INTRODUCTION TO THE SPECIAL ISSUE: SOME NOTES ON THE STUDY OF EARLY SUBJECTS IN CHILD ROMANIAN

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Abstract: This article offers a brief presentation of the main issues and results which emerge from the few previous studies on the syntax and interpretation of subjects in child Romanian as well as an introduction to this special issue.

Keywords: pronominal subjects, L1 Romanian, 2L1 Romanian

1. Introduction

One common empirical observation with respect to the acquisition of subjects in null subject languages is that the value of the *pro*-drop parameter is set early, around age two (Valian 1991, Valian and Eisenberg 1996, Austin et al. 1997, Grinstead 1998, 2000, Serratrice 2005, Lorusso et al. 2005, Belletti and Guasti 2015, a.o.). The child makes use of a legitimate grammatical alternation between null and overt subjects, pre- and post-verbal subjects, made available by the target-language. The null-overt subject ratio is remarkably similar to the one found in adult speech. But studies differ with respect to how early they assume that children make target-like use of this alternation. In particular, the debate has been focusing on the availability or absence of a "no overt subject stage". Following the insight of theoretical analyses which link the null subject property to properties of Inflection, the setting of the *pro*-drop parameter has been discussed in relation to the acquisition of Inflection. In several studies, the latter was considered a requirement for the acquisition of *pro*-drop. On the basis of data from child Catalan and child Spanish, Grinstead (1998, 2000) argues that the emergence of overt subjects correlates with the acquisition of (contrastive) tense and number morphology. As long as the functional projections of Tense and Agreement are not active in the child's grammar, overt subjects will be absent. A correlation between the emergence of overt subjects and the activation of the C-layer has also been found. Building on the analysis of preverbal subjects in (some) *pro*-drop languages as occupying a position in the left-periphery of the clause, Grinstead and Spinner (2009) argue that in Spanish overt subjects emerge concurrently with left-peripheral structures (*wh*-questions, clitic left dislocations, fronted topics and foci).

Evidence in favour of a "no overt subject" stage in child Spanish is also provided by Villa-Garcia (2013). On the other hand, no similar stage is attested in the data investigated by Bel (2003), which show that Catalan and Spanish children use both null and overt subjects from the earliest combinatorial speech. The same contradictory results are available for Italian. Bates (1976) discusses data which show that Italian-speaking children go through a "no overt subject stage" which, however, is not attested in the data investigated by Serratrice (2005) (see also Belletti and Guasti 2015 for an overview).

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But even when the "no overt subject stage" is not attested in the data investigated, there is an increase in the use of overt subjects over time, indicating that some developmental change may be at stake (see Cabre Sans and Gavarró 2007 for Catalan, Austin et al. 1997 for Spanish, Lorusso et al. 2005 for Italian, Valian and Eisenberg 1996 for Portuguese).

One further empirical finding is that the early distribution of subjects shows sensitivity to the class which the verb belongs to. Italian and Catalan children preferentially use post-verbal subjects with unaccusatives, i.e. there are more Verb Subject utterances with unaccusatives in children's spontaneous speech. This has been interpreted as evidence that they correctly treat the argument of unaccusatives as an internal argument and prefer to leave it in its first Merge position, i.e. in complement position (Lorusso et al. 2005, Cabre Sans and Gavarró 2007). Similar results are reported by Bel (2003) for Catalan and Spanish. The analysis of the early use of pre- and post-verbal subjects with various verb classes (transitives, unergatives, unaccusatives) reveals that both Catalan and Spanish children use a higher rate of post-verbal subjects with unaccusatives.

In spite of the fact that children show early knowledge of the *pro*-drop option in accordance with their target language and alternate null and overt subjects, they do not always use subjects in an adult-like manner. Discourse-pragmatic knowledge of subject use is (slightly) delayed across languages (Austin et al. 1997, Bel 2003, Grinstead and Spinner 2009). Even for languages like Italian, for which there is evidence that children are sensitive to the pragmatic conditions on null and overt subject use (informativeness, disambiguation) from the very beginning, it has been observed that "this sensitivity becomes more fine-tuned over time" (Serratrice 2005: 457). Several studies report an overuse of overt pronominal subjects, especially 1st and 2nd person pronouns (Austin et al. 1997, Serratrice 2005). And this delay is even more obvious in 2L1 acquisition, where phenomena at the syntax-pragmatics interface are generally more vulnerable (Sorace and Filiaci 2006, Sorace 2011).

