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**L1 ACQUISITION OF NOUN ELLIPSIS
IN FRENCH AND IN DUTCH***
CONSEQUENCES FOR LINGUISTIC THEORY

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Abstract

In the literature several theoretical analyses of nominal ellipsis of various languages have been proposed. In this exploratory and comparative study the L1 French and Dutch acquisition of noun ellipsis is analyzed. The L1 data suggest that a theoretical analysis of the licensing mechanisms of nominal ellipsis should take the following observations into account. First, the acquisition of nominal ellipsis by French and Dutch children proceeds essentially in the same way, even though the adult languages differ. Second, as proposed in previous studies, not the presence of a determiner or inflection but the presence of an element with a partitive meaning seems to be a crucial factor in the licensing mechanism.

1. Introduction

Noun ellipsis is the omission of the noun in a context where the interpretation of the elided noun can be recovered from the linguistic or situational context, as in the French example (1a). If noun ellipsis takes place in an indefinite object, a quantitative pronoun is required (1b):¹

- (1) a. *De ces robes, je préfère la rouge e.*
'Of these dresses, I prefer the red one.'
b. *Il en a acheté deux e.*
he EN has bought two
'He has bought two.'

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¹ We take cliticization of the quantitative pronoun to be the result of movement, as in Milner (1978), Kayne (1977), and, more recently, Barbiers (2009) and Kranendonk (2010). This means that the empty noun is a trace. The quantitative pronoun can be considered to be a lexical variant of an empty noun, and is required in certain contexts (Sleeman 2003).

Just like French, Dutch also has nominal ellipsis with or without a quantitative pronoun (2a-b):

- (2) a. *Ik neem de blauwe.*
 ‘I take the blue one.’
 b. *Dit is er één.*
 this is ER one
 ‘This is one.’

To account for the restrictions on the use of nominal ellipsis and the quantitative pronoun in French and in Dutch, several theoretical analyses have been proposed (e.g. Kester 1996; Sleeman 1996; Bouchard 2002; Corver & van Koppen 2009 for nominal ellipsis, and, e.g., Sleeman 1996; Kranendonk 2010 for the quantitative pronoun).

The acquisition of nominal ellipsis has not received much attention in the literature (but see, e.g., Ntelitheos & Christodoulou 2005 for Greek; Valois et al. 2009a,b for French; Gavarró et al. 2011 for Romance). In this paper the results of an exploratory study of the early L1 acquisition of noun ellipsis with and without the quantitative pronoun by French and Dutch children (age span 1.8 – 3.6) based on spontaneous productions are presented and discussed. Besides providing insight into the acquisition process of nominal ellipsis, the results of this study also contribute to theoretical analyses of nominal ellipsis that have been proposed in the literature.²

The paper is organized as follows. In §2, some theoretical analyses of the licensing of nominal ellipsis and the use of the quantitative pronoun that have been proposed in the literature are presented. In §3, previous research on the acquisition of nominal ellipsis and the use of the quantitative pronoun in L1 French and in L1 Dutch is briefly discussed. In §4, the results of our own research are presented and discussed, also with respect to their consequences for linguistic theory. Section 5 concludes the paper with an overview of our results and a suggestion for future research.

2. Licensors of noun ellipsis

In the literature, several analyses of nominal ellipsis have been proposed (e.g. Bernstein 1993, Cardinaletti & Giusti 1992 for Romance; Lobeck 1995 for English; Giannakidou & Stavrou 1999, Ntelitheos 2004, Alexiadou & Gengel 2012, for Greek; Kester & Sleeman 2002, Eguren 2009 for Spanish; Bouchard 2002, Corblin, Marandin & Sleeman 2004 and references therein,

² In this paper the notions “noun ellipsis” or “nominal ellipsis” will sometimes be used to cover ellipsis both with and without the use of a quantitative pronoun.

for French). Since this paper deals with the acquisition of nominal ellipsis in French and Dutch, we limit ourselves essentially to analyses of the licensing of noun ellipsis that have been proposed for these two languages.

