



## Dislocations in French and English bilingual children: A priming study

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### Citation for published version (APA):

Herve, C., & Hervé, C. (2012). *Dislocations in French and English bilingual children: A priming study*. Acquisition at the Interface, University of Tromso.

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# Dislocations in French-English bilingual children: A priming study

22<sup>nd</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup> October 2012  
Acquisition at the Interface, CASTL, University of Tromsø

# Cross-linguistic influence in BFLA



- Interaction between two language systems
- Conditions for this phenomenon:

**-interface**

-overlap

-language dominance

-input

# Interface Hypothesis in BFLA



“Structures involving an interface between syntax and other cognitive domains (e.g. pragmatics) present protracted indeterminacy but structures that require only syntactic computations are acquired early in bilingual acquisition”.

Sorace (2011: 5)

# Cross-linguistic influence in BFLA

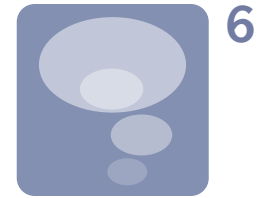


- Interaction between two language systems
- Conditions for this phenomenon:
  - interface
  - overlap
  - language dominance
  - input



# Why Dislocation constructions?

- Interface phenomenon
- Partial overlap across French and English
- Functionally important discourse function



# Dislocations and interface

(1) *Le lion, il court.*

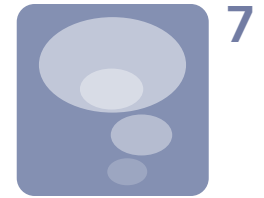
(2) *Il court, le lion.*

*The lion, it/he is running. It/he is running, the lion.*

Syntactically:

- definite Noun Phrase

- resumptive pronoun within the sentence



# Dislocations and interface

Pragmatically:

-topic-announcing

-> *Brand-new referents may not occur in them.*

(Lambrecht 1994: 188)



# Dislocation construction and overlap



- Topics are **obligatory** dislocated when **not** expressed with **a weak pronoun** in French.

(Lambrecht 1994, De Cat 2007)

- Dislocation are used in different pragmatic contexts in French and English.



# Frequency of dislocations

- Dislocations account for:

- **25%** of data in spoken **French**

(De Cat 2007)

- only **1%** in spoken **English**

(Snider and Zaenen 2006)



## What is syntactic priming?

“A tendency in speakers to repeat sentence structures that have been encountered earlier”

(Vasilyeva, Waterfall & Gomez 2012: 163)



# Priming bilingual adults and children

Bilinguals **share** syntactic representation **across languages** with the same syntactic representation that can be **accessed** during production and comprehension in **both languages**.

(e.g. Hartsuiker et al 2004; Vasilyeva et al 2010)



# Why syntactic priming?

- Test children's sensitivity to specific syntactic forms
- Cross-linguistic influence due to daily processing of parallel structures at the interface



## Aims

- Explore the extent to which the regular use of two languages may lead to cross-linguistic influence from French to English in the use of dislocations



# Predictions in French

	<b>SVO</b>	<b>Left- dislocation</b>	<b>Right- dislocation</b>
<b>Monolinguals</b>	=	1	1
<b>Bilinguals France</b>	=	2	2
<b>Bilinguals UK</b>	=	3	3



# Predictions in English

	<b>SVO</b>	<b>Left- dislocation</b>	<b>Right- dislocation</b>
<b>Bilinguals France</b>	=	1	1
<b>Bilinguals UK</b>	=	2	2
<b>Monolinguals</b>	=	3	3





# Participants

- age group: 5;3-6;4 (mean age: 5;10)
- 19 English-French bilingual children in London
- 19 English-French bilingual children in Paris
- 20 monolingual British children in Manchester
- 20 monolingual French children in Paris



# Participants

⇒ Krott et al's (2011) questionnaire on bilingual children's exposure to English

- Bilinguals: great differences in language skills due to different language exposures and social need to speak their two languages.



