

# Reconsidering the syntax of interrogatives in Caribbean Spanish, with special reference to Dominican Spanish

Michael Zimmermann

University of Konstanz

michael.zimmermann@uni-konstanz.de



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## Abstract

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This paper readdresses one of the most conspicuous syntactic traits of varieties of Caribbean Spanish that has been on the research agenda ever since almost a hundred years ago: the preverbal occurrence of subjects in interrogatives with a fronted simple non-subject argumental *wh*-expression. In an attempt to shed more light on the still highly controversial issues of the frequency of *whSV* order and the kind(s) of preverbal subject, the present paper initially gathers claims regarding these issues as well as examples from the literature and then presents the corresponding results from a refined large-scale quantitative analysis of natural speech from colloquial Dominican Spanish, hereby filling a long-standing lacuna. Furthermore, the paper discusses previous approaches and shows that none of these are free from problems. Drawing on relevant aspects of earlier approaches and building on insights into the morpho-syntactic status of subject pronouns as well as word order in medieval French, the paper eventually argues that *whSV* order in Dominican, and by extension, in other varieties of Caribbean Spanish, follows from ongoing morpho-syntactic changes that possibly result in the resetting of the null subject parameter: the development of a paradigm of weak subject pronouns, the concomitant establishment of a dedicated subject position, SpecTP, and the overall strong tendency towards SV order.

**Keywords:** interrogatives, word order, subject pronoun, paradigm, null-subject parameter, Caribbean Spanish, Dominican Spanish

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### 1. Introduction

In Spanish, a null-subject language with fairly free word order, (direct as well as indirect) interrogatives with a (fronted) simple (non-subject) argumental *wh*-expression generally stand out due to obligatory inversion of the (overt) subject and the verb.\* As illustrated in (1), such interrogatives have compulsory *whVS* order, as first established in Núñez Cedeño (1983) and Torrego (1984) (cf. also Hadlich 1971; Otheguy 1973; Solé & Solé 1977).

- (1) a. ¿Qué quieres tú?<sup>1</sup> General Spanish  
 b. \*¿Qué tú quieres? General Spanish  
 ‘What do you want?’ (Núñez Cedeño 1983, 51)

Varieties of Caribbean Spanish, principally Cuban, Dominican, and Puerto Rican, but also, to some extent, Columbian, Panamanian, and Venezuelan, have been particularly noted to deviate from this word order (inter alia Navarro Tomás 1929; 1948; Henríquez Ureña 1940; Davis 1971; Lipski 1977; 1990; 1994; RAE 2009b).<sup>2</sup> In effect, since the late 1920s, it has been repeatedly reported that these varieties additionally allow for non-inversion of the subject and the verb, i.e. *whSV* order, as shown in (2).<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The occurrence of subject pronouns in General Spanish, a null-subject language, is usually restricted to contexts in which these elements are interpreted as either emphatic or contrastive, whence the putative markedness of (1a), as pointed out by an anonymous reviewer.

<sup>2</sup> Deviations from *whVS* order have likewise been reported for varieties from coastal Ecuador (Lipski 1990), River Plate region (Kany 1945; Zamora Munné & Guitart 1988), Peru (Sessarego & Gutiérrez-Rexach 2017), Mexico (Davis 1971; Cantero 1978 *contra* Lipski 1977), the U.S. (*isleño* Spanish of St. Bernard Parish, Louisiana) (Lipski 1990), the Canary Islands (inter alia Alvarez Nazario 1972; 1981; 1990; Lipski 1990; 1994; Lapesa 1992; Green 1997; RAE 2009b) as well as (Northern) Spain (Lapesa 1992; Lipski 1994; Green 1997). The exact extent of these deviations, both geographical and quantitative, is yet generally far from clear, pending further investigation.

<sup>3</sup> As extensively discussed in Section 5, the positioning of subject pronouns in the varieties at issue directly relates to differences in their interpretation: postverbal subject pronouns such as in (2a) are interpreted as emphatic or contrastive, as in General Spanish (cf. also footnote 1);

- (2) a. ¿Qué quieres tú? Caribbean Spanish  
 b. ¿Qué tú quieres? Caribbean Spanish  
 ‘What do you want?’ (Núñez Cedeño 1983, 51)

While acknowledging the existence of such word order,<sup>4</sup> these reports are far from concurring on both its frequency and the kind(s) of subject that can intervene between the *wh*-expression and the verb. In particular, quantitative and qualitative claims range from an infrequent to a consistent use as well as from a strictly limited set of subject pronouns to the entire paradigm, possibly extending to full D(eterminer)P(hrase)s. Similarly, the approaches to *whSV* order in varieties of Caribbean Spanish are manifold and, fundamentally, strongly divergent.

This paper sets out to reconsider the unsettled issues associated with *whSV* order in interrogatives in varieties of Caribbean Spanish by, essentially, carrying out a refined analysis of natural speech and putting forward an approach that takes into consideration other (morpho-)syntactic hallmarks of these varieties, yet with a special focus on Dominican. Section 2 gathers the various claims put forward in the literature regarding the frequency of such word order as well as the specific nature of the preverbal subject and lists numerous reported examples. Section 3 presents the results from a refined large-scale quantitative analysis of a corpus of natural speech from colloquial Dominican Spanish that is contemporaneous to the detection of *whSV* order and establishes that, in the late 1920s, such word order is possible only with the pronouns *tú* as well as *usted* and occurs in around 1 out of 2 and 4 cases, respectively. Section 4 discusses previous approaches to the phenomenon of *whSV* order, showing that all of these face a number of problems. From this review as well as relevant analyses of data from medieval French that are akin to those reported for varieties of Caribbean, especially Dominican Spanish, Section 5 fundamentally argues that *whSV* order is a direct result of current changes pertaining to the morpho-syntactic component, viz. the development of an additional paradigm of subject pronouns that are ‘weak’ in the sense of Cardinaletti & Starke (1999), the concomitant establishment of SpecTP as an A-position, and the strong tendency towards SV order in all sentence types. Summarizing the preceding discussion, Section 6 eventually claims that these changes possibly bode a resetting of the null subject parameter.

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with preverbal subject pronouns, as in (2b), however, a non-emphatic, non-contrastive interpretation obtains, which conforms to that of a null subject in General Spanish.

<sup>4</sup> *WhSV* order in interrogatives with a simple argumental *wh*-expression are commonly considered an innovation in varieties of Caribbean Spanish (inter alia Lantolf 1980a;b; Núñez Cedeño 1983; Burunat, Burunat & Starčević 1987; Toribio 2000a;b; Bullock & Toribio 2009). Note, however, that it is far from clear whether such word order is indeed a recent phenomenon, given that pertinent reports stem from no earlier than the end of the first third of the 20th century and, essentially, diachronic analyses are generally absent. To the best of my knowledge, there is but a single diachronic analysis of a fairly limited extent by Granda (1991), who, on the basis of an extract from a prose work of colloquial Dominican Spanish dating from the second half of the 18th century, reports no instances of *whSV* order with simple argumental *wh*-interrogatives. Still, such word order is encountered in earlier stages of Peninsular Spanish (Lapesa 1992; RAE 2009b). In view of its general ungrammaticality in modern Peninsular Spanish, the existence of this word order in varieties of Caribbean Spanish has alternatively been conceived of as a relic emanating from Vulgar Latin, in which it likewise occurred (Lapesa 1992; RAE 2009b; cf. also Lipski 1990). Note, however, that the respective situations in Vulgar Latin and pre-modern Peninsular Spanish do not match completely, since, unlike the former, the latter exhibits *whSV* order in indirect simple argumental *wh*-interrogatives only (Lapesa 1992).

## 2. Previous investigations into *whSV* order in varieties of Caribbean Spanish

*WhSV* order in interrogatives in varieties of Caribbean Spanish has been on the research agenda ever since it had first been mentioned in the late 1920s.<sup>5</sup> Despite the unanimous acknowledgement of the existence of such word order as well as the extensive period of time that has since elapsed, researchers still strongly disagree on both its frequency and the kind(s) of intervening subject.

Regarding the latter issue, specific information on the kind(s) of preverbal subject is usually missing in the vast literature addressing *whSV* order. Comparatively few contributions only provide details as to what kind(s) of subject can occur between the *wh*-expression and the verb, and several of these fail to be specific about which varieties of Caribbean Spanish are affected. Glossing over any putative variety-specific differences, it appears that the preverbal occurrence of the non-deferential specific second person singular subject pronoun, *tú*, is uncontroversial (cf. (3)).

- (3) a. ¿Qué *tú* dices? Cuban/Dominican/Puerto Rican Spanish  
 ‘What are you saying?’ (*inter alios* Navarro Tomás 1929, 133; Patín Maceo 1940, 162; Padrón 1948, 468)  
 b. ¿Cómo *tú* te llamas? Cuban/Dominican/Puerto Rican Spanish  
 ‘What is your name?’ (*inter alios* Patín Maceo 1940, 50; Padrón 1948, 468; Lipski 1977, 61)

As to the possibility of the preverbal occurrence of subject elements other than *tú*, there is yet considerable controversy. While Davis (1971) as well as the impressionistic data given by numerous researchers, who exclusively provide examples, rather than relevant details, defy such a possibility, a fair number of researchers claim that *whSV* order is likewise possible with the deferential second person singular and plural subject pronouns, *usted* (cf. (4)) and *ustedes* (cf. (5)) (*inter alia* Navarro Tomás 1948; Quirk 1972; Lantolf 1980a; Suñer & Lizardi 1995; Ortiz López 2009b).<sup>6</sup>

- (4) a. ¿Qué *usted* quiere? Puerto Rican Spanish  
 ‘What do you want?’ (Navarro Tomás 1948, 132; Alvarez Nazario 1990, 183)  
 b. ¿Dónde *usted* se va a sentá? Dominican Spanish  
 ‘Where are you going to sit?’ (Green 1997, 227)

<sup>5</sup> With the notable exceptions of López Morales (1992), Fontana (1994), Suñer (1994), and Dumitrescu (2016), the literature remains silent on whether pertinent claims hold for indirect (argumental) *wh*-interrogatives as well. From the vast majority of the examples adduced, one is led to conclude that claims basically apply to direct *wh*-interrogatives. This evidently clashes with the null hypothesis that, as in General Spanish, the same word order obtains in both direct and indirect interrogatives in varieties of Caribbean Spanish. That *whSV* order is indeed possible in indirect *wh*-interrogatives in these varieties can, in addition to López Morales, Fontana, Suñer, and Dumitrescu’s notes, be inferred from relevant examples provided by a small number of researchers without further discussion (*Me preguntó cómo yo me llamaba* ‘He asked me what my name was’ (Gutiérrez Araus 1987, 1005), *Me dijo que cuántas capas yo llevaba debajo* ‘She asked me how many layers I was wearing underneath’ (Suñer & Lizardi 1995, 193)). For reasons of consistency, this section lists only direct *wh*-interrogatives.

<sup>6</sup> In the literature, examples illustrating the preverbal occurrence of *usted* and *ustedes* in Cuban Spanish are missing.

