

The use of nominal elements in L2 Greek

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Abstract: The present paper investigates the use of the definite/indefinite article and pronominal object clitics in L2 Greek of Pontic-Greek immigrants from Georgia, and seeks to define the status of clitic and article omission attested in the data. Previous research has shown that the properties of these elements give rise to persistent acquisition problems (Tsimpli 2003). Accordingly, and in view of the absence of clitics and articles in L1 Russian and Georgian, which are the languages predominantly used before immigration, the prediction is that the use of these elements will not be target-like.

Key words: clitics, articles, L2 Greek

1. Introduction

This paper looks into the distribution of determiners and clitics in L2 Greek by native speakers of Russian, and aims to describe the contexts of clitic and article omission. It investigates the *optionality* (Sorace 2005) observed in the participants' interlanguage with reference to these features, and aims to find out the extent to which it is unrestricted or constrained by different discourse conditions. A related question that arises is whether the participants have been acquiring determiners and object clitics randomly or within a system of grammar. With a view to accounting for the non-target structures, the study draws on previous findings concerning developmental properties of D-features and on relevant hypotheses developed in generative literature.

Specifically, the issue of differential development in L2 grammar is addressed in the light of the Interpretability Hypothesis (Tsimpli and Mastropavlou 2008), according to which, features that are parametrically unavailable in L1 and also invisible at Logical Form (LF) resist re-setting. As regards the present study, the particular hypothesis predicts that pronominal clitics and definite articles, which are non-interpretable features (Tsimpli 2003) and parametrically unavailable in the L1, will present a different pattern of distribution from that of the indefinite article. From a similar perspective, non-native-like performance is attributed to the involvement of specific structural domains which, according to Sorace (2005), are prone to cross-linguistic influence, namely, the syntax-pragmatics interface. Accordingly, we could predict that the participants are more likely to drop a clitic in clitic-doubling and clitic-left-dislocation than in structures of narrow syntax.

Furthermore, although a principled conclusion in terms of the differences in the processes of first and second language acquisition is beyond the scope of this study, the data are also discussed in relation to the developmental stages attested in the acquisition of determiners and clitics in L1 Greek, since they serve as a better yardstick in the description of non-native grammars than end-state L1 grammar does. Marinis (2005) distinguishes five stages in the acquisition of definite articles; in Stage 0, L1 learners drop the definite article altogether; in Stage 1, they use it randomly; Stage 3 marks the outset of productive –i.e. not random– use of the definite determiner with proper names

and kinship terms; in Stage 4, learners have acquired the subject-object asymmetry, i.e. the fact that bare nouns in subject positions are licit in much more restricted environments than bare nouns in object positions. Finally, in the final stage, learners have acquired the licensing conditions for base singular count nouns.

As regards the acquisition of clitics, previous findings indicate that clitics in early L1 Greek obey positional restrictions of the adult grammar and that their acquisition precedes the acquisition of the definite article, which is also acquired later than the demonstrative (Marinis 2000). Marinis (2000) accounts for the divergences in the developmental patterns in the following respects; while the demonstrative is acquired earlier due to its richer semantic content, the acquisition of clitics precedes the acquisition of the definite article because the latter is not referential and cannot be used without a complement.

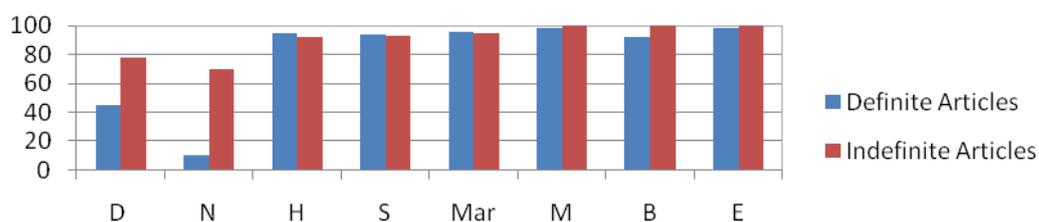
2. The Study

The present study is part of an ongoing research into native/non-native interactions that is not primarily concerned with the morpho-syntactic features of the participants' discourse. The participants in this study are Pontic-Greek immigrants from the former USSR who are native speakers of Russian, while some of them also speak Georgian and Pontic-Greek. They all immigrated to Greece in the early 1990s and live thereafter in Thessaloniki. They work in Greek-speaking environments and use the language on an everyday basis. The data are gleaned from spontaneous utterances that were produced during semi-structured interviews and/or mundane interaction, and consist of seven hours of recorded conversation.

