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On relatives with a null head: German free relative clauses and clefts

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ENGLISH ABSTRACT

One of the main aims of the present dissertation is investigating German free relative clauses and clefts and explaining whether the two constructions are related. On the basis of cross-linguistic evidence and of a robust amount of German data, it can be shown that free relative clauses as well as cleft sentences contain a silent head, whose nature has precise consequences on the syntax and semantics of these constructions. Free relative clause formation is ruled by specific constraints, which involve case-matching. These requirements are carefully considered and an account is provided to explain the reasons why certain bans apply. It is also illustrated how the grammaticality of free relative clauses can be rescued if the constraints on their formation are not respected. Some new light is shed also on German clefts. A discussion is devoted to the relationship between clefting and relativizing; in particular, the question whether cleft sentences can be considered relative clauses is addressed. The analysis provided for German clefts capitalizes both on the nature of the subordinate clause and on its relation with the main copular clause and its components. The German case prospectively contributes to theoretical research in that it synchronically evidences precise development patterns for cleft sentences and demonstrates that the different structures displayed by the languages correspond to different degrees of grammaticalization.

ITALIAN ABSTRACT

Uno degli scopi principali del presente lavoro è quello di indagare il rapporto tra le frasi relative libere e la costruzione scissa del tedesco e spiegare se le due strutture siano correlate. Sulla scorta di dati provenienti da diverse lingue e di una base empirica molto ampia per il tedesco, è possibile dimostrare che sia le frasi scisse che le frasi relative libere contengono una testa silente, la cui natura ha ricadute precise sulla semantica e sulla sintassi della costruzione. La formazione delle frasi relative libere è regolata da vincoli specifici che riguardano anche il *matching* di caso. Tali vincoli vengono discussi diffusamente e viene fornita una spiegazione del perché ci siano determinate limitazioni. Partendo dall'osservazione del dato agrammaticale, vengono esaminate le modalità attraverso le quali è possibile ripristinare la grammaticalità di frasi che violino le regole di formazione del costrutto. Grazie alla problematizzazione della relazione tra costruzione scissa e frase relativa, viene anche aperta una nuova prospettiva sulla costruzione scissa del tedesco. La proposta di analisi per tale costrutto pone al centro la natura della frase subordinata e il suo rapporto con la frase copulare e gli elementi che la compongono. Il caso del tedesco è particolarmente interessante e potrebbe contribuire al progresso della ricerca scientifica in linguistica perché mostra a livello sincronico ciò che in altre lingue accade in diacronia e chiarisce quale sia la direzione di sviluppo di questa costruzione, che va verso una progressiva grammaticalizzazione.

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INTRODUCTION

1. Motivations of the study

The main goal of the present dissertation is investigating German free relative clauses and cleft sentences. This involves examining the relationship between relativizing and clefting. It has often been taken for granted in the literature that clefts are actually relative clauses. A long-standing debate however, has arisen concerning the type of relativization involved and the alleged antecedent of the relative clause instantiated by clefts. Problematic relatives, however are not only clefts, but also the so-called free relative clauses, also known as headless relative clauses. Although they have been studied for a long time by scholars (albeit with different degrees of interest for the case of German), no final word has been said yet, and the field is open for further research. In particular, German free relative clauses are often cited in the literature, with puzzling data, while German clefts are disregarded. We will see, that at least for German, the two constructions are intertwined and a sharpening of our knowledge of German free relative clauses is certainly of help to come to an account for clefts.

My personal interest for free relatives and clefting has started with my master thesis, in which I treated relativization in German, not only in Standard, but also in Substandard and dialectal varieties. Looking for data which instantiated relative clauses in German, I happened to find examples of clefts and I did not feel at ease to insert them in my work and handle them as if they were fully comparable with the headed relative clauses which I was taking into consideration. Moreover, I happened to read accounts for free relatives, which suggested to non-native speakers to avoid using them (e.g. Bosco Coletsos & Costa, 2004).

One of the most fascinating aspects which characterizes clefting is that there seems to be an evident mismatch between the syntax of this construction, which heavily resembles relative clauses in many languages, and its semantics, which is intuitively diverse from that of “canonical” relative clauses. This intriguing behavior, which surely deserves thorough investigation, led me to keep this issue aside during the master thesis and suspend the judgment. Along the same lines, at that time I only made little reference to free relatives, which I was not in a position to deal with effectively.

The research I carried out on relative clauses in German and its dialectal varieties has been an excellent starting point for the present study, since it enabled me to have a clear overview of the different relativization strategies employed by German varieties. This was fundamental to identify given pronouns or complementizers as possible or impossible relativizers. This distinction turned out to be decisive also in establishing the nature of cleft sentences in different linguistic registers of German.

Analyzing German clefts and free relatives however is not only useful to better understand how German syntax works, which is surely important, but it can also further contribute to the refinement of syntactic theories in general. First of all, it can help clarify whether free relative clauses are actually headless. Since clear clues suggest that they are not, this triggers devoted research to outline the status of this head. German shows, by means of different introducers of free relative clauses corresponding to non-overlappable semantic meanings, that the nature of the silent head is not always the same in the languages and even within the same language, if different formation strategies for the same construction are used. Nevertheless, there are some shared features, whose identification allows for the description of the nature of this head. Besides, German free relative clauses allow to investigate the puzzling issue of matching. It can be seen to what extent different factors are intertwined and lead to the possible and impossible configurations. It also contributes in understanding whether prolepsis may play a role in rescuing potentially ungrammatical structures and if it is so, how it is actually carried out by German. The treatment of cleft sentences in different theoretical models has been oscillating between a headed relative clause approach and the assimilation to pseudoclefts, therefore to free relative clauses whose matrix clause is copular. Once again, German is particularly instructive in this respect, in that it shows that not all languages utilize the same syntactic structure to create the cleft construction. Cleft sentences have in fact, different degrees of grammaticalization in the languages, corresponding to different clefting strategies. German has the advantage to show this pattern of development also synchronically, if different linguistic registers are compared. This mechanisms can not only be fruitfully observed, but also enable us to exactly see the direction of this development and where it starts from. Further challenges are posed by the copular constructions obligatorily present in clefts as their main clause. This leads to a deeper reflection concerning small clauses and their employment in clefts. There is definitely no agree in the literature with respect to the status of small clauses, which I will not clarify either. Nevertheless, it will be shown

that they can effectively capture the relationship between different items also within clefts, in that it explains the relations holding between the focused constituent and the so-called “expletive¹”, between the focused constituent and the subordinate clause, between the “expletive” and the subordinate clause.

2. Methodological remarks

It has been recently underlined that good data collection is of fundamental importance in linguistic research. Kayne (2013) recalls that in recent years there has been an increasing tendency to start from linguistic theoretical assumptions and then make the data fit into these hypotheses. It is instead clear that data should be the starting point from which generalizations can be made. Robust data collection is therefore the first unavoidable step that any linguist should take to begin a serious work. The second point which Kayne (2013) underlines is that comparing different languages is of crucial importance to figure out what generalizations involving a particular phenomenon hold cross-linguistically and what other are instead language-specific. This is also helpful in that it narrows out the number of proposals which can be made to account for a phenomenon, being certain assumptions excluded by cross-linguistic evidence.

I am personally convinced that this is the right track and that this is the methodology which should be adopted. In the present work, I have tried to take into consideration both the necessity for careful data collection and the need to widen my perspective to other languages in which the constructions I analyze are displayed.

I will now make clear how data have been collected. The very first step has been verifying in the grammars, both prescriptive (for foreign learners) and descriptive, how German free relative clauses and cleft sentences are treated, so as to realize what the traditional description for these linguistic phenomena is. I also took as a first token, the examples which were supplied by the grammars. I then tried to investigate to what extent these descriptions were satisfactory and if they were not, what their weak points were. I also considered the bans that were reported for these constructions and I tried to verify whether these constraints really apply to any linguistic register. I then read the most influential theoretical works which could be recovered in the literature and which involved the linguistic issues that I wanted to tackle. I did not exclude any work on the basis of the approaches that were adopted by the authors, since even works which do

¹ I will provisionally refer to this item as “expletive”, as is currently done in the literature, but its status will be thoroughly discussed in the course of the dissertation.

not belong to the theoretical framework I have chosen, Generative Grammar, could effectively contribute in drawing a thorough picture of the phenomenon.

While for free relative clauses the literature is extremely wide and directly involves also the treatment of German (Bresnan & Grimshaw, 1978; Groos & Van Riemsdijk, 1981; Harbert, 1983; Suñer, 1984; Grosu, 1994-1996; Cinque, 2003; Donati, 2006; Benincà, 2010 a.o. and specifically for German Pittner, 1991; Bausewin, 1991; Müller, 1999; Vogel, 2004-2006; Fuß & Grewendorf, 2012 a.o.), the literature on German clefts is definitely scarcer (Grewendorf & Poletto, 1989; Fischer, 2009; Gast & Wiechmann, 2011; Hartmann, 2012; Höhn, 2012; Fuß & Grewendorf, 2012, a.o.). This is evidently in contrast with the abundance of the literature on English clefts, which was started by Jespersen (1949), flourished in the Seventies and has continued with no interruption up to the present days with a further refinement of the scientific proposals which had been made². The reason for this asymmetry is interestingly provided by Fischer (2009), who states that even German linguists seem to find the English part more rewarding than investigating German, which is seemingly less interesting from a theoretical point of view. In very recent years an increasing number of young scholars, most of them German PhD students have engaged themselves in this field and I personally benefitted from the exchange of ideas with some of them (Katarina Hartmann and Georg Höhn), who I met at GGS 2012, in Freiburg, where I presented a first version of the part of this work dedicated to clefts.

Naturally, the survey of scientific literature was accompanied right from the beginning from my own data collection. As a very first step I made google searches, trying to test all the possible combinations which could appear in the constructions I took into account. I made internet searches both for attested combinations and even for expectedly ungrammatical configurations. Mass numbers needed to be cut to seek for a selection of reliable data. The first operation involved excluding all data which could be potentially produced by non-native speakers. This is the reason why I deliberately excluded all websites of non-German speaking countries. Then I excluded all the data inserted in bigger portions of texts containing other errors, which rendered the remaining part unusable. Once I have selected a good number of potentially reliable data, I submitted them to native speakers of German. As informants, I tried to choose speakers with some metalinguistic awareness, ideally linguists. Since there is huge

² I will not cite here the works on cleft sentences in the various languages. A good selection of them can be found in the section devoted to bibliography, at the end of the dissertation.

variations concerning the grammaticality judgments, I submitted the same internet findings to informants coming from different areas of Germany. If I were to identify macro-areas I tested, I could group them as follows: Thuringia, Saxony, Berlin, Hamburg, Bavaria, Tyrol. A clear tendency in the grammaticality judgments has emerged: there is no uniformity even among informants coming from the same geographical areas and it is well possible instead that people coming from the North and from the South agree on the same judgments.

After having submitted internet findings to my informants and having obtained judgments about them, I created my own questionnaires to test specific patterns, which appeared to be most problematic or in which there was a discrepancy in the speakers' judgments with respect to the descriptions provided by the grammars.

The questionnaires contained different tasks:

- (i) Especially for clefts, I submitted to speakers with an excellent knowledge of English, English sentences which I asked them to translate into German, or I also submitted Italian sentences to Tyrolean bilingual speakers. This task was meant to induce them to produce spontaneous sentences in German and helped me to effectively identify the parametric differences between the couple of languages under investigation. Due to the very specific requirements of this kind of task, this method was limited to a very restricted number of speakers, who I also submitted in any case also questionnaires directly in German.

- (ii) Both to test clefts and to test free relative clauses, which I inserted in separate questionnaires, I asked to express grammaticality judgments on a scale. I deliberately proposed sentences which I expected to be grammatical, ungrammatical sentences, and others which I knew would be problematic. In the instructions it was clearly stated that speakers could also rephrase ungrammatical or dubious sentences, so as to render them acceptable.

Here are the instructions I supplied for each questionnaire:

„Der folgende Fragebogen enthält Sätze, die grammatikalisch sind, Sätze, die gar ungrammatikalisch sind, und andere die weder total ungrammatikalisch noch völlig akzeptabel sind. Bitte geben Sie Ihre Grammatikalitätsurteile ab.

Grammatikalisch = OK

Ungrammatikalisch = *

Nicht völlig akzeptabel = ?

Wenn der Satz ungrammatikalisch oder nicht total akzeptabel ist, dürfen Sie auch den Satz umformulieren“

Some speakers spontaneously decided to enrich the list of symbols and added ** to signal severe ungrammaticality, or a double question mark ?? to express heavy perplexities.

All questionnaires were written and sent by e-mail. All informants provided me with details concerning their place of birth, their present city, the place of birth of their parents. Besides, I asked them to indicate whether they were also speakers of a dialect, in which case I requested to provide also dialectal translations. In any case, most of my speakers, if we exclude speakers from the South, declared not to speak any dialectal variety. Even though dialectal data were not crucial for my analysis, I wanted to compare them with the data given by the same speakers for Standard or colloquial varieties, in order to verify whether there was an influence of the dialect on the judgments given for Standard German.

If crucial, I further investigated problematic or uncertain data orally. This was all the more necessary for clefts, in which prosody can be decisive to attribute a given interpretation.

(iii) A very reduced part of the questionnaires – only concerning cleft sentences – involved also meaning questions. Specifically, given a stimulus sentence, or a minimal pair, which I previously verified to be grammatical, I asked informants to provide me with a suitable context. I used this method rarely because only few speakers really accomplished the task. This was all the more evident when they said that minimal pairs were in free variation, which was unlikely.

The protocols I chose to apply are well-established especially for dialectal data collection (SAND project protocol, Cornips & Poletto, 2005 a. o.). As my research is concentrated on syntax and aims at investigating the morpho-syntax / semantics interface, with minor attention for phonological and prosodic factors, written questionnaires were the most suitable research tool to be used, provided that they were integrated with oral interviews whenever needed. The fact that the goal of my research was collecting Standard and colloquial data of German, the drawbacks traditionally attributed to written questionnaires were strongly diminished. There was in fact no possible ambiguity connected with orthography, which is a variable for dialectal questionnaires, there is no problem of potential illiteracy of the speakers and there was no risk to adopt lexicon which could sound to some extent disturbing and negatively affect the reliability of the grammaticality judgments. The high preference for informants with enhanced linguistic sensitivity, preferably linguists, is certainly connected with the search for reliability. It is well-known, especially when varieties having a normative grammar are investigated, that some speakers tend not to express their own judgment, but rather to conform to the rule. This risk is particularly accentuated if professional categories such as teachers are selected. They have interiorized the rule and they find it hard to distinguish it from their actual production.

The conventions I adopted in this work to indicate the source of the data I used are the following:

- a. No indication if the sentence was contained in the questionnaires I submitted to my informants.
- b. Indication of a website if the original source is the Internet, even though the input was then submitted to informants.
- c. Indication of the author and year of publishing if the sentence was taken by the literature
- d. Indication of the literary source, if the sentence comes from a novel, a poem, or any kind of literary works.

3. Some issues about relativization

3.1 *Defining relative clauses and classifying them*

To fruitfully tackle the issue of free relative clauses and clefting in the Generative Grammar framework, a general overview of the questions connected with relativization in general is unavoidable.

First of all, it should be defined what relativization is. This is not an easy task. Defining a relative clause is far from being trivial. Everybody would be in a position to define it intuitively, at a naïve level, but providing an explanation in formal terms is not that simple. For the moment I will borrow Bianchi (2002 a)'s definition of headed relative clauses:

- (1) “A headed relative clause is a syntactically complex modifier involving abstraction over an internal position of the clause (the relativization site) and connected to some constituent it modifies (the relative ‘head’)”

(Bianchi, 2002 a: 197)

This definition does not commit itself in providing a semantic account for relativization, in that it does not specify how this *modification* semantically affects the modified item³. A semantic characterization is generally supplied by the traditional distinction between restrictive and non-restrictive relative clauses. As the labels overtly make clear, a restrictive relative clause serves as a restrictor for the antecedent it modifies and contributes to its possible identification; a non-restrictive relative clause instead, which is also called appositive or attributive relative clause, does not really contribute to the identification of the head, which is fully identifiable regardless of the presence or absence of the relative clause, it rather adds unnecessary information about the antecedent. Grosu & Landman (1998) further refines this classification and adds a new category. In particular, they claim that in restrictive relative clauses, the relativizer modifies the determiner of the head and restricts it, while in non-restrictive relative

³ Notice that definitions of relative clauses which make use of the concepts of *modification* and *antecedent* undergo criticism above all from typologists, since they are considered too narrow, if we take also typologically distant languages into account. De Vries (2006) for instance proposes the following definition based on defining properties of relative clauses:

i) A relative clause is subordinated.

ii) A relative clause is connected to surrounding material by a pivot constituent.

He then adds a further point, which is not a defining property, but is a shared characteristic: “The semantic θ -role and syntactic role that the pivot constituent has in the relative clause, are in principle independent of its roles in the matrix clause”.

clauses the entire head is modified. The group that they add is *maximalizing relatives*. These are not necessarily headed, on the contrary, they are mostly, although not exclusively, free relative clauses. The maximalization does not apply to the head or to the determiner but to the entire clause. Although Grosu & Landman (1998) tripartition is both syntactic and semantic, I prefer to choose the standard grouping into:

- (i) Headed relative clauses:
 - a. Restrictive relative clauses
 - b. Non-restrictive relative clauses
- (ii) Free relative clauses

Maximalizing relatives is in fact a label which unifies semantically homogenous constructions at the expense of the syntax, which is the linguistic field I would like to concentrate on in my study.

As I have already anticipated a main issue in the analysis of relativization phenomena is investigating relativization strategies. As Bianchi (2002a) points out, three parameters need to be considered:

- (i) the syntactic relation holding between the head and the relativizer (which has already been discussed in § 3.1)
- (ii) the relativization site
- (iii) the relativizer

3.2 *Formal accounts for the derivation of headed relative clauses*

A long standing debate concerns the nature of the item which sits in the relativization site. The two major approaches are: the matching analysis and the raising analysis.

The *matching analysis* was first proposed by Chomsky (1965). The core proposal is that the relative clause contains a noun phrase that is identical to the commanding head. Then the head is substituted by a relative pronoun which moves in front of the relative clause. The landing site of the relative pronoun is a Specifier of CP. The final result is that, in general, either the relative pronoun or the relative complementizer is deleted. Anyway there exist cases in which both can coexist (as

instantiated by many English and German dialectal varieties) or both are deleted, as possibly happens in English contact relatives, in non-subject relatives⁴. Deleted material, however, has to be recoverable from the structure.

A second major approach has been put forth by Carlson (1977) and is generally known as *raising analysis*. This account assumes that, at least in restrictive relative clauses, the head is inserted directly in the relative clause and then moves out of it, to the matrix clause. This hypothesis, which appeared in the same period in which Chomsky published his famous *On wh- movement*, was soon dismissed, even though it has been quite recently revitalized by Kayne (1994) and Bianchi (1999), partially also by Cinque (2010), who adopts a mixed approach according to which both derivations are typologically attested. He provides some interesting parameters to assess the advantages and disadvantages of each proposal.

Pros of the raising derivation, on the basis of the phenomena that it correctly predicts:

- Also an idiom chunk can be relativized
- The head of the relative clause can receive an amount reading
- There exist instances of inverse case attraction

Phenomena correctly predicted by the matching analysis:

- The reconstruction of the head is not obligatory, while it is in interrogative wh-phrases
- The head can be fully repeated inside the relative clause, while interrogative wh-phrases cannot
- Negative polarity items are licensed

Cinque (2010) proposes a unified account according to which there is no need to postulate the necessity of a raising analysis as a means to avoid right adjuncts, which are ruled out by antisymmetry. One of the most remarkable objections against matching was in fact, the possible violation of antisymmetry. He argues that the basic position in the structure for relatives is prenominal (Cinque, 2003). The relative clause is placed in a specifier on the left of the noun which it modifies. This fact solves all problems connected with antisymmetry: there are in fact no right adjuncts. Everything is merged on the left and the final reciprocal positions of noun and relative clause are due to movement operations. Depending on language internal constraints, in the linear order

⁴ There are attestations of English dialects in which deletion applies also to subject relatives.

the relative clause can appear either before or after the noun, depending on whether it crosses over it.

Not all kinds of relative clauses are at the same height within the fine structure of DP. For scope and c-command reasons, restrictive relative clauses are collocated over the numerals and below demonstratives (or strong quantifiers such as *most*), while participial relative clauses are below the numerals. Non-restrictive relative clauses are higher than them both, since they are merged even above determiners and universal quantifiers.

- (2) [DemP D° [RC X° [NumP Y° [AP... Z° [NP]]]]]

Provided that the relative clause is always generated as prenominal, in the end, Cinque (2008, 2010)'s idea is that the “raising” and “matching” derivations are two different derivational options; in the “raising” derivation, it is the Head internal to the relative clause that ends up being the *overt* Head whereas in the matching derivation, it is the external Head that ends up being the *overt* Head, and the internal head is deleted. Cinque (2008) offers also some interesting insights concerning the nature of the internal head. Resuming some older proposals of Kayne (1994), he provides some clues to maintain that the head internal of a (restrictive) relative clause is actually indefinite. This is proved by typological evidence: (i) there exist languages such as Austronesian, in which the postnominal headed restrictive relative clause is placed in front of demonstratives, which cannot therefore take scope over them; (ii) further clues come from Italian examples in which the DP has to be indefinite unless it heads a restrictive relative clause. This could show that there is an underlying indefinite form also within the head or the relative clause; (iii) the third piece of evidence is supplied by Lakota, in which restrictive relative clauses are not compatible with the presence of strong determiners.

3.3 *Relativization strategies: possible introducers*

There are basically three relativization strategies in the languages of the world, which can then be combined to create additional mixed strategies.

- (i) Use of relative pronouns

- (ii) Use of relative complementizers
- (iii) Use of relative complementizers + resumptive pronoun

(i) is instantiated by Standard German:

- (3) Jeden Morgen treffe ich den alten Mann, den
 Every morning meet_{1st PERS SING} I the old man_{ACC} who_{ACC MASC SING}
 du da siehst
 you there see_{2nd PERS SING}
 “Every morning I meet the man who you see there”

(ii) is instantiated by many languages such as English, which can use *that*:

- (4) I hate being the girl that broke them up

(i) can be combined with (ii): this is a strategy which is generally applied in non-standard languages and dialectal varieties. This is well-attested for English dialects, but also for some dialects of German. In particular, for German, the following combinations are displayed in the dialects:

a. der/die/das + was

- (5) Northern Bavarian (Egerland)
 Der Mon, der wos dös hod
 The man_{NOM} who_{NOM} what that has
 “The man who has this”

(Fleischer, 2004)

b. der/die/das + wo

- (6) Central Bavarian (Muncheu)
 Der Mon, (der) wo uns g’hoifa hod
 The man who_{NOM} where us helped has
 “The man who helped us”

(Guidolin, 2009)

c. *der/die/das + da*

(7) High Saxon

Der Herre, der de kam

The man_{NOM} who_{NOM} there came_{3rd PERS SING}

“The man who came”

(Albrecht, 1881)

Notice that in German, apart from *da* the complementizers following the relative pronoun can also serve as relativizers alone, but when a complementizer is used, this is generally admitted only if it relativizes a Structural position, or, interestingly, if there is case matching. In case a non-matching Dative has to be relativized, in German varieties the presence of a pronominal item is compulsory. This becomes all the more clear when the relative clause involves a PP.

In Standard German, there is no other possibility than having the relative pronoun governed by a P, the same holds for Standard Italian while in English the preposition can be stranded and a relative complementizer can be used as well. Once again substandard varieties have more freedom: they can either employ standard strategies or they can use (iii), this means the combination of a complementizer and a resumptive pronoun which can be governed by a preposition. This is well attested for instance in substandard Italian or in its dialectal varieties (e.g. Paduan and Neapolitan) even with dative forms:

(8) a. Substandard Italian:

Il bambino che gli hai regalato la bicicletta nuova è

The kid_{NOM} that him_{DAT} have_{2nd PERS SING} donated the bicycle new is
felice

happy

b. Paduan (Cittadella)

El puteo che te ghe regalà a bici nova l' è

The kid_{NOM} that you_{NOM SING} him_{DAT} donated the bike new he_{CLIT} is
contento

happy

c. Neapolitan (Marano di Napoli)

O criaturə ca c' e regalətə a biciletta novə è
The kid_{NOM} that him_{DAT} are_{2nd PERS SING} donated the bike new is
cuntentə
happy
“The kid to whom you donated a new bike is happy”

It is widely attested also for German dialects:

(9) Low Alemannic (Basel)

Dä Ma, woni⁵ im s Mässer gä ha
The man_{NOM} REL- n – I_{CLIT} him_{DAT} the knife given have_{1st PERS SING}
“The man to whom I gave the knife”

There is evidently a distribution of features between two distinct items: a complementizer on the one side, which serves the purposes of subordination, and a pronoun on the other, which expresses the features of gender, number and case. Since Structural Cases are more easily recoverable in the structure as they are associated with specific positions and precise thematic roles, they tolerate to be relativized by means of a bare complementizer. This is impossible for Oblique Cases unless there is matching. Matching is a crucial factor in allowing for “silence”. Matching turns out to be fundamental also for free relatives: under matching all combinations are accepted, whereas in cases of mismatches, the situation is definitely puzzling, with many factors intervening with different weights to influence the acceptability of the sentence. In cases of silence – for headed relative clauses silence is represented by the lack of a relative pronoun, for free relatives by the absence of a lexicalized head – resumptive pronouns are good tools to rescue the grammaticality of the sentence.

Different analyses have been proposed in the literature to account for resumptive pronouns. They were first analyzed in terms of representational chains (Chomsky, 1977 a.o.): the resumptive pronoun was claimed to be connected with a null operator base

⁵ The form *woni* is the combination of the complementizer *wo* and the subject clitic pronoun *i*. –n is simply epenthetic, even though thorough investigation would be needed to determine the actual morphological and syntactic origin of it.

generated in CP⁶. Later on, the analysis of resumptive pronouns was refined and it was maintained that they are a last resort option offered by Universal Grammar, whenever a movement derivation cannot take place (Shlonsky, 1992 on the basis of Hebrew data). Notice that, regardless of the syntactic derivation one assumes for resumptive pronouns, what emerges is that they supply the syntactic information which is not completely conveyed by the relativizers, and it is often relative complementizers which do not fully satisfy the requirements of the embedded verb. Benincà & Cinque (1988) notice that there is an implicational scale in the use of resumption for headed relative clauses: if it is found in appositive relative clauses, it will surely be also in restrictive, while the reverse does not hold. We will see that resumption can be used also in German free relative clauses to rescue the grammaticality of impossible combinations (ch. 1, § 6). Notice that De Vries (2001) claimed that resumption is impossible if the relativizer is not a complementizer, but is a pronoun. This is partially contradicted by cases in which a relative pronoun is resumed, as happens in some Medieval Latin texts.

- (10) quem (...) sequere illum non desinebant
 which_{iACC SING} to-follow him_{iACC SING} not stopped_{3rd PERS PL}
 “which they didn’t stop to follow”

(*Chronicon Salernitanum*⁷, ch. 43)

At any rate, the insertion of resumption signals that the resumed item is not totally transparent at a syntactic level. This claim apparently does not fit the Latin example, in which Case morphology is still displayed and there should be no ambiguity in identifying the Case and the syntactic function of the relative pronoun *quem*. Nevertheless, Latin was undergoing a progressive morphological loss at the time (10th century), and even overt morphological markers were no longer considered distinctive and sufficiently disambiguating. De Vries (2001) is therefore not truly incorrect, in that he properly captures the trigger for the necessity to insert resumption.

4. Overview of the internal articulation of the work

This work is divided into two main chapters, which are preceded by an introduction and are followed by general conclusions. The introduction provides some

⁶ S’ at the time.

⁷ It is an anonymous work written in the 10th century by a monk in the area of Salerno, Southern Italy.

motivations for the study (§ 1), it makes clear what methodology has been used for data collection (§ 2), and briefly problematizes the question of relativization: it provides a first possible classification for relative clauses (§ 3.1), some earlier formal accounts for the syntactic derivation (§ 3.2), and the main relativization strategies used in the languages (§ 3.3).

The first chapter of the work is devoted to German free relative clauses and aims at investigating the presence of a silent head (§ 2) and at defining its nature (§ 4). It also tackles the puzzling issue of matching and tries to provide an account for the syntactic behavior of German free relatives in this respect. Of fundamental importance will be the distinction between *wh*- free relative clauses (§ 5) and *d*- free relative clauses (§ 8): the differences involve both the semantics and the syntax of the construction and the restrictions on the latter type will be accounted for. The second chapter deals with German cleft sentences. After having introduced the issue (§ 1-2), I will provide an overview of the most influential literature (§ 3) and of clefting in typologically distant languages (§ 4). I will then problematize why cleft sentences are rarely used in German (§ 5). I will separately deal with cleft sentences in Standard German (§ 6) and in Colloquial varieties (§ 7). Both parts will be articulated symmetrically with the first paragraphs concerning the structure of the copular clause, the nature of *es*, verbal agreement patterns, while the following paragraphs thoroughly discuss the nature of the subordinate clause. In all the cases in which there is no significant diversity between the standard and colloquial varieties, the paragraphs will not be repeated, but simply referred to. In all the dissertation, data description will be constantly accompanied with a proposal of analysis, which will be outlined in a unified form at the end of each section, where a formalization by means of syntactic trees is also supplied. At the very end of the dissertation, an autonomous unit will be devoted to general conclusions containing the result of the present research and some hints for the future. The appendix contains a sketch on pseudoclefts, which should hopefully be the object of future research.

CHAPTER 1.

German free relative clauses

1. Introduction

Free relative clauses have been thoroughly investigated and discussed over the past forty years. This construction has also been called *headless relative clauses*, but applying this label would imply that a certain syntactic account has been adopted. This last definition in fact, is transparent: it entails that they are relative clauses which do not have a head. This is allegedly suggested by the macroscopic difference between headed relative clauses and this kind of relative clauses: while the former have a lexicalized antecedent, with which the relative pronoun agrees in gender and number, the latter do not have any clear antecedent.

Here are two examples, which make this clear:

- (1) Headed relative clause:

The man who broke the vase had to buy a new one

- (2) Free relative clause:

Who broke the vase had to buy a new one.

Intuitively these two sentences are very close to each other and their semantics is very similar as well. This effect is even reinforced in English, in which the introducer of the headed relative clause and the introducer of the free relative clause can – even though it does not need to – be the same.

However, if we consider languages such as Italian, the situation is a little bit more complicated, as two different introducers have to be used. Free relative clauses, use in fact the same pronominal series as interrogatives:

- (3) Il ragazzo che ha rotto il vaso ne ha comprato uno nuovo

The boy that has broken the vase it has bought one new

“The boy who broke the vase bought a new one”

- (4) Chi ha rotto il vaso ne ha comprato uno nuovo
 Who has broken the vase it has bought one new
 “Who broke the vase bought a new one”

The same holds also for German:

- (5) Der Junge, der die Vase zerbrochen hat, hat eine neue gekauft
 The boy who the vase broken has has one new bought
 “The boy who broke the vase bought a new one”
- (6) Wer die Vase zerbrochen hat, hat eine neue gekauft.
 Who the vase broken has has one new bought
 “Who broke the vase bought a new one”

The simple examples from Italian and German prevent us from interpreting free relative clauses simply as a reduced version of headed relative clauses. If it were so, we would be forced to have the same pronominal item introducing both. The question is still challenging and it could be of interest to see how traditional grammars deal with these constructions. Significantly, the approach which is generally adopted by Italian grammars is different from the account provided by German grammars, although - at least at a very superficial level – the mechanic formation requirements for free relative clauses is so that much differentiated.

In Italian the introducers of free relative clauses have been attributed the label *pronomi relativi misti* or *pronomi relativi doppi* (literally meaning *mixed relative pronouns* or *double relative pronouns*). The label is due to the fact that these pronouns are claimed to be a combination of a demonstrative or indefinite pronoun with a relative pronoun, with the result that the *wh*- pronoun accumulates both meanings. Moreover, these grammars (Serianni, 1989; Sensini, 2009) maintain that this kind of pronouns do not require that the antecedent is lexicalized because they “contain” it.

- (7) Chi = colui che

The approach adopted by German grammars is different, in that they do not state that the *wh*- pronoun accumulates both values. They rather say (e.g. Duden, 2006) that free relative clauses are relative clauses whose antecedent has to be thought of, as it

were in the main clause. This claim is supposedly reinforced by the fact that a reinsertion of the lacking head is always possible:

- (8) a. Wer Köln kennt, weiß, dass diese Stadt tausend Gesichter hat
 Who Köln knows knows that this city thousand faces has
- b. Derjenige, der Köln kennt, weiß, dass diese
 That_{NOM MASC SING} who_{NOM MASC SING} Köln knows knows that this
 Stadt tausend Gesichter hat
 city thousand faces has
 “Who knows Köln, knows that it has thousand faces”

(Duden, 2006)

At a closer look both accounts are however, untenable. The typical analysis provided by Italian grammars is evidently not used for the explanation of the construction in other languages, basically because it is immediately disclaimed by the linguistic facts of languages which display morphological markers on the *wh*-, such as German or Latin. In Italian it is possible to say:

- (9) L' insegnante premia chi fa sempre i compiti
 The teacher rewards who does always the homework
 “The teacher rewards the students who always do their homework”

In Italian, this *chi* could be, in theory, both the object of the main verb and the subject of the free relative clause. The point is that there is a case mismatch between the case required by the embedded verb and the case governed by the main verb. For the principle of the Unicity of Case and Thematic Role, the *wh*- pronoun cannot simultaneously bear both cases and roles. It could be argued that one of the two cases prevail, and if this were true, we would have to claim that the most marked case is overtly realized. Nevertheless, this is contrary to facts and would not account for the ungrammaticality of sentences like (10), in which case mismatches involve the presence of a PP governed by the embedded verb:

- (10) *Incontro tutti i giorni a chi piace la pizza
 Meet_{1st PERS SING} every the days to who likes the pizza
 “I meet every day people who like pizza”

The account provided for German is certainly not theoretically accurate, either, even though the intuition behind this explanation is partly correct: there must be an antecedent for the *wh*-, although this is not visible. The problem with this account is that not all nouns or pronouns are suitable antecedents if we want to preserve the same type of interpretation; furthermore, the reformulation which has been proposed in (12) involves the pronoun *derjenige*, a so-called light head¹, which does not have exactly the same syntactic behavior as any other lexical head of a restrictive or non-restrictive relative clause.

- (11) Wer das sagte, hat sich geirrt
 Who_{NOM} it said has himself wrong-been
- (12) Derjenige, der das sagte, hat sich geirrt
 That_{NOM MASC SING} who_{NOM MASC SING} it said has himself wrong-been
- (13) */?Derjenige/der hat sich geirrt, der das sagte
 That_{NOM MASC SING} has himself wrong-been who_{NOM MASC SING} it said
 “Who said it was wrong”

Extraction, for instance is claimed to be compulsory, or at least highly preferred, if a light-head is inserted, while it is not so necessary with real lexical heads. Furthermore, precise restrictions apply, as far as the use of free relative clauses is concerned, while there is no such constraint with headed relative clauses.

Albeit the long-standing debate, the very nature of this construction is still hard to capture.

2. Some theoretical accounts for free relative clauses

2.1 *The major approaches*

Two major approaches have been proposed in the literature to account for free relative clauses. They have been labeled (i) Head Hypothesis and (ii) Comp Hypothesis.

¹ The term “light headed relative clauses” was coined by Citko (2007) on the basis of Polish data.

(i) has been put forth by some scholars starting from Bresnan & Grimshaw (1978) at the end of the Seventies and has then been revitalized by some other authors such as Battye (1989). These authors share the idea that there is no need to postulate the existence of a silent head, since the *wh-* is itself a head. As for (ii) instead, starting from Groos & Van Riemsdijk (1981), it has been assumed that there is actually a silent head, which satisfies the requirements of the matrix verb and accounts for all non-matching cases. After having provided an overview of the main theoretical proposals (§ 2.1-2.7), I will consider all the points in favor of one analysis or the other (§ 2.8),.

2.1 Chomsky (1973)

Chomsky (1973) was one of the first works that treated the issue of free relative clauses. He claimed that the basic representation of free relative clauses and headed relative clauses had to be the same, with the difference that in free relative clauses, the head has undergone deletion. This explanation is not totally satisfactory in that it does not capture the peculiarities of free relative clauses if compared with headed relative clauses². Recall, however, that this proposal was made even before Chomsky (1977)'s *On wh- movement*. There was therefore no adequate theoretical instrument to tackle this issue effectively.

2.2 Bresnan & Grimshaw (1978)

Bresnan & Grimshaw (1978) were the first who valuably investigated this construction. Their statement was that there exist free relative clauses in which there is a null head, but the prototypical free relative clause requires that the entire relative clause and the *wh-* which introduces it match both in morphological case and category. This claim was made on the basis of matching effects, which are a requirement in many languages for free relative clauses to be grammatical:

- (14) *Ich helfe, wen du lieb hast
 I help_{1st PERS SING} who_{ACC MASC SING} you dear have_{2nd PERS SING}
 ‘‘I help who you love’’

² These peculiarities will be made clear later in the text, for the moment it will be enough to recall the objections we made in the previous paragraph concerning the account proposed for German by traditional grammars (nature of the antecedent, extraction).

These requirements on matching effects, however, need to be refined, since even in languages in which they apply, there are subtler rules at work. For all the languages in which matching effects are active, Bresnan & Grimshaw (1978) maintain that the introductory wh- item occupies a Head position in CP, rather than a maximal projection. Positing the wh- in Head position implies that it agrees in case and category with the construction which it heads in its Complement. This hypothesis anyway is not tenable: Grosu (1994) highlights that in free relative clauses on the subject, the gapped subject has to be recovered by the insertion of a wh- or a complementizer:

(15) All that/*which/* \emptyset pleases you pleases me

If it were a head we would expect it to be impossible to insert another head in a position in which the wh- has left its trace.

As for non-matching free relatives, Bresnan & Grimshaw (1978) admit that the wh- could have a Specifier position in CP as its landing site. We owe to Bresnan & Grimshaw (1978) also the classification of the languages in (i) matching languages, (ii) restricted non-matching languages, (iii) unrestricted non-matching languages. We will exploit this grouping later on in the dissertation, specifically in § 3.1.

