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 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:

Un chico llegó
A boy arrived

Llegó un chico
Arrived a boy

Heritage speakers overgeneralize preverbal subjects
(Hinch Nava, 2007; Montrul, 2009, Zapata et al., 2005)

Subject position in Dutch
Main clauses:

Een jongen floot
A boy whistled

Buiten/er schreeuwde een jongen
Outside/There shouted a boy

Subject position with intransitives in Spanish is more vulnerable to preverbal subjects than in Dutch

Method
Contextualized Scalar Acceptability Judgment Task:

Verb type
Unaccusative Unergative

Focus
Broad Narrow

Subject
Definite Indefinite

Example: Unaccusative – narrow – indefinite

Subject position in Dutch as a Heritage Language in the Netherlands

Previous Research: Heritage Spanish in the US

Comparing verb type & focus → unclear findings:

• Verb type is robust (Montrul, 2009)
• 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

(De Prada-Pérez & Pascual y Cabo, 2012)

Heritage Spanish in the Netherlands

Experiment 1:

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 than heritage speakers
2. Both focus and definiteness are more vulnerable than verb type

Results per condition

Results across conditions

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 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

• Hinch Nava, E. (2007). 0.5 1.5 2 0 1 2