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Future or Movement? The L2 Acquisition of *Aller* + V Forms

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Abstract: This study aims to advance the understanding of the impact of the discursive context in the form-function mappings of *aller* + V forms by native speakers (NSs) and learners of French (NNSs), and to further knowledge about the developmental patterns of use of such forms at three proficiency levels (lower intermediate, upper intermediate, and advanced). While *aller* + V is often referred to as a periphrastic future form, i.e., a way to express temporal reference, it also takes a range of diverse semantic values (including spatial, aspectual, and modal values), and discursive functions. We therefore set out to examine data from a cross-sectional oral narrative and a longitudinal semi-guided interview task to find out to what extent *aller* + V forms are used by NSs and NNSs in a study abroad context. Our main results show that at lower intermediate level, spatial values dominate, while temporal and modal values emerge at upper intermediate and advanced levels. As regards the discursive functions of *aller* + V, learners make context appropriate choices (among others, narrative function in oral narratives, and stance-marking in interviews), but even at advanced level, their range of semantic values and discursive functions is more restricted than native speakers'.

Keywords: *aller* + V; SLA; spatial reference; tense; aspect; modality; discursive function

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1. Introduction

According to Athanasopoulos et al. (2017), time and space are fundamental and inextricably linked concepts for human cognition. As a clear instance of the spatio-temporal metaphor, we examine the use of *aller* + V forms in the oral production of native speakers of French and English L2 learners of French. Studies on the acquisition of the future have shown a limited use of this periphrastic form, particularly at lower proficiency level (Ayoun 2014; Bartning and Schlyter 2004; Edmonds and Gudmestad 2015; Michot and Pierrard 2017) and in an instructed context (Howard 2012). Their use seems to develop with L2 proficiency, especially in an immersion context, as a result of exposure to French native input.

While most studies refer to *aller* + V forms as instances of periphrastic future, it is not always clear to what extent they encode spatial information (*il va chercher l'échelle*) or temporal information (*il va essayer de donner la main à sa maîtresse*) (see Bres and Labeau 2013; Michot and Pierrard 2017). Michot and Pierrard (2017) indeed observe that while French natives mostly use *aller* + V forms with a temporal or aspectual meaning in an oral narrative task, learners do so mostly to express motion. However, there is little information regarding learners' use of these forms in other discursive contexts, a gap we wish to address through an analysis of *aller* + V forms in an oral narrative and a semi-guided interview.

With such a polysemic form, L2 learners of French face a challenging task of performing the right form-to-function mapping, i.e., identifying which semantic value is relevant in a given discursive context. We therefore wish to examine the use of *aller* + V forms by French native speakers and learners at three different proficiency levels, in a study abroad context, to find out to what extent discursive genre influences the use of *aller* + V forms in French L1/L2. We examine data from a cross-sectional oral narrative and a longitudinal semi-guided interview task to find out to what extent *aller* + V forms are used with temporal vs. motion meaning, and with which discursive function.

We begin with a literature review on *aller* + V and its L2 acquisition, before presenting our two corpus studies.

2. *Aller* + V: Future or Spatial Description?

Aller is one of the most frequent French verbs. Just as its English counterpart *go*, it expresses motion, without specifying the manner of the movement, nor its beginning and endpoint, and cannot be used on its own, as illustrated in (1a) and (1b):

1. a. *Je vais.
   "I go."[1]
   b. Je vais à Paris.
   "I go to Paris."

Just like *go*, it is also used as an auxiliary form in a verbal periphrasis: *aller* + V is often presented as an equivalent of *be going to*, in which *aller* and *go* do not denote a movement but are used to build aspectual and/or temporal meaning, such as future reference, in an abstract movement (Ayoun 2014; Larreya 2005). Indeed, as shown by Bybee et al. (1994), spatial markers often undergo a process of grammaticalization during which they acquire a temporal value. Regarding *aller* + V, Bres and Labeau (2013, 2018) suggest that in its temporal, aspectual, and modal (TAM) values, *aller* retains the initial spatial value, with movement abstractly reinterpreted as a temporal shift.

2.1. An historical Account

According to (De Mulder 2008, who bases his analysis on Detges 1999), the abstract reinterpretation leading to the grammaticalization of *aller* results from a series of metonymic transformations, (a) from movement to intention, and (b) from intention to futurate value. In other words, at the cognitive level, the concepts of movement and intention are related through a metonymical process, from concrete to abstract; on a pragmatic level, speakers resort to such metonymical processes to convince their interlocutor that their intentions will result in actions located in the future. De Mulder proposes that the grammaticalization of *aller* + V is motivated by the cognitive architecture of the speakers, who tend to use metonymy to denote abstract meanings based on referents with a concrete meaning; the pragmatic use of context and ease of processing, coupled with frequency effects in the input, also explain the gradual specialization of *aller* + V into an intention marker, and then a temporal marker. It is nevertheless interesting to observe that in contemporary French, these different values still continue to co-exist, which suggests that the grammaticalization process of *aller* + V has not been fully achieved yet (see also Bres and Labeau 2013, 2018).

According to Giacalone Giacalone Ramat (1992) and Ellis (2008), the cognitive mechanisms underlying the grammaticalization process also explain the interlanguage development observed in second language speakers. Following this approach, we expect lower-level learners to use *aller* + V with spatial meaning and upper proficiency level learners to use predominantly temporal and aspectual values.

