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**

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)

**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>Definite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unaccusative</td>
<td>Narrow</td>
<td>Indefinite</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Results across conditions:**

- **Experiment 1:**
  - 24 heritage speakers
  - 7 vs 0.5
  - Partial support for the Interface Hypothesis

- **Experiment 2:**
  - 22 heritage speakers in New Jersey
  - 0.5 vs 1
  - Support for cross-linguistic influence

**Conclusions**
- Dutch heritage speakers show knowledge of the factors verb type, focus, and definiteness → Partial support for the Interface Hypothesis
- In production, Dutch heritage speakers of Spanish overgeneralize preverbal subjects, whereas American HS do not prefer either order.
- In production, American heritage speakers of Spanish overgeneralize preverbal subjects → Support for cross-linguistic influence

**References**