FINITENESS AND VERB PLACEMENT IN EARLY SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNERS WITH SLI[1]

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1. Introduction

According to standard syntactic theories of German, overtly marked infinitival forms (*en*-infinitivals) should never be licensed in verb second position (V2) (e.g., Vikner 1995). Evidence from typical acquisition confirms this prediction: Typically developing (TD) children restrict infinitivals to sentence-final position (Vf) and produce verbs inflected for person and number in V2 (Poeppel and Wexler 1993; Clahsen, Eisenbeiss, and Penke 1996). Children with Specific Language Impairment (SLI), in contrast, have sometimes been reported to produce nonfinite verbs in V2, both in monolingual (MON) and in early second language acquisition (eL2) (Clahsen, Bartke, and Göllner 1997; Chilla 2008). This qualitative difference has been interpreted as evidence for a deviant development, more specifically, as an Agreement Deficit in SLI (Clahsen et al. 1997). On the other hand, Rice, Noll, and Grimm (1997) and others argue that the Extended Optional Infinitive Stage, i.e. an extended period of producing *en*-infinitivals in Vf, is an indicator of SLI in MON children. Crucially, the latter account is in line with the general assumption that SLI is characterized by a delay. In order to decide between these two accounts of

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SLI (Delay-Deviance Dichotomy, cf. Leonard 2000) with regard to finiteness and V2, the status of nonfinite verbs needs to be investigated more closely. Nonfinite verbs can either be *en*-infinitivals such as *geh-en* 'go_INF' or bare forms such as *du geh-∅* 'you go-∅'. Although bare forms lack a finite suffix, according to Haznedar and Schwartz (1997), Prévost (2003), and Wojtecka, Schwarze, Grimm, and Schulz (2013) bare forms in V2 are covertly marked for finiteness by a phonologically empty suffix. Under this view, bare forms are licensed in V2 but *en*-infinitivals are not. In line with this prediction, eL2-TD learners of German have been found to overuse bare forms, but not *-en* forms, in V2 at some point in acquisition (Prévost 2003, Wojtecka et al. 2013). In previous work on MON-SLI and eL2-SLI in German, the difference between bare forms and *en*-infinitivals has not been considered in detail. Either both forms were analyzed as potentially 'nonfinite' (e.g., Rothweiler, Chilla, and Clahsen 2012), or bare forms were excluded from the analysis (e.g., Clahsen et al. 1997).

To close this gap, the present study investigated finiteness marking and verb placement in eL2-learners with SLI in more detail. We examined elicited production data of 13 eL2-SLI learners of German between the ages 4 and 9 across two test rounds. The analysis differentiated finite forms (verbs inflected for person and number) and two types of apparently nonfinite forms (bare forms vs. *en*-infinitivals) in relation to their position (V2, Vf). Results show that bare forms, but not *en*-infinitivals, are produced in V2 and that eL2-SLI children's error patterns resemble those of younger eL2-TD children, pointing to a delay in acquisition.

The paper is structured as follows: Section 2 summarized central theoretical aspects of verb placement and finiteness in German matrix clauses. Section 3 describes previous studies research on the acquisition of finiteness and verb placement. The research questions are formulated in section 4. Section 5 presents the design and the results of the study, and the findings are discussed in Section 6.

2. Finiteness and verb placement in German

German belongs to the SOV languages that show V2 movement, i.e. in matrix clauses the finite verb has to appear in V2, as shown in (1a). We assume that uninflected verbs are base-generated within a head-final VP. Following Chomsky (1995) we further assume that agreement, tense, and finiteness are strong features, which have to be checked and deleted before LF. In order to check agreement, tense, and finiteness features, overt verb movement from V^0 to C^0 via I^0 is required (e.g., Vikner 1995). IP is assumed to be head-final. In contrast to finite verbs, nonfinite verbs are restricted to V^0 and are not licensed in C^0 (cf. example (1b)). Spec CP is assumed to be specified for a strong +EPP feature (Chomsky 1995), requiring overt movement of one constituent, typically the subject, or a topicalized object, or an adverb, to this position. (1c) illustrates the German sentence structure for matrix clauses such as (1a).[2] Structural details that are not relevant for the purposes of this paper are disregarded.[3]

(1a) Lise füttert den Hund.
Lise feed-3SG the dog.
Lise feeds the dog.

