

**On the contrasts between *sí* ‘yes’ and *sí que* ‘yes that’ in Spanish and the structure of the Complementizer Phrase domain**

DOI

**Abstract:** This paper aims to account for a host of old and novel syntactic contrasts between the emphatic polarity particle *sí* ‘yes’ and its putative counterpart with an instance of the complementizer *que* –*sí que* ‘yes that’ in Spanish. Even though the two constructions appear to be synonymous in certain contexts, closer inspection reveals that the two elements display a number of non-trivial asymmetries in their behavior and distribution and convey different meanings. We thus argue that the two elements should be treated differently. Building on Hernanz (2007 and subsequent work), we propose that *sí*, which marks focal positive polarity, i.e., verum focus, originates in  $\Sigma P$  and then moves to FocusP. By contrast, *sí que* is directly merged in a projection below TopicP but higher than FocusP in the left periphery, does not encode polarity, and instead renders the meaning that the speaker is extremely confident about the propositional content, be it positive or negative. We argue that *sí que* involves more CP structure than *sí*, which makes a variety of correct empirical predictions.

**Keywords:** positive polarity, verum focus, left periphery, complementizers, Spanish

## 1 Introduction

This paper deals with the emphatic positive polarity marker *sí* ‘yes’ (illustrated in (1)a) and the sequence *sí que* ‘yes that’ (illustrated in (1)b). These two constructions are extremely frequent in present-day Spanish and have on occasion been deemed interchangeable (Carbonero Cano 1980: 167; Leonetti & Escandell-Vidal 2009: 199; RAE-ASALE 2009: 3004, among others). This is suggested by (1), where the meaning of the two sentences appears to be almost the same at first sight, as shown by the English paraphrases.<sup>1</sup>

- (1) a. María *sí* vino.  
      María yes came  
      ‘María did come.’  
      b. María *sí que* vino.  
      María yes that came  
      ‘María certainly came.’

We submit that (1)a and (1)b involve different syntactic structures, which correlate with both syntactic (i.e., distributional) and semantic differences. We argue that *que* is not optional, since its optionality would mean that *sí* and *sí que* should be equivalent in all contexts, contrary to fact. Put another way, the difference between the examples in (1) does

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise noted, the data in this paper were elicited from native speakers of Iberian Spanish. For dialectal variation in terms of the *sí-que* construction, see Villa-García & González Rodríguez (in preparation).

not merely reduce to a superficial matter of P(honetic)F(orm) spellout. Our major claim is instead that the sentence in (1)b involves more syntactic structure, namely a more complex left periphery/CP domain. Our major proposal is outlined in (2).

- (2) a. [ForceP [TopicP [FocusP *sí* [ $\Sigma$ P *sí* [TP ... ]]]]] [Hernanz 2007: 144]  
 b. [ForceP [TopicP [XP *sí* [X° *que* [TopicP [FocusP [ $\Sigma$ P [TP ... ]]]]]]]]

The different analyses proposed in this paper for *sí* on the one hand, (2)a, and *sí que* on the other, (2)b, account for a number of novel contrasts between the two configurations in a unified way. On the basis of previous investigations (Hernanz 2007; Batllori & Hernanz 2013), we provide a number of arguments to the effect that *sí* is an emphatic polarity marker (in FocusP), namely a verum focus marker, whereas *sí que* marks the speaker's strong commitment to the propositional content (Hernanz 2007; Batllori & Hernanz 2013: 27; Poletto & Zanutinni 2013). Thus, our claim is that whereas *sí* is intimately connected to the polarity of the clause, *sí que* is related instead to its propositional content (i.e., the speaker is convinced of the truth of the proposition embedded under *sí que*). In light of a number of arguments, including the observation that *sí que* can co-occur with *sí* in the same clause, with *sí que* invariably preceding *sí*, we contend that *sí que* occupies a phrase higher than FocusP (the locus of *sí*) in the left periphery, and speculate on the nature of such a projection. A more general result of this paper is that the constructions at issue enable us to further our understanding of the delineation of the Spanish left periphery, a topic of heated debate in the Romance literature in the last two decades.

The paper is organized as follows: Section 2 summarizes competing proposals, including the evidence adduced in the existing works; Section 3 outlines the account advocated here and investigates its syntactic consequences; Section 4 concludes the paper and offers directions for future research.

## 2 Existing accounts of the contrast

Before we present our proposal, we will outline a previous account for the structures in (1); in particular, the analysis in question is presented in Hernanz (2007) and Batllori & Hernanz (2008, 2013), where the authors similarly argue that the constructions in (1)a and (1)b are not equivalent and therefore propose a different syntactic structure for each.<sup>2</sup> These authors adopt the split-CP system proposed by Rizzi (1997 et seq.), whose basic structural geometry is furnished in (3) (\* indicates that the functional projection in question is recursive, i.e., that it can be iterative):

- (3) ForceP > TopicP\* > FocusP > FinitenessP > TP...

Assuming this structure, Batllori & Hernanz (2013) propose that in cases without *que*, the polarity marker *sí* is (externally) merged in  $\Sigma$ /Sigma Phrase, the polarity-encoding

<sup>2</sup> See Rodríguez Molina (2014) and Batllori (2016) for a diachronic study of polarity particles in Spanish. Specifically, Rodríguez Molina (2014) argues that the *sí-que* construction arose in the syntax of Spanish after its *que*-less counterpart. According to this author, *sí que* is not attested in Spanish until the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Martins (2013) studies emphatic polarity in Portuguese. Ricardo Bermúdez-Otero (p.c.) points out that *sí que* seems to have arisen historically as the result of polary *sí* + a proposition headed by *que* (though a potential complication of this hypothesis is that standard Italian has *sì che* while lacking clause-internal polarity *sì*, as shown below).

projection proposed by Laka (1990), and then moves further up to Focus Phrase, as shown in (4)a. When the complementizer *que* follows *sí*, Batllori & Hernanz claim that both elements are merged in Force Phrase. According to these authors, *sí* occupies the specifier of this projection while the complementizer is located in its head position, as shown in (4)b.

- (4) a. [ForceP [TopicP [FocusP *sí* [ $\Sigma$ P *sí* [TP ... ]]]]]  
 b. [ForceP *sí* [Force° *que*] [TopicP [FocusP [ $\Sigma$ P [TP ... ]]]]]

We focus on the treatment that the literature has given to each of the two items in turn.

## 2.1 Emphatic affirmative *sí*

Batllori & Hernanz offer a variety of arguments in favor of the structure in (4)a, that is, in support of the movement of *sí* from  $\Sigma$ P to FocusP (see also González Rodríguez 2007). The authors argue that this operation is related to the features borne by the emphatic positive polarity marker *sí*: [+Polar] and [+Emphatic]. The second feature is responsible for the particle moving from  $\Sigma$ P (where it originates because of its [+Polar] feature) to FocusP. This analysis naturally accounts for several syntactic properties of the marker *sí*, such as the word order triggered by this particle, which displays operator/wh-/focus-like properties. By way of illustration, it is well-known that Spanish is a “free” word order language. Although there are syntactic-pragmatic differences, Spanish accepts, among others, the word orders in (5):

- (5) a. Juan compró la tarta. (SVO)  
       Juan bought the cake  
 b. Compró Juan la tarta. (VSO)  
       bought Juan the cake  
 c. Compró la tarta Juan. (VOS)<sup>3</sup>  
       bought the cake Juan  
       All: ‘Juan bought the cake.’

However, these possibilities are restricted if a constituent receives a contrastive focus reading, and is fronted and stressed as a result, as shown in (6). In these examples, *LA TARTA* ‘the cake’ is focalised and occupies FocusP. The presence of this contrastively focused phrase forces subject-verb inversion and hence the subject must appear in a position below the verb, as indicated by the contrast in (6).

- (6) a. \*LA TARTA (y no el periódico) Juan compró.  
       the cake and not the newspaper Juan bought  
 b. LA TARTA (y no el periódico) compró Juan.  
       the cake and not the newspaper bought Juan  
       ‘Juan bought the cake, not the newspaper.’

<sup>3</sup> As a reviewer notes, the order with a full DP functioning as the object is controversial. Since this is not directly relevant to our analysis, we leave aside this debate. See Ortega-Santos (2016) for a recent overview of this issue.

The same behavior is displayed by the particle *sí*, as indicated by (7). This can easily be explained under Batllori & Hernanz's account: given that *sí* is placed in FocusP, it forces subject-verb inversion in much the same way as uncontroversially focalised constituents do. The reader is also referred to Villa-García (2016) for a host of arguments that polarity particles like *sí* are focal.

