On the nature of covert operations

The case of focus in Spanish pseudoclefts*

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The phenomenon analyzed in this paper is instantiated by a type of pseudocleft structure in (oral) Spanish, characterized by the fact that when the element which is actually clefted (which is also marked as focus) is an internal argument, it can ‘extend’ its focal status to the constituents dominating it (VP/IP). As a consequence, in these constructions syntactic structure does not match semantic interpretation. This is (obligatorily) accompanied by a phenomenon of ‘relative reduction’: the relative pronoun in the relative clause does not spell out the features of the clefted element but those of the constituent which is actually interpreted as focus (i.e. the VP or the whole IP). The analysis proposed for this phenomenon is that there is a covert process of focus extension preceded by (also covert) reconstruction. In particular, we adapt the monoclausal analysis of English cleft structures (Kiss’ 1998) to pseudoclefts and claim that (identificational) focus propagates in a direct path to VP or IP thus accounting for the interpretation obtained. This account will be extended to other structures including a type of wh-structure, the so called ‘split interrogatives’.

1. Introduction

The point of departure of this paper is the behavior of pseudocleft structures in (oral varieties of) Spanish. The properties displayed by these structures will allow us to show that there is a special type of covert operation. In regular pseudocleft sentences in Spanish, the clefted element which follows the copulative verb *ser* is interpreted as focused (as is the usual case). The grammatical subject of the

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structure is a relative clause headed by a form which contains two parts: a referential component (a determiner) and a quantificational component (a wh-element). This is exemplified in (1):

(1)  *Lo que quiero es un coche.*
the that I.want is a car  
“What I want is a car.”

As can be seen in (2), not only DP’s but also PP’s and adverbial phrases can be clefted. In this case, the relative form used in Spanish is complex: a PP or an adverbia relative, depending on the type of clefted phrase. This holds both for arguments and for adjuncts:

(2) a.  *A quien lo entregué fue a Maria.*
to whom it I.gave was to Maria
b.  *Donde lo puse fue debajo de la mesa*
where it I.put was under the table
c.  *Como habla es muy despacio.*
how s/he.speaks is very slowly
d.  *Por lo que te lo digo es por eso.*
for what (why) you it I.tell is for that

Another property of pseudoclefts is that the element that is clefted is interpreted as identificational focus. As Kiss (1998) argues, this element “represents the value of the variable bound by an abstract operator expressing exhaustive identification” and thus has to occupy a scope position. The rest of the structure is then interpreted as presupposed material. I will come back to the movement process and the position of the informational focus later.

An important fact for our study is that in the structures under examination, together with verbal complements and adjuncts, the whole predicate and even the whole sentence can be clefted (and thus interpreted as focus). Crucially, in these cases in Spanish the relative clause is always introduced by the neuter simple form *lo que* (lit. the that, “what”) and it contains a support verb, usually *hacer* “to do/make” in the case of clefted VP (see (3)) and *pasar* or *suceder* “to happen” in the case of CP (see (4)). In the following examples both the support V and the clefted constituents are underlined:

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1. I only provide literal translations for the sentences in (2), since English does not easily allow complex relatives in these cases.

2. Information focus, on the other hand, does not involve operator-variable relations.
On the nature of covert operations

(3) a. En esos casos, lo que hago es empezar de nuevo.
In those cases, the that I do is start of new
“En esos casos, lo que hago es empezar de nuevo.”

b. En vez de arreglarlo, lo que hice fue comprar otro coche.
Instead of repair it, the that I did was buy another car
“En vez de arreglarlo, lo que hice fue comprar otro coche.”

c. Lo que tienes que hacer es echarle otro vistazo.
“What you have to do is take another look at it.”

(4) a. Lo que pasaba es que todos tenían ideas parecidas.
“What happened is that they all had similar ideas.”

b. Quiero ir, lo que pasa es que no tengo tiempo.
“I want to go, what happens is that I don’t have time.”

With this background in mind, the phenomenon I would like to analyze in this paper is the following. In spoken Spanish pseudocleft constructions display two parallel properties: one of a formal (syntactic) nature and the other of a semantic kind. To my knowledge, the second (semantic) property has so far gone unnoticed to grammarians.

