

# Subject clitics and preverbal negation in European French: Variation, acquisition, diatopy and diachrony



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## Abstract

This contribution aims to propose a corpus-based analysis of variation and acquisition of subject clitics and preverbal negation in European French within a diglossic approach. The investigation collates previous and new, contemporary and diachronic, adult and child data from France and Belgium. The results point to an analysis of subject clitics as agreement markers in contemporary French. The negative particle *ne* is eliminated from the list of arguments against the morphological analysis of subject clitics, since negative utterances with agreement markers display postverbal negation only. A strong correspondence between two characteristics, i.e. morpho-syntactic status of subject clitics (agreement markers vs. arguments) and type of negation (simple vs. discontinuous), is established supporting the hypothesis on grammatical consistency and pointing to the existence of two different grammars of French (labeled chronologically G<sub>1</sub> and G<sub>2</sub>). Diatopic data inform us that the correspondence seems to hold throughout France, but that diglossia does not appear to apply (or at least applies differently) when reaching the Belgian frontier. Finally, adult and child diachronic data (17th–19th century) also display an interesting co-occurrence in terms of clitics and negation, and invite us to further our understanding of the acquisition and processing of expletive clitics.

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## 1. Introduction

The comparative study of preverbal clitics in colloquial and standard French represents a lively and inspiring area for research in a number of different perspectives. Indeed, the debate surrounding the distribution and forms of these preverbal elements, i.e. subject (*je* 'I', *tu* 'you-sg', *il* 'he', etc.), object (*me* 'me', *te* 'you-sg', *le* 'him', etc.), and adverbial clitics (*y* 'there', *en* 'from there'), together with the negative particle *ne*, is of interest to (at least) morpho-syntacticians studying French in synchrony, diachrony, diatopy, and/or cross-linguistically, language acquisitionists, sociolinguists, and cognitive scientists. This contribution brings these complementary points of view together by examining subject clitics and negation in new child data and by considering the results in the light of the other perspectives. The main goals of this paper are to contribute to (i) the debates surrounding the morpho-syntactic status of subject clitics and preverbal negation in European French, and (ii) the discussion on the formalization of variation in this language in synchrony, diachrony, and

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diatopy. The investigation supports the following hypotheses: (i) subject clitics are agreement markers in colloquial French and syntactic subjects in standard French, and (ii) diglossia can account for this variation in France.

The article is organized as follows. Section 2 presents the theoretical debates on the morpho-syntactic status of subject clitics and preverbal negation, and on the formalization of variation in French. Section 3 examines subject clitics and negation in new child data from south-eastern France (12,969 utterances by 19 children). Section 4 turns to diatopy, and attempts to outline the geographical area where diglossia applies by examining fieldwork undertaken on child and adult central, Parisian, northern and Belgian French. Section 5 then assesses the plausibility of the current existence of diglossia in the brain/mind of French native speakers against adult and child data from the 17th century onwards. Finally, section 6 contains concluding remarks and leads for further research.

## 2. Variation in contemporary adult French

Preverbal clitics in French can be subject (*je* 'I', *tu* 'you-sg', *il* 'he', etc.), object (*me* 'me', *te* 'you-sg', *le* 'him', etc.), adverbial (*y* 'there', *en* 'from there'), or negative clitics (preverbal marker *ne* 'neg'). This contribution focuses on two of these categories, i.e. subject and negative clitics.

### 2.1. The morpho-syntactic status of subject clitics

A particularly long-standing debate surrounds the morpho-syntactic analysis of subject clitics in French, whether in traditional grammar or in more recent frameworks such as generative linguistics (overview in Heap and Roberge, 2001). In his classic work on standard French, Kayne (1975) described these elements as proper syntactic arguments occupying the canonical subject position, and cliticizing to the finite verb at the post-syntactic, phonological level (1a). Kayne's work followed by other influential investigations (Brandi and Cordin, 1989; Cardinaletti and Starke, 1999; De Cat, 2005; Rizzi, 1986; among others) hence analyzed these formatives as morphologically independent words fulfilling a syntactic role. In this configuration, when a subject clitic and a DP co-occur, the syntactic structure represents an instance of left-dislocation (also labeled 'Clitic Left Dislocation (CLLD)' after Cinque, 1990), and the DP occupies a topic position above the subject position (TopP, as in (1b); Rizzi, 1997).<sup>1</sup> Since definiteness characterizes topics, indefinite entities are not expected to occur in TopP, as shown in (1c–d)<sup>2,3</sup>:

- (1) a. [<sub>IP</sub> il parle]  
       he speaks  
       'he speaks'
- b. [<sub>TopP</sub> l' enfant [<sub>IP</sub> il parle]]  
       the child he speaks  
       'the child speaks'
- c. \* [<sub>TopP</sub> un enfant [<sub>IP</sub> il parle]]  
       a child he speaks  
       'a child speaks'
- d. \* [<sub>TopP</sub> quelqu'un [<sub>IP</sub> il parle]]  
       someone he speaks  
       'someone speaks'

In the 1970s–1980s, (socio-)linguists started to examine syntactic variation between written/standard French on the one hand and spoken/colloquial French on the other hand. Questions arose on the status of the latter with regard to the former (e.g. Blanche-Benveniste, 1983; Lambrecht, 1981), and structures that had previously been stigmatized were gradually quantified and described as belonging to non-standard varieties of French (e.g. Hulk, 1991; Zribi-Hertz, 1994). The co-occurrence of DPs and subject clitics in oral French is hence now well documented.<sup>4</sup> First, it is established that the

<sup>1</sup> I leave aside the question of whether the DP is base-generated in the left periphery or copied to it (e.g. De Cat, 2007a vs. Grohmann, 2003).

<sup>2</sup> The term 'indefinite entities' (or 'QPs') refers to: (i) DPs whose determiners bear a quantifying value only, e.g. *un* 'a-masc', *une* 'a-fem', *des* 'some', *tous* 'all', *chaque* 'each', *aucun* 'no', etc., and (ii) indefinite pronouns, e.g. *personne* 'nobody', *rien* 'nothing', etc. (Grevisse and Goosse, 2008:738).

<sup>3</sup> This definition and exclusions are controversial though. Reinhart (1981) for instance clearly distinguishes topichood from old information, and De Cat (2007b), among others, qualifies the exclusions reported in (c) and (d).

<sup>4</sup> Note however that Baude (2006:26) reports that France is far behind with regard to oral databases. Gadet (2009:115) relates this lag to 'the influence of the "ideology of the standard" and, more specifically, the importance of normative attitudes'.

Table 1  
Types of subjects in adult speech.

Corpus	Clitic	DP + Clitic	DP	Total <i>n</i>
Blanche-Benveniste (1994)	81.3%	12.8%	5.9%	203
C3	75.8%	23.9%	0.3%	6,357

phenomenon is common and long-standing in oral Metropolitan French, since 17th century grammarians were already concerned with the status and frequency of this co-occurrence: ‘Ne dites pas *Mon père, il est malade*, au lieu de *Mon père est malade*’ (Chifflet, 1659).<sup>5</sup> Second, a general picture of the types of subjects speakers spontaneously use can be outlined. Thus, one major characteristic that distinguishes colloquial from standard French is the rarity of canonical subject DPs in the former. Indeed, speakers overwhelmingly introduce subject clitics before finite verbs, as shown in Table 1 with adult-directed and child-directed data (Blanche-Benveniste, 1994 and C3 exemplified in (2a)).<sup>6</sup> Oral corpora also indicate that subject clitics emerge with indefinite entities, in coordinate VPs, preverbally in interrogative contexts, and that *il* ‘he/it’ is elided in colloquial French, contrary to standard French (Ashby, 1980, 1984; Blanche-Benveniste, 2000; Dye, 2011; Fonseca-Greber and Waugh, 2003; Kayne, 1975; Lambrecht, 1981; Morin, 1979; Zribi-Hertz, 1994; examples from C3 in (2b) and (2c)).