2.3 Groos & van Riemsdijk (1981)

Groos & van Riemsdijk (1981) challenged the accounts by Bresnan & Grimshaw (1978) starting by the assumption that their analysis could not apply to all matching free relative clauses. Support for their idea was offered by German data on extraction. Complex DPs (in the terms of Ross, 1967) can follow the indefinite verbal form. However, in case of a headed relative clause, only the embedded clause can appear after the verb, while the antecedent cannot. Free relative clause instead can optionally extract the entire overt part, as (16d) shows:

(16) a. Hans hat den Boten empfangen, den Gretchen
 Hans has the envoy received who_{ACC MASC SING} Gretchen_{NOM}
 ihm geschickt hat
 him_{DAT} sent has

- b. *Hans hat empfangen den Boten, den Gretchen
 Hans has received the envoy who_{ACC MASC SING} Gretchen_{NOM}
 ihm geschickt hat
 him_{DAT} sent has
- c. Hans hat den Boten, den Gretchen
 Hans has the envoy who_{ACC MASC SING} Gretchen_{NOM}
 ihm geschickt hat empfangen
 him_{DAT} sent has received
 “Hans has received the envoy that Gretchen sent him”
- d. Hans hat empfangen, wen Gretchen ihm geschickt hat
 Hans has received who_{ACC MASC SING} Gretchen him_{DAT} sent has
- e. Hans hat, wen Gretchen ihm geschickt hat,
 Hans has who_{ACC MASC SING} Gretchen him_{DAT} sent has
 empfangen
 received
 “Hans has received whom Gretchen sent him”

(Grosu, 1994)

The analysis by Groos & Van Riemsdijk supposes that (i) free relative clauses are always headed by a null category; (ii) the *wh*- always occupies a SpecCP position as required by *wh*- movement rules. They account for matching effects as parameter depending, in that there exist languages in which the requirements on the null head can be passed by and transferred on the *wh*-, as if it were the actual head. Languages that do not display these matching effects instead, allow for the *wh*- to bear the case required by the embedded verb. According to Groos & Van Riemsdijk (1981), German has a ban on all free relative clauses containing a preposition, although also Grosu (1994) stated that this ban is not actually shared by all German informants and he supplies some grammatical sentences that should be out on the basis of Groos & Van Riemsdijk (1981):

- (17) Achte, worauf ich dich aufmerksam mache!
 Pay-attention what-on I you attentive make_{1st PERS SING}
 “Pay attention (to that) which I draw your attention to”

- (18) Ich habe nachgedacht, worüber du gesprochen
 I have_{1st PERS SING} reflected what-about you spoken
 hast
 have_{2nd PERS SING}
 “I reflected about that which you spoke”
- (19) Ich spreche wovon auch du sprichst
 I speak_{1st PERS SING} what-about also you speak_{2nd PERS SING}
 “I speak about what you speak, too”

(Grosu, 1994)

Recall that these compounds formed by a preposition and a pronoun *was* > *wo*, are normally referred to as *Pronominaladverbien*, even though they do not have a truly adverbial value. They are used for inanimate complements both in questions and in headed relative clauses. They can be tendentially substituted by the extended version *P* + *was*, and, due to the neuter gender of the pronoun inserted in the compound, they can never refer to animate entities, who need to be questioned or relativized by using the preposition and the *wh*- normally inflected for the case selected by the preposition.

- (20) a. An was denkst du gerade?
 About what think_{2nd PERS SING} you now
- b. Woran denkst du gerade?
 What-about think_{2nd PERS SING} you now
 “What are you thinking about?”
- (21) An wen denkst du?
 About whom_{ACC} think_{2nd PERS SING} you
 “Who are you thinking about?”

German is therefore not incompatible with prepositional free relative clauses. A point that Groos & Van Riemsdijk (1981) certainly got right is that matching effects do not need to be accounted for by postulating that the *wh*- occupies a head position, what they fail to observe instead, is that the null head of a free relative clause can be not only a bare DP, but also a PP.

2.3 Harbert (1983)

Harbert's proposal is not that different from Groos & Van Riemsdijk (1981)'s in that he proposes that all free relative clauses contain a null head. Its main advantage is that it tries to further precise the nature of the null head, which is not a trivial question. This is strictly linked with the fact that some languages such as German or Italian are only partially matching effect, and this has to be accounted for in some ways. This has to be surely linked with the deep syntactic characteristics of the null head. He proposed that the null head (in DP free relative clauses) is *PRO* or *pro*. Differently from Groos & Van Riemsdijk (1981), however, he hypothesizes that the possibility to skip the requirements of the null head and directly pass to the *wh*- is not due to an internal parameter of the languages, but is the result of the *PRO* nature of the head, which cannot be governed, therefore the "governors" of the free relative clause need to apply their requirements on the *wh*- pronoun. If, on the contrary the head is *pro*, it can satisfy the government rules and therefore no matching effects can be found. This is what is alleged to happen in German with left dislocation, which is not a governed position:

- (22) Wonach man eifrig strebt, das bleibt oft unerreicht.
what-after one eagerly aspires that remains often unattained
"You often do not attain what you eagerly aspire"

(Grosu, 1994)

One possible drawback however has been pointed out by Grosu (1994): strict matching effects languages such as English and French do require matching effects, even in left dislocation contexts.

- (23) *For whom you bought the present, I don't like him

Asymmetries between the syntactic behavior of left dislocated free relative clauses and free relative clauses in ordinary positions cannot be accounted for in terms of "governed/non-governed positions".

2.4 *Suñer (1984)*

Suñer maintained that non-matching free relative clauses are possible whenever a *pro* head is licensed by an external identifier such as a governor capable to assign rich morphological case or a rich verbal agreement. There is purportedly no need to think of internal mechanisms for the head to be properly identified. Some facts however, especially concerning anti-pied-piping effects contradict her claims. If verbal agreement were sufficient to legitimate a *pro* head, we would expect free relative clauses serving as subjects to be acceptable also if the *wh-* is preceded by a preposition, but this does not happen to be the case, at least not in all languages. For instance, free relative clauses in subject position only allow for prepositional stranding.

- (24) a. *With whom I go out likes reading
b. Who I go out with likes reading

2.5 *Vogel (2001)*

Vogel (2001) is a seminal work about German clefts which adopts also a comparative perspective to explain how languages deal with case conflicts in free relative clauses. He tries to provide an account for mismatches in the framework of the Optimality Theory, by hierarchically ordering a set of constraints. On the basis of Rooryck (1994), he assumes that free relative clauses are CPs rather than DPs or PPs, because he finds it simpler and less stipulative. Although I will in no way exploit his account, the paper is particularly interesting in that it provides an accurate data description.

2.6 *Donati (2006)*

Her proposal is that the *wh-* is actually a head, this means a *wh-*phrase with a X° status. Its nature enables *wh-* movement in free relative clauses to reproject, giving rise either to a CP, and in this case it is C which projects, or to a nominal free relative clause, if it is the *wh-*phrase which reprojects. The key point is that all Donati (2006)'s claims rely on the assumption that the *wh-* is a head and any further possibility is due to successive reprojection. The element which has been moved reprojects its featural

content. A problem with this analysis, which has been underlined also by Ott (2011)³ is that this solution does not provide explanation for prepositional free relative clauses.

(25) [DP [wh] D [C [TP ...t_{wh}...]]]

2.7 Benincà (2010), on the basis of Cinque (2003)

Benincà proposes that the *wh*- of a free relative clause always has to be governed by a silent head (a null DP), which meets the requirements of a main verb. This null head is always present in the structure, although it is not lexicalized.

(26) [DP_ [CP *who/what THAT* you saw]].

Although in some languages it coincides with the interrogative pronominal series, the relative *wh*- occupies a very high SpecCP position in a split CP configuration (Rizzi, 1997; Benincà & Poletto, 2004; Benincà, 2006; Benincà & Munaro, 2010). If we exclude cases of attraction, which deserve a special treatment, the *wh*- pronoun always has to satisfy the requirements of the embedded verb. The position of the *wh*- relative within the CP field can be easily accounted for on the basis of some simple diagnostic tests, which rely on the reciprocal position of this *wh*- and of other lexical items which are provided with a pragmatic interpretation, such as left dislocated or focused constituents. These tests can be applied to Italian, which allows that the CP field is simultaneously occupied by more than one item.

- (27) a. Ammiro chi un aiuto concreto cerca, non la commiserazione
 Admire who_{NOM} a help concrete seeks not the commiseration
 altrui.
 of-other-people
- b. *Ammiro un aiuto concreto chi cerca non la commiserazione
 Admire a help concrete who_{NOM} seeks not the commiseration
 altrui.
 of-other- people

³ Ott (2011) proposes yet another account for free relatives, which crucially differs from Donati (2006) in that the *wh*- has XP status. However, I will not describe his account in detail because it is anchored to a strictly Minimalist perspective, which I will not adopt in this dissertation.

“I admire people who look for a concrete help, not for other people’s commiseration”

Wh-Rel > Focus

*Focus > Wh- Rel

- (28) a. Chi di viaggi ne fa pochi conosce solo una piccolo parte
Wh_{NOM} of trips them makes few knows only a small part
del mondo
of-the world
“Who does not travel very much, only knows a little part of the world”
- b. *Di viaggi chi ne fa pochi conosce solo una piccola parte
Of travels wh_{NOM} them makes few knows only one small part
del mondo
of-the world
“Who makes only few trips, only knows a little part of the world”

Wh-Rel > Left dislocation

*Left dislocation > Wh-Rel

- (29) a. Bugie, chi ne dice non è affidabile
lies wh_{NOM} them tells not is reliable
- b. *Chi bugie ne dice non è affidabile
wh_{NOM} lies them tells not is reliable
“Who tells lies is not reliable”

Hanging Topic > Wh-Rel

*Wh-Rel > Hanging Topic

The result of this simple test leads us to convincingly maintain, along the lines of Benincà (2006) that wh- relatives are higher than left dislocation and Focus and lower than Hanging Topic.

By applying the same kind of diagnostics, we can also prove that Wh- relatives do not occupy the same position as Wh-interrogatives, even though they coincide in some languages, as in Italian:

- (30) a. Ho amato chi di sbagli nei miei confronti ne
 Have_{1st PERS SING} loved who_{NOM} of mistakes in-the my respect them
 ha fatto fin troppi
 has made until too-many
- b. *Ho amato di sbagli chi nei miei confronti ne
 Have_{1st PERS SING} loved of mistakes who_{NOM} in-the my respect them
 ha fatto fin troppi
 has made until too-many
 “I loved who has made even too many mistakes which affected me negatively”
- (31) a. Ti ricordi il maglione chi me lo
 You_{REFL} remember_{2nd PERS SING} the pullover who_{NOM} me_{DAT} it
 aveva regalato?
 had_{3rd PERS SING} donated
- b. *Ti ricordi chi il maglione me
 You_{REFL} remember_{2nd PERS SING} who_{NOM} the pullover me_{DAT}
 l’aveva regalato?
 it had_{3rd PERS SING} donated
 “Do you rememeber who had donated me the pullover?”

While wh- relatives always precede left dislocation and focus, wh- interrogatives always follow left dislocation and are therefore lower in the structure.

- (32) [Force C° {Frame [HT]C°} { [**Relwh** chi C° che] topic[LD] C° } {Oper
 [Focus]/[**Interrwh** /Quant] C° } [Fin C°

Interestingly, the entire free relative clause formed by the subordinate clause and by the null head is a DP and serves as such. It has syntactic behaviors typical of DPs (or PPs) rather than CPs.

This claim is further reinforced by the already mentioned possibility to pragmatize free relative clauses, for instance by means of left dislocation, or as we will see, by the possible use of determiners in front of the free relative clause.

2.8 *Pros and cons of postulating a silent head*

Once some of the most influential proposals about the syntactic configuration of free relatives have been drawn, it is now worth considering what the advantages and disadvantages of the two hypotheses, namely the Head Hypothesis and the Comp Hypothesis.

(Alleged) pros of treating free relative clauses as a CP, or - as Bresnan & Grimshaw (1978) do – as a DP in which the head is the *wh*- itself:

- it is theoretically simpler: it does not require to postulate the existence of an element that cannot be seen overtly.
- there are languages such as Greek (§ 3.7 will be devoted to them) which display a specialized pronominal series for free relatives, this signals that they are a separate kind of subordinate clauses.
- on the basis of Rooryck (1994), Vogel claims that the C° has an agreement function, which is capable to absorb the case features even assigned by the matrix verb.
- In languages such as English, the preposition cannot be pied-piped, but only stranded (e.g. I met who you were looking for). This should be accounted for by the impossibility for a P to govern a head and not an XP.

Some possible objections to these claims:

- postulating a silent head is neither complex nor stipulative. There are many other silent categories in the syntax: null operators in yes-no questions, *wh*- items in relative clauses introduced by a complementizer, null subjects in pro-drop languages, just to cite some of them.
- The fact that some languages have a dedicated pronominal series, does not imply that they are incompatible with a silent head: it is simply a descriptive consideration which does not enable to take a position in favor or against one of the two analyses.
- The fact that all the features assigned by the embedded verb and the matrix verb are carried by a unique element is not tenable. If it were really so, we would

expect that the *wh-* always bear the most marked case regardless of the fact that it is assigned by the embedded or the matrix verb. Anyway most languages do not adopt this strategy. Conversely, if there were no silent head, the other possibility would be that no problem of case conflict should arise because the *wh-* alone carries all the required features.

- If the *wh-* were a head itself, extraposition facts displayed by German and Dutch could not be accounted for: the *wh-* of free relatives behaves exactly as the relative pronoun of headed relative clauses: it participates in fact in the extraposition process.
- The ban on pied-piping in languages such as English, is a parametrical constraint which is not displayed by all languages and could be due to independent reasons.

Cons of reprojection analyses (e.g. Donati, 2006):

- It reproduces the same problems of the head hypothesis because it does not effectively account for mismatching and extraposition facts.
- It does not explain free relative clauses of the type of *-ever*.

Pros of postulating the existence of a silent head:

- If there were no silent head, cases of mismatches could not be accounted for: there are configurations in which the matrix verb has syntactic requirements which are not realized by the *wh-* pronoun. Some of them can lead to grammatical results in some languages, while other case conflicts cannot. In the lack of a silent head this would not be explicable.
- Languages such as Latin (§ 3.7.2) employ the relative pronominal series: this would be odd if there were no silent head.
- Languages such as Italian effectively show asymmetries in the syntactic behavior of CPs as embedded interrogatives and free relative clauses: while in the former there is no possible mismatch and the *wh-* pronoun can display any case provided that it is assigned by the embedded verb, precise restrictions apply for free relatives.
- German shows that CPs can never be complements of verbs requiring the dative (Bayer, Bader, and Meng, 2001). Free relative clauses instead, if all other restrictions are satisfied, can be even complements of main verbs requiring the dative. This is a clear clue of their DP status.

3. Free relative clauses in different languages: a comparative perspective

3.1 Classifying languages on the basis of their behavior with respect to free relative's behavior

Once the main theoretical approaches have been outlined, it is now worth seeing how the construction is realized in different languages and what constraints it undergoes. On the basis of the diverse pieces of evidence which have emerged when the various accounts have been proposed, it is now clear that the silent head hypothesis is the most appropriate. Nevertheless, in the course of the dissertation I will provide further clues to enhance this hypothesis. The silent head, however, is not the only point worth investigating in free relatives. A further puzzling issue I will deal with is matching. By analyzing the syntactic behavior of different languages and German in particular, I will outline some possible patterns. Crucial elements, at least for German, will turn out to be Case Hierarchy (Keenan & Comrie, 1977; Caha, 2009) and prolexis with left dislocation of the free relative clause.

It has already been stated (Bresnan & Grimshaw, 1978) that languages, even typologically close to each other are subject to different formation rules, depending on the possible combinations of silent head and wh- pronouns. In particular, as has already been sketched, Bresnan & Grimshaw (1978) created three groups in which languages can be inserted on the basis of their behavior with respect to matching:

- (i) Matching languages
- (ii) Restricted non-matching languages
- (iii) Unrestricted non-matching languages⁴

This generalization needs to be further refined and languages have to be grouped according to the restrictions they apply to free relative clause formation.

These factors are heavily dependent on Case Hierarchy and on overt case morphology. These are surely key points, however there are subtler distinctions which make sentences acceptable or not. These constraints are language specific, even though some

⁴ This generalization is however too strong, as there seems to be no language which allows non-matching in all circumstances.

generalizations can be made. Before providing an analysis however, it is essential to look at the empirical data thanks to which we can draw a picture of the phenomenon.

3.2 *English*

English is not particularly useful to better define how matching effects work. If we were to assign English to one of the three groups identified by Bresnan & Grimshaw (1978), we would say it is a matching language, i.e. it allows free relatives only in contexts in which the silent head has exactly the same requirements as the *wh*-.

- (33) Who makes a mistake has to pay
- (34) I love who you love, too.
- (35) I'll live in whatever town you live

In the first example, both the *wh*- and the silent head bear Nominative case, whilst in the second example they both bear Accusative case; in the third case the same PP is required by both verbs (the main verb and the embedded verb). Notice that for () to be grammatical, the *wh*- must necessarily have the extension *-ever*, which forces a generic interpretation. This sentence however needs to be cautiously treated, since this is not a pronominal *wh*- free relative clause, but it is a lexical one, whose constraints are not totally comparable with the ones on canonical *wh*- questions. Nevertheless, this constraint on the necessity to extend the *wh*- by means of *-ever* applies not only to lexical free relative clauses, but also to pronominal free relative clauses, as correctly highlighted by Grosu (1994):

- (36) a. *I work for whom you work
- b. I work for who(m)ever you work

While the constraints on the use of lexical free relative clauses are very widespread in the languages of the world, this restriction, as many other, concerns specifically English. In Italian, sentences like the one in (36) would be perfectly acceptable, with the verb preferably in the future if the *wh*- pronoun is provided with a generalizing marker of the kind of *-ever*.

- (37) a. Lavoro con chi lavori tu⁵
 Work_{1st PERS SING} with whom work_{2nd PERS SING} you
- b. Lavoro/Lavorerò con chiunque tu lavori/
 Work/will-work_{1st PERS SING} with whomever you work/
 lavorerai
 will work_{2nd PERS SING}
 “I work/will work with whomever you work/will work”

However, PPs deserve a special mention for another peculiarity in English: as already anticipated above, P can appear also in non-matching contexts, provided that the preposition is not pied-piped, but only stranded.

- (38) I’m looking for who I give it to
 *I’m looking for to whom I give it
- (39) Whoever I want to listen to, is not here
 *To whoever I want to listen is not here

Notice that stranding the preposition also enables to rescue all the contexts such as (36) in which the use of the generalizing marker is obligatory for the sentence to be grammatical. In English, even in contexts of Left Dislocation, no mismatch is allowed, if no sort of grammaticality is restored by means of stranding:

- (40) *With whom I go to the theatre is my best friend.

The fact that the preposition needs to be stranded induces to think that the null head and the wh- cannot be completely blind to each other, since it is as if the preposition somehow inhibited their relation. In contexts of matching, in which the preposition does not have to be stranded, the consequence for this is that the wh- has to display the generic reading. The mediation of the preposition, which opacifies the relation between the head and the wh- pronoun triggers the generic interpretation, being a specific interpretation incompatible with the scarce accessibility of the null head.

⁵ Some speakers seem to have a preference for b. regardless of the fact that the verb is in the present or the future tense.

English could be potentially of help to better define the issue of free relative clauses in that its rigid restrictions enable to better investigate the nature of the null antecedent and the bans which can occur depending on its relation with the *wh*-. However, being these bans too strict, they do not enable us to consider Case Hierarchy relations which can fruitfully lead to grammatical relative clause formation in other languages. Recall however, that cases of partial mismatch are allowed with the inanimate pronoun *what*, which maintains its form both in the Nominative and in the Accusative, with no possible alternation of the type *who/whom*.

(41) What you are doing for me is not enough

Whilst *what* is clearly the object of the embedded verb *do*, the null head is certainly a Nominative, as the whole free relative clause serves as the subject of the main verb *be*.

3.3 French

Like English, also French is considered by Bresnan & Grimshaw (1978) a matching language in that it is claimed to require that the case of the null head and the case of the *wh*- perfectly coincide. This statement needs to be at least refined, since mismatches are partially allowed as well (43). The pronominal series which is used for free relatives is the same as in interrogative clauses. Differently from English, however, French cannot form free relative clauses if the *wh*- is an inanimate entity.

In case of matching, a free relative clause with the *wh*- referring to an animate entity can be felicitously formed. Here are some proverbs in which this is clearly shown:

(42) Qui a bu boira
 Wh_{NOM} has drunk will-drink_{3rd PERS SING}
 “He who has drunk will always drink”

(43) Tout vient à point à qui sait attendre.
 All comes at point to who knows to-wait
 “All in good time”

As in English, also the generic form *quiconque* is allowed:

- (44) Quiconque se sert de l' épée, périra par l'
 Whoever himself serves of the sword will-die_{3rd PERS SING} through the
 épée
 sword
 “He who lives by the sword will die by the sword”

In French, as well as in English, the so-called missing P-FRC⁶ effect is applied, i.e. if both the main and the embedded verb govern a PP (the same PP), the P is lexicalized only once and is never repeated.

- (45) Je le dis pour qui je dois le dire
 I it say for who I must it to-say
 “I say it (for the one) for whom I must say
- (46) Pierre s' est battu avec qui tu voulais qu'il sorte
 Pierre self is fought with who you want that he goes-out
 “Pierre fought with whom you wanted him to go out”

3.4 Italian

3.4.1 The possible configurations of Italian free relative clauses

As for French, Italian can only form free relative clauses referring to an animate entity. It uses the pronominal series used for interrogatives, with which free relative clauses are often confused. However, the fact that although they are homophonous, relative *wh*- pronouns and interrogative *wh*- pronouns occupy two distinct positions in the CP field, is proved by the fact that the syntactic behavior of relatives is also different from that of interrogatives. This diversity, which will be highlighted for Italian, is well proved also by German data, which I will present in the sections below.

Italian is very interesting, since the interactions between the case and the thematic role of the null head and the *wh*- pronoun respectively, are crucial in determining grammatical and ungrammatical configurations. Italian is also a good case in point, since its poor morphology on the *wh*- makes it possible to form free relative clauses in contexts in which languages with a richer case morphology cannot⁷. Italian,

⁶ Grosu (1994) uses this label to refer to free relative clauses in which the preposition is missing.

⁷ For a detailed discussion on Italian free relative clauses see Bertollo & Cavallo (2012).

in fact, uses the *wh*- pronoun *chi*, which is morphologically indistinct for Case. *Chi* can serve as a subject (47), an object (48) or the complement of a preposition (49):

- (47) Chi ha rotto il vaso ne deve comprare uno nuovo
 Who_{NOM} has broken the vase it must to-buy one new
 “Who has broken the vase has to buy a new one”
- (48) Ho invitato al mio compleanno anche chi
 Have_{1st PERS SING} invited to-the my birthday also who_{ACC}
 avevi rimproverato
 had_{2nd PERS SING} blamed
 “I invited to my birthday also who you had blamed”
- (49) Con chi parli volentieri esci anche
 With whom talk_{2nd PERS SING} with-pleasure go-out_{2nd PERS SING} also
 volentieri
 with-pleasure
 “With whom you talk with pleasure, you also go out with pleasure”

Notice that some speakers feel more comfortable if (49) is rephrased as (50)

- (50) Con chi parli volentieri ci esci
 With whom talk_{2nd PERS SING} with-pleasure with-him go-out_{2nd PERS SING}
 anche volentieri
 also with-pleasure
 “With whom you talk with pleasure, you also go out with pleasure”

The insertion of the resumptive pronoun *ci* improves the degree of grammaticality of the sentence. The resumptive *ci* has a twofold function: it simultaneously conveys both locative and comitative features. The fact that a resumptive pronoun can occur is a further clue that free relative clauses need to have a silent head. If they did not have a silent head, resumption would not be possible, it is in fact not compatible with CPs. The presence of a resumptive pronoun also signals that the free relative clause has been left dislocated.

If we were to define Italian on the basis of Bresnan & Grimshaw (1978) classification, we would consider it a restricted non-matching language, since it allows

the formation of free relative clauses, even if the cases of the null antecedent and the wh- do not match.

- (51) Chi non mangia mai frutta e verdura si
 \emptyset_{NOM} who_{NOM} not eats never fruit and vegetables himself_{REFL}
 ammala
 gets-sick
 “Who never eats fruit and vegetables gets sick”
- (52) Alla festa ho riconosciuto chi mi
 At-the party have_{1st PERS SING} recognized \emptyset_{ACC} who_{ACC} to-me
 avevi già presentato
 had_{2nd PERS SING} already presented
 “At the party I recognized who you had already introduced to me”
- (53) Ha partecipato con interesse alla lezione anche chi
 Has participated with interest in-the lesson also \emptyset_{NOM} who_{ACC}
 avevi punito severamente
 had_{2nd PERS SING} punished severely
 “Also those who you had severely punished have participated in the lesson with interest”
- (54) Gli studenti invidiano chi prende sempre bei voti
 The students envy_{3rd PERS PL} \emptyset_{ACC} who_{NOM} takes always good marks
 “The students envy who always has good marks”

While in the first two examples (51-52), there is matching, since both the null head and the wh- are in the Nominative or in the Accusative, in the last pair of sentences there is mismatch, as in (53) the null head is Nominative and the wh- is Accusative, while in (54) the null head is Accusative and the wh- is Nominative. Due to the morphological indistinctness of the wh-, speakers who are not provided with enhanced metalinguistic sensitivity are induced to think that the wh- item is directly governed by the main verb, to the point that Italian grammars use the label *mixed pronoun* for the wh- pronoun, as recalled in § 1. When the wh- pronoun and the null head both bear a structural Case, it is as if there were perfect matching between the two. A configuration which is not always acceptable even though there is both morphological matching is one in which the null antecedent is Accusative and the wh-

is in the Nominative, as in (54). Here for the sentence to be grammatical in its unmarked reading, the free relative clause always has to appear after the matrix clause. This is due to independent factors of linear order. Being Italian an SVO language, the object is preferably postposed to the verb. Notice that in (54) if the free relative clause serving as an object were moved in front of the main clause only a pragmatic interpretation would be admitted.

A delicate question concerns cases in which there is matching because both the embedded and the main verb govern a PP (the same). Even though there is matching, there is no guarantee of grammaticality. This is mainly due to the fact that the same preposition can serve syntactic functions which can be semantically very distant from each other and introduce different thematic roles. The following sentences, for instance, show perfect matching, but they do not have the same degrees of grammaticality. Notice the following contrasts:

- (55) Regalo un braccialetto a chi hai regalato un
 Donate_{1st PERS SING} a bracelet to whom have_{2nd PERS SING} donated a
 anello
 ring
 “I will donate a bracelet to whom you have donated a ring”
- (56) Esco solo con chi sono già uscito
 Go-out_{1st PERS SING} only with whom am already gone-out
 “I only go out with people I have already been out with”
- (57) Il ladro restituì il denaro a chi l’aveva
 The thief gave-back_{3rd PERS SING} the money to whom it had_{3rd PERS SING}
 rubato
 stolen
 “The thief gave the money back to the people from whom he had stolen
 it”
- (58) *Soffro molto per chi hai comprato un regalo
 Suffer_{1st PERS SING} much for whom have_{2nd PERS SING} bought a present
 “I suffer a lot for the person for whom you bought a present”

(58) is barely ungrammatical although both verbs govern the same preposition *per*. The crucial point is that accidentally this preposition introduces two complements whose

semantics is heavily different. On the one side the P *per* in the main clause introduces a Cause, a Source for suffering, on the other side, the P *per* licensed by the embedded verb introduces a Beneficiary. It is therefore not completely true that in this kind of sentences there is no mismatch, there is actually a mismatch, but it is definitely not morphological, but rather semantic and syntactic in nature. Interestingly, (57) is perfectly grammatical although there is no coincidence in the thematic roles assigned by the two verbs through the same preposition. While the verb *restituire* instantiates a kind of Beneficiary relation, *sottrarre* indicates quite the opposite: that someone has been deprived of something. The key point is that these verbs express a sort of specular relation; albeit from the opposite perspective, the two verbs assign two semantic roles, which do not have identical features, but surely have a good number of features in common. The more features the two thematic roles share, the more probable it is that the sentence is grammatical. If no other factors intervene, the ideal condition is realized by sentences in which the main verb and the embedded verb are the same. This is proved by the grammaticality of (56) about which nobody would object. The *caveat* “if no other factors intervene” is far from being superfluous. Surprisingly, (55) is considered acceptable by most speakers, but if they are asked to express a rating for the sentences in (55) and (56), they overwhelmingly prefer (z). This would not be easily accountable if we just considered that the two clauses have the same verb. The aspects which intervene in the decrement of grammaticality are the change of the subject and the displacement of the PP in the embedded clause from its canonical position, which makes the sentence odd. Notice that the acceptability of (55) improves, if a sort of correlative structure is used (59):

- (59) A chi l' anno scorso ho regalato un braccialetto,
 To whom the year last have_{1st PERS SING} donated a bracelet
 quest'anno regalo un anello
 this year donate_{1st PERS SING} a ring
 “I will donate a ring to the one to whom last year I donated a bracelet”

Let us now see what happens when there is overt mismatch between the cases of the null head and the wh-. This happens in Italian when one of the two is governed by a preposition, while the other is in a Structural Case:

- (60) a. Comprò un sacco di regali per chi amo
 Buy_{1st PERS SING} a lot of presents for Ø who_{ACC} love_{1st PERS SING}
 “I buy a lot of presents for the people I love”
- b. Comprò un sacco di regali per chi mi vuole bene
 Buy_{1st PERS SING} a lot of presents for Ø who_{NOM} me wants good
 “I buy a lot of presents for people who love me”
- c. *Ho incontrato a chi fai tanti regali
 Have_{1st PERS SING} met Ø_{ACC} to whom make_{2nd PERS SING} many presents
 “I met who you give many gifts to”
- d. *Ti viene a trovare con piacere a chi
 You_{ACC SING} comes to to-visit with pleasure Ø_{NOM} to whom
 fai tanti regali
 make_{2nd PERS SING} many presents
 “He who you give many presents to, visits you with pleasure”

What emerges from the data above is that the mismatches which are allowed if a PP is involved are those in which a preposition governs a silent antecedent, while the wh- bears a Structural Case. Under the reverse pattern instead, when the antecedent is in a Structural Case and the wh- is governed by a preposition, the configuration is always ungrammatical⁸.

⁸ Partial exceptions for this are provided by examples displaying the [- animate] feature, in which the verb of the main clause is either *esserci* or *avere*.

- (1) Non ho di che lamentarmi
 Not have_{1st PERS SING} of what to-complain-me
 “I have nothing to complain about”
- (2) Non c'è di che lamentarsi
 Not there is of what to-complain-oneself
 “There is nothing to complain about”
- (3) Non hai di che dolerti di me
 Not have of what feel-you-sad of me
 “There is no reason for you to suffer about me”

(L. Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso*)

However these apparent counterexamples are only limited to sentences with the verbs *avere* and *esserci* and always require an infinitive form. In formulaic expressions, the ellipsis of the embedded verb is possible as well:

- (4) Non c'è di che
 Not there is of what
 “Not at all/ You're welcome”

- (62) *Scrivo a di chi hai l'indirizzo mail
 Write_{1st PERS SING} to of who have_{2nd PERS SING} the address mail
 "I write to the person whose e-mail address you have"

The sequence of the two prepositions is ungrammatical because one of the two serves as an intervener (Rizzi, 1990) and prevents from a correct interpretation.

It could be of interest to highlight that Colloquial Italian (at least some varieties) try to circumvent this ban on prepositional cluster, by applying a strategy, which is frequently used in headed relative clauses. (63) makes clear a possible pattern in this respect:

- (63) La poesia non è di chi la scrive ma di chi gli serve
 The poem not is of Ø wh_{NOM} it writes but of who to-him is-useful
 "The poem is not a property of him who writes it, but of him who needs it"

(from the Italian film *Il Postino*)

The sentence is uttered by a non-well-educated man in the famous Italian film *Il Postino*. This sentence is interesting by a linguistic point of view, since an operation of simplification has been carried out. The sentence is formed by three clauses: a main clause and two free relatives. The verb of the main clause *be* governs a PP headed by *di*; the verb of the first embedded clause governs a wh- in a Structural Case (the Nominative), therefore the sentence perfectly works. The problem arises with the second embedded clause whose verb *servire* under this meaning normally governs a PP headed by the preposition *a* (*servire a qualcuno* > *serve a chi...*). Realizing the preposition *a*, however, would lead to severe ungrammaticality because an undesirable prepositional cluster would arise **di a chi*. The circumvention strategy consists in realizing the requirements of the verb by inserting the dative resumptive pronoun *gli* within the embedded clause introduced by the morphologically indistinct wh- *chi*. As required by the formation rules of free relative clauses, the sentence is reformulated so that a grammatical configuration arises: P + Ø + *chi*.

Recall that phenomena of resumption due to left dislocation in Italian, are not only attested for cases of mismatch, but also under matching as instantiated by (50), here repeated as (64):

- (64) Con chi parli volentieri ci esci
 with whom speak_{2nd PRERS SING} with-pleasure with-him go-out_{2nd PRERS SING}
 anche volentieri
 also with-pleasure
 “With whom you talk with pleasure, you also go out with pleasure”

This seems to contradict De Vries (2001) who states that resumptive strategies are incompatible with relative pronouns while they are felicitous with complementizers. As anticipated in § 3.3 of the introduction, further drawbacks for De Vries (2001)’s hypothesis are provided also by Late Latin, in particular by the work *Chronicon Salernitanum*⁹, in which wh- relative pronouns, especially in the Accusative are resumed by a pronoun displaying the same syntactic function within the relative clause¹⁰.

- (65) Quem cum eum vidissent....
 Whom_{ACC MASC} when him_{ACC} saw_{SUBJ 3rd PERS PL}
 Lit: “whom, when they saw him”

(*Chronicon Salernitanum*, 51)

3.4.2 Free relative clauses and indirect questions

Yet another point is worth making now, even though it does not only concern Italian. Free relative clauses are often confused with indirect questions. The ambiguity easily arises in many languages, since the introducer of the subordinate clause is the same in the two kinds of sentences. Confusing free relative clauses and indirect questions may lead to think that the constraints concerning free relative clause formation, which I have highlighted above. The following sentences, for instance, can lead to this type of error.

- (66) So a chi hai regalato il libro di Angela
 Know_{1st PERS SING} to whom have_{2nd PERS SING} donated the book of Angela
 “I know who you gave Angela’s book to”

⁹ See footnote 7 in the *Introduction*. for some data on this work.

¹⁰ For a discussion on resumption see also § 3.3 of the *Introduction*.

- (67) Chiedimi con chi esco e non ti
 Ask_{IMP 2nd PERS SING}-me with whom go-out_{1st PERS SING} and not to-you
 risponderò
 will-answer_{1st PERS SING}
 “Ask me who I go out with and I won’t answer”

The examples in (66) and (67) are perfectly grammatical although the *wh-* *chi* is headed by the preposition *a* and the entire embedded clause serves as the object of the main verb *sapere*. The core difference, however, is that indirect questions do not have any silent antecedent whose requirements need to be met. The *wh-* here only has to satisfy the requirements on the embedded verb and does not interfere in any way with the main clause. These asymmetries in the syntactic behavior of free relative clauses and indirect questions further corroborate the claim that free relative clauses are headed by a null antecedent to which the *wh-* is not completely blind.

It cannot be denied that it is not always easy to distinguish between free relative clauses and indirect questions. The ambiguity may be determined by the main verb, which does not undoubtedly select for one or the other kind of structure. While there are verbs which can only select for one or the other, there is a range of verbs which are compatible with both. A first diagnostic test is to check whether a verb selects for an indirect question or for a free relative by substituting the subordinate clause with a light headed relative clause.

- (68) a. So chi hai incontrato al bar oggi
 Know_{1st PERS SING} who_{ACC} have_{2nd PERS SING} met at-the bar today
 b. *So quello/colui che hai incontrato
 Know_{1st PERS SING} that who_{ACC} have_{2nd PERS SING} met
 al bar oggi
 at-the bar today
 “I know who you met at the bar today”
- (69) a. Stimo chi fa tanti regali alla propria
 Appreciate_{1st PERS SING} who_{NOM} makes many presents to-the his-own
 moglie
 wife
 “I appreciate who makes a lot of presents to his wife”

- b. Stimo quelli che fanno tanti regali alla
 Appreciate_{1st PERS SING} those who_{NOM} make many presents to-the
 propria moglie
 his-own wife
 “I appreciate men who give a lot of presents to their wives”

A second test involves the pronominal item *che cosa*. If it is a suitable introducer of a subordinate clause, the latter is not a free relative clause, but rather an indirect question:

- (70) a. So che cosa voglio
 Know_{1st PERS SING} what want_{1st PERS SING}
 “I know what I want”
 b. *Compro che cosa voglio
 Buy_{1st PERS SING} what want_{1st PERS SING}
 “I buy what I want”

There are however verbs which have a mixed behavior if these tests are employed: they are compatible with the reformulation by means of a light headed relative clause, but they tolerate the inanimate *wh-* as introducer of the subordinate clause:

- (71) a. Vedo/sento chi mi aiuta con piacere e chi
 See/ feel_{1st PERS SING} who_{NOM} me_{ACC} helps with pleasure and who_{NOM}
 no
 not
 “I see/feel who helps me with pleasure and who does not”
 b. Vedo/sento quelli che mi aiutano con piacere e
 See/feel_{1st PERS SING} those_{ACC} who me_{CC} help_{3rd PERS PL} with pleasure and
 quelli invece a cui scoccia
 those instead to whom annoys
 “I see/feels who helps me with pleasure and who is annoyed by it”
 c. Vedo/sento che cosa fa Mario e poi
 See/listen-to_{1st PERS SING} what does Mario_{NOM} and then
 decido
 decide_{1st PERS SING}

“I see/hear what Mario does and then I decide”

d. Vedo/sento quello che fa Mario e poi
See/listen-to_{1st PERS SING} that which_{ACC} does Mario_{NOM} and then
decido

decide_{1st PERS SING}

“I’ll see what Mario does and then I’ll decide”

Interestingly, the verbs which display this mixed behavior are mostly (albeit not uniquely) perception verbs. Basically, they are compatible with both free relative clauses and indirect questions, since they allow for both readings. Depending on the selection of an indirect question and a free relative clause, the semantic interpretation is slightly modified. In any case, this property of enabling both readings is not at disposal of all verbs, but is peculiar to a restricted range of them. Another tendency which has been developing in recent time is the use of *che cosa* in contexts which are unambiguously free relative clauses.

