1 Clitics in Albanian

Kapia (2010)

Most of the discussion here is based on this dissertation:

Kapia, Enkeleida (2010). *The role of syntax and pragmatics in the structure and acquisition of clitic doubling in Albanian*. Ph.D. dissertation, Boston University.

1.1 Clitic doubling

Clitic doubling in Albanian

(1) Djal-i   e   hëngi akullor-en.
    Boy-NOM it.CL.ACC ate   ice.cream-ACC
    'The boy ate the ice cream.'

(2) Djal-i   i   foli   baba-it.
    Boy-NOM him.CL.DAT spoke father-DAT
    'The boy spoke to father.'

(3) Bora i   bleu   lulet.
    Bora them.CL bought flowers-DAT
    'Bora bought the flowers.'

Clitic doubling patterns

(4) a. Eva më foli mua.
Eva me.CL spoke me.DAT
'Eva spoke to me.'

b. *Eva foli mua.
Eva spoke me.DAT
('Eva spoke to me.')

(5) a. Eva e bleu fustan-in.
Eva it.CL.ACC bought dress-ACC
'Eva bought the dress.'

b. Eve bleu fustan-in.
Eva bought dress-ACC
'Eva bought the dress.'

When the object is in the dative case, clitic doubling is obligatory. When the object is in the accusative case, the clitic can either be there or not be there.

1.2 Information structure

Accusative clitic doubling and focus

For accusative objects, the clitic is not *optional*, but corresponds to "information structure." (Kallulli 2001)

(6) a. What did Bora do? What did Bora lose?

b. *Bora e humbi dosjen.
Bora it.CL.ACC lost file-ACC
('Bora lost the file.')

c. Bora humbi dosjen.
Bora lost file-ACC
'Bora lost the file.'

Accusative clitic doubling and focus

For accusative objects, the clitic is not *optional*, but corresponds to "information structure." (Kallulli 2001)

(7) a. Who lost the file? What did Bora do to the file?

b. Bora e humbi dosjen.
Bora it.CL.ACC lost file-ACC
'Bora lost the file.'

    c.   * Bora humbi dosjen.
             Bora lost   file-ACC
             ('Bora lost the file.')

Focus

What the clitic seems to be sensitive to is the "focus" of the sentence.

"Focus" in this context refers generally either to what is presented as new information in a sentence, or what is contrasted with other alternatives.

(8)   Bora only gave a BOOK to Eva.

(9)   Bora only gave a book to EVA.

(10)   Bora gave a BOOK to Eva.

(11)   Bora gave a book to EVA.

(12)   Bora even gave a BOOK to Eva.

(13)   Bora even gave a book to EVA.

Focus congruence

In an answer to a *wh*-question, it only sounds right to have the focus on the part of the answer that corresponds to where the *wh*-word was.

(14)   What did Bora give to Eva?
      a.   Bora gave the BOOK to Eva.
      b. # Bora gave the book to EVA.

(15)   Who did Bora give the book to?
      a. # Bora gave the BOOK to Eva.
      b.   Bora gave the book to EVA.

Clitic double (accusative) = not focused

The generalization then about the use of the accusative clitic in Albanian is that you *must* have the clitic when the accusative object is not part of the focus, and you *cannot* have the clitic when it is part of the focus.

For dative objects, it doesn't matter what the information structure status is, there must always be a clitic double.

(16)   a.   What did you do? Who called your sister?

        b.   Unë i   thërrita motrës.
             I   her.CL.DAT called   sister-DAT
             'I called my sister.'

        c.   * Unë thërrita motrës.
             I   called   sister-DAT
             ('I called my sister.')

Clitic double (dative) = everywhere

For dative objects, it doesn't matter what the information structure status is, there must always be a clitic double.

(17)   a.   What did you do? Who called your sister?

        b.   Unë i   thërrita motrës.
             I   her.CL.DAT called   sister-DAT
             'I called my sister.'

        c.   * Unë thërrita motrës.
             I   called   sister-DAT
             ('I called my sister.')

More examples of focus blocking accusative clitics

(18)   Kë   (*e)   pe?
       who 3sg.CL.ACC saw
       'Whom did you see?'

(19)   Papa   (*e)   vizitoi madje Tiran-ën
       pope.the 3sg.CL.ACC visited even   Tirana-ACC
       'The pope visited even Tirana.'

(20)   Ana nuk (*i)   hëngri fasul-et,   por hëngri fiq-të.
       Ana not 3pl.CL.ACC ate   beans-ACC but ate   figs-ACC
       'Ana did not eat the beans, but ate the figs.'