2.1 *The role of partitivity*

In several analyses of nominal ellipsis it has been claimed that it is licensed by a quantifier or an adjective with a partitive interpretation. We present here two of these analyses. In one of these analyses the presence of the determiner also plays an important role in the licensing mechanism.

Sleeman (1996), building on Barbaud 1976 and Ronat 1977, claims that noun ellipsis is licensed if the remnant has a partitive interpretation. The remnant can be a quantifier or an adjective that can also occur in an explicit partitive construction ('three of the books', 'the third of her books', 'the tallest one of the boys'), but it can also be a "classifying" adjective, i.e. a type of adjective that naturally denotes a subset of a set, such as color adjectives or some other adjectives such as measuring adjectives ('big', 'small'), but not a non-classifying adjective such as *intéressant* 'interesting'. This is illustrated in (3-7) with examples from French:

- (3) *Plusieurs e de ces étudiants sont venus me voir.*
'Several of these students have come to see me.'
- (4) *Je ne prends pas cette robe-ci, je prends l'autre e.*
I NEG take NEG this dress-here I take the other
'I do not take this dress, I take the other one.'
- (5) *Je prends les mêmes e que toi.*
'I take the same ones as you.'
- (6) *De ces chiens, je préfère le grand e.*
'Of these dogs, I prefer the big one.'
- (7) *Je n' ai pas pu assister à toutes les conférences.*
I NEG have NEG could assist to all the talks
'I could not be present at all the talks that were given at the conference.'
**Malheureusement je n' ai pas entendu les intéressantes.*
Unfortunately I NEG have NEG heard the interesting.

Although Sleeman's analysis is essentially based on French, she extends her analysis also to other languages, such as English, Italian, and Spanish, and, for the licensing by quantifiers, to Dutch.

In Bouchard's (2002) analysis as well, noun ellipsis in French is licensed by partitivity, expressed by a quantifier or an adjective. However, Bouchard claims that number and gender also play a crucial role, because they indicate the number and/or gender of individuals that are selected from a set. In the case of quantifiers, number and/or gender is expressed by the quantifier itself, but if the partitive element is an adjective, it is the

accompanying determiner that selects an individual from the set having the property expressed by the adjective. Bouchard claims that his analysis can account for the fact that in English ellipsis is not allowed with adjectives. In English, the determiner does not express number and/or gender:³

- (8) *I want the green.

For Dutch, Corver & van Koppen (2009) claim that noun ellipsis is licensed by contrastive focalization. They argue that their claim is supported by the fact that in Dutch nominal ellipsis can be licensed by an explicit contrast between two noun phrases:

- (9) ?*Hij zag een zwart paard en ik zag een wit e.*
'He saw a black horse and I saw a white one.'

This analysis can be related to analyses in terms of partitivity if one assumes that in both cases, a subset is created out of a larger set.⁴

2.2 *The role of inflection*

In another influential view, an important role in the licensing mechanism of nominal ellipsis is attributed to inflection on the remnant. We illustrate this type of analysis on the basis of Dutch, for which this analysis has been proposed in the literature.

Contrary to French, in Dutch nominal ellipsis is licensed by all kinds of adjectives, even non partitive ones:

- (10) *Hoe waren de lezingen? Er waren hele interessante e.*
how were the talks? There were very interesting

For Dutch, in many analyses nominal ellipsis has been related to the presence of adjectival inflection (e.g., Muysken & Van Riemsdijk 1986; Barbiers 1990; Kester 1996).

In Dutch, there is no inflection on the attributive adjective with indefinite neuter singular nouns, as in (11). In all other cases, inflection appears on the attributive adjective, in the form of a schwa, as in (12):

³ Sleeman (1996) shows, however, that apart from a restriction on the type of qualificational adjectives that can license noun ellipsis, English behaves exactly in the same way as French (even color adjectives, but not other qualificational adjective, license noun ellipsis, see, e.g., Halliday & Hasan 1976), which puts Bouchard's analysis into doubt.

⁴ Corver & van Koppen claim that nominal ellipsis is licensed by contrastive focus. In non-explicitly contrastive contexts, however, focus seems to be identificational rather than contrastive (Kiss 1998). Contrastive focus is a restricted version of identificational focus. In both cases there is selection from a set, just as in the case of partitivity.

