

Spanish Subcomparatives: The “Obligatory Gapping” Strategy

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1. Introduction

In this paper I examine the curious behavior exhibited by Comparative Subdeletion constructions in Spanish. On the surface, one could claim that Spanish does not allow Comparative Subdeletion constructions (Snyder, 1995). As I will show, this claim can be easily falsified. The correct generalization emerging from the data is the following: Spanish does not allow Comparative Subdeletion in the same way English does. However, Spanish allows Comparative Subdeletion constructions if the verb undergoes obligatory gapping in the subcomparative clause (henceforth, the “Obligatory Gapping” strategy).¹

I capture the Spanish data by appealing to the idea that there is an offending strong feature in the “Obligatory Gapping” strategy. Following Lasnik’s (1995) analysis of pseudogapping, I propose that the derivation can be rescued by deleting the strong feature in PF. Once the strong feature is erased from the derivation, the emerging sentence is grammatical.

I organize the paper as follows. First, I introduce the data and some background assumptions regarding Comparative Subdeletion. Second, I discuss the “Obligatory Gapping” strategy in Spanish. As it will become clear below, this strategy involves a deletion process which serves to hide an offending strong feature. Finally, I draw the main conclusions of the paper.

2. Comparative Subdeletion: General assumptions

Bresnan (1972) gave the name ‘Comparative Subdeletion’ to the type of structure represented in (1):

(1) Mary read more books than John read magazines.

(1) roughly means “the number of books that Mary read is larger than the number of magazines that John read”. According to Bresnan’s analysis, the underlying representation of (1) contains a variable ranging over quantities, as shown in (2):

(2) Mary read more books than John read [x-many] magazines.

Note that the variable in (2) gets deleted under identity with material in the main clause, as in (3). The parallelism between ‘more’ and ‘x-many’ might not be obvious at first sight. The underlying assumption here is that ‘more’ is decomposed into ‘er many’. Note that the only difference between ‘er many’ and ‘x many’ is that the comparative morpheme has been substituted for a variable ranging over quantities in the subcomparative clause.

* For helpful comments and discussion, I would like to thank Željko Bošković, Howard Lasnik, two anonymous reviewers and audiences at the University of Connecticut and the 9th Hispanic Linguistics Symposium.

¹ There is a second strategy to form Comparative Subdeletion constructions in Spanish: the “Inversion” strategy. This strategy requires word order alteration of the elements (i.e. from SVO to OVS) in the subcomparative clause. Due to space limitations, I will not discuss this strategy in this paper. I refer the reader to Reglero (2006) for a detailed analysis of this construction.

- (3) Mary read more books than John read [~~x-many~~] magazines.

Later work, such as Bresnan (1975) and Chomsky (1977), observed that subcomparatives share several characteristics with wh-movement (see also Corver 1990, den Besten 1978, Grimshaw 1987, Larson 1988, among others). To be more precise, subcomparatives exhibit island effects. Based on this, Chomsky concludes that the variable in (3) should be identified with the trace of a null Operator. This null Operator is extracted from the NP and moves to Spec, CP. The resulting derivation is given in (4):²

- (4) Mary read more books than *Op_i* John read [*t_i* many] magazines.

3. Snyder (1995)

In his study of the syntax of quantity and degree across languages, Snyder (1995) examines whether languages allow bare numerals/measure phrases, Left Branch Condition effects and subcomparatives (of quantity and degree). If we focus on subcomparatives of quantity ((1)), we notice that there is cross-linguistic variation: some languages allow the construction whereas other languages don't. In his survey of twelve languages, Snyder finds that Japanese, Khmer, Hungarian, German and Albanian behave like English in allowing Comparative Subdeletion constructions. In contrast, French, Russian, Spanish, Italian, Serbo-Croatian and Mandarin disallow the construction. Some representative examples are provided below:

- (5) Kira mien siawp'ow jran jieng Aroy mien C. D. (Khmer)
Kira have book many/more than ARoy has C.D's
'Kira has more books than Aroy has C.D's'
- (6) *Maria ha letto più libri che Gianni ha letto riviste (Italian)
Mary has read more books than John has read magazines

4. Comparative Subdeletion Constructions in Spanish

As mentioned in the previous section, Spanish belongs to the class of languages which disallow comparative subdeletion constructions. Snyder provides the following ungrammatical example to illustrate this point:

- (7) *María leyó más libros que Juan leyó revistas.
Mary read more books than John read magazines

