

# **Finiteness and verb placement in untutored second language acquisition subject-verb agreement**

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First and (untutored) second language learners have been shown to pass through a non- finite stage of utterances organization, at which utterances such as German (1) are produced rather than the target-like version (2).

(1) Peter nicht laufen.

(2) Peter läuft nicht.

During first language acquisition, there is a transitional phase during which children sometimes produce utterances of type (1), and sometimes of type (2). Children very rarely seem to produce utterances of type (3) or (4), however, suggesting a strong relation between finiteness and verb placement (Poeppel & Wexler, 1993).

(3) Peter nicht läuft.

(4) Peter laufen nicht.

With respect to second language acquisition, conflicting claims have been made as to whether this relation is present as well, or not (Meisel, 1997; Prévost & White, 2000).

I will present data from elicited production and elicited imitation experiments conducted with untutored second language learners of different ages that aimed at confirming that learners pass through a non-finite stage, and at testing whether the relation between finiteness and verb placement is present.