Child and Adult Heritage Spanish in the Netherlands

the Development of Subject Position

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Publication date
2017

Citation for published version (APA):

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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

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

**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

**Method**

**Children's 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.

**Results**

**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**


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**Simplification or cross-linguistic influence?**