

Asymmetrical Acquisition of Non-Personal Catalan Clitics: Dominance Effects

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Recent research has put forward that simultaneous (2L1) bilinguals converge with monolingual speakers by following the same developmental phases as them (Meisel, 2007, 2009). However, very little research has been carried out on child L2 (cL2) acquirers, the focus of this study. The present talk investigates whether Catalan and Spanish bilinguals who started learning their second language from an early age (that is, before 7) differ from 2L1 bilinguals. Specifically, I investigate how three groups of Catalan-Spanish bilingual children with different ages of onset and different degrees of language dominance acquire the two Catalan non-personal clitics *en* (1-2) and *hi* (3-4), neither of which exist in Spanish.

- (1) No tinc 4 gots; en tinc 2.
neg. have-1sg-pres 4 glasses; *en* have-1sg-pres 2
'I don't have 4 glasses; I have 2 (of them).'
- (2) Jo no parlo de gossos; en parla el Pau.
I neg. talk-1sg-pres about dogs; *en* talk-3sg-pres the Pau
'I don't talk about dogs; Paul talks (about them).'
- (3) No vaig anar a Roma al 2000; hi vaig anar al 1999.
neg. go-1sg-pres go-inf to Rome in the 2000; *hi* go-1sg-pres go-inf in the 1999
'I didn't go to Rome in 2000; I went (there) in 1999.'
- (4) No penso sempre en política però hi penso sovint.
neg. think-1sg-pres always about politics but *hi* think-1sg-pres usually
'I don't always think about politics but I usually think (about it).'

This talk presents the data of 284 bilingual children, aged 4-9, divided by age of onset and language dominance into three groups: Catalan-dominant (CD) (n=100), Balanced bilinguals (BB) (n=100), and Spanish-dominant (SD) (n=84). Participants completed two tasks (an elicited narration task and an oral production task) on two separate occasions, once in Catalan and once in Spanish. The results of the OPT in Catalan will be presented.

The results of the OPT show significant differences between the 3 groups, with BBs producing more omissions than the CDs and with SDs omitting significantly more than the other two groups at all ages. At the same time, results also show that the different clitics are acquired at different ages or to different degrees, with the partitive *en* (1) being acquired the earliest and the oblique clitics (2 and 4) being acquired the latest, when they are indeed acquired.

This study has theoretical implications since results prove that not only age of onset of acquisition matters, but also language dominance. This supports the idea that input quantity and quality impose limitations on acquisition, even in cases of 2L1 children (Meisel, 2007; Muller Gathercole & Thomas, 2005), but more notably so on cases of early successive bilingualism. In

addition, this is the first effort to determine the order of acquisition of Catalan non-personal clitics.

References

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