Chapter 5

Conclusion: Full Transfer, No Access

5.1 Overview of the chapter

This chapter concludes the research report on the transfer of the L1 Null Subject Parameter value into the IL grammars of Romance learners of Germanic languages. The hypotheses and research questions investigated in this study are addressed and answered, but not in their original order for reasons of exposition. Section 5.2 summarises the observed IL structures, and analyses them in terms of the Null Subject Parameter outlined in chapter 3, section 3.2. The empirical evidence confirms Full Transfer hypotheses 1, 2, 3 and 4, but fails to confirm Full Access hypotheses 5, 6 and 7. Section 5.3 discusses the implications of the results for the theories of Partial Transfer and Full Transfer. Section 5.4 addresses the implications of the results for the version of the Null Subject Parameter used throughout this study. Section 5.5 touches upon the theories of No Access and Full Access. Section 5.6, finally, makes some suggestions for future research.

5.2 Summary and analyses of the results

5.2.1 Introduction

This study was designed to find empirical evidence for L1 transfer of the Null Subject Parameter value into the ILs of Spanish and Italian L2ers of Swedish, German and English. The IL data conform closely to hypotheses 1, 2, 3 and 4 that the L1 parameter value carries over into their IL grammars: regardless of the TL, all L2ers produce IL utterances with missing subjects, post-verbal subjects and (X)SVOA adverb placement orders. Throughout this study, I have adopted a version of null subject theory which accounts for this cluster of typical null subject phenomena in terms of two syntactic properties: empty SpecAgrP and V-to-Agr raising. This section collapses the IL findings of all L2ers and shows that they are consistent with this notion of the Spanish/Italian Null Subject Parameter value.

A secondary aim of this study was to look into the issue of parameter resetting. The IL data fail to provide evidence for resetting of the Null Subject
Parameter. Despite the fact that the data cover approximately two years, there are no innovations in the relevant IL properties of any individual learner which characterise a new stage in his or her IL development. In fact, the term development may not be appropriate for the IL data that were studied: the absence of new phenomena suggests a lack of development in the properties under investigation. Therefore, hypotheses 5, 6 and 7 are not confirmed.

5.2.2 Evidence for V-to-Agr raising (hypothesis 3): adverb placement

Full Transfer hypothesis 3 assumes that in the L2 initial state of native Italian and Spanish L2ers, the verb continues to move to Agr at PF to amalgamate with the zero-affix base-generated there due to transfer of the [+ strong] Agr value (cf. 3.3). To determine whether the Romance L2ers do raise the finite verb to Agr, as in their L1s, I examined adverb placement relative to the transitive verb and its complements. Diagnostic adverbs occurred very rarely in the longitudinal data studied, but at least among the Italian L2ers of German the SVAO orders provide scant evidence of verb raising to Agr (cf. 4.3.3).

IL evidence for V-to-Agr consists of evidence that the verb does not stay in V nor moves to C, but moves to an intermediate position between V and C. The cooccurrence of two kinds of IL word orders offers such indirect support for V-to-Agr. On the one hand, IL utterances with SVAO orders provide unambiguous evidence against V-in situ, as the verb precedes the adverb to the left of the VP. However, such orders do not reveal exactly whether the verb ends up in Agr, or raises as high as C. On the other hand, IL utterances with ASVO or SAVO orders count as evidence against V-to-C, because the verb comes in third position whereas C is normally associated with the second position. A drawback of these ASVO and SAVO orders in terms of evidence for verb movement is that they are consistent with both V-to-Agr and V-in situ.

More direct evidence for verb raising to an intermediate position between V and C comes from XSVAO orders in which a complementiser or a time or place adverbia occurs clause-initially, as in (1) (example 11c from section 4.3.3).

(1). ...das ich suche sofort ein andere (Tino, xiii)
that I search immediately another one
‘That I immediately search for another one’

Such orders argue against V-in situ and V-to-C at the same time. Not only must the verb have raised out of its base position V, as it occurs to the left of the

\[102\] With ‘cooccurrence’ I mean that the relevant orders cooccur at the same time in the IL data of one L2er.
adverb proper, it also must have raised to a position lower than C, as it occurs in third position. If a complementiser precedes the subject and the verb, it is the complementiser instead of the verb that occupies C. If an adverbial occurs before the preverbal subject, V-to-C is also an unlikely analysis, but for a different reason. In languages with V-to-C, like German, the V2 requirement that is responsible for V-to-C rules out conjunction to CP. However, an analysis of the IL order XSVAO in terms of V-to-C, implies that the sentence-initial adverbial is left-adjointed to CP.

Taken together, the IL adverb placement data challenge alternative analyses in which the verb either consistently stays in-situ or consistently raises to C at any stage. Nevertheless, it might be argued that the data discussed here indicate optional verb raising: sometimes the verb stays in situ, whereas at other times it raises to Agr or even C. At the same time, however, the adverb placement findings also cleave closely to my prediction that verb raising transfers from the L1. Compared to optional verb raising, consistent verb raising to Agr as in the L1 provides a more unified analysis of the observed word orders: all word orders at any stage of any of the L2ers can be captured in terms of a single analysis, namely V-to-Agr. Optional verb movement implies different representations. Moreover, there is an obvious explanation for the source of V-to-Agr in the IL, namely L1 transfer, whereas optional verb movement requires explanations that are perhaps less straightforward. Therefore, the adverb placement data tentatively confirm Full Transfer hypothesis 3.

Even though the adverb placement data are all compatible with and suggestive of verb raising to Agr, the matter cannot be decided on the basis of these data alone. The evidence for subject verb inversion presented in 5.2.3 provides additional support.

5.2.3 Evidence for V-to-Agr and empty SpecAgrP (hypotheses 4 and 7): VS orders

Full Transfer hypothesis 4 assumes that, due to transfer in the L2 initial state of native Italian and Spanish L2ers, SpecAgrP may remain empty, and thus the overt subject may remain VP-internal at PF. Inverted subjects derive from this situation since the finite verb raises to Agr, past the subject in SpecVP. Full Access hypothesis 7 assumes that, if L2ers reset the “Agr strength” parameter to the [-strong] Agr value, SpecAgrP must be filled by a subject to license AgrP and V can stay in situ since agreement affixes are generated directly on the verb in V. Once the parameter has been reset to the TL value, VS orders with the main verb preceding the subject do not occur in declarative sentences if the TL is English.

The occurrence of post-verbal subjects in declarative sentences was studied for two purposes. First, declarative VS orders may provide additional
evidence for V-to-Agr raising. If a transitive or unergative verb occurs before the subject, this strongly suggests that the verb has raised out of the VP. Second, post-verbal subjects may be taken as evidence for an empty structural subject position, namely specAgrP. If a subject occurs after the verb, it is assumed to occur in SpecVP or a complement of V, leaving SpecAgrP empty. Like V-to-Agr, empty SpecAgrP follows directly from the [+ strong] Agr value of the Null Subject Parameter: the phi-features in Agr which trigger V-to-Agr, at the same time license the projection of AgrP, and thus permit SpecAgrP to remain empty.

