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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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Subject position in Spanish

Spanish has flexible word order:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verb type</th>
<th>Subject position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unacc. Unerg.</td>
<td>Un chico llegó</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Llegó un chico</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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 (Montrul, 2005)
- 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; Montrul, 2005; Zapata et al., 2005)

Unacc. Unerg.

Definite

Indefinite

FOCUS & DEFINITENESS

External interface (syntax-pragmatics / discourse)

more vulnerable

Internal interface (syntax-semantics)

less vulnerable

RESULTS PER CONDITION

SV

VS

other

missing

Results across conditions:

Heritage speakers

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

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

Hypotheses

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

Method

Contextualized Scalar Acceptability Judgment Task:

Verb type

Focus

Subject

Unaccusative

Unacc. Unerg.

Broad

Narrow

Definite

Indefinite

RESULTS ACROSS CONDITIONS

Monolinguals

Heritage speakers

SV

VS

Results per condition

Conclusions

1. Dutch heritage speakers show knowledge of the factors verb type, focus, and not 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.

Support for cross-linguistic influence

References