- (7) a. \**Sí* Juan compró la tarta.  
           yes Juan bought the cake  
       b. *Sí* compró Juan la tarta.  
           yes bought Juan the cake  
       c. *Sí* compró la tarta Juan.  
           yes bought the cake Juan  
           'Juan did buy the cake.'

A (dislocated) subject can appear before the polarity marker *sí*, as shown by (8)a. It is important to note that this is by no means a counterexample to Batllori & Hernanz's proposal. In fact, they convincingly argue that in these cases, the subject is not in the specifier of TP –the canonical subject position– but in TopicP, which is higher than FocusP (see (3)). Note that if the subject precedes *sí*, it cannot be a quantified DP such as *todos los padres* 'all the parents/fathers,' as in (8)b, since bare quantifiers and non-specific quantified DPs are not good candidates for topic-like positions (Rizzi 1986, 1997, et seq.; Cinque 1990, among others). As noted, this does not hold for a non-quantified DP such as *Juan*, which is able to appear in a topical position, as shown in (8)a.

- (8) a. Juan *sí* compró la tarta.  
           Juan yes bought the cake  
           'Juan did buy the cake.'  
       b. \**Todos* los padres *sí* compraron la tarta.  
           all the parents yes bought the cake  
           'All the parents did buy the cake.'

Another argument in favor of the analysis of *sí* in FocusP comes from its incompatibility with wh-phrases and contrastive foci, as shown in (9). The ungrammaticality of these sentences is immediately accounted for under Batllori & Hernanz's analysis. Since *sí* moves to FocusP, it occupies the same slot as wh-phrases and contrastive foci (see Bianchi 2017 for a dissenting view regarding the position occupied by foci). Therefore, these elements compete for the same syntactic position, on the assumption that in languages like Spanish, only one focal phrase can occur per clause (see Ortega-Santos 2016 for relevant discussion).

- (9) a. \**EN* LA HABITACIÓN *sí* leyó el libro.  
           in the room yes read the book  
           Intended reading: 'He did read the book IN THE ROOM.'  
       b. \**¿Qué* alto *sí* es!  
           how tall yes is  
           Intended reading: 'How tall he is!'

For all these reasons, we adopt Batllori & Hernanz’s analysis of the marker *sí* when the complementizer is not present, that is, when *sí* signals polarity (see (4)a). Before we move on to *sí que* under Batllori & Hernanz’s proposal, it is worth considering the actual type of focus that *sí* encodes.<sup>4</sup>

Batllori & Hernanz (2013: 10) claim that *sí* appears in “case[s] of emphatic affirmation, where the occurrence of the adverb *sí* serves to reinforce what is asserted in the sentence by pushing its value to the axis of positive polarity.” In other words, *sí* instantiates contexts in which “a stressed affirmation is obtained” (Batllori & Hernanz 2013: 11). In order to characterize the sort of focus that emphatic positive polarity in Spanish instantiates, it is worth mentioning the different polarity possibilities in the language (González Rodríguez 2009; Batllori & Hernanz 2013; Villa-García 2016), which are exemplified in (10):

- |      |    |                         |     |        |                               |
|------|----|-------------------------|-----|--------|-------------------------------|
| (10) | a. | Pedro                   | no  | baila. | [Negative polarity]           |
|      |    | Pedro                   | not | dances |                               |
|      |    | ‘Pedro does not dance.’ |     |        |                               |
|      | b. | Pedro                   | Ø   | baila. | [Positive polarity (neutral)] |
|      |    | Pedro                   |     | dances |                               |
|      |    | ‘Pedro dances.’         |     |        |                               |
|      | c. | Pedro                   | sí  | baila. | [Emphatic positive polarity]  |
|      |    | Pedro                   | yes | dances |                               |
|      |    | ‘Pedro does dance.’     |     |        |                               |

Thus, the presence of *sí*, as in (10)c, adds a layer of emphasis or focus to cases of neutral positive polarity, which is not marked morphologically in any overt fashion, as shown in (10)b. A question which arises is what type of focus construction such cases instantiate. The type of configuration exemplified by (10)c is an instance of the verum focus (or polarity focus) construction, where the focus of the sentence is the polarity value itself (i.e., the focus is on the polarity component of the sentence) (Han & Romero 2004; Romero 2006; Escandell-Vidal & Leonetti 2009; Leonetti & Escandell-Vidal 2009). The emphatic character of verum-focus configurations is the result of focus on sentence polarity, which emerges when a previously negative sentence is refuted (see (11)a). Thus, in (11)a, *sí* is a polarity marker that reverses the polarity value of a negative previous utterance or presupposed knowledge.

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<sup>4</sup> As noted by an anonymous reviewer, further corroboration of the status of *sí* as a focus marker in a position higher than  $\Sigma P$  is that it does not display the same distribution as *no*. Due to space limitations, we will not review the contrasts here, but the reader is referred to González Rodríguez (2007) for ample evidence to this effect (i.e., unlike *no*, *sí* cannot appear in clauses with a defective periphery such as absolute clauses featuring infinitivals, participles and *-ing* forms, non-finite embedded clauses, and independent infinitival clauses; *sí* cannot co-occur with focalized constituents, but *no* can in a number of cases). In addition, *no* differs from *sí* phonologically in that the latter is always stressed. The question is whether *no* can be focal. Villa-García (2016) investigates this issue with particular attention to TP-ellipsis cases with a polarity particle, and concludes that in some contexts, *no* can also be emphatic. Likewise, as noted by another anonymous reviewer, *Pedro NO baila* ‘Peter does NOT dance,’ with focus stress on *NO* is possible (for such cases, it would be reasonable to propose an analysis of focal negation akin to that proposed for *sí*). See González Rodríguez (2008, 2016) and Martins (2014) for an analysis of metalinguistic negation akin to that of emphatic positive polarity.

- (11) A: Pedro no baila.  
           Pedro not dances  
           ‘Pedro does not dance.’  
       B: Pedro sí baila.  
           Pedro yes dances  
           ‘Pedro does dance.’

*Sí* is also featured in contexts where the preceding XP, which can be any phrase able to be left-dislocated, provides the required contrastive information, as in (12), where *la Pepsi* contrasts with *la Coca-Cola*. Such XPs constitute instances of contrastive Clitic-Left Dislocation (CLLD) (see RAE-ASALE 2009 and Villa-García 2016).

- (12) Hugo no traga la Coca-Cola, pero la Pepsi sí le gusta.  
       Hugo not swallows the Coca-Cola, but the Pepsi yes DAT pleases  
       ‘Hugo can’t stand Coca-Cola, but he does like Pepsi.’

In any case, in sentences where *sí* is featured, the focus of the sentence is placed upon the polarity component. All in all, the evidence adduced above further supports Batllori & Hernanz’s claims about *sí* in Spanish, which is why we adopt their analysis in (4)a here. We now turn to *sí que*.

## 2.2 *Sí que*

For Batllori & Hernanz (2013), *sí que* occupies ForceP, as in (4)b above. We argue that this analysis falls short of capturing certain distributional properties of *sí que*. Under the structure in (4)b, *sí que* should not be preceded by a topic, since this sequence occupies the highest projection in the split-CP structure, namely ForceP, and therefore, there is no available slot to introduce a constituent before it. Nevertheless, as shown in (13), the sequence *sí que* can be preceded by a (contrastive) topic, much like *sí*, as shown in (12) (see also López 2009 for the proposal that the *sí-que* sequence actually provides a test for topichood, in that the material preceding *sí que* must be topical in nature; more specifically, the relevant XPs can constitute different types of topics, as will be seen. In these examples, the most natural interpretation of the dislocates is as contrastive topics. In (13)a, for instance, the speaker means that they work well with that guy as opposed to other people, presumably other workers in the company).

- (13) a. Con ese chico sí que trabajan bien.  
           with that guy yes that work well  
           ‘They certainly work well with that guy.’  
       b. En el jardín sí que fuman.  
           in the garden yes that smoke  
           ‘They certainly smoke in the garden.’

That *sí que* can be preceded by topical material is further corroborated by quotative contexts and embedded contexts where topics can be followed by an instance of the recomplementation (i.e., double-*que*) construction, which Villa-García (2015, 2016, 2019)

argues heralds TopicP. In these environments, *sí que* is also legitimate after the relevant (sandwiched) topics, as shown in (14).

