The structural integrity of direct object marking in the Spanish of New Mexican bilinguals
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This study assesses the variation in the use of *a* with animate direct objects in the Spanish of New Mexican bilinguals, as illustrated in (1). *a*-marking by these speakers is then compared with its use in a monolingual non-contact Spanish corpus.

(1) a. he did like ten surgeries that he messed up. ... *a la gente* (09.La Salvia, 1572-1573)
   
   b. *vemos que no maltratan Ø la gente* (08.Graduación familiar, 525)

Direct object marking (DOM) does not exist in English, as illustrated in (2), but it has an important role in Spanish, where it has been extensively studied. However, its behavior in contact settings has not been the object of much quantitative analysis.

(2) *esos plastic surgeons, the=you um, ... they mess up Ø people* (09.La Salvia, 1599-1601)

This study is designed to remedy this lack and to test whether there is any erosion of DOM in New Mexican Spanish given the influence of English grammar, as might be predicted by the hypothesis of linguistic convergence.

The data were extracted from the New Mexico Spanish/English Bilingual (NMSEB) corpus (Torres Cacoullos & Travis, 2012) and the Corpus Sociolingüístico de Mérida (Domínguez y Mora 1995) from Venezuela. From these corpora—about 600 thousand words—we extracted all transitive clauses where variation between *a*+DO and Ø+DO is possible. This represents 147 and 798 transitive clauses, respectively, which we coded according to seven linguistic constraints that recur in the literature as governing this variation: verb class, humanness of the DO, as well as its grammatical number, specificity, definiteness as indicated by determiners, syntactic position and co-reference in previous and/or subsequent context.

The results indicate that DOM has the same basic linguistic pattern in the bilingual and in the monolingual non-contact corpora. Thus, in variable rule analyses of both data sets, verb class is the main constraint on the variation: verbs of perception tend to attract more *a*-marking in the NM bilingual Spanish (prob=.76) and in the Merida corpus (prob=.73), *tener* ‘to have’ tends to avoid *a*-marking (prob=.11 and prob=.15, respectively), and the set of all other verbs have about the same impact in both data sets (prob=.61 and prob=.62, respectively). The data also share the second most important constraint on the variation: Humanness of DO. DOs with human referent attract more *a*-marking in NM (prob=.69) and in Merida (prob=.54) than DOs with animal referent (prob=.12 and prob=.15, respectively). Additionally, both data sets share the third most important constraint on the use of *a*+DO: DO definiteness. More definite DOs (prob=.62 and prob=.60, respectively) tend to have *a*-marking, while less definite DOs (prob=.29 and prob=.32, respectively) tend to have less *a*-marking.

Perhaps most important is that the overall rate of *a*+DO usage is almost identical in the two corpora (49% and 46%). We can thus conclude that contact with English has not eroded the overall rate of overt marking of animate direct objects, nor has it affected the hierarchy of constraints.