

# Local *wh*-subjects under *Quem nunca?* ellipsis

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## Abstract

In this paper I show that there is an elliptical construction in Brazilian Portuguese involving *nunca* ('never') restricted to locally moved *wh*-subjects and provide an account of this peculiar restriction. The construction in question corresponds to the sequence *Quem nunca?* ('Who never?'), which is used as a follow-up comment to a declarative sentence such as *Pedro beijou João* ('Pedro kissed João'), meaning 'Who did never kiss João?'. Curiously, the *wh*-element in such cases must correspond to the locally moved subject. I argue that the construction in question provides evidence for Bošković's (2023) proposal regarding two different positions for *wh*-movement, in which local *wh*-subjects move to a position below CP and above TP, whereas other *wh*-elements all move to Spec,CP. I also show this approach provides evidence for the view in which a Spec-head relation is needed for ellipsis licensing.

**Keywords:** ellipsis, *wh*-constructions, Brazilian Portuguese, left periphery.

## 1. Introduction

The linguistic expression *Quem nunca?* (literally 'Who never?') is used in Brazilian Portuguese (BP) as a follow-up comment to a declarative sentence that serves as its antecedent (cf. 1), being felicitous in a context where speaker B is not at all surprised by the statement uttered by speaker A. Unless otherwise indicated, the data presented in this paper is of Brazilian Portuguese. Ellipsis will be represented as a crossed-out text.

- (1) A: Pedro beijou João  
       P.     kissed J.
- B: Quem nunca [~~beijou João~~]?  
       who    never   kissed J.  
       'Who has never kissed João?

*Quem nunca?* is a type of rhetorical question, typically used in an ironic way. A natural continuation of B's comment would be, for instance, something like 'He [João] kisses everybody!'. In this paper I will provide a syntactic account of the phenomenon; more specifically, will provide an account for the structure and ellipsis licensing involved. In the following section I show that *Quem nunca?* is better understood as a case of TP ellipsis. In section 3 I show that the *wh*-element must be a locally moved *wh*-subject. In section 4 I present Bošković's (2023a) proposal that there are different *wh*-movement positions in the left periphery, with one dedicated to local subjects. In section 5 I propose a structure for *Quem nunca?* and argue for a Spec-head ellipsis licensing approach, as in Lobeck (1995). In section 6 I conclude.

## 2. *Quem nunca?* as (TP) ellipsis

Here I will provide evidence that *Quem nunca?* is an elliptical construction.<sup>1</sup> First, notice that the *wh*-phrase in (2) must be interpreted as the subject, and it cannot be interpreted as the object.

- (2) A: Pedro beijou João  
       P.     kissed J.
- B: Quem nunca [~~beijou João~~]?  
       who    never   kissed J.  
       'Who has never kissed João?'
- B': \*Quem nunca [~~Pedro beijou~~]?  
       who    never P.     kissed  
       (Intended) 'Who has Pedro never kissed?'

<sup>1</sup> See Dias (2022) for additional evidence on the elliptical status of *Quem nunca?*.

The facts in (2) are straightforwardly accounted for under an ellipsis approach, since the non-elided version of B' is ungrammatical (i.e., *\*Quem nunca Pedro beijou?*; cf. the well formed *Quem Pedro nunca beijou?*), which means it cannot be the ellipsis source for *Quem nunca?* prior to deletion.<sup>2</sup>

It is known since Ross (1967) that both strict (3a) and sloppy (3b) readings are available under ellipsis, which has traditionally been used as an ellipsis diagnosis.<sup>3</sup>

- (3) John<sub>1</sub> likes his<sub>1</sub> car and Peter<sub>2</sub> does, too.
- a. John<sub>1</sub> likes his<sub>1</sub> car and Peter<sub>2</sub> likes his<sub>1</sub> car, too. (*strict*)
- b. John<sub>1</sub> likes his<sub>1</sub> car and Peter<sub>2</sub> likes his<sub>2</sub> car, too. (*sloppy*)

<sup>2</sup> An anonymous reviewer pointed out that ellipsis has long been known for its effect of rescuing ungrammatical structures, as in the case of island repair, thus suggesting that the argument regarding (2) above should be taken with a grain of salt. But even though sluicing (TP ellipsis) is able to ameliorate island effects (Ross 1967, Merchant 2001), that shouldn't lead us to expect it to unrestrictedly rescue ungrammatical structures. I am unaware of cases in which sluicing rescues structures in which their ungrammaticality is based on anything other than locality violations, which are not involved in (2B'). However, there is an interesting point to be made here regarding this issue. Manner adverbs in English, which must occur below Infl, e.g., *John (\*completely) will (completely) lose his mind*, show up above it under ellipsis, e.g., *John partially lost his mind, and Bill completely did* (Lasnik 2003:16; see also Ochi 1999). If one were to expect *nunca* to be stranded higher than usual under ellipsis just like English *completely*, the fact (2B') is ill formed would indeed count as evidence against an ellipsis account. However, BP doesn't allow such misplaced adverbs, as we can see in (i): the adverb must follow the auxiliary even under ellipsis.

