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INTERROGATIVES AND RELATIVES IN SOME VARIETIES OF ENGLISH

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Abstract.

After a general overview of standard and non standard strategies of direct interrogative clause formation in some varieties of English, the thesis focuses on the phenomenon of subject-auxiliary inversion in the wh-indirect interrogative clause in Hiberno English.

We argue that the wh-dependent interrogative clause and the headless relative clause display a number of similarities and more than one point of contact in a diachronic perspective. In the light of this, our syntactic proposal discusses the possibility, in the Cartographic Approach, that wh-indirect interrogative clause displaying inversion has the syntactic structure of a headless relative clause, and not that of an interrogative. In the “fine structure” of the Left Periphery, the wh-item is thus hosted in the Spec of the higher projection WhRelP dedicated to wh-relativisers and not in the Spec of the lower IntWhP, the projection in which interrogative wh-elements are located in both main and embedded contexts. It follows that the activation of the higher projection WhRelP does not prevent verb raising to C and inversion can display. In order to support this hypothesis, evidence is provided from both Romance and Germanic languages.

In the last Chapter, we turn our attention the peculiar status of the wh-element *what*. Adopting a cross-linguistic perspective, we analyse the occurrence of *what* in both the interrogative and relative system. In order to provide evidence in favour of the underspecified nature of *what* in English, we concentrate on the “why”-like interpretation in the colloquial language and in the dialectal varieties and on the relative uses of *what* and its distinctive syntactic features in the dialects of England. In this regard we will show that there are reasons to believe that relative *what* has become a complementiser.

Presentazione.

Dopo un'introduzione generale alle principali strategie, standard e non standard, di formazione della frase interrogativa diretta in alcune varietà di inglese, la tesi si concentra sul fenomeno di inversione ausiliare-soggetto nella frase interrogativa indiretta wh nell'inglese d'Irlanda.

Partendo dall'osservazione che la frase interrogativa indiretta wh e la frase relativa senza testa mostrano delle similitudini motivate in parte anche da fatti diacronici, la nostra proposta di analisi discute, in un approccio cartografico, la possibilità che le frasi interrogative indirette

wh che mostrano inversione abbiano in realtà la struttura sintattica di una frase relativa senza testa e non di una interrogativa. In una struttura articolata della periferia sinistra, gli elementi wh occupano la posizione di specificatore della proiezione alta WhRelP, dedicata ai relativi, e non la proiezione più bassa IntWhP, nella quale si trovano gli elementi wh interrogativi sia in contesti diretti che incassati. Segue che l'attivazione della proiezione alta WhRelP non impedisce la salita del verbo e l'inversione può occorrere. Le varietà romanze e germaniche forniscono prove a sostegno di questa ipotesi.

Nell'ultimo capitolo, viene discusso lo status particolare dell'elemento wh *what*. Adottando un prospettiva cross linguistica, la tesi analizza l'occorrenza di *what* sia nel sistema interrogativo che in quello relativo, al fine di fornire prove in favore della natura sottospecificata di *what* in inglese. Ci concentreremo, da una parte, su un'interpretazione particolare di *what* nelle varietà colloquiali e dialettali, in cui l'elemento assume approssimativamente il significato di *perché* ("why"-like *what*) e, dall'altra, sulle caratteristiche sintattiche di *what* come elemento relativo nei dialetti inglesi, mostrando come il *what* relativo, unico caso fra i pronomi wh, sia diventato un complementatore.

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Introduction

Starting from the observation that the interpretation of the indirect interrogative and of the headless relative may sometimes be ambiguous between the two clause types, the fact that some varieties of English, Hiberno English among others, display subject-auxiliary inversion as a distinctive syntactic feature in the indirect interrogative clause suggests that the syntax of embedded questions deserves to be further explored. On this respect, the ambiguity between headless relatives and dependent interrogatives should also be accounted for in formal terms. Obviously, the general optionality of embedded inversion and the different degree of marginality of the phenomenon in several varieties potentially represents a problematic aspect for the analysis.

Starting from the early 90's, two major lines of research have systematically treated the phenomenon of embedded inversion in Hiberno English: (i) The syntactic analysis proposed by Henry (1995) is discussed within the framework of Principles and Parameters, in particular its version known as the Minimalist program of Chomsky (1992); a noteworthy fact in her proposal is that she analyses the phenomenon in Belfast English providing a unified proposal for inversion in both the indirect interrogative clauses and the dependent clauses embedded within main questions. (ii) The proposal outlined by McCloskey (1992) and related work is along the lines of the *CP-recursion analysis*, that is, the occurrence of multiple CPs that represent the final landing sites of moved elements; he establishes a strict correlation between the occurrence of embedded inversion and the possibility of adjunction. This line of research is partially discussed and challenged by Henry (1995) and is only marginally touched upon in the present dissertation.

The theoretical framework we adopt here is that of the cartographic approach and of the “fine structure” of the Left Periphery, as outlined in Rizzi (1997) and related works, Benincà (2001) and related works and Benincà & Poletto (2004). An articulated structure of the complementiser layer, as proposed by this line of research, enables us to account for embedded inversion in terms of different syntactic projections available in different “portions” of CP layer.

The accessibility of CP in dependent clauses has already been discussed for Romance languages, (see Benincà (2006) for medieval varieties); we intend to adopt here this proposal and see whether it may be applied to Hiberno English, basing on the assumption that proposals for cartographic maps of CP are supposed to hold cross-linguistically. The fact that the indirect interrogative and the headless relative clause may virtually share an identical syntactic structure is not totally unexpected if one considers that the two clause types share some relevant syntactic

features concerning *wh*-elements: both clause types are introduced by *wh*-pronouns (interrogative and relative) and both clauses are derived by *wh*-movement.

Focussing on the *wh*-paradigm, *what*, displays a peculiar behavior in terms of interpretative and distributional properties. This behavior reflects on both the interrogative and the relative system; this has already been related to the status of underspecified *wh*-element in a cross-linguistic perspective by Munaro & Obenauer (1999) and Obenauer (2006) and related works. In this regard, this thesis intends to provide further evidence of the underspecified nature of *what*, using data from colloquial and dialectal varieties of English. *What*, as interrogative operator, confirms the pattern observed by the authors, but with a different spectrum of possibilities, as expected. The case of “why”-like *what*, for example, presents some interesting points of contact with different Romance varieties. Moreover, strong evidence also comes from the relative system and the occurrence of the *wh*-element *what* in headed relative clauses. In particular, the syntactic status of relative *what* – which is assumed here to be a complementiser – is to be related to the underspecified nature of this element.

The outline of the thesis is as follows.

The first Chapter provides the theoretical framework and the most relevant proposals for the “fine structure” of the Left Periphery. It also provides a description of the main sources from which a relevant amount of data is drawn and the methodological approach adopted during the fieldwork, focusing, in particular, on some problematic aspects.

The second Chapter consists of a descriptive overview of the main standard and nonstandard strategies of direct interrogative clause formation in some varieties of European and non European English.

The third Chapter is concerned with the indirect interrogative clause and the phenomenon of subject-auxiliary inversion in Hiberno English. It also contains the syntactic proposal and some pieces of evidence from both Romance and Germanic languages. In addition, a syntactic proposal is also given in order to account for the lack of inversion with the *wh*-element *whether*.

The fourth Chapter focuses on the *wh*-element *what* and its occurrence both as interrogative operator and as a relativiser and how both the interrogative and relative systems provide evidence in favour of the underspecified nature of *what*.

The conclusions discuss the most relevant findings and some possible lines of research.

Chapter 1. Theoretical framework and methodological approach.

1.1 The Cartographic Program.

According to the theoretical approach that dominated within the generative framework until the end of the 80's, for each of the three layers of the syntactic representation of the clause, VP, IP and CP corresponded one single X-bar projection made up of a head and its complement and a specifier.

Starting from the end of the 80's several works started to provide much syntactic evidence in favour of a much more complex internal structure of phrases. Pollock (1989) proposed that the IP layer could be split into two distinct projections: T and AGR; at the same time, other works produced similar analysis for VP (see Larson (1988) among others) and CP (see § 1.1.1.).

The fact that generative grammar had to do with articulated “fields” rather than single X-bar projections led to the necessity to describe this complexity with a different approach.

This is the background that stands behind the development of the cartographic research, whose main aim is to account for the complexity and richness of syntactic structures, providing detailed maps of the architecture of syntactic structures.

A milestone in the history of the Cartographic Project is represented by the workshop that was held at the University of Siena in November 1999. A sort of state-of-the-art workshop that was entirely dedicated to research within the cartographic framework.

Over a period of more than ten years, much work has been done in order to outline a “fine structure” of the three different structural layers; in particular, the complementiser layer is the object of a series of relevant proposals, which will be discussed in the following section.

1.1.1. Left Periphery in the Cartographic Approach

We will outline here the evolution of the different proposals for a detailed map of the complementiser layer within the framework of the cartographic approach. A terminological remark must be made; works dedicated to the cartography of the CP layer generally refer to this portion of the structure as the left-periphery.

The term left-periphery identifies what precedes the IP layer, in the light of this the complementiser layer can be seen as “the left (pre-IP) periphery of the clause” (Rizzi 1997: 281).

Most of the proposals that adopted a split-CP hypothesis, which are meant to hold cross-linguistically, have been developed for Romance languages, (for a split-CP hypothesis applied to Germanic languages, (see Alber (1994) among others, see also § 3.4.2.).

One of the first proposals was outlined by Rizzi (1997), who observes that the CP layer can be considered as the interface between the IP layer expressing the propositional content of the clause and a superordinate structure. These two different types of information expressed by the CP layer are respectively the sentence type, or the “force” and the relation with the verbal morphology of the embedded sentence, or the “finiteness”. The force and the finiteness of the sentence are syntactically encoded by two projections, respectively ForceP and FinP.

Between ForceP and FinP, Rizzi (1997), identifies two other projections: TopicP and FocusP. Topic and Focus are pragmatically very different, it is traditionally assumed that Topic expresses old information and Focus new information.

Cross-linguistically, Topic and Focus may display very different syntactic properties. Rizzi (1997), basing on Italian, shows that Topic, and not Focus, can co-occur with a resumptive clitic (see also Cinque 1990):

- (1) a. Il tuo libro, lo ho comprato
“Your book, I bought it”
- b. *IL TUO LIBRO lo ho comprato (non il suo)
“YOUR BOOK I bought it (not his)”

Topic and Focus display different behaviors with respect to the syntactic test of Weak Cross-Over as well. Focus, and not Topic, presents effects of Weak Cross-Over:

- (2) a. Gianni sua madre lo ha sempre apprezzato
“Gianni, his mother always appreciated him”
- b. *GIANNI sua madre ha sempre apprezzato
“GIANNI his mother always appreciated, not Piero”

Bare Quantificational Elements such as *nessuno* (“no one”), *tutto* (“all”), etc. can only be Focus and not topicalised elements such as Left Dislocations:

- (3) a. *Nessuno, lo ho visto
 “No one, I saw him”
- b. NESSUNO ho visto t
 “NO ONE I saw”

As for the relative order of Topic and Focus, Rizzi (1997) assumes that there can be more than one topic but there is only one structural position for focus and that topic is recursive, that is, it can both precede and follow a focus:

- (4) [ForceP [*TopP [FocP [*TopP [FinP]]]]]

Other elements can be found in the complementiser layer, besides thematised and focalised elements, among them: interrogative pronouns, relative pronouns and exclamative phrases, which are maximal projection and occupy the position of specifiers, and complementisers and the inflected verb, which are heads.

Benincà (2001), basing on Standard and substandard Italian varieties, show that the relative order is: Topic – Focus and no topicalised element can be found lower than Focus. Benincà & Poletto (2004) assume that Topic and Focus are actually to be considered articulated fields rather than single projections, this proposal excludes the possibility for the Topic to be recursive.

A relevant distinction between the two fields is that the Focus field hosts operator-like elements which are moved to CP leaving a trace, while the Topic field hosts non-operator elements, which are base generated.

Both the Topic and the Focus fields can be further split into subfields. The lower Focus field is split into informational Focus and contrastive Focus and syntactic evidence is given that contrastive Focus can be considered a field itself.

The Topic field is further articulated into two subfields: the Frame Field hosting Hanging Topics and a lower Top Field hosting left dislocated elements.

- (5) [ForceP [FrameP [TopP [FocP [FinP]]]]]

Two more problematic sets of elements are the Scene Setting adverbs and the elements that are related to a “List Interpretation” (LI). The List interpretation is given when two elements belonging to the same list are contrasted. Scene Setting adverbs are presumably very high in the structure, possibly lower than HT, LI is presumably the lowest projection in the Topic Field.

1.1.2. The *wh*-elements in the Left Periphery.

In this section, we will focus on the structural positions dedicated to *wh*-elements in the CP layer. Rizzi (1997), basing on Italian, shows that Topics are preceded by relative operators and followed by interrogative operators:

- (6) a. Un uomo a cui, il premio Nobel, lo daranno senz’altro
“A man to whom, the Nobel Prize, they will give it undoubtedly”
- b. Il premio Nobel, a chi lo daranno?
“The Nobel prize, to whom will they give it?”
- c. Mi domando, il premio Nobel, a chi lo potrebbero dare?
“I wonder, the Nobel prize, to whom they could give it”

Rizzi (1997) also observes that both relative pronouns and Topics are compatible with a focalized element, as illustrated in (7a) and (7b) respectively:

- (7) a. Ecco un uomo a cui IL PREMIO NOBEL dovrebbero dare (non il premio X)
“Here is a man to whom THE NOBEL PRIZE they should give (not prize X)”
- b. Credo che a Gianni QUESTO gli dovremmo dire
“I believe that to Gianni, THIS we should say”

As for *wh*-operators, they are compatible with a Topic in interrogative clauses, displaying the fixed order: Topic-Wh, but cannot co-occur with a focalized constituent (8):

- (8) *IL PREMIO NOBEL a chi dovrebbero dare?
 “THE NOBEL PRIZE to whom should they give?”

Rizzi (1997) assumes that the interrogative *wh*-operator and the Focus compete for the same position, that is, the Specifier of Focus.

It follows that relative operators are hosted in a projection which is very high in the structure, the specifier of Force, while interrogative operators are hosted in a much lower projection in the Focus field. The ordering constraints we have observed so far lead to assume the following relative order:

- (9) Rel Wh – Topic(HT-LD) – Focus/ Interr Wh

Furthermore, Benincà (2006) observes the relative order displayed by relative and interrogative *wh*-phrases with respect to complementisers and verbs. A lexicalized *wh*-element cannot be separated from the verb in a main question, both HTs and LDs must precede:

- (10) a. Questo libro, a chi l'hai dato? (LD – *wh* – V)
 this book, to whom it-have given
 "This book, who did you give it to?"
- b. *A chi questo libro, l'hai dato? (**wh* – LD V)
 to whom this book, it-have given
- (11) a. Mario, quando gli hai parlato? (HT – *wh* – V)
 Mario, when to-him have spoken
 "Mario, when did you talk to him?"
- b. Questo libro, a Mario, quando gliene hai parlato? (HT – LD – *wh* – V)
 this book, to Mario, when to-him-of-it have spoken?
 "This book, to Mario, when did you talk to him about it?"
- (12) *Quando questo libro, ne hai parlato? (**wh* – HT)
 when this book of-it have spoken

The relative order that can be derived is the following:

(13) {Frame ..[HT]..} {Topic ...[LD]....} {Focus ...[wh] V}

Interestingly, Benincà (2006) also observes that *wh*-items in indefinite relative clauses are hosted by the same projection that also hosts *wh*-relativisers in restrictive and appositive relatives and not by the lower projections of *wh*-interrogatives. As can be seen in the following examples, relative *wh*-elements must precede LD, interrogative *wh*-elements can only be followed by LD:

- (14) a *Lo chiederò a chi queste cose le sa bene.* (rel *wh* – LD)
 it will-ask to whom these things them knows well
 “I will ask this of those who know these things well.”
- b **Lo chiederò queste cose a chi le sa bene.* (*LD - rel *wh*)
 it will-ask these things to whom them knows well
- c **Mi chiedo a chi queste cose le hai dette* (*interr *wh* - LD)
 self wonder to whom these things them have said
- d *Mi chiedo queste cose a chi le hai dette* (LD - interr *wh*)
 self wonder these things to whom them have said
 “I wonder to whom you said these things.”

As for the restrictions displayed by the co-occurrence of interrogative *wh*-elements and Focus, Benincà (2006) assumes that the accessibility to CP in Romance languages provide evidence that the interrogative *wh*-projection is actually very low, possibly the lowest one in the CP structure.

In all Romance languages CP is blocked in dependent interrogatives. More precisely, it is the involvement of the lowest *wh*-head that excludes the activation of all the other higher projections, preventing movement to C.

To sum up: if we consider the structure of left-periphery in (), as outlined in Benincà (2006), we can see that syntactic evidence from Medieval Romance varieties consistently show that

there are two different projections that host wh-items. One is very high in the structure and host wh-relative elements, the other is lower, presumably in the Focus field and host the wh-interrogative elements:

- (15) [Force C° [RelWh C°] {Frame [ScSett] [HT] C°} {Topic [LD] [LI] C°} {Focus [I Focus] [II Focus]} / [InterrWh] C°} [Fin C°]

Rizzi (2006) assumes that a small group of wh-interrogative items such as *perché* (“why”) and *come mai* (“how come”) occupy a position that is actually higher than Focus, more precisely, these wh-interrogative elements are hosted in the specifier of a projection IntP. The specifier of IntP also hosts the null operator of yes/no direct questions. The head of IntP hosts the complementiser *se* (“if”).

The resulting structure is given in (16):

- (16) [ForceP [TopP [IntP (*perché*) [Int' (*se*) [FocP/Wh [Fin C°]

1.2. True and special questions.

Interpretative and structural properties of interrogative clauses have been investigated in details by Obenauer (1994 and later works) and Obenauer & Poletto (2000) for Romance varieties.

A first distinction was made between true questions, that is, questions that are to be considered as genuine requests for information and rhetorical questions, that is, questions whose interpretation does not necessarily require an answer; this line of research focussed on how different interpretative properties could be syntactically encoded in the left periphery.

The starting assumption is that, in rhetorical questions, wh-phrases are located higher than wh-phrases in true questions. Evidence in favour of this proposal is given by tests on the position of subjects and left dislocated elements in Italian.

In Italian SpecT is not an available position for DP subjects, nor can the DP subject immediately follow the wh-phrase, as the ungrammaticality of the sentences in (17) show:

- (17) a. *Cosa ha Gianni fatto?
what has Gianni done

- b. *Cosa Gianni ha fatto?
 what Gianni has done

The subject DP can only occur at the left edge (18a) of the interrogative clauses or at its right edge (18b), as illustrated in the following examples:

- (18) a. Gianni, cosa ha fatto?
 Gianni what has done
- b. Cosa ha fatto, Gianni?
 what has done Gianni

An explanation for the ungrammaticality of (17a) is that a DP subject cannot occur at the right of the *wh*-element, because preverbal subject is assumed to be hosted in the spec/Topic within the complementiser layer and the position of Topic is structurally higher than that of the *wh*-elements in main questions.

Interestingly, if we consider the interrogative clause in (19), we can observe that the subject DP can follow the *wh*-item and the inflected verb. This means that in this case the position occupied by the sequence of *wh*-element and inflected verb is higher than that occupied by the subject.

The interrogative clause in (19) is actually a rhetorical question.

It follows that *wh*-item and inflected verb can occur in more than one position in CP.

- (19) Cosa mai avrebbe Gianni potuto fare, in quel frangente?
 what ever had-cond Gianni could do, in that situation

The relative order that can be derived is given in (20):

- (20) [_{XP} rhetorical WH [_{subjectP} DP [_{FocusP} True WH ...]]]

As far the left dislocated elements are concerned, in true questions the only position available for left dislocated elements is at the left of the *wh*-item, as shown by the sharp contrast in (21a) and (21b):

- (21) a. A Gianni, cosa gli hai dato?
to Gianni what to-him have (you) given
- b. *Cosa, a Gianni, gli hai dato?
what to Gianni, to-him have (you) given

The ungrammaticality of (21b), in which the wh-phrase precedes LD, also represents strong evidence in favor of the relative order Topic-Focus in (22), already discussed in § 1.1.1. :

- (22) [_{TopicP} LD [_{FocusP} Wh ...]]

If we consider the RQ in (23), we observe that the possibility for a DP subject to occur at the right of the wh-element is not completely excluded, though a certain degree of marginality is perceived by some speakers. The marginality in (23) may be due to the lower position of the verb, for it is assumed that TopP is not a suitable position for the inflected verb (Rizzi 1997).

- (23) ?Cosa mai a Gianni avresti potuto dirgli che lo tirasse su in un momento simile?
what ever to Gianni have-cond could tell-him that cheered him up in such a moment

It follows that the following relative order can be established:

- (24) [_{XP} rhetorical WH [_{TopicP} LD [_{FocusP} True WH ...]]]

Further developments of this line of research led to identification of a larger group of nonstandard questions, the so-called special questions, of which the rhetorical questions represents a subtype, as opposed to the standard (true) questions. The study of the North-Eastern Italian varieties of the Bellunese area turned to be crucial with this respect; these dialects operate syntactically encoded distinctions between standard and nonstandard questions. In particular, the Pagotto dialect also distinguishes between the wh-phrases *cossa* and *che* (“what”), which generally alternate with no change in meaning in the dialects of the Bellunese group; in the Pagotto variety *che* is used exclusively in standard questions and appears *in situ*, while *cossa* is specialised for special questions and appears in sentence-initial position.

Obenauer (2004, 2006), basing on the Pagotto dialect, identifies three types of nonstandard questions: surprise/disapproval questions, rhetorical questions and Can't-find-the-value-of-x questions. Consistently with what has been observed above for rhetorical questions, special questions are assumed to activate higher projections in the CP layer.

Surprise/disapproval questions (henceforth SDQ) convey the negative orientation of the speaker towards the propositional content in terms of surprise and/or disapproval and are characterised by wh-phrases that obligatorily appear in sentence-initial position, as in the examples in (25):

- (25) a. Cossa sé-tu drìo magnar?!
what are-you behind eat
“What on earth are you eating?!”
- b. Chi à-tu invidà?!
who(m) have-you invited?!
“Who have you invited?”

Note that in (25a) *cossa* is used argumentally, non argumental uses of *cossa* in special questions will be discussed in Chapter 4.

Similarly to SDQs, rhetorical questions also require the wh-phrase to raise to initial position:

- (26) a. Cossa à-lo fat par ti?
what has-it done for you
“What has he done for you?”
- b. Chi à-lo iutà in tuti sti ani?
who(m) has-him helped in all these years
“Who(m) has he helped in all these years?”

Moreover, rhetorical questions admit a DP subject to the right of the wh-phrase in Pagotto as well, with the same degree of marginality we have observed above for Italian, as can be seen in (26); this possibility is excluded for both standard questions and SDQs:

- (26) ?CHI MAI Mario à-lo iutà in tuti sti ani?

“Who(m) (ever) has Mario helped in all these years?”

The possibility for *wh*-phrases to precede a DP subject in rhetorical questions, and not in standard questions or SDQs suggests that rhetorical questions activate projections that are higher than those activated by the other two question types. This suggests that special questions are hierarchically ordered within the left periphery.

The third type, the Can't-find-the-value-of-x type questions, define a type of questions by which the speaker is not able to find a value corresponding to the variable bound by the *wh*-phrase.

This type of questions, exemplified in (27), also requires the *wh*-phrase to occur in sentence initial position. The *wh*-phrase *che* is excluded and *cossa* appears optionally doubled by *che*.

- (27) a. Andè l' à-tu catà?
 where it-have-you found
 “Where the hell did you find it?”
- b. Cossa se ciàme-lo (che)?
 cossa refl calls-he what
 “What the hell is his name?”

1.3. The Wh-Criterion, Rizzi (1996)

Rizzi (1996) observes that in some languages *wh*-elements and the inflected verb must be adjacent in main questions:

- (28) a. *What Mary has said?
 b. What has Mary said?
- (29) a. *Che cosa Maria ha detto?
 what Mary has said
 b. Che cosa ha detto Maria?
 what has said Mary

As far as the English case is concerned, the subject-auxiliary inversion in main questions is

expressed in terms of Verb Second residual case requiring I-to-C movement and creating a Spec-head configuration. The triggers for verb movement to C is the satisfaction of a well-formedness condition on wh-structures, the Wh-Criterion, here reported in (30):

- (30) a. A wh-operator must be in a Spec-head configuration with X° [+Wh]
b. An X° [+Wh] must be in a Spec-head configuration with a wh-operator

The satisfaction of the Wh-Criterion occurs by means of a Spec-Head configuration of agreement with the wh-operator, which is required in CP. This condition is satisfied when the inflectional node carrying the feature [Wh] moves to the Head in main interrogative clauses. In embedded interrogative contexts inversion is banned because the Wh-Criterion is satisfied by the presence in C of a [+Wh] complementiser selected by the matrix verb. This [+Wh] complementiser can be either null or lexicalised. This prevents the verb from raising to C, plausibly because verb and complementiser are competing for the same position.

1.3.1. The Wh-criterial positions (Rizzi 2004).

If we consider the sentences in (31), Rizzi (2004) distinguishes between two kinds of interpretive properties that are received by the phrase [book]: “s-selectional” properties, in this case theta-assignment (the phrase *book* is patient of the verb *read*) and “criterial” properties (the phrase *book* is also an interrogative, a topic, a focus, respectively)

- (31) a. Which book should you read ___?
b. This book, you should read ___
c. THIS BOOK you should read ___ (rather than something else)

The position in which the element is semantically selected and the position in which the same element occurs as focus, topic or interrogative operator in the Left Periphery, that is a position dedicated to scope-discourse semantics, form a “chain”.

S-selectional properties, which are thematic properties in case of lexical items, are generalized to non-argumental elements in the structure, such as adverbials, modifiers, etc.. which are s-selected by appropriate nodes.

As for the “scope-discourse positions”, a number of principles, known as “the Criteria” are at work. The Criteria require “*Spec-head agreement with respect to features of the relevant*

class: Q, Top, Foc, R, etc. for questions, topic, focus, relatives, etc.”

The format of Criteria, as outlined by Rizzi (2006), is given in (32):

(32) XP_F and X_F must be in a Spec-head configuration, for $F = Q, Top, Foc, R, \dots$

In order to support the hypothesis of local Spec-head configurations created with dedicated heads, Rizzi (2004) reports cases in which these heads morphologically expressed.

In (33a-b) the criteria heads are respectively interrogative (Q) and relative (REL):

- (33) a. Ik weet niet [wie *of* [Jan ____ gezien heeft]] (Dutch, Haegeman 1994)
‘I know not who Q Jan seen has’
- b. Der Mantl [den *wo* [dea Hons ____ gfoundn hot]] (Bavarian, Bayer 1984)
‘The coat which REL the Hans ____ found has’

The criterial position is thus created by agreement between a head endowed with the relevant feature works as a trigger for the attraction of a phrase bearing that feature. The criterial heads can be either lexicalized or null, but they are always present.

The relevant type of interpretation is then assigned to the phrase by the interpretive system. The phrase in the Spec will be interpreted as an interrogative operator, as a Topic, as a Focus, as a relative operator, etc.

Within this framework an A'-chain will include at least two positions:

(34) ... criterial s-selection ...

Rizzi (2004) assumes that while there is no position lower than the s-selection position, there is evidence in favor of intermediate traces between s-selectional and criterial positions.

He assumes that intermediate movement to a noncriterial position as in the case of wh-long movement exemplified in (35) can only be a feature driven movement

(35) I wonder [what C [you think [t' that [I saw t]]]]

More precisely, Rizzi (2004) assumes that the triggering features may be either interpretable, that is criterial, or uninterpretable; in the case of intermediate movement the triggering features are non interpretable formal features, which have to be considered as “purely formal counterparts” of criterial features; their role is to bring “the moved phrase closer to the target”, the criterial position, satisfying locality requirements.

In the light of this the representation of (35) is given in (36); the criterial features are in capital letters (Q, Top, Foc, R, etc.) and the corresponding purely formal features in low case (q, top, foc, r, ...)

(36) I wonder [what C_Q [you think [t' that_q [I saw t]]]]

1.3.2. The Wh-criterial freezing.

We have seen that there is no position lower than s-selectional position but there are intermediate traces between s-selectional and criteria position. As for positions higher than criterial position, Rizzi (2004) assumes that “chains begin at an s-selection position and terminate at a criterial position, and such positions are unique”

This means that, once a criterial configuration is created, the structure is frozen, so that the moved wh-phrase cannot undergo further movement.

This constraint, known as the Criterial Freezing, is reported in (37):

(37) Criterial Freezing: A phrase meeting a criterion is frozen in place

The Criterial Freezing makes sure that one chain will receive only one scope-discourse property.

1.3.3. The Wh-criterion applied to Romance varieties.

The Wh-criterion seems to account for some facts of Standard English interrogative system, such as inversion in main questions and lack of inversion in indirect questions, even if we will see in Chapter 2 that some substandard varieties of English presents some problematic aspects with this regard, (see §).

Things become more complicated if we try to apply the Wh-Criterion to Romance languages. We will consider here some relevant facts. Rizzi (1996) proposes a unified analysis for English and Italian and establishes a parallelism between the two. As we have seen in § 1.3., in Italian the inflected verb must be adjacent to the wh-phrase in main questions, this holds for a number of natural languages, English among them:

- (38) a. *Chi Maria ama?
 who Maria loves
- b. Chi ama Maria?
 who loves Maria

If we consider subject position, the parallelism weakens. It is a well-known fact that in Italian the subject cannot immediately follow the auxiliary in a main question, unlike in Germanic languages:

- (39) a. Che cosa ha detto il direttore
 what has said the director
- b. *Che cosa ha il direttore detto
 what has the director said

Rizzi (1996) proposes that the ungrammaticality of (39b) is due to the impossibility of assigning nominative case to the subject because of the lack of Spec-head relation between the subject and the auxiliary, which has moved from I to C. The grammaticality of (39a) is due to “*an independent assigner of nominative case [which] is available for a post-verbal subject*”.

As we have already seen in § for special questions, Obenauer & Poletto (2000) accounts for the ungrammaticality of (39b) arguing that in main questions the only positions available for subjects are either a Topic position higher than wh-phrases in true questions or right dislocated.

In the light of this, Rizzi’s proposal seems to be less plausible if we consider that in rhetorical questions the sequence “wh-phrase – auxiliary – DP subject” is admitted, (see ex. (23)).

Poletto (2000) for the Northern Italian dialects and Benincà (2001) for Italian challenge Rizzi's assumption that in dependent interrogatives display verb movement to C apply satisfying the Wh-Criterion.

Benincà (2001) argues that verb movement to C is never involved in dependent interrogatives in Romance. Dependent clauses are always introduced by a complementiser that may be either lexicalized or null

As for Standard Italian, the Doubly Filled Comp Filter, which bans the co-occurrence of the wh-element and the complementiser, is active in dependent interrogatives. The same filter does not seem to operative in the nonstandard varieties, in which a dependent interrogative in wh-contexts can or must have a lexicalized declarative complementiser. If we consider that the Doubly Filled Comp Filter is generally assumed to be operative only in some varieties, this cannot explain why verb movement to C is always banned.

