Emergent syntactic categories and increasing granularity

Evidence from a multilingual corpus study

Núria Bosch & Theresa Biberauer

University of Cambridge

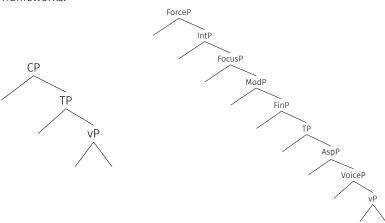
□ nb611@cam.ac.uk • mtb23@cam.ac.uk

nuria-bosch.github.io

Seminari di Linguistica (Università degli Studi di Padova) — 6 March 2025

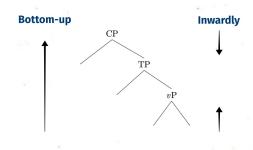
1. Introduction

■ Syntactic trees grow → differences in **granularity** across (and within) frameworks:



ACQUIRING FUNCTIONAL CATEGORIES

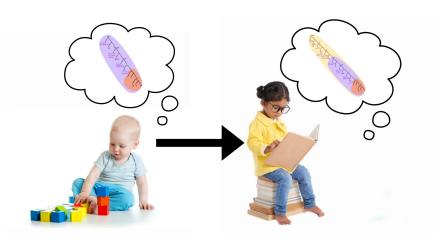
- How do children acquire these trees?
- **Prior maturational work:** focus on *directionality* of acquisition
 - Trees are acquired **bottom-up**: vP → TP → CP (i.a., Radford, 1990; Rizzi, 1993; Friedmann et al., 2021; Diercks et al., 2023).
 - Trees are acquired inwardly: vP & CP → TP (i.a., Galasso, 2003; Tsimpli, 2005; Heim & Wiltschko, 2021).



- What about granularity, though? How 'fine-grained' are children's trees at the start?
 - Implicit assumption in work thus far: granularity is fixed by UG. In cartographic approaches, as soon as a child acquires a specific domain, it is cartographic in nature.
- Existing cartographic approaches:
 - Westergaard (2009)'s micro-cues model: children have access to cartographic left-peripheral knowledge from the start.
 - Friedmann et al. (2021)'s Growing Trees: the cartographic left periphery emerges in two steps, and develops very late in its entirety.

Testable prediction: If (parts of) cartographic CP are available early, we should see (some) evidence for its distinct projections reasonably early (as noted in by Westergaard, 2009; Moscati & Rizzi, 2021; Moscati, 2023, and explored directly by Soares, 2006)

- 2



Bigger tree, same granularity?

(Tree diagrams from Friedmann et al., 2021)

- Granularity never changes throughout development?
- **Today:** revisiting the development of the left periphery:
 - Are categories acquired in a specific directionality?
 - But most importantly, when do children show evidence for access to an articulated CP domain?
- → Changes in granularity might be an important (unexplored) aspect of syntactic development.

- 4

- Maturation of functional categories
 - (Arguably) dominant approach so far: bottom-up approach.
 - The top of the tree (≈ CP) acquired last (Radford, 1990; Rizzi, 1993; Friedmann et al., 2021; Diercks et al., 2023).
 - Growing Trees Hypothesis (most recent, left periphery-centred proposal): two-stage development of LP.

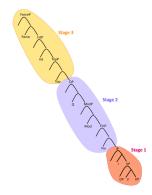


Figure 1: Stages in the Growing Trees Hypothesis (Friedmann et al., 2021, p. 12)

- Maturation of functional categories
 - (Arguably) dominant approach so far: bottom-up approach.
 - The top of the tree (≈ CP) acquired last (Radford, 1990; Rizzi, 1993; Friedmann et al., 2021; Diercks et al., 2023).
 - Growing Trees Hypothesis (most recent, left periphery-centred proposal): two-stage development of LP.

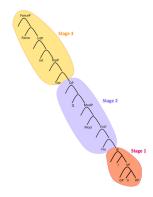


Figure 1: Stages in the Growing Trees Hypothesis (Friedmann et al., 2021, p. 12)

Bottom-up directionality, fixed granularity

Maturation of functional categories

- More recently revived idea: inward approach. CP emerges early! (i.a., Galasso, 2003; Tsimpli, 2005; Heim & Wiltschko, 2021).
- ► Galasso (2003)'s 'Empty Middle' approach: CP>Ø>VP to CP>IP>VP.
- Heim & Wiltschko (2021)'s Inward Growing Spine: spine matures inwardly.

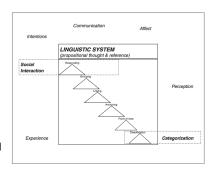


Figure 2: Bridge Model (Hinzen & Wiltschko, 2023)

¹With the exception of Heim & Wiltschko (2021), who incorporate an (implicit) notion of granularity. Since cartography is not adopted in their work, we will set this aside for time reasons.

Maturation of functional categories

- More recently revived idea: inward approach. CP emerges early! (i.a., Galasso, 2003; Tsimpli, 2005; Heim & Wiltschko, 2021).
- Galasso (2003)'s 'Empty Middle' approach: CP>Ø>VP to CP>IP>VP.
- Heim & Wiltschko (2021)'s Inward Growing Spine: spine matures inwardly.

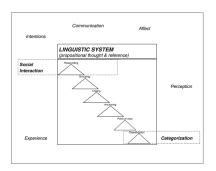


Figure 2: Bridge Model (Hinzen & Wiltschko, 2023)

Inward directionality, (generally)¹ fixed granularity

¹With the exception of Heim & Wiltschko (2021), who incorporate an (implicit) notion of granularity. Since cartography is not adopted in their work, we will set this aside for time reasons.

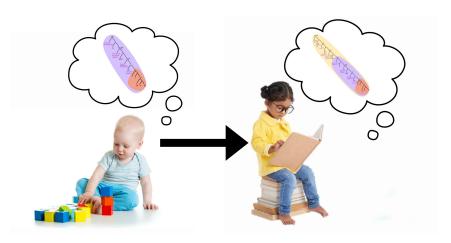
- **Continuity**: children's initial state ≈ adult's functional inventory.
 - Of various strengths: Strong Continuity, Weak Continuity (Underspecification of features, Lexical Learning, etc.) (i.a., Poeppel & Wexler, 1993; Hyams, 1992, 1996; Clahsen et al., 1994)
 - Westergaard (2009)'s micro-cues approach: sensitivity to cartographic structures early on.

²Possible underspecification of features notwithstanding.

- **Continuity**: children's initial state ≈ adult's functional inventory.
 - Of various strengths: Strong Continuity, Weak Continuity (Underspecification of features, Lexical Learning, etc.) (i.a., Poeppel & Wexler, 1993; Hyams, 1992, 1996; Clahsen et al., 1994)
 - Westergaard (2009)'s micro-cues approach: sensitivity to cartographic structures early on.

