

# FUNCTIONAL FEATURES IN L2 SPANISH ACCUSATIVE CLITICS\*

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## ABSTRACT

This paper contributes supporting evidence for the Full Access Hypothesis of second language acquisition, as proposed by White (1985b, 1986, 2000, 2003) and Duffield et al. (1999, 2002), among others, according to which adult second language learners have access to principles and parameters of Universal Grammar (UG) and can thus acquire the features of syntactic functional categories present in the second language. Here, we present the results and constitution of a small pilot study that investigates the ultimate attainment of functional features related to accusative clitic doubling agreement in the second language acquisition of Spanish by native speakers of Romanian. The aim is to determine whether the final state interlanguage language competence of the functional features under discussion complies with the grammar of (1) the second language (language to be acquired), (2) the first language of the learner, or (3) neither the rules of the first language nor those of the second language. We show that the features of the accusative clitic functional category are reset to the values of the L2 in a configuration in which the set of features of the L1 is restricted to those of the L2.

**Key Words:** L2 acquisition of Spanish, accusative DP clitic doubling, advanced L2 learners of Spanish

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This paper discusses the second language acquisition (henceforth SLA) of features of syntactic functional categories, specifically the features of the accusative clitic involved in accusative clitic doubling constructions, by native speakers of Romanian learning Spanish. This paper is part of a larger, ongoing study on the syntactic behavior, and first and second language acquisition of functional categories in Romance languages, with particular focus on Romanian, French and Spanish. The main research goal here is to determine whether syntactic features associated with IP-internal (Inflectional Phrase) accusative clitic doubling constructions (henceforth ACDCs) are eventually acquired/reset in the inter language (IL) grammar of an advanced second language learner to those of the second language.<sup>1</sup> Since the focus here is on the eventual/ultimate resetting of features of functional categories, this experiment bears consequence on the end-state grammar only and does not make any claims about the initial or intermediate stages of acquisition.

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<sup>1</sup> This study only considers IP-internal ACDC, where the associate DP is in situ at surface structure. That is, constructions where the direct object is in the left periphery of the Complementizer Phrase (CP) are not considered.

In terms of SLA theories, the results of the present investigation provide additional support for the Full Access/No Impairment Hypothesis, according to which adult learners of a second language (henceforth L2) have full and unimpaired access to principles and parameters of Universal Grammar (UG). That is, features of functional categories of the L2 can be acquired/reset. Furthermore, the present results challenge theories of SLA such as the No Access Hypothesis, as in Clahsen (1988, 1990, 1991) and Meisel (1998); the Failed Feature Hypothesis, as in Schachter (1996) and Tsimpli and Roussou (1991); and the Local Impairment Hypothesis, as in Beck (1998). According to these hypotheses adult grammars of L2 learners do not have access to UG, only have access to principles of UG that are present in the first language (henceforth L1), or access to UG is impaired resulting in an IL that does not obey principles of UG, respectively. That is, according to the latter three hypotheses features of functional categories either cannot be reset in the IL grammars of adult L2 learners altogether or are only partially acquired.

This study targets the resetting of the features of functional categories and not the acquisition of the functional categories themselves. To do so, the features are isolated by zeroing in on the features of a functional category that is present in both the L1, Romanian, and in the L2, Spanish. The functional category is the accusative clitic and the features under observation are the agreement features that instantiate accusative clitic doubling in the two languages. The specific aim of the present study is to determine whether native speakers of Romanian acquiring Spanish as a second/foreign language can ultimately reset the parametric features of the accusative clitic in the environment of accusative clitic doubling to those present in L2. Since both Romanian and Spanish have accusative clitic projections, the acquisition of this functional category (FC) could be equally argued to be transferred from L1 or to be retrieved from UG. Consequently, no predictions are made as to the acquisition of the accusative clitic FC as such; rather, the focus is on the agreement features of the accusative clitic in accusative clitic doubling constructions. Central to the present study are issues pertaining to the resetting of features of functional categories from the L1 into the L2 because both L1 and L2 have accusative clitic doubling constructions but the features that trigger clitic doubling in the two languages are sometimes different. Thus, this syntactic context provides us the opportunity to directly monitor the extent to which transfer from L1 into L2 takes place, if instances of transfer are indeed present.

