



Subject position in Spanish adult and child heritage speakers in the Netherlands

Heritage Language Acquisition: Breaking New Ground in Methodology and Domains of Inquiry

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Heritage speakers

- Specific type of bilingual
- Drop in input in the heritage language
- Variability in ultimate attainment
- Focus on the end-state
- What about the developmental path?

Subject Position in Spanish

Theory

Spanish has flexible word order:

S

V

Un chico **llegó**

A boy arrived

V

S

Llegó **un chico**

Arrived a boy

Theory

Subject position with intransitives in Spanish is constrained by:

1. **Predicate type**
2. **Focus**

Theory

Subject position with intransitives in Spanish is constrained by:

1. Predicate type

Unergative verbs

Un chico silbó

A boy whistled

S

V

Unaccusative verbs

Llegó un chico

Arrived a boy

V

S

Theory

Subject position with intransitives in Spanish is constrained by:

1. **Predicate type**
2. **Focus**

Broad focus

¿Qué pasó?

What happened?

Un chico **silbó**

A boy

Whistled

S

V

Narrow focus

¿Quién silbó?

Who whistled?

Silbó **un chico**

Whistled

a boy

V

S

Theory

	Broad focus	Narrow focus
Unaccusative predicates	VS	VS
Unergative predicates	SV	VS

Previous research – adult HS

Most studies with heritage speakers of Spanish in the US:

- **Heritage speakers do not have monolingual-like knowledge of verb type and focus constraints on word order**

(Zapata et al., 2005; De Prada-Pérez & Pascual y Cabo, 2012)

- **Heritage speakers overgeneralize preverbal subjects compared to monolingual speakers**

(i.a. Hinch Nava, 2007).

The Present study

1. **ADULT** heritage speakers

2. **CHILD** heritage speakers

Method

Acceptability Judgment Task

- **Unaccusative & Unergative verbs**
- **Broad & Narrow focus.** Context ending in:
 - ¿Qué pasó? (*What happened?*) → introducing broad focus
 - ¿Quién + V? (*Who V-ed?*) → introducing narrow focus
- **Definite & Indefinite subjects.**
 - As a control factor

Method

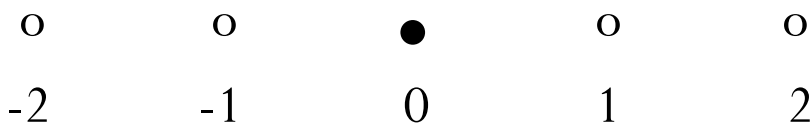
EXAMPLE: Unaccusative - Narrow focus

Es mi cumpleaños y hay mucha gente de visita en mi casa. De repente suena el timbre pero como justo estoy recibiendo un regalo de mi tío, no puedo abrir la puerta. Va mi esposa. Cuando regresa, le pregunto: '¿Quién llegó?' Mi esposa me dice:

It's my birthday and there are many guests in my house. Suddenly the doorbell rings, but since I'm just receiving a gift from my uncle, I cannot open the door. My wife goes. When she gets back, I ask her: "Who arrived?". My wife tells me:

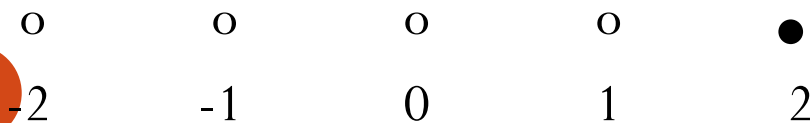
Unos primos llegaron. → SV

Some cousins arrived. They are in the kitchen



Llegaron unos primos. → VS

Arrived some cousins. They are in the kitchen



	Broad	Narrow
Unaccusative	VS	VS
Unergative	SV	VS

Participants

- 17 heritage speakers of Spanish in the Netherlands
 - Age: 19-36
 - Educational level: university – **No students of Spanish!**
 - High-intermediate to advanced proficiency level (as measured by means of self-reports, the *DELE* and a lexical decision task)
 - Simultaneous bilinguals from birth
 - 2nd generation HS
 - Mixed families
 - Variety of Spanish: Spain, Mexico, Colombia, Uruguay, Argentina

Participants

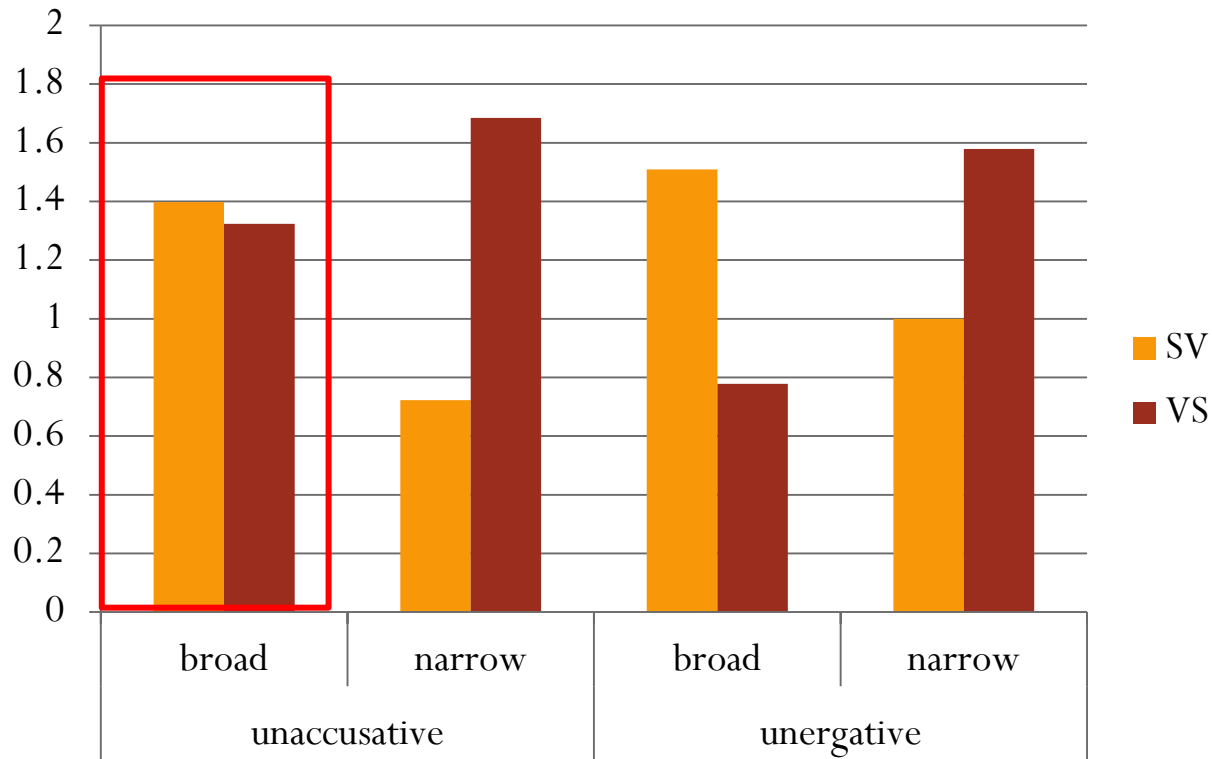
- Control group: 18 Spanish monolinguals
 - Similar to the heritage speakers in terms of:
 - Age
 - Educational level
 - Variety of Spanish (Spain, Mexico, Colombia, Argentina, Nicaragua, Venezuela)

Results

Expected pattern:

