

## Contrastive Focus in Yucatecan Spanish

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### 1. Introduction

In this paper we provide a description and analysis of contrastive focus constructions in Yucatecan Spanish, the dialect of Spanish spoken in the Yucatán Peninsula, Mexico.<sup>1</sup> In this variety of Spanish, fronted focus constructions are notoriously common.<sup>2</sup>

(1) *Yo originalmente A SU HIJO contraté.*

I originally ACC his son hire.past.1sg

‘Originally, I hired HIS SON.’

(SSC: IO)

At first sight, examples like (1) appear to indicate that Yucatecan Spanish allows for the kind of focus fronting that has been reported for many other varieties of Spanish (Zubizarreta 1998, 1999), but which is absent from Mexican Spanish (Gutiérrez-Bravo 2006). However, upon closer inspection it becomes clear that fronted foci in Yucatecan Spanish are different from those of any other variety of Spanish that we are aware of. For example, unlike Standard Mexican Spanish, the Yucatecan variety of Spanish allows fronted foci to be preceded by the negation particle *no*. Secondly, in Yucatecan Spanish there is a verb focus construction in which the main verb is fronted to a left peripheral position and a finite verb form of *hacer* (‘do’) is inserted as a dummy verb into the clause.

This paper provides evidence in favor of the hypothesis that these constructions originate from language contact between Yucatecan Spanish and the Mayan language Yucatec Maya, since the syntax of the above mentioned Yucatecan Spanish focus constructions is strikingly similar to the syntax of comparable constructions in Yucatec Maya. The paper is organized as follows. First of all, we give a brief overview of the syntactic realization of contrastive focus in standard Spanish as described in the relevant literature and we present the fronting constructions characteristic of Yucatecan Spanish (section 2). Secondly, we briefly introduce the general characteristics of the Spanish variety spoken on the Yucatán Peninsula (section 3). Thirdly, we give a detailed description and analysis of (the peculiarities of) several Yucatecan Spanish focus constructions on the basis of data obtained by means of an empirical study carried out in 2012-2013 in Yucatán (section 4). Fourthly, we compare the data to similar constructions found in Yucatec Maya, arguing that the syntactic peculiarities of Yucatecan Spanish regarding contrastive focus are very likely to originate from language contact (section 5). We then briefly compare the contrastive constructions of the Yucatecan variety to the standard variety and provide a formal analysis of the Yucatecan Spanish data (section 6), and finally, we resume our main results and conclusions.

## **2. Contrastive focus in standard Spanish and Yucatecan Spanish focus fronting**

According to the syntactic literature on focus marking in Standard Spanish, contrastive focalization is generally understood as “a quantification-like operation which involves exhaustive identification on a set of entities” (Gutiérrez-Bravo 2006: 164f). This last definition captures the fact that the various kinds of contrastive focus (corrective, affirmative etc.) are all based on the exhaustive interpretation of the corresponding constituents (cf. Kiss (1998),

Zubizarreta & Vergnaud (2005), RAE (2009:2986) and references cited therein).<sup>3</sup> In Standard Spanish, phrasal prominence to signal contrastive focus is very often generated by means of the so-called Contrastive/Emphatic Stress (“acento nuclear enfático o contrastivo”, Zubizarreta 1999: 4228), which “may fall on any accentable morpheme” (cf. 3a).

(2) *El gato de botas ROJAS se comió un ratón, y no el de*  
 the cat of boots red CL eat.past.3sg a mouse and not the of  
*botas AZULES.*  
 boots blue

‘The cat with RED boots ate a mouse, not the one with BLUE boots.’

(Zubizarreta 1999: 4230)

However, according to Zubizarreta (1998, 1999), two further salient syntactic mechanisms of contrastive focalization are clefting (3a) and focus fronting (3b): the latter is well known to be different from topicalization because of its ban on clitic doubling (3b vs. 3c).

(3) a. *Fue a JUAN a quien le regaló María un libro*  
 be.past.3sg to Juan to whom to.him give.gift.past.3sg María a book  
*(y no a Pedro/PEDRO).*<sup>4</sup>  
 and not to Pedro/Pedro

‘It was to JUAN that María gave a book (as a gift), not to PEDRO.’

b. *EL DIARIO (\*lo) compró Pedro.*  
 the newspaper it buy.past.3sg Pedro

‘Pedro bought THE NEWSPAPER.’

c. *El diario* \*(lo) compró *Pedro*.

the newspaper it buy.past.3sg Pedro

‘The newspaper, Pedro bought it.’

(Zubizarreta 1999: 4240, 4242)

Moreover, p-movement (i.e. the placement of the focused constituent in the sentence final position in order to align it with the unmarked nuclear accent) is generally regarded as an equivalent option to mark contrastive focus in Standard Spanish (Casielles Suárez 1997:132; Domínguez 2004:72; Martínez Celdrán & Fernández Planas 2007:217, and references cited above). Most importantly for our purposes, Gutiérrez-Bravo (2006:170) shows for Standard Mexican Spanish that contrastive foci typically appear in sentence-final position, just like presentational foci, unless they are highly definite and individuated.

