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.

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

**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 (Hinch Nava, 2007; Montrul, 2005; Zapata et al., 2005)

**Subject position in Spanish**
Spanish has flexible word order:

- Un chico llegó. A boy arrived.
- Llegó un chico. Arrived a boy.

Subject position with intransitives in Spanish is constrained by:
1. **Verb type**
2. **Focus**
3. **Definiteness**

**Subject position in Dutch**
Main clauses:

But... V2:
- Buiten/er schreeuwde een jongen. Outside/There shouted a boy.

**Experiment 1: Heritage Spanish in the Netherlands**

**Recommendations**
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**

**Results across conditions:**

**Conclusions**
1. Dutch heritage speakers show knowledge of the factors verb type, focus, and definiteness
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

**References**