"C'est" or "Sé"? On the Cartography of Clefts

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C’EST OR SÉ? ON THE CARTOGRAPHY OF CLEFTS*

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INTRODUCTION

Clefts make use of a bi-clausal syntax to express a single proposition. The mono-clausal sentence and its clefted counterpart, although not necessarily interchangeable in all discourse contexts, have the same truth-values (a.o., Lambrecht 1988, Karssenben and Lahousse 2018). Clefts (minimally) consist of a quasi-argumental pronoun (Reeve 2010), the copula, the focused element and a relative-like clause. The latter contains a syntactic gap co-indexed with the focalized element – a long-distance dependency is established within cleft sentences (1):

(1) C’est [mon père], qui ___ , est allé à la messe ce matin
C’COP my father that is gone at the mass this morning
'It’s my father that attended Mass this morning'

Although any argument or adjunct can be focalised, the focal element of it-clefts is predominantly the subject or an adjunct. For Collins (1991), this preference follows from thematic prominence – in ordinary declaratives, subjects and adjuncts are by far the most frequent elements, thus it is unsurprising that they should need clefting to become thematically even more prominent. According to the existing literature, clefts constitute a form of focalisation. Belletti (2015, and earlier related works) argues that, cross-linguistically, at least two types of focalisation can be realised through clefting: (a) subject clefts can express focus of new information or contrastive focus; (b) non-subject clefts can only be associated to a contrastive reading.

Within the cartographic enterprise, Belletti (2015, and related works) provides a convincing analysis for the fine structure of declarative clefts. Her model makes use of the focal position within the matrix vP (in Belletti 2004 terms) and the matrix and embedded FocusPs to explain the morpho-syntactic and semantic properties of clefts, as explained in detail in section 2 of this work. Belletti’s analysis, despite its perfect applicability to standard French, is challenged by the morpho-syntax of declarative clefts in some non-standard oral languages, and appears difficult to extend to interrogative clefts, as shown throughout this work.

This paper presents novel data on the syntax of clefting in two Romance languages: Trevigiano (Bonan, 2018), a Venetan dialect, and contemporary oral European French (henceforth, “French”). Following systematic intra- and inter- linguistic comparisons between

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1 Reeve (2010) provides cross-linguistic evidence in favour of treating cleft pronouns as non-expletive: (i) their obligatoriness in V2 Germanic languages; (ii) the fact that they observe the referentiality restriction on Aux-to-COMP subjects in Italian; (iii) the fact that, just like referential DPs, they block experiencer raising in French. The curious reader will find arguments (i-iii) discussed in detail in Reeve’s original works.
declarative (1.1) and interrogative clefts in these varieties (1.2), Belletti’s (2015) analysis of clefts is presented and discussed (2.1), and minor modifications thereof are suggested to accommodate the previously presented data (2.2).

1. CLEFT SENTENCES IN TREVIGIANO AND NON-STANDARD ORAL FRENCH

In both Trevigiano and French, cleft sentences differ minimally from their non-clefted, informationally unmarked counterparts in that they focalise a verb-selected argument or an adjunct, giving it syntactic prominence over the following comment. In declarative contexts, (at least) two types of it-clefts are possible, which will hereafter be referred to as regular and reverse clefts throughout this work. The respective linear orders are given in (2a) and (2b). The quasi-argument it is given between brackets because it is not phonetically realized in all varieties:

(2)  a. (It) COPULA [focus X] that [TP ...xt]  
   Regular cleft
b. COPULA (it) [focus X] that [TP ...xt]  
   Reverse cleft

In (2), the English terminology is used simply for of clarity: it stands for the quasi-argumental S of the copula, that for any COMP that introduces the relative-like part of the cleft, and X for any focalised argument or adjunct, which is extracted from the lower clause (hence the trace). Henceforth, the focal part of clefts will be referred to as the high clause, and the presupposed part as the low clause.

1.1. Clefting in declarative Sentences

The declarative clefts of Trevigiano and French differ in the presence of a phonetically realised quasi-argument, unavailable in Trevigiano, and in the availability of reverse constructions, categorically excluded in French. Other minor instances of micro-variation will be highlighted in 1.1.1-3. In section 2, it will be shown that the differences between these two Romance varieties can actually be narrowed down if we rethink the nature of French c’est.

1.1.1. Declarative Subject Clefts

Declarative S-clefts can express both focus of new information or contrastive focus. In Trevigiano, similarly to Italian, the quasi-argument is never phonetically realized (3a). However, French obligatorily makes use of the reduced form of ce (3b). In both languages, the COMP that introduces the low clause must be realized. A summary is given in (4a-b):

(3)  a. Ze Toni *(ke) ga bevuo tuto el vin  
   COP Antony that has drunk all the wine  
   ‘It’s Antony that drank up the wine’  
   Trevigiano
b. C’est Antoine *(qui) a bu tout le vin  
   COP Antony that has drunk all the wine  
   French

The variety of Trevigiano described here has an incomplete series of declarative proclitics (1PS and 1-2PP pronouns are lacking, along with an overt expletive). The enclitic non-assertive series is richer (1PS is available with auxiliaries and modals, 2PP is systematically realized and the expletive has an overt form, -o), yet not complete.

Please notice that here only French c’est-clefts are taken into consideration, leaving il y a-clefts aside. For further details on the latter, refer to Karssenber and Lahousse (2018).
(4) Subject cleft (regular type)
   a. Trevigiano: Copula \([\text{focus } S] \ ke \ ts \ V \ (DO) \ (\text{Indo})\)
   b. French: \(C' \ copula \ [\text{focus } S] \ qu(i) \ ts \ V \ (DO) \ (\text{Indo})\)

In French, the well-known *que/qui alternation is at work here (3b and 4b). The fact that *que surfaces as *qui has been explained as a consequence of the S being extracted from the tensed complement clause and moved across it to a higher functional position (Kayne 1976, Rizzi 1990, Rizzi and Shlonsky 2007). Because of special restrictions on S-extraction, from that-trace effects (Perlmutter 1968, Chomsky and Lasnik 1997) to more recent Criterial freezing (Rizzi and Shlonsky 2007), the morphology of the *that-COMP is altered iff the embedded S is extracted. Thus, the presence of *qui here signals that the S has been moved from the canonical position to the focal region. Predictably, here the use of *que leads to ungrammaticality (5a); differently, the phonetically reduced form *qu’ is perfectly fine (5b):

(5) a. * C’est Jean que a bu ton vin
    \[C’\text{COP John *que} \ has \ drunk \ your \ wine\]
    'It’s Jean that drank your wine'
   b. C’est Jean qu’a a tuon vin
    \[C’\text{COP John qu} \ has \ drunk \ your \ wine\]

No such alternation is at work in Trevigiano. Please note that, in both languages, long-distance constructions require for the higher and the lower COMPs to be realized (6a-b). In French, the embedding COMP is expectedly *not subject to the *que/qui alternation, because it is not crossed-over by the S:

(6) a. A Maria a pensa *(ke) ze Giani *(ke) ga bevuo tuo el vin
    \[The \ Mary \ she \ thinks \ ke \ COP John \ ke \ has \ drunk \ all \ the \ wine\]
    'Mary thinks it’s John that drank up the wine'
   b. Marie pense *(que) c’est Jean *(qui) a bu tout le vin
    \[Mary \ thinks \ que \ c’\text{COP John qui} \ has \ drunk \ all \ the \ wine\]

In Trevigiano, finite Vs are always construed with the corresponding S-clitic. Thus, a lexical S is systematically followed by the corresponding S-clitic (7a) (Bonan 2018). Curiously though, this generalization does not hold in clefts, where the S-clitic can neither follow the lexical S (7b) nor appear in the embedded part of the cleft (7c):

(7) a. Toni *(el) ga magnà tuti i pomi
    \[Antony \ he \ has \ eaten \ all \ the \ apples\]
    'Antony ate up the apples'
   b. Ze Toni *(el) ke ga magnà tuti i pomi
    \[COP Antony \ he \ ke \ has \ eaten \ all \ the \ apples\]
    'It’s Antony that ate up the apples'
   c. Ze Toni ke *(el) ga magnà tuti i pomi
    \[COP Antony \ ke \ he \ has \ eaten \ all \ the \ apples\]

Rizzi (2006) claims that, in unmarked sentences, the S position expresses (at least) an aboutness property. Since scope-discourse criteria are encoded by heads, the Subject Criterion must involve a head in TP (plausibly Subj°) that triggers movement of the subject-DP to its Spec, thus determining the aboutness interpretation at the Interface. Differently from French, in Northern Italian dialects this functional head is made morphologically visible as a subject
clitic (Poletto 2000, Manzini and Savoia 2005). The absence of a \(S\)-clitic from the low part of \(S\) clefts and the impossibility for the focalized \(S\) to be construed with a clitic is evidence that the former has been moved from its canonical position. This is further confirmed by the fact that, in \(S\)-clefts, the \(S\) does not express aboutness, which is rather encoded in the low clause. Interestingly, in TV the same behaviour is observed in \(S\)-relative clauses, as discussed in 2.1. Finally, notice that in Trevigiano also reverse clefts are possible (8a-b), but exclusively with a contrastive focus reading. The relevant structure is given in (9):

(8) a. Toni ze ke ga magnà tuti i pomi (no a Maria)! 
   Antony COP ke has eaten all the apples (NEG the Mary) 
   'It’s Antony that ate up the apples (not Mary)'

b. To fiol ze ke ga assà el cancel verto (no to fia)! 
   Your son COP ke has left the gate open (NEG your daughter) 
   'It’s your son that left the gate open (not your daughter)'

(9) Subject cleft (reverse type) 

Trevigiano: [focus \(S\)] copula ke \(t_S\) V (DO) (IndO) 

The fact that these structures are not available in French is probably due to the very limited availability of focus fronting in this language, even outside of clefts\(^4\).

1.1.2. Declarative Object Clefts

Just as \(S\)-clefts, the declarative DO-clefts of Trevigiano and French require for an overt COMP. Regular clefts are possible in both languages (10a-b), whereas reverse clefts are only available in Trevigiano, and only with a contrastive focus interpretation (11a-b). The data are summarized in (12a-c):

(10) a. Ze Nane *(ke) i\(^5\) gà visto al marcà 
   John COP ke they have seen at the market 
   'It’s John that they saw at the market'

b. C’est Jean *(que) nous avons vu au marché 
   'It’s John that we saw at the market'

(11) a. Nane ze *(ke) i gà visto al marcà! 
   John COP ke they have seen at the market 
   '(False!) It’s John that they saw at the market'!

\(^4\) As suggested to me by my reviewer, whom I wish to thank.

\(^5\) Let me point out that in non-\(S\) clefts, realizing a lexical \(S\) along with the \(S\)-clitic sounds very degraded (1a-b):

(I) a. ?? Ze Nane ke e tose e gà visto al marcà 
   COP John that the girls they have seen at the market 
   'It’s John that the girls saw at the market'

b. ?? Ze el me can ke i tosati i gà moeà 
   COP the my dog that the boys they have let out 
   'It’s my dog that the boys let out'

This unexpected property suggests that \(SubjP\) might be ill-realized also in non-\(S\) clefts. The possibilities are two: either Spec\(SubjP\) is truncated, which is theoretically undesirable, or the whole \(SubjP\) is inactivated and \(S\)-clitics actually realize a head structurally lower than \(Subj\). I leave this question open for further investigation.
b. * Jean c’est que nous avons vu au marché!
  \( \text{French}\) John \( \text{c’COP que}\) we have seen at the market
  '(False!) It’s John that we saw at the market'

(12) \textbf{Object cleft (regular)}

a. Trevigiano: Copula \([\text{focus DO}\] ke \(\text{(*S\_lexical)}\) S-cl V tDO (IndO)

b. French: C' copula \([\text{focus DO}\] qu(e) S V tDO (IndO)

(12) \textbf{Object cleft (reverse)}

c. Trevigiano: \([\text{focus DO}\] copula ke \(\text{(*S\_lexical)}\) S-cl V tDO (IndO)

Predictably, in Trevigiano the S-clitic can (and indeed must) appear in the low clause here - it \textit{does} occupy its canonical position. In French object clefts, the COMP that introduces the low part is \textit{que}, which is predicted because it is not crossed over by \(S\)-movement. The phonetically reduced version of the COMP, \textit{qu’}, is compulsory when the embedded \(S\) has a vocalic onset (13a), whereas \textit{qui} is always excluded (13b):

(13) a. C’est Jean qu’ils ont croisé au théâtre
  \(\text{French}\) C’\text{COP} John qu’they have met at the theater
  'It’s John that they met at the theater!'

b. * C’est Jean qui nous avons croisé au théâtre
  \(\text{French}\) C’\text{COP} John qui we have met at the theater
  'It’s John that we saw at the market'

1.1.3 \textit{Declarative Indirect Object and Adjunct Clefts}

In French and Trevigiano, focus via clefting of an indirect object or adjunct is possible (14a-b and 15a-b, respectively). Again, the regular construction is available in both languages:

(14) a. Ze a Toni *(ke) a ghe ga dato tuti i pomi
  \(\text{Trevigiano}\) COP to Antony \(ke\) she DAT has given all the apples
  'It’s to Antony that she gave all the apples'

b. C’est à Jean *(que) Marie a filé des sous
  \(\text{French}\) C’\text{COP} to John \text{que}\ Mary has given some money
  'It’s to John that Mary gave some money'

(15) a. Zé al marcà *(ke) go catà to santoea
  \(\text{Trevigiano}\) COP at the market \(ke\) have\text{1PS} met your godmother
  'It’s at the market that I met your godmother'

b. C’est au Rex *(qu’) ils passent Spiderman
  \(\text{French}\) C’\text{COP} at the Rex \text{qu’} they project Spiderman
  'It’s at the Rex that Spiderman is on'