(2) Subjects in adult speech (C3):

- a. je crois que Lou elle va te montrer où il est le début.  
I think that Lou she goes you show where it is the beginning  
‘I think that Lou is going to show you where the beginning is’
- b. tous les pirates i[z] ont des tatouages.  
all the pirates they have some tattoos  
‘all pirates have tattoos’
- c. mais il est triste et i met les pieds dans l’ eau?  
but he is sad and he puts the feet in the water  
‘but he is sad and puts his feet in the water?’

Thus, the pervasive presence of preverbal subject clitics in many finite contexts has led some scholars to propose an alternative to the classic, syntactic analysis of these formatives by considering them as agreement markers not syntactic subjects in colloquial Metropolitan French as well as Quebec, Ontario, and Swiss varieties of French (Auger, 1994; Culbertson, 2010; Dye, 2011; Fonseca-Greber, 2000; Kaiser, 1994; Miller, 1992; Miller and Monachesi, 2003; Nadasdi, 1995; Pierce, 1992; Roberge, 1986, 1990; Zribi-Hertz, 1994).<sup>7</sup> This analysis views co-occurring clitics and DPs as doubling, not dislocation. The DP occupies the subject position, and the emergence of the clitic is in principle less constrained.<sup>8</sup> This alternative analysis of French subject clitics is hence reminiscent of the morphological analysis of subject clitics in some northern Italian dialects (henceforth NIDs) which have been shown to display clitics in all possible finite contexts, as illustrated in (3) with Poletto’s (2000) examples. Section 3.2 will point to interesting parallels between these dialects and French child speech.

(3) Doubling in NIDs:

- a. Pronominal DPs:  
TI te magni sempre. (Venice)  
YOU scl eat always  
‘YOU always eat’
- b. Referential DPs:  
el fio el mangia l pom. (Milan)  
the boy scl eats the apple  
‘the boy eats the apple’

<sup>5</sup> ‘Do not say *My father, he is ill* for *My father is ill*’, cited in Blanche-Benveniste (2000:37).

<sup>6</sup> Details on C3 are given in section 3.1.

<sup>7</sup> King and Nadasdi (1997) illustrate that the analysis cannot be extended to all varieties of colloquial French though (Newfoundland French in Canada patterns like standard French with regard to subject clitics).

<sup>8</sup> Doubling is not a unitary phenomenon though. See Poletto (2000) for qualifications on doubling with subject clitics, and Kallulli and Tasmowski (2008) with object clitics.

- c. QPs:  
 un quidun el riverà in ritart. (Milan)  
 a somebody scl will-arrive in late  
 'somebody will arrive late'
- d. *Wh*-variables:  
 le fomne che le neta le scale e endade via. (Friulian)  
 the women who scl clean the stairs scl went away  
 'the women who clean the stairs have left'

Section 3 will examine the properties of child subject clitics in French in terms of presence, position, repeatability, co-occurring elements, and // elision, between the ages of 3;6 and 4;10. These observations will be collated with previous results from the same children before 3;6 in order to (i) propose a longitudinal analysis of subject clitics in child French, and (ii) test the morphological analysis of these elements in this system compared to NIDs. A major counterargument to the analysis of subject clitics as agreement markers in French is the presence of intermediate clitics between the subject clitic and the finite verb, notably the preverbal negative marker *ne* (De Cat, 2005). The next section outlines the theoretical debate surrounding the status of this particular element.

## 2.2. The morpho-syntactic status of the negative particle *ne*

Zanutini (1997) established a threefold classification of Romance languages according to the distribution of their negative markers, as reported in (4).

- (4) Distribution of negative markers in Romance languages:
- a. Preverbal marker only, e.g. Italian:  
 Gianni non legge articoli di sintassi.  
 Gianni neg reads articles of syntax  
 'Gianni does not read syntax articles'
  - b. Post-verbal marker only, e.g. Valdostain<sup>9,10</sup>:  
 lo film l' èra pa dzen.  
 the movie scl was neg beautiful  
 'the movie was not good'
  - c. Co-occurring pre- and post-verbal markers, e.g. Standard French:  
 je n' ai pas parlé de toi.  
 I neg have neg spoken of you  
 'I have not spoken of you'

In Standard French, the preverbal clitic *ne* is traditionally analyzed as the head of an independent negative projection, viz. NegP (Ouhalla, 1991; Pollock, 1989; Rowlett, 1998; among others). Zanutini (1997), however, specifies that the case of French is complex due to sociological and geographical factors. Indeed, Ashby's fieldwork (Ashby, 1976 onwards) has shown that *ne* can be frequently omitted in colloquial French, as in (5). The negative particle is hence generally absent from child-directed speech (Clark and de Marneffe, 2012; Dye, 2011).

- (5) Colloquial French:  
 j' ai pas parlé de toi.  
 I have neg spoken of you  
 'I have not spoken of you'

Variation between standard and colloquial French is thus widely documented in the literature, and different formalizations exist. Depending on the approach, the presence/absence of *ne* is deemed to be either sociolinguistically or grammatically constrained in adult speech (e.g. Ashby, 1981, 1982, 2001; Coveney, 1996, 2002 vs. Barra-Jover, 2004; Massot, 2010; further details in section 2.4), and its morpho-syntactic status is discussed. Ouhalla (1991:142–143) for instance, who

<sup>9</sup> Valdostain is a variety of Franco-Provençal mainly spoken in Switzerland and eastern parts of France.

<sup>10</sup> Markers come in different forms in this category, e.g. *nen* in Piedmontese, and different positions, e.g. Milanese *no* is lower than Valdostain *pa*. Their 'defining property' though is that the negative marker 'always follows the main verb when it is finite and in a simple form' (Zanutini, 1997:4).

applies the morphological analysis to subject clitics in colloquial French, suggests that the latter can co-occur with *ne*, and also attributes a morphological status to *ne* in the verbal complex since it appears ‘inside AGR [Agreement, i.e. the subject clitic] and outside TNS [Tense]’. To the contrary, De Cat (2005:1201–1203; 2007b:15–18), who mentions that *ne* is productive in spontaneous speech, argues that the negative particle cannot be morphological insofar as its value (negative or restrictive; referring to Godard, 2004), and its scope (clausal or longer-distance; referring to Godard, 2004; Milner, 1979; Rowlett, 1998) are syntactically determined. Culbertson (2010) also supports the syntactic analysis of *ne*. The morpho-syntactic status of this preverbal clitic is hence debated in adult data. Section 3.4 will examine *ne* in child data and attempt to shed different light on the matter.

### 2.3. Do both elements co-occur?

The presence of subject clitics and the absence of *ne* have been often related in adult- and child-directed speech. Drawing on adult data, Ashby (1977:62) for instance reports the existence of a correspondence between the absence of *ne* and the presence of a subject clitic (55% deletion with a clitic vs. 12.1% with a noun), and further suggests that: ‘The trend toward the synthesis of these clitics with the verb is likely the major reason for the advanced state of the loss of *ne* in this environment’.