Now, setting aside the difference between contrastive and presentational focus, the purely syntactic properties of the fronted focus construction are somewhat less controversial. In the grammar of the Real Academia (RAE 2009:2988), as well as in Zubizarreta (1998), following Rizzi (1997), it is observed that, in those varieties of Spanish that allow for them, preverbal foci are still not allowed to co-occur neither with a subject DP placed immediately to the left of the verb or with a *wh*-pronoun, as shown in examples (4a) and (4b). Therefore, it is generally the case that subjects occur in postverbal position in the context of declarative fronted foci constructions, as illustrated by (4c). We will see that these properties of fronted foci are indeed relevant for the study of fronted foci in Yucatecan Spanish.

(4) a. \**LAS ESPINACAS Pedro trajo* (y no las papas).

the spinach Pedro bring.pst.3sg and not the potatoes

(‘Pedro brought THE SPINACH (not the potatoes).’) (Zubizarreta 1998:103)

b. \**A dónde A MARÍA quieres invitar (y no a Marta)?*

To where ACC Maria want.prs.2sg invite (and not ACC Marta)

(‘Where do you want to invite MARIA (and not Marta)?’) (Zubizarreta 1998:107)

c. *Las ESPINACAS detesta Pedro (y no las papas).*

the spinach hate.prs.3sg Pedro and not the potatoes

‘Pedro hates SPINACH (not potatoes).’ (Zubizarreta 1998:103)

Moreover, it is generally agreed that, in constructions with fronted topics and foci co-occurring in one and the same sentence, topics occur in a sentence marginal position at the left edge of the clause, whereas the fronted focus constituent is placed left-adjacent to the verb:

(5) *A Juan, ALGO habría que decirle.*

to Juan something should that to.say.to.him

‘With respect to Juan, SOMETHING should be said to him.’ (RAE 2009:2990)

Finally, it should be mentioned that there is not yet conclusive empirical evidence that corroborates the use by native speakers of Standard Spanish of fronted focus constructions such as (4c), (3b) and (5), (see e.g. Gabriel 2007:285), and further, it is also clear that the possibility of having fronted foci is subject to some dialectal variation. While the informants of Gabriel (2007:287f) accept contrastive fronted foci to a quite high degree in the corresponding perception experiments, the introspective data cited by Gutiérrez-Bravo (2006:171) suggests for Standard Mexican Spanish that fronted foci like (3b) or (4c) are “downright ungrammatical” in

this variety. In this respect, Yucatecan Spanish differs strikingly from Standard Mexican Spanish, since focus fronting is the principal means to realize contrastive focus. The most common types of Yucatecan Spanish contrastive focus fronting involve the fronting of subjects (6a-b), objects (6c), adverbial phrases (6d), verbs (6e), and entire verb phrases (6f). Furthermore, the Yucatecan Spanish focus construction is not restricted to the clausal level, but long extraction of the focused constituent is equally possible, as shown in (6g).<sup>5</sup>

- (6) a. *No YO se lo conté, Alexis se lo contó.*  
 not I CL it tell.past.1sg Alexis CL it tell.past.3sg  
 ‘It was not ME that told him, Alexis did.’ (SSC:TGL)
- b. *No ESO la mancha; TÚ la manchas.*  
 not that it stain.prs.3sg you it stain  
 ‘THAT is not staining it; YOU stain it.’ (SSC: JL)
- c. *Yo originalmente A SU HIJO contraté.*  
 I originally ACC his son hire.past.1sg  
 ‘Originally, I hired HIS SON.’ (SSC: IO)
- d. *No DOMINGO DE RAMOS llovió, el otro.*  
 not Sunday of palms rain.past.3sg the other  
 ‘It was not on PALM SUNDAY that it rained, the other one.’ (SSC:MGL)
- e. *Ellos, VENIR hicieron acá en Yucatán.*  
 they to.come do.past.3pl here in Yucatan  
 ‘They, they CAME here to Yucatán’ (SSC:RH)

- f. *Puro COMER CARNE hice.*  
 only to.eat meat do.past.1sg  
 ‘I just ATE MEAT (during my trip).’ (SSC:IO)
- g. [*No JUGO*]<sub>i</sub> *dijo* *Abu* [*que vamos a tomar* t<sub>i</sub> ], *AGUA.*’  
 Not juice say.past.3sg Abu that go.pres.1pl to drink water  
 ‘Abu didn’t say that we were going to drink JUICE, WATER (he said).’ (SSC:TGL)

### 3. Yucatecan Spanish

There is a fair amount of literature where numerous differences have been registered between Standard Mexican Spanish (or Central Mexican Spanish) and Yucatecan Spanish. Some of these studies are concerned with the internal development of Yucatecan Spanish as a dialect of Spanish that is noticeably different from others, whereas other studies are concerned with the differences of Yucatecan Spanish in the lexical, phonetic and intonational levels that result from language contact with Yucatec Maya. In contrast, the syntax of this dialect of Spanish has hardly been explored up to this point. This is not because specific properties of the syntax of Yucatecan Spanish have not been previously observed: for instance, Barrera Vásquez (1977:344) observes that what he calls *impersonal reflexive sentences* in Yucatecan Spanish (7) appear to originate in Yucatec Maya passive constructions like (8).<sup>6</sup> This construction is also analyzed in Lema (1991), where it is instead proposed that these are not reflexive clauses.<sup>7</sup>

(7) *Se lo quitaron por su papá.*

CL it take.away.pst.3pl by his Dad

‘It was taken away from him by his Dad (lit. they took it away from him by his Dad).’

