Generalized C-doubling in an Oïl dialect, subjects and the nature of que2

This paper aims at broadening the empirical coverage of investigations on double-complementizer constructions (DCC), which dialect syntax has drawn recent attention to, in order to feed its theoretical analysis. It focuses on a novel case of DCC, found in a dialect of Picard, an Oïl endangered and under-described language spoken in Northern France and Hainaut. In a given area, which we will loosely call “Ternois”, some speakers display (quasi-) systematic DCC when at least one XP is fronted in an embedded clause, yielding the pattern (1), for clauses that display (2) when no XP is fronted:

(1) que1 XP, (YP), (ZP) que2 TP
(2) que TP

- **Contexts.** Unlike other dialects, such as Irish English (McCloskey 2006) or Turinese and Ligurian (Paoli 2007), Ternois generalizes DCC to various embedded clauses, whatever their type, tense or mood: argument clauses (3), adjunct clauses (4), relative clauses (5), cleft structures (6), embedded interrogatives, complements of noun or adjectival predicates, etc.:

  (3) Rappell’-ti qu’(…)+ch’ l’éclusier, des carpe’ et d’s inguilles, plein t’n’ épuigett’ qu’i t’in mettra1
  Remember *that* the lock keeper, carps and eels, your net full, *that* he to-you of-them will put

  (4) . Et si qu’edman qu’j’épreuv’ seul’mint (…) l’isintimint…
  And if *that* tomorrow *that* I have only  the feeling…

  (5) Sur chés rimparts, édu que ch’l’herp’ qu’all’ poussaut drue
  On these ramparts, where *that* the grass *that* it grew thick

  (6) Ch’est toudis aveuque émotion qu’jes incienn’s fortifications, que j’les ardèch’…
  It is always with émotion *that* your ancient ramparts *that* I them rebuild…

In this respect, it is reminiscent of medieval Romance (Wanner 1995) and, to some extent, European Portuguese (Mascarenhas 2007).

- **Fronted XP.** Nevertheless, it seems to differ from the latter and other Iberic varieties at least in one respect. In (1), XP can take various forms: adverbials (cf. 4), (left-dislocated) internal arguments (cf. 6) and subject DPs (cf. 5), or a combination of them (cf. 3). But first, in the latter case, unlike what Mascarenhas shows for European Portuguese, only one que2 shows up, at the end of the sequence. Triple Cs may only very marginally appear, and are never obligatory. Second, for Iberic varieties, Uriagereka (1995) and Mascarenhas (2007) argue that only Topics can be fronted in DCC and Foci are excluded. This leads the latter to conclude that que2 is a Topic head. This does not seem to hold for Ternois, yet. First, in Ternois, foci, such as *plein t’n’ épuigett’* in (3) can be fronted. Second, subjects give rise to a specific problem.

- **Subjects.** Ternois, indeed, as do most dialects of Picard, displays extensive doubling of DP subjects by a clitic (Auger 2003). It has been argued that such subject-doubling differs from Clitic Left Dislocation (CLLD) in that all quantified DPs, some of which are commonly held to be banned from Topic positions, can be doubled (cf. 7, from Auger 2003: 3):

  (7) Parsonne i n’ poroait mie vnir ll’érteheure
  Nobody he neg could  neg come him get (‘Nobody could come and get him’)

Yet, in Ternois’ DCC, bare quantifiers can stand in a left peripheral position, as in (8), where *tou’t* is neither a focus nor a hanging topic – a situation reminiscent of Turinense and Ligurian (Paoli 2007), though with differences:

  (8) Et ch’est ainsi qu’ tou’t qu’ ’i s’évanuit, dins la vie
  Ant it is thus  that all  that it  vanishes, in our lives

I argue that quantified expressions *can* in fact be left-dislocated (Cinque 1990, Arregi 2003): their usual ban from these structures relies not on the syntax or semantics of the QP itself, but on the properties of the clitic: in Picard (*vs*, say, French), P3 subject clitic are not interpreted as individual variables. Doubled and undoubled DP subjects, on the other hand, stand in Subject position and are not involved in DCC.

1 Unless otherwise mentionned, all cited occurrences are from Lemaire (1945, 1947).
The nature and position of que.

Previous analyses of DCC assume that que2 is the head of a lower projection, either TopP or FinP. Yet, except for Paoli’s (2007) analysis – that links it to the deficient subjunctive-marking on the verb in some Italian dialects and can’t be extended as such to Ternois – the question of why que2 is overtly present, and of what relationship it may bear with que1 are not directly addressed.

For European Portuguese and Early Romance, given that only Topics, not Foci, can appear between que1 and que2, Mascarenhas and Paoli respectively argue that que2 is the realization of Top°. Even if it were the case for Ternois, this would not account for the presence of que2. A topicalized item per se does not, indeed, trigger the presence of an overt que in Ternois: unlike Portuguese, double Tops in DCC do not trigger double que2; besides, topicalized XPs are not followed by que in matrix clauses. Furthermore, embedded clauses that do not license a que1 do not display a que2. Que2, then, seems actually ‘parasitic’ on the formally identical que1. Barbiers et al. (2008) argue that the lower occurrence of a doubled XP can be viewed as a pronounced copy of the higher one in a movement chain, dialects showing parametric variation as to which copy may be pronounced. We propose to extend this analysis to DCC, and to consider that que1 and que2 are the two ends of a chain created by head-movement, the lower position being Fin°. They would indeed qualify for a Project Both (Citko 2008) view of head-movement, since they are categorically non-distinct and que conflates two pieces of information wrt the CP-domain: the fact that the sentence is embedded and the fact that it is finite, the addition of which determining for instance that TP may be subject to Sequence-Of-Time. It is then first-merged in Fin° and rises to the higher C°. If this is correct, it would account for the fact that infinitive complementizer de is never doubled in Ternois, neither by a que or by a de: infinitives lack the higher C position; de is and stays in Fin°, whether preceded by a Topic or not.

References


