THE LEFT EDGE IN THE SPANISH CLAUSAL STRUCTURE*

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This paper reexamines several ideas and empirical data uncovered during the last decade regarding the left-edge part of the clause in Standard Spanish in the light of what is also known about other closely related languages, such as Italian and Caribbean Spanish. Two facts about Standard Spanish are identified as being intimately related to its rich agreement paradigm: the availability of the VSO order and the “subject inversion” phenomenon in informational questions. A particular formalism is proposed which allows us to identify the left-most edge in the I-domain (above Tense) as the projection of “rich” agreement (phi-P) and as the locus of the EPP feature.

1. The Issue

In Standard Modern Spanish, the order VSO is still attested, namely in cases where some element other than the subject functions as the subject of predication, see Zubizarreta (1994), (1998). The subject of predication may be overt as in (1) or covert as in (2), i.e. a silent pronominal bound by a clitic. (Examples from Zubizarreta (1998):100-101)

(1) a. Todos los días compra Juan el diario.
   every day buys Juan the newspaper
   “Juan buys the newspaper every day”
b. Ayer presentó María su renuncia.
   yesterday handed-in Maria her resignation
   “María handed in her resignation yesterday”
c. A María le regaló su abuelo un caballo de pura raza
   to María dat.cl. gave his grandfather a horse of pure breed
   “Her grandfather gave María a purebred horse”

(2) a. Me devolvió María el libro que le presté.
   Dat.cl. retruned María the book that to-her (I) lent
   “María returned to me the book that I lent her.”
b. Se comieron los niños todo el pastel.
   Ben.cl. ate the boys all the cake
   “The boys ate up all the cake.”
In Zubizarreta (1994), it was argued that the postverbal subject occupies a position outside the VP.\(^1\) A simple argument in favor of that view is provided by the distribution of low adverbs. As shown by the examples in (3), low VP adverbs (such as manner and aspectuals) can appear between the Subject and the Object in the VSO construction.

(3)  
a. *Aquí hablan todos muy bien el Inglés.*  
Here speaks everyone very well English  
b. Ayer explicó el maestro integralmente el teorema.  
Yesterday explained the teacher entirely the theorem  
c. *En la ducha canta Pedro amenudo La Marsellesa.*  
In the shower sings Pedro often the Marsellesa

The comparison with Italian is particularly revealing. In this language, VSO is possible when the subject is a pronoun, but not when it is lexical; see (4). As expected, low VP adverbs can follow postverbal pronominal subjects but not postverbal lexical subjects; see (5). Examples are from Belletti (2004).

(4)  
a. *Di quel cassetto ho le chiavi.*  
Of that drawer have I the keys  
b. *Di quel cassetto ha Maria le chiavi.*  
Of that drawer has Maria the keys

(5)  
a. *Di questo mi informerò io bene.*  
Of this refl.cl.inform I well  
b. *Di questo si informerà Maria bene.*  
Of this si informerà Maria bene

c. *Di questo si informerà bene Maria.*

While subject pronouns move to Spec of T in Italian, lexical subjects do not. They remain in Spec of V. The illformedness of (4b) suggests that the subject in Spec of VP interferes with the Case-licensing of the object (deeply embedded within VP).

If the postverbal subject in Spanish is outside the VP, say in Spec of T, where is the verb? Obviously, it is above T, in a position left-adjacent to T. See also Beas (2007) for the same conclusion.\(^2\) The goal of this paper is to elucidate the nature of that position.

\(^1\) I am grateful to Anna Cardinaletti and Patricia Schneider-Zioga for detailed comments.
\(^2\) A. Cardinaletti points out that if the tensed verb moves above T in Italian, it would wrongly predict the grammaticality of examples like *di quel cassetto ho io avuto le chiavi* (of that drawer have I had the keys). Note that in Spanish the subject can appear after a tensed auxiliary: ‘de ésto ya les había yo hablado muchas veces’ (of this already to them have I spoken several times). This suggests that the participle in Italian is higher than in Spanish. In our analysis, the participle in
2. **The left-edge in Old Spanish**

Before we address the issue of where the Verb sits in Spanish, it is useful to examine briefly the distribution of clitics in Old Spanish. This will help us to identify the domains at the left-edge of the clausal structure. In Old Spanish, clitic pronouns were syntactically weak pronominal phrases, which generally cliticized onto the element on its left; see Rivero (1986), (1991), Fontana (1993). Rivero (1997) distinguishes two distinct domains in the left-periphery for clitics in Old Spanish: the **C-domain** and the **I-domain**. Negation clearly demarcates the two domains.

