

SQUIB

Dialectal variation in the expression of *que* in *sí-que* 'yes that' contexts across Spanish: The case of some Latin American Spanish varietiesJulio Villa-García¹ and Raquel González Rodríguez²¹ University of Manchester, Department of Linguistics and English Language, Samuel Alexander Building, School of Arts, Languages and Cultures, Faculty of Humanities, UK² Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Departamento de Lengua Española y Teoría de la Literatura, Facultad de Filología, Edificio D, Plaza Menéndez Pelayo, Madrid, ESCorresponding autor: Julio Villa-García (julio.villa-garcia@manchester.ac.uk)

This paper investigates dialectal microvariation across the Spanish-speaking world in terms of the presence/absence of *que* in *sí-que* contexts. The function of this construction is to signal the speaker's commitment to the truth of the proposition. In this connection, we argue that the syntactic account recently proposed by Villa-García & González Rodríguez (2020) for polarity-encoding *sí* 'yes' on the one hand and for *sí-que* 'yes that' sequences in Iberian Spanish on the other readily extends to a number of Latin American varieties where *que* in *sí que* is syntactically present albeit unpronounced (i.e., *sí* \emptyset /*que*), although it can be overt as well. We provide a variety of syntactic arguments together with Phonetic-Form- and Logical-Form-related arguments to this effect, and show that the dialectal split brought to light here is consonant with a view of (micro-)variation whereby Phonetic Form spellout plays a key role (Barbiers 2009; Rizzi 2013; Rizzi & Bocci 2017; *inter alia*).

Keywords: microvariation; dialectal variation; polarity; *sí que*; *sí*; Latin American Spanish; Iberian Spanish

1 Introduction

The particle *sí* 'yes' and the sequence *sí que* 'yes that' have been deemed interchangeable in constructions such as the ones illustrated in (1), which *prima facie* do not appear to involve syntactic or semantic differences (e.g., Carbonero Cano 1980: 167; Leonetti & Escandell-Vidal 2009: 200; RAE-ASALE 2009: 3004).

- (1) a. María *sí* llegó a Buenos Aires.
María yes arrived to Buenos Aires
'María did arrive in Buenos Aires.'
- b. María *sí que* llegó a Buenos Aires.
María yes that arrived to Buenos Aires
'María certainly arrived in Buenos Aires.'

However, in spite of the apparent parallelism between (1)a and (1)b, recent research has shown that *sí* and *sí que* in Spanish are critically different from each other in terms of their behavior and distribution alongside their meaning (Hernanz 2007; Batllori & Hernanz 2013; Villa-García & González Rodríguez 2020).

In particular, Batllori & Hernanz (2013) and Villa-García & González Rodríguez (2020) provide a host of arguments that *sí* in (1)a is an emphatic/focal positive polarity marker, a function typically carried out in English by a stressed auxiliary (i.e., *did* in the English translation of (1)a). However, *sí que*, illustrated in (1)b, does not encode polarity and instead signals the speaker's commitment to the truth of the proposition; (1)b can thus be paraphrased as 'it is truly the case that [Mary arrived in Buenos Aires],' where the bracketed constituent corresponds to the proposition (see also Poletto & Zanuttini 2013 for a similar claim for Italian *sì che*). We adopt the analysis proposed by Villa-García & González Rodríguez (2020) for *sí* and *sí que* in Iberian Spanish, which is sketched in (2).¹ Note that (2)a assumes that the polarity element *sí* is initially generated in the head of the polarity-encoding projection ΣP and from there it rises to FocusP in order to satisfy its focal nature, although nothing in this paper hangs on this. As for (2)b, *sí que* is merged in a higher position (see Section 2 for a note on the label of XP in (2)b).

- (2) a. [_{ForceP} [_{TopicP} [_{FocusP} *sí* [_{ΣP} *sí* [_{TP} ...]]]]]
 b. [_{ForceP} [_{TopicP} [_{XP} *sí* [_{X°} *que* [_{TopicP} [_{FocusP} [_{ΣP} [_{TP} ...]]]]]]]]]

Importantly, this analysis makes a number of correct predictions regarding Iberian Spanish, such as the ability of negative propositions to occur below *sí que*, but not below *sí*, as in (3). This is precisely what would be expected under (2)a/(2)b, wherein *sí* marks emphatic affirmative polarity and *sí que*, rather than encoding polarity, indicates the speaker's commitment to the proposition, be it positive or negative.

- (3) Ahora *sí* *(*que*) ya no pueden fastidiarme.
 now yes that already not can bother-CL
 'Now they clearly can't bother me anymore.'

In this paper, we show that some Latin American varieties permit (3) without *que*, which amounts to saying that such varieties exhibit a version of *sí que* where *que* is physically absent (i.e., *sí* \emptyset), effectively making it superficially identical to polarity-encoding-*sí* sentences in certain environments. However, as we will see, there are important differences in the relevant Latin American dialects between polarity-encoding *sí* and *sí* \emptyset , which, we argue, is the *que*-less variant of Iberian Spanish *sí que*.

It is of note that the negative head *no* can be preceded by *sí* in all dialects providing that *sí* is followed by a pause/intonational break, as in (4).

- (4) *Sí*, no pueden fastidiarme.
 yes not can bother-CL
 'Yes, they can't bother me.'

As noted by Brucart (1999) and González Rodríguez (2009), when *sí* is followed by a prosodic boundary, this particle is a proform and does not display the same distribution as the polarity marker that is integrated in the predicate, despite their homophony and related meaning. Our analysis applies only to the second type of *sí* (cf. (1)a), not to proform *sí* (cf. (4)).²

¹ Batllori & Hernanz (2013) propose the same structure for *sí*. However, these authors argue that *sí que* is placed in ForceP. See Villa-García & González Rodríguez (2020) for arguments against *sí que* being located in ForceP.

² The proform *sí* shows a different distribution from that of the polarity marker that is integrated in the predicate. In addition to the possibility of being followed by other polarity markers (see the contrast between (3) and (4)), they differ regarding to their autonomy: the proform can occur as an utterance by itself (see (i)),

Building on the findings of Hernanz (2007), Batllori & Hernanz (2013), and Villa-García & González Rodríguez (2020), we investigate *sí*, *sí que*, and *sí* \emptyset in varieties including Colombian, Mexican, and Peruvian Spanish, and submit that the Spanish spoken by speakers of these dialects also displays (a version of) the *sí-que* construction, with *que* being able to remain silent.³ This pattern is exemplified in (5), where *sí* is a formal mark of the commitment of the speaker to the truth of the proposition, as shown in the English translation. Note that the polarity of this example is negative, despite the presence of the word *sí* (much like in Iberian Spanish examples with *que*, shown in (3), which would be fully grammatical in the relevant Latin American varieties without *que*). This confirms that (5) features *sí* \emptyset , as argued below, rather than the emphatic polarity marker *sí*.

- (5) (Song by Orquesta Típica Juventud, 1975, Peru)
 No me digas que no sabes. Eso *sí* no te lo creo.
 not CL tell that not know that yes not CL CL believe
 'Don't tell me you don't know. That, I certainly do not believe!'

