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.

Citation for published version (APA):
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:
- Unaccusative
  - Verb type: Unaccusative
  - Focus: Broad
  - Subject: Undefinite

Subject position in Dutch
Main clauses:
- Broad
  - S: Een jongen floot
  - V: A boy
- Narrow
  - S: Adv: Some cousins arrived
  - V: The boy

Results per condition
- Monolinguals
- Heritage speakers

Experiment 1: Heritage Spanish in the Netherlands
Participants
24 heritage speakers
- 1 Dutch speaking parent, 1 Spanish speaking parent
- No Caribbean dialects
- Recently immigrated to the Netherlands.
- No knowledge of Dutch
- No Caribbean dialects

Results across conditions
- Monolinguals
- Heritage speakers

The Interface Hypothesis
(Domínguez & Sorace, 2011)

Internal interface (syntax-semantics/ discourse) more vulnerable » less vulnerable
External interface (syntax-pragmatics) more vulnerable » less vulnerable

FOCUS & DEFINITENESS » VERB TYPE

Previous Research:
Heritage Spanish in the US
- 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)

Subject position in Dutch during Spanish has flexible word order: constrained by:
- Verb type
- Focus
- Subject

Definiteness
- Heritage speakers overgeneralize preverbal subjects

Subject position in English or Simplification?
- Broad: S: Un chico llegó
  V: Llegó un chico
- Narrow: S: V: Un chico llegó

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

Results across conditions:
- Judgment task
- Production task

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 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

References

Subject position in English or Simplification?
- Broad: S: Un chico llegó
  V: Llegó un chico
- Narrow: S: V: Un chico llegó

Experiment 1: Heritage Spanish in the Netherlands
Participants
24 heritage speakers
- Born in the Netherlands, or arrived before 5
- Dutch heritage speakers show knowledge of the factors
- No Caribbean dialects