2.2. Functional Descriptions of Aller + V in Contemporary French

Based on a corpus of written (literary, journalistic, and Internet) and oral conversational sources spanning the last three centuries, Bres and Labeau (2013, 2018) provide a description of the many temporal, aspectual and modal values *aller* + V can take. In addition to spatial values, we are going to explore the values referred to by Bres and Labeau (2013) as imminence, illustrative, and modal ("*modalisation du dire*"), as they roughly correspond to those that can be expected in oral narratives and conversational data.

[1] An anonymous reviewer outlined that "I go" might be sometimes be acceptable in English, as in "I'm going (now)". This would be translated in French by *Je m'en vais*.

2.2.1. Spatial Values

According to Vandeloise (2007) analysis of certain uses of *aller* + V, *aller* keeps its spatial meaning in examples such as (2), when the subject changes location at the moment of utterance, and if the subject accomplishes the described action in the targeted location (here, if Sophie actually eats in a restaurant).

2. Sophie va manger (au restaurant).
   "Sophie goes to eat (at the restaurant)"

Of course, it is often difficult to draw the line between those occurrences and those in which *aller* + V has a temporal meaning, which makes the task of learners particularly difficult. There is in particular very little information in the literature on the frequency of use of spatial vs. temporal and modal values of *aller* + V.

2.2.2. Temporal/Aspectual Values

Temporal values are more frequently identified in the literature, as *aller* + V is often considered as a competitor for the inflectional future. It is sometimes called periphrastic future, and traditional grammars associate it with proximal future, as in (3) where the temporal adverbial *l'année prochaine* "next year" triggers a futurate interpretation of *vais faire*.

3. Ça me donne un petit goût à ce que je vais faire l'année prochaine. (FrL2 PT, 120)
   "It gives me a little taste of what I'm going to do next year."

In addition to this temporal value, Bres and Labeau (2013) identify the value of imminence, which can also be interpreted as an aspectual value, where *aller* + V can be replaced by *être sur le point de* "be about to" and whereby it refers to the phase of the situation which immediately precedes its realization. It is illustrated in (4), where *aller* + V is used to refer to a situation whose duration is about to reach seven months. Of course, temporal proximity is a relative concept, and while it is a matter of days in (4), it could be a matter of months in another context.

4. et enfin ça va faire sept mois. (FrL2 V3, 128)
   "and finally it is about to be seven months."

We will now turn to a description of modal values.

2.2.3. Modal Values

Bres and Labeau (2013) identify what they call an illustrative value of *aller* + V, which describes what a protagonist will typically do under given circumstances, as in (5):

5. Les gens ils sont super sympathiques au premier abord ils vont vraiment discuter correctement avec quelqu'un. (FrL1, 137)
   "People they are super nice at first they will really talk with someone in a correct way."

Another frequently expressed modal value is intention, as in (6) where the speaker indicates her objective to manage to think in English at the end of her study abroad period:

6. Déjà je veux progresser au niveau de la langue euh je vais réussir à penser en anglais. (FrL1, 138)
   "To start with I want to progress as regards language ehm I'm going to manage to think in English."

Finally, (7) illustrates the prediction value that *aller* + V can take, particularly when embedded in an epistemic stance matrix clause such as *je pense que* "I think that."

7. Mais la difficulté principale je pense que ça va être de partir. (FrL1, 135)
   "But the main difficulty I think that it's going to be to leave."

The examples (2) to (7) show to what extent the values of intention, prediction and future reference are in a continuum. Context is key for the interpretation of *aller* + V, with cues such as type of discourse (narrative vs. conversation), presence or absence of verbs of epistemic stance (*je pense*) or modals (*vouloir*) or as central components in the semantic analysis of the periphrasis. It is interesting to note that the modal values of prediction and intention and the temporal value of future time reference are also ascribed to "be going to" in English, particularly in conversations (Biber et al. 2002, pp. 175–78). Regarding modal values, Biber and al. also note that the intention meaning is the most frequent.

Finally, Lansari (2009), and more recently Abouda and Skrovec (2014) and Bres and Labeau (2018) identify a frequent collocation of *aller* with *dire* "say". Abouda and Skrovec (2014), in a micro-diachronic corpus-based study, observe that in contemporary French, this collocation has considerably increased over the last five decades, almost exclusively with the verb *dire*. They base their analysis on a subcorpus of the ESLO (Enquêtes Sociolinguistiques à Orléans) database, which comprises a first dataset (ESLO1) collected between 1968 and 1971, and a second dataset, which started being collected in 2008. Their subcorpus includes interviews and interactional data (recorded during conferences and meals) from 30 participants for each collection round. The authors analyze this expression as a discursive marker used by the speaker to mark a distance relative to the content of the proposition, therefore signalling that they do not deem the chosen formulation as completely satisfying, as illustrated in (8). The possibility to replace *on va dire* by *disons* confirms its status as a modal discursive marker. With this value, no futurate interpretation is identifiable.

8. Donc j'étais un petit peu en galère de stage on va dire. (FrL1, 139)
   "So I was a little stranded as regards my internship I would say."

To sum up, in contemporary French *aller* + V mostly expresses temporal/aspectual values such as imminence, as well as modal values, such as intention or prediction, and can even be used as a modal discourse marker when combined with *dire*, although spatial values are still found.

