

# (Pseudo)cleft constructions at the Interfaces

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## 1. Introduction

This paper aims at providing a syntactic, semantic and intonational analysis of cleft and pseudocleft constructions. Specifically, it will be concerned with sentences of the following type:

- (1) *It is a book that I gave John* (cleft)
- (2) *What I gave John is a book* (pseudocleft)

As can be observed, both structures are constituted by a copular construction, in which the copula is followed by a focused constituent (i.e., the clefted phrase *a book* in both examples). Moreover, the relevant constructions contain a relative-like DP, which is realized on the right of the Focus in clefts (cf. (1)) and in pre-copular position in pseudoclefts (cf. (2)).

As far as pseudoclefts are concerned, our analysis will be limited to structures like (2), in which the *wh*-clause precedes the copula. In other words, following Den Dikken et al.'s (2000) terminology, attention will be paid only to "Type A" pseudoclefts, whereas "Type B" constructions (showing the two nominal constituents in the reversed order, as in (3)) will not be analyzed in detail:

- (3) *A book is what I gave John*

Our analysis will be mainly based on Italian data; however, cross-linguistic evidence will be also provided in order to support the validity of the present proposal.

The paper is organized as follows. Section 2 discusses the type of copular sentence involved in (pseudo)clefts. Section 3 deals with the Focus function associated with the relevant constructions in a cross-linguistic perspective, presenting a number of syntactic and semantic arguments in favour of the analysis to be developed. Section 4 is dedicated to an illustration of the Topic-Comment articulation in the structures at issue. Our syntactic analysis is proposed in section 5 and is provided further evidence from an intonational perspective in section 6. Section 7 summarizes the results.

## 2. The specificational (vs. predicational) nature of (pseudo)clefts

Since (pseudo)clefts involve copular constructions, it is worth analyzing their semantic and syntactic properties in order to establish what kind of copular structure is allowed in the relevant sentences. As a matter of fact, many types of copular constructions have been recognized in the literature (a thorough discussion is provided in Den Dikken 2001), which are mainly distinguished on the basis of specific properties of the two constituents (and/or of the copular element; see, for instance, Safir 1985).

(Pseudo)clefts have often been analyzed as specificational copular sentences (cf. Den Dikken et al. 2000). In this respect, assuming Declerck's (1984: 252) definition of specificational (vs. predicational) copular sentences reported in (4), one of the two constituents (i.e., the predicate) specifies the value of the variable represented by the other constituent (i.e., the subject):

- (4) "A sentence is specificational if the NP that is subject of *be* in underlying structure represents a variable for which the predicate nominal specifies a value. Such sentences are identifying in that the specification of a value makes it possible to identify the variable, i.e. to pick out the person, thing, etc. represented by

the variable from a set. [...] [On the other hand, a] copular sentence is predicational if it does not specify a value for a variable but merely predicates something of the subject NP”.

This subsection is exactly dedicated to provide some evidence for the specificational nature of (pseudo)cleft constructions (for a semantic analysis, see section 3.3).

First of all, predicational structures do not alternate with clefts (cf. Declerck 1988: 69, 260, Den Dikken 2001: 4), as the ungrammaticality of (5b) clearly illustrates:

- (5) a. *John is a teacher*  
 b. \**It is a teacher that John is*  
 c. *What John is is a teacher*

As for (5c), it is important to notice that its grammaticality is not to be taken as a counterexample to the specificational status of pseudoclefts. As a matter of fact, since in pseudoclefts the postcopular constituent specifies the entity having the property expressed by the precopular one (see section 3.3), the sentence in (5c) is not to be analyzed as a pseudocleft at all. Rather, it is a predicational copular sentence in which *a teacher* is predicated about the subject [*what John is*].<sup>1</sup>

As a matter of fact, sentences having the form [wh-clause – be – NP],<sup>2</sup> much like [DP – be – NP] constructions in general, are ambiguous between a predicational and a specificational reading. Consider, for instance, the following examples (discussed in Den Dikken 2001: 2, 9):

- (6) *His supper is food for the dog*  
 a. ‘His supper serves as food for the dog’ (predicational)  
 b. ‘He eats food for the dog for his supper’ (specificational)  
 (7) *What John does not eat is food for the dog*  
 a. ‘What John does not eat serves as food for the dog’ (predicational)  
 b. ‘The (specific) thing that John does not eat is represented by food for the dog’ (specificational)

Given the semantics we assume for (pseudo)clefts (see section 3.3), only the (b) interpretation of (7) is to be considered as a pseudocleft structure, whereas the reading provided in (a) corresponds to a predicational copular sentence (cf. (6a)) that happens to have a wh-clause as its subject. In other words, when the term ‘pseudocleft’ is used in this work, it should be understood as indicating a specificational copular sentence having a relative DP as its subject; as far as the form of this relative DP is concerned, both the “free relative” type (cf. (8)) and the “generic head” type (cf. (9)) will be considered:

- (8) *What I gave John is a book* (subject = free (i.e., headless) relative)  
 (9) *The thing I gave John is a book* (subject = relative headed by a generic noun)

It is noteworthy that the different nature of the copular sentences illustrated in (6-7) can explain a number of restrictions concerning the type of syntactic categories that can be clefted. As a

<sup>1</sup> A further argument showing the specificational nature of pseudoclefts is discussed in Salvi (1991: 178-179), who shows that the *ne* pronoun cannot be extracted from the postcopular constituent in Italian pseudoclefts:

(i) *Chi ha ucciso il conte è l' avvocato di sua moglie* (ambiguous: spec./pred.)  
 who have.3SG kill.PST.PART the count be.3SG the lawyer of his wife

(ii) *Chi ha ucciso il conte ne è l' avvocato* (unambiguous: only predicational)  
 who have.3SG kill.PST.PART the count 3SG.GEN be.3SG the lawyer

As indicated, while (i) is ambiguous between a predicational and a specificational reading, (ii) can only be interpreted as a predicational copular sentence (hence, it is not to be taken as a pseudocleft).

<sup>2</sup> In this work, the label “NP” will be invariably used to indicate all types of predicative noun phrases, *independently* of the functional structure they project.

matter of fact, given its specificational function (see (4)), the clefted constituent is required to be able to denote individuals.<sup>3</sup> As a consequence, only phrases containing nominal projections (DPs/NPs, PPs) or being able to be contained in nominal(ized) structures (APs, IPs) are allowed to occur as the Focus of (pseudo)clefts, whereas constituents such as QPs, NPIs and VPs (which cannot denote individuals) are expected to yield ungrammaticality. As is often observed in the literature (cf. Lees 1963), this prediction is borne out:

- (10) \* *It is something that I gave John* (cleft)  
 (11) \* *What I gave John is something* (pseudocleft)

Despite the function of the postcopular constituent of specificational sentences, which is used to specify a value for its subject rather than to predicate a property (see (4) above), we argue that the relevant specificational NP is merged as a predicate. In other words, the specificational (vs. predicational) nature of copular sentences (cf. (6-7)) must be ascribed to the formal properties of the postcopular phrase (such as its referentiality and specificity; cf. fn. 3) rather than to its non-predicational nature. For instance, the pronominalization possibilities in Italian show that it patterns with predicates:

- (12) a. *Maria è simpatica, e lo/\*la vorrei essere anch' io*  
 Maria be.3SG nice and PRON/PRON.F want.COND.1SG be also 1SG  
 (predicational)
- b. *Maria è un' insegnante, e lo/\*la vorrei essere anch' io*  
 Maria be.3SG a teacher and PRON/PRON.F want.COND.1SG be also 1SG  
 (predicational)
- (13) *Maria è la sorella di Gianni, e lo/\*la vorrei essere anch' io*  
 Maria be.3SG the sister of Gianni and PRON/PRON.F want.COND.1SG be also 1SG  
 (specificational)

As can be observed, the pro-form required in the specificational sentence (13) is the same used in predicational structures (cf. (12)), namely the clitic *lo*; on the contrary, the fully inflected clitic *la* (marked for feminine gender) is excluded in both cases.

Another piece of evidence for the specificational nature of pseudoclefts is provided by Den Dikken et al. (2000: 78), who show that a pseudoclefted AP can only receive an individual-level reading, whereas it can also be interpreted as a stage-level property when it occurs in a predicational copular sentence. Consider for instance the interpretation of *available* in the copular sentence (14) and in the pseudocleft (15):

- (14) *A fireman is available* (ambiguous)  
 a. ‘There is a fireman available (right now)’ (stage-level reading)  
 b. ‘A fireman has the intrinsic property of being available’ (individual-level reading)
- (15) *What a fireman is is available* (unambiguous)  
 a. # ‘There is a fireman available (right now)’ (stage-level reading)  
 b. ‘A fireman has the intrinsic property of being available’ (individual-level reading)

As these examples show, the ambiguity of *available* shown in (14) disappears if it occurs in a pseudocleft construction like (15). Following Ramaglia (2008), the ambiguity in (14) can be explained by assuming that predicative adjectives can be derived in two different ways: on the one hand, they can be directly merged as predicates of the DP to which they refer; on the other, they can function as modifiers of a null (generic) noun within a predicative noun phrase. These two

<sup>3</sup> More precisely, as observed in Benincà et al. (1988: 219), clefted phrases are required to be specific (which confirms the specificational, not predicational, nature of the relevant copular sentence).

structures, respectively associated with the stage-level and the individual-level interpretation of (14), are illustrated below:

- (16) *is* [SC [DP *a fireman*] [AP *available*]] (stage-level reading)  
 (17) *is* [SC [DP *a fireman*] [NP <an> *available* <person>]] (individual-level reading)

As is shown, while (16) can only be analyzed as a predication copular sentence (in which the property of being available is *predicated* about the subject), (17) can instead be interpreted as a specificational construction (in which the individual having the property of being *an available person* specifies a value for its subject; notice that this is the reason why it is interpreted as an intrinsic property, as indicated in (14b)).

As far as pseudoclefts are concerned, the grammaticality judgments indicated in (15) show that only the individual-level interpretation is allowed in these structures. Given the analysis illustrated in (16-17) for the two types of readings, this proves that the copular sentence in (15) is not predication but specificational.

Finally, the specificational nature of pseudoclefts is also confirmed by the existence of specific restrictions concerning the realization of the copular element. It has been observed that the copula of a pseudocleft like (18) cannot be replaced by any other copular verbs (such as *seem*, *become*, etc.; cf. (19)); furthermore, a number of constraints are imposed on tense marking (cf. (20)) and adverbial modification (cf. (21)) (cf. Salvi 1991: 179, 186-ff., Den Dikken et al. 2000: §§ 3.5-3.6):

- (18) *What I saw is a man* (ambiguous: specificational/predicational)  
 (19) *What I saw seems (to be) a man* (unambiguous: only predication)  
 (20) *What I saw will be a man* (unambiguous: only predication)  
 (21) *What I saw is still a man* (unambiguous: only predication)

As indicated, only (18) allows the specificational reading typical of pseudoclefts, whereas the sentences (19-21) are unambiguously predication structures: as such, they do not constitute pseudocleft constructions.<sup>4</sup>

### 3. The (pseudo)cleft constructions as a Focus strategy

As is generally acknowledged, (pseudo)cleft constructions constitute a specific type of copular sentence used to realize Narrow Focus. In language like Italian or English, in which other strategies are available to produce Focus (see the *in situ* strategy in (22) and the *ex situ* strategy in (23)),<sup>5</sup> (pseudo)clefts are normally associated with a contrastive interpretation (but see below for a more detailed discussion).

<sup>4</sup> The existence of these restrictions suggests that the copula used in (pseudo)clefts is not to be analyzed as a fully inflected verb: rather, it should be conceived as a functional head, which acts as a linker (a ‘functor’, in Partee’s 2002 [1987] terms). This point will be discussed in section 3.4.

<sup>5</sup> In the focalization of subjects, Belletti (2008) also proposes the existence of another strategy, namely, the “free inversion” one, producing the VS order in languages like Italian:

(i) Q. *Chi è partito?*  
       who be.3SG leave.PST.PART  
       ‘Who left?’  
   A. *È partito LEO*  
       be.3SG leave.PST.PART Leo  
       ‘LEO left’

However, in a framework assuming verb movement in Focus constructions (Frascarelli 2000a), or – according to more recent trends in the Minimalist framework – (remnant) XP movement across the Focus, the subject in sentences like (iA) remains in fact in its unmarked position. We therefore include this type of construction in the *in situ* strategy.

- (22) (Q. *What did you give him?*)  
 A. *Gli ho dato UN LIBRO* (ITALIAN)  
 to.3SGM have.1SG give.PST.PART a book  
 ‘I gave him A BOOK’
- (23) (Q. *Did you meet John yesterday?*)  
 A. *No, MARIO ho incontrato*  
 no Mario have.1SG meet.PST.PART  
 ‘No, MARIO I met’

Several languages, on the other hand, use cleft-like structures as the only strategy to realize all types of Foci (their interpretation being dependent on context and intonation). A short survey on a number of these languages is important for the purposes of the present work because their morpho-syntactic properties provide clear evidence for the merge structure we propose.

In particular, data show that cleft constructions require a base structure in which the (to-be) focused constituent is merged as the predicate of a Small Clause, while the subject is a free relative (cf. Frascarelli & Puglielli 2005a, Frascarelli 2007a, in prep.).

### 3.1 Cross-linguistic evidence

In the construction at issue, the copular element can be realized as a (frozen) auxiliary (cf. (24-30)), a dividing pronoun (cf. (31-33)), a Focus Marker (cf. (34-35)), or be null (cf. (36-37)), according to language parameters. This element functions as a “linker” (Den Dikken 1998, 2006; see also section 3.4) between the presuppositional part of the sentence and the Focus, which is subject to predicate inversion in the C-domain (hence, a case of A’-movement) to check the [+foc] feature. Consider the following examples:

- (24) *NƏSSU ‘əyyu waga ‘ab kätäma zäxəbbər* (TIGRINYA, Appleyard 1989)  
 3SGM COP.PRON3SGM price in town raise.REL  
 ‘HE raises the prices in town’
- (25) *BÄHƏ MÄDÄR-u yäcänänä* (CHAHA, Appleyard 1989)  
 from.DEM place-COP come.PST.REL  
 ‘We came FROM THAT PLACE’
- (26) *FAS wi la jaaykat bi jënd* (WOLOF, Kihm 1999)  
 horse the COP.3SG merchant the buy.PST  
 ‘The merchant bought THE HORSE’
- (27) *C’ est LE PETIT qui est tombé dans l’ escalier*  
 DEM COP.3SG the child who be.3SG fall.PST.PART in the staircase  
 ‘It’s THE CHILD that fell down from the staircase’ (FRENCH, Clech-Darbon et al. 1999)
- (28) *Se FLER Mari aste* (HAITIAN, Bickerton 1993)  
 COP flowers Mari buy  
 ‘Mary bought FLOWERS’
- (29) *A JAAN sii me* (GUJANA CREOLE, Bickerton 1993)  
 COP Jaan see 1SG  
 ‘JOHN saw me’
- (30) *Na AKI wi bin si* (KRIO, Veenstra & Den Besten 1994)  
 COP Aki SUBJ.1PL PST see  
 ‘We saw AKI’
- (31) *HUWA al-ladi ra’aytu* (STANDARD ARABIC, Ouhalla 1999)  
 3SGM DET-REL.PRON see.PERF.1SG  
 ‘I saw HIM’
- (32) *TAMGHART-A ay yzrin Mohand* (BERBER, Ouhalla 1993)  
 woman-DEM PRON.INDEF see.PST.PART Mohand  
 ‘THIS WOMAN saw Mohand’

