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

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

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:

- Unaccusative Verb type
- Broad Focus
- Definite Subject

Subject position with intransitives in Spanish is constrained by:
1. Verb type
2. Focus
3. Definiteness

Subject position in Dutch
Main clauses:
- Een jongen floot
- Buiten/er schreeuwde een jongen

But... V2:
- Pewt/er schreeuwde een jongen

MORE EVIDENCE FOR POSTVERBAL SUBJECTS

Method
Contextualized Scalar Acceptability Judgment Task:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verb type</th>
<th>Focus</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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</tr>
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Example: Unaccusative → narrow → indefinite
Es mi cumpleaños y hay mucha gente de visita en mi casa. De repente suena el timbre pero como justo estoy recibiendo un regalo de mi tío, no puedo abrir la puerta. Yo mi esposa y ve que son unos primos. Cuando regresa, le pregunto: ‘¿Quién llegó?’ Mi esposa me dice: ‘It’s my birthday and there are many quests 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 per condition
- Monolinguals
- Heritage speakers

Results across conditions:
- Production task
- Judgment task

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 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

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