Subject Position in Spanish as a heritage language in the Netherlands

Interface Vulnerability and Cross-linguistic Influence

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**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 et al., 2005)
  - Verb type is more vulnerable than focus (de Prada-Pérez & Pascual y Cabo, 2010)
  - Heritage speakers overgeneralize preverbal subjects

**Subject position in Spanish as a Heritage Language in the Netherlands:**

- The Interface Hypothesis
- Subject position in Spanish is more vulnerable (syntax-pragmatics)
  - Verb type: 1. Both focus and definiteness are more vulnerable
  - Subject position: 1. Verb type, 2. Focus

**Experiment 1: Heritage Spanish in the Netherlands**

**Method**

- Contextualized Scalar Acceptability Judgment Task:
  - Verb type
  - Unaccusative
  - Unergative
  - Focus
  - Broad
  - Narrow
  - Subject
  - Definite
  - Indefinite

**Results per condition**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Monolinguals</th>
<th>Heritage speakers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SV</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VS</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>2.0</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: 200-600**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SV</th>
<th>VS</th>
<th>other</th>
<th>missing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Production task</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**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

**References**