Benincà (2001) also observes two relevant facts against the hypothesis that verb movement to C is involved in dependent interrogatives; the ban on preverbal subjects weakens with heavier VP, as the examples in (40) show:

- (40) a. Dimmi dove Mario ha comprato questo giornale
"Tell me where Mario has bought this newspaper"
- b. Mi hanno chiesto che cosa Mario ha regalato a Maria
"They asked me what Mario gave to Maria"

Northern Italian dialects display a post-posed DP subject in dependent interrogatives but verb subject clitic inversion is never permitted in this context. The examples in (41) are from Paduan:

- (41) a. No so dove che ??Mario zé ndà
b. No so dove che * zé Mario ndà
c. No so dove che zé ndà Mario
d. No so Mario dove che el zé ndà
e. No so dove (che) zé-lo ndà (Mario)
"I don't know where Mario has gone"

Poletto (2000) analyses the structure of CP in main and embedded interrogative clauses in relation to Subject Clitic Inversion in the Northern dialects and identifies four projections in interrogative structures, each triggering a different interpretation. She shows that the presence of a [+Wh] C° that satisfies the Wh-Criterion cannot be an explanation for the lack of subject-clitic inversion in a number of Northern Italian dialects. Poletto (2000) assumes that the trigger of the verb is not the satisfaction of the Wh-Criterion but rather the checking of special features in the AgrC head. Besides, the presence of a lexicalized complementiser in a Spec-head configuration with a wh-element does not automatically imply the lack of verb movement to C. In embedded interrogatives the complementiser, which originates in the lowest C° position, blocks verb movement, in main questions the situation is different and the complementiser may originate in head higher than AgrC.

1.4. The methodological approach

Data concerning interrogative clauses in Ennis English have been collected during winter 2008 on the occasion of my stay in County Clare, Republic of Ireland, where fieldwork was conducted on different areas of syntax: interrogative and relative clauses, aspect, modal verbs, verbal morphology, pronouns and subject-verb agreement focussing on the phenomenon of singular concord.

I used a combination of oral questioning in the form of structured interviews and written questionnaires of the completing type. The structured interviews were made up of small sets of sentences to be submitted to the informant. I believed that the format of a structured interview was particularly suitable for investigating interrogative clauses, aspect and modal verbs; the questionnaire of the completing type, in which the informant was asked to fill in a blank, were used for relative clauses and question tags. My intention was also to corroborate data I would get from structured interview and written questionnaires with data collected from recordings of spontaneous speech. The reasons why spontaneous speech could not eventually be used to these purposes will be discussed later on in this section.

I started with five informants, of which only one, for many reasons, turned out to be an eligible subject to perform the whole task. Data of Ennis English contained in the following chapters are thus to be ascribed to whom we can consider the main informant.

Each informant was interviewed at least two times; the main informant, who had already been met once in Summer 2007, was interviewed four times in January-February 2008 and

continuously collaborated during the whole year 2008, providing grammatical judgments by e-mail.

Each session lasted between 45 and 60 minutes. The first session was preceded by a few minutes of conversation the main aim of which was to get acquainted with the informant, put them at ease and introduce them to the task. At any time, the informant was permitted to stop, comment and add information that he considered relevant or meaningful.

The general idea was to keep the register of the interview as more informal as possible, in order to get not only clear-cut judgments, but also the speaker's precious intuitions.

Samples of the structured interview I used for the interrogative clauses and of the written questionnaire for relative clauses are given below, respectively in (A-B-C) and (D); as far as the interview is concerned, each group of sentences (A,B,C) contained a range of possible options, including both Standard English constructions (see (A1)) and ungrammatical clauses (see (A3)).

The presence of completely ungrammatical structures, on one hand, and unproblematic, grammatical sentences, on the other, help to build a "protocol", as Den Dikken et al. (2007) point out: "(...) *before testing the target structures on a potential informant, it is essential to work on structures that are well-known to be possible (or impossible) and to familiarize the informant with what the linguist ultimately intends by 'acceptable' and 'unacceptable'*."

A. 1. Are you going to the pub?

2. You are going to the pub?
3. Are going to the pub?
4. Going to the pub?
5. You going to the pub?

B. 1. I asked him whether/if you were going to the pub

2. I asked him were you going to the pub
3. I asked him whether/if were you going to the pub

C. 1. I wonder who he hoped (that) he would meet at the party

2. I wonder who did he hope would he meet at the party
3. I wonder who did he hope that would he meet at the party
4. I wonder who he hoped would he meet at the party

- D.
1. The woman _____ came here yesterday is John's sister
 2. The church _____ was built in that village is really beautiful
 3. The boy _____ you met at the party is my brother
 4. The noise _____ you heard came from the street

The order was not necessarily a fixed order. Both the order of the sentences within one single set and the order of the sets was often changed, especially when the submitted sentences were very similar and the task could get too stressful or I realised that the informant was meeting with some difficulties with the specific topic and was getting tired. The fact that the interview was interrupted at least a couple of times to permit the informant to complete the written questionnaire was also particularly useful to this purpose.

The alternation between oral questioning and written questionnaire helped to avoid the possible monotony of the task; this danger is not to be underestimated, the best informant will not be of any help if bored or tired.

Following Henry (2005), I have always avoided, during the interviews, questions such as “Is this sentence grammatical to you?”, which are definitely inappropriate questions for naive speakers, who may be strongly influenced by a prescriptive notion of grammar. Similarly, I have also tried to avoid questions such as “Does this sound right to you?”; this type of questions tends to produce responses in which judgments might be influenced by the “naturalness” of the sentence. Problems with the “naturalness” of the sentence may be due to lexical choice, for example, and a “non-natural sentence” can be consequently rejected for this reason. The lexical “naturalness” of the sentences to be submitted to the informant is essential in the preparation of the interview and a fieldworker who is not a native speaker of English should thus pay particular attention to this aspect.

During oral questioning, I have generally used expressions such as “Could you say ...?” (or “Would you say ...?”), which Henry (2005) suggests as “*the initial question (...) producing the best results*”; the hypothetical situation indicated by the modal “*could*” tends to eliminate pragmatic or lexical interferences. Questions such as “Would people around here say ...” are actually a “two-edged weapon”, in case of a positive response, we will be certain that the phenomenon/construction is attested, at least somewhere in the area, but we do not learn anything new about the informant's individual grammar, which is our main interest.

It frequently happens that the informant admits the existence of the inquired substandard construction but he attributes it to third persons, mainly “*people around here*” or he states that he would not use it but “*I’ve probably heard them (...)*”.

Even if this might be considered an unconscious (?) “strategy” operated by the informant in order to ascribe to others possibly stigmatised grammatical features and it might be the case sometimes, such judgements are not to be treated as reliable data.

1.4.1. Problematic aspects of fieldwork.

Some relevant problematic aspects emerged during the fieldwork activities.

Firstly, each informant was informed that the interest was not for Standard English or “English as taught at school”, but for English as spoken everyday with friends and relatives; as Henry (2005) points out: “*It is essential to explain that what is being sought is information about the local dialect and not some notion of ‘correctness’*”. On more than one occasion, informants seemed to lose sight of the target of the investigation, which needed to be re-established during the sessions; notwithstanding this, the tendency to operate a strict distinction between the so-called “good grammar” vs. the so-called “bad grammar” was constant among all the informants, except for the main informant, for whom this distinction seemed to be less relevant.

Not only did the informants describe substandard grammar as “bad grammar”, but often their reaction to the first questions proposing possible substandard constructions was to deny the use of them, even in the most informal contexts. In most cases, it was only a question of time, the informant basically needed more time to understand the task and relax.

Sometimes it was very difficult, during the first session, to elicit even data concerning syntactic constructions, on whose existence in that variety I had no doubts. It is the case of the *after*-perfect aspectual periphrasis: on one occasion the informant denied having ever used it; what I did was to temporarily leave aside the “problematic topic”. Surprisingly, the informant spontaneously admitted to regular use of the *after*-perfect construction at the end of the session.

For some other informants things were different. Interestingly, some categorically stated that the construction/s in question was/were typically used by specific categories of people, such as: old and/or non-educated people, inhabitants of isolated and/or rural areas of Ireland, travellers, people with serious mental diseases.

The picture left no doubts: what emerged was a strong stigmatisation of substandard grammar, which was generally ascribed to groups or communities, which might also be socially stigmatised, such as travellers or people with mental disabilities.

I will not deal here with the possible causes that led to this situation, it is certainly a rather complicated combination of factors that deserves specific treatment, but a remark must be made.

What I found amazing and unexpected was the connection between dialectal variation and mental disease which I had never met with in my preceding (and following) fieldwork with Romance varieties (North-eastern dialects of Italy). The possible link between travellers and mentally disabled people, (and possibly rural areas) on one hand, and the use of substandard grammar, on the other, is that these are all subjects that, for different reasons and to different degrees, might have been excluded by the education system. Unfortunately, it was not possible for me to get in touch with any of these groups, as a consequence, I had no chance to collect data concerning their varieties. If it was confirmed that the language spoken by these “communities” shows a relevant degree of dialectal variation, it becomes clear that one possible reason is that these subjects, having little formal education, have never developed “linguistic prejudices” against substandard grammar.

Besides stigmatisation, another aspect played a relevant role in the elicitation of the data, especially during the sessions of spontaneous speech: the fact that I am not a native speaker of English posed a series of problems. Reactions were actually of different types. Most of the time there was a great interest (and curiosity) in a non-national who was interested in the “local speech”; on one occasion, the same factor created a sort of suspicious feeling towards my intentions; obviously, the result was that it was not possible to do either the structured interview or the spontaneous speech recording.

This was an isolated case; the general tendency, however, was that during the interview the informant’s speech inevitably shifted towards Standard English. Obviously, this mechanism, which was less evident during the structured interviews, massively emerged during the recordings of spontaneous speech and was determinant in compromising the success of the task.

Having met with this problematic aspect of the interaction between fieldworker and informant,

I now believe that the presence of an interviewer, who comes from the same locality as the informant, is of extreme importance, essential for the creation of what Tanja Hermann (2005) defines as a “*supportive atmosphere for spontaneous, unmonitored speech*”.

On the basis of my personal experience, the presence of a “local” who introduces the fieldworker to the informant and explains the task, as a sort of mediator, is not a guarantee of “the good quality” of spontaneous speech production. Interviewers who are also native speakers of the local varieties that they are investigating are probably the solution that would produce the best results.

1.5. The sources

Data contained in the present work comes from a variety of different sources.

data from Ennis English, also presented in Chapter 3, were collected during my stay in Ireland in 2008; the details concerning the methodological approach adopted in the elicitation of Ennis English data are discussed in the following section.

Besides data from Belfast English discussed in Chapter 3, which comes from Henry (1995) and data from Ennis English, which were personally collected in Co.Clare, a certain amount of data is also drawn from the following sources:

The Freiburg Corpus of English Dialects, (henceforth FRED) is a traditional-dialects corpus, that was compiled under the supervision Professor Bernd Kortmann by the project group “English Dialect Syntax from a Typological Perspective”.

The full version of the corpus is divided into 9 different areas, of which four major dialect areas for England: Southwest, Southeast, Midlands, North and two major areas for Scotland: Highlands and Lowlands, for a total amount of 163 locations. The corpus consists of 372 interviews, 300 hours of face-to-face conversations recorded between 1968 and 2000 (2,5 mill. words). Each conversation was transcribed by linguists or fieldworkers. Most informants are non-mobile elderly rural males, though female speakers are also present; interviewers are native speakers themselves.

The data contained in the present work is drawn from the sample version of FRED (henceforth FRED-S), a subset of FRED, which is not subject to copyright restrictions. The sample version consists of 1,011,396 words, 121 interviews, five major dialect areas (the

Southwest of England, the Southeast of England, the Midlands, the North of England, and the Scottish Lowlands) for a total amount of 57 different locations investigated.

The English Dialect Dictionary, (henceforth EDD), edited by Joseph Wright in 1898 is a collection of heterogeneous material concerning dialectal varieties of England, such as unprinted sources, dialect glossaries, minor local and regional dictionaries, collections of folk ballads and works containing dialect words and literary sources.

The Oxford English Dictionary, (henceforth OED), second edition, revised in 2002, was published between 1972 and 1986. The first edition appeared in 1933. It reports attestations of written and colloquial English and it also presents dialectal and slang usage from the older stages of the language up to the present time.

The Computer Developed Linguistic Atlas, (henceforth CDLA), published in 1991, consists of a collection of 169 maps of lexical, morphologic and syntactic nature that are based on the data contained in the Survey of English Dialect, (henceforth SED). The computerization of the SED data was carried out at the University of Bamberg.

The SED is the result of an impressive amount of fieldwork that was conducted between 1948 and 1961 on 313 locations throughout England.

The aim of the SED project, created by Eugene Dieth and Harold Orton, was to record the oldest kind of vernacular speech. Informants were mainly chosen among older farmers in rural areas.

Data were elicited through a questionnaire that contained two types of questions: the naming type question and the completing type question, for a total amount of 1,326 questions.

Naming questions consisted in quizzing the informant in order to elicit data of lexical nature. The completing type questions required the informant to fill in a blank and was used for questions of both syntactic and morphologic nature.

In the *Basic Material* of the SED, which was published between 1962 and 1971, data was divided, on geographical basis, into four regional areas: the North, the South, the eastern counties and the western counties.

The grammar references also turned out to be very helpful, in particular, the following works, which are all, to a greater or lesser degree, attentive to colloquial language:

- “A comprehensive Grammar of the English Language”, Greenbaum et al. (1985)
- “Longman Student Grammar of spoken and written English”, Biber et al. (2002)
- “Cambridge Grammar of English: a comprehensive guide. Spoken and written English grammar and usage”, Carter et al. (2006)

An alternative source was represented by local newspapers, which may give an idea of the “local standard variety”. The phenomenon of inversion in the indirect interrogative clause (yes/no contexts), for example, and, marginally, the *after*-perfect construction are attested in the news writing as well but of great interest are also attestations of the colloquial speech found in reported speech and interviews contained in the local press. It is obvious that the exploiting of such data must be taken with a grain of salt, if we consider that, in most cases, no information about the informant is available.

2. The direct interrogative clause.

2.1. Introduction.

For the purposes of the present work we will now give a brief description of the more relevant facts of the interrogative clause formation in Standard English, this is the starting point for the discussion of interrogatives in colloquial English and alternative strategies in other substandard varieties which will be proposed in the following sections.

It is generally assumed that the following three types of interrogative clauses can be identified:

- Yes/no questions, also known as polar or open questions, in which an affirmative or negative reply is required
- Alternate questions, in which the reply involves the choice between two alternatives
- Wh-questions, in which the wh-element is bound to a variable; the reply implies the substitution of the variable with the appropriate value.

Yes/no questions can actually be considered a subtype of the alternates, the difference being that in yes/no questions the alternative option is not spelled out. Consider also that any yes/no question (1a) can be converted into an alternate question (1b); alternate questions normally appear in the elliptical form in which the alternative option is not overtly expressed, in this case the sentence can be tagged with *or not* (1c):

- (1) a. Are you coming?
b. Are you coming or aren't you coming?
c. Are you coming or not?

For the purposes of this chapter, it will be useful to assume a basic dual distinction: yes/no questions on one hand and wh-questions on the other, for the moment we will leave aside the alternate type.

Yes/no questions are syntactically derived by the verb raising to sentence-initial position. This movement to C is restricted to do-support (2), auxiliaries (3) and modals (4) including the

verbs *need* and *dare*¹ which, besides a behaviour of the lexical type, also have a modal operator option. It is generally assumed that verb movement is triggered by the presence of a null question operator in the CP:

- (2) Do they all speak French?

- (3) a. Have you already finished your work?
b. Was he asked to leave?

- (4) a. Will John speak to the boss today?
b. Dare society tolerate this?
c. Need we say more?

The same verb movement involved in yes/no questions can be found in wh-questions as well, but in this context verb movement is not triggered by a null question operator as in the case of yes/no question, rather by the presence of the wh-pronoun in CP, the functional area of the sentence.

If we observe the sentences in (5), we realise that moved constituents can be: NP (5a-c), AdvP (5d-g), AP (5h), PP (5i). It can be both an argument or an adjunct, but in any case we assume that it moves from the position in which it has been generated to reach the Specifier CP². This type of movement is generally known as wh-movement. In its base position the wh-pronoun leaves a wh-trace, which is co-indexed with the moved constituent.

- (5) a. Who did your brother meet at the party last night?
b. What are you going to do tomorrow?
c. What book did you buy for John?
d. When are they leaving?
e. Where do they still serve food at this time?

¹ The verbs *dare* and *need* can also display the behaviour typical of lexical verbs as the following interrogative constructions show:

- (i) Do you dare to help those who robbed us?
- (ii) Do we need to go somewhere?

² It is traditionally assumed for the *wh*-elements *why* and *how* that they can be directly merged in dedicated projections in CP.

- f. Why did you decide to fix the car?
- g. How are you solving this problem?
- h. How long are you staying?
- i. For which company do you work ?

We have seen that in Standard English the distinctive syntactic feature of the interrogative clause formation of both types is the apparent inversion of subject and verb and that this apparent inversion is in fact the result of verb movement to C. For the sake of convenience, the term *inversion* will be used quite frequently in the course of this work, but it is important to remember that by inversion we will mean the occurrence of the syntactic operation of verb movement to C and consequently by non-inversion the lack of this phenomenon.

2.1.1. Long *wh*-movement.

The *wh*-movement we have proposed for the *wh*-interrogative clause formation can potentially be iterated, this is the case of a main *wh* question in which one or more dependent clauses are embedded. The structure in (6) shows that, in order to reach the matrix CP, in which the interrogative force of the sentence is encoded, the *wh* element must raise to the CP of the clause from which it has been extracted first, then it must climb to the higher embedded CP and eventually it must raise to reach the highest CP, the CP of the matrix clause. The necessary condition for the long movement is that all the intervening CPs be available for the *wh*-item, no other *wh*-element must fill any of the intervening specifier positions, because this would prevent *wh*-movement

- (6) [What_i do you think [_{t_i} he claims [_{t_i} the kids did last night _{t_i}]]]?]

2.1.2. Wh-movement from subject position

The case of *wh* interrogatives on subject position is more complicated. The subject generated in the Spec VP, must climb to the Spec/IP to receive nominative case; as we know, the interrogative clause formation strategy requires the *wh*-pronoun to move to the Spec CP leaving a trace in its extraction site. At this point an asymmetry is established if compared to the interrogatives from non-subject positions: the verb does not move to C°.

- (7) a. [Who C [*t* spoke to Mary]]
 b. *[Who did [_{CP} *t t* speak to Mary]]

Long *wh*-movement from subject position shows a relevant restriction, the sequence *complementiser – trace* is not admitted and the two elements cannot be adjacent, this constraint is known as the Trace/that Filter.

- (8) a. *Who does he think [_{CP} that *t_i* spoke to Mary]?
 b. Who does he think [_{CP} \emptyset *t_i* spoke to Mary]?

Rizzi (1996) argues that the lack of inversion in *wh*-movement of the subject poses at least two problems: one relates to the incompatibility of verb movement to C and subject movement and the other more directly concerns the Wh-Criterion that seem to be satisfied without verb movement to C³.

A reinterpretation of the Wh-Criterion proposes to assume that it is the chain of the relevant X^o position and not the position itself that are required to possess the feature [+Wh].

- (9) a. [Who_i C_i [*t_i* I_i love -s [_{+Wh}] Mary]]

So the subject moved to Spec/CP leaves a trace which is co-indexed with I^o and obviously with the *wh*-element *who*, *who* is co-indexed with C^o and thus, by transitivity C^o and I^o are also co-indexed and they can form a chain together with the lower inflection that contains a feature specified for [+Wh]. The Wh-Criterion is thus satisfied without involving verb movement.

³ One possible solution would be to assume that the subject itself does not move to C, the *wh*-pronoun *who* would thus remain in Spec/Infl endowed with a [+Wh] feature, the structure is given in (i):

- (i) [[who spoke to Mary]]

The Wh-Criterion would be satisfied in Infl, rather than C, but a series of problems would arise.

2.1.3. Islands for movement and the Subjacency Condition.

As we have seen in § 2.1.1., *wh*-movement can occur beyond the clause in which the *wh*-element has been generated but we must consider that long *wh*-movement is subject to certain constraints.

Consider the following clauses:

- (10) a. [CP Whom_i did [IP Paul meet *t*_i at the bank]]?
b. [CP Whom_i did [IP Paul assure [CP that [IP he met *t*_i at the bank]]]]?
c. *[CP Whom_i did [IP Paul give [NP assurance [CP that [IP he met *t*_i at the bank]]]]]]?

If we observe the sentences in (8), we realise that while *wh*-movement in both (8a) and (8b) are unproblematic, in (8c) the *wh*-item moves from inside a complex NP, that is, an NP whose head takes a sentential complement. We can say that movement out of a complex NP is banned. Complex NPs are *islands* for movement. The ungrammaticality of (8c) derives from the violation of the constraint formulated by Ross (1967) known as the complex NP Constraint.

Let us now observe the following:

- (11) a. [CP₁ Where_i do [IP you [think [CP₂ that [IP John could meet Mary *t*_i]]]]]?
b. I wonder [CP whom_i [IP John [could meet *t*_i at the bank]]
c. *[CP₁ Where_k do [IP you [VP wonder [CP₂ whom_i [IP John could meet *t*_i *t*_k]]]]]?

If we look at the sentences in (11), we can see that while *wh*-movement in (11a) and (11b) is unproblematic, in (11c) there are two *wh*-elements that move, *whom* moves to lower CP₂ and *where* to the higher CP₁. In this case the movement of *whom* to CP₂ represents an obstacle for the movement of *where* to CP₁. We can say that *wh*-elements are also islands for movement. Ross' islands constraints underwent further treatment and led to definition of the bounding theory first proposed by Chomsky (1973 and later works) which regulates the distance of *wh*-movement, to sum up we can say that *wh*-movement is subject to the subjacency condition given in (12):

(12) Subjacency Condition:

movement cannot cross more than one bounding node, where bounding nodes are IP and NP.

2.2. Other cases of inversion.

The kind of inversion we have seen in Standard English main questions is a residue of what was a much more widespread characteristic of older stages of English syntax. We must not forget that English is a residual V2 language, that is, the V2 feature now shows up only in a restricted number of contexts⁴: main questions, as we have just seen in (4), with the operator *so* (13), which may also modify an adverb (13b), with a null operator as in some dependent clauses such as the counter-factual (14) and the conditional (15), (in these cases, inversion occurs only if the complementiser is omitted) and with monotone decreasing quantifiers such as: *never, hardly, barely, rarely, scarcely, little, (not) only, nor, neither*, etc...(16):⁵

- (13) a. I worked and so did the others.
b. So monotonously did he speak that everyone left.
- (14) a. Had he come!
b. Had I known, I would not have gone.
- (15) Should you change your mind, no one would blame you.
- (16) a. Never did I feel the need to visit my old school.
b. Hardly had I left before the quarrelling started.

Inversion also displays in disjunctive clauses as those in (17)⁶:

⁴ We will not deal here with cases of apparent subject inversion in contexts such as the presentative there/here-constructions (i) and those with a fronted PP, i.e. time and place adverbials (ii) which are to be considered a completely different phenomenon involving no verb raising to C:

- (i) There exist a number of similar medieval crosses in various parts of the country.
Here comes the bus
- (ii) At the end of the week came the rains
In the garden stood a sundial

⁵ A marginal instance of subject/verb inversion with the adverb *well* is illustrated in (i). The register is highly formal and of the literary type, it is to note that in this case inversion is optional.

- (i) Well may he complain of the misfortunes that have befallen him

⁶ Interestingly, if we take into consideration the older stages of English, too, a strict parallelism seems to emerge between English V2 contexts and the contexts displaying inversion discussed by Poletto (2000) and reported by Benincà (1989) for the Northern Italian dialects. The following examples illustrate cases of inversion in exclamative contexts:

- (i) a. What a caterwauling do you keep here!

(17)

- a. (...) but he did command that every man of the sons of Israel (*were he rich, or were he poor*), that came in account from twenty years and upward, should pay yearly half a shekel for an oblation to the Lord.

Letter Addressed to the Commonalty of Scotland 1558 John Knox

- b. And now the Neck-verse was free to every-one *were he or were he not* in holy orders
The law's lumber room Francis Watt 1895

- c. *Be it or be it not true* that man is shapen in iniquity and conceived in sin, it is unquestionably true that (...)

Herbert Spencer

It is worth pointing out that Munaro (2001), observing the pattern of variation in the North-Eastern Italian dialects, identifies a series of syntactic contexts which inversion (and the lack of inversion) is consistently associated with⁷; the syntactic contexts are the following:

- (18) a. main interrogative sentences
b. pseudo-questions
c. presuppositional⁸ exclamatives
d. optatives
e. if-clauses
f. disjunctive

Twelfth Night [II, 3] Maria772

- b. Why, what a brood of traitors have we here!
Henry VI, Part II [V, 1] Lord Clifford, 3130
- c. Why, what a shame was this!
Henry VIII [V, 3] Henry VIII, 3214
- d. What an equivocal companion is this!
All's Well That Ends Well [V, 3] King of France, 2961

⁷ see also Benincà (1989) for the central variety of Friulan.

⁸ The term “presuppositional” actually covers the projections activated by rhetorical questions (Obenauer & Poletto, 2000), pseudo-interrogatives (Munaro & Obenauer, 1999) and wh-exclamatives (Benincà, 1995).

The above syntactic contexts can be represented by the implicational scale in (19), the splitting into two subfields (18a-c), on one hand, and (16d-f), on the other, is motivated by the fact that inversion is invariably compatible with the contexts in (18a-c):

(19) disjunctive – hypothetical – optative > presuppositional – exclamative – interrogative

In the light of this, inversion in English seems to be compatible to all the syntactic contexts in (18) English.

2.3. Interrogative strategies in colloquial English.

2.3.1. Non-inversion in yes/no questions in colloquial English.

We have just seen that subject-inversion is the general rule in direct interrogative clause formation of both types, but we must note that descriptive grammars generally mention at least two major exceptions for yes/no interrogatives, these are the *declarative questions* and a peculiar type of interrogative which traditionally goes under the name of *echo questions*.

A terminological remark must be made here, within our theoretical framework the so-called echo questions are actually to be considered a particular case of special questions of the surprise/disapproval kind, following Obenauer (2004) and related works. In the present work we will thus refer to these interrogative clauses as SDQs, while we will keep the label *echo-questions* exclusively to identify a type of interrogative clause characterised by the *wh*-element in situ and produced as a genuine request for information. Echo-questions will be briefly discussed in § 2.3.2.1.

2.3.1.1. The declarative question.

Before analysing declarative questions in details, it is necessary to assume that the speaker's orientation towards an expected answer plays a fundamental role in the interrogative clause formation in general and in declaratives in particular.

It is obviously very difficult, if not almost impossible, to establish, from a quantitative point of view, the degree of strength in the orientation towards a certain answer rather than another. Nevertheless, declarative questions can be considered of this type.

Quirk-Greenbaum (1979, §7.50) among others define the declarative question as having “*the form of a statement, except for the final rising question intonation*”, that is to say that from a descriptive point of view they are basically treated as declarative statements with the typical subject-verb word order conveying interrogative force if accompanied by the appropriate intonation⁹, they do not display the typical syntactic structure of ordinary yes/no questions, as the following examples illustrate:

- (20) a. You’ve got the explosive?
b. He didn’t finish the race?

It is traditionally assumed that this type of interrogative, (also *conducive question*) does not convey a true request for information at all but rather a confirmation of the speaker’s opinion. As we have argued above, the degree of intensity in the orientation towards a presupposed reply is extremely variable and the speaker’s presuppositions can potentially be contradicted by an unexpected reply:

- (21) A. You felt alright when you left?
B. Yes

- (22) A. You’re going home?
B. No, I come from there

It is to point out that it does not seem possible to establish a strict correlation between oriented questions and the lack of inversion, if we consider the fact that there are other types

⁹ The impermissibility of non-assertive forms is assumed to be a diagnostic for the assertive nature of this exceptional type of yes/no question, as the following example illustrates:

- (i) The guests have had nothing/something/*anything to eat?

Non-assertive forms may occur in non inverted negative questions when following the negative form, as in the following example:

- (ii) You didn’t get anything to eat?
(iii) A. You never went anywhere anywhere for holidays or anything like that?
B. No, no holidays.
[FRED-S]<text DUR_003> <area N> <county Durham><loc Hartlepool>

of oriented questions that normally display inversion¹⁰. These are the negative interrogative clauses (23), which are normally strongly oriented and the assertive interrogative clauses (24), that is, the interrogatives that contain assertive words such as: *some, someone, something, somewhere, already* and the like.

- (23) a. A. Don't mention her name
B. Why? Don't you like her?
- b. Wasn't I right?

- (24) a. Is something wrong?
b. Have they gone already?

Another type of oriented interrogative clause that always displays inversion is the question tag, as exemplified in (25) and (26), here the lack of inversion is never admitted, as the b-examples show, and to my best knowledge there are no varieties displaying this possibility.

- (25) a. She's so generous, isn't she?
b. *She's so generous, she isn't?
- (26) a. A. She likes her granddad, does she?
b. *A. She likes her granddad, she does?
B. Yeah.

Question tags are reduced interrogatives that attach to another clause, traditionally defined as the *anchor*, (in Cambridge Grammar of the English Language terminology); they can have either constant or reversed polarity, this means that question tags and anchor can be both affirmative or negative as in (26) or a negative tag can be attached to an affirmative anchor as in (25) and vice versa.

¹⁰ Rhetorical questions are also considered a type of oriented questions, but being addressed to oneself interrogative clauses on subject position do not show inversion

2.3.1.2. The repetition of the stimulus: a type of SDQ.

We will discuss here a type of SDQs that involves the complete or partial repetition of the other speaker's propositional content. We will refer to the other speaker's utterance as the stimulus.

It is important to note that the stimulus (A in the examples) can be of different types: declarative (26), interrogative (27), exclamative (28), imperative (29). Provided that this type of SDQs is basically a repetition of the structure that works as the stimulus accompanied by the proper interrogative intonation conveying speaker's surprise and/or disapproval, it becomes quite clear that (27B) cannot show inversion, the stimulus being a declarative clause with the typical subject-verb word order:

- (27) A. He's the best teacher
 B. He's the best teacher?
- (28) A. Did they complain?
 B. Did they complain?
- (29) A. What a beautiful car he has!
 B. What a beautiful car he has?
- (30) A. Go away!
 B. Go away?

Once again, the fact that the production of the propositional content generated surprise, disapproval or incredulity, that is, the special pragmatic force involved, cannot be directly connected to the lack of inversion, as we have already seen in (28) that the repeated structure can be that of an inverted interrogative.

Besides, we can have SDQs that do not necessarily involve the repetition of the stimulus, these structures display inversion, as can be seen in (31b) and (32b), given respectively (31a) and (32a) as the stimulus:

- (31) a. She's leaving on Saturday.
 b. Did you say she's leaving on Saturday?

- (32) a. I like it.
b. Did you say you like it?

Obviously the interrogative in (27) is potentially ambiguous between a declarative question and a SDQ of the repetition type and could only be disambiguated through the intonation pattern in discourse context, this means that neither of the two clause types we are dealing with can be uttered out of context.

