

## **Generative and Usage-based Approaches to L1 Acquisition: Evidence from Cypriot-Greek**

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### **Abstract**

*The most influential approaches to first language acquisition include generative approaches and usage-based accounts. Generative approaches encompass the idea that child's grammar is UG-constrained, while usage-based accounts assume that children's early syntactic development does not involve abstract constructional schemas. In this paper, we investigate the L1 acquisition of clitic positioning in Cypriot Greek based on samples of spontaneous speech and the implementation of two semi-structured elicitation techniques. Data analysis reveals an asymmetry regarding clitic placement in proclisis and enclisis contexts. Enclisis environments are adult-like from the onset of L1 acquisition, while proclisis environments remain problematic for some children until the age of 3;2 years, with high proportions of misplaced clitics. The phenomenon observed, the overgeneralization of enclisis, is in line with Petinou and Terzi's (2002) outcome for the acquisition of Cypriot Greek and Duarte and Matos' (2000) claim for the acquisition of European Portuguese. The main finding of this study is that the pattern of clitic placement in early Cypriot Greek is not characterised by un-constrained optionality, but it is constrained by a systematic grammar that goes in either adult-like or non-adult-like directions. On the grounds of this finding, we discuss to what extent each of these two approaches to L1 acquisition can explain our results.*

### **1. Introduction**

The current debate in the literature for first language acquisition (henceforth L1A) involves on the one hand functional, usage-based approaches and, on the other, generative accounts emerging from Chomsky's theory for formal syntax. The basic assumption behind usage-based accounts is that children learn the language item-by-item from the language they are exposed to, while generative accounts assume that children's grammar is constrained by an innate system, the Universal Grammar (henceforth UG). Adult input has an important role to play in both accounts, but there is a substantial difference between generative and usage-based approaches. Within the generative framework, adult input is necessary for language development, but not sufficient, while for usage-based accounts adult input is argued to be both necessary and sufficient.

This paper investigates the acquisition of clitic positioning in Cypriot Greek (henceforth CG) and discusses to what extent each of these accounts can explain the phenomenon observed, namely the over-generalization errors in clitic placement. Sections 2 and 3 offer some background information for generative and usage-based approaches. Section 4 presents the rationale behind this study and section 5 gives an outline of the two studies carried out. Section 6 discusses which of the two accounts better accommodates the findings of our study.

### **2. Generative Approaches to L1A**

Generative approaches to L1A encompass the idea that children have an innate mechanism, the so-called Universal Grammar, with certain aspects of their linguistic knowledge being genetically determined. In Radford's wording, UG provides children with 'a 'template' which specifies the (universal) structure of phrases and clauses' (1996:43). Yet, there are obvious discrepancies between child and adult language. A number of accounts were put forward in the late 90s aiming to capture the mechanism that boosts the development of the deficient child system into the advanced

adult system. The most influential proposals for the development of the clausal structure within the generative framework include Radford's (1996) *Structure Building Hypothesis*, Clahsen et al.'s (1996) *Lexical Learning Hypothesis*, Hyams' (1996) *Underspecification Hypothesis*, Wexler's (1994) *Tense Omission Model* and Rizzi's (1994) *Truncation Hypothesis*.

The basic assumption behind all the aforementioned accounts is that UG constraints the search space for available alternatives at the initial stages of L1 acquisition. A number of choices are available to children by UG, not all of which are licit in adult language. Taking for example the acquisition of pronoun case marking, the well-known Agreement/Tense Omission Model (Schütze & Wexler 1996) predicts the use of nominative subjects with both inflected and uninflected verb forms, even though the latter is illicit in adult language. However, it does not predict the use of non-nominative subjects with inflected verbs, which is completely ruled out by UG. In the generative framework, children learn on the basis of their innate endowment. Yet, the innate mechanisms are obligatorily supplemented by positive evidence in adult input.

The generativists have used the so-called overgeneralization errors as evidence for the existence of abstract syntactic representations in child language, since children use forms or structures absent from the adult input. An error of this type is the over-regularization of the past tense of irregular verbs, with children producing forms that adults don't, i.e. *goed* instead of *went* and *singed* instead of *sang* (Tsakali 2006:118-119). The argumentation of generativists is based on the hypothesis that if children do not learn these patterns from the language they are exposed to, they must have constructed them based on some abstract representation.

