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Effect of implicit training on the processing of morphosyntactic violations by French learners of English.

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► **To cite this version:**

Maud Pélissier, Jennifer Krzonowski, Emmanuel Ferragne. Effect of implicit training on the processing of morphosyntactic violations by French learners of English.. 5th Implicit Learning Seminar, Jun 2016, Lancaster, United Kingdom. . hal-01370545

HAL Id: hal-01370545

<https://hal.science/hal-01370545v1>

Submitted on 23 Sep 2016

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Introduction

Implicit grammar learning with artificial languages has shown that novel grammatical structures can be learned implicitly. We aimed to see if these results could be extended to natural L2 learning.

We investigated the **effect of implicit training** on the processing of **morphosyntactic violations** with different **salience** and **similarity** between L1 and L2.

Methods and Materials

PARTICIPANTS

16 French learners of English

MATERIAL

EEG recording with Semantic Acceptability Judgment Task (SAJT)

192 critical polar questions, ½ with violations:

- Similar L1/L2: *Had Mary finished/*finish our dinner?*
- Specific L2: *Did Mary finish/*finished our dinner?*

120 syntactic fillers, ½ with determinant/noun agreement violations:

- *Did John govern that country/*countries for years?*

120 semantically incongruent sentences

- *Had Mary fired what happened?*

Timed Grammaticality Judgment Task (GJT)

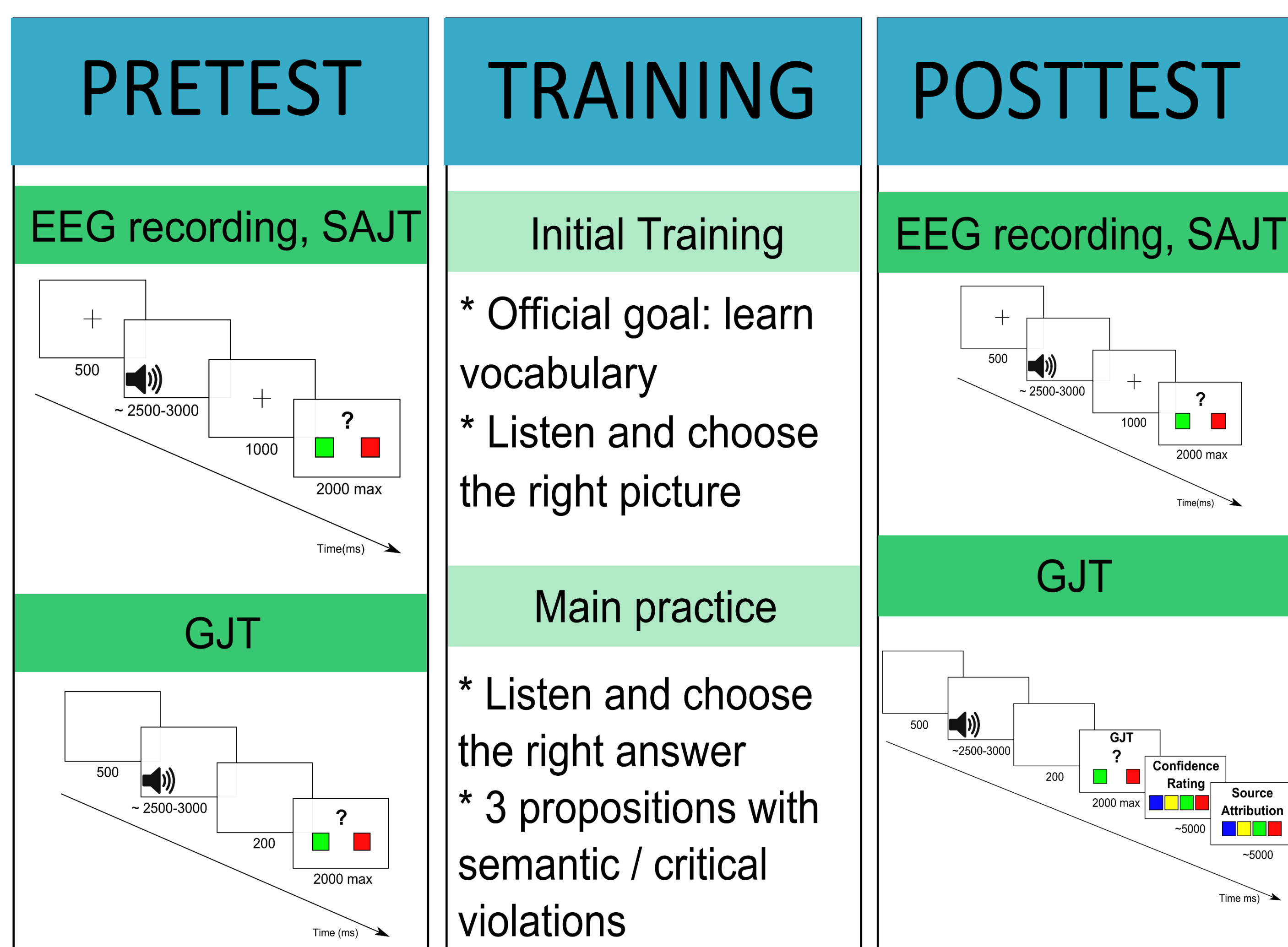
40 polar questions, 24 determinant-noun fillers and 64 additional syntactic fillers; ½ ungrammatical

Training

Initial: 72 polar questions and declarative counterparts

Main: 256 correct polar questions * 3 sessions

PROCEDURE



Results

GJT	Pre-test		Post-test	
	DID	HAD	DID	HAD
<i>d'</i>	0,18 (1,44)	0,87 (1,18)	0,39 (1,14)	1,25 (0,85)
<i>Perf (%)</i>	53,8 (22,7)	62,8 (19,0)	57,2 (17,7)	69,1 (14,3)
<i>RT (ms)</i> $\mu(\sigma), \tau$	283 (245),386	447 (266),294	533 (260),331	568 (274),338