(8) YUCATEC MAYA

*Luk's-a'ab-ij ti'-ø tumen u yuum*

take.away-PASS.CP-ABS.3sg PREP-ABS.3sg by his lord

‘It was taken away from him by his father.’

Yet there are not many other detailed analyses of the syntax of this dialect of Spanish.<sup>8</sup> There is one work, however, where verb focus constructions like (6e) are identified, namely Sobrino Gómez (2010:90), from where the following examples are taken. In what follows, we build on Sobrino Gómez (2010) for our analysis of contrastive focus in this dialect of Spanish.

(9) a. *Sólo PASEAR haces.*

only to.stroll do.pres.2SG

‘You only go WALKING AROUND.’

b. *TRAGADA hace su comida.*

swallowed do.pres.3sg his food

‘He SWALLOWS his food.’

## 4. Contrastive focus in Yucatecan Spanish

### 4.1 Methodology

We conducted an empirical study with 7 monolingual speakers of this variety in Mérida (3 speakers) and Motul (4 speakers), Yucatán. We further ensured that all the informants had only



monolingual Spanish parents. The informants were required to rate 37 constructions resembling (6) with respect to acceptability. Supplementary elicitation data was later obtained from three other speakers from Mérida and one from Motul. Since acceptability judgments are generally prone to spurious effects of the rating process and of the standard/norm variety which the relevant speakers also dispose of, the acceptability judgments are supplemented by a compilation of examples of relevant spontaneous speech data that was recorded ‘along the way’ during the survey. In the following, where necessary we will refer to the corpus of acceptability judgments by means of *AJ*, followed by the initials of the corresponding participants, whereas the spontaneous speech compilation is referred to by means of the label *SSC*, followed by the initials of the relevant informant.

#### ***4.2 The syntax of contrastive focus in Yucatecan Spanish: Data and analysis***

As mentioned in the introduction, contrastive focus constructions in Yucatecan Spanish basically differ from those of other dialects of Spanish with respect to the two following properties. First of all, as shown in (6a, b, d, g), the fronted focus can be preceded by the negation particle. However, the negation that precedes the focus in these cases does not license the presence of post-verbal negative quantifiers (a fact that we address in detail in §6). This is shown in the examples below.

(10) a. \**No ÉL pagó nada.*

not he pay.past.3sg nothing

(Intended: ‘It was not HIM that did not pay for anything’)

b. \**No ÉL convenció a nadie.*

not he convince.past.3sg ACC no.one

(Intended: 'It was not HIM that did not convince anyone')

The second basic peculiarity of Yucatecan Spanish contrastive focus is that, in verb focus constructions, the main verb is fronted to a left peripheral position and a finite verb form of *hacer* 'do', is inserted as a dummy verb into the clause, as previously shown in (6e, f). Note that this construction is also observed in embedded clauses as illustrated by (11a). The focused verb can equally be preceded by the negation particle, as shown in (11b).

(11) a. *Con todos esos [ que puro TOMAR hacen].*

with all those that just to.drink do.past.3sg

'...with all those guys that just DRINK.'

(SSC:TGL)

b. *No JALADO se hace.*

not pulled CL do.past.3sg

'It's not meant to be PULLED.'

We now consider some of the specific properties that are observed in the verb focus construction. All of the speakers consulted accept this kind of construction when the verb is intransitive as in (12a), or with transitive verbs that clearly imply a high degree of affectedness of the direct object, as in (12b).

- (12) a. *Tú sólo PASEAR haces.*                      b. *Sólo COMER hace.*  
           you only to.stroll do.PRES.2SG                only to.eat do.pres.3sg  
           ‘You only go WALKING AROUND.’            ‘He only EATS.’

With other verb classes the picture is less clear. Some of the speakers from Motul and one speaker from Mérida accept these verb focus constructions with verbs that imply a low degree of affectedness of the object, and also with psych verbs, but the other two speakers from Mérida do not.

- (13) a. *%Sólo PERDONAR hizo.*                      b. *%Sólo ODIAR hace.*  
           only to.forgive do.past.3sg                      only to.hate do.pres.3sg  
           ‘The only thing he did was to FORGIVE.’        ‘He only HATES (others).’

Another relevant observation has to do with whether focused infinitive verbs can appear with an object clitic cross-referencing to the direct object/semantic patient of the verb, as in examples (14a) and (14b). In most instances, speakers from Motul do not accept these constructions. The three speakers from Mérida accept (14a), but uniformly reject (14b). A similar observation applies for those speakers that accept the verb focus construction with psych verbs: grammaticality judgments are mostly irregular, with some speakers, but not others, allowing for the focused psych infinitive to appear with an object clitic (e.g. *%Sólo odiarlo hace*, ‘he just HATES him.’).

- (14) a. %*Sólo COMER-LO hace.*                      b. %*Sólo VENDER-LO hace.*  
           only to.eat-it    do.pres.3sg                      only to.sell-it    do.pres.3sg  
           ‘He only EATS IT.’                                      ‘He only SELLS IT.’

