3 refer to the response of each participant (SBJ) to the mutation task. The bold square corresponds to the most frequent response of the control group (i.e., 14 occurrences produced by 7 Italian learners in L2 French).

The overuse of indicative tenses other than the conditional in the mutation task was an unexpected result, so we decided to look at the productions of the 23 learners having produced them, now in the predictive task.<sup>4</sup> In the following

<sup>4</sup> What is henceforth called the predictive task are responses obtained from the second instruction of the guided interview (i.e., *Quels effets auraient eu vos modifications sur le rapport entre Karen et Carlson ?* What would have been the effects of your modifications on the relationship between Karen and Carlson?). The following results were published in a collective volume edited by Martin Howard and Pascale Leclercq: *Tense-Aspect-Modality in a Second Language, Contemporary perspectives* (2016), *Studies in Bilingualism* 50, 213-252. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

sections –from 6.2.1 to 6.2.3– we will switch to qualitative analyses in the aim of answer a question that could not be answered satisfactory by quantitative means. And this question is: What lies behind the overuse of indicative tenses other than the conditional in the Italian group of learners? In the predictive task, we distinguished three patterns across the French production of these 23 speakers:

- A subgroup of 10 speakers whose responses contained no conditional forms at all.<sup>5</sup> We will henceforth refer to this subgroup as pattern A. Examples of their production are given in the next section (cf. 6.2.1).
- A subgroup of 8 speakers whose responses were prominently encoded by the present indicative or the *imparfait* and only rarely marked by conditional forms.<sup>6</sup> We will henceforth refer to this subgroup as pattern B. Examples of their production are given in section 6.2.2.
- A subgroup of 5 speakers whose responses were prominently encoded by conditional forms.<sup>7</sup> We will henceforth refer to this subgroup as pattern C. Examples of their production are given under in section 6.2.3.

### 6.2.1 Present tense

A subgroup of eight speakers responded only by means of the present tense (subjects 6, 9, 10, 14, 15, 17, 18, 24). From this subgroup of speakers, we identified 99 verbal forms of the present tense. We observed two syntactic patterns in which the speakers structured their discourse: by coordinated clauses linked by copulative and adversative conjunctions as in (f), and by *if*-clauses which allowed the speaker to frame his/her discourse in relation to a specific situation or context as in (g). For instance:

- (f) 1. \*SBJ: *alors peut-être qu'il passe une bonne soirée.*  
So maybe he is having a good evening.
2. \*SBJ: *mais alors monsieur Carlson veut la ramener à la maison.*  
But then Mr. Carlson wants to give her a lift.
3. \*SBJ: *et ils discutent sur la promotion de Karen.*  
And they discuss on Karen's promotion.

<sup>5</sup> Subjects 6, 9, 10, 14, 15, 17, 18, 24, 28, 29.

<sup>6</sup> Subjects 2, 5, 8, 13, 19, 20, 21, 22.

<sup>7</sup> Subjects 3, 11, 16, 23, 30.

4. \*SBJ: *Karen **est** très heureuse de ça et très contente.*

Karen is very happy about it and very glad.

5. \*SBJ: ***et remercie** beaucoup son supérieur.*

And she's very thankful to her boss.

6. \*SBJ: ***mais** monsieur Carlson à un certain point.*

But at some point Mr. Carlson.

7. \*SBJ: ***peut** lui donner l'impression que cette promotion.*

May give her the impression that her promotion.

8. \*SBJ: *il **faut** se la gagner.*

She has to earn it.

[SBJ9]

- (g) 1. \*SBJ: *et sinon **si** le dîner il **va continuer** bien.*

And otherwise, if the dinner will continue.

2. \*SBJ: *elle **va manger** les coquilles de Saint Jacques.*

She's going to eat the scallops Saint-Jacques.

3. \*SBJ: *et rien **va arriver**.*

And nothing is going to happen.

4. \*SBJ: ***peut-être** aussi que elle **va tomber** amoureuse.*

Maybe she's also going to fall in love.

5. \*SBJ: *du monsieur Carlson on sait jamais.*

With Mr. Carlson, you never know.

[SBJ14]

Four speakers, subjects 9, 10, 17 and 18, responded to the predictive task using several present tense forms as in example (f). Their responses were marked by the modal adverb *peut-être* (maybe) and structured in coordinated clauses by means of the conjunctions *et* (and) and *mais* (but). Direct speech was used by speakers 10 and 17 to retell fictional conversations between the characters of the stimulus (*Elle dit mais tu voulais me tuer ou pas ? Eh non, il dit, non mais moi j'avais complètement oublié.* She says but you wanted to kill me or what? Ah no, he says, but I had completely forgot).

Slightly more than one third of the 99 occurrences elicited in the present tense was composed of the periphrastic verb form 'Aller + Infinitive' which is usually used as a periphrastic form to express futurity (lines 2-3-4 of the example above). This kind of response is based on the present tense of the verb *Aller* (go)

followed by an infinitive. Overall, seven speakers<sup>8</sup> produced 36 occurrences of this structure in the predictive task: 29 were composed of the 3rd person singular form *va* + infinitive; 4 tokens of the 3rd person plural form *vont* + infinitive; and 3 tokens of the 1st person singular form *vais* + infinitive. The semantic role played by the periphrastic future ‘*Aller* + Infinitive’ in example (g) is equivalent to the conditional tense. This is because it is used by the speaker to encode the posteriority of a process whose actualization is suspended. In example (g), ‘*Aller* + Infinitive’ could be replaced by the conditional tense without modifying the meaning of what has been said (i.e., *si le diner continuait bien, elle **mangerait** les coquilles [...] et rien n’**arriverait**, peut-être aussi qu’elle **tomberait** amoureuse*, if the dinner continued, she would eat the scallops [...] and nothing would happen, maybe she would fall in love). The function of ‘*Aller* + Infinitive’ is traditionally related to the expression of a proximal future or future progressive. However, the forms elicited in our corpus do not indicate any kind of ulterior actualization but instead are used to express a counterfactual state-of-affairs.

Table 6.7 reveals that ‘*Aller* + Infinitive’ is more prominent than bare present tense forms in the grammars of subject 6 and subject 14. It also suggests that subject 15 and subject 18 use both devices equally, whereas bare present tense forms seem to be preferred by subjects 9, 10 and 17<sup>9</sup>.

**Table 6.7:** Distribution of the present tense and *Aller* + Infinitive across the subgroup A

	SBJ6	SBJ9	SBJ10	SBJ14	SBJ15	SBJ17	SBJ18	SBJ24	Total
Present	4	15	15	3	3	12	9	2	63
<i>Aller</i> +Inf.	10	1	3	8	3	5	6	0	36
	14	16	18	11	6	17	15	2	99

A further frequent present tense form used is *c’est* (it is). In L2 French, this form is used by beginner learners as a lexical marker to compensate for the lack of more elaborated markers of time, like inflectional verbal morphology. We decided to look at the production of this form with the intention of collecting additional data on each speaker’s production. A total of 28 occurrences was elicited in the predictive task from eight different speakers from pattern A (subjects 6, 10, 14, 15, 17, 18, 24 and 29). In particular, subjects 6, 10, 14, 15, 17 and 18 produced four occurrences each. For example:

<sup>8</sup> Subjects 6, 9, 10, 14, 15, 17, 18.

<sup>9</sup> The brief production of subject 24 in the predictability task – with only two verbal forms elicited – does not allow us to make any general consideration.

- (h) 1. \*SBJ: *alors la dernière [modification] que j'ai dit c'est pas de promotion.*  
 Ok, so the last one that I said it's no promotion.
2. \*SBJ: *c'est rien qui change.*  
 It's nothing that changes.
3. \*SBJ: *si c'est elle qui reste assistante à l'édition.*  
 If it's her who keeps working as assistant editor. [SBJ14]

Note that example (h) can be paraphrased by replacing *c'est* (it is) by more sophisticated temporal markers. For example: *Alors la dernière [modification] que j'ai dit, il n'y aurait pas eu de promotion, il n'y aurait eu rien qui change si c'était elle qui restait assistante à l'édition* (Ok, so the last one that I said, **it would have had** no promotion, no change **would have happened** if she **had kept** her position as an assistant editor). Here, we have replaced *c'est* at the 1st and 2nd lines by two impersonal verbal forms of the past conditional and the one of the 3rd line by a form of the indicative *imparfait*, in line with the canonical verbal morphology of French *if*-clauses. The use of *c'est* enables the production of non-conjugated predication and, at the same time, a fluency gain (Bartning 1997). Evidence has been given about the non-native use of *c'est* (it is) instead of *il y a* (there is), and about its combination with an adjective or a noun phrase, which often leads to ambiguous referential meanings (Bartning 1997:35). This author explains the overuse of *c'est* by her Swedish non-advanced learners as a strategy of avoiding complex verbal inflections. The data on which Bartning (1997) based her results come from guided interviews to university learners who had completed between one to 4 semesters of FFL studies and had lived in France between one to 18 months.

### 6.2.2 Rare use of the conditional

A subgroup of eight speakers responded to the predictive task using mainly indicative tenses semantically anchored to factuality, although the conditional tense was occasionally elicited as well (subjects 2, 5, 8, 13, 19, 20, 12, 22). This subgroup produced 12 forms of the conditional expressing a counterfactual event or state-of-affairs and 52 verbal forms which included 24 occurrences of the present, 25 occurrences of the *imparfait*, 2 of the *passé composé* and one of the inflected future. The asymmetrical use of the conditional compared to other indicative tenses creates an imbalance in which the foregrounded information is often expressed both by canonical and non-canonical devices. For example:

- (i) 1. \*SBJ: *alors bon dans le cas où.*  
So, in the case where.
2. \*SBJ: *au cas où Karen ne.*  
In the case that she doesn't.
3. \*SBJ: **refuse** *le rendez-vous.*  
She refuses to meet him.
4. \*SBJ: *parce qu'elle craint recevoir des avances.*  
Because she fears to be overwhelmed by his advances.
5. \*SBJ: *peut-être monsieur Carlson commence à se comporter.*  
Maybe Mr. Carlson begins to behave.
6. \*SBJ: *de façon un peu agressive au boulot.*  
A bit aggressively at work.
7. \*SBJ: *à lui faire du mobbing [...].*  
And she's bullied by him.
8. \*SBJ: *au cas où le monsieur Carlson choisit un plat différent.*  
In the case that Mr. Carlson orders a different dish.
9. \*SBJ: *tout simplement il y aurait pas des gros changements je crois.*  
Simply, it wouldn't have great changes I think.
10. \*SBJ: *sauf si Karen est vraiment dégoûtée par les coquilles Saint-Jacques.*  
Unless if Karen is really upset because of the scallops Saint-Jacques.

[SBJ21]

The example above contains two counterfactual scenarios, one in which Mr. Carlson would begin to behave aggressively (5th line) and another in which no noticeable effects would happen (9th line). However, the former is expressed by the present tense and the latter by the conditional tense. In the example below, the speaker uses both the conditional tense and the *imparfait* to assess two different scenarios different from the factual world (5th and 8th lines, respectively).

- (j) 1. \*SBJ: *le fait qu'elle avait une rare maladie héréditaire.*  
The fact that she had a rare hereditary disease.
2. \*SBJ: *si elle n'avait pas eu une rare maladie héréditaire eh.*  
If she had not had a rare hereditary disease ahm.