- (11) *Hij heeft een groot(*e) paard.*
 he has a big.ADJ.INFL. horse.NEUTER
 ‘He has a big horse.’
- (12) *Het grote paard is verkocht.*
 the big.ADJ.INFL horse is sold
 ‘The big horse has been sold.’

In many analyses of noun ellipsis in Dutch it is claimed that adjectival inflection licenses the omission of the noun. This would explain why (13) is grammatical, but why many speakers add a noun if the adjective is uninflected (14), or add a formally non required adjectival inflection (15):

- (13) *Het grote e is verkocht.*
 ‘The big one has been sold.’
- (14) *Wat voor paard zag je daar?*
 wat for horse. NEUTER saw you there?
*Ik zag een heel groot *(paard).*
 I saw a very big (horse)
 ‘What kind of horse did you see there? I saw a very big one.’
- (15) *??Ik zag een hele grote e.*
 I saw a very big.ADJ.INFL.
 ‘I saw a very big one.’

In the literature, the role of adjectival inflection, discussed in this subsection, and the role of partitivity, discussed in the previous subsection, have also been related to each other, e.g. by Corver & van Koppen (2009). On the basis of data from Dutch dialects, standard Dutch, and Afrikaans, Corver & van Koppen claim that the inflection present on the adjective in the case of nominal ellipsis in (13) and (15) is not an agreement marker but a focus marker, which happens to be homophonous with the agreement marker. Corver & van Koppen claim that the type of focalization involved is contrastive focalization, relating the licensing mechanism in (13) and (15) to the one operative in (9).

2.3 *The role of quantitative pronouns*

Both for French and for Dutch it has been claimed that nominal ellipsis in indefinite objects requires an additional licenser, viz. the use of a quantitative pronoun, *en* in French, and *er* in Dutch. In many analyses of the quantitative pronoun proposed within the framework of Generative Grammar, the quantitative pronoun in French and Dutch has been analyzed in the same way, viz. as the head of the noun phrase (N⁰ as head of the NP, or NP as “head” of the DP), which moves to its verbal host (see, e.g., Hulk 1982; Bennis 1986; Sleeman 1996), preverbal in French, and postverbal in Dutch, just as for the other pronouns in the respective languages. In

Sleeman's (1996) analysis, the quantitative pronoun is simply a lexical variant of the empty noun, also licensed (in its original position) by the partitivity of the preceding adjective or quantifier, and used under special pragmatic conditions⁵.

There is, however, a difference between French and Dutch. Whereas in French the remnant can contain an adjective, this is not possible in Dutch:

- | | | |
|------|--|--------|
| (16) | <i>J'en achèterai trois nouveaux en.</i> | FRENCH |
| | I EN will buy three new EN | |
| | ‘I will buy three new ones.’ | |
| (17) | <i>Ik koop er drie (*nieuwe) er.</i> | DUTCH |
| | I buy ER three (*new) ER | |
| | ‘I buy three (*new).’ | |

Kranendonk (2010) therefore proposes for Dutch another analysis of the quantitative pronoun than for French. He proposes that in Dutch the quantitative pronoun is merged into a larger portion of the DP than just the NP, viz. the portion of the DP in which adjectives and the noun are merged.

In the literature, several of the theoretical analyses presented in this section have (already) been evaluated on the basis of language acquisition data. We present some of these studies in the next section.