- (33) *BILLI hi neva laik go* (HAWAIIAN, Bickerton 1993)  
 Billy PRON.3SG not want go  
 ‘BILLY doesn’t want to go’
- (34) *CALI baa soomaali ah* (SOMALI, Frascarelli & Puglielli 2005a)  
 Cali FM Somali be.REL  
 ‘CALI is Somali’
- (35) *BAAYAN BISHIYÀÀ (nee) ya-kée* (HAUSA, Newman 2000)  
 behind tree FM AUX.3SG-REL.PROG  
 ‘He is BEHIND THE TREE’
- (36) *LIBRO ang ibinigay ng titser sa estudiante* (TAGALOG, Frascarelli in press)  
 book DET.TRIG TH.give.PERF DIR teacher OBL student  
 ‘The teacher gave A BOOK to a/the student’
- (37) *ÀWKA huuri-h adda-l kullumta habte-m* (AFAR, Frascarelli & Puglielli 2005b)  
 boy.ACC boat-of inside-in fish leave.PST.3SGF-NOMIN.NOM  
 ‘THE BOY left the fish inside the boat’

Let us now consider some piece of evidence showing that Focus has non-argument properties in this construction. First of all, when a subject is focused, it does not show nominative (NOM) Case, but rather the default (i.e., unmarked) Case marking available in the relevant language. Moreover, agreement is either dispensed with or ‘reduced’ by means of a special paradigm (specific of relative clauses). This complex phenomenon (which cannot be explained by operator-movement *per se*) is generally defined as the ‘Antiagreement effect’ (cf. Ouhalla 1993, Frascarelli 1999) and can be fully illustrated in a language like Somali (cf. Frascarelli & Puglielli 2005a):

- (38) *Hilib-ka* *NIMAN-KA* *baa* *cunayá*  
meat-DET.NONNOM<sup>6</sup> men-DET.NONNOM FM eat.PRES.PROG.**REL**(RED)  
'THE MEN are eating the meat'
- (39) a. \* *Hilibka* *NIMAN-KU* *baa* *cunayá*  
men-DET.**NOM**  
b. \* *Hilibka* *NIMANKA* *baa* *cunaya**an***  
eat.PRES.PROG.**3PL**  
c. \* *Hilibka* *NIMANKA* ***bay*** *cunayá*  
FM.**SCL3PL**

As we can see, the focused subject cannot show NOM Case (39a) and a ‘reduced paradigm’ (RED) is present, in which agreement is limited to gender and number features (cf. (39b)).<sup>7</sup> Finally, a focused subject cannot be resumed by a clitic (39c), while clitic resumption is obligatory in all other cases (cf. Frascarelli & Puglielli 2005a for details).

Crucially note that NONNOM Case in Somali is also used to mark *predicative NPs*. To provide an illustration, consider Case marking in copular sentences in which Focus is not involved:

- (40) *Wiilk-u/\*wiilk-a*                      *waa gabarta walaalkeed-a/\*walaalkeed-u*  
 boy.DET-NOM/\*NONNOM DECL girl.DET brother.POSS3SGM-NONNOM/\*NOM  
 ‘The boy is the girl’s brother’
- (41) *Shukri*                      *waa naag/\*naag-i*  
 Shukri.NOM DECL woman.NONNOM/\*NOM  
 ‘Shukri is a woman’

<sup>6</sup> Somali marks all objects with the same Case marking, which is distinct from NOM Case. This is the reason why we prefer to indicate it as ‘non-nominative’ (NONNOM), rather than using the (more specific) ACC(usative) label.

<sup>7</sup> In particular, the reduced paradigm has three forms: one for 3SGF, one for 1PL and one for the other persons.

As is shown, in these sentences a ‘declarative marker’ (*waa*) is present and the subject DP is marked for NOM Case, while the predicative NP shows NONNOM Case.

In languages like Berber and Kikuyu, on the other hand, antiagreement implies the presence of a non-finite verbal form. In particular, in subject focusing a ‘participial’ form shows up. Consider (42) and (43) below (respectively, from Ouhalla 1993 and Schwarz 2007):

- (42) *TAMGHART-A ay yzrin/\*t-zra Mohand* (BERBER)  
 woman-DEM PRON.INDEF see.PST.PART/\*3SGF-see.PST Mohand  
 ‘THIS WOMAN saw Mohand’
- (43) *Ne KÁRIOKI ó-tem-ire/\*á-tem-ire mote* (KIKUYU)  
 COP Karioki PART-cut-PST/\*3SG-cut-PST tree  
 ‘KARIOKI cut a tree’

Given the non-argument properties of the focused NP illustrated so far, it is particularly interesting to note that NOM Case is present on the (relativized) predicate. This is clearly shown in ‘dependent-marking’ languages (cf. Nichols 1986), like Somali and Afar, since Case marking appears on the rightmost constituent within a DP. Consider the following (from Frascarelli & Puglielli 2005b):

- (44) *WIL-KAAS baa [aan af Talyaani-ga ku hadlin]-i* (SOMALI)  
 boy-that.NONNOM FM NEG language Italian-DET.NONNOM in speak.NEG-NOM  
 ‘THAT BOY cannot speak Italian’
- (45) *ÁWKA [huurí-h adda-l kullumta habte]-m* (AFAR)  
 boy.ACC boat-of inside-in fish leave.PST.3SGF-NOMIN.NOM  
 ‘THE BOY left the fish inside the boat’

Given this piece of evidence, it is clear that what follows the Focus is not simply ‘the rest of the sentence’, but a relative clause (as was originally proposed in Schachter 1973) having a subject role in the relevant construction.<sup>8</sup>

Alternative analyses have also been proposed. For instance, the initial *wh*-clause of “Type A” pseudoclefts (see section 1) is claimed to be a *wh*-question in Den Dikken et al. (2000). However, besides the morpho-syntactic arguments shown in (38) and (42-45), further evidence in favour of the present analysis is provided by languages like Greek and Bulgarian. As is discussed in Den Dikken et al. (2000: fn. 23), these languages present a morphologically apparent relative structure in pseudoclefts: “The *wh*-clause of S[pecificational]P[seudo]C[left]s in Bulgarian (Izvorski 1997) and Greek (Alexiadou & Giannakidou 1998) shows evidence of being [a] F[ree]R[elative]. The *wh*-pronouns used in SPCs have an affixed definite determiner typical of FRs but absent in questions – *koj-to* ‘who-DEF’ in Bulgarian (cf. [46]), and *o-pjos* ‘DEF-who’ in Greek”:

- (46) *Kakvo-to kaza bese ce Maria e umna* (Bulgarian)  
 what-DEF say.PST.3SG be.PST.3SG that Maria be.3SG smart  
 ‘What he said was that Maria is smart’

This suggests that Bulgarian (and Greek) pseudoclefts are derived from a structure in which the *wh*-clause is a free relative (not a *wh*-question).

<sup>8</sup> The subjecthood of the relevant relative DP is also confirmed by the impossibility of extraction from within it (Moro 1997). Consider Tagalog in this respect:

(i) \**Ng titser<sub>k</sub> ay LIBRO [ang ibinigay t<sub>k</sub> sa estudiante]*  
 DIR teacher TM book DET give.OBL.PERF OBL student  
 ‘(As for) the teacher, (he) gave a BOOK to the student’

Moreover, the analysis of the initial *wh*-clause of pseudoclefts as a free relative is also confirmed by the existence of the “generic head” pseudocleft type, in which the initial clause is a full relative headed by a generic noun (cf. (8-9) above, repeated here as (47-48)):

- (47) *What I gave John is a book* (subject = free (i.e., headless) relative)  
 (48) *The thing I gave John is a book* (subject = relative headed by a generic noun)

It is also important to notice that the analysis of the initial *wh*-clause of pseudoclefts in terms of a *wh*-question is challenged by the impossibility of forming pseudoclefts introduced by questions of a different kind (i.e., yes-no questions). As the following examples show, while yes-no questions are allowed to appear as the subject of predication copular sentences like (49), they are totally excluded in pseudoclefts (cf. (50)):

- (49) *Whether Tom offered Sue a sherry is unknown* (predicational copular sentence)  
 (50) \* *Whether Tom offered Sue a sherry is yes/he did* (pseudocleft)

A final property that is worth noticing is that Focus is not subject to the restrictions imposed on operator-movement in the languages using the cleft-like strategy. This shows that Focus is not merged in argument position within the relative clause. Consider for instance the absence of island effects in Yoruba (Manfredi 2004) and of Weak Cross Over in Igbo (Manfredi 2006) and Somali (Svolacchia & Puglielli 1999):

- (51) *FILA ni won bèèrè pe [boya mo rà]* (YORUBA)  
 hat COP 3PL ask say whether 1SG buy  
 ‘They ask whether I bought a HAT’  
 (52) *Ó bù ÓNYE<sub>k</sub> ahù ka ñne yá<sub>k</sub> hù-ru n’ányá* (IGBO)  
 3SG COP person DEM that mother 3SG.GEN see-CL at.eye  
 ‘That’s THE PERSON<sub>k</sub> that his<sub>k</sub>/her<sub>k</sub> mother loves’  
 (53) *CAL<sub>k</sub> bay hooya-diis<sub>k</sub> jeceshahay* (SOMALI)  
 Cali FM.SCL.3SGF mother-his<sub>k</sub> love.3SGF  
 ‘His<sub>k</sub> mother loves CAL<sub>k</sub>’

### 3.2 *Specificational (pseudo)cleft sentences are not “inverse” structures: syntactic properties*

According to the present proposal, (pseudo)cleft constructions can be classified as “specificational copular sentences” (cf. section 2). In this picture, the relative clause of clefts contains what is essentially a semantic variable, a semantic ‘gap’, which must be specified (‘filled’) by the Focus item; in the case of pseudoclefts, the *wh*-NP heading the relative clause functions as a variable ranging over given semantic roles.

As for derivational aspects, we argue that word order in (at least) this type of specificational sentences is *not* derived via inversion of the underlying subject-predicate order, contrary to most influential works (cf., among others, Blom & Daalder 1977, Higgins 1979, Williams 1983, Heggie 1988, 1993, Moro 1997 and, recently, Belletti 2005; see also Den Dikken 2001 for a detailed survey on this topic). This means that, in a sentence like *the culprit is JOHN*, the focused NP *John* is not the subject, but the predicate of the relevant construction (see also section 3.3); its final position is due to topicalization of the subject DP *the culprit* (for details, see section 5).

As a matter of fact, the traditional analysis can hardly account for the cross-linguistic data exposed in section 3.1 and suffers from a number of semantic shortcomings, which will be addressed in section 3.3. In this section, we concentrate on a number of well known phenomena that characterize cleft constructions and challenge previous analyses. Let us consider *extraction effects* first (Moro 1997, Heycock & Kroch 1999, Den Dikken 2006). As is commonly agreed, extraction is



not allowed from subject DPs. The present proposal therefore predicts that no constituent can be extracted from the relative clause. This prediction is borne out by data. This was shown in fn. 8 for Tagalog and can be supported by English and Italian, as we can see below (from Frascarelli 2000b):

- (54) a. *It is [the photograph of the wall] [that I gave John]*  
 b. *È [la foto del muro] [che ho dato a John]*  
 be.3SG the photograph of.the wall that have.1SG give.PST.PART to John
- (55) a. *What<sub>i</sub> do you think [what I gave John] is [the photograph of t<sub>i</sub>]?\**  
 a'. *Di cosa<sub>i</sub> pensi che [quello che ho dato a John]*  
 of what think.2SG that DEM that have.1SG give.PST.PART to John  
*sia [la foto t<sub>i</sub>]?\**  
 be.CONJ.3SG the photograph  
 b. \* *Who<sub>i</sub> do you think [what I gave to t<sub>i</sub>] is [the photograph of the wall]?\**  
 b'. \* *A chi<sub>i</sub> pensi che [quello che ho dato t<sub>i</sub>] sia*  
 to who think.2SG that DEM that have.1SG give.PST.PART be.CONJ.3SG  
*[la foto del muro]?\**  
 the photograph of.the wall

As we can see, while it is not possible to extract material from within the relative clause (cf. (55b-b')), extraction from the focused NP is fully grammatical (cf. (55a-a')). This can be explained if we assume that the latter is a predicate, while the former is merged in subject position.<sup>9</sup>

- (56) *it is* [<sub>SC</sub> [<sub>DP</sub> *what I gave John*] [<sub>NP</sub> *the photograph of the wall*]]

Similarly, if we take into consideration *quantifiers interpretation*, it will be immediately evident that the relative clause cannot be analyzed as the predicate of a cleft construction: as a matter of fact, a QP therein contained cannot assume scope over the entire sentence (i.e., over the SC as a whole). Consider the following:

- (57) *It is many students that bought every book*

Sentence (57) only admits a narrow scope interpretation of *every*, so that 'many students are such that they bought all the books (included in a list)', while a wide scope interpretation ('every book is such that many students bought them') is excluded. This means that *every* cannot raise over *many* at LF, suggesting that it is not contained in the predicate but in the subject constituent of the relevant SC:

- (58) *it is* [<sub>FocP</sub> *many students<sub>i</sub>*] [<sub>SC</sub> [<sub>DP</sub> [<sub>CP</sub> *that bought every book*]] t<sub>i</sub>]]

Given this merge analysis, the relevant QP cannot be extracted and can only raise to the Spec,CP contained in the relative DP.

The proposed base structure of clefts is also confirmed by the form of tag-questions. For instance, consider the following:

- (59) *It's YOU that/who wants to become a doctor, isn't it/\*aren't you/\*doesn't it/\*don't you?*

<sup>9</sup> It should be observed that the ungrammaticality of the examples (55b-b') could also be ascribed to the (generally acknowledged) impossibility of extraction from within a relative clause. In other words, the unacceptability of these examples does not necessarily indicate the subjecthood of the relative DP. However, the grammaticality of (55a-a') unambiguously shows the predicative nature of the other constituent (i.e., *the photograph of the wall/la foto del muro*); hence, the relative DP cannot itself be taken as a predicate, but is to be analyzed as the subject of the relevant constructions (for further details, see below).

The only tag-question allowed shows that the main verb of the relevant cleft is the copula *is* and its subject is the pronoun *it* (not the clefted phrase *you*). This constitutes a further argument in favour of our proposal that *you* is merged as a predicate.

Let us now turn to one of the most famous (and still unsolved) syntactic problems related to cleft constructions, namely *connectedness* effects between the Focus constituent and the relative verb. In particular, when the clefted NP is (interpreted as) the subject of the subordinate clause, grammatical connectedness (agreement and Case marking) is blocked in languages like English, while it is fully realized in languages like Italian. Consider the following:

- (60) a. *It is ME that/who/Ø goes to America*  
 b. *Sono IO che vado in America*  
 be.1SG 1SG.NOM that go.1SG to America  
 b'. \**È ME che va in America*  
 be.3SG 1SG.ACC that go.3SG to America
- (61) a. *It is not ME that always looks at himself in the mirror*  
 b. *Non sono IO che mi guardo sempre allo specchio*  
 NEG be.1SG 1SG.NOM that 1SG.RIFL look.1SG always to.the mirror  
 b'. \**Non è ME che si guarda sempre allo specchio*  
 NEG be.3SG 1SG.ACC that 3SG.RIFL look.3SG always to.the mirror
- (62) a. *Was it YOU that held his breath for five minutes?*  
 b. *Sei stato TU che hai trattenuto il respiro per cinque minuti?*  
 be.2SG been 2SG.NOM that have.2SG hold.PST.PART the breath for five minutes  
 b'. \**È stato TE che ha trattenuto il respiro per cinque minuti?*  
 be.3SG been 2SG.ACC that have.3SG hold.PST.PART the breath for five minutes

The (a) sentences illustrate the lack of syntactic connectedness in English as far as verb agreement (60-61), reflexive binding (61) and pronoun binding in idiom chunks (62) are concerned. Italian translations (cf. examples (b-b')) show, on the other hand, an opposite behavior. In particular, English copulas always agree with the subject *it*, the Focus constituent is marked with ACC Case and the relative verb invariably shows 3rd person agreement (also determining 3rd person reflexive binding). In Italian, on the other hand, the focused NP shows NOM Case and determines agreement *both* with the relative verb *and* the matrix copula.

