Subject Position in Spanish as a heritage language in the Netherlands
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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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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:

- **Unaccusative**
  - A boy        whistled
  - Silbó        un chico
  - Llegó        un chico
- **Unaccussative**
  - A boy        arrived
  - The boy      arrived

Subject position with intransitives in Spanish is constrained by:

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

The Interface Hypothesis

- **External interface (syntax-pragmatics)**
- **Internal interface (syntax-semantics)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Subject</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Broad</td>
<td>Definite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narrow</td>
<td>Indefinite</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<p>|</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verb type</th>
<th>Subject Position in English or Simplification?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unacc. Unerg.</td>
<td>CROSS-LINGUISTIC INFLUENCE FROM ENGLISH OR SIMPLIFICATION?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Def. Unerg.</td>
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<td>Def. Def.</td>
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Method
ContextualizedScalar Acceptability Judgment Task:

- **Verb type**
- **Focus**
- **Subject**

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
- Most 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

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:

- **Production task**
- **Judgment task**

Conclusions

1. Dutch heritage speakers show knowledge of the factors verb type, and focus, but not 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