3. Previous research on the acquisition of noun ellipsis and the use of the quantitative pronoun

It is well-known that in early stages of language acquisition children do not yet produce full DPs: they leave out determiners and adjectives, only producing the noun (e.g., Granfeldt 2000; van der Velde 2003, 2004):

- | | | |
|------|------------------------------|--------------------|
| (18) | <i>oreilles Grégoire</i> | (Grégoire, 1;9.28) |
| | ‘These are Grégoire’s ears.’ | |

However, it is less well known that children also produce DPs containing an adjective or a quantifier, but no noun. On the basis of the context wherein these DPs are produced, these DPs seem to be genuine cases of nominal

⁵ Sleeman (1996) claims that the choice between nominal ellipsis with or without a quantitative pronoun is motivated by pragmatic considerations. Both in French and in Dutch the quantitative pronoun is only used in combination with indefinite objects. Sleeman argues that since noun phrases in object position are no natural topics, an anaphoric element, the quantitative pronoun, is required to establish a relation with a referent in the context. If the DP occurs in a natural topic position, such as the subject position, or if the DP contains a definite determiner or a partitive PP no quantitative pronoun is required.

ellipsis and not erroneously produced incomplete DPs or nominalizations:⁶

(context: action of hammering nails, in this situation a green one)

- (19a) CHI: *groene* [noun] (Matthijs 2;0)
 green
 “the green one”
 answer ADULT: *de groene* [noun].
 “the green one.”
- (19b) CHI: *autre* [noun] (Théotime 1;8)
 “other”
 answer ADULT: *Ah oui, il y en a un autre* [noun] *aussi*.
 O yes, there of-it is an other too
 “There is another one too.”

Few studies have investigated the L1 acquisition of nominal ellipsis. In this section we present some analyses of the early acquisition of nominal ellipsis with or without a quantitative pronoun in Romance.⁷

3.1 *Noun ellipsis without a quantitative pronoun*

Snyder et al. (2001) analyze and discuss the acquisition data of two young monolingual L1 learners of Spanish available in the CHILDES database, María and Koki. Studying the acquisition data of these two children, Snyder et al. found that nominal ellipsis emerges (for María at the age of 2;1, and for Koki at 2;6) when adjectival agreement is in place (for María at 2;1, and for Koki at 2;2). Snyder et al.’s results seem to support theories suggesting that nominal ellipsis is licensed by adjectival inflection (see §2.2).

Snyder et al.’s analysis has been criticized by Valois et al. (2009a, b). On the basis of Snyder et al.’s findings and also on the basis of their own research on the early acquisition of noun ellipsis in French, Valois et al. reject a relation between the acquisition of nominal ellipsis and the acquisition of adjectival inflection. Valois et al. studied the spontaneous production data of 15 monolingual L1 Canadian-French children (1;8 – 2;12). Some of their subjects used nominal ellipsis in L1 French already from 1;8. An analysis of the data shows that, just as in adult French, in L1 French nominal ellipsis appears to be licensed by quantifiers and adjectives with a partitive meaning, as in Sleeman’s (1996) and Bouchard’s (2002) analyses of nominal ellipsis in adult French (see §2.1). Furthermore, Valois et al. found that, in the nominal ellipsis productions of their subjects, adjectives are always accompanied by a determiner, supporting Bouchard’s

⁶ Both Matthijs’ and Théotime’s acquisition data are available on CHILDES (MacWhinney 2006).

⁷ To the best of our knowledge, there do not exist studies on the early acquisition of nominal ellipsis in Dutch. Van Hout et al. (2011) and Veenstra et al. (2010) are reports of experimental research on the use of the quantitative pronoun by Dutch 5-year olds.

(2002) analysis of noun ellipsis. Valois et al. observe that at 2;0 their subjects are aware of the compulsory character of the determiner in French, and at 2;6 they produce already more than 80% of the determiners in compulsory non-elliptic contexts.

3.2 *Noun ellipsis with a quantitative pronoun*

To the best of our knowledge, little is known about the early use of the quantitative pronoun by L1 learners.⁸ Hamann et al. (1994) report that the French-speaking child they studied, Augustin, produced his first quantitative pronoun (at 2;9.2) some months after the emergence of his first object pronoun (at 2;2.13). For Catalan, Gavarró et al. (2006) analyzed the spontaneous production of three children in the CHILDES database (Gisela, Guillem, and Pep). They found that the children used their first quantitative clitic at the age of 1;8.3, 2;6.10, and 1;10.6, respectively. They also observed that the production of the quantitative clitic by the three children was subject to optional omission, and that the omission of the quantitative clitic seemed to last slightly longer than the omission of direct object clitics.

