

Temporal existential constructions in Romance
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ABSTRACT

This article offers an analysis of the lexical properties and syntactic behavior of temporal existential constructions, a kind of construction not often discussed in the literature on Romance languages. The relationship between the temporal existential verbs and other existential verbs, like locative and deontic verbs, is examined. Two kinds of temporal existential constructions can be distinguished: temporal circumstantial constructions, which act as a temporal circumstantial adjunct, and temporal presentational constructions, which precede a finite clause headed by a complementizer. Both constructions provide an excellent opportunity to study the properties of the left periphery categories.

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1. Introduction. The article illustrates the lexical properties and syntactic behavior of some Romance temporal existential verbs. The relationship between temporal existential verbs and other existential verbs, like locative and deontic verbs, will be examined. These kinds of verbs act as host verbs, the real predicate being a static locative preposition. Romance temporal existential verbs are light verbs, such as French avoir, Portuguese haver, Occitan aver, Old Spanish haber; Catalan fer, Portuguese fazer, Spanish hacer, Italian fare, Sardinian fàkere, Occitan hèr, and so on, as exemplified in 1.

- (1) a. Pierre est arrivé il y a une heure French
 Peter is arrived expl. cl. has one hour
 'Peter arrived one hour ago'
- b. Fará amanhã oito dias que partiu Portuguese
 will-make tomorrow eight days that (she/he) left
 'As of tomorrow, it will have been eight days since (s)he left'

The article is also concerned with the properties of the left periphery categories and the split of the complementizer layer proposed by Rizzi (1997, 1999).

2. Romance temporal existential constructions. Temporal existential constructions express the setting or location of a temporal point at a particular value on a scale of temporal magnitude. Moreover, this temporal point is always past with respect to the speech act or with respect to the point denoted by a temporal expression appearing in the construction. Consider the sentences in 2.

- (2) a. Le 9 de novembre de 1989 le mur de Berlin tomba: aujourd'hui il
y a exactement dix ans et un mois (de ça) French
 'The Berlin Wall fell on November 9, 1989, exactly ten years and one month ago today'
- b. El 9 de novembre de 1989 va caure el mur de Berlín. Avui fa exactament
deu
anys i un mes Catalan
 'The Berlin Wall fell on November 9, 1989, exactly ten years and one month ago today'

Roughly speaking, in the sentences in italics in 2, the predicate relates the deictic element French aujourd'hui / Catalan avui 'today' with a particular value or point on a scale of values or units of temporal magnitude, namely: the measure phrase French dix ans et un mois

/ Catalan deu anys i un mes 'ten years and a month'. The French temporal existential construction in 2a is formed with the verb avoir 'have', whereas the Catalan one in 2b is formed with the verb fer 'make/do'. I will begin my discussion with constructions that feature avoir, exemplified in 2a. It is easy to show that this construction follows the basic pattern of other existential sentences in languages like French, Occitan or even Old Spanish. Compare the locative presentational sentences in 3 and the temporal existential constructions in italics in 4.

- (3) a. Il y a du vin chaud French
 expl. cl. has part. wine hot
 'There is some hot wine'
- b. Que i a vin caud Bearnese Occitan
 that cl. has wine hot
 'There is some hot wine'
- c. Hay vino caliente Spanish
 has-cl. wine hot
 'There is some hot wine'
- (4) a. Il y a deux jours (de cela) French
 expl. cl. has two days (from this)
 'It was two days ago'
- b. Que vedoï a Pèir, ièr i avó quate meses Bearnese Occitan
 that (I) saw to Peter, yesterday cl. had four months
 'As of yesterday, it had been four months since I last saw Peter'
- c. No hay una hora que le dejé bueno, sano y salvo Old Spanish (Corominas-Pascual 1980)
 not has-cl. one hour that (I) him let well, healthy and safe
 'I left him safe and sound less than an hour ago'

Constructions in 3 and 4 several some properties: The verb is the existential verb avoir/aver/haber, the oblique (or dative) clitic y appears in the construction, and all of them are impersonal sentences, although only the French sentences show the expletive pronoun il, French being a non-null subject language.¹ The verb in these sentences is always conjugated in the 3rd person, which is the morphological expression of the lack of person feature in languages like Romance.

