

THE ORDER OF WORDS IN SPANISH
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO
THE SUBJECT POSITION

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this work is to contribute to the study of word order in Spanish. Although it considers, in general terms, the main factors determining the order of words (eg. pragmatic factors like theme/rheme, given/new information, etc.) this study concentrates on those more specific to the syntax of the language by which sentences are considered grammatically acceptable or unacceptable.

This study deals with the order of major constituents (as subject, verb and object) in the Spanish sentence and, in particular, with the position of the subject. The position of the object is only considered if it can modify the subject position somehow (as in the case of topicalised objects) but we will concentrate on the subject category as Spanish is said to be a consistent VO language, and, nevertheless, the alternation SV/VS is very common in this language.

It will be claimed that while the SV/VS alternation can be motivated by pragmatic and stylistic factors (it has been argued, for example, that Spanish achieves by syntactic means what English does with intonation), there are cases in which the obligatory order is VS, SV being ungrammatical in Spanish. We concentrate on one of these cases, namely that of direct or embedded questions in Spanish. Taking these constructions as the basis of our argument, we will argue against SVO as the only basic word order in Spanish (as traditional grammarians have

seemed to consider) and we will refer to certain arguments
proposed by some linguists in favour of a VSO analysis.

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CHAPTER ONE:

A THEORY OF WORD ORDER

AND FACTORS WHICH DETERMINE IT

1. General.

One of the observations we can make about the utterances of a language is that the units which these utterances are made of come out from the speaker's mouth in a certain order. This observation may seem trivial if one suspects that this state of affairs simply reflects the fact that the utterances of a language occur in real time and one may believe that the order of elements is therefore a necessary property of human language determined by physical factors. A closer inspection of the languages of the world reveals, however, that the situation is much more complicated than merely supposing that the order of elements in natural languages is indeed a matter of temporal necessity. Brown and Yule (1983:125) refer to the "linearisation problem" confronted by the speaker/writer of a language when he has to order the words he wants to express into sentences, and those sentences into texts. One of the constraints the speaker/writer faces is that he can produce only one word ~~word~~ at a time and he has, therefore, to choose which the pattern or structure of his utterance will be.

In fact, if the order of elements in an utterance were only a matter of temporal necessity, then changing that order should

make no difference to the meaning. Consider, however, the following utterances in English (see Brown and Yule (1983:127)):

- (1) a. John kissed Mary
- b. Mary was kissed by John
- c. It was John who kissed Mary
- d. It was Mary who was kissed by John
- e. What John did was kiss Mary
- f. Who John kissed was Mary
- g. Mary, John kissed her

As (1) shows, there exist a very wide range of syntactic forms which can be used by the speaker to convey the same propositional or cognitive content. But if the only reason for having syntactic structure were to express propositional content, then it is difficult to explain why there should be such a variety of syntactic forms to express the same basic meaning. On the contrary, it is clearly the case that (1a-g) could not all function satisfactorily as answers to the same question.

The nearest approximation to the situation in which the change of order makes no appreciable difference in meaning is to be found in the so called "free word order" languages. However, there seems to be a preferred order which might be regarded as basic in most, if not all, languages. On the one hand, there may be strict constraints on the possible sequences of constituents-XYZ is grammatical but, for example, *XZY is not and thus, in English (2) is grammatical whereas (3) is not:

- (2) Henry hates Martians
- (3) * Henry Martians hates

On the other hand, a change of order may provoke a change of

meaning which may relate to the nuclear propositional content and thus (4) and (5) are different:

- (4) Henry hates Martians
- (5) Martians hate Henry

or it may relate to a variety of "pragmatic" differences, as in the contrast between the following utterances:

- (6) Henry hates Martians
- (7) Martians, Henry hates

(See Vincent (1979:2)). In this study, therefore, we will assume that no languages completely ignore the dimension of word order in associating meaning and physically realised utterances.

The next question one must ask is whether word order is predictable. If the answer is no, then word order should be specified as a particular fact about every particular language. However, the majority of investigators have assumed that word order can be predicted on the basis of certain factors of sentence or discourse structure, although there has been a lot of debate as to what exactly these factors are.

Danes (1972:217), in the framework of Prague-School linguistics, identifies three different levels in which every utterance may be analysed within the syntactic domain: (a) the level of grammatical structure; (b) the level of semantic structure; (c) the level of thematic and contextual organisation of utterance. These three levels of analysis coincide with the three major types of information in terms of which attempts have been made to predict word order (see Vincent (1979:7)): (a) syntactic relations; (b) semantic relations; (c) discourse

relations. Let us now consider the order of elements and the concepts within every different level in some detail:

(a) On the grammatical level, we can distinguish syntactic relations as subject, object, etc. Danes distinguishes three types of rules of order: (1) functional rules; (2) concomitant rules; (c) weak rules. In the first case, the opposition between two syntactic categories is realised by two different positions of the element in the sentence pattern and the corresponding rules may be called "functional rules" and the order of elements "grammaticalised" (as in English the pattern S-V-O).

Secondly, the position of elements in the sentence is only a "concomitant" (or "redundant") feature of their syntactic function if the position of an element is fixed but the violation of the rule which fixes its position in the sentence does not lead to a different sentence, but to an "ungrammatical" or "less grammatical" form of the original sentence.

In the third case, a certain order of elements is "usual" and a "weak" rule permits any modification of this order, motivated by special non-grammatical conditions. The deviated construction is associated with the feature of "non neutrality" or "markedness".

Apart from these three types of grammatical word order-grammaticalised, ungrammatical or less grammatical and non-neutral or marked - first pointed out by Mathesius, Danes (p.218) considers a fourth possibility in languages with the so-called "free" word order, ie. a "labile" order. In this case, the order of elements on the grammatical level is irrelevant and the

position of the respective words vacillates according to non-grammatical conditions.

(b) the semantic level includes notions such as agent, instrument, locative, etc. Danes(1972:220) tries to illustrate the significance of the semantic structure of the sentence for the order of elements making reference to sentences which convey man's inner states and sensations. The person who is the "recipient" (R) of sensations, or bearer of states, is expressed by means of different syntactic patterns according to the different languages. Nevertheless, in all of Danes's examples the phrase which expresses R is placed at the beginning of the sentence:

Russian: U Ivana bolit golova
 Adv V S
 ("With Ivan aches head")

Czech: Ivana boli hlava
 O V S

English: Ivan has headache
 S V O

Spanish: A Ivan le duele la cabeza
 O V S
 ("To Ivan aches head")

(The example in Spanish has been provided by us)

(c) The third level of syntactic analysis to consider is that of discourse relations, the level of thematic and contextual organisation of the utterance. So far we have analysed sentences in isolation, without considering the context and situation in which they occur, ie. as abstract structures. But these structures are in fact employed as concrete utterances in different contexts and situations.

If we analyse the structure of an utterance from this point of view, we refer to the bipartite pattern of this utterance. Terms such as topic vs. comment, theme vs. rheme, given vs. new, focus vs. presupposition, etc. point to this bipartition in utterances. There is a great amount of terminological confusion and overlapping within this area but we will refer to these terms according to the definitions given by the Prague School (Vilém Mathesius) which first introduced most of them. The respective two parts of an utterance may be defined from two different aspects. Firstly, considering that in the act of communication every utterance is a statement about something, we shall call the respective parts "topic" or "theme" (something that one is talking about) and "comment" or "rheme" (what one says about it). Secondly, if we associate the utterance with its consituation (see Mirowicz's term: see Danes (1972:221)), we shall recognise that, normally, the topic contains "given" or "already known" elements, while the "comment" refers to the "new piece of information". This second aspect of the textual organisation of language has been called "information structure". In English, information structure is expressed by intonation. Danes remarks that in the written language, and apart from word order, there is no formal device by means of which the shift in the contextual structure of the given sentence would be manifested. "The spoken language, however, avails itself of a specific means for signalling the comment of the utterance, viz. the sentence intonation" (Danes (1972:225)).

There is a clear association between the concepts within every different level - grammatical, semantic and contextual or

thematic level - and the order of the constituents in a sentence and thus, at the syntactic level, a subject-constituent is more prominent than an object-constituent; an agent-constituent is considered to be more prominent than a non-agent one (semantic level); and a topic or focus constituent is more prominent than a non-topic or a non-focus one at the pragmatic level. And if, in an utterance, all three levels are "in agreement" such an utterance has a neutral word order.

Halliday (1970:158) refers to certain problems that have arisen in the history of the investigation of the notions of subject and predicate which can throw some light on our discussion here and also later on, as we shall be discussing the position of the subject in Spanish interrogative sentences. Thus let us consider two sentences like:

- (8) a. My mother gave me these beads
b. These beads I was given by my mother.

A sentence such as (8a) presents no problem in this respect: my mother is clearly subject and the rest predicate. But in (8b) there seems to be three candidates for the status of subject, these beads, my mother and I. The solution is to distinguish different types of subject and, thus, my mother is "logical subject"; I is grammatical subject; these beads is known as "psychological subject". These three types of subject do normally coincide as in (8a), but they are independent of one another as (8b) shows. These three kinds of subject, on the other hand, relate to the levels of linguistic analysis we mentioned before and, therefore, the logical subject is the actor (semantic

level); the grammatical subject relates to the syntactic level; the psychological subject belongs to the textual component.

As Danes points out (p. 223), the notion of "marked word order" implies the existence of a conflict between levels and the solution of it by some specific linguistic devices, namely, (a) "inversion"; (b) sentence intonation; (c) particles, articles, lexical means, specific grammatical constructions; (d) selection of a different pattern.

2. Linguistic theory and the theory of word order.

It is a known fact that word order has not figured prominently among the concerns of grammarians and linguistic theoreticians. Nor does the study of word order advance much with modern structuralism.

2.1. Contribution of the Prague School

The only structuralist school that devoted some attention to word order is the Prague school, as we have seen already. It was linguists of the Prague school who first studied the fact that the clause is organised as a message and it has structure as a message, the "thematic" structure. Thus, Mathesius' main contribution to the study of word order is the introduction of notions as theme and rheme. According to Mathesius (see Contreras (1976:15)), if the theme precedes the rheme a sentence is said to have an objective order; otherwise, the order is subjective.

Mathesius' ideas have been elaborated on by linguists like F. Danes, J. Dubsky and J. Firbas. According to Contreras, "these linguists have failed, however, to formulate an explicit theory

of word order, valuable though their observations might be, and in some respects their elaboration of Mathesius' ideas is a step backward" (see Contreras (1976:16) for further details).

2.2. Contribution of the Transformational school.

Since the development of transformational grammar, syntactic study has shown an ever-increasing concern for problems of word order and the number of books and articles which have appeared on word order have established this area of Syntax as an independent sub-division of Syntax worthy of investigation in its own right.