3. \*SBJ: *ok si elle n'aurait pas eu sa promotion dans son travail.*  
Ok, if she would not have had her promotion at work.
4. \*SBJ: *le rapport entre Karen et son supérieur.*  
Maybe would have remained as it was before the promotion.
5. \*SBJ: *peut être serait resté le même qu'avant la promotion.*  
Maybe would have remained as it was before the promotion.
6. \*SBJ: *la deuxième [conséquence] c'est que.*  
The second [effect] is that.
7. \*SBJ: *si elle n'avait pas la rare maladie héréditaire.*  
If she didn't have the rare hereditary disease.
8. \*SBJ: *le rapport c'était le même.*  
The relationship was the same. [SBJ]8

In the example above, the verbal morphology of the *if*-clauses elicited does not seem to be stable. In the second line, the speaker produces the *plus-que-parfait* (pluperfect) in the subordinate clause, which is the canonical tense in French. In the third line, however, the speaker seems to correct herself when she uses the conditional tense.

Table 6.8 summarizes the frequencies of the conditional tense and the other indicative tenses observed. Within the latter, the present indicative clearly dominates in the productions of subjects 2, 20 and 21, whereas the *imparfait* characterizes the responses of subjects 5, 8 and 19. These two preferences have been highlighted *supra* in examples (i) and (j). The short production of subject 22 differs from the rest of the subgroup and thus, does not provide a clear picture of the speaker's verbal system.

**Table 6.8:** Distribution of the conditional tense across the subgroup B

	SBJ2	SBJ5	SBJ8	SBJ13	SBJ19	SBJ20	SBJ21	SBJ22	Total
Conditional	1	2	2	2	1	2	1	1	12
Other forms	8	7	10	4	6	9	7	1	50
	9	9	12	6	7	11	8	2	64

### 6.2.3 Frequent use of the conditional

In contrast to these speakers who use the conditional minimally, a subgroup of five speakers responded to the predictability task using mainly the conditional



tense (subjects 3, 11, 16, 23, 30). This subgroup produced 34 forms of the conditional expressing a counterfactual event or state-of-affairs. Unlike the subgroup presented in section 7.1.1, the speakers producing conditional tenses in the prediction task showed a repertoire of *if*-clauses coherent with the canonical description of the verbal morphology (i.e., the *plus-que-parfait* in the subordinate clause and the past conditional in the main clause), as exemplified in the following speakers' productions.

- (k) 1. \*SBJ: *elle **serait** pas morte.*  
She would not be dead.
2. \*SBJ: *Carlson **aurait pu** avoir son employée le lendemain.*  
Carlson might have had his employee the day after.
3. \*SBJ: *elle **aurait savouré** le repas.*  
She would have enjoyed the meal. [SBJ16]
- (l) 1. \*SBJ: *alors si Karen avait décidée de ne pas manger.*  
So if Karen had decided not to eat.
2. \*SBJ: *les moules que son chef avait commandées pour elle.*  
The mussels that her boss had ordered for her.
3. \*SBJ: *il y **aurait eu** une situation un quelque peu embarrassant.*  
There would have been a bit of an embarrassing situation.
4. \*SBJ: *entre son- le chef et Karen.*  
Between her- the boss and Karen.
5. \*SBJ: *parce qu'il **aurait pu** considérer cela comme un manque de respect.*  
Because he might have considered this like a lack of respect. [SBJ3]

While example (k) directly answers the *Quaestio* of the predictability task, example (l) contains two information levels. The subordinate clause introduced by the conjunction *if*- is used to situate the counterfactual scenario within a particular set of conditions different from  $W_0$  (1st and 2nd lines) and thus, it can be considered as background information. In contrast, we consider the content of the 3rd and 5th lines as foreground information. Firstly, the hypothesis of an embarrassing situation between Karen and Carlson adds new information to the background shared by the speaker and the interviewer. Secondly, the lines mentioned are the only segments that properly satisfy the interviewer's request

(i.e., the possible effects of Karen's survival). Table 6.9 presents the differences between the conditional tense, on the one hand, and the *imparfait* and the *plus-que-parfait*, on the other hand, for each of the five speakers.

**Table 6.9:** Distribution of the conditional tense across the subgroup C

	SBJ3	SBJ11	SBJ16	SBJ23	SBJ30	Total
Conditional	12	6	3	7	6	34
<i>Imparfait</i> or <i>PQP</i>	2	1	0	2	3	8
	14	7	3	9	9	42

Note that the frequencies of conditional forms are higher than the sum of those of the *imparfait* and the *plus-que-parfait* in each one of the speaker productions. This allows the speaker to construct counterfactual retellings in which foreground information – encoded by conditional tenses – is dominant, and which may be supported by comments and background information expressed by the *imparfait* and the *plus-que-parfait*. As shown in example (1), the *imparfait* and the *plus-que-parfait* were used to relate the counterfactual scenario to a specific point in the background information shared by speaker and the interviewer.

#### 6.2.4 Summary of the Italian speakers' patterns

So far, our analyses have revealed three distinctive patterns behind the overuse of the present tense and the *imparfait* in counterfactual contexts. The absence of any form of the conditional tense was a common feature for ten speakers (subjects 6, 9, 10, 14, 15, 17, 18, 24, 28, 29). The rest of the speakers produced at least one or more forms of the conditional. However, the use of the conditional tense was asymmetrical, being infrequent in the grammars of eight speakers (2, 5, 8, 13, 19, 20, 21, 22) and dominant in the grammars of five speakers (subjects 3, 11, 16, 23, 30).

Figure 6.4 illustrates the three distinctive patterns in relation to the sociolinguistic traits of each of the 23 speakers: immersion and instruction in French. We use the letter A to distinguish the group of speakers who did not use any form of the conditional from the group of speakers who used the conditional tense poorly (B) and the group who used it frequently (C). Figure 6.4 illustrates 20 graphical points that cover 23 speech productions in the predictability task. This is because three pairs of speakers shared the same values on both the duration of immersion and the amount of FFL studies (pairs 6 & 10, 15 & 17, and 24 & 29). The grammars of these six speakers lacked any form of the conditional tense

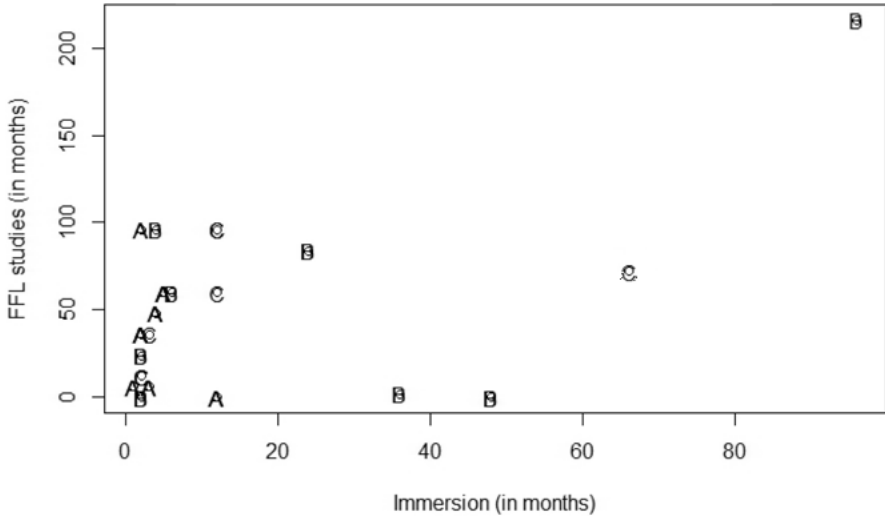


Figure 6.4: Verbal repertoire of the speakers in the predictive task

(pattern A). At first sight, Figure 6.4 reveals a left-down area covering the productions of all speakers from pattern A. The maximum values of this subgroup are 100 months of FFL studies (8.3 years) and 20 months of immersion (1.6 years). We will discuss the impact of these variables in the use of the conditional tense while the Discussion (cf. sections 7.2.1 and 7.2.2).

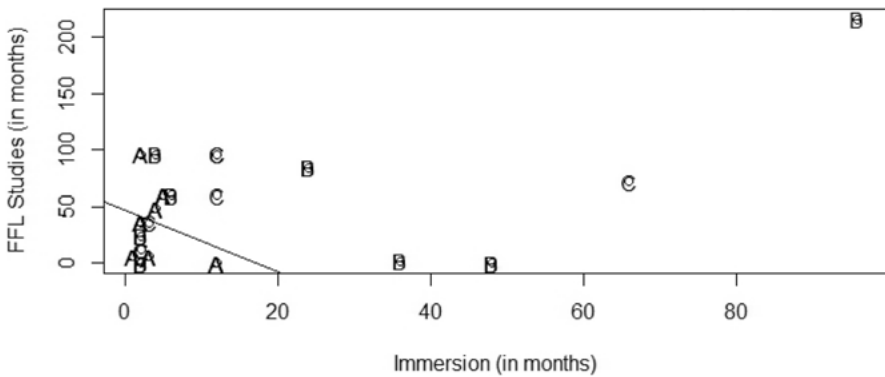
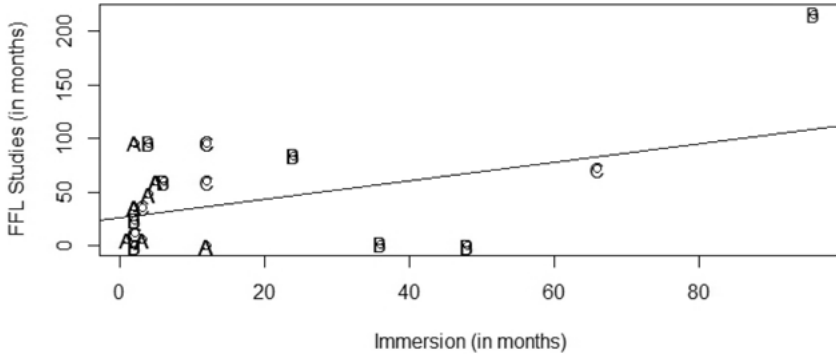
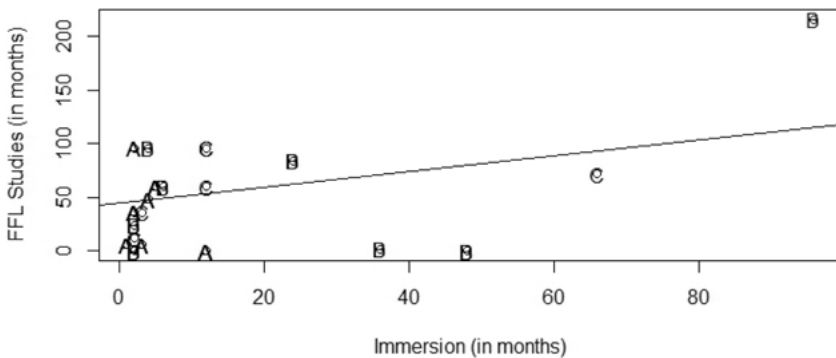


Figure 6.5: Linear regression calculated on the sociolinguistic variables of speakers A



**Figure 6.6:** Linear regression calculated on the sociolinguistic variables of speakers B

Figures 6.5 to 6.7 show how the time of FFL studies and immersion affect the type of response produced in the predictability task. The decreasing line of Figure 6.5 predicts that the features described in pattern A are likely to be abandoned by learners beyond a certain time. Conversely, the increasing lines of Figure 6.5 and 6.6 predict that the features described in patterns B and C are more likely to be used by those learners presenting higher levels of FFL studies and immersion.



