The Complementizer System in Embedded Clauses in Spanish.

Francisco Javier Bucio García
University of Toronto
xbucio2003@yahoo.com.mx

Abstract

Rizzi (1997, 2001) found that a complementizer system (C-system) consisting of a single functional head did not account for empirical data in Italian and suggested a structure like in (1a). Taking into consideration Rizzi’s proposal, we address the following questions in this paper: Can the Italian order in (1a) be applied to Spanish? Where do wh-elements land in embedded clauses in Spanish?

In this paper, I show that Spanish and Italian differ with respect to the order of the functional heads of their respective C-system in embedded clauses and suggest the structure in (1b) for Spanish. I also propose that the specifier of the head Int in (1b) is the most suitable landing site for wh-elements to land in embedded clauses in Spanish. I show that the order in (1a) makes wrong predictions for Spanish, and that clitic climbing is a good test for our proposal.

(1) a. Force > (Top) > Int > (Top) > Foc > wh-elements > Fin > IP (Rizzi 1997, 2001)
   b. XP > Int. (proposal)

Key words: complementizer, wh-elements, Spanish, prepositional verbs, embedded clauses.
1. Rizzi (1997, 2001): the fine structure of the left periphery

Rizzi (1997) proposed that the C-system is divided into several different functional heads as seen above in (1a). The evidence for such a claim comes from Italian data in (2a), where the complementizer *che* ‘that’ occupies the highest functional head called Force, whereas the focalized element QUESTO is in between two topicalised items: *a Gianni* and *domani* as illustrated in (2b).

\[(2) \text{Rizzi (1997:295 (second lined modified for illustrative purposes)}
\]
\[\begin{align*}
a. \text{Credo} & \quad [\text{che} \quad [\text{a Gianni}, \quad [\text{QUESTO}, \quad [\text{domani}, \quad [\text{Ø} \quad gli dovremo dire.]]]]] \\
b. \text{Credo} & \quad [\text{FORCE} \quad \text{P} \quad [\text{TOPIC} \quad \text{FOCUS} \quad \text{P} \quad [\text{TOPIC} \quad \text{FINIT.}\text{INFLECTIONAL P}]]]] \\
c. \text{‘I believe that to Giannni, THIS, tomorrow, we should say’}
\end{align*}\]

Moreover, Rizzi (1997) proposes that the preposition *di* ‘of’ in (3a) occupies the lowest functional head, called Finiteness in embedded C-systems. He gives the sentence in (3a) as evidence for this claim. Observe that *a Gianni*, occupies the head TOP that precedes the head Finiteness as illustrated in (3b).

\[(3) \text{Taken from Rizzi (1997:295 and 304 second line modified).}
\]
\[\begin{align*}
a. \text{Penso} & \quad [\text{a Gianni}, \quad [\text{di} \quad [\text{dovergli parlare}.]]] \\
b. \text{Penso} & \quad \text{TOP} \quad \text{P} \quad [\text{FINIT} \quad \text{P} \quad \text{I}])]] \\
c. \text{‘I think that, to Gianni, ‘of’ to have to speak to him’}
\end{align*}\]

In a more recent work, Rizzi (2001) adds a new functional head for embedded C-systems. This functional head is labeled **Int**errogative and is where the interrogative element *se* ‘if’ is generated for embedded clauses in Italian as shown in (4a). Rizzi (2001) argues that the head Int must occupy a position in between the head Force and Foc, since Italian data in (4a), shows a topicalised item like QUESTO preceding the interrogative *se* ‘if’.

Another argument for the position of Int within the C-system comes from Spanish data. Spanish sentences overtly show the element *que* ‘that’ generated in the head Force, whereas the interrogative *si* ‘if’ is generated in the head Int as shown in (4b). Observe that the head Force precedes the head Int.

\[(4) \text{(Rizzi 1997:295, and Rizzi 2001:290, second line modified)}
\]
\[\begin{align*}
a. \text{Mi domano} & \quad [\text{se} \quad [\text{QUESTO} \quad gli volessero dire (non qualco's altro)}] \\
\text{Mi domano} & \quad \text{[int se} \quad [\text{FAC} \quad \text{QUESTO} \quad gli volessero dire (non qualco's altro)]]] \\
\text{‘I wonder if THIS they wanted to tell him (not something else’}
\end{align*}\]
\[\begin{align*}
b. \text{Me preguntaron (que)} & \quad [\text{si} \quad [\text{tus amigos ya te visitaron en Granada}] \\
\text{Me preguntaron} & \quad [\text{FORCE(que)} \quad \text{[int si} \quad [\text{tus amigos ya te visitaron en Granada]}]] \\
\text{‘They asked me (that) if your friends had already visited you in Granada’}
\end{align*}\]

\[32 \text{The parenthesis indicates that the element *que* is optional in Spanish.}\]
Since Rizzi gives Spanish, a Romance language, as evidence for the order of Int within an Italian split C-system, it seems that his proposal could be applied to Spanish too. However, it makes wrong predictions for Spanish.