All conversations have been transcribed so that I can detect the obligatory contexts for articles and object clitics, and non-target production. In order to distinguish optionality from "performative variability" (Bialystok 2001), I employ Brown's criterion level of accuracy (1973), which is set at 90 percent of obligatory contexts. The following subsection presents the distribution of clitics and determiners in the participants' interlanguage, also with reference to the contexts of target/non-target use as well as the attested contexts of omission.

2.1. The Data¹

Figure 1: The uses of definite and indefinite determiners in obligatory contexts



Considering the uses of the definite determiner (Figure 1), we notice that, with the exception of **D** and **N**, whose knowledge is only elementary, all other participants provided the determiner in more than ninety percent of obligatory contexts. As regards the uses of the indefinite determiner, although **D**'s and **N**'s performance is significantly better, they again fail to meet Brown's criterion (1973). It follows that we cannot draw conclusions as to whether **D** and **N** use bare NPs productively or as a result of their

¹ Throughout the presentation of the data, (**O**) corresponds to a missing element, (*) indicates ungrammaticality in the English glosses, **bold type** points to the elements involved in the on-going discussion and, when relevant, the underlined words indicate the focus constituents.

tendency to drop the determiners. The rest of the participants demonstrate target performance.

With reference to the qualitative characteristics of the missing articles, the two participants who show the highest omission rates dropped the definite determiner both in subject and object positions, despite the more restrictive use of bare NPs in subject position that Greek allows (Marinis 2005: 157).

- (1) D: \emptyset Άνθρωπος πρέπει να μένει άνθρωπος.
human-nom must remain-3s human-nom.
' \emptyset human must remain humane.'
- (2) N: \emptyset Άνδρας μου βρήκε δουλειά.
husband-nom found-3s job-acc.
'My husband has found a job.'

What is more, **D** and **N** tend to drop the definite article with proper names and kinship terms, although these are the only nouns that always appear with the definite article in argument positions, and as bare nouns in non-argument positions (Marinis 2005: 163).

- (3) N: \emptyset Αδερφή μου μικρή, ναι.
sister-nom my little, yes.
'My little sister, yes.'
- (4) D: Εμείνανε μετά \emptyset εγγονάκια.
remained-3pl then grandchildren-nom.
'Then \emptyset grandchildren remained.'

However, the omission rate of the definite article is significantly lower with kinship terms (twenty percent for **D** and seventy-two percent for **N**) compared to other types of nouns (sixty-three percent for **D** and ninety-two percent for **N**).

In addition, the definite article is missing in DPs that incorporate a demonstrative. In contrast, in prepositional phrases, the omission rate is significantly lower; **N** drops the definite article in less than twenty-five percent of obligatory contexts and **D**, in less than five percent, which means that his performance is native-like.

- (5) N: Τώρα πέθανε **αυτή** \emptyset καημένη.
now died-3s she-nom poor-nom.
'Now \emptyset poor woman is dead.'
- (6) N: **Αυτά** \emptyset φροντιστήριο εγώ μένει να πληρώνει.
these-acc English school-acc I remain-3s na-subj pay-3s.
'It remains for me to pay for \emptyset English school.'
- (7) D: Σεβασμός στο μεγαλύτερο.
respect-nom for the-acc elder-acc.
'Respect for your elders.'
- (8) N: Βγαίνω απ' το σπίτι.
leave-1s from the-acc house-acc.
'I leave home.'

Turning now to the use of the indefinite article, although the low number of obligatory contexts does not allow us to make any generalisations, we could cautiously observe that **D** tends to use the definite article in contexts that require the indefinite article.

