Aretousa Giannakou

Title: Spanish and Greek subjects in contact: Greek as a heritage language in Chile Abstract:

While more commonly spoken languages have featured prominently in heritage speakers (HS) and language attrition research still little is known on immigrant/attritted Greek and Greek as a heritage language especially in Latin America (but see Zombloou 2011). The aim of this study is to capture linguistic variation in the syntax of subjects of adult bilingual immigrants (potential attriters) HS and L2 speakers of Greek in the context of two typologically similar null subject (NS) languages: Greek and Chilean Spanish (henceforth Spanish). The focus is on one of the properties of the NS parameter cluster in which differences between Greek and Spanish manifest themselves namely the use of third-person null and overt subjects in topic continuity and topic shift contexts. Such structures involve the interface between syntax and discourse/pragmatics a vulnerable domain in bilingualism. Previous research has shown overextension of the scope of the overt subject pronoun in contexts where null subjects are discursively expected. Consider the following example 1 in which the overt pronominal subject although not ungrammatical is less expected (infelicitous) in Greek in case of disjoint reference because it is redundant (Tsimpli Sorace Heycock & Filiaci 2004: 260):

(1) O Janisi idhe ton Petrok otan AFTOSk/i* ton plisiase.

‘Janisi saw Petrok when HEk/i* approached him.’

The Interface Hypothesis (IH) (Sorace 2011) accounts for such findings which obtain even in bilingual speakers of two NS languages. Sorace et al. (2009) discovered that Italian-Spanish bilinguals overextend the use of overt pronouns in Italian. This finding can be interpreted in terms of processing with bilinguals relying on the overt subject pronoun by default whenever they fail to integrate and coordinate syntactic and discourse information (Sorace 2011). However crosslinguistic influence cannot be ruled out since the Spanish pronoun is more open to coreferential readings with either subject or object referents than its Italian counterpart (e.g. Filiaci 2010 2011). Language-contact effects on subject distribution in NS language combinations require further exploration while the combination of Greek and Spanish has been so far understudied.

Data from oral narratives using two picture story description tasks (Hickmann 2003) and aural pronominal anaphora resolution (Mastropavlou et al. 2014) were elicited from monolinguals (n=40) and bilinguals (n=76/75) namely first-generation immigrants heritage speakers and L2 speakers of Greek residing in Chile. No overextension of the scope of overt pronouns was found in bilinguals against the predictions stemming from the IH. This finding can be interpreted in terms of the typological similarity between Greek and Spanish as well as to the nature of the Greek pronoun which is different from its Spanish counterpart involving a relatively categorical use due to deictic properties as shown in Giannakou and Sitaridou (in press). More specifically the strong nature of the Greek pronoun bearing the discourse- interpretable features of [+TS]
and [+Focus] thereby appearing almost always in these contexts is what possibly makes it resistant to variation in bilingual use of topic continuity contexts. Such findings lend support to the Representational account (Tsimpili et al. 2004): The two languages instantiate a complex pragmatic setting thus no underspecification of the discourse interpretable features would be expected hence no optionality in the performance of bilinguals of this language pair (see Tsimpili et al. 2004; Sorace & Serratrice 2009).

On the other hand overextension of the scope of NS was observed in the bilingual performance in production while in anaphora resolution NS were found to be ambiguous. Moreover the findings of the production study indicated a significant overextension of the scope of NS in topic shift contexts in narratives causing ambiguity in the bilingual performance as compared to monolinguals. This is interpreted and discussed in terms of the complexity of NS which demands higher degrees of computational efficiency. The following is an example from the HS data:

(2) (...) enas skilosi ide ton gatok ke Øi iksere oti Øk ithelek Øk na fai ta pulakia. Tote Øi tu dagose tin ura ke Øi to travikse Øk ja na fiji. ' (...a dogi saw the catk and (hei) knew that (hek) wanted to eat the little birds. Then (hei) bit his tail and (hei) pulled him down so that (hek) goes away.'

The findings are also discussed considering the Vulnerability Hypothesis (Prada Pérez 2018) which predicts that structures showing variable distributions are more vulnerable than those exhibiting categorical distributions. In this study NS were found to be more variable than overt pronouns in Greek the latter being more categorical. This may explain why NS were found to be vulnerable while overt subject pronouns were not.