As to the formal property, which extends to all varieties of (spoken) Spanish, it has to do with the form of the relative pronoun. Even in cases of clefted PP’s or adverbial phrases, the relative pronoun is ‘reduced’ so that the simple form lo que (lit. the that, “what”) appears, instead of the required complex prepositional or adverbial relative (compare (2) with (5)). All the examples presented below are taken from real speech.

(5) a. Lo que estamos acostumbrados es a otra cosa.
What we are used to is something else.
“Lo que estamos acostumbrados es a otra cosa.”

b. Lo que me habló fue de irnos de vacaciones.
“What he spoke to me was about going on vacation.”

“Lo que me habló fue de irnos de vacaciones.”

c. Ya somos mayorcitos y lo que estamos es en casa
comfortably watching the TV
“We are quite old and where we stay is at home comfortably watching TV.”

But the main property I would like to analyze has to do with the interpretation of these structures. To my knowledge, this property has so far not been noted by theoretical or descriptive studies. In a nutshell, not only is there a mismatch with respect to the relative form used (simple lo que) and the focalized constituent (a PP or an adverbial, which would require a complex form), the important thing is that what is interpreted as focus does not coincide with the clefted phrase either.
On the contrary, the focus of the structure may be a higher constituent. In other words, cases are frequently found in which (together with ‘relative reduction’ to lo que “what”) a verbal complement is clefted but the whole VP or even the whole sentence is interpreted as focus. Some real examples are provided in (6), where the English glosses correspond to the interpretation actually given to the sentences:

(6) a. (No me he disculpado) lo que le he traído es un regalo.
   “I did not apologize, what I did is bring her a present.”
   (I didn't apologize), the that her I've.brought is a present

b. Lo que no tienes ganas es de ir.
   “What happens is that you don't feel like going.”
   the that no you.have mood is to go

c. Lo que no puedes prorrumpir es en sollozos.
   “What you cannot do is burst is into tears.”
   the that you.cannot burst is into tears

Contrary to what is suggested by the structure, the focus in the sentence in (6a) is not on the object but on the entire VP: it is not presupposed that the subject brought something (exhaustively identified as a present), as would be the case if only a present is interpreted as focus, but that he did something (i.e bring a present to someone), This is shown by the gloss. The case of (6c), is even clearer: the intended interpretation must be that in (6’), focus is on the whole IP, since the presupposition is not that there is something the hearer has to burst into, with focus on en sollozos.

(6’) Lo que no puedes (hacer) es prorrumpir en sollozos.
   “What you cannot (do) is burst into tears.”

In a similar fashion, sentence (6b) is interpreted with focus on the whole IP. What these facts seem to indicate is that the focus has the possibility to covertly extend up to the next branching node. For this extension to take place, we will claim, the clefted elements covertly reconstruct to their original position. Before getting into the concrete analysis I will propose, something needs to be said about focus interpretation.

2. Focus ‘extension’

It is an extended assumption in the literature on focus that there is a direct relation between focus marking and nuclear stress assignment. In particular, it is claimed
that a focal element must bear nuclear stress at PF (Selkirk 1982; Zubizarreta 1998; among others). It is also assumed that in the unmarked case nuclear stress falls on the most embedded element (Cinque 1993). An important fact for our purposes is that it has also been shown that in sentences with unmarked word order a process or ‘(informational) focus projection’ takes place. By means of this process, the element that bears the nuclear stress (the most embedded constituent) projects its focal status up to the nodes that dominate it (Reinhart 2006, for instance). Thus, many different focus structures can be obtained, proceeding in a direct path from the most embedded element (usually the direct object) up to the whole sentence. This is illustrated in (7):

Note that the subject, crucially, is left aside in this ‘extension’ process, since it occupies an external position. I will come back to this issue later.

On the other hand, according to Reinhart (2006) among others, in order to mark focus on a phrase that cannot receive nuclear stress by this unmarked process (that is, when the sentential focus is not the most embedded constituent), some special strategy must be employed. There are at least two possibilities: the application of a deaccentuation rule followed by a marked stress rule or different types of scrambling operations (see Vallduví 1988). Pseudoclefting is a syntactic means of focalizing by extraposing a constituent which is interpreted as focus.4