2   Clitic development

2.1   Participles and patterns

Patterns in clitic acquisition

Languages seem to differ with respect to whether children start using clitic right away (Early Pattern) or later (Late Pattern) (Babyonyshev & Marin 2006).

In French, children generally seem to get clitics fairly late (still under half of the required clitics produced at 3 years old). Children acquiring Greek and Spanish, though, seem to use their clitics mostly right, quite early (70% to 90% correct by age 3).

French: participle agrees with the clitic

(21) a. Eva l'   a   prise. (la revue)
Eva it.CL has taken (the magazine.SG.FEM)
'Eva took it.'

b. Eva l'   a   pris. (le gâteau)
Eva it.CL has taken (the cake.SG.MASC)
'Eva took it.'

c. Eva les   a   prises. (la revues)
Eva it.CL has taken   (the magazine.PL.FEM)
'Eva took them.'

d. Eva les   a   pris. (les gâteaux)
Eva it.CL has taken (the cakes.PL.MASC)
'Eva took them.'

Albanian: No participle agreement

(22) a. Eva e   kishte shitur makin-ën.
Eva it.CL.ACC.SG had   sold car-ACC.SG.FEM
'Eva had sold the car.'

b. Eva e   kishte libr-in.
Eva it.CL.ACC.SG had   sold   book-ACC.SG.MASC
'Eva had sold the book.'

c. Eva i   kishte shitur makina-t.
Eva it.CL.ACC.PL had   sold car-ACC.PL.FEM
'Eva had sold the cars.'

d. Eva i   kishte libra-t.
Eva it.CL.ACC.PL had   sold   book-ACC.PL.MASC
'Eva had sold the books.'

2.2 Early vs. Late and Participle agreement

A correlation

It appears that a pretty reliable predictor of whether a language will show an Early Pattern for acquisition vs. a Late pattern for acquisition is whether there is object agreement on the participle. (Tsakali & Wexler 2003)

That is, French shows participle agreement and a Late Pattern, Greek shows no participle agreement and an Early Pattern.

Based on this, we expect that Albanian will show an Early Pattern.

Why the correlation?

One proposal for why participle agreement matters is that it depends on our old friend, the Unique Checking Constraint.

Remember that the UCC was proposed as a way of predicting root infinitives—between 2 and 3, when children are subject to the UCC, the subject can't do both of its jobs (in languages where it has two jobs to do). One of those jobs involves T and the other involves Agr. So, the children will leave out either T or Agr sometimes, in order to satisfy the UCC.

The UCC vs. clitics

The idea with respect to clitics is that in languages that show agreement, there are two things that need to happen to them. The first is that they need to get into position (that is, we assume they start off where an object would, and move to the position before the verb where we see them—simplifying somewhat).

(23)   Subject obj.clitic$_i$ verb t$_i$ (doubled object)

In languages where there is participle agreement, the clitic *also* has to stop off and mark the verb as well. That's two. That's not allowable under the UCC. So: children subject to the UCC in languages with agreement will sometimes either not produce the clitic or not move it (or not agree) or something, in order to satisfy the UCC.

3 The child experiment

3.1 Materials

Setup

Hey, let's read this book! Look at these colorful pictures, Arush Dudushi! We'll all read together. But, pay attention, Arush Dudushi, ok? Because we will ask you questions. And don't worry if you make mistakes, because we will teach you how to say it right, ok, furry friend? If you make mistakes, we will correct you because we love you and we want you to grow up quickly and speak like us! Let's begin! Are we all ready?

