

**Observations on the optionality of modern Catalan participle agreement and
hypotheses as to its implications for the future of Romance languages**

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Preface *

Catalonia, a region of northeastern Spain where Catalan is spoken, has not been particularly powerful since the fifteenth century when its decline first began. Various monarchs and dictators, including Ferdinand and Isabella, Philip V, and Franco, have restricted and/or forbidden the use of Catalan, subjugating it to Castilian Spanish, the main language spoken throughout the rest of Spain (Nath, 1998). Because of its past as a minority language in many ways, Catalan's social and political status has strongly affected both prescriptive and normative grammar, making it a fascinating yet difficult language to target in linguistic analysis. Since Franco's death in 1975, there has been more emphasis on reviving the use and standardization of Catalan, including more extensive use of the language in official contexts, as well as its teaching in public schools. However, many of the older speakers who were interviewed for this thesis grew up during the years when Catalan was prohibited, meaning they never learnt to read or write in Catalan through any standardized teaching if at all; and many of the younger ones may have been influenced by the resurgence of pro-Catalan activism and the sense of duty to learn to speak the language well, which often involved focusing on the factors

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that differentiate Catalan and Spanish, participial agreement being one of them. Therefore, I wish to include the disclaimer that the native speaker data which are provided and analyzed in this thesis are not nearly as reliable as I might like, in large part due to the colored past of Catalan's socio-linguistic status. A more in-depth study with much more control and attention to background, etc. would be necessary to accurately survey the large array of different speakers from different geographic locations, socioeconomic backgrounds, age groups, genders, levels of education, etc.; not to mention to encompass the sheer number of dialects within the language. These data are meant to serve only as a preliminary indicator of the phenomena that I address in the thesis, and are by no means as complete a study that I believe is necessary to obtain satisfying conclusions.

1.0 Introduction¹

In this thesis, I attempt to analyze the possible causes for the optionality of Catalan participle agreement with preceding direct object third person clitic pronouns in the present perfective structure. I will present two hypotheses as to why this optionality occurs, namely language contact with Spanish as cause for this morphosyntactic change; and independent agreement loss over time, possibly across all Romance; and show why I believe the second to be the correct analysis. In section 1, I briefly describe how most Romance languages are grouped either as Type A, agreement rich; or Type B, agreement poor; and how Catalan seems to be somewhere in between. I then move on in section 2 to analyze data collected by native speakers in Igualada (2.1), Barcelona (2.2) and Valencia

¹ Many of the authors whose texts I cite base their arguments on assumptions made in Chomsky (1995), particularly in Chapter 3 (A Minimalist Program for Linguistic Theory), which was first published separately in 1993

and the Balearic Islands (2.3). In section 3 I then examine the hypothesis of Spanish influence on Catalan as the primary cause for optionality in this structure, as well as arguments against this hypothesis. In section 4 I use data from both Medieval Catalan and Old Spanish to uphold my hypothesis that this language change has occurred over time in both of these languages independent of syntactic influence from other languages. I further explore this premise in section 5, analyzing some possible causes for and patterns of this agreement loss, and in section 6 I focus on certain puzzling issues within the expected patterns. In section 7 I cite a personal communication that leads me to believe that independent agreement loss is slowly occurring across all Romance, even in French, an agreement-rich (Type A) language. I then draw some conclusions based on agreement losses in some different structures in Catalan and Spanish over time that suggest that agreement loss could be occurring very abundantly, across many different structures in many different Romance languages.

1.1 Basic Information

It is generally accepted among linguists that all Romance languages contain a periphrastic structure consisting of the construction *have + perfect participle*, which evolved from a similar Latin construction:

Habeo scriptum librum
have[I] written[acc m s] book[acc m s]
'I possess the book which is written'²

² Example sentence and translation from Smith (1995:271), gloss added

This construction came to mean ‘I have got the book written’ and was eventually grammaticalized to result in a similar periphrastic construction exhibited by all modern Romance languages, translating more literally to “I have written the book”. This structure can also be altered using a pronoun to substitute for “the book,” yielding a sentence translated into English as “I have written it.” In the parallel structure in modern Catalan, the pattern of perfect participle agreement with preceding direct object clitic pronouns is quite strange and interesting when compared to agreement patterns in other Romance languages.

According to classifications made by Lois (1990), Romance languages can be generalized into two types: Type A languages, like French and Italian, in which agreement of perfect participles is obligatory with preceding third person direct object clitics; and Type B languages, like Spanish and Portuguese, in which it is forbidden. The following examples illustrate these agreement patterns, respectively:

French:

- (1) Je **les** ai écrites / *écrit
 I them[f pl] (I) have written [f pl] / written[-Agr]
 “I have written them”

Spanish:

- (2) **Las** he escrito / *escritas
 them[f pl] (I) have written [-Agr] / written [f pl]
 “I have written them”

However, in Catalan, agreement of the perfect participle in both number and gender with a preceding direct object clitic pronoun is optional for most speakers, as shown in (3) -

(8)³:

(3) **Les** he escrites
them[f pl] (I) have written [f pl]
“I have written them”

(4) **Les** he escrit
them[f pl] (I) have written [-Agr]
“I have written them”

(5) **L’he** vista
It[f s] (I) have seen [f s]
“I have seen it”

(6) **L’he** vist
It[f s] (I) have seen [-Agr]
“I have seen it”

(7) **Els** he trobats
Them[m pl] (I) have found [m pl]
“I have found them”

(8) **Els** he trobat
Them[m pl] (I) have found [-Agr]
“I have found them”

³ The masculine singular case is not shown here, because it shows no agreement - rather, it is the “base” (or uninflected) form of the participle, which is identical in form to the participles in (4), (6), and (8)

All of the above sentences are acceptable for most Catalan speakers, whether they demonstrate participial agreement with the pronoun (3), (5), (7); or not, (4), (6), (8).

