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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Brechje van Osch, Suzanne Aalberse, Aafke Hulk & Petra Sleeman
University of Amsterdam

References

Method
Contextualized Scalar Acceptability Judgment Task:

Verb type
Unaccusative
Unergative

Focus
Broad
Narrow

Subject
Definite
Indefinite

Example: Unaccusative -> narrow -> indefinite

Subject position in Spanish

Spanish has flexible word order:

Un chico llegó

Llegó un chico

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

Outside/There shouted a boy

More evidence for postverbal subjects

Results per condition

Monolinguals

Heritage speakers

Results across conditions:

Monolinguals

Heritage speakers

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 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


table