Topic dative condition (picture)
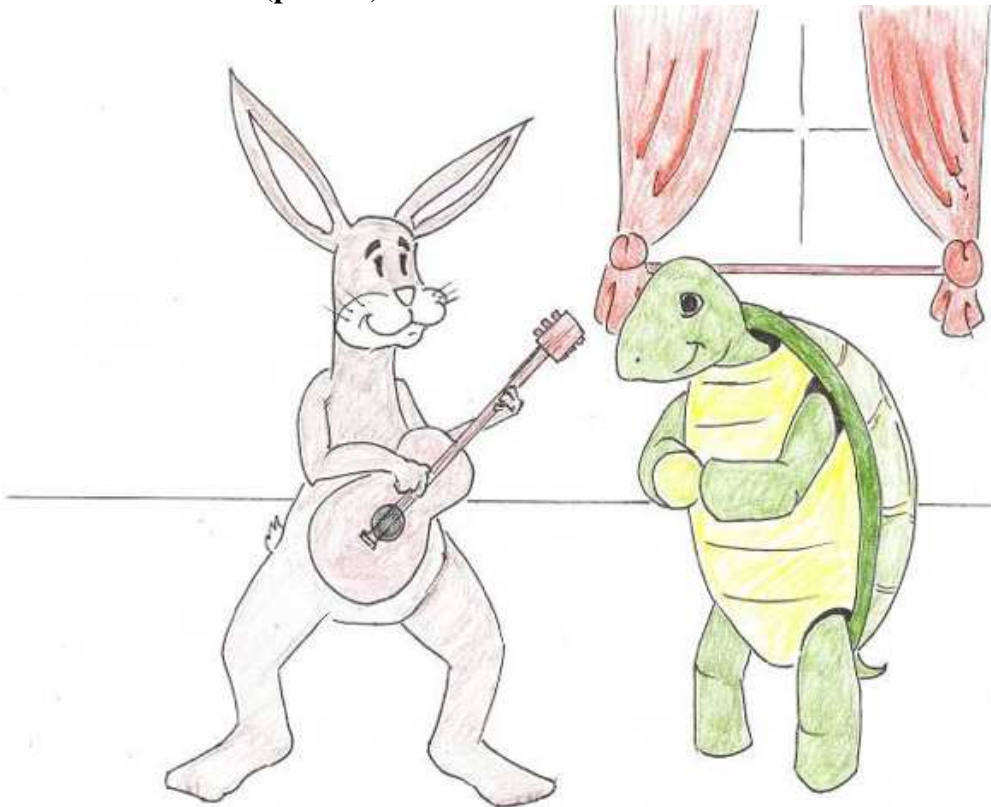
Topic dative condition

Ex   Oh, look, who is in this picture! Our friends, Mr. Rabbit and Mrs. Turtle! Do you see them? They seem to be having lots of fun. Hey, Arush Dudushi, who played the guitar here?

AD   Oh, I know this one!

AD Breshk-a   i   ra   kitar-ës!
    turtle-NOM 3sg.CL.DAT played guitar-DAT
    'The turtle played the guitar!'

Ch No!

Ch Lepur-i   i   ra   kitar-ës.
    rabbit-NOM 3sg.CL.DAT played guitar-DAT
    'The rabbit played the guitar.'

Focus accusative condition (new) (picture)

Focus accusative condition (new)

Ex Pa shiko! Ana po vizaton një lule. 'Look! Ana is drawing a flower.'

Ex She is sitting at her desk in her room. Wow, look how big this table is and look at the lamp too. Do you see it? Hey, Arush Dudushi, can you tell us what Ana is doing here?

AD I don't know. I forgot. Can you tell me? What is Ana doing?

Ch Oh, I know.

Ch   Ana po   vizaton një lule.
       Ana PROG.PART draws   a   flowerACC
       'Ana is drawing a flower.'

Focus accusative condition (contrast) (picture)
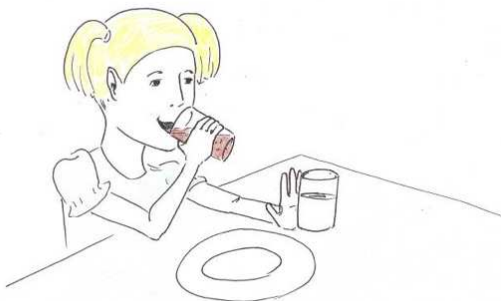
Focus accusative condition (contrast)

Ex   Look, here is Ana again. Her mommy wants her to drink milk and cola. That's why she left them on the table for Ana, right? Hey, Arush Dudushi, what is Ana doing here?

