**Dutch children's interpretation of ONLY in pre-subject and pre-object position**

ONLY asserts that a predicate applies exclusively to a focused constituent and not to any alternatives, (1)-(2) (Rooth, 1992). In several child languages it has been found that although children have acquired the inference that ONLY entails an exclusive contrast with a set of alternatives, they don't always apply this target-like. ONLY is interpreted more accurately in pre-object than pre-subject position (Bergsma, 2002; Crain et al., 1994; Müller et al., 2011, 2015). This subject-object asymmetry has received various accounts. Children restrict the scope incorrectly when there are multiple constituents in the c-command domain (Crain et al., 1994). Children depend on a felicitous discourse where two sets under discussion have been explicitly introduced (Müller et al., 2011). Given that focus tends to be expressed in object position, not subject (Heusinger, 1999), ONLY in pre-subject position is confusing, because the alignment is non-canonical (Müller et al., 2015). Our study compared sentences with ONLY in pre-subject and pre-object position in a discourse with two explicitly sets. Do children know the exclusiveness inference of ONLY and its scope for both positions alike when given such a felicitous discourse?

Dutch learners' interpretation of ONLY (n=53, M 7;2, range 4;6—9;9) was investigated using a picture-verification task (Figures 1-3). 12 Adults served as controls. The design varied position (Pre-subject vs. Pre-object) and exclusiveness (Match vs. Mismatch). In the Mismatch condition exclusiveness was violated by switching target and alternative set.

Accuracy on pre-object ONLY was near-ceiling, suggesting that children knew the exclusiveness inference. Accuracy on pre-subject ONLY was low, especially in younger children (Figure 4), as confirmed by a logistic mixed-effects model with a main effect of position ($p < .001$), an interaction of position and exclusiveness ($p < .001$), as well as a positive correlation between accuracy and age ($p < .001$). In contrast to previous studies, our design also allowed analyzing individual response patterns. Most children answered consistently. Three subgroups emerged for pre-subject ONLY (Figure 5): 28 children had adult-like scope (top-left), 8 children misconstrued scope in match and mismatch conditions (bottom-right), and 11 children allowed both scopes, accepting ONLY in both conditions. The latter pattern presents a novel finding in the literature.

Children's interpretation was affected by the syntactic position of ONLY. Nevertheless, this does not support accounts based on c-command (Crain et al., 1994), because in a control task with ALL, the same children were at ceiling on subject and object ALL, not making the so-called "spreading" mistake (Roeper et al., 2006). Moreover, facilitating the identification of the alternative set with a felicitous discourse did not help for pre-subject ONLY. Our findings are compatible with Müller et al.'s (2015) account that children are sensitive to the canonical alignment of focus in syntax. Seeing children's ability to correctly determine scope for universal quantifiers in both syntactic positions, the difference between ALL vs. ONLY in our study suggests that the exclusiveness of ONLY is harder to acquire than the exhaustivity of ALL. Thus, ONLY is acquired late, but what exactly is the challenge for pre-subject ONLY? We discuss how non-canonical alignment can lead to two distinct error patterns, inverse scope and overly liberal scope, and what can lead to reversing the scope and blocking an overly liberal scope.

**Figure 1**: Introduction scene

Pre-subject ONLY intro:

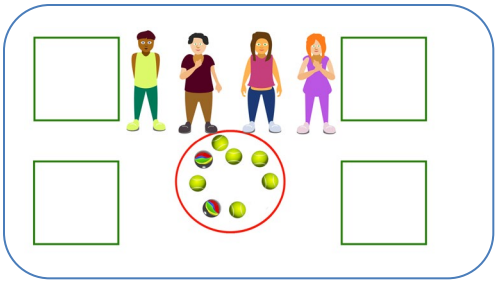
Kijk, hier zijn wat jongens en meisjes.

'Look, here are some boys and girls.'

Pre-object ONLY intro:

Kijk, hier zijn wat knikkers en boeken.

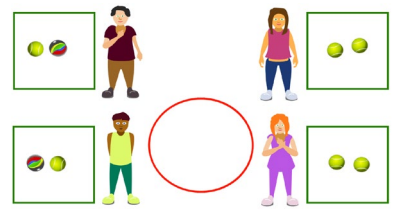
'Look, here are some marbles and books'



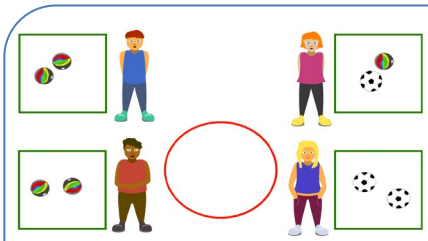
(1) Alleen maar jongens hebben een knikker gepakt.

'Only boys took a marble'. → No one else took a marble

**Figure 2**: Scenes for Match and Mismatch conditions for Pre-subject ONLY



MATCH: No one else took a marble

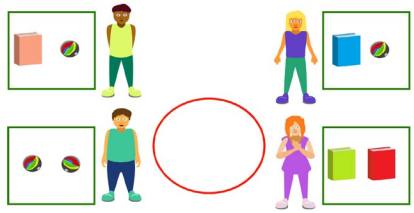


MISMATCH: Someone else took a marble

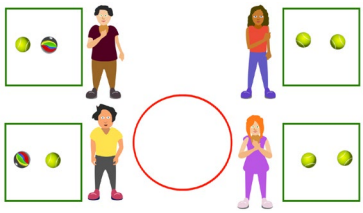
(2) Eén jongen heeft alleen maar knikkers gepakt.

'One boy has taken only marbles'. → There are no other things that the boy took.

**Figure 3**: Scenes for match and mismatch conditions for Pre-object ONLY



MATCH: One boy took no other things



MISMATCH: The boy took something else

**Figure 3**: Accuracy in Pre-subject and Pre-object position for Match (M) & Mismatch situations (MM)

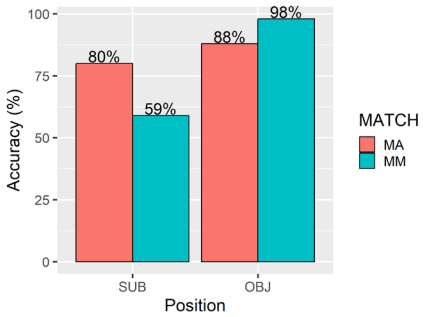
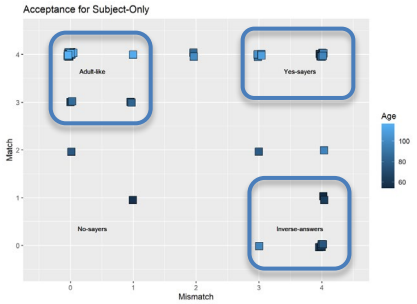



**Figure 4**: Subgroups of individual response patterns Pre-subject ONLY modulated by age

Adult scope n=28




Ambiguous scope n=11

Inverse scope n=8