O. Introduction

Two ongoing and interconnected questions in Heles Contreras’ research program have been the interaction of syntactic and discursive factors in determining the order of elements in the clause and the syntactic characterization of subject position in, e.g., Spanish vs. English. In this paper I propose to show how a detailed examination of the nature of PP preposing in these two languages within the general postulates of the Minimalist Program (Chomsky 1995, 1998) can bring some aspects of these questions into sharper focus. The paper is organized as follows. In Section 1 I review the syntactic and discourse constraints on locative inversion in English, and show how the syntactic constraints fall out as a consequence of locality conditions on satisfaction of the EPP. In section 2 I turn to Spanish, and argue that fronting of PPs in that language is generally A’ type movement, on the view that [Spec,TP] in Spanish is not needed for satisfaction of the EPP. Section 3 examines some apparent discourse differences between fronted PPs and preverbal subjects in Spanish; the conclusion is that they are both topicalized elements, but of two distinct types of topics.

1. Locative inversion in English

The locative inversion construction in English has been exhaustively analyzed over the years from a number of different theoretical viewpoints; consequently, both the discourse and syntactic constraints on the construction have been well established. Syntactically, it is limited to intransitive verbs, including passives, although not necessarily to unaccusatives, as shown by the examples in (1). In addition, the preposed locative PP or adverbial must be an argument, not an adjunct; specifically, it carries a thematic role of
Location or Direction (Stowell 1981); this is shown by the contrasts in (2). Finally, like subjects, a preposed PP triggers that-trace effects, as in (3):

(1) a. On the third floor worked two young women called Maryanne Thomson and Ava Brent ... (L. Colwin, *Goodbye without Leaving*, example cited by Levin and Rappaport 1995)
   b. Among the guests was sitting my friend Rose.
   c. In this rainforest can be found the reclusive lyrebird.
   d. *In this rainforest can find the reclusive lyrebird a lucky hiker.*

(2) a. In the corner sat/*laughed little Jack Horner.
   b. In this bedroom slept/?*ate George Washington.

(2b from Stowell 1981:387)

(3) It’s in these villages that we all believe [ (*that) ___ can be found
   the best examples of this cuisine]           (Bresnan 1994)

With respect to its discourse constraints, locative inversion is largely comparable to topicalization. The information in the locative PP, like topics in general, is either context salient, as, for example, in a guided tour context such as (4), or discourse old, as in (5):

(4) At this desk here works the president’s personal secretary, never
   more than two steps away from the Oval Office itself.
(5) Speaker A: What did you see on the walls of the room?
   Speaker B: Well, on the north wall hung a large mirror and on the
   east wall was displayed a world map.

In contrast, the postverbal subject must represent new information or, minimally, relatively unfamiliar information with respect to the information represented by the PP (Birner 1994). Thus in a discourse context such as (6) the locative inversion structure is infelicitous:

(6) Speaker A: Have you seen my keys?

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1 There is an additional discourse restriction on the postverbal subject: it must carry presentational focus (Bresnan 1994). In Kempchinsky (1999), I propose that the postverbal subject does not remain in its Merge position, but rather moves to the specifier of a focus position, along the lines of Rochemont’s (1998) analysis of heavy-NP shift in English. The remnant VP then moves to Spec of a higher projection, which accounts for certain facts about adverbial placement in fronted PP structures.
Speaker B:  a. #On the hall table are lying your keys.
b. Your keys are lying on the hall table.

Locative inversion also shares an important syntactic characteristic with topicalization: in precisely those contexts in which topicalization is disallowed, locative inversion is also not possible, as noted by Stowell (1981). Thus, the preposed PP behaves syntactically in part like a subject and in part like a topicalized element, but discursively like a (pure) topic.