**Figure 6.7:** Linear regression calculated on the sociolinguistic variables of speakers C

**Table 6.10:** Pattern A: Mean on sociolinguistic variables (in months) and standard deviation

	Time of FFL studies	Time of immersion
Mean's group	34.8 (2.9 years)	4.8
Standard deviation	32.1	4

**Table 6.11:** Pattern B: Mean on sociolinguistic variables (in months) and standard deviation

	Time of FFL studies	Time of immersion
Mean's group	60.2 (5 years)	27.2 (2.3 years)
Standard deviation	73.7	32.7

Tables 6.10 to 6.12 summarize the mean of FFL studies and immersion per subgroup. The speakers whom production has been classified as pattern A are a compact group in what concerns the immersion variable presenting an average of 4.8 months. Unlikely, the subgroups B and C have a greater variability although both of them present an immersion's average that goes beyond 1 year. As for the time of FFL studies, again subgroup A is a more compact set than subgroups B and C. The former has an average of 2.9 years, whereas any of the later presents an average higher than 4 years.

**Table 6.12:** Pattern C: Mean on sociolinguistic variables (in months) and standard deviation

	Time of FFL studies	Time of immersion
Mean's group	55.2 (4.6 years)	19 (1.6 years)
Standard deviation	32.4	26.7

### 6.2.5 Results in L1 Italian in the predictive task

Unlike the L1 French group, the data found in L1 Italian highlight two main ways of responding to the predictive task. On the one hand, we identified a general pattern characterized by the combination of some verbal forms of the subjunctive and the conditional (speakers 2, 3, 5, 8, 11, 14, 16, 18, 20, 21, 22, 23, 28, 30). On the other hand, we identified a less extensive pattern characterized by a larger variety of indicative tenses containing a counterfactual narration marked frequently by the present tense (learners 6, 9, 10, 13, 15). In the examples below, (m) is representative of the canonical pattern, whereas (n) and (o) are representative of counterfactual narrations marked by the present tense.

- (m) 1. \*SBJ: *la terza [modifica] se Karen non fosse stata promossa.*  
The third [modification], if Karen had not been promoted.
2. \*SBJ: *diciamo che Karen sarebbe stata meno contenta.*  
Let's say that Karen wouldn't have been as glad.
3. \*SBJ: *e comunque non sarebbe uscita a cena con il signore.*  
However she wouldn't have gone out to dinner with him.
4. \*SBJ: *e quindi non si sarebbero probabilmente conosciuti meglio.*  
And thus they wouldn't have known each other better.
5. \*SBJ: *come può succedere durante una cena.*  
As it might happen during a dinner. [SBJ11]
- (n) 1. \*SBJ: *e quindi immagino che a quel punto succeda qualche cosa.*  
And thus, at that point, I can imagine that something happened.
2. \*SBJ: *per cui Karen o decide di stare al gioco.*  
And either Karen decides to play along with Mr. Carlson.
3. \*SBJ: *e diventare la amante di questo capo.*  
And to become his mistress.
4. \*SBJ: *o decide di tenere fermi i suoi principi la sua dignità.*  
Either she decides to stick to her own principles and dignity.
5. \*SBJ: *e denuncia il suo avventore e cambia lavoro.*  
And she pleads against her aggressor and leaves her job.
6. \*SBJ: *e magari anzi forse magari tiene la promozione.*  
And maybe, furthermore, maybe she gets her promotion.
7. \*SBJ: *perché monsieur Carlson.*  
Because Mr. Carlson.
8. \*SBJ: *il signor Carlson viene giudicato colpevole dalla polizia.*  
Mr. Carlson pleaded guilty to the police.
9. \*SBJ: *e viene incarcerato magari o perde il posto.*  
And he is sent to prison or loses his job. [SBJ9]
- (o) 1. \*SBJ: *la seconda [modifica] ho detto che lui era a conoscenza.*  
The second [modification] I've said that he was aware [of Karen's illness].

2. \*SBJ: *discutono della sua malattia.*  
They discuss her illness.
3. \*SBJ: *quindi magari sai **si crea** un legame più stretto.*  
So that maybe, you know, it creates a more intimate bond.
4. \*SBJ: *fra lei e il suo capo proprio perché possono.*  
Between her and her boss because they can.
5. \*SBJ: *discutono della malattia.*  
They discuss the illness.
6. \*SBJ: *e di insomma di come **vive** lei questo stato.*  
And about how she lives with it. [SBJ6]

Example (n) corresponds to the final fragment of the response to the predictive task. It was preceded by an initial fragment in line with the canonical way in which counterfactuality is generally marked in Italian (i.e., the subjunctive usually introduces a condition different from the actual world, whereas the conditional is used to develop the consequence of the non-actualized condition). Speaker 9 switched spontaneously from the canonical pattern to a succession of coordinated clauses carrying the present tense. The counterfactual narration of example (n) is structured mainly by the copulative conjunction *e* (and), constituting five occurrences and parallel counterfactual scenarios are proposed after the conjunction *o* (or). The counterfactual interpretation of the present tense is reinforced by the use of hypothetical markers like *forse* and *magari* (maybe) (four occurrences). Note that the counterfactual narration from the 2nd to the 9th lines occurs immediately after the speaker explicitly alerts the hearer to the fictional nature of what is being proposed (i.e., *e quindi immagino che a quel punto succeda qualcosa*; and thus, at that point, I can imagine that something happened). Example (n) shares some of the characteristics of example (o) but we quote it above because of the colloquial element *sai* (you know, 3rd line). The speaker is constructing a counterfactual scenario anchored in the present tense when she suddenly produces an overt colloquial morpheme by which she validates the plausibility of her counterfactual scenario.

We found some variability within the less canonical pattern represented above by examples (n) and (o). Some speakers used the present tense to accomplish the predictive task from beginning to end (speakers 6 and 10), other speakers switched to the present tense (subject 9) and the *imperfetto* (subject 13) from a combination of forms from the subjunctive and the conditional, and

another speaker switched instead to the canonical pattern of the present tense (subject 15).

In sum, we have shown that native French speakers and native Italian speakers responded differently to the predictive task. The Italian group used either the present indicative or the past conditional, whereas the French group particularly used the past conditional. Within the learner group, we identified three strategies to encode irrealty in L2 French: eight learners marked counterfactuality by means of bare present tense forms and the periphrastic future 'Aller (to go) + Infinitive' (pattern A), eight learners produced some rare forms of the conditional combined with other indicative tenses (pattern B), and five learners produced the past conditional prominently (pattern C).

### 6.2.6 Uses of the conditional tense in the mutation task

As for the frequencies of the conditional tenses across the mutation cores, Italian's production did not present significant differences compared to the control group (cf. Table 6.6). In all, 17 conditional tenses were produced by Italian speakers in the mutation task. In the diagram below, numbers from 1 to 3 refer to the response of each participant (SBJ) to the mutation task. The bold square corresponds to the most frequent response of the control group (i.e., 6 occurrences produced by the 3 Italian learners in L2 French).

We will now describe how the modal verbs *pouvoir* & *devoir* (could, should) were used within the conditional tense. We elicited 8 occurrences with a modal verb in the past participle position, as usually found in the control group's production. However, two of them were introduced by the relative pronoun *que-*, similarly to the Spanish speakers' production (cf. Section 6.1). Examples of these occurrences are given below:

Elle aurait pu informer monsieur Carlson de son problème

*She could have informed Mr. Carlson on her condition*

Qu'elle aurait pu voilà poser des questions

*[That] She should have been given the chance to ask some questions*

Among the mutation cores encoded by conditional tenses, we elicited only one carrying the present conditional:

Monsieur Carlson pourrait demander si Karen avait des problèmes  
d'alimentation

*Mr. Carlson could ask whether Karen had any digestive problem*

In all, 8 conditional past tenses were marked by no modal verbs at all and 7 of them were introduced by *que-*. Examples of these cases are given below:



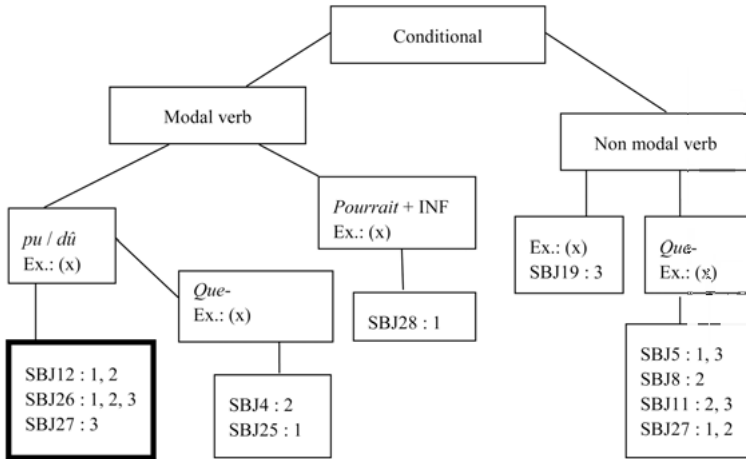


Figure 6.8: Summary on the uses of the conditional tense by Italian speakers

Karen peut-être aurait évité absolument de sortir à manger

*Karen had maybe refused to go out for dinner*

Que le monsieur aurait choisi l'autre assiette

*[That] Mr. Carlson had chosen the other dish*

The use of *que-* by the Italian speakers' group deserves some remarks to clarify its origins. Frequently, the relative pronoun is associated to a nominal antecedent –i.e., *le fait que* (the fact that)–, a verbal construction that serves to modalize the subsequent speech –i.e., *je pense que* (I think that)–, or an implicit referent of the mutation task –i.e., the lexical item 'modification'–. For example:

Ensuite bo' le fait que monsieur Carlson aurait pu se renseigner

*Then the fact that Mr. Carlson could have informed himself*

Je pense que là on pourrait eu choisir les coquilles

*I think that there one could have chosen the scallops*

La deuxième [modification] c'est que le monsieur aurait choisi l'autre assiette

*The second [modification] is that Mr. Carlson would have chosen the other dish*

Unlike Italian speakers, the control group participants tended to privilege the ellipsis and not referring explicitly to the modifications demanded by the interviewer (cf. example below). This explains why we found zero use of *que-* introducing a mutation core in the control group's production.

Premièrement, tout simplement, monsieur Carlson aurait pu demander au serveur

*First of all, very simple, Mr. Carlson should have asked to the waiter*

## 6.3 Verbal morphology within *if*-clauses

### 6.3.1 L2 French by Spanish speakers

In all, 224 *if*-clauses were produced by Spanish speakers during their guided interviews. In some cases, these constructions were dependent of a main clause<sup>10</sup> (we will henceforth refer to them as compounded *if*-clauses). In other cases, the *if*-clause did not depend of an explicit main clause<sup>11</sup> (we will henceforth refer to them as simple *if*-clauses). 106 simple *if*-clauses and 118 compounded *if*-clauses were elicited in the L2 French production of Spanish speakers (47% and 52% out of the total, respectively). Indicative tenses were produced within the *If A* antecedent in 109 sentences (48.6%), whereas we elicited 3 occurrences carrying a subjunctive tense (1.3%) and 60 carrying a conditional tense (26%). Below, some examples of the most frequent combinations of tenses are given across the 118 compounded *if*-clauses:

A. *Plus-que-parfait* (*If A*) + Past conditional (*then B*). This combination represented 26.2% out of the 118 sentences. For example:

- (1) *Si Karen n'avait pas été \*promouvée il n'aurait pas eu les chances pour le dîner*

If Karen had not been promoted, the diner would probably never took place

B. Present indicative (*If A*) + Present indicative (*then B*). This combination represented 13.5% out of the 118 sentences. For example:

- (2) *Si Karen elle n'est pas malade il y a aucune modification*

If Karen is not ill, there is no modification

C. Past conditional (*If A*) + Past conditional (*then B*). This combination represented 12.7% out of the 118 sentences. For example:

- (3) *Si elle aurait dit ça peut être son chef l'aurait mal pris*

If she would have said that, maybe her boss would have took it in a negative manner

The examples above are representative of 52% of the 118 compounded *if*-clauses produced by the Spanish learners. As for simple *if*-clauses, the *plus-que-parfait*

<sup>10</sup> For example: *Si Karen n'avait pas été promue, elle ne serait pas morte*; If Karen had not been promoted, she would have not died.

