Modal Ellipsis in Spanish as surface anaphora
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Introduction: Modal verbs allow their complements to be null under identity with a linguistic antecedent (1). I call these cases Modal Ellipsis (ME):

(1) a. Juan quiere beber alcohol pero realmente no debería.
   “Juan wants to drink alcohol, but he really shouldn’t.”
   b. Me gustaría correr, pero lamentablemente no puedo.
   “I’d love to be able to run, but unfortunately I can’t.”

In the literature on Spanish, most authors (i.a. Brucart 1999, Depiante 2000, Saab 2008, Brucart and Macdonald 2012) have assumed that ME is a mere instance of a more general phenomenon called Null Complement Anaphora (NCA), a construction in which some infinitive-taking verbs allow their complement to be null, as in I wanted him to do the job but he refused. In particular, these authors defend that NCA/ME is a case of what Hankamer and Sag (1976) referred to as deep anaphora, where the modal verb selects a null pronoun which derives the correct interpretation of the strings in (1).

Main claims: In this paper, I will make three claims:

(i) ME cannot be subsumed under NCA
(ii) NCA is indeed a case of deep anaphora
(iii) ME must be analysed as TP-ellipsis. Thus ME is a case of surface anaphora instead.

Depiante (2000) - On ME and extraction: Throughout the paper, I will focus on the interplay between extraction and ME. A very strong argument in favour of a PF-deletion view of English VP-ellipsis comes from the fact that one can extract an element pertaining to the elided VP:

(2) a. Chicken, I eat, but beef, I don’t [VP eat].
   b. I know which paper she read, and which book, she didn’t [VP read].

If VP-ellipsis was an instance of deep anaphora and therefore the auxiliary in (2) selected a null pronoun, we wouldn’t be able to determine where the underlined constituents were being extracted from. The possibility to extract from a gap, thus, constitutes evidence for the existence of silent syntax. Depiante (2000) provides evidence that ME disallows extraction:

(3) ME disallows clitic climbing (CC)
   a. *Juan las puede ver, y María también las puede.
      Juan them can see and María also them can
      “Juan can see them, and María also can.”
   b. Juan las puede ver, y María también puede.

(4) ME disallows long object preposing (LOP)
   a. *Estas casas se pueden alquilar fácilmente, y estos pisos también se pueden.
      These houses se can rent easily and these flats also se can
      “These houses can be easily rented, as well as these flats.”
   b. Estas casas se podían alquilar fácilmente hace años, pero ahora no se puede.
      These houses se could rent easily makes years but now not se can
      “These houses could be easily rented years ago, but now they can’t be rented.”
(5) ME disallows A-bar movement (Saab 2008:57)

* Juan sabe qué libro quiere leer María y Pedro qué revista Ana puede.
Juan knows what book wants to read María and Pedro what journal Ana can
“J. knows which book M. wants to read, and P. knows which journal A. can.”

Depiante argues that the data in (3) through (5) follow if the modal verbs select a null pronoun, as there is no structure out of which the underline elements could have been extracted from.

Extraction revised: in this paper I revise the data provided by Depiante (2000) and claim that:

(i) The impossibility for CC and LOP to occur in ME contexts does not follow from the lack of syntactic structure, but rather because in contexts where CC and LOP are allowed, the modal verb selects a VP and not a TP (i.a. Cardinaletti and Shlonsky 2004) and VP-ellipsis is impossible in Romance (López 1994, Lobeck 1995).

(ii) A-bar extraction is indeed possible in ME contexts. The problem with (5) has to do with the fact that operator-movement in ellipsis contexts is subject to certain information-structural constraints which are not controlled for in (5) – cf. to (6):

(6) Pedro sabe qué libros tiene que leer y cuáles no debería.
Pedro knows which books has that to read and which not should “Pedro knows which books he has to read, and which ones he shouldn’t.”

Further issues: in this talk, I will expand on the following issues:

- ME involves TP (and not VP) ellipsis as evidenced by the fact that ME behaves like sluicing, and unlike English VP-E, in disallowing voice mismatches (Merchant 2013).
- There is independent evidence that ME must involve silent syntax from the fact that one can establish anaphoric links with referential expressions within the elided TP (known as the missing antecedent test in Grinder and Postal 1971).
- (Classic) Null Complement Anaphora displays all the properties of deep anaphora: extraction is impossible in these cases, which strongly militates against a unified treatment of ME and NCA (in line with Authier 2011’s discussion of French data):

(7) * El coche lo tuviste que asegurar, pero la casa te negaste.
the car it had that insure but the house you refused “You had to insure the car, but you refused to insure the house.”

Conclusions: most of the literature in Spanish assume that (i) ME is a case of NCA and that (ii) ME involves a null pronoun. In this paper I defend that (i) ME involves the existence of a fully fledged TP selected by the modal which is deleted only at PF and (ii) that ME cannot be a subcase of NCA given that the former, but not the latter, behave differently wrt extraction.