Crosslinguistic interference in Italian-Turkish 2L1 children and Turkish L2 Italian attriters

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Recent studies (Sorace & Serratrice, 2009; Serratrice et al. 2012) have underlined how structures at the syntax-discourse interface are vulnerable in 2L1 children in contexts which involve two typologically similar languages. Sorace et al. (2009) underlines the fact that cross linguistic interference in 2L1 children is not fully explained by the partial overlapping of language structures as proposed by Hulk & Müller (2000) and Müller & Hulk (2001), and that the input of parents/caregiver that undergo attrition and the cost of processing two languages (Belletti et al. 2007) may play an important role in it.

This study investigates whether structures at the syntax-discourse interface are equally vulnerable in 2L1 children and L1 attriters in languages sharing the same parametric setting. Data are collected from Turkish-Italian 2L1 children (10 subjects, mean age 9.5) and adult Turkish L2 Italian attriters (5 subjects) using acceptability judgment (AJ) and translation task which involve sentences with postverbal subjects occurring with unaccusative verbs. Italian and Turkish are null subject languages and subject inversion is accepted as one of their property (Rizzi 1982), but subject inversion is regulated by different discourse requirements: Italian allows postverbal subject with unaccusative verbs in neutral contexts (Pinto, 1997), Turkish allows postverbal subjects only as background information (Erguvanlı305; , 1984).

The results of the AJ Italian task revealed that in this task, late bilingual accepted significantly more preverbal subjects than young bilinguals. In translation task children produced sentences in Italian following Turkish word order significantly more than adults. Those results support previous findings (Sorace & Serratrice, 2009; Serratrice et al. 2012) in that interference at the interface occurs also with languages sharing the same parametric setting, moreover they indicate that complexity of task and processing load play a role a role in crosslinguistic interference.

Keywords: interfaces, Italian, Turkish, bilingual.