The interesting thing about Spanish is that (7) becomes fully grammatical once the verb 'leyó' is deleted from the subcomparative clause (Price (1990)). The grammatical status of (8) provides empirical evidence for this claim:

- (8) María leyó más libros que Juan revistas.
Mary read more books than John magazines

I will call the structure in (8), that is, a structure where the verb undergoes gapping, the "Obligatory Gapping" strategy. Interestingly, Spanish is not the only language where obligatory gapping of the verb is required in order to form a Comparative Subdeletion construction. According to Price (1990),

² This analysis is a slight oversimplification of Chomsky (1977). According to Chomsky (1977: 123), "no wh-word was moved, but only wh-?". What Chomsky is implying is that the whole wh-word does not move but only the wh-feature does. Chomsky makes this distinction to avoid Left Branch Condition violations. Additionally, see Chomsky (1995) and Chomsky (2000).

Andrea Calabrese (p.c.) and Eva Bar-Shalom (p.c.), Galician, Portuguese, Italian and Hungarian behave in the same way as Spanish. Some relevant examples are provided below:

- (9) a. *Maria ha letto più libri che Gianni ha letto riviste
 Maria has read more books than John has read magazines
 b. Maria ha letto più libri che Gianni riviste
 Mary has read more books than John magazines (Italian (Andrea Calabrese, p.c.))
- (10) a. *János több könyvet olvasott mint Maria újságot olvasott
 John more book-acc read than Mary newspaper-acc read
 ‘John read more books than Mary read newspapers’.
 b. János több könyvet olvasott mint Maria újságot
 Janos more book-acc read than Mary newspaper-acc
 ‘John read more books than Mary newspapers.’ (Hungarian (Eva Bar-Shalom, p.c.))

A question arises at this point: Could the Spanish sentence in (7) be ungrammatical because the verb ‘leyó’ is repeated twice in the structure? Maybe there is a strong preference in Spanish to leave out as much material as possible from the comparative clause. In order to test this hypothesis, let us use a different verb in the subcomparative clause in (7). If the sentence turns out to be grammatical, one could argue that there is a ban in Spanish against having redundant material in Comparative Subdeletion. In contrast, if the resulting sentence is still ungrammatical, one should look for a deeper explanation in order to account for the facts. As (11) shows, a different verb does not make a difference. Even though we have two different verbs; namely, ‘leyó’ and ‘compró’, the sentence is still ungrammatical:

- (11) *María leyó más libros que Juan compró revistas
 Mary read more books than John bought magazines

In summary, Spanish does not have the English Comparative Subdeletion construction. However, Spanish has an alternative way to express the same meaning: the “Obligatory Gapping” strategy.

5. The “Obligatory Gapping” strategy

In this section, I provide an analysis for the “Obligatory Gapping” strategy. The relevant example is (8), repeated as (12a):

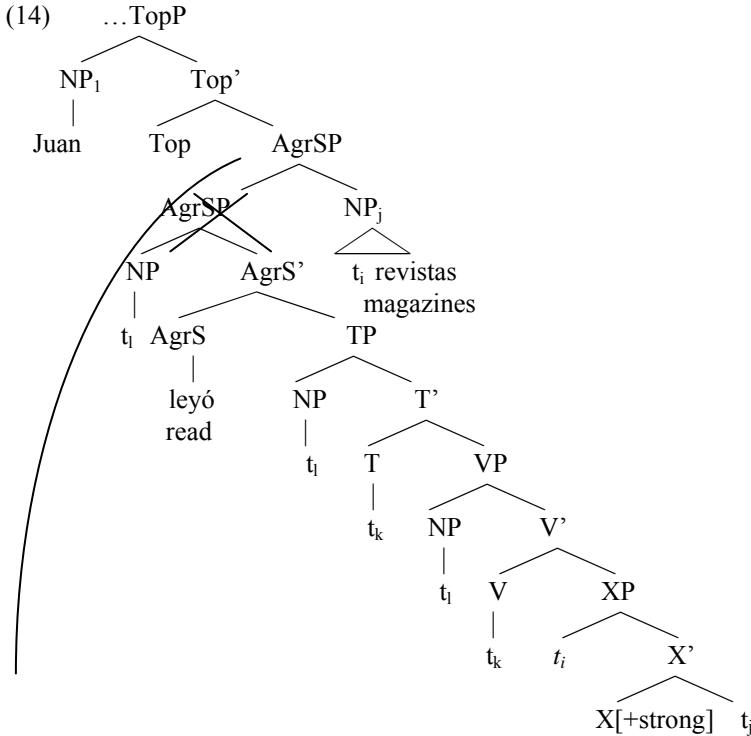
- (12) a. María leyó más libros que Juan revistas.
 Mary read more books than John magazines
 b. *María leyó más libros que Juan leyó revistas