Even though free relative clause formations with inanimate reference are impossible in Italian, there are some clues in everyday usages of the language that signal the ingress of the neuter interrogative pronoun (*che*) *cosa* also as an introducer of free relatives. Here is an example taken from the news in an Italian TV channel:

(72) E’ in odore di conferma, da cosa filtra oggi

Is in scent of confirmation from what filters today

“On the basis of today’s rumors, he is likely to be confirmed”

(TG LA7, 20th February 2011)

3.5 *Italian dialects*

3.5.1 *Paduan dialect*

The Paduan dialect is not very different from Standard Italian with respect to the formation rules which apply for free relative clauses. The bans are exactly the same as in Italian:

(i) no free relative clause with inanimate antecedent is allowed, rewording is possible only by means of a light headed relative clause:

- (73) a. *Fasso cossa che te ghe dito
 Do_{1st PERS SING} what that you have_{2nd PERS SING} said
 b. Fasso queo che te ghe dito
 Do_{1st PERS SING} that which you have_{2nd PERS SING} said
 “I do what you told me to”

(ii) case mismatches which involve only Structural cases are always tolerated:

- (74) Voo catare chi che te voi
 Go_{1st PERS SING} to-visit Ø_{ACC} who_{ACC} that you want_{2nd PERS SING}
 “I’ll go and visit who ou want me to”
- (75) Chi che ga magnà (el) ga da pagare¹¹
 Ø_{NOM} who_{NOM} that has eaten (he) has to to-pay
 “Who has eaten has to pay”
- (76) Chi che te ghe catà (el) ga da
 Ø_{NOM} who_{ACC} that you have _{2nd PERS SING} found (he) has to
 ndar ben par forza
 to-go well for force
 “Who you found must be necessarily adequate”
- (77) Te paghi sempre voentieri chi che te
 You pay_{2nd PERS SING} always with-pleasure Ø_{ACC} who_{NOM} that you
 insegna ben e robe
 teaches well the things
 “You always pay with pleasure the person who teaches you things well”

Differently from Standard Italian, if the verb of the matrix clause governs a Nominative silent head, it can optionally lexicalize the clitic subject pronoun. The most striking peculiarity of Paduan, however is that the *wh*- must always be followed by the complementizer *che*. This is quite unexpected in the literature (e.g. Fuß & Grewendorf, 2012), in which it is generally argued that only indirect questions can have the *wh*- followed by a complementizer, while free relatives cannot. Nevertheless, the sequence of a relative *wh*- and a complementizer is not exclusively attested in Paduan. It is a

¹¹ Interestingly, the presence of the subject clitic disambiguates the generic vs specific reading. In other terms, the insertion of the clitic forces the specific interpretation.

device still used by most Northern Italian dialects and was used in Old English (Benincà, 2010):

- (78) To lie open on the spoile of who that first can catch it
 (W. Watson, *Decacordon*, 1602)

(iii) if the null antecedent is headed by a P and the wh- is in a Structural case, the free relative clause is grammatical:

- (79) Ghe doo schei soeo a chi che se i merita
 Him_{DAT} give_{1st PERS SING} money only to Ø who that himself them deserves
 “I give money only to the person who deserves it”

(iv) If the null antecedent is in a Structural case and the wh- is headed by a P, the free relative clause is ungrammatical:

- (80) *Me scolta a chi che ghe doo schei
 Me listens to who that him give_{1st PERS SING} money
 “People who I give money to listen to me”

(v) Prepositional clusters are not accepted:

- (81) *Ghe doo i schei a de chi che te te
 Him_{DAT} give_{1st PERS SING} the money to of who that you yourself
 fidi
 trust_{2nd PERS SING}
 “I give the money to the person who you trust”

In the light of what we observed, the most remarkable aspect concerning free relative clauses in Paduan is therefore, that the wh- is always followed by the complementizer *che*. Another aspect which is worth noting is that *chi* cannot be morphologically rendered a generalizing pronoun **chiunque*. The interpretation depends exclusively on the context. According to Benincà (2010) these facts are not completely independent from each other. She claims that under the generic interpretation, the complementizer

could serve the same purposes as the suffix *-ever*. On the basis of Battye (1989) she hypothesizes that these relatives are pseudo-headless relatives, in that the *wh*-purportedly occupies a Head position, thus partially revitalizing Bresnan & Grimshaw (1978)'s proposal.

3.5.2 Neapolitan

Neapolitan shares the same syntactic characteristics as Standard Italian and Paduan, thus, I will not repeat them. Nevertheless, Neapolitan is worth citing, since it provides further evidence that free relative clauses are DPs rather than CPs.

These clues are supplied by forms, which are no more productive, in which the inanimate *wh*- *chə* can, although it does not need to, be preceded by the determiner 'o (the)¹². Interestingly these forms, perceived as rather formulaic, must have the verb *tené*¹³ (to have) as a matrix verb and the only mood allowed for the embedded verb is the infinitive. As has been highlighted for Standard Italian, the presence of verbs such as *be* or *have* in the matrix clause enables for further possibilities that are generally excluded for lexical verbs.

- (82) a. *Tengə* (o) *chə* *dicerə*
 Have_{1st PERS SING} the what to-say
 “I have what to say”
- b. *Tengə* (o) *chə* *ffa*
 Have_{1st PERS SING} the what to-do
 “I have what to do”
- c. *Nu tenə* *chə* *magnà*
 Not have_{3rd PERS SING} what to-eat
 “I don’t have what to eat”

¹² The presence of a determiner in free relative clauses is even compulsory in some languages such as Portuguese:

- (6) O que o Pedro não come....
 The what the Pedro not eats
 “What Pedro does not eat...”

(Barbosa, 2013)

¹³ Notice that Neapolitan has the typical alternation of Spanish *tener* and *haber*, with the first one indicating possess and the second serving as an auxiliary. The Neapolitan forms are *tené* and *avé*, respectively.

Informants say that they do not perceive these forms as really productive. The sentences in which *chə* is preceded by the article can also be attributed an ironic interpretation, which is generally absent from the forms without the determiner. Notice however, that, regardless of the presence of the determiner, free relative clauses with inanimate reference cannot be formed with any lexical verb in the matrix clause, but only with *be* and *have*.

- (83) Mə magnə *(chellə) chə me piacə
 Me eat_{1st PERS SING} that that me likes
 “I eat what I like”

3.6 Old Italian

After having analyzed some of the characteristics of free relative clauses, before turning to German, which is the core interest, it is worth investigating how this construction worked in previous stages of the languages, for which we have only written attestations.

Comprehensive works concerning free relative clauses in Old Italian have been written by Benincà & Cinque (1988) and Benincà (2010) a.o..

Surprisingly free relative clauses are only attested in Old Italian starting from 13th century¹⁴. They regularly exploit the interrogative paradigm. Benincà & Cinque (1988) propose the following table:

	chi	che ¹⁵	cui
Interrogative and free relative	+ animate + nominative	- animate +/- nominative	+ animate - nominative

Old Italian is not subject to the same constraints as modern Italian, but is much freer. Provided that the requirements of the embedded verb are always satisfied by the *wh*- pronoun, Old Italian can form free relative clauses in all contexts in which modern Italian can, but it also displays configurations which are impossible in the modern language:

¹⁴ This is quite interesting since, as I will point out in the next sections about clefts, also the latter appear in this period. This is hardly by chance.

¹⁵ Partial exceptions for this are provided later on in the text.

- (84) Donna, invano labora/ in cui non è dirittura
 Madam in vain works in whom not is rectitude
 “Oh madam, the person in whom there is no rectitude works in vain”
 (Monte Andrea, *Rime*, vv.25-26)

This pattern would be ungrammatical in modern Italian, which does not tolerate prepositional *wh*-. Furthermore, the following examples are only superficially similar to modern Italian, but there is a crucial difference with respect to morphological distinctness:

- (85) ... e perdona a chi l' offende...
 and forgives to Ø *wh*_{NOM} him injures
 “And he forgives who injures him”
 (Bono Giamboni, *Fiore di rettorica*, ch. 81, § 48)

It is worth reminding that in Old Italian *chi* could only serve as a Nominative, and there was no possibility to interpret the *wh*- *chi* as governed by the preposition *a*.

At first glance, it could be argued that these data contradict the hypothesis I put forward for Italian, namely that it is morphological opacity that enables for non-matching configurations. This statement on Italian is in no way undermined by the data of Old Italian. Old Italian is in an intermediate position, between Modern Italian and Latin, as far as morphology is concerned. Old Italian marks the *wh*- for Nominative and non-Nominative. In Italian, where there is no form of inflection for the *wh*-, the strategy which is pursued is ensuring that the requirements on the *wh*- are always respected and that the null head can be somehow interpreted as if the *wh*- were directly governed by the main verb, too. Of course, this kind of interpretation can only be due to morphological ambiguity and cannot be syntactic, as the null head and the *wh*- independently receive a Thematic role and a case. Due to the lack of morphology, nothing can remain truly silent, otherwise it could not be correctly interpreted.

Old Italian instead, by making a distinction between Nominative and Non-Nominative adopts a partially different strategy: direct cases headed by the main verb do not need to be lexicalized, while PPs cannot be inferred if there is not any marker for them, and have to have at least the preposition realized. The *wh*- is independently assigned its Case, which does in no way interfere with the silent head. Mismatches are therefore

accepted only insofar as the silent head can be interpreted because it is in a Structural Case or it is a PP, whose P is overtly realized.

Differently from Modern Italian and most Italian dialects, Old Italian allowed also for free relative clauses with inanimate reference:

- (86) ...e non avea che donare
 and not had_{3rd PERS SING} what to-donate
 “He didn’t have anything to donate”

(*Novellino*, 18, lines 11-12)

The pronoun *che* can be reduplicated to allow for the generic interpretation¹⁶:

- (87) Ma, che che faccia, non pensa ch’ a male
 But what what does not thinks that to bad
 “But whatever he does, he only thinks about bad things”

(*Fiore*, 102, line 14)

Notice that for the animate, to pursue the same goal, there is either reduplication of *chi*, or *chi* is followed by *che*, whose status is ambiguous between a complementizer and the neuter pronoun. In the animate form, the generic reading is maintained in modern Italian as well (*chicchè/ chi che*).

- (88) chi chi non s’ aomilia, già sua bontà non
 who_{NOM} who not himself humiliates already his goodness not
 puote essere gradita
 can_{3rd PERS SING} to-be appreciated
 “Whoever does not humiliate himself, his goodness cannot be appreciated”

(Chiaro Davanzati, *Rime*, 92, lines 45-46)

¹⁶ An expression containing the reduplication of *che* still exists in Italian, but the meaning has slightly shifted: the correct interpretation is not just generic, but rather concessive.

- (7) Che che ne dica, io non gli credo
 What what it says, I not him believe
 “Even though he says it, I do not believe him”

In contrast to what is generally assumed for Old Italian, *che* can also serve as introducer of free relative clauses referring to an animate antecedent. This pattern is found in Ariosto's *Satire*¹⁷

- (89) Che quindi vien, come sorbir si dee l' aria che tiene in
 What from-there comes how tolerate one must the air that keeps in
 travaglio il fiato...
 labour the breath
 "How can one who comes from here tolerate the cold air which takes
 your breath away?"

(L. Ariosto, *Satire*, 1 line 43)

- (90) or n'avrò tre; che più di me ne spera / comperi
 now it will-have three what more than me it hopes buy_{IMP 2nd PERS SING}
 quanto io n' ho d'aver
 as- much-as I it have_{1st PERS SING TO} to-have
 "Now I will have three of them; who has more hopes than me about
 them, he should buy as much as I must have"

(L. Ariosto, *Satire*, 2 line 270)

3.7 Classical languages

3.7.1 The importance of classical languages for the discussion on free relative clauses

Taking classical languages into account is all the more useful for free relative clauses, in that they display interesting patterns: on the one hand, they show that also pronouns belonging to the relative paradigm can be suitable introducers of free relative clauses, and on the other hand they testify the importance of Case Hierarchy in non-matching contexts, to the point that marked cases can be used instead of less marked cases, giving rise to phenomena of attraction.

¹⁷ It is philologically clear that this pronoun *che* refers to a human entity and is not a corrupted version of *chi*.

3.7.2 Latin

Latin is particularly interesting as far as free relative clauses are concerned, since it does not use the interrogative paradigm *quis, quid*, but it uses the pronominal series regularly employed for headed relatives *qui, quae, quod*. This is quite unexpected, since it is not a strategy usually adopted by modern languages, but it is definitely important for our purposes, since it is a point in contact with German, which can, although does not need to, use the regular relative pronouns of the *d-* type, for free relatives, too.

- (91) Qui amicus est, amat
Who friend is, loves

(Sen, *Epistulae*, 4, 35)

- (92) Der dich lieb hatte, war dein Freund
Who you dear had_{3rd PERS SING} was your friend
“Who loved you was your friend”

The fact that Latin uses relative pronouns for free relatives enables to always distinguish between them and indirect questions and entails that the gender of the entity to which reference is made, is always overtly marked. Furthermore, Latin is a language with rich case morphology, which makes it closer to German than other languages.

As far as we can infer from the analysis of the *corpora* of Latin at our disposal, it seems that Latin admits all configurations in which matching is ensured, but it also allows for some mismatches. The case combinations of silent head and *wh-* are basically the same that Old Italian tolerates, with the substantial difference that Latin had regular pronominal case inflection and not just the distinction between Nominative and Non-Nominative.

Thus, the following examples of mismatch are attested:

- (93) Cui permittit necessitas sua, circumspiciat exitum mollem
Ø_{NOM} Who_{DAT} allows necessity his, looks-for exit easy
“The person to whom his personal situation allows it, has to look for an easy way to go out of this”

(Seneca, *Epistulae* 70, 24)

- (94) Qui amat quoi odio ipse est, bis facere
 Ø_{NOM} Who loves Ø_{ACC} who_{DAT} hate himself is, twice to-behave
 stulte duco
 in-a-silly-way think_{1st PERS SING}
 “Who loves the person by whom he is hated, I think that he is definitely
 silly”
 (Terence, *Hecyra*, 343)
- (95) Scipio cum quos paulo ante nominavi interiit
 Scipio with Ø who_{ACCPL} a short time ago cited_{1st PERS SING} died_{3rd PERS SING}
 “Scipio died with those who I have just cited”
 (B. Afr. 96.2)

Albeit attested, the pattern exemplified in (95), which parallels the Old Italian *a chi*, is definitely rare. In general, if the main verb selects for a PP, the entire PP is generally overtly realized.

3.7.3 Greek

Ancient and modern Greek are both remarkable, since they provide insightful clues concerning the role of Case Hierarchy in licensing the formation of free relative clauses. Moreover, both Ancient and modern Greek can be of interest because of the nature of the introducer they employ to introduce free relative clauses. Ancient Greek uses a pronoun which belongs to the relative paradigm, while modern Greek uses a form which is a hybrid of a relative and an interrogative pronoun (Vogel, 2001):

pjos = interrogative pronoun meaning *who*

opjo = relative item

opjos = free relative clause pronoun *who*

This is worth noting in that it shows the conflation of two possible items used by the languages to form a free relative in one single item. German uses both pronominal series, although the two strategies are not always interchangeable, Greek has instead fused them.

Ancient Greek shows that Case Hierarchy (Keenan and Comrie, 1977) is crucial in determining the Case assigned to the relative pronoun. Case Hierarchy orders the Cases

on the basis of their accessibility for relativization. The higher cases are more easily relativizable and are less marked, while the lower cases are more difficult to be relativized and more marked.

(96) Nom > Acc > Dat > Gen > PPs

In Greek, if the case assigned to the null head is higher in the Hierarchy than the Case assigned to the *wh*- pronoun by the embedded verb, attraction takes place.

(97) ἀλλ' εἶα φείδου μηδὲν ὧν ἐπίστασαι
 But come spare_{IMP2nd PERS SING} nothing \emptyset which_{GENPL} know_{2nd PERS SING}
 “Come, don’t spare anything of what you know”

(Eur, med., 401)

In (97) the *wh*- is assigned the Genitive, even though it should bear Accusative Case as required by the embedded verb *ἐπίσταμαι*. Contrary to what is generally observed, the *wh*- displays the Case that the matrix verb should have assigned to the null head. This could be an instance of *attractio*: the *wh*- has the Case of the null head. Incidentally, this strengthens the hypothesis of a silent head, otherwise there would be no possibility for the *wh*- to display a case which is not assigned by the embedded verb. In (97) the *wh*- displays Genitive Case and not the Accusative, because Structural Cases are higher in the Accessibility Hierarchy and are therefore easily recoverable. The partitive Genitive instead, would be hardly recoverable if it were not lexicalized in the structure. It is unexpected to find instances of *attractio* if the *wh*- is assigned an Oblique Case by the embedded verb, and the antecedent bears a Structural Case, since it would not be advantageous to copy the Case of the null head, if it is less marked. Evidence for this is provided by the following sentence, in which it is clear that the case borne by the *wh*- is regularly the one assigned by the embedded verb:

(98) καλῶς γ' ἂν οὐνδέξαιντό μ' οἴκοις ὧν
 Well PRT.PROBABILITY welcome_{3rd PERS PL} me home_{DAT} \emptyset which_{GENPL}
 πατέρα κατέκτανον
 father killed_{1st PERS SING}

“They would welcome me well at their home, they whose father I killed!”

(Eur., med., 504-505)

3.8 Summary of the typological characteristics of free relative clauses

Here is a table which summarizes some of the most relevant properties of free relative clauses in the languages that we have taken into consideration so far. The table is necessarily a simplification of the patterns which have been outlined in greater detail in the previous paragraphs, with specific attention to the aspects which were worth noticing because of their saliency either by contrast or by similarity to German free relative clauses, or which could to some extent contribute to defining a formal account for free relative clauses.

	Animacy	Type of pronoun	Morphological inflection on the pronoun	Matching effects
English	+/- animate	interrogative	no	matching
French	+ animate	interrogative	no	matching
Italian	+ animate	interrogative	no	Restricted non-matching
Paduan	+ animate	interrogative	no	Restricted non-matching
Neapolitan	+ animate (- animate only in formulaic contexts)	interrogative	no	Restricted non-matching
Old Italian	+/- animate	interrogative	Distinction for the animate Nominative vs Non-Nominative	Restricted non-matching
Latin	+/- animate	relative	Gender, case and number inflection	Restricted non-matching
Greek	+/- animate	Relative (Ancient Greek); hybrid: relative + interrogative (Modern Greek)	Gender, case and number inflection	Restricted non-matching. Many phenomena of Case attractio

4. Some considerations on the nature of the silent head: clues from quantifiers

Once the main characteristics of clefts have been outlined on the basis of different languages, it is now possible to make some more considerations and to try to understand what the silent head may look like. Romance languages offer interesting

clues which enable to hypothesize the possible nature of the silent head of free relative clauses. These clues are provided by quantifiers. As postulated by Giusti (1990) and then reposed by Cirillo (2011), quantifiers take DP as their complement. Specifically quantifiers are the head of a quantifier phrase dominating a DP. The fact that quantifiers are higher than DP is showed by sentences in which the quantifier is followed by a determiner as in (99).

- (99) Tutti gli studenti hanno fatto i compiti
 All the students have_{3rd PERS PL} made the homework
 “All students have made their homework”

Interestingly, universal quantifiers, especially in the neuter singular, require that a head is lexicalized after them:

- (100) Tutto ciò/quello che faccio lo faccio per te
 Everything it that that do_{1st PERS SING} it do_{1st PERS SING} for you
 “Everything I do, I do it for you”

However, if we go back to Italian, what is striking is that the lexicalized head is preferably deictic in nature: *ciò* and *quello*. It is quite unexpected that universal quantifiers are associated with deixis, which is definitely referential. This provides a collocation in space to the quantifiers. As shown also by the English translation of (100), the phenomenon is not exclusive of Italian, but is also shared by English, in which the quantifier is followed by a generic head “thing”, and by French, with the well-known expression *tout le monde*. In these cases, the quantifier is not really followed by a deictic item, but rather by a classificatory element which provides the features of animacy, person and number. Once again, this pattern is displayed in Italian as well, with expressions such as:

- (101) a. Tutti quanti
 b. Tutti coloro che
 c. Tutte le persone che

Some Italian dialects also have expressions such as *tutte cose* (lit: all things), to translate the English *everything*. These points suggest that, depending on the languages, the silent head of free relative clauses could be either a classificatory or a deictic. The phenomenon is clearly displayed in Substandard Italian, in which sentences like (102a, b) are possible:

- (102) a. Il posto dove andiamo mi piace
 The place where go_{1st PERS PL} me_{DAT} likes
 “I like the place we go”
 b. Il modo come si veste è eccentrico
 The way how herself wears is eccentric
 “The way in which she wears clothes is eccentric”

The relativizer, which is a *wh*- pronoun, belongs to the interrogative paradigm and its head is classificatory in nature: it either *thing, person, place, way*. Further elements to corroborate the hypothesis on the classificatory nature of the silent head, come from a related phenomenon: kind defining relative clauses. This subtype of relative clauses has been recently postulated by Benincà & Cinque (to appear) and includes all relative clauses in which there is a sort of definition. An example could be (103a). Intuitively, (103a) could be also rephrased as a light-headed relative clause (103b) or even as free relative clause (103c):

- (103) a. Cerco una donna che mi pulisca le scale
 Look-for_{1st PERS SING} a woman that me cleans the stairs
 “I look for a woman who cleans the stairs for me”
 b. Cerco qualcuno che mi pulisca le scale
 Look-for_{1st PERS SING} someone that me cleans the stairs
 c. Cerco chi mi pulisce le scale
 Look-for_{1st PERS SING} who_{NOM} me cleans the stairs
 “I look for someone who cleans the stairs”

This could be paraphrased as follows: *I look for X // X is a PERSON who cleans the stairs.*

Even in true headed relative clauses, specifically kind-defining relative clauses, which always have a generic identificational head, we can find something in common with free relative clauses, which are semantically near, although not fully comparable: the necessity for a classificatory head, which supplies gender, number and animacy information, which would otherwise be opaque. We will come back to the behavior of German in this respect, specifically when the quantifier *alles* is used. The observation of German data will allow us to check whether the hypothesis that the silent head is a classifying element is tenable and we will also check whether there are differences in the nature of the silent head depending on the type of free relative clause.

5. Wh- free relative clauses in German

The cross-linguistic framework which has been presented, had the aim of better understanding what the structure of free relative clauses looks like in languages other than German and to focalize on possible parametric differences in the structure, which can be inspected for German as well. If we were to maintain Bresnan & Grimshaw (1978)'s terminology, German is to be considered a restricted non-matching language. This means that matching is not always compulsory for the sentence to be grammatical, even though very precise restrictions apply.

Non-matching free relative clause structures, however, are used very cautiously by speakers, since they do not feel at ease in most non-matching contexts and definitely prefer to reformulate the sentence in the form of a light-headed relative clause, which poses no problems of matching, as both the head and the relative pronoun are overtly realized respecting all the requirements of the verbs which have selected for them. We will now see, how free relative clauses in German are formed and how the construction is treated in the grammar.

5.1 *How grammars treat the construction*

German can form free relative clauses both with animate and inanimate reference. Duden (2006) explicitly says that German exploits the pronominal series of interrogative pronouns and supplies the entire paradigm of the pronouns *wer*¹⁸ and *was* for the animate and the inanimate respectively.

¹⁸ Although it provides the entire paradigm, examples are only supplied in the Nominative and the Genitive.

- (104) Wer viel verdient, gibt auch viel Geld aus
 Ø_{NOM} who_{NOM} much earns spends also much money PRT
 “Who earns a lot spends also a lot”

It further informs that the Genitive form *wessen* is often substituted by the older form *wes*, which was used in *Frühneuhochdeutsch* and is still used in idiomatic expressions:

- (105) Wes das Herz voll ist, des geht der Mund über.
 Who_{GEN} the heart full is who_{GEN} goes the mouth over
 “Whose heart is full of things to say, his mouth speaks”

(Matthew, *Holy Bible*, 12, 34)

It is then maintained that the Dative form *was* is only possible if it follows a preposition, anyway it is generally preferred to substitute the sequence of P + *was* by means of a prepositional adverb. No other information about free relative clauses is provided in Duden (2006).

Bosco Coletsos & Costa (2004), instead, which is an Italian contrastive grammar that compares German and Italian, emphasizes that free relative clauses are very different in the two languages. While there is a corresponding structure if the introducer is in the Nominative, there is purportedly no equivalent in German if the relative clause is in “on the right side of the construction¹⁹”:

- (106) a. Chi osa vince

b. Wer wagt, gewinnt

“Who dares wins”

- (107) a. Devi chiederlo a chi lo sa

Must_{2nd PERS SING} to-ask-it to whom it knows

b. Du must jemanden fragen, der es

You_{2nd PERS SING} must_{2nd PERS SING} someone to-ask who_{NOM MASC} it

weiß

knows

¹⁹ This is the literal translation of the Italian text.

“You have to ask it to someone who knows it”

(Bosco Coletsos & Costa, 2004)

They then explain that “the so-called double pronoun of Italian has to be split in its two components in German: the complement of the main clause and the subject of the relative and it does not correspond anymore to the form *wer*”.

If we observe Bosco Coletsos & Costa (2004)’s description from a theoretical point of view, it is clear that it is not totally adequate. Using spatial references like *on the right/left side* is not accurate in that it does not provide the learner with precise syntactic information which enables them to correctly handle the construction, unless reference to a specific theoretical model is made²⁰. Moreover, they reduce the possible configurations to the case in which the *wh*- serves as the subject of the free relative clause, which is evidently only one of the many possibilities (it could be Nominative, Accusative, Dative, Genitive or a PP).

Neither in Bosco Coletsos & Costa (2004) nor in Duden (2006) do we find mention of the possibility for German to introduce a free relative clause by means of *d*-pronouns. This lack is partially justified in Bosco Coletsos & Costa (2004), which is meant to be a grammar for foreign learners, namely Italian, whilst it is less comprehensible if we consider Duden grammar.

Formal works as for instance Lehman (1984), Bausewein (1991) explicitly cite the existence of this type of relatives, even though they do not provide a detailed account for them. The recent paper by Fuß & Grewendorf (2012) has *d*- free relatives as its core topic, nevertheless it is not totally exhaustive. To be honest, providing a unitary account for free relative clauses, which considers all empirical data, which are very often controversial, is definitely a challenging task. This is true for all restricted non-matching languages in which the boundaries between acceptability and non-acceptability are sometimes very opaque and heavily dependent on speakers’ own linguistic sensitivity. Furthermore, asking for grammaticality judgments of sentences, even if provided with an appropriate context, does not always guarantee that all sentences which could be actually uttered are considered grammatical. No distinction can be made depending on the geographic origin of the informants: speakers coming

²⁰ Notice that there is no reference to syntactic models such as Generative Grammar or *Feldertheorie*, in which indicating spatial positions acquires a specific meaning, since they do not only refer to the superficial linear order.

from the same area sometimes diverge in their judgments, although some patterns hold. Even listening to spontaneous speech does not ensure that the data are always reliable. Many factors could intervene: (i) in fast spontaneous speech inflection is not easily detectable, nor would the speaker be always in a position to re-construe what they actually uttered once they re-think about it; (ii) in spontaneous speech, rethinking could take place; investigating how a sentence could be rescued even by means of last resort strategies is certainly interesting.

What is certain is that *wh*- free relatives and *d*- free relatives deserve separate discussion, as they are not in free variation. These differences will turn out to be crucial also for clefts and specifically for the analysis we will propose for them.

5.2 *An overview of wh- free relatives*

It has already been made clear that German normally introduces free relative clauses by means of the *wh*- pronoun *wer*, *wen*, *wem*, *wessen* (*wes*) for the animate and *was*, *was*, (*wem*) for the inanimate. These pronouns are generally compatible both with a generic and with the specific interpretation. A generic interpretation can optionally be reinforced by the adjunct of elements such as *auch immer*. We have also highlighted that German is considered a *restricted non-matching language*, this means that case mismatches are partially allowed, even though it is not clear to what extent these mismatches are tolerated. There is no agreement among the scholars: Grosu (1994) is more restrictive in that he considers some combinations impossible, while Vogel (2001, 2004) along the lines of Pittner (1991) judges the same kind of sentences as perfectly grammatical. Fuß & Grewendorf (2012), Fuß & Grewendorf & Groat (2012), Grewendorf & Groat (2013) express similar judgments, although they warn that not all speakers agree on the degree of acceptability of given sentences. These inconsistencies come as no surprise in the light of what has been observed concerning the difficulties of gathering uniform grammaticality judgments. Nevertheless it will be tried to shed some new light on the construction, especially by observing the reciprocal position of free relative clauses and matrix clauses and the possibilities offered by resumption. This perspective has been often disregarded in the literature, but the data I collected reveal that these factors are in most cases crucial in determining the acceptability of the sentence.

We will now see it in detail by exploring all the possible configurations. For the moment I will keep the so-called pseudocleft sentences aside, since they deserve to be treated separately, as their syntactic behavior is not exactly the same as free relative clauses in which the matrix verb is a full lexical verb.

5.2.1 *Matching configurations under Structural cases*

a. Nominative matching with animate referent

Matching configurations in which both the silent head and the wh- require the same structural case always lead to grammatical results.

Here are some possible combinations with both the wh- and the silent head bearing Nominative Case:

- (108) Wer glücklich ist, fühlt; wer unglücklich ist, denkt
 Wh_{NOM} happy is feels wh_{NOM} unhappy is thinks
 “Who is happy feels, who is unhappy thinks”
 (J. Fernau)

- (109) Wer noch nie einen Fehler gemacht hat, hat sich noch nie
 Wh_{NOM} yet never a mistake made has has himself yet never
 an etwas Neuem versucht
 to something new tried
 „Who has never made a mistake yet has never challenged himself yet
 with something new”
 (A. Einstein)

- (110) Wer sich entschuldigt, klagt sich an.
 Wh_{NOM} himself excuses accuses himself PRT
 “He who excuses himself accuses himself”

Notice that, although the most frequent order is with the free relative clause serving as a subject preposed to the main clause, the reverse order is possible as well. This is confirmed both by formulaic expressions, which are rather stiff (111) and by everyday language (112):

- (111) *Recht hat, wer zuletzt lacht*
 reason has *wh_{NOM}* last laughs
 “He who laughs last laughs best”
- (112) *Hunger hat immer, wer nicht genug isst.*
 hunger has always *wh_{NOM}* not enough eats
 “He who does not eat enough is always hungry”

These are certainly the prototypical cases in which free relative clauses are always accepted by speakers. There is no need to insert any kind of resumption unless pragmatic effects are pursued. Here is a selection of possible sentences representing this configuration:

- (113) *Wer das sagt, (der) irrt sich*
Wh_{NOM} it says he is-in-the-wrong himself
 “Who says it is in the wrong”
- (114) *Wer es fassen kann, (der) fasse es*
Wh_{NOM} it to-take can he take_{IMP} it
 “Who can take it, he has to take it”
- (115) *Wer viel verdient, (der) gibt auch viel aus*
Wh_{NOM} much earns he spends also a lot *PRT*
 “Who earns a lot spends also a lot”
- (116) *Wer eine Fremdsprache erlernen will, (der) muss*
Wh_{NOM} a foreign-language to-learn wants he *MUST_{3rd PERS SING}*
sich anstrengen
 himself to-commit
 “Who wants to learn a foreign language has to commit himself”

Notice that the resumptive pronoun is necessarily a gendered pronoun, usually in the masculine, as the *wh-* *wer* is morphologically a masculine as well. The resumptive pronoun is therefore in the form *der*. Interestingly, uncertainties arise if world-knowledge imposes a feminine gendered interpretation of the *wh-* pronoun. This could happen, for instance in sentences like the following:

- (117) Wer schwanger ist, sollte sich nicht anstrengen
 Who_{NOM} pregnant is should herself not to-tire
 “Who is pregnant should not get tired”

In cases like this, speakers do not feel at ease either to resume the *wh*- pronoun by means of *der*, since it is clear that no man could be pregnant, or to use *die* (the feminine) *ad sensum*, because it would imply an overt morphological mismatch between the *wh*- and the pronoun which resumes it. In such contexts speakers simply prefer to avoid resumption. This can be done without affecting morpho-syntax in that the only reason to insert resumption in nominative-matching configurations is pragmatization, in particular left dislocation. In any case it is barely ungrammatical to insert the neuter pronoun *das*, if the referent is animate. This is particularly worth underlining, as this is a crucial diversity with respect to pseudocleft sentences, which we will consider separately.

b. Matching under Accusative Case and animate referent

Free relative clauses in which both the *wh*- and the null head are assigned Accusative Case are possible. Speakers never consider ungrammatical sentences under this configuration, although they are not as sure in their judgments as they are with Nominative matching. Notice that the acceptability progressively increases if the thematic role assigned by the two verbs is similar, better if identical. If we observe the following sentences, we notice immediately that while the first couple of sentences is perfectly fine (118-119), some more uncertainties arise in (120), in which the clausal constituents are heavier, the relations are more opacified and the thematic roles assigned by the two verbs are not exactly the same.

- (118) Ich liebe, wen du auch lieb hast
 I love_{1st PERS SING} who_{ACC} you also dear have_{2nd PERS SING}
 “I love who you love too”

- (119) Anna liebt, wen du ihr neulich auf der Party vorgestellt
 Anna loves who_{ACC} you her_{DAT} recently at the party introduced
 hast.
 have_{2nd PERS SING}
 “Anna loves who you recently introduced to her at the party”

- (120) OK/? Ich begleite nach Hause wen du im Zentrum
 I take_{1st PERS SING} to home who_{ACC} you in-the center
 getroffen hast
 met have_{2nd PERS SING}
 “I take home who you met at the party”

Interestingly, some speakers feel more comfortable if they insert a resumptive pronoun, which, especially in complex sentences, mainly has the function to disambiguate the relations. Pragmatic purposes, however, may be pursued as well.

- (121) Wen du lieb hast, den schätze ich auch.
 who_{ACC} you dear have_{2nd PERS SING} him appreciate_{1st PERS SING} I also
 viel
 much
 “I appreciate very much as well who you love”
- (122) Wen du mit deinen süßen Worten endlich davon überzeugt
 who_{ACC} you with your dear words finally it-of convinced
 hast, sich besser zu benehmen, den hatte ich
 have_{2nd PERS SING} himself better to to-behave him_{ACC} had_{1st PERS SING} I
 am Gegenteil aggressiv vorgeworfen.
 on-the contrary aggressively reproached
 “I had aggressively reproached the person who you, with your sweet
 words, convinced to better behave”

Regardless of thematic roles and the preference for resumption in some contexts, under matching, free relative clauses are always acceptable.

c. Neuter forms and some hints about resumption

Free relative clauses which involve an inanimate referent basically function as nominative matching free relative clauses with animate reference. They do not need any resumption, even though for pragmatic purposes they can be resumed by means of the neuter pronoun *das*, which is co-indexed with *was*. Notice that here the pronoun *das* is only legitimate because it refers to the neuter wh- and thus serves exactly as *der* for the animate.

- (123) Was dir gefällt, kostet zu viel
 What you_{DAT} likes costs too much
 “What you like costs too much”
- (124) Was mich nicht umbringt, macht mich stärker.
 What me_{ACC} not kills makes me_{ACC} stronger
 “What doesn’t kill me makes me stronger”

(F. Nietzsche, *Götzendämmerung oder wie man mit dem Hammer philosophiert*, 1888)

- (125) Was du nicht sagst das sage ich: ich
 What you_{2nd PERS SING} not say_{2nd PERS SING} this say_{1st PERS SING} I I
 vermisse dich
 miss you_{2nd PERS SING ACC} you_{2nd PERS SING ACC}
 “What you don’t say, I say it, I miss you”
- (126) Was ich mir wünsche, (das) kaufe ich mir auch.
 What I me_{DAT} wish_{1st PERS SING} this buy_{1st PERS SING} I me_{DAT} also
 “What I wish for me, I buy it for me, too”

Due to the morphological identity of Nominative and Accusative forms of the neuter, matching Accusatives are equally accepted, as well as mismatches in which either the null head is in the Nominative and the *wh-* in the Accusative or *viceversa* (§ 5.2.2). The same holds also for resumption, which is ruled mainly by pragmatic purposes, although there is a slight preference for resumption to take place if the free relative clause is a heavy clausal constituent, in which there would be a concrete risk to opacify the relation between the *wh-* pronoun and the main verb. This happens above all in the written language, in literature, in which argumentation and the information structure can be partially altered because of stylistic reasons. This is irrespective of whether the *wh-* has animate or inanimate reference, see (127) for the inanimate and (128) for the animate.

- (127) Was man nicht weiß, das eben brauchte man, / Und was man
 What IMPERS not knows this just would-need IMPERS and what IMPERS
 weiß, kann man nicht brauchen
 knows can_{3rd PERS SING} IMPERS not to-need

“What you don’t know, is always what you need, and what you know,
have no use for it”

(W. Goethe, *Faust I*)

(128) Wer unter diesen fünfundzwanzig jungen Leuten von
Wh_{NOM} among these twenty-five young men of
rechtschaffener Konstitution, stark und tüchtig für das Leben war,
upstanding constitution strong and competent for the life was
wie es ist, der nahm in diesem Augenblick die Dinge völlig wie sie
as it is he took in this moment the things completely as they
lagen.

were

“Whoever among these twenty-five young men was of an upstanding
constitution, who was strong and competent for life as it is, took things
completely as they were²¹”

(T. Mann, *Buddenbrooks*)

5.2.2 *Non-matching configurations under Structural Cases with inanimate reference*

If the free relative clause is introduced by the neuter pronoun *was*, non-matching is allowed irrespective of whether it is the *wh*- or the silent head which bears the Nominative or the Accusative. This is evidently due to the morphological identity between the two forms.

(129) Was mir gut schmeckt, (das) esse ich immer gerne.
What me_{DAT} well likes this eat_{1st PERS SING I} always with-pleasure
“I always eat with pleasure what I like”

(130) Was du machst, gelingt mir nicht
What you_{2nd PERS SING} make_{2nd PERS SING} works-out me_{DAT} not
“I do not manage to do what you do”

The perfect acceptability of mismatches in Structural cases, provided that the referent is neuter, is a well-known fact, but needs to be emphasized in that it is a clear clue that even in cases of mismatch, what really determines the acceptability of a

²¹ Translation by Herbert Lehnert & Eva Wessell (2004).

sentence is not just abstract Case, but rather morphological case. If other instances of case syncretism are displayed in the language, we would expect them to easily overcome mismatch problems and lead to well-formed sentences. These will be verified with morphologically syncretic cases under *d*-free relatives.