- (9) D: Βλέπεις **τον** μεγαλύτερο από σένα, ...
see-2s the-acc older-acc than you, ...
'If you see *the older person than you,'
(10) D: ? Έλληνας **τον** ξένο ποτέ δεν κάνει κακό.
Greek-nom the-acc foreigner-acc never not do-3s harm.
'Ø Greek would never harm *the foreigner.'

With reference to the rest of the participants, contrary to **D** and **N**, the contexts of omission of the definite determiner often involve phrases that incorporate the prepositions 'σε' ('to') and 'από' ('from').²

- (11) B: Είμαστε από **Ø** πρώην Σοβιετική Ένωση.
are-1pl from former USSR.
'We come from **Ø** former USSR.'
(12) S: Αυτή **Ø** σπίτι δεν βρισκόταν τόσο.
she home-acc not was-3s that much.
'She wasn't home that much.'
(13) H: Δεν θα πήγαιναν να δουλεύουν **Ø** οικοδομές.
not would go-3pl na-subj work-3pl building works-acc.
'They wouldn't work in construction.'

In every other respect, these participants approximate native-speaker behaviour. What is more, they seem to have acquired the licensing conditions for bare NPs (cf. Marinis 2005: 158); firstly, they distinguish between argument and non-argument positions and they have identified the fact that bare nouns in subject position are licit in much more restricted environments than in object position. Moreover, they have discovered the possibility of bare mass nouns and plurals to appear as objects and they have identified verb classes which allow bare singular count nouns (BSCN) as arguments. Finally, the upper group of speakers tend to use bare objects post-verbally, unless they are focused, "observing the impact of word-order and focalisation" (ibid: 163).

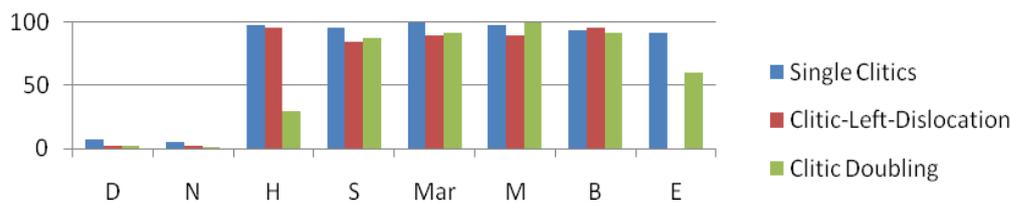
- (14a) H: Και τώρα εδώ που το κάνουμε εμείς **οι Έλληνες**, ... **[argument position]**
and now here that it-acc do-1pl we the-nom Greeks-nom, ...
'And now that we, the Greeks, do the same thing here,'
(14b) H: Δεν είναι **Έλληνες**. **[non-argument position]**
not are-3pl Greeks.
'They are not Greeks.'
(15) S: **Τα πιροσكى** πα ρώσικα είναι. **[subject position]**
the-nom piroshkies-nom Russian-nom are-3pl.
Πιροσكى κάνουν οι Ρώσοι με πατάτα, ... **[object position]**
Piroshkies-acc make-3pl the-nom Russian-nom with potato, ...
'Piroshkies are Russian. Piroshkies are made by the Russians with potato,'

² As regards the prepositional article 'στο, στην, ...' ('to the'), although its omission is common in L1 Greek to indicate an activity, especially with verbs of motion, the corresponding cases attested in the data do not always follow the native preferences since they occur in prepositional phrases that carry significant referential value. Valioui and Psaltou-Joycey (1995) observe that there are differences in the cognitive meaning between the two structures; the occurrence of a prepositional article points to a materialised object of reference while the non-occurrence to an abstract and generic activity, e.g. 'πάμε στο σχολείο' (go to the school building) versus 'πάμε σχολείο' (go to school, we are students).