A delay is also reported with respect to overt pronominal subject antecedent biases across languages. Children as old as 8 years may not show adult-like subject antecedent biases in the case of overt pronominal subjects though they behave adult-like with respect to null pronouns (Kraš and Stipeć 2013).

Summing up, the main empirical finding reported in the studies which investigated the acquisition of subjects in *pro*-drop languages is that the syntax of subject use is acquired early. If there is a delay, it targets the discourse-pragmatics constraints on the use and the interpretation of subjects, with a slight developmental asymmetry between null and overt subjects. The properties of the latter seem to be more difficult to acquire.

2. Previous studies on early subjects in child Romanian

The issues discussed in the previous section have also been addressed in relation to child Romanian. All the available studies show that the syntax of subjects is acquired very early, at approximately 2 years (Avram and Coene 2004, 2008, 2010, Teodorescu 2014, 2017b). Overt subjects are attested early (at 1;09 – 1;10), pre- and post-verbal

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subjects emerge concurrently and are correctly placed, post-verbal subjects are found with all classes of verbs (not exclusively with unaccusatives). But these studies also present data which indicate that in child Romanian subjects are not target-like from the earliest stages (Avram and Coene 2004, 2008, 2010). In one of the corpora (age range 1;05 – 2;11) investigated in Avram and Coene (2010), a possible "no overt subject stage" is attested (age 1;05 – 1;09). The range of early overt subjects is limited in the beginning: children use only DPs with situation-bound reference, i.e. demonstratives, proper names and, more rarely, definite DPs. This restrictive system is analysed as indicative of a deficient Agreement/Person system, which makes use of (deictic) demonstratives and full nominal expressions to compensate for a still unvalued Person feature (Avram and Coene 2010). The null subjects attested during this stage are also analysed as situation bound elements, associated with old information.

According to Avram and Coene (2008) the valuation of the Person feature of Inflection takes place in two steps. First, the child has to determine whether Inflection in the target-language is split, i.e. whether Tense and AgrS are independently projected. For AgrS to be independent, it must minimally distinctively mark Person (i.e. 1st and 2nd person have to be distinctively marked in at least one number in at least one tense). Split-Inflection is associated with a positive setting of the verb movement parameter, which explains the early post-verbal subjects. At this stage, however, the Person feature has not been fully valued yet. For AgrS to allow null subjects it must maximally distinctively mark Person, i.e. 1st and 2nd person must be distinctively marked in both the singular and the plural in at least one tense. The *pro*-drop parameter can be set only after full valuation of the Person feature.

One more finding reported in these studies is a slight increase in the use of overt subjects over time, especially pronouns, on a par with what was found for several other *pro*-drop languages[1]. Another change targets the use of post-verbal subjects: their number increases over time. The range of possible subjects becomes adult-like as soon as null subjects are found in embedded clauses, at a time when the number of demonstratives used as subjects decreases (at approximately 2;04). There is a correlation between the emergence of complementizers, which signals activation of the force-finiteness system of the C-domain, and the shift from exclusively situation bound DP subjects (topics) to a larger array of possible subjects.

The studies whose findings were briefly presented above converge on the conclusion that in child Romanian the *pro*-drop parameter is set early but subjects are not target-like from the onset of combinatorial speech. Children need time to value the Person feature in the target-language and to identify the properties of the force-finiteness system in the C-layer of the clause before they can identify the constraints on subject use. There might be a "no overt subject stage" in child Romanian, in support of Grinstead's (2000) view according to which children who are acquiring a *pro*-drop language go through a stage when they do not use overt subjects. The Romanian data, however, as acknowledged by the authors of these studies, are relatively "thin". The studies rely on only two longitudinal corpora and the "no overt subject stage" is attested in one single

[1] Interestingly, for Romanian a decrease in the use of overt subjects in child directed speech is also reported.