# Within languages testing

## Within languages:

- Description 1 and description 2 in the same language

Only testing **3 conditions per language**



# French experiment

- ✓ SVO *Linda conduit.*
- ✓ Left-dislocations *Linda, elle conduit.*
- ✓ Right-dislocations *Elle conduit, Linda.*
- ✓ Participants: monolingual French, bilingual Paris, bilingual London



# English experiment

✓ SVO

*Linda is driving.*

✓ Left-dislocations

*Linda, she is driving.*

✓ Right-dislocations

*She is driving, Linda.*

✓ Participants: monolingual English, bilingual Paris,  
bilingual London



# Material



SVO

- **Bob l'éponge et Patrick** dansent.
- **Sponge Bob and Patrick** are dancing.

LDs

- **Bob l'éponge et Patrick, ils** dansent.
- **Sponge Bob and Patrick , they** are dancing.

RDs

- **Ils** dansent, **Bob l'éponge et Patrick.**
- **They** are dancing, **Sponge Bob and Patrick.**



# Material



SVO

- **Sponge Bob** is writing.
- **Patrick** is taking a photo.

LDs

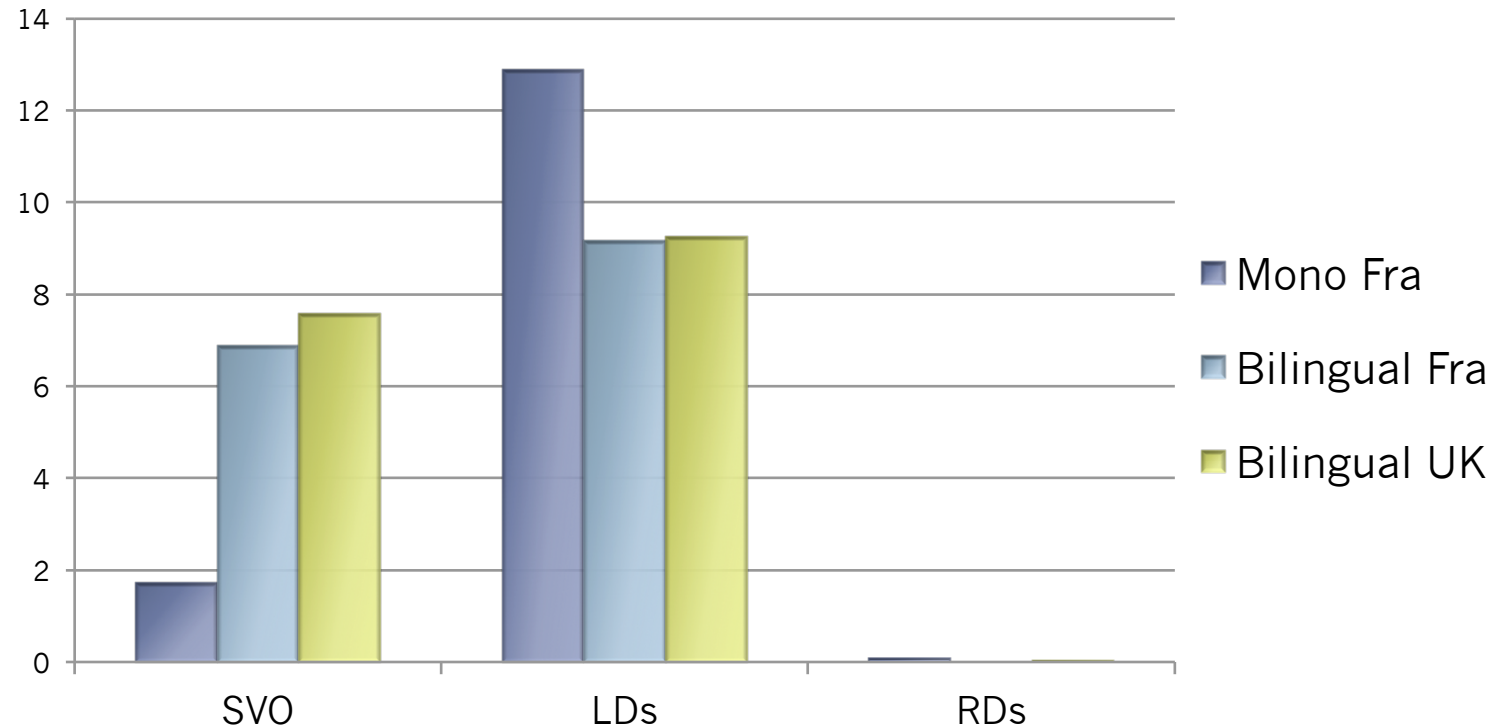
- **Sponge Bob, he** is writing
- **Patrick, he** is taking a photo.