3. Second Language Acquisition of *Aller* + V

Although there is relatively scarce research on the second language acquisition of modal forms, the SLA field has recently seen a surge of interest in the expression of futurity, particularly in L2 French (see Ayoun 2014; Gudmestad et al. 2020; Howard and Leclercq 2017 for a recent panorama). Authors usually identify three main ways of referring to the future in L2 French: inflectional future (IF), present indicative (PI) and periphrastic future (PF). Therefore, the acquisition of the temporal value of *aller* + V has been studied extensively, from a variety of theoretical perspectives.

At lower proficiency level, learners have been found to make a limited use of these periphrastic forms (Ayoun 2014; Bartning and Schlyter 2004; Edmonds and Gudmestad 2015; Howard 2012; Michot and Pierrard 2017). Their use seems to develop with L2 proficiency, especially in an immersion context, as a result of exposure to French native input. While an exhaustive account of these studies is beyond the scope of this paper, we will detail the results of two studies that resonate with our own research questions: (Michot and Pierrard 2017 and Gudmestad et al. 2020).

Using a functional and developmental perspective, Michot and Pierrard (2017) describe the second language acquisition of *aller* + V forms in an instructed context by 87 Dutch-speaking teenagers at different stages of French instruction (1st year, A1–A2, 3rd year, A2–B1, 6th year, B1–B2) in an oral narrative task ("Frog Story"), while also providing a description of what 30 French teenagers (in 1st and 6th year) produce in the same experimental conditions. Their results indicate that the older native speakers use movement at approximately the same rates as learners, but use aspect proportionally less frequently, in favor of temporal and modal usages, which are only found in learners' productions at B2 level. They also observe that the use of *aller* + V forms and the variety of semantic values increases with proficiency level, with an extension of functions at B2 level. In their

conclusion, the authors attribute the scarcity of temporal values, and the relative frequency of spatial value to the task itself, which they call "narrative-descriptive" (pp. 343–44).

In their 2020 study on the use of futurate forms in 10 unguided conversations between a near-native speaker and a native speaker of French, in an immersion context, and taking a variationist perspective, (Gudmestad et al. 2020) found that both NS and NNSs used the periphrastic future more often than the inflectional future or the present indicative. NNSs frequently used PI in association with a temporal adverbial; and topic seriousness was identified as a variable triggering the use of inflectional future, especially among NNSs. Their results seem to indicate that "these NNSs are sensitive to style and characteristics of discourse, more so than linguistic factors" (the other linguistic factors under consideration are polarity and temporal distance, but they did not impact NNSs' use of future-time verb forms).

To sum up, second language acquisition research on *aller* + V suggests that

1. *Aller* + V is used by lower-level learners to express motion, while temporal and modal values are rare among the oral productions of NNSs, even at B2 level.
2. Learners are sensitive to the characteristics of discourse (narrative/descriptive, but also, the degree of formality) and contextual cues (e.g., the inclusion of temporal adverbials).

We wish to put those results to the test by analyzing the use of *aller* + V forms by French native speakers and L2 learners in two types of discourse (oral narrative discourse and oral conversation), in a study abroad context, to determine (a) what are the preferred patterns of use by native speakers in those tasks (control groups), and (b) whether learners are sensitive to the type of discourse at different stages of acquisition. In doing so, we will offer complementary findings to contribute to the current discussion in SLA on the impact of the discursive context on form-functions mappings.

4. Study 1: Oral Narrative Task

In our first study, we wish to analyze the impact of the proficiency level variable in the use of *aller* + V forms in a narrative task. We used an oral narrative task and a cross-sectional design, to try to retrace the development of *aller* + V forms in the speech of French natives and English learners of French in a study abroad context.

4.1. Methodology

For this analysis, we used data from an oral retelling task, elicited by the Reksio stimulus (Watorek 2004), a five-minute long cartoon with background music but no speech, featuring a little dog and his master. The story is set in winter, and the two characters embark on an ice-skating activity on a frozen lake. Unfortunately, the ice breaks, and the little boy escapes drowning thanks to the help of the little dog. Although this task is not specifically designed to elicit spatial reference, it contains three major locations (the dog's house in the boy's courtyard, the frozen lake, and the boy's house), and the narratives, structured along a temporal framework, also have to include reference to the changes in location while the story unfolds. This stimulus therefore seems appropriate to check whether Michot and Pierrard (2017) results are confirmed with a group of English learners of French. In particular, we wish to check their claim that (1) temporal and modal values are mostly used by French natives while learners rather use *aller* + V for spatial and aspectual reference, and (2) that the use of *aller* + V forms increases in frequency and range of values with proficiency.

In our study, 10 French native speakers and 30 English learners of French (10 lower intermediate (LI), 10 upper intermediate (UI), 10 advanced (A)) completed the task. All participants were recorded in a French university setting, and learners were recorded during a study or residence abroad period. They came from a variety of Anglophone countries (UK, US, Ireland, Australia, and Canada). Their length of stay at the moment of recording was variable, ranging from a few weeks for newly arrived lower intermediate learners, to up to 5 years in France for the most advanced participants. All learners had

received previous formal instruction in French (ranging from a few months to over 10 years) before coming to study on a French campus. They were administered a biographical questionnaire, yielding information on their language learning history, and their proficiency was assessed with an in-house test from the American University of Paris tapping into lexical and morphosyntactic knowledge. While this is not a standardized test, it yielded results that were considered by the team of investigators as consistent with production data.