As far as child-directed speech is concerned, Culbertson (2010:95) interestingly mentions that ‘*ne*-retention [average rate: 7.6%, 456/5990] is clearly affected by the properties of the preceding subject’ since *ne* is preferentially dropped after a subject clitic (retention rate in this context: 6.3%, 332/5229), whereas *ne* is largely maintained in the context of a DP with no clitic (83.3%, 20/24).<sup>11</sup> Crucially, Culbertson (2010:95–96) also mentions that this pattern is statistically reliable in the corpus, but does not know of any historical evidence which would correlate the emergence of the morphological status of subject clitics and the loss of the preverbal negative particle. This investigation will show that the same pattern exists in child data, will suggest a formalization within the diglossic approach to variation (Barra-Jover, 2004, 2010; Massot, 2008, 2010; Massot and Rowlett, 2013; Zribi-Hertz, 2011), and rely on diachronic data (Foisil, 1989; Martineau and Mougeon, 2003) in order to investigate the historical and cognitive aspects of the correspondence.

### 2.4. Formalizing variation: three possible approaches

The term diglossia stems from Ferguson’s (1959) seminal work on Arabic, Modern Greek, Swiss German and Haitian Creole.<sup>12</sup> The author defined diglossia as a language situation ‘where two varieties of a language exist side by side throughout the community, with each having a definite role to play’ (Ferguson, 1959:325). Thus, a sociolinguistically ‘high variety’ (H) of the language is activated in formal situations, whether written or spoken (poetry, newspaper editorials, university lectures, etc.), whereas a ‘low variety’ (L) is used for more ordinary purposes (folk literature, conversations with family, etc.). The speakers hence regard H either as prestigious compared to L or as the only language they use since they sometimes deny the existence of L (Ferguson, 1959:330). Another major characteristic of diglossia is the difference in the way children acquire the two varieties. Indeed, ‘L is invariably learned by children in what may be regarded as the “normal” way of learning one’s mother tongue’ whereas ‘H may be heard by children from time to time, but the actual learning of H is chiefly accomplished by the means of formal education’ (Ferguson, 1959:331). Thus, it is expected that non-educated speakers and preschool children should not be actively diglossic. As far as language acquisition is concerned, diglossia then makes the very strong prediction that there are no native speakers of H, and investigations in diglossic communities are expected to uncover the following sequence: (i) initial presence of one grammar only, and (ii) subsequent emergence and development of a second grammar.

French is a language that exhibits broad differences in various phonological, morphological, syntactic and lexical configurations, together with strong sociolinguistic constraints on the use of these different variants (e.g. Lodge, 2007 on the codification of French). The following question then naturally arose, as termed by Blanche-Benveniste (2003:317): ‘Les Français seraient-ils atteints de *diglossie*?’<sup>13</sup> Some linguists answer the question negatively by adopting a variationist approach which accounts for variation within one unique grammar (e.g. Blanche-Benveniste and Martin, 2010; Coveney, 2011; Gadet, 2007). Other linguists answer the question positively, and argue that French actually spreads over two distinct grammars in the speakers’ mind/brain (Barra-Jover, 2004, 2010; Massot, 2008, 2010; Massot and Rowlett,

<sup>11</sup> Culbertson (2010) relies on the Lyon Corpus which includes 106,000 utterances from four French children and their caregivers (Demuth and Tremblay, 2008).

<sup>12</sup> The linguistic situation in Cyprus (with Cypriot Greek and Standard Modern Greek) has also recently been described as possibly diglossic, giving rise to very interesting acquisition and interface issues, and a new cover term for bilectalism, bidialectism and bilingualism, i.e. ‘bi-x’ (Grohmann and Leivada, 2012; Rowe and Grohmann, 2013).

<sup>13</sup> ‘Have French people caught *diglossia*?’.

Table 2  
The corpus.

Specifications	C1	C2	C3	C4
Date	2003/2004	2006/2007	2007/2008	2008/2009
Hours	13	25	20	20
Sessions	5	13	10	10
Recording	Audio	Audio & video	Audio & video	Audio & video
Adults	1	3	1	1
Utterances	N/A	12,891	9,042	N/A
Children	17	20	19	18
Age range	2;3–3;1	2;5–4;0	3;6–4;11	4;5–5;11
Utterances	1,072	15,992	12,969	N/A

2013; Palasis, 2013; Zribi-Hertz, 2011).<sup>14</sup> Crucially, the variationist approach and diglossia then make very different predictions about combinations of variants. Indeed, the former does not formalize any particular constraint with regard to combinations, whereas the latter makes very strict predictions on this particular matter, and Massot (2010:90) even argues that: 'Pour chaque énoncé produit par un locuteur éduqué, celui-ci s'engage pour l'énoncé entier dans l'une de ses deux compétences [...]'.<sup>15</sup> Finally, Villeneuve and Auger (2013) capture the differences and relationships between French and Picard with a model that aims to reconcile diglossia and variation. The next section will test the strongest thesis, i.e. diglossia, against contemporary child data.

### 3. Variation in contemporary child French

#### 3.1. The data

The investigation relies on newly processed spontaneous data collected with 19 children in a kindergarten class in south-eastern France (henceforth C3, as detailed in Table 2). Table 2 shows that C3 is part of a broader, longitudinal and cross-sectional corpus which has already been partly examined (Palasis, 2005, 2010a,b, 2013).<sup>16</sup>

The same methodology was used throughout the corpus. The data consist of child–child and child–adult interactions. The investigator recorded small groups of 3 to 5 children in a room adjoining the children's usual classroom. The children were encouraged to tell the investigator about their activities in and out of school, to play games, or to look at books.

#### 3.2. Assessing the status of subject clitics in contemporary child French

##### 3.2.1. Presence and position with regard to the finite verb

Table 3 outlines the different types of subjects children use in the corpus. Observation of C3 corroborates previous findings: (i) preverbal clitics are pervasive in finite clauses, either appearing alone or co-occurring with a pronominal or referential DP (as illustrated in (6a), (6b) and (6b'), respectively)<sup>17</sup>; (ii) non-target null subjects (as in (6c)) decrease drastically during the period<sup>18</sup>; (iii) canonical subject DPs (as in (6d)) remain very rare throughout the whole period. In terms of development between C2 and C3, the concomitant decrease of null subjects and increase of clitics on the one hand, and the stable and low rate of DPs on the other hand suggest that the early null subjects are null clitics, not null DPs.

- (6) Child data (C3):
- a. et après i sait. (Elena, 4;4)  
and after he knows  
'and afterwards he knows'

<sup>14</sup> The grammars are named differently though, depending on the background of the authors, e.g. 'demotic' and 'late classic' (Massot, 2008), 'standard' and 'dialectal' (Zribi-Hertz, 2011), 'G<sub>1</sub>' and 'G<sub>2</sub>' (Palasis, 2013).

<sup>15</sup> 'Every time an educated speaker produces an utterance, he engages himself in one of his two grammars for the entire utterance [...]'.  
<sup>16</sup> C2 is available on CHILDES (Child Language Data Exchange System) at <http://childes.talkbank.org/browser/index.php?url=Romance/French/Palasis/>. The figures for C3 are provisional (9 sessions out of 10), and C4 has not been processed yet.

<sup>17</sup> There are no postverbal clitics in C1 and C3, and only 6 in C2 (details and data from C2 in Palasis, 2013).

<sup>18</sup> The null subject phenomenon is well-documented in French and other non-null subject languages. This matter cannot be addressed in this article for reasons of space but see Prévost (2009:150–160) for an overview of the literature on French, and Palasis (2012) for an analysis of the phenomenon in C1 and C2.

Table 3  
Subjects in early French.