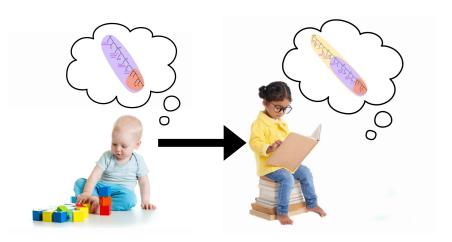
Continuity (no maturation), fixed granularity²

²Possible underspecification of features notwithstanding.



Bigger tree, same granularity?

(Tree diagrams from Friedmann et al., 2021)



Not in all approaches...

(Tree diagrams from Friedmann et al., 2021)

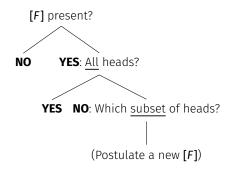
- **Neo-emergentism** (Biberauer, 2011, et seq.; Biberauer & Roberts, 2015)
 - Emergentist generative approach: **minimal UG**, no innate categories³.
 - → Hypothesis relevant here: Biberauer & Roberts (2015)'s **emergent categorial** hierarchy.
 - Different levels of granularity across frameworks unified → different stages of a learning path (coarse- to fine-grained).

'Basic CP' before cartographic-type CP

³Leaving open the possibility that an innate *template* of some kind could guide the development of the functional spine (see, e.g., Ramchand & Svenonius, 2014; Wiltschko, 2014).

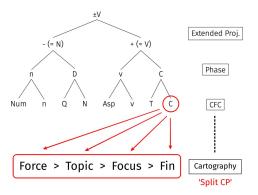
- **Neo-emergentism** (Biberauer, 2011, et seq.; Biberauer & Roberts, 2015)
 - Maximise Minimal Means (Biberauer, 2019), one general-cognitive bias, two (of several) language-specific manifestations.
 - Feature Economy (FE; generalised from Roberts & Roussou, 2003)
 Postulate as few [F]s as possible to account for the PLD.
 - Input Generalisation (IG; adapted from Roberts, 2021; termed Feature Generalisation in Biberauer, 2020)
 Maximise available [F]s.

(1) The NO>ALL>SOME learning path



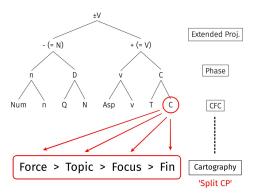
- MMM and NO>ALL>SOME then make two key predictions about formal feature postulation (Biberauer & Roberts, 2015):
 - ▶ **'Parameter setting'** (following the Borer-Chomsky Conjecture)
 - Emergence of functional categories

(2) Extended Projection (V) > phase (C, V) > Core Functional Category or CFC (C, T, V) > "cartographic field" (e.g. Tense, Mood, Aspect, Topic, Focus) > semantically distinct head (e.g., Cinque, 1999; Frascarelli & Hinterhölzl, 2007).



Syntactic categories 'granularise' (become refined) during development

(3) Extended Projection (V) > phase (C, V) > Core Functional Category or CFC (C, T, V) > "cartographic field" (e.g. Tense, Mood, Aspect, Topic, Focus) > semantically distinct head (e.g., Cinque, 1999; Frascarelli & Hinterhölzl, 2007).



Any apparent directionality epiphenomenal, flexible granularity

- This is the intuition we pursue in the corpus study.
 - Grant that various degrees of granularity may be needed to capture to crosslinguistic typology of CP (i.a., Giorgi & Pianesi, 1997; Biberauer & Roberts, 2015; Hsu, 2017; Walkden, 2017; Larson, 2021; Cournane & Klævik-Pettersen, 2023).
 - No specific granularity assumed a priori when analysing the data → 'Let the data decide'.
 - ▶ **Inquires** into not just 'earliness' of functional domains, but also their *granularity* throughout development.

■ This is the intuition we pursue in the corpus study.

- Grant that various degrees of granularity may be needed to capture to crosslinguistic typology of CP (i.a., Giorgi & Pianesi, 1997; Biberauer & Roberts, 2015; Hsu, 2017; Walkden, 2017; Larson, 2021; Cournane & Klævik-Pettersen, 2023).
- No specific granularity assumed a priori when analysing the data → 'Let the data decide'.
- ▶ **Inquires** into not just 'earliness' of functional domains, but also their *aranularity* throughout development.
- See also Soares (2006) for a very similar analytical approach to European Portuguese data.

Predictions for development of left periphery

Bottom up (Growing Trees):

- Late CP (two-stage).
- Fixed (cartographic) granularity: evidence for it once (or soon after) CP matures.

Inward maturation:

- Early CP.
- Fixed granularity: if cartographic, evidence for it once (or soon after) CP matures

■ Neo-emergentism (Biberauer & Roberts, 2015):

- Early CP.
- Flexible granularity: late emergence of cartographic elaboration of CP.

3. CORPUS STUDY

METHODOLOGY AND DIAGNOSTICS

■ Longitudinal analysis of 10 typically-developing children in CHILDES, across five languages (Catalan, Spanish, Italian, German and Dutch)

Table 1: Children studied in the CHILDES database and summary information

Language	Corpus	Child	Files	Age	MLUw
Catalan	Serra-Solé	Laura	19	1;07-4;00	1.03-3.47
		Gisela	21	1;07-4;02	1.02-3.51
Italian	Calambrone	Martina	13	1;07-2;07	1.26-2.69
		Rosa	21	1;07-3;03	1.27-3.24
Spanish	Llinàs-Ojea	Irene	59	0;11-3;02	1.0-5.13
	Montes	Koki	13	1;07-2;11	1.96-3.61
German	Miller	Kerstin	37	1;03-3;04	1.09-2.89
		Simone	50	1;09-2;09	1.52-4.89
Dutch	Groningen	Josse	28	2;0-3;04	1.2-4.01
	van Kampen	Sarah	50	1;06-5;02	1.07-6.07

CP diagnostics:

- 1. Wh-questions
- Yes/no questions (Germanic only)
- 3. V-to-C movement (Germanic only)
- 4. Topics/Foci
- 5. Illocutionary (main clause) complementisers (Romance only)
- 6. Finite embedding

■ Split CP diagnostics (Romance):

- 1. Top > Wh
- Top > Top/Foc
- 3. Complementiser > Wh/Top
- Quotative que 'that' > Wh (Ibero-Romance only)
- Topic > interrogative que 'that' (Catalan only)
- Si que/sì che 'yes that' and que si que 'that yes that' structures (for the latter, Ibero-Romance only)

STRUCTURES ANALYSED: SPLIT CP DIAGNOSTICS

- (4) a. **La Júlia**, **on** ha anat? (Top > Wh, Catalan) the Júlia where AUX.HAVE.3SG go.PTCP 'Júlia, where has she gone?'
 - b. Questo, a te, ti spaventa (Top > Top/Foc, Italian) this to you CL.IO= scare.3sG 'This, it scares YOU.'
 - C. ¿Que cuánto te han costado estas that.QUOT how.much CL.IO= AUX.HAVE.3PL cost.PTCP these bambas? (Comp > Wh, Spanish) trainers

'How much have you said these trainers have cost you!?'