2.3.1.3. The comment question.

The comment question is a peculiar type of interrogative clause about whose status there is much disagreement. Descriptive grammars do not agree mainly on the question of whether these clauses convey a true request for information or not.

It may be assumed that they share features with both question tags and SDQs of the repetition type seen in § 2.3.1.2., though, they still represent a class of their own. More precisely, on a par with question tags, they have a very reduced form operator/pronoun, they are found in colloquial language, mainly in conversational contexts and they display inversion as exemplified in (33) and (34):

- (33) A. She's a teacher
B. Oh, is she?

- (34) A. He's got our books actually
B. Has he?

On a par with SDQs of the repetition type, they could be considered as a sort of repetition but in the elliptical form of what the other speaker has just said. Syntactic evidence that comment questions and SDQs of the repetition type are two different types of interrogative clauses is given by the noteworthy fact that, given a declarative clause as stimulus, SDQs of the repetition type would display the same word order of the stimulus, that is, subject-verb, while, as we have just argued, the comment question requires inversion, as can be seen by the ungrammaticality of (35c) and (36c):

- (35) a. A. He's the best teacher
 b. B. Is he ~~the best teacher~~?
 c. B. *He is ~~the best teacher~~?
- (36) a. Paul speaks Croatian
 b. Does he ~~speak Croatian~~?
 c. *He speaks ~~Croatian~~?

There is no doubt that the comment questions are also pragmatically marked, it can be assumed that in a conversational context they provide relevant feedback conveying the surprise/incredulity of the speaker and performing at the same time a kind of speech-act function of the connective type. This would lead us to assume that comment questions are to be considered special questions; interestingly, this type of special questions seems to be of a slightly different type, if compared to SDQs. Comment clauses have a wider spectrum of pragmatic possibilities; they may also convey, among others combinations, surprise positively oriented, which does not seem to be a possibility according to Obenauer (2004) who points out that SDQs generally convey “*surprise with a tendency to negative orientation (disapproval)*”. We will see later on in the in this chapter that the so-called comment questions show interesting variation in the dialects of England.

2.3.2. Wh-in-situ.

In this section, we will deal with interrogatives displaying wh-in-situ. There are two major types of interrogatives displaying this syntactic feature, these are echo-questions and SDQs. We will then turn our attention to a less studied interrogative structure the so-called “and”-questions.

2.3.2.1. Wh-echo questions.

In § 2.3.1. we have anticipated that echo-questions identify a precise type of wh-interrogative clause. These interrogatives normally occur when a part of the utterance has not been correctly heard and their main function basically consists in the total or partial repetition of the other speaker's propositional content in order to obtain the repetition of the information. The relevant features of echo-questions are mainly two: from a syntactic point of view, the

information which has not been correctly perceived, that is, the variable, is syntactically represented by the *wh*-constituent in situ, as illustrated by the examples in (37), from a prosodic point of view, the typical intonation pattern is characterised by a rising intonation with the nucleus on the *wh*-word.

- (37) a. A. I met Paul last night.
B. You met WHO?
- b. A. I visited the Coliseum.
B. You visited WHAT?
- c. A. I'm going home now.
B. You're going WHERE?
- d. A. It costs five dollars.
B. It costs HOW MUCH?

Actually, the term repetition is not specific enough, following Huddleston (1994) repetition is to be intended here as “*repetition plus variable substitution - at a more abstract level, that of illocutionary acts*”, “*the repetition (...) is a kind of citation, and the citation includes the illocutionary component of the original utterance*”, this becomes clear if we consider the echo-questions in (38) and (39) which cannot be considered mere repetitions of the stimulus:

- (38) A. You're debauched.
B. I'm what?
- (39) A. As soon as the alarm goes, phone your father.
B. I'm to what?

Obviously, echo-questions do not represent the only strategy to obtain the partial repetition of a propositional content as the corresponding sentences in (40) display inversion and perfectly achieve the same aim:

- (40) a. A. I met Paul last night.

B. WHO did you meet?

b. A. I visited the Coliseum.

B. WHAT did you visit?

c. A. I'm going home now.

B. WHERE are you going?

d. A. It costs five dollars.

B. HOW much does it cost?

Sobin (1990) labels the questions above as “*pseudo echo-questions*”, that is, a peculiar type of echo-questions characterised by the typical syntax of interrogative clauses, that is, subject-auxiliary inversion.

Huddleston (1994) argues that from a syntactic point of view the *wh*-element fronting is not sufficient to consider the *wh*-items in (40) variables of echo-questions. This becomes clear if we consider two contexts in which the *wh*-element in sentence-initial position is not permitted at all. First, as already noted by Sobin (1990) if the information that has not correctly perceived is contained in an interrogative structure – yes-no main questions in (41-45)) – this

cont ext excludes *wh*-fronting; as can be seen in the following examples, the echo-questions will display subject-auxiliary inversion and the *wh*-element must remain in situ:

(41) A. Was she there in the morning?

B. Was she there when?

B.*When was she there?

(Huddleston, 1994: 432)

(42) Does Jill date Mozart?

*Who does Jill date?

(Sobin, 1990: 145)

(43) A. Did you eh, meet the people who worked at the house at Littleburn?

B. Have I what?

A. Did you meet the people that worked in the house at Littleburn?
[FRED-S]<text NBL_006> area N>co Northumberland> loc Fenwick_Steads>

(44) A. "Did you, Grandpa?" the boy asked.

B. "Did I what?"

A. "Did you all feel gay when the army got home?"

Ramsey Milholland - Chapter I – Booth Tarkington

(45) A. "And did you, or did he?" enquired the detective.

B. "Did he what?"

A. "Did you pay up, or did he do for you?"

The Thirteenth Clue or The Story Of The Signal Cabin Mystery - Chapter III Eric Bradwell

Second, *wh*-fronting is not possible with some *wh*-phrases that typically occur in echo-questions as can be seen in the following examples:

(46) A. I've just created a new macro

B. You've just created a new what?

B'. *A new what have you just created?

(47) A. They sacked Jimmy Carrhuters.

B. They sacked Jimmy who?

B'. *Jimmy who did they sack¹¹?

This seems to confirm our initial assumption that *wh*-in-situ is a distinctive syntactic feature of echo-questions that cannot fail to occur together with the proper intonational pattern. Furthermore, we agree with Huddleston (1994) when he maintains that the sentences in (40) – the so-called pseudo-echo-questions in Sobin's terminology – cannot be considered echo-questions.

¹¹ Huddleston (1994) observes that the starred example in (47B') is not possible as an echo-question, given A as a stimulus, though it is perfect as a standard question.

We will see in the following sections that *wh-in-situ* can also occur with two other types of questions: the SDQs and the “and”-questions, in the latter case as a genuine request for information.

2.3.2.2. Wh-in-situ and SDQs.

The *wh-in-situ* structures in (37), here repeated in (48) can also be used to convey, with the appropriate intonation, the speaker’s attitude in terms of surprise/disapproval/incredulity towards what has just been said. This means the the interrogative structures displaying *wh-in-situ* can also be interpreted SDQs with the appropriate intonational pattern.

- (48)
- a. You met WHO?
 - b. You visited WHAT?
 - c. You’re going WHERE?
 - d. It costs HOW MUCH?

In English SDQs can display both *wh-in-situ* and *wh*-fronting; there does not seem to be any correlation between the a distinctive syntactic structure and the interpretative properties of this type of special questions.

What is relevant to our purposes is that echo-questions and SDQs both displaying *wh-in-situ* are different in a relevant way and a distinction must be made. Echo-questions are to be considered a subtype of standard question; as opposed to SDQs, they represent a genuine request for information and are generally produced when a part of the information has not been correctly processed in non-pragmatically marked contexts.

2.3.2.2. The “AND”-questions.

We have anticipated that *wh-in-situ* can be found in another type of interrogative clause used to elicit new information: the so-called “AND”-questions.

The “AND”-questions have been discussed by Taylor (2005) and Pires & Taylor (2007); they represent a peculiar type of *wh-in-situ* in non-echo contexts and are found not only in colloquial language, especially in every-day interaction, (49), but they also occur very

frequently in some specific formal contexts such as interviews (50) and depositions or court examinations (51)¹²:

- (49) And you need how much money today?
- (50) A. Date of birth?
B. January 1, 1965
A. And you were born where?
B. Pleasant Valley
A. Pleasant Valley is in what state?
B. Ohio
A. Where do you live now?
B. Toledo, Ohio
A. And you have lived there for how long?
- (51) A. Tell me what happened on January 1, 2005 at 4 p.m.
B. I was driving along Andrews Avenue.
A. And you were driving which direction?
B. I was headed south, towards the library
A. And you were travelling about how fast would you say?
B. 35 miles per hour
A. OK, and then what happened?
B. I came upon a stop sign and stopped quickly.
A. (writing this down) OK, you came to a stop sign and stopped quickly why?
B. Because I saw someone crossing in the crosswalk.

At first sight “AND”-questions and echo-questions show some similarities: both display wh-in-situ and cannot be uttered out of context, both request new information.

Taylor (2005) observes that in the “AND”-questions the wh-phrase has a referent that is contextually relevant in the discourse and this referent can be either overt or covert but not necessarily immediate in the discourse. More precisely, the possible answers must be

¹² The examples in (49-51) are drawn from Taylor (2005).

compatible with the Common Ground, that is, with the common knowledge shared by the participants.

2.4. The interrogative strategies of non-standard varieties.

In the previous sections we have dealt with conversational strategies that occur in different registers of the colloquial language: non-inversion and *wh-in-situ* in the most informal contexts and a distinct type of interrogative clause involving *wh-in-situ* in specific formal contexts. Obviously, it is plausible that all the abovementioned strategies can easily be found in non-standard English varieties as well; we will mention them when occurring systematically in the corpora or other sources. That being stated, the following sections are dedicated to variety-specific strategies; we will see that a number of fixed patterns can be isolated: non-inversion in yes/no contexts, non-inversion in *wh*-contexts, auxiliary deletion also in co-occurrence with subject deletion or both, to further complicate the picture we will see that ellipsis phenomena often co-occur with both conversational and variety-specific strategies.

2.4.1. Non-inversion.

We have seen that, to simplify, the general rule for interrogative clause formation is inversion in both yes/no and *wh*-questions.

In the following sections we will see that a frequent non-standard strategy involves no inversion at all, but a relevant distinction must be made.

We must distinguish the lack of inversion in yes/no questions, on one hand, and in *wh*-contexts, on the other. We will see that non-inversion in yes/no questions occurs much more frequently in many different varieties and has appropriate pragmatic contexts that seem to favour it; non-inversion in *wh*-questions is much rarer and, as a distinctive syntactic feature, it characterises only a few varieties. The picture is further complicated by the fact that few varieties also display non-inversion in yes/no questions as a general strategy for the yes/no interrogative clause formation with no pragmatic restrictions.

2.4.1.1. Non-inverted yes/no interrogatives in the dialects of England.

We have already found the non-inversion strategy in oriented and special questions in colloquial English, non-inversion is in fact a widespread phenomenon in these contexts in a great number of varieties of English, at least in all the varieties that we have taken into consideration in this work. In this section we will observe the dialects of England and see in which contexts non-inversion occurs.

Before going into details, we must point out that all the dialects represented in the corpus have an interrogative system in which standard interrogative clauses are formed by inversion strategy, besides, question tags always display inversion, with no exceptions and non-inversion in *wh*-contexts is never attested.

The following examples drawn from the FRED corpus show non-inversion in declaratives in the Northern English dialects of Lancashire, Durham and Nottinghamshire, it is worth noticing that non-inversion in declarative questions is a general phenomenon attested throughout the corpus, we take these varieties as representative for English dialects.

As for colloquial English, a strong speaker's orientation towards a positive or a negative reply is found in the declaratives (52), even if the reply obviously can be of the unexpected type as the example in (52e) shows:

(52)

a. A. Well, give you a dose of licorice eh, glycerine for the chest you see.

B. You 'd swallow it?

A. Aye, yeah oh we swallowed it and, it it done the trick you know.

(FRED-S, NTT 005; Midlands, Nottinghamshire, Southwell)

b. A. Well, it 'd be oh it would be quarter of a mile I suppose.

B. Oh, so it wasn't too far to go to school?

A. Oh no, eh (...)

(FRED-S, NTT 005; Midlands, Nottinghamshire, Southwell)

c. A. Well they would be Church of England.

B. Yes, your mother was a Methodist?

A. A Methodist, yeah.

(FRED-S, DUR 002; North, Durham, Hartlepool)

- d. A. (...) I come from Darwen, Park Hotel at Darwen, and they kept the Syntax during the First World War.
 B. So you were here in the First World War?
 A. Oh yes, yes I was five when we came.
 (FRED-S, LAN 009; North, Lancashire, Preston)
- e. A. And so your father was from Darwen?
 B. Eh, no, my father originally come from Padiham.
 (FRED-S, LAN 009; North, Lancashire, Preston)

In the example in (53), a self-supplied answer has been anticipated and the non-inverted question follows:

- (53) A. I don't know what the two thousand they're collecting, what's, what's that for, Dan?
 B. No idea.
 A. For church repairs, you don't know?}
 B. No, no one did.
 (FRED-S, CON 001; South-West, Cornwall, Churchtown)

As far as SDQs of the repetition type are concerned, it is to note that this type of interrogative is indeed quite common in the whole corpus, which is made up of interviews, the ideal context for the production of this type question. As a matter of fact, we can say that, as a general tendency, the repetition of the stimulus occur much more frequently in the reduced form in which only the most relevant part of the utterance is repeated, as the examples in (54) show, though most of the structure is elided, it is assumed that the underlying structure is that of the stimulus:

- (54)
- a. A. Whereas other days we had what there was. Which was very often skilly.
 B. Skilly?
 (FRED-S, KEN 001; South-East, Kent, Whitstable)
- b. A. Can you remember seeing an eclipse in Hartlepool?}

B. An eclipse?

(FRED-S, DUR 002; North, Durham, Hartlepool)

c. A. Uh it was seed laps.

B. Seed laps?

(FRED-S, CON 001; South-West, Cornwall, Churchtown)

d. A. You didn't have to take a test in those days then?

B. Test?

(FRED-S, NTT 001; Midlands, Nottinghamshire, Nottingham)

The following example shows one of the rare instances in which a larger portion of the structure, (almost the whole structure), is repeated:

(55) Then I moved into Canterbury, into Harbledown.

You moved to, to Harbledown?}

(FRED-S, KEN 001; South-East, Kent, Whitstable)

We will see in § 2.5.5. that non-inversion strategy may also combine with null subjects.

We have seen that as the declarative questions and the SDQs of the repetition type in the dialects of England confirm a well-known pattern which is common to colloquial English as well, but they are not the only contexts that display non-inversion in these varieties. The following examples show that in the South-West area, at least in some varieties in Cornwall, Devon, Somerset and Wiltshire the comment questions are generally formed by the non-inversion strategy. This seems to be a syntactic feature typical of the South-West area considering that non-inversion in comment questions is not attested elsewhere in the corpus:

(56)

a. A. did you ever do milking outside, or was that --?}

B. Yes. I did.

A. You did?

B. But I hated it.

(FRED-S, CON 002; South-West, Cornwall, Carnelloe)

- b. A. The Sunday School. Did they have a piano in the house?
 B. Oh yes.
 A. They did? }
 B. And a pianola.
 (FRED-S, DEV 007; South-West, Devon, Totnes)
- c. A. Well, you can't get gold top now. }
 B. You can't?
 A. No, no
 (FRED-S, SOM 013; South-West, Somerset, Yeovil)
- d. A. Oh, Charlie were the oldest. He went, he went to, he went uh, he went to Canada here, oh, about nineteen ten, I think.
 B. Oh, he did?
 A. He were, he were big chap.
 (FRED-S, WIL 010; South-West, Wiltshire, Urchfont)

2.4.1.2. Non-inversion in African American English.

African American English (henceforth AAE) is generally assumed to be the variety of American English spoken by Afro-Americans throughout the United States, even if it AAE is also spoken by many Americans of non-African origins. This variety presents a peculiar interrogative system: in addition to standard strategies, that is, generalised subject-auxiliary inversion in both yes-no and wh-questions, non-inversion is also available in both contexts. First, we will see the contexts of use for non-inversion in yes/no interrogatives and whether it differs from what we have seen for other varieties, then we will turn to non-inverted wh-interrogative clauses.

2.4.1.2.1. Non-inverted Yes/no interrogatives in AAE.

The following examples show that non-inversion is perfectly grammatical in this variety of English, but what is remarkable is that interrogatives in (69) can occur not only as SDQs, as we have seen for the varieties in the previous sections, but also as true interrogative clauses, that is, they convey a genuine request for information:

- (57) a. They took it¹³?
b. Bob left?
c. You know her name?

It is to note that the AAE past participle form is not distinguished from the simple past form, this holds for irregular verbs as well. The result is ambiguity between a present perfect and a simple past interpretation, which can only be solved by the context.

Here the picture is further complicated by the fact that auxiliaries and existential *be* can be omitted in interrogative clauses, as illustrated in the following examples:

- (58) a. Bob gon' leave?
b. Bob running?
c. Bob here?

There is but one important restriction: modal verbs and past tense auxiliary/copula *be* cannot be omitted in interrogatives, this means that the sentence in (59b) could not have a possible counterpart in which the auxiliary is omitted; in the light of this, sentence in (58b) can only be interpreted in the present tense, past tense interpretation is excluded. It can be assumed that modals and past tense copula/auxiliary cannot be omitted because they are tense-marked and convey information that could not be recovered elsewhere:

- (59) a. You' a (will) teach me how to swim?
b. Bruce was running?
c. Bruce can swim?

Obviously one could argue that, non-inversion always being optional, it is not clear which strategy is responsible for the resulting word order in those interrogatives in which the auxiliaries have been cancelled in the sentences in (58).

¹³ Wolfram & Fasold (1974) point out that sentences like that in (57a) is not to be confused with cases of echo question, which have the same structure in Standard English. Intonation and contexts of use exclude this interpretation in AAVE. In our framework (56a) could be confused with a SDQs of the repetition type, as we have argued in the previous sections the label echo-questions refer to genuine interrogative displaying *wh*-in situ, (see § 2.3.2.1.).

More precisely, it is not clear whether inversion did not occur at all and the auxiliary was independently deleted or verb raising led to inversion and the auxiliary (or existential) *be* were cancelled afterwards.

This ambiguity is not found in (57a-b). Here we are not dealing with the deletion of the auxiliary, tense-marked lexical verbs exclude this possibility.

In order to shed light on these occurrences, we must consider that AAE auxiliaries are characterised by a set of properties some of which are responsible for the behaviour observed in interrogative contexts, the more relevant properties are the following:

- Auxiliaries generally have a null form, besides contracted forms, in the declarative sentences as well:

- (60)
- a. They \emptyset walking too fast
 - b. The teacher \emptyset got all the papers
 - c. He \emptyset be there in a minute
 - d. Sometimes he \emptyset be already sleeping

- They can occur in the null form in interrogative clauses, as we have seen above.
- They cannot be omitted in question tags, not even in those tags attached to declarative sentences in which the auxiliary has been omitted, as the ungrammaticality of the b-examples in (61) and (62) show:

- (61)
- a. Bruce eating, aint'he?
 - b. *Bruce eating, \emptyset not he?

- (62)
- a. Bruce not eating, is he?
 - b. *Bruce not eating, \emptyset he?

2.4.1.2.2. Non-inverted *wh*-interrogatives in AAE.

Non-inversion in *wh*-interrogatives, exemplified in (63), is a distinctive syntactic feature of AAE; while it is almost absent in the European varieties of English, it is also attested in the variety of English spoken by the descendents from Spanish-speaking Latin Americans in New

York, henceforth NYLE, (§ 2.4.1.3.), in Nigerian Pidgin (§ 2.4.1.4.) and Indian English (§ 2.4.1.5.):

- (63) a. What they was doing?
b. Who that is?
c. Where that is?
d. Why I can't go?
e. How you knew I was here?

Martin & Wolfram (1974) note that the lack of inversion in *wh*-contexts cannot occur freely and the following restrictions can be observed:

- Non-inversion rarely occurs with heavy NP subject:

- (64) a. Who the woman is?
b. Where she is?
c. */?Who all the young women's best friends is
d. */?Where the woman doing all the work is?

- Non-inversion seems generally to be favoured by the copula *be*

Martin & Wolfram (1998) and Wolfram (2004) argue that the phenomenon is not particularly productive anymore, it seems to be restricted to fixed expressions and “*syntactically simple sentences*” as a residue of a much more widespread phenomenon, which is now receding.

Martin & Wolfram (1998) assume that here *wh*-movement and verb raising could operate independently. It follows that in the interrogatives in (63), in which the *wh*-movement occurred, but the auxiliary has not moved, the conditions for the required agreement and the satisfaction of the Wh-Criterion are not met. Sentences in (63) represent a violation of the Wh-Criterion.

A different case is illustrated by the sentences in (65)¹⁴:

- (65) a. What you doing?

¹⁴ The example in (65a) is drawn from Martin & Wolfram (1998), the example in (65b) is drawn from Green ()

- b. Why you looking like that?

These sentences are potentially ambiguous if we consider that there is no auxiliary visible. It is not possible to detect whether the silent auxiliary has undergone verb movement to C° , or not.

If we assume the Wh-Criterion proposed by Rizzi (1996) and discussed in § 1.3., we must obligatorily derive sentence in (65) from an auxiliary deletion rule that is necessarily preceded by inversion because verb raising cannot fail to occur in main *wh*-questions. In the light of this, we have two possible analysis; we could assume that the sentences in (65) do not represent a violation of the Wh-Criterion, which is satisfied by agreement with a null auxiliary, hosted in the head of InterrWh/P. An alternative possibility would be to assume that the null auxiliary has not undergone movement to C° , the sentences in (65) would thus represent a case of violation of the Wh-Criterion and could be considered a subtype of those in (63).

2.4.1.3. New York Latino English

The so-called New York Latino English (henceforth NYLE) defines the variety of English spoken in New York by people of ethnic Latino origin. The examples in (66) are drawn from the NYLE Research Project corpus of Slomanson & Newman (2004) and are reported by Heidrick (2007):

- (66) a. What kind of technology they have?
b. Why you think they came out with that new rule saying ...?
c. Why you have to get involved?
d. Why you come so late?
e. Who else I like...?

2.4.1.4. Nigerian Pidgin

In the Nigerian Pidgin English urban variety of Lagos non-inversion is not only utterly productive if compared to the American varieties whose vitality is uncertain according to some authors but also represents the only strategy for the *wh*-interrogative formation. The

following examples come from the corpus of spontaneous speech collected and discussed by Mazzoli (2008):

- (67) a. Why una let am enter here?
why you let him enter here
- b. If your Id card loss, like how pesin gò take retrieve am?
if your Id card gets lost, like how anybody would take retrieve it
- c. Wetin dem write for here?
what they write for here

Similarly to what we have argued for AAE sentences in (63), these cases undoubtedly represent a violation of the Wh-Criterion.

Surprisingly, inversion fails to occur in special questions as well, as the examples in (68) illustrate:

- (68) a. Wetin you dèy do for gate?
what you PROGR. do at gate
- b. Wetin dat guy get for mind?
what that guy get for mind

With this regard, it is worth pointing out that verb raising to C° fails to occur in the indirect contexts as well, as exemplified in (69):

- (69) a. Na me even first go ask di organisers say **where** our artiste dem go sidon.
“It was me that ask the organisers where our artists were sitting”
- b. Aisha ask me **wetin** I wan chop
“Aisha asked me what I wanted to eat”

2.4.1.5. Indian English

“One characteristic of the Indian English speech community (...) is that (at least) two grammars of English are available to its educated members – (...) we call one Indian Vernacular English and the other Standard Indian English”. (Rakesh M. Bhatt, 2000).

The case of Indian Vernacular English is emblematic, its interrogative system is *“the mirror image of the standard variety”*. Indian Vernacular English, as opposed to Standard Indian English, presents the systematic lack of inversion in direct interrogatives and the consequent violation of the Wh-Criterion, as can be seen from the examples in (70)¹⁵, while it displays inversion in indirect contexts, see (§ 3.6.2.3.)

- (70)
- a. Who they invited for the party?
 - b. What he has eaten?
 - c. What they need now?
 - d. Where you are going?
 - e. When you are coming home?
 - f. Why you look worried?
 - g. How much interest they charged you?
 - h. How long ago that was?

2.5. Cases of deletion: auxiliary, subject and auxiliary/subject.

2.5.1. Auxiliary deletion in colloquial English.

We have seen in (2.4.1.2.2.) that the occurrence of auxiliaries in the null form is a relevant syntactic feature in AAE. In this variety auxiliary deletion is subject to a set of properties and restrictions and is generalised to declarative clauses as well. We have also noted that in these cases it is difficult, in fact almost impossible, to establish whether the underlying structure involves inversion at some stages of the derivation or not. What we have assumed is that either the Wh-Criterion could be violated or virtually satisfied by agreement with a null auxiliary in C°.

¹⁵ The example in (68) are drawn from Bhatt (2000)

In this section we will observe that the same phenomenon of deletion occurs in the colloquial varieties of both American and British English but in much more restricted morpho-syntactic contexts.

As we have seen for AAE, it is obviously very difficult to define whether subject-auxiliary inversion is involved or not,

The Longman Grammar for Colloquial British English (henceforth LGCBE) signals the possibility of ellipsis of auxiliary/copula in yes/no interrogative clauses, all the following examples illustrate cases in which deletion occurred: copular *be* in (71), do-support in (72) and auxiliary *have* in (73):

- (71) a. ~~are~~ You serious?
b. ~~are~~ You alright?
c. ~~is~~ That too early for you?
d. ~~is~~ That you, Liz?

(71) ~~does~~ Your Granny Iris get here?

- (72) a. ~~has~~ Anyone seen my glasses?
b. ~~have~~ You got the other one?

Auxiliary deletion in *wh*-interrogatives is also attested as a generalised phenomenon in both American (73) and British English colloquial speech (74)¹⁶:

- (73) a. What she say?
b. Whenyou coming back?

- (74) a. When you gonna do that then?
b. When you doing the shop like, next week?
c. How we doing Kevin?

If we consider the examples in (70-72), on one hand, and those in (73-74), on the other, there are reasons to believe that we are dealing with two different phenomena: assuming that

¹⁶ The so called formulaic American English greeting “How are you doing?” is often spelt as “How ya doing?”

inversion has occurred, the former set of examples represents cases of ellipsis of the element in sentence-initial position in yes/no interrogatives, while the latter implies a null auxiliary. Crucially, the lack of verb agreement in (71) and (73a) provide evidence that subject-auxiliary inversion is involved. As we have already proposed for AAE, a null auxiliary in (73) and (74) is assumed to create agreement with the *wh*-element, leading to the satisfaction of the Wh-Criterion:

- (75) a. What DOES she say?
b. When ARE you coming back?
c. When ARE you gonna do that then?
d. When ARE you doing the shop like, next week?
e. How ARE we doing Kevin?

It is worth noticing that, as we have observed for AAE in section § 2.4., in both cases it does not seem possible to delete tense-marked auxiliaries. We will see in the following sections that this seems to be a possibility in the case of both auxiliary and subject deletion, in which the tense-marked auxiliary *did* can be deleted.

2.5.2. Auxiliary and subject deletion.

Deleting both auxiliary and subject in interrogative clauses seems to be a further possibility for the yes/no interrogative clauses in the colloquial language, the following examples are signalled by descriptive grammars:

- (76)¹⁷ a. Ever driven a Porsche?
b. Want any more beer?
c. Feeling any better?
d. Looking for anybody?
e. Know what I mean?
f. Why aren't you working? Got a day off?
g. Got what you want?

¹⁷ Examples (90a-c) come from Cambridge Grammar of the English Language (§ 7.8.1.c.), (90d) from Quirk et al. (1985: ...), (90e-g) from Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English (2004).

While the deleted auxiliary in the above sentences can be *have* (76a, f-g), *do* (76b, e), *be* in (76c-d), the deleted subject is always the 2nd person singular *you*. This is also observed by Sandre (2002), who reports the following examples from theatrical writing:

- (77)¹⁸ a. Fancy a drink?
b. Sleep well?
c. Got any olives?
d. Got a light?
e. Find it?

It is worth noticing that while the deleted auxiliary is *do* in (77a), *have* in (77c-d), in (77b, e) the deleted auxiliary is the tense-marked *did*. Apart from these two instances, in which the deletion of the tense-marked auxiliary clearly shows that these are cases of a “double deletion” of both auxiliary and subject, it is extremely difficult to establish for most of them whether they represent cases of interrogatives derived by the standard strategy of inversion or questions in the non-inverted form in which only the subject has been deleted.

In order to get a more clear picture, it will be helpful to take into consideration a series of observations reported in Schmerling (1973)¹⁹. The author explicitly deals with standard question, “*genuine requests of information*”, except for few cases of special questions, which are treated separately. Schmerling (1973) argues that the deletion of the subject is optional if the auxiliary has been deleted, as can be seen from the two set of interrogative clauses below; in the following examples (78-79) the auxiliary is deleted, but only in (78) both the subject and the auxiliary are deleted:

- (78) a. Going to lunch?
b. Find what you were looking for?
c. Ever been to Chicago?

- (79) a. You going to lunch?
b. You find what you were looking for?
c. You ever been to Chicago?

¹⁸ (91a) comes from Stoppard *The Real Thing*, (91b) Pinter *The Caretaker*, (91c) Pinter *The Collection*, (91d) Pinter, *The Lover*, (91e) Pinter, *Night School* in Sandre (2002).

¹⁹ All the examples from (80-91) come from Schmerling (1973).

Nevertheless, the deletion of the subject is impossible if the auxiliary is not deleted, as illustrated by the ungrammaticality of the following:

- (80) a. *Are going to lunch?
b. *Did find what you were looking for?
c. *Have ever been to Chicago?

Schmerling (1973) also observes that while the auxiliaries that can be deleted are *do*, *did*, *have* and *be*, modals and past tense forms of *have* and *be* cannot be deleted. It is worth noticing that she also argues that the deletion of the tense-marked auxiliary *did* is possible but much more restricted if compared to the other auxiliaries, while the sentences in (81) are grammatical, (82a) and (83a) are much less acceptable, note that the corresponding sentences using the present perfect are acceptable:

- (81) a. Come up with anything else while I was gone?
b. Find what you were looking for?
- (82) a. ?? Try one of those cookies?
b. Tried one of those cookies
- (83) a. ?? Go to the exhibit yet?
b. Been to the exhibit yet?

Interestingly, this apparent restriction seems to be related to the pragmatic force of the clause: the deletion of *did* is possible in special questions whose main function, in this case, is to express the speaker's sarcasm²⁰ towards what has just been said, as exemplified in (86):

- (84) A. Old-time machine politics is dead.
B. Oh yeah? Ever go to Chicago?

²⁰ Italian seems to have the same possibility to with special questions conveying speaker's sarcasm such as:

- (i) Mai sentito parlare di diritti umani?
(ii) Mai pensato di darmi una mano?

A rhetorical interpretation is also possible for questions like the following:

- (85) a. Know what Dick did last spring?
b. Remember where we saw Gordon?

As we have already argued above, the deletion of subject and auxiliary shows a relevant difference in the distribution: the deletion of the auxiliary does not depend on the subject of the sentence, as the following examples show:

- (86) a. I look okay?
b. You find him yet?
c. They still in there?