1.1 Discrepancies between Spanish and Italian

The order in (1a) makes two wrong predictions for Spanish. It would predict that a topicalised item could precede prepositions in the so-called prepositional verbs (Demonte 1991). The prepositional verbs are parallel instances to Italian ones in (3) and (5a). But observe the ungrammaticality of the Spanish sentence in (5b), a parallel sentence to (3) and (5a) in Italian.

(5)

a. María crede, il tuo libro, di poterlo leggere
   María crede [CP [TOP il tuo libro [FIN P di [IP poterlo leggere]]]
   ‘Maria believes, your book, of to be able to read’ (Rizzi 2001: 296)

b. *María piensa, tu libro, en leer
   *María piensa, [TOP tu libro, [FIN en [IP leer]]]
   ‘Maria thinks, your book, in to read’

The topicalised item, your book, cannot intervene between the verb pensar ‘think’ and the preposition en ‘in’ in Spanish (5b). In contrast, a topicalised item like ‘your book’ follows the preposition di ‘of’ in Italian (5a) and does not produce an ungrammatical sentence. The other wrong prediction concerns wh-elements.

1.2 wh-elements within the C-system in Italian and Spanish

Under a Government and Binding theory, Chomsky and Lasnik (1977) suggested that wh-elements land in the specifier of the functional head Complement. Now with the new proposals (Rizzi 1997, 2001) of a split C-system with so many functional heads like in (1a) repeated in (6), the question is: where do exactly wh-elements land in languages like Italian and Spanish?

(6)

Force > (Top) > Int > (Top) > Foc > wh-elements >Fin >IP

Rizzi (2001:291) draws on Italian data like (7) to suggest that wh-elements must land in a position below the functional head Foc yielding the order in (6).

(7)

Mi domando A GIANNI che cosa abbiano detto (non Piero)
Mi domando [foc A GIANNI [wh-elem che cosa abbiano detto (non Piero)]]
‘I wonder TO GIANNI what they have said.’ (not to Piero)

(Rizzi 2001:291, second line modified)

Rizzi (2001) implies but does not affirm where exactly wh-elements land. He mentions that “As the position occupied by se (if) is higher than the position occupied by Foc and
the Foc position is higher than the position occupied by wh (elements) in embedded questions like (his 14e, our 7), we conclude by transitivity that the position of se is higher than the position of embedded Wh-elements” (Rizzi 2001:291).

But does the order in (6) make right predictions if we apply it to Spanish? The order of (6) would predict that a wh-element could follow the interrogative si ‘if’, but such cases are ungrammatical in Spanish as shown in (8).

(8) *Maria preguntaba que si quién va a venir?
*Maria preguntaba [Force que [Int si [wh-elem quién va a venir]]]
‘Maria said/wondered that if who is coming?’

If the proposal in (6) makes wrong predictions for Spanish, then where do wh-elements land exactly in embedded clauses in Spanish? We propose that there is an XP followed by a head Int in which wh-elements land for embedded clauses as shown in (1b).

2. The proposal: the head Int for embedded clauses

We suggest an order XP > Int for embedded clauses in a C-system for Spanish (1b). Our proposal is that wh-elements and the interrogative si ‘if’ have the same interrogative feature that makes them incompatible to use the same functional head Int, following (Cheng 1997). The mechanics of our proposal are illustrated in (9a) and (9b) and are as follows.

(9) a. Juan se pregunta [ForceP que [Force [Int [IP [VP compró que Lupe?]]]]]
‘Juan wonders that what bought Lupe’

b. Juan se pregunta [ForceP que [Force [Int [IP [VP [va a venir Lupe]]]]]]
‘Juan wonders that if Lupe is going to come’

c. *Juan se pregunta [ForceP que [Force [Int [IP [VP [va a comprar que Lupe]]]]]]
‘Juan wonders that what if Lupe is going to buy’

On the one hand, the head Int has a feature [+ Interrogative] that would attract wh-elements to its specifier (Chomsky & Lasnik 1977, Cheng 1997). The head Int satisfies its interrogative feature once a wh-element has landed to its specifier, so that the feature is checked in a head-specifier position. The sentence (9a) illustrates this. The wh-element qué ‘what’, which is the direct object of the verb comprar ‘to buy’, was generated within the VP. The feature [interrogative] of the head of Int dragged the wh-element to C-system composed by XP > Int.