4. See Irurtzun (2007) for a detailed description of the two types of foci. This author makes a distinction between 'out of the blue' and 'contextualized' utterances. The former contain broad focus and the latter narrow focus. It is also shown in this work that there is a distinction between categorically different pitch accents for both types of foci. See the mentioned work for details.
In this work, I will adapt Kiss (1998)’s monoclausal structure for cleft structures to pseudoclefts. As can be seen in (8), a Focus Phrase headed by the copulative verb is generated under IP. The focused constituent moves to Spec,FP. In a pseudo cleft, the CP complement of FP further moves to Spec,IP, as shown in the structure below (adapted from Kiss 1998: (41)):

(8)

As we saw, different constituents can be clefted (and thus focalized): arguments, adjuncts, the whole VP and even the whole sentence. See (9):

(9) a. Lo que le dio Juan a María en Navidad fue el regalo.
    what CL gave Juan to Maria for Christmas was the present
    "What John gave Mary for Christmas was the present."

b. Cuando le dio Juan a María el regalo fue en Navidad.
    when CL gave Juan to Maria the present was for Christmas

c. Lo que hizo J. fue darle el regalo a María en Navidad.
    what did J. was give.CL the present to Maria for Christmas

d. Lo que pasó fue que J. le dio el regalo a M en Navidad.
    what happened was that J. gave the present to M. for Xmas

With this in mind, let us go back to our example (6) repeated below in (10a), with the interpretation in (10b):

(10) a. Lo que no puedes prorrumpir es en sollozos.
    what not you.can burst is into tears

b. Lo que no puedes (hacer) es prorrumpir en sollozos.
    what not you.can do is burst into tears
    “What you cannot do is burst into tears.”

In view of data such as (10), I would like to claim that the extension of the domain of focus to the projections dominating the constituent bearing the pitch accent is not restricted to informational focus (Kiss 1998) but, under certain circumstances,
it can operate in the case of identificational focus. The analysis I would like to propose for this phenomenon is that in the constructions under study, there is a possibility of ‘reconstructing’ and ‘propagating’ the sentential focus in the interpretive (covert) component. This process takes place, as is always the case, for focus extension, from the most embedded phrase up to the whole IP.

In a structure such as (8) the element in Spec,FP would covertly reconstruct to its original position inside CP (in bold in the tree in (8)) and from there focus would propagate up to VP thus accounting for the interpretation obtained. As was mentioned above, in the Spanish cases considered here, it is the simple neuter form *lo que* “what” which appears in Spec,CP. Crucially, this is the form that is used when a VP or an IP are clefted (see examples above). That amounts to saying that the referential component of the relative form refers to VP or IP (the one actually interpreted as focus), although it is an NP or PP inside it what is clefted.

What the phenomenon under analysis seems to suggest is that, contrary to what has usually been accepted, the constituent interpreted as focus may not coincide with the one which is both phonologically and syntactically marked as focus. Moreover, in the structures under study it is the contrastive / identificational focus that extends up to higher nodes. I provide some more real examples in (11):

(11) a. *Pensábamos que estábamos anticuados y lo que abrimos fue un camino que después han seguido muchos.*

“We thought we were out of fashion and what we did open was a path that after have followed many people.”

b. *No hagas una presentación en power point si no quieres, pero lo que no puedes repetir es el papel.*

“No do make a power point presentation if you don’t want to, but what you cannot do is just repeat the printed text.”

c. *Lo que tienen que abrir es los ojos y darse cuenta de lo que pasa.*

“What they have to do is open up is their eyes and realize what is happening.”

d. *No le castigaría, lo que le pagaría es un psicólogo.*

“I would not punish him, what I would do is pay for a psychologist for him.”
In all these sentences, as a consequence of focus extension, the presupposed material becomes less restricted: it is not presupposed that there is something that has been opened (11a) or that should be repeated (11b), opened (11c) or paid (11d).

Note that ‘relative reduction’ is mandatory for the extended focus interpretation to be obtained. In the sentences in (12), for instance, the variants with a complex relative are odd since the extended focus interpretation is highly preferred (otherwise it would be presupposed that there is some period of time during which the speaker has to be substituted or that the subject has arrived at a certain moment) and this requires the simple form *lo que* with no preposition:

(12) a. #Despedirme no, por *lo que* me releva es por tres meses
"He will not fire me, what he will do is substitute for me for three months."
(vs *lo que* me releva es por tres meses)

b. #No ha cometido ningún delito: cuando ha llegado es tarde.
"He did not commit any crime: all he did was arrive late."
(vs *lo que* ha llegado es tarde)

2.1 Island effects

An interesting property displayed by the constructions under study is that if the clefted element is reconstructed (and the focus is extended), the sentence constitutes a strong island and further extraction is not allowed. In (13a, b) we have grammatical sentences because there is no covert extension process. In contrast, (13c, d) are ungrammatical.

