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

Brechje van Osch, Suzanne Aalberse, Aafke Hulk & Petra Sleeman
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The Interface Hypothesis
(Garcia & prepares, 2011)

Method
(Contextualized Scalar Acceptability Judgment Task)

3. Definiteness
2. Focus
1. Verb type

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
Llegó        un chico

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

Heritage speakers overgeneralize preverbal subjects
(Hinch Nave, 2007; Montrul, 2005; Zapata et al., 2005)

Spanish has flexible word order: constrained by:

Subject position in Dutch
Main clauses: Een jongen - float
A boy - Whistled

But... V2:

Buiten/er schreeuwde een jongen: Outside/There shouted a boy
Adv - V - S

Unacc. Unerg. Subject Focus

Results per condition:

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
- Recently immigrated to the Netherlands.
- No knowledge of Dutch
- No Caribbean dialects

18 monolingual speakers of Spanish

Results across conditions:

Experiment 2: Heritage Spanish in the US

Heritage speakers
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:

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 judgment, 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

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