Following Freeze (1992), Hale-Keyser (1997:fn.7), Kayne (1993), and others, I assume that the verb avoir/aver/haber has its source (diachronically and synchronically) in a

static locative preposition, as shown in (5c). It is a light verb in the sense that it acts as the host of the real predicate, which is a covert preposition. This preposition can be defined as a preposition of central coincidence. According to Hale (1986) and Hale-Keyser (1993, 1997), a preposition of central coincidence is a preposition that expresses the relation whereby some entity is associated or in contact with another entity, as in 5b. It defines a relation of spatial contiguity between one entity (i.e. a place) and another entity (i.e. a thing, a substance, a measure, etc.). The meaning of the abstract preposition in 5 would be defined more or less as 'with' (as proposed by Hale-Keyser (1997, 1998), Guéron (1994), Longa et al. (1995). Cf. Hoekstra (1994)). The complement of the preposition incorporated into the verb *avoir* in 5a is the NP *du vin*. The subject required by the preposition to complete the interrelation between the two entities is the clitic y, a clitic expressing a locative circumstance (Hale-Keyser 1997).²

- (5) a. Il y a du vin
 expl. cl. has part. wine
 'There is some wine'
 b. [P N[P N]]
 c. avoir : v [P V] French

My proposal is that the incorporation of the central coincidence preposition into the verb avoir/aver/haber is reflected in its lexical entry –schematically represented in 5c–, as idiosyncratic information provided by the verb itself for operations of the computational system (see Mateu-Rigau 1999). Thus, the existential verbs avoir and haber are always ergative verbs in the sense that they do not select an external argument.³ Regarding the temporal constructions in 4, my claim is that the element which relates the clitic y to a measure phrase is the central coincidence preposition incorporated into the verb. In other words, the preposition defines a spatial contiguity, or correspondence, between a point in time, represented by the clitic y, and a point or value on a scale of temporal magnitude. Measure nouns like days, years, meters or gallons divide up a magnitude into subunits. This magnitude is temporal in the constructions studied here. The measure phrase merges with quantifiers (i.e. deux ans 'two years'). In fact, the measure phrase is quantified when the functional elements are added to the derivation. The quantifier may be covert, as in Spanish tiempo ha 'long ago'.

As Rizzi (1990) showed, measure phrases are non-referential NPs. Because of this, they can neither be modified by adjectives or relative clauses, nor coappear with specific determiners, as shown in 6(a-b). However, emphatic modifiers like bien can be accepted, as

in 6c. On the other hand, 6d shows that these constructions, like other measure phrases, manifest negative island effects (see Rizzi (1990), Bosque (1998)).

- (6) a. *Il y a ces deux jours, Marie est arrivée French
 expl. cl. has these two days Mary is arrived
- b. *I a tres dias cauds, vedi a Pèir Bearnese Occitan
 cl. has three days hot, (I) saw to Peter
- c. Il y a bien longtemps (de cela) French
 expl. cl. has well long time (from this)
 'It's been a good while (since then)'
- d. *Quant(s) de dias no i a pas? Bearnese Occitan
 how many of days not cl. has neg.

Just as in other constructions with measure phrases, such as those in 7, the predicate, namely the preposition incorporated into the light verb *avoir/fer*, expresses a spatial correspondence between its specifier, *Marie/la Maria* and the quantified unit of time measurement.

- (7) a. Marie a dix ans French
 Mary has 10 years
 'Mary is 10 (years old)'
- b. La Maria fa deu anys Catalan
 the Mary makes ten years
 'Mary is 10 (years old)'

In French and Occitan temporal constructions, the specifier of the relation defined by the preposition of central coincidence is the locative clitic *y/i*, a clitic that expresses a locative or temporal point.⁴ In other Romance languages the pronominal element in temporal constructions is covert, a phonologically empty pronoun. This is the case with Spanish and Portuguese, which have no overt locative clitic, but it is also the case with Catalan, a language that has an overt locative clitic but rarely uses it to express temporal location. The covert clitic that I postulate in Romance temporal (and locative) constructions will be represented by <Y> (= covert locative determiner).⁵

Following Brunot (1926: 289f), I propose that the impersonal existential sentences in 8 have an overt or covert locative/dative clitic, which acts as a clitic subject of the sentence. The French sentence in 8a is a locative sentence, those in 8b are deontic existential sentences and 8c is a temporal construction.

- (8) a. Il y a du vin chaud French
 expl. cl. has part. wine hot
 'There is some hot wine'
- b. Il y faut des chaises / Il faut des chaises
 expl. cl. is-necessary part. chairs / expl. is-necessary part. chairs
 'Some chairs are necessary here'
- c. Il y aura trois mois dans quelques jours
 expl. cl. will-have three months in some days
 'In a few days, it will have been three months'

Inspired by Torrego (1992, 1998), Kayne (1993), and Longa et al. (1998), I am going to label the clitic *y* as a D/P (that is, an 'adverbial pronoun', following the terminology of Catalan traditional grammarians. See also Bosque (1989: 199s); Schrotten (1996)). The determiner dimension of the clitic allows it to be selected as an argument. Like the other subject clitics used in deontic existential sentences in Catalan and Spanish, the spatio-temporal pronoun *<y/hi>* may be doubled. It is doubled by an element expressing temporal reference, such as a deictic adverb like *demain*, *próximamente* or a DP or a PP expressing a date or a point in the calendar (*le première janvier*). See 8c, where the clitic *y* is doubled by *dans quelques jours*. Furthermore, 9a exemplifies the doubling of a dative subject clitic in a Catalan deontic sentence, whereas 9b shows the doubling of a locative subject clitic in a Catalan locative sentence.