- (5) a. ¿Qué *ustedes* buscan por aquí? Puerto Rican Spanish  
 ‘What are you looking for here?’ (Gili Gaya 1966, 53)  
 b. ¿A quién *ustedes* quiere ver? Dominican Spanish  
 ‘Who do you want to see?’ (Jiménez Sabater 1977, 14)

Several researchers furthermore contend that the first person singular subject pronoun, *yo*, can also show up in *whSV* order (cf. (6)) (inter alia Navarro Tomás 1948; Bergen 1976; Alvarez Nazario 1981; 1990; Green 1997; Ordóñez & Olarrea 2006).<sup>7</sup>

- (6) a. ¿Qué *yo* hice? Puerto Rican Spanish  
 ‘What did I do?’ (Brown & Rivas 2011, 25)  
 b. ¿Qué *yo* les mando a esos muchachos? Dominican Spanish  
 ‘What do I send these guys?’ (Toribio 1993, 168)

Some researchers additionally state that the first person plural subject pronoun, *nosotros/nosotras*, may likewise intervene (cf. (7)) (Lantolf 1980a; Suñer & Lizardi 1995; Ordóñez & Olarrea 2006; Ortiz López 2009b),<sup>8</sup> much like the third person singular subject pronouns, *él* and *ella* (cf. (8)) (Lipski 1977; Lantolf 1980a; Olarrea 2006; Ortiz López 2009b; 2016).<sup>9</sup>

- (7) ¿Qué *nosotras* haríamos si [...]? Puerto Rican Spanish  
 ‘What would we do, if ...?’ (Suñer & Lizardi 1995, 194)
- (8) a. ¿Qué *él* va a hacer allá? Puerto Rican Spanish  
 ‘What is he going to do there?’ (Suñer & Lizardi 1995, 193)  
 b. ¿Dónde *ella* vive? Dominican Spanish  
 ‘Where does she live?’ (Ortiz López 2009b, 96; 2016, 319)

According to a minority of researchers, the kind of subject occurring in *whSV* order also comprises the third person plural subject pronouns, *ellos* and *ellas* (cf. (9)) (Lipski 1977; Olarrea 2006; Cabrera-Puche 2008; Ortiz López 2009b).<sup>10</sup>

- (9) a. ¿Qué *ellos* trajeron a la fiesta? Caribbean Spanish  
 ‘What did they bring to the party?’ (Ordóñez & Olarrea 2001, 233; 2006, 68)  
 b. ¿Dónde *ellos* están? Caribbean Spanish  
 ‘Where are they?’ (Núñez Cedeño 1983, 37)

Based on the claims in the literature, the scale in (10) can be established, which displays in schematic form and descending order the rates of acceptance of subject pronouns in

<sup>7</sup> Examples with *yo* in Cuban Spanish are absent in the literature.

<sup>8</sup> The literature does not provide examples for intervening *nosotras* in varieties of Caribbean Spanish other than Puerto Rican and, more generally so, for intervening *nosotros*.

<sup>9</sup> Examples with preverbal *él* in Cuban Spanish are also absent in the literature, along with those showing *ella* in preverbal position in varieties of Caribbean Spanish other than Dominican.

<sup>10</sup> Unlike in the case of the other subject pronouns, the literature does not provide examples with either *ellos* or *ellas* that are explicitly classified as belonging to a specific variety of Caribbean Spanish. Rather than refraining from illustrating at least preverbal *ellos* (examples of *ellas* in preverbal position are entirely absent), examples argued to hold for ‘Caribbean Spanish’ are provided.

interrogatives with *whSV* order in varieties of Caribbean Spanish, both in general and in specific varieties (notably Dominican and Puerto Rican).

- (10) *tú > usted, ustedes > yo > nosotros/nosotras, él/ella > ellos/ellas*

Fundamentally, not only is the state of affairs regarding the kind of subject pronoun allowed to intervene between the *wh*-expression and the verb highly controversial, but also the situation concerning full DP subjects. In effect, only few researchers address this matter, and those who do so express viewpoints that are mutually exclusive. While according to some researchers, *whSV* order is impossible with full DP subjects in any variety of Caribbean Spanish (inter alia Padrón 1948; Lipski 1977; Núñez Cedeño 1983; Brown & Rivas 2011; Ordóñez 2016), other researchers underscore the possibility of the preverbal occurrence of this kind of subject, particularly in Dominican and Puerto Rican Spanish, and/or give examples (cf. (11)) (inter alia Lantolf 1980a;b; Toribio 1993; 2000a;b; Cabrera-Puche 2008; Ortiz López 2009a;b; 2016; Martínez-Sanz 2011).

- |      |  |                      |
|------|--|----------------------|
| (11) | a. ¿Qué <i>Juan</i> tiene?<br>‘What does Juan have?’ (Lantolf 1980b, 215)  | Puerto Rican Spanish |
|      | b. Papi, ¿qué <i>ese letrero</i> dice?<br>‘Daddy, what does this sign say?’ (Toribio 2000a, 630; 2000b, 322)                     | Dominican Spanish    |
|      | c. ¿Cuánto <i>un médico</i> consume en un mes?<br>‘How much does a doctor spend in a month?’ (Toribio 1993, 168)                 | Dominican Spanish    |
|      | d. ¿Dónde <i>Astrid</i> vive?<br>‘Where does Astrid live?’ (Ortiz López 2016, 319)   | Caribbean Spanish    |
|      | e. ¿Por dónde <i>la carretera</i> queda?<br>‘Where about is the highway located?’ (Suñer & Lizardi 1995, 195)                    | Puerto Rican Spanish |
|      | f. ¿A quién en este momento <i>Juan</i> está entrevistando?<br>‘Who is Juan presently interviewing?’ (Suñer & Lizardi 1995, 201) | Puerto Rican Spanish |

From the incorporation of the claims from the literature regarding full DP subjects into the scale of acceptance of subject pronouns in interrogatives with *whSV* order in (10) above, the exhaustive acceptability scale in (12) results, that appears to hold in varieties of Caribbean Spanish in general and Dominican and Puerto Rican in particular.

- (12) *tú > usted, ustedes > yo > nosotros/nosotras, él/ella > ellos/ellas > full DP subject*

Turning now to the issue of the frequency of *whSV* order in varieties of Caribbean Spanish, pertinent claims in the literature are few and far between and usually provide little, if any information, from which the frequency of a particular preverbal subject element in a given variety of Caribbean Spanish can be deduced.

From the quantitative claims found in the literature, the overall picture in Table (1) ensues, which in fact closely matches those relating to specific varieties of Caribbean Spanish (Cuban, Dominican as well as Puerto Rican).

As it stands, the literature is far from concurring on the frequency of *whSV* order in varieties of Caribbean Spanish. In effect, quantitative claims at times diverge considerably, attesting to an altogether wide range of frequencies of preverbal subjects. Abstracting away from the shortcomings commonly inherent to these quantitative claims (cf. Section 3) as well as from their at times strong contradictoriness, it seems that, in varieties of Caribbean Spanish, *whSV* order is a regular phenomenon. Yet, this is apparently only the case with pronominal

subjects, while, with non-pronominal ones, *whVS* order predominates, at least according to those researchers that concur that such a kind of subject can occur preverbally.

	infrequent	frequent	highly frequent	consistent
subject (not further specified)	1	12	14	1
subject pronoun	1	5	3	1
full DP subject	2	1	-	-
total	4	18	17	2

Table (1): Frequencies of *whSV* order in varieties of Caribbean Spanish as reported in a multitude of pieces of research<sup>11</sup>

Even though some light has been shed on the frequency of *whSV* order and the specific nature of the subject intervening between the *wh*-expression and the verb in interrogatives in varieties of Caribbean Spanish, these issues are still far from clear, pending further investigation.

### 3. Results from a large-scale quantitative analysis of colloquial Dominican Spanish

The discussion in the previous section has shown that, despite their being on the research agenda for almost a hundred years, researchers are far from agreeing on the two central issues relating to *whSV* order in interrogatives in varieties of Caribbean Spanish: the frequency of such word order as well as the specific nature of the preverbal subject. In effect, quantitative claims in the literature range from an infrequent to a consistent use of *whSV* order as well as from an exclusive subset of subject pronouns to their entire paradigm, possibly extending to full DPs.

According to a number of researchers, such strong disagreement is not indicative of variation among or within varieties of Caribbean Spanish, but rather due to two major shortcomings affecting the literature to varying degrees. Specifically, it has been observed that the examples provided to illustrate *whSV* order are discrepant, since many of these actually contain *wh*-expressions that fail to be simple and/or argumental and, thus, allow for non-inversion of the subject and the verb in Spanish (Ordóñez & Olarrea 2001; 2006). Moreover, it has been pointed out that pertinent claims are usually based on personal impression, anecdote as well as questionnaires distributed to native speakers, rather than on unequivocal empirical evidence based on large-scale quantitative analyses of natural speech (Heap 1990; Suñer & Lizardi 1995; D’Introno 2000; Brown & Rivas 2011). Arguably, the general absence of the latter relates to the difficulties associated with a systematic study of *whSV* order in varieties of Caribbean Spanish, viz. its principal occurrence in non-standard or colloquial speech (Lipski 1977), the availability of null subjects (cf. farther below and Section 4), and, more generally, the rare occurrence of interrogatives in natural speech (Lipski 1977; D’Introno 2000; Martínez-Sanz 2011; Peralta Céspedes 2017).

<sup>11</sup> The digits given in the table each relate to the respective number of pieces of research, that comprise the following bulk of work: Patín Maceo (1940); Kany (1945); Henríquez Ureña (1948); Padrón (1948; 1949a;b); Gili Gaya (1966); Davis (1971); Pérez Sala (1971; 1973); Quirk (1972); Jiménez Sabater (1977; 1999); Jorge Morel (1978); Lantolf (1980a;b); Megenny (1985); Buesa Oliver (1986); Gutiérrez Araus (1987); Green (1988); Alvarez Nazario (1990); Liceras (1994); Suñer (1994); Suñer & Lizardi (1995); Lunn (2002); Alba (2004); Ticio (2004); Ordóñez & Olarrea (2006); Cabrera-Puche (2008); Camacho (2008); Gutiérrez-Bravo (2008); Ortiz López (2009a); Brown & Rivas (2011); Butt & Benjamin (2011); Martínez-Sanz (2011); Rivas & Brown (2011); Peralta Céspedes (2017).

Although few in number, large-scale quantitative analyses tackling *whSV* order in specific varieties of Caribbean Spanish (Dominican and Puerto Rican) do exist. To the best of my knowledge, there are four such analyses, viz. Suñer & Lizardi (1995), Cabrera-Puche (2008), Martínez-Sanz (2011), and Rivas & Brown (2011). Yet, all of these suffer from a number of flaws that considerably reduce the gain in further insight into the issues under investigation. These flaws primarily relate to either the failure to indicate which subject pronouns can occur in preverbal position as well as what the respective frequencies of preverbal subject elements are – this pertains to Suñer & Lizardi (1995) and Cabrera-Puche’s (2008) analyses – or the disregard of both a subset of subject pronouns and the argumental nature of *wh*-expressions, as is the case with Martínez-Sanz (2011) and Rivas & Brown’s (2011) analyses.

