

# Abstracts Booklet

## OVERT SUBJECT PRONOUNS IN NULL-SUBJECT LANGUAGES: COMPARING NATIVES AND NEAR-NATIVES

Workshop at the Università per Stranieri di Perugia  
September 13<sup>th</sup>, 2018



**Keynote speaker**

**Ianthi Maria Tsimpli**

University of Cambridge

**OVPRON  
2018**



**Organized by**

**Elisa Di Domenico** Università per Stranieri di Perugia

**Simona Matteini** Università di Siena

<https://www.unistrapg.it/it/ovpron18>

## **Acknowledgments**

This workshop has been financially supported by the hosting institution, Università per Stranieri di Perugia (D.R.491/2017 and Progetto di Ateneo per la ricerca Di Domenico 2018).

Besides our keynote speaker, all presenters and all participants, we would like to thank Petra Bernardini, Cristina Flores, Dobrinka Genevska- Hanke, Diletta Comunello, Antonello Belli, Carlotta Caravaggi, Luciano Matteucci, Sara Nasini, Michele Schippa, Valentina Seri and Valentina Severoni for their precious help

Elisa Di Domenico and Simona Matteini

## Workshop OVPRON 2018

**“Overt subject pronouns in null-subject languages: comparing natives and near-natives”**

**Università per Stranieri di Perugia**

**September 13<sup>th</sup>, 2018, Aula 9 (Roma) - Piazza Fortebraccio 4 – Perugia**

8.45 – 9.15	Registration
9.15 – 9.30	WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION
9.30 – 10.45	<b>Keynote speaker:</b> Ianthi Maria Tsimpli (University of Cambridge) <i>On the diversity of linguistic and cognitive factors affecting anaphora resolution</i>
10.45-11.15	COFFEE BREAK
11.15 – 11.55	Teresa Quesada & Cristóbal Lozano (Universidad de Granada) <i>Is there a clear division of labour in Spanish? Corpus approaches to test the Position of Antecedent Strategy</i>
11.55 - 12.35	Tihana Kraš <sup>1</sup> & Maja Miličević Petrović <sup>2</sup> ( <sup>1</sup> University of Rijeka, <sup>2</sup> University of Belgrade) <i>Overt subject pronouns in Italian: Comparing Italian monolinguals and Croatian-Italian bilinguals</i>
12.35 – 13.15	Torregrossa Jacopo <sup>1</sup> , Christiane Bongartz <sup>2</sup> , Maria Andreou <sup>2</sup> , Claudia Rizzo <sup>2</sup> ( <sup>1</sup> University of Hamburg, <sup>2</sup> University of Cologne) <i>The production of null subjects by Greek-Italian bilingual children: Teasing apart transfer and developmental effects</i>
13.15 – 14.45	LUNCH
14.45 - 15.25	Chiara Gargiulo, & Joost van de Weijer (Lund University) <i>L1 attrition and re-immersion effects on pronoun resolution in Italian</i>
15.25 – 16.05	Panagiota Margaza & Anna Gavarrò (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona) <i>Null/overt subject alternations in L2 Spanish and L2 Greek</i>
16.05 – 16.45	Fernando Martín-Villena & Cristóbal Lozano (Universidad de Granada) <i>New factors in anaphora resolution: topic continuity in L1 English-L2 Spanish (CEDEL2 corpus)</i>
16.45 – 17.15	COFFEE BREAK
17.15- 17.55	Adriana Belletti <sup>1,2</sup> & Claudia Manetti <sup>1</sup> ( <sup>1</sup> University of Siena, <sup>2</sup> University of Geneva) <i>Children's use of different types of subjects in Clitic Left Dislocations</i>
17.55 – 18.35	<b>Poster session</b>
18.35 – 19.55	Discussion
20.00	SOCIAL DINNER

## Poster session

Carla Contemori and Iva Ivanova  
(University of Texas at El Paso)

*Bilinguals' referential choice in cognitively demanding situations*

Lena Dal Pozzo  
(University of Florence)

*When more is less: (over)use of pronominal forms in L2 acquisition*

Elisa Di Domenico<sup>1</sup> and Ioli Baroncini<sup>2</sup>

(<sup>1</sup>Università per Stranieri di Perugia, <sup>2</sup>Università per Stranieri di Siena)

*Null vs lexical subjects in bilingual speakers of two null-subject languages: amplifying micro-differences in language contact*

Simona Matteini  
(University of Siena)

*Exploring null and post-verbal subjects in L2 English beyond the initial state: an investigation on the written production of unaccusatives and passives in Italian learners*

## **Abstracts**

## **On the diversity of linguistic and cognitive factors affecting anaphora resolution**

Ianthi Maria Tsimpli  
(University of Cambridge)

Anaphora resolution has been shown to be a complex process affected by linguistic factors (e.g. word-order and pronominal inventories), cognitive factors (e.g. age, working memory and cognitive control) and language experience (bilingualism and education). I will focus on a small number of studies focusing on a combination of these different factors. I will argue that despite the multiplicity of factors affecting anaphora resolution, linguistic properties of the target language (either L1 or L2) take priority over cognitive factors in anaphora resolution.

## Children's use of different types of subjects in Clitic Left Dislocations

Adriana Belletti<sup>1,2</sup> & Claudia Manetti<sup>1</sup>  
(<sup>1</sup>University of Siena, <sup>2</sup>University of Geneva)

Belletti & Manetti (forthcoming) investigated monolingual children's production of Clitic Left Dislocations (henceforth CILD) and in particular the use of left dislocated object topics in structures as i.e. DP<sub>1</sub> DP<sub>2</sub> Cl V. In two elicited production experiments 72 children (n=36 in each experiment, from 4 to 6 year-olds) were presented with pictures depicting action verbs, either with both the subject and the object in the singular form (Experiment 1: e.g. cat washing dog, rabbit dressing bear) or with a plural subject and a singular object creating a number mismatch condition between DPs (Experiment 2: e.g. cats washing dog, rabbits dressing bear). In both tests children were asked to talk about the patients of the actions and this prompting question yielded the use of CILDs from the age of 4, showing that children master the use of left dislocated object topics under appropriate discourse conditions (see Belletti & Manetti forthcoming, for a detailed analysis of the CILDs and types of topics produced):

- (1) a. Al/Il cane il gatto lo lava  
To the/the dog the cat him.Cl washes  
'The dog, the cat is washing him.'  
b. Al/Il cane lo lavano  
To the/The dog him.Cl wash  
'The dog, (they) are washing him.'

As mentioned before, both experiments elicited CILDs, but an interesting difference emerged across experiments concerning the type of subject produced. The present paper aims at discussing this difference by highlighting and analysing the use of null pronominal vs. overt lexical subjects in the production of DP<sub>1</sub> DP<sub>2</sub> cl V structures.

In Experiment 1, as expected, children preferred the production of CILDs with singular lexical subjects (64%) (i.e. DP<sub>object</sub> DP<sub>subject</sub> Cl V; see 1a), and seldom used null plural subjects (12%). In Experiment 2 pictures depicted two agents and required use of plural lexical subjects, but the results showed that the overwhelming majority of children's CILDs had the subject realized as a null plural subject, resulting in structures in the form of DP<sub>object</sub> *pro*<sub>pl</sub> Cl V, (80%; see 1b). Moreover, production of CILDs in Experiment 2 significantly increased with respect to Experiment 1, as well as the number of children producing CILDs (Exp. 1: 47% vs. Exp. 2: 89%). Table 1 reports the ratio of these types of subjects in the two experiments (the remaining subjects, not reported in the table, were either post-verbal or a few singular null ones in Experiment 1):

Table 1: Types of subject in CILDs		
	Null Plural Subject	Preverbal Lexical Subject
Experiment 1	12%	64%
Experiment 2	80%	12%

In light of these results, use of singular lexical subjects and null plural subjects across experiments will be discussed in terms of the discourse related properties that children adopted across conditions, as well as in terms of the different intervention configurations arising in children's CILDs, within the featural Relativized Minimality approach (fRM, Friedmann, Belletti & Rizzi 2009).

First, we suggest that the most natural interpretation of the null pronominal subject present in several children's CILDs of Experiment 2 should not be a referential interpretation. It should rather count as

a generic one, which is a possibility allowed in several languages, including standard Italian. Possibly, the presence in Experiment 2 of a plurality of subjects (two characters performing the action in each stimulus) has somehow primed use of plural generic null subject. Indeed, this option was only seldom used in Experiment 1, where the referent of the subject was always a singular character in the stimuli and the subject was mostly overt in children's CILDS answers. In using a null plural pronominal subject in the given experimental conditions, their answers were thus completely informative about the (object) Topic of the question, and remained vague about the subject of the following sentence. These answers were anyway felicitous, as the question was specifically about the object, thus the choice of producing a null plural subject displayed a discourse felicitous behaviour. Second, use of null plural subjects enabled children avoiding the use of CILDS with both the subject and the object expressed as lexical DPs (DP<sub>1</sub> DP<sub>2</sub> Cl V): this structure would instantiate an intervention configuration, namely Inclusion (see 2a), known to be hard for children, both in CILDS (Manetti et al 2016) and other A-bar dependencies (e.g. Object relatives; Friedmann Belletti & Rizzi, 2009). The use of silent *pro*<sub>pl</sub> with the generic interpretation following the left dislocated Topic does not contain the feature [+NP] in its feature composition. We take this to be the crucial property accounting for the much-preferred use by children of CILDS in the form of DP<sub>obj</sub> *pro*<sub>pl</sub> Cl V, which allows a featural disjunction configuration, see (2b):

- (1) a. Il cane            il gatto lo morde  
           +Top +NP    +NP  
           The dog the cat bites him-Cl  
       b. (al)La giraffa [*pro*<sub>pl</sub> la lavano <\_>]  
           +Top +NP  
           (to) the giraffe (they) wash it

Overall, our results confirm that at the age of the experiments monolingual preschoolers properly use lexical vs. null referential subjects (Belletti & Guasti 2015; Manetti 2017) depending on discourse conditions: the results of Experiment 1 specifically confirm this ability as children mainly used overt lexical subjects in order to be completely informative about which character performed a given action on the object topic patient. In Experiment 2, however, children displayed a different choice in subject selection, overwhelmingly preferring the use of null plural subjects with a generic interpretation, resulting in DP<sub>obj</sub> *pro*<sub>pl</sub> Cl V sentences. We suggested that this choice, which led to overall felicitous answers, was preferred since it made the subject in their CILDS somewhat lighter and create a disjunction configuration which is fully mastered by children.

To conclude, these two experiments investigated how monolingual children deal with the use of different types of subjects in a production study and could constitute a useful tool to extend the analysis to bilingual or L2 production of overt lexical vs. null pronominal subjects in the specific context of CILDS.

