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 (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

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)

The Interface Hypothesis: (Sorace & Serratrice, 2009)

DEFINITE

The boy arrived
Arrived a boy
S V V S

Un chico llegó
Llegó un chico
S V S

Unacc. Unerg. Broad Narrow Def. Indef. Subject

Method: Contextualized Scalar Acceptability Judgment Task:

Verb type:
- Unaccusative
- Unergative

Focus:
- Broad
- Narrow

Subject:
- Definite
- Indefinite


Subject position in Dutch:
- Een jongen floot (A boy whistled)
- Lied hij (He sang)

More evidence for postverbal subjects:
- Buiten/er schreeuwe een jongen (Outside/There shouted a boy)
- Adv V S

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

In a naturalistic setting in the home context:

Results per condition:
- Monolinguals
  - SV
  - VS

Results across conditions:
- Heritage speakers
  - SV
  - VS

Conclusions:
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 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:

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