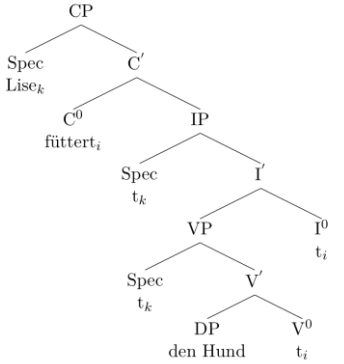
[2] In subordinate clauses the verb generally appears in Vf. Following standard analyses (e.g., Grewendorf 1988), in subordinate clauses the verb moves from V^0 to I^0 in a head-final IP. Movement to C^0 is blocked, as this position is filled with a complementizer or a similar element (1d). In the remainder of the paper we focus on matrix clauses.

(1d) weil der Hund auf dem Skateboard sitzt.
$[_{CP}$ weil $[_{IP}$ der Hund $[_{VP}$ auf dem Skatebord $t_i]$ sitzt$_i]]$

[3] Recent syntactic theories typically assume the existence of more fine-grained functional projection levels, e.g. split-INFL (Pollock 1989, Chomsky 1991) and/or Split CP (Müller and Sternefeld 1993; Rizzi 1997), stipulating the projection of different functional categories, such as TP and AgrP, or ForceP and FinP, respectively. Differences between these accounts are relevant, when discussing the exact linguistic nature of bare verbs in V2; this is beyond the scope of this paper (but cf. Schwarze in prep.).

(1b) *Lise füttern den Hund.
Lise feed-INF the dog .
Lise feed the dog.

(1c)



In German, verbs are morphologically marked for finiteness. The present tense inflectional paradigm consists of five different suffixes for marking 1st, 2nd, and 3rd person singular and plural, respectively (Table 1). In this study, we focus on present tense marking of lexical verbs. Importantly, all present tense suffixes are obligatory, except for the 1st person SG marking *-e*, which may be omitted in colloquial speech. Unlike English, infinitivals (e.g., *spiel-en*, play-INF) can be clearly distinguished from bare forms (e.g., *spiel-∅*, play-∅), since German infinitival verbs are overtly marked with the suffix *-en.*[4]

[4] Note, that the children in this study grow up in the area of Frankfurt and are exposed to the Hessian dialect, where *-e* can mark an infinitive suffix. However, the eL2-SLI in this study never produce *-e* in V2 in a context other than 1SG. The eL2-TD children in Wojtecka et al. (2013) substitute *-e* in two cases, where it may be an infinitival in V2.

Table 1. German inflectional paradigm for lexical verbs (present tense agreement marking).

	Ps.	Suffix	Example	
Bare form		-Ø	spiel-Ø	play-Ø
Infinitival form		*-en*	spiel-*en*	play-*INF*
Singular	1	*-e*	ich spiel-*e*	I play-*1SG*
		-Ø	ich spiel-Ø	I play-Ø
	2	*-st*	du spiel-*st*	you play-*2SG*
	3	*-t*	er/sie/es spiel-*t*	he/she/it play-*3SG*
Plural	1	*-en*	wir spiel-*en*	we play-*1PL*
	2	*-t*	ihr spiel-*t*	you play-*2PL*
	3	*-en*	sie spiel-*en*	they play-*3PL*

3. Acquisition of finiteness and verb placement in child German

In order to master the sentence structure in German matrix clauses, children have to acquire verb movement to V2 as well as the correct marking of finiteness (morphological marking of person and number). Across different learner groups (MON and eL2 children with and without SLI) a range of non-adult-like developmental patterns has been observed regarding verb form and verb placement. These patterns include *en*-infinitivals in Vf (2) and in V2 (3), target-like inflected finite verbs in Vf, (4), incorrectly inflected verbs in V2 (5), and presumably finite bare verbs in V2 (6).

