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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
- Llegó un chico

Subject position with intransitives in Spanish is constrained by:
1. Verb type
2. Focus
3. Definiteness

The Interface Hypothesis

- External interface (syntax-pragmatics/discourse)
- Internal interface (syntax-semantics)

Focus & Definiteness
- More vulnerable
- Less vulnerable

FOCUS & DEFINITENESS
- 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 et al., 2005)
  - Verb type is more vulnerable than focus (De Prada-Pérez & Pascual y Cabo, 2012)

- Heritage speakers overgeneralize preverbal subjects (Hertel, 2003; Lozano, 2006; Domínguez, 2013; Zapata et al., 2005)

Subject position in Dutch

Main clauses:
- Een jongen floot
- A boy whistled

But... V2:
- Buiten/er schreeuwe een jongen
- Outside/There shouted a boy

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

Results per condition

Heritage speakers

Results across conditions:

Method
Contextualized Scalar Acceptability Judgment Task:
- Verb type
- Focus
- Subject

CROSS-LINGUISTIC INFLUENCE FROM ENGLISH OR SIMPLIFICATION?

Conclusion
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

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:

References