According to Contreras (1976:17), the transformational school's concern with word order falls into two distinct areas: (a) the question of order in base structures; (b) the problem of "stylistic reordering". Concerning the first question, and against proposals that claim that base structures should be considered as unordered set-systems, Chomsky has defended the position that they are linearly ordered.

As for the rules of "stylistic reordering", Chomsky suggests that they "are not so much rules of grammar as rules of performance" (in Contreras (1976:17) and see in general for discussion on this point).

Both generative semantics (particularly Lakoff) and Chomsky's extended standard theory have recognised the importance of "old" or "given" versus "new" information (using the terms presupposition and focus) in the interpretation of sentences.

Apart from this, within the framework of the extended standard theory, we must make reference to Emonds' structure preserving constraint, whereby the so-called major transformations are

required not to produce derived structures which could not have been independently generated by the base rules. Since basic word order is defined in terms of the PS rules, it follows that transformations will not create new word order possibilities. Vincent points out as exceptions to the constraint grammatically defined and language particular facts as the obligatory inversion of subject and auxiliary in English, or what Emonds refers to as "stylistic rules" (Vincent (1979:11)).

In general and, apart from Chomsky's consideration of factors such as topicalisation (see Vincent (1979:12-3)) and of the importance of given and new information (under the labels of presupposition and focus), the transformational theory has very little to say on the interaction of word order with semantic and discourse relations, which are conceived of as belonging to the semantic component and therefore irrelevant to an "autonomous" syntax (see Vincent (1979:10-11)).

2.3. The Typological Method.

Word order typology has played a major role in the recent development of language typology. The main study in this field is Greenberg's (1963) and most of the recent typological approaches (see Comrie (1981), Lehmann (1973) and Coopman₅ (1984)) stem from it.

According to Greenberg, the order of constituents of the clause is one of the most important word order typological parameters and, indeed, some linguists have considered it as the major typological parameter. This parameter characterises the relative order of subject, verb and object, giving rise to six

logically possible types of languages in terms of word order, namely SVO, SOV, VSO, VOS, OVS, and OSV. Of these six, only the first three normally occur as dominant orders, the last three being extremely rare. Examples of the first three orders are English (SVO), Turkish (SOV) and Welsh (VSO). However, there are many languages where the situation is less clear-cut and "perhaps even languages where we are forced to say that, in terms of subject, object, and verb, there is no basic word order" (Comrie (1981:82)). But we must point out that even in many languages where is said to be a free word order, there is frequently some indication that one of the orders is more basic than others.

A further problem in assigning word order is where the language has different basic word orders in different constructions. There are cases in which the "split" (as Comrie calls this situation) does not lead to difficulty in assigning basic word order, where one of the word orders is clearly much more restricted than the others. Thus, for instance, in French clitic object pronouns precede the verb (11b) but in the other constructions the word order is clearly SVO (as in 11a):

- (11) a. Le garçon a vue la jeune fille
 b. Le garçon l'a vue.

There are, however, cases of languages in which the solution is not so clear. Thus, German has the word order SVO in main clauses but SOV in subordinate clauses (we will refer to this fact also later on).

The main merit of the work by Greenberg lies on the fact that it demonstrated that it is possible to come up with significant cross-linguistic generalisations looking at a wide range of

languages and without developing very abstract analyses of these languages (see Comrie (1981:97)).

CHAPTER TWO:
ON WORD ORDER IN SPANISH

1. General.

Although some elements of concord, mainly nominal case, have been eliminated during the history of Spanish, the system of the language still marks number and gender on all modifiers within the noun phrase, and number and person between subject and verb. Thus, concord assigns a subject to a verb in most cases unambiguously. On the other hand, subjects and objects which are identical in morphological terms, can almost always be distinguished by the presence or absence of determiners and what has been called the "personal a" (of which we shall be talking later on), or by their position in relation with the verb.

In Spanish simple declarative sentences, nominal objects and complements almost always follow the verb:

(12) María compró un coche
"María bought a car"

(13) El libro parecía interesante
"The book seemed interesting"

In everyday language, the VO/VC order is fixed; objects cannot precede their verbs:

(14) * María un coche compró
"María a car bought"

It is of course possible to topicalise an object by moving it to the front of the sentence, but when this happens there is an

intonation break after the topic (normally represented by a comma) and a clitic is obligatory inserted before the verb:

- (15) El coche, lo compró María
 "(as for) the car, Mary bought it"

The result is no longer a simple sentence; "lo compró María" is a complete structure itself (see Harris & Vincent (1988:114))¹.

In general, it can be said that in plain prose style and ordinary conversation, word order seems nowadays to be a good deal more rigid than fifty years ago: literary Spanish of a by-gone age tended to imitate the word order of Classical Latin prose and poetry (Butt & Benjamin (1988:394)).

According to these observations, it is surprising that Spanish has acquired a reputation for free, or comparatively free, word order. Given that VO order is obligatory and the internal structure of noun phrases largely invariable, where lies the freedom? This reputation of free word order language is due to a distinct characteristic of Spanish which differentiates it sharply from French but which is common to most of the Southern Romance group (Harris & Vincent (1988:115)), namely that subject NPs are not fixed by grammatical requirements to a particular

¹ The rule by which the object must normally be "echoed" by an object pronoun which agrees with it in number and gender is, however, not applied to nouns which are not preceded by an article or demonstrative adjective:

Aviones tenemos aquí que han costado más de
treinta millones
"we've got planes here that cost more than thirty
million"

Demasiada prisa se ha dado el Gobierno en este
caso

"the Government has been too hasty in this case"

(see Butt & Benjamin (1988:396)).

position in the sentence. Thus, a sentence consisting of a subject, verb and object (direct or indirect) can theoretically appear in Spanish in the following forms:

- | | | |
|---------|-----------------------|-----------------------------|
| (16) a. | Inés leyó el libro | SVO |
| | "Inés read the book" | |
| b. | El libro lo leyó Inés | O (redundant VS
pronoun) |
| c. | El libro Inés lo leyó | OS (redundant V
pronoun) |
| d. | (Inés el libro leyó | SOV) |
| e. | Leyó Inés el libro | VSO |
| f. | Leyó el libro Inés | VOS |

Of these possibilities only the first three are at all common in everyday language. (16d) might occur in songs or comic verse, and (16e) and (16f) are typical of flowery literary style (Cf. Butt & Benjamin (1988:395)).

According to Butt & Benjamin (1988:395), (16a) is a neutral word order corresponding to an English sentence spoken with equal stress on "Inés" and "book". (16b) makes the object into the topic of the sentence, and introduces the subject as new information, eg. in answer to the question "quién leyó el libro?" ("who read the book?"), (and thus it goes to the end of the sentence: we shall talk about the distinction between new and given information in relation with the position of sentential

constituents later on)². (16c) also makes the object into the topic, but focuses on the verb and not on the subject, as in:

- (17) La moto mi marido la compró el año pasado y
el coche hace una semana
"(as for the) motor cycle, my husband bought
it last year, and the car (he bought) last
week".

Therefore, word order, and specifically the position of the subject in relation to its verb, is much more flexible in Spanish than in English or French. Frequently, the position of subject NPs is heavily influenced by pragmatic and, sometimes, stylistic considerations (see mainly Contreras (1976)) but this is not always the case. As a general rule, topics precede comments, and new information is located towards the end of the sentence. Due to the normal tendency in speech for the topic to coincide with the grammatical subject, SV order is probably the most frequent, especially if the subject consists of a single proper noun or a very short phrase. So (18) would sound very odd in spoken language and (19) would tend to be reserved for contradiction or contrast:

- (18) ? Compró María el coche
(bought María the car)
"María bought the car"

² Butt & Benjamin (1988:396) notice that OVS order, as it focuses the object of the verb, it often has the same effect as passive with ser ("to be"), for which it is often a less formal substitute:

El médico intenta averiguar si la reacción la
provocó una alergia o una enfermedad
(instead of... fue provocada por una alergia...,
etc.)
"the doctor tries to find out if the reaction was
produced by an allergy or an illness".

- (19) Compró el coche María
(bought the car María)
"it was María (not Juana) who bought the car".

Nevertheless, in more formal registers VSO and VOS orders are common, and in all registers unusually long or "heavy" subject phrases appear to the right of the verb:

- (20) Han llegado todos los transeúntes de la
compañía X
(have arrived all the passengers of the
company X)
"all passengers travelling with Company X
have now arrived".

This movement of the subject to the right of the verb may be due sometimes also to the semantic character of the verb and thus, for instance, verbs indicating movement require the subject to appear after them; thus (21) sounds much more natural to the Spanish ear than (22):

- (21) Vino Juan
(came Juan)
"Juan came"

- (22) Juan vino
(Juan came)

Hatcher (1956) groups all these verbs with different semantic character which require inversion of the subject into the existential category in which VS order is obligatory:

- (23) Viven gitanos en las cuevas
(live gipsies in the caves)
"there are gipsies living in the caves".

VS order is the norm in many types of subordinate clause even when the subject consists of a single word:

- (24) No ví lo que leía Juana
(not saw what was reading Juana)
"I did not see what Juana was reading"

There is also a strong tendency towards VS order in questions and, moreover, this order is obligatory in direct questions beginning with an interrogative word:

- (25) ¿Qué quieren ustedes?
(what would like you (pl.)?)
"what would you like?"
- (26) * Qué ustedes quieren?
(what you (pl.) would like?)

and also in embedded questions with an interrogative word:

- (27) No sé qué estará haciendo Luis
(not know what will-be-doing Luis)
"I don't know what Luis will be doing"
- (28) * No sé qué Luis estará haciendo
(not know what Luis will-be-doing)

Therefore, although there are cases in which the order of the sentential constituents is clearly influenced by pragmatic and stylistic factors and both SV and VS are accepted as grammatical, there are other clear instances in which the VS order seems to be obligatory. Although we have already mentioned the cases of existential sentences and direct or indirect questions, we will refer later on to other examples of obligatory or preferred VS word order.

Apart from subject NPs, other elements which enjoy syntactic freedom are adjectives which normally precede their noun, most others may precede if used figuratively, and a few have different meanings according to their position:

- (29) Un pobre pueblecillo
"a miserable little town"
- (30) Un aristócrata pobre
"an impoverished aristocrat"

and the elements enjoying most syntactic freedom in Spanish are adverbial clauses and phrases.

The subject of Spanish word order would require a whole book to be accounted for: unquantifiable factors like rhythm, context, register and psychology affect the ordering of the main constituents of a Spanish sentence. Also it has been said that, in general, word order has more or less the same function in Spanish as stress and intonation in English.

