Subject Position in Spanish as a heritage language in the Netherlands
Interface Vulnerability and Cross-linguistic Influence
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**Subject Position in Spanish as a Heritage Language in the Netherlands: Interface Vulnerability and Cross-linguistic Influence**

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**Heritage speakers**
Speakers of a minority language, acquired during childhood in a naturalistic setting in the home context.

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**Subject position in Spanish**
Spanish has flexible word order:

- **Unaccusative**
  - Narrow
  - Indefinite
- **Unenergative**
  - Broad
  - Definite

Subject position with intransitives in Spanish is constrained by:
1. **Verb type**
2. **Focus**
   - **Unergative**
   - **Unaccusative**
3. **Definiteness**

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**Previous Research: Heritage Spanish in the US**
- Comparing verb type & focus → unclear findings:
  - Verb type is robust (Monteil, 2005)
  - Verb type and focus are vulnerable (Zapata et al., 2005)
  - Verb type is more vulnerable than focus (De Prada Perez & Pascual y Cabo, 2012)
- Heritage speakers overgeneralize preverbal subjects
  - *Hinch Nava, 2007, Monteil, 2005, Zapata et al., 2005*

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**The Interface Hypothesis**

- **External interface (syntax-pragmatics/discourse)** more vulnerable → less vulnerable
- **Internal interface (syntax-semantics)**
- **FOCUS & DEFINITENESS** more vulnerable → less vulnerable
- **VERB TYPE**

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**Subject position in Dutch**

- **Broad**
  - Narrow
  - Indefinite
  - Definite

Main clauses:
1. **Unaccusative**
   - Narrow
   - Indefinite
   - Definite
2. **Unenergative**
   - Broad
   - Narrow
   - Definite
   - Indefinite

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**Method**
Contextualized Scalar Acceptability Judgment Task:
- **Verb type**
  - **Unaccusative**
  - **Unenergative**
- **Focus**
  - Broad
  - Narrow
- **Subject**
  - Definite
  - Indefinite

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**Results across conditions:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>Monolinguals</th>
<th>Heritage speakers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unacc. Unerg.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broad Narrow</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Def. Indef.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Conclusions**
1. Dutch heritage speakers show knowledge of the factors verb type, focus, and definiteness → Partial support for the Interface Hypothesis
2. In judgment, Dutch heritage speakers of Spanish overgeneralize preverbal subjects, whereas American HS do not prefer either order.
3. In production, American heritage speakers of Spanish overgeneralize preverbal subjects → Support for cross-linguistic influence

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**References**

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**Subject Position in English from Unaccusative to Unenergative**

- **Unaccusative**
  - Narrow
  - Indefinite
  - Definite
- **Unenergative**
  - Broad
  - Narrow
  - Definite
  - Indefinite

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**Experiment 1: Heritage Spanish in the Netherlands**

Participants: 24 heritage speakers
- Born in the Netherlands, or arrived before 5
- 1 Dutch speaking parent, 1 Spanish speaking parent
- No Caribbean dialects

18 monolingual speakers of Spanish
- Recently immigrated to the Netherlands.
- No knowledge of Dutch
- No Caribbean dialects

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**Hypotheses**
1. Dutch HS of Spanish will show less overgeneralization of preverbal subjects
2. Both focus and definiteness are more vulnerable than verb type