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corpus, which contains a small number of relevant tokens. Therefore, further investigation is necessary, based on more longitudinal corpora of child Romanian.

Further support in favour of the view that children acquire the syntax of subjects early is provided in Teodorescu (2014, 2017b). This author examined subject use in child Romanian in relation to verb class (transitive, unaccusative and unergative), definiteness and animacy in three longitudinal corpora (age range 1;9 – 3;1) and in 44 *frog story* narratives (age range 3;1 – 9;5). The results reveal that Romanian children treat the subject of unaccusatives as an internal argument, placing it preferentially in post-verbal position. Importantly, both definite and indefinite subjects of unaccusatives are found in post-verbal position. In Romanian, unlike in Italian, the subject of unaccusatives may remain in post-verbal position irrespective of definiteness (Alboiu 2002). Movement to sentence-initial position is associated with discourse-information features. Definite DPs can freely occur in pre-verbal position (if they are interpreted as topics), but indefinite DPs move to sentence initial position only when they are interpreted as specific (Alboiu 2002). The analysis of the subjects used by Romanian children revealed that both definite and indefinite subjects are placed in post-verbal position, but definite subjects were preferentially placed pre-verbally. The rate of pre-verbal subjects is higher with definite DPs across verb classes. No difference between spontaneous speech and narratives is reported. The child data are similar to the adult data.

Teodorescu (2014, 2017b) also shows that children have an overt subject bias with unaccusatives. In this respect as well, the data from child speech are similar to those in adult speech and also to those reported for child Italian (Lorusso et al. 2005). Teodorescu (2017b) further examines to what extent subject use with unaccusatives and unergatives interferes with animacy. An animate subject bias with unergatives was reported for child English (Becker and Schaeffer 2013); English-speaking children use both animate and inanimate subjects with unaccusatives but mainly animate ones with unergatives. Teodorescu's results are similar to those reported for child English. In both the longitudinal data and in narratives the Romanian monolinguals used animate and inanimate subjects with unaccusatives, but they showed a bias towards animate subjects with unergatives.

More recent studies investigated the interpretation of pronominal subjects. They focused on subject antecedent preferences in two different contexts. Stoicescu and Cotfas (2015) investigated the antecedent preference of 5-year-old Romanian monolinguals for the overt pronominal subject *el* 'he' and of the null *pro* in embedded subjunctive clauses. Their test sentences were compound clauses whose second conjunct included a matrix clause with a volitional verb and an overt pre-verbal subject, followed by a subjunctive mood complement with a null or an overt pronominal subject. In Romanian, the (null or overt) subject of an embedded subjunctive selected by volitional verbs can co-refer with the matrix subject antecedent, as illustrated in (1) and (2):

(1) Mama$_i$ a intrat în cameră şi fetiţa$_j$ vrea pro$_{i/j}$ să citească
Mother has entered in room and girl-the wants pro SBJV read
o poveste.
a story

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(2) Mama$_i$ a intrat în cameră şi fetiţa$_j$ vrea ca ea$_{i/j}$ să citească
Mother has entered in room and girl-the wants that she SBJV read
o poveste.
a story
'Mother has entered the room and the girl wants (her) to read a story.'

Their predictions build on previous results which showed that, in the same experimental setting, in accordance with Ariel's (1990, 2006) Accessibility Scale, Romanian adults preferentially choose the subject of the volitional verb in the matrix (i.e. the closer) as the antecedent of the null subject, but the subject in the first conjunct of the compound clause as the antecedent of the overt pronominal subject (Cotfas 2012). The results of the group of adult controls in Stoicescu and Cotfas (2015), however, do not replicate those in Cotfas (2012). The participants showed no bias for the overt pronominal subject, a result which the authors explain as a possible task effect. Cotfas (2012) used written questionnaires, Stoicescu and Cotfas (2015) used a task in which the participants had to give a response in real time.