Reverse clefts, expressing contrastive focus, are only possible in Trevigiano (16a-b):

(16) a. Al marcà ze *(ke) go catà to santoea!
  \(\text{Trevigiano}\) At the market \(COP ke\) have\text{1PS} met your godmother
  '(False!) It’s at the market that I met your godmother!'

b. * Au marché c’est que j’ai croisé ta marraine!
  \(\text{French}\) At the market \(c’COP que\) I have met your godmother
The relevant orders are summarized in (17a-c):

(17) **Indirect Object / Adjunct cleft** (regular)
   a. Trevigiano: Copula \([\text{focus IO/Adv }] \text{ke} \ (*\text{S}_{\text{lexical}}) \ S-\text{cl} \ V \ (DO) \ t_{IO/Adv}\)
   b. French: \(C\) ' copula \([\text{focus IO/Adv }] \text{qu(e)} \ S \ V \ (DO) \ t_{IO/Adv}\)

(17) **Indirect Object / Adjunct cleft** (reverse)
   c. Trevigiano: \([\text{focus DO }] \text{copula ke} \ (*\text{S}_{\text{lexical}}) \ S-\text{cl} \ V \ (DO) \ t_{IO/Adv}\)

All observations made in 1.1.2 for DO-clefts also apply here.

1.1.4 *Intermediate remarks*

In both languages under investigation, in long-distance questions the clefted element is realized either in the embedded part (18a-b) or undergo total fronting (19a-b):

(18) a. A Maria a pensa \(\text{[ke ze Nane ke te ga catà al marcà]}\)
    The Mary she thinks \(\text{ke cop} \text{John ke you have met at the market}\)
   clefted "Mary thinks that it's John that you met at the market"
   "The Mary she thinks [ke *S _lexical_ ke te ga catà al marcà]"
   Trevigiano

   b. Marie pense \(\text{[que c'est Jean que tu as croisé au marché]}
    Mary thinks \(\text{que C'COP John que you have met at the market}\)
   "Mary thinks that it's John that you met at the market"'
   "Mary thinks que *COP John que you have met at the market"
   French

(19) a. Ze Nane ke a Maria a pensa \(\text{[ke te ga catà al marcà]}\)
    COP John ke the Mary she thinks \(\text{ke you have found at the market}\)
   "Cleft in embedded""C'est Jean qui Marie pense qui a tout bu"
    "C'est Jean que Marie pense qui tu a tout bu"
    Trevigiano

   b. C'est Jean que Marie pense \(\text{[que tu as croisé au marché]}\)
    C'est Jean que Marie pense qui tu a tout bu
   "Cleft in matrix""C'est Jean que Marie pense qui tu has all drunk"
    "C'est Jean que Marie pense qui tu has all drunk"
   French

The *que/qui alternation* creates interesting patterns in long-distance S-clefts (20):

(20) a. Marie pense *que_ C’est Jean qui_ (i) a tout bu
    Cleft in embedded
   "Mary thinks *que C’est Jean qui (i) has all drunk"
   "Mary thinks it’s John that drank everything up"

   b. C’est Jean que Marie pense qui a tout bu
    Cleft in matrix
   "C'est Jean que Marie pense qui has all drunk"
   "C'est Jean que Marie pense qui has all drunk"

   c. * C’est Jean qui Marie pense qu’a tout bu
    Cleft in matrix
   "C'est Jean qui Marie pense qui has all drunk"

   d. * C’est Jean qui Marie pense qui a tout bu
    Cleft in matrix
   "C'est Jean qui Marie pense qui has all drunk"

   Example (20a), where clefting is realized in the embedded part is accepted by all speakers. (20b), where the focalised S is in the matrix, is accepted by most speakers. All speakers refuse (20c-d), and those who refuse (b) recognise that it is indeed better than (c-d). (20b) is the only possible structure for long-distance clefts with matrix focus – the fact that it displays the *que/qui alternation* in the low clause but not in the matrix part suggests that the focalised S has indeed been raised from an embedded position, as in (21):

(21) **C’est Jean que [ Marie pense t[C'est Jean] qui t[Jean a tout bu]**
   "That the higher que is not subject to the *que/qui alternation* raises the question of how such sentence is derived – either (i) via complex computations involving movement of
remnants to the matrix (21), or (ii) COP-foc does not move to the high LP from an embedded position because the COPULA itself selects a long-distance sentence as its complement (22):

\[(22) \quad \text{C'est} \, \text{Jean que [ Marie pense t[Jean] qui tJean a tout bu ]} \]

The latter option is theoretically more desirable than the former, and follows the direction of extensive literature on locality (Rizzi 1990 and further related works, Rizzi and Shlonsky 2007). In fact, the alternation is active only when S-extraction is local (i.e. when it targets the first CP) and fails to apply in case of non-local movement. Let us tentatively suggest that there might be more than just locality at play here, and that the que/qui alternation is at play iff the S that crosses over Fin° is also the S of the clause where it lands.

To summarize, declarative clefts in both varieties require for an overt COMP ke/qu(e)/qui(i), and the major difference between the two seems to lie in the presence of ce in French. Trevigiano also has reverse clefts, but only in the contrastive focus interpretation, which is excluded in (all varieties of) French. Also, it has been argued that a special property of clefted subjects in Trevigiano, namely the impossibility for them to be followed by the corresponding clitic and the lack of a S-clitic from the low part of S-clefts, constitutes evidence in favour of an analysis where the focalized S is moved from its canonical position.

1.2. Clefting in interrogative Sentences

CLEFTS are the most unmarked formation strategy in many Northern Italian dialects (Poletto 1993, Poletto and Vanelli 1993, Benincà and Poletto 2004, a.o.). In Trevigiano, SCII is compulsory. In clefts, the COP inverts with the enclitic pronoun o – the presence of this dummy pronoun, that has no overt declarative counterpart, is unsurprising in a language whose interrogative pronominal series, in line with much literature on Northern Italian dialects (Poletto and Pollock 2000-2015, Munaro et al. 2001), is richer than the assertive one. Trevigiano has three types of wh-clefts - regular (23a), reverse (23b) and reduced (23c):

\[(23) \quad \begin{array}{ll}
\text{a.} & \text{COP-(o) Wh-phrase ke V...?} \\
\text{b.} & \text{Wh-phrase COP-(o)^6 ke V...e} \\
\text{c.} & \text{Wh-phrase ke V...?}^7
\end{array} \]

Regular clefts are very productive, whereas not all speakers accept reverse and reduced clefts. For the speakers who do accept all wh-clefts, all three are possible with any wh-item, also with wh-subjects, which are excluded from “regular” wh-questions. As in other Northern Italian dialects (a.o., Munaro 1999, Poletto 2000) in fact, genuine S-questions are degraded in TV in the absence of clefting.