5.2.3 *Inanimate reference headed by a universal quantifier*

Although they are not truly free relative clauses, it is worth investigating what happens in case a quantifier is involved in the relativization process. Something similar has already been tried for Romance languages in § 4. For German I will check what happens, with the universal quantifier *alles*, which expresses exhaustiveness as free relative clauses alone can do, especially if they are extended by means of expressions such as *auch immer*. The following couple of sentences is semantically very similar:

- (131) a. Was du auch immer machst gefällt mir.
 What you even always make_{2nd PERS SING} likes me_{DAT}
 b. Alles was du machst gefällt mir.
 All_{NEUT SING} what you make_{2nd PERS SING} likes me_{DAT}
 “I like whatever you make”

If we compare the German pattern with the equivalent which has been described for Romance languages, what emerges is that the element which has to obligatorily appear after the quantifier is at first glance different from what we see in Romance languages. The nature of *was* however, is not totally clear, or at least, it is uncertain what its syntactic status in these contexts actually is. We will now make a survey of the possible uses of *was*.

5.2.4 *Uses of was in relativization and quantification*

A first consideration is that *was* is used not only in free relative clauses, but also after quantifiers and after superlatives:

- (132) Das Interessanteste was ich gelesen habe ist sein Roman
 The most-interesting what I read have_{1st PERS SING} is his novel
 “The most interesting thing that I read is his novel”

Second, *was* is used in some areas such as Lower Saxony and in Westfalia as the normal relative pronoun *das* coindexed with neuter antecedents. It can either completely substitute *das* in the paradigm, or it is an additional form. This situation is mirrored in the dialectal varieties of the same areas.

- (133) Das Buch was ich lese ...
 The book what I read_{1st PERS SING}
 “The book that I read...”

This pronominal use however, is to some extent weakened in other linguistic areas, such as High Saxony, in which *was* not only refers to neuter inanimate antecedents, but also to non-neuter objects. This testifies a loss in its pronominal features:

- (134) Die Hauptsache, was ich esse, ist Abends
 The main-thing_{FEM} what I eat_{1st PERS SING} is evenings
 “My main meal is dinner”

(Albrecht, 1881)

Nevertheless, *was* is also attested with animate entities, and this shows that *was* has become a relative complementizer. It may appear after true relative pronouns, or, even though it is used alone, it respects all canonical requirements for attributing a complementizer status to it: it is insensitive to the animacy of the antecedent, it cannot be governed by a preposition, it cannot be inflected for gender, number and case. Dialectal varieties in which this is evidenced are for instance Tyrolean and Northern Bavarian, but it is also well attested in colloquial varieties of German:

- (135) Diese Frau, was ich liebe, habe ich zu mir
 This woman what I love_{1st PERS SING} have_{1st PERS SING} I to me_{DAT}
 eingeladen
 invited
 “I invited to my place this woman, who I love”

(www.esoterikforum.de)

Third, *was* can be utilized, in colloquial varieties as a reduced form of *etwas*, and stands therefore for *something*.

- (136) Ich habe was Leckeres gegessen
I have_{1st PERS SING} something delicious eaten
“I ate something delicious”

It was however used also in poetry with the meaning of *something*:

- (137) Der war nie reich, der niemals was verlor
He was never rich who never what lost_{3rd PERS SING}
“Who never lost something was never rich”

(B. Brecht, *Sechstes Sonett*)

Anyway there are clear clues that *was*, when combined with a universal quantifier is pronominal in nature. It belongs to the interrogative paradigm, as is for all wh-pronouns used in free relatives. Evidence for this is supplied by the following grammatical sentence:

- (138) a. Was alles liegt auf dem Tisch?
 what all lies on the table
 b. Was liegt alles auf dem Tisch?
 what lies all on the table
 “What lies on the table?”

(Cirilli, 2011)

The function of the floating quantifier is in this case a request for enumeration. Cirilli (2011) labels it *list reading feature*. Notice that, when the quantifier is not relativized, the canonical form *das* applies.

- (139) Alles das ist nur meine persönliche Meinung.
 all that is only my personal opinion
 “All this is only my personal opinion”

(Cirilli, 2011)

Recall that English dialects display a behavior similar to what has been described for German *was* with respect to headed relative clause formation. In Old English the German equivalent of *alles was* was attested²²:

- (140) Nu ic wot eall hwaet thu woldest
 NOW I know_{1st PERS SING} all what you_{SING} want_{2nd PERS SING}
 “Now I know all that you want”

(Mitchell, 1985: §340:143)

Notice that in Old English *hwaet* had also the value of true indefinite, as is today for *was* in colloquial German. Substandard English still tolerates the combination *all what*, even though this is ruled out in Standard English:

- (141) *All what I want is you
 All that I want is you
 All I want is you

On the light of what has been described for German and, as a comparison, for English, it seems that, differently from Romance languages, in this construction, with *alles* serving as a universal quantifier which is relativized, there is no overt head realized immediately after the quantifier, but, exactly as in other free relatives, what we see is the relative clause introducer. That is the reason why Romance languages are precious in this respect: they make transparent phenomena which Germanic languages maintain opaque.

5.2.5 *Non-matching configurations under Structural Cases with animate reference*

The question is definitely delicate if we investigate mismatches with animate reference. As has been outlined above, one difficulty concerns morphological mismatch. A second crucial factor, which has been briefly sketched above for languages such as Greek or Latin, involves Case Hierarchy. These two factors are intertwined: the morphological filter alone would not account for some grammatical results that we would not expect to be possible if no other factor intervenes. On the other side, if there

²² Thanks to Silvia Rossi for having provided me with this Old English example.

were not any Case Hierarchy, we would not account for the asymmetries in the acceptability of the sentence depending on the Case of the silent head. We will now consider the following data, which concretely show the pattern that we will then describe:

- (142) Wen du eingeladen hast, (der) kommt gerne
 Who_{ACC} you invited have_{2nd PERS SING} he comes with-pleasure
 zur Party
 to-the party
 “Who you have invited comes with pleasure to the party”
- (143) Wen du liebst, (der) liebt dich nicht
 Who_{ACC} you love_{2nd PERS SING} he loves you_{2nd PRS SING} not
 “Who you love does not love you”
- (144) Wen es interessiert, (der) soll sich bei Frau Meyer informieren
 Who_{ACC} it interests he must himself at Mrs Meyer to-inform
 “Who is interested in it has to get information at Mrs Meyer’s”

In all these instances, the *wh*- meets the requirements of the embedded verb which selects for it, but it does not meet the requirements of the main verb, which assigns Nominative case. Nevertheless, the sentences are considered grammatical by most speakers. Resumption is definitely not compulsory, even though it is desirable. Mismatch is therefore allowed.

Interestingly the sentences would sensibly decrement their acceptability if the free relative clause were posited after the main clause. This is due to the fact that the silent head has to serve as the subject of the main clause; if the free relative clause introduced by an Accusative pronoun appears after the matrix, the correct interpretation is actually disfavored, or, at least, the sentence sounds very weird.

- (145) ? Dich liebt nicht wen du liebst
 You_{ACC} loves not who_{ACC} you love_{2nd PERS SING}
 “You are not loved by whom you love”

If we want to account for the acceptability of (142), (143) and (144), even though they display case-mismatch, it could be of help to consider once again Keenan & Comrie

(1977)'s Accessibility Hierarchy, which I repeat here as (146). What we notice is that the Nominative is the highest case, immediately followed by Accusative, then Dative, Genitive and PPs.

(146) Nom > Acc > Dat > Gen > PPs

The fact that the *wh-* is assigned Accusative Case, while the matrix requires a Nominative, enables the sentence to be grammatical in that the most marked case is realized, while the least marked may remain silent. If we adopt the nano-syntax framework concerning Case Hierarchy (Caha, 2009)²³, we could rephrase this utterance by saying that the least marked case has all its features contained in more marked cases. It is simply poorer. If all relevant features of the Nominative are contained in the Accusative, keeping the Nominative head silent does not lead to any loss in features and the derivation can correctly take place.

Along this same line of reasoning, we can easily explain the pattern that we observe if the *wh-* bears Nominative Case and the silent head is assigned Accusative Case.

Accusative Case is lower in the Accessibility Hierarchy, this implies that it has to be overtly realized to be correctly interpreted. It is in fact, richer in features than the Nominative and if it were not lexicalized, all these features would get lost. No silent head is therefore allowed if it is in the Accusative and the *wh-* displays Nominative Case.

(147) Wer dich liebt, *(den) liebst du nicht

Who_{NOM} you_{ACC} loves him_{ACC} love_{2nd PERS SING} you not

“Who loves you, you don’t love him/her”

(148) Wer die richtige Einstellung hat, *(den) kann nichts und

Who_{NOM} the right attitude has him_{ACC} can nothing_{NOM} and

niemand aufhalten

nobody_{NOM} to- stop

“Who has the right attitude, nobody and nothing can stop it”

²³ Notice however that the Case Hierarchy proposed by Caha (2009) is partially different in that Genitive and Dative are placed in the reverse order, with the Genitive less marked than the Dative. Caha (2009) provides cross-linguistic evidence for his claim, which still remains disputed. In any case this does not affect the discussion, as I will deliberately keep the Genitive aside.

- (149) Wer dir sympathisch ist, *(den) lade ich gerne
 Who you_{DAT} nice is, him_{ACC} invite_{1st PERS SING} I with-pleasure
 zur Party ein.
 to-the party _{PRT}
 “I invite with pleasure to the party the person that you find nice”

What clearly emerges from all these sentences is that the insertion of a resumptive Accusative pronoun is the only possible strategy to maintain the structure of a free relative clause and satisfy the requirements on the *wh*-. At a syntactic level the operation which has taken place is left dislocation. The entire free relative clause is moved to SpecLD and is then resumed by the weak pronoun *den*, which is in Wackernagel position²⁴. Differently from all the resumptions we have described so far for free relative clauses, it is morpho-syntactic factors rather than pragmatics which require the whole DP containing the free relative clause to be shifted. Using the structures normally utilized to create markedness is a way to satisfy the syntactic requirements of the matrix verb. Notice that here the fact that the free relative clause is the first constituent is mandatory for the sentence to be grammatical, in that only left dislocation allows for resumption, offering therefore a rescuing device.

- (150) *Ich lade gerne zur Party ein, wer dir
 I invite_{1st PERS SING} with-pleasure to-the party _{PRT} who_{NOM} you_{DAT}
 sympathisch ist
 nice is
 “I invite with pleasure to the party the person who you think is nice”

If no resuming pronoun is used, all speakers agree that the only possible solution to create a well-formed semantic equivalent is forming a light-headed relative clause

- (151) Ich lade denjenigen zur Party ein, der dir sympathisch ist.
 I invite him_{ACC} to-the party _{PRT} who_{NOM} you_{DAT} nice is
 “I invite with pleasure to the party the person who you think is nice”

²⁴ For thorough discussion on the Wackernagel position and the nature of the elements which can be hosted in this CP projection, see Tomaselli & Poletto (1995), Cardinaletti & Roberts (2003). For its counterpart in Romance languages (Tobler-Mussafia Law), see Benincà (2006).

We will do it in greater detail in the following paragraphs. Nevertheless it is worth investigating from now, why left dislocation can rescue the grammaticality of the sentence and to what extent the A-bar position (or non-governed position as the literature used to call it) plays a role in rendering the sentence acceptable.

5.2.6 *Matching under Oblique Cases*

As has been shown for matching under Structural cases, and as happens for most languages, if there is matching free relative clauses are generally well-formed. Nevertheless certain restrictions apply. In general, while Nominative matching is always accepted with no uncertainty in the judgment, a light decrement is observed with Accusatives, and some perplexities begin to arise with Oblique cases. Notice for instance the following Dative matching sentence:

- (152) Wem klassische Musik gefällt, gefällt normalerweise auch Literatur
 Whom_{DAT} classical music likes likes usually also literature
 “Who likes classical music, normally likes also literature”

Nothing should be wrong with this sentence, there is in fact both morphological and syntactic matching between the two verbs. As the verb of the subordinate clause and that of the main clause are identical, we expect them to assign exactly the same thematic role and the same case to the null head and the wh- respectively. Even though the overwhelming majority of the informants declare that this sentence is perfectly fine, some (honestly few) people judge the sentence even impossible, unless a resumptive pronoun in the Dative is inserted:

- (153) Wem klassische Musik gefällt, *(dem) gefällt normalerweise auch
 Whom_{DAT} classical music likes to-him likes usually also
 Literatur
 literature
 “Who likes classical music usually likes also literature”

Coherently, informants accepting matching with Dative tend to do it also with PPs, albeit even stricter requirements apply as far as the identity of the thematic roles of the PPs is concerned.

- (154) Ich gehe aus, mit wem du auch
 I go_{1st PERS SING} out with whom_{DAT} you_{2nd PERS SING} also
 ausgehst
 out-go_{2nd PERS SING}
 “I go out with whom you go out as well”
- (155) An wen du denkst, denke ich auch.
 About whom_{ACC} you think_{1st PERS SING} think_{1st PERS SING} I also
 “I think about whom you think about as well”
- (156) a. ?Die Mutter von Martin hat einen leckeren Kuchen gebacken, für
 The mother of Martin has a delicious cake baked for
 wen sie immer kocht
 whom_{ACC} she always cooks
- b. Die Mutter von Martin hat einen leckeren Kuchen gebacken für
 The mother of Martin has a delicious cake baked for
 denjenigen, für den sie immer kocht
 the-one_{ACC} for whom_{ACC} she always cooks
 “Martin’s mum baked a delicious cake for those for whom she normally cooks”

It is remarkable that in matching contexts, the reciprocal order of the free relative clause and the matrix clause is not crucial. Moreover, whilst (154) and (155) are definitely acceptable because matching is complete, (156) is dubious even though the thematic roles assigned by the two verbs *backen* and *kochen* are very similar: we expect both constituents to bear the Beneficiary role. The oddness of some sentences even under case matching has been highlighted for German by IDS-Grammar (1997), which clarifies that there must preferably be identity or strict proximity between the thematic role of the *wh*- and that of the main clause complement. This point has been underlined

also for Italian, in which the equivalent of (156) would sound odd, too and should be rather rephrased with a light headed relative clause²⁵.

5.2.7 Case mismatching: a complete description

a. The silent head is a PP

We will now see what happens under Case mismatching which involves a PP as a null head. One of the main ruling factors in this respect is Case Hierarchy: one configuration can be grammatical only provided that the Case assigned to the wh-pronoun is more marked than the Case assigned to the null head. One more decisive factor is the satisfaction of the requirements of the embedded verb on the wh-. If this last constraint is not met, the sentence is inevitably unacceptable. Mismatch in which the silent head is a PP cannot be grammatical, since there is no Case for the bare wh- which can be more marked than a PP and therefore respect the requirements imposed by Case Hierarchy. This is evidently shown by the ungrammaticality of the following sentences:

(157) **Ich habe ein Geschenk gekauft, für wen mir
 I have_{1st PERS SING} a present bought for whom_{ACC} me_{DAT}
 geholfen hat
 helped has
 “I bought a present for the person who helped me”

(158) *Ich habe ein Geschenk gekauft, für wen du
 I have_{1st PERS SING} a present bought for whom_{ACC} you_{NOM}
 liebst
 love_{2nd PERS SING}

²⁵ (8) a. ? La mamma di Martin ha preparato una torta deliziosa per chi cucina sempre
 The mum of Martin has baked a cake delicious for who cooks always
 b. La mamma ha preparato una torta deliziosa per le persone per cui cucina
 The mum has baked a cake delicious for the people for whom cooks
 sempre
 always
 “Martin’s mum baked a delicious cake for the people for whom she always cooks”

To be honest, there is a further reason why (8a) is hardly acceptable in Italian. This sentence is not impossible at all, but it would rather be interpreted differently, as if *chi* were the subject of the embedded clause. The most natural interpretation is that Martin’s mum has baked a cake for those who are always engaged in cooking. Here it is them who usually cook and not Martin’s mum. Recall that this is possible in Italian because the morphological opacity of the wh- enables to interpret it as if it were simultaneously governed by P and by the embedded verb. Here the missing-P strategy described for English does not effectively work either in Italian or in German.

“I bought a present for the person you love”

Both sentences are barely ungrammatical, although (157) is even worse than (158). In both examples, the null head is governed by the preposition *für*, it is therefore a PP. The *wh-* instead, which should be assigned case by the embedded verb, in (157) does not meet its requirements: it displays in fact Accusative case (the case governed by the preposition *für*, while it should be assigned Dative case as required by the verb *helfen*). In (158) instead, something partially different happens: the case required by the embedded verb is correctly displayed on the *wh-*, which is in the Accusative case, the null head (a PP), however, only has the P lexicalized.

In non-matching contexts a PP functioning as a head of the free relative clause can never remain silent: it needs to have the entire PP overtly realized. This leads to the consequence that there exist no free relative clauses in non-matching contexts, if the silent head is a PP²⁶. Although (158) is not acceptable, it does not sound as ungrammatical as (157) because *wen* respects the requirements on the *wh-* and could potentially be also directly governed by the preposition. This could happen for instance in indirect questions, in which there is no silent antecedent. Recall that the overt realization of the entire PP governed by the main verb in non-matching contexts is a parameter set by German, because, as has been shown in the previous paragraphs, in Italian it is well possible to have a P which governs a silent antecedent heading the *wh-chi*. The fact that (158) is impossible, while it would be acceptable if the matrix clause selected for a CP (an indirect question) instead of a DP (a free relative clause) is a further clue that there is actually an underlying null head governing the CP introduced by the *wh-* pronoun²⁷.

²⁶ Possible rescuing strategies will be proposed later in the dissertation.

²⁷ Surprisingly, even authoritative dictionaries such as Wahrig (2000) confuse free relative clauses and indirect questions. If we look up the lexical entry *wer*, three different uses are cited: (i) *Interrogativpronomen*, (ii) *Indefinitpronomen*, (iii) *Relativpronomen*. The first example that is cited to clarify the third possible meaning (it is a relative pronoun) is the following:

- (9) Ich weiß nicht, wer gekommen ist
I know_{1st PERS SING} not who_{NOM} come is
“I don’t know who has come”

It is self-evident that this is not a free relative clause but rather an indirect question.

b. The silent head is in the Dative

Here is a possible sentence, in which the matrix verb *helfen* assigns the Dative, while the embedded verb *brauchen* assigns the Nominative.

- (159) *Junge Leute sollten helfen, wem es braucht
 Young people should help whom_{DAT} it needs
 “Young people should help people who need it”

One of the problems with this sentence, is that the *wh-* pronoun bears the case required by the matrix clause (the Dative) and not the case selected by the embedded verb (the Nominative). Notice that differently from languages such as Ancient Greek or Gothic²⁸, no Case attraction can take place in German, therefore no strategy such as the lexicalization of the most marked Case irrespective of whether is assigned to the *wh-* or the null head can apply. In Greek or Gothic, this sentence would be perfectly fine in that it overtly realizes the more marked Case (the Dative). The second problem with this sentence is that, even if Case assignment were correctly carried out, due to Case Hierarchy, it would be impossible to maintain the head silent, if it is assigned the Dative and the *wh-* is assigned a Structural Case. This becomes clear if we observe the ungrammaticality of (160):

- (160) *Junge Leute sollten helfen, wer es braucht
 Young people should help who_{NOM} it needs
 “Young people should help people who need it”

Although the Case has been successfully assigned to the *wh-*, the result is ungrammatical because the Nominative is less marked than the silent Dative and cannot therefore display all the syntactic features borne by the Dative.

²⁸ Some possible examples of Case attraction in Gothic have been provided by Harbert (1983) and have then been cited in Bausewein (1991):

- (10) jah po - ei (=po so-ei) ist us Laudeikaion jus ussiggwaid
 und which_{ACC} ist aus Laodicea du lies
 “And read that that comes from Laodicea”
(11) pan-ei (=sa pan-ei) frijos siuks ist
 who_{ACC} love_{2nd PERS SING} sick is
 “Who you love is sick”

If the *wh-* is governed by a preposition selected by the embedded verb, the sentence is not unredeemable, although it sounds very odd.

- (161) ?Ich begegne gerne, mit wem deine Freunde Karten
I meet_{1st PERS SING} with-pleasure with whom_{DAT} your friends cards
spielen

play_{3rd PERS PL}

“I meet with pleasure the people with whom your friends play cards”

- (162) ?Er begegnete, mit wem er rechnete
He met_{3rd PERS SING} with whom_{DAT} he relied_{3rd PERS SING}

“He met whom he relied on”

(Bausewein, 1991)

- (163) ?Er begegnet, auf wen er gewartet hatte
He meets to whom_{ACC} he waited had_{3rd PERS SING}

“He meets who he waited for”

(*ibidem*)

All these combinations show that the silent head does not really need to be in a Structural Case, but grammatical configurations can also arise with Oblique silent heads, provided that the case of the *wh-* is richer in features (in the terms of nano-syntax) or more marked (if we adhere to Keenan & Comrie, 1977).

c. The silent head is in the Accusative

Here is a possible example:

- (164) *Ich habe endlich kennen gelernt, wen du bei den
I have_{1st PERS SING} finally got-to-know who_{ACC} you_{NOM SING} in the
Schwierigkeiten geholfen hast.

difficulties helped have_{2nd PERS SING}

“I finally got to know who you helped during difficulties”

What we observe is that the silent head is assigned Accusative Case by the matrix verb *kennen lernen*, while the embedded verb should select for the Dative. The case borne by the *wh-* is the Accusative and the sentence crashes, since the primary constraint on free

relative clauses is that they have to respect the requirements of the embedded verb. Recall that there are languages such as Ancient Greek, which I treated in § 3.7.3, which adopt as a strategy Case attraction and copy the most marked case onto the wh- regardless of the fact it is assigned by the main or by the embedded verb.

The same ungrammatical result would be reached even if the silent head were in the Accusative and the wh- borne Nominative Case:

- (165) *Hans lädt zum Restaurant ein, wer seinen Geburtstag
 Hans invites to-the restaurant PRT wh_{NOM} his_{ACC SING} birthday
 feiern will.
 to-celebrate wants
 “Hans invites to the restaurant who wants to celebrate his birthday”

Here ungrammaticality is caused by the fact that the silent head is assigned a Case which is lower in the Case Hierarchy (the Accusative) than the case borne by the wh-, which is the Nominative, as correctly required by the embedded verb *feiern*.

The question is definitely more complicated if we take into account a configuration in which the silent head is assigned Accusative Case and the wh- displays Dative Case or is governed by a preposition. On the basis of Case Hierarchy we would expect this configuration to be perfectly acceptable, as the two real constraints are satisfied. Recall that these requirements are (i) that the wh- displays the Case assigned by the embedded verb, and (ii) the Case displayed by the wh- is more marked than the Case of the silent head.

Nevertheless, grammaticality judgments provided by the informants show that this configuration is not always perceived as well-formed and people are rather skeptical to produce or even accept sentences like the following:

- (166) */?Ich hasse wem immer kalt ist
 I hate_{1st PERS SING} who_{DAT} always cold is
 “I hate people who are always cold”
 (167) */?Ich hasse wem Thriller gefallen
 I hate_{1st PERS SING} who_{DAT} thrillers like_{3rd PERS PL}
 “I hate people like thrillers”

Informants do not claim that they are completely out, as they do for the configurations we mentioned above, but they do not feel at ease either. In the literature however, there are some attestations which are typically cited as evidence in favor of the acceptability of this configuration, one of them is the following:

- (168) Ich suche aus, wem ich mich unterwerfe.
 I choose wh_{DAT}I me submit_{1st PERS SING}
 “I choose who I submit to”

(*Spiegel* 36/88, p. 210)

Nevertheless not all speakers consider this sentence as well-formed. Interestingly, some issues concerning generic or specific interpretation arise as well. Given the following sentence:

- (169) ?Ich beneide, wem du hilfst
 I envy_{1st PERS SING} Ø_{ACC} wh_{DAT} you help_{2nd PERS SING}
 “I envy who you help”

People say that, although they are not sure whether they would actually accept sentences like (169), if they did, they could only interpret it as generic, the meaning being: I am envious of whoever you happen to help because it is nice being helped by you. If one wants to indicate that envy is addressed to the very specific person who is being helped by you, some more indications have to be provided and the interpretation can be somehow forced towards this direction, being the default interpretation generic.

- (170) Ich beneide, wem du da gerade hilfst
 I envy_{1st PERS SING} Ø_{ACC} wh_{DAT} you there now help_{2nd PERS SING}
 “I envy who you help”

A decisive improvement in the acceptability of the sentences under this configuration (with the free relative clause in post-matrix position) can be noticed instead if the null head is Accusative and the wh- item is a *Pronominaladverb*; recall that using a pronominal adverb implies that the referent is inanimate:

- (171) Sie macht, wozu sie Lust hat
 She does what-of she delight has
 “She does what she feels like to do”
- (172) Sie kocht, worauf sie Appetit hat
 She cooks what-to she appetite has
 “She cooks what she has appetite for”
- (173) Jeder muß tun, wofür er bestimmt ist
 Every must_{3rd PERS SING} to-do what-for he decided is
 “Everybody must do what has been decided for him to do”
 (Spiegel 36/88, p. 217)
- (174) Ohne dadurch eine Befreiung zu erzielen, zerstört er, wovon er
 Without through-this a liberation to obtain destroys he what-on he
 abhängig ist.
 dependent is
 “Without obtaining a liberation from this, he destroys what he is
 dependent on”
 (W.Wieck, *Männer lassen lieben*, p. 115)

d. The silent head is in the Nominative

If we consider Case Hierarchy, the Nominative is the least marked Case and in theory, there should be no constraint on the grammaticality of this kind of sentences provided that the requirements on the wh- are always satisfied. Nevertheless, especially if the free relative clause is in post-matrix position, many sentences, even respecting these constraints sound decidedly odd:

- (175) ??Heute kommt, wen du in Paris kennen gelernt
 Today comes \emptyset_{NOM} who_{ACC} you in Paris got-to-know
 hast
 have_{2nd PERS SING}
 “Whom you got to know in Paris comes today”
- (176) ??Zu seinem Fest kam, wem er geschrieben
 To his_{DAT} party came_{3rd PERS SING} \emptyset_{NOM} who_{DAT} he written
 hatte.
 had_{3rd PERS SING}

“People to whom he had written came to his party”

- (177) ??Gestern kam, mit wem sie rechnete.
Yesterday came_{3rd PERS SING} \emptyset _{NOM} with who_{DAT} she counted_{3rd PERS SING}
“The person on whom she counted came yesterday”
- (178) ? Wem du das Buch geschenkt hast, ist dir gar
Who_{DAT} you the book donated have_{2nd PERS SING} is you_{DAT} definitely
nicht dankbar²⁹
not grateful
“The person to whom you donated a book is not grateful to you”

As we have just outlined, albeit Case Hierarchy is respected, silent Nominative heads do not indistinctly allow for any kind of free relative clause. A slight improvement takes place if the free relative clause is shifted to the beginning of the sentence. This could be due to a preference for German to display SV orders. Nevertheless, this change alone does not ensure that the output is grammatical.

Notice that even under this configuration, free relative clauses introduced by a pronominal adverb are decidedly better than PPs with animate reference.

- (179) Wovon er spricht interessiert mich gar nicht
What-of he speaks interests me absolutely not
“What he speaks about does not interest me at all”
- (180) Woran du denkst, hat kein Interesse für mich.
What-about you think_{2nd PERS SING} has no interest for me
“What you think is of no interest for me”

The pattern which clearly emerges is that there are specific constraints concerning the animacy of the referent. Animate entities are less “prone” to be maintained silent as heads, probably because of their richness in features. This interacts with the relatively scarcer morphological forms of inanimate entities, usually not employed in the dative form and rendered as a unique component in syntactic contexts in which the inanimate

²⁹ I will cite one of my informants’ comment with respect to this sentence, as it is revelatory of the general attitude towards this kind configuration: “This sounds something I might say, it’s fairly marked, and I might be the only one using it even jokingly”.

wh- would be governed by a P (see Bayer, Bader, Meng, 2000 for thorough discussion on the nature of the Dative).

Something that is worth wondering about is whether there is any device which allows to maintain the structure of a free relative clause and all the same guarantees that the sentences are always well-formed, even in contexts of mismatch and of disregarded Case Hierarchy. This possibility has already been sketched above for the configurations in which the Structural case of the wh- is not the same of the silent head in contexts in which there is animate reference and we will consider it in greater detail (§ 6).

5.2.8 All possible combinations: a brief summary

Before investigating if the language has some possibilities at its disposal to restore the grammaticality of impossible sentences, it will be fruitful to summarize in a table what all the possible configurations are and to what extent they are grammatical.

	Case of the wh- pronoun			
Case of the null head	NOMINATIVE	ACCUSATIVE	DATIVE	PP
NOMINATIVE	OK	OK	OK/?	OK/?
ACCUSATIVE	*/OK (only with inanimate reference)	OK	?	?
DATIVE	*	*	OK	?
PP	*	*	*	OK/?

6. Can ungrammatical free relative clauses be rendered grammatical?

6.1 Left dislocation as a rescuing device

There is actually a rescuing device for basically all ungrammatical free relative clauses of German, which consists in left dislocating the whole DP containing the free relative clause and inserting the obligatory resumption in the Case required by the main verb. It has already been noticed that when this happens in matching contexts, the result is markedness: pragmatic nuances are added, since there would be no reasons other than pragmatics to do it. The pragmatic effect is instead much more limited if left dislocation is used as a circumvention strategy to avoid ungrammaticality. It is in fact, not purely pragmatics which requires for it, but rather morpho-syntactic factors. Informants declare

that all the sentences which have been judged ungrammatical can be made acceptable if this strategy is applied. Notice that this is a peculiarity of German, since in most languages, left dislocating a free relative clause and then resuming it by means of a pronoun does not lead to any significant improvement in the grammaticality³⁰.

- (181) Wem unser Vorschlag nicht gefällt, der soll es sagen
 Who_{DAT} our proposal not likes he has-to it to-say
 “Who doesn’t like our proposal has to say it”

This sentence, for instance, would be considered ungrammatical if there were no resumption and the free relative clause appeared after the matrix clause, while in this form it is perfectly acceptable.

The same holds also for the contexts in which a silent head in the Accusative remains silent.

- (182) Wem immer kalt ist, (den) hasse ich
 Who_{DAT} always cold is, him_{ACC} hate_{1st PERS SING} I
 “I hate who is always cold”
- (183) Wem Thriller gefallen, (den) hasse ich.
 Who_{DAT} thrillers like_{3rd PERS PL} him_{ACC} hate_{1st PERS SING} I
 “I hate who likes thrillers”

It applies also when the null head is in the Dative or is a PP.

- (184) a. *Junge Leute sollten helfen, wem /wer es braucht
 young people should_{3rd PERS PL} to-help who_{DAT/NOM} it needs
 b. Wer es braucht, dem sollten junge Leute helfen
 who_{NOM} it needs him_{DAT} should_{3rd PERS PL} young people to-help
 “Young people should help who needs it”

³⁰ Partial exceptions for this have been supplied and discussed in (50).

- (185) a. *Ich habe ein Geschenk gekauft, für wen mir
 I have_{1st PERS SING} a present bought for whom_{ACC} me_{DAT}
 geholfen hat
 helped has
- b. Wer mir geholfen hat, für den habe ich ein
 who_{NOM} me_{DAT} helped has for him_{ACC} have_{1st PERS SING} I a
 Geschenk gekauft
 present bought
 “I’ve bought a present for the person who helped me”

Notice that informants regularly provide the sentence with a left dislocated free relative clause as an alternative in free variation with light-headed relative clauses:

- (186) a. *Ich gehe gerne aus mit wem/wer die Disko liebt
 I go_{1st PERS SING} with-pleasure out with who_{DAT/NOM} the disco loves
- b. Wer die Disko liebt, mit dem gehe ich gerne
 Who_{NOM} the disco loves with him go_{1st PERS SING} I with-pleasure
 aus
 out
- c. Ich gehe gerne aus mit demjenigen/dem, der die
 I go_{1st PERS SING} with-pleasure out with that_{DAT} who_{NOM} the
 Disko liebt
 disco loves
 “I go out with pleasure with the people who like the disco”

Notice that the insertion of resumption does not lead in any way to the restriction of the reference of the wh- pronoun. It is in fact still felicitous even if the generic interpretation is rendered obligatory by means of the formula *auch immer*:

- (187) Wer auch immer auf diese Idee kam, dem
 who_{NOM} also always to this idea came_{3rd PERS SING} him_{DAT}
 gebe ich Recht
 give_{1st PERS SING} I reason
 “Whoever came to this idea, I admit he was right”

Whilst in all these examples the use of left dislocation is the only way to maintain the structure of a free relative clause and simultaneously ensure grammaticality, there are also cases in which the sentence without being left dislocated would not be completely out, but would sound odd. Even in these cases, left dislocation is a powerful instrument to obviate the limits in the acceptability of the sentence and is therefore preferred to the unmarked version without resumption.

- (188) Wem viele Leute begegnen, ?(der) arbeitet als Lehrer
 Who_{DAT} many people meet_{3rd PERS PL} he works as teacher
 “He who meets many people works as a teacher”

As has been anticipated for the cases of matching in the Nominative, in which resumption only serves pragmatic purposes, the only possible limitation in the use of this strategy is the fact that resuming pronouns must necessarily be gendered. Morphology shows that the *wh-* item is inflected in the masculine form with the consequence that the resuming pronoun must be in the masculine as well. This could sound weird in all the cases in which world-knowledge inhibits a masculine reading.

- (189) ?Wer schöne Beine hat, dem stehen Röcke gut
 Who_{NOM} beautiful legs has him_{DAT} stay_{3rd PERS PL} skirts well
 “Skirts suit who has beautiful legs”
- (190) ?Wer schon mehrmals gebärdet hat, mit dem wollen
 Who_{NOM} already various-times delivered has with him want_{3rd PERS PL}
 alle Frauen sprechen, die in kurzer Zeit gebären werden
 all women to-speak who_{NOM FEM PL} in short time deliver will_{3rd PERS PL}
 “All women who have to deliver a baby in a short time want to talk with
 other women who have already delivered babies”

A part from these very narrow contexts, left dislocation reveals to be basically always successful. Interestingly, this possibility to use left dislocation as a syntactic instrument to restore grammaticality is a parameter of German and is not generally employed by the languages. To prove what we claimed about the inapplicability of this device in languages other than German, we could try to test this solution with Italian:

- (191) a. *³¹Lo deve dire a chi piace la nostra proposta
 it has-to to-say \emptyset_{NOM} to whom likes the our proposal
 b. */?³² A chi piace la nostra proposta lo deve dire
 \emptyset_{NOM} to whom likes the our proposal it has-to to-say
 c.* A chi piace la nostra proposta quello lo deve dire
 \emptyset_{NOM} to whom likes the our proposal he it has-to to-say

These sentences are in no way acceptable either with resumption or without. It could be argued that in Italian there exists a marginal possibility to resume non-matching free relative clauses, see the following sentence:

- (192) ?Chi disturba gli metti un brutto voto
 Wh_{NOM} disturbs him_{DAT} give_{2nd PERS SING} a bad mark
 “Give a bad mark to those who disturb”

Notice, however that this is something partially different from what happens in German. For Italian internal parametric rules, the plain version for this sentence would be:

- (193) a. A chi disturba metti un brutto voto
 To who disturbs give_{2nd PERS SING} a bad mark
 b. Metti un brutto voto a chi disturba
 give_{2nd PERS SING} a bad mark to who disturbs
 “Give a bad mark to those who disturb”

The plain version requires that the *wh-* is always preceded by the preposition selected by the matrix verb and which governs the silent head. As the preposition *a* introducing the Maleficiary argument in (192) is dropped, the silent head is rescued by means of a Dative pronoun *gli*. Provided that (192) is acceptable at all, it only pertains to colloquial language. *Chi* in (192), however, respects neither the requirements of the main verb, nor of the embedded verb.

³¹ In the interpretation *Who likes our proposal has to say it* this sentence is ungrammatical, and that is the meaning I want to test. Because of language specific constraints instead this sentence could be interpreted as *You have to say it to the people who like our proposal* and under this meaning it is grammatical.

³² The prolepsis of the free relative clause renders this sentence more acceptable than if it were collocated after the main clause. I personally consider this sentence impossible; however, provided that there is prolepsis, some people accept or produce this kind of sentences.

Differently from German, left dislocation does not manage to rescue all ungrammatical configurations, and this is probably the reason why it is not adopted by the Standard. If we observe the following cases of non-matching, left dislocation cannot restore grammaticality at any rate:

- (194) *A chi piace la musica lo incontri tutti i giorni
 To who likes the music him_{ACC} meet_{2nd PERS SNG} all the days
 “You meet every day people who like music”
- (195) *Per chi hai comprato il cellulare nuovo
 For whom have_{2nd PERS SING} bought the mobile-phone new
 egli/quello lo mostra ai suoi amici
 he/ that it shows to-the his friends
 “Who you bought a new mobile-phone for will show it to his friends”

It is clear that, in Italian, resumption is not an instrument to avoid ungrammaticality of mis-matching configurations, it is rather a means to “simplify” the internal structure of configurations which would be grammatical in any case if the requirements on the wh- and the constraints on the lexicalization of the P governing the null head – when selected by the matrix verb - are respected.

A question spontaneously arises: why does left dislocation in German rescue the grammaticality of the sentence? Two factors could allow for this:

- (i) Left dislocation makes the DP shift to a “non-governed”, an A-bar position. This makes this DP external to the rest of the clause and obviates any possible conflict.
- (ii) The element which allows for the restoration of grammaticality is the resuming pronoun, in that it lexicalizes the null head, which is normally kept silent.

Both factors certainly play a role: (ii) alone is not sufficient, as shown by the ungrammaticality of the Italian examples in (194-195); even (i) alone however is not effective, because simply eliminating (by externalizing it) a source for crash, does not provide a suitable argument for the main verb. A technical account for doubling will be sketched in the next paragraph (§ 6.2).

6.2 *Some formal approaches to left dislocation and syntactic doubling*

Phenomena such as left dislocation have been analyzed in the literature as instances of syntactic doubling.

A definition of syntactic doubling has been provided by Barbiers (to appear):

(196) (A subset of) the features of a morpheme are expressed phonologically twice or more.

