The Subject Position in Spanish Nominalized Infinitives

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1 Introduction

The Spanish Nominalized Infinitive (NI) has received significant attention in linguistic literature, especially recently, starting with Plann (1981) up through more recent work (Wilkins 1986, Pérez Vázquez 2002, Ramírez 2003, and others). The NI is characterized by an infinitive verb occurring in a decidedly nominal environment.

(1) El   bonito   tiritar   del   follaje.
     the beautiful tremble.INF of.the foliage
     'The beautiful trembling of the foliage'

Example (1) shows the infinitive *tremble* being modified by a determiner, an adjective, and a PP complement. Many authors (Alexiadou et al. 2011, e.g.) have likened the Spanish NI to certain English gerund constructions, in that they both seem to fall on a continuum of nominality. Ross (1973) showed that English gerunds could be divided into separate constructions, some of which behaved more nominally than others.

Spanish NIs have been shown to behave in the same way. Some authors (Plann 1981, Pérez Vázquez 2002, Alexiadou et al. 2011) have argued that the Spanish NI can be divided into two distinct constructions, while others (Yoon and Bonet-Farran 1991, Ramírez 2003) have argued for three. Following Ramírez (2003), I argue for three distinct constructions and use his terms for them.

(2) a. [El murmurar] explica la   reacción de María.   *Nominal NI*
        the murmur.INF explain the reaction of Maria
        'The murmuring explains Maria's reaction.'
    b. [El escribir   novelas de Juan] explica   su   fama.   *Verbal NI*
        the write.INF novels of John explains his fame
        'John's writing novels explains his fame.'
    c. [El venir   tarde él] me molesta.   *Sentential NI*
        the come.INF late   he me bother
        'Him coming late bothers me.'

Ramírez points out four characteristics of these NIs that allow them to be distinguished from each other. Nominal characteristics are the inability to take a direct object, adjectival modification, the subject (when present) being marked with *de* 'of', and the ability of the construction to be introduced by any determiner. The verbal characteristics that complement these are the ability to take a direct object, adverbial modification, the subject being marked with nominative Case, and the requirement of being introduced by the masculine, singular, definite determiner *el*. Table 1 details these properties.

	Ability to take a direct object	Modification	Case of the subject	Initial determiner
Nominal NI	No	Adjectival	*de*-marked	Any
Verbal NI	Yes	Adverbial	*de*-marked	Any
Sentential NI	Yes	Adverbial	Nominative	*El* only

Table 1: Nominal and Verbal Properties of Spanish NIs.

While the properties of the different types of NIs in Spanish have been well-described, an area that has received very little attention is the position of the subject in these NIs. For the purposes of this paper, I will focus on the Sentential NI as described above, since they exhibit the most variation, and my analysis easily extends to the other types. While the Sentential NI is least widely accepted of the NIs across different regions of the Spanish-speaking world, its various possible positions for the subject will provide the most complete analysis.

The organization of this paper follows with Section 2 outlining the problems and previous solutions. Section 3 puts forth a unified analysis that accounts for all the data presented, and also accounts for the apparent shortcomings of other analyses. In Section 4, I show cross-linguistic evidence for the mechanisms used in my analysis. Section 5 concludes.

2 The Problem(s) and Previous Solutions

Initially, the problem appears to be whether the subject of an NI appears immediately after the infinitive in the phrase or at the end of the phrase, as shown in (3), in which the subjects have been italicized.

(3) a. [El escribir *ella* novelas] explica su fama.
       the write.INF *she* novels   explain her fame
       'Her writing novels explains her fame.'
    b. [El escribir   novelas *ella*] explica su   fama.
       the write.INF novels *she* explains her fame
       'Her writing novels explains her fame.'

For the time being, I will discount movement to information structural projections as a possible solution, but will return to this in Section 4 to point out that this is not a viable option. To further establish where these subjects are appearing, it is helpful to also consider NIs in the perfective aspect.

(4) a. [El haber   *ella* escrito novelas] explica su   fama.
       the have.INF *she* written novels   explain her fame
       'Her having written novels explains her fame.'
    b. [El haber   escrito novelas *ella*] explica su   fama.
       the have.INF written novels *she* explain her fame
       'Her having written novels explains her fame.'

In order to consider all the possible subject positions for the Sentential NI, there is one regional dialect that is also important to consider. In Caribbean Spanish, there is a variety where the subject can occur between the determiner and the infinitive when (and only when) it is a prononimal subject. This is true for sentences with and without perfective aspect.