In French, regular (24a-’) and reverse (24b-’) clefts are possible. Despite the availability of SCII as a question formation strategy in this language, ce-COP is never inverted (25a-b), which constitutes a first argument in favour of treating it as reanalysed unit:

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6 In (23a-c) the interrogative clitic –o is between brackets because it is not available for all speakers. Here, it is used in all examples - kindly note// it needs to be noted that the exact same structures minus -o are perfectly fine for some speakers.

7 One of my reviewers correctly pointed out that doubly-filled COMP questions are widespread in NIDS and nothing suggests they could actually be reduced biclausal structures. This question is, therefore, left open for further investigation.
The availability of reduced clefts of the (23c) type in French has almost gone unnoticed in the literature, yet it is not questionable (26). It is, however, subject to geographical constraints:

In 1.2.1, an overview of the morpho-syntax of interrogative clefts is provided – the most relevant properties will be summarized and discussed in section 2.

1.2.1. Interrogative Subject Clefts

In Trevigiano, as in declarative S-clefts, the COMP ke must be realized in all three types of wh-S-clefts, and the insertion of a S-clitic in the low part of the cleft sentence is excluded (27). The relevant orders are given in (28):²

(27) a. Ki ze-o *(ke) (*el) gà bevuo tuto el vin?  
Who COP-o ke he has drunk all the wine  
'Who is it that drank up the wine?'

b. Ze-o ki *(ke) (*el) gà bevuo tuto el vin  
COP-o who ke he has drunk all the wine

c. Ki *(ke) (*el) gà bevuo tuto el vin?  
Who ke he has drunk all the wine

³ For reasons discussed in 2.3, est-ce que (IIa-b) is not considered an inverted COP-expl but an INT-marker:

(II) a. Qui est-ce qui arrive ?  
Who INT qui arrives  
'Who's arriving?'

b. Qui est-ce que tu vois ?  
Who INT que you see  
'Who do you see?'

⁹ The [-animate] wh-words of Trevigiano, kossa and ke (“what”), have different distributions - the former is used in reverse (IIia) and regular (IIib) clefts, the latter in regular clefts (IIic):

(III) a. Kossa / *ke ze{o} *(ke) ga spakà el piter?  
Kossa / ke COP-o ke has broken the vase  
'What is it that broke the vase?'

b. Ze-o ?!kossa / ke *(ke) ga spakà el piter?  
COP-o kossa / ke ke has broken the vase
(28) Interrogative subject clefts:
   a. Regular: copula-o Wh-S ke (*Scl) V (DO) (IndO)
   b. Reverse: Wh-S copula-o ke (*Scl) V (DO) (IndO)
   c. Reduced: Wh-S ke (*Scl) V (DO) (IndO)

Yes/no S-clefts can be regular (29a), or reverse (29b). The latter either express surprise/disappointment or have an echo reading (kindly note that, in such cases, the interrogative syntax is lost altogether – SCll is in fact ruled out) (29c):

(29) a. Ze-o giani ke te gà parlà de sta roba? Trevigiano
   COP-o John ke to.you has spoken of this thing
   'Is it John who told you about this?'
   b. Giani ze-o ke te gà parlà de sta roba?!
   John COP-o ke to.you has spoken of this thing
   ECHO
   'John has spoken of this thing'
   c. Ze(*-o) ke te gà parlà de sta roba?!
   Giani ke to.you has spoken of this thing

The higher ke of indirect wh-questions can be omitted (30b), whereas the one that introduces indirect y/n-questions is compulsory (31b). In addition, the lower ke cannot be left out (30b-31b) – quite clearly, the three COMPs must realize distinct heads (Force* vs Fin*):

(30) a. * Vorja saver ki ze-o ke ga bevuo tuto el vin
   Would1PS know who COP-o ke has drunk all the wine
   'I would like to know who is it that drank up the wine'
   b. Vorja saver ki (ke) ze *(ke) ga bevuo tuto el vin
   Would1PS know who ke COP ke has drunk all the wine

(31) a. * A Maria pens-ea ke ze Giani ke ga bevuo tuto el vin?
   The Mary thinks-she ke COP John ke has drunk all the wine
   'Does Mary think it’s John that drank up the wine?'
   b. A Maria pens-ea *(ke) ze Giani *(ke) ga bevuo tuto el vin?
   The Mary thinks-she ke COP John ke has drunk all the wine

In French, both regular (32a) and reverse (32b) clefts are available. Predictably, in the interrogative S-clefts of French the COMP surfaces either as qui or its reduced form, quoi.10 The relevant orders are given in (33):

(32) a. C’est qui *(qu(i)) a mangé toute la tarte?
   French
   C’COP who qui has eaten all the cake
   'Who is it that ate up the cake?'
   b. Qui c’est *(qu(i)) a mangé toute la tarte?
   Who c’COP qui has eaten all the cake

10 When the focalised S is [-animate], the wh-clitic quoi(e) is excluded from all clefts. The wh-word quoi is used instead, which is only compatible with the regular construction (IV):

(IV)  a. * Quoi c’est qu(i) a cassé le vase?
   French
   Quoi c’COP qu(i) has broken the vase
   'What is it that broke the vase?'
   b. C’est quoi qu(i) a cassé le vase?
(33) **Interrogative subject clefts**

a. Regular: C’copula Wh-S *qu(i) V (DO) (IndO)

b. Reverse: Wh-S c’copula *qu(i) V (DO) (IndO)

*Reverse* yes/no clefts are possible, whereas regular ones are excluded (34a-b):

(34) a. C’est Jean qui a bu tout le vin?

*C’COP John qui has drunk all the wine"

‘*Is it John that drank up the wine?’

b. * Jean c’est qui a bu tout le vin?

John c’COP *qui has drunk all the wine*

Long distance questions are compatible with regular and reverse structures (35a-b), whereas indirect wh-questions can only be regular (36a-b). Interestingly, in *regular* clefts the (reduced version of the) COMP que can be inserted between the wh-word and the ce-COP cluster (35a-37a). The distribution of COMPs follows the same patterns seen in (30-31):

(35) a. Qui (qu’) c’est *(que) Marie pense qu(i) a bouffé tes artichauts? Indirect wh-

Who *qu’ c’COP que Mary thinks qu(i) has eaten your artichokes

‘Who is it that Mary thinks ate your artichokes?’

b. C’est qui *(que) Marie pense qu(i) a bouffé tes artichauts?

*C’COP who que Mary thinks qui has eaten your artichokes*

(36) a. Jean se demande qui (qu’) c’est qu(i) a bouffé tes artichauts

John himself asks who *qu’ c’COP qui has eaten your artichokes

‘John wonders who it is that ate your artichokes’

b. * Jean se demande c’est qui qu(i) a bouffé tes artichauts

John himself asks c’COP who *qu(i) has eaten your artichokes

1.2.2. **Interrogative Object Clefts**

In Trevigiano, when a [+animate] DO is questioned, all wh-clefts are available (37)11:

(37) a. Ki ze-o *(ke) I ga fregà?

