Child and Adult Heritage Spanish in the Netherlands

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Citation for published version (APA):

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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 unaccentuality, focus, definiteness, animacy, verbal aspect, adverbial phrases, and subject heaviness.

Subject position in Dutch

- Een jongen float whistled (A boy)
- But V2!

Spanish has overgeneralization of preverbal subjects that aren't overtly marked.

The present study

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?

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

Results

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.

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:

Simple sentences are presented, and participants judge if they are acceptable or not. The acceptability judgments are then used to infer acceptability judgments for more complex sentences.

References


Conclusions

- Simplification or cross-linguistic influence?