1/

CP diagnostics:

- 1. Wh-questions
- Yes/no questions (Germanic only)
- 3. V-to-C movement (Germanic only)
- 4. Topics/Foci
- 5. Illocutionary (main clause) complementisers (Romance only)
- 6. Finite embedding

Split CP diagnostics (Germanic, V3 orders):

- Frame-setters
- 2. Hanging Topic Left-Dislocation
- 3. Contrastive Left-Dislocation
- 4. Conditional/temporal clauses with resumptive dann/dan 'then'

STRUCTURES ANALYSED: SPLIT CP DIAGNOSTICS

- (5) a. In alle geval, ik had het niet verwacht (Frame-setter, Dutch) in any case I AUX.HAVE.PST.1SG it not expect.PTCP 'Anyway, I had not expected it' (Haegeman & Greco, 2020, p. 65)
 - b. **Diesen Kuchen hier**, den möchte ich probieren (CLD, German) the ACC cake ACC here PRON.ACC want.1sg I try.INF
 'This cake here, I want to try.'
 - c. Als het niet zo warm is, dan ga ik naar buiten (Conditional with when/if it not so hot be.3sg then go.1sg I to outside resumptive, Dutch)

'When/if it isn't so hot, then I'll go out.'

3. CORPUS STUDY

3.1. Results and generalisations

RESULTS: STAGES OBSERVED

- Transparent order of appearance of the structures analysed in the ten children. Very early CP emergence. Split CP structures systematically emerge at a later stage.
 - 1. Stage 1 CP structures: 1.38 MLUw (range 1.15-1.54).
 - 2. Stage 2 CP and TP structures: 1.64 MLUw (range 1.44-1.94).
 - 3. Stage 3 Split CP structures: 2.57 MLUw (range 2.32-2.8).
- Focus on Stages 1 and 2 (as a group) vs Stage 3 here.

RESULTS: STAGES OBSERVED

- Transparent order of appearance of the structures analysed in the ten children. Very early CP emergence. Split CP structures systematically emerge at a later stage.
 - 1. Stage 1 CP structures: 1.38 MLUw (range 1.15-1.54).
 - 2. Stage 2 CP and TP structures: 1.64 MLUw (range 1.44-1.94).
 - 3. Stage 3 Split CP structures: 2.57 MLUw (range 2.32-2.8).
- Focus on Stages 1 and 2 (as a group) vs Stage 3 here.

→ Unpacking 3 Generalisations

MAIN GENERALISATIONS: CP IS EARLY

Generalisation 1: Early Acquisition of CF

CP-structures emerge early on in the developmental data.

MAIN GENERALISATIONS: CP IS EARLY

Generalisation 1: Early Acquisition of CP

CP-structures emerge early on in the developmental data.

→ 'Directionality' of emergence likely isn't bottom-up.

Some children:

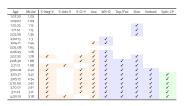


Table 2: Production of structures by Laura (Catalan)

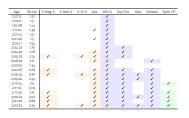


Table 3: Production of structures by Rosa (Italian)

See Appendix for full tables of all children.

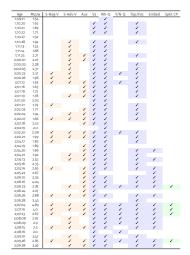


Table 4: Production of structures by Simone (German)

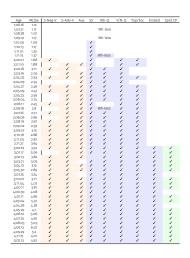


Table 5: Production of structures by Sarah (Dutch)

MAIN GENERALISATIONS: CP IS EARLY

Table 6: Emergence of all CP-structures for the 10 children

	V2	Wh-Q	Y/N-Q	Top/Foc	Illoc	Embed
Laura Cat.		2;02.13		2;08.20	1;10.22	3;00.02
Gisela Cat.		2;06.23		2;08.00	1;08.24	2;08.00
Martina It.		1;08.02		1;10.29	1;08.02	1;11.20
Rosa It.		1;07.13		2;04.23	2;09.04	2;06.29
Irene Sp.		1;04.16		1;08.09b	1;08.09a	1;09.10
Koki Sp.		1;11.25		1;11.25	2;02.27	1;11.25
Kerstin Ger.	1;10.05	1;10.03	2;00.10	2;00.05		2;07.23
Simone Ger.	1;10.20	1;09.11	2;00.23	1;10.20		2;04.20
Josse Dutch	2;00.07	2;00.07	2;03.28	2;03.28		2;09.02
Sarah Dutch	1;10.05	2;02.18	2;00.17	2;00.17		3;00.19

Table 7: CP-structures produced at Stages 1 + 2 and its length

	V2	Wh-Q	Y/N-Q	Top/Foc	Illoc	Embed	Length
Laura		15		4	42	4	1;10.22-3;03.21
							(MLUw 1.15-2.54)
Gisela		1		0	6	0	2;04.25-2;08.00
							(MLUw 1.58-2.61)
Martina		21		4	7	8	1;08.02-2;04.13
							(MLUw 1.57-2.69)
Rosa		133		12	3	8	1;07.13-2;10.14
							(MLUw 1.27-2.5)
Irene		18		3	10	4	1;04.16-1;11.13
							(MLUw 1.32-2.95)
Koki		32		7	2	4	1;07.20-2;04.18
							(MLUw 1.96-2.69)
Kerstin	/	16	21	27		1	1;10.03-2;09.11
							(MLUw 1.28-2.32)
Simone	/	166	3	105		24	1;10.03-2;06.23
							(MLUw 1.54-2.78)
Josse	/	62	37	68		1	2;00.07-2;11.09
							(MLUw 1.2-3.57)
Sarah	/	124	104	116		0	1;10.05-3;00.19
							(MLUw 1.09-3.52)

MAIN GENERALISATIONS: STRUCTURALLY HIGH ≠ LATE

Generalisation 2: Structural Height and Acquisition Mismatch

There is a dissociation between structural height and order of emergence. Acquisition does not proceed successively upwards; some syntactically very high elements emerge early.

→ Evidences comes from early **topics** and **illocutionary complementisers**.

 Comparable emergence time of embedding markers and topicalisation in Friedmann et al. (2021) (their Stage 3) is, in several instances, not replicated.