Examples like (5) stand in glaring contrast to similar cases featuring *sí que* in Iberian Spanish (cf. (3)), where *que* must be present, pointing to an important dialectal difference in terms of the lexicalization of *que* in *sí-que* contexts: whereas *que* is obligatory in Iberian Spanish, in some Latin American varieties, *que* can be absent (*sí* \emptyset) or present (*sí que*). The example in (5) illustrates the first option; we provide examples of said varieties where the complementizer is present in due course.

Our main theoretical claim in this paper is that the Iberian Spanish facts and the novel Latin American Spanish facts can be accounted for in a uniform fashion, the difference between said varieties being that in the latter case, *que* in *sí que* can normally remain silent in P(honetic)F(orm), as (6)b assumes.

whereas the polarity marker that is integrated in a sentence cannot (see (ii)). As illustrated by the examples in (i) and (ii), the two particles are used in different contexts. The proform is typically used to answer questions; the other particle is used to refute a previous utterance (see Brucart 1999 and González Rodríguez 2009 for a more detailed description of the distribution of both forms; see also fn. 18 for additional evidence). Note that languages such as English employ different strategies in these cases.

- (i) A: ¿Visitaste a tu madre?
 visited ACC your mother
 'Did you visit your mother?'
 B: Sí (, la visité el otro día).
 yes, CL visited the other day
 'Yes, I visited her the other day.'
- (ii) A: No visitó a su madre.
 not visited ACC her mother
 'S/he did not visit her mother.'
 B: Sí *(visitó a su madre).
 yes visited ACC her mother
 'S/he did visit her mother.'

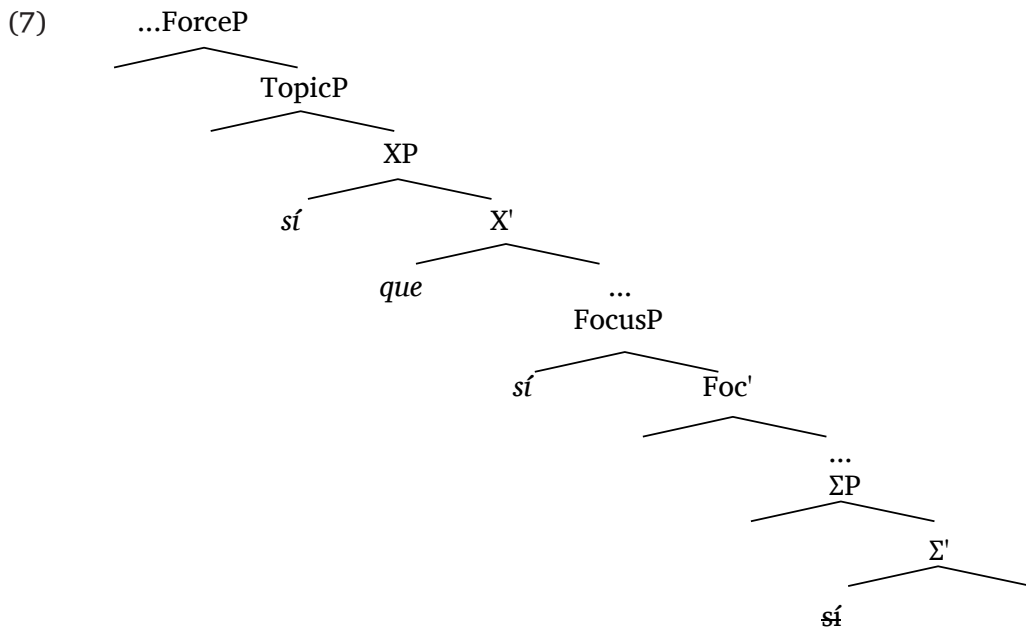
³ The exact extent of diatopic variation in this regard is beyond the scope of this paper. This is not a trivial matter, as Latin American varieties do not necessarily refer to countries, but to areas (e.g., in Colombia, there are notable dialectal differences between the Spanish spoken in the Caribbean area and in the Andean area). In our investigation, in addition to relying on naturally occurring data and on data from published literary works, songs, TV shows, and TV series, we have consulted two speakers from Colombia, one from Ecuador, two from Mexico, and two from Peru (age range: 26–50), who have kindly shared their introspective judgments with us. Although we did not find discrepancies in their judgments, further research will determine whether the rather stable judgments we have obtained hold, and whether they extend to different Latin American varieties.

- (6) a. $[_{\text{ForceP}} [_{\text{TopicP}} [_{\text{FocusP}} \textit{sí} [_{\Sigma\text{P}} \textit{sí} [_{\text{TP}} \dots]]]]]]$
- b. $[_{\text{ForceP}} [_{\text{TopicP}} [_{\text{XP}} \textit{sí} [_{\text{X}^0} \textit{que} [_{\text{TopicP}} [_{\text{FocusP}} [_{\Sigma\text{P}} [_{\text{TP}} \dots]]]]]]]]]]]]$ ⁴

This paper is organized as follows: in Section 2, we outline the analysis and predictions of *sí vs. sí que* in Iberian Spanish, based on the evidence provided by the existing works on the topic. In Section 3, we present Colombian, Mexican, and Peruvian Spanish data where *que* can be absent in *sí-que* sequences. In Section 4, we provide an analysis of the facts and argue against competing proposals. We also discuss the issue of microvariation in the expression of *que*, along with a proposal as to how to parameterize the observed variation. In Section 5, we conclude the paper.

2 *Sí vs. sí que* in Iberian Spanish

In the spirit of Rizzi’s (1997 et seq.) fine structure of the left periphery, Villa-García & González Rodríguez (2020) adopt the view that *sí que* sits in a projection higher than FocusP, where polarity-encoding *sí* is assumed to be located after moving to that position from ΣP (Hernanz 2007), as in the highly simplified structure in (7).⁵



Although Villa-García & González Rodríguez (2020) do not specify the label of the XP projection in (7), leaving it for future research, it would be possible to explore two options regarding the nature of this projection. As Villa-García & González Rodríguez note, an

⁴ Until the account is presented in Section 4, we employ the more theory-neutral form \emptyset to represent the physical absence of *que* in the main text.

⁵ As an anonymous reviewer points out, a logical question to pose is whether or not *que* is a complementizer. In light of the analysis in (7), the categorial status of *que* is not fully clear. In order to determine this issue, a detailed study of *que* in the sequence *sí que* and in other related structures (*por supuesto que* ‘of course that,’ *¡Qué alto que eres!* ‘How tall that you are!’) should be conducted in future research (see Villa-García in preparation). An argument for the analysis of *que* as a complementizer in the configuration at issue is that *sí que* introduces more structure (i.e., a full sentence/clause), in contrast to polarity-encoding *sí* (Villa-García & González Rodríguez 2020). Thus, the fact that what we get is *sí que* + [sentence] is symptomatic of *que* being the head of the upcoming clause (see the authors for discussion of the historical development of the construction, which may have developed out of the affirmative polarity particle plus a clause/sentence (*sí* + [*que*...])). Since complementizers can be omitted in some declarative clauses in some diachronic and present-day varieties such as Mexican Spanish (Villa-García in preparation and the references cited there), it is not surprising that in *sí* \emptyset cases, a complementizer is present, albeit unpronounced (i.e., *sí que*). In any case, we will employ the label complementizer for expository reasons.

option would be to identify this projection with AssertiveP, a projection proposed by Ambar (2002). According to this author, AssertiveP is the projection in which metalinguistic negative particles are placed (see Villa-García & González Rodríguez 2020, for parallels between the elements assumed to occur in AssertiveP and *sí que*). Ambar argues that this projection is located between TopicP and FocusP, which fits in with the proposal in (7). A second option would be to propose that XP in (7) is related to a Speech Act Projection, as an anonymous reviewer points out (see Haegeman & Hill 2013; Wiltschko & Heim 2016; Miyagawa 2017; and Jiménez-Fernández & Issever 2019, among many others, for a syntactic approach to discourse). In order to establish this correlation, a detailed comparison between *sí que* and the particles typically associated with the Speech Act Projection should be carried out. It would also be necessary to study if that proposal could account for the word order patterns of *sí que*, a task that we leave for future research.