On the other hand, the Int head has satisfied its [interrogative] feature by the generation of the interrogative si ‘if’ in its head in sentences like (9b). Then, the head Int cannot attract an interrogative element to its specifier anymore. In sum, the head Int satisfies its [interrogative] feature by either or generating an interrogative element in its head or attracting a wh-element from the VP. If the head Int attracted a wh-element within the VP to its specifier, it would yield and ungrammatical sentence like (9c). The elements si ‘if’ and wh-elements cannot co-exist in a sentence, thus they are complementary distribution (Suñer 1982, 1999).
2.1 Wh-elements with prepositional verbs in Italian and Spanish

Rizzi (1997:282) mentions that che and di occupy different positions within this system. The element che occupies the head Force, while di occupies the lowest head Fin. He gives the example in (5b) and (3) as evidence for the order in (6). But, if we observe the order in (6), it would predict that a wh-element could precede the head Finitness, but this is not possible for neither nor Italian (10a), nor Spanish (10b).

(10) a. *Penso che cosa di parlare che cosa;  
     ‘I think what thing of to say’

b. *Juan piensa qué en comprar qué; la próxima navidad  
     ‘Juan thinks of what to buy the next Christmas’

Considering Finiteness as the lowest head in a C-system does not account for cases as the ones above. A wh-element cannot precede the preposition in Italian nor can it in Spanish (10). But the other way around is possible. See the Spanish sentence in (11).

(11) Juan piensa en dónde ir; la próxima navidad  
     ‘Juan thinks of where to go the next Christmas’

Should we propose another landing site for wh-elements that follow the head Fin? Should we propose a Wh-element > Fin > wh-element order? It would not be economical. But our proposal XP > Int is more economical since wh-elements do not land in another site but the specifier of Int. But what is the nature of this XP? In the next section, we show that the nature of the XP is a combination of the function of the head Force and Finiteness.

2.2 The element que and the prepositions occupy the head XP

One of the functions of the head XP must be to define whether an embedded clause occurs with a finite or non-finite verb. The motivation of this claim comes from the fact that the Spanish element que ‘that’ may introduce an embedded sentence with a non-finite verb (12a) or a sentence with a finite verb (12b).

(12) a. Juan piensa que ir a la fiesta es buena idea  
     ‘Juan thinks that to go to the party is not good idea’

b. Juan piensa que Lupe compró demasiados globos  
     ‘Juan thinks that Lupe bought too many balloons’

We regard this data as a case in which the element que ‘that’ must be generated in the head of XP occupying the highest position of an embedded C-system in both (12a) and (12b). Our proposal is more economical than Rizzi’s (1997, 2001), since we suggest only one XP for
Force and Finiteness, whereas he suggests two different heads. Compare (13a) and (14a) with (13b) and (14b).

13) a. Maria crede [Force [TOP il tuo libro... [FIN P di [IP poterlo leggere]]] 
   ‘Maria believes, your book, of to be able to read’

   b. Credo [che [TOP a Gianni, [FOC QUESTO, [TOP domani, [IP gli dovremo dire.]]]]
   ‘I believe that to Giannni, THIS, tomorrow, we should say’

Our proposal differs from Rizzi (1997, 2001) in that we have a single functional head XP for Rizzi’s Force and Finiteness. In addition, we do not need to propose a different place for wh-elements to land. We suggest a single functional head Int where wh-elements land. Prepositional verbs above are data for our proposal, likewise some adjectives and nouns as we show in the following section.

2.3 Adjectives and nouns with prepositions have the structure XP > Int.

Some nouns followed by a preposition like in (14a) support our proposal of the order in which a head XP precedes a head Int. The noun duda ‘doubt’ is followed by de ‘of’ which introduces a clause vendrá. Observe that the bolded wh-element has been extracted from the VP to land in the C-system, specifically in the specifier of the head Int.