This study will concentrate on the relative position of the subject in Spanish and, particularly, on the subject position in direct and indirect or embedded questions as, unlike other cases in which, although VS order is the most natural, both VS and SV are acceptable, in the case of indirect and direct questions with an interrogative word the obligatory word order is VS, SV being unacceptable; and in which, therefore, it cannot be said that pragmatic or stylistic factors determine the order of the constituents in the sentence.

2. Interaction of Spanish Word Order and Pragmatic factors.

As we have seen, it is generally agreed that Spanish is an (S)VO language which allows freedom in the linear arrangement of the constituents in any given sentence as compared with, for instance, English. On the other hand, various linguists have observed that word order in Spanish is not free in an absolute

sense but is controlled by discourse and pragmatic factors (Hatcher (1956); Contreras (1976); Silva-Corvalán(1983); Fant (1984)).

Various of these studies of Spanish word order have adopted the position that the primary function of word order is the signalling of old and new information, or thematic and rhematic material, so that in one- and two-argument sentences, new information will be postverbal and old information preverbal. Old information has been defined as presupposed information or as information that the speaker assumes to be in the addressee's consciousness at the time of speaking according to the different linguists. Thus if we consider the next pair of sentences:

- (31) a. ¿Qué aprendiste hoy en el colegio?
"what did you learn at school today?"
b. Aprendí que dos y dos son cuatro
"I learned that two and two is four"

The given information (or presupposition in Chomsky's terms: see Contreras (1976:2)) shared by the question and the answer is "Y learned X", and the new information (or, again, focus) is "that two and two is four".

According to Silva-Corvalán (1983), however, old-new is not a dichotomy and the referents of the various constituents may be more or less new with respect to one another. This concept of gradience may be compared with the Praguean notion of Communicative Dynamism. In Firbas's words, "known elements are followed by unknown elements, or to put it more accurately, sentence elements follow each other according to the amount

(degree) of Communicative Dynamism they convey, starting with the lowest and gradually passing on to the highest"³.

The constituents of a sentence, therefore, are sensitive to these different degrees in such a way that they will be ordered along a scale of increasing newness. This is illustrated in the following examples:

- (32) a. Así es que ¿cuál es el profesor o la profesora que más te gusta, por ejemplo?
"so who's the teacher you like the best, for example?"
- b. ¿A mí? A todo el curso le gustaba una monja que se fue
"me? The whole class liked a nun who left"⁴

According to a dichotomous definition of old-new information, it does not seem to be possible to consider a todo el curso in (32a) to be old information. An investigation preceding the passage from which (32) has been extracted indicates that a todo el curso has not been referred to before so it may not be assumed that the referent of this IO is in the listener's consciousness. The subject una monja que se fue, provides the new piece of information required by the question in (32a) and is, as expected, in postverbal position. The referents of the IO (the whole class) and of the subject (a nun who left) in (32b) are "given to different degrees". The amount of information conveyed by the IO is lower than that conveyed by the subject because the

³ Firbas, J. (1962) "Notes on the function of the sentence in the act of communication" Sborník Prací Filosofické Fakulty Brněnské University. A 10, p. 36.

⁴ These examples have been extracted from data selected from recordings of conversational Spanish by Silva-Corvalán (1983).

IO is less important to fulfilling the request in (32a). Therefore, the IO is in preverbal position in (32b).

If we now focus on Contreras' account of word order (1976) we must say that, in essence, Contreras develops a theory of word order in which a sentence is defined as consisting of a nucleus and optional adjuncts. The arguments stand for semantic notions, such as agent, patient, experiencer, instrument, cause, etc.; and they are assigned a linear order on the basis of their rhematic status. Contreras establishes a Rheme Selection Hierarchy which is as follows:

(33) Rheme Selection Hierarchy (RSH)

1. Instrumental, manner adverbial, "strong" time and place adverbial
2. Target
3. Complement, source, location, time identifier, beneficiary
4. Patient
5. Agent, cause, possessor, experiencer
6. "weak" time and place adverbial.

3. The notion of Subject.

This study deals with the linear distribution of sentence constituents in Spanish, and more specifically with the position of the subject. Now we believe that a word about the relevance of the syntactic notion of subject is in order.

Contreras (1976), for instance, does away with the object category but finds it necessary to keep the subject category, which is identified not configurationally (by position) but as the argument marked with the feature [+ subject] by the rule of Subject Selection. However, Contreras agrees with Fillmore in not

accepting the notion of deep or underlying subjects as los militares in (99):

(99) Victor Jara fue asesinado por los militares
"Victor Jara was murdered by the military"

After the rule of Subject Selection has applied, the rule of Subject-Verb Agreement is triggered: for Contreras (p. 128), "the only reason an argument must be identified as subject (at the surface level in Spanish) is so the verb may agree with it" (see Suñer (1982:291ff) for a criticism of Contreras' view in this area).

Contreras' analysis has a lot to do with Westfal (1980). The latter observes (p. 67) that "when the subject NP cannot be identified as such because verb agreement has been neutralised by the presence of an object NP that has the same features of person and number as the subject, pre-verbal position is mandatory for the subject, and so is post-verbal position for the object":

- (100) a. Entonces, el papel dañó la máquina
(then, the paper damaged the machine)
"then the paper damaged the machine"
b. * Entonces, dañó el papel la máquina
c. * Entonces, dañó la máquina el papel

Westfal argues that only NPs that trigger obligatory verb agreement are subjects in Spanish, whereas those that trigger optional agreement are not. He finds that the former are sensitive to the tests for subjecthood available in the language, whereas the latter are not.

Let us illustrate his position with an example. In Spanish the prepositional phrase por sí mismos may refer back to the subject of sentences constructed with non-stative verbs only:

- (101) Juan y María prepararon el almuerzo por sí mismos
"Juan and María prepared lunch by themselves"
- (102) * Juan y María prepararon el almuerzo por sí mismo"
"* Juan and María prepared lunch by itself"

The por sí mismos phrase is compatible with intransitive se sentences (103) but not with impersonal se sentences (104):

- (103) Las puertas se abrieron por sí mismas
(the doors opened by themselves)
"the doors opened by themselves"
- (104) a. Se abrieron las puertas (* por sí mismas)
(opened (pl.) the doors (by themselves))
"the doors were opened (* by themselves)"
b. Se abrió las puertas (* por sí mismas)
(opened (sing.) the doors (by themselves))
"the doors were opened (* by themselves)"

Therefore, this test shows that NPs that trigger optional verb agreement (in this case the NPs of impersonal se sentences) are not subjects in Spanish (see Westfal (1980:87-9)).

Green (1987:254-5) emphasises another aspect of verbal inflection which has word order implications. We have already mentioned that Spanish is a consistent VO language. The most serious discrepancy for VO typology, however, is the vigour of suffixal inflection in the verb system. Verbal inflection has two important syntactic functions. Together with the concord system, it guarantees the freedom of movement of subject phrases. It also tends to preserve the optionality of subject pronouns, permitting many grammatical sentences of V(S)O form with no overt subject nominal. Spanish rarely needs subject pronouns to avoid syntactic

ambiguity, though they are regularly used for emphasis and contrast.

4. The "personal a" and its implications for word order.

A peculiarity of Spanish object NPs is illustrated by:

- (105) Ví a Carmen
(saw to Carmen)
"I saw Carmen"
- (106) Llamé a tu primo
(called to your cousin)
"I called your cousin"

as opposed to:

- (107) Ví unas montañas
(saw some mountains)
"I saw some mountains"

When the object in Spanish refers to a particular human being, it is obligatorily introduced by the preposition "a", popularly known as "personal a". This construction is by no means confined to humans; it is common when the referent is an animal, a place name or a country, or even an inanimate object if there is any possibility of confusion with the grammatical subject; hence:

- (108) La rata cazó al gato
(the rat chased to-the cat)
"the rat chased the cat"
- (109) La bicicleta adelantó al camión
(the bicycle overtook to-the lorry)
"the bicycle overtook the lorry"

Preserving the distinctiveness of subjects and objects is an evident desideratum in Spanish syntax and one of the main

guarantors of relatively free word order. Thus, surface subjects never take the preposition a regardless of their position in the sentence⁵:

- (110) a. * A mi padre compró un nuevo libro ayer
(to my father bought a new book
yesterday)
"my father bought a new book yesterday"
- b. * Un nuevo libro, compró a mi padre ayer
(a new book, bought to my father
yesterday)
"a new book, my father bought
yesterday"

⁵ This sentence would be acceptable, of course, if the meaning were "a new book he/she bought to my father yesterday" in which to my father is IO, rather than subject.

CHAPTER THREE:

CONSTRUCTIONS WITH POSTVERBAL POSITION

OF THE SUBJECT IN SPANISH

The unmarked word order of Spanish affirmative simple sentences is NP verb (NP) where the NP that precedes the verb is its subject and the one that follows, its object. This is the order which normally characterises declarative sentences in Spanish. In Spanish, most of the discussion concerning word order has centered on the alternation between presentationals, characterised by VS order, and declaratives, which are characterised by SV(O) order. The following examples illustrate the alternation:

- (34) Vino Juan Presentational
 (came Juan)
 "Juan came"
- (35) Juan habló Declarative
 "Juan spoke"

The alternation SV/VS in Spanish is pragmatically motivated and it is much more common than is generally realised. Furthermore, in a number of constructions VS order is strongly preferred or has become grammaticalised. It is in these cases of VS which are grammaticalised (the opposite option being ungrammatical) in which we will focus our attention and chapter four of this study will deal with one of these constructions. All this will point to the hypothesis which will argue against SVO as the only basic

word order for Spanish, which will be considered more extensively in chapter five.

We have considered a corpus of sentences in Spanish for our data. Some of them have been extracted from books or newspapers and most are invented examples generally backed up with our own native speaker intuitions or by informants who were also native Peninsular Spanish speakers. We have tried to classify our data into several groups which shared syntactic or semantic characteristics. These groups often coincide with those stated in different studies on the same area of research (mainly, Terker (1984); Suñer (1982); Hatcher (1956); Butt & Benjamin (1988); Fant (1984)).

Let us consider first those constructions where VS order is either required or preferred. Questions with an interrogative phrase at the beginning require VS order:

- (36) a. ¿A dónde va María?
(to where is-going María?)
"Where is María going to?"
b. * A dónde María va?
(to where María is-going?)
- (37) a. ¿Qué imagen cree usted que tiene ahora la
sociedad española de usted? (El País,
Spanish daily newspaper)
(what image think you that has now the
society Spanish of you?)
"what image do you think the Spanish
society has of you now?"
b. *¿Qué imagen usted cree que tiene ahora
la sociedad española de usted?
(what image you think that has now the
society Spanish of you?)
- (38) a. ¿Qué toma el señor? (Hijos de Papá,
Vizcaíno Casas)
(what has the sir?)
"what would you like sir?"
b. *¿Qué el señor toma?
(what the sir has?)