Although Valois et al. do not explicitly distinguish the acquisition of ellipsis with or without a quantitative pronoun, their data show that the first *en* is used at 2;7, and that there is optional omission.

In section 2 we saw that according to the literature the elements that can play a role in the licensing of nominal ellipsis are partitivity, adjectival inflection and/or the quantitative pronoun. In the present section we have seen, especially for the first two elements, that there are contradictory claims in the literature with respect to their relevance in L1 acquisition. In order to test the relevance of these three elements, we studied new data: we studied spontaneous productions of other monolingual French children, but also of monolingual L1 Dutch children. This research is presented in the following section.

4. This study

For our study on the acquisition process of nominal ellipsis with or without a quantitative pronoun, we studied the spontaneous production data of several monolingual French and Dutch children. We counted all occurrences of nominal ellipsis, even identical repetitions in the same sentence. The repetitions were not numerous, and cannot have influenced the results.

For L1 French, the spontaneous speech of 5 monolingual children (1;8 – 3;0) available in CHILDES was analysed:

⁸ Just like Van Hout et al. (2011) and Veenstra et al. (2010) for Dutch, see fn. 7, Gavarró et al. (2011) report and analyze the results of their experimental research on the use of the quantitative pronoun by 5-year olds in Romance (Catalan, Italian, French).

Anaïs (Lyon):	1;8 / 1;11 / 2;4 / 2;8 / 3;0 (5 files)
Marie (Lyon):	1;8 / 2;0 / 2;5 / 2;8 / 3;0 (5 files)
Nathan (Lyon) :	1;8 / 2;0 / 2;4 / 2;8 / 3;0 (5 files)
Théotime (Lyon):	1;8 / 2;0 / 2;4 / 2;8 / 3;0 (5 files)
Madeleine (Paris):	1;9 / 2;1 / 2;4 / 2;8 / 3;0 (5 files)

For L1 Dutch, we also analysed the spontaneous speech of 5 monolingual children (1;8 – 3;6) available in CHILDES:

Abel (Groningen):	2;0 / 2;4 / 2;8 / 3;0 / 3;2 / 3;4 (6 files)
Daan (Groningen):	1;8 / 2;0 / 2;4 / 2;8 / 3;0 / 3;2 / 3;3 (7 files)
Matthijs (Groningen):	2;0 / 2;4 / 2;8 / 3;0 / 3;2 / 3;4 / 3;6 (7 files)
Laura (van Kampen):	1;9 / 2;4 / 2;8 / 3;0 / 3;2 / 3;4 / 3;6 (7 files)
Sarah (van Kampen):	1;8 / 2;0 / 2;4 / 2;8 / 3;0 / 3;2 / 3;4 / 3;5 (8 files)

Since the number of files and the number of children for each language are limited, we consider this study to be a pilot study, comparing the acquisition of nominal ellipsis in French and in Dutch. Since the patterns of acquisition of nominal ellipsis are, however, rather uniform in our data, we expect that the analysis of a larger corpus or experiments will not modify our results in a significant way.

We present the results of our analysis of the emergence and use of nominal ellipsis without a quantitative pronoun (§4.1) and with a quantitative pronoun (§4.2) in L1 acquisition. In §4.3 the results are discussed.

4.1 *Noun ellipsis without a quantitative pronoun in L1 acquisition*

In this subsection our analysis of the use in L1 French and Dutch of noun ellipsis without a quantitative pronoun is presented. We included also the cases where the quantitative pronoun is incorrectly omitted.

