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Acquisition of Romance languages

Edited by Anna Gavarró & Conxita Lleó

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- 11-13 **Gavarró, Anna** (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. Departament de Filologia Catalana); **Lleó, Conxita** (Universität Hamburg. Institut für Romanistik)
Acquisition of Romance languages. Introduction. *Catalan Journal of Linguistics*, 2006, vol. 5, pp. 11-13.

Articles

- 17-44 **Babyonyshev, Maria; Marin, Stefania** (Yale University. Department of Linguistics)
Acquisition of Pronominal Clitics in Romanian. *Catalan Journal of Linguistics*, 2006, vol. 5, pp. 17-44.

This paper uses new evidence from elicited production experiments to establish that Romanian children do not omit either direct or indirect object clitics at a significant rate. The results reported for the acquisition of indirect object clitics are particularly significant in that, for the first time, it is possible to demonstrate the similarity between the acquisition of direct and indirect object clitics in Romanian and, arguably, for other languages that pattern with Romanian in the relevant respects. Furthermore, our findings receive a natural explanation if it is assumed that two conditions must be met for children to produce clitics. First, children's grammars must not be constrained by any relevant grammatical constraints, such as the Unique Checking Constraint (Wexler 1998, 2003). Second, children must be able to produce utterances of the length required by the clitic constructions.

Key words: first language acquisition, Romance languages, Romanian, accusative clitics, dative clitics, cross-linguistic variation.

- 45-58 **Costa, João; Loureiro, João** (Universidade Nova de Lisboa)
Morphology vs. Word Order in the Acquisition of V-to-I. *Catalan Journal of Linguistics*, 2006, vol. 5, pp. 45-58.

This article presents an experiment on children's sensitivity to two phenomena associated with V-to-I: morphology and word order. It is shown that children are highly sensitive to morphology, but accept ungrammatical sentences in which

verb and adverb are in the wrong order. These results on children's accuracy contrast with those reported for production. An analysis is proposed for explaining this asymmetry, discussing the notion of trigger in acquisition.

Key words: V-to-I, morphology, adverb, European Portuguese, trigger.

- 59-81 **Demuth, Katherine** (Brown University. Cognitive and Linguistic Sciences); **Kehoe, Margaret** (University of Hamburg. Research Centre for Multilingualism)

The Acquisition of Word-final Clusters in French. *Catalan Journal of Linguistics*, 2006, vol. 5, pp. 59-81.

The structure of French syllables has long been controversial, particularly with respect to the status of word-final consonants. Some researchers suggest that word-final consonants are syllabified as codas, whereas others propose that these are onsets of empty-headed syllables. This raises questions regarding the nature of syllabic representations in children's developing French, a topic that has received little attention. This study examines 2-year-olds' elicited productions of word-final obstruent-liquid (OL) clusters, and compares these with the acquisition of word-initial OL clusters. The acquisition of singleton word-final consonants is also discussed. Although word-final clusters are acquired later than both word-initial clusters and word-final singletons, the error patterns are the same, with earlier acquisition and preservation of obstruents. A few children exhibit final vowel epenthesis, raising the possibility that some French-speaking children may syllabify word-final consonants as onsets. The paper concludes with a discussion of the cross-linguistic implications of these findings, identifying several areas for further research.

Key words: phonological acquisition, syllable structure, clusters.

- 83-108 **Fikkert, Paula** (Radboud University Nijmegen); **Freitas, Maria João** (University of Lisbon/Onset-CEL)

Allophony and Allomorphy Cue Phonological Acquisition: Evidence from the European Portuguese vowel system. *Catalan Journal of Linguistics*, 2006, vol. 5, pp. 83-108.

The acquisition of morphophonological alternations is hardly investigated in phonology (Macken 1995, Bernhardt & Stemberger 1998, Hayes 2004, Kerkhoff 2004). Learnability models of phonological alternations often assume that allophonic variation is easy to learn, as it usually follows from the phonology of the language (Peperkamp & Dupoux 2002, Hayes 2004). On the other hand, these models assume that allomorphic variation is acquired late and learners often show paradigm uniformity at the early stages of development. In our study of longitudinal data of seven European Portuguese children, aged between 0;11 and 3;7, we investigate the acquisition of vowel alternations and show that children start acquiring those very early. In particular, children even seem to distinguish vowels in neutralized context to a large extent. We argue that children acquire the abstract phonological vowel system of European Portuguese very early, precisely because of the large amount of systematic variation in the input. We will pro-

vide empirical evidence for the claim that the phonological processes in the language help children to set up the abstract vowel system of European Portuguese.

Key words: vowel alternations, acquisition, allophony, European Portuguese.

109-142 **Goad, Heather; Buckley, Meaghen** (McGill University. Department of Linguistics)

Prosodic Structure in Child French: Evidence for the Foot. *Catalan Journal of Linguistics*, 2006, vol. 5, pp. 109-142.

There is disagreement in the literature on whether French has stress and on whether it has a foot projection. The disagreement stems from the observation that French is unusual in that the phrase rather than the word is the domain of stress assignment, there is optional initial stress in addition to obligatory final stress, and there are rampant violations of word minimality. In view of these observations, this paper examines the outputs of a child learner of Québec French in an attempt to determine the conclusions she has arrived at concerning the status of the foot in the language being acquired. It is demonstrated that, in spite of the challenge that the facts of the target language present, from the onset of production, the child's outputs are compatible with standard views on prosodic structure. Word minimality effects, the distribution of final lengthening, the emergence of word-final consonants, and the organisation of functional material into prosodic structure are all examined. The paper also provides a preliminary analysis of stress in target French which is, to the greatest extent possible, consistent with standard views on prosodic structure.

