A note on *lo que*
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Most studies of Spanish I am familiar with have focused on the uses of the sequence *lo que* (Lit. *it that*) which are shown in (1), illustrating what we could call the 'individuative' (in Bosque & Moreno's (1991) sense) and 'quantificational' readings, respectively:

(1)

    a. Lo que has hecho es sorprendente.   INDIVIDUATIVE   (Spanish)

        CL-it that have-2SG done be-3SG surprising

        'What you have done is surprising'

    b. No te creerías lo que bebe Jordi.   QUANTIFICATIONAL   (Spanish)[1]

        Not CL-you would-believe-2SG it that drink-3SG Jordi

        'You wouldn't believe how much Jordi drinks'

Despite appearances, the structures of (1) are quite different: (1a) is a DP headed by the clitic *lo* (Eng. *it*), while (1b), under common assumptions, is a CP in which *lo* moves from a clause internal position to SPEC-C (arguably pied-piping a null quantificational operator, as argued by Torrego (1988)[2]).

It is important to mention that *lo que* can be interpreted in two ways: as a relative pronoun (cf. (2a)) or as the sequence *D + relative pronoun* (cf. (2b)), thus differing from other *D + que* sequences of Spanish (cf. Brucart (1992)):

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[1] In what follows all the examples come from present day Peninsular Spanish.

[2] Cf. Brucart (1993) for a different analysis. Also left aside is the possibility that *lo* (re)projects after internal-Merge with C (cf. Donati (2004)).

(2)

    a.   María no ha llamado, lo {que/cual} no deja de ser sorprendente.

         María not have-3SG called, it {that/which} not stop-3SG of to-be surprising

         'María hasn't called, which is quite surprising'

    b.   Lo {que/*cual} no deja de ser sorprendente es que María no ha llamado.

       It {that/which} not stop-3SG of to-be surprising is that María not have-3SG called

       'What is quite surprising is that María has not called'

       In this brief note, however, I would like to point out a completely different, exceptional, use of *lo que*, one which I have repeatedly heard in present day Peninsular Spanish. Consider it in (3):

(3) No, si yo iba a llamar a María, lo que no he tenido tiempo.

   Not, if I went-1SG to to-call to María, it that not have-1SG had time

  'Well, actually I was going to call María, but I didn't have time'

       Plausibly, *lo que* in (3) is interpreted as in (4), roughly in an evidential-like fashion:

(4) No, si yo iba a llamar a María, lo que [pasa es que] no he tenido tiempo.

   Not, if I went-1SG to to-call to María, it that [happen-3SG be-3SG that] not have-2SG had time

  'Well, actually I was going to call María, what happens is that I didn't have time'

       Another possible interpretation for (3) is shown in (5). This time, the DP *[lo que pasa es que] no he tenido tiempo* being analyzed as selected by a coordinating conjunction: *pero* (Eng. *but*).

(5) No, si yo no iba a llamar a María, pero [lo que pasa es que] no he tenido tiempo.

   Not, if I went-1SG to to-call to María, but [it that happen-3SG be-3SG that] not have-2SG had time

  'Well, actually I was going to call María, but what happens is that I didn't have time'

The sequence has an obvious connection with both relative and pseudocleft structures, displaying an equative semantics: *lo* is the head of a free relative whose "pivot" (to use Merchant's (1998) terminology) is the CP *que no he tenido tiempo*. In addition, the abstract material in square brackets shares some properties with the pleonastic structures investigated by Uriagereka (2005), who analyzes (6) as in (7):

(6) El morreu a Xubenca, pobriña.   (Galician)

   It died-3SG the Xubenca, poor thing

  'Xubenca died, poor thing'

(7) El (é (certo) que) morreu a Xubenca, pobriña.   (Galician)

   It be-3SG true that died-3SG the Xubenca, poor thing

  'It is true that Xubenca died, poor thing'

[from Uriagereka (2005)]

Let us see whether some tests can tell us more things about this particular construction. First of all, to my ear, this *lo que* structure cannot appear in initial position[3]:

(8) #Lo que no me convence, (aunque) los colores me gustan.

   It that not CL-to-me convince-3SG, (although) the colours CL-to-me like-3PL

  'The thing is that it doesn't convince me, (although) I like the colours'

Note that by simply adding something right before, the sentence is okay:

(9) Ya(, ya veo,) lo que no me convence, aunque los colores me gustan.

