Chapter 16

EARLY PERIPHERIES IN THE ABSENCE OF C

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1. Introduction

Children acquiring non-pro-drop languages regularly omit pronominal subjects, though this tendency gradually disappears. Some francophone children pass through a stage during which they correctly realize pronominal subjects in wh-questions while continuing to omit them in declaratives and yes-no questions. Such a pattern has been taken to provide evidence in favor of a Rizzian view in which the absence of subjects is cotemporaneous in the child grammar with the possibility of truncating clause structure below CP. This explanation has been claimed to hinge on the requirement that CP be projected in child as well as adult wh-questions. In this paper, it will be shown that null subjects do disappear just as CP begins to be a regular feature of children's utterances. However, it is demonstrated that in immature grammars null subjects can be quite widespread in wh-questions. The conclusion that CP is projected in every finite wh-question is rejected. Although evidence is adduced that CP structure is not required for the production of early questions, it is established that this fact cannot directly stem from the *in situ* nature of the questions produced by the principal children under study. It is also demonstrated that null subjects are not always left-peripheral. So although null subjects wither with the acquisition of CP, the claim that CP cannot be present in a clause with no subject is rejected.

The asymmetric realization of subjects in wh-questions and declaratives is ascribed to other factors related to the setting of Agreement parameters. The asymmetry is an artifact arising from the prevalence of copular verbs in early wh-questions together with the predominant use of 3rd person singular subjects with the copula. In line with other work, this is attributed to the fact that children attempt to respect a principle of Economy of Projection (Speas 1993); they thus posit clause structure incrementally. Even having discovered the need for extra projections children initially employ these only when forced to. A grammar in which CP parameters have been fully set is thus only possible once the specification of Agreement features has been fully determined. Until

CP parameters have been set, we do not expect categorical and error-free use of CP structure.

While null subject use may coincide with the occurrence of partially truncated structural representations, the particular view of null subjects proposed by Rizzi (1993) is rejected; it follows that left-peripheral XP elements in the earliest grammar need not occupy the CP domain.

1.1   Background

Much work on the null subject phenomenon in child French has focused on the presence or absence of the C projection(s) in children's syntactic representations (Crisma 1992; Rasetti 1995; Hamann 2000). Since it was established that children's null subjects invariably occur in the first position of the matrix, it has been tempting to claim that the initial position in a root clause is privileged, so that null elements barred elsewhere can nevertheless occupy this position. Building on such an idea, Rizzi (1993) hypothesized that child null subjects represent a special type of empty category: null constants. These resemble variables in requiring A' binding but have non-variable (i.e. constant) reference. He suggested (as in (1)) that in restricted circumstances in child grammar null constants may appear even though no syntactic binder is available for them.

(1)   Null Constant Hypothesis
         Null constants must be A' bound (if possible). An unbound null constant can survive only in the specifier of the root, where it can be
         discourse identified

Rizzi also claims that the axiom in (2) has not yet matured in the child grammar.

(2)   CP is the root projection in all sentences

Assuming this, (1) can be invoked to explain an interesting pattern noted in Crisma (1992) looking at the subject use of a French child Philippe (Suppes et al. 1973).[1] Crisma found that between the ages of two years one month and nineteen days (2;1.19) and two years seven months and eight days (2;7.8), in declarative clauses, up to 42% of his subjects were null while virtually none were null in wh-interrogatives.[2] She argued that this contrast supported Rizzi's view of null subjects since wh-questions involve the CP projection; when [Spec,CP]

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[1] The corpus is available electronically via CHILDES (MacWhinney 2000).

[2] I will not discuss Crisma's figures in detail since her numbers are computed differently and based on the number of null subjects out of all subjects while I calculate percentages based on proportions of pronominal subjects.

is filled, the specifier of the root is unavailable to a null constant. Rizzi's view thus appeared not only to explain the asymmetry found but to predict it.[3]

Until recently, the only longitudinal corpus of child French allowing an examination of such issues was that of Philippe; very little was known about whether these patterns were replicated in other children. It has been argued, however, that Rizzi's predictions do not hold for child English (Roeper and Rohrbacher 1999), though English is expected to pattern like French. Furthermore, it has been suggested (Phillips 1995) that the pattern seen in Philippe's data could be attributed to other factors.[4] A new corpus of child French (henceforth, the York Corpus) together with some other recent data, which I review, will allow us to examine this issue further. Before proceeding to presentation and discussion of the data I will briefly introduce the corpus.

1.2 The Data: the York corpus and other recent data on child French

The York Corpus arose from a project *The Acquisition of Wh-questions in French: a cross-dialectal comparison*.[5] Subjects are three children from different dialect areas who were video-recorded for 30 minutes twice a month over a period of 18 months. The children studied and their ages during the study are listed below.

(3)   Belgian child,   Léa: 2;8.22-4;4.5
        Canadian child, Max: 1;9.19-3;2.23
        French child,   Anne: 1;10.12-3;5.4

In addition to considering data from my own corpus, I will briefly consider data from the Cat corpus,[6] as well as data discussed by Hamann (2000) and Rasetti (1995).

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[3]In more recent work (Rizzi 1997) it is claimed that the CP domain itself consists of various different projections and that the landing site of wh-phrases in matrix clauses is the specifier of a Focus Phrase. To a large extent these distinctions have no direct bearing on the question at hand, although the possibility of truncating some but not all of these CP projections has been exploited by both Haegeman (1995) and Hamann (2000) in analyzing the child data. For ease of exposition I will continue to refer to 'CP', wherever possible.

[4]In particular, the prevalence of 'auxiliaries' in wh-questions.

[5]I received funding from the UK Economic & Social Research Council for this project (R000 22 1972), which I hereby gratefully acknowledge. This corpus is now available through CHILDES, under the author's name.

[6]Thanks to Cécile De Cat for allowing me to use the Cat corpus, which she collected for her PhD project and transcribed in the same way as the York Corpus.