The data on post-verbal subjects adds to the evidence that both V-to-Agr and SpecAgrP still hold in the IL grammars of the L2ers, who all produced declarative utterances with post-verbal subjects, irrespective of their TL. The majority of these post-verbal subjects occurred with the equivalents of the verb come, which is a typical inversion verb in both Spanish and Italian. With unaccusative verbs like come, the VS order is generally assumed to be the base-order in which the subject and the verb are generated. The verb itself is base-generated in V, whereas the subject of the unaccusative verb is base-generated in a complement position of the verb (see chapter 3). Therefore, surface VS orders with unaccusatives show that SpecAgrP is empty, but they do not reveal whether the underlying position of the verb is its base position V, or a higher position to which it has moved. However, the IL data contain some evidence in support of verb raising out of V, which comes from instances of post-verbal declaratives with transitive or unergative verbs. The common assumption for such verbs is that their subjects are base-generated in pre-verbal position (SpecVP). Given then that their surface position in VS constructions is post-verbal, this must have been caused by movement of the finite verb to a position left of the VP. There is no reason to assume that V-to-Agr applies to transitives and unergatives in the IL grammar, but not to unaccusatives. In other words, all declarative VS constructions that were found, including those with equivalents of the unaccusative verb come, are compatible with a verb raising analysis. Moreover, the VS constructions that occurred with transitive and unergative verbs disconfirm alternative analyses in which the verb remains in situ.

An obvious and pertinent question presents itself at this point: do the IL data warrant an analysis in which the verb raises as high as C? This is an obvious question given that two of the TLs, namely Swedish and German, have VS constructions in which the verb raises to C instead of Agr, and the post-verbal subject occupies SpecAgrP instead of SpecVP. It is also a pertinent question because an analysis in terms of V-to-C challenges my hypothesis that transfer of V-to-Agr and empty SpecAgrP are responsible for the declarative VS constructions in the IL data. A negative answer to this question seems justified: the results fail to confirm an analysis of VS constructions in terms of V-to-C and a filled SpecAgrP in two ways.

103 Or a complement position of the verb in the case of unaccusatives.
First, none of the L2ers of Swedish and German uses VS orders consistently where the TL would require them. For example, more often than not they fail to invert the subject and the verb if another constituent occurs sentence-initially, thus violating the V2 constraint. V2 violations as illustrated by (2) (example 9a from section 4.4.2) are incompatible with the TL rules, which are not acquired by any of the learners.

\[(2) \quad \text{und dann ich will bezahlen alles} \quad \text{(Angelina; xvi)}\]

‘And then I want to pay everything’

Second, and more revealing, the L2ers used VS orders where the TL disallows inversion. For example, post-verbal subjects occurred in subordinate clauses with a complementiser, as (3) (example 5i from section 4.3.2) shows. This means that the verb cannot have raised as high as C, as this position is already occupied by the complementiser. Thus, the verb does not raise as high as C. Consequently, the post-verbal subject must be lower than SpecAgrP, leaving SpecAgrP empty, in accordance with Full Transfer hypothesis 4.

\[(3) \quad \text{när kommer pojke} \quad \text{(Fernando, xxvii)}\]

‘When the boy comes’

The conclusion that all observed declarative VS orders result from V-to-Agr and empty SpecAgrP is further strengthened by the similarity between the Swedish and German IL data on the one hand, and the English IL data on the other hand. Like the Spanish-Swedish data and Italian-German data, the Italian-English too contain VS orders, as exemplified by (4) (example 14i from section 4.5.2).

\[(4) \quad \text{after come back the fire brigades} \quad \text{(Andrea, iii)}\]

‘After the fire brigades come back’

Similar facts ask for similar explanations. TL English crucially differs from TL German in that English does not allow VS orders in declaratives. Therefore, if the TL-input cannot have been the main source of declarative VS constructions in the Italian-English data, it is implausible that it could have been the source of declarative VS constructions in the Italian-German data. Moreover, the shared preference for VS constructions with the equivalents of the verb come would remain unexplained if different TL input were the source rather than similar L1s.

Naturally, in the case of the Spanish-German and Italian-German learners, TL input containing declarative VS orders in main clauses may have reinforced the transferred L1 grammar because such surface orders are
compatible with the L1 grammar and can thus easily be incorporated in it without forcing real changes. However, since the L2 Swedish and L2 German inversion data do not contrast in any qualitative or quantitative way with the Italian-English inversion data, the issue of TL input reinforcing the L1 grammar cannot be settled on the basis of the present findings.

In short, the combination of IL findings makes most sense under the view that the declarative inversion constructions that were found in all learner groups stem from the L1. Therefore, Full Transfer hypothesis 4 seems to hold, while Full Access hypothesis 7 fails to be confirmed.

5.2.4 Evidence for empty SpecAgrP (hypotheses 2 and 6): subject omissions

*Full Transfer* hypothesis 2 assumes that in the L2 initial state of Italian and Spanish L2ers, the SpecAgrP may remain empty at PF, as a syntactic consequence of the transfer of the [+ strong] Agr value, which licenses the AgrP projection. *Full Access* Hypothesis 6 assumes that if L2ers reset the parameter to [- strong] Agr, SpecAgr must be filled by a subject to license AgrP. As a consequence, L2ers’ subjects must always be overt in subordinate clauses, once the parameter has been reset.

Additional evidence in favour of empty SpecAgrP comes from expletive subject omissions. Generally, expletive IL subjects seem to pattern in line with the L1. As was shown in chapter 3, Spanish differs from Italian in the use of expletives. Because of the crucial role of the L1 grammar, the expletive data of the L2ers with Spanish backgrounds must not be collapsed with those of the L2ers with Italian backgrounds. Therefore, the Spanish-Swedish expletive data are analysed separately from the Italian-German and Italian-English data.

Compared to their use of overt referential subjects, the Spanish L2ers of Swedish are remarkably more consistent in their use of overt non-referential subjects, that is, in existential *det finns* (there is/are) constructions. At first examination, this difference is surprising. Spanish may have overt referential (pronominal) subjects under limited conditions, but it does not have overt expletive subjects at all. Given this lack in Spanish of an overt counterpart of Swedish expletive subject pronoun *det* (*it*), one would rather expect the use of overt expletive subjects to lag behind the use of overt pronominal subjects in Spanish-Swedish IL, contrary to fact.

Nevertheless, there is a pertinent resemblance between Spanish and Swedish in that both languages have a special construction for existential utterances: the Spanish verb form *hay* (is/are) is uniquely used for existential copula constructions, as is the Swedish verb form *finns* (is/are). The fact that the same form is used for singular and plural subjects makes the resemblance even more striking as verbs in Spanish are normally inflected for number. Therefore, it may well be the case that the Spanish L2 learners of English initially use *det*
finns as an ‘unanalysed chunk’, equivalent to Spanish expletiveless hay constructions.

A closer inspection of the early IL data seems to support this suggestion. Nora has only a single existential finns construction without expletive det, and Fernando too uses det finns consistently in his early recordings. It is only after recording xi that he begins to omit the expletive from finns constructions, which could be the point at which he realises that det finns consists of a verb and an expletive. An early, but incomplete example of a det finns utterance that actually occurs alongside the Spanish equivalent hay is given in (5).

\[(5)\] Sverige no det finns (Swedish) hay (Spanish)... (Fernando: i)

Sweden no there is is

Existential constructions constitute the majority of expletive contexts in the Spanish-Swedish IL data by far. There are very few atmospheric or temporal expletive contexts, and no contexts with an extraposed clausal subject. The scarcity of other expletive contexts makes it difficult to decide whether the L2ers’ fairly consistent use of overt expletives is construction-specific, in holding only for existential det finns constructions, or rather means that the L2ers know that the TL requires overt expletive subjects in general.