A manual of Catalan grammar for English speakers claims that “if the direct object is an atonic [direct object pronoun, as opposed to subject pronoun⁴] form of the personal pronouns of the third person: *el, la, els, or les*, the past participle usually agrees in gender and number with it.” (Crowley, 1936:24) However, this statement is immediately amended by the note that “Observance of these rules is not uniformly maintained.”

A different manual of Catalan grammar for English speakers claims that this agreement occurs with participles and their preceding unstressed third person direct object pronouns (Gili, 1967:65). However, this same text makes the subtler distinction that, “When a compound verb is followed by a verb in the infinitive, and the sentence has a direct object, it is necessary to ascertain whether the direct object belongs to the first or to the second verb. If the latter is the case, there is no agreement of the Participle”:

- (9) Aquesta dona, *l’he sentida* cantar⁵
 This woman, her[f s] [I] have heard[f s] to sing
 I have heard this woman sing
- (10) Aquesta cançó, *l’he sentit* cantar
 This song, it[f s] [I] have heard[-Agr] to sing
 I have heard this song sung

⁴ While this definition does not hold with a traditional linguistic definition of “atonic” (which means “stressless”), it is the term used to differentiate the direct object clitic pronouns from the subject pronouns.

⁵ In more modern GB than Gili (1967) was working with, the agreement issues in (9) and (10) are accounted for, as *l’* is the subject of the verb *cantar* in (9) and *sentir* in (10); therefore the agreement patterns shown in these examples are to be expected.

In (9) the pronoun *l'* is the direct object of *sentir*, and in (10) it is the direct object of *cantar*.⁶ While this rule applies in most dialects of modern Catalan, it is significant because it could be a source of confusion for speakers as to when it is correct or incorrect to show agreement, thereby resulting in them dropping agreement to avoid the problem entirely.

The works of Catalan linguist Joan Solà (1973:2. 59) show yet another, vaguer and more complicated, agreement rule proposal:

“ . . . el participi passat, precedit dels verbs *ser* o *haver*, pot concordar o no amb el subjecte o el complement directe, segons una sèrie de casos molt o força complicats en algunes llengües (francès, italià) i, comparativament, simples en català: però, així i tot, el fenomen representa en aquesta llengua una dificultat notable que mereix atenció.”

(“ . . . the past [perfect] participle, preceded by the verbs *ser* [to be] or *haver* [to have], can agree or not with the subject or the direct object, according to a series of very or somewhat complicated cases in some languages (French, Italian) and, comparatively, simple cases in Catalan: but, even so, the phenomenon represents in this language a notable difficulty that deserves attention.”)⁷

While Solà (1973) claims that the participle can at times agree with the subject of the sentence, Cortés (1993:222) documents that this type of agreement is fairly archaic and is only present in dialects of Catalan such as Majorcan, which because of its geographic location remains fairly isolated from contact with Spanish and tends to preserve older structures⁸. In the same article, Cortés shows that in most dialects of Catalan the participle does not agree with preceding direct object clitics for first or second person, only for third person, which coincides with the prescriptive grammar books by Gili

⁶ Examples (9) and (10) taken from Gili (1967:65), gloss added.

⁷ The entire paradigm of when agreement is and is not appropriate, according to Solà, can be found on p. 86.

⁸ Though the two are not necessarily related.

(1967) and Crowley (1936). She mentions that many speakers would recognize an agreement with a first or second person clitic as an archaic form (Cortés 1993: 205), suggesting a general loss of agreement in Catalan in multiple constructions.

The fact that agreement between participles and preceding direct object clitic pronouns is optional in Catalan might indicate that the particular structure is currently in flux in the language. There are two main hypotheses for why this could be true. The first is that Catalan is and always has been in close contact with Spanish, and often subordinated both politically and linguistically to Spanish. This could therefore suggest that syntactic influence from Spanish, which forbids participle agreement in this construction, influences Catalan agreement patterns in the parallel structure. The second hypothesis is that Catalan is progressing from a Type A to a Type B language independent of contact with Spanish, and that this optionality is indicative of the progress of such a change. In this paper I intend to explore and address these two hypotheses and defend why I believe the second to be the primary reason for the optionality in Catalan participle agreement with preceding direct object clitic pronouns.

2.0 Analyses of native speaker data

I attempted to gather data from native speakers of central Catalan, the dialect spoken in Barcelona and surrounding areas. The speakers polled were of three approximate generations from two different areas, the city of Barcelona itself and a smaller town, Igualada, which is approximately 70km from Barcelona, but where the same dialect of Catalan is still spoken. The data I received were not as conclusive as I had hoped, and I

think this is in part because this central dialect of Catalan is known for being poor in participle-pronoun agreement, and in part because some of my hypotheses were completely disproved across the board⁹. However, I was still able to draw some interesting conclusions based on my findings. I had hypothesized that two things might happen: 1) older speakers might use the older plus-agreement form more than younger speakers, and 2) agreement might be more common in Igualada than in Barcelona, possibly because of Igualada's relative lack of contact with Spanish (a Type B, agreement-forbidden language). The survey¹⁰ I wrote consisted of 12 sentences in Catalan, administered and answered orally, in which the informants would have to substitute a pronoun for the direct object, therefore possibly triggering agreement in 9 of the 12 cases (all except the masculine singular, which would remain unmarked). The informants were not told what the objective of the survey was before taking it. An example of one of the sentences is:

(11) a) He volgut **la** **taula** → b) **L'**he volgut/**uda**
 a) I have wanted the[f s] table → b) it[f s] I have wanted[-Agr/f s]¹¹

The test consisted of sentences such as (11) in which informants had to change the sentence from (11a) to (11b) and my survey distributors¹² wrote down whether their

⁹ This most likely has something to do with the factors mentioned in the preface, and therefore indicates once again that a more in-depth sociolinguistic study would be necessary here.

