



BACKGROUND

Spanish has flexible word order. In context, however, not all word orders are acceptable:

- | | | |
|--------|-------------------------|-----|
| (1) a. | Juan comió una manzana. | SVO |
| b. | JUAN comió una manzana. | SVO |
| c. | Comió una manzana Juan. | VOS |
| d. | Comió Juan una manzana. | VSO |

Context: Who ate an apple? (subject information focus)

- | | | |
|--------|-------------------------------------|------|
| (2) a. | #Juan comió [una manzana. +F] | #SVO |
| b. | #JUAN comió una manzana (no Pedro). | #SVO |
| c. | Comió una manzana [Juan. +F] | VOS |
| d. | #Comió Juan [una manzana. +F] | #VSO |
- (Zubizarreta, 1998: 20, 22)

Zubizarreta (1998) for Spanish

- word order acceptability relates to informational context
- information focus targets the rightmost clausal edge (FPR)
- nuclear stress targets the rightmost clausal edge (R-NSR)
- when focus and nuclear stress conflict, prosodic movement is responsible for leftward scrambling of constituents

Findings from recent empirical tests of Zubizarreta (1998):

- prosodic movement does not work as predicted; multiple focus-related strategies are available
- information focus can target constituents in non-rightmost positions; p-movement does not feature prominently in speaker evaluations

(Muntendam, 2013; Jiménez-Fernández, 2015; Hoot, 2016; Leal, Destruel & Hoot, 2018)

Research Questions

- Does Cibaeño Dominican Spanish (CDS) obey the constraints proposed in Zubizarreta (1998) for Romance such that information focus is encoded via word order?
- Do experimental results from CDS confirm the suggestion that Dominican Spanish is becoming an increasingly fixed SVO variety?

CURRENT STUDY

- seeks to contribute to the experimental literature on syntax-information structure
- seeks to further test the empirical adequacy of Zubizarreta (1998)
- employs contextualized internet-based acceptability questionnaire (4-point Likert, IDK option) testing a variety of linguistic phenomena
- audio recordings of sentences rated to control for intonation

Why Dominican Spanish (DS)?

- DS may be undergoing typological change (i.e. to non-null subject language) similar to Old French (Cameron 1993)
- Changes in pronoun system may be driving typological change (Camacho 2016, a.o)
- experimental results in Ortiz-López (2009) from 12 DS speakers (among other Caribbean varieties) suggest emergence of a system with strict SV order consistent with suggestions in Toribio (2000)

PARTICIPANTS

N=34, age 17-21

- University students in Santiago de los Caballeros
- All raised as monolingual CDS speakers
- 22 (!) native/early bilinguals excluded
- no participant had spent >6 months outside of DR



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RESULTS

- descriptive statistics

	transitive predicate				unaccusative predicate			
	all-focus		subject narrow focus		all-focus		subject narrow focus	
	VSO	VOS	ScIV	cIVS	SV	VS	SV	VS
mean	2.606	3.163*	3.364	3.212	3.197	3.213	3.531**	2.898
s.d.	1.176	1.052	0.974	1.043	0.975	1.052	0.815	1.020

ratings z-normalized and analyzed using paired, two-tailed t-tests

transitive predicates

- VOS rated higher than VSO for all-focus contexts ($*p < 0.001$)
- SV v. VS - no difference for subject narrow-focus contexts ($p = 0.33$)

contrastive/corrective focused direct objects

- in situ* ($\mu = 3.77/4$) rated higher ($p < 0.001$) than *ex situ* ($\mu = 1.83/4$)
- nonetheless, contrastive & non-contrastive subjects may follow Wh-expressions (!)

unaccusative predicates

- SV rated higher than VS for subject narrow-focus eliciting contexts with unaccusative predicate ($**p < 0.0001$)
- no difference in SV v. VS for all-focus contexts ($p = 0.78$)
- additional results:** subject animacy
 - [+animate] SV rated higher than VS ($p < 0.01$)
 - [-animate] VS rated higher than SV ($p < 0.005$)

FINDINGS & IMPLICATIONS

- RQ1: CDS does not (entirely) obey Zubizarreta's (1998) proposal
 - word order **and** intonation may mark information structure
- RQ2: ratings of VSO & VOS suggest that CDS does not have rigid syntax
- Subject animacy may influence subject position in CDS
- microvariation present in preverbal field merits further investigation