

Topicalization and Preverbal Subjects in Spanish *wh*-interrogatives

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1. Introduction

A much-discussed source of dialectal variation in Spanish syntax is the pattern observed in the Caribbean varieties of Spanish, where preverbal subjects are allowed to co-occur with fronted *wh*-operators, as illustrated in (1). In contrast, the “standard” varieties of Spanish tend not to allow for this possibility and display postverbal subjects in these cases instead.¹ Analyses that deal with this dialectal variation have accordingly concentrated on the comparison between the properties of the *Wh-V-S* interrogatives of standard Spanish and the *Wh-S-V* interrogatives of Caribbean Spanish. For clarity, in all the examples that follow I omit the opening question mark ‘¿’ characteristic of questions in Spanish orthography.

(1) CARIBBEAN VARIETIES
Qué tú quieres?
what you want
‘What do you want’

(2) STANDARD SPANISH
Qué quieres tú?
what want you
‘What do you want?’

In this paper I develop an alternative proposal that appeals to the syntax-information structure interface to provide an account of (1). Specifically, in this paper I argue that (1) is not the Caribbean equivalent of Standard Spanish (2). Rather, I provide evidence that (1) is the Caribbean Spanish equivalent of Standard Spanish (3), where the subject is a sentence topic displaced to a left-peripheral position.

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¹ This is something of a simplification of the different dialectal patterns observed in Spanish. As discussed in Torrego (1984) and Baković (1998), whether or not any given variety of Spanish allows for *Wh-S-V* interrogatives depends on; (a) the semantic role of the *wh*-operator, and (b) whether the interrogative is found in a matrix or an embedded context. What is unique to the Caribbean varieties is that they allow *Wh-S-V* interrogatives when the *wh*-operator is an argument. It is this last property that I address in this paper. Further research should indicate why this property is restricted to adjuncts in other varieties of Spanish.

- (3) Tú [qué quieres]
you what want
 ‘You, what do you want?’

In this analysis, the Caribbean varieties and the “standard” varieties behave in the same way when the subject does not bear the [topic] feature, both having (2) as the unmarked pattern for *wh*-interrogatives. This explains why inversion interrogatives like (2) are observed in every variety of Spanish. As such, in this analysis the difference between the Caribbean and the standard varieties reduces to a difference in the strategies for fronting a sentence topic that are available to each of these varieties.

2. Preverbal subjects in interrogatives

The Caribbean pattern in (1) has been widely studied in the literature on Spanish *wh*-interrogatives: (Lipski 1977; Torrego 1984; Suñer 1994; Baković 1998; Toribio 2000; Ordóñez & Olarrea 2001, 2006; Gutiérrez-Bravo 2005). In this pattern the preverbal subject is typically a pronoun (Ordóñez & Olarrea 2001, 2006), but it can also be a full DP, as in the examples in (4).

- (4) CARIBBEAN SPANISH (Puerto Rico): Suñer (1994)
- a. *Cuándo un implante dental es exitoso?*
when an implant dental is successful
 ‘When is a dental implant successful?’
 - b. *Qué Ivan dijo de eso?*
what Ivan said of that
 ‘What did Ivan say about that?’

The analyses listed above are quite diverse in the proposals they develop to account for the Caribbean data, but they share two basic assumptions: (a) they all assume that the preverbal subject is an unmarked transitive subject (i.e. it is a garden-variety subject DP that emerges in its usual preverbal position), and (b) the conditions responsible for (1) and (4) are thus exclusively syntactic. Starting with these assumptions, most of these analyses propose in one way or another that the preverbal subject in (1) and (4) surfaces in this position because of a strong Case/EPP requirement that is overridden in the “standard” varieties of the language when *wh*-fronting takes place. Most of the proposals have thus concentrated on providing an account of why this Case/EPP requirement is not usually operational in interrogatives in Standard Spanish. After this, the Caribbean pattern is explained by the absence of this particular property in the Caribbean varieties.²

A detailed review of all these different proposals cannot be undertaken here, but they still face problems accounting for two facts about *wh*-extraction in Spanish. The first one is that inversion interrogatives like (2) are equally attested in the Caribbean varieties, irrespective of whether the subject is a pronoun or not (see Toribio 2000). This is illustrated in (5) for both matrix and embedded interrogatives.