The analysis in (2)/(7) makes a number of correct predictions regarding Iberian Spanish. We will only review the most relevant ones here; the reader is referred to Villa-García & González Rodríguez (2020) for further predictions and empirical evidence. Firstly, (7) captures the fact that *sí* and *sí que* convey different meanings. While *sí* invariably marks (focal) positive polarity and therefore the proposition is affirmative, the proposition embedded under *sí que* need not bear positive polarity. This is because *sí que* is not a positive polarity marker, but rather a means of signaling the speaker's conviction that the proposition is true, irrespective of whether the proposition is affirmative or negative. The fact that *sí*, but not *sí que*, encodes polarity is shown by its incompatibility with the negative polarity particle *no*. As noted, *sí que*, but not *sí*, can co-occur with this particle in Iberian Spanish. This is shown by (8), which indicates that when followed by *que*, *sí* does not denote positive polarity (see also (3) above).

- (8) a. Aquí *sí que* no nieva.
 here yes that not snows
 'It is truly the case that it does not snow here.'
- b. *Aquí *sí* no nieva.
 here yes not snows
 'It certainly does not snow here.'

In addition to this major semantic difference between *sí* and *sí que*, the analysis in (7) predicts that these elements should have a different distribution, and this prediction is again borne out. First of all, if we assume the structure in (7), we can also explain the contrast in (8) by appealing to syntactic reasons, since in (8)b, *sí* and *no* compete for the same position, namely the head of ΣP .⁶ By contrast, this problem does not arise in (8)a, since *sí que* is placed in a higher, different position (i.e., XP in (7)). It must also be noted in passing that (7) can also account for the fact that when *sí que* co-occurs with *no*, the order must be the one in which *sí que* precedes the negation. This is illustrated by the contrasting examples in (8)a and (9).

- (9) *Aquí no *sí que* nieva
 here not yes that snows
 Intended meaning: 'It is truly the case that it does not snow here.'

Another piece of evidence arguing for (7) comes from subject-verb inversion. *Sí* is focal and as such requires adjacency with the verb (Hernanz 2007; Batllori & Hernanz 2013).

⁶ (8)b is fully grammatical in Iberian Spanish if only one of the polarity markers (*sí* or *no*) occurs, as predicted if they originate in the same syntactic position.

In much the same way as in constituent questions, the underlined subject *Juan* in (10)a needs to occur postverbally in the presence of the emphatic/focal polarity particle *sí*. By contrast, the occurrence of the subject between *sí que* and the verb does not lead to an ungrammatical outcome, as indicated by (10)b. Although (10)b is a marked sentence for some speakers (%), as pointed out by a reviewer, it stands in stark contrast with (10)a (see Villa-García & González Rodríguez for further discussion and exemplification from corpus data).

- (10) a. Al final sí {*Juan*} compró {*Juan*} patatas {*Juan*}.
 at.the end yes John bought John potatoes John
 'In the end John did buy potatoes.'
- b. %Al final sí que *Juan* compró patatas.
 at.the end yes that John bought potatoes
 'In the end, John certainly bought potatoes.'

Much like preverbal subjects, other preverbal constituents such as (multiple) dislocated adverbials can follow the *sí-que* sequence, as the metalinguistic example from the main text of Hualde et al. (2010: 288) in (11) demonstrates.

- (11) Aquí sí que aún hoy, en la medida en que se conserva la
 here yes that even today in the measure in that CL conserves the
 forma tradicional de hablar, podemos...
 form traditional of speak can
 'Here, even today, to the extent that the traditional way of speaking is
 preserved, it is truly the case that we can...'

Finally, the analysis in (7) makes the claim that a focal element should be able to occur below *sí que*. Since *sí* in this account is assumed to be a focal polarity particle in FocusP, then in principle we should be able to find occurrences of the *sí-que-sí* sequence. This prediction is corroborated by the following data, akin to those reported in Villa-García & González Rodríguez (2020). The order in cases like (12) is always *sí que* > *sí* rather than *sí* > *sí que*, precisely as predicted by (7).⁷

- (12) (TV show name, laSexta TV, Spain, 2017)
 Tú sí que sí.
 you yes that yes
 'You are certainly able to do X.'

As expected, other focal phrases are also legitimate in post *sí-que* position, as indicated by (13). The examples in (14) show that *sí* does not display the same behavior.

- (13) a. Tú sí que también tienes tela.
 you yes that also have fabric
 'It is truly the case that you are a pain.'
- b. A mí sí que NI DE COÑA me van a ascender.
 ACC me yes that NO OF JOKE CL go to promote
 'Under no circumstances will they promote me.'

⁷ A reviewer notes that the impossibility of having the combination *sí* + *sí que* could be explained by haplology, that is, by a constraint against adjacent homophonous forms (we resort to this type of analysis in Section 4 in order to account for the ungrammaticality of **sí sí* in varieties that accept *sí no*). However, a haplology-based explanation of **sí sí que* is called into question by the fact that the sequence *no* + *sí que* is also ungrammatical (see (9)).

- (14) a. *Tú sí también tienes tela.⁸
you yes also have fabric
'You are also a pain.'
- b. *A mí sí NI DE COÑA me van a ascender.
ACC me yes NO OF JOKE CL go to promote
'Under no circumstances will they promote me.'

In the next section, we turn to the novel dialect data that constitute the object of study of this paper.

3 Dialectal variation: Some Latin American Spanish varieties

Moving away from Iberian Spanish, in certain varieties of Latin American Spanish, the bare form *sí* ∅ can be used instead of the form *sí que*, as shown by the data in (15) (see also (5) in Section 1).

- (15) (Song by Los Relámpagos del Norte, 1993, Mexico)
Eso sí nunca podrás.
that yes never will.be.able.to
'That, you will certainly never manage to...'

This occurs in contexts where, given our previous discussion, which focused on Iberian Spanish data, we would expect *que* to occur. In other words, in some varieties, *sí* is frequently used in the place of *sí que* (i.e., not as an emphatic polarity element, but as formal marker of the speaker's commitment to the proposition).

It is of note that the presence of *que* is also legitimate in the varieties at issue, as shown by the corpus examples furnished in (16). These cases are, in effect, identical to their Iberian Spanish counterparts with respect to both the form and meaning of *sí que*.