(5) a. [El *ella* escribir   novelas] explica su fama.
       the *she* write.INF novels   explain her fame
       'Her writing novels explains her fame.'
    b. [El *ella* haber   escrito novelas] explica su   fama.
       the *she* have.INF written novels   explain her fame
       'Her having written novels explains her fame.'
    c. *[El *Maria* escribir   novelas] explica su   fama.
        the *Maria* write.INF novels   explain her fame
       'Her writing novels explains her fame.'

As far as previous research regarding these constructions, the majority of work has focused on which projections should appear in the syntactic derivation of the different NIs, and how certain combinations of projections can yield the correct properties for the different degrees of nominalization. Pérez Vázquez (2002), for example, focuses on the categorical status of the infinitive in the NI (which she hypothesizes to be a verb). Moreover, she finds that the nominal properties of NIs

come from the infinitive appearing with nominal functional projections, an idea that has been echoed in much work on nominalization, most notably Borsley and Kornfilt (2000). Pérez Vázquez arrives at an analysis in which DP dominates GenP and InfP (genitive and infinitive respectively). While this captures the properties of the nominalization status of certain NIs, she does not consider the Sentential NI to be a unique construction.

Ramírez (2003) does identify the Sentential NI as unique however. He also takes an approach based on mixed extended projections, in which verbal projections are embedded under nominal functional projections in order to capture the nominal and verbal properties of NIs. For the Sentential NI, he assumes DP dominating CP, for the Verbal NI, DP dominating AgrP, and for the Nominal NI, DP dominating NP. He does not, however, go into detail about how the subjects of these clauses come to appear in their different positions.

The approach I will take most closely mirrors that of Ramírez, in that I follow his distinction of three types of NIs as mentioned above. I add to his proposal by accounting for variation of the subject's position. I also take a less cartographic approach than Pérez Vázquez, in which the infinitive appeared in a dedicated infinitive phrase: InfP. Instead, I show that the functional projections which are already assumed to be in the structure (TP and DP) account for the same properties as Pérez Váquez's InfP. For the Sentential NI I will be analyzing, I assume DP to be dominating TP, and not CP, for reasons outlined in Section 4. I also assume TP to be dominating VoiceP, in the sense of Kratzer (1996), into which the external argument is First Merged.

3 A Unified Proposal

3.1 Verb and Verb Phrase Movement

The goal of this analysis is to provide an analysis of the different subject positions of the Sentential NI, using only projections and movements that are attested in other parts of the syntax, so as to avoid any *ad hoc*, construction-specific conjectures to explain this phenomenon.

For the syntactic structure of these NIs, I assume that they must be headed by DP. This will correctly ensure not only that the NI appear only in Case-marked positions, but also the overt appearance of the determiner. The general structure is illustrated in (6), which shows the structure for the bracketed portion of (3a) above.

(6)

(=3a)
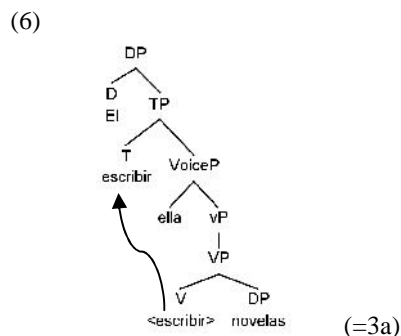
In (6), both the subject and object stay in the sites where they were First Merged. The only movement is of the infinitive verb to T. There are no phi features in non-finite T which would motivate the verb moving there; however, movement of the verb or verb phrase is consistent across all the possible subject positions in NIs.[1]

Generating phrase-final position of the subject in (3b) above is not much different from (3a), in that it is also achieved through syntactic movement. The only difference is that (3b), whose syntactic structure is given in (7), involves a different type of movement, namely phrasal movement of the VP into Spec TP. Otherwise, there is no other new movement.

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[1]It is possible that the combination of the presence of an overt subject and a T projection creates an environment that motivates this movement. This is an issue which is better addressed in work on infinitives in a broader context, and which is left for future research.

