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Child and Adult Heritage Spanish in the Netherlands: The Development of Subject Position

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Research Questions
1. Will Dutch HS of Spanish show less overgeneralization of preverbal subjects (but deviate from monolinguals?)
2. (When) do bilingual children deviate from monolinguals?

The present study

A) Adult Participants
24 heritage speakers
• Born in the Netherlands, or arrived before 5
• Mixed families
• No Caribbean dialects

18 monolingual speakers of Spanish
• Recently immigrated to the Netherlands.
• No knowledge of Dutch
• No Caribbean dialects

B) Child Participants
30 heritage speakers
• 9 and 13 years old
• Born in the Netherlands, or arrived before 5
• Mixed families
• No Caribbean dialects

44 monolingual speakers of Spanish
• 9 and 13 years old
• Born and raised in Spain
• No knowledge of other languages

Previous Research:

Children
Monolingual
• Have knowledge of verb type by age 2
• No previous research on other factors

Bilingual
• No previous research

Adults
Monolingual
• Verb type & focus influence word order
• Many other factors, such as definiteness as well

Bilingual
• Do not have monolingual-like knowledge of all factors determining word order

Subject position in Dutch
Een jongen
A boy
fluent whistled
but V2!

Subject position in Spanish
Spanish has flexible word order:
Un chico llegó
A boy
arrived
Llegó
un chico
Arrived
a boy

Subject position with intransitives in Spanish is constrained by unaccusativity, focus, definiteness, animacy, verbal aspect, adverbial phrases, and subject heaviness

This makes subject position a highly complex phenomenon, prone to vulnerability in (bilingual) acquisition

References

- Pascual y Cabo, D., Lingwe, A., & Rothman, J. Applying the Interface Hypothesis to Heritage Speaker Acquisition: Evidence from SGBSPyrood.

Child
Preference Judgment Task:

Three dogs are playing at the beach and having a lot of fun. While they play, their friend the cat comes and sees them and he gets very sad because they had not asked him to join them.

Method

Contextualized Scalar Acceptability Judgment Task:

El gato llegó
Llegó el gato

Monolinguals

Results

Bilinguals

CONCLUSIONS
1. Both monolingual and Dutch heritage speakers increase the preference of VS across the lifetime
2. In Dutch bilinguals, this VS preference is more pronounced in all age groups
3. This overgeneralization might be due to the influence of V2 in Dutch

SIMPLIFICATION OR CROSS-LINGUISTIC INFLUENCE?