- (9) a. Li caldrà ajut a en Pere Catalan
 him_{dat} will-be-necessary help to the Peter
 'Peter will need some help'
- b. Hi ha vi fresc a la nevera
 cl. has wine cool in the refrigerator
 'There is some cool wine in the refrigerator'

Following an analysis of clitic doubling constructions attributed to Torrego (see Uriagereka 1995), I assume that the internal structure of the dative in 10a is roughly that in 11a, where the PP *a en Pere* is in the specifier position (cf. Torrego (1998:143s)). Similarly to the dative PP in 10a, the temporal element *dans quelques jours* in 8c is generated at the specifier position of the phrase headed by the locative pronoun *y*, as shown in 10b.

- (10) a. DP/PP [[PP a en Pere] [D/P li]]
 b. DP/PP [[dans quelques jours] [D/P y]]

Examples in (11) show that the PP dans quelques jours is not directly related with the main clause. The ungrammatical sentence in 11b shows that the doubling temporal element is not licensed if it occurs alone in the sentence. Actually, the past tense of the main clause is licensed, because the temporal adjunct in italics in 11a globally expresses a past meaning.

- (11) a. Jean est parti il y aura trois mois dans quelques jours French
 John is left expl. cl. will-have three months in some days
 'In a few days it will have been three months since John left'
- b. *Jean est parti dans quelques jours
 John is left in some days

There are few verbs in the same class as temporal existential avoir. One of them is the verb faire/fer/hacer. Currently, the use of the verb *avoir* is losing ground in several Romance languages or dialects, such as Aranese Occitan. In Portuguese, haver coexists with fazer in temporal constructions, whereas in Spanish and Catalan, hacer/fer has gradually ousted haber/haver. Even in French, where *avoir* enjoys good health, the verb faire may be used in its place in the colloquial language. See 12.

- (12) a. Il est parti ça fait dix ans French (Le Goffic 1993: 501)
 He is left this makes ten years
 'He left ten years ago'
- b. Pronto hará diez años Spanish
 soon (it) will-make ten years
 'It will soon be ten years'
- c. Ahir va fer deu anys Catalan
 yesterday made ten years
 'As of yesterday, it had been ten years'

The Romance verb hacer/fazer/fer may be used in temporal existential constructions, because it may act as a light verb. In other words, in some Romance languages, besides the causative verb hacer/fazer/fer, we find a form that has lost the causative property for diachronical reasons. Therefore, this form is unable to project an external argument. Without the expression of causative or source relation, this form becomes stative and means a locative relation. The different forms of the verb fer in Catalan are shown in 13. In 13a fer is a causative verb. The construction expresses a source relation that can be paraphrased as 'Peter is the originator of a process in which the laundry becomes clean'. However in 13(b-c) there is no causative meaning and the verb is just the host of a preposition of central coincidence:

v[PV]. The verb in 13(b-c) expresses a relation of contiguity between a spatio-temporal element (<Y>/ara) and an entity (fred/deu anys). The sentence in 13b expresses an atmospheric state and 13c means a relation of correspondence between a temporal point (the time of utterance) and a measure phrase. The last construction measures a lapse of time in relation to a temporal point (now).

- (13) a. En Pere fa la roba neta (causative verb fer) Catalan
 Peter makes the laundry clean
 'Peter makes the laundry clean'
- b. Hi fa fred [[hi] [v[P V] fred]]
 cl. makes cold
 'It is cold'
- c. Ara fa deu anys [[ara <Y>] [v[P V] deu anys]]
 now makes ten years
 'It's been ten years now'

The encoding of the central coincidence preposition into the verb hacer/fer/fazer is reflected in its lexical entry as idiosyncratic information provided by the verb itself for the operations of the computational system. Hence, no external argument will be licensed with such a verb.⁶

3. Temporal circumstantial constructions vs. temporal presentational constructions. Although locative, deontic and temporal existential constructions share the basic property of having a central coincidence preposition incorporated into the verb in their lexical entry, some differences arise when we attend their syntactic behavior and the way they are used in discourse. Impersonal locative sentences show a relation between an entity or a place and another entity, as in 8a. Deontic existential constructions express the existence of the need for some entity in a place or person, as in 8b. The lexical entry for deontic constructions is more complex than for locative constructions, and they coappear not only with locative subject pronouns but with personal dative pronouns (see Rigau 1999). That is to say, a need may be located in a place or in a person. Finally, temporal existential constructions relate a place, which is interpreted as a point in time, to a measure of temporal magnitude. Because of this, they are generally used in order to establish the temporal frame of a particular situation. This is the reason for their appearance in adjunct positions like other temporal circumstantials or temporal frame-adverbials. Temporal existential constructions establish the temporal scenario for states or events. Therefore, temporal existential constructions diverge from other existential constructions in one respect: they rarely constitute autonomous sentences. When they do, they strongly depend on the preceding discourse, as in 2. On the other hand, the

construction can accept an adjunct phrase (de cela, de su huida, etc.) that expresses the event referred to in the preceding discourse, as shown in 14.