One important characteristic of this construction is that the verb has to undergo gapping. If it doesn’t, the result is ungrammatical, as in (7) (repeated as (12b)). This is clearly different from normal gapping where the verb is optionally elided. (13) below is a representative example. See Williams (1977), Hankamer (1973, 1979), Agbayani and Zoerner (2004), Sag (1976), Johnson (1994), Lobeck (1995, 1997), Larson (1990), Ross (1970), Tri Chan (1999), among others, for relevant discussion of this construction.

- (13) a. John bought apples and Mary bananas
 b. John bought apples and Mary bought bananas

I propose that there is a PF violation in the structure in (12b). The violation is eliminated by deleting the verb and the offending strong feature in the subcomparative clause, as in (12a). Following insights of Lasnik (1995) and Kennedy and Merchant (2000) regarding a similar phenomenon in English pseudogapping structures, I propose that there is a strong feature in the object “revistas” that

needs to be checked either by movement, or by PF deletion of the strong feature in PF. It is this last strategy that is taking place in (12a) (for the movement option, see Reglero (2006)). Let me offer the derivation for (12a):



5.1 Motivating the analysis

There are three main aspects of the derivation in (14) that need to be argued for. As the tree makes clear, the subject 'Juan' is located pretty high in the structure, namely, Spec of TopP. This high placement for the subject is not that surprising. Ordóñez (1997), Ordóñez and Treviño (1999), Ausín and Martí (2001), among others, have already argued for the possibility of this high position for the subject in declarative and interrogative clauses. I will show that the subject is also located in Spec TopP in subcomparative sentences. Second, there is an extra projection in the tree called XP. This projection contains a strong feature. The NP ' t_i revistas' is the complement of X at some point but then it moves so that it escapes the deletion site. I will provide evidence for the existence of XP in the tree. The relevant evidence comes from Kennedy and Merchant (2000) and Rivero (1981). Finally, the movement of the DO needs to be argued for. I will propose that the object undergoes Heavy NP shift (HNPS), not overt object shift, as in Lasnik (1995).

5.1.1 Subjects as Topics

Let us start by discussing the position of the subject 'Juan' in the subcomparative clause. The first possibility that comes to mind is that the subject is located in Spec AgrSP. However, there is evidence that the subject is located higher, namely in Spec TopP. Belletti (1990) mentions that negative quantifiers such as the Italian 'nessuno' (nobody) cannot undergo topicalization. The relevant examples are provided in (15). Spanish behaves like Italian, as in (16):

- (15) a. *Nessuno, l'ho incontrato ieri
 nobody CL have see yesterday
 'Nobody I saw him_{CL} yesterday'

- b. *A nessuno, gli daranno il premio
to nobody CL will-give the prize
'To nobody, they will give him_{CL} the prize'
- (16) a. *A nadie, lo ví ayer
to nobody CL saw yesterday
b. *A nadie, le darán un premio
to nobody CL will-give the prize

If the subject in the subcomparative clause behaves like a topic, then a negative quantifier will not be able to occur in that position. Unfortunately, the test cannot be run since the resulting output is not pragmatically sound:

- (17) # María read more books than nobody magazines

Belletti offers some additional tests for topichood. According to her, in sentences containing a subject followed by a sentential adverb, the adverb is in a high position and the subject is in a left peripheral position,³ topicalized or left-dislocated. An Italian example is given in (18a) and the Spanish counterpart in (18b). If I combine the negative quantifier test with this new test, an interesting result emerges. If the position preceding 'probablemente' is a topic position and if negative quantifiers cannot be topicalized, I correctly predict that a sentence such as (19) should be ungrammatical.

