Subject Position in Spanish as a heritage language in the Netherlands

Interface Vulnerability and Cross-linguistic Influence

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Citation for published version (APA):
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.

Subject position in Spanish
Spanish has flexible word order:

- Un chico llegó un chico
- Llegó un chico

Subject position with intransitives in Spanish is constrained by:

1. Verb type
2. Focus
3. Definiteness

Previous Research: Heritage Spanish in the US
- Comparing verb type & focus: unclear findings:
  - Verb type is robust (Monturiol, 2009)
  - Verb type and focus are vulnerable (Zapata et al., 2005)
  - Verb type is more vulnerable than focus (de Prada-Pérez & Pascual y Cabo, 2012)
- Heritage speakers overgeneralize preverbal subjects
  (Hinch Nava, 2007; Monturiol, 2009; Zapata et al., 2009)

The Interface Hypothesis
(Def. Indef.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verb type</th>
<th>Unacc.</th>
<th>Unergative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Broad</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narrow</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Definite

Focus & Definiteness

FOCUS & DEFINITENESS

VERB TYPE

MORE EVIDENCE FOR POSTVERBAL SUBJECTS

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
- Recent immigrants to the Netherlands.
- No knowledge of Dutch
- No Caribbean dialects

18 monolingual speakers of Spanish

Experiment 2: Heritage Spanish in the US
22 heritage speakers in New Jersey
- Born in the US, or arrived before 5
- 2 Spanish speaking parents
- No Caribbean dialects
- Proficiency-matched to the Dutch HS

Results across conditions:

Method
Contextualized Scalar Acceptability Judgment Task:

- Verb type
- Focus
- Subject

Results per condition

Monolinguals

Heritage speakers

Conclusions
1. Dutch heritage speakers show knowledge of the factors verb type, and focus, but not definiteness
   Partial support for the Interface Hypothesis
2. In judgment, Dutch heritage speakers of Spanish overgeneralize postverbal 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

References