Transferring islandhood into L1?
Locality constraints CLI effects in Chinese L2 learners of French

Goals: Chinese and French display different strategies for wh-questions (in situ vs mixed) and also differ at a more abstract level, concerning locality. In Chinese, only wh-questions on adjuncts are sensitive to islands constraints (Huang 1982), while in French all questions are equally sensitive (Rizzi 1990). The issue we address is whether bilinguals and L2 learners exhibit crosslinguistic influence (CLI) effects on this abstract dimension, which is related to the C-domain and the syntax-pragmatics interface (as predicted by the Crosslinguistic Hypothesis, Müller&Hulk 2001) but where they can hardly rely on positive evidence. We here present data concerning Chinese L2 learners of French, and expect to be able to compare these results with those of Chinese heritage bilinguals in France by the time of the conference.

Preliminary phase 1: locality conditions in monolinguals (authors 2023; Tian et al 2022)

Methods. Authors 2023 ran an acceptability rating **experiment 1 on French monolinguals** (N=66) wh-movement questions with a 2X2x2 factorial design manipulating a) dependency length (long vs short) b) islandhood (non-island vs island) c) type of question (adjunct vs argument). There were 24 items for a total of 192 sentences, divided into 8 lists using Latin Square. Results confirmed that all wh-questions were constrained by island conditions in French. These results contrast as expected with the results of an identically designed experiment on **Chinese monolinguals** (N= 64, Tian et al. 2022: **experiment 2**), showing that only adjunct questions are islands sensitive. Since the difference between Chinese and French with respect to locality constraints only concerns arguments, in the version of the experiments for L2 learners we removed the conditions with wh-adjuncts (see Ex. 1 for French).

Phase 2: Locality conditions in L2 Chinese learners of French

Methods. We administered experiments 1 and 2 to China born **French L2** bilinguals (**N=50**). Experiment 1 was preceded by a lexical proficiency test on French (LexTALE_FR. Brysbaert 2013). Only speakers with an accuracy of 60% were included in the research (N=43). **Results** for the two experiments show a two-way CLI, most remarkably as L2->L1.

In **French**, we found a significant main effect of Length ($\beta = 1.6473$, SE = 0.2232, $t = 7.379$, $p < 0.001$***), and of Structure ($\beta = 0.4109$, SE = 0.1456, $t = 2.821$, $p = 0.00597$**) and a significant effect of two-way interaction Structure × Length($\beta = -0.4845$, SE = 0.1580, $t = -3.066$, $p = 0.00224$**). Sensitivity to islands with wh-arguments is thus present though weaker wrt to French monolinguals: see Fig 1 vs Fig 2; Fig. 3 vs Fig. 4).

In **Chinese** we found a significant main effect of Length ($\beta = 2.2327$, SE = 0.1570, $t = 14.219$, $p < 0.001$***), and of Structure ($\beta = 1.2516$, SE = 0.1650, $t = 7.587$, $p < 0.001$***), and a significant effect of two-way interactions as Structure × Length($\beta = -1.8836$, SE = 0.1691, $t = -11.137$, $p < 0.001$***). Sensitivity to islands with wh-arguments is thus present, contrary to Chinese monolinguals: see Fig 9 vs Fig 10; Fig 11 vs Fig 12.

Discussion. The results of this study suggest that an abstract dimension such as locality constraints on wh-questions is open to CLI, and that this influence goes in particular from the more restrictive (French) to the less restrictive (Chinese) grammar, in line with the Crosslinguistic Hypothesis. Interestingly, this effect is visible in L2 late learners affecting their L1 We shall show in details how it is modulated by degree of L2 proficiency. By the time of the conference, we plan to have replicated the study with Heritage Chinese French speakers and to be able to assess the role of language dominance and age of acquisition in further modulating thi CLI phenomenon and its directionality.