## References

- Belletti, Adriana & Maria Teresa Guasti.** 2015. The acquisition of Italian. Morphosyntax and its interfaces in different modes of acquisition. Language Acquisition and Language Disorders series. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Belletti, Adriana & Claudia Manetti.** forthcoming. Topics and passives in Italian-speaking children and adults.
- Friedmann, Naama, Belletti, Adriana & Luigi Rizzi.** 2009. Relativized relatives: Types of intervention in the acquisition of A-bar dependencies. *Lingua* 119. 67-88.



**Manetti, Claudia.** 2017 Changing the topic in question-answer pairs: a production study on the use of subject, topicalization and passive in Italian. *Quaderni di Linguistica e Studi Orientali / Working Papers in Linguistics and Oriental Studies*, Vol. 3 (2017).

## L1 attrition and re-immersion effects on pronoun resolution in Italian

Chiara Gargiulo, & Joost van de Weijer  
(Lund University)

We investigate whether L1 attrition effects on anaphora resolution exist and whether they decrease with L1 re-immersion. In order to address this question we administered an offline sentence comprehension task to a group of 20 Italian-Swedish late bilinguals and a control group of 21 Italian monolinguals. The late bilinguals were adult native speakers of Italian who had left Italy after puberty and had lived in Sweden for at least seven years. The monolinguals were adult native speakers of Italian who had grown up and lived in Italy at the time of the study. The bilinguals were tested once before their summer holidays in Italy (L1 re-immersion) and once directly after. The control group was also tested twice. According to the *Position of Antecedent Strategy* or *PAS* (Carminati, 2002), when interpreting an intra-sentential anaphora, Italian speakers prefer a null pronoun in a topic-continuity context, when there is no change in subject reference while, in a context of topic-shift, they prefer an overt pronoun, which is associated with a change in reference from the subject to the object (1). In Swedish, on the contrary, null pronouns in finite clauses do not exist, which gives raise to ambiguity with respect to the antecedent of the pronoun.

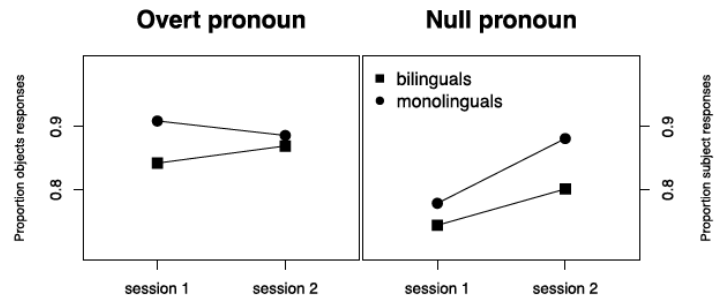
- (1) Andrea<sub>i</sub> ha conosciuto Jacopo<sub>j</sub> quando *pro<sub>i</sub>*/lui<sub>j</sub> lavorava in una clinica privata.  
'Andrea met Jacopo when he was working in a private clinic.'

Following the *Interface Hypothesis* (Sorace & Filiaci, 2006) we expect the bilinguals to display effects of attrition on anaphora resolution. Moreover, in line with previous studies (i.e., Tsimpli, Sorace, Heycock, & Filiaci, 2004) we expect that attrition effects will be seen on sentences containing an overt pronoun. Secondly, in line with the *Activation Threshold Hypothesis* (Paradis, 1993) we expect that bilinguals display recovery effects after L1 re-immersion (e.g., Chamorro, Sorace, & Sturt, 2015). In order to test these expectations, globally ambiguous sentences such as (1) were presented to the participants on a computer screen; each sentence was followed by a comprehension question. Their task was to choose the antecedent of the pronoun (i.e., either the subject or the object), by pressing button "1" or "2" on the keyboard. The stimuli consisted of 90 sentences: 20 target sentences (10 with null pronouns and 10 with overt pronouns) and 70 fillers. Participants' choices were measured, as well as their response times and reading times.

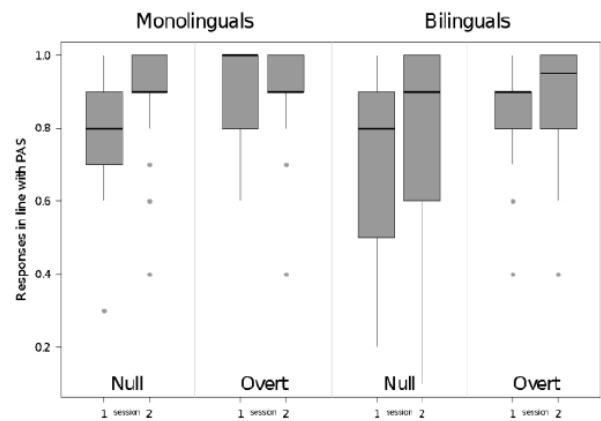
Firstly, compared to monolinguals, bilinguals report an overall significant lower degree of consistency with the PAS ( $p = 0.014$ ). Secondly, compared to monolinguals, bilinguals assign consistently less often overt pronouns to objects in the first session (Fig. 1), while, after the re-immersion, the difference in antecedent assignment between the two groups almost disappears for the overt pronoun condition. However, Figure 2 shows, for the null pronoun condition, larger variability in the bilinguals' data compared to the monolinguals, a result that is not consistent with previous findings that attrition effects are limited to overt pronouns. In terms of response times, the bilinguals performed more similarly to monolinguals after the re-immersion (Fig. 3). In fact, while in the first session the bilinguals are faster in the null subject condition than in the overt subject condition, in the second session the opposite pattern is observable, with faster responses for overt pronouns than for null pronouns. On the other hand, the monolinguals are always faster in the overt subject condition.

Finally, for reading times, data show a small difference between sentences containing null pronouns and sentences containing overt pronouns, for both groups (Fig. 3). This outcome suggests that target sentences have the same level of difficulty. These results suggest that L1 attrition effects on anaphora resolution seem to have an impact not only on overt pronouns but on null pronouns as well. The improvement found also in the monolingual group, especially on sentences containing a null pronoun, do not allow us to draw a strong conclusion on the ephemerality of attrition effects.

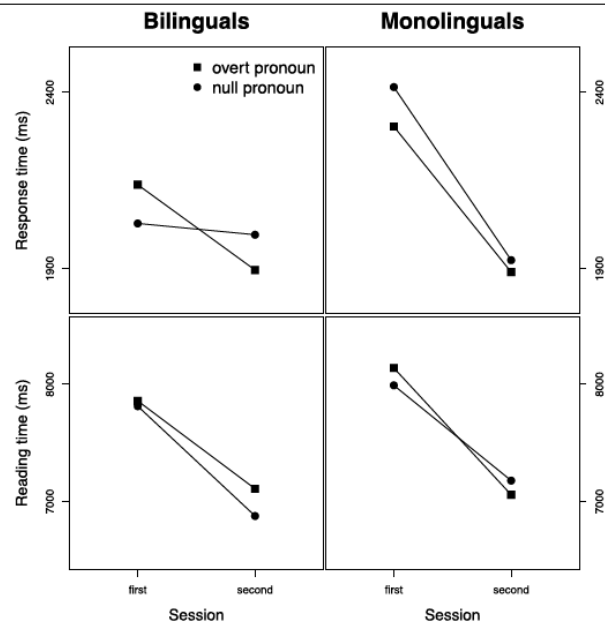
**Figure 1:** Response proportions.



**Figure 2:** Distribution of preferences.



**Figure 3:** L1 re-immersion effect in reading times and response times.



## References

- Carminati, M. N.** (2002). *The Processing of Italian Subject Pronouns*. Ph.D. dissertation, University of Massachusetts at Amherst.
- Chamorro, G., Sorace, A., & Sturt, P.** (2015). What is the source of L1 attrition? The effect of recent L1 re-exposure on Spanish speakers under L1 attrition. *Bilingualism-Language and Cognition*, 19(3), 520–532.
- Paradis, M.** (1993). Linguistic, psycholinguistic, and neurolinguistic aspects of ‘interference’ in bilingual speakers: The Activation Threshold Hypothesis. *International Journal of Psycholinguistics*, 9, 133–145.
- Sorace, A., & Filiaci, F.** (2006). Anaphora resolution in speakers of Italian. *Second Language Research*, 22, 339–368.
- Tsimpli, I. M., Sorace, A., Heycock, C., & Filiaci, F. (2004). First language attrition and syntactic subjects: A study of Greek and Italian near-native speakers of English. *International Journal of Bilingualism*, 8, 257–277.

## **Overt subject pronouns in Italian: Comparing Italian monolinguals and Croatian-Italian bilinguals**

Tihana Kraš<sup>1</sup> & Maja Miličević Petrović<sup>2</sup>  
(<sup>1</sup>University of Rijeka, <sup>2</sup>University of Belgrade)

Properties at the discourse-syntax interface have proved problematic in bilingual L1 and L2 acquisition and L1 attrition. This has been shown in particular for the use and interpretation of subject pronouns in null subject languages. Compared to monolinguals, highly proficient bilinguals (especially speakers of a null- and a non-null-subject language), tend to over-accept and overuse infelicitous overt pronouns referring to topical antecedents, while being (mostly) target-like on null pronouns. Two broad explanations have been proposed. The representational account (Tsimplici, Heycock, & Filiaci, 2004) attributes the bilinguals' problems to cross-linguistic influence, while the processing account ascribes the difficulties primarily to bilinguals' hypothesised less-than-optimal processing abilities (Sorace & Filiaci 2006). According to the representational account, difficulties should not arise when two grammatical systems pattern together with respect to an interface property; according to the processing account, difficulties should occur even then.

In this paper, we compare the results of three parallel studies into the interpretation of Italian subject pronouns in intra-sentential contexts by Croatian-Italian bilinguals, the aim of which was to test the predictions of the two accounts. The two languages involved pattern together with regard to the antecedent biases of null and overt subject pronouns (Kraš, 2008a). The first study, Kraš (2008b), included adult L1 Croatian near-native speakers of Italian ( $N=24$ ) and a control group of Italian monolinguals ( $N=24$ ), the former aged 21-30 and the latter 21-34 years. The second study, Kraš (2016), included highly proficient L1 Croatian child L2 learners of Italian ( $N=40$ ) and a control group of Italian monolinguals ( $N=48$ ), both aged 13-14 years. The same group of Italian monolinguals served as a control group in the third study, Kraš & Miličević Petrović (in press), in which Croatian-Italian simultaneous bilinguals ( $N=40$ ), aged 11-15 years, also participated. The same picture-selection task was used in the three studies. Participants read sentences containing null or overt pronouns, which either followed or preceded the candidate antecedents (anaphora vs. cataphora) (see (1)), and matched each sentence to one of three pictures, showing the antecedent as the matrix subject, the matrix object or an extra-linguistic referent (see Figure 1). This task is an adaptation of the task used by Tsimplici et al. (2004) and Sorace and Filiaci (2006), the results of which, also based on off-line measures, have provided the basis for the two accounts.