- (5) PUERTO RICAN SPANISH
- a. *Cómo se llama ese libro?*
how CL call that book
 ‘What’s that book called?’ Morales & Vaquero (1990:387)
 - b. *... ver [cómo se desarrollan los animales].*
to.see how CL develop the animals
 ‘... to see how the animals develop.’ Morales & Vaquero (1990:404)

² Ordóñez & Olarrea (2001, 2006) are an exception in this respect, but these accounts do not extend to cases like (4) where the subject is a full DP.

More so, a preliminary text count of Puerto Rican Spanish carried out as part of my research (3 texts) indicates that inversion interrogatives are far more common than *Wh-S-V* interrogatives like (4). As shown in (6), *Wh-S-V* interrogatives add up to just 10% of all *wh*-interrogatives where the subject is not null. This is unexpected if (1) and (4) are derived by a syntactic condition on the subject (Case, a strong EPP, etc.), since the absence of inversion is expected to be the unmarked situation in these analyses.

(6)

	Wh-V-S	Wh-S-V
Puerto Rican Spanish	90%	10%

Secondly, whereas interrogative extraction with a preverbal subject is robustly ungrammatical in matrix clauses in standard Spanish, long extraction is unaffected by the presence of a preverbal subject in the lower clause (Goodall 2004). Previous accounts of the ungrammaticality of (7a) have mostly failed to take this fact into account and thus incorrectly predict that (7b) should equally be ungrammatical. This is because whatever condition rules out the preverbal subject in (7a) also ends up ruling out the lower clause's preverbal subject in (7b).³

- (7) a. *Qué_i Pedro compró *t_i* en su cumpleaños?
what Pedro bought on his birthday
 b. Qué_i dices [que Pedro compró *t_i* en su cumpleaños]?
what you.say that Pedro bought on his birthday
 'What did you say that Pedro bought for his birthday?'

Here it is important to note that the grammaticality and absence of inversion of (7b) is not trivially the result of the lower clause not being an interrogative. Given standard assumptions about cyclicity (i.e. CP as a Phase), the *wh*-operator in (7) is still required to undergo fronting in the lower clause first. In most previous accounts of the ungrammaticality of (7), this first displacement makes the preverbal position equally unavailable to the subject in matrix and subordinate interrogatives, contrary to what is observed in (7).

In what follows I develop an analysis that is consistent with these two observations. The account I propose derives (4) through two different conditions that can operate simultaneously in *wh*-interrogatives. The first one is a condition on the location of the [Q] feature that signals a clause as an interrogative. The second condition is linked to information-structure, and concerns the landing site of a sentence topic when it too is fronted to a left peripheral position. In the following section I discuss the first of these two conditions.

³ A reviewer asks whether this is also observed when the lower clause is an interrogative. In fact it is not, the corresponding construction being seriously degraded (unless the extracted *wh*-operator is D-Linked: Cinque 1990).

- (i) ??Qué_i preguntaste [si Pedro compró *t_i* en su cumpleaños]?
what you.asked if Pedro bought on his birthday

However, this is not due to the preverbal position of the lower subject, but because (i) involves extraction from an interrogative island. In fact, five speakers of Mexican Spanish consulted for this purpose considered the equivalent of (i) with inversion to be systematically worse (this was also observed with speakers for whom (ii) is not totally ungrammatical).

- (ii) *Qué_i preguntaste [si compró Pedro *t_i* en su cumpleaños]?
what you.asked if bought Pedro on his birthday

3. On the location of the [Q] feature

3.1 The Interrogative Clause Condition

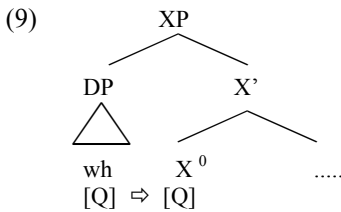
It is a standard assumption that the [Q] feature that triggers the fronting of *wh*-operators is associated with a unique kind of head (for instance, C^0). I depart from this assumption and instead I propose that the distribution of this feature is regulated by the condition in (8).