AD   Oh, I know this one!
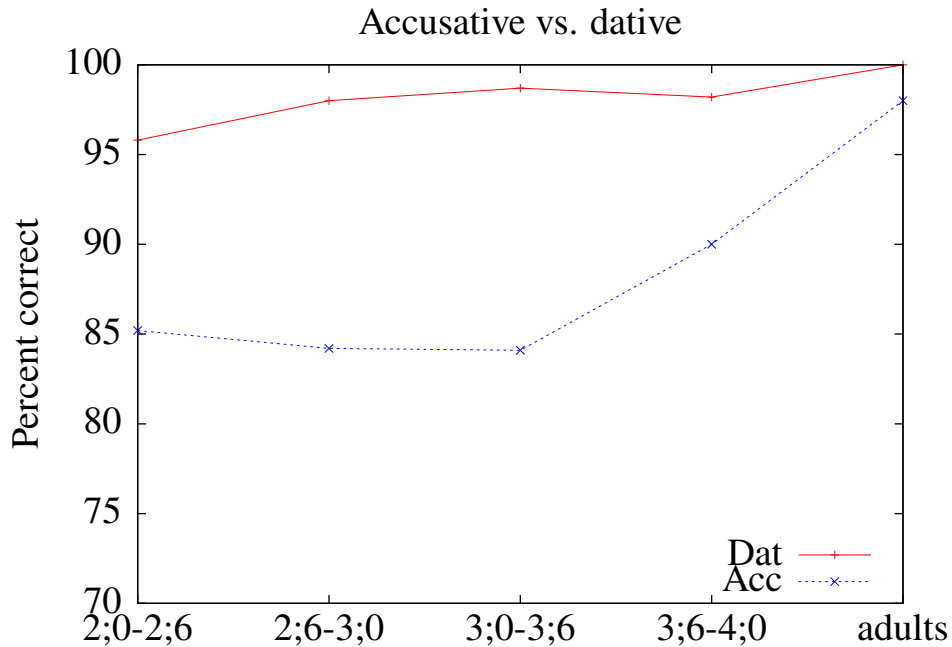
AD   Ana po   pi   vetëm qumësht-in!
       Ana PROG.PART drink only   milkACC
       'Ana is drinking only the milk!'

Ch   No!

Ch   Ana po   pi   vetëm koka-kol-ën!
       Ana PROG.PART drink only   colaACC
       'Ana is drinking only cola!'

4 Child results

Accusative vs. dative

Accusative vs. dative

Percent correct — y-axis: 70, 75, 80, 85, 90, 95, 100

x-axis: 2;0-2;6, 2;6-3;0, 3;0-3;6, 3;6-4;0, adults
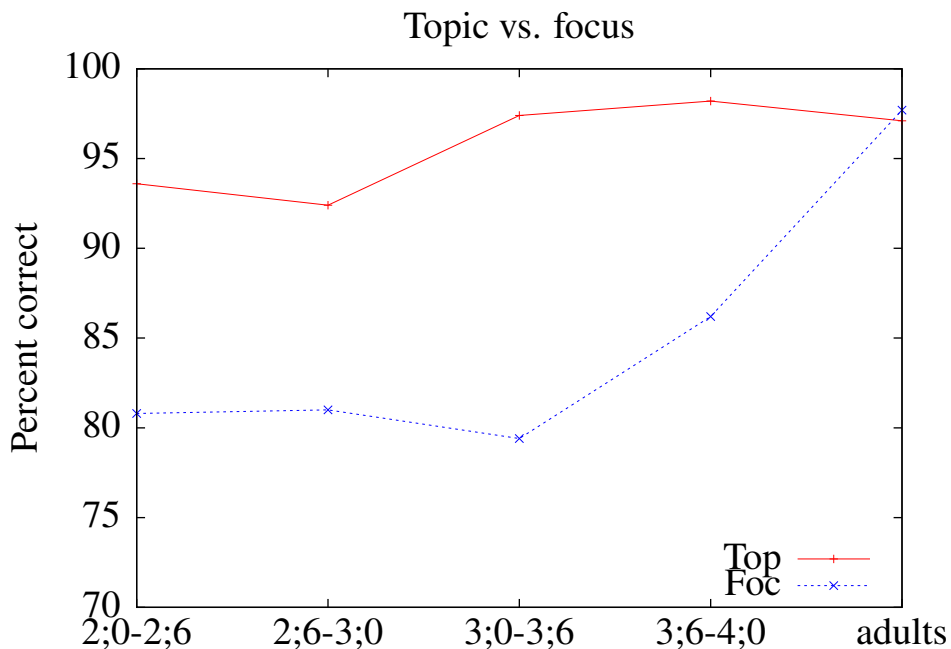
Dat
Acc

Dative clitics ok, syntax ok

The production of the dative clitics seems to be basically right on.

This indicates that there is nothing wrong with the *syntax* of clitic production.

The production of the accusative clitics seems less perfect, only around 80% (moreover, it does not seem to change really across the time being tested, except maybe getting slightly better at the end).

The realization of accusative clitics depends not only on syntax but also on the sensitivity to conditions of pragmatics. But since the syntax was ok, this effect is probably attributable to the pragmatics.