At first glance it could seem that doubling is anti-economic, since it leads to duplicate the same item in the structure. Economy instead is a principle that requires that no superfluous derivational steps or elements occur. As has been convincingly shown by Poletto (2006), however, doubling can be actually considered an economy device: a complex constituent, in our case a big DP, is stripped and gives rise to two distinct items in which the features contained in the original complex constituent are distributed. The prediction made in Poletto (2006) is that the more an element has a complex featural composition, the more probable doubling will be. The salient features which have to be doubled in this construction are gender, and above all, case, which would otherwise remain opaque. If we assume that big DPs such as free relative clauses are internally layered, what we see in these instances of resumption is the stripping of the highest portions of the layered subtree, which moves them to a CP position; the rest of the syntactic information, specifically gender and case remains lower and is realized by the unstressed pronoun. Notice that these instances of syntactic doubling show that the highest item (the DP which realizes the free relative clause) is richer in features than the weak pronoun resuming it. This is a counterexample to Barbiers (2008)'s generalization according to which doubling takes place by means of a copying procedure. He claims in fact, that lower items are copied (entirely or partially) and then appear as two distinct items. This proposal, however, is not compatible with the fact that elements which appear high in the structure as a result of copying are richer in features than the element from which the copy derives. This approach therefore does not account for our data.

As we have seen, the strategy of left dislocating the free relative clause and then resume it by means of a weak unstressed pronoun is crucial also to rescue all non-matching free relative clauses in which the Case of the silent head is lower in the Accessibility Hierarchy than the Case lexicalized by the *wh*- meeting the requirements of the

embedded verb. Left dislocation is therefore not only a pragmatic device, but also a syntactic means exploited to circumvent constraints which would otherwise block the formation of this kind of construction.

6.3 *The nature of the resuming pronoun*

The resumptive pronoun of left dislocated free relative clauses, always has the form of the definite article *der, die, das*, which is regularly inflected and used also as a demonstrative and as a relative pronoun.

If we look up the lexical entry *der* in a monolingual German dictionary, such as Wahrig (2000), the following results are provided³³: (i) definite article masculine; (ii) definite article feminine Dative and Genitive, Genitive of all plurals; (iii) demonstrative pronoun; (iv) relative pronoun; (v) colloquial for the personal pronoun. In the origin *der, die (diu), das*, was used as a demonstrative and gave then rise to the relative pronoun. It is therefore a deictic in nature and maintains these prerogatives also when it is not used overtly as a demonstrative. It is different from the true personal pronoun *er* in that the latter has mainly an anaphoric value, while the former still contains deixis (Tomaselli, 2004). Recall, that although German has two distinct pronominal series for proximals and distals (*dies-* und *jen-*, respectively), as is in English and Italian, it still uses them far less extensively than other languages and uses very often *der, die, das*.

In dictionaries, there is no explicit mention of the fact that *der* can resume left dislocated items, nevertheless this use can be traced back to the meanings which have been outlined. Its compound nature – it is a deictic and can also serve as a personal pronoun – makes it the perfect candidate to resume items which have undergone movement.

- (197) Den Hans, den treffe ich jeden Tag im Zentrum
 The_{ACC} Hans him_{ACC} meet_{1st PERS SING I} every day in-the center
 “I meet Hans every day at the city-center”

This is a prototypical case in which a DP has been left dislocated, therefore topicalized, and needs to be resumed. The only difference with respect to left dislocated free relative clauses is the weight of the dislocated constituent.

³³ The original is: 1 (m. bestimmter Artikel), 2 (Gen. u. Dat. Sg. vom Art. „die“; Gen. Pl. vom bestimmter Art aller Geschlechter, 3. (Demonstrativpron.), 4. (Relativpron.), 5. (umgs. für das Personalpron.)

- (198) Wen du gestern zum ersten Mal im Kino gesehen
 Who_{ACC} you yesterday for-the first time in-the cinema seen
 hast, den treffe ich jeden Tag im Zentrum
 have_{2nd PERS SING} him meet_{1st PERS SING} I every day in-the center
 “I meet every day at the city-center who you met yesterday for the first
 time at the cinema”

Notice that in left dislocated free relative clauses, the resuming pronoun is always a gendered pronoun coindexed with the *wh*- and by chain (Rizzi, 2006), with the empty head. Using the neuter pronoun *das* would have led to ungrammatical results.

If we observe resumption, it clearly emerges that this *d*- pronoun *der*, *die*, *das* is syntactically a weak pronoun in the terms of Cardinaletti & Starke (1999) and tends to occupy fixed positions in the structure. The possible treatment of these German pronouns as weak has been evidenced by Frey (2004a). The presence of these pronouns in the structure enables us to make some points about the respective position of the verb and left dislocation – if the main clause is considered - and of the finite verb within the free relative clause.

6.4 *The position of the finite main verb under left dislocation*

Left dislocation of DPs or PPs is often discouraged by prescriptive grammars, in that it is perceived as purely colloquial and leading to undesirable syntactic consequences affecting the finite verb. The most striking syntactic consequence is that the finite verb is no more in the second position, but occupies the third position, giving rise to V3 phenomena³⁴.

The fact that the verb is not in the second position challenges standard assumptions according to which, in German, CP has only one projection whose head hosts the finite verb. This hypothesis was strictly maintained until recent time, since Standard German generally does not tolerate that the CP is filled by more than two items (one in the Specifier and the verb in the Head). Cases of left dislocation induce us to think that CP is a field which contains a number of hierarchically ordered projections, as has been hypothesized starting from Italian data by Rizzi (1997) and has been further refined in

³⁴ For a detailed discussion on V3 with pronouns in Old High German, see Tomaselli (1995).

the following years, by Benincà & Poletto (2004), Benincà (2006) a.o. and is now mapped as shown in (52), which I will repeat here as (199) for the sake of clarity:

- (199) [Force C° {_{Frame} [HT]C°}{ [**Relwh** *chi* C° *che*] _{topic}[LD] C°}{_{Oper}
[Focus]/[**Interrwh**/Quant] C°}[Fin C°

It is self-evident that resumption has to occupy an intermediate position between left dislocation and the finite verb. The precise position of these elements in the map of the left periphery is still disputed. Guidolin (2009) claims that these resumptive pronouns are to be placed in the Specifier of Contrastive Focus, as they cannot co-occur with it. I will just argue that they have a specific position in CP, which is to the right of HT and LD, and to the left of the verb.

The finite verb is necessarily lower in the syntactic structure, since it always follows resumption. I will label it *Wackernagel* position, since the resuming pronoun is an unstressed weak pronoun, whose position is fix. It tends to cliticize onto the verb and it is always the second clausal constituent.

Once it has been clarified what the reciprocal positions of the left dislocated free relative clause, its resumption and the finite verb are, it is now worth providing further evidence in favor of the high position of the wh- relative, which has been assumed at the beginning of this discussion.

7. The position of the wh- relative pronoun: evidence from German

On the basis of Italian data, it has been effectively shown by the scholars that the relative item is very high in the structure since it always precedes focus and even left dislocation. It has also been shown that it should not be confused with the homophonous wh- interrogative: tests on the reciprocal order of focalized and topicalized constituents and wh- interrogative have clearly highlighted that the latter is lower than them. If we suppose that the structure is universal, even tests applied on Italian data should suffice to effectively map the left periphery. Nevertheless, it is worth collecting evidence for it also on the basis of German data. Demonstrating it has a twofold advantage: on the one side it corroborates the hypothesis made on the cartography of the left periphery, on the other it reinforces the idea that German uses the same type of introducer that other languages use.

Some clues about the high position of the *wh*- come from a possible position of the finite verb in free relative clauses: although its normal position is a head position within the IP field, there are instances in which the finite verb enters the CP field:

- (200) Was du hast gemacht mit deinen Haaren, sieht aus wie du unter dem
 What you have_{2nd PERS SING} made with your hair seems as you under the
 Rasenmäher gewesen wärest.
 mower been were_{SUBJ 2nd PERS SING}
- (201) Verbessere was du hast gemacht!
 Improve_{IMP 2nd PERS SING} what you have_{2nd PERS SING} made
 “Improve what you made”

If we can find instances of verbs which access CP in free relative clauses, it means that their introducer is not at the right edge of CP, otherwise it would block the possibility for the finite verb³⁵ to enter the CP field. Interestingly (200) and (201) are Verb Third Cases, with the finite verb of the subordinate clause preceded both by the *wh*- and by the subject personal pronoun.

8. German free relative clauses introduced by a *d*- pronoun

8.1 *The morpho-syntax of d-free relative clauses*

It has been argued that *d*- free relative clauses deserve a special treatment, in that their syntactic behavior is not totally the same as *wh*- relatives. Understanding how they work, however, is crucial, in that I will argue that they are a constituting part of Standard German clefts.

The literature on *d*- free relative clauses is not abundant, this is due to diverse factors: firstly, they are perceived by many speakers as rather stiff, stilted, mainly belonging to a high stylistic register and mostly used in the language of the Bible (202); secondly, some speakers even refuse to express grammaticality judgments on them, because they maintain that they do not master them and that they would not be in a position to say

³⁵ The syntactic tree that I will propose will not contain a dedicated high projection for a relative *wh*-, since it is not really crucial for an effective formalization of the construction.

whether they are grammatical or not³⁶; thirdly, their use is restricted to very limited contexts, which we will outline, and is therefore not mentioned in most grammars.

- (202) Gelobt sei, der da kommt im Namen des Herrn
 Blessed be_{IMP 2nd PERS SING} who here comes in-the name the_{GEN} lord
 “Blessed is he who comes in the name of Lord”
 (Luke, 13, 31-35)

One of the few formal works specifically devoted to *d*-free relatives is a recent paper by Fuß & Grewendorf (2012), in which free relative clauses introduced by *d*-pronouns are alleged to be actually appositive relative clauses which have undergone haplology. I will discuss this point later, even if I will not adopt this perspective, since this account is not sufficiently explicatory of the syntactic behavior of *d*-relatives and of the absence of a lexicalized head. In any case, this work deserves to be carefully taken into consideration in that it provides useful descriptive information, which is surely a good starting point for further investigation. Before providing an analysis of *d*-free relative clauses, it will be worth supplying some examples, which could be of help:

- (203) Der die Vase zerbrochen hat, muss eine neue kaufen
 Who_{NOM MASC SING} the vase broken has must a new to-buy
 “Who has broken the vase has to buy a new one”
- (204) Der den Tod auf Hiroshima warf, ging ins
 Who_{NOM} the_{ACC} death at Hiroshima threw_{3rd PERS SING} went to-the
 Kloster, läutet dort die Glocken
 convent rings there the bells
 „Who threw the death on Hiroshima, went to the convent, so rang the bell“
 (M. L. Kaschnitz, *Hiroshima*)
- (205) Aber die das sagen, sind Leute, die
 But who_{NOM FEM PL}: this say_{3rd PERS PL} are_{3rd PERS PL} people who_{NOM PL}
 keine Ahnung haben oder nicht biken
 no idea have_{3rd PERS PL} or not to-bike

³⁶ Some informants who have been interviewed have marked all *d*-free relative clauses with a question mark, accompanied by the comment “nicht meine Varietät” (not my variety).

“But who says it is people who don’t have any idea or do not bike”

(http://www.radroutenplaner.hessen.de/mtb_info.asp?dbspalte=43)

(206) Den/ Die du uns empfohlen hast,
Who_{ACC MASC SING/FEM SING} you_{SING US} suggested have_{2nd PERS SING}
stellen wir nächste Woche ein
hire_{1st PERS PL} we next week PRT

“Next week we will assume who you suggested to us”

(Fuß & Grewendorf , 2012)

(207) Dem/ Der ich vertraue, solltest auch
Who_{DAT MASC SING/FEM SING} I trust_{1st PERS SING} should_{2nd PERS SING} also
du vertrauen
you_{SING} to-trust

“Who should trust who I trust as well”

(*ibidem*)

These sentences are all free relative clauses introduced by the *d*- pronoun. All these sentences are cases of matching, in which both the silent head and the *wh*- display the same case. As has been noticed for *wh*- free relative clauses, partial mismatching is allowed, provided that (i) the *d*- pronoun respects the requirement of the embedded verb; (ii) Case Hierarchy is respected. If all these conditions are met, the sentence can be grammatical, but there is no guarantee it is. Exactly as for *wh*- free relative clauses, the implication is that if the requirements are not met, the sentence is surely ungrammatical, however, even if all the above mentioned constraints are satisfied, case mismatches can be perceived as odd. Left dislocation as a rescuing device is employed also for *d*- free relative clauses: it can be either the unique strategy to restore the grammaticality of sentences which do not satisfy the requests in (i) and (ii), or it can disambiguate the relation in cases of mismatch which respect Case Hierarchy. If we compare *wh*- free relative clauses and *d*- free relative clauses, what we notice – and is also confirmed by Fuß & Grewendorf (2012) - is that case mismatches which are not restored by the insertion of resumption are more tolerated in *wh*- free relative clauses than in *d*- free relative clauses, although they are not totally impossible. This means that they are preferably resumed, but it is not a strict requirement. The possibility to use left dislocation as a device to create markedness is always preserved, especially for the prototypical cases in which there is Nominative matching.

- (208) Den sie liebt, *(dem) hilft sie immer gerne
 Who_{ACC MASC SING} she loves him_{DAT MASC} helps she always with-pleasure
 “She always helps with pleasure who she loves”
- (209) Dem der Dirigent vertraut, [?](der) empfängt sicherlich einen
 Who_{DAT MASC SING} the chief_{NOM} trusts he receives surely a_{ACC}
 guten Lohn
 good wage
 “The person whom the chief trusts surely receives a good wage”
- (210) Der seine Studenten langweiligt, (der) sollte
 Who_{DAT MASC SING} his_{SPL} students bores he should_{3rd PERS SING}
 sich engagieren
 himself to-make-an-effort
 “Who bores his students should make an effort to improve”

In the examples above the three possible functions of resumption are sketched: in (208) resumption is mandatory to ensure the grammaticality of the sentence; in (209) it is not obligatory, albeit strongly recommended, in (210) resumption is purely due to pragmatic factors.

Some more points have to be made, since they differentiate the morpho-syntactic behavior of *d*- free relatives from *wh*- free relatives. These points involve (a) the gender and number of the pronominal introducer and its earlier usages; (b) the position of the free relative clause with respect to the matrix clause.

8.1.1 *The gender and number of the pronominal introducer and its earlier usages*

A striking difference with respect to *wh*- free relative clauses is that *d*- pronouns are inflected not only for Case, but also for gender and number. This entails that these pronouns are more specified than *wh*- pronouns. The fact that this specification is necessarily encoded in the morphological form of the pronoun, leads to the consequence – which will be thoroughly discussed in the following part of the work – that free relative clauses introduced by *d*- are necessarily specific. By providing the pronoun with a gender and a number, the reference is definitely more precise and there is no possible clash between the gender which marks the relativizer and its potential resumption. The problems of oddness connected with mismatches due to a contrast

between world-knowledge and the morphological mark of masculine on the *wh*- item are all solved.

- (211) Die gestern gebärdet hat, (die) hat ein sehr schönes Kind
 Who_{FEM SING} yesterday delivered has she has a very beautiful baby
 bekommen
 received
 “She who has delivered a baby yesterday, delivered a beautiful baby”

The fact that the complete pronominal series of *d*- pronouns can be used³⁷, triggers further considerations about the phenomena taking place under morphological Case syncretism. It had been maintained in the preceding section concerning *wh*-relatives, that case-mismatches allowed by the Case syncretism of *das*, could potentially extend to other combinations if other morphological Cases coincide. Under *wh*- relatives the only possibility was evidently provided by *was*, while in *d*- free relatives *die* can serve as:

- (i) Nominative Feminine Singular
- (ii) Accusative Feminine Singular
- (iii) Nominative (All genders) Plural
- (iv) Accusative (All genders) Plural

As expected, due to the fact that Case filter involves morphological rather than abstract Case, all combinations of *die* are acceptable, provided that all other constraints on *d*- relative formation are respected.

- (212) Die die Vase zerbrochen hat, (die) treffe ich
 Who_{NOM SING} the vase broken has her_{ACC SING} meet_{1st PERS SING} I
 jeden Tag auf der Post.
 every day at the post
 “Every day I meet at the post the woman who broke the vase”

³⁷ Honestly, Fuß & Grewendorf (2012) argue that in *d*- free relative clauses the Genitive is not acceptable, while it is in *wh*- free relative clauses. I will not consider this aspect, since the Genitive has not been taken into account, apart from some very brief and marginal considerations.

- (213) Die du eingestellt hat, (die) ist sehr intelligent
 Who_{ACC FEM SING} you_{SING} hired has she is very clever
 “The person who you hired is very clever”
- (214) Die dich zum Konzert eingeladen haben, (die)
 Who_{NOM PL} you_{ACC SING} to-the concert invited have_{3rd PERS PL} them_{ACC}
 hattest du schon zu mehreren Festen eingeladen
 had_{2nd PERS SING} you already to many parties invited
 “The people who invited you to the concert have already been invited by
 you to many parties”
- (215) Die du mit deinem schlechten Benehmen verletzt
 Who_{ACC PL} you_{SING} with your_{DAT SING} bad behavior hurt
 hast, (die) haben dich verzeiht.
 have_{2nd PERS SING} they have_{3rd PERS PL} you_{ACC SING} forgiven
 “The people who you hurt because of your bad behavior have forgiven
 you”

Notice that for Case syncretism to allow mismatch, there must be correspondence either in gender or in number. *Der*, for instance, cannot permit case mismatch in that it is syncretic in the forms of:

- (i) Masculine Nominative Singular
- (ii) Dative Feminine Singular
- (iii) (Genitive Plural)

Mismatches can evidently involve case but not gender and number.

This phenomena could be connected with recent versions of Rizzi’s Relativized Minimality (2013). He maintains in fact, that there are asymmetries in the treatment of interveners between children and adults. Being interveners bundles of features, children are more restrictive than adults. Children can in fact extract only if there is full identity, while adults allow for extraction, even though the features of the intervener are not exactly the same as the crossing element. This indicates that when mismatching is taking place, even extraction is possible, provided that the syntactic information is recoverable.

Even though free relative clauses exploiting the demonstrative pronominal series, are not frequent in the languages of the world, this was not infrequent in previous stages of Germanic languages: they were used in Old English, in Old High German, Old Saxon and are still used – albeit they are not the only possibility – in the Bible, in *Plattdeutsch* and Bavarian.

- (216) salige sind oc undar thesaro managen thiudu thie
 blessed are_{3rd PERS PL} also among the many people, who_{NOM PL}
 hebbiad iro herta gihrenod
 have_{3rd PERS PL} their hearts purified
 “Blessed are among the people those who have purified their hearts”
 salige sind oc them hir mildi uuirdit hugi
 blessed are_{3rd PERS PL} also who_{DAT PL} here mild becomes soul
 “Blessed are also those whose soul becomes mild”
 (Delbrück, 1900; Old Saxon, *Heliand*, 830)³⁸

- (217) Thaz sitot themo ih biutu this brot
 This does who_{DAT SING I} offer this bread
 “Who I offer this bread to does this”
 (Delbrück, 1900; Old High German - South Rhine Franconian Dialect- *Otfried*,
 863-871)

As can be seen from the examples above, the use of the *d-* pronoun was already compatible with case mismatch. (217) with the *d-* pronoun in the Dative provides evidence for that.

For the principles of Case Hierarchy, a Case which is lower in the Accessibility Hierarchy cannot remain silent if it is assigned to the head by the verb of the matrix clause. Here in fact, the Accusative resumptive pronoun *den* is lexicalized within the matrix clause, with the free relative clause in post-matrix position.

Here is a plain example of a *d-* relative from a 19th century text, under case matching:

³⁸The whole book is available at:
http://archive.org/stream/grundrissdserver06bruggoog/grundrissdserver06bruggoog_djvu.txt. The examples which have been cited are not really free relative clauses, in the sense we intended so far, they are rather pseudocleft sentence, since their matrix clause is a copular sentence. The present purpose however, was to show that *d-* pronouns were used in early stages of the languages as free relative clause introducers.

Notice, that as in *wh*- relatives of German, Italian has no ban on the collocation of the free relative clause in post-matrix position. If there were no resuming pronoun lexicalized, we could not detect that the free relative clause actually occupies two different positions in (222a) and (222b).

Right dislocation obviously has its counterpart in left dislocation: German *d*-free relative clauses can always be left dislocated and resumed along the same lines of *wh*- free relatives.

Before turning to the analysis of the semantic content of *d*- free relative clauses, it is worth discussing one of the most influential accounts which have been proposed for this construction: I will examine Fuß & Grewendorf (2012)'s proposal. They have maintained that *d*- free relatives are not really “free”, but rather appositive relative clauses whose antecedent has been canceled because it is phonologically identical to the relative pronoun. In other words, a *d*- free relative clause is claimed to be a relative clause in which there is full identity between the antecedent and the relative pronoun, with the result that the antecedent is simply canceled. They define this process in terms of syntactic haplology. Haplology taking place in free relatives is allegedly the same that can be observed in some German words (223) and predicts that under identity one of two adjacent items is eliminated.

(223) *Zaubererin > Zauberin
“magician (feminine)”

(Fuß & Grewendorf, 2012)

This analysis however, has some evident weak points:

- (i) The silent head cannot be simply canceled because of homophony, otherwise there would be no explanation for all the cases in which the head is assigned a Case which is diverse from the Case borne by the relativizer. This is confirmed by the (at least partial) acceptability of sentences like this:

- (224) Dem unser Vorschlag nicht gefällt, (der) soll es sagen⁴¹
 Who_{DAT} our proposal not likes he must_{3rd PERS SING} it to-say
 “Who doesn’t like our proposal has to say it”
- (ii) Even in German, two formally identical items having two different functions in the sentence can be felicitously stacked one after the other and the omission of one of them would lead to ungrammatical results.
- (225) Die Frau, die die rote Bluse trägt, hat mir gestern
 The woman who_{NOM FEM SING} the red blouse wears has me_{DAT} yesterday
 beleidigt.
 injured
 “Yesterday the woman who wears the red blouse injured me”
- (iii) To account for the actual existence of two identical forms one after the other, it should be at least postulated that for deletion to take place, the two identical forms should be also coindexed, otherwise the analysis is hyper-productive. The distinction however, should involve the syntax and not just LF.
- (iv) The stacking of two identical elements is attested also in free relative clauses with a generic meaning in languages such as Italian:
- (226) Checchè⁴² ne dica tuo marito, io ho ragione
 Whatever it says your husband I have_{1st PERS SING} right
 “whatever your husband may say, I am right”

⁴¹ This becomes all the more clear if we take into consideration for a moment also pseudocleft sentences, which we will investigate further on in the discussion. In cases of mismatch, the free relative clause is resumed by *das*, which can in no way be interpreted as the head of the relative clause.

- (12) Der du eine Puppe geschenkt hast, das ist meine kleine Tochter.
 Who_{DAT} you a doll donated have_{2nd PERS SING} this is my little daughter
 “The child to whom you donated a doll is my little daughter”

⁴² *Checchè* is the fusion of *che* + *che* (what + what).

For all those reasons, I prefer to treat *d*- free relative clauses as actual free relatives whose head is silent, because of the specific nature of the construction and not because of syntactic haplology.

Understanding what the nature of this silent head is, is definitely not trivial. I deem that its syntactic status is deeply connected with the semantics of this kind of clauses, which differentiates them from *wh*- free relatives. Thorough investigation of the semantics of this construction will be of help also to refine the syntactic account.

8.2 *The semantics of d-free relative clauses*

The semantics of *d*- free relative clauses strongly diminishes the number of contexts in which they can be employed with respect to *wh*- free relatives. It is worth outlining from the beginning what these semantic features are and then discuss them on the basis of the data. These characteristics are:

- (i) specificity
- (ii) exhaustiveness

The requirement for specificity blocks any kind of indefinite reading and makes these pronouns incompatible with expressions such as *auch immer*, which overtly mark generic interpretation. This request for specificity is clear in all the grammatical sentences which have been proposed so far and becomes all the more clear if we consider speakers' attitudes towards this kind of sentences. Some of them claim that they feel more at ease in using *d*- introducers if the sentence contains another deictic expression such as *hier, dort, da* (here, there...). The preference for the insertion of this type of adverbs can be easily accounted for, because it contributes to prevent any possible generic reading, by exactly referring to a specific person⁴³.

⁴³ *D*- free relatives are generally not found with inanimate reference, even though it is not completely impossible. Examples such as () are considered extremely marginal:

- (13) */?Das du gekauft hast, kaufe ich auch
 This you bought have_{2nd PERS SING} buy_{1st PERS SING} I too
 "I buy what you have bought, too"

A possible explanation for the ban on the use of *das*, can be traced back to the fact that even in headed relative clauses, *das* is often substituted by *was*:

- (14) Alles, was ich gekauft habe, gefällt mir gut
 All what I bought have_{1st PERS SING} likes me_{DAT} good

- (227) Den du da siehst, arbeitet als Arzt im
 Who_{ACC MASC SING} you there see_{2nd PERS SING} works as doctor in-the
 Krankenhaus
 hospital
 “(The man) who you see there works as a doctor at the hospital.”

There is only one person who can identify with the description provided in the free relative clause, and this is the only possible interpretation for a *d*- pronoun in the singular. If the *d*- relative is introduced by a form of plural (either *die* or *denen*) the interpretation is pretty the same: the relative has to refer to an identifiable group of people and not to mankind in general.

- (228) Die auf dich jeden Morgen auf dem Marktplatz
 Who_{NOM PL} for you_{SING} every morning at the market-place
 warten, haben zu viel Geduld
 wait_{3rd PERS PL} have_{3rd PERS SING} too much patience
 “Who waits for you every morning at the market place are too patient”

The example above is strictly connected with exhaustiveness as well. If one person or a group of people is referred to, it has a maximizing implicature. This characteristic, which is peculiar of *d*- free relatives, is also shared by other constructions. There is abundant literature (Declerck, 1988; Kiss, 1999; Hedberg, 2000) on the fact that the exhaustiveness implicature is also displayed in clefts and in some types of Foci such as *only-Foci*:

- (229) Only Mary translated the sentence correctly
 (230) It was Mary that translated the sentence correctly

Both the sentences in (229) and (230) and the examples of *d*- free relative clauses display this semantic peculiarity. There is only one person or one selection of

-
- “I like all I bought very much”
 (15) Ein guter Freund ist das Schönste was es auf der Welt gibt
 A good friend is the best what there in the world is
 “A good friend is the best thing in the world”

This could be one reason why *das* has not completely entered *d*- free relative clauses.

people for whom the value of the utterance is true, and this excludes anybody else. The fact that this characteristic is shared by *only*-Foci and clefts comes as no surprise, since, when used with pragmatic purposes, clefts are certainly focalization devices. It is instead not that clear why these semantic features should involve *d*- free relative clauses and why their semantics differentiate them from *wh*- free relatives. Recall that while *wh*- relatives can also be interpreted generically, *d*- free relatives cannot. One of the reasons for that could reside in the nature of the silent head of *d*- relatives, which is not the same as *wh*- relatives.

Some clues help us to better identify what the structure of the silent head of *d*- free relatives is: one of them is that they preferably appear together with deictic items such as place adverbs, one second reason is that *d*- pronouns are themselves deictic in nature and not simply anaphoric. The observation that deixis is a hallmark of this kind of clauses implies that also the silent head bears some deictic features which are mirrored in the overt part of the clause. The silent head of *d*- free relatives contains at least these features: [+ animate; + gender; + number; + specific; + exhaustive]. An element which could display all these features and simultaneously serve as a head which could optionally be kept silent is the weak unstressed pronoun *der/derjenige* which can obviously bear number and gender information as well. Clues that *der*⁴⁴ is potentially the silent head of this kind of free relatives are supplied also by the way in which speakers rephrase all *d*- free relatives, when they are asked to provide an alternative. Looking at the following pairs could be of help:

- (231) a. Den du mir empfohlen hast,
 Who_{ACC MASC SING} you me_{DAT} recommended have_{2nd PERS SING}
 kenne ich seit schon langem
 know_{1st PERS SING} I from already long
 “I have known the person that you recommended to me for a long
 time”
- b. Den/denjenigen, den du mir empfohlen
 that who_{ACC MASC SING} you me_{DAT} recommended
 hast, kenne ich seit schon langem
 have_{2nd PERS SING} know_{1st PERS SING} I from already long

⁴⁴ I use the form *der* for simplicity, but I obviously refer to all the forms of this pronominal paradigm.

“I have known the person that you recommended to me for a long time”

Recall that it was the fact that the silent head is probably a pronoun of the *d*-type, so bearing the same morphological form as the relative clause introducer, that has induced Fuß & Grewendorf (2012) to formulate an account in terms of haplogy. Hence, even if their syntactic account provided for the construction is different from the one I propose, they postulate the same subjacent head.

It remains to be explained what the connection with clefts could be, since free relative clauses are certainly not used as focalization devices. Their linking is not random: as we will see in the following chapter about clefts, I will maintain that the subordinate clause of Standard German clefts is actually a free relative clause of the *d*-type, and it is namely this semantic coincidence with the semantics of the subordinate clause of clefts, which makes *d*-free relative clauses the perfect candidate to construe cleft sentences and contributes in providing them with this value in German. Both *d*-free relatives and clefts need to express topic information, with a very specific reference and a requirement for exhaustiveness. If we assume that cleft sentences are formed by a *d*-free relative clause, it is now clear that their investigation is crucial in that it enables to better understand how this construction works.

Nevertheless, before turning to “true” clefts, (*es*-clefts formed by a copular sentence and a subordinate clause introduced by a *d*-pronoun) and analyze them in detail, it is worth making clear what the main characteristics of a tightly connected construction are, namely the so-called *pseudocleft sentences*.

9. A possible account for free relative clauses in German: summing up

Once a detailed picture of free relative clauses in German and in other languages has been drawn, we can now try to outline a syntactic analysis which accounts for the linguistic phenomena which have emerged when the data have been observed.

First of all, on the basis of cross-linguistic evidence, it has been made clear that the underlying structure of free relative clauses require that there is always a head, which is kept silent, but has to satisfy the syntactic requirements of the matrix verb. This has been proved by applying different diagnostic tests, which have outlined evident

asymmetries in the syntactic behavior of embedded interrogative clauses (CPs) and free relative clauses (DPs):

- (i) Respect of Case Hierarchy: in embedded interrogative clauses, the only requirements are on the *wh-* item, which has to display the Case assigned by the embedded verb; there is no interaction with the Case which the matrix verb would assign

(252) Ich weiß nicht, wer zur Party kommt
 I know_{1st PERS SING} not wh_{NM} to-the party comes
 “I don’t know who comes to the party”

In free relatives instead, for the sentence to be grammatical, the matrix verb cannot govern a Case which is lower in the Accessibility Hierarchy than the Case displayed by the *wh-*. If we compare (a) with (b), the contrast is clear:

(253) *Ich kenne nicht, wer zur Party kommt
 I know_{1st PERS SING} not wh_{NM} to-the party comes
 “I don’t know who comes to the party”

- (ii) Case mismatching: along this same line of reasoning, if there were no silent head, no problems of mismatch should arise. Italian is instructive in this respect. If the *wh-* is governed by a preposition, and the matrix verb selects for Accusative Case, even though Case Hierarchy is respected, the sentence is ungrammatical:

(254) *Invidio a chi vanno bene le cose
 Envy_{1st PERS SING} to-who go_{3rd PERS PL} well the things
 “I envy people who things go well”

I have claimed that this is due to the fact, that neither syntactically, nor purely morphologically, can the selectional requirements of the *wh-* be satisfied. If there were no silent head, as in embedded interrogative, such restrictions would not apply:

(255) Non so a chi vadano bene le cose
 Not know to-who go_{3rd PERS PL} well the things
 “I don’t know anyone for whom things always go right”

All these arguments, which are corroborated cross-linguistically, lead to assume a syntactic configuration in which the free relative clause is a DP, in which a silent head governs a CP introduced by a pronominal relativizer, either a *wh*- or a *d*- pronoun.

We have now to formally account for the acceptability and unacceptability of certain configurations in which there is no case-matching. It has already been stated that in German the case assigned by the embedded verb to the *wh*- always has to be displayed regardless of the fact it is more or less marked than the Case assigned by the matrix verb to the *wh*-. Provided that these requirements are met, Case Hierarchy plays a role: the Case of the silent head can never be more marked than the Case displayed by the *wh*-. Notice that the cases which are proner to be kept silent are Structural Cases. There is a precise reason for that.

Even though Structural Cases are not lexicalized, this does not entail the loss of unrecoverable information. Structural Cases are also labeled “core cases”, since they can be easily identify because they bear prototypical features. They are purely syntactic cases: even though they are not overtly realized, there is no risk to lose unrecoverable semantic content.

One of the most interesting aspects however, is how the ungrammaticality of certain configurations, which do not respect the requirements that we have described, can be rescued. As has been described in the previous paragraphs, there is actually a rescuing device, which is left dislocation. Data by informants from different areas of Germany confirm that all ungrammatical sentences containing a non-matching free relative clause can be rendered grammatical if the free relative clause is left-dislocated and then resumed by a *d*- pronoun that displays the Case governed by the matrix verb. Having the resuming pronoun respecting the syntactic requirements of the matrix clause enables to simultaneously satisfy the requests of both verbs, although the head is not lexicalized. This *d*- pronoun is a weak unstressed pronoun, which occupies a Spec position in the left periphery. Being the *wh*- pronoun morphologically a masculine, also the *d*- pronoun displays Masculine gender. The presence of the resuming pronoun causes V3 phenomena usually associated with the left dislocation of DPs. The same syntactic behavior described for *wh*- free relative holds also for *d*- free relatives, with a slight

preference for *d*- relatives to be always in front of the matrix clause and, seemingly, the impossibility for them to appear in the *Nachfeld*, unless there is no right dislocation.

Although the syntax of the two types of relatives is very similar, there is a crucial difference in the semantics of *wh*- and *d*- free relative clauses, with the latter covering only a subgroup of meanings of the former. While *wh*- relatives are well compatible with a generic interpretation and can be extended by expressions such as *auch immer*, *d*- relatives cannot. They are only allowed in contexts in which the reference is specific and the reading is exhaustive. They have nearly a deictic value, which is confirmed by the preference for some informants to insert a truly deictic item within the free relative clause. This semantic difference between *wh*- and *d*- relatives, can be accounted for if we assume that the two silent heads are different in nature. The silent head that can be hypothesized for *wh*- relatives is an underspecified version of the head which can be postulated for *d*- relatives, which would probably have the form of a *d*- pronoun if it were lexicalized. Regardless of the morphological forms we can postulate for it, we can identify a bundle of features for the head of *d*- relatives: [+ animate; + gender; + number; + specific; + exhaustive]. The silent head in *wh*- free relatives instead, does not necessarily bear all these features: it does not need to be animate, to be specific and to be exhaustive. As has been shown also thanks to cross-linguistic data and the diagnostic tests provided by quantifiers, the silent head of free relative clauses must be a classifier, which is supplied with different amounts of features depending on the type of free relative clause taken into consideration: generic, specific, etc.

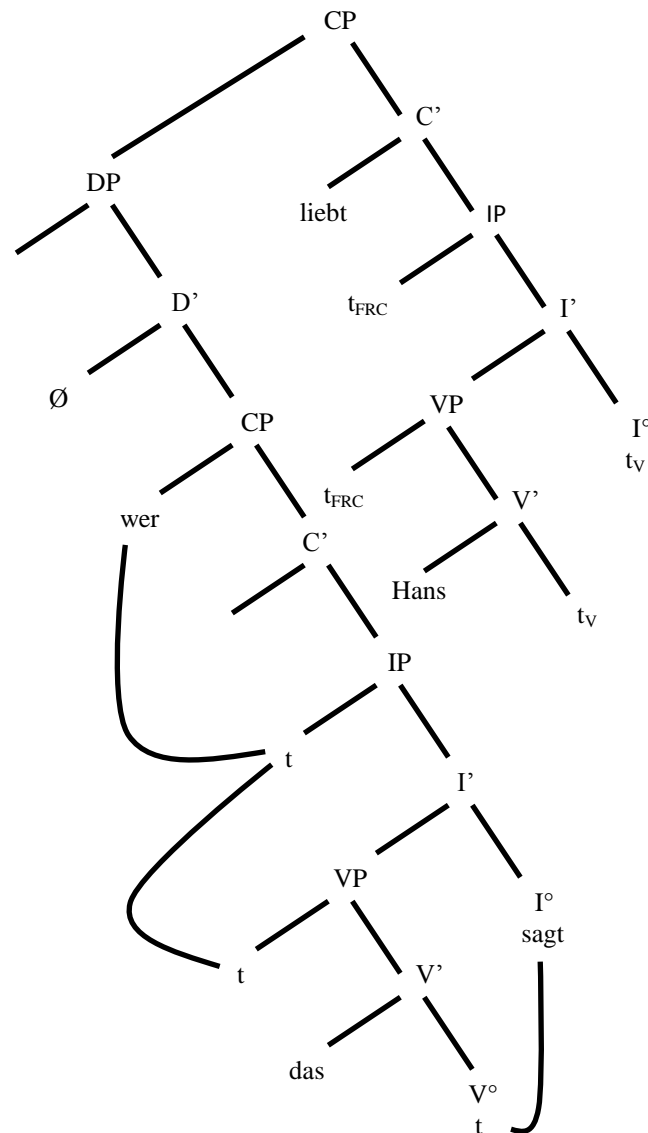
10. A formal representation for free relative clauses: syntactic trees

(i) Free relative clauses: **tree 1**

The syntactic tree for free relative clauses show that they are a DP in nature, containing a null head, which governs the CP introduced by the *wh*- item or the *d*- pronoun respectively. Depending on the syntactic function of the free relative clause, the case and role assigned to it by the matrix verb, it can either be in subject or in object position. Here I propose a paradigmatic case, in which the free relative clause serves as a subject for the main clause. Of course, if it were an object it would be placed in the Complement position of the main verb.

