

Catalan/Spanish early bilingualism and grammatical outcome in adulthood: language dominance as a factor for linguistic convergence

Eloi Puig Mayenco¹, David Miller² & Jason Rothman^{2,3}

Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona¹, University of Reading², UiT, the Arctic University of Norway³

In this paper we address the question of whether language dominance is a factor triggering linguistic convergence of two typologically related languages in the adult grammars of early bilinguals. Recently, studies on the role of input and language use in early and successive bilingualism have been conducted (Meisel, 2009; Unsworth, 2013; Tsimpli, 2014). In this study, we bring the variable of dominance to bear on this emerging literature. We ask what role dominance plays in unbalanced bilingualism for explaining patterns of non-convergence between early/successive bilingual and monolingual grammars. To do so, we study two subtle phenomena in Spanish and Catalan: the co-occurrence of the Sentential Negative Marker and the Negative Concord Item (NCI) in pre-verbal position and Differential Object Marking (DOM). These two phenomena have been claimed to be sensitive to variation in the grammars of bilinguals (Depréz, et al. 2015; Montrul, 2004).

With respect to negation, Catalan and Spanish behave differently when the NCI occurs pre-verbally (1a-2b). In Spanish, the SNM cannot co-occur with the NCI pre-verbally. The SNM contains an [iNEG] feature and gets deleted post-syntactically when it co-occurs with the NCI. Espinal and Tubau (in press) suggest that there is variation in Catalan due to the fact that Catalan has two SNM: one which carries an [iNEG] feature and one which contains expletive negation, when the one with expletive negation is inserted into the derivation, the SNM is not deleted.

As for the other phenomenon tested here, Differential Object Marking occurs in Spanish when the object is [+animate] and [+specific] – in these cases the accusative case marker *a* is inserted. If *a* is not inserted for object marking (3b), it results in the ungrammaticality of the sentence. Central Catalan does not require object marking and no marker is inserted in the derivation (3a), if it is, then the sentence is ungrammatical (4a).

In this study, we tested two groups of Catalan/Spanish bilinguals from the same geographic area in order to reduce dialectal effects [Catalan-dominant] and [Spanish-dominant]. We determined dominance using the Leap-Questionnaire (Marian, et al. 2007). The participants took part in two separate experiments: A moving window Self-Paced Reading Task and an off-line Grammaticality Judgement Task. In both tasks, there were four key conditions: a) *NCI+SNM*, b) *NCI+V*, c) *DOM[+a]*, d) *DOM[-a]*. Conditions (a) and (d) targeted ungrammatical sentences in Spanish and (b) and (c) grammatical ones. As for Catalan, condition (c) targeted ungrammatical sentences and the other three (a), (b) and (d) grammatical ones (see table 1).

Table 1 Summary of the linguistic properties in Catalan and Spanish

	NCI+SNM	NCI+V	DOM[+a]	DOM[-a]
Spanish	UNGR	GR	GR	UNGR
Catalan	GR	GR	UNGR	GR

We hypothesise that dominance will play an important role in triggering language convergence in the adult grammars of early/successive bilinguals. Thus, Catalan-

dominant speakers are expected to show convergence of their Spanish towards their Catalan and the other way around for the Spanish-dominant speakers.

This paper aims to bring an insight into the role of language dominance in the outcome of early/successive bilingualism and some empirical evidence to the theoretical analysis of the grammars of Catalan and Spanish.

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Linguistic Data

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|-----|----|-----------------------------------|------|------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| (1) | a. | Ningú | (no) | va comprar | pomes | <i>Catalan</i> | |
| | b. | *Nadie | no | compró | manzanas | <i>Spanish</i> | |
| | | N-PERSON | NOT | BOUGHT | APPLES | | |
| | | “Nobody bought apples” | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | |
| (2) | a. | Ningú | | va comprar | pomes | <i>Catalan</i> | |
| | b. | Nadie | | compró | manzanas | <i>Spanish</i> | |
| | | N-PERSON | | BOUGHT | APPLES | | |
| | | “Nobody bought apples” | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | |
| (3) | a. | La Maria | | va sentir | la professora de japonès | <i>Catalan</i> | |
| | b. | *María | | escuchó | la profesora de japonés | <i>Spanish</i> | |
| | | MARY | | HEARD | THE TEACHER OF JAPANESE | | |
| | | “Mary heard the Japanese teacher” | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | |
| (4) | a. | *La Maria | | va sentir | a | la professora de japonès | |
| | b. | María | | escuchó | a | la profesora de japonés | |
| | | MARY | | HEARD | PREP.ACC | THE TEACHER OF JAPANESE | |
| | | “Mary heard the Japanese teacher” | | | | | |