¹⁰ See Appendix I for the entire survey.

¹¹ While the pronoun *L'* in sentence (11b) is [f s], the feminine aspect of it is not obvious, because the feminine and masculine pronouns in this form are not distinguishable. Further discussion of this point can be found in section 5.3.

¹² Both of whom were native Catalan speakers, instructed specifically to administer the surveys and record the results without discussing the objective until afterwards.

response exhibited participle agreement. The findings are displayed in the following table:

Data collected in Igualada

F s	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
M pl	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
M s	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
M pl	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No
F pl	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
F s	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
M s	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
F pl	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No
M pl	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
F s	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
F pl	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
M s	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
age and distance from Barcelona of hometown	15, Igualada (70 km)	17, Terrassa (30 km)	18, Igualada (70 km)	19, Igualada (70 km)	20, Igualada (70 km)	24, Girona (100 km)	25, Girona (100 km)	37, Igualada (70 km)	40, Terrassa (30 km)	42, Terrassa (30 km)	46, Igualada (70 km); Barcelona (0 km)	54, Majorca (approx 475 km)	64, Terrassa (30 km)	72, Igualada (70 km)	74, Anoia (*)
# of [f s] +Agr instances	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
# of [f pl] +Agr instances	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	3	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
# of [m pl] +Agr instances	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
# of total +Agr instances, out of 9 possible	0	0	0	2	2	0	1	6	0	0	0	1	1	0	0

*Difficult to say here – Anoia is a county which contains Igualada as its capital; but since this informant put “Anoia – Poble (village), they most likely meant to indicate that they are from a rural, and not an urban, area. The distance from Barcelona could be anywhere from 70-100 km.

2.1 Igualada

The data shown in the 12 Igualada surveys do not necessarily line up with my hypothesis.

For example, the two 70-something speakers showed no examples of agreement on the survey questions (though my interviewer specifically asked the 72-year-old if s/he ever did show agreement in this construction, and the answer was yes, at times). Also, the Majorcan subject of 54 years only agreed in one sentence, and included the note that in Mallorca, they hardly ever agree the participle with the pronoun¹³. As can be seen in the results, the very youngest subjects showed little or no agreement, but it was not true that

¹³ Which is the opposite of all documented accounts of Majorcan Catalan, according to Cortés (1990) as well as all other evidence that I have been exposed to regarding Majorcan Catalan.

the oldest subjects showed the most. In fact, the speakers in the middle age bracket showed the most instances of agreement. These findings were not what I expected, and I think they are somewhat inconclusive, in that they do not concretely determine whether or not the agreement is a phenomenon that older generations use more than younger.

2.1.1

One very interesting fact that I noticed is that, of the 6 speakers that displayed some agreement¹⁴, only one showed agreement with a masculine plural pronoun, whereas there were 5 instances of agreement with a feminine singular and 5 with feminine plural¹⁵.

While speakers are generally not systematic about how they agree with pronouns, I consider it important that they agreed more with feminine ones, whether plural or singular; the only informant who agreed in all feminine instances was the 37-year-old (who, my survey distributor mentioned, is a man who intentionally studies Catalan normative grammar in an effort to speak as ‘correctly’ as possible). This observation that the feminine pronouns trigger more agreement than masculine plurals is mentioned in Smith (1995:274-5), Cortés (1993:202) and Wheeler (1999:411), and is, according to my recollections of the Catalan spoken in Barcelona, entirely true. Furthermore, the one case of masculine plural agreement was in the following sentence:

(12) *He vist els nois* → *Els he vistos*
 [I] have seen[-Agr] the[m pl] boys → them[m pl] [I] have seen[m pl]

¹⁴ 6 of 15, or 40% of the speakers, displayed some agreement.

¹⁵ In the masculine singular, no overt agreement exists, so the participle would remain unaltered both audibly and orthographically:

He vist el noi → L’he vist
 I have seen the boy → Him[m s] [I] have seen[-Agr]

I have seen the boys → I have seen them

With this particular verb participle, there were three possible options due to the verb's irregularity; the unmarked option *vist*, the marked option *vists* and the marked option *vistos* are all acceptable answers to most speakers. The fact that the agreement was done with the *vistos* form (and not the *vists* form) is interesting because it is more similar phonologically to the agreement of a feminine plural pronoun, such as:

(13) *He vist les noies → Les he vistes*
 [I] have seen[-Agr] the[f pl] girls → them[f pl] [I] have seen[f pl]
 I have seen the girls → I have seen them

since there is a vowel between the end consonant *t* of the participle and the plural marker *-s*. The significance of this will be elaborated in section 6.

Data Collected in Barcelona

F s	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	Yes
M pl	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
M s	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
M pl	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
F pl	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes
F s	No	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
M s	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
F pl	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes
M pl	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
F s	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes
F pl	No	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No
M s	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
age and distance from Barcelona of hometown	21, Barcelona (0 km)	22, Sitges (30 km)	22, Barcelona (0 km)	23, Barcelona (0 km)	30, Barcelona (0 km)	34, Martorell (20 km)	43, Badalona (6 km)	47, Santa Coloma de Gramenet (8 km)	59, Barcelona (0 km)	70, Guissona (70 km); Martorell (20 km)	74, Badalona (6 km)
# of [f s] +Agr instances	1	2	1	1	1	1	3	2	1	0	3
# of [f pl] +Agr instances	1	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	2
# of [m pl] +Agr instances	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
# of total +Agr instances,	2	4	1	1	1	2	3	2	1	0	5

out of 9 possible											
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2.2 Barcelona

The data from the 11 Barcelona surveys proved to be extremely useful, as they exhibited a significantly larger number of [+Agr] instances than those of Igualada. This serves to support my hypothesis that Spanish influence is not the primary factor in Catalan agreement loss, since Barcelona speakers are undoubtedly exposed to a greater amount of Spanish than Igualada speakers. As can be seen from the chart, it was not true that the younger speakers showed less agreement instances, nor that the older speakers showed significantly more overall. Once again, age did not seem to be an analyzable factor.