2.   Clause structure and null subjects in child French

Within the various approaches to L1 acquisition there are those who maintain
that maximal structural representations are available to and implemented by
the child from the outset (e.g. Whitman et al. 1990). Others assume either
incremental acquisition of functional projections (e.g. Plunkett 1992) or variable
realization of them (e.g. Rizzi 1993). These last two views, let us call them the
structure-building and the truncation views, are beginning to converge, since
with the move towards Minimalist syntax, the belief that all clauses have a
uniform syntactic structure is becoming less popular. Rizzi himself now views
the possibility of truncation in child grammar as due to the tension between
structural economy and structural uniformity (Rizzi, 1998). However, a crucial
aspect of the truncation view not adhered to in all structure-building work
(cf. Roeper and Rohrbacher 1999) is that, with truncation, whatever the root
projection in a given derivation the structure below it must be as complete. For
example, if C is present, T must be present. The essence of Rizzi's view is that
when T is present the subject will be correctly realized.[7] Thus, in French, the
presence in an utterance of any element belonging to the CP domain should
guarantee a correctly realized pronominal subject.

The analysis centers on quantitative data from the two youngest children
from the York corpus. However, before turning to this I wish to look at two
Belgian and three Swiss children, whose data shed light on some interesting
theoretical issues.

2.1   Léa, Tom and the Geneva corpus: evidence for and against truncation

Léa's data is not included in the quantitative analysis below because she is at
the very end of the null subject stage in her first recordings; her wh-questions
contain no referential null subjects. Given the low rate overall, the absence
of null referential subjects in her wh-questions is entirely to be expected, she
does, however, produce wh-questions containing null expletives.   Her data
provides interesting evidence about a child's grammar at the end of the null
subject phase.

Léa knows that referential subjects are obligatory in French and can clearly
project CP.[8] In session one, only 3 (1%) referential null subjects appeared in

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[7] Unless the target language is V2 and [Spec,CP] is an A position when null topics may also be permitted.

[8] 10% of Léa's finite clauses contain a clear indicator of finite embedded structure.

finite clauses.[9] Her data is thus broadly in keeping with Rizzi's predictions, though one of these null subjects (in (4)) is not in initial position.[10]

(4)   cette fois+ci,   0 [:? on/tu] n' aura   pas tout.[11]   (LEA 2;8.22)
        this time-here   neg will-have not all
        'This time we/you won't get it all'

However, despite the small number of referential null subjects, of 28 expletive contexts, 53% had non-overt subjects. Although some expletives may legitimately remain unrealized in adult French, given the high proportion in Léa's early files, some are undoubtedly attributable to the remnants of a null subject grammar. One indicator of this is that not all of the null expletives in Léa's data are licit; for example, those found in wh-questions are ungrammatical for adults.

    If the paucity of referential null subjects indicates a high but not categorical production of CP structure, Léa's data supports a view in which structural economy requirements have a residual effect after CP has been 'acquired'. Note in this respect that one common question type which undoubtedly requires CP, (wh+)*est-ce que/qui* questions, is not produced at adult rates until 3;5,17. Moreover, while Léa's mother and grandmother both used high rates of subject-verb inversion in wh-questions,[12] aside from (5), a case from Léa in the first file containing a moved wh-question, no other spontaneous case of inversion was seen until 2;10.07.

(5)   oh oui mais # <comment as   tu   fait> [?] ?   (LEA 2;9.05)
        oh yes but   how   have you done
        'Oh yes, but how did you do (that)?'

Furthermore, Léa does not yet consistently realize all CP heads in the expected form. Cases like (4) cast doubt on the view that referential null subjects must occupy the specifier of the root. However, complex questions such as (6) are also incompatible with the truncation of CP. Here, not only is a root C projec-

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[9]There were four root infinitives in this session; all contained null subjects.

[10]Haegeman (1997) modifies Rizzi's view, allowing a null constant in the presence of a fronted adverbial.

[11]The transcription system used in the York Corpus is a modified form of the CHAT system used in the CHILDES data base. Details of this and other information about the corpus can be found in Plunkett (2002). Briefly, capitals disambiguate object pronouns from determiners and wh-words from complementizers. Alternative transcriptions are given as [:?] or [=?]. Elements in parentheses were absent but identifiable from the context. Ambiguous missing elements are transcribed as 0. Xs indicate unclear material. # indicates a pause. $C indicates the target form.

[12]*Est-ce que* questions, also implicating I to C movement in European French were counted separately. Excluding these, Simple Inversion of a pronominal subject with the finite verb occurred in 26% and 27% of the Belgian adults' wh-questions; contrasting sharply with its virtual absence in the wh-questions of the French and Canadian adults.

tion required but two dislocated phrases and an adverbial wh-clause intervene between this and the null subject in parentheses.[13]

(6)   est ce que toi, ton   robinet, quand t'   étais petite, (il) était allumé?
       is it that you your tap   when you were little (it) was lit
       'Was your tap turned on when you were little?'   (LEA 3;0.05)

If structural economy is responsible for any resistance to the categorical use of CP, the need for such economy cannot straightforwardly be attributed to processing or other performance difficulties, as seen by Léa's use of questions with a long-distance interpretation.[14]

(7)   oui ça marche bien mais #   maintenant il   faut appuyer où?
       yes it goes   well but now it   must to   press   where
       'Yes, that works ok but where do you have to press now?'   (LEA)

Notwithstanding the incompatibility of examples like (4) and (6) with Rizzi's treatment of null subjects, it is worth noting that some examples, including (6) are potentially viewed as containing null topics of some kind (see De Haan and Tuijnman 1988 for discussion) in that the missing subject is coreferential with the topic.

Rizzi regards topics as occupying the C domain, so null constants should be barred in dislocations. One could, however, modify Rizzi's account to allow for the identification of a null constant by an A' element overtly present in the structure, as well as from discourse. Positing an approach in which an empty category is identified by a topic will, however, pose difficulties for a unified explanation of the null expletive and null referential cases. I leave the desirability of such unification as an open question. Given the difficulty in determining whether an expletive is (il)legitimately null, I have chosen not

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[13] In the York Corpus, on the basis of prosody and other factors, referential DPs in initial position were classified either as dislocated topics or as subjects. A dislocated DP on the left or right is separated from the rest of the utterance by a comma; in child data no reliance was placed on the presence of a resumptive clitic. Thus, the first two declarative examples in (i) are dislocations, while the third involves a lexical subject. Following Labelle and Valois (1996) post-verbal 'subjects' were consistently treated as dislocated, so the subject in (ib) is classed as null.

