May 15, 2023

Dear Editorial Board,

It is my pleasure to submit the manuscript entitled “Age Effects in the Heritage Language Acquisition of Differential Object Marking in Spanish: Late Childhood to Adulthood.” This manuscript has not been published before and is not currently being considered for publication elsewhere. There are no conflicts of interest associated with this manuscript, and there has been no financial support for this work that could have influenced its outcome.

In this article, I evaluate the roles of age, proficiency, and frequency of use on Spanish heritage speakers’ acquisition differential object marking morphology. 127 participants completed a sentence completion task and a morphology selection task to test production and underlying syntactic knowledge of this structure. In addition to 18 bilingual adults, there were 109 heritage speakers of Spanish in three age groups: adults, fifth grade children (ages 10-11) and seventh and eighth grade children (ages 12-14). There was a subtle increase in DOM production and selection across age groups, which was only significant between the HSA and HS5 groups. Proficiency level affected individual-level variability, and participants were more likely to select DOM on the morphology selection task than to produce it on the sentence completion task, which comprises a source of intraspeaker variability.

These findings make timely theoretical contributions to the field of heritage language acquisition. On one hand, all of the participants produced or selected DOM at least once, which argues against the incomplete acquisition of this structure. However, this study provides mixed evidence for Putnam and Sánchez’s (2013) approach to heritage language acquisition through feature reassembly. This theory predicts that proficiency and differences between production and receptive knowledge can account for differences between and within individual heritage speakers, which is consistent with the present study. However, the increase in knowledge across age groups argues against the reassembly of the D-feature responsible for DOM, which shows that HS’ knowledge. They therefore invite the possibility for an adjustment to this theory to account for the early, protracted development such as DOM, as in the present study.

I believe that *International Journal of Bilingualism* is an ideal forum for my research article given its long history of high-quality scholarship in Spanish as a heritage language. Sharing my research with this journal is an opportunity to disseminate findings to like-minded researchers in a respected and well-cited journal, and I look forward to your feedback and hope to collaborate with you in the publication of this manuscript.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of my manuscript and I look forward to hearing from you in due course.

Sincerely,



Patrick D. Thane, Ph.D.