- (16a) S: Δεν έχουνε λάδι. [bare mass noun]
not have-3pl oil-acc.
'They aren't oily.'
- (16b) S: Το σπίτι άμα θα καθαρίζεις, πρέπει να σηκώνεις χαλιά, τραπέζια, καναπέδες... [plurals]
the-acc house-acc if will clean-2s, must na-subj lift-2s carpets-acc, tables-acc, sofas-acc...
'If you clean the house, you must lift carpets, tables, sofas...'
- (17) Mar: Τον έκανα μπάνιο και ... [verb that allows BSCN]
him gave-1s bath-acc and ...
'I bathed him and ...'
- (18a) E: Πολύ καλό νερό έχουμε. [O-focus]
very good water-acc have-1pl.
'The water in our area is very good.'
- (18b) E: Και εσείς έχετε πολύ καλό νερό. [S-focus]
and you-pl have-2pl very good water-acc.
'You, too, have got very good water.'

To continue with pronominal clitics, Figure 2 shows the uses of clitics without a full DP and in clitic-left-dislocation and clitic-doubling. In the case of **M**, the contexts in which clitic-doubling is the preferred option are very rare and, thus, the result may not be statistically significant. No clitic-left-dislocation constructions appear in the data obtained by **E**. Once again, it is clearly evident that **D** and **N** show a competence deficit, especially since they omit single clitics in the majority of the obligatory contexts attested in the data. The omission of single clitics is seen as unambiguous evidence of deficient L2 grammars, because the assessment is not based on preferences, as is usually the case in clitic-doubling and clitic-left-dislocation (Keller and Alexopoulou 2001), but on categorical judgments, i.e. null objects with specific reference are ungrammatical in Greek (Giannakidou and Merchant 1997).

Figure 2: Uses of pronominal clitics instead of the full NPs and in clitic-left-dislocation and clitic-doubling constructions



As regards the contexts of omission in the data obtained by **N** and **D**, the following examples illustrate missing clitics in constructions in which a null object is normally disallowed and in which the omission gives wrong truth conditions on the intended reading, since it does not allow co-reference (cf. Giannakidou and Merchant 1997).

- (19) D: Τα παιδιά εδώ ήρθανε, δεν μπορείς να \emptyset κρατάς.
the children-nom here came-3pl, not-can-2s na-subj keep-2s.
'The children have come here and you can't keep \emptyset close.'
- (20) N: Σαν Αλεξάνδρα, εννιά μηνών ήταν, \emptyset άφησα πεθερά.
like Alexandra, nine months was-3s, left-1s mother-in-law-acc.
'Like Alexandra, when she was nine months, I left \emptyset my mother-in-law.'

Moreover, **N** and **D** frequently dropped the clitic with the universal quantifier ‘όλος’.

- (21) N: Όλα \emptyset εγράψαμε Ρουσικά.
everything-3pl.acc wrote-1pl Russian-3pl.acc.
‘We wrote everything in Russian.’
- (22) D: Αυτοί **όλο** \emptyset κάνουνε.
these-nom anything-1s.acc do-3pl.
‘They can do anything.’

In terms of the discourse-relevant structures, since topicalization typically involves an overt pronominal in the argument position (Tsimplici 1995), the absence of a clitic instantiates focusing on the preposed object, although it does not bear heavy/focal stress and the context does not support such an interpretation. In (24), in particular, the default nominative makes the use of the clitic obligatory (cf. Tsimplici 1995: 180).

- (23) D: Τον καπνό Πόντιοι \emptyset φέρανε απ’ τον Πόντο. [S focus]
the-acc tobacco-acc Pontic-Greeks-nom brought-3pl from Pontus.
‘As for tobacco, it was the Pontic-Greeks who brought it from Pontus.’
- (24) N: **Εμείς** αυτός δεν \emptyset άφησε. [S focus]
we he not-let-3s.
‘As far as we are concerned, he didn’t let \emptyset change our surname.’

In addition, **N** and **D** dropped the clitic with post-verbal objects in sentences in which the verb carried a focal accent. However, although the preferred structure would involve clitic-doubling, the result is not ungrammatical (Keller and Alexopoulou 2001) and, in most cases, a VP-focus context is also pragmatically relevant. Thus, the effect of deviance was stronger when the unaccented objects were placed pre-verbally than post-verbally.

- (25) N: Βλέπω \emptyset ξέρεις δουλειά.
see-1s know-2s job-acc.
‘I see you do know \emptyset job.’
- (26) D: Πρέπει να \emptyset αγαπάς το μεγαλύτερο.
must na-subj love-2s the older-acc.
‘You must love your elders.’