- (39) a. ¿Cómo se llama su hermano?
 (How is called his brother?)
 "what is his brother's name?"
 b. *¿Cómo su hermano se llama?
 (how his brother is called?)

Absolute questions "prefer" VSO order which seems more natural than SVO:

- (40) ¿Ha comprado mamá leche?
 (has bought Mum milk?)
 "has Mum bought any milk?"
- (41) a. ¿Se llevará Antonio el coche?
 (will-take Antonio the car?)
 "will Antonio take the car?"
 b. ¿Se llevará el coche Antonio?
- (42) ¿Ha salido María a pasear?
 (has gone-out María to walk?)
 "has María gone for a walk?"

If it goes before the verb, the subject is felt very frequently to be extraposed, something which is reflected in the written language placing the initial interrogation mark at the beginning of the verb and after the subject:

- (43) Mamá, ¿ha comprado leche?
 (Mum, has bought milk?)
 "Mum, has she bought any milk?"
- (44) Antonio, ¿se llevará el coche?
 (Antonio, will-take the car?)
 "Antonio, will he take the car?"
- (45) María, ¿ha salido a pasear?
 (María, has gone-out to walk?)
 "María, has she gone for a walk?"

Embedded interrogative questions require VS as their obligatory order:

- (46) a. Pepe preguntó qué dibujaba María
 (Pepe asked what was-drawing María)

- "Pepe asked what María was drawing"
- b. * Pepe preguntó qué María dibujaba
(Pepe asked what María was-drawing)
- (47) a. Sólo quería saber qué estaba haciendo Juan
(just wanted know what was doing Juan)
"I just wanted to know what Juan was doing"
- b. * Sólo quería saber qué Juan estaba haciendo
(just wanted know what Juan was doing)
- (48) a. Juan nos dijo cuándo iba a llegar María
(Juan us told when was-going to arrive María)
"Juan told us when María was going to arrive"
- b. * Juan nos dijo cuándo María iba a llegar
(Juan told us when María was-going to arrive)
- (49) a. No tenía ni idea de cómo iba a hacerlo él
(not had any idea of how was-going to do-it he)
"I didn't have any idea of how he was going to do it"
- b. * No tenía ni idea de cómo él iba a hacerlo
(not had any idea of how he was-going to do-it)
- (50) a. Jaime adivinó cuál era la respuesta correcta (from Plann (1982))
(Jaime guessed which was the answer right)
"Jaime guessed which the right answer was"
- b. * Jaime adivinó cuál la respuesta correcta era
(Jaime guessed which the answer right was)
- (51) a. No sé a qué hora llega Juan (from Terker (1984))
(not know at what time arrives Juan)
"I don't know when Juan arrives"
- b. * No sé a qué hora Juan llega
(not know at what time Juan arrives)

In cleft sentences the preferred order is ^{normally} ~~always~~ VS (indicated as (a) in the following examples) although SV is also possible:

- (52) a. Fueron sus padres los que nos lo dijeron
(were his parents the-ones who us it said)
"it was his parents who told us"

- b. Sus padres fueron los que nos lo dijeron
(his parents were the-ones who us it said)
"his parents were the ones who told us"
- (53) a. Fue María la que compró el regalo
(was María the-one who bought the present)
"it was María who bought the present"
- b. María fue la que compró el regalo
(María was the-one who bought the present)
"María was the one who bought the present"
- (54) a. Es esa chica la que lo hizo
(is that girl the-one who it did)
"it is that girl the one who did it"
- b. Esa chica es la que lo hizo
(that girl is the-one who it did)
"that girl is the one who did it"
- (55) a. Fue usted el que lo dijo
(was you the-one who it said)
"it was you who said it"
- b. Usted fue el que lo dijo
(you were the-one who it said)
"you were the one who said it"

Cleft sentences are those in which an object, predicate or adverbial phrase in a sentence is isolated and focused by using the verb to be ("ser"). According to this, the preference for VS order can be considered to be pragmatically motivated as the element which wants to be focused and isolated (which coincides with the subject in these constructions) is presented as new information, being placed after the verb therefore ⁶.

⁶ Another interesting point to discuss concerning cleft constructions in Spanish is the subject of agreement. Consider:

- (1) Yo soy el que lo sé
(I am the-one who it know)
"I am the one who knows"
- (2) Yo soy el que lo sabe
(I am the-one who it knows)
"I am the one who knows"

In Spanish the verb saber ("know") in (1) and (2) may agree with the first person (yo) or with the third person singular (represented in this case by el que, third person pronoun). However, consider now:

- (3) El que lo sabe soy yo
(the-one who it knows am I)
"the one who knows is me"

The existence of clitics is another factor which can determine the order of the major constituents in a sentence. Any intransitive verb with two arguments, will freely occur in sentences with VS order as long as the object is a clitic:

- (56) a. Lo instaló Esteban
(it installed Esteban)
"Esteban installed it"
b. Esteban lo instaló.
(Esteban it installed)
as in (a)
- (57) a. Como no vino María, lo tuvo que hacer Juan
(as not came María, it had to do Juan)
"As María didn't come, Juan had to do it"
b. Como no vino María, Juan lo tuvo que hacer
(as not came María, Juan it had to do)
the same as in (a)

Even verbs with three arguments readily permit VS order and ^{it} is normally preferable if all the objects are clitics, as the following examples illustrate:

- (58) a. Me lo dijo Juan
(me it said Juan)
"Juan said it to me"
b. Juan me lo dijo
(Juan me it said)
as in (a)
- (59) a. Me lo recomendó mi primo
(me it recommended my cousin)
"my cousin recommended it to me"

-
- (4) * El que lo sabe es yo
(the-one who it knows is I)
as in (3)

In (3) and (4) the verb of the main clause, ser ("to be") does not agree with the subordinate clause acting as subject (ie. el que lo sabe) which has the feature of third person singular, but with yo, which would be considered by most linguists as the predicate of the sentence. This could lead us to think that yo is in (3) and (4) the real subject, or - in Halliday's terms - the "logical subject". This view, therefore, will support the position that there is a VS order in cleft sentences. This is, clearly, an area of the Spanish language in which more research should be done.

- b. Mi primo me lo recomendó
(my cousin me it recommended)
as in (a)
- (60) a. Se lo iba a decir el estudiante
(him it was-going to say the student)
"the student was going to say it to him"
- b. El estudiante se lo iba a decir
(the student him it was-going to say)
as in (a)

In (56-60) either VS or SV order are perfectly permissible depending on whether it is the subject or the predicate which the speaker wishes to emphasise. In this case, therefore, the order is totally dependent on context. When full NP objects are present VS order is considerably less frequent. This is because objects are much more likely to be the comment than subjects (see Terker (1984:276)).

When there is a topicalisation is likely that the order of sentential constituents should be different from that of SVO. In general, there is a tendency to postpone the subject if there is another sentential element which occupies the preverbal position, or as Westfal (1980:66) remarks, "when the TOP node is filled, the subject may appear in post-verbal or sentence-final position"⁷. Thus, when adverbials of place are topicalised, VS order is much more natural than SV which sounds awkward to the Spanish ear, as in:

- (61) a. En España no se ha diseñado aún una
fórmula definitiva (Diario 16)
(in Spain not has been designed yet a
formula definitive)

⁷ Westfal is assuming here that the Phrase Structure Rules of Spanish that expand S" generate a TOP node plus S', along the lines of Rivero (1978) which gives a justification of the TOP node in Spanish.

"in Spain a definitive formula has not yet been designed"

- b. ? En España una fórmula definitiva aún no se ha diseñado
(in Spain a formula definitive yet has not been designed)

- (62) a. En su habitación estaba estudiando María cuando entró Juan
(in her room was studying María when went-in Juan)

"María was studying in her room when Juan went in"

- b. ? En su habitación María estaba estudiando cuando entró Juan
(in her room María was studying when went-in Juan)

When the topicalised adverbials of place are not sentential adverbs but dominated by VP, the VS order seems to be obligatory (see Terker (1984:277)):

- (63) a. En el cuarto está la mujer⁸
(in the room is the woman)
"the woman is in the room"

- b. * En el cuarto la mujer está
(in the room the woman is)

- (64) a. Al mercado va María
(to-the market is-going María)
"María is going to the market"

- b. * Al mercado María va
(to-the market María is-going)

- (65) a. En el garaje puso mi padre el coche
(in the garage put my father the car)
"my father put the car in the garage"

- b. * En el garaje mi padre puso el coche
(in the garage my father put the car)

⁸ Carmen Silva-Corvalán notes that if the verb is "semantically empty" SV order is possible and thus (5) is acceptable:

- (5) En el cuarto la mujer lee
"in the room the woman is reading"

(see Terker (1984:285)). We agree with Silva-Corvalán and hypothesise that the reason for this may be the preference for not leaving an empty verb of the type of estar ("to be") at the final position of a Spanish sentence.

why?

Topicalised adverbials of time dominated by VP demonstrate clear preference for VS order; only when the final element in the verb phrase is contrastively stressed can SV order be made acceptable (Terker (1984:277-8)), as in (66-68):

- (66) a. Mañana viene Juan
(tomorrow is-coming Juan)
"Juan is coming tomorrow"
b. * Mañana Juan viene
(tomorrow Juan is-coming)
c. Mañana Juan VIENE
(tomorrow Juan IS-COMING)
"Juan IS-COMING tomorrow"
- (67) a. Ya me dio eso Juan
(already gave me that Juan)
"Juan already gave me that"
b. * Ya Juan me dio eso
(already Juan me gave that)
c. Ya Juan me dio ESO
(already Juan me gave THAT)
"Juan already gave me THAT"
- (68) a. A las diez llegó ayer Elena
(at ten arrived yesterday Elena)
"Elena arrived at ten o'clock yesterday"
b. * A las diez Elena llegó ayer
(at ten Elena arrived yesterday)
c. A las diez Elena llegó AYER
(at ten Elena arrived YESTERDAY)
"Elena arrived at ten o'clock YESTERDAY"

Sentences which contain topicalised objects must have VS order, as indicated in the following examples (Terker (1984:277))⁹:

- (69) a. A María le habla Juan
(to María her is-talking Juan)
"Juan is talking to María"
b. * A María Juan le habla
(to María Juan her is-talking)

⁹ Terker (1984:285) notices that contrastive stress on the verb will make (69a) and (70a) more acceptable if these topicalisations may not seem very natural placed isolately.

