Child and Adult Heritage Spanish in the Netherlands

the Development of Subject Position

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**Subject position in Spanish**

Subject position 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.

**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 years old
- Mixed families
- No Caribbean dialects

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

**Children**

**Method**

Contextualized Scalar Acceptability 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**
  - SV: 9y: 2, 13y: 2
  - VS: 9y: 1, 13y: 1

- **Bilinguals**
  - SV: 9y: 1, 13y: 1
  - VS: 9y: 0, 13y: 0

**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**

- Brechje van Osch, Elisabet García González, Suzanne Aalberse, Aafke Hulk & Petra Sleeman
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**Heritage speakers**

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

**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 (Hertel, 2003; Lizarraga, 2005)
  - Many other factors, such as definiteness as well (Riggs, 2011)

- Bilingual:
  - Do not have monolingual-like knowledge of all the factors determining word order (Cepeda et al., 2005; de Prada-Pérez & Pacielo y Cabo, 2012)

- Overgeneralize preverbal subjects (Hinch, 2007; Hertel, 2005; Cepeda et al., 2005)

**SIMPLIFICATION OR CROSS-LINGUISTIC INFLUENCE?**

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