

Crosslinguistic influence in the processing of grammatical norm violations by German learners of Dutch

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Crosslinguistic influence (CLI) in multilinguals has been found to be particularly strong when the languages under investigation are typologically closely related (Kellerman, 1995; Ringboom & Jarvis, 2009). This is the case for Dutch and German, where research indicates that CLI from the L1 strongly influences L2 acquisition and processing (e.g., Lehmhöfer et al., 2008). Moreover, Ribbert and Kuiken (2010) show that subtle variability in structures that overlap in the two closely related languages can even lead to L1-attribution in German learners of Dutch, i.e. CLI from the L2 to the L1.

In this study, we examine how German learners of Dutch as an L2 process CLI-prone structures that are, in addition to this, considered grammatical norm violations in both languages. Grammatical norm violations are linguistic variants that occur frequently in informal language use despite being considered “ungrammatical” from a normative perspective (Hubers et al, 2016). Both Dutch and German feature such grammatical norm violations in comparative constructions: Native speakers sometimes use the equative particle *als* in Dutch and *wie* in German (Dutch: *Jane is sterker als Jackie*; German: *Jane ist stärker wie Jackie*; “Jane is stronger than (lit. *as*) Jackie.”), even though the use of *dan* in Dutch and *als* in German is prescribed. As can be seen from the examples above, the use of *als* in German is considered prescriptively appropriate in comparative constructions, while the Dutch cognate *als* is considered a norm violation in these contexts.

Hubers et al. (2020) show that native speakers of Dutch process grammatical norm violations in comparative structures differently when compared to grammatical and ungrammatical counterparts on a sentence matching task and in eye-tracking. Following up on these findings, we present the results from a sentence matching task in which we investigate how German L2-learners of Dutch process grammatical norm violations in comparative constructions in their two languages. By comparing learners from Germany and the Netherlands and by comparing both groups with monolingual native speakers of Dutch and German, we hope to get a deeper insight into what affects the processing of these structures in the L1 and the L2 and which role CLI plays in this.

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