On the direction of cross-linguistic influence in the acquisition of object clitics in French and Italian

Petra Bernardini and Joost van de Weijer
Lund University

Placement errors of object clitics (OCL) in French have been documented in 2L1 and L2 but not in L1 acquisition (Granfeldt, 2012; Hamann & Belletti, 2006). In the present study, we investigate whether placement errors of third person singular OCLs may be due to cross-linguistic influence. We exposed bilingual children (successive L1 French/L2 Italian and L1 Italian/L2 French and simultaneous 2L1 Italian/French) to an OCL elicitation task. The results showed significant differences between the 2L1 and L2 groups in comparison with the L1 groups, and between the languages, thus corroborating the findings of previous studies. Production accuracy of OCLs in general was highest in L1, and higher in Italian than in French. However, OCL placement errors were found in 2L1 French and L2 Italian as well as in the L1 French of children who had Italian as L2. These findings suggest that cross-linguistic influence is bidirectional (Foroodi-Nejad & Paradis, 2009; Chenjie Gu, 2010; Nicoladis, 1999). We discuss these results in relation to the proposal that cross-linguistic influence should occur only in one direction, i.e. only in one language, and only under certain conditions (Hulk & Müller, 2000; Müller & Hulk, 2001).

Keywords: object clitics, direction of cross-linguistic influence, French, Italian, bilingual acquisition

1. Introduction

Previous studies on the acquisition of object clitics (OCLs) in French and Italian demonstrate that monolingual children go through a period in which they omit these elements or replace them with full noun phrases (NPs). Italian children omit OCLs or replace them with NPs, but do not make placement errors (Vender, Garraffa, Sorace, & Guasti, 2016 for a recent overview). Similar findings have been
shown for French, though omission and replacement occurs to a greater extent than in Italian (Jakubowicz, Müller, Riemer, & Rigaut, 1997; Müller, Crysmann, & Kaiser, 1996; Müller, Schmitz, Cantone, & Kupisch, 2006 and many others). On account of this increase, OCLs tend to be acquired later in French than they are in Italian (Hamann & Belletti, 2006), and are also acquired later than other pronouns in French (Müller et al., 2006). In fact, Schmitz and Müller (2008) show that non-reflexive OCLs are acquired well after subject clitics and strong subject pronouns in French, and also after strong object pronouns in Italian and French monolingual and bilingual acquisition (German-French/German-Italian). A similar qualitative pattern has been found for 2L1 and L2 French children (see Granfeldt, 2012; Schmitz & Müller, 2008) and Italian children (Hamann & Belletti, 2006, see however Vender et al., 2016).1

OCL placement errors are less common than omissions and NP replacements. They appear to be absent in monolingual acquisition (cf. Hammann & Belletti, 2006; Schmitz, 2006), but have been reported in French 2L1 child acquisition and adult L2 acquisition (Granfeldt, 2012). In Italian, placement errors have been documented in one study of German-Italian 2L1 acquisition (Ferrari, 2006), but are not mentioned in any other study on Italian L1, 2L1, or L2 acquisition. This points to a cross-linguistic difference in which OCL placement errors are less frequent in Italian than in French (Hamann & Belletti, 2006).

Taken together, there appear to be two factors that determine the occurrence of placement errors during acquisition. The first is the presence of another language, i.e. cross-linguistic influence, since placement errors have been found in bilingual, but not in monolingual acquisition. The second is that placement errors are more common in French than in Italian, suggesting that the degree of cross-linguistic influence depends on the languages involved.

Previous studies on the bilingual acquisition of OCLs in children (in which placement errors have been found) have been mostly concerned with combinations of two different language families, Germanic and Romance. In the current study, we focus on two Romance languages, French and Italian, allowing us to see if the degree and type of typological proximity has an impact on the direction of cross-linguistic influence. As Liceras and Alba de la Fuente (2015) point out, cross-linguistic influence may be expected between two typologically close languages, since the languages in question need not be similar in all domains.2 It

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1. The omission pattern in acquisition is in accordance with adult systems, French allowing for more omissions than Italian (Müller et al., 2006).

2. Liceras and Alba de la Fuente (2015) distinguish typological proximity, such as belonging to the same language family (Romance vs. Germanic), from typological similarity, such as sharing the same feature values of a parameter (for instance +/− pro-drop). As the authors underline,
has been suggested that the placement errors documented in the previous studies were prompted by the categorical weak-strong status of object pronouns in the Germanic languages (Granfeldt, 2012; Hamann & Belletti, 2006). In contrast, object pronouns are often realized as clitics in both Italian and French, but rules for their placement differ between the two languages. For that reason, the cross-linguistic influence in Italian and French may be different from the influence between two languages with greater typological distance.

The current study also addresses the question whether cross-linguistic influence is unidirectional or bidirectional. As Foroodi-Nejad and Paradis (2009) point out, studies on cross-linguistic influence commonly focus solely on one language in a pair. In contrast, our study examines both, allowing us to determine the direction of cross-linguistic influence. If we find the same misplacement pattern seen in previous studies on the Germanic-Romance combination, this would suggest that placement errors are not primarily due to cross-linguistic influence, since third person singular object pronouns are clitic both in French and Italian. However, placement errors that are unlike those found in studies on Germanic/Romance, i.e. errors which reflect the OCL structure of the other Romance language, would suggest that cross-linguistic influence is important for the placement of OCLs. Accordingly, placement errors in both languages would provide strong evidence in support of the view that cross-linguistic influence is bidirectional.

2. The placement of third person direct object clitics in Italian and French

As we saw in the introduction, the acquisition of OCLs has been widely studied using different theoretical frameworks. In the current study, we follow the framework utilized in two acquisition studies that focus specifically on the placement of OCLs: Hamann and Belletti (2006) and Granfeldt and Schlyter (2004). According to this framework, pronouns can be divided into three classes: weak, strong, and clitics (1). Weak and strong pronouns project a lexical XP and are therefore similar to full lexical NPs. Clitics have less internal structure and therefore need to be hosted by a functional X°. Strong and weak pronouns are thus considered to

the term typological proximity cannot account for the effects of subtle structural differences, such as the clitic systems of Spanish, French, or Italian. On a macro-level, French and Italian are typologically close, sharing the category of third person OCL, among many other aspects. On a psychotypological level (Kellerman, 1979), they may also be perceived as having more in common than German and French. On a microlevel, however, such as specific details within the clitic system, there may be subtle differences. We assume, therefore, that such discrepancy could lead to cross-linguistic influence.
be phrasal elements in the syntax, situated in Spec XP, whereas clitics are heads attached to a functional X°.

\[
\text{Clitic} < \text{weak} < \text{strong}
\]

X° XP XP

Weak pronouns contrast with strong pronouns in that they cannot stand on their own, i.e. they cannot be put in isolation or be coordinated. They are deficient in the sense that they require more phrasal structure (clitic climbing) and a host, an X°, to attach to (Rizzi, 1982; Belletti, 1999), or viewed in a more lexical perspective, to merge lexically without climbing (Cardinaletti & Starke, 1994: 87; Cardinaletti & Shlonsky, 2004). In order to recover the prosodic features of the missing X°, the clitic must adjoin a X°; and to compensate for the absence of functional case features (of C°, Head of the Complementizer Phrase) this must occur in a spec XP. This means that the clitic needs to both undergo specifier-head agreement and incorporate through a syntactic derivation, as illustrated in Figure 1 (Cardinaletti & Starke, 1999: 47).