(i)   a.   oh e   bébé, i(l) pleu(re).   (ANNE 1;11.29)
             (th)e baby he cries

       b.   (il) est pas belle,   le bébé.   (ANNE 2;0.27)
              is   not beautiful the baby

       c.   le bébé pleu(re).   (ANNE)
             the baby   cries

[14] As noted in Plunkett (2000), contrary to claims in the literature (Bošković 1998; Cheng and Rooryk 2000), this type of *in situ* long-distance question is grammatical.

to include null expletives in any subsequent counts. I turn now to the Cat corpus and another Belgian child, Tom, followed from 2;1.11, whose data is not substantial enough to be included in the quantitative analysis. As is to be expected, his grammar is far less developed than Léa's. Since he produces both root infinitives and null pronominal subjects in the presence of correctly placed finite verbs (as in (10)), at least some of his utterances are likely to involve impoverished structural representations.

(8)   pas prendre ma balle !   (TOM 2;1.11)
       not to-take my ball
       'Don't take my ball'

(9)   0 est pas une fille, bruno.   (TOM)
        is not a   girl Bruno
       'Bruno isn't a girl'

Note the contrasting position of the verb in these two cases. Since the finite verb is above negation, 'bruno' cannot be a post-verbal subject left in [Spec,VP] (Pierce 1992); it must be treated as as a right-dislocated DP (as defended in Labelle and Valois 1996). Even though many of Tom's pronominal subjects and objects are only embryonic in nature, he is capable of producing some embedding; the position of the object pronoun in front of the non-finite verb in (10) suggests that *chercher* belongs to an independent clause.[15]

(10)   (j)e[16]va (L)A chercher,   # (la) tartine.   (TOM)
        I-goes it   to-look-for   the slice-of-bread
        'I'm going to look for the piece of bread'

The presence of embedded structure does not entail the presence of an overt matrix subject, however.[17]

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[14]Absence of a capital in the transcription of a name indicates referential rather than vocative use of the name.

[15]*Pace* De Cat (2000) who argues that matrix verbs like *aller* are subject to reanalysis as auxiliaries. Notice here that the apparently finite verb does not agree with the subject (the expected form is *vais*).

[16]Schwa-like elements in subject position are treated as overt pronominals except where they could be otherwise interpreted. In (i) the schwa could be a place filler for either a finite verb or a subject pronoun so the subject would be coded as 'unclear'. Unclear cases have been omitted from all statistical analyses.

(i)   e pas mangE   de l' herbe.   (TOM)
       ? not to-eat/eaten of the grass

[17]At first, all embedded structure is infinitival; there is no clear evidence that it necessarily involves the projection of CP. A GB style analysis would require C to protect PRO from government, since *vouloir* 'want' is a control verb.

(11)   veux jouer   à raquette.   (TOM)
         want to play at raquette
         'I want to play raquettes.'

Tom's data at this stage may thus be compatible with CP truncation. However, he is already producing wh-questions, the most typical form being exemplified by (12). In the first three files (recorded over 4 days), of the 28 wh-questions containing a verb 4% contained a null subject.

(12)   où   il est, mon ballon?   (TOM)
         where he is   my ball
         'Where is my ball?'

   If we assume that all wh-questions entail the presence of CP then only a small number of cases go against Rizzi's predictions. Furthermore, since 40% of Tom's declaratives have null subjects the pattern certainly looks superficially very much like the one seen in Philippe. The one problematic case could be explained away; while Tom produces both 'moved' and *in situ* wh-questions, it is not clear whether wh-movement is initially productive since certain wh-words always appear 'moved' and others always *in situ.* In the next recording analyzed, overt wh-movement has clearly become productive. There is no longer any clear mismatch in subject realization between questions and declaratives; examples like (13) make up a slightly higher proportion of null subjects in wh-questions than that found in declaratives.

(13)   QUAND (elle) parle # ça   # Isabelle ?   (TOM 2;3.22-23)
         when   (she) speak that   Isabelle
         'When does Isabelle speak (into) that? '

   The first embedded wh-structure (14) occurs in this file, suggesting that Tom can indeed project CP but even here, the matrix subject can be null.[18]

(14)   xx [=? veux] voir #   quoi # il   y   a   ici. (TOM 2;3.22-23)
         ? want to-see   what   it there has here
         'I want (?) to see what there is here'

The last analyzed recording in which Tom produces a wh-question with a null subject is at 2;5.24. By this time only 11% of Tom's subjects in declaratives were null. In that file, two verbs in 25 wh-questions had null subjects representing a statistically non-distinct 8% null. If the occurrence of any wh-question is taken as diagnostic of the presence of CP in the grammar, then Tom continues to use null subjects for at least 6 months after acquiring CP. However, the

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[18]Assuming that the initial word was indeed *veux*. If it represented a subject, *voir* would be a root infinitive.

evidence that Tom is initially able to project CP at all is meager, coming only from the presence of such questions. If null subjects imply the absence of CP then the assumption that all child wh-questions force the projection of CP is problematic. The specifier of the root is superficially empty in *in situ* questions; Crisma (1992) noted that Rizzi's approach does not necessarily make the same predictions regarding these as for moved wh-questions. If *in situ* questions don't involve either the 'overt' movement of a null operator or wh-movement to [Spec,CP] at LF then the root specifier could be occupied by a null constant. Hamann (2000), based on data from the Geneva corpus, has adapted Rizzi's view to allow for null subjects when the wh-phrase is left *in situ*. Note, however, that Tom produces some moved wh-questions with null subjects. We turn now to Hamann's evidence.

