

Does the task really matter? The elicitation of negative doubling across four tasks in Chipileño Spanish

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Some studies (e.g., Sankoff & Vincent, 1980; Milroy, 1987; Milroy & Gordon, 2003) found that interviews, a common method in obtaining adequate sample size for phonological phenomenon, are not ideal when eliciting a morphosyntactic variable because of the low number of occurrences of the intended target structure. Given that analyzing a morphosyntactic phenomenon can be more problematic in terms of finding and identifying sufficient data (Milroy, 2000, Milroy & Gordon 1998, Lavandera, 1974) both experimental and traditional methods (sociolinguistic interviews) were used to elicit the appearance of negative doubling (ND) in the speech of bilingual speakers of Chipilo, Mexico. In standard Spanish, negation is preverbal, as in (1) *Yo no hablo italiano* ('I do not speak Italian'); the presence of a postverbal marker *no* is considered ungrammatical. However, in Veneto (a Northern Italian dialect), both markers are used: one preverbally and the second one at the end of the utterance, as in (2) *Mi no parle talian no* ('I do not speak Italian NEG'). According to sporadic observation reported in previous literature (Barnes, 2009, Mackay, 2002), many lexical, prosodic and morphological features have been transferred from Veneto into Spanish in the bilingual community of Chipilo, Mexico, which has preserved its minority language for over a century, and today represents a case of a stable bilingual diaspora, where Veneto is still acquired as the first language among bilingual speakers. Given the fact that this construction is not present in the speech of monolingual Spanish speakers from the same area, I predicted that the construction in (2) has been transferred into the Spanish of bilingual speakers, resulting in instances of ND as in (3) *Yo no hablo italiano no* ('I do not speak Italian NEG'). For this project, 79 bilingual participants were recruited to do four tasks in Spanish: a semi-spontaneous interview (Task 1), a sentence completion task (Task 2), a preference forced-choice task (Task 3), and a sentence repetition task (Task 4). The interviews contained questions to elicit responses; a sentence completion task included 9 scenarios with an incomplete ending; a preference forced choice task contained 18 pair-answer scenarios; a sentence repetition task included 41 isolated stimuli. A total of 316 tokens (out of a total of 1585 cases, excluding 1427 distractors) were extracted and analyzed to determine which task had the most of effect on ND use. The results found that only Task 3 (76 tokens out of a total of 217) and Task 4 (219 out of 514 tokens) were successful in eliciting the ND phenomenon, whereas participants produced very few tokens in the other tasks (4 tokens out of 306 possible tokens for Task 1 and Task 2 (7 tokens out of a total of 335). A statistical multivariable analysis using Goldvarb was followed to determine the effect of task on the distribution of speakers with variant behaviour. 41% speakers (n=32) and 30% speakers (n=24) produced a mixed set of two variants in the Task 3 and Task 4, respectively, in comparison to only four speakers who used some ND in Task 1 and Task 2; the rest of the participants used the standard variant only. These results suggest that the participants favoured the use ND in the two controlled tasks only. Therefore overall, we can conclude that the tasks with more contextual information and a list of given options triggered a lesser number of ND, in contrast to the task with isolated and unrelated sentences (i.e., the Repetition Task). This is consistent with previous observations about eliciting data from a spontaneous speech, which suggests that it is crucial to include experimental work when analyzing morphosyntactic variation to obtain a better sample.

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