

# Contents

## Danksagung – Agradecimientos – Ringraziamenti — VII

### 1 Why WHY? — 1

### 2 Word order, information structure, and *wh*-interrogatives in Italian and Spanish — 6

#### 2.1 Basic word order in Italian and Spanish — 6

#### 2.2 Information structure: definition of terminology — 10

##### 2.2.1 Focus — 13

##### 2.2.2 Information status — 18

#### 2.3 The interplay of word order and information structure in Italian and Spanish — 20

##### 2.3.1 A note on null subjects — 20

##### 2.3.2 SV(O) — 21

##### 2.3.3 V(O)S — 22

##### 2.3.4 (X)VSO — 25

##### 2.3.5 Further strategies for focus marking — 26

##### 2.3.6 Information structure-related word order variation in Italian and Spanish: generalizations and differences — 28

#### 2.4 Syntactic accounts for word order variation in Italian and Spanish — 30

##### 2.4.1 The cartographic framework — 30

##### 2.4.2 The left periphery — 31

##### 2.4.3 Previous accounts of subject positioning — 34

#### 2.5 Word order variation in Italian and Spanish *wh*-interrogatives — 47

##### 2.5.1 The main characteristics of *wh*-interrogatives — 47

##### 2.5.2 The syntactic structure in *wh*-interrogatives — 53

### 3 Word order variation in Italian and Spanish WHY-interrogatives: current state-of-the-art and research questions — 55

#### 3.1 The special syntactic position of WHY — 56

##### 3.1.1 WHY-x-V: Previous observations of intervening elements — 56

##### 3.1.2 WHY-Voc-V: Vocatives as intervening elements — 61

##### 3.1.3 Further evidence for the peculiarity of WHY — 64

#### 3.2 Subject positioning in Italian and Spanish WHY-interrogatives — 71

##### 3.2.1 Information structure of the subject — 71

##### 3.2.2 Heaviness of the subject — 73

##### 3.2.3 Subject type — 75

<b>4</b>	<b>Data and methods — 79</b>
4.1	Parallel corpus study: Italian and Spanish — 80
4.1.1	Corpus and annotation — 81
4.1.2	Statistical analysis — 85
4.2	Experimental studies — 86
4.2.1	Acceptability judgment task I and II: intervening vocatives — 86
4.2.2	Forced-choice experiment: information structure in intransitive constructions — 90
4.2.3	Production task: information structure in transitive constructions — 96
4.2.4	Acceptability judgment task III: information structure in transitive constructions — 100
4.2.5	Acceptability judgment task IV and V: the syntactic heaviness of the subject in Spanish — 104
<b>5</b>	<b>On the syntactic position of WHY: an analysis of WHY-x-V sequences — 108</b>
5.1	Characterizing intervening elements in WHY-x-V: results of the parallel corpus study — 108
5.2	WHY-Voc-V: results of the AJT I and II — 109
5.3	Discussion — 113
5.3.1	WHY-x-V: a characterization of intervening elements — 113
5.3.2	WHY-Voc-V: intervening vocatives — 116
5.3.3	Implications for the architecture of the left periphery and the syntactic position of WHY — 121
<b>6</b>	<b>Subject positioning in Italian and Spanish WHY-interrogatives: disentangling the relevant factors — 127</b>
6.1	Exploring potential factors: results of the parallel corpus study — 127
6.1.1	Frequency of pre- and postverbal subjects — 128
6.1.2	Information structural categories — 129
6.1.3	Verb type and object realization — 129
6.1.4	Subject type — 133
6.1.5	Phonological Heaviness of the subject — 137
6.1.6	Statistical analysis — 138
6.2	Information structure and intransitive verbs: results of the forced-choice task — 139
6.3	Focus and transitive verbs in production: results of the elicited production task — 143
6.4	Focus and transitive verbs in perception: results of the AJT III — 145

6.5	Syntactic heaviness and subject type in Spanish: results of the AJTs IV and V — 147
6.6	Towards a hierarchy of relevant factors — 150
6.6.1	Information structure-related subject positioning — 151
6.6.2	The heaviness of the subject — 165
6.6.3	Subject type — 167
6.6.4	Building the hierarchy — 170
6.6.5	An outlook: a potential effect of the heaviness of the sentence — 173

**7 A syntactic account for subject positioning in Italian and Spanish WHY-interrogatives — 176**

7.1	Discussion of previous accounts — 176
7.1.1	A structural account: variation in basic word order — 176
7.1.2	A structural explanation: the position of WHY — 180
7.1.3	A structural explanation: the availability of subject positions — 183
7.1.4	A feature-based account: the role of case assignment — 185
7.2	An alternative account: the distribution of the EPP-feature — 187

**8 WHY-interrogatives in Italian heritage speakers: at the interface between syntax and discourse — 197**

8.1	Background — 198
8.1.1	Word order in Italian — 198
8.1.2	Word order in Italian (and German) <i>wh</i> -interrogatives — 199
8.1.3	The acquisition of word order in a syntactic and information structural context — 202
8.1.4	Word order in Heritage Italian WHY-interrogatives and the Interface Hypothesis — 204
8.2	Methods — 205
8.2.1	Materials — 205
8.2.2	Participants — 207
8.2.3	Procedure and statistical analysis — 208
8.2.4	Results — 209
8.3	Discussion — 210

**9 Conclusion — 212**

**Bibliography — 215**

**Index — 233**