![Diagram](image)

The I-domain is below Neg and left-adjacent to the position occupied by tensed V; see examples in (7). On the other hand, the C-domain is above Neg and below C; see examples in (8). The clitic located above the subject in (8c) is also assumed to be in the C-domain. (Examples from Rivero (1997).)

(6) \[ [C [ CL [ Neg [ CL [ T…..]\\

(7) a. *Seméjame que vos tienen en estrechura, si Dios non vos ayuda.*
Hears.that you have in difficulites, if God not you helps
“It seems to me that if God does not help you, they have you in a difficult position.”

b. *E el arcobispo dijo que se non trabajase ende…*,
And the archbishop said that himself not work of.it…,
*ca non ge-lo darían.*
Since not to.him-it would.give
“And the archbishop said not to get excited about it…, since they would not give it to him.”

(8) a. *E grant derecho sería que me matases…, si me de ti non guardase.*
And big right would.be that me kill…, if me from you not protect
“And it would be your right to kill me…, if I did not protect myself from you.”

Italian would move above T. This might be related to another difference between the two languages. Modern Italian, but not Modern Spanish, has the phenomenon known as Stylistic fronting; see Cardinaletti (2003).
b. **Fue a la corte a demandar el palio e non lo pudo cabar,…,**
   went to the court to ask the pennant and no it could obtain
   que ge-lo non darían en ninguna manera.
   that to him it not would give in no manner
   “He went to court to ask for the pennant and could not get it,…, since they would not give it to him at all.”

c. **Si lo el rey por bien toviere, mándeme quemar.**
   and it the king for good had, order me burn
   “If the king considered it good, let him order that they burn me.”

With Rivero, we will refer to the domain above Neg as the C-domain, where multiple topic constituents (or point-of-view elements, as suggested by Rivero) can appear. Constituents other than weak pronominal clitics, such as full DPs and PPs can appear in the C-domain, as is clearly illustrated by the examples below from Fontana (1993); see also example (8a) above.

(9) a. **Si dios lo non fizies…**
   if God it not did…
   “If God did not do it…”

b. **Sy el físico la bien connosce…**
   if the physician it well knows…
   “If the physician knows it well”

c. **Si buen entendimiento le Dios quiso dar para entender…**
   if good understanding him God wanted give to understand…
   “If God wanted to give him a good mind to understand…”

For the meanwhile, we will refer to the projection below Neg as Ext(nded) I(nfl). When Neg is present, only clitics can surface in Spec of Ext-I because Neg must procliticize onto V (Rivero 1991). This means that when Neg is present, lexical DPs in Spec of Ext-I must move out to the C-domain. In conclusion, the CL positions in (6) are available for lexical DPs as well. (A CL position at the left-edge of the I-domain was also identified in Zubizarreta 2001; cf. also Uriagereka 2005’s F projection.)

3. **The left-edge in Modern Standard Spanish**
The I-domain and the C-domain are qualitatively distinct positions. The I-domain is the inflectional domain of the verb, while the C-domain is where sentence grammar meets discourse. The left-edge of the C-domain is where the force of the sentence (declarative, interrogative, exclamative) is encoded and where wh-phrases in interrogatives and exclamatives are attracted to. The middle field of the C-domain is where topics and point-of-view related-constituents are hosted, as well as discourse-linked focus, (i.e. so-called “contrastive focus”). The
right-edge of the C-domain is where the proposition is asserted or denied, referred to as Pol(arity). The C-domain is summarized in (10).

\[(10) \quad \text{[Force [Wh [Top [Foc [Pol …}}\]

There are also topics above the Force P (at the left-most edge of the clause). These only occur in root clauses; a María, quién la invitó? ‘Maria, who invited her?’ We will not discuss this type of topic here, nor will we be concerned with contrastive focus in this paper. We will therefore omit the FocP from future structures.