## 2. SYNTACTIC BACKGROUND

Pronominal clitics are pronoun-like elements, also referred to as deficient/weak pronominals as they cannot be stressed and they depend morphologically on another word. In Romance languages, they are usually dependent on the verb complex (verb and/or auxiliary) and they have person, number, gender and case features. Some examples of direct object/accusative clitics from French, Spanish and Romanian are provided below.

(1) Marie **le** voit (Fr.)

Mary him sees  
 “Mary see him”

(2) Maria **lo** vea (Sp.)  
 Mary him see  
 “Mary sees him”

(3) **Maria îl** vede (Rom.)  
 Mary him see  
 “Mary sees him”

Following Roberge (1990), Sportiche (1996) Cuervo (2003) and Hill and Tasmowski (2008), among others, I assume that accusative clitics are functional categories base-generated in their surface position that can be associated with a DP in argument position with which they agree in person, number, gender and case. This association is contingent upon the features exhibited by the determiner phrase (henceforth DP) and is subject to parametric variation.

For constructions where the accusative clitic occurs on its own, that is, it is not followed by an overt direct object DP in the same IP, it is assumed that the direct object is in fact a [+pronominal] [-anaphoric] empty category, also known as ‘pro’. This ‘pro’ is directly licensed by the presence of the accusative clitic with which it forms a chain for the purposes of case and theta role assignment. This and similar analyses are proposed by Jaeggli (1982), Borer (1984) and Sportiche (1996) and account for all languages and dialects that make use of accusative clitics, including those that do not permit clitic doubling, such as French.<sup>2</sup>

In accusative clitic doubling constructions, the overt DP associate of the clitic is also restricted in terms of its features. For instance, while in most Romanian dialects the accusative clitic in a doubling construction may only be associated with a [+human] [+specific/+restricted] DP; the accusative clitic in some Spanish dialects may only be associated with a [+animate] [+specific] DP.<sup>3</sup> It has been widely argued in the theoretical syntax literature that it is the accusative clitic that places restrictions on the material that it licenses in its associate DP. According to Sportiche (1996), these restrictions are subject to parametric variations triggered by the features that are present in the feature matrices of the clitic and its associate DP. Furthermore, he argues that the doubled DP moves to the specifier position of the accusative clitic phrase by LF (Logical Form) as an instance

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<sup>2</sup> Due to space limitations, I do not provide a detailed presentation of the syntax of clitics; rather, I refer the reader to Kayne (1975, 1991) Torrego (1995), Uriagereka (1995), Sportiche (1996), Suñer (1988) and Belletti (1999), among others.

<sup>3</sup> According to Suñer (1988), the relevant feature for accusative clitic doubling in most dialects of Spanish is [+specific] rather than [+definite]. Also note that there is great variation among Spanish dialects in terms of the features relevant to ACDC.

of Spec-Head licensing. Suñer (1988) also notes that in addition to person, number, gender and case, the accusative clitic in Spanish ACDC also agrees with features of animacy and specificity. Importantly, these restrictions and cross-linguistic differences are subject to parametric variation.

In this work, I assume that, in ACDC, the accusative clitic licenses its associate DP and enters in an agreement relation with it, where the functional features relevant to ACDC are present in the feature matrices of the accusative clitic and of the DP, in line with Sportiche (1996) and Suñer (1988).

## **2.2. Accusative Clitic Doubling in Romanian and Spanish**

As noted, the functional features relevant to ACDC are subject to parametric variation cross-linguistically and among dialects of the same language. That is, the configuration of the feature matrices of the accusative clitic and its associate DP in ACDCs are language and dialect dependent, as is the obligatory versus optional status of ACDC. This fact is of great importance to the present study, given that the object of investigation is the acquisition/resetting of the functional features relevant to ACDC in L2 Spanish. Consequently, this section centers on the differences between Romanian and Spanish in terms of the functional features involved in ACDC but also considers dialectal variation.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, two different types of Spanish dialects are considered here. These two types group Spanish dialects on the basis of the functional features relevant to ACDCs. This is necessary because the L2 learner in this study, like many L2 learners of Spanish in North American cities, has been exposed to Standard (European) Spanish, mainly through oral and written instructional input and literature, and to various Central and South American dialects of Spanish, through oral interaction. Importantly, in these dialect types, ACDCs are licensed under different functional feature configurations. Only one Romanian dialect is considered here because I am only concerned with the specific dialect spoken by the subject of the study and Romanian exhibits less cross-dialectal variation with respect to ACDC.

