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.

Subject position in Spanish
Spanish has flexible word order:

- **Un chico llegó**
- **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 (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)

Method
Contextualized Scalar Acceptability Judgment Task:

- **Verb type**: Unaccusative → Unergative
- **Focus**: Broad vs Narrow
- **Subject**: Definite vs Indefinite

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
- Monolingual speakers of Spanish
- Recently immigrated to the Netherlands.
- No knowledge of Dutch
- No Caribean 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

Results across conditions:

- **Monolinguals**
- **Heritage speakers**

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**

References

Method
Contextualized Scalar Acceptability Judgment Task:

- **Verb type**: Unaccusative → Unergative
- **Focus**: Broad vs Narrow
- **Subject**: Definite vs Indefinite

EXAMPLE: Unaccusative → narrow → indefinite

Un chico llegó
Llegó un chico

Subject position in Dutch
Main clauses:

- Een jongen floot
- Buiten/er schreeuwde een jongen

But... V2:

- Butuiten/er schreeuwde een jongen
- Outside/There shouted a boy

More evidence for postverbal subjects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject position in Dutch</th>
<th>Un acc. vs Unergative</th>
<th>Broad vs Narrow</th>
<th>Definite vs Indefinite</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Een jongen floot</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
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<tr>
<td>Buiten/er schreeuwde een jongen</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
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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 per condition

- **Monolinguals**
- **Heritage speakers**

Support for cross-linguistic influence

The Interface Hypothesis

External interface (syntax-pragmatics/discourse) more vulnerable → less vulnerable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FOCUS &amp; DEFINITENESS</th>
<th>VERB TYPE</th>
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<td>more vulnerable</td>
<td>less vulnerable</td>
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