

Gender concord in Spanish-German code-switched DPs

The case of neuter

Aim

Further investigate the nature of L1-L2 asymmetric gender systems.

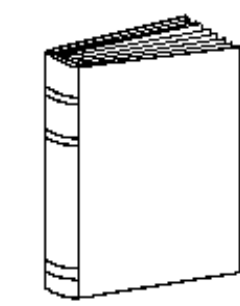
Spanish: masculine, feminine

German: masculine, feminine, neuter

Code-switching offers a complementary perspective to online L2 tasks.

das libro (German D-Spanish N)

el Buch (Spanish D-German N)

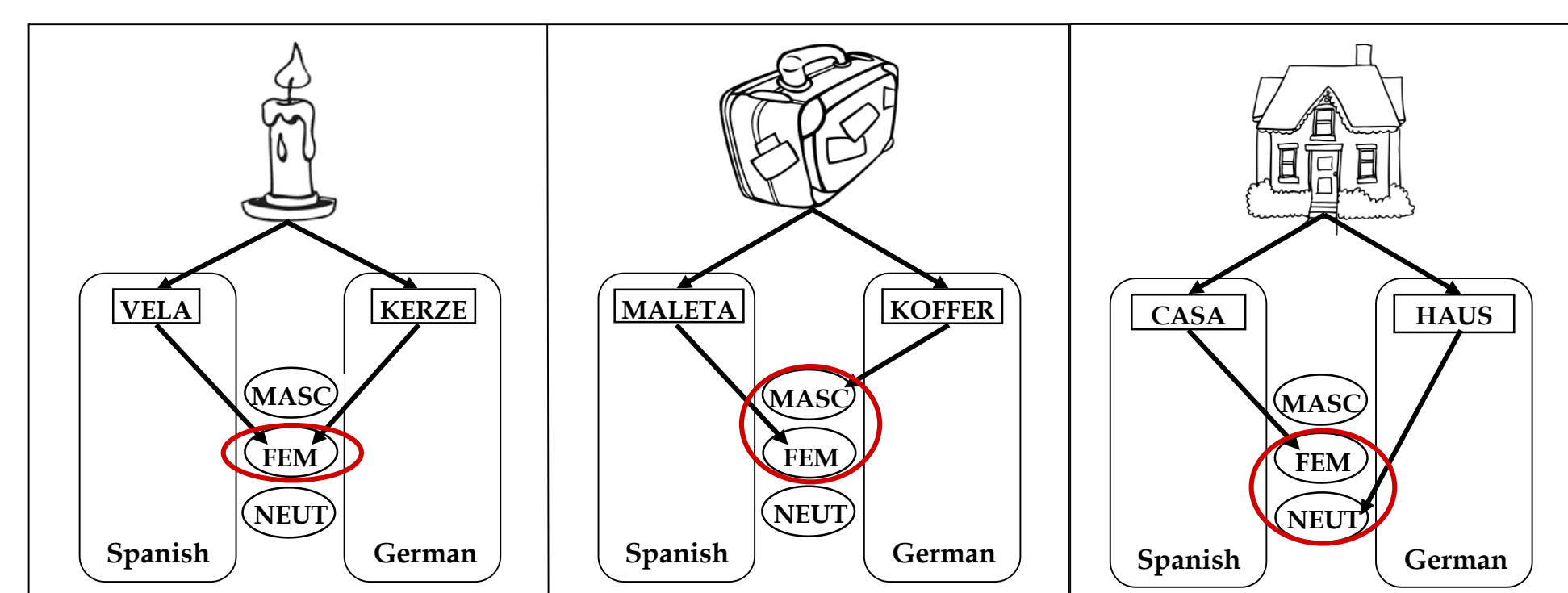


Background

Asymmetric Gender Systems

Psycholinguistic research has shown that the L1 and L2 gender systems have an integrated representation, even when the L1 and L2 differ in number of gender values:

- L1 German-L2 Dutch (Lemhöfer et al, 2008)
- L1 German-L2 Italian (Johnson Fowler, 2015)
- L1 Spanish-L2 German (Klassen, 2016a, 2016b)
- L1 French-L2 German (Klassen, 2016b)



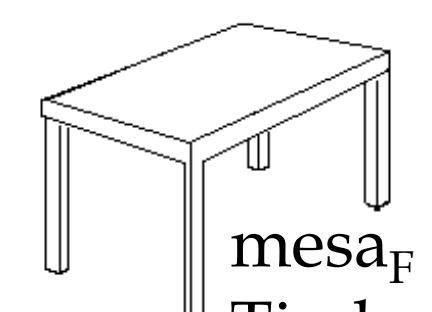
- gender values common to both languages: single set of shared gender nodes (Salamoura & Williams, 2007)
- L2-specific gender values: unique representation, encoded separately (Klassen, 2016b)