- (14) a. Il y a longtemps de tout cela French (Henry 1968: 18)
 expl. cl. has long time from all that
 'All that was a long time ago'
- b. Il y avait quelques jours de ça
 expl. cl. had some days from that
 'It had been some days since then'
- c. De su huida hace casi diez años Spanish
 from his escape makes almost ten years
 'It's been almost ten years since his escape'
- d. Desde que te fuiste hace casi diez años
 since that (you) yourself left makes almost ten years
 'It's been almost ten years since you left'

Interestingly, temporal existential constructions may appear as a temporal circumstantial adjunct, as in 15, or with a finite clause headed by the complementizer que, as in 16. On the inspiration of authors like Henry (1968), Porto Dapena (1983) and Sáez (1990), I will call the constructions in italics in 15. Temporal circumstantial constructions, whereas those in 16 will be called temporal presentational constructions.

- (15) a. Il y a trois ans, il est parti French
 expl. cl. has three years he is left
 'He left three years ago'
- b. Votre frère, il y a quelques années, est venu chez moi un soir
 Your brother expl. cl. has several years is come home me one evening
 'Several years ago your brother came over one evening'
- c. Era a Girona, ara fa tres hores Catalan
 (I) was in Girona now makes three hours
 'I was in Girona three hours ago'
- d. Escribió poemas hace tres semanas Spanish
 (he) wrote poems makes three weeks
 'He wrote poems three weeks ago'
- (16) a. Il y a deux semaines qu'il travaille French
 expl. cl. has two weeks that he works
 'He has been working for two weeks'

- | | |
|---|------------|
| b. <u>Fa dues setmanes</u> que treballa | Catalan |
| makes two weeks that (he) works | |
| 'He has been working for two weeks' | |
| c. <u>Hace dos semanas</u> que trabaja | Spanish |
| makes two weeks that (he) works | |
| 'He has been working for two weeks' | |
| d. <u>Há duas semanas</u> que trabalha | Portuguese |
| has two weeks that (he) works | |
| 'He has been working for two weeks' | |

The source of the special behavior of temporal existential constructions, in contrast with those that are locative or deontic, is in the very nature of the arguments of the predicate, because they express a relation between a temporal point and a unit of time measurement. These temporal constructions are able to set the temporal frame for an event or a state expressed by the clause they coappear with. As shown in 15, temporal circumstantials do not occupy a rigid position. However, the temporal construction in 16 has a single fixed position and it is connected by the complementizer *que* to the clause that has the main assertive content of the sentence. Moreover, the relation between the temporal circumstantial and the other clause in the sentence is not the same in 15 as in 16. In 15 the temporal constructions act as a past temporal adjunct, similar to the adverbial phrase yesterday. And when they are preposed, they are able to provide a past temporal frame to the main clause, which shows a past tense. However, the sentences in 16 show different aspectual-temporal properties. The temporal presentational construction does not act as a past frame-adverbial. Because of this, the tense of the clause headed by the complementizer que may be present, past or future.

3.1. Temporal circumstantial constructions. The circumstantials of time in 15 may act as what Parsons (1990:209) calls frame adverbials, namely 'locative or temporal phrases that set a context within which the rest of the sentence is to be interpreted.' They may appear in a left or right peripheral position set off from the rest of the clause by autonomous intonation, as in 15a and 15c. They may also appear in parenthetical position; e.g. in 15b. As regards the temporal circumstantial in 15d, I agree with Cinque (1997:40f) that it is below the VP node, just as with other circumstantial phrases of place, time, manner, etc. As a result, it does not occupy the specifier position of a functional projection above the VP. It is probably in the specifier of a VP shell (Chomsky (1995:333), Cinque (1997:40f)). Circumstantial phrases can be seen as predicates of events (or of VPs) (see Parsons (1990), Cinque (1997:41)). Its predicate role accounts for the fact that the main verb in 15 is a past verb. Because these circumstantial phrases express a point of time in the past, the situation

expressed by the main clause must be in a past tense. However, the verbs in 15 can manifest a perfective or imperfective grammatical aspect.

We can now raise the question of how the relation between the temporal circumstantial phrase and the main clause is established. In other words, we must decide which element is the head of the temporal circumstantial phrases in 15. My conclusion is that the head of the phrase is a preposition, as in 17, where a temporal preposition heads the circumstantial phrase in italics.