RDs

- He is writing, **Sponge Bob.**
- He is taking a photo, **Patrick.**



# Effect of Priming in French

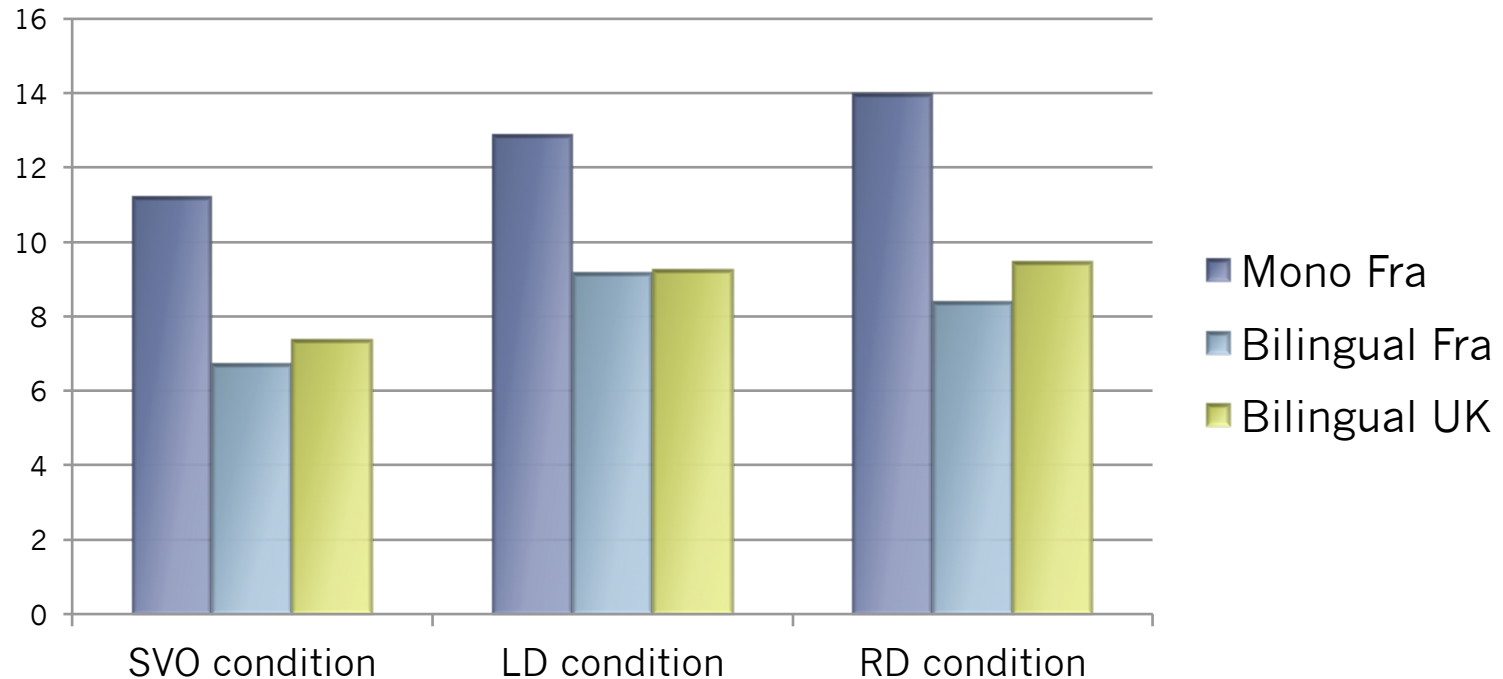


- Significant effect of priming condition ( $F(1.34, 68.26) = 38.06, p < .001$ )
- No significant effect of language experience ( $F(3, 51) = 1.62, p = .196$ )
- No interaction between priming condition and language experience ( $F(0.83, 48) = 2.35, p < .063$ )