The present analysis can provide an explanation for these (opposing) syntactic properties. Let us consider the derivation of a sentence like (60a):<sup>10</sup>

- (63) *it is* [<sub>FocP</sub> *ME*<sub>k</sub> [<sub>SC</sub> [<sub>DP</sub> [<sub>SC</sub> [<sub>NP</sub> *pro*] [<sub>CP</sub> *OP*<sub>i</sub> [<sub>C'</sub> (*that*) [<sub>IP</sub> [<sub>e</sub>]<sub>i</sub> *goes to America*]]]]] *t*<sub>k</sub>]]

As we can see, given this structure 3rd person agreement (and reflexive binding) is due to the presence of an empty category (the variable [<sub>e</sub>]) in subject position, while ACC Case can be plausibly ascribed to the predicative role of the relevant NP. Indeed, NOM is a structural Case, requiring a specific configuration for its assignment (which is not realized here), while ACC Case is widely associated with nominal predicates. Consider for instance the following contrast offered by German (from Iatridou & Varlokosta 1998):

<sup>10</sup> As is shown in (63), we assume Den Dikken & Singhapreecha's (2004) analysis of relative clauses, according to which the relative head constitutes the subject of a DP-internal SC hosting the relative CP as its predicate. It is important to notice that under this analysis, the relative head (i.e., the NP *pro* in (63)) is not part of the operator-variable chain established within the relative CP (*contra* Kayne 1994); rather, the relative head and the variable are merged as independent syntactic objects and their interpretation is due to a mechanism of semantic composition after the raising of relative operator to Spec,CP. For the interpretation of the *pro* heading the relative DP, see section 5.1 below.

- (64) *Was Hans essen wollte war einen Apfel* (specificational)  
 what Hans eat want.PST.3SG be.PST.3SG a.ACC apple  
 ‘What Hans wanted to eat was an apple’ (specificational reading)
- (65) *Was Hans essen wollte war ein Apfel* (predicational)  
 what Hans eat want.PST.3SG be.PST.3SG a.NOM apple  
 ‘What Hans wanted to eat was an apple’ (predicational reading)

Moreover, the cross-linguistic association between ACC Case and Focus can be also ascribed to a prosodic requirement: as Focus is the most prominent element in the sentence, it must be realized as a ‘strong’ NP. It is therefore feasible to conclude that, in the case of English, NOM pronominal forms (typically ‘weak’, cf. Cardinaletti & Starke 1999) are avoided and ACC preferred.<sup>11</sup> Similarly, in the case of German, ACC pronouns are preferred because bisyllabic, hence with a more appropriate phonological structure to bear the main prominence of the sentence (cf. also Starke 1995: fn. 32 for similar conclusions). This prosodic requirement can be of course interpreted in the light of an interplay between syntax and phonology. This issue will be addressed later on in this paper (see sections 5.1-5.2), where we will also deal with connectedness in Italian and the contrast offered with English.

### 3.3 (Pseudo)cleft sentences: the semantic perspective

In a number of works, (pseudo)clefts are analyzed as copular sentences composed of a relative clause and a nominal expression representing the Focus of assertion. According to the general (traditional) view (Gazdar 1979, Delahunty 1982, Klein & Sag 1985, Hedberg 1990), the relative clause corresponds to the (logical) predicate (type  $\langle e, t \rangle$ ) of the relevant copular sentence, while the (to-be-focused) referential term is the subject (type  $\langle e \rangle$ ). In this perspective, a cleft sentence like (66a) is semantically analyzed as (66b):

- (66) a. *It was John that Mary kissed*  
 b.  $\lambda x.kissed'(Mary, x) (John)$ <sup>12</sup>  
            $\langle e, t \rangle$                        $\langle e \rangle$

Here the denotation “John” is an individual, while the denotation of the relative clause is the function  $\lambda x.kissed'(x)$ , that is to say, the function that, applied to an individual, obtains a truth value iff the relevant individual (John, in this case) has the property of having been kissed by Mary.

In semantic terms, the  $\langle e, t \rangle$  function is a set. The truth conditions expressed by the formula in (66b) can be therefore restated saying that the relevant sentence is true if the individual denoted as “John” belongs to the set of individuals who have the property of having been kissed by Mary.

<sup>11</sup> Since it is a prosodic requirement, it is not compulsory for interpretation and admits exceptions. This is the case, for instance, of non-standard varieties of English (cf. also Akmajian 1970: 107-ff.), in which NOM pronouns can be evidently pronounced with a strong accent and, therefore, be stressed. Consider for instance the following sentences, taken from the Daily Telegraph “readers’ opinion” section (January 4th, 2007):

(i) *I dwell on Mrs Beckett because it is SHE we have to thank for the farming fiasco!*

(ii) *Sadly, it is WE, the general population, not these leaders, who are left vulnerable by their continue recklessness...*

This possibility is however expected if we consider that non-standard varieties of English also allow NOM pronouns in the predicative position of non-cleft copular sentences (Peter Douglas, p.c.):

(iii) Q. *Who is knocking at the door/talking/leaving?*

A. *It’s HER / It’s SHE*

On this point, see also Brook (1958: 152): “One of the most frequently discussed problems is whether to say *It is I* or *It is me*. The latter expression gained ground so quickly that it is now the usual idiom, especially in colloquial speech. [...] the form *It is I* [...] is still regarded by many speakers as the correct form”.

<sup>12</sup> Notice that, according to Gazdar (cited in Atlas & Levinson 1981: 17), pseudoclefts have the same semantic analysis. Hence, a cleft like (66a) parallels the following pseudocleft:

(i) *What Mary kissed was John*

Hence, on a purely semantic level, this analysis renders the cleft in (66a) totally equivalent to a simple sentence like (67):

(67) *Mary kissed John*

The semantic representation offered by Gazdar and others, however, fails to make the semantic and pragmatic data cohere. Several problems can be outlined.

First of all, the *exhaustiveness effect* is hard to explain in this approach. As a matter of fact, Focus in cleft sentences entails an exhaustive reading (cf., among others, Halvorsen 1978,<sup>13</sup> Kiss 1999), which is not implied in simple sentences like (67). In other words, the cleft in (66a) implicates (68), differently from (67):

(68) *There is only one person that Mary kissed*

This is also shown by the fact that (69a) is acceptable, while (69b) is infelicitous:

- (69) a. *Mary kissed John, among others*  
b. *??It was John that Mary kissed, among others*

A second problem concerns *presuppositional behavior* (see Atlas & Levinson 1981). Indeed, sentences (66a) and (67) both share the meaning stated in (70). However, the cleft in (66a) preserves the inference in (70) under denial (71a) and questioning (71b), while this is not the case for (67):

- (70) *Mary kissed someone*  
(71) a. *It wasn't John that Mary kissed*  
b. *Was it John that Mary kissed?*

More specifically, sentence (72b) has the same truth conditions as (72a), but only (72b) presupposes (72c) and (72d):

- (72) a. *Mary did not kiss John*  
b. *It wasn't John that Mary kissed*  
c. *Mary kissed someone*  
d. *There is one only person that Mary kissed*

Analogously, the truth value of (73b) is the same as (73a), but only (73b) presupposes (73c) and (73d):

- (73) a. *Did Mary kiss John?*  
b. *Was it John that Mary kissed?*  
c. *Mary kissed someone*  
d. *There is one only person that Mary kissed*

A semantic theory of clefts must account for these entailments in a coherent way. This means that sentences (66a) and (67) must have different logical forms.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Halvorsen (1978) formulates exhaustiveness in terms of “uniqueness”. In line with Atlas & Levinson (1981: 26-ff.) we reject this conclusion.

<sup>14</sup> “Logical primitivism would take the familiar claim that [(66a)] and [(67)] have the same truth conditions to imply (fallaciously) that [(66a)] and [(67)] have the same logical form” (Atlas & Levinson 1981: 50).

Sentence (66a) – repeated below – is “about” the person that Mary kissed, which is then specified as John:

- (66) a. *It was John that Mary kissed*

Hence, in line with Atlas & Levinson (1981: 52-ff.), we assume, as a first step, that sentence (66a) involves a  $\lambda$ -abstraction (Carnap 1958: 129-131) to formulate a complex one-place predicate-symbol and a “collection operator”  $\gamma$  to formulate a singular term ( $\gamma$  yields the set of individuals for whom the relevant function obtains a truth value). Formulation (74a) can be therefore paraphrased as in (74b):

- (74) a.  $\lambda x (x = \text{John}) (\gamma x \text{ kissed' (Mary, } x))$   
 b. the set of individuals kissed by Mary is identical to John

Then, following Partee’s (2002 [1987]) influential proposal, we substitute the “collection operator”  $\gamma$  with the  $\iota$ -operator. The application of the  $\iota$ -operator to the relative clause obtains the exhaustiveness effect for the type  $\langle e \rangle$  produced: it defines the “maximal individual” having the property of being kissed by Mary, and the assertion is that the relevant individual has the property of being identical to John (see also the MAX operator in Grosu & Landman 1998).<sup>15</sup>

- (75)  $\lambda x (x = \text{John}) (\iota x \text{ kissed' (Mary, } x))$

The semantics of cleft sentences thus implies a ‘type mismatch’<sup>16</sup>, requiring a *type-shifting* operation. Assuming with Partee (2002 [1987]) that each category corresponds to a family of types (rather than just a single type) and that NPs all have basically a quantificational meaning (type  $\langle\langle e, t \rangle, t \rangle$ ), we propose that the denotation of the NP *John* has shifted to type  $\langle e, t \rangle$ , yielding the function that is characteristic of the individuals who have the property of being identical to the individual named John (i.e., the IDENT type-shifting rule in Partee 2002 [1987]: 363). On the other hand, the relative clause has shifted to type  $\langle e \rangle$  through the  $\iota$ -operator.

This means that there is an important difference between (76a) on the one hand and (76b-c) on the other:

- (76) a. *Mary is intelligent*  
 b. *MARY is intelligent*  
 c. *It is MARY that is intelligent*

(76a) is a predication sentence (i.e., a categorical judgment in Kuroda’s 1972 terms) composed by two separate acts: the recognition of *Mary* as the subject and the act of affirming what is expressed by the predicate about the subject. On the other hand, in (76b-c) *Mary* is not the subject of a categorical judgment and the predicate has an NP-like denotation; in other words, (76b-c) imply the recognition of [someone who is intelligent] as the subject of the predication realized by *Mary*, which specifies the entity having such a property. In particular, the clefted predicate *Mary* in (76c) is also characterized by exhaustiveness (see above): in other words, besides its optional contrastive interpretation, a cleft construction implies an exclusive reading for the Focus.

The type-shifting proposed is a legitimate operation, accounting for nominal predicates in general (see Partee 2002 [1987]), for the data exposed above and for a number of additional phenomena concerning clefts. Consider, for instance, the restrictions imposed on the syntactic

<sup>15</sup> “At the interpretive stage where the relative clause has become a lambda-abstract, an operator MAX applies to the set defined by abstraction, picking out of it a unique maximal element, if there is one (if there is no such element, MAX is undefined, with ensuing infelicity)” (Grosu 2000: 88).

<sup>16</sup> Specifically, a mismatch between syntactic category (NP) and semantic function (predicate).

categories that can be clefted (excluding AdvPs, NPIs, wh-constituents, ‘non-referential QPs’ and so on). The problem with these constituents is that they cannot be shifted to the  $\langle e, t \rangle$  type (cf. Heggie 1993: 54-ff., Hedberg 2000: fn. 31).

Type-shifting of the (to-be-focused) NP to the  $\langle e, t \rangle$  type is made possible by the predicative structure it is part of. Hence, in line with Partee (2002 [1987]: 363-367), English *be* serves as a *BE* operator, a type-shifting (universal) functor, naturally mapping  $\langle \langle e, t \rangle, t \rangle$  types into  $\langle e, t \rangle$ . *BE* applies to a general quantifier, finds all the singletons therein, and collects their elements into a set.<sup>17</sup> In other words, *BE* only looks at the singletons (“ignoring a lot of structure”); that’s why many NPs cannot occur naturally in predicative position. *Most men*, for instance, will never contain any singletons, so *be most men* will always be empty (on copulas as functors in cleft constructions, see also section 5.3). The role of the copula as a functor is also supported by syntactic evidence, which will be addressed in the following section.

### 3.4 Copula as a ‘grammaticalized functor’: a linker analysis

In line with general assumptions (Stowell 1981, Heggie 1988, Guéron 1992, Den Dikken 1995), we assume that a copula in cleft constructions has no meaning at all: it is a functional element, linking the major constituents of the sentence. It is therefore a LINKER and, as such, devoid of any specific interpretation (see also Adger & Ramchand 2001 for discussion). This is also in line with Partee’s (2002 [1987]) semantic analysis of ‘type-shifting’ operations, which we subscribe for our proposal (see section 3.3).

Through a grammaticalization path, copulas have lost their auxiliary, verb-like role and have developed differently across languages. Some languages have kept its external form, others have merged it with a (3SG) pronoun creating Focus Markers (FMs), others have dropped it, possibly keeping pronominal forms as ‘dividing elements’ between subject and predicative NPs, so as to distinguish predication from specificational sentences (as is the case of Hebrew, cf. Doron 1985). In this perspective, copulas, dividing pronouns and FMs must be simply considered as different expressions of the same linker function.

The grammaticalization path leading from copulas to FMs has been discussed in several works for a number of languages, so that we cannot make full justice of this interesting subject in this paper. We can briefly mention works by Green (1997) and Abdoulaye (2006) on Hausa, Frascarelli & Puglielli (2005a) on Cushitic languages, Migge (2002) on Maroon Creoles, Oréal (2005) on ancient Egyptian and, interestingly, Coppock & Staum (2004) on “double-*is* constructions” in English. In particular, Coppock & Staum (2004) identify the (pseudo)cleft construction as the proper context for a grammaticalization path of copulas into FMs. Indeed, the type of Focus which is marked by a copula-FM “must be selected from a set of alternatives. In a cleft, the set of alternatives is established through the wh-NP. Double-*is* constructions do not have wh-NP topics, so their Topic NPs must be of the type that can establish a set of alternatives without a wh-pronoun: appositional NPs such as *the thing* [...] are capable of establishing a set of alternatives”. That’s why (77) is fine while (78) is not:

- (77) *The thing is, is we’ve got to be strong*  
 (78) \* *My dog is, is a pain in the ass*

Appositional NPs like *thing*, *person*, *place*, etc. are generic, non-referential entities, exactly like the null NP (i.e., the *pro*) heading the free relative clause in the cleft strategy at issue.

One interesting prediction of the analysis of the copula as a linker between the topicalized wh-NP and the Focus is that it can become optional. This is the case of languages like Hausa (from Newman 2000) and English (cf. Coppock & Staum 2004):

<sup>17</sup> Notice that *BE* must not be considered as equal to English *be*. *BE* is a semantic functor “freely applicable to generalized quantifier meanings of NPs to yield predicative meanings for those NPs” (Partee 2002 [1987]: 375), while *be* subcategorizes semantically for an  $\langle e \rangle$  argument and an  $\langle e, t \rangle$  argument, with the meaning “apply predicate”.