Types of subjects		C1	C2	C3
a	Clitic	50.9% (459)	64.6% (5,831)	70.9% (6,719)
b	Clitic + DP	22.5% (203)	31.1% (2,804)	28.1% (2,658)
c	Null	26.6% (240)	3.9% (348)	0.6% (60)
d	DP	0% (0)	0.4% (39)	0.4% (35)
Total		100% (902)	100% (9,022)	100% (9,472)

Table 4  
Types and relative rates of doubling in C3.

Constituents	All	Doubled
Pronominal DPs	54.6% (1,697)	99.9% (1,696)
Referential DPs	30.3% (942)	97.5% (918)
Indefinite DPs	1.4% (43)	76.7% (33)
Relative pronouns	13.7% (426)	2.6% (11)
Total	100.0% (3,108)	85.5% (2,658)

- b. moi j' ai un livre de pirates. (Massimo, 3;6)  
me I have a book of pirates  
'I have a book of pirates'
- b'. mon papa il a une moto. (Massimo, 3;6)  
my father he has a motorbike  
'my father has a motorbike'
- c. veux pas ce livre! (Enzo, 4;1)  
want not this book  
'(I) do not want this book'
- d. le Père Noël m' a apporté une Barbie. (Mathilde, 3;9)  
the Father Christmas me has brought a Barbie  
'Father Christmas has brought me a Barbie doll'

Regular repetition of subject clitics in conjoined VPs follows directly from the overwhelming presence of these clitics in finite clauses, as illustrated in (7a), while (7b) presents the only occurrence of non-repetition.

(7) Conjoined VPs (C3):

- a. elle joue elle danse elle met la musique et elle dort. (Lucille, 3;10)  
she plays she dances she puts the music and she sleeps  
'she plays, dances, turns the music on, and sleeps'
- b. après elle soufflait et tout le monde goûtait et disait miam miam. (Elena, 4;10)  
after she blew and all the world tasted and said yam yam  
'afterwards she blew and everybody tasted (the cake) and said yam yam'

### 3.2.2. Co-occurring constituents

In addition to the co-occurrences with pronominal and definite DPs illustrated in (6b–b'), C3 displays clitic associations with indefinite DPs and relative pronouns, as reported in (8). Table 4 gives the breakdown and relative doubling rates for each type of co-occurrence.

(8) Doubling (C3):

- a. Indefinite DPs:
- i. et même qu' un Pokemon il a des crocodiles. (Massimo, 3;9)  
and even that a Pokemon he has some crocodiles  
'and even a Pokemon has crocodiles'
- ii. personne i m l' a dit. (Matteo, 4;5)  
nobody he me it has told  
'nobody told it to me'

- b. Relative pronouns:
- i. ma mère qui il a dit qu' y aura des médailles. (Massimo, 3;9)  
my mother who he has said that there will-have some medals  
'my mother who said that there will be medals'
  - ii. y a un sac qu' il est marron et noir.<sup>19</sup> (Lina, 4;1)  
there has a bag that he is brown and black  
'there is a bag that is brown and black'

Table 4 shows that pronominal and referential DPs represent the vast majority of the subjects in child speech (84.9%), and that their average relative doubling rates are close to 100%. All 19 children use these two structures. These doubled DPs together with the non-doubled DPs ( $n = 35$  in Table 3) indicate that definiteness is a general characteristic of subjects (71.4% of the latter are definite entities). Indefinite DPs are hence very rare in subject position (1.4%). They are nevertheless also mainly doubled (76.7%). 12 children out of 19 produce these indefinite DPs, but contrary to definite DPs the individual doubling rates are extremely heterogeneous (7 children: 100%; 1: 66.7%; 2: 50%; 2: 0%). Nonetheless, they indicate that most of the children predominantly apply the doubling strategy when introducing an indefinite DP in subject position. Interestingly, one of the two children who never double these indefinite DPs is the only child not to double a pronominal DP (occurrence reported in (14a)).

Finally, the average doubling rate for relative pronouns in C3 is 2.6%, with 4 children out of 19 who occasionally double these pronouns (individual rates: 9.1%, 15%, 15.4%, 20%). These occurrences are particularly relevant to the debate on the status of subject clitics since relative pronouns are never doubled in adult French (Labelle, 1988). Moreover, the form of the relative pronoun *qui* 'who/that' is used to test the status of [i] in [ki], since its non-deletion before a vowel is interpreted as supporting the analysis of [i] as an agreement marker in Quebec Colloquial French (henceforth QCF; Auger, 1994). In C3, 17 children out of 19 produce the relative pronoun *qui* before a vowel ( $n = 92$ ), and only 13% of these occurrences are elided ( $n = 12$ ). The children hence predominantly do not elide *qui* before a vowel (87%), and 11 children even never elide their forms ( $n = 52$ ), as exemplified in (9a). The 4 children who occasionally double relative pronouns belong to this subgroup of 11. Auger (1994) also argues that the presence of two *qui*'s in *wh*-questions in QCF supports the morphological analysis of subject clitics in this language. Thus, QCF displays sequential *qui*'s (*qui qui est venu?* 'who who came'), as well as complex forms (e.g. *qui est-ce qui, qui c' qui, qui c'est qui*), but no structures with a single occurrence of the interrogative pronoun *qui* 'who' (Auger, 1994:91). C3 presents similar characteristics to QCF on this matter since three different combinations of two *qui*'s are attested in the data, i.e. *c'est qui qui, qui c'est qui*, and *qui est-ce qui*, as illustrated in (9b–d), and these combinations represent 79.5% ( $n = 35$ ) of all the subject *wh*-questions. Simple *qui* pronouns are hence much less frequent than combinations thereof (20.5%,  $n = 9$ ) and are uttered by 5 children only.

- (9) Relative and interrogative *qui* forms (C3):
- a. j' ai vu un cochon qui est parti. (Enzo, 4;1)  
I have seen a pig that is gone  
'I saw a pig that left'
  - b. c' est qui qui a la vache? (Elena, 4;9)  
it is who who has the cow  
'who has the cow?'
  - c. qui c' est qui était là? (Dylan, 3;8)  
who it is who was there  
'who was there?'
  - d. qui est c' qui m' a ouvert ça? (Enzo, 4;1)  
who is it who me has opened that  
'who opened that for me?'

In sum, relative pronouns can co-occur with subject clitics in child data despite the total absence of such combinations in child input. Second, interrogative pronouns show a strong tendency not to emerge as simple forms. In addition, let us remember that pronominal, referential and indefinite DPs also largely surface with subject clitics. Most of the different subject-related constituents in child French are hence doubled with a clitic. Doubling does not apply across-the-board though, contrary to NIDs. In order to test the strength of the doubling hypothesis in child French, the next section will report Poletto's (1993, 2000) description of doubling in the NIDs, and verify if the phenomena observed in C3 comply with Poletto's implications.

<sup>19</sup> A reservation on this type of utterance is that *qu'* could be a complementizer not a relative pronoun.

Table 5  
Doubling in NIDs.

Types	Tonic pronouns	DPs	QPs	Wh-variables	Dialects
1	+	–	–	–	Central Veneto
2	+	+	–	–	Trentino & North Lombard
3	+	+	+	–	Milanese & East Lombard
4	+	+	+	+	Friulian, Piedmontese & Ligurian

### 3.2.3. Cross-linguistic comparison with NIDs

Poletto (1993, 2000) proposed one-way implications in order to capture the variation found in NIDs with regard to doubling. Her implications are reported in (10), and Table 5 exemplifies the four possible combinations.

