

## **The role of parental input and transfer on the morphosyntactic development of Dutch as a heritage language: a research program**

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This study aims to distinguish input quality effects from transfer in child heritage speakers to get a better understanding of the mechanisms that are at play in heritage language development. Child heritage speakers are a heterogeneous group both in terms of language abilities and language learning environments (Paradis, 2023). The characteristics of the environment in which children acquire their heritage language, i.e. under reduced input conditions and in the presence of a societal language (Daskalaki et al., 2020), might account for the considerable variation in language abilities we encounter in these speakers. Our research investigates the influence of language environmental factors on the development of Dutch grammatical gender in Dutch-German and Dutch-French children.

Heritage language input differs quantitatively from monolingual language input: child heritage speakers receive input in two languages, thereby reducing the input quantity per language (Unsworth, 2016). Quantity might not be the only input factor distinguishing monolingual children from child heritage speakers, however. The quality of parental input might also differ. Heritage speakers are children of first- or second-generation immigrants whose heritage language might be affected by attrition (i.e. loss of certain grammatical structures over time) or transfer (i.e. influence of one of a bilingual's languages on the other; Daskalaki et al., 2020; Polinsky, 2018). Given that parents provide the main source of input for child heritage speakers, any divergences in parental input are important predictors for children's heritage language use (Pascual y Cabo, 2020). If we are unaware of divergences in the input, we might mistakenly assume that characteristics of child heritage language use are caused by other mechanisms.

Our study investigates input quality effects and transfer in grammatical gender in Dutch-French and Dutch-German children. Dutch has a two-way non-transparent gender system, distinguishing common and neuter. German has a three-way gender system that is, nevertheless, historically related to the Dutch two-way system and French has a two-way gender system distinguishing feminine and masculine. Both the French and German gender system are more transparent than the Dutch gender system (Rodina et al., 2020). It has been suggested that bilingual children acquiring two gendered languages acquire the gender system of the non-transparent language faster than monolingual children acquiring the gender system of a non-transparent language only (Egger et al., 2018). Similarities between the gender systems of a bilingual's languages might be of additional support in the acquisition of a non-transparent system. We investigate this by comparing grammatical gender assignment in Dutch-German and Dutch-French children. Before we analyze how transfer affects heritage language use, however, we first investigate the effect of parental input quality.

Typological similarities between languages influence attrition, whereby grammatical properties of a feature that are similar between languages are more sensitive to L1 attrition (Ribbert & Kuiken, 2010; Schmid, 2010). Given the similarities between gender in Dutch and German, we expect this property to be more sensitive to attrition in Dutch-German families than in Dutch-French families. Divergences from the monolingual standard in parental input will be taken into account to a) investigate its association with child language use and b) to eliminate diverging items for further analyses into transfer in child heritage speakers.

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