- (79) BAAYAN BISHIYÀÀ (*nee*) ya-kée (HAUSA)  
 behind tree FM AUX.3SG-REL.PROG  
 ‘He is BEHIND THE TREE’
- (80) a. *So, what they’re doing, they’re counting for cash*  
 b. *What they did, they usually hired kids to do this*

A number of other phenomena – discussed in the literature – support the linker analysis, as for instance the lack of inflectional marking for phi- and temporal features (see also (18-21) above):

- (81) a. *What you have bought is fake jewels* (ambiguous: specificational/predicational)  
 b. *What you have bought **are** fake jewels* (unambiguous: only predicational)  
 c. *What you have bought **were** fake jewels* (unambiguous: only predicational)  
 d. *What you have bought **will be** fake jewels* (unambiguous: only predicational)

## 4. The (pseudo)cleft constructions as a Topic-Comment strategy

### 4.1 The information packaging in (pseudo)clefts

As is well known, (pseudo)cleft structures are present in many typologically and genetically diverse languages as a Focus strategy (see section 3.1). However, the present work argues that these constructions are not limited to a focusing function but also establish a Topic-Comment structure. Specifically, some evidence will be provided showing that the relative DP is dislocated in both constructions, thus constituting a right-hand Topic in clefts and a left-hand Topic in pseudoclefts. The present section is dedicated to illustrate the information-structural role of (pseudo)cleft constituents, therefore presenting the information packaging in the relevant sentence types. Our proposal will be shown to be supported by intonation (cf. section 6), as well as by a number of syntactic properties (illustrated in section 5).

Let us first concentrate on the information-structural interpretation of pseudocleft constituents. It has often been observed that the *wh*-clause introducing these constructions encodes given information. As a matter of fact, a pseudocleft sentence like (2), repeated here as (82), is only appropriate in contexts in which the fact that the speaker gave something to John is presupposed:

- (82) *What I gave John is a book*

However, given our assumption that the relative clause is subject to a type-shifting operation that makes it denote an individual (see section 3.3), we suggest that the information encoded by the *wh*-clause is to be analyzed as an *existential presupposition* (on this point, cf. also Collins 1991: 71-ff.): in other words, what is presupposed in a sentence like (82) is the *existence* of an *individual* such that I gave it to John. Since its existence is presupposed, it seems plausible to argue that the whole relative DP in (82) constitutes a Topic.

Notice that a similar analysis is suggested in Prince (1978: 887), who argues that “[i]f we compare the logico-semantic notion of presupposition with the discourse notion of known/old/given information, we find that, in the case of the [pseudocleft], they seem to match quite closely”.

Turning now to cleft structures, we propose that the *wh/that*-clause encodes a presupposition of existence in much the same way as in the case of pseudoclefts, as the relative DP is subject to the same type-shifting operation (through the *t*-operator; see section 3.3) in both constructions. However, its different position suggests that it does not have exactly the same function in the two sentence types. In this respect, consider Prince’s (1978: 896) words about the interpretation of the relative DP in the relevant structures: “The difference [between clefts and pseudoclefts] lies in the communicative value of the presupposition. In the [pseudocleft] [...] the *WH*-clause represents what the speaker is assuming the hearer is or can be thinking about; as such, it may be seen as the *THEME*

of that particular stretch of discourse. In the [cleft], the *that*-clause represents known or old information, which is not marked as assumed to be in the hearer's consciousness and which is not the theme".

It thus seems that the relative DP constitutes a topical element both in clefts and pseudoclefts, and that its realization in different positions (i.e., as a right-hand Topic and a left-hand Topic, respectively) is related to a slightly different interpretation in the two cases. Specifically, following Frascarelli & Hinterhölzl (henceforth, F&H, 2007), we propose that they are different types of Topics. According to the authors, at least three types of Topics can be distinguished on the basis of their discourse role and grammatical (i.e., phonological and syntactic) properties, as is briefly illustrated below (cf. F&H 2007: 88):

- (83) a. *Aboutness[-shift] Topic*:  
 "what the sentence is about" (Reinhart 1981, Lambrecht 1994); in particular a constituent that is "newly introduced, newly changed or newly returned to" (Givón 1983: 8), a constituent which is proposed as "a matter of standing and current interest or concern" (Strawson 1964);
- b. *Contrastive Topic*:  
 an element that induces alternatives which have no impact on the focus value and creates oppositional pairs with respect to other Topics (Kuno 1976, Büring 1999);
- c. *Familiar Topic*:  
 a given or accessible (cf. Chafe 1987) constituent, which is typically distressed and realized in a pronominal form (Pesetsky 1987); when a familiar Topic is textually given and d-linked with a pre-established aboutness[-shift] topic, it is defined as a *continuing Topic* (cf. Givón 1983).

Given the specific interpretation that the relative DP receives in the two constructions, we propose that it can qualify as any type of left-hand Topic in pseudoclefts (its specific nature depending on discourse grammar), whereas the right-hand dislocated *wh/that*-clause of clefts constitutes a Familiar Topic (in F&H 2007, this is the only one admitted as a right-hand Topic).

Interestingly, an analysis of clefts as the right-dislocation counterpart of pseudoclefts has already been proposed in Gundel (1977, 1985), according to which "cleft sentences [like *It was an explosion that you heard*] are reduced forms of structures underlying right-dislocated pseudoclefts like [*It was an explosion, what you heard*], where the pronoun in the main sentence is a copy of the right-dislocated NP" (from Gundel 1977: 543). Under this view, "*it* [in clefts] is not empty at all, but is a pronominal reference to the topic of the sentence". We will resume this topic in section 4.2, also discussing syntactic evidence for this dislocation analysis.

As far as the interpretation of the clefted phrase is concerned, it is the undisputed Focus of the sentence. In some languages (e.g., Somali, Tagalog, Tigrinya, Ingbo) it is interpreted as an *information* Focus (though a contrastive interpretation is not excluded and can be obtained by means of a specific intonation), whereas in others (e.g., Italian, English, Basque) a contrastive reading is normally induced. However, it should be noticed that, even in languages of the latter type, clefts can be used as answers to *wh*-questions (hence, encoding new – not contrastive – information). As observed in Belletti (2008), in this case clefts are normally realized in a reduced form and constitute "the preferred option when either a cleft is contained in the question [...] or else with agentive predicates expressing a somewhat negative presupposition".<sup>18</sup> This is illustrated in (84-85) for Italian:

- (84) Q. *Chi è (stato) che ha rotto il vaso?*  
 who be.3SG be.PST.PART that have.3SG break.PST.PART the vase  
 'Who is it that broke the vase?'
- A. *È (stato) GIANNI*  
 be.3SG be.PST.PART Gianni  
 'It is (has been) GIANNI'

<sup>18</sup> On the possibility for clefts to be used as answers to cleft-questions in Italian, see also Belletti (2005: § 3.2).



- (85) Q. *Chi ha urlato?*  
           who have.3SG scream.PST.PART  
           ‘Who screamed?’  
   A. *È stato GIANNI*  
       be.3SG be.PST.PART Gianni  
       ‘It has been GIANNI’

Given the exhaustiveness effect associated with clefts (cf. section 3.3), an answer like (85A) differs from the corresponding (non-cleft) Focus construction (namely, *L’ha fatto GIANNI* ‘GIANNI did it’) in that the former implies that there is only one person who screamed; hence, in a cleft sentence like (85A) any individual other than Gianni is excluded from being the one (or among the ones) who screamed (cf. the notion of “exclusion by identification” in Kiss 1998), which makes this structure different from its non-cleft counterpart.

These examples show that the traditional observation that in languages like Italian, clefts can only encode contrastive Focus is not correct: clefted phrases can also be interpreted as information Foci, with an exhaustive reading which can, but not need, be associated with contrast.

#### 4.2 *The relative DP as a dislocated constituent: syntactic evidence*

As shown above, cleft and pseudocleft constructions are used as Focus strategies: they share the same communicative function, that is the focalization of the postcopular element (cf. Salvi 1991: 177), namely *a book* in (1-2), repeated here as (86-87):

- (86) *It is a book that I gave John*           (cleft)  
 (87) *What I gave John is a book*           (pseudocleft)

Moreover, according to our proposal, the relative DP constitutes a Topic, namely a dislocated constituents, in both types of structures.

The topical status of the *wh*-clause in pseudoclefts (cf. (87)) has been suggested in several analyses, either on discourse and/or on syntactic grounds (cf. Gundel 1977, 1985, Prince 1978, Collins 1991, Frascarelli 2000b, Den Dikken et al. 2000, Den Dikken 2005). What seems to be more problematic is the hypothesis that the *that*-clause of clefts (cf. (86)) represents a right-hand Topic.<sup>19</sup> The present section is dedicated to an illustration of some syntactic arguments in favour of this hypothesis.

A piece of evidence for the dislocation of the *that*-clause in clefts lies in the possibility to realize right-dislocated adverbial constituents (e.g., *alla fine* ‘in the end’ in (88)) between the Focus and the *that*-clause itself:

- (88) *Sono io, alla fine, che parto*  
       be.1SG 1SG.NOM at.the end that leave.1SG  
       ‘It’s ME, in the end, that leaves’

If the adverbial PP *alla fine* in (88) is analyzed as a right-dislocated constituent, the *that*-clause following it cannot be embedded in a clause-internal position; rather, it can only constitute a right-hand Topic.

Furthermore, the topical nature of the relevant *that*-clause is also suggested by deletion possibilities. In this respect, consider the following data from Brazilian Portuguese, drawn from Belletti (2008: § 3) (for Italian, see (84-85) above):

<sup>19</sup> However, there is no lack of previous accounts of clefts as involving right-dislocation of the relative DP: see, for instance, Jespersen (1927), Akmajian (1970), Emonds (1976), Gundel (1977, 1985), Hedberg (2000).

(89) (Question: *Who spoke?*)

Types of (pseudo)cleft answers:

- a. *Foi UM RAPAZ que falou*  
be.PST.3SG a boy that speak.PST.3SG
- b. *Foi UM RAPAZ*  
be.PST.3SG a boy
- c. *UM RAPAZ que falou*  
a boy that speak.PST.3SG
- d. *Quem falou foi um rapaz* (pseudocleft)  
who speak.PST.3SG be.PST.3SG a boy

As these examples show, the relevant question can be answered by various types of (pseudo)cleft structures. In addition to the full cleft in (89a) (or the full pseudocleft in (89d)), two deletion possibilities are illustrated in (89b) and (89c): the former involves the deletion of the *that*-clause, which is thus proved to encode given information, and as such can be omitted (as is generally the case of dislocated constituents); on the other hand, the possibility for the copula *foi* to be elided in (89c) confirms our hypothesis that it is a functional head (not dominated by the whole functional structure projected by (lexical) verbs) (see section 3.4).

Assuming that the relative DP is right-dislocated in cleft constructions implies that the initial *it* is not an expletive pronoun (as is generally acknowledged).<sup>20</sup> Rather, it should be analyzed as a non-expletive pronoun, which is coreferent with the right-hand Topic. Strong evidence for the nature of *it* as “a pronominal reference to the Topic at the end of the sentence” is provided in Gundel (1977: § 4). The author discusses some data from Russian, showing that the pronoun introducing clefts in this language (i.e., *èto* ‘it/that’) is the same used in right-hand Topic constructions (compare (90) and (91)); in this respect, it differs from the (null) dummy subject selected by impersonal and weather verbs (cf. (92)):

- (90) a. *Èto IVANA ja videl*  
3SGN Ivan.ACC 1SG.NOM see.PST.1SG  
‘It was IVAN I saw’
- b. *Èto IVAN kogo ja videl*  
3SGN Ivan.NOM who.ACC 1SG.NOM see.PST.1SG  
‘It was IVAN whom I saw’
- (91) a. *Èto ne (byl) IVAN, tot kto zvonil*  
3SGN NEG be.3SGN Ivan.NOM that.one who.NOM call.PST.3SGM  
‘It/That wasn’t IVAN, the one who called’
- b. *Èto ne ARXANGEL’SKIJ SOBOR, tot kotoryj sgorel*  
3SGN NEG Arkhangelsk cathedral that.one which.M.NOM burn.down.PST.3SGM  
‘It/That wasn’t the ARKHANGELSK CATHEDRAL, the one that burned down’
- (92) a. *(\*Èto) morozit*<sup>21</sup>  
3SGN freeze.3SG  
‘It’s freezing’
- b. *(\*Èto) kažetsja čto on ušel*  
3SGN seem.3SG that 3SGM leave.PST.3SGM  
‘It seems that he left’

Furthermore, it should be observed that a similar pattern can be found in other languages as well: as illustrated below, many languages require (or, at least, allow) the initial pronoun of clefts to

<sup>20</sup> However, this analysis has also been discussed in the literature: see, for instance, Gundel (1977), Hedberg (2000), Rialland et al. (2002), Belletti (2008).

<sup>21</sup> Of course, the realization of *èto* in (92) yields an acceptable sentence if the relevant pronoun is interpreted as referential.

be formally identical to a referential pronoun, thus differing from the dummy (i.e., expletive) subject of impersonal and weather verbs (cf. Hedberg 2000, Rialland et al. 2002, Belletti 2008).

- (93) English (Hedberg 2000: 892):
- It/\*this/\*that seems to me that you're wrong*
  - It/\*this/\*that is snowing*
  - It/this/that was JOHN that I saw*
  - It/this/that's not true*
- (94) German (Hedberg 2000: 893):
- Es / ?das kommt mir so vor, als ob du unrecht hast*  
3SGN/that seem.3SG 1SG.DAT so PREF<sup>22</sup> as if 2SG wrong have.2SG  
'It seems to me that you're wrong'
  - Es / ?das schneit*  
3SGN/that snow.3SG  
'It's snowing'
  - ?Es / das war JOHN, den ich gesehen habe*  
3SGN/that be.PST.3SG John who.ACC 1SG see.PST.PART have.1SG  
'It was JOHN that I saw'
  - ?Es / das ist nicht wahr*  
3SGN/that be.3SG NEG true  
'It isn't true'
- (95) French (Hedberg 2000: 893):<sup>23</sup>
- Il / ?ce / ??cela me semble que tu as tort*  
3SGM/DEM 1SG.DAT seem.3SG that 2SG have.2SG wrong  
'It seems to me that you're wrong'
  - Il / \*ce / ?ça neige*  
3SGM/DEM snow.3SG  
'It's snowing'
  - \*Il / c' est JOHN que j' ai vu*  
3SGM/DEM be.3SG John that 1SG have.1SG see.PST.PART  
'It's JOHN that I saw'
  - \*Il / ce n' est pas vrai*  
3SGM/DEM NEG be.3SG NEG true  
'It isn't true'

Finally, notice that the referential nature of the cleft pronoun, as well as its coreference with a topical element (which can be either overtly realized or elided), can also be observed in Japanese, where the relevant pronoun is marked with the Topic Marker *wa* (cf. Belletti 2008: § 1):

- (96) Q. *Dare-kara denwa-ga kakatte kita no*  
who-from phone-NOM being.made come.PST Q  
'Who called?' (lit. 'From whom was the phone made?')
- A. *(Sore-wa) HANS-KARA (desu)*  
DEM.ANAPH-TOP Hans-from COP  
'It's FROM HANS'
- (97) Q. *Kinoo dare-ga dete itta no*  
yesterday who-NOM go.out go.PST Q  
'Who left yesterday?'

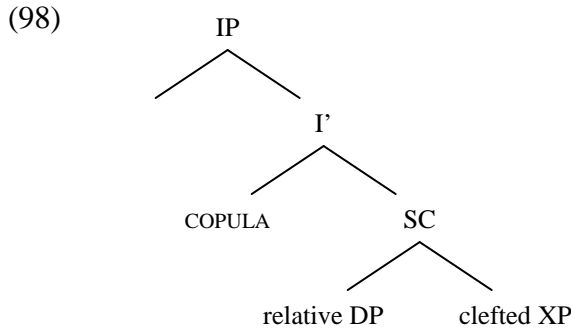
<sup>22</sup> *Vor* is a separable prefix of the verb *vorkommen*.

<sup>23</sup> The analysis of *ce* as a referential pronoun in French clefts is also suggested in Rialland et al. (2002: 3): on the basis of a prosodic analysis, the relevant pronoun is claimed to refer to the relative clause realizing the coda.