It is worth asking whether the reason why the focused verb cannot appear with an object clitic is because the fronted verb is actually nominal in nature, as suggested by an anonymous reviewer.<sup>9</sup> An analysis along these lines certainly looks promising: it is well known that event nominalizations exhibit mixed properties as concerns the realization of argument structure, i.e. they do indeed project argument structure to a certain degree, but certain arguments tend to be demoted, and the realization of arguments of event nominalizations generally depends on different semantic and pragmatic constraints (cf. e.g. Alexiadou 2010 for details). Moreover, this analysis might account for the evident modal or aspectual values of these verb focus constructions, which closely resemble the aspectual meaning components of event nominalizations (cf. e.g. Uth, to appear b, and the references therein, for details). Such an analysis, though, would still have to account for three properties of the data presented here. First, while it is certainly common for focused verbs to be nominalizations (see for instance Manfredi 1993), this does not by itself prevent the focused verb from appearing with its complement. For instance, focused verbs are nominalizations in Yorùbá, but they can still appear with their complements (Manfredi 1993:19-20), and the same situation is described for Oiartzun Basque in Haddican (2007:745). Secondly, the split judgments of the speakers from Mérida point in the direction that the restriction is arguably semantic in nature, relating to the different lexical semantic properties of different verb classes: this in turn seems to be corroborated by the fact that some speakers accept these focused verb + clitic constructions with psych verbs, but others do

not. Lastly, recall that we have one case where the fronted focused verb appears with a full lexical complement (6f). If nominalization of the focused verb by itself were to rule out focused verb + clitic constructions, it would be unclear why it would not similarly rule out the presence of a full lexical complement with the focused verb in this case. Ultimately, though, these are issues which exceed the scope of the present paper and need to be left for future research.

Now, observe that in (14) we represent the object clitic *lo* as attached to the focused verb, and not to the light verb. This representation is based exclusively on our own prosodic intuitions about these constructions. However, it is a relevant question if the clitic is not actually attached instead to the light verb itself.<sup>10</sup> Although we believe that ultimately the strongest evidence to settle this question would be provided by an instrumental prosodic analysis (which cannot be undertaken here), there is some syntactic evidence in favor of the representation we suggest. In Spanish, when some auxiliaries like the progressive *estar* are present, an object clitic can alternatively attach to the left of the auxiliary or to the right of the main verb, as in the following examples.

- (15) a. *Ana lo está leyendo.*                      b. *Ana está leyendo-lo.*  
Ana cl be.3sg reading                              Ana be.3sg reading-cl  
'Ana is reading it.'                                'Ana is reading it.'

If the object clitic in (14) were indeed associated with the main verb, then we would expect to see the same alternation observed in the examples above. Although verb focus constructions with auxiliaries are uncommon in Yucatecan Spanish, speakers do accept elicited examples with

*estar*. However, they have robust intuitions that verb focus constructions with a structure like (15b) are impossible. This indicates that the clitic is attached to the focused verb.<sup>11</sup>

- (16) a. *Puro jugar-lo hace.*                      b. \**Puro jugar está haciendo-lo.*  
only to.play-it do.3sg                      only to.play be.3sg do.gerund-it  
'He only PLAYS with it.'

- (17) a. *Puro molestar-lo hace.*                      b. \**Puro molestar está haciendo-lo.*  
only to.bother- it do.3sg                      only to.bother be.3sg do.gerund-it  
'He only BOTHERS him.'

Lastly, our data shows that there is also a restriction at play concerning constructions with contrastively focused participles. As evidenced above in (9b) and (11b), the focused verb can also be a participle. There is, however, apparently also speaker variation with respect to the kinds of verbs that can be used in these constructions. Our data indicate that if the transitive root from which the participle is constructed implies that the patient undergoes some kind of spatial displacement, the resulting constructions are acceptable for all speakers consulted:

- (18) a. *No JALADO se hace.*                      b. *No EMPUJADO se hace.*  
not pulled CL do.past.3sg                      not pushed CL do.past.3sg  
'It's not meant to be PULLED.'                      'It's not meant to be PUSHED.'

With transitive verbs that do not imply the displacement of the direct object, judgments are evenly split between speakers of Motul, which accept constructions like the ones below, and speakers from Mérida, who do not.

- (19) a. %*Yo COMPRADO lo hice.*                      b. %*No ROBADO lo hice.*  
I bought it do.pres.1sg                      not stolen it do.pres.1sg  
'I BOUGHT it.'                                      'I did not STEAL it.'

In the following section, we compare the syntactic properties of the above constructions with those of the corresponding constructions of Yucatec Maya.

## 5. Comparison with Yucatec Maya

In the above section, we singled out three basic peculiarities of Yucatecan Spanish contrastive focus constructions with respect to which Yucatecan Spanish differs importantly from (close to) standard varieties of Spanish: more precisely, we saw that (i) the standard way to realize contrastive focus is by means of fronted constituents, (ii) it is possible to negate fronted constituents in contrastive focus, and (iii), the verb focus constructions are construed by means of fronting of the main verb plus insertion of a dummy *hacer*-form. Crucially, all the syntactic properties mentioned above are salient properties of the syntax of Yucatec Maya, the Mayan language that Spanish has been in contact with in the Yucatán Peninsula for almost 500 years.

Like most other Mayan languages, Yucatec Maya displays robust use of preverbal contrastive foci (see Gutiérrez-Bravo & Monforte 2011, *inter alia*), and, just like in many other Mayan languages, the preverbal focus can be preceded by a negation particle as shown in (20a). Lastly,

the verb focus construction in Yucatec Maya has essentially the same structure as the one illustrated above for Yucatec Spanish. As can be seen in (20b), the focused verb occupies the same left peripheral position as other kinds of foci, and a dummy verb *beet* ‘do’ functions as the main finite verb of the clause, a syntactic process that is not observed elsewhere in the syntax of Yucatec Maya.

