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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**The Interface Hypothesis** (Givón & Selمضه, 2012)

**Subject position in Spanish**

Spansh has flexible word order:

- Un chico llegó
- Llegó un chico
- A boy, a boy arrived
- A boy arrived

Subject position with intransitives in Spanish is constrained by:

1. **Verb type**
2. **Focus**
3. **Definiteness**

**Verbs**

- Unaccusative
- Unergative

**Focus**

- Broad
- Narrow

**Definiteness**

- Definite
- Indefinite

**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
- Heritage speakers overgeneralize preverbal subjects

**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:

- Example: Unaccusative – narrow – indefiniteness

**Results per condition**

- Monolinguals
- Heritage speakers

**Results across conditions**

- Monolinguals
- Heritage speakers

**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 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

**References**


**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

**Method**

Contextualized Scalar Acceptability Judgment Task:

- Example: Unaccusative – narrow – indefiniteness

**Results across conditions**

- Monolinguals
- Heritage speakers

**Conclusions**

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

**References**