Subject Position in Spanish as a heritage language in the Netherlands
van Osch, B.A.; Aalberse, S.P.; Hulk, A.C.J.; Sleeman, A.P.

Citation for published version (APA):
Subject Position in Spanish as a Heritage Language in the Netherlands: Interface Vulnerability and Cross-linguistic Influence

Brechje van Osch, Suzanne Aalberse, Aafke Hulk & Petra Sleeman
University of Amsterdam

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

Definite
Focus
Subject
3. Definiteness
2. Focus
1. Verb type

Heritage speakers overgeneralize preverbal subjects
(Hirche Nava, 2007; Montrul, 2005; Zapata et al., 2005)

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 (J. de Prada-Pérez & Pascual y Cabo, 2012)
• Heritage speakers overgeneralize preverbal subjects

(Cross-linguistic influence from English or simplification?

Subject position in Dutch
Main clauses:

Een jongen floot
A boy whistled

But... V2:

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

ADV

MORE EVIDENCE FOR POSTVERBAL 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

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

Method
Contextualized Scalar Acceptability Judgment Task:

Verbs
Focus
Subject

Broad
Narrow
Definite
Indefinite

Unaccusative
Unergative

Subject position in Spanish
Verb type

Unaccusative
Unergative

Focus

Broad
Narrow

Subject

Definite
Indefinite

Experiment 2: Heritage Spanish in the US
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:

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.

Support for cross-linguistic influence

References

The Interface Hypothesis
(Scovel & Sagasti, 2013)

External interface
(syntax-pragmatics/discourse)

Internal interface
(syntax-semantics)

more vulnerable
less vulnerable

FOCUS & DEFINITENESS

VERB TYPE

more vulnerable
less vulnerable

Support for cross-linguistic influence

Partial support for the Interface Hypothesis

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

2. In judgment, Dutch heritage speakers of Spanish overgeneralize postverbal subjects, whereas American HS do not prefer either order.

Support for cross-linguistic influence

Results across conditions:

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.

Support for cross-linguistic influence

References