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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject position</th>
<th>Un chico llegó</th>
<th>Llegó un chico</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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 (Montub, 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; Montub, 2005; Zapata et al., 2005)

### Method

Contextualized Scalar Acceptability Judgment Task:

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

### Results across conditions:

- **Experiment 1:** Heritage Spanish in the Netherlands
  - 24 heritage speakers
  - 22 Spanish speaking parents
  - No Caribbean dialects
  - Proficiency-matched to the Dutch HS

- **Experiment 2:** Heritage Spanish in the US
  - Born in the US, or arrived before 5
  - 2 Spanish speaking parents
  - No Caribbean dialects
  - Proficiency-matched to the Dutch HS

### 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 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

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### References


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### The Interface Hypothesis

Geeslin & Seminario, 2013

- External interface (syntactic-pragmatics/discourse) more vulnerable
- Internal interface (syntax-semantics) less vulnerable

**FOCUS & DEFINITENESS**

VERB TYPE

more vulnerable

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### Subject position in Dutch

Main clauses:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject position</th>
<th>Een jongen floot</th>
<th>A boy whistled</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

But... V2:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject position</th>
<th>Buiten/er schreeuwe een jongen</th>
<th>Outside/There shouted a boy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adv</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

MORE EVIDENCE FOR POSTVERBAL SUBJECTS

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### 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

### Hypotheses

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