- (16) a. (CORPES XXI, Isaac Goldemberg. *El nombre del padre*, Lima, Peru: Alfaguara, 2001)
¡Esto sí que no lo puedo creer!
this yes that not CL can believe
'I certainly cannot believe this!'
- b. (CORPES XXI, Gabriel Velasco, *Alondra de ojos en las alas*, Mexico City, Mexico: La rana, 2001)
Yo no sé por qué regresé acá, pero ahora sí que no vuelvo.
I not know why returned here but now yes that not return
'I don't know why I returned, but now I certainly do not return.'

Accordingly, Latin American varieties that permit sequences where *que* is absent also allow the presence of the complementizer in the same contexts (see Section 4 for environments where the complementizer must actually be present in those varieties). In other words, in these varieties, (17)a and (17)b are interchangeable. As we will see, however, the relevant Latin American varieties also possess polarity-encoding *sí*, much like Iberian Spanish.

- (17) a. Esta pregunta sí que no la contestó.
this question yes that not CL answered

⁸ (14)a would in principle become grammatical if an intonational break (represented orthographically by a comma) occurred after *sí*, in which case this instance of *sí* would be a proform. However, it is important to highlight that this is not our intended structure.

- b. Esta pregunta *sí* no la contestó.
 this question yes not CL answered
 Both: 'S/he certainly did not answer this question.'

In the following subsections, we take a closer look at certain syntactic and semantic aspects of the *que*-less paradigm in said varieties.

3.1 The construction *sí* \emptyset

The following sentences further indicate that *que* does not need to occur (at least overtly) below *sí* in *sí-que* cases in Spanish varieties spoken in (at least) Colombia, Mexico, and Peru (see also the data in Campos 1992: 332).⁹ Recall that the meaning of *sí* in (18) is conveyed via *sí que* in Iberian Spanish and that the absence of *que* in the relevant Latin American varieties is optional; thus, the complementizer could be introduced in (18) without giving rise to any syntactic or semantic change.

- (18) a. (Rafael Delgado, *Angelina*, Mexican Spanish, 1983)
 A eso *sí* no puedo acostumbrarme, al chocolate malo.
 to that yes no can get.used to.the chocolate bad
 'I certainly cannot get used to that, to bad chocolate.'
- b. (Juan Gabriel Vásquez, *El ruido de las cosas al caer*, Colombian Spanish, 2011)
 Eso *sí* no sé.
 that yes no know
 'I certainly do not know that.'

That *sí* in (18) is an instantiation of the *sí-que* construction (and not a polarity particle) is straightforwardly corroborated by the fact that the polarity of the proposition below *sí* \emptyset is negative in spite of the presence of the word *sí*, much like in Iberian Spanish cases like (8)a above. In fact, there is independent evidence corroborating the negative polarity of the sentences in question. As observed by Brucart (1999), in cases of TP ellipsis with a polarity particle, if the first conjunct is negative and the second conjunct is also negative, *tampoco* 'neither' must be used in the second, elliptical clause (and, conversely, *también* 'also/too' must be used if the polarity of both conjuncts is positive). Now, if we add to the sentences in (18) another clause including the polarity element *también* 'too' or *tampoco* '(n)either,' the negative element *tampoco* must be used, as expected if the examples in (18) are indeed negative, despite the presence of *sí*. This is shown in (19). The judgments reported for these examples do not vary if we introduce *que* between *sí* and *no*.

- (19) a. A eso *sí* no puedo acostumbrarme, al chocolate malo, y
 to that yes no can get.used-REFL to.the chocolate bad and
 al amargo **también*/ *tampoco*.
 to.the bitter too neither
 'I certainly cannot get used to that, to bad chocolate, nor can I get used to bitter chocolate either.'

⁹ Such sentences are also attested, though much less frequently, in the speech of some Iberian Spanish speakers. Although our focus is Colombian, Mexican, and Peruvian Spanish, due to the results of our corpus searches, some speakers of other varieties, such as Argentinean, Chilean, Costa Rican, and Ecuadorian Spanish also report *que*-less *sí* cases. It is not our intention to treat these varieties as a single monolithic entity, although we have found a similar behavior in the relevant respects. One related area where there may be geographic differences has to do with the structure *no que no* (lit. 'not that not'), which is in use in some dialects. In Argentinean and Mexican Spanish, for example, *no que no* is employed to ironically affirm something that had previously been denied. The neg.-*that*-neg. pattern is widely attested in Catalan (Batllori & Hernanz 2013) and in Italian (Poletto & Zanuttini 2013). We leave a comprehensive study of diatopic variation for future work (see also fn. 3).

- b. Eso *sí* no sé, y esto **también*/ tampoco.
that yes no know and this too neither
'I certainly don't know that, and I don't certainly know this either.'

The possibility of having the sequence *sí no* in Colombian and Mexican Spanish is further supported by data from the CREA (*Corpus de Referencia del Español Actual*) corpus, which contains examples such as the ones in (20).

- (20) a. (Wilebaldo López, *Vine, vi... y mejor me fui*, Mexico, 1988, CREA)
Pero de pestilencia *sí* no te escapas.
but of stench yes no CL escape
'But you certainly will not escape from stench.'
- b. (*El Tiempo*, Colombia, 01/12/1991, CREA)
Ahí *sí* no se tendrá en cuenta el proceso de apertura.
there yes not CL will.take into account the process of opening
'The process of opening will certainly not be taken into account there.'

In the next subsection we explore the issue of the distinction between *sí* \emptyset (*sí que*) and polarity *sí* in Colombian, Mexican, and Peruvian Spanish.¹⁰

3.2 *Sí* vs. *sí* \emptyset in Latin American varieties

Having mainly looked at examples involving negation, several issues arise in light of Latin American Spanish examples like (21) (pronounced with no intonational break after *sí*), where the polarity of the clause is positive:

- (21) (Netflix TV series *The House of Flowers/La casa de las flores*, Episode 1, Season 1, Mexico, 2018)
Ahora *sí* la Roberta resultó una aguafiestas.
now yes the Roberta resulted a wet blanket
'Now it is truly the case that Roberta ended up being a wet blanket.'

As noted by Villa-García & González Rodríguez (2020), an anticipated problem when studying *sí/sí que* contrasts in Iberian Spanish is that, due to their seeming interchangeability, traditional grammars have usually treated *sí/sí que* as variants of one and the same underlying phenomenon, which is typically represented by the use of brackets around *que* (cf. *sí (que)*) in traditional descriptions. The Latin American Spanish case exemplified in (21) further exacerbates this problem, since the polarity of the proposition embedded by *sí* \emptyset can be positive and thus, *sí* \emptyset can easily be taken to instantiate polarity-encoding *sí* instead. In (21), the presence of the preverbal subject after *sí* allows us to conclude that *sí* is not a polarity marker, that is, that *sí* \emptyset does not instantiate *sí*, notwithstanding their similarity in outward appearances. As shown in Section 2, *sí*, unlike *sí que*, is a focalized constituent and therefore, requires adjacency with the verb (see below for examples involving the polarity-encoding particle *sí*, not *sí* \emptyset , in said Latin American varieties).

