

## **Mood distinctions in non-obligatory contexts: a study on Spanish heritage speakers' comprehension and production.**

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The following study examines Spanish heritage speaker's comprehension and production of mood morphology in non-obligatory contexts. In particular, it focuses on nominal phrases introduced by a communication verb, either with reported-speech (indicative) or jussive (subjunctive) purposes (*María dice que comes/comas poco*; "María says/tells you (to) eat very little"). An extensive number of studies have documented an overall loss of the indicative/subjunctive mood distinction in a wide range of constructions, such as relative clauses (Ocampo, 1990; Silva-Corvalan, 1994), and temporal and adverbial phrases (Montrul, 2007, 2011) in both Spanish heritage speakers and L2 learners. However, there have been some discrepancies regarding the attrition of mood distinctions for production and comprehension purposes (Villegas, Dussias & Morgan-Short, 2013).

The present work is designed to shed some light on this discussion by analyzing whether adult heritage speakers of Spanish maintain the distinction between jussive/reported speech contexts based on the use of indicative or subjunctive morphology. Participants will be presented with two types of tasks: a picture matching activity probing the speaker's comprehension of the indicative/subjunctive distinction in the aforementioned non-obligatory context, and a picture-based elicited-production task to examine production. In these tasks, target verbs will be controlled for frequency (in the input and of use), since it is believed to affect the way in which these optional contexts will be handled (Pires and Rothman, 2009, Putnam & Sánchez, 2013).

Since it has been attested that subjunctive morphology in negative commands seems to be stabilized by the age of 4 in both monolingual and bilingual children (De las Cuevas, 2011; Eizezabarrena, 1997; López Ornat, 1994; Sánchez-Naranjo & Pérez-Leroux, 2010), it is hypothesized that jussive contexts might be more resilient to morphological erosion. However, it is also anticipated that frequency of exposure to Spanish and English and the activation of both languages for comprehension and production purposes will have an effect on the interpretation and use of indicative/subjunctive pairs.

**Keywords:** subjunctive, Spanish, heritage speakers, mood distinctions.