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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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verb type</th>
<th>Subject position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unaccusative</td>
<td>Narrow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broad</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unergative</td>
<td>Indefinite</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Subject position with intransitives in Spanish is constrained by:

1. Verb type
2. Focus
3. Definiteness

Subject position in Dutch
Main clauses:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject position</th>
<th>Focus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unaccusative</td>
<td>Narrow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broad</td>
<td>Definite</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

Results per condition

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 production, Dutch heritage speakers of Spanish overgeneralize postverbal subjects, whereas American HS do not prefer either order.
   - Support for cross-linguistic influence

References