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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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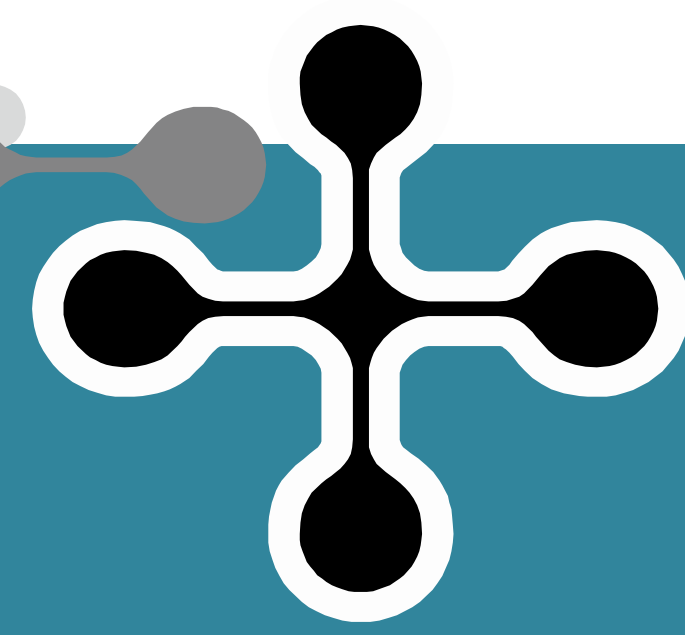
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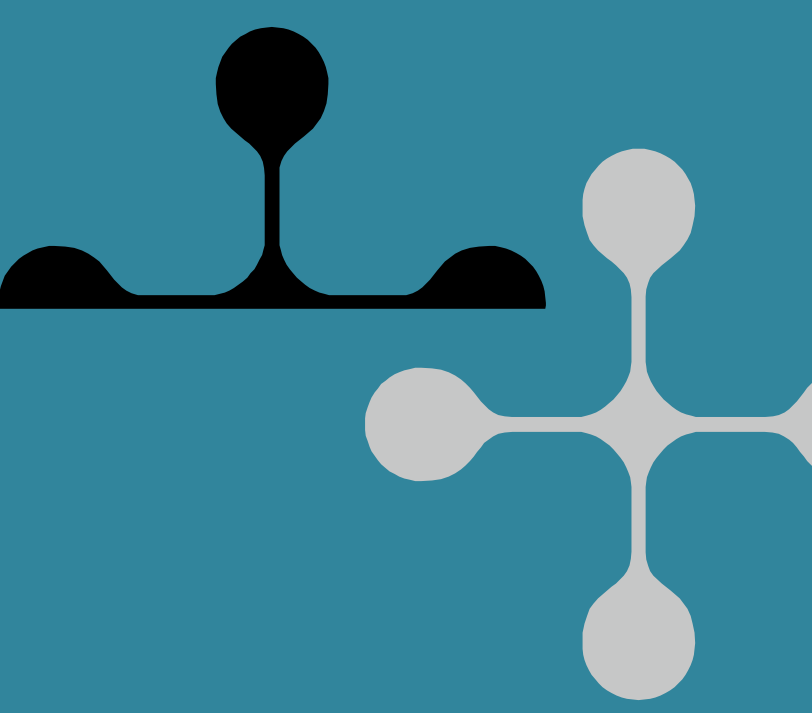
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Subject Position in Spanish as a Heritage Language in the Netherlands: Interface Vulnerability and Cross-linguistic Influence



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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 S V	Llegó un chico Arrived a boy V S
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Subject position with intransitives in Spanish is constrained by:

- Verb type**
- Focus** (Hertel, 2003; Lozano, 2006; Domínguez, 2013; Zapata et al., 2005, De Prada-Pérez & Pascual y Cabo, 2012)
- Definiteness** (Roggia, 2011)

Unergative Un chico silbó A boy whistled S V	Unaccusative Llegó un chico Arrived a boy V S
Broad Silbó un chico Whistled a boy V S	Narrow Llegó un chico Arrived a boy V S
Definite El chico llegó The boy arrived S V	Indefinite Llegó un chico Arrived a boy V S

The Interface Hypothesis

(Sorace & Serratrice, 2009)

External interface (syntax-pragmatics /discourse) more vulnerable	Internal interface (syntax-semantics) less vulnerable
FOCUS & DEFINITENESS more vulnerable	VERB TYPE less vulnerable

Previous Research:

Heritage Spanish in the US

- Comparing verb type & focus → 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-Pérez & Pascual y Cabo (2012)
- 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
S	V

But... V2:

Buiten/er	schreeuwde	een jongen
Outside/There	shouted	a boy
Adv	V	S

MORE EVIDENCE FOR POSTVERBAL SUBJECTS

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

- Dutch HS of Spanish will show less overgeneralization of preverbal subjects
- both focus and definiteness are more vulnerable than verb type

Method

Contextualized Scalar Acceptability Judgment Task:

Verb type	Focus	Subject
• Unaccusative • Unergative	• Broad • Narrow	• Definite • Indefinite

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. Va 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 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:

Unos primos llegaron.
Some cousins arrived.