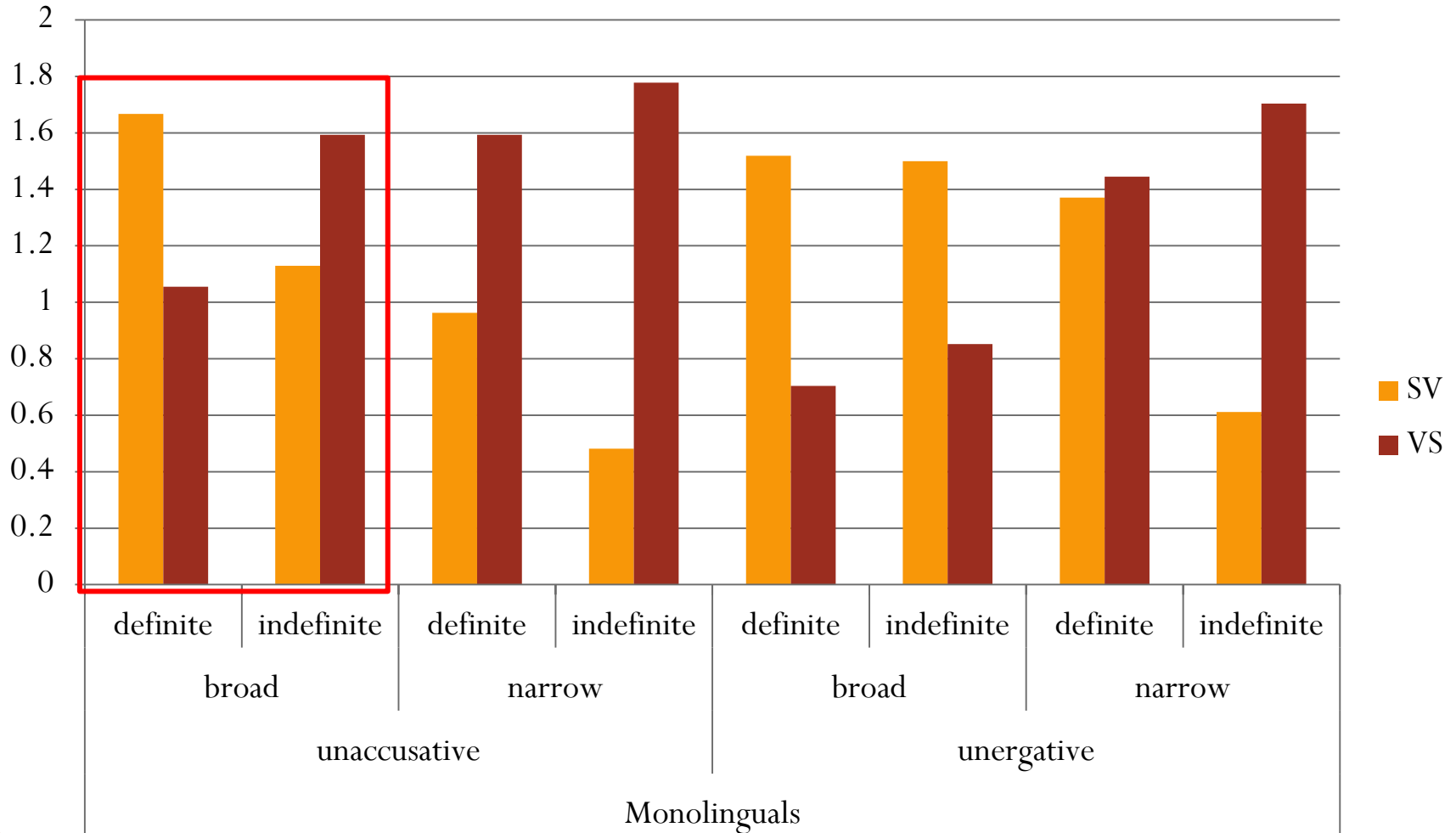
	Broad	Narrow
Unaccusative	VS	VS
Unergative	SV	VS

Results - Monolinguals



EXPECTED	Broad	Narrow
Unaccusative	VS	VS
Unergative	SV	VS

Results - Monolinguals



Monolinguals

Mixed effects model:

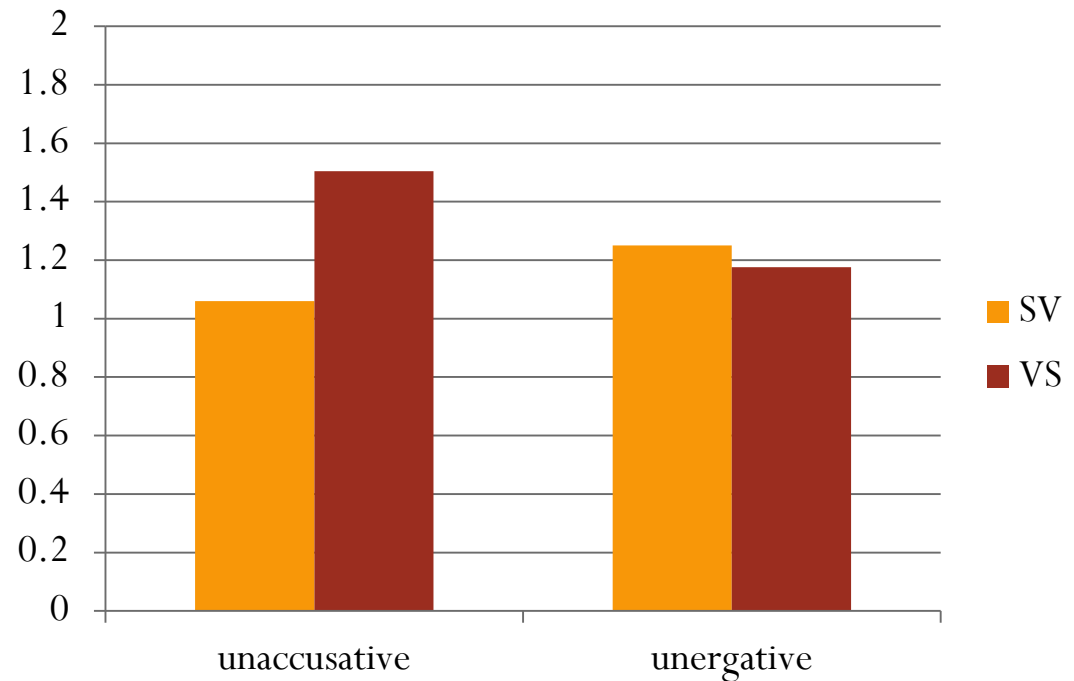
Independent variables:

- Predicate type (t=-2.56, p=0.01)
- Focus (t=5.81, p=8.79*10⁻⁷)
- Definiteness (t=-3.61, p=8.34*10⁻⁴)

Results - Monolinguals

Monolinguals rate VS relatively higher for:

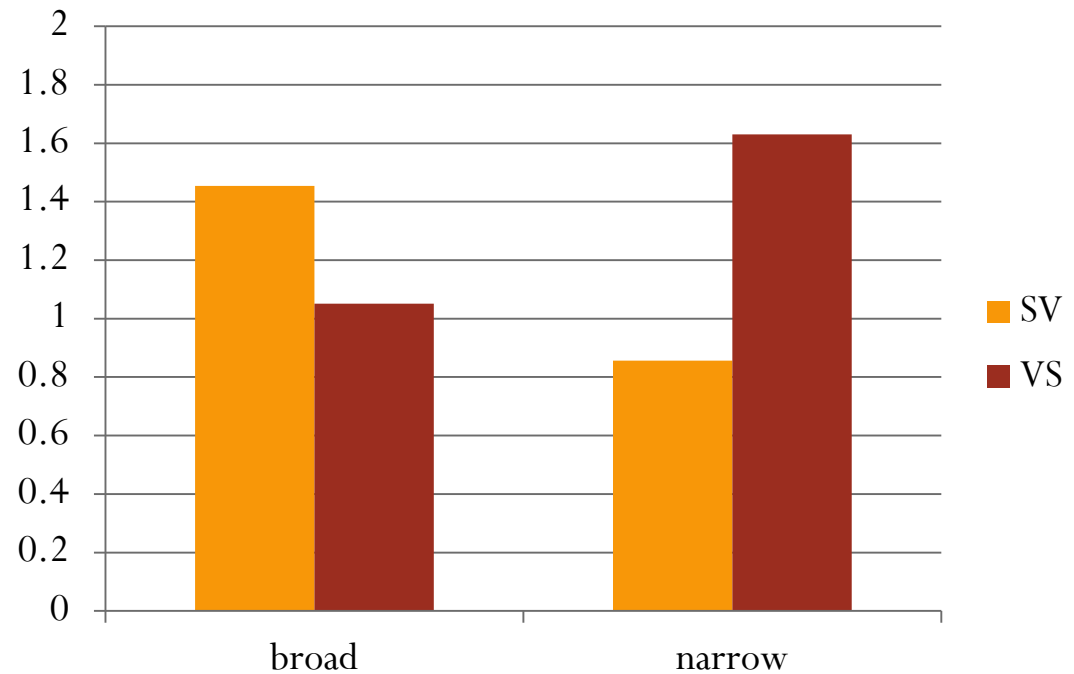
- Unaccusative predicates



Results - Monolinguals

Monolinguals rate VS relatively higher for:

