Child and Adult Heritage Spanish in the Netherlands
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Subject position in Spanish

Spanish has flexible word order:

- Un chico llegó
  - A boy arrived
- Llegó un chico
  - A boy arrived

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

This makes subject position a highly complex phenomenon, prone to vulnerability in bilingual acquisition.

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

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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 Cabo, D., Lingseal, A., & Rothman, J. Applying the Interface Hypothesis to Heritage Speaker Acquisition: Evidence from L2 Spanish. 

Simplification or cross-linguistic influence?