- (17) a. Estoy enfermo desde ayer hizo ocho días Spanish
 (I) am sick since yesterday made eight days
 'As of yesterday, I had been sick for eight days'
- b. No el veig (des) de fa tres anys Catalan
 not him (I) see since makes three years
 'I have not seen him for three years'
- c. Hasta hace unas tres horas estuvo conmigo Spanish
 till makes some three hours (she/he) was with me
 '(S)he was with me until three hours ago'
- d. Il était là jusqu'à il y a cinq minutes French
 he was there till expl. cl. has five minutes
 'He was there until five minutes ago'

My proposal is that the circumstantial phrases in 15 and 18 are PPs like those in 17. However, the preposition heading the temporal construction in 15 and 18 is a covert central coincidence preposition.

- (18) a. Juan se fue mañana hará tres meses Spanish
 John himself went tomorrow will-make three months
 'As of tomorrow it will have been three months since John left'
- b. [PP [P ε] [[DP/PP mañana [D/P <Y>]] [hará tres meses]]]

Therefore, a possible paraphrase of a sentence such as 18a would be 'John left in the past at a temporal point which is equivalent to the measure of three months with respect to tomorrow.' The structure we assume for the temporal circumstantial construction in italics in (18a) is schematically represented in 18b. According to this structure the adjunct has a PP status. See Sáez 1990, Fernández Soriano-Táboes (1999) for other analyses of these constructions as PPs.

The punctual temporal meaning of the temporal existential construction is due to the covert preposition that heads the circumstantial phrase. This covert preposition selects a clause, probably a CP that selects an IP (see in 18b). Other functional categories may be visible in the subordinated clause, e.g. NegationP. A temporal circumstantial construction may be negated, as shown in 19.

- (19) a. Ha llovido no har a a n tres horas Spanish
 (it) has rained not will-make still three hours
 'It rained not yet three hours ago'
- b. Il est parti il n' y a pas longtemps French
 He is left expl. not cl. has neg. long time
 'He left not long ago'

3.2. Temporal presentational constructions. Consider the presentational constructions in 20.

- (20) a. Il y aura deux ans qu'il est parti French
 expl. cl. will-have two years that he is left
 'It will have been two years since he left'
- b. Ayer hizo tres meses que ella se licenci  Spanish
 yesterday made three months that she herself graduated
 'As of yesterday it had been three months since she graduated'
- c. Feia un mes que no havia plogut Catalan
 made one month that not had rained
 'It hadn't rained in a month'
- d. Que i a tres dias que soi malaut Bearnese Occitan
 that cl. has three days that (I) am ill
 'I've been ill for three days'

Some of the properties shown by temporal presentational constructions are not shared by circumstantial constructions:

a. Presentational constructions appear in the initial position of the sentence and are followed by the complementizer que, as shown by the ungrammatical constructions in 21.

- (21) a. *Que ella se licenci  ayer hizo tres d as (cf. 20b) Spanish
 that she herself graduated yesterday made three days
- b. *Feia un mes no havia plogut (cf. 20c) Catalan

made one month not had rained

b. Unlike the main clause that appears with a circumstantial of time, which is in past tense, the clause headed by the complementizer in 20 may be in present tense, as in 20d, past tense, as in 20a, or future tense, as shown in 22.

(22) Demà a les set farà dues hores que l'estaran operant Catalan
tomorrow at the seven will-make two hours that him/her (they) will-be
operating

'As of tomorrow at seven o'clock they will have been operating on him for
two hours'

c. In contrast with temporal circumstantial constructions, presentational constructions cannot coappear with other circumstantials in an apposition relationship of time, as shown in 23.

(23) a. Juan nació el 6 de diciembre de 1996, el lunes hizo tres años Spanish
John was-born the 6 of December of 1996 the Monday made three years
'John was born December 6, 1996, three years ago last Monday'

b. *El 6 de diciembre de 1996, el lunes hizo tres años que nació Juan
the 6 of December of 1996, the Monday made three years that was-born

John

d. Moreover, presentational constructions cannot be cleft. Only temporal circumstantials can appear in a cleft structure, as in 24.

(24) a. C'était il y a trois mois qu'il est parti (cf. Il est parti il y a trois mois)
pron. was expl. cl. has three months that he is left French
'It was three months ago that he left'

b. *C'était il y a trois mois que qu'il est parti (cf. Il y a trois mois qu'il est
parti)
pron. was expl. cl. has three months that that he is left

All these syntactic differences can be explained if we assume that the existential construction, when acting as a presentational temporal construction, is in a peripheral position of a sentence whose main clause is the clause introduced by que. Note that a main clause connected to a preposed adjunct by the complementizer que is not an unusual phenomenon in Romance languages. Consider sentences in 25.

the other hand, the clause headed by que in sentences like 20b cannot be a relative clause, because the measure phrase will not accept specific adjectives or relative clauses, as shown in 26a.⁷

- (26) a. *Ayer hizo tres meses muy alegres Spanish
 yesterday made three months very happy

An alternative would be to analyze 20b analogous to the adjunct PP in 27.