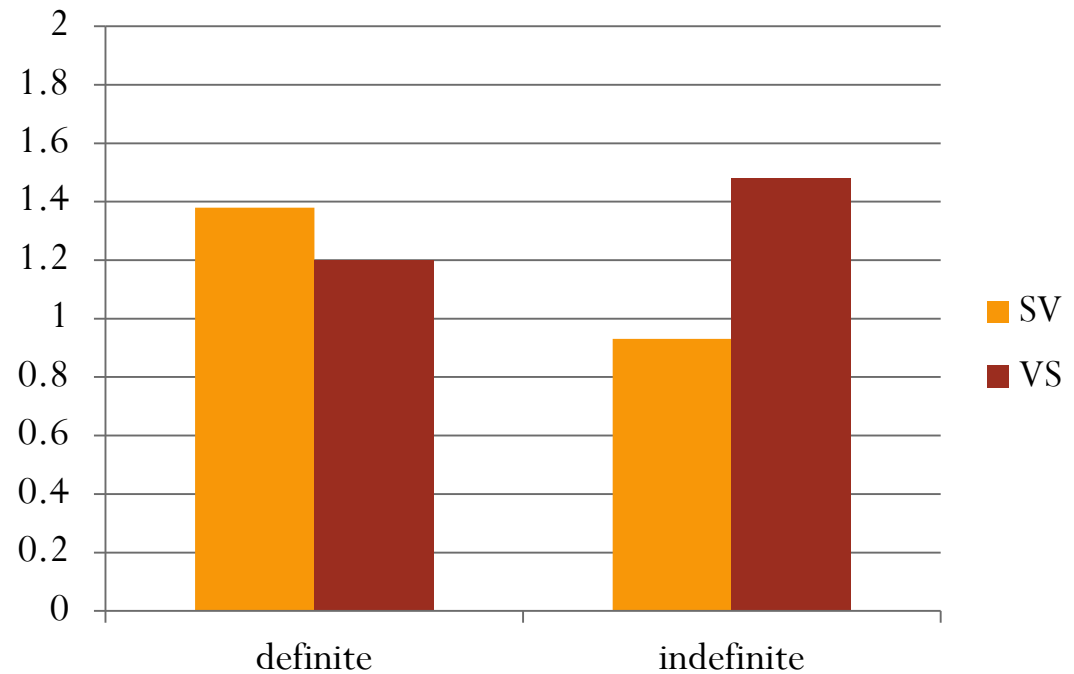
- Unaccusative predicates
- Narrow focus



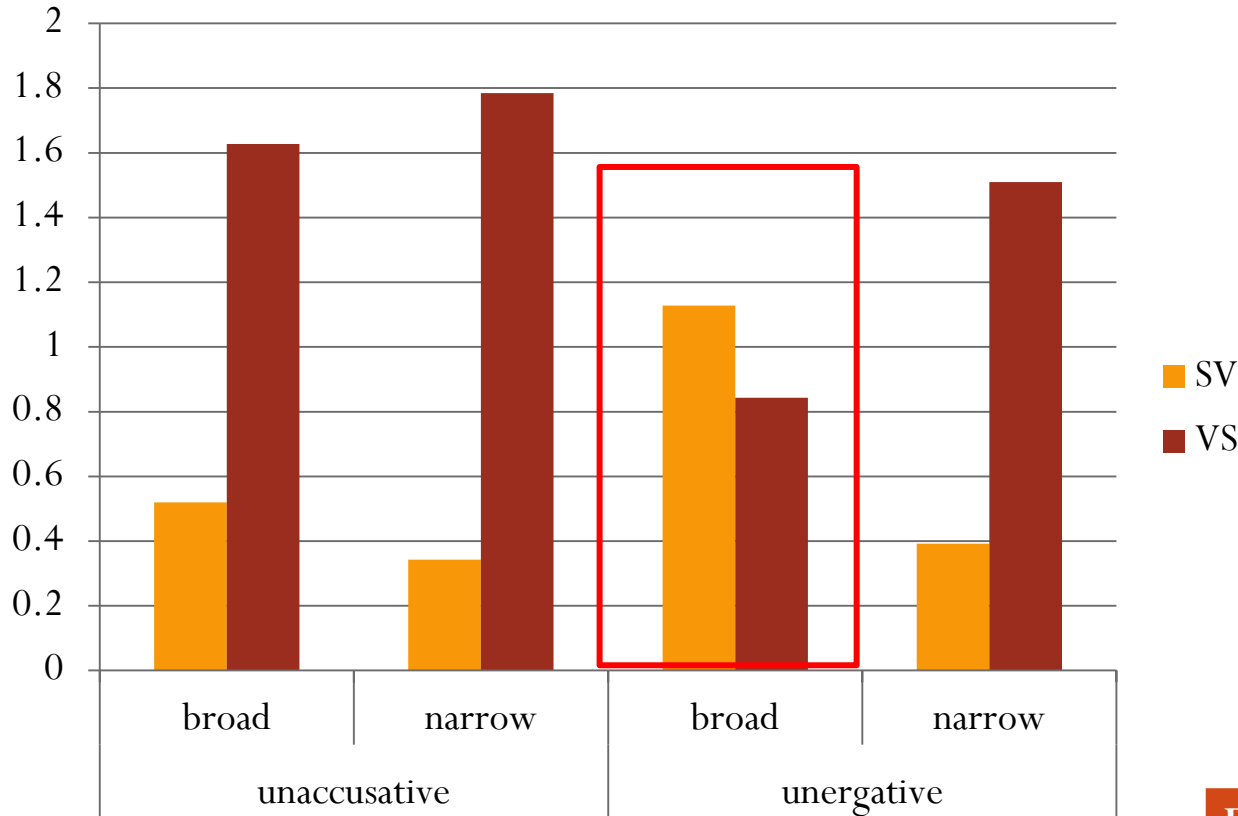
Results - Monolinguals

Monolinguals rate VS relatively higher for:

- Unaccusative predicates
- Narrow focus
- Indefinite subjects

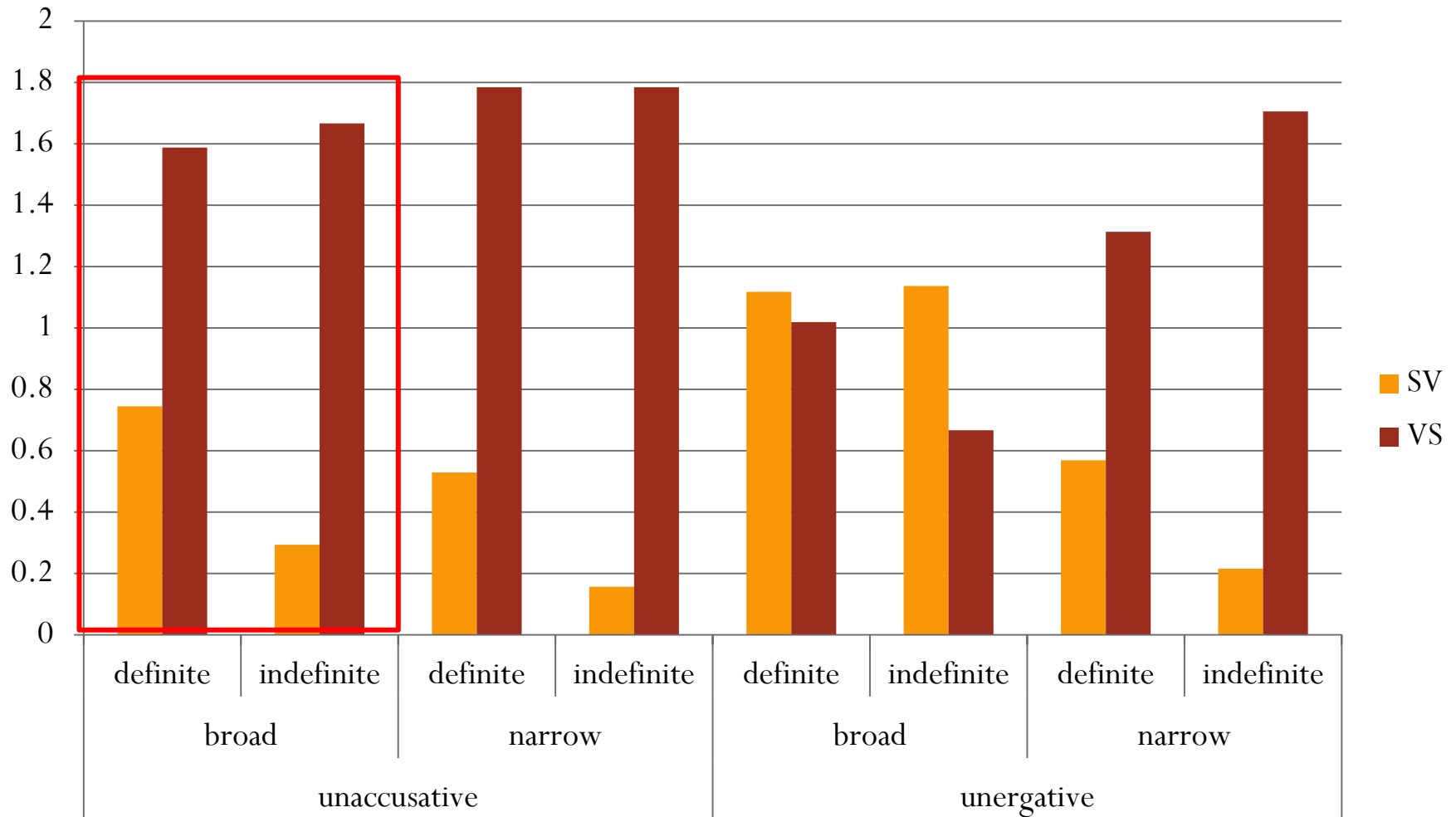


Results – Adult HS



EXPECTED	Broad	Narrow
Unaccusative	VS	VS
Unergative	SV	VS

Results – Adult heritage speakers



Results – Adult HS

Mixed effects model:

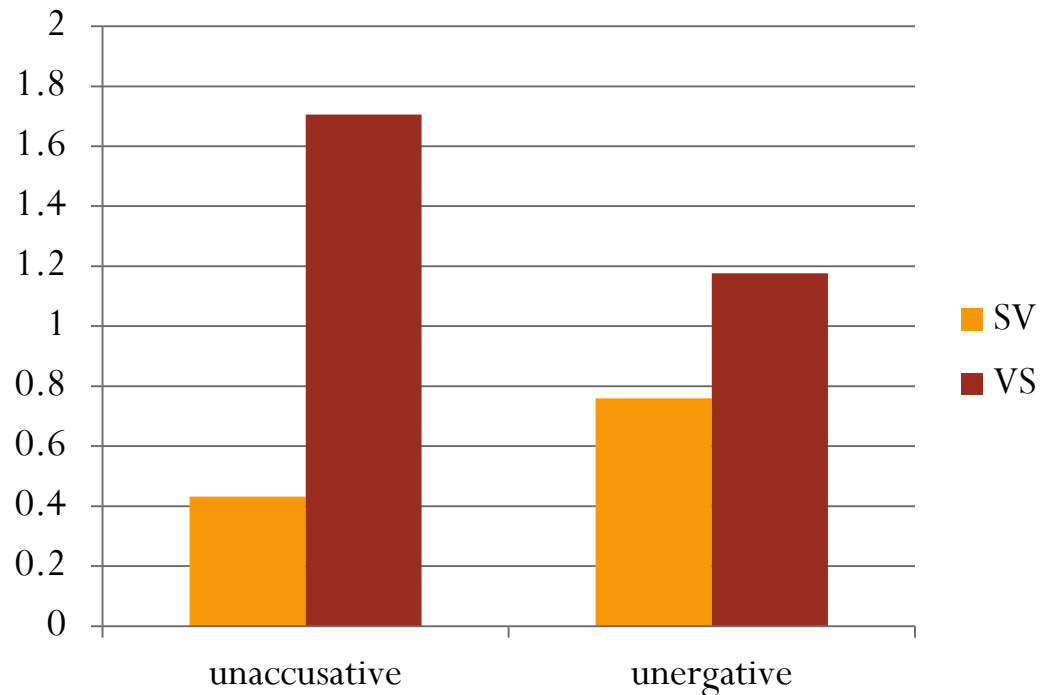
Independent variables:

- Focus (t=2.83, p=0.007)
- Predicate type (t=-2.79, p=0.008)
- Definiteness **Not significant** (t=-1.04, p=0.30)

Results – Adult heritage speakers

Heritage speakers rate VS relatively higher for:

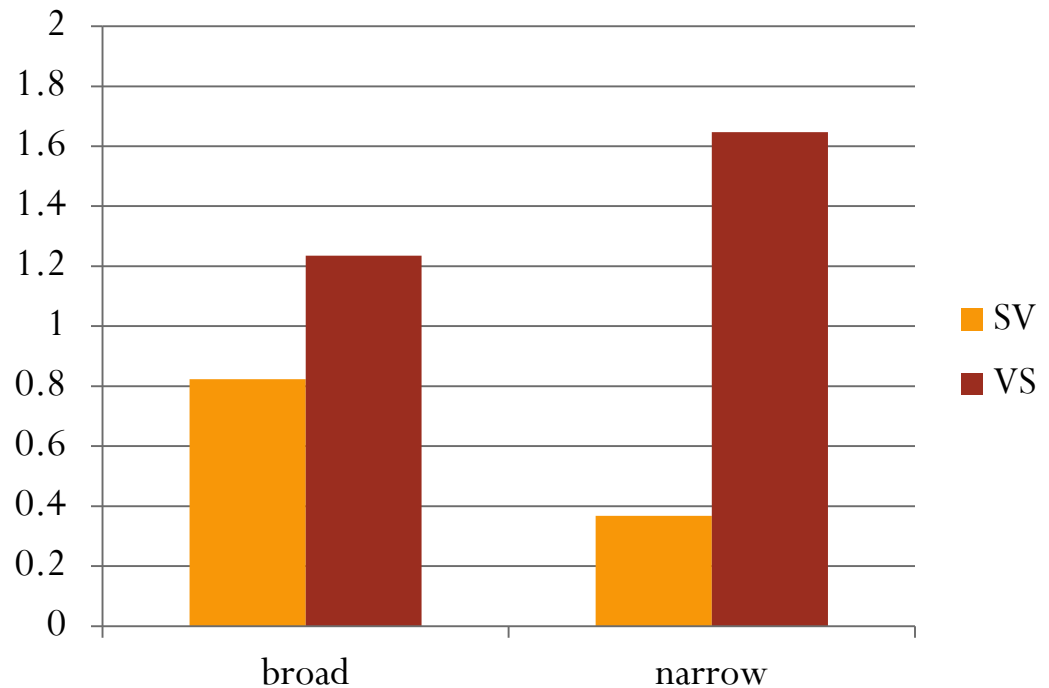
- Unaccusative predicates



Results – Adult heritage speakers

Heritage speakers rate VS relatively higher for:

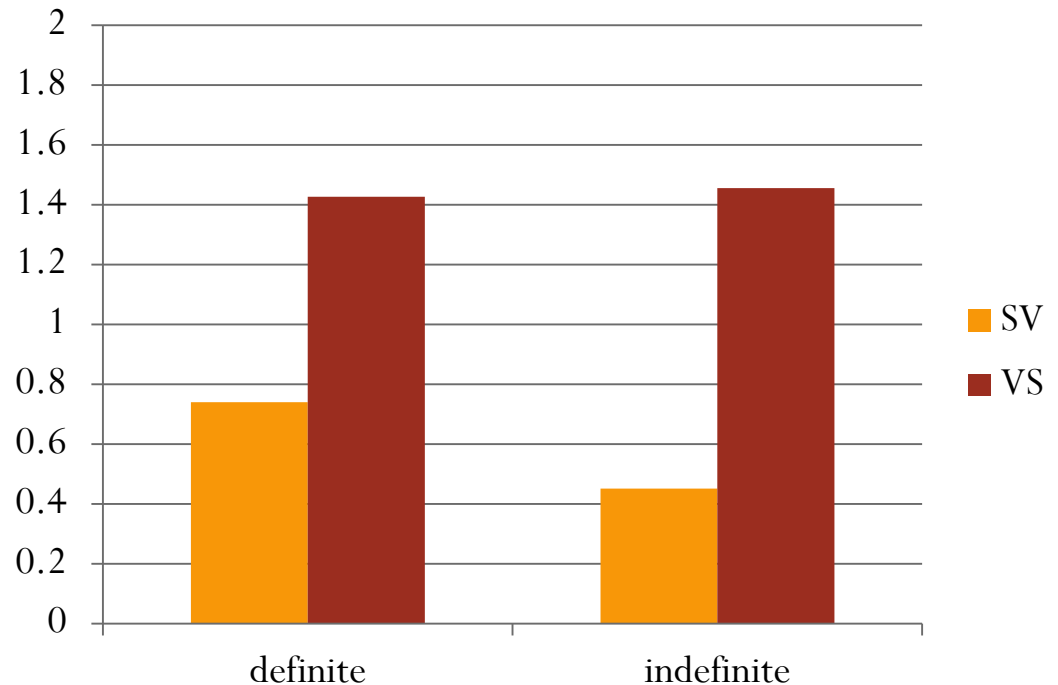
- Unaccusative predicates
- Narrow focus