**Figure 1.** The syntactic representation of OCLs

The syntactic derivation of a clitic pronoun is performed in two steps. In order to recover its missing prosodic features and occur in the XP, the clitic must move from the VP-internal XP, as an XP, to its checking position in a higher Spec, and then climb further as an X° to adjoin to a F° (Functional X°). Cardinaletti and Starke (1999) note that since only two derivations or syntactic chains are possible in syntax, X° to X° movement and XP-movement, there can only be three types of pronouns: strong, which stay in the VP-internal XP position, weak, which move to the Spec position, and clitics, which move further to a higher F°.
Italian has both clitics (objects) and weak pronouns as complements (see Cardinaletti, 2004), but only strong or null elements as subjects (Cardinaletti & Starke, 1994, 1999). French has both weak and clitic subjects, and clitic objects. French and Italian thus differ from the Germanic languages in that they share the characteristic that a verb can have a clitic as its complement. However, only French allows a clitic pronoun to be a subject, and only Italian is a null-subject language, so the two languages are not completely typologically similar in the domain of pronouns. Thus, a general difference between these languages (disregarding tense or verb types) is that OCLs can be preceded by a clitic subject pronoun in French (as in 2b) but not in Italian, due to its null subjects (as in 2a, in which it is marked Ø).

(2)  
\begin{enumerate}
\item \(\text{Ø} \quad \text{lo vedo}\)  
\hspace{1cm} (I) it see  
\item \(\text{Je} \quad \text{le vois}\)  
\hspace{1cm} (I) it see  
\end{enumerate}

Schmitz and Müller (2008) further develop the pronominal tripartition idea, taking into consideration the internal structure and external syntax of the three types of pronouns. They propose that subject clitics pattern with strong pronouns in their internal structure, as they possess an N-layer, but differ from object clitics, which are D-elements. The N-layer is a lexical layer, absent in OCLs, which makes strong and weak pronouns and French subject clitics comparable to lexical noun phrases. Consequently, Schmitz and Müller (2008) predict an asymmetry between subject and object clitics in the acquisition of French (see Section 3.1).

The distribution of OCLs is similar in the two languages in that the OCL is placed before the finite form of the verb in the simple tense (2a, 2b), and precedes the auxiliary in the past tense (3a, 3b).

(3)  
\begin{enumerate}
\item \(\text{l’ho visto}\)  
\hspace{1cm} (I) it have seen  
\item \(\text{Je l’ai vu}\)  
\hspace{1cm} I it have seen  
\end{enumerate}

Yet, there are several differences in OCL distribution between the languages. One difference concerns their position in relation to constructions with modal verbs followed by infinitival forms. In constructions with a modal verb and an infinitival

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3. In Italian the plural dative pronoun *loro* ‘them’ is also considered weak (Cardinaletti, 2004). In this study we only consider third person singular clitic pronouns, and thus omit discussion of this case.
The acquisition of object clitics in French and Italian

Italian OCLs optionally precede the modal verb (4a) or follow the lexical verb (4b). In contrast, French OCLs are always placed between the modal and the infinitival lexical verb (4c).

(4) a. \( \text{lo voglio vedere} \) (restructured position)
   (I) it want to see

   b. \( \text{voglio vederlo} \)
      (I) want to see it

   c. \( \text{Je veux le voir} \)
      I want it to see

   (In all cases 'I want to see it')

The Italian OCL position in (4a) was originally claimed to be the result of a clitic cyclically climbing further up in the syntactic hierarchy, and is therefore referred to as “restructuring” (Rizzi, 1982). All clitics move in two steps, first as an XP, similar to weak and strong pronouns, and then as an \( X^\circ \). However, in the restructuring context, the OCL is supposed to move one more step when in the presence of a modal verb. Cardinaletti and Shlonsky (2004) argue that Rizzi’s (1982) explanation of restructuring as the result of one more step in the cyclic movement of the clitic is a movement which is not forced by anything. Therefore, they explain the optionality of restructuring via the assumption that the same verb can be merged either in a lexical VP (i.e. being used lexically), or in a functional XP (i.e. being used functionally). Hence, clitic climbing in restructuring occurs because the verb is used as a functional verb and the clitic moves out of the functional XP, instead of out of the lexical VP, as would be the case in normal clitic climbing, as Spec to another XP, and then adjoins to an \( X^\circ \) as an X. Authier and Reed (2007: 27), in discussing restructuring in French, further claim that UG leaves it open for both functional and lexical ‘pseudo’ modal verbs, like \textit{vouloir} (to want), and that the choice between lexical or functional status of these modal verbs is parameterized, with Italian having both choices, but French having only the lexical option, as in (5).4

(5) Option A: restructuring verbs are either lexical or functional (Italian)
Option B: restructuring verbs are lexical (French)
Option C: restructuring verbs are functional (other languages)

When child learners do not find evidence that restructuring verbs are either lexical or functional (5a), or solely functional (5c), they will choose the lexical option (5b). We will return to this in the discussion of our data, since a bilingual French/Italian

4. The class of restructuring verbs can be divided into three groups (Rizzi, 1982): modal verbs (with which we are concerned here), aspectual verbs (as \textit{cominciare} 'to begin'), and motion verbs (as \textit{andare} 'to go').
child is faced with positive evidence for two parametric choices when using modal verbs, i.e. (5a) and (5b). The analysis of restructuring presented in Cardinaletti and Shlonsky (2004) and in Authier and Reed (2007) allows us to consider the French modal verb in (4c) as being lexical, and the auxiliary _avoir_ as being functional, just as in Italian restructuring. Italian has a parameter setting value by which a modal verb (and other verbs of the restructuring class) may be simultaneously functional (as with French _avoir_) and lexical (as with French _vouloir_), but in French there is no optionality.

Finally, if both an accusative and a dative OCL in the third person are present, the dative precedes the accusative in Italian, forming a clitic group (6a), while in French the order is reversed (6b).

