Child and Adult Heritage Spanish in the Netherlands

the Development of Subject Position

van Osch, B.A.; García González, Elisabet ; Hulk, A.C.J.; Aalberse, S.P.; Sleeman, A.P.

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Subject position in Dutch

Spanish has flexible word order:

- Un chico llegó a casa.
- A boy arrived at home.

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

Un chico llegó a casa.
A boy arrived at home.

More evidence for postverbal subjects

- Buiten/er/dat Outside/Here/that
- Adv/OBJ

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

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

Overgeneralization of preverbal subjects

- Zapata, G. C., Sanchez, L., & Sorace, A. (2013). Subject position with intransitives in Spanish is constrained by unaccusativity, focus, definiteness, animacy, verbal aspect, adverbial phrases, and subject heaviness.

Children

Monolingual
- Have knowledge of verb type by age 2

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 the factors determining word order

Method

Contextualized Scalar Acceptability Judgment Task:

- Es mi cumpleaños y hay mucha gente de visita en mi casa. De repente suena el timbre pero como justo estoy recibiendo un regalo de mi tío, no puedo abrir la puerta. ¿Ya mi esposa y yo que son unos primos. Cuando regresa, le pido: ¿Quién llegó? Mi esposa me dice: It’s my birthday and there are many guests in my house. Suddenly the doorbell rings, but since I’m just receiving a gift from my uncle, I cannot open the door. My wife goes and sees that it’s some cousins. When she gets back, I ask her: “Who arrived?” My wife tells me:

- Unos primos llegaron.
- Some cousins arrived.
- Llegó el gato.
- The cat arrived.

Results

- Monolinguals
- 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

References