Gender in Code-Switched DPs

Bilinguals have been found to use/prefer different gender concord strategies:

i) concord between D and N in the switch

die_F mesa_F vs el_M Tisch_M



ii) concord between D and translation equivalent N

der_M mesa (Tisch_M) vs la_F Tisch (mesa_F)

D – N in the switch die_F mesa_F

- 2L1 Italian-German (Cantone & Müller, 2008; Eichler et al, 2012)
- 2L1 French-German (Eichler et al, 2012)
- 2L1 Spanish-German (González-Vilbazo, 2005; Eichler et al, 2012)

D – translation equivalent N der_M mesa_F

- 2L1 French-German (Radford et al, 2007)

Research Questions

1. Do Spanish-German bilinguals prefer concord between the D and the N in the switch or between the D and the translation equivalent N?

die_F mesa_F vs der_M mesa (Tisch_M)

a) Does this preference vary with respect to:

- L1?
- type of switch?

German D-Spanish N

Spanish D-German N

die_F mesa_F / der_M mesa_F

el_M Tisch_M / la_F Tisch_M

2. What is the effect of the asymmetric gender value (neuter) on bilinguals' gender concord strategies?

Method

Participants

- 23 L1 Spanish-L2 German adults
- 16 L1 German-L2 Spanish adults
- intermediate-advanced level of L2 proficiency

Acceptability Judgment Task

Participants were asked to rate the acceptability of written sentences containing Spanish-German code-switched DPs on a 4-point Likert scale.

Stimuli

- 120 sentences of the type:
Target DP + PP + Copula (ser/sein) + Adj

Das_{Nt} maleta_F de la azafata es grande. (Ger D-Sp N)
The suitcase of the flight attendant is big.

