

Center for the Study of Language Development and Linguistic Communication (CSLDLC)
- University of Bucharest

Workshop on the Acquisition of Recursion

November 18, 2016

Keynote speakers

Ana Teresa Pérez-Leroux – University of Toronto

Tom Roeper - University of Massachusetts, Amherst

4th Bucharest Colloquium of Language Acquisition

November 19, 2016

Keynote speaker

Mihaela Pîrvulescu - University of Toronto

Venue: Casa Universitarilor
46 Dionisie Lupu Str., Sector 1, Bucharest

4TH BUCHAREST COLLOQUIUM OF LANGUAGE ACQUISITION
18 – 19 November 2016

Friday, 18 November	
	Workshop on the Acquisition of Recursion Casa Universitarilor, Sala de lectură, 46 Dionisie Lupu Str.
9:30 - 9:45	Registration
9:45 -10:00	Opening address: Professor Octavian Roske, Head of Department of English, University of Bucharest
10.00 - 11.00	Ana Teresa Pérez-Leroux – University of Toronto
Keynote speaker	Constraints and resilience in the child’s path to recursion
11.00 - 11.30	Coffee – tea break
Session 1	Chair: Tom Roeper
11.30 - 12.00	Motoki Nakajima – Nagano Prefectural College, Miwa Isobe – Tokyo University of the Arts, Reiko Okabe – Nihon University, Akiko Terunuma – Daito Bunka University, Sakumi Inokuma – Jissen Women’s University, Shunichiro Inada – Meiji Pharmaceutical University & Terue Nakato – Kitasato University
	Recursive relative clauses in child Japanese
12.00 - 12.30	Ágnes Tóth - Research Institute for Linguistics (HAS), Pázmány Péter University, Budapest
	The acquisition of possessive structures in Hungarian
12:30 – 14:00	Lunch break
14:00 - 15:00	Tom Roeper – University of Massachusetts, Amherst
Keynote speaker	Cross-linguistic perspectives on the acquisition path for recursion: the left- and right-branching question
Session 2	Chair: Ana Teresa Pérez-Leroux
15:00 – 15:30	Benu Pareek
	Recursive nominal modification in Hindi and its acquisition
15:30 – 16.00	Anca Sevcenco & Larisa Avram – University of Bucharest
	Recursive locative PPs and relative clauses in child Romanian

	Saturday, 19 November
	Casa Universitarilor, Sala de lectură, 46 Dionisie Lupu Str.
10:00- 11:00 Keynote speaker	Mihaela Pîrvulescu - University of Toronto Bidirectional effects in the acquisition of two or more languages
11.00 - 11.30	Coffee – tea break
Session 1	Chair: Anca Sevcenco
11:30 - 12:00	Marco Bril – Free University, Amsterdam Written inflectional morphology and locality in L1 and L2 learners of French
12:00 –12:30	Irina Iancu - University of Bucharest Surface unaccusativity diagnostics in L2 English
12.30 – 13:00	Elena Buja – “Transilvania” University of Braşov Syllable structure processes in child Romanian
13.00 - 14.30	Lunch break
Session 2	Chair: Elena Buja
14.30 - 15:00	Veronica Tomescu - University of Bucharest Remarks on the delayed acquisition of the possibility suffix -hat/-het in 2L1 Hungarian
15:00 - 15:30	Laura Miros – University of Bucharest Null and overt subjects in child Romanian in two 2L1 contexts: Romanian-Russian and Romanian-Ukrainian
15:30-16:00	Otilia Teodorescu (Negru) - University of Bucharest On early subjects in child Romanian: antecedent preferences of null and overt pronominal subjects
16:00-16:30	Coffee – tea break
Session 3	Chair: Larisa Avram
16:30 – 17:00	Cristina Măniţă – University of Bucharest On early wh-question asymmetries in child Romanian
17:00 – 17:30	Roxana Din – University of Bucharest Remarks on linguistic markers of developmental dyslexia in Romanian