The I-domain is composed of temporal elements such as Tense and Aspect. The Ext-I projection (the nature of which is yet to be determined) is at the left-most edge of the I-domain, right below the Pol projection. The combination of the C-domain and the I-domain, with the V projection immediately below it, yields the following PS schema:3

\[(11) \quad \text{[Force [Wh [Top [Pol [Ext-I [T [Asp [V}}\]

The topics and point-of-view elements in the C-domain are referentially specific (i.e. they are part of the speaker/hearer discourse domain). And crucially, they are outside the scope of negation. On the other hand, the constituent that appears in the Spec of Ext-I is not required to be specific. This can best be illustrated by comparing the two types of subjects identified by Suñer (2003) and Beas (2006), (2007) for Spanish. These authors have shown (contra Alexiadou and Anagnostopoulou (1998)) that the preverbal subject in Spanish need not be specific, as in (12) below. On the other hand, the subject above Pol, as in (13), must be specific (Beas op.cit.).

\[(12)\]
a. Un estudiante (cualquiera) publicará su tesis este año.
A student (whichever) will publish his thesis this year.
b. Un estudiante que se gradué con honores publicará su tesis este año.
A student that refl. graduates-SUBJ with honors will publish his thesis this year.

“A student that graduates with honors will publish his thesis this year.”

\[(13)\]
a. Un estudiante (*cualquiera) no/sí publicará su tesis este año.
A student (whichever) no/yes will publish his thesis this year.

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3 Rizzi (1997) argues for the following left-periphery structure: Force (Top*) Foc (Top) Fin. This author assumes that the landing site of wh-phrases is the same landing site as the contrastive Focus, immediately below Top*. While we do not discuss Foc P here, we assume that wh-phrases are attracted to a higher position, close to Force. See section 7.2. for arguments. We do not recognize a Top position below Foc P, at least not for Spanish. See Benincà and Poletto (2004) for discussion of the nature of this projection in Italian.
a. *Un estudiante que se gradúe con honores no/sí
b. A student that graduates-SUBJ with honors no/yes

Furthermore, a subject above Pol is outside the scope of negation. Compare (14b) with (14a), in which the subject is below Pol and the sentence is ambiguous.

(14)  a. Aquí no leen muchos linguistas libros de textos. [AMBIGUOUS]
   Here neg.reads many linguists textbooks
   “There are many linguists here such that they do not read textbooks.”
   “There are few linguists that read textbooks.”

b. Muchos linguistas no leen libros de textos. [NON-AMBIGUOUS]
   Many linguists neg read textbooks
   “There are many linguists such that they do not read textbooks.”

The expectation for a subject in Spec of Ext-I is that it should be able to have narrow scope with respect to Neg. But this is not testable in Spanish because no lexical DP can surface between negation and the verb, the reason being that Neg must procliticize onto the verb. Consequently, lexical DPs must move out from this field into the topic field in the higher C-domain.

4. **What sits in the Ext-I projection?**

   Ext-I is where the inflected verb sits in Spanish. In Old Sp, the Spec of this projection was a landing site for a variety of scrambled constituents, including objects; see (15) (cited by Fontana (1993)). Possibly, this was the position where weak pronominals were licensed in old Spanish as well.

(15)  a. Grande duelo avien las yentes christianas.
   great grief had the people Christian
   “The Christian people experienced great grief.”

b. este logar mostro dios a abraam.
   this place showed God to Abraham
   “God showed Abraham this place.”

c. Uino & agua deue el clerigo mexclar en el caliz.
   Wine & water must the priest mix in the chalice
   “The priest must mix wine and water in the chalice.”

   Fontana op.cit. has argued that the loss of object scrambling in Old Sp was related to the reanalysis of clitics as heads. As is well-known, a preverbal object in Mod Sp requires the presence of an object clitic (unless the preverbal object is contrastively focused).
(16) a. *El vino lo comprará Juan
   the wine 3rd.p.s.acc.ill.buy Juan
b. A Juan le regalaremos una botella de vino.
   Acc.Juan 3rd.p.s.dat.cl.give a bottle of wine

b. *A Juan regalaremos una botella de vino.

