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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Un chico llegó</th>
<th>Llegó un chico</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Unaccusative</em></td>
<td><em>Definite</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Subject position with intransitives in Spanish is constrained by:

1. **Verb type**
2. **Focus**
3. **Definiteness**

**The Interface Hypothesis**

- **External interface**
  (syntactic-pragmatics/discourse) more vulnerable — less vulnerable
- **Internal interface**
  (syntactic-semantics) more vulnerable — less vulnerable
- **FOCUS & DEFINITENESS**
  *VERB TYPE* more vulnerable — less vulnerable

**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, 2005)
  - Verb type is more vulnerable than focus (De Prada-Pérez & Pascual y Cabo, 2012)
  - Heritage speakers overgeneralize preverbal subjects (Hinch Nava, 2007; Montrul, 2005; Zapata, 2005)

**Subject position in Dutch**

Main clauses:

- Een jongen floot
  - S V

But... V2:

- Buiten/er schreeuwde een jongen
  - 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

**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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broad Narrow</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Def. Indef.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Heritage speakers</th>
<th>SV</th>
<th>VS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unacc. Unerg.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broad Narrow</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Def. Indef.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</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>SV</th>
<th>VS</th>
<th>other</th>
<th>missing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Conclusions**

1. Dutch heritage speakers show knowledge of the factors verb type, and focus, but not definiteness → Partial support for the Interface Hypothesis
2. In production, 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

**References**