¹⁰ An additional argument in favor of treating these cases as *sí-que* configurations in disguise comes from the fact that when the negation appears, the topic above *sí que* is obligatory (for reasons that are far from clear; see RAE-ASALE 2009 and Villa-García & González Rodríguez 2020). According to our native-speaker consultants, the examples furnished in this section require a topical element, suggesting that we are dealing with clear cases of *sí- \emptyset -no* configurations. In this connection, it is important to recall that cases such as (4), where proform *sí* is followed by a prosodic break and then by a negated sentence, do not require a preceding topic. Therefore, this substantiates the claim that the examples from Latin American Spanish offered throughout this section (which furthermore do not occur with an intonational break after *sí* \emptyset) do not constitute cases like (4).

As an anonymous reviewer notes, this proposal appears to make a prediction regarding the interpretation of (21): if the subject were postverbal, *sí* would in principle mark positive polarity, not the speaker's firm belief that the propositional content is true. Our informants do note a semantic difference depending on whether the subject is preverbal or postverbal. However, they cannot explain clearly what this difference is, which can be due to the fact that distinguishing between positive polarity and the commitment of the speaker is subtle, especially in affirmative contexts. Similarly, the difference may well be motivated by the different information-structural statuses of preverbal and postverbal subjects.¹¹

The problem of determining whether we have a polarity marker (*sí*) or not (*sí* \emptyset) when the complementizer is not present in varieties of Colombian, Mexican, and Peruvian Spanish is even worse in a sentence without a preverbal subject intervening between *sí* and the verb, such as (22)a. Anticipating the upcoming theoretical discussion and based on the analysis pursued for Iberian Spanish in Section 2, in principle two underlying structures should exist, with two different meanings, as shown by the English translations (though evidently not easy to tell apart). The two underlying structures are given in (22)b and (22)c.¹²

- (22) a. Ahí sí voy.
 there yes go
 'I AM going there.' / 'I am certainly going there.'
- b. (Emphatic positive polarity)
 [_{ForceP} [_{TopicP} ahí [_{FocusP} *sí* [_{XP} *sí* [_{TP} voy]]]]]
- c. (Speaker's commitment to the proposition)
 [_{ForceP} [_{TopicP} ahí [_{XP} *sí* [_{X°} \emptyset /*que* [_{TP} voy]]]]]

A potential question to raise at this juncture is whether Latin American Spanish varieties where *que* can be omitted in the contexts above actually altogether lack the *sí que*/ \emptyset construction and only employ the focal affirmative marker *sí*, in such a way that these varieties have (22)b but not (22)c. However, this possibility cannot be right. After all, several examples furnished above involve an instance of negation below *sí* and are interpreted as bearing negative polarity, which refutes the claim that *sí* in such cases encodes polarity. Likewise, *que* can optionally surface in these varieties, which provides direct evidence for the existence of *sí-que* configurations. Moreover, as will be shown below, in some syntactic environments, *que* is obligatory even in the relevant dialects spoken in Colombia, Mexico, and Peru.

Conversely, then, could it be that these Latin American varieties use only *sí* \emptyset (cf. (22)c), instead of the two constructions in (22)b,c? The answer to this question turns out to be negative as well. First of all, the relevant varieties can also have examples akin to (12), where *sí que* co-occurs with the emphatic positive polarity marker, as in (23), suggesting that we are dealing with the familiar *sí-que* construction followed by *sí*. (We return to these cases in the following section.)

¹¹ Be that as it may, an issue that casts doubt on this prediction is that *sí que* in Iberian Spanish is also compatible with postverbal subjects, as in (i):

(i) Ahí sí que puso bancos el consejero.
 there yes that put benches the counsellor
 'The regional minister certainly placed benches there.'

¹² As a reviewer points out, it would be interesting to know the (preferred) interpretation of (22)a. However, as noted above, the distinction between the two readings is subtle, which makes it difficult to obtain data in this regard. Context certainly seems to play an important role (see Villa-García & González Rodríguez 2020).

- (23) Ahora *sí que sí*.
now yes that yes
'Now it is truly the case that X.'

Furthermore, Villa-García & González Rodríguez (2020) capitalize on cases involving ellipsis with a polarity particle (Brucart 1999), which, as the name indicates, feature a polarity element as the licenser of ellipsis. These cases are illustrated in (24).

- (24) A Arequipa no voy, pero a Lima *sí*.
to Arequipa not go but to Lima yes
'I'm not going to Arequipa, but I am going to Lima.'

Cases like these are attested throughout the Spanish-speaking world, as shown by the examples provided by RAE-ASALE (2009: 3006–3007), and clearly involve a contrasting polarity marker in the second clause. This is further substantiated by the fact that *sí que*, which in principle covaries with *sí* \emptyset in some Latin American Spanish varieties, cannot occur in cases like the following, which have been analyzed as a context in which the verb is elided (Brucart 1999; Depiante 2004; Villa-García & González Rodríguez 2020):

- (25) a. No compré carros, pero *sí* departamentos.
not bought cars but yes apartments
'I didn't buy cars, but apartments.'
- b. *No compré carros, pero *sí que* departamentos.¹³
no bought cars but yes that apartments
- c. *No compré carros, pero *sí que sí* departamentos.
not bought cars but yes that yes apartments

In (25)b, if *sí* were always the *que*-less variant of *sí que*, we would in principle expect *que* to be able to be pronounced, contrary to fact. What is more, if such ellipsis cases must involve polarity particles, as is standardly assumed in the literature, we would expect the *bona fide* focal affirmative polarity marker to be instantiated in (25)a, rather than *sí que*/ \emptyset , which does not serve the function of indicating the polarity of the clause. This is the reason why (25)a is acceptable but not (25)b: only in the first case do we have a genuine polarity marker, as required by this type of ellipsis. As shown in (25)c, the combination *sí que sí* is rejected in these contexts. We would like to suggest that the ungrammaticality of (25)c is due to the parallelism requirement on ellipsis (i.e., we would expect coordination at the clausal level with *sí que*), although the data merit further attention. Note in passing that cases like (23) above (*Ahora sí que sí* 'Now it is truly the case that X') are also interpreted as elliptical clauses, which is exactly what would be expected, given that the polarity particle *sí* (the ellipsis licenser) occurs below *sí que* (and, as shown below, examples with other ellipsis-licensing polarity particles, namely *no* 'not,' *también* 'also/too,' and *tampoco* 'neither,' are also documented).

Lastly, it is important to note that *sí* \emptyset configurations do not require the inversion that one would expect in the case of a *bona fide* focal *sí*. This is indicated by (21), repeated here again in (26), which exhibits a preverbal subject intervening between *sí* \emptyset and the verb.

¹³ An anonymous reviewer notes that s/he finds a sentence like (25)b acceptable. This seems to indicate the existence of variation regarding this construction. To us, this example is completely out and, crucially, the speakers from the varieties studied here also reject this structure.

- (26) (Netflix TV series *The House of Flowers/La casa de las flores*, Episode 1, Season 1, Mexico, 2018)
 Ahora sí la Roberta resultó una aguafiestas.
 now yes the Roberta resulted a wet.blanket
 ‘Now it is truly the case that Roberta ended up being a wet blanket.’