(8) INTERROGATIVE CLAUSE CONDITION (ICC)⁴

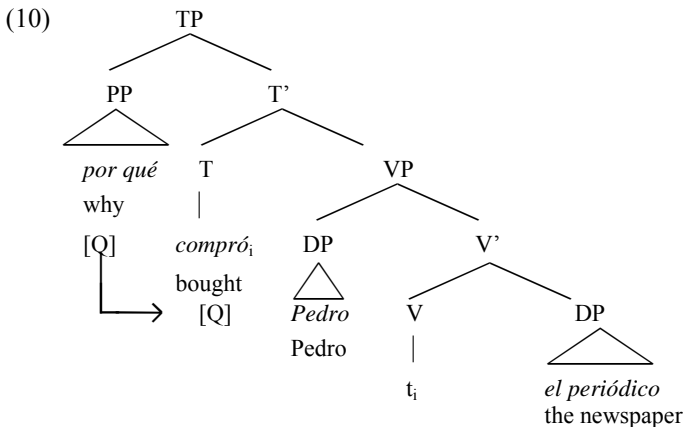
A clausal Extended Projection is interrogative iff the head of the highest phrase in the Extended Projection bears the feature [Q].

(See also Cheng (1991), Ackema & Neeleman (1998), Baker (1970))

In this definition I assume the Extended Projection analysis of Grimshaw (1997), in which clauses can be TPs or CPs, depending on how much structure is needed for the lexical items of the clause and the operations they are subject to. Following Cheng (1991), the basic idea is that, in the absence of an inherently interrogative C^0 (*if*, *whether*), the [Q] feature needed to mark the clause as an interrogative must be provided by an interrogative operator through Spec-head agreement, as schematized in (9).



However, I depart from Cheng's analysis, where the relevant head necessarily has to be C^0 (see (17)). Rather, in accordance with an analysis that assumes extended projections, when the highest functional projection of the clause is CP, C^0 must bear the [Q] feature, but when the highest functional projection is TP, there is no need to project a CP to host this feature. Rather, as a result of Spec-head agreement, the [Q] feature can be transmitted into T as long as the *wh*-operator that bears this feature can land in [Spec, T] (see Ackema & Neeleman 1998). In this analysis, in principle two kinds of structures are permitted. In one, TP is the highest projection, as in (10).⁵ My suggestion is that this is a possible structure for both matrix and subordinate interrogatives.

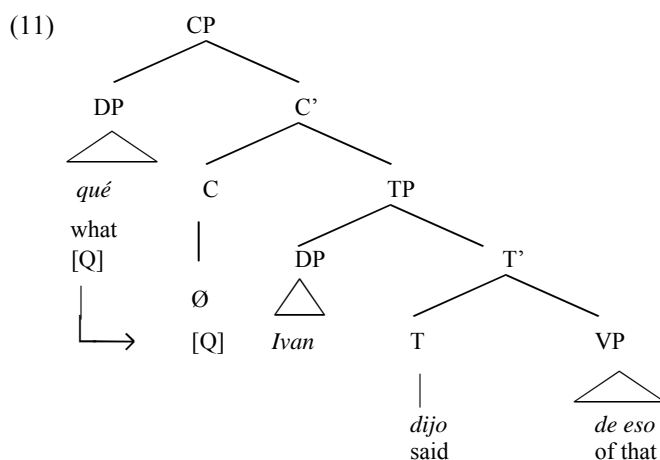


⁴ Originally from Gutiérrez-Bravo (2005).

⁵ In (10) I illustrate the effects of the ICC with the smallest possible structure, which abstracts away from the possibility of having other projections between TP and VP (i.e., ν P, AgrP). This has no effect on the analysis, which is equivalent if these projections are considered.

In this case, the *wh*-operator has [Spec, T] as its final landing site, as has been argued is the typical case in Spanish in Groos & Bok-Bennema (1986), Zubizarreta (1998), and Gutiérrez-Bravo (2005). I assume this in turn is part of the analysis in Zubizarreta (1998) that [Spec, T] is a multifunctional position in Spanish, which can be occupied by preverbal subjects, but also by foci, interrogative operators, and, as we shall see below, also by topics.⁶ In (10), T⁰ is the highest head in the extended projection. It acquires the [Q] feature from Spec-Head agreement with the *wh*-operator and in this way the ICC is satisfied. Since the *wh*-operator lands in the position that would otherwise be occupied by the subject DP, it automatically satisfies any EPP requirement associated with the [Spec, T] position and so the subject remains in its VP internal position. In other words, once a *wh*-operator is fronted into [Spec, T], further fronting of the subject DP to satisfy the EPP becomes unnecessary. Because of this, after V-to-T movement, the result is the *Wh-V-S* order of (2). This is the inversion interrogative, the kind attested in every variety of Spanish.