- (18) a. Gianni probabilmente telefonerà alle 5
John probably will-call at 5
b. Juan probablemente llamará a las 5
John probably will-call at the 5
- (19) ??Nadie probablemente llamará a las 5
nobody probably will-call at the 5

Let us apply this test to our subcomparative example. In (20), the subject 'Juan' precedes the sentential adverb, which is consistent with the idea that 'Juan' is located in a topic position.⁴

- (20) María probablemente leyó más libros que Juan probablemente revistas.
Mary probably read more books than John probably magazines

Let us now focus on another example which further suggests that 'Juan' is behaving like a topic in subcomparative constructions. The relevant data is provided below. Under the assumption that 'probablemente' cannot occur higher than topics, the ungrammaticality of (21) is explained if 'Juan' is indeed a topic. That is, if the subject is in a topic position and the adverb cannot occur higher than that position (i.e. it is AgrSP-adjoined), I expect the word order adverb-subject to be impossible.

- (21) ?? Probablemente María leyó más libros que probablemente Juan revistas
probably Mary read more books than probably John magazines

³ Following Watanabe's (1993) and Bošković's (1997) insights on the position of sentential adverbs, I assume that 'probablemente' is AgrSP-adjoined in the sentential reading in Spanish.

⁴ One anonymous reviewer points out that the first instance of the adverb "probablemente" is not required to show that "Juan" is a topic in (20). I agree with the observation. I included the adverb "probablemente" in both the main clause and the subcomparative clause for parallelism purposes. Regardless of the presence or absence of "probablemente" in the main clause, the judgments reported in (20) and (21) remain the same (at least in my dialect).

In summary, the evidence presented in this section suggests that the claim that the subject in the subcomparative clause is behaving like a topic. In the next section I provide support for AgrSP-deletion and XP.

5.1.2 *AgrSP-deletion and XP*

In his analysis of pseudogapping constructions, Lasnik (1995) proposes that strong features can be eliminated from the derivation either via movement or via PF deletion of the strong feature. Once PF deletion takes place, the strong feature is literally gone at that level.

Lasnik applies this system to explain the behavior of pseudogapping examples such as (22):

(22) John will select me, and Bill will ~~select~~ you.

In order to account for this example, Lasnik (1995) proposes that Pseudogapping is an instance of VP ellipsis with the remnant having moved out of the VP to Spec AgrOP overtly (Lasnik assumes that English may have overt object shift (i.e. movement to Spec AgrOP)). After raising of the remnant “you” to AgrOP takes place, the VP containing the verb ‘select’ is elided. One of the questions arising in this derivation is the following: Why is (23) ungrammatical? In other words, why doesn’t the verb raise in the Pseudogapping examples?

(23) *Bill will you select

In order to offer an answer to this question, Lasnik makes use of Chomsky’s (1993, 1995) theory. In Chomsky (1993), an unchecked feature causes a PF crash. Under this view, the moving element has a strong feature that needs to be checked against a matching feature upstairs. In contrast, Chomsky (1995) proposes that an unchecked strong feature needs to be immediately checked (Virus Theory of feature strength). This theory is based on Attract. A category containing a strong feature attracts an element with a matching feature downstairs. Bearing these ideas in mind, let us see how the ungrammaticality of (23) can be accounted for. First, we need to postulate that V has a strong feature that needs to be checked (Lasnik (1995) suggests that the feature driving the raising of V could be a θ -feature). After Formal Features raise, V becomes defective. In (23), either the Formal Features of ‘select’ did not raise or the features were raised but pied-piping did not take place. In both cases the derivation crashes. So, why doesn’t the verb raise in Pseudogapping examples? As I have already explained, when the matching features of V are attracted, the lower V becomes phonologically defective. We also know that one of the reasons why (23) is ungrammatical is because pied-piping did not apply. It seems that we have two options: either we do pied-piping and we get ‘Bill will select you’ or we delete the phonologically defective V (‘Bill will ~~select~~ you’). In the Pseudogapping examples we have decided to hide the PF damage by deleting the defective structure. Once deletion applies there is no longer a problem with PF because the damage is literally gone at that level.

Let us suppose that the same process is at stake in the subdeletion cases under discussion. The strong feature can be checked by overt movement or by PF deletion.⁵ If PF deletion is taking place in the “Obligatory Gapping” strategy, the projection containing the verb and the strong feature would have to be deleted. That we also need to delete the verb is obvious from the ungrammaticality of examples containing an overt verb (see (12b) above).

The ellipsis process cannot be VP ellipsis (see (24) for an English example illustrating this ellipsis process). If this were the case, we would predict sentences containing modal verbs to be grammatical in Spanish (the modal would be in AgrS and the verb in V). This is a wrong prediction, as illustrated in (25). It must be the case that a higher projection is deleted. I will assume based on my discussion below that the deletion site is AgrSP.