- (70) a. Dinero no tiene Pablo
 (money not has Pablo)
 "Pablo doesn't have any money"
 b. * Dinero Pablo no tiene
 (money Pablo not has)

All the same, when an object is left shifted in a contrastive topic context, there is a strong tendency toward VS syntax:

- (71) El libro me lo dio Juan
 (the book me it gave Juan)
 "Juan gave me the book"
 (72) La película la vieron los estudiantes
 (the film it saw the students)
 "the students saw the film"

SV order is possible in here, but only when the verb is contrastively stressed, as (73) illustrates:

- (73) El libro Juan me lo DIO
 (the book Juan me it GAVE)
 "Juan GAVE me the book"

With recall topics, topics which are repeated from earlier in the discourse (see Terker (1984:278)), there is a clear preference for VS order; (74b) and (75b) are more restricted in occurrence than (74a and (75a):

- (74) a. En cuanto a la película, la prohibieron
 las autoridades
 (as for the film, it prohibited the
 authorities)
 "as for the film, it was prohibited by the
 authorities"
 b. En cuanto a la película, las autoridades
 la prohibieron
 (as for the film, the authorities it
 prohibited)
 "as for the film, the authorities
 prohibited it"
 (75) a. Hablando de París, estuvo allí
 recientemente Juan

- (speaking of Paris, was there recently
Juan)
"speaking of Paris, Juan was recently
there"
- b. Hablando de París, Juan estuvo allí
recientemente
(speaking of Paris, Juan was there
recently)
as in (a)

As for (75), if the subject is emphasised, SV (and therefore
(75b)) will be the preferred order:

- (76) Hablando de París, JUAN estuvo allí
recientemente
"Speaking of Paris, JUAN was recently there"

Object relative clauses demonstrate both VS and SV syntax, but
there may be a tendency toward VS order. Nevertheless, (77b),
(78b) and (79b) are made more acceptable by strong stress on the
verb:

- (77) a. El libro que me dio José era de Física
(the book that me gave José was about
Physics) Fisics)
"the book that José gave me was about
Fisics"
- b. El libro que José me dio era de Física
(the book that José me gave was about
Fisics)
- (78) a. La que se comió Paula era verde
(the one which ate Paula was green)
"the one which Paula ate was green"
- b. La que Paula se comió era verde
(the one Paula ate was green)
- (79) a. Las naranjas que compró mi madre estaban
de oferta
(the oranges that bought my mother were on
sale)
"the oranges that my mother bought were on
sale"
- b. Las naranjas que mi madre compró estaban
de oferta
(the oranges that my mother bought were on
sale)

Apart from relative and embedded interrogative clauses, there are two other main type of subordinate clauses which favour VS order under certain conditions. When clauses permit both orders; however, the alternation is not totally pragmatically motivated. If the clause contains no object or if the object is a clitic, VS order is favoured:

- (80) a. Vamos a salir tan pronto como llegue Juan
(are-going to leave as soon as arrives Juan)
"we are going to leave as soon as Juan arrives"
b. Vamos a salir tan pronto como Juan llegue
(are-going to leave as soon as Juan arrives)
- (81) a. Fue entonces cuando nos lo dijo Pedro
(was then when us it told Pedro)
"it was then that Pedro told it to us"
b. Fue entonces cuando Pedro nos lo dijo
(was then when Pedro us it told)

While (80b) and (81b) are grammatical, they are much more restricted in occurrence than (80a) and (81a). When there is a full NP object the tendency is toward SV order (Terker (1984:279)):

- (82) a. Se apagaron las luces mientras Juan leía un libro
(were-turned-off the lights while Juan was-reading a book)
"the lights were turned off while Juan was reading a book"
b. Se apagaron las luces mientras leía Juan un libro
(were-turned-off the lights while was-reading Juan a book)
c. Se apagaron las luces mientras leía un libro Juan
(were-turned-off the lights while was-reading a book Juan)

While (82b) and (82c) are acceptable, they are more restricted in occurrence than (82a). The reason is the same as for declarative sentences: objects tend to be part of the comment; subjects tend to be part of the topic. (82b) and (82c) become more acceptable if the subject is strongly stressed.

Another case of subordinate clauses exhibiting VS order is if clauses. These permit pragmatically motivated alternation for intransitives and transitives with clitics. Thus (83a), (84a) and (85a) are less restricted in occurrence than (83-85b):

- (83) a. Si viviera mi madre encontraría solución a esto (Niebla, Unamuno)
(if lived my mother would find solution to this)
"if my mother lived she would find a solution to this"
- b. Si mi madre viviera encontraría solución a esto
(if my mother lived would find solution to this)
- (84) a. Iremos sólo si viene Susana
(will-go only if comes Susana)
"we will only go if Susana comes"
- b. Iremos sólo si Susana viene
(will-go only if Susana comes)
- (85) a. Podrás venir si lo permite tu padre
(will-be-able to-come if it permits your father)
"you'll be able to come if your father permits it"
- b. Podrás venir si tu padre lo permite
(will-be-able to-come if your father it permits)

Butt & Benjamin (1988:399) generalise and talk about the fact that VS order is commonly used to avoid verbs or verb phrases left dangling at the end of a subordinate clause.

There are other constructions in Spanish in which the subject is postponed which are related more to semantic and pragmatic

factors rather than syntactic ones. Thus, the so called presentative, normally intransitive, verbs which denote the "existence" or "come to existence" of their subject, and whose normal information function is that of introducing a referent in the discourse:

(86) Pronto empezará la música
(soon will-begin the music)
"the music will begin soon"

(87) Aparecieron dos soldados
(turned-up two soldiers)
"two soldiers turned up"

Related to this area of presentational verbs, see two studies which have dealt with the subject in depth: Hatcher (1956) and Suñer (1982).

The so called emotive verbs of the type of gustar ("to like"), encantar ("to love"), interesar ("interest"), adorar ("adore"), etc. require also an inversion of the subject. In this case, the indirect object represents the person who has the attitude or psychological reaction expressed by the verb:

(89) No me gustan los políticos
(not me please the politicians)
"I don't like politicians"

(90) Le van a irritar mis sugerencias
(him are-going to upset my suggestions)
"my suggestions are going to upset him"

Westfal (1980:68ff), on the other hand, adds more information to the subject of sentences with VS order. He observes that the word order of intransitive se sentences is NP + SE + VERB, whereas that of impersonal se sentences is SE + VERB + NP:

(A) Intransitive se construction:

- (91) Las puertas se abrieron (por sí solas)
(the doors opened (by themselves))
"the doors opened"

(B) Impersonal se construction:

- (92) a. Se abrieron las puertas
(opened (pl.) the doors)
"the doors were opened"
b. Se abrió las puertas¹⁰
(opened (sing.) the doors)
"the doors were opened"

Furthermore, Westfal notices that sentences constructed with meteorological verbs and the existential haber ("there-to-be") have the same basic word order as impersonal se sentences:

(C) Sentences with meteorological verbs:

- (93) a. Llovieron monedas del cielo¹¹
(rained (pl.) coins from-the sky)
"it rained coins from the sky"
b. Llovió monedas del cielo
(rained (sing.) from-the sky)
as in (a)
(94) a. * Monedas llovieron del cielo
(coins rained (pl.) from-the sky)
as in (93a)
b. * Monedas llovió del cielo
(coins rained (sing.) from-the sky)

¹⁰ It seems to us that (92b) is ungrammatical in Peninsular Spanish or, at least, would only be accepted by a few speakers and then should be marked with the "?" sign; Westfal, however, considers it to be grammatically acceptable.

¹¹ Again we consider (93a) as not totally acceptable in Peninsular Spanish.

(D) Existential sentences:

- (95) a. Habían muchas personas en la fiesta¹²
(there-were many persons at the party)
"There were many people at the party"
b. Había muchas personas en la fiesta
(there-was many persons at the party)
as above
- (96) a. * Muchas personas habían en la fiesta
(many persons there-were at the party)
as above
b. * Muchas personas había en la fiesta
(many persons there-was at the party)

Of course, examples such as (94b) and (96b) are perfectly acceptable if the constituent in sentence initial position is assigned emphatic stress, which in turn calls for comma intonation:

(97) MONEDAS, llovió del cielo (Cf. (94b))

(98) MUCHAS PERSONAS, había en la fiesta (Cf. (96b))

Comma intonation marks topicalisation. Consequently, and according to Westfal (1980:70), although the corresponding NPs appear in pre-verbal position in examples (97) and (98), they are not in subject position.

¹² This form is only accepted as grammatical in certain dialects of South-American Spanish but it occurs as a very generalised tendency in Peninsular Spanish.

CHAPTER FOUR:

VS ORDER IN DIRECT AND EMBEDDED QUESTIONS

IN SPANISH

In the last chapter we referred to those constructions in which the position of the subject was postverbal in Spanish. While in some constructions VS order was preferred or conditioned by pragmatic factors, we also saw that there were others in which the position of the subject after the verb was obligatory. Contreras (1976) and Silva-Corvalán (1983) are examples of interesting studies of Spanish word order interacting with pragmatic and discourse factors. However, we will not be concerned with pragmatic factors in the present paper (as they cannot be accounted for very objectively) and we will concentrate now, on the other hand, on those specific to the syntax of the language which makes some constructions grammatical and others ungrammatical or unacceptable. Apart from the general tendency in Spanish to postpone the subject if there is another sentential element which occupies the preverbal position (topicalisation) and those cases in which the inversion is required by the semantic character of the verb (in the case of presentational or existential and emotive verbs), the clearest case of construction in which VS order is required is that of interrogatives and, more specifically, direct questions introduced by an interrogative word and embedded questions. In this chapter, we will concentrate on this particular case of constructions and look for possible

arguments which account for their behaviour. Some linguists dedicated to the study of Spanish language have also referred to the subject and raised some hypotheses to explain this phenomenon. We will mention some of these hypotheses as well.

Let us first reproduce from our previous chapter, and for ease of exposition, some of the examples illustrating these constructions:

(A) Direct questions with initial interrogative word:

- (111) a. ¿A dónde va María?
(to where is-going María?)
"where is María going to?"
b. * ¿A dónde María va?
(to where María is-going?)
- (112) a. ¿Cómo se llama su hermano?
(how is called his brother?)
"What is his brother's name?"
b. * ¿Cómo su hermano se llama?
(how his brother is-called?)