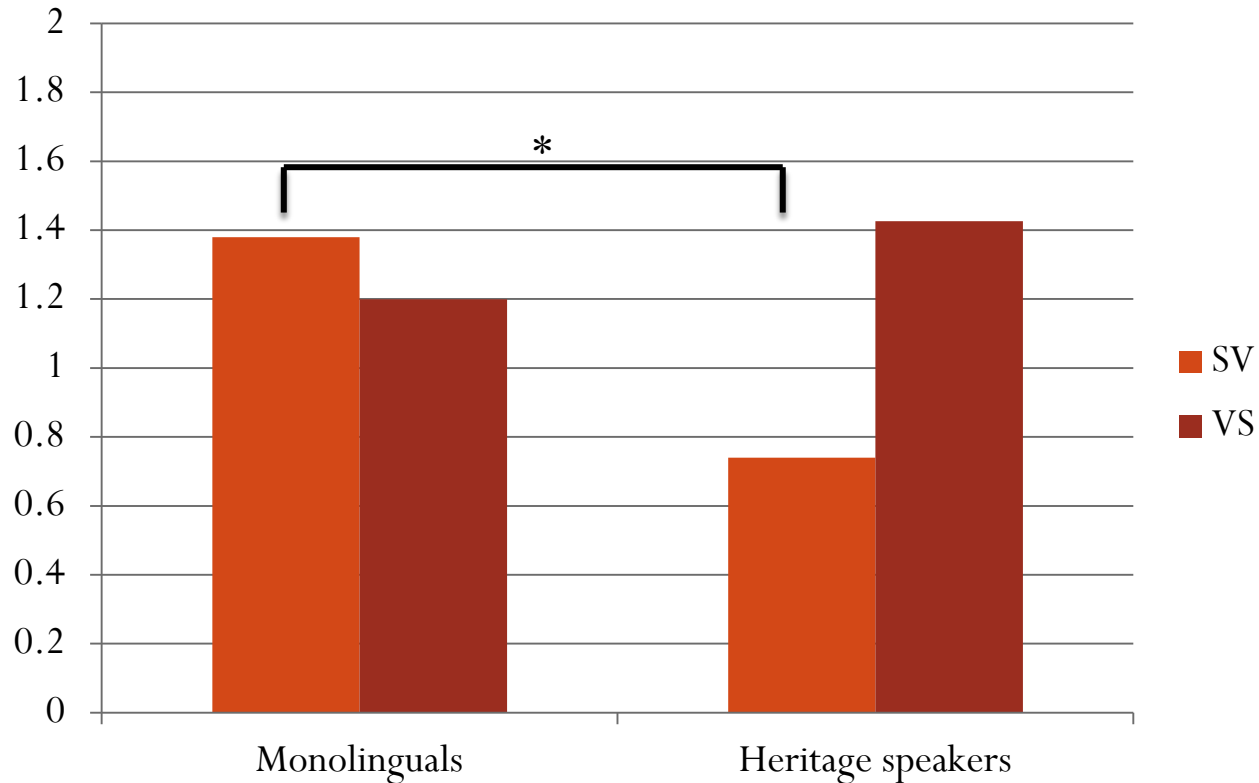
Results – Adult heritage speakers

Heritage speakers rate VS relatively higher for:

- Unaccusative predicates
- Narrow focus
- Indefinite subjects



Results – Adult heritage speakers



Heritage speakers give lower ratings to SV orders ($t=-3.06, p=0.003$)

Summary – Adult HS

	Adult monolinguals	Adult heritage speakers
Accept both orders	✓	✓
Verb type	✓	✓
Focus	✓	✓
Definiteness	✓	X
Overgeneralize	-	VS

Questions

- Why overgeneralization of VS?
 - Cross-linguistic influence from Dutch. Much evidence for VS in Dutch due to V2 in root clauses:

Gisteren	vertrok	Jan	
<i>Yesterday</i>		<i>left</i>	<i>John</i>
Adv	V	S	

Questions

Developmental path:

- When do child heritage speakers start overgeneralizing VS?
- When are verb type and focus constraints on word order acquired?

1. **ADULT** heritage speakers

2. **CHILD** heritage speakers

Previous research – L1 acquisition

- Monolingual children acquiring Spanish seem to have knowledge of the distinction between unergative and unaccusative verbs **early on**.
(Snyder et al., 1995; Bel, 2005, but see Pladevall Ballester, 2010)
- No studies have looked at focus constraints

Previous research – child HS

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Method

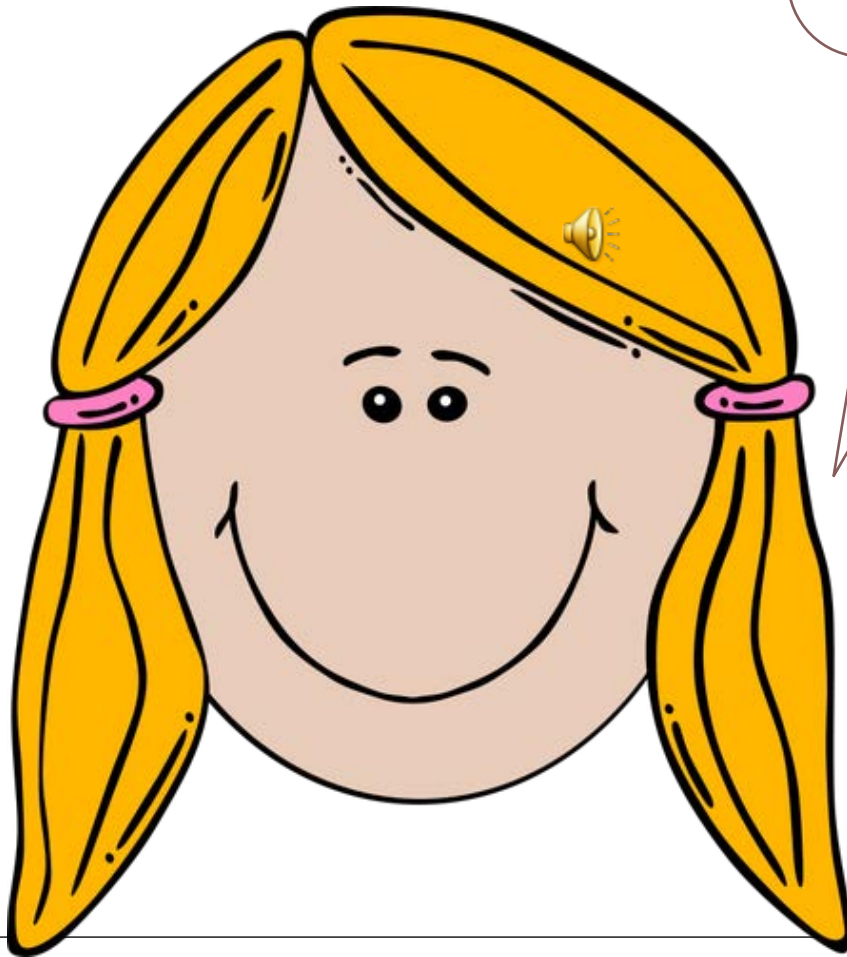
- Oral preference judgement task:
 - Unaccusative & Unergative verbs
 - Broad & Narrow focus (contextualized in a story)
- Only definite subjects
- Same verbs as adult study

Three dogs are playing at the beach and having a lot of fun. While they play, their friend the cat comes and sees them and he gets very sad because they had not asked him to join them?