2.3 Valencia and the Balearic Islands¹⁶

While I did not manage to have any surveys specifically conducted in Valencia or the Balearic Islands, one of my investigators distributed copies of the surveys to two informants from the Valencian region, one from the island Ibiza, and one from the island Minorca. Since these four surveys were most likely taken as a written test rather than an oral, and since I had no control over the results, I hesitate to use their results as concrete information in my thesis. However, they show some interesting traits:

¹⁶ One subject in the Igualada data was from Majorca, technically one of the Balearic Islands. However, as she had been living in Igualada for some time, I chose to group her with that set of data.

F s	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
M pl	No	No	No	No
M s	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
M pl	No	Yes ¹⁷	Yes	No
F pl	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
F s	Yes	Yes	No	No
M s	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
F pl	Yes	No	No	No
M pl	No	No	No	No
F s	Yes	Yes	Maybe ¹⁸	Yes
F pl	Yes	Yes	No	No
M s	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
age and distance from Barcelona of hometown	18, Minorca (424 km)	19, Ibiza (503 km)	20, Alcant (Valencia) (729 km)	21, Alcoi (Valencia) (662 km)
# of [f s] +Agr instances	3	3	1	2
# of [f pl] +Agr instances	3	3	0	1
# of [m pl] +Agr instances	0	0	1	0
# of total +Agr instances, out of 9 possible	6	6	2	3

Smith (1995) makes an interesting point that, despite Valencia being the biggest city in which Valencian Catalan is spoken, and therefore the place in Valencia where Catalan would be most exposed linguistically to Spanish, Valencian Catalan is much higher in agreement than even the Catalan of non-urban areas in northern Catalonia. Therefore, this might suggest that simply contact with Spanish is not enough to provoke such a linguistic

¹⁷ Once again, *vistos* in both of these cases.

¹⁸ Here the speaker expressed doubt, circling both the marked and unmarked participial forms. I shall count it loosely as a case of agreement simply for the tallying purposes, and since these data do not enter into my main analyses due to their overall unreliability.

change. The data shown by the two Valencian speakers in this section hold true to this richer agreement.

3.0 Spanish Language Influence

Despite the previous claim of Smith (1995) that contact with Spanish does not seem to be the primary factor of participle agreement loss in Catalan, there are many linguists who believe otherwise. Moll (1952, as cited by Smith (1995:280)) attributed the survival of agreement-plus participial structures in some dialects of Catalan to their remoteness from Spanish influence. Alcover (1908:127-128, cited by Smith, 1995:280) claims that Spanish influence is violently invading Catalan, and Obrador (1908:133, cited by Smith, 1995:280) goes further by claiming that ‘participial agreement has tended to occur ‘sobre tot durant les èpoques y a les regions menys atacades pe’l virus castellanista’” (above all during the epochs and in the regions least attacked by the [Pro-Spanish] virus). Badia Margarit (1962:467) claims less definitively that “esta tendencia . . . puede haber venido apoyada por la invariabilidad de las construcciones paralelas castellanas” (this tendency . . . can have come supported by the invariability of the parallel Castilian constructions). However, the more recent trends in linguistic analysis of Catalan are dismissive of the idea that such a change took place solely based on Spanish influence.

4.0 Data from Medieval Catalan and Old Spanish¹⁹

4.1 Medieval Catalan²⁰ data

¹⁹ The Medieval Catalan examples here are from texts from the 13th and 14th centuries. This was the approximate time period during which Catalan exhibited the traits explored in section 4.1. The texts in 4.2 that examine these same traits in Old Spanish are analyzing the language between the 12th and 15th century, with participial agreement beginning to disappear entirely during the second half of the 16th century (Bolaño e Isla, 1959)

Lois (1990) shows a correlation between participial agreement and alternation of auxiliaries: that is, languages that alternate between *be* and *have* auxiliaries in compound tenses show compulsory agreement; that is, they are Type A languages. Munxí (1996) identifies some other characteristics true of Medieval Catalan as being properties of Type A languages. All of these characteristics fundamental to Type A languages are illustrated and explained in the examples below. Through these characteristics we see that Medieval Catalan seems to have been a Type A language, and has since evolved into its present state of being somewhere between Type A and Type B.

- i) auxiliary alternation of *to have* and *to be* verbs: sentences (14), (15) and (16) illustrate that, in unaccusative constructions, Medieval Catalan made use of the auxiliary *ser* (*to be*):

(14) **Erem** anats a caçar
 Were[1 pl] gone [m pl] to hunt
 ‘We went hunting.’

(15) Jo **só** partit de la mia ciutat.
 I am left of the my town
 ‘I left my town.’

(16) **Són** me mesa en sa guarda.
 Am myself [f s] put [f s] in his guard
 I have put myself under his protection²¹

- ii) use of *haver* (*have*) as a main verb taking a direct object, and not just an auxiliary:

(17) Tot hom qui **age** mesuras **las** **age** tornades.
 Everyone who has ‘measures’ them[f pl] has returned[f pl]²²

²⁰ Examples taken from Munxí (1996) with gloss and translation slightly altered for clarity:

²¹ There is some question as to the accuracy of Munxí’s translation here - the important point is, regardless of the discrepancy, the sentence illustrates a case of the auxiliary *ser*.

- iii) participial agreement with the auxiliary *have* was compulsory with direct object clitics of all three persons, as shown in (17)-(19)

(18) pus que Déus **la**'ns **ha** donada en ajuda.
since that God her-to us has given-Fem.Sg in help
'since God has given her to us to help us.'

