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

Brechje van Osch, Elisabet García González, Suzanne Aalberse, Aafke Hulk & Petra Sleeman

University of Amsterdam

Heritage speakers
Speakers of a minority language, acquired during childhood in a naturalistic setting in the home context.

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, adverbal phrases, and subject heaviness (Hertel, 2003; Lozano, 2006; Dominguez, 2011; Capo, 2013).

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

Previous Research:

Children
Monolingual
- Have knowledge of verb type by age 2
  (Mare, 2001)
- No previous research on other factors

Bilingual
- No previous research

Adults
Monolingual
- Verb type & focus influence word order
  (Hertel, 2003; Lozano, 2006)
- Many other factors, such as definiteness as well
  (Rogge, 2011)

Bilingual
- Do not have monolingual-like knowledge of all the factors determining word order
  (Capo et al., 2008; De Prada-Pérez & Pascale y Cabo, 2012)
- Overgeneralization of pronominal subjects
  (Hertel, 2003; Mare, 2005; Capo et al., 2009)

SIMPLIFICATION OR CROSS-LINGUISTIC INFLUENCE?

Adults

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 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 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.

-0 0 -1 0 0

Preferences. Arrived some cousins.

2 -1 0 1 2

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’.

Results

Monolinguals

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<th>13yo</th>
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Bilinguals

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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

- Dominguez, L. (2013). Understanding interfaces: Second language acquisition and first language attrition of Spanish subject realization and word order variation. (Univ. of Minn. Diss.).

elisabet.garcialglez@gmail.com
b.a.vanosch@uva.nl