### 3. Usage-based Approaches to L1A

The central idea behind usage-based accounts is that children's language development is item-based. Within this approach, the adult input constitutes the only source of linguistic information for children and plays a major role in the course of L1A. There is no innate grammar to restrict children's choices, with their grammar being derivative (Tomasello 2006:7). This section presents one of the most influential usage-based accounts for L1A put forward by Michael Tomasello in a number of papers published over the last decade (2000a, 2000b, 2006).

Tomasello's account is under the umbrella of Cognitive-Functional linguistics and is part of a growing literature opposing generative theories. For Tomasello, there is continuity of process in language learning: children learn the syntactic structures in the same way adults learn different kinds of idiomatic structures, typically located by generativists in the linguistic periphery. Within this account, children's early syntactic development is driven by the implementation of their cognitive skills, some of which are grouped together under the heading Intention-Reading and others fall in with Pattern-Finding.

Skills related to intention-reading are involved in cognitive processes aiming to capture the symbolic dimension of language, while skills related to the process of pattern-finding are employed in the construction of abstract representations. A number of skills, including cultural learning, joint attention and the understanding of communicative intentions constitute the so-called intention-reading, while processes such as categorization, schema formation, statistical learning and analogy are part of the pattern-finding mechanisms (Tomasello 2006:8). Entrenchment and competition / pre-emption play an important role in L1A, with the former term denoting the process by which the way of doing something becomes habitual, and the latter denoting humans' ability to discover the communicative reason why someone uses X instead of Y. Thus, entrenchment and competition constrain children's abstractions, while distribution analysis helps them construct paradigmatic categories, such as 'nouns' and 'verbs' (Tomasello 2006:72).

Based on data from longitudinal studies (see Tomasello 2000a for references), Tomasello suggests that children's early clauses are organised around individual verbs and other predicative terms, an idea expressed in his so-called Verb Island Hypothesis (1992). For example, in a clause like 'John hits the ball', two entities are involved, the 'hitter' and the 'hittee' (Tomasello 2000a:213-4). Tomasello offers evidence that linguistic items and structures, such as determiners in

English and verbs in Italian, Brazilian Portuguese and Hebrew are not used productively at the initial stages of L1A. What follows is that child language is constructed around concrete and not abstract entities.

The bulk of the experimental studies reported by Tomasello in all his recent papers (see Tomasello 2000a; 2000b; 2006 for detailed descriptions of the experiments and the relevant references) involve the use of novel verbs for the investigation of argument structure. The non-existence of these verbs in the natural language children are acquiring is claimed to ensure that children's performance cannot be affected by the input they receive. The basic assumption being that if children have created the abstract category of 'verb', they will be able to use novel verbs in a simple transitive construction when prompted.

In a number of production experiments, Tomasello and his colleagues have shown that young children fail to use novel verbs in transitive constructions, if these verbs are introduced in different constructions (in passive, intransitive or imperative constructions). Furthermore, he reports that experimental work carried out has shown that young children fail to assign correct agent-patient roles to the arguments of the clause and they are also unable to produce canonical SVO structures, when novel verbs are introduced in non-canonical SOV or VSO forms. Based on the findings of the aforementioned studies, Tomasello rejects the existence of abstract syntactic representations in child language and suggests that the constructions found in child speech derive solely from the adult input. It should be mentioned that the application of this methodology, that involves the elicitation of transitive constructions with novel verbs for testing the existence of the abstract category 'verb', has received some criticism (Fisher 2002).

As for the overgeneralization errors, Tomasello insists that they can be explained on the basis of adult input alone. To illustrate, it's worth mentioning the explanation he gave for a well-known error in early English: the use of accusative instead of nominative subjects, in structures like 'Me eat', 'Her go' etc. Tomasello argues that children simply tear apart structures that exist in adult input, i.e. 'Let me eat', or 'Make her go', and use the first part of the clause alone (2000a:240). He also denies the existence of early abstractions that go in non-adult-like directions (Tomasello 2000a:243). In the following section, we present a phenomenon that offers evidence for the existence of such an abstraction in early child language.