However, given the definition of the ICC, it is also possible for the interrogative as a whole to be a CP, as in the standard analyses of English interrogatives. My proposal is that Caribbean Spanish, but not Standard Spanish, has this option in addition to the structure in (10). This is illustrated in (11), which corresponds to (4b). Again, my suggestion is that this is a possible structure in both matrix and subordinate contexts.



This structure equally complies with the ICC. The highest head of the clause, which in this case is C⁰, receives the [Q] feature from the interrogative operator in its specifier. The evident difference between this structure and the one in (10) is that in this case the *wh*-operator does not land in [Spec, T]. Consequently this position can now be occupied by the subject DP or, in accordance with the analysis assumed here about the multifunctional nature of [Spec, T] in Spanish, by fronted XPs other than the subject. As will be discussed in detail in what follows, the gist of my analysis will be to propose that that this larger structure surfaces only when there are two XPs that need to be fronted simultaneously to the left periphery. When there is only one XP (for our purposes, a *wh*-operator) that needs to be fronted, only the more economical TP structure in (10) surfaces.

I now discuss the advantages of the analysis in (10), where the interrogative is just a TP. My analysis accounts for the fact that long extraction in Standard Spanish is compatible with a preverbal subject in a subordinate declarative (7b), in contrast with short extraction, i.e. (7a). In short *wh*-extraction, the interrogative operator has as its final landing site the position that would otherwise be occupied by the subject. If we assume that once the subject occupies [Spec, T], the only other option left in standard Spanish is to adjoin the fronted *wh*-operator to TP, as in (12), the ungrammaticality of this construction follows directly from the ICC. In this case, the *wh*-operator is not in a Spec-Head relation with the highest head of the extended projection, and so this head does not

⁶ Further evidence for the multifunctional nature of [Spec, T] in Spanish (including evidence that it is also the landing site of fronted negative quantifiers) can be found in Gutiérrez-Bravo (2005, 2007).

receive from the operator the interrogative feature that is needed to type the clause as an interrogative (as in Ackema & Neeleman 1998).

- (12) * $[_{TP} \text{Que}_i [_{TP} \text{Pedro compró } [_{VP} t_i \text{ en su cumpleaños}]]]$?
what Pedro bought in his birthday

At the same time my analysis correctly predicts that long extraction should be unaffected by the presence of a preverbal subject in the lower clause in every variety of Spanish, as in (13). This is because in this case the highest functional projection is CP, not TP. Following the ICC, the *wh*-XP needs to move first to [Spec, C] because C is the highest functional projection in the subordinate clause. The lower [Spec, T] position is thus available for the subject DP in this case and it is unsurprising that it does surface in this position, since in doing so it satisfies the EPP requirement associated with T^0 .

- (13) $\text{Qué}_i \text{ dices } [_{CP} t_i \text{ que } [_{TP} \text{Pedro compró } t_i \text{ en su cumpleaños}]]$?
what you.say that Pedro bought on his birthday
 ‘What did you say that Pedro bought for his birthday?’

Observe that this further shows that when subject inversion *does* occur in the lower clause, as in (14), this is presumably just a case of free subject inversion triggered by the same conditions that trigger free subject inversion in matrix clauses (*contra* Torrego’s (1984) original proposal).

- (14) $\text{Qué}_i \text{ dices } [_{CP} t_i \text{ que } [_{TP} \text{compró Pedro } t_i \text{ en su cumpleaños}]]$?
what you.say that bought Pedro on his birthday
 ‘What did you say that Pedro bought for his birthday?’

3.2 Extensions to English

I now briefly argue that there is no reason to think that the ICC is a condition specific to Spanish, and that it provides a straightforward account of the absence of *do*-support in English subject interrogatives, as illustrated in (15).

- (15) a. What did John buy?
 b. Who bought the newspaper?

This absence of *do*-support in subject interrogatives has led to analyses where the *wh*-subject differs from other *wh*-operators in that it does not move to [Spec, C] (George 1980, Chomsky 1986, Grimshaw 1997, Radford 1997). With some notational variations, these analyses propose a structure like (16) for this kind of interrogative.

