Subject Position in Spanish as a heritage language in the Netherlands

Interface Vulnerability and Cross-linguistic Influence

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

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Brechje van Osch, Suzanne Aalberse, Aafke Hulk & Petra Sleeman
University of Amsterdam

Subject position in Spanish

Spanish has flexible word order:

Un chico   silbó     Llegó    un chico

Definite

Broad

during home

Spanish has flexible word order:

3. Definiteness

2. Focus

more vulnerable

(Focus & pragmatics/discourse)

Home

Verb type is more vulnerable than focus (De Prada-Perez & Pascual y Cabo, 2012)

Recall: Unaccusative

Broad Narrow

Unaccusative

Subject

Unaccusative

Broad Narrow

Definite

Indefinite

EXAMPLE: Unaccusative – narrow– indefinite

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:

Results across conditions:

Method

Contextualized Scalar Acceptability Judgment Task:

Verb type

Unaccusative

Broad Narrow

Definite

Indefinite

Heritage speakers

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

Previous Research: Heritage Spanish in the US

Comparing verb type & focus \(\rightarrow\) 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-Perez & Pascual y Cabo, 2012)

• Heritage speakers overgeneralize preverbal subjects

(Hinch Nava, 2007; Montrul, 2005; Zapata et al., 2005)

Results per condition

Participants

24 heritage speakers

• Born in the Netherlands, or arrived before 5

• 1 Dutch speaking parent, 1 Spanish speaking parent

• No Caribbean dialects

Conclusions

• Dutch heritage speakers show knowledge of the factors verb type and focus, but not definiteness

\(\rightarrow\) Partial support for the Interface Hypothesis

• In judgment, Dutch heritage speakers of Spanish overgeneralize preverbal subjects, whereas American HS do not prefer either order.

• In production, American heritage speakers of Spanish overgeneralize preverbal subjects

\(\rightarrow\) Support for cross-linguistic influence

References


The Interface Hypothesis

(George & Stanowick, 2011)

External interface (syntax-pragmatics/discourse)

more vulnerable \(\rightarrow\) less vulnerable

FOCUS & DEFINITENESS

more vulnerable \(\rightarrow\) less vulnerable

Verb type

Unaccusative

Broad Narrow

Definite

Indefinite

Results across conditions

Subject position in Dutch

Main clauses:

Een jongen     floot

Adv

Broad

SV

Unacc.Unerg.

Heritage speakers

2. both focus and definiteness are more

1. Dutch HS of Spanish will show less

overgeneralization of preverbal subjects

2. both focus and definiteness are more

overgeneralization of preverbal subjects

overgeneralized

more vulnerable

Support for cross-linguistic influence