

Marking yes/no questions across Romance

In this work I will argue that the syntactic codification of yes/no questions is characterized across Romance by crosslinguistically different strategies, all of which involve alternatively the activation of the specifier, the head, or both the specifier and the head of a dedicated left-peripheral functional projection, identified under current assumptions with Rizzi's (2001) *Int(errogative)P*.

The first option, that is the overt realization of a yes/no operator, is attested for example in Catalan, where polar interrogatives may be introduced by the question marker *que* (cf. Prieto & Rigau (2007)):

- (1) *Que* plou? Catalan
what rains
'Is it raining?'

The same phenomenon is attested in Tuscan varieties, where polar interrogatives display the sentence initial interrogative marker *che*, as exemplified in (2a); interrogative markers corresponding to Tuscan *che* are also found in other Central and Southern Italo-Romance varieties, as witnessed by (2b-c) (cf. Rohlfs (1969)):

- (2) a. *Che* ti dispiace? Tuscan
what you dislikes
'Do you regret it?'
- b. *Ce* sta cchiovi? Salentino
what stays rain
Is it raining?
- c. *Chi* siti sula? Sicilian
what are alone
'Are you alone?'

As pointed out by Cruschina (2007), in Sicilian the question marker *chi* can be preceded by a topicalized constituent, or followed by a fronted informational focus, which provides direct empirical evidence for the hypothesis that it occupies precisely the specifier of *IntP*.

The second option, namely raising of the verbal head to a dedicated functional position, is attested in French and Portuguese, which display a sort of cleft structure where the interrogative clause is introduced by the inflected copular verb (lexicalizing the head *Int*^o) followed by the complementizer (presumably occupying the lower head *Fin*^o), which introduces the propositional content to which the addressee is asked to assign a truth value:

- (3) a. *Est-ce* que vous-allez a Paris? French
Is-it that you-go to Paris
'Are you going to Paris?'
- b. *E'* que tu o fazes? Portuguese
Is that you it do
'Are you doing it?'

Furthermore, in a few isolated dialects spoken in North-Eastern Lombardy (polar) interrogatives are characterized by a 'do support' strategy of the English type, which features an inflected form of the verb *fà* 'do' followed by the infinitive of the lexical verb (cf. Benincà & Poletto (2004)):

- (4) a. *Fé-t* däjel? Monnese
Do-you give-him-it
'Do you give it to him?'
- b. *Fà-l* majà?

Does-he eat
'Is he eating?'

On the basis of the data discussed so far, one might wonder whether the morpho-syntactic marking of yes/no questions might ever be achieved by the simultaneous overt realization of the specifier and the head of the relevant functional projection. Such a possibility seems to be indeed attested; as discussed by Lusini (2013), in Sienese, a Southern Tuscan variety, polar interrogatives display a sort of verbal reduplication to the effect that the lexical verb is preceded by an inflected form of the verb *fare* 'do', preceded in turn by the interrogative marker *che*:

- (5) *Che facesti* andasti al mare? Sienese
What did went to-the seaside
'Did you go to the seaside?'

Finally, we find Romance varieties, like Sardinian, which employ both the head marking strategy and the specifier marking strategy. Mensching (2015) reports that polar interrogatives in Sardinian may feature an interrogative particle *a* which is used mainly in questions interpreted as requests, invitations or offers, like in (6); he analyzes this particle as a head occupying a relatively high structural position within the left-peripheral skeleton, arguably *Int*^o. Furthermore, as discussed by Remberger (2010), in polar questions Sardinian optionally features the preposing of phrasal constituents, like in (7a-b), where the past participle and the adjectival predicate - having been fronted to the [Spec,IntP] position - precede the inflected verb:

- (6) *A ti lavo cussos prattos?* Sardinian
A you wash those plates
'Should I wash those plates for you?'
- (7) a. *Mandicatu as?* Sardinian
Eaten have
'Have you eaten?'
- b. *Istraccu ses?*
Tired are
'Are you tired?'

Interestingly enough, phrasal preposing of the kind exemplified in (7) is incompatible in Sardinian with the particle *a*, which suggests that the possibility to lexicalize the specifier and the head of the functional projection codifying the yes/no interpretation in this language must be constrained by a parametric condition determining their complementary distribution.

References

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