Keynote speaker

Bidirectional effects in the acquisition of two or more languages

Mihaela Pirvulescu

University of Toronto Mississauga

Recent studies show that bilingual children might experience delay in some grammatical domains with respect to monolingual children, in the absence of cross-linguistic influence (Unsworth 2011, Pirvulescu et al. 2014). With respect to developmental object omissions some studies show delay in bilingual children as unidirectional quantitative differences with respect to monolinguals; this is interpreted as a consequence of cross-linguistic influence (Müller & Hulk 2001; Yip & Matthews 2005). These data come from a combination of [±null argument] languages, contrasting in the availability of null objects. The first research question I am addressing is the following: is there still a bilingual effect in omissions once cross-linguistic differences are factored out? I will show that this seems to be the case, in different language combinations: French and English and French and Spanish. These findings lead to a second question: are these effects due to the grammatical representation or to language processing? I will argue that these are due to the developing grammatical representations and I will extend the discussion to what type of model would account for these bilingual effects, in what domains we should expect them and what we can predict for the acquisition of more than two languages.

Written inflectional morphology and locality in L1 and L2 learners of French

Marco Bril

Free University, Amsterdam

The acquisition of inflectional morphology is affected by the influence of structural distance between the Probe (i.e. the adjective) and the Goal (i.e. the noun) ([2]). In spoken production of young Italian children for example, [2] showed that the smaller the Probe-Goal distance is, the earlier the agreement relation is acquired. In written production of inflectional morphology a similar effect of the Probe-Goal distance has been found (i.e. [1]).

This study focuses on the L1 and L2 acquisition of written inflectional morphology in advanced learners of French and its relation to the Probe-Goal distance. In our first experiment we tested 28 advanced French L1 learners in a fill-in-the-gap elicitation task with Adj-Noun, dislocations and relative clauses. We expected to find more incorrect inflection morphemes with the increase of the Probe-Goal distance. A Friedman's Anova revealed a main effect for Distance ($X^2(2) = 24.53$; $p = 0.000$) and Wilcoxon follow-up comparisons revealed significance for Adj-Noun (vs. Relative Clause) ($T = 1.23$; $p = 0.000$; $r = 0,87$), as well as for Dislocations (vs. Relative Clause) ($T = 0,86$; $p = 0.004$; $r = 0,6$). However, Adj-Noun vs. Dislocation was not significant ($T = 0.38$; $p = 0,48$; $r = 0,27$).

In our second experiment we tested 26 advanced Dutch L1- French L2 learners in a similar fill-in-the-gap elicitation task and expected a higher rate of incorrect inflections with the increase of the Probe-Goal distance. An one-way repeated measures Anova revealed a main effect for Distance ($F(1,45; 36.33) = 14.91$; $p = 0.000$; $r = 0.37$). In addition, more incorrect inflections were found in Dislocation (vs. Adj-Noun) ($F(1,25) = 11.33$; $p = 0.002$; $r = 0.31$) and in Relative Clauses (vs. Dislocations) ($F(1,25) = 4.85$; $p = 0.037$; $r = 0.16$).

Results show a significant effect of Probe-Goal distance on the correctness of written inflections in both advanced L1 and L2 learners of French.

References

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Syllable structure processes in child Romanian

Elena Buja

“Transilvania” University of Braşov

The paper aims at bringing to the fore some strategies young typically developing children who acquire Romanian as their mother tongue (L1) make recourse to in their attempt to produce adult targets. The focus of the study is represented by those processes that affect syllable structure, such as cluster reduction, weak syllable deletion, metathesis and epenthesis, to mention a few. To this aim, data coming from 6 language diaries and 4 longitudinal corpora have been subjected to investigation within the framework of developmental “universals and particulars” (Slobin 1985: 5). The results of the analysis reveal language-specific and child-specific features, as well as universal tendencies in the acquisition of syllable structure. At the same time, they are also indicative of a certain developmental path in the case of the children whose speech production has been traced longitudinally.

Remarks on linguistic markers of developmental dyslexia in Romanian

Roxana Din

University of Bucharest

Previous studies which focused on the identification of possible linguistic markers of language deficits reveal that there is an overlap between the linguistic profile of specific language impairment and that of developmental dyslexia (Avram et al. 2013, Arosio et al. 2016). These studies also show that Accusative clitics might be one of the linguistic markers of both deficits (Arosio et al. 2016, Durrleman & Delage 2015). A large number of children with dyslexia, however, may actually be affected by SLI, although not diagnosed as such. One of the main reasons for which diagnosis of the two language impairments may interfere is that reading remains an area of risk with many SLI children. Therefore reading deficits may indicate both disorders. Besides, these deficits can have other causes, unrelated to language.