(7)

(=3b)
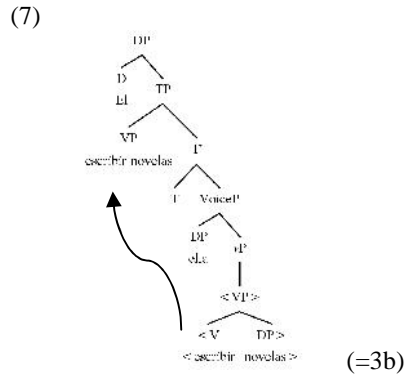
Having established the structures for the examples from (3), the examples in (4) follow logically. With the addition of perfective aspect to these constructions, there is the addition of AspP to the derivation. A separate projection for this is necessary since this aspectual information is not part of non-finite T.

(8)

(=4a)
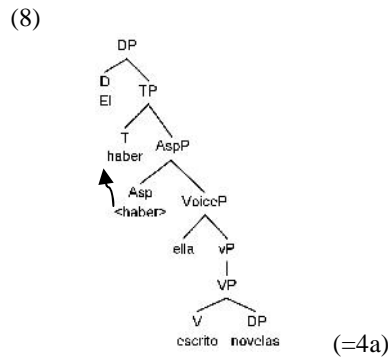
The addition of AspP comes into the derivation with the verb *haber*, which marks the perfective aspect. As a verb, *haber* stays as an infinitive, a form which lacks phi features.[2] AspP then licenses the participle *escrito*, and *haber* moves to T, exactly like in (6). Since, in both (3a) and (4a) the subject immediately follows the infinitive verb, it follows that they both show the same movement of the infinitive to T, with the only difference being the addition of AspP to the examples that show perfective aspect. The same will hold for (4b), given in (9), showing the same phrasal movement as (3b).

(9)

(=4b)

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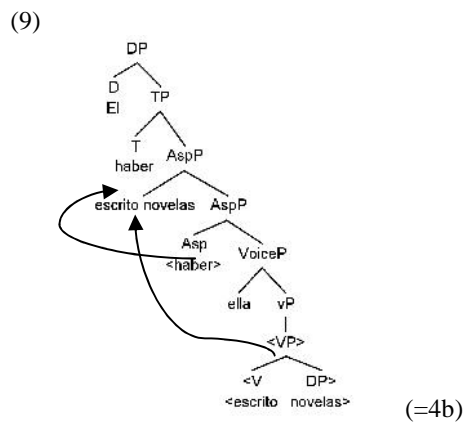
[2]This raises the question of how the subject receives its Case. This is discussed in Section 4.

The example in (9) shows that the NI in (4b) requires two movements. As before, the VP undergoes phrasal movement, but this time to Spec AspP. This allows the infinitive, as before, to move to T.

Thus, all the examples from (3–4) conform to a unified analysis involving a combination of movement of the verb and/or VP, and the inclusion, when necessary of AspP. Notably, although on the surface it is the position of the subject that appears to be changing, this analysis shows that the subject, in fact, does not move at all. This shows that an analysis is possible without having to appeal to information structural projections (e.g., TopP, FocP, OpP, etc.).

3.2 Caribbean Spanish

I turn now to the examples involving Caribbean Spanish (5a–b), in which the subject appears in a preverbal position in the NI. These are repeated in (10).

(10) a. [El *ella* escribir   novelas] explica su fama.
       the *she* write.INF novels   explain her fame
       'Her writing novels explains her fame.'
    b. [El *ella* haber   escrito novelas] explica su fama.
       the *she* have.INF written novels   explain her fame
       'Her having written novels explains her fame.'

Given the analysis so far, it is logical to assume that the subject *ella* moves to Spec TP, given that the infinitive is in T and the determiner is in D. There is also no apparent reason to posit an additional projection between TP and DP. One possibility would be to assume that, in Caribbean Spanish Sentential NIs, there is some kind of EPP feature drawing the subject to Spec TP, in the sense of Goodall (2001). This would not, however, capture the fact that it is only pronominals that can appear in this position (recall the ungrammaticality of 5c). The lack of Case being valued on nouns in non-finite Spec TP also eliminates the possibility of Case-related movement. There is some motivation, however, for subjects in Spec TP being necessary for surface semantics (see, e.g., Ortega-Santos 2008).

Another possibility is that this preverbal position of the subject mirrors another preverbal subject position, also found predominantly in Caribbean Spanish and also possible only with pronominals. This is with *wh-* questions like the following, with the comparative form from standard Spanish.

(11) Qué   tú   quieres? (cf. Qué quieres tú?)
     what you want
     'What do you want?'