On the contrary, once the auxiliary is deleted, only the second person subject can be deleted:

- (87) a. Look okay?
b. Find him yet?
c. Still in there?

Interestingly, an exception to this general rule seems to be represented by verbs of perception with which the deletion of the third person is also possible but “*only if the experiencer is the second person*”, consider the following examples:

- (88) a. Sound okay to you?
b. ?? Sound okay to John?
- (89) a. That sound ok to you?
b. That sound ok to John?

According to Schmerling (1973), (88b) improves if the auxiliary, but not the subject, is deleted as in (89b), while (88a) is perfectly acceptable but only if the deletion of the third person *that* co-occurs with the “*the experiencer*” overtly expressed by *to you*. The absence of verb agreement in (88) and (89) represents further evidence that inversion has occurred in the derivation.

2.5.3. Auxiliary deletion in the dialects of England .

Data from FRED-S reveals that in the Nottingham variety, (Nottinghamshire), auxiliary deletion occurs quite frequently in both yes/no and *wh* interrogatives.

In the yes/no interrogatives exemplified in (90), we can see instances of deletion of auxiliary *have* (90a), *do*-support (90b) and copula *be* (90c):

(90)

- a. I went home to mi mother I says, **You ever seen angels?**
(FRED-S, NTT 013; Midlands, Nottinghamshire, Nottingham)

- b. You 're the one I want, says, Hey lad, you. I says, **You want me mister?** Yes, he says,
You.
(FRED-S, NTT 013; Midlands, Nottinghamshire, Nottingham)

- c. I said, I 'm right Dad, he said, **You sure?** I says, Yes.
(FRED-S, NTT 013; Midlands, Nottinghamshire, Nottingham)

The examples in (91) show that deletion of the auxiliary is also found in *wh*-contexts with the *wh*-elements *what*, *where* and *how* (occurring also in the complex *wh*-phrase *how many*). As for AAE (see § 2.4.1.2.2.), we assume here that a null auxiliary has moved to C°:

(91)

- a. I'm running down up eh, Hollowstone, so I bumped straight into the Parson. (...) he says, **Where you going Wilbur?**, I says, I 'm in a hurry
(FRED-S, NTT 013; Midlands, Nottinghamshire, Nottingham)

- b. I says, I 'm leaving, he says, **Where you going then?** I says, I 'm going to Jack Padleys
(FRED-S, NTT 013; Midlands, Nottinghamshire, Nottingham)

- c. **How many you got?** She says, Seven.
(FRED-S, NTT 013; Midlands, Nottinghamshire, Nottingham)

- d. I goes in the tripe shop where she knowed me, Hello duck, she says, **How you going**, she says, What do you want?
(FRED-S, NTT 013; Midlands, Nottinghamshire, Nottingham)
- e. Oh, he says, (...) **How far you going?** Oh, I says, Coalpit Lane.
(FRED-S, NTT 013; Midlands, Nottinghamshire, Nottingham)
- f. on the Sunday I were talking to a fellow and he says, **what you doing?** I says, nothing,
(FRED-S, YKS 011; North, Yorkshire, Hebden Bridge)
- g. **What you doing** out there?
(FRED-S, LND 003; South-East, London, London North)

2.5.4. Auxiliary and subject deletion in the dialects of England.

In the English dialects, elliptical structures in which we can find the deletion of both auxiliary and subject are quite frequently in the Northern variety of Birtley, Durham but in very restricted contexts. It seems to be restricted to fixed expression with the verbs *see* and *understand*, as the following examples illustrate:

(92)

- a. Aye, it 's on the screens that, aye, what you call the screens, where they chuck all the stones, you see that 's the ... Tha see it? **See this here?**
Yes.
(FRED-S, DUR 001; North, Durham, Birtley)
- b. In this ... in the ... what you call a flat. Now you used to come out the place and you used to run your empty ... your full tubs down at this side, **see what I mean?**
(FRED-S, DUR 001; North, Durham, Birtley)
- c. (...) They used to yoke them up, I 'll show you how you used to ... **see its collar there?**
(FRED-S, DUR 001; North, Durham, Birtley)

- d. Now there 's a ... there 's the ... there 's the chain, he had a chain there, oh you know ... just by ... just by ... **See the chain there?**
(FRED-S, DUR 002; North, Durham, Birtley)
- e. when a a wagon is full, he takes the ... he stops ... he rings a bell to stop the ... the ehr ... the belts from running, **understand what I mean?**
(FRED-S, DUR 001; North, Durham, Birtley)

2.5.5. Subject deletion.

Subject deletion is only found in combination with the non-inversion strategy, as can be seen in the examples in (93); subject deletion can be related to a more general possibility of null subject in the language²¹; it occurs very frequently in the South-West, in the Churchtown variety in Cornwall but it is also attested in the Northern variety of Hartlepool, Durham. There are reasons to believe that we are dealing with non-inversion structures, where the subject is in the null form; evidence come from the fact that the tense-marked verbs *lived* in (93c), *made* in (93d, f), *worked* in (93e) exclude that verb raising to C° has ever occurred. Besides, it is worth noticing that in (93b) the null subject is *he*, in (93c-e) *they*, in (93f) *she*, while we have seen that in the case of deletion of both auxiliary and subject, subject deletion is restricted to the second person singular (see 2.5.4.):

(93)

- a. A. Well What was Richard's right name?
B. '*laughter*'
C. Tony
A. Don't know?
B. Was it Tony?
C. Yeah.
(FRED-S, CON 001; South-West, Cornwall, Churchtown)
- b. A. couldn't look after himself?

²¹ For subject deletion in English, see Schmerling (1973), Haegeman (2007)

B. Well, uh, no, either couldn't or wouldn't.
 (FRED-S, CON 001; South-West, Cornwall, Churchtown)

c. A. Well look, there was, you know behind the pub, there was two houses there.

B. Were there? Lived in?

A. Lived in.

(FRED-S, CON 001; South-West, Cornwall, Churchtown)

d. A. And made it higher?

B. Yeah, made it higher.

(FRED-S, CON 001; South-West, Cornwall, Churchtown)

e. A. All worked at the same pit?

B. No, different pits.

(FRED-S, DUR 001; North, Durham, Birtley)

f. A. Oh yes, she did a lot of cooking. She didn't run to the shop buying stuff like they do now, ready made.

B. Made her all her own bread and pies and things?

(FRED-S, DUR 002; North, Durham, Hartlepool)

2.5.6. Summary

The table in (94) summarizes the occurrence of deletion distribution in relation to the person:

	Wh-contexts	Yes/no-contexts		
	Auxiliary/Copula deletion	Auxiliary/Copula deletion	Auxiliary and subject deletion	Subject deletion
1 pers.	X	√	X	X
2 pers.	√	√	√	√
3 pers.	√	√	√ ⁱⁱ	√
4 pers.	√	X ⁱ	X	X ⁱ

5 pers.	X ⁱ	X ⁱ	X	X ⁱ
6 pers.	√	√	X	√

- i no instances attested in the sources
- ii refers to the cases of auxiliary and third person subject deletion discussed in Schmerling (1973) and restricted to the verbs of perception, see § 2.5.4.

2.6. Some brief consideration on Hiberno English direct interrogatives.

In the West-Clare variety of Ennis auxiliary deletion in direct interrogatives is only admitted in yes/no contexts and it is restricted to the 2nd person singular *you*, as the examples in (83) illustrate. Interestingly, the subject pronoun always shows up here in the clitic form *y'*.

- (95) a. Y' going to the pub?
b. *He going to the pub?
c. *They going to the pub?

Data concerning the lack of inversion confirms the pattern we have observed so far for British English, that is, inversion can fail to occur in yes/no interrogatives as illustrated in the declarative questions in (96). The informant observes that the degree of the speaker's orientation towards an expected answer can be extremely reduced, so that interrogatives in (96) can be uttered as a genuine request for information, with no particular orientation towards an expected reply:

- (96) a. You went to Galway yesterday?
b. He spoke French with Mary?

As far as *wh*-interrogatives are concerned, the lack of inversion is never admitted as can be observed in (97), it is worth noting that the *wh*-element *how* seems to represent an exception to the general rule, the sentence (98) being marginally acceptable:

- (97) a. *Why he took it?
b. *What you're looking for?

- c. *Where the kids went last night?
- d. *When Paul left?

(98) ?How she's feeling?

It is no surprise that the degree of acceptability in (98) improves if compared to the sentences in (97), this structure can actually be considered akin to the structures of the formulaic type such as greetings and the like. We have already observed above that these fixed expressions may tend to display peculiar syntactic features such as auxiliary deletion and clitic subjects, as in (99) and (100), respectively:

(99) How we doing Kevin?

British colloquial language

(100) How ya doing?

American colloquial language

3. The indirect interrogative clause.

3.1. A general introduction to the indirect interrogative clause.

The indirect interrogative clause is a type of dependent clause which is embedded within a matrix (or main) clause. The verb in the main clause belongs to the limited set of question verbs²² such as: *ask, wonder, inquire/enquire, question*. Question verbs, by virtue of their semantic domain, select an interrogative complement clause whose CP is marked [+wh].

As we have seen in Chapter 2 for the direct interrogatives, embedded interrogatives can be of two types: wh embedded questions and yes/no embedded questions. Wh embedded questions (in square brackets below) are introduced by a wh-phrase (1a-h) or a more complex wh element (1i-l), like the following examples show:

- (1) a. I 'd like to know [**who**'s playing music so loud]
b. I asked Paul [**who(m)** he met at the party last night]
c. I'm wondering [**whose** car they stole]
d. They wondered [**what** they had done]
e. I asked him [**when** he's planning to leave]
f. I'm wondering [**where** they come from]
g. I asked Mary [**why** she's leaving now]
h. I don't know [**how** she's feeling]
i. I don't know [**how far** we drove]
j. They want to know [**which cloth** you have chosen]
k. I wonder [**what kind of books** he's reading]

Yes/no embedded interrogatives can be introduced by the complementiser *if* or the wh-element *whether*, as the following examples illustrate:

²² Obenauer H.G., personal communication, suggests that there do not seem to be specific verbs selecting embedded special interrogatives, rather a subgroup of question verbs is compatible with the selection of an embedded interrogative of the special type. A case in which a verb seems to be specialised for the selection of special indirect question is represented by the Italian verb *vedere* (*see*) in the negative form, as in the following example:

- (i) Non vedo che rispetto meriti
not see what respect deserves
I can't see what respect he deserves

- (2) I asked him [**if** he could help me]
 (3) I wonder [**whether** Paul has already come back]

In the above sentences, the two elements *if* and *whether* seem to be interchangeable without any meaning shift, the only case in which it does not seem possible to substitute *whether* for *if* is in the alternate embedded question (see also E.E. *whether*-clause). Consider examples in (4-6): *whether* can occur on its own (4), with the elliptical negative clause “or not” at the end of the sentence (5), or directly followed by it (6):

- (4) When they reached Duck Bank, Mynors asked her **whether** they should go through the marketplace or along King Street, by the bottom of St. Luke’s Square.
 (5) I don’t care **whether** you want to play an instrument **or not**.
 (6) We do not ask **whether or not** an axiom is “true”, just as we don’t ask if the rules of chess are “true”.

As a matter of fact, the complementiser *if* may also introduce occasionally alternate questions, these occurrences are attested in specific registers such as journalism; the following examples come from news writing:

- (7) a. I don’t know **if** she was upset or her eyes were watering because of the smoke
 b. It really doesn’t matter **if** I’m a nice guy **or not**

As we have seen from the above examples, in Standard English the order in the embedded interrogative clause of both WH and yes/no types is that given in (8):

- (8) Matrix clause – Wh/complementiser – Subject – Verb

As far as the interrogative clause is concerned, subject-auxiliary inversion is restricted to direct interrogatives, while indirect interrogatives of both types do not admit inversion in Standard English, as can be seen from the ungrammaticality of (9-12):

- (9) *She’s wondering whether has Paul already come back
 (10) *I asked him if could he help me

- (11) *Jill was asking what did it happen
 (12) *I asked him when is he planning to leave

We have already seen in Chapter 2 that, besides main questions, Standard English, a residual V2 language, displays verb raising (do-support, auxiliaries, modals) to C° in a limited number of other contexts. In particular, subject-auxiliary inversion with monotone decreasing quantifiers is admitted not only in matrix questions but also in dependent clauses:

- (13) a. It had to be pointed out to him that not only had I already done so, but my ball had landed many yards behind the spot where it was standing
 b. With hand on heart I can categorically state that never once have I done anything illegal with a cricket ball

If we assume the Wh-Criterion, proposed by Rizzi (1996) and discussed in Chapter 1, in embedded interrogative contexts inversion is banned because the Wh-Criterion is satisfied by the presence in C of a [+Wh] complementiser selected by the matrix verb. This [+Wh] complementiser can be either null or lexicalised. This prevents the verb from raising to C, plausibly because verb and complementiser are competing for the same position.

- (14) a. Each+wh SPEC must have a +wh X°
 b. Each+wh X° must have a +wh SPEC

3.1. A related structure: the headless relative clause.

For the purposes of the present work, we introduce here a type of embedded clause that shows a number of similarities with the indirect interrogative clause and whose acquaintance will be helpful later on when we will present our proposal.

The structure in question is the headless relative clause (henceforth HLR). The HLR is a type of relative clause that, as the name itself suggests, has no lexical head as antecedent, or better has a “silent” head of the semantically indefinite type such as “the thing”, ”the person”, ”the place”. etc. Consider the following examples:

- (15) a. I will eat what you have prepared

- b. You're not who I thought you were
- c. Here is where I bought the food

HLRs are introduced by *wh*-elements belonging to the interrogative paradigm (*who*, *what*, *where*, *when*, *how*, *why*), which may also occur in combination with the suffix *ever*, (a reduced form of *every*), (*whoever*, *whatever*, *wherever*, *whenever*, *however*). This latter type of HLRs is generally related to a strongly indeterminate interpretation.

- (16)
- a. I'll cook whatever you like
 - b. I dislike whoever could do this
 - c. I'll follow him wherever he goes

3.1.1. HLRs and indirect interrogatives: points of contact.

It is a well-known fact that the indirect interrogative clause and the headless relative clause may have a very similar superficial structure, as Bresnan & Grimshaw (1977) already observed. This becomes clear if we consider the two sets of sentences in (17) and (18)²³. The a-examples are HLRs while the b-examples are indirect interrogative clauses:

- (17)
- a. I'll buy what he is selling
 - b. I'll inquire what he is selling
- (18)
- a. She is reading what she prefers
 - b. She is asking what they prefer to read

The basic difference is made by the semantic value of the verb in the matrix and consequently the type of complements they select. According to its semantic content, the verb can either select a [+Wh] CP, as in the case of the interrogative clause, or a null NP, as in the case of the headless relative. After all this is said, the similarities are striking. A relevant fact is that both HLRs and indirect interrogatives are introduced by the same paradigm of elements and both structures are derived by *wh*-movement of the *wh*-constituent from its base position within the embedded clause.

²³ The examples in (17) are drawn from Bresnan & Grimshaw (1977), the examples in (18) are drawn from Viel (2001: 149)

The interpretation of the two clause types, can be ambiguous so that in some cases it may be difficult to distinguish one from the other. We will see below, as we go further in details, that this ambiguity can be translated and explained in syntactic terms.

The historical perspective may shed some light in this sense: the *wh*-relatives of Standard and substandard English (and many other Indo-European languages) are actually the interrogative *wh*-elements.

These elements were exclusively interrogative and they were used in both direct and indirect contexts (Mustanoja, 1960, Mitchell & Robinson, 1986). As for the relativisers, Old English only had elements of the demonstrative paradigm (*se, seo, þæt*), while the *wh*-paradigm (*hwa* "who", *hwæt* "what", *hwelch* "which", *hwær* "where", *hwy* "why", *hu* "how"), was restricted to interrogative contexts. Besides, the interrogative *wh*-items could also introduce headless relative clauses with a generalising meaning ("whoever", "whatever", etc.) in the form *swa hwa/hwæt/hwær/hwelch/hwæper swa*. Starting from the beginning of the Middle English period they were gradually introduced into the relative system and this process followed a precise pattern.

The first type of relative clause that underwent this process was the headless relative clause. The first attestations of interrogative *wh*-elements introducing HLRs are very early, dating back from the Late Old English period. After this first stage, the *wh*-items gradually began to spread to the headed relative clauses, of both appositive and restrictive types.

We could say that the penetration of the interrogative *wh*-elements into the relative system was mediated by the indirect interrogative clause and took place via the headless relative clause.

It is worth noticing that, as the *wh*-items began to introduce the headed relatives, the spreading was not random; Romaine (1980) argues that the use of etymological *wh*-words as introducers of headed relative clauses was first restricted to the more formal and complex registers of the language. Besides, when entering the headed relative system, the interrogatives *wh*-elements seemed to follow a definite pattern again. The pattern in question concerns the syntactic positions involved in the process of relative clause formation. More precisely, *wh*-pronouns started to relativise the lower positions in the AH.

At this point, *wh*-items gradually spread to the whole system.

A final remark concerns the type of headed relatives which first underwent the process. Probably the appositive relative clause was the first type of headed relative to be introduced by the interrogative *wh*-items. Evidence lies in the fact that in Middle English *wh*-items were

more frequently attested in this context (Viel, 2001). If we look at Modern English, we realise that *wh*-pronouns are still specialised for appositive relative clauses and optionally alternate with *that* in restrictive relatives. This fact could be interpreted as a signal of the incomplete transition from interrogative to relative, but it is not possible to predict whether this process will ever come to a conclusion, this kind of process being the result of a complex interaction of many different factors.

What is assumed above by Romaine (1980) is basically that *wh*-pronouns were introduced in order to relativise positions that were less accessible to the other strategies.

The accessibility to relativisation of different NP syntactic positions is discussed in detail by Keenan and Comrie (1977) on the basis of data from about fifty languages. What they observe is that languages consistently vary with respect to which NP position can be relativised and that all the syntactic positions which are cross-linguistically accessible to relative clause formation can be ordered in an Accessibility Hierarchy (henceforth AH), here given in (28):

(19) **Accessibility Hierarchy**

Subject > Direct Object > Indirect Object > Oblique > Genitive > Object of comparative

What is relevant about the AH is that it also predicts certain cross-linguistic constraints on the frequency with which NPs are relativised in a language and on the accessibility of NPs in different syntactic positions to a particular relativisation strategy. More precisely, a) subject NPs are most frequently relativised (“*a language must be able to relativise subjects*”) and objects of comparison are least frequently relativised, b) if a given relativisation strategy works on two possible NP positions, then it must work on all intermediate positions between the two.

In the light of what we have just argued, it would be interesting to observe from a synchronic point of view those languages in which *wh*-items are (still?) restricted to interrogative contexts and the relative clauses are usually introduced by other kinds of elements. This would re-propose exactly the same picture of the older stages of the English language.

The Scandinavian languages represent an emblematic case in this sense. *Wh*-elements are used to introduce interrogative clauses of both direct and indirect types while relative clauses are usually introduced by non-*wh* elements such as the complementiser *som*.

Vangsnes, personal communication, observes that in Scandinavian languages *wh*-pronouns are used very rarely in relative clauses, *wh*-items only occur in highly restricted contexts such as the more formal styles of the written language. They occur more frequently in “locative relatives” such as “The house where I live”, and interestingly, in headless relative clauses even if it is to point out that it would be more natural for the speaker to use non-*wh* elements in both these contexts. Data from Scandinavian languages will be also discussed in § 3.5.3.

We can hypothesise that the same process that English underwent, starting from the Old English period, is taking place in the Scandinavian languages now, with the same pattern we have discussed above for English. As expected, *wh*-items are starting to “affect” the relative system via the headless relative clauses; as far as headed relatives are concerned, “locative relatives” can be associated to syntactic positions quite low in the AH, presumably lower than Oblique²⁴, even if Keenan & Comrie (1977) do not deal specifically with this kind of position. This predicts that the spreading of *wh*-interrogatives will gradually occur climbing up the AH from the lower to the higher syntactic positions; obviously, as we have already argued above, nothing can tell us whether this process will go on until a relevant substitution of the whole relative paradigm (the process has never been completed in English either): interfering processes or competing strategies could be at work at the same time.

3.1.2. The “*wh-that*” clause.

There are a number of varieties of American, British and Hiberno English displaying the co-occurrence of both the *wh*-element and complementiser *that*.

The so-called “*wh-that* clauses” are discussed by Radford (1988), Seppänen & Trotta (2000), Zwicky (2002) and Bayer & Brandner (2007). It is generally assumed that this pattern, which is always optional, exclusively occurs in interrogative embedded contexts. As a matter of fact, only a small part of the recorded examples are to be considered genuine embedded interrogatives; some of them are reported below:

- (20) a. ... we asked [what sort of health care that] they rely on
Interviewee on KQED-FM, 9/02/98

²⁴ In the Accessibility Hierarchy, OBL stands for “major oblique case NP” (we intend here NPs that express arguments of the main predicate, as *the chest* in *John put the money in the chest* rather than ones having a more adverbial function like *Chicago* in *John lives in Chicago* or *that day* in *John left on that day*) Keenan & Comrie (1977: 66).

- b. I wonder [which dish that] they picked
Belfast English (Henry 1995)

The majority of the occurrences discussed in literature are actually instances of relative clauses of the headless type and not interrogative clauses, as illustrated by the examples in (21), which belong to the “R/Z corpus” collected by Radford/Zwicky and discussed in Zwicky (2002) :

(21)

- a. It’ll be evident from the field which of the players that are feeling the heat most.
- b. I want to tell you what experiences that I’ve had here in my work.
(Columbus Stonewall presentation, 9/1/94)
- c. I’d like to make whatever contribution that I can.
(public radio interviewee, 9/14/99)
- d. It all depends on how much work that you had to do.
(astronaut Shannon Lucid, interviewed on NPR, 9/16/96)

Zwicky (2002), starting from the assumption that “*wh-that* clauses” are all interrogatives, observes that they undergo the following restrictions: a) they do not occur in ordinary relative clauses such as restrictive, appositive or free relatives, (22a), (22b) and (22c,) respectively, b) they are only attested in finite clauses (23) and c) they never display inversion (24):

- (22) a. *The people whose house that I visited
- b. *Kim and Terry, whose house that we visited
- c. *What thing that I had in my hand exploded
- (23) a. *Which book that to read
- b. *I wonder which book that to read
- (24) a. *How much water that do you need to drink?

- b. *I wonder which dish that did they pick?

There is also general agreement on a further relevant restriction relating to the composition of the wh-phrase. The co-occurrences of bare wh-items and the complementiser *that* seem to be excluded, as Zwicky (2002: 229) observes: “*The minimal XP [... WH] then has two words, one of them a WH word, the other a lexical word, of category N (...) or Adv (...)*”

We agree with the author that there is a tendency for this kind of constructions to occur with complex wh-phrases in which the wh-word modifies a lexical word. It is worth noticing that co-occurrences of bare wh-items and complementiser *that*, such as “*who that*”, “*which that*”, are indeed highly restricted from a quantitative point of view, though they may occasionally occur, as the appositive relatives in (25) and (26) illustrate. The *which-that* clauses in (25) come from the FRED corpus and the *who-that* clauses in (26) are drawn from the British National Corpus:

- (25) I got a job at Pollington **which that** was one of Oakes.

(FRED-S, NTT 002; Midlands, Nottinghamshire, Nottingham)

he wants to make a nice overcoat, **which that** got to be some so that square yard is exactly thirty ounces

(FRED-S, WIL 001; South-West, Wiltshire, Trowbridge)

- (26) and erm I mean there was th the curate **who that** she eventually married but, really they wouldn't know, they wouldn't have any male friends.

K60 633 <http://www.natcorp.ox.ac.uk/>

You know, I he mustn't pushed me, that man, **who that** keeps asking me out

KB1 797 <http://www.natcorp.ox.ac.uk/>

We assume here that in modern English the co-occurrences of wh-items and complementiser are typically found in headless relative clauses, and marginally in headed relatives; in the light of this, we disagree with Zwicky (2002) when he argues that the “*wh-that* clauses” are all embedded interrogatives²⁵. The fact that headless (and headed) relatives might display the co-

²⁵ It is to point out that Zwicky (2002) classifies concessive free relatives, “*with WH-ever words in them*”, as interrogatives.

occurrence of the *wh*-element and complementiser is not problematic, if we adopt a diachronic perspective: it is a well known fact that in several varieties of Germanic and Romance a lexical complementiser may follow *wh*-words in headless relative clauses; in the modern North-Eastern dialects of Veneto the *wh*-item and the complementiser *che* must obligatorily co-occur. The examples in (27a-b) are from Middle English, (27c) from Modern English. (28) from North-Eastern Italian dialects (Paduan)²⁶:

- (27) a. (...) they stoden for to see [*who that* ther com]
(Chaucer)
- b. [What that euer he wer to by straw], he must pay in honde.
OED s.v. *what*, pron., a., adv., conj., int.C I 4 b1464 Stonor Papers (Camden) I.
- c. To lie open to the spoile of [*who that* first can catch it].
(1602, W. Watson, *Decacordon* , p. 101)
- (28) a. chi *(che) lo dise ze buziaro
who that it.says is liar
- b. lo lassaremo a disposission de *chi *(che)* lo trova par primo
we will leave it at disposal of *who that* finds it first

3.2. The indirect interrogative clause in Hiberno English

As we have seen above, in Standard English inversion occurs exclusively in matrix contexts, that is, direct interrogative clauses of both *wh*- and *yes/no* types. Nevertheless a striking syntactic feature of Hiberno English is that inversion occurs in embedded interrogatives of both types, with some distributional differences that we will see.

This phenomenon is not entirely restricted to the spoken language; in particular, inversion in *yes/no* embedded interrogatives is recorded also in formal contexts in both local and national newspapers; it is thus to be considered a syntactic feature of the *standard*

²⁶ The examples in (27c) and (28a-b) are drawn from Benincà (to appear).

Hiberno English and not only of the colloquial language. The following examples are taken from County Clare local papers:

- (29) Judge Mangan asked did the accused intend to stay in Ireland and was told that he has lived here for the past two years and planned to stay here
The Clare People 03/10/2006
- (30) When asked was he drunk going into the nightclub, he said: “I mustn’t have been too bad if I got in”.
The Clare People 05/07/05

In the following sections we will analyse the syntactic contexts in which this phenomenon shows up and we will observe how two varieties of Hiberno English show a certain degree of variation.

The two varieties of Hiberno English taken into consideration are Belfast English as representative of Ulster English and an urban variety of the Munster province, more precisely the variety spoken in Ennis, County Clare, in the mid-west of the Republic of Ireland. Before going further into details, a remark must be made; the cases of inversion in indirect interrogative contexts that will be discussed in the following sections are to be taken as genuine cases of embedded inversion. Instances of quotations of direct speech, as in (31), are categorically excluded.

- (31) I’m wondering: “What is he doing?”

The embedded interrogative in (32b) shows the distinctive features of indirect question, if compared to the direct speech quotation in (32a): the present tense of the verb in the dependent clause changes into the past tense if it is embedded into past tense question verb. Indirect interrogative in (32b) also implies a change to pronouns (underlined) with respect to the corresponding direct quotation in (32a):

- (32) a. I asked him: “Where are you going with your friend?”
b. I asked him where was he going with his friends.

3.3.1. Embedded interrogatives in Belfast English

According to Henry (1995), Belfast English (Bel.E. henceforth) shows inversion in embedded questions of both yes-no and wh type, though the data seem to confirm that yes-no contexts are slightly preferred, this means that at least some groups of speakers do not accept inversion in wh embedded contexts. However, it is important to note, as a general rule, that inversion is always an optional strategy, this means that the embedded question may always be introduced by *whether/if* in the case of yes/no embedded interrogatives or the wh element followed by the canonical order in the case of wh contexts.

But consider the following examples:

- (33) a. I wondered where they were going
b. I wondered where were they going
- (34) a. They couldn't work out whether/if we had left
b. They couldn't work out had we left
c. They couldn't work out *whether/if had we left

We soon realise that the phenomenon is different in the two contexts. While in the wh-context the pattern is: wh-element followed either by the order subject-verb or inversion, in the yes/no context both *whether* and *if* can only be followed by the order subject-verb and the alternative strategy, verb-subject is ungrammatical, as the starred example in (40c) shows.

As far as the wh-context is concerned, a noteworthy fact is that in Bel.E. embedded wh questions allow the co-occurrence of a wh-phrase with the complementiser *that* as shown in the examples in (35a) and (36a), but once again, as we can see from the b-examples below, inversion is banned in embedded interrogatives in which the complementiser is lexicalised.

- (35) a. I wonder which dish that they picked
b. *I wonder which dish that did they pick
- (36) a. They didn't know which model that they had discussed
b. *I wondered which model that did they discuss

Inversion is unproblematic if the complementiser *that* is not lexicalised:

- (37) a. I wonder which dish did they pick
 b. They didn't know which model had they discuss

Henry (1995) also argues that the co-occurrence of a *wh*-phrase and the complementiser *that* is restricted to embedded interrogatives and in direct interrogative clauses is ungrammatical, as illustrated in (38):

- (38) a. *Which dish that they picked?
 b. *Which model that they discussed?

Inversion occurs not only in the clause where we can find a *wh*-element at spell-out like in the embedded interrogatives seen above, but also in *that*-type clauses from which the *wh*-element has been extracted; these *that*-clauses can be embedded to both direct (39a-b) and indirect interrogatives (39c).

It is worth noticing that in the examples below inversion occurs, as we have just said, in *that*-clauses, that is, in clauses that are embedded under bridge verbs such as: *hope*, *claim*, *think* that do not select a [+Wh] CP.

- (39) a. [_{CP1} Who_i did John hope [_{CP2} *t*_i would he see *t*_i]]?
 b. [_{CP1} What_i did Mary claim [_{CP2} *t*_i did they steal *t*_i]]?
 c. I wonder [_{CP1} what_i did John think [_{CP2} *t*_i would he get *t*_i]].

Inversion in HE is thus to be considered a phenomenon of embedded contexts in a wider sense involving different types of embedded clauses within the interrogative system but if we consider the sentence in (40), we can see what happens in case of a longer sequence of clauses: inversion can go right down the sequence to the extraction site

- (40) [_{CP1} Who_i did John say [_{CP2} *t*_i did Mary claim [_{CP3} *t*_i had John feared [_{CP4} *t*_i would Bill attack *t*_i]]]]?

In case of long *wh*-movement, inversion can occur in every clause between the moved *wh*-constituent and its extraction site in case of either direct, or indirect interrogative contexts. In (39) and (40) the complementiser *that* of the *that*-clauses complements was omitted and inversion was perfectly grammatical; as we can see in (41), if the complementiser *that* occurs, inversion is banned:

(41) *_[CP1] Who did John hope _[CP2] that could he help]]

Inversion cannot co-occur with a lexicalised complementiser, as we have seen in (34) for *if*, in (35b) and (36b) for *that* following a *wh*-phrase and in (41) for *that* introducing a *that*-clause, we will find out later on why inversion cannot co-occur with *whether*.

