Subject Position in Spanish as a heritage language in the Netherlands
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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

**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, 2009; Zapata et al., 2005)

**Method**

Contextualized Scalar Acceptability Judgment Task:

- **Verb type**
  - Unaccusative
  - Unergative

- **Focus**
  - Broad
  - Narrow

- **Subject**
  - Definite
  - Indefinite

**Subject position in Dutch**

Main clauses:

- Een jongen floot
  - A boy whistled

But... V2:

- Buiten/er schreeuwde een jongen
  - Outside/there shouted a boy

**Results per condition**

- Monolinguals
- Heritage speakers

**Results across conditions**

- Production task
- Judgment task

**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**


**The Interface Hypothesis**

(Quirk & Sankoff, 1991)

**External interface**

(syntax-pragmatics / discourse)

more vulnerable → less vulnerable

**FOCUS & DEFINITENESS**

more vulnerable → less vulnerable

**Internal interface**

(syntax-semantics)

more vulnerable → less vulnerable

**Experiment 2:**

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

**Experiment 1:**

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

**Figures and Graphs**

- CROSS-LINGUISTIC INFLUENCE FROM ENGLISH OR SIMPLIFICATION?
- MORE EVIDENCE FOR POSTVERBAL SUBJECTS

**Support for cross-linguistic influence**

- No Caribbean dialects
- Heritage speakers

**Images and Illustrations**

- Un chico llegó
- A boy arrived

- Llegó un chico
- Arrived a boy

- Buiten/er schreeuwde een jongen
- Outside/there shouted a boy

- Eep jongen floot
- A boy whistled

- Ex. Unaccusative narrow indef Timbre

- More evidence for postverbal subjects

- Results per condition

- Results across conditions

- Conclusions

- References