In Kempchinsky (forthcoming) I argue that the syntactic constraints on PP preposing in English are due to the fact that in this language locative inversion is possible only when the subject DP and the PP are in the same minimal domain, in which case either one is in the attract range of the +D feature on T (Chomsky 1995). Following Grimshaw’s (1991) view of extended projection sets, P is the highest functional projection of the nominal projection set, defined by the lexical feature +N and the functional feature +D, and hence the PP can ‘compete’ with the DP argument for satisfying the EPP, under the appropriate locality conditions. The transitivity restriction falls out under the principled assumption that the transitive structure has a higher VP, the projection of the light verb v; hence only the subject may move to [Spec,TP]. These consequences remain unchanged if Attract is recast in terms of the T-associate (i.e. probe-goal) relation (cf. Chomsky 1998): in the absence of an expletive in the array, the associate itself (the subject DP) must merge to T (i.e., [Spec,TP]) unless there is some other element a closer to T than the associate. If the subject DP and the PP are in the same VP level, then minimally they are at least equidistant from T; otherwise, the subject DP will always be closer and thus PP can never satisfy the EPP.

The requirement of equidistance of the DP argument and the PP argument in locative inversion is precisely what led Collins (1997) to stipulate that locative inversion is possible only with unaccusative verbs, despite the existence of examples such as (1a) with the normally unergative verb *work*. The stipulation, however, is in a sense a consequence of the syntactic requirement of minimal links. In other words, it is necessarily the case that verbs such as *work* which otherwise are unergative do not project the upper VP shell (assuming the covert transitive analysis of unergatives of Hale and Keyser 1993), so that the VP structure of a sentence such as (1b) is as in (7):

(7)  [VP [DP two young women] [v′ worked [PP on the third floor]]]
Taking theta roles as a function of a certain structural configuration between the V and its arguments, this means that in (7) the subject of *work* is not an agent but rather a theme, thus capturing Bresnan’s (1994) observation that the subject in a locative inversion structure is the argument of which the location, change of location or direction expressed by the locative argument is predicated, following the original definition of *theme* in Gruber (1965). This apparently semantic restriction on the construction is simply a consequence of the general operation of principles of the computational system. One piece of evidence that the DP argument in a locative inversion structure in English is structurally a theme rather than an agent is the ungrammaticality of agentive purpose clauses in these contexts:

(8) *In this office works the President’s personal secretary (in order) to take notes on everything which is discussed.*

Importantly, this ‘change’ from agent to theme can be obtained without resorting to an operation of reanalysis (as in Hoekstra and Mulder (1990)). Rather, following Stroik (1996), I assume that locative adverbials may form part of a predicate with the verb, in the same way that the verb and the indirect object form an inner predicate whose external argument is the direct object, and so on. As the operation of Merge builds different types of VPs, according to the items in the initial numeration, the theta roles which can be read off those structures will vary accordingly. In particular, if unergatives are analyzed as covert transitives, then the apparent alternations with verbs like *work* will be possible just in case the covert object is not syntactically projected, a possibility which clearly must be lexically determined.

Thus, locative inversion in English—meaning movement of a locative PP or adverbial to a position normally occupied by the subject DP—differs from topicalization of a PP in the nature of the landing site: an A position in the case of locative inversion, an A´ position in the case of topicalization. The former is an instance of Merge to ‘Spec’ position of a head with phi-features, the latter and instance of Merge to Spec of a head with P(eriphery)-features.² If [Spec,TP] in a given language is an A´-type rather than A position, the

² The separation is not actually so clear cut. I assume that movement of the PP to [Spec,TP] must be followed by movement to [Spec,TopP] (as argued, for example, by den Dikken and Naess 1993); this finds empirical support in the lack of PP fronting in subject auxiliary inversion structures (cf. Bresnan (1994)) and by the similar syntactic distribution of locative inversion and topicalization (Stowell 1981). Thus, in all cases of PP fronting in English, the PP checks a P-feature such as [+top] (see section 3).
descriptive difference between these two instantiations of PP fronting collapses. This, I will argue in the next section, is what we find in Spanish.