This suggests that that DP arguments (whether subject or object) cannot be
fronted from a thematic position within VP into Spec of Ext-I in Mod Sp.
Preverbal DP arguments are directly merged to the Ext-I and linked via Agree to
the clitic in the case of objects and to Agr in the case of subjects. In turn, the
clitic(or Agr) is linked to a silent pronominal in argument position also via Agree.
Following Rizzi (1982), we assume that Agr has the same syntactic status as a
clitic. (Note that pro does not impose a specific interpretation.)

(18) a. [DP
   [ cl, [V+T]] …[ V pro]]
b. [DP
   [[V+T]agr, ]] … [pro, V..]]

The derivations in (18) are preferred to the derivations in (19). This could
be attributed to the preference for derivations that involve Shortest Links, as
proposed in Zubizarreta (1994). (On the Shortest Link Condition, see Chomsky
(1993.)) In effect, the representations in (18) involve two short links (DP,cl) and
(cl,pro). Fewer brackets separate the two elements in each of these links than in
the case of the link (DP, e) in (19). Two representations can be compared with
each other only to the extent that the two involve the same Numeration (i.e. the
same set of lexical items or LI). We can indeed assume that (18) and (19) involve
the same Numeration if we consider that the phi-features in the {cl, pro} and
{Agr, pro} chains are copies of the phi-features of the DP object and DP subject,
respectively, rather than independent items in the Numeration.

(19) a. [DP
   [ V+T .... [ V e]]]b. [DP
   [ V+T ....[ e, V ..]]]

There is some evidence based on reconstruction that the preverbal object in
sentences like (16) are indeed merged at the left-edge of the clause (i.e. in Spec of
Infl-I), rather than merged within the VP and then subsequently moved to the left-
edge of the clause. As noted in Zubizarreta (1998), (2001), a pronoun contained
within a left-dislocated object can be bound by a preverbal subject that follows the
object; see (20a) and (21a). On the other hand, a pronoun contained within a
preverbal object cannot be bound by a postverbal subject; see (20b) and (20b).
(20) a. A su hijo, cada madre lo acompañará el primer día de escuela.
   Acc. his child each mother him-will-accompany the first day of school.
   “Each mother will accompany his child on the first day of school.”
   b.*A su hijo, lo acompañará cada madre el primer día de escuela.

(21) a. A su propio hijo, ningún padre lo quiere castigar.
   Acc. his own child, no father him-wants punish
   “No father wants to punish his own child.”
   b.*A su propio hijo, no lo quiere castigar ningún padre.

That the source of the contrast is indeed structural is shown by the fact that there is no preverbal/postverbal asymmetry when the binder is a matrix subject and the dislocated object originates at the left-edge of the embedded clause:

(22) a. A su hijo, ninguna madre desea que se lo regañe.
   Acc. his child no mother wants that indef.subj.-him-reprimand
   “No mother desires that his son be reprimanded.”
   b. A su hijo, no desea ninguna madre que se lo regañe.
   c. No desea ninguna madre que a su hijo se lo regañe.

The above paradigms suggest that the object in (20a) and (21a) is merged with Ext-I and the subject is merged in the C-domain. The object is then moved to the C-domain above the subject, giving rise to the left-edge structure shown in (23). The object can then be reconstructed to its original position below the subject and the binding relation can be established.

(23) [CP A su hijo [ cada madre [Ext-I e lo-acompañará. [ T ……

Further evidence for direct merge is provided by sentences like the following (first noted by Suñer (1988)). As expected, when the object is directly merged in Ext-I, it does not give rise to weak-cross over effects.

(24) A quién no lo aguanta ni su madre?
   Who not acc.cl. stand even his mother

Finally, note that while a preverbal object linked to the accusative clitic must be specific, this is not the case with a preverbal object linked to a dative clitic. This shows that the specificity effect in the first case is due to the clitic and not to the position.

(25) a.*(A) Una persona que hable tres idiomas la estamos buscando.
   A person that speaks(subj) 3 languages acc.cl. (we) are looking for
b. A una persona que hable tres idiomas \textit{le pagaremos un buen} salario.

In the next section, we propose that the Ext-I projection consists of a bundle of person/number features, to which we refer as \textit{phi-projection}. In order to motivate and formalize such a projection, we will adopt a proposal put forth by Biberauer and Roberts (B&R) 2008.

