Spanish has a resyllabification process that converts a consonantal coda into an onset, if the following word begins with a vowel (Harris 1983, Hualde 1989, Colina 1997, 2006). German does not resyllabify: If a word initial syllable lacks an onset, a glottal stop is generally epenthesized. Both processes, resyllabification and glottal stop insertion, preserve the unmarkedness of syllable structure by providing an onset, albeit by means of different mechanisms: the left edge of words is manipulated in Spanish (compromising word identity) and badged in German.

The present study discusses child data on the acquisition of Spanish resyllabification: from a group of monolingual Spanish children (Madrid, 2;0 to 3;0), and from two groups of German-Spanish simultaneous bilinguals (Hamburg, 2;0 to 5;0; Hamburg and Manheim, 7;0 to 8;0). For the bilingual groups, Spanish is the weak or heritage language (HL). The main hypothesis of the study predicts that, if frequency is a crucial variable for acquisition, resyllabification will be soon acquired. Whereas monolinguals begin to resyllabify to very high percentages, as soon as they produce consonantal codas, bilinguals have low percentages of resyllabification, often inserting a glottal stop instead. This lack of resyllabification is attributed to negative transfer from German, as it has been shown that HL speakers exhibit much interaction between their two phonological components, substituting fragments of the hierarchy of constraints of the stronger language for the HL hierarchy. Resyllabification implies variation in word production, because a word that begins with a vowel can be alternatively produced with an initial consonant. This tendency against variation of lexical form has also been found in bilingual Spanish regarding processes like spirantization and PA assimilation of nasals. It is concluded that these various phenomena be ultimately unified under an outranking UNIFORMITY constraint, which appears to be a more powerful factor than frequency.
References