Tree 1

Wer das sagt, liebt Hans



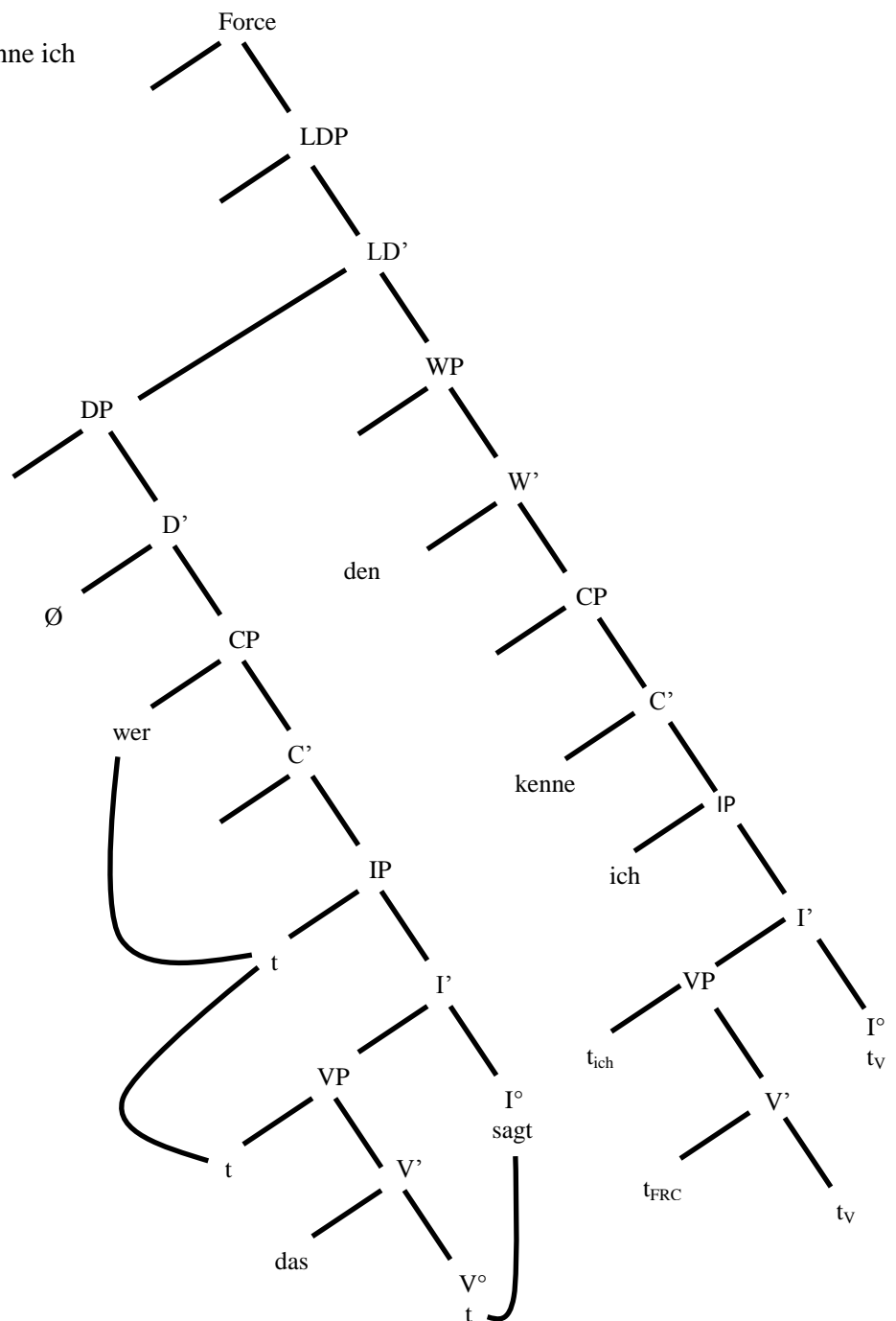
(ii) Left dislocated free relative clauses: **tree 2** (*Wer das sagt, den kenne ich*)

This second syntactic tree represents the case in which left dislocation has been used to restore the grammaticality of the sentence, in a mismatch context, this means in a case in which Case Hierarchy is not respected and the grammaticality can be restored only in that the source for mismatch is weakened and the obligatory requirements are met. Notice however, that the syntactic structure would not change if left dislocation were employed to create markedness. As can be seen from the syntactic tree, the whole DP containing the free relative clause is collocated in the Specifier position of a projection labeled LDP, which normally hosts left dislocated items. Since the resuming pronoun is

an unstressed weak pronoun, which tends to cliticize onto the subject and have a fixed position as the second clausal constituent, along the lines of current literature, I hypothesize it is placed in Wackernagel position. The fact that the finite main verb of this kind of constructions enters the CP field is confirmed by the fact that when resumption is not in the Nominative serving as the subject of the main verb, the syntactic subject always comes after the verb.

Tree 2

Wer das sagt, den kenne ich



CHAPTER 2.

Cleft sentences in standard and colloquial German

1. What is a cleft sentence?

Defining cleft sentences is very problematic without providing at least an initial syntactic account for them. The term was first coined by Jespersen (1937) and the word choice *cleft* clearly signals Jespersen's idea that clefts are the result of splitting a simple sentence into two parts. If we consider the lexical entry *to cleave* and look it up in the dictionaries, the descriptions are univocal:

cleave /kli:v/ vb (cleaves, cleaving, cleft, cleaved, clove, cleft, cleaved, cloven)

1. to split or cause to split, esp. along a natural weakness
2. (transitive) to make by or as if by cutting: *to cleave a path*
3. when intr, followed by through: to penetrate or traverse

Etymology: Old English *clēofan*; related to Old Norse *kljūfa*, Old High German *klioban*, Latin *glūbere* to peel

(<http://www.wordreference.com/definition/cleave>)

Cleft is the irregular past form of *cleave*, even though the form has currently been grammaticalized and the term *clefted* is normally used. Regardless of the number of different analyses of clefts, the term has been maintained as such and translated in different languages: *phrase clivé* (French), *frase scissa* (Italian), *Spaltsatz/Spannsatz* in German.

For the moment, as a starting point, I will provide Lambrecht's definition for clefts (2001: 466): "[a cleft sentence is] a complex sentence structure consisting of a matrix clause headed by a copula and a relative or relative-like clause whose relativized item is coindexed with the predicative argument of the copula". The caution in defining the kind of subordinate clause represented by the cleft is far from being superfluous. The question is not trivial and will be addressed in the course of the dissertation. The nature of the "argument of the copula" needs to be further clarified as well, especially with respect to its predicative status. Clefted constituents are generally considered a focus, which can be either contrastive or new-information, this is the reason why cleft

sentences are often referred to as focalization devices. Although the fact that this argument has pragmatic value is basically undisputed, there has been much discussion in the literature as far as the most proper label is concerned: Akmajian (1970) and Higgins (1979) propose to adopt the label “focus”, Huddelstone (1971) used the term “identifier”, Collins (1991) suggested “highlighted constituent”, Heycock and Kroch (1999) “counterweight”, Den Dikken (2006) “X-value”. The terminological choice is not that simple: as a number of clues clearly show, the clefted constituent of a copular sentence, for instance, cannot always be syntactically and semantically overlapped with foci. Just to cite one of these differences, quantifiers cannot be clefted while they can be focalized. The other solutions which have been proposed do not seem to be satisfactory either. In the awareness of all the theoretical implications of such a word choice, the label “focus” will be adopted.

Once the main elements which form cleft constructions have been supplied, it is now possible to schematize their basic structure:

[copular sentence = (*pronominal item*) + (*copula*) + *focus*] + [subordinate clause]

Some of the elements inserted within the copular sentence have been bracketed, since not all languages displaying this construction have the same form for copular sentences and clefts in particular. There are clear parametrical differences in forming this construction among languages that are typologically close to each other such as Italian, French, English, or German, and more striking ones have to be observed if we consider languages which are typologically more at distance.

2. The structure of the copular clause of clefts

Since cleft sentences are always formed by a main copular clause and a subordinate clause, it is worth analyzing what copular sentences look like, what their basic structure is and what patterns of agreement they display. Before analyzing the language specific rules governing copular sentences in German, however, I will briefly sketch some of the most influential classifications which have been proposed for copular sentences. This type of sentence conforms to this general model:

XP₁ *be* XP₂¹

Although a number of different labels has been proposed, scholars agree on distinguishing at least two types of copular sentences: *predicational* and *specificational*. In a double-NP copular sentence, the main difference between the two types is the *referentiality* of the second NP. In predicational copular sentences the second NP is not referential, while in specificational copular sentences it is (1)

(1) His supper is food for the dog

(Akmajian, 1970)

Two different interpretations apply to this sentence: (i) the supper is used as food for the dog; (ii) the content of his supper is food for the dog. In (i) a property of *his supper* is predicated, in (ii) the second NP specifies what *his supper* is made of. This is the reason why Akmajian (1970), who made up this example, used the labels *predicational* to refer to the type in (i) and *specificational* to refer to the type in (ii). More fine-grained proposals have been suggested as well. I will just cite one of the most influential: Higgins (1979) hypothesized a four-way distinction for copular sentences, adding two points to the canonical classification:

- a. predicational
- b. specificational
- c. identificational
- d. identity statements

As Higgins correctly points out, copular sentences are often ambiguous on paper, and their possible classification depends on the interpretation we provide to them.

In the 90s there have been attempts to reduce the types of copular sentences to the broad distinction referential/non-referential. Verheugd (1990) argues that specificational copular sentences can be treated as *inverse copular sentences*, this means

¹ Of course for the copular sentence to maintain its status, the second XP cannot be a past participle, otherwise the sentence could still remain possible with certain classes of verbs, for instance, it could give rise to a passive in English if the verb is transitive, but it would completely change its status.

sentences in which the superficial word order is derived transformationally from the underlying subject-predicate order; therefore the predicate can be raised and appear in front of the copula. Heggie (1988) and Moro (1997) take the same tack. The high number of different copular constructions, however, has induced some scholars to think of many *be*'s (Akmajian 1970, Higginbotham 1987). Nevertheless, the Generative literature (Moro 1997, Heycock & Kroch 1999) - but not only this – has tended to adopt the approach according to which there is only one copula which may anyway differ in its internal structure on the basis of the type of copular constructions that it gives rise to. The latter is the hypothesis that will be accepted in the present dissertation, since it enables to account for all the possible configurations which are instantiated in clefts and there would be no real semantic reason to justify the existence of different verbs for each typology. Anyway this aspect will not be discussed in detail, since it is not crucial for the present discussion.

All the scholars in favor of the one-*be* analysis, albeit in different variants, propose an “inverted” structure which enables to account for basically all the combinations and to provide a unified theory of copular sentences. Most of these linguists share the idea that the copula takes a *small clause* as its complement. If the subject is regularly preceded by the copula, the result is a predicative sentence in the unmarked word-order, if, instead, the predicate moves past the copula, it gives rise to a specificational copular sentence. Here is a scheme proposed in Heycock (2012) to summarize the two possible derivations²:

- (2) *be* [SC Subject Predicate]:
 - a. Subject *be* [SC <Subject> Predicate] Canonical predicative sentence
 - b. Predicate *be* [SC Subject<Predicate>] Inverse predicative (= specificational sentence)

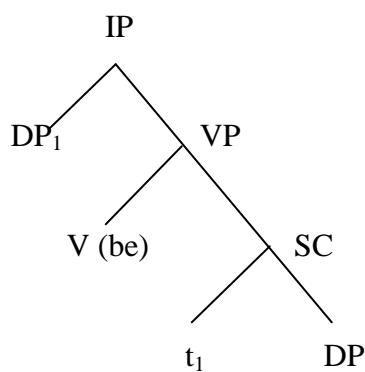
A great deal of work has been carried out concerning the internal structure of small clauses as well. Stowell (1981) proposed to analyze small clauses as a sort of adjunct structure, where a DP serving as a subject is adjoined to an XP related to a lexical head. This has as a consequence that the small clause only has a predicational relation, in which there is no mediating head. It would be as if a small clause were

² The author says that angle brackets refer to the starting point of the constituent.

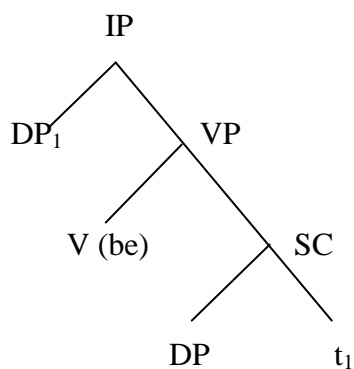
actually a maximal projection but did not have the internal structure of a phrase. More recent proposals claim that the small clause is the projection of a functional head. There is a selectional relation between a copula and its predicate and the predicate can therefore be extracted, whilst there is allegedly no such relation of selection between the copula and the subject; extraction from the latter is therefore claimed to be blocked (Moro 1997).

The structures that he proposes for copular sentences are the following:

(3) CANONICAL



(4) INVERSE



Provided that, on paper, in absence of any clues given by the context or by prosody, certain copular sentences still remain ambiguous, some tests have been proposed by Den Dikken (2006)³ in order to distinguish between specificational and

³ Den Dikken (2006) applies these tests in order to distinguish between predicational and specificational pseudoclefts, being the latter the object of his investigation. However clefts are among the core topic of

predicational copular sentences. The methods that he suggests to apply mostly refer to pseudoclefts, but can be easily extended to the copular clause of cleft sentences.

One first diagnostic test proposed in Den Dikken (2006) is *reversibility*: specificational 77r sentences are generally reversible, although there exist specificational copular sentences in which the order of the elements cannot be changed. A second characteristic, as Declerck (1988) already maintained, is that “specificational copular sentences are the only type of copular sentences that show *connectedness*⁴”.

- (5) John_i is important to himself_i

Another crucial factor which distinguishes specificational and predicational copular sentences are the *restrictions on extraction*, which have been noticed basically by all influential literature. Some potential limitations have already been mentioned when Moro’s model has been described (Heggie (1988), Moro (1997), Heycock & Kroch (1999) a.o.).

- (6) a. I believe that the cause of the riot was the picture of the wall
b. *Which picture of the wall do you believe that the cause of the riot was?
c. *Which wall do you believe that the cause of the riot a picture of was?
d. *Which riot do you believe that the cause of was a picture of the wall?
e. *The cause of which riot do you believe was a picture of the wall?

(Den Dikken 2006)

A further argument distinguishing specificational copular sentences is that the focused constituent determines the value of the item with which it is coindexed and receives focal stress. Declerck (1988) identifies four ways of focusing in specificational sentences:

- It can involve the entire value (this is the normal case)
- It can focalize only a subpart

this dissertation, therefore the tests suit also the classifying purposes that we pursue. Furthermore these diagnostic tests can be fruitfully extended also to simple clauses whenever it is not differently specified.

⁴ *Connectedness* is not to be interpreted in the terms of Kayne (1984), but rather as *connectivity*.

- It can focalize the whole subordinate clause (if the sentence is a cleft or a pseudocleft)
- The focus can be split into two non-continuous segments

Specificational copular constructions can then have an *exhaustiveness* implicature, even if they do not need to. However, the reverse is true: if a copular sentence has this implicature, it must be specificational. More recent literature – Heycock (2012), for instance – basically recalls the same characteristics identified by Den Dikken (2006) to verify the specificational nature of some copular sentences. Heycock (2012) along the same lines of many scholars, accepts Moro (1997)’s idea that specificational copular sentences are *inverse copular sentences*, although she argues in favor of treating them as a subclass of equatives. She takes into consideration the pronominalization issue, information structure and agreement. The benefit of considering these points is twofold: from one side they enable her to distinguish between specificational and predicative copular sentences, and on the other they corroborate the “inverse” analysis, which is a desirable result in that it offers a unitary treatment of the phenomenon.

The first point that she makes is *agreement*: languages such as Italian or German are languages with so-called NP₂ agreement. Heycock and Kroch (1999) had already pointed out that this was a clear clue for a predicate inversion structure. French and English for instance, have post-copular pronouns in the tonic form, which is not the Nominative, while all the languages which display NP₂ agreement necessarily have the postcopular noun phrase or pronoun in the Nominative, being agreement with any other Case excluded. The generalization could be that whenever two noun phrases are at disposal, the agreement is always with the “most specified noun phrase whose ϕ -features are available”. This claim is made on the basis of the well-established assumption that third person is less specified than first or second, in which also deixis intervenes. However, it has been observed that, whenever agreement with NP₂ takes place, it does with specificational semantics. This is clearly highlighted for instance in German⁵, in hypothetical sentences, in which both Nominative pronouns would be at

⁵ Notice that although Italian is an NP₂ agreement language, examples like the ones proposed for German would not hold for Italian, as NP₂ would not bear Nominative Case in this context. These are the so-called *identity readings*, in which even languages normally displaying a Nominative post-copular pronoun, use instead the Accusative: *Se fossi (in) te*_{NON-NOM}

disposal for agreement. Here agreement takes place with the first constituent, since the sentence is not specificational but equational:

- (7) a. Wenn ich du wäre, würde ich sofort
 If I you_{SING NOM} were_{SUBJ 1PERS SING} would I immediately
 weggehen.
 to-leave
 “If I were you I would leave immediately.”
- b. Wenn du ich wärest, was würdest du
 If you_{SING NOM} I were_{SUBJ 2nd PERS SING} what would you
 tun?
 to-do
 “If you were me, what would you do?”

(Heycock 2012)

The second point that Heycock (2012) takes into account is *information structure*. Provided that each language functions according to specific rules and each language has a default word order also for copular sentences, in German, the possibility to “invert” is strictly connected with scrambling. There is a default word order in German, which is compatible with focus assignment. Other orders are possible, however, only if the unmarked position before the verb has focal stress. The formulation that (Lenerz, 2001) provides for this assumption is: *Don't scramble focus*.

If we treat specificational copular sentences as predications involving a subject which, in the unmarked order, precedes the predicate and we want to account for the possibility for the predicate to move to the left of the copula, we could do it in terms of scrambling. In this case the ungrammaticality of focus on the fronted predicate coincides with the impossibility to focalize scrambled items. As Heycock (2012) underlines, if a noun phrase is scrambled, it needs to be interpreted as “strong”. In English, the distinction between weak and strong indefinites is clearly displayed by the different use of *a* and *one*.

- (8) It was very difficult for him to fill in the test, but one/*a exercise was particularly difficult.

As Heycock (2012), on the basis of Mikkelsen (2005), shows, there is no direct connection between specificational copular sentences and V2 in German. The pattern of agreement displayed in main clauses is exactly the same as in verb final subordinate clauses:

- (9) Das Hauptproblem von dem Unternehmer sind die
 the main-problem_{NOM} of the_{DAT} entrepreneur are_{3rd PL} the_{NOM PL}
 Schulden
 debts_{NOM}
 “The problem of the entrepreneur is debts”
- (10) Der Unternehmer ist sehr besorgt, weil sein
 The_{NOM} entrepreneur is very preoccupied because his
 Hauptproblem die Schulden sind
 main-problem_{NOM} the_{NOM} debts are
 “The entrepreneur is very preoccupied because his main problem is
 debts”

The examples above, especially the one in (10), clearly demonstrate that agreement is made with the plural noun, even though it is clearly not the syntactic subject. German proves to be very consistent as far as agreement with the second NP is concerned, this means with the focused NP, which can also be “inverted” or scrambled. The fact that the possibility for NP₂ to be scrambled is crucial in determining the agreement pattern is further supported by Dutch data. In Dutch, a V2 language which has more reduced fronting possibilities if compared to German, agreement of the copula widely oscillates between NP₁ and NP₂, with a great deal of both inter- and intra-speaker variation.

All these data, however, induce to think that noun phrases which are to be found in initial position in main clauses, display properties which are normally associated with arguments rather than with predicates. If the noun phrases are genuinely predicates, in fact, they cannot invert. Furthermore, initial noun phrases are not always pronominalized as if they were true predicates, but rather as arguments. See in this respect the following example:

(11) Ahab is the best man for the job, isn't he/*it?

(Heycock 2012)

If the sentence is really predicational instead, the reverse would be true:

(12) The best man for the job is Ahab, isn't *he/it?

(*ibidem*)

According to Heycock (2012), the fact that raised predicates within specificational copular sentences can be pronominalized through a gendered pronoun does not weaken the assumption that these constituents behave like a predicate; the point is that for the inversion to take place, there must be, at least in some sentences, an equation between the two items involved in the copular construction.

3. Some theoretical accounts for clefts

3.1 The main proposals

Once an overview on copular clauses has been made, it is now worth seeing how cleft sentences, which involve the presence of copular clauses, have been investigated in the literature. Research has started essentially from two different perspectives:

- (i) on the one side clefts have been treated as paralleling specificational copular sentences,
- (ii) on the other side, they have been treated as semantically parallel to sentences containing focus fronting.

We will now see, the main points of these hypotheses and we will then analyze in greater detail (§ 3.2) some recent proposals which do not strictly adhere to either models and are worth considering one by one.

As for (i), Reeve (2011) labeled this approach *specificational*. Some influential scholars who have proposed an account along these lines are: Akmajian (1970), Gundel (1977) and Percus (1997). All these authors assume that there must be a transformational relation between clefts (13a) and pseudoclefts (13b).

- (13) a. It is a pizza that I eat every Saturday night
b. What I eat every Saturday night is a pizza

They maintain that the subordinate clause is an adjunct to *it*. All these approaches imply that the construction is bi-clausal: there is always a main clause and a subordinate clause.

As for (ii), if we were to adopt once again Reeve (2011)'s terminology, this approach could be labeled *expletive*. This is due to the fact that the scholars inserted in this group (Chomsky, 1977; Delahunty, 1981; Kayne, 1994; Meinunger, 1998) share the idea that *it* and the copula are semantically vacuous. The main characteristic of all these analyses is that clefts are very similar to sentences containing focus:

- (14) a. Pasta, Mary eats every day
b. It's pasta that Mary eats every day

In all these proposals the focused constituent is generated within the cleft clause and then moves to its focus position. In particular, Chomsky (1977) proposed that the copula is the head of VP which governs a S'' node (a CP in modern terms), which symmetrically develops into one NP containing the focus and one adjoined S' (IP) which hosts the subordinate clause from which the focused constituent has started its movement, as if it were a wh- item.

Some of these expletive approaches are monoclausal, in other terms, biclausal structures which have become monoclausal. One of the most representative analyses in this respect is Meinunger (1998), which is worth analyzing separately.

3.1.1 Meinunger (1998)

He assumes that the derivation for *it*-clefts is rigidly monoclausal. He supposes that both the alleged expletive and the copula occupy the Specifier of the Topic projection in CP, while the clefted constituent occupies the head of TopicP. Focus projections are empty and, in a low portion of the left periphery, a head hosts the complementizer *that* which introduces the subordinate clause of clefts in English. The subordinate clause headed by *that* contains also the clefted constituent licensed by the embedded verb, which is then moved to the left periphery to reach its final position, in

TopicP. The main argument for his derivation is that in many languages clefts are expressed by monoclausal structures.

3.2 *Mixed proposals*

As has already been anticipated, most of the proposals which have been put forth over the past decade are neither completely specificational - in that they do not claim that cleft sentences are transformationally derived from pseudo-clefts - nor expletive, since they recognize that both the “expletive” and the copula play a role in the construction. We will now see three of the most influential analyses, which have been outlined basically contemporarily, in very recent years, and suggest diverse solutions: Frascarelli & Ramaglia (2009) then reconsidered by Haegeman & Meinunger & Vercauteren (2013), Belletti (2008, 2011) substantially based on Italian and French data, and Reeve (2010, 2011) which has English as core language.

3.2.1 *Frascarelli & Ramaglia (2009)*

Frascarelli & Ramaglia (2009) propose an approach in the cartographic framework. It will be therefore all the more interesting to investigate their hypothesis, which is developed on the basis of the same theoretical model that I adopt. The authors capitalize on the strict relation between focus and clefts – as Meinunger (1998) did - and propose that they target the same position in CP. Coherently with their framework, this implies that the correspondence in the syntactic position mirrors an interpretative correspondence. Their aim is twofold: they want to preserve the similarity with focus and so the fact that the structure is monoclausal, but they are also aware that the construction is actually biclausal in the deep structure, with the presence of a main copular sentence and a subordinate clause. Crucially, they maintain that the subordinate clause is a relative clause. Anyway not all languages have relative clauses as a subordinate clause of clefts. This makes it important to address this question. Recall that the issue concerning the nature of the subordinate clause is often disregarded in the literature, since it is taken for granted that the subordinate clause is nothing else but a relative clause. Frascarelli & Ramaglia (2009) however, further develop this point and argue that the relative clause actually has the structure of a free relative clause. It is worth analyzing the make up they propose for it, since it is not the same I argued for in

the last chapter. The internal structure that they propose for the free relative clause is the following⁶:

- (15) [DP [SC [NP *pro*][that you saw]]]

In other terms, they claim that the free relative clause is a DP, containing a small clause in which there is a silent head, which they label *pro* and the relative clause. Personally I am not convinced that it is necessary to postulate the presence of a small clause within the free relative clause. My idea is that in the languages in which the complementizer can be employed, the construction is not necessarily a relative clause. This is proved by contexts in which the use of the complementizer cannot be substituted by a relative pronoun, as for instance when entire PPs are clefted:

- (16) It's with Paul that/*who I go to the cinema on Friday night

This is the reason why I will propose that clefts cannot be always treated as a unitary phenomenon, but have to be carefully analyzed in all their facets and some distinctions, even within the same language have to be made. My proposal for German will become clear in the course of the dissertation.

If we continue with Frascarelli & Ramaglia (2009), the “relative clause” occupies a specific position in CP, namely FamP, a projection that hosts left dislocated items and forms a “right-hand Topic in clefts”. It is undisputed that the real focus in clefts is the clefted constituent, while the subordinate clause is given information. Depending on the languages, the clefted constituent can be either new information focus or a contrastive focus. In any case, if clefts are used as answers to a *wh*- questions, they can also contain new Information regardless of their general context of use.

I will now try to summarize the whole derivation proposed by Frascarelli & Ramaglia (2009). It is quite complicated at a technical level and I will exploit also Haegeman & Meinunger & Vercauteren (2013) description of it, to render it as plain as possible.

The clefted constituent is generated within a small clause and is claimed to be its predicate, while the subject is *it*. Claiming that the clefted NP is a predicate, however implies that it is a non-argument, which is not desirable. The small clause is licensed by

⁶ This is cited also in Haegeman & Meinunger & Vercauteren (2013).

the copula which merely acts as a linker (Den Dikken, 2006). The subject of the small clause moves to the subject position in IP. The subordinate clause instead is base-generated in SpecTopP in CP. Frascarelli & Ramaglia (2009) further precise the exact projection in the Topic field in which the subordinate clause is collocated: it is FamP: the Familiar Topic. Thanks to successive movements, all IP items reach the left periphery of the clause. The remanant IP is collocated in GroundP (within CP), a projection, which was first postulated by Poletto & Pollock (2004).

However, Frascarelli & Ramaglia (2009) is not free of problems, which affect the syntactic derivation. These problems have been highlighted by Haegeman & Meinunger & Vercauteren (2013). First of all, word order variation attested for clefts, even for English clefts, requires that the left periphery is even richer: there is in fact no position for fronted clefted constituents. Moreover, if we assume that clefts have a monoclausal structure which parallels focus, we expect to find root phenomena typical of main clauses. Haegeman & Meinunger & Vercauteren (2013) outline at least two possible contexts in which main clauses and cleft sentences differ: adverbial clauses and complements of factive verbs. Adverbial clauses in English are not compatible with focus-fronting, but are felicitous with clefts.

- (17) a. Whenever it was money we needed, George was nowhere to be seen.
b. *Whenever money I needed....

(Haegeman & Meinunger & Vercauteren, 2013)

Complements of factive verbs are compatible with clefts, but cannot coexist with focus fronting.

- (18) a. *John still resents that his sister they appointed as director of the
company
b. John still resents that it was his sister that they appointed as director of
the company.

3.2.2 *Reeve (2010, 2011)*

Reeve (2010, 2011) proposes an analysis of clefts along the lines of Hedberg (2000). His hypothesis is explicitly based on English clefts. He assumes that *it* is the subject of the copular sentence and occupies therefore a SpecIP position. The copula *be*

is generated in VP and then moves to an IP head. VP has a CP as its complement. This CP hosts the subordinate clause from which the focused constituent is extracted. This is the basic structure of the construction; we will now provide deeper insights concerning each of the items contained in a cleft structure. Reeve maintains that *it* is not semantically vacuous, and therefore it cannot be considered simply an expletive. He corroborates his claims on the basis of cross-linguistic data: V2 Germanic languages all require that the pronominal subject is overt. We will show it in detail for German, but we will supply from now the data reported in Reeve: the pronominal subject can never be dropped even if it appears in contexts (as for instance in post-copular position) in which expletives are omitted. As far as the copula is concerned, Reeve assumes that it is semantically vacuous, and he claims that there are three types of copular sentences: predicational, specificational, equative. However, his analysis is different from all predicational analyses of copular sentences *à la* Moro, in that he does not hypothesize that all kinds of copular sentences can be derived transformationally. He states instead that there is a syntactic difference between predicational sentences and other copular sentences: the former do not contain a functional equative head, which is the hallmark of the latter. Moreover, he does not accept that the copula takes a small clause as its complement. He argues instead that the copula is very similar to a transitive verb “selecting for an XP of an unspecified syntactic category” (Reeve, 2011: 144). This idea, which is not very convincing, has been strongly criticized by the same *Lingua* reviewers of Reeve’s paper. The first drawback for this hypothesis is that differently from transitive verbs, the copula is an auxiliary that undergoes V to I to C movement in questions; furthermore, in the terms of Reeve, the copula has to be a peculiar transitive verb in that it does not assign any Theta-role.

A further crucial aspect in Reeve’s analysis concerns the subordinate clause of clefts. He assumes that it originates as part of the clefted XP. In other words, he hypothesizes that the clefted XP is generated within the subordinate clause and then moves to its final position, which is an adjunct to the CP of the cleft clause. Hence, the subordinate clause semantically modifies *it* rather than the clefted constituent. He then claims that the subordinate clause of clefts in English is a relative clause, and he specifies that it is a restrictive relative clause. The main clue for that is that clefting and relativization are expressed in the same way in many languages of the world and, in English, both relatives and clefts can use pronouns or complementizers or a covert operator basically with the same distribution.

(19) It was the vodka which/that/Ø Boris drank

(Reeve, 2011: 152)

In addition, cleft sentences show “anti - *that* – trace” effects: this means that, as in relative clauses, *that* is well-tolerated before a trace.

(20) a. It was Boris *t* that bought the vodka

b. I know the man *t* that bought the vodka

(Reeve, 2011: 153)

Moreover, extraction from clefts behaves exactly the same as in relatives: relative clauses are in fact, a strong island from which extraction is ungrammatical.

Differently from most specificational analyses (e.g. Hedberg, 1990), Reeve claims that the subordinate clause is in an extraposition relation with the clefted constituent and not with *it*. To Reeve, this is suggested by the fact that cleft clauses behave syntactically as if they were modifying the clefted item. Evidence for this is provided also by agreement patterns displayed in clefts. Furthermore, the clefted item c-commands into the cleft clause, which would be unexpected if it were not the head of the relative clause. Besides, specificational clefts show connectivity effects. As far as semantics is concerned, Reeve basically accepts Hedberg (1990, 2000)’s accounts. They both maintain that cleft sentences are divided into two parts and this division is mirrored both by syntax and semantics. The clefted constituent is always focalized and the subordinate clause conveys given information, a presupposition.

3.2.3 *Belletti (2008, 2011)*

Belletti’s proposals are mainly based on the investigation of Italian and French cleft sentences. One striking aspect of her account is that, at least in her 2008 paper, she argues for two different derivations depending on the fact that the cleft expresses contrastive or new-information focus. While object clefts can only be of the first type, subject clefts can realize both. Belletti devotes particular attention also to the CP of clefts, which she claims to be truncated. She wonders (a) whether subject and non-subject clefts have the same CP and (b) where the clefted constituent is located in the clause structure. Along the lines of well-established literature, she assumes that the

copula takes a small clause as its complement. She hypothesizes however, that this small clause is actually a CP. A subject cleft is typically a cleft which would be suitable to answer to a *wh*- question. As for new information subjects, also subject clefts have their clefted constituent in the Specifier of a new information focus position in the low left periphery (the left periphery of *vP*). She also observes that the *vP* periphery of the copula is reduced and only contains a Focus head. She supposes that the copula itself could be interpreted as a focus marker as happens in many languages, since the copula tends to grammaticalize into a focus particle. In the derivation, the clefted constituent, which is the subject of the small clause, moves to Focus*vP* and the copula raises on its left. The small clause in clefts is allegedly a CP with an EPP feature. The subordinate clause of clefts is contained in a lower CP, which Belletti identifies as a *Fin* head, while the higher CP is identified with a projection necessarily lower than Force. As the EPP position of the small clause CP complement of the copula has A status, this position can be occupied by the DP which corresponds to the subject, but not by objects and indirect objects.

The main difference from subject clefts is that in non-subject clefts, the CP is not endowed with an EPP feature. It is not technically a reduced CP, even though it lacks the Force head. The fact that there is no EPP feature to be satisfied, triggers important syntactic consequences: there is no restrictions for non-subjects to move into the reduced CP, although they cross the intervening subject in TP. This is an A' movement, so not subject to intervention effects. Non-subjects move to the focus of the truncated CP. The movement to the left periphery could only take place via successive movement, otherwise it would be blocked for the principles which rule locality. Nevertheless, there is no possible intermediate step within CP, due to its truncated nature which does not allow for any escape hatch. This triggers as a consequence that whereas subject clefting involves focalization in the low left periphery, in *vP*, non-subject clefting requires that the clefted constituent is in the high left periphery in CP. Recall that if a subject cleft is meant to be contrastive, it undergoes the same type of derivation proposed for non-subject clefts. To sum up, both in subject and non-subject clefts the copula has a truncated CP as its complement. This may be endowed with an EPP feature. If it must satisfy EPP it is a small clause, equivalent to a small CP. Only the subject can check the EPP feature, so that only subjects can realize new-information focus in the *vP*

periphery. If there is no EPP feature⁷, the focalization can only take place in CP. This type of focalization is always contrastive-corrective. Belletti (2008) commits herself in locating the Italian introducer of the subordinate clause of clefts. She argues that in a split CP framework, *che* is placed in the Finiteness head. She bases this assumption on the fact that the complementizer *che* always follows focus. In contexts of non-truncated CP, complementizers such as *che* can rise up to Force to express illocutionary force.

4. The typological distribution of clefts

4.1 Some preliminary remarks

Cleft sentences appear not only in Indoeuropean languages, but also in languages which are typologically very distant. If we exclude some superficial differences, they conform to the pattern outlined in § 1, which consists of a copular sentence followed by a subordinate clause. Languages differ with respect to the type of cleft sentences they possess and the purposes they pursue in using them.

There are languages in which the construction has reached a high degree of grammaticalization and others in which the construction continues to be a combination of a copular sentence and a subordinate clause that heavily resembles a relative clause.

The first “extreme” is represented by French, in which the structure is nearly completely grammaticalized and, in given syntactic contexts, a cleft is not even perceived as such. In questions for instance, which are a privileged environment for clefts to be produced, French can utilize the formula *est-ce-que*, which – as hyphens graphically underlines and prosody confirms – is no more recognized as the sequence of a copula, an expletive and a complementizer, but rather as a “particle-like” element, which functions as a word. The level of integration of the cleft construction in the language has induced Munaro & Pollock (2005) to propose a monoclausal account, which treats *est-ce-que* as a particle in CP. This approach, which is generally accepted for French and has been extended to some Northern Italian varieties, formally signals that grammaticalization in this case has affected even the underlying syntactic representation of the phenomenon, which cannot be treated as monolithic, but needs to be carefully analyzed on the light of language-specific constraints.

⁷ Notice that this proposal has been partially modified in Belletti (2011). In the last version, Belletti unifies the account and hypothesizes that both derivations are endowed with an EPP feature, which is satisfied in both cases by the semi-argument *ce*, *it*. This is directly merged in the EPP position of the small clause CP.

On the opposite side of the scale with respect to French, there are languages such as Standard German, which use clefts very scarcely and only in restricted contexts and under specific constraints which involve, for instance, case. Thinking of a bi-clausal structure formed by a main copular sentence and a subordinate clause is obligatory in languages such as German, as two independent verbs are involved: the copula and the lexical verb.

Between these two languages, which represent some sort of extremities, there is a big group of languages, which use clefts in different proportions and for different purposes. A good number of languages (basically most of the languages which utilize this strategy) make use of this construction as a further instrument to focalize a constituent, although they dispose of independent focalization strategies (i); some others such as Somali use it as the only focalization device (ii); some others, as for instance the Paduan and the Neapolitan dialect, as well as Irish, use cleft constructions both as a further instrument to focalize a constituent and as a means to form main interrogative clauses on the subject (iii)⁸; others, which cannot be grouped in typologically homogeneous areas, do not have this construction (Romanian and Standard Basque⁹) (iv).

In this section I will provide a brief survey on cleft sentence formation in various languages before concentrating on the core topic of this chapter, which is cleft sentences in German. Having at least some rough ideas about the manner in which this construction is realized in languages other than the object of our investigation will help us shed some light on the language specific constraints of the idiom which will be considered and will be of help to further refine a syntactic account. Aspects which could be taken for granted if we just considered a single language, could stand out after having considered languages which are parametrically different in this respect.

4.2 *English*

I will start to investigate the structure of clefts by taking into account English, which is surely the language for which this construction has been studied most. The basic structure of English so-called *it*-clefts (true clefts) is:

⁸ This class is intrinsically complex and heterogeneous and needs to be further specified. It will be shown that the requirement of building a cleft to form an interrogative clause is connected also with the type of verb involved (unaccusative, transitive, etc.). Moreover Irish requires clefts not only to form subject main questions but for any kind of *wh*- questions.

⁹ Notice that there exist dialects of Basque which actually use this construction.

(21) [it] + [copula] + [clefted constituent] +
[subordinate clause introducer (\emptyset /*that/which/who*)] + [rest of the
subordinate clause]

(22) It is Bill that I wanted to call.

The nature of the introducer of the subordinate clause has induced to think of clefts as relative clauses and the fact, among others, that one of the possible relativizers is *that* led to identify these alleged headed relative clauses as restrictive relative clauses, being *that* ungrammatical under appositive relative clauses. Much discussion has been carried out about the nature of *it* and the role of the copula. It has been wondered whether *it* is a true expletive or if it has argumental status. A conclusion has not been unanimously reached, nor has a final word been said on the semantic nature of the copula. However, I will keep these issues aside for the moment.

What is of relevance here is that in English cleft sentences, as in English copular sentences, the copula always agrees in number with the initial pronoun *it*, even though the focus is plural.

- (23) a. It's your children who are always sad.
b. It's your parents that should make the final decision on you.

The presence of the pronoun *it* is always mandatory: it must appear in pre-copular position, at least in affirmative sentences. The reciprocal order of focus and *it* can never be scrambled.

- (24) a. It is Mary that needs Lennie
b. *Mary is it that needs Lennie

Clefts are also compatible with main clause interrogatives, and in this case, due to the requirements of matrix interrogatives, *it* appears immediately on the right of the copula.

(25) Is it Bill that Mary hates?

English clefts are also compatible with subordinate clauses:

(26) I think (that) it was Sue who decided to get up early.