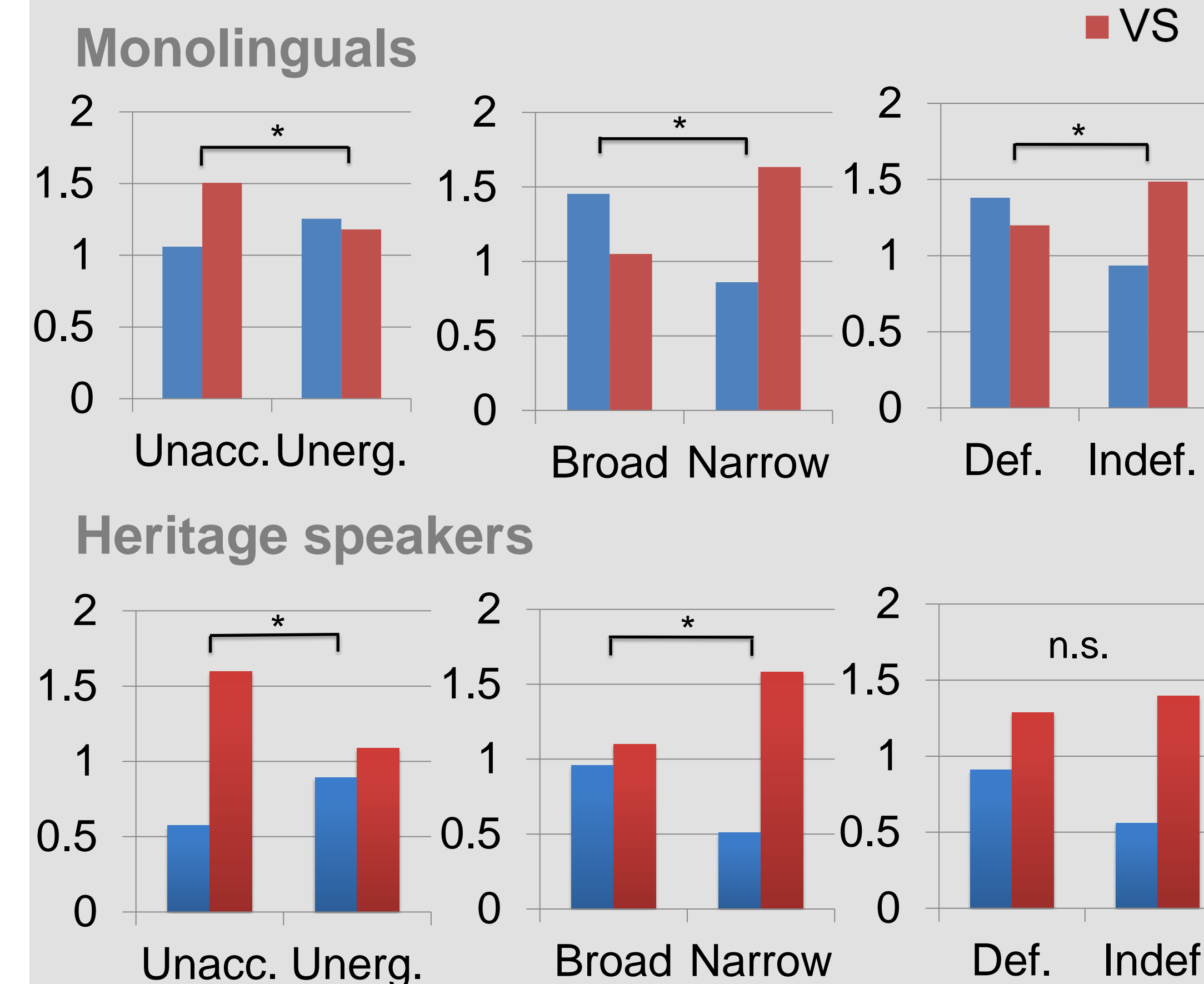
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Llegaron unos primos.
Arrived some cousins.

