

Week 9

Subject inversion under A-bar movement

June 15, 2009

1 Basic data

In Spanish, wh- movement of an object causes the subject to be postverbal. This is known as *subject inversion*.

- (1) a. ¿Qué libro ha leído Juan?
what book has read Juan
b. * ¿Qué libro Juan ha leído?
what book Juan has read

This also happens with indirect objects.

- (2) a. ¿A quién le ha dado Juan un libro?
to who CL has given Juan a book
b. * ¿A quién Juan le ha dado un libro?
to who Juan CL has given a book

This happens not only with wh- movement, but also with focus fronting.

- (3) A: ¿Qué libro ha leído Juan?
what book has read Juan
B: ESTE LIBRO ha leído Juan
this book has read Juan
B': * ESTE LIBRO Juan ha leído
this book Juan has read
- (4) A: ¿A quién le ha dado Juan un libro?
to who CL has given Juan a book
B: A MARÍA le ha dado Juan un libro
to María CL has given Juan a book
B': * A MARÍA Juan le ha dado un libro
to María Juan CL has given a book

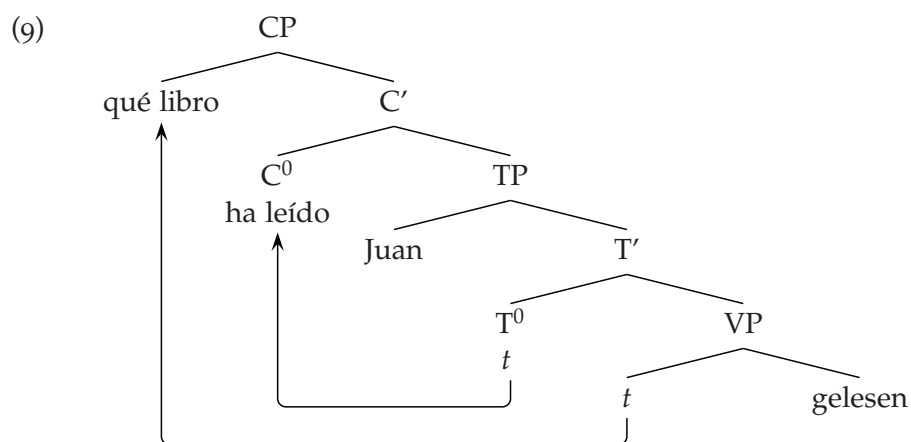
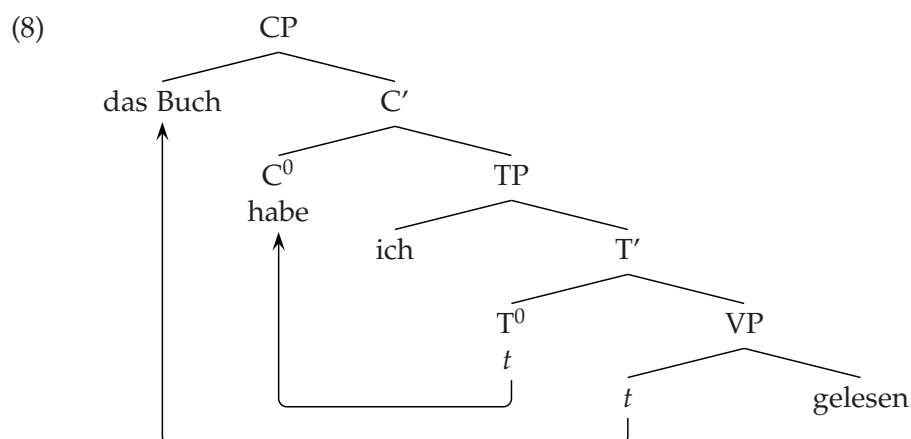
To a lesser extent, this also happens with other constructions involving A-bar movement, such as some types of exclamatives.

- (5) a. ¡Cuántos libros ha leído Juan!
 how many books has read Juan
 b. *? ¡Cuántos libros Juan ha leído!
 how many books Juan has read
- (6) a. ¡A cuántas personas les ha dado Juan un libro!
 to how many people CL has given Juan a book
 b. *? ¡A cuántas personas Juan les ha dado un libro!
 to how many people Juan CL has given a book

2 The analysis in Torrego (1984)

In the paper assigned for this week, Torrego (1984) proposes to treat the inversion cases in the same way as the verb second phenomenon in Germanic, i.e., via verb movement to C plus movement of the wh-phrase or focus to SpecCP.