### **2.2.1. Romanian ACDC**

In Romanian, IP internal accusative clitic agreement is obligatory with [+human] nominals of the following types: personal pronouns (definite/specific), proper names, lexical bare nouns and definite DPs (where the DP [+restricted]) as in (4).<sup>5</sup> Note that all

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<sup>4</sup> Here, the focus is placed on the descriptive facts and syntactic functional features that are directly relevant to the present study. Also, although discourse plays a role in the felicitous realization of some ACDCs, these issues are not discussed in the present work, where the focus is on narrow-syntax and the agreement of functional features. However, pragmatic (discourse) well-formedness was considered in the construction of the test items in the tasks.

<sup>5</sup> Descriptively, in examples like (4) the associate DP that has a lexical noun must be a human and must be further modified/ restricted by an adjective, relative clause, possessive or prepositional phrase.

the aforementioned DPs are interpreted as definite, including the bare nouns. Indefinite DPs with lexical nouns can also be clitic doubled if they have a specific interpretation, as in (5).<sup>6</sup> Ungrammatical ACDCs (IP internally) include those with non-human DP-associates (irrespective of definiteness and/or specificity), as in (6); and human indefinite DPs that are not specific. Interestingly, even human DPs with a lexical noun that are marked as definite cannot be in an ACDC if the noun is not further restricted, as in (6). This ungrammaticality is independent of ACDC and is related to the linearization of the preposition and the definite article. This phenomenon is analysed by Dobrovie-Sorin (2007) as an instance of article-drop, a morpho-phonological rule that applies on the output of the syntactic derivation at PF (Phonetic Form). However, definiteness is present in the structure for the purposes of syntax and semantics. I will assume this analysis here. Below is a list that summarises the above descriptions.

Romanian ACDC only with [+ human] DPs

**Obligatory:** definite/specific pronouns, proper names, bare nouns, [+def.]

DPs with lexical N [+restricted]

**Optional:** DPs with lexical N [-def.] if [+ specific]

**Ungrammatical:** DPs [-human], DPs with lexical N [+def.] [-restricted]

(4) L                    -am            vazut pe el / Ion / băiat / băiat-ul blond  
cl.3. sg. m.acc.; have 1 sg; seen to him/ John / boy / boy-the blond  
'I saw him/John/the boy/the blond boy.'

(5) L                    -am            vazut pe un băiat (blond)  
cl.3. sg. m.acc.; have 1 sg; seen to a boy (blond)  
'I saw a blond boy'

(6) \*L                    -am            vazut pe /cîine-(le)/băiat-ul  
cl.3. sg. m.acc; have 1 sg; seen to /dog-(le) / boy-the  
'I saw the dog/the boy'

### 2.2.2. Spanish ACDC

In Spanish, IP-internal ACDC is subject to considerable dialectal variation; however, there is one feature of ACDC that is common to all dialects of Spanish. In all dialects of Spanish, ACDC is obligatory with pronouns, as in (7). Moreover, in many spoken dialects (including Peninsular Spanish) ACDC is optional with proper names, as in (8). Also, in the great majority of dialects the relevant animacy agreement feature in ACDCs is

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<sup>6</sup> For the purposes of this paper I will assume Dobrovie-Sorin (1990, 1992), according to whom the relevant feature of the DP relative to ACDC is [+specific]. However, the specificity issue in clitic doubling constructions is not unproblematic and is still debated.

[+animate], (c.f. 8 and 10).<sup>7</sup> Dialectal variation related to ACDC consists of the extent to which clitic doubling is licensed with various types of DPs. Specifically, two main dialect types emerge relative to ACDC, which I arbitrarily call dialect 1 and dialect 2 for lack of genuine geographical cohesiveness.

Dialect 1 is mainly represented by Standard (European) Spanish and by dialects spoken in many regions of Central and South America and is characterised by the fact that it only licenses obligatory ACD with definite/specific pronouns that are animate and optionally with proper names.