The bilinguals expressed the same antecedent preferences as the monolinguals in all conditions apart from cataphora with overt pronouns, where they chose the topical, subject antecedent *less* often than the monolinguals, i.e. in 14.67% compared to 20.83% of the cases in the first study, in 22.08% compared to 37.5% of the cases in the second study, and in 24.1% compared to 37.5% of the cases in the third study. In other words, it was the monolinguals, rather than the bilinguals, who accepted more overt pronouns referring to discourse topics. However, the difference reached statistical significance in a logistic regression analysis only in the second study. We interpret the results of the three studies as pointing to cross-linguistic influence, and thus lending support to the representational account.

### **References**

**Kraš, T.** (2008a). Anaphora resolution in Croatian: Psycholinguistic evidence from native speakers. In M. Tadić, M. Dimitrova-Vulchanova, & S. Koeva (Eds.), *Proceedings of the sixth international conference, Formal Approaches to South Slavic and Balkan Languages*

(pp. 67-72). Zagreb: Croatian Language Technologies Society – Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences.

**Kraš, T.** (2008b). Anaphora resolution in near-native Italian grammars: Evidence from native speakers of Croatian. *EUROSLA Yearbook*, 8, 107-134.

**Kraš, T.** (2016). Cross-linguistic influence at the discourse-syntax interface: Insights from anaphora resolution in child L2 learners of Italian. *International Journal of Bilingualism*, 20(4), 369-385.

**Kraš, T., & Miličević Petrović, M.** (in press). Anaphora resolution in Italian by Croatian-Italian simultaneous bilinguals. In A. Dudley, A. Wallington, & J. Corbet (Eds.), *Proceedings of the 14th Generative Approaches to Second Language Acquisition conference (GASLA 2017)*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

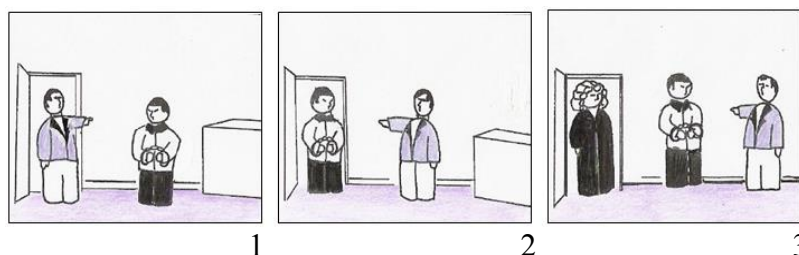
**Sorace, A., & Filiaci, F.** (2006). Anaphora resolution in near-native speakers of Italian. *Second Language Research*, 22(3), 339-368.

**Tsimpli, I.-M., Sorace, A., Heycock, C., & Filiaci, F.** (2004). First language attrition and syntactic subjects: A study of Greek and Italian near-native speakers of English. *International Journal of Bilingualism*, 8(3), 257-277.

## Examples

- (1) a. ANAPHORA WITH A NULL PRONOUN  
*Il testimone<sub>i</sub> indica l' accusato<sub>j</sub> mentre pro<sub>i/j</sub> entra in tribunale.*  
 the witness points the accused while pro enters in courtroom  
 'The witness points to the accused as he enters the courtroom.'
- b. ANAPHORA WITH AN OVERT PRONOUN  
*Il testimone<sub>i</sub> indica l' accusato<sub>j</sub> mentre lui<sub>i/j/k</sub> entra in tribunale.*  
 the witness points the accused while he enters in courtroom  
 'The witness points to the accused as he enters the courtroom.'
- c. CATAPHORA WITH A NULL PRONOUN  
*Mentre pro<sub>i/j</sub> entra in tribunale, il testimone<sub>i</sub> indica l' accusato<sub>j</sub>.*  
 while pro enters in courtroom the witness points the accused  
 'As he enters the courtroom, the witness points to the accused.'
- d. CATAPHORA WITH AN OVERT PRONOUN  
*Mentre lui<sub>i/j/k</sub> entra in tribunale, il testimone<sub>i</sub> indica l' accusato<sub>j</sub>.*  
 while he enters in courtroom the witness points the accused  
 'As he enters the courtroom, the witness points to the accused.'

## Figures



## Null/overt subject alternations in L2 Spanish and L2 Greek

Panagiota Margaza & Anna Gavarrò  
(Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona)

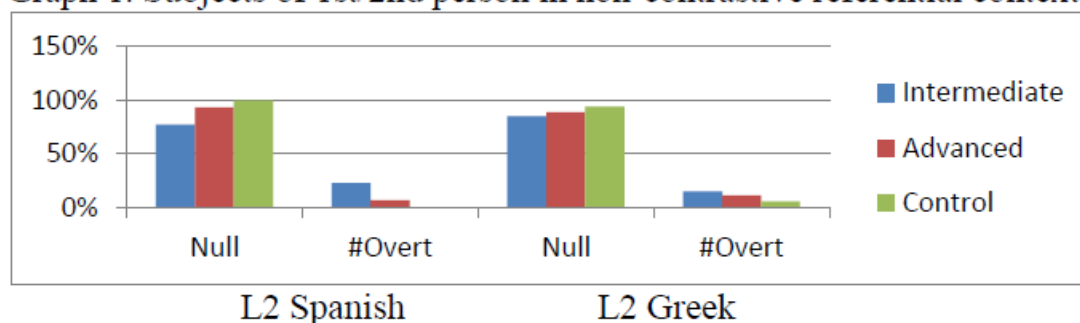
The aim of this study is to explore the distribution of null/overt subjects, a widely studied phenomenon in the context of the Interface Hypothesis (IH). Sorace and colleagues (Sorace & Filiaci, 2006; Tsimpli & Sorace, 2006; Sorace, 2011, a.o.) claim that the phenomena that involve the integration of syntax with external modules such as pragmatics may not be fully acquirable in a second language. In order to test the validity of the IH, we examine the alternation of null/overt subjects in two null subject languages, Spanish and Greek. Here the aim is to observe if the L1-L2 null subject value enhances the L2 acquisition of this parameter, circumventing the effect of the pragmatic interface. Competence level is also taken into account to test if the increase in proficiency facilitates the acquisition of null subjects in L2 Spanish or L2 Greek, against (or not) the IH (Rothman & Slabakova, 2011; White 2011).

We designed and administered two multiple choice tasks, one in L2 Spanish and one in L2 Greek. Each task was run with 90 subjects, 30 intermediate and 30 advanced learners, and 30 native speakers. The conditions examined were: (i) null subjects of 1st/2nd person in non-contrastive contexts, (ii) null subjects of 3rd person in unambiguous shift contexts and (iii) overt subjects of 3rd person in contrastive shift contexts. Test items are exemplified in (1a), (2a) and (3a) for Spanish and (1b), (2b) and (3b) for Greek.

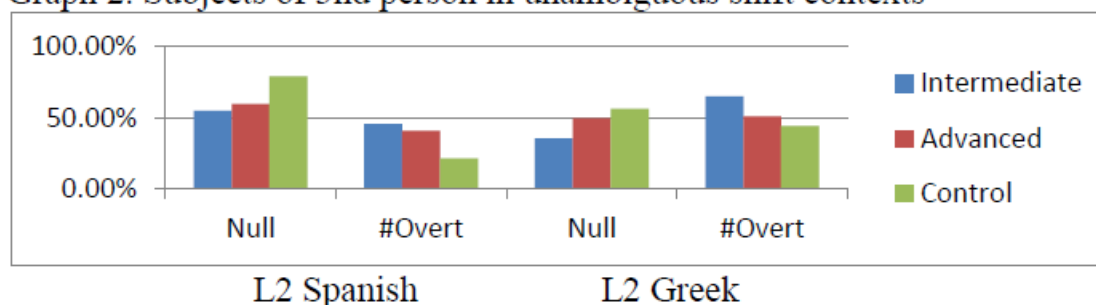
- (1) a. *El fin de semana **ei** doy<sub>i</sub> un paseo por el parque de la ciudad.*  
b. *To savatocirjako **ei** kanoi mja volta sto parko tis polis.*  
the end of week give-1sg.prs. a walk by the park of the city.
- (2) a. ***Juan**<sub>i</sub> estudia para las oposiciones y sus amigos no creen que **ei** tenga<sub>i</sub> tiempo para tomar un café con ellos.*  
b. ***O Janis**<sub>i</sub> djavazi ja tis eksetasis ce i fili tu den pistevun oti **ei** exi<sub>i</sub> xrono ja na pji enan kafe mazi tus.*  
Juan/Janis-nom. studies-3sg.prs. for the exams and his friends-nom. do not think-3pl.prs. that has-3sg.prs. time-acc. to drink a coffee-acc. with them.
- (3) a. *Pese a que **María**<sub>i</sub> y Jorge fueron a la universidad, el profesor se enteró de que **ella**<sub>i</sub> no asistió a la clase de filosofía.*  
b. *An ce i **Maria**<sub>i</sub> ce o Jorgos pigan sto panepistimio, o kathijitis katalave oti **afti**<sub>i</sub> den parakoluthise to mathima tis filosofias.*  
although Maria-nom. and Jorge/Jorgos-nom. went-3pl.pst. to the university, the professor-nom. realized-3sg.pst. that she not attended-3sg.pst. the class of philosophy.

The results appear in Graphs 1-3. The three conditions involve the syntax-pragmatics interface and should, by hypothesis, give rise to problems of L2 acquisition. In the results, statistically significant differences ( $p < 0.05$ ) between the native and the two experimental groups were found for non-contrastive subjects of 1st/2nd person in L2 Spanish, but not in L2 Greek ( $p > 0.05$ ). However, in both L2s the distribution of unambiguous subjects of 3rd person was significantly different for natives and both L2 groups ( $p < 0.05$ ) in the Kruskal-Wallis test. In the Mann-Whitney test it was significant for both intermediate-control and advanced-control groups in L2 Spanish, but only for the intermediate-control groups in L2 Greek. As for the distribution of contrastive subjects of 3rd person, significant differences ( $p < 0.05$ ) between natives and L2 groups were attested in L2 Spanish, but not in L2 Greek ( $p > 0.05$ ) in the Kruskal-Wallis test. Only in L2 Spanish the intermediate-control groups showed significant differences ( $p < 0.05$ ) in the Mann-Whitney test. Out of the three conditions, the IH was fulfilled in the first and second conditions for the two experimental groups in L2 Spanish, but only for the intermediate group in the second condition in L2 Greek. In the third condition the IH was fulfilled for the intermediate group in L2 Spanish, but not in L2 Greek. Therefore, the results were affected by the L2 (Spanish or Greek), and also by competence level, but the IH failed to predict the performance pattern of the L2 learners.