Moreover, **D** and **N** dropped the clitic with unaccented strong pronouns, although these elements are normally associated with emphasis or focus, when they appear without a clitic. Therefore, the absence of a clitic contradicted the ground/focus distinction realised through accent.

- (27) D: **Εμάς** τώρα δεν \emptyset παίρνουν.
us now not-take-3pl.
‘They don’t take us on.’
- (28) N: \emptyset Κράτησε **εμένα** λίγο παραπάνω. [all focus]
kept-3s me a little longer.
‘She kept me a little longer.’

The inaccessibility of the particular features is also evidenced in the few cases in which **D** and **N** *do* use a clitic; in (29), the clitic is replaced by a benefactive prepositional phrase, while the pronominal within the prepositional phrase bears the same morpho-phonological form with the missing object. In (30) and (31), the wrong clitic is used in terms of person.

- (29) N: Πάρα πολύ **Ø** βοήθησε **για μας**.
 very much helped-3s for us.
 ‘She helped *for us a lot.’
- (30) N: **Αστα** να πάει.
 let-imp them-neu.pl na-subj go-3s.
 ‘Let *them go.’ (instead of ‘Let her go’)
- (31) D: Έλληνες **τα** τρώγαν.
 Greeks them-neu.pl ate.
 ‘Greeks ate *them.’ (instead of ‘Greeks ate it’)

In contrast, **D** and **N** always use a clitic with experiencer predicates, although, in **N**’s utterances, the agreement features are not always the appropriate.

- (32) N: Δεν **σ’** **ἀρεζε**.
 not you-acc like-3s.
 ‘You didn’t like it.’ (instead of ‘I didn’t like it.’)
- (33) D: Αρνιά, δεν **μ’** **αρέσει** εμένα.
 lamps-acc, not me-acc like-3s me-acc.
 ‘Lamps are not what I like.’

With reference to the rest of the participants, they perform at ceiling as regards the use of single clitics. In discourse-regulated structures, similarly to **D** and **N** and contrary to the native preferences, they tend to structure a V-focus utterance without clitic-doubling. In most cases, if the participants had not stressed the verb, a VP-focus interpretation would also be relevant and the respective utterances would not sound non-native-like.

- (34) B: Εγώ πιστεύω ότι **Ø** παρακολουθεί τις παραδόσεις.
 I believe-1s that observe-3s the-acc customs-acc.
 ‘I believe that people do observe the customs.’
- (35) E: Και τώρα νομίζω πως **Ø** έχουμε την ελευθερία, μπορούμε να
 and now think-1s that have-1pl the-acc freedom-acc, can-1pl na-subj
 ‘I think that we do have the freedom, we can’
- (36) S: Δεν **Ø** ξέρω τα Ελληνικά.
 not know-1s the-acc Greek-acc.
 ‘I don’t know Greek.’
- (37) Mar: Μέχρι να **Ø** μάθουμε τα Ρώσικα
 by the time na-subj learn-1pl the-acc Russian-acc.
 ‘By the time we learnt Russian’
- (38) H: Αμα **Ø** εκτιμάς τους άλλους
 if respect-2s the others-acc.
 ‘If you respect other people’

H, in particular, drops the clitic also in other contexts that involve a post-verbal unaccented object. **E**, too, omits the clitic in a variety of contexts. However, since clitic doubling is optional with post-verbal objects, the utterances that incorporate an undoubled post-verbal object are seen as less preferred, though not target-deviant. This is not the case in (41), which is ungrammatical in view of the occurrence of an isolated demonstrative as ground information. The occurrence of demonstratives and other strong pronouns as unaccented material *without* a doubling clitic is frequent in the data obtained by other participants, as well.

- (39) H: Δεν μπορώ να \emptyset καταλάβω αυτό το πράγμα.
not can-1s na-subj understand-1s this-acc the-acc thing-acc.
'I can't understand this thing.'
- (40) E: Και η δικιά μου \emptyset έχει αυτό το πράγμα.
and the-nom mine-nom has-3s this-acc thing-acc.
'Mine has got this thing, too.'
- (41) H: Εγώ \emptyset πιστεύω αυτό.
I believe-1s this-acc.
'As for me, I do believe so.'