- ¿Qué pasó?(What happened?) → introducing broad focus
- ¿Quién + V? (Who V-ed?) → introducing narrow focus

El gato llegó





Llegó el gato

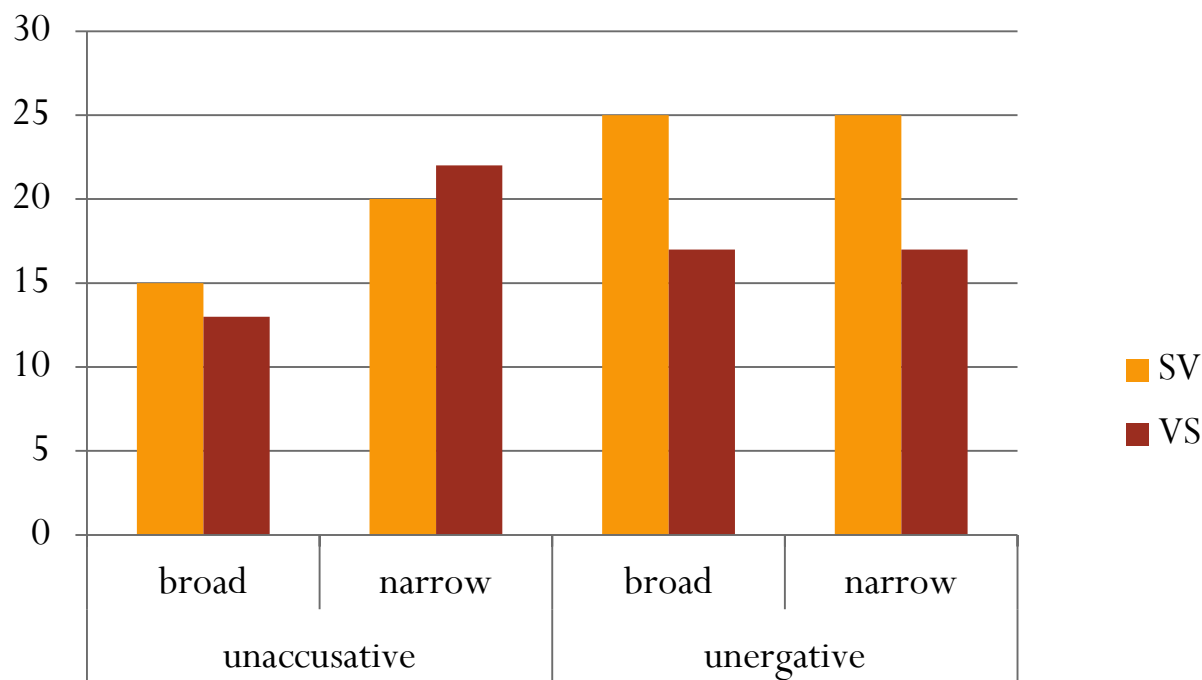
Participants

- 13 child heritage children
- Age: 5-6
- Born in The Netherlands
- 1 Spanish-speaking parent, 1 Dutch-speaking parent
 - Mostly Argentina, Spain and Peru
- Some of them went to a Spanish Saturday-school

Participants (2)

- 4 child heritage children
- Age: 9
- Born in The Netherlands
- 1 Spanish-speaking parent, 1 Dutch-speaking parent
 - Mostly Argentina, Spain and Peru
- Some of them went to a Spanish Saturday-school

