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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.

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)

The Interface Hypothesis
Subject position with intransitives in Spanish is constrained by:
1. Verb type
2. Focus (Heretik, 2003; Luzano, 2006; Dominguez, 2013; Zapata et al., 2005; De Prada-Perez & Pascual y Cabo, 2012)
3. Definiteness (Roggia, 2011)

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

Subject position in Dutch
Main clauses:
A boy
S
whistled
V
Arrived a boy
S

Results per condition

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

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

References

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