(13) a. ¿Qué es *lo que* comiste/quieres comer?
what is.it what you.ate/want.to eat

b. ¿Adónde es *adonde* fuiste/quieres ir?
where is.it where you.went/want.to go
"Where is it that you want to go."

c. *¿Qué/Adónde es *lo que* fuiste/quieres ir?
where is.it what you.went/want.to go

d. *¿En qué es *lo que* prorrumpe siempre?
into what is what s/he.bursts always

This contrast is expected, since focus cannot extend if the clefted element moves to the (highest) CP position. The idea is that once the clefted element is moved to the higher Spec,CP it cannot reconstruct inside the relative clause and propagate.
2.2 Fixed and periphrastic expressions, idiom chunks

There is an important fact that I would like to note: given that there is a covert focus reconstruction process, it is possible to cleft any embedded constituent, independently of how tight its relation with the verb is. That is why in some cases ‘undetachable’ phrases that cannot be affected by any syntactic operations (such as passive or wh-movement) can nevertheless be clefted, if and only if the relevant phrase reconstructs and focus is extended. This is the case, for example of periphrastic and idiomatic expressions. The structures in (14) would, as expected, be impossible without focus covert extension:

(14) a. *Lo que voy a empezar es de nuevo.*
    “What I am going to do is start from scratch.” (vs. “Como voy a empezar”)

b. *Ahora lo que tenemos que seguir es aplicando lo que nos han enseñado.*
    “Now what we have to do is continue applying what we have been taught.”

It is also possible to cleft parts of idiom chunks. All the sentences in (15) can only be interpreted with focus on the VP (15a, c) or on the whole IP (15b):

(15) a. *Lo que no puedes meter es la pata hasta el punto de que te echen.*
    “What you cannot do is put your foot in it until you get fired.”

b. *No es que no me guste, lo que cuesta es un riñón.*
    “It is not that I don’t like it, what happens is that it costs a fortune.”

c. *Lo que no se puede usted ir es por las ramas, sin centrarse en el tema a debatir.*
    “What you cannot do is beat about the bush avoiding the point at issue.”

d. *Lo que tienes que seguir dando es la tabarra; ya verás como te hacen caso.*
    “What you have to do is keep on being a nuisance, you’ll see how they pay you attention.”
In sum, in Spanish pseudocleft structures the constituent which is clefted may not coincide with what is actually interpreted as focus. In the covert component, the postcopular phrase may reconstruct inside the relative clause and extend up to the whole predicate or even the whole sentence. The presupposition of the sentence is consequently modified. This focus extension is restricted in such a way that it operates from the most embedded constituent in a direct path until it reaches the sentence boundary, as has been described for (informative) focus propagation. An interesting corollary of this hypothesis is that it seems that idioms can be affected by syntactic processes if and only if they are kept untouched in the semantic component.

3. Arguments supporting the covert focus extension hypothesis

3.1 Subjects and VP adverbs

One piece of evidence in support of the hypothesis just sketched comes from the behavior of the subject. From the analysis I am defending it follows that, since the subject occupies an external position, focus cannot propagate from it in a direct path up to VP or IP (although it can of course be focalized), so no extended interpretation should be found with subjects. This prediction is confirmed, and a sentence like (16a) cannot be interpreted, in any variety of Spanish, as (16b). For the same reason, sentence (16c) (with the corresponding neuter form lo que) is ungrammatical. The same holds for (17):

(16) a. Quien tiene que arreglarlo es Juan.
    who has to fix.it is John
    b. #Lo que Juan tiene que hacer es arreglarlo.
    what John has to do is fix.it
    c. *Lo que tiene que arreglarlo es Juan.

(17) a. Quien tiene que hablar es tu padre.
    who has to speak is your father
    b. #Lo que tiene que hacer tu padre es hablar.
    what has to do your father is speak up
    c. *Lo que tiene que hablar es tu padre.

The reason for this fact is, according to what I have been claiming, that the subject occupies a higher Spec position, and thus focus cannot propagate from it.