<sup>11</sup> Par exemple: *Si Karen n'avait pas été promue*; If Karen had not been promoted.

is the most frequent tense with a frequency of 49%, followed by the past conditional, with a frequency of 36.7%. Figures of Table 6.13 have been calculated on the 224 *if*-clauses (simples and compounded) produced by the Spanish learners. The use of the conditional tense in the subordinated clause is considered as ungrammatical (cf. example 3 above). Another use that does not make part of the standard morphology of contemporary French is the use of the subjunctive. For example:

(4) Si seulement il \*n'aille pas manger ce plat, elle serait vivante

The verbal morphology of example (4) recalls the canonical morphology within Spanish *if*-clauses. However, this use of the French subjunctive is not frequent in the production of the Spanish learners, with only 2 occurrences elicited (cf. Table 6.14).

**Table 6.13:** Distribution of tenses within *if*-clauses by Spanish learners<sup>12</sup>

	Prés. IND	Imp. IND	PQP IND.	PC	Fut smp.	Fut ant.	COND. prés.	COND. passé	SUB Prés.
–	2 (0,8%)	11 (4,9%)	52 (23%)			1 (0,4%)		39 (17%)	1 (0,4%)
Prés. IND	16 (7,1%)	2 (0,8%)		1 (0,4%)	1 (0,4%)			1 (0,4%)	
Imp. IND	1 (0,4%)	5 (2,2%)	3 (1,3%)	1 (0,4%)					
PC		2 (0,8%)							
PQP IND.			1 (0,4%)						
Fut. smp.	1 (0,4%)								
Fut. ant.						1 (0,4%)		1 (0,4%)	
CON. prés	1 (0,4%)	3 (1,3%)	9 (4%)					3 (1,3%)	2 (0,8%)
CON. passé	7 (3%)	8 (3,5%)	31 (13,8%)	1 (0,4%)			1 (0,4%)	15 (6,6%)	

<sup>12</sup> Vertical axis contains the tenses produced in the main clause, and horizontal axis contains those produced in the subordinated clause. PC = *passé composé*; CON= conditional; IND = indicative; Fut. = future; SUB = subjunctive; PQP = *plus-que-parfait*; Imp = *imparfait*.

**Table 6.14:** Formal patterns across the *if*-clauses by Spanish learners

Total	INDp INDa Ex.: (60)	INDp CONDa (59)	CONDp INDa	CONDp CONDa (61)	SUBp CONDa (57)
118 (100%)	35 (29,6%)	60 (50,8%)	2 (1,6%)	19 (16,1%)	2 (1,6%)

The statistical analyses carried out in Table 6.15 revealed no significant differences between the symmetrical indicative *if*-clauses and the symmetrical conditional (p-value = 0.020). This is a controversial result, since the symmetrical indicative makes part of the description of the French standard morphology but the symmetrical conditional does not. The canonical pattern in French (INDs+CONDM) was used significantly more frequently compared to any of the other patterns. The poor frequencies of the substandard patterns CONDS+INDM & SUBS+CONDM is the reason why they hold significant differences with the rest of the patterns but not between them.

**Table 6.15:** Statistical analyses across L2 French *if*-clauses by Spanish learners

	INDp INDa	INDp CONDa	CONDp INDa	CONDp CONDa	SUBp CONDa
INDp INDa	–	0.001*	1.01e-08**	0.020	1.01e-08**
INDp CONDa	0.001*	–	<2.2e-16**	3.436e-08**	3.436e-08**
CONDp INDa	1.01e-08**	<2.2e-16**	–	0.0002*	[1]
CONDp CONDa	0.020	3.436e-08**	0.0002*	–	0.0002*
SUBp CONDa	1.01e-08**	3.436e-08**	[1]	0.0002*	–

(P values resulting from the  $X^2$  test)

### 6.3.2 L2 French by Italian speakers

In all, 155 *if*-clauses were produced by Italian speakers during their guided interviews. 58 of them were simple clauses (37.4%) and 97 compounded (62.5%). Indicative tenses were produced within the *If A* antecedent in 136 sentences (87.7%), whereas we elicited 17 occurrences carrying a conditional tense (10.9%). In addition, we elicited one sentence carrying a subjunctive tense and another sentence carrying a past participle (0.6% each). Below, some examples of the most frequent combinations of tenses are given across the 97 compounded *if*-clauses produced in L2 French by Italian speakers:

A. *Plus-que-parfait* (If A) + Past conditional (then B). This combination represented 35% out of the 97 sentences. For example:

(5) *Si elle avait mangé les coquilles Saint-Jacques, elle aurait survécu*

If she had eaten the scallops, she would have survived

B. Present indicative (If A) + Present indicative (then B). This combination represented 12.3% out of the 97 sentences. For example:

(6) *Il [ne] donne pas une promotion si après il veut la tuer*

He does not promote her if he wants to kill her

C. Past conditional (If A) + Past conditional (then B). This combination represented 6.1% out of the 97 sentences. For example:

(7) *Si seulement j'aurais pris l'autre plat, ça [ne] serait passé pas du tout la même chose*

If only I would have chosen the other dish, this would have never happened

D. *Imparfait* (If A) + Past conditional (then B). This combination represented 6.1% out of the 97 sentences. For example:

(8) *Si je savais de la maladie de Karen, j'aurais \*ordonné\* un autre plat*

If I had known Karen's condition, I'd have rather ordered another dish

E. *Imparfait* (If A) + *Imparfait* (then B). This combination represented 6.1% out of the 97 sentences. For example:

(9) *Si elle disait à son patron qu'elle voulait choisir elle-même l'assiette c'était aussi une façon de s'imposer*

If she said to her boss that she wanted choosing the dish for herself, it was also a manner of imposing herself

The examples above are representative of 65% of the 97 compounded *if*-clauses produced by the Italian learners. As what concerns simple *if*-clauses (i.e., *If A*), 60% of them carried the *plus-que-parfait* and 18.9% the *imparfait*. Substandard verbal morphology represented 18.9% out of the 58 simple *if*-clauses. Within the substandard morphology, the conditional tense represented 17.2%. The figures of Table 6.16 have been calculated on the 155 *if*-clauses elicited (simples and compounded).

**Table 6.16:** Distribution of tenses within *if*-clauses by Italian learners<sup>13</sup>

	Prés. IND	Imp. IND	PQP IND.	PC	Fut smp.	Part. passé	COND. prés.	COND. passé	SUB Prés.
–	1 (0.6%)	11 (7%)	35 (22.5%)				2 (1.2%)	8 (5.1%)	1 (0.6%)
Prés. IND	12 (7.7%)	1 (0.6%)	1 (0.6%)	1 (0.6%)	1 (0.6%)				
Imp. IND	2 (1.2%)	6 (3.8%)	1 (0.6%)			1 (0.6%)			
PC	1 (0.6%)			1 (0.6%)					
PQP IND.			3 (1.9%)						
Fut. smp.	5 (3.2%)	2 (1.2%)			3 (1.9%)				
CON. prés	1 (0.6%)	2 (1.2%)	5 (3.2%)	1 (0.6%)				1 (0.6%)	
CON. passé		6 (3.8%)	34 (21.9%)					6 (3.8%)	

The division of the *if*-clauses' verbal morphology depending on the use of conditional tenses or other indicative tenses revealed three patterns (Table 6.17). This represents a major difference compared to the Spanish learners' *if*-clauses and places the production of the Italian group closer to the control group's production.

**Table 6.17:** Formal patterns across the *if*-clauses by Italian learners

Total	INDp+INDa Ex.: (60), (61)	INDp+CONDa Ex.: (59), (63)	CONDp+CONDa Ex.: (62)
97 (100%)	41 (42,2%)	49 (50,5%)	7 (7,2%)

The statistical analyses carried out in Table 6.18 revealed no significant differences between the symmetrical indicative and the canonical pattern INDs+INDm. Significant differences resulted from the poor frequencies of the substandard pattern

<sup>13</sup> Vertical axis contains the tenses produced in the main clause, and horizontal axis contains those produced in the subordinated clause. PC = *passé composé*; CON= conditional; IND = indicative; Fut. = future; SUB = subjunctive; PQP = *plus-que-parfait*; Imp = *imparfait*.

CONDs+CONDm. This is a major difference compared to the Spanish learners, whose production revealed a higher frequency of this pattern with 19 occurrences (cf. Table 6.14).

**Table 6.18:** Statistical analyses across L2 French *if*- clauses by Italian learners

	INDp+INDa	INDp+CONDa	CONDp+CONDa
INDp + INDa	–	0.313	4.006e-08**
INDp + CONDa	0.313	–	8.244e-11**
CONDp + CONDa	4.006e-08**	8.244e-11**	–

(*P* values resulting from the  $X^2$  test)

## 7 Discussion

In the present chapter some of the results presented in Section 6 will be discussed. Our results will be considered in relation to previous studies with a view to answering the research questions presented in section 4.3. The first part of our discussion will address the L2 French production by Spanish learners. The second part will focus on the Italian learners.

### 7.1 L2 French production by Spanish learners

As seen in section 6.1, our results pointed out significant differences between the production of the control group and the Spanish learners in the way the conditional tense is used to express counterfactual scenarios in French (cf. Table 6.5). From the 28 conditional tenses produced by the Spanish learners, 9 corresponded to the modalized conditional produced by native French speakers (e.g., *Son patron aurait pu choisir les Saint-Jacques*; Her boss could have chosen the scallops), whereas 19 occurrences resulted from using the conditional tense in a non-native way. Among these occurrences, 11 lacked of a modal verb and were introduced by the conjunction *que-*, 2 were marked by the modal verb *pouvoir* as a present conditional introducing an infinitive periphrasis (e.g., *Elle pourrait avoir commandé elle-même*; *She could have ordered by herself*), and 6 that did carry the modal verb in the past participle position were introduced by the conjunction *que-*. In what follows, special attention will be paid to the semantic values of the combination of a past conditional and a modal verb (section 7.1.1), the substandard use of the conditional tense within *if-* clauses (section 7.1.2), and the levels of L2 proficiency as an explicative factor of the results' variability (section 7.1.3).<sup>1</sup>

#### 7.1.1 Semantic implications of the modalized conditional

The prominent use of the modalized conditional by native French speakers is coherent with Van linden & Verstraete's description (2008) of the more frequent

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<sup>1</sup> Some parts of the discussion involving Spanish learners have been published in French in the journal 'Language, Interaction, Acquisition' 5:2 (252–281), under the title *La production des scénarios contrefactuels par des apprenants adultes hispanophones: Quelques effets d'étrangeté liés à l'emploi du conditionnel en français langue étrangère* (2014, Amsterdam / Philadelphia: John Benjamins).



marker expressing counterfactuality across 43 languages<sup>2</sup>. These authors claim that in most languages, counterfactuality has its origins in the combination of a modal marker with (i) a past-tense marker, (ii) a combination of past tense and aspectual markers, or (iii) just with aspectual markers. Their results seem to challenge the existence of one single ‘dedicated’ marker to express counterfactuality. The native French speakers’ responses place French among the languages for which counterfactuality is expressed by the combination of a modal marker and a past-tense marker by means of the past conditional carrying a modal verb in the past participle position (e.g., *Elle aurait dû choisir toute seule son plat*; She should have chosen her own dish)<sup>3</sup>. The use of the past conditional tense in the mutation task –for which we obtained 33 occurrences in the French control group–, is convergent with Hellberg’s results (1971) on the prominence of simple clauses carrying a conditional tense over *if*-clauses to express hypotheticality in French written texts. Notwithstanding, our results seem to suggest that the important function of the modalized conditional in French is similarly filled by subjunctive tenses and *if*-clauses, since no significant differences were found between these grammatical devices at the level of their frequencies in the control group’s production (cf Table 5.2).

