

## **Comparing sentential subject production: English heritage vs. English L2 learners**

The nature of sentential subjects in the case of English/Spanish bilinguals' data has been extensively analyzed both in the case of simultaneous bilinguals (e.g. Liceras et al. 2008, 2012) as well in sequential bilinguals with Spanish as their L2 (e.g. White 1986, Liceras 1989, Montrul & Rodríguez Louro 2006) or with English as their L2 (e.g. Lozano 2002, Pladevall 2007). However, not much has been said regarding a comparison between L2 English and L1 heritage English. The present work focuses on this last comparison and on the difference between crosslinguistic influence from the other L1 (in the case of L1 English heritage speakers) and transfer from the L1 (in the case of L2 English speakers). In particular, we aim to determine whether, in the case of child experimental production data, transfer occurs from Spanish (the language allowing null subjects) into English (the language that requires its subjects to be overt) and results in the over-production of (illicit) null subjects. This provides information as to the status of the two languages and how the properties of the more salient language (i.e. Spanish as the language having two subject types: null and overt) influence those of the other language (i.e. English as the language having one subject type: overt).

To do so the English sentential subjects produced by 12 L1 Spanish L2 English children and 12 2L1 English-Spanish speakers are analyzed. The L2 English participants are divided into two proficiency groups depending on the amount of exposure to English at school (2 or 4 years; aged 8-9 and 10-11). The heritage speakers have been exposed to both languages from birth (aged 6-15). Written production data (story-telling) are obtained by means of a wordless picture sequence adapted from the Narrative Norms Instrument (ENNI) (Schneide, Dubé & Hayward 2005) which participants have to narrate. Oral production data are obtained through a semi-guided individual interview which was audio recorded and then transcribed in CHAT format (CHILDES, MacWhinney 2000). The subjects produced in both tasks were classified using 3 criteria: form (full DPs, pronouns or null subjects); grammaticality (correct or incorrect); and appropriateness in terms of referentiality (DPs for referent introduction, disambiguation or emphasis and pronouns for referent maintenance) (as in Fernández Fuertes et al. 2011).

The results show that the subjects produced by English heritage speakers are both grammatically correct and pragmatically adequate and this is so across the two tasks even if differences appear between the oral and the written one. The L2 speakers produce significantly more ungrammatical and pragmatically inadequate subjects, where differences between the two proficiency groups (the younger group produces more ungrammatical and non-adequate subjects) and tasks (more ungrammatical subjects in the oral task and more pragmatically inadequate subjects in the written task) are appreciated. These results are interpreted in terms of language status (L2 – heritage language) and the interaction of the grammar of the two language systems.

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