4.2. Results

As shown in Table 1, native speakers' productions are generally longer than learners' (although there is quite a lot of variation in length, as illustrated by the standard deviation and range figures). LI productions are much shorter than UI and A productions; surprisingly, UI narratives are slightly longer than advanced learners' (however A learners were judged by the investigators as more accurate from a lexical, grammatical, and phonological viewpoint).

Table 1. Description of participants and characteristics of productions.

Group	N	Mean Age	Gender	Proficiency Test Scores [2] (out of 60)	Length of Productions (Number of Utterances [2])
LI NNSs	10	22.8	2M, 8F	M 29.6 SD 3.8 Range 27–36	M 30.2 SD 14.5 Range 14–55
UI NNSs	10	23.7	1M, 9F	M 46.9 SD 2.2 Range 41–50	M 54.4 SD 26 Range 30–69
Adv NNSs	10	28.5	4M, 6F	M 55.7 SD 2.3 Range 52–58	M 43.6 SD 14.7 Range 82–169
FRENCH NSs	10	30.3 [1]	6M, 4F	/	M 85.7 SD 47.1 Range 20–180

[1] The mean age for native speakers of French was calculated based on 9 participants as a participant refused to answer this question. [2] We segmented the data following the principle that an utterance includes only 1 verb (except when modal auxiliaries or verbal periphrasis are involved).

We identified 87 *aller* + V forms in our database, see Table 2 for distribution. We excluded from our analysis all *aller* + SN occurrences from our analysis (as in (1a), as well as other idioms including *aller* as in *ça va* "I'm fine" or *il va bien* "he's fine", to focus solely on instances of *aller* + V). Those occurrences were coded according to their semantic value (spatial, or TAM). TAM occurrences were subdivided into the following semantic values: future expression, intention, prediction—see examples (9) to (14)). We will now analyze our data quantitatively to find out whether our learners follow the same developmental pattern as the Dutch learners of French in Michot and Pierrard (2017).

Table 2. Distribution of *aller* + V forms in Reksio database.

	FrL2 LI n = 10	FrL2 UI n = 10	FrL2 A n = 10	FrL1 n = 10
# *aller* + V/#total utterances	3/302	14/544	21/436	49/857
% of *aller* + V	0.99%	2.57%	4.82%	5.71%
Range	1–1	1–3	2–6	2–16
SD	0.48	1.07	1.66	4.65

In line with the findings of Michot and Pierrard (2017), Table 2 shows that native speakers use *aller* + V forms more frequently than learners of French in an oral narrative context, and that these forms largely emerge at upper intermediate level.

A one-way ANOVA was carried out in order to investigate the impact of group membership (i.e., the impact of belonging to the FrL2 LI, UI, A, or FrL1 groups) on the use of *aller* + V. The ANOVA showed a significant difference, $F(3, 36) = 5.96513$, $p = 0.002072$). Post-hoc comparisons using Tukey's HSD revealed a significant difference between the FrL1 (M = 4.9, SD = 4.65) and the LI learners (M = 0.3, SD = 0.48), as well as between the FrL1 and the UI learners (M = 1.4, SD = 1.07). The behavior of the A learners was not found to differ from that of the other groups (M = 2.1, SD = 1.66).

Our statistical analysis therefore points to a significant evolution in the behavior of the learners, with LI and UI learners' use of *aller* + V largely distinct from that of native speakers, while the distribution of these forms for A learners cannot be neatly distinguished from that of UI learners nor that of the native speaker pattern (remember that the length of NS productions is twice that of A learners as illustrated in Table 1).

If we look at the percentage use of *aller* + V relative to the length of productions (measured through the number of utterances, where an utterance is defined as comprising a single verb phrase), we find that there is a gradual increase in the frequency of use of *aller* + V from LI (0.99%) to UI (2.57%) and A (4.82%), the latter getting closer to the native speakers' pattern (5.71%).

4.2.1. Semantic Analysis of *Aller* + V

Let us now focus on the semantic values assigned to *aller* + V forms in the productions of learners and native speakers, summarized in Table 3.

Table 3. Distribution of spatial (S) and temporal, aspectual, and modal (TAM) values of *aller* + V among FrL1 and FrL2.

		FrL2 LI ***n* = 3**	**FrL2 UI** ***n* = 14**	**FrL2 A** ***n* = 21**	**FrL1** ***n* = 49**
S	#	3	12	15	3775.5
	%	100	85.7	71.5	75.5
TAM	#	-	2	6	12
	%	-	14.3	28.5	24.5

By and large, spatial values largely dominate as they constitute 77% of the total of the whole database (LI: 100%, UI: 85.7%, A: 71.5%, FrL1 75.5%) against 23% for TAM values (LI: 0%, UI: 14.3%, A: 19%, FrL1: 24.5%).

If we look at the learner data, we observe that at LI levels, only three occurrences are found, all with spatial values. TAM values appear at UI level (two occurrences of prediction) and are still rare at A level (six occurrences, expressing temporal (future/intention, n = 4), or aspectual (n = 2) reference). We now turn to a qualitative analysis of spatial and TAM values.