Ordóñez and Olarrea (2006) (henceforth OO) provide an analysis of these *wh-* questions in Caribbean Spanish. What I will argue here is not that there are problems with their analysis, but that their analysis does not extend to the microvariation of NIs. There will, however, be some similarities, including why it is that only pronominal subjects are affected.

In their analysis, OO provide evidence that, once all the elements of the phrase are introduced into the derivation, the *wh-* element moves to OpP$_1$. Once the *wh-* element has moved out, the subject moves to a TopP. Following this, the remaining TP, from which these elements have moved, remnant moves to GroundP. In the final step, the *wh-* element moves once more into OpP$_2$, yielding the correct final word order (12).

(12) [$_{Op2}$ Qué [$_{GroundP}$ [$_{IP}$ tú   quieres] [$_{Op1}$]]]?
       what   you want
    'What do you want?'

The difference between pronominal elements and non-pronominal elements is based on Cardinaletti and Starke's (1999) analysis of weak pronominals, which behave differently than other nouns, in that they are defective elements. However, whereas clitics behave more like heads,

weak pronominals behave more like maximal projections. OO assume that weak pronominals do not undergo the move to TopP, and that instead they are carried along with TP when it is remnant moved.

At the end of all this movement, the entire *wh-* question has landed in the left periphery. However, given what I have shown so far for NIs in Spanish, this analysis would not be compatible with NIs as well, since these NIs have no CP domain into which anything could move. I argue that DP as the highest functional projection is a parallel projection, the nominal counterpart of the verbal CP. This follows Abney (1987, 25–26) who states that this parallelism is:

> attractive for conceptual reasons, in addition to the empirical advantages it provides. Verb versus noun is the most fundamental opposition in grammar, and it is appealing to be able to assign the phrases built on them — sentence and noun phrase, respectively — parallel structure.

Additionally, it is unlikely that the subject for NIs is as high as a TopP given evidence from clitics. Ordoñez (2000) argues that the Spanish subject appears in TopP in finite clauses. Since the subject is not in Spec TP, that slot remains open for clitics. For NIs, this cannot serve as evidence, since clitics show enclisis to infinitives.

(13) a. [El ella haber-las   escrito] explica su fama.
        the she have.INF-them written explain her fame.
        'Her having written them explains her fame.'
     b. *[El ella las haber escrito] explica su fama.

Finally, any of the TopP or remnant movement options would stray from the analysis of NIs we have already proposed for non-Caribbean varieties of Spanish. We can instead propose an analysis that unifies the treatment of NIs in the two varieties of Spanish under consideration. It builds upon what we have already proposed, that is, V moving to T in the non-perfective, and VP moving to Spec AspP for the perfective. The only difference in Caribbean Spanish is that the subject moves to Spec TP when it is a pronominal. The defective nature of pronominals requires their movement in NIs. This movement is analogous to the movement of the subject in finite clauses (as argued by Goodall 2001, Ortega-Santos 2008). This will yield the final syntactic derivations for the Caribbean Spanish variety given in (14–15), based on the sentences in (5a–b).

(14)

(=5a)

(15)

(=5b)
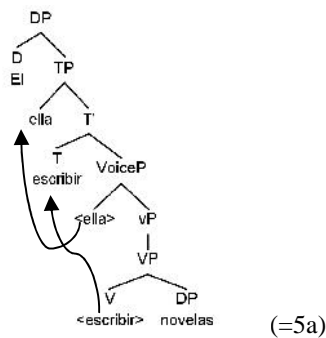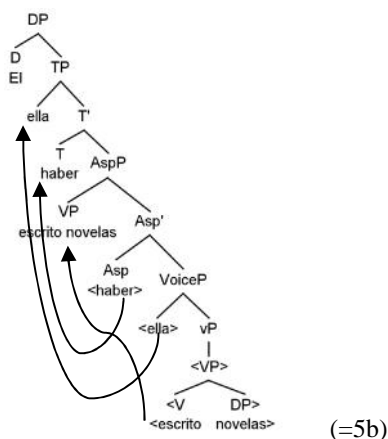
3.3 Application to Other NIs

With the Sentential NI as the most verbal of the NIs, it has the most verbal projections in its syntactic derivation. This has the effect that there is more possibility for movement of arguments. In the spirit of mixed extended projections, the more verbal a construction, the more verbal projections pervade the derivation. Below are what I propose to be the derivations for the other NIs, neither of which require any construction-specific projections or operations.

