

The clausal article *el* in Spanish. A nominal and referential marker

The idea. This paper focuses on the phenomenon formed by the non-obligatory definite article *el* heading embedded clauses in Spanish (Leonetti 1999; Picallo 2002; Serrano 2015).

- (1) **El que** digas esas cosas es triste
the that say-2sgsub those things is sad
'The fact that you say those things is sad'

This is restricted to Spanish within the Romance languages. However, it exists in other languages like Greek, where it is obligatory:

- (2) **To oti** prospathises poli tha metrisi... [Roussou 1991: 1 (1a)]
The that tried-2sg a lot fut count-3sg
'That you tried hard will count...'

I propose that CPs are DPs (following Rosenbaum 1967; Manzini & Savoia 2011; Kastner 2015a. o.) and the article is a referential mark connected to the nominal status.

Previous analysis. Literature has argued that the article turns the clause into a nominalization and that there is a null *fact*-nominal between the article and the complementizer (Picallo 2002; Delicado 2016; Kornfilt & Whitman 2011 a.o.). The Kiparskys (1970) start the connection between factivity and nominals arguing that factive verbs are more complex since they have a null nominal *fact* (rejected by De Cuba & Ürögdi 2010 a.o.). We follow the proposal of Manzini & Savoia 2011 (and previously Kayne 1982) that CPs are DPs due to the complementizer *que* (or *that*). The complementizer is a nominalizer that yields the nominal status in the clause (that it is originally verbal), allowing it to be an argument. Further, Kastner (2015) argues that CP complements of presuppositional verbs are actually definite DPs connecting to the correlation proposed by Sheehan & Hinzen (2011) between definite DPs and referential CPs.

The proposal. The article is not a nominalizer, but a spell-out of reference linked to nominal status (Kastner 2015). The definite properties of DPs are expected to be found in those CPs as well. Several facts support this. First, there is no nominal ellipsis, as the obligatory absence of a preposition shows (3a) (which is required for all noun CP complements in Spanish (3b) cf. Picallo 2002). Therefore, the article directly takes the CP as its complement:

- (3) a. Me aterroriza **el** (***de**) **que** determinados países estén en manos de dirigentes locos
(Google)
me-dat terrorizes the (*of) that some countries are-sub in hands of leaders crazies
'It terrorizes me that some countries are governed by crazy leaders'
b. Lamento **el hecho** *(**de**) **que** no me saludara
regret-1sg the fact *(of) that no me-dat greet
'I regret that s/he didn't greet me'

In addition, not all *el*+CP examples accept the overt nominal *fact* due to a clash of meaning (*contra* Kastner 2015):

- (4) No entiendo mucho por qué ha sucedido **el** (?**hecho de**) **que** los niños no comiesen (Google)
no understand-1sg much why has happened the (the fact of) that the kids no ate-sub
'I don't understand very much for what reason the kids didn't eat'

Greek endorses this claim, since the noun *fact* is incompatible with some complementizers:

- (5) *to **ghehonos na** ehis ipomani [Taken and modified from Roussou 1991: 81 (12)]
the fact comp have-sg patience
'*The fact to have patience'

Second, they are mostly in the subjunctive, the mood used in Spanish to express factivity (a subset of presupposition) (Demonte 2012 among others; see also Kornfilt & Whitman 2011:1309 for Turkish)

- (6) No me convence **el que** solamente **tenga** 16 megapixels (Google)
no me-dat convinces the that only has-subj 16 megapixels
'It doesn't convince me that it only has 16 mp'

Moreover, *el* turns the clause into an island. Whereas factive verbs typically form weak islands and extraction from complements is allowed (7a), *el* is like an extra barrier and makes the CP opaquer turning extraction impossible (7b):

- (7) a. Me molesta que digan eso → ¿Qué te molesta que digan? [not *el*+CP] me bothers that say-3plsubj that → what you-dat bothers that say-3plsubj
b. Me molesta **el que** digan eso → *¿Qué te molesta **el que** digan? [**el*+CP] me bothers the that say-3plsubj that → what you-dat bothers the that say-3plsubj 'It bothers me that they say that' → 'What does it bother you that they say?'

Fronting is neither allowed within presuppositional contexts (Kastner 2015):

- (8) a. Te aseguro que *esa película*, no la quiero volver a ver [non-presuppositional]
Lit: 'I claim that this film, I don't want to watch it ever again'
b. *Juan lamenta **el que** *ese libro* lo haya leído Maria [presuppositional]
Lit: *'Juan regrets (the fact) that this book, Maria read'

Also, *el* cannot co-occur with ECM verbs, and factive verbs cannot take ECM complements (Ormazabal 2005:93)

- (9) a. *Ana vio **el que** salía Juan
Ana saw-3.sg the that goes-out Juan
'Ana saw John going out'
b. *He regrets [Bacon to be the real author] [Ormazabal 2005: 93 (1a)]

Predictions: As said above, *el* makes a clause referential, triggering an only possible situation to be argued by the clause. A possible consequence is the presupposition. A CP with an overt definite determiner cannot be cancelled (11b). This shows that they are part of a DP since those are always factive, as shows (10a) (Kastner 2015; Sheehan & Hinzen 2011). Moreover, the information must be part of the common ground:

- (10) a. #I explained the collapse, but it didn't
b. #I explained the fact that it collapsed, but it didn't
- (11) a. Les expliqué que el edificio se derrumbó, pero no lo hizo [non-presuppositional]
'I explained that the building collapsed, but it didn't'
b. #**El que** digas eso me aburre, pero no lo dices/aunque no lo digas [presuppositional]
#The fact that you say that bores me, but you don't say it/ although you don't say it

Moreover, a clause headed by *el* only bears the declarative interpretation and the conditional one is not allowed:

- (12) a. **El que** vengas a verme me gusta...
‘I like that you come to visit me’
a’. ...Cuando vienes [declarative]
‘Whenever you come’
A’’. ...#Si vienes [*conditional]
‘If you come’

The Greek *to* also shows this. As Roussou (1991) points out, *to* is obligatory in subject position. Therefore, the clause must be [+definite]. In fact, the definite complementizer *pu* that introduces factive complements does not accept the article since *pu* possesses [+ definite] feature itself (Roussou 1991: 90 (32)):

- (13) ***to pu** efighe
the that left-3sg

Related to this, the article mostly appears in Spec, TP, a thematic position. To the contrary, DOs typically express new referents. This constrain may be explained asserting that the DP-shell raises to the Spec, TP and is inserted post-cyclically (Hartman 2012) or arguing for the empty category principle (Sheehan & Hinzen 2011).

Conclusions. This paper has studied the phenomenon *el* + CPs, which has not received much attention in the literature. We have proposed that *el* is a spell-out of reference in clauses within a nominal domain. This claim has been supported by some syntactic and empirical facts. Moreover, Greek supports our analysis since the phenomenon behaves parallel to the Spanish one, although the distribution is wider in the former. Nonetheless, languages like Hebrew, Turkish or Washo possess this phenomenon and the behavior is like Spanish or Greek. It can be argued, then, that we are dealing with a crosslinguistic pattern (Kastner 2015, Hartman 2012, Kornfilt & Whitman 2011, Bochnak & Hanink 2021 a.o.).

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