- A. (*Sore-wa*)      *MARY* (*desu*)  
 DEM.ANAPH-TOP Mary COP  
 ‘It’s MARY’

## 5. Derivation

In the previous sections, the clefted phrase of (pseudo)cleft sentences has been shown to have a number of properties suggesting its analysis as the main predicate of a copular construction. Furthermore, we have observed that, contrary to the traditional view, the relative DP should be taken as a dislocated constituent (specifically, as a right-hand Topic in clefts and a left-hand Topic in pseudoclefts), which is merged as (or connected with) the subject<sup>24</sup> within a SC structure. Given these observations, we therefore assume the following base structure for (pseudo)clefts:



It can be observed that the structure in (98) corresponds to the configuration that is generally assumed for copular sentences. Given the specificity requirement on the clefted constituent (cf. fn. 3), the interpretation of (pseudo)clefts as specificational copular sentences directly follows from the properties of their constituents (see the semantic analysis in section 3.3) and from their merge configuration.

We will first (section 5.1) consider how cleft constructions are derived from the structure given in (98); then pseudoclefts will be considered (section 5.2), showing that the present analysis can account for a number of similarities and asymmetries between the two sentence types. Our proposal will mainly concentrate on data from a pro-drop language like Italian; however, comparative data will also be discussed, in order to prove the validity of our arguments in a cross-linguistic perspective.

### 5.1 Clefts

As far as Italian is concerned, when the clefted constituent is interpreted as the object of the relative verb (see fn. 30 for some details), two agreement patterns are available, as illustrated in (99):

- (99) a. *È*      *ME*      *che*   *pro*   *hai*      *visto*  
 be.3SG   1SG.ACC   that   have.2SG   see.PST.PART  
 ‘It is ME that you saw’  
 b. *Sono*   *IO*      *che*   *pro*   *hai*      *visto*  
 be.1SG   1SG.NOM   that   have.2SG   see.PST.PART  
 ‘id.’

These examples show that a non-3rd person clefted phrase can be marked either with the ACC (cf. (99a)) or the NOM Case (cf. (99b)); in the former case, the copula shows a default 3SG agreement,

<sup>24</sup> As will be shown below, the relative DP can either be merged as the subject or else be generated in an extrasentential position (i.e., in the left periphery of the clause); in the latter case, it is interpreted as coreferent with the structural subject, with which it establishes an Agree relation.

whereas in the latter it agrees with the clefted constituent. We would like to show that these agreement and Case marking possibilities are to be related to the Null Subject parameter, as well as to the existence of two types of derivation for right-hand Topics in Italian.

First of all, let us concentrate on the derivation we propose for the sentence in (99a). In section 4.2 it has been proposed that the relative DP of clefts is to be analyzed as a right-hand Topic. In particular, in an approach distinguishing different types of Topics, each related to a specific interpretation and phonological realization (cf. F&H's 2007 proposal in section 4.1), the relevant constituent has been analyzed as a Familiar Topic.

In order to illustrate the derivation of the cleft in (99a), it is necessary to consider the structure we assume for the left-periphery of the clause. On the basis of Frascarelli's (2005) and F&H's (2007) analyses of Focus and Topic constructions, we propose the following hierarchy of functional projections in the CP-system (the asterisk indicates recursivity):

$$(100) \quad [\text{ShiftP} [\text{GP} [\text{ContrP} [\text{FocP} [\text{FamP}^* [\text{IP}]]]]]]$$

In particular, as far as the derivation of right-hand Topics is concerned, the present work assumes that they are “merged in the left periphery of the sentence and that their right-peripheral position is derived through IP-inversion” (from F&H 2007: 99; cf. also Frascarelli 2004b). In other words, right-hand Topics are located in Spec,FamP (much like left-hand Familiar Topics) and are crossed by IP raising to Spec,GP (Ground Phrase; cf. Poletto & Pollock 2004):

$$(101) \quad [\text{ShiftP} [\text{GP} [\text{IP} \dots \text{pron}/t_k \dots] [\text{ContrP} [\text{FocP} [\text{FamP} \text{Topic}_k t_{\text{IP}}]]]]]$$

Turning now to the cleft in (99a), our proposal is that, starting from the base structure illustrated in (98) above, the relative DP firstly raises to Spec,IP (where it agrees with the copula<sup>25</sup> through a Spec-Head configuration) and is then attracted to Spec,FamP, where it can receive its interpretation as a Familiar Topic:<sup>26</sup>

$$(102) \quad [\text{FamP} [\text{DP} [\text{SC} [\text{NP} \text{pro}] [\text{CP} \text{che pro hai visto}]]] [\text{IP} t'_{\text{DP}} \grave{e} [\text{SC} t_{\text{DP}} [\text{NP} \text{me}]]]]]$$

At this stage of the derivation, the predicate *me* is attracted to a higher position in order to be interpreted as a Focus: specifically, it moves either to Spec,FocP or Spec,ContrP, depending on whether it acts as an *information* or a *contrastive* Focus, respectively. For the sake of simplicity, in the following structures the relevant projection hosting the clefted phrase is uniformly indicated as FocP:

$$(103) \quad [\text{FocP} [\text{NP} \text{ME}] [\text{FamP} [\text{DP} [\text{SC} [\text{NP} \text{pro}] [\text{CP} \text{che pro hai visto}]]] [\text{IP} t'_{\text{DP}} \grave{e} [\text{SC} t_{\text{DP}} t_{\text{NP}}]]]]]$$

Before illustrating the last part of the derivation we propose for cleft sentences, it is important to pay attention to the type of movement the Focus is subject to and to its trigger. As should be clear from the discussion above, we assume A'-movement for Focus in the left periphery of the clause and the trigger for this operation is related to the interpretation of discourse-grammar features (as is

<sup>25</sup> For the sake of simplicity, we indicate the functional projection containing the copula as IP. However, given the analysis provided for copulas in (pseudo)cleft constructions (cf. section 3.4), the functional structure of this IP projection should be conceived as reduced. The extent of the relevant reduction is dependent on the degree of grammaticalization reached by the copula (cf. section 5.3).

<sup>26</sup> For the sake of simplicity, in (102) and in the following structures, the indication of the operator and the variable within the relative CP will be omitted.

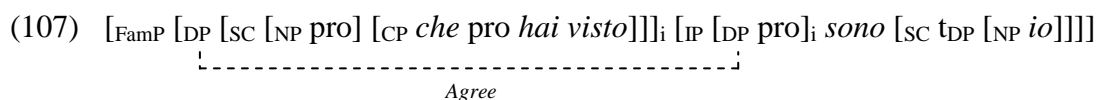
commonly agreed in a cartographic approach; cf. Rizzi 1997 and subsequent works). Hence, Focus moves to Spec,FocP to check the [+foc] feature. This movement cannot be connected with Case assignment (contra Belletti 1988), because a Focus does not need Case and is in fact marked with the default Case marking available in the language (cf. also Guéron 1992, Kayne 1994).

- (104)  $[_{\text{FocP}} [_{\text{NP}} ME] [_{\text{FamP}} [_{\text{DP}} [_{\text{SC}} [_{\text{NP}} \text{pro}] [_{\text{CP}} \text{che pro hai visto}]]] [_{\text{IP}} \text{t}'_{\text{DP}} \text{è} [_{\text{SC}} \text{t}_{\text{DP}} \text{t}_{\text{NP}}]]]]]$   
└──────────────────┘  
Agree (phi-features)

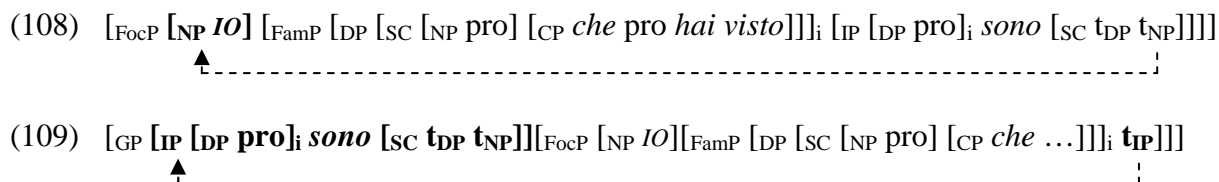
- (105)  $[_{GP} [_{IP} \mathbf{t}_{DP} \textit{è} [_{SC} \mathbf{t}_{DP} \mathbf{t}_{NP}] ] [_{FocP} [_{NP} \textit{ME}] ] [_{FamP} [_{DP} [_{SC} [_{NP} \textit{pro}] ] [_{CP} \textit{che pro hai visto}]]] ] \mathbf{t}_{IP}]]]$

Notice that this proposal is perfectly in line with F&H's (2007) analysis of right-hand Familiar Topics. As a matter of fact, the authors provide strong evidence for Topics of this kind to allow two different derivations in Italian: on the one hand, they can be merged in a clause-internal position and then be attracted to Spec,FamP in order to receive their topical interpretation; on the other, they can be directly generated in Spec,FamP and resumed by a (overt or null) pronoun internal to IP.

- (106) a. [<sub>SC</sub> [<sub>DP</sub> pro] [<sub>NP</sub> io]]  
           └───┬───┘  
               NOM  
               1SG
- b. [<sub>IP</sub> [<sub>DP</sub> pro] sono [<sub>SC</sub> t<sub>DP</sub> [<sub>NP</sub> io]]]  
           ↑     └───┬───┘     |  
           1SG                  t<sub>DP</sub>



The derivation then proceeds with the discourse-related movements illustrated in (103-105), namely with the predicate raising to Spec,FocP (cf. (108)) and the remnant-IP being attracted to Spec,GP (cf. (109)), which determines the spell-out of the *that*-clause as a right-hand Topic:



It is noteworthy that under the present proposal the existence of two types of cleft structures in Italian is motivated by two independent syntactic properties, namely the syntax of Familiar Topics and the setting of the Null Subject parameter. As a matter of fact, the two derivations illustrated in (102-105) and in (106-109) are distinguished by the derived vs. merged nature of the right-hand Familiar Topic (i.e., the *that*-clause) and the type of empty category hosted in Spec,IP (i.e., either a trace or a *pro*, respectively).

It can be observed that the present approach can easily explain why a language like English only allows one type of cleft. Since it is not a Null Subject language, the presence of a *pro* as the subject of the SC (as in (106)) is excluded, blocking the derivation of a sentence like (110):

- (110) \* *pro am I that you saw*

Rather, the only pronoun required in English is *it* (which determines agreement with the copula); given its referential nature (as discussed in section 4.2), the initial *it*, much like the Italian *pro* in (107-109), is to be analyzed as coreferent with the right-dislocated relative DP:

- (111) *It<sub>i</sub> is ME [that you saw]<sub>i</sub>;*

## 5.2 Pseudoclefts

We can now focus on the derivation of pseudoclefts. In section 4 the relative DP has been shown to be a left-dislocated constituent in these constructions (cf. Gundel 1977, 1985, Prince 1978, Collins 1991, Frascarelli 2000b, Den Dikken et al. 2000, Den Dikken 2005). In particular, what this paper proposes is that the right- vs. left-dislocation of the relative DP constitutes the major asymmetry between clefts and pseudoclefts, all other differences being just a consequence of the former.

Let us consider the relevant asymmetries between the two sentence types. First of all, clefts and pseudoclefts are distinguished by word order. While the clefted phrase (i.e., the Focus) appears on the right of the copula in both constructions, the relative DP is realized sentence-finally in the former and sentence-initially in the latter:

- (112) a. *Sono io che parto* (cleft: copula > clefted phrase > relative DP)  
 be.1SG 1SG.NOM that leave.1SG  
 'It is ME that leaves'
- b. *Chi parte sono io* (pseudocleft: relative DP > copula > clefted phrase)  
 who leave.3SG be.1SG 1SG.NOM  
 'The one who leaves is me'

(113) a. \**Sono* *io* *chi* *parto*  
           be.1SG 1SG.NOM who leave.1SG  
       b. \**Che* *parte* *sono* *io*  
           that leave.3SG be.1SG 1SG.NOM

(114) a. \**Sono io che parte*  
           be.1SG 1SG.NOM that leave.3SG  
       b. \**Chi parto sono io*  
           who leave.1SG be.1SG 1SG.NOM

(115) a. *Chi parte sono io*  
 who leave.3SG be.1SG 1SG.NOM  
 ‘The one who leaves is ME’  
 b. \**Chi parte è me*  
 who leave.3SG be.3SG 1SG.ACC

(116) [ShiftP [DP *chi parte*]<sub>i</sub> [IP [DP *pro*]<sub>i</sub> sono [SC t<sub>DP</sub> [NP *io*]]]]

-----
-----|

Agree
1SG
NOM

1SG

24



constructions lies in the position in which the relative DP is realized, as it constitutes a right-hand Topic in clefts (cf. (109)) and a left-hand Topic in pseudoclefts (cf. (116)).<sup>28</sup>

The dislocation analysis proposed in (116) is confirmed by another Romance language like French. Since it differs from Italian in not being a pro-drop language, the presence of a null subject in Spec,IP is excluded; the prediction is therefore that the subject position will be filled by a resumptive pronoun. This is exactly what we find in examples like the following (from Clech-Darbon et al. 1999: 92):<sup>29</sup>

- (117) a. *Ce que tu vois, \*(c') est ce qui sortira*  
 DEM that you see.2SG DEM be.3SG DEM who come.out.FUT.3SG  
 'What you see is what will come out'  
 b. *Ce que Marie aime, \*(c') est le riz*  
 DEM that Marie love.3SG DEM be.3SG the rice  
 'What Marie likes is rice'

If the asymmetry between Italian (cf. (116)) and French (cf. (117)) can be ascribed to the different value of the Null Subject parameter in the two languages, the question is now why the resumptive subject pronoun is not required in another non-pro-drop language like English, as is shown below:

- (118) a. *The one who leaves (\*it) is me*  
 b. *What I saw (\*it) is a man*

In order to account for the absence of the subject pronoun in English (vs. its presence in French), we suggest that the crucial point lies in the syntax of left-hand Topics in the two language types. As a matter of fact, they are assumed to be directly merged in a left-peripheral position in Italian (strong evidence is provided in Cinque 1990, Frascarelli 2000a, 2004b, 2007b and F&H 2007), as well as in French (cf. De Cat 2002). On the contrary, Topics in English are generally considered as merged in a clause-internal position and then moved to the left periphery in order to receive their specific discourse interpretation (cf. Culicover 1991, Lasnik & Saito 1992). As a consequence, the realization of a resumptive pronoun is excluded in this language, as the subject position is filled by the trace of the raised relative DP, as is illustrated in (119):

- (119) [<sub>ShiftP</sub> [<sub>DP</sub> *what I saw*] [<sub>IP</sub> *t'* [<sub>DP</sub> *is*] [<sub>SC</sub> *t* [<sub>DP</sub> [<sub>NP</sub> *a man*]]]]]

Let us now concentrate on the asymmetries between clefts and pseudoclefts illustrated above (cf. (113-115)), in order to show that they can all be ascribed to the different positions in which the

<sup>28</sup> As for the predicative NP, it moves to the left periphery in clefts, where it assumes a specific Focus interpretation (see (103) and (108)), while it remains *in situ* in pseudoclefts. Indeed, as is argued in section 4.1, pseudoclefts instantiate a Topic-Comment structure, in which the postcopular phrase is interpreted as a "Narrow" Focus because it is the only constituent within the Comment (this is supported by intonational evidence, see section 6). Notice that a similar conclusion can also be drawn assuming Den Dikken et al.'s (2000) and Den Dikken's (2005) approach to "Type A" (i.e. standard) pseudoclefts, in which a different structure is proposed for the Comment. In particular, the authors argue that the copula (the "linker") is located in Top° and that the IP-internal material is partially elided (e.g., *What John bought was [he bought some wine]*), in such a way that the clefted phrase constitutes the only phonologically realized element within the Comment. Although their proposal is very convincing in most respects (for instance, it straightforwardly accounts for connectivity effects, consider in particular the licensing of NPIs in the Comment), we maintain an analysis of pseudoclefts like (116), as it shows the same copular structure proposed for clefts (cf. (98)), thus accounting for the semantic and syntactic similarities between the two constructions.

