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**

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University of Amsterdam

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**Heritage speakers**

Speakers of a minority language, acquired during childhood in a naturalistic setting in the home context.

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**Subject position in Spanish**

Spanish has flexible word order:

- **Un chico** llegó, Llegó un chico
- **Definite**
- **A boy** arrived, **Arrived a boy**

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**The Interface Hypothesis**

(Sorace & Serratrice, 2009)

- Broad Speakers of a
- **Subject Position in Dutch**

Main clauses:

- Een jongen floot, A boy whistled
- But... V2: Buiten/er schreeuwde een jongen, Outside/There shouted a boy

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**Subject position with intransitives in Spanish is constrained by:**

1. **Verb type**
2. **Focus**
3. **Definiteness**

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**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

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**Method**

Contextualized Scalar Acceptability Judgment Task:

- **Verb type**
- **Focus**
- **Subject**

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**Results per condition**

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<th>Monolinguals</th>
<th>SV</th>
<th>VS</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Missing</th>
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**Results across conditions:**

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**Conclusions**

1. Dutch heritage speakers show knowledge of the factors verb type, focus, and 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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**References**