

COMPARATIVE CONSTRUCTIONS IN FRENCH-SPEAKING BELGIAN LEARNERS OF ENGLISH: A CONTRASTIVE APPROACH

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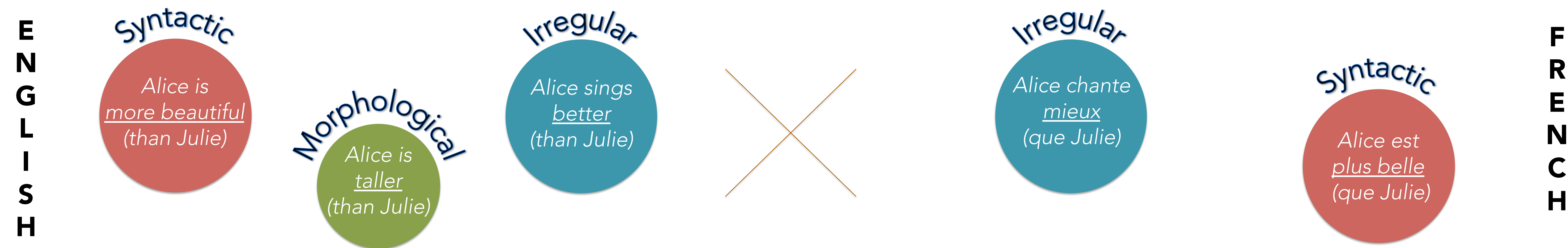
RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- ◆ Carry out a **contrastive analysis** of comparative constructions in French and English
- ◆ Investigate the **acquisition** of English by intermediate **French-speaking Belgian learners** through the lens of these constructions
- ◆ Compare pupils taught following the **Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)** method (Eurydice 2012) and pupils enrolled in **traditional Belgian educational settings** to further our understanding of the impact of CLIL on foreign language learning

METHODS

1 We first investigate the similarities and differences between French and English through a **contrastive analysis** with comparative constructions (as described in Biber et al. 1999, Grevisse 1975, Riegel et al. 1994 and Quirk et al. 1978) as a *tertium comparationis*.

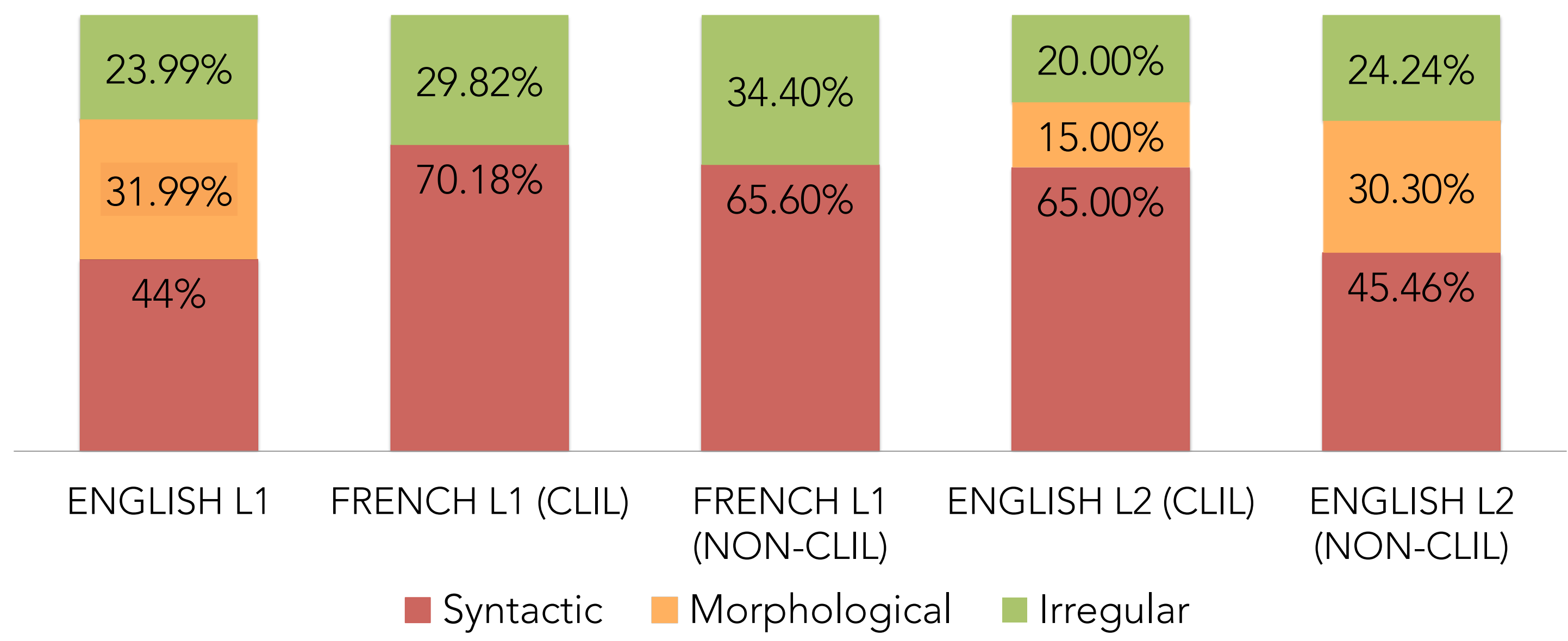
We hypothesize that the **discrepancy** between the two languages acts as a potential **obstacle** to the correct use of comparatives by our population of French-speaking learners of English. From a usage-based perspective such as the one adopted in Ellis and Cadierno (2009), the main challenge faced by learners consists in the competition between the specific constructions of their native and foreign language.