Table 8: Emergence of topicalisation *vs* embedding markers

	Topicalisation	Embedding
Laura	2;08.03	3;00.02
	1.88 MLUw	2.42 MLUw
Gisela	2;08.00	2;08.00 (same file)
	2.61 MLUw	2.61 MLUw
Martina	1;08.17	1;11.20
	1.56 MLUw	1.99 MLUw
Rosa	2;04.29	2;06.29
	1.77 MLUw	2.6 MLUw
Irene	1;08.09b	1;09.10
	2.24 MLUw	3.28 MLUw
Koki	1;11.25	1;11.25 (same file)
	2.47 MLUw	2.47 MLUw
Kerstin	2;00.05	2;07.23
	1.76 MLUw	2.13 MLUw
Simone	1;10.20	2;04.20
	1.62 MLUw	1.96 MLUw
Josse	2;03.28	2;09.02
	1.94 MLUW	2.42 MLUw
Sarah	2;00.17	3;00.19
	1.68 MLUw	3.52 MLUw
Average	1.93 MLUw	2.54 MLUw

■ Crosslinguistic picture of acquisition of topicalisation appears diverse, but in a systematic way → correlation with formal, featural complexity (Bosch & Biberauer, to appear).

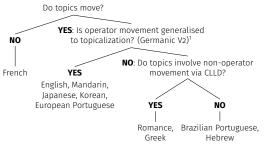
Table 9: Topicalisation strategies, their acquisition and their formal complexity

Language	Acquisition	Formal characteristics of topicali- sation	Parametric complexity
French	Very early	Adjoined or base-generated	Macroparametric
Germanic V2	Very early	Generalised V2 diacritic	Mesoparametric
Mandarin Japanese Korean	(Possibly) early	Operator movement or base-generation ⁴	Mesoparameter
European Portuguese ⁵	Early	Operator movement	Mesoparametric
Spanish Italian Catalan	Late	Non-operator movement with CLLD	Microparameteric
Greek	Late	Non-operator movement with CLLD	Microparameter
Hebrew Brazilian Portuguese	Late	Non-operator movement without CLLD	Microparametric

⁴Depending on theoretical analysis

⁵Non-CLLD topics only.

- Crosslinguistic picture of acquisition of topicalisation appears diverse, but in a systematic way → correlation with formal, featural complexity (Bosch & Biberauer, to appear, for full details).
- (6) Topics in a crosslinguistic acquisition hierarchy



⁵In Germanic, operator topics fall out from its generalised V2 system, unlike the other languages considered, hence its parenthetical placement.

- Crosslinguistic picture of acquisition of topicalisation appears diverse, but in a systematic way → correlation with formal, featural complexity (Bosch & Biberauer, to appear, for full details).
- (6) Topics in a crosslinguistic acquisition hierarchy



! 'Late' topics in maturational work **epiphenomena** of L1s studied, **not** result of universal maturational constraints on CP.

⁵In Germanic, operator topics fall out from its generalised V2 system, unlike the other languages considered, hence its parenthetical placement.

MAIN GENERALISATIONS: STRUCTURALLY HIGH ≠ LATE

 Illocutionary complementisers (Corr, 2016) also emerge from the earliest files for many children (Bosch, 2023c).

- (7) a. Ai, **que** crema! (Laura, MLUw 1.35) ouch that.EXCL burn.3sG 'Ouch, it's burning!'
 - b. Que cau! (Laura, MLUw 1.3) that.EXCL fall.3sG 'It's falling!'
- → Development *cannot* be recapitulating a cartographic spine in a bottom-up manner.
 - ► Some of the structurally highest elements don't emerge last.

■ **Broader** generalisation, attested across a wider sample of 10 Catalan and Spanish children - Bosch (2023c).

Table 10: Emergence of illocutionary and embedding complementisers

Language	Children	Illocutionary	Embedding
	Laura	1;10.22	3;00.02
		1.15 MLUw	2.42 MLUw
	Gisela	1;08.24	2;08.00
		1.13 MLUw	2.61 MLUw
Catalan	Àlvar	2;02.06	2;06.25
Catalali		1.84 MLUw	1.91 MLUw
	Guillem	2;02.28	2;11.25
		1.54 MLUw	2.44 MLUw
	Júlia	2;06.25	2;06.25
		2.74 MLUw	2.74 MLUw
	Irene	1;08.09	1;09.10
		1.88 MLUw	3.28 MLUw
	Yasmin	1;10.08	2;05.18
		1.93 MLUw	2.47 MLUw
Spanish	Juan	1;11.11	2;01.21
Spariisii		1.58 MLUw	1.77 MLUw
	Magín	1;09.01	1;10.00
		1.78 MLUw	2.73 MLUw
	Emilio	2;04.17	2;04.17
		2.18 MLUw	2.18 MLUw
Total		1.67 MLUw	2.42 MLUw

■ **Broader** generalisation, attested across a wider sample of 10 Catalan and Spanish children - Bosch (2023c).

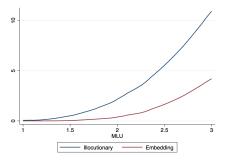


Figure 3: The development of complementisers in the Catalan and Spanish children

■ Structural Height and Acquisition don't match – recap

- ► L1-dependent Topic Development.
- Early acquisition of illocutionary complementisers in Ibero-Romance.
- 'Constrained' heterogeneity in developmental orders of acquisition:
 near-impossible to establish orders of acquisition of all CP diagnostics used that are crosslinguistically universal. Some language/child will show a different ordering

Table 11: Relative order of emergence of diagnostics studied

Order of emergence
Illoc > Wh > Topic > Embed > Split CP
Illoc > Wh > Topic/Embed/Split CP
Illoc/Wh > Topic > Embed > Split CP
Wh > Topic > Embed > Illoc > Split CP
Wh > Illoc/Topic > Embed > Split CP
Topic > Wh/Embed > Illoc > Split CP
Wh > V2 > Topic/YN > Embed > Split CP
Wh > V2/Topic > YN > Embed > Split CP
Wh/V2 > Topic/YN > Embed > Split CP
V2 > Y/N/Topic > Wh > Embed/Split CP

MAIN GENERALISATIONS: CARTOGRAPHIC STRUCTURE IS LATE

Generalisation 3: Cartography is Emergent

Evidence for cartographic-type structure within CP systematically and abruptly emerges at a later developmental stage, elaborating on developmentally-prior structure (a 'basic' CP).

MAIN GENERALISATIONS: CARTOGRAPHIC STRUCTURE IS LATE

Generalisation 3: Cartography is Emergent

Evidence for cartographic-type structure within CP systematically and abruptly emerges at a later developmental stage, elaborating on developmentally-prior structure (a 'basic' CP).

Corroborates independent syntactic and biolinguistic work advocating for an 'emergent cartography' (i.a., Soares, 2006; Ramchand & Svenonius, 2014; Svenonius, 2016; Scontras et al., 2017; Mišmaš et al., 2018; Leivada & Westergaard, 2019; Marušič et al., 2019; Larson, 2021; Ramchand, 2023).