## **4. L1 Acquisition of CG Clitics**

### **4.1. The Syntactic Construction**

The L1 acquisition of clitic constructions has been widely studied cross-linguistically (such as Hamann et al. 1996 for French, Schaeffer 1997 for Dutch, Costa et al. 2007 *et seq.* for European Portuguese, Marinis 2000 and Stephany 1997 for Greek, Guasti 1993/94 for Italian, Babyonyshev & Marin 2005 for Romanian, Ilic & Ud Deen 2003 for Serbo-Croatian, Wexler et al. 2004 for Spanish). The reason why clitics are such interesting elements for acquisition studies is that they have, according to Joao Costa (2008), a number of properties that make them a good tool for assessing language development. First, they have controversial status (X<sup>0</sup>/XPs): some formal approaches for cliticization treat them as markers of object agreement (Sportiche 1996), while others suggest that clitics head their own projections (Uriagereka 1995). Second, they are lexical materials, which are highly dependent on the functional domain, thus they constitute a good testing tool for the acquisition of this domain. Third, in the Romance languages (Roberts 2010), CG (Agouraki 2001, Terzi 1999a, 1999b) and Standard Modern Greek (Mavrogiorgos 2009), object clitics have variable placement depending on the syntactic environment.

Languages like CG, European Portuguese (henceforth EP) and Galician exhibit the enclisis pattern; in finite clauses clitics appear post-verbally (example 1), but if the clause is headed by a proclisis-triggering element, for example a negation marker (example 2), they appear pre-verbally.

1. Efera to  
Brought CL  
'(I) brought it'
2. O João não o comprou.  
Joao not CL bought  
'Joao didn't buy it'

Based on work done by Terzi (1999a; 1999b) and Agouraki (2001) for CG, Duarte and Matos (2000) for EP, and Uriagereka (1995) for Galician, proclisis-triggering environments for these languages are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: The Proclisis-Triggering Environments for CG, EP and Galician

Syntactic Environments	CG	EP	Galician
<i>Subjunctive Clauses</i>	<i>YES</i>	<i>NO</i>	<i>YES</i>
<i>Negatives</i>	<i>YES</i>		
<i>Contrastive Focalised XPs</i>	<i>YES</i>		
<i>Wh-operators</i>	<i>YES</i>	<i>YES</i>	<i>NO</i>
<i>(some) Pre-verbal Adverbs</i>	<i>NO</i>	<i>YES</i>	<i>NO</i>

Constructions involving object clitics represent a challenge for children acquiring languages that exhibit the enclisis pattern. In early EP high rates of clitic omission are reported (Costa and Lobo 2007; 2009; Costa et al. 2008) and clitic misplacement is also observed (Duarte and Matos 2000). Greek-Cypriot children misplace clitics at the onset of L1A (Petinou and Terzi 2002). To the best of our knowledge, there are no existing studies for the L1A of clitics in Galician.

#### 4.2. Research Hypothesis

This study aims to find out whether young children acquiring CG exhibit overgeneralization errors that go in non-adult-like directions. Based on the results of a previous study on the L1A of CG clitics (Petinou & Terzi 2002), Greek-Cypriot children are expected to pass through some developmental stages until they reach the adult-like clitic positioning. Taking into account that CG is a language exhibiting the enclisis-pattern, where clitics usually follow the finite verb, unless the clause is headed by a proclisis-trigger, children may erroneously manifest enclisis in proclisis environments and / or vice-versa. Yet, what is important to find out is whether they randomly use pre- and post-verbal clitics regardless of the syntactic context, or if their clitic placement is systematic. The former case represents true optionality that can be easily accommodated in a usage-based account, while the latter is an indication for a step beyond adult input. The overgeneralization of either proclisis or enclisis across syntactic contexts would offer evidence for the existence of a systematic grammar in child language based on criteria that differ from those valid in adult grammar. Thus, the experimental investigation conducted to study the initial stages of L1A of CG clitics is driven by the following research question: Is clitic positioning characterized by unconstrained optionality or is it constrained by a systematic grammar?

#### 5. Methodology

Two studies were conducted to investigate the developmental stages in the course of L1A of CG pronominal clitics. The first study is a preliminary investigation of the spontaneous speech of nine typically-developing children, aiming to reveal the general pattern for clitic positioning in early CG.

The second study is an experimental investigation in a more structured setting and involves the implementation of two semi-structured elicitation techniques.

### **5.1. Spontaneous Speech Recordings**

The aim of this study is to lay the foundations for the creation of a solid knowledge base for clitic placement by young Greek-Cypriot children acquiring their mother tongue. The results obtained from this study, offered useful insights that were taken into consideration for the implementation of the experimental investigation.