- (14) a. Que con ese chico (, que) sí que trabajan.  
           that with that guy that yes that work  
           ‘I say/somebody says that they certainly work with that guy.’  
       b. Dice Conchi que en el jardín, (que) sí que fuman.  
           says Conchi that in the garden that yes that smoke  
           ‘Conchi says that they certainly smoke in the garden.’

Note also that *sí que* can appear in embedded clauses without a preceding topic, as illustrated in (15)a, which is similar to the corpus examples reported in Batllori & Hernanz (2013) (see also (15)b).

- (15) a. Dice que sí que llovió.  
           says that yes that rained  
           ‘He says that it certainly rained.’  
       b. ... por considerar que sí que actuó como cómplice.  
           for consider that yes that acted as accomplice  
           ‘Since X considers that s/he certainly participated as an accomplice.’  
       [*Telediario*, Spanish Radio and Television Corporation (RTVE), Spain, 5 November 2016]

If the complementizer that heads the embedded clauses in (15) is placed in ForceP (more specifically, in Force<sup>0</sup>), then there is no available slot in this projection to introduce *sí que* under (4)b. Yet, Batllori & Hernanz point out that these examples are not a problem for their proposal. According to these authors, such examples involve a structure in which ForceP splits into two levels, as assumed in (16). However, as far as we can see, there is no independent reason to argue that ForceP can be recursive (and not FinitenessP, for instance) and therefore, such reduplication should be avoided.<sup>5</sup>

- (16) [<sub>ForceP1</sub> que [<sub>ForceP2</sub> sí que ...]]

Furthermore, the proposal in (16) is at odds with the data in (14), which involve embedded dislocates/topics that can even co-occur with recomplementation *que*. Unless three ForcePs are invoked, which is not a desirable assumption, such data cast doubt on the validity of (16).

Consequently, we refute this account and argue instead for an alternative analysis of *sí que* which captures the data above as well as the additional properties of this sequence that we investigate below. We discuss the contribution that *sí que* makes to the meaning of the sentence in due course, although we anticipate that we concur with the intuition reported in Hernanz (2007), Batllori & Hernanz (2013), and Poletto & Zanuttini (2013)

<sup>5</sup> Batllori & Hernanz (2013) argue that it has been noted in the literature that clauses embedded under assertive and semifactive verbs have a more complex structure than clauses embedded under factive verbs. However, as we will discuss in Section 3.7, this difference is not related to a recursive ForceP, but to the presence of projections placed above FocusP.

that rather than focusing on the polarity of the sentence (cf. *sí*), *sí que* centers on the speaker's commitment to its truth value.

### 3 The proposal

As noted, we adopt Batllori & Hernanz analysis of *sí* when this particle is not followed by *que*. Consequently, we assume that *sí* is merged in  $\Sigma P$ , since it is a positive polarity maker, and moves to FocusP in order to satisfy the [+Emphatic] feature, as in (17)a, making it a focal positive polarity marker (an instance of verum focus). However, we differ from these authors with respect to the structure of *sí que*, which they place in ForceP. The interim account that we pursue for *sí que* is furnished in (17)b, where there is an additional projection below TopicP and above FocusP, whose specifier is filled by *sí* and whose head is spelled out as *que*. We will also provide empirical evidence that *que* is a (left-peripheral) head and will offer evidence suggesting that TopicP can actually also occur below XP. It must be highlighted that our main concern is not the label of the projection where *sí que* is placed but the necessity of postulating this projection. We will make preliminary suggestions as to the nature of such a projection toward the end of the paper.

- (17) a. [ForceP [TopicP [FocusP *sí* [ $\Sigma P$  *sí* [TP ... ]]]]] [based on Hernanz 2007: 144]  
 b. [ForceP [TopicP [XP *sí* [ $X^o$  *que* [TopicP [FocusP [ $\Sigma P$  [TP ... ]]]]]]]]

In what follows, we provide empirical support for the claim that *sí* and *sí que* mask different syntactic structures and that *sí que* involves a more complex CP domain. The relevant empirical evidence comes from several correct predictions of the analysis outlined in (17). We submit that it is not just the position, but also the properties of *sí que* that call for a different analysis from the one put forward by Batllori & Hernanz. Similarly, we will defend the view that *sí que* signals a commitment on the part of the speaker to the propositional content following it, but it does not function as a polarity marker.<sup>6,7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Present-day standard Italian also allows the sequence *sì che*, as shown in (i), which carries a meaning comparable to that of its Spanish homolog, as shown by the English paraphrase:

- (i) Ugo sì che lo fa.  
 Hugo yes that ACC does  
 'Hugo surely does it.'

In contrast to Spanish, however, *no che* is also licit in Italian (Poletto 2016; Poletto & Zanuttini 2013; Delia Bentley, p.c.; Simone De Cia, p.c.). In this case, Italian *no che* can only precede a negative proposition, as in (ii):

- (ii) Ugo no che \*(non) lo fa.  
 Hugo not that not ACC does  
 'Hugo surely doesn't do it.'

Thus, it seems that standard Italian has two ways of emphasizing the proposition content, depending on its polarity, with *sì che* reserved for positive clauses and *no che* for negative ones. As we will see, Spanish only possesses the form *sí que*, which can occur with both positive and negative sentences. Note that Catalan also allows the sequence *no que*, as pointed out by Rigau (2012). Crosslinguistic plausibility to the distinction between *sí* and *sí que* in Spanish comes from the fact that, as observed by Luigi Rizzi (p.c.), Italian actually lacks the equivalent of *sí* in examples like (8)a and (12), but *sì che* is attested in this language, as shown in (i).

<sup>7</sup> Due to space limitations, here we do not explore the nature of the complementizer *que* in *sí que*, which seems to perform an echoic function, along the lines of Demonte & Fernández-Soriano (2014).



### 3.1 Topics, foci and *sí* vs. *sí que*

The first prediction made by our account is related to the possibility of introducing topics before the *sí que* sequence, as mentioned in Section 2. The structure in (17)b allows *sí que* to be preceded by a left-dislocated phrase, contrary to what happens under Battlori & Hernanz's proposal, which assumes that *sí que* is hosted in ForceP (see (4)b) (unless we stipulate that topics –not just hanging ones, but also CLLDs– can be external to ForceP, as has been noted). As indicated by (13), repeated here as (18), this prediction is correct, which supports our account.<sup>8,9</sup>

- (18) a. Con ese chico *sí* que trabajan.  
           with that guy yes that work  
           'They certainly work with that guy.'  
       b. En el jardín *sí* que fuman.  
           in the garden yes that smoke  
           'They certainly smoke in the garden.'

In this regard, *sí* does not differ from *sí que*, as shown in (19). This naturally follows from our proposal, since *sí* is placed in FocusP and TopicP is higher in the structure (see also (3) and (8)a).

- (19) a. Con ese chico *sí* trabajan.  
           with that guy yes work  
           'They do work with that guy.'  
       b. En el jardín *sí* fuman.  
           in the garden yes smoke  
           'They do smoke in the garden.'

According to (17), *sí que* and *sí* should differ regarding the elements that can appear after them. In fact, *sí que*, unlike *sí*, should in principle be able to be followed by CP-related phenomena including topics and focalised constituents alongside preverbal subjects (see Campos 1992). This is actually what happens, as illustrated in (20). First, the example in (20)a shows that *sí que* can be followed by preverbal phrases including left-dislocated topics, as noted by Battlori & Hernanz (2013: 28). The corpus sentence in (20)b manifests a preverbal subject after *sí que*.

- (20) a. Pedro *sí* que al final lo va a llamar.  
           Pedro yes that at.the end ACC goes to call  
           'Pedro will eventually call him.'

<sup>8</sup> Hanging topics (HTs/HTLDs) can also be featured above *sí que*, as shown in (i), which contains an epithetic correlate that constitutes the real clause-internal accusative object of the verb *invitar* 'to invite,' a hallmark of HTLD. Poletto (2016) observes a contrast with the Italian counterpart *sì che*, which cannot be preceded by instances of HTs.

(i) Tu prima, *sí que* no la pienso invitar a la muy mezquina  
       your cousin yes that not ACC think invite ACC the very petty  
       'As for your cousin, there is no way I will invite her (since she is so petty).'

<sup>9</sup> See Villa-García (2019) and references there for the claim that PPs can be cases of CLLDs, despite the non-existence of (overt) PP clitics in Spanish.

- b. Ahora sí que sus lágrimas corrían.  
 now yes that his/her tears ran  
 ‘Now s/he was truly crying.’

