I discuss how childhood input has an effect on gender selection in mixed DPs (e.g., (2) and (3)) in heritage speakers of Spanish in Chicago. There have been proponents that bilingual speakers use the analogical gender (Montes-Alcalá & Shin, 2011), as seen (1); or the masculine default (Valdés Kroff, 2016), as in (2). While both might have an effect on gender assignment in mixed DPs, I hypothesize that, at least for heritage speakers of Spanish in Chicago, childhood input also has an effect. More specifically, these speakers will use the feminine Spanish determiner with English nouns that are both (i) feminine in Spanish and (ii) are words that they were exposed to during childhood. An experiment was carried out to test this hypothesis. A total of 20 heritage speakers performed a Forced Choice task, where they had to complete a trial as seen in (3). The stimuli of this experiment consisted of English nouns. These English nouns were separated into four separate categories: (i) nouns that are feminine in Spanish and are childhood-input words, (ii) nouns that are feminine in Spanish and not childhood-input words, (iii) nouns that are masculine in Spanish, and (iv) nonwords. The nouns that were considered to be childhood-input were chosen intuitively by the researcher. They were also vetted by two heritage speakers of Spanish in Chicago. If one of the consultants rejected a word, it was omitted from the list of stimuli. The participants were also given the experimental stimuli and they were asked to provide the Spanish translation and its gender. This test is important for the validity of the results; the participants needed to know the translation and correct gender of the experimental stimuli. Confidence intervals were used. These results show that participants chose the feminine determiner significantly more frequent with words that were (i) feminine in Spanish and are childhood-input words (M=.34, 95% CI [.29, .39]). This was opposed to nouns that were (ii) feminine in Spanish but not childhood-input (M=.81, 95% CI [.76, .85]), (iii) masculine in Spanish (M=.89, 95% CI [.85, .93]), and (iv) nonce words (M=.59, 95% CI [.53, .65]). Let us now analyze these results using Lopez (2018) and Distributed Morphology (DM).

Under DM (Halle & Marantz 1993; Embick & Noyer 2007), grammatical gender depends on the morphosyntactic frame; i.e., the interaction between the root and the nominalizing little n, which carries the gender feature (see also, Kramer (2015)). For Spanish, there are two flavors of little n: n[±fem]. English only has a plain n. Furthermore, for the population that was tested here, mes- and table are the same root, which has no information whatsoever, semantic, phonological or otherwise and is represented as an index (e.g., mes-, table → √145) (Acquaviva, 2009; Harley, 2014). For example, the root √145 can be externalized as table or mes-. This depends on the morphosyntactic structure. Let us assume that the root √145 is spelled out as table. Some speakers have the morphosyntactic flexibility whereby √145 (table) can be selected by the Spanish n[+fem], resulting in la table or it can be selected by n[-fem], resulting in el table. For this experiment, the participants had the structure in (5). However, this does not mean that the structure in (4) is impossible. For other populations, the structure in (4)
could be more common. This is evidence that there is some extra-linguistic factor that could affect the structure. It could be processing, the type of task (Bellamy et al., 2018), or even sociolinguistic factors, such as the case in the experiment described above. That is, the population of this experiment was exposed to their parents, which in this population are first generation immigrants, borrowing English nouns into their Spanish discourse. Because English is the second language of the first-generation immigrants, when they borrow English nouns into a DP, they transfer the gender of the Spanish determiner (Liceras et al. 2008). Thus, the parents of the bilingual children population described here utter DPs such as la table ‘the table’. This results in the children having (5) as a possible linguistic structure due to the input that they received as children.

**Examples**

(1) *La* table (*mesa.FEM* in Spanish)

(2) *El* table (*mesa.FEM* in Spanish)

(3) Which one te suena mejor?

a. He swept la floor with a broom.
b. He swept el floor with a broom.

**Works cited**