<sup>29</sup> Clech-Darbon et al. (1999: 92-93) also show "the sharp contrast with real predication sentences, which do not require dislocation: *Ce que je vois est laid* 'What I see is ugly'; *Ce que Marie aime est bon* 'What Marie likes is good'". For the specificational (not predication) nature of (pseudo)clefts, see also section 2 above.

dislocated relative DP is realized in the two structures (i.e., as a right-hand and a left-hand Topic, respectively).

First of all, the structural position in which the topicalized relative DP is located in the two sentence types triggers the specific form of the item introducing it (cf. (113)). It can be observed that in the course of the derivation of clefts, the relative DP is under the scope of the clefted constituent (cf. (103) and (108)); in this configuration, the *pro* heading the relative DP can check its phi-features through an Agree relation with the clefted phrase (cf. (104) and the relevant discussion); in other words, *pro* is allowed to appear as the head of the relative DP and be followed by the complementizer *che* ‘that’.

In the case of pseudoclefts, on the contrary, the relative DP is not under the scope of the clefted constituent at any point of the derivation (cf. (116) and (119)). Consequently, a null head could not be licensed and the relevant NP must be spelled out either as a relative pronoun (cf. *chi* ‘who’ in (120a)) or as a generic noun (cf. *persona* ‘person’ in (120b)):

- (120) a. *Chi parte sono io*  
 who leave.3SG be.1SG 1SG.NOM  
 ‘The one who leaves is me’ (lit: ‘Who leaves is me’)
- b. *La persona che parte sono io*  
 the person that leave.3SG be.1SG 1SG.NOM  
 ‘The one who leaves is me’ (lit: ‘The person that leaves is me’)

The different scope relation between the relative DP and the clefted constituent in the two sentence types also has consequences in the agreement pattern of the relative verb. As already discussed, when the clefted phrase is interpreted as the subject of the relative verb, it determines its agreement in clefts; on the contrary, the relative verb always shows a default 3rd person agreement in pseudoclefts (no matter what the phi-features of the clefted phrase are). The relevant examples are repeated here as (121-122):

- (121) a. *Sono io che parto*  
 be.1SG 1SG.NOM that leave.1SG  
 ‘It is ME that leaves’
- b. \**Sono io che parte*  
 be.1SG 1SG.NOM that leave.3SG
- (122) a. *Chi parte sono io*  
 who leave.3SG be.1SG 1SG.NOM  
 ‘The one who leaves is me’ (lit: ‘Who leaves is me’)
- b. \**Chi parto sono io*  
 who leave.1SG be.1SG 1SG.NOM

This asymmetry, much like the one discussed above, can be ascribed to a specific difference in the scope relation established between the relative DP and the clefted phrase in the two relevant constructions. Let us first consider the case of clefts. As already mentioned, after its movement to Spec,FocP, the clefted constituent takes scope over the relative DP located in Spec,FamP; in this configuration, not only is it in a position to enter an Agree relation with the null relative head (cf. (104)), but it also qualifies as an antecedent for the *pro* filling the subject position within the relative CP. In other words, the null subject of the relative clause has its phi-features checked against the clefted phrase and can trigger agreement with the relative verb:

- (123) [FocP [NP *IO*] [FamP [DP [SC [NP *pro*] [CP *che pro parto*]]] [IP ... copula ...
- 
- Agree (phi-features) Spec-Head 1SG

Given the analysis of the relative DP as a left-hand Topic in pseudoclefts, the agreement pattern illustrated in (123) is not available in these structures. As a matter of fact, we have already observed that the relative DP of pseudoclefts cannot be headed by a *pro* and that a relative pronoun (or a generic noun) is instead required (see (120) and the relevant discussion); this means that the subject position of the relative verb is filled by (a trace of) the relative pronoun, namely a 3SG phrase, which thus determines an obligatory 3rd person agreement on the relative verb (independently of the phi-features of the clefted constituent).

Let us finally turn to the property presented in (115), concerning the need for the copula to agree with the Focus in pseudoclefts, while it can also display a default 3SG agreement with clefted objects (cf. (99) above).<sup>30</sup> In section 5.1 we have proposed that the latter option is to be related both to the value of the Null Subject parameter and to the syntax of right-hand Topics in languages like Italian. In particular, following F&H (2007), right-hand Topics are either merged in an extrasentential position or derived from within IP, and these two syntactic configurations have been claimed to trigger the agreement pattern reported below:

- (124) a. *Sono IO che hai visto*  
 be.1SG 1SG.NOM that have.2SG see.PST.PART  
 ‘It is ME that you saw’  
 b. *È ME che hai visto*  
 be.3SG 1SG.ACC that have.2SG see.PST.PART  
 ‘id.’

On the contrary, left-hand Topics in pseudoclefts only allow to be merged in the left periphery.<sup>31</sup> This is the reason why the agreement pattern illustrated in (125b) (which would require the relative DP to be extracted from its subject position) is not acceptable in Italian,<sup>32</sup> which only allows the realization of a rightward agreement with the NOM predicate (as in (125a)):

- (125) a. *Chi hai visto sono io*  
 who have.2SG see.PST.PART be.1SG 1SG.NOM  
 ‘The one that you saw is me’  
 b. \**Chi hai visto è me*  
 who have.2SG see.PST.PART be.3SG 1SG.ACC

<sup>30</sup> This option is excluded whenever the clefted constituent is interpreted as the subject of the relative verb:

- (i) *Sono IO che parto*  
 be.1SG 1SG.NOM that leave.1SG  
 ‘It is ME that leaves’  
 (ii) \**È ME che parte/parto*  
 be.3SG 3SG.ACC that leave.3SG/1SG

Given the pro-drop property of Italian, null subjects require an antecedent for their interpretation (cf. Frascarelli 2007b). However, the ACC clefted phrase *ME* in (ii) does not constitute an appropriate antecedent for *pro* (because of a mismatch in their Case feature).

In the case of clefted PPs, only the default 3SG inflection on the copula is allowed because their syntactic category excludes agreement:

- (iii) *È CON ME che vai al mare*  
 be.3SG with 1SG.ACC that go.2SG to.the seaside  
 ‘It is WITH ME that you go to the seaside’  
 (iv) \**Sono CON ME che vai al mare*  
 be.1SG with 1SG.ACC that go.2SG to.the seaside

<sup>31</sup> This is not a stipulation, as Aboutness-shift and Contrastive Topics can only be merged extrasententially (cf. F&H 2007). As for Familiar Topics, which generally allow either a merge or a derivation analysis, the French data in (117), as well as intonational patterns, provide evidence against derivation in pseudoclefts.

<sup>32</sup> On the contrary, this agreement pattern is the only one admitted in English, as is perfectly expected from the derived nature of left-hand Topics in this language (see (119) above).

We can thus conclude that the various properties distinguishing clefts and pseudoclefts confirm our analysis of these constructions as involving different types of Topics.

### 5.3 *The syntax of copulas and Focus Markers*

In the present paper we have assumed a linker function for the copula in cleft constructions, motivating this analysis on semantic and syntactic grounds (cf. sections 3.3-3.4). We have also argued for a grammaticalization path, changing what was originally a fully inflected auxiliary into a (gradually) ‘frozen’ head, on which a reduced option of TAM and phi-features can be realized.<sup>33</sup> Grammaticalization of the copula in cleft constructions has therefore the effect of changing a verb into a functional head.

This linguistic change reaches its final point in the languages that make use of FMs: as a matter of fact, these ‘particles’ are no longer considered as auxiliaries by speakers and, in fact, do not behave like auxiliaries syntactically. Indeed, they are not obligatory and can cooccur with auxiliaries, as is shown in Hausa (from Junaido 1987):

- (126) *HÀDIZÀ (cee) ta ci lambàà* (HAUSA)  
 Hadiza FM AUX.3SGF.REL.PERF eat prize  
 ‘HADIZA won the prize’

This example shows that FMs and auxiliaries are located in different positions and have different functions. Specifically, the former are functional heads in the FocP projection, while the latter are inflectional heads, carrying TAM and phi-features.

As a matter of fact, FMs (and dividing pronouns) are optional in a number of languages – as functors can be – while true auxiliaries can never be deleted. Consider the following contrast (from Newman 2000):

- (127) a. *BAAYAN BISHIYÀÀ (nee) ya-kée* (HAUSA)  
 behind tree FM AUX.3SG-REL.PROG  
 ‘He is BEHIND THE TREE’  
 b. *Audu \*(yaa) ga doogon mùtúm*  
 Audu AUX.3SG.PERF see big man  
 ‘Audu saw a big man’

Clear evidence is also provided by languages like Kikuyu, in which FMs are optional in the presence of an auxiliary (128a), while they cannot be deleted in predicational sentences with a zero-copula (cf. (128b)):

- (128) a. *ABDUL (ne) a-a-re mo-rutani* (KIKUYU, Schwarz 2007)  
 Abdul FM SUBJ-T-be 1-teacher  
 ‘ABDUL was a teacher’  
 b. *ABDUL \*(ne) Ø mo-rutani*  
 Abdul FM COP 1-teacher  
 ‘ABDUL is a teacher’

Using Schwarz’s (2007: 141) words, this shows that a FM can itself function as a copula; as a consequence, it can be omitted in the presence of a full auxiliary. This constitutes further evidence that FMs are originated from the auxiliary used in predicational sentences (besides diachronic arguments, see section 3.4), namely by an auxiliary corresponding to English *be*. Languages only differ in the extent of its grammaticalization in cleft structures.

<sup>33</sup> For this reason, we have proposed that a reduced functional structure should be assumed for copulas in the IP extended projection of cleft constructions (cf. fn. 25).

Given the present analysis, we are now in a position to provide an explanation for the different location cross-linguistically shown by copulas in cleft constructions, namely, either before (Italian, French, English, Kikuyu, etc.) or immediately after the Focus (Somali, Hausa, Wolof, Chaha, etc.). Specifically, we propose that FMs (and the like<sup>34</sup>) are located in  $\text{Foc}^\circ$ , forming a Spec-Head relation with the fronted Focus (in  $\text{Spec}, \text{FocP}$ ), while in languages in which the copula still maintains some inflectional features (i.e., agreement with the postcopular phrase and (reduced) tense information), this element reaches  $\text{I}^\circ$  and is then raised to a pre-focal position by means of the remnant-IP movement to  $\text{Spec}, \text{GP}$  (see section 5.1):<sup>35</sup>

- (129) a. *CALI baa yimid* (SOMALI, Frascarelli & Puglielli 2005a)  
 Cali FM (= COP) come.REL.PST(RED)  
 ‘CALI arrived’

- b.  $[_{\text{FocP}} [_{\text{NP}} \text{CALI}] [_{\text{Foc}'} \text{baa} [_{\text{SC}} [_{\text{DP}} [_{\text{SC}} [_{\text{NP}} \text{pro}] [_{\text{CP}} \text{yimid}]]] t_{\text{NP}}]]]$

- (130) a. *C' est LE PETIT qui est tombé dans l' escalier*  
 DEM COP.3SG the child who be.3SG fall.PST.PART in the staircase  
 ‘It’s THE CHILD that fell down from the staircase’ (FRENCH, Clech-Darbon et al. 1999)

- b.  $[_{\text{FocP}} [_{\text{NP}} \text{LE PETIT}] [_{\text{FamP}} [_{\text{DP}} [_{\text{SC}} [_{\text{NP}} \text{pro}] [_{\text{CP}} \text{qui} \dots]]] i [_{\text{IP}} [_{\text{DP}} c'] i [_{\text{I}'} \text{est} [_{\text{SC}} t_{\text{DP}} t_{\text{NP}}]]]]]]]$   
 Agree  
 $[_{\text{GP}} [_{\text{IP}} [_{\text{DP}} c'] i [_{\text{I}'} \text{est} [_{\text{SC}} t_{\text{DP}} t_{\text{NP}}]]]] [_{\text{FocP}} [_{\text{NP}} \text{LE PETIT}] [_{\text{FamP}} [_{\text{DP}} [_{\text{SC}} [_{\text{NP}} \text{pro}] [_{\text{CP}} \text{qui} \dots]]] i t_{\text{IP}}]]]]]$

Given this analysis, the presence of FMs does not imply a monoclausal structure. In other words, FMs are not associated with an *ex situ* strategy, in which the focused constituent is extracted from an IP-internal position. Our claim is therefore that FMs still imply a biclausal structure. Though their grammaticalization excludes their movement to an inflectional projection (cf. (129b)), the relevant Focus construction must still be considered as a cleft: as a matter of fact, it maintains all the morpho-syntactic properties belonging to clefts proper, namely Case marking, Antiagreement, island and Weak Cross Over effects (cf. section 3.1) and, finally, the realization of presupposition as a relative clause.

## 6. (Pseudo)clefts: intonational analysis

In this paper we have proposed that both cleft and pseudocleft constructions instantiate a Topic-Comment discourse structure, though involving different types of Topics. In particular, syntactic

<sup>34</sup> The observations provided for FMs can also be applied to the analysis of dividing pronouns in languages like Afar, Hebrew or Standard Arabic. Indeed, they are invariable elements, their presence is often optional and they are rigidly located after the Focus. Consider, for instance, the following example from Hebrew:

(i) *ATTA hu kshe azar le-Rina*  
 2SG 3SGM that help.PST.3SGM to-Rina  
 ‘It is YOU that helped Rina’

Therefore, we can analyze dividing pronouns as remnant elements of a former cleft construction in which the relevant pronoun was incorporated onto the copula (as is the case of Tigrinya still now, cf. (24)), which has been dropped in time.

<sup>35</sup> The case of some Creole languages could be produced as a challenge to this proposal. Indeed, languages like Haitian and Krio (cf. (28) and (30)) use a copular form which is invariable (like a FM) but precedes the Focus. We can plausibly consider it as the consequence of the grammaticalization of a borrowing: cleft constructions entered these languages through English or French and have been used as Focus strategies, “freezing” the original copular form in pre-focal position.

evidence has been provided (see section 5) that cleft constructions imply – besides exhaustive focalization – the realization of a right-hand Familiar Topic, while the relative DP in pseudoclefts is a left-hand, base-generated Topic; the latter is usually of the Aboutness-shift type, but can also be Contrastive (if more Topics are opposed) or Familiar (when the relevant DP does not induce a shift, but is continuous with respect to the current Topic). In this section we will substantiate this proposal by means of intonational evidence, taken from naturalistic data.<sup>36</sup>

As already illustrated in section 4.1, F&H (2007) singled out three different types of Topics basing on the existence of a *systematic correlation* between their formal properties and discourse function. They also showed that this correlation is encoded in a strict hierarchy in the C-domain and provided intonational and syntactic evidence that different types of TopP projections must be posited in the left periphery of the sentence:

- (131) “Discourse properties have structural correlates both in phonology and in syntax. In other words, [...] different types of Topics show different intonational properties and are realized in a specific order in the CP-system. A free recursion analysis will thus be refuted and a hierarchy [is] proposed in which different functional projections are distinguished in terms of prosodic and syntactic properties”. (F&H 2007: 89)

In particular, prosodic investigation of spontaneous data shows that Topic constituents are associated with three different tonal events which, according to the Autosegmental-metrical theory (cf. Goldsmith ed. 1990), can be described as (L+H)\*, L\* and H\*.<sup>37</sup> Specifically, the authors show that Aboutness-shift Topics are characterized by the rising (L+H)\* contour (cf. example (132) and Figure 1), Familiar Topics are marked with a L\* tone (cf. example (133) and Figure 2) and, finally, Contrastive Topics are associated to a H\* pitch (cf. example (134) and Figures 3-4).<sup>38</sup>

- (132) *il materiale era tantissimo quindi all’inizio l’ho fatto tutto di corsa cercando di impiegarci il tempo che dicevate voi magari facendolo un po’ superficialmente pur di prendere tutto/ l’ultima unit la sto facendo l’ho lasciata un po’ da parte perché...*  
[PC01]  
‘The material was quite a lot, so at the beginning I did it in a rush, trying to do it all in the time that you had fixed, maybe a little superficially, so as to do everything/ I’m doing the last unit now, I had put it aside before because ...’