2. **PP preposing in Spanish**

To begin our discussion of Spanish, we may observe that the syntactic constraints evidenced in English are apparently absent; preverbal PPs may appear with all classes of verbs and show no sensitivity to the argument/adjunct distinction, as we see in (9):

\[
(9) \quad \begin{array}{ll}
  a. & \text{En el cuarto entraron tres extranjeros.} \\
  & \text{‘Into the room entered three foreigners’} \\
  b. & \text{En esta oficina trabajan los contables.} \\
  & \text{‘In this office work the accountants’} \\
  c. & \text{En esta sala escriben los estudiantes los exámenes.} \\
  & \text{‘In this room write the students the exams’} \\
  d. & \text{En el rincón reía Juan.} \\
  & \text{‘In the corner laughed Juan’}
\end{array}
\]

If ‘locative inversion’ is defined narrowly as preposing of a locative phrase into a subject position (say, [Spec,TP]), then at face value one could argue that not all of the above examples are locative inversion, but rather that some, for example (9c,d) are cases of topicalized PPs, equivalent to the examples in (10) but with optional subject-verb inversion. Note that these PPs are arguably adverbial adjuncts rather than arguments of the verb:

\[
(10) \quad \begin{array}{ll}
  a. & \text{En esta sala(,) los estudiantes escriben los exámenes.} \\
  & \text{‘In this room, the students write the comprehensive exams’} \\
  b. & \text{En el rincón(,) Juan reía.} \\
  & \text{‘In the corner Juan laughed’}
\end{array}
\]

As in English, the discourse constraint that the preposed PP represent discourse old or discourse salient information is observed, as shown by the unacceptability of (11a), comparable to example (6) in English:

\[
(11) \quad \begin{array}{ll}
  \text{Speaker A: } & \text{¿Has visto mis llaves?} \\
  & \text{‘Have you seen my keys?’} \\
  \text{Speaker B: } & \text{a. En la mesita del recibidor están tus llaves.} \\
  & \text{‘On the table in the entrance are your keys’} \\
              & \text{b. Tus llaves están en la mesita del recibidor.}
\end{array}
\]
'Your keys are on the table in the entrance'

Thus, the fronted PP generally shares the discourse properties of the fronted PP in English locative inversion structures, but lacks the syntactic constraints observed in such structures. This will follow straightforwardly if preverbal ‘subject position’ in Spanish, i.e. [Spec,TP], is an A’ position, an analysis defended, in different guises, starting most clearly with Goodall (1991) and most recently by Ordóñez (1997) and Zubizarreta (1998).3

Since Case and agreement features can in principle always be checked covertly (and Chomsky 1995 explicitly eliminates Case as a driving force behind movement), then the status of [Spec,TP] as an A position reduces to the strong +D feature on T. There are then two possibilities for explaining the apparent A’ like nature of this position in Spanish: either T in Spanish lacks a +D feature, or this feature is checked in some way other than Merge of an XP bearing +D (as in the case of expletive there in English). Chomsky suggests that T has a strong +D feature universally. Obviously this is an empirical question; nevertheless, in previous work (Kempchinsky forthcoming) I have supposed this to be true and have taken the second option. Specifically, in that work I adopted the analysis of Agr in Spanish of Ordóñez (1997), who proposes that Agr and the lexical DP form a complex DP, following Uriagereka’s (1995) proposal for clitics, as shown in (12), where (12a) is the complex subject DP and (12b) a complex object DP:

(12) a. \[DP \[DP ellos \[D/Agr 3PL\]]\] (cf. Ellos trabajan ‘They work-3PL)
   b. \[DP \[DP a ellos \[D/Agr los\]]\] (cf. Yo los vi a ellos ‘I saw them’)

Now, if the D/Agr head alone moves to T to satisfy the EPP, then the lexical DP need not and hence by economy cannot, and so can remain in situ in Spec position of the light v. As a doubling element with the lexical subject, it also checks nominative Case, since in effect D/Agr is the head of the subject DP in the configuration in (12a).4 Thus the lexical DP need not move

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3 Contreras (1991) proposes that preverbal subjects in Spanish are adjuncts to T’, which does not project a Spec position. This is related to the question of the nature of ‘topic position’ as an adjoined position vs. the specifier position of some functional head such as TOP, an issue addressed below.

4 See Ordóñez (1997) for evidence that in cases of feature mismatches between the lexical DP and the D head, be it Agr or a clitic pronoun, coreference is determined by the phi features of the D head. For similar, although not identical, analyses of the relationship between the subject DP and Agr, see Alexiadou and Anastopoulous (1998) and Olarrea (1996) who analyze Spanish preverbal subjects as instantiations of clitic left-dislocation.
to [Spec,TP] for any reason at all. In fact, the analysis becomes even neater if we adopt the assumptions of Chomsky (1998): the EPP feature of T is satisfied by Move (of the D° head Agr to T), while the phi-features of T and the matching phi-features of the lexical DP, including the structural Case feature, are free to enter into a long-distance Agree operation.

