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:

Un chico llegó

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

Subject position in Dutch
Main clauses: Een jongen floot
But... V2: Buiten/er schreeuwde een jongen

Method
Contextualized Scalar 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

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

Results per condition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monolinguals</th>
<th>SV</th>
<th>VS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unacc. Unerg.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Broad Narrow</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Def. Indef.</td>
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<td>0</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Judgment task</th>
<th>Monolinguals</th>
<th>Heritage speakers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SV</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VS</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conclusions
1. Dutch heritage speakers show knowledge of the factors verb type, focus, and definiteness

   - **Partial support for the Interface Hypothesis**

2. In production, 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

   - **Support for cross-linguistic influence**

References