- (i) a. João (\*totalmente) estava (totalmente) assustado.  
J. was totally scared  
'João was totally scared.'
- b. Maria estava um pouco assustada e João (\*totalmente) estava (totalmente).  
M. was a bit scared and J. was totally  
'Maria was a bit scared and João was completely scared'

The fact *nunca* in (2B') behaves like BP *totalmente* in (ib.), which is a clear case of ellipsis, therefore suggests that *Quem nunca?* is indeed elliptical.

<sup>3</sup> An anonymous reviewer observed that the sloppy identity is highly inaccessible under sluicing (Merchant 2001), pointing out that the availability of such reading in *Quem nunca?* could actually be an argument against the TP analysis. The sentence in (ii), however, shows that a sloppy reading is available under clausal *e* in BP.

- (ii) João ama sua patroa, e Pedro também.  
J. loves his boss and P. too  
'João loves his boss, and Pedro loves João's boss/his own boss too'

I take (i) to show that the unavailability of sloppy reading under sluicing is not due to TP ellipsis itself, but - I tentatively suggest - restricted to particularities of the sluicing construction, such as issues with co-reference with indefinites.



- (8) \*Mari tegnap vásárolt a piacon, és nem holnap.  
 M. **yesterday** shopped the market.on and not **tomorrow**  
 'Mari was shopping at the market yesterday, and not tomorrow.'  
 Griffiths & Lipták (2014: 214, fn2)

Notice in (9) that tense mismatches are also not permitted under *Quem nunca?*.

- (9) A: Maria beijou João na festa ontem.  
 M. kissed J. at.the party yesterday
- B: Quem nunca [~~beijou João~~]? Ele já beijou todo mundo!  
 who never kissed J. he already kissed everybody  
 'Who did never kiss João? He has already kissed everybody!'
- B': #Quem nunca [~~beija João~~]/[~~vai beijar João~~]? Ele beija/ vai beijar  
 who never kisses J. will kiss J. he kisses will kiss  
 todo mundo!  
 everybody  
 (Intended) 'Who never kisses/will kiss João? He kisses/will kiss everybody!'

Lastly, *Quem nunca?* seems to obey the ban against a non-null C under sluicing, i.e., TP ellipsis, thus patterning with (10), as we see in (11).<sup>4</sup>

- (10) A: Alguém beijou João  
 someone kissed J.
- B: Quem? (\*que)  
 who that  
 'Who kissed João?'
- (11) A: Pedro beijou João.  
 P. kissed J.
- B: Quem nunca?  
 who never
- B': ??Quem que nunca?<sup>5</sup>  
 who that never
- B'': \*Quem nunca que?  
 who never that

<sup>4</sup> For more on the ban, see Ross 1967 and Merchant 2001.

<sup>5</sup> The acceptability of B' (*Quem que nunca?*) varies among BP speakers, with a group of speakers who considers it degraded (but still better than B'' (*Quem nunca que?*)), and a group that considers it acceptable. I will address this variation in section 5, but the point here is that B' and B'', at least for a group of speakers, contrast with B.

Notice that the only fully acceptable version of *Quem nunca?* is the one with a null C, with the presence of *que* ('that') making the expression degraded. The contrast between B' and B'' will be addressed in section 5.

Therefore, I take *Quem nunca?* constructions to involve TP ellipsis.

### 3. The data

In this section I discuss the relevant properties of *Quem nunca?* constructions for which this paper will propose an analysis. Interestingly, *Quem nunca?* ellipsis is *only* available with a locally moved *wh*-subject, that is, moved within the clause they are generated (cf. 12b, 13b). With (local) *wh*-objects (cf. 12c), long distance (LD) *wh*-arguments<sup>6</sup> (cf. 13c for the object, 13d for the subject), and *wh*-adjuncts (cf. 14), this ellipsis is disallowed. In (12a), (13a) and (14a), we have the discourse antecedent of the elliptical constructions in (b-d). Notice that the non-elided versions of the ellipses being examined are all acceptable, which shows that the issue with the ungrammaticality in such cases is with respect to ellipsis licensing. In other words, it is only when ellipsis following *nunca* is applied that the pattern can be observed.<sup>7</sup>

- (12) a. A: Pedro beijou João.  
P. kissed J.
- b. B: Quem nunca [~~†beijou João~~]? (Quem nunca beijou João?✓)  
who never kissed J.  
'Who did never kiss João?'
- c. B': \*Quem Pedro nunca [~~†beijou~~]? (Quem Pedro nunca beijou?✓)  
who P. never kissed  
'Who did Pedro never kiss?'
- (13) a. A: Maria disse que Pedro beijou João.  
M. said that P. kissed J.
- b. B: Quem nunca [~~†disse que Pedro beijou João~~]? (Quem nunca disse que Pedro beijou João?✓)  
who never said that P. kissed J.  
'Who did never say Pedro kissed João?'