For null pronominal subjects, the 5-year-old Romanian monolinguals preferentially chose the closer antecedent. But with overt pronominal subjects the children showed no significant bias. Their responses were practically at chance, just like those of the adult controls. In spite of the fact that the results may have been affected by experimental confounds (see Stoicescu and Cotfas, this issue, for a discussion along these lines), it is nevertheless interesting that the at chance responses were obtained in the overt pronominal subject condition.

Teodorescu (2017a) investigated anaphora resolution in temporal adjuncts by Romanian children (age range 3;11 – 5;11). She used a binary picture selection task whose test sentences included a sentence with a transitive verb and a clausal temporal adjunct whose subject was a null or an overt pronoun (personal pronoun or a demonstrative). The pronominal subject in the temporal clause could pick two possible antecedents: the subject and the direct object in the matrix, whose number and gender features are identical. The predictions are formulated in terms of Carminati's (2002) Position of Antecedent Hypothesis, according to which null subjects preferentially take a more prominent antecedent, one which appears in a higher structural position, whereas overt pronominal subjects take a less prominent antecedent, which appears lower in the structure. Teodorescu's results revealed that the children did not make any distinction between null and overt pronominal subjects (personal pronouns and demonstratives) with respect to antecedent choice, randomly choosing the matrix subject or the matrix object as the antecedent of both null and overt pronominal subjects. With demonstratives, the rate of the responses which opted for a direct object as the antecedent was slightly higher, but much lower than in the adults' responses. There is, however, one problem with the results reported in this study. The group of participants includes 3-year-olds and children who are almost 6, which prevents us from identifying possible developmental changes from age 3 to age 6.

The study of the acquisition of subjects in 2L1 Romanian is only at its beginning. The only previous study is that of Miros (2017a, 2017b). She investigated possible cross-linguistic interference effects on subject use in the "frog story" narratives of

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Romanian-(Lipovan) Russian (mean age 7;2) and Romanian-(Hutsul) Ukrainian (mean age 7;1) bilingual children, two language pairings in which one language is *pro*-drop (Romanian) and the other one is partial *pro*-drop (Russian and Ukrainian). Several studies revealed that in bilingual contexts which involve a *pro*-drop and a non *pro*-drop language the direction of cross-linguistic interference effects is from the non *pro*-drop language to the *pro*-drop one (Argyri and Sorace 2007). But they also showed that there is a correlation between dominance and directionality of interference (Argyri and Sorace 2007, Serratrice 2007). Miros' results reveal that when one language is *pro*-drop and the other one partial *pro*-drop cross-linguistic interference affects subject use in both directions**,** though the effect is weaker from the *pro*-drop to the partial *pro*-drop language. Overall, both groups of bilinguals used a low number of null subjects in Russian/Ukrainian**.** Some of these were also found with past tense verbs, a context in which subject omission is ungrammatical, a result which the author interprets in terms of weak cross-linguistic interference from Romanian. In Romanian, the number of null subjects is low with both groups of bilinguals, significantly lower than with the age-matched Romanian monolinguals. These results are interpreted as interference from Russian and Ukrainian, respectively. Language dominance cannot account for the results, since for the Romanian-Russian bilinguals Romanian is the dominant language, whereas for the Romanian-Ukrainian group Ukrainian is the dominant language. Needless to say, further studies on subject use and interpretation in 2L1 Romanian are required.

There are at least three issues which emerge from the few available studies presented in this section. The first one targets the syntactic properties of the early subjects attested in L1 Romanian, for which the data presented in previous studies are insufficient. The second one is related to the age at which Romanian children show adult-like biases in their pronominal subject antecedent choice. The answers to these two issues would certainly gain in depth if they included data from 2L1 Romanian as well.

The articles in this special issue address these questions. They add further Romanian data to the general picture of the acquisition of subjects in *pro*-drop languages in L1 and 2L1 contexts. They also contribute to the ongoing discussion with respect to the availability of a "no overt subject" stage in the acquisition of these languages by examining to what extent monolingual and simultaneous bilingual children who are acquiring Romanian use and interpret subjects in an adult-like manner during the early stages. Additionally, the articles offer data which shed light on the vulnerable domains in bilingual acquisition.