The two children studied by Hamann (2000), Augustin and Marie, first form wh-questions by using *in situ* forms; 22% of these overall have null subjects. Hamann claims that moved questions behave differently; however, her statistical support is weak. Suppose that null subjects only appear in the earliest questions; in view of the delay in acquiring moved questions, a difference in subject realization is to be expected. Although none of Marie's 3 fronted questions had a null subject, only 8% of her *in situ* questions had null subjects. On the assumption that the rate of omission was the same in the two types, we would need to see 12 moved questions before we could expect to see a single case with a null subject. In Augustin's case, 27% of his *in situ* wh-questions had null subjects but 3 of the subjects in 8 moved questions were also null; this is a rate of 37%. Hamann attempts to dismiss counterexamples on the basis that they all contain the wh-word *pourquoi* 'why'; however, short of independent supporting evidence that these are exempt from generalizations about moved questions, they must be included; if they are, the statistical trend goes in the wrong direction. With such a small number of moved questions, χ^2 comparisons between the two movement types are unreliable. Another child from the Geneva corpus, Jean, has also been examined (Rasetti 1995). Rasetti does not discuss Jean's wh-questions specifically but gives all utterances containing verbs in an appendix. Like Tom, Jean appears to use overt movement and the *in situ* wh-strategy from early on. He employs wh-questions from the beginning of the study at 1;7.16. However, he was recorded only four times, until 2;0.28, by which time he had left the null subject stage. At 1;7.16 Jean produced 24 wh-questions, all copular and all with overt subjects; 17 were 'moved' but all had the same form (15). All but two of Jean's *in situ* questions involved *où* 'where'.

(15)   Ça qui c' est?   (JEAN 1;7.16)
        that who is it
        'Who is that?'

At 1;8.24 33/42 wh-questions employed 'moved' *qui* and an overt subject. Of the 9, *in situ* questions, the two in (16) (17) had null subjects.[19]

(16)   Fait comment?   (JEAN 1;8.24)
         does how
         'How do (?)you do it?'

(17)   Est où   l' autre?   (JEAN)
         is   where the other
         'Where is the other one?'

Jean's data suggests a differential realization of subjects in moved and *in situ* questions providing some support for Hamann's view.[20] However, if Jean's *qui* questions have been learnt as a routine, the fact that they consistently contain overt subjects means little. We will see in section 2.2.2 that the bigger difference in subject realization between copular and non-copular questions is of greater import. Only 3% of subjects were null in copular wh-questions against 25% in those with other verbs. Most of Jean's wh-questions contain the copula, which Phillips (1995) clearly intended to be included in the cover term 'auxiliary' when he said that the prevalence of questions with auxiliaries accounted for the pattern of subject realization in Philippe's data. Indeed, Rasetti (1995) investigating this claim in Jean's data found that functional verbs in general showed no particular pattern but that copular clauses did. In Jean's data, regardless of the form of the subject, the suggestion that CP is necessary to all wh-questions is once again not clearly supported. The significance of any difference between the two wh-strategies when it comes to subject realization is unclear. We will return to this issue in discussing the remaining children from the York corpus.

2.2   Productive use of null subjects in the York Corpus

Around a year after the beginning of the study, in affirmative clauses, the two younger children have reached the level of at least 90% of referential pronominal subject realization, a level often considered criterial for the acquisition of a grammatical feature. Data up until this time was studied in detail. We begin by looking at the general trends before moving on to a detailed analysis.

2.2.1   Subject realization in Anne and Max.   Excluding imitations of adult speech and unclear cases, overall 28% of Max's pronominal subjects are

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[19] Assuming (17) is a right dislocation with a null resumptive subject.

[20] In the next file at 1;10.16 all wh-questions have overt subjects. In the final file at 2;0.28 relative clauses appear, showing that Jean is incontrovertibly using CP by that time.

null and 32% of Anne's, with a fairly small difference between the rates in declaratives and wh-interrogatives.[21]

	%	**Max**	%	**Anne**
declaratives	28	(314/1109)	33	(464/1402)
y-n questions	33	(35/107)	36	(39/108)
wh-questions	15	(18/117)	24	(57/240)

Table 16.1. Non-realization of pronominal subjects in different sentence types

When comparing factors which might influence the presence of null subjects (finiteness, negation, declarative status and verb type), finiteness is clearly the most significant in both children, since subjects are almost categorically null in matrix non-finite clauses. However, fewer than 10% of all null subjects occur in non-finite clauses. The fact that wh-interrogatives are rarely non-finite, cannot explain the limited occurrence of null subjects in them. The main analysis thus looks only at finite clauses. Table 16.2 shows the overall pattern there.

	%	null **Max**	%	null **Anne**
declaratives	18	(178/990)	25	(304/1234)
y-n questions	23	(22/95)	28	(28/95)
wh-questions	15	(17/115)	23	(54/236)

Table 16.2. Non-realization of pronominal subjects in different finite sentence types

The pattern of subject realization in yes-no questions is closer to that in declaratives than wh-questions. We leave this issue aside temporarily. Compare first the difference between the rate at which subjects are realized in declaratives and wh-interrogatives when the data is split into time slices.[22]

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[21] Note that the York Corpus contains some wh-questions in which no finite root verb appears. The examples below are exhaustive if we exclude elliptical cases legitimate in the adult language.

(i)	0 pa(r)ti où? 　　left　　where	(MAX 2;1.25)
(ii)	ça　# e mettre où? 　　that　e to-put where	(MAX)
(iii)	0 mettre où xx　　? 　　to　　put where ?	(ANNE 2;6.2)
(iv)	0 ME voir　pourquoi ? 　　me　to-see why	(ANNE 2;7.16)

[22] No wh-questions were negative so only affirmative clauses are examined.

In the early stages the children have generally high rates of subject omission.[23]

Initially, there were no wh-questions but when they first appeared they were invariably without overt subjects. If we consider only data from the first file containing a wh-question up to and including the first file in which a wh-question contains a clear and recognizable overt pronominal subject, we find the pattern in Table 16.3.

Initial Stage	declaratives		wh-questions		Total	
	N	*%*	**N**	*%*	**N**	*%*
MAX 2;0.14-2;0.28						
Null	22	**65**	13	**93**		73
Overt	12	35	1	7		27
Total	34		14		48	
ANNE 1;11.13-2;2.20						
Null	31	**44**	18	**78**		52
Overt	40	56	5	22		48
Total	71		23		94	

Table 16.3. Early use of referential subjects in affirmative finite clauses

For Anne, two cases classed as containing overt subjects were produced prior to 2;2.20 but not considered clear enough to define the end of the period, these are shown in (18) and (19).[24]

(18)   e fait quoi ?   (ANNE 1;11.13)
         ? does what
         'What is he doing?'

(19)   e   met quoi e mimi ? [% which clothes]   (ANNE 2;2.0)
         she puts what ? Mimi
         'What is Mimi putting on?'