(16) [$_{DP}$El [$_{nP}$ murmurar$_i$ [$_{VP}$ t_i [$_{DP}$ del   mar]]]]   (Nominal NI)
        the   murmur.INF   of.the sea
      'The murmuring of the sea'

    (16) shows the Nominal NI, which contains almost all nominal projections, save for the VP which introduces the infinitive. This follows from Pérez Vázquez (2002), who concluded that the infinitive was purely verbal, and not a hybrid nominal/verbal element. The infinitive then moves to n, which mirrors the V-to-T movement in the Sentential NIs.[3] I also assume that the *de-* marking on the subject is a Case marker, from a *de-* Case feature on D. In Section 4, I return to this and explain why it is not present in the Sentential NI. In (17), I show that the Verbal NI is actually nearly identical to the Sentential NI in structure.

(17) [$_{DP}$El [$_{TP}$ [$_{VP}$ conducir camiones$_i$] [$_{VoiceP}$ de Juan [$_{vP}$ [$_{VP}$ t_i [$_{DP}$]]]]]]   (Verbal NI)
        the   drive.INF trucks   of Juan
      'Juan's driving trucks'

    As with the Nominal NI, the Verbal NI does not contain anything we have not already seen. In fact, as far as movement goes, it looks exactly identical to the movements in (7), with the crucial difference that the Case of the subject is different. Since it is neither the syntactic projections

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[3]The assumption that movement to n parallels the movement that happens in more verbal structure is based on the fact that n also mirrors the assignment of argument structure that v provides. Some independent evidence of the required movement from N to n might be seen in Russian:

(i) Podarenie$_i$ emu t_i knigi
    giving   him.DAT   book.GEN
    'The giving to him of the book'

    Given this word order, the gerund *podarenie* moves from its origin site between *emu* and *knigi*. This movement is not possible, however, with pure nouns, e.g., *podarok* 'gift'. Thanks to Keith Langston (p.c.) for this example.

nor the movement of elements that distinguishes Sentential and Verbal NIs, there must be another factor at play. This is discussed in the following section.

4 Defectiveness and Default Features

Recall from Table 1 that there are two properties that set the Sentential NI apart from the Verbal NI: the Case of the subject and the kind of determiner that introduces the phrase. I argue that these two properties are linked, and that one necessarily follows from the other.

4.1 D as a Defective Head

The Sentential NI is unique among the NIs in allowing only *el* as the determiner, whereas the Verbal NI allows for any determiner. I argue that this is because the D head that is Merged into the Sentential NI is defective with respect to its features. This means that there are no agreement features that would allow the determiner to show gender or number agreement, or to show any kind of definiteness, possession, deixis, etc.

The determiner *el* that does appear in the Sentential NI, however, does seem to bear the features masculine, singular, and definite. I will posit that these are all default features that are expressed because they are the least marked in the language. Since an overt determiner is necessary, the determiner with these default features is used. Singular is easily shown as the less marked in Spanish, as well as English, since the expression of the plural in both languages is by the addition of a morpheme *-s*.

Spanish, being a language that uses grammatical gender, uses masculine adjectives to describe groups of mixed gender, signaling masculine as the default gender in Spanish.

(18) a. Los   hombres buenos   y   las   mujeres buenas
         the.MASC men   good.MASC and the.FEM women   good.FEM
         'The good men and the good women'
     b. Los   hombres y   mujeres buenos
         the.MASC men   and women   good.MASC
         'The good men and women'

Definiteness as a default feature is harder to show. It can be corroborated by definiteness as a default for English gerund constructions, which mirror Spanish NIs in many respects (see, e.g., Alexiadou et al. 2011). (19a) shows that definite is at least slightly more of a default feature in English, whereas (19b), perhaps more importantly, shows that English allows an overt accusative when there is a defective D head. The construction in (19b) is the English Acc-*ing*, which mirrors the Spanish Sentential NI, and suggests by the lack of a determiner that the defective D head is null in English.

(19) a. [The/John's/??a running of a marathon] takes hours.
     b. [Him/*the/*this/*a/*one buying a pet ocelot] concerned his neighbors.

The combination of all of these default features yields the masculine, singular, definite determiner *el* for the Spanish Sentential NI.