5. \textit{Formalizing the Ext-I projection}

5.1 Biberauer and Roberts (B&R) 2008

B&R suggests that the syntactic dependency between T and V is due to the fact that T is inherently verbal, but lacks arg-structure; therefore \textit{T has an unvalued V feature}. On the other hand, V has no inherent temporal content, but it is associated with an arg-structure; therefore \textit{V has a valued verbal feature and an unvalued T feature}. The unvalued features get valued via the Agree-relation, which is universally available.

Yet, despite the universal nature of the Agree-relation, in Romance, the V-to-T mechanism is also active. Why is this? B&R propose that V-to-T movement is related to the richness of “tense” morphology in the Romance verbal paradigm. These authors argue that richness of “tense” inflection should be distinguished from richness of “agreement” inflection. As illustrated by the examples in (26), the Romance languages (e.g., French, Italian, Spanish) are richer than the Germanic languages in their synthetic tense paradigm:

(26) \textbf{Romance:}
\begin{itemize}
    \item \textbf{French:} parle (present indicative/subjunctive), parlerai (future), parlerais (conditional), parlais (imperfect), [parlai (preterit), parlasse (past subjunctive)];
    \item \textbf{Italian:} parlo (present), parlerò (future), parlerai (conditional), parlavo (imperfect), parli (present subjunctive), parlassi (past subjunctive);
    \item \textbf{Spanish:} hablo (present), hablará (future), hablarei (conditional), hablaba (imperfect), hablé (preterit), hable (present subjunctive), hablase (past subjunctive I), hablara (past subjunctive II).
\end{itemize}

\textbf{Germanic:}
\begin{itemize}
    \item \textbf{German:} spreche (present indicative/subjunctive), sprach (past), spräche (past subjunctive)
    \item \textbf{English:} speak (present), spoke (past)
    \item \textbf{Swedish:} snakker (present), snakket (past)
While richness of tense inflection is related to V-to-T movement, richness of agreement inflection is related to licensing of subject drop. Indeed, languages with rich agreement and rich tense inflection have both null subjects and V-to-T movement (e.g. Spanish, Italian). Languages with poor agreement and poor tense inflection lack both null subjects and V-to-T movement (e.g., English, Modern Scandinavian). Languages with poor agreement and rich tense inflection lack null subjects but have V-to-T movement (e.g., French).4

B&R put forth the following proposal to formalize the dependency between rich tense morphology and the V-to-T mechanism. In languages with a rich tense inflectional paradigm, synthetic Vs are actually compound words consisting of V and T. The V part of the compound requires that it merge with a V-complement to form a VP, and the T part of the compound requires that it merge with a T complement to form a TP. In other words, the compound T+V must double merge in order to satisfy its subcategorization requirements, giving rise to the effect of V-to-T.

5.2 Extending B&R’s proposal to “rich agreement”

We propose that in languages with rich agreement and rich tense inflection, synthetic Vs are not only compounded with T, but also with a bundle of person/number/D features referred to as phi-features: i.e. V+T+phi. Therefore, in languages with both rich tense inflection and rich agreement inflection, the verb undergoes triple merge:

\[
\begin{align*}
1. & \text{ Merge with complement of } V \text{ (forming a VP)} \\
2. & \text{ Merge with complement of } T \text{ (forming a TP)} \\
3. & \text{ Merge with complement of } \phi \text{ (forming a } \phi P) \\
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\phi P \quad V+T+phi \\
\hline
\text{TP} \quad V+T+phi \\
\hline
\text{VP} \quad V+T+phi \\
\end{array}
\]

The projection that we called the Ex-Infl is \( \phi P \). The \( \phi \) projection bears some resemblance to the AgrS projection proposed by Cardinaletti (2004) and others, but it is different from AgrS in an important respect. The Spec of \( \phi P \), unlike the Spec of AgrS, is not restricted to subjects.