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[23] The figures presented are calculated on the basis of the view of left and right peripheral elements presented above. In dislocated questions resumptive subjects were variably realized.

(i)   (c') est quoi, ça?   (ANNE 2;0.13)
         (it) is what that

(ii)   Maman bébé [= le bébé de Maman], il est où?   (ANNE 2;2.20)
         mummy baby   he is where

[24] By treating embryonic pronominals as 'overt' subjects, the number of null subjects in finite clauses is, if anything, underestimated.

Unexpectedly, given Crisma (1992), these children produce a higher proportion of wh-questions with null subjects than declaratives with such subjects. The wh-questions are always *in situ* and predominantly copular but despite their relatively limited nature, they do not look formulaic; both children use more than one wh-word.[25]

Table 16.4 on the next page shows the pattern in the files following the last wh-question with a null subject; Max's last wh-question of this type is in (20), Anne's last ones are in (21).

(20)   (elle) est où,   la casquette à lui?   (MAX 2;5.15)
              is   where the cap   of him
         'Where's his cap?'

(21)   0 adore   [=? adores] quoi # aussi ?   (ANNE 2;10.18)
             adore(s)   what   too
         'What else does he (/do you) love?'[26]

(22)   0 va   ## où   ?   (ANNE)
             goes   where
         'Where do I go?'

The data in this table suggests that both children may continue to use occasional null subjects in declaratives after those in wh-questions have disappeared.

Let us turn now to the critical intervening period shown in Table 16.5 on the following page.

In this middle stage, there is a differential realization of subjects in wh-questions and declaratives. The contrast strongly resembles the one found in Philippe, Tom and Jean in the case of Max but for Anne there is only a 6% difference in subject-realization in the two clause types, a difference which is not statistically significant. We must attempt to account for the similarity between Anne and Max in the initial stage but their dissimilarity in this interim stage in which Max's pattern closely resembles that of Philippe and others.

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[25] Five of Max's early cases, while clearly intended as wh-questions , contained no wh-phrase. Three resembled (i).

(i)   0   s' appelle, lui?   (MAX)
            (How/what) self call   him
            'What's his name?'

The rate of null subjects in his wh-questions remains high (88%) even if such cases are excluded from the analysis.

[26] The adult is speaking via a glove puppet about what different people like to eat. It is not clear whether Anne addresses the (female) adult or the (male) puppet. The adult takes the question to be about what the puppet's likes.

Final Stage	declaratives		wh-questions		Total	
	N	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**
MAX 2;5.29-2;9.12						
Null	33	**9**	0	**0**		9
Overt	334	91	12	100		91
Total	367		12		379	
ANNE 2;11.02-3;0.02						
Null	2	**1**	0	**0**		1
Overt	218	99	19	100		99
Total	220		23		239	

Table 16.4.   Later use of referential subjects in affirmative finite clauses

Middle Stage	declaratives		wh-questions		Total	
	N	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**
MAX 2;1.16-2;5.15						
Null	62	**22**	3	**0.5**		19
Overt	221	78	60	99.5		81
Total	283		63		346	
ANN 2;2.30-2;10.18						
Null	181	**27**	33	**21**		26
Overt	493	73	126	79		74
Total	674		159		833	

Table 16.5.   Interim use of referential subjects in affirmative finite clauses

2.2.2   Results.   Note first the contrast between the stages seen in Tables 16.3 and 16.5; the increase in subject realization in wh-questions is most dramatic in Max where 93% of null subjects in Stage One is to be compared with 0.5% null in Stage Two. An interesting result here is that *contra* Hamann (2000) the early prevalence of null subjects in wh-questions cannot be attributed to these children's exclusive use of *in situ* questions; Max continues to use exclusively *in situ* questions throughout this second stage. The change between stages is less dramatic in Anne's case: 78% dropping to 21% null in wh-questions although Anne has begun to use some moved questions in this second stage, a fact which if Hamann was right would lead us to expect a lesser tendency towards null subjects in those questions and consequently an even sharper drop than that seen in Max. Subject realization in Anne's moved and *in situ* questions is not significantly different. Any effect on subject realization

from the interrogative nature of a clause cannot critically involve whether the child overtly moves the wh-phrase in them.

To explain the differences between the two children in Table 16.5, both interrogative and wh-clauses were coded for a number of factors thought to have a potential influence on subject realization. Given Phillips' (1995) claim mentioned with regard to Jean, initial analysis focused on the comparison between wh/declarative on the one hand and copular/non-copular on the other, since there were few true auxiliaries at this stage. The coded data was subjected to multivariate analysis. Initial results suggested that that the crucial difference was the one found between clauses containing only a copular verb and other clauses. In copular clauses, no significant difference in the realization of subjects occurs in questions and declaratives. The following Figures (adapted from Plunkett and De Cat 2001) show the situation clearly.[27]

The larger, though non-significant difference between declaratives and wh-questions for Anne in Figure 16.1 on the next page may in part be due to the fact that negatives were included in the analysis on which it was based, since polarity was found to be a significant factor in Anne's declaratives. Although subject realizations in the two copular clause types cannot be distinguished statistically, the trends are less clear-cut in non-copular clauses; here there is a 13% difference in subject realization for Anne and a 39% difference for Max.

The patterns in the two children appear to be somewhat different, suggesting a confounding factor. Note, however, that for Anne, the difference in clause types is not statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 2.831$, p < 0.10). This test is inappropriate for Max's data due to the very small number of non-copular wh-questions.

Splitting the data in this way allows us to see how different copular clauses are from others. When considering the utterances represented in Figure 16.2 on page 399, striking facts emerge which can explain the apparent differences between the children. Nearly all of the subjects in Max's wh-questions here are 3rd singular. In d) all seven of the subjects are 3rd person singular. Anne, on the other hand relies much less exclusively on 3rd person subjects; eight of the thirty-six questions in b) are of other types. This suggests that pronominal type must be considered. Furthermore, when the data in Figure 16.1 is reexamined, it emerges that 3rd singular subjects strongly predominate.

The factor pronominal type, when added to the multivariate analysis of this second stage, was selected as better explaining differential subject realization than the copular/non-copular factor.[28]

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[27] Stage boundaries were defined slightly differently in that analysis. Null subjects are shown unfilled.