(24) John sleeps every afternoon, and Mary should too.

⁵ I leave open the nature of the strong feature under discussion. Most likely, it is a strong [+wh] or a strong [+focus] feature, as discussed by Reglero (2006).

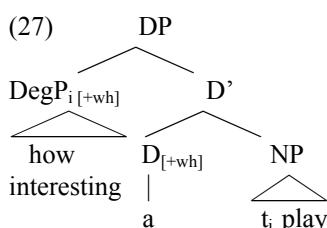
- (25) *María puede leer más libros que Juan puede revistas
 Mary can read more books that John can magazines

One immediate question arising from the structure in (14) is: Why do we need the extra projection XP? It would be easier to propose that there is only an NP bearing a strong feature. This alternative would be simpler but it wouldn't give us the output in (12a). This is so because at the point of deletion of the strong feature, there would not be a way to eliminate the strong feature without eliminating the NP 'revistas' as well. It seems that we need a way of deleting the strong feature without deleting the DO.

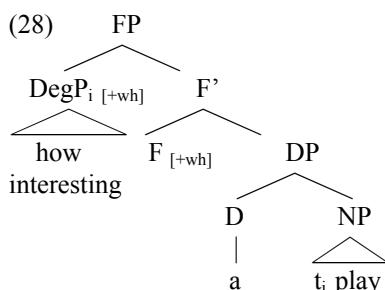
A similar problem was faced by Kennedy and Merchant (2000) in their analysis of attributive comparative deletion. They note that pseudogapping of the verb is obligatory in the construction in (26a):

- (26) a. *Pico wrote a more interesting novel than Brio wrote a play
 b. Pico wrote a more interesting novel than Brio did a play

They propose that the underlying structure for the phrase "how interesting a play" looks like (27) below:



The idea is that 'how interesting' originates inside the NP. Then, it moves to spec DP and passes its strong wh-feature to the head of the DP (see Webelhuth (1992), Chung (1994)). Kennedy and Merchant also assume, following Lasnik, that an offending strong feature can be eliminated from the derivation via PF deletion of the projection containing the verb and the strong feature. Let us go back to (26) now. If PF deletion were to occur in this case, there would be no way to delete the strong +wh-feature without deleting the survivor 'a play'. In order to solve this problem, they suggest that the structure for 'how interesting a play' is more complex than (27). They propose the structure in (28). Note that there is an extra layer of structure, namely, FP. Given this richer structure, it is now possible to delete the strong feature without deleting 'a play'. The idea is that the DegP with its +wh-feature raises to Spec FP. The +wh-feature, which is now in Spec FP is transferred to F via spec-head relation. The DP 'a play' right-adjoins to VP and VP deletion applies and deletes the FP containing the strong +wh-feature. Crucially the DP is outside the deletion site.



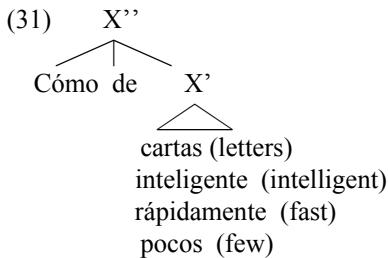
One piece of evidence which supports the rich structure in (28) is given in (29). According to Kennedy and Merchant, 'of' in (29) occupies exactly the F position in (28):

- (29) [How long of a novel] did Brio write?

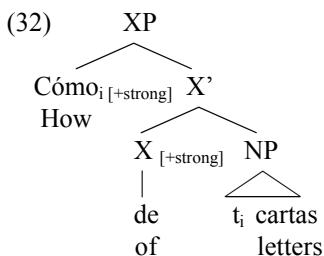
Could it be the case that the structure of the NP ‘revistas’ in (12a) is also more complex than it seems at first sight? If this could be maintained, it would give us a way of deleting the offending strong feature without deleting ‘revistas’. I would like to propose that this is indeed what happens in the construction under consideration. According to Rivero (1981), left-branch modifiers belonging to the general class of degree/quantity/measure/quality phrases can be moved in isolation from the constituent they modify by wh-movement (the judgments hold only for some dialects of Spanish):⁶

- (30) a. *Cómo dices que llegaron de cartas?*
 how say-you that arrived of letters
 ‘How many letters do you say arrived?’
 b. *Cómo dices que es de inteligente?*
 how say that is of intelligent
 c. *Cómo dices que corre de rápidamente?*
 how say that runs of fast
 d. *Cómo dices que hay de pocos libros?*
 how say that are of few books

The ‘cómo’ modifier is the spec of an X’’ category (where X ranges over N, A, Adv. and Q). The preposition ‘de’ is inserted by transformation (Rivero (1981)).