- (10) Poletto's (2000:140) one-way implications on doubling in NIDs:
- 'If [referential] DPs are doubled in a given dialect, tonic pronouns are also doubled.
  - If QPs are doubled, both DPs and tonic pronouns are doubled.
  - If variables in *wh*-contexts such as relative, interrogative, and cleft structures are doubled, doubling is always obligatory with all other types of subjects.'

With the exception of the Friulian dialects spoken in north-eastern Italy, Poletto's implications show a gradual geographical pattern in this area, moving west from the east coast (Type 1: Central Veneto dialects) to the French-Italian border (Type 4: Piedmontese and Ligurian dialects).<sup>20</sup> Our recordings of child French took place just a few kilometers away on the French side of this border. It can be seen from Table 5 that child data seem quite similar to Type 3 with some utterances compatible with Type 4. Following Roberge (1990), Culbertson (2010:121) integrated standard and colloquial French to Poletto's typology of subject doubling by: (i) distinguishing standard and colloquial French, (ii) placing standard French as a system with no doubling at all, and (iii) describing colloquial French as a Type 2 system. The data examined in this contribution suggest that standard and colloquial French differ even more deeply insofar as the latter seems to match Type 3, not Type 2.

Besides, the implications put forward by Poletto for entire linguistic systems also seem to apply at an individual level in C2 and C3. Indeed, in both sets of data, all the children double pronominal and referential DPs. In C2, the 3 children who double *wh*-variables belong to the small subgroup of 5 who double QPs. In C3, 2 of the 4 children who double *wh*-variables also double QPs. The other two children unfortunately never produce QPs in subject position, whether doubled or not, so the implication cannot be confirmed across-the-board in C3. The occurrences are nevertheless predominantly consistent with Poletto's implications at two levels: (i) by and large, the linguistic system we are describing seems to represent a geographical continuum with the contiguous NIDs with regard to doubling, and (ii) individually, the implications seem to hold. The connection between the latter and the former, and the underlying explanation of such implications could then represent interesting leads for further research in cognitive sciences.

### 3.2.4. // elision

Last but not least, previous literature on the matter has established that subject clitics vary in their form according to the phonological context in colloquial French, but not in standard French (e.g. Ashby, 1984; Morin, 1979; detailed account in Culbertson, 2010:90–93). These variations include fusion of *je* 'I' with certain verbs and elision of *il* 'he/it' before a consonant. Pope (1934:324) reported that the phonological reduction of *il* for instance is attested in French since the end of the 12th century 'with the common people', and according to Chervel (2011:198), it is 19th century schooling and its normative pressure that restored the pronunciation of the final // in pre-consonantal position.

These alternations have hence been extensively studied in adult data. // elision has also been highlighted in different child corpora (e.g. Grégoire, 1947; Guillaume, 1927; review of data in Clark, 1985), and C3 shows the same strict alternation pattern, i.e. full /il/ before a vowel and elided // before a consonant (99.3% of the *il* clitics, total  $n = 2208$ ), as exemplified in (11).<sup>21</sup>

- (11) // elision (C3):  
 et après i sort et après il habite ici. (Dylan, 3;8)  
 and after he goes out and after he lives here  
 'and afterwards he goes out and afterwards he lives here'

<sup>20</sup> A gradual geographical variation pattern is also reported for object-clitic doubling in the Balkan languages (Friedman, 2008; Tomić, 2008).

<sup>21</sup> The remainder 0.7% is analyzed in section 3.4.

Table 6  
Negation in C3.

Forms	Simple	Discontinuous
<i>pas</i> 'not'	89.7% (967)	85.0% (17)
<i>plus</i> 'no more'	7.9% (85)	10.0% (2)
<i>jamais</i> 'never'	1.9% (21)	5.0% (1)
<i>que</i> 'only'	0.5% (5)	0.0% (0)
Total	100.0% (1,078)	100.0% (20)

### 3.3. Discussion on the morpho-syntactic status of subject clitics

The close examination of the finite clauses produced by a group of 19 children between 3;6 and 4;10 (C3) sheds light on the following characteristics of subject clitics at this age. First, their presence, which was already predominant in C1 and C2, becomes pervasive in C3 (73.4%, 95.7% and 99.0%, respectively). This increase co-occurs with a decrease of the null subjects (26.6%, 3.9% and 0.6%, respectively). DPs which represent the expected subject in standard French remain very low throughout the period (0%, 0% and 0.4%, respectively).<sup>22</sup> Thus, subject clitics seem almost obligatory in this linguistic system. It follows that these formatives appear in complementary syntactic contexts, i.e. main and embedded clauses as well as coordinated structures, and that most of the pronominal, referential and indefinite subject DPs occur with a clitic (99.9%, 97.5% and 76.7%, respectively). Even *wh*-variables which never co-occur with a subject clitic in adult speech are sometimes doubled in these data (2.6%), yielding an average doubling-rate of 85.5% in C3. Second, the position of subject clitics with regard to their host is remarkably constant, i.e. always preverbal, even in interrogatives. Since the data display no clitic-verb inversions, two competing hypotheses can be drawn with regard to verb movement to the left periphery once the verb has checked its inflectional features in the agreement/tense area. In order to yield the correct order, the finite verb has to either remain in the agreement/tense area, or move higher with the preverbal clitic. The former hypothesis suggests that we should find no particular difference with regard to the order of the constituents in declarative and interrogative sentences, whereas the latter entails that the clitic-verb sequences should be found relatively higher in interrogative structures than in declarative sentences. An examination of the position of these sequences with regard to the subject DPs seems to favor the second hypothesis. Indeed, subject DPs mainly occur to the left of the clitic-verb sequences in declarative structures (91.6%, total  $n = 1895$ , as in (12a)), whereas they show a tendency to appear to their right in interrogative structures (62.3%, total  $n = 162$ , as in (12b)). We can hence hypothesize that clitic and verb move together past the DP in the latter only.

(12) Lateralization of the DP in declarative and interrogative structures (C3):

- a. Sanbarbe il essaie de l' attraper. (Matteo, 4;4)  
Sanbarbe he tries to him catch  
'Sanbarbe tries to catch him'
- b. et qu'est-c' qu' i fait Sanbarbe là? (Matteo, 4;4)  
and what he does Sanbarbe there  
'and what is Sanbarbe doing?'

Finally, we have seen that subject clitics and *wh*-elements display regular phonological patterns according to the context. On the one hand, subject clitics in Metropolitan child French hence seem to display a substantial number of characteristics that lead to an analysis in terms of agreement markers. On the other hand, doubling does not apply across-the-board, contrary to QCF and NIDs. Let us extend our investigation to negation in C3.

### 3.4. Negation in contemporary child French

Children overwhelmingly use simple rather than discontinuous negation in C3 (98.2% vs. 1.8%, total  $n = 1098$ ). Table 6 lists the different negative adverbs found in these utterances and their relative occurrence rates. Examples are reported in (13).

(13) Simple negation (C3):

- a. mon papa i voulait pas. (Victor, 4;3)  
my dad he wanted not  
'my dad did not want'

<sup>22</sup> In contrast, Blanche-Benveniste (1994:87) reports DP rates of 38.3% and 83.3% in two written corpora of French.

