A SYNTACTIC ACCOUNT OF DIFFERENCES IN THE PROCESSING AND PRODUCTION OF CODE-SWITCHED CONCORD AND AGREEMENT STRUCTURES

Previous research on gender agreement in code-switching shows that Spanish-dominant but not English-dominant Spanish-English bilinguals assign English nouns the gender of the translation equivalent (analogical criterion) (Liceras et al, 2008). English-dominant bilinguals also use gender differently in concord and agreement, performing like Spanish-dominant bilinguals with switched agreement structures (Valenzuela et al, 2012) but demonstrating more native-like gender agreement in non-switched concord structures (Montrul et al, 2008). Opacity of gender marking on the Spanish noun is reported to affect gender agreement as well (Montrul et al, 2008).

We propose a double-feature valuation analysis to account for differences between switched concord and agreement structures, showing that valuation mechanisms differ between these structures with regards to directionality and complexity. Directionality is more problematic in concord as features are valued in two directions (1), while more complexity exists in agreement as the DP must first subsume the features of the Spanish equivalent in order to value the features of the Adj (2).

43 English-dominant Spanish-English adult bilinguals performed an acceptability judgment task (3a & 4a) and 81 performed a sentence completion task (3b & 4b). In the acceptability task, participants showed a significant preference for agreement over concord structures (p=.004). In the production task accuracy (defined as the analogical criterion) was significantly higher for concord over agreement structures (p<.001), and there was also a significant effect (p=.05) of opacity of gender marking for agreement but not concord.

These results suggest that different characteristics are prominent in the processing and production of these switched structures. In processing the directionality of the double-feature valuation is more important than the complexity, as shown in the preference for agreement over concord, whereas in production complexity has a stronger influence than directionality and thus the analogical criterion is applied significantly more consistently in concord than in agreement structures. Opacity of gender marking affects agreement but not concord given that gender inflection on the adjective also displays gender-transparent and gender-opaque options.
EXAMPLES

(1)

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{DP} \\
\text{La} \text{the-fem} \\
\text{[uGen: fem. + (Φ)]}
\end{array}
\quad \begin{array}{c}
\text{N} \\
\text{house (as Spanish casa)} \\
\text{[Gen-fem. + u(Φ)]}
\end{array}
\]

STEP 1
DP internal

(2)

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{TP} \\
\text{DP} \quad \text{T} \quad \text{T’} \\
\text{The house} \quad \text{es} \quad \text{pequeña} \\
\text{[Gen: fem. + (Φ)]} \quad \text{[uGen-fem. + u(Φ)]}
\end{array}
\]

STEP 2
DP - AdjP

—Concord:

(3a) Where is the milk? - La leche está en el glass. [MM matching]

(3b) Hay nubes en _____ sky. response: el glass [MM matching] / la fem [FM non-matching]

There are clouds in (cielo-masc.)

—Agreement:

(4a) Why do you like the castle? – The castle es preciosa. [MF non-matching]


La mesa[fem.] IS black[fem.] black[masc.]

SELECTED REFERENCES