(6) a. **Glielo** _dice_  
Him/her-it says  
(‘he/she says it to him/her’)  
b. **Il le lui** _dit_  
He it him/her says  
(‘He says it to him/her’)

The so-called clitics mechanism (Seuren, 2009), i.e. the clustering of dative and accusative OCL, is a case of placement difference between French and Italian. We will not discuss this further, since in Italian it involves the third person dative form _gli_ (‘him/her’), which is difficult for learners primarily because of its pronunciation (Chini, 1995).

As the examples above show, apart from the fact that the Italian OCL is never preceded by a subject clitic, the placement of Italian and French OCL is the same in the present simple and in the past tense with an auxiliary, but not in the presence of a modal, nor between two OCLs.

In both languages, objects that are lexical NPs and strong pronouns follow the verb:

(7) a. **vedo il gatto**  
(I see the cat’)  
b. **vedo lui e lei**  
(I see him and her’)

(8) a. **je vois le chat**  
(‘I see the cat’)  
b. **je vois lui et elle**  
(‘I see him and her’)

Germanic languages, the native languages of most learners in past studies of OCLs in Romance languages, lack third person OCLs. Thus, the non-clitic object
pronoun in (7–8), and therefore its position, may also be considered the position for the object in Romance languages for a learner with a Germanic L1 (cf. 3.1).

In sum, OCL placement in French and Italian is identical in the present tense and in the past tense with the auxiliary ‘to have’, and is similar in that the two languages display variation related to the presence of a modal auxiliary. However, this variation is strict in French and variable in Italian.

3. Previous studies on the placement of OCLs in French and Italian

3.1 French

OCL placement errors in French have been argued to distinguish L1, 2L1, and L2 acquisition. Hamann and Belletti (2006) found that 2L1 and L2 (child and adult) learners make placement errors, whereas L1 learners do not. Furthermore, Granfeldt (2012) showed that the errors seen in 2L1 and L2 are qualitatively different depending on whether the acquisition begins prior to or after the age of four. Granfeldt (2012) and Hamann and Belletti (2006) present different classification systems for these errors. We discuss the two systems below.

Granfeldt (2012) suggests a developmental sequence of OCLs with respect to placement errors. The proposal is based on Swedish 2L1 and Swedish (child/adult) L2 learners of French. Both learner groups share an error type that Granfeldt calls an intermediate position error, where the OCL is placed between the auxiliary and the past participle (e.g. *j’ai le vu (‘I have seen it’). However, only adult L2 learners produced post-verbal position errors, where the OCL is in the Swedish full pronoun position (e.g. *je vois le (‘I see it’).

Table 1 shows the two types of errors present in the development of French in 2L1 and child and adult L2 learners. The postverbal position error is only present in adult L2 and child L2 when the age of onset (AoA)\(^5\) for language acquisition is

| Table 1. Developmental sequence for OCLs in different modes of acquisition in French (Source: Granfeldt 2012: 149, Table 2) |
|---|---|---|
| L1 sequence | 2L1 sequence | Adult L2 sequence |
| All target positions | Pre-verbal and intermediate positions | Post-verbal position |
| | je le vois / *j’ai le vu / je veux le voir | *je vois le |
| | Pre-temporal auxiliary position | Pre-verbal and intermediate positions |
| | je l’ai vu | je le vois / *j’ai le vu / je veux le voir |
| | | Pre-temporal auxiliary position |
| | | je l’ai vu |

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5. AoA: Age of onset of language Acquisition (if not the L1), given in years;months.
above four (9, 10). However, this type of error has also been documented in 2L1 acquisition, as illustrated in (11), borrowed from the case study of the French/Dutch child Anouk (Hulk, 2000).6

(9) Postverbal error in adult L2

(Granfeldt, 2012: 143, Example (1); Granfeldt & Schlyter, 2004).

on prend le gaz et refroidir le / on refroidir le dedans.

one takes the gas and cool it / one cool it in there

(‘one takes the gas and cools it off / one cools it off in there’) Karl 2, adult L2

(10) Postverbal error in child L2 (Granfeldt, 2012: 155, Example (18))

a. Tony 1 (AoA 4;5) Age 5;0, Exposure 7 months

*CHI: il va casser le

(‘he will break it’)

b. Viola 1 (AoA 6;4) Age 6;11, Exposure 7 months

*INV: et qu+ est+ ce+ qu’il fait ?

(‘and what does he do?’)

*CHI: mange le

(‘eat it’)

c. Valentine 2–3 (AoA 6;6) Age 7;11–8;2, Exposure 12–15 months

*CHI: et après il y avait deux garçons qui étaient amoureux de

(‘and then there were two boys who were in love with

les them’)

(11) Postverbal error in child 2L1 (Hulk, 2000, Anouk, 3;3)

Je prends la

(‘I take her’)

The intermediate position error, on the other hand, occurs in the second phase of the 2L1 and L2 acquisition of OCLs (Table 2), as shown in (12).

(12) Intermediate position error in a Swedish/French 2L1 child

(Granfeldt, 2012: 153, Example (17)), Lars, 2L1 (5;9)

*CHI le oiseau [= zoiseau] il a t’aïdé

the bird he has you-helped

(‘the bird has helped you’)

Here the OCL is incorrectly placed between the auxiliary and the past participle instead of between the subject clitic il ‘he’ and the auxiliary. According to Granfeldt

6. Note, however, that Anouk’s languages were not balanced, Dutch being stronger. For unbalanced bilingual acquisition, it has been argued that the weaker language might develop more like an L2 than an L1 (Schlyter, 1993).
This placement error can be explained by appealing to Rizzi’s (1982) theory of the cyclic movement of clitics. In the grammar of the learner, the clitic has moved out as an XP, one step from the VP, to a Spec, but not yet further up as a head. This interpretation of the intermediate position error is in line with an analysis of the clitic as a weak pronoun, which is also the explanation presented by Granfeldt and Schlyter (2004) for the postverbal error, i.e. as a categorization error of the clitic as weak or strong, as prompted by the learner’s L1.

Hamann and Belletti (2006) distinguish four types of placement error, attested only in L2 and 2L1 speech (Table 2).