In dialect type 2, spoken in parts of Spain and Central and South America, in addition to definite/specific pronouns and proper names, ACD is also optional with DPs with lexical nouns, provided that the DP is [+animate] (anim.) and [+definite] or [+animate] and [-definite] [+specific], as in (8) and (9) respectively. ACDC is ungrammatical with inanimate DPs, as in (10) (see footnote 7), with indefinite DPs that are not specific and with DPs with a lexical bare noun, as in (11). Below is a list that summarizes the above generalizations.

Spanish ACDC, dialect 1: only with [+animate] DPs

**Obligatory:** definite/specific pronouns

**Optional:** proper names (in spoken and colloquial Spanish)

**Ungrammatical:** DPs with a lexical N

Spanish ACDC, dialect 2 only with [+animate] (see footnote 11)

**Obligatory:** pronouns

**Optional:** proper names; DPs with a lexical N [+animate], [+definite]; DPs with a lexical N [+animate], [-definite], [+specific]

**Ungrammatical:** DPs [-animate]; DPs with lexical N [+animate], [-definite], [-specific], DPs with a lexical bare N

(7) \*Ø/Lo                  vi      a      él.  
cl.3. sg. m.acc      saw      to      him                                  Belloro (2007)  
'I saw him.'

(8) (La)                                  oían      a      Paca / a la      niña / a la      gata.  
cl.3. sg. f.acc                  hear      to      Paca / to the girl /      to the cat                                  Suñer (1988)  
'They listened to Paca / the girl / the cat.'                  [+anim, +spec, (+def)]

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<sup>7</sup> A few Spanish dialects spoken in the Basque country, Madrid, Buenos Aires, Chile and Quito allow ACD with [-animate] DPs. These dialects are not considered in the present study. Although irrelevant for the purposes of this study, it should be mentioned that in some dialects of Spanish, referred to as the 'leista' dialect, the case marking on the direct object clitic is the one of dative instead of accusative.

- (9) Diariamente, (la) escuchaba a una mujer que cantaba tangos. Suñer (1988)  
 ‘Daily, he/she listened to a woman who sang tangos.’ [+anim, +spec, (-def)]
- (10) \*La compramos (a) esa novela. Suñer (1988)  
 cl.3. sg. f.acc bought to this novel [-anim, +spec, (+def)]  
 ‘We bought that novel.’
- (11) \*La oían a niña / a gata.  
 They listened to girl/ to cat.  
 ‘They listened to the girl to the cat’

### 2.3. Syntactic issues on the L2 acquisition of agreement in ACDC in Spanish L2 by Romanian L1

The above sections have established the feature relevant to accusative clitic doubling in Romanian and in two dialects of Spanish. I assumed that the features relevant to agreement in ACDC must be present in the feature matrix of the clitic and of the associate DP. In this section, I provide a brief review of the parameters that need to be changed from L1 Romanian to the two dialects of L2 Spanish in order to consider the resetting of the agreement clitic features in ACDC successful.<sup>8</sup>

Learners acquiring dialect 1 of Spanish must pre-empt the features of L1, Romanian, in order to successfully produce L2-like ACDC. Specifically, they must restrict the set of features that allows ACDC in Romanian, a superset, to the subset of features that allows ACDC in dialect 1. Recall that in Romanian ACD agreement is obligatory, with more types of DPs (specific/definite pronouns, proper names and definite/specific lexical Ns) than it is in Spanish dialect 1, which obligatorily licenses ACDC with [+specific]/[+definite, +pronominal] DPs and optionally with proper names. That is, the IL grammar of the successful learner will not licence ACDCs with [+animate, +specific, -pronominal] lexical DPs (or with [+human, +specific, +definite, -pronominal] DPs). Crucially, ACD is obligatory with the latter DPs in L1, Romanian. Moreover, the animacy features must be reset from L1 to L2: from [+human], a subset to [+animate], a superset.

Learners acquiring dialect 2 of Spanish also have to reset the animacy feature from [+human] to [+animate]. In addition, they must acquire that ACD with a bare lexical noun is ungrammatical in Spanish although it is obligatory in Romanian, and that a [+definite] [-restricted] DP with a lexical noun is grammatical in Spanish, yet ungrammatical in Romanian.