Results - 5 year olds

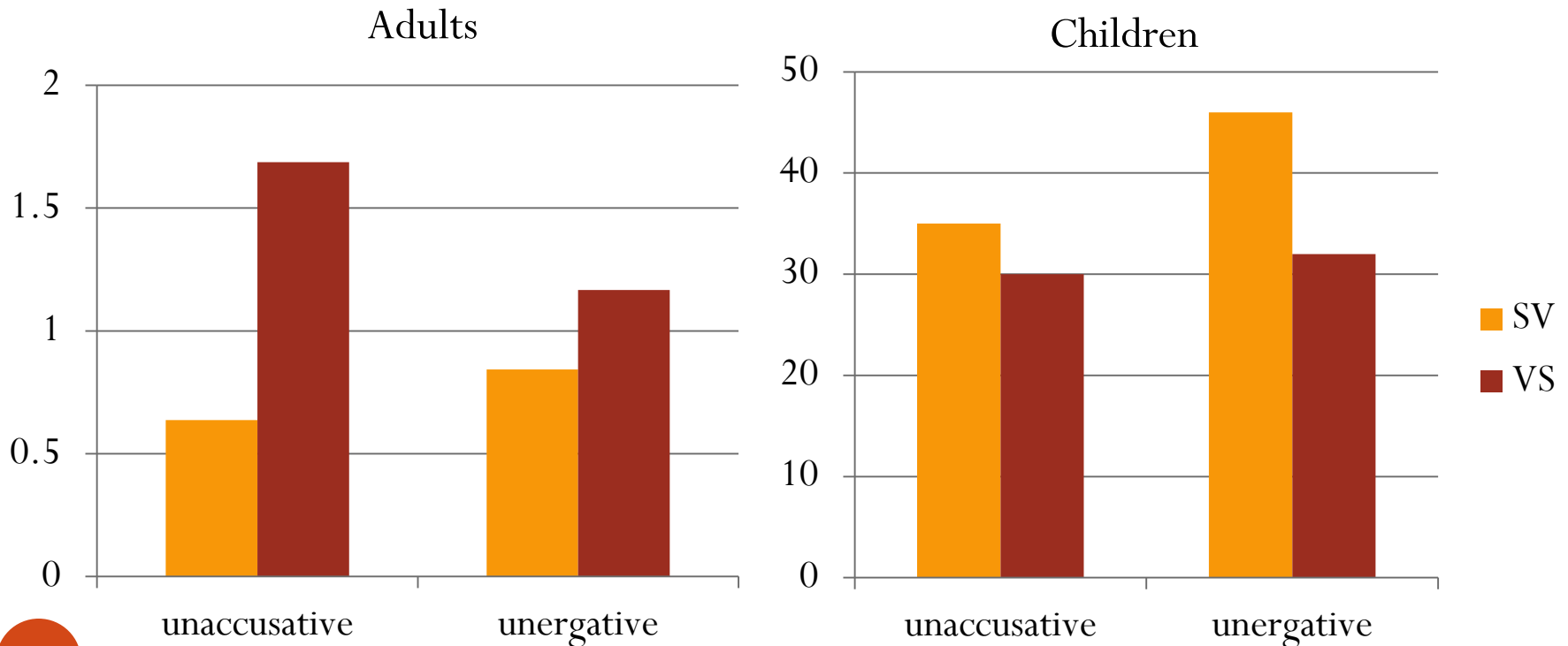


EXPECTED	Broad	Narrow
Unaccusative	VS	VS
Unergative	SV	VS

Results – 5-year olds

Child heritage speakers prefer SV overall regardless of

■ Verb type



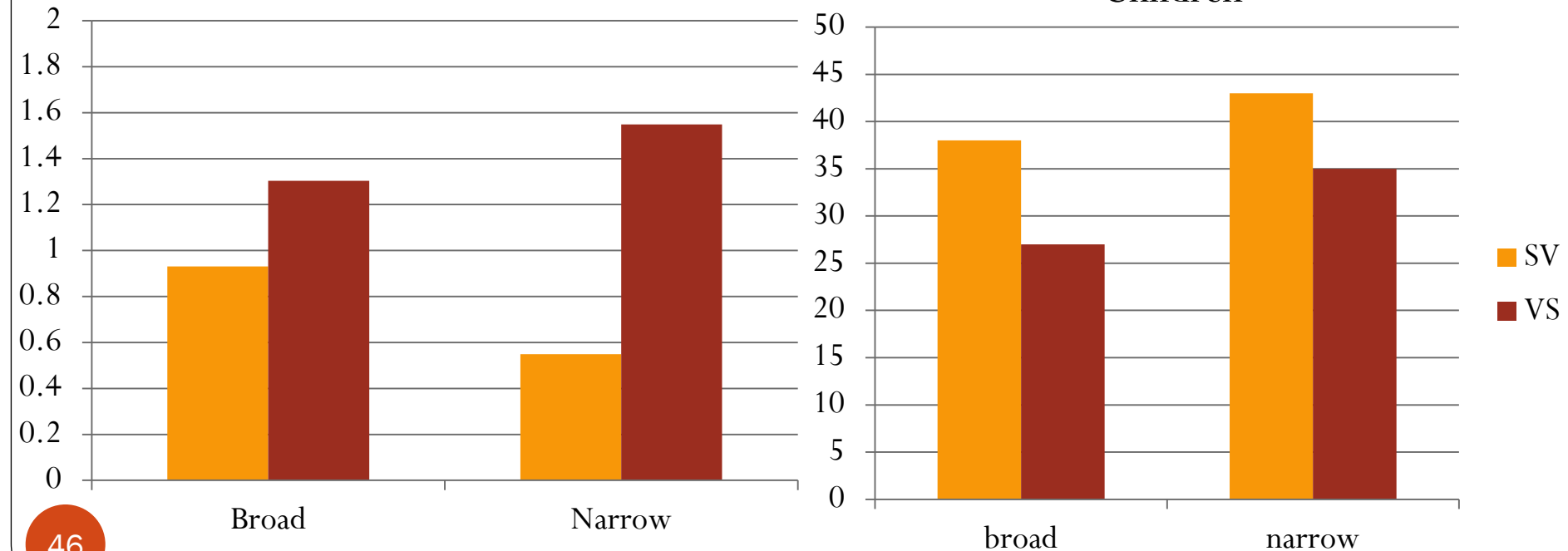
Results – 5-year olds

Child heritage speakers prefer SV overall regardless of

- Verb type
- or Focus

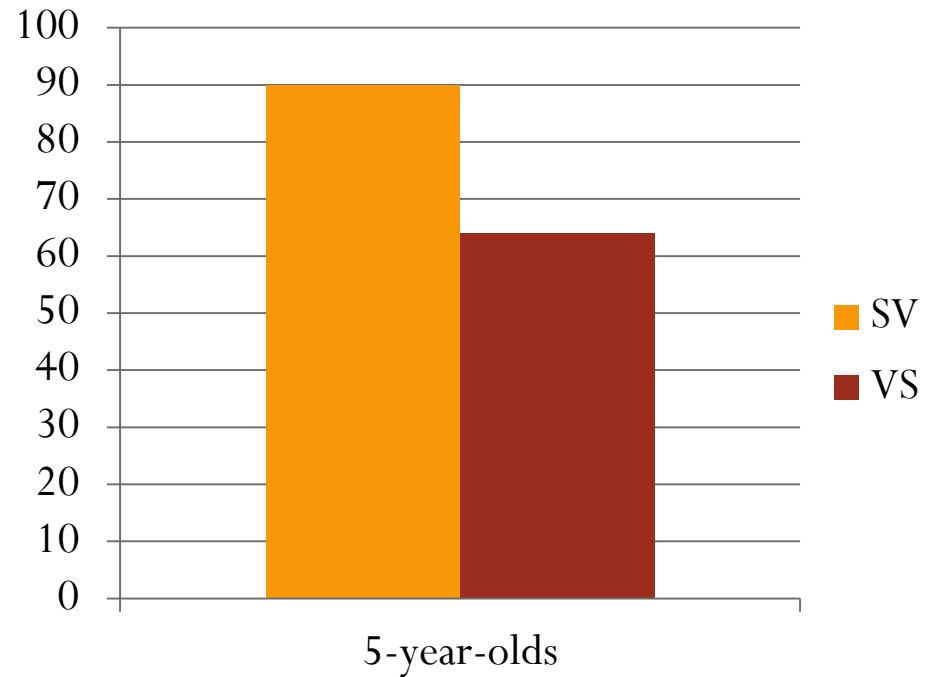
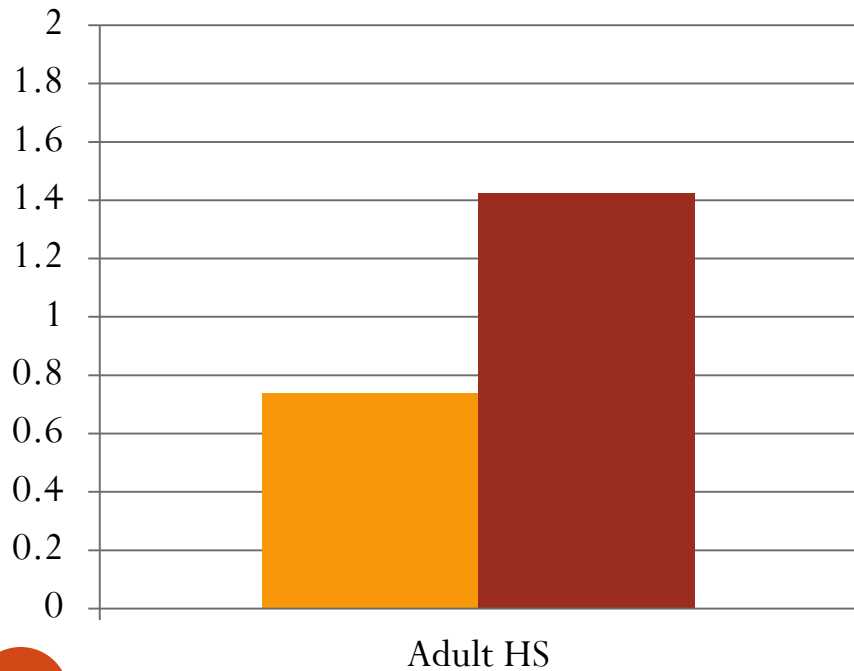
Adults