The high frequency of the modalized conditional has semantic implications, such as denoting the speaker’s position about the counterfactual scenario that she produces. This result is coherent with the results observed by Carroll et al. (2008), according to which the salient features capturing the speaker’s attention in the L2 production are, in general, the ones grammaticalized in the L1. In section 5 we have seen that the mutation cores carrying a conditional tense are frequently marked by a modal verb in the control group’s productions (e.g., *Elle aurait pu choisir toute seule son plat*; She could have chosen her own dish). This modal element marks counterfactual responses of a subjectivity that is rarely denoted in the mutation cores in L2 French. The late emergence of modalized conditional mutation cores in the system of Spanish speakers coincides with the lack of modal verbs in the Spanish response more significantly used (i.e., the pluperfect subjunctive). These results suggest that when the learner starts to use the conditional tense to express counterfactual scenarios in French, she is not fully aware of the role of modal verbs within the conceptualizations produced by native speakers. At least, it seems that the relatively less advanced Spanish learners participating in our survey do not orient their attention to the input’s lexical units *pu / dû* when expressing themselves.

<sup>2</sup> The majority of the languages analyzed by these authors belong to the Austric, Amerind and Indo-Pacific families. However, Basque and Cantonese are also included.

<sup>3</sup> The use of the modalized conditional is higher in a significant way in the production of the native French speakers compared to the use of other indicative tenses ( $p$ -value resulting from the  $X^2$  test = 0.0004).

Marking the conditional tense with a modal verb in the past participle position seems logical with the preference of native French speakers of retelling *what happened* from the narrator perspective (Carroll et al. 2008). These authors show that, for a narrative task, the predicates of L1 French informants are more frequently related to the internal states-of-mind of the story's main character, compared to L1 German informants. Their qualitative results give evidence of the preference of native French speakers to make explicit the character's point of view by a recurrent use of cognitive or perception verbs (e.g., *il est perplexe, il s'aperçoit, il s'est dit que*; he's impressed, he realizes, he says to himself that). Thus, French narrations are richer in interpretative elements compared to German narrations. Moreover, the narrative organization in French is more frequently marked by causal connectors, whereas in German the prevailing cohesive connectors are temporal (Carroll et al. 2008). The use of the modalized conditional in counterfactual contexts seems therefore to be logical with the pattern of recalling chronological events from a subjective perspective in French.

However, the interpretation of our results under the light of those obtained by Carroll et al. (2008) needs some caution remarks. First, there are important differences between our task and the one proposed by Carroll and her colleagues. Our mutation and predictive tasks belongs to what cognitive psychologists call 'decision-making tasks', whereas the task from Carroll et al. (2008) is a narrative one. Evidence has been given on the existence of critical differences between narrative and decision-making tasks (Gilbert 2007)<sup>4</sup>. The former being perceived by participants as significantly easier. This can be explained because narrative tasks based on a chronological linearity provide the participant with a number of contents to be communicated. The open nature of the decision-making task makes it cognitively more demanding, since to complete it the speaker is led to focus on the message conceptualization (Gilbert et al. 2011).

Preceding studies have shown that, at a macro-structural level, the information eligible for mention in L2 production is filtered by certain grammaticised meanings in the learner's source language (Carroll & Lambert 2003, Carroll et al. 2012). In particular, learners encounter difficulties to align their L2 narrations to the preferred structural patterns of native speakers for the same task. Our results involving the non-native use of *que-* at the beginning of the L2 mutation cores provided by Spanish speakers seem to confirm this point<sup>5</sup>. The non-native

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4 The decision-making task used by Gilbert (2007) and Gilbert et al. (2011) is based on a comic trip stimulus. Participants were presented with a burning building where a number of people needed to be rescued. They were instructed to specify the actions they would take, determine the sequence of their actions, and justify their choice for actions and their specific sequence.

5 However, the proficiency level of our participants is more heterogeneous than Carroll's and her colleagues.

uses of the conditional tense in the counterfactual scenarios of Spanish learners are based on: (i) the absence of a modal verb, and (ii) the phrasal element *que-* at the beginning of the counterfactual segment. If the former feature seems to be specific to beginners and intermediate learners, the latter is found in a transversal way across learners of different proficiency levels. This means that Spanish learners manage, after some time, to align their productions to a certain level of subjectivization by marking their conditional tenses with a modal verb. However, the initial *que-* seems to persist in the system of some advanced learners.

In L1 Spanish the use of a subjunctive introduced by the conjunction *que-* marks 60% from the total of the mutation cores and thus, represents the prominent grammatical device to encode counterfactual scenarios. We think that the use of *que-* in L2 French results from a transfer from the learner's L1 accordingly to the theory 'Thinking for speaking' (Slobin 1996). As explained supra, Spanish would be at the origins of the substandard use of the conditional tense within *if*-clauses because containing the *-r* morpheme, also present in the Spanish subjunctive. The fact that some learners capable of aligning their productions to the subjectivisation of native French speakers –by means of modal verbs' past participles– do introduce the verbal segment by a syntactic element connected to the Spanish subjunctive –i.e., the conjunction *que-* prove to us the difficulties experienced by L2 learners at the macro-level of information's organization (Carroll & Lambert, 2003; Carroll et al., 2012), even at advanced stages of acquisition.

The argument by Carroll et al. (2008) to claim a high degree of subjectivization in the narrations produced by native French speakers focuses on the use of verbs of intention, perception and attitudes in a narration task. Their study is based on the oral retellings from three groups made of 20 native speakers of French, English and German. We have related the results of these authors to our result concerning the expression of counterfactual scenarios in which the speaker explicitly takes a critical position within a set of conditions by the evaluative markers *pu / dû*. The crossed reading of these results gives us a picture on the conceptualizations in French as strongly marked by the speaker's subjectivity both in narrative and argumentative texts. Further studies targeting diverse L1 seem necessary to test the theory 'Thinking for speaking' in conceptualizations pertaining to the semantic domain of *irrealis*.

The frequencies of the conditional tense in the L2 mutation cores provided by Spaniards do not hold significant differences to the frequencies of the control group. But unlike the control group, the learners use the conditional tense in combination with lexical or syntactic elements that are not found in the production of the native French speakers. This indicates that the master of the flexional features of the conditional tense is not sufficient to talk about irreality as French speakers generally do. Thus, the acquisition of counterfactuality in L2 does not

hold exclusively on the knowledge of the target language's verbal system. It requires the learner's sensibility to perceive or notice the frequencies of certain formal devices on certain contexts. Ellis et al. (2016: 56) explain this idea when talking on the determinants of construction learning:

Language knowledge involves statistical knowledge [...]. Frequency is a key determinant of acquisition because rules of language, at all levels of analysis from phonology, to syntax, to discourse, are structural regularities that emerge from learners' lifetime unconscious analysis of the distributional characteristics of the language input.

The control group's results have shown that the functional exploitation of the conditional does not only depends on the formal production of this tense but primarily on its combination with the modal verbs *pouvoir* and *devoir* conjugated as past participles. In French, the combination of these elements denotes the semantic effect of modifying a specific condition from the set of conditions pertaining to the factual world ( $W_0$ ). The native use of the conditional tense in counterfactual contexts requires (i) the grammatical activation of a temporal value of ulteriority within the past, and (ii) the lexical activation of a verb denoting an evaluative modality. The later activation allows the speaker to positioning herself in a critical manner within a set of conditions, as native French speakers normally do.

### 7.1.2 The use of the conditional tense within *if*-clauses

In section 6.1.2 we talked about some substandard uses of the conditional that occurred within the conditional constructions *If A*. These occurrences were produced by a subgroup of 5 learners presenting an average of 2.1 years of FFL studies. Is the symmetrical conditional found in the subordinate and the main clause (e.g., *Si \*j'aurais su, j'aurais évité de commander pour elle*; If I \*would have known, I would have prevented myself to order for her) a way to compensate the lack of explicit knowledge over the role of the *imparfait* and *plus-que-parfait* in the *If A* segment? In Spanish, the preterit subjunctive allows two flexional endings (*-ra* and *-se*)<sup>6</sup>. The same applies to the pluperfect subjunctive<sup>7</sup>. Since these subjunctive tenses do not exclude the morpheme *-r* it is likely that learners make use of the French conditional in the aim of marking an open

<sup>6</sup> For example: *Si yo amara/amase; si yo tuviera/tuviese; si yo viviera/viviese* (If I loved, If I had, If I lived).

<sup>7</sup> For example: *Si yo hubiera/hubiese amado* (If I had loved).

perspective within the past. The following considerations from Barceló & Bres (2006: 77) seem to point out in the same direction:

*Si l'imparfait répond bien à la demande de situer le processus dans le passé, il ne répond (i) ni à la demande d'ouvrir une perspective (morphème -r) – à la différence du conditionnel –, (ii) ni à la demande de déclarer cette perspective comme sans avenir.*

The French *imparfait* fills the demand of placing the process within the past. But, unlike the conditional tense, it does not fill the demand of (i) opening a perspective (morpheme *-r*) nor (ii) declaring this perspective as not likely.

We cannot exclude that the above metalinguistic reasoning is implicitly perceived or explicitly reasoned by the learner at one point of the acquisitional process. Barceló & Bres (2006) present the past conditional as a future within the past because of its compositional features in French: the iconic morpheme *-r* from the future followed by the suffixes from the *imparfait* (i.e., *-ais*, *-ait*, *-ions*, *-iez*, *-aient*). Guided learners may have been exposed to this metalinguistic explanation in the FFL classroom. And if they did, it may seem logic to them to use the conditional tense as a way to mark an ulterior perspective that 'might have been'. This hypothesis finds support in the number of *if*-clauses carrying the conditional tense in L2 French (from 224 *if*-clauses produced by the Spanish learners, one over four carried substandard morphology related to this issue). To us, this result proves (i) the difficulties experienced by Spanish learners to integrate the modal values of the French *imparfait* in their L2 productions, and (ii) the time it takes them to use it in a native-manner to denote a nuance of ulteriority within the past. To what extent the *imparfait* is considered as a tense not consistent with any degree of irreality in the learner's representations? Unfortunately, this is a question for which we have no empirical response. However, from the data discussed so far, we can highlight two explicative factors for the recurrent use of the conditional tense in the L2 French *if*-clauses. First, to the mental representation of the *imparfait* as a tense that only expresses temporal values related to the past. Second, to the mental representation of the conditional as a tense (i) formally close to the Spanish subjunctive, and (ii) semantically close to tenses expressing an open perspective. The first claim is supported by Patard (2007: 323) when she claims that the counterfactual use of the French *imparfait* is in tension with non-factual contexts.

*L'imparfait offre l'inscription du processus dans un passé réel alors que le contexte requiert une inscription dans un passé qui n'a pas eu lieu. L'imparfait prend alors la place d'un conditionnel passé qui est ici la forme verbale proto-typiquement attendue.*

The French *imparfait* offers the adscription of the process within a factual past, whereas the context demands an adscription within a non-factual past. The French *imparfait* takes then the role of a past conditional that is the proto-typical expected verbal form.

The above statement finds support in the data collected by Wald (1993) from a group of immigrant Spanish speakers in California. This author explained the production of the symmetrical conditional within English *if*-clauses (e.g., If Angel \*would have beaten him up; Wald 1993: 81) because the learner's rejection to express non-factual contexts by means of a non-modalized verbal form accounting for the past. Because the verbal forms from the indicative and subjunctive mood are sometimes the same in English, Wald's learners used *would* in a redundant manner in the aim of marking the modal value that Spanish generally realizes by means of the subjunctive.

