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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
A boy arrived
Llegó un chico
Arrived a boy

Unergative
Definite

The Interface Hypothesis

Broad
Speakers of a Spanish has flexible word order:
3. Definiteness
2. Focus
1. Verb type

Unaccusative
Indefinite

Subject position in Dutch
Main clauses:
Unaccusative

Subject position with intransitives in Spanish is constrained by:

1. Verb type
2. Focus
3. Definiteness

Preverbal subjects (De Prada-Pérez & Pascual y Cabo, 2012)

Definiteness » Cross-linguistic influence from English or simplification?

Results across conditions:

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

Method
Contextualized scalar acceptability judgment task:

Verb type
Unaccusative
Unergative

Focus
Broad
Narrow

Subject
Definite
Indefinite

RESULTS:

Experiment 1:

- Partial support for the Interface Hypothesis
- Support for cross-linguistic influence

Conclusions

References