In an attempt to partly fill the persisting lacuna of refined large-scale quantitative analyses of natural colloquial speech from varieties of Caribbean Spanish that, essentially, take into consideration the complexity as well as the argumental nature of *wh*-expressions, in what follows I present results from an analysis based on a corpus of colloquial Dominican Spanish spoken almost a century ago. Fundamentally, this corpus allows to determine the relevant state of affairs at the very time when *whSV* order was first taken notice of in the literature, and to compare it with today’s situation.

The corpus in question comprises a large number of stories from oral tradition that were collected by Manuel J. Andrade in the summer of 1927 and published in 1930 as the major part of his monograph entitled *Folklore from the Dominican Republic*. Specifically, the corpus encompasses 304 tales stretching over a total of 325 pages.



Figure (1): Location of the municipalities selected by Andrade (1930)<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup> The map underlying Figure (1) was downloaded on 7 March 2017 from the online map collection of the Perry-Castañeda Library of the University of Texas at Austin, using the following link: [http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/americas/dominican\\_republic\\_pol-2004.pdf](http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/americas/dominican_republic_pol-2004.pdf).



As Andrade was eager to capture natural colloquial speech free from normative pressures as well as prescriptive use of language, he primarily consulted informants that were illiterate, belonged to the occupational class of unskilled laborers, and lived in rural districts some of which neighbored larger municipalities. Andrade (1930, 8) himself qualifies his informants as “the peasants and the uneducated city folk”. In total, Andrade collected stories from 78 informants ranging from 15 to 80 years of age and living in areas surrounding the cities and villages illustrated in Figure (1): Restauración (west), Dajabón (northwest), Monte Cristi (northwest), Puerto Plata (north), San José de las Matas (center), La Vega (center), Bonao (center), Seibo (east), Higüey (east), San Pedro de Macorís (southeast), and Villa Velázquez (southeast).

The informants usually first recited their tales and then dictated them to Andrade, who wrote them down by employing a mixture of phonetic rendering and Spanish orthography. Occasionally, informants dictated stories to young(er) relatives that could write or wrote them down themselves when they were literate to some extent. Such writings met with great caution on the part of Andrade (1930, 24), who actually made sure that these “were reproduced from oral tradition” and, for reasons of better intelligibility, corrected their orthography.

Having detailed the methodology underlying the corpus presently made use of, I now turn to the two central issues under investigation regarding direct<sup>13</sup> interrogatives with a simple argumental *wh*-expression, viz. the frequency of *whSV* order and the specific nature of the preverbal subject.

A total of 344 direct interrogatives produced by 46 informants are encountered. Of these, 138 are of the *yes/no* kind and 206 of the *wh* kind (cf. Table (2)), provided by 38 informants each.

	#
<i>yes/no</i>	138
<i>wh</i>	206
<b>total</b>	<b>344</b>

Table (2): Kinds of direct interrogatives

Regarding *wh*-interrogatives, whose *wh*-expressions are in fact consistently non-subject in nature and which all constitute information-requesting questions,<sup>14</sup> 29 contain a cleft, viz. “the formula QU-word –SER – (lo) – que ‘WH-word – to-be – (‘lo’) –that” (Suñer 1986, 197). Of the remainder, 89 have a null subject and 88 an overt subject, as Table (3) illustrates.

	#
<b>cleft</b>	29
<b>non-cleft, null subject</b>	89
<b>non-cleft, overt subject</b>	88
<b>total</b>	<b>206</b>

Table (3): Kinds of direct *wh*-interrogatives

As shown in Table (4), of the 88 *wh*-interrogatives with an overt subject, 19, expressed by 16 informants, have a non-argumental *wh*-expression and, essentially, 69, produced by 30

<sup>13</sup> The present restriction is a regrettable, yet necessary step. The state of affairs in indirect interrogatives is thus pending further investigation.

<sup>14</sup> In effect, an answer by another character is provided subsequently to each of the established *wh*-interrogatives.

informants, have an argumental *wh*-expression that is actually invariably simple in nature.<sup>15</sup>

	#
<b>non-argumental</b>	19
<b>argumental</b>	69
<b>total</b>	88

Table (4): Argumental status of *wh*-expressions in direct non-cleft *wh*-interrogatives with an overt subject

I start by investigating non-argumental *wh*-interrogatives, which allow for non-inversion of the subject and the verb in Spanish to varying degrees.<sup>16</sup> *WhSV* order and *whVS* order were each employed by 8 informants, the latter order showing a slight predominance (cf. Table (5)).

	#	%
<b>preverbal</b>	8	42.1
<b>postverbal</b>	11	57.9
<b>total</b>	19	100

Table (5): Positioning of the overt subject in direct non-cleft non-argumental *wh* interrogatives

A closer look at these interrogatives reveals that the kind of subject occurring with *whSV* order is strictly limited. In effect, only a small subset of subject pronouns shows up with this word order, viz. the non-deferential specific as well as the deferential second person singular subject pronouns, *tú* and *usted*. Examples are given in (13) and (14).

- (13) a. ¿Poi qué *tú* yora?  
‘Why are you crying?’ (LuJoSu, illiterate, peasant, 30, San José de las Matas, 80)<sup>17</sup>  
b. Toribito, ¿dónde *tu* conseguite to ete dinero?  
‘Toribito, where did you get all this money from?’ (CaSá, illiterate, 20, Seibo, 42)
- (14) a. Mire, amigo, poi qué *uté* me pisó?  
‘Well, friend, why did you hit me?’ (LuCoMo, illiterate, peasant, 17, Monte Cristi, 294)  
b. ¿Dónde *uté* consiguió eto?  
‘Where did you get this from?’ (LuCaAr, literate, 16, Higüey, 78)

<sup>15</sup> In the present paper, I make use of ‘simple’ to refer to argumental *wh*-expressions that do not comprise more than two words in General Spanish orthography. Therefore, I exclude heavy as well as complex argumental *wh*-expressions that, similar to non-argumental ones, allow for non-inversion of the subject and the verb in Spanish to varying degrees (inter alia Torrego 1984; Ordóñez & Treviño 1999; Zubizarreta 1999; Ordóñez & Olarrea 2001; 2006; Ordóñez 2016). Note that, in the vast majority of established argumental *wh*-interrogatives, the *wh*-expression consists of a single word.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. footnote 15.

<sup>17</sup> All corpus examples are appended by information relating to the informants that produced the sentences contained in these examples. Unless Andrade does not provide relevant details, the pieces of information given are as follows and in this order: name (abbreviated; for full name cf. Andrade), literacy, job, age, municipality, page number in Andrade’s monograph.

In contrast, *whVS* order comprises not only a larger subset of subject pronouns, extending, in addition to *tú* (cf. (15a)) and *usted* (cf. (15b)), to the first person singular subject pronoun, *yo* (cf. (15c)), but also the demonstrative pronoun *eso* (cf. (15d)) and (singular) full DP subjects (cf. (15e)).

- (15) a. Helmano, ¿para qué ere *tú* resusitadol?  
 ‘Brother, what are you a resuscitator for?’ (FrDe, illiterate, cab-driver, 40, San Pedro de Macorís, 92)
- b. ¿Por qué se robó *uté* eso chivo?  
 ‘Why did you steal these kids?’ (JuAm, literate, 67, La Vega, 312)
- c. ¿Con qué le pago *yo* a eta pobre viuda?  
 ‘How shall I pay the poor widow?’ (JuCa, illiterate, 18, Seibo, 305)
- d. ¿pa pué fué *eso*?  
 ‘what was this for?’ (BiFa, illiterate, bootblack, 17, San Pedro de Macorís, 167)
- e. ¿Y por qué yora *la prinsesita tan bonita*?  
 ‘And why does the princess that is so beautiful cry?’ (CoRu, literate, dish-washer, 18, Seibo, 298)

When exclusively looking at interrogatives with *tú* and *usted*, the sole subject elements that show up pre- as well as postverbally, the picture turns out to be quite different from the comprehensive one (cf. Table (5) above): with *tú*, *whSV* order is predominant (cf. Table (6)), while with *usted*, no preference for a specific word order can be determined (cf. Table (7)).

	#	%
<b>preverbal</b>	5	71.4
<b>postverbal</b>	2	28.6
<b>total</b>	7	100

Table (6): Positioning of *tú* in direct non-cleft non-argumental *wh*-interrogatives

	#	%
<b>preverbal</b>	3	50
<b>postverbal</b>	3	50
<b>total</b>	6	100

Table (7): Positioning of *usted* in direct non-cleft non-argumental *wh*-interrogatives

It is interesting to note that, as shown in Table (8), none of the informants that produced *whSV* order provided a single instance of *whVS* order and, conversely, none of the informants expressing *whVS* order made use of *whSV* order.

This does not seem to result from diatopic variation, since, as Table (8) illustrates, several of the municipalities with informants solely producing *whSV* order are likewise home to those exclusively using *whVS* order (Higüey, La Vega, San Pedro de Macorís). Age per se does not appear to play a crucial role either, given that the majority of the informants providing one of these word orders belong to the same age groups (cf. Table (8)). Yet, it is quite noteworthy that, while none of the informants that expressed *whSV* order was older than 30 years,<sup>18</sup> those employing *whVS* order were generally considerably older: 3 out of the 4 informants that made use of *whVS* order were aged 40, 67, and 80, respectively.

<sup>18</sup> Note that, since Andrade does not indicate the age for one informant, JoJuRi, the age limit might possibly be less low.

informant	municipality	age	whSV	whVS
JuAr	Higüey	80	✗	✓
LuCaAr	Higüey	16	✓	✗
JuAm	La Vega	67	✗	✓
JVSo	La Vega	18	✓	✗
LuCoMo	Monte Cristi	17	✓	✗
JoAb	San José de las Matas	16	✓	✗
LuJoSu	San José de las Matas	30	✓	✗
FrDe	San Pedro de Macorís	40	✗	✓
BiFa	San Pedro de Macorís	17	✗	✓
JoJuRi	San Pedro de Macorís	-	✓	✗
FéAn	Seibo	30	✓	✗
CaSá	Seibo	20	✓	✗

Table (8): Informants employing *tú* and/or *usted* in direct non-cleft non-argumental *wh*-interrogatives

Turning now to (simple) argumental *wh*-interrogatives, the picture proves to be somewhat similar to that established for non-argumental ones. 11 informants produced *whSV* order, 19 *whVS* order. The overall number of interrogatives with an argumental *wh*-expression discloses a strong predominance of postverbal subjects, as Table (9) illustrates.

	#	%
<b>preverbal</b>	20	29
<b>postverbal</b>	49	71
<b>total</b>	69	100

Table (9): Positioning of the overt subject in direct non-cleft argumental *wh* interrogatives

A closer look reveals again a strict limitation of the kind of subject showing up in *whSV* order, viz. *tú* and *usted*, the non-deferential specific and the deferential second person singular subject pronoun, respectively. Examples are provided in (16) and (17).

