

The acquisition of syntax in Romance languages

Vincent Torrens

Linda Escobar

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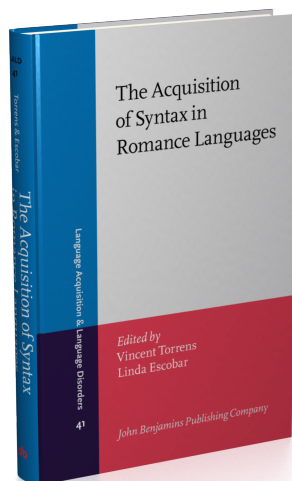
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Introduction

This volume includes a selection of the papers delivered at the first and second language acquisition workshop ‘The Romance Turn’ which took place in Madrid on September 2004. The papers address a wide range of acquisition phenomena from different Romance languages and all share a common theoretical approach based on the Principles and Parameters theory. They favour, discuss and sometimes challenge traditional explanations of first and second language acquisition in terms of maturation of general principles universal to all languages. They all depart from the view that language acquisition can be explained in terms of learning language specific rules, constraints, or structures.

The workshop intended to gather new acquisition research data in the Romance languages in the light of well known hypotheses about some linguistic phenomena. We have obtained papers on the acquisition of Catalan, French, Italian, Portuguese, Spanish and comparative papers with other languages. The papers are not only inherently interesting; they represent one way to look for concrete answers to questions that permeate linguistic science. We include the following topics on the fields of first, second language acquisition and bilingualism: null arguments, subject pronouns, root infinitives, wh-movement, verb movement, clitics, determiners and resumptive pronouns.

The different parts into which this volume is organized reflect different approaches that current research has offered. The contributions in Part 1 deal with issues of development of reflexive pronouns, determiners and clitics in Catalan, French, Italian and Spanish. In the opening chapter Sergio Baauw, Marieke Kuipers, Esther Ruigendijk & Fernando Cueto analyse reflexive clitics in Spanish in comparison with reflexive pronouns in many Germanic languages under the experimental condition that there are pragmatic differences between SE- and SELF anaphors in the line of Reuland (2001). In order to capture their results, they support Avrutin’s (1999) claim that children have early knowledge of the principles of syntax but often have problems with the use of syntax (feature checking, A-Chain formation) and structure information (formation of referential dependencies). Anna Gavarró, Ana Teresa Pérez-Leroux & Thomas

Roeper report on their work on acquisition of the bare noun/definite contrasts in English versus Catalan. They claim that children are sensitive to structural contrasts in the NP domain, i.e. in the object position, independent from parametric variation.

The paper of **Isabelle Barrière & Marjorie Perlman Lorch** gives an account of the order of acquisition of different types of SE-constructions in French along with a wide range of research strategies, proposing a modified version of Borer & Wexler's (1987) Maturation Hypothesis. **Natascha Müller, Katrin Schmitz, Katja Cantone & Tanja Kupisch's** paper provides evidence that acquisition of object clitics in French and Italian presents language-specific differences in relation to the acquisition of verbs and the setting of the null subject parameter. The paper by **Pannemann** studies the cross-linguistic influence in bilingual language acquisition formulated by Müller & Hulk (2000) for the acquisition of determiners and adjectives.

Part 2 focuses on the acquisition of verbs, auxiliaries, and the properties of Inflection. The first two papers deal with early Italian. **Claudia Caprin & Maria Teresa Guasti** focus on the use/omission of the copula and auxiliary BE. They claim that children omit auxiliaries more often than the copula because the computation in which the former are involved is more costly than the computation in which the latter is involved and also conclude, supporting Hirsch and Wexler's (2004) claim (based on work by Embick 2004), that children's passives are resultative passives, in which "be" selects a V(erb)al P(hrase). **Elisa Franchi** also investigates the acquisition and the developmental pattern of copular constructions. The pattern emerging from the data is analysed along the lines of the Truncation Hypothesis (Rizzi 1993, 1994).

Manola Salustri & Nina Hyams's paper compares early Germanic languages, on the one hand, with Spanish, Catalan, and Italian along with other null subject languages, on the other hand. It is argued that there exists an analogue of the Root Infinitive (RI) stage in the latter languages: the imperative. According to this Imperative Analogue Hypothesis (IAH), they propose that what is universal about the RI stage is the mapping of irrealis mood onto a tenseless clausal structure. The last two papers in this part of the volume analyse acquisition of verbs with respect to presence/absence of subjects.

Vincent Torrens, Linda Escobar & Ken Wexler examine early Spanish comprehension data from different experimental paradigms and give support to the External Argument Requirement Hypothesis, according to which children have trouble with base structures that don't assign a subject/external argument. Finally, **Jacqueline van Kampen** examines early French, Spanish and Portuguese with respect to finite verbs that lack a subject. She proposes a four-stage process of acquisition.

Part 3 contains three papers which deal with wh-movement transformations in child language. **Elaine Grolla's** paper relates a number of configurations in Brazilian Portuguese along with English in which the following holds: when a derivation involves movement, the insertion of a pronoun is blocked. In this sense she proposes a unified account of the problems that have been reported so far in child language with respect to certain configurations containing A and A' bound pronouns.

María Junkal Gutiérrez Mangado presents her work of an on-going longitudinal experimental study investigating the acquisition of L1 Spanish long-distance (LD) *wh*-questions by a Spanish speaking child. The non-adult questions found are shown to be fully UG constrained since they look like the strategies performed by some natural languages when forming LD dependencies, sharing with them the same restrictions. Her analysis of non-adult questions adopts Chomsky's (1995) general economy where Partial movement questions are predicted to precede *wh*-copying structures since the latter involve movement of additional features besides the default option of subextracting the *wh*-feature only.

Magda Oiry & Hamida Demirdache provide arguments from L1 acquisition of French for the syntax of *wh*-in situ questions and for the existence of a non-lexical Q morpheme. The central claim they make is that this Q morpheme licenses not only *wh*-in situ but also *wh*-movement in early French.

Part 4 deals with syntactic/semantic factors along with other discourse strategies in L1 Acquisition found in the syntax/discourse interface. **João Costa & Kriszta Szendrői** present their work on two strategies of focus marking in early European Portuguese: syntactic and prosodic. In addition to the properties of development of focus, their experiment provides an acquisition argument for evaluating competing theoretical proposals. They argue against the prosodic bootstrapping hypothesis for the setting of parameters, according to which sensitivity to prosody precedes sensitivity to word order.

The second paper by **Manuela Pinto** examines recent studies on bilingual first language acquisition focused on crosslinguistic influence effects, particularly in those areas where the formal system interfaces with the system of use.

Part 5 contains the three papers on Second Language Acquisition included in this book and all of them deal with different grammatical domains that are acquired late or are difficult to acquire. **Claudia Borgonovo, Joyce Bruhn de Garavito & Philippe Prévost** re-examine the debate of vulnerability of interface phenomena acquisition and present their experimental work on one particular morphosyntax-semantics interface phenomenon: the interpretation of DPs marked by mood in Spanish. In particular, they analyse the L2 acquisition of Spanish relative clauses by English speakers. **Cristóbal Lozano** also looks at one particular interface phenomenon: presentational focus in Spanish along with a longitudinal study of Greek-speaking learners. **Silvina Montrul & Celeste Rodríguez Louro** finally investigate both morphosyntactic and discourse-pragmatic aspects of subject expression in the same L2 learners (English speakers learning Spanish) across different proficiency levels.

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