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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:

- Preverbal subjects: Indefinite – Narrow
- Postverbal subjects: Broad – Unaccusative

Subject position in Dutch
Main clauses:

- More evidence for postverbal 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:

- Verb type
- Focus
- Subject

RESULTS

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 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

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