(19) ...perquè **us** **han** amenada en aquesta nau.
...because you.Fem.Sg.Formal have-3pl brought-Fem.Sg in this ship
'...because they have brought to you this ship.'

- iv) “the main verb *tenir* was being used in a similar way to the main verb *haver*. *Tenir* is the form that would eventually start replacing and then taking over completely the function of main verb, relegating *haver* to the function of auxiliary verb only. This transition from type A to type B language must have started some time after the XIV century and is already in its final stages, the optionality in participial agreement being the last remnant of what used to be a type A language.”

(20) Tot clerge qui **tingua** ni ague.
every clergyman who has neither water²³

4.1.1 Summary and analysis of Medieval Catalan data

In summary, the traits displayed by these examples are as follows:

- a) alternation between auxiliaries *haver* (*have*) and *ésser*²⁴/*ser* (*be*)
- b) use of *haver* as a main verb and not just an auxiliary, as is the case in modern Catalan
- c) Participial agreement with *haver* was obligatory with direct object pronoun clitics of all three persons

²² Munxi provides no translation, only a gloss. My guess based on her gloss is “Everyone who has measures has returned them,” and I imagine it was some sort of idiomatic expression or figure of speech.

²³ Once again, Munxi provides no translation, and once again I can do little better than to restate her gloss. However, Ivette Tarrida pointed out that “tingua” here seems to be a main verb rather than an auxiliary to her, which is what I believe Munxi’s point was, despite her ambiguous wording.

²⁴ While both *ser* and *ésser* are considered acceptable versions of the infinitive *be*, *ser* is a more modern version.

- d) the main verb *tenir* was being used in a similar way to the main verb *haver*, when it had previously been serving as an auxiliary as well, a function which was taken over by *haver* in modern Catalan.

These four traits were present in Medieval Catalan, and are identified as traits that are typical of Type A languages. That is to say, Medieval Catalan displayed the fundamental traits of a Type A language, and has gone through changes which now make modern Catalan seem to fall somewhere between a Type A and a Type B language.

4.2 Old Spanish data

In Old Spanish, these same four characteristics can be found, according to Bolaño e Isla (1959, p. 144)^{25 26}, though they seem to have occurred, and therefore possibly died out, much earlier historically than they did in Catalan. Bolaño e Isla (1959:144²⁷) shows an example in which the participle agrees with a preceding explicit direct object, rather than with a clitic pronoun. Keniston (1937:452) also cites only examples in which agreement is shown with the express direct object, but not with a clitic pronoun²⁸. Inclán (1991) states that participial agreement with a preceding direct object clitic pronoun was present in Old Spanish, showing the following example²⁹:

²⁵ However, I did not find anything to indicate whether participle agreement was obligatory with all three persons in Old Spanish, as it was in Medieval Catalan (per Munxi 1996). Agreement with pronouns of all three persons is questionable, but can still be somewhat acceptable, in modern Catalan, according to Cortés (1993:206).

²⁶ Not only does Old Spanish have *ser* (to be) as an auxiliary, but, as Keniston (1937:445) points out, also many other auxiliaries with transitive verbs: *traer* (to bring), *dexar* (to leave – present Spanish *dejar*), and *llevar* (to wear, carry, bring). Keniston also claims that with *tener* as well as the above mentioned auxiliaries, agreement with the direct object is common (1937:452).

²⁷ Bolaño e Isla cites Lapesa citing Cervantes for this example, with no further information.

²⁸ These examples are provided with further discussion in section 7.1.1.

²⁹ Example cited from the epic poem *Cid*, p. 67, as cited by Yllera (1979)

[los]	ovo	bastidos
[pro]them[m p]	had	provided[m p]

4.2.1 Summary and analysis of Old Spanish data

The information from the authors in 4.2 indicates that Old Spanish also displayed the fundamental traits of a Type A language, but has since gone through many changes that have rendered modern Spanish a Type B language. Olbertz (1993:255) also states that past participle agreement, with any person, died out c. 1438. The fact that these traits were present in Old Spanish and eventually disappeared on their own suggests that more is affecting the agreement patterns in this structure than simply the influence of Spanish on Catalan, since in Spanish the change happened without apparent influence from any Type B language contact.³⁰ Another interesting note regarding Old Spanish is brought up by Parodi (1995), who claims that speakers of Old Spanish began dropping participial agreement and replacing that structure with the non-agreement counterpart by the end of the 16th century, because it was a “simpler and less costly construction.” She claims that the loss of this agreement is “diachronic proof that speakers minimize overt syntax,” suggesting that agreement, at least in this particular structure, was superfluous for communication purposes. This idea will be further explored in sections 5-7.

5.0 Further observations in support of a non-language contact analysis

5.1

³⁰ While Spanish may have been in contact with other languages such as Portuguese and certain Spanish dialects at the time, this does not seem to indicate that there was any syntactic influence from these languages, particularly since in this case, Spanish would have been the politically and socially stronger language - the likelier story is that Spanish would have influenced these other languages, and not vice-versa.

In modern spoken French, there are certain constructions in which participle agreement is optional (and therefore possibly in flux), which will be more fully explored in sections 6 and 7. This apparent loss of agreement in French, a Type A language, coupled with the losses of agreement from medieval to modern Catalan and old to modern Spanish, might suggest that all Romance languages are in the process of gradually losing agreement, particularly in cases in which agreement is not critical to the understanding of the sentence. To illustrate this, let us look at some examples of modern French:

(21) Je **l'**ai écrit
 I it[m s] have written[m s, -Agr]

(22) Je **l'**ai écrite
 I it[f s] have written[f s]

(23) Je **les** ai écrits
 I them[m pl] have written[m pl]

(24) Je **les** ai écrites
 I them[f pl] have written[f pl]

Due to the particulars of French phonology, there are some interesting observations to be made here. First of all, in sentences (21) – (24), there is no phonologically realized difference between number – that is, sentence (21) and its plural counterpart (23) sound exactly the same, as do sentences (22) and (24)³¹.

