



UvA-DARE (Digital Academic Repository)

Subject position in L2 and heritage Spanish in the Netherlands

van Osch, B.A.; Hulk, A.C.J.; Aalberse, S.P.; Sleeman, A.P.

[Link to publication](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

van Osch, B. A., Hulk, A. C. J., Aalberse, S. P., & Sleeman, A. P. (2017). Subject position in L2 and heritage Spanish in the Netherlands. Paper presented at Generative Linguistics in the Old World , Leiden, Netherlands.

General rights

It is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), other than for strictly personal, individual use, unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons).

Disclaimer/Complaints regulations

If you believe that digital publication of certain material infringes any of your rights or (privacy) interests, please let the Library know, stating your reasons. In case of a legitimate complaint, the Library will make the material inaccessible and/or remove it from the website. Please Ask the Library: <https://uba.uva.nl/en/contact>, or a letter to: Library of the University of Amsterdam, Secretariat, Singel 425, 1012 WP Amsterdam, The Netherlands. You will be contacted as soon as possible.



Subject position in L2 and heritage Spanish in the Netherlands

Brechje van Osch
Suzanne Aalberse
Aafke Hulk
Petra Sleeman

Leiden. March 14, 2017

Introduction

Comparing heritage speakers and L2 speakers

- Linguistic domain
 - Syntax & phonology: HS > L2
 - Other domains: HS = L2
- Task type
 - Written & explicit tasks: L2 > HS
 - Oral & implicit tasks: HS > L2

(Montrul, 2009, Bowles, 2009, Montrul 2012)

Introduction

Comparing heritage speakers and L2 speakers

- Most studies have looked at explicitly instructed phenomena:
 - Gender agreement
 - Tense, aspect mood
 - Ser vs. estar
 - Etc.
- What about implicitly acquired phenomena?

Subject position

Subject position with intransitive predicates

- Interface phenomenon
 - **Notoriously vulnerable** (Tsimpili & Sorace 2006; Sorace & Filiaci, 2006; Iverson et al, 2008; Montrul, 2008)
- No explicit instruction

Subject position

Spanish has flexible subject position:

S

Un chico

A boy

V

llegó

arrived

V

Llegó

Arrived

S

un chico

a boy

Subject position

Subject position in Spanish is constrained by many factors:

- Unaccusativity
- Focus
- Definiteness of the subject
- Heaviness of the subject
- Animacy of the subject
- Verbal aspect
- Adverbial Phrases

(Roggia, 2011)

Subject position

Subject position in Spanish is constrained by many factors:

- **Unaccusativity**
- **Focus**
- **Definiteness of the subject**
- Heaviness of the subject
- Animacy of the subject
- Verbal aspect
- Adverbial Phrases

(Roggia, 2011)

Subject position

1. Unaccusativity → syntax-semantics

Unergative

Un chico	silbó
<i>A boy</i>	<i>whistled</i>
S	V

Unaccusative

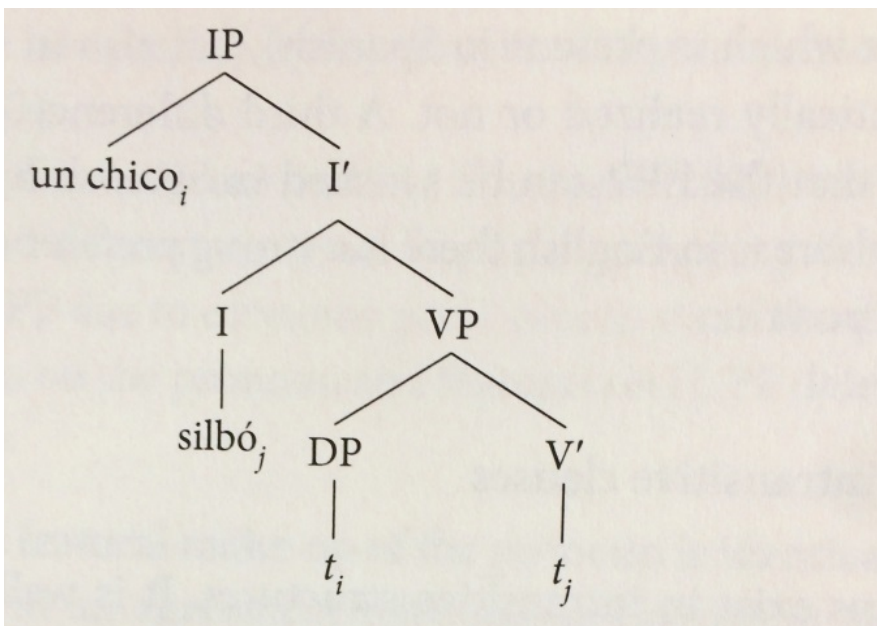
Llegó	un chico
<i>Arrived</i>	<i>a boy</i>
V	S

