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.

Subject position in Spanish
Spanish has flexible word order:

Un chico llegó un chico
Llegó un chico

Definite
Broad
Home

Spanish has flexible word order:

The boy arrived
Arrived a boy

S V S

Subject position in Dutch

Main clauses:

Een jongen floot

Adv V S

But... V2:

Buiten/er schreeuwe 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
1. Dutch HS of Spanish will show less overgeneralization of preverbal subjects
2. both focus and definiteness are more vulnerable than verb type

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

References

The Interface Hypothesis
(Quitsch & Scolaro, 2012)

External interface (syntax-pragmatics/ discourse)
more vulnerable ➔ less vulnerable

Focus & Definiteness ➔ Verb Type
more vulnerable ➔ less vulnerable

Method
Contextualized Scalar Acceptability Judgment Task:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verb type</th>
<th>Unaccusative</th>
<th>Unergative</th>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Broad</th>
<th>Narrow</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Definite</th>
<th>Indefinite</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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 hijo, no puedo abrir la puerta. Ya mi esposa va 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 son, 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:’

Results per condition

Monolinguals

SV

VS

Heritage speakers

Unacc. Unerg.

Broad Narrow

Def. Indef.

Results across conditions

Monolinguals

Heritage speakers

SV

VS

References