Child and Adult Heritage Spanish in the Netherlands

the Development of Subject Position

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Subject position in Spanish

Spanish has flexible word order:

- Un chico llegó un chico
- A boy arrived a boy

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

Subject position in Dutch

Dutch has SV word order:

- Een jongen floot een jongen
- A boy whistled a boy

Other syntactic factors in Dutch are influenced by: definiteness, verb type & focus, discourse factors in the second language.

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

Method

Contextualized Scalar Acceptability Judgment Task:

- Es mi cumpleaños y hay muchas gentes de visita en mi casa. De repente suena el timbre pero justo estoy recibiendo un regalo de mi tía, no puedo abrir la puerta. ¿A mi esposa y ve que son unos primos. Cuando regresa, le pregunto: ¿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 aunt, I cannot open the door. My wife asks and says that it’s some cousins. When she gets back, I ask her: ‘Who arrived?’ My wife tells me:

  - Unos primos: cousins
  - Algunos primos arg.: some cousins

  - 0: -2 -1 0 1 2

Preferences: fewer cousins.

Children 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.

 Preference: El gato llegó

Preferences: fewer cousins.

Results

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


Previous Research:

Children

Monolingual

- Have knowledge of verb type by age 2
- Belt, 2003
- No previous research on other factors

Bilingual

- No previous research

Adults

Monolingual

- Verb type & focus influence word order (Hertel, 2003; Lozano, 2005)
- Many other factors, such as definiteness as well (Rogers, 2011)

Bilingual

- Do not have monolingual-like knowledge of all the factors determining word order (Castaña et al., 2005; De Prada_Pérez & Pascual y Cabo, 2012)
- Overgeneralize proverbal subjects (Hinch_Rennar, 2005; Hertel, 2003; Castañ, 2005)

Conclusion:

- Simplification or cross-linguistic influence?