[CREA, Jesús Fernández Santos, *Extramuros*, Barcelona, Seix Barral, 1994]

In contrast, as noted above (see the discussion around (7) above), *sí* displays focus-like properties (such as triggering subject-verb inversion) and therefore cannot be followed by any overt material apart from the (clitic cluster+)verb in Iberian Spanish (RAE-ASALE 2009), as shown again by examples like (21). The contrast between (21) and (20)a indicates that *sí* and *sí que* involve different structures.

- (21) \*Pedro sí al final lo va a llamar.  
 Pedro yes at.the end ACC goes to call  
 Intended meaning: ‘Pedro will eventually call him.’

The contrasting examples in (22) below illustrate that a similar situation is found with respect to focalised constituents. As pointed out by Batllori & Hernanz, *sí* is not compatible with this type of constituents, as shown in (22)b, which is due to the fact that the focal phrase and *sí* compete for the same structural position –FocusP. As shown by (22)a, however, *sí que* does not obey this restriction: there is a clear contrast between (22)a and (22)b, suggesting that *sí que* occupies a higher position, precisely as claimed by our proposal in (17)b (see the following subsection for further evidence).

- (22) a. ?En agosto sí que SOLO TRES PERSONAS viven en esa casa.  
 in August yes that only three persons live in that house  
 ‘In August, ONLY THREE PEOPLE certainly live in that house.’  
 b. \*En agosto sí SOLO TRES PERSONAS viven en esa casa.<sup>10</sup>  
 in August yes only three persons live in that house  
 ‘In August, ONLY THREE PEOPLE live in that house.’

In the next subsection, we show that our proposal makes correct predictions regarding the compatibility between *sí que* and polarity particles.

### 3.2 *Sí que* + polarity particles

In Section 2.1.1 we argued that *sí* is a focal polarity/verum focus marker. This begs the question of whether such foci can be embedded under *sí que*, as by assumption they occupy FocusP. The answer to this question turns out to be positive, as shown by the novel data in (23).

<sup>10</sup> As noted by an anonymous reviewer, the judgement changes if *sí* is followed by a pause/intonational break. In this connection, Brucart (1999) and González Rodríguez (2009) show that when *sí* is followed by a pause, *sí* is a proform and does not display the same distribution as the polarity marker that is integrated in the predicate. Our analysis applies only to the second type of *sí*.



- b. \*Ahí sí tampoco quiere volver.  
 there yes neither wants return  
 ‘S/he certainly does not want to go back there either.’
- c. \*A María sí no la llamaron.  
 ACC María yes not ACC called  
 ‘They certainly did not call María.’

Our analysis predicts that such elements should be able to appear below *sí que*, along the lines of *sí*, regardless of whether they are positive or negative. This expectation is fulfilled, as indicated by the examples in (28), kindly noted by an anonymous reviewer (the pattern illustrated by (28)c is reported in RAE-ASALE 2009: 3006 and Batllori & Hernanz 2013).<sup>12</sup>

- (28) a. Sí que también sabemos que ahora es más fácil de diagnosticar.  
 yes that too know that now is more easy of diagnose  
 ‘Now it is the case that we also know that it is easier to diagnose.’  
 [Carlos Casabona, <https://aprendemosjuntos.elpais.com/especial/como-ensenar-a-tus-hijos-a-comer-sano-carlos-casabona/>]
- b. Ahí sí que tampoco quiere volver.  
 there yes that neither wants return  
 ‘S/he certainly does not want to go back there either.’
- c. A María sí que no la llamaron.  
 ACC María yes that not ACC called  
 ‘They certainly did not call María.’

(28)b and (28)c show that *sí que* is compatible with a negative particle. This would be surprising if *sí que* were a positive polarity marker, since positive and negative particles are incompatible, as shown in (27). Thus, the grammaticality of the examples in (28) strongly confirms that *sí que* is not a polarity marker, which is consonant with the syntactic analysis put forward here, since *sí que*, unlike *sí*, *tampoco*, *también* and *no*, is not merged in  $\Sigma P$ . As noted in Section 1, *sí que* marks the speaker’s strong commitment with respect to the propositional content following it (Hernanz 2007; see also Poletto & Zanutinni 2013). And crucially, this is the case regardless of whether the proposition under *sí que* is positive or negative. More specifically, the negative polarity particle contributes to the propositional meaning of the sentences in (28)b and (28)c, since it denotes that the event

<sup>12</sup> Aritz Irurtzun (p.c.) points out that a further argument in favor of treating *sí* and *sí que* as different constructions comes from the behavior of *ya* (lit. ‘already’) in varieties such as present-day Basque Spanish. This particle has acquired the ability to signal verum focus (i.e., emphasizing the polarity of the sentence), as shown in (i) (see Camus Bergareche 2012 for the behavior of *ya* in Basque Spanish and Leonetti and Escandell-Vidal 2009 for an analysis of verum focus in Spanish; see also Section 2.1). However, for Basque-Spanish speakers, *ya* cannot be followed by *que* under this interpretation, which indicates that polarity markers that are placed in FocusP and signal verum focus cannot be followed by the complementizer.

(i) En casa ya fuman  
 in house smoke  
 ‘They do smoke at home.’

Daniel Vergara (p.c.) further points out that Spanish Basque *ya* can actually occur under *sí que*, as in (ii).

(ii) En Bilbao sí que ya llueve  
 in Bilbao yes that rains  
 ‘In Bilbao, it certainly does rain.’

did not take place; in other words, it is responsible for the sentence being negative. The sequence *sí que* therefore does not determine the polarity value of the construction –it is not a polarity marker like *sí*– but instead modifies the whole proposition expressing the speaker’s commitment to the propositional content (e.g., in (28)c, *sí que* conveys the meaning that the speaker is really certain that the event of calling María did not take place).

Before describing more precisely the interpretation of *sí que*, we will now show by means of formal mechanisms that the polarity value of (28)b and (28)c is established by the negative marker, and not by *sí que*. In cases of coordination with agreeing polarity values, the polarity particle *también* ‘too’ and *tampoco* ‘(n)either’ are used, contingent on the polarity of the first conjunct clause. This is shown by the contrast in (29). In (29)a, which bears positive polarity, *también* ‘too’ needs to be employed; in (29)b, where the polarity is negative, *tampoco* ‘(n)either’ must be used (Brucart 1999). If we take (28)c and coordinate it with another sentence involving TP-ellipsis, as in (30), the only possible option is the one where *tampoco* ‘(n)either’ appears, which confirms that the polarity of (28)c is in fact negative, in spite of the appearance of *sí que* in the sentence.

- (29) a. (\*No) llamaron a María y a Pedro también.  
           not called ACC María and ACC Pedro too  
       b. \*(No) llamaron a María y a Pedro tampoco.  
           not called ACC María and ACC Pedro neither

- (30) A María sí que no la llamaron, y a Pedro {tampoco/ \*también}.  
       ACC María yes that not ACC called and ACC Pedro neither too  
       ‘They certainly did not call María, and they didn’t call Pedro either.’

The situation in (31) below mirrors that in (30), the only difference being that the polarity value of the sentence is positive in this case and is established by the emphatic particle *sí* or by the null polarity operator involved in neutral positive polarity sentences in Spanish (represented as  $\emptyset$ ) as in (10)b above). Not surprisingly, such patterns require *también* rather than *tampoco*. *Sí que*, much like in (30), modifies the whole proposition and is unrelated to polarity.

- (31) A María sí que {sí/  $\emptyset$ } la llamaron (y a Pedro también/\*tampoco).  
       ACC María yes that yes ACC called and ACC Pedro too / neither  
       ‘They certainly {did call/ called} María (and Pedro too).’

Once we have shown the *sí que* is not a polarity marker, we will devote some paragraphs to the semantic contribution of *sí que*. Since the goal of this paper is not to develop a formal semantic analysis of this construction, we will provide only a description –an intuitive characterization– of the main interpretative characteristics of *sí que*.

### 3.3 *Sí que* as a formal marker of the speaker’s commitment to the content of the proposition

The data provided above indicate that *sí que* and *sí* are not equivalent, despite the fact that they are interchangeable in a context like (32), where B’s response can –but need not– include the complementizer.

- (32) A: No llamó a María.  
           no called ACC María  
           ‘S/he did not call to María.’  
       B: Sí llamó a María / Sí que Ø llamó a María.  
           yes called ACC María      yes that called ACC María  
           ‘S/he did call María.’ / ‘S/he certainly called María.’