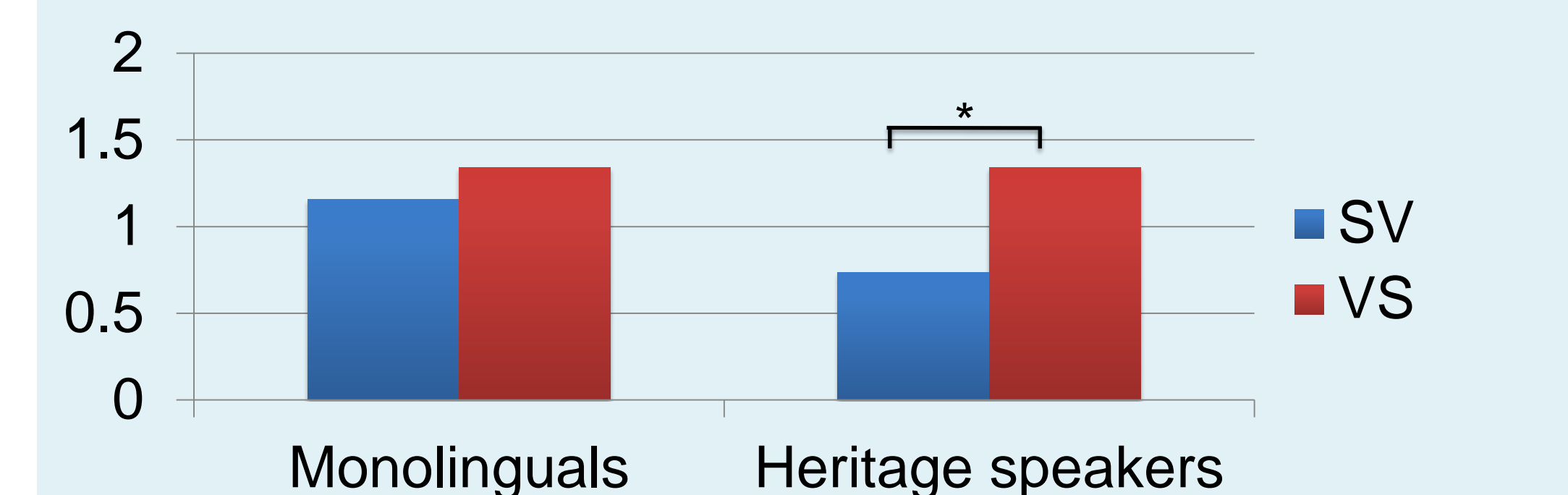
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Results per condition



Results across conditions



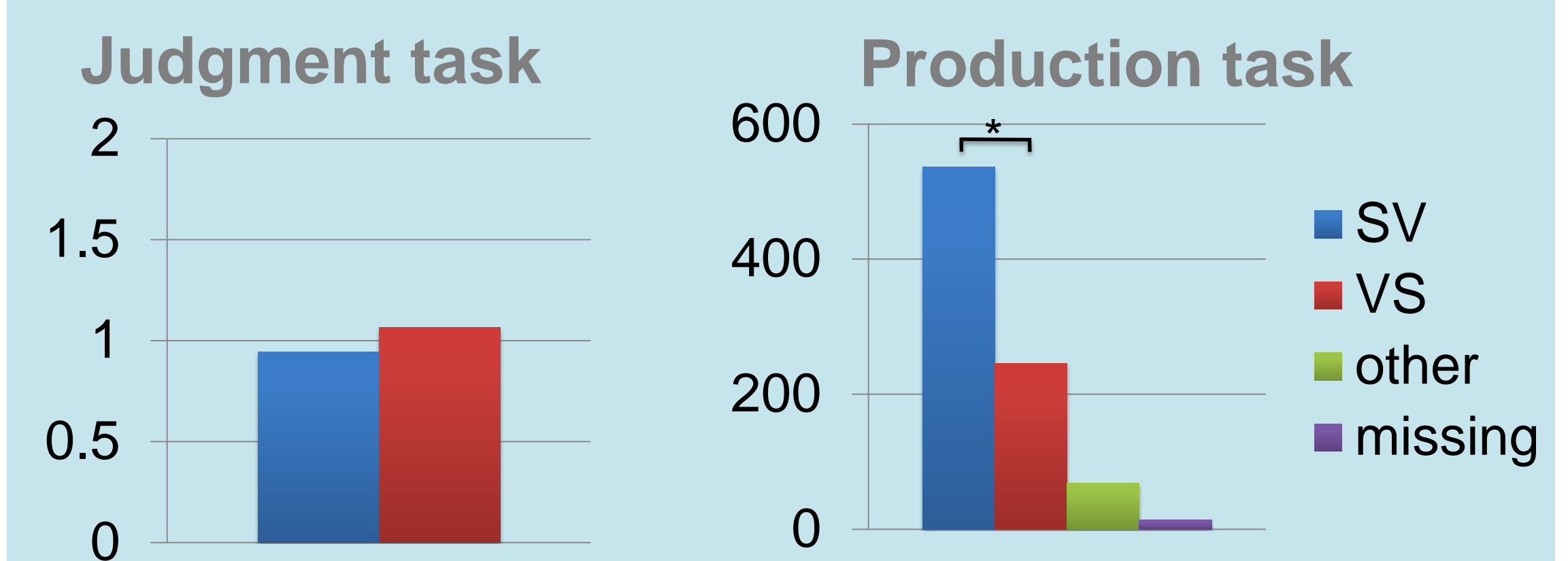
Experiment 2:

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

Results across conditions:



Conclusions

- Dutch heritage speakers show knowledge of the factors verb type, and focus, but not definiteness
→ **Partial support for the Interface Hypothesis**
- In judgment, Dutch heritage speakers of Spanish overgeneralize postverbal subjects, whereas American HS do not prefer either order.
- In production, American heritage speakers of Spanish overgeneralize preverbal subjects
→ **Support for cross-linguistic influence**

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