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<sup>8</sup> The fact that L2 learners may have input from two or more different dialects can lead to an IL that has characteristics of more than one dialect yet is not L2-like. This issue does not arise in the present study where the L2 participant's forms are decidedly those of dialect1.

### 3. THEORETICAL SLA BACKGROUND

#### 3.1. Brief overview of SLA hypotheses on the acquisition of functional categories and their features

This pilot experiment is concerned with the eventual acquisition of the features associated with functional categories, specifically, the features of the accusative clitic projection. It has been argued in the field of theoretical linguistics that FCs contribute greatly to cross-linguistic variation. Not only are functional categories not universally present cross-linguistically, but the features and the feature values associated with the FCs are subject to parametric variation. Thus, it is assumed that, while FCs, their features and feature values are present in UG, they are not necessarily instantiated in all languages. These assumptions are of particular interest to second language acquisition since L2 acquisition patterns of FCs, their features and feature values that are missing or distinct in L1, can provide direct evidence on the status of access to UG. In the debate on access or lack of thereof to UG principles, three main views can be distinguished: Full Access, No Access and Failed Feature Hypothesis, all of which I briefly present below.

According to the Full Access (Full Transfer) Hypothesis, L2 speakers have full and unimpaired access to UG. Schwartz and Sprouse (1994), Vainikka and Young-Scholten (1994) and Duffield et al. (1999, 2002) all argue in favor of the eventual acquisition of functional categories, their features and feature values. This Hypothesis assumes that mature IL grammars are subject to principles and constrains of UG. In consequence, the IL will be L2-like, at least as far as narrow syntax is concerned, and L1 properties are taken to be present only in the initial stages of acquisition as an instance of Full Transfer.<sup>9</sup>

Representative of the No Access Hypothesis are Clahsen (1988, 1990, 1991) and Meisel (1998) who conclude on the basis of studies observing verb raising and general knowledge of inflectional features that UG principles are not available to the adult L2 learner.

Under the Failed Feature Hypothesis, L2 learners are assumed to access only UG principles that are present in the L1. This view predicts that parameters cannot be reset and that L2 learners will use the parameters provided by the L1. This view was proposed by Schachter (1996) based on subjacency and XP movement. Tsimpli and Roussou (1991) reach a similar conclusion based on the acquisition of null subjects in L2, where they argue that parameters cannot be reset. This suggests that, in the case of FCs, L2 learners are restricted to the functional categories, their feature and feature values as instantiated in L1 since access to the properties of UG is taken to be only via L1. According to this view the inter language (IL) looks much like the L1 and, thus, obeys general UG principles.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Further studies that argue for the Full Access Hypothesis include Schwartz and Sprouse (1996, 2000b); Duffield et al. (1999, 2002) White (1984b, 1986, 2000, 2003) Yuan (1998), Slabakowa (2000)

<sup>10</sup> Other studies supporting the Failed Feature hypothesis include Hawkins (1998, 2000); Hawkins & Chan(1997); and Smith & Tsimpli (1995).



### 3.2. SLA Context of the Experiment

In this pilot study, I test the Full Access Hypothesis. I predict that an adult, native speaker of Romanian who is an advanced learner of L2 Spanish can reset the clitic features of L1 Romanian to those of the dialect of Spanish acquired and the IL grammatical judgments and production data of the L2 learner parallel those of a native speaker of the same dialect.<sup>11</sup>

For dialect 1, the IL grammar of the L2 learner will obligatorily license ACDC with [+pronominal, +specific, +animate] DPs and optionally with proper names, but not with [-pronominal, +specific, +human] DPs, as it is the case in L1. That is, the learner will pre-empt the features of L1. If on the other hand the learner acquired dialect 2, she will acquire that the definite article is not subject to the article-drop rule that is present in Romanian. Thus, the learner will judge as grammatical and may produce ACDC with DPs that [-pronominal, +specific] in the absence of further modification of the DP. She will also judge as ungrammatical ACDC with bare nominals, which are grammatical in L1. This hypothesis also predicts that, for both dialects, the animacy feature can be reset from L1 [+human] to L2 [+animate]. Thus [+animate, -human, +specific] DPs will be licensed in ACDC.