Our results concerning the production of conditional tenses within *if*-clauses support the conclusions of previous studies about the symmetrical verbal marking in both the main and subordinated sentences as being a characteristic feature in the acquisition of the hypothetical system (Bates 1976, Reilly 1982, Chini 1995, Schouten 2000).

### 7.1.3 Proficiency levels across the learners

Our Spanish group of learners presents a great variability in what concerns the L2 proficiency. Individual differences at this level seem to be at the origins of the four types of responses dealing with the conditional tense (cf. Table 6.4). Crossing these different uses of the conditional with the sociolinguistic data of learners revealed that the learners accounting for an immersion inferior to 2 years in France did produce no mutation cores marked by modal verbs. The division of the learners' group depending on this threshold did not reveal significant differences (Repiso 2013: 143). Unlikely, the learners' division according to a threshold equal or superior to 6 years revealed a significant difference concerning the systematic production of mutation cores carrying a conditional tense plus a modal verb<sup>8</sup>. This highlights the importance of the time of immersion as a critical factor for Spanish learners to acquire the modalized conditional. A short stay in the country of the target language seems not to be enough to replicate the native French's frequencies of this grammatical device in counterfactual contexts.

The native-like responses that some learners produced in the mutation task seem to be related to a long exposure allowing them to be aware of the frequencies of the modalized conditional in the input provided by native French speakers. Our results indicate that this grammatical device is recurrent in the oral input and thus, may be considered as a hint to test the learner's proficiency level. The mutation cores carrying a modal verb in the past participle position

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<sup>8</sup> P-value resulting from the Welch t-test = 0.0002 (for additional data cf. Repiso 2013: 144).

were produced by 5 learners accounting for an immersion equal or higher than 9 years (10 occurrences), 3 learners accounting for an immersion between 2 and 5 years (3 occurrences), and 2 learners accounting for an immersion between 5 and 12 months (2 occurrences). The use of the conjunction *que-* to introduce a counterfactual scenario marked by the conditional tense is transversal across the learners. This non-native-like phrasal element was in fact produced by an early bilingual that moved to France with her family at the age of 5 years-old (SBJ16). The initial *que-* was also found in the production of other relatively advanced learners (SBJ3, SBJ30), as well as in other learners' productions relatively less advanced (SBJ6, SBJ11, SBJ25, SBJ26). These observations led us to consider the conjunction *que-* as a L1 transfer that may fossilize in the Spanish learner's system. Its production by the learners having a level of proficiency very advanced suggests that, at least from a discursive perspective, the production of counterfactual scenarios is a challenge to learners because highly influenced by the phrasal prerogatives of the Spanish subjunctive.

Concerning the acquisitional path, preceding studies have pointed out the emergence of the conditional tense in the advanced learners' variety (Bartning & Kirchmeyer 2003). At this stage, the master of the flexional features of the conditional takes place within macrostructural features realized in a non-native manner and related to the discourse organization (Bartning & Kirchmeyer 2003). The different combinations to express counterfactual scenarios by means of the conditional tense would suggest that our learners have a level of proficiency very advanced. The use of this tense filling a semantic value of *irrealis* has been found in guided English learners having studied FFL for seven years (Howard 2009). In our survey, the uses of conditional tenses within the mutation cores were produced by an heterogeneous group of 15 learners. Among them, 8 learners having studied FFL between 6 months and 3 years provided the earlier uses. This led us to think that the conditional tense does not emerge so late as claimed by some studies (Howard 2012, Housen et al. 2006, Bartning & Schlyter 2004, Bartning & Kirchmeyer 2003, Hendrix et al. 2001). There are various explicative factors to our results. First, the mentioned studies strictly focused on guided learners. Ours is not, with 2 learners whose guided FFL instruction was equal or inferior to 6 months, and 1 learner that had not studied French at all. On the other hand, the mentioned studies had Deutsch, English and Swedish as L1 rather than another Romance language such as in our case. It may well be that Spanish speakers begin to use the conditional tense earlier because of the compositional similarities of this tense in French and Spanish (i.e., both the French and the Spanish conditional results from adding the *-r* morpheme – meant to mark the future – to proper, specific suffixes). Another factor that may explain the frequencies produced by our learners lays in the application of

decision-making tasks targeting counterfactual responses rather than linear narrations. However, it is important to remind here that *irrealis* semantic values may also be expressed by other means other than the conditional tense and the *if*-clauses. Further studies not targeting a specific verbal form but a set of constructions pertaining to a semantic domain are necessary in order to obtain a more complete picture of the conceptualization of *irrealis*.

#### 7.1.4 Conclusion

We hope to have drawn attention to the non-native features of the conditional tenses used by Spanish learners in the semantic domain of counterfactuality. We have described these non-native uses as the result of combining the canonical tense enabling *irrealis* readings in French under the influence of phrasal constraints linked to the information's organization in Spanish. Only the most experienced learners in terms of immersion produced native-like modalized conditionals accordingly to the phrasal pattern observed in the control group. Conversely, the relatively less advanced learners produced approximate forms either by the combination or omission of different features more or less salient in the Spanish conceptualization of counterfactuality (i.e., modal verbs [-]; the present conditional introducing an infinitive periphrasis [+]). The use of the conjunction *que*- at the beginning of the mutation cores affects the L2 French productions in a transversal way, suggesting that it is a feature that may fossilize in the Spanish learner's system. It has been argued that the use of *que*- has its origins at the organizational structure of the Spanish subjunctive. Our results converge with preceding studies in what concerns the learner's disposition to focus her attention while speaking in L2 on the salient categories of her L1 (Slobin 1996, Carroll & Lambert 2003, Carroll et al. 2012). They seem to confirm the theory 'thinking for speaking' beyond purely narrative texts.

## 7.2 L2 French production by Italian learners<sup>9</sup>

In the following sections, we will discuss to what extent the present indicative and the conditional are reliable clues to the learners' proficiency. We will also examine the role of immersion in the use of the first conditional forms, as well

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<sup>9</sup> The following discussion was published in a collective volume edited by Martin Howard and Pascale Leclercq: *Tense-Aspect-Modality in a Second Language, Contemporary perspectives* (2016), *Studies in Bilingualism* 50, 213–252. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.



as the learners' preference to use the present indicative in non-factual contexts. Finally, we will highlight the role of the present indicative and the *imperfetto* in Italian as potential sources of L1 transfer.

### 7.2.1 Verbal morphology and L2 proficiency

Our data suggest that the dominant use of the present indicative to mark counterfactuality is not necessarily reflective of a basic level of general L2 proficiency. Rather, the high frequency of this tense in the mutation task takes the form of different markers pointing to different origins underlying use of such non-canonical forms across the 23 heterogeneous learners observed. Indeed, our qualitative analysis showed that some of these learners did not produce any other tenses, even though the interviewer's input included several past conditional forms. The learners could therefore have aligned their verbal repertoires to the input and switched from the present indicative to a variable use of the conditional.

In section 6.2.1, we have shown how four learners from pattern A talked about *what might have been* using bare present tense forms in French<sup>10</sup>. These four learners produced 80% of the present tense forms elicited in the predictive task from pattern A. Their counterfactual scenarios were marked by the modal adverb *peut-être* (maybe) and structured around coordinated clauses by means of the conjunctions *et* (and) and *mais* (but). The periphrastic future '*Aller + Infinitive*' was also frequently observed in the learners grouped under pattern A to encode the posteriority of a process whose realization is suspended. This result is similar to Bernini's description (1994) concerning the dominant use of the future tense to mark hypothetical scenarios in the acquisition of Italian by beginner, non-guided learners. The data analyzed by this author show that the periphrastic future is relatively more used than the present tense to mark hypothetical states-of-affairs. We can therefore consider the prominent use of '*Aller + Infinitive*' in the productions of learners 6 and 14 as a confirmation of Bernini's results (1994). In the case of basic learner varieties, the counterfactual interpretation of forms of the present is made possible because of the discursive context (Bernini 1994). Under these conditions, we might consider the recurrent use of '*Aller + Infinitive*' as a resource in the learner's grammar that will be progressively replaced by the canonical conditional tense.

Apart from the latter form, we have also noted the learners' frequent use of *c'est*. The use of this form has previously been described as a characteristic

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<sup>10</sup> Subjects 9 and 10 produced 15 occurrences each, subject 17 produced 12, and subject 18 produced 9.

feature of the production of less advanced learners (Bartning 1997) and appears to be processed as a lexical item (Bartning & Schlyter 2004). Studies of non-guided learners have shown that, at the very early stage of L2 acquisition, temporal marking is realized by means of lexical items rather than inflectional morphology (Klein & Perdue 1997). In the predictive task, we elicited 28 occurrences of *c'est* from eight learners demonstrating pattern A. In particular, six of them produced four occurrences each (cf. section 7.1.1). Such levels of frequency contrasted with the general use of *c'est* by the rest of the learners observed, from whom we elicited a maximum of two occurrences (subjects 20 and 23), one occurrence (subjects 5, 8, 11, 13 and 30) or none at all (subjects 2, 3, 16, 21 and 22).<sup>11</sup> In section 5.1, six learners were labelled as potentially non-advanced due to their low values on immersion time and guided instruction. Our qualitative analysis has shown that at least four of them (subjects 14, 15, 17 and 18) shared the following characteristics: the non-production of conditional forms, the overuse of the present indicative or the periphrastic *Aller* + infinitive and the overuse of *c'est* as a lexical item (4 occurrences each). These regularities suggest that the grammars of these learners are less developed than the rest of their counterparts.

A factor frequently mentioned as pointing to the more advanced proficiency of learners is based on tense agreement, and more specifically on the production of the *plus-que-parfait* alongside the past conditional within *if*-clauses. Use of these tenses has been described as a feature characterizing an intermediate level within the advanced stage (Bartning & Schlyter 2004). Variation with regard to these forms within some *if*-clauses was found in the production of subjects displaying pattern B (8, 20, 21 and 22) and C (11 and 23). Only three learners from pattern C (subjects 3, 16 and 30) produced the *plus-que-parfait* and the past conditional regularly within their *if*-clauses,<sup>12</sup> like the control group. Learner 5 from pattern B also produced some *if*-clauses in line with the French canonical system outside the two tasks analyzed in the present article. The variation found within patterns B and C with regard to the learners' use of such grammatical resources suggests that beyond a minimal period of immersion or FFL studies, which seems necessary for the learner to integrate conditional forms in their system, the use of the present in counterfactual contexts continues to occur, and it is not necessarily indicative of a low level of proficiency.

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<sup>11</sup> The only exception to the low frequencies of *c'est* was found in the production of subject 19, from whom we elicited 5 occurrences. This amount is similar to those found in the learners classified within pattern A. Subject 19 produced one single conditional form in the predictive task, five forms of the *imparfait* and one of the present tense.

<sup>12</sup> Data elicited in other tasks different from the predictive task (for details, cf. section 4.5).

In other words, some learners use the present indicative in counterfactual readings, while also using complex aspects of the L2 verbal system, as in the case of *if*-clauses or the subjunctive following certain modal markers (*Il faut qu'elle fasse toujours gaffe à tout ce qu'elle mange*, she has to be always careful with everything she eats). Further studies are still necessary in order to obtain a complete overview of the acquisitional trajectory followed by the learner to mark time in counterfactual contexts. The application of more finely tuned methods to distinguish *a priori* well delimited levels of L2 proficiency would help us to better understand how intermediate learners and advanced learners proceed.