A comparison of the two classifications indicates that Type II and Type III errors correspond to Granfeldt’s postverbal and intermediate position errors respectively. Type I errors are not attested in Granfeldt’s data. However, these errors may be considered as Type II, since, following the discussions in Granfeldt

Table 2. Classification of OCL placement errors in French (Hamann & Belletti, 2006: §§ 4.2.1–4)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>*Cl in isolation (and or separation) errors</th>
<th>*Cl in object position</th>
<th>*Aux Cl Ppart</th>
<th>Restructuring errors p 67.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I.</td>
<td>*Cl in isolation (and or separation) errors</td>
<td>Karl, Swedish L1, adult L2, 8 months of exposure (Granfeldt &amp; Schlyter, 2004)</td>
<td>Anouk 3;9</td>
<td>Anouk 4;6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Greg, 1;2 English L1, French child L2</td>
<td>*On refroidir le dedans</td>
<td>Il a le mis à l’envers</td>
<td>*Cl Mod infinitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>moi, j’ai trouvé le</td>
<td>one cool it in there</td>
<td>He has it put on the reverse</td>
<td>Je le sais pas faire</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
|      | (‘Me, I’ve found it’) | (‘one cools it off in there’)| (‘he has it put on the reverse’) | (I don’t know how to do it’)
|      | Anouk, 4;06, Dutch/French 2L1 (De Houwer, 2000) | Tu peux le tré bien faire | ‘(you can do it very well’)
|      | ‘(you can do it very well’) | | | |

and Schlyter (2004), this placement error can be explained by appealing to Rizzi’s (1982) theory of the cyclic movement of clitics. In the grammar of the learner, the clitic has moved out as an XP, one step from the VP, to a Spec, but not yet further up as a head. This interpretation of the intermediate position error is in line with an analysis of the clitic as a weak pronoun, which is also the explanation presented by Granfeldt and Schlyter (2004) for the postverbal error, i.e. as a categorization error of the clitic as weak or strong, as prompted by the learner’s L1.

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and in Hamann and Belletti, they may be attributed to the learner’s misanalysis of the OCL as a full pronoun (see Section 4). Type IV errors, so-called restructuring errors, are also not found in Granfeldt. These errors are important to our study since the order Cl Mod Infinitive is accepted in Italian.

3.2 Italian

Whereas placement errors have been noted for French child 2L1 and adult L2 acquisition, no such errors have been documented for similar studies of Italian L1 and L2 acquisition (Hamann & Belletti, 2006; Leonini & Belletti, 2004; Leonini, 2006). Furthermore, Belletti and Hamann (2004) report that placement errors of Types I, II, or III are absent in typical/atypical monolingual acquisition and L2 (child/adult) acquisition. However, Hamann and Belletti (2006) discuss another kind of error present in 2L1 Italian. An inverted variant of the Type IV restructuring error was reported in Ferrari’s (2006) study of two early L2/2L1 German-Italian children. In reference to Ferrari’s finding, Hamann and Belletti (2006: 71) note: “a peculiar misplacement occurred in Restructuring contexts, producing the order ‘Mod Cl Vinf’ […] at a rate of 63% for Vincenzo and a rate of 27% for Elisa […] especially significant in this connection is the lack of the ‘Aux Cl Ppart’ error in both these children”; this is exemplified in (13) ‘he/she wants to buy it’, which in Italian should be *lo vuole comprare / vuole comprarlo*.

(13) *Vuole lo comprare* (our hypothetical example)

wants it buy

(‘He/she wants to buy it’)

To the best of our knowledge, the only type of error that has been found in previous studies of Italian acquisition is a Type IV from Hamann and Belletti’s (2006) classification of placement errors in French, but in the opposite direction, i.e. the OCL is placed in a position not allowed in Italian, but is in the only position allowed in French, given the context of a modal verb and an infinitive. Thus, we suggest that this error is best classified as a variant of Hamann and Belletti’s Type IV. As noted by Hamann and Belletti, the Italian/French child Lorenzo does not produce this type of error in French. Furthermore Bennati and Matteini (2006) found that L2 learners of Italian with different L1s (English and Spanish) systematically employed restructuring in an elicitation task.

From this earlier research, we posit three different types of errors that distinguish modes of acquisition relative to different languages (Table 3). Type A is derived via a consolidation of Granfeldt’s Type 1 postverbal error with Hamann and Belletti’s Types I-II clitic in isolation/separation and clitic in object position. Type B represents a combination of Granfeldt’s Type 2, intermediate position
error and Hamann and Belletti’s Type III Aux Cl Ppart. Finally, Type C allows us to account for the error found in Italian, as observed in Ferrari’s (2006) data and labelled as Mod Cl Vinf in Hamann and Belletti’s Type IV, restructuring error.

Table 3. Types of OCL placement errors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A. In the position of strong object pronouns (in L2 French):</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>il va casser le</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>('he will break it')</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
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<tr>
<th>B. Intermediate position: (in 2L1 French and L2 French)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>le oiseau [= zoiseau] il a taidé</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the bird he has you(him) helped</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>('the bird has helped you')</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>C. Restructuring context (In French 2L1, Italian 2L1/child L2)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Je le sais pas faire</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I it know not do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>('I don’t know how to do it')</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>voglio lo vedere</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(I) want it to see</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>('I want to see it')</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To conclude, there is evidence that there are no OCL placement errors in L1 acquisition of French or Italian. There is evidence that OCLs may be treated as non-clitic pronouns by adult and child L2 and 2L1 learners of French, but not by any kind of learner of Italian. The erroneous placement of OCLs in an intermediate position is documented for L2 and 2L1 acquisition of French, but not for Italian (although it would also be a possible error in Italian). And finally, the modal and infinitive option is problematic for all acquisition modes, but not for all individuals studied (cf. the child Lorenzo described above), although L2 learners of Italian are capable of producing restructured OCLs (Bennati & Matteini, 2006). To summarise, previous studies of OCL placement indicate that:

(14) a. there are no placement errors in L1 acquisition of French or Italian;
    b. what clearly distinguishes adult L2 learners of French and Italian is the treatment of OCLs as strong object pronouns, to a certain degree evident also in child L2 and 2L1 learners;
    c. the sequence Aux PastP is problematic for learners of French (except L1), but not of Italian;
d. restructuring contexts with a modal verb and an infinitive verb constitute a problematic case for some 2L1 learners, both of Italian and of French.

The fact that the Aux PastP sequence does not pose a problem for learners of Italian may be due to the restructuring context in Italian, which reinforces the positive evidence needed for the learner’s grammar to adopt an analysis of the clitic as such a category in other structures too, and hence to complete its movement as an $X^o$, and not as a weak pronoun.