Previous research on accusative clitics has mainly been concerned with the acquisition of the clitic projection itself, its status as a functional category and its placement within the phrase, as in Duffield et al. (1999, 2002). Other studies considered the acquisition (at the stage of ultimate attainment) of clitics as they play out at the syntax-pragmatics/discourse, interface as in Valenzuela (2006), and Ivanov (2009). However, I am not aware of any studies that specifically target the functional features considered here, or the issue of feature preemption in light of IP internal ACDC.

## 4. THE PILOT EXPERIMENT

### 4.1. Participants

Since this pilot study is only concerned with ultimate attainment, I have chosen an advanced L2 learner who proved a high proficiency in a preliminary placement test of Spanish.<sup>12</sup> The L2 participant, a 21-year-old student, had been enrolled for the previous 3 years in Spanish courses (reaching the advanced level) at the University, which was the main source of Spanish input. She had also been exposed, in social settings, to different spoken dialects of Spanish, mainly from South and Central America (Colombia, Bogota;

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<sup>11</sup> As I am only concerned with the ultimate attainment of features I will make no predictions regarding the initial or intermediate stages of acquisition.

<sup>12</sup> Two other participants had been initially enlisted for the study; however, their results on the pre-test placed them at the intermediate and below intermediate proficiency.

and Mexico, Mexico City). The participant is also fluent in English and French, both of which she had acquired as a teenager.

The two control participants each represent one of the dialects considered here. The first L1 speaker, speaks a dialect particular to Caracas, Venezuela, that does not permit IP internal ACDC with DPs other than animate pronominals and proper names. At the time of the study, he was 22 years old, had been living in Canada for one year and his social life was mainly conducted in Spanish. The second control participant speaks a dialect of European Spanish (Southern Spain) that uses optional IP-internal ACDC. He immigrated to Canada ten years prior to the test and spoke only Spanish at home with his family. He also socialized regularly with other Spanish speakers, mainly from Spain.

#### 4.2. Methodology: Overview of the Tasks

The experiment consists of three different tasks. The first one, a grammaticality judgment task, is meant to expose the participant to ACDC and to control for avoidance and preference effects, which can be present in elicitation tasks, especially since ACDC is optional with lexical DPs in Spanish. The instructions specified that the sentences provided could be formulated differently, but corresponding alternative sentences (non-ACDC) were not provided in the judgment test in order to avoid preference effects. The participants were presented with 70 relevant sentences (10 sentences for each condition) and 50 distracter sentences, all of which were randomized. The distracters were very different constructions from those tested. Throughout the task, for each grammatical token an ungrammatical one was presented and vice-versa. Importantly, some of the grammatical sentences in Spanish have ungrammatical counterparts in Romanian. The acceptance of these sentences and the rejection of the ungrammatical Spanish sentences would indicate that the learner has reset the features under consideration in accordance with those of Spanish.

##### 4.2.1. First Task: Conditions Tested, Stimuli and Predictions

Below is a table depicting the conditions tested, including the feature matrices of the associate DPs. Grammaticality is symbolized by (√) and ungrammaticality by (\*). Following, is an example of the test items provided for condition 1.<sup>13</sup>

Table 1

Cond.	Associate DP	Romanian	Dialect 1	Dialect 2
1	lexical DP [+def.] [-restricted] [+human] [-pron.]	*	*	√ optional

<sup>13</sup> For condition 1, in the ungrammatical sentences used as counterexamples for the grammatical ones, the definite article was left out so that they parallel the Romanian bare root NP (noun phrase) constructions. If the subject uses L1 parameters these sentences would be accepted as grammatical.

2	lexical DP [+def.] [+restricted] [+human] [-pron.]	√ obligatory	*	√ optional
3	lexical DP [-def.] [-restricted]	√ optional	*	√ optional
4	Pronouns [+def.] [+pron.] (personal pronouns) proper names	√ obligatory	√ obligatory √ optional	√ obligatory
5	lexical DP [+def.] [+restricted] [+animate] [-human] [-pron.]	*	*	√ optional
6	lexical DP [+animate] [+def.] [+human] [+restricted] [-pron.]	√ obligatory	*	√ optional
7	lexical DP [+def.] [+restricted] [-animate] [-human] [-pron.]	*	*	*