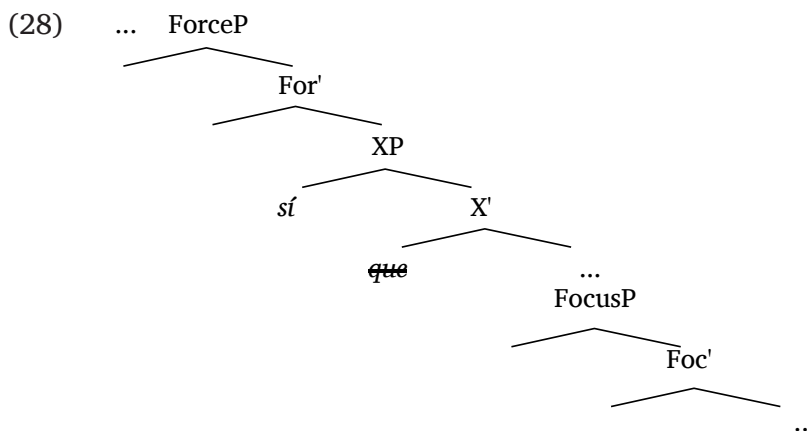
However, Latin American Spanish varieties such as Argentinean, Colombian, Ecuadorian, Mexican, and Peruvian Spanish do have focal *sí* requiring adjacency with the verb. By way of illustration, speakers report obligatory inversion in cases like (27), which again involve a contrast in polarity (*no* ‘not’ vs. *sí* ‘yes’).

- (27) Aquí no compró nada ninguno de ellos, pero en Guanajuato sí
 here not bought nothing none of them but en Guanajuato yes
 {*María} dejó todos sus ahorros {María}.
 Mary left all her savings
 ‘None of them bought anything here, but Mary did leave all of her savings in Guanajuato.’

This strongly indicates that *sí* in such cases is an emphatic affirmative polarity element, which given its focal character, requires subject-verb inversion. Overall, the evidence adduced in the preceding paragraphs confirms that both *sí que*/ \emptyset and *sí* exist in Colombian, Mexican, and Peruvian Spanish, although the difficulty in distinguishing the two of them in certain contexts is undeniable. We now turn to the analysis of *sí* \emptyset .

4 On the analysis of *sí* \emptyset and PF spellout

Taking the account of Iberian Spanish *sí que* in (7) as our point of departure, we provide arguments that in those Latin American varieties in which *que* need not be expressed overtly in the *sí-que* construction, the syntactic analysis proposed for Iberian Spanish in (7) can fully be maintained, which should be taken to be a strong (and novel) argument in its favor. The difference between Latin American Spanish varieties where *que* might be missing and Iberian Spanish is that *que* can receive a silent/null PF spellout in Latin American varieties, as in (28).¹⁴ This line of analysis dates back in spirit to the seminal work of Chomsky & Lasnik (1977), wherein *that* in English sentences where it can be omitted without semantic consequences (*I think that the CP is cool* vs. *I think the CP is cool*) is the result of *that*-deletion.



¹⁴ In the *sí-que* sequence, *sí* appears to be the most important element to obtain the relevant semantic interpretation in the varieties in question. This makes sense intuitively, since the complementizer *que* is the most underspecified element in the left periphery (Villa-García 2015) and it can occur in various positions along the left-edge spine. Thus, it is not surprising that if one of the two elements can be omitted, it is *que* and not *sí* that remains unpronounced.

Before entertaining this hypothesis, however, there is a potential competing account which needs to be excluded.

4.1 Ruling out an alternative analysis

Prima facie, the by-now familiar *sí-no* combination in Colombian, Mexican, and Peruvian Spanish would in principle be amenable to an analysis whereby *sí* occupies FocusP (presumably it would have to be base-generated there) and *no* is located in Σ P, by virtue of the fact that it marks the negative polarity of the clause. This possibility is schematized in (29):

(29) $[_{\text{ForceP}} [_{\text{TopicP}} \text{XP} [_{\text{TopicP}} [_{\text{FocusP}} \text{sí} [_{\Sigma\text{P}} \text{no} [_{\text{TP}} \dots]]]]]]$

On this view, then, the two items (*sí* and *no*) may be able to co-occur in the same clause. This would assume that *sí* does not signal a commitment on the part of the speaker to the truth of the proposition —perhaps it is just a focal, emphatic affirmative polarity marker, *contra* the judgments of the speakers consulted. Beyond meaning, this alternative account of the *sí-no* sequence is also weakened on syntactic grounds by the fact that *sí* can be followed by an unambiguous adverb stressing the truth value of the proposition that follows it in the relevant Latin American varieties, as in (30).¹⁵

(30) A la fiesta *sí* ciertamente/ desde luego no voy a ir.
 to the party yes certainly of course not go to go
 'I will certainly not go to that party.'

Similarly, this piece of data crucially indicates that *sí* in this context is indeed not a focal marker, since it does not require adjacency with the verb (see the preceding section).

Moreover, under (29), we would expect to find *no-sí* sequences if the facts reduced to a matter of focal polarity particle + polarity particle. However, the CREA corpus does not contain any instance of the *no-sí* combination in any dialect of Spanish. The corpus searches, coupled with the introspective judgments of our native-speaker consultants, suggest that *no-sí* sequences are fully ungrammatical, as (31) and (32) demonstrate. Note that speakers find these sentences not only syntactically ill-formed, but they actually fail to assign them a plausible interpretation.

(31) a. *A eso no *sí* puedo acostumbrarme, al chocolate malo.
 to that not yes can get.used to.the chocolate bad
 b. *Eso no *sí* sé.
 that not yes know

(32) a. *Pero de pestilencia no *sí* te escapas.
 but of stench not yes CL escape
 b. *Ahí no *sí* se tendrá en cuenta el proceso de apertura.
 there not yes CL will.take into account the process of opening

This is scarcely surprising if *sí* in the relevant Latin American Spanish examples does not really mark polarity, in much the same way as its *sí-que* homolog in Iberian Spanish, which is our claim here, *contra* (29). *No* in Spanish, for its part, can only mark negative polarity, and thus the presence of *sí* creates a contradiction. More generally, the ungrammaticality of (31) and (32) is owing to syntactic and semantic reasons: on the one hand, *sí* and *no* compete for the same base-generated position, since both are polarity particles initially merged directly in Σ P (Hernanz 2007, *inter alia*); on the other hand, the two

¹⁵ Not surprisingly, this example is completely out in Iberian Spanish unless *que* occurs.

polarity particles cannot co-occur because a clause cannot bear contradictory polarity values simultaneously. Thus, the data above rule out an analysis along the lines of (29) wherein both *sí* and *no* in (31) and (32) are polarity markers. The alternative order, *sí no*, is possible in the relevant varieties because the high element *sí* is not really a polarity marker, but the *sí* of *sí que* in XP, whilst *no* is a polarity marker located in Σ P. Thus, we propose that the sentences in which *sí* is followed by *no* (cf. (18), (20), and (30)) are null-*que* variants of the *sí-que-no* sequence. Consequently, the analysis proposed for *sí-que* cases can be maintained for their *que*-less counterparts, as in (33) (see also (28)).¹⁶

(33) $[_{\text{ForceP}} [_{\text{TopicP}} [_{\text{XP}} \text{ sí } [_{\text{X}^0} \text{ que } ([_{\text{TopicP}} [_{\text{FocusP}}] [_{\Sigma\text{P}} \text{ no } [_{\text{TP}} \dots]]])]](]]]]$

As a reviewer kindly points out, it is important to consider the possibility of having null-*que* variants in other environments. In this regard, Martínez Vera (2019) argues that Latin American Spanish varieties lack overt *que* in the double-*que* (i.e., recomplementation) construction found in Iberian Spanish, as investigated by Villa-García (2015). As Michelle Sheehan (pers. comm.) observes, perhaps Latin American varieties are more permissive in terms of the omission of *que* as a C head more generally. Thus, the phenomenon discussed here seems to be an instantiation of a more general case (see also fn. 5 for much relevant discussion). In essence, the omission of *que* in *sí-que* environments is not an isolated case in the left periphery of Spanish; other C's can be overt and null as well (Villa-García in preparation).

