

## PARAMETRIC SETTINGS OF FUNCTIONAL PROJECTIONS IN DIACHRONY THE CASE OF ROMANCE CLEFTS AND WH-INTERROGATIVES

This paper utilises data from ten Romance corpora to determine how the functional projections responsible for nominal clefting and for interrogative wh-movement have changed from earlier stages of Romance to present times. The data are assessed through the lens of Rizzi's (2017) parameters.

**INTRODUCTION.** According to Rizzi's (2017; see also Samo 2022) study of parameters, functional projections can be understood as either requiring overt movement (IM=1) or not (IM=0). This, along with other parameters such as the Spell Out of functional heads, allows a fine understanding of the way languages function, and evolve. In this study, we utilise Rizzi's parameters to determine whether the existing understandings of cleft structure and interrogative wh-movement in Romance are tenable *as is* or need refining. To do so, we investigate the parametric settings of the projections involved in these structures, and their evolution over time.

**CONCEPTUAL CHALLENGES.** Belletti's (2015) promotes a derivation of clefts which utilises, depending on the nature and role of the structure, either Rizzi's (1997) high left-peripheral FocusP or Belletti's low left-peripheral (2004) Foc. In both cases, the involved projections require overt movement, i.e., IM=1.

FocusP has traditionally been considered responsible for the attraction of either wh-elements or contrastive foci. However, while the former are systematically attracted into SpecFocusP in Standard Italian, which suggests a setting as IM=1, the latter can surface either fronted or in situ (Bianchi 2013), rather suggesting an IM=1/0 setting. Clefts are present in the language but require certain context conditions to be met to be licensed (Larivée 2021). Languages like European French, on the other hand, have both shifted and in situ wh-elements (IM=1/0) but **no** prosodic foci, and productive clefts. The existence of Foc, in the other hand, was originally posited to account for the existence of VS structures in Standard Italian (Belletti 2004) but many pieces of research have suggested that Italian low foci are always unmoved (Cardinaletti 2001, Samek-Lodovici 2015, Bonan 2021), thus suggesting an IM=0 setting for the language. In French, the position is not exploited in any known structure.

These facts, coupled with numerous other empiric considerations, question the validity of the classification of the FPs exploited in clefts as FocusP and Foc. The functional projections investigated in this study are thus, minimally: Rizzi's (1997), Belletti's (2004) Foc, and the higher FPs exploited in inversed and interrogative clefts. We nonetheless also test the legitimacy of Rizzi's (2017) splitting of FocusP into two projections surrounding IntP, as well as Cable's (2010) understanding of wh-fronting as QP-fronting.

**WORKING HYPOTHESES.** The working hypotheses behind the present study are as follows:

- The parametrisation of functional projections evolves in the direction of **no** movement (IM=0 in Rizzi's 2017 terms, see works on the diachrony of Chinese interrogatives, Aldridge 2010, or Japanese, Aldridge 2009, but also Roberts & Roussou 2003, Dadan 2019, a.o.);
- Diachronically, one functional projection can display different settings for the same parameter at different stages. Synchronically, this ought to be disallowed;
- When what is commonly considered as one single projection displays different parametrisations across structures (e.g., IM=1 in clefts vs IM=0 in interrogatives), the existence of **two** separate projections ought to be posited instead.

**METHODOLOGY AND DISCUSSION.** Our hypotheses have been tested utilising corpus linguistics techniques. As a preliminary assessment of the theory, we have limited the scope of the present investigation to the study of three standard Romance languages: Italian, French and European Portuguese.

The corpora chosen for this study are: [Archivio Datini](#), [Corpus Epistolare Ottocentesco Digitale](#), and [Archivio del parlato italiano](#) for Italian; [Base de français medieval](#), [Groupe d'Observation et de Recherche sur les Documents Epistolaires du Seizième siècle](#), [ESLO](#) 1-2, and [88milSMS](#) for French; [Tycho Brahe Parsed Corpus of Historical Portuguese](#), [Reference Corpus of Contemporary Portuguese](#), and [Corpus do Português](#) for European Portuguese.

The data, which we classify utilising a parametrisation à la Rizzi (2017), will shed light on the diachronic evolution of the functional projections under consideration, and especially Rizzi's FocusP and Belletti's Foc. We shall also discuss the consequences of our innovative classification for the received cartography of clefts, and for the role of FocusP in the theory of interrogatives.

**CONCLUSIONS.** Belletti's (2015) cartographic analysis of clefts makes use of two functional projections that require systematic movement into their Spec, which she understands as Rizzi's (1997) FocusP and Belletti's (2004) Foc. However, the very fact that Foc doesn't attract low foci in Standard Italian is problematic in light of Rizzi's (2017) movement parameters, whereby an IM=1 projection should stay IM=1 across structures. The data discussed in this paper will outline what is tenable, and what is challenging, in the current understanding of Romance clefts and interrogative wh-movement, and suggest alternative trajectories for future investigations.

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