Table 12: Emergence of CP- vs Split CP-structures

	CP-structures	Split CP-structures
Laura	1;10.22	3;03.21
	1.15 MLUw	2.54 MLUw
Gisela	2;04.25	2;08.00
	1.58 MLUw	2.61 MLUw
Martina	1;08.02	2;04.13
	1.57 MLUw	2.69 MLUw
Rosa	1;07.13	2;10.14
	1.27 MLUw	2.5 MLUw
Irene	1;04.16	1;11.13
	1.32 MLUw	2.95 MLUw
Koki	1;07.20	2;04.18
	1.96 MLUw	2.69 MLUw
Kerstin	1;10.03	2;09.11
	1.28 MLUw	2.32 MLUw
Simone	1;09.11	2;06.23
	1.54 MLUw	2.78 MLUw
Josse	2;00.07	2;11.09
	1.2 MLUw	3.57 MLUw
Sarah	1;10.05	3;00.19
	1.09 MLUw	3.52 MLUw

MAIN GENERALISATIONS: CARTOGRAPHIC STRUCTURE IS LATE

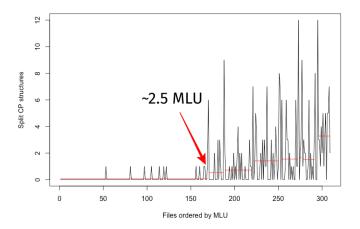
■ Emergence is not just late, but **sudden and 'explosive'** in the production data (z = -2.949874, p = 0.003).

Table 13: Production of Split CP-structures before and after MLUw ~ 2.5

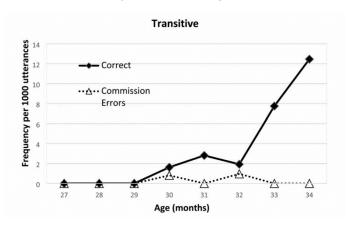
	Before MLUw ~ 2.5	After MLUw ~ 2.5	%
Laura	1	20	4.8-95.2%
Gisela	0	9	0-100%
Martina	0	5	0-100%
Rosa	1	31	3.1-96.9%
Irene	0	85	0-100%
Koki	0	41	0-100 %
Kerstin	3	4	42.9-57.1%
Simone	2	7	22.2-77.8%
Josse	1	19	5-95%
Sarah	2	51	3.8-96.2%
Total	10	272	3.5-96.5%

CHANGE POINT ANALYSIS

■ Detecting when the change occurs with change point analysis



■ Similar **'explosive'** trend reported in Snyder (2007, 2021) for the development verb-particle constructions in English → also taken as evidence for a potential *grammatical* change.



INTERIM SUMMARY

- So far: Closer look at the development of left peripheral knowledge reveals two significant trends:
 - **CP knowledge** emerges **early**, and not in a way that recapitulates a cartographic spine bottom-up.
 - Evidence for articulated CP structure emerges significantly late (after TP and complex structures like subordination).

- **So far:** Closer look at the development of left peripheral knowledge reveals two significant trends:
 - CP knowledge emerges early, and not in a way that recapitulates a cartographic spine bottom-up.
 - Evidence for articulated CP structure emerges significantly late (after TP and complex structures like subordination).

■ BUT:

- Could this be explained by the relative length of these two groups of structures? (e.g., Split CP-structures may need higher MLUW)
- Or input frequency?
- → Results from input analysis and fixed effects logistic regression suggest No, at least not entirely.

Fixed effects logistic regression

■ Testing the likelihood of relative length of CP vs Split CP structures as the driving factor of the patterns → fixed-effects logistic regression model with length of (a sample of) the CP/Split CP utterances analysed, MLUw and Age as fixed effects.

Results:

- → The effect of **mlu** is **highly** statistically significant and positive (β = 1.23, p < .001)
- \rightarrow The effect of **age** is **highly** statistically significant and positive (β = 0.08, p = .001)
- The effect of **length** is **not** statistically significant and positive (β = 0.04, p = .563)

Input analysis

 Ongoing work, but Split CP structures appear to be preliminarily more frequent than illocutionary complementisers, foci, CLLD in some languages.

4. THEORETICAL ACCOUNT AND IMPLICATIONS

IMPLICATIONS

■ Most theoretical approaches → 'fixed granularity', imposed by UG. Development accounted for by 'recapitulating' this spine, either bottom-up or inwardly.

+Ο

IMPLICATIONS

- Most theoretical approaches → 'fixed granularity', imposed by UG. Development accounted for by 'recapitulating' this spine, either bottom-up or inwardly.
- → **Results here**: it's not (just) about directionality and fixed granularity.

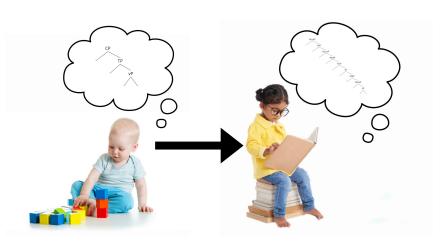
- Most theoretical approaches → 'fixed granularity', imposed by UG. Development accounted for by 'recapitulating' this spine, either bottom-up or inwardly.
- → **Results here**: it's not (just) about directionality and fixed granularity.
 - Generalisations 1-3 generate a contradiction in current maturational approaches.
 - ► Early CP emergence → challenges bottom-up approaches.
 - Early topics/complementisers and late embedding → challenges a cartographic bottom-up approach.
 - Split CP is late → challenges any account with fully innate functional (esp. cartographic) categories (either bottom-up or inward-growing, and continuity).
 - Early CP but late cartographic-type left periphery?

- Most theoretical approaches → 'fixed granularity', imposed by UG. Development accounted for by 'recapitulating' this spine, either bottom-up or inwardly.
- → **Results here**: it's not (just) about directionality and fixed granularity.
 - Generalisations 1-3 generate a contradiction in current maturational approaches.
 - ► Early CP emergence → challenges bottom-up approaches.
 - ► Early topics/complementisers and late embedding → challenges a cartographic bottom-up approach.
 - Split CP is late → challenges any account with fully innate functional (esp. cartographic) categories (either bottom-up or inward-growing, and continuity).
 - **?** Early CP but late cartographic-type left periphery?