3.3.1.1. Previous analysis: Henry (1995).

To account for the phenomenon, Henry (1995) explores two possibilities: her first proposal is to argue that inversion occurred in IP rather than in CP, the verb is assumed to fill the head position of AgrP and the subject the specifier of a lower position in Spec//TP and Spec/TP is indeed an available position for subjects in Belfast English as the facts of Singular Concord²⁷ confirm, but this proposal, as Henry herself states, poses a series of problems. Firstly, it would predict inversion with a lexicalised complementiser which is not the case, as the data shows. Secondly, it is true that Spec/TP is a position for subjects but that is the portion of IP in which there is no agreement between verb and subject, only default Case is checked, this means that a nominative pronoun cannot occur in this position, as a consequence this would predict that embedded inversion could not co-occur with a nominative pronominal subject, nevertheless, as we have seen, there is no restriction on pronominal subjects in embedded inversion; inversion, in fact, occurs freely with nominative pronouns, which are case marked besides singular concord and inversion do not necessarily co-occur, this means that between subject in Spec/TP and embedded inversion a relation of cause and effect cannot be established.

As far as the Wh-Criterion is concerned, this proposal would also mean that the criterion satisfaction is met in Agr rather than CP, preventing subject checking in that position. Once again that is not the case.

²⁷ The singular concord

In a second more detailed proposal, Henry (1995), assuming the traditional analysis of the V2 property, argues that for embedded yes-no questions there is only one complementiser position. This position is occupied in Belfast English by a phonologically null element which needs checking and thus triggers verb raising while in Standard English the overt complementiser *if*, which fills the Head position in C, prevents verb movement to C. This means that complementiser and verb are both competing for the same position in CP

As far as Wh-Questions are concerned, Henry argues that the trigger for verb movement in embedded wh questions is the presence of a +wh Head which has been created by agreement with a wh-element in SPEC/CP. This agreement is operative in Belfast English but it seems to fail in standard English, the examples given by Henry (1995) to illustrate her proposal are all main questions made up of the matrix plus embedded clause, like the following:

(42) [CP₁ Who_i did you claim [CP₂ t_i did he see t_i]]?

In (42) a *wh*-trace is found in the SPEC of the embedded CP, in Bel.E, the verb can in fact raise to C provided that C is not overtly filled, but it is worth noting that the verb can also raise to a [-Wh] embedded CP, in fact the verb *claim* in (42), selects a [-Wh] clause like the other bridge verbs.

We have just argued that the trigger for movement is basically an agreement in CP between a null [+Wh] C° and a [+Wh] Spec, more precisely between a head created by agreement with a [+Wh] specifier. What is remarkable here is that this agreement occurs in [-Wh] CP as well²⁸.

If it is the agreement which triggers movement and this movement does not take place in standard English, the proposed solution is to posit that this agreement occurs at different steps in the derivation. In Belfast English, agreement between the *wh*-element and the

²⁸ Interestingly, Irish displays a similar phenomenon. Embedded clauses from which a *wh*-word has been extracted show up a lexicalised [+Wh] complementiser, the interrogative/relative aL rather than declarative [-Wh] complementiser goN. This happens in all the higher embedded as well to the matrix CP, consider the following examples from McCloskey (1979):

- (i) Cé aL deir said aL chum t-amhrán sin?
 who Compl say they Compl composed that song
 “Who do they say wrote that song?”
- (ii) Deir siad gurL chum sé an t- amhrán sin
 they say Compl composed he that song
 “They say that he wrote that song”

complementiser in embedded clauses is assumed to have taken place in the *overt syntax* i.e. before spell out, as a consequence, verb raising is also triggered before spell out.

Nevertheless Henry assumes that the reason why verb movement to embedded CPs fails to occur in Standard English is that there is no agreement in embedded clauses until *LF*, so that embedded CP(s) remains [-Wh] until *LF*; verb movement thus occurs after spell-out. The result is that inversion is restricted to the matrix clause in case of direct questions. In order to reinforce the claim that inversion is strictly related to *wh*-movement, Henry (1995) argues that inversion cannot occur in an embedded clauses which is lower than the clause containing the *wh* extraction site:

- (43) a. *<sub>[CP1 Who do you think [<sub>CP2 did John convince [_{CP3 did Mary go]]]}]?
b. _{[CP1 Who_i do you think [_{CP2 t_i did John convince t_i [_{CP3 that Mary went]]]}]?}}</sub></sub>

This case of successive cyclic movement of the *wh*-item shows that in Bel.E. the presence of *wh*-traces²⁹ are a necessary and sufficient condition to trigger movement of V to C.

3.3.1.2. Previous analysis: McCloskey (1992, 2006).

The proposal within the CP-recursion analysis outlined by McCloskey (1992, 2006) establishes a strict correlation between embedded inversion and adjunction.

He argues that there can be adverbial adjunction to VP, IP and unselected CP, but adjunction is not admitted to phrases which are selected by a lexical category such as NP or embedded CP. This is also valid for Standard English; he also observes that there are verbs that behave like exceptions in this sense, that is CP complements of certain verbs behave like unselected CPs allowing adverbial adjunction. These are those verbs that also allow embedded inversion as well, as the following examples illustrate:

- (44) a. Ask your father when he gets home does he want his dinner
b. I was wondering next Christmas would he come home

²⁹ Wh traces must be traces of a *wh* question word, relative *wh* traces do not trigger inversion.

i. *This is the man who John claimed did I see
ii. This is the man who John claimed that I saw

- c. Do you remember when they were in Derry did they live in Rosemount?
- d. I've never found out if I'd asked him would he really have come with me

McCloskey also observes that predicates which do not allow adverbial adjunction to their CPs also do not allow embedded inversion, consider the following:

- (45) a. *The police couldn't establish while we were out who had broken into our apartment
- b. *The Police couldn't establish who had they beaten up
- (46) a. *While you're out how many people you meet depends on where you go
- b. *How many people do you meet depends on where you go

McCloskey proposes that these two facts are related, that is to say, some verbs select a CP which can take a lower CP itself as its complement, this so-called recursive CP is not selected by a lexical category, thus behaves like a matrix CP allowing both adverbial adjunction and inversion.

This proposal has been partially criticized by Henry (1995) who argues that this correlation between adjunction and embedded inversion which is valid for both Hiberno and British English does not explain why inversion then occurs in the former but not the latter variety.

She also says that there are some varieties of Hiberno English that simply do not seem to show such a correlation, that is to say that they can have adjunction in the same contexts which are supposed to ban it and, notwithstanding this, they show inversion.

Ennis English for example seems to be one of those varieties. It does not show a strict connection between the two facts. First, the informant found it quite difficult to express clear judgements on the sentences in (44-46), but eventually he came to the conclusion that those in (44) were "ok", and those in (45) and (46) were also ok with the exception of the one in (46b) which was rejected.

According to Henry (1995), Belfast English also show a relevant degree of variation from what is assumed by McCloskey, the b examples are perfectly grammatical, while the respective versions with adverbial adjunction are ungrammatical.

What is argued by Henry (1995) is right in claiming that a recursive-CP analysis poses more than one problem even in a pre-cartographic approach; first, it does not account for the differences displayed by wh and yes/no embedded inversion. Within this framework both

would be equally possible, when it is plausible to argue that there are two different underlying processes causing apparently similar inversion phenomena, it is also a well-known fact that there are varieties that admit yes/no inversion but prohibit wh-inversion.

McCloskey's proposal would thus involve two positions for two complementisers, which could actually explain certain facts of English considered that English is a residual V2 language, but once again this assumption poses a series of problems.

As we have seen in § 2.2., verb raising occurs after some adverbial negations and monotone decreasing quantifiers, when these elements are found in an embedded clause, a preceding complementiser is not only unproblematic but also represents the preferred option:

- (47) a. At no time must this door be left unlocked
b. He said that at no time must this door be left unlocked

According to Henry (1995), this seems to hold for Bel.E. as well, in which () is perfectly grammatical, while we must remember as a general rule, a lexical complementiser and inversion can never co-occur.

We are still dealing with two different phenomena, if they were triggered by the same principle, this could not explain why some varieties, such as British English, have inversion in Neg-criterion contexts but not in embedded interrogatives.

3.3.2. The indirect interrogative clause in Ennis English

In order to get a more detailed picture of the phenomenon, let us compare Bel.E. with Ennis English, (henceforth E.E.) and see how the two varieties differ and what this variation suggests.

Similarly to Belfast English, E.E. allows inversion both in yes-no and wh embedded questions, but inversion is never obligatory, that is to say that embedded yes-no questions may also be introduced by standard *whether* and *if* and embedded wh questions may also show the standard order. Besides, in accordance with the collected data, there does not seem to be a preference for one or the other context. Let us consider yes/no embedded interrogatives first:

- (48) a. I asked Paul were you going to the pub
b. We asked him were there any rooms available at the hotel

- c. Go and see is he still busy

As we have seen for Bel.E. inversion cannot co-occur with a lexicalised complementiser *if* or *whether*, the examples in (49) are thus ungrammatical:

- (49) a. *I asked him *if* were you going to the pub
b. *I'm wondering *whether* does Paul understand what you're saying

In Belfast English this restriction was further supported in *wh*-contexts by the impossibility of having inversion after a *wh*-phrase followed by the complementiser *that*. In E.E. *wh* phrases never admit the co-occurrence with the complementiser *that*³⁰.

- (50) *I wonder *which* book that he bought

In Ennis English inversion occurs with all the *wh*-items:

- (51) a. They wondered **what** had they done
b. He also asked me **who** did I meet at the party
c. I asked him **where** did they come from
d. Please let me know **when** will you be in Ennis
e. He didn't ask me **why** did they come
f. He didn't ask me **how** was I feeling
g. Tell me **how far** is Dublin from here
h. I wonder **which book** did he buy

Let's see what happens in case of a sequence of embedded clauses. We have observed that Bel.E. allows inversion not only in the clause where the *wh*-element occurs at spell out but also in the clause that contains the extraction site of the *wh*-element and potentially in every clause occurring between them.

Comparing the data in the two varieties, the most striking difference is that inversion in case of long *wh*-movement never occurs in the clause containing the extraction site of the

³⁰ Note that in E.E. a null complementiser is generally preferred also in declarative dependent clauses introduced by bridge verbs; obviously sentences like "I think that Paul is a nice guy" are not considered ungrammatical, but there is a strong preference for the non-lexicalised complementiser *that*, as in "I think Paul is a nice guy".

wh-element, while it is possible in the indirect interrogative in which the wh-element is lexicalised. It is to note that in the embedded clause from which the wh-item has been extracted there is no lexical complementiser *that* that could prevent the occurrence of inversion.

- (52) a. I wonder [_{CP1} who_i he hoped [_{CP2} *t_i* he'd meet *t_i* at the party]]
 b. I wonder [_{CP1} who_i did he hope [_{CP2} *t_i* he'd meet *t_i* at the party]]
 c. *I wonder [_{CP1} who_i he hoped [_{CP2} *t_i* would he meet *t_i* at the party]]
 d. *I wonder [_{CP1} who_i did he hope [_{CP2} *t_i* would he meet *t_i* at the party]]
- (53) a. I asked [_{CP1} when_i Paul claimed [_{CP2} *t_i* the kids broke the window *t_i*]]
 b. I asked [_{CP1} when_i did Paul claim [_{CP2} *t_i* the kids broke the window *t_i*]]
 c. *I asked [_{CP1} when_i Paul claimed [_{CP2} *t_i* did the kids break the window *t_i*]]
 d. *I asked [_{CP1} when_i did Paul claim [_{CP2} *t_i* did the kids break the window *t_i*]]
- (54) a. I asked Paul [_{CP1} why Mary thought [_{CP2} the kids had broken the window on purpose]]
 b. I asked Paul [_{CP1} why did Mary think [_{CP2} the kids had broken the window on purpose]]
 c. *I asked Paul [_{CP1} why Mary thought [_{CP2} had the kids broken the window on purpose]]
 d. *I asked Paul [_{CP1} why did Mary think [_{CP2} had the kids broken the window on purpose]]

As expected, inversion is also excluded in case of long movement occurring in direct interrogative contexts as well, as the examples in (55-57) show:

- (55) a. [_{CP1} What_i do you think [_{CP2} *t_i* they'll do *t_i*]]?
 b. * [_{CP1} What_i do you think [_{CP2} *t_i* will they do *t_i*]]?
- (56) a. [_{CP1} Where_i do you think [_{CP2} *t_i* they come from *t_i*]]?
 b. * [_{CP1} Where_i do you think [_{CP2} *t_i* do they come from *t_i*]]?
- (57) a. [_{CP1} When_i do you think [_{CP2} *t_i* they'll leave *t_i*]]?

- b. *_{[CP1} When_i do you think _{[CP2} t_i will they leave t_i]]?

3.4. A syntactic proposal.

Before illustrating our proposal, let us turn our attention to the structure of the left periphery as outlined by Benincà (2006), already discussed in Chapter 1 and here repeated in (58):

(58) [**RelWh** C°] {_{Frame} [ScSett] [HT] C° } {_{Topic} [LD] [LI] C° } {_{Focus} [I Focus] [II Focus] / [**InterrWh**] C° } [Fin C°

Extensive syntactic evidence has led to the identification of at least two positions that are dedicated to wh-elements, one is very high in the structure and hosts relative wh-items, the other is lower, in the Focus field, and is dedicated to interrogative wh-pronouns. It is generally assumed that the interrogative wh-pronouns of both direct and indirect questions occupy the specifier of this projection.

Our proposal intends to discuss the possibility that the cases of inversion in indirect questions found in Hiberno English are to be strictly related to the availability of two different positions for wh-items in the left periphery. This seems to be consistent, as we will see below, with a series of proposals for Romance languages (Benincà, 2006).

Here we assume that the difference between the indirect interrogatives that display embedded inversion and those who do not is mainly due to the fact that the two cases are characterised by two different underlying structures; more precisely, the embedded interrogatives that perform inversion actually have the structure of a relative clause and more precisely of a headless relative clause, while the non-inversion embedded interrogatives do not; let's see in what terms.

When verb raising to C is banned and inversion is ungrammatical, which is the case of Standard British English for example, the position occupied by the wh-element in the embedded interrogatives will be that of the interrogative *wh*-pronoun in the Focus Field; when embedded inversion occurs, thus verb raising is permitted, the *wh*-element occupies the position of the higher specifier of the relative wh-items.

If the wh-element occupies a higher position in the left periphery, as we have proposed, nothing would prevent the verb from moving to C and reach the head of Focus/Int.

The structures proposed for (59a) and (60a) are given respectively in (59b) and (60b):

- (59) a. They wondered what they had done
 b. They wondered [Rel_{wh} C°] {Frame} {TOPIC} {Foc/InterrWh **what_i** C°} [IP they had done *t_i*]
- (60) a. They wondered what had they done
 b. They wondered [Rel_{wh} **what_i** C°] {Frame} {TOPIC} {Foc/Interr/Wh C° had} [IP *t_v* they done *t_i*]

At this point the following generalization follows:

- (61) Generalization: in the indirect interrogative clauses, verb raising is blocked when the IntWhP is activated.

In the following examples (62-63) the embedded clauses are two, the former (CP1) is selected by the main question verb (*wonder* and *ask*, respectively), the latter (CP2) is embedded within the former and is selected by a bridge verb (*hope* and *claim*, respectively). We know that only question verbs select interrogative clauses, an interrogative interpretation for bridge verb complements is excluded.

- (62) a. [I wonder [CP1 *who_i* did he hope [CP2 he'd meet at the party]]]
 b. *[I wonder [CP1 *who_i* he hoped [CP2 would he meet at the party]]]
 c. *[I wonder [CP1 *who_i* did he hope [CP2 would he meet at the party]]]
- (63) a. [I asked [CP1 when did Paul claim [CP2 the kids broke the window]]]
 b. *[I asked [CP1 when Paul claimed [CP2 did the kids break the window]]]
 c. *[I asked [CP1 when did Paul claim [CP2 did the kids break the window]]]

The above examples also involve long movement of the *wh*-item from the lower embedded clause to the higher dependent clause.

Similarly to what has been observed above in (55-57) for direct interrogatives, we can see that in these cases inversion cannot occur in the sentence from which the *wh*-item has been extracted in the indirect question, as illustrated by the ungrammaticality in (62b-c) and (63b-c).

Interestingly, an apparent symmetry concerning the prohibition of inversion in the clause containing the extraction site is established, but it is only apparent. In the direct interrogative the impermissibility of inversion is due to a parametric variation to be further investigated, by virtue of which a non-lexical *wh*-item is not sufficient to create agreement and trigger verb movement; in indirect interrogatives, the extraction site is contained in a [-Wh] CP selected by a bridge verb and, as we know, bridge verbs do not select indirect interrogative clauses, the interrogative interpretation is thus excluded for CP2 in both (62) and (63).

The *wh*-element raises to CP2 first, in order to reach its final landing site in CP1, that is, the embedded clause under the matrix verb. We assume that the *wh*-element moves first to Spec/IntWhP, the lower specifier dedicated to the interrogative *wh*-pronouns, in [-Wh] CP2 selected by the bridge verb, from this position it then moves to the higher [+Wh] CP1, selected by the question verb. In CP1 we assume that the *wh*-element first moves to the lower projection in SpecFocus/IntWhP then it reaches its final landing site, SpecRelWhP, in the higher projection dedicated to relative *wh*-elements. It is from that position that it can be properly governed by the matrix verb.

(64) I wonder [_{CP1} Rel*wh* **who**_i C°] {_{Frame}} {_{TOPIC}} {Int*wh* **t**_i did } [_{IP} he hope]
 [_{CP2} Rel*wh* C°] {_{Frame}} {_{TOPIC}} {Int*wh* **t**_i C°} [_{IP} he'd meet **t**_i]

3.4.1. Wh-extraction in direct interrogatives and inversion.

If we are on the right track inversion in indirect questions and inversion in embedded clauses in direct interrogative contexts are necessarily to be treated separately, as we have anticipated above. A direct interrogative even if *enriched* with a number of other embedded clauses has very little in common with a relative clause. It is not the case that the combination of a matrix and embedded clauses may have an underlying headless relative structure.

While E.E. presents different conditions for embedded V-subject inversion, in B.E. inversion occurs systematically in the cases of *wh*-extractions in direct interrogatives, as shown by the following examples:

- (65) a. Who did John hope [would he see]?
 b. What did Mary claim [did they steal]?
 c. Who did John say [did Mary claim [had John feared [would Bill attack]]]?

In Henry's proposal, as we have already seen in § 3.3.1.1., indirect question inversion is framed in a more general context of embedded inversion phenomena. Inversion in indirect interrogatives and inversion in dependent clauses with long wh-movement are thus treated uniformly and explained by the presence of a wh-trace left by the wh-item in the embedded CP. This trace is sufficient to create the agreement which is responsible for verb raising; the same agreement fails to occur in E.E.

This approach does not seem to account for those varieties, such as E.E., that display inversion only in indirect interrogatives with the abovementioned constraints and not in cases of long wh-movement in direct contexts. In the previous section we had shown that in E.E. inversion in direct interrogative contexts is prohibited, as the b-examples in (55-57) here repeated in (66) illustrate:

- (66) a. *What do you think will they do?
b. *When do you think will they leave?
c. *How do you think are they feeling?

Even if we are not dealing with inversion in dependent clauses with long wh-movement, we could for the moment assume that Henry's proposal can be adopted for direct contexts only. As far as the agreement in the embedded CP is concerned, a trace does not seem to be sufficient to trigger inversion in E.E. embedded contexts, a lexicalised wh-element is needed. It is possible to parametrize this difference, assuming that the trace is a marked option, which is not available to E.E.

3.4.2. Evidence from Romance.

There is a group of Romance languages characterised by V2 syntax, that show subject-verb inversion in main declarative clauses (among other typical V2 features) and a certain degree of asymmetry in the dependent clauses as far as the accessibility of CP is concerned. These are the medieval Romance varieties discussed in detail in Benincà (2006).

In medieval Romance languages the accessibility of CP in dependent clauses is only blocked for the embedded wh interrogative, while verb movement to C is allowed for other types of dependent clauses, as evidence from the asymmetry of pro-drop shows. The following generalization on verb movement is established:

- (67) Generalization on Verb movement: in Romance the CP is only blocked for V movement in dependent interrogatives

This restriction on verb movement to C is to be due to the lower position of interrogative *wh*-element, which, when activated, involves both the head and the Specifier, totally excluding any other elements moving to CP, as the following indirect *wh*-interrogative shows:

- (68) Domandà lo dito Pero [que eli deveva far del pes] (oVen.; *Lio Mazor*, 37)
asked the aforementioned Pero what they should do of-the fish
“The aforementioned Pero asked what they should do with the fish.”

Other types of embedded clauses such as dependent clauses selected by bridge verbs (69) and relative clauses (70) only show a quantitative restriction of the accessibility of the CP. The following examples show that these structures are allowed:

- (69) mes ge croi **qu**'[encor] le fera il mieuz en la fin. (oFr.; *Artu*, 16)
but I think that even it will-do *he* better in the end
“But I think that in the end he will do it even better.”

- (70) ...li chevalier **qui** [a la guerre] devoient aler. (oFr.; *ibidem*, 138)
the knights who to the war had-to go
“The knights who had to go to war.”

The only exception to the verb movement generalization in (67) is represented by the class of embedded *wh*-questions introduced by *come*, “how”, whose CP seems to be accessible, as can be seen in the following example:

- (71) Vedi tu (...) *come* [per le dette vie] *fa* /Avarizia/ le sue operazioni (...)?
(oFlor.; *Bono Giamboni, Trattato*, 46)
see you how through the said ways makes Greed its operations?
“Can you see how Greed in the aforesaid ways makes its operations?”

The preposed PP ”*per le dette vie*” is assumed to be in Focus, the inflected verb has moved to C°, the subject follows.

This class of interrogatives introduced by *come*, “how”, are assumed to have the same structure as a headless relative, with *wh*-elements occupying a very high position in the structure, (the position of all relative pronoun and complementisers), instead of the lower projection of interrogative *wh*-pronouns.

(72) [Rel*wh* come C°] {Frame} {TOPIC} {Foc *per le dette vie* C° fa} [IP Avarizia tv le sue operazioni t]

3.5. Evidence from the Germanic languages.

Evidence for etymological interrogative *wh*-items in a higher *wh*-projection also comes from the Germanic languages, in particular from the family of Scandinavian languages.

We have seen in § 3.2.1. that a synchronic perspective seems to confirm that the same process that characterised the Late Old English period is currently at work in the interrogative and relative systems of these languages.

Alber (1994), developing her split-CP hypothesis for Germanic languages, observed that in Scandinavian languages the interrogative *wh*-element can occupy a higher position in the left periphery, preceding a relative complementiser, as can be seen in the proposed hierarchy here reported in (73):

(73) InterrP/CompP....RelP....DichP.... TopP³¹....AgrP

Alber (1994) shows that the hierarchy in (73) is also motivated by data from Swedish, the indirect interrogative clause in (74) seems to confirm the order of the hierarchy above: the *wh*-item *när* followed by the relative complementiser *som*³² followed by the declarative complementiser *att*³³.

³¹ The order declarative phrase (DeclP) > topic phrase (TopP) is attested in English where direct objects and adjuncts follow the complementizer when they are topicalized.

(i) a. John says that Sue Bill doesn't like.
 b. John says that under no circumstances would he accept their offer.

³² *Som* is the relative complementiser specialised for subject and object positions:

- (74) Jag vet tinte [_{IntP} **när** [_{RelP} **som** [_{DeclP} **att** han kommer]]]
 I know not when REL DICH he comes
 “I do not know when he comes”.

Consistently with the hierarchy in (73), Norwegian displays a *wh*-element preceding the relative complementiser *som* in indirect interrogative clauses. The complementiser *som* obligatorily follows the *wh*-item in cases of subject extraction, as illustrated in (75):

- (75) Jeg lurer på [**hvem** *(**som**) [kommer på festen]]
 I wonder on who SOM comes to party-def.
 “I wonder who will come to the party”

The same holds for Swedish; when the interrogative pronouns are used as subject in indirect interrogatives, they are followed by the complementiser *som*³⁴:

-
- (i) a. Jag såg en polis, som hade arresterat en tjuv.
 “I saw a policeman who had arrested a thief”
 b. Jag hittade boken, som jag hade tappet
 “I found the book which I had lost”

The above examples are drawn from Björkhagen (1947).

³³ *Att* is the declarative complementiser:

- (i) Jag sade åt honom, att han var dum
 “I told him that he was a fool”

The above example is drawn from Björkhagen (1947).

³⁴ Interestingly, the same restriction applies in a small group of Romance varieties in exactly the same contexts. Poletto & Vanelli (1990) describe the direct and indirect interrogative system in a number of Northern Italian Dialects. What emerges is a distinction between, on the one hand, varieties displaying the *wh*-item alone as interrogative introducer (Lombardy with the exception of the Alpine area, part of Ticino, Veronese, and most of the Emiliano group) and varieties showing the co-occurrence of both *wh*-item and complementiser, as a sort of “double introducer” strategy, on the other (Piedmontese, Trentino, Northern Lombard, Veneto, Friulian and Romagnolo). Within this latter group, some dialects in the Locarno area and the varieties spoken in Brione and Valle Maggia display a strongly restricted occurrence of the double introducer, more precisely, “the phenomenon is regularly attested only with the introducer *chi* (who)”, as illustrated by the following examples:

- (i) Al zo mia **chi c** a laverà i piet
 I don’t know who will do the washing-up. Brione
- (ii) Al zo mia cos u fa Giani
 “I don’t know what Giani is doing” Brione
- (iii) Dim **chi c** a vegn stasera
 “Tell me who’s coming tonight” Cevio–Valle Maggia

(76) Jag vet inte, [**vem som** har gjort det]

I don't know who has done it

Data from Scandinavian languages seems to provide strong evidence that *wh*-items in indirect interrogatives can be structurally much higher than the Focus Field, and this can be observed cross-linguistically. I argue that the above examples are instances of embedded interrogative exploiting the structure of a headless relative clause, similarly to what has been observed and discussed in E.E.; this possibility is given, we must not forget, by virtue of the existence of a higher projection for relative *wh*-elements in the left periphery. This is assumed to hold cross-linguistically, even in those languages in which *wh*-elements have only partially affected the relative system, (see § 3.1.1.). The structure representation of (76) is reported in (77):

(77) Jag vet inte, [_{CP RelWhP} RelWh **vem** C° **som** [har gjort det]]

The case of Norwegian in which the relative complementiser *som* must follow the *wh*-pronoun when the syntactic position of the *wh*-item is that of the subject is striking if we consider that the relative complementiser *som* is specialised exclusively for relative clauses (see footnote 15) and the *wh*-elements are only marginally used in headless relative contexts.

3.4.4. Final remarks on Hiberno English indirect interrogative inversion.

We assume that, when formulating an indirect interrogative clause, Hiberno English speakers have the additional possibility (syntactically motivated) to select a *wh*-projection which is very high in the structure and dedicated to relative *wh*-items. The activation of this projection consequently activates the rest of the CP. This could explain why these speakers always have the possibility to select the *wh*-elements that occupy the very low position dedicated to interrogative *wh*-pronouns. Optionality would thus be at least partially explained in terms of strategy availability.

(iv) Al so mia indò l a töc' i fiür mama
"I don't know where mum has bought the flowers"

Cevio–Valle Maggia

We are aware that, for the moment, there is no evidence that the *wh*-elements are hosted in the higher projection RelWhP,

It is worth noticing that there are no varieties that have the embedded inversion as the only strategy to produce indirect interrogatives, varieties such as Hiberno English can always choose between two strategies, in more formal terms they can choose between the activation of two different positions in the structure. On the contrary, speakers of varieties, such as British English, that do not permit embedded inversion, can only form indirect interrogatives with the canonical order in the embedded, that is to say that they can only select the lower position Spec IntWhP. This means that they do not have access to a strategy that would involve the activation of the higher portion of the CP and permit embedded inversion.

What has been argued so far also permits us to exclude an interpretation of these facts as cases in terms of code switching.

Wolfram and Fasold (1974) observed that African American Vernacular English could show a pragmatic distinction between the two strategies: embedded inversion would involve a real request for new information while the non-inversion strategy would not. This data will be discussed in § 3.6.2. but what we wanted to point out here is that E.E. does not seem to show this pragmatic constraint.

3.5. Relative clause as a possible context for embedded inversion.

At this point a prediction could be made, which – if confirmed by data – could bring rather strong syntactic evidence in favour of our proposal for embedded inversion.

If embedded inversion in indirect questions is admitted by virtue of the fact that the position of relative items is activated and this position cannot block verb raising, embedded inversion should be admitted in relative clause contexts, as well.

The prediction seems to be at least partially confirmed by data in (78), which illustrate cases of headless relative clauses displaying embedded inversion. It is to point out that the following examples come from very different varieties, contexts and registers of the English language and cannot be considered a language/variety specific phenomenon.

(78)

- a. Consider **how do you intend** to use the feedback from every question asked and be prepared for both negative and positive responses.

Case Study – The Regional Transportation Strategy

‘Shaping Our Future – The Regional Development Strategy for Northern Ireland 2025’,

- b. I know **what do you think** of me
Wolfgang Press “Ghost” lyrics
- c. I don’t care **what do I see** across the way
Alice in chains “Angry Chair” lyrics
- d. I remember STAWA **and I am interested in what are they doing** but (...)
from an interview in: “Testing Models of Collaboration among High School Science Teachers in an Electronic Environment”
<http://www.lib.murdoch.edu.au/adt/pubfiles/adtMU20041201.151300/02Whole.pdf>
- e. (...) they’re interested **in what can you do** for the economy right now. And what we’re doing for the economy right now is to deal with the biggest drags on the economy,
Press Briefing by Deputy Press Secretary Tony Fratto
<http://georgewbushwhitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2008/11/20081107-1.html>
- f. Anticipate the lecturer’s main points. Think about **what are you supposed** to learn
<http://www.latrobe.edu.au/lasesl/listening.html>
Language and Academic Skills (ESL) La Trobe University, Victoria, Australia
- g. In this job, there aren’t those noted goals and outcomes, meaning that you will never be saying to yourself, “**This is what am I doing next week**,” or “I really need something more packaged and formula.” Here you don’t have that.
http://www.cpn.org/topics/youth/highered/pdfs/Extension_We_Grow_People.pdf
“We Grow People. Profiles of extension educators” 2003 Cornell University Cooperative Extension—New York City
- h. The project, said Kennedy, began in 1995 with an effort to coordinate the initiatives of state, local and federal law enforcement regarding gun trafficking and violence in the Boston area. “This is not,” he emphasized, “a root causes type approach for the next generation. **This is what can we do to quickly decrease the killing right now.**”
The Minnesota Senate Week in Review February 28, 1997 available at:
<http://www.senate.leg.state.mn.us/briefly/1997/brf228.pdf>

Besides, there seems to be also a number of cases of headed relative clauses displaying inversion; as in the case of headless relatives, they come from different contexts and registers, and even from older stages of the language:

(79)

- a. I know [a place] **where could you get** what you're looking for
Ennis English
- b. [...] If not, identify [the nearest place] **where should you take** a sick animal, night or day. www.redcross.org.uk
- c. A home is [a place] **where can you find** shelter and warmth.
WizardLoanApproval.com - A company in UK, Specialized in Debt Consolidation Loans
- d. Today people still think of the city not only as [a place] **where can you do** what you want to do (...), but also by extension where you can be who you want to be.
"New Orleans: a cultural history" – Louise McKinney (OUP, 2006: 202)
- e. Las Vegas – [the only city] **where can you shop** in Paris, walk the streets of New York and gamble along side a medieval prince all in one night. from Dollar Rent a Car, INC. Website:
<http://www.dollar.com/Locations/LocalSites/AirportLasVegas.aspx?LocationID=LAS>
- f. There is a problem of perception, it is a problem of perception about professions generally in this country, and [about the way] **in which can you** actually trust professional people
(*Sir John Bourn*) www.parliament.uk
- g. [...] spare not to tell him that he hath wronged his honour in marrying the renowned [Claudio]--**whose estimation** do you mightily hold up--to a contaminated stale, such a one as Hero.

