



COMPREHENSION OF SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT IN DOMINICAN SPANISH-SPEAKING PRESCHOOLERS: CROSS-DIALECTAL PERSPECTIVES

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KEY CONCEPTS

Subject-Verb Agreement: sentence structure in which both subject and verb are in accordance in person and/or number and indicate *who is doing what (to whom)*.

e.g. Mainstream American English:

- *the girl \emptyset sleeps vs the girls sleep \emptyset*

e.g. Spanish

- *(El niño) canta vs (los niños) cantan*

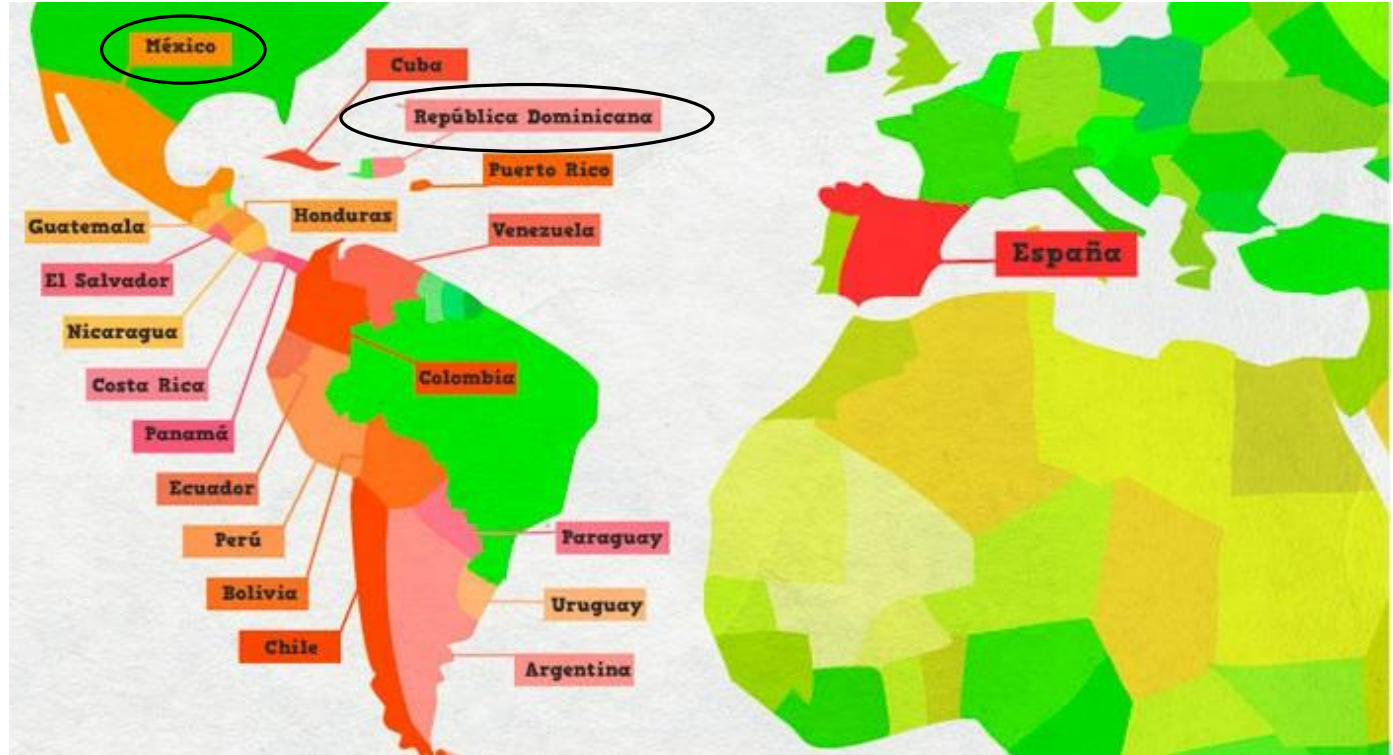
(Subject) Pro-Drop: the fact that in certain languages the expression of the subject is optional; subject-less sentences are grammatical and agreement markers are the only cue indicating *who is doing what (to whom)*.