- (7) a. Das Buch habe ich gelesen
 b. Het boek heb ik gelezen



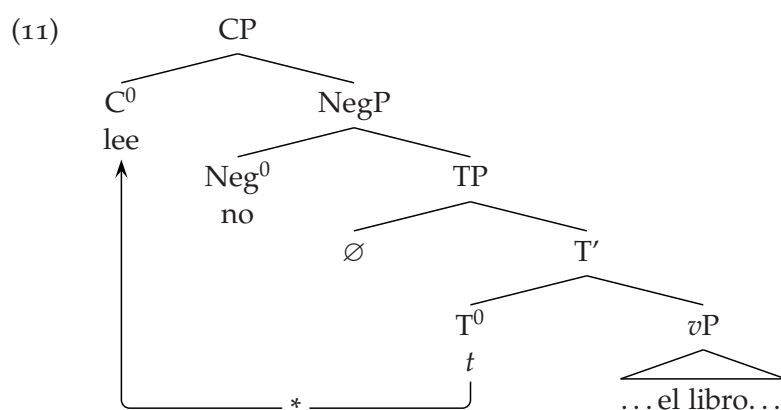
This analysis, however, is dependent on there being verb movement from T⁰ to C⁰. There are reasons, however, to think that the verb doesn't move beyond T⁰ in interrogatives.

2.1 Imperatives #1: interaction with negation

In Spanish, imperatives do not have a negative form: in order to give a negative order one has to use the subjunctive.

- (10) a. ¡Lee el libro!
read.IMP the book
- b. * ¡No lee el libro!
not read.IMP the book
- c. ¡No leas el libro!
not read.SUBJ the book

Rivero and Terzi (1995) argue that, in imperatives, the verb needs to move to C^0 . However, negation is hosted in an intermediate projection Neg^0 . Due to the Head Movement Constraint, movement from T^0 to C^0 skipping over Neg^0 is blocked.



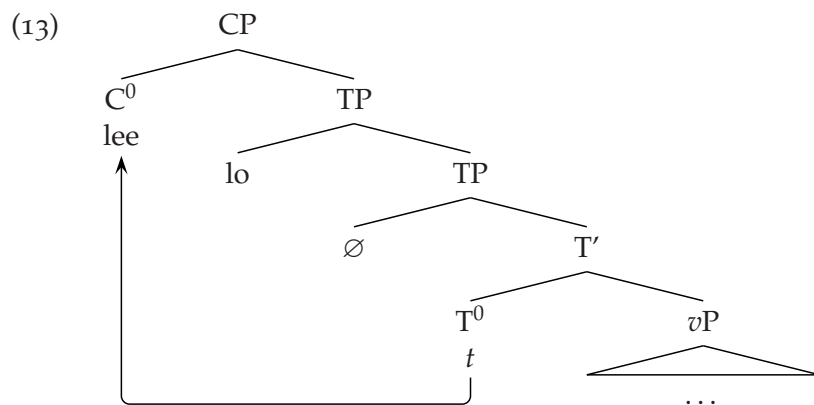
On the other hand, if the verb stays in T^0 , then the feature triggering movement to C^0 is not satisfied. The only solution is to use a mood, like the subjunctive, that does not require movement to C^0 .

2.2 Imperatives #2: clitics

Following the logic of the previous point, Rivero and Terzi also point out that, in imperatives, clitics that are normally preverbal are relegated to a postverbal position.

- (12) a. Este libro, lo lees
this book CL read
"You are reading this book"
- b. * Este libro, ¡lo lees!
this book CL read
"Read this book!"
- c. Este libro ¡leelo!
this book read.CL
"Read this book!"

The explanation: as before, imperative verbs need to move to C^0 . However, unlike negation, clitics don't project an independent head, so they can be crossed over by the verb.



2.3 Back to interrogatives

Interrogatives behave from imperatives in these two aspects: they are not blocked by negation, and they don't force clitics to appear postverbally.

- (14) ¿Qué libro no has leído?
 what book not have read
 "Which book didn't you read?"

- (15) a. El libro, ¿a quién se lo diste?
 the book to who CL CL gave
 "The book, who did you give it to?"
 b. El libro, ¿a quién disteselo?
 the book to who gave.CL.CL
 "The book, who did you give it to?"

Therefore, the conclusion is that imperative clauses have verb movement to C^0 , but interrogative clauses don't, which falsifies Torrego's analysis.

3 The analysis in Suñer (1994)¹

Suñer (1994) presents an alternative analysis based on the conclusion that the verb does not move beyond T^0 , as we saw above. She also stresses one other property mentioned by Torrego, namely, the fact that inversion is only required with argumental wh- phrases –*quién* 'who', *qué* 'what', and *a quién* 'to who'. This has already been exemplified above

On the other hand, non-argumental wh- phrases (*cuándo* 'when', *dónde* 'where' *cómo* 'how', and *por qué* 'why') don't require inversion, at least in the relevant dialects.

