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.

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**Subject position in Spanish**
Spanish has flexible word order:

- **Un chico** llegó
  - A boy
  - arrived
  - VS

- **Llegó un chico**
  - Arrived a boy
  - S

Subject position with intransitives in Spanish is constrained by unaccusativity, focus, definiteness, animacy, verbal aspect, adverbial phrases, and subject heaviness. (Hertel, 2005; Lozano, 2006; Dominguez, 2012; Bont & Weltman, 2011; De Prada-Pérez & Pesceul y Cabo, 2012)

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

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**Previous Research:**

**Children**

- Monolingual
  - Have knowledge of verb type by age 2
  - Biem, 2001
  - No previous research on other factors

- Bilingual
  - No previous research

**Adults**

- **Monolingual**
  - Verb type & focus influence word order
  - (Hertel, 2005; Lozano, 2006)
  - Many other factors, such as definiteness as well
  - (Rogge, 2011)

- **Bilingual**
  - Do not have monolingual-like knowledge of all the factors determining word order
  - (Oprea et al., 2005; De Prada-Pérez & Pesceul y Cabo, 2012)
  - Overgeneralize preverbal subjects
  - (Hinch & Hertel, 2005; Oprea et al., 2005)

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**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

- 18 monolingual speakers of Spanish
  - Recently immigrated to the Netherlands.
  - No knowledge of Dutch
  - 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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**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 justo estoy recibiendo un regalo de mi tío, no puedo abrir la puerta. Va mi esposa y ve que son unos primos. Cuando regresa, le pongo: ¿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:

**Children Preference Judgment Task:**

Three dogs are playing at the beach and having a lot of fun. While they play, the friend of the cat comes and sees them and he gets very sad because they had not asked him to join them.

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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

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**References**