Dislocations in French-English bilingual children: An elicitation study

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Cross-linguistic influence in BFLA

- Bilinguals acquire their languages as largely separate systems
- Interactions => Cross-linguistic influence
- Discourse-pragmatics interface
- From individual referential expressions to syntactic marking
Processing account

Bilingual children would have **difficulties** in **processing** overlapping structures in their two languages.
“The routine processing of overt pronominal subjects as co-referential with a subject antecedent in English increases the likelihood that overt pronouns will be processed in the same way in Italian in what might be considered as an instance of cross-linguistic priming.”

Serratrice (2007: 235)
Why Dislocation constructions?

- Interface and partial overlap across French and English
- Functionally important discourse function
- Syntactic structure rather than individual referential expression
Dislocations and interface

(1) *Le lion, il court.*  
*The lion, it/he is running.*

(2) *Il court, le lion.*  
*It/he is running, the lion.*

Syntactically:

- definite Noun Phrase
- resumptive pronoun within the sentence
Dislocations and interface

Pragmatically:

-topic-announcing

-> Brand-new referents may not occur in them in French

(Lambrecht 1994: 188)
Dislocation construction and overlap

- Topics are **obligatory** left-dislocated when **not** expressed with a **weak pronoun** in French.

  (Lambrecht 1994, De Cat 2007)

- Dislocation are used in **different pragmatic** contexts in French and English.
## Left-dislocation construction and overlap

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marking a topical contrast</td>
<td>Introducing discourse new referents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pointing the attention to an object present in</td>
<td>Create an emphasis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the extra-linguistic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emphasis</td>
<td>Re-introducing a discourse-old referent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Re-introducing a discourse-old referent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintaining a referent</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Frequency of dislocations

- Dislocations account for:
  - 25% of data in spoken **French** (De Cat 2007)
  - only 1% in spoken **English** (Snider and Zaenen 2006)
What is syntactic priming?

“A tendency in speakers to repeat sentence structures that have been encountered earlier”

(Vasilyeva, Waterfall & Gomez 2012: 163)
Priming bilingual adults and children

Bilinguals share syntactic representation across languages with the same syntactic representation that can be accessed during production and comprehension in both languages.

(e.g. Hartsuiker et al 2004; Vasilyeva et al 2010)
Why syntactic priming?

- Explore bilingual children’s syntactic representation
- Relative degree of activation of their two languages in production
Aims

- Test cross-linguistic influence at the syntactic level to encode referent status
- Examine the direction of influence
- Explore the role of language exposure
Participants

- age group: 5;3-6;4 (mean age: 5;10)

- 19 English-French bilingual children in London
- 19 English-French bilingual children in Paris
- 20 monolingual British children in Manchester
- 20 monolingual French children in Paris
Participants

⇒ Krott et al’s (2011) questionnaire on bilingual children’s exposure to English

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>French dominant</th>
<th>Balanced</th>
<th>English dominant</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bilinguals</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>France</strong></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>UK</strong></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Procedure

Within languages:

- Description and production in the same language

Two conditions per language:

- **SVO**
  - Linda conduit / *Linda is driving*

- **Left-dislocation**
  - Linda, elle conduit / *Linda, she is driving*
Procedure

✓ **French study:** monolingual French, bilingual Paris, bilingual London

✓ **English study:** monolingual English, bilingual Paris, bilingual London
## Predictions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>French</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SVO</td>
<td>LD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French mono</td>
<td>=</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bilinguals</td>
<td>=</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>=</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British mono</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Materials: LD condition

Prime

- The cowboy and the astronaut, they are shaking hands.
Materials: LD condition

- The astronaut, he is flying.
- The cowboy, he is typing on the computer.
Materials: SVO condition

Prime

• The zebra and the lion are running
Materials: SVO condition

• The zebra is drinking
Materials: SVO condition

Target

- The lion is sleeping
Effect of Priming in French

Significant effect of priming condition \((F(1.34, 68.26)= 38.06, p<.001)\)

No significant effect of language experience \((F(3, 51)= 1.62, p=.196)\)

No interaction between priming condition and language experience \((F(0.83,48) =2.35, p<.063)\)
Left-dislocation in French

Production of LDs in each priming condition

- Significant effect of priming condition ($F(1, 53) = 7.90, p < .007$)
- No significant effect of language experience ($F(1, 52, 36) = 1.69, p < .180$)
- No interaction between priming condition and language experience ($F(5, 66, 43) = 1.01, p < .422$)
Effect of Priming in English

- Significant effect of priming condition English ($F(1.19, 62.08) = 94.21, p < .001$)
- Significant effect of language experience ($F(2,52) = 39.82, p < .001$)
- Interaction between priming condition and language experience ($F(2.39, 62.08) = 38.77, p < .001$)
Left-dislocation in English

- Significant effect of priming condition
- Significant effect of language experience ($F(3,33.01)=6.38, p<.001$)
- Interaction between priming condition and language experience ($F(5,51,28.65)=3.16, p<.007$)
Language exposure analysis

- Does French exposure predict the production of LDs in French and in English?
Summary

- **French:**
  1. All children were responsive to priming in the SVO and LD condition
  2. All children favoured LD to mark topicality in the two conditions

- **English**
  1. All children favoured SVO constructions to mark topicality
  2. Significant effect of language exposure with bilinguals producing dislocations when monolinguals never produced any.
  3. Significant effect of exposure to French on the bilinguals’ production of LD in English

=> Bilinguals sensitive to cross-linguistic effect from French
Theoretical implications

- Demonstrates cross-linguistic influence for a global marker of information status
- Confirms the role of language processing on cross-linguistic influence
- Provides quantified measure on the role of language exposure
References


Thank you

Merci