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Focus-related Operations at the Right Edge in Spanish

Subjects and Ellipsis

Iván Ortega-Santos

John Benjamins Publishing Company

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Volume 7

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by Iván Ortega-Santos

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To Amelia, who had to share her daddy with this book project

List of abbreviations

1SG	First-person singular
2PL	Second-person plural
2SG	Second-person singular
3PL	Third-person plural
3SG	Third-person singular
AgrOP	Object Agreement Phrase
AspP	Aspect Phrase
ATB	Across-the-Board
CL	Clitic
CLLD	Clitic Left Dislocation
CLRD	Clitic Right Dislocation
COND	Conditional tense
CP	Complementizer Phrase
DP	Determiner Phrase
EA	External argument
ECM	Exceptionally Case Marking
ECP	Empty Category Principle
EM	External Merge
EPP	Extended Projection Principle
expl	Expletive
FocP	Focus Phrase
GP	Gapping
IA	Internal argument
IM	Internal Merge
LCA	Linear Correspondence Axiom
MS	Multiple Sluicing
MSO	Multiple Spell-Out
NP	Noun phrase
NPI	Negative Polarity Item
NSL	Null Subject Language
NSR	Nuclear Stress Rule
O	Object
OT	Optimality Theory

PIC	Phase Impenetrability Condition
p-movement	prosodic-movement
PP	Prepositional Phrase
PPLE C	Principle C
PQD	Pero, qué dices? but what say.2sg 'What are you saying?'
PRS	Present tense
P-stranding	Preposition stranding
QP	Quantifier Phrase
QR	Quantifier Raising
RM	Relativized Minimality
S	Subject
SO	Syntactic object
SOD	Spell-Out Domain
Spec	Specifier
TEC	Transitive Expletive Construction
TopP	Topic Phrase
TP	Tense Phrase
V	Verb
VP	Verb Phrase
WCO	Weak Cross-Over
WS	Wh-Stripping

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

1. Why study information structure

The study of focalization processes, particularly as related to displacement or syntactic movement, is important for current syntactic theorizing because it provides a unique perspective on the grammar and (a) the interaction of its various components (e.g., syntax, semantics and phonology), (b) its relation to linguistic (and non-linguistic) context, and (c) its relation to so-called third factors. In particular, it is a central property of human language that phrases can be pronounced in positions different from those in which they are interpreted as thematic arguments or as modifiers of various sorts. For instance, in (1a) we find the canonical site of direct object interpretation in Spanish, a Romance Null Subject Language (NSL), whereas in (1b) we find the displaced or moved direct object:[1]

(1) a. Yo le di un carro a Pedro.
I CL gave a car to Pedro
'I gave a car to Pedro.'

b. UN CARRO le di yo _____ a Pedro, no una moto.
a car CL gave I to Pedro, not a motorbike
'I gave A CAR to Pedro, not a motorbike.'

Crucially for present purposes, while these two sentences include the same words with the same grammatical functions (e.g., *un carro* is the object in both sentences), there are correlated effects on almost every other component of the grammar. E.g., (1) does not only illustrate a change in word order, that is to say, in syntax; from the point of view of pragmatics, there is also a change in the way the sentence relates to its context, namely, through the use of focus. Specifically, (1b) has a contrastive interpretation that (1a) lacks. These sentences also include a contrast in the phonology / phonetics in that *un carro* is stressed in (1b) as opposed to (1a) (hence the use of capital letters in the former case). In this sense, word order variations and focus stand out as particularly complex phenomena involving almost every single component of the grammar (syntax, semantics, pragmatics, phonetic form

1. Note that clitics are glossed as CL without further details unless relevant to the argumentation.

and even morphology, depending on the language).[2] As a consequence, a proper understanding of their properties is crucial to linguistic theory.

