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
- **El chico** llegó

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
- Verb type is robust
- Verb type and focus are vulnerable
- Verb type is more vulnerable than focus
- Heritage speakers overgeneralize preverbal 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
- 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

**Example**: Unaccusative → narrow → indefinite.

My birthday and there are many guests in my house. Suddenly, the doorbell rings, but since I’m just receiving a gift from my uncle, 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: “Some cousins arrived.”

**Results per condition**

- **Monolinguals**
- **Heritage speakers**

**Results across conditions**

- **Monolinguals**
  - SV
  - VS
- **Heritage speakers**
  - SV
  - VS

**Conclusions**
1. Dutch heritage speakers show knowledge of the factors verb type and focus, but not definiteness
2. Partial support for the Interface Hypothesis
3. Support for cross-linguistic influence

**References**

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

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

**Internal interface**
(syntax-semantics)
-more vulnerable ➔ less vulnerable

**FOCUS & DEFINITENESS** ➔ VERB TYPE ➔ more vulnerable ➔ less vulnerable

**Subject position in Dutch**

- **Main clauses**: Een jongen floot
- **But... V2**: Buiten/er schreeuwde een jongen

**Experiment 2: Heritage Spanish in New Jersey**
- 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**

- **Monolinguals**
- **Heritage speakers**