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.

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Subject Position in Spanish as a Heritage Language in the Netherlands: Interface Vulnerability and Cross-linguistic Influence

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

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

Un chico   llegó
The boy    arrived

Heritage speakers

Speakers of a minority language, acquired during childhood in a naturalistic setting in the home context.

Previous Research: Heritage Spanish in the US

- Comparing verb type & focus → unclear findings:
  - Verb type is robust (Montreal, 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; Montrel, 2005; Zapata et al., 2005)

Method

Contextualized Scalar Acceptability Judgment Task:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verb type</th>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Subject</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unaccusative</td>
<td>Broad</td>
<td>Indefinite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unaccusative</td>
<td>Narrow</td>
<td>Definite</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

Results per condition

Monolinguals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>SV</th>
<th>VS</th>
<th>Unacc. Unerg.</th>
<th>Broad</th>
<th>Narrow</th>
<th>Def.</th>
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Heritage speakers

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

- Support for cross-linguistic influence

References