Samples of spontaneous speech were collected from nine monolingual Greek-Cypriot children, aged 2;3-3;4 years, with a monolingual CG-speaking background and no history of cognitive deficits or language impairments. Each child was audio-recorded at his / her home for an hour. In each recording session, the experimenter was interacting with the children using stickers, picture books and wooden puzzles. The toys were used as prompts for the elicitation of constructions involving clitics. In order to reduce the artificiality of the situation, other members of the family were occasionally present but silent.

### **5.2. Experimental Investigation**

Nineteen Greek-Cypriot children participated in this study, their age range was 2;7-3;9 years and they were randomly recruited from two Greek-speaking nurseries in Limassol, after approval from the directors and upon written parental consent. Only monolingual children, with a monolingual CG-speaking background and no history of cognitive deficits or language impairments participated in this study.

Two semi-structured elicitation techniques were implemented:

- a. the puzzle task, introduced by Sonja Eisenbeiss in her recent paper (2009) discussing elicitation techniques for studies on child language acquisition, and,
- b. a picture-based task (the pictures appear in the book 'First Hundred Words in English' by Amery & Cartwright (2009)).

Two factors were taken into consideration for the choice of the aforementioned semi-structured elicitation techniques. First, the age range of the participants and, second, the effectiveness of the task for the elicitation of constructions involving pre- and post-verbal clitics. Given that in the literature for methodological issues in acquisitional studies it's widely accepted that experiments are suitable for participants older than three years of age (Crain & Thornton 1998, Eisenbeiss 2009), and since children aged 2 to 4 were recruited for this study, semi-structured elicitation techniques were considered as the most appropriate experimental design. Moreover, semi-structured elicitation provides a non-strictly constrained experimental set-up with many prompts for the elicitation of the relevant structures. The testing for both the puzzle task and the picture-based task was carried out in a single session that lasted no longer than 25 minutes. Participants were tested once, the sessions were audio recorded and the data were then transcribed by the experimenter.

#### *a. The puzzle-task*

The purpose for the implementation of the puzzle task was twofold, on the one hand it served as a warm-up session and on the other it was used to elicit pre- and post-verbal clitics. Two puzzles were used, each consisting of a wooden puzzle board with pictures in cut-outs and puzzle pieces with pictures. Some jungle animals were depicted on the pieces of the first puzzle, and the characters of the well-known cartoon 'Dora the Explorer' were depicted on the pieces of the second. The children were initially encouraged to put the puzzle pieces in the corresponding cut-outs and then they were asked to guide the naïve experimenter to correctly place the puzzle pieces herself. In this way, children were prompted to use several clitic constructions, including matrix clauses ('Put it over there'), negatives ('It doesn't fit'), subjunctives ('You have to place it here') etc.

*b. The picture-based task*

The picture-based task constitutes an elicitation-production task for 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular object clitics. The material included 12 pictures selected from the book 'First Hundred Words in English' (Amery & Cartwright 2009) matched with 12 questions. The children were shown the pictures one at a time and the experimenter would point at a picture and would then address a question related to the situation depicted on this picture (example 3) in order to elicit a clitic construction (example 4).

3. Ti   θeli   na   kami   to            koritsaki            to    kaðro?  
 What wants Subj do   the-nom girl-nom-diminutive the-acc frame-acc  
 ‘What does the girl want to do the frame’
4. Na   to    kremasi.  
 Subj it-CL hang up  
 ‘(She wants) to hang it up’

The experimental questions were designed to elicit clitic constructions in three different conditions, two proclisis-triggering environments (negatives and subjunctives / future clauses) and one enclisis-triggering environment (bare finite clauses). Only singular forms were elicited and we controlled for genitive and accusative case and all the three genders to be equally represented in the task (table 2).

*Table 2: The morphological paradigm of Cypriot Greek clitics*

	1 <sup>st</sup> person	2 <sup>nd</sup> person	3 <sup>rd</sup> person		
			Masculine	Feminine	Neuter
<b>Singular</b>					
Genitive	mu	su	tu	tis	tu
Accusative	me	se	to(n)	ti(n)	to
<b>Plural</b>					
Genitive	mas	sas	tus	tus	tus
Accusative	mas	sas	tus	tes	ta

*5.3. Data Analysis*

The samples of the spontaneous speech and the recordings of the experimental investigation, were orthographically transcribed following the conventions of CHAT format, used by the largest database of child language, CHILDES (MacWhinney 2010 (electronic edition); 2000 (last printed edition)). These transcripts were used to build up a corpus of utterances for each child. Only (a) fully intelligible, (b) multi-word, and (c) spontaneously used (imitations and immediate self-repetitions were discarded) utterances were included in data analysis.