4.2 Back to *sí que* in the relevant Latin American varieties: Arguments

Given that the *sí que* – *sí* \emptyset alternation seems to be in free variation in varieties such as Colombian and Mexican Spanish (cf. (15)–(17)), a natural way of analyzing the relevant cases is to assume, as we are doing here, that *que* can remain silent or, put differently, that the head of XP —under the analysis currently pursued— does not have to be spelled out under normal circumstances. Since the semantic contribution and the syntactic behavior of *sí* \emptyset in such varieties mirror those of *sí que* in Iberian Spanish, it follows that the two elements should be analyzed similarly, precisely as assumed by our proposed account in (33). In the following paragraphs, we provide support for the claim that the absence of *que* reduces to a case of null PF spellout.

Indeed, that the overtness or non-overtness of *que* in the *sí-que* sequence has to do with PF realization of the complementizer is supported by the following facts. First, the optional presence of *que* has no semantic effect in the Latin American varieties at issue, which is wholly compatible with its realization being reducible to PF considerations.¹⁷ Additionally, remember that in Iberian Spanish, *sí que* can in principle be followed by a proposition that itself contains an emphatic positive polarity marker, thus making the sequence *sí que sí* legitimate. If some varieties of Latin American Spanish permit the omission of *que*, as we have seen, then the prediction is that such varieties should in theory allow *sí-sí* sequences. The reason is that the first instance of *sí* would be in Spec,XP and the second instance would be the focal positive polarity marker located in FocusP, making the two items compatible in principle. However, the CREA corpus does not contain any examples of *sí sí* in Colombian Spanish, and the same result holds for Mexican Spanish. This fact leads us to suggest that the prediction that the combination *sí* + *sí* should in theory be possible is not borne out, as shown by (34). This result resonates with the judgments

¹⁶ As Villa-García & González Rodríguez (2020) point out, it may well be the case that in some contexts *no* can also be focal and thus move to FocusP. Since nothing bears on this issue for purposes of our present claims, we will deliberately set aside this possibility here. See also fn. 9 on *no que no*.

¹⁷ As is usually the case with elements that can be overt or null without apparent semantic differences, when asked about potential meaning differences, speakers tend to point out that there is a difference in the degree of emphasis, with overt elements (*sí que*) indicating added emphasis.

of our native-speaker consultants from different varieties, who categorically reject such sentences, regardless of whether or not ellipsis is effected.

- (34) *Ahora *sí sí* (ayuda).
 now yes yes helps
 'Now it is truly the case that s/he does help.'

This may seem like a counterexample to the analysis proposed here, but in fact it constitutes strong evidence in its favor: in such contexts, *que* has to surface obligatorily for speakers of the aforementioned varieties, who find *que* non-compulsory (and in fact tend to omit it) in other contexts. Thus, the grammatical counterpart of (34) is identical to the Iberian Spanish version, provided in (35).

- (35) Ahora *sí que sí* (ayuda). (= (23))
 now yes that yes helps
 'Now it is truly the case...'

The fact that *que* needs to be overt in *sí-sí* contexts but not in *sí-no* contexts (cf. (18)) confirms that we are dealing here with an instance of the *sí-que* construction.¹⁸ One natural explanation for the contrast between *sí no* and **sí sí* is to assume that whereas *que* can remain phonologically unrealized in the first case, it cannot in the second, possibly due to a constraint against adjacent homophonous forms (i.e., haplology). This is in keeping with the judgments of our consultants, who intuitively deem *sí-sí* sentences overly cacophonous. As a result, *que* must be PF-realized in order for the illicit *sí-sí* sequence to be disrupted (i.e., *sí que sí*).^{19,20}

Lastly, that *sí-sí* sequences are ruled out on phonological grounds and not because *sí que* is incompatible with a focal polarity particle immediately below it is corroborated by the example in (36), which features the focal polarity particle *tampoco* 'neither' after *sí que*. Put another way, while the presence of the emphatic affirmative polarity *sí* requires *que* to surface to avoid contiguous *sí sí* forms, other focal polarity particles causing no haplology issue do not trigger the overt realization of the complementizer in between items:

- (36) (Miguel Torres, *El incendio de abril*, Alfaguara, Colombian Spanish, 2012)
 Ponerse uno contento de que lo mataran, eso *sí tampoco*.
 becoming-CL one happy of that CL killed that yes neither
 '...getting happy because they killed him, that cannot be the case either.'

¹⁸ Again, these cases should be distinguished from those involving proform *sí*, followed by a clause, which may include the emphatic affirmative polarity marker (and which are found across Spanish varieties). Here, the adjacency between *sí*s is disrupted by the presence of the prosodic boundary (see also (4) above):

- (i) *Sí, sí gané.*
 yes yes won
 'Yes, I did win.'

Note that (i) further contributes to the distinction drawn above between proform *sí* and emphatic-polarity-encoding *sí*: structurally, the former is higher than the latter and the two can occur in the same sentence concurrently.

¹⁹ In this sense, this would be comparable to Spanish cases where an expletive (i.e., meaningless) *no* is inserted to avoid contiguous homophonous forms, as in (i).

- (i) *Que vengas es mejor que (no) que te quedes.*
 that come_{SUBJ} is better than not that CL stay
 'For you to come (here) is better than staying.'

Though optional, *no* is usually employed in order to avoid the (stylistically dispreferred) adjacent realization of two homophonous complementizers (RAE-ASALE 2009).

²⁰ In fact, see Villa-García (2015 et seq.) and references therein for the prospect that (non-)PF-realization of an element can help ameliorate violations.

The existence of examples like (36) further strengthens the parallelism with Iberian Spanish *sí-que* patterns, which can also be followed by emphatic polarity-encoding elements like *tampoco* and *también* (see Villa-García & González Rodríguez 2020, for empirical evidence; see also (13)a).²¹

The facts just reviewed lend plausibility to an account wherein *que* is in principle optional in the *sí-que* sequence in most contexts in Latin American varieties such as Colombian and Mexican Spanish, thus reducing its presence or absence to a PF matter.²² Further, a welcome advantage of this analysis is that it allows for a unified account of *sí que* and *sí Ø* across dialects.

4.3 Excluding a lexical account (*sí que* vs. *sí Ø*)

In this subsection, we would like to briefly consider an alternative account to derive the *sí que* case. This competing analysis is outlined in (37):

(37) $[_{\text{ForceP}} [_{\text{TopicP}} [_{\text{XP}} \text{ sí } [_{\text{X}^0} \text{ que}/\emptyset [_{\text{TP}} \dots]]]]]$

Under the proposal in (37), *que* and \emptyset are distinct lexical items, rather than a single lexical item with two different spellouts, namely an overt spellout (i.e., *que*) and a null spellout (i.e., *que*), as assumed under our account (cf. (33)).