As regards clitic-left-dislocation, the data allow for some generalisations with reference to **S**. Specifically, she tends to topicalize objects without a clitic in contexts in which topicalization is *not* the preferred option. Accordingly, a doubling clitic would improve the acceptability of (42), although the construction is best seen as VP-focus. This is also the case in (43), while the utterance was meant to be interpreted as O-focus, since the negation constitutes 'old' negation in Baltazani's terms (2002). In fact, **S** meant to say 'Ούτε τα δικά μου δεν κάνω.'

- (42) S: Το σπίτι άμα θα \emptyset καθαρίζεις, σηκώνεις χαλιά,
the-acc house-acc if will clean-2s, must na-subj lift-2s carpets-acc.
'If you clean the house, you must lift carpets,'
- (43) S: Τα δικά μου δεν \emptyset κάνω.
the-acc mine-acc not do-1s.
'I don't do mine.'

Moreover, **S** occasionally places the clitic post-verbally. Finally, she often fails to use a clitic with the quantifier 'όλα', which always appears pre-verbally in the data. Thus, the omission affects the quantification of clitic-left-dislocation structures.

- (44) S: Εκείνο σκέπασά **το**.
that-acc covered-1s it-acc.
'I covered it.'
- (45) S: **Όλα** \emptyset καταλαβαίνουμε.
all-acc understand-1pl.
'We understand everything.'

3. Summary and Discussion

With reference to the use of the definite article vis-à-vis Marinis' findings (2005: 164) concerning L1 acquisition, **D** and **N** can be argued to realise Stage 1, in which the use of the definite article is rare, while definite reference is expressed mainly through the use of demonstratives. Moreover, the more frequent occurrence of this element with proper

names and kinship terms provides evidence for the beginning of Stage 2, since it points to the beginning of productive use. However, a significant difference with L1 development is that **D** tends to misuse the definite determiner as indefinite reference, a deviation which has not been attested in L1 acquisitional data.

Furthermore, in the data obtained by **D** and **N**, the indefinite article is dropped considerably less frequently than the definite. The omission of the definite article can be attributed to transfer from L1 Georgian and Russian, which do not have a determiner system, as well as to the non-interpretability of Greek definite determiners at LF (Tsimpli 2003). By contrast, the more competent use of the indefinite article, although also absent in Russian and Georgian, is ascribed to its inherent feature-specification for referentiality (ibid: 332). Moreover, the optional use of the definite article can be attributed to its overwhelming frequency of occurrence in the input (Marinis 2005), and more preferably according to Tsimpli (2003: 338), to the fact that learners can *assign* interpretable features to the definite article, such as kinship or animacy, depending on the head noun. The latter conclusion is supported by the lower omission rate of the determiner with kinship terms, as compared to other contexts.³ At the same time, **N**'s near-native and **D**'s target use of the determiner in prepositional phrases makes evident the role of prepositions as triggers.⁴ Consequently, although the overall use of determiners by **D** and **N** is elementary, there are certain environments in which the participants are more likely to produce the grammatical option than a non-target structure, which points to the emergence of constrained, apparent optionality (cf. Parodi and Tsimpli 2005) in their grammars.

On the other hand, the rest of the participants perform in a native-like manner, as the rare instances of missing articles are attributed to "performative variability" (Bialystok 2001). Moreover, since the definite determiner is dropped predominantly together with prepositions of place or with ones that denote direction, the participants reproduce a pattern which, though syntactically anomalous, is commonly observed in native discourse (Valioli and Psaltou-Joycey 1995), although they occasionally over-generalise the pattern in prepositional phrases with significant referential value. Nevertheless, even among the natives, the acceptability of this pattern also depends on the interlocutors and their extra-linguistic knowledge (op.cit.). In this respect, in view of ambiguous input and the absence of a determiner system in Russian and Georgian, the participants probably under-specify the differences between structures with and without a prepositional article, and resort to their L1s.