Who COP-o *ke he has ripped.off

‘Who is it that he ripped off?’

b. Ze-o ki *(ke) I ga fregà?

COP-o who *ke he has ripped.off

c. Ki *(ke) I ga fregà?

Who *ke he has ripped.off

---

11 If the focalized direct object is [-animate], only kossa can be used in regular (Va) and reduced (Vb) clefts, whereas *ke must be used in reverse structures (Vc):

(V) a. Kossa / *ke ze-o ke te ga magnà?

Kossa / ke COP-o *ke you have eaten

‘What is it that you ate?’

b. Kossa / *ke ke te ga magnà?

Kossa / ke *ke you have eaten

c. Ze-o ??kossa / ke ke te ga magnà ?

COP-o kossa / ke *ke you have eaten
Interestingly, non-S wh-clefts are inconsistent with a lexical S doubled by a clitic (38a) – there must be a quasi-adjacency between COMP and the S-cl in the low part of the cleft. This is also supported by the impossibility of using unreduced pronominal clitics like el (“he”, realized here as /l/) (37a-c). The only way of successfully inserting a lexical S here is by dislocating\(^{12}\) it (38b). Summaries are given in (39):

(38) a. ?? Ki ze-o ke Toni l ga fregà?
   Who COP-o ke Tony he has ripped off
   ‘Who is it that Toni ripped off?’
   b. Ki ze-o ke l ga fregà, Toni?
   COP-o who ke he has ripped off # Toni
   ‘Toni, who is it that he ripped off?’

(39) **Interrogative direct object clefts:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Trevigiano</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a.</td>
<td>Regular: Copula-o Wh-DO ke (*S(_{lexical})) Scl V (IndO)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b.</td>
<td>Reverse: Wh-DO copula-o ke (*S(_{lexical})) Scl V (IndO)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c.</td>
<td>Reduced: Wh-DO ke (*S(_{lexical})) Scl V (IndO)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When it comes to yes/no DO-clefts, only regular structures are real questions (40a). The reverse cleft is only fine in the echo reading, hence the lack of SCII (40b):

(40) a. Ze-o Giani *(ke) te gà ciamà stamatina?
   COP-o John ke him have called this.morning
   ‘Is it John that you called this morning?’
   b. Giani ze *(ke) te gà ciamà stamatina?!
   John COP ke you have called this.morning

In French, as in Trevigiano, both regular and reverse clefts are possible (41a-b). Yes/no clefts are only compatible with regular structures (42a-b)\(^{13}\):

(41) a. Qui c’est que t’as croisé au marché?
   Who c’COP que you’have met at the market
   ‘Who is it that you met at the market?’
   b. C’est qui que t’as croisé au marché?
   C’COP who que you’have met at the market

(42) a. C’est Jean que t’as vu?
   C’COP John que you’have seen
   ‘Is it John that you saw?’
   b. * Jean c’est que t’as vu?
   Johan c’COP que you’have seen

---

\(^{12}\) In the gloss, I naively use the symbol # to signal the presence of a prosodic break.

\(^{13}\) And so is the [-animate] wh-phrase quoi (VIb):

(VI) a. C’est quoi que tu manges?
   C’COP quoi que you eat
   ‘What is it that you are eating?’
   b. * Quoi c’est que tu manges ?
   Quoi c’COP quoi que you eat
1.2.3. *Interrogative Indirect Object and Adjunct Clefts*

In Trevigiano, with [-animate] *DOs* all clefts are possible\(^{14}\). With [+animate] and [-animate] *DOs*, long-distance and indirect questions work exactly as they do when the questioned element is the *S*. The same observations apply to both languages with a wh-*IO* (43-44):

(43) a. A chi ze-o ke te ghe ga regaeà e rose?
   To whom COP-o *ke* you DAT have given the roses
   'To who is it that you gave the roses?'

b. A chi ke te ghe ga regaeà e rose?
   To who *ke* you DAT have given the roses

c. Ze-o a ki ke te ghe ga reaèe e rose?
   COP-o to who *ke* you DAT have given the roses

(44) a. A qui c’est que t’as offert le bouquet?
   To who c’COP *que* you’have given the bouquet
   'To who is it that you gave the bouquet?'

b. C’est à qui que t’as offert le bouquet?
   C’COP to who *que* you’have given the bouquet

Only *ki* and *kossa* can be construed with a preposition. In French, only *qui* and *quoi*. The [-animate] *IOs* of Trevigiano and French are only compatible, respectively, with the reverse and the regular construction (45a-b):

(45) a. A cossa ze-o ke te ghe ga dato na peada?
   To what COP-o *ke* you DAT have given a kick
   'What is it that you kicked?'

b. C’est à quoi que t’as filé un coup de pied?
   C’COP to what *que* you’have given a kick of foot

As for wh-adverbials, all the structures discussed so far are possible.

**Intermediate Remarks**

The wh-clefts of Trevigiano display the linear orders in (46). Two wh-landing sites are available, *Wh1* and *Wh2*. The COP-*expletive* cluster is placed right after *Wh1* or right before *Wh2*. *Wh2* is not available to all speakers, and neither is the possibility of using reduced clefts. The [-animate] wh-*DOs* have different distribution - *kossa* occupies *Wh1* (and very marginally *Wh2*), whereas *ke* is only grammatical in *Wh2*:

(46) a. **Matrix cleft:**
   {Wh1} (COP(-o)) {Wh2} *(ke) (S) S\(_{CL}\) (DAT) V (DO) (IO) (Adv\(^*\))\(^{15}\)

b. **Long-distance cleft:**
   {Wh1} (COP(-o)) {Wh2} *(ke) X thinks that (S) S\(_{CL}\) (DAT) V (DO) (IO) (Adv\(^*\))

c. **Indirect clefts:**
   X wonders {Wh1} (ke) (COP*(^-expl)) *(ke) (S) S\(_{CL}\) (DAT) V (DO) (IO) (Adv\(^*\))

---

\(^{14}\) The distribution of *kossa* and *ke* is the same as their *S* counterparts.

\(^{15}\) I use the asterix here to signal that adverbial “adjuncts” can be more than one.
In French, the main peculiarities are firstly the impossibility for *c’est* to undergo *SCII*, which in turn raises questions regarding its very nature as an element, and secondly, the marginality of reduced clefts. The COMPs behaviours in both languages hint to their respective nature. In indirect wh-questions, the *ke/que* COMP that follows the wh-phrase directly is optional, whereas the one that introduces indirect yes/no questions is compulsory. The latter, likely to realize *Force°*, is distinct from the former, which realizes the head of a low left peripheral *WhP* (Bonan, 2018). The main differences between the two projections are their position (high *LP* vs a position lower than all topics), and the (un)availability of their Spec as a wh-landing site. A third COMP, the clefting homophonous *ke/que*, can never be omitted; also, it is the only one subject to the *que/qui* alternation – plausibly a *FinP* head.