- (16) a. ¿Qué *tú* buca po aquí?  
‘What are you looking for here?’ (JoAnAr, illiterate, peasant, 15, San Pedro de Macorís, 103)<sup>19</sup>
- b. ¿Cuánto talego *tú* me da y te alimo?  
‘How many sacks do you give me, if I file you?’ (BiFa, illiterate, bootblack, 17, San Pedro de Macorís, 329)<sup>20</sup>
- (17) a. ¿Cómo *uté* se ñama?  
‘What is your name?’ (RaPe, literate, peasant, 15, La Vega, 185)
- b. ¿A dónde *uté* va, mai vieja?  
‘Where are you going, my dear old one?’ (AnAr, illiterate, peasant, 16, Restauración, 289)

<sup>19</sup> The interrogative in (16a) was also produced by the following informants (and at times more than once): BiFa, illiterate, bootblack, 17, San Pedro de Macorís, 160, 273, 274; GuSá, bootblack, 19, San Pedro de Macorís, 55; CaSá, illiterate, 20, Seibo, 115.

<sup>20</sup> The interrogative in (16b) was actually encountered twice, and this in the same story (also on p.329).

With *whVS* order, by contrast, the set of pronominal subjects encompasses, besides *tú* (cf. (18a)) and *usted* (cf. (18b)), *yo* (cf. (18c)) as well as *ustedes* (cf. (18d)), the first person singular and the deferential second person plural subject pronoun, respectively. Furthermore, full DP subjects, both singular (cf. (18e)) and plural (cf. (18f)), are found with such word order.

- (18) a. ¿Qué busca *tú* po aquí, Juan?  
 ‘What are you looking for here, John?’ (BiFa, illiterate, bootblack, 17, San Pedro de Macorís, 159)
- b. Compái Pedro, ¿qué anda *uté* haciendo aquí?  
 ‘Pedro, my friend, what are doing here?’ (JVSo, 18, La Vega, 50)
- c. ¿Qué le digo *yo*?  
 ‘What do I tell him?’ (FéAn, illiterate, peasant, 30, Seibo, 268-269)
- d. Mi suiso, ¿qué bucan *utede* po-r-aquí?  
 ‘My darlings, what are you looking for here?’ (FrDe, illiterate, cab-driver, 40, San Pedro de Macorís, 92)
- e. ¿Qué hiso *Juan Bobo*?  
 ‘What did Juan Bobo do?’ (GuSá, bootblack, 19, San Pedro de Macorís, 54)
- f. ¿Cómo e’tán *mis hijito*?  
 ‘How are my children doing?’ (CoRu, literate, dish-washer, 18, Seibo, 122)

When exclusively taking into consideration those interrogatives that contain subject elements that are attested in pre- as well as postverbal position, i.e. those with *tú* and *usted*, the picture turns out to be somewhat different from that above: whereas the results concerning *usted* are actually in line with the latter, since this subject pronoun occurs preferably in postverbal position (cf. Table (11)), preverbal and postverbal positioning fairly balance out one another regarding *tú* (cf. Table (10)), for which, thus, no dedicated preference for a specific word order can be established.

	#	%
<b>preverbal</b>	17	51.5
<b>postverbal</b>	16	48.5
<b>total</b>	33	100

Table (10): Positioning of *tú* in direct non-cleft argumental *wh*-interrogatives

	#	%
<b>preverbal</b>	3	27.3
<b>postverbal</b>	8	72.7
<b>total</b>	11	100

Table (11): Positioning of *usted* in direct non-cleft argumental *wh*-interrogatives

Unlike in the case of non-argumental *wh*-interrogatives, a fair number of informants (a total of 5) produced *whSV* order along with *whVS* order with argumental *wh*-interrogatives comprising subject elements attested both pre- as well as postverbally (cf. Table (12)).

informant	municipality	age	<i>whSV</i>	<i>whVS</i>
SóMe	Bonao	18	✗	✓
JuAr	Higüey	80	✗	✓
LuCaAr	Higüey	16	✓	✗
JuAnMe	La Vega	60	✗	✓

RaPe	La Vega	15	✓	✗
JVSo	La Vega	18	✗	✓
LuCoMo	Monte Cristi	17	✗	✓
JeMaMo	Monte Cristi	23	✗	✓
MaPo	Monte Cristi	26	✓	✗
AnAr	Restauración	16	✓	✓
LuJoSu	San José de las Matas	30	✓	✗
JoAnAr	San Pedro de Macorís	15	✓	✗
FrDe	San Pedro de Macorís	40	✓	✓
BiFa	San Pedro de Macorís	17	✓	✓
GuSá	San Pedro de Macorís	19	✓	✗
AnCa	Seibo	18	✗	✓
JuCa	Seibo	18	✓	✓
CaSá	Seibo	20	✓	✓
GuMo	Seibo	21	✗	✓

Table (12): Informants employing *tú* and/or *usted* in direct non-cleft argumental *wh*-interrogatives

A particularly telling example is given in (19), which displays the rendering of an argumental *wh*-interrogative in the same tale in terms of either word order.<sup>21</sup>

- (19) ¿Qué quiere *tú*? [...] ¿Qué *tú* quiere?  
‘What do you want? What do you want?’ (JuCa, illiterate, 18, Seibo, 62-63)

Still, there are several informants making exclusive use of either *whSV* order (6 in total) or *whVS* order (a total of 8). As shown in Table (12) above, however, the municipalities established for the informants making use of *whSV* order generally match those of the informants expressing *whVS* order (Higüey, La Vega, Monte Cristi, San Pedro de Macorís, Seibo). This finding, which strongly argues against diatopic variation, is reminiscent of the one regarding non-argumental *wh*-interrogatives, much like the observations that most of the pertinent informants form part of the same age groups and that, unlike *whVS* order, *whSV* order was not employed by middle aged or elderly informants (cf. again Table (12)).

A wide variety of word order combinations is attested – ranging from consistent inversion to consistent non-inversion – regarding those informants that employ both non-argumental and argumental *wh*-interrogatives with subject elements occurring pre- as well as postverbally, i.e. *tú* and *usted* (cf. Table (13)). Fundamentally, the possibility of non-inversion in argumental *wh*-interrogatives does not seem to necessarily correlate with such possibility in non-argumental *wh*-interrogatives and vice versa. It is also noteworthy that, unlike all other informants, who make use of *whSV* order to different degrees, the one informant producing exclusively *whVS* order is elderly.

informant	municipality	age	argumental		non-argumental	
			<i>whSV</i>	<i>whVS</i>	<i>whSV</i>	<i>whVS</i>
JuAr	Higüey	80	✗	✓	✗	✓

<sup>21</sup> As (19) straightforwardly illustrates and is extensively discussed in Section 5, verb type does not have an impact on the positioning of the subject pronoun regarding the verb; rather, as pointed out in footnote 3 and explained in Section 5, the respective positioning ties in with interpretational differences.

LuCaAr	Higüey	16	✓	✗	✓	✗
JVSo	La Vega	18	✗	✓	✓	✗
LuCoMo	Monte Cristi	17	✗	✓	✓	✗
LuJoSu	San José de las Matas	30	✓	✗	✓	✗
FrDe	San Pedro de Macorís	40	✓	✓	✗	✓
BiFa	San Pedro de Macorís	17	✓	✓	✗	✓
CaSá	Seibo	20	✓	✓	✓	✗

Table (13): Informants employing *tú* and/or *usted* in direct non-cleft non-argumental as well as argumental *wh*-interrogatives

From the results presented in this section one may thus conclude that non-inversion of the subject and the verb in direct simple argumental *wh*-interrogatives was a fairly restricted word order young adult speakers of colloquial Dominican Spanish in the late 1920s produced with the pronouns *tú* and *usted* in around 1 out of 2 and 4 cases, respectively. The very same word order restrictions held for direct non-argumental *wh*-interrogatives that were in fact more frequently expressed with *whSV* order, viz. in around 2 out of 3 (*tú*) as well as 1 out of 2 (*usted*) cases.<sup>22</sup>

When comparing these results with the few claims in the literature that pertain exclusively to Dominican Spanish, it appears that, in the course of the 20th and 21st centuries, restrictions on non-inverted word order in *wh*-interrogatives have become considerably relaxed, if not entirely lifted, and the use of such word order has gained vital momentum.<sup>23</sup> In effect, pertinent claims indicate that *whSV* order is, at least since the late 1970s, also possible with *yo* and *ustedes* (Jiménez Sabater 1977; 1999; Toribio 1993; 2000b; Green 1997; Bullock & Toribio 2009) and, ever since the end of the 20th century, additionally with *él / ella* (Jiménez Sabater 1999; Lunn 2002). According to the most recent claim (Ortiz López 2009b), the entire set of subject pronouns can nowadays occur with *whSV* order. Furthermore, at least since the early 1990s, full DP subjects have become possible with such word order (Toribio 1993; 2000b; Cabrera-Puche 2008; Ortiz López 2009b). Regarding the frequency of its use, *whSV* order was apparently increasingly employed (Henríquez Ureña 1948) or even strongly preferred (Patín Maceo 1940) in the 1940s and strongly favored in the late 1970s (Jiménez Sabater 1977; Jorge Morel 1978). From the turn of the millennium onward, *whSV* order has been used regularly (Jiménez Sabater 1999; Alba 2004; Cabrera-Puche 2008), if not exclusively (Lunn 2002; Camacho 2008).

Closing this section, I suggest, in accordance with various researchers (cf. footnote 4), that *whSV* order in interrogatives constitutes an innovation in colloquial Dominican Spanish and assume in this regard that the origins of such word order in this variety date back to the late 19th century.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>22</sup> That the second person singular pronouns were evidently the first subject elements to show up between the *wh*-expression and the verb (cf. also Section 2 as well as Lipski 1977; Heap 1990), hereby leading the way for other pronouns as well as, in at least some dialects, full DPs, is presumably due to the plain fact that “most questions will be couched in the second person singular” (Davis 1971, 332).

<sup>23</sup> As expounded at the beginning of this section, these claims must be taken with a grain of salt, since, to all appearances, they are flawed to varying degrees.

<sup>24</sup> In the context of the analysis of an extract from a prose work of colloquial Dominican Spanish from the second half of the 18th century, Granda (1991, 86) encounters a single instance of *whSV* order in a direct interrogative with a non-argumental *wh*-expression ([...] *cómo usted cojio tanto oro que llevo a España, de la isla Española* [...])? ‘How did you get so much gold that you took to Spain from the isle of Hispaniola?’). Whether this isolated example provides evidence, as he claims, for the use of such word order by at least some social strata at the time indicated or rather follows from other factors, is an issue that future investigation based on more

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#### 4. Previous approaches to *whSV* order in varieties of Caribbean Spanish

Not only is the literature far from agreeing on the frequency of *whSV* order in interrogatives in varieties of Caribbean Spanish as well as on the kind(s) of preverbal subject, but also on the approach to be adopted to account for such order in general and the issues of its frequency and the kind(s) of preverbal subject in particular. In effect, approaches to the phenomenon of *whSV* order are manifold and strongly divergent, focusing primarily on its origin and extending occasionally to its frequency and the specific nature of the preverbal subject. The approaches put forth adopt either an extralinguistic or an intralinguistic reasoning. While the latter line of reasoning is multifaceted, invoking one or several domains of grammar (morphology, phonology, pragmatics, syntax), the former exclusively draws on the notion of language contact.