<sup>6</sup> By long distance *wh*-arguments I refer to both subjects and objects generated outside of the matrix clause they end up in, such as in the embedded clause.

<sup>7</sup> It might be worth exploring other cases of BP rhetorical questions in which a *wh*-element is involved, such as *Quem diria...*? (lit. 'who would say'; cf. English 'Who would've thought?'), or *Quem (me) dera...* (lit. 'who would give (me)'; cf. English 'I wish'). As with *Quem nunca?*, it seems that the *wh*-element in these constructions must also be a subject. But caution is needed, since in here an inflected verb is involved and we might be dealing with a case of a lower ellipsis (or we might not even be dealing with ellipsis at all). Separate tests must be run to verify the status of these constructions in order to entertain a uniform account. I thank an anonymous reviewer for bringing up this point.

c. B': \*Quem Maria nunca [~~disse que Pedro beijou t~~]? (Quem Maria nunca disse que Pedro beijou?✓)

who M. never said that P. kissed  
'Who did Maria never say Pedro kissed?'

d. B'': \*Quem Maria nunca [~~disse que t beijou João~~]? (Quem Maria nunca disse que beijou João?✓)

who M. never said that kissed J.  
'Who did Maria never say kissed João?'

(14) a. A: Pedro beijou João na festa.  
P. kissed J. at.the party

b. B': \*Onde Pedro nunca [~~beijou João t~~]? (Onde Pedro nunca beijou João?✓)  
where P. never kissed J.  
'Where did Pedro never kiss João?'

As we can see, *only* local *wh*-subjects are allowed in *Quem nunca?* ellipsis constructions, whereas non-local *wh*-subjects (i.e., both local and LD *wh*-objects, LD *wh*-subjects, *wh*-adjuncts) are not. This is summarized in the table below.

**Table 1.** Brazilian Portuguese *Quem nunca?* ellipsis

	<i>Quem nunca</i> [ <del>XP</del> ]?	Examples
local <i>wh</i> -subject	✓	12b,13b
local <i>wh</i> -object	*	12c
LD <i>wh</i> -subject	*	13d
LD <i>wh</i> -object	*	13c
<i>wh</i> -adjunct	*	14b

The problem to be addressed in the remainder of this paper is: why only locally moved *wh*-subjects are allowed in BP *Quem nunca?* constructions? What is special about them?

#### 4. Different *wh*-movement positions

In this section I present the theoretical framework I will adopt in the analysis of *Quem nunca?* constructions.

Bošković (2021, 2023a,b) argues that there are two distinct *wh*-positions, one being confined to locally moved *wh*-subjects (cf. 15). In particular, he argues that *who* in (16b) is lower than *who* in (16a), but higher than *Amy* in (16c). For expository reasons, I have labeled the higher *wh*-position as <sub>H</sub>CP (i.e., higher CP), and the lower one <sub>L</sub>CP (i.e., lower CP). In his work, <sub>L</sub>CP is actually named A/A'P, as the author claims it consists of a mixed A and A' position, given that it is able to (i) satisfy EPP, (ii) check nominative Case, and also (iii) check A' features, e.g., [+WH]. Here, I will

be concerned with the distribution of *wh*-words in the left periphery, rather than with the mixed A/A' properties.

(15) [HCP [LCP *wh*-Subj<sub>LOC</sub> [TP ...

(16) a. I wonder [HCP *who* Amy met].

b. I wonder [LCP *who* left].

c. I think [TP Amy left].

Bošković argues that local *wh*-subjects move straight to <sub>L</sub>CP without passing through Spec,TP, by showing *who* in e.g., *who left?* is neither in Spec,TP nor in Spec,CP, but it must be in between. Quantifier float (Q-float) data from West Ulster English (WUE) show that *wh*-subject movement cannot proceed via Spec,TP. WUE allows Q-float under *wh*-movement (17b,c), but a regular subject in Spec,TP is unable to float a quantifier following a passive verb (17a). Considering Q-float is allowed under a *wh*-subject (17b), if *wh*-subjects were to pass through Spec,TP, we would expect (17b) to pattern with (17a) and not with (17c). Therefore, the *wh*-subject in (17b) must be above TP.

