Subject Position in Spanish as a heritage language in the Netherlands
*Interface Vulnerability and Cross-linguistic Influence*

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Publication date
2017

Citation for published version (APA):
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

The Interface Hypothesis

External interface (syntactic-syntactic/paradigm) 
more vulnerable » less vulnerable

Internal interface (syntactic-semantics/discourse)
more vulnerable » less vulnerable

FOCUS & DEFINITENESS

VERB TYPE

Previous Research: Heritage Spanish in the US
Comparing verb type & focus → unclear findings:
1. Verb type is robust
2. Verb type and focus are vulnerable
3. Verb type is more vulnerable than focus

Heritage speakers overgeneralize preverbal subjects
(Hinch Nava, 2007; Montrul, 2005; Zapata et al., 2005)

CROSS-LINGUISTIC INFLUENCE FROM ENGLISH OR SIMPLIFICATION?

Subject position in Dutch
Main clauses:
- Een jongen floot
- A boy whistled

But...V2:
- Buiten/er schreeuwde een jongen
- Outside/There shouted a boy

MORE EVIDENCE FOR POSTVERBAL SUBJECTS

Method
Contextualized Scalar Acceptability Judgment Task:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verb type</th>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Subject</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unacc. Unerg.</td>
<td>Broad</td>
<td>Definite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unacc. Unerg.</td>
<td>Narrow</td>
<td>Indefinite</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Examples:
- Unacc. Unerg. 
  - narrow indefinitely
  - 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 see that it’s some cousins. When she gets back, I ask her: ‘Who arrived?’ My wife tells me: ‘Some cousins arrived.’

- Broad
  - narrow indefinitely
  - Llegó a boy arrived some cousins.

Results per condition

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

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

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

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 postverbal 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