1. INTRODUCTION
Research question: Why do children produce utterances with null copulas?

The Production Hypothesis (our hypothesis): To facilitate production, children exploit the fact that the copula carries little semantic information and drop it (regardless of predicate type, language group (bilingual or monolingual), or language (Spanish or English)).

The Syntactic Hypothesis: Some children pass through a null copula phase. Due to a parameter mis-setting, they omit more copulas with stage than with individual-level predicates.

- Because Spanish has two copular forms, one for each predicate type, Spanish/English bilinguals set the parameter correctly at an earlier stage and omit fewer copulas.
- In a controlled environment, there is no effect of predicate type and language group on copula omission.

Two problems with the Syntactic Hypothesis:
- Type, language group (bilingual or monolingual), fact that the copula carries little semantic effects (Becker 2000, 2004; Fuertes & Liceras 2010).
- Why elicited repetition?

Why elicited repetition?
- Individual-level predicates: temporary properties
- Locative PPs and some adjectives
- The girl is tall.
- The girl is tall.

4. CONCLUSIONS
- Two-year old English monolinguals and Spanish/English bilinguals include the copula to the same degree with stage and individual level predicates.
- In a controlled environment, there is no effect of predicate type and language group on copula omission.
- Two-year olds copula omissions are not likely to be due to delayed parameter resetting: Our data do not support the Syntactic Hypothesis.

Our data support The Production Hypothesis:
- When semantic-pragmatic value is low, children will omit the element.
- In stage-level predicates, the copula is only a tense carrier; in nominal it is semantically vacuous (Carton 1980).
- Language proficiency is correlated with copula inclusion.

For future research:
- Administering our task to monolingual Spanish speakers
- Testing on a language with a null copula (e.g. Modern Hebrew)

2. METHODOLOGY: ELICITED REPETITION
Why elicited repetition?
- Sensitive to both structural and performance effects
- Allows systematic comparisons, unlike corpus data.

(participants)
- 10 English monolingual, 10 Spanish/English bilingual (range 2.00 to 2.90)

Procedure
- Monolinguals: English only
- Bilinguals: English (first) and Spanish (within two weeks of the English session)
- Items were written on index cards, which the experimenter read and asked the child to repeat.
- Once the child repeated the item (or a portion of it), she was handed the card and could feed it to Elmo.

Stage-level predicates:
- temporary properties
- locative PPs and some adjectives
- (1) The girl is small.
- (Stage-level)
- Individual-level predicates:
- permanent properties
- nominals and some adjectives
- (2) The girl is tall. (Individual-level)

In SPANISH:
- Stage-level predicates are marked by estar.
- (3) La niña está triste. (Stage-level) ‘The girl is sad.’
- Individual-level predicates are marked by ser.
- (4) La niña es alta. (Individual-level) ‘The girl is tall.’

Two problems with the Syntactic Hypothesis:
- Based on weak corpus data.
- Based on a problematic syntactic distinction.

Individual-Level Stage-Level Overall
English Language Proficiency Measures
Mean imitation MLU not including the copula: 2.55 (range .95 – 3.0); mean copula inclusion: .71
r = .72, p < .01

3. RESULTS

ENGLISH DATA (MONOLINGUAL AND BILINGUAL)
Contrary to The Syntactic Hypothesis, a 2 (predicate type) X 2 (language group) ANOVA found no main effects and no interaction.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual-Level</th>
<th>Stage-Level</th>
<th>Overall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monolingual</td>
<td>.63 (.42)</td>
<td>.65 (.35)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bilingual</td>
<td>.79 (.36)</td>
<td>.74 (.32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>.71</td>
<td>.70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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SPANISH DATA (BILINGUAL ONLY)
Also contrary to The Syntactic Hypothesis, a 2-tailed paired-samples t-test found no significant difference for copula inclusion across predicate type in Spanish (t = .96, n.s.)

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English Language Proficiency Measures
In support of The Production Hypothesis, language proficiency and copula inclusion were highly correlated:
- Mean imitation MLU not including the copula: 2.55 (range .95 – 3.0); mean copula inclusion: .71
- r = .72, p < .01

Spanish Language Proficiency Measures
Again in support of The Production Hypothesis, language proficiency and copula inclusion were highly correlated:
- Mean imitation MLU not including the copula: 2.29 (range 1.15 – 3.0); mean copula inclusion: .63
- r = .73, p < .05

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<td>My mommy is tall.</td>
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<td>Some kids are inside.</td>
<td>These grapes are yummy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our blanket was outside.</td>
<td>The floor was hard.</td>
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REFERENCES
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