As noted, when the complementizer is not present, *sí* functions as the polarity operator of the sentence, that is, it determines its emphatic affirmative value (and tends to be translated into English by using an emphatic form of the auxiliary *do*). The emphatic flavor is due to the fact that *sí* refutes a previous negation; it changes the polarity value of the sentence (Hernanz 2007; González Rodríguez 2009, 2016). Thus, when *sí* is present, the focus of the sentence is the polarity value and as a result we obtain a verum focus construction (see Section 2.1.).

In contrast, when *sí* is followed by *que*, this sequence tends to co-occur with the null affirmative polarity operator ( $\emptyset$ ), which is responsible for the neutral positive value of the sentence (see (10) in Section 2.1). Thus, the speaker’s strong commitment to the propositional content is introduced by *sí que*, not by the null affirmative polarity operator ( $\emptyset$ ), which lacks emphatic value. The fact that *sí que* indicates the speaker’s strong commitment explains, on the one hand, why *sí que*, in analogous fashion to *sí*, has an emphatic flavor (viz. the use of *certainly* in the relevant English paraphrase) and, on the other hand, why *sí que*, unlike *sí*, does not by itself change the polarity of the proposition. What the version with *sí que* does in (32) is to assert the proposition that s/he called María. Poletto & Zanuttini (2013: 126) claim that the Italian equivalent of the relevant sentence “reverses the scale of truth values: the truth value to be associated with the proposition is the opposite than the one attributed to it in the assertion.” However, it should be noted that whereas in Italian *sì che* is always associated with positive polarity (*no che* + neg. would be the construction used in negative sentences, as shown in fn. 6), Spanish *sí que* can be followed both by positive and negative polarity, a matter that we turn to immediately.

So far, as shown in (32), *sí* and *sí que* can appear in a context where the polarity value of a previous construction is reversed. Nonetheless, there are contexts in which *sí que* cannot be replaced by *sí* (Hernanz 2007), which corroborates that *sí que* and *sí* also mask semantic differences. Consider, for example, the context in (33), which involves sentences that bear positive polarity values. In this case, B can employ *sí que* but not *sí*. The reason is that *sí* does not change the polarity value of the sentence in A (in opposition to what happens in (32)), so it is infelicitous in this context. Speaker B expresses a strong commitment to the propositional content introduced by A (in this case, a confirmation); accordingly, the sequence *sí que* is the only felicitous option. In the words of Hernanz (2007), *sí que*, unlike *sí*, is crucially also legitimate in non-denying contexts.

- (33) A: Está lloviendo mucho.  
           is raining heavily  
           ‘It is raining heavily.’  
       B: #Sí está lloviendo mucho / Sí que está lloviendo mucho.  
           yes is raining heavily      yes that is raining heavily  
           ‘It IS RAINING heavily.’ / ‘It is certainly raining heavily.’

[Data from a WhatsApp conversation, Principality of Asturias, Spain, November 2016]

Another context in which *sí que* and *sí* are not interchangeable is the one illustrated in (34) and (35), where *sí que* is preceded by a contrastive topic.

- (34) A: En Madrid está lloviendo.  
           in Madrid is raining  
           ‘It is raining in Madrid.’  
       B: #En Avilés *sí* está lloviendo / En Avilés *sí que* está lloviendo.  
           in Avilés yes is raining in Avilés yes that is raining  
           ‘It IS RAINING in Avilés.’ / ‘It is certainly raining in Avilés.’
- (35) A: En Madrid no está lloviendo.  
           in Madrid not is raining  
           ‘It is not raining in Madrid.’  
       B: \*En Avilés *sí* no está lloviendo<sup>13</sup> / En Avilés *sí que* no está lloviendo.  
           in Avilés yes not is raining in Avilés yes that not is raining  
           ‘It IS RAINING in Avilés.’ / ‘It is certainly raining in Avilés.’

In these cases, the polarity value of the previous utterance is not reversed. Speaker B does not establish a contrast in terms of the polarity value of the previous utterance, but in terms of the city –expressed by means of a contrastive topic PP– in which the event of raining heavily takes place, as in (34), or does not take place, as in (35). In other words, the speaker establishes a contrast between two cities, Madrid and Avilés, and expresses his/her certainty about the fact that the raining event is currently taking place (cf. (34)) or is not currently taking place (cf. (35)) in Avilés.

Throughout this section and the previous one, we have shown that *sí que* does not determine the polarity value of the sentence and that it can in fact be followed by uncontroversial polarity markers. What *sí que* does is to scope over the main assertion of the sentence, giving rise to “an interpretation where the truth value of the sentence is stressed” (Batllori & Hernanz 2013: 27). Put another way, by way of *sí que*, the speaker is signalling his/her commitment to the truth of the proposition (e.g., in (35)B, the speaker is convinced that it is not raining in Avilés).<sup>14</sup> Our syntactic analysis is compatible with these facts. *Sí que* is placed in a phrase higher than  $\Sigma$ P and FocusP whereas polarity particles are merged in  $\Sigma$ P and, if the particle in question happens to be emphatic, as is invariably the case with *sí*, it moves to FocusP, as in (36). This structure accounts for the compatibility between *sí que* and lower polarity particles, but also for the fact that *sí que* does not establish the polarity value of the sentence, since its locus is not a polarity-encoding projection (which is the case for *sí*, initially merged in  $\Sigma$ P) under this analysis.

- (36) [<sub>ForceP</sub> [<sub>TopicP</sub> [<sub>XP</sub> *sí* [<sub>X°</sub> *que* [<sub>TopicP</sub> [<sub>FocusP</sub> *sí* [ <sub>$\Sigma$ P</sub> ~~*sí*~~/ no/  $\emptyset$  [<sub>TP</sub> ... ]]]]]]]]]

We now turn to syntactic contexts where *sí* and *sí que* differ from each other distributionally.

<sup>13</sup> As noted, *sí* and *no* actually cannot co-exist in the same clause in Iberian Spanish.

<sup>14</sup> Poletto & Zanuttini (2013) employ the terms “feeling quite sure,” “being extremely confident,” and “being convinced of the truth of the proposition” when characterizing the semantic contribution of Italian *sì che*.

### 3.4 *Sí* and *sí que* in other syntactic environments

So far, the examples of *sí* and *sí que* sentences furnished throughout feature propositions. RAE-ASALE (2009: 3006) points to the possibility of *sí* preceding not a full sentence or verbal phrase, but a constituent. This is exemplified in (37), where *sí* is linked to the PP *en Cádiz*, which contrasts with *en Zamora*.

- (37) No quiere pasar tiempo en Zamora, pero *sí* en Cádiz.  
 not wants pass time in Zamora, but yes in Cádiz  
 ‘S/he doesn’t want to spend time in Zamora, but s/he does in Cádiz.’

The analysis of sentences such as that in (37) remains a point of contention in the literature, with accounts that hypothesize that *sí* forms a constituent with the phrase that it takes scope over (i.e., ...*pero* [*sí* [*en Cádiz*]]) (Bosque 1984; Brucart 1987, 1999; RAE-ASALE 2009: 3007) and alternative accounts which assume ellipsis/deletion of the material not present in the second conjunct (i.e., ...*pero sí* [~~*quiere pasar tiempo*~~] *en Cádiz*), as argued by Depiante (2004: 65). Whatever the right analysis turns out to be, the data clearly point to a further asymmetry between *sí* and *sí que*, since the latter is illicit in such contexts, as shown by (38).

- (38) \*No quiere pasar tiempo en Zamora, pero *sí que* en Cádiz.  
 not wants pass time in Zamora, but yes that in Cádiz  
 ‘S/he doesn’t want to spend time in Zamora, but s/he does in Cádiz.’

First, under the non-ellipsis account, the data can be taken to indicate that whereas *sí* is not confined to the left periphery of the clause, *sí que* is. This is not surprising. On the one hand, we have made the proposal, in line with previous works on *sí-que* sequences, that *sí que* modifies a *proposition* denoting the commitment of the speaker with respect to it. Similarly, the presence of *que* heralds the presence of a C head, which may simultaneously discharge several functions (Rizzi 1997, 2013; Villa-García 2015, 2019), one of them being that of marking finiteness. This would explain why *sí que* can only take a proposition with a conjugated verb, as shown by the contrast in (39), which reveals the incompatibility of *sí que* with infinitivals.

- (39) Les dijo que no podrían comer fuera, pues llovía demasiado, pero  
 DAT said that not could eat outside as rained too-much but  
*sí* / \**sí* que quedarse dentro y...  
 yes yes that stay inside and...  
 ‘S/he told them that they could not eat outside, as it was raining heavily, but they could stay inside and...’

