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

Spanish has flexible word order:

- Un chico llegó a boy arrived
- Llegó un chico arrived a boy

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

Subject position in Dutch

Main clauses:
- Een jongen floot a boy whistled
- Buiten/er schreeuwde een jongen outside/there shouted a boy

But... V2:
- Adv V S

CROSS-LINGUISTIC INFLUENCE FROM ENGLISH OR SIMPLIFICATION?

Method

Contextualized Scalar Acceptability Judgment Task:

- Verb type
- Focus
- Subject

Results across conditions:

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
- More 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

References

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 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

Heritage speakers

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

The Interface Hypothesis

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

Heritage speakers overgeneralize preverbal subjects (Hinch Nava, 2007; Montrul, 2015; Zapata et al., 2005)

Verb type is more vulnerable than focus (De Prada-Perez & Pascual y Cabo, 2012)

FOCUS & DEFINITENESS

focus

DEFINITE

SUBJECT

Unacc. Unerg. Broad Narrow Def. Indef.

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