(2) ich der Fos hab'n
I the frog have-INF (MON-TD, Wexler 1994: 315)

(3a) der stehen hier
he stand-INF here (MON-SLI, Clahsen et al.1997: 163)

(3b) aber ich spielen noch
but I play-INF still (eL2-SLI, Rothweiler at al. 2012: 46)

(4) da Yaya wohnt
there Yaya live-3SG (MON-SLI, Clahsen 1991:179)

(5) du kommt dahin
you come-3SG there (MON-SLI, Clahsen et al. 1997: 157)

(6a) pferd steh nich
horse stand-Ø not (MON-SLI, Clahsen 1991: 171)

(6b) das geh nikt
this go-Ø not (eL2-TD, Prévost 2003: 81)

Disregarding for now potential differences between acquisition types, several accounts have been proposed to explain these patterns in acquisition: an (Extended) Optional Infinitive stage (Poeppel and Wexler 1993; Wexler 1994; Rice et al. 1997) for structures such as (2), the Truncation Hypothesis (Rizzi 1993/1994; Prévost 2003) for structures like (2) and (4), the Missing Surface Inflection Hypothesis (Haznedar and Schwartz 1997; Haznedar 2001; Prévost 2003) for structures as in (6), a CP Deficit (Hamann, Penner, and Lindner 1998; Hamann, Lindner, and Penner 2001) accounting for (4), and an Agreement Deficit (Clahsen 1991; Clahsen et al. 1997; Rothweiler et al. 2012) for structures as in (3), (5), and (6). In the following, the developmental patterns and different accounts will be discussed with regard to their relevance for typical and SLI acquisition, respectively.

Children with typical development. In MON-TD acquisition target-like marking of person and number on verbs co-occurs with correct placement in V2, suggesting a strong relation between agreement und verb placement (Clahsen 1982; Clahsen 1986; Tracy 1991; Clahsen and Penke 1992; Meisel 1992; Poeppel and Wexler 1993). MON-TD children master verb movement from V^0 to C^0 via I^0 by age 3. Nonfinite verbs in Vf as in (2), parallel to occurence of finite verbs in V2, reflect an earlier acquisition phase (i.e. Optional Infinitive Stage), usually around age 2 (cf. Clahsen and Penke 1992; Poeppel and Wexler 1993; Wexler 1994). According to Rizzi's (1993/1994) Truncation Hypothesis, the so-called Root Infinitives are truncated clausal structures: The CP is not projected by the child, and *en*-infinitivals hence remain in V^0 as there is no higher landing site in V2. In some cases, verbs in Vf are inflected (cf. (4)) (Clahsen et al. 1997). Given a structure as in (1c) this pattern corresponds to an acquisitional stage with truncation above IP and movement of the inflected verb from V^0 to I^0. In support of the Truncation Hypothesis, nonfinite verbs are banned from V2, as movement and feature checking are available as soon as IP and CP have been projected. In the few attested cases of verbs in V2

that lack overt finiteness marking, bare forms were more frequent than *en*-infinitivals (Clahsen and Penke 1992).

Regarding eL2-acquisition, TD learners of German master verb placement together with the target-like marking of finiteness after about 6 to 18 months of exposure (Prévost 2003; Rothweiler 2006; Tracy and Thoma, 2009; Wojtecka et al. 2013). Unlike in adult L2, where *en*-infinitivals in V2 frequently occur as a default form (Prévost and White 1999, 2000), eL2-children rarely produce *en*-infinitivals in V2, which is also comparable to MON-TD children. Instead, they sometimes produce bare verbs in V2 (cf. (6b)) (Prévost 2003; Wojtecka et al. 2013; Blom and Baayen 2012 for eL2-TD Dutch). Using the same experimental design as in the current study, Wojtecka et al. (2013) analyzed production data of 25 eL2-TD learners of German at two test rounds, at age 3;9, after 10 months of exposure to the L2, and at age 4;8. They report that at age 3;9 76% of the verbs in V2 were inflected correctly. Out of the non-target-like forms, bare forms were more frequent than *en*-infinitivals in V2 clauses (14% vs. 7%). In Vf bare forms rarely occurred (11%), and verbs marked for person and number were not attested at all. In both V2 and Vf, substitutions of suffixes were infrequent. One year later – at age 4;8 – the eL2-TD children inflected 97% of the verbs in V2 correctly, which suggests that they mastered finiteness and verb placement. In line with Prévost (2003), Wojtecka et al. (2013) conclude that eL2-TD learners obey the ban on *en*-infinitivals in V2 and argue that bare forms as (6b) are covertly finite. They state that these bare forms function as a default and reflect eL2 children's difficulty with the realization of the correct overt morphological suffix, as also suggested by the *Missing Surface Inflectional Hypothesis* (Haznedar and Schwartz 1997; Haznedar 2001; Prévost 2003).