3. Individual article summaries

3.1 Early subjects in spontaneous speech

Two of the articles in this issue investigate the use of early subjects in naturalistic conversation before age 3.

Teodorescu's paper, "Early subjects in child Romanian: A case study", offers a comprehensive description of the properties of early subjects in L1 Romanian on the basis of a longitudinal corpus which was not investigated before (Cristina, age range 2;1 – 3;1,

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MLU 2.791 – 3.935). An important ingredient in her analysis is the comparison with subject use in child directed speech (CDS) in all the files which were investigated for child speech. The results reveal early acquisition of the syntax of subjects: (i) overt subjects, pre- and post-verbal, are attested in the first available transcript, at 2;1; (ii) the rate of overt and null subjects in child speech is similar to the one in CDS; (iii) there is a slight increase in the number of overt subjects across time, whereas one finds a decrease in CDS; (iv) post-verbal subjects are not limited to unaccusative contexts and they occur VP-internally, i.e. they are not right dislocated constituents; (v) there is evidence that the pre-verbal subjects occur in the C-domain; (vi) null subjects in embedded clauses are attested very early, at 2;2. All these findings are similar to those reported in previous studies on the acquisition of subjects in L1 Romanian. But no "no overt subject stage" is attested in the corpus investigated by Teodorescu. The range of subjects used by Cristina is adult-like from the first available transcript, at 2;1, when proper names, demonstratives, definite lexical DPs, interrogative pronouns are used as subjects. Overt pronominal subjects are also found early, at 2;3. These data differ from those discussed in Avram and Coene (2008, 2010) and provide strong support in favour of the view that children acquiring a *pro*-drop language use subjects target-like very early.

The only delay found in the corpus is related to the pragmatic appropriateness of overt pronominal subjects. Cristina occasionally uses 1st person pronominal subjects in contexts in which they are uninformative, i.e. they do not signal topic shift or focus. But the number of such contexts is very low, which suggests that the child is already sensitive to the discourse-pragmatic constraints on overt subject use.

Tomescu's paper, "The acquisition of subjects in 2L1 Romanian", extends the investigation to the acquisition of subjects in 2L1 Romanian by Hungarian-Romanian bilinguals. The paper is, as far as I know, the first one to document early subjects in 2L1 Romanian. The fact that the language pairing includes two *pro*-drop languages which impose similar discourse-pragmatic constraints on the null/overt subject alternation facilitates the identification of possible effects of bilingualism *per se*. The data come from two longitudinal Hungarian-Romanian corpora (age range 1;10 − 2;11, MLU 2.5 − 4.51, and 1;10 − 2;8, MLU 1.47 − 3.79, respectively) (Tomescu 2013). For both children Romanian is the dominant language. Several of the findings show striking similarity with those reported in Teodorescu, this issue, for L1 Romanian: (i) overt subjects, pre- and post- verbal, emerge early, at 1;10, and no "no overt subject stage" is found in either of the two corpora; (ii) post-verbal subjects are found with all verb classes; (iii) early pre-verbal subjects occur in the C-domain; (iv) null subjects in embedded clauses are attested as early as 2;1 and 2;2, respectively. The range of subjects, however, is different in the two corpora investigated. In one of them, the pattern is similar to the one identified in L1 in Avram and Coene (2010), i.e. there is a limited range of DPs used as subjects during an early stage. But in the other corpus, various DP types are used as subjects from the first available transcript (as with Cristina, in Teodorescu, this issue).

The 2L1 data, however, differ from those in L1 in several respects. The bilingual children use pronominal subjects earlier than the Romanian monolinguals. They also produce a significantly higher number of overt subjects (especially during the early stages) than the Romanian monolinguals and also higher than the one found in CDS. They show a preference for pre-verbal subjects, unlike the monolinguals who have a

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preference for post-verbal ones. One more finding is that, in spite of the fact that the null/overt subject alternation is generally sensitive to discourse factors, the two bilingual children produce a higher number of uninformative subjects. Tomescu argues that all the attested differences can be accounted for in terms of effects of bilingualism, excluding any possible cross-linguistic interference effects.

