

## On the direction of crosslinguistic influence in the bilingual acquisition of object clitics

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This paper addresses the question of the directionality of crosslinguistic influence in the bilingual acquisition of object clitic pronouns (OCL) in French, Italian and Romanian. Hamann & Belletti (2006) and Granfeldt (2012) have shown that the placement of OCLs in French distinguishes bilingual acquisition from monolingual acquisition, in that misplacements are only found in the first type of acquisition. This suggests that the lack of the category clitic pronoun in the Germanic language of the child might be the indirect cause of misplacements. More specifically, the OCL is treated as a weak pronoun in French and hence put in the wrong position, which could be seen as an instance of crosslinguistic influence in one direction, i.e. from the Germanic languages to French. The fact that there are no misplacements in the bilingual acquisition data from a closely related language as Italian, could be interpreted as if the unidirectional crosslinguistic influence was reinforced by French as a target language but not by Italian as a target language, since French has a more systematic use of weak pronouns than Italian (Hamann & Belletti 2006). One influential claim on crosslinguistic influence in bilingual acquisition is that one of its conditions to occur should be that there are structures that only from the child's perspective are possible in both languages (Müller & Hulk, 2001), due to variability in the input (Miller & Hendricks, 2014).

In order to test the direction of crosslinguistic influence in the bilingual acquisition of OCLs, we carried out two elicited production studies on the placement of OCLs on simultaneous and successive bilingual children aged 4-7: one on French/Italian (N=15) and one on Romanian/Italian (N= 27). Misplacements of OCLs were found both in L1 (as dominant as well as heritage language), L2 and 2L1 children, in both studies. In the first study, crosslinguistic influence was observed in the form of misplacements of OCLs in both French and Italian in constructions with a modal auxiliary involved, where both languages present variable input to the learner: Italian allowing for the OCL to occur both before the finite modal verb and after the infinitive (*lo voglio vedere/voglio vederlo* '(I) it want to see'/'(I) want to see it') and French allowing for the OCL to occur before the auxiliary 'avoir' but after the modal 'vouloir' (*je l'ai vu/je veux le voir* 'I it have seen/I want it see). In the second study misplacements were also found, in Romanian only, and in addition, contrary to the first study, wrong gender forms of the produced OCLs both in Romanian and Italian. Considering that misplacements have not been found in the monolingual acquisition of Romanian (Babyonyshev & Marin, 2006) or Italian (see Hamann & Belletti 2006), this finding might be interpreted as if the variability of the OCL's placement in Romanian leads to misplacements and gender errors in bilingual acquisition, since OCL placement in Romanian varies according to gender, amongst other things.

On the basis of our findings on the placement of OCLs in French/Italian and Romanian/Italian bilingual children we claim that crosslinguistic influence may be bidirectional, depending on

the kind and degree of variability presented in the input of the languages involved and not on their respective status (L1, L2, dominant or not).

## References

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