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

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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

S V V

Een jongen floot

A boy whistled

S V

Subject position with intransitives in Spanish is constrained by:

1. Verb type
2. Focus
3. Definiteness

External interface (syntax- pragmatics / discourse) more vulnerable » less vulnerable

The Interface Hypothesis

(Sorace & Serratrice, 2009)

Subject position in Dutch

Main clauses:

Een jongen floot

A boy whistled

S V

But... V2:

Buiten/er schreeuwe een jongen

Outside/There shouted a boy

Adv V S

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

Method

Contextualized Scalar Acceptability Judgment Task:

Result across conditions:

SV

VS

subject

focus

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

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.

Support for cross-linguistic influence

References