Teodorescu's and Tomescu's articles report very early setting of the *pro*-drop parameter as well as early sensitivity to the pragmatic conditions on null and overt subject use. But they also show that in both L1 and 2L1 Romanian children go through a stage when they overuse overt pronominal subjects. And the number of uninformative overt pronominal subjects is significantly higher in 2L1 Romanian, in support of the Interface Hypothesis (Sorace and Filiaci 2006, Sorace 2011), which predicts vulnerability when an external interface is involved.

3.2 Early subjects in experimental studies

The other three articles in this issue investigate antecedent preferences of pronominal subjects in L1 and in 2L1 Romanian.

The article by Stoicescu and Cotfas, "Ambiguity resolution in the pronominal domain in child Romanian", focuses on children's (5-year-olds, 6-year-olds and 7-year-olds) identification of the possible antecedents of pronominal subjects (null, overt pronouns and demonstratives) in subjunctive clauses in terms of accessibility (Ariel 1990). The task they used was a binary judgment task, an improved version of the one which they used in their 2015 study (described in section 2 above). They also included a demonstrative subject condition.

Starting from Ariel's Accessibility Scale, the authors predict that null pronouns should prefer a close DP antecedent, *el* 'he' should choose both a distant and a close DP as an antecedent with a preference for the former, whereas *acesta* 'this' should prefer a remote DP. The predictions were borne out by the responses of the control group of adults. The results of the three groups of children reveal a delay with respect to the acquisition of the accessibility properties of overt pronominal subjects. All the age groups preferentially chose the closer antecedent for a null pronominal subject, showing an adult-like bias. But their responses were only slightly above chance in the overt personal pronoun and in the demonstrative pronoun conditions. These findings reveal that Romanian children have problems identifying the degree of accessibility marked by *el* 'he' and by the demonstrative. The authors explain for the children's behaviour with respect to the personal pronoun in terms of relevance considerations (Sperber and Wilson 1986) and in processing terms. The delay observed with the demonstrative is accounted for in terms of input: anaphoric demonstratives are infrequent in child directed speech.

The two experimental studies by Teodorescu and Tomescu investigate intra-sentential anaphora resolution in child Romanian on the basis of the same binary picture selection task, used in Teodorescu (2017a,b) and described in section 2 above. The test sentences used in their studies are illustrated in (3):

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(3) Caracatița a văzut pisica în timp ce 0 / ea / aceasta se plimba
octopus-the has seen cat-the while 0 / it / this REFL walked
cu bicicleta.
with bicycle-the
'The octopus saw the cat while it was riding its bicycle.'

They both formulate their predictions in terms of Carminati's (2002) Position of Antecedent Hypothesis.

Teodorescu's article, "Pronominal subject interpretation in temporal adjuncts in child Romanian", examines anaphora resolution in L1 Romanian. This study is an extension of her 2016 study to several age groups of participants. The 3-, 5- and 7-year-old monolinguals showed an adult-like antecedent bias for demonstrative subjects. The children in all these age groups, the 3-year-olds included, preferentially chose the direct object as the antecedent of a demonstrative in sentences like the one in (3). But the results reveal an obvious delay with respect to null and overt subjects. In these two conditions, only the 8-year-old group showed the same antecedent biases as the adult controls. With the 3-year-olds there was no antecedent choice bias in the null or in the overt pronoun conditions. The author suggests that, in spite of the fact that in the null subject condition the bias is similar to the one obtained in the adult group, this should be analysed as an at chance pattern which reflects developmental optionality. 3-year-old Romanian monolinguals do not distinguish between null and overt pronominal subjects in terms of antecedent choice. The 5-year-olds showed a subject bias in both conditions, i.e. they also treated null and overt pronominal subjects alike.

Teodorescu's results reveal that demonstratives are the least vulnerable. The delay targets only the null/overt pronominal subject alternation. She accounts for this delay in terms of the properties of the Romanian pronominal system, where overt pronominal subjects can occur both in topic shift and in topic continuity contexts, i.e. in topic continuity contexts there is an overlap between overt and null pronominal subjects. According to Teodorescu, it is precisely this overlap which explains the delay found in her study. The 3- and the 5-year-olds hypothesize that these pronouns, when used as subjects, have the same discourse properties.