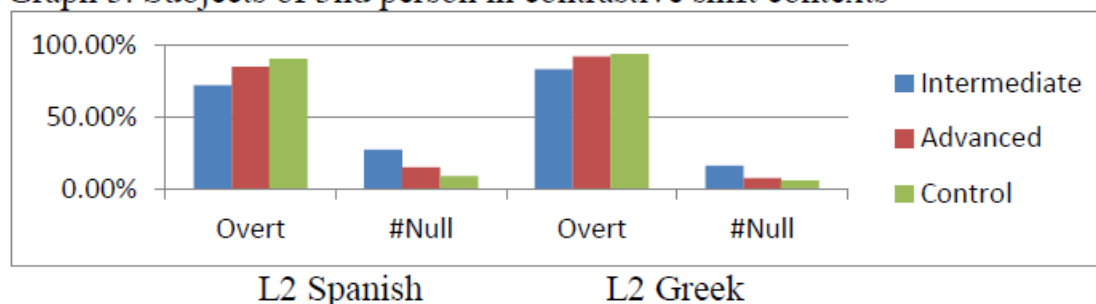
Graph 1. Subjects of 1st/2nd person in non-contrastive referential contexts



Graph 2. Subjects of 3rd person in unambiguous shift contexts



Graph 3. Subjects of 3rd person in contrastive shift contexts





### **Selected references**

- Sorace, A.** (2011). Pinning down the concept of “interface” in bilingualism. *Linguistic Approaches to Bilingualism*, 1 (1), 1–33.
- Sorace, A. & F. Filiaci** (2006). Anaphora resolution in near-native speakers of Italian. *Second Language Research*, 22 (3), 339–368.
- Tsimpli, I. & A. Sorace** (2006). Differentiating interfaces: L2 performance in syntax-semantics and syntax-discourse phenomena. *Proceedings of the 30th Annual Boston University Conference on Language Development* (653–664). Somerville, MA: Cascadia Press.



that at the syntax-discourse interface learners at the end state show residual deficits such as overuse of overt pronouns in null-subject L2s.

(1) Una persona famosa es **Beyonce Knowles**. **Beyonce** esta muy bonita. **Ella** canta fantastico. **Ella** baila muy bien. [CEDEL2 L1Eng-L2Spa Beginner]

‘A famous person is **Beyonce Knowles**. **Beyonce** is very beautiful. **She** sings really well. **She** dances very well.’

(2) **John Lennon** es una persona famosa. **John** nace en Liverpool, England en mil novecientos cuarenta. **John** era moreno, alto [CEDEL2 L1Eng-L2Spa Beginner]

‘**John Lennon** is a famous person. **John** was born in Liverpool, England, in 1940. **John** was dark-haired, tall’.

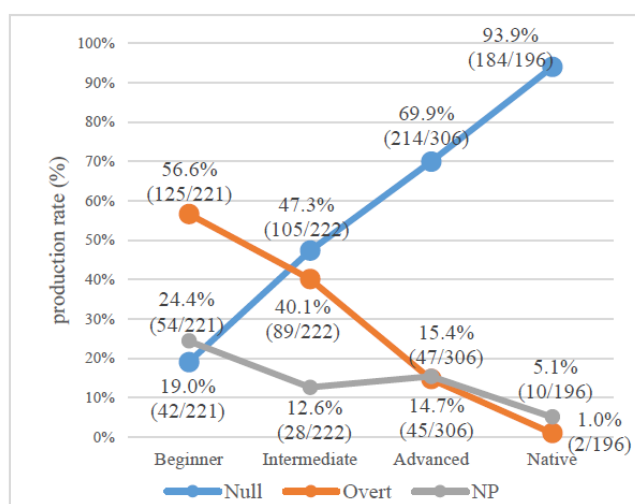


Figure 2. Referential forms in TC

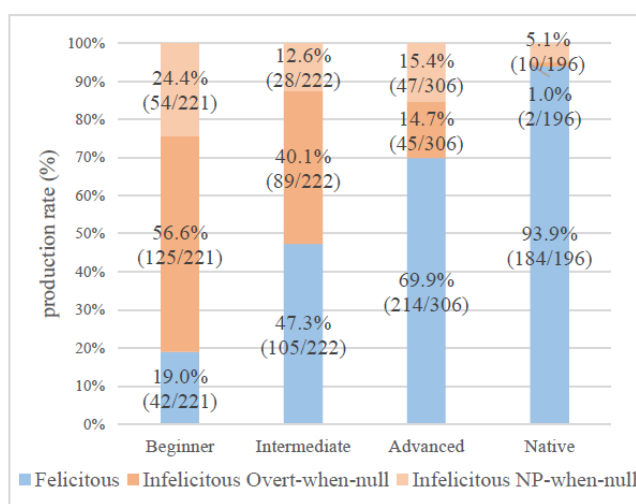


Figure 3. Pragmatic (in)felicity

Additionally, the L1 was shown to be a modulating factor (Fig. 4): learners use felicitous null pronouns in syntactic coordination from early stages (see 4 and 5), which results in native-like behaviour (simply) because this is possible in their L1 English. By contrast, in non-coordinate contexts there is a gradual increase of null pronouns, which eventually approaches native levels in near-natives. This indicates that learners acquire the pragmatic rules of AR at the syntax-discourse interface as proficiency increases.

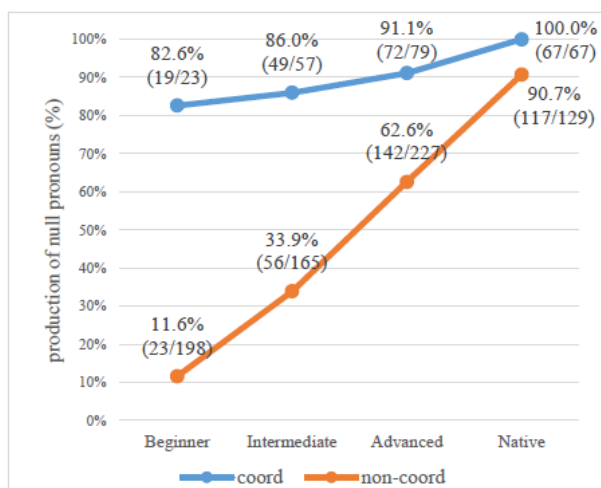


Figure 4. Null pronouns x syntactic pattern

(3) **Chloe<sub>i</sub>** se enamora de **Chris<sub>j</sub>**, **O<sub>i</sub>** le introduce en la empresa familiar y **O<sub>i</sub>** acaba casándose con él<sub>j</sub>. [CEDEL2 L1Spa Native]

‘**Chloe** falls in love with **Chris**, (**she**) introduces him in the family business and (**she**) ends up marrying him’.

(4) **Ella<sub>i</sub>** ha aparecido en muchas películas y **O<sub>i</sub>** ha registrado cuatro álbumes [CEDEL2 L1Eng-L2Spa Beginner]

‘**She** has appeared in many films and (**she**) has recorded four albums’

(5) Porque **ella<sub>i</sub>** gasta tanto dinero, **ella<sub>i</sub>** está en deuda y **O<sub>i</sub>** no puede pagar sus cuentas de tarjeta de crédito [CEDEL2 L1Eng-L2Spa Intermediate]

‘Because **she** spends a lot of money, **she** is in debt and (**she**) cannot pay her credit card bills’.

Finally, in topic chains, null antecedents are typically followed by null anaphors in native Spanish in line with previous research (Blackwell & Quesada 2012; Cameron & Flores-Ferrán 2004; Geeslin & Linford 2012), though our learners are sensitive to this with increasing proficiency.

In short, our corpus approach reveals facts about AR in TC contexts that have previously gone unnoticed in the L2 acquisition literature as well as some additional qualitative findings.

## References

- Blackwell, S. E., & Quesada, M. L.** (2012). Third-person subjects in native speakers' and L2 learners' narratives: Testing (and revising) the Givenness Hierarchy for Spanish. In K. L. Geeslin & M. Díaz-Campos (eds.), *Selected Proceedings of the 14th Hispanic Linguistics Symposium* (pp. 142–164). Somerville, MA: Cascadia Press.
- Cameron, R., & Flores-Ferrán, N.** (2004). Perseveration of subject expression across regional dialects of Spanish. *Spanish in Context*, 1(1), 41–65.
- Geeslin, K. L., & Linford, B.** (2012). *Cross-sectional study of the effects of discourse cohesiveness and perseveration on subject expression. Paper presented at the Sixth International Workshop on Spanish Sociolinguistics*. Tucson, Arizona.
- Hendriks, H.** (2003). Using nouns for reference maintenance: A seeming contradiction in L2 discourse. In A. Giacalone Ramat (Ed.), *Typology and Second Language Acquisition* (pp. 291–326). Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Lozano, C.** (2009). Selective deficits at the syntax-discourse interface: Evidence from the CEDEL2 corpus. In: N. Snape, Y-k. I. Leung & M. Sharwood-Smith (eds). *Representational Deficits in Second Language Acquisition* (pp. 127–166). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Lozano, C.** (2016). Pragmatic principles in anaphora resolution at the syntax-discourse interface: advanced English learners of Spanish in the CEDEL2 corpus. In: M. Alonso Ramos (ed.), *Spanish Learner Corpus Research: Current Trends and Future Perspectives* (pp. 236–265). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Montrul, S., & Rodríguez-Louro, C.** (2006). Beyond the syntax of the Null Subject Parameter: A look at the discourse-pragmatic distribution of null and overt subjects by L2 learners of Spanish. In: V. Torrens & L. Escobar (eds.), *The Acquisition of Syntax in Romance Languages* [Language Acquisition and Language Disorders 41] (pp. 401–418). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Rothman, J.** (2009). Pragmatic deficits with syntactic consequences? L2 pronominal subjects and the syntax-pragmatics interface. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 41, 951–973.
- Ryan, J.** (2015). Overexplicit Referent Tracking in L2 English: Strategy, Avoidance, or Myth? *Language Learning*, 65(4), 824–859.
- Sorace, A.** (2011). Pinning down the concept of “interface” in bilingualism. *Linguistic Approaches to Bilingualism*, 1(1), 1–33.
- Sorace, A., & Filiaci, F.** (2006). Anaphora resolution in near-native speakers of Italian. *Second Language Research*, 22(3), 339–368.