To conclude, as aforementioned, clefting is *focus*. Wh-questions are also *focus* (Rizzi 1997 and related works), and as such question the status of interrogative wh-clefts. Are they informationally richer than non-clefted wh-questions? How are they derived? These questions will be addressed in the next section.

2. **THE FINE STRUCTURE OF CLEFTS**

This section overviews Belletti’s (2015) cartographic analysis of clefts, and discusses the modifications thereof needed to accommodate the data presented in section 1. This would be preceded by discussing some properties of *S*-extraction in Trevigiano that are relevant under any theoretic frameworks.

2.1. Subject-Extraction in TV

The data on the unacceptability of *S*-clitics in the low part of *S*-clefts (7a-c) clearly support the claim that in *S*-relatives the *S* must be extracted from a *vP*-internal position, rather than from the higher, *criterial* position (Rizzi 1982, Rizzi and Shlonsky 2007). In fact, this pattern is observed not only in the relative-like part of *S*-clefts (47a), but also in *S*-relatives (47b):

(47) a. *Zé el bocia che (*el) ze drio magnar tuti i biscoti*
   *COP the boy that he is PROGR eat all the biscuits*
   *It’s the boy that’s eating up the biscuits*

   b. *El bocia che (*el) ze drio magnar tuti i biscoti el ze to fiol*
   *The boy that he is PROGR eat all the biscuits he is your son*
   *The boy that’s eating up the biscuits is your son*

Plausibly, the same pattern, namely direct *S*-extraction out of *vP*, must be at play in both *S*-relatives and *S*-clefts. Also, since in French the reduced COMP *qu’* can be used instead of *qui* (48a-b), there must be a quasi-adjacency requirement between COMP and the *V* in *T°*:

(48) a. *C’est la jeune femme qu’a mangé tous les biscuits*
   *C’*COP the young lady *qu’*has eaten all the biscuits
   *It’s the young lady that ate up the biscuits’*

   b. *La jeune femme qu’a mangé tous les biscuits est ma copine*
   *The young woman *qu’*has eaten all the biscuits is my girlfriend*
   *The young lady that ate up the biscuits is my girlfriend’*
Following this observation, the TP of S-relatives and S-clefts must be subject to an inactivation of its higher portion\(^{16}\), and the extraction of the S must be modelled as in (49):

(49) \[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{[ForceP Force}^{\circ} \ldots \text{[FinP quile [SubjP [TP V \ldots [VP IS V}^{\circ} \text{[VP tv }\ldots]\ldots]}
\end{array}
\]

Either S-extraction is done directly from vP because SubjP is unavailable, or SubjP is not activated to circumvent a possible violation in terms of Criterial Freezing (Rizzi 2006, and extensive research) and the S is extracted straight from the lower, non-canonical S position. Either way, here SubjP is clearly not available to host cyclic movement of the S.

Let us tentatively suggest that at least the S-movement to the high clause of clefts is case-driven. In fact, if in S-clefts the structure of the COP-selected clausal argument is deficient at both CP and TP levels, it is unsurprising that NOM Case assignment might fail. To save the structure, the S moves to the focal region, where the COP assigns it NOM Case. Let us refer to this phenomenon as Exceptional Case Assignment (ECA). That movement of the S might be case-driven is further evidenced by clefts whose focalised element is a clause (50):

(50) a. C'est que [TP j'ai croisé mon ex en sortant de la gare] French
COP que I've met my ex while leaving from the station
'It's that I met my ex while I was leaving the station…'
b. * C'est [TP j'ai croisé mon ex en sortant de la gare] que
COP I've met my ex while leaving from the station that

Quite clearly, here the focalised S does not move to the high focal region because its clausal nature excludes the need for it to be assigned Case. Note also that the lack of movement does not derive from the “complexity” of the focalised element but just from its clausal nature, since very complex DPs can indeed be moved to the high part of the cleft (51):

(51) C'est [DP le fait d'avoir croisé mon ex en sortant de la gare] qui m'a rendue triste French
CCOP the fact of've have met my ex while leaving of the station qui me'has made sad
'It's crossing paths with my ex while getting out of the station that made me sad'

The exact same observations can be extended to interrogative S-clefts.

2.2. The Cartography of Clefts

Haegeman et al. (2015) argued that it-clefts are structurally and semantically similar to focus fronting, to wh-questions, and to relativization. As the authors show, two cartographic models have been proposed for cleft-structures: the “embedded” (Belletti 2009-2015), and the “matrix” analyses (Meinunger 1997, Frascarelli and Ramaglia 2013).

The former derives clefts via A’-movement of the focalised element to the low SpecFocP. Throughout the derivation, clefts are bi-clausal - the COP projects a clausal domain called TP1, whereas the cleft relative is an embedded clausal projection called TP2, as in (52):

(52) \[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{[TP1 it be [VP be [FocP the CAT [FinP that [TP2 Mary saw the cat]]]]]}
\end{array}
\]

\(^{16}\) In the first version of this paper, the existence of a truncated IP in S-clefts was posited. Samo, who I wish to thank for the useful comments on a draft of this paper, suggested not mentioning truncation of any kind and rather positing that the COMP is generated inside IP and then raises to Fin” - the S-clitic is not realized otherwise it would cause intervention when the COMP raises. However, this fails to capture the fact that it is indeed possible to have a S-clitic in non-subject clefts. Let us rather posit the presence of some kind of inactivation of SubjP, operated to avoid cyclic movement of the S and a violation in terms of Criterial Freezing.
SpecTP1, the canonical S position, hosts the dummy S. The derivation is made via wh-movement within TP2. This account captures both the interpretive similarities of clefts and focus fronting (the focalised element moves to SpecFocP), and the parallelism with the derivation of relatives, which would be otherwise lost in matrix analyses.

In the next sections, an overview of Belletti (2009-2015) analysis for clefts (2.2.1) will be followed by a presentation of the arguments in favour of a refinement thereof to account for the morpho-syntax of declarative (2.3.1) and interrogative (2.3.2) clefts in Trevigiano and French.