3.3 Cross-linguistic influence: unidirectional or bidirectional?

During bilingual language acquisition, the development of each individual language is widely held to be subject to cross-linguistic influence (Paradis & Genesee, 1996). This influence may affect the acquisition path and production of the two languages qualitatively, creating a deviant acquisition sequence and non-target-like productions, or quantitatively, creating more instances of a deviation that also occurs in monolingual acquisition. Paradis and Genesee (1996) distinguish between three types of effects that cross-linguistic influence can have on language acquisition: acceleration, delay, or transfer, which is the incorporation of a certain structure of one language’s grammar into that of the other. According to Meisel (2008), only qualitative differences can tell us if bilingual acquisition is different from monolingual acquisition. Foroodi-Nejad and Paradis (2009) point out that in the majority of studies on cross-linguistic influence in bilingual children, only one language is examined. Furthermore, the differences found in the production patterns of monolingual and bilingual children are often based on quantitative rather than qualitative error trends. These authors therefore call for additional studies involving larger numbers of participants. They also highlight the importance of examining the production of both languages in such studies, since, as they state, it is difficult to find unequivocal support for a claim of unidirectionality in cross-linguistic influence, if only one language is examined (Foroodi-Nejad & Paradis, 2009: 413).

As was outlined in 3.1, OCL placement errors have only been shown to occur in 2L1 and L2 French. In the majority of these cases, the other language of the pairs, (or the L1) is Germanic, which suggests that transfer occurred from the Germanic grammar to the French grammar in the sense that the learner treats the OCL as a strong object pronoun in French, incorporating the weak pronoun category of the Germanic grammar. Previous studies on the acquisition of Italian, on the other hand, have shown that in bilingual acquisition modes, placement errors occur in the context of restructuring. This suggests that the child applies
clitic climbing to a higher position than is allowed in French (*Cl Mod Vinf) or in Italian, putting the OCL in an intermediate position (*Mod Cl Vinf), which would also be an instance of transfer. Note, however, that the Restructuring error in French has also been documented in adult L2 learners of French having an English L1 (Landow, 2002), and in Italian bilingual German/Italian and French/Italian children (Ferrari, 2006, Hamann & Belletti, 2006: 33). This suggests that the cutoff point between what comprises an instance of transfer from a previously or a simultaneously learned language, and what comprises an instance of options available to the child, possibly through UG, is not so clear (Hamann & Belletti, 2006: 31). Also considering the proposal of Authier and Reed (2007) regarding a parameterization of restructuring, the acquisition of OCLs becomes a question of choosing a parameter value, which makes it important to disentangle the options of the direction of cross-linguistic influence discussed in the literature.

One of the most prominent approaches to cross-linguistic influence was proposed by Müller (1998), who argued that syntactically ambiguous structures are susceptible to cross-linguistic influence when one of the syntactic outcomes is shared with the second language, i.e. in situations where there is structural overlap. In other words, cross-linguistic influence is predicted if language A offers evidence for more than one analysis of the structure, and this analysis is reinforced by language B. Consequently, the outcome of a particular structure in language A will be the one which is shared with language B.

Besides the structural overlap condition, Hulk and Müller (2000) and Müller and Hulk (2001) argue that cross-linguistic influence needs to take place at the syntax-pragmatics interface, e.g. in the C-domain, which is vulnerable in language acquisition in general (Müller, 2003). According to Müller and Hulk (2001), object pronouns constitute just such a vulnerable domain, since they are left in the lexical VP position after the verb in the Germanic languages, but leave an empty category trace (eci) in the postverbal VP internal position when they move to the preverbal position in the C-domain in non-declarative sentences in the Romance languages (cf. 15a–b). Following this reasoning, Müller and Hulk propose that 2L1 learners tend to drop the object in French or Italian because it is allowed in German or Dutch.

7. Language dominance has also been seen as an explanatory factor for cross-linguistic influence, in specific cases (Yip and Matthews, 2007), or together with input ambiguity (Kupisch, 2007). As the data of our study do not allow us to say enough about language dominance (see Section 4), we will not address this issue and only focus on input ambiguity, which is important for the restructuring context of OCLs in Italian, since this is seemingly optional, permitting the OCL to climb or to stay after the infinitive verb, without any apparent difference.
Many subsequent studies have corroborated Müller and Hulk’s (2001) proposal (e.g. Argyri & Sorace, 2007; Foroodi-Nejad & Paradis, 2009). The point that we want to make by appealing to this proposal is that it suggests that cross-linguistic influence is normally unidirectional, i.e. it results in a syntactically erroneous outcome only in the language in which a particular structure is syntactically ambiguous, and not in the other language, which only offers one of the two options. Müller and Hulk’s (2001) proposal provides an important basis for our study on the direction of cross-linguistic influence between two Romance languages, French and Italian, presented below. Given that placement errors in one language’s position would comprise an instance of an incorporation of a possible structure in the other language, it would be possible to state that cross-linguistic influence is bidirectional, provided that Romance-Romance learners’ OCL placement errors occur in the same construction (such as the restructuring context) in both languages.

Some limited evidence exists in support of the view that cross-linguistic influence in 2L1 is bidirectional. Chenjie Gu (2010) found bidirectional cross-linguistic influence in Cantonese/English children’s production of English prepositional datives and in Cantonese inverted double object datives. However, this study is limited in that distinct structures of the dative domain were examined in each language. Thus, it only shows bidirectional cross-linguistic influence in the general domain of structure, and not with respect to one particular structure. A related study by Nicoladis (1999) found no evidence of cross-linguistic influence in the sequence of nouns and adjectives in a French/English bilingual child, although both languages present structural overlap in this domain (both have pre-nominal adjectives, but only French allows post-nominal adjectives as well). Nicoladis (2002) found evidence for bidirectional English/French cross-linguistic influence in the ordering of noun-noun compounds (rigidly right-headed in English and left-headed in French).

It is important to note that Müller and Hulk’s (2001) proposal does not exclude bidirectionality per se, as long as all cross-linguistic incorporations are available in the language in which the structure of a particular domain in question is more ambiguous than in the other language. The reverse direction may apply in another structure, which would explain the findings in Chenjie Gu (2010). Therefore, the concept of bidirectionality does not contradict Müller and Hulk’s unidirectional hypothesis in its strict interpretation. Exceptions are provided by Nicoladis (1999, 2002), Foroodi-Nejad and Paradis (2010) and Kupisch (2007).
These studies explain the unpredicted absence or presence of cross-linguistic influence by invoking external factors, such as the design of the experimental study or language dominance. As Argyri (2003: 10) notes: “Only in this way we will be able to disentangle the possible sources of cross-linguistic influence in bilingual acquisition and to define its locus and direction and therefore, to show that it is not a random phenomenon but a controlled one.”

