Child and Adult Heritage Spanish in the Netherlands

*the Development of Subject Position*

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

Subject position in Dutch
Dutch has flexible word order:

- Without V2:
  - Een jongen
  - A boy
  - S
  - float whistled
  - V

- With V2:
  - Men komen
  - Some cousins arrived.
  - 0
  - 0

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
  - Herrmann, 2000; Lizzio, 2005
- Many other factors, such as definiteness as well
  - Riggio, 2011

Bilingual
- Do not have monolingual-like knowledge of all the factors determining word order
  - Osch et al., 2003; De Prada-Pérez & Puşculescu and Cabe, 2012
- Overgeneralize preverbal subjects
  - Hertel & Grinstead, 2003; Lozano, 2005

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 mucha gente de visita en mi casa. De repente suena el timbre pero como estoy recibiendo un regalo de mi tío, no puedo abrir la puerta. Va 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 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
  - Some cousins arrived.
  - 0
  - 0

- Llegaron unos primos.
  - Arrived some cousins.
  - 0
  - 0

More evidence for postverbal subjects

Research Findings

1. Both monolingual and Dutch heritage speakers increase the preference of V2 across the lifetime.
2. In Dutch bilinguals, this V2 preference is more pronounced in all age groups.
3. This overgeneralization might be due to the influence of V2 in Dutch.

Conclusions

References

- Puşculescu y Cabo, D., Lingwood, A., & Rothman, J. Applying the Interface Hypothesis to Heritage Language Acquisition: Evidence from Romanian. 189