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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
- A boy arrived
- Llegó un chico
- Arrived a boy

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

SIMPLIFICATION OR CROSS-LINGUISTIC INFLUENCE?

Subject position in Dutch

Dutch prefers preverbal subjects:

- Een jongen
- A boy
- vloot
- whistled

but V2!

- Buiten/er/dat
- Outside/There/that
- Adv/OBJ
- vloot
- whistled
- een jongen
- a boy

MORE EVIDENCE FOR POSTVERBAL SUBJECTS

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

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, 2005; Lizarraga, 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
- (Cabo et al., 2003; De Prada-Pérez & Pravos y Cabo, 2012)

Overgeneralize preverbal subjects
- (Rogge, 2007; Merrie, 2005; Cabo et al., 2003)

Method

Contextualized Scalar Acceptability Judgment Task:

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.

Adul ts

References