

Knowledge of restructuring in L2 and heritage Spanish

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According to Full Transfer/Full Access (Schwartz and Sprouse 1996) L2 acquisition is possible but not guaranteed. Clear, unambiguous triggers that lead learners to reanalyze the L1 may be missing. In comparison, results for heritage speakers that are often similar to L2 learners are explained in different terms: incomplete learning or attrition. Focusing on Verb + Non-finite restructuring in Spanish, we will compare L2 Spanish speakers and heritage speakers whose L1 is Spanish and the L2 is English, the language of the environment. We will argue that the results for the two groups must have similar explanations. Evidence for restructuring comes mainly from clitic climbing (1b). Previous studies have focused on the position of the clitic itself, and not on the phenomenon that allows clitics to climb to the main clause in the first place: restructuring. This paper examines different properties of restructuring in order to determine: (a) whether there is evidence of knowledge of restructuring in L2 and heritage speakers; (b) whether there is a correlation between knowledge of restructuring and clitic climbing, which may indicate that noticing clitic climbing in the input serves as a trigger for restructuring; (c) whether there are differences between Heritage and L2 speakers that may lead to different explanations.

The structure of (1a) is bi-clausal. In (1b), however, the presence of clitic climbing constitutes evidence that the embedded verb and the matrix verb form a complex predicate (Rizzi 1982; Roberts 1997; 2010). There are interesting constraints on restructuring: it is only possible with a certain type of main verb (modals, aspectuals, and motion verbs (Cinque 2006)) (2a, b); restructuring may be blocked by true prepositions, but not by the pseudo-prepositions *a* and *de* (3a,b); after restructuring it is impossible to omit the embedded verb (verb phrase ellipsis) (4a,b,c,d) (agreement between verb and theme in *se* constructions is evidence of restructuring).

A group of high intermediate speakers of Spanish were tested on the properties illustrated in (1-4): A heritage group (n=20) in an English speaking environment and an English L1 group of L2 learners (n=20) (control group (n=10)).

Participants completed a GJT, and a production task. The GJT included 7 tokens for each of the following types: a. basic clitic climbing (1a, b, *c); (non) restructuring main verbs (2a, *b); prepositional blocking of restructuring (3a, *b); verb phrase ellipsis (4a, *b,c, *d), plus distracters. The production task included 5 tokens for each type, to a total of 30 questions.

Preliminary results of the GJT show that both groups were similar although the heritage group tended to choose the end of the judgement scale, in contrast to the L2 learners. As in previous studies, there were participants from both groups who rejected clitic climbing, but interestingly enough were able to judge ungrammaticality in other properties of restructuring (see the Figure on the next page for an example). The property that was most problematic for both groups was the restriction on the type of verb that permits restructuring. This will be discussed in relation to the type of input received by the participants and lexical vs. functional restructuring (Wurmbrand 2004).

References

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- Wurmbrand, S. (2004). "Two types of restructuring — Lexical vs. functional." *Lingua* 114: 991-1014.

Examples

- (1) a. Puedo verlo. (no evidence for restructuring)
 can-I see-him/it
 ‘I can see him/it.’
 b. Lo puedo ver. (restructuring)
 Him/it can-I see (=1a)
 c. *Puedo lo ver. (This would be the position in French)
 can-I it see (=1a)
- (2) a. Detesto verlo.
 Detest-I see-him/it
 ‘I detest seeing him/it.’
 b. *Lo detesto ver (main verb does not permit restructuring)
 him/it detest-I see (=2a)
- (3) a. Lo voy a ver./Voy a verlo (Pseudo-preposition, restructuring possible)
 Him/it go-I a see
 ‘I am going to see him.’
 b. *Lo voy para ver./Voy para verlo. (preposition, restructuring blocked)
 Him/it go to see
 ‘I am going in order to see him.’
- (4) a. –¿Se puede fumar cigarros? –Sí, se puede./Sí, se puede fumar. (restruct. optional)
se can-sing smoke cigars yes *se* can-sing/yes, *se* can-sing smoke
 ‘–Can one smoke cigars? –Yes, one can./Yes, one can smoke.’
 b. –¿Se pueden fumar cigarros? –*Sí, se pueden./Sí, se pueden fumar. (restructuring)
se can-pl smoke cigars? yes, *se* can-pl./Yes, *se* can-pl smoke (=4a)
 c. –¿Puedo verlo? –Sí, puedes./Sí, puedes verlo. (restruct. optional)
 can-I see-him yes, can-you/yes, can-you see-him
 ‘–Can I see him? –Yes, you can/Yes, you can see him.’
 d. –¿Lo puedo ver? –*Sí, lo puedes./Sí, lo puedes ver. (=2a) (restructuring)
 him can-I see? Yes, him can-you /yes, him can-you see
 ‘–Can I see him? –Yes, you can/Yes, you can see him.’

Results for full preposition vs. pseudo preposition and clitic climbing (GJT). Groups divided into clitic climbers (cl) and non-climbers (no-cl).