4.1.1 *Noun ellipsis in the L1 acquisition of French*

In our data, the L1 French children use noun ellipsis already from 1;8. Examples of nominal ellipsis produced by the children are given in (20-27). The context made us select these examples as cases of noun ellipsis, and not as, e.g., nominalizations or incomplete utterances:

- (20) *une autre e, d'autres e* (Marie 1;8)
 an other, others
- (21) *ə meme e* (Madeleine 1;9)
 ART (filler) same
 'the same'

- (22) *le vert e* (Théotime 2;0)
‘the green (one)’
- (23) *Le deuxième e, c’était où?* (Madeleine 2;8)
the second, it was where?
‘The second one, where was it?’
- (24) *il y a un petit e* (Anaïs 3;0)
there-is a small
‘there is a small one’
- (25) *le grand e* (Marie 2;8)
the big
‘the big one’
- (26) *une ronde e* (Nathan 2;4)
a round
‘a round one’
- (27) *un propre e* (Théotime 2;0)
a clean
‘a clean one’

In the files we studied the percentage of omissions without a determiner was low: in all files on average 4,2%. Our data shows that at 2;6 the children studied produced already 80% of the determiners in compulsory contexts.

We also analyzed the types of remnants that were used by the L1 French children of our study. These were mainly quantifiers and adjectives with a partitive meaning, the same that license nominal ellipsis in adult L1 French. The types and number of remnants are shown in table 1:^{9,10}

quantifiers / adjectives	number of and first occurrences with elided noun
cardinal <i>un</i> ‘one’	10 (1;8)
cardinal <i>deux</i> ‘two’	10 (2;4)
quantifiers	15 (1;8)
ordinals	2 (2;4)
<i>autre</i> ‘other’	60 (1;8)
<i>même</i> ‘same’	14 (1;8)
<i>seul</i> (‘only’)	2 (2;8)
colors	48 (2;0)
<i>grand</i> ‘tall, big’	8 (2;8)
<i>petit</i> ‘small’	5 (2;8)

⁹ According to Sleeman (1996), in adult French, what counts as partitive seems to be somewhat less restricted in indefinite DPs than in definite DPs. The not clearly classifying adjectives *énorme* ‘enormous’, *beau* ‘beautiful’, *propre* ‘clean’, and *rond* ‘round’, are indeed all used in indefinite DPs in the files.

¹⁰ We also analyzed the types of adjectives that were used without noun ellipsis or in predicative use. We noticed that even before they start using noun ellipsis at 1;8, children also use other adjectives than partitive ones in non-ellipsis contexts (‘hot’, ‘wet’, ‘broken’, ‘dirty’, etc.). This shows that children master the notion of partitivity at 1;8 and use it to license noun ellipsis.

<i>gros</i> ‘big’	8 (2;5)
<i>énorme</i> ‘enormous’	1 (2;4)
<i>propre</i> ‘clean’	2 (2;0)
<i>rond</i> ‘round’	1 (2;4)

table 1: types of licensors in L1 French noun ellipsis

These results correspond to Valois et al.’s (2009a,b) findings (see §3.1), but in their data the rate of omission without a determiner was even lower: 0%.

4.1.2 Noun ellipsis in the L1 acquisition of Dutch

The results of our analysis show that, just as in L1 French, L1 Dutch learners use noun ellipsis at least from 1;8. Some examples of noun ellipsis used by the Dutch children are given in (28-31):

- (28) *een e* (Daan 1;8)
‘one’
- (29) *oh, grote e* (Matthijs 2;0)
oh, big
‘oh, a big one’
- (30) *groene e* (Matthijs 2;0)
green
‘the green one’
- (31) *moeten ze een nieuwe kopen* (Sarah 2;8)
must they a new buy
‘They have to buy a new one’

In child L1 Dutch, noun ellipsis is apparently not licensed by inflection (neither is it in the adult example (9)), because adjectival agreement (and correct gender assignment) is not target-consistent before the age of 7 (Blom et al. 2008): the schwa and common gender are the default options until that age.

For L1 French we showed that, in our data and in conformity with Valois et al.’s (2009a,b) analysis of N-drop in French child language, the adjective licensing noun ellipsis is almost always preceded by a determiner, which, as we showed in §2.1, is predicted by Bouchard’s theoretical analysis of nominal ellipsis. Contrary to L1 French, however, with nominal ellipsis in Dutch L1 in our data, the adjective is not always preceded by a determiner. This is not surprising given the fact that, in Dutch, indefinite mass nouns and plural nouns are not preceded by a determiner. In our data, ellipsis without a determiner in Dutch occurs on average in 64% of the cases: in 24% of the cases the omission of the determiner is correct, but in 40% of the cases it is incorrect. The omission of the determiner with nominal ellipsis can be explained by the fact that the obligatory presence of the determiner (in other, non-elliptical, contexts) is acquired later in L1 Dutch than in L1 French (see, e.g., Chierchia et al. 1999; van der Velde

2003. 2004). In our data, 80% of the determiners is produced in compulsory contexts not before the age of 3;2 (cf. 2;6 in Valois' et al.'s and our data for French L1).