Turning to the use of clitic pronouns, while **N** and **D** do not drop a full DP with specific reference, although null objects with specific reference are frequent in L1 Russian and Georgian, they fail to use object clitics both in direct and indirect object positions, which contradicts Marinis (2000), who observes omission of the direct object only in the acquisition of L1 Greek. At the same time, **N** and **D** omit 1st/2nd and 3rd person clitics, although 1st and 2nd person clitics are expected to be acquired earlier than 3rd person clitics because the person in the case of the former is an LF-interpretable feature, as argued by Tsimpli and Stavrakaki (1999). In addition, although the presence of a clitic in **D**'s utterances that involve experiencer object predicates can be credited to the role of the argument as the thematic subject (cf. Anagnostopoulou 2003: 21ff.), this

³ The difference in the omission rate between animate and inanimate nouns for **D** is not significant for sampling reasons and, specifically, due to the frequent occurrence of the animate 'άνθρωπος' and 'Έλληνας' without the definite article, which distorts the results. For **N**, the omission rate is eighty percent for the animate and ninety-five percent for the inanimate nouns.

⁴ This is further supported by the fact that almost twenty percent of the deviant cases in **N**'s utterances involve the omission of both the article and the preposition, as shown in Example (20).

does not seem to be the case with **N**, who often uses the wrong clitic in terms of person in these structures. The use of wrong clitics cannot be attributed to morpho-phonological deficits, either, since **N** uses appropriate clitics in prepositional phrases. Thus, experiencer object clitics are probably perceived as a lexical unit with the verb, which points to a lexically-based rather than productive use, especially since all such constructions attested in the data involve the reduced forms of 1st or 2nd person clitics (e.g. *μ' ἀρέσει* 'I like'). Consequently, although **N** and **D** have acquired the morpho-phonological forms of clitics, the observed use of clitics in a restricted set of contexts indicates that their acquisition is at an initial stage.

Concerning the rest of the participants, they use single clitics in a variety of contexts. As regards **S**, although post-verbal clitics with indicative verbs constitute a transfer error from her L1 Pontic, they are not seen as evidence of incompetence, since the high rate of appropriate use indicates that **S** has acquired the underlying syntactic structure that licenses pre-verbal clitics with verbs in the indicative and the subjunctive, and post-verbal clitics in imperative structures and with gerunds. In terms of the discourse-regulated structures, while the participants' performance approximates target acceptability patterns, they are more likely to drop a clitic in clitic-doubling and clitic-left-dislocation than in structures of narrow syntax. This is something to be expected, because features that are regulated by discursive properties incur problems in acquisition, even among advanced L2 learners (cf. Sorace 2005).

Finally, the data indicate a preference for strong pronouns among all participants where the corresponding clitic would be more appropriate, which can be explained in terms of the different degree of referentiality commonly associated with strong and deficient pronouns; although both elements are referential, clitics are somehow "less referential than strong pronouns" (Cardinaletti & Starke 1999: 156) because they need a prominent antecedent, as a result of which, they are LF-non-interpretable (Tsimplici 2003: 332). Strong pronouns, on the other hand, do not need such an antecedent. Hence, the semantic richness of strong pronouns facilitates their earlier acquisition in comparison with clitics (cf. Marinis 2000).

In conclusion, non-interpretable features which are parametrically unavailable in L1 grammars are particularly problematic for some participants, who also face problems with interpretable features, but to a lesser extent. Moreover, cross-linguistic effects occur not only at the syntax-pragmatics interface but also in narrow syntax. Consequently, this group of participants demonstrates low linguistic competence in L2 Greek, although the emerging constrained optionality in their interlanguage provides evidence for the beginning of a more productive use of clitics and determiners. On the other hand, the rest of the participants have acquired the constraints that are purely syntactical, independently of the interpretability status of the features involved, but they occasionally face problems with features at the syntax-pragmatics interface. However, since violations at the interfaces lead to mild unacceptability (Sorace and Keller 2005), and considering that the low degree of optionality can be attributed to "performative variability" (Bialystok 2001), we can safely conclude that these learners demonstrate native or near-native competence.

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