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

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

The Interface Hypothesis
(Sorace & Serratrice, 2009)

Subject position in Spanish
Spanish has flexible word order:

Un chico llegó un chico

Definite
A boy arrived a boy

Focus & Definiteness

Subject position in Dutch
Main clauses:

A boy floated

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

Method
Contextualized Scalar Acceptability Judgment Task:

Verb type
- Unaccusative
- Unergative

Focus
- Broad
- Narrow

Subject
- Definite
- Indefinite

Results per condition

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

  “Een jongen floot...” (Hench Nava, 2007; Montrul, 2005; Zapata et al., 2005)

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:

Production task
- 210

Results across conditions:

Judgment task
- 210

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 across conditions:

Heritage speakers

18 monolingual speakers of Spanish

- Narrow

- Broad

- Definite

- Indefinite

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Def. Indef.

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Broad Narrow

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