(25) Je **l'**ai vu
 I it[m s] have seen [m s, -Agr]

(26) Je **l'**ai vue
 I it[f s] have seen[f s]

³¹ However, here the agreement marker on the end of the participle would be heard in a liaison if the next word began with a vowel, such as “*Je les ai écrits aujourd’hui*” (I have written them today).

- (27) Je **les** ai vus
 I them[m pl] have seen[m pl]
- (28) Je **les** ai vues
 I them[f pl] have seen[f pl]

Furthermore, since the uninflected form of the participle in sentences (25) – (28) ends in a vowel, there is no phonologically realized difference for gender OR number – that is, in (25), (26), (27) and (28), the participles all sound exactly alike.

5.2

Since we can't hear the difference between the singular and plural participle endings for a given gender with consonant-final uninflected participles like *écrit* in (21) – (24), and we can't hear the difference between gender or number markings in a vowel-final uninflected participle like *vu* in (25)-(28), it is easily concluded that the participle agreement is not crucial to the understanding of the sentence, as speakers have managed to orally communicate effectively with this system for years. It can therefore be argued that the crucial information on both number and gender³² is carried in the direct object pronouns, here *l'* and *les* in French, for singular and plural (masculine or feminine), respectively.

This indicator that the participle does not carry some of, or all of, the vital information for communication, might suggest that this type of agreement is superfluous, and therefore is being lost from the language due to this lack of necessity (see Parodi 1995, mentioned in section 4.2.1). Therefore, it could be possible that in Catalan, the participle agreement is

³²Masculine/Feminine distinction is carried in French participles, but not in all cases; whereas in Catalan, a feminine singular marked participle will always sound distinct from a masculine singular one due to phonological differences between the languages. However, the argument still holds that participles may not therefore carry all the gender/number information in the sentence, which could therefore allow agreement to be dropped and still have a perfectly understandable sentence.

not needed to carry either gender or number information, since the direct object clitic pronouns carry all of this information.

5.3

However, the case in which this is ambiguous is when in certain phonological environments the Catalan clitics *la* and *el* reduce to the *l'* form, since *l'* can be either masculine or feminine singular. One might speculate that in this gender-ambiguous instance, such as in sentences (29) and (30), agreement might be triggered for clarification purposes to show whether the ambiguous clitic *l'* was masculine or feminine. Below, sentence (29) remains ambiguous as to the gender of the clitic *l'*, and so that information would have to be discovered through context, whereas sentence (30) uses participle agreement with the gender-ambiguous clitic *l'* to clarify that it is feminine. Sentences (31) and (32), however, do not have the same ambiguity problem because the clitics they contain do not collapse to an ambiguous form in front of a vowel or mute *h* as their singular counterparts do.

(29) Jo **l'**he vist avui
I it[f s] have seen[-Agr] today

(30) Jo **l'**he vista avui
I it[f s]have seen[f s] today

(31) Jo **els** he vist/vists avui
I them have seen[-Agr/m pl] today

(32) Jo **les** he vist/vistes avui
I them[f pl] have seen[-Agr/f pl] today

Since agreement in feminine singular instances such as (29) might clarify ambiguous components of the sentence³³, we might assume that agreement would be more common in feminine singular than in feminine plural instances³⁴. However, according to the Igualada data, this is not the case. The survey results are repeated here:

Data collected in Igualada

F s	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
M pl	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
M s	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
M pl	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No
F pl	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
F s	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
M s	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
F pl	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No
M pl	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
F s	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
F pl	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
M s	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
age and distance from Barcelona of hometown	15, Igualada (70 km)	17, Terrassa (30 km)	18, Igualada (70 km)	19, Igualada (70 km)	20, Igualada (70 km)	24, Girona (100 km)	25, Girona (100 km)	37, Igualada (70 km)	40, Terrassa (30 km)	42, Terrassa (30 km)	46, Igualada (70 km); Barcelona (0 km)	54, Majorca (approx. 475 km)	64, Terrassa (30 km)	72, Igualada (70 km)	74, Anoia (*)
# of [f s] +Agr instances	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
# of [f pl] +Agr instances	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	3	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
# of [m pl] +Agr instances	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
# of total +Agr instances, out of 9 possible	0	0	0	2	2	0	1	6	0	0	0	1	1	0	0

*Difficult to say here – Anoia is a county which contains Igualada as its capital; but since this informant put “Anoia – Poble (village), they most likely meant to indicate that they are from a rural, and not an urban, area. The distance from Barcelona could be anywhere from 70-100 km.

³³ While this clarification is not necessary in instances such as (32) because of the non-ambiguous clitic *les*.

³⁴ Particularly since every conjugation of the auxiliary *haver* (*to have*), which the clitics have to proceed in this structure, begins with a mute *h*, thereby forcing the singular clitics to collapse to their gender-ambiguous form *l'* due to phonological reasons.