- (16) a. ¿Cuándo ha leído Juan el libro?
 when has read Juan the book
 b. ¿Cuándo Juan ha leído el libro?
 when Juan has read the book

¹Suñer, Margarita. 1994. V-movement and the licensing of argumental wh- phrases in Spanish. *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory* 12:335-372

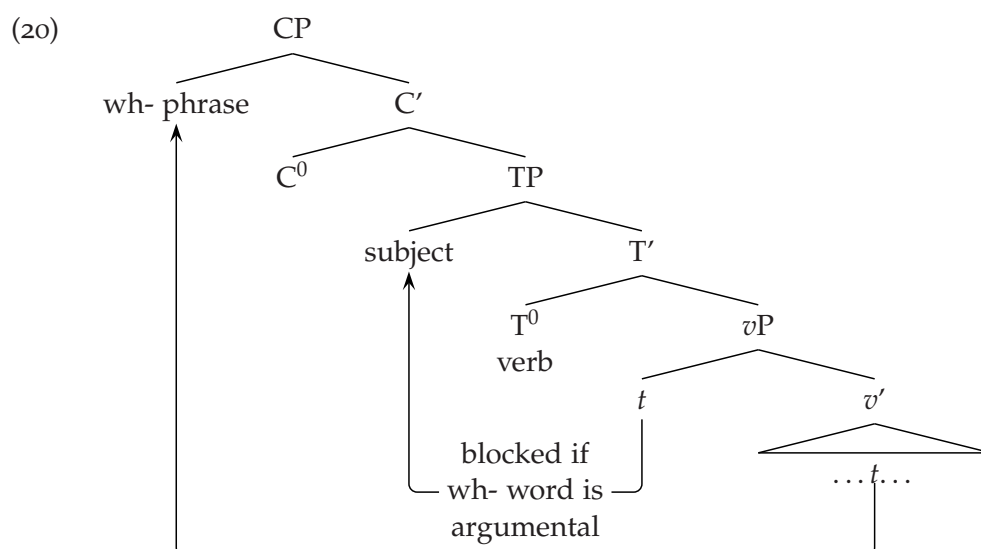
- (17) a. ¿Dónde ha leído Juan el libro?
 where has read Juan the book
 b. ¿Dónde Juan ha leído el libro?
 where Juan has read the book
- (18) a. ¿Cómo ha leído Juan el libro?
 how has read Juan the book
 b. ¿Cómo Juan ha leído el libro?
 how Juan has read the book
- (19) a. ¿Por qué ha leído Juan el libro?
 why has read Juan the book
 b. ¿Por qué Juan ha leído el libro?
 why Juan has read the book

Note: these data hold for the relevant dialects (Suñer's and Torrego's), but not for all dialects. We will see a more accurate description next week.

3.1 Analysis

How do we analyze inversion if there is no verb movement to C^0 ? Suñer bases her analysis on the following assumptions.

- Subjects are introduced in vP and optionally raise to TP.
- Wh- words need to move to CP (she attributes this to the *Wh- Criterion*, but the implementation is not important).
- An additional constraint (the *Argumental Agreement Licensing Condition*, see below) prevents subject movement to TP whenever an argumental wh- phrase is in CP.



(21) *Argumental Agreement Licensing* (Suñer 1994, 361)

- a. Argumental wh- phrases must be licensed through symmetric agreement between SpecCP and C⁰.
- b. C⁰ agrees with the verb only if C⁰ and the verb are Arg-marked and no other Arg-marked element is closer to the verb than C⁰.

In short, the relation between a verb and one of its arguments must be preserved also under wh- movement, and this requires agreement between the wh- word in SpecCP and C⁰. The only way in which C⁰ can acquire the necessary features, given the lack of verb movement, is by agreement with the verb in T⁰. However, the presence of a subject in SpecTP can block agreement.

3.2 An (apparently) difficult case: Caribbean Spanish

Caribbean Spanish (especially the variety spoken in Puerto Rico) is notorious in not requiring inversion in any case. Thus, the following are grammatical.

(22) *Puerto Rican Spanish*

- a. ¿Qué ese hombre ha dicho?
what that man has said
- b. ¿A quién ese hombre le ha dado una flor?
to who that man has given a flower

Suñer's solution is to stipulate that this dialect has lost the Argumental Agreement Licensing condition, due to an independent loss in the richness of agreement.

4 Conclusions for today

This might seem like a fancy restatement of the facts, and to some extent it is. The crucial point, which Suñer gets right, is that inversion must be analyzed not as verb movement to C⁰, but rather as the subject failing to move to SpecTP in the relevant cases. However, as we shall see next week, the dialectal variation is more fine-grained than Suñer assumes.

5 Reading for next week

Bakovic, Eric. 1995. A markedness subhierarchy in Spanish: optimality and inversion in Spanish. Ms., Rutgers University. Downloadable from <http://roa.rutgers.edu/view.php3?roa=80>.

This article is written in the Optimality Theory framework, which I will introduce briefly next week.