Contact with another language has been repeatedly put forward in the literature. In effect, it has been generally argued that there was contact with either English (inter alia Kany 1945; Gili Gaya 1966; Davis 1971; López Morales 1992; Ordóñez & Olarrea 2006) or some African substrate (inter alia Kany 1945; Otheguy 1973; Pérez Guerra 1989; Granda 1991; 1994; Green 1997). However, this extralinguistic approach has been challenged by numerous researchers.

An objection often raised regarding English relates to the lexicon of the lowest occupational classes that extensively or even constantly use colloquial varieties, in which *whSV* order is typically encountered (cf. Section 3). This lexicon manifests few, if any, relevant borrowings, a state of affairs that is strongly suggestive of the absence of any contact with English culture (inter alia Navarro Tomás 1948; Pérez Sala 1973; Lantolf 1980b; Morales 1986b; Jiménez Sabater 1999). Furthermore, *whSV* order has usually not been noted “among Mexican or Chicano speakers” (Lipski 1977, 61).<sup>25</sup> Fundamentally, such word order predates the time when English started exerting influence (RAE 2009b).

Contact with an African substrate, on the other hand, is altogether dubious, since it is not verifiable (Núñez Cedeño 1983; Heap 1990; Ordóñez & Olarrea 2001). Moreover, *whSV* order fails to be encountered in other ‘Africanized’ varieties (Heap 1990), and the languages spoken by the slaves imported from Africa were most probably typologically distinct and, presumably, did not all admit such word order (Núñez Cedeño 1983; Green 1997). Essentially, *whSV* order has been observed in “non-Africanized dialects of Spanish” (Lipski 1994:113) (cf. footnote 2).

In view of the “highly suspect” (Lantolf 1980b, 206) (cf. also Quirk 1972) nature of approaches based on the notion of language contact as well as the general absence of other extralinguistic approaches, an approach bearing on one or several intralinguistic factors seems preferable. In fact, many such approaches have been put forth in the literature. In what follows, I shall succinctly explain these in thematic order.

Starting with purely syntactic approaches, it has been argued that *whSV* order is originally due to a “fusion” of *yes/no*-interrogatives with *SV* order such as *¿Tú quieres?* ‘Do you want it?’ and *wh*-interrogatives with a null subject like *¿Qué quieres?* ‘What do you want?’ (Kany 1945). In a similar vein, *whSV* order has been repeatedly ascribed to analogy, viz. with

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evidence coming from large-scale quantitative analyses of pre-20th century texts will have to settle.

<sup>25</sup> Cf., however, footnote 2. Further investigation is needed to decide on the issue of the availability of *whSV* order in Mexican varieties. What is yet relevant for the present discussion is that reports on non-inversion of the subject and the verb in simple argumental *wh*-interrogatives in these varieties are virtually absent.



one of the following constructions: (i) *wh*-interrogatives containing a null subject and, fundamentally, a directly preverbal oblique pronoun, such as *¿Qué te pasa?* ‘What happens to you?’, (Padrón 1948); (ii) interrogatives with non-heavy non-argumental *wh*-expressions such as *por qué* ‘why’ that allow for non-inversion of the subject and the verb in Spanish (Herrero 1992); (iii) *yes/no*-interrogatives that generally allow for non-inversion of the subject and the verb in Spanish (Bergen 1976; cf. also Lipski 1977); (iv) replies that frequently display SV order (Lapesa 1992). Moreover, *whSV* order has been argued to continue a word order already encountered in Vulgar Latin and, to a minor extent, in pre-modern Peninsular Spanish (Lipski 1990; Lapesa 1992).<sup>26</sup>

Concerning approaches bearing on morpho-syntactic aspects, a fair number of these directly or indirectly relate to the status of subject pronouns by invoking (i) the establishment of an additional paradigm of subject pronouns that are ‘clitic’ in the sense of Cardinaletti & Starke (1999), essentially as a compensation for the ambiguity ensuing from the loss of verbal agreement morphology (inter alia Quirk 1972; Lipski 1977; 1990; Contreras 1984; 1989; Heap 1990; Cabrera-Puche 2008),<sup>27</sup> (ii) the extensive use of subject pronouns and their generally preverbal positioning in declaratives in varieties of Caribbean Spanish (inter alia Lantolf 1980b; López Morales 1992; Jiménez Sabater 1999; Martínez-Sanz 2011; Peralta Céspedes 2017), (iii) the loss of verbal agreement morphology in whose wake so-called ‘Argument Agreement Licensing’, a formalized condition ensuring that no element intervene between the *wh*-expression and the verb, is discarded (Suñer 1994; cf. also Ticio 2008), (iv) the valuation of an uninterpretable nominative Case feature whenever speakers of varieties of Caribbean Spanish

<sup>26</sup> Cf. footnote 4.

<sup>27</sup> The erosion in verbal agreement morphology relates principally to the pronunciation in varieties of Caribbean Spanish of the inflectional suffix *-s* marking non-deferential second person singular in all tenses but the preterite indicative. It has been commonly observed that this marker, pronounced /s/ in General Spanish, has been phonologically lost in “the majority of the population” (Andrade 1930, 10-11) from the Caribbean as early as the late 1920s, while being aspirated only among higher strata (inter alia Henríquez Ureña 1940; Jorge Morel 1978; Terrell 1982; Lipski 1977; 1994; Alba 2004; 2009a). Glossing over diastatic differences, this salient consonant apocope results from an original phonological change of /s/ into an aspirate and, subsequently, into zero (/s/ > /h/ > Ø). Along with the absence of the non-deferential second person plural subject pronoun *vosotros/vosotras* in Latin American Spanish varieties more generally (inter alia Lenz 1920; Gili Gaya 1966; Solé & Solé 1977; Olloqui de Montenegro 1984; Lipski 1990), the phonological loss of verbal final /s/ has led to a fair reduction in the number of distinct inflections marking person and number in Caribbean varieties, as first pointed out by Andrade (1930, 10-13): “The loss of the final *s* has brought about the assimilation of the second person singular to the third person in all the tenses except the preterite. This together with the fact that the second person plural is never used, has reduced the inflection of the verb to four forms: first and third singular, and first and third plural, eliminating also the distinction between the intimate and the formal manner of address, so far as the verb is concerned”. In effect, with a number of tenses (imperfect indicative, pluperfect indicative, conditional, conditional perfect, present subjunctive, perfect subjunctive, imperfect subjunctive, pluperfect subjunctive, future subjunctive, future perfect subjunctive), the reduction in verbal agreement morphology is even more extensive, in that verbal inflections for first, non-deferential second as well as third person singular “coincide” (Fernández Soriano 1989, 231) in form in all varieties of Spanish (cf. also inter alia Brakel 1980; Olloqui de Montenegro 1984; Ranson 1991; Cameron 1992; Toribio 2000b). For extensive discussion on the putative impact of the loss in verbal agreement morphology on the extensive use of subject pronouns in Caribbean varieties (cf. Section 5) (the so-called functional (compensation) hypothesis), cf. inter alia Davis (1971); Lipski (1977; 1994); Hochberg (1986a;b); Ranson (1991); Cameron (1992; 1996). For related discussion on Andalusian Spanish dialects, cf. inter alia Alvar (1955); Mondéjar (1970); Carbonero Cano (1982a;b); Miró Vera & de Pineda (1990); Ranson (1991).

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access a mentally co-present innovative non-null subject variety (Toribio 1993; 2000a;b cf. also Cabrera-Puche 2008), (v) the existence of a paradigm of subject pronouns that are ‘weak’ in the terminology of Cardinaletti & Starke (1999) and that remnant-move along with the verb (Ordóñez & Olarrea 2001; 2006).

Regarding approaches that exclusively rely on phonology, it has been contended that *whSV* order is due to an alternative alternating stress pattern affecting initially *wh*-interrogatives with a null subject and a left-peripheral topic, such as *Tú ¿qué quieres?* ‘You, what do you want?’, to licence stress on both the *wh*-expression and the verb by means of an intervening unstressed pronominal subject (Davis 1971; cf. also Quirk 1972).

As far as approaches are concerned that uniquely draw on pragmatics, it has been proposed that *whSV* order is pragmatically marked, in that it is mainly employed to express inquisitive interest, surprise, admiration or rebuke (Lapesa 1992; Rivas & Brown 2011).

As to approaches that are based, along with pragmatics, on syntax, it has eventually been suggested that *whSV* order is the outcome of a tendency “to place non-asserted/presupposed subjects consistently in a thematic position” (Suñer & Lizardi 1995, 196), possibly appended by the availability of extra structure in varieties of Caribbean Spanish (Gutiérrez-Bravo 2008).

Having briefly explained the vast number of intralinguistic approaches to the phenomenon of *whSV* order in interrogatives in varieties of Caribbean Spanish, in the remainder of this section I will point out a set of major problems that affect many, if not all of these approaches.<sup>28</sup>

Most approaches leave unexplained the fact that *whSV* order in interrogatives, in particular those with a simple argumental *wh*-expression, is mainly, if not exclusively, encountered in Caribbean varieties. Also, the vast majority of approaches have nothing to say about the commonly noted differences in frequency regarding the preverbal occurrence of subject elements: as detailed in Section 2, it is generally observed that some pronominal subjects show up more frequently in preverbal position than others and that non-pronominal subjects occur comparatively seldom in this position. In addition, a number of approaches are based on the spurious notions that full DP subjects are excluded with *whSV* order, that subject pronouns are used categorically and that the latter elements occur mandatorily in preverbal position. Still, in *wh*-interrogatives, preverbal full DP subjects are arguably possible (cf. Section 2), null subjects are (still) employed (inter alia Pérez Sala 1971; 1973; Toribio 2000a; Ordóñez & Olarrea 2006; Cabrera-Puche 2008; Brown & Rivas 2011), and pronominal subjects can appear in postverbal position as well (inter alia Gili Gaya 1966; Cameron 1992; D’Introno 2000; Toribio 2000a; Ordóñez & Olarrea 2006). As to the various approaches that draw on analogy, one may object with Lantolf (1980b, 206) that these “do[...] nothing more than allude to a possible relationship between the structures and do[...] not undertake to show precisely how one could have influenced the other.” Lastly, regarding eventually those approaches that build on the loss of verbal agreement morphology, they leave unexplained the fact that, in varieties such as Andalusian, Argentinian, and Chilean, which show the same kind of loss (inter alia Alvar 1955; Carbonero Cano 1982a;b; Rodríguez-Izquierdo 1982; Miró Vera & de Pineda 1990; Ranson 1991), *whSV* order is not encountered (Quirk 1972; Lipski 1977; RAE 2009b).

As matters stand, none of the intralinguistic approaches to *whSV* order in interrogatives in varieties of Caribbean Spanish are free from problems. In effect, despite their occasional persuasiveness, they all eventually fall short of satisfactorily capturing the phenomenon under investigation. This state of affairs underpins the persistent relevance of the issue of *whSV* order in varieties of Caribbean Spanish also from a theoretical point of view. In the following section,

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<sup>28</sup> Note that each of the intralinguistic approaches just expounded meets with further problems, whose detailed discussion would yet be tedious and is therefore dispensed with.

I shall outline an approach to this issue which, essentially, takes into consideration other (morpho-)syntactic hallmarks of varieties of Caribbean Spanish and draws on fundamental insights into the fairly related situation in medieval French.