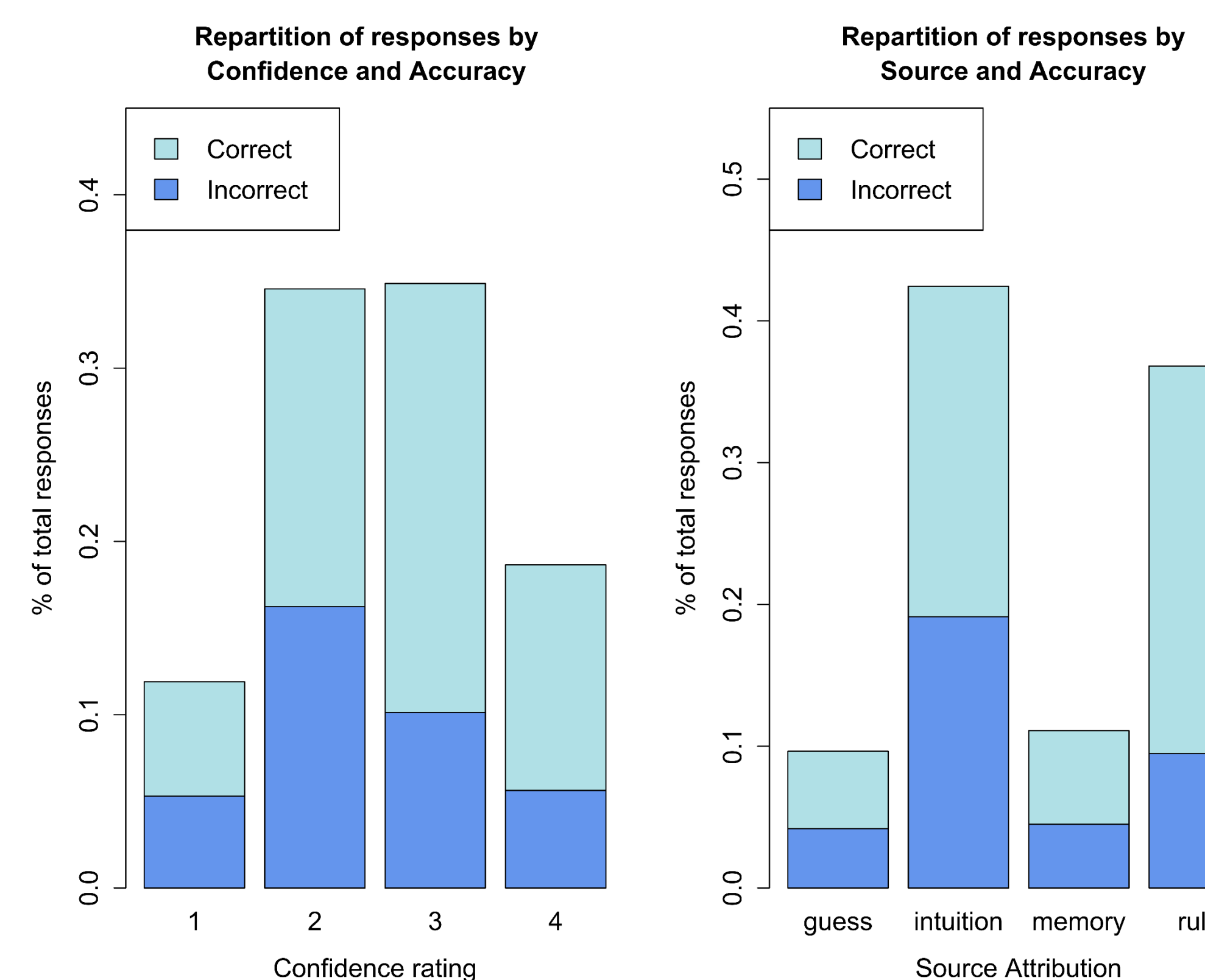
Performance: Effect of **Auxiliary:** $F(1,15)=7.10, p<.05$

RT: analyses performed on exGaussian distribution with a normal part described by μ and σ and exponential part described by τ .

RT: Effect of **Aux.** on μ : $F(1,15)=10.3, p<.01$: slower with HAD

Effect of **Session:** $F(1,15)=13.6, p<.01$: slower in post-test

ERPs	Pre-test		Post-test	
	DID	HAD	DID	HAD
300-600 ms	<i>Cond.*Aux.:</i> $F(1,15)=7,50, p<.05$	<i>Positive, p<.05</i> Negative, p<.05	<i>No effect of Condition</i>	
600-900 ms	<i>Cond*Aux.:</i> $F(1,15)=4,91, p<.05$	<i>Positive, p<.01</i> No effect	<i>No effect of Condition</i>	



SAJT	Pre-test	Post-test
<i>Performance (%)</i>	71.6 (8.9)	78.5 (8.7)
	<i>Session: F(1,15)=17.24, p<.001</i>	

Discussion

Results show that participants were **more sensitive to the L1-like violation** (with HAD) despite the superior saliency of the DID violation.

Learners seemed to rely on **different processes** with the 2 auxiliaries:

- an **attention-related** response with DID
- **morphosyntactic processing** with HAD.

No significant effect of session was found on accuracy but the disappearance of the positive effect with DID suggests the **start of a change** in processing strategy.

Participants show some degree of implicit knowledge but relied successfully on explicit knowledge in the GJT.

Acknowledgments

This research was supported by an IUF grant awarded to Dr E. Ferragne.