Just as for L1 French, we analyzed the types of remnants used by the children. Surprisingly, just as in L1 French, in L1 Dutch these are also quantifiers and adjectives with a partitive meaning (see table 2). The few adjectives with a non-classifying meaning (cf. section 2.1) occur at a more advanced age:

quantifiers / adjectives	number of and first occurrences with elided noun
<i>één(tje)</i> 'one(.DIM)'	114 (1;8)
other cardinals	11 (3;0)
quantifiers	41 (2;4)
ordinals (<i>eerste</i> 'first')	1 (3;2)
<i>ander</i> 'other'	14 (2;4)
<i>zelfde</i> 'same'	2 (3;0)
superlatives	3 (3;0)
colors	28 (2;0)
<i>groot</i> 'tall, big'	9 (2;0)
<i>klein(tje)</i> 'small(.DIM)'	8 (2;4)
<i>hoog</i> 'high'	1 (2;4)
<i>lang</i> 'long'	2 (2;8)
<i>nieuw</i> 'nieuw'	2 (2;8)
<i>goed</i> 'good'	2 (2;4)
<i>mooi</i> 'beautiful'	1 (2;4)
<i>moeilijk</i> 'difficult'	1 (3;2)
<i>bol</i> 'big'	1 (3;0)
<i>raar</i> 'strange'	1(2;8)
<i>gevaarlijk</i> 'dangerous'	2 (3;6)
<i>apart</i> 'separate'	1 (3;6)

table 2: types of licensors in L1 Dutch noun ellipsis

In the next subsection, we present the results of our analysis of the use of nominal ellipsis with a quantitative pronoun in L1 acquisition.

4.2 Noun ellipsis with a quantitative pronoun in L1 acquisition

We studied the files of the same children as in §4.1 in order to analyze the use of the quantitative pronoun. In tables 3 and 4, the types and numbers of remnants used in combination with the quantitative pronoun are listed.

quantifiers / adjectives	number of and first occurrences with <i>en</i> in French
<i>un</i> 'one'	6 (2;4)
<i>deux</i> 'two'	4 (3;0)
–	7 (2;0)
<i>encore</i> 'more'	3 (1;11)
<i>plein</i> 'plenty'	1 (2;8)

<i>une demie</i> ‘a half’	1 (2;8)
<i>un nouveau</i> ‘a new one’	1 (3;0)
<i>un grand</i> ‘a big one’	1 (2;8)

table 3: types of remnant in combination with *en* in L1 French

quantifiers	number of and first occurrences with <i>er</i> in Dutch
<i>één(the)</i> ‘one(.DIM)’	7 (2;4)
<i>twee</i> ‘two’	1 (3;0)
<i>meer</i> ‘more’	1 (3;4)

table 4: types of remnant in combination with *er* in L1 Dutch

Our data shows that the French children start using the quantitative pronoun around the age of 1;11 and the Dutch children around 2;4. Examples are given in (32-33). A comparison with sentences (34-35), exemplifying noun ellipsis with the (incorrect) omission of the quantitative pronoun (analyzed in §4.1), shows that in the earlier stages of acquisition, the quantitative pronoun is subject to optional omission, as already observed by Gavarró et al. (2006). If the quantitative pronoun is used, its use is syntactically and pragmatically correct (see §2.2).¹¹ Furthermore, the remnant has a partitive interpretation.¹²

- (32) *en* *veux encore e* (Anaïs 1;11) FRENCH
 EN want more
 ‘I want more.’
- (33) *hebben we er nog eentje e ?* (Abel 2;4) DUTCH
 have we ER still one
 ‘Do we have another one?’
- (34) CHI : *moi je veux deux moi.* (Nathan 2;10) FRENCH
 me I want deux me
 ‘I want to have two.’
 MOT : *Tu en veux deux ?*
 you EN want two
 ‘You want two?’
- (35) **ik wil ook een e [= one]* (Sarah 2;8) DUTCH
 I want also one
 ‘I also want one.’

