Subject Position in Spanish as a heritage language in the Netherlands
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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**
A boy arrived a boy

*Previous Research: Heritage Spanish in the US*
• Comparing verb type & focus -> 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])

Subject position with intransitives in Spanish is constrained by:

1. **Verb type**
2. **Focus** ([Hertel, 2003; Luzano, 2006; Dominguez, 2013; Zapata et al., 2005; De Prada-Pérez & Pascual y Cabo, 2012])
3. **Definiteness** ([Roggia, 2011])

**The Interface Hypothesis** (Grosjean & Serratrice, 2010)

External interface
(syntax-pragmatics / discourse)
more vulnerable

Internal interface
(syntax-semantics)
less vulnerable

**FOCUS & DEFINITENESS**
more vulnerable

**VERB TYPE**
less vulnerable

**Subject position in Dutch**
Main clauses: Een jongen floot
A boy floated

But... V2:
Buiten/er schreeuwe eend jongen
Outside/There shouted a boy

**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

**Method**
Contextualized Scalar Acceptability Judgment Task:

**Verb type**
- Unaccusative
- Unergative

**Focus**
- Broad
- Narrow

**Subject**
- Definite
- Indefinite

**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

**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 postverbal 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**

**Results across conditions:**

**Experiment 1:**

Unacc. Unerg. SV VS other missing

2 1 0 1 2

Production task

Partial support for the Interface Hypothesis

Support for cross-linguistic influence

**Results per condition:**

Monolinguals

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Heritage speakers

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**References**