An interesting fact that supports the analysis defended here is that, as expected, the preceding generalization does not hold for internal (unaccusative) subjects, since in this case the propagation line may be obtained. This seems in fact to be the case: sentences like (18) can be found, where focus extends from the subject
of an unaccusative verb. In these cases the non agreeing neuter form *lo que*, is also obligatory:

(18) a. *No es que tuviera suerte, lo que se le apareció fue la virgen.*
   not is that he had luck what to him appeared was the Virgin
   “It is not just that he was lucky: what happened to him was a miracle.”

b. *Lo que se le vino fue el mundo encima.*
   what him came was the world on top
   “What happened is that the whole world came down on him.”

c. *No se ha estropeado: lo que han crecido son flores amarillas por todas partes.*
   not it has ruined what have grown are flowers yellow will see how
   “It is not ruined: what happens is that yellow flowers have grown everywhere.”

Due to similar reasons, another prediction of this analysis is that focus cannot extend from adverbs modifying the whole VP or, of course, from sentential adverbs. Therefore sentences like (19a’, b’) are impossible:

   the boy plays the piano beautifully

   a’. *El chico no es guapo, (pero) lo que toca el piano es maravillosamente.*
   the boy not is handsome but what he plays the piano is beautifully

   the boy abstained intelligently (from voting)

b’. *El chico no estuvo muy afortunado, (pero) lo que se abstuvo fue inteligentemente.*
   the boy not was very brilliant, but what he abstained was intelligently.

5. An anonymous reviewer points out correctly that sentences with extended focus with clefted (internal) subjects are not always well formed. As Mara Luisa Zubizarreta (p.c.) notes, this is specially clear with [human] DP’s. Compare, in this respect (18c) with:

   (i) *Sí los reconocí, pero lo que ha crecido mucho es el niño.*
   I did them recognize, but what has grown a lot is the boy

I cannot provide an appropriate account for this fact.
3.2 Focus ‘restriction’

An indirect piece of evidence in favor of our proposal about covert focus extension is that the inverse process of focus ‘restriction’ never takes place, that is, in all varieties of Spanish interpretations such as the ones in (20b) and (20d) for sentences (20a) and (20c) are impossible:

(20) a. Lo que tienes que hablar con tu padre.
    “What you have to do is talk to your father.”

b. #Con quien tienes que hablar es con tu padre.
   with whom you have to talk is with your father

c. Lo que pasa es que has comprado un coche usado.
    “What happens is that you have bought a used car.”

d. ≠ Lo que has comprado es un coche usado.
    “What that you have bought is a used car.”

3.3 Double objects

An interesting clue about how the phenomenon of covert focus extension works is provided by ditransitive and double object constructions. In these configurations, the two objects seem to form a unit that cannot be divided. In particular extended focus is impossible if only the indirect object is clefted, unless the direct object is cliticized. Of course, focus can extend from the constituent formed by the two objects (as in (21a)).

(21) a. Lo que tienes que dar es [el regalo a tu hermana].
    what you have to give is the present to your sister
    “What you have to do is give the present to your sister.”

b. Lo que se lo tienes que dar es a tu hermana
   what you have to give is to your sister

c. *Lo que le tienes que dar el regalo es a
   what you have to give the present is to
   tu hermana
   your sister

The same contrast obtains with locative constructions, as seen in (22):

(22) a. Lo que llevó fue [el libro al sitio equivocado].
    what he took was the book to the place wrong
    “What he did was he took the book to the wrong place.”

b. Lo que lo llevó fue al sitio equivocado.
    what he took was to the place wrong
In all these cases focus cannot extend from the direct object alone either, but the sentence is not ungrammatical since there is no relative mismatch. The sentences below are grammatical, but only with a narrow focus interpretation.

(23) a. *Lo que tienes que darle a tu hermana es el libro.
   “What you have to give to your sister is the book.”
   (vs: Lo que tienes que darle a tu hermana es el libro)

b. *Lo que llevó al sitio equivocado fue el libro.
   “What he took to the wrong place was the book.”
   (vs: Lo que llevó al sitio equivocado fue el libro)

c. *Lo que no puedes poner en otro garaje es el coche.
   “What you cannot put in another garage is the car.”
   (vs: Lo que no puedes poner en otro garaje es el coche)

Idiomatic expressions that contain double objects behave in the same way:

(24) a. *Lo que no puedes poner una pica es en Flandes
   “What you cannot do is do a totally new heroic thing.”
   (vs: Lo que no puedes poner es una pica en Flandes)

b. *Lo que no puedes dar tres cuartos es al pregonero
   “What you cannot do is give reasons for people to gossip.”
   (vs: Lo que no puedes dar es tres cuartos al pregonero)

c. *Lo que quiere llevarse el gato es al agua.
   “What he wants to do is to be the winner.”
   (vs: Lo que quiere llevarse es el gato al agua)

d. *Lo que tiene que arrimar el ascua es a su sardina
   “What he wants to do is to defend his own interests.”
   (vs: Lo que quiere arrimar es el ascua a su sardina)

In conclusion, focus cannot extend from one of the objects of a ditransitive construction. This might constitute indirect evidence for an analysis in Hale & Keyser’s (1993) terms, in the sense that it might indicate that both objects form a single constituent. Something similar happens with secondary predicates, which can
also be claimed to form a single constituent (namely a small clause) with the main object:6

\[
(24') \quad \begin{align*}
\text{a. } \text{No es que no quiera venir, lo que tiene es a su madre enferma.} \\
\text{not is that not wants.to come, what has is her mother sick}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{b. } \text{?*... lo que tiene enferma es a su madre.} \\
\text{what has is her mother sick}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{c. } \text{??...lo que tiene a su madre es enferma.} \\
\text{her that cares too.much about her mother, what her}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{d. } \text{No es que se ocupe demasiado de su madre, lo que la} \\
\text{not is that cares too.much about her mother, what her}
\end{align*}
\]

Going back to the main issue, the most important argument in my opinion, in favor of the analysis presented here is that the described phenomenon does not restrict to pseudocleft sentences. Once identified, one can find other cases in which focus (and scope) markers seem to raise and affect higher constituents than the one they appear with. The data I will present are all taken from real oral (and even written) speech and have, to my knowledge, also gone unnoticed so far.

## 4. Other cases

In what follows I will analyze other structures which demonstrate the silent processes of ‘extension’. More specifically, I will show that there are some particles that can covertly widen their scope to higher elements than the ones they explicitly appear with in the sentence. All the examples presented in this section are also taken from real written and oral speech.

### 4.1 Either, neither

A first type of example is provided by cases like (25):

\[
(25) \quad \begin{align*}
\text{a. } \text{Speaker A} \\
\text{-Yo creo que va a llover.} \\
\text{I think that is.going to rain}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{-Yo creo que también.} \\
\text{I think that also?}
\end{align*}
\]

“I also think (that it is going to rain) / I think so too.”

6. I thank an anonymous reviewer for pointing this out to me.

7. Note that the word *that* in the gloss corresponds to the complementizer, not to the demonstrative (in which case the sentence would be grammatical in English).
b. Speaker B

"Yo creo que no ha venido.
I think that not he has come."

"Yo creo que tampoco.
I think that neither
"I also do not think that he has come / Neither do I."

As can be seen in the examples above, adverbs like también “too/also” and tampoco “neither” are interpreted as affecting the main verb creer “believe” and not the embedded one with which they appear. Examples like (26) can also be found:

(26) a. Yo creo que tampoco va a hacerlo.
I think that neither is going to do it
"I also do not think s/he is going to do it."

b. Yo creo que también lo negará.
I think that also it will deny
"I also think s/he will deny it."

4.2 NPI’s, (not) even

Negative polarity items like ni (siquiera) “not (even)” also give rise to this covert scope extension process:

(27) a. No voy a probar ni el postre.
not am going to try even the dessert
"I am not even going to try the dessert."

b. No es que no lo vaya a leer, es que no va a abrir ni el sobre
not is that not it is going to read, is that not is going to open even the envelope
"It is not that s/he will not read it, s/he will not even open the envelope."

In all these cases the negative element ni is interpreted as negating the predicate (the VP) as a whole, not the element is it adjacent to.

I would like to note that we are again facing a phenomenon which takes into account only hierarchical structure: idioms and frozen expressions can be ‘broken’ in these cases. See (28):

(28) a. No me dirige ni la palabra.
not me he addresses even the word
"He does not even talk to me."

b. Se fue sin decir nada: no me dio ni las gracias.
he left without say nothing: not me he gave even the thanks
"He left without a word: he did not even thank me."
c. Si no le tomas ni las medidas, no sé cómo vas
if not her you.take even the measures, not I.know how you.go
to decide.
“If you don’t even take her measures, I don’t know how you can make a
decision.”

d. Engaña a la gente muy bien, no se le ve ni el plumero
he.lies to the people very well, not him see even the duster
ni nada.
or anything
“S/he lies to people very well; one cannot even see what s/he is up to.”

