

The acquisition of partitive clitics in Romance five-year-olds¹

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Abstract: In this paper we look at a previously unexplored empirical domain: the acquisition of partitive clitics in Catalan, French, and Italian. The course of acquisition of third person object clitics is well known and clitic omission is limited to a first stage in the languages in which it is found, so that at age five children do not omit clitics any more, unless they suffer from Specific Language Impairment. Partitive clitics share many properties with third person object clitics and here we develop two experiments, an elicitation and a repetition experiment, of partitive clitics in transitive sentences, and report results for 60 children. Of the two experiments, repetition shows to be the more reliable method, while elicitation gives rise to more pragmatically adequate answers which nevertheless do not present a clitic. The results from both experiments show that partitive clitic omission is not found for any of the languages tested at age five, just like third person object clitics.

Keywords: Acquisition, partitive clitics, clitic omission, child language, Catalan, French, Italian.

Resumen: Este artículo aborda un campo de estudios empíricos previamente inexplorados: la adquisición de clíticos partitivos en catalán, francés e italiano. El curso de adquisición de clíticos de tercera persona de objeto es bien sabido: la omisión de clíticos se limita a la primera etapa en las lenguas donde ocurre y a la edad de cinco años los niños ya no omiten los clíticos a menos que sufran Deficiencias Lingüísticas Específicas. Los clíticos partitivos comparten muchas propiedades con los

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clíticos de tercera persona de objeto. Aquí se desarrollan dos experimentos, una elicitación y un experimento de repetición de clíticos partitivos en oraciones transitivas, contando con resultados obtenidos a partir de 60 niños. De los dos experimentos, la repetición demuestra ser el método más fiable, mientras que la elicitación da lugar a respuestas pragmáticamente más adecuadas que sin embargo no presentan clíticos. Los resultados de los dos experimentos muestran que la omisión de clíticos partitivos no se encuentra en ninguna de las lenguas examinadas a la edad de cinco años, tal y como ocurre en el caso de los clíticos de tercera persona de objeto.

Palabras clave: Adquisición, clíticos partitivos, omisión de clíticos, lengua infantil, catalán, francés, italiano.

Resumo: Neste artigo investigamos um domínio empírico ainda não explorado: a aquisição de clíticos partitivos em Catalão, Francês e Italiano. O processo de aquisição de clíticos de objecto da terceira pessoa é bem conhecido e a omissão de clíticos está limitada a um primeiro estágio das línguas em que se verifica, sendo que aos cinco anos de idade as crianças já não omitem clíticos, exceto quando sofrem de Perturbação Específica de Linguagem. Os clíticos partitivos partilham várias propriedades com os clíticos de objecto da terceira pessoa. Desenvolvemos aqui dois experimentos, um experimento de elicitación e um experimento de repetición, de clíticos partitivos em frases transitivas, apresentando os resultados de 60 crianças. De entre os dois experimentos, a repetición mostra ser o método mais fiável, enquanto a elicitación dá lugar a respostas pragmáticamente mais adequadas, que, no entanto, não apresentam um clítico. Os resultados de ambos os experimentos mostram que a omissão de clíticos partitivos não se verifica em nenhuma das línguas testadas aos cinco anos de idade, tal como acontece com os clíticos de objecto de terceira pessoa.

Palavras-chave: Aquisição, clíticos partitivos, omissão de clítico, linguagem infantil, Catalão, Francês, Italiano.

1. Introduction

Many studies have shown that the acquisition of direct object clitics is characterized by an initial period of optional omission (around age three), a gradual improvement and finally the attainment of an adult-like performance at the age of five (see the results of Jakubowicz et al. 1996 for French, Schaeffer 2000 for Italian, Wexler, Gavarró and Torrens 2004 for Catalan, and, for a general review, Varlokosta et al. in preparation). Even though some studies have also pointed out that not all clitics are acquired at the same pace,² very little is known about the acquisition of partitive clitics.

² Other clitic pronouns have been shown to be much more target-like from early on: see Costa, Lobo, Carmona and Silva (2008) for reflexive clitics in



Here we report the first experimental results on the production of the partitive pronoun *ne/en* (1) in early first language acquisition of three Romance languages, Catalan, French, and Italian.

- (1) *En té dos/molts* (, de llibres de lingüística). (Catalan)
CL has two/many (, of books of linguistics)
'He has two/many.'
- (2) *Il en a deux/beaucoup* (de livres de linguistique) (French)
he CL has two many of books of linguistics
'He has two/many.'
- (3) *Gianni ha comprato molte mele ma ne ha vendute poche/tre.* (Italian)
Gianni has bought many apples but CL has sold few/three
'Gianni has bought many apples but has sold few/three of them.'