- b. on va plus toucher à ça. (Matteo, 3;11)  
 one will no more touch at that  
 ‘we will not touch that anymore’
- c. moi je mange jamais à la cantine. (Lucien, 4;2)  
 me I eat never at the canteen  
 ‘I never eat at the canteen’
- d. moi j’ ai vu que des dauphins. (Nina, 4;1)  
 me I have seen only some dolphins  
 ‘I only saw dolphins’

Discontinuous negation (1.8%,  $n = 20$ ) hence barely extends compared to C2 (1.2%,  $n = 16$ ; Palasis, 2013), but the contexts in which preverbal *ne* emerges and the form of *il* in these utterances call for comments. First, as far as contexts are concerned, one peculiarity comes into sight. Discontinuous negation appears in 6 different contexts, i.e. *je*, *il*, imperatives, *lui*, *elle* and relative *qui* ( $n = 7, 6, 4, 1, 1$  and  $1$ , respectively), and the *lui* context reported in (14a) is very singular. Indeed, this utterance combines two rare phenomena in the corpus which are both uncontroversially described as belonging to standard French, i.e. discontinuous negation ( $n = 20$ ) and a non-doubled third-person strong pronoun ( $n = 1$ ). Second, the form of *il* in these negative sentences ( $n = 6$ ) stands out. When *il* surfaces before *ne*, it never obeys the strict alternation pattern described in section 3.2.4. The pair (14b–c) illustrates this contrast (same child, same session, same verb), which is due neither to */n/* nor to non-strict adjacency to the finite verb (as illustrated in (14d–e)).<sup>23</sup>

(14) Interesting facts (C3):

- a. mais lui n’ est pas d’ accord. (Kelsang, 4;7)  
 but him neg is not of agreement  
 ‘but he disagrees’
- b. mais lui il ne voulait toujours pas. (Lou, 4;9)  
 but him he neg wanted always not  
 ‘but he still did not want to’
- c. mais i voulait pas que j’ le nourrisse. (Lou, 4;9)  
 but he wanted not that I him feed  
 ‘but he did not want me to feed him’
- d. i nage. (William, 4;2)  
 he swims  
 ‘he is swimming’
- e. Quentin i nous a fait une balançoire. (Lina, 4;3)  
 Quentin he us has made a swing  
 ‘Quentin made us a swing’

### 3.5. Discussion on negation

#### 3.5.1. Implications for the diglossic hypothesis

The negative utterances in C3 represent an interesting test with regard to the diglossic approach mentioned in section 2.4. The strongest hypothesis defended by Massot (2010) predicts grammatical consistency throughout every utterance. Discontinuous negation is uncontroversially analyzed as belonging to the ‘high variety’ (H) of French. Consequently, any peculiarity emerging with discontinuous negation in child utterances should also be considered as pertaining to H. The examination of C2 highlighted a strong correspondence between the presence of *ne* and the non-elision of *il* (Palasis, 2013). Following Massot (2010), the entire sentences were considered as stemming from a unique grammar  $G_2$ , which displays discontinuous negation and argument clitics, contrary to  $G_1$  which features simple negation and agreement markers. Two series of predictions were made with regard to negative utterances. First: (i) simple negation ( $G_1$ ) should never surface with a non-doubled subject DP ( $G_2$ ), and (ii) discontinuous negation ( $G_2$ ) should never surface with a doubled subject ( $G_1$ ). Second: (i) all the subject clitics emerging with simple negation ( $G_1$ ) should be elided before a consonant ( $G_1$ ), and (ii) all the subject clitics emerging with discontinuous negation ( $G_2$ ) should be full clitics ( $G_2$ ). Both series of predictions on grammatical consistency are

<sup>23</sup> Note that both *il* and *je* are elided in (14c).

borne out in new C3, as exemplified in (13a) and (14a–c). Massot's (2010) strong and controversial proposal is hence supported by child data so far (up to 4;10).

Grammatical consistency raises questions however. Indeed, code-switching is a well-documented phenomenon in child bilingualism (at least since Leopold's (1949) investigations on his daughter). The diglossic hypothesis assumes that French speakers manipulate two grammars. Yet, C2 and C3 do not seem to show any signs of code-switching. Indeed, diglossia and bilingualism are different in the early stages insofar as the diglossic child starts his/her acquisition process with one grammar only, i.e.  $G_1$  (there are no native speakers of  $G_2$ , as detailed in section 2.4), and the very low rates of discontinuous negation and canonical subject DPs in the data illustrate that  $G_2$  emerges subsequently and gradually. C4 will furnish us with further data on this particular matter, and code-switching is expected to emerge at some point of the development, perhaps when the two grammars get more balanced.

### 3.5.2. Implications for the status of subject clitics

The continuous absence of *ne* with elided subject clitics ( $G_1$ ) in C3 is also of interest to the debate surrounding the status of subject clitics. *Ne* is often mentioned as problematic when analyzing subject clitics as agreement markers, since the analysis entails that *ne* would also have to be considered as morphological, which is controversial (De Cat, 2005; see section 2.2). The presence of *ne* in  $G_2$  only (where clitics are analyzed as arguments) and its absence in  $G_1$  (where the debate applies) seem to solve the problem, since *ne* and non-argument subject clitics belong to two different grammars. From this point of view, negation no longer represents an obstacle to the morphological hypothesis. Object and adverbial clitics still do though, and hence require further examination.<sup>24</sup>

The twofold proposal, i.e. (i) capture variation within a diglossic approach and (ii) grant two different statuses to subject clitics according to the activated grammar, is primarily drawn from 21st century south-eastern child French. In order to further our understanding of diglossia and test the relevance of the approach, complementary questions are addressed in sections 4 and 5 with regard to diatopy and diachrony, i.e. Where does diglossia apply? and When did diglossia emerge in France?

## 4. Diatopy

On the one hand, researchers sometimes use the label 'European French' to refer to varieties of French found in France, Belgium and Switzerland (Culbertson, 2010; Ferdinand, 1996; Fonseca-Greber and Waugh, 2003; Martineau and Mougeon, 2003). On the other hand, it is well-known that these varieties display important lexical, phonological and morpho-syntactic divergences. The next section will examine oral adult and child data from different parts of France and Belgium in order to attempt to outline the geographical limits of  $G_1$ .

### 4.1. The south-eastern boundary

Since French is spoken neither in Italy nor in Spain, the southern boundaries of  $G_1$  follow. Nevertheless, interesting comments arise as far as cross-linguistic comparisons with neighboring linguistic systems are concerned. As mentioned in section 2.2, Zanuttini (1997) established a threefold classification of negation in Romance languages according to the distribution of their negative markers. Previous and new data on the acquisition of sentential negation in early south-eastern French clearly establish that children under five years old overwhelmingly use simple negation (see section 3.4). Their grammar hence descriptively complies with Zanuttini's Type b, as exemplified in (15a–d) with Valdotain and  $G_1$  simple and complex verbal forms.<sup>25</sup>

- (15) Comparing Valdotain and  $G_1$ :
- a. lo film l' èra pa dzen. (Valdotain)  
the movie scl was neg beautiful  
'the movie was not good'
  - b. Sanbarbe il était pas content. ( $G_1$ , Matteo, 4;5)  
Sanbarbe he was neg happy  
'Sanbarbe was not happy'

<sup>24</sup> Object and adverbial clitics were tentatively examined in child data in Palasis (2009, 2013). Note however that these items are relatively scarce in naturalistic data under the age of 5;0, e.g. 8729 subject clitics vs. 1105 object and 437 adverbial clitics in C2, and 9377 subject clitics vs. 1488 object and 159 adverbial clitics in C3.

<sup>25</sup> Note that Valdotain and  $G_1$  also present very interesting similarities with regard to the status of their subject clitics. A detailed comparison is not possible in this article for reasons of space but see Diémoz (2007) for an investigation of subject clitics in Franco-Provençal.