[based on Maeve Binchy, *Noches de lluvia y estrellas*, Penguin Random House, 2013]

Second, under the alternative analysis which assumes ellipsis of material between *sí* and the relevant constituent, *sí* functions as an ellipsis licenser. The fact that *sí* is responsible for licensing ellipsis but *sí que* is not (cf. (37)/(39) without *que* vs. (38)/(39) with *que*) confirms the standard view that polarity is crucially involved in the licensing of



this type of ellipsis in Spanish (Brucart 1999; Depiante 2004; Brucart & MacDonald 2012; Villa-García 2016, *inter alia*). If this analysis is correct, then the facts above actually substantiate our claim that *sí que* does not encode polarity in Spanish, but *sí* does; hence, *sí* can license ellipsis of its complement, in contrast to *sí que* (see also the examples in (23), which feature *sí que* + an emphatic polarity particle + ellipsis of the complement of said particle).<sup>15</sup>

Be that as it may, the data just reviewed point to a further divergence between the *sí* construction and the *sí-que* construction in Spanish. In the next subsections, we pose the question of how the dislocated phrases preceding *sí* and *sí que* are derived, which reveals yet another asymmetry between the two constructions at stake.

### 3.5 The dislocate/topic above *sí/sí que* and reconstruction effects

Villa-García (2015) has argued that low *ques* in contexts such as recomplementation (i.e., multiple-complementizer configurations) constitute islands/barriers for extraction (see Villa-García & Ott 2019 for recent discussion). If this property is exhibited by low *ques* more generally, our analysis makes predictions regarding the possibilities of reconstruction effects in the context of *sí que* and *sí*.<sup>16</sup> Let us first briefly summarize Villa-García's hypothesis for clarity. This author focuses on non-high *ques*; in particular, he deals with recomplementation *que* (see (14)/(40)). This secondary *que* appears (optionally) after left-dislocated constituents in embedded clauses, most commonly with communication verbs in the indicative mood.

- (40) Digo que, como está nevando, (*que*) viene ahora.  
 say that since is snowing that comes now  
 'I say that s/he's coming now, since it's snowing.'

[Villa-García 2015: 6]

This author claims that elements preceding this non-high complementizer are base-generated in their surface position, since such secondary complementizers induce an island/barrier for extraction. Thus, constituents cannot move across a secondary complementizer even in cases in which there are no additional restrictions blocking the movement. The position flanked between overt *ques* is a merger site, rather than a landing site: moving constituents cannot land in that position and only those phrases that can be directly merged where they surface can occur there. The arguments provided in favor of his proposal come from the lack reconstruction effects of flanked dislocates, unlike their counterparts without a secondary *que* (see also Villa-García 2019 and Martínez-Vera 2017, 2019).

Assuming Villa-García's hypothesis and extending it to low *que* complementizers in general, our analysis predicts that dislocated elements appearing before *sí* should (not)

<sup>15</sup> The data in this paper can therefore make a contribution to the account of elliptical constructions. However, since exploring this matter in detail would take us too far afield, we leave it for future research, noting its importance.

<sup>16</sup> It is not our intention in the main text to present the islandhood of *que* in *sí que* to be a categorical fact, and indeed it would not be surprising to find variation in terms of the operativity of his locality condition (see Kandybowicz 2006 and references therein for variation regarding English *that-t* effects). We will thus present the judgments of our consultants and our own, leaving an in-depth investigation of the issue in question for future research.

show reconstruction effects depending on whether *que* appears below *sí* or not. If *que* is present, then we should only be able to interpret the left-dislocated element in its surface position (on the assumption that low *que* complementizers in Spanish display island-creating properties),<sup>17</sup> while both interpretations should obtain when *sí* appears without *que*. (The reader should note that, as argued throughout, this is not to claim that the difference between *sí* and *sí que* is a matter of (non-)overtness of *que*). Let us begin by focusing on *sí* cases. As predicted, a sentence such as (41) can in principle be assigned two readings: in the former, which is paraphrased in (41)a, the CLLD is interpreted in its derived position, TopicP, and as a result, it takes scope over the universal quantifier. In the latter, we have the inverse scope relation, for the CLLD is interpreted in the position in which it is externally/directly merged. The fact that this element displays reconstruction effects explains why it can have narrow scope with respect to the universal quantifier (see (41)b), which contrasts with the surface order in which the existential quantifier is higher than the universal one (see (41)a).

- (41) (Dijo que) a dos o tres mujeres *sí* las sacaron de todos  
 said that ACC two or three women yes ACC exited of all  
 los edificios.  
 the buildings  
 ‘(They said that) two or three women were taken out of all the buildings.’  
 a. ‘There are two or three women that were taken out of all the buildings.’  $\exists > \forall$   
 b. ‘For every building there are two or three women that were taken out of them.’  $\forall > \exists$

Bound variable data also confirm this prediction, as shown in (42).

- (42) Dicen que en su hijo *sí* confía todo el mundo.  
 say that in his/her son yes trusts all the world  
 ‘They say that everybody trusts his/her/their child.’

In (42), *en su hijo* can be bound by the quantified expression *todo el mundo*, in such a way that the interpretation wherein each person trusts their own child is possible here. Thus, we observe reconstruction effects, which are compatible with *en su hijo* undergoing movement from a VP-internal position to a topic position above *sí*.

By contrast, when *que* follows *sí*, the only available reading is the one in which the dislocated element (the existential quantifier) has wide scope over the universal quantifier. The alternative scope is not available, as in (43)b, which is now explained by the inability of the dislocated phrase to reconstruct in (43).

- (43) (Dijo que) a dos o tres mujeres *sí que* las sacaron de  
 said that ACC two or three women yes that ACC exited of  
 todos los edificios.  
 all the buildings  
 ‘(They said that) two or three women were taken out of all the buildings.’

<sup>17</sup> Under Villa-García’s proposal, the complementizer in *sí que* is a non-high complementizer, since it is a low ForceP.

- a. ‘There are two or three women that were taken out of all the buildings.’  $\exists > \forall$
- b. ‘For every building there are two or three women that were taken out of them.’  $*\forall > \exists$

As far as bound readings are concerned, (44) tests whether they are possible in the presence of *sí que*.

- (44) Dicen que en su hijo *sí que* confía todo el mundo.  
 say that in his/her son yes that trusts all the world  
 ‘They say that everybody certainly trusts his/her/their child.’

In much the same way as with scope readings, in (44) the only possible interpretation is that in which *en su hijo* is not bound by the quantified expression; therefore, (44) can only be understood as involving just one child. The impossibility of the bound variable interpretation here is explained by assuming that *en su hijo* is directly merged in its superficial position, which means that there is no low position below *todo el mundo* in which *en su hijo* could be interpreted in the L(ogical)F(orm) component.<sup>18</sup>

Therefore, although *sí que* and *sí* can both be preceded by a (contrastive) dislocated element, as has been seen, this phrase exhibits a different behavior regarding reconstruction effects in each case; reconstruction effects are only observed when *que* does not occur. We take these data to imply that movement about *sí que* cannot proceed, and therefore only phrases which can be directly merged above *sí que* can occur in this position (see Martínez-Vera 2017, 2019 and references therein for further details of the availability of such derivations for CLLDs in Spanish).

Villa-García’s proposal that low complementizers are island-inducing makes a further prediction regarding long-distance movement, a matter to which we turn in the following subsection.

### 3.6 Movement possibilities across *sí* and *sí que*

The proposal developed by Villa-García (2015) also allows us to make another prediction concerning the behavior of *sí* and *sí que* in those varieties where crossing *que* induces a locality problem. As the careful reader will note, the analysis defended here (cf. (17)) makes two predictions regarding wh-questions in the same clause as *sí/sí que*. On the one hand, *bona fide* questions should be incompatible with *sí*, as both items are focal. This is corroborated by (45) (which concurs with the judgments reported in Batllori & Hernanz 2013; see also Villa-García 2016; see additional examples of the incompatibility of *sí* with foci in Section 2.1):

- (45) #¿Cuándo *sí* viene?  
 when yes comes  
 Intended meaning: ‘When is s/he really coming?’

As for *sí que*, the prediction is that such questions should also be ungrammatical, even if *sí que* is not an element in FocusP and the two items do not compete for the same

<sup>18</sup> The same judgments remain if *todo el mundo* appears preverbally right after *sí que*.

focal slot, as claimed by our proposal. This is shown in (46). In this case, the reason for the ungrammaticality of such sequences is that the low *que* induces a barrier/island for movement, as has been noted. Incidentally, since XP, the locus of *sí que*, is situated between TopicP and FocusP, in (46) there is actually no focus-appropriate position above *sí que* to host a focal constituent.

