WHAT CODE-MIXED DPS CAN TELL US ABOUT GENDER

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I. LINGUISTIC BACKGROUND

- Spanish nouns have inherent gender (Carroll 1989), masculine or feminine, which is an inherent lexical feature.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nouns with canonical gender marking</th>
<th>Nouns with non-canonical gender marking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MASCULINE-ε</td>
<td>FEMININE-ε</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Il-ε</td>
<td>ma-ε</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>book(MS)</td>
<td>table(FS)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Harris (1991) argues that only words ending in -a are gender marked and that -o words present the default; words ending in -e are so marked for purposes of syllabicity.

- Gender is a feature which is interpretable and is found on the head noun (Chomsky 1995; 2001) while determiners and adjectives have uninterpretable features. Although the gender feature on the noun is interpretable, it is not crucial for semantic interpretation. Nevertheless, if the interpretable gender feature is not acquired on the noun, agreement features may not match within the DP.

II. RESEARCH QUESTION

Q: Do heritage speakers treat gender selection differently in code-mixed DPs than in code-mixed copula constructions (agreement)?

- We argue that if gender is treated differently in these two constructions, it is not a reflection of the interpretable feature (gender) not having been acquired but rather of the underlying representation being Spanish or English.

III. METHODOLOGY

Participants

GROUP 1: Heritage Spanish speakers
- living in Canada at time of testing
- simultaneous bilinguals
- dominant English
- advanced / near-native proficiency in Spanish
- n=12

GROUP 2: L1 Spanish / L2 English
- living in Canada at time of testing
- post-childhood learners of English
- intermediate, advanced and near-native proficiency range
- n=10

Tasks

- Elicited Production
- Vocabulary Test
- Sentence Selection Task (SST)

Participants read a dialogue between two bilingual speakers. They were asked to choose the most acceptable concluding sentence.

IV. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

- Heritage Spanish speakers showed the Spanish determiner based on the gender of the noun in Spanish:
  
  #. el book (book(MS) / a chair (silla(RM))

- Heritage Spanish speakers in copula constructions agreed the Spanish adjective with the gender of the Spanish translation of the English noun:
  
  #. ..., the party (party(MS) for festividad(FS))

Heritage speakers: preferred the MASC gender instead of masculine nouns and chose optionally of or to (MASC or FEM, respectively) for feminine nouns:

# e.g. el book (book(MS) / a car (coche(MS)))

Heritage speakers: like the L1 Spanish speakers, agreed the Spanish adjective with the gender of the Spanish translation of the English noun in copula constructions:

# e.g. ..., the party (party(MS)).

Heritage speakers: Do not show an effect for ending of noun. That is, canonical (MASC -a / FEM -a) versus non-canonical ending (-e / -o) of the noun in Spanish does not seem to help.

Spanish speakers: slightly higher accuracy (gender matching) with nouns whose gender in the Spanish translation are RM with canonical -e ending.