## Is there a clear division of labour in Spanish? Corpus approaches to test the Position of Antecedent Strategy

Teresa Quesada & Cristóbal Lozano  
(Universidad de Granada)

The Position of Antecedent Strategy (PAS) (Carminati 2002) is a purely structural parsing strategy where the syntactic function of the antecedent determines the form of the anaphor. Carminati proposed that, in Italian, null pronouns tend to select subject antecedents, whereas overt pronouns typically corefer with non-subject antecedents. The PAS has been extensively studied experimentally in native and L2 Italian and other null-subject languages like Spanish (e.g., Alonso-Ovalle et al. 2002, Bel & García-Alcaraz 2015, Bel & al. 2016, Filiaci et al. 2014, Jegerski et al. 2011, Sorace & Filiaci, 2006), as in *Juani pegó a Pedroj. Él/Øi está enfadado*. If we focus on Spanish data, advanced and near-native learners of Spanish typically show certain deficits when processing PAS, arguably as a result of their limitations when integrating simultaneously syntactic information (overt/null alternation) with discourse information (topic/focus) at the syntax-discourse interface, as predicted by the Interface Hypothesis, IH (Sorace 2011). Importantly, these studies are experimental in nature and have explored PAS in decontextualised and unnatural scenarios. This study explores the PAS in a corpus, as production data offers natural and contextually richer scenarios. A sample of intermediate and near-native L1 English

1. L2 Spanish learners plus a control group of Spanish natives was selected from CEDEL2 (Corpus Escrito del Español L2) (Lozano & Mendikoetxea 2013). This sample was manually annotated with a tagset (Fig. 1) in the UAM Corpus Tool tagging software following a fine-grained tagset. Some of those results reveal the following:
2. Near-native learners behave similarly to Spanish natives in terms of the PAS, as both advanced groups produce mainly a null subject pronoun (and not an overt pronoun) to refer to a subject antecedent, except for the intermediate group that shows variability. Therefore, corpus data confirm previous experimental findings (Fig. 2).
3. However, regarding overt anaphoric forms, LCR methodology reveals that the anaphoric choices for non-subject antecedents are more complex than previously assumed. Importantly, it is not only overt forms (e.g., *él*) but also NPs (e.g., *Pedro/el hombre*) that show a strong bias towards antecedents in non-subject position in natives (Fig. 3), a fact that has gone undetected in previous experimental work. The division of labour in Spanish is between null pronouns vs. overt material (=overt pronouns & NPs). Advanced learners do not show a clear bias with NP forms, as was the case for overt pronominal forms.
4. In short, intermediates show variability and even near-natives fall short of attaining complete native-like knowledge at the syntax-discourse interface.

Corpus methods therefore reveal that there are additional factors that have gone undetected in previous experimental studies. Results also suggest that full native-like competence is not attainable in very advanced levels, which supports the IH predictions.

Figure 1: Tagset

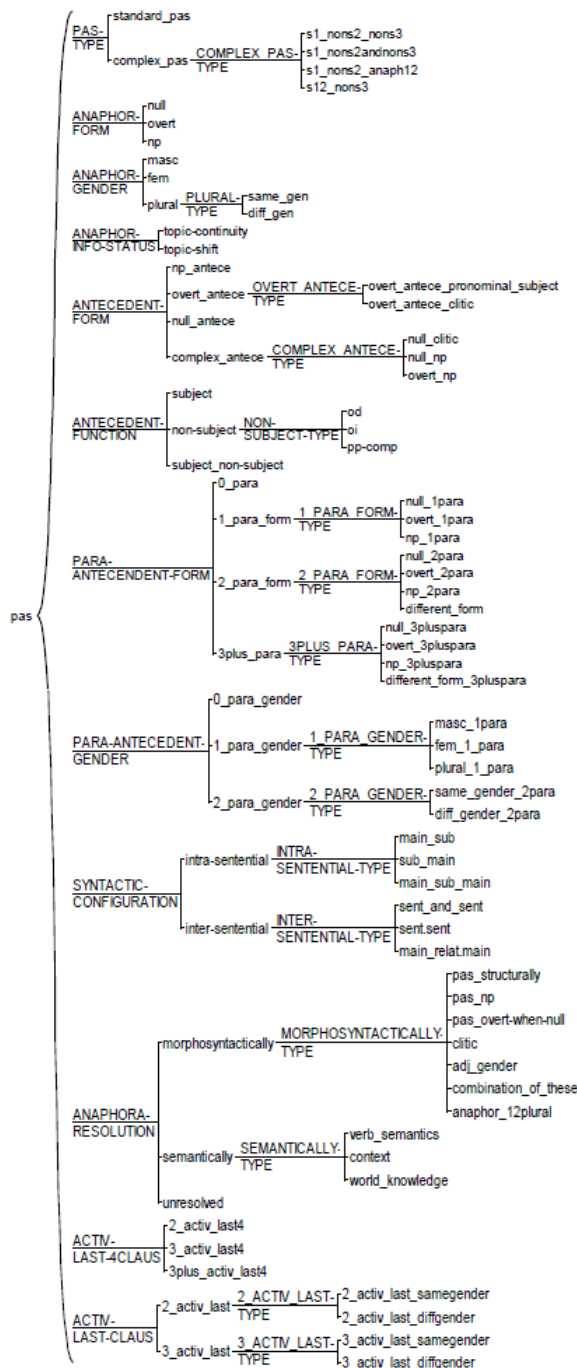


Figure 2: Subject-antecedent results

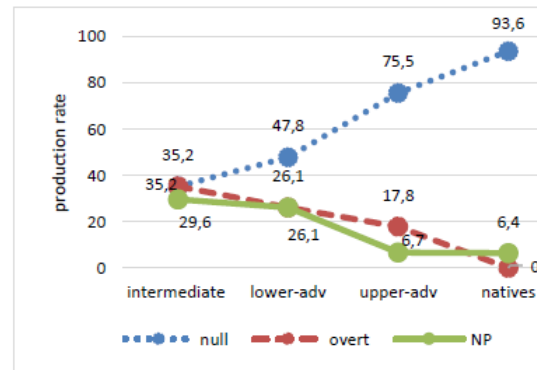
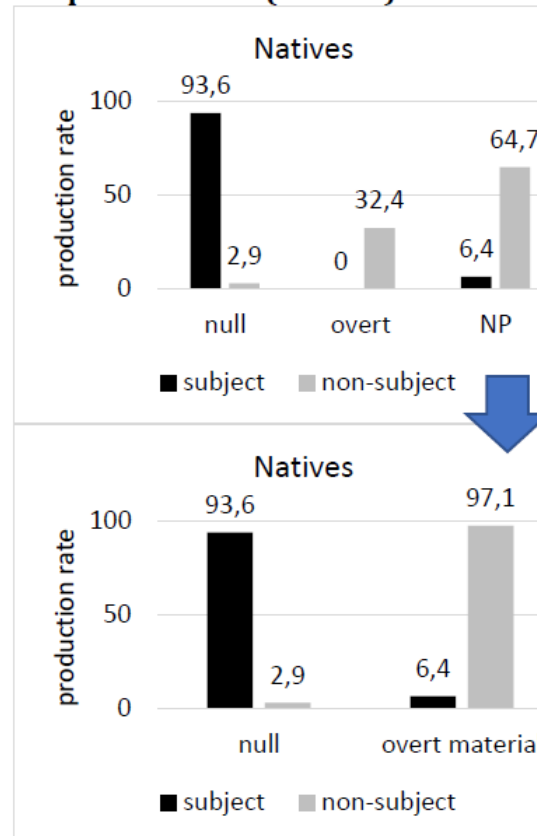


Figure 3: Division of labour of anaphoric forms (natives)



## References

- Carminati, M. N.** (2002). The processing of Italian subject pronouns. PhD thesis: University of Massachusetts at Amherst.
- Alonso-Ovalle, L., Fernández-Solera, S., Frazier, L., & Clifton, C.** (2002). Null vs. overt pronouns and the topic-focus articulation in Spanish. *Journal of Italian Linguistics*, 14(2), 151–169
- Bel, A., & García-Alcaraz, E.** (2015). Subject pronouns in the L2 Spanish of Moroccan Arabic speakers. In T. Judy & S. Perpiñán (Eds.), *The Acquisition of Spanish in Understudied Language Pairs* (pp. 201–232). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

- Bel, A., Sagarra, N., Comínguez, J. P., & García-Alcaraz, E.** (2016). Transfer and proficiency effects in L2 processing of subject anaphora. *Lingua*, 184, 134–159.
- Filiaci, F., Sorace, A., & Carreiras, M.** (2014). Anaphoric biases of null and overt subjects in Italian and Spanish: a cross-linguistic comparison. *Language, Cognition and Neuroscience*, 29(7), 825–843.
- Jegerski, J., VanPatten, B., & Keating, G. D.** (2011). Cross-linguistic variation and the acquisition of pronominal reference in L2 Spanish. *Second Language Research*, 27(4), 481–507.
- Lozano, C., & Mendikoetxea, A.** (2013). Learner corpora and second language acquisition: the design and collection of CEDEL2. In A. Díaz-Negrillo, N. Ballier, & P. Thompson (Eds.), *Automatic Treatment and Analysis of Learner Corpus Data*. (pp. 65–100). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Sorace, A.** (2011). Pinning down the concept of “interface” in bilingualism. *Linguistic Approaches to Bilingualism*, 1(1), 1–33.

## **The production of null subjects by Greek-Italian bilingual children: Teasing apart transfer and developmental effects**

Torregrossa Jacopo<sup>1</sup>, Christiane Bongartz<sup>2</sup>, Maria Andreou<sup>2</sup>, Claudia Rizzo<sup>2</sup>  
(<sup>1</sup>University of Hamburg, <sup>2</sup>University of Cologne)

Several studies on bilingual reference production have shown that bilinguals speaking a null-subject (NS) and a non-null-subject (NNS) language combination tend to produce overt pronouns in contexts in which the use of a NS would be more appropriate (i.e., when maintaining reference to a discourse referent; e.g., Serratrice et al., 2004; Sorace & Filiaci, 2006; Belletti et al., 2007). In other terms, these bilinguals produce overspecified (redundant) forms. This tendency has been analyzed in terms of cross-linguistic influence (CLI) from the NNS to the NS language. However, the evidence is less clear when considering the combination of two NS languages. Sorace et al. (2009) found that Italian-Spanish bilinguals produce overt pronouns in Italian, which could be interpreted in terms of either CLI (Spanish is more tolerant to overt subjects in maintenance contexts) or processing: Overt pronouns are the default options that bilingual use, whenever they fail to integrate syntactic representations with discourse information in real time (Sorace, 2011). Furthermore, when considering bilingual language acquisition, CLI and processing effects may interact with developmental factors: Children may produce ambiguous null subject, due to developing Theory of Mind (ToM) – Hendriks (2016).