Indeed, we propose here to dissociate subject-verb agreement and Nom Case assignment from the EPP feature. Syntactically, the EPP is the structural requirement that requires the presence of a Specifier for a given head. Semantically, that Specifier is the Subject of Predication, which may or may not correspond to the logical subject. Indeed, while it is generally the case that the logical subject both agrees with the verb and is Case marked nominative in

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4 The question arises as to whether there are languages with rich agreement and poor tense inflection. B&R suggests that Icelandic may be a case in point. Interestingly, Icelandic lacks subject-drop and, according to B&R, it should also lack V-to-T movement. See note 5 for further discussion.
Romance, the logical subject is not always the Subject of Predication in the clause. This dissociation arises from the fact that Subj-Verb agreement is established early on, namely via the Spec-head relation between a Specifier and V within VP, while Nom Case is licensed in TP via the Spec-head relation that holds between T and its Specifier. On the other hand, the host of the EPP feature may vary. We assume that unlike phi and T, the EPP feature cannot project on its own because it lacks categorial feature. It is therefore necessarily parasitic on another category. In languages with a nominal phi compounded to V, EPP merges with phi (as in Spanish and Italian). In this case, the EPP feature is valued by the specifier of phi. Recall that languages with poor agreement inflection (such as English and French) lack a category phi. In such cases, the EPP feature is combined with verbal T and it is checked by Spec of T.

As for the null subject licensing property of languages with rich agreement, we adopt Rizzi (1982)’s original analysis in which “rich” agreement licenses a silent pro because syntactically it has a status comparable to that of an object clitic. More precisely, the nominal category phi, although morphologically a suffix, has the syntactic status of a head.

6. Consequences of the Proposal
6.1 Some general consequences: Summary
An important consequence of the above proposal is that in languages with “rich” agreement, V must move above T to project phi. Therefore, the verb is necessarily above T in such languages. We thus expect VSO order in such languages. This is the case in Spanish with both lexical and pronominal subjects. In Italian, the VSO order arises only with pronominal subjects; see (4). This must be due to independent constraints on the position of lexical subjects rather than on the position of the verb. In other words, while postverbal pronominal subjects in Italian are in Spec of T, postverbal lexical subjects in Italian are in Spec of V. The latter then interferes with the Case-licensing of the object within VP; see

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5 It is possible that in languages with rich “tense” inflection, in which V and T are compounded as one complex word, Nom Case can also be checked within the VP (via spec-head between V+T and Spec of V). This might be the case in Italian, in which postverbal lexical subjects are in Spec of V (rather than in Spec of T). But see note 7 for an alternative view.

6 B&R propose that in the Germanic languages with poor tense inflection, there is no V-to-T per se. On the other hand, the V2 Germanic languages have V-to-C, and only in such cases does V transit through T (due to minimality considerations). This would also be the case in Icelandic, a language with generalized V-to-C (Vikner 1995). As mentioned in note 1, Icelandic has rich agreement but no subject drop. This could be due to the fact that the category phi must be compounded to T, which itself must be compounded to V. If the tense paradigm is weak, then T cannot be compounded to V and in turn phi cannot be compounded to T on V. Therefore, Icelandic lacks a phi-projection and cannot license subject drop.
Zubizarreta (1994), Belletti (2004). The VSO order when S is a lexical subject is thus blocked in Italian.7

As mentioned earlier, in languages with a phiP, the logical subject and the Subject of Predication may be dissociated. This is because Spec of phiP is an “open” position. Any argument or adverb may occupy that position, check the EPP feature on phi, and function as the Subject of Predication; as in examples (1)-(3). The phiP is close in spirit to the SubjP in Cardinaletti (2004). Yet, this author dissociates the Subject of Predication from the EPP feature, while we propose that the two are intimately related.8

6.2 Consequences for Word Order in Questions: The phenomenon of subject-inversion

The above analysis makes a prediction in the case of wh-questions in languages like Spanish, based on the Shortest Link Condition; see Chomsky (1993). Given that the wh-phrase must front to the left-edge of the C-domain to check its wh-feature, it can satisfy the EPP feature on phi by moving through Spec of phi on its way to the C-domain. Such a derivation, shown in (29c), is preferred to the one in (29d), because the wh-movement part of the derivation in the former case involves shortest steps (or links) than in the latter case. This would force the wh-phrase to merge with phi, thus satisfying the EPP requirement of phi in passing. There would then be no motivation for merging any other constituent with phi.9 (Alternatively, we can reformulate this idea in terms of the theory of phase along the lines of Chomsky (2001), if we assume that PhiP constitutes a phase domain.)