- (12) Todos lo felicitan al profesor por su conferencia  
 All cl:acc/3/sg/m congratulate to/PP-the professor for his lecture  
 ‘Everyone congratulates the professor for his lecture’

The data obtained from the conditions depicted above allow us to infer whether the participant (1) reset the ACD parameters of L1 Romanian to L2 Spanish, dialect 1 or dialect 2; or (2) did not reset the ACD parameters to L2, rather they are those of L1; or (3) the ACD parameters are neither those of L1 nor those of L2.<sup>14</sup>

If the participant acquired dialect 1, she will reject all the ACD constructions, except for those in condition 4. However, if she acquired dialect 2 she will judge as grammatical all ACDCs, except for those in condition 7. If the participant’s L2 grammar has the ACD parameters of L1, she will reject the sentences in conditions 1, 5 and 7 and accept as grammatical those in 2, 3, 4 and 6. Any other combinations of grammaticality judgements indicate that the ACD parameters of the current IL of the participant are neither reset to those of L2 nor fully transferred from L1.

#### 4.2.2. Second and Third Tasks: Conditions Tested and Predictions

The second and third tasks combine a translation task with an elicited production task. The translation task consists of four short paragraphs written in the form of stories in which [±definite], [±specific], [±animate] and [±human] accusative objects in the form of lexical DPs are manipulated. The stories use common vocabulary, which is easily accessible, and are written in English, which does not have clitics. This controls for the

<sup>14</sup> It could also be argued that the learner’s IL exhibits characteristics of the two dialects concurrently; however, this is not the case, as is revealed in the following section.

possibility of transfer of the clitic-doubling constructions from Romanian. Furthermore, the texts were constructed such that they provided felicitous discourse contexts for the use of ACD, which is discourse sensitive in Spanish, dialect 2. Each story is followed by a number of questions asking for the earlier manipulated DPs. The answers to these questions constitute the elicited production task. This task was included because it was observed within theoretical syntax literature that question-answer sequences can force the use of clitic doubling constructions (this has been attributed to the specificity and apparent topic-type character of the associate DP). In the instructions for this task, the participants are asked to provide as much information as possible in the answers, in order to further coerce ACDCs. It should be noted that many of the conditions tested involve constructions that trigger obligatory ACD in Romanian; thus, providing ample opportunities to observe L1 transfer if the case may be.

The following predictions are made for these tasks under the hypothesis tested here, Full Access. For Spanish dialect 1, there should be no ACDC, given that only lexical DPs are included here.<sup>15</sup> Lack of ACDC would also strongly suggest that the IL of the participant does not use the parameters of L1, given that many of the sentences in these tasks trigger obligatory/syntactic ACD in Romanian. For Spanish dialect 2, we predict that the participant will produce ACDCs that are consistent with the parameters of Spanish dialect 2.<sup>16</sup> That is, ACD will be present with [ $\pm$ definite] [ $+$ specific] DPs and with [ $+$ animate] [ $\pm$ human] DPs. This conclusion would be strengthened if the participant produces ACDCs with [**+**definite, **-restricted**, +human/animate] and [ $+$ definite,  $\pm$ restricted, **+animate, -human**] DPs, which are ungrammatical in Romanian, and does not produce ACDCs with bare nouns, which are grammatical in Romanian, but ungrammatical in Spanish.

## 5. RESULTS

The L2 learner participant produced grammaticality judgements and elicited production data that were consistent with those of the L1 participant representing dialect 1 of Spanish: identicalness of grammaticality judgements and elicited production was

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<sup>15</sup> A complete experiment should also include personal pronouns and proper names accusative objects in the elicitation task.

<sup>16</sup> Absence of ACDC in the elicitation task may also indicate that the participant's grammar is consistent with L2 dialect 2 at the narrow-syntax level but exhibits fossilization at the syntax-pragmatics/discourse interface. This interpretation of the results is consistent with the Interface Hypothesis, as proposed by Sorace (2006). Still, it must be recalled that such ACDCs are either obligatory or optional in Romanian. An in-depth consideration of this and other hypotheses will be warranted in a complete study.

observed in 100% of the ACD data (90% of the overall grammaticality judgements).<sup>17</sup> Below is a list of observations of the learner's linguistic behaviour relative to ACDC in Spanish, dialect 1.

