

## **The importance of typological proximity for the acquisition of clitic objects in Italian/French in simultaneous vs successive bilingualism**

Petra Bernardini (Lund University)

This study concerns the acquisition of third person object clitic pronouns (OCL) in Italian and French in bilingual (successive vs simultaneous) and monolingual preschool children and is based on an elicitation task. It addresses the question if there is any difference in the importance of typological similarity/proximity for the acquisition of object clitics in simultaneous vs successive bilingualism. In previous studies on OCL acquisition in L2/2L1 a Germanic/OCL-free language is often the other language (the L1 or the other in 2L1). The purpose of our study is to examine further if OCL are acquired more easily when L1/the other language has them too.

18 children (ages 4-7) with Italian as L1 (N= 4), L2 (N=5) (French L1) and Italian/French 2L1 (N=8) and French L2 (N=1) (Italian L1) were exposed to a production elicitation task of OCL in Italian and French. Fifteen of the children attended a school with a French immersion program in Italy and three of them a school in a SES matched school in the same city.

All the children omitted OCL at various degrees, depending on age, type of acquisition and language. Misplacements were few and only in French. The differences in total accuracy in the production of OCL was not significant between groups (L1, L2/2L1), but between French and Italian, irrespectively of age of onset.

Since standard Italian has no Subject clitics, it would be reasonable to blame the overall less accurate production of OCL in French on the presence of Subject clitics, which presence would cause a conflict or competition in disposable positions of clitics, but Italian has ‘clitic climbing/restructuring’ which also requires two clitic positions (Cardinaletti & Schlonsky, 2004), although they cannot be filled contemporarily.

We will discuss our results exploring further the possibility that in the case of two conflicting options in a grammatical structure, the one that the two languages seem to have in common will be chosen (Müller, 1998, Müller & Hulk, 2001), irrespectively of the balance between the languages of the bilingual child.

## References

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