

Directionality and intensity of cross-linguistic influence: Evidence from Differential Object Marking in Catalan-Spanish bilinguals

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The goal of this study is to explore the directionality and intensity of cross-linguistic influence in the Differential Object Marking (DOM) system of Catalan-Spanish bilinguals. These two languages are closely related and have experienced prolonged and intense contact in the society. However, DOM distribution is slightly different: whereas in Spanish [+human] objects are marked depending on the referential stability (high stability is DOM-triggering and low stability is DOM-inhibiting, Farkas & von Heusinger 2003), in normative Catalan DOM is much more restrictive (only personal pronouns always show DOM). It has been suggested that extensive language contact can lead to crosslinguistic influence (Silva-Corvalán 2014), but its directionality is not exclusively related to language dominance (Yip & Matthews 2007), but also to the degree of overlapping between languages (Fernández-Fuertes & Liceras 2018). Although DOM in Catalan-Spanish bilingualism has received little attention, cross-linguistic effects in both ways have been attested (Guijarro-Fuentes & Marinis 2009; Perpiñán 2018; Puig-Mayenco et al. 2018). Nevertheless, the intensity of the influence depending on the language dominance in bilinguals and on the referential stability degree of objects in each language has not been studied yet.

Two equivalent Acceptability Judgement Tasks in Catalan and Spanish were conducted by three groups of Catalan-Spanish bilinguals with different language dominance (33 Catalan-dominant, 32 balanced, 29 Spanish-dominant). A 4x2 factorial design was used, which included the within-subject manipulation of two factors: four referential stability degrees (proper names, [+definite] NPs, [-definite, +specific] NPs, [-definite, -specific] NPs) and two DOM levels (marked, unmarked). An example is given in (1).

- (1) Las detectives buscan a **Victoria** para investigarla. (proper name, [+DOM])
'The detectives look for **DOM Victoria** to investigate her.'

GLMMs revealed that cross-linguistic effects have a different degree of intensity in each language. In Spanish, cross-linguistic influence only shows up in the higher referential stable levels (proper names and [+definite] NPs) within the most Catalan-dominant group, which accept more the unmarked objects than the other two groups (Spanish-dominant and balanced bilinguals). However, in Catalan, the three bilingual groups (regardless of their language dominance) accept all referential stability levels with and without DOM above 50%, which suggests that Catalan language is in a transitional stage in which both options are accepted maybe, or partially, due to the Spanish influence. Our discussion focuses on the idea that the more dominant language can affect the less dominant one, but that the general role of dominance is modulated by the extension of the phenomenon under scrutiny: when a given phenomenon (DOM in the current case) has a higher amplitude in one language, the influence from that language occurs regardless of the relative language dominance.

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