Subject position

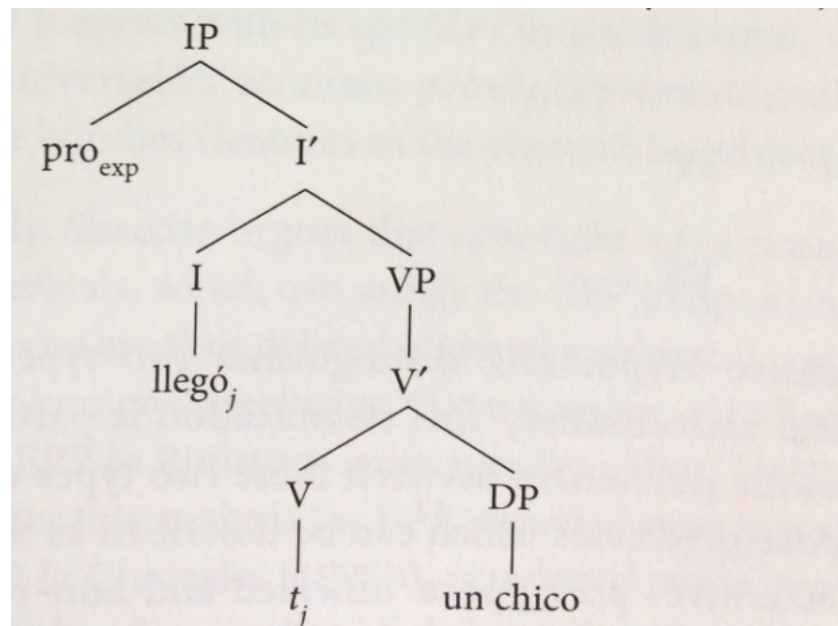
1. Unaccusativity → syntax-semantics

Syntax: the single argument of unergatives is underlyingly the subject, while the single argument of unaccusatives is syntactically a direct object (Perlmutter, 1978)

unergatives



unaccusatives



Subject position

1. Unaccusativity → syntax-semantics

Semantics: Split-intransitivity hierarchy: semantic notions (telicity, agentivity) are involved. There is a universal continuum (Sorace, 2000)

Change of location
Change of state
Uncontrolled processes
Continuing of a preexisting state
Existence of state
Uncontrolled processes
Controlled processes (motional)
Controlled processes (nonmotional)

Core unaccusatives



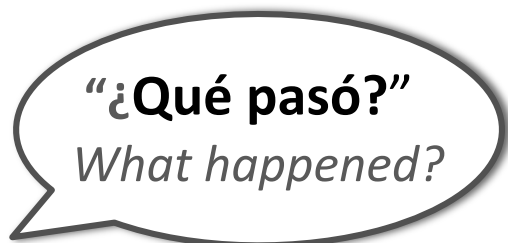
periphery

Core unergatives

Subject position

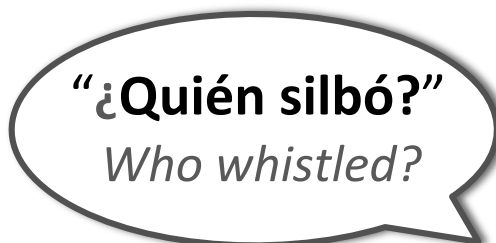
2. Focus → syntax-discourse

Broad



Un chico	silbó
<i>A boy</i>	<i>whistled</i>
S	V

Narrow



Silbó	un chico
<i>Whistled</i>	<i>a boy</i>
V	S

Subject position

3. Definiteness → syntax-discourse

Definite

El chico

The boy

S

llegó

arrived

V

Indefinite

Llegó

Arrived

V

un chico

a boy

S

Previous research

Comparing HS and L2 speakers

- Montrul (2005): Both HS and L2 had knowledge of unaccusativity but in the low proficiency group, HS outperformed L2. No other factors were taken into consideration.