<sup>36</sup> This research is based on a *corpus* of spontaneous conversations recorded in the area of Rome with speakers of the Roman variety (for detailed information on the *corpus*, cf. Bonvino 2005). In particular, we have analyzed four conversations (60 minutes ca.) named *Chiacchiere*, *Colosseo*, *Incontro* and *PC*. The relevant speakers (3 women and 1 man) have at least a high school education and their age ranges between 29 and 33.

<sup>37</sup> The description of intonational contours is based on Pierrehumbert’s (1980) system – generally known as ‘ToBI’ – in which tonal events are described as sequences of low (L) and high (H) tones, which determine the shape of the F0 contour. In particular, pitch accents (marked with a ‘star’) are aligned with tonic vowels and determine prominence on the linguistic material with which they are associated.

<sup>38</sup> For reasons of space we can only provide here a short illustration of the different types of Topics. For details and discussion, the interested reader can refer to F&H (2007) and Frascarelli (2007b, 2008).

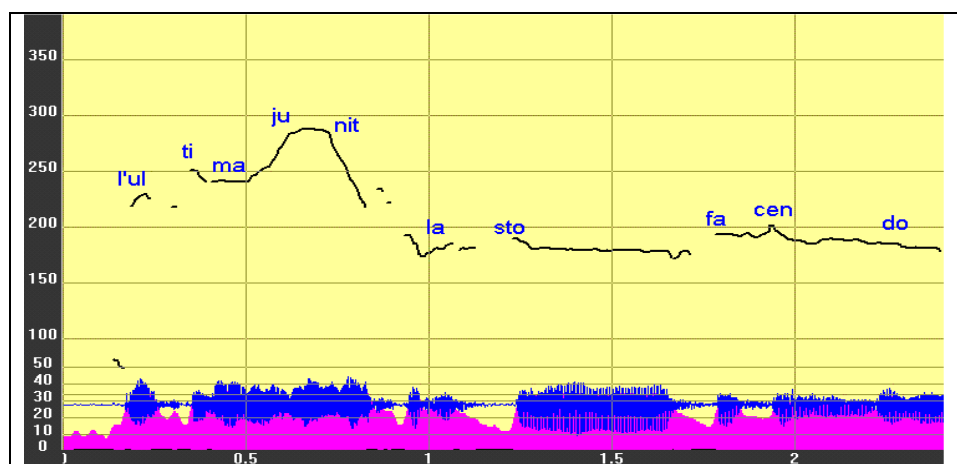


Figure 1 – Aboutness-shift Topic: (L+H)\*

- (133) A: *mi aspettavo di trovare dei punti a cui far riferimento ogni volta per vedere la regola questo mi è mancato praticamente per avere **la conferma** di ricordare tutto.*  
 B: *comunque quelle domande ti davano **la conferma** che avevi capito.*  
 A: *ma... magari non me la/ non riesco a darmela da sola **la conferma**.* [PC03]  
 ‘A: I expected to find some outlines I could always refer to check the relevant rule, this is what I missed, to have a check that I could remember everything B: however those questions gave you the possibility to check your understanding A: well, maybe I cannot make this check on my own.’

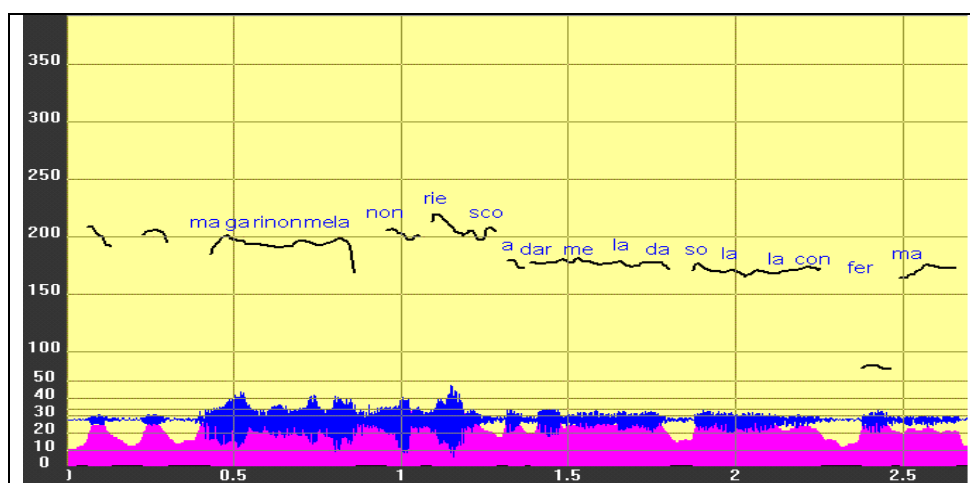


Figure 2 – Familiar Topic: L\*

- (134) A: *le lingue in particolare?*  
 B: ***in francese** benissimo: ho fatto tre anni di medie avevo raggiunto un buon livello secondo me riuscivo a vedere un film/ **in inglese** ho avuto sempre problemi con i professori* [PC01]  
 ‘A: what about languages in particular? B: with French, very well: I have studied it for three years at school, I reached a good level I think, I could also see movies in original version/ in English I always had problems with professors.’

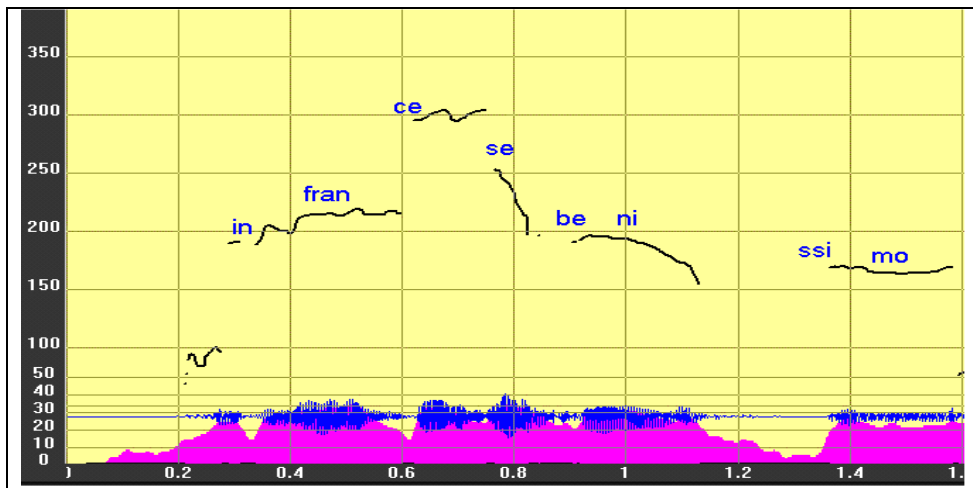


Figure 3 – Contrastive Topic: H\* (a)

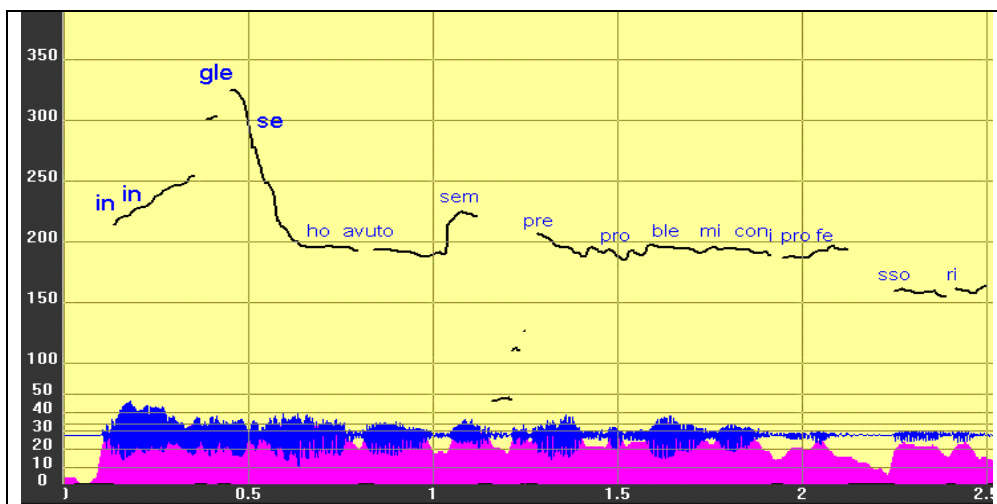


Figure 4 – Contrastive Topic: H\* (b)

As we can see, the NP *l'ultima unit* in Figure 1 marks a turning point in the conversation. This shift is interpreted at the PF-interface by means of a sharp rise on the tonic syllable – the diphthong [ju] – and likewise by a sharp fall after it. In Figure 2, on the other hand, the tonic vowel of the right-dislocated object *la conferma* is realized with a low tone, which is very close to the speaker's baseline. Finally, in Figures 3-4 *francese* and *inglese* represent two oppositional Topics and, accordingly, each of them is marked by a high pitch and is followed by a Broad Focus sentence (as is shown by their H+L\* contour, cf. Frascarelli 2004a), expressing the informative part of the relevant contrast. Also notice that Topics always form a prosodic domain that is separate from the Intonational Phrase containing the Comment; hence they are preceded (or followed) by a prosodic break and a resetting of the fundamental frequency (F0).

The relevant correlation between prosodic properties and syntactic structure – originally discovered for Italian and German data – have been then supported by cross-linguistic evidence; indeed, the same intonational properties have been found on typologically different languages like Tagalog (Frascarelli in press) and Somali (Frascarelli & Puglielli 2009).<sup>39</sup>

Let us turn now to the prosodic analysis of (pseudo)cleft sentences. Consider first the following passage:

<sup>39</sup> The distinction among different types of Topics has also proved as extremely advantageous for the understanding of phenomena connected with information structure and the interpretation of null subjects in languages like Italian (see Frascarelli 2007b).



- (135) A: *quando adesso vai al Colosseo quando entri quello che vedi al centro non è dove-*  
 B: *sì l'arena stava più in alto*  
 A: *-sì lottava no non era più in alto era lì solo che era era coperta cioè quello che si vede è il sotterraneo sono i diciamo gli ambienti di servizio per dire no – questi ambienti di servizio erano coperti da un tavolato di legno sul quale poi loro combattevano... [colosseo-02]*  
 'A: at present, when you go to the Colosseum, when you enter, what you can see in the middle is not where- B: yes, the arena would stand higher A: -they would fight, no, it was not in a higher position, it was there, simply it was covered, that is to say, what you can see is the underground, it's – let's say, the part dedicated to utility services, so as to say – services were covered by a wooden floor, on which they used to fight...'

In this passage speaker A – a woman, who is a tourist guide – is describing the internal architecture of the Colosseum and, specifically, the part dedicated to gladiators' fights. In her first sentence, after a temporal clause, she introduces the Topic of her speech by means of a relative DP, namely *quello che vedi al centro* 'what you can see in the middle'. This Topic thus qualifies as an Aboutness-shift Topic and, accordingly, is realized with a rising tone (L+H)\* on the demonstrative pronoun (*quello*) heading the relative clause. The rightmost constituent of the relevant clause (*centro*) is also marked by a (downstepped) pitch, as is usual with relatives, in order to delimitate their prosodic domain. At the end of this prosodic unit, the F0 reaches a baseline value for the speaker (ca. 120 Hz):

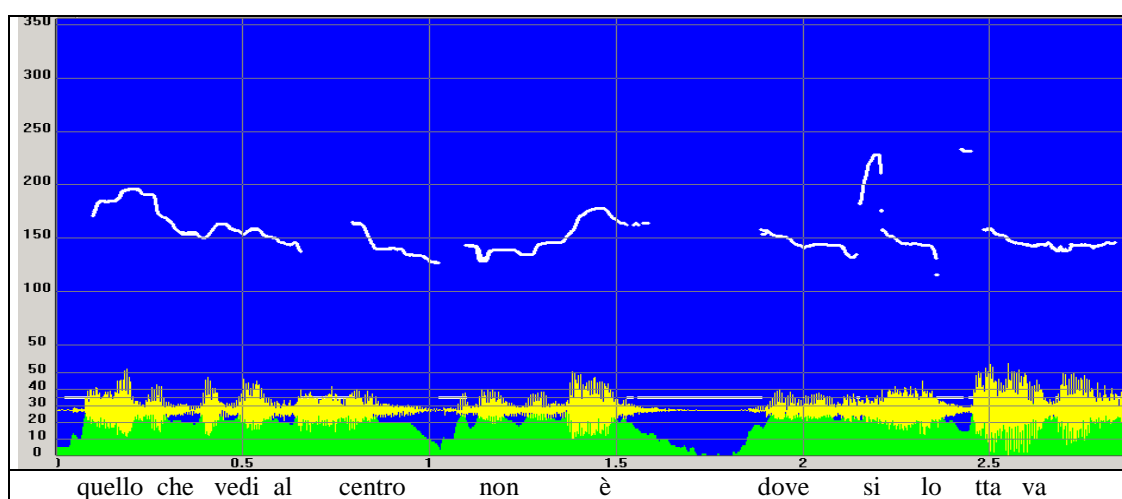


Figure 5

As is shown, after resetting the Comment starts an independent prosodic domain; in particular we can notice the presence of a typical 'hat contour' on the copula and, at the end of a downgrading contour, a final rise on the tonic vowel of the verb *lottava*. This is due to the effect of negation: since its scope extends all over the sentence, the two prominences serve to define the entire sentence as the Focus of the relevant pseudocleft construction.

Since speaker A was interrupted during her speech (in fact, the two speakers overlap in the last part of the sentence illustrated in Figure 5, thus explaining the phonetic 'disturb' over *si lottava*), she feels obliged to stop her explanation for a second and correct speaker B's assertion (*no, non era più in alto* 'no, it was not in a higher position'). This is a null subject sentence, having as its Topic the Aboutness-shift Topic proposed by speaker B (namely, 'the arena'). Consequently, when she resumes her explanation, she has to shift back Aboutness to her former Topic (namely, *quello che si vede* 'what you can see'). Hence, a rising contour is realized again on the relevant relative clause:

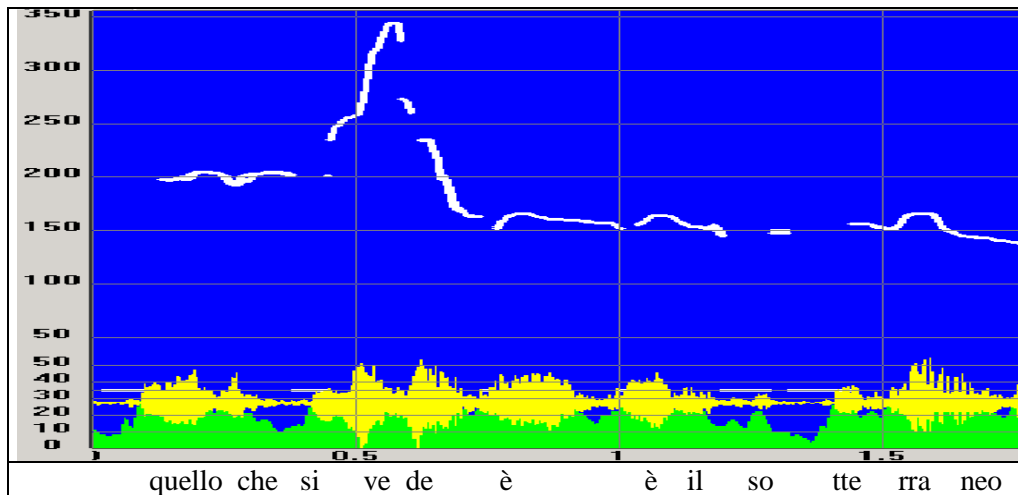


Figure 6

Notice that, in the absence of negation no pitch marks the copula, as expected given its functional role (cf. section 3.4): the only H\* tone can be found on the tonic vowel of *sotterraneo*, which is the Comment of the relevant construction.