Children with SLI. MON-SLI children show severe difficulties with the correct marking of finiteness up to age 10 and in some cases even later (Rothweiler et al. 2012; Clahsen 1991, Clahsen et al. 1997; Rice et al. 1997; Hamann et al. 1998, 2001). Rothweiler et al. (2012) found target-like verb inflection in MON-SLI children to be at 71%. Instead of finite forms, non-finite forms were produced. Clahsen (1991) reported production of bare forms such as (6a), and *en*-infinitivals both in Vf and V2 (cf. (2) and (3)). Importantly, *en*-infinitivals in V2 are basically absent in MON-TD acquisition. Clahsen (1991) and Rothweiler et al. (2012), arguing for a deficit in agreement marking in SLI, suggest that SLI children differ in their qualitative error patterns from TD-children. Unlike the agreement-deficit account, other accounts assume that children with SLI are delayed but not qualitatively different from TD children (e.g., Rice et al.1997). According to Rice et al. (1997) MON-SLI children generally

resemble MON-TD children in their verb placement patterns, but show an *Extended Optional Infinitive Stage*. Crucially, SLI children are assumed to be aware of the relationship between verb placement and finiteness. Other researchers argue for an impaired clause structure in SLI (Hamann et al. 1998, 2001): Based on an analysis of spontaneous speech data, they found 44% of all finite declarative main clauses to be finite Vf structures reflecting a defective CP projection[5], in which the verb cannot move out of I^0.

With respect to eL2-SLI acquisition of German, the few studies to date suggest parallels to MON-SLI (Chilla 2008; Rothweiler et al. 2012). According to Rothweiler et al. (2012), eL2-SLI children inflected most verbs correctly (74%). Bare verbs were the most frequent error type (16%), followed by infinitivals (6%) and substitutions (3%). The error distribution of eL2-SLI and MON-SLI children, reported in the same study, was similar, and in both groups problems seemed to be persistent. Note, however, that the analysis of Rothweiler et al. (2012), which focused on agreement deficits, did not consider verb position (V2/Vf). However, based on a small sub-subset of the eL2-SLI children, Chilla (2008) found *en*-infinitivals in V2 (e.g., 18% of all V2 structures of a single child).

In sum, in eL2-TD acquisition *en*-infinitivals seem to be restricted to Vf position and are almost never produced in V2. This is in line with the *Truncation Hypothesis* and resembles patterns of MON-TD acquisition. Furthermore, bare verbs in V2 reflect a possible developmental stage for eL2 learners. In eL2-SLI, acquisition of finiteness marking is problematic, and the rate of correct finiteness markings is low. Insight into the relation between finiteness and verb placement in eL2 acquisition is limited, however, as previous studies did not systematically distinguish between V2 and Vf clauses. *en*-infinitivals in V2 have only been reported in a case study of one eL2-SLI child (Chilla 2008). Moreover, both bare forms and *en*-infinitivals were analyzed as potentially 'nonfinite' (cf. Rothweiler et al. 2012). This analysis is called into doubt given Prévost's (2003) and Wojtecka et al.'s (2013) findings that bare verbs but not *en*-infinitivals occurred in V2 in eL2-TD children. Taken together, it is still an open issue whether eL2-SLI children obey the ban on *en*-infinitivals in V2, as has been reported for TD development. Alternatively, if they show a deficit in agreement, *en*-infinitivals are expected to also occur in V2, as has been

[5] As reported in Hamann et al. (1998, 2001) children with SLI show problems (the so called "CP-trouble") with generalized V2, such as wh-questions and object topicalization, as well as subordination. We are currently analyzing these structures in our data to shed light on the question of whether eL2-SLI children exhibit difficulties with the CP-Shell, but not with the IP.

claimed to be the case for MON-SLI. Hence, it is unclear whether eL2-SLI children show a deviant or delayed development regarding finiteness and verb placement. We therefore investigated the acquisition of finiteness marking in a larger group of eL2-SLI children by analyzing Vf and V2 clauses separately.