Previous research

Heritage speakers

Unaccusativity is robust:

- Montrul (2006)

Focus is more robust than unaccusativity

- De Prada Pérez & Pascual y Cabo (2012)
- De Prada-Pérez (2010) (Spanish-Catalan)

Both are vulnerable

- Zapata et al. (2005)

Previous research

L2 speakers

Unaccusativity is robust (more than focus):

- Hertel & Pérez-Leroux (1999)
- Montrul (2004, 2005) (only intermediate and advanced learners)
- Lozano (2006)

Focus is more robust than unaccusativity

- Domínguez (2013)
- Parafita-couto et al (2014)
- Sánchez-Álvaro (2016) (beginners)
- Domínguez & Arche (2008) (beginners & intermediate learners)

Previous research

L2 speakers

Both are vulnerable

- Hertel (2003) (low & intermediate learners)

Both are acquirable

- Hertel (2003) (advanced learners)
- Domínguez & Arche (2008) (advanced)
- Sánchez-Álvaro (2016) (advanced)

Previous research

Furthermore:

- No control group
- Different proficiency levels
- Different methods
- Are additional factors controlled for?
- Qualitative vs. quantitative interpretation of the results?

Previous research

Overall order preferences

Preference for preverbal subjects

- Montrul (2005)
- De Prada Pérez & Pascual y Cabo, 2012
- Hinch-Nava, 2007
- de Prada-Pérez, 2010
- Hertel, 2003 (only low & intermediate learners)
- Domínguez & Arche, 2008
- Domínguez, 2013

Previous research

Overall order preferences

... although advanced L2 learners sometimes overgeneralize postverbal subjects in some conditions

- Hertel, 2003
- Lozano, 2006
- Domínguez, 2013

The present study

CONTEXTUALIZED SCALAR ACCEPTABILITY JUDGMENT TASK

VERB TYPE:

- Unaccusative: *llegar, regresar, entrar, irse, desaparecer, morirse, escaparse*
- Unergative: *bailar, correr, llamar, reírse, cantar, gritar, limpiar, tocar*

FOCUS: Story ending in:

- ¿Qué pasó? → introducing broad focus
- ¿Quién + V? → introducing narrow focus

DEFINITENESS:

- Definite subjects
- Indefinite subjects

The present study

CONTEXTUALIZED SCALAR ACCEPTABILITY JUDGMENT TASK

CONTROL VARIABLES:

- Heaviness of the subject
- Animacy of the subject
- Verbal aspect
- Adverbial Phrases

The present study

EXAMPLE: Unaccusative – narrow focus – indefinite subject

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 y ve que son unos primos. 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 and sees that it's some cousins. When she gets back, I ask her: "Who arrived?". My wife tells me:

Unos primos llegaron.

Some cousins arrived.

0	0	●	0	0
-2	-1	0	1	2

Llegaron unos primos.

Arrived some cousins.

0	0	0	0	●
-2	-1	0	1	2



The present study

PARTICIPANTS

21 heritage speakers

- 1 Dutch speaking parent, 1 Spanish speaking parent
- Different varieties of Spanish: Spain, Mexico, Colombia, Uruguay, Argentina (No Caribbean dialects)
- High-intermediate to advanced proficiency level

22 L2 speakers

- Acquired Spanish after age 16
- Similar to HS in age, educational level and proficiency
- Minimum 6 months naturalistic exposure

18 monolingual speakers of Spanish

- Different varieties of Spanish: Spain, Mexico, Colombia, Argentina, Nicaragua, Venezuela
- Similar to HS and L2 in age and educational level

Predictions

1. Given the interface status of the phenomenon, both heritage speakers and L2 speakers will diverge from monolingual speakers
2. Even though the task is explicit, we do not expect an advantage for L2, given that word order is not taught in courses.
3. In line with previous research, we expect an overgeneralization of preverbal subjects

Results

Monolinguals

Mixed effects model

Independent variables

- Unaccusativity (t=2.16, p=0.056)
- Focus (t=4.17, p=0.002)
- Definiteness (t=3.39, p=0.007)