However, if Müller and Hulk (2001) are correct, then there should be no cross-linguistic influence if the condition for structural overlap in the C-domain, the interface of pragmatics, is not met. But how narrowly may we define a structural overlap or even a structure? Should we predict cross-linguistic influence for OCLs in one type of context, i.e. restructuring (4), but not in another, i.e. a simple tense clause (2)? In the domain of OCLs, French and Italian do not overlap, since even apart from the restructuring context the OCL is not always in the same position in relation to the verb and to other clitics (6). In fact, even when the clitic does not climb in Italian (4b), it does not move to the “French position” (4c). There are only two contexts in which the clitic is placed in the same position in both languages: in non-compound finite tenses (2) and in the past tense with the auxiliary have (cf. 3), as was described in Section 2. We therefore make the following two predictions, based respectively on a narrow and a wide interpretation of Müller and Hulk’s (2001) position on the direction of cross-linguistic influence:

There is no structure in the domain of OCLs (at the syntax–pragmatics interface) in French and Italian which has complete structural overlap, for which one of the languages also presents an alternative structure. Therefore cross-linguistic influence is not expected in either direction.

French and Italian each present an OCL syntactic structure which has incomplete structural overlap; French presents one position for non-restructured OCLs, not shared with Italian, and Italian presents one additional higher functional position, in which the OCL is placed in the restructuring context. Therefore, we expect cross-linguistic influence to occur in the context of restructuring, with the result of non-target-like outcomes in Italian, reflecting non-restructured OCL structures.

We prefer the second prediction, since the first makes it too difficult to explain cross-linguistic influence as a too-controlled phenomenon. However, even the second prediction is narrow in the sense that the concept of “one direction” relies too much on surface output. If cross-linguistic influence is due to the ambiguity of the internal structure of one of the languages, what would prevent it from stemming from ambiguity in both languages, leading to non-target-like output in
both languages, as long as it can be explained by the structural ambiguity of the languages? We therefore make the following prediction:

Bidirectional cross-linguistic influence will occur in structures in which both languages show ambiguous input in different ways, as in the case of OCLs in French and Italian.

4. Methodology

4.1 Participants

A total of 16 children participated in the study (see Table 4). Thirteen of the participants were recruited from a French school in Rome. Of these, five were successive bilinguals, having French L1 and Italian L2, with an AoA of Italian varying from age 3;4 to 5;6 and a length of exposure to Italian ranging from 0;7 to 1;7. Seven of the 13 were simultaneous French/Italian bilinguals, i.e. bilingual from birth, who all had the same length of attendance at the French school (1;7). These children were selected for participation because the teachers and parents had classified them as balanced simultaneous bilinguals. Finally, there was one successive bilingual child, having Italian L1 and French L2.

In addition, three monolingual Italian children were recruited from an Italian school in an area of the same city with matching socio-economic status. The only Italian L1/French L2 child (Fea) from the French school was added to this group as a native Italian speaker. French L2 is not included as a group in the analysis, since only one French L2 child participated (French AoA 3;7, length of exposure to French, 1;7).

The mean ages of the children in the three different groups was 5;5 (Italian L1), 5;4 (Italian L2/French L1) and 5;4 (Italian/French 2L1). The instructional language of these 13 participants was French except for two hours of Italian per week. French was limited to school and home-related activities (for L1 French children and 2L1 French/Italian children), and Italian was used also in the children’s local environment, such as after-school activities.

All children except the three Italian monolinguals completed the test in both languages during the same week, but on different days. The test was administered in French by a French speaking teacher and in Italian by the first author, in the presence of an Italian teacher.
4.2 The elicitation task

The elicitation task used was developed by Bortolato (2003) as part of a bachelor thesis project supervised by A. Cardinaletti and M. T. Guasti. In its original form, the test was intended to elicit third person singular OCLs orally in Italian monolingual children of approximately the same age as our participants (Cardinaletti, 2004). The task consists of 15 short stories that the test leader reads to the child, and to which a puppet makes an incorrect comment. Subsequently, the child is expected to correct the puppet using a construction involving an OCL. For our version of the task, we added corresponding pictures, to make it easier for the L2 children to produce their corrections, as some of them had only been in Italy and/or attending the French school for approximately six months. The test was also translated into French.

The task was designed to elicit simple phrases in the present (16a) and past tense (16b), as well as infinitival (16c), affirmative imperative (16d), negated imperative (16e), and restructuring (16f) sentences. In (16), examples (a–f) are first given in Italian and then in French, followed by a single translation in English, since the meaning is the same.

(16) a. **la guarda / il la regarde**
(‘he watches it’)

**l’accende / il l’allume**
(‘he starts it’)

**lo da / il le donne**
(‘he gives it’)

---

Table 4. Characteristics of the bilingual and monolingual children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Italian L1</th>
<th>Italian L2/French L1</th>
<th>2L1 Italian/French</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Child</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dav</td>
<td>4;0</td>
<td>Rom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foa, French L2</td>
<td>5;4</td>
<td>Cia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar</td>
<td>5;5</td>
<td>Lou</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ele</td>
<td>7;0</td>
<td>Tea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Bea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>5;5</td>
<td>5;4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Legend: Age (during experiment); Exposure: exposure to Italian is equivalent to schooling for L2 Italian; School: schooling in years;months for 2L1 children (exposed from birth to both languages)
In all cases the child has the opportunity to produce a correct form of the OCL, omit the OCL, substitute the OCL with a lexical NP, use a different form, or provide no reply at all. In some cases, especially in learners with a short length of exposure to L2 Italian, no answer was provided as the task was too difficult.

5. Results

5.1 General accuracy in the production of OCLs in French and Italian

Omissions and substitutions/replacements by a lexical NP, but not placement errors, were counted as errors in the calculation of accuracy rates. Counts and proportions of correct productions are given in Table 5. The proportions of correct responses were analyzed in a multilevel logistic regression analysis using group and language as predictors (fixed effects). The outcome of the analysis showed a significant interaction between the two predictors (chi-squared = 30.755, df = 2,
Thus there were differences between the groups, but the differences were not the same in the two languages. We looked at simple group effects given as part of the regression output, once for Italian and once for French. In this, the 2L1 and the L2 groups were each compared to the L1 group. In Italian, both the L2 group and the 2L1 group made significantly more errors than the L1 group ($p = 0.000$, $p = 0.016$ resp.). In French, the difference between the L1 and the L2 group was not significant ($p = 0.116$), which is most likely due to the fact that the French L2 data comprised productions from only one child. The difference between the L1 group and the 2L1 group was significant ($p = 0.004$).