W. Shakespeare - Much Ado About Nothing – Borachio

- h. (The Gordiaean mountains) **from the northernmost of which did the Georgians take** their names who were first Gordians then Georgians

The Work of Sir Walter Raleigh – Vol II: The History of the World, Book I

- i. The process has been complicated both by the real costs of change and by the necessity to reach agreement on each detail, **for few of which did the NHTSA have** an objective reason to favour a particular result

AUTOMOBILE SAFETY REGULATION: by Philip A. Lorang and Lawrence H. Linden Working Paper MIT-EL 77-036WP October, 1977

If we consider the headed relatives in (79), and we compare them to the headless relatives in (78), we realise that they share a common feature: the syntactic positions which are quite low in the Accessibility Hierarchy (here repeated in (80)): genitive in (79g), and positions presumably lower than Oblique in all the other cases:

(80) **Accessibility Hierarchy**

Subject > Direct Object > Indirect Object > Oblique > **Genitive** > Object of comparative

As far as the sentences in (79a-d) are concerned, the antecedent in all these headed relatives is the “light” NP “place”, the same semantically indefinite type of antecedent which is assumed to be silent in headless relatives (see § 3.1.). Similarly to “place”, the antecedent “way” in (79f) can be considered a “light” NP as well; in this case it is not relativised by a specialised *wh*-pronoun, but by relative *which* governed by the preposition *in*. As for the type of headed relative clause involved, it is worth noticing that there are no instances of restrictive relative clauses, they are all either headed relatives of the definitorial³⁵ type (79a-e), or appositive relative clauses (79f-g).

³⁵ It is useful to introduce here a definition of definitorial relative clause: this type of relative shares some features with both restrictive and appositive relative clauses. Its semantic interpretation is more akin to that of a relative clause, because it contributes to the definition of the nominal head though the nominal head is already identified. More precisely, the definitorial relative clause does not strictly refer to the antecedent but to the features possessed by the class to which the antecedent belong, the information conveyed by this kind of relative clause are not redundant as in the case of the appositives.

Relative clauses, both of the headless and headed types, seem to be a possible context for embedded inversion. It must be remembered that the occurrences we have reported in (78) and (79) are highly restricted from a quantitative point of view, but cannot be ignored.

3.6. Independent evidence from other varieties of English.

It is a very well-known fact that Standard English does not permit inversion strategy in embedded interrogative clauses; in principle, this very general rule does not seem to accept any exceptions. As a matter of fact, the situation is slightly different. In this section we will focus on cases of inversion in both yes/no and wh-contexts and starting from British English and its substandard varieties, we will see that the distribution of the two types of inversion and the different degree of marginality provide evidence in favour of the hypothesis that inversion in yes/no and wh-contexts are to be considered two different phenomena.

Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English (§ 11.2.3.4.F p. 920) does report instances of “*a more informal alternative, without a connecting link*”, that is, an embedded inversion, restricted to yes/no contexts in colloquial English, while no mention is made of a possible wh-embedded inversion which thus seems to be excluded even in the most informal registers of the language. The following examples come from different contexts³⁶: conversational (81), fiction writing (82), news writing (83); note that in (81) the verb *say* is synonym of *ask*, it does not introduce a declarative dependent, but an embedded interrogative:

- (81) a. One lady thought we were turfing – and she said could we turf the lawn for her.
b. And she said would we like these shirts.
- (82) The young man who had seen Mac in Westmoreland Street asked was it true that Mac had won a bet over a billiard match.
- (83) She needed a backing guitarist and asked Kieran, who she had met once or twice on the road, would he help out.

This is not totally unexpected if we consider that from a diachronic perspective as well, early stages of English also showed embedded inversion in yes/no contexts; Visser (1963-1973)

³⁶ The examples in (83-85) are drawn from the LGSWE § 11.2.3.5 :920

observes that this phenomenon has its origins in the Old English period even if it did not occur with great frequency until the eighteenth century and that “*this manner of reporting a question has of late become quite common, especially in novels. The original word order is retained, but there is no conjunction (if, or that) and both tenses and the persons are shifted*”. A noteworthy observation also concerns the lack of uniformity in punctuation and other printing conventions: dependent clauses are sometimes separated from their matrixes by a colon, a semi-colon, a comma or zero and the initial letters are often printed in capital letters while the question mark is sometimes missing (when it is supposed to be omitted in embedded interrogatives), this may reveal that at least a part of the instances collected by Visser (1963-1973) are not cases of reported speech, but possibly true main interrogative clauses. Nevertheless the following examples illustrate genuine cases of yes/no embedded interrogative clauses in which inversion shows up and the complementiser is omitted, which is perfectly consistent with the picture we have outlined so far:

(84)

- a. She wondered would they change it, if she went back
1898 J.K. Jerome, *Second Thought of the Idle Fellow* 5
- b. I wonder was he ever so truly great
1902 Mich. Fairless, *Roadmender* V
- c. he ... asked her, would she drive with him in the afternoon
1921 D.H. Lawrence, *Women in Love* (London Secker) 318
- d. Three young fellows followed him and he wondered were they also looking for a job
1935 J.T. Farrell, *Judgement Day* (Signet Bk.) 291
- e. He could call and pretend that someone had called when he was out, and ask had she called
1935 J.T. Farrell, *Judgement Day* (Signet Bk.) 291

Among the instances Visser collected, there is but one striking example of wh-embedded inversion, which is reported in (85):

- (85) She asked me, sir, scores and scores of little sweet, timid, innocent questions about the doctor's property, and how much did I think it was, and how had he laid it out
1862 Thackeray, *Advent*. Philip (Oxford) 109

The assumption that in British English embedded inversion is restricted to yes/no contexts may be true in general terms, but, as far as British English is concerned, *wh* embedded inversion is not totally excluded. We intend to consider it here as a very marginal phenomenon basically independent of the registers or styles, whose occurrence is strongly restricted from a quantitative point of view, but not impossible at all; in addition to the single instance in (85), further evidence is given by the following examples, which belong to contexts that are very different from each other:

- (86) Respondents were asked what had they found most useful about the training and six themes emerged

University of Lincoln Prison Dual Diagnosis Training Project

www.lincoln.ac.uk/cjmh/PDDTP.pdf

- (87) and he set himself up as a dairy owner before the real owner came along and asked what was he doing there.

Headley Miscellany – Vol. 4 – October 2002 – Early Days at Mellow Farm by *David Hadfield* <http://www.johnowensmith.co.uk/headley/vol4.htm>

This supports what has been argued above, that is, the two types of inversion are to be treated as two separate phenomena: they have a different distribution and a different syntactic status. First, yes/no inversion seems to occur quite systematically in various registers, second, it does not automatically involve *wh*-embedded inversion, as Henry (1995) had noted for a number of Ulster English varieties. Data of colloquial English also go in this direction. On the contrary, *wh*-embedded inversion is a relevant syntactic feature of several varieties of English around the world, but where it is not, as in the case of British English, we have seen that it may occasionally occur, marking what might be considered as an underlying possibility of the language. Occurrences of this type are thus much rarer, but not produced by accident.

Embedded inversion is traditionally considered a distinctive feature of Hiberno English syntax, but, as we have already anticipated above, it is not actually confined to Ireland and

Ulster, there are a number of other European and non-European varieties of English, that show up both the phenomena. Let us start with the substandard varieties of British English.

3.6.1. Dialects of England

If we now observe the so-called substandard varieties of British English, we can see that the dialects of England occasionally display yes/no embedded interrogatives

A detailed picture of the geographical distribution of the phenomenon would be beyond the scope of the present work, but, basing on the data contained in FRED-S, we can say that it is generally attested at least in two areas: Lancashire, Durham and Northumberland in the north, examples in (88) and Cornwall in south west, examples in (89):

(88)

- a. she asked could she go to this dance
(FRED-S, LAN 001, North, Lancashire, Barrow)
- b. this woman across the road, she asked me would I help her out, two maiden ladies they were.
(FRED-S, LAN 001; North, Lancashire, Barrow)
- c. They approached me and asked me would I go there.
(FRED-S, LAN 012; North, Lancashire, Prescott)
- d. he asked me did I want a suit, and I said aye. And then he asked me did I want a pair of boots, and I said aye.[...] He says, I got 'em i' t' middle o' t' week. Said, I didn't ask for 'em. He said, he asked me did I want them ...
(FRED-S, LAN 012; North, Lancashire, Prescott)
- e. Well you had to leave at fourteen then and eh they come and asked mi father, they sent for mi father and asked him could I stay on and he said no ...
(Hartlepool) Durham N
- f. (...) the farmers came as well, and the families was just all in the market you know, just moving about and they would pick one out and ask was he to hire.

(FRED-S, NBL 006; North, Northumberland, Fenwick Steads

(89)

a. And uh, rode in to Bradley and asked could I stop home

(FRED-S; South-West, Cornwall, Gurnards Head)

b. I wonder can I have a chat one time

(FRED-S, CON 006; South-West, Cornwall, Pendeen)

Beal (1993, 2004) also observes for the dialects of the North of England, that “*it is (...) common for indirect questions to have the same constituent order as direct questions*”; the examples in (90) are cases of inversion in yes/no contexts, one single instance of embedded *wh*-inversion is reported in (91):

(90) a. I asked him did he want some tea

Beal (2004: 129)

a. She once asked me did it interfere with me

Beal 1993: 204 in McDonald (1980)

(91) When he discovered I wasn't at school he wanted to know what was the matter

Beal (1993: 204) in McDonald (1980)

Consistently with what has been seen above for British English, *wh*-embedded examples are much rarer, the only three instances which were found in FRED-S are reported in (92) and they are curiously attested in those areas, i.e. Midlands and South East, in which no cases of yes/no inversion were found:

(92) a. Well I picked her up in mi arms and stroked her and asked her what was the matter and brought her down.

(Tenterden) Kent area SE

- b. And ask them where 's the coal and tell them if I, if they don't tell you, I 'm coming³⁷.
(FRED-S; Midlands, Nottinghamshire)
- c. I bet they wondering what 's the matter out there
(FRED-S, NTT 014; Midlands, Nottinghamshire)

This suggests that yes/no and wh-embedded inversion are indeed two different phenomena.

3.6.1.1. Scottish and Welsh English.

Here we present two varieties of English, Scottish and Welsh English, that share a relevant common feature with Hiberno English. These three varieties all have a celtic linguistic substratum. I will not focus here on the complex question of linguistic substratum and Celtic languages, nor will I take into consideration any sociolinguistic perspectives; this would undoubtedly be a matter of great interest but it is beyond the scope of the present work. I will limit myself to illustrate and discuss what is traditionally assumed by much relevant literature for many syntactic features of this peculiar group of varieties, that is, embedded inversion strategy is the result of a more or less direct influence of the underlying celtic substratum (Fillpula 1999, 2004). But for the moment let us consider the data in (93) for Scottish English and in (94) for Welsh English; the two varieties show both types of inversion, similarly to Irish, even if in the case of Welsh English, according to Penhallurick (2004), the occurrences seem to be few in number:

- (93)³⁸ a. I can't remember now what was the reason for it
b. If they got an eight they had to decide where was the best place to put it
c. I asked her what's wrong but I received no answer
d. You sort of wonder is it better to be blind or deaf

- (94)³⁹ a. I don't know what time is it.

³⁷ Note that (92b) and possibly (92c) might not be a case of genuine embedded inversion; they can be the rendering of a reported speech, the recording could be helpful in this sense, because it would reveal the intonation and other prosodic elements necessary to disambiguate.

³⁸The examples in (93) are drawn from Miller (1993:126)

- b. I don't know what is that
- c. I'm not sure is it Caerleon or not
- d. I wouldn't know would there be any there now

Penhallurick (2004) establishes a strict correlation between the embedded inversion strategy and the syntax of Welsh; he observes that the word order in Welsh is the same in direct and indirect questions and this pattern seems to be confirmed by Welsh English. Besides, as far as the yes/no embedded inversion is concerned, the omission of the complementiser has also an equivalent in Welsh, which permits the elision of the corresponding element (*a/os*).

A Celtic influence is also suggested for Irish by Filppula (1999). Except for the fact that Irish yes-no questions are introduced by the particle *an* (Q), it is worth noting that the superficial word order in direct and indirect interrogative clauses is identical, as can be seen in the following examples:

- (95)⁴⁰ a. An dtuigeann sé?
Q understand he?
 “Does he understand?”
- b. Fiafraigh de an dtuigeann sé é
 ask-IMP of him **Q understand he** it
 “Ask him whether he understands”
- a'. Ar lia é?
Q-COP surgeon he
 “Was he a surgeon?”
- b'. D'fhiafraigh Máire ar lia é
 ask-FUT Mary **Q-COP surgeon he**
 “Mary asked if he was a surgeon”

³⁹Examples in (109a-c) come from the Survey of Anglo-Welsh Dialects (Parry 1999) in Penhallurick (2004); example in (109d) is drawn from Thomas (1994: 138)

⁴⁰ The examples in (97) are drawn from Stenson (1981: 93)

There is no doubt that a strict correspondence can be easily recognised between the syntax of direct/indirect interrogative clauses in the two languages. Evidence in support of a Celtic influence at work also comes from the fact that the only varieties that show systematically both types of inversion in the British Isles are three varieties of English with a Celtic substratum.

Though a Celtic influence might have played a role in the case of these varieties, an analysis in terms of “calque” will not be of help here. It is clear that embedded inversion, as we have analysed it in the preceding sections, is to be considered a phenomenon of the English language that has to be motivated by the syntactic possibilities of the language.

3.6.2. American English.

Embedded inversion is very frequently found in yes/no contexts in colloquial American English, Murray & Simon (2004) argue that it occurs throughout the United States as a general phenomenon; this is quite expected if we consider what has already been argued for colloquial British English:

- (96) a. He asked could he get there about fifteen minutes late
b. Susan wants to know should she bring a casserole

There are at least three varieties of American English in which wh-embedded inversion, besides yes/no inversion, is to be considered a distinctive syntactic feature, these varieties are Appalachian English, AAE and NYLE. The picture is further complicated by the fact that, for AAE variation is not restricted to embedded contexts but to the whole interrogative system, as we will see later.

3.6.2.1. Appalachian English.

Though it should not be difficult to define Appalachia from a geographical point of view, we must distinguish between the Appalachian Mountains, on one side, and the definition of “Appalachia” from both a cultural and socio-economic point of view, on the other.

While the Appalachian Mountains form a series of mountainous chains along the Eastern part of the United States, from Maine to Tennessee, the “Appalachia” in terms of cultural and linguistic “unified area” does not cover the whole extension of the Appalachian Mountains.

From a linguistic point of view, we identify the area traditionally known as “Appalachia” with the central-southern area. The term “Appalachian English” refers to the variety of English spoken in this part of the Appalachian mountains and can be considered distinct from both Northern and Southern varieties. (Pederson 2001, Tortora 2004, Montgomery & Hall 2000, among others)

The Appalachian English derives from the variety of English that was originally “imported” in this area by the Scotch-Irish immigrants during the 18th century presents some striking similarities with the varieties of Ulster English.

In particular, the embedded inversion in interrogative clauses occurs in both yes/no (97) and wh-contexts (98):

- (97)⁴¹ a. He asked me did I want to work this morning
b. Somebody asked me was that Jim Ike’s truck
c. We finally asked would they help us
d. He asked him did he want to eat

- (98)⁴² a. I studied what was the matter
b. Momma asked me where have I been

3.6.2.2. African American English.

As for the other varieties illustrated so far, in AAE embedded inversion is attested in both yes/no (99) and wh-contexts (100)⁴³. Interestingly, we have seen in § 2.4.1.2.2. that AAE also displays a non-inversion strategy in the direct interrogative clause formation of both types.

- (99) a. They asked could she go to the show
b. I wonder did he finish the job somehow

- (100) a. I wonder how did he finish the job

⁴¹ The examples in (113a-c) come from ... (); the example in (113d) is drawn from Tortora (2004)

⁴² The example in (114a) comes from Montgomery (2004); the example in (114b) comes from Wolfram (1974)

⁴³ The example in (115a) comes from Martin & Wolfram (1998). The examples in (115b) and (116) come from Wolfram & Fasold (1974)

Unfortunately it is not clear whether a precise correlation can be established between non-inversion strategy in direct and indirect contexts. Wolfram's observation that non-inversion is generally less frequent if compared to embedded inversion led us to suppose that there is a number of AAE dialects for which inversion is extended to both contexts. It would be interesting to isolate the varieties that display non-inversion as a distinctive syntactic feature of direct question formation and see how the indirect interrogative system behaves.

Obviously we must consider that several different varieties actually go under the label "AAE", it is thus plausible to assume that these varieties may also possess interrogative systems which are different in a relevant way.

A pragmatic distinction between the two options (inversion/no-inversion) in embedded contexts had been proposed by Gordon and Lakoff (1971) for AAVE. They account for the availability of two different strategies assuming that the pragmatic context might play a crucial role; for the sentence in (100) here repeated in (101a) and the corresponding without inversion in (101b), they propose that the inversion strategy in (101a) signals a real request for information, thus requiring an answer, while the non-inversion does not, sentence (101b) "*can count as a statement about something the speaker is curious about and need not be interpreted as a request for information*":

- (101) a. I wonder how did he finish the job
b. I wonder how he finished the job

According to Gordon and Lakoff (1971) a "real request for information" requires a "real answer" such as "*I don't know*" or "*He did it by convincing his friends that whitewashing a fence was a privilege*". In this context answers such as "*Yeah*" or "*It would be nice to know*" would result "*rude*" and could only be acceptable if referred to (101b). Gordon and Lakoff (1971) do not refer if the first set of answers (the "I don't know" type"), which is suitable for the inversion strategy, is also suitable for the non-inversion strategy or any pragmatic mismatch is created.

What we can derive from the observation made by Gordon and Lakoff (1971) is that the indirect interrogative in (101b), the one that "*can count as a statement about something the speaker is curious about*" could actually be considered an embedded special question of the

surprise/disapproval type, while (101a), the one displaying inversion, can be considered a standard question.

Following Obenauer (2004) and related works, we should expect the opposite behaviour. In the light of the theory of special questions, pragmatically marked interrogative clauses in embedded contexts should display verb movement, that is, inversion, as in (101a), while standard questions should not, as in (101b).

Obviously a subject with such subtle implications deserves further research. On the other hand the analysis we have proposed for indirect interrogative inversion does not take into consideration pragmatic facts also because this kind of restrictions are excluded for E.E. Nor does Henry (1995) mention pragmatic contexts playing a relevant role in Bel.E.

Our proposal rather accounts for inversion in terms of different syntactic positions available for the *wh*-element, by virtue of the syntactic status of the element itself, thus, in our analysis embedded inversion cannot be considered the same phenomenon that shows up in the direct interrogatives, which is what seems to be assumed by Gordon and Lakoff (1971). In their framework, it is the inversion that in one sense *marks* the interrogative force of the sentence, the indirect interrogative clause with the non-inverted word order in (101b) is interpreted as a *statement*. Such an assumption would lead one to assume that in (101b) it is the declarative (not interrogative) force which is involved; this is excluded in principle if we consider that the semantic content of the matrix verb is responsible for the complement selection and the verb *wonder* can only select an interrogative clause.

More interestingly, the semantic content of the matrix verb *wonder* could be compatible with the selection of an embedded special interrogative (see footnote 1). This is a possibility which is worth exploring in the future.

Embedded inversion also emerges in the “memory tests” elaborated by Labov and discussed in Labov (1972). These tests were basically repetition tests submitted to several groups of adolescent native speaker of AAE in South-Central Harlem, New York. Some of these tests are reported below in (102); the “test patterns” represent the stimulus:

(102)

- a. Test pattern: **I asked Alvin if he could go**
 I as? Alvin could he – could he go

b. Test pattern: **I asked Alvin if he knows how to play basketball**

I aks Alvin do he know how to play basketball

c. Test pattern: **I asked Alvin whether he could go**

(1st) I asked Alvin- I asked Alvin – I can't –I didn't quite hear you

(2nd) I asked Alvin did he know how to play basketball

(3rd) I asked Alvin whether – did he know how to play basketball

Providing the stimulus, the repetition elicited embedded inversion. The results are extremely consistent with the pattern, as observed by Labov (1972): complementiser and inversion never co-occur, note that the third elicitation in (102c-3rd) is not a case of inversion with *whether*, as proposed by Martin & Wolfram (1998: 29), rather, a sudden change of strategy operated by the informant during the test.

3.6.2.3. New York Latino English

As we have seen in § 2.4.1.3., NYLE main questions may display the lack of inversion, as far the indirect interrogatives are concerned, the examples in (103) show that inversion occurs in embedded *wh*-contexts:

- (103)⁴⁴ a. By that time, I didn't know what was the World Trade Center
b. I don't know why is everybody hassling him
c. You said how would I divide them

3.6.3. Indian English.

We have observed in § 2.4.1.4. that in Indian Vernacular English the interrogative system is exactly the mirror image of the interrogative system in Standard English. While main questions inversion is not permitted, indirect interrogatives are characterised by verb raising to C^o:

- (104)⁴⁵ a. I asked Ramesh what did he eat for breakfast.

⁴⁴ The examples in (103) come from Heidrick (2007)

⁴⁵ The examples in (119) are from Bhatt (2000).

- b. Ramesh asked his teacher where is his lunch box.
- c. He wanted to know why are you so sad today.
- d. I always wondered what is he talking about with his children.
- e. I wonder where does he work.

3.7. Whether.

The syntactic analysis discussed in § 3.4. accounts for cases of inversion in indirect interrogative clauses in *wh*-contexts, we have not yet mentioned the possibility that the same proposal could also account for the lack of inversion with the *wh*-element *whether*. In this section, we will focus on the indirect interrogative clauses introduced by *whether* and see, on the basis of diachronic data, whether our proposal can be extended to this type of clauses.

A remark must be made here; in the following sections we will not deal extensively with the syntactic structure involved by the *wh*-word *whether*, as its complexity undoubtedly deserve specific treatment, which is beyond the scope of the present work. In particular, we will not deal with the phenomenon of ellipsis, which is traditionally associated to correlative structures introduced by *whether ... or ...* For an analysis of the phenomenon of ellipsis in the correlative structures with *whether*, see Larson (1985), Schwarz (1999) and Han & Romero (2002) among others. We will limit ourselves to sketch a first proposal, whose main aim is to account for what is our main concern: the lack of inversion in indirect interrogatives.

It is a well-known fact that in modern English the use of *whether* is restricted to yes/no embedded interrogatives and alternates in this context with the complementiser *if*, in most of the cases with no change in meaning, but from a categorial point of view *whether* and *if* are two completely different elements. *Whether* is a *wh*-pronoun similar to the other *wh*-items, for example, *whether* and not *if* can be the object of a preposition:

(105) It depends on whether/*if he comes or not.

The position occupied in the syntactic structure is that of a specifier, not that of a complementiser as in the case of *if*⁴⁶. It can be assumed that yes/no embedded interrogatives

⁴⁶ It is also to point out that *whether* and not *if* can select an infinitival, as the following examples illustrate:

(14) a. I don't know whether to talk to Paul

introduced by *whether* are actually a particular case of embedded wh-interrogative. A relevant difference between *whether*, on one hand and the other wh-elements on the other is that *whether* is bound to a variable in a restricted set of two alternative options⁴⁷.

Things become clearer if we look at the etymology of *whether*:

(OE *hwæðer*, *hweðer*, “which of the two” cf. OS *hwedar*, ON *hvarr*, Gothic *huapar*, OHG *hwedar*, Skr. *katarah*, Avestan *katara-*, Gk. *poteros*, Lat *uter*, Lith. *katras*, Old Church Slavonic *koteru* “which” [< PGerm **hwatharaz*, wh-base **kw-o-* “WH-” + comparative suffix **ter-*]

This wh-word is originally a compound made up of the interrogative wh-base and a suffixed form [P.Ie. **k^wat* + **-er*, P.Gmc. **khwatharaz*, **khwa-* + **-theraz*].

The combination of the wh-item *what* and the suffix, whose several uses included a comparative form, gave the wh-word *whether* the meaning of “which of the two”.

Going back to the phenomenon of embedded inversion, we have seen that in Hiberno English and all the other varieties, which display indirect interrogative inversion in wh-contexts as a distinctive syntactic feature, *whether* never admits inversion. From a theoretical point of view,

b. *I don't know if to talk to Paul

Obviously, we must consider that cross-linguistically there are complementisers that do co-occur with infinitivals. If we observe Italian and Catalan, for example, the equivalent of the complementiser *if*, respectively the complementisers *si* and *se* can select infinitivals, as illustrated by the grammaticality of both the sentences below:

(15) En Pere no sap si fer-ho
Pere NEG knows if to-do-it

Catalan

(16) Gianni non sa se vuole andare al cinema
Gianni NEG knows if to-go to-the cinema

Italian

The corresponding structure for French in (17) is ungrammatical, similarly to English:

(17) Je ne sais pas si aller au cinéma

Kayne (1991) proposes that the impossibility of (14b) is related to the null subject licensing property of infinitival I. In French and English the identification of the null subject is assumed to occur in C, thus I presumably moves to this position in order to collect the required features, while in Italian and Catalan there is no need for infinitival I to move to C, I is assumed to be already endowed with the required features. C can thus be occupied by a complementiser.

⁴⁷ The wh-element *which* is also bound to a variable in a restricted set of two or more items, but the difference with *whether* is that among the items of the set no relation is established.

this is a problem, if we consider that we have assumed that *whether* is a wh-element like the others but shows an opposite behaviour in this respect.

In order to shed light on this problematic aspect of the phenomenon, a diachronic perspective is needed. The contexts of use of *whether* in the older stages of the language will permit us to better define the syntactic nature of the interrogative clauses introduced by this element. A more detailed picture will enable us to propose a syntactic analysis for *whether*-interrogatives and accounts for the lack of inversion in Hiberno English.

As can be expected, *whether*, being a wh-pronoun, was also used to introduce direct interrogative clauses of mainly two types.

The first type of direct interrogative clause we will discuss is exemplified in (106). Here *whether* is bound to a variable corresponding to an argumental gap. As expected, these direct interrogatives display subject-auxiliary inversion, which triggered by wh-movement. As we have anticipated, the variable bound by *whether* refers to two alternative options, two items in a limited set, here the two items are namely two NPs:

(106)

- a. Hwæþer wylle ge þæt ic eow agyfe, þe Barrabban, þe þone Hælynd,
whether will you that I you give, OR Barabbas, OR the Saviour,
þe is Crist gehaten
that is Christ called
Anglo Saxon Gospel Mt. 27,17
- b. And whether schulde Mayster be, Thei of Grece or Troye Cite?
c1400 *Laud Troy Bk.* 3477
- c. Whether doest thou professe thy selfe, a knaue, or a foole?
1601 SHAKES. *All's Well* IV. v. 23
- d. Whether would ye? gold or field?
1872 TENNYSON *Gareth & Lynette* 333
- f. Wether will t'a 'ev, this er that?
EDD, sub. *whether*, 1.; north Yorkshire, (W.H.)

Graphic conventions in (108) can lead us to assume that the above main questions are made up of the combination of two separate interrogative structures⁴⁸. The question in (106c) here repeated in (107a), for example, can be considered the combination of a *wh*-question (107a') and a yes/no question in the elliptical form (107b'), introducing the set of the possible options:

- (107) a. Whether doest thou professe thy selfe, a knaue, or a foole?
 a'. [CP Focus/InterrWhP Whether_i doest [IP thou professe thy selfe *t_i*]]
 b'. [CP Focus/InterrWhP Doest [~~thou professe thy selfe~~ a knaue, or a foole]]?

We will assume here that this is not the case; if we are on the right track *whether* and the items of the set belong to the same syntactic structure, approximately sketched in (108); we will see later on how the relation between *whether* and its set can be syntactically encoded.

- (108) [CP Focus/InterrWhP Whether doest [IP thou professe thy selfe *t_i* , a knaue, or a foole?]]

Starting from the Old English period until about the end of XVIth century, *whether* also introduced a second type of interrogative clause, which is exemplified in (109). The OED describes this type of interrogative clauses as “*a simple direct question, (...) often with verb in subjunctive, and almost always without inversion of subject and verb, as if depending on a principal clause understood*”, (OED, s. v. *whether* (pron., a., conj.) B II, 2)).

At first sight the following examples seem to be yes/no direct interrogatives, but we will see below that these structures are much more complex than that:

- (109)
 a. Hwæþer þe þin eade manful ys, forþam þe ic god eom?⁴⁹
 whether that thine eye wicked is, for which that (because) I good am?
 “Is your eye wicked, for which I am good?”

⁴⁸ (Greenbaum & Quirk 1985: 822, § 11.18) propose an analysis in terms of combination of two separate questions for interrogative clauses introduced by *which* as the one in (i) rephrased in (i') and (ii'):

- (i) Which ice cream would you like? Chocolate, vanilla or strawberry?
 (i') Which ice cream would you like?
 (ii') Would you like chocolate, vanilla or strawberry?

⁴⁹ To be noted the co-occurrence of the *wh*-element *hwæþer* (*whether*) and the complementiser *þe* (*that*).

c1000. Anglo-Saxon Gospels, West Saxon, Matt. xx. 15

b. ‘Hweþer she sholde be Quen and leuedi ouer me?’

Whether she should be queen and over me?

“Should she be(come) queen and over me?”

c1300 *Havelok* 292 Godrich..seyde,

c. Lauerd! quer i sal him euer se?

Lord! Whether I shall him ever see?

“Lord! Shall I ever see him?”

a1300 *Cursor M.* 5178

d. Quhat is Baptisme? and quhidder it be necessare to all mankynd?

“What is Baptisme? And is it necessary to all mankind?”

1588 A. KING tr. *Canisius' Catech.* 67

What can be observed in the above interrogative clauses is that they do not display subject-auxiliary inversion and that *whether* is not bound to a trace in the visible sentence. We hypothesise that this is due to the presence of a silent clause of the type “*whether* IS IT (THAT) ...” and the non-argumental use of *whether* is only apparent. The silent clause is assumed to be a main wh-question and the “visible” clause is embedded within the silent matrix. The wh-trace, which is apparently missing in the interrogative clause, is thus contained in the silent matrix, as a consequence of wh-movement:

(110) a. (...) and quhidder it be necessare to all mankynd

b. [_{CP1} IntWh/P quhidder_i [_{IP1} IS IT *t_i* [_{CP2} THAT [_{IP2} it be necessare to all mankind]]]?

Given that the distinctive feature of *whether* is to bind a variable in a limited set of two possible options, we assume that here the two possible options are not two NPs as in (), but two CPs expressing the two truth values, positive or negative, of the propositional content.