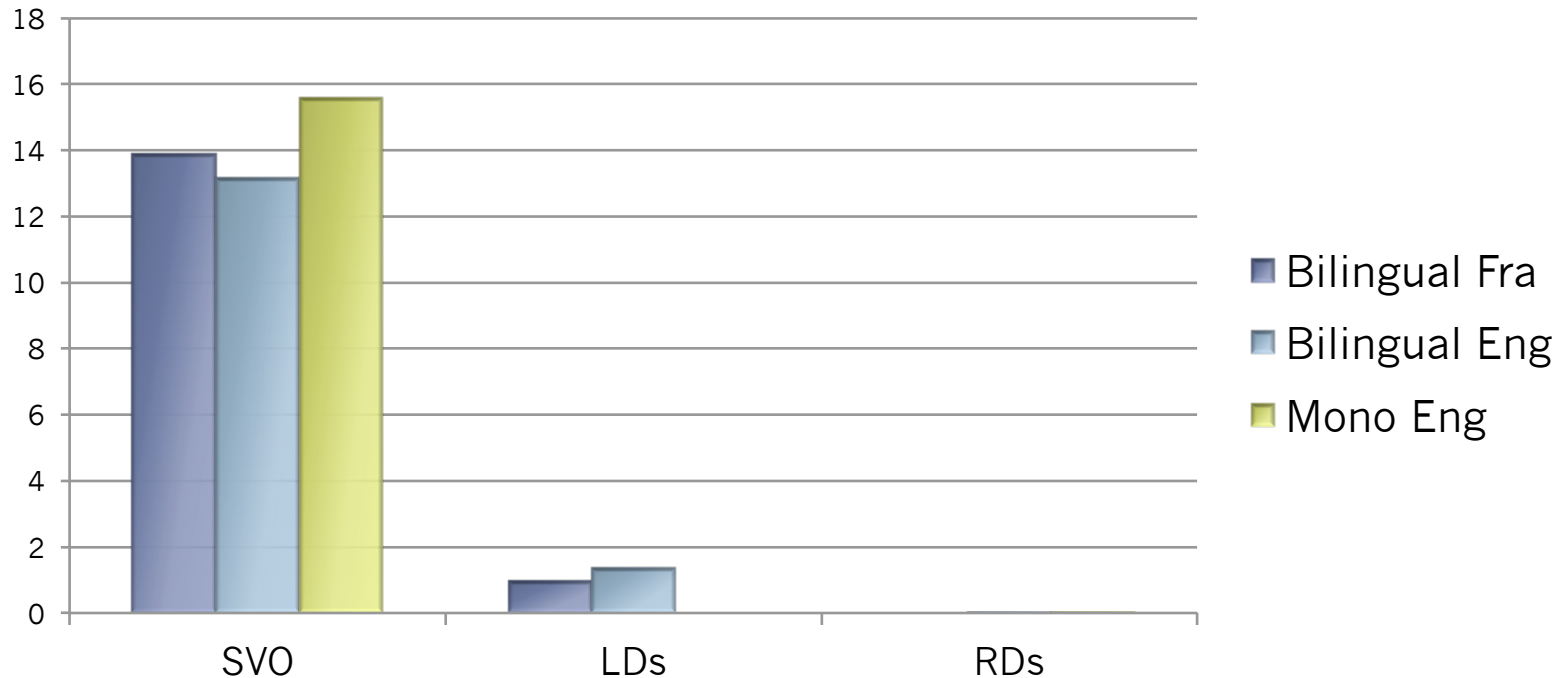


# Left-dislocation in French



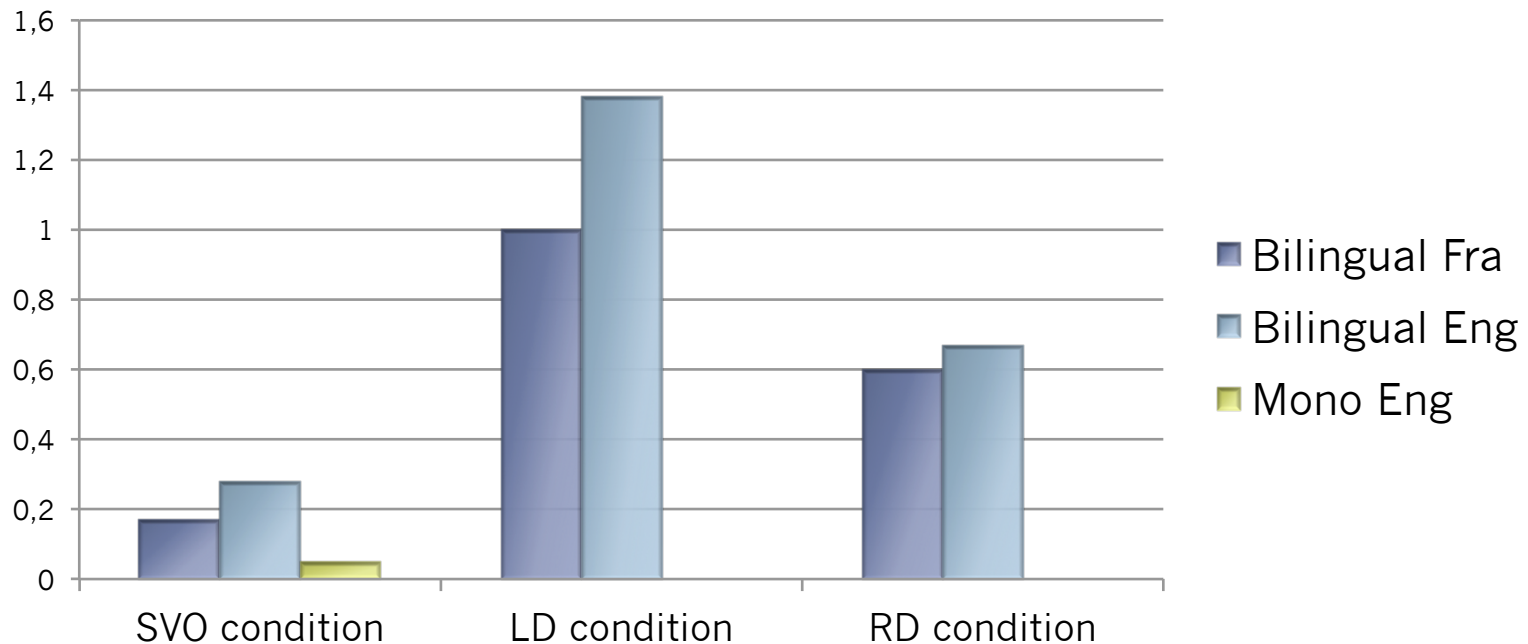
- Significant effect of priming condition ( $F(1, 53) = 7.90, p < .007$ )
- No significant effect of language experience ( $F(1, 52, 36) = 1.69, p < .180$ )
- No interaction between priming condition and language experience ( $F(5, 66, 43) = 1.01, p < .422$ )

# Effect of Priming in English



- Significant effect of priming condition English ( $F(1.19, 62.08) = 94.21, p < .001$ )
- Significant effect of language experience ( $F(2, 52) = 39.82, p < .001$ )
- Interaction between priming condition and language experience ( $F(2.39, 62.08) = 38.77, p < .001$ )

# Left-dislocation in English



- Significant effect of priming condition
- Significant effect of language experience ( $F(3,33.01)=6,38, p<.001$ )
- Interaction between priming condition and language experience ( $F(5,51,28.65)=3,16, p<.007$ )

# Summary

- French:
    - i. All children were responsive to priming in the SVO and LD condition but favoured LDs to mark topicality
    - ii. RD did not prime RD
    - iii. LD and RD primes lead to the production of Left-dislocations.
  