- (16) $[_{TP} \text{Who bought the newspaper}]$?

Recently, the advantages of this kind of analysis have been discussed in Agbayani (2006). However, Agbayani concludes that (16) is problematic mostly because of two considerations, clausal typing and *wh*-islands.⁷ I now address these two objections in turn, and show that they are not

⁷ Agbayani (2006) also argues that evidence from sluicing is problematic for an analysis like (15). Assuming that Sluicing is a form of TP deletion, as in (i), a *wh*-subject in [Spec, T] should not survive sluicing, but it clearly does, as in (ii).

- (i) I heard Pat insulted someone. Tell me who $[_{TP} \text{Pat insulted}]$.
 (ii) I heard someone left early. Tell me who $[_{TP} \text{left early}]$.

problematic under the definition of the ICC that I propose. First, Agbayani points out that, under the definition of clausal typing of Cheng (1991), reproduced below, it is not clear how the interrogative operator in [Spec, T] in (16) can type the clause as an interrogative, since it is never in a Spec-head relation with a C^0 .

- (17) **Clausal Typing Hypothesis**
 Every clause needs to be typed. In the case of typing a *wh*-question, either a *wh*-particle in C^0 is used or else fronting of a *wh*-word to the Spec of C^0 is used, thereby typing the clause through Spec-head agreement.

The definition of the ICC I propose in (8) avoids this problem altogether because, unlike Cheng's definition, it does not make reference to C^0 exclusively. Instead it is defined with respect to the head of the highest functional projection, which, as we have seen can be either CP or TP.

Secondly, Agbayani (2006) notes that embedded subject interrogatives behave like non-subject interrogatives in that they are islands for long *wh*-extraction, as in (18). This, however, is unexpected if subject interrogatives are TPs; if they were, [Spec, C] would be an available escape hatch for the interrogative operator on its way to the matrix clause, as illustrated in (18).

- (18) *What_i does Kim wonder [_{CP} t_i ' Ø [_{TP} who Ø [_{VP} bought t_i]]]?

By adopting the extended projection analysis, however, my proposal equally avoids this problem altogether. In an extended projection analysis it is not necessary to postulate that every clause is a CP, even in the case of subordinate clauses (see Grimshaw (1997) for discussion). Rather, when there is no need to project a CP (either because there is no overt complementizer in the numeration or because there is no need to project a CP to host a fronted XP in its specifier), the structure that conforms best to Economy of Structure is simply a TP. Hence, the TP in (16) can be the complement of *wonder* without the mediation of a CP. Following my definition of the ICC, the subordinate clause is typed as an interrogative because its highest head T^0 receives the [Q] feature from the interrogative operator in its specifier, as in (19).

- (19) *What_i does Kim wonder [_{TP} who Ø [_{VP} bought t_i]]]?
 [Q]

In this analysis, the observed island effects now follow directly, since there is no longer any escape hatch that *what* can use on its way to the matrix clause.

4. An analysis based on topicalization

4.1 Subjects with a [topic] feature

In the preceding section I argued that the ICC derives two different kinds of interrogative clauses, TPs and CPs. My proposal has been that whereas the standard varieties of Spanish allow only for the TP structure, the Caribbean varieties allow for both. This is why Caribbean Spanish displays both inversion interrogatives (TPs) and *Wh-S-V* interrogatives (CPs). In the latter kind of interrogative, the *wh*-operator occupies the [Spec, C] position, and the subject occupies [Spec, T]. It is still necessary to determine when the Caribbean varieties project each kind of structure, though. The answer to this question further needs to be consistent with the empirical observation that inversion interrogatives are far more common than *Wh-S-V* interrogatives.

This argument, however, crucially relies on the assumption that sluicing is always TP deletion. In an Extended Projection analysis like the one adopted here, we can instead assume that sluicing is the deletion of all of the extended projection except for the specifier of its highest phrase. So when CP is the highest phrase, the remnant of sluicing is [Spec, C], but when TP is the highest phrase, then the remnant is [Spec, T]. Under this assumption, (ii) is compatible with an analysis where the *wh*-subject is in [Spec, T].