Table 5. General Accuracy in Italian and French as L1, 2L1 and L2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>L1</th>
<th>L2</th>
<th>2L1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>49/60 (0.82)</td>
<td>8/75 (0.11)</td>
<td>66/105 (0.63)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td>48/75 (0.64)</td>
<td>13/15 (0.87)</td>
<td>43/105 (0.41)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>97/135 (0.72)</td>
<td>21/90 (0.23)</td>
<td>109/210 (0.52)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Legend: Total correct numbers responses/contexts, and correct proportions in parentheses

Incorrect responses were categorized as *omission*, *placement error*, *NP substitution*, *form error*, or *no reply*. Figures 2–4 show the absolute numbers of responses within each of these categories for the Italian L1 group, the 2L1 group, and the Italian L2 group respectively.

The Italian L1 group produced OCLs with 82% accuracy. The one successive bilingual child in this group performed at 87% accuracy in Italian and 86% accuracy in French. Within this group, there were no OCLs in the wrong position, but OCLs were omitted or replaced with a lexical NP, and sometimes produced as the wrong form (Figure 2).

![Figure 2. Error counts in Italian L1 children.](image-url)
The error pattern of the seven 2L1 children is shown in Figure 3. The overall accuracy was higher in Italian (66 responses, 63%) than in French (43 responses, 41%), where OCLs were also omitted; replaced to a greater extent in French than in Italian. These results corroborate the results of previous studies, indicating that Italian OCLs are more easily acquired.

Not unexpectedly, the accuracy of the five Italian L2 children was much higher in their French L1 (48 responses, 64%) than in their L2 (8 responses, 11%), as Figure 4 shows. Note, however, that the accuracy of their French is lower than the Italian L1s (82%).

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8. See Hill and Pirvulescu (2006: Table 1) and Grüter (2006: Table 2–2) for an overview of omissions in studies on French L1 based on elicited production tasks.
So far the results of comparing the various modes of acquisition and languages are consistent with what has been observed in previous studies. Italian OCLs were produced with a higher level of accuracy both by the L1 group compared to the French L1 group, and by the 2L1 group speaking Italian compared to the 2L1 group speaking French.

5.2 Placement errors

In the previous section, we formulated two predictions based on a narrow and a wide interpretation of Müller & Hulk’s (2001) position on cross-linguistic influence: first, that no placement errors would occur in either language; and second, that placement errors would occur in Italian but not in French, because restructuring is optional in Italian but non-existent in French – all this taking into account that placement errors should be rare in general. All placement errors produced, regardless of language or acquisition mode, are Type C errors, occurring in the restructuring context (which appeared in three contexts in the test), as illustrated below. The children did not produce any intermediate position errors (Type B), which is typical for French L2/2L1, or Type A errors (with the OCL in the position of a strong object pronoun), typical for L2 French. Five placement errors in total were observed in Italian L2, produced by two participants (the child with 1;4 years of exposure to Italian and an AoA of 4;9 years (17a), and the child with the shortest length of exposure and an AoA of 4;6 years). The erroneous productions are provided in (17) below. Each example is followed by the target structure in Italian (TI) or French (TF), translated word for word to English, and then with idiomatic English translations. The OCL is marked in bold.

(17) a. Bea, Italian L2 (age 6;3, 1;4 years in Italy)

*BEA: vuole la donare@f alla…

wants it give(French) to the…

(‘she wants to give it to the…’) (TI: vuole darla/la vuole dare)

*INT: e questo invece cosa vuole fare?

‘and this one on the contrary what wants (he) (to) do?’

(‘and in contrast, what does this one want to do?’)

*BEA: la mangiare.

it eat

(‘eat it’) (TI: la vuole mangiare/vuole mangiarla/mangiarla

*INT: sì, invece lei? Cosa vuole fare con la bici?

‘yes, on the other hand, she? What wants (she) (to) do with the bike?’

(‘and in contrast, what does this one want to do with the bike?’)
Placement errors in the Italian L2 data were of Type C, restructuring errors. The position of the OCL was, so to speak, in the French position, as it appeared between the modal and the infinitive. According to Authier and Reed (2007) this position is a lexical position, in accordance with the French parametric setting (cf. 5b).

Unexpectedly, we also found two placement errors of Type C in the French L1, produced by the same child who made Type C errors in her Italian L2.

(18) *CIA, French L1 (age 5;1, 0;7 years in Italy)

*CIA: Il la veux manger.
He it wants (to) eat
(‘He wants to eat it’) (TF: Il veux la manger)

*CIA: Il le doit jeter.
He it has to throw
(‘He has to throw it’) (TF: Il doit le jeter)

As seen in (18), the misplacement consists of a restructuring of the French OCL to a higher position in the syntactic structure (cf. Figure 1), i.e. an error in French, but one of the two options in Italian (cf. Section 2). Finding restructuring in French L1 in a child who fails to restructure in Italian L2 does not corroborate a parametric setting according to which there would be only lexical pseudo-modals (Authier & Reed, 2007). Rather, it seems as though the parameter value of Italian is set (5a), i.e. modal verbs may be both functional and lexical, so OCLs may be placed in a lexical position or in a functional position higher up in the syntactic structure.

Four OCL placement errors were also found in the French of one of the 2L1 children, all of Type C, restructuring error. These errors are presented in (19) below.

(19) *MAS, 4;10, 1;7 in Italy

*MAS: Il la veux manger.
He it wants (to) eat
(‘He wants to eat it’) (TF: il veux la manger)

*MAS: Il le doit mettre à la poubelle.
He it has (to) put in the garbage bin
(‘He has to put it in the garbage bin’) (TF: Il doit le mettre dans la poubelle)
The fact that the French L1 child in (18) and the French/Italian 2L1 child in (19) place the OCL in a high, presumably functional position just below the subject clitic, falsifies the idea that OCLs would be more difficult in French because the subject clitic would end up higher up and closer to the subject than it should be in French. Furthermore, these instances of restructuring in French show that Italian L1 learners of French L2 do not consider the OCL to be a weak pronoun, contrary to what has been assumed for Germanic L1 learners of French L2 (Granfeldt, 2012; Hamann & Belletti, 2006).

Table 6 shows which of the two optional OCL positions in Italian restructuring contexts is used most by the participating children. L1 and 2L1 children prefer the preverbal restructured position in Italian (6/8) vs. (11/16), whereas Italian L2 children prefer a postverbal restructured position in 2/3 contexts. Placement errors are not included in Table 6.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Preverbal</th>
<th>Postverbal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>L1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2L1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. Summary and discussion

We used a cross-sectional production task to test the accuracy of third person OCLs and their placement in oral production for French and Italian children aged 4–7. We studied the difference in child acquisition of two Romance languages, compared to children with a Germanic/Romance language pair, in order to determine the direction of cross-linguistic influence. The results are as follows:

- In all participants, we observed a significantly higher accuracy in production of OCLs in Italian, compared to French.
- Significant differences in accuracy between L1 and 2L1/L2 in both languages.
- L1 learners of French made placement errors, contrary to findings in prior literature.
- All placement errors were in the restructuring context.
- All placement errors in a specific language were in the OCL position of the other language.