In principle, then, any movement of an XP to [Spec,TP] in Spanish will not be driven by the phi-features of T. However, it should not therefore be the case that such movement is free; rather, it should be driven by some feature. The logical candidate is some P(eripheral) feature usually associated with the left periphery, such as Topic. Thus, immediately preverbal topicalized constituents can be analyzed as occupying [Spec,TP], as in fact is argued by Ordóñez (1997) and Zubizarreta (1998).

Note, however, that there is no a priori reason at all to consider that any element occupies [Spec,TP], if the +D feature of T is satisfied by head movement. A sentence such as (13) can in principle be assigned the structure in (14a) or (14b), with TopP above TP (cf. Rizzi 1997):

(13) En el rincón reía Juan.
    ‘In the corner laughed John’

(14) a. \[\text{TopP } \text{En el rincón} \text{ TOP° } \text{TP [T reía] [VP Juan tVP tPP ]]\]
    b. \[\text{TP En el rincón [T reía] [VP Juan tVP tPP ]]\]

Economy considerations would seem to favor the second over the first. Concretely, suppose, in the spirit of Rizzi (1991), that the main inflectional head, i.e. T, is the position in the clause structure whose properties and specifications are independently licensed and is therefore the point which the chain of licensings can be anchored to. Thus T bears (or can bear) both P-features and phi-features (a possibility explicitly alluded to in Chomsky 1998), and each of these (sets of) features must be satisfied. In the absence of head movement as a way to cancel out T’s +D feature, as proposed for Spanish, if the same XP does not bear the relevant sets of features, then two separate positions will result from Merge. This is an example of what Giorgi and Pianesi (1997) term “Scattering A”: given a numeration N containing a bundle of features corresponding to a syncretic category, scattering can determine more than one projection in \( \Sigma \), in correspondence with the features of that bundle. This is strictly ruled by economy conditions, and can only occur when there is no way to project the bundles contained in N, as for example, when an extra head is needed to provide a Spec position for some
feature or feature bundle which must be merged there. In this case, the
syncretic head is T, which projects as two heads (T and TOP) as necessary.5

By this account, then, there is no special construction of ‘locative
inversion’ in Spanish which is distinct from topicalization of a PP, and hence
no syntactic restrictions such as the valence of the verb and the argument vs.
adjunct status of the fronted PP, accounting for the range of data given in
section 1. Since locality considerations do not play a role, PP fronting from
within a double VP structure presents no problem, and hence the subject DP
can retain an agentive interpretation, as confirmed by the grammaticality of
(15), to be contrasted with (8) above:

(15) En este despacho trabaja la secretaria personal del presidente para
documentar todo lo que se discute.
‘In this office works the president’s personal secretary (in order) to
take notes on everything which is discussed’

As we saw with example (11), fronted PPs, like other topicalized
elements, generally refer to discourse old information; hence the infelicity of
both clauses with a fronted PP and clauses with other topicalized elements as
the answer to a question of the type What happened?:

(16) ¿Qué pasó?
   a.  #En el bar pegó el camarero a un cliente.
       ‘In the bar hit the waiter a customer’
   b.  #Al suelo cayó la lámpara.
       ‘To the floor fell the lamp’
(17) ¿Qué pasó?
    #Un collar de diamantes le regaló Juan a Blanca.
    ‘A diamond necklace CL-DAT gave Juan to Blanca’

Nonetheless, some empirical problems remain with this account, to be
examined in the next section.