### 5. An alternative approach to *whSV* order in varieties of Caribbean Spanish

To account for the preverbal occurrence of subjects in simple non-argumental *wh*-interrogatives in varieties of Caribbean Spanish, I deem it necessary that the picture to be taken into consideration extend beyond such interrogatives and comprise other conspicuous traits of these varieties, especially Dominican Spanish, as well. I hereby concur with relevant aspects of previous approaches (inter alia Lantolf 1980b; Toribio 1993; 2000; Jiménez Sabater 1999; Ordóñez & Olarrea 2001; 2006; Camacho 2008). As the following discussion will show, the traits to be likewise considered are all highly suggestive of the existence of an additional paradigm of subject pronouns that are not strong, but rather ‘deficient’ in the sense of Cardinaletti & Starke (1999), who employ this term to refer to particular types of pronouns underlying a number of restrictions in several fields of grammar (syntax, morphology, phonology, pragmatics) as compared to strong pronouns and nominals, both of which behave identically in the relevant respects.<sup>29</sup>

Varieties of Caribbean Spanish are renowned for the extensive use of (referential) subject pronouns in declaratives (inter alia Gili Gaya 1943; 1966; Hochberg 1986a; Morales 1986a;b; 1997b; 1999; Cameron 1992; 1993; 1995; 1996; Toribio 2000a;b). This relates directly to the intriguing observation that the occurrence of these elements is not restricted to contexts in which they are interpreted as either emphatic or contrastive, as is usually the case in General Spanish, but, essentially, extends to contexts in which such interpretations are absent, as (20) illustrates for Dominican Spanish.

- (20) a. *Yo no puero habló mucho poke yo estoy sin comé.* Dominican Spanish  
 ‘I cannot talk a lot, since I have not eaten.’ (Green 1997, 135)
- b. *Bueno m’hijo, todo lo que tú me pidas yo te lo doy, pero tu carrera tú tienes que hacerla tú.* Dominican Spanish  
 ‘Well, my son, all you demand from me I will give you, but your career you have to make it for yourself.’ (Toribio 2000b, 319)

As shown in (21), this was already the case in Dominican Spanish in the late 1920s.

- (21) *Entonse él se marchó a vel si hayaba su do’ helmano.* Dominican Spanish  
*Entonse él yegó donde la vieja. [...] — Mi suiso, ¿tú no toma café?*  
 ‘Then he left to search for his two brothers. Then he arrived at the place where the old lady was. – My darling, won’t you have coffee?’ (JuCa, illiterate, 18, Seibo, 63)

In the literature, subject pronouns as those highlighted in (20) and (21) are commonly conceived of as ‘redundant’ (inter alia Gili Gaya 1943; 1966; Lipski 1994; Toribio 2000a;b; Ordóñez & Olarrea 2001; 2006; Ortiz López 2009a;b; 2016). As such, they hardly lend themselves to an analysis as strong elements. In fact, it seems more appropriate to consider them ‘weak’ in the sense of Cardinaletti & Starke (1999) (cf. also Pérez-Leroux 1993; Lipski

<sup>29</sup> Specifically, as a function of their particular restrictions, Cardinaletti & Starke (1999:168) distinguish two types of deficient pronouns, viz. ‘weak’ and ‘clitic’ pronouns, referring, respectively, to “mildly deficient pronouns” and “severely deficient pronouns”.

1994; Ordóñez & Olarrea 2001; 2006; Camacho 2008; RAE 2009a;b), i.e. structurally deficient, yet phrasal argumental elements that are ‘deaccented’ (RAE 2009a, 1179; cf. also Davis 1971, 332; Heap 1990, 32), much like their counterparts in modern standard French, “a notoriously non-pro-drop language” (Pollock 1989, 381,fn.17).<sup>30</sup> Unlike the latter, however, which can additionally occur (directly) postverbally, the pertinent subject pronouns in varieties of Caribbean Spanish exclusively appear in directly preverbal position (inter alia Gili Gaya 1943; 1966; Lipski 1994; Toribio 2000a;b; Ordóñez & Olarrea 2001; 2006; Ortiz López 2009a;b; 2016), possibly separated from the verb by the negative scope marker *no* ‘not’ and oblique pronouns, as in (20) and (21) above.

A further trait which is strongly indicative of the existence of subject pronouns that are not strong is the occurrence of what seems to be a subject expletive in at least some dialects of Dominican Spanish (inter alia Henríquez Ureña 1939; 1940; Jorge Morel 1978; Toribio 2000a;b; Camacho 2008; 2013; Pöll 2015).<sup>31</sup> <sup>32</sup> As (22) illustrates, “impersonal and meteorological verbs, unaccusative predicates, impersonal passives, and other constructions in which transitives are used intransitively” (Bullock & Toribio 2009, 56) can occur with (directly preverbal) *ello*. This is categorically excluded in General Spanish (inter alia Hanssen 1913; Bordelois 1974; Suñer 1982a;b; Flores-Ferrán 2002; 2004; Ortiz López 2009b).<sup>33</sup>

- (22) a. porque realmente *ello* hay personas que ... Dominican Spanish  
‘since, really, there are people that ...’ (Bullock & Toribio 2009, 69)  
b. *Ello* estaba lloviendo. Dominican Spanish  
‘It was raining.’ (Alba 2004, 128)

Given that subject expletives are semantically vacuous, their interpretation as either emphatic or contrastive is strictly excluded. Consequently, such elements cannot form part of the paradigm of strong subject pronouns and, therefore, must have a different morpho-syntactic status. Independent evidence for this reasoning is provided by the observation that, unlike strong subject pronouns (cf. (23a)), the subject expletive *ello* cannot be separated from the verb by elements other than the negative scope marker *no* ‘not’ and oblique pronouns, thus excluding the non-adjacency resulting e.g. from an intervening parenthetical (cf. (23b)) (Suñer 2003,

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Zimmermann (2016) for a summary discussion of aspects of modern standard French referred to in this section.

<sup>31</sup> As indicated in the text, the phenomenon under discussion is reportedly restricted, as it has been exclusively observed in dialects of mainly the rural Cibao region in the northwest of the Dominican Republic. Cf. Camacho (2008) for an approach to the restriction of the phenomenon at issue to these dialects.

<sup>32</sup> The analysis in terms of a subject expletive has been challenged by Silva-Villar (1998) and Hinzelin & Kaiser (2007), who instead argue for an analysis of the pertinent subject pronoun as, respectively, a topic/CP expletive and a discourse marker (cf. also Gupton & Lowman 2013; Ortiz López 2016). Cf. Barme (2011), Martínez-Sanz (2011), Camacho (2013), and Pöll (2015) for extensive discussion and a rebuttal of such alternative analyses. Cf. also Suñer (2003).

<sup>33</sup> Note, incidentally, that the use of *ello* at issue is highly stigmatized (inter alia López Morales 1992; Cabrera-Puche 2008; Camacho 2008; 2013; Alba 2009a;b; Bullock & Toribio 2009). In effect, such use is considered to manifest speakers’ belonging to or descent from the lowest social strata as well as lack of education, subjecting them to ridicule, and is therefore avoided, particularly among young, educated speakers originating from the Cibao region. Cf. Alba (2004; 2009a;b) and Klump (2017) for extensive discussion on linguistic insecurity in speakers of Dominican Spanish.

351).<sup>34</sup>

- (23) a. *Él*, a mi parecer, es muy simpático. General Spanish  
 ‘He, it seems to me, is very nice.’ (Suñer 2003, 351)  
 b. \**Ello*, a mi parecer, no sería malo estudiar. Dominican Spanish  
 ‘It seems to me that it would not be wrong to study.’ (Suñer 2003, 351)

What makes varieties of Caribbean Spanish moreover stand out, while being at the same time strongly suggestive of the existence of weak subject pronouns, is the use of the third person masculine plural subject pronoun, *ellos*, to refer to non-specific, i.e. antecedentless, third person plurals, as shown in (24) (inter alia Avila-Jiménez 1995; Toribio 2000b; Lapidus & Otheguy 2005; Ortiz López 2009b; Martínez-Sanz 2011). In General Spanish, the subject pronoun must be null in such cases (inter alia Cifuentes 1980; Suñer 1983; Jaeggli 1986; Ranson 1991; Camacho 2008; 2013).<sup>35</sup>

- (24) Si yo voy a Santo Domingo o Venezuela, o Ecuador o cualquiera de estos países a buscar un trabajo, solamente por la simple razón de que estudié en Nueva York y sé inglés, *ellos* son capaz de quitarle el trabajo a un empleado de ellos para dármelo a mí simplemente porque yo soy un americano. Puerto Rican Spanish  
 ‘If I go to Santo Domingo or Venezuela or Ecuador or any of these countries to look for work, only for the simple reason that I studied in New York and know English, they are capable of taking away a job from an employee of theirs to give it to me for the simple reason that I am American.’ (Lapidus & Otheguy 2005, 165)

The use of *ellos* to refer to non-specific third person plurals is already found in Dominican Spanish in the late 1920s, as (25) illustrates.

- (25) La gente de la ciudad tenía que llevarles [= a las culebras] comida todos los días. Pero una vez se cansaron de estarles llevando, y la cosas andaban muy mal por la ciudad [...]. Entonces la gente empezó a recoger de lo mejor que tenían para llevárselo al bosque, pero cuando llegaron al bosque, se desataron esas culebras furiosas y no hacían más que morderlos, y *ellos* salieron tendidos para el pueblo. Dominican Spanish  
 ‘The people from the city had to bring them [= the snakes] food every day. But once they got tired of bringing it to them, and things went bad for the city. Then the people began to gather the best they had to take it to the woods, but when they arrived at the

<sup>34</sup> A cursory examination of the established corpus of Dominican Spanish from the late 1920s obtained no pertinent instances of *ello*. This is somewhat unexpected, given that the subject expletive *ello* is well attested with elder speakers (Cabrera-Puche 2008), an observation which suggests that *ello* was used back then as it is used nowadays and had thus already developed into an expletive. Further research on the diachrony of the use of *ello* is needed to decide on this issue.

<sup>35</sup> An instance of non-specific *ellos* in Peninsular Spanish is yet encountered on a 2018 promotional poster of the US movie *Death Wish* (entitled *El Justiciero* in Spain), whose tagline starts off as in (i).

(i) *Ellos* acabaron con su familia ...  
 ‘They came for his family ...’

woods, these raging snakes erupted and did nothing but bite them, and they set off as quickly as possible for the city.’ (JoCi, literate, 25, San José de las Matas, 248)

Another salient characteristic of varieties of Caribbean Spanish that appears to be in favor of the existence of subject pronouns other than strong ones is the possibility of the co-occurrence of a full subject DP and a coreferential preverbal third person subject pronoun (*él, ella, ellos, ellas*) in the same clause (cf. (26)) (Pérez Sala 1971; Otheguy & Zentella 2007; Camacho 2008). Such co-occurrence is impossible in General Spanish (Otheguy 1973; Camacho 2008).

- (26) a. *Carlos él* llegó. Caribbean Spanish  
‘Carlos arrived.’ (Otheguy & Zentella 2007, 279)  
b. *María, ella* cocina muy bien. Dominican Spanish  
‘María cooks very well.’ (Camacho 2008, 422)

(27) is an illustration from Dominican Spanish in the late 1920s that in fact displays the occurrence in the same clause of two instances of one and the same pronominal subject.