- (46) #¿Cuándo *sí* *que* viene?  
           when   yes   that   comes  
           ‘When is s/he really coming?’

Interestingly, if questions such as (45) and (46) carry a rhetorical or echoic interpretation, their status improves (e.g., (45)-(46) would be possible in a context in which the interlocutors are talking about a third person who never shows up at meetings; in this scenario, if somebody says that X did not come to a given meeting, one of the interlocutors could utter (45)-(46), which would reinforce the idea that X never attends meetings). This comes as no surprise, since under such readings, the relevant sentences do not contain genuine questions and therefore the wh-items may not involve (focus) movement and they may be located in a position higher than FocusP. This is likewise suggested by the following naturally occurring sentence (heard in the Principality of Asturias in 2019):

- (47) ¡Ves *cómo* *ahí* *sí* *que* hay *que* ir!  
           see how there yes that has that go  
           ‘You see how one certainly needs to go there!’

In (47), the interrogative particle *cómo* is followed not just by *sí que*, but also by a topical (locative adverbial) phrase preceding *sí que*, indicating that its behavior is rather different from run-of-the-mill wh-items featured in genuine constituent questions. The reason is that in genuine constituent questions, wh-phrases must immediately precede the verb, as indicated by (48):<sup>19</sup>

- (48) \*¿Cómo *ahí* hay *que* ir?  
           how   there has that go  
           ‘What should we wear?’

In the same spirit, note that the grammaticality of (49)a below does not constitute a problem for our proposal, despite the presence of a wh-phrase above *sí que*. The reason is that the wh-phrase featured here is D(iscourse)-linked and as a result, it may not move from its base position to FocusP and it may actually occupy a different structural position in the CP domain (Buesa-García 2008, among others; see Rizzi 2001 on the ability of *por qué* ‘why’ to be base-generated where it surfaces<sup>20</sup>). In this context, the wh-phrase may involve

<sup>19</sup> As an anonymous reviewer notes, adjunct wh-phrases do not necessarily have to precede immediately the verb. Torrego (1984) shows that these wh-phrases do not force subject-verb inversion, although this claim has been refined in the works on the topic ever since. In any event, what is crucial for our purposes is that a topical phrase such as *ahí* (‘there’) cannot appear between the wh-phrase and the verb.

<sup>20</sup> Given our claim that *sí* competes with wh-items such as *qué*, the question arises as to whether *sí* can co-occur with *por qué* ‘why,’ which has been treated as a special wh-item in that it can be base-generated in the left periphery (see Rizzi 2001), and therefore it does not behave like a real quantificational operator. If this

a different derivation from canonical (i.e., quantificational) wh-items (i.e., D-linked phrases may be directly merged in the CP domain and they may occupy a different slot from that filled by canonical wh-items. D-linked wh-phrases constitute a sort of topical constituent. This is not arbitrary, since in D-linked contexts, the answer is old information in the sense that it must be picked from an existing set: if (49)a were not D-linked, then the only possible felicitous answer would include the set of all persons who are able to drive. Thus, D-linking is associated with a pre-existing set known to the interlocutors. It is therefore in this sense that they behave like topics). Note that if the wh-phrase is non-D-linked and therefore, it is uncontroversially focal, the outcome is ungrammatical, as expected. This is illustrated in (49)b, where *demonios* ‘demons’ forces an aggressively non-D-linked reading (Den Dikken & Giannakidou 2002):

- (49) a. ¿Quién sí (que) sabe conducir?  
           who yes that know to.drive  
           ‘Who does certainly know how to drive?’  
       b. \*¿Quién demonios sí que sabe conducir?  
           who demons yes that know to.drive  
           ‘Who the hell does certainly know how to drive?’

It must be noted that the grammaticality of (49)a is not incompatible with the fact the *sí que* is related to the commitment of the speaker with respect to the propositional content. (49)a does not ask about the truth of the predicate but about a person from a given set who is able to drive. As Vera Hohaus (p.c.) observes, in a sentence like (49)a, repeated in (50), *sí que* focuses on the bracketed proposition, namely the fact that somebody knows how to drive; the speaker is committed to the truth of “somebody knowing how to drive;” what is at issue is which member of the set shared by speaker and hearer has the ability to drive (hence the D-linked status of *quién*).

- (50) ¿Quién sí que [sabe conducir]?  
       who yes that know to.drive  
       ‘Who does certainly know how to drive?’

If this reasoning is on the right track, then the prediction is that a sentence that questions the main event, as is the case of (51), should be ungrammatical, since what is being questioned here is an event that *sí que* assumes is true (an additional factor conspiring to render (51) ill-formed is the fact that *qué* ‘what’ may only be interpreted as a genuine wh-item in FocusP, thus illicit above *sí que*).

- (51) \*¿Qué sí que hizo?  
       what yes that did  
       ‘What did s/he certainly do?’

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hypothesis is correct, then *por qué* and *sí* should be able to occur in the same left periphery. That this is correct is shown by (i):

- (i) A Madrid no, pero ¿a Barcelona *por qué* sí vais a ir?  
       to Madrid not but to Barcelona for what yes go to go  
       ‘You are not going to Madrid, but why are you going to Barcelona?’

We now turn to the issue of which predicates can select for an embedded clause with a periphery that is able to host *sí/sí que*.

### 3.7 CPs with a deficient left periphery and *sí/sí que*

As noted, the currently-pursued analysis, repeated here in (52), makes the claim that *sí que* involves a richer left periphery, unlike *sí*.

- (52) a. [ForceP [TopicP [FocusP *sí* [ΣP *sí* [TP ... ]]]]] [based on Hernanz 2007: 144]  
 b. [ForceP [TopicP [XP *sí* [X° *que* [TopicP [FocusP [ΣP [TP ... ]]]]]]]]

Therefore, our analysis poses the question of whether *sí que* can occur under verbs that take a deficient (i.e., truncated) left periphery. We show that, as expected, the answer to this question turns out to be negative, although a note of caution is in order, as selection has been shown to be subject to a high degree of inter-speaker variation (Radford 2018; Villa-García 2019, among others).

Demonte & Fernández-Soriano (2009) and de Cuba & MacDonald (2013) show that the complement of certain verbs has a more limited CP layer. In this connection, de Cuba and MacDonald distinguish between two semantic types of embedded clauses: referential CPs and non-referential cPs. Their definition is the following:

- (53) Types of CPs  
 a. Referential CP: denotes an accepted (pre-established or resolved) proposition in the existing discourse/common ground (shared by the speakers), which has no illocutionary force.  
 b. Non-referential cP: denotes a speech act, which introduces a new proposition (or an open question) that is not yet accepted (or pre-established) in the existing discourse. [based on Cuba & MacDonald 2013: 314]

De Cuba and MacDonald furnish the context in (54) in order to illustrate these two types of complements. In this situation, a teacher and a parent discuss the illegal appropriation of lunch money at school on the part of the child.

- (54) a. Teacher: Your son stole the lunch money.  
 b. Parent: I regret that my son stole the lunch money.

The parent's response to the educator includes the factive verb *regret*, whose complement is a referential CP referring back to a resolved proposition that is part of the existing discourse. Suppose, however, that the parent responds to the teacher using (55), instead of (54)b.

- (55) Parent: #I think that my son stole the lunch money.

This response is infelicitous, since non-factive *think* embeds a non-referential cP; therefore, it cannot refer back to the teacher's proposition. The oddity of (55) in this specific discourse context stems from the fact that the parent is introducing a proposition as unresolved when

in fact it is already established as part of the common ground shared by the parent and the teacher.

As noted by de Cuba & MacDonald (2013: 130–131), the inverse patterns of felicity are found in out-of-the-blue contexts. Consequently, in a context where the teacher does not know anything about the theft, it is awkward for the parent to walk up to the teacher and utter (56).

(56) Parent to teacher: #I regret that my son stole the lunch money.

Given that the proposition *my son stole the lunch money* is not part of the common ground shared by parent and teacher, no reference can be made to a resolved proposition. This contrasts with the complement of *regret*, which is referential. However, in an out-of-the-blue context, (57) would be appropriate.

(57) Parent to teacher: I think that my son stole the lunch money.

Since the (non-referential) complement of *think* is not referring back to any pre-established proposition (in fact the parent is introducing this proposition in the common ground for the first time), no infelicity problem arises.