(29) a. Qué diarios lee Juana siempre?
   What newspapers reads Juana always
b. ??Qué diarios Juana lee siempre
c. [CP qué diarios, [phiP e_lee [TP Juanak T [VP e_k V e_i]]]]
d. [CP qué diarios, [phiP Juanak lee [TP prok T [VP e_k V e_i]]]]
Interestingly, there are cases in which the “subj-inversion” requirement disappears. One case, noted by Inclán (1997) and also discussed by Beas (2007), are questions in which a negative polarity (realized as no or as the adverb nunca ‘never’) or a positive polarity (realized as sí or as an adverb like siempre ‘always’) is present; see (30) and (31). We assume that NPIs as well as negative and positive polarity adverbs may occupy the Spec of Pol position.\textsuperscript{10}

(30)  
a. \textit{Qué diarios Juana no lee nunca?}  
What newspapers Juana neg. reads never?  
b. \textit{Qué diarios Juana nunca lee?}  
What newspapers Juana never reads?

(31)  
a. \textit{Qué diarios Juana sí lee siempre?}  
What newspapers Juana aff.pol reads always?  
b. \textit{Qué diarios Juana siempre lee?}  
What newspapers Juana always reads?

Note that more than one topic may appear between the wh-phrase and polarity adverb:

(32) \textit{Qué cuentos, a María, su madre siempre le lee antes de dormir?}  
What stories to María her mother always dat. cl. reads before sleeping

The other well-known case in which preverbal subjects may appear in wh-questions is when the wh-phrase is specific, as shown by the lack of contrast between (33a) and (33b); see Arnaiz (1992), Ordoñez and Treviño (1999), Inclán (1997), Zubizarreta (2001), Beas (2007), among others. Compare (33) with (29).

(33)  
a. \textit{Cuál de los diarios lee Juana siempre?}  
Which of the newspapers reads Juana always  
b. \textit{Cuál de los diarios Juana lee siempre?}  
Which of the newspapers Juana always reads?

Note that the preverbal subject in such cases must be specific or D-linked (Beas 2007), which suggests that the preverbal subject in these cases is a topic.

(34)  
a. \textit{*Qué diarios alguien no lee nunca?}  
Which newspaper someone not reads ever  
b. \textit{Qué diarios alguien que tu conoces/*conozcas sí lee}  
Which newspapers someone that you know.ind/*subj yes reads siempre?

\textsuperscript{10} Note that \textit{qué} \textit{N}, unlike \textit{cual} \textit{N}, is non-specific.
always

The above paradigms suggest that in the presence of polarity and in the presence of a D-linked wh-phrase, the topic-field in the C-domain gets activated in questions, but not otherwise. Questions are different from assertions in that an Assertion Force freely activates the topic in the middle field in the C-domain, but not the Question Force. In the case of (33), the D-linked wh-phrase may be assumed to move through a topic position in the middle field of the C-domain before moving to the left-edge of the C-domain, thus activating the topic field and allowing for a subject topic to be merged there as well. As for wh-questions that contain an overt positive or negative polarity, it is to be noted that these are not informational questions but contrastive questions. One indication of this is that the answer cannot negate the presupposition. Thus, an answer such as “ninguno” (‘none’) for the questions in (30) and (31) is not acceptable (as noted by Inclán and Beas op.cit.).

French wh-in-situ questions (in a conservative dialect of French) exhibit the same property; see Boeckx (2000), Zubizarreta (2003). Interestingly, non-D-linked subjects are infelicitous in that construction:

(35) a. *Quelqun a mangé quoi?
    Someone ate what
b. Chacun a mangé quoi?
    Each ate what?

The above paradigms suggest that contrastive questions (unlike informational questions) favor a topic/comment articulation of the underlying presupposition. In other words, Force Q disallows a topic within its scope, unless it is a contrastive Q. If Force Q is contrastive, a topic (including a topic subject) can be directly merged in the middle field of the C-domain.