(17) a. \*[TP They were arrested all *t* last night].

b. Who [TP (\**t*) was arrested all *t* in Duke Street]?

c. What did [TP he say all *t* that he wanted]?

Bošković (2023a: 03)

However, *who* and *what* in (17) cannot occupy the same position in the left periphery. If that were the case, the contrast in (18) would be unexpected. Notice that the *wh*-object moves above the topic, a position unavailable for *wh*-subjects, suggesting that the former is higher than the latter. Also notice that a long-distance *wh*-subject above the topic is not ungrammatical (18b), being acceptable in contrast to (18c).

(18) a. ?Mary wonders which book, for Kim, Peter should buy.

b. ??I wonder which student, for Kim, Mary said should buy that book.

c. \*Mary wonders which student, for Kim, should buy that book.

Bošković (2023a)



Also, in a number of languages, fronted *wh*-subjects and non-subjects are marked differently, as in Igbo<sup>8,9</sup>.

- (19) a. Ònyé \*(ka) Òbí hùrù n'-áhíá?  
           who    FOC O. saw at-market  
           'Who did Obi see at the market?'  
       b. Ònyé (\*ka) hùrù Ádá n'-áhíá?  
           who    FOC saw A. at-market  
           'Who saw Ada at the market?'

Amaechi & Georgi (2019)

Extraction from subject *wh*-islands is less degraded than from non-subject *wh*-islands (see 20).<sup>10</sup> Bošković (2023a) captures this fact by saying that in the former case we have *wh*-movement crossing a position that is not a pure A'-position, since it's a mixed A/A' position, contrary to what happens in the latter cases, where we have *wh*-movement to an A'-position across an A'-Spec.<sup>11</sup> Crucially, *who* in (20a) and *how* in (20b) must be in different positions, as if they occupied the same position the attested contrast would be unexpected.

- (20) a. ?*What* do you wonder *who* bought?  
       b. ??*What* do you wonder *how* she bought?

Another case where we have a local subject *vs* non-local subject asymmetry is given below. Kaisse (1983) observed there is a one-word host restriction on contracted auxiliaries hosted by moved *wh*-phrases, which crucially doesn't apply to local *wh*-subjects.

- (21) a. [Who]'s coming? / [What]'s Mary buying? / [When]'s dinner? / [How]'s your old man?  
       b. \*[Whose food]'s the dog eating *t*?  
       c. [Whose food]'s *t* burning?  
       d. \*[Which man]'s she the fondest of *t*?  
       e. [Which man]'s *t* leaving first?

Kaisse (1983)

<sup>8</sup> Amaechi & Georgi (2019) show that LD *wh*-moved subjects pattern with objects in preceding the complementizer FOC.

<sup>9</sup> The reader is referred to Bošković 2023b for additional evidence for the split presented here.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Chomsky (1986).

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Rizzi (1990).

Notice that the two-word *wh*-phrases above cannot be the host of a contracted auxiliary (cf. 21b, 21d), except when it corresponds to a local *wh*-subject (cf. 21c, 21e). Bošković (2021) takes this to indicate that *wh*-XPs in non-subject (cf. 21b, 21d) and subject (21c, 21e) questions are not in the same position. Also notice that LD moved subjects (cf. 22) pattern with objects in this respect.

- (22) \*[Which man]'s Peter claiming *t* will leave first?

As mentioned in Bošković (2023b), there are other languages with processes restricted to local *wh*-subjects. Gan (2022) shows that in Hong Kong Sign Language only local *wh*-subjects need to undergo rightward *wh*-movement. In Lewis (2022) it is shown that object *wh*-objects and LD *wh*-subjects pattern alike with respect to British *do*-ellipsis, since both disallow *wh*-extraction out of *do*-ellipsis (cf. 23). However, *wh*-extraction of local subjects is allowed (cf. 24).

- (23) a. Although I don't know what Tom will read, I do know what Fred will (\*do).

b. I don't know who Martha thinks will leave, but I do know who Emily thinks will (\*do).

Baltin (2006)

- (24) A: Sue wouldn't kiss Peter last night.

B: Well, who WOULD (do)?

Lewis (2022)

The idea to be pursued here is that the restrictions we see in BP *Quem nunca?* relate to the aforementioned ones, which all suggest a dedicated position to local *wh*-subjects.

In this respect, Brazilian Portuguese displays the same topicalization pattern observed in (18) for English, indicating that *wh*-objects are higher than *wh*-subjects, which is expected under the  $_{HCP/LCP}$  approach. Notice that the contrast in BP is even sharper (cf. 25).

- (25) a. Maria quer saber que livro, pro Pedro, o João comprou.