Results for general accuracy show that in Italian, unlike in French, OCLs were produced with significantly higher accuracy with respect to omissions and NP replacements. Although previous studies of French show reduced accuracy in the production of OCLs compared to Italian, we have to take into account that our study included three Italian monolinguals, but only bilinguals for French. In fact, even the French L1 children were exposed to Italian; however, the child with Italian L1 and French L2 had higher accuracy level than the Italian L1 group. The fact that L1 production differed significantly from 2L1 production is presumably due to the presence of the other language, since it cannot be due to age of onset. Rather, exposure to one language is most likely more limited in the presence of a second language. But the difference between L1 and L2 in accuracy is not surprising, given that the L2 learners had been exposed to the second language for a shorter time at the time of testing. Having seen that our participants’ production of OCLs conforms to previous studies, we now turn to the discussion of placement errors.

As noted above, all placement errors in both languages were produced in the restructuring context. This suggests a difference between learners who simultaneously acquire French and a Germanic language, and learners who simultaneously acquire two Romance languages. Given that we found placement errors in French L1 as well, we assume that the mode of acquisition (L1, L2, 2L1) does not guarantee the absence of placement errors. Rather, the presence of another language being acquired is significant for OCL placement in L1 French as well. We did not find any Type B errors (Aux Cl Ppast/intermediate position) in our data. This was expected for Italian, since this error has not been previously documented in Italian acquisition data, although it is a possible misanalysis of the OCL position in both languages. It has been observed previously in French data, in 2L1 and L2 of Germanic/French, presumably due to a misanalysis of the OCL as an XP, i.e. a result of the OCL not moving further as an X°. This error has been explained as a result of the fact that the third person object pronoun is not a clitic in Germanic languages (Granfeldt & Schlyter, 2004). We assume that the presence of Italian in our study helps the learner in the right direction. It could be a positive influence from the restructuring context, which gives more positive evidence for categorizing the clitic as such, and for moving the clitic, not just as an
The acquisition of object clitics in French and Italian

XP, but further, as an X°. Alternatively, it could also be simply due to the developmental phase, which we leave for future research to resolve. In any case, our study corroborates claims by Müller and Hulk (2001) in a wider interpretation. Cross-linguistic influence may occur in a structure of a domain which is at the interface of pragmatics and syntax, for which one language has two possibilities of output order, one of which is (by and large) shared by the other language. In this case, the OCL in the non-restructured context is assumed to be in a lexical position (Cardinaletti & Shlonsky, 2004) both in Italian and French (cf. 2). However, since we found placement errors in the restructuring context in both languages, we have reason to claim that cross-linguistic influence may be bidirectional, or may have a bidirectional outcome. The bidirectional cross-linguistic influence may be due to the ambiguous restructuring possibilities of Italian and French. Thus, if restructuring is parameterized (Authier & Reed, 2007), the Italian value (as in 5a), which is more open than the French, having both functional and lexical modal verbs, is open for French too, in the bilingual French/Italian acquisition, until the child has enough positive evidence that French only has lexical modal verbs. This might be exactly what happens in the case of the French L1/Italian L2 child who made placement errors in both languages by putting the OCL in the OCL position of the other language.

In contrast to previous studies (Belletti & Hamann, 2004; Granfeldt, 2012), all placement errors in our study consisted of placing the OCL in the OCL position of the other language, irrespective of the children’s AoA, and most importantly, in L1 French as well. Since no placement errors have been found in monolingual French or Italian, we interpret the placement errors as evidence for bidirectional cross-linguistic influence. Our results are thus compatible with Müller and Hulk’s (2001) definition of cross-linguistic influence. At the same time, the results showed that cross-linguistic influence can be bidirectional, and occurs when there is ambiguous input in both languages, which concern the same context. In our study, this is the restructuring context. In French, the position of OCLs depends on the modal verb, while in Italian the position of the OCL is optional, though not in the same way as in French.

It is interesting to relate the question of bidirectional cross-linguistic influence to Liceras and Alba de la Fuente’s (2015) distinction between typological similarity and typological proximity. Previously, OCL placement has mainly been studied in Germanic/Romance language combinations, i.e. languages from different language families. In contrast, French and Italian belong to the same language family, and are therefore typologically close. Because of this general typological proximity, the two languages are very alike for the learner, for whom a specific structure which the two languages have in common, e.g. OCL, may be assumed to be the same. Cross-linguistic influence is therefore likely to occur (Liceras & Alba de la
Fuente, 2015), given that the two clitic systems are not completely typologically similar, especially with respect to morpho-lexical choices in the restructuring context. In this context, there is a distinction between the lexical and the functional position of the OCL, depending on the modal which combines with the infinitive in this construction.\(^9\) Previous studies, e.g. Nicoladis (2002), found bidirectional cross-linguistic influence in nominal compounds, i.e. on a morpho-lexical level.

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**References**


\(^9\) However, as Liceras and Alba de la Fuente point out, the prediction of direction or type of transfer also depends on the linguistic analysis adopted for the structures in question.


Les erreurs dans le placement des pronoms clitiques objet sont documentées dans l’acquisition de 2L1 et de L2, mais non dans celle de L1 (Granfeldt 2012; Hamann & Belletti 2006). L’objectif de la présente étude est d’étudier si les erreurs de placement du pronom clítique objet de la troisième personne du singulier peuvent dépendre d’influences interlinguistiques. Pour ce faire, nous avons exposé des enfants bilingues successifs (L1 français/L2 italien et L1 italien/ L2 français) et simultanés (2L1 italien/ français) à une tâche d’élicitation de pronoms clitiques objet. Les résultats montrent des différences significatives aussi bien entre les langues qu’entre les groupes 2L1 et L2 d’une part, et les groupes L1 d’autre part, ce qui corrobore les résultats d’études précédentes. La production de pronoms clitiques objet est globalement plus correcte en L1, et elle est plus correcte en italien qu’en français. Toutefois, on relève des erreurs de placement des pronoms clitiques objet en français 2L1 et en italien L2, ainsi qu’en français L1 chez des enfants ayant l’italien comme L2. Ces résultats, qui suggèrent que l’influence interlinguistique est bidirectionnelle (Chenjie Gu, 2010; Foroodi-Nejad & Paradis, 2009; Nicoladis, 1999), sont discutés par rapport à l’hypothèse qu’elle serait unidirectionnelle, c’est-à-dire qu’elle se manifesterais dans une langue uniquement, et seulement sous certaines conditions (Hulk & Müller, 2000; Müller & Hulk, 2001).