Subject Position in Spanish as a heritage language in the Netherlands

*Interface Vulnerability and Cross-linguistic Influence*

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 \(\rightarrow\) unclear findings:
  - Verb type is robust (Monti, 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; Monti, 2005; Zapata et al., 2005)

**The Interface Hypothesis**
(Sorace & Serratrice, 2009)

Subject position in Dutch

- **Een jongen** floot
- **Vliegde** een jongen

**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 across conditions:**

- **Monolinguals**
  - SV: 0.5
  - VS: 1.5

- **Heritage speakers**
  - SV: 2
  - VS: 2

**Conclusions**

1. Dutch heritage speakers show knowledge of the factors verb type, and focus, but not definiteness
   \(\rightarrow\) **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
   \(\rightarrow\) **Support for cross-linguistic influence**

**References**