4.2.2. Spatial Values

In (9), *va* is followed by a telic action verb (*chercher* "look for"), and by an object: *l'échelle* "a ladder", which constitutes the endpoint of the action. In this example, *va* clearly expresses the dog's movement to go and fetch a ladder located against a tree on the lakeside, as observed in the cartoon.

9. Donc il [le chien] va chercher l'échelle. (FrL1, F03) "So he [the dog] goes look for a ladder."

4.2.3. TAM Values

In (10) and (11), *aller* + V is used to describe the intentions of the protagonist to do some ice-skating. In (10), the temporal value seems to dominate while in (11), two aspectual phases of the ice-skating event are described: the prospective phase, in which the A learner expresses the protagonists' intention to go ice-skating, and the ongoing phase, in which he indicates through the *en train de* periphrasis that the ice-skating activity is in progress.

10. Après il [le chien] rentre au bord du lac et le garçon il va aller faire du patinage lui. (A FrL2, AEF02)
    "Then he comes back to the lakeshore and the boy he's going to go ice-skating himself."
11. Eum ben ensuite ils vont faire mm du patin à glace tous les deux donc voilà ils sont en train de faire du patin à glace tous ensemble (A FrL2, AEF06)
    "Well then they go ice-skating together so that's it they are ice-skating together."

In (12) the learner uses *aller* + V to predict, based on world knowledge, what will happen (the melting of the ice after the spreading of salt on the ground), while in (13) *aller* + V clearly contributes to narrative progression (Bres and Labeau 2013 label such use "narrative"). The speaker presents the events in the order of appearance in the movie (principle of natural order) and the use of *va* followed by telic motion verbs (*monter sur l'échelle*, *aller au centre du lac*) or an action verb (*donner la main* "give a hand") indicates that the speaker predicts the achievement of such events. However, an aspectual value could also be ascribed to those occurrences (in (13a) *va* could be replaced by another temporo-aspectual marker, *est sur le point de*, and in (13b) the adverb *progressivement* "progressively" reinforces the aspectual perspective. Finally, in (13c) *il va essayer de donner la main*, the speaker makes a prediction on what is going to happen, or on the intention of the protagonist.

12. C'est un peu de sel qui va aider le glace [à fondre] (UI FrL2, UIEF08)
    "It is a bit of salt which will help the ice [to melt]."
13. Donc en fait il (a) va monter sur l'échelle il (b) va progressivement *aller* au centre du lac et (c) il va essayer de donner la main à sa maîtresse (FrL1, F08)
    "So in fact he goes climb on the ladder he will progressively go to the center of the lake and he will try give a hand to his mistress."

As a whole, the analysis of the various values (spatial or TAM) assumed by *aller* + V in our database, suggests this periphrasis contributes to narrative progression, whether by indicating a movement from one location to another (spatial value), or by expressing aspectual (imminence) or modal (prediction, intention) values.

4.3. Discussion

To sum up, our results from Study 1 confirm the findings by Michot and Pierrard (2017) that spatial values predominate in the oral narratives of French native speakers and learners alike. They attributed this to the "narrative-descriptive" nature of the Frog Story task. However, our results, obtained through an experimental design that featured a clearly narrative task eliciting less spatial description, seem to argue against their hypothesis that the nature of the stimulus and the type of discourse elicited could have explained the dominance of spatial values. We believe that in this type of discourse, the main discursive function of *aller* + V is to signal narrative progression, whether by expressing a change of location (spatial value), the imminence of a given event, the intention of a protagonist, or by enabling the speaker to predict the realization of an event. We find it particularly difficult to tease apart the different TAM concepts as they seem to be intricately interwoven.

As regards L2 development, we observe just like native speakers, learners use *aller* + V forms for narrative progression; however, they mainly do so with spatial values at LI level, while TAM values emerge at upper intermediate level, but are still quite rare at advanced level (only six occurrences produced by four different A FrL2 learners). With such a low number of instances, it is difficult to assess whether advanced learners have acquired all the fine-grained form/function mappings for *aller* + V in their L2. We therefore carry on with another, more ecological experimental design, in the hope of finding out whether a prolonged stay abroad period in a francophone country can trigger target-like form/function mappings in the use of such forms.

5. Task 2: Semi-Guided Interview

Faced with the limitations of the Reksio narrative task, we decided to look at advanced learner data collected in an equivalent study abroad setting, but with a different discursive

task: a semi-guided interview. Our aim was to compare the use of *aller* + V in those two discursive contexts. Semi-guided interviews provide interactional data that is more "ecological" and less constrained than the data elicited through a film-retelling task (Benazzo and Leclercq forthcoming). Moreover, the Reksio experimental design is cross-sectional, which permits developmental interpretations, but is not as refined as a longitudinal design, where learners are followed over a certain period of time. We therefore used data from the LANGSNAP project[2], and more specifically from the semi-guided interview task.

5.1. Methodology

LANGSNAP is a longitudinal study that was conducted over a 21 months period. It included 27 Anglophone learners of French, who studied languages in British universities, had been learning French for at least eight years at the time of the first recording, and who took part in a study-abroad period (whether as a language teaching assistant, as an Erasmus+ student, or as an intern in a company) in a French-speaking country as part of their BA curriculum; and 10 native speakers of French (all exchange students in British universities). No proficiency test was administered to the learner participants.