Innate categories (fixed granularity) and directionality-based maturation lead to this 'deadlock'

- Our proposed solution here: dropping innate categories (at least cartographic ones).
 - → Emergent categories lend us the flexibility needed to rationalise these patterns.
- Biberauer & Roberts (2015)'s **emergent categorial hierarchy**:
 - ► First, children access core 'macroparametric' structural properties (see also work on 'Very Early Parameter-setting') → basic CP domain.
 - Once mastered, these enable ('unlock') more complex, increasingly 'micro-parametric' refinements → (part-)cartographic structure.
 - Input vs intake discrepancies (Tsimpli, 2014; Gagliardi, 2012; Lidz & Gagliardi, 2015).
- Understanding the **contribution** of neo-emergentism:
 - ✓ Emergent categories → expect departures from strict directionality.
 - ✓ Emergent categories and increasing granularity go hand-in-hand.
 - ✓ Discrete change in representations → 'sudden' and 'explosive' emergence expected (aligning with Snyder, 2007, 2021).

- Our proposed solution here: dropping innate categories (at least cartographic ones).
 - → Emergent categories lend us the flexibility needed to rationalise these patterns.
- Biberauer & Roberts (2015)'s **emergent categorial hierarchy**:
 - ► First, children access core 'macroparametric' structural properties (see also work on 'Very Early Parameter-setting') → basic CP domain.
 - Once mastered, these enable ('unlock') more complex, increasingly 'micro-parametric' refinements → (part-)cartographic structure.
 - Input vs intake discrepancies (Tsimpli, 2014; Gagliardi, 2012; Lidz & Gagliardi, 2015).
- Understanding the **contribution** of neo-emergentism:
 - ✓ Emergent categories → expect departures from strict directionality.
 - ✓ Emergent categories and increasing granularity go hand-in-hand.
 - ✓ Discrete change in representations → 'sudden' and 'explosive' emergence expected (aligning with Snyder, 2007, 2021).
- → This not just accommodates, but crucially *predicts*, the patterns observed



Bigger tree, different granularity

5. CONCLUSION

CONCLUSION

→ **Novel generalisation**: early CP vs late Split CP knowledge, in production.

- → **Novel generalisation**: early CP vs late Split CP knowledge, in production.
- Generalisations 1-3 foreground three (largely) new challenges and requirements:
 - Early CP emergence.
 - ▶ A move away from exclusively directionality-centred approaches.
 - Potential role of granularity and categorial flexibility: neither fixed nor always fine-grained in development.
- Further work needed:
 - More children/languages, other structures and syntactic domains (work in progress!)
 - Comprehension/behavioural studies (although non-trivial to probe)
 - Alternative explanations for the patterns?

- → **Novel generalisation**: early CP vs late Split CP knowledge, in production.
- Generalisations 1-3 foreground three (largely) new challenges and requirements:
 - Early CP emergence.
 - ▶ A move away from exclusively directionality-centred approaches.
 - Potential role of granularity and categorial flexibility: neither fixed nor always fine-grained in development.
- Further work needed:
 - More children/languages, other structures and syntactic domains (work in progress!)
 - Comprehension/behavioural studies (although non-trivial to probe)
 - ► Alternative explanations for the patterns?
- More generally, *productive questions and patterns* surface when probing acquisition through a **neo-emergentist** lens.

What we are working on at the moment

- Acquisition of the left periphery in monolinguals and bilinguals, expanding on this paper:
 - Corroboration with more monolinguals.
 - ► Romance-Romance bilinguals.
 - ► Germanic-Romance bilinguals.
- The development of topicalisation crosslinguistically, and the role of the A' feature geometry.
- Embedded CP and V2 in German-Italian bilinguals.
- Supporting developmental parallels in diachronic syntax.
- Extension to other functional domains beyond CP.

Thank you!

Acknowledgements: Thanks in particular to Dora Alexopoulou, Cécile de Cat, Bert Vaux, Roman Feiman, Itamar Schatz and Julia Schwarz, for very helpful comments and help. Thank you also to audience of BUCLD 48, especially Barbara Lust and William Snyder, IGG 49 and GALA 16, for useful discussion. This work was generously supported by St John's College (Cambridge), the Cambridge Trust and the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC, UKRI).

ides □→



6. EXTRA SLIDES AND APPENDIX

Age is not a reliable predictive factor of timeline of emergence of structures, presenting high variance within each Stage (as in Friedmann et al., 2021). It's the stages that remain identical across children.

Table 14: Age of emergence across the three stages

	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3
Laura	1;10.22	2;04.11	3;03.21
Gisela	_	2;04.25	2;08.00
Martina	1;08.02	1;10.29	2;04.13
Rosa	1;07.13	2;04.29	2;10.14
Irene	1;04.16	1;06.16	1;11.13
Koki	_	1;07.20	2;04.18
Kerstin	1;10.03	2;01.01	2;09.11
Simone	1;09.11	1;10.28	2;06.23
Josse	2;00.07	2;02.08	2;11.09
Sarah	1;10.05	2;00.17	3;00.19

EXTRA SLIDES Additional case studies

- 'Basic' before 'cartographic-type' patterns repeat themselves in other work:
 - ▶ De Lisser et al. (2017) on acquisition of the **TMA** field in **Jamaican Creole**
 - Co-ocurrence of TMA markers systematically at Phase 2 (MLU 2.5-3.49) or Phase 3 (MLU > 3.5) in the data reported. No examples at Stage 1 (< MLU 2.5).
 - Development of **PPs** (Sanfelici & Gallina, 2022) in **Italian**
 - Bimorphemic prepositions (such as dentro a 'inside', sopra di 'above') only in Groups 3 (MLU 2.50-2.99) and Groups 4 (3.0-3.49).
 - ► Mitrofanova (2018)'s **Underspecification of P Hypothesis**
 - Initial stage with a coarse-grained prepositional category, but without cartographic heads encoding fine-grained meaning distinctions (such as Svenonius's, 2006, 2008, AxialPartP).

- **But**, do Split CP structures emerge 'late' simply because lower utterance lengths cannot accommodate these constructions (even though the child's competence *does* capture them)?
 - Likely not. Arguments come from two domains: fixed effects logistic regression and comparison of production lengths across stages.

Fixed effects logistic regression

■ Testing the likelihood of relative length of CP vs Split CP structures as the driving factor of the patterns → fixed-effects logistic regression model with length of (a sample of) the CP/Split CP utterances analysed, MLUw and Age as fixed effects.

Results:

- → The effect of **mlu** is **highly** statistically significant and positive (β = 1.23, p < .001)
- \rightarrow The effect of **age** is **highly** statistically significant and positive (β = 0.08, p = .001)
- → The effect of **length** is **not** statistically significant and positive (β = 0.04, p = .563)

Patterns cannot be accounted for entirely by *length*. MLU (as an average length of *all* utterances and metric of syntactic development) is a much stronger predictor.

 NB: Importantly, length also cannot account for the 'suddenness' and 'explosiveness' with which Split CP structures emerge (growth of utterance length often isn't exponential).

Corpus data: comparison across stages

(g) a Aquest on va?

Structures at Stage 1 or Stage 2 can occasionally be as long as or even longer than those at Stage 3, raising problems for utterance length as a complete account of the patterns.

