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. (A boy came.)
- Llegó un chico. (A boy arrived.)

Subject position with intransitives in Spanish is constrained by unaccusativity, focus, definiteness, animacy, verbal aspect, adverbial phrases, and subject heaviness (Bel, 2001; López, 2005; Lázaro, 2006; Domínguez, 2013; Jusidman et al., 2009; de Prada-Pérez & Pascual y Cabo, 2012).

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 (Bel, 2001).
- No previous research on other factors.

Bilingual
- No previous research.

Adults

Monolingual
- Verb type & focus influence word order (Heretik, 2005; López, 2005).
- Many other factors, such as definiteness as well (Rogga, 2011).

Bilingual
- Do not have monolingual-like knowledge of all the factors determining word order (Cayetano et al., 2001; de Prada-Pérez & Pascual y Cabo, 2012).
- Overgeneralize preverbal subjects (Heretik, 2005; Heretik et al., 2005).

Method

Contextualized Scalar Acceptability Judgment Task:

El gato llegó.

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.

Children

Preference Judgment Task:

LVG

SV

N

SV

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
- Mixes families
- No Caribbean dialects

Research Questions

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