4.2 Default Case of the Subject

Once we have accepted that D is a defective head, we can consider what effect this has on the Case of the subject, and how that distinguishes the Verbal and Sentential NIs. Recall earlier the claim that the D head is what provides the *de-* Case to the subjects of Nominal and Verbal NIs. This is the nominal subject Case that mirrors nominative as the verbal subject Case. The question now is where the nominative Case on the subject of the Sentential NI comes from.

One possibility is that the nominative Case comes from T in the Sentential NI, but not in the Verbal NI. However, this doesn't seem to be the case, since both constructions contain infinitives, whose T projections have no phi features anyways.

What is more likely is that the difference in Case follows from the defectiveness of the D head in the Sentential NI as discussed earlier in this section. This would mean that, in the Sentential NI, the D head is also defective with respect to its Case-valuing feature. With no *de-* Case to value on the subject, there should be some sort of default Case that is being assigned. I argue that this is in fact what is happening.

Schütze (2001) claims that Default Case is a Case that is applied to a noun which would not otherwise receive structural Case, crucially not violating the Case filter. The Default Case for each language is language-specific. For subjects, it is often found in environments without a finite verb, since a finite verb would presumably come with phi features to value Case on a noun. I show here that, although English and Spanish use different Cases as their defaults, they both use Default Case for subjects of their most verbal nominalizations, the Sentential NI for Spanish and Acc-*ing* for English.

There seems to be more evidence for Default Case in English than Spanish, but (20) shows evidence that English uses accusative, while (21) shows that Spanish uses nominative.

(20) a. Who will look after your pet ocelot if not _us_?
     b. We can't all eat steak and _him_ eat chicken!

(21) a. Yo/*mi también.
       I/me   also
       'Me too'
     b. Para ti   y   yo/*mi[4]
       For   you.ACC and I/me
       'For you and me'

This is easily applicable to the gerund and infinitive constructions at hand. In both English and Spanish, an overt subject appears with a nonfinite verb, creating an environment that will not value the subject's Case. Notably, the subject in both languages appears in that language's default Case, in exactly the environment we would expect. Examples (19b) and (2c) are repeated below in (22) to illustrate this.

(22) a. _Him_ buying a pet ocelot concerned his neighbors.
     b. [El venir   tarde _él_]   me molesta.
       the come.INF late   he.NOM me bother
       'Him coming late bothers me.'

Further cross-linguistic work on nominalization may reveal more evidence linking Case valuation of subjects in nominalizations with language-specific Default Case.

5 Conclusion

This paper has continued work on the Spanish NI as a means of syntactic nominalization. Whereas other work on these constructions has focused mainly on using syntactic projections to account for various nominal and verbal properties of various degrees of nominalization, this work has focused more on how movement within these derivations yields the distinct positions the subject can appear in.

To do this, I have focused primarily on the Sentential NI, the most verbal of the Spanish constructions. This construction also allows for the most variation in subject position. I presented a unified analysis that accounts for the discrete subject positions using consistent movement strategies which do not appeal to informational structural projections, since I argue that these projections cannot be present in these nominalizations. I go on to show that only a single additional movement is needed to account for the position of pronominals subjects in Caribbean Spanish NIs. Finally in this section, I show that these same strategies apply to the Nominal and Verbal NIs as

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[4]For this construction, some speakers have pointed out to me that it is more common to use *para ti y para mi* 'for you and for me', in which the accusative is used after both prepositions. However, when both objects are conjoined under a single preposition as in (21b), the second is more acceptable in the nominative.

well.

In showing the movement strategies for the Sentential and Verbal NIs alongside each other, I note that these two constructions are essentially identical with the exception of the Case of their subjects and the features of the D head. To explain this, I appeal to a defective D projection in the Sentential NI, which values a default nominative Case on its subject, while also accounting for the limitations on the determiner which can introduce Sentential NIs. I compare this to the English Acc-*ing* construction for corroborative data.

As mentioned earlier, more work is needed on these NI constructions with regard to how they work with adverbs. The location of the adverb will provide evidence of whether phrasal movement in NIs is of VP or *v*P. Also, I have pointed out that the Caribbean Spanish microvariation in NIs is similar to a formation of *wh-* questions with pronominal subjects in Caribbean Spanish. However, my analysis of NIs does not align well with OO's analysis of these *wh-* questions. The similarities between these structures deserve more attention, however, and more comparative work remains to be done. Generally, more cross-linguistic and comparative work on nominalization will be enlightening in determining the viability of a unified theory of their syntax.

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