

Clitic omission and clitic placement in French-Portuguese bilingual children

Introduction. Development of Portuguese in bilingual contexts is still an understudied topic, especially with pre-schoolers. The present study aims at investigating patterns of clitic omission and clitic placement in Portuguese by bilingual Portuguese-French children. French differs from Portuguese both in the contexts where clitic omission is allowed and in clitic placement patterns. In French, object omission is more restricted than in Portuguese. French has generalized proclisis, whereas European Portuguese (EP) has enclisis as the default pattern and proclisis triggered by specific contexts (negation, a subset of preverbal adverbs, a subset of quantified subjects, subordinate clauses, among others) [1]. Although there is variation in clitic placement patterns in Brazilian Portuguese (BP), proclisis is the generalized pattern, as in French. The two varieties also differ in the distribution of null objects. Clitic production may be considered an interface phenomenon, since it requires the integration of syntactic and discourse factors, and also presumably semantic factors, since animacy has an influence on object drop (Duarte/Costa 2013; Raposo 2004; Lopes/Cyrino 2005). According to Müller & Hulk's hypothesis, interface phenomena may be subject to crosslinguistic interference in bilingual development. Clitic placement, on the other hand, is not conditioned by discourse factors. Many studies with bilingual children have found that clitic omission is higher in bilinguals than in monolinguals (Serratrice/Sorace/Paoli 2004, Pirvulescu et al. 2014, Nardelli/Lobo 2017, Costa/Lobo/Pratas 2016; a.o.), although some studies did not find differences in omission rates (Tomescu/Avram 2016). As for clitic placement, although it stabilizes early in most languages, it develops late in EP monolinguals, arguably due to its complex patterns of clitic placement and variable input (Costa/Fiéis/Lobo 2015). Taking this into account, our study aims at answering the following research questions: i) is the development of French-Portuguese bilingual children similar to the one of Portuguese monolinguals? ii) does animacy, type of clitic (reflexive vs. non-reflexive) and syntactic context have an effect on clitic production/omission? iii) do we find crosslinguistic influence in clitic production and clitic placement?

Methodology. Participants were 17 bilingual children, aged 3 to 5-years-old, second-generation heritage speakers of Portuguese living in France. Children had schooling in French but attended Portuguese classes twice a week (around 6 hours per week). All children were exposed both to Portuguese and French at home. 6 children had BP as L1, while the other 11 had EP as L1. The variety spoken at school by the teacher is the EP variety. Children were administered 2 tests: 1) a clitic production test, adapted from Nardelli/ Lobo (2017), but unlike previous studies, in the accusative conditions we controlled for the animacy of the object; 2) a clitic placement test, adapted from Costa/Fiéis/Lobo (2015) that elicited only reflexive clitics in enclisis and proclisis contexts [2].

Results and discussion. Global results [3] show that both groups of bilinguals have a low production of object acc. pronouns, which contrasts with the production of refl. clitics, and which is lower than that of monolinguals. The rates of omission are always higher with inanimate antecedents [4]. We confirm that the pattern of clitic/pronoun production in the bilinguals is globally similar to the one found in monolinguals (more omission in acc. contexts than in refl. contexts; more omission in simple sentences than in islands), but with higher rates of omission. BP/FR have high rates of DP production in simple s. As for the clitic placement experiment, the two groups of bilinguals clearly differ: BP/FR bilinguals have a predominantly proclitic pattern, as expected in the BP variety; EP/FR bilinguals predominantly produce enclisis in enclitic contexts, with some rate of proclisis, and predominantly produce proclisis in proclitic contexts, although with some rate of enclisis [5]. Compared to the monolinguals studied in Costa, Lobo & Fiéis (2015), EP/FR bilinguals produce more proclisis both in enclitic contexts and in proclitic contexts. This may be attributed to a crosslinguistic effect from French. We can, thus, conclude that areas that do not involve the syntax-discourse interface may also be vulnerable to crosslinguistic influence in bilingual acquisition, although the global pattern of development is essentially the same as the one found in monolingual acquisition: reason clauses (adverbial clauses) and quantified subjects are the contexts in which proclisis develops later [6]. It is also very clear that, although the children with Brazilian parents are exposed to the EP variety at school, they maintain the Brazilian pattern of clitic placement. The two groups behave differently with respect to clitic placement and clitic production.

- [1] French (1) a. Marie s'est lavée. / b. Avant de se laver, Marie...
 EP (2) a. A Maria lavou-se / c. A Maria já se lavou
 b. A Maria não se lavou.. / d. Acho que a Maria se lavou.

[2] **Clitic production test:** (a) Reflexive clitics - 10 items; (b) Accusative clitics in simple sentences [+ animate] - 6 items; (c) Accusative clitics in simple sentences [- animate] - 6 items; (d) Accusative clitics in islands [+ animate] - 6 items; (e) Accusative clitics in islands [- animate] - 6 items.

Clitic placement test: Enclitic contexts - 8 items; Proclitic contexts: a) negation: 4 items // b) negative subject: 4 items // c) quantified subject: 4 items // d) adverb já 'already': 4 items // e) complement clause with indicative: 4 items // f) complement clause with subjunctive: 4 items // g) adverbial reason clause: 4 items.

[3] **Global rates:**

	EP/FR				BP/FR			
	clitic	omiss.	str. pron.	DP	clitic	omiss.	str. pron.	DP
Acc. simple s.	11,4%	57,6%	0	16,7%	1,4	36,1%	1,4%	41,7%
Acc. islands	13,6%	51,5%	0	21,2%	0	52,8%	12,5%	13,9%
Reflexives	46,4%	20,9%	0	0,9%	28,3%	25%	1,7%	0

[4] **Rates of omission + clitic/pronoun production considering animacy (excluding other answers)**

		EP/FR			BP/FR		
		clitic	omission	str. pron.	Clitic	omission	str. pron.
Acc. simple s.	+ anim.	23,3%	76,7%	0	7,1%	85,7%	7,1%
	- anim.	10,4%	89,6%	0	0	100%	0
Acc. island	+ anim.	27,3%	72,7%	0	0	55%	45%
	- anim.	14,3%	85,7%	0	0	100%	0

[5] **Global results for clitic placement (considering only answers with clitics)**

	No trigger (enclisis)		Proclisis trigger		
	enclisis	Proclisis	enclisis	proclisis	doubling
EP/FR	78,1%	21,9%	35,5%	61,2%	3,3%
BP/FR	0	100%	1,7%	94,9%	3,4%

[6] **Rates of proclisis in each proclitic context**

	Negation	Neg. Subj	Q. Subject	Adverb	Indic. Compl. Clause	Subj. Compl. Clause	Adverbial Clause
EP/FR	78,9%	81,3%	31,6%	78,9%	42,9%	77,8%	31,3%
BP/FR	100%	100%	75%	100%	100%	87,5%	100%

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