Tomescu's article, "Anaphora resolution in 2L1 Romanian. Evidence from Romanian-Hungarian bilinguals", reports the results of the same task on intra-sentential anaphora resolution in 2L1 Romanian in a Romanian-Hungarian setting. Two groups of Romanian-Hungarian bilinguals took part in the study: a group of 5-year-olds, and a group of 8-year-olds. Their responses were compared to two age-matched monolingual groups. The findings reveal an obvious delay in 2L1 only with the antecedent preferences for null and overt pronominal subjects. The 5-year-old and the 8-year-old bilinguals did not show any significant bias in the null or in the overt pronoun conditions. But both groups had adult-like biases with demonstratives, indicating that the (Romanian) demonstrative is not vulnerable in bilingual acquisition.

Tomescu's data reveal the same area of vulnerability in 2L1 as in L1 (see Teodorescu's study, this issue). But they also reveal that vulnerability lasts longer with the bilinguals. The 8-year-old monolinguals in her study showed adult-like biases in the three conditions, whereas the bilinguals behaved adult-like only with respect to

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demonstratives. At age 8, the Romanian-Hungarian bilinguals do not distinguish between null and overt pronominal subjects with respect to antecedent preferences. She accounts for this delay in terms of language specific properties and in terms of the Interface Hypothesis (Sorace 2011). This is in line with what was found in other studies which investigated anaphora resolution in a bilingual setting (Argyri and Sorace 2007, Serratrice 2007).

4. Summary and open issues

Taken together, the articles in this issue provide evidence that: (i) the syntax of subjects is acquired very early in both L1 and 2L1 Romanian; (ii) the areas whose acquisition is delayed in L1 are even more delayed in 2L1. Discourse-pragmatics constraints on subject use are more vulnerable than purely syntactic phenomena in both L1 and 2L1 but in 2L1 they are more vulnerable than in L1. The acquisition of antecedent preferences of pronominal subjects is delayed in both L1 and in 2L1 Romanian, but the delay persists at older ages in 2L1.

Some issues, however, remain open. The question of whether there is an early stage when the use of subjects is not yet target-like is still in need of further study on the basis of new longitudinal corpora. So far, those studies which document very early subjects also mention a "no overt subject stage" and a limited range of DPs used as subjects. The findings in Tomescu's study on early subjects in 2L1 Romanian do not help clarify the issue. The range of early subjects used by one bilingual child is also limited in the beginning, whereas the other child uses subjects target-like from the first available transcripts. More longitudinal corpora with early transcripts are needed before one can reach a conclusion.

Another question emerges from the experimental articles that investigated anaphora resolution. It targets the acquisition of the antecedent preferences of pronominal subjects. According to the study by Stoicescu and Cotfas, demonstratives and overt personal pronouns are vulnerable. According to the studies by Teodorescu and Tomescu, demonstratives are not vulnerable. Though the contexts in which these subjects were tested were different, it is nevertheless unexpected to find that one and the same pronominal subject is either the most or the least vulnerable in acquisition. Since Stoicescu and Cotfas test the antecedent preferences of pronominal subjects in subjunctive clauses and Teodorescu and Tomescu in indicative clauses, it is not implausible to assume that the differences observed might reflect possible interference effects of mood.

The two articles in this issue which addressed early subjects in 2L1 Romanian relied on data from Romanian-Hungarian bilinguals, who are acquiring two *pro*-drop languages, with similar pragmatic constraints on the null/overt alternation. This allowed the author to focus on the possible effects of bilingualism *per se* on the acquisition of subjects in Romanian. Further studies on the acquisition of subjects in 2L1 Romanian in a context in which the other language does not allow *pro*-drop or is a *pro*-drop one but with different pragmatic constraints on the null/overt subject alternation could certainly shed new light on the acquisition of subjects in L1 and 2L1 Romanian.

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