

Friday

September 23, 2022

17:00–18:00

## Verb placement across different acquisition types. Evidences from German as heritage, second language and attrited language.

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Various factors have been taken to distinguish heritage languages (HL) from second languages (L2), even though the distinction is not always clear-cut. Based on extra-linguistic factors, it is mainly the acquisition setting combined with the age of onset of acquisition that differentiates them: whereas HL are acquired from birth within the family as non-environmental language (Valdes 2000), L2 languages are acquired later in life, when a first language has already been fully or partially acquired. However, the linguistic outcome of these different acquisition types may not be distinct; some authors argue that HL speakers may become indistinguishable from late L2 speakers in various linguistic domains due to reduced language exposure (Montrul 2008). In the same vein, the effort to separate heritage language acquisition from language attrition has not always been effective (see the discussion in Polinsky 2011: "that both attrition and incomplete acquisition are implicated in the final shape of adult heritage grammars"). Taking a step further, picture gets even more complex if we look at linguistic phenomena, which present variation in monolingual speech (Flores & Rinke 2019). Certain non-standard constructions observed in HLs may, in fact, be the outcome of variation typical of the colloquial register of the target language, instead of the effect of delayed acquisition or of erosion. In addition, apparently deviant linguistic constructions may be the outcome of language change over several HL generations (see Rinke & Flores 2021). Furthermore, contradicting conclusions are often due to the comparison of studies using distinct methodology, different language pairs and looking at different types of grammatical structures.

In the present talk, I will hold constant the mentioned factors (i) the type of data (*oral/written corpus data*), (ii) the language pair (*Portuguese-German*) and (iii) the linguistic property under analysis (*verb placement*), while analysing the language competence of different populations of Portuguese-German bilingual speakers with focus on their *German*. Based on four different studies, I will discuss **verb placement patterns** in the speech of:

- **adult heritage speakers of German** living in Portugal with Portuguese as environmental language and **adult heritage speakers of Portuguese** living in Germany with German as environmental language (Oliveira & Flores, in preparation)
- **late second language learners of German**, with Portuguese L1 (Oliveira & Flores, in preparation)
- **child heritage speakers of Portuguese** living in Switzerland with German as environmental language (Flores et al. in press)
- Portuguese-German **returnee heritage speakers** who lost exposure to German (Flores 2010)
- **heritage speakers of Hunsrück German** living in Brasil as 6<sup>th</sup> / 7<sup>th</sup> generation descendants of German immigrants (Flores, Rinke, Wagner 2022).

The aim of this talk is to disentangle (to some degree) the effects of language attrition, language acquisition in contexts of varying environmental languages and varying age of onset, language

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variation typical of non-standard German and language change. I argue that German verb placement (verb second and verb final, see 1a/b) is very stable in early bilinguals, even in contexts of minority language acquisition over several generations, as long as language exposure is not interrupted in childhood. Contrary, late learners and early bilinguals who experienced prolonged loss of exposure to German in childhood, show similar effects of unstable knowledge (with frequent verb third and non-final placement in subordinate clauses and complex predicates, see 2a/b). Furthermore, apparent non-final placement in verb clusters in the speech of Hunsrück heritage bilinguals (see 3) is the outcome of dialectal variation, and not an instance of language attrition.

- (1) a. Und am Ende **flüchten** der Mann und die Frau.  
and at+the end flee the man and the woman  
b. Als der Mann dann in die Konditorei reingegangen **ist**,  
when the man then in the pastry shop entered has (Oliveira & Flores, in preparation)
- (2) a. Dort ich **spreche** nur Deutsch.  
there I spoke only German  
b. ... damit sie **kann** essen.  
so that she can eat (Flores, 2010)
- (3) ..., wo net **het** défa passiera .  
where not had should happened (Flores, Rinke & Wagner, 2022).

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