For Romanian, there is no linguistic profile for dyslexia. Avram et al. (2013) show that Romanian dyslexic children have phonological problems. Non-reflexive 3rd person Accusative clitics are problematic with both developmental dyslexia and SLI, but clearly more vulnerable with the latter. The omission rate as well as the avoidance strategies used in the two deficits are different, offering a possible discriminating criterion.

In the present study I use language assessment, including that of Accusative clitic production with a view to testing whether a group of 7 Romanian monolingual children (age range 6;0 – 8;0) referred for dyslexia have the same linguistic profile as the one reported for developmental dyslexia in Avram et al. (2013). Their responses are compared to those of an age-matched group of 7 TD children. The results of an elicited production task and those of a sentence repetition task (CLAD GAPS for Romanian, Avram et al. 2013) show that non-reflexive 3rd person Accusative clitics are not problematic with the 7 children diagnosed with reading problems. The results in the repetition task reveal the absence of phonological problems. Overall, they behave like the control group of TD children. The results reveal the importance of language assessment when children are referred for dyslexia.

References

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Surface unaccusativity diagnostics in L2 English

Irina Iancu

University of Bucharest

Recent acquisition studies argue that interface phenomena are vulnerable in L2 learning (The Interface Hypothesis, Sorace & Filiaci 2006, Sorace & Serratrice 2009, Sorace 2011). This translates into residual optionality and non-convergence even at advanced stages of L2 learning. In the present talk I address the following main question: Are properties operating at the interfaces problematic for advanced L2 learners? If so, to what extent? In order to answer this question, I investigate how Romanian learners of L2 English integrate knowledge of unaccusativity with knowledge of *there*-sentences and locative inversion.

47 students of L2 English (age range 20-24 years) took part in two studies. The first acceptability judgment task focused on the unergative/unaccusative split in locative inversion structures in L2 English. It included 16 test sentences and 16 distractors. The test sentences were balanced for 4 conditions: locative inversion with (i) prototypical unaccusatives; (ii) unergatives; (iii) passive predicates; (iv) definite change of state unaccusatives. The results reveal a main effect of condition ($F(2, 91) = 376.18, p=0.001$). Post-hoc tests with Bonferroni correction reveal a significant difference between the acceptance rate of prototypical unaccusatives and i) unergatives ($p < .05$) and ii) definite change of state unaccusatives ($p < .05$).

The second acceptability judgment task focused on the unergative/unaccusative split in *there*-sentences. It included 16 test sentences and 16 distractors. The test sentences were balanced for 4 conditions: *there*-sentences with (i) verbs of existence; (ii) verbs of appearance; (iii) definite change of state unaccusatives; (iv) unergatives. The results reveal a main effect of condition ($F(2, 82) = 248.71, p=0.001$) and a significant difference between the acceptance rate of prototypical unaccusatives and i) unergatives ($p < .05$) and ii) definite change of state unaccusatives ($p < .05$).

The advanced learners make the unergative-unaccusative distinction in both *there*-sentences and locative inversion structures, providing evidence that the unaccusative/ unergative split is universal.

References

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The use of null and overt subjects in narratives by Romanian-Russian and Romanian-Ukrainian bilinguals

Laura Miros

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Background. Recent acquisition studies have revealed cross-linguistic influence effects on early subject use in a bilingual context which involves a *pro*-drop and a non *pro*-drop language. One can identify a cross-linguistic pattern: the direction of these effects is from the non-null subject language to the null subject one (e.g. from English to Italian in Serratrice, Sorace and Paoli 2004, from English to Greek in Argyri and Sorace 2007). These studies also show that dominance and directionality of interference seem to be related (Argyri and Sorace 2007, Serratrice 2007).

Aim. The aim of the present study is to investigate whether there is evidence for cross-linguistic influence effects on subject use in the speech of Romanian-Russian and Romanian-Ukrainian bilingual children. These bilingual pairs have not been investigated before. Moreover, given the fact that Russian and Ukrainian are partial *pro*-drop languages (Růžička 1986, Müller 1988, 2011, Benedicto 1993, Perlmutter & Moore 2002) and Romanian is *pro*-drop (Dobrovie-Sorin 1993), the data may shed light on whether the pattern of cross-linguistic influence effects is the same as in non *pro*-drop / *pro*-drop contexts.