[28] Moreover, even if negative sentences are included, as they are in the figures above, once the PERSON and NUMBER features of the pronoun are included as a factor group, negation is no longer selected as significant.

a) Stage two non-copular declaratives

b) Stage two non-copular wh-questions

31.0%

69.0%

ANNE

44.0%

56.0%

ANNE
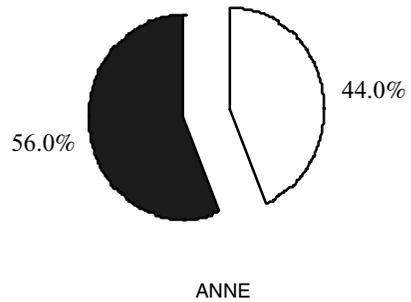
c) Stage Two non-copular declaratives
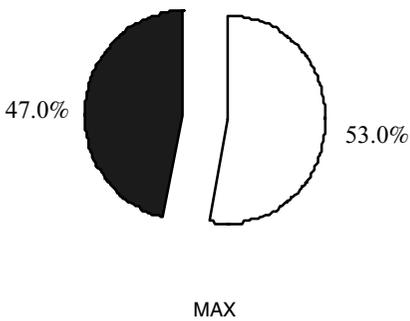
d) Stage Two non-copular wh-questions

47.0%

53.0%

MAX

14.0%

86.0%

MAX
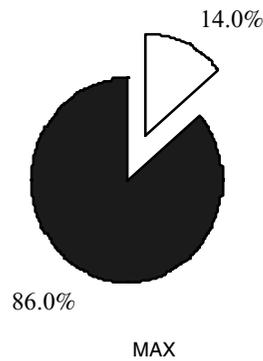
Figure 16.1. Pronominal realization in copular clauses

2.2.3   Analysis: the incremental acquisition of agreement features and higher projections.   I interpret the relevance of pronominal features in the following way. For each potential functional projection provided by UG, the child must determine whether or not it is implemented in the target language. Thus parameter setting involves determining whether the postulation of a particular projection is motivated and if yes, how highly specified it is. Regardless of whether or not we treat Agreement features as heading their own projection or being specified on Tns, the child will have to determine at some point whether the French agreement system encodes any or all of the feature types PERSON, NUMBER and GENDER.

a) Stage Two copular declaratives
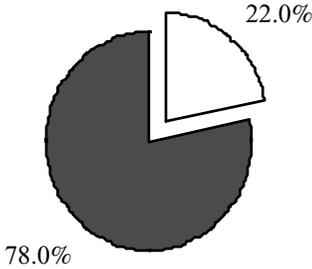
b) Stage Two copular wh-questions

22.0%

78.0%

ANNE

15.0%

85.0%
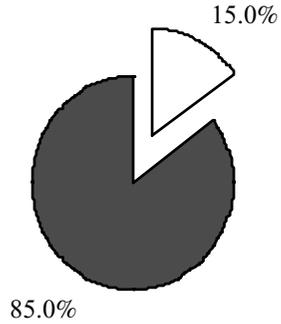
ANNE

c) Stage Two copular decaratives
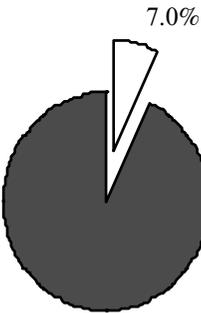
d) Stage Two copular wh-questions

7.0%

93.0%

MAX

5.0%

95.0%
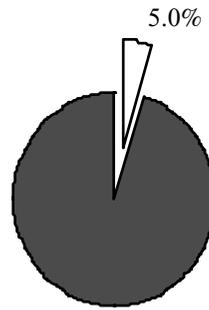
MAX

Figure 16.2. Pronominal realization in non-copular clauses

Gender is never encoded on finite French verbs so assume that the child will quickly determine that only PERSON and NUMBER are of potential importance with all verbs being marked α GENDER, where α is an underspecified setting compatible with positive and negative values. Suppose that the child, having determined that verbs can be tensed or not, initially assumes that PERSON and NUMBER are not marked; since the personal subject pronouns clearly encode PERSON and NUMBER features, so feature checking between an overt pronoun in [Spec,TP] and a verb in T marked only for TENSE and GENDER could not

result in exhaustive feature-checking. Suppose that the child rather than using a pronoun that will result in unchecked φ-features posits instead a null pronoun with no φ-features on it, which will not give rise to a failure of complete feature-checking. I assume that such a null pronominal, a bare NP, as Tomioka (2000) has posited for Japanese null pronouns is invoked by the child.[29]

For the French-speaking child to initially posit that verbs lack PERSON and NUMBER features is quite plausible given that in the majority verb-class only 1st and 2nd person plural forms are phonetically distinct. With regular verbs, before children can interpret the contrast between the plural a) *ils/elles mangent* 'they eat' and b) *vous mangez* 'you eat' as encoding a PERSON contrast, they must realize that the distinction between c) *tu manges* 'you (sg) eat' and b) *vous mangez* 'you (pl) eat' is one of NUMBER. The child's acquisition of the *tu/vous* distinction is crucial because *il/elle* are not usually phonologically distinct from *ils/elles* and the 1st person plural subject pronoun is never used in informal spoken French. Since the relation between *tu* and *vous* is not morphologically transparent, the conclusion that the distinction between them represents NUMBER is not obvious; it is further complicated by the fact that children will hear the 'polite' 2nd person b) form addressed to a singular individual.

There are verb classes in which a further NUMBER distinction is made on the verb e.g. *Il/elle veut,* 'he/she wants' but *ils/elles veulent* 'they want'; however, this number distinction is not apparent in all tenses (*il/elle voulait* and *ils/elles voulaient,* 'he/she/they wanted' sound the same). Within the pronominal system, the number distinction is again not obvious since *il* and *ils* are pronounced the same, except in liaison contexts. Now suppose that having noticed contrasts such as *veut/veulent* the child posits a French grammar with NUMBER encoded on these verbs. The use of pronominals encoding GENDER and NUMBER would now be possible, as long as they were marked for no other φ-features. A tension arises between economy and uniformity since the need for NUMBER specification is not obvious with most verbs; this causes the child to also retain a grammar without that feature. The two grammars will compete, perhaps until the child acquires the *manges/mangez* contrast. Let us consider further the consequences of a grammar in which no PERSON is encoded on the verb.