However, there is one context which suggests that the L2ers do not generally use overt expletive subjects: IL constructions with the inversion verb komma (come). Swedish requires a preverbal expletive det (there) subject in komma constructions, followed by a NP subject if a sentence-initial place adverbial is missing (see 6a). Spanish, on the other hand, lacks expletive subjects across the board. Moreover, the Spanish equivalent of komma (venir = come) is a typical ‘inversion verb’, which often precedes the NP subject. Unlike what was found in expletive det finns constructions, both L2ers are initially found to omit expletive det from komma constructions (cf. example 6b). In fact, Fernando never uses an overt expletive in komma constructions. The most obvious source for this behaviour is the L1.

\[(6)\]

a. det kommer möbler i hallen (grammatical Swedish example with overt det)
there come furniture in hall-the
b. *komma möbler i hall (ungrammatical expletiveless come furniture in hall utterance by Fernando, iv)

The IL expletive data of the native Italian L2ers show a similar propensity to use overt expletive subjects in existential contexts, but not in other expletive contexts. This time, the observed IL pattern mirrors the L1, that is, the Italian situation, where overt expletive Ci (there) is required in existential
utterances, but expletives are missing from other contexts, like temporal or atmospheric expressions, and VS constructions. The Italian L2ers of English consistently use overt expletive there in existential utterances with a form of copula “be”, but rarely use overt expletive it subjects in the other contexts requiring an overt expletive subject in English. Like the Italian-English learners and like native Italian speakers, the Italian-German learners consistently use the overt expletive es in existential contexts, but generally omit expletive es in other expletive contexts. In German, expletive subjects even have the same form es in all contexts, which strengthens the conclusion that the difference in overt expletives is due to a difference between existential contexts and other expletive contexts, rather than a difference between expletive forms.

Why then would L2ers consistently use expletive subjects in one context, but omit them in other contexts, while all expletive contexts share the property of requiring a subject that lacks referential meaning? The most obvious answer for the native Italian L2ers is that the observed distinction is caused by the L1, which shows the same pattern. However, the native Spanish L2ers too seem to distinguish between existential constructions and other expletive constructions, even though their L1 does not require an overt expletive in existential sentences. If my (admittedly rather ad hoc) analysis of the Spanish-Swedish expletive data in terms of unanalysed chunk det finns is along the right lines, the notion of L1 transfer can be maintained for the IL expletive data. However, until we are convinced that the distinction is due to L1 transfer and not to the nature of the existential context itself, such speculation seems premature. Leaving overt expletives in existential sentences aside, the IL data on all other expletive contexts are compatible with L1 transfer, confirming Full Transfer hypothesis 2.

It is the omission of referential subjects that most obviously warrants an explanation in terms of L1 transfer. However, one seemingly anomalous feature of the missing subject findings must be discussed before looking at the similarities between the IL data and the L1: throughout the data collection the rates of missing subjects are much lower in the IL data than in native languages Spanish and Italian. This quantitative difference is a widely attested property of IL data produced by L2ers from a ‘null subject’ background, but it must be noted that proportions of missing subjects vary greatly among individual L2ers. This is

104 The German equivalent of Italian existential utterance “Ci è...” (there is/are) is “es gibt” or “gibt es” or “gibts”. Perhaps, in the Italian-German data the contracted VS construction “gibts” can be seen as an unanalysed expression. This would match the analysis that was proposed for the Spanish-Swedish expletive data. However, the occurrence of “es gibt” in the IL data, as well as the parallelism with the expletive patterns found in the Italian-English data suggest that the observed distinction in the use of non-referential “es” is due to the influence of the L1.

105 Vikner (1994) makes a distinction between existential expletive subjects and other expletive subjects. A discussion and interpretation of the IL data in terms of this distinction lie beyond the scope of this book.
also true for the learners in this study: missing subject rates are as high as 50% for some and as low as 10% for others.\textsuperscript{106} This variation in rates between individual L2ers in similar learning situations is found across all three language pairs. Despite this difference, all L2ers are alike in that they use more overt subject pronouns in their IL production than they would in their native languages Spanish and Italian. The learners’ increased use of overt subject pronouns may be attributed to the saliency of overt subject pronouns in the TL input. Native Spanish and Italian L2 learners will not have much difficulty in recognising overt subject pronouns in the TLs for what they are, because Spanish and Italian also have overt subject pronouns, even though different (discourse or pragmatic) constraints govern their usage. At an early stage of L2A, these L2ers learn the TL equivalents that match their L1 pronouns.\textsuperscript{107} Moreover, they soon observe that the TL pronouns are used differently, as the TL pronouns clearly violate the L1 constraint that subject pronouns are only overt when they are needed to emphasise, contrast or disambiguate the reference of the subject. It may be tentatively concluded that the comparatively higher use of overt subject pronouns in the IL data is due to an early relaxation of this L1 constraint.

But, one might ask, wouldn’t a relaxation of this L1 constraint rule trigger resetting of the parameter value and consequently rule out missing subjects altogether? It seems quite plausible to me that loosening or even giving up this pragmatic constraint does not affect the parameter value itself. As was suggested in chapter 2, the pragmatic constraint on the use of overt pronouns in Spanish and Italian is not parameterised because it is not related to the strength of features in a functional category. The [+ strong] Agr parameter value depends on the strength of Agr features, and is responsible for the syntactic option of empty SpecAgrP, hence for surface strings without subjects. This parameter value allows but does not require empty SpecAgrP. In other words, this parameter value accommodates both missing and overt subject pronouns alike. In Spanish and Italian, it is a non-parameterised pragmatic constraint which restricts the actual use of overt subject pronouns to utterances in which the reference of the subject is not unambiguously clear from the context or cases where the subject is emphasised or contrasted. Thus, the information that determines the overtness of subject pronouns in null subject languages like Italian and Spanish is contextual, or discourse information. I assume that the L2ers relax this pragmatic constraint to the point of allowing overt subject pronouns everywhere, regardless of the need for disambiguation. If L2ers apply

\textsuperscript{106} Commonly, 90% correct usage of a form is taken as evidence for acquisition of that form (but Vainikka and Young-Scholten 1994 take 60% as evidence for acquisition). However, usage of overt pronouns does not reflect unlearning of the pro-drop option, even if the percentage of missing subjects is as low as 10%. These missing subjects must still be accounted for.

\textsuperscript{107} L2ers often use a third person singular masculine personal pronoun ‘he’, for male and female referents alike.
this pragmatic rule consistently, they will use overt subjects everywhere.\textsuperscript{108} However, the parameter value itself remains unchanged and still allows missing subjects.

So, on the one hand, L2ers may be aware that subject omissions are not correct in the TL, resulting in the use of more overt subject pronouns. On the other hand, they may be unable to stop the L1 parameter value from intruding. Some individuals may be better at resisting the force of habit than others, which would explain the variability in missing subject rates between individual L2ers. An early, but partial, adaptation to the TL does not totally exclude the possibility of subject omission from the learners’ IL grammar. This is clear from the observation that the initial proportions of missing subjects do not decrease significantly over time, but are more or less sustained during the two-year period that the recordings were made.

Except for this quantitative difference, the observed distributions of subject omission are congruent with Spanish and Italian patterns of subject omission. As was predicted, referential subject omissions are generally spread out equally across all person/number contexts, verb types and forms, and main and subordinate clauses, which means they pattern exactly like missing subjects in Spanish and Italian.