Results

Heritage speakers

Mixed effects model

Independent variables

- Unaccusativity (t=2.68, p=0.01)
- Focus (t=2.80, p=0.01)
- Definiteness (t=1.07, p= **0.30**)

Results

L2 speakers

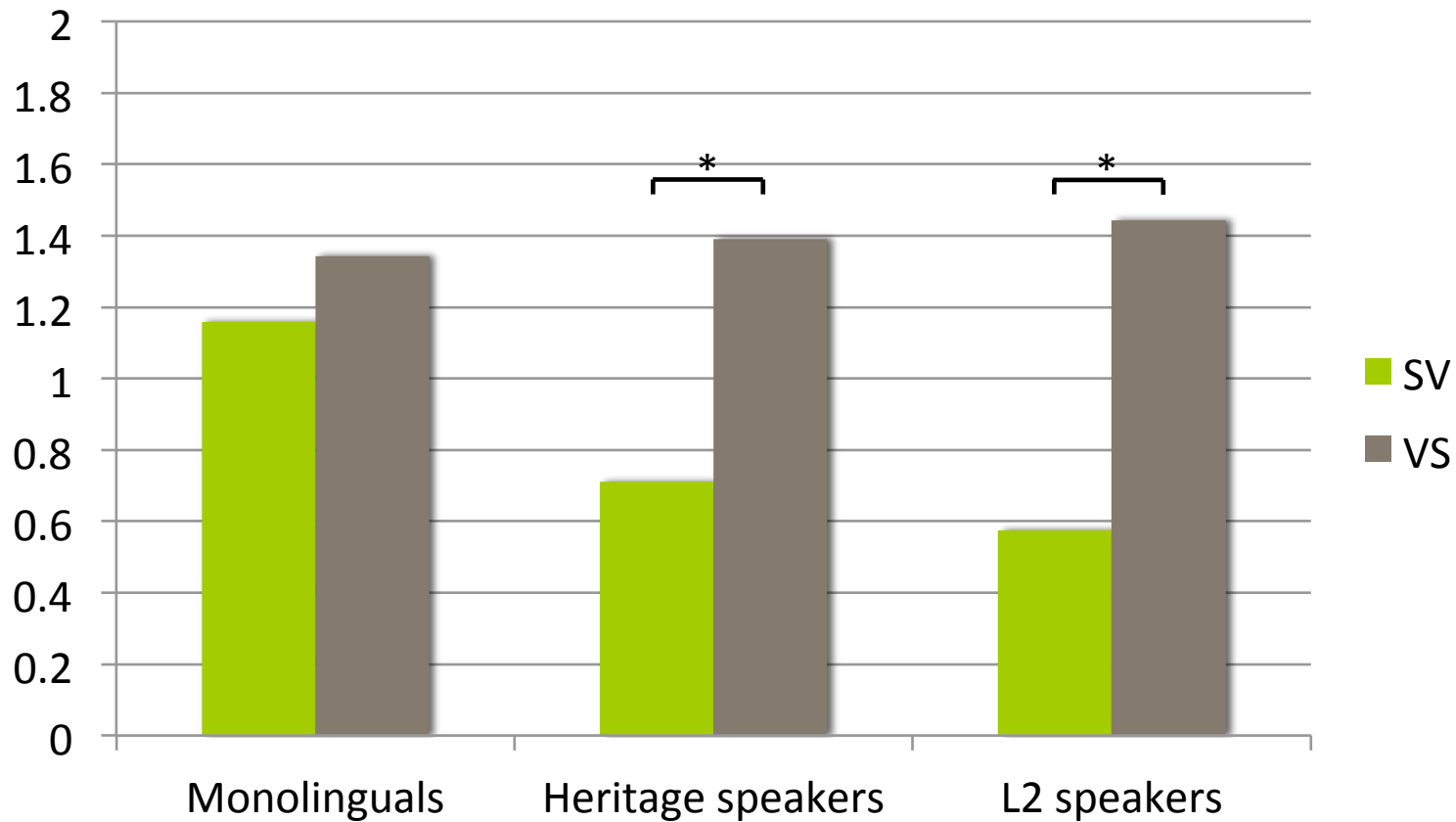
Mixed effects model

Independent variables

- Unaccusativity (t=1.49, p= **0.15**)
- Focus (t=0.71, p= **0.48**)
- Definiteness (t=0.96, p= **0.35**)

Results

Ratings across conditions:



Back to the predictions

1. Given the interface status of the phenomenon, both heritage speakers and L2 speakers will diverge from monolingual speakers
2. Even though the task is explicit, we do not expect an advantage for L2, given that word order is not taught in courses.
3. In line with previous research, we expect an overgeneralization of preverbal subjects

→ cross-linguistic influence from Dutch?