This construction, not previously tested in L1 acquisition, consists of a transitive verb with a partitive pronoun (as in (1) to (3)). In the Romance languages, the partitive pronoun is a clitic and is found in Catalan, French, Italian (all tested in this paper), and other languages, such as Occitan. The partitive may be followed by a quantifier or a numeral, as in (1), (2), and (3) or not, as in (4a), but in either case it is obligatory, as shown in (4b-c)³:

- (4) a. *En té* (, de llibres de lingüística). (Catalan)
CL has of books of linguistics
- b. **Té tres /molts.*
has three/many
- c. **Té.*
has

The partitive clitic may also be found with unaccusative verbs, cliticizing the only argument of the verb, as in (5). However, the acquisition of this construction will not be examined in this paper.

- (5) a. *Arriben dos trens. N' arriben dos.* (Catalan)
arrive-3pl two trains CL arrive-3pl two
'Two trains arrive. Two arrive.'
- b. *Il est tombé beaucoup de neige. Il en est tombé beaucoup.* (French)
it is fallen much of snow it CL is fallen much
'A lot of snow fell. A lot fell.'

The question of the (partial) similarity between direct object clitics and the partitive clitic stems from the fact that they are both related to the direct

Portuguese – a language with null objects – and Gavarró and Mosella (2009) for indirect object clitics in Catalan.

³ Other Romance languages, e.g. Spanish, allow for a null counterpart of the partitive clitic, so that the analogues of (4b,c) are well-formed, just as other Romance languages, e.g. European Portuguese, allow for null objects. So both options are made available by UG.





object position: object clitics because they realize the direct object in the form of a clitic pronoun, the partitive clitic as it realizes part of an indefinite direct object, again in the form of a clitic pronoun. The computation associated with the cliticization of the partitive clitic may count as even more complex than that of direct objects as the former, but not the latter also involves extraction (out of the indefinite complement e.g. [*tre libri*] >> *ne* ...[*tre* -]). Circumstantial evidence that the computation associated to the partitive clitic is more complex than the one associated to simple (definite) direct object clitics may come from the fact that the partitive clitic seems to appear later in children's productions than direct object clitics (see e.g. the discussion in Hamann & Belletti 2006)). Of course, one would not expect productions with complete omission of the direct object containing an indefinite partitive clitic, as the omission in this case would also imply unrecoverable information, corresponding to the indefinite quantifier (Q = *tre* in the example above). Hence, for direct objects there is often a developmental omission stage yielding to ungrammatical productions in which the pronominal direct object is not present in an obligatory context; for the partitive clitic one may want to check whether there also is a comparable omission stage, which would lead to the production of a sentence in which the direct object is only partially realized but not altogether absent, as in (6).

- (6) *Ha mangiato tre. Target: Ne ha mangiati tre -.
 has eaten three CL has eaten three

Given the documented omission period of the partitive clitic in development, which we detail in the next section, it seemed appropriate to check for the potential omission of the partitive clitic at a relatively advanced stage in development; in our research we selected age 5.

2. Background: Spontaneous production studies

Although there are no experimental studies of partitive clitic production in child Romance, there are a few studies looking at spontaneous production. Hamann, Rizzi and Frauenfelder (1994) analyzed the corpus of a French-speaking child, Augustin, for the period 2;0,2 to 2;9,3. According to them, Augustin produced the first partitive clitic *en* in the file recorded at age 2;9,2; in the next file, at age 2;9,30, he produced four. This is to be compared with the first production of a direct object clitic *le*, which was reported at age 2;2,13, although no other direct object clitic was recorded until the age of 2;6. For Italian, Bottari and collaborators studied the emergence of direct object clitics (Bottari et al. 1998, Bottari et al. 2001) but Bottari et al.'s (2004) work on partitive clitics remains unpublished.



For Catalan, Gavarró, Mata and Ribera (2006) analyzed the spontaneous productions of three children in the CHILDES database, both for direct object and partitive clitics. The children and periods considered were: Gisela (age 1;10,7–4;2,3, M(ean)L(ength)U(tterance): 1.18–3.53), Guillem (age 1;1,29–4;0, MLU: 1.07–2.5) and Pep (age 1;1,28–4;0, MLU: 1.46–4.1). The first occurrence of *en* was at 1;8,3 for Gisela, 2;6,10 for Guillem, and 1;10,6 for Pep (later than the direct object clitic for Guillem only). The results of that study on partitive clitic production appear in Table 1 – note that there are few data points in the first files, but this is common when the spontaneous productions of children under the age of two are examined.