Two of the Italian-English learners (Andrea and Lavinia), and one Italian-German learner (Tino) show a propensity to omit the subject in 3\textsuperscript{rd} person singular contexts with copula or auxiliary verb form “is”. At no point in the data is their subject omission restricted exclusively to this context, however. In her study of the IL data of a native Spanish child learning English as a L2, Lakshmanan (1994) observed a somewhat similar tendency for subject omission from “is” contexts. She claims that a “phonological matching between the English it’s and is and the Spanish es triggers the transfer of null subjects [in other contexts] to English”. Her account depends on two conditions that clearly do not hold for the Italian-English data under discussion. For ‘phonological matching’ with copula/auxiliary “is” to occur, the subject pronoun that is (apparently) missing must be neuter pronoun “it”. However, in the IL data I studied, many of the L2ers’ subjects that were missing from “is” contexts referred to masculine “he” or feminine “she” (or German er and sie respectively, for Tino), which cannot be phonologically assimilated with “is”. Furthermore, for subjectless “is” to act as a trigger for subject omissions in other contexts, one would expect the former to precede the latter in time. Again, this prediction is not borne out by my IL data, as subjects are omitted from all different contexts from the start. Rather the reverse situation holds for Andrea, whose subject omissions from contexts other

\textsuperscript{108} Even if L2ers let go of the L1 constraint that subject pronouns are only used for emphasis, contrast or disambiguation, they still hold on to another constraint that restricts the use of subject pronouns to contexts in which the referent is deictic (for 1\textsuperscript{st} and 2\textsuperscript{nd} persons) or has been introduced by a NP subject (for 3\textsuperscript{rd} person subjects). The latter constraint holds in the L1s and TLs alike.
than copula/auxiliary “is” contexts drop off a bit after recording session viii. Since the three L2ers continue to omit subjects from different contexts, there is no evidence for a qualitative change in their underlying grammars, nor do the data warrant an alternative explanation for missing subjects with “is”.

Assuming, then, that the missing subject of this study are generally supportive of Full Transfer hypothesis 2, what do they say about alternative accounts for missing subjects in learner language? One alternative analysis of the IL missing subjects claims that it is the initial lack (or optionality, or underspecification) of functional projections that causes subjects to be omitted in early L2 acquisition (see chapter 1 for a review of such proposals, especially Minimal Trees and Valueless Features). In the absence of functional projections such as TP, AgrP and CP, subjects are only optionally overt in the specifier position of VP. The end of this ‘optional subject’ stage is thought to be triggered and marked by the acquisition of properties commonly associated with these functional projections, such as overt verbal inflection, (modal) auxiliaries and overt complementisers introducing subordinate clauses. Such accounts usually run into trouble with IL data, as there is ample empirical evidence that the predicted finiteness/null subject interactions do not hold in the adult L2 acquisition of Germanic languages (cf. chapter 2). This evidence is corroborated by the results of the present study, which also show a dissociation between verbal inflections and missing subjects, and—what is more—subject omissions from tensed subordinate clauses with a complementiser. Example (7) (12g from section 4.5.1) illustrates a tensed subordinate clause without an overt subject pronoun.

(7) because were talking to each other (Lavinia, viii, 3rd
‘Because they were talking to each other’ person plural)

Another alternative explanation for the subject omissions in the IL data which does not hinge on the presence or absence of verb inflections is an analysis in terms of ‘topic drop’. Topic drop is the account commonly used for missing subjects in the target languages Swedish and German. It is a potentially plausible alternative account for the L2ers of Swedish and German, as these learners may have encountered input with examples topic drop. Under a topic drop account, subjects may be omitted, provided their reference can be recovered from the discourse context and they are associated with the topic position, that is, sentence initial position. In other words, topic drop is constrained to initial positions and can thus only account for subject omissions from main clauses. Therefore, the IL finding that subjects are also omitted from tensed subordinate clauses with a complementiser is incompatible with the notion of topic drop.

The same and other IL findings are problematic to a heavily constrained version of topic drop, known as “diary drop”. This account merits to be
mentioned because it is used to describe the phenomenon of acceptable subject omission in certain registers of English (see chapter 2), and may have been present in the TL input of the Italian L2ers of English. Diary drop is restricted to clause-initial position and utterances with lexical verbs, and preferably occurs with 1st person subjects. Under the assumption that the observed IL subject omissions reflect diary drop in the English input, one would expect results that are rather different from the actual IL findings: one would expect a tendency for missing subjects in 1st person singular contexts and no cases of subjectless predicates with (modal) auxiliaries or subjectless tensed subordinate clauses. Thus, the IL findings that missing subjects are found in subordinate clauses, with different person/number combinations, and lexical verbs as well as auxiliary and modal verbs offer evidence against a diary drop analysis of these data.

Summarising, the results on subject omission confirm Full Transfer hypothesis 2 that SpecAgr can remain empty in the IL grammars of the learners. Moreover, the fact that all learners continue to omit subjects from main and subordinate clauses throughout the study means that Full Access hypothesis 6 does not hold: as long as subjects are omitted from both clause types, the parameter clearly has not been reset.

5.2.5 Conclusion: answers to research questions 1 and 3

In conclusion, none of the alternative explanations extends to the cluster of observed L2 facts: there is no more obvious common source of the IL findings other than L1 transfer. In this sense, then, research question 1 can be answered affirmatively. *Is the L2 initial state defined by clustered transfer of properties that relate to the L1 parameter value? If so, which properties are found to cluster?*

Yes, the L2 initial state is defined by clustered transfer of properties that relate to the L1 Null Subject Parameter value. The properties that are found to cluster are missing expletive and referential subjects in main and subordinate clauses (5.2.4), subject-verb inversion (5.2.3) and (X)SVAO word orders (5.2.2). The Null Subject Parameter adopted throughout this study (chapter 3) attributes all of these properties to the learners’ Spanish/Italian L1 parameter value.

The answer to research question 3 is negative. *Is L2 development characterised by clustered acquisition of properties that relate to parameter values of the target language (or non-L1 parameter values)? If so, which properties are found to cluster?* There is no evidence for clustered acquisition of properties that relate to the TL value. What is more, there is not even evidence suggesting that the L1 Null Subject Parameter is unlearnt by any of the learners involved in this study. Although we cannot verify whether these L2ers reset this parameter at a point later in time, there is no reason to assume that they will.109

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109 This study has analysed all available recordings of each learner: there are no data beyond the period I reported on here.
What we are dealing with, then, seems to be a rather stable IL state. Of course, the L2ers may get better at using overt subject pronouns and overt expletives, and avoiding post-verbal subjects. Nevertheless, the available IL data of the most successful L2ers suggest that such superficial approximation of TL-like sentences does not eradicate the syntactic option of leaving SpecAgrP empty or V-to-Agr raising.

Section 5.3 looks into the implications of the results for the theories of Partial Transfer and Full Transfer and answers research question 2; section 5.5 discusses the implications for the theories of No Access and Full Access, answering research question 4.

5.3 Implications of the results for Partial Transfer and Full Transfer

The major contribution of this study is that it adds to the evidence that the L1 parameter setting carries over into the L2 initial state grammar of adult L2 learners. Disconfirming both No Transfer and Partial Transfer, my results are best accounted for by the Full Transfer hypothesis.

In chapter 1, I introduced a lexicalist notion of grammar, which accounts for parametric variation in terms of variation in the lexicon (cf. section 1.6). In this section, I argue why parts of the L2ers’ existing L1 lexicon might transfer into the IL, and illustrate this notion of transfer with examples from the IL data. The lexicalist notion of grammar fits in with the view that crosslinguistic variation captured by the Null Subject Parameter, or rather the Agr strength parameter, is attributable to [+/-] strong Agr features (section 3.2). Recapitulating, the strength of the Agr features depends on how agreement affixes are listed in the lexicon. For instance, null subject languages like Spanish and Italian have the [+ strong] Agr parameter value, in that each inflectional affix has its own individual lexical entry which is available to the computational component and may head its own Agr projection. The resulting AgrP thus gets content from the agreement affix in Agr, satisfying the Economy of Projection Principle. As a result, SpecAgrP may remain empty, which accounts for sentences with missing or post-verbal subjects in Spanish and Italian.

