Promoting Individual Differences in Bilingual Grammars

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Introduction
Bilingual language acquisition theory

L2 deterministic failure (deficit perspective)
Bley-Vroman (1989)

Bilingual grammars are rule governed and restricted by UG.
Lydia White (2003)

Nativelikeness is possible in L2A.
Birdsong (2009)

Analysis at the level of individuals shows that even monolinguals have diverging grammars.
Dabrowska (2012)
Student 1: “It sounds right…”

Student 2: “I don’t’ think so… I prefer to say it this way.”

Teaching moment: “Why does it sound right? Are both forms correct?”

**Teacher’s Goal:**

Developing a student’s metalinguistic knowledge, fostering a general openness and acceptance of difference, and advancing general critical thinking skills.
Methodology to achieve goal

Triggering points of divergence + Fostering discussion

Turning to language acquisition research to inform classroom instruction

Example 1: Spanish Word Order Variation: The case of subject-verb inversion in wh-questions
The structure of *wh*-questions:

**MATRIX**

(1a) ¿Con quién *volvieron Julia y Marco* a Texas?
(1b) With whom *did Julia and Mark return* to Texas?

**EMBEDDED**

(2a) Marta le preguntó a Celina cuándo *lavó Jorge* los platos.
(2b) Martha asked Celina when *George cleaned* the dishes.

HLL have trouble producing (VS) word orders, particularly in embedded contexts. e.g., Cuza (2012) and Frank (Forthcoming).
Lesson plan template for paired interaction: Abing (2013)

Task 1: Scrambling Task
¿/con quién/ Julia y Marco/ a Texas/ volvieron/ ?
Mi oración: ¿Con quién volvieron Julia y Marco a Texas?

Paso 2: Partner acceptability judgments:
(1) well-formed, (2) not well-formed (3) unsure;
(We have also used 5 point scales, which are more sensitive.)

Paso 3: Discuss your judgments with your partner.
(optional record them doing this, lab-style)
Research Questions

• Do HLL have trouble acquiring subject-verb inversion?

• Do HLL resolve word order disagreements in paired discussions?

• *Do HLL form and test hypotheses about language both related and unrelated to the specific linguistic structure? (*This would require recording and transcription)
If there is disagreement in the paired interaction, then the following discussion will force the student to explain why she believes what she does. This will promote hypothesis formation, testing, and the development of metalinguistic knowledge.
Participants

Orlando:
Born in Texas, grew up speaking Spanish in the home with his native Spanish speaking parents. To this day, the majority of his Spanish exposure comes from the home, namely with his mom and dad. Orlando scored a 39/50 on the DELE proficiency exam. Which according to various scales, places him just below an advanced rating. (Cuza & Frank, 2011; Montrul & Slabakova, 2008). He identifies equally with both Spanish and English language and culture. Orlando considers it to be of the utmost importance to speak both languages natively, but doesn’t really care that other people think that he is a native speaker. “I’m planning on pursuing a career in bilingual education.”

Alejandro:
Alejandro is Orlando’s classmate, born in Mexico, who moved to the US at age 5. Both his parents speak Spanish natively and he grew up speaking Spanish in the home with them. The majority of his Spanish exposure comes from the home, namely with his mom and dad. Either through visits or phone calls. He’ll also watch a television program in Spanish every once in a while. Alejandro scored a 43/50 on the DELE proficiency exam. This means that he is an advanced speaker of Spanish. He identifies equally with both Spanish and English language and culture. He considers it to be of the utmost importance to speak both languages natively, and also cares that other people think that he is a native speaker of both languages.
Embedded
1. Jorge le preguntó a Celina cuándo lava Marta los platos. (VS)
2. La esposa le preguntó a Jose con quién baila su hermano. (VS)
3. María le preguntó a su padre dónde aprendió Susana la gramática. (VS)

Matrix
1. Dónde dio Cristo el regalo a su madre? (VS)
2. Cuándo termina Pilar con la clase? (VS)
3. Con quién volvieron Julia y Marco a Texas? (VS)
Embedded
1. La esposa le preguntó a Jose cuándo encontró las llaves Sammy.
2. Susana le preguntó a Ana dánde ve Eric la televisión.
3. Felipe le preguntó a Jose con quién ganó el hijo la competencia.

Matrix *
1. Marí con quién cantó la canción? (SV)
2. Dani cuándo le echó azucar al café? (SV)
3. Jorge escuchó la música dónde? (SV) + wh-in-situ
Summary

Co-constructed Metalinguistic knowledge includes:
Direct versus Indirect speech, Interrogative inversion, subject/object word order, parts of speech (verbo, nombre/sustantivo), word functions (subject/object) and wh-movement versus wh-in-situ.

Co-constructed Hypotheses:
(1) Direct speech, to speak at somebody allows preverbal subject but a pause would be required, in written form a comma.
   (ex) Jesse, Qué estás haciendo?
   “Jesse, what are you doing?”
(2) Embedded and matrix wh-questions display obligatory interrogative inversion.
(3) The subject should come directly after the verb, before the object/s, if any (VSO).
(4) In wh-questions, movement of the wh-element is favored over wh-in-situ.
Teacher led: ¿Cuál es el español verdadero?

Subject-Verb inversion is not characteristic of all dialects of Spanish.

- The BILINGUAL answer: Several bilinguals do not invert the subject and verb in embedded *wh*-questions (why: input conditions, processing constraints, derivational factors) (i.e., Cuza, 2012; Frank, Forthcoming)

- The MONOLINGUAL answer: Caribbean dialects of Spanish often do not produce interrogative inversion (i.e., Lipski, 2008) Example: Qué tú quieres?
Fostering a general openness and an acceptance of individual variation.
Frank, J., Abing, J., and Huerta, L. (March 2013) Bilingualism and Biculturalism in the Spanish Foreign Language Classroom. Invited talk for the Texas Language Center: Language Matters Speaker Series. The University of Texas at Austin. We discussed piloted word order activities (e.g., interrogative inversion, adverb placement) and lexical variety activities in the heritage language classroom. Our goals were to stress individual differences and to bridge the gap between language acquisition theory and classroom instruction.


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