→ characterizes Spanish

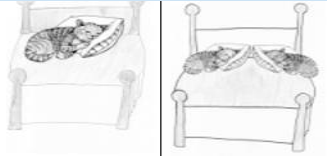
e.g. *canta* '(s/he/it) sings'


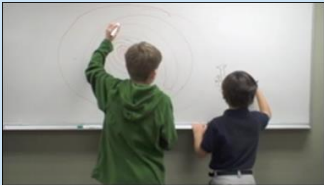
Vs *cantan* '(they) sing'

SPANISH IN THE WORLD



LITERATURE REVIEW

Author	Participants	Methodology	Singular	Plural	Results
Perez- Leroux (2005)	23 Dominican Spanish- speaking monolingual Preschoolers Ages of 3 and 6	 Still picture matching task	Intransitive medial position (Condition 2) e.g. duerme en la cama [left]	Intransitive medial position (Condition 2) e.g. duermen en la cama [right]	Children ages of 4 and 6 (but not 3) showed accuracy for Plural only

Authors	Research Study	Methodology	Singular	Plural	Results
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gonzalez – Gomez et al. (2007) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 80 Mexican Spanish- speaking monolingual preschooler in Mexico; ages of 3 and 6 	 <p>SINGULAR</p> <p><i>Video matching and constrained elicitation task</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transitive medial with real objects (Condition 4) <p>e.g. agarra el bate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Intransitive Medial Condition (Condition 2) <p>e.g. dibuja en el pizarrón</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transitive medial with real objects (Condition 4) <p>e.g. agarran el bate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Intransitive Medial Condition (Condition 2) <p>e.g. dibujan en el pizarrón</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> younger children showed accuracy in both Singular and Plural Ages of 3 and 5 showed accuracy + sensitivity in both Singular and Plural Positive Correlation between comprehension & production
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hsin et al (in press) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 51 Mexican Spanish- speaking monolingual preschooler in Mexico; ages of 3 and 5 	 <p>PLURAL</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Intransitive Final Position (Condition 1) <p>e.g. En la banca salta</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Intransitive Final Position (Condition 1) <p>e.g. En la banca saltan</p>	

DIFFERENT RESULTS?

- Different methodologies: still pictures vs animated videos?
- Different varieties of Spanish?

	Mexican (Mx) Spanish	Dominican (DR) Spanish
% of pro-drop constructions tested in comprehension task (Otheguy et al., 2007)	81%	59%
Forms of plural (PL) -n	<i>-n</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>n</i> /kãŋ.tãn/• <i>ɲ</i> /kãŋ.tãɲ/ (velarization)• \emptyset /kãŋ.ta/ (final consonant deletion) (same as Singular)

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- Q1: Using the same methodology as Hsin et al (in press), will **DR-Spanish** speaking children show evidence of understanding of Subject-Verb agreement with Intransitive verbs in medial position (Condition 2) as age peer **Mx-Spanish** speaking children?
- Q2: Will they show evidence of understanding of other conditions (1 and 4 in Table 1) like **Mx-Spanish**-speaking children (Gonzalez-Gomez et al., 2017, Hsin et al, under review)?
- Q3: Will they show evidence of productivity in their comprehension (Condition 3, nonce/invented-verb)?
- Q4: Will their comprehension correlate with their production (like **Mx-Spanish**-speaking children)?

PARTICIPANTS

- 31 Monolingual Dominican Spanish speaking children aged 3.7-5.2 residing in Santo Domingo, the Dominican Republic
- No documented developmental disorders



METHODOLOGY: VIDEO-MATCHING: COMPREHENSION TASK

Dibujan en el pizarrón



X



✓

- Directions and verbal stimuli produced by Native DR Spanish speaker
- Each condition: 16 videos (order left and right, SG and PL randomized), 8 verbal stimuli, **4 Singular** & **4 Plural**
- Child was asked to point to video that matches stimuli

TABLE 1: FOUR DIFFERENT CONDITIONS IN COMPREHENSION TASK:

Conditions	Singular	Plural
1. Intransitive final position	En la banca salt <u>a</u>	En la banca salt <u>an</u>
2. Intransitive medial position	Dibuj <u>a</u> en el pizarrón	Dibuj <u>an</u> en el pizarrón
3. Intransitive nonce/invented verbs (new condition)	Edil <u>a</u>	Edil <u>an</u>
4. Transitive medial with <i>el objeto</i>	Limpi <u>a</u> el objeto	Limpi <u>an</u> el objeto

Elicitation Task: Production

Child was asked to complete the sentence starting with either a **singular** or a **plural** subject → production of either singular or plural agreement markers.