The proposal that I develop in this section is that the Caribbean varieties of Spanish only show *Wh-S-V* interrogatives when the subject functions as a sentence topic, as originally suggested in Morales (1999). When this is not the case, Caribbean *wh*-interrogatives are just TPs (i.e. (10)), as in any other variety of Spanish. This proposal is structured as follows. I assume that sentence topics need to be fronted to a left-peripheral position. This position is often a specifier position, but need not be. Following Baltin (1982) and Lasnik & Saito (1992), I assume that topics can alternatively adjoin to TP (and presumably also to matrix CP). My assumption is that topics can display this dual behavior because topicalization is not part of the narrow syntax. In the spirit of the original formulation of sentence topics in Vallduví (1992), I take topicalization to be phenomenon regulated exclusively by information structure considerations. In other words, topicalization is not triggered by the inherently syntactic mechanisms (feature checking, the ICC, etc.) characteristic of other movement operations. Because of this, I further assume that even when topics do move into a specifier position, they do not need to move into a specifier position with an exclusive topical status. Rather, topics can move into any available specifier position in order to fulfill the purely pragmatic requirement that they must appear in the left periphery.

With respect to the properties of subjects in Spanish, I assume that preverbal subjects are not default (CLLDed) topics in Spanish. They can either have the [topic] feature (according to discourse conditions) or not. See Gutiérrez-Bravo (2005, 2007) for evidence and detailed discussion. When the subject does not bear the [topic] feature, it occupies [Spec, T] to satisfy an active EPP requirement (Goodall 2001). However, as previously discussed, alternatively it is possible for the EPP to be satisfied by XPs other than the subject. So when a *wh*-operator is fronted into [Spec, T], as in (10), it satisfies the EPP. As previously mentioned, in this case the subject no longer needs to satisfy the EPP, and so it remains in its VP-internal position because of economy of movement. This results in the *Wh-V-S* “inversion” order.

If the subject additionally has the feature [topic], a different state of affairs results. In this latter case, there are two elements that need to be fronted simultaneously to a left-peripheral position: the *wh*-operator, which needs to satisfy the ICC, and the sentence topic. In other words, the structure in (10), which is the one that abides best to Economy of Structure, is insufficient in this case, because now there are two XPs that must be fronted to the left edge of the clause. Hence it becomes necessary to project a larger structure. My proposal is that the different varieties of Spanish differ with respect to how they accommodate this situation. In Standard Spanish the *wh*-operator moves into [Spec, T], just as it does in interrogatives where there is no sentence topic. Since [Spec, T] is filled by the *wh*-operator, the subject bearing the [topic] feature can no longer occupy this position and adjoins to TP instead (Rivero 1980). Recall that the opposite possibility (i.e. to move the subject into [Spec, T] and to adjoin the *wh*-operator to TP (i.e. (12)) is ruled out because it does not comply with the ICC.

- (20) [_{TP} tú_[topic] [_{TP} qué quieres [*t* *t*]]]?
 you *what* *want*
 ‘What do you want?’

Now, what is different about the Caribbean varieties is that they can resort to the structure in (11) for fronting a topic when a *wh*-operator also needs to be fronted. In this case the *wh*-operator lands in [Spec, C], as required by the ICC, and [Spec, T] remains an available landing site for the subject topic. This is schematized in (21).

- (21) [_{CP} qué ∅ [_{TP} tú_[topic] quieres [*t* *t*]]]?
 what [Q] *you* *want*

In my proposal, the difference between the Caribbean and the Non-Caribbean varieties is thus reduced to the strategies each variety has to accommodate fronted topics when there is more than one XP that needs to be fronted to the left periphery. The Non-Caribbean varieties only have the adjunction

option in (20); the Caribbean varieties in addition have the option to project a CP as in (21).⁸ Observe that my proposal is compatible with the observation in (6) that the frequency of occurrence of interrogatives without inversion in the Caribbean varieties is lower than that of inversion interrogatives. In my account, inversion interrogatives in every variety of Spanish are the result of there being an interrogative operator in the numeration, in conjunction with the requirement (from the ICC) that this *wh*-operator type the clause as an interrogative. The *Wh-S-V* interrogatives of the Caribbean varieties, however, are more complex (i.e. more marked) structures that originate from a more complex numeration. Specifically, the numeration *Wh-S-V* interrogatives is just like the numeration of any other *wh*-interrogative, but in addition it has the [topic] feature associated with the subject DP.⁹ As such it is not surprising that the frequency of occurrence of these interrogatives is lower than that of garden-variety, inversion interrogatives.