In the nominal system, NUMBER is typically encoded on the determiner. Assume then that the child is forced to use a D(P) (i.e. an overt pronoun rather than the null NP) when NUMBER needs to be checked against the verb. Even if the *il/ils* distinction was not clear to the child before, she must now associate NUMBER with the 3rd person pronouns. Overt 3rd person pronouns can check

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[29] Assuming that gender features are associated with N, such a pronoun might also be marked α GENDER.

either NUMBER on the verb. However, this will be possible only if 3rd person pronouns carry no PERSON features. We have seen evidence that children overtly realize 3rd singular pronouns before others. I thus assume that PERSON features distinguish speaker and hearer (i.e. 1st and 2nd person) and that 3rd person pronouns are an elsewhere form.[30]

The pronoun *on* 'we/you/one' is semantically compatible with either a singular or a plural referent; it must therefore appear with a verb-form unspecified for NUMBER. Let us assume that the phonetic verb form that appears with *je/il/elle/on/ça* and with the majority verb class *ils/elles* too is an elsewhere form marked α NUMBER. *On* will be similarly marked and thus able to check NUMBER; I assume that the same applies to the deictic pronouns *ce/ça*, which can also have plural referents. Note however, that none of the other overt subject pronouns will yet be able to check NUMBER. Since *nous* 'we' is not used as a subject pronoun in spoken French, the child will have no need to associate any number feature with the pronoun *je* 'I'; even if she did, the PERSON feature on this pronoun would remain unchecked. Since *vous* is not yet being used by the child and, by hypothesis, *tu* and *vous* are not yet seen as counterparts of each other, like *je*, *tu* will not yet be associated with NUMBER. The child must thus retain a grammar containing a null pronominal if she is to be able to express utterances with intended 1st and 2nd person subjects. But if NUMBER is always associated with D, then the child will have to retain the grammar containing a null NP marked, at most, α GENDER.

A French grammar in which no PERSON is marked on the verb results in the anomalous situation in which only 3rd person pronouns (and *on*) can be overtly realized in subject position.[31] I propose that it is while the child uses a verbal system with NUMBER but not PERSON that we see the distinction in subject realization between declaratives and wh-questions evidenced in Table 16.4. Note though that the child has still to ascertain whether PERSON features are ever marked on the verb. I assume that if the child has not yet fully set the Agreement parameter(s), the parameters associated with any higher structure cannot yet be set. How can wh-questions be generated in these early stages, as we know they are? I return to this issue shortly but first let us briefly examine how the child progresses from the stage outlined to the adult grammar.

There will come a time when the child acquires the requisite morphological distinctions to be able to determine that PERSON too is specified in the French verbal system. In a very small number of verbs, 1st person forms are phonetically distinct (e.g. *je vais* 'I go', *tu vas* 'you go'). However, at this point,

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[30] 3rd plural pronouns also appear quite early but the number of contexts is small.

[31] *On* occurs early but it is difficult to calculate missing cases since potential null instances are usually ambiguous.

the only PERSON feature that the child will be led to firmly posit on the verb will be 1st person. Elsewhere verb forms must always be compatible with 3rd singular pronouns; since, by hypothesis, these pronouns carry no PERSON features, this feature type must be absent from the elsewhere forms. It is thus the non-specification for PERSON that distinguishes the α GENDER, α NUMBER elsewhere forms from the specified forms in French.

Remember now that *tu* carries PERSON features but it occurs with a verb form which, in almost all circumstances, is phonetically indistinguishable from the elsewhere form. Until the child notices that in liaison contexts, the elsewhere form [ɛ] becomes [ɛt] in *il/elle est* 'he/she is' but [ɛz] in *tu es* 'you are', she may be reluctant to conclude that specified 2nd singular verb forms are required. She will thus continue to use the GENDER and NUMBER only grammar whenever a 2nd singular subject is intended. The erroneous assumption that specified 2nd person verb forms are not needed may be compounded by the fact that in imperative contexts null subjects are used in the adult grammar.

Most probably, no decision to use specified 2nd person verb forms will be taken until children analyze verbs ending in *-ez* as 2nd person plural; at that point the *tu parles/vous parlez* 'you speak' distinction will force them to posit specified forms for all verbs with 2nd person subjects.

Thus, until the child acquires 2nd person plural forms she may be forced to retain the earlier GENDER and NUMBER only grammar in competition with the grammar including PERSON. There could thus be a time when essentially only 2nd singular pronouns have null realization. As long as the earlier grammar is still available, 1st person subjects will be variably realized, 1st person verb forms may be able to occur but in competition with less specified forms. In both children we see occasional examples of overt pronouns specified for number occurring with elsewhere forms (*je va* 'I goes'). In Max, this may not be meaningful, since the Canadian adults too seems to variably realize the 1st singular form of *aller* as either *va* or *vais*; in the case of Anne, it indicates an uncertainty as to the correct morphological form of the verb marked 1st singular.

Depending on how difficult the resolution of the status of *-ez* forms is, something which may vary across children depending on the input, we may expect a period in which 1st person pronouns appear but not 2nd person pronouns. At the least, we expect 1st person pronouns more often overtly realized than 2nd and no 2nd person plural subjects. This is exactly what we find in the York corpus.[32] Having acquired the *tu/vous* distinction, the complete pronominal agreement system will have been acquired and (at least referential) subjects will become categorical. Interestingly, the first occurrences of 2nd plural verb forms occur in both children in files adjacent to the last files analyzed here.

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[32] A more detailed implementation of the system proposed here appears in Plunkett (2003).

Having fully set the Agreement parameters, the child will be able to move on to further consideration of higher projections.

Let us return now to the issue of how wh-questions are produced in the intermediate stage of the null subject phase. In the outlined view of parameter setting, grammars with different settings are in competition until one of the two is no longer needed. Suppose that children do not attempt to determine the presence or nature of the C projection(s) until after the specifications for Tense and Agreement have been at least partially resolved. If this is so, we expect to see evidence that subject realization is practically categorical by the time that CP is being used as in the adult grammar. Aside from the early appearance of wh-questions, this is exactly what we find.