(B) Embedded interrogative questions:

- (113) a. Pepe preguntó qué dibujaba María
(Pepe asked what was-drawing María)
"Pepe asked what María was drawing"
b. * Pepe preguntó qué María estaba
dibujando
(Pepe asked what María was-drawing)
- (114) a. Jaime adivinó cuál era la respuesta
correcta
(jaime guessed which was the answer
right)
"Jaime guessed which the right answer
was"
b. * Jaime adivinó cuál la respuesta
correcta era
(Jaime guessed which the answer right
was)

One characteristic that these two constructions have in common is that the element placed in the preverbal position is a Wh-

phrase. Let us make the assumption that the preverbal position can either only be occupied by an element or that it may be left empty. This assumption would account for the ungrammaticality of (111b), (112b), (113b) and (114b) and also for the fact that when there is another sentential element which occupies the preverbal position there is a general tendency to postpone the subject as in the next examples already considered in chapter two:

(115) Lo instaló Esteban (existence of clitics)
(it installed Esteban)
"Esteban installed it"

(116) Al mercado va María (topicalised adverbial
of place)
(to-the market is-going María)
"María is going to the market"

(117) Mañana viene Juan (topicalised adverbial
of time)
(tomorrow comes Juan)
"Juan comes tomorrow"

We assume, therefore, that the verb occupies a fixed position in the Spanish sentence, namely the first or the second depending on the fact that the subject be absent or not:

(118) (Juan) está comiendo una manzana
((Juan) is eating an apple)
"Juan is eating an apple"

The position of the subject, however, is not fixed and may be inverted to occupy the postverbal position as in the case, clearly, of indirect and direct questions in Spanish or the subject may ^{be} preverbal as in the case of simple declarative sentences in Spanish.

The structure of the sentence in Spanish which results from this assumption is different from the one generally assumed for

Spanish, which is like English, ie. consisting of a subject NP, followed by INFL and the VP. Opposite to this position and coinciding with the one we have presented so far is that argued by Groos & Bok-Bennema (1986) represented as (119) below:

(119) (XP) V XP*

According to (119), in Spanish there is an optional first position that can be filled by any argument. This position is followed by the verb; the verb is followed by a series of constituents that may appear in any order. This structure, therefore, would account for the grammaticality of (120a-e) and for the ungrammaticality of (120f-g):

- (120) a. Trajo para mí una carta el criado
(brought for me a letter the servant)
"the servant brought a letter for me"
b. Trajo el criado una carta para mí
(brought the servant a letter for me)
c. Trajo una carta para mí el criado
(brought a letter for me the servant)
d. Para mí trajo el criado una carta
(for me brought the servant a letter)
e. Trajo una carta para mí
(brought a letter for me)
f. * El criado para mí una carta trajo
(the servant for me a letter brought)
g. * El criado una carta para mí trajo
(the servant a letter for me brought)

Thus, only in the cases in which the verb of a Spanish sentence is placed in first or second position, can that sentence be considered as grammatical.

Let us examine again our examples of interrogatives in Spanish. In (111a) and (112a) the position before the verb is occupied by a Wh-phrase (a dónde in (111a) and cómo in (112a)).

These Wh-phrases, of course, are base-generated after the V as (121) and (122) show:

(121) Va María a dónde
V S Wh-phrase

(122) Se llama su hermano cómo¹³
V S Wh-phrase

There has been, therefore, a Wh-movement which moves the Wh-phrases to the preverbal position. The idea is that the first position of the sentence in Spanish (XP) is the target of movement. This assumption will also account for embedded constructions like those of (113a) and (114a) in which the two respective Wh-phrases (qué in (113a) and cuál in (114a)) are moved to the initial position of the embedded clause, before the verb.

This claim that the first position is the target of movement predicts correctly that Spanish does not allow two constituents to occur before the verb. Thus, (111b), (112b), (113b) and (114b) are marked as ungrammatical in Spanish.

Consider, however, the following sentences:

- (123) a. María preguntó qué prefería Juan
(María asked what preferred Juan)
"María asked what Juan preferred"
b. * María preguntó qué Juan prefería
(María asked what Juan preferred)
- (124) a. María dijo que Juan prefería carne
(María said that Juan preferred meat)
"María said that Juan preferred meat"
b. * María dijo que prefería Juan carne
(María said that preferred Juan meat)
as in (a)
c. * María dijo que prefería carne Juan

¹³ We assume here that the subject is base-generated at the right of the verb. We will discuss about this assumption later on.

- (María said that preferred meat Juan)
as in (a)
- d. María dijo que Juan prefería qué
(echo-question)
(María said that Juan preferred what)
"María said that Juan preferred what"
- (125) a. ¿Dijo María qué prefería Juan?
(said María what preferred Juan?)
"Did María say what Juan preferred?"
b. *¿Dijo María que qué prefería Juan?
(said María that what preferred Juan?)
c. *¿Dijo María qué Juan prefería?
(said María what Juan preferred?)
- (126) a. María preguntó que qué prefería Juan
(María asked that what preferred Juan)
"María asked what Juan preferred"
b. * María preguntó que qué Juan prefería
(María asked that what Juan preferred)

Several interesting points arise from these data. First of all, we must notice that in (124a) and (124d) (echo-question), there is not one but two elements occurring before the V in the embedded interrogative clause. But we had said that only one element could occur in the preverbal position as the ungrammaticality of (123b) shows. The two elements occurring before the verb in (124a) are que and Juan, ie. a complementiser and an NP; the same happens in (124d). A complementiser is a clause-introducing particle which very often introduces embedded complement clauses. In this sense, a complementiser is lexically empty and cannot be, therefore, considered as a proper constituent. Notice, in addition, that a complementiser of the type of que never introduces an embedded interrogative clause in Spanish as the unacceptability of (125b) shows (and the same happens in English).

There is, however, an only case in which a complementiser

introduces an embedded interrogative clause. The exception is si ("whether") and the same happens, again, in English:

- (127) a. Le pregunté si Juan había comido ya
(him asked whether Juan had eaten already)
"I asked him whether Juan had already eaten"
- b. Le pregunté si había comido Juan ya
(him asked whether had eaten Juan already)
- c. Le pregunté si ya había comido Juan
(him asked whether already had eaten Juan)

As (127) shows, not only the complementiser si can introduce an embedded interrogative clause in Spanish, but also is SV (and not VS as in the other cases of indirect questions in Spanish) the preferred order. Furthermore, let us consider (128) as well:

- (128) Le pregunté que si Juan había comido ya
(him asked that whether Juan had eaten already)
"I asked him whether Juan had already eaten"
- (129) Le pregunté si Juan había comido ya
(him asked whether Juan had eaten already)
as in (128)

In this case, two elements are placed in preverbal position and introduce an embedded interrogative clause.

If we now summarise the main ideas in this chapter, we must refer to the following points:

- (a) We assume that the structure of the Spanish sentence is (XP) V XP* by which the preverbal position is optional and may be occupied by an element only; and the postverbal position can be occupied by a number of constituents appearing in any order.

- (b) From this assumption it follows that the position of the verb is fixed in Spanish, whereas that of the subject is not and can be even left empty (as Spanish is a PRO-drop language).
- (c) However, there is an exception in our rule about the structure of the Spanish sentence. The preverbal XP position can be filled by two elements provided that the first one is the complementiser que ("that"). This complementiser will be followed by an NP (which is optional as it is the subject) in the case of embedded non-interrogative clauses like in (124a); it is followed by a Wh-phrase in the case of embedded interrogative clauses as in (126a). But notice that when an embedded interrogative clause is introduced by a verb like decir, there is inversion of the subject but the complementiser que ("that") cannot be introduced before the Wh-phrase (see (125a-c)). The difference in these two constructions concerning word order is that in the case of embedded non-interrogative clauses the required order is SV, whereas in the embedded interrogative clauses the obligatory order is VS.
- (d) The complementiser si ("whether") constitutes another peculiarity within our assumption of which the structure of the Spanish sentence is. As for embedded interrogative clauses, they may be introduced by two elements and the subject NP provided the first two are the complementisers que ("that") and si ("whether"). Thus, and overall, we have three elements in our XP position before the verb

although the first complementiser, que ("that") may be omitted (see (128) and (129)). What is really relevant for our study of word order in Spanish embedded questions is that in these cases in which these clauses are introduced by (que) si, inversion of the subject (VS order) is not required, unlike other types of embedded interrogative sentences introduced by Wh-phrases, and the obligatory order is VS as (126) shows.

So far we have been assuming that the position of the verb in Spanish is fixed and that of the subject is not and the latter can be placed both in preverbal and postverbal position. In an interesting article on Wh-movement in Spanish, Torrego (1984) assumes that Spanish has both a rightward movement rule for subjects and a leftward movement rule for verbs, in order to account for the fact that only one preverbal constituent is allowed. She claims that Spanish has a rule of "free subject inversion", which is identical to the rule proposed for Italian by Rizzi (1980), as well as a verb-preposing rule. With these two rules, Torrego seeks to account for the difference between simple declarative sentences and those which are introduced by a Wh-phrase in Spanish.

As for the rule of "free subject inversion", it is characteristic of null subject languages such as Italian and Spanish, which may have a phonetically unrealised pronoun as subject. (130) illustrates the effect of free subject inversion in Spanish:

(130) Contestó la pregunta Juan
(answered the question Juan)

Juan answered the question

Torrego assumes that free subject inversion optionally moves the NP subject to the right, adjoining it to the VP. This optional inversion rule may apply to all sentences in the language.

In addition to free subject inversion, and according to Torrego, Spanish has an inversion rule that must always apply, when a "Wh-phrase of a certain kind or its trace appears in COMP prior to logical form (LF) in finite clauses" (p. 103). Our previous sentences (111) and (112) may illustrate this obligatory inversion rule.

This inversion rule does not apply in case of absence of Wh-movement and thus yes/no questions do not require inversion in Spanish as we have already mentioned (although the preferred order is VS: see our previous examples); nor do sentences containing a non preposed Wh-phrase as in our example (124d) (reproduced as (131) in here for ease of exposition):

(131) María dijo que Juan prefería qué
"María said that Juan preferred what"

Torrego also notices that while obligatory inversion rules such as Subject-Auxiliary Inversion (SAI) in English or Verb/Second in other Germanic languages are commonly restricted to root sentences, in Spanish the inversion rule involved in Wh-questions occurs in both embedded and non-embedded clauses and thus the rule applies to (132) as well as (133):

(132) ¿Cómo se llama su hermano?
(how is-called his brother?)
"what is his brother's name?"

- (133) Luis preguntó (que) cómo se llamaba su hermano
 (Luis asked (that) how was-called his brother)
 "Luis asked how his brother was called"

If the verbal sequence involves more than one verb, only the first verb of the sequence must necessarily precede the subject.

For instance:

- (134) ¿Qué viene Juan a hacer aquí?
 (what comes Juan to do here?)
 "what does Juan come to do here?"
- (135) ¿A quién acaba Cristina de hablar?
 (to whom finish Cristina of talking?)
 "whom did Cristina just finish talking to?"