- (27) Pero *él*, cuando *eya* se fué, *él* se fué detrás de *eya*. Dominican Spanish  
‘Yet he, when she went away, he went after her.’ (FéAn, illiterate, peasant, 30, Seibo, 102)

An additional trait of varieties of Caribbean Spanish that is again suggestive of the existence of weak subject pronouns is the use of third person subject pronouns (*él, ella, ellos, ellas*) with non-human antecedents, as in (28) (Toribio 2000a;b; Lunn 2002; Bullock & Toribio 2009). In General Spanish, such use is generally excluded, and null subjects are usually employed in cases of subsequent reference (inter alia Jensen 1973; Suñer 1982a; Cameron 1992; 1993; 1995; Toribio 2000b; Flores-Ferrán 2002; 2004).

- (28) a. *Él* [= el río] tiene poca agua. Dominican Spanish  
‘It [= the river] has little water.’ (Toribio 2000a, 629; 2000b, 320)  
b. Pero yo no sé que le<sub>i</sub> pasó [a la camioneta<sub>i</sub>] porque Dominican Spanish  
*ella<sub>i</sub>* tiene gasolina y *ella<sub>i</sub>* estaba caminando bien.  
‘But I do not know what happened to it [= the bus], since it had gas and it was working well.’ (Bullock & Toribio 2009, 57)

The use of third person subject pronouns to refer to non-human antecedents is likewise attested in Dominican Spanish from the late 1920s, as exemplified in (29).

- (29) Depué de mucho caminar se encontraron con una Dominican Spanish  
serpiente<sub>i</sub> que se etaha comiendo un cabayo, y el  
cabayo era de la hija del rey, que había andado  
por ayí, y *eya<sub>i</sub>* había tumbado el cabayo al suelo y  
quería comerse al cabayo y a la muchacha. El  
buen hombre le echó lo perro<sub>j</sub>, y *eyo<sub>j</sub>* la devoraron  
en un abrir y cerrar de ojo.  
‘After having travelled for a long time, they met a snake that was eating a horse, and the horse belonged to the king’s daughter, who had passed there, and it had knocked down the horse to the ground and wanted to eat the horse and the girl. The good man set the

dogs on it, and they gulped it down in a flash.’ (JuAr, illiterate, 80, Higüey, 300)

A further characteristic that has been solely reported for Puerto Rican Spanish relates to phonology. Specifically, with what Cameron (1992, 109) refers to as “discourse markers”,<sup>36</sup> which, unlike in General Spanish, regularly occur with a subject pronoun in varieties of Caribbean Spanish, viz. phrases such as *tú sabe(s)* ‘you know’, *tú no sabe(s)* ‘you have no idea’, *tú entiende(s)* ‘you understand’, *tú ve(s)* ‘you see’, phonological proclisis of the subject pronoun, if not its fusion with the verb (cf. (30)), is frequent in at least Puerto Rican Spanish (López Morales 1983; Cameron 1992).<sup>37</sup>

- (30) [tsa] (= *tú sabe(s)*) Puerto Rican Spanish  
 ‘you know’ (Cameron 1992, 110)

These phonological traits are clear indications not only of the structural deficiency of the subject pronoun at issue, but also of its atonicity and, therefore, underpin the claim of the existence of subject pronouns other than strong ones in varieties of Caribbean Spanish.

Intriguingly, many of the observations presently put forth are highly reminiscent of a typologically related pre-modern variety, namely that usually referred to as Old French (9th–13th century). French is commonly taken to have evolved from a null into a non-null subject language (inter alia Adams 1987; Roberts 1993; Vance 1997). Unlike modern French, which has two paradigms of strong and weak subject pronouns, respectively, most of which are distinct in form, Old French is traditionally considered to have a single paradigm of subject pronouns constituting strong elements.

This view, however, has been challenged, as it has been argued that Old French additionally has a paradigm of weak subject pronouns, being almost identical in form to their strong counterparts (inter alia Foulet 1935/36; Skårup 1975; Marchello-Nizia 1999; Zimmermann 2018a; cf. also Roberts 1993; Vance 1995). The two major pieces of evidence in favor of such an alternative approach tie in with some of the pieces of evidence given above to corroborate the claim of the existence of weak subject pronouns in varieties of Caribbean Spanish. In particular, subject pronouns in Old French can occur in the same clause along with another coreferential subject element, even one of the same type (cf. (31)), and participate, at least as regards the first person singular, in phonological proclisis (*je* / [ʒə] → *j’* / [ʒ]) (cf. (32)).

- (31) *Jou je n’irai.* Old French  
 ‘I will not go.’ (*Le Couronnement de Renard* 568, quoted from Foulet 1935, 307)

- (32) *que j’en recevroie tel cop* Old French  
 ‘that I would receive such a blow from it’ (*La Queste del Saint Graal* 30, 24, quoted from Vance 1995, 303)

Crucially, Old French stands out due to two further morpho-syntactic traits which have generally been left out of consideration in the context of the debate on the number of paradigms of subject pronouns in the history of French and which are, in turn, strongly suggestive of the existence of a paradigm of weak subject pronouns. Specifically, as in varieties of Caribbean Spanish, referential subject pronouns in Old French are frequently used in contexts in which

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Cameron (1992, 109–112) for further explanation.

<sup>37</sup> A cursory examination of the established corpus of Dominican Spanish from the late 1920s yielded no instances of phonological reduction of the discourse markers at issue. Since such discourse markers are generally absent in this corpus, the issue remains to be settled whether phonological proclisis of *tú* was possible in such contexts back then.

they are interpreted as neither emphatic nor contrastive (cf. (33)) (inter alia Adams 1987; Vance 1997; Zimmermann 2014; 2018a;b).

- (33) Treze anz mist li reis; á faire sun paleis od tutes Old French  
les apurtenances, é puis que *il<sub>i</sub>* out fait le temple  
Deu é sun demeine paleis é quanque *il<sub>i</sub>* out desired  
a faire, nostre Seignur; li aparut altre feiz si cume  
*il<sub>j</sub>* out fait en Gabaón.  
‘The king needed thirteen years to build his palace together with his near relations, and when he had built the temple of the Lord and his own palace and all what he had desired to do, the Lord appeared to him another time, just as He had done at Gibeon.’ (*Li Quatre Livre des Reis*, p.133, quoted from Zimmermann 2014, 2-3; 2018b, 72)

Fundamentally, as has been claimed with regard to some dialects of Dominican Spanish, Old French evinces the occurrence of a subject expletive, *il*, (cf. (34)) (Zimmermann 2014; 2018a;b).

- (34) a. *Il* nen i ad chevalier ne barun Old French  
‘There was no knight nor baron’ (*La Chanson de Roland*, p.453, quoted from Zimmermann 2018b:79)  
b. que *il* ne plúve pur lur pecchié Old French  
‘because it does not rain on account of their sin’ (*Li Quatre Livre des Reis*, p.130f., quoted from Zimmermann 2018b:79)

In view of the compelling evidence provided from varieties of Caribbean Spanish as well as the many parallels with a typologically related language, it seems natural then to assume that varieties of Caribbean Spanish have developed an additional paradigm of subject pronouns that are weak and (almost) identical in form to their strong counterparts.

Since, as witnessed by modern standard French, local valuation of nominative Case,  $\phi$ -features as well as the E(xtended)P(rojection)P(inciple) feature obtains with weak subject pronouns (cf. also Suárez 2003; Camacho 2006; 2008), the development of a paradigm of such elements in varieties of Caribbean Spanish is necessarily accompanied by the projection of a dedicated argumental specifier position at the T(ense) level. In line with previous analyses (inter alia Toribio 1993; 2000a;b; Suárez 1994; Pérez-Leroux 1999; Ordóñez & Olarrea 2001; 2006; Camacho 2008), I assume in this respect that, in varieties of Caribbean Spanish, directly preverbal subject pronouns that have neither an emphatic nor a contrastive interpretation occupy SpecTP. Unlike in null subject languages in general then, for which the projection of this position has commonly been disputed in numerous minimalist work (inter alia Duarte 1993; Speas 1994; Alexiadou & Anagnostopoulou 1998; Ordóñez & Treviño 1999; Ticio 2004), SpecTP is projected in varieties of Caribbean Spanish, originally with weak pronominals only and, later on, also with full DPs (cf. Section 3).

The development of a paradigm of weak subject pronouns and the concomitant establishment of SpecTP as a dedicated subject position are clearly reflective of ongoing morpho-syntactic changes in varieties of Caribbean Spanish. That this is indeed the case is underpinned by another syntactic hallmark of these varieties: the strong overall tendency towards SV order.

As a matter of fact, varieties of Caribbean Spanish show fairly strict SV order irrespective of sentence type (root as well as embedded declaratives, *wh*-exclamatives, rhetorical and quotative questions, relatives), the specific nature of the subject (pronominal,



non-pronominal), its pragmatic function (topic, focus) as well as verb type (inter alia Morales 1986a;b; 1997a;b; 1999; Pérez-Leroux 1999; Toribio 2000b; Ortiz López 2009a;b; 2016; Camacho 2013). This is illustrated in (35).

- (35) a. Sí, mas o meno *yo* canto. *Yo* tengo un padrino de matrimonio que *ése* también canta porque *él* eh el diácono de la iglesia y *él* canta. Caribbean Spanish  
 ‘Yes, I sing more or less. I have a best man that sings as well, since he is deacon of the church and he sings.’ (Ortiz López 2009b, 95)
- b. ¡Qué gordo *yo* estoy! Dominican Spanish  
 ‘How fat I am!’ (Toribio 1993, 169)

The development of a strict word order in varieties of Caribbean Spanish is again highly reminiscent of the evolution of word order in French. In effect, French developed from a language with strong verb-second effects into one in which inversion of the subject and the verb is severely sanctioned in the modern standard variety and (almost) absent in the modern colloquial variety.<sup>38</sup> Note in this regard that modern colloquial French, just like varieties of Caribbean Spanish, frequently displays *whSV* order in direct (as well as indirect) simple argumental *wh*-interrogatives with both pronominal and non-pronominal subjects.

The discussion so far has been strongly suggestive of the view that varieties of Caribbean Spanish have developed, along with SpecTP as an A-position, a paradigm of weak subject pronouns and are, moreover, in the process of moving towards rigid SV order. I consider these insights essential for accounting for non-inversion of the subject and the verb in simple argumental *wh*-interrogatives in these varieties. Specifically, I argue that the traits at issue ultimately paved the way for SV order in such interrogatives, “encroaching upon one of the few instances in which VS word order is gr[a]mmatically required” (Brown & Rivas 2011, 41).<sup>39</sup>

On the reasonable assumption that, in varieties of Caribbean Spanish, neither the occurrence of weak subject pronouns nor the tendency towards SV order is restricted to a particular sentence type or a subset of sentence types, the null hypothesis is that weak subject pronouns show up in SpecTP in interrogatives as well (cf. also Lispi 1994; Cabrera-Puche 2008; Ortiz López 2009b).<sup>40</sup> In effect, various pieces of evidence, to be explained in what follows, corroborate such a view.