Additionally, information structure stands out as a particularly important domain given the recent emphasis on so-called third factors. Specifically, within the biolinguistic perspective, three factors exist that interact to determine (I-) languages attained: "genetic endowment (the topic of Universal Grammar), experience, and principles that are language- or even organism-independent" (Chomsky 2005a: 1). It is the latter set of principles that are referred to as 'third factors'. In keeping with this emphasis, various syntactic properties that played a prominent role in the development of Generative Grammar are currently under close consideration; see, for instance, Ortega-Santos' (2011) claim that Relativized Minimality (RM), Rizzi (1990a, 2001a), Starke (2001), a.o., is grammaticized as a real constraint that is functionally grounded as a response to memory or Bever's (2006, 2008) analysis of the Extended Projection Principle (EPP) as the need for 'canonicity', taken as a general cognitive principle relevant to the acquisition process. With regard to the study of information structure, the psycholinguistic literature has paid particular attention to the relationship between third-factors and word order. E.g., it has been claimed that in the case of production, the surface word order would reflect the degree of availability of the syntactic constituents (Levelt 1989), giving rise to the topic >> focus order provided that the grammar of the relevant language allows it, e.g. Spanish does to a larger extent than English (Kempen & Harbusch 2003, a.o.; see Ortega-Santos 2008 for Spanish; see Bock, Loebell & Morey 1992; Phillips 1996; and Ferreira 1996 for relevant discussion on Incrementality and processing costs; for a recent overview of other processing factors that influence word order, see Trotzke, Bader & Frazier 2013; see also Cowles 2012; and Gernsbacher 1990 for discussion of the topic first order from the point of view of comprehension).[3] Needless to say, priming effects and/or the differences in the degree of availability

2. In the case of Spanish, morphology does not interact with focus in any relevant way. Still, in closely related linguistic varieties, Fiorentino and Piedmontese, there are so-called anti-agreement effects under wh-movement (see Rizzi 1982 and Campos 1997), that is to say, an operation closely-related to focus movement (see Chapter 2, Section 5.1.1 for discussion).

3. According to the Principle of Incrementality, different levels of processing can work on different pieces of an utterance at the same time. Thus, the phonological encoder can work on whichever part of the clause is already available while the syntactic encoder is still working on filling out what remains (Ferreira 1996; Schriefers et al. 1998; Levelt 1989; or Phillips 1996). This allows for fast/efficient computation.

of certain mental representations are not restricted to language and, thus, are attested in other cognitive domains.[4]

In this context, the objective of this monograph is to advance our understanding of syntactic movement and the syntax of focus through the analysis of various understudied focalization processes in Spanish, both in non-ellipsis and ellipsis contexts, with an emphasis on the syntax of subjects and on focus at the right edge of the sentence. This chapter is structured as follows: Section 2 introduces the goals of this work and the methodology. Section 3 presents the notion of focus, the main focalization processes found in Spanish and the specific data set to be discussed throughout the book. Section 4 deals with those aspects of Minimalism (Chomsky 1995, et seq.) and Phase Theory (Chomsky 1998 and 2000, and subsequent work) that will be particularly relevant to the discussion. Finally, Section 5 includes a detailed summary of the monograph chapter by chapter.

2. The goals of the present monograph and methodological considerations

The present monograph, intended for professional linguists and researchers, is aimed at furthering our knowledge on the properties of syntactic movement in natural language while expanding the syntactic contexts and kinds of focus considered in the literature on Spanish and, by extension, in other Romance NSLs. More specifically, this work contributes to our current understanding of syntactic movement as follows: While the mechanisms that allow an element to surface to the left of its base-generated position ([X_i [Y .... t_i]]) generally speaking are well understood, the exact operations that allow an element to surface to the right of its base-generated position ([[Y t_i Z] X_i]) are subject to a higher degree of controversy. Romance NSLs, for instance, allow focused subjects to surface at the right edge of the clause. A number of possible implementations have been put forward to account for those cases within the field of generative grammar: e.g., leftward movement of TP across the subject hosted in FocP, Kayne & Pollock 2001 for French, Etxepare & Uribe-Etxebarria 2008 and Ordóñez 2000 for Spanish, Longobardi 2000 for Italian, a.o.; p(rosodic)-movement of presupposed phrases past the in situ subject, Zubizarreta 1998; object scrambling past the in situ subject,

4. Questions arise as to what extent these factors are really part of competence (grammar) or performance and whether they might be related to interspeaker variation and the corresponding controversy regarding the syntax of new information focus in Spanish; in particular, the claim that new information focus surfaces at the right edge (see Chapter 2 for discussion). It is worth noting that at least a subset of these discussions is re-editing the functionalism vs. nativism debate in the light of state of the art of the discipline.

