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.

Citation for published version (APA):
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 un chico
- **A boy** arrived a boy

Subject position with intransitives in Spanish is constrained by:

1. **Verb type**
2. **Focus** (Hertel, 2003; Luzano, 2008; Dominguez, 2013; Zapata et al., 2009; De Prada-Pérez & Pascual y Cabo, 2012)
3. **Definiteness** (Roggia, 2011)

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, 2009; Zapata et al., 2005)

The Interface Hypothesis

Subject position with intransitives in Spanish is more vulnerable to the following constraints:

- **Focus**
- **Verb type**
- **Definiteness**

Subject position in Dutch

Main clauses:

- Een jongen floot
  - A boy floated

But... V2:

- Builen/er schreeuwe een jongen Outside/There shouted a boy
- Adv

Unaccusative

Un chico sibiló
- A boy whistled

Unaccusative

Llegó un chico
- Arrived a boy

Definite

Subject

Un chico llegó
- The boy arrived

Subjects position with intransitives in Dutch is more vulnerable to the following constraints:

- **Focus**
- **Verb type**
- **Definiteness**

The Interface Hypothesis

Subject position with intransitives in Dutch is more vulnerable to the following constraints:

- **Focus**
- **Verb type**
- **Definiteness**

The Interface Hypothesis

Subject position with intransitives in Dutch is more vulnerable to the following constraints:

- **Focus**
- **Verb type**
- **Definiteness**

Method

Contextualized Scalar Acceptability Judgment Task:

- **Verb type**
- **Focus**
- **Subject**

Experiment 1: Heritage Spanish in the Netherlands

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

Hypothses

1. Dutch HS of Spanish will show less overgeneralization of preverbal subjects
2. Both focus and definiteness are more vulnerable than verb type

References


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:

- SV: Significant
- VS: Significant
- Def: Definite
- Indef: Indefinite

Conclusions

1. Dutch heritage speakers show knowledge of the factors verb type, focus, and not 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