The fact that a direct interrogative can be interpreted as the dependent of a silent matrix is not completely new: in Italian, for example, it is possible to have main questions, introduced by the complementiser *che* (“that”), as illustrated by the examples in (111). These questions, in which the verb is obligatorily in the subjunctive form, are structurally dependent clauses of a

yes/no main question, whose matrix of the type “È IL CASO CHE ...” / “È DATO IL CASO CHE ...” (“is it the case that”) is assumed to be silent:

- (111) a. E’IL CASO che sia già arrivato?
(Is it the case) that he has already arrived?
- b. E’IL CASO che vengano alla festa?
(Is it the case) that they are coming to the party?

The apparently non argumental use of *whether* seen in (109) is no more attested starting from the beginning of the XVIIth century. Nevertheless, the argumental use of *whether* as introducer of the wh-interrogatives seen in (106) is attested at least until the end of the XIXth century, when it was gradually substituted by *which*. The wh-element *which*, being bound to a variable in a generically restricted set of two or more items, was the most eligible element to cover the contexts of use of *whether*: this led to a brief period of transition in which the contexts of uses of the two elements partially overlapped. The instances are only few but worth being noticed: on one hand, *which* is occasionally attested in the typical context of *whether*, as illustrated in (112):

- (112) But which is it to be? Fight or make friends?
1889 Stevenson Ballantrae iii

On the other, *whether* could sometimes occur in relation to a set of more than two elements, as the example in (113) show:

- (113) a. Whether will you have whisky, rum or brandy?
1892 The Anecdote of Glasgow. Book IV Rober Alison
- b. If you offered a boy the choice of six apples, you’d ask him:
Whether will you have?
(CDLAE; S 11: VII.8.18, *which one*, Eggleston, Duram)

The sentence in (113b) comes from the SED and it was elicited with a questionnaire of syntactic nature of the completing type, that is, the informant was namely asked to fill in the

blank in order to complete the sentence. The provided context was that of a choice restricted to a limited set of items, what is to be elicited is the appropriate wh-pronoun corresponding to the variable in a wh-main question.

What is striking about (113b) is that this is the only occurrence of *whether* as introducer of a wh-interrogative clause out of 313 locations throughout England. To my knowledge, it is also the only instance of *whether* in a main question attested in XXth century; this proves that this residual use survived in the dialects of England until last century, but also shows that the strict correlation between *whether* and a variable in a two-item-set was already lost.

3.5.1. The lack of inversion with *whether*.

As for the main questions discussed above, indirect interrogatives introduced by *whether* have to do with the alternation between two options. While the wh-embedded questions we have dealt with so far showed argumental gaps in the sentence, indirect interrogative clauses introduced by *whether* show no argumental gap, as we have seen in main questions in (109).

The two possible options are represented in indirect contexts by a correlative structure.

In the case of alternation between the positive or negative truth value of the propositional content the correlative structure is usually in the elliptical form; as illustrated in (114), the sentence can be tagged with *or not*:

(114) I wonder whether Paul is coming tonight, or not

The alternation can also relate to a constituent in the clause, as the following examples show:

- (115) a. I wonder whether Paul is coming tonight or tomorrow
b. I wonder whether Paul met Mary or John
c. I wonder whether Paul came here by bus or train

As proposed for the apparently non argumental use of *whether* illustrated by main questions in (109), it seems plausible to hypothesise that, *whether* here involves the same silent clause, “*whether* IT IS (THAT) ...”, which is to be considered here the genuine dependent interrogative clause. The structure of (114) is given in (116):

(116) I wonder [_{CP1} IntWh/P *whether* _i [_{IP1} IT IS _{t_i} [_{CP2} (THAT) [_{IP2} Paul is coming tonight, or not]]]]

The structure in (116) is thus composed by the matrix clause “*I wonder*” containing the question verb, the genuine dependent interrogative clause “*whether IT IS (THAT) ...*”, in which only the wh-word *whether* is lexicalised, and a second dependent clause “*Paul is coming tonight*”, which is embedded within the dependent interrogative.

The plausibility of a silent clause of the “whether it is” type seems to be reinforced by the fact that, interestingly, there are attestations in which the clause “*whether it is that*” is lexicalised, as illustrated by the examples in (117) in which the two alternative options are overtly expressed:

- (117) a. I wonder **whether it is that** they think we don't understand their lingo, **or** that they don't understand ours
A. C. ARMSTRONG & SON, 714 BROADWAY. 1884.
- b. I do not know **whether it is that** he fights shy of our dialect **or** that he does not like our county.
<http://historical-debates.oireachtas.ie/D/0175/D.0175.195906100017.html>
- c. I do not know **whether it is that** they are too short **or** that they are uneven
Tolstoy L. “A confession and other religious writings” Ch.16 p.78

Assuming that in indirect contexts the *wh*-element *whether* introduces a dependent interrogative, which is generally silent, and that the “visible” sentence is embedded within the dependent interrogative, we can keep a unified syntactic proposal to account for the apparent asymmetry observed in Hiberno English. The fact that inversion, which systematically occurs in *wh*-contexts, fails to occur with *whether* is explained in these terms: the “visible” portion of the sentence, “*Paul is coming tonight*” in “*I wonder whether Paul is coming tonight*” cannot display inversion simply because it is not a genuine dependent questions, but only an embedded clause in which syntactic conditions for embedded inversion are not met; the nature of this embedded clause is still to be defined and leaves this question open to further research.

Conditions for embedded inversion might virtually be met in the dependent interrogative “*whether* IT IS”, but, again, there is no evidence is provided at the moment to support this hypothesis.

It follows that there is no syntactic evidence for assuming that *whether* may be hosted in the higher projection RelWhP; we assume here that *whether* is hosted in the spec/IntWh in the Focus field; this is not a problem for the theory, as we have already argued that the position of Spec/IntWhP is always an available position:

(118) I wonder [_{CP1} IntWhP *whether* [_{IP1} IT IS [_{CP2} (THAT) [_{IP2} ...]]]]

A crucial question is still open. We know that *whether* is always in relation with two possible options and we have seen that these two alternatives can be CPs, NPs, etc.... How can the two items be syntactically encoded? What follows is only a proposal whose refinement is left to future research.

We hypothesise that *whether*, by virtue of its suffix *-ter*, could be related to a Head *or* in a projection that we will call for the moment OrP.

(119) [_{CP} Focus/InterrWhP Whether doest [_{IP} thou professe thy selfe t_i , [_{OrP} a knaue, or a foole?]]

Following Kayne (1994), we assume that *or* hosted in Or^o introduces the two items/options of the set and more precisely Item 1 is the specifier, Item 2 the complement of OrP:

(120) *whether* ... [_{OrP} Item/Option1 or^o Item(Option2)]

Chapter 4. *What* as an underspecified *wh*-element.

4.1. A general introduction.

In the previous chapter we have seen that indirect interrogatives and headless relatives share some features of both semantic and syntactic nature to such an extent that indirect interrogatives can have the structure of a headless relative clause, this leading to a sort of identity between the two clause types. We could assume that any indirect interrogative clause can potentially be interpreted as a headless relative clause, even if varieties such as Hiberno English show that there are at least two strategies available involving the activation of two different syntactic projections. In support of our hypothesis, evidence of the strict relation between the two clause types is also given by diachrony. To sum up briefly, we have observed two relevant facts: in Late Old English, *wh*-elements already introduced indefinite headless relatives expressing a generalising meaning together with direct and indirect interrogative clauses; when interrogative *wh*-items started to enter the relative system, the process took place via headless relative clause to then spread to headed relative clauses.

If we look at the distribution of *wh*-relativisers in modern English, we realise that not all the *wh*-elements seem to have “completed” the process of transition from the interrogative to the relative system. As for the relatives, one *wh*-item, in particular, shows a certain degree of asymmetry if compared to the others of the same paradigm: in Standard English *what* is restricted to interrogative and headless relative contexts and does not introduce headed relatives; it is not the case of historic and dialectal varieties, which, as we will see, display interesting nonstandard uses. It is on the *wh*-element *what* that we will concentrate in this chapter, in particular we will try to relate this asymmetry, overtly expressed in the relative system of Standard English, to a more general asymmetry characterising the particular syntactic and semantic status of the *wh*-element *what*. A cross-linguistic perspective will help to shed light in this regard.

4.2. A cross-linguistic perspective on *what*: Munaro & Obenauer (1999).

Cross-linguistically, the element *what* displays a peculiar behaviour from both a semantic and a syntactic point of view, if compared to the other elements in the paradigm. Munaro & Obenauer (1999) analyse the distributional and interpretative properties of the *wh*-phrase

corresponding to English *what* in four varieties: German, French, Bellunese and Pagotto, two North-Eastern Italian dialects.

Their starting assumption is that cross-linguistically *what* has a wider range of interpretative possibilities if compared to the other elements in the wh-paradigm. The picture is further complicated by the fact that the “*multi-usage ability*” of *what* cannot be treated as a uniform phenomenon: languages can show different distributional patterns.

As exemplified below⁵⁰, the German analogue of *what*, *was* occurs not only in standard questions as in (1), but also in exclamative-rhetorical questions (2), in exclamations (3), in questions with a “why-like” *what* meaning (4):

- (1) Was suchst du?
what look-for you
“What are you looking for you?”

- (2) Was weißt du schon davon!
what know you already of-it
“What can you know of it!”

- (3) Was hast du dich verändert!
what have you refl changed
“How you changed!”

- (4) Was rennst du so schnell?
what run you so fast
“Why are you running so fast?”

The constructions illustrating the *non-canonical* uses of *what* in (2-4), together with nonstandard questions, are labelled by Munaro & Obenauer (1999) as “*pseudo-questions*”.

Interestingly, in Bellunese the wh-element *what* can be expressed by two different elements, *che*, which must obligatorily occur in situ and *cossa*, which must obligatorily occur in sentence initial position. In this regard, the behaviour of *cossa* is similar to that of complex

⁵⁰ The examples in (1-4) are drawn from Munaro & Obenauer (1999).

wh-phrases consisting of the wh-element modifying a nominal element, which, like *cossa*, can only appear in initial position.

Munaro (1998) observes that, diachronically, *cossa* developed from a nominal element whose meaning was originally *thing*.

From the XVIII century *cossa* underwent a gradual process and turned to be an interrogative operator, widening at the same time the range of its semantic interpretations.

While *cossa* and *che* are virtually interchangeable in the group of dialects that go under the label *bellunese*, there is but one variety, the Pagotto dialect, in which *che* is used exclusively in standard questions and *cossa* is specialised for *pseudo-questions*.

More precisely, in Pagotto *che* is used in standard questions, while *cossa* is used argumentally in special questions () and exclamative sentences (), in exclamative contexts, *cossa* must obligatorily co-occur with the complementiser *that*:

(5) Cossa sé-tu drìo magnar (che)?
what are-cl behind eat (what)
What on earth are you eating

(6) Cossa che te sé drìo magnar!
What that cl-are behind eat
What you are eating!

Besides the argumental uses seen above, *what* is also used non-argumentally in another context within the domain of special questions, that is, in a type of special questions conveying speaker's annoyance or disapproval (SDQ) in which the meaning of *what* approximately corresponds to *why*. This phenomenon, illustrated in (7), is known in the literature as "why-like" *what*:

(7) Cossa zìghe-tu (che)?!
what shout-cl (what)
Why are you shouting?

The interpretation of "why"-like *what* is subject to certain constraints. The "why"-like *what* reading is unproblematic in (7), in which the verb *zìgar* ("cry") is intransitive and *cossa* cannot be interpreted as the direct object of the predicate but it is ungrammatical in (8) in

which the argumental structure of the transitive verb *magnar* (“eat”) does not exclude this possibility.

- (8) ??Cossa magni-tu (che)?!
what shout-cl (what)
“Why are you shouting?!”

There is a number of strategies to improve acceptability of the “why”-like *what* reading with transitive verbs, all based on the disambiguation of the semantic value of *what*. If we consider the sentence in (9), we can see that the direct object is overtly expressed; in this case the direct object, *n’altro giornal*, excludes the possibility for *what* to be interpreted as the direct object of the predicate. Munaro-Obenauer (1999) ascribe this fact to the mono-transitivity of the verb *comprar*, which, would virtually lead to a violation of the theta-criterion. Consider (9):

- (9) Cossa compre-tu n’altro giornal?!
what buy-cl another newspaper
“Why are you buying another newspaper?”

Further improvement is generally obtained with the addition of a periphrastic expression, as illustrated in (10):

- (10) Cossa compre-tu n’altro giornal (*par al to amigo*) (*par far che*)?!
what buy-cl another newspaper (*for your friend*) (*for do what*)

Improvement in the degree of acceptability is also obtained, in the following examples, by means of a modal periphrasis construed with verbs with a modal function, such as *andar* (“go”) as in (11a) or *ocorar* (“need”) as in (11b):

- (11) a. Cossa va-tu a comprar n’altro giornal (*par far che*)?!
what go-cl to buy another newspaper (*for do what*)
b. Cossa ocore-lo comprar/che te-compre n’altro giornal (*par far che*)?!
what needs-cl buy /that cl-buy another newspaper (*for do what*)
“There is no need for you to buy another newspaper.”

Another argumental use attested for *cossa* refers to arguments of the verb which are quantificational expressions, as illustrated in (12) and (13):

(12) *Cossa coste-lo (*che)?*
what cost-cl (*what)
“How much does it cost?”

(13) *Cossa péze-lo (*che)?*
what weigh-cl (*what)
“How much does it weigh?”

(12) can also have the rhetorical interpretation in (14) with the optional co-occurrence of both wh-elements, which is excluded in the non-rhetorical interpretation:

(14) *Cossa ghe coste-lo (che) iutàrli*
what him cost-cl (what) help-them
“What does it cost him to help you?”

If we consider the embedded contexts, we realize that the range of semantic interpretations of the element *cossa* in is much more restricted. The sentence in (15) can only be interpreted as a standard embedded question. Both the causal “why”-like *what* in (16) and the quantificational readings in (17) are excluded:

(15) *Me domande cossa che I à fat*
myself ask what that cl-have done
“I wonder what they have done”

(16) **Me domande cossa che’l compra n’altro giornal*
myself ask what that cl-buys another newspaper
“I wonder why he buys another newspaper”

(17) ??*Me domande cossa che ‘l costa/peza*
myself ask what that cl-costs/weights

“I wonder how much it costs/weights”

In the light of what can be observed in the embedded contexts above, Munaro & Obenauer (1999) assumed that the “nonstandard” uses of *cosa* in main questions are to be related to the availability of certain structural conditions, which fail to occur in embedded clauses selected by interrogative predicates.

The *division of labour* between *cosa* and *che*, each specialized for different subdomains of WHAT, can be considered in terms of dichotomy. This dichotomy, overtly expressed by the distributional asymmetry found in the Pagotto dialect, is not between argumental vs. nonargumental values, but rather, as the authors themselves argue, between “*standard argumental values, expressed by che vs. nonstandard values, argumental as well as nonargumental, expressed by cosa*”.

4.2.1. Underspecified WHAT in English.

The analysis illustrated in the previous section is our starting point. The aim of the following sections is to give further support to the hypothesis of the underspecified nature of WHAT providing evidence from the English language. In order to do so, we will now turn our attention to the wh-element *what* in English and its interpretative properties.

Providing that languages display different distributional pattern in this regard, as Munaro & Obenauer (1999) observe, we will show that English *what* seems to display a number of expected features on one hand and some additional features on the other.

First, it is worth noticing that Munaro & Obenauer (1999) exclude for the English *what* the possibility to occur in exclamative clauses of the type illustrated in (3) here repeated in (18) and in interrogative clauses with a “why-like” *what* reading as in (4) here repeated in (19):

(18) Was hast du dich verändert!
what have you refl changed
“How you changed!”

(19) Was rennst du so schnell?
what run you so fast
“Why are you running so fast?”

As far as the exclamative contexts are concerned, *what* is actually ungrammatical in sentences such as (20) in which the adequate wh-element is *how*:

(20) How/ *what you have changed!

As for a “why-like” interpretation of *what*, we will see in the following section that, while it is not permitted in SE, it is regularly attested in the older stages of the language, it occurs in some modern dialects and it is possible, at least for some speakers, in the colloquial variety.

4.3. Underspecified *what* in the interrogative clauses.

4.3.1. “Why”-like *what*.

As we have anticipated in the previous section, a “why”-like interpretation of *what* is actually excluded in present-day SE. Nevertheless “why”-like *what* was possible in the older stages of the language. In particular, most of the examples we have found come from Early Modern English literature⁵¹. The occurrences reported in (17) are from Shakespeare’s literary production (see <http://www.opensourceshakespeare.com/concordance/>), in which this particular interpretation of *what* is very frequently attested:

- (21) a. GRUMIO: (...) But **what** talk I of this? Call forth Nathaniel, Joseph, Nicholas, Philip, Walter, Sugarsop, and the rest;
Taming of the Shrew, IV, I
- b. But what stand we trifling about this testimonie?
(1579, William Fulke, *Heskins’ Parl.* 148; OED, s. v., *what* A. III adv.19)
- c. **What** sit we then projecting Peace and Warr?
(1667, Milton, *Paradise Lost*, II, 329; OED, s. v., *what* A. III adv.19)
- d. TYBALT: (...) **What** dares the slave Come hither, cover’d with an antic face, To fleer and scorn at our solemnity?

⁵¹ Examples in (17 e-f) are reported by Garzonio & Obenauer (2009).

Romeo and Juliet, I,v

- e. GONNERIL: Hear, me, my lord. **What** need you five-and-twenty, ten, or five, To follow in a house where twice so many Have a command to tend you?

King Lear, II, iv

As for the constraints established by the argumental structure of the verb, it is worth noticing that the above examples, (21a-e), seem to confirm the pattern observed by Munaro & Obenauer (1999) for Bellunese dialects. More precisely, the verbs *talk* in (21a), *stand* (21b) and *sit* (21c) are unaccusative verbs, which, as we have seen, are unproblematic for the “why”-like *what* interpretation; *dare* and *need* in (21d) and (21e) respectively, are two verbs with modal functions, of the same type used to disambiguate the semantic value of WHAT in the Pagotto dialect, though in this variety verbs with modal functions occur in modal periphrastic constructions.

“Why”-like *what* is also attested with transitive verbs with the direct object overtly expressed as exemplified in (22) with the verb *mention*:

- (22) What should I mention beauty; that fading toy?

(1677, Barrow, *Sermons* I. 7; OED, s. v., *what* A. III adv.19)

Interestingly, Munaro & Obenauer (1999: 191, footnote 7) point out that copular verbs in predicative constructions are not compatible with this particular interpretation of WHAT, as illustrated in (23), though a modal predicate in a periphrastic construction, as expected, improves considerably the degree of acceptability of the structure, as in (24):

- (23) *Cossa sé-tu cussì agitada?!

what are-cl so nervous

- (24) Cossa ocore-lo che te sìe cussì agitada?!

what needs-cl that cl-be so nervous

“You needn’t/shouldn’t be so nervous?!”

In the light of this, we can assume that the use of “why”-like *what* in English is not subject to the same constraint, being extended to copular structures as well, as illustrated in (25):

- (25) IAGO: O treacherous villains! **What** are you there? come in, and give some help.
Othello, V,I

Besides early Modern English literature, “why”-like *what* is also attested in modern dialects (26a-b), and colloquial speech (26c-e)⁵².

- (26) a. **what** are you talking about angels?
(FRED, LAN 006; North, Lancashire, Preston)
- b. **What** did they pay in so much money a week?
(FRED, NTT 005; Midlands, Nottinghamshire, Southwell)
- c. **What** are you standing staring at there, stupid?
(Andrew Lang, *The Violet Fairy Book*, 1901)
- d. Malcom, **what** are you walking like that?
Tv series USA “Malcom in the Middle” – Season 2, Ep. 17, *Surgery* (2001)
- e. **What** don’t you go first, Andy?
http://www.justicetalking.org/transcripts/060227_idtheft_transcript.pdf
Margot Adler, Radio Transcript, Air Date: 27/02/2006

The distributional properties of the phenomenon do not seem to differ from what can be observed in the attestations found in Early English literature: “why”-like *what* regularly occurs with unaccusative verbs (21a,c,d,e) and it does occur with transitive verbs with an overtly expressed direct object (21b). The example in (21e) displays an interesting property of the phenomenon in English: “why”-like *what* also occurs in the negative form. It is worth noticing that “why”-like *what* is never permitted in the negative form in the North-Eastern Italian dialects, as shown by the ungrammaticality of (22):

- (27) a. *Cossa no te me varda

⁵² Example in (21c) is to be considered an instance of colloquial speech in fiction.

what NEG cl cl look

- b. *Cossa no te zighe
what NEG cl shout

The possibility for “why”-like *what* to co-occur with the negative form represents a noteworthy point of contact between English and present-day standard and colloquial French. In this regard, French seems to be the mirror image of the North-Eastern Italian dialects: *que*, the corresponding form of *what*, is very rarely attested with a “why”-like interpretation. “Why”-like *que* is generally assumed to be restricted to negative contexts, as illustrated in the following examples:

- (28) a. *Que partez-vous?
Que ne partez-vous?
“Why don’t you leave?”
- b. *Qu’écrit-il en prose?
Que n’écrit-il en prose?
“Why doesn’t he write in prose?”

While in both standard and special questions argumental *que* can alternate with the periphrastic expression *qu’est-ce que*, non-argumental *que* with a “why”-like reading cannot⁵³. An alternative strategy to derive the “why”-like reading in positive contexts is represented by the use of another periphrastic expression, that is, *que* + *avoir à V_{infinitive}*, as shown by the examples in (23)

⁵³ The wh-element *que* and the periphrastic expression *qu’est-ce que* are interchangeable in both standard (i) and special questions (ii):

- (i) a. Que faites vous?
b. Qu’est-ce que vous faites?
- (ii) a. Que veux-tu que je fasse?
b. Qu’est-ce que tu veux que je fasse?

The periphrastic expression *qu’est-ce que* cannot alternate with “why”-like *que*:

- (iii) a. Que tardez vous
a'. *Qu’est-ce que vous tardez?
b. Que n’écrit-il en prose?
b'. *Qu’est-ce qu’il n’écrit (pas) en prose?

- (29) a. Qu'est-ce qu'il a à crier (comme ça)?
 what is that he has to shout (like this)
 "Why does he shout (like this)?"
- b. Qu'est-ce qu'il a à nous regarder?
 what is that he has to look at us
 "Why does he look at us?"

It is to point out that the periphrastic expression *que + avoir à V_{infinitive}* turns the wh-element *que* into an argument of the periphrasis itself. Besides, the *que + avoir à V_{infinitive}* construction does not have the same interpretative properties of "why"-like *que*: more precisely, it does not necessarily convey the speaker's annoyance or disapproval. On the contrary, the only possible reading of the non-argumental uses of "why"-like *que* reported in (22) is that of pragmatically marked special questions.

While the periphrastic expression *qu'est-ce que* cannot have a "why"-like interpretation in French (see footnote 3), the corresponding structure is found in Middle English with a "why"-like reading. In (30) *what* introduces the copular construction *what is that*, :

- (30) **What is**, irael, þat in þe lond of þe enemys þou art?
 What is, irael, that in the land of the enemies you are
 (1382, *WBible (1)* (Bod 959) Bar. 3.10, MED s. v. *what* (pron.) 2a. (d))

Actually, the *what is that* periphrasis is not totally excluded in the Romance varieties; while this periphrastic expression cannot occur with a "why"-like interpretation in French, as we have seen above, it is attested in some varieties of North-Eastern Italian dialects of Veneto⁵⁴, even if with some different distributional properties, as we will see below. Examples in (31) come from the variety of Fossalta di Piave (Venice), examples in (32) are from the variety of

⁵⁴ The *what is that* periphrasis is also marginally acceptable, at least for some speakers, in the regional Italian variety of Veneto, as illustrated in the following example:

- (i) Cos'è che piangi?
 what is that cry
 "Why are you crying?"

Arcole (Verona), the a-examples are with unaccusative verbs, the b-examples with transitive verbs co-occurring with an overtly expressed direct object:

- (31) a. **Coss'eo che** te camina stort?
 what is-cl that cl walk
 “Why are you walking ?”
- b. **Coss'eo che** te me varda?
 what is that cl cl look
 “Why are you looking at me?”
- (32) a. **Ssa zè che** te pianzi?
 what is that cl cry
 “Why are you crying?”
- b. **Ssa zè che** te me vardi?
 what is that cl cl look
 “Why are you looking at me?”

It is worth noticing that the periphrastic construction *what is that* with a “why”-like interpretation may also co-occur with the negative form in the dependent clause, as illustrated in (33) for Middle English:

- (33) **What is þat** þow answerest not to þis seruaunt to dai?
 What is that you answer not to this servant to-day
 (1382, *WBible (1)* (Bod 959) I Kings 14.41, MED s. v. *what* (pron.) 2a. (d))

As for the compatibility of the *what is that* construction with the negative form in the North-Eastern Italian dialects, an interesting asymmetry emerges: while in the variety of Fossalta di Piave the negative form is permitted with both unaccusative (34a) and transitive verbs (34b), in the dialect of Arcole, the co-occurrence of the periphrastic expression and the negative form is excluded with unaccusative verbs, as shown by the ungrammaticality of (35a), but it is perfectly acceptable with transitive verbs, see (35b):

- (34) a. **Coss'eo che** ancuo no te va via?
 what is-cl that now NEG cl go away
 “Why aren't you leaving today?”
- b. **Coss'eo che** no te me varda?
 what is-cl that NEG cl cl look
 “Why don't you look at me?”
- (35) a. * **Ssa zè che** no te parti ancùò
 what is that NEG cl leave now
- b. **Ssa zè che** no te magni niente ancùò?
 what is that cl cl look
 “Why are you looking at me?”

4.3.2. “How much-like” *what*.

Parallel to what observed by Munaro & Obenauer (1999) for “how (much)”-*cossa*, *what* is also used to realize the verbal arguments that express a quantificational value, alternating with the complex wh-phrase *how much*

- (36) a. **What/How much** does it cost?
 b. **What/ How much** do you charge for this?
- (37) a. **What/How much** does it weigh?

The quantificational *what* in (36a) can also occur with a rhetorical interpretation in the special question in (38):

- (38) **What** does it cost you to help him?

4.3.3. *What* and the echo-questions.

A. nah a couple of lines, a cheeky half and a driving four-four with ward mc'ing over the top

B. i don't understand your "youth speak". a couple of whats? a whatty half? a driving what-what? what'ing over the what?

In the light of what we have observed in the previous section, it is clear that English *what* displays the typical behaviour of underspecified wh-elements outlined by Munaro & Obenauer (1999), though with a different spectrum of possibilities.

Further evidence of the underspecified nature of *what* in English is given by its occurrences in the echo-questions (see ...). It is a well-known fact that the function of the wh-element in the echo-question consists in the total or partial repetition of the other speaker's utterance in order to recover the information that has not been correctly perceived. Echo-questions in (28) and (29) ask for the repetition of a part of the propositional content: in these examples, which come from the modern dialects of English, *what* exclusively substitutes the NP and more precisely the lexical component of the NP. In both the following examples *what* is preceded by a determiner, the definite article *the* in (39) and the indefinite article *a* in (40):

(39) A. They called the pit where I work the Ann Pits.

B. **The what?**

A. The Ann Pits.

(FRED-S, DUR 001; North, County Durham, Birtley)

(40) A. Always the same, the same sort, always the same kind of horse.

B. Ours is **a what?**

A. Always the same kind of horse.

(FRED-S, YKS 009; North, County Yorkshire, Loftus)

A relevant feature of *what* in the echo-questions is that not only does it work as a substitute of the lexical component of the NP but it may also assume the morphologic contour of the element it substitutes, as illustrated in (41), in which *what* has acquired the nominal morphology of plural:

- (41) A. Astronomers have discovered some more black holes.
B. They've discovered some more **whats**?
(Quirk et al. 1985: §11.34: 836)

Besides NPs, *what* can also substitute adjectives, occurring as a modifier of an NP as in (41), and, as expected, it may also acquire adjectival morphology as in (43):

- (42) A. She always wears a quizzical expression.
B. She always wears a **what** expression?
(Quirk et al. 1985: §11.34: 836)

- (43) A. (...) a cheeky half (...)
B. (...) a **whatty** half (...)?

The possibility for *what* to display “alien” morphology is extended to verbs as well, as exemplified in the following examples in which *what* occurs as a substitute of a verbal form. In (44) *what* substitutes the tense-marked regular verb *ratiocinated*, thus acquiring verbal morphology of simple past (-ed), in (45) it substitutes the gerundive form of the verb *mc*⁵⁵, thus acquiring the respective verbal morphology (-ing)⁵⁶:

- (44) A. She sat there and ratiocinated.
B. She sat there and **whatted**?
(Quirk et al. 1985: §11.34: 836)

- (45) A. (...) mc'ing over the top
B. (...) **what'ing** over the what?

⁵⁵ *Mc* stands for Master of Cerimonies. ... “” the hip hop culture

⁵⁶ The form *whatting* is also signaled by a contributor to the Urban Dictionary as “*Something you might say after you say something to someone and they say 'what?' and you don't know what they said what at*”, as in the following example:

- (i) Me: Hey yesterday I cycled my bike out the roof and then landed on top of my math teacher. It was painful but funny.
Someone else: What?!
Me: What are you whatting at?
<http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=whatting>

There is no doubt that cross-linguistically *what* display different ranges of possibilities, as already shown by Munaro & Obenauer (1999), but in this regard echo-questions are particularly meaningful. If we consider Italian *cosa*, for example, the contexts of use in (39) and (40) seem to overlap in the two languages, as shown by the grammaticality of the examples in (46) and (47):

(46) A. Per cena ho preparato il cous-cous
 for dinner have prepared the cous-cous
 “For dinner I have prepared the cous-cous”

B. Hai preparato **il cosa**?
 have prepared the what
 “You have prepared the what?”

(47) A. Nel mio ufficio hanno comprato un defibrillatore
 in my office have bought a defibrillator
 “In my office they have bought a defibrillator”

B. Hanno comprato **un cosa**?
 have bought a what
 “They have bought a what?”

While (46) and (47) are unproblematic, none of the occurrences in (41-45) could be acceptable in Italian, as shown by the ungrammaticality of the sentences in (48):

- (48) a. *Hanno scoperto degli altri **cosi**?
 have discovered some more **whats**?
- b. *Ha sempre una **cosa/che** espressione?
 has always a **what** expression?
- c. *Si è seduto là a **cosare**?
 sat there **to what**?

If we leave aside echo-questions for a moment, it is worth pointing out that in Italian *cosa* can assume both nominal and verbal morphology in the colloquial language, as illustrated in the following examples⁵⁷:

(49) Ho trovato quel **coso** che cercavi
have found that *cos-o* that looked for

(50) Per aprirlo, lo devi ... **cosare**
To open-cl, cl must cos-are

In these cases the function of *cosa* is restricted exclusively to the substitution of the lexical component of the elements, though it has acquired the morphology of the element it substitutes. What seems to be totally excluded in Italian is the possibility for *cosa* to occur in interrogative contexts, once it has acquired “alien” morphology.

This is presumably due to the fact that in the echo-questions in (41-45) the status of *what* is still that of a genuine *wh*-element, though it has acquired nominal, adjectival or verbal morphology: it is thus specified for [+Wh]. Differently to what has been observed for English, the ungrammaticality of the Italian sentence in (48a), the corresponding of (41), clearly shows that the Italian corresponding form, *cosa* is specified for [-Wh], when occurring with nominal or verbal morphology.