- (27) a. Ayer hizo tres meses de su licenciatura Spanish
 yesterday made three months from her graduation
 'As of yesterday, it had been three months since his graduation'
 b. Il y a trois mois de cela French
 expl. cl. has three months from that
 'It was three months ago'

However, unlike other Romance languages, Spanish does not drop weak prepositions before the conjunction que, as shown in 28a. Therefore, 20b would have to be analogous to 28b, which is ungrammatical.⁸

- (28) a. Me olvidé de que ya se licenció Spanish
 (I) me forgot of that already herself (she) graduated
 'I had forgotten that she had already graduated'
 b. *Ayer hizo tres meses de que ella se licenció
 yesterday made three months from that she herself graduated

Moreover, the impossibility of coordination between clauses headed by que and adjunct PPs expressing an event, like those in 25, shows that the clause headed by que and the adjunct PP do not have the same role within the sentence. See the ungrammatical sequences in 29.

- (29) a. *Ayer hizo tres meses de su licenciatura y que tú te caíste al río
 Spanish
 yesterday made three months from her/his graduation and that you yourself
 fell in the river
 b. *Hoy hace tres meses de la muerte de mi padre y que me operaron (Gómez
 Torrego (1999:2115)
 today makes three months from the death of my father and that me (they)
 operated-on

Note that coordination between a clause headed by que and another headed by desde is also ungrammatical, as shown in 30(a,b), in contrast with the grammaticality of 30c.

- (30) a. *Hace dos meses que se licenció y desde que me operaron Spanish
 makes two months that her/himself (she/he) graduated and since that me
 (they) operated-on
- b. *Hace dos meses desde que me operaron y que se licenció
 makes two months since that me (they) operated-on and that her/himself
 (she/he) graduated
- c. Hace dos meses que se licenció y que me operaron
 makes two months that her/himself (she/he) graduated and that me (they)
 operated-on
 'It's been two months since she/he graduated and I had my operation'

The data shown in 26-30 suggest that the temporal existential construction, when acting as a presentational construction, is generated in a left peripheral position of a sentence, in the complementizer layer, and that the main verb is the verb of the clause headed by que. Similarly to the left peripheral elements in 25, the function of the temporal construction is to modify the temporal-aspectual properties of the sentence.

According to Rizzi (1997: 281), who explored the articulated structure of the complementizer layer of the sentence, the complementizer layer is typically headed by a free functional morpheme, and hosts topics and various operator-like elements such as interrogative and relative pronouns, focalized elements, etc. The articulated structure for the complementizer system in Rizzi (1997) is reproduced in 31a. In a new version of the complementizer system, a Modifier node is added, as shown in 31b.

- (31) a. Force (Top*) (Focus) (Top*) Fin IP (Rizzi 1997)
 b. Force (Top*) (Focus) (Mod*) (Top*) Fin IP (Rizzi 1999)

According to Rizzi (1997:285f), the Force-Finiteness system expresses the selectional relations between a complementizer system and the immediately higher and lower structural systems. Rizzi (1997:283) regards 'the complementizer system as the interface between a propositional content (expressed by IP) and the superordinate structure (a higher clause or, possibly, the articulation of discourse).' The node Force expresses the fact that a sentence is a question, a declarative, etc. Force is expressed sometimes by overt morphological encoding on the head, for example, in Bearnese Occitan, as shown in 32.

- (32) a. Que i a tres dias que ne lo vesi pas Bearnese Occitan
 that cl. has three days that not him (I) see neg.
 'I haven't seen him for three days'
 b. E vòs vin?
 comp. (you) want wine
 Do you want some wine?

The elements in italics are the overt realisation of a declarative and interrogative head, respectively. According to Rizzi (1997:288), 'if the topic-focus field is activated, it will inevitably be 'sandwiched' in between force and finiteness, as these two specifications must terminate the complementizer system upward and downward, in order to meet the different selectional requirements and properly insert the complementizer system in the structure.' The node Top defines a kind of 'higher predication', a predication within the complementizer system. However, phrases in the specifier of a left periphery node do not always receive a Topic-Comment meaning or a Focus meaning. Because of this and other reasons, Rizzi (1999) redefines the typology positions in the left periphery of the clause by adding a Modifier node. See his example in 33a, where *last year* is in the specifier position of an empty Modifier node. Mod node causes minimality effects, as shown in 33b. The Wh-phrase cannot move to the specifier of Mod.

- (33) a. I think [that [last year Mod⁰ [she read many books]]] (Rizzi 1999)
 b. *How many books did [last year Mod⁰ [she t read t]]

My proposal is that temporal presentational constructions and temporal circumstantial constructions are in the specifier position of the Mod head, as represented schematically in 34b and 35b.

