

# Phonological (in-)stability in bilingual language acquisition

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This contribution reports on the causes of (in-)stable prosody in bilingual language acquisition based on a case study of one French-Spanish child. This language combination serves as an excellent testing ground because as two Western Romance varieties French and Spanish are typologically closely related, but at the same time differ importantly from each other when lexical stress, prosodic phrasing and intonation are considered (e.g. Jun & Fougeron 2000, Lleó 2002, Delais-Roussarie et al. 2015, Hualde & Prieto 2015). These categories are more flexible in Spanish where variation needs to be learned, while French prosody is less variable and therefore possibly more easily acquired. Research questions for acquisition are: (i) Do children separate the phonological systems from each other? (ii) Does phonological variability influence the process of acquisition (e.g. acceleration, delay or transfer)? In line with findings from the literature (e.g. Paradis 2001: 29), it is hypothesized that the invariable system (French) is more likely to influence the variable system (Spanish) in the acquisitional process.

Data taken from five naturalistic recordings between 2;0 and 3;0 containing 3,340 utterances in total were extracted and prosodically coded with *Praat* (Boersma & Weenink 2018) and Tones and Break Indices (Delais-Roussarie et al. 2015, Hualde & Prieto 2015). First results indicate that variability indeed poses a problem: Phrase-final stress as a possible source of negative transfer from French onto Spanish can be observed at and above the word level in ips and IPs (*en una camiseta* 'on a t-shirt', *el señor no haBLA* 'the man does not talk'). Preliminary data analyzed for narrow focus constructions reveal that in French the child consistently produced the expected L\* L% or H\* H% configurations (100.0%, n=14), while in Spanish only half of the realizations correspond to the grammatical L+H\* L% pattern (50.0%, n=6); 16.7% (n=2) are produced using the French template. Even though these findings are too scanty to draw reliable conclusions, they point at the importance of phonological variability for acquisitional (in-)stability. In order to maintain the hypothesized direction of influence, the results need to be related to monolingual acquisition and to language dominance (Paradis 2001).

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