

# Grammatical Features and the Acquisition of Reference

## A Comparative Study of Dutch and Spanish

*Grammatical Features and the Acquisition of Reference* offers a comparative study of the interpretation of definite articles and pronouns by Dutch and Spanish 4 – 7 year old children. It presents experimental evidence showing that children's interpretation of definite articles and pronouns is affected by their incomplete acquisition of morphosyntactic features of the D-position, the host of both pronouns and definite articles. It is argued that as a result of this, children often interpret definite articles as expletive determiners (articles without semantic content), and third person pronouns as SE-anaphors (*se* in Spanish and *zich* in Dutch).

This study also offers evidence for the claim that young children are sensitive to inflectional morphology. It shows that children acquiring a poorly inflected language, such as Dutch, have considerably more difficulties with the adult interpretation of pronouns and definite articles than children acquiring a richly inflected language, such as Spanish.

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