It is worth pointing out that, as discussed in Munaro (1998), *cosa* is not an etymological *wh*-element; it originated as a nominal element, whose meaning was *thing*; it is only from the 18th century that *cosa* started to develop as an interrogative operator, acquiring *wh*-uses and the [+Wh] specification.

We may therefore assume that, on the contrary, *cosa* displaying nominal or verbal morphology is always specified for [-Wh].

4.4. *What* as a relativiser.

As anticipated in the introduction to this chapter, a certain asymmetry in the *wh*-paradigm emerges also in the relative system of SE in which *what* is the only element that does not relativise headed relative clauses. Interestingly the situation changes in dialectal varieties in

⁵⁷ These uses of *cosa*, occurring with nominal or verbal morphology, generally refer to objects or actions which are not clearly defined or about whose nature the speaker is uncertain.

which *what* also introduces headed relatives. In the following section, we will concentrate on the semantic and syntactic status of *what* in the relative system of both historical and modern dialectal varieties. More precisely, we will see whether the nature of relative *what* in these varieties is still that of a full wh-pronoun or not, trying to establish a connection between the possibility for *what* to introduce relative clauses to the underspecified nature of this wh-element.

For the purposes of the present contribution, we will focus on the distributional properties of relative *what* cross-dialectally, we will not consider *what* in relation to the other elements of the relativisation system in specific varieties.

4.4.1. The origins of *what* as a relativiser.

Though a detailed picture of the geographical distribution of relative *what* is beyond the scope of our work, it is interesting to point out that scholars agree that its origins are to be found in the South-East of England. In particular, Poussa (1988), investigating the data on relative clauses contained in the SED, argues that relative *what* has its origins in Essex; Hermann (2003) observes that data in the Lowman Survey of Middle and South England also seems to suggest “*East Anglia, particularly Western Suffolk, to be the heartland of REL what*”.

Cheshire (1993) observes that nowadays relative *what* is present in a great number of dialectal varieties throughout the country and argues that the spreading takes place via big cities.

Hermann (2003), based on a frequency study of her data, talks of a “*process of dissemination*”, she points out that “*from its southeastern (East Anglia including Essex) heartland what has been radiating out through the adjoining Midlands and the Home Counties, especially London, to the Southwest and, eventually, to the North*”, where it is least frequent attested.

4.4.2. Relative *what*: a general description.

In this section, we will give a general description of the wh-element *what* as introducer of headed relative clauses, focussing on the type of antecedent, the type of relative clauses and the syntactic position relativised.

The most relevant feature of relative *what* is that it is not sensitive to the animacy of the antecedent, this means that *what* can relativise both animate (51a) and inanimate (51b) antecedents:

- (51) a. There was ehm *Mrs Acres* **what** was on Hollow Stone
(FRED-S, NTT 006; Midlands, Nottinghamshire, Nottingham)
- b. *the stuff* **what** came from the gas corroded the cables
(FRED-S, MDX 001; South-East, Middlesex, Pinner)

Besides NPs, as exemplified in the above examples, *what* can also relativise personal pronouns (52a-b) and quantifiers (52c-d):

- (52) a. It would be them **what** were a bit better off, 'cause there were one or two a bit better off in them days.
(FRED, NTT 009; Midlands, Nottinghamshire, Nottingham)
- b. ... and I said to one, the, one of them **what** were boss of the home guard I says,
(...)
(FRED, NTT 009; Midlands, Nottinghamshire, Nottingham)
- c. ... they live on the green grass and anything of course, wheat, and oatmeal, anything **what** 's good.
(FRED, WES 003; North, Westmorland, Ambleside)
- d. ... she wasn't a trained midwife but she used to look after anybody **what** had children,
(FRED, NTT 009; Midlands, Nottinghamshire, Nottingham)

The lack of specification for animacy seems to hold for all the dialects that include *what* in their relative systems. In this regard, it is worth pointing out that in the variety spoken in the Reading area, which has a five-term relativisation system (*who*, *which*, *that*, *what*, zero), *what* tends to predominate in a specific context, that is, as subject of the relative clause referring to inanimate antecedents, even if animate antecedents are also possible. Obviously, this is only a tendency and it does not suffice to maintain that in this variety *what* is still a pronoun. We could say that here *what* preserves “memory” of its original pronominal status, more precisely of the [- animate] feature.

The very early attestation of *what* reported in (53) is an interesting instance of headless relative clause in which *what* virtually refers to an animate antecedent. This leads us to suppose that presumably *what* had already lost the specification for animacy in the headless relative system:

- (53) We met none here [St. Just] but **what** could speak English, few of the children could speak Cornish.
(1664, in P. A. S. Pool, 1982, *The Death of Cornish*)

As for the syntactic positions relativised by *what*, we need to consider again the AH formulated by Keenan-Comrie (1977) already discussed in Chapter 3, here repeated in (54):

- (54) **Accessibility Hierarchy**
Subject > Direct Object > Indirect Object > Oblique > Genitive > Object of comparison

What relativises the syntactic positions of subject (55) and direct object (56):

- (55) ..., so the fellow **what** were learning me, says, I 'm sorry I couldn't get you last night,
(FRED, NTT 001; Midlands, Nottinghamshire, Nottingham)
- (56) I think at one time we used to get eh thirty shillings for every baby **what** we had,
(FRED, NTT 009; Midlands, Nottinghamshire, Nottingham)

As for the other syntactic positions, the examples in (57) are all instances of *what* occurring as prepositional object.

- (57) a. and they used to move that belt every day in that track **what** you 'd took the coal *from*, yeah.
(FRED-S, NTT 004; Midlands, Nottinghamshire, Nottingham)
- b. and I know them because she used to introduce me to them **what** she works *with* you know ...
(FRED, NTT 006; Midlands, Nottinghamshire, Nottingham)

- c. ... we had a wooden board about this size, **what** they used to keep coppers *in*,
pennies and halfpennies,
(FRED, YKS 006; North, Yorkshire, Hinderwell)
- d. Is that t'hat **what** thoo was wed *in* ?
(Westmoreland, B. K.; EDD, s. v. *what*, 4. pron.)

Even if the syntactic position of prepositional object is not expressly included in the AH, it is worth noting, for the purposes of this work, that the pied-piping of the preposition is never attested in the corpora, the preposition can only be stranded. Andrew Radford (personal communication), suggests that this may be due to stylistic reasons, that is, relative *what* occurs in informal styles and preposition stranding is obligatory in low styles.

The case of the genitive position is more puzzling; the only strategy available to *what* in order to relativise this position seems to be a periphrastic construction in which relative *what* co-occurs with the possessive adjective⁵⁸. This is attested in both the Survey of English Dialects (58a) and in the Lowman Survey of Middle and South England (58b):

- (58) a. That man's uncle was drowned last week.
In other words, you might say, that's the chap **what** *his* uncle was drowned.
(CDLAE; S 10: IX.9.6 *whose*; Essex, Cornish Hall End)
- b. he's a boy) whose father
he's a boy what his father
(Lowman Survey; Map 208 31.2: *whose*; Suffolk, cf. Viereck 1975a)

⁵⁸ The same periphrastic construction for the genitive position is found in the Italian North-Eastern dialects with the complementiser *that*, as illustrated in the examples below:

- (i) Maria, che so mama te a vedi sempre al marcà, ...
Maria, that her mum, cl cl see always at market
“Maria, whose mother you always meet at the market, ...”

See also regional North-Eastern Italian:

- (ii) Maria, che suo zio abita vicino a te, ...
Maria, that her uncle lives near to you
“Maria, whose parents bought my old house, ...”

The periphrastic construction of the genitive relativiser *what his* may occur in the reduced form *what's* as well, as exemplified in (59):

(59) That man's uncle was drowned last week.

In other words, you might say, that's the chap **what**'s uncle was drowned.

(CDLAE; S 10: IX.9.6 *whose*; Essex, Netteswell)

In this regard, Andrew Radford (personal communication), observes that *what* in (58) is declined for genitive case. This would lead to exclude, as a consequence, the complementiser nature of *what* and at the same time it would provide evidence in favour of the pronominal status of relative *what*. This might actually represent a problem for our hypothesis, especially if we consider (60), in which the female antecedent *the girl* clearly excludes the possibility that *what's* is the reduced variant of *what his*.

(60) That's the girl **what**'s mum loves horror films.

(Cheshire et al. 1993:69, item 118)

We assume here that the possessive form *what's* is not comparable to the morphological case realised by *whose*, *whom*, the genitive and accusative forms of *who*.

Here the function of the Saxon genitive form 's is to allow *what* to relativise a syntactic position that would be otherwise inaccessible.

What's seems to parallel in these dialects the possessive forms *that's* and *at's* which are attested in several dialectal varieties (cf. .CDLAE; S 10: IX.9.6 *whose*). In the light of this, we assume here that *what's* is not the declined genitive form of *what*, but the combination of the complementiser *what* and the genitive marker 's.

Hermann (2003) comes to interesting conclusions: on the basis of data from Central Midlands, she suggests that relative *what* entered the AH by subject position, then gradually accessing to the lower positions. This is also confirmed by Cheshire et al. (1993), who observe an implicational hierarchy based on the results from questionnaires in a nation-wide survey at school: "such that all schools reporting the occurrence of *what* as a genitive pronoun also reported *what* as object pronoun, and all schools reporting *what* as object pronoun also reported *what* as subject pronoun" (see Cheshire et al. 1993: 69-70, see also Hermann 2003: 139-140).

Interestingly, this contrasts with the process underwent by all the other wh-pronouns as they turn to be used in the headed relative system. As we have already seen in Chapter 3, in the Middle English period, wh-items entered the AH by the lower positions in the more formal registers of the language (Romaine 1980: 234).

Hermann (2003) reports that the fact that relative *what* seems to display the opposite order in the hierarchy “climbing” if compared to the other wh-pronouns is due to stylistic reasons: (...) “because it is part of an informal straightforward spoken code, which has greater affinity to the simpler positions of the AH” (see Cheshire et al. 1993: 70).

4.4.3. A wider look at relative *what*: the contexts.

While in the previous section we concentrated on *what* in relation with its antecedent on one hand and with the available syntactic position in the AH on the other, in this section we will give a “wider look” *what* and focus more generally on the contexts in which relative *what* is attested.

First, *what* introduces both restrictive (61a) and non-restrictive relative clauses⁵⁹ (61b):

- (61) a. And then they had this eh Campbell Hope and King in Chambers Street *what* the university 's got now.
(FRED, MLN 007; Scottish Lowlands, Midlothian, Edinburgh)

⁵⁹ Interestingly, a pattern seems to emerge in the non-restrictive context. In the examples below, the antecedent (underlined) is topicalised, it is presumably a Hanging Topic with a pronominal copy in the main clause. In all the cases we have found, *what* relativises the syntactic position of subject and its antecedent is also the subject in the main clause:

- (i) a. this Council House *what* 's built now, it wasn't there then
(FRED-S, NTT 006; Midlands, Nottinghamshire, Nottingham)
- b. and him *what* owned that wood yard he used to own the cottage that we lived in
(FRED-S, NTT 009; Midlands, Nottinghamshire, Nottingham)
- c. and all these children *what* lived up Green Lane we all used to go and play around
(FRED-S, NTT 009; Midlands, Nottinghamshire, Nottingham)
- d. I bought a new corn drill, and eh, my old man *what* was bankrupt, he was going out the farm, he says, First man who 'll want to borrow that, he says, Is Paulson.
(FRED-S, KEN 002; South East, Kent, Faversham)
- e. And if it come that the place was busy, us chaps *what* was on the cordite, we would go down where the girls were.
(FRED-S, KEN 003; South East, Kent, Faversham)

- b. ... , so the fellow *what* were learning me, says, I 'm sorry I couldn't get you last night,
(FRED, NTT 001; Midlands, Nottinghamshire, Nottingham)

Besides the two major types of relative clauses, *what* frequently occurs in a third type of clause known as “definitorial” relative clause (Benincà & Cinque, in press), exemplified in (62) by SE:

- (62) a. I like all the people who are always working hard
b. John is a boy who is friendly to anyone
c. I know a girl who is working with Paul

It can be assumed that the “definitorial” relative clause shares some features with both the restrictive and the non-restrictive types; on a par with the restrictive relative, it gives non-redundant information, on a par with the non-restrictive relative, the information conveyed is not necessary to the identification of the antecedent.

From a semantic point of view, the “definitorial” relative clause can actually be considered a sub-type of the restrictive relative clause, that is, it contributes to the definition of the antecedent, even if the antecedent is already identified. More precisely, the “definitorial” relative clauses describes the features possessed by the class to which the antecedent belongs, as exemplified below by the modern dialectal varieties in (63):

- (63) a. there used to be some lodging houses what they call lodging houses for people **what** 's got nowhere to go you know
(FRED-S, NTT 006; Midlands, Nottinghamshire, Nottingham)
- b. we put cows **what** 's giving five gallons a day and over in one field and five gallons and under in another field.
(FRED-S, NTT 015; Midlands, Nottinghamshire, Lambley)
- c. ... she wasn't a trained midwife but she used to look after anybody **what** had children,
(FRED-S, NTT 009; Midlands, Nottinghamshire, Nottingham)

- d. there were pineapple, eh teargas, gas **what** made their eyes run.
(FRED-S, YKS 010; North, Yorkshire, Hebden Brige)

If we look at the main clause containing the antecedent of the “definitorial” relative clauses, at least two patterns seem to emerge: existential constructions as in (64) and copular constructions of the *XP be XP* type as in (65) are contexts in which relative *what* is frequently attested as introducer of “definitorial” relative:

- (64) a. And of course there was a lot of clauses **what** you could do and
what you couldn't do.
(FRED-S, LAN 001; North, Lancashire, Barrow)
- b. there used to be factories **what** used to let lace
(FRED-S, NTT 006; Midlands, Nottinghamshire, Nottingham)
- c. there was a man **what** used to work on the guillotines cutting boards ...
(FRED-S, NTT 006; Midlands, Nottinghamshire, Nottingham)
- (65) a. I think Drewry and Edwards they was about the only firm **what** was going well
(FRED-S, NTT 013; Midlands, Nottinghamshire, Nottingham)
- b. If I didn't know what a cowman is, you would tell me:
He is the man **what** looks after the cows.
(CDLAE; S 8b: III.3.7 *that*, East Anglia, Midlands)

Leaving “definitorial” relative clauses aside for the moment, it is worth noticing that other patterns seem to emerge as well. In particular relative *what* is also attested in existential clause with *have*, *have*-existentials, as illustrated in (66):

- (66) a. I've got a poor son **what's** a cripple.
(1893, North Yorkshire, Simpson *Jeanie o'Biggersdale* 35; EDD, s. v. *what* 4.
pron.)
- b. I've got a bank-book **what** is worth lookin' at!

(1902, Dorset, Francis North, South &c. 124; EDD, s. v. *what* 4. pron.)

- c. I got a letter **what** she wrote on her dying bed
(1895, Devon, Mortimer W. Moors 42; EDD, s. v. *what* 4. pron.)
- d. we had some big committee, **what** they called committee tables you see,
(FRED, DEV 010; South West, Devon, Buckfast)

Besides, *what* is also frequently attested with cleft clauses in which the antecedent is a focalised NP, as exemplified in (67):

- (67)
- a. it was GIRLS **what** run it.
(FRED-S, KEN 003; South East, Kent, Faversham)
 - b. It's ALL DUKES **what** writes in them.
(s. Lancashire, s. Cheshire, Derbyshire; EDD, s. v. *what*, 4. pron.)
 - c. I said, It weren't US **what** owed you money
(FRED-S, NTT 013; Midlands, Nottinghamshire, Nottingham)
 - d. it used to be one **what** used to come from Shire Hall at oh, somewhere like that
(FRED-S, NTT 009; Midlands, Nottinghamshire, Nottingham)
 - e. it was THE BUMP **what** done that
(FRED-S, NTT 005; Midlands, Nottinghamshire, Southwell)
 - f. The attraction was there it was something **what** only used to come once a week
for us kids
(FRED-S, NOTT 016; Midlands, Nottinghamshire, Nottingham)
 - g. Aye, see then, it was something here, **what**, **what** made me think.
(FRED-S WLN 004; Scottish Lowlands, West Lothian, Falkirk)

Even if cleft clauses deserve a specific treatment, which is beyond the scope of the present contribution, it is quite clear that in the clauses seen above we are not dealing with *what* as introducer of “definitorial” relative clauses; there is much disagreement whether dependent clauses co-occurring with clefts can be considered relative clauses at all.

What is relevant about the contexts of use illustrated so far is that at a more careful sight an interesting parallelism emerges with the distributional properties of another relativisation strategy. More precisely, relative *what* and the zero \emptyset strategy on the subject seem to have the same distribution.

4.4.4. The zero strategy on the subject: the contexts

Parallel to what we have shown for *what* in the previous section, the zero strategy on the subject also occurs with “definitorial” relative clauses, cleft clauses⁶⁰ and existential constructions. In particular, *there*-existentials and clefts are assumed to be the main contexts in which, cross-dialectally, the zero strategy on the subject is associated with (Berizzi, 2001: 101).

The zero strategy on the subject occurs with both restrictive (68a) and non-restrictive relative clauses (68b):

(68) a. Tell us the one about the lady \emptyset couldn't get a lift
(Cheshire 1982; in Berizzi 2001:104, ex. (13b))

b. Owen Kelsey, \emptyset used to live next door, has emigrated
(Cheshire 1982; in Berizzi 2001:104, ex. (13a))

Besides the two major types of relative clauses, the zero strategy is also compatible with definitorial relative contexts as illustrated in (69). Interestingly, in (69a-b) we find the same pattern we have found in definitorial relatives introduced by *what*, that is, copular constructions of the *XP be XP* type, (see examples in (66a-b) for *what*):

(69) a. Leck is a young boy \emptyset was coming home from school.

⁶⁰ It is to point out that it may be difficult sometimes to keep these contexts distinguished, as we have observed that definitorial relatives tend to occur with specific contexts, among which existential clauses, (see page 13, examples 31).

(Berizzi 2001:103, ex. (11))

- b. Leonard up here would be the only person, maybe, Ø goes to the bog (...)
(Hermann 2005: 36, ex. (31))
- c. You might know a friend Ø works in a blacksmith('s)⁶¹.
(Shorrocks 1982; in Berizzi 2001:103, ex. (8a))
- d. Yet, at them times, anybody Ø wanted to learn could learn
(Hermann 2005: 36, ex. (28))

As far as the existential construction is concerned⁶², besides *there*-existentials (70a-c), the zero strategy is also attested with *have*-existentials (70d-f), (see examples in (65) for *what*):

- (70) a. There's one single house Ø stands right against the school gates
(FRED-S, MDX 001; South-East, Middlesex, Pinner)
- b. (...) there was Mr McNaughton and Ben Weir from Kendal Ø came round
buying horses.
(Hermann 2005: 32, ex. (15))
- c. There was a young barrister Ø keep questionin en, you know

⁶¹ Hermann (2005) observes that among “the syntactic environments” in which the zero strategy occurs “a handful of examples occur in have-existential-like constructions involving the verb 'to know'”:

- (i) Well, I wasn't, because I was always, eh, I had my lessons learned, and I didn't get so much of the stick as the, but I know **ones** Ø got a lot of it
(Hermann 2005: 35, ex. (25))

⁶² Shorrocks (1982) observes that the existential clause represents a relevant pattern in the variety of Farnworth as well: the zero strategy on the subject regularly occurs where the antecedent of the subject trace is the subject of the existential clause:

- (i) a. There were only the locals Ø went in.
(Shorrocks 1982; in Berizzi 2001:103, ex. (9a))
- b. There's feet Ø keeps trotting up and down the lobby.
(Shorrocks 1982; in Berizzi 2001: 103, ex. (9b))
- c. There are two blocks Ø been upgraded
(Shorrocks 1982; in Berizzi 2001: 103, ex. (9c))

(Ihalainen 1980; in Berizzi 2001: 101, ex. (4))

- d. If we had, say, fifty, sixty, fat sheep Ø had to go to market, they used to be taken by road.

(Ihalainen 1980; in Berizzi 2001: 102, ex. (6))

- e. We had this French girl Ø came to stay
Romaine 1980; in Berizzi 2001: 104, ex. (12b))

- e. Yes she had her aunt Ø was a widow there at the time (...)
(Hermann 2005: 33, ex. (18))

As exemplified in (71), cleft clauses, in which the antecedent is meant to be a focalised element, represent another context in which the zero strategy on the subject is typically associated with, (see examples in (67) for *what*):

- (71) a. It was JENNIFER HIGGINS Ø lived in there.
(Hermann 2005: 30, ex. (7))

- b. It ain't THE BEST ONES Ø finish first.
(Berizzi 2001:103, ex. (10b))

- c. It was MY GRANDMOTHER Ø owned this bit of land (...).
(Hermann 2005: 30, ex. (3))

- d. (...) 't weren't EVERYONE Ø had a binder.
(Hermann 2005: 30, ex. (9))

4.4.5. The syntactic status of relative *what*.

In the previous sections, we have observed that the relevant characteristics of relative *what* are the following:

- it is not sensitive to the animacy of the antecedent;

- it is indeclinable;
- it is only attested with stranding of the preposition;

Following Radford (1988), the co-occurrence of the above-mentioned features would lead us to assume that relative *what* is a complementiser and not a relative pronoun like the other *wh*-relativisers. Obviously, the picture is much more complicated than that: we have seen that insensitivity to the animacy is not a sufficient condition, on its own, to determine the nature of complementiser: example in (52) reports an occurrence of pronominal *what* as introducer of headless relative clauses in which *what* refers to a null NP, PEOPLE, which is specified for [+animacy]; the fact that we have assumed that relative *what* is indeclinable may also present some problematic aspects if we consider that *what* can be modified by the genitive clitic form 's, as in *what's*, see examples (58-59), even if we exclude the possibility for *what* to display morphological case as *who* does: *who/whom/whose*. Besides, the fact that relative *what* is never attested with the pied-piping of the preposition but only with stranding could be ascribed to stylistic reasons.

Notwithstanding these problematic aspects of the categorial status of relative *what*, we assume that the asymmetries displayed by *what*, if compared with the other relativisers of the *wh*-paradigm, lead us to exclude for relative *what* a full pronominal nature.

Following Cardinaletti & Starke (1999), who identify three different classes of pronouns for *wh*-items as well: full *wh*-pronouns, weak *wh*-pronouns, and *wh*-clitics, we argue that there is no clear evidence for the clitic nature of *what*. We suggest that in their theoretical framework relative *what* should be considered more akin to a weak pronoun, that is, a “deficient *wh*-element”, which is not specified for [animacy].

We assume here that relative *what* is a complementiser, but a relevant distinction must be made. If we consider the complementisers *as*, *at* and *that*, besides relative clauses (72), they can also introduce declarative clauses, as illustrated in (73):

- (72) a. There was a man **as** would go around and do the job for you
(Ihalainen 1980, in Berizzi 2001: 69, ex. (13))
- b. He gat helpt up on a plank **at** was laid cross two barrels
(Cumbria, Dickinson *Lamplugh* 1856; EDD, s. v. *at*, pron.)

- c. Dhu maa·yd **dhut** ad ur yuung mae·un u-kee·uld
 “The maid that had her young man killed”
 Elworthy Grammar (1879): 42

(73) I think as/at/that Paul is nice.

This possibility is excluded for relative *what*, which is etymologically a wh-element and is specialised for relative contexts, as shown by the ungrammaticality of (74):

(74) *I think what Paul is nice

The fact that relative *what* is a complementiser, which etymologically originated as a wh-item is unproblematic if we consider that the same process also occurred in other languages. In Italian, for example, the relative complementiser *che* is etymologically the wh-element

Further evidence for the complementiser nature of relative *what* is given by the following examples in which relative co-occurs with resumptive pronouns of the antecedent:

- (75) a. and I often wonder if there's *any girls* living today **what** *they* know
 what banders were
 (Shorrocks, 1982; Great Manchester County)
- b. *Lovely horses* **what** *they* come out there
 (Ihalainen, 1980; Somerset)
- c. he 's got *a girl* **what** *she* 's twenty-four or five.
 (FRED-S, NTT 015; Midlands, Nottinghamshire, Lambley)
- d. (...) And *Mrs Mapstone*, **what** *they* live up here to, where the,
 Q: MUSEUM IS....
 museum is.

4.5. Summary.

Both the interrogative and the relative systems provide independent evidence of the peculiar status of *what*. From a cross-linguistic point of view, the behaviour of *what* as interrogative operator and the range of its semantic values support what has been observed and discussed by Munaro & Obenauer (1999) for German and French and, in details, for the North-Eastern Italian dialects. Interestingly, the spectrum of the distributional properties displayed by *what* in English seems to be even more extended if we consider that “why”-like *what* presents more than one points of contact with both French and the Italian varieties.

In order to provide further evidence of the underspecified nature of *what*, we have also discussed the asymmetry displayed by *what* in the wh-paradigm in the relative system, which turned to be extremely relevant in this respect. It is a “twofold” asymmetry, actually, if we consider that *what* is the only wh-item that does not introduce headed relative clauses in SE but in the dialectal varieties that include *what* in their relativization systems, once again, the distributional properties of *what* reveal a different categorial status if compared to the other wh-relativisers. The proposal that the syntactic status of relative *what* is that of a complementiser in modern dialects implies that *what*, originally a full pronoun, gradually underwent a process of features impoverishment. The transition, which took place following a precise pattern, involves first the loss of its interrogative value, then the gradual loss of its pronominal features, among which, the first feature to be lost is presumably the specification for [animacy].

While the loss of the interrogative value is shared by all the other wh-elements as they entered the relative system, the loss of the pronominal features is the distinctive characteristic of *what*, which can only be motivated by the underspecified nature of the element.

⁶³ Hermann (2005) points out that in this example “*antecedent and resumptive pronoun (they) are not strictly coreferential: semantics and number concord do not match; resumptive they refers to 'the Mapstone clan', living at the 'Mapstone place', which is represented by Mrs Mapstone*”

Conclusions.

Chapter 2 introduced from a purely descriptive perspective the most relevant characteristics of the different question types; the aim of this very general overview was to provide some basic information that are needed in order to better understand some issues discussed in the following chapters.

However, some interesting facts deserve to be given special attention. The Wh-Criterion, (Rizzi 1996), for example, presents more than one problematic aspects when one tries to apply it to the direct interrogative clause formation in non-standard English: a number of varieties, Indian vernacular English among others, derive *wh*-main questions through *wh*-movement but do not admit verb raising to C°. Such strategies can be considered a violation of the Wh-Criterion. Moreover, the cases of *wh*-main questions with a null auxiliary further complicates the picture, considering that these interrogatives could be either seen as violations of the Wh-Criterion or as cases of agreement with a null, rather than lexicalised, auxiliary. In this respect, phenomena of deletion, which are briefly treated in the last part of the first chapter, are generally considered problematic, except for few cases in which tense-marked verbs – and marginally verb agreement – allow to detect whether subject-auxiliary inversion has occurred or not.

The syntactic proposal for the indirect interrogative clause is given in Chapter 3. We start from the observation that Hiberno English displays embedded inversion and that the indirect relative clause and the headless relative clause share a series of similarities, which can be observed cross-linguistically. On the basis of this we argue that the two clause types may have the same syntactic structure, i.e. the syntactic structure of a headless relative.

In a cartographic approach, the syntactic structure of the indirect interrogative clause (and of the headless relative) implies the activation of the *RelWhP*. It is precisely the activation of this projection, and not of the *InterrWhP*, that allows verb raising to C°. This is possible since *RelWhP* – and consequently its head(s) – are located in the very high portion of the complementiser layer:

$$[\mathbf{RelWh} C^\circ]_{\text{Frame}} [\text{ScSett}] [\text{HT}] C^\circ \} \{ \text{Topic} [\text{LD}] [\text{LI}] C^\circ \} \{ \text{Focus} [\text{IFocus}] [\text{IIFocus}] / [\mathbf{InterrWh}] C^\circ \} \quad [\text{Fin} C^\circ]$$

Under this assumption, the verb is expected to move to C° also in headless, and possibly headed relative clauses. This is indeed the case: as shown in Chapter 3, inversion is attested in both headless and headed relative clauses, even if this phenomenon is highly restricted from a quantitative point of view. In this regard, a number of problematic aspects should be pointed out: the instances are not numerous and a larger corpus is thus needed; grammaticality judgements are very difficult to elicit; and, native speakers generally reject inversion in relative contexts. In addition, the phenomenon does not seem to be restricted to Hiberno English since it is marginally attested in many different varieties and registers.

Nonetheless, embedded inversion in relative context is a very interesting phenomenon that certainly deserves to be further explored in future research. A first observation in this direction is that inversion in headed relative clauses seems to occur only with two types of relative clauses, namely with the appositive and the definitorial, while it never occurs in the restrictive type. If this picture will be further supported by new data, the phenomenon could shed some light on the syntactic representation of relative clauses in general, and of the definitorial type in particular. There are reasons to believe that, like the Focus and Frame fields, also the *RelWhP* should not be considered a single projection, but rather a more articulated field (or sub-field), in which the *wh*-relativisers of different relative clause types may be hosted in the Specs of the different projections.

The fact that the interrogative and relative systems are intimately interrelated also emerges from the behaviour of *what*, which we have analysed in the last chapter. The argumental and non-argumental uses of *what* as interrogative operator and its occurrence as a relativiser in the dialects of England both provide evidence in favour of the hypothesis that *what* is to be considered an underspecified *wh*-element. This has already been shown by Munaro and Obenauer (1999) and Obenauer (2006) for a number of other varieties; the original contribution provided by the English data presented here is that only *what* seems to have become a complementiser in the headed relative system. Again, this “categorical shift” has been possible by virtue of its underspecified nature.

A possible line of research to be developed in future is the study of the process undergone by *what* in the relative clauses of English, in terms of “feature impoverishment”. This process can be better captured if we argue that the *wh*-elements can be considered as matrixes of features that can be specified for the positive or the negative value; in the light of this, “feature impoverishment” may be more formally defined as “the gradual loss of specification of a series of features”.

Furthermore, features in the *wh*-matrix are presumably organised in a hierarchical order and can be lost (and/or acquired?) possibly leading to a change in the categorial status of the element, as it is assumed to have occurred in the case of *what*.

In terms of feature specification, the occurrence of *what* in the echo-questions is also significant if we adopt a cross-linguistic perspective and comparing it to other languages, like Italian, for example. The possibility of acquiring what we have defined as “alien morphology” seems to interact with specifications in the *wh*-matrix rather than the *wh*-element itself.

As a final note, some words are to be spent on the methodological approach adopted in the fieldwork for this thesis since more than one problematic aspects have been encountered. We have seen in Chapter 1 that the interaction of a number of different factors play a crucial role in the success of the fieldwork activities. While the interviews turned out to be the best way to elicit data even from the less reliable informants, the question of whether it is possible for a non-native speaker to obtain good results with spontaneous speech does not seem to have a positive answer. In addition, another important aspect forms the background against which the fieldworker must operate: the situation in the United Kingdom and Ireland is that of a extremely strong and generalised stigmatisation of non-standard grammar. Notwithstanding an emerging interest of local and national policies towards the linguistic question, the dichotomy good grammar vs. bad grammar is always present. In a future perspective, a refinement of the methodological approach used is needed.

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