Study. For the present study I used frog story narratives (*Frog goes to dinner* and *Frog, where are you?*). Details related to the number of examined utterances and to participants are given in Table 1. The subjects were coded as (i) overt and null; (ii) in past tense and in non-past tense sentences. The results reveal a similar rate of overt subjects in the Russian and in the Ukrainian narratives (83.11% and 87.6%). For both languages, the rate of null subjects is significantly lower in past tense sentences. In the Romanian narratives of the bilinguals, the rate of overt subjects is higher than in the narratives of the

control group of Romanian monolinguals (age-matched) and also higher than reported in previous studies for younger Romanian monolinguals (Teodororescu 2014). Interestingly, the rate is higher with the Romanian-Ukrainian group than with the Romanian-Russian group (77% vs. 64%).

I interpret the data as revealing cross-linguistic effects on early subject use, in accordance with previous studies. The results show that the direction is from the partial *pro*-drop to the *pro*-drop language. The difference between the two groups of bilinguals is accounted for in terms of language dominance.

Table 1. Corpus and participants

GROUP	AGE RANGE	TOTAL Verb UTTERANCES
Romanian-Russian (10 bilinguals)	5;9-8;1	Romanian: 425 Russian: 302
Romanian-Ukrainian (14 bilinguals)	5;0-9;1	Romanian: 436 Ukrainian: 331
Romanian monolinguals (10)	5;5-9;1	553

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On early *wh*-question asymmetries in child Romanian. Animacy feature mismatch and interference effects

Cristina Măniță
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Several recent studies have shown that syntactic structures which involve *wh*-movement are vulnerable in child language only when the moved constituent and the subject intervener have a lexical NP restriction (Friedmann et al. 2009). Other studies claim that *wh*-questions can also be vulnerable when the copy of the displaced *wh*-phrase interferes with AGREE between AgrS and the postverbal subject (Guasti et al. 2010). The former predict a subject-object asymmetry with *which*-NP questions alone. The latter also predict a subject-object asymmetry with bare *wh*- questions, with no lexical restriction.

In this talk I examine longitudinal data and experimental results on the production of subject and object *wh*-questions in child Romanian with a view to evaluating these two hypotheses. Previous research on *wh*-questions in child Romanian has focused on comprehension (Bențea 2015, Sevcenco et al. 2015, Sevcenco & Avram 2015). The present study extends the investigation to the production of *wh*-questions. More generally, it can shed light on the nature of the subject-object asymmetry in child language.

The longitudinal data come from two corpora of monolingual Romanian (B. 1;9 – 3;0 and I. 1;10 – 2;8). The results for child speech are compared to child directed speech in the same corpora. The experimental data come from an elicited production task, an adaptation of the one used in Wilhelm & Hanna (1992). It had a 2 x 2 design with type of *wh*-element (*cine* ‘who’ vs. *ce* ‘what’) and type of structure (subject vs. object) as within-participants factors. It included 4 test sentence types (illustrated in 1-4) and a total of 16 test sentences.

- (1) *Cine*_subject: Cine spală câinele?
‘Who is washing the dog?’
- (2) *Cine*_object: Pe cine spală fetița?
‘Whom is the girl washing?’
- (3) *Ce*_subject: Ce zboară pe cer?
‘What is flying in the sky?’
- (4) *Ce*_object: Ce bea pisica?
‘What is the cat drinking?’

24 typically developing monolingual Romanian-speaking children aged 3;4 – 4;11 (mean age 4;2) took part in the study.

The results reveal an asymmetry in the production of subject and object *wh*-questions. In support of Guasti et al. (2010), our data provide evidence that there is an asymmetry between subject and object bare *wh*-questions, but only with *who* questions. Children produced significantly more subject *who*-questions than object *who* questions ($p < .05$) in the production task. The former are attested at a younger stage in the longitudinal data as well (object *who*-questions are absent in both corpora). In child directed speech a similar asymmetry is found: adults use a higher number of subject *who*-questions. With *what* questions there is no asymmetry in the experimental data between subject and object questions, in spite of the fact that object questions emerge earlier and are more numerous in the input. I account for the lack of asymmetry in this case in terms of feature mismatch. In the task, all the elicited object *what* questions contained an animate subject and an inanimate object. This feature mismatch seems to alleviate the interference effect (Guasti et al. 2010) similarly to the way in which animacy feature mismatch seems to alleviate intervention effects in the case of which-NP questions (see Bențea 2015).

