Subject Position in Spanish as a heritage language in the Netherlands
van Osch, B.A.; Aalberse, S.P.; Hulk, A.C.J.; Sleeman, A.P.

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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:

- **Un chico** llegó un chico
- **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
  - Verb type and focus are vulnerable
  - Verb type is more vulnerable than focus
  - Heritage speakers overgeneralize preverbal subjects

**Method**
Contextualized Scalar Acceptability Judgment Task:

**Verb type**
- Unaccusative
- Unergative

**Focus**
- Broad
- Narrow

**Subject**
- Definite
- 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

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

**Results per condition**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monolinguals</th>
<th>Heritage speakers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SV</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VS</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Results across conditions**

- **Unacc.Unerg.**
  - SV: 0.5
  - VS: 0.5
- **Broad Narrow**
  - Def.: 0.5
  - Indef.: 2
- **Heritage speakers**
  - n.s.

**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, 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**

**The Interface Hypothesis**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>External interface (syntax-pragmatics / discourse)</th>
<th>Internal interface (syntax-semantics)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>more vulnerable</td>
<td>less vulnerable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**FOCUS & DEFINITENESS**
- more vulnerable
- less vulnerable