Subject Position in Spanish as a heritage language in the Netherlands
van Osch, B.A.; Aalberse, S.P.; Hulk, A.C.J.; Sleeman, A.P.

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Subject Position in Spanish as a Heritage Language in the Netherlands: Interface Vulnerability and Cross-linguistic Influence

Brechje van Osch, Suzanne Aalberse, Aafke Hulk & Petra Sleeman
University of Amsterdam

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
- Llegó un chico arrived a boy

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)

CROSS-LINGUISTIC INFLUENCE FROM ENGLISH OR SIMPLIFICATION?

Subject position in Dutch
Main clauses:

- Een jongen floot
  a boy whistled

But... V2:

- Buiten/er schreeuwde een jongen
  Outside/There shouted a boy

Unacc.Unerg. Some cousins arrived.
- o -1 0 1 -2
- o o o o

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

Method
Contextualized Scalar Acceptability Judgment Task:

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Definite</th>
<th>Indefinite</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

EXAMPLE: Unaccusative → narrow → indefinite

It’s my birthday and there are many guests in my house. Suddenly the doorbell rings, but since I’m just receiving a gift from my uncle, I cannot open the door. My wife goes and sees that it’s some cousins. When she gets back, I ask her: ‘Who arrived?’. My wife tells me:

Unacc.Unerg. Some cousins arrived.
- o -1 0 1 -2
- o o o o

Results per condition

- Unacc. Unerg.
  - Monolinguals
  - Heritage speakers

Results across conditions

- SV
  - Monolinguals
  - Heritage speakers

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

Results across conditions:

- SV
  - Monolinguals
  - Heritage speakers

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 production, Dutch heritage speakers of Spanish overgeneralize postverbal 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
  (pp. 308-318). Somerville, MA: Cascadilla Proceedings Project.

The Interface Hypothesis

External interface (syntax-pragmatics/discourse) ➔ more vulnerable

Internal interface (syntax-semantics) ➔ less vulnerable

FOCUS & DEFINITENESS ➔ VERB TYPE

more vulnerable ➔ less vulnerable

b.a.vanosch@uva.nl