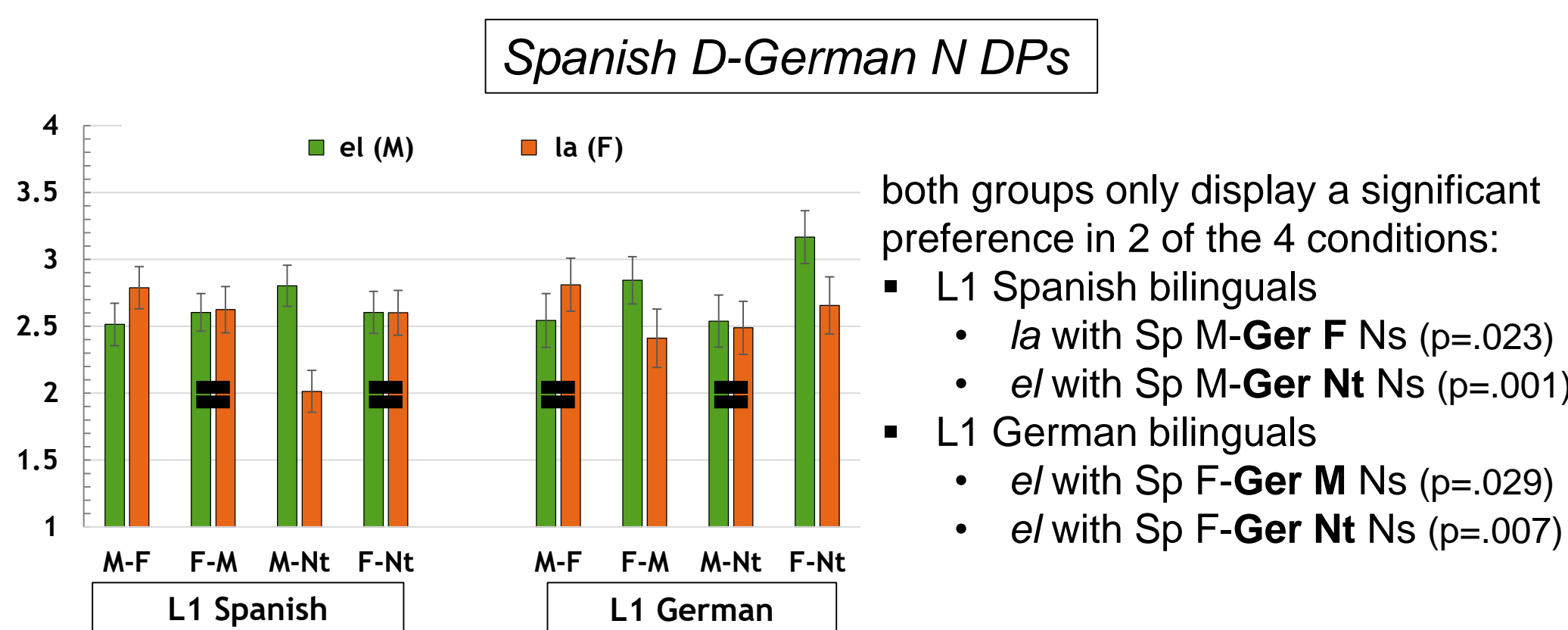
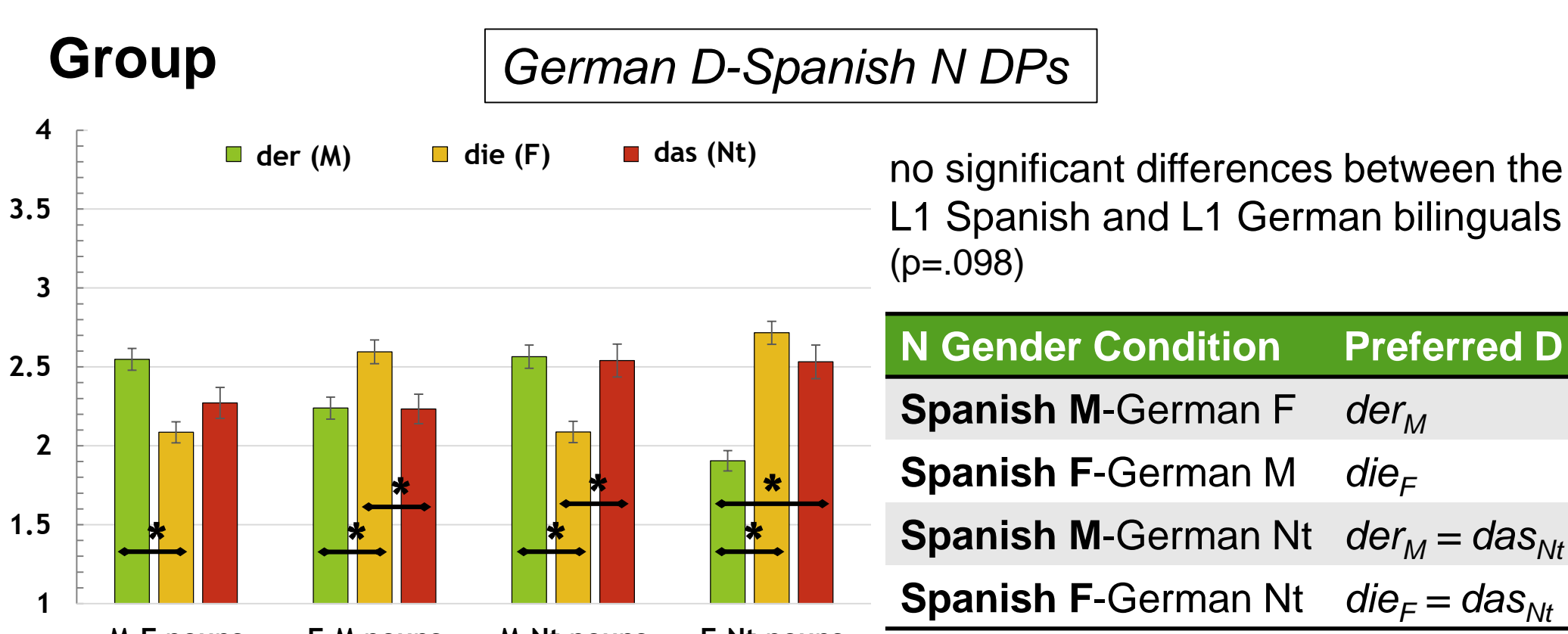
El_M Rock_M in der Garderobe ist rot. (Sp D-Ger N)
The skirt in the closet is red.

Experimental Conditions

- gender congruency between the L1 and L2 nouns was manipulated to form 4 conditions
- target DPs in each of these conditions were presented with all possible D forms (2 in Spanish, 3 in German)

Noun Gender Condition		Determiner Gender	
Spanish	German	Spanish	German
masculine	feminine		der_M
feminine	masculine	el_M	die_F
masculine	neuter	la_F	das_{Nt}
feminine	neuter		

