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Abbreviations

1 First person
2 Second person
3 Third person
ACC Accusative
ACC-CL Accusative clitic
Ag Agent
CL Clitic
DAT-CL Dative clitic
Ex Experiencer
Inv Inversion
Loc Location
p Plural
s Singular
t Temporal
Th Theme
Tense
plural
singular
present
past
root
p
s

1

2

3

Temporal
Subject
Predicate
Experiencer
Direct (indirect object) clitic
Accusative (direct object) clitic
Accusative Preposition
Third Person
Second Person
First Person

Prepositions
1

2

3

1

2

3
This dissertation investigates a number of word order phenomena observed in two left-peripheral phenomena in Spanish, coordination and the fronting position where the EPP is satisfied. These phenomena are explained by a number of word order facts observed in the markedness of the unmarked word order of this language and the perturbations of this order that result from two left-peripheral movement operations, topicalization and wh-movement. 

The core proposal developed here is that in the unmarked case, the EPP in Spanish is satisfied in the specifier of the highest inflectional projection by the argument of the verb that ranks highest in the thematic hierarchy, which may but need not correspond to the grammatical subject. The analysis developed here argues that, in the unmarked case, the EPP in Spanish is satisfied in the specifier of the highest inflectional projection by the argument of the verb that ranks highest in the thematic hierarchy, which may but need not correspond to the grammatical subject. To disassociate the constituent that satisfies the EPP from any specific grammatical relation, I propose that it be referred to as the Pole of the clause.

I propose that Spanish clauses with different constituents in the Pole position have different degrees of structural markedness, depending on their semantic role. Agents and experiencers constitute the least marked instance of a Pole. Other arguments and adjuncts which rank lower in the thematic hierarchy constitute more marked instances of a Pole. I argue that beyond a certain degree of structural markedness (when the constituent that would satisfy the EPP ranks low in the thematic hierarchy) it is better not to satisfy the EPP altogether. This explains a number of Spanish verb-initial constructions where the highest inflectional specifier is left empty. I argue that Optimality Theory (Prince & Smolensky 1993), where well-formedness conditions are interpreted as violable constraints, provides a straightforward analysis of this state of affairs.

Finally, I show that the two fundamental properties of the Pole position, its sensitivity to the semantic role of the constituent that occupies it and being the position where the EPP is satisfied, allow us to explain a number of word order phenomena observed in two left-peripheral phenomena, coordination and the fronting position where the EPP is satisfied, where no explicit thematic role has been assigned to the constituent that satisfies the EPP.
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