Children

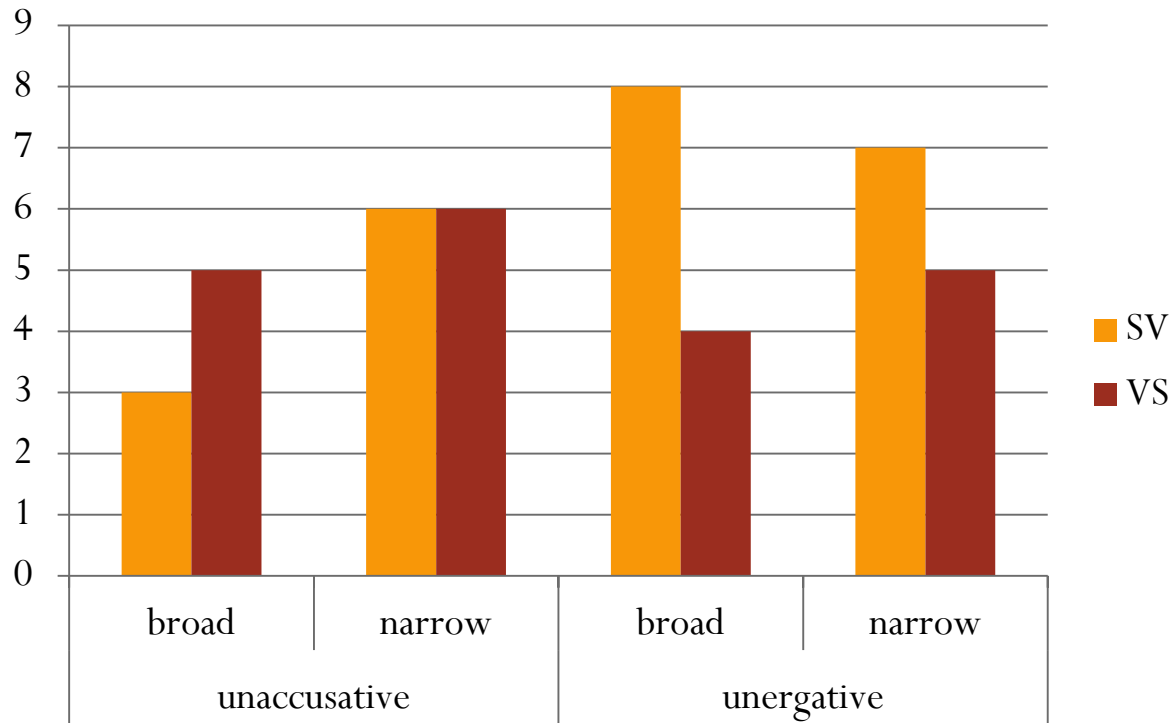


Results - 5-year olds

Child heritage speakers prefer SV overall, unlike adult HS



Results – 9 year olds

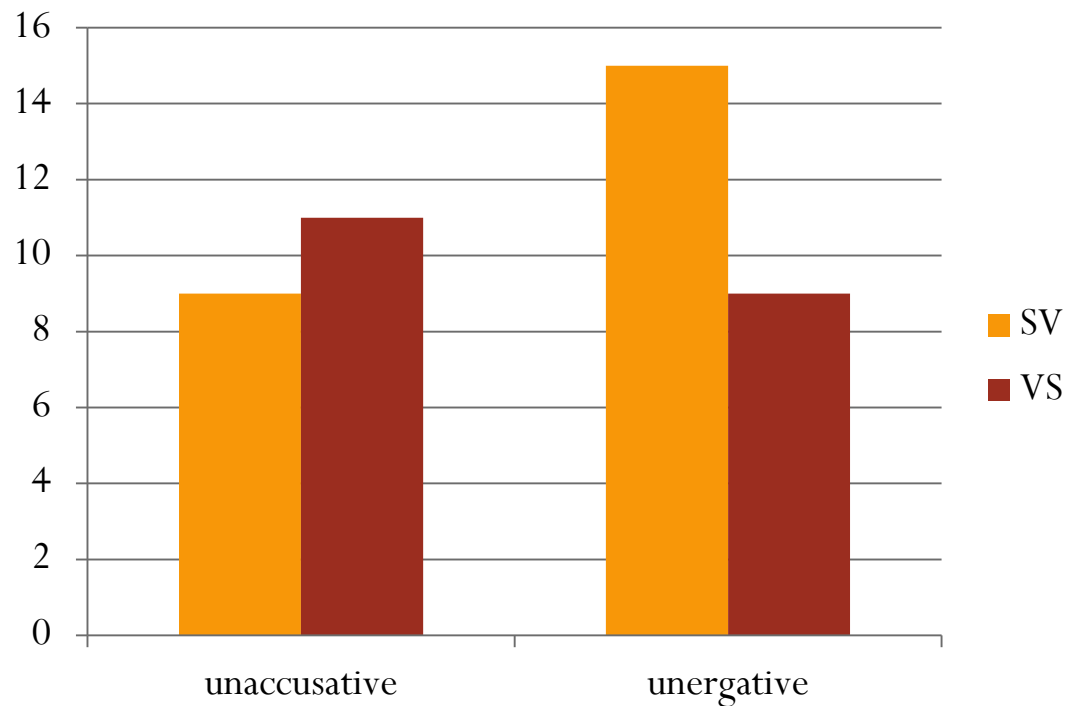


EXPECTED	Broad	Narrow
Unaccusative	VS	VS
Unergative	SV	VS

Results – 9-year olds

The older child heritage speakers prefer SV with

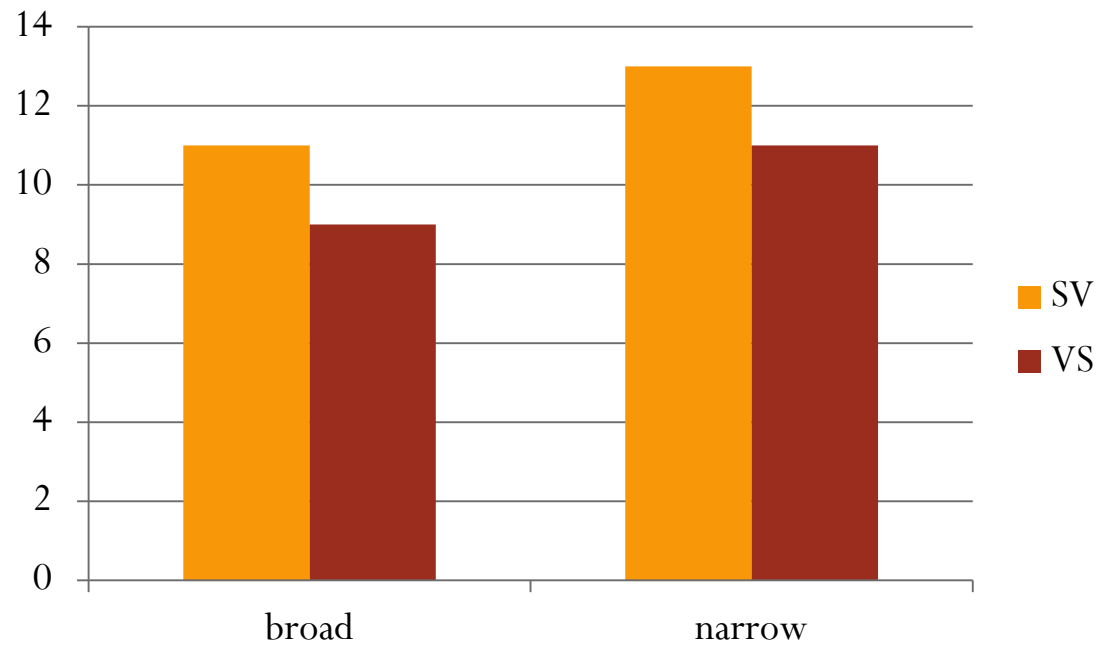
- Unergative predicates



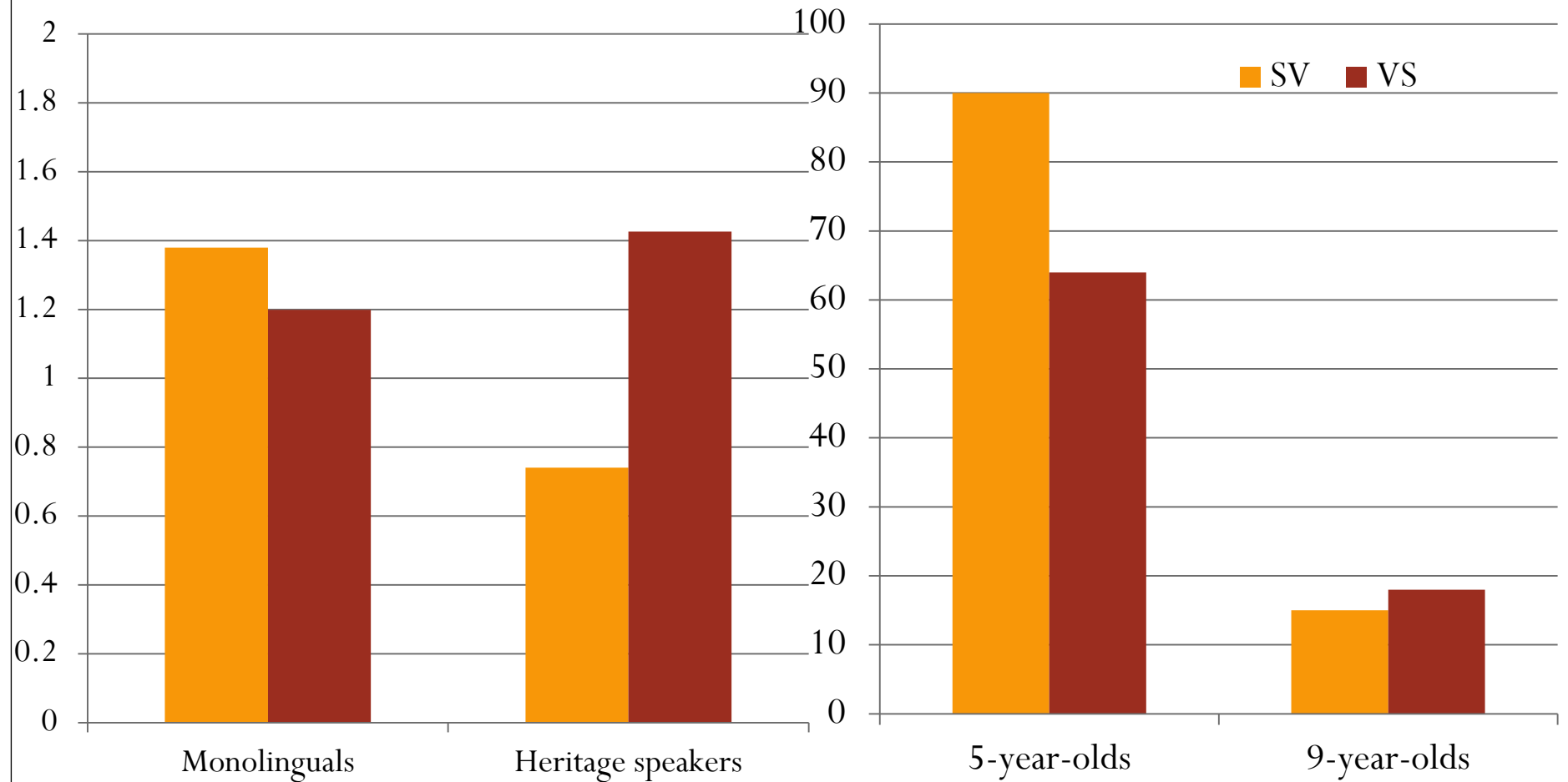
Results – 9-year olds

But no clear preferences established for:

- Focus



Results - overgeneralization



Summary – child HS

	5 yo	9 yo
Accept both orders	√	√
Verb type	X	√
Focus	X	X
Definiteness	?	?
Overgeneralize	SV	-

Discussion

	5 yo	9 yo	Adult HS
Accept both orders	✓	✓	✓
Verb type	X	✓	✓
Focus	X	X	✓
Definiteness	?	?	X
Overgeneralize	SV	-	VS

Discussion

	5 yo	9 yo	???	Adult HS
Accept both orders	√	√	???	√
Verb type	X	√	???	√
Focus	X	X	???	√
Definiteness	?	?	???	X
Overgeneralize	SV	-	???	VS

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THANK YOU!

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