The first stage of data analysis was to pin-point the syntactic environments involving clitics and classify them as proclisis- or enclisis-triggering contexts. Table 3 shows the number of clitics produced in each condition in the two studies. In the spontaneous speech recordings, children’s overall production includes 1025 clitic constructions, and it is estimated that each child produced on average 114 clitics. Out of the 1025 clitics, 518 were produced in enclisis environments and 507 in proclisis environments. In the experimental study, children’s overall production includes 1018 clitics, and 54 clitics were produced on average in each experimental session. The overall clitic production of the participants of the experimental study is remarkably lower than the clitic production of the participants of the first study. This is due to the duration of the recordings in each

study; recall that the first study involves one-hour recordings of spontaneous speech, while each experimental session lasted approximately 25 minutes. Overall, 654 proclisis contexts were produced in the experimental investigation, but only 364 enclisis contexts. The mean number of enclisis environments in each experimental session was 19 and the mean number of proclisis environments was 34. The obvious discrepancy in the numbers of clitics produced in each condition is due to high production of subjunctive clauses during the implementation of the puzzle task.

Table 3: Clitic Production in Enclisis and Proclisis Contexts

Spontaneous Speech Recordings		Experimental Tasks	
<i>Enclisis Contexts</i>	<i>Proclisis Contexts</i>	<i>Enclisis Contexts</i>	<i>Proclisis Contexts</i>
	1025		1018
518	507	364	654
	100%		100%
50.5%	49.5%	35.8%	64.2%

Clitic constructions were then coded as correct or incorrect: a clitic construction was coded as correct if the clitic was placed pre-verbally in a proclisis environment or post-verbally in an enclisis environment, and reversely, a clitic construction was coded as incorrect, if the clitic was placed post-verbally in a proclisis environment or pre-verbally in an enclisis environment. Finally, the proportion of correctly placed and misplaced clitics in each condition was calculated.

#### 5.4. Results

Data analysis revealed that clitic placement in enclisis environments is target-like from the onset of L1A, whereas proclisis-triggering environments are problematic for young Greek-Cypriot children. In the spontaneous speech samples, children use exclusively post-verbal (100%) clitics in enclisis environments, in accordance with adult-language, but proclisis environments are characterized by clitic misplacement. The percentage of incorrect clitic placement in proclisis environments varies across individuals, ranging from 2% to 98%. Similarly, in the experimental investigation, children's clitic positioning in enclisis contexts is almost adult-like; only three children exhibit incorrect clitic placement, but with remarkably low error rates (4%-7%). Yet, high proportions of misplaced clitics are found in proclisis environments, with percentages of incorrect clitic misplacement ranging from 0% to 100%.

Enclisis environments are adult-like from the onset, while proclisis environments are problematic for some children under three years of age. A number of young children use exclusively post-verbal clitics across environments. In other words they over-generalise enclisis over proclisis environments as well, regardless of the presence of proclisis-triggering elements. This outcome is in line with Petinou and Terzi's (2002) finding for L1A of CG and Duarte and Matos' claim (2000) for L1A of EP.

Leaving aside the enclisis environments, we turn to proclisis environments. Figures 2 and 3 show the proportions of correct and incorrect clitic placement in proclisis environments from spontaneous speech data and experimental data correspondingly. Children's clitic positioning in proclisis contexts reveals a bimodal distribution: some children are always correct and some others are always incorrect. Their choice for clitic placement is consistent across conditions: they either use pre-verbal or post-verbal clitics. For this reason the proportions of correct and incorrect clitic placement reach ceiling levels.

