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**
  - V S
  - Subject position with intransitives in Spanish is constrained by:
  1. Verb type
  2. Focus
  3. Definiteness

**Definite**
- Hertel, T. J. (2003). Lexical and discourse factors in the second language acquisition of Spanish word order.
- Hinch Nava, 2007; Montrul, 2005; Zapata et al., 2005.

**Previous Research: Heritage Spanish in the US**
- Comparing verb type & focus → unclear findings:
  - Verb type is robust (Montrul, 2005)
  - Verb and focus are vulnerable (Zapata et al., 2005)
  - Verb type is more vulnerable than focus (de Prada-Perez & Pascual y Cabo, 2012)
  - Heritage speakers overgeneralize preverbal subjects

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

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**Method**
Contextualized Scalar Acceptability Judgment Task:
- **Verb type**
  - Unaccusative
  - Unergative
- **Focus**
  - Broad
  - Narrow
- **Subject**
  - Definite
  - Indefinite

**Results across conditions:**
- Monolinguals
- Heritage speakers

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**References**