(20) a. *To'on-e', ma' LETI' kaan-s-a'an-ø to'on-i'.*

1PL-TOP NEG 3SG learn-CAUS-PART-ABS.3s 1PL-CL.NEG

‘To us, it was not THAT what was taught to us.’

(MDG-B:266)

b. *Okol-bil u beet-ik-ø wal-e'.*

steal-NFP ERG.3 do-IND-ABS.3sg perhaps-CL

‘Maybe he used to STEAL it.’

(Gutiérrez-Bravo 2015a)

There are hence various pieces of evidence suggesting that the syntax of the Yucatecan variety of Spanish is indeed importantly influenced by the Mayan adstrat language, at least as far as the realization of contrastive focus is concerned.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, we saw in the previous section that sentential negation in Yucatecan Spanish licenses the occurrence of a negative quantifier in the postverbal position, whereas the negation that precedes foci in focus constructions cannot (i.e. *El joven no pagó nada.* vs. *\*No él pagó nada*). Observe that the same contrast is observed in Yucatec Maya, which is also a negative concord language (Gutiérrez-Bravo 2015b), as shown in the examples below. This provides further support for the hypothesis that the contrastive focus constructions of Yucatecan Spanish originate in Yucatec Maya.<sup>13</sup>



- (21) a. *Le máak-o' ma' t-u man-aj-∅ mixba'al-i'.*  
 DEM person-CL NEG CP-ERG.3 buy-PRF-ABS.3sg nothing-CL.NEG  
 'The man did not buy anything.'
- b. \**Ma' leti' ts'on-∅ mixba'al-i'.*  
 NEG 3.SG shoot-ABS.3s nothing-CL.NEG  
 (Intended: 'It was not HIM that did not hunt anything')

Finally, besides to the three basic peculiarities mentioned above, we also pointed to the fact that there is a high degree of variation with respect to the possibility to realize object clitics in verb focus constructions (examples in (14), e.g. %*Sólo comerlo hace*), with some speakers, but not others, allowing for the focused infinitive to appear with an object clitic. Given that (Yucatecan) Spanish infinitive verbs are freely allowed to appear with accusative and dative clitics, this idiosyncrasy of Yucatecan Spanish verb focus constructions may come as a bit of a surprise (see §4.2). But once again it is possible that this peculiarity originates in the verb focus constructions of Yucatec Maya. Specifically, the focused verb in Yucatec Maya cannot be a finite form, and cannot cross-reference its arguments by means of verbal morphology (Gutiérrez-Bravo 2015a) as can be observed in example (22a). This prohibition against focused verbs in Yucatec Maya cross-referencing to their arguments through morphology is robust and uniform (in contrast with what is observed in Yucatecan Spanish), and does not depend on verb class, syntactic category, or other considerations. It is worth mentioning that this restriction in Yucatec Maya is (equally) specific of the verb focus construction. The same verb forms used for verb focus can cross-reference to their arguments in other contexts, as can be seen in (22b).<sup>14</sup> Hence, the comparison of the peculiarities of Yucatecan Spanish with the comparable data in Yucatec



‘You only go WALKING AROUND.’

(24) a. \**Quién ESO manchó?*

who that stain.past.3sg

b. \**Dónde PASEAR hace?*

where to.stroll do.pres.3sg

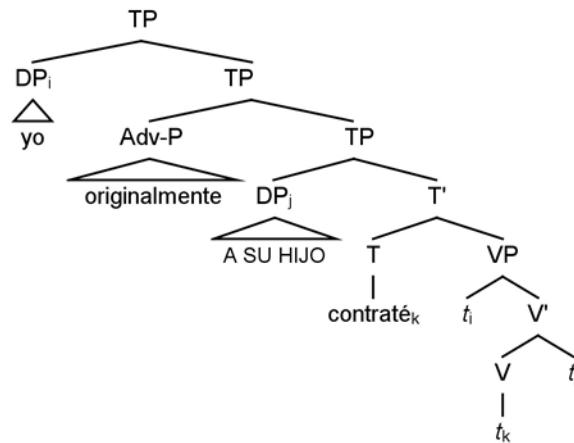
As such, in spite of some striking differences between Yucatecan Spanish and other dialects of Spanish, Yucatecan Spanish still displays some of the most characteristic syntactic properties of other varieties of Spanish, at least with respect to word order. This allows for a fairly simple analysis of the Yucatecan Spanish data. We adopt the analyses in Zubizarreta (1998) and Gutiérrez-Bravo (2006), where preverbal unmarked subjects, *wh*-operators and fronted foci all have [Spec, T] as their final landing site. This accounts for the fact that in (23b) and (24) these elements cannot co-occur in the preverbal field. Just as in the standard variety, leftmost topicalized subjects such as *tú* in (23a) and further sentence topics that may be observed in the clause do not compete for this position (cf. again RAE 2009:2990 and example (5) in §2 above). Rather, we analyze them as adjoined to TP and so they bear no effect on the kind of XP that surfaces in [Spec, T]. As such, for example 0, repeated here as 0, we assume the analysis in 0, where a simplified VP is presented for expository purposes.