4.2 Evidence for topicalization

In this final section I present evidence that the subject DP in *Wh-S-V* interrogatives like (21) is not a garden-variety subject fronted to satisfy the EPP or Case requirements, but rather a sentence topic, as proposed above. A first piece of evidence that can be presented in favor of my proposal is the well known observation that the preverbal subjects of *Wh-S-V* interrogatives in the Caribbean varieties are typically pronouns (Lipski 1977, Ordóñez & Olarra 2001, 2006). This fact is expected under my proposal since the referents of nominal expressions need to be either part of the common ground or discourse-old in order for them to be realized as pronouns.¹⁰

Secondly, as originally noted in Suñer (1994), the same position can be occupied by non-subject topics. Observe that this is unexpected in any analysis where the preverbal subject of (4) and (21) moves into Spec-TP because of Case considerations. In fact, the preverbal subject can co-occur with other non-subject topics, as in (23). I take this as further evidence that the fronting that derives *Wh-S-V* interrogatives is the result of topicalization.¹¹

- (22) Qué [al Rafo] le han hecho?
what to-the Rafo DAT-CL they.have done
 ‘What have they done to Rafo?’

⁸ From the point of view of classic parametrical theory, this difference can arguably be understood as a parameter allowing or disallowing languages to project XP with null heads, hence allowing or disallowing the structure in (21). In theories based on markedness, such as Optimality Theory, the way to understand this situation would be slightly different. Concretely, depending on the different constraint rankings, in some varieties of Spanish the least marked way to accommodate a fronted topic would be by adjunction. In others, the projection of an XP with a null head would be the least marked strategy. This kind of constraint interaction is illustrated for topicalization and multiple topicalization in Gutiérrez-Bravo (2005).

⁹ More precisely, it is a more complex numeration where *some* XP bears the [topic] feature. This will become clearer in what follows.

¹⁰ It is also well known that monosyllabic pronouns are far more common than heavier pronominal forms in *Wh-S-V* interrogatives. This indicates that, besides the topicalization condition that I propose here, there is probably also a prosodic condition that is operational in these constructions. However, the fact that the preverbal position can be occupied by full DP as in (4) and (22) indicates that this prosodic condition cannot account by itself for all the different kinds of *Wh-S-V* interrogatives observed in the Caribbean Varieties.

¹¹ A reviewer notes that my analysis consequently predicts that Caribbean Spanish should allow multiple topicalization structures like (i), where one of the topics lands in [Spec, T] and the leftmost topic adjoins to CP:

- (i) [_{CP} Tú [_{CP} qué [_{TP} al Rafo le has hecho]]]?
you what to-the Rafo DAT-CL you.have done

My analysis does make this prediction, which needs to be corroborated with a larger corpus than the one I have used for this work.

- (23) A *quién* [en este momento] [Juan] *está entrevistando?*
ACC who at this time Juan is interviewing
 ‘Right now, who is Juan interviewing?’ (Suñer 1994: 367)

Thirdly, a comparison between Caribbean Spanish and another variety where *Wh-S-V* interrogatives are much more restricted shows that, in the latter variety, the preverbal subject equally needs to be a sentence topic. I now discuss this with respect to one variety of Mexican Spanish. Different varieties of Spanish allow different kinds of *Wh-S-V* interrogatives depending on the theta role of the *Wh-Op* (Torrego 1984, Baković 1998, Gutiérrez-Bravo 2005). For instance, there is a variety of Mexican Spanish (henceforth *Mexican Spanish B*, after Gutiérrez-Bravo 2005) where preverbal subjects are allowed only with *reason wh*-operators, as in (24).¹²

- (24) MEXICAN SPANISH B
 Por qué Pedro *compró* el periódico?
why Pedro bought the newspaper
 ‘Why did Pedro buy the newspaper?’

As we will see, the preverbal subject in (24) is the same in its information structure properties as the preverbal XPs in (21), (22), and (23). This argues in favor of the equivalence of these constructions across different varieties of Spanish, even though they are clearly more restricted in the non-Caribbean varieties. First, in oral texts from Mexican Spanish, these preverbal subjects are highly definite and individuated entities, a standard property of sentence topics (examples from Davies 2004).