2.2.1 Belletti (2015)

Belletti’s analysis (2009) is comprised of two essential aspects. First, the COP of clefts selects a complement Small Clause (SC) reduced at least at the level of ForceP, very likely right above FocusP (2012) (53):

\[
\text{COP-selected SC: } \{\text{TP} \rightarrow \text{Spec} \rightarrow \text{FocP } \rightarrow \text{Top } \rightarrow \ldots \rightarrow \text{FinP } \rightarrow \text{TP } \rightarrow \text{T°} \}]
\]

Second, given that a predication relation is established within the SC of clefts, the existence of a specialized Pred projection in the LP of the SC is posited (54):

\[
\text{COPULA: } \{\text{TP} \rightarrow \text{Spec} \rightarrow \text{FocP } \rightarrow \text{Pred } \rightarrow \ldots \rightarrow \text{FinP } \rightarrow \text{TP } \rightarrow \text{T°} \}]
\]

Finally, two positions are exploited for the two types of focus. Focus of New Information (S-clefts) makes use of a VP-peripheral FocusP - the focalised S is interpreted in the same position as the new information postverbal S of null-subject languages as Italian (55):

\[
\text{S clefts expresses contrastive focus, first the quasi-argument is merged in SpecFocP, then the argument to be focalised moves into the specialized FocusP and, finally, ce moves to the matrix S position to satisfy the Subject Criterion (Rizzi and Shlonsky, 2007). The last step where extraposition is performed to keep FinP in a local configuration with the quasi-argument is left out of the discussion here as it does not have an immediate bearing. The derivation is summarized in (57):}
\]

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If the quasi-argument is merged in \( \text{SpecPredP} \), in NI S-clefts the possibility for the S to move directly from the embedded TP into the NI \( vP \)-internal FocusP is ruled out by RM as the presence of the quasi-argumental S would cause intervention. To overcome this problem, Belletti posits a derivation that crucially relies on Kayne and Pollock’s (2009) analysis of \( ce \), where a DP headed by the neutral article \( ce \), and containing a silent functional nominal head THING, [\( ce \) THING], is merged directly in \( \text{SpecPredP} \). Since THING enters a strictly local relation with \( \text{FinP} \) (through \( \text{Pred}^\circ \)), it is actually identified with it (\( ce \) THING=\( \text{FinP} \)) – when the S moves into FocusP, there is no intervention. The derivation is summarized in (58):

\[
\begin{align*}
(58) \quad [TP \ldots [\text{FocPnI} \quad [\text{vP COP} \quad [\text{CP} \ldots [\text{FocPc/e} \quad \Omega_r \text{[\text{PredP} \quad [\text{ce/it} \text{ Pred}^\circ \text{ [\text{FinP} \quad C \quad [TP \quad S \quad v \quad o \quad ]}]]]]]]]]]
\end{align*}
\]

Clearly, the analysis of the quasi-argument of the cleft as containing a silent functional N is extended by Belletti also to S and non-S clefts expressing contrastive focus.

2.3. Belletti (2015), revisited

The theoretical desire that has animated extensive research in formal linguistics in the last years is for the left and the low peripheries of the clause to be structurally identical across languages. Nonetheless, it does not seem undesirable for different languages to exploit different left and low peripheral positions to convey similar meanings.

The data discussed in section 1 raise a number of questions, which will be addressed here. First, as discussed at the beginning of section 2, it is crucial to posit that in S-clefts the extraction of the S is done not via the canonical S position, but straight out of the \( vP \) - it appears capital to posit that the TP of the COP-selected clause is deficient. The unavailability of the canonical S position is witnessed by the absence of a S-clitic from the embedded TP, and by the fact that the focalised S is exceptionally assigned NOM case by the COP via a last-resort strategy, ECA. Crucially, I argued that S-movement to the focal region is likely Case-driven, supporting my claim with data on the lack of such movement with clausal focalised elements. Also, the fact that the COP might always select a TP-deficient complement is partially visible in the non-S clefts of Trevigiano, where an adjacency requirement between the COMP \( che \) that introduces the low part of the cleft and the S-cl suggests that a (narrower instance of) inactivation must be at play.

At this stage, it is significant to redefine the status of \( c’est \). In fact, it is interesting to consider why SCI is ought to be banned from clefts in a language where it functions as a productive question-formation strategy, whereas in languages like English and Trevigiano \( S(Cl)It \) is systematically performed on it-COP. Crucially, this property does not derive from the nature of \( ce \) itself, given that this quasi-argumental pronoun \( can \) undergo SCI in French (59):

(59) a. \( \text{Qui est-}\ce{?} \text{ qui a vu Jean?} \)  
Who is-\ce{?} who has seen Jean  
‘Who saw Jean?’

b. \( \text{Serait-}\ce{?} \text{ possible d’y aller en train?} \)  
Would-\ce{?} possible of there go in train  
‘Would it be possible to go there by train?’

French
This property is not linked to register either. In fact, SCII is a rather formal question-information strategy, yet it is not excluded from the oral variety. For this reason, we would rather expect it to remain optional in oral French and not altogether ruled out.

It may be tempting to try to argue that the est-ce que questions of French are actually clefts with SCII on the ce-COP. However, this hypothesis seems rather unfounded if one thinks that est-ce que also appears in genuine information seeking yes/no questions – which would rather argue in favour of a treatment of est-ce que (eszk/) as a pure Q(uestion)-marker. Est-ce que might have arisen from clefts with SCII at a previous linguistic stage, but it has properties that push for treating it as a reanalysed interrogative cluster in the contemporary spoken variety.

The claim here is that the c’est of written French is actually a reanalysed whole, /sel/, in the contemporary oral variety. This reanalysed cluster is a fully-fledged COP that realizes the head of a projection whose Spec hosts a phonetically null “dummy” pronoun (60):

(60) \[ [\text{CopP} \varnothing_{\text{expl}} [\text{se}]] \]

Hence the difference between the wh-clefts of French and Trevigiano does not lie in the absence of SCII in the former, but in the presence of an overt “dummy” pronoun in the latter.

Finally, the availability of more cleft types in Trevigiano suggests that, cross-linguistically, not all focal positions might be activated in the same ways and contexts.

2.3.1 The fine structure of declarative clefts

To accommodate the data in section 1, a revision of Belletti’s (2015) analysis seems in order. First, if c’est is really a crystallized unit /sel/, then the pronoun associated with it must be a null true expletive, not a quasi-argument. In fact, in oral French it is indeed possible to have null expletives (61a-c) while null quasi-arguments are excluded (62):

(61) a. (II) faut que nous appelions mamie
   EXPL mus that we call grandma
   'We must call Grandma'

b. (II) vaut mieux que tu l'appelles de suite
   EXPL should better that you he'call of now
   'You had better call him now'

c. (II) manquerait plus que ça…
   EXPL miss que this
   'It's the last thing we want…'

(62) *(II) pleut
   'It rains'

The clefts of the oral variety might be undergoing a process of structural simplification: the newly-created COP /sel/ is associated with a null expletive S, which excludes the need to postulate the presence of a null nominal THING identified with FinP. In fact, whereas a S moved to the Spec of the COP from a vP-internal position would be subject to intervention, no intervention is expected to be caused by a S merged directly in the Spec of the COP. Let us posit a simplified COP-selected truncated LP, where no PredP is projected. Then, the possibility for Trevigiano to have reverse declarative clefts expressing contrastive focus queries the FocusP they exploit. Clearly, the relevant Spec must be higher than the position targeted by the COP, and hence left peripheral. This projection is bound to lie in the LP of the
COP and take the markedness of this type of cleft to follow from the presence of further movement compared to a regular cleft expressing contrastive focus.