M. wants to.know which book to.the P. the J. bought

- b. Maria quer saber que aluno, pro Pedro, o João disse que

M. wants to.know which student to.the P. the J. said that comprou o livro.  
bought the book

- c. \*Maria quer saber que aluno, pro Pedro, comprou o livro.

M. wants to.know which student to.the P. bought the book

Also consider BP (26). In (26a) we have a simple *wh*-subject construction, and in (26b) a simple *wh*-object one.

(26) a. Quem<sub>i</sub> (que) *t<sub>i</sub>* viu a garota?  
           who   that   saw the girl  
           'Who saw the girl?'

b. Quem<sub>i</sub> (que) a garota viu *t<sub>i</sub>*?  
           who   that the girl   saw  
           'Who did the girl see?'

Now consider BP (27). Even though it is possible to topicalize the object above the local *wh*-subject position (27a), it is impossible to topicalize the subject above the *wh*-object (27b). This contrast provides additional support for the claim that *wh*-subjects and *wh*-objects have different landing sites in the left periphery domain.

(27) a. E [a garota]<sub>j</sub>, quem (que) *t<sub>i</sub>* viu *t<sub>j</sub>*?  
           and the girl   who   that   saw  
           'As for the girl, who saw her?'

b. \*E [a garota]<sub>i</sub>, quem (que) *t<sub>i</sub>* viu *t<sub>j</sub>*?  
           and the girl   who   that   saw  
           'As for the girl, who did she see?'

I take the data above to indicate that locally moved *wh*-subjects in BP also occupy the intermediate projection between <sub>H</sub>CP and TP, that is, <sub>L</sub>CP. I will capitalize on the availability of this projection in BP to propose an account for the ellipsis pattern presented in the previous section.<sup>12</sup>

## 5. The account

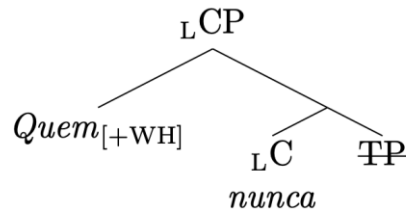
Assuming with Bošković (2021, 2023a,b) that locally moved *wh*-subjects move to Spec,<sub>L</sub>CP, we are able to capture the topicalization pattern seen in (25) and also the ellipsis facts I have presented in section 3, namely, that *Quem nunca?* ellipsis is only available when the *wh*-element corresponds to the local *wh*-subject, being excluded in cases of object, LD subject, and adjunct *wh*-movement. This is exactly the cut that is predicted under Bošković's subjects-in-Spec,<sub>L</sub>CP analysis.

By also assuming with Lobeck (1995) that [+WH] Spec-head agreement is a necessary condition for ellipsis licensing in cases of TP ellipsis (e.g., sluicing), I propose that *nunca* heading the <sub>L</sub>C projection licenses ellipsis when it stands in a Spec-

<sup>12</sup> An anonymous reviewer pointed out that this approach to split CP, in which the local *wh*-subject is in the lower Spec,CP, predicts elements in the higher Spec,CP co-occurring with the *wh*-subject. This is exactly the case seen in (18) and in (25)-(27) with respect to the interaction between *wh*-movement and topicalization, where the topic must be above the low CP. They have also mentioned that the split CP analysis predicts that local *wh*-subjects should not create a *wh*-island. I do not agree that this is a straightforward prediction of this approach; it would really depend on the phasal status of the projections within CP, which is to a large extent an empirical matter. Potentially relevant here is the work by Vera (2019), who discusses Spanish double-complementizer constructions and argues that the lower CP (TopicP) in his split CP domain is a phase.

head relation with *Quem*<sub>[+WH]</sub>: this is only possible when *quem* corresponds to the local subject, since this is the element located in Spec,<sub>L</sub>CP. This is represented in (28).

(28)



Under Bošković's proposal regarding a special position for locally moved *wh*-subjects, we would expect to find cases where a syntactic process is essentially confined to this position, which is in fact confirmed by the BP ellipsis process under consideration, hence this ellipsis process can be taken to provide evidence for the proposal in question.

### 5.1. *Quem nunca?* structure

*Nunca* ('never') has a very similar distribution with the negation *não* ('not', 'no') in Brazilian Portuguese. They both have a fixed position and must occur between the subject and the inflected verb.<sup>13</sup>

- (29) a. Eu não assisti (\*não) ao filme.  
           I not watched not to.the movie  
           'I didn't watch the movie'
- b. Eu nunca assisti (\*nunca) ao filme.  
           I never watched never to.the movie  
           'I never watched the movie'

Additionally, they share the same properties with respect to the licensing of emphatic negation either pre- or post-sententially.