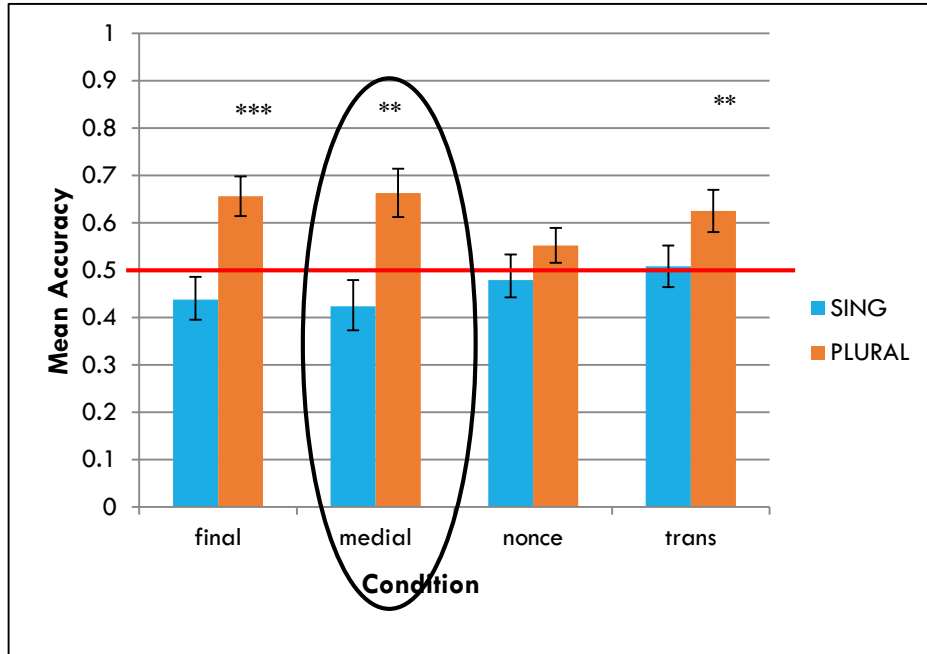


*Pictures extracted and
procedure adapted from
DELV (Seymour, 2005)*

Veo unos platos y veo unos vasos. La niña siempre lava vasos y los niños ...[target: lavan]

RESULTS

Q1: Using the same methodology as Hsin et al (in press), will DR-Spanish speaking children show evidence of understanding of Condition 2 as age peer Mx-Spanish speaking children?

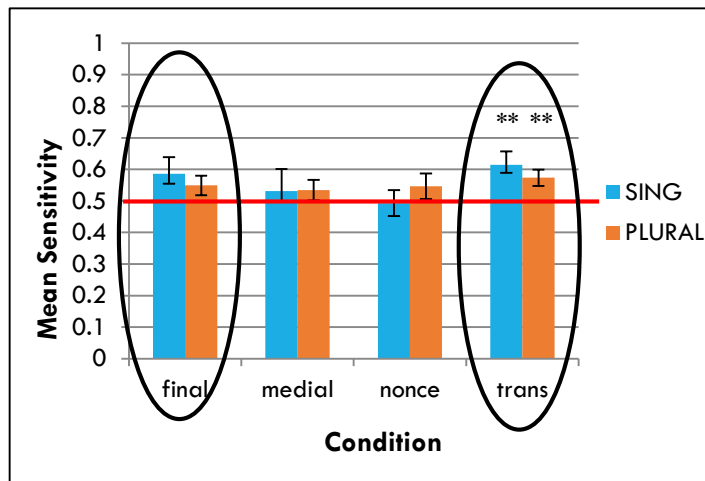
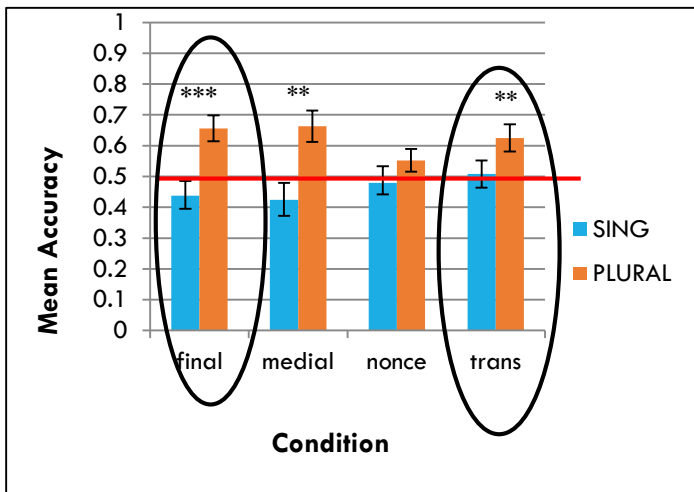


Accuracy:

At a younger age (compared to Perez-Leroux, 2005), children showed evidence above chance for plural only

RESULTS

Q2: Will they show evidence of understanding of other conditions (1 and 4 in Table 1), like Mx-Spanish-speaking children (Gonzalez-Gomez et al., 2017, Hsin et al, under review)?