MLU	Clitic	Omission	Total
< 1.5	3 (50%)	3 (50%)	6
< 2	5 (71.4%)	2 (28.6%)	7
< 2.5	42 (87.5%)	6 (12.5%)	48
< 3	61 (83.3%)	14 (18.6%)	75
< 3.5	49 (79%)	13 (21%)	62
> 3.5	51 (83.6%)	10 (16.4%)	61
Total	211 (81.5%)	48 (18.5%)	259

Table 1: Spontaneous production, Catalan

Gavarró et al. (2006) concluded that *en* production was subject to optional omission, i.e. children alternatively produce the clitic or omit it, and that period appeared to last slightly longer than direct object clitic omission.

All these studies bear on the early development of the partitive clitic; here we examine the development of the partitive clitic at age five, an age critical for the assessment of linguistic development in children. Indeed, direct object clitic production has been claimed to be a clinical marker for Specific Language Impairment in some of the languages under investigation here (and specifically at age five, in Bortolini et al. 2006 for Italian), since typically developing children cease to omit direct object clitics long before the age of 5. Should omission of partitive clitics be found at age five, that would constitute a difference with accusative clitics.

3. An elicitation and a repetition task

3.1. Experimental design

Elicitation – Our experiment was construed as a guessing game in which the child had to answer questions asked by the experimenter, which in some cases required some corrections forcing the use of a partitive clitic. The materials consisted of pictures printed for the children to hold, of which the experimenter could only see a partial version. In order to guess what was





depicted in the picture, visible only to the child, the experimenter had to ask yes/no questions. All questions included a transitive verb and a quantified object. Test questions corresponded to incorrect guesses by the experimenter, which were meant to trigger a correction on the part of the child. The expected verbal correction would involve again a transitive verb and a quantified object, plus the partitive clitic required in these transitive sentences given that the NP was known information appearing in the immediately preceding linguistic context. The method is illustrated in (6)–(7): the experimenter sees a partial picture indicative of the characters involved in the picture, and makes a guess as in (6); the child can see a whole picture and can correct the experimenter if required as in (7).

- (6) Una mare amb gallines. Que cuida tres gallines?
 'A mother with hens. Does she take care of three hens?'



- (7) EXPECTED ANSWER: No, en cuida una ('No, she takes care of one.')



Filler questions were also included, which corresponded to correct guesses by the experimenter. The total number of experimental items was 12, plus 10 fillers. The verbs used for the experimental items were the equivalents of 'have' (3), 'take' (3), 'walk' (3), and 'take care of' (3), as shown in (8). A list of all experimental items appears in the appendix.

- (8) Experimental items: verbs
 a. Catalan: *tenir, portar, passejar, cuidar*
 b. French: *avoir, prendre, promener, garder*
 c. Italian: *avere, portare, tirare, curare*

Given that, as we shall see in detail below, eliciting partitive pronouns is quite difficult, a repetition task was also designed.

Repetition – The method involved reading a short story to the child, which crucially included a partitive clitic in the last sentence. A sample story,



in Catalan, appears in (9). The experimenter asked the child to listen to the story and then to repeat what (s)he last heard so that the experimenter could be sure the child had been paying attention. No request was made to delay the repetition by the child.

- (9) Aquesta és la història d'un ós que troba una pomera. L'ós agafa unes quantes pomes de l'arbre i les posa al cistell. Després arriba un mico i agafa dues pomes i les carrega al seu cistell. I després l'ós diu: –Quin mal d'esquena! Saps perquè té mal d'esquena, l'ós? Perquè carrega moltes pomes. El mico no té mal d'esquena *perquè no en porta gaires*.

'This is the story of a bear who finds an apple tree. The bear takes several apples from the tree and puts them in his basket. Then a monkey arrives and picks two apples and puts them in his basket. Later on the bear says: What a back ache I have! Do you know why the bear has a back ache? Because he's carrying lots of apples. And the monkey has no back ache because he's not carrying very many.'

The number of experimental items was 12, and there were 5 distractors with direct object clitics instead of partitive clitics. The verbs used were the equivalents of 'carry', 'eat', 'steal', 'buy', 'hide', 'drink', 'take', 'find', 'wash', 'have', 'sell' and 'see'. Given the high production of partitive clitics in children, his task was not run with adults, as it was assumed they would perform at ceiling.

3.2. Subjects

We tested a total of 60 five-year-old children, native speakers of Catalan, French, and Italian, as well as adult controls. The Catalan-speaking children were recruited in the CEIP Pompeu Fabra in Manlleu, Osona; the French-speaking children in a public school in the city of Blois; the Italian-speaking children in the Scuola dell'Infanzia Santo Stefano di Lecco in Northern Italy. The Catalan adults were students at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, the French-speaking adults were students at the Université François-Rabelais, Tours and the Italian-speaking adults were students at the Università di Milano-Bicocca. Details of all the subjects tested appear in Table 2.