Due to its scarce morphology, it is difficult to state what the Case of the English cleft focus is if we consider only DPs, an easy solution however, is provided by the observation of focalized pronouns, which display a separate series for Nominative on the one side, and the rest of the cases on the other.

(27) a. It's him that's cheating!
b. It's me that you need!

English foci of clefts bear the default Accusative Case, as is shown by (27a) and (27b). This comes as no surprise since copular sentences display exactly the same pattern. Accusative Case assignment in these syntactic contexts is not casual. It has been postulated by Longobardi (1994) that non-pro-drop languages such as English correlate with Accusative, while pro-drop or at least partial pro-drop languages (e.g. German¹⁰) have to assign Nominative Case.

Up until now it has been noticed that clefted constituents can be both DPs and pronouns, but the focus of English clefts can also be PPs and Adverbs. In these contexts however, the subordinate clause introducer needs to be *that*. The pronominal strategy can be used only if the preposition is stranded (28c) and the focus is a bare DP.

(28) a. It's with Mary that I was sitting (with)
b. * It's with Mary, with whom I was sitting
c. It's Mary, who I was sitting with

¹⁰ Huang (2000) cited in Biberauer (2008) groups semi subject-null languages or semi pro-drop languages in three sub-types. German and Dutch belong to the first subtype in which only non-argumental expletives can be omitted (this means that the subject of weather verbs, for instance, needs to be overtly realized). Biberauer however, convincingly adheres to original Rizzi (1986)'s classification, which I report here:

a. Full NSL: licenses both referential and non-referential null pronominals (Italian, Spanish, Greek)
b. Semi NSL Type I: only licenses null non-referential pronominals, i.e. quasi-argumental and non-argumental expletives – Icelandic, Yiddish
c. Semi NSL Type II: only licenses null non-argumental pronominals, but not referential or quasi-argumental expletives – Dutch, German
d. Non-NSL: does not license null pronominals (*pro*) at all – e.g. English, French

d. It's Mary that I was sitting with¹¹

(Van der Auwera, 1985)

The reasons why (28a) is perfectly acceptable are quite transparent: all the syntactic and semantic information is borne by the focus in the matrix clause and a bare *wh*- pronoun could not express all the features provided by an entire PP. The possible repetition of the preposition within the subordinate clause can be interpreted as a form of doubling, which reinforces the prepositional features of the clefted constituent. (28b) instead is out because a full PP can either appear as a focus in the matrix or be fully contained within the subordinate clause. No reduplication of this kind is allowed. The grammaticality improves if the subordinate clause is introduced by a *wh*-, but there is preposition stranding. Notice that while (28a) can only be interpreted as a cleft sentence, (28c) could be read as a presentational sentence. Using a *wh*- pronoun instead of *that* is however not possible if entire PPs are clefted. Introducing the subordinate clause with a pied-piped preposition governing a *wh*- would lead to the repetition of the same syntactic information in a very short span of structure. This kind of reduplication is not possible in English. As has emerged from the examples above, instead of clefting the whole PP, only the bare noun can be clefted and the preposition remains only in the subordinate clause. When cleft sentences are used with stylistic purposes, however, to emphasize an element, the *that* strategy, with the full PP clefted, is the only to be admitted.

(29) It's with joy that I am writing this.

Notice that there seems to be no difference between arguments and adjuncts as far as the clefting strategy is concerned. However there is a slight preference for prepositional adjuncts to be clefted as PPs, so as to maintain their interpretation and their relation with the subordinate clause clearer.

Clefts with adverbs are only possible if the introducer of the subordinate clause is *that*, there is in fact no ϕ -feature in the adverb which a pronoun could reproduce:

¹¹ Example *d.* was not contained in the original set of sentences proposed by Van der Auwera (1985). However, as *d.* is actually grammatical in English, I thought it was worth inserting it, so as to provide the reader with the complete set of possibilities.

(30) It was yesterday that¹² my secretary sent the bill to Mr. Smith

4.3 French

Another language which has been thoroughly studied to understand cleft sentences is French, in which the construction has grammaticalized and is now one of the ways in which unmarked main interrogatives can be introduced. Some school grammars¹³ even state that Standard French has to form a main question by means of the formula *est-ce-que*, while the other two possible strategies (use of intonation and inversion) belong to different linguistic registers: to informal and formal language respectively. The fact that some grammars indicate the use of a cleft structure as a formation rule pertaining to one sociolinguistic dimension, specifically the Standard, further confirms the very special nature of clefts in French. Other possibilities would be available to make a question but the cleft strategy is progressively imposing and has lost its deep semantics.

- (31) a. Qu' est-ce-que tu en penses?
what is-it-that YOU_{NOM SING} of-it think_{2nd PERS SING}
“What do you think about that?”
- b. Est-ce que Pierre est malade?
is-it that Pierre_{NOM} is sick?
“Is Pierre sick?”
- c. Est-ce que c'est un livre intéressant?
is-it that this-is a book_{NOM} interesting
“Is it an interesting book?”

As the examples above clearly show, forming a question with *est-ce-que* is possible with *wh-* interrogatives (subject, object, etc.), with yes-no questions and even with questions containing a presentational item as *ce*.

The pattern however is still used with “true”¹⁴ cleft sentences as well, as (32) shows:

¹² Some speakers accept the use of *when* in these contexts, which reproduces the idea of time.

¹³ Instances of these claims can be found for instance in: http://ppbm.langedizioni.com/gram_fra/doc/teoria/th051.htm

¹⁴ By “true” clefts I refer to the sentences in which the structure has maintained its syntactic, semantic and pragmatic properties and is not grammaticalized as in questions.

- (32) C'est Michel qui parle russe
 it-is Michel_{NOM} that speaks Russian
 "It's Michel that speaks Russian"

(Clech-Darbon, Rebuschi, Rialland 1999, ex. 14)

The pronoun preceding the copula is *ce* in French, and the introducer of the subordinate clause is *qui* or *que* depending on the syntactic function of the focus. Both of them anyway are generally considered complementizers in the literature¹⁵. No relative pronoun such as *le quel /la quelle* can be used to introduce the subordinate clause of a cleft. Clech-Darbon, Rebuschi, Rialland (1999) claim that contrary to other languages, in French (32) cannot be ambiguous with a presentational sentence because the latter would have to obligatorily display the definite article in front of the proper name. This grammaticality judgment anyway is not shared by all speakers of French. Some of them argue that there is no necessity for the article to be inserted in front of the proper name if a presentative interpretation has to be conveyed. Regardless of the specific case of proper names, some speakers¹⁶ maintain that sentences like the following are undoubtedly ambiguous on paper, while no confusion could arise in the spoken language because of prosodic factors, which clarify the obligatory interpretation.

- (33) C'est la petite fille, qui parle français très bien
 it-is the little girl_{NOM} that speaks French very well

Furthermore, differently from presentational, cleft sentences cannot be introduced by *voilà*. French clefts are compatible both with PPs and adverbs:

- (34) C'est dans la maison que/*qui j'ai dormi
 it-is in the house that I have_{1st PERS SING} slept
 "It's at home that I slept"

(Clech-Darbon, Rebuschi, Rialland 1999, ex. 38)

¹⁵ For the complementizer status of *qui* see Kayne (1974).

¹⁶ Geneviève Henrot (p.c.) a.o.

- (35) C'est maintenant que tout commence
 it-is now that all starts
 "It's now that everything starts"

As far as copula agreement is concerned, a distinction between formal and informal French has to be made: in the formal variety the copula agrees in number with the focus, while in colloquial French the copula is always in the 3rd person singular and agrees therefore with *ce*.

- (36) Ce sont ces dames qui sont arrivées les premières
 it are_{3rd PERS PL} these women that are_{3rd PERS PL} come_{FEM PL} the first_{FEM PL}
 "It's these ladies who have arrived first"

- (37) C'est les enfants qui décident
 it is the children that decide_{3rd PERS PL}
 "It's the children that decide"

The case borne by the focus is not predictable if we just observe DPs, since they do not have any clear morphological marking. Some clues are offered by focalized pronouns, which display a non-Nominative case. As Nominative personal pronouns are only clitics, they cannot be employed in isolation, nor they can be focalized. Tonic pronouns belong to a different series and their case cannot be independently predicted.

Difficulties arise with verbal agreement when the focus is a pronoun such as *eux*, for which, being verbal agreement impossible with a non-Nominative form, speakers feel embarrassed in choosing between the singular or the plural conjugation of the copula:

- (38) C'est eux, qui rangent
 it's them who tidy_{3rd PERS PL} up
 "It's them who tidy up"

- (39) Ce sont eux qui rangent
 it be_{3rd PERS PL} them who tidy_{3rd PERS PL} up
 "It's them who tidy up"

In the first case, the copula agrees with the singular expletive, while in the second case there is *ad sensum* agreement with the focalized third person plural pronoun, which cannot however technically determine agreement, since it is not the Nominative syntactic subject of the copular sentence. Further aspects concerning agreement such as verbal agreement within the subordinate clause would be worth analyzing, but this goes beyond the goals of this discussion, whose key topic is German. It is however to be underlined that French clefts are compatible with both main questions and subordinate clauses, both completive and adverbial¹⁷.

- (40) ...parce que c'est la demande qui gère tout.
 because it-is the_{FEM} demand_{FEM} that regulates all
 "... because it's the demand that regulates everything."
 (Lahousse 2012)

4.4 Italian

Italian is another language that has been investigated by linguists to provide a syntactic account for cleft sentences (Sornicola, 1988; Belletti 2008, 2011 whose accounts have been described in § 3.2.3). Italian can cleft DPs, PPs, CPs and some adverbs¹⁸. Differently from English and French, Italian is a *pro-drop* language; this has as a consequence that there is no lexicalized expletive pronoun.

4.4.1 The agreement of the copula

The copula agrees with the focus whenever it is possible, i.e. in all the cases in which the clefted constituent is in the Nominative (41). Pronominal foci show that it is not necessary that the focus is in the Nominative, its Case depends on the syntactic function it would have if it were within the subordinate clause (42) – (43)¹⁹.

¹⁷ For thorough discussion of the distribution of clefts in adverbial clauses see Lahousse (2012).

¹⁸ Cinque (1999) provides thorough discussion concerning the hierarchy of adverbs.

¹⁹ For the sake of completeness it is worth saying that some Southern Italian speakers, for instance Neapolitans, consider sentences like (43) in free variation with the version "Sono io che vedi". My personal intuition as a Northern Italian speaker is that this last possibility is completely out.

- (41) Sono i ragazzi che dicono sempre le bugie
 are_{3rd PERS PL} the boys that tell_{3rd PERS PL} always the lies
 (non le ragazze)
 (not the girls)
 “It’s the boys who always tell lies (not the girls)”.
- (42) Sono io che dico sempre la verità (non tu)
 am I that tell_{1st PERS SING} always the truth (not you)
 “It’s me who always tells the truth”.
- (43) E’ me che vedi sempre la mattina
 is me_{ACC} that see_{2nd PERS SING} always the morning
 “It’s me that you always see in the morning”

4.4.2 *The case of the focused constituent*

The examples above show that in Italian, the Case displayed by the focused element is the Nominative, as required by the copula, if the clefted constituent is also the subject of the subordinate clause. On the contrary, when the Case required by the embedded verb is not the Nominative, the focused element displays Accusative case if it is a direct object or is a PP if the verb of the subordinate clause selects for it. This comes as no surprise, since the *ratio* which is respected is always Case Hierarchy (Keenan & Comrie 1977), which has been abundantly discussed in chapter 1 and which I repeat here for clarity as (44):

- (44) Nominative > Accusative > Dative > Genitive > PPs

As the copula always assigns the Nominative, there is either matching with the Case required by the embedded verb, or the Case assigned by the embedded verb is necessarily lower in the Case Hierarchy. The lexicalization of the more marked Case at the expense of the less marked is a strategy that languages apply quite often. Marked cases in fact, cannot be reconstructed starting from high cases, because they are richer in features, which cannot be recovered in any other way²⁰. This mechanism rules also free relative clauses (ch. 1, § 6). The present account is coherent also with more recent

²⁰ The fact that poorer elements can only derive from richer items and not viceversa is further supported in linguistics by the cases of syntactic doubling, see Poletto (2006) and the discussion on syntactic doubling carried out in chapter 1, § 6.2. The higher item resulting from doubling, for instance in left dislocation, cannot be richer in features than the item from which the whole process started.

approaches such as the one by Caha (2009), who proposes that cases should be analyzed as incremental. The more marked cases are created as rich as possible in a low portion of the syntactic tree and undergo a process of *peeling*, which deprives them of part of their features. Nominative is therefore a “poorer” version of lower cases such as Dative and Accusative. The fact that in the context of Italian clefts, only the more marked case is lexicalized derives from the consideration that less marked cases are somehow “contained” in the other.

4.4.3 *The introducer of the subordinate clause*

The question of Case affects also the choice of the introducer of the subordinate clause. As all the examples show, the only possible one is the complementizer *che*, even though the clefted constituent is a DP or a pronoun. As in French, the use of the wh-pronoun *il quale / la quale* is absolutely ungrammatical. The reason why *il quale* cannot be used is twofold: if the case required by the embedded verb is displayed on the focused item, it is never copied on a pronoun, too; secondly, even if we were to assume that cleft sentences are relative clauses in Italian, *il quale* is not compatible with all types of relative clause, but only with non-restrictive.

- (45) *E' Maria la quale riceve sempre un sacco di regali
 is Mary_{NOM} who receives always a lot of presents
 “It's Maria who always receives a lot of presents”

The ungrammaticality of the wh- pronouns in these contexts is confirmed also when PPs or adverbs are clefted. All require the use of the complementizer.

- (46) E'con Gianni che ci siamo divertiti un sacco ieri
 is with Gianni that ourselves are_{1st PERS SING} amused a lot yesterday
 sera
 evening
 “It's with Gianni that we had a lot of fun last night”
- (47) Era ieri che mi dovevi chiamare (non oggi)
 was yesterday that me_{ACC} had_{2nd PERS SING-} to-call not today
 “It was yesterday that you had to call me”

4.4.4 Cleftable constituents

Notice that the issue concerning the nature of the cleftable constituents is definitely not trivial, not all adverbs, in fact, can be clefted and there are also different degrees of acceptability depending on the type of adverb which is clefted. Temporal adverbs are easily cleftable, the same does not hold however for adverbs of frequency:

- (48) *E' mai/ sempre/qualche volta che ci incontriamo
is never/always/sometimes that each-other meet_{1PERS PL}
“We never/always/sometimes meet”

Manner adverbs are generally tolerated in clefting contexts, even though their PP counterpart is definitely preferable.

- (49) ?E' dolcemente che mi devi parlare, non con arroganza
is sweetly that me_{DAT} have_{2nd PERS SING} to-talk not with arrogance
- (50) E' con dolcezza che mi devi parlare non con
is with sweetness that me_{DAT} have_{2nd PERS SING} to-talk not with
arroganza
arrogance
“You have to talk to me sweetly, not arrogantly”

However, not all manner adverbs behave the same way. While sentences such as (51) are well-accepted by the informants I consulted, sentences like (52) are definitely worse:

- (51) E' consapevolmente che ha agito così, non per rabbia
is consciously that has done so not for anger
“S/He behaved like this consciously, not because of anger”
- (52) ?E' lentamente che legge, non con scioltezza
is slowly that reads not with fluence
“He reads slowly (not fluently)”

Notice that there is a decrement in the acceptability if the subordinate clause contains a future tense:

- (53) ? E' consapevolmente che agirà, non per rabbia
 is consciously that will-do_{3rd PERS SING} not for anger
 "S/He will behave consciously, not for anger"
- (54) ??E' lentamente che leggerà, non con scioltezza
 is slowly that will-read_{3rd PERS SING} not with fluence
 "S/He will read slowly, not fluently"

While future tense reduces the grammaticality of these structures, the insertion of a modal, namely *dovere* (have to), makes the sentences improve.

- (55) E' consapevolmente che devi agire, non per rabbia
 is consciously that must_{2nd PERS SING} to-do not for anger
 "You have to act consciously, not for anger"
- (56) ? E' chiaramente che parli non con giri di parole
 is clearly that speak_{2nd PERS SING} not beating-around-the-bush
 "You speak clearly, not beating around the bush"
- (57) E' chiaramente che devi parlare, non con giri di parole
 is clearly that must_{2nd PERS SING} to-speak not with turns of words
 "You have to speak clearly, not beating around the bush"

The insertion of negation does not substantially influence the grammaticality of the sentence. Provided that the context is adequate, it does neither improve nor worsen the structure. Notice that in Italian, the cleft construction is compatible also with some adjectives. Colors, for instance are fine, even though the grammaticality degree rises if the DP to which the adjective refers is topicalized in the subordinate clause. This is exemplified by (58), in which the DP *il maglione* is resumed by the clitic *lo*. The counterpart with no resumption (59) is still acceptable, although the grammaticality slightly diminishes.

- (58) E' grigio che lo voglio il maglione, non nero
 is grey that it_{ACC} want_{1st PERS SING} the pullover not black
- (59) ? E' grigio che voglio il maglione
 is grey that want_{1st PERS SING} the pullover
 "I want the pullover grey, not black"

The improvement of the possible grammaticality of the construction with a clefted adjective is provided, as for adverbs, by the presence of the modal verb *dovere*.

- (60) ?? E' gentile che sei
 is kind that are_{2nd PERS SING}
 "You are kind"
- (61) E' gentile che devi essere se vuoi conquistare
 is kind that must_{2nd PERS SING} to-be if want_{2nd PERS SING} to-win-over
 una donna
 a woman
 "You have to be kind if you want to win over a woman"

As for adverbs, future tense negatively contributes to the grammaticality of the structure:

- (62) ? E' grigio che lo vorrò il maglione
 is grey that it_{ACC} will-want_{1st PERS SING} the pullover
- (63) *Sarà grigio che lo voglio il maglione
 will-be_{3rd PERS SING} grey that it_{ACC} want_{1st PERS SING} the pullover
 "I'll want the pullover grey"

It is as if the semantics of clefts were not well compatible with future tense, especially if it is in the dependent clause and the main verb is in the present. Future tense is better tolerated if there is no tense mismatch between the main and the subordinate clause:

- (64) ? Sarà bianco che lo vorrò il mio
 will-be_{3rd PERS SING} white that it_{ACC} will-want_{1st PERS SING} the my
 abito da sposa
 gown for bride
 "I will want to have my bridal gown white"

In any case, regardless of the element which is clefted (DP, pronoun, adverb, adjective), the subordinate clause is always formed by means of *che*. The impossibility

to use a *wh*- pronoun to introduce the subordinate clause, regardless of the nature of the clefted item, triggers further important syntactic consequences: the embedded verb agrees in number with the focused constituent if it is the subject (41-42). The absence of a pronoun as the introducer of a cleft prevents the embedded verb from displaying third person agreement, if the focused constituent does not display these ϕ -features. Pronouns instead, behave differently. This shown for instance by English (65):

(65) It's you who goes through fire

Clefts are to be found both in embedded and main clauses (affirmative or interrogative).

(66) Penso che siate voi che vi dovete
 think_{1st PERS SING} that are_{2nd PERS PL SUBJ} YOU_{2nd PERS PL} that you have-to
 scusare
 to-apologize
 "I think that it is you that have to apologize"

(67) E' Mario che è stato licenziato?
 is Mario_{NOM} that is been fired
 "Is it Mario who has been fired?"

Main interrogatives which contain a triargumental verb with a lexical subject are preferably rephrased as a cleft sentence, which can (even though does not need to) re-establish the canonical SV order, which, due to independent constraints on Romance languages could not be maintained. The alternative is to right dislocate the lexical subject.

(68) *A chi Pietro ha dato il libro²¹?
 to whom Pietro has given the book

(69) A chi ha dato il libro Pietro?
 to whom has given the book Pietro_{NOM}

²¹ Notice that there are speakers who claim that the sentence is grammatical provided that it is a D-linked element.

(70) A chi è che Pietro ha dato il libro?
to whom is that Pietro_{NOM} has given the book

(71) A chi è che ha dato il libro Pietro?
to whom is that has given the book Pietro_{NOM}
“Who did Pietro give the book to?”

The fact that clefts are highly accepted in questions comes as no surprise, since questions are a privileged environment for clefts to appear. This is confirmed by the case of French, in which, as discussed above, the pattern in questions has even grammaticalized and is no more perceived as a cleft.

4.4.5 *Moods of the subordinate clause*

A peculiarity of Italian clefts is that they can also have infinitives²². This possibility is restricted to contexts in which the clefted constituent is in the Nominative and is therefore suitable to serve as a subject also for the subordinate clause²³.

(72) E' il mio ragazzo a leggere molti libri (non io)
is the my boyfriend_{NOM} to to-read many books (not I)
“It's my boyfriend who reads a lot of books (not me)”

(73) *Anna_i è con il mio ragazzo a uscire_i tutti i giorni
Anna_{NOM} is with the my boyfriend to to-go-out every the days
“It's with my friend that I go out every day”

Notice that this syntactic possibility developed quite late as the first attestations are in Goldoni's comedies (18th century).

²² It seems that the use of infinitives, though not completely excluded, is definitely more marginal in the dialects of Italian than in the Standard.

²³ Notice that at first glance the claim seems to be weakened by the existence of sentences such as: “E' con Mario a farci da guida che non abbiamo nulla di cui temere” Lit: It's with Mario to make the guide for us that we do not have anything to worry about”; in plain English it would sound like: *If Mario is our guide, we don't have anything to worry about*. A closer look, however, reveals that this is a completely different construction, since *con Mario a farci da guida* entirely serves as a focus of the cleft sentence; the subordinate clause of the cleft is regularly introduced by the complementizer *che* followed by a finite mood.

- (74) Le ho vedute ma poi non sono stato io a
 Them_{ACC FEM} have_{1st PERS SING} seen but then not am been I to
 esaminarle
 to-examine-them_{FEM}
 “I saw them, but then it wasn’t me who examined it”
 (Goldoni, *L’impostore II*, 4, 14)

4.4.6 *The position of focus*

Another characteristic which distinguishes Italian from both French and English²⁴ is the possibility to scramble the clefted constituent (at least focalized DPs) in front of the copula in main affirmative clauses. This leads however, to increased markedness.

- (75) Mario è che ho visto, non Ugo!
 Mario_{NOM} is that have_{1st PERS SING} seen not Ugo
 “It’s Mario that I saw, not Ugo!”

A possible context for (75) is a situation in which the speaker has already said that they saw Mario, but the addressee did not understand that properly and continued to think that the person they saw was Ugo. This word order for clefts is not restricted to Modern Italian, since it was already attested in Old Italian.

4.5 *Old Italian*

One of the first instances of a cleft sentence dates back to 13th century and is attested in the *Rime* by Pier della Vigna:

- (76) Vostro amor’ è che mi tene in disi[r]o
 Your_{2nd PERS PL} love_{NOM} is that me_{ACC} keeps in desire
 “It’s your love that keeps me in desire”
 (Pier della Vigna, *Rime, Amore, in cui disio ed ò speranza*, 17-18)

²⁴ See Haegeman, Meinunger, Vercauteren (2013) for a detailed discussion of the possible contexts of fronting in English.

This example is not uncontroversially interpreted as a cleft sentence. It could be a pseudocleft²⁵ in which *che* has pronominal value, as often was the case in Old Italian²⁶. The pronominal nature of *che* in Old Italian is abundantly shown by the data and *che* continued to be used as a relative pronoun also much later, for instance in Manzoni, who uses it also governed by a preposition.

- (77) Quello di che tu sospetti è certo
 That of which you suspect is sure
 “What you are suspicious about is sure”

(Manzoni, *I promessi sposi*, VII)

The following example by Jacopo da Lentini (13th century) deserves a closer look as well (78).

- (78) ca s'eo in voi troppo isparlo / non son[o] eo che
 that if I in you_{2nd PERS PL} too-much talk_{1st PERS SING} not am I that
 parlo: / Amore è che tacente fa tornare / lo ben \
 talk_{1st PERS SING} love is that still makes to-become the well
 parlante, e lo muto parlare
 talking and the dumb to-talk
 “That if I talk too much about you, it’s not me who talks. It’s love which
 makes dumb who knows how to speak well and makes those who are
 dumb speak”

(Jacopo da Lentini, *Uno disio d'amore sovente*, 33-36)

This passage from *Uno disio d'amore sovente* is particularly interesting, since it shares with Pier della Vigna the controversial structure in which *che* is ambiguous between being a relative pronoun or the introducer of a cleft. In Jacopo da Lentini this construction is instantiated by *amore è che [...] fa tornare*, but this passage also contains a part which is more clearly a cleft: *non sono eo che parlo*. There is evidently a contrast with what follows and the meaning is quite plain: it is not the author but love

²⁵ See the *Appendix* for a brief sketch on pseudoclefts.

²⁶ See chapter 1, § 3.6.

that makes people keep quiet or talk. Besides, 1st person agreement on the subordinate clause leads to think that *che* here is actually a complementizer rather than a pronoun.

The fact that the example by Pier Della Vigna or that one of the two structures by Jacopo da Lentini could be free relative clauses governed by a copular sentence, would not be disturbing for the analysis in any case, since it is well-known that at least in some languages, if not in modern Italian, the two structures are deeply connected. Recall for instance the analysis proposed for English clefts by Chomsky (1977), Akmajian (1970) and Higgins (1979). However, if the examples from Old Italian were to be interpreted as plain clefts, and at least one of the examples is, this would be a clue that cleft sentences are perfectly compatible with a V2 system, which has many other focalization tools. Old Italian, in fact, clearly had a V2 system, which has some similarities in common with modern Germanic V2 systems²⁷, although it is not identical. It has often been argued in the literature (e.g. Fischer, 2009) that verb second systems are not well compatible with clefts, since they have fronting possibilities that non-V2 languages do not have. This explanation, however, proves not to be satisfactory, as there are V2 languages such as Swedish or Norwegian²⁸ that have a greater incidence of cleft sentences if compared to other languages such as contemporary English, which is not V2 anymore.

Further clear examples of Old Italian cleft sentences, however, which do not pose any ambiguity in the interpretation, are to be found also in later texts, for example in Dante, Petrarch and Ariosto.

- (79) Il savio imperator ch' estinguer vòlse / un grande
 The wise emperor_{NOM} that to-stop wanted_{3rd PERS SING} a big
 incendio fu che gli la tolse
 fire was that him_{DAT} it took-away_{3rd PERS SING}
 “It was the wise emperor who wanted to stop a big fire who took it off
 from him.”

(Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso*, I, 7)

²⁷ For a discussion on Germanic verb second systems, see Tomaselli (1990b). See also Tomaselli (1993) for verb second phenomena in old languages.

²⁸ Gundel (2006) proposes a quantificational study in which it clearly emerges that Norwegian cleft sentences are three times more frequent than in English. Similar results have been obtained by the comparison between English and Swedish.

there is a number of reasons why identifying Latin clefts is difficult. Due to the fact that Latin is a *pro-drop* language and does not have a specialized pronoun for presentative and clefts, many instances in which there is a copular clause and a *wh-* clause are interpreted as a presentative rather than as a cleft, being pragmatic values very difficult to be perceived. Some examples however, which I have cautiously selected, are not ambiguous and show that in Latin the clefted element always bears Nominative case and if the Case governed by the *wh-* is not the Nominative, the requirements of the embedded verb have to be satisfied by the *wh-* pronoun. This pattern is clearly displayed both in the Classical period (Lucanus and Ovid), as well as in Late Latin (Tertullian).

- (81) Ego sum cui Marte peracto quae populi
 I am whom_{DAT} Mars made_{ABL} which_{NEUT ACC PL} people_{NOM PL}
 regesque tenant donare licebit
 kings_{NOM}-and possess_{3rd PERS PL SUBJ} to-donate will-have-to_{3rd PERS SING}
 “I am the person who you will have to donate the things that people and
 kings have, once the war is over.”
 (Lucan. Phars. 7, 299)

- (82) illa ego sum cui tu solitus promittere caelum
 that_{FEM SING} I am whom_{DAT} you usual to-promise sky_{ACC}
 “It’s me who you used to promise the sky”
 (Ov. fast. 3, 505)

- (83) Ipse est, qui solus praestat, et non ego sum cui
 himself_{NOM} is who_{NOM} alone has-might and not I am whom_{DAT}
 impetrare debetur, famulus eius, qui eum solus
 to-ask is-required slave of-him who_{NOM} him_{ACC} alone_{NOM}
 obseruo, qui pro disciplina eius occidit, qui
 worship_{1st PERS SING} who_{NOM} for faith of-him am-killed who_{NOM}
 ei offero opimam et maiorem hostiam,
 him_{DAT} offer_{1st PERS SING} fat_{ACC SING} and bigger_{ACC SING} victim_{ACC}
 quam ipse mandavit.
 than himself_{NOM} asked_{3rd PERS SING}
 “He himself alone can give them, and I am not he to whom the obtaining
 is due, his slave, who alone worship him, who on account of his teaching

- (85) Chi ze che me juta? (transitive)
 Who is that me_{ACC} helps
 “Who helps me?”
- (86) Chi ze che zuga co mi? (unergative)
 Who is that plays with me
 “Who plays with me?”
- (87) Chi ze che vien casa co mi? (unaccusative)
 Who is that comes home with me
 “Who comes home with me?”

The choice of present tense is not by chance. Even though not all informants agree on this point, it seems that there is some residual possibility to form a main question on the subject without using a cleft, if past tense is used.

- (88) Chi ze vegnuo?
 Who is come
 “Who has come?”
- (89) Chi ga magnà a me torta?
 Who has eaten the my cake
 “Who ate my cake?”

Notice that, apart from these uses in the past, main interrogatives without a cleft are not totally excluded, but they are not unmarked. Let us consider the following sentences:

- (90) Chi vien casa mia?
 Who comes home my
 “Who comes to my place?”
- (91) Chi zuga a balon co mi?
 Who plays at ball with me
 “Who plays football with me?”

Informants perceive these sentences as possible, only if emphasis is put on one of the constituents and it is not the entire event which is questioned. In *chi vien casa*

mia?, either additional emphasis is put on *chi* or on *casa mia*. A possible context of utterance is that I cannot imagine anyone willing to come to my place because certainly nobody would, or there are people willing to go around but I am proposing to go to my place, not somewhere generically. These observations support the claim that cleft constructions are not always necessarily connected with focalization intents, on the contrary, the plain version, with no cleft, implies markedness.

The difference between the dialectal variety spoken in (i) and (ii) is that (ii) does not need to introduce a main interrogative on the subject by means of a cleft if the verb is unaccusative. For speakers of (ii) in fact, the following example is perfectly grammatical:

- (92) Chi vien?
 “Who comes?”

Regardless of these micro-differences, what is worth noticing is that, coherently with the pattern described for French, a privileged environment for clefts to appear is questions, a structure which would in any case involve movement. Then, for reasons of left branching, subjects are more easily cleftable.

The dialects of the Veneto, however, provide further interesting data, which concern the necessity to insert a resumptive pronoun if a PP functioning as a Beneficiary is clefted.

- (93) Ze a Mario che *(ghe) go dato el libro
 Is to Mario that him have_{1st PERS SING} given the book
 “It’s to Mario that I gave the book”
- (94) Ze a to fradeo che te *(ghe) ghe comprà e scarpe
 Is to your brother that you him have_{2nd PERS SNG} bought the shoes
 nove?
 new
 “It is for your brother that I bought the new shoes?”

As (93) and (94) show, the obligatoriness of resumption is confirmed with both argumental and adjunct PPs introduced by *a*. Not all PPs require resumption, however:

when the PP is not a Beneficiary, resumption is impossible; when it is an adjunct Beneficiary introduced by *per* resumption is optional.

- (95) Ze co me mama che so ndà fare a spesa
 Is with my mum that am gone to-do the shopping
 “It’s with my mum that I went shopping”
- (96) Ze de ti che ghemo parlà
 Is about you that have_{1st PERS PL} talked
 “It’s about you that we talked”
- (97) Ze da lu che ghemo senà chealtra sera
 Is at him that have_{1st PERS PL} had-dinner the-other evening
 “It’s at his place that we had dinner a couple of days ago”
- (98) Ze par ea che (ghe) ghemo comprà a machina nova
 Is for her that her have_{1st PERS PL} bought the car new
 “It’s for her that we bought the new car”

The examples from (95) to (98) all display copular sentences in which the copula is inflected for third person singular. What is normally expected is that cleft sentences in which also non-Nominative complements can be clefted, are NP₂ agreement copular sentences, since the copula agrees in number with the focused pronoun. It is in fact what normally happens, but sentences with third person singular agreement are possible as well, although a different nuance in the meaning is implied.

- (99) Te si ti che te ghe da capire
 You_{CLIT} are you_{NOM} that you_{CLIT} have_{2nd PERS SING} to to-understand
 “It’s you who have to understand”
- (100) So mi che go rason
 Am I that have_{1st PERS SING} reason
 “It’s me who is right”
- (101) Eora ze mi che no go capio
 So is I that not have_{1st PERS SING} understood
 “So it’s me who didn’t understand”

While the sentences with the copula which agrees with the focus have a real focus on the clefted item, sentences in which the copula is inflected for third person express a wider focus, on the whole sentence rather than only on the post-copular constituent. This second possibility, definitely rarer, is not too far away from completive sentences of the type in (102), in which there is a silent item such as *the point/the problem, etc.* with which the subordinate clause is equated.

- (102) Ze che go paura de farme mae
 Is that have_{1st PERS SING} fear of to-do-me_{DAT} bad
 ‘It’s me who is afraid that I could hurt myself’

It is as if the sentence in (102) could be reformulated as *The point is that I fear I could hurt*. The example in (101), which is in the form of a cleft, could be paraphrased as *The point is that I didn’t understand*. Notice that English provides some other interesting data with respect to this kind of construction. There exist also forms like (103):

- (103) The thing is that you can never predict who will win

This shows that there is actually a head in front of the copula, which languages such as Italian or Paduan can avoid lexicalizing. As has been postulated in the previous chapter for free relative clauses, in *wh*- free relatives, the silent head has the form of a classifier.

Let us now come back to “proper” clefts. Paduan is a Northern Italian dialect which can, or in some contexts, must, use clefts. The case of Albosaggia³² however, is definitely striking, since this dialect has to use clefts basically in any main question context, i.e. with any kind of verbs and also with object or other *wh*- questions. Here is a first set of subject questions which require the use of a cleft, regardless of the category the verb belongs to.

³² Albosaggia is a small city in the North of Italy, precisely in Lombardy, in the province of Sondrio. All the dialectal data concerning Albosaggia come from the asis database.

Albosaggia (Sondrio)

(104) Chi ca al maia li patati? (transitive)

Who_{NOM} that he_{CLIT} eats the potatoes

“Who eats potatoes?”

(105) Chi che piaise? (unergative)

Who_{NOM} that cries

“Who cries?”

(106) Chi c'al ve al to post?

Who_{NOM} that-he_{CLIT} comes at your place

“Who comes on your place?” (unaccusative)

Notice that in all these sentences there is no lexicalized copula and in the linear sequence the Nominative wh- *chi* is immediately followed by the complementizer *che/ca*. The distribution is quite consistently *che* for unergative verbs and *ca* for the rest. An alternative analysis is that these instances are not really clefts but simply questions in which the wh- is followed by a complementizer as often happens in indirect questions in the dialects. This would imply that there is actually no subjacent copula. This analysis finds further support if we consider embedded questions on the subject, which display exactly the same pattern:

(107) Dimm chi ca 'l ve stasera

Tell_{2nd PERS SING IMP-me} who_{NOM} that he_{CLIT} comes tonight

“Tell me who comes tonight”

Clearer instances of clefts are provided by object direct questions, in which the copula is unambiguously present:

(108) Chi ca l'è c' a ho desmentegat?

Who that it is that her_{ACC} have_{1st PERS SING} forgotten

“Who did I forget?”

Interestingly, the wh- *chi* is once again followed by the complementizer *ca* and then by a clitic subject pronoun *l* which agrees with the copula. The whole construction is a

subject question and constitutes the copular clause, which is followed by the cleft subordinate clause introduced by *ca*.

Another Northern Italian dialect which requires the use of clefts to form subject interrogatives is Monnese. The case of Monno was thoroughly investigated by Benincà (1997).

The forms in which a *wh*- question on the subject can appear are the following:

- (109) a. *ch' è 'l chi che canta / telefona / ve?*
what is _{it_{CLIT}} who that sings/ phones comes
“Who sings/phones/comes?”
- b. *è 'l ki ke canta?*
is _{it_{CLIT}} who that sings
“Who sings?”
- c. *chi che canta?*
who that sings
“Who sings?”

(Benincà, 1997)

In subject questions, the subject always needs to be moved from the canonical preverbal position it has in assertive sentences and has to reach the Specifier of the projection devoted to interrogative items in CP (Rizzi, 1997; Benincà & Poletto, 2004; Benincà, 2006). This is a well-known fact and is further confirmed by the presence of the complementizer after the *wh*-. As Benincà (1997) points out, in Monnese the subject in the form of a *wh*- can be preceded by a copula with an inverted expletive subject. This allows for the *wh*- to remain structurally after the copula. The basic form is therefore a cleft in which the copula is moved to the left of the clitic subject. The cleft structure can optionally be preceded by a *ke* element. As happens in Paduan (ii) unaccusative verbs, in which the subject naturally sits in the position of an object, admit an *in situ wh*- interrogative.

The need for subject interrogatives to be formed by means of a cleft however, is not restricted to Northern Italian varieties, since it is attested also in Southern varieties such as Neapolitan.

