

What Bilingual and Monolingual Acquisition Data can Tell Us about English Direct Objects and Verb Types

As opposed to monolingual grammars, bilingual grammars have been said to be subject to interlinguistic influence. On the one hand, influence has been linked to the differences between bilinguals' two L1 grammars (Yuan 2016, Gu 2010, Yip and Matthews 2000, 2006, Döpke 1997, Paradis and Genesee 1996, Gawlitzek-Maiwald and Tracy 1996, Hulk and van der Linden 1996, among many others); on the other hand, developmental differences between bilingual and monolingual children's L1(s) have also been found as a by-product of the so-called bilingual effect (Yuan 2016, Pirvulescu et al. 2014, among others).

In terms of children's early direct object (DO) production, verb type (i.e. pure (1) *versus* mixed transitive verbs (2)) has been found to play an important role in monolingual English-speaking children's performance (Ingham 1993). However, no such verb type effect appears in a study of bilingual English based on Chinese-English and Spanish-English bilingual children's data (Yuan 2016).

In the spirit of these previous works, the present study focuses on bilingual and monolingual children's English DO production following a double analysis: a syntactic one in terms of verb type (pure *versus* mixed transitive verbs, as in (1) *versus* (2) below) and a lexical one by means of an item analysis. In order to do so, the early English DO production of Chinese-English bilinguals (Yip-Matthews corpus in CHILDES, MacWhinney 2000) is compared with that of English monolinguals (Sachs corpus, Bloom 70 corpus, and Demetras Trevor corpus in CHILDES) in order to answer two main questions: (i) whether children produce higher non-adult-like null DO rates with mixed verbs than with pure transitive verbs; and (ii) whether bilingual children produce higher non-adult-like null DO rates with certain lexical items when compared to monolingual children. The results show that, though non-adult-like null DOs can be found in both monolingual and bilingual English, some verbs are more vulnerable than others in bilingual children's English production due to their unique argument structure and are, therefore, more likely to receive influence from the other L1 (i.e. Chinese); moreover, the pure/mixed transitive verb distinction does not seem to play a significant role in bilingual children's DO production. Therefore, what seems to be guiding object omission in these bilingual grammars is not syntax but rather semantics.

Examples

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|------------------------------|----------|
| (1) a. I <i>like</i> apples. | overt DO |
| b. *I <i>like e</i> . | *null DO |
| (2) a. I <i>eat</i> apples. | overt DO |
| b. I <i>eat e</i> . | null DO |

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