(25) *Yo originalmente A SU HIJO contraté.*

I originally ACC his son hire.past.1sg

‘Originally, I hired HIS SON.’

(26)



Evidence that the pre-focal subject in these cases occupies a topic position can be found in definiteness restrictions on the subject XP. Specifically, speakers readily accept highly definite and individuated XPs in this position (*yo, Pedro, el muchacho* ‘the boy’). However, even though judgments are not entirely uniform across speakers, acceptability degrades the more we descend on the definiteness scale, as shown by the examples below:<sup>15</sup>

(27) a. %*Un muchacho, no JÍCAMA compró, guayaba.*

a boy not jicama buy.past.3sg, guava

‘A boy did not buy JICAMA, but (instead) guavas.’

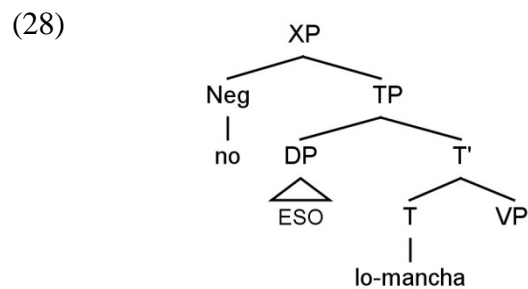
b. \**Alguien, no JÍCAMA compró, guayaba.*

someone not jicama buy.past.3sg, guava

‘Someone did not buy JICAMA, but (instead) guavas.’

Now, the central part of the analysis in (26) is the fact that fronted foci have [Spec, T] as their final landing site. Based on this analysis, which can equally be adopted for other varieties of Spanish where focus fronting is observed (see Zubizarreta 1998), we now turn to the peculiarities

of Yucatecan Spanish. Consider first the fact that negation can precede the fronted focus in this dialect of Spanish. Since the focus surfaces in [Spec, T], on a first approximation it would be reasonable to think that the negation is located somewhere above TP but below the landing site of sentence topics preceding the focus, as in the analysis of Mayan languages developed in Aissen (1992).



As it turns out, our data indicate that this analysis cannot be entirely correct. Specifically, there is evidence that the negation observed in examples such as e.g. (6a, b, d, g), (11b) and (18) is not the sentential negation of examples like (29).

(29) *El joven no pagó su comida.*

The young.man not pay.past.3sg his food

‘The young man did not pay his food.’

Rather our claim is that the negation that precedes the foci in the above mentioned examples is an instance of constituent negation (Lasnik 1972, Haegeman 1995), i.e. it is internal to the phrase that is in focus. Evidence for this comes from the fact that sentential negation in Yucatecan Spanish (just as in every other variety of Spanish, as is well known) licenses the

occurrence of a negative quantifier in the postverbal position. However, as previously mentioned in §4.2, this is not what is observed with the negation that precedes foci in the Yucatecan Spanish focus constructions, which cannot license any negative quantifier. The resulting analysis is shown in (30b), which corresponds to (10a).

- (30) a. [[*El joven*]        *no pagó*        *nada*].  
           the young.man not pay.past.3sg nothing  
           ‘The young man did not pay for anything’
- b. \*<sub>[TP]</sub> [*No ÉL*] *pagó*        *nada*.  
           not he pay.past.3sg nothing  
           (‘It was not HIM that did not pay for anything’)

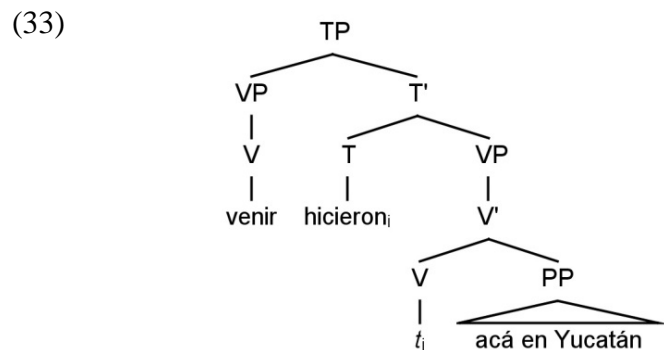
Further evidence in favor of the above analysis comes from the fact that this peculiar negation of the Yucatecan Spanish focus construction is not clause-bound. As shown in (6g), repeated here as (31), long extraction of the focus preceded by a negation particle is equally possible.<sup>16</sup> This is unexpected if the negation that precedes the focus is the sentential negation, but follows unproblematically from our analysis of it as a constituent negation.

- (31) [*No JUGO*]<sub>i</sub> *dijo*        *Abu [que vamos a tomar t<sub>i</sub> ], agua.*  
           Not juice say.past.3sg Abu that go.pres.1pl to drink water  
           ‘Abu didn’t say that we were going to drink JUICE, WATER (he said).’        (SSC:TGL)

Lastly, observe that in standard dialects of Mexican Spanish, internal negation does not license negative quantifiers either, which again supports the analysis we propose in (30b):<sup>17</sup>

- (32) a. *\*[No siempre] compro nada.*  
 Not always buy.pres.1sg nothing
- b. *\*[No todos los niños] trajeron nada.*  
 Not all the children bring.past.3sg nothing
- c. *\*[No muchas personas] quieren a nadie.*  
 Not many people love.pres.3pl ACC no.one