Let us see how clefts in Trevigiano and French could be derived. Clefts are bi-partite structures, which means that four focal positions must be there: two left peripheral and two low peripheral FocusP, as in (66). The presence of a realized Fin° in the low clause clearly signals that the vP-internal FocusP of the low clause is not involved in the derivation, hence only three focal positions seem to be available: (I) the left peripheral FocusP of the COP-selected SC; (II) the vP-internal FocusP of the COP; and (III) the left peripheral FocusP of the COP (63):

\[
\begin{align*}
(63) \quad [\text{CP(high)}] & [\text{FocP} \text{III} \text{Foc°} \ldots [\text{TP} \ldots [\text{FocP} \text{II} \text{Foc°} \ldots [\text{vP} \text{COP} \ldots [\text{FocP} \text{I} \text{Foc°} \ldots [\text{FinP} \text{C} ]]]]]
\end{align*}
\]

Positing that (I) is the focal position targeted by contrastive focus and (II) is the focal position targeted by focus of NI, as in Belletti (2015), allows to derive the linear order of regular declarative clefts correctly. The third focal position, (III), is made use of also in interrogatives and exploited in the reverse declarative clefts of Trevigiano. These clefts, that are informationally richer in comparison with regular contrastive clefts and express a certain degree of annoyance, have a [+EXCL] feature to check in the higher LP, which is done by moving the focalised element there (64):

\[
\begin{align*}
(64) \quad [\text{CP[EX]}] & [\text{FocP} \text{Toni} \text{Foc°} \ldots [\text{vP} \text{ze} \ldots [\text{FocPNI} \text{Foc°} \ldots [\text{vP} \text{TV} \ldots [\text{FocP/C} \text{Foc°} \ldots [\text{FinP} \text{ke} \ldots ]]]]]
\end{align*}
\]

It is theoretically desirable for additional meaning to be paired with a more complex derivation. The unavailability of such structures in French is likely to be bound with inherent properties of this language, a research of which is beyond the scope of this article

2.3.2 The fine structure of interrogative clefts

Let us briefly address the computations further needed to derive interrogative clefts, taking for granted that wh-movement is cyclic and that wh-clefts must involve further movement compared to their declarative counterparts. Wh-clefts cannot express focus of New Information in Belletti’s sense, so wh-words must first be moved to the contrastive FocusP (I, in the LP of the low clause) and then undergo “regular” wh-movement to the matrix FocusP (III). This captures the fact that both regular and reverse wh-clefts are available in French and Trevigiano, whereas the same is not true in declaratives – this alternation must derive from a property of wh-clefts itself.

In the unmarked case, a focalised wh-word must move from the low left peripheral focalisation site to the matrix FocusP, and then the COP moves higher, giving rise to a regular wh-cleft of the c’est-wh-type. To derive a reverse wh-cleft of the wh-c’est-type, more structure will be needed, hence a further CP-domain will be projected (65):

\[
\begin{align*}
(65) \quad [\text{CP} \text{wh-phrase} \ldots [\text{CP(high)}] \text{COP } \text{twh-} \ldots [\text{TP} \ldots ]]]
\end{align*}
\]

Even though this move might seem theoretically unfounded, it is indeed justified by the presence, in related varieties like Canadian French, of structures like (66a-b) (Mathieu 2009), which will henceforth be called regular doubling (RegD) and reverse doubling (RevD) clefts:

\[
\begin{align*}
(66) \quad \text{a. } & \quad \text{C’est où c’est que tu vas?} \quad \text{RevD} \\
& \quad \text{C’COP where c’COP qu’ you go} \\
& \quad \text{‘Where are you going?’}
\end{align*}
\]
These *tri-clausal* clefts clearly demonstrate that a higher *CP* domain can indeed be projected in wh-clefts. The possibility for Canadian French to have “doubling” clefts might be linked to an ability to pronounce copies. This property merits further scholarly work.

To conclude, the claim that no *PredP* might be projected in the varieties described in this paper is not invalidated by the presence of –*o* in Trevigiano if one reconsiders Roberts’ (2010) claim that interrogative *S*-clitics are base-generated in the *LP*, extending it to non-assertive expletives. If –*o* is the phonetically realized head of the left peripheral projection to which the COP is attracted (or that of an adjacent, directly following one), then no intervention is expected in the derivation, hence excluding the need for *PredP*.

**CONCLUSIONS**

This paper demonstrated that the declarative and interrogative clefts of Trevigiano, a Venetan dialect, and *contemporary oral French*, have morpho-syntactic peculiarities that set them apart from the *it*-clefts described in Belletti (2015) and Reeve (2000). The crucially innovative claim here is that these derive from a process of structural simplification.

A systematic comparison between the *it*-clefts of these two Romance languages shed light on lesser-discussed aspects related to the derivation of clefts, namely *S*-extraction, the structure of the *TP* of the COP-selected clause of clefts, but also the very nature of the COP itself and of its dummy *S*. It was argued that Belletti’s embedded analysis needs (i) some implementations, and (ii) minor modifications to accommodate the data presented in this paper. In fact, (i) the availability of the matrix *FocusP* in declaratives needs to be posited to derive Trevigiano’s reverse structures, which are excluded from French. This same focal position is exploited in the regular interrogative clefts of both varieties, whereas more structure is needed to derive reverse wh-clefts. As for (ii), it was argued that a treatment of the *S* of the COP as a *true* null expletive is desirable for the declarative clefts of both varieties, and as a left-peripheral *overt* head in the case of Trevigiano interrogatives. This follows from the observation that French *c'est* is a reanalysed COP associated to a null *true* expletive, which excludes the presence of a *PredP*.

To conclude, it is worth noting that *c'est* has already been considered to be “partly fossilized” in the literature, because it can only undergo minimal variations in tense, mood and (marginally) number (Carter-Thomas 2009). In fact, contrary to English where *it*-clefts are frequently used in the past tense, in French *it*-clefts are systematically employed in the present tense, even when the embedded part of the cleft is [+PAST]. Nonetheless, the singular/plural distinction does not appear to be totally frozen, at least in written French though it is not frequently displayed in the oral variety. Moreover, the range of *relative pronouns* that can be used in French is significantly narrower than it is in English. These observations can be extended to Trevigiano as well, where the use of the past tense is not excluded from the copular part of clefts, even though it is largely less common than in the present tense, and the use of *ke* is over-generalized. Finally, the use of the relative pronoun *que/qui* in French and *che* in Trevigiano is compulsory, which is not always the case with the object pronouns of English (e.g. *that/which*). As a consequence, in the rare cases when the French COP is marked for tense or number agreement, we must be dealing with English-like clefts. Crucially, these are bound to have a different structure compared to those of Romance, as addressed here and in Belletti (2015), resulting in a variety of distinct syntactical properties.
Although this work offers only partial answers to the rich array of questions it raises, it may potentially set the bases for further investigation of clefts in Romance, whose internal structure will hopefully become a privileged subject for future research.

REFERENCES