Figure 1: Clitic Placement in Proclisis Environments (Spontaneous Speech Recordings)

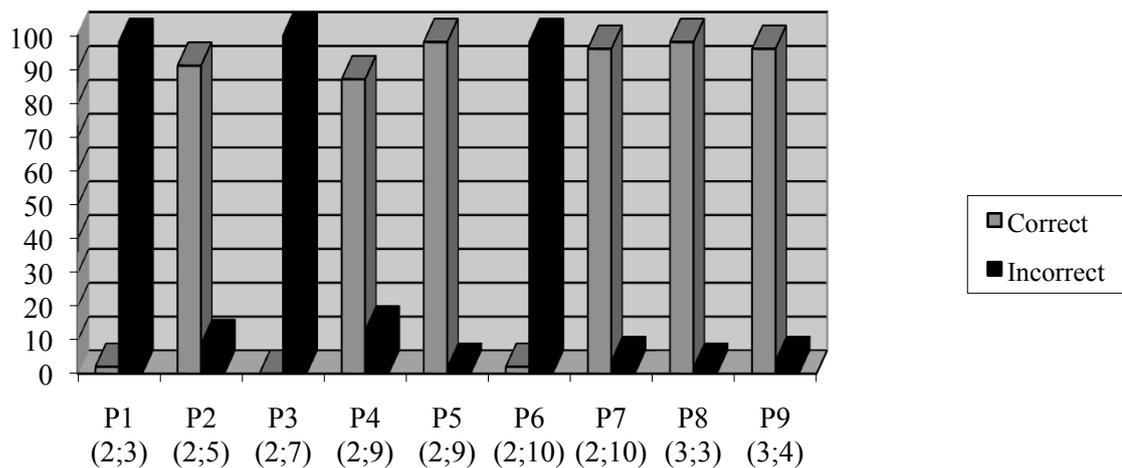
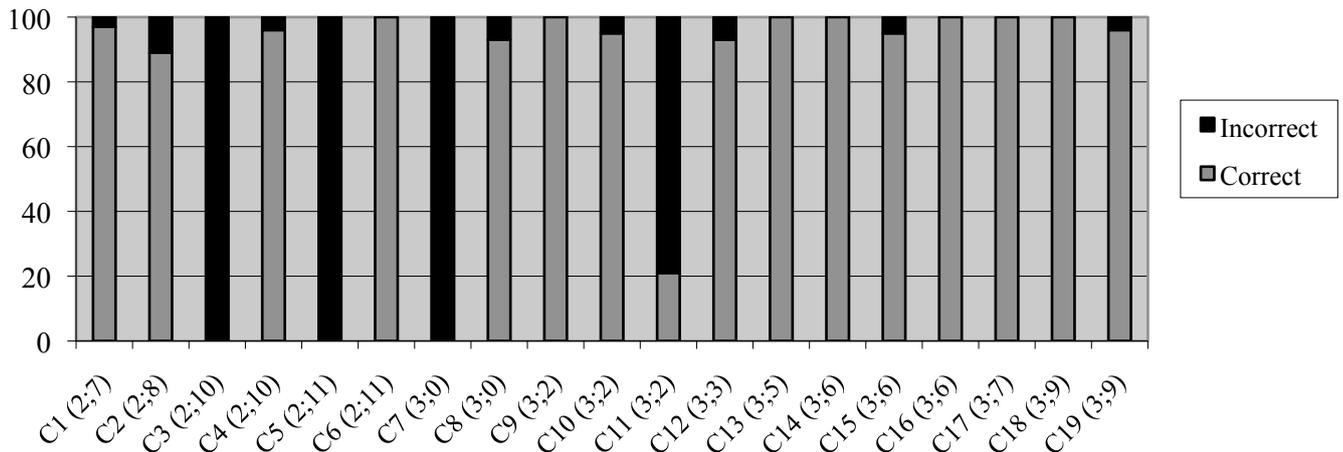


Figure 2: Clitic Placement in Proclisis Environments (Experimental Tasks)



The obtained results partly confirm the outcome of a previous study on L1A of Cypriot-Greek clitics carried out by Petinou and Terzi's in 2002 with a small number of participants (five typically developing children). Petinou and Terzi put forward that the initial stages of L1 acquisition of CG are characterized by the overgeneralization of enclisis pattern. The existence of this phenomenon is confirmed on the basis of the results presented above, but it is not generalised across participants.

This study has shown that a number of Greek-Cypriot children initially generalize enclisis across syntactic contexts, irrespectively of the presence of proclisis-triggering elements. The observed bimodal distribution reveals that there is no true optionality for clitic positioning in early CG, but children's choices are individually consistent. Some children have acquired the adult rule for clitic positioning, i.e. post-verbal clitics in enclisis contexts and pre-verbal clitics in proclisis contexts, whereas others use exclusively post-verbal clitics across conditions. In both cases, though, their choices are constrained by a grammatical system: in the former case, this is in accordance with the adult system, but in the latter case it is not. The latter case has some very interesting implications regarding the existence of early syntactic abstractions in child language and accordingly for the current debate in the literature for L1A.

