Subject Personal Pronouns

- Use of Subject Personal Pronouns (SPPs) is optional in Spanish when the referent is human (Orozco & Guy, 2008; Otheguy et al., 2007).
- Person and Number: Singular subjects favor overt SPPs
- Tense, Aspect and Mood: Ambiguous tenses favor overt SPPs
- Coreferentiality: Changes in referent favor overt SPPs
- Clause type: Main clauses favor overt SPPs
- Semantic Class: Mental verbs favor overt SPPs
- Reflexivity: Reflexive verbs disfavor overt SPPs

Recent Findings

- Monolingual Spanish speakers use null SPPs at a higher frequency than overt SPPs (Orozco & Guy, 2008; Otheguy et al., 2007).
- Person and Number: Singular subjects favor overt SPPs
- Tense, Aspect and Mood: Ambiguous tenses favor overt SPPs
- Coreferentiality: Changes in referent favor overt SPPs
- Clause type: Main clauses favor overt SPPs
- Semantic Class: Mental verbs favor overt SPPs
- Reflexivity: Reflexive verbs disfavor overt SPPs

Research Questions

- Do L2 Spanish students express SPPs at a rate similar to that of native speakers?
- Which linguistic and social factors influence the use of overt or null SPPs in L2 Spanish students?
- How is the SPP grammar formed in L2 students and is it comparable to that of native speakers?

Methodology

- Participants: 12 students in fourth year Spanish classes at a North Carolina university who had spent time abroad ranging from 1 to 6 years
- Coding: The first 125 tokens from each subject's data were coded for the linguistic factors of previous studies and the social factors of time abroad and gender.
- Analysis: The data was analyzed using R 3.0.2 and Rblur (Johnson, 2014) mixed effects models with speaker as a random factor and time abroad a continuous effect.

Results

- Use of SPPs is generally not explicitly taught, it must be acquired (Marqués-Pascual, 2011).
- Person and Number of the verb is the first linguistic factor acquired by monolingual children (Shin, 2012).
- Person and Number is the first linguistic factor acquired by most Spanish students.
- Native-like use of coreference comes in the later stages of SPP grammar acquisition.
- Spanish grammar allows for placement of the overt SPP before or after the verb.
- For the Spanish students, 98.85% of the overt SPPs came before the verb.
- Displacement of overt SPPs seems to come in the later stages of SPP grammar acquisition for native English speakers.

Conclusions

- As a group the students have a similar rate of overt SPPs as native speakers.
- The same linguistic factors influence the use of overt SPPs for Spanish students as native speakers.
- The level of SPP grammar acquisition is the underlying difference between the participants.
- Non-native use of SPPs does not assume higher rates of overt SPPs; exceedingly low rates can also result in non-native like use.
- Overt SPP rate and the underlying grammar do not appear to be directly connected.
- Students who have native-like rates do not have native-like grammar - Students who have native-like grammar do not have native-like rates.
- Future studies could analyze: a larger database and oral proficiency interview scores, as well as reanalyzing gender and time abroad.

References

- Cameron, A., & O’G. (1999). Monolingual and mixed effects of previous studies and the social factors of time abroad and gender.