		N	Mean age
Five-year-old Children	Catalan	20	5;4
	French	20	5;7
	Italian	20	5;4
Adults	Catalan	23	
	French	12	
	Italian	18	

Table 2: Participants

An ANOVA on the age of the three groups of children revealed a significant effect of age, with Italian and Catalan children being younger than French children, as established by a post hoc Scheffé test ($p < .05$). As we will





see, however, this difference in age did not affect the overall performance.

3.3. Procedure

The children were tested individually in a quiet room in their schools, in sessions that lasted around 20 minutes. First, a short training session for the elicitation task took place, then the elicitation task was administered, and, finally, the repetition task was run. Children were allowed to ask for items to be repeated in both tasks. French and Italian adults were tested for the elicitation task in the same fashion; Catalan adults were tested all together in a classroom and were asked to write down the answers on an answer sheet, as it was assumed that the elicitation would not be problematic with adults. This small difference in the procedure followed with adults does not seem to have had an effect on their performance.

4. Results

4.1. Elicited production

In the elicited production task, children did not produce high numbers of partitive clitics, as can be seen in Figure 4, which shows the mean number of responses containing a partitive clitic (/12) that were produced by children in each of the three languages.

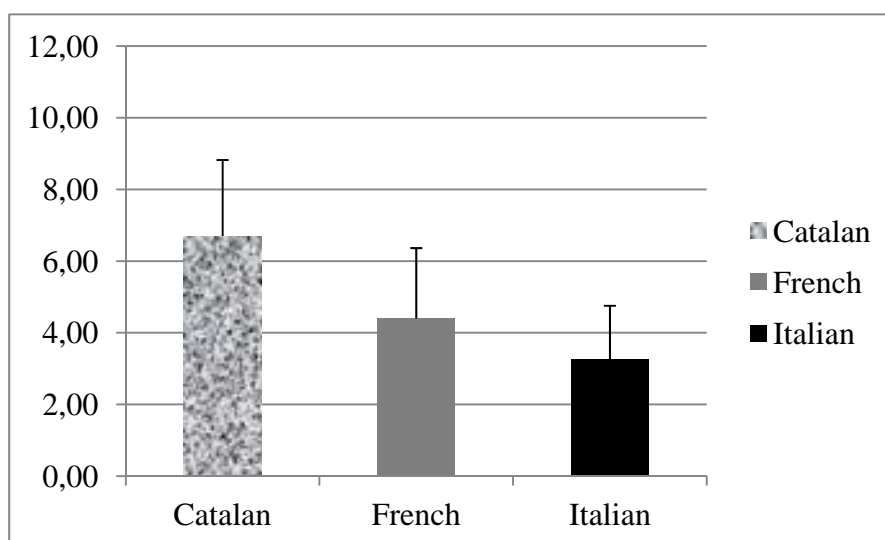


Figure 4. Mean Number of Responses (/12) with a Partitive Clitic: 5-year-olds

Examples of the responses are given in (10)

- (10) a. En porta dos. (Catalan)
 CL carries two
 '(S)he carrying two (of them).'
- b. Non, elle en garde deux. (French)
 No, she CL takes-care-of two
 'No, she's taking care of two (of them)'



- c. Ne sta tirando due. (Italian)
CL is pulling two
'(S)he is pulling two (of them).'

An ANOVA with language as independent variable and percentages of clitics as dependent variable revealed a significant effect of language ($F(2.57) = 4.3605$). A post hoc Scheffé test revealed that Catalan-speaking children used significantly more partitive clitics than Italian-speaking children ($p < 0.05$).

Despite the low numbers for partitive clitic production, and the inter-language variability (to which we return below), a major result emerged from this experiment. No statistically significant difference was found across the languages tested for partitive clitic omission ($F(2.52)=22.519$, $p = .237$), and, moreover, as can be seen in Figure 5 below, such omission was very low in each of the three languages (2.5% for Catalan, 4.2% for French, and 2.9% for Italian). Five Italian children and seven French children omitted partitive clitics, though usually only once each (and never more than three times). Examples of these rare omissions appear in (11).

- (11) a. No té cap. (Catalan)
No has none
b. Il promène pas. (French)
he walks not
c. Sta tirando due. (Italian)
is pulling two

Figure 5 also shows that children gave many non-omission answers which nevertheless did not include a partitive clitic. These were generally pragmatically adequate, but did not serve the purpose of our experiment. So children produced elliptical answers (with a numeral or a quantifier), in which no verb was produced and, therefore, no pronominal clitic, as in (12). They also gave answers which, while containing a verb, also had a full DP complement, as in (13). The statistical analysis indicates that there is a significant effect of language in the production of DPs ($F(2.52) = 22.519$) and a post hoc Scheffé test revealed that French-speaking children produced more DP answers than the other children ($p < 0.05$).



