## Object raising and cliticization in Serbo-Croatian child language

The so-called 'root infinitive' stage in child language acquisition is commonly described as a stage in which verbs sometimes fail to raise to INFL and check tense/agreement features. Hyams (1996) accounts for this phenomenon by arguing that finiteness, or temporal specificity in children's root clauses, is underspecified and thus verb raising is optional. Noticing the parallel between the verbal and nominal system, Schaeffer (1997) argues that in addition to temporal specificity, nominal specificity is also underspecified (Schaeffer 1997: 528), thus accounting for a) the optionality of object scrambling in obligatory context in early Dutch and b) the frequent omission of determiners in early Dutch. Moreover, Schaeffer introduces a Discourse Rule to account for the fact that specificity is not always grammatically marked in the grammar of 2-year old Dutch children, with this rule being acquired by age 3 (Schaeffer, 1997: 537). In this paper we present evidence from child Serbo-Croatian which shows that children raise object personal pronouns from utterance final position to utterance medial position, which is a position associated with specificity. We thus argue that children have knowledge of specificity. We also show that utterance medial object personal pronouns appear correctly as clitics, which are unmarked counterparts of full pronouns, thus showing evidence of knowledge of the discourse rule that interacts with the principle of specificity.

Serbo-Croatian is a South-Slavic language with inflectional morphology and a basic SVO word order. Direct objects may occur in three different positions: utterance final, utterance medial (pre-verbal), and utterance initial position. This is exemplified in 1) through 3).

- 1. Dete ye uzyahalo **magarca**. Utterance final position Child.NOM AUX mounted donkey.ACC 'The child mounted **the/a donkey**.'
- 2. Dete ye magarca uzyahalo. Utterance medial position Child.NOM AUX donkey.ACC mounted 'The child mounted the/\*a donkey'
- 3. Magarca ye dete uzyahalo. Utterance initial position Donkey.ACC AUX child.NOM mounted 'The child mounted the/\*a donkey.'

The utterance final position is reserved for focused constituents / new information. Because lexical direct objects typically represent new information, they commonly occur utterance finally (1). On the other hand, a lexical direct object representing old information may either remain sentence final or raise to a higher position (2 and 3). When raising occurs, the object is obligatorily specific. Raising may occur to one of two positions: preverbal position (2), or a higher utterance-initial position (3), in the appropriate contexts (i.e., when emphatic or topicalized). In both cases, however, only specific objects may raise. Because the difference between these two raised positions is not relevant to our paper, we make no distinction between them, but instead treat them both as raised positions requiring specific objects. Thus Serbo-Croatian has two positions for objects: postverbal (which does not require specificity) and raised (which does require specificity).

Since personal pronouns are inherently specific, they obligatorily raise in Serbo-Croatian unless focused, in which case they remain in the utterance final position (Stojanovic, 1997). There are two kinds of pronouns in Serbo Croatian: full pronouns (which are marked, i.e., focused, emphatic, etc.), and cliticized pronouns (which are unmarked). As marked, full pronouns typically occur utterance finally - a position reserved for focus or new information.

Pronominal clitics, on the other hand, are unmarked, and are thus disallowed in utterance final position. In sum, clitic pronouns are specific, unmarked and obligatorily raised (example 4.), while full pronouns are specific, marked, and either raised or un-raised. What distinguishes between raised pronominal clitics and raised full pronouns is the degree of emphasis.

4. Dete **ga** ye uzyahalo.

Object pronominal clitic

Child.NOM him.CL AUX mounted.

'The child mounted it.'

The properties of the pronominal system in the adult Serbo-Croatian are summarized in table 1.

Table 1. Properties of Serbo-Croatian adult Pronominal system

	Clitic Pronouns	Full Pronouns
Specificity	+	+
Markedness	_	+
(focus, emphasis, etc.)		
Raised	+	+/_

In this paper we compare Schaeffer's (1997) findings with the results of an analysis of naturalistic data collected from a 3-year old child speaking Serbo-Croatian, and argue that, at as early as 3 years of age, the child's grammar shows a) no underspecification of the specificity feature, and b) the child is highly aware of discourse, which enables him to identify discourse-related specific object DPs. The results are presented in Table 2, which shows that: a) of the 36 object personal pronouns, 94% are appropriately raised; b) of the 34 raised object personal pronouns, 32 are correctly cliticized. The remaining 2 non-cliticized pronouns are clearly emphasized objects, and thus cliticization is not appropriate; c) of the 94 lexical DPs, 79 (84%) occur in sentence final position, the preferred position for lexical DPs; and d) of the 15 raised lexical DPs, all 15 are specific.

Table 2. Position, form and specificity in child Serbo-Croatian

	Object pers	sonal pronouns	Lexical	Object DPs
Total	36		94	
Unraised (Utterance final) Objects	*2 (6 %)		79 (84 %)	
	34 (94 %)		15 (16%)	
Raised (medial or initial) objects	cliticized	not cliticized	specific	non-specific
	32	2	15	0

These data show that the Serbo Croatian child (i) appropriately raises specific objects (both lexical as well as pronominal); (ii) selects the appropriate form of pronouns (clitics or full pronouns) depending on discourse-specific factors such as focus. Thus we conclude that knowledge of specificity as well as discourse principles of focus that govern the form of pronouns is evidenced in early Serbo-Croatian

## References

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