In the examples given so far, obligatory inversion must take place every time a clause is introduced by a Wh-phrase. However, not every occurrence of a Wh-word in the COMP position of an interrogative sentence in Spanish causes the inversion to be obligatory. Torrego (1984:106) points out that Wh-phrases that do not require inversion include en qué medida ("in what way"), por qué ("why"), cuándo ("when") and cómo ("how")¹⁴:

- (136) ¿En qué medida la Constitución ha contribuido a eso?
 (in what way the Constitution has contributed to that?)
 "in what way has the Constitution contributed to that?"
- (137) ¿Por qué Juan quiere salir antes que los demás?
 (why Juan wants leave before that the others?)
 "why does Juan want to leave before the others?"

¹⁴ We think, however, that the examples with cuándo and cómo that Torrego provides sound very unnatural to the Spanish ear.

Also, and as we referred to earlier, the complementiser si ("whether") does not require obligatory inversion.

To explain the behaviour of these embedded and non-embedded interrogative clauses, Torrego assumes that the grammar of Spanish has a rule, Verb Preposing, that moves to the left of the subject whatever projection of V verbal sequences we have. This rule of Verb Preposing is triggered by a preposed Wh-constituent and accounts, then, for the correct order in Wh-questions.

Torrego considers V-Preposing to be an adjunction rule so that in examples like (136) and (137) in which the preverbal XP position (cf. our previous analysis of the sentence in Spanish) is assumed to be occupied by the subject (la Constitución and Juan, respectively), it is clear that the Wh-phrases cannot occupy this position as well. They are proposed, therefore, to be in an adjoined position. The same can be argued of sentences like (124a), (126a) and (128) in which there is a complementiser introducing the embedded clause and in which the preverbal XP position seems to be occupied by more than one element: the complementiser is in an adjoined position. We assume, therefore, that when a subject precedes the verb in embedded finite sentences, there cannot be a fronted Wh-phrase as well, unless, of course, this Wh-phrase is of the adjunct type.

Let us now consider the behaviour of the constructions considered in this chapter in other languages. Both Spanish and Italian share the free subject inversion rule characteristic of null subject languages, but the obligatory inversion rule of Spanish does not operate in embedded clauses in Italian. Obligatory inversion in Italian is a process limited to root

sentences. The following sentences illustrate the lack of V-Preposing in Italian embedded Wh-questions (see Torrego (p. 107)):

- (138) Non ho ancora capito a chi Gianni abbia
raccontato questa storia
"I haven't still understood to whom Gianni
has told this story"
- (139) Non so di che cosa Gianni ti abbia parlato
"I don't know what Gianni has told you
about"

Catalan is another null subject language which, like Spanish, requires inversion in main and embedded clauses. Some examples are:

- (140) a. No sabia què volien aquesta gent
(not knew what wanted these people)
"I didn't know what these people wanted"
- b. * No sabia què aquesta gent volien
(not knew what these people wanted)
as in (a)

And, in general, we can say that the major claims made in this chapter appear to hold for Catalan as well.

Let us consider now the behaviour of these constructions in French, another Romance language, together with Spanish, Catalan and Italian, but which does not share the null-subject parameter with these languages. In French, embedded questions introduced by an interrogative word do not present inversion of the subject or V-Preposing as the following examples show (from Schwartz (1975:448)):

- (141) a. J'ai oublié comment le prêtre a dit la
messe
(I-have forgotten how the priest has said
the mass)
"I have forgotten how the priest said the
mass"

- b. * J'ai oublié comment a dit le prêtre la messe
(I have forgotten how has said the priest the mass)
 - c. * J'ai oublié comment a dit la messe le prêtre
(I have forgotten how has said the mass the priest)
- (142) a. Je ne sais pas comment la police est allée à Paris
(I not know not how the police are gone to Paris)
- b. * Je ne sais pas comment est allée à Paris la police
(I not know not how are gone to Paris the police)
 - c. * Je ne sais pas comment est allée la police à Paris
(I not know not how are gone the police to Paris)

Apart from these embedded questions, French has Wh-fronting and V-preposing in direct questions introduced by a Wh-phrase:

- (143) Où vas-tu?
(where are-going you?)
"where are you going?"

This V-preposing in direct questions, however, is less restricted than in Spanish mainly because French allows more than one question-pattern:

- (144) a. Où est-ce que tu vas?
(where is-it that you are-going?)
"where are you going?"
- b. Où tu vas?¹⁵
(where you are-going?)
as in (a)

To conclude this chapter, therefore, we can say that Spanish has a free subject inversion rule characteristic of null subject

¹⁵ This form is only used in ordinary spoken language in French.

languages and an obligatory inversion rule that preposes the verb in certain constructions. Catalan (also a null subject language) shares these two types of rules with Spanish and, in general, most of the claims made in this chapter for Spanish also refer to Catalan. Italian shares with Spanish the free subject inversion rule characteristic of null subject languages, but the obligatory inversion rule of Spanish does not operate in embedded clauses in Italian. As for French (Romance but non-null-subject language) it does not seem to have the obligatory inversion rule which preposes the verb in embedded and direct interrogative sentences in Spanish, as the VS order is ungrammatical for the former and only possible (not obligatory) for the latter.

CHAPTER FIVE:

BASIC WORD ORDER IN SPANISH

1. Introduction

It seems to us that the assumption has always been that Spanish is an SVO language.

We have already referred to the typological study of word order carried out by Greenberg (1963), a non-Hispanicist. Although Greenberg never clarifies how he decided what constitutes the dominant word order of a given language (see Suñer (1982:265)), it is clear that he would classify Spanish as an SVO language.

The year 1970 marks the appearance of McCawley's revolutionary article "English as an VSO language". Since then, a few linguists have hypothesised that Spanish is also VSO.

In the light of the Spanish data considered in the second and third chapters of this study and taking into account some of the arguments presented by several linguists on the subject, we will argue, to conclude our study, against SVO as the only basic word order for Spanish. In particular, we will concentrate on the position of the subject in Spanish sentences, as we have been doing so far, and consider the possibility that this subject may be generated postverbally in D-structure.

2. Spanish: SV or VS language?

The mobility of subjects in Spanish is not, in itself, a serious difficulty for a typological description and does not affect most of the features implied by VO structure, but it does cause problems in assigning a basic word order to Spanish: SVO, VSO and VOS are all possible candidates.

This study has been restricted to an account of the position of the subject in Spanish: a consideration of the position of the object as well would have required another study of the same scope as this one. For this reason, we have referred and will refer to the alternation SV/VS rather than SVO/VSO.

Let us consider again in here, and in a summarised fashion, the cases in which the position of the subject does not conform to the SV order normally assumed for Spanish. The following constructions in Spanish have VS order as obligatory:

- (a) direct questions introduced by an interrogative phrase (Wh-phrase)
- (b) embedded interrogative questions (in the case, however, of embedded questions introduced by the complementiser si, the natural order is SV)
- (c) sentences introduced by a topicalised adverbial of place dominated by VP
- (d) Sentences with topicalised adverbials of time
- (e) constructions with topicalised objects
- (f) presentational (or existential) constructions
- (g) sentences with emotive verbs of the type of gustar ("to like"), encantar ("to love"), etc.

A VS order is preferred or sounds more natural to the Spanish

ear in the following constructions in Spanish:

- (a) absolute questions
- (b) cleft sentences
- (c) constructions with clitic pronouns
- (d) sentences with "recall topics"
- (e) object relative clauses
- (f) temporal subordinate clauses ("when" clauses)
- (g) conditional subordinate clauses ("if clauses")

In general, we must admit that quantitative studies do not support the VSO hypothesis (see Suñer (1982:275)) and Gutierrez (1985)). The statistics in these studies clearly indicate that SVO order is more frequent in both main and subordinate clauses. These studies leave very little doubt as to which word order is the more frequent in Spanish. We, therefore, admit the fact that SVO is the dominant order, if by "dominant" we mean the most used and most natural order from a communicative point of view and therefore the most frequent in the use of the language.

We do believe, however, that this fact is not in conflict with the view considered in this study by which SVO is not the only basic order for Spanish.

We must consider that if there were a completely free alternation between SV and VS, the SVO analysis together with a movement rule would seem well-founded within the transformational paradigm, even when the alternation is pragmatically motivated. But in view of the fact that in a large number of constructions (mainly in direct and embedded Wh-questions) VS order is obligatory (not only preferred or motivated by pragmatic

factors), in many other constructions VS order is preferred and, in general, in virtually all declarative sentences in Spanish the position of the subject can be postverbal (by the application of the free subject inversion as we saw in the previous chapter of this study), one must ask what generalisations an SVO analysis is able to state. It is only when we have reached this position that we can ask whether VS can be considered more basic, and therefore less constrained, than an SV order.

To the analysis of the data presented in the previous chapter and the position we take here that SV is not the only basic order in Spanish, we must add other arguments taken into account by different studies on the subject. They will be considered in the remaining of this section.

3. Synchronic evidence.

Terker (1984:282) considers the case of the postverbal NPs in haber ("there-to-be") constructions in Spanish as an argument in favour of VS order. He argues that these postverbal NPs seem to have properties of both subject and object. There is a tendency to pluralise the verb haber when there is a postverbal NP in many dialects¹⁶ (as in (145)). However, when the preverbal NP is pronominalised, object clitics are used (see (146)):

(145) Habían muchos edificios en esa calle
(there-were many buildings on that street)
"there were many buildings on that street"

(146) Los había
(them there-were)

¹⁶ In fact, as far as Peninsular Spanish is concerned, it is a generalised tendency in the informal speech of a great number of people.

"there were (them)"

When the full NP is present it is the logical subject. The analysis made, then, by the speaker seems to be the following: the existential construction is presentational; since all other presentational constructions have VS order, he analyses the postverbal NP as a subject, and consequently, makes the verb agree with that subject (habían is plural like edificios in (145)). If the NP appears as a pronoun it is analysed as the object and no agreement between the verb and the NP appears.

4. Diachronic considerations.

Terker (1984:283) also points out that VS syntax is typical of languages which have evolved from a previous SOV order. The SV/VS alternation is common to languages which have moved from SOV to a freer, more pragmatically controlled word order. The comparatively free word order of early Romance developed from the Latin SOV order. Pragmatically alternating SV/VS, Terker points out, is common to a wide range of languages which have developed from earlier SOV, among them Swahili, Russian, Hebrew and Spanish.