- c. dz' i pa mindzà. (Valdotain)  
 scl have neg eaten  
 'I have not eaten'
- d. j' ai pas vu. (G<sub>1</sub>, Nina, 4;2)  
 I have not seen  
 'I have not seen'

Interestingly, G<sub>1</sub> also geographically complies with Zanuttini's Type b since 'These languages are geographically contiguous, covering the area of southeastern France [referring to Occitan dialects, not French], the Romance part of Switzerland, and the western part and central part of northern Italy' (Zanuttini, 1997:4). Morphological subject clitics and simple postverbal negation then seem to co-occur in these systems too. Let us carry on our investigation on subject clitics and negation by moving further north.

## 4.2. The northern boundary

### 4.2.1. Central and Parisian French

Major fieldwork on simple negation has been carried out over the years with adult speakers in central and northern France (Armstrong and Smith, 2002; Ashby, 1976, 1981, 2001; Coveney, 1996, 2002; Hansen and Malderez, 2004; Pohl, 1975). The authors usually define the phenomenon as 'losing' or 'deleting' the preverbal negative particle *ne*, and research reports null or very low rates of *ne*-retention with children, teenagers and young adults (Garel, 1997; Hansen and Malderez, 2004).

Hansen and Malderez (2004) also examined the distribution of simple and discontinuous negation with regard to the nature of the subject. Interestingly, the authors report a correspondence between the presence of a subject clitic and the absence of the negative particle *ne* with an average 3.3% *ne*-retention rate with a clitic pronoun (e.g. *lui il (n') aime pas* 'him he does not like'), in contrast with an average 56.4% *ne*-retention rate with a DP subject (*mon père (n') aime pas* 'my father does not like'). Both facts, i.e. the absence of *ne* and the co-occurrence with the type of subject, are consistent with the diglossic approach advocated in this paper. They hence allow us to suggest that diglossia also applies to native speakers in these geographical areas.

### 4.2.2. Northern French

The characteristics of negation seem to change when moving further north. According to Hansen and Malderez (2004:20), who also refer to previous studies by Coveney (1996:64) and Armstrong and Smith (2002:28), speakers who lived in the Parisian area at the time of their investigations but who grew up in northern France display differences with the speakers who had spent their childhood in the Parisian area. The authors thus report that the former presented a statistically significant higher *ne*-retention rate than the latter. Interestingly, *ne*-retention is characteristic of Picard, a Gallo-Romance language of northern France and southern Belgium (61% in spoken Picard, Auger and Villeneuve, 2008), and monolingual speakers of French in this area and bilingual speakers of Picard and French display *ne*-retention rates of 31% and 33%, respectively when speaking French (Villeneuve and Auger, 2013:120). The authors nevertheless report a correlation between the type of negation and the type of subject in their northern French data, since doubling is not pervasive in this area (monolinguals: 42%; bilinguals: 25%).

### 4.2.3. Belgian French

Descriptions of Belgian French often indicate that this language is more conservative than the one spoken in France. Belgian French thus displays clitic-verb inversions in *wh*-questions (40% inversions in Belgium vs. 2% in France), singleton DP subjects (21% DPs in Belgium vs. 3% in France), as well as frequent *ne*-retention (De Cat, 2002, 2007b). The former led De Cat (2005) to argue for the syntactic analysis of subject clitics in 'spoken French'. In the face of these data, two hypotheses arise: (i) either Belgian speakers are not diglossic and their unique grammar resembles French G<sub>2</sub>, (ii) or Belgian speakers are diglossic but their G<sub>1</sub> is 'one stage more conservative' than the G<sub>1</sub> spoken in France (Rowlett, 2013:54). Further data from early stages of acquisition would be necessary in order to disentangle this matter. The corpora examined so far nevertheless show that a term such as 'European French' actually covers broad linguistic diversity, and that scholars should be cautious about this heterogeneity.

## 5. Diachrony

The last perspective explored in this article on the acquisition of subject clitics and the negative particle *ne* in French is historical. We have hypothesized that French children first acquire G<sub>1</sub> that displays morphological subject clitics and

simple negation. The remainder of the contribution will illustrate that, contrary to common belief (see section 2.1), these characteristics seem to have been robustly present and interrelated in adult and child data for the last two centuries (section 5.1) or longer (section 5.2).

### 5.1. Adult data (17th to 19th century)

The ‘lack of agreement’ among linguists as to when *ne*-deletion became widespread in spoken French (somewhere between the 17th and the 20th century) drove Martineau and Mougeon (2003) to examine additional diachronic data in order to contribute to the resolution of this debate. Their approach is of special interest to us for two reasons. First, they analyzed sources assumed to reproduce ‘popular spoken French’, i.e. plays, diaries and dialectological surveys, which would be the closest we can get to  $G_1$ . Second, they also investigated the evolution of the morpho-syntactic status of subject clitics over the centuries and the possible role of the latter in the progressive loss of the negative particle.

*Ne*-deletion turns out to be ‘extremely infrequent’ in their 17th century data, ‘still quite low’ in the 18th century, and ‘stratified along social class lines’ but spreading during the 19th century, initially confined to lower social classes in the Parisian area. The authors point to a strong correspondence with the type of subject as early as the 18th century with ‘the starting point’ of deletion being the context of subject clitics in contrast with high retention rates with DPs. Martineau and Mougeon (2003:139) hence conclude that *ne*-deletion is relatively recent in France and that the transformation of subject pronouns into affixes might have reinforced, but not necessarily triggered, its rise after the 18th century. Along with Hirschbühler and Labelle (1994), the authors also suggest that the diachronic evolution of the position of the non-finite verb with regard to the adverb *pas*, i.e. the loss of leftward movement of the verb rendering *ne* and *pas* adjacent (e.g. *ne vouloir point* vs. *ne point vouloir* ‘not want’), could represent another factor of reinforcement. Let us now collate these findings with 17th century child data.

### 5.2. Child data (17th century)

The *Journal de Jean Héroard* (Foisil, 1989) is a major source of information for any scientist investigating 17th century infancy and childhood in France. Indeed, Héroard was appointed personal physician to Louis XIII upon the birth of this future king in 1601, and spent the subsequent 26 years keeping a very detailed diary of the dauphin/king’s activities and behavior. Considered of prime importance for the study of child care and development in general, Héroard’s diary is also regarded as very informative as far as language acquisition is concerned since it displays a number of almost phonetically transcribed utterances (Ernst, 1989; Wirth Marvick, 1993). This corpus is thus referred to as ‘trustworthy’, ‘objective’, and ‘priceless’ for the study of French (Hirschbühler and Labelle, 2004:188; Ingram and Le Normand, 1996:357; Morgenstern, 2009:25; respectively), and has been used in various linguistic studies (e.g. Duffer and Stark, 2007; Ernst, 1985, 1989; Hirschbühler and Labelle, 2004; Ingram and Le Normand, 1996).

Hirschbühler and Labelle (2004:196) draw the following conclusions on negation from these data: ‘[. . .] Louis XIII has two grammars in competition, one with *ne* and one without. If this is right, the omission of *ne* in spoken speech, which is typical of contemporary spoken French, has its origin as early as the beginning of the 17th century [. . .].’ On the one hand, Martineau and Mougeon (2003) and Hirschbühler and Labelle (2004) reach opposing conclusions on the emergence of *ne*-deletion. On the other hand, the closeness of our hypothesis on diglossia with Martineau and Mougeon’s correspondence and Hirschbühler and Labelle’s statement urges us to examine the distribution of *ne* in this 17th century corpus, and test the conclusions drawn from contemporary child French. For reasons of time, 15 months have been investigated so far in the former, which correspond to the ages of 2;0 to 3;3 (from September 1603 to December 1604; Foisil, 1989:455–561), with the following outcome. First, the child’s negative utterances ( $n = 67$ ) display variation as early as 2;3 since Louis produces four different types of negative structures during the period, as labeled in Table 7 and exemplified in (16a–d). Simple and discontinuous negation (types c and d, respectively) are dominant, and the latter increases sharply after 3;0.