References

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Early subjects in child Romanian: antecedent preferences of null and overt pronominal subjects

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Background. One common assumption with respect to the null (NPS) vs. overt pronominal subject (OPS) alternation in intra-sentential contexts in null subject languages (NSL) is that NPS preferentially take a prominent antecedent, whereas OPS a less prominent one (Carminati 2002). Several studies, however, reveal that these preferences are subject to cross-linguistic variation (Alonso-Ovalle et al. 2002, Filiaci 2011, Filiaci et al. 2013). Another finding is that antecedent choice is different in anaphoric and in cataphoric contexts. Acquisition studies report that adult-like antecedent preferences develop relatively late. In some languages, they are acquired earlier for NPS (Sorace et al. 2009, Serratrice 2007 for Italian, Kraš & Stipeć 2013 for Croatian); in others, 5 year-olds have no clear preference for the antecedent of either NPS or OPS (e.g. for European Portuguese, Lobo & Silva 2015). The only study which compares

early antecedent choices in both anaphoric and cataphoric contexts is Lobo & Silva (2015). Their results reveal a difference between the two contexts, as reported for several adult languages. For Romanian, Teodorescu (2015) and Avram & Teodorescu (2016) offer results which show that children make no distinction between NPS and OPS in anaphoric contexts.

Aim. We extend the investigation of the interpretation of NPS and OPS in temporal adjuncts in child Romanian to cataphoric contexts, with focus on the following questions: (i) Which are the antecedent preferences of pronominal subjects in child Romanian in a cataphoric context?; (ii) Is there any difference between antecedent choice in anaphoric and in cataphoric contexts?

Study. Participants. 40 monolingual Romanian-speaking children (age range 3;11-5;11) and a control group of 40 adults (age range 19-68) took part in the study. **Method.** We used a picture selection task similar to the one used in Teodorescu (2015). The participants were required to choose the picture which best matched the sentence they heard. The task tested antecedent preferences in a cataphoric context across 3 conditions: (i) null pronoun; (ii) overt personal pronoun; (iii) (proximal) demonstrative. Each condition had 4 items (see example in (1)), i.e. 12 test sentences. **Results.** The results (summarized in Table 1) show that 4- and 5-year old Romanian children make no distinction between NPS and OPS with respect to antecedent choice. In the cataphoric context the choice of the antecedent was similar for these two pronominal subject types. With demonstratives, the object was the preferred antecedent. The children gave adult-like responses. The comparison with the results reported for European Portuguese reveal several differences both for adult and for children antecedent preferences, in both contexts. We suggest that these differences can be accounted for in terms of language-specific properties.

- (1) În timp ce **pro/el/acesta** mergea cu bicicleta, elefantul a stropit motanul.
 in time that pro/he/this.one went with bicycle.the elephant.the has splashed cat.the
 'While he was riding the bicycle, the elephant splashed the cat.'

Table 1. Antecedent preferences of pronominal subjects in a cataphoric context

Condition	null pronoun		overt personal pronoun		demonstrative	
	subject	object	subject	object	subject	object
Children	71.25%	28.75%	67.5%	31.8%	22.5%	77.5%
Adults	75%	25%	66.8%	32.5%	25%	75%

References

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Remarks on the delayed acquisition of the possibility suffix *-hat/-het* in 2L1 Hungarian

Veronica Tomescu

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The paper discusses the delayed acquisition of the Hungarian possibility suffix *-hat/-het* in 2L1 Hungarian, on the basis of longitudinal data coming from two 2L1 Romanian-Hungarian children. In Hungarian, deontic, dynamic and epistemic modality can be expressed either by the use of auxiliary-like modal verbs or by the above-mentioned suffix. While in L1 Hungarian both are acquired before the third birthday, in the bilingual data it is only the auxiliary-like modals which are attested at a similar age; the suffix is only present after 5;0. In addition, epistemic contexts are entirely absent from the 2L1 corpora investigated.