Crucially, de Cuba & MacDonald (2013) argue that the referential status of sentential complements correlates with a structural difference: referential CPs have less structure than non-referential cPs. As shown in (58), they propose that non-referential cPs have a rich left-peripheral structure whereas referential CPs lack ForceP and TopicP:

- (58) a. Non-referential cPs  
           [ForceP [TopicP [FocusP [FinitenessP]]]]  
       b. Referential CPs  
           [FocusP [FinitenessP]]

[based on Villa-García 2015: 39-40]

The authors argue that their system accounts for a number of syntactic differences between referential and non-referential clausal complements; for example, they point out that their proposal naturally explains why factive verbs cannot take recomplementation structures, as in (59) (Demonte & Fernández-Soriano 2009; Villa-García 2015, 2019; though see the latter work for evidence that some speakers accept recomplementation with factives both in English and in Spanish). The embedded clause of *lamentar* ‘to regret’ lacks TopicP, and this is precisely the projection in which recomplementation *que* is placed.<sup>21</sup>

- (59) Lamento   que    en    esa   tienda,   (\*que)   no   compren   discos.  
       regret     that   in   that shop     that   not   buy<sub>Subj.</sub>   records  
       ‘I regret that they don’t buy records in that shop.’

Assuming de Cuba & MacDonald’s account and our analysis of *sí que* (cf. (52)), it is expected that this sequence should be impossible under verbs that take a referential CP. If the sequence *sí que* is located in a projection above FocusP, (58)b predicts that it should

<sup>21</sup> Recomplementation-less topics are possible, but here the position of topics may be TP-related (see Villa-García 2015 for much relevant discussion).

not appear in clauses that lack projections above FocusP, as is the case with embedded clauses of factive verbs (i.e., with referential CPs). The particle *sí*, for its part, should not show such a restriction, since there is no point in the derivation in which it occupies a position higher than FocusP, as shown in (52). These predictions are borne out, as shown by the contrast in (60)a and (60)b (see also (60)c-d).<sup>22</sup>

- (60) a. Lamentó que *sí* estuviera enfermo.  
 regretted that yes be<sub>Subj.</sub> sick  
 ‘He regretted that he WAS sick.’  
 b. \*Lamento que *sí* que estuviera enfermo.  
 regretted that yes that be<sub>Subj.</sub> sick  
 c. No comprendo el hecho de que *sí* nevara ayer  
 not understand the fact of that yes snowed<sub>Subj.</sub> yesterday  
 ‘I don’t get the fact that it did snow yesterday.’  
 d. \*No comprendo el hecho de que *sí* que nevara ayer  
 not understand the facts of that yes that snowed<sub>Subj.</sub> yest.

Now, consider the examples in (61). These sentences show that the contrast above does not arise if the main verb selects a non-referential *cP* and consequently, the embedded clause displays a rich left-peripheral structure capable of hosting *sí que*, as claimed by (58)a.

- (61) a. Creo que *sí* está enfermo.  
 think that yes is sick  
 ‘I think that he IS sick.’  
 b. Creo que *sí* que está enfermo.  
 think that yes that is sick  
 ‘I think that he is certainly sick.’

The different distributional possibilities exhibited by *sí* and *sí que* in embedded contexts depending on the selecting predicate demonstrate that *sí que* involves a more elaborated left-peripheral structure, which lends further support to the account pursued here (cf. (52)).

#### 4 Conclusion and outstanding questions

This paper took as its point of departure sentences involving the positive polarity marker *sí* and their counterparts with an instance of *que* (the *sí-que* sequence) in Iberian Spanish. Despite the fact that these high-frequency constructions are superficially similar in contexts such as (1), we have shown that the two constructions display radically different behavior.

<sup>22</sup> An anonymous reviewer notes that s/he finds a sentence like (i) acceptable. This may be indicative of the variation alluded to at the outset of this section, which further work will have to take into account. For our current purposes, it is sufficient to note that at least some speakers may select a full-fledged CP layer even with factives, which calls for a refinement of de Cuba & MacDonald’s proposal in order to account for inter-speaker variation.

(i) Pensé que era mentira que Pedro tuviera un tumor. Lamento que *sí* que lo tuviera.  
 thought that was lie that Peter had<sub>Subj.</sub> a tumor lament that yes that ACC had<sub>Subj.</sub>  
 ‘I thought that it was a lie that Peter had a tumor. I am sad that he certainly had it.’



Building upon the initial evidence provided in Hernanz (2007) and Batllori & Hernanz (2008, 2013) and upon novel data brought to light in this paper, we have provided a number of empirical arguments, summarized in Table 1, that *sí* and *sí que* should be treated differently in the syntax.

Table 1. Syntactic (a)symmetries between *sí* and *sí que*

|  | <i>Sí</i> | <i>Sí que</i> |
|--|-----------|---------------|
| focus-like properties (e.g., obligatory S-V inversion)   | ✓         | ✗             |
| (related to previous) can be followed by left-peripheral material such as topics and foci alongside preverbal subjects                 | ✗         | ✓             |
| can be preceded by (e.g., contrastive) topics/dislocates   | ✓         | ✓             |
| possibility of a co-occurring polarity marker in a lower projection  | ✗         | ✓             |
| (related to previous) compatibility with a proposition with a variable polarity value  | ✗         | ✓             |
| ellipsis-licensing properties/scope over non-sentential constituents   | ✓         | ✗             |
| island-creating properties (i.e., lack of reconstruction effects of the preceding topic and impossibility of long-distance extraction) | ✗         | ✓             |
| can occur in deficient CPs (e.g., those selected by factives)  | ✓         | ✗             |

Recall that in the course of our syntactic characterization of the differences between *sí* and *sí que* in Spanish, we have also noted differences between the two constructions in terms of their semantic contribution, with *sí* marking emphatic affirmative polarity and *sí que* signaling the speaker's commitment to the proposition appearing below *sí que*. Therefore, our syntactic proposal (cf. (52)/(62)) also captures the fact that there are semantic correlates of the structures proposed: it is not just the distribution of *sí* and *sí que*, but also their meaning that helps us tease apart the two constructions. We thus proposed the following left-peripheral structures for each element:

- (62) a. [ForceP [TopicP [FocusP *sí* [ΣP *sí* [TP ... ]]]]] [Hernanz 2007: 144]  
 b. [ForceP [TopicP [XP *sí* [X° *que* [TopicP [FocusP [ΣP [TP ... ]]]]]]]]

We have shown that (62) makes various correct predictions regarding the syntax of *sí* and *sí que* in Spanish, and the analysis in (62)b actually opened the way to an exploration of the semantic behavior of the *sí-que* construction. As shown, *sí* marks verum focus (i.e., it emphasizes the positive polarity value of the sentence), but *sí que* expresses instead that the speaker is extremely confident about the propositional content. This resonates well with the analysis in (62)b, which places *sí que* in a phrase that is situated between TopicP and FocusP, and argues against proposals that locate *sí que* in the highest left-peripheral

projection, namely ForceP. Our characterization in semantic terms has only been intuitive, and a detailed formal semantic analysis of *sí que* is certainly an important issue that we leave for future research. In characterizing the differences between *sí* and *sí que*, this paper has likewise contributed to the mapping of the much-debated Spanish/Romance left periphery.

Even though we hope to have provided sufficient evidence to grant the postulation of a projection responsible for hosting *sí que*, an important question that we have not tackled so far is the label of the relevant projection. On the basis of the location and major semantic contribution of *sí que*, we speculate that this position —our XP projection in (62)b— could be AssertiveP, a projection independently proposed by Ambar (2002). According to a suggestion in Martins (2014), this position is the locus of some metalinguistic negative particles. Ambar provides arguments that this projection is located between TopicP and FocusP, which is wholly compatible with the foregoing empirical evidence from Spanish *sí-que* configurations. Similarly, Ambar (2009: 29) has argued that AssertiveP actually involves an echoic flavor, which fits in well with our claim to be explored in future work that the *que* of *sí que* can fulfil an echoic function. An alternative theoretical option would be to consider our XP as a ModalP, since *sí que* denotes the speaker's commitment to the propositional content, along the lines of expressions such as *desde luego* ('of course') or *ciertamente* ('certainly'). However, in order to argue for one of the options sketched here, it would be necessary to formulate a detailed semantic analysis of these constructions, as noted above.

Lastly, although this paper has mainly focused on Iberian Spanish *sí que/sí* contrasts, with occasional reference to other Romance languages, in Villa-García & González Rodríguez (in preparation) we show that Latin American varieties generally permit the omission of *que* in *sí-que* sequences. In that work, we argue that the dialectal data substantiate the analysis proposed here and therefore contribute further to our characterization of *sí que/sí* across Spanish.

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