The native speaker participants were recorded once, in a study abroad context, while learner participants were recorded on six occasions, once before, three times during and twice after their nine-month stay abroad period. In this study, we will focus on the pre-departure (PT) data, and the Visit Abroad 3 (V3) data (the last on-site data collection round). The interviews were collected by members of the LANGSNAP research team and transcribed with CLAN (MacWhinney 2000). We excluded their interventions from our data analysis to focus on the utterances produced by the target participants[3]. Table 4 provides an overview of the database.

Table 4. Characteristics of FrL1 and FrL2 participants and their productions.

Group	N	Mean Age	Gender	Nb of Years of FrL2 Instruction	Length of Productions (Number of Tokens)
Pre-test FrL2	27	19.8	3M, 24F	M = 10.4 years SD = 2.43 Range 8–16	M = 1321.51 SD = 501.94 Range = 679–2895
V3 FrL2	27	20.8	3M, 24F	+6 months abroad	M = 1317.25 SD = 655.30 Range = 600–3398
FRENCH NSs	10	19.8	3M, 7F	Recorded on their arrival in the UK	M = 1491.7 SD = 515.83 Range 779–2581

Length of production was calculated through the freq command of CLAN, which yielded the number of tokens per participant in each interview. The mean length of learner data is nearly the same at PT (M = 1321.51) and V3 (M = 1317.25), but SD and R figures show increased variation. We identified a total of 331 occurrences of *aller* + V, with the following distribution:

- FrL1: 63 occurrences
- FrL2: 268 occurrences, including 149 at PT and 119 at V3.

Occurrences were coded using the same scheme as previously described for the Reksio analysis: S for spatial values, T for TAM values. We then coded TAM instances for temporal (future), aspectual and modal (illustrative, intention, prediction, and discourse marker) values.

[2] LANGSNAP ("Social networks, target language interaction, and second language acquisition during the year abroad: A longitudinal study") http://langsnap.soton.ac.uk/tasks.html (Supplementary Materials).

[3] Biographical information regarding participants (learners and native speakers of French) is available on the online browsable LANGSNAP repository http://langsnap.soton.ac.uk/theL2FrenchParticipants.html.

5.2. Results

Our first results, presented in Table 5, highlight the very low percentage of occurrences of *aller* + V forms in the database, especially in the learner data, and the large dominance of TAM values (FrL1 76.2%; FrL2 PT 91.28%; FrL2 V3 82.4%) over spatial values.

Table 5. Number and percentage of occurrences in interview data.

			S		TAM	
	# *ALLER* + V	**% *ALLER* + V Tokens/Total nb of Tokens)**	**#**	**%**	**#**	**%**
FrL1	63	0.42	15	23.8	48	76.2
FrL2	268		33	12.31	235	87.69
PT	149	0.11	13	8.72	136	91.28
V3	119	0.09	21	17.6	98	82.4
Total	331					

A one-way ANOVA was carried out to determine if there is a significative difference between pre-test, V3, and FrNS. However, no significant between-groups difference was identified.

While French natives use future, prediction, and modal marker values in a balanced way, as shown in Figure 1, they almost never use *aller* + V to express intention, contrary to learners. Finally, we found four occurrences of the illustrative value (see (20) below).

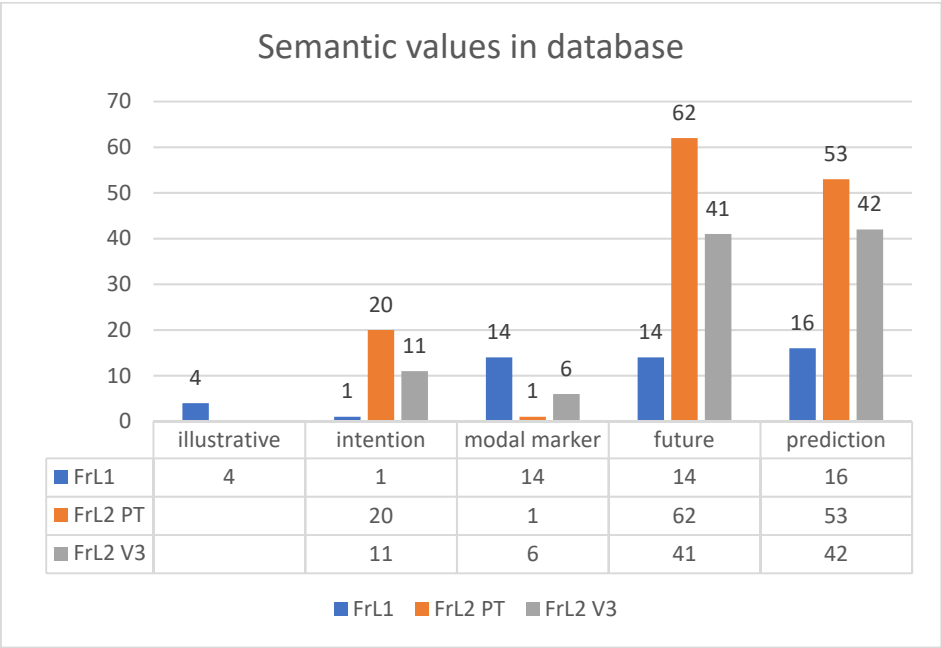

Figure 1. Semantic values in LANGSNAP database.