The beginning of the last stage exemplified in Table 16.4 on page 396 is precisely the time at which clear reflexes of CP structure such as embedded wh-questions and overt complementizers appear as can be seen in Figures 16.3 below and 16.4 on the next page.[33] However, wh-questions appear considerably earlier.
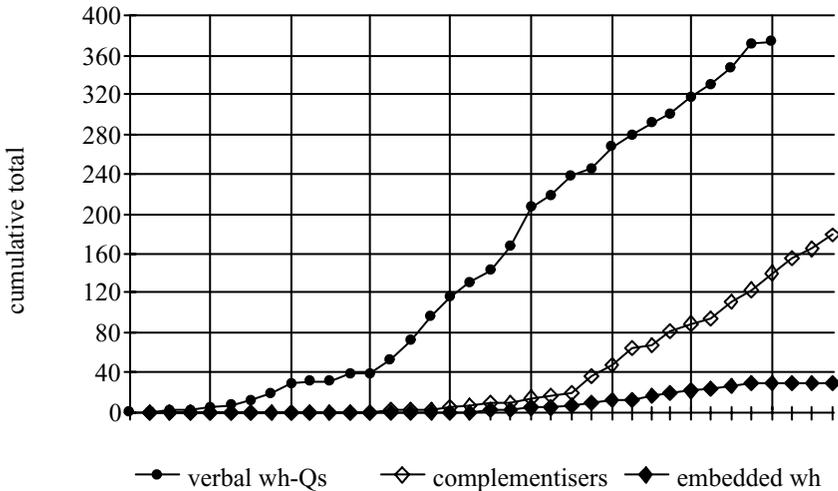
Figure 16.3. Anne, wh-questions and CP

As mentioned above, during the first two periods, all of Max's and nearly all of Anne's wh-questions employed the *in situ* strategy. I propose that, since *in*

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[33] These charts show the total number of attested occurrences of each structure as time progresses, with a dotted line showing the file containing the last wh-question with a null subject.
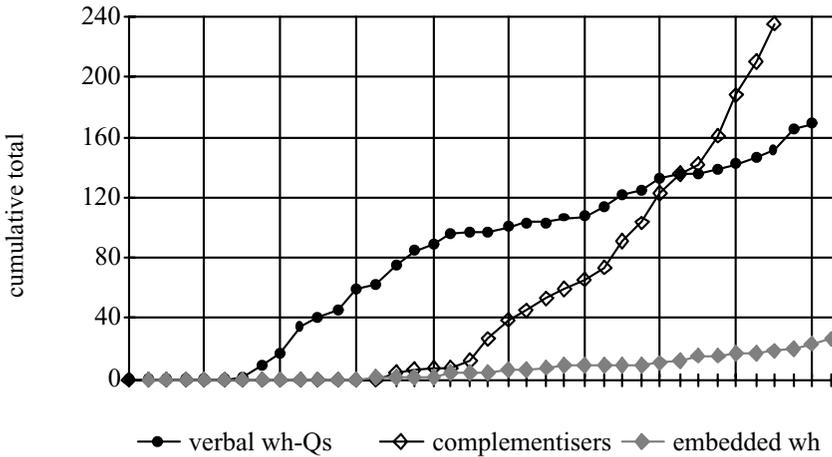
Figure 16.4. Max, wh-questons and CP

situ questions are licit in French, as in Rizzi (1991), wh-features are associated with T in the matrix domain. I further propose that that these wh-features can be satisfied by Agree (see Plunkett 2000 for some related ideas on this issue). Although in adult French other factors force the projection of CP in wh-questions, as long as the child is attempting to obey Economy of Projection there is no clear reason why early *in situ* wh-questions should require the projection of CP. As far as moved questions are concerned, assuming that they are truly productive, a left-peripheral XP position will be required to host the wh-phrase but, at least in the absence of a subject clitic, it is not clear that [Spec,TP] could not be used, much as I have suggested for English-speaking children (Plunkett 1992). If early wh-questions need not involve CP then we do not necessarily expect to see the asymmetry highlighted by (Crisma 1992). However, first we have seen that it is not found spectacularly in all children and second we have shown that early subject realization of only 3rd singular subjects will explain the pattern found in the children in this study.

If early questions need not involve CP, what is the status of other elements that occur on the left periphery, during the null subject stage? Cases with initial adverbials, like (4) are not problematic on the traditional view that such fronted adverbials are adjoined to TP, they only become problematic if we insist that they occupy a position in the C domain. Null subject clauses with left-dislocated topics are common in the York corpus, though they are not numerous in wh-questions; these too need not be problematic if we allow that dislocated phrases

appear in adjoined positions as had often been assumed prior to Rizzi (1997) and has been argued for recently by De Cat (in press).

The proposed order in which the agreement parameters are set in French predicts that constructions involving mainly 3rd singular subjects will initially be more likely to contain overt subjects and that constructions containing the fewest of these will be least likely to have their subjects realized. Because the use of different person subjects varies in Anne and Max's declaratives, they do not appear to behave identically. Interestingly, yes-no questions contain relatively few 3rd person subjects and proportionately more 2nd singular ones. Given the analysis proposed we are now in a position to explain why these questions have the lowest rate of overt subject realization of all the sentence types in Tables 16.1 and 16.2 on page 393.

3.   Conclusion

A careful examination of longitudinal data from child French has shown that in keeping with Hyam's original ideas the acquisition of subjects is linked to the setting of Agreement parameter(s). The view presented here is also generally in keeping with Roeper and Rohrbacher's 1999 ideas concerning early English; however, it does not require us to posit the possibility that children can omit projections intermediate between VP and CP. It is thus more in keeping with Rizzi's 1998 view of truncation, though it does not attribute the development of overt subjects to maturation but to data-driven structure building. Though largely compatible with Rizzi's current view of truncation, the data presented here shows clearly that his approach to child null subjects is untenable. Furthermore, the claim that (even child) wh-questions require the projection of CP is undermined by the pattern of emergence of wh-structures.

We conclude instead that left-peripheral elements are not in the CP domain in early child French; the consistent realization of CP begins only when the null subject phase is at an end. This phase is posited to consist of several sub-stages in which the grammar specifies increasing numbers of agreement features, resulting in incremental acquisition of the subject pronominal system.

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