4.3 Focus markers

A third type of structure I would like to present is instantiated by certain focus
marking particles such as hasta “even” o solo “only, just”, whose scope can be
covertly extended:

(29) a. Desde que se ha ido fumo hasta menos.
since that has left I.smoke even less
“Since s/he left I have even reduced smoking.”

b. No he venido a traerte solo las croquetas sino a hablar
not I.came to bring.you just the croquettes but to talk
contigo.
with.you
“I didn’t come just to bring you the croquettes but to talk to you.”

c. No tengo frío, de hecho me voy a quitar hasta el abrigo
not I.have cold in fact refl I.go to take.off even the coat
“I am not cold; in fact I am even going to take off my coat.”

Particles of the type of casi “almost” give raise to an analogous phenomenon. The
example in (30), taken from a newspaper, is quite conclusive:

(30) El diputado de turismo vuelve al trabajo tras morir
the deputy of tourism goes.back to work after dying
casi ahogado.
almost drown
“The tourism deputy goes back to work after almost drowning.”

8. Brody (1990) assumes that these particles are operators in situ which move in LF to adjoin
to FP. Kiss (1998) argues against this hypothesis.
Again it seems that these particles ‘reconstruct’ and extend their scope from the most embedded constituent up to VP in a covert way.

In the next section I will try to show that the proposed hypothesis can be extended to other cases of wh-movement.

5. Wh movement: Split interrogatives

An important consequence which follows from the hypothesis defended in this paper is that it is predicted that one should also find constructions with wh-movement (like interrogatives) which display the described phenomenon of covert extension. More precisely, cases should be possible where an interrogative element is fronted and, again, the constituent which is interpreted as the focus of the question is hierarchically superior. In what follows I will show that this prediction is born out. The examples I am about to present are sentences which involve a fronted wh-word and contain a phrase that constitutes a possible answer. The overall interpretation of the sentence is that of a yes/no question with focus on the wh-element (as indicated by the gloss). These structures have been called ‘split interrogatives’. Phonologically, they involve two intonational curves, as if there were two separate questions: a wh-question and a yes/no question.9 I provide some examples in (31):

(31) a. ¿Qué quieres, que te dé una bofetada?
   what you.want, that you I.give a slap
   “What do you want, for me to slap you?”

b. ¿Adónde vas, a tu casa?
   where you.go, to your house
   “Is it home that you are going?”

c. ¿Qué vas a hacer, pagarle lo que le debes?
   what you.go to do, pay.him what him you.owe
   “Is it to pay what you owe him that you are going to do?”

d. ¿Cómo lo has resuelto, con una calculadora?
   how it you.did solve, with a calculator
   “Is it with a calculator that you solved it?”

9. Camacho (2002) calls these constructions ‘wh-doubling’ and notes some differences between them and other interrogatives. He points out, for example, that these structures differ from regular yes/no questions in not allowing the continuation o no “or not”.

   (i) *¿Qué vas, a casa o no?
       What you.go to home or not
Interestingly enough, as was the case for pseudoclefts, it is common in spoken Spanish to ‘reduce’ the wh-word to the simple form qué “what” (see López Cortina 2003). Actually the real reported sentences are the following:

\[(32)\]
\[
\begin{align*}
\text{(a)} & \quad \text{¿Qué vas, a tu casa?} \\
& \quad \text{what you go, to your home} \\
\text{(b)} & \quad \text{¿Qué lo has resuelto, con una calculadora?} \\
& \quad \text{what it you did solve, with a calculator} \\
\text{(c)} & \quad \text{¿Qué vino, en avión?} \\
& \quad \text{what he came, by plane?}
\end{align*}
\]

Based on the fact that in these cases there is a single construction with two interdependent parts, rather than two juxtaposed questions, López Cortina (2003) proposes a monoclausal analysis of these constructions and claims that the element after the comma moves to a focus position in the left periphery. The structure would be like \((32c')\) (his (18)):

\[(32c')\]

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{FocP} \\
\text{PP} \\
\text{en avión} \\
\text{Foc'} \\
\text{F} \\
\text{VP} \\
\text{V} \\
\text{vino} \\
\text{t}
\end{array}
\]

10. In Camacho (2002)’s analysis, the element after the comma appear as an adjunct to the VP trace. I refer the reader to the work for more details.