I propose to update (31) as in (32) (note that XP is the equivalent of Kennedy and Merchant’s FP). If the structure in (32) is correct it gives us a way to delete the strong feature without deleting the NP.



So far, we know that the subject ‘Juan’ in (12a) is a topic. We also know that the AgrSP containing the verb and the strong feature get deleted in PF. What I need to discuss is the position and the nature of the movement of the DO ‘revistas’. This is the topic of the next section.

5.1.3 Heavy NP Shift of the object

One of the claims made in the derivation in (14) is that the DO ‘revistas’ is AgrSP-adjoined. Is there evidence that the object is that high in this kind of structure? For this I will use data with Floating Quantifiers. I assume Sportiche’s (1988) analysis of these facts. The basic idea is that the presence of a Floating Quantifier signals the presence of an NP-trace next to it. This is also known as the stranding analysis of Floating Quantifiers. To illustrate, consider the example below. As the structure makes

⁶ Rivero (1981) is not explicit as to which dialects in particular share the judgments reported in (30).

clear, the NP ‘the students’ was in the position following ‘all’ at some point in the derivation, forming a constituent with it. Then, it moved to the matrix IP. The NP moved stranding the quantifier behind.

(33) The students seem all t_{NP} to have left.

This test is particularly useful for us because it indicates where the NP was originally located. As Bobaljik (1995) and Bošković (2004) note, Sportiche’s analysis is not without problems. The examples below are ungrammatical even though an NP-trace is assumed to exist in both cases.

(34) a. *The students arrived all t_{NP}
 b. *The students were arrested all t_{NP}

In order to solve this problem, Bošković proposes the following generalization (Bošković deduces the generalization from independent mechanisms, i.e. he shows it is a theorem):

(35) Quantifiers cannot be floated in their θ -positions.

If this generalization is correct, the examples in (34) are ungrammatical because the quantifiers are located in a θ -position. It follows that in all the grammatical examples the quantifier is not floated in a θ -position. This is indeed the case in (36) (see Bošković for the consequences of this analysis).

(36) The students_i were all t_i arrested t_i

I will apply the floating quantifier test to the subcomparative construction under discussion. First of all, note that Spanish allows floating quantifier structures, as illustrated in (37a). Under Bošković’s analysis, the quantifier cannot be floated in Spec VP, a θ -position. Otherwise, the sentence would be ungrammatical. The structure for this sentence is provided in (37b), with ‘todos’ located in Spec TP, a non- θ -position.

(37) a. Los estudiantes leyeron todos el libro
 the students read all the book
 b. [_{AgSP} Los estudiantes]_j leyeron_i [_{TP} todos t_j t_i] [_{VP} t_j t_i el libro]

With this background in mind, let us compare (38) with (37a). The floating quantifiers are ruled out in the first set of data, not in the second one. As discussed above, ‘todos’ is located in Spec TP in (37b). According to this, (38a) indicates that the object is even higher than the floating quantifier in the grammatical (37a). If ‘todos’ is in Spec TP and ‘revistas’ is higher, the ungrammaticality of (38a) is expected. (38b) seems to indicate that the ellipsis site is very high, so that the floating quantifier is caught in it. These two pieces of data together support the idea that the object is very high in the structure and that the ellipsis site is very high as well.

(38) a. *María leyó más libros que los estudiantes todos revistas
 Mary read more books than the students all magazines
 b. *María leyó más libros que los estudiantes revistas todos

So far we know that the object is located quite high in the structure but what kind of movement is the object undergoing? I will claim that the object is undergoing Heavy NP Shift (HNPS).^{7, 8} Lasnik

⁷ I’m assuming the traditional approach to HNPS where the object ends up in a right-adjoined position in the structure. Nothing would go wrong if the object is left-adjoined instead. I will assume the right adjunction hypothesis here for ease of exposition.