- (34) a. Que i a tres dias que ne lo vesi pas Bearnese Occitan
 that cl. has three days that not him (I) see neg
 'I haven't seen him for three days'
 b. [ForceP que [ModP [i a tres dias] Mod⁰ [FinP que [IP ne lo vesi pas]]]]
- (35) a. Hace tres días, vi a Pedro Spanish
 makes three days (I) saw to Peter
 'I saw Peter three days ago'
 b. [ForceP [ModP [PP e [hace tres días]] Mod⁰ [FinP [IP vi a Pedro]]]]

According to Rizzi (1997:283), the information expressed by Finiteness faces the inside, the content of the IP embedded under it. Finiteness reflects certain properties of the verbal system of the clause. For instance, it is responsible for the co-occurrence of that and a tensed verb, of for and an infinitive in English. Thus, Fin node can manifest temporal properties of the IP, mood distinctions, agreement properties, etc. On the basis of Rizzi's analysis, I suggest that Fin may also manifest aspectual properties of the IP system. It is generally assumed that Aspect is a temporal notion (Smith (1991), Hoekstra (1992), Dermidache-Uribe-Etxebarria (1998), among others). Hence, the elements in italics in 36 may be analyzed as the morphological realisation of the aspectual and temporal properties of the IP selected by Fin node.

- (36) a. Que i a tres dias que ne lo vesi pas (= 34a) Bearnese Occitan
 that cl. has three days that not him (I) see neg
 'I haven't seen him for three days'
- b. Tot avui que plora (= 25c) Catalan
 all today that (she/he) cries
 '(S)he has been crying all day'

One of the differences between the ModPs in 34b and 35b is that the Fin node in 34b is phonologically realised as que and in 35b is phonologically empty. This fact indicates that the temporal and aspectual properties that these nodes host may also be different. Compare the sentences in 37 and 38.

- (37) a. Hace tres días, vi a Pedro (= 35a) Spanish
 makes three days I saw to Peter
 'I saw Peter three days ago'
- b. *Hace tres días, no como
 makes three days (I) don't eat
- c. *(Para entonces) hará un mes, tendrás un hijo
 by then will-be a month (you) will-have a child
- (38) a. Hace tres días que vi a Pedro Spanish
 makes three days that (I) saw to Peter
 'I saw Peter three days ago'
- b. Hace tres días que no como
 makes three days that (I) don't eat
 'I haven't eaten in three days'
- c. (Para entonces) hará un mes que tendrás un hijo

by then will-be a month that (you) will-have a child
 'By then you will have had a child for a month'

In 37a the constituent in the specifier of ModP is a temporal circumstantial construction, whose internal structure is that postulated in 18b as a PP structure headed by an empty central coincidence preposition. The preposed circumstantial construction in 37a sets a past temporal frame within which the rest of the sentence must be interpreted. Consequently, the tense of the main clause must be a past tense. Note that 37b and 37c are ungrammatical because of the non-past tense of their main clauses. We will assume then that the Fin node in 37, which is empty, manifests past time, and that this property will be shared with the IP selected by it.

In contrast to the circumstantial constructions in 37, in presentational temporal constructions the main clause may be either present, past or future, as shown in 38. I will attribute this fact to the aspectual-temporal properties hosted by the Fin node que selected by Modifier. In other words, the element que is an aspectual-temporal marker. Other cases where que acts as an aspectual-temporal marker are shown in 39.

- (39) a. Tot aquest any (que) ha plogut Catalan
 all this year that (it) has rained
 'It has rained all year'
- b. Tot aquest any que (no) plou
 all this year that not (it) rains
 'It has/hasn't rained all year'
- c. *Tot aquest any (no) plou
 all this year not (it) rains

We can see in 37 and 38 that only when the Fin node is phonologically realised as que can the clause be in present or future tense. What, then, is the role of the constituent in ModP in sentences like 38? The role of the ModP here is to indicate the initial endpoint in the temporal contour of the event described by the sentence, which is called the assertion time by Klein (1995) and Dermidache-Urbe Etxebarria (1998), among others. According to Klein (1995), 'the assertion time is the time for which an assertion is confined, for which the speaker makes a statement.' The main clause no como in 38b is in present tense, a tense with an imperfective aspect. According to Smith (1991:93), imperfective viewpoints focus on stages that are neither initial nor final, excluding endpoints. The role of the ModP in 38b is precisely to fix the initial endpoint of the assertion time of the clause no como.

Traditional Romance grammarians claim that presentational existential constructions express duration or a span, instead of a point in time. However, as shown in 38a, the presentational construction itself does not express duration. In fact, the meaning of duration depends on the aspectual properties of the main clause, on its imperfective aspect. Thus, the meaning of duration –when it is present– is not a property of the existential constituent in the ModP. It is a property of the main clause. The Fin node *que* replicates the temporal-aspectual properties of the main clause.