14) a. Me carcome [XP de [Int quién [VP quién, vendrá]]
   ‘The doubt of who will come eats me’

   b. No estoy seguro [XP de [Int dónde [VP establecer su negocio, dónde]]
   ‘I am not sure of where to establish his business’

Likewise, the adjective ‘sure’ precedes the preposition de ‘of’ and this latter introduces a clause too in (14b). In the following section, we draw on clitic climbing to test our proposal and show that the preposition is part of the CP and not of the IP.

3. Tests for the proposal that preposition are part of the C-system

We draw on clitic climbing to show that the preposition en ‘in’ in prepositional verbs is part of the CP and not of the IP. The test becomes relevant because Demonte (1991) suggests that there are some prepositions which are part of the IP under a GB theory. Moreover, Rizzi (1997, 2001) departs from the assumption that the Italian preposition di ‘of’ is part of the C-system, but he does not give detailed arguments for not considering it as part of the IP.

3.1 Clitic climbing

Clitic climbing, like negation, has been used to measure the size of the embedded C-systems (Wurmbrand 2000). Clitic climbing (CC) refers to a phenomenon in which a clitic jumps from an embedded clause to the upper clause. The pronominal clitic le stands for the phrase a Juan that is one argument of the infinitival verb regalar ‘give’ in (15a). Observe the
sentences (15a) and (15b). The dative clitic le has moved from the embedded clause, where it was generated (15a), to the matrix clause (15b). The clitic le can attach to the matrix verb quiero without yielding any ungrammaticality of the sentence. Moreover, note that this clitic has surpassed the inflectional layers of the embedded IP of the infinitival verb dar ‘give’ in (15b).

(15) a. *Quiero [IP dar-le; un regalo (a Juan)]
  ‘I want-dat.cl. to give a gift (to Juan)’

b. Le quiero [IP dar un regalo (a Juan)]
  ‘dat.cl-I want to give a gift (to Juan)’

Bok-Benema (1980) has mentioned that IP layers do not prevent a clitic to climb from the embedded clause to the upper clause in Spanish. In contrasts, a CP prevents CC. This claim is illustrated with clauses introduced by overt complementizers like que ‘that’ in Spanish (16)

(16) a. Pienso [CP que [IP Maria debería(-lei) hablar-le (a Juan)]]
  ‘I think that Maria should (dat-cl.) talk-dat.cl. (to Juan)’

b. *Le pienso [CP que [IP Maria debería hablar (a Juan)]]
  ‘him-dati-I think that Maria should talk (to Juan)’

The dative clitics le stands for the indirect object of the embedded verb ‘to call’. This clitic may climb up to the auxiliary deberia as shown in the parenthesis in (16a). But, those clitics cannot attach to the main verb ‘think’ (16b). Like the overt complementizer que in (16b), the preposition en in (17b) blocks a clitic to climb to the upper clause, namely the main verbs. Syntactically, en and que show the same restrictions. They do not allow CC and both of them are part of the C-system.

(17) a. Pienso [CP en [IP poder-lo; leer (tu libro)]]
  ‘I think ‘in’ to be able-(iti) to read

b. *Lo pienso [CP en [IP poder leer (tu libro)]]
  ‘I think (iti) in to be able to read the book soon’

3.2 The optionality of en

The preposition en ‘in’ can be omitted. As shown in (18a), its presence or absence is optional. If the presence of the preposition blocks CC, we would expect that its absence would allow CC. This is shown with a dative clitic in (18b). The dative clitic le is co-referential with the indirect object Juan. Observe that the absence of the preposition allows the clitic to be in the main clause, likewise in (18c). The accusative clitic lo is co-referential with the direct object tu libro and it appears in the main clause.

(18) a. Pienso [CP O [IP poder hablar-le; (a Juan) pronto]]
  ‘I think to be able to call(him-dati) to John soon’

b. Le pienso [CP O [IP poder hablar (a Juan) pronto]]
  ‘dat.cl.-I think to be able to call to John, soon’
c. Lo pienso [CP O[IP poder leer (tu libro)]]
   ‘I-I think to be able to read (the book) soon’

Conclusion

Rizzi suggested a split C-system in which a *wh-element* must precede a head *Fin*. This order makes wrong predictions for Spanish in embedded clauses. We give data to consider the Spanish preposition *en* part of the CP domain and not of the IP. We have used elitic climbing to make our point. We have also suggested an order *XP > Int* for embedded clauses, in which the head *XP* is the highest functional head that precedes a head *Int* where *wh-elements* land. This order also applies to other instances like nouns and adjectives followed by prepositions.

© Francisco Javier Bucio García, 2007
References