2 We propose to answer two research questions through the extraction and the analysis of 399 instances of comparative constructions in five small-scale comparable corpora collected within the framework of an ongoing research project on CLIL in French-speaking Belgium (Hilgsmann et al. 2017).

Language of the samples	English L1	French L1 (CLIL)	French L1 (Non-CLIL)	English L2 (CLIL)	English L2 (Non-CLIL)
Year of data collection	2016	2017	2017	2017	2017
Number of texts	46	218	170	30	77
Number of word tokens	14,865	69,291	52,247	9,348	19,968
Average text length (in words)	323	318	307	311	259

RQ1: WHICH FORMAL TYPES OF COMPARATIVE CONSTRUCTIONS DO CLIL AND NON-CLIL LEARNERS USE IN THEIR L1 AND L2 PRODUCTIONS?



RQ2: DO CLIL LEARNERS DEVELOP A MORE NATIVE-LIKE USE OF COMPARATIVE CONSTRUCTIONS (IN TERMS OF FORMAL TYPES OF CONSTRUCTIONS, DIVERSITY AND ACCURACY) THANKS TO MORE TARGET LANGUAGE INPUT?



CONCLUSIONS

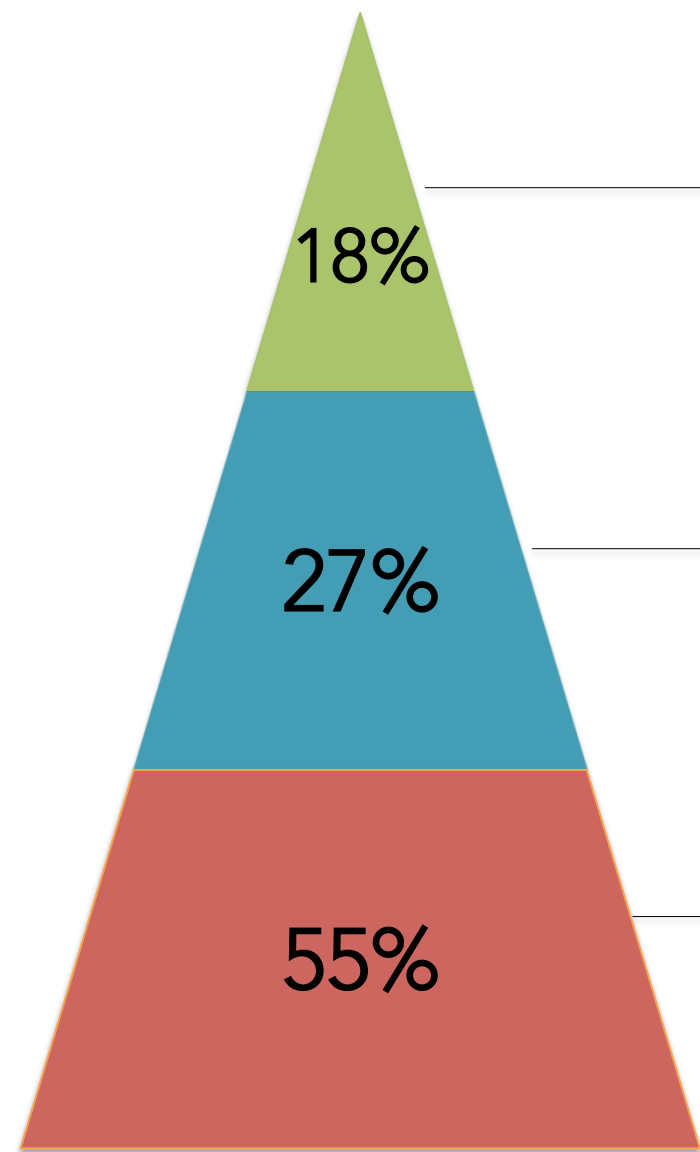
COMPARATIVE CONSTRUCTIONS = AREA OF DIFFICULTY FOR INTERMEDIATE FRENCH-SPEAKING LEARNERS OF ENGLISH FROM BELGIUM? WHY?

- ① **Preference for syntactic constructions** likely due to the influence of L1 (cf. Hendrikx et al. 2017)
 - ➡ Further research is necessary to determine if intra-lingual or interlingual tendency
- ② **Higher productivity** of comparative constructions in **English** as compared to French in the student **populations** under study

➡ **CLIL approach = better learning outcomes** in the long run in the case of comparative constructions: less native-like in formal proportions, perhaps, but with a lower rate of error and a higher degree of productivity and diversity

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| ✗ Lower proportion of morphological comparatives | ✓ Higher proportion of morphological comparatives |
| ✓ Greater formal diversity (TTR: 75%) | ✗ Lesser formal diversity (TTR: 61%) |
| ✓ Lower rate of error (9.1% - 1 type: Functional) | ✗ Higher rate of error (24.5% - 3 types) |
| ✓ Higher productivity of comparative constructions | ✗ Lower productivity of comparative constructions |

TYPES OF ERRORS IDENTIFIED IN THE L2 CORPORA



SYNTACTIC ERRORS: Omission or addition of syntactic elements as part of the comparative construction

FORMAL ERRORS: Use of a syntactic comparative construction in domains taking irregular or morphological markings of the comparative

FUNCTIONAL ERRORS: Use of the comparative form to fulfill a superlative function OR use of the superlative form to fulfill a comparative function