  Now, now see-1SG it that not CL-to-me convince-3SG, although the colours

  CL-to-me like-3PL

  'Ok (ok, I see now), the thing is that it doesn't convince me, although I do like the

  colours'

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[3] Actually, it could if very specific contextual conditions are met, but basically it is clear that these *lo que* structures cannot be used *in medias res*.

Consider next the pseudocleft-like properties of this structure. As is well-known, pseudoclefts allow the order alternations in (10); let us call them 'canonical' and 'inverted':

(10)

 a. What I like is your car. CANONICAL ORDER
 b. Your car is what I like. INVERTED ORDER

Now, contrary to what happens in the case of the overt version (i.e., *lo que pasa es [CP que . . .]*), the covert one (i.e., *lo [CP que . . .]*) rules out the inverted order:

(11)

 a. #María llegó, [que ya era tarde] es [lo que pasa].
   María arrived-3SG, that already be-3SG late be-3SG it that happen-3SG
   'María arrived, that it was already late is what happens'
 b. *María llegó, [(que) ya era tarde] es [lo que].
   María arrived-3SG, that already be-3SG late be-3SG it that
   'María arrived, that it was already late is what happens'

Importantly, the intended (evidential) interpretation is lost in hypotactic environments:

(12) *Inés dijo [CP que [lo que no le hacen caso]]
  Inés said-3SG that it that (happen-3SG be-3SG that) not CL-to-her make-3SG case
  'Inés said that (what happens is that) they do not listen to her'

It is also interesting to note that the structure we are considering is, structurally speaking, rich, for it allows speaker oriented adverbs (cf. Etxepare (1997)), but only in a post-*lo-que* position, though, as illustrated by (13) and (14)[4]:

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[4] *Francamente* (Eng. *frankly*) is fine in (14) if it is interpreted within the matrix clause.

(13) Luis está capacitado para eso y para más, lo que, francamente, no tendrá agallas.

Luis be-3SG enabled for that and for more, it that, frankly, not will-have-3SG guts

'Luis can do that and more, but, frankly, I think he will not have the guts to do it'

(14) *Luis está capacitado para eso y para más, francamente, lo que no tendrá agallas.

Luis be-3SG enabled for that and for more, frankly, it that not will-have-3SG guts

'Luis can do that and more, but, frankly, I think he will not have the guts to do it'

Finally, and quite strikingly, it seems that *lo que* can license sluicing, hence behaving like a *bona fide* verbal form:

(15) Hombre, creo que podría hacerlo, lo que para qué –será una pérdida de tiempo.

Man, think-1SG that could-3SG to-do-it, it that for what –will-be-3SG a loss of time

'Well, I think I could do that, but I wonder what for –it will be a loss of time'

In sum, in the previous lines, I have noted that there is a particular structure in present day Spanish that has rather particular properties. The examples in (16) and (17) are representative of it:

(16) La idea es buena, lo que no vas a poder llevarla a cabo.

The idea be-3SG good, it that not go-2SG to to-be-able to-carry-it-out

'The idea is good, but I don't think you will be able to do it'

(17) El premio era para María, lo que al final no se lo dieron.

The award was-3SG for María, it that to-the end not CL CL-it give-3PL

'The award was for María, but they did not give it to her at the end'

It remains to be answered what the analysis of this *lo que* structure is. I do not think it can be true ellipsis, for there is no antecedent structure such a process can rely on, so two plausible options are left: the first one is to argue that the structure has some traits of the small clauses studied by Etxepare (1997; 2002; 2005) and Uriagereka (2005), perhaps with massive null materials and movements to the CP-field; the second analysis is not much different: it would claim that *que* is a sort of performative particle (cf. Etxepare (2002; 2005) for a

more fine grained analysis) selecting a CP, which would appear to be a species of *lo*'s 'associate' (in Chomsky's (1995) sense). The two possibilities are depicted in (18) and (19); I leave the final analysis unsettled for the time being.

(18) [$_{vP}$ PASA [$_{vP}$ ES [[$_{DP}$ Lo que] [$_{CP}$ no lo hará]]]

　　　HAPPEN-3SG BE-3SG it that not CL-it will-do-3SG

(19) [$_{TP}$ [$_{DP}$ Lo] [$_{v*P}$ que [$_{CP}$ no lo hará]]]

　　　　It　　　that　　not CL-it will-do-3SG

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