11. López Cortina (2003) points out that in certain varieties of English there is a similar construction, with the particularity that the wh-word remains in situ. The author provides the example in (i) (his (6)):

\[(i)\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{You are going what, by train? (English)}
\end{align*}
\]

12. According to the author, a strong argument in favor of the single construction approach is that corresponding structures without the focus are not grammatical if taken separately, as in (i) (to be compared to (32)).

\[(i)\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{a. } & \quad *¿Qué lo mandaste? \\
\text{b. } & \quad *¿Qué lo resolviste? \\
\text{c. } & \quad *¿Qué vino?
\end{align*}
\]
The crucial fact that I would like to point out here is that, when that happens (i.e. if the wh-element is reduced to qué “what”), the interrogative can ‘propagate’ up to VP or to IP, giving interpretations like the following.13

(33) a. ¿Qué huyó, fuera del país?
   what he ran away, from the country
   “What did s/he do, run away from the country?”

   b. ¿Qué han matado, al presidente?
   what they have killed, to the president
   “What has happened, that they killed the president?”

Accepting the analysis by López Cortina (2003), our claim is that, once moved to FocP in (32’), the focal element reconstructs to the position of its trace inside VP in the covert component and expands up to VP or IP, just as was the case for pseudoclefts. Idioms can also be affected by this type of wh-movement, as can be seen in (34):

(34) a. ¿Qué lo mandaste, al infierno?
   what him you sent, to the hell?
   “What did you do, send him to hell?”

   b. ¿Qué me chupo, el dedo?
   what refl I suck, the finger
   “What happens, (do you think that) I am an idiot?”

Some other real examples are provided in (35).

(35) a. ¿Y qué te tienes que quitar, toda la ropa?
   And what refl, you have to take off, all the clothing?
   “And what do you have to do, take off all your clothes?”

   b. Tienes dos hijos: ¿qué te vas a hacer cargo, de un tercero?
   you have two children, what you go to make charge, of a third one
   “You have two children, what are you going do, get in charge of a third one?”

   c. Ya lo has intentado todo: ¿qué vas a ir ahora, a ver al rey?
   already it you have tried everything, what you go to go now, to see the king?
   “You have already tried everything, what are you going to do now, go to see the king?”

López Cortina also claims that qué is the spell out of the trace of the focal DP, and moves to a higher position in the left periphery. We refer the reader to the work for further details.

13. This fact has also never been observed in the literature before.
It thus seems that there are other cases of constructions instantiating the special type of covert movement process that was shown to apply to pseudoclefts. The result is that some structures have readings that do not correspond to what would be obtained by computing overt superficial constituent order.

6. Conclusions

The phenomenon analyzed in this paper involves a special type of covert operation. More specifically it has been shown that, in oral Spanish pseudocleft structures, when the element which is actually clefted is an internal argument, it can ‘extend’ its focal status to the constituents dominating it (VP/IP), thus instantiating a case of mismatch between syntactic structure and semantic interpretation. This is (obligatorily) accompanied by a phenomenon of ‘relative reduction’, by means of which the relative pronoun in the relative clause does not match the features of the clefted element but those of the constituent which is actually interpreted as focus (i.e. the VP or the whole IP). The proposal that has been put forward states that there is a covert process of focus extension preceded by (covert) reconstruction. In particular we have adopted Kiss’ (1998) monoclausal analysis of English cleft structures and adapted it to pseudoclefts. We claim that the clefted element moves covertly from its position in Spec,F(ocus)P to its most embedded position inside the relative CP. From there (identificational) focus propagates in a direct path up to VP or IP thus accounting for the interpretation obtained. It has also been shown that idiom chunks can be affected by clefting (contrary to what could be expected) just because this process of (covert) reconstruction takes place. Other structures have been analyzed which instantiate the same phenomenon of covert focus extension and finally the proposal has been extended to a special type of wh-structures (called ‘split interrogatives’).

An important question that is left unresolved here is whether there is a (macro) parameter involved. From the analysis presented here it follows that the option described should be available for other languages but it is still to be determined under which circumstances.

References


