Subject Position in Spanish as a heritage language in the Netherlands

*Interface Vulnerability and Cross-linguistic Influence*

van Osch, B.A.; Aalberse, S.P.; Hulk, A.C.J.; Sleeman, A.P.

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Subject Position in Spanish as a Heritage Language in the Netherlands: Interface Vulnerability and Cross-linguistic Influence

Brechje van Osch, Suzanne Aalberse, Aafke Hulk & Petra Sleeman
University of Amsterdam

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:

- Imperfective
  - Un chico  llegó
  - Un chico
  - Llegó un chico
  - Llegó

- Perfective
  - El chico llegó
  - The boy arrived

Subject position with intransitives in Spanish is constrained by:

1. Verb type
2. Focus
3. Definiteness

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 (Hinch Nava, 2007; Montrul, 2005; Zapata et al., 2005)

The Interface Hypothesis
Heritage speakers
- Speakers of a language parameterized by the Interface Hypothesis
- Heritage speakers more vulnerable than monolingual speakers

Method
Contextualized Scalar Acceptability Judgment Task:

- Cross-linguistic influence from English or simplification

Results across conditions:

Monolinguals
- SV vs. VS

Heritage speakers
- SV vs. VS

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 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

References