Regarding direct non-cleft *yes/no*-interrogatives, in which the inversion of the subject and the verb is not mandatory in Spanish, subject pronouns in at least Dominican Spanish from the late 1920s are frequently overt and, fundamentally, appear almost consistently in directly preverbal position:<sup>41</sup> as shown in Table (14), 69.2% of all pertinent *yes/no*-interrogatives have a preverbal subject pronoun.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Culbertson (2010) and Kaiser & Zimmermann (2011) for extensive discussion.

<sup>39</sup> I consider the originally mandatory nature of the inversion of the subject and the verb in interrogatives with a simple argumental *wh*-expression in Spanish to be responsible for the arguably delayed intrusion of preverbal subjects in this sentence type, as reflected by the relatively low percentage of particularly preverbal *tú* in pertinent interrogatives in the established corpus of Dominican Spanish from the late 1920s (23.3%) as opposed to the comparatively high percentage of the corresponding null subject (54.8%). Note, in this connection, the considerable discrepancy of this finding with that from direct non-cleft *yes/no*-interrogatives, given farther on in Table (14).

<sup>40</sup> Fundamentally, this reasoning implies that, in interrogatives in particularly Caribbean varieties of Spanish, the verb occupies the T level, rather than the C(omplementizer) level (cf. also Suñer 1994; Ordóñez & Olarrea 2006).

<sup>41</sup> To the best of my knowledge, there are no quantitative studies on the syntax of (direct non-cleft) *yes/no*-interrogatives in varieties of Spanish.

	#	%
<b>null</b>	39	29.3
<b>overt preverbal</b>	92	69.2
<b>overt postverbal</b>	2	1.5
<b>total</b>	133	100

Table (14): Nature and positioning of subject pronouns in direct non-cleft *yes/no*-interrogatives

Essentially, as illustrated by *tú* in the interrogative in (21) above, directly preverbal subject pronouns have neither an emphatic nor a contrastive interpretation and, thus, prove to be ‘redundant’.

Turning to *wh*-interrogatives, it has been repeatedly noted in the literature that, with directly preverbal subject pronouns, an emphatic or contrastive interpretation is likewise consistently absent in varieties of Caribbean Spanish (inter alia Patín Maceo 1940; Gili Gaya 1966; Davis 1971; Stiehm 1987; Ordóñez & Olarrea 2001; 2006). A case in point is the occurrence of the subject expletive *ello* in directly preverbal position in this type of sentence (cf. (36)).

- (36) *¿Por dónde ello aparece eso?* Dominican Spanish  
 ‘Where does this appear?’ (Bullock & Toribio 2009, 57)

Moreover, as in other sentence types, subject pronouns that do not lend themselves to an interpretation as either emphatic or contrastive are restricted in their positioning in *wh*-interrogatives, appearing exclusively in directly preverbal position. In effect, the literature essentially concurs that, in this sentence type, postverbal subjects are consistently interpreted as contrastive (inter alia Gili Gaya 1966; Quirk 1972; Cameron 1992; D’Introno 2000; Ordóñez & Olarrea 2006).

What is also strongly suggestive of the occurrence of weak subject pronouns in, particularly, simple argumental *wh*-interrogatives in varieties of Caribbean Spanish is the crucial observation that, when appearing in directly preverbal position, subject pronouns pass three more tests which are commonly taken to be indicative of the morpho-syntactic status of subject pronouns as weak elements, as originally laid out in Kayne (1975) regarding modern French. Specifically, along with weak subject pronouns in modern standard French, directly preverbal subject pronouns in varieties of Caribbean Spanish can be neither separated from the verb by strong elements (cf. (37)) (Lispki 1994), nor modified (cf. (38)) (Ordóñez & Olarrea 2001; 2006; Ordóñez 2016),<sup>42</sup> nor conjoined (cf. (39)) (Ordóñez & Olarrea 2001; 2006; Ordóñez 2016).<sup>43</sup>

<sup>42</sup> Suñer & Lizardi (1995) provide the example in (i), arguing that modification is yet possible in at least Puerto Rican Spanish.

- (i) *¿A quién ustedes tres vieron ayer?* Puerto Rican Spanish  
 ‘Who did you three see yesterday?’ (Suñer & Lizardi 1995, 194)

Further investigation is needed to clarify matters.

<sup>43</sup> Note that, in the established corpus of Dominican Spanish from the late 1920s, no relevant instances of separated, modified or conjoined directly preverbal subject pronouns have been detected. Although one must not readily extrapolate from the absence of particular constructions in a pre-modern corpus to their ungrammaticality at a given point in time, the non-occurrence

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- (37) \*¿Qué tú *a veces* piensas? Caribbean Spanish  
 ‘What do you sometimes think?’ (Lispki 1994:62,fn.4)
- (38) \*¿Qué tú *mismo* comes? Caribbean Spanish  
 ‘What do you eat yourself?’ (Ordóñez & Olarrea 2006, 74)
- (39) \*¿Qué tú y él comieron? Caribbean Spanish  
 ‘What did you and he eat?’ (Ordóñez & Olarrea 2001, 228; 2006, 74)

From the discussion in this section I conclude that *whSV* order with pronominal subjects in simple argumental *wh*-interrogatives in Dominican, and by extension, other varieties of Caribbean Spanish, follows from the existence of a paradigm of weak subject pronouns and, concomitantly, their regular occurrence in a dedicated, directly preverbal A-position exclusively limited to subject elements, SpecTP.

The projection of this position may be naturally expected to be initially restricted to weak subject pronouns, which, in the course of time, have presumably been increasingly employed to the detriment of null subjects, possibly along the lines outlined in Sprouse & Vance (1999) for French. Such a development would necessarily result in a constantly more frequent projection of SpecTP and, if so, have a knock-on effect on full DP subjects, in the sense that this position, which is in principle open to any kind of subject element, is ‘activated’ as a potential landing-site for non-weak subject elements.<sup>44</sup> Crucially, I consider this surmised state of affairs to be at the outset of the strong overall tendency of full DP subjects in varieties of Caribbean Spanish to occur in directly preverbal position independent of their pragmatic function, verb type, and, most notably, sentence type. Regarding *whSV* order in simple argumental *wh*-interrogatives with full DP subjects, I assume that, in those Caribbean varieties in which weak subject pronouns are recurrently employed, among which is Dominican, SpecTP has eventually come to host also full DP subjects.

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of pertinent instances in the corpus may yet be tentatively considered indirect corroboration for the view that the contemporary state of affairs obtained in Dominican Spanish almost a century ago.

<sup>44</sup> The precise conditions under which full DP subjects start moving to SpecTP remain to be determined on the basis of in-depth diachronic investigation.

## 6 Conclusion

On the level of syntax, varieties of Caribbean Spanish have been specifically noted to additionally allow for non-inversion of the subject and the verb in interrogatives with particularly a simple non-subject argumental *wh*-expression. Despite being on the research agenda for almost a hundred years, the frequency and the kind(s) of subject possible with *whSV* order are still highly controversial, much like the approaches put forth to account for it. Quantitative as well as qualitative claims range from, respectively, an infrequent to a consistent use of such word order and a strict limitation to a subset of subject pronouns to their full paradigm along with full DPs. Still, by gathering a multitude of such claims, it has been shown that, in varieties of Caribbean Spanish, *whSV* order appears to occur regularly with pronominal subjects. On the basis of a refined quantitative analysis of a large-scale corpus of natural speech from colloquial Dominican Spanish, which is contemporaneous to the first mention of *whSV* order in the literature, it has been shown that, in the late 1920s, non-inversion of the subject and the verb in direct *wh*-interrogatives (i) is possible only with *tú* and *usted*, (ii) ranges in frequency from 27.3% to 71.4%, depending on the argumental nature of the *wh*-expression, and (iii) is exclusively produced by young adult speakers. Correlating these findings with claims in the literature on Dominican Spanish, it has been surmised that, in the course of the 20th and 21st centuries, restrictions on the intervening subject have become considerably relaxed, if not entirely lifted, and the use of *whSV* order has gained vital momentum, resulting in a high frequency. The corpus findings have furthermore been taken indicative of the innovative nature of such word order in colloquial Dominican Spanish, whose origins arguably date back to the late 19th century. As far as previous approaches to *whSV* order are concerned, which are manifold and essentially adopt an extra- or intralinguistic reasoning, it has been shown that none of these are free from problems. In particular, while accounts based on the notion of language contact prove to be hardly convincing in the present case, those drawing on one or several domains of grammar, albeit pervasive to a certain extent, eventually fall short of satisfactorily capturing the explanandum. In this regard, an approach has been proposed that, essentially, embraces a larger perspective, by taking into consideration traits of varieties of Caribbean, especially Dominican Spanish which seem to be intimately related to that of *whSV* order and by drawing on insights into the fairly similar situation in medieval French. The adoption of such a larger perspective has been shown to be strongly suggestive of the existence in varieties of Caribbean Spanish of an additional paradigm of subject pronouns which are weak and distributionally constrained to directly preverbal position. In line with standard assumptions on e.g. the standard variety of modern French, the occurrence of such elements has been argued to be accompanied by the projection of a dedicated specifier position at the T level that is exclusively limited to the appearance of subject elements, SpecTP. These developments have in turn been taken to be at the outset of another syntactic hallmark of varieties of Caribbean Spanish, viz. the strong overall tendency of full DP subjects towards SV order. Departing from the null hypothesis that, in these varieties, neither the occurrence of weak subject pronouns nor the projection of SpecTP are restricted to a subset of sentence types, and underpinning this hypothesis by various pieces of evidence, *whSV* order in interrogatives with particularly a simple non-subject argumental *wh*-expression has eventually been claimed to naturally follow in Dominican, and by extension, other varieties of Caribbean Spanish.

As a final note, I would like to suggest, in line with various researchers (inter alia Heap 1990; Toribio 1993; 2000a;b; Pérez-Leroux 1999; Ticio 2004; Camacho 2008; 2013), that the ongoing morpho-syntactic changes considered crucial in the context of the present investigation, viz. the development of a full-fledged paradigm of weak subject pronouns, the establishment of SpecTP as the canonical subject position, and the strive for rigid SV order

throughout, might ultimately result in a resetting of the null subject parameter. This is in fact what happened in French, which, in its earliest stage, evinced the three changes at issue, along with the occurrence of null subjects. As these changes in varieties of Caribbean Spanish bring about a state of affairs that is ever more reminiscent of that obtaining in prototypical non-null-subject languages and, as evinced by French, predate the resetting of the null subject parameter, they can firmly be considered precursors of this resetting. Essentially, though, if such resetting occurs at all, which, as with any kind of ongoing change, cannot be predicted with certainty, it may not necessarily be imminent. In effect, adopting once again the French perspective, the observed morpho-syntactic changes in varieties of Caribbean Spanish might well persist for centuries without the null subject parameter being reset. Whereas regarding French, the resetting took place in pre-modern times, for which the bad data problem in the Labovian sense arises, preventing a thorough technical implementation of the particulars of this resetting, varieties of Caribbean Spanish offer an exceptional opportunity in this respect, as they allow for close investigation of real-time changes in the context of longitudinal studies.

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