The present study investigates which factors underlie bilingual production of NS, by considering the production of NS in Italian by bilinguals speaking a combination of NS languages, i.e., Italian and Greek. In particular, the study builds on studies (both comprehension and production data: Torregrossa, Bongartz & Tsimpli, 2015; Torregrossa & Andreou, in preparation) showing that Greek NS are ‘freer’ in their reference possibilities than Italian NS, being able to refer to both subject and object antecedents. On the contrary, Italian NS exhibit a greater subject bias (Carminati, 2002). If bilingual reference production were mainly affected by processing constraints, Greek-Italian bilingual children would tend to produce overspecified overt pronouns (in line with Sorace, 2011). On the contrary, CLI should lead to an extension of the reference possibilities for Italian NS, according to the pattern shown by Greek. This would correspond to the production of (ambiguous) NS referring to both subject and object antecedents. Furthermore, we will control the production of ambiguous NS for developmental factors.

40 Greek-Italian bilingual children (age-range: 8.00-11.8, M: 9.5) – living in Athens and attending a Greek-Italian bilingual school – took part in the study. We designed an experimental battery for the assessment of their reference production skills: i) two sentence repetition tasks (SRT) tapping the syntactic representations of the language-specific referential systems; ii) two Theory-of-Mind task (Silent movies, Devin & Hughes, 2013); iii) an updating task (on-line monitoring and manipulation of information), to assess children’s processing abilities; iv) a narrative production task (Schneider et al., 2005) eliciting referring expressions (REs) in Italian. We also administered each child a questionnaire, targeting home language history, current language use and current literacy, as a proxy for language experience.

For the analysis of the narratives, we coded NS for factors affecting the accessibility of their referents (Arnold, 2010), i.e., grammatical role of the antecedent (subject vs. object) and number of characters (of the same or different gender) intervening between the NS and its antecedent. Then, we identified referential configurations indicating an underspecific (i.e., ambiguous) use of NS (use of a null when the antecedent is an object, with or without intervening characters).

The results show that in Italian, bilingual children produce underspecific NS that refer to object antecedents, as shown by sentences (1) and (2). Very few instances of overt pronouns could be observed.



(1) [*E infine (l'elefante) ha preso il palloncino*]. L'ha dato **al giraffino**<sub>1</sub> e Ø<sub>1</sub> si è riempito di gioia.

[and at the end the elephant took the balloon]. He gave it to the giraffe boy and Ø (he) was full with joy].

(2) *E l'elefante cercava di prendere il giocattolo dall'acqua, ma Ø diceva che Ø era troppo lontano.*

[and the elephant tried to take the toy from the water, but Ø (he) was saying that Ø (it) was too far away].

Interestingly, there is no significant correlation between the number of produced underspecific NS and the scores in the updating and ToM tasks. Rather, the results of the SRT as well as measures of language experience (questionnaires) are the only significant predictors of the use of underspecific forms (i.e., of the extension of the reference possibilities of Italian NS according to the Greek pattern).

In other terms, among the bilinguals considered in this study, the production of underspecific NS is not motivated by developmental factors, as shown by the absence of correlation with ToM scores. Nor could processing limitations account for the observed pattern of production (very few overt pronouns were produced and there was no correlation with processing measures). Rather, the syntax-discourse interface analysis of null subjects – coupled with the results of the correlational analyses involving the SRT-scores and the questionnaires – suggests that the production of underspecific forms is an effect of CLI of the Greek pattern of use of null subjects to Italian.

## References

- Arnold, J.** 2010. How speakers refer: The role of accessibility. *Language and Linguistic Compass* 4(4): 187-203.
- Belletti, A., Bennati, E. and Sorace, A.** 2007. Theoretical and developmental issues in the syntax of subjects: evidence from near-native Italian. *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory* 25: 657–689.
- Carminati, M. N.** 2002. *The processing of Italian subject pronouns*. Doctoral Dissertation, University of Massachusetts, Amherst.
- Devine, R.T. & Hughes, C.** 2013. Silent films and strange stories: theory of mind, gender and social experiences in middle childhood. *Child Development*, 84, 989 - 1003.
- Hendriks, P.** 2016. Cognitive Modeling of Individual Variation in Reference Production and Comprehension, *Frontiers in Psychology* 7: 1-17.
- Schneider, P., Dubé, R. V., and Hayward, D.** 2005. The Edmonton Narrative Norms Instrument. Retrieved [23.08.2013] from University of Alberta Faculty of Rehabilitation Medicine website: <http://www.rehabresearch.ualberta.ca/enni>.
- Serratrice, L., Sorace, A., Paoli, S.** 2004. Crosslinguistic influence at the syntax-pragmatics interface: Subjects and objects in English-Italian bilingual and monolingual acquisition. *Bilingualism: Language and Cognition* 7(3): 183-205.
- Serratrice, L., Sorace, A., Filiaci, F. and Baldo, M.** 2011. [Pronominal objects in English-Italian and Spanish-Italian bilingual children](#). *Applied Psycholinguistics* 33(4).
- Sorace, A.** 2011. Pinning down the concept of 'interface' in bilingualism. *Linguistic Approaches to Bilingualism* 1: 1-33.
- Sorace, A. and Filiaci, F.** 2006. Anaphora resolution in near-native speakers of Italian. *Second Language Research* 22: 339-368. **Sorace, A.** 2011. Pinning down the concept of 'interface' in bilingualism. *Linguistic Approaches to Bilingualism* 1: 1-33.

**Torregrossa, J., Bongartz C. and Tsimpli, I.** 2015. Testing accessibility: A cross-linguistic comparison of the syntax of referring expressions. In *Proceedings of the 89<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the Linguistic Society of America*, Portland.

## **Posters**

## Bilinguals' referential choice in cognitively demanding situations

Carla Contemori & Iva Ivanova,  
University of Texas at El Paso

Appropriate references are a prerequisite for successful communication, but monolinguals and bilinguals differ in their choice of referential expressions. Native English speakers use attenuated forms (e.g., pronouns) when the referent is the topic of conversation. They use instead more explicit forms (full noun phrases) when introducing new entities in the discourse or making reference to an entity that has not been mentioned recently (e.g., Arnold & Griffin, 2007). However, even unbalanced but highly-proficient bilinguals may over-use pronominal forms in a non-null subject second language (L2) such as English (Contemori & Dussias, 2016) or Italian (e.g., Belletti, Bennati, & Sorace, 2007). Such residual indeterminacy in L2 referential choice could be due to an increased need for cognitive resources when computing interface structures between syntax and pragmatics such as referential expressions (the Interface Hypothesis, e.g., Sorace, 2011). Such structures are less likely to be successfully used by bilinguals relative to structures without this interface because speaking an L2 is cognitively costly and even speaking one's first language (L1) requires cognitive resources to prevent interference from the non-target language.

The present research tests the ability of the Interface Hypothesis to explain bilingual referential choice by examining the production of pronouns and noun phrases in unbalanced Spanish-English bilinguals in common and privileged ground (i.e., when the preceding discourse is shared by speaker and listener or only known to the speaker, Fukumura & vanGompel, 2012). The privileged ground condition is potentially more cognitively effortful, because the speaker has to consider the addressee's discourse model and choose a more explicit referring expression (i.e., a noun phrase). According to the Interface Hypothesis, in privileged ground bilinguals in their L2 may be more likely to differ from monolinguals by producing fewer noun phrases, relative to common ground.

Twenty-one English monolinguals and 44 Spanish-English bilinguals (L2 proficiency: advanced=21; High proficiency=23) participated in a story-telling task in English (bilinguals' L2), in which they saw two pictures of a male and a female character performing different actions (Figure 1). Participants heard a two-sentence description of the first picture, and then produced descriptions of the second picture to a confederate. The second picture cued references to the character that was salient (e.g., *the boy*) or non-salient (e.g., *the girl*) in the preceding discourse. Importantly, the second context sentence (e.g., *The boy got really annoyed*) was either presented to both participant and confederate (common ground condition) or only to the participant (privileged ground condition).

Participants produced more noun phrases in the privileged ground than in the common ground condition ( $\beta=-0.4$ ,  $SD=0.1$ ,  $t=-2.313$ ,  $p<0.02$ ), and monolinguals produced more noun phrases than low-proficiency ( $\beta=0.20$ ,  $SD=0.09$ ,  $t=2.172$ ,  $p<0.03$ ) and high-proficiency bilinguals ( $\beta=0.19$ ,  $SD=0.09$ ,  $t=2.138$ ,  $p<0.03$ ). However, the difference between bilinguals and

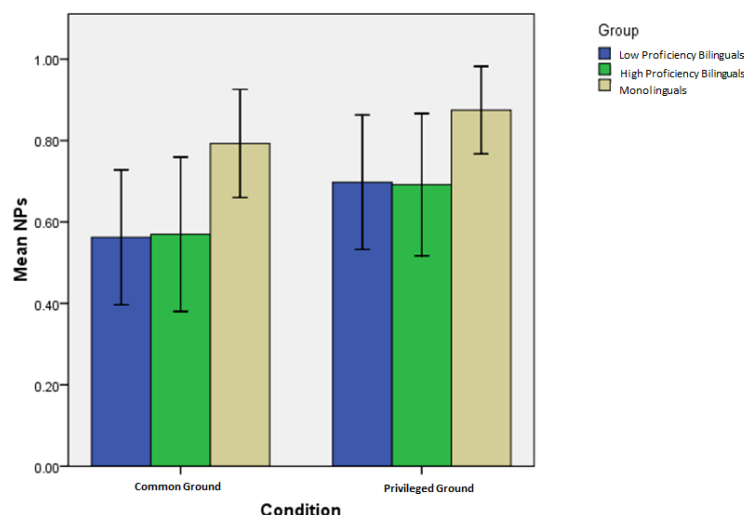
monolinguals was similar in the common and privileged-ground conditions (no interaction between group and condition,  $\beta=0.08$ ,  $SD=0.1$ ,  $t=-0.515$ ,  $p=0.6$ ).

These results reveal that both monolinguals and bilinguals are sensitive to the demands of privileged ground, and tend to be more explicit in their choice of referring expressions when the information is not shared with the addressee. Also, as in prior studies, bilinguals tended to use fewer explicit references (noun phrases) than monolinguals, possibly because of a difficulty to evaluate discourse salience which resulted in the use of expressions more economical for the speaker (e.g., Contemori & Dussias, 2016). However, the difference in referential use between bilinguals and monolinguals was similar in common and privileged ground, inconsistent with the Interface Hypothesis. In a currently on-going experiment, we put the Interface Hypothesis to another test, in a picture-description task under verbal and non-verbal cognitive load. A greater difference in referential use between bilinguals and monolinguals under load would support the Interface Hypothesis.

Figure 1. Example of the production task material (from Vogels, Krahmer & Maes, 2014)



Figure 2. noun phrases produced by the three groups of participants in the common ground and privileged ground condition (out of the number of noun phrases and pronouns produced).



