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

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Citation for published version (APA):
Child and Adult Heritage Spanish in the Netherlands: The Development of Subject Position

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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
V

SV

Llegó un chico
Arrived a boy

SV

Subject position with intransitives 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

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; Lizano, 2005)
• Many other factors, such as definiteness as well (Rogge, 2011)

Bilingual
• Do not have monolingual-like knowledge of all the factors determining word order
(Capataza, 2005; De Prada-Pérez & Pascual y Cabo, 2012)

Overgeneralize preverbal subjects
(Montalvo, 2007; Merino, 2005; Capataza et al., 2005)

Simplification or Cross-linguistic Influence?

Method

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.

Adults
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 tía, no puedo abrir la puerta. Ya 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 goes and sees that it’s some cousins. When she gets back, she asks: “Who arrived?” My wife tells me:

Unos primos llegaron.
Some cousins 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