4.3 Discussion

¹¹ Our data suggests that children know early which portion of the DP the quantitative pronoun lexicalizes: NP in French, NP plus the functional part of the structure reserved for adjectives in Dutch (see §2.2).

¹² Since in the files of our small corpus it was difficult to find an example of the incorrect omission of *en* as illustrated by the context, we took an example from another file, viz. Nathan (2;10).

Our acquisition data of the licensing requirements on noun ellipsis without a quantitative pronoun shows that:

- The first omissions occur just before the age of 2, both in L1 French and Dutch. Partitivity appears to license the omission of the noun in L1 French (cf. Sleeman 1996; Valois et al. 2009a, b) and L1 Dutch ;
- adjectival agreement is not yet acquired and therefore cannot license the omission of the noun in (early) L1 Dutch;

With respect to the theoretical analyses of noun ellipsis that have been put forth in the literature, our preliminary results suggest that both in French and in Dutch licensing of noun ellipsis in child language could be accounted for in terms of partitivity (Sleeman 1996, Bouchard 2002) or focus (Corver & van Koppen 2010), but that the role of the determiner seems to be less important than has been claimed by Bouchard (2002). Since adjectival agreement is acquired late in Dutch, it appears not to be inflection (as in Kester's 1996 analysis), but rather the meaning of the adjective that licenses the ellipsis, just like the meaning of quantifiers (which are generally uninflected) does.¹³

Our acquisition data of the use of the quantitative pronoun shows that in L1 French and L1 Dutch, the quantitative pronoun is used early (in our data it appears shortly after the omission of the noun with definite determiners, viz. at 1;11 and 2;4, respectively). Syntactically, it is used correctly, which, for both languages, would support a movement/copy theory, *en/er* being licensed by the partitive interpretation of the remnant. However, as has also been shown by Gavarró et al. (2006), it is often dropped in cases where it is required in the target language and its omission seems to last longer than the omission of accusative pronouns. The optional omission of the quantitative pronoun might therefore also be due to the fact that it is simply a lexical variant of the empty noun, and that the use of the lexical variant seems rather redundant to the child.

5. Conclusion

Several theoretical analyses of nominal ellipsis have been proposed in the

¹³ That it is the interpretation of the remnant and not inflection that licenses ellipsis is also suggested by the fact that a contrastive use enhances acceptability, even if the adjective is not inflected, as in (9), or not clearly “classifying”, as in the French example (i). The contrast creates subsets:

(i) *Parmi les exposés présents au colloque, je distingue trois catégories : les intéressants, les atroces et les incolores.*

‘Among the talks delivered at the colloquium, I distinguish three categories: the interesting ones, the awful ones, and the colorless ones.’

This means that if inflection has a focalizing function, as claimed by Corver & van Koppen (2009), it seems to be limited to sentences such as (10) and (15).

literature. The results of our exploratory study of the L1 acquisition of noun ellipsis in French and Dutch contribute to the discussion by bringing in new empirical data to test these theories. We have shown that just as in adult and child L1 French, in child L1 Dutch nominal ellipsis appears to be licensed by partitivity. The data has shown that in child L1 Dutch ellipsis can be produced even in the absence of a determiner and of (correct) adjectival inflection. Therefore, theories of nominal ellipsis claiming a crucial role for determiners and/or inflection should be re-considered.

Furthermore, it has been shown that the acquisition of the role of the quantitative pronoun in the licensing mechanism of nominal ellipsis proceeds essentially in the same way in French and in Dutch, supporting for both languages a movement analysis of a lexical variant of an empty noun. This is however work in progress and therefore our results can only suggest certain answers; it is clear that more data from more languages should be investigated in the future

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