I assume that initially there is no more obvious lexical knowledge than the knowledge encoded in the L1 lexicon that can serve as input for the structure building component. As we have seen, the IL data reported in chapter 4 are all compatible with and suggestive of residual L1 structures. Apart from this empirical reason, there are conceptual reasons for assuming that the L1 lexicon is the basis for IL syntactic structures. These reasons are founded on learnability considerations. The common assumption in computational perspectives on learnability is that learning is error or failure driven (Fodor 1999). A failure driven learning procedure adopts the current grammar until it fails. So, if the current
grammar succeeds in assigning a structure to the input there is no need to try another grammar. I assume that this is the way L2A works, too. Therefore, the question of what makes up the IL lexicon can be rephrased as: what serves as the 'current' grammar at the L2 initial state?

Obviously, at the onset of L2 acquisition there is no separate IL grammar which can assign structures to TL sentences. It is uncontroversial that simply acquiring TL words does not mean the complete set of TL lexical properties follows automatically, since the TL words do not come with the TL analysis attached to them. Yet, as Fodor (1999) suggests, to the computational system of the learner, the TL input is more than unanalysed sound strings: the TL input is the sound strings as the computational system analyses them. Initially, the only analyses available to the computational system must come from the L1, as there is no other ‘current’ grammar than the L1 grammar.

One reason for assuming that alternative sources of grammatical knowledge (such as UG or construction-specific rules) are less likely candidates, is their inefficiency at the L2 initial state. This inefficiency is caused by the fact that these alternatives offer a vast pool of options which need to be tested before they can be adopted or rejected. For instance, even if the pool of UG-defined parametric options were still accessible to the computational component (which I believe it is not), multiple test parses must be made before the parser hits upon a possible, but not necessarily correct TL parse. During the earliest stage of L2A, the same disadvantage holds for construction-specific rules that are construed through general problem solving strategies (an option which may become important after the L2 initial state when the IL is restructured; see below). In short, why would the L2er prefer a random choice from the pool of possibilities above the fully fledged and ready-to-use L1 grammar, even before the usefulness of this current grammar has been tested with the TL input?

Another reason why an UG scenario is unlikely at the L2 initial state is that during the process of child L1A many of the UG-defined options were rejected in favour of the L1 parameter values; the L1 values, however, have been fixed and reinforced by evidence. Moreover, alternative, non-instantiated parameter values have not been activated, if ever at all, since the L1 parameters were set to their appropriate TL values in childhood; again, the L1 values are still used every time the adult L2ers generate or parse a sentence in their final-state native language. So, when L2ers begin to learn a L2, the “activation level” of their L1 grammars is very high. Even though L2ers are aware from the start that the TL is a separate language, which is possibly or even clearly different from the L1, they have no more active alternative grammar than the L1 grammar with which to tackle the TL input. In fact, there is no reason why the L1 grammar would not serve as input for the parser at the L2 initial state.

It is important to stress that, initially, the computational component draws its structural knowledge from the L1 grammar, regardless of the similarities and differences between the L1 and the TL. There is ample empirical evidence in the L2A literature that this is indeed the case. To give one well-
known example (see also chapter 1), L2ers with a SOV L1 (e.g. Punjabi, Turkish) but a SVO TL (e.g. English) initially use L1-like SOV orders, while L2ers with a SVO-L1 (e.g. Spanish, Italian) but a SOV-TL (e.g. German, Swedish) initially use L1-like SVO orders, both in line with their L1, and in disregard of the obvious difference between the L1 and the TL. So, the degree of resemblance between the L1 and the TL only becomes relevant after the computational system has attempted to assign L1 structures to TL sentences.

Let us now return to where we left off at the beginning of this section: defining the L2 initial state IL lexicon. Above, I concluded that the task of L2A boils down to building an IL lexicon. The L2er brings to this task the complete L1 lexicon, including the lexical items, with their phonological, semantic and parameterised properties. On the basis of this L1 knowledge, which can perhaps be conceived of as a copy of the L1 lexicon, the L2er tries to identify L1 lexical items with TL phonological matrices. Simplifying the matter, this might go as follows: first, the L2er takes a TL phonological matrix for the equivalent of a L1 lexical item; then, a copy of this L1 item is listed in the IL lexicon under the matching TL phonological matrix. This procedure results in IL lexical items that have inherited all the properties of L1 lexical items, except for their phonological matrices. To construct IL ‘sentences’ the computational system can draw its knowledge from this IL lexicon. Consequently, the IL output has a syntactic structure that is identical to the L1 structure, but is made up of words that sound more or less TL-like.

Let me briefly illustrate how the parameterised properties of the L1 lexicon affect the IL structures by considering the IL lexicons of the nine Romance L2ers of Germanic languages described in this study. According to my earlier assumptions, these IL lexicons contain separate lexical entries with all the properties associated with the strong agreement affixes of the L1, except for the L1 phonological matrices. The IL entries function as they do in the L1: they head their own AgrP projection. Because they are inserted in the Agr head, they can license empty SpecAgrP like in the L1, resulting in the possibility of IL sentences with missing or post-verbal subjects. Moreover, the transferred lexical properties continue to motivate verb raising to Agr. I acknowledge the seeming inelegance of my proposal in which IL lexical entries are associated with rich agreement morphology, but lack the actual phonological matrices of the verbal inflections. This is a consequence of my attempt to reconcile Speas’ (1994) account for null subjects and the idea of L1 transfer of lexical information. It should be noted here that the adoption of Speas’ proposal is a matter of execution. All my assumptions concerning the preservation of L1 properties can be

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110 Phonological information is usually not included in listings of L1 properties that may transfer (cf. Schwartz and Sprouse 1994, 1996; Van de Craats et al, forthcoming). Although I do not assume that the L1 phonological matrices transfer, as the L2er is aware that the words of the L2 sound different, they may affect the L2 initial state: they may play a role in matching L1 sounds with TL sounds and if a L2er does not know a TL word, he or she sometimes uses a L1 phonological matrix.

111 I acknowledge the seeming inelegance of my proposal in which IL lexical entries are associated with rich agreement morphology, but lack the actual phonological matrices of the verbal inflections. This is a consequence of my attempt to reconcile Speas’ (1994) account for null subjects and the idea of L1 transfer of lexical information. It should be noted here that the adoption of Speas’ proposal is a matter of execution. All my assumptions concerning the preservation of L1 properties can be
lexical entries lack overt phonological matrices, either because the TL has no overt verbal inflections that can serve as replacements for the L1 inflections (as with TL Swedish, and TL English except for 3rd person singular –s), or because candidate replacement inflections have not been learnt yet (as with TL German). But there are also some L2ers who have acquired the TL-like phonological matrices of the agreement inflections. These L2 learners have mapped the L1 entries to target-language morpho-phonological material. What all these IL lexicons have in common, regardless of whether their phonological matrices are empty or filled, is that their lexical entries are otherwise identical to those of the L1. Consequently, the IL generates and parses sentences as in the L1, which explains the empirical evidence for missing and post-verbal subjects and word orders that are suggestive of V-to-Agr movement.