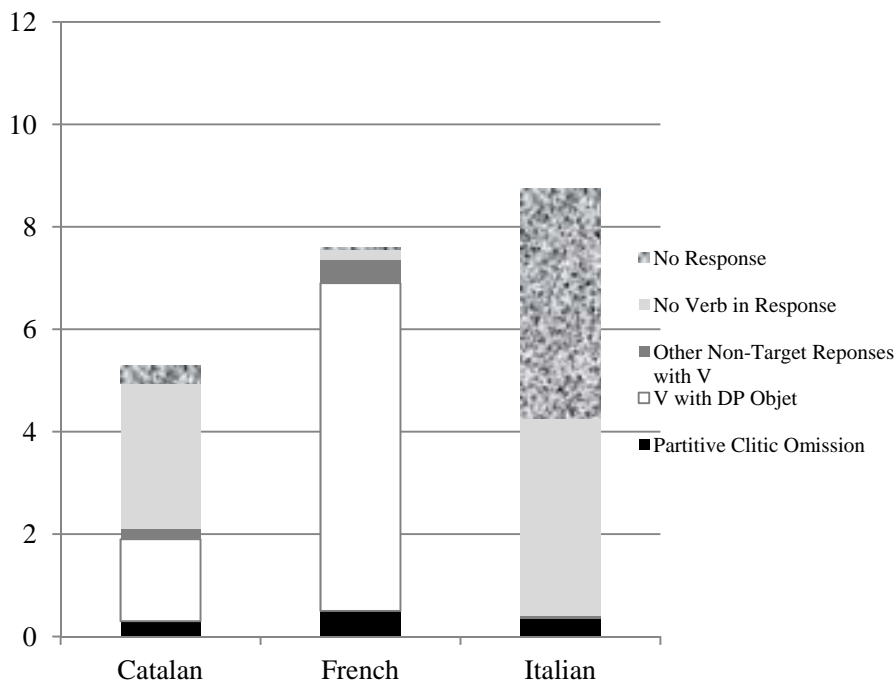


Figure 5. Responses Not Containing a Partitive Clitic (Mean N /12): Five-year-olds

- (12) Experimenter: Que cuida dues gallines? Child: No, una. (Catalan)
 Int take-care-of-3sg two hens no one
- (13) a. Experimenter : Que porta tres cavalls? Child : No, porta dos cavalls.
 Int take-3sg three horses no take-3sd two horses
- b. Experimenter : Le papa indien. Il promène deux chevaux?
 the father Indian he walks two horses (French)
- Child: Euh un chevaux. Non, i(l) promène un chevaux.
 Um one horses no he walks one horse
 'Um one horses. No, he's walking one horses'

While the first answer (12) is pragmatically adequate, the answer type in (13) was initially unexpected in the sense that pragmatic sensitivity would seem to make the child avoid repetition of a DP in the immediate linguistic context. Yet, given the fact that children were asked to correct false statements, repetition of the DP may have resulted from the intention to provide a sentence as similar as possible to the lead-in, or may indicate emphasis on the DP. Finally, we note the relatively high number of 'no responses' in Italian, produced for an unknown reason. It could be the case that the experimenter did not manage to force the children to come up with an answer, in contrast to what happened in the two other languages (for which answers were almost always provided by the children). There is, indeed, a large variation in the responses found in the three languages tested, indicating that the task designed allows the speaker more options than would probably be desirable. The reason why elicitation of partitive clitics is particularly subject to methodological bias appears to be the difficulty in



creating a discourse context sufficiently constrained to require pronominalization.

We now turn to the presentation of results based solely on answers containing a verb. While these represent the contexts where a partitive clitic could potentially occur and, thus, would appear to be the only relevant answers, it is important to remember that verbal answers containing a full object DP were not pragmatically inadequate, as explained above. Likewise, answers not containing a verb (elliptical responses) were also pragmatically acceptable. In Figure 6 we see that French children produced more responses containing a verb. This difference owes to the way the experiment was run. For French, the experimenter insisted on ‘long answers’, while in Catalan and Italian the experimenters did not, and therefore children produced many more ‘short answers’, i.e. elliptical answers without a verb (also, in the case of Italian, there were many more cases of non-responses).