- (30) a. (Não,) eu não assisti ao filme(, não).  
           no I not watched to.the movie no  
           'No, I didn't watch the movie'
- b. (Não,) eu nunca assisti ao filme(, não).  
           no I never watched to.the movie no

I take this to indicate that *não* and *nunca* occupy the same position in the clause structure. Following work by Gribanova (2017), I will assume there are two positions associated with polarity (i.e., negation, affirmation) in the clausal structure: one above

<sup>13</sup> See discussion about the syntactic structure of *Quem nunca?* constructions also in Dias (2022).

TP (i.e., PolP) and one below TP (i.e., NegP). The higher one is able to host focus features in addition to polarity features. Neg, on the other hand, hosts the morphosyntactic features responsible for sentential negation.<sup>14</sup> She claims these projections are connected (i.e., they license each other) via an Agree relation.

In languages with verb-stranding ellipsis in polarity focus contexts (e.g., Russian (cf. 31), Hungarian (cf. 32), BP (cf. 33), it is proposed that the verb head-moves to the higher polarity head, from where it licenses TP ellipsis. Also relevant is Martins (2016), who argues for a polarity phrase  $\Sigma$ P above TP able to license ellipsis after verb movement to the  $\Sigma$  head.

- (31) A: Evgenija otpravila posylku v Moskvu.  
E. send.PST.3SG.F package.ACC to Moscow  
'Did Eugenia send the package to Moscow?'

B: (Net,) ne otpravila. / (Da,) otpravila.  
no she send.PST.3SG.F yes send.PST.3SG.F  
'(No,) she didn't.' / '(Yes,) she did.'

Gribanova (2017: 1080)

- (32) A: Láttá János a szomszédokat?  
saw J. the neighbours  
'Did János see the neighbours?'

B: Láttá.  
saw  
'He did.'

Lipták (2012: 85)

- (33) A: Maria beijou João?  
M. kissed J.  
'Did Maria kiss João?'

B: (Sim,) beijou. / (Não,) não beijou.  
yes kissed no not kissed  
'(Yes,) she did.' / '(No,) she didn't.'

I propose that this high polarity phrase is actually  $_{\text{L}}\text{CP}$ , thus being able to host a head that needs to check focus features in responsive constructions.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Cf. also Zanuttini (1997) for relevant discussion.

<sup>15</sup> See Bošković (2021) for evidence that local subject focus movement also lands in this projection. Notice that a focalized DP can also appear under *nunca* ellipsis, which is expected under this approach:

- (i) Pedro beijou Maria, mas João<sub>[+FOC]</sub> nunca [~~beijou Maria~~].  
P. kissed M. but J. never kissed M.

Crucially, the DP preceding *nunca* must be a local subject.

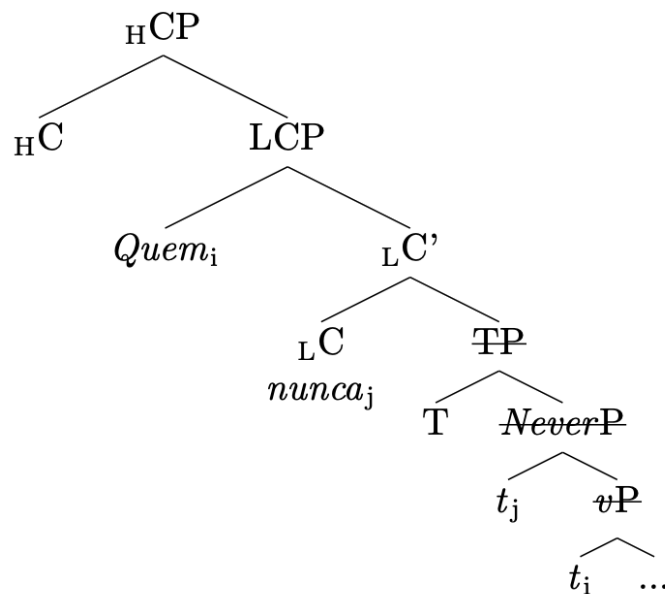
I will take *nunca* to head the lower polarity projection, which here I will label *NeverP* for ease of exposition. *Nunca* is licensed via Agree with the higher head  $_L C$ , which can be either null or host an emphatic negation (cf. 34). Remember that both  $_L C$  and *Never* are able to host polarity features.

- (34) (Não,) Maria nunca beijou João.  
       no    M.    never kissed J.  
       '(No,) Maria never kissed João.'

Gribanova 2017 claims that the lower polarity complex head moves to the higher one, which is followed by TP ellipsis in cases like (33). Where *nunca* serves as the fragment answer to an antecedent, I propose *nunca* head-moves to  $_L C$  to check its focus feature prior to TP deletion. Alternatively, we could envision *nunca* as being base generated in  $_L CP$  and thus licensing a lower null *Never* through a distance in ellipsis cases. I will leave this open and adopt the head movement approach for concreteness.

