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

- Flexible word order
  - Un chico llegó
  - Llegó un chico

- Subject position with intransitives
  - more vulnerable
    - Un chico llegó
    - Llegó un chico
    - Narrow
      - Broad
        - Subject
          - Definite
          - Indefinite

Heritage speakers

- Speakers of a minority language, acquired during childhood in a naturalistic setting in the home context.

The Interface Hypothesis

- Sorace & Serratrice (2009)
- Flexible word order: Spanish has subject position in Spanish during childhood.
- Definiteness
- Focus
- Heritage speakers overgeneralize preverbal subjects.

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
- Verbs: Subject Position in English or Simplification
- Focus: Subject
- Verb type (Unaccusative vs. Unergative)
- Broad vs. Narrow
- Definite vs. Indefinite

Results

- Results across conditions:
  - Monolinguals
  - Heritage speakers

Conclusions

- Partial support for the Interface Hypothesis
- Support for cross-linguistic influence

References

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

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