

## CROSS-LINGUIST INFLUENCE (CLI) IN MIRRORED PROPERTIES

### SESSION GOALS

CLI is an amply studied phenomenon in bilingual language acquisition, but studies have so far been conducted on language combinations in which one language had two variants whereas the other one had only one variant of a linguistic phenomenon (Bernardini, 2003; Kupisch, 2014; Rizzi et al., 2013; Westergaard & Anderssen, 2015). Hulk and Müller (2001) define CLI as dependent on the internal properties of the two languages, such as (i) surface structure overlap, and (ii) interface between two modules of the grammar (i.e syntax & pragmatics). The aforementioned research has found that the overlapping variant is usually produced more frequently in the language with two variants, when compared to monolingual peers.

In the current study we explore CLI when both languages have two surface structures, but with opposite pragmatic implications. We thus explore the possessive structures in Norwegian-Italian bilingual children. Both languages have the pre-nominal and post-nominal possessive, and their use is context dependent. In Italian the pre-nominal possessive is used for neutral contexts whereas the post-nominal possessive signals contrast or emphasis, while the opposite is true for Norwegian (cf. table 1).

### SIGNIFICANCE TO THE FIELD

This combination of factors has good grounds for CLI to occur, but the direction of CLI and which factors play a role is currently theoretically unexplored. We will thus shed light on bilingualism effects of a complex linguistic situations many bilingual children go through.

### METHODOLOGY

We conducted an elicitation task set to elicit possessive structures in topical and contrastive conditions. The participants were 31 bilingual children (15 female) aged 4-10 (mean=6;3) who spoke Italian and Norwegian. Most of the participants were residing in Norway (n=28). The participants were tested in both languages.

The task was designed in power-point, one presentation for each language, depicting characters interacting with objects which were either their own (neutral condition) or belonging to other characters (contrast condition). The experiments were conducted on Zoom via screen share due to Covid-19 restrictions; participants were tested in the two languages on two separate days, at least one week apart.

### FINDINGS

*The data for this study has just recently been collected and we are currently working on the analysis. Thus, what will be presented below are preliminary results.*

The study found that in the Italian version of the task the children use the pre-nominal possessive almost exclusively (fig.1), as if the Italian system had been simplified to the unmarked and more frequent variant. This cannot be attributed to CLI from Norwegian as we would expect the exposure to Norwegian to enhance the use of the postnominal variant. The Norwegian task showed more variation as both variants were used, but this was not always pragmatically target-like.

Our generalized linear model<sup>1</sup> found (i) significantly more postnominals in the contrast condition in Italian ( $p < 0.05$ ) which indicates these bilinguals have a grasp of the pragmatic use of the variants, (ii) more marked forms (post-nominals) in the neutral context in Norwegian

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<sup>1</sup> Intercept: Italian task and neutral condition

( $p < 0.001$ ), (iii) a strong interaction of condition and language ( $p < 0.001$ ). Thus, the potential CLI can be observed in the use of the pre-nominal variant in neutral contexts in Norwegian; but also, to a lesser degree, in the post-nominal use in neutral contexts in Italian. We will thus argue that CLI can be bi-directional within the same property when the surface structure of both languages allows for this.

To this model, we then added the effects of dominance. Dominance was calculated based on the responses of the CLT tasks (Roch et al., 2015; Simonsen et al., 2012) administered to the child prior to the elicitation task. The children were categorized as Italian-dominant, Balanced, or Norwegian-dominant. There was no effect of dominance on the responses in Italian, but the Norwegian model found (i) a marginal significance ( $p < 0.1$ ) between balanced and Italian-dominant participants (ii) more post-nominal structures in neutral conditions in Norwegian-dominant than the balanced participants ( $p < 0.05$ ). Thus, the children seem to be more target-like in Norwegian as their Norwegian dominance/proficiency increases (fig. 2).

## CONCLUSIONS

These preliminary findings suggest there is a simplification of the Italian system, similarly what literature on heritage languages has found (Montrul, 2010), but nevertheless the Italian system seems to also be able to influence the use of Norwegian variants. Thus, CLI can be bidirectional when the language systems allow for it, but also dominance plays a role as it contributes to a proficiency of a system.

	Italian		Norwegian	
	Pre-nominal	Post-nominal	Pre-nominal	Post-nominal
<b>Example</b>	La mia macchina	La macchina mia	Min bil	Bilen min
<b>Gloss</b>	The my car	The car my	My car	Car-the my
<b>Derivation</b>	Derived	Basic	Basic	Derived
<b>Markedness (contextual)</b>	Unmarked	Marked	Marked	Unmarked
<b>Frequency</b>	More	Less	Less	More
<b>Monolingual acquisition</b>		Slight overproduction	overproduction	
<b>Bilingual acquisition</b>	preferred		preferred	

Table 1: comparison of Italian and Norwegian possessives

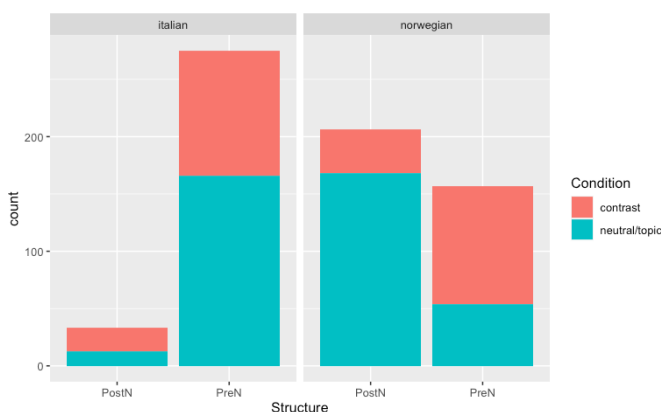


Figure 1: Distribution of responses

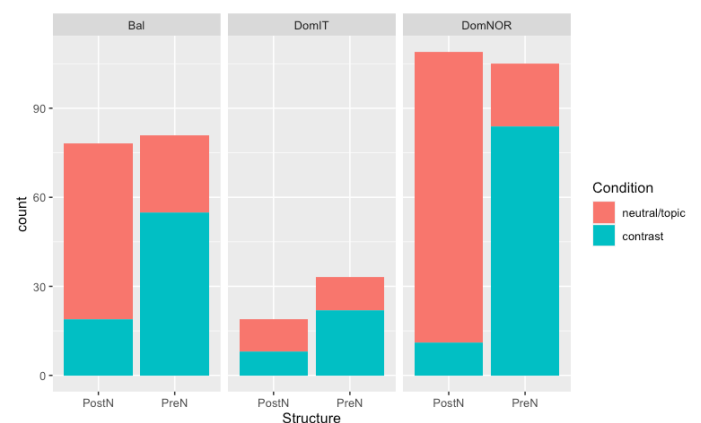


Figure 2: distribution of responses in the Norwegian task based on dominance

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