Key words: French, Québec French, language acquisition, stress, foot binarity, word minimality, truncation, prosodic structure.

143-189 **Hamann, Cornelia** (University of Oldenburg. Department of English) Speculations About Early Syntax: The Production of Wh-questions by Normally Developing French Children and French Children with SLI. *Catalan Journal of Linguistics*, 2006, vol. 5, pp. 143-189.

This paper examines the spontaneous (and elicited) production of questions in 3 typically developing French children (1;8-2;10) and 11 French children with SLI (3;10-9;1). French has three types of constituent questions (Wh-in-situ, fronted Wh without inversion, fronted Wh with inversion) graded in syntactic complexity, allowing detailed investigation of syntactic competence.

The results show that both groups of children greatly prefer Wh-in-situ over fronted Wh and avoid inversion. Infinitives are extremely rare in all questions, whereas null subjects are rare in fronted Wh-questions but occur in in-situ questions in typically developing children. SLI children do not produce infinitives in Wh-questions, but allow null subjects in all question types. The elicitation experiment confirmed these trends, though the SLI children had significantly more difficulties with movement than the normal children.

A tentative account uses the truncation approach and the assumption that young children avoid movement by deriving in-situ questions with a Q-element in the head position of an Interrogative Phrase entering into an Agree relation

with the element left in-situ. SLI children might extend this economic analysis to all Wh-questions.

Key words: French questions, fronted Wh, Wh-in-situ, syntactic complexity, infinitives, null subjects, movement, economic, typically developing children, SLI children.

- 191-219 **Lleó, Conxita** (Universität Hamburg. Institut für Romanistik)
Early Acquisition of Nominal Plural in Spanish. *Catalan Journal of Linguistics*, 2006, vol. 5, pp. 191-219.

This paper examines the development of nominal plural formation in Spanish by three monolingual and two Spanish-German bilingual children, from the beginning of word production until at about 2;4 - 3;0, depending on data availability. Some children begin to express plurality by means of a final *-e* (belonging to the Spanish allomorph *-es*), whereas other children, one of the monolinguals and the two bilinguals, produce plural final *-s* from the beginning. These results are correlated to the child-specific accessibility of final codas in lexical items. On the one hand, such a correlation leads to the postulation of a relative dependency of morphology on phonology: only accessible phonological material can provide morphology with the means to express its categories. However, even if the phonological means have not yet been acquired, the child can still express morphological categories, which are then incomplete, and often ignored in analyses that do not take phonology into consideration.

Key words: morphological acquisition, phonological acquisition, prosodic structure, plural, allomorphs, coda consonants, monolingual and bilingual acquisition.

- 221-236 **Pirvulescu, Mihaela** (University of Toronto at Mississauga)
Theoretical Implications of Object Clitic Omission in Early French: Spontaneous vs. Elicited Production. *Catalan Journal of Linguistics*, 2006, vol. 5, pp. 221-236.

This article examines the phenomenon of object clitic omission in French. Previous research contains contradictory results depending on the source of the data: it seems that in spontaneous production children prefer DPs while in elicited production they prefer omissions. It is proposed that a common methodology be used across different modalities in measuring the rate of omissions, and that the notion of «illicit object omission» be dispensed with. The analysis of the proposed «clitic-contexts» reveals that the strategy favoured by children is omission of all kinds of lexical material in both spontaneous and elicited production. Moreover, it is shown that child behaviour is quantitatively different from the adult one. These findings have consequences on the status of null objects in child grammar: child grammar allows optional object deletion without clitic recoverability, as opposed to adult grammar. Several theoretical approaches are evaluated in the light of the new findings.

Key words: object clitic omission, French, spontaneous production, elicited production.

- 237-272 **Prieto, Pilar** (ICREA-Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona); **Bosch-Baliarda, Marta** (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. Departament de Filologia Catalana)
The Development of Codas in Catalan. *Catalan Journal of Linguistics*, 2006, vol. 5, pp. 237-272.

This paper focuses on the development of syllable-final consonants in Catalan. Developmental data by four Catalan-speaking children (Serra-Solé corpus in CHILDES) has revealed that codas appear with the very first word productions. The role of the following factors in the development of coda acquisition has been systematically analyzed: within-word position, stress, morphological import and segmental composition. The paper presents empirical evidence in favor of the privileged status of metrically prominent syllables (or heads and edges of feet) in licensing coda consonants in Catalan: it is clear that stressed syllables make their coda available before unstressed syllables, independently of within-word position or morphological import. Similarly, word-final positions are privileged and codas in word-final position are acquired earlier than those in word-medial position. Our results also contribute to the discussion about the potential facilitating effect of morphology in phonological acquisition. While Freitas, Miguel & Hub Faria (2001) find evidence for an early emergence of plural markers (expressed as word-final coda fricative [-ʃ]) in European Portuguese, Lleó (2003) reports late acquisition of plural markers (word-final coda fricative [-s]) in Spanish. The Catalan data, like the Spanish data, show that morphological codas are acquired relatively late.

Key words: Catalan, phonological acquisition, syllable structure acquisition, coda acquisition.

- 273-276 Resums