5.4 Implications of the results for the Null Subject Parameter

The transfer of a L1 parameter-value that is associated with rich agreement morphology, but without the actual morpho-phonological realisations, raises the important question whether the proposed L2 initial state can be reconciled with Speas’ Null Subject Parameter theory that has been adopted as syntactic framework throughout this text. Or more specifically: does the proposed L2-initial state satisfy the general Economy of Projection Principle (3.2.2), which is central to Speas’ proposal? Recall from chapter 3 that this economy principle rules out projections which lack content. The principle is repeated in (8) for ease of reference.

(8) Economy of Projection Principle
Project XP only when XP has content

translated into alternative theoretical accounts for null subjects, such as a minimalist account. For instance, in the minimalist program, lexical items are inserted from the lexicon with their inflections already in place, and crosslinguistic variation is captured in terms of variation in abstract features. These abstract features can be assumed to transfer and function as in the L1. An account that is based on abstract features only, solves the conceptual problem that [+ strong] Agr features have morphological correlates, yet are allowed to lack these morpho-phonological reflexes without their strength being affected in L2A. However, such accounts run into other problems. What is attractive about morphological correlate of strength of features à la Speas, for instance, is that feature-strength is overtly detectable - at least to child L1ers - via morphological form in the input; moreover, proposals like Speas’ attempt a principled explanation of crosslinguistic relations between the possibility of missing subjects and overt morphology.
Either the head or the specifier must have content to license a maximal projection. Because the L1 (Italian or Spanish) must project AgrP since it has agreement, AgrP is also projected in the L2 initial state grammar as a result of transfer. The question arises how this transferred AgrP can be given content, since the specifier of AgrP is assumed to be empty, or only optionally filled by an overt subject, as in the L1. This means that the Agr head would have to license the AgrP projection. However, assuming phonologically empty lexical entries, there is no overt morpheme in this L2 initial state Agr head (illustrated in (9)). If this implies that the Agr head has no content to license the projection of AgrP, the proposed L2 initial state seems to cause a violation of the Economy of projection principles. In this section, I argue that the seemingly impossible representation of the L2 initial state AgrP projection in (9) does not violate any economy of projection principles because Agr does in fact have 'content'.

(9) L2 initial state AgrP projection of native Italian or Spanish learner.

In chapter 3, I adopted Speas’ (1995:8) definition of the notion of content that “[a] node X has content if and only if X dominates a distinct phonological matrix or a distinct semantic matrix”. This definition makes clear that the representation in (9) lacks phonological content. Consequently, (9) is only legitimate if the zero-affix can be argued to have semantic content. Speas’ economy account of null subjects revolves around the assumption that Agr itself

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112 This apparent problem does not arise if the learning situation involves a L1 which does not allow pro subjects. Such languages (i.e. English) are taken to base generate their agreement morphology in a paradigm directly on the verb. Since in such languages there are no individual lexical entries for agreement affixes, the presence or absence of overt agreement morphology is irrelevant. The head of AgrP is empty anyway and the AgrP projection is licensed via lexical material in SpecAgrP. This situation is transferred into the L2 initial state and economy principles can be satisfied in the absence of overt morphology.

Another learning situation which is not troubled by absence of morphology involves an L1 which allows null subjects by virtue of the absence of agreement morphology, such as Japanese. In such a case there is no AgrP to be licensed in the L2 initial state, because the L1 does not project AgrP at all, hence it cannot transfer. Following Speas, I assume that in languages as Japanese pro subjects are licensed in SpecTP. This option is then transferred into the L2 initial state.
lacks independent semantic content as it is only a relational head (cf. Kiniyalolo 1991; Carstens 1991; Bouchard 1992; Fukui 1993; Kayne 1994). However, Speas also assumes (1995:16) that "... phi features are semantic features associated with particular morphemes, either pronouns/NPs or affixes". I take this idea one step further in assuming that even the zero-affix under Agr in (9) is associated with phi features which have semantic content (i.e. person and number information), because semantic information transfers under my transfer account. Therefore, the Agr head in (9) meets Speas’ requirement of dominating a distinct semantic matrix, and it can thus license the AgrP projection despite the absence of phonologically overt material.

The pertinent question to ask at this point is whether there is independent evidence that natural languages permit individual lexical entries for agreement features that are phonetically null. This question may be answered by looking at Rohrbacher’s (1994) Full Paradigm Condition. This condition requires that agreement morphology minimally distinctively marks the person features [1st] and [2nd] in order to have lexically listed affixes. So, according to Rohrbacher’s generalisation not every cell in the agreement paradigm is required to have an overt affix in order to have an individual lexical entry. This is illustrated in (10) with the indicative present of the Spanish verb ‘amar’ (to love).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicative present of the Spanish verb ‘amar’ (to love)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Singular</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Root</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd person</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The root of the verb *amar* is ‘*am*’. The vowel that follows the root in all forms (except first person singular *amo*) is traditionally called the theme vowel. In the verb *amar* the theme vowel is ‘a’. Theme vowels belong neither to the root, nor, strictly speaking, do they belong to the inflectional affix. Their function is to define the conjugation class of the verb. The root plus the theme vowel is often referred to as the “stem”. Thus, the forms in (10) consist of the stem, followed by one of the person-number endings (-o, -s, -ø, -mos, -is, -n).

According to Harris (1980:67) “[t]he theme vowel does not appear phonetically in 1sg amo. This may be accounted for and the paradigm regularised by postulating for amo the systematic phonemic representation /am+a+o/. Thematic a is then deleted.”
Note that the third person singular consists of just the stem ‘ama’, and hence lacks an overt agreement affix. Yet, third person singular null subjects are possible (e.g. ‘ama Juan’ = ‘(she/he/it) loves Juan’). The possibility of a third person singular pro-subject implies that there is an individual lexical entry for the third person singular features in the Spanish lexicon even though there is no morpho-phonological reflex of these agreement features. Apparently, principles of economy do not rule out structures in which the Agr head does not contain a (audible) phonological matrix and the SpecAgrP is also empty, provided the relevant slot in the agreement paradigm has a separate lexical entry. This justifies an affirmative answer to the question whether individual lexical entries without overt phonological reflexes are legitimate in principle.

Recall that I adopted Rohrbacher’s (1994) proposal that being listed individually in the lexicon means being available to the computational component, and consequently being permitted to head a projection. This accounts for the possibility of a missing subject combined with a phonologically ‘empty’ or ‘zero’ (ø) agreement morpheme in languages with an overall rich agreement paradigm, such as Spanish or Italian. Such languages qualify for the Full Paradigm condition on the basis of their overt agreement affixes. There is an individual lexical entry for each cell in the paradigm, although some of these cells (like Spanish 3rd person singular indicative present) may contain nothing but a phonologically zero (ø) affix.

I propose to extend this possibility to the L2 initial state of native Spanish and Italian L2ers where all agreement affixes are assumed to be phonetically null, given the lack of overt inflectional morphology during this stage. Because the property of individual lexical entries is transferred from the L1, along with the distinct abstract referential features for each entry, the AgrP projection can be headed and licensed by Agr. This means that an empty SpecAgrP is permitted. In this way, L2 initial state pro-subjects do not violate the economy of projection principle, even though overt agreement morphology is missing.

Although the L2 initial state grammar just described does not violate any principles constraining natural language grammars, and hence is a possible natural language grammar, it is not an existing language, as far as I know. Nevertheless, my scenario may create a conceptual learnability problem for child first language acquisition which I will briefly address here. If principles of economy permit AgrP projections without phonological material in either

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114 Recall that languages without agreement morphology which allow null subjects (like Japanese) are assumed here not to project AgrP at all, following Speas (1995). Such languages are thus dissimilar to the L2 initial state grammar proposed for L2ers coming from a null subject language with rich agreement (like Spanish and Italian).