Ordóñez 2000 for Spanish, Costa 2004 for Portuguese, a.o.; or rightward movement of the subject at PF, Parafita Couto 2005; see also Camacho 2006 for recent discussion on dialectal variation in the syntax of focus in Spanish. Some of these analyses have been supported by evidence from acquisition studies or experimental research (e.g., Villa-García, Snyder & Riqueros-Morante 2010 and Domínguez 2004, respectively), but the resulting picture is obscured by the fact that most discussions available in the literature discuss in detail only one kind of focus at the right edge, usually new information focus, a.k.a. presentational focus. In that sense, the possibly distinct syntactic behavior of various kinds of focus types at the right edge (new information focus vs. contrastive focus vs. corrective focus) has not received enough attention. This issue is taken up in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3; specifically, Chapter 2 reviews the literature on new information and contrastive focus in Spanish, whereas Chapter 3 concentrates on the understudied corrective focus construction. Furthermore, the interplay between ellipsis and focus only figures marginally in the literature on focalization in Spanish, in spite of the fact that ellipsis remnants are arguably focused (Merchant 2001, a.o.).[5] Chapter 4 provides a detailed discussion of this area of syntax concentrating on the properties of constituents that appear at the right edge of the sentence after surviving ellipsis in various understudied ellipsis constructions involving multiple remnants. In the course of the discussion of these issues, unambiguous evidence will be provided in favor of the existence of at least three different mechanisms to derive the rightmost position of subjects at the right edge: (i) a two step process where the movement of the focused phrase to the left-periphery is followed by the topicalization of the remnant TP, (ii) rightwards movement, and (iii) in situ position of the subject (e.g., in the case of certain unaccusative verbs). It is argued that rightward movement in Spanish is restricted to various ellipsis constructions, as ellipsis, among other factors, mitigates the effects of a PF constraint against this operation.

Furthermore, in the course of the discussion, the syntax of the preverbal field, e.g., Spec-TP, will figure prominently. As a consequence, this monograph will also enter into current debates on the status of preverbal subjects in Spanish and Romance NSLs and our understanding of the EPP both in early and recent instantiations of the Minimalist Program (e.g., Chomsky 1995, 2000, 2013). Evidence is provided for the view that preverbal subjects can be hosted in Spec-TP, contrary to standard assumptions (e.g., Ordóñez 1997; Alexiadou & Anagnostopoulou 1998; and Chomsky 2013, a.o.).

5. Strictly speaking, for a remnant to survive ellipsis, it only needs to end up higher than the ellipsis site. While it is focused remnants that will be most important in this monograph, *a priori*, clitic left dislocated remnants and other kinds of topics may survive ellipsis as well (see Chapter 4, fn. 16 for discussion).

2.1 A brief note on the methodology

With regard to the methodology used to gather the data, grammaticality judgments will be used as customary in syntactic studies.[6] Whenever available, the results of so-called experimental syntax are discussed, particularly when there are divergences between the results of traditional grammaticality judgments and judgments gathered through experiments (see Chapter 2). Clearly, this is not the only option. Corpora, for instance, are also useful in gathering relevant generalizations (e.g., see Brunetti 2009 and Ocampo 2003 for relevant work on information structure in Spanish). Still, corpora, while relevant, provide evidence as to which structures are grammatical while failing to provide evidence as to which structures are ungrammatical, clearly a relevant part of most theoretical studies. Therefore, traditional introspective grammaticality judgments are considered appropriate for the task at hand, though the results from corpus studies will also be discussed where pertinent (see Chomsky 2010: 48, a.o., for further discussion on the importance of corpora from a biolinguistic perspective).

Furthermore, while focalization processes seem to involve various components of the grammar (see Section 1) for methodological reasons, the emphasis of this book will be put on the syntactic component, e.g., on the issue of displacement, as exemplified by the syntax of Spanish. This being said, the semantic and the phonological component as well as third factors will be included in the discussion where relevant (e.g., see Chapter 2 for some discussion). This non-trivial methodological choice was made in order to make progress in the syntactic side; clearly, to study the interaction of the different components of the grammar, first we need to understand each of them thoroughly. This would set the stage for a future study on the interaction of the components of the grammar and other related questions.

3. Data set and background on focalization in Spanish

For the purpose of this discussion, focus refers to the new information that is being asserted in any given proposition, (e.g., Chomsky 1971; see Krifka & Musan 2012 for recent discussion and a refinement of this view). Accordingly, the question / answer pair is used to determine the focus of the sentence at various points

6. The data reported in this book are representative of both (northern) Iberian and Chilean Spanish. A minimum of three speakers (two linguists and one naïve informant) were tested for each sentence. Additionally, subtle data were tested with at least two more linguists, a speaker of Peruvian Spanish and a speaker of Puerto Rican Spanish. Variation among speakers is noted in the text, when attested.

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