

Pablo Irizarri van Suchtelen

Spanish as a heritage language in the Netherlands

A cognitive linguistic exploration

There are more than 100,000 people in the Netherlands born in a Spanish speaking country, or with at least one parent born there. A large part of them fits the definition of heritage speaker: persons exposed to a heritage language in a naturalistic setting from birth, simultaneously or subsequently exposed intensively to another language in childhood, and with varying degrees of proficiency in the heritage language.

This dissertation investigates the Spanish spoken as a heritage language by members of a small but tight-knit subgroup: the first and second generation of Chileans in the Netherlands. This Dutch-Spanish bilingual community was studied from a sociolinguistic perspective, and then linguistically on the basis of 60 hours of recordings. These were gathered through visual elicitation and personal interviews with 40 participants - 24 bilinguals and a control group of 16 monolingual homeland speakers in Chile.

The book contains studies on differential object marking, verbal mood, progressive constructions, grammatical gender, dative constructions, chilenismos, pattern replication, matter replication and fluency, uncovering subtle divergences from the Spanish in the homeland and bringing new insights to the study of bilingual Spanish.

The work contributes to a cognitive linguistic approach to fundamental issues in language contact. New insights are provided regarding the activation paths underlying manifestations of cross-linguistic influence such as pattern replication and structural convergence. The author also proposes a concrete model of system-internal optimization to explain the mechanisms behind incomplete acquisition and attrition.

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