## 6. Summary and Discussion

The main finding of this study is the existence of overgeneralization errors in early CG, namely the enclisis pattern is overgeneralized across conditions at the initial stages of L1A. Interestingly, only enclisis pro proclisis was found but not the reverse. This indicates that children’s positioning of pronominal clitics is not characterized by true optionality, but it is constrained by a systematic grammar, which may differ from adult grammar.

Over-generalization errors are predicted from generative accounts on the basis of non-adult-like abstract representations that are available by UG. For usage-based accounts, however, they present a challenge, as they constitute constructions that do not occur in adult language. As previously discussed, from a functionalist perspective, children learn the language from the adult input alone and they construct their clauses based on the language they are exposed to. Tomasello argues in favour of an ‘extended period of child conservativeness, denying the existence of early abstractions that go in non-adult-like directions’ (Tomasello 2000a:243). This argument would be rejected on the basis of the evidence presented above.

The proponents of usage-based approaches can put forward a counter-argument based on the morphology of CG. Singular definite articles and 3<sup>rd</sup> person clitics share the same morphological paradigm in CG (Table 4), thus Greek-Cypriot children are exposed to functional elements that have the same phonological realization.

Table 4: The Morphological Paradigm of 3rd person Clitics and Definite Articles in CG

	Clitic			Definite Article		
	Masculine	Feminine	Neuter	Masculine	Feminine	Neuter
<b>Singular</b>						
Nominative	-	-	-	o	i	to
Genitive	tu	tis	tu	tu	tis	tu
Accusative	to(n)	ti(n)	to	ton	tin	to
<b>Plural</b>						
Nominative	-	-	-	i	i	ta
Genitive	tus	tus	tus	ton	ton	ton
Accusative	tus	tes	ta	tus	tes	ta

In (5), *to* is the definite article of the NP ‘book’, while *to* in (6) is a 3<sup>rd</sup> person masculine clitic - with the NP ‘book’ as antecedent. The article and the clitic have the same phonological realization in both structures, so children may be unable to assign the correct function to each form. This would lead to an incorrect statistical analysis of the adult input, as they would sum up all the instances of the same phonological realization, irrespectively of its function in each construction. The instances of post-verbal clitics and determiners may out-number preverbal clitics and as a result, children may construct some syntactic pattern / cue of the kind VP-X(...), where X stands for the phonological realization of clitics and determiners, according to which X must appear post-verbally.

5. Efera        *to* vivlio .  
brought-1sg the book  
‘I brought the book’
6. Efera        *to* .  
brought-1s CL  
‘I brought it’

Although this line of argumentation seems reasonable, acquisition data from Standard Modern Greek challenge it’s validity. In Marinis (2000), although the production of pre-verbal clitics in

child speech out-numbers the production of post-verbal clitics, which only appear in imperatives and constructions involving gerunds, clitic placement is target-like from the onset of L1A.

Turning to the generative tradition, there are two possible lines of reasoning to accommodate the over-generalization of enclisis in early CG. Generative analyses for cliticization in the Romance languages traditionally involve movement of some element (Roberts 2010; Uriagereka 1995 for Romance languages; Belletti 1999 for Italian; Duarte & Matos 2000 for EP). Similarly, in the analyses so far proposed for clitic constructions in CG, verb movement is manifested as either V-to-M (Terzi 1999a; 1999b) or V-to-C (Agouraki 2001). The over-generalization of enclisis can be either attributed to the overgeneralization of verb movement across syntactic contexts or to the absence of clitic movement. Petinou and Terzi's (2002) argumentation is in lines with the former account suggesting that verb movement is over-generalised in early CG, whereas Duarte and Matos (2000) claim that clitic movement is not manifested in early EP. A fine-grained account for the structure and derivation of pronominal clitics in CG goes beyond the scope of this paper and remains an open question for future research.

The research question was whether clitic placement in early Cypriot Greek reveals true optionality or not. On the basis of the results obtained, we can argue that child language is constrained by a systematic grammar. This presupposes the existence of early syntactic abstractions and provides corroborative evidence for UG-constrained grammar. Initially, a child's grammar may go in either adult-like or non-adult-like directions. In subsequent stages and on the basis of sufficient input, it conforms with the conventions of adult grammar.

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