We finally turn to verb focus constructions like (6e) and (6f). A lot remains to be said about these constructions, especially given the fact that grammaticality judgments for the more complex kinds of these constructions tend to vary considerably between speakers. However, it would at least seem that a unified structural analysis of the verb focus construction with all the focus constructions analyzed in this section can be arrived at with an analysis in which the focused verb is the head of a VP that occupies the [Spec, T] position as in the phrase marker below, which corresponds to (6e).<sup>18</sup>



There are two reasons that make this analysis preferable to an alternative analysis in which the focused verb is not the head of its own phrase (i.e. an alternative analysis involving head movement of the focused verb to a head position in the left periphery). First, as can be seen in the examples presented throughout this paper, verb focus constructions in Yucatecan Spanish are typically accompanied by focus operators such as *solo* ‘only’ and *puro*, ‘just’. Presumably, these focus operators are adjoined to the VP that occupies [Spec, T], as in (34).

- (34) [TP[<sub>VP</sub> *Sólo* [<sub>VP</sub> *COMER*]] *hace*].  
only to.eat do.prs.3sg  
‘He only EATS.’

Secondly, during our research we recorded an instance of spontaneous speech of the focused verb with its direct object (in what is presumably a case of full VP focus and not just verb focus), (6f), repeated below as (35):

- (35) *Puro COMER CARNE hice*.  
just to.eat meat do.pst.1sg  
‘I just ATE MEAT (during my trip).’

This datum should only be considered preliminary pending a more thorough investigation like the one that was done through elicitation for the rest of the data presented in this paper. Lastly, note that the analysis of verb focus sketched above allows for a potential account of the



variation observed with respect to the possibility of the focused verb appearing with an object clitic. If object clitics are generated in the functional projections above the VP, then the possibility of the focused verb bearing an object clitic may be related to whether or not the focused VP can appear with these functional projections when it occupies [Spec, T]. Developing this analysis in detail, however, is beyond the scope of this paper and so we leave this issue open for future investigation.

## **7. Conclusions**

The above analysis of contrastive focus in Yucatecan Spanish points to important insights concerning the contact between the Yucatecan variety of Spanish and the Mayan adstrat in particular, as well as the broader questions relating to language contact and syntactic transfer in general. First of all, our investigation reveals that focus fronting in Yucatecan Spanish is indeed very common and idiosyncratic, compared to what is known so far with respect to other varieties of Spanish. Furthermore, it is interesting to note the striking equivalence between the Yucatecan Spanish peculiarities in the realm of contrastive focus realization, and focalization in Yucatec Maya, to the point that the Yucatecan Spanish verb focus construction is almost entirely parallel to the corresponding verb focus constructions in Yucatec Maya. Similarly, we saw that the fronted negated foci are best analyzed as cases of constituent negation, just like their Yucatec Maya counterparts. Finally, the possibility to realize object clitics in verb focus constructions seems to be highly restricted, if not impossible, for most of the speakers of Yucatecan Spanish that participated in our survey. This characteristic is very likely to result from the general impossibility of Yucatec Mayan fronted verbs to cross-reference their arguments. All in all, our

analysis contributes important evidence in favor of the hypothesis that the Yucatec Mayan (adstrat) grammar has an important bearing on the syntax of Yucatecan Spanish. On the other hand, our analysis reveals several similarities between the Yucatecan variety of Spanish and the standard variety, suggesting, for example, that the fronted foci of Yucatecan Spanish are very likely to have [Spec, T] as their landing site, as proposed by Zubizarreta (1998) and Gutiérrez-Bravo (2006) for fronted foci in the standard variety. All in all, our investigation offers interesting evidence in favor of a direct, but partial syntactic transfer in a linguistic contact situation involving two typologically unrelated languages.

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<sup>2</sup> The abbreviations used in the examples in this paper are the following: ABS: absolutive, ACC: accusative, CAUS: causative, CL: clitic, CP: completive, DEM: demonstrative, ERG: ergative, IND: indicative, IRR: irrealis, NEG: negation, NFP: non-finite passive, PART: participle, PASS: passive, pl: plural, PREP: preposition, PRF: perfective, prs: PRESENT sg: singular, SUBJ: subjunctive, TOP: topic. In text examples, the abbreviation MDG-B corresponds to Monforte *et al.* (2010).

<sup>3</sup> There is certain terminological confusion as concerns the denomination of the different focus types. Here we follow the terminology in Zubizarreta & Vergnaud (2005).

<sup>4</sup>The glosses and translations of these examples are our own. In our syntactic analysis, it is not necessary to determine whether the sentence final accents in (3) and all the relevant examples in this paper are to be traced back to the NSR or to Contrastive/Emphatic stress assignment, coincidentally being realized in sentence final position. Although several researchers argue in favor of a prosodic, but non-intonational differentiation of the two kinds of phrasal prominence in this position (e.g. Face 2002:57), further research is needed to resolve this issue.

<sup>5</sup> The examples in (6) demonstrate that all Yucatecan Spanish contrastive focus constructions discussed in the present paper are instances of contrastive focalization as defined above, conveying a contrastive or exhaustive interpretation. As such, they differ from the *verum focus* of Leonetti & Escandell-Vidal (2009), which essentially boil down to the association of focus with sentence polarity. For example, unlike what is stated by Leonetti & Escandell-Vidal (2009: 161) for the case of the *verum focus* constructions, the fronted elements of the Yucatecan Spanish contrastive constructions may: (i) co-occur with an explicit mention of the discarded alternative (cf. 6a, b, d, g), and: (ii) bear emphatic stress in the overwhelming majority of the cases (Grice & Uth 2015, Uth, to appear).