Data Collected in Barcelona

F s	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	Yes
M pl	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
M s	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
M pl	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
F pl	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes
F s	No	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
M s	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
F pl	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes
M pl	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
F s	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes
F pl	No	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No
M s	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
age and distance from Barcelona of hometown	21, Barcelona (0 km)	22, Sitges (30 km)	22, Barcelona (0 km)	23, Barcelona (0 km)	30, Barcelona (0 km)	34, Martorell (20 km)	43, Badalona (6 km)	47, Santa Coloma de Gramenet (8 km)	59, Barcelona (0 km)	70, Guissona (70 km); Martorell (20 km)	74, Badalona (6 km)
# of [f s] +Agr instances	1	2	1	1	1	1	3	2	1	0	3
# of [f pl] +Agr instances	1	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	2
# of [m pl] +Agr instances	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
# of total +Agr instances, out of 9 possible	2	4	1	1	1	2	3	2	1	0	5

In the Igualada surveys, there were exactly the same number of instances of feminine singular agreement and feminine plural agreement (six of each, out of a total of 45 possible instances for each; i.e. approximately 13% of the total opportunities for agreement). Therefore, participial agreement cannot be based solely on sentence clarification, since there are clearly a number of sentences in which this ambiguity was present and yet speakers did not clarify using participle agreement, and since there seems to be no preference for feminine singular agreement over feminine plural. However, in the Barcelona surveys, there were only 6 cases of feminine plural agreement, but 16 of feminine singular (and 0 masculine singular). This might lead us to question the findings

from Igualada, and allow for the possibility that feminine singular agreement is preferred over either masculine or feminine plural agreement, possibly because of the gender ambiguity factor with the *l'* clitic.

Wheeler (1999:411) states that agreement is more common with *la* than with any other direct object clitic pronoun. Smith (1995:274-5)³⁵ also supports this claim, as does Cortés (1993:205), who states that “phonological realization of optional plural agreement is not as common as optional (feminine) singular agreement. Both masculine and feminine third person singular clitics reduce to *l'* before the auxiliary *haver*”. Therefore, while not all of my data entirely uphold the principle that feminine singular cases are the most common, the Barcelona data do provide a strong case in favor of this.

6.0 Further issues

Yet another interesting point in Catalan agreement is brought up in the native speaker data, this time from all the locations apart from Barcelona. The fact that the feminine instances, both plural and singular, tend to trigger agreement more than the masculine plural instances suggests that there is some sort of phonological reasoning behind agreement preferences. All feminine cases require the participle to be suffixed with either a vowel *-a* (for singular) or *-es* (for feminine), thereby adding a syllable to the uninflected (i.e. masculine singular) participle form, whereas the majority of masculine plural cases only require an *-s* suffix. This implies that the extra syllable created by the

³⁵ He points out that, from his corpus of 20th century Catalan prose data consisting of approximately 150,000 words, the three cases of non-agreement with a preceding direct object clitic pronoun all involved the masculine plural clitic *els*.

vowel initial suffix facilitates pronunciation and is therefore a more likely agreement case. Further support for this conclusion is that the only case of masculine plural agreement found in the Igualada data was with a slightly irregular past participle that can take two possible marked forms when agreed, either *-s* to form *vists*, or *-os* to form *vistos*. Since this case allows the masculine plural to be formed with a vowel-initial suffix, as in the feminine suffixes, it seems that the phonology of Catalan demonstrates a preference for vowel-initial suffixes in optional participle agreement. Further evidence for this belief is the fact that in Catalan, words with a *-st* final consonant cluster are somewhat rare and, when they are masculine adjectives or nouns they are regularly formed into a plural by adding *-os*, and not simply *-s*. The only other participles I have been able to find ending in *-st* are “post” and “repost,” neither of which are particularly common. Therefore, we might assume that the word final consonant cluster *-sts* is very dispreferred in Catalan, and is therefore avoided through this particular agreement strategy. The slight dispreference of word final *-ts* in Catalan would explain why masculine plural participial agreement is less common than any feminine agreement; however, as other words ending in *-ts* do exist, this is therefore not a sufficient explanation for the lack of all masculine plural agreement. The reasons given in section 5 involving critical information transmittal are most likely contributing factors as well.

7.0 Conclusion

7.1 Further evidence for agreement loss across Romance

7.1.1

Another observation supporting a possible overall loss of agreement in Romance is the fact that, in both Spanish and Catalan, we can see a loss of participle agreement with direct objects which are not cliticized in the simple perfect structure I have previously analyzed, but rather overt in *wh*- structures:³⁶

- (33) **Leyda** que houo Flaminio **la letra**
 Read[f s] that had Flaminio the letter[f s]
 The letter that Flaminio had read
- (34) **Recibida** que houe **tu carta** e leyda
 Received[f s] that [pro]had your letter[f s] and read[f s]
 That [pro] had read and received your letter
- (35) **La ropa** de algodón que había **allegada**
 The clothing[f s] of cotton that had arrived[f s]
 The cotton clothing that had arrived

Cortés (1993:222) also points out that in Majorcan, “underlying object NPs which surface as overt subject, however, also trigger agreement optionally . . . in structures with the anaphoric external argument clitic *es*.”³⁷

- (36) **Na Maria s’ha cremat/ada** a la cuina
 Maria[f s] herself has burnt[-Agr]/[f s] in the kitchen
 Maria has burnt herself in the kitchen

Badia Margarit (1962:464) states that, in earlier stages of Catalan and in some modern dialects such as those of Valencia and the Balearic Islands, participial agreement occurs

³⁶ Sentences (33) and (34) are examples from Keniston (1937:452), and sentence (35) is an example from Bolaño e Isla (1959:144); my glosses and translations have been added for both. While my translations may not be flawless, the relevant grammatical features are analyzed correctly.

³⁷ Example based on Cortés (1993:222), gloss added.

even in a simple construction when the direct object is not cliticized but rather overtly stated.³⁸

(37) He vista **la mare**
I have seen[f s] the mother[f s]
I have seen the mother

(38) He trobats **els amics**
I have found[m pl] the friends[m pl]
I have found the friends

The fact that these three different linguistic contexts all used to display agreement and have since lost it indicate that agreement loss, in different contexts and in different Romance languages, is demonstrated over time.