(0)	this where go.3sg	(Catalan, disela Stage 3)
	'This one, where does it go? / This one, where is it going?	,,,
	b. Jo tinc un petit suisse I have.1SG a petit suisse 'I have a petit suisse.'	(Catalan, Gisela – Stage 1)
	c. No, jo em vull treure els patins no I CL.REFL want.1SG take.off.INF the skates 'No, I want to take off the skates.'	(Catalan, Gisela – Stage 2)
		/

(Catalan Gisola - Stago a)

- (9) a. Nog ik heb het gegeven (Dutch, Josse Stage 3) yet I AUX.HAVE.1sG it give.PTCP 'Yet | gave it'.
 - b. Wat doet ie nou? (Dutch, Josse Stage 1)
 what do.3sG he now
 'What is he doing now?'
 - c. Kan niet zo een zwembad maken van de duikplank (Josse Stage 2) can.1sg not so a pool make.INF from the diving.board 'I can't jump to the swimming pool from the diving board.'

Corpus data: comparison across stages

- Derivational Complexity accounts (e.g., Jakubowicz, 2005, 2011) offer a partial account at best:
 - Many Split CP-structures do not require more movement (more derivational complexity) than CP-structures → they thus fall outside the definition of 'complex' in these approaches (see the Derivational Complexity Metric in Jakubowicz, 2011).
- For more in depth discussion, see the note in Bosch (2023a).

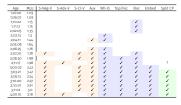


Table 15: Production of structures by Laura (Catalan)



Table 16: Production of structures by Gisela (Catalan)

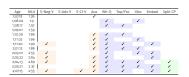


Table 17: Production of structures by Martina (Italian)

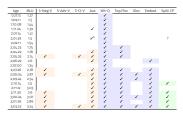


Table 18: Production of structures by Rosa (Italian)

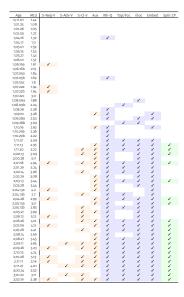


Table 19: Production of structures by Irene (Spanish)

Age	MLU	S-Neg-V	S-Adv-V	S-CI-V	Aux	Wh-Q	Top/Foc	Illoc	Embed	Split CP
1,07.20	1.96						/			
1,09.18	2.54	/		/	/					
1,11.25	2.47	/			1	1	/		/	
2;01.29	2.51	/			1	/	/			
2;02.27	2.47				1	/	/	1	/	
2,03.21	2.07	l .			1	/	/	/		
2;04.18	2.69	/		/	1	/	/		/	/
2;05.24	3.08	/	/	/	/	/	/		/	/
2;06.10	2.71	/	/	/	/	/	/	1	/	/
2:07:10	3.61	/	/	/	1	/	/	1	/	/
2;08.09	2.75	/	/	/		/	/	/	/	/
2,09.14	2.93			1	1	1	/		1	
2:11.14	3.38	/	/	1	1	1	/	1	/	1

Table 20: Production of structures by Koki (Spanish)

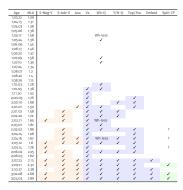


Table 21: Production of structures by Kerstin (German)

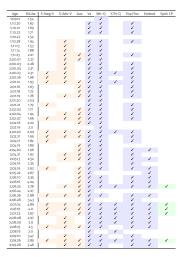


Table 22: Production of structures by Simone (German)

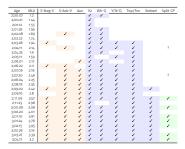


Table 23: Production of structures by Josse (Dutch)

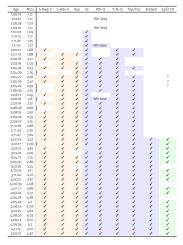


Table 24: Production of structures by Sarah (Dutch)

7. REFERENCES

REFERENCES I

- Biberauer, Theresa. 2011. In defence of lexico-centric parametric variation: two 3rd factor-constrained case studies. Paper presented at the *Workshop on Formal Grammar and Syntactic Variation: Rethinking Parameters* (Madrid).
- Biberauer, Theresa. 2019. Factors 2 and 3: Towards a principled approach. *Catalan Journal of Linguistics (Special Issue)* 45–88.
- Biberauer, Theresa. 2020. Emergent variation from a minimalist perspective: on the significance of imperatives. Talk presented at *Abralin ao Vivo Linguists Online* (online), 22 July.
- Biberauer, Theresa & Ian Roberts. 2015. Rethinking formal hierarchies: A proposed unification. *Cambridge Occasional Papers in Linguistics* 7. 1–31.
- Bosch, Núria. 2023a. A note on Generalisation 3 ('Cartography is Emergent') in Bosch (2023): Alternative explanations for the patterns at Stage 3.

 Unpublished Ms., University of Cambridge. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1sQcdU6Czns9hnq9vbhWS_IOKJBlJD3Hj/view?usp=sharing.
- Bosch, Núria. 2023b. Emergent Syntax and Maturation: a neo-emergentist approach to syntactic development: University of Cambridge MPhil thesis.
- Bosch, Núria. 2023c. Not all complementisers are late: a first look at the acquisition of illocutionary complementisers in Catalan and Spanish. *Isogloss. Open Journal of Romance Linquistics* 9. 1–39.

- Bosch, Núria & Theresa Biberauer. to appear. On Another Topic, How Do Acquisition Orders Vary? The Left-Periphery and Topicalization in Bilingual and Monolingual Acquisition. In *Proceedings of bucld 49*, Cascadilla Press.
- Cinque, Guglielmo. 1999. Adverbs and Functional Heads: A Cross-Linguistic Perspective. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Clahsen, H., S. Eisenbeiss & Anne Vainikka. 1994. The Seeds of Structure: A Syntactic Analysis of the Acquisition of Case Marking. In T. Hoekstra & B. Schwartz (eds.), *Language Acquisition Studies in Generative Grammar*, 85–118. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Corr, Alice. 2016. *Illocutionary complementisers and utterance syntax*: University of Cambridge dissertation.
- Cournane, Ailís & Espen Klævik-Pettersen. 2023. The role of the conservative learner in the rise and fall of verb-second. *Journal of Historical Syntax* 7(6-19). 1–48.
- De Lisser, Tamirand Nnena, Stephanie Durrleman, Ur Shlonsky & Luigi Rizzi. 2017.
 The Acquisition of Tense, Modal and Aspect markers in Jamaican Creole.

 Journal of Child Language Acquisition and Development 5(4). 219.

REFERENCES III

- Diercks, Michaels, Katherine Johns, Bar-Server & Madeline Bossi. 2023.

