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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

Un energative

The Interface Hypothesis
(Sorace & Serratrice, 2009)

Subject position in Dutch
Main clauses:

Een jongen floot
A boy floated

Stellite clauses:

Buiten/er schreeuwe één jongen
Outside/There shouted a boy

Unaccusative

Subject position in preverbal 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
• Unaccusative
• Unergative

Focus
• Broad
• Narrow

Subject
• Definite
• Indefinite

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

Conclusions
1. Dutch heritage speakers show knowledge of the factors verb type and focus, but not definiteness

Results across conditions:

Judgment task

Production task

Results per condition

Monolinguals

Heritage speakers

SV

VS

Def. Indef.

UNacc. Unerg.

Broad Narrow

Def. Indef.

References