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Abstract (oral presentation)

We investigate whether L1 attrition effects on anaphora resolution exist and whether they decrease with L1 re-immersion. In order to address this question we tested a group of 20 Italian-Swedish late bilinguals and a control group of 21 Italian monolinguals. The late bilinguals were adult native speakers of Italian who had left Italy after puberty and had lived in Sweden for at least seven years. The monolinguals were adult native speakers of Italian who had grown up and lived in Italy at the time of the study. The bilinguals were tested once before their summer holidays in Italy (L1 re-immersion) and once directly after. The control group was also tested twice.

According to the *Position of Antecedent Strategy* (Carminati, 2002), when interpreting an intra-sentential anaphora, Italian speakers prefer a null pronoun in a topic-continuity context, when there is no change in subject reference while, in a context of topic-shift, they prefer an overt pronoun, which is associated with a change in reference from the subject to the object (1). On the contrary, Swedish is a non-null subject language, and this gives raise to ambiguity with respect to the antecedent of the pronoun in sentences such as (2).

(1) Andrea$_i$ ha conosciuto Jacopo$_j$ quando ***pro***$_i$/**lui**$_j$ lavorava in una clinica privata.
'Andrea met Jacopo when he was working in a private clinic.'

(2) Andreas$_i$ lärde känna Jonas$_j$ när **han**$_{i/j}$ arbetade på en privatklinik.
'Andreas met Jonas when he was working in a private clinic.'

Following the *Interface Hypothesis* (Sorace & Filiaci, 2006) we expect the bilinguals to display effects of attrition on anaphora resolution. In other words, we expect that they would not interpret sentences in Italian containing an anaphoric reference in the same way as monolinguals. More specifically, in line with the *Activation Threshold Hypothesis* (Paradis, 1993) we expect, firstly, that attrition effects will be most clearly seen on sentences containing an overt pronoun, and secondly, that bilinguals display recovery effects after L1 re-immersion (e.g., Chamorro, Sorace, & Sturt, 2015), suggesting that attrition effects are temporary rather than permanent. In order to test these expectations, sentences such as (1) were presented to the participants. Their task was to choose the antecedent of the pronoun (i.e., either the subject or the object). Their choices were measured, as well as their response times and reading times.

Firstly, compared to monolinguals, bilinguals assign consistently less often overt pronouns to objects in the first session (Fig. 1). Moreover, after the re-immersion, the difference in antecedent assignment between the two groups almost disappears for the overt pronoun condition. However, Figure 2 shows, for the null pronoun condition, larger variability in the bilinguals' data compared to the monolinguals, a result that is not consistent with previous findings that attrition effects are limited to overt pronouns (e.g., Tsimpli, Sorace, Heycock, & Filiaci, 2004). In terms of response times, the bilinguals performed more similarly to monolinguals after the re-immersion (Fig. 3). In fact, while in the first session the bilinguals are faster in the null subject condition than in the overt subject condition, in the second session the opposite pattern is observable, with faster responses for overt pronouns than for null pronouns. On the other hand, the monolinguals are always faster in the overt subject condition. Finally, for reading times, data show a small difference between sentences containing null pronouns and sentences containing overt pronouns, for both groups (Fig. 3). This outcome suggests that target sentences have the same level of difficulty. Taken

together, these results suggest that L1 attrition effects on pronoun resolution are evident on overt pronouns, but attrition seems to have an impact on null pronouns as well. As hypothesized, attrition effects are ephemeral and decrease with L1 re-immersion, suggesting that they pertain to processing and language co-activation rather than to changes in speakers' grammatical knowledge.

Figure 1: Response proportions.

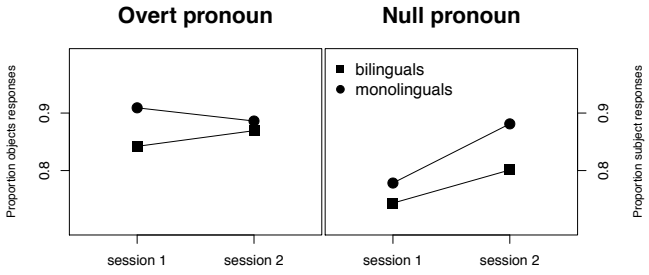


Figure 2: Variability in antecedent assignment

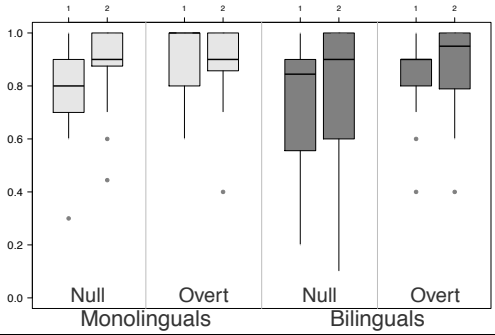
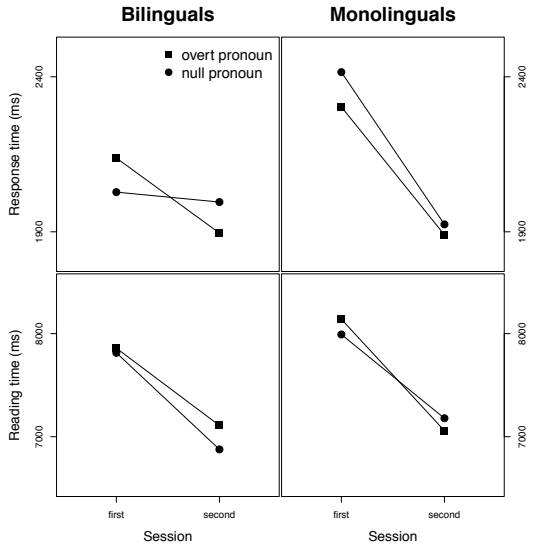


Figure 3: L1 re-immersion effect in reading times and response times.



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