### 7.2.2 The role of immersion in the production of conditional forms

Following the grouping of the 23 learners in three distinctive patterns, statistical analyses revealed a significant difference between groups A and B concerning the immersion variable. This means that immersion can be taken as a reliable explicative factor underlying the speakers' different patterning for those learners who rarely used the conditional (pattern B) and those who produced no conditional forms at all (pattern A). Conversely, no significant differences were found between the learners' patterns with respect to the duration of instruction. The learners who expressed counterfactual scenarios by means of the present tense (pattern A) had lived in France for a time span of between one and 12 months. Apart from subjects 15 and 17,<sup>13</sup> the rest of the speakers from pattern A had an immersion period equal to or less than five months. In light of such results, having lived in France for more than one year seems to have benefitted the production of conditional forms in counterfactual contexts. The lack of significant differences across the patterns depending on the learners' instruction leads us to consider this variable as less influential than immersion. This result supports the conclusion of Howard (2012) concerning the advantageous role of immersion over guided instruction for English learners of French.

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<sup>13</sup> The lack of conditional forms in the case of subjects 15 and 17 who had one year of immersion can be explained because of their particular situations. Subject 15 was recorded after a year during which she had worked as a teacher's assistant of Italian. She lived in France with her Italian partner, the dominant language in their daily life was Italian. Subject 17 was recorded in Nijmegen but worked in Germany. She had lived in France for one academic year during her PhD, four years prior to our data collection.

### 7.2.3 Stylistic preference

The coexistence in the learners' system of a canonical way to encode *irreality*, by means of the conditional tense, and a non-standard way, by means of the present tense, might be explained by a stylistic preference in which the latter can be considered as a colloquial license to frame narrative texts. Previous studies have shown that the present tense is spontaneously selected by native speakers when they are asked to tell "what happened" in an oral narrative (Carroll et al. 2008, Dimroth *et al.* 2010) or when they frame their production in fictitious discourse (Klein 2009, Krifka 2012). Our study also shows the dominant use of the present tense to encode counterfactuality in L2 French by 23 heterogeneous learners in a mutation task (i.e., those classified within pattern A, who have not integrated the conditional tense in their language system *versus* those classified within patterns B and C, in which the use of the conditional varies from infrequent to dominant). The overuse of the present tense in the former case has been explained by their basic learner variety with regard to verbal morphology and the recurrent use of *c'est* as a lexical item (cf. section 7.1). However, the overuse of the present tense is more difficult to explain for the rest of the learners observed. The learners in groups B and C seem to have integrated the conditional tense into their grammars because each of them produced several occurrences of it during the predictive task. We cannot exclude the idea that they use the present as a stylistic license, like native speakers do when asked to retell past events (Carroll et al. 2008, Dimroth *et al.* 2010) or fictional stories (Kifka 2012). Interestingly, the learners in groups B and C behaved differently compared to the input provided in the task which contained a large number of past conditional forms. Only a small group of learners (pattern C) switched from the present tense to a more dominant use of past conditional forms. This means that stylistic preferences can be abandoned at one point of the interaction with the aim of adjusting the L2 production to the interlocutor's behavior.<sup>14</sup>

### 7.2.4 L1 influence

Even if the grammatical devices elicited in the mutation task in Italian were similarly distributed and no significant differences were found among their frequencies, the most frequent grammatical device in absolute terms was indicative

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<sup>14</sup> Accommodation strategies have been defined as a multiply complex set of alternatives that allow communicators to index and achieve solidarity with a conversational partner reciprocally and dynamically. These strategies can characterize wholesale realignments of patterns of code or language selection in face-to-face talk (Giles et al., 1991).

tenses and not the conditional, 28% in relative terms (cf. section 6.3). This is the main reason why L1 influence cannot be discarded as an explicative factor. The heterogeneous devices shown in examples (n) and (o) recall Bernini's example below, produced by a native Italian interviewer (INT):<sup>15</sup>

- \*INT: *ma, se voi vi trovaste [...] nella stessa situazione.*
  - \*INT: but, what if you were [...] in the same situation.
  - \*INT: *che cosa fareste?*
  - \*INT: what would you do?
  - \*INT: *mettiamo che voi arrivate in campeggio.*
  - \*INT: let's say that you arrive at a camping.
  - \*INT: *volete affittare una roulotte, e non trovate piu i documenti.*
  - \*INT: you want to rent a caravan, but you don't find the papers.
  - \*INT: *cosa fareste?*
  - \*INT: what would you do?
  - \*SBJ: *dobbiamo tornare + a prendere.*
  - \*SBJ: we must go back and get them.
- (Bernini 1994: 274, 1995: 312)

In section 6.2 we described how four native Italian speakers produced counterfactual scenarios through a succession of coordinated clauses carrying only verbal forms in the present tense (subjects 6 and 10) or in combination with some forms of the subjunctive (subjects 9 and 15). The present tense is sometimes used in Italian to express counterfactual scenarios generally structured around coordinate clauses, giving rise to linear or chronological narrations.

In this study, the *imperfetto* (i.e., the equivalent of the French *imparfait*) was frequently used in L1 Italian in the predictive task by one native speaker, subject 13, in combination with some forms of the subjunctive and the conditional (cf. section 6.2). In spoken Italian, the *imperfetto* is frequently used instead of the conditional tense in colloquial contexts (e.g., *Se venivi, lo vedevi*; If you had come, you would have seen it, Renzi & Salvi 1991). This L1 preference seems to interfere in the L2 production. In L2 French, symmetrical uses of the present indicative and the *imperfetto* marked 41 *if*-clauses produced by Italian learners

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<sup>15</sup> The integration of the *imperfetto* in the grammars of non-guided learners belonging to the basic variety has been explained in L2 Italian as quotation strategy (Bernini 1994). This author claims that the learners first associate the *imperfetto* with reported speech in the L1 input. This association would trigger a mnemonic process by which learners integrate the *imperfetto* in their grammar as a 'routine' form. In other words, when the learner starts to use the *imperfetto*, (s)he is not aware of its modal value, although (s)he can produce it in hypothetical contexts (personal communication).

(Il [ne] donne pas une promotion si après il veut la tuer, He does not give a promotion if he's willing to kill her; Si elle disait à son patron qu'elle voulait choisir elle-même son assiette, c'était aussi une manière de s'imposer, If she told her boss that she wanted to choose for herself, it was also a way of empower herself).<sup>16</sup> From this point of view, the use of the *imparfait* in L2 French in counterfactual scenarios may be related to the native pattern in Italian of ascribing the *imperfetto* to narrative contexts, covering either factual states-of-affairs in the past or non-actualized states-of-affairs. The former use is usually described as temporal and the latter as modal (Barceló & Bres 2006). If native speakers use the *imperfetto* in Italian as a way of framing narrative texts in general, and counterfactual narrations in particular (Renzi & Salvi 1991), then it is possible that in their L2, they reproduce this behaviour by means of the French *imparfait*.

### 7.2.5 Conclusion

We have explored the use of the present indicative to encode counterfactuality in L2 French by a heterogeneous group of Italian learners. Our results suggest that the use of this form is particularly characteristic of the learners who have been immersed in the target language environment for a period of less than six months. Moreover, the overuse of the present tense seems to be a mechanism to compensate for the absence of the conditional form in the learner's interlanguage. In contrast, the use of the present indicative in counterfactual contexts is less homogeneous in more experienced learners in terms of immersion and instruction. We have found that the present indicative was frequently used either by learners able to produce past conditional forms and by learners who use it as a non-marked means to express counterfactuality. Our data show that the non-canonical use of the present tense hides a more sophisticated pattern in which the past conditional becomes prominent for a small group of learners. One condition that seems to influence the switching from the present tense to the native use of the past conditional is the recurrent use of the latter in the input provided in the task. However, we found that the present indicative is frequently used even by learners who align their productions to the native pattern. This has been explained as a stylistic preference. Further research is necessary in the domain of counterfactuality in order to test how such stylistic preferences may be attributable to the role of the present indicative and the *imperfetto* in Italian in terms of an effect for L1 transfer. Our survey highlights the role of qualitative analysis in offering more fine-grained insights than quantitative analysis alone would have permitted. In particular, by applying qualitative

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<sup>16</sup> For additional data, cf. Repiso (2013: 139).

methods we have shown that the use of the present tense to encode counterfactuality in French may have different sources. Of course, the grammatical devices to mark time cover other categories that we have not analyzed in the present article, such as temporal adverbials, aspect and discourse principles. Further studies focusing on these categories will be necessary to obtain a more complete picture of the expression of counterfactuality.

### 7.3 The role of conditionality in counterfactual conceptualizations

Conditional constructions were not the most frequent way of referring to counterfactual worlds, neither for the French native speakers nor for the Spanish native speakers nor for the Italian native speakers. The attention paid to conditional constructions in previous studies devoted to hypotheticality and counterfactuality has been explained because of its iconicity within the cognitive process of thinking about alternative situations (Ferguson et al. 1986). Our study provides empirical evidence that conditionality is one possible way among others in which one can refer to counterfactual worlds. However, in Spanish counterfactuality is frequently expressed using grammatical devices other than conditional constructions (i.e., the pluperfect subjunctive introduced by *que*). In French, evidence has been given about the prominent role of clauses combining the conditional tense and a modal verb, simple clauses in the subjunctive mood, as well as conditional constructions. In this sense, our results are coherent with Hellberg's conclusion (1971) about the predominance of simple sentences carrying a conditional tense as the most frequent device to express hypotheticality in French.

Previous studies have portrayed conditionality as a way 'to reason about situations, to make inferences based on incomplete information, to imagine possible correlations between situations and to understand how the world would change if certain correlations were different' (Ferguson et al. 1986: 19). Our results demonstrated that the iconic role assigned to conditional constructions as a prominent category to express hypotheticality and counterfactuality (Grevisse 1986, Renzi & Salvi 1991, Campos 1993, Alarcos-Llorach 1999, Traugott et al. 1986, Athanasiadou & Dirven 1997) is not empirically based on the observation of natural languages.

The interest paid to conditionality as a resource for conceptualizing *irrealis* or imagined scenarios has neglected the description of other ways to express these semantic domains and thus, has provided an incomplete description of the conceptualization of counterfactuality. The non-prominent role of the conditional constructions to speak about *what might have been but was not in*

Spanish, French and Italian suggests that the status of conditionality as a conceptualization process needs to be reconsidered. This idea finds support in the balanced distribution of the conditional constructions, the subjunctive mood and the combination of the conditional tense and modal verbs across the mutation cores in French<sup>17</sup>.

## 7.4 The semantics of counterfactuality in French and Spanish

We assume that the significant differences found within groups have an impact in the typological distance between French and Spanish. The compositional semantics of counterfactuality, i.e. the features of virtuality and non-actualization (Verstraete 2005), was satisfied by the use of the subjunctive in Spanish and by the combination of a past marker and a modal marker in French. The presence of a modal marker in the mutation core was the most salient difference when comparing these Romance languages. The frequent use of evaluative particles in the mutation cores in French was implemented by means of the modal verbs *pouvoir* and *devoir*, i.e. *pu* and *dû* ('could' and 'should' in English), in the past participle form within the past conditional structure. This is coherent with the description of the most frequent counterfactual marker in natural languages, which is not one single dedicated marker but rather the combination of a past tense and a modal marker (Van Linden & Verstraete 2008). Modalizers are well known for their wide range of forms, meanings and uses, and by the absence of univocal relationships between these three dimensions (Roulet 1993). However, this is not the case for the modal markers elicited in the French mutation cores. The French modal verbs *pouvoir* and *devoir* were exclusively used in the past participle form only within the perfect conditional tense. No *pu* / *dû* was found within the *passé composé* (e.g., *Elle a pu choisir toute seule son plat*; She has could to choose her dish on her own)<sup>18</sup>. To us, this fact reveals the univocal relationship between the 'modalized conditional' and its use for altering a factual past scenario in French. A further question concerns the type of modality expressed by this form. When saying *Elle aurait pu choisir toute seule son plat* ('She could have chosen her own dish'), the speaker is not expressing any epistemic or deontic modal value, since she is not attaching beliefs or nuances of obligation. We posit that the modal values expressed when using the modalized

<sup>17</sup> No significant differences were found in the frequencies of these grammatical devices in French L1.