Nonetheless, arguments such as the following seem to favor the null-*que* analysis in (33) over the two-different-lexical-items analysis in (37): in Colombian, Mexican, and Peruvian Spanish, *que* in *sí que* always seems to be an option, in that we have found no cases involving *sí Ø* as a way of signaling the speaker’s commitment to the truth of the proposition where *que* would have to remain absent. In other words, it seems that *que* is always pronounceable. Moreover, the analysis in (37) would be at variance with the facts reviewed above where on occasion, *que* must be spelled out owing to PF reasons (cf. (34)/(35)). In this connection, in a model wherein syntactic structure is sent to PF and to L(ogical)F(orm), and PF checks whether the structure adheres to PF requirements such as the avoidance of contiguous homophonous forms (e.g., *sí sí*), it is not at all clear how the head \emptyset could end up being spelled out as *que* in such cases (since under this account, *que* and \emptyset are different lexical items, not just the result of two different spellouts of the same item). On this view, we would have to stipulate that *que*, as a maximally underspecified left-peripheral form (Villa-García 2015), is an expletive inserted in PF, much like contentless/expletive *no* ‘not’ in (i) in fn. 19.²³ Although we will defer further discussion of this alternative account for future work due to space limitations, it appears that the *que* alternative provides a more straightforward account of the *sí-que-sí* facts (as well as a unitary

²¹ Additionally, Iberian Spanish *sí que* and its Latin American counterparts without *que* behave analogously in other relevant respects, as expected if they are variants of the same construction. For instance, Villa-García & González Rodríguez (2020) show that *sí-que* sequences, which are assumed under (33) to involve more CP structure than polarity-*sí* configurations, cannot readily appear in CPs with a defective structure that projects only up to FocusP (de Cuba & MacDonald 2013). Defective CPs include factive sentences. This predicts that *sí Ø* should be illegitimate under factive predicates in the Latin American dialects in question, in much the same way as *sí que* in Iberian Spanish. This is borne out by (i):

(i) *Me atormenta el hecho de que sí la Roberta no venga.
CL torments the fact of that yes the Roberta not come_{SUBJ}
Intended reading: ‘The fact that it is truly the case that Roberta doesn’t come bothers me.’

However, as noted by an anonymous reviewer, further research should ascertain this point, since there seems to be a high degree of inter-speaker variation in terms of the selectional requirements of factive predicates more generally (see also Villa-García 2019).

²² Something along the same lines may occur in the case of the seemingly lexicalized expression *no que no* found in certain varieties, where *que* must be present (see fn. 9).

²³ An account along these lines is in fact usually assumed for the English expletives *it/there* and even for *do* in *do-support* (see, among others, the discussion in Bošković 2007 and Radford 2016).

treatment of the facts across dialects), and in actuality the account in (33) fares rather well with the account of micro-variation to be pursued in the following subsection. More generally, our findings provide additional cross-dialectal support for the analysis of *sí/sí que* proposed in Villa-García & González Rodríguez (2020), which in turn is based in part on previous accounts in the literature (e.g., Hernanz 2007; Batllori & Hernanz 2013).

4.4 Toward a (micro-)parameterization of the dialectal contrast

The approach adopted here (cf. (33)) coheres well with the claim made by Rizzi (2013: 201–202) and Rizzi & Bocci (2017: 13) that in some cases, the difference between overt and null C/left-peripheral heads (i.e., *que/que*) can be attributed to a superficial spell-out (i.e., pronunciation) parameter, which we would like to recast also as a micro-parameter accounting for intra-linguistic differences (see, e.g., Kandybowicz 2009; Chomsky 2010; Richards 2010; Berwick & Chomsky 2011; and Boeckx 2012, for an approach that treats linguistic variation as a matter of externalization). In the words of Rizzi (2013: 201–202), this is “a familiar and widely attested kind of low-level parameterization.” This (micro-)parameter would thus lie at the heart of the observed dialectal split between Iberian Spanish *sí que* on the one hand, where *que* is overt, and Latin American *sí que/que*, on the other, where *que* can receive a silent spellout, hence accounting for its optional character. On this view, the presence or absence of *que* in *sí que* would be a matter of PF: whereas in Iberian Spanish, *que* requires an overt spellout, in some Latin American varieties at least, it can receive a silent/null spellout in most contexts, a view for which we have provided empirical support in the preceding subsections. This approach to micro-variation is indeed in keeping with Barbiers (2009) contention that variation more generally is restricted to lexical properties and PF spellout (see also the abovementioned references). Further research will determine whether this approach is extendable to other left-peripheral heads/C°s.

As an alternative account of the observed microvariation, Adger & Smith (2005 et seq.) advocate the view that the feature system assumed in much work in Minimalism in the last three decades allows for variable phonetic (i.e., audible) outputs with the same interpretation (in our case, *que* and its null counterpart, *que*), by virtue of a particular head containing one additional formal feature, with visible phonetic consequences but not semantic ones. For reasons of space, we will not explore this alternative possibility here. Further research will draw a comparison between competing accounts of microvariation in *sí que/que* cases.

5 Conclusion

In this paper, we have focused on the previously unnoticed dialect contrast between Iberian Spanish *sí que* vs. Colombian, Mexican, and Peruvian Spanish *sí que/Ø*, a construction used to herald the speaker's commitment to the truth of the proposition embedded under *sí que/Ø*. We have shown that *sí* as an emphatic affirmative polarity marker is attested across Spanish varieties. The diatopic contrast therefore relates to *sí que/Ø*, with the *sí-que* version being obligatory in Iberian Spanish, and *que* being generally optional in Latin American varieties like Colombian, Mexican, and Peruvian Spanish. More generally, the morphological realization of distinct CP-related heads as *que* along the left periphery across Spanish dialects is a topic of ongoing research at present (see, e.g., Villa-García 2015, in preparation).

Based on recent accounts of the *sí-que* phenomenon in Iberian Spanish, we have argued that the analysis pursued in Villa-García & González Rodríguez (2020) can straightforwardly be applied to the relevant Latin American varieties, the difference between said varieties being the PF (non-)realization of the relevant head *que* (i.e., *sí que/que*). We have provided empirical arguments that this is the case from a number of Latin American varieties using data drawn from a variety of sources and considered alternative

theoretical proposals, which fail short of explaining the relevant facts. Therefore, the data presented here lend novel support to Villa-García & González Rodríguez's recent account of the Iberian Spanish facts, which allows for a unitary analysis of the different dialectal possibilities.

We have also shown that the data brought to light herein are wholly consistent with a view of (micro-)parameterization whereby variation is restricted to lexical properties and, crucially for the *sí que*/Ø case, PF spellout (*que/que*), although the dialectal data may also be amenable to feature-based accounts. More generally, our discussion has shown that the phenomenon investigated here has wide-ranging consequences for a host of longstanding issues in morphosyntax, including word order possibilities, ellipsis, polarity, lexical realizations, microvariation, and the structure of the clausal left edge.

Abbreviations

ACC = accusative, CL = clitic, SUBJ = subjunctive.

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Competing Interests

The authors have no competing interests to declare.

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