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.

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**Subject position in Spanish**

Spanish has flexible word order:

- **Unaccusative**
  - Un chico llegó
  - Llegó un chico
- **Unergative**
  - A boy whistled
  - Unaccusative

Subject position with intransitives in Spanish is constrained by:

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

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**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 Pauw-Peña & Pascual y Cabo, 2013)
- Heritage speakers overgeneralize preverbal subjects (Hinch Nava, 2007; Morait, 2005; Zapata et al., 2005)

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**Subject position in Dutch**

Main clauses:

- Een jongen floot
  - A boy whistled
- Buiten/er schreeuwen een jongen
  - Outside/There shouted a boy

But... **V2**:

- Een jongen floot
  - A boy whistled
- Buiten/er schreeuwde een jongen
  - Outside/There shouted a boy

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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
  - 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

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**Experiment 2: Heritage Spanish in the US**

**Participants**

- 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:

- **Verb type**
  - Unaccusative
  - Unergative
- **Focus**
  - Broad
  - Narrow
- **Subject**
  - Definite
  - Indefinite

**Results across conditions:**

- **Monolinguals**
  - Unacc. Unerg.
- **Heritage speakers**
  - Broad Narrow
  - Def. Indef.

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**References**