4. Study

4.1 Research questions

This study takes as a starting point the positional asymmetry between bare forms and *en*-infinitivals observed in eL2-TD development. The following questions were addressed in this study:
(Q1) Do the error patterns regarding finiteness marking in V2 and Vf sentences, observed in eL2-TD learners, resemble those of eL2-SLI learners?
(Q2) Do eL2-SLI learners violate the ban on *en*-infinitivals in V2?
If they obey the ban, as shown for eL2-TD (Prévost 2003; Wojtecka et al. 2013), this would speak against a deviant development in eL2-SLI. Given the previous acquisition research on SLI, we expected persistent deficits in eL2-SLI learners of German. If eL2-SLI learners are delayed in their development, they should produce bare verb forms at both test rounds (one year interval), but no *en*-infinitivals in V2 (Q2). If the development of eL2-SLI children is deviant, qualitative differences between TD and SLI children should be observed (Q1). More specifically, eL2-SLI children are then expected to also produce *en*-infinitivals in V2, similar to what has been reported for MON-SLI children.

4.2 Participants

The participants were 13 eL2-children with SLI, which were tested twice (T1 and T2) within a one-year-interval. At T1, children's mean age was 6;9 years (range 4;3 to 9;3) with a mean length of exposure (LoE) to German of 3;7 years (range 0;7 to 6;3). They had their first systematic exposure to German between 24 and 48 months of age (ø 3;0 years), typically when entering kindergarten. Children acquired different L1's:

Arabic, Moroccan Arabic, Urdu, Chinese, Russian, Croatian, Polish, Nepali, and Italian. All participants met the typical criteria of SLI (cf. Leonard, 2000): They had an age-appropriate nonverbal IQ, assessed by the nonverbal scales of the Kaufman Assessment Battery for children (Kaufman et al. 2003), no signs of hearing problems or of psycho-social deprivation, assessed by parental questionnaires. All children were enrolled in speech and language therapy and in addition scored below their age-appropriate norms in at least two out of nine subtests in the standardized test LiSe-DaZ (Schulz and Tracy 2011; for details on this SLI-criterion see Schulz 2013, and Grimm and Schulz 2014).

4.3 Method

The data were collected using the elicited production task of the standardized test LiSe-DaZ (Schulz and Tracy 2011), which is accompanied by a picture book. The experimenter, following the test manual, prompted the children to produce different sentence types (n=19), as exemplified in (7) with a possible child utterance:

(7) Experimenter (points to the picture):
Guck mal, was passiert auf diesem Bild?
Look, what is happening in this picture?

Child:
Die Kinder spielen Ball mit dem Hund.
the children play-3PL ball with the-DAT dog
The children are playing ball with the dog.

Following the procedure of Wojtecka et al. (2013), children's utterances were then analyzed according to the standard linguistic criteria used in similar studies (cf. section 4.4), which were more detailed than the analysis provided in the test manual. All children were tested individually by trained student assistants, and all test sessions were video-recorded for later transcription and coding.

