

Subject and object *wh*-question comprehension among Farsi-speaking adults, monolingual children, and heritage child speakers of Farsi

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Research has shown that object *which*-questions are more challenging than object *who*-questions for adults to process and for children to comprehend and/or produce (Donkers et al. 2013, Friedmann et al. 2019). This difficulty has been linked to a preference for assigning an agent-first interpretation to the first noun, which later requires revision (Contemori et al., 2017; Schouwenaars et al., 2018; Pontikas et al., 2022). Morphosyntactic cues might effectively guide revision or prevent the parser from committing to an incorrect interpretation (Pozzan et al., 2015). Farsi represents a good test case for this hypothesis because it has an object marker *ra*, following object nouns and bare *wh*-objects. Therefore, when the *wh*-object appears clause-initially, *ra* represents an early cue that should prevent commitment to a subject/agent-first interpretation (or facilitate revision) in object *which*-questions (Pozzan et al., 2015). Our study is the first to investigate (a) whether Farsi-speaking adults and children are sensitive to the presence of *ra* and use it for the comprehension of object *who* and *which*-questions and (b) to what extent heritage children differ from monolingual children in their interpretation of these questions. 15 monolingual children (M = 4;9yo), 16 heritage child Farsi speakers (M = 7.3yo) and 33 Farsi-speaking adults (M = 28;3yo) were assessed on a picture-selection task (including 32 items varying according to structure (subject/object) and *wh*-word (*who/which*) and a sentence-repetition task/SRT. Bilingual children's language history was measured through the QBEx questionnaire (De Cat et al. 2022).

A GLMER analysis of response accuracy yielded a significant interaction ($p < .001$) between *wh*-word and structure: while adults and monolingual children only showed a subject-object asymmetry with *who*-questions, heritage children also displayed this asymmetry with *which*-questions. A LMER on reaction times revealed a significant effect of structure, as all groups slowdown when processing object questions.

The findings show that, contrary to cross-linguistic evidence (Contemori et al., 2017; Schouwenaars et al., 2018), object *who*-questions pose comprehension difficulties not only for monolingual and heritage children, but even for Farsi-speaking adults. Unlike adults and monolingual children, heritage children have difficulties integrating the information provided by *ra* to disambiguate between a subject and an object interpretation (Lohndal et al., 2021). These difficulties seem to be modulated by (i) language skills, measured through the SRT: children with higher SRT scores are also more accurate with object questions; (ii) language experience, as heritage children with higher cumulative exposure to Farsi also comprehend object questions better.

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