## References

- Arnold, J. & Griffin, Z. M.** (2007). The effect of additional characters on choice of referring expression: Everyone counts. *Journal of Memory and Language*, 56(4), 521–536.
- Belletti, A., Bennati, E., & Sorace, A.** (2007). Theoretical and developmental issues in the syntax of subjects: Evidence from near-native Italian. *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory*, 25.
- Contemori, C., Dussias, P. E.** (2016). Referential choice in a second language: Evidence for a listener-oriented approach. *Language, Cognition and Neuroscience*, 31(10), 1257–1272.
- Fukumura, K., & Van Gompel, R.** (2012). Producing pronouns and definite noun phrases: Do speakers use the addressee's discourse model? *Cognitive Science*, 36(7), 1289–1311.
- Sorace, A.** (2011). Pinning down the concept of 'interface' in bilingualism. *Linguistic Approaches to Bilingualism*, 1, 1–33.
- Sorace, A., & Filiaci, F.** (2006). Anaphora resolution in near-native speakers of Italian. *Second Language Research*, 22(3), 339–368.
- Vogels, J., Krahmer, E., & Maes A.** (2014). How cognitive load influences speakers' choice of referring expressions, *Cognitive Science*, 39, (6), 1396–1418.

## When more is less: (over)use of pronominal forms in L2 acquisition

Lena Dal Pozzo  
Università degli Studi di Firenze

In this work we will present an overview of different studies facing the intriguing issue of subject pronoun use in L2 acquisition and we will attempt to give a unified account for the reported results. The use of overt subject pronouns in null subject languages (such as Italian and Spanish) and in partial null subject languages (such as Finnish) is regulated by subtle properties that involve both discourse and syntax. Several studies in the last decade have reported difficulties for L2ers in the acquisition of these properties at the syntax-discourse interface.

We will discuss the L2 data extending to L2 acquisition the assumption first presented in Platzack (1999, 2001) and further elaborated in Hulk & Muller (2000) and Muller and Hulk (2001) following which the C domain is the more vulnerable domain as it is an interface level connecting internal grammar and other cognitive systems, namely syntax and pragmatics/discourse. Hulk & Muller (2000) further assume that in bilingual language acquisition crosslinguistic influence can take place at the interface of two modules in the C-domain whenever there is overlapping of a structure in the two languages at the surface level. Hence, it follows that for L2ers of a null subject language there can be overlapping in the domain of the pronominal system resulting in the extension of overt pronouns in the L2. Comparing independent studies the postulation appears to be true independently from the status of the L1 as for the pro-drop parameter (null subject language, partial null subject language, non null subject language), a fact that puts under discussion the role of transfer and crosslinguistic influence in the acquisition of the discourse-syntactic properties involved in the use of pronominal forms. Data are presented from different studies on Italian L2 (Dal Pozzo 2012, 2015; Contemori, Dal Pozzo and Matteini 2015; Sorace, Serratrice, Filiaci and Baldo 2009; Tsimpli, Sorace, Filiaci and Heycock 2004 on attrition effects, a.o.) and Finnish L2 (Dal Pozzo 2015) showing that L2 learners generally prefer overt pronominal forms to null ones as this is the option available in both languages.

## References

- Belletti, Adriana, Bennati, Elisa and Sorace, Antonella**, 2007. Theoretical and developmental issues in the syntax of subjects: evidence from near- native Italian. *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory* 25: 657- 689.
- Carminati, M. N.**, 2002. *The processing of Italian subject pronouns*. Doctoral Dissertation, University of Massachusetts at Amherst.
- Dal Pozzo, Lena**, 2012. Evidence from experimental results and some questions about the syntax-discourse interface. *Finno-Ugric Languages and Linguistics (FULL)* vol. 1, n.1-2, pp. 67-80.
- Dal Pozzo, Lena**, 2015. *New information subjects in L2 acquisition: evidence from Italian and Finnish*. Firenze University Press, Firenze.
- Filiaci, Francesca, Sorace, Antonella and Carreiras, Manuel**, 2014. Anaphoric biases of null and overt subjects in Italian and Spanish. A cross-linguistic comparison. *Language, Cognition and Neurosciences*, 29/7: 825-843.

- Hulk, Aafke, and Muller, Natascha**, 2000. Bilingual first language acquisition at the interface between syntax and pragmatics. *Bilingualism: Language and Cognition*, 3.
- Muller, Natascha and Hulk, Aafke**, 2001. Crosslinguistic influence in bilingual language acquisition: Italian and French as recipient languages. *Bilingualism: Language and Cognition*, 4:1, 1-21.
- Platzack, Christer**, 2001. The Vulnerable C-domain. *Brain and language*, 77:3, 364-377.
- Sorace, Antonella and Filiaci, Francesca**, 2006. Anaphora resolution in near-native speakers of Italian. *Second Language Research*, 22: 339–368.
- Sorace, Antonella, Serratrice, Ludovica, Filiaci, Francesca and Baldo, Michela**, 2009. Discourse conditions on subject pronoun realization: testing the linguistic intuitions of older bilingual children. *Lingua*, 119: 460– 477.
- Tsimpli, Ianthi, Sorace, Antonella, Heycock, Catherine and Filiaci, Francesca**, 2004. First language attrition and syntactic subjects: a study of Greek and Italian near- native speakers of English. *International Journal of Bilingualism*, 8: 257- 277.



## Null vs lexical subjects in bilingual speakers of two null subject languages: amplifying micro- differences in language contact

Elisa Di Domenico<sup>1</sup> & Ioli Baroncini<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Università per stranieri di Perugia, <sup>2</sup>Università per Stranieri di Siena

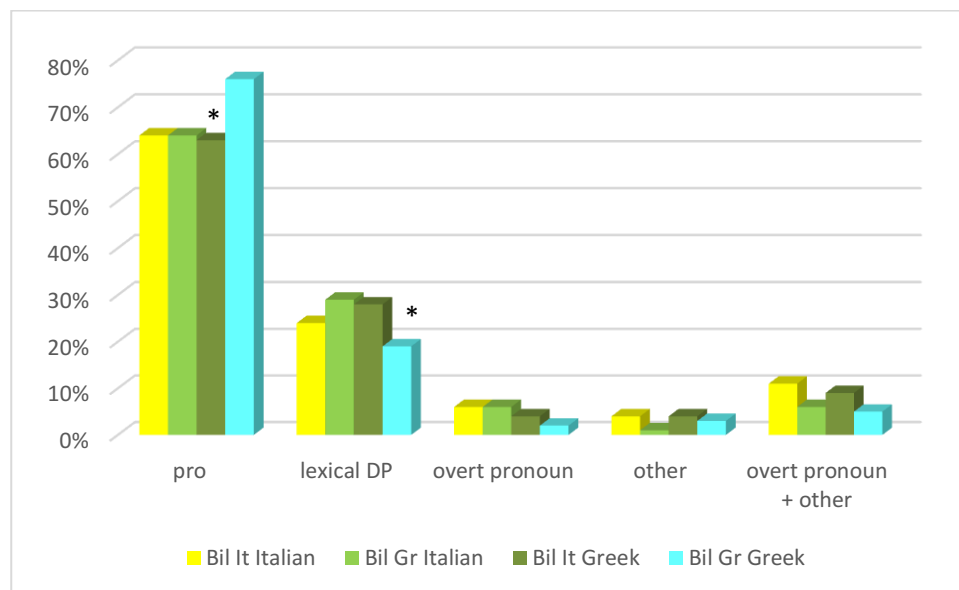
Null subject languages may differ in the division of labor between different referring expressions, as is the case of Spanish and Italian for what concerns overt and null subject pronouns (Filiaci, Sorace and Carreiras 2013). In previous work (Di Domenico and Baroncini 2017) we have shown that Italian and Greek instead do not: though Greek native speakers employ slightly more null pronouns and less lexical DPs and overt pronouns than Italian natives, these differences do not reach statistical significance. In this work we analyze the productions of two groups of Greek- Italian bilinguals from birth: Bilinguals living in Greece ( $n=10$ ), henceforth Bil Gr, and bilinguals living in Italy ( $n=10$ ), henceforth Bil It. Both speakers groups reached a near-native level of proficiency in Greek as well as in Italian: for Bil Gr, mean 8.97/10 in Italian and mean 9.34/10 in Greek; for Bil It, mean 9.03/10 in Italian and mean 8.79 /10 in Greek, determined through an adaptation of White and Genesee's (1996) test. Besides a small difference in proficiency (with Bil Gr slightly more proficient in Greek and Bil It slightly more proficient in Italian), i.e. in one of the two factors characterizing dominance (Birdsong, 2014), the two groups of speakers mainly differ in the other factor, i.e. use: Bil Gr daily use both Greek (they live in Greece) and Italian (they attend or graduated at the Italian State School of Athens and/or use Italian for their work), while Bil It daily use Italian only, reserving Greek basically for contacts with their family living in Greece.

Subjects had to watch a short movie containing no linguistic material (The Pear Film, Chafe 1980) and then tell the story, first in their less proficient language and then in their most proficient one. Subjects were tested individually in a quiet room and the interviewer did not linguistically interact with them during their narration. Their productions were recorded and then transcribed with the help of the CLAN system (part of the CHILDES tools, Mac Whinney 2000). From the total of sentences, we extracted only the ones in which a true choice between a subject pronoun (null or overt) or a subject lexical DP is possible, i.e. finite and copular sentences, non-subject relatives, non-subject clefts. We also excluded first mentions of Discourse Referents (which are always lexical) and sentences referring to the narrator, or narrator+ interviewer (which are always pronominal). Within this 'Reference Total' (for Bil Gr: 267 sentences in Greek and 241 in Italian; for Bil It: 251 sentences in Greek and 234 in Italian) we counted the occurrences of null and overt subject pronouns and of lexical DP subjects. We also singled out another resumption device which we call 'other' and consists in various quantificational expressions such as It. '*uno*' (one), '*uno dei tre*' (lit. one out of the three), '*tutti*' (all of them), Gr. '*enas apo aftous*' (one of them).

We then compared results in the two languages in each group as shown in Figure 1. A  $\chi^2$ -test revealed no significant differences in the production of overt pronouns. We found however an unexpected significant effect in one group, in the language in which they are more proficient: Bil Gr produce significantly more null pronouns and less lexical DPs in Greek compared to Bil It, amplifying a (non- significant) difference between Greek and Italian noted in native monolingual speakers of these languages. We interpret this effect as stemming from the need to differentiate the two languages that these bilingual speakers have to handle in everyday life. Interestingly, this instance of divergence (as a sub-case of non- convergence, Kaufmann 2010) is found in the language in which these speakers are more proficient, rather than in the one in which they are less proficient. Finally, this instance of divergence does not involve overt pronouns, but consists in a wider use of null pronouns which charges lexical DPs. This suggests

that overt pronouns are a marked option, questioning accessibility marking scales such as those in Ariel (1990, 2001) which place overt pronouns near to null ones.

