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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
Spanish has flexible word order:

Un chico llegó un chico
A boy arrived
a boy

Subject position in Dutch
but V2!

Un chico
A boy
flotó
swam

MORE EVIDENCE FOR POSTVERBAL SUBJECTS

Previous Research:

Children

Monolingual
• Have knowledge of verb type by age 2
  (Bé, 2001)

• No previous research on other factors

Bilingual
• No previous research

Adults

Monolingual
• Verb type & focus influence word order
  (Merkt, 2005; Lizarraga, 2005)
• Many other factors, such as definiteness as well
  (Rogers, 2011)

Bilingual
• Do not have monolingual-like knowledge of
certain factors determining word order
  (Díaz, 2003; Lizarraga, 2005; Zapata et al., 2005)

Simplification or Cross-linguistic Influence?

Subject position in Dutch

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

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

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:

Children

Preference Judgment Task:

El gato llegó

Llegó el gato

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

• Pascual y Calbo, D., Lingwea, A., & Rothman, J. Applying the Interface Hypothesis to Heritage Speaker Acquisition: Evidence from Spanish Grammar.