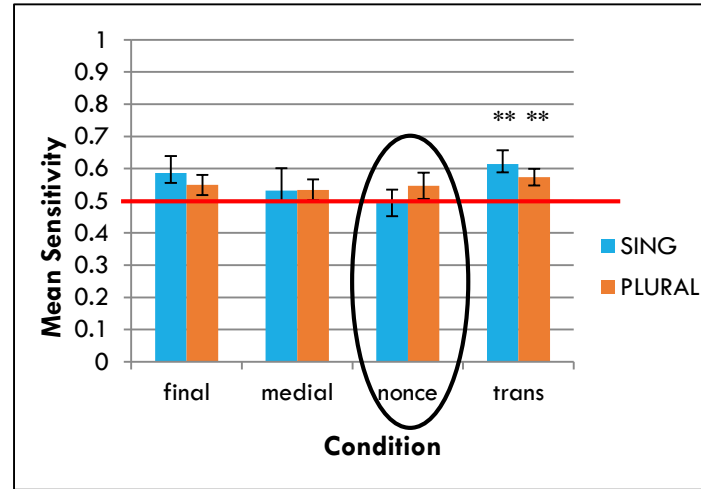
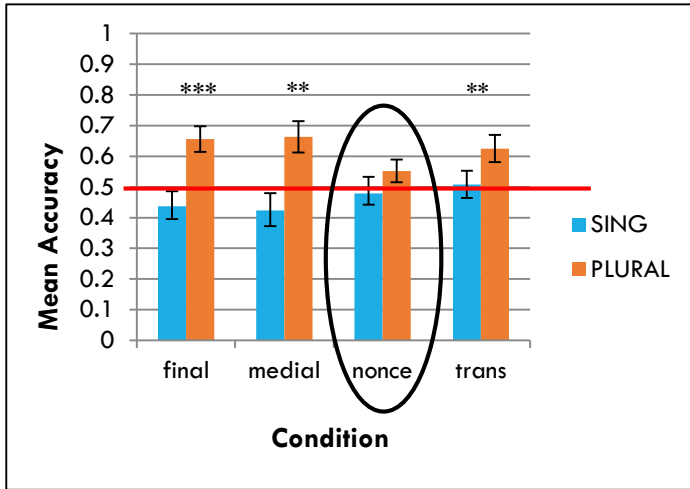


Accuracy (weak evidence of actual comprehension): PL for Final and Transitive conditions

Sensitivity (stronger evidence of comprehension): both SG and PL, only Transitive Condition

RESULTS

Q3: Will they show evidence of productivity in their comprehension (Condition 3, nonce/invented-verb)?



No evidence of comprehension both **SINGULAR** and **PLURAL**

CONCLUSIONS: SUMMARY

EVIDENCE OF COMPREHENSION IN MEXICAN SPANISH-SPEAKING CHILDREN REPORTED IN GONZALEZ-GOMEZ ET AL. (2017) AND HSIN ET AL. (UNDER REVIEW) AND IN DOMINICAN SPANISH-SPEAKING CHILDREN (PRESENT STUDY) BASED ON SENSITIVITY RESULTS

Conditions	SING		PLURAL	
1. Intransitive final position	MX +	DR-	MX+	DR-
2. Intransitive medial position	MX +	DR-	MX+	DR-
4. Transitive medial with <i>el objeto</i>	MX +	DR+	MX+	DR+
<i>Correlation in Comprehension and Production</i>	MX +	DR-	MX+	DR-

❖ Difference across ages on accuracy for *Intransitive Medial Condition* above chance in Perez-Leroux (2005) versus Present Study in **DR-Spanish-speaking children**

→ Different methodology; animated videos foster better results with young children

❖ Differences between Results of **Mexican** and **Dominican** Spanish speaking children found even when using the same methodology:

→ Possible effects of variety of Spanish with

a) **lower proportions of pro-drop** constructions (only constructions tested in comprehension) in **Dominican Spanish**.

b) **different realizations (forms)** of the plural Subject-Verb agreement marker in **Dominican Spanish**: e.g

- n /kãŋ.tãn/
- ŋ /kãŋ.tãŋ/ (velarization)
- Ø /kãŋ.ta/ (final consonant deletion) (same as **Singular**)

→ Implications for assessment of **DR Spanish** versus **Mx Spanish** speakers

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Special thanks to the participants in the study , their parents , their educators and Nayeli Gonzales-Gomez and Lisa Hsin for the creation of the stimuli . This study is funded by two NSF grants— an REU Site Grant SMA# 1659607 and BCS#1548147 to Isabelle Barrière.

спасибо 谢谢
GRACIAS

THANK YOU

ありがとうございました MERCI

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