Figure 1



## References

- Ariel, M.** (1990). *Accessing Noun Phrase Antecedents*. London: Routledge.
- Ariel, M.** (2001). Accessibility Theory: An Overview. In T.J.M. Sanders, J. Schilperoord and W. Sporen (eds.) *Text Representation: Linguistic and Psycholinguistic aspects*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 29- 87.
- Birdsong, D.** (2014) Dominance and Age in Bilingualism. *Applied Linguistics*. 35:4. 374- 392.
- Chafe, W.** (1980) (ed.) *The pear stories: Cognitive, cultural, and linguistic aspects of narrative production*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.
- Di Domenico, E. and I. Baroncini** (2017) The Age of Onset of Exposure Factor. Talk delivered at GALA 13. Palma de Mallorca, UIB, 7-9 September 2017.
- Filiaci, F., Sorace, A. and M. Carreiras** (2013) Anaphoric biases of null and overt subjects in Italian and Spanish: a cross- linguistic comparison. *Language, Cognition and Neurosciences* 28:7, 825-843.
- Kaufmann, G.** (2010) Non – convergence despite language contact. In P. Auer and J. E. Schmidt (eds.), *Language and Space. An International Handbook of Linguistic Variation. Volume 1: Theory and Methods*. Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 478-493.
- Mac Whinney, B.** (2000) *The CHILDES Project: Tools for Analyzing Tool*. 3rd Edition. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- White, L. and F. Genesee** (1996) How native is near-native? The issue of ultimate attainment in adult second language acquisition. *Second Language Research*. 12:3, 233–265.

# Exploring null and postverbal subjects in L2 English beyond the initial state: an investigation on the written production of unaccusatives and passives in Italian learners

Simona Matteini  
DSFUCI, University of Siena

**Theoretical background.** This work wants to contribute to a well-known research strand in generative studies on L2 English (White 1985, Phinney 1987, Judy 2011, Lozano & Mendikoetxea 2010, Orfitelli & Grüter 2013 a.o.): the acquisition of some aspects of the syntax of subjects that crucially diverge in the learners' L1, in this case Italian. The main focus is on the mastering of two syntactic phenomena: the compulsoriness of subjects and the lack of free inversion structures (Verb-Subject order) in English, as traditionally described for the Null Subject Parameter by Rizzi (1982). With respect to previous studies, the peculiarity of the present research is twofold: firstly, it looks at null and postverbal subjects through unaccusative and passive constructions; secondly, it provides L2 data from a translation task, that proves to be a powerful tool to let intermediate and advanced L2 learners' sensitivity to subtle syntactic differences come to light.

**The study.** The data analysed (267 sentences) are part of a written translation task administered to n. 89 University students (n. 20 Towards C1, n. 48 Towards B2, n.21 Towards B1; mean age 20,12). The short text analysed for this research contains one unaccusative context with a postverbal subject (Unacc\_VS), one short passive with a postverbal subject (Shortpass\_VS) and one long passive with a null referential subject (Longpass\_NS). Sentences (1) – (3) exemplify the relevant contexts:

- (1) È appena accaduto qualcosa di spiacevole nel nostro ufficio: [...]. (Unacc\_VS)  
“Something unpleasant has just happened in our office.”
- (2) [...] è stato danneggiato il computer del capo. (Shortpass\_VS)  
“The chief's computer has been damaged.”
- (3) Domani verrà riparato da un nostro esperto di fiducia. (Longpass\_NS)  
“Tomorrow it will be repaired by one of our reliable experts.”

These sentences express two peculiar syntactic phenomena traditionally related to the null-subject nature of Italian: the postverbal position of a subject (examples 1-2) and the omission of a (referential) subject (example 3), namely, when it is a topic (old information). Both facts (postverbal and null subjects) are not allowed in the same contexts in standard English, which is a non-null subject language. In terms of L2 acquisition, the three sentences pose then a challenge to an Italian learner: standard English is a [- null subject] language, where properties related to the positive setting of the parameter (null and postverbal subjects) are not available, contrary to his mother tongue. In light of these facts, three main research questions (RQ henceforth) guide this investigation: RQ1: Are postverbal and null subject contexts equally problematic for L2 learners when translating from Italian into English? RQ2: Are there any differences between unaccusative constructions and passives in terms of mastering the target word order SV? RQ3: Can developmental patterns in the three different contexts be identified across proficiency levels?

**The data.** Overall, the main findings indicate that null subject contexts (Graph 3) are less problematic than postverbal subject contexts (Graph 1 and 2 – RQ1) and that mastering is sensitive to proficiency levels (RQ3; see table n.1 for statistical analyses). Moreover, an interesting asymmetry between unaccusatives and passives in terms of subject placement emerges (Graph 1 vs. 2; RQ2).

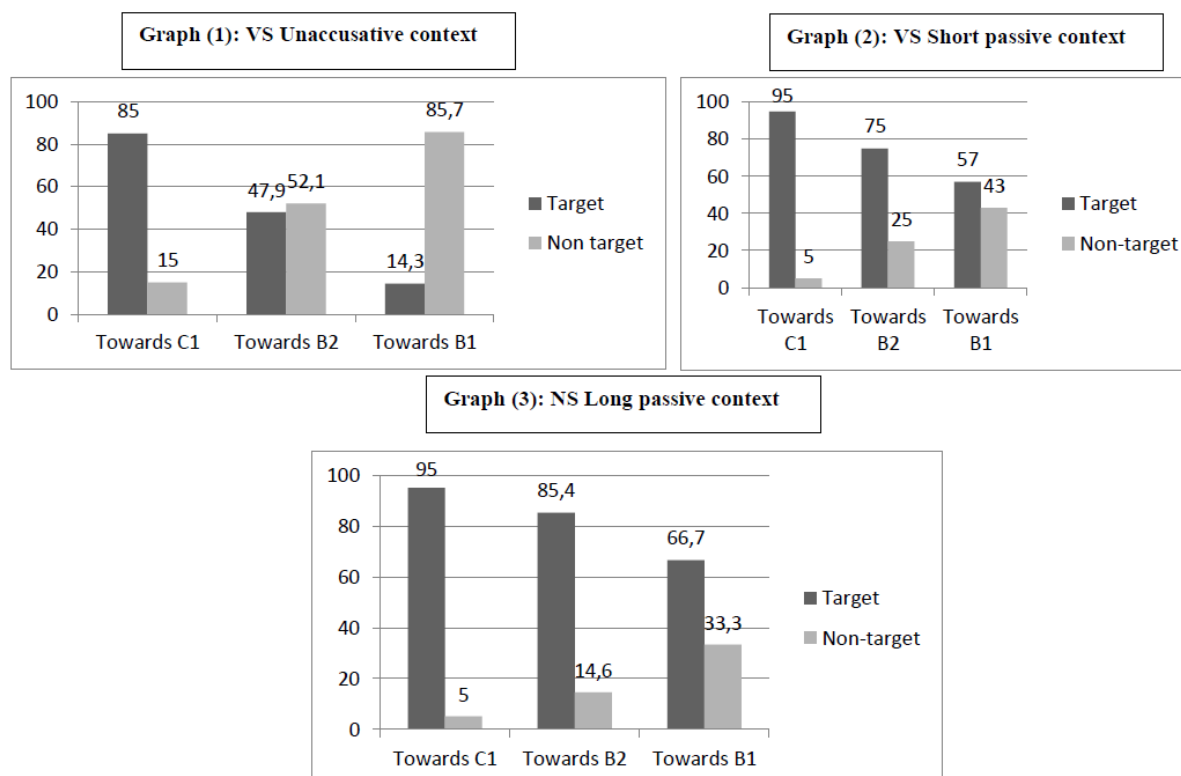


Table (1): Statistics for the three contexts analysed				
Contexts	Test	Variable List	Grouping Variable	Results
VS Unaccusative context	Kruskal-Wallis	Target SV order	Proficiency Levels (3 groups)	$X^2 = 20,289$ , $df = 2$ , $p = .000$
VS Short passive context	Kruskal-Wallis	Target SV order	Proficiency Levels (3 groups)	$X^2 = 7,805$ $df = 2$ , $p = .020$
NS Long passive context	Kruskal-Wallis	Target Subject insertion	Proficiency Levels (3 groups)	$X^2 = 6,181$ , $df = 2$ , $p = .045$

The finding that (referential) null subjects are less problematic has been largely documented in previous studies on the acquisition of the Null Subject Parameter in L2 English (White 1985, Phinney 1987, Judy 2011 a.o.), conversely the new interesting result is the contrast between passives and unaccusatives: even the VS short passive context (Graph 2) is less challenging than the VS unaccusative one (Graph 1), especially for intermediate L2 learners (Towards B2 and B1). In the discussion of the data, I will propose that a possible reason for this asymmetry lies in the nature of the verb (unaccusative vs. passive) as well as in the (in)definiteness of the subject and its related position in the clause. Supporting evidence for this claim will be provided and comes from the translation of another VS unaccusative sentence provided in the same translation task where, crucially, the subject is definite (*Sono appena entrate le due nuove impiegate* – The two new employees have just come). Interestingly, the tendency emerged in this case confirms that L2 learners strongly prefer the SV order across proficiency levels. The sharp contrast in terms of pre- and postverbal subjects when the subject is [+/- definite] seems then to suggest that

L2 learners are sensitive to the Definiteness Effect with unaccusatives and that this sensitivity follows a developmental path. A more fine-grained research that includes different verb types as well as definite/indefinite postverbal subjects is clearly desirable in order to support such proposal.

## References

- Judy, T.** (2011). *L1/L2 Parametric Directionality Matters: More on the Null Subject Parameter in L2 Acquisition*, «Eurosla Yearbook» 11, 165-190.
- Lozano, C. & Mendicoexta, A.** (2010). *Interface conditions on postverbal subjects: A corpus study on L2 English*, «Bilingualism: Language and Cognition» 13, 4, 475–497.
- Orfitelli, R. & Grüter, T.** (2013). *Do null subjects really transfer?* Proceedings of the 12th Generative Approaches to Second Language Acquisition Conference (GASLA 2013), J. Cabrelli Amaro, T. Judy & D. Pascual y Cabo (eds.), Cascadilla Proceedings Project, Somerville, MA, 145-154.
- Phinney, M.** (1987). *The pro-drop parameter in second language acquisition*, in T. Roeper and E. Williams (eds.), *Parameter setting*, D. Reidel Publishing Company, Dordrecht, Holland, 221-238.
- Rizzi, L.** (1982). *Issues in Italian syntax*. D. Reidel Publishing Company, Dordrecht, Holland.
- White, L.** (1985). *The pro-drop parameter in adult second language acquisition*. «Language Learning» 35, 47-62.