Word order in Dutch

- Een man schreeuwde
A man *shouted*
S **V**

But...

- Buiten schreeuwde een man
Outside *shouted* *a man*
ADV **V** **S**
- Er schreeuwde een man
There *shouted* *a man*
ADV **V** **S**
- Dat schreeuwde een man
That *shouted* *a man*
OBJ **V** **S**

Conclusion

To summarize:

- Neither heritage speakers nor L2 speakers of Spanish have completely monolingual-like knowledge on the constraints on word order
- Heritage speakers have an advantage over L2 speakers, due to their increased exposure to naturalistic input
- Both groups show overgeneralization of postverbal subjects, possibly due to influence from Dutch

References

- Bowles, M. A. (2011). Measuring implicit and explicit linguistic knowledge. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 33(02), 247-271.
- de Prada Pérez, A., & Pascual y Cabo, D. (2012). Interface heritage speech across proficiencies: unaccusativity, focus, and subject position in Spanish. In K. Geeslin, & M. Díaz-Campos (Eds.), *Selected Proceedings of the 14th Hispanic Linguistics Symposium* (pp. 308-318). Somerville, MA: Cascadilla Proceedings Project.
- Domínguez, L. (2013). *Understanding Interfaces: Second language acquisition and first language attrition of Spanish subject realization and word order variation* (Vol. 55). John Benjamins Publishing.
- Hinch Nava, E. (2007). Word order in bilingual Spanish: convergence and intonation strategy. In *Selected Proceedings of the Third Workshop on Spanish Sociolinguistics* (pp. 129-139). Somerville, MA: Cascadilla Proceedings Project.
- Iverson, M., Kempchinsky, P., & Rothman, J. (2008). Interface vulnerability and knowledge of the subjunctive/indicative distinction with negated epistemic predicates in L2 Spanish. *Eurosla Yearbook*, 8(1), 135-163.
- Montrul, S. (2005). Second language acquisition and first language loss in adult early bilinguals: Exploring some differences and similarities. *Second Language Research*, 21(3), 199-249.
- Montrul, S. (2008). Incomplete acquisition in Spanish heritage speakers: chronological age or interfaces vulnerability. In *BUCLD, 32, Proceedings of the 32nd annual Boston University Conference on language development* (pp. 299-310).
- Montrul, S. (2009). Reexamining the fundamental difference hypothesis. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 31(02), 225-257.
- Montrul, S. (2012). Is the heritage language like a second language?. *Eurosla Yearbook*, 12(1), 1-29.
- Perlmutter, D. (1978). Impersonal passives and the unaccusative hypothesis. Proceedings of the Fourth Annual Meeting of the Berkeley Linguistic Society (pp.157 – 189). Berkeley Linguistic Society, University of California, Berkeley.
- Roggia, A. B. (2011). *Unaccusativity and word order in Mexican Spanish: An examination of syntactic interfaces and the split intransitivity hierarchy* (Doctoral dissertation, The Pennsylvania State University).
- Sorace, A. (2000). Gradients in auxiliary selection with intransitive verbs. *Language*, 859-890.
- Sorace, A., & Filiaci, F. (2006). Anaphora resolution in near-native speakers of Italian. *Second Language Research*, 22(3), 339-368.
- Tsimpli, I. M., & Sorace, A. (2006). Differentiating interfaces: L2 performance in syntax-semantics and syntax-discourse phenomena. In *Proceedings of the 30th Annual Boston University conference on language development* (Vol. 30, pp. 653-664). Somerville, MA: Cascadilla Press.
- Zapata, G. C., Sanchez, L., & Toribio, A. J. (2005). Contact and contracting Spanish. *International Journal of Bilingualism*, 9(3-4), 377-395.

i Muchas Gracias!

b.a.vanosch@uva.nl