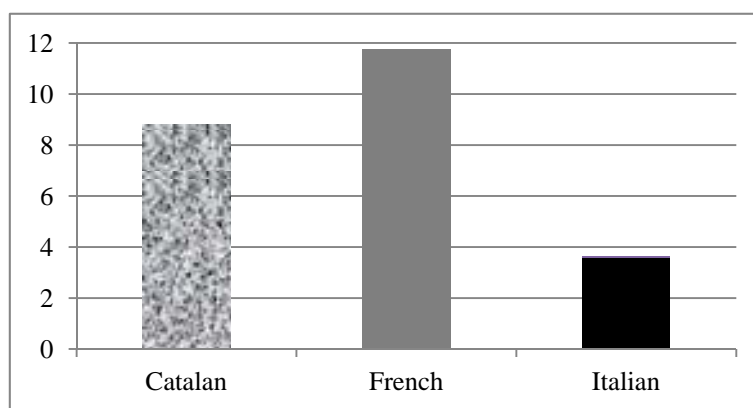


Figure 6. Responses Containing a Verb (Mean N /12): Five-year-olds

This difference between the languages is also related to the type of responses children made, as reported in Figure 5: In French these were responses in which DP occurs as the object of the verb, in Italian they were isolated DPs (as well as cases of No Response), and in Catalan both of these occurred.

When partitive clitic production was calculated over total verbal utterances, i.e. over those sentences in which clitic production was possible, as in Figure 7, it was found that Catalan- and Italian- speaking children used more clitics than their French peers. Once again, a significant effect of language was found ($F(2,52) = 13.003$; $p < 0.005$). A post-hoc Scheffé test reveals that Catalan and Italian are different from French. Thus, in spite of the fact that Catalan and Italian children were younger, they used more clitics in answers containing a verb. Note, however, that this difference was largely due to the fact that fewer verbal answers were provided in Italian and





Catalan than in French, which increases the ratio of clitics over verbal utterances in the first two languages.

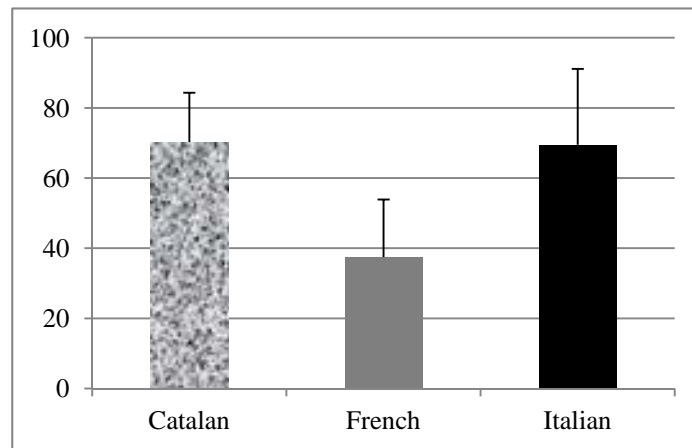


Figure 7. Percentage of Partitive Clitics / Responses with a Verb: Five-year-olds

If we consider now the adult results, Figure 8 shows that adults generally produced many more partitive clitics than children did, in each of the languages tested.

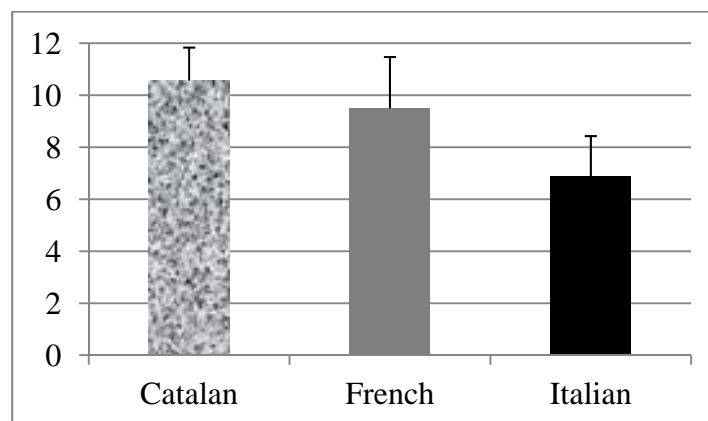


Figure 8. Responses with a Partitive Clitic (Mean N / 12): Adults

A Kruskal-Wallis test showed a group effect for the number of partitive clitics produced. Mann-Whitney two-by-two comparisons revealed that the Catalan and French adults did not differ, whereas both the French and the Catalan adults performed significantly better than the Italian adults (French vs. Italian: $U = 51.5$, $p = 0.015793$; Catalan vs. Italian: $U = 52$, $p = 0.000035$).

The adults also gave answers in which no partitive clitic was produced, including options found in the children's responses (full DPs, for example), as can be seen in Figure 9.