For *Quem nunca?* I propose it licenses TP ellipsis in the configuration (35), that is, with *nunca* heading  $_L CP$  after movement motivated by focus feature checking. The *wh*-subject, as we saw, is in Spec, $_L CP$ .

- (35)



The polarity head *nunca* is generated in the lower *Never* position. In order to check its focus feature, it moves to  $_L C$ , where ellipsis of its complement TP is then applied. The *wh*-subject is base generated in Spec, $_v P$  and then moves (straight) to Spec, $_L CP$ , where it satisfies EPP and checks [+WH]. The ungrammatical cases of

ellipsis seen in (12c), (13c), (13d), and (14b) in section 3 are thus explained because *Quem* and *nunca* do not stand in a Spec-head (Agree) relation.<sup>16</sup>

In the following I will discuss the contrast attested in (11), repeated below as (36).

- (36) A: Pedro beijou João.  
P. kissed J.

B: Quem nunca?  
who never

B': ??Quem que nunca?  
who that never

B'': \*Quem nunca que?  
who never that

## 5.2. BP interrogative *que* as base generated in the higher CP

The complementizer *que* ('that') cannot occur following *Quem nunca* (\**Quem nunca que?*; see 36B"), which naturally follows from the structure provided in (35), but its occurrence between *Quem* and *nunca* is considerably better (??*Quem que nunca?*; see 36B'), even fully acceptable by some speakers (see note 5). However, given (35), no intervening element is expected between *quem* and *nunca*, since they stand in a Spec-head relation. In order to better understand this, let's take a look at (37), where a phonetic transcription for *Quem que nunca?* is provided; *quem* = [kẽĩ] , *que* = [-ki], and *nunca* = [nũkɐ].

- (37) Quem que nunca?  
who that never

a. [kẽĩ.ki nũ.kɐ]

b. \*[kẽĩ ki nũ.kɐ]

c. \*[kẽĩ ki.nũ.kɐ]

The complementizer *que* in (37) behaves like a *suffix*<sup>17</sup> (cf. 37a), and it cannot be pronounced as an independent word (i.e., a free morpheme) (cf. 37b).<sup>18</sup> Also notice that it is not prefixal/proclitic, as it doesn't attach to the following word (cf. 37c). I then propose that interrogative *que* is (always) base generated in <sub>H</sub>C, that is, above *Quem* in (35). However, this element cannot be spelled-out in this position when there

<sup>16</sup> See Koopman (2006) for additional evidence and argumentation that agreement must be understood in terms of a Spec-head configuration, contra Chomsky (2001).

<sup>17</sup> Or like an enclitic. I will leave the precise status of the interrogative *que* aside. Relevant here is its status as a non-free element.

<sup>18</sup> It also doesn't receive stress: [kẽĩki], \*[kẽĩ'ki].

is no host to its left due to its suffixal nature. I propose that an operation amounting to "Affix Hopping" (Chomsky 1957) takes place hopping *que* onto *Quem* in Spec,LCP, thus enabling it to be pronounced.<sup>19</sup>

Interestingly, the complementizer *que* in embedded clauses (38a) and the homonymous relative pronoun (38b) behave differently from interrogative *que*, being pronounced as a free morpheme in (38), which shows that the affix-like nature of *que* is restricted to *Wh*-constructions. This is not to say that *que* in (38) is a strong form, since it can never bear stress.<sup>20</sup> Additionally, interrogative *que* and *que* in (38) fail to pattern alike in another respect: in both the embedded (cf. 38a) and in the relative clause (cf. 38b) *que* is obligatory, whereas it is optional in *Wh*-sentences<sup>21</sup> (cf. 35). I will leave this puzzle aside, noticing that this suggests we have different *ques* in BP, and that the claim I made here about *que* is restricted to the complementizer in *Wh*-constructions.

(38) a. Pedro disse \*(que) o homem chegou.  
P. said that the man arrived  
'Pedro said the man arrived'

b. O homem \*(que) chegou é feliz.  
the man that arrived is happy  
'The man that arrived is happy'

(39) a. Quem (que) beijou João?  
who that kissed J.  
'Who kissed João?'

b. Quem (que ) Maria beijou?  
who that M. kissed  
'Who did Mary kiss?'

I will leave this puzzle aside, noticing that this suggests we have different *ques* in BP, and that the claim I made here about *que* is restricted to the complementizer in *Wh*-constructions. The proposal is summarized in (40).<sup>22</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Alternatively, the inversion could also be implemented in terms of "Prosodic Inversion", a PF process which moves a prosodically weak element the minimal distance necessary for it to get prosodic support (cf. Halpern 1995).