4.4 Data analysis

All declarative matrix clauses containing a lexical verb[6] were included in the data analysis (n=143). For the purposes of this study, utterances without a lexical verb, non-declaratives (i.e. yes/no-questions, wh-questions, imperatives), and subordinate clauses were excluded from analysis. Verb placement was coded as V2 or as Vf. Structures that were ambiguous regarding verb placement like *Er geht* (he go-3SG, 'he goes') were excluded from this analysis.[7] Verb forms were coded as finite if they were inflected with *-e, -st, and -t*. Importantly, *-en* was also coded as finite when used in 1PL or 3PL plural context in V2 (cf. Rothweiler 2006). The form -Ø was coded as finite only if used for 1SG. All verb forms were then coded for (in)correct subject-verb-agreement. We distinguished between correctly inflected forms (i.e. verbs with the target inflectional suffix) and incorrect forms (i.e. substitutions, bare forms, and infinitival forms with *-en*). The bare verb form -Ø was coded as incorrect if it was used in a context other than 1SG; the verb form *-en* was classified as infinitival if used in a context other than 1PL or 3PL (c.f. Clahsen et al. 1997). Note that target-like inflected verb forms in Vf were coded as 'target' regarding the morphological marking despite the fact that the resulting structure is not adult-like. Tables 2 and 3 illustrate the coding.

Table 2. Coding of V2 clauses.

Finiteness	Inflection	Example
+ finite	target	Der Hund spiel-*t* mit dem Ball. The dog play-3SG with the ball
+ finite	substitution	Der Hund spiel-*e* mit dem Ball. The dog play-1SG with the ball
? finite	bare	Der Hund spiel mit dem Ball. The dog play-Ø with the ball
- finite	infinitival	Der Hund spiel-*en* mit dem Ball. The dog play-INF with the ball

[6] Auxiliaries were excluded, as previous studies showed that they occur in the finite form from the beginning and never appear in Vf (Clahsen 1991; Wexler 1994; Clahsen, Penke, and Parodi 1993/1994; Parodi 1998; Prévost 2003). Preliminary results show that at T1 our eL2-SLI children produced 89% of all auxiliaries in V2 correctly inflected. At T2, correctness rate raised to 98%. This indicates that auxiliaries are treated differently by the eL2-SLI children.

[7] These structures will be considered in a future analysis focusing on subject-verb-agreement.

Table 3. Coding of Vf clauses.

Finiteness	Inflection	Example
- finite	infinitival	Der Hund mit dem Ball spiel-*en*. The dog with the ball play-INF
? finite	bare	Der Hund mit dem Ball spiel. The dog with the ball play-Ø
+ finite	target	Der Hund mit dem Ball spiel-*t*. The dog with the ball play-3SG
+ finite	substitution	Der Hund mit dem Ball spiel-*e*. The dog with the ball play-1SG

4.5 Results

Finiteness marking in V2 position. Table 4 presents the results for V2 clauses produced by the eL2-SLI learners at age 6;9 and 7;9. To better compare these data to typical development, results of Wojtecka et al.'s (2013) children (AoO: ø 3;0, LoE: ø 0;10) are displayed as well.[8]

Table 4. Raw number and proportions of verb forms in V2 position

	eL2-SLI		**eL2-TD** (see Wojtecka et al. 2013)	
	T1 age: ø 6;9	T2 age: ø 7;9	T1 age: ø 3;9	T2 age: ø 4;8
Total number of clauses	46 (100%)	74 (100%)	58 (100%)	116 (100%)
target inflection	37 (80%)	59 (79%)	44 (76%)	113 (97%)
non-target inflection:				
bare	7 (15%)	13 (17%)	8 (14%)	3 (3%)
en-infinitival	1 (2,5%)	1 (2%)	4 (7%)	-
substitution	1 (2,5%)	1 (2%)	2 (3%)	-

[8] Assuming that German eL2-TD children with an AoO between 2;0 and 4;0 have acquired finiteness after 6 to 18 months of exposure, (cf. section 3), the age of the eL2-children in Wojtecka et al. (2013) is exactly in the age range in which developmental patterns can be observed. Since eL2-SLI children still show problems with finiteness marking up to age 8, we could compare our older eL2-SLI children to the TD group even at the ages of 6;9 and 7;9.

The eL2-SLI learners inflected 80% of the verbs in V2 target-like at age 6;9 and 79% at age 7;9. *en*-infinitivals and substitutions were rarely found in V2 position at both test rounds. At age 6;9, bare forms represented the most frequent error type (15%). At age 7;9, the eL2-SLI learners still produced 17% bare forms in V2, suggesting that they did not improve within a year. In comparison with the eL2-TD learners analyzed in Wojtecka et al. (2013), the eL2-SLI learners in this study display persistent deficits marking finiteness in V2, as non-target bare forms in V2 were equally frequent at both T1 and T2. Importantly, like eL2-TD learners, eL2-SLI learners did not violate the ban on *en*-infinitivals in V2.