Topic vs. focus

Topic vs. focus — line graph. X-axis: 2;0-2;6, 2;6-3;0, 3;0-3;6, 3;6-4;0, adults. Y-axis: Percent correct (70–100). Lines: Top, Foc.

Topics ok, focus less ok

Looking just at the accusative clitics (where pragmatics matters), children are producing clitics in those places where adults do—that is, with "old" or non-focused information.

But children seem to be making mistakes with clitics in the focused conditions. Recall that there are not supposed to be clitics in the focused condition. That means that children are actually producing more clitics than they should be, actually. Why would that be?

Not much that's new

This kind of goes along with the explanations of the other pragmatic effects we've seen. . .

The idea that children use null subjects with finite verbs, for example, was attributed to something like this: early on, children don't grasp the fact that things that are old to them might not be old to their interlocutor. So, they'll treat too many things as topics, and drop them (assuming also that this is a grammatical option).

Also mentioned was the fact that children overuse the definite determiner *the* where an adult would use *a*—the same kind of explanation could work.

New vs. contrast

New vs. contrast
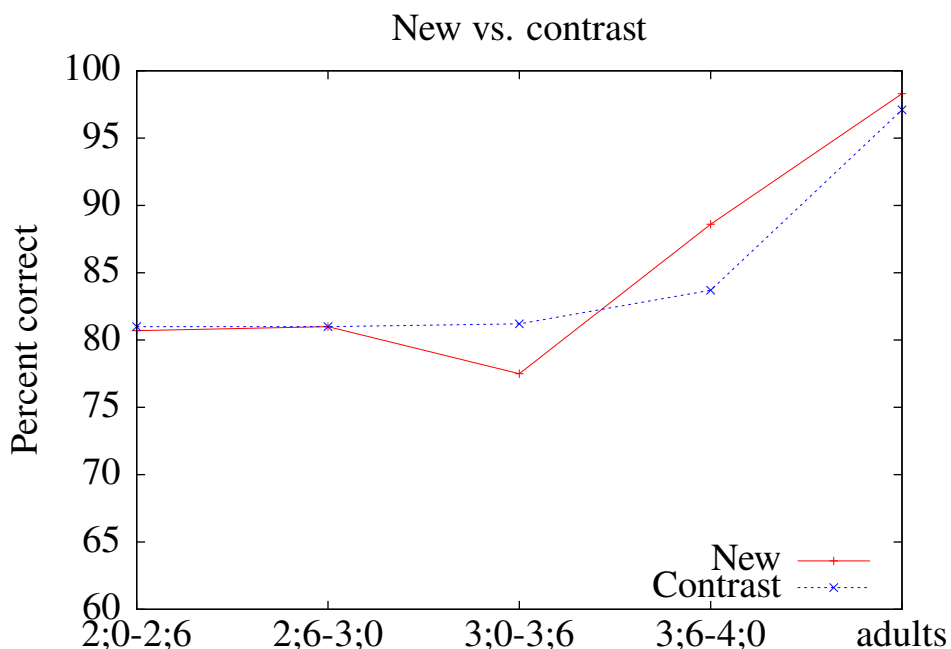
No difference between new- and contrast-type focus

There doesn't seem to be any difference in the behavior of children depending on whether the type of "focus" is the new-information kind or the contrast kind.

(This does throw perhaps a bit of a wrench into the explanation of the overproduction of accusative clitics based on children taking too much information to be "old"—in order to explain this, we also have to assume that they take too much information to be "non-contrastive" at the same rate.)

5 Syntax vs. Pragmatics

Pragmatic explanations

The errors that children make during acquisition that seem to be based on a problem with *pragmatics* rather than with *syntax*. (And we'll see more of this next, when we consider Principle B.)

In Albanian, the success with the dative clitics and with the topical accusatives indicates that the children basically have the syntax down. The fact that they double the clitic with accusative objects too often appears to come down to them taking too many things to be "topics."

When there is no syntactic possibility to drop a topic (English *wh*-questions), children do not leave subjects out with finite verbs. But when the syntactic possibility exists, they do, again suggesting that the syntax is in place, but they just treat too many things as "topics."

Differentiating syntax and pragmatics

So, it seems that the case is pretty good for there being two separate things developing, and that they aren't developing at the same rate. Syntax seems to be developing quite fast—there is almost nothing we can point to as evidence that children old enough to test lack syntactic knowledge (the only exception, perhaps, being that children allow untensed verbs in main clauses).

Meanwhile, the errors children do make often seem to be attributable to their interaction with the context. A separate system, developing separately.