 Developmental Minimalist Syntax. Ms.
 - https://lingbuzz.net/lingbuzz/007134.
- Frascarelli, Mara & Roland Hinterhölzl. 2007. Types of topics in German and Italian. In K. Schwabe & S. Winkler (eds.), On information structure, meaning and form: Generalizations across languages, 87–116. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Friedmann, Naama, Adriana Belletti & Luigi Rizzi. 2021. Growing Trees: The acquisition of the left periphery. *Glossa: a journal of general linguistics* 6(1). 131.
- Gagliardi, Ann C. 2012. *Input and intake in language acquisition*: University of Maryland, College Park dissertation.
- Galasso, Joseph. 2003. The Acquisition of Functional Categories: A Case Study. Indiana University: IUCL Publications.
- Giorgi, Alessandra & Fabio Pianesi. 1997. Tense and aspect: From semantics to morphosyntax. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Haegeman, Liliane & Ciro Greco. 2020. Frame setters and microvariation of subject-initial Verb Second. In R. Woods & S. Wolfe (eds.), *Rethinking Verb Second*, 61–89. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

REFERENCES IV

- Heim, Johannes & Martina Wiltschko. 2021. Acquiring the form and function of interaction: a comparison of the acquisition of sentence-final particles and tag questions in the Brown corpus. Talk presented at *LAGB Annual Meeting* 2021 (online), 8 September.
- Hinzen, Wolfram & Martina Wiltschko. 2023. Modelling non-specific linguistic variation in cognitive disorders. *Journal of Linguistics* 59(1). 61–87.
- Hsu, Brian. 2017. Verb second and its deviations: An argument for feature scattering in the left periphery. Glossa: a journal of general linguistics 2(1). 35.
- Hyams, Nina. 1992. Morphosyntactic development in Italian and its relevance to parameter-setting models: Comments on the paper by Pizzuto and Casselli. *Journal of Child Language* 19(3). 695–709.
- Hyams, Nina. 1996. The Underspecification of Functional Categories in Early Grammar. In H. Clahsen (ed.), Generative Perspectives on Language Acquisition: Empirical findings, theoretical considerations and crosslinguistic comparisons, 91–127. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Jakubowicz, Celia. 2005. The language faculty: (ab)normal development and interface constraints. Talk presented at GALA, University of Siena.
- Jakubowicz, Celia. 2011. Measuring derivational complexity: New evidence from typically developing and SLI learners of L1 French. *Lingua* 121(3). 339–351.

REFERENCES V

- Larson, Richard K. 2021. Rethinking cartography. Language 97(2). 245–268.
- Leivada, Evelina & Marit Westergaard. 2019. Universal linguistic hierarchies are not innately wired. evidence from multiple adjectives. *PeerJ* 7. e7438.
- Lidz, Jeffrey & Annie Gagliardi. 2015. How Nature Meets Nurture: Universal Grammar and Statistical Learning. *Annu. Rev. Linguist.* 1(1). 333–353.
- Marušič, Franc, Petra Mišmaš & Rok Zaucer. 2019. Looking for Cognitive Foundations of Functional Sequences. *Studies in Polish Linguistics* 1. 53–75. Special Volume.
- Mišmaš, Petra, Franc Marušič & Rok Žaucer. 2018. Looking for an extralinguistic source of the strict order of adjectives. Paper presented at the *A Workshop* (Bled, Slovenia).
- Mitrofanova, Natalia. 2018. Early Underspecification of Functional Categories: Evidence from the Acquisition of Locative PPs in Russian. *Language* Acquisition 25(4). 341–365.
- Moscati, Vincezo. 2023. he observation of superiority on multiple movements to the Italian left-periphery: Intervention effects on nested dependencies and the role of information-structure features. *Journal of Child Language* 1–33.

REFERENCES VI

- Moscati, Vincenzo & Luigi Rizzi. 2021. The Layered Syntactic Structure of the Complementizer System: Functional Heads and Multiple Movements in the Early Left-Periphery. A Corpus Study on Italian. *Frontiers in Psychology* 12. doi:10.3389/fpsyg.2021.627841. https:
 - //www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.627841.
- Poeppel, D. & Ken Wexler. 1993. The Full Competence Hypothesis of Clause Structure in Early German. *Language* 69(1). 1–33.
- Radford, Andrew. 1990. Syntactic theory and the acquisition of English syntax: The nature of early child grammars of English. Oxford: Wiley Blackwell.
- Ramchand, Gillian. 2023. The Symbolic Domain. Talk presented at V-NYI 6 Winter School, 23 January.
- Ramchand, Gillian & Peter Svenonius. 2014. Deriving the functional hierarchy. Language sciences 46. 152–174.
- Rizzi, Luigi. 1993. Some notes on linguistic theory and language development: The case of root infinitives. *Language Acquisition* 3(4). 371–393.
- Roberts, Ian. 2021. *Diachronic Syntax*. Oxford: Oxford University Press 2nd edn.
- Roberts, Ian & Anna Roussou. 2003. *Syntactic change: A minimalist approach to grammaticalization*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

REFERENCES VII

- Sanfelici, Emanuela & Camilla Gallina. 2022. The timing of production: on the acquisition of Italian prepositions. *Isogloss* 8(2). 1–22.
- Scontras, Gregory, Judith Degen & Noah D. Goodman. 2017. Subjectivity Predicts Adjective Ordering Preferences. *Open Mind* 1(1). 53–66.
- Snyder, William. 2007. *Child language: the parametric approach*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Snyder, William. 2021. A parametric approach to the acquisition of syntax. *Journal of Child Language* 48(5), 862–887. doi:10.1017/S0305000921000465.
- Soares, Catarina. 2006. La syntaxe de la périphérie gauche en portugais européen et son acquisition. Paris: University of Paris 8 dissertation.
- Svenonius, Peter. 2006. The emergence of axial parts. Nordlyd 33. 49-77.
- Svenonius, Peter. 2008. Projections of P. In A. Asbury, J. Dotlacil, G. Gehrke & R. Nouwen (eds.), *Syntax and Semantics of Spatial P*, 63–84. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Svenonius, Peter. 2016. Emergent extended projections. Paper presented at MIT, 4 November.
- Tsimpli, Ianthi Maria. 2005. Peripheral positions in early Greek. In M. Stavrou & A. Terzi (eds.), Advances in greek generative syntax: In honor of dimitra theophanopoulou-kontou, 179–216. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

REFERENCES VIII

- Tsimpli, Ianthi Maria. 2014. Early, late or very late?: Timing acquisition and bilingualism. *Linguistic Approaches to Bilingualism* 4(3). 283–313.
- Walkden, George. 2017. Language contact and V3 in Germanic varieties new and old. The Journal of Comparative Germanic Linquistics 20. 49–81.
- Westergaard, Marit. 2009. *The Acquisition of Word Order*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Wiltschko, Martina. 2014. The Universal Structure of Categories: Towards a Formal Typology. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.