Subject Position in Spanish as a heritage language in the Netherlands

*Interface Vulnerability and Cross-linguistic Influence*

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

(Es Sorace & Serratrice, 2009)

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
A boy whistled

But... V2:

Buiten/er schreeuwe een jongen
Outside/There shouted a boy

Adv V S

(Es Hinch Nava, 2007; Montrul, 2005; Zapata et al., 2005)

Method
Contextualized Scalar Acceptability Judgment Task:

Verb type
Unaccusative
Unergative

Focus
Broad
Narrow

Subject
Definite
Indefinite

RESULTS

4.5
3.5
2.5
1.5
2
1
0
2
1
0
-1
-2
0
1
2

Results per condition

Monolinguals

S

VS

Results across conditions

CONCLUSIONS

1. Dutch heritage speakers show knowledge of the factors verb type, focus, and definiteness → Partial support for the Interface Hypothesis

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 → Support for cross-linguistic influence

References
- Meisel, M., Van Lier, R., & van Geest, J. (2009). Dutch heritage speakers in the US. 22 heritage speakers in New Jersey