3. Some differences between topics and preverbal subjects in Spanish

In recent work, Goodall (1999) points out a serious empirical difficulty
with the explicit characterization of Spanish preverbal subjects as topics:

5 Zubizarreta 1998 also appeals to the notion of syncretism between T and discourse-based
features; however, she does not detail why such syncretism should be the case in Spanish.
these subjects do not necessarily have the discourse properties of topics. He offers the example in (18):

(18) Ayer fui al festival de cine, y vi una película acerca de Almodóvar. ‘Yesterday I went to the cinema festival and saw a movie about Almodóvar’
   a. Al director, lo vi una hora más tarde en un bar. ‘The director I saw an hour later in a bar’
   b. El director es muy conocido. ‘The director is very well known’

The topicalized direct object in (18a) can refer only to the director of the movie about Almodóvar (a Spanish film director), but, crucially, cannot refer to Almodóvar himself. In contrast, the preverbal subject of (18b) can refer to either one. Nevertheless, Spanish preverbal subjects do show syntactic characteristics of A’ rather than A elements in addition to the lack of locality effects discussed in the previous section; as demonstrated by Uribe-Etxebarria (1995), a preverbal quantified subject in Spanish has its scope “frozen in place”, like a clearly topicalized quantifier phrase in English, whereas a postverbal quantified subject may have ambiguous scope.

Goodall’s solution to the apparently contradictory behavior of preverbal subjects is to propose that in languages such as Spanish, the EPP-feature attracts scope-bearing elements. If a given XP has a scopal feature, it will move to [Spec,TP], checking both the scopal element and the EPP; in that position its scope is therefore “fixed”. A non scopal bearing subject in preverbal position simply satisfies the EPP alone. That is, [Spec,TP] is at times simply an A position and at other times an A/A’ position.

I would like to explore a different approach to the apparent differences between preverbal subjects and topics, examining in greater detail the syntactic and semantic properties of topicalized constituents. To begin, we may note that topic as a position in the left periphery has a variable status from one analysis to the other: it is treated either as an adjoined position to some clausal projection or as a distinct functional position in the left

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6 It may be the case that (19b), as a copular clause, is not a perfect example of the discourse properties of preverbal subjects. However, the judgment remains the same for the preverbal subject of a transitive clause such as El director ganó un premio importante ‘The director won an important award’.

7 This analysis, among other things, accounts for the well-known ungrammaticality of preverbal subjects in Spanish wh questions (one of the goals of Goodall 1991), since the wh phrase as a scope-bearing element will check the EPP (see also Zubizarreta 1998).
periphery. Rizzi (1997) attempts as it were the best of both approaches by assigning it two different (and recursive) positions in the left field functional hierarchy: Force - Topic* - Focus - Topic* - Finite. Casielles-Suárez (1999) argues that the variation in syntactic and semantic treatments of topics is due to the erroneous conflation of two different notions of ‘topic’ into one. Both are non-focal elements, but otherwise differ in both their syntactic and their discourse properties. One (which for expository purposes she labels ‘Topic #1’) is restricted to a unique element, correlates with some sentence-initial position, may be but is not necessarily discourse old, and may be but is not necessarily unaccented. The other (‘Topic #2’) is not restricted to a unique element, may be in sentence-initial position but not necessarily so, is necessarily discourse old and is necessarily unaccented. She further shows that immediately preverbal subjects in Spanish generally have the properties of the first type of topic.

Casielles-Suárez specifically proposes that the two types of topics belong to different articulations of topic and focus: topic 1 co-occurs with a potentially wide focus, while topic 2 co-occurs with a necessarily narrow focus. Further, wide focus is correlated with the right edge of the sentence and may project, while narrow focus is marked and is not at the right edge: it may be in-situ or it may be in the left periphery. These co-occurrences are, I think, the key to the syntactic analysis of topics.

Recall that there can only be one unique ‘topic 1’ per clause, which immediately suggests that there is a corresponding functional head, TOP. In accordance with economy considerations on scattering, this forms a syncretic category with T. Narrow focus is also a functional head, FOC, which also forms a syncretic category with T: hence, they do not co-occur and any topicalized elements co-occurring with an element in FocP are examples of ‘topic 2’, which adjoin to T/FocP. This captures quite neatly the observation in Zubizarreta (1998) that focus takes precedence over topic in forming a syncretic category with T, which, as she points out, is not accounted for by Rizzi’s hierarchy:

(20) a. Pedro las ESPINACAS trajo.
Pedro the spinach brought
b. *Las ESPINACAS Pedro trajo.