115 Cf. Chomsky (1987: 10) about UG defining the class of natural languages, but not attainable languages.
SpecAgrP or Agr, as I have just suggested for the L2 initial state of Italian L2ers of English, one wonders what prevents children from ending up with similar native final state grammars. Young children learning a variety of L1s are known to permit null subjects in the absence of overt agreement morphology (cf. chapter 3). \[116\] However, this stage does not last, and eventually all children converge on the TL grammar, which indicates that children do not remain trapped in false hypotheses. Obviously, the knowledge that children are successful in practice, must be the basis of any theoretical account of language learning. A proposal under which children are unlikely to emerge from potential pitfalls is a conceptually weak proposal in terms of learnability considerations. My account does not seem to suffer from such weakness.

I follow Rohrbacher (1994) in suggesting that children acquiring their L1s are sensitive to the TL morphology. On the basis of morphology they may discover whether or not the TL has a Full Paradigm. If the TL does not minimally mark 1st and 2nd person, and singular, the possibility of treating agreement affixes as individual lexical items does not arise at all. By implication, this also means that the possibility of an empty SpecAgrP does not present itself to the child. If, however, the TL has a Full Paradigm, (and here I diverge from Rohrbacher’s assumptions and agree with Speas 1995) the child must still learn whether agreement affixes are individually listed in the lexicon or not. \[117\] As Speas (1995:65) remarks, this is a reasonable assumption, given that “properties of the mapping from the Lexicon to Syntax...must be learned in any case”.

It is possible that children may initially be mislead by a Full Paradigm. This seems to happen with German children at a particular stage in their native language development. German meets Rohrbacher’s Full Paradigm Condition, but does not allow referential null subjects in SpecAgrP, just in topic position. Indeed, German children display rather clear topic-drop profiles; that is, missing arguments are restricted to sentence initial (topic) positions for most of the time (De Haan and Tuyman 1988). Post-verbal subjects and embedded subjects are practically never omitted up to a certain age, when suddenly they are left out from these positions for a while, and later this phenomenon disappears again

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\[116\] For the early null subject stage found in L1A there are many different accounts. Hyams’ (1986) once popular idea that children start out with a wrong, but possible, parameter value has lost ground. Rather than a missetting of a pro-drop parameter, underspecification or incompleteness of the L1 grammar are now commonly held responsible for these early missing subjects (cf. Chapter 4).

\[117\] So, I assume with Speas (1995) that rich morphology is a necessary but not sufficient condition for setting the Agr strength parameter to the [+ strong] value. This differs from Rohrbacher who assumes that rich morphology automatically triggers the TL value. Even if the condition of a sufficiently rich agreement paradigm is met to justify lexical entries, the child is still left with two options made available by UG: agreement morphemes are either individually listed in the lexicon or in verbal paradigms. At that point the child may need other information, for instance the presence of overt expletives, to decide which of these two is the correct TL option.
CONCLUSION: FULL TRANSFER, NO ACCESS

(Duffield 1993; Hamann 1994). The temporary omission of post-verbal and embedded subjects (which cannot be analysed as German-like topic-drop) coincides with the acquisition of agreement morphology.

It may well be that when German children discover that German has a Full Paradigm, this leads them into temporarily entertaining the false hypothesis that German lexically lists the agreement affixes, thus licensing an empty Spec-AgrP. The early German L1 acquisition phenomenon of post-verbal missing subjects has been observed to vanish with the acquisition of expletive "es" in SpecCP. Even if no conclusions can be drawn as to what exactly eradicates the option of post-verbal and embedded pro-subjects, it is clear that in L1A in this option is lost eventually. Thus, at some point the child arrives at the correct German way of listing the agreement affixes in the lexicon, base-generating affixes directly on the verb in V instead of in Agr, separate from the verb.

What is important to note about the observation that German children briefly use post-verbal and embedded null subjects is the following. Post-verbal missing subjects are not used before the acquisition of agreement morphology (especially, firm acquisition of the second person ending -st, as would follow from Rohrbacher (1994)). This confirms the suggestion that child L1 learners, unlike adult L2 learners, do not come up with individual lexical entries for agreement affixes unless this is warranted by the morphology. In other words, overt morphological conditions determine whether or not individual entries for agreement morphemes are at all possible in the child's developing lexicon. Therefore, children are not likely to end up with the grammar proposed for the L2 initial state of native Spanish and Italian speakers above, that is, separate lexical entries for agreement inflections without overt phonological matrices.

Summarising, I assume for the L2 initial state of native Spanish and Italian speakers that once the lexical status of the agreement paradigm has been determined as involving an individual entry for each cell in the paradigm, none of these entries has to contain an overt morpheme. Under the assumption that the mere property of individual lexical listing is sufficient to provide Agr with content, empty Spec-AgrP may thus be licensed even though overt agreement morphology is completely lacking. Although this option of null subjects in Spec-AgrP without any overt morphology may not come up in native natural language grammars, it does not violate any economy principles per se. In the sense that the L2 initial state grammar does not violate this general constraint on natural language grammars, the hypothesised L2 initial state grammar is not an unnatural grammar.

118 Adult L2ers of German from null subject languages like Spanish and Italian display distributions of missing subjects that differ from missing subjects in child L1 German. These L2ers are found to omit subjects from all the positions permitted in Spanish and Italian, such as from embedded clauses, even though they have not mastered the German inflectional paradigm. This shows that adult L2ers are less guided by overt morphology in the TL input than children learning their mother tongue.
Importantly, my claim is that such a situation may occur in L2 initial state grammars of native Italian and Spanish L2ers whose L1s license null subjects via independently listed agreement affixes. Adult L2ers have established the lexical status of their L1 agreement paradigm during the process of L1A. The abstract properties of the L1 are transferred into the L2 initial state, but without their morpho-phonological reflexes. If, in the L1, there are separate entries for each cell in the paradigm, and each entry has distinct referential features, a blueprint of this situation constitutes the L2 initial state. However, none of these entries is initially filled with a phonologically overt morpheme.

Finally, I claim that this situation is unlikely to occur in child L1A, precisely because children, unlike adult L2ers, do not start out with a fully developed grammar that has been fixed deeply by constant use over a long time. If the TL input to the child contains overt agreement morphology, this morphology and its lexical/grammatical implications will soon be acquired and used in a TL manner by the child.

This takes me back to where I started this section. The Null Subject Parameter adopted in this study as the syntactic framework accounts for both child L1A and the cluster of properties found in adult L2A.

5.5 Implications of the results for No Access and UG Access

In the previous section, I argued that the IL data do not violate the general Economy of Projection Principle that constrains the free projection of entire phrases. This general constraint impinges on the computational component of the generative procedure, hence it is not part of the lexicon where I assume the parameters of UG to be located. It is important to note here, then, that even if the IL grammar as I proposed it happens not to violate a general economy principle, the findings fail to confirm Full Access, the proposal that UG in its entirety - used and unused principles and parameters - constrains the process of adult L2A.

To which extent is the absence of restructuring, which characterised my IL data, meaningful beyond this particular study? It goes without saying that I should be cautious about what to conclude with respect to the possibility of accessing previously unused parameter values in general. For instance, one limitation to the generalisability of the results is that I have investigated only one parameter: the Null Subject Parameter or Agr Strength Parameter; another limitation is my focus on only one learning direction: from Romance null subject L1 to Germanic non-null subject L2.