  - English
    - i. All children favoured SVO constructions to mark topicality
    - ii. Significant effect of language experience with bilinguals producing dislocations when monolinguals never produced any.
- => Bilinguals sensitive to cross-linguistic effect from French



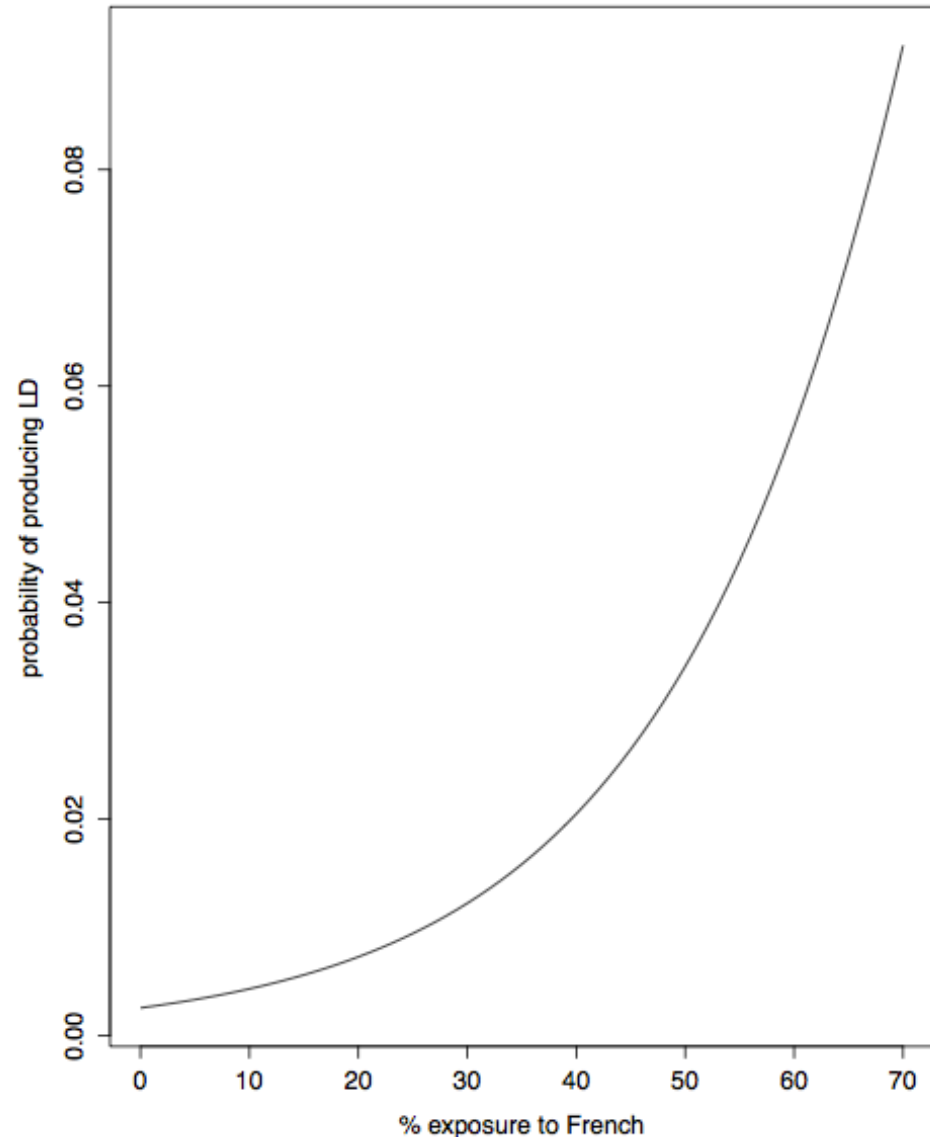
# Theoretical implications

- Confirm the likelihood of cross-linguistic influence at the interface between syntax and discourse-pragmatics
- Further analysis needed to examine implication of language exposure



# Language exposure analysis

- Does French exposure predict the production of LDs in French and in English?





## Future direction

Test bilingual children across languages using the same methodology and material.

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Takk  
Merci  
Thank you