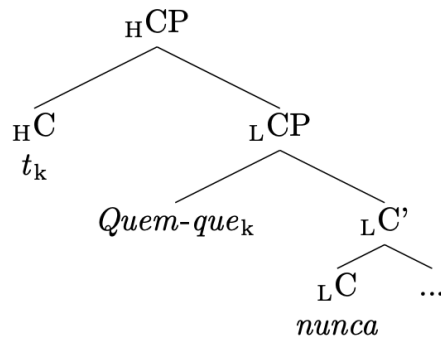
<sup>20</sup> I thank an anonymous reviewer for pointing that out.

<sup>21</sup> Except under sluicing, where it is always prohibited; see Merchant (2001).

<sup>22</sup> An anonymous reviewer pointed out that the syntactic status of *que* in (38) and (39) is very different, which should make us take the comparison established in the text with a grain of salt. In (38b), for instance, *que* corresponds to a relative pronoun in Spec,CP (with a null C). Also, *que* in interrogative contexts such as (39) occurs in a projection with a filled Spec,CP, whereas in declarative contexts such as (38a) Spec,CP is not filled. I would like to stress out that the relevant comparison is strictly phonological, and it is only relevant to emphasize that interrogative *que* and the other *ques* do not behave (phonologically) alike. Since they all have the same phonological form and the operation regulating the distribution of interrogative *que* is phonological, I believe it remains relevant to point out these asymmetries.



(40)



For the speakers who do not accept an intervening *que* between *Quem* and *nunca*, I propose "Affix Hopping" does not operate when ellipsis is involved. Notice that for sluicing this must be true for all speakers, as *que* is never allowed in such cases (cf. 10). Also notice that if no PF switch was proposed and if the complementizer *que* was able to be base generated either below  $_{\text{H}}\text{C}$  or below  $_{\text{L}}\text{C}$  we wouldn't expect variation among speakers with respect to (32B'), i.e., ??*Quem que nunca?* (see note 5).

### 5.3. A note on identity of ellipsis

Here I claim that an approach solely based on lack of identity under recoverability of deletion wouldn't be enough to account for the pattern discussed.<sup>23</sup>

One could wonder whether the problem with (41c) is due to the fact the ellipsis site [*beijou t*] takes [*beijou João*] as an antecedent, in violation of identity.

- (41) a. Pedro beijou João  
P. kissed J.
- b. Quem nunca [~~beijou João~~]?  
who never kissed J.  
'Who did never kiss João?
- c. \*Quem Pedro nunca [~~beijou t~~]?  
who P. never kissed  
'Who did Pedro never kiss?'

Consider, however, (42) and (39).

- (42) A: Pedro beijou alguém.  
P. kissed someone
- B: Quem [~~Pedro beijou t~~]?  
who P. kissed

<sup>23</sup> I refer the reader to Dias (2022), which has proposed an account (based on scopal parallelism) for the lack of identity under ellipsis as attested in *Quem nunca?* constructions, with focus on a different set of data. More specifically, it addresses the fact ellipsis licensing in these constructions are island sensitive.

- 'Who did Pedro kiss?'  
 (43) A: Alguém beijou João.  
           someone kissed J.

B: Quem [~~beijou João~~]?  
       who       kissed J.  
       'Who kissed João?

We attest the same lack of identity between the antecedent and the ellipsis site in (41a/c) and (42,43A/B), but the contrast emerges only in the former. This shows that lack of identity is not sufficient to rule out (41c).

Finally, identity fails to account for the basic *Quem nunca?* case, as the *wh*-trace (i.e., a deleted copy) in the ellipsis site cannot be taken to be identical with the correlate DP (i.e., *Pedro*) in the antecedent.

- (44) A: [Pedro beijou João]  
       P.       kissed J.

B: Quem nunca [~~Quem beijou João~~]?  
       who    never               kissed J.

## 6. Conclusion

In this paper I have shown that the reason why only the element moving to Spec,<sub>L</sub>CP, i.e., locally moved *wh*-subject, survives *nunca* ellipsis is because this ellipsis targets the complement of <sub>L</sub>C, which I have proposed it is realized by *nunca* in the constructions in question. Besides providing additional evidence for the existence of two positions for *wh*-movement, this work indicates that ellipsis licensing is structurally determined, and not lexically determined, that is, X is a licensor in a language L only if it occupies a licensing position. In the case discussed here, *nunca* is able to license ellipsis when it heads <sub>L</sub>C, but unable to do so otherwise, since it must stand in a Spec-head relation with *Quem* to become an ellipsis trigger.

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