- (25) MEXICAN SPANISH B
- a. Por qué México *es uno de los países en el mundo más*
why Mexico is one of the countries in the world more
capacitados para enfrentar emergencias?
prepared for facing emergencies
 ‘Why is Mexico one of the countries in the world most prepared to face emergencies?’
- b. Por qué Carlos Medina *y Juan Miguel Alcántara* *asumen*
why Carlos Medina and Juan Miguel Alcántara take.for.granted
que sí hubo el compromiso...?
that yes was the commitment
 ‘Why do Carlos Medina and Juan Miguel Alcántara assume that there WAS a commitment...?’

Secondly, just as in the Caribbean varieties, this same preverbal position can be occupied by non-subject topics, as in (26), from an oral text in Davies (2004).

- (26) MEXICAN SPANISH B
 Por qué al mismo Lenin *lo mataron?*
why ACC-the same Lenin ACC-CL they.killed
 ‘Lenin himself, why did they kill him?’

Lastly, speakers are sensitive as to whether or not interrogatives with preverbal subjects are felicitous in contexts where they can be interpreted as sentence topics. Specifically, they find inversion interrogatives infelicitous when the subject of the interrogative has an instantiation in the previous discourse. This follows from the observation in (Fant 1984) that it is a sufficient condition for a referent in Spanish to have a previous instantiation in the discourse in order for it to function as a

¹² In the other variety of Mexican Spanish (*Mexican Spanish A*) preverbal subjects are never allowed in matrix interrogatives (i.e. inversion is always obligatory); see Gutiérrez-Bravo (2005) for details.

sentence topic. Hence, when presented with the discourse context in (27) (where the referent *el presidente* ‘the president’, has been introduced) speakers systematically reject the *Wh-V-S* inversion interrogative as a felicitous continuation of the discourse, and prefer the *Wh-S-V* interrogative instead.

(27) MEXICAN SPANISH B

Discourse Context. A: Me dicen que el canciller le ofreció todo su apoyo al presidente, aún en estos momentos de crisis generalizada.

‘They have told me that the chancellor has offered all his support to the president, even at this time of major crisis.’

- a. **B:** Y por qué el presidente presentó su renuncia? **Wh-S-V**
and why the president presented his resignation
 ‘So why did the president present his resignation?’
- b. **B:** #Y por qué presentó el presidente su renuncia? **Wh-V-S**
and why presented the president his resignation

Summing up, preverbal subjects in *wh*-interrogatives show similar behavior in Mexican Spanish B and Caribbean Spanish, even though these are two varieties of Spanish that differ quite radically as to the *Wh-S-V* interrogatives that they allow: Caribbean Spanish can resort to the structure in (11) with any kind of *wh*-operator, but Mexican Spanish B can only do so with the reason *wh*-operator ‘*por qué*’. The nature of this particular dialectal difference is in itself a question that should be addressed in future research, of course. The point here, however, is that the similarities with respect to the behavior of the subject allow for a unified analysis of *Wh-S-V* interrogatives across different varieties of Spanish, concretely, that they only occur when the subject is a sentence topic.

5. Conclusions

In this paper I have developed an analysis where *Wh-S-V* interrogatives in Caribbean Spanish are the result of topicalization of the subject. I have proposed that while matrix interrogatives in Standard Spanish are systematically TPs, they can be either TPs or CPs in the Caribbean varieties. I have argued that this result can be achieved with the proposal that the distribution of interrogative operators is regulated not by the association of a feature [wh]/[Q] with a specific head in the numeration, but rather by the Interrogative Clause Condition, which requires the highest functional head to bear the [Q] feature. The possibility of the Caribbean varieties to have CPs as matrix interrogatives is in turn fundamentally linked to the information structure properties of subject of the interrogative. I have argued that when there is no topicalization of the subject, all varieties of Spanish behave alike, the interrogative projecting no further than TP. This accounts for the fact that *Wh-V-S* interrogatives are attested in every variety of Spanish. In contrast, *Wh-S-V* (or more precisely, *Wh-XP-V*) interrogatives result from a CP being projected above TP so that both a fronted topic and the *wh*-operator can be hosted in the left edge of the clause. What is characteristic of Caribbean Spanish in this analysis is that it has this option for every kind of *wh*-operator. Other varieties are more restricted, but the preverbal subject equally shows the properties of a sentence topic when it is permitted in *wh*-interrogatives.

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