⁸ For now I assume that Spanish HNPS is similar to HNPS in English. One anonymous reviewer points out that the two processes may not necessarily be the same. This might be true given that HNPS in Spanish is not parallel to English in all respects (see (40)-(41)). Things may be even more complex given that Spanish has p-movement,

(1995) uses the following tests to determine whether the object is undergoing HNPS in pseudogapping constructions. He compares HPNS and pseudogapping in double object constructions. He tests whether the first and the second object can undergo pseudogapping and/or HNPS. He also tests data with pronouns. Since there is no one-to-one parallelism between pseudogapping and HNPS, Lasnik claims that the pseudogapping remnant is not undergoing HNPS. Let us see whether the remnant ‘revistas’ is undergoing HNPS or not. (39) is the baseline data to show that HNPS is possible in Spanish (see Fernández-Soriano (1993) and Ordóñez (1997) for related discussion):

- (39) a. ?Trajeron al hombre que estaba siendo interrogado a la habitación
(they) brought to-the man who was being interrogated to the room
‘They brought the man who was being interrogated into the room’
b. Trajeron t a la habitación al hombre que estaba siendo interrogado

As the examples above make clear, a heavy NP such as ‘al hombre que estaba siendo interrogado’ can either stay in its base-generated position or can undergo movement to the right. In fact, the HNPS-ed version sounds more natural (note that ‘t’ in (39b)) stands for the trace of the displaced heavy NP).

In (40a), I have the first object as a remnant in an “Obligatory Gapping” strategy (note that this is the base order for the sentence: S V DO IO). (40b) shows that the first object in a ditransitive construction can undergo HNPS.^{9,10} The parallelism is maintained with the second object: it can survive in the subcomparative clause ((41a) and it can undergo HNPS ((41b)). Jayaseelan (1990) notes that only one element can be HNPS-ed in English (he attributes this observation to Stowell (1981)). As shown in (42b), this is not the case in Spanish: more than one element can undergo HNPS in this language. Interestingly, multiple remnants can appear in subdeletion constructions too, as in (42a).

- (40) a. María le dio libros a más alumnos que Juan revistas
Mary CL gave books to more students than John magazines
b. María le dio t a Pedro los libros de aventuras que más le gustaban.
Mary CL gave t to Peter the books of adventures than more CL liked
- (41) a. María le dio libros a más chicos que Juan a chicas
Mary CL gave books to more boys than John to girls
b. María le dio libros t ayer al estudiante que había sacado las mejores notas
Mary gave books yesterday to-the student who had obtained the best grades
- (42) a. Juan le compró (a María) más libros (a María) que Pedro revistas a Antonia
John CL bought to Mary more books than Peter magazines to Antonia
b. Provó t t al jurado su culpa que Juan fuera visto con el arma del homicidio
proved to-the jury his guilt that John was seen with the weapon of-the murder
‘It proved his guilt to the jury that John was seen with the murder weapon’

as in Zubizarreta (1998). I will explore these issues in future research. It is worth mentioning at this point that in (40)-(42) there is always a one-to-one parallelism between HNPS and subdeletion. It is not the case that HNPS fails in some cases whereas subdeletion is perfectly grammatical (or viceversa). This seems quite suggestive regarding what’s going on in these constructions.

⁹ Note that it would make more sense to compare the number of books to the number of magazines in (41a) (see (i) below). The reason I didn’t do this is because I wanted to have a neutral word order in both (41a) and (42a):

- (i) María le dio a Pedro más libros que Juan revistas
Mary CL gave to Peter more books than John magazines

¹⁰ I take the sentences in (40)-(42) to be the equivalent of English double object constructions. See Demonte (1995), Bleam (2003), among others, for the empirical evidence to support this claim.

Given the parallelism between the movement of the remnant and HNPS, I will claim that the object is undergoing HNPS in the subcomparative clause. I will assume the traditional approach to HNPS whereby the object is right-adjoined to some maximal projection. Given the evidence I have found for the high position of the object, adjunction to AgrSP seems to be a reasonable assumption.

6. Conclusion

In this paper I have explored the behavior of Spanish Comparative Subdeletion constructions. I have shown that Spanish does not have Comparative Subdeletion in the same way English does. More precisely, the Spanish construction requires obligatory gapping of the verb in the subcomparative clause. I have argued that there is an offending strong feature that needs to be checked off. In order to salvage the derivation, the AgrSP containing the verb and the offending strong feature are deleted and literally disappear at the PF level. Furthermore, I have argued that the remnant object undergoes HNPS and adjoins to a high projection in the structure: AgrSP.

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