- ❖ The learner judged as ungrammatical all ACDCs with lexical DPs (task 1)
- ❖ The learner did not produce any ACDCs with lexical DPs (tasks 2 and 3)
- ❖ The learner judged as grammatical all ACDCs with pronouns and proper names (task 1)
- ❖ The same linguistic behaviour was exhibited by the control subject of dialect 1 of Spanish (tasks 1-3)

The following generalizations can be inferred about the IL of the L2 learner on the basis of the above observations.

- ❖ In the IL, the functional category, the accusative clitic, and its feature matrix are consistent with those and only those of L2: the learner does produce ACDC in all and only those environments that license ACD in L2. Her grammaticality judgements and production data perfectly parallel those of the L2 dialect 1, the control participant for dialect 1, where the feature matrix of the accusative clitic that licenses ACD agreement in the IL corresponds to a subset of the feature matrix that licenses ACD in the L1.
- ❖ In the IL, the learner does not use all the clitic agreement features present in the L1: the learner judged as ungrammatical constructions that are obligatorily ACDC in L1. She also did not produce ACDC constructions in environments that trigger obligatory ACDC in L1.

## 6. CONCLUSION

The results of this study show that an advanced L2 learner of Spanish, dialect 1, whose L1 is Romanian can reset the feature matrix of the accusative clitic in ACDCs from a superset (that triggers agreement) in L1 to a subset in L2. In terms of SLA theories, the above results are consistent with the predictions made by the Full Access Hypothesis, according to which the IL grammar of the L2 learner is predicted to look much like that of mature grammars of native speakers, in this case Spanish, dialect 1. This is indeed the case in the present pilot study. The functional features of the accusative clitic that license ACD are those and only those of the L2. Moreover, the functional features involved in ACDC represent a subset of the features that trigger ACDC in L1. This indicates that the resetting of features took place in the absence of positive evidence and, according to a post-test questionnaire, in the absence of formal instruction on ACDC in L2. The issue of

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<sup>17</sup> Given the decided convergence of results, the small sample of participants and the preliminary nature of the present investigation no advanced statistical analysis is necessary. A full-fledged study may need to include t-scores and multiple ANOVA test.

acquisition of functional features in the absence of positive evidence and formal instruction provides an interesting avenue of investigation for a complete study. Conversely, the results of the present study refute the Failed Features Hypothesis, which predicts that the IL grammar of the Spanish learner would resemble that of L1, here Romanian. However, the L2 participant judged as ungrammatical and did not produce forms that are obligatorily ACD in Romanian. Furthermore, The No Access Hypothesis is also not supported by these results since the features of the functional category of the IL are consistent with those of the L2. This suggests that the learner has access to UG in order to restrict the agreement feature matrix of the accusative clitic functional category to those of L2.

The conclusive results of the present pilot study suggest that extending this investigation to a larger sample of participants more definitive results can be obtained; thus, contributing to a better understanding of the nature of L2 acquisition of agreement features in ACDC. This in turn will further contribute to identifying the extent of L2 learners' capacity to access UG and reset the features of functional categories of L1 to those of L2. It would be also very interesting to further investigate the resetting of functional features in the absence of positive evidence and formal instruction. Although this study is small in terms of participants, it provides a good indication that the tasks can be used on a larger scale study, albeit with some additions and alterations. For instance, the translation and elicitation tasks should also include sentences where ACD with pronouns and proper names are elicited. These data would provide further evidence that L2 learners also produce ACD with pronouns and proper names. In the case of L2 learners who acquire dialect 2, these data would also help in testing the Interface Hypothesis, according to which learners at the ultimate attainment stage have native like forms in narrow-syntax but do exhibit residual effects of optionality at the interface between syntax and other grammar or cognitive modules, as in (Lardiere, 1998, 2006; Prévost & White, 1999, 2000; Sorace, 2000, 2003, 2005; Goad and White, 2006; Sorace and Filiaci, 2006). Given that in Romanian ACDC with lexical definite DPs is obligatory and that in Spanish dialect 2 ACDC with (definite/specific) lexical DPs is discourse sensitive, investigating the acquisition of ACDC at the syntax-discourse interface could provide additional insights into the acquisition of distinct grammar modules.

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