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<sup>6</sup> We have modified Barrera Vásquez's original Yucatec Maya example according to the language's current orthographic norm.

<sup>7</sup> Lema claims that these constructions are in no way specific to Yucatecan Spanish, and so she rejects the idea that they originate in the syntax of Yucatec Maya passive constructions. Rather, she proposes that the similar semantics that these Yucatec constructions share with the corresponding Spanish constructions have reinforced the use of the latter in this dialect of Spanish.

<sup>8</sup> Amongst the few that can be found are the study in Lema (1995) of the postverbal position of the subject, and works regarding particular aspect distinctions related to the special use of the verb 'pasar' with a proximative reading, and the existence of an assurative auxiliary (i.e. Sobrino Gómez 2010).

<sup>9</sup> In fact, we are thankful to Barbara Pfeiler (p.c.) for originally suggesting such an analysis to us (March 2013).

<sup>10</sup> We are thankful to an anonymous reviewer for bringing this issue to our attention.

<sup>11</sup> The speakers we consulted did accept one case of this kind of construction in which the clitic was the first person singular clitic *me*. At present, we have no explanation for this exception.

<sup>12</sup> A note on fronted focus constructions in Old Spanish is in order here. Infinitival verb forms are known to be quite commonly fronted to a position in front of the corresponding auxiliary or modal verb in Old Spanish (e.g. *Bastir quiero dos archas*, 'I want to build two chests', Fontana 1996:192). As such, the fronted verbs of Yucatecan Spanish could be considered to result from a reactivation or continuation of the Old Spanish verb fronting constructions. However, a closer look at the relevant data allows us to conclude that the Old Spanish verb fronting is entirely different from the Yucatecan Spanish verb focus construction. To cite just one piece of evidence, the Old Spanish fronted verbs occurred with all different kinds of auxiliaries and modal verbs *except* 'hacer' (Fontana 1996), whereas 'hacer'-insertion is one of the basic characteristics of the relevant constructions in Yucatecan Spanish.

<sup>13</sup> The negation clitic *-i*' in the examples in (22) is an enclitic that appears in a number of constructions where the sentential negation *ma*' is present, typically perfective and stative constructions. Although the behavior of this clitic in Yucatec Maya is still poorly understood, many examples like (21a) point to the possibility that this clitic may signal the scope of the sentential negation. This possibility, however, is not immediately compatible with our analysis (developed in what follows) of the negation in (21b) as a constituent negation. This is an important issue

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that needs to be addressed before fully understanding the behavior of this enclitic in Yucatec Maya, but is not directly relevant for the analysis of the data from Yucatecan Spanish that is the focus of this paper.

<sup>14</sup> In these examples the focused verb is a transitive verb in a non-finite (i.e. a defective) passive form characterized by the suffix *-bil*. See Gutiérrez Bravo (2015a) for a detailed analysis.

<sup>15</sup> Examples where the subject is the negative XP *nadie*, ‘no one’, are uniformly rejected, but this may be the result of *nadie* coexisting in the preverbal field with a negated focus.

<sup>16</sup> It could be claimed that (31) is not really a case of a fronted focus preceded by a negation, but rather of gapping. There are two facts that make this alternative analysis problematic. First, gapping does not generally allow the gapped constituent to precede its antecedent. Secondly, the gapping construction with no fronting of the focus is clearly possible in Standard Spanish (*Abu dijo que vamos a tomar agua, no jugo* ‘Abu said that we were going to drink water, not juice’), but (31) is not, a contrast that goes unaccounted for in the gapping analysis of (31).

<sup>17</sup> It is worth pointing out that not every sequence of a negation plus an XP in Spanish can be straightforwardly taken to be the case of internal negation. Specifically, Etxepare & Uribe-Etxebarria (2011) present evidence from Peninsular Spanish that indicates that although [*no muchos*] is a case of internal negation, [*no todos*] is not. They propose that the negation in [*no todos*] is the same sentential negation as in any other negative clause in Spanish. Although this difference certainly merits a more detailed investigation, as far as we can tell the evidence supporting this analysis in Peninsular Spanish does not carry over to Mexican Spanish. This contrast between these two varieties of Spanish is not entirely surprising. In the analysis in Etxepare & Uribe-Etxebarria (2011), [*todos*] in the [*no todos*] sequence is a fronted focus in the specifier of a Focus Phrase that is dominated by the XP headed by the sentential negation *no*. In contrast, as discussed earlier in this paper, fronted foci are unattested in Mexican Spanish. Yucatecan Spanish (which does allow fronted foci) could then in principle resemble either Peninsular or Mexican Spanish with respect to the [*no todos*] sequence. This specific issue, however, is not relevant for the evaluation of the contrast between the examples in (30b) and (31), where the negation is internal.

<sup>18</sup> Note that, as analyzed above, verb focus constructions are instances of focalization where the focus is base-generated in [Spec,T]. In other words our analysis proposes that, contrary to other focus constructions, the verb foci considered here do not actually undergo movement. Studying this peculiarity in detail is an important question, but not one that we can address in this paper.