# *Come* to think of it:
# Heritage speakers' use of deictic verbs

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## DEICTIC VERBS

**Verbs of motion** reveal cross-linguistic differences in how languages encode key aspects of events (Talmy 1985, 1991).

**Deictic verbs** such as 'come' and 'go' capture information about the source or goal, and also the speaker's or hearer's location.

**Pragmatics of 'come' and 'go'**
'come' (but not 'go'):
• encodes an indexical presupposition about the relation of the motion goal to the speaker at the reference time
• carries pragmatic appropriateness conditions (Barlew 2015, 2017; Fillmore 1971/1997; Oshima 2006; Sudo, 2018)

**Language-specific restrictions on 'come'**
**English (come)**
• flexible, allowing for indexical perspective shift (Anand & Nevins, 2004; Schlenker, 1999, 2003)
• may be oriented toward the perspective of a protagonist in narrative (Lewis, 1979; Rall & Harris, 2000)
**Spanish (venir)**
• more restrictive, only used to express movement towards the speaker

Previous work on deictic verbs has documented **cross-linguistic transfer** (Chui, 2016, English; Lewandowski, 2014, Polish; Vann, 1998, Catalan)

**Investigating deictic verb use can reveal how dominance and varying levels of activation may affect the strength of semantic and pragmatic associations in bilingual children.**

## PATTERNS OF HERITAGE BILINGUAL DEVELOPMENT

**Heritage speakers** undergo a continuing process of **feature reassembly** drawing from features in both languages (Putnam & Sánchez, 2013; Sánchez, 2019).
• This involves fluctuation in the levels of activation of the lexicon and the strength of the association among functional, semantic and phonological features.
• **Activation** for comprehension and production purposes is required to retain these associations.

## METHODOLOGY

### Corpus Analysis

**Participants**
**12** monolingual Spanish speakers (age 12) in Mexico (Aguilar, 2015)
**40** monolingual English speakers (ages 10, 11)
**80** English dominant Spanish heritage speakers (ages 10, 11) in Miami, FL (Pearson, 2002) *children with parents from Cuba, Nicaragua, Honduras and El Salvador

**Method**
Picture-based narrative re-telling task based on Meyer's *Frog, Where are you?* obtained from CHILDES (MacWhinney, 2000)

Transcripts of child productions were hand-coded for the presence of the verbs 'come' and 'go' in present tense and past tense, imperfect and preterit.

Occurrences were then compared across participant groups.

**Predictions**
Following Spanish deictic verb restrictions, monolingual Spanish speakers will not use *venir* in narrative (in contrast to English speakers).
English dominant bilinguals will show a more permissive pattern with *venir*, reflective of their dominant language, allowing the motion to be associated with the protagonist.



**Examples of productions by Spanish heritage speakers in both English and Spanish**
**(participant numbers in parentheses)**

| English | | |
|---|---|---|
| | 1. He called his name but nobody **came** (22132099) | 1. Then a deer **came** (32331466) |
| | | 2. This deer **came** along and picked up the boy (22232065) |

| Spanish | | |
|---|---|---|
| | 1. la llamó y la llamó y no **vino** (22132056) *he called and he called but [the frog] didn't come* | 1. cuando vino un reindeer (22132056) *when came a reindeer* |
| | 2. y llamaron rana, rana, pero no **vino** (11132198) *and they called frog, frog, but [he] didn't come* | 2. pero **vino** el reindeer (11131281) *but came the reindeer* |

## RESULTS

### Raw counts of 'come' and 'go'
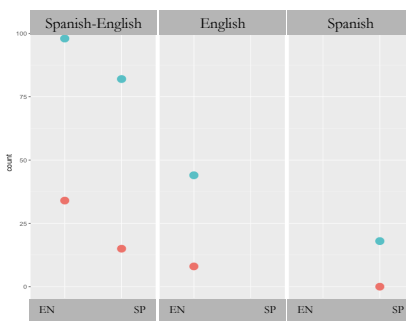


ME of Language (F(1) = 13.32, $p < 0.003$) and Group (F(2) = 43.87; $p < .003$); Interaction (F(3) = 51.44; $p < 0.004$)

### Percentages of 'come' and 'go'

| Participant group | 'come' | 'go' |
|---|---|---|
| Spanish-English (English) | 14.80% | 85.20% |
| Spanish-English (Spanish) | 15.50% | 84.50% |
| English monolingual | 15.40% | 84.60% |
| Spanish monolingual | 0.00% | 100.00% |

Results reflect English-level production in the Spanish of the heritage speakers

## DISCUSSION

Bilingual heritage speakers narrating in Spanish
• displayed pattern of use of 'come'/*venir* that closely resembled English distribution
• allowed 'come' to express protagonist perspective
• **displayed no difficulty with focus word order, morphosyntax, or discourse markers**
This pattern does not appear to be linked to non-linguistic factors:
• most participants had mid-level SES
• type of schooling had no effect (50% in English immersion for Hispanic students/50% in two-way immersion schools)
• Spanish at home had no effect (with the exception of 2 children, all of the parents in this group reported speaking mostly Spanish in the home)

**The locus of the observed pattern was in the use of lexical items, indicating differences in pragmatic restrictions on perspective shift between the two languages.**

## CONCLUSION

• English dominant heritage speakers seem to use *venir* more liberally in Spanish, regardless of amount of Spanish exposure at school and in the home
• This pattern suggests evidence of alternate alignment or feature reassembly (as proposed by Putnam & Sánchez (2013) and Sánchez (2019)) of deictic verbs
• The strength of the association between semantic and pragmatic values is strongest in English, the most activated language, and thus influences the non-dominant language, Spanish, leading to an innovative or non-target realignment.
• An open question is where, beyond deictic verbs, we would observe this influence.

## SELECT REFERENCES

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