Finiteness marking in Vf position. Verb forms in Vf clauses are depicted in Table 5. For comparison with eL2-TD the results of Wojtecka et al. (2013) are supplied here as well. Overall, the eL2-SLI learners produced only few utterances with verbs in Vf. This indicates that at age 6, eL2-SLI children, like their younger TD peers, know that German requires movement to V2.

Table 5. Raw number and proportions of verb forms in Vf.

	eL2-SLI		**eL2-TD** (see Wojtecka et al. 2013)	
	T1 age: ø 6;9	T2 age: ø 7;9	T1 age: ø 3;9	T2 age: ø 4;8
Total number of clauses	14 (100%)	9 (100%)	18 (100%)	19 (100%)
target inflection	3 (21%)	2 (22%)	-	1 (5%)
non-target inflection:				
bare	1 (8%)	1 (11%)	2 (11%)	-
en-infinitival	10 (71%)	6 (67%)	15 (83%)	17 (90%)
substitution	-	-	1 (6%)	1 (5%)

As expected, correctly marked finite verbs in Vf are infrequent; eL2-SLI children produced only three clauses (21%) with a target-like inflected verb in Vf at age 6;9 and two clauses (22%) at age 7;9. Likewise, bare forms occurred in only one clause each at T1 (8%) and T2 (11%). Substitutions in Vf were not attested at all. In Vf, the most frequent verb forms were *en*-infinitivals, at age 6;9 (71%) and 7;9 (67%). The findings suggest that in eL2-SLI acquisition, as in eL2-TD acquisition, the sentence final position in matrix clauses is restricted to infinitival *-en* verbs.

5. Discussion

This is the first study to investigate the acquisition of finiteness and verb placement in a larger group of eL2-SLI children by analyzing bare verbs and *en*-infinitivals together with verb placement (V2 vs. Vf). Two questions were addressed: (Q1) Do the error patterns regarding finiteness marking in V2 and Vf sentences, observed in eL2-TD learners, resemble those of eL2-SLI learners? (Q2) Do eL2-SLI learners violate the ban on *en*-infinitivals in V2?

Regarding (Q1), our results indicate that eL2-SLI children resemble eL2-TD learners regarding the error patterns they produce. In V2, bare verb forms were the most frequent error type at both age 6;9 and 7;9. Substitutions were infrequent. While bare verbs disappeared in eL2-TD children before age 5, eL2-SLI children produced these forms even after age 7.

Regarding (Q2), our data provide first evidence that eL2-SLI children obey the ban on *en*-infinitivals in V2. Like eL2-TD children (see Prévost 2003; Wojtecka et al. 2013), the eL2-SLI children in our study used correctly inflected verbs or bare forms in V2. In Vf clauses bare verbs were rarely produced. Instead, *en*-infinitivals represent the most frequent error type in these clauses, consistent with the Truncation Hypothesis. Put differently, *en*-infinitivals and bare forms do not occur interchangeably in eL2-SLI and eL2-TD acquisition, which suggests that bare verb forms in V2 should not be characterized as nonfinite. In sum, we did not find qualitative differences in the error patterns of eL2-TD and eL2-SLI children. As for verb placement and finiteness, our findings suggest a delayed rather than a deviant development for eL2-SLI children. Even at age 7;9 only 79% of verbs in V2 were correctly inflected by the eL2-SLI children. We argue that eL2-SLI learners of German have persistent difficulty with target-like overt morphological marking of finiteness. Note that our study did not attempt to explain why the eL2-SLI children, lagging about 3 years behind their eL2-TD peers, still produce bare forms even at age 8. It may be that the delay results from a different underlying language learning mechanism (e.g., Leonard 2000). More research on German and more cross-linguistic research are needed to locate the source of the deficits in marking finiteness in SLI children, both monolingual and multilingual.

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