6.3 PhiP and language change

Given the analysis of category phi put forth above, we expect that if a language originally with a rich, distinctive verbal agreement paradigm begins evolving towards a system with more syncretism, this will have a considerable effect in its syntactic system. Caribbean Spanish might indeed be a case in point; see Lizardi (1993), Toribio (1993), (2000), Pérez-Leroux (1995). Caribbean Spanish is still rich in its tense paradigm, but its agreement paradigm has undergone syncretism due to its loss of syllable final –s. This resulted “in the convergence of second with third persons, and in the imperfect and conditional, first, second, and third person are rendered homophonous” (Toribio 2000:318). As Toribio notes, native speakers of Caribbean Spanish are also speakers of Standard Spanish; therefore some of the predictions are not always easily testable. The prediction that null subjects should no

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11 A. Cardinaletti points out that the same facts hold in Italian. *Quali libri Maria non legge mai? (which book Maria not read more?) *Nessuno. (none).
longer be available for a speaker of Caribbean Spanish cannot be readily tested because of the interference from Standard Spanish. Yet, the above authors have noted that in Caribbean Spanish, unlike Standard Spanish, overt pronouns have a wider semantic usage, namely they are readily used in non-contrastive contexts and to refer to non-human subjects, as well as in the cases of non-thematic subjects (i.e. the expletive subject *ello*).

On the other hand, there are two observable differences that are expected. One is the loss of “subject” inversion in questions, and this is indeed attested; see Lizardi and Toribio op.cit. Some examples from Toribio (2001) are cited below.\(^{12}\)

(36) a. *Qué ese letrero dice?*
   What that signs says
   b. *Qué número tú anotaste?*
   What number you wrote down
   c. *Qué yo les voy a mandar a esos muchachos?*
   What I going.to send to those boys?

Caribbean Spanish still has a rich tense paradigm. Therefore, Caribbean has the V+T compound (like French) and V therefore moves to T, but not any higher (since it lacks *phi*). Unlike French, Caribbean Spanish still allows for postverbal subject (subjects in Spec of V). This can best be observed in a construction that is proper to Caribbean, namely the copula focus construction:

(37) a. *Juan le regaló fué un libro a Pedro.*
   Juan to-them gave was a book to Pedro
   “It was a book that Juan gave to Pedro.”
   b. *Juan le regaló un libro fué a Pedro.*
   “It was to Pedro that Juan gave a book.”
   c. *Los niños comieron fueron patatas.*
   The children ate was potatoes
   “It was potatoes that the children ate.”

Bosque (1999) has argued that the above construction is distinct from clefts and that the focused phrase in such cases is part of the verbal phrase. Therefore, examples like the following, where a postverbal subject is focused, must be analyzed as involving a VP internal subject:

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\(^{12}\) An anonymous referee remarks that inverted subjects are preferred in CS. It would be important to do a generational study (also taking into consideration urban vs. non-urban parameter) to determine how the two competing grammars (Standard Spanish and CS) are evolving. The view that there are two competing grammars involved (as suggested by Toribio) has the benefit of accounting for an apparent optionality in these speakers speech. But see Ordoñez and Olarrea (2006) for a different view.
The above sentences indicate that in Caribbean (unlike French), Nom Case can still be licensed within VP. On the other hand, Italian has shown that a VP internal subject blocks Acc licensing on an object contained within the same VP. Therefore, we predict that the VSO order should not be compatible with the copula-focus construction. Based on preliminary data, this indeed appears to be the case (the examples below were provided to us by A.T. Pérez-Leroux):

(39) a. *Pa las navidades le compró fué Juan un carro.
   “For Christmas, it was a car that Juan bought for them.”

b. *Pa las navidades le compró fue Juan un carro.
   “For Christmas, it was Juan that bought them a car.”

7. Conclusion

In this paper, we have reexamined several ideas and empirical data uncovered during the last decade regarding the left-edge part of the clause in Standard Spanish in the light of what is also know about other closely related languages, such as Italian and Caribbean Spanish. We have identified two facts about Standard Spanish as being intimately related to its rich agreement paradigm: the availability of the VSO order and the “subject inversion” phenomenon in informational questions. We suggested a particular formalization of “rich” agreement based on ideas of Biberauer and Roberts (2008). That formalism allow us to identify the left-most edge in the I-domain as the projection of “rich” agreement (the phi-P), which is also the locus of the EPP feature. Spec of phiP is an “open” position, which checks EPP feature and functions as Subject of Predication.

While we claim that the VSO order is intrinsically related to rich agreement in Romance, we do not intend this correlation to be taken as a universal. Indeed, in languages with V-to-C (and poor agreement), like German and Dutch, a VSO order is also attested.

References

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