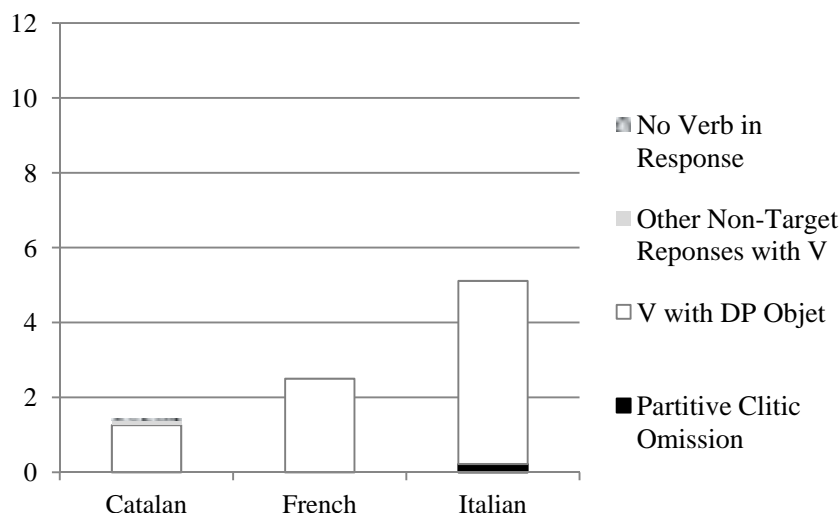


Figure 9. Responses Not Containing a Partitive Clitic (Mean N /12): Adults

Just like in the child production, no significant partitive clitic omission was found in the adult participants in any of the three languages.

Summarizing, children in all three languages were similar in their very low rates of partitive clitic omission. The cross-linguistic differences observed, as has been hinted at, with respect to the use of full DPs and answers with a quantifier only, emerges from the way in which the test was run – i.e. a methodological difference – rather than a difference in the child grammars. In particular, children in all three of the languages very frequently answered by giving a full DP, either with a verb or in isolation. The answers provided by the children fell within grammatical well-formedness and were pragmatically acceptable (indeed adults sometimes gave answers of this type); variation ensued only from additional constraints such as the mentioned request for ‘long answers’. In addition, this methodological bias also affected adult production, albeit to a lesser degree, as adults spontaneously produced many more partitive clitic responses. Although, as pointed out by an anonymous reviewer, the differences in procedure in the administration of the task have an undesirable impact on the types of answers elicited in the different languages, this shortcoming does not detract from the main finding here: there is no partitive clitic omission at age five in typically developing children.

4.2. Repetition task

In the repetition task, only run with children, very few omissions and DPs were produced, and the task proved to be more effective. Children were correct between 92 and 98% of the time and there were no statistically significant differences between languages. We can conclude that repetition is an efficient task for the elicitation of partitive clitics.



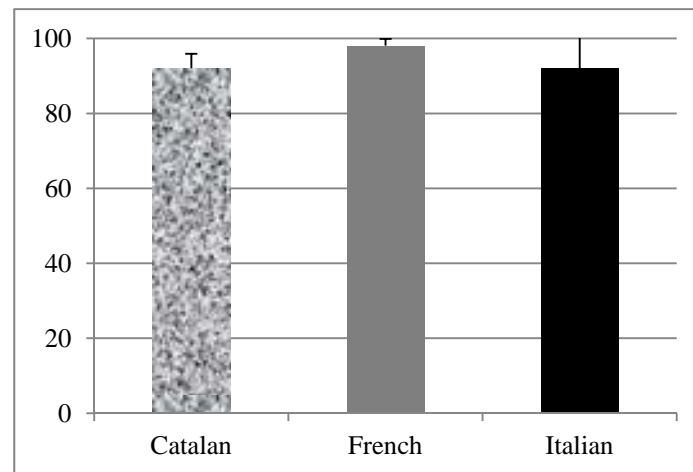


Figure 10. Partitive Clitic Repetition: Five-year-olds

5. Conclusions and topics for future research

We can conclude from our study that at five years of age children exposed to a language with partitive clitics both produce such clitics and, most importantly, do not omit them. Partitive clitic omission was very low in Catalan, French and Italian, both in the elicitation task and in the repetition task we conducted.

There is also a methodological conclusion of our study: of the two tasks run, repetition fared better than elicitation in terms of the number of target and useful answers, because elicitation gives room for various grammatical and pragmatically felicitous answers without a clitic, in children as well as adults. Indeed, verbal answers should not be considered to constitute a strategy for avoiding the partitive clitic, in contrast to what has been proposed in the literature for the use of object DPs instead of accusative clitics (see, among others, Jakubowicz et al. 1998). If DP production were a way for children to avoid producing partitive clitics, we would need to explain why this strategy seemed to be the only avoidance strategy deployed in this experiment. In particular, it is well known that omission is another way for young children to cope with the computational complexity involved in third person clitics. In experiments eliciting accusative clitics used in the literature (see Varlokosta et al., in preparation, for review), use of a DP object was never pragmatically felicitous, as the context was not one of correcting the experimenter's statement, but, rather, response to a question, as in (14a):

- (14) a. Experimenter: Que fait Kiki à Nounours? (French)
 What does Kiki do to Teddy
- b. Target response: Il le lève.
 he CL washes
 'He's washing him.'