7.1.2 Evidence for possible agreement loss in modern French³⁹

Yet another language that seems to be possibly losing agreement is French, which is arguably the most agreement-rich of the Romance languages⁴⁰. A vital point brought to my attention by French professor Brigitte Mahuzier of Bryn Mawr College (personal communication, November 14th, 2002), suggests further validity for the hypothesis of a slow historical change throughout Romance languages. Mahuzier claims that she recalls

³⁸ Examples here taken from Van Gelderen (1997:190).

³⁹ Kempchinsky (1995:135) claims that both French and Italian show obligatory agreement between the [perfect] participle and an unaccusative subject, but that French shows optional agreement between the past participle and direct object clitics, while Italian shows obligatory agreement in this structure. I believe that she has confused the two languages, as all other sources I have read and/or heard have claimed that in French agreement is obligatory, and in Italian it is optional for first and second person clitic pronouns but obligatory for third person pronouns. Since I am unable to verify what Kempchinsky's reasoning was for this claim, I chose to include it as it may be significant to my arguments if she is aware of an optionality in French agreement that I am not aware of.

⁴⁰ Perhaps not in phonological realization of agreement, however – in that case, Italian is richer in that agreement is heard in all structures where it appears.

having observed, both in direct object clitic structures such as (39) and *wh*- structures such as (40), that native speakers occasionally tend to drop agreement in French:

(39) Je **les** ai **écrit* / *écrites*

(39) **Les cartes** que j'ai **écrit* / *écrites*

While this agreement is technically incorrect according to French normative rules, the observation that French speakers have been occasionally dropping agreement in recent years yields the hypothesis that all Romance languages might eventually experience this sort of gradual change from Type A (agreement required) to Type B (agreement forbidden), as well as strengthening the claim that participial agreement is not crucial to sentence understanding in Romance. Further studies in this area would be necessary to determine the frequency and recentness of such a phenomenon; however, the mere observation that it occurs shows that the gradual Romance language change hypothesis, both with respect to Catalan agreement and in a broader across Romance sense, deserves a closer study.

7.1.3

Posner (1996:135) poses an interesting idea regarding Romance languages. She analyzes the Latin structure from which the construction discussed in this thesis came:

(41) Habeo litteras scriptas
I have letters written
'I have written the letters.'

and shows how this structure came to mean “I have written the letters.” She explains the process of grammaticalization for this sentence as involving the following assumption, and yields an interesting conclusion:

“the subject of the finite verb is necessarily assumed to be the subject of the participle, which is interpreted as active rather than passive. The two verb forms thus amalgamate to the equivalent of a simple verb form, and come to be used with intransitive verbs . . . The amalgamation is most complete in modern Spanish, where intercalation of elements between the auxiliary and the past participle is very rare. *Haber*, having ousted *ser* as the auxiliary of unaccusatives, has virtually lost its original lexical meaning of ‘to have, possess’, in which sense it is replaced by *tener* ‘to hold’. In many other varieties the retention of the *BE* auxiliary for certain verbs, and the possibility of agreement of the past participle with an expressed object, seems to indicate less complete grammaticalization.”

This theory of languages with auxiliary alternation between *have* and *be* as well as about participial agreement is interesting, because it links Lois’ (1990) and Munxí’s (1993) conclusions about these phenomena while filling in gaps that neither other study seemed able to do. However, Posner provides no argument behind her claim, nor references any other author in this section. Regardless, the idea that languages exhibiting the typically Type A traits of auxiliary alternation and participial agreement are somehow less grammaticalized than Type B languages suggests that these Type B languages are in a more evolved state, indicating that Type A languages might be headed in that direction over time. While this is not necessarily indicative of concrete evidence for systematic language evolution, as Posner indicates, it is nevertheless an interesting idea that languages are changing towards a less agreement-marked state.

7.2 Concluding remarks

In this thesis, I have summarized the structure that is in flux in modern Catalan and proposed two possible analyses; that of influence from language contact with Spanish, and that of an independent historical language change in progress. Given the research and data available, I am inclined to agree with the latter hypothesis; however, much sociolinguistic research far beyond the scope of what I can perform in an undergraduate thesis would be necessary in order to rule out the possibility of language influence from Spanish. One would need to take into account many features that I was not able to, namely gender, social status, language preference, education, etc. of the speakers, in order to have a broader and less biased data pool, as well as to overcome the sociolinguistic factors mentioned in my preface.

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Appendix: Sample questionnaire

COSTAT DE LA INVESTIGACIÓ

Exemple:

He descobert el plan → L'he descobert

Frase	Concordança amb participi? Si us plau, encercla la resposta		Notes importants (per exemple, si pregunten si han de fer la concordança o fan qualsevol comentari sobre l'estudi o les preguntes, etc.)
1) Has mirat la televisió	Sí mirada	No mirat	F s
2) He escollit en Joan i en Sergi	Sí escollits	No escollit	M pl
3) Ha vist l'equip	Cap concordança		M s
4) He vist els nois	Sí vists	Sí vistos	No vist
5) Hem pres les pastilles	Sí preses	No pres	F pl
6) Heu volgut la taula	Sí volguda	No volgut	F s
7) Hem guanyat el partit	Cap concordança		M s
8) Has après les lliçons	Sí apreses	No après	F pl
9) Heu banyat els nens	Sí	No	M pl

	banyats	banyat	
10) He fet la sopa	Sí feta	No fet	F s
11) Has escrit les cartes	Sí escrites	No escrit	F pl
12) Ha sentit en Joan	Cap concordança		Ms

COSTAT DELS PARTICIPANTS

Edat: _____

On va créixer vostè? _____

Pot dir la proximitat del lloc de creixement a Barcelona? _____

Si vostè vol ser remerciat/ada a la tesi final, posi el nom aquí: _____

Moltes gràcies per la seva ajuda i participació!

Si té qualsevol pregunta sobre aquest estudi, em pot escriure a ginnielizz@yahoo.com