In the constructions we are studying, FinP is selected by Mod. Therefore, we have to ask what determines whether a Mod head will select a FinP with an empty or a full head. Actually, the different behavior of the Fin node is a consequence of the structural divergence in temporal existential constructions. As shown in 35b, the structure we have assumed for a temporal circumstantial construction such as that in 35a: *hace tres días* is a PP structure headed by an empty central coincidence preposition. Because of the past meaning of the existential construction, the main clause related to it through the central coincidence preposition must be a past tense clause.

In contrast to 35b, the internal structure I tentatively assume for temporal presentational constructions is a default structure. The constituent in the specifier position of ModP is not headed by a preposition of central coincidence. Although I cannot offer fully conclusive evidence, it seems reasonable to think that the constituent in the specifier position of Mod is neither a PP nor a ForceP but an IP. Because the temporal presentational construction does not act as a past frame-adverbial, the Mod node is not restricted to selecting a FinP with a past tense feature. As a consequence, the tense of the main clause may be present, past or future, as shown in 38.⁹ Note that if a temporal presentational construction is a default structure, such as IP, we can easily explain why an interrogative element belonging to the presentational construction can occupy the specifier position in ForceP, as shown in 40, whereas an interrogative element in a temporal circumstantial construction cannot.¹⁰

- (40) a. ¿Cuántos días hace que Pedro se fue? Spanish
 how many days makes that Peter himself left
 'How many days has it been since Peter left?'
 b. *¿Cuántos días hace Pedro se fue?
 how many days makes Peter himself left
 c. [_{ForceP} cuántos días Force⁰ [_{ModP} [_{IP} hace t] Mod⁰ [_{FinP} que [_{IP} Pedro se fue]]]]

4. Concluding remarks. Temporal existential constructions provide an excellent opportunity to study the affinity among the existential constructions in Romance languages, and the split in the complementizer layer (Rizzi 1997, 1999). It has been shown that there are two different temporal existential constructions, namely temporal circumstantial constructions and temporal presentational constructions. Given that some of the syntactic properties shown by temporal presentational constructions are not shared by temporal circumstantial constructions, it is essential to draw a distinction between these two forms.

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¹ On the proximity between dative and locative, see Jespersen (1924:XIII), Rigau (1999), and Fernández Soriano (1999), among others.

² As a consequence of the incorporation of the abstract preposition into the verb, the host verb acquires case properties. In fact, it is the preposition that triggers the case properties of the verb (See Rigau 1997).

³ Due to diachronic evolution, the verb avoir in Romance languages contains a fossilized preposition. Nevertheless, some of them do not use it in locative constructions (only as a possessive predicate and an auxiliary verb). This is the case in Romanian and to a lesser extent Italian and Sardinian. In our analysis, we leave aside existential constructions with verbs other than avoir and hacer (and their equivalents).

⁴ Besides the case of the clitic y that coappears with avoir in temporal constructions, French offers other examples of the use of locative elements expressing temporality, like voici or voilà: Voilà dix ans, il est parti (Le Goffic 1993:501).

⁵ A similar convention is also used in Longa et al. (1997) to stand for the Romance abstract locative clitic.

⁶ The fact that verbs like avoir and faire act exactly like light verbs in temporal constructions is shown in the Sardinian and American Spanish examples given in (i). The constructions in italics show us that the verbs fàkere and haber are not necessary under some conditions, namely: when the specifier is a deictic element meaning 'at this time'/'now'. A covert central coincidence preposition heads the phrase, as represented in (ic).

- (i) a. L'appo accabbatu como tres annos Sardinian (Jones 1993:195)
 it (I) have finished now three years
 'I finished it three years ago'
- b. Ahora poco le robaron American Spanish (Kany 1951:221)
 now a-little him (they) robbed
 'He was robbed recently'
- c. [PP como [P tres annos]] / [PP ahora [P poco]]

⁷ Moreover, the clause que ella se licenció in 20b cannot be paraphrased as (i), which is ungrammatical: (i) *Ella se licenció tres meses (she herself graduated three months)

⁸ Under certain conditions an adjunct headed by desde 'since' may coappear with a temporal existential predicate. Some Spanish speakers accept a sentence like Hace tres meses desde que murió mi padre 'It's been three months since my father died' (from Gómez Torrego (1999:2115), where an adjunct is headed by *desde*, which selects a clause in past tense. However, a sentence like *Hace tiempo desde que no la veo (makes time since that not her (I) see) is ungrammatical.

⁹ Nevertheless, some restrictions of 'consecutio temporum' between the ModP and the tense of the main clause may occur, i.e. *Ayer hizo tres días que estará aquí (yesterday made three days that (he) will be here).

¹⁰ The hypothesis that temporal presentational constructions are in ModP specifier position instead of being analyzed as the main clause of the sentence is not far from the analysis of Italian temporal presentationals in Benincà (1978), where such constructions – as in (i)– are viewed as cleft constructions. Note that Italian forms temporal presentational constructions from the verb essere and the measure NP.

- (i) É/sono tre ore che ti aspetto
 is/are three hours that (I) you wait
 'I have been waiting for you for three hours'