- c. Ungrammatical child response: Il lave.
he washes
'He's washing him.'
- d. Infelicitous child response: Il lave Nounours.
he washes Teddy
'He's washing Teddy.'

Thus, it has been argued that children in these studies resorted to both infelicitous DP repetition (14d) (never found in adults) and ungrammatical omission (14c) in order to avoid production of an accusative clitic. However, as we have seen for the experiment reported here, partitive clitics were rarely omitted by the children tested: in other words, children do not seem to have avoided partitive clitic production. If children are not avoiding partitive clitics (since they are not omitting them), it follows that use of object DPs is not evidence for avoidance, but rather simply a legitimate way of correcting the lead-in sentence.

To the extent that partitive clitics are not omitted at age five, children's performance with this clitic is in fact essentially the same as that with third person object clitics in Catalan, French and Italian, which have ceased to be omitted by age five (see Schaeffer 2000 for Italian, Gavarró, Torrens and Wexler 2010 for Catalan, Varlokosta et al. in prep. for French and a large number of languages in which third person clitics were elicited). One possibility that emerges is that partitive clitics are omitted at an earlier age, just like the third person object clitics of Catalan, French and Italian (see references above). The results available for spontaneous production suggest that there is indeed early omission, but experimental results remain for future research.

Children with Specific Language Impairment have not been tested so far either. Again under the assumption that partitive clitics with transitive verbs share a number of properties with object clitics in Catalan, French, and Italian (realization of a direct object, obligatoriness, triggering of participle agreement), we would expect higher omission of partitive clitics at age five with SLI children – parallel to higher omission of object clitics found with this population (see Bortolini et al. 2006 for Italian, and the work of Jakubowicz and Nash to appear, Tuller et al. 2011 for French).

Finally, we have only investigated partitives in transitive contexts. As pointed out, they also occur in sentences with unaccusative verbs; if derived subjects are problematic for children (see Babyonyshev et al. 2001 a.o.) we would predict differences in the production of partitives with unaccusative verbs. This also remains for future research.





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Appendix: Experimental items, Catalan

1. Un nen indi que porta cavalls. Que porta tres cavalls?
An Indian walking horses. Is he walking three horses?
2. Hi ha una família. Que tenen un gos? Filler
There is a family. Do they have a dog?
3. El nen a casa seva, a la seva habitació. El nen té dos ossets?
A boy at home, in his room. Does he have two teddy-bears?
4. same picture Que té una pilota?
Does he have a football?





5. Una àvia que va de viatge. Que porta tres maletes?
A grandmother taking a trip. Is she taking three suitcases?
6. La família amb un arbre de Nadal. Que hi ha posat decoracions? Filler
A family with a Christmas tree. Are there decorations on it?
7. Un bomber amb gossos. El bomber, que passeja tres gossos?
A fireman with dogs. Is he walking three dogs?
8. L'àvia amb el cotxet. Que porta un nen a passejar? Filler
A grandmother with a pram. Is she taking a child for a walk?
9. same picture Que porta una maleta?
Is she taking a suitcase?
10. La mare a casa. Que té un ram de flors? Filler
A mother at home. Does she have a bunch of flowers?
11. L'àvia i el nen. L'àvia, que empeny el cotxet? Filler
A grandmother and a child. Does she push the pram?
12. El pare indi. Que porta dos cavalls?
The Indian father. Is he walking two horses?
13. same picture: i que passeja dos búfals?
Is he walking two buffalos?
14. El pare que fa el sopar. Que aguanta una cassola? Filler
A father making dinner. Is he holding a saucepan?
15. La família índia. Que viuen en una tenda? Filler
The Indian family. Do they live in a tent?
16. La mare índia. Que cuida dues gallines?
The Indian mother. Is she taking care of two hens?
17. same picture Que porta dos conills?
And is she taking care of two rabbits?
18. L'ós marró. Que té un osset? Filler
The brown bear. Does she have a baby bear?
19. El nen que va a dormir i l'àvia. Que tenen un conte? Filler
The boy who goes to bed and the grandmother. Will they read a story?
20. La mare índia amb els nens. Que té tres nens?
The Indian mother with some children. Is she taking care of three children?
21. El nen i la mare indis amb llenya. Que fan un foc? Filler
An Indian boy and his mother with some wood. Are they lighting a fire?
22. El pare indi que va a pescar. Que porta tres peixos a casa?
The Indian father in his canoe. Is he taking three fish home?

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