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
A boy arrived

Definite Subject position in Dutch
Main clauses:

Een jongen floot
A boy whistled

Example of postverbal subjects

Un chico llegó
A boy arrived

Hypotheses
1. Dutch HS of Spanish will show less overgeneralization of preverbal subjects
2. Both focus and definiteness are more vulnerable than verb type

References

Results
- 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

Method
Contextualized Scalar Acceptability Judgment Task:

Verb type
Unaccusative
Unergative

Focus
Broad
Narrow

Subject
Definite
Indefinite

Results per condition

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

Support for cross-linguistic influence

Production task

Results across conditions:

Monolinguals

Heritage speakers

External interface
(syntax-pragmatics/discourse)
more vulnerable

Internal interface
(syntax-semantics)
less vulnerable

Focus & Definiteness
more vulnerable

Verb Type
less vulnerable

The Interface Hypothesis
(Gilquin & Szmrecsanyi, 2011)

Un chico llegó
A boy arrived

-2 -1 0 1 2

Monolinguals

Heritage speakers

Unacc. Unerg.

Broad Narrow

Def. Indef.

n.s.

Unacc. Unerg.

Broad Narrow

Def. Indef.

n.s.

Unacc. Unerg.

Broad Narrow

Def. Indef.

n.s.