As for learners, they mostly use *aller* + V with temporal (future) and modal (prediction, intention) values. We found a few occurrences (FrL2 PT:1; FrL2V3: 4) of *aller* + V as a modal marker (*on va dire*) and none of illustrative value.

Due to the nature of the task, most of the *aller* + V occurrences were in the first person (except for a few impersonal *ça va* + V) and occurred in embedded complement clauses introduced by matrix clauses with an epistemic stance verbal marker (mainly *je pense* "I think", *j'espère* "I hope", *je sais/je ne sais pas* "I know/don't know", *je crois* "I believe").

No occurrences of the subjunctive were found in the learner data, even with triggers such as *je ne pense pas que* which should be followed by a verb in the subjunctive form. This is in line with previous findings (among others, McManus et al. 2014; Leclercq and Edmonds 2017).

It is interesting to note that native speakers use those triggers much less frequently than learners in the same type of discursive context. Learners do not always use target-like forms (**Espoir que* "hope that" rather than *j'espère que* "I hope that") but we coded non-target-like occurrences according to their semantic value in context. We now present examples of the different TAM semantic values found in the database to analyze their discursive function.

5.2.1. TAM Values—Future

We grouped in this category instances of what is traditionally referred to as the periphrastic future. In these instances, the speaker uses *aller* + V to assert that an event is going to take place at some point in the future, as exemplified in (14). With futurate values, *aller* + V is mostly found in matrix clauses (15), or in embedded clauses introduced by verbs expressing various degrees of certainty (*je sais*, *je pense*) or irrealis (*j'espère*, *j'imagine*).

14. J'espère que je vais progresser en anglais. (FrL1, 133)
    "I hope I will progress in English."
15. Euh mais je vais aller à City avec ma mère à la fin de août. (FrL2 PT, 109)
    "Er but I'm going to City with my mother at the end of August."

5.2.2. TAM Values—Prediction

This category includes occurrences in which *aller* + V is used by the speaker to predict a given state of affairs, mostly through impersonal forms (*ça va* V, as in (16) or third person utterances (17)).

16. Et du coup je pense que ça va être assez difficile. (FrL1, 131)
    "And so I think that it's going to be quite difficult."
17. Mais euh et Paris va me manquer je crois parce que c'est Paris quoi. (FrL2 V3, 102)
    "But er and I'm going to miss Paris I believe because well it is Paris."

5.2.3. TAM Values—Intention

In this category, which is used only once by a French native (see (6) above), the speakers express their intention to accomplish an action (18) or that of another person, such as visiting Paris frequently (18) or working in a school (19). In such utterances, *aller* + V is often found in association with matrix verbs of cognition (18) or modal verbs expressing volition (6) or intention (19).

18. Euh alors oui je je pense que je vais visiter Paris beaucoup. (FrL2 PT, 109)
    "Er well yes I I think that I will visit Paris a lot."
19. Aussi je vais essayer de travailler avec ma maman dans une école. (FrL2 V3, 122)
    "So I will try to work with my mum in a school."

5.2.4. TAM Values—Illustrative

In (20), the speaker uses *aller* + V to illustrate what typically happens after a hypothetical situation (going to a party in France). It is interesting to note that no learner produced this type of semantic value.

20. C'est à dire que en France quand on par exemple à une soirée (. . .) on discute bien avec quelqu'un le lendemain si on croise on dit 'oh ça va ?' et on on va échanger on va continuer à se voir enfin. (FrL1, 137)
    "I mean in France when one for example at a party [. . .] you talk well with someone the next morning if you come across that person you say, 'Oh how are you?' and you speaks you go on seeing each other well."

5.2.5. TAM Values—Modal Marker

Finally, our database includes 21 occurrences of *aller* + V as a modal discursive maker (16 *on va dire* "let's say"—see (6), 1 *je vais être honnête* "I'll be honest", 3 *je vais voir/on va voir* "we'll see", 1 *ça va le faire* "it's gonna be OK"), through which the speaker takes a stance towards the propositional content under examination: in (6), *on va dire* is used as a hedging device, while with (21) and (22), the speaker takes a non-committal position relative to the realization of the event under consideration.

21. Euh je vais être honnête je n'ai pas n'aucune idée en ce moment (FrL2 PT, 110)
    "Er I'll be honest I have not no idea at this moment."
22. Mais bon on va voir. (FrL2 V3, 122)
    "But well we'll see."

5.3. Discussion

To sum up, our analysis of the LANGSNAP database reveals a fairly low frequency of *aller* + V forms in the data. Although FrL1 speakers seem to use a slightly higher proportion of such forms in their productions (FrL1 0.42%; FrL2PT 0.11%; FrL2V3 0.09%), no statistically significant between-group difference was identified. In particular, the six-month study abroad period between PT and V3 recordings did not seem to foster significantly different patterns of usage as regards *aller* + V. We will therefore comment on L2 (PT and V3) results as a whole. As regards the choice of TAM semantic values for *aller* + V, while FrL1 use intention, prediction, and future reference in an equivalent way, future and prediction were the learners' most frequent choice at PT and V3, immediately followed by intention. French speakers also make an occasional use of the illustrative value (four occurrences produced by two speakers) and use *on va dire* or *ça va le faire* as modal discourse markers. In short, FrL1 display a proportionally higher and semantically more diverse use of *aller* + V than learners who mostly use futurate values of intention, prediction, and future reference. It is nevertheless interesting to note that the use of modal markers by learners is on the rise at V3 (PT:1, V3:3), which suggests an increased sensitivity to such uses in the input. However, further investigation (and a different methodological approach) would be necessary to find out whether this is a chance result or not.