The rising tonal event characterizing the relative DP in Figures 5-6 must not be ascribed to its initial position. Indeed, its intonational contour changes according to its specific Topic role, in accordance with F&H's (2007) analysis. Hence, when the relative DP does not propose a topic shift but, rather, maintains the current topic, it is realized with a flat contour, as is expected for a Familiar Topic. Consider, for instance, the following passage (the speaker is a woman also in this case) and the intonational contour in Figure 7 below:

- (136) *il mio capo è un ex reporter è stato corrispondente per Panorama dall'Afghanistan dal Libano è stato in giro per il mondo ma veramente uno di quelli pioniere sai di quelli che andavano in giro con la macchina fotografica e la macchina da scrivere a tracolla [...] quello che c'ha però è che è durissimo sai una persona che al primo errore fa saltare la gente...* [chiacchiere-01]

'My boss is an ex-reporter he was correspondent for Panorama in Afghanistan and Lebanon, he was a globe-trotter, a real pioneer, you know, one who would go around with a camera and a typewriter on his back [...] what he has, however, is that he is really tough, you know, that kind of person that fires people at their first mistake...'

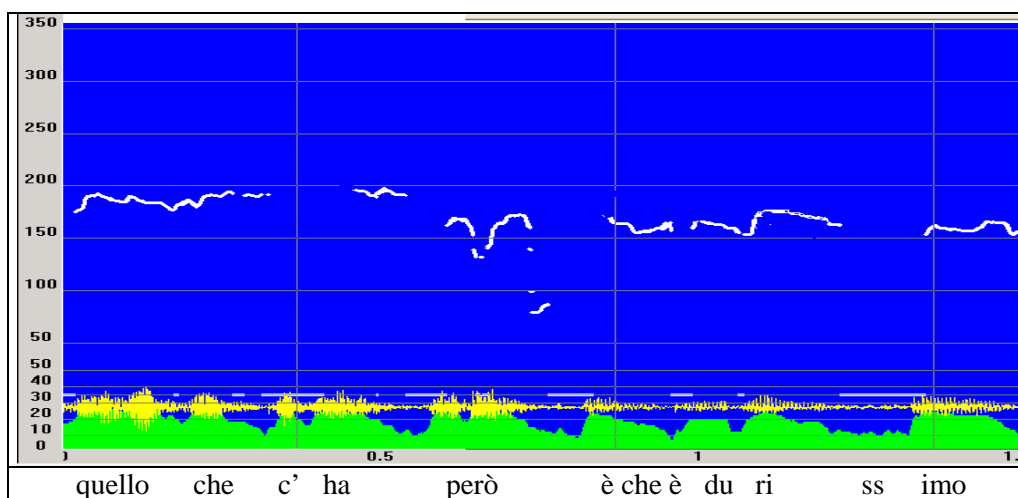


Figure 7

As we can see, no rise characterizes the relative DP *quello che c'ha* ('what he has'), as the entire passage is dedicated to the description of the personality of the speaker's boss. The relevant Topic is therefore completely flat and realized at a low tone. Notice that, also in this case, it forms a separate prosodic group and the rest of the sentence follows after resetting. Then, the Comment follows forming a downgrading contour, which is the typical intonational pattern of Broad Focus sentences cross-linguistically, thus supporting the syntactic analysis proposed in section 5.2.

Let us now consider the intonational properties of cleft sentences. According to our proposal, the relative DP following the copula is a right-hand Familiar Topic and, as such, a flat contour is expected. This prediction is borne out by data. Consider the following passage:

- (137) A: *e poi lei mi guardava*  
 B: *ma ti guardava nel senso che rispondeva ai tuoi sguardi o proprio era LEI che ti guardava?*  
 C: *sii onesto!*  
 A: *potevo anche essere io che rispondevo ai suoi sguardi*  
 C: *che bugiardo!* [incontro-01]  
 'A: and then she was looking at me B: but she was looking at you in the sense that she responded to your looks, or was it exactly her who would look at you? C: be honest! A: it might also be me who would respond to her looks C: what a liar!'

In this passage speaker B (a man) is 'interviewing' speaker A about how he started to go out with his present girlfriend (speaker C). In his question, he wants to know whether they started to look at each other (in the university library) at the same time or, rather, he noticed her because it was (exclusively) her to look at him initially. The sentence at issue (*o proprio era LEI che ti guardava*) is produced as illustrated in Figure 8:

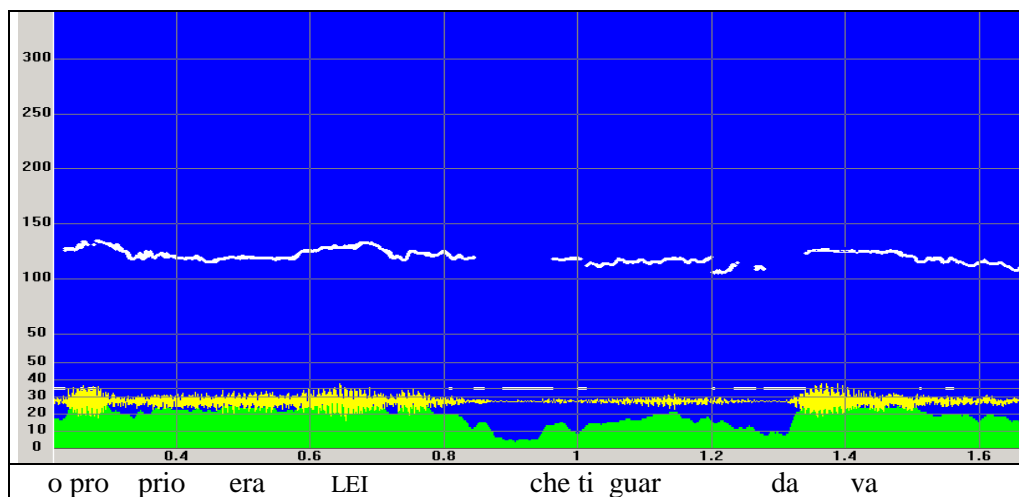


Figure 8

As expected, the relevant that-clause (*che ti guardava*) is realized as an independent prosodic group (after a clear break with respect to the Focus) with a low, flat contour. Therefore, the relative DP fully qualifies as a Familiar Topic. This pattern was found consistently throughout the corpus (see also the examples below), providing additional support to our analysis.

As far as Focus is concerned, prosodic analysis shows that Focus prominence in clefts is not as marked as it could be expected given its initial position and the emphatic character that is normally ascribed to this type of construction. In the sentence examined above, for instance, the clefted constituent (*LEI*) is marked by a very slight prominence, which is also due to the presence of the focusing adverb *proprio* ('exactly') – also marked by a pitch – which requires a H\* tone on the element included in its scope.

As a matter of fact, clefted Foci are very often not marked by any special prominence throughout the corpus examined, independently of the age and the sex of the speaker. Consider, for instance, the following case, in which a young woman is talking about her way of studying:

- (138) *comunque cioè penso che l'avete capito che a me piace più applicarle le cose che comunque è LA PRATICA che mi manca quindi una volta vista la regola preferisco andare sul pratico...* [PC06]

‘Anyway, I mean, I think that you have understood that I like more applied things than - at any rate it’s practise that I miss - so, once I have read a rule I prefer to pass immediately to its practical use...’

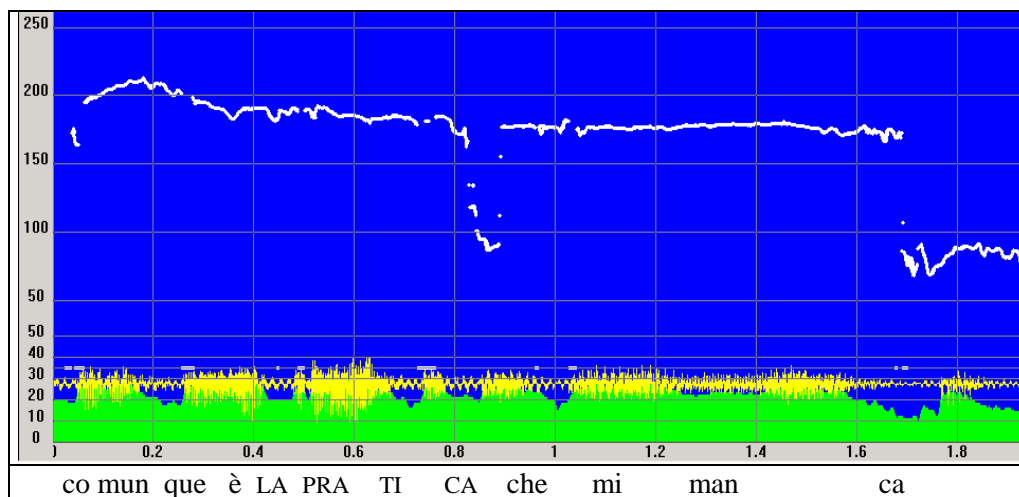


Figure 9

As we can see, also in this case the clefted Focus is almost unstressed (and the relative DP totally flat after a prosodic break). The only difference between the realizations illustrated in Figures 8 and 9 is provided by the tonal range of the speakers: 100-130Hz for a man and 180-220Hz for a woman. These phonetic details, however, are totally immaterial for the purposes of the present analysis.

In some other cases, however, a significant pitch can be found on the clefted Focus. As an illustration, let us resume the passage in (137) – here repeated as (139) – and the cleft produced by speaker A (illustrated in Figure 10):

- (139) A: *e poi lei mi guardava*  
 B: *ma ti guardava nel senso che rispondeva ai tuoi sguardi o proprio era lei che ti guardava?*  
 C: *sii onesto!*  
 A: *potevo anche essere io che rispondevo ai suoi sguardi*  
 C: *che bugiardo!* [incontro-01]

‘A: and then she was looking at me B: but she was looking at you in the sense that she responded to your looks, or was it exactly her who would look at you? C: be honest! A: it might also be me who would respond to her looks C: what a liar!’

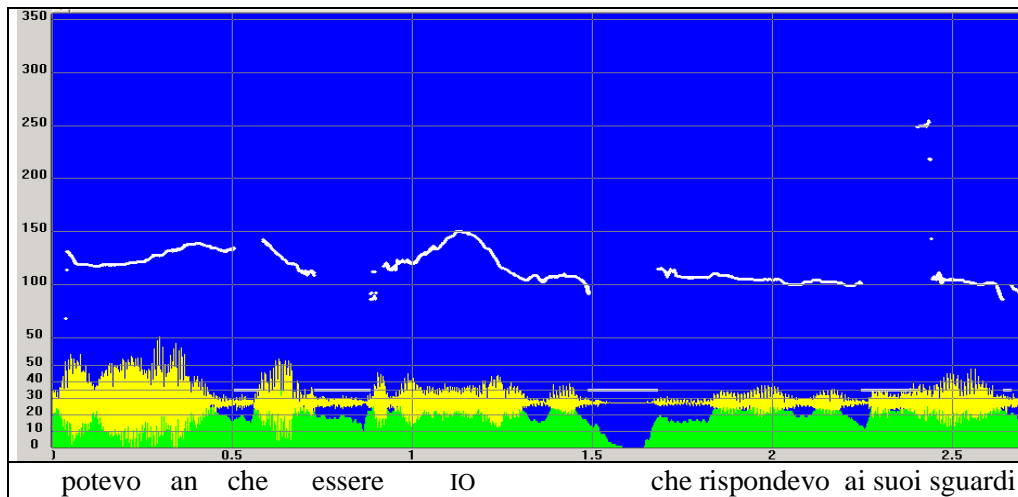


Figure 10

As we can see, differently from the two cases examined above, an evident hat contour marks the realization of the clefted Focus *io* (while the topical status of the relative clause rests unchanged).

What kind of interpretation can we provide for these data? We would like to propose that prominence on the clefted phrase depends on its interpretation as a contrastive Focus. Indeed, clefted Foci are basically characterized by their *exhaustive* reading (cf. section 3.3), while contrast is an option which can overlap. Hence, when a clefted Focus has an *informational*, exhaustive interpretation, it is not marked by a strong prominence, as is normally the case with *in situ* information Focus, cross-linguistically. Division of labour can also be invoked to explain this case: exhaustiveness is obtained through syntactic markedness, hence no extra job is needed at the level of phonetic form. On the other hand, when contrast is added to exhaustiveness, the relevant phrase moves to Spec,ContrP and this operation is associated with a special prominence in order to signal this extra discourse value to interface interpretation.

The discourse analysis of the examples provided proves the validity of the present explanation. The clefted Foci in Figures 8 and 9 do not have a contrastive reading. They only express exhaustiveness: speaker B in (137) wants to know whether it was *only* her that would look at him and the student in (138) uses the cleft to mean that she *only* has problems with practical application (while she understands the rule, theoretically). On the contrary, speaker A in (139) wants to provide a contrast with what his girlfriend tacitly wants him to admit (saying *sii onesto* ‘be honest’) and asserts that it is him who would respond to her looks (and not the other way round).

To conclude, we can say that intonational data strongly support our analysis of (pseudo)cleft sentences as Topic-Comments structures, in which different types of Topics are realized either in the left (pseudoclefts) or in the right (clefts) periphery of the sentence. Moreover, prosody provides evidence for a correlation between intonation and different types of Foci; hence, exhaustive clefted Foci are not marked by a strong pitch (being a type of information Focus), while contrast is associated to a H\* tone, forming a typical ‘hat contour’.

## 7. Conclusions

In this paper an interface approach to cleft and pseudocleft constructions has been developed in order to account for their interpretation at different levels of analysis.

Specifically, we have proposed a semantic and syntactic analysis of the two major constituents forming these types of specificational copular sentences (cf. section 2), which can explain both their discourse role (cf. section 4) and the morpho-syntactic properties they show in different languages (cf. section 3.1). In particular, several arguments have been provided for a merge structure that requires the Focus to be merged as the predicate and the relative DP as the subject of the relevant SC. In a semantic perspective, a type-shifting operation has been discussed (section 3.3), while a

functor ('linker') role is assigned to the copula (section 3.4). As for discourse analysis, the relevant constructions have been shown to instantiate not only a Focus strategy (as is generally acknowledged), but also a Topic-Comment structure, as the relative DP encoding presupposed information constitutes a dislocated constituent in both cases. In particular, it has been analyzed as a right-hand Familiar Topic in clefts and a left-hand Topic (either of the Aboutness-shift, the Contrastive, or the Familiar type, depending on discourse requirements) in pseudoclefts. This means that its informational role is to encode a *presupposition of existence* of the individual it refers to (cf. section 4.1), which determines its topical interpretation.

In section 6 we have also shown that the intonational properties of the two copular constituents in Italian proves the validity of the syntactic analysis proposed in section 5.

We can therefore observe that the proposed analysis can explain the specific functions of clefts and pseudoclefts, which make them different from other Focus strategies: as a matter of fact, (pseudo)cleft constructions are always associated with an *exhaustive* reading, and only in some cases can a contrastive interpretation overlap.

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