Table 7  
Louis’ different types of negative structures (2;0–3;3).

Types of negation		2;0–3;0	3;0–3;3	Total
a	Preverbal marker only	6.7% (2)	0.0% (0)	3% (2)
b	Preverbal marker + negative determiner	3.3% (1)	2.7% (1)	3% (2)
c	Postverbal marker only	36.7% (11)	13.5% (5)	23.9% (16)
d	Pre- and postverbal markers	53.3% (16)	83.8% (31)	70.1% (47)
Total		100.0% (30)	100.0% (37)	100.0% (67)

- (16) Louis' first negative verbal utterances (Foisil, 1989:468–482):
- a. a ne tare dire. (target: je ne le sçauroit dire) (2;3)  
I neg know say  
'I cannot say (it)'
  - b. je ne pante a nu ma. (je ne pense a nul mal) (2;4)  
I neg think of no harm  
'I think of no harm'
  - c. fai pa beau saboté. (on n'est pas beau en sabots) (2;6)  
makes not nice with-clogs  
'(one) does not look nice with clogs'
  - d. je né pas encore equivé. (je n'ai pas encore écrit) (2;8)  
I neg-have not yet written  
'I have not written (it) yet'

These data comply with the hypothesis on diglossia since it can be suggested that the child alternately applies  $G_1$  and  $G_2$  in his discourse. Let us now investigate the expected correlates, i.e. co-occurring subjects and the *i//* alternation.

A major characteristic of the child's speech is the overwhelming presence of subject clitics in his utterances between the ages of 4;0 and 9;0 (e.g. 94.7% of his negative matrix clauses between 4;0 and 5;0, Dufter and Stark, 2007:123). This characteristic is also prevalent in earlier data since all the negative sentences investigated in this contribution, except two, display a subject clitic (total  $n = 63$ ).<sup>26</sup> The two exceptions show referential DPs. As far as the correspondence with negation is concerned, it is interesting to note that these extremely rare subject DPs co-occur with discontinuous negation (and subordination), as reported in (17a–b). These utterances thus exhibit properties of  $G_2$  throughout, i.e. non-doubled subject DPs and discontinuous negation, and hence corroborate one of the predictions made for contemporary child French (illustrated in (14a)).

- (17) Louis' subject DPs (Foisil, 1989:516, 531):
- a. que le Roy ne veu pa descende.<sup>27</sup> (2;11)  
that the King neg wants not get-down  
'that the King does not want to get down'
  - b. alé faire bon guet pou Papa que les ennemi ne nou viene pa tué. (3;0)  
go do good watch for Daddy that the enemies neg us come not kill  
'go and do a good watch for Daddy so that the enemies do not come and kill us'

The remaining utterances with discontinuous negation exhibit clitics. Another characteristic of these clitics is the absence of co-occurring referential DPs or strong pronouns, contrary to what is observed in contemporary French. According to the diglossic approach on grammatical consistency, these clitics should be syntactic and not exhibit the *i//* alternation found with morphological clitics in contemporary child French.

On the one hand, the data show that the *i//* alternation is active in the child's speech with a clear phonological reduction of *il* before consonants (96.3%, total  $n = 27$ , as illustrated in (18a–c)). On the other hand and contrary to the predictions made by diglossia, some of these elided clitics emerge with discontinuous negation ( $n = 10$ , as in (18d)). These apparent counterexamples call for two comments though. First, they are alike in terms of clitics (80% display expletive *il* 'one') and verbs (60% display *faut* 'must-3sg'), as in (18d). Second, the rest of the corpus tells us that expletive *il* is systematically reduced before a consonant, even in postverbal position, as in (18e).

- (18) Louis' *i//* alternations (Foisil, 1989:484, 489, 500, 533, 541):
- a. i dit sa messe. (2;8)  
he says his mass  
'he celebrates mass'
  - b. il a de gan den. (2;9)  
he has some big teeth  
'he has big teeth'

<sup>26</sup> The null-subject utterances such as (16c) are not included in this amount.

<sup>27</sup> This utterance answers the question: 'What does one say?'

- c. i    fau   pa    touné le   cu   a   Moucheu le   Daufin. (2;9)  
 one must not turn the back to Mister the Dauphin  
 'one must not turn his back to the Dauphin'
- d. i    ne   fau   pas   don le   tué. (3;0)  
 one neg must not so him kill  
 'so one must not kill him'
- e. que faut i    que je   batte? (3;1)  
 what must one that I hit  
 'what must I hit'

Consequently, the tentative examination of Louis' data seems to show that the dauphin alternately produced simple and discontinuous negation and that the *i//* alternation was active in his speech at least for referential subject clitics.<sup>28</sup> However, the behavior of expletive *il* and the limited number of negative utterances with referential *il* studied so far do not allow us to propose reliable correlations at this stage. The very appealing hypothesis suggested by Hirschbühler and Labelle (2004) that 'Louis XIII has two grammars in competition' hence still requires further investigation.

## 6. Concluding remarks

This contribution aimed to propose a corpus-based analysis of variation and acquisition of subject clitics and preverbal *ne* in European French within the recent diglossic approach to variation in French (Massot and Rowlett, 2013). Contemporary as well as diachronic data were reviewed, stemming from previous and new adult and child corpora, from south-eastern, central, Parisian, northern France, Belgium, and northern Italy. The investigation aimed to test the morpho-syntactic status of subject clitics (agreement markers vs. arguments), and to formalize a possible correspondence with the types of negation in French (simple vs. discontinuous). The thesis on grammatical consistency defended by the proponents of diglossia was put to the test of new child data (C3), and the investigation attempted to outline the geographical and temporal limits of diglossia.

The results point to an analysis of subject clitics as agreement markers in contemporary south-eastern child French, and the negative particle *ne* has been eliminated from the list of arguments against this morphological analysis, since negative utterances with agreement markers display postverbal negation only. A strong correspondence between two characteristics, i.e. morpho-syntactic status of subject clitics (agreement markers vs. arguments) and type of negation (simple vs. discontinuous), is hence established from the data, which supports the hypothesis on grammatical consistency on the one hand, and points to the existence of two different grammars of French on the other hand (labeled chronologically G<sub>1</sub> and G<sub>2</sub>). Indeed, developmental data also show that the emergence of discontinuous negation co-occurs with the emergence of other types of subjects, i.e. argument clitics and non-doubled subject DPs. Diatopic data complement the investigation, and inform us that the correspondences seem to hold moving north, but that diglossia does not appear to apply (or at least applies differently) when reaching the Belgian frontier. Finally, adult and child diachronic data (17th–19th century) also display interesting alternations in terms of full/elided clitics and simple/discontinuous negation, and invite us to further our understanding of the acquisition and processing of expletive clitics. Concomitantly, the analysis of C4 should provide us with additional information on the development of diglossia before the children reach primary school. Elicitation tasks with other children in kindergarten are also foreseen in order to test the hypotheses on subject clitics, negation and French diglossia.

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<sup>28</sup> The latter observation invites us to refine our investigations on the acquisition of expletive clitics in Louis' corpus as well as in contemporary data, in line with recent research on the status of expletive clitics in Old French, Modern French and dialects spoken in France (e.g. Kaiser et al., 2013; Olivieri, 2011; Zimmermann, 2012).

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