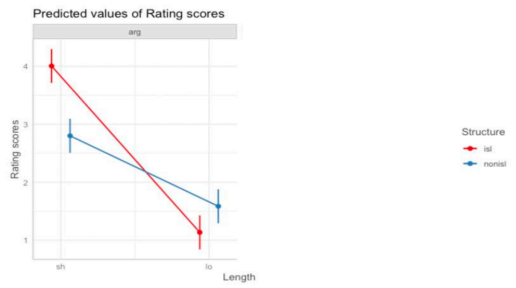

Figure1. The interaction plots for wh-argument in French monolinguals

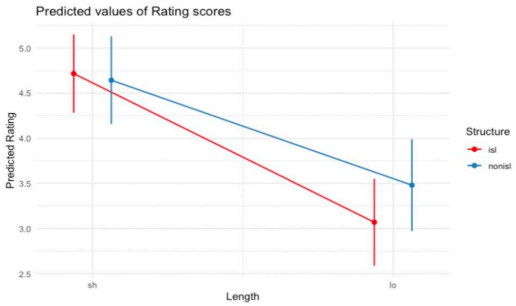

Figure2. The interaction plots for wh-argument in Chinese L1 French L2 learners

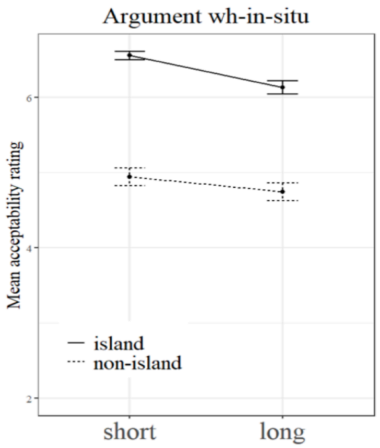

Figure9. The interaction plots for wh-argument in Chinese monolinguals

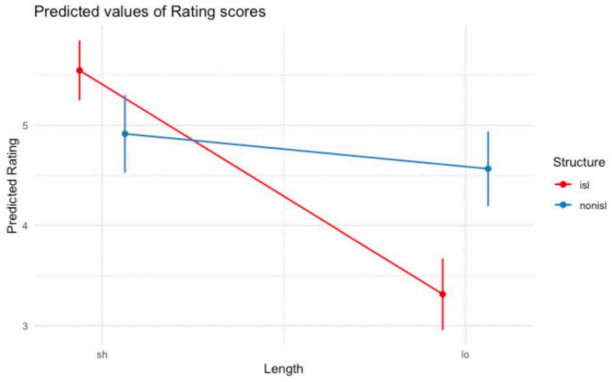

Figure10. The interaction plots for wh-argument in Chinese L1 French L2 learners

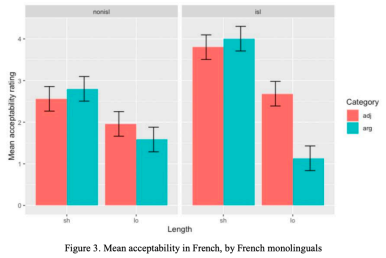

Figure 3. Mean acceptability in French, by French monolinguals

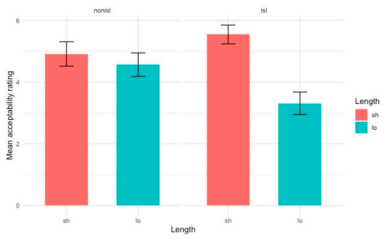

Figure 4. Mean acceptability in French, by Chinese L1 French L2 learners

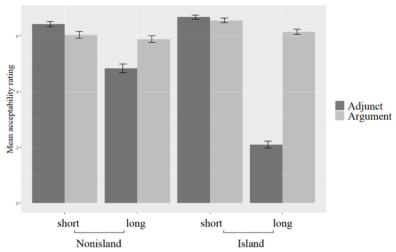

Figure11. Mean acceptability in Chinese, by Chinese monolinguals

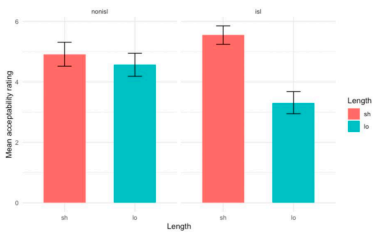

Figure12. Mean acceptability in Chinese, by Chinese L1 French L2 learners

ex. (1)

condition	Item	
sh+nonisl+arg	1	Julie se demande qui saura que la fille payera bientôt la dette .
lo+nonisl+arg	1	Julie se demande ce que tu sauras bientôt que la fille payera.
sh+isl+arg	1	Julie se demande qui invitera la fille qui payera bientôt la dette.
lo+isl+arg	1	Julie se demande ce que tu inviteras bientôt la fille qui payera.

References. @AUTHORS 2023. Wh-questions in Chinese/French bilinguals. Poster at BMRS.@ BRYSBAERT, M. 2013. LexTALE_FR: A fast, free, and efficient test to measure language proficiency in French. *Psychologica Belgica.* @HUANG, C.-T.J. 1982. Move Wh in a Language without Wh-Movement. *Linguistic Review*. @MÜLLER, N. & H. HULK 2001. Crosslinguistic influence in bilingual language acquisition: Italian and French as recipient languages. *Bilingualism: Language and Cognition*. @RIZZI, L. 1990. *Relativized Minimality*. @TIAN, Q. ET AL. 2022. Mandarin Chinese wh-in-situ argument–adjunct asymmetry in island sensitivity: Evidence from a formal judgment study *Frontiers in Psychology*.