On the definite article *el* heading clauses in Spanish (*el-que):* some syntactic and semantic properties

Cristina RUIZ-ALONSO
Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB)

This paper deals with the construction formed by the non-mandatory definite article *el* heading finite embedded clauses (CPs) in Spanish (henceforth *el-que*, cf. (1) Leonetti 1999; Picallo 2001, 2002; Serrano 2015).

(1) a. **El   que** llegues   tarde me   molesta   [subject]
       The that arrive.SUB-2SG late me.DAT   bothers
         'The fact that you're late bothers me'
    b. Lamento   **el que** llegues   tarde   [object]
        regret.1SG the that arrive.SUB-2SG   late
         'I'm sorry that you arrive late'

Even though it has been usually considered 'optional', we will show that *el* involves semantic and syntactic properties, so that its presence is not 'free'. We argue that *el* is a referentiality mark that licenses a [d-linking] operator (Haegeman & Urogdi 2010, H&U) in Spec, CP (along the lines of Roussou (1994), Melvold (1991) or Haegeman (2012) among others).

We propose that *el* is a referentiality mark parallel to that in DPs (cf. DP-hypothesis, Abney 1987). For concreteness, among the possible situations denoted by the clause, the article refers to one unique salient situation turning the clause into a definite entity belonging to the real world. Syntactically, the article is in a higher position taking the CP as its complement (not a null noun is involved, cf. Picallo 2001, 2002). Moreover, in Spec, CP (more specifically in Spec, ForceP), a null [d-linking] operator licensed by *el* raises from the TP making the clause opaque since it occupies the position where extracted elements land (cf. Campbell 1996, Aboh 2004 for a specific operator in DPs). Both syntactic and semantic facts confirm this.

<u>Semantic facts</u>. *El-que* clauses cannot appear in assertive contexts. Its information must be part of the Common Ground (CG, Stalnaker 1978), the foreground (Levinson 1983) and it cannot be at-issue (Roberts 1998), as the examples from corpora show -the CG is <u>underlined;</u> *el-que* information related to the CG in *cursive*-:

(2) <u>Con todo, el alcohol se ha ido haciendo cada vez más asequible al consumo femenino y,</u>
<u>consecuentemente, hay más mujeres alcohólica</u>s. Aunque, si bien ya se acepta **el que** *la mujer beba incluso fuera de las comidas*, sigue existiendo una marcada intolerancia (…)

   Even so, <u>alcohol has become more accessible to female consumers over time; therefore, there are more alcoholic women.</u> Yet, although it is accepted *that a woman drinks, even outside of meals, an important rejection still exists (…)*

This claim is supported by the fact that *el-que* clauses cannot appear in *out-of-the-blue* contexts, like an answer (3):

(3) A: ¿Qué ha pasado? (What happened?)
    B: *Juan ha impedido **el que** bajaran los sueldos
        Int: 'Juan prevented them from lowering the salaries'

Plus, *el-que* can co-occur with epistemic adverbs that mean certainty, but not with those that mean doubt:

(4)   …Es lo que está determinando **el que {realmente/ efectivamente/ *posiblemente/ *tal vez}** la gente joven reciba unas dosis tremendas de luz ultravioleta
     'It is what's causing (the) that {really/in effect/ *perhaps/*maybe} young people get such tremendous doses of ultraviolet lights'

Moreover, the information inserted in *el-que* is more difficult to cancel since it is interpreted as a fact or a result (Dubosc 2011):

(5) La noticia muestra **el que** los precios han   subido,   *#aunque   no se   sabe si es cierto*
    The news shows   the that the prices have increased #although   no SE knows if is true

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<u>Syntactic facts</u>. The article licenses the operator and c-commands it; in turn, the operator c-commands the clause. Regarding its final position, the OP moves from an internal position until Spec, Force where the evidential information of the clause is encoded (Rizzi 1997). However, it must be base-generated somewhere in TP since it bounds the whole clause ('event relativization', H&U; Melvold 1991) in order to be able to quantify over the clause (i.e., the set of possible worlds) in a similar fashion to that of other clausal operators (e.g., relatives). For concreteness, we argue that the operator generates in the functional projection EvidP (Cinque's 1999 hierarchy; cf. H&U; Haegeman 2012 for a similar proposal). A preliminary representation is proposed below:

(7) $[_{DP}$ D $[_{ForceP}$ Op_1 $[_{F^o}$ *que* $[_{FinP}$ $[_{Fin^o}$ $[_{EvidP}$ $t_1 \ldots]$ $]$ $]$ $]$ $]$ $]$ $]$

Some syntactic facts further endorse this proposal. First, the subjunctive: *el-que* mostly appears with this mood in the CP, which is the mood for non-assertion (Hooper & Thompson 1974) and it is used for factivity in Spanish (Quer 2001 a.o.). Interestingly, with non-factive verbs that can select indicative as well (8), the subjunctive is preferred with the article (9):

(8) El acuerdo contempla **que** la empresa {pueda/puede} hacer laborables cuatro sábados este año
'The agreement considers that the company can.SUB/can.IND have four Saturdays as working day this year'

(9) El acuerdo contempla **el que** la empresa {pueda/?puede} hacer laborables cuatro sábados este año
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Moreover, the article blocks extraction (10b), as definite DPs do (Roussou 1994; Leonetti 1999) due to the definiteness and the operator. This further endorses that *el*'s properties are not due to factivity since it is not restricted to factive verbs, and extraction patterns are not the same with factive verbs (10a) and with *el-que* (10b). Sheehan & Hinzen (2011) link the *more-edger* position with referentiality and the reluctance to extract from, being *el-que* evidence for this claim:

(10) a. Me   molesta que digan   eso → ¿Qué te   molesta que digan?
    Me.DAT   bothers that say.SUB.3PL that → what   you.DAT   bothers that say.SUB.3PL
  b. Me   molesta **el que** digan   eso → *¿Qué te   molesta **el que** digan?
    Me.DAT bothers the that say.SUB.3PL that → *what you.DAT bothers the that say.SUB.3PL
        'It bothers me that they say that' → 'What does bother you that they say?'

Besides extraction, neither TopP (11) nor FocP (12) (and any Main Clause Phenomena, cf. Haegeman 2012; Hooper & Thompson 1973; H&U 2010) can be projected in *el-que* clauses:

(11) a. *La   noticia destaca   **el que** *esa medida* no *la*   han   aprobado (*CLLD in *el-que*)
        The news   highlights the that *that measure*   no *ACC* have.3PL approved
    b. La noticia destaca **que** *esa medida* no *la* han aprobado   (CLLD *bare-que*)

(12) a. *Lamentamos **el que** LOS LIBROS DE LORCA no te hayan gustado (y sí los de Alberti)
        'Int: We're sorry that THE BOOKS OF LORCA you didn't like (but Alberti's you did)
    b. Lamentamos **que** LOS LIBROS DE LORCA no te hayan gustado (y sí los de Alberti)

However, these data are expected. The OP raises from its initial position until Spec, ForceP. Therefore, a projection endowed with similar features cannot be projected in its path since it would trigger intervention effects (Rizzi 2004). If the proposed operator is [+d-linking] and has [+Quantif.] features (H&U), neither wh-questions nor topics nor MCP (included foci) are expected.

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