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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
  - llegó

- **Llegó un chico**
  - Arrival
  - a boy

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

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

**Previous Research:**

**Children**

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

- **Bilingual**
  - No previous research

**Adults**

- **Monolingual**
  - Verb type & focus influence word order
  - Many other factors, such as definiteness as well

- **Bilingual**
  - Do not have monolingual-like knowledge of all the factors determining word order

**Subject position in Dutch**

- **Een jongen floot whistled V**
  - A boy
  - but V2!

- **But/en/dat Outside/There/that Adv/OBJ**
  - Floot
  - 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

**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**


**Method**

**Adults**

Contextualized Scalar Acceptability Judgment Task:

- Es mi cumpleaños y hay mucha gente de visita en mi casa. De repente suena el timbre pero como estoy recogiendo un regalo de mi tía, no puedo abrir la puerta. ¿A mi esposa y me que son unos primos. Cuando regresa, le pido: ¿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 aunt, 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:

    - Unos primos llegaron.
    - Some cousins arrived.

**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.

**SIMPLIFICATION OR CROSS-LINGUISTIC INFLUENCE?**

**Table:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Monolinguals</th>
<th>Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9yo</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13yo</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure:**

- The Development of Subject Position

**Figure:**

- Probably heritage speech across proficiency levels

**References**