In the light of these caveats, I conclude with what I feel this study suggests with respect to Full Access. During the two years covered by my IL data, the L2ers have presumably received all kinds of natural input that could logically serve as triggers for setting the TL value if L2A were as deterministic as L1A. Clearly, adult L2A is not deterministic in that these L2ers remain trapped in
false analyses of the TL instead of converging on the TL grammar. For the L2 learners of my study, at least, the failure to attain the TL grammar appears to be due to their L1 grammars still being appropriate for their perception of the L2 surface data. This conclusion follows logically from the view presented in section 5.3 that changes in developing grammars are driven by a failure to accommodate the TL input. As long as there is nothing in the input data to force a change, the current grammar continues to serve as the hypothesis about the data.

But a lack of determinacy is by no means restricted to L2A cases which seem to lack grammatical development. The determinacy-problem is a well-known feature of adult L2A, even of the most advanced stages of L2A. It is interesting to note here that even L2ers that could pass as native speaker of the TL in spontaneous production have been found to fall short of ultimate attainment on closer inspection. For instance, Sorace (1993) observed that the grammaticality judgments of very advanced adult L2 learners were different from those of native speakers. Moreover, she found that the judgments of advanced adult L2 learners from the same L1 background differed consistently from those of equally advanced learners from another L1 background: the ways in which their grammaticality judgments varied reflected differences in their L1 grammars.

Do such findings falsify Full Access approaches? According to some, they do not: not all versions of Full Access are committed to convergence upon the target language grammar. For instance, Full Transfer/Full Access as advocated by Schwartz and Sprouse (1994, 1996, 2000) actually predicts divergent outcomes of L2A, in that L2ers may be successful in some, but not all cases, depending on the combination of L1 properties and TL input. In addition to full UG access, Schwartz and Sprouse (1994) attribute to the process of L2 development a property of conservatism and minimal change in which the “grammatical properties of the immediately antecedent system” (340) play a crucial role.119 They suggest that “the lack of success may arise exactly because the sole hypotheses that an L2er can employ in the construction of an L2 grammar are those that UG makes available, but as they apply in conjunction with the L1 grammar, these hypotheses will in certain circumstances miss the mark and without (the necessary) negative data, the L2er will be unable to retract” (1994, 356).120 Nevertheless, Schwartz and Sprouse assume that complete success in L2A is possible in principle: even though they acknowledge

119 What could be a reason for minimal changes under a UG account? White (1982, 48) points out that “the theory of grammar does not impose specific restrictions on possible changes beyond restrictions on grammars in general (Lightfoot, 1979).” So minimal changes cannot be a formal constraint on natural language development. Moreover, Schwartz and Sprouse do not offer a definition of ‘minimal change’.

120 They add the following endnote: “This is not to suggest that negative data are actually usable in L2 ‘grammar construction’. (See Schwartz 1993, Schwartz and Gubula Ryzak 1992; for a different position, see White 1987, 1991, 1992.)”
that L1A and L2A often differ in ultimate attainment, they maintain that the process of L2A closely resembles the process of L1A.

However, if grammar change in L2ers proceeds along the lines Schwartz and Sprouse propose, it differs crucially from the process of grammar change in L1A, contrary to their claim. The assumption that the successive stages of L2A each relate directly to the previous grammar is at odds with the common perception of grammar construction in L1A. As White (1982) convincingly argues for L1A, the grammar of each intermediate stage does not depend on the previous grammar, but on the learner’s perception of the surface data. The rationale behind this model of grammar change derives from Chomsky’s (1975) observation that the end result of primary language acquisition is shared by all native speakers of the same language, despite differences in the order in which children encounter particular data. As White (1982, 44) puts it, “grammar change involves starting afresh in grammar construction for any particular structure under consideration without reference to the way this structure has been dealt with before”. Complete success in L1A thus includes a system of grammar change in which the previous grammar is discarded if it ceases to fit the child’s current perception of the data. Indeed, a different process seems to apply in adult L2A. Unlike the end-state L1 grammar, which is quite similar across native speakers of the same language, the grammars with which L2ers end up are notoriously dissimilar across nonnative speakers of that language. Such differences are to be expected if L2 grammars crucially depend on the history of their previous grammars. Clearly, then, the etiology of L1A and L2A are different: while discrete changes between subsequent grammars characterise L1A, the L2 grammar continues to be directed by the properties of the previous (i.e. L1) grammar - from the earliest to the most advanced stages.

Where does this leave us in the debate about UG access? Up to the present time, evidence from L2A research consistently suggests that adult L2ers do not converge on the TL grammar. Such evidence does not make sense under a Full Access account: it simply is not plausible to claim Full Access, while at the same time claiming that – whatever the reason – full access to previously unused UG parameters is compromised. To point out L1 transfer effects as the obstacle to complete success in L2A is rather arbitrary. What is the relevance of the pool of UG options to L2A if the L2 learner cannot access these options? As long as UG fails to take charge when a change of grammar is required, Full Access is out of the question. I take the tack that a given L1 may be a more or less advantageous point of departure for learning the constructions of a particular L2. I tentatively assume that - for want of unused UG parameters-adult L2 learners locally accommodate TL input, for instance by relaxing constraints on their transferred grammars or by positing construction-specific

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121 Given that adult native speakers have the same intuitions about (un)grammaticality, their grammars must be the same.
rules. These speculations extend beyond what the findings of the present study warrant. The unresolved issue as to how exactly adult learners build their L2 grammars from the L1 grammar warrants further empirical investigation.

5.6 Suggestions for further research

I close with some suggestions for ways in which this study can be extended. The present study investigates the transfer of three properties assumed to be related to the Null Subject Parameter value of Spanish and Italian: missing subjects, inverted subjects and adverb placement suggesting verb movement to Agr. Due to the low incidence of typical Romance inversion verbs and diagnostic adverbs in the spontaneous longitudinal data reported here, some of my conclusions are rather tentative. Therefore, it would be worthwhile to complement these data with data from experiments that are designed to prompt the use of inversion verbs and diagnostic adverbs in meaningful contexts, to determine whether they confirm the results of this study.

Additional UG-oriented L2A research should try to differentiate between invariant UG constraints and parameter resetting. There are two well-known lines of inquiry. On the one hand, there is research looking for ‘wild grammars’ that cannot be captured in terms of UG constraints; on the other hand, there are those who are trying to find evidence for ‘poverty-of the stimulus phenomena’. These phenomena are IL data that extend beyond the L1 grammar and cannot have been derived solely from the TL input, yet fall within the boundaries of UG constraints. However, both types of evidence have proved very hard - if not impossible - to find. Over twenty years of UG-based L2A research has not yielded conclusive empirical results concerning the UG Access debate, despite the variety of the languages (e.g. Romance, Germanic, Asian) and syntactic domains (e.g. adjacency, binding, null subjects, Subjacency, verb movement and word order) that have been the object of investigation. Possibly, the arbitrating types of evidence, that is ‘wild grammars’ or ‘poverty-of the stimulus phenomena’ do not exist. This explanation is not entirely implausible if a compromise position can be proven to be along the right lines: while parameter resetting is an impossibility in L2A (No Access), the complete L1 grammar constrains L2 development and allows the application of invariant UG principles to construction-specific rules not found in the L1.

Finally, the current work has presented a rather crude picture of the role of the L1 in L2 grammars. Especially in near-native L2 grammars, the effects of the L1 may be more subtle. Yet, prolonged L1 influence in seemingly successful L2A is a largely unexplored topic. The aim of trying to show in what ways the L1 affects near-native grammars is one worth pursuing, because such research should advance our understanding of the adult L2A process.