Now, however, we have two new questions. First of all, in the absence of FocP, does a ‘topic 2’ in Spanish occupy [Spec,TP] or does it adjoin to the maximal projection of T? Secondly, what type of topic is a fronted PP?
I will start with the second question first, taking as a point of departure another observed difference between preverbal subjects and other topicalized elements: their felicity in what happened? contexts. Ordóñez (1997) examines in some detail the different informational properties of SVO, VSO and VOS clauses in Spanish. In VOS sentences, the subject receives main sentence stress, and can be (and usually is) the only understood focus; thus, VOS sentences are infelicitous as responses in a what happened? context. VSO sentences are appropriate in such contexts, but have two different possible informational structures: in both, the subject is part of the assertion, but either it also bears main sentence stress (with the object downstressed) or it does not. Ordóñez refers to the latter as the ‘neutral’ interpretation. Finally, SVO clauses are also felicitous in a what happened? context, and the subject is focus-neutral, although part of the assertion.

In this respect preverbal subjects differ from clearly topicalized elements, which are generally infelicitous in such a context, as we saw with examples (16) and (17) above, which contrast with (21b) below:

(21) ¿Qué pasó?
    a. Ganó David el premio gordo de la lotería. (VSO)
       Won David the big prize in the lottery
    b. David ganó el premio gordo de la lotería. (SVO)
    c. #Ganó el premio gordo de la lotería David. (SOV)

Thus we must conclude that fronted PPs are of the type topic 2, not topic 1.

The first question is somewhat trickier, and the answer depends in no small way on how the interface between the syntax and the conceptual component, presumably including discourse considerations, is viewed. Casielles-Suárez argues that topic 2 is syntactically detached to avoid being

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8 Note that if the subject in a VOS clause bears narrow scope, and if narrow scope is limited to FocP, then the derivation of VOS sentences must involve movement of the subject to [Spec,T/FocP] followed by further leftward movement of the verb and object, as proposed by both Ordóñez (1997) and Zubizarreta (1998) for Italian but not for Spanish. If Spanish VOS structures are different from Italian, then the possibility of narrow focus must also be allowed in situ. See Ordóñez (1997).

9 Ordóñez proposes that in the latter case the subject moves out of VP to a higher projection which he terms Neutral Phrase. It is not clear whether there are any overt syntactic differences correlated to the two informational structures.

10 Fernández Soriano (1998) argues that fronted PPs in sentences such as En esta casa falta café ‘In this house lacks coffee’, (‘impersonal sentences’), are true external arguments. Correspondingly, these fronted PPs are felicitous in a what happened? context. See Kempchinsky (forthcoming) for a more thorough discussion of such examples.
interpreted as focal, which would suggest that movement to [Spec,TP] is not a possibility. The phonological evidence for such detachment is lacking, in that multiple topics (clearly instantiations of topic 2) need not be separated from each other nor from the main proposition with a comma intonation. In the absence of any decisive empirical or conceptual arguments, I will leave this question open. ¹¹

To summarize, [Spec,TP] in Spanish is a position in which P-features such as TOP or FOC are checked, but not the EPP, which is satisfied by head movement of D/Agr. Preverbal subjects, like other elements which move to [Spec,TP] are topics (minimally, of the type ‘topic 1’) or focused phrases. Fronted PPs are topics (generally, of the type ‘topic 2’), and hence no syntactic restraints on such fronting (apart from the usual island constraints on A’ movement in general) are observed.

Does the fronted PP in Spanish check a P-feature [+top]? If in fact this PP shows the characteristics of ‘topic 2’, and if ‘topic 2’ involves adjunction rather than movement to a functional projection TopP, then it would seem that no such feature is checked. This raises the question of whether such non feature-driven movement is in a different category of movement altogether, as Chomsky (1998) suggests is the case of QR and stylistic inversion. One question to explore is whether different types of reconstruction effects are observed with different types of topicalization and that is a topic for another paper.

REFERENCES


¹¹ English appears to have more syntactic restrictions on topicalization than Spanish: multiple topics are disallowed and topicalization is not possible in a variety of embedded contexts where it is available in Spanish. Further, the discourse characteristics of English topics seem to be a hybrid of those of both ‘topic 1’ and ‘topic 2’ in Spanish (Casielles-Suárez, 1999).