Results



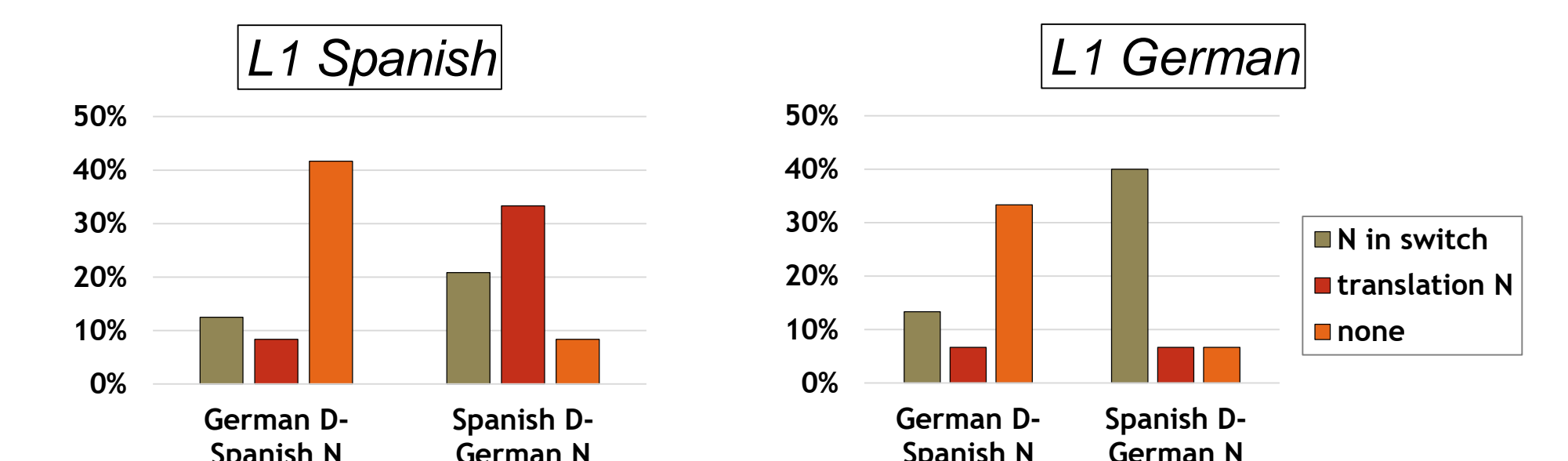
Individual

- same analysis carried out on the individual data (i.e. highest rated D in each condition for each type of DP)
- D preferences in each condition linked to the gender concord strategy it represents:
 - concord between D and N in the switch (i)
 - concord between D and translation equivalent N (ii)
- participants classified by the type of strategy they used:
 - overall strategy users:** consistently used one concord strategy with both types of switched DPs
 - switch-specific strategy users:** consistently used one concord strategy with each type of DP
 - no strategy users:** mixed concord strategies with each type of DP; instances of no clear strategy

Concord Strategy	Overall Strategy Users	Switch-Specific Strategy Users	
		German D-Spanish N	Spanish D-German N
N in switch	8	5	11
translation N	2	3	9
none	6	15	3
total	16 / 41%	23 / 59%	

- 60% of participants were switch-specific strategy users, while only 40% were overall strategy users
- overall strategy users**
 - concord between the D and N in the switch most preferred strategy, followed by no strategy
- German D-Spanish N DPs**
 - majority of participants displayed no discernible strategy preference
- Spanish D-German N DPs**
 - most participants opted for concord between the D and N in the switch or translation equivalent N

Individual Strategies by L1



- German D-Spanish N DPs**
 - neither L1 Spanish nor L1 German bilinguals display a predominant preference for either concord strategy
- Spanish D-German N DPs**
 - L1 Spanish bilinguals prefer concord between the D and translation equivalent N
 - L1 German bilinguals prefer concord between the D and N in the switch

Discussion & Conclusions

- individual analysis offers a more complete picture, revealing that the majority of participants opted for a switch-specific strategy

DP Type	L1 Spanish	L1 German
German D-Spanish N	none	none
Spanish D-German N	translation N	N in switch

- Spanish D-German N DPs**
 - L1 Spanish and L1 German bilinguals ultimately prefer concord between the D and noun in their L1s
- L1 Spanish bilinguals la_F Tisch (mesa_F)
- L1 German bilinguals el_M Tisch_M
- German D-Spanish N DPs**
 - lack of clear concord strategy for either group suggests that the additional gender value (neuter) is more problematic on the D than the N

Determiner	Noun
masculine	} masculine feminine
feminine	
neuter	

Gender concord strategy preferences in code-switched Spanish-German DPs

- preferences vary by L1 and according to type of switch
- gender concord strategies may not be as clear-cut as in previous studies (though note different type of data)

Code-switching and gender in the bilingual lexicon

- these findings support the integrated representation of asymmetric gender systems in that both L1 and L2 gender information is available to these bilinguals
- the complexity of asymmetric gender systems is illustrated in the lack of discernible concord strategy with some DPs for both groups of bilinguals