<sup>18</sup> This combination was found in the L2 French production by Spanish speakers as an approximate form of the modalized conditional.



conditional for mutation purposes are evaluative. By saying *Elle aurait pu choisir toute seule son plat* ('She could have chosen her own dish'), the speaker attaches the pertinence of a specific action within a set of particular conditions. This coincides with the notion of evaluative modality (Palmer 1986: 119), which expresses the speaker's attitude over known factual events. This is why the expression of regret is often linked to evaluative modals (Palmer 1986: 115). The frequency in the use of this 'modalized conditional' in the mutation task is coherent with the French pattern of retelling a linear story from a narrator's point of view by the use of predicates relating to intentions, attitudes and perceptions (Carroll et al. 2008). These authors have shown that the predicates of French speakers generally refer to the mental states of the protagonist in the story, e.g. *il est perplexe, il s'aperçoit, il s'est dit que...* (he's perplexed, he realizes, he told himself that...). The use of the 'modalized conditional' in counterfactual contexts sounds concordant with the subjective pattern in narrative tasks. There are various reasons that might explain the frequent use of the modalized conditional by native speakers of French. First, the modalized conditional results from the combination of two processes: the grammatical activation of a specific past tense, i.e. the past conditional, and the lexical activation of a modal verb in the past participle form. When these two processes converge, the listener may have access to the speaker's subjectivity in a more direct way than through other structural devices such as conditional sentences or even the indicative mood, which generally do not accommodate modal values in the mutation core. These pragmatic implications may be the first factor in explaining the high frequency of this structure in French. The second explanation concerns the economy factor. Unlike conditional constructions, the modalized conditional is generally not subordinated to a main clause. Moreover, in just three syllables (*aurait pu / dû*) the speaker is opening the door to another possible world by using the same verb tense as they might have used in a main conditional clause while avoiding the production of an antecedent (If A). It could be argued that the prominent role of the 'modalized conditional' in French may be explained by the fact that the task instruction itself contains the 'modalized conditional'. If that was the case and the input structures of the mutation task played a real effect on the data elicited, then one might expect the same effect in the Spanish corpus. However, in Spanish, the past conditional of the instruction (i.e., *explica por qué habrían evitado su muerte*; explain why [the modifications] would have prevented Karen's death) was not prominently reproduced by the Spanish native speakers. Our data in Italian L1 confirmed no correlation between the 'modalized conditional' of the input and the responses of the native speakers of Italian.

The prominent use of the subjunctive in Spanish in the mutation task might be explained because of the frequency of this type of structure in non-factual contexts. The Spanish subjunctive mood is semantically associated with the *irrealis* domain (Real Academia Española 2009: 1866). Among the uses of the non-factual subjunctive, we find the expression of threat related to the future, e.g. *Que se quejen* ('Let them complain') or *Que vengan mañana* ('We'll see if they come tomorrow'). We maintain that, unlike the examples mentioned, the occurrences elicited in the mutation task, e.g. *Que ella hubiera informado en su trabajo que sufría esa enfermedad* ('She might have informed people at her job that she had that disease'), are semantically anchored to the unreal past frame (Harris 1986). In Spanish, different grammatical devices may allow a counterfactual reading: the past perfect subjunctive presented here, but also the combination of the Spanish imperfect indicative and the modal markers *poder* 'could' or *tener que* 'have to' (e.g., *Ella tenía que haber informado que sufría esa enfermedad*; She should have informed that she had that disease) or the combination of the simple past tense and the modal *deber* 'should' (e.g., *El señor Carlson debió preguntar qué prefería comer ella*; *Mr Carlson should have asked what she preferred to eat*). We interpret the use of these modals as evaluative markers, since the speakers use them to express a critical judgment within a set of particular conditions (i.e. those established in the stimulus). Even if the counterfactual meaning may well be encoded by the Spanish imperfect indicative, our data showed that the subjunctive mood is significantly more frequently used by native Spanish speakers<sup>19</sup>.

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<sup>19</sup> In L1 Spanish, we elicited 5 responses over 90 (5.5%) combining an indicative tense plus a modal marker as in the mentioned examples. Four responses followed the pattern *El señor Carlson debió preguntar* (Mr. Carlson should have asked) and only one response followed the pattern of example *Ella tenía que haber informado* (She should have informed). The possibility of a link between certain varieties of Spanish and the use of the simple past tense and a modal marker to encode counterfactuality cannot be ruled out, but could not be statistically tested because of the low frequencies. However, it is interesting to note that three out of the four responses coherent with example *El señor Carlson debió preguntar* (Mr. Carlson should have asked) were produced by Colombian native speakers. Further studies devoted to the expression of counterfactuality are still necessary to explore possible differences across the American and peninsular varieties of Spanish.

## Concluding remarks

One of the main objectives of the present volume has been to identify the constructions and grammatical devices encoding counterfactual scenarios. Preceding studies dealing with counterfactual statements in L1 and L2 have generally focused on the conditional constructions (Bates 1976, Bloom 1981, Reilly 1982, Au 1983, Bernini 1994, Chini 1995, Katis 1997, Schouten 2000, Yeh et Genter 2005). Our contribution shows that the conditional constructions were not the most frequent way to express counterfactuality in absolute terms neither in Spanish, French and Italian. In relative terms, the conditional constructions were significantly less used in Spanish compared to the pluperfect subjunctive (e.g., *que el jefe hubiera pedido las vieiras en vez de los mejillones*; [that] the boss had ordered the scallops rather than the mussels). In French, the most frequent way to encode counterfactual responses was the combination of a modal verb and the past conditional tense (e.g., *il aurait pu choisir une autre assiette*; he could have chosen another dish). The combination of these lexical and flexional elements was rare in the L2 French production of Italian and Spanish learners. In Italian, no significant differences were found between the different grammatical devices encoding *what might have been*.

Our results concerning the verbal morphology across the *if*-clauses support the description made by grammarians on the canonical role of the pattern INDs+CONDm for French and SUBs+CONDm for Italian. As for Spanish, our results showed that the canonical pattern accounting for a subjunctive tense in the subordinated clause and a conditional tense in the main clause (i.e., SUBs+CONDm) is frequently replaced by the symmetrical subjunctive in both the subordinated and the main clause (i.e., SUBs+SUBm). The frequencies of these patterns appear to be balanced in our corpus L1 Spanish. As for the verbal morphology across the *if*-clauses in L2 French, the Spanish learners used significantly more frequently the conditional tense in the antecedent *If A* (e.g., *Si seulement \*j'aurais pris un autre plat*; If only I \*would have chosen another dish) compared to their Italian counterparts and to the control group. One out of four *if*-clauses produced by the Spanish learners carried a conditional tense (e.g., *Si elle \*aurait dit ça*; If she \*would have said that). In the L2 French production by Italian learners, four *if*-clauses out of ten carried the symmetrical indicative (e.g., *Il [ne] donne pas une promotion si après il veut la tuer*; He does not give a promotion if he wants to kill her further). Our explanations for these uses are the following. Because the subjunctive morpheme *-r* in Spanish gives access to the counterfactual semantic domain, the Spanish learners tend to overuse the French conditional (which also contains the *-r* morpheme) over the canonical

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indicative within conditional constructions. This explanation is supported by the semantics associated to the French conditional, in that sense that it opens a perspective (Barceló & Bres 2006). A second factor explaining the resilience of Spanish learners against the French imparfait lies on the discordance between its semantic values as a factual past and the contextual demand of counterfactuality (Patard 2007). As for the Italian learners, their overuse of the symmetrical indicative can be partially explained because the basic proficiency level of one third of the group and, on the other hand, because a stylistic preference linked to the oral speech in L1 Italian (Renzi & Salvi 1991).

In all, our empirical results demonstrated the following phenomena in L1 French, Spanish and Italian:

1. The preferred way to encode countrefactuality in French is the combination of a past marker and a modal marker realized by the past conditional and the past participle of a modal verb (e.g., *Elle aurait pu choisir toute seule son plat*; She could have chosen her dish on her own). In this type of construction, the past conditional encodes the non-actualization of the propositional content, whereas the modal auxiliary *pu/dû* encodes the potentiality of the content expressed by the main verb, which appears under the infinitive form in French (in the example above, *choisir*; to choose). This modalized conditional has a privileged status in French because the iconicity of this form-function within counterfactual mutation cores<sup>1</sup> and its significant higher frequency over other grammatical devices.
2. Modality is one prominent category mobilized in French to talk about *what might have been*. Unlikely Spanish, the French mutation cores generally incorporate a trace of the speaker's subjectivity. The counterfactual responses produced by French speakers tend to denote an evaluative judgment over a set of conditions enabling the factual world ( $W_0$ ). The rare use of modal verbs in Spanish to express counterfactuality lead to scenarios where the speaker's subjectivity is not so explicitly denoted compared to French.
3. The use of conditional constructions is not prominent neither in French, Spanish and Italian. In Spanish the frequency of the conditional constructions is significantly lower compared to the subjunctive tenses. The fact that previous studies on hypotheticality and counterfactuality have focused on conditional constructions has been explained as due to the iconicity of

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<sup>1</sup> In our L1 French corpus, the modal markers *pu/dû* were never combined with other tense than the past conditional. No occurrences of these markers were obtained within other compounded past tenses, like the *passé composé* (e.g., *Elle a pu/dû*). This makes us conclude that the French modalized conditional is a robust form-function in the counterfactual semantic domain.

these constructions within the cognitive process of thinking about alternative situations (Ferguson et al. 1986). Our study provides empirical evidence that conditionality is one possible way among others in which one can refer to counterfactual worlds. The non-prominent role of the conditional constructions to speak about *what might have been but was not* in Spanish and French suggests that the status of conditionality as a conceptualization process deserves to be reconsidered.

4. The subjunctive mood is significantly more frequently used in Spanish mutation cores compared to French and Italian. Conversely, conditional tenses are significantly more used in French and Italian mutation cores compared to Spanish. Other indicative tenses different from the conditional are significantly more used in Italian compared to Spanish.

On the other hand, our empirical results demonstrated the following phenomena in L2 French:

5. The speaker's subjectivity expressed by the modalized conditional in French is a problematic feature to be realized by L2 speakers. The Spanish and Italian learners who systematically produced this form-function in a native-like use were in general the most experienced in terms of immersion. Before its proper acquisition, the production of the modalized conditional seems to coexist with approximate forms from the *passé composé* (e.g., *Il/elle a dû* plus an infinitive) in the Spanish learner's system, and with forms from the *imparfait* (e.g., *Il/elle pouvait* plus an infinitive) in the Italian learner's system.
6. Non-advanced learners are able to express counterfactuality in the absence of conditional forms by means of the future progressive (*aller*; to go + infinitive) in combination with adverbs denoting some degree of uncertainty (*peut-être*; perhaps). At this stage, the *if*-clauses' verbal morphology is rarely canonical.
7. Advanced learners tend to over-modalize their *passé composés* and their *imparfaits* with the modal verbs *pouvoir* or *devoir*. The learners producing these occurrences are in general able to produce canonical verbal morphology within their *if*-clauses. From a discursive point of view, the mutation cores are organized in a native-like manner by the pragmatic connectors *puis* (then) and *ensuite* (subsequently).

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