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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Subject position in Spanish

Spanish has flexible word order:

- Un chico llegó
- 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: unclear findings:
  - Verb type is robust (Montibeller, 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; Montibeller, 2005; Zapata et al., 2005)

CROSS-LINGUISTIC INFLUENCE FROM ENGLISH OR SIMPLIFICATION?

Subject position in Dutch

Main clauses:

- Een jongen float
  - A boy

But... V2:

- Buiten/er schreeuwde een jongen
  - Outside/There shouted a boy

Results across conditions:

Monolinguals

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Heritage speakers

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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 production, 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