

**16. Wuppertaler Linguistisches Kolloquium**  
**„Languages in Contact: Cross-linguistic influence on different**  
**grammatical domains in bilingual first language acquisition“**

**Internationale Tagung der romanistischen Sprachwissenschaft**  
**vom 27.-29. Mai 2010**  
**im Gästehaus am Campus Freudenberg**

In recent years there has been intense interest in examining hypotheses that may account for why in the process of acquiring two languages from birth (2L1) some areas of the grammar are more or less vulnerable to cross-linguistic influence. It has been proposed that influence may be induced by the mapping of universal principles onto language-specific principles, by ambiguity in the input, by an inclination to make the languages converge, by structural competition between the languages, by an unbalanced dominance of the two languages, by frequency factors, by differing conceptualizations, by structural “locality” (see, among others, Hulk & Müller 2000; Müller & Hulk 2001; Serratrice, Sorace & Paoli 2004; Nicoladis 2006; Gathercole et al. 2005; Argyri & Sorace 2007; Kupisch 2007; Yip & Mathews 2007; Mueller & Gathercole 2008). The participants in the proposed colloquium examine the validity of the hypotheses offered to account for cross-linguistic influence, their commonalities and differences, with the aim of contributing to the development of a systematic account of the factors that promote this influence (e.g., grammatical domain, language dominance, language combination). To this end, the participants consider a wide range of studies dealing with cross-linguistic influence and present their own analyses of “vulnerable structures” in a representative sample of various combinations of typologically different languages, including Cantonese, Dutch, English, French, German, Italian, Spanish, Swedish, Taiwanese. The children studied have acquired their languages from birth and range in age from one year five months to five years. In order to be able to work out the limits of cross-linguistic influence, researchers with a focus on heritage speakers have been invited: In bilingual first language acquisition, some effects of cross-linguistic influence fade away once the children are growing older. Some effects, however, persist and are still observable in bilingual adults. The question is what the determinants of the disappearance or persistence of effects of cross-linguistic influence are. With respect to the language combination, most researchers have studied a Romance language in combination with another language. The reason for this specialization is that the Wuppertal language acquisition group focuses Romance languages; one of the goals of the colloquium is to enable the DFG research project group (MU 875 10-1) to discuss their results with other specialists.

The proposed colloquium brings together researchers representing cutting-edge research on 2L1 and second language acquisition and cross-linguistic influence in eight countries (Canada, China, Germany, Spain, Sweden, The Netherlands, UK, USA). In addition to language acquisition researchers, well-known linguists with a focus on theoretical linguistics have been asked to contribute their expertise to the grammatical domains to be studied, namely the distribution between SER and ESTAR, grammatical gender, null-subjects, finite verb placement. Based on their analyses of these grammatical aspects, they challenge one of the most influential proposals in the field: the view that cross-linguistic transfer occurs when there is structural overlap in the two languages and the structures are located at the interface between syntax and pragmatics (Müller & Hulk 2001). Some participants claim that structural overlap is not a necessary condition for cross-linguistic influence; others point out that it is not a sufficient condition either. On the other hand, there is agreement among the participants that multiple causes need to be considered in the explanation of language interaction. It

is hoped that the colloquium discussion will clarify the role that these various causes may play in predicting cross-linguistic influence and that it will help disentangle the complexity of this question.

Most of the researchers have presented papers at a colloquium at ISB 7 (Utrecht) with two slots of 120 minutes each. The organizer was Carmen Silva-Corvalán. Since the presenters felt that 15 minutes per paper were not enough time to discuss the aforementioned issues in depth and since the papers were all of a very high quality, the presenters decided to continue and to deepen the discussion at Bergische Universität Wuppertal. A publication of the research results in an international journal is intended.