Romance is still moving to a more fixed SVO order. SVO languages which developed from previous SOV still show relics of VS syntax. Thus, the English existential construction demonstrates VS order, as do a number of French adverbial constructions. The fact that Spanish has grammaticalised VS order in a large number of constructions - Terker argues - clearly indicates that it is evolving to a more rigid word order. This rigid order will be predominantly SVO. The existence of SV/VS

alternations motivated by pragmatic factors in a large number of constructions clearly indicates that the SVO stage has not yet been reached.

There is another theory which also has to do with diachronic considerations (see Lapesa (1984:151-2)). The normal word order in the Arabic and Hebrew sentence places the verb in first position, the subject in second position and after the complements. As in Spanish and Portuguese the verb precedes the subject much more frequently than in other Romance languages, this theory argues that there is a Semitic influence in Spanish word order. This hypothesis would require a systematic study of the Spanish word order in its different stages and levels compared with a parallel study of the rest of Romance languages, Arabic and Hebrew. This is, therefore, an area of study in which research should obviously be done.

5. The order of words and the pro-drop parameter: Contreras analysis.

In recent discussions concerning the so called pro-drop parameter (by which a language may have a subject NP as phonetically unrealised), it has been assumed that one of the hallmarks of pro-drop languages is that they allow free postposition of the subject.

Spanish is clearly a pro-drop language and this favours the view taken in this study (chapter three) by which the position of the subject is not fixed in Spanish, whereas that of the verb is.

This assumption raises the question of two well known

differences between English and Spanish, namely that the latter but not the former, allows both null and postverbal subjects.

As for the possibility of postverbal subjects in Spanish and their impossibility in English, Contreras (1982) argues that the standard analysis of this difference - which allows adjunction to the right of VP whereas English does not - is problematic. Contreras, instead, assumes that S does not have an obligatory subject position, and that what we normally think of as subject of S should be interpreted as subject of VP. That is to say, Spanish, according to Contreras, is strictly Head Initial, and a consequence of this is that subjects are final. Initial subjects are the result of adjunction. We cannot reproduce the analysis in full in here (see Contreras (1982:241-2)) but we will only refer to an argument that Contreras presents to make the subject-final hypothesis plausible.

Contreras refers to constructions in which the occurrence of a preverbal element requires the subject to occur in final position, in particular to constructions like direct and embedded Wh-questions. If we assume - Contreras argues - that subjects are initial in Spanish, the preposed elements in these sentences would have to trigger obligatory inversion, but fronted Wh-phrases in relative clauses, for instance, do not trigger obligatory inversion (see our data on relative clauses in chapter three). It seems, therefore, more plausible to assume that subjects are final in D-structure and that there is a principle which forbids fronting more than one constituent (as we considered ourselves in chapter four of this study).

6. Basic word order and Subordinate clauses.

The principle of structure-preservation (Emonds 1976) states that non-root transformations must be structure-preserving (ie. that an element cannot be moved unless a node of the relevant category is present in deep structure in the position to which the node will be moved), whereas root transformations do not have to be structure-preserving.

Now let us consider that with certain exceptions, root sentences are main clauses. We have already referred to the fact (cf. chapter two, section four) that the German language is very characteristic in terms of word order because it has SVO order in main clauses but SOV in subordinate clauses. In languages such as German, then, Emonds' hypothesis entails that the order of the subordinate clause must be taken as the base order, with the main clause order derived by a non-structure-preserving transformation. If, instead, SVO were taken as basic, then the non-structure-preserving rule converting SVO to SOV would have to apply in non-root sentences, which is not allowed by the hypothesis (see White (1981:245)).

This hypothesis clearly favours our position that the SVO order is not the only basic one for Spanish. As we have already seen, there are cases of subordinate clauses (embedded questions) in which the VS order is obligatory and other cases of the same clauses (temporal, conditional and relative clauses) in which the VS order is clearly preferred. In view of these facts and taking into consideration our previous remarks concerning Emonds' structure-preserving principle (ie. that the basic order in a

language is the one of its subordinate clauses) we could hypothesise that the VS order is the base order for Spanish.

7. Child Language Acquisition considerations.

According to Terker (1984:283-4), data from child language acquisition also make the SVO account highly questionable.

The transformational analysis predicts subjects and predicates to be dominant notions in child language. If SVO were the only dominant order, one would expect SVO to be acquired first by children, and VS later. At the earlier stages of language acquisition in Spanish there is an overwhelming preference for verb-initial order, according to Linda Givón (in personal communication to Terker). We are not familiar with any study of language acquisition in Spanish which deals with successive stages of acquisition in children, but such study does exist for Italian (by Bates: see Terker (p. 284) for full reference). For Italian, a language which also has the SV/VS alternation motivated by pragmatic factors, it was found that verb-initial syntax predominates in the earlier stages of acquisition and later the SV and VS orders alternate according to pragmatic motivations. Only when children acquire the notion of syntactic subject at a still later stage is SVO found to be acquired.

Terker does not provide an analysis in full of this hypothesis but it is clear that this is an interesting and promising area that can shed much light on the question of which the base order for Spanish is and more research should obviously be done on the subject.

8. Schwartz's position.

Although Schwartz (1975) begins considering that Spanish appears indeterminate in terms of its variety of surface word orders (see pp. 440-3 for arguments) he ultimately argues that Spanish is a language with a basic SVO character. Schwartz examines particularly the case of interrogatives in VSO and SVO languages. In the clearest instances, he argues, SVO Wh-questions are distinct from VSO as follows:

SVO: Wh S V ...?
VSO: Wh V S ...?

According to this hypothesis, Spanish would be classified as a VSO language. But Schwartz also notices that other systems are not so transparently SVO in their interrogatives and thus, such SVO systems as English and French appear to be VSO in their interrogative forms. A closer inspection to Spanish interrogatives and the fact that embedded forms confirm a V-initial hypothesis ultimately leads Schwartz to accept that Spanish is underlyingly SVO.

Schwartz notices an important aspect of V-fronting in SVO systems: when it is used to characterise yes/no interrogatives, it is also used in the WH-type; and where it is missing in one, so is it in the other. This correlation appears just in those SVO systems that are VSO in interrogatives (like Spanish, Schwartz argues) and makes an important prediction: such SVO systems will never be "inconsistent" in their Wh-interrogatives and, thus, for example, English will admit:

(147) They will see what? (no Wh-fronting;
no V-fronting)

or:

(148) What will they see? (Wh-fronting;
V-fronting)

but not "* Will they see what?" (V-fronting; no Wh-fronting) or
"* What they will see?" (Wh-fronting; no V-fronting).

Turning to Spanish, Schwartz finds that it does not admit of
"inconsistency" and he illustrates his position arguing that
Spanish has a Verb-fronting rule that is inherently linked to Wh-
fronting, and when the latter does not occur, neither does the
former. He concludes that since V-fronting is idiosyncratic to
SVO systems, Spanish is underlying SVO.

We have, nevertheless, an objection to make to Schwartz's
analysis. From our point of view, the following constructions are
well-formed in Spanish:

- (149) a. Ha dicho María que iban a venir a las 6.
(has said María that were-going to come
at 6)
"María has said that they were going to
come at 6 o'clock"
b. ¿Ha dicho María qué?
(has said María what?)
"María has said what?"
c. ¿María ha dicho qué?
as in (b)
- (150) a. Ayer se fue Juan a Madrid
(yesterday went Juan to Madrid)
"Juan went to Madrid yesterday"
b. ¿Ayer se fue Juan a dónde?
(yesterday went Juan to where?)
"Juan went where yesterday?"
c. ¿Ayer se fue Juan a dónde?
(yesterday Juan went to where?)
as in (b)
- (151) a. Mis tíos le compraron un coche
(my aunt-and-uncle him bought a car)
"my aunt and uncle bought him a car"

- b. ¿Le compraron tus tíos qué?
(him bought your aunt-and-uncle what?)
"your aunt and uncle bought him what?"
- c. ¿Tus tíos le compraron qué?
(your aunt-and-uncle him bought what?)
as in (b)

These examples show that echo-questions can either have or not have V-fronting in Spanish. Thus, if constructions with V-fronting and no Wh-fronting are acceptable in Spanish, this language would be considered as "inconsistent" in Schwartz's terms and therefore this could be raised as an argument against SVO as underlying order for Spanish.

CONCLUSION

Given that in everyday language the VO order is fixed for Spanish and the internal structure of noun phrases largely invariable together with the fact that word order seems nowadays to be a good deal more rigid than fifty years ago, it is sometimes surprising that Spanish has acquired a reputation for free, or comparatively free, word order. Where lies the freedom? could we ask. This reputation is due to a characteristic of Spanish by which subject NPs are not fixed by grammatical requirements to a particular position in the sentence.

Based on this assumption about the subject position in Spanish, we considered several constructions of this language in which the postverbal position for the subject was either required (obligatory) or preferred. As the SV/VS alternation is frequently motivated by pragmatic factors, we decided to concentrate on a case of study in which, clearly, the VS was obligatory, the case of interrogatives, and particularly, embedded and direct questions with an introducing Wh-phrase.

In chapter four of this study we examined more closely the behaviour of Spanish interrogatives. One characteristic that the two types of Spanish interrogatives considered have in common is that in both cases there is a Wh-phrase placed in the preverbal position. Given this fact, we hypothesised that the preverbal position of the Spanish sentence can either be occupied by an only element or it may be left empty. This assumption would

account for the fact that when there is another sentential element which occupies the preverbal position there is a general tendency to postpone the subject (as in the cases of topicalisations and presence of clitics). We also assumed that the verb occupies a fixed position in the Spanish sentence and that the subject position is not fixed: it can be preverbal (as in the case of simple declarative sentences in Spanish) or postverbal (as in Spanish interrogatives), or even be absent as Spanish is a null subject language and its subject NP can be phonetically unrealised.

We also noticed that the preverbal position of the Spanish sentence - which we assume is normally occupied by one element - can be also filled by two elements provided the first of these is the complementiser que ("that"). Furthermore, we noticed another exception in our assumption about Spanish interrogatives, namely that in the case in which the embedded interrogative clause is introduced by the complementiser si ("whether"), the preferred order is SV, and not VS as with the rest of embedded questions in Spanish.

In the light of the Spanish data considered in this study and taking into account several arguments proposed on the subject, we finally argue against SVO as the only basic word order for Spanish, and in particular, we consider the possibility that the underlying order in Spanish is VS. We admit that SVO is the dominant order if by "dominant" we mean the most frequent in the use of the language but in view of the fact that in a large number of constructions VS order is obligatory, in others it is preferred and in virtually all Spanish sentences a rule of "free

subject inversion" may apply, we consider that a VS analysis seems capable of stating more linguistic generalisations than a SV analysis and therefore, the former should be considered more basic and less constrained.

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