Another key finding is that the semantic interpretation of *aller* + V is often guided by contextual cues: triggers such as *j'espère que* entail the inscription of the content of the object clause in irrealis, hence guiding a futurate interpretation of *aller* + V. On the other hand, cues such as modal verb *je veux* facilitate an intentional reading. Generally speaking, the semi-guided interview data under consideration, wherein the interviewer questions the participant on their study abroad expectations (PT) and experiences (V3), guides the learners' responses and can explain the lower proportion of *aller* + V forms in V3 responses. Stylistically speaking, the predominance of first person (*je*) and impersonal (*ça*/*on*) subjects, as opposed to third person in the Reksio narrative, is also a consequence of the discursive genre under consideration.

Finally, three main discursive functions have been identified in our database: stance marker (modal values of intention and prediction, and hedging when used as a modal marker), future reference (as in (15)) and illustrative values, the latter being rather infrequent in interview data.

6. Conclusions

In this study, we wished to re-assess previous research results on the developmental patterns followed by learners at different proficiency levels as regards the use of *aller* + V. In particular, we wanted to find out (a) whether the developmental path described by Michot and Pierrard (2017) for teenage Dutch learners of French, with spatial and aspectual uses dominant in the earlier stages and a timid apparition of temporal and modal values at advanced stages, was valid with a population of adult Anglophone learners of French; and (b) whether learners were sensitive to discourse characteristics in their choice of semantic values and discursive functions for *aller* + V.

To answer these questions, we used data from an oral narrative task and a semi-guided interview task. Both datasets included control groups of native speaker participants, and learner participants were all recorded during a study abroad experience. The Reksio experimental design is cross-sectional, and the LANGSNAP database is longitudinal, which makes them suitable for the tracking of interlanguage development. We therefore set out to determine (a) L1 speakers' preferred patterns of use for *aller* + V, in relation with the type of task; and (b) to find out whether learners were sensitive to the mapping of semantic values onto specific discourse functions, at different stages of acquisition.

Our results show that in both tasks, FrL1 speakers display a higher proportion of *aller* + V forms altogether, and use a larger range of semantic values, than learner participants. In the oral narrative task, spatial values dominate, but they serve the purpose of moving the narrative forward, just like aspectual values and modal values of intention and prediction. *Aller* + V forms are usually found in the third person, to describe the actions of the protagonist of the story. In the semi-guided interview task, FrL1 speakers use predominantly TAM values (76.2%, against 23.8% for spatial values), mainly the periphrastic future and stance-taking means (expression of prediction and hedging through modal markers). They also use occasionally the illustrative value described in Bres and Labeau (2013), but they almost never express intention with *aller* + V. Most occurrences are in the first person, or impersonal (*ça va*), and many instances of *aller* + V appear in association with verbal markers of epistemic stance. The main discursive functions identified are future reference (with the so-called periphrastic future), epistemic stance marking (through prediction, intention, and hedging), and illustrative function (presenting typical behaviors). No specifically aspectual value was identified in our LANGSNAP database. From a typological perspective, our results confirm that the grammaticalization of *aller* + V is far from achieved, as in the productions of French natives it is found with a large variety of semantic values.

As for learners, they roughly behave like native speakers as regards the mapping of *aller* + V forms onto the two different kinds of discourse under consideration: they use those forms for narrative progression in the Reksio task and mark future reference and epistemic stance marking in the interviews. However, they mostly mark narrative progression with the spatial values of *aller* + V, with only a few TAM forms at UI and A levels; and in the interview data, advanced learners stick to the futurate semantic values of intention, prediction (epistemic stance-marking) and future reference, a choice that might reveal a crosslinguistic transfer effect (as intention, prediction and future reference are the most frequent values of the equivalent English expression "be going to"). Learners do not use those forms for hedging or with an illustrative function. In short, from a developmental perspective, our results converge with previous research in showing that spatial values emerge before TAM values, and that even at advanced level, the range of semantic values and discursive functions attributed to *aller* + V forms is more restricted than that of native speakers. In other words, the developmental pattern followed by learners seems to match the diachronic grammaticalization pattern described in the literature (from spatial values to TAM values). However, our results indicate that even at advanced level, learners do not always adopt the same form-function mappings as native speakers, maybe because of crosslinguistic transfer from their L1. Finally, we are well aware of the limitations of this study and believe that a phraseological approach would be interesting to find out whether native speakers' and learners' choices of collocations differ (i.e., which verbs are often found after *aller*), and to what extent learners are sensitive to frequency patterns in the input. Such issues, namely, transfer, phraseological, and input frequency patterns constitute rich directions for future research.

Supplementary Materials: The full LANGSNAP database can be consulted at http://langsnap.soton.ac.uk/tasks.html.

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Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

Data Availability Statement: The full LANGSNAP database can be consulted at http://langsnap.soton.ac.uk/tasks.html. The Reksio dataset can be consulted upon request to the author.

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