- (110) Neapolitan (Marano di Napoli):
 Chi è cə vennə a carnə?
 who is that sells the meat
 “Who is it that sells the meat?”
- (111) Chi ven (a ccena staserə)?
 who comes at dinner tonight
 “Who comes for dinner tonight?”
- (112) Chi è vənutə a ccenə staserə
 Who is come at dinner tonight
 “Who has come for dinner tonight?”
- (113) Chi (è ca) rormə a casa toja tutte e dummenechə?
 who is that sleeps at home your all_{PL} the sundays
 “Who sleeps at your place every Sunday?”
- (114) Chi (è ca) rurmett a casa toja l’ altra sera?
 who is that slept at home your the other evening
 “Who slept at your place yesterday evening?”
- (115) E’³³ a Mmario ch’ aggə vistə no a Pascalə
 is to Mario that have_{1st PERS SING} seen not at Pascalə
 “It’s Mario who I saw, not Pasquale”
- (116) A Mmario aggia vistə no a Pascalə
 to Mario have_{1st PERS SING} seen not to Pascalə
 “Mario did I see, not Pasquale”

Interestingly, Neapolitan obligatorily requires that a main question on the subject is in the form of a cleft if the verb is transitive. If the verb is unergative, the question is preferably introduced by a cleft, even though this is not compulsory, while if the verb of the question is unaccusative, the unmarked question is formed by simple *wh*- movement and forming it by means of a cleft would imply markedness. Notice that if the past tense is employed, the cleft is not so strictly required as in the present. The pattern seems to

³³ Notice that in Neapolitan the form of the copula can also be *seve*. This is the form of the auxiliary which is used also with unaccusative verbs and in the nominal predicate. It is not clear yet, how this auxiliary is to be analyzed. According to some proposals, it is the combination of *be* and *eve*. As the distribution of this verb in the Neapolitan area is still to be investigated, I will keep this issue aside. It is however interesting that the copula of clefts perfectly coincides with the nominal predicate and the auxiliary of unaccusatives in analytic forms. For a discussion on *seve*, see Cennamo (2013).

go along the same direction of Paduan (ii), in that it does not need a cleft to form a question on the subject if the verb is unaccusative and it has further focalization tools at its disposal. A cleft is not necessary to form a question on the object. This asymmetry between subject and object questions is not by chance. The extraction of the subject is in fact complex because of left branching reasons. Under unaccusatives, the subject is not generated in SpecVP, since it is not truly an Agent. It is in fact generated in object position and this makes extraction easier in that it can be treated as an object. Furthermore, subject questions are in general opaque as they do not clearly display any form of verb movement, which can be made clear preferably by means of a cleft. Italian dialects show a clear pattern; it is as if there were an implicational scale: if a subject question containing an unaccusative verb needs to be formed by means of a cleft, then it also needs to with unergatives, and, if it does so with unergatives, then, it will surely do also with transitives. Here is a scheme which shows the decrement in the obligatoriness of use of clefts in subject questions.

Transitive verbs \longrightarrow Unergative verbs \longrightarrow Unaccusative verbs

Extraction difficulties from left branches combine with the problem of the reduplication of subject clitics in some Northern Italian dialects. Cleft sentences serve therefore as a kind of circumvention strategy in that they enable to split the information into two simpler clauses.

4.8 *Irish*

It has been argued that French has grammaticalized the structure of a cleft as a Standard way to form a question. Italian dialects such as Paduan need to introduce questions on the subject by means of a cleft (some with all classes of verbs, some others only provided that the verb is not unaccusative). Irish is another case in point, since it requires that all *wh*- main interrogatives are formed with a cleft. For language-specific constraints, *wh*- items cannot stand alone in front of the verb, but they cannot remain *in situ* either. In full questions containing an interrogative (*who, what, how, where, why*), the question word always has to appear at the beginning of the sentence. In order to circumvent the constraints which would not enable a *wh*- to stand at the beginning of a sentence, the interrogative is split into two subsets: the *wh*- stands in the form of a small

copula clause in which the copula is invisible or at least fused with the *wh*- itself. The subordinate clause appears in the form of a relative clause.

(117) Cé a rinne é sin?
Who(-is-it), that did it that
“Who did that?”

(118) Cad a rinne sé?
What(-is-it), that did he
“What did he do”

Questions, in which the cleft strategy is the only possible to be adopted, respect exactly the same word order that statements containing a cleft construction display.

(119) Is é sin a rinne sé.
Is it that that did he
“It is him that did that”

4.9 *Non Indo-European languages*

Having at least a general idea of what the structure of cleft sentences look like in languages that are syntactically very distant from ours can warn us against the risk of taking for granted patterns which are typical of languages typologically similar to ours. An interesting aspect is that also languages such as Chinese, Korean, Arabic, Somali, Tswana, Wolof do have cleft sentences. Many of these languages can also mark focus in other ways, but still use clefts. Surprisingly, if we exclude some superficial differences, all these languages share a similar basic anatomy: there is a copular structure (though the copula is not always lexicalized), they contain a focus and a subordinate clause.

4.9.1 *Chinese*

Chinese clefts contain a copula *shi*, which is invariable, and cannot be preceded by a lexicalized pronominal subject as the English *it*; it is in fact a pro-drop language. The copula is followed by the focus and the subordinate clause is introduced by the

complementizer *de*, at the end of the clause, which serves also (but not only) as a relativizer. The constituents which can be clefted are DPs, PPs and Adverbs.

- (120) Shu shi wo mai de
 Book COPULA I buy C
 “It’s me who bought the book”

(Ramberti, 1985)

4.9.2 Arabic

Standard Arabic displays strategies which are not exactly the same in all its dialects. Standard Arabic clefts have the following form:

focus + pronominal copular element + subordinate clause (in the form of a relative)

If they have a contrastive reading, standard Arabic foci have to be placed in front of the copula (Ouhalla, 1999). In both standard and Moroccan Arabic, there is no equivalent of the English *it* and the only constituents which can be clefted are definite noun phrases. PPs, adverbs and indefinite noun phrases are factored out.

4.9.3 Wolof (Niger-Congo, spoken in Senegal and in the Gambia)

Wolof has cleft sentences as the only possibility to focalize a constituent. Interestingly, Wolof morphology and phonology disambiguate between the two possible interpretations of sentences like, for instance, *It is the bag that I bought*. In the written language, in fact, if we are not provided with a context, this English sentence could either be interpreted as a presentational or as a cleft sentence. Notice instead the difference between (121) – (122).

- (121) Fas wi la jaaykat bi jënd
 Horse the COPULA_{3rd PERS SING} merchant the buy
 “It’s the horse that the merchant bought (not something else)”
- (122) Fas wu jaakat bi jënd la
 Horse RELATIVE merchant the buy COPULA_{3rd PERS SING}
 “This is the horse that the merchant bought”

(Kihm, 1999, ex. 24-25)

While (122), a presentational sentence, contains the relativizer *wu*, (121), which is a true cleft, does not. This asymmetry suggests that the structure is not exactly the same for the two constructions. Besides, the copula and what precedes it have to be pronounced *legato* in clefts but they are not in presentational sentences. A further point of interest is that not only does Wolof use cleft sentences as a focalization instrument, but clefts are normally associated with interrogative clauses³⁴ (Torrence, 2013) - subject interrogatives, but also non-subject. Furthermore, the presence of a cleft is compatible also with hanging topics and left dislocations. Wolof can cleft DPs, pronouns, PPs, adverbs and even VPs.

(123) *ca lekkool ba l-a-a gis-e Isaa* PP (locative)
 P school the xpl-*a*-1sg see-loc isaa
 “it’s at school that I saw Isaa”

(Torrence, 2013)

This proves that clefting is a widespread strategy even in typologically distant languages.

4.9.4 *Twsana (spoken in Botswana)*

As Wolof, also Twsana has non ambiguous structures, which enable to distinguish between presentational sentences containing a true relative and cleft sentences. The first are regularly introduced by a relative pronoun and display the suffix *-ng* on the verb, which marks the clause-type as relative, whereas the latter cannot be introduced by the relative pronoun and only display the *-ng* mark on the embedded verb (Clech-Darbon, Rebuschi, Rialland, 1999)

4.9.5 *Chichewa*

Chichewa is another interesting case in point, since it needs to use cleft sentences as the only focalization device. For instance, as Baker (1997) clearly explains, the object of a transitive verb can be focalized only if a cleft sentence is formed. The following example, however, shows that there are clear restrictions on clefting, in that

³⁴ Torrence (2013) makes reference to the obligatoriness of forming a question with a cleft when the particle *a(n)* is used. The nature of this particle however, is far from being clear. It may be interpreted as a focus marker or as a copula.

derived objects cannot be clefted. If they are, they need to be resumed by a pronoun which clarifies their status.

- (124) a. Uwu ndi-wo mtsuko u-mene ndi-ku-ganiza kuti Mavuto
 this be-agr waterpot cl-which 1sS-pres-think that Mavuto
 a-na-umb-ir-a mfumu
 SP-past-mold-appl-fv chief
 ‘This is the waterpot which I think that Mavuto molded the chief³⁵’
- b. *Iyi ndi-yo mfumu i-mene ndi-ku-ganiza kuti Mavuto
 this be-agr chief cl-which 1sS-pres-think that Mavuto
 a-na-umb-ir-a mtsuko
 SP-past-mold-appl-fv waterpot
 ‘This is the chief which I think that Mavuto molded a waterpot.’

(Baker, 1997: 23)

The example is a double object construction, in which a direct object and a Beneficiary respectively have been clefted. While the former can be easily focalized, the latter does not manage to. This restriction is not so cogent in double object constructions of English, in which the Beneficiary which has been promoted to object, can be clefted even though the preposition is not restored. Notice however, that this possibility is extremely marginal also in English and the most natural version requires, according to native speakers, that the preposition is lexicalized, either pied-piped or stranded. An instance of a cleft with a derived object is in a lyrics, but the fact that it is attested in a song does not imply that this is plain English.

- (125) It’s you I give my heart and dedicate my soul

(from the song *So unpredictable* by Jordyn Taylor)

4.10 *Summary of the characteristics of clefts in typologically different languages*

To summarize the main characteristics of the construction in the various languages, a table could be of help. I will keep Non-Indoeuropean languages aside, as

³⁵ The English translation is the same as in the original (Baker, 1997). Though the English version does not sound a cleft, the author makes it explicit in the text that he is dealing with cleft constructions.

the description of their syntactic behavior was just meant to signal that clefts are not a prerogative of typologically similar languages. The same holds for Irish, which is a VSO language and is therefore too distant from the languages we will consider for an actual comparison.

Languages	Syntactic behavior				
	<i>Expletive</i>	<i>Agreement of the copula</i>	<i>Case of focus</i>	<i>Cleftable constituents</i>	<i>Introducer of the subordinate clause</i>
English	It	3 rd person singular	Accusative	DPs, PPs, pronouns	That / wh-pronouns
French	Ce	Depending on the register	Non-nominative if pronominal	DPs, PPs, CPs, pronouns	Que/qui
Italian	None	Agreement with the focus (if nominative)	Case required by the embedded verb	DPs, PPs, CPs, (some) adverbs, pronouns	che
Latin	None	(generally) agreement with the focus	Nominative Case	Pronouns, DPs, (other data not available)	wh- pronouns
Paduan	None	Agreement with the focus (if nominative)	Case required by the embedded verb	DPs, PPs, CPs, (some) adverbs, pronouns	che
Neapolitan	None	Agreement with the focus (if nominative)	Case required by the embedded verb	DPs, PPs, CPs, (some) adverbs, pronouns	ca/ chə
Albosaggia	‘1	Agreement with the focus (if nominative)	Case required by the embedded verb	DPs, PPs, CPs, (some) adverbs, pronouns	ca/ che
Monnese	‘1	Agreement with the focus (if nominative)	Case required by the embedded verb	DPs, PPs, CPs, (some) adverbs, pronouns	che

5. The frequency of use of German cleft sentences: possible accounts

5.1 Scarcity of use

As most languages, German has cleft sentences. Differently from languages such as Italian, French or English, anyway, German does not make much use of this construction and learners of German could look in vain in grammars to find a section devoted to this construction. Their scarce frequency both in written and spoken texts is

evident even if we conduct randomized research in German sources. Accurate quantitative studies however, have been carried out to analyze in what proportion cleft sentences appear in German texts with respect to their English counterparts (Doherty 1999, Fischer 2009, Ahlemeyer & Kohlhof 1999 a.o.). The findings of research independently done confirm that only one third of English clefts is rendered in German with a *Spaltsatz*. This suggests that German has alternative manners to convey the same meaning which is often expressed by cleft sentences. If we look closer at the semantics of this construction, what is clear is that the subordinate clause forming the structure contains background information, therefore information which is already known to the speaker, while the clefted constituent is always new and expresses a focus. The nature of this focus is not always the same: it can be new-information focus (126) or it can be contrastive (127), this means it corrects what has been said. Belletti (2008) claims that subject clefts can express both new-information and contrastiveness, while object clefts can only express contrastiveness (128).

(126) It's Mary that talks with Jim (new information)

(127) It was John that cheated (not Mary) (contrastive focus)

(128) It's Anna that I always meet with pleasure

5.2 *Modal particles*

A possible explanation which has been given in the literature (Fischer, 2009) for German not exploiting clefts is that it has modal particles (*Modalpartikeln*) such as *ja, eigentlich, nochmal, schon, gut, doch...* which can contribute in giving a particular nuance to the expression, whereas English does not have devices like these (Doherty 2001). These particles can serve as focus markers and provide illocutionary force, they express the attitude of the speaker towards their utterance, which could not be conveyed by means of other pragmatic tools. Notice, for instance, the following scale, in which it is clearly shown that the same sentence can be interpreted in various ways on the basis of the modal particles it is accompanied with:

- (129) a. Wo wohnt er denn? (no out-of-the-blue usage; only common ground)
 b. Wo wohnt er wohl? (uncertainty about the answer)
 c. Wo wohnt er nur? (can't-find-the-value)
 d. Wo wohnt er schon? (yields a rhetorical question)

Where lives he PRT

“Where does he live?”

(Bayer & Trotzke, 2013)

As the scale above makes clear, German can easily render the different pragmatic nuances by means of lexicalized items inserted within the syntactic structure. Notice that these items can even be stacked and have to appear in a fixed order. Here is an example

- (130) Wer hat denn wohl wen geführt?

Who_{NOM} has PRT PRT who_{ACC} led

“Who the hell has led who?”

(title of a song by Klaus Densow)

A very stimulating debate has been taking place for some years among the scholars, with the aim to understand why these particles appear to be in sentence internal position, though they clearly give a pragmatic contribution, which certainly affects the upper part of the clause, namely the CP area. As this is not crucial for the present discussion, I will not deal with this aspect. I will briefly mention the fact that different proposals have been put forth and most of them resort to LF, as the only possible movement which can provide the particles with their value without them actually sitting in the CP layer (Bayer & Trotzke, 2013; Coniglio, 2013; Gärtner, 2013). Modal particles however, are not a prerogative of German; similar particles (though not the exact equivalent) can be detected also in some Italian dialects. Their presence in these languages is particularly interesting for the present investigation, since it weakens the argument that cleft sentences are not widespread in German, since it can use other focalizers. In a recent paper, Hinterhözl & Munaro (2013) have looked for a possible correspondence between the modal particles of German and the ones of Bellunese³⁶;

³⁶ Bellunese is a Northern Italian dialect spoken in the mountains of the Veneto

although the two systems cannot be fully overlapped, there are some interesting coincidences. Bellunese has a good number of specialized particles, but even in dialects such as Paduan, which have more limited sets of focalizers, these happily coexist with clefts. As has been shown in § 4.7, in given syntactic contexts, some varieties even require clefts as instruments to form unmarked subject questions. Here is an example of a Paduan question, in which a particle is inserted:

(131) (*Possible context*)

It's Christmas time, Anna wants to buy a lot of food for the big lunch on Christmas Eve and Gina tries to convince her that she should not because it is definitely too much and nobody would eat that huge amount of food
 Ma chi ze che se a magna tuta chea roba po'?'
 But who_{NOM} is that himself her eats all_{FEM} that_{FEM} thing_{FEM} PRT
 "But who the hell is gonna eat all that stuff?"

Once it has been independently proved for other languages that cleft structures and particles are not mutually exclusive, we can go back to German and show that even here clefts and modal particles are perfectly compatible. Some speakers even say that in certain contexts the presence of the particles improves the grammaticality of the cleft. In (132) for instance, the speaker signals that he is astonished at the possibility that someone could produce or sell a therapy which has turn out to be potentially dangerous.

(132) Also - wer ist es wohl, der diese hier so schillernd
 So who_{NOM} is it PRT who_{NOM} this_{ACC} here so blinkingly
 beschriebene Immuntherapie produzieren - und verkaufen! - will?
 described immunotherapy to-produce and to-sell wants
 "So, who is it who wants to produce – and sell! – this beautifully
 described immunotherapy?"

(<http://forum.spiegel.de>, 19th February 2013)

(133) Wer war es denn, der mein Haus zerstört hat? Wer war
 Who_{NOM} was it PRT who_{NOM} my house destroyed has who_{NOM} was
 es der mich eingesperrt und gefoltert hat? Wer war es, der
 it, who_{NOM} me imprisoned and tortured has who_{NOM} was it who_{NOM}
 my_{ACC} Schwester geschändet und meinen Bruder ermordet hat?
 meine sister dishonored and my_{ACC} brother killed has
 “Who was it who destroyed my house? Who was it who imprisoned and
 tortured me? Who was it who dishonored my sister and killed my
 brother?”

(On-line journal [www. profile.at](http://www.profile.at), 9th February 2013)

In this last example the presence of the particle suggests that the speaker is particularly shaken by the sad event which has affected him and his family and wants to know who the culprit is and he has no idea about whom it may be.

5.3 *Fronting and Verb Second*

Being a V2 language, beside modal particles, German surely has further alternatives at its disposal to express markedness. A substantial difference with respect to English is that it can put a constituent in front of the verb. While English cannot say something like (134), German can, see (135).

(134) *Me loves mum

(135) Mich liebt Mama

Me loves mum

“Mummy loves me”

English has very reduced fronting possibilities, whereas German can pre-pose constituents in front of the main verb to provide a contrastive interpretation of the moved item (Frey 2004a, Light 2012). This is a result of the V2 nature of German, which enables it to put a constituent in front of the verb, English instead has lost this system and is now SV.

It has also been noticed that the infrequency of clefts with respect to English is due to the fact that English is more rigid also with adverbs, which must appear only in designated positions.

(136) *She did it therefore

(137) Sie hat es deshalb gemacht / deshalb hat sie es gemacht

She has it therefore made therefore has she it made

(Fischer 2009)

Differently from English, German has pronominal adverbs, which it can use also as a rhetoric instrument to delay the pronunciation of a clause (Doherty, 2001):

(138) Ich habe Angst davor, dass etwas Schlimmes

I have_{1st PERS SING} fear in-front-of that something bad
passiert.

happens

“I am afraid that something bad happens”

All the points which have been outlined are certainly good reasons why German utilizes cleft sentences very seldom. However, they are not totally convincing: first of all, having fronting possibilities does not necessarily imply that clefts are to be excluded. Paradigmatic in this respect is the example of the Paduan and Neapolitan dialects, which can front constituents, but all the same, even have to obligatorily introduce main interrogatives on the subject with a cleft, at least with transitive verbs.

(139) To mama go visto (no to papà)

Your mum_{ACC} have_{1st PERS SING} seen (not your dad)

“It’s your mum that I saw (not your dad)”

(140) Chi zè che te ghe visto?

Who is that you have seen

“Who is it that you have seen?”

The rigid position of adverbs in English compared to German, is not a sufficient reason either. Once again languages such as Italian, which are very free in this field, still use clefts.

- (141) a. Quindi ho deciso di partire
 So have_{1st PERS SING} decided to to-leave
 “So I decided to leave”
- b. Ho deciso quindi di partire
 Have_{1st PERS SING} decided so to to-leave
 “Therefore I decided to leave”

Although the presence of pronominal adverbs has no exact counterpart in the languages we took into consideration, the rhetoric wish to make the addressee wait for the information can be attained also in other ways which many languages have at disposal. The style of the German sentence in (138), here repeated as (142) could be rendered for instance in Italian as (143):

- (142) Ich habe Angst davor, dass etwas Schlimmes passiert
 I have_{1st PERS SING} fear in-front-of that something bad happens
 “I am afraid that something serious happens”
- (143) Ho paura del fatto che possa accadere qualcosa
 Have_{1st PERS SING} fear of-the fact that can_{SUBJ} to-happen something_{NOM}
 di grave
 of serious
 “I am afraid that something serious could happen”

5.4 *The influence of English*

It is worth noting that Standard German has few syntactic possibilities to form a cleft sentence and can cleft only certain constituents, while the colloquial language is much freer and uses this construction more abundantly. This asymmetry has been explained in terms of influence of English on colloquial German, which could play a role, but would not account for the use of the structure also by old people or by sociolinguistic groups not so much exposed to the stimulus. Besides, the influence of

English is more restricted to lexicon and to jargons such as advertisement, it does not certainly affect the syntax so deeply.

A good reason for the comparatively scarce use of clefts in German could be provided by translation studies indeed, as far as they show that the pragmatic and discourse functional value of clefts in German is not the same as in English, or in other languages in which clefts are of current use. The markedness effect German clefts create is bigger than that provided by English, therefore translating an English cleft with the German exact equivalent would lead to a partial distortion of the original meaning, in that the emphasis put on the clefted item is exaggerated if compared to the original.

5.5 *Why does V2 not account for the scarcity of clefts?*

It has already been made clear in § 5.3 that the scarcity of clefts cannot be due to the V2 structure of German, or at least not only to this. It has been pointed out that Old Italian for instance made use of clefts, although it had a V2 system. The case of Norwegian is paradigmatic in this respect, since it shows that being a V2 language is not responsible for blocking clefts, which are abundantly used, three times more than in English (as Gundel, 2006 argues). The same holds also for Swedish, in which the percentage of clefts is very similar to that of Norwegian if we compare it with English. Gundel (2006) claims for Norwegian that the high frequency of clefts in this language is not due to grammar alone but is connected with a preference of the language to encode all presupposed information in the cleft clause and keep instead all new material out of the syntactic subject position. Moreover, *wh*- questions are preferably clefted in Norwegian especially when there is a presupposition. The preference for clefting presupposed material also combines with referentiality: when referential presupposed material is questioned, a non-cleft question would sound unnatural, even weak presuppositions³⁷ are rather clefted in questions. Clefts are an effective device for Norwegian to explicitly distinguish between focus and topic. Thus, clefting is not merely a matter of emphasis as is in English, but a direct way to encode information.

5.6 *Scrambling and information structure*

The reasons which have been outlined above to account for the scarcity of German clefts (the presence of focus markers and pronominal adverbs, the fact that

³⁷ Although it is not crucial to her analysis, Gundel (2006) points out that strong presuppositions are at least familiar, while weak presuppositions are at most uniquely identifiable.

German is V2 a. o.) are certainly factors which can contribute in diminishing the number of clefts in German. However they do not seem to be crucial. The key factor is probably the properties of focus, this means it is connected with *scrambling*. German is a language in which it is possible to displace the constituents from their canonical position and put them in more marked orders. This is clearly shown by the following examples, in which the subject precedes and follows the object respectively:

- (144) a. dass das Objekt dem Subjekt den ersten Platz
that the object_{NOM} the_{DAT} subject the_{ACC} initial position
streitig macht
fighting makes
- b. dass dem Subjekt den ersten Platz das Objekt
that the_{DAT} subject the_{ACC} initial_{ACC} place the_{NOM} object
streitig macht
fighting makes
“that the object competes with the subject for the initial position”
(Haider & Rosengren, 2003)

The instances of scrambling under subordinate clauses have been deliberately selected, since they enable us to exclude all those cases in which, for instance, an object precedes the verbs just for the properties of V2 and therefore is not to truly reconnect with scrambling³⁸.

As the preceding example shows, scrambling can involve more than one constituent and create markedness. It is also clear that scrambling does not necessarily have to do with the CP layer, the syntactic field devoted to pragmatics. It can be an A- or A' - movement and target therefore different positions. This indicates that German not only has the possibility to front elements making them sit in a Specifier Position within CP, but it can also scramble some constituents within the so-called *Mittelfeld* (middle-field) in structure internal position. When this happens, however, very specific restrictions apply (Haider & Rosengren, 2003). This framework is perfectly compatible with what can be observed for German clefts: they are far less frequent than in other

³⁸ There is no consensus among linguists concerning how scrambling should be treated theoretically nor on the precise concept of scrambling. I will adopt traditional approaches, which rely for instance on Lenerz (2001).

languages because German has many other tools at its disposal, but when these tools cannot be used or their application is not as effective as pursued, than German resorts to clefts: the elements which are, in fact, easier to be clefted are subjects (Fischer 2009), and, in colloquial varieties, adjuncts such as *mit großer Freude*, *mit Enttäuschung*, etc. In the first case, the subject cannot receive adequate pragmatic prominence, at least in the written language, if it is simply placed in front of the verb; on the other side, adjuncts cannot undergo proper scrambling and need therefore to be extracted from the subordinate clause and put into a split structure which emphasizes their prominence. This is to say that German tries to apply more economic strategies whenever syntactic conditions allow for it, and resorts to cleft only when other devices cannot be used or are not emphatic enough. This account can be traced back to a wider issue, which is information structure in German: while Romance languages normally have New Information focus in the vP periphery, therefore in the low periphery, German has it in front of the verb. Notice this contrast between Italian and German:

- (145) Chi ha parlato? Ha parlato Gianni
 Who_{NOM} has spoken has spoken Gianni_{NOM}
- (146) Wer hat gesprochen? Gianni hat gesprochen
 Who_{NOM} has spoken Gianni_{NOM} has spoken
 “Who spoke? Gianni spoke”

The fact that the relative scarcity of clefts could be attributed to reasons of information structure seems to be confirmed for instance by Sicilian. This is certainly a language which has an information structure which is heavily different both from standard Italian and German. Nevertheless, it shares with German some properties which enable to draw a parallel. The most interesting in this respect is that New Information focus always sits in front of the verb, as is in German, although the prosody is very different. A very famous sentence by Camilleri’s *Montalbano*, a text in which the characters speak Sicilian dialect or at least transpose the Sicilian syntax to Italian, is:

- (147) Montalbano sono
 Montalbano am
 “I am Montalbano”

This similarity with German leads to parallel consequences in the two languages with respect to the use of clefts.

Sicilian speakers³⁹ use clefts really scarcely (even less than German) and when they do it, they only do it with subjects. Once again this parallels the syntactic behavior of German, which can form clefts also on other constituents, but has subjects as a prototypical context for clefting. This is probably due to the fact that having the subject in pre-verbal position does not always suffice in signaling that that subject has been further moved to a pragmatic position in the left periphery. While objects and PPs cannot be generated pre-verbally and when they sit in front of the verb they signal that movement has taken place, subjects cannot. The reluctance of Sicilian for clefts is even more radical than German, since objects and PPs are not even accepted. The scale of grammaticality anyway corresponds to Keenan & Comrie (1977) Accessibility Hierarchy, in that the most marked cases are the least acceptable in clefting. A potential example of a Sicilian cleft is (148):

- (148) Peppi jè ca jè u cchiù ranni
Peppe is that is the more big
“It’s Peppe who is the biggest one”

As can be inferred from the example above, Sicilian allows also for pre-copular clefted constituents, as happens in German, although this order in German normally triggers a contrastive interpretation.

6. Standard German

6.1 A review of previous literature

Doherty (2001) points out that there are very few studies on German clefts alone, since it seems that even German linguists are not interested in the issue. The result is that there is abundant literature on the cleft construction of other languages, such as English, but very little about German. German grammars devoted to foreign learners do not even mention cleft sentences. Dreyer & Schmitt (2008) or Difino & Fornaciari (2001) do not have any section concerning clefts, nor do they treat them together with other topics.

³⁹ Silvio Cruschina (p. c.) is currently doing specific research on that and his studies show this tendency.

Descriptive grammars of German at least mention the existence of the construction, although the space devoted to it is very little and the description has not a dedicated chapter, but is often to be found either in the relative clause or in the use of *es* chapters. Engel (1988) dedicates two small sections to the construction and tries to identify a list of possible scopes of *es*-clefts. He provides a selection of potential sentences, even though its judgments are considered liberal by many speakers (Fischer 2009). IDS grammar (Zifonun 1997) spends only two pages on clefts, Pittner (2008) mainly cites Engel's examples and concentrates more on pseudoclefts. There is basically no mention of *das*-clefts, this means clefts which are introduced by the demonstrative pronoun *das* instead of *es*.

Duden (2006) inserts clefts in the restrictive relative clause section and identifies only a small number of cleftable constituents, which are accepted by all speakers and in all registers. These constituents are basically DPs. The formulation Duden adopts to introduce the topic is the following: "restrictive relative clauses appear also in a particular construction, which is called *Spaltsatz*"⁴⁰. The pattern outlined for clefts is:

Es ist X, der/die/das...

It is also maintained that each cleft sentence can be easily reworded in non-cleft sentences containing focalization. Duden also specifies that in other languages clefts are more often used than in German and that in those languages there are some possible combinations which have to be excluded for German. The formula *es ist* must be followed by a DP in the Nominative, being any other kinds of constituents factored out. The appropriateness of the sole Nominative is confirmed by the ungrammaticality of the following example:

- (149) *Es war einem Journalisten, dem er den Hinweis verdankte
 It was a_{DAT} journalist whom_{DAT} he the_{ACC} hint owed
 "It was to a journalist that he owed the hint"

(Duden 2006: 1044)

⁴⁰ The German original is "Restriktive Relativsätze erscheinen auch in einer besonderen Konstruktion, die man Spaltsatz nennt".

This example is certainly ungrammatical, but the deep reasons why it is not acceptable do not reside – at least not only – in the fact that the clefted item bears Dative Case, but as will be shown by colloquial varieties, such a combination is impossible in German for Case Filter: two phrases governed by the same verb cannot be assigned the same Case. The copula cannot in fact govern Dative Case, which is evidently assigned by the embedded verb. The case however, has to be assigned either to the *d-* pronoun or to the focus, but not simultaneously to both. The presence of a clefted constituent bearing a case different from the one which is normally displayed in copular sentences is only possible in the languages if the introducer of the subordinate clause is a complementizer.

A part from the few warnings, which underline the ungrammaticality of inserting a dative clefted constituent and a dative *d-* pronoun, nothing else is said about clefts in Duden (2006).

Durrel (2002) advises learners against using clefts because the risk to overuse them is serious and suggests that other means of pragmatization (*in situ* or through scrambling) should be preferred. Furthermore, he claims that cleft sentences sound unnatural in German and that the only possible type is (150). His approach to this grammatical issue is very similar to Duden's.

- (150) Er war es, der mich davon abhielt
 He was it who_{NOM} me from-that prevented
 “It was him who prevented me from doing that”

(Durrel 2002: 479)

Although Durrel (2002) does not explicitly affirm it, (150) makes it clear that the order focus + copula + *es* is perfectly acceptable. This creates a first syntactic asymmetry with English and further supports the idea that fronting is not a device which blocks clefts, on the contrary, the two aspects can interact.

Besides, Durrel (2002) claims that only nominal phrases are cleftable, while PPs and Adverbs should never be clefted. A cleft sentence containing a PP should only have this form (151):

- (151) Es ist Hans, mit dem ich gesprochen habe
 It is Hans_{NOM} with whom I spoken have_{1st PERS SING}
 “It’s with Hans that I spoke”

As (151) clearly shows, the clefted constituent bears Nominative Case and is therefore a DP, even if emphasis should be put on the entire PP and not on the bare noun. The Standard however prohibits that a full PP is clefted. The point is that this structure is inevitably ambiguous with a presentational sentence. Out-of-the-blue, in the written form there is no way to determine whether it is a cleft or not. A possible disambiguation would come by the substitution of *es* with a presentational pronoun such as *das*. Notice however that *das* is not incompatible with clefts, on the contrary, it can in certain cases increase their degree of acceptability. Its disambiguating function cannot be assimilated to that of the French *voilà*. A number of speakers, in fact, judge clefts with *das* as even preferable, since it contributes in giving definiteness to the sentence. Using a demonstrative as a possible introductory pronoun is not a hallmark of German: Norwegian can do the same with *det* although in this case the distinction between the demonstrative and the unmarked pronoun is much more opaque, since in Norwegian the difference between the two items is only given by stress. The reasons why *das* potentially improves the grammaticality of the sentence is that it increases the degree of referentiality: a requirements for clefts to be grammatical. Being *das* a demonstrative, it has a deictic component which plays a role. Notice that the generic or non-specific reading is absolutely impossible in clefts. *Das* is compatible with affirmative sentences, main questions and embedded clauses. Thus, there is no real restriction on the use of *das* with respect to the syntactic context, if we exclude a demonstrative / deictic component which makes it more frequent with clefted deictic pronouns.

- (152) Wer war das, der ein neues Buch veröffentlicht hat?
 Who_{NOM} was this who_{NOM} a new book published has
 “Who was it who published a new book?”

- (153) Du warst das, der das andere Dorf zerstört hat, nicht
 You_{SING} were this who_{NOM} the other village destroyed has not
 wahr?
 true

“It was you who has destroyed the other village, wasn’t it?”

(<https://www.fanfiction.net/s/9266420/3/Forgotten-in-Time>)

(154) Ich meine, dass du das warst, der das dachte, und
I mean that you this were who_{NOM} this thought_{3rd PERS SING} and
nicht er
not he

“I mean that it was you who thought this and not him”

(<http://www.assoziations-blaster.de/info/Schnappatmung.html>)

6.2 Copular sentences in Standard German clefts

The kind of cleft sentences that I will treat are essentially constituted by specificational copular sentences (Den Dikken 2006). Because of their nature, specificational copular sentences have a definite NP₁ and precise restrictions apply on the kind of phrases which can be clefted. A possible example of a specificational copular sentence in German is (155):

(155) Der Sieger ist Jan
The winner is John

The simple relation can be schematized as follows:

NP₁ COPULA NP₂

Languages conform to different patterns of agreement. German is said to be an NP₂ agreement language (Heycock 2012), this means that the copula always agrees with the post-copular NP, which has to bear Nominative Case:

(156) Mein Glück sind meine Kinder
My joy_{NOM} are_{3rd PERS PL} my children_{NOM}
“My joy are my children”

The copular clause of clefts however is peculiar, since in the unmarked order of clefts, NP₁ is always *es*, an unstressed weak 3rd person subject pronoun. This triggers

that the true agreement operations in clefts remain opaque if the focus is a singular DP or if it is a 3rd person pronoun, as it cannot be established whether agreement is governed by one or the other item. (157) perfectly respects the rule expressed above on the basis of descriptive grammars, besides, the example by Durrel (2002) (150) shows that even in the Standard, *es* does not need to be in pre-copular position, as also (158) highlights.

- (157) Es ist Hans, der das neue Buch von Baricco liest
 It is Hans_{NOM} who_{NOM} the new book by Baricco reads
- (158) Hans ist es, der das neue Buch von Baricco liest
 Hans_{NOM} is it who the new book by Baricco reads
 “It’s Hans, who reads the new book by Baricco”

The agreement dynamics only become clear if plural (pro)nouns or deictics as foci are observed.

6.3 Agreement with DPs

With DPs the following patterns of agreement are displayed.

- (159) a. Die Freunde sind es, die dir bei den
 The friends are_{3rd PERS PL} it who_{NOM PL} you_{DAT} in the
 Schwierigkeiten des Lebens helfen können
 difficulties the_{GEN} life_{GEN} to-help can_{3rd PERS PL}
- b. Es sind die Freunde, die dir bei den
 It are_{3rd PERS PL} the friends who_{NOM PL} you in the_{DAT}
 Schwierigkeiten des Lebens helfen können
 difficulties the_{GEN} life_{GEN} to-help can_{3rd PERS PL}
 “It’s friends who can help you when you are in trouble in your life.”

Differently from many other languages⁴¹ German can easily front the focused constituent in front of the copula. The focus, which is always in the Nominative, agrees with it. If the focus were non-Nominative (as happens for instance in English), it could

⁴¹ Even from Dutch, in this respect, since the latter has reduced fronting possibilities.

not share any ϕ -features with the verb and could not therefore establish any form of agreement. The pattern in (159a) is perfectly grammatical and its grammaticality would be the same also if the *es* and the focus were in the canonical order (159b). There are probably different nuances in the meaning depending on the order. Thus, it is to be noticed that while (159a) is equally acceptable as (159b), with a pragmatic variation between the two versions, the judgments differ if a pronoun is clefted.

6.4 Agreement with pronouns

Plural DP subjects are perfectly acceptable both in pre- and post-copular position, the same does not hold for subject pronouns:

- (160) ? Es sind sie, die bei der Bank arbeiten
 It are_{3rd PERS PL} they who_{NOM PL} in the_{DAT} bank work_{3rd PERS PL}
 “It’s them who work at the bank”

It is worth underlining that the same degradation in acceptability is attested even if the clefted pronoun is *er*, therefore a 3rd person singular pronoun which cannot give rise to any apparent verbal agreement mismatch.

- (161) a. Er ist es, den ich treffen möchte
 He is it who_{ACC MASC SING I} to-meet would-like_{1st PERS SING}
 b. ? Es ist er, den ich treffen möchte
 It is he who_{ACC MASC SING I} to-meet would-like_{1st PERS SING}
 “It’s him that I want to meet”

The respective order of *es* and the focus are not interchangeable at all if the clefted constituent is a pronoun in the 1st or in the 2nd person. Under these cases, the pronouns must always precede the copula, as it would sound odd to have a linear order in which the weak 3rd person pronoun *es* is followed by a copula displaying 1st or 2nd person agreement.

- (162) a. Du bist es, der immer lügt.
 You_{SING} are_{2nd PERS SING} it who_{NOM MASC SING} always tells-lies
- b. % Es bist du, der immer lügt
 It are_{2nd PERS SING} you_{SING} who_{NOM MASC SING} always tells-lies
- c. * Es ist du, der immer lügt
 It be_{3rd PERS SING} you_{2nd PERS SING} who_{NOM MASC SING} always tell-lies
 “It’s you who always tell lies”
- (163) a. Ich bin es, der viel von dir gelernt hat.
 I am it who_{NOM MASC SING} much from you_{DAT SING} learned has
- b. % Es bin ich, der viel von dir gelernt hat.
 It am I who_{NOM MASC SING} much from you_{DAT SING} learned has
- c. * Es ist ich, der viel von dir gelernt hat.
 It is I who_{NOM MASC SING} much from you_{DAT SING} learned has
 “It’s me that learned a lot from you”

To sum up, the copula always agrees with the focus. This is possible because the focus must bear Nominative Case and is therefore a suitable candidate for agreement. If it were not in the Nominative, agreement would not succeed. The order of *es* and the clefted phrase are freer if the focus is a DP (with slight pragmatic variation), while it undergoes several restrictions if the focus is a pronoun. The latter should preferably appear in front of the copula if it is 3rd person (both singular and plural) and must be pre-copular if it is 1st or 2nd person. The different degree of acceptability of the two patterns is probably linked to a number of factors. The intuitive explanation of native speakers is that apparent forms of wrong verbal agreement should be avoided, as it would sound awkward to have a Nominative preverbal pronoun which normally rules verbal agreement followed by a verb with non-corresponding agreement. Nevertheless, this is not the only reason, since it would not account for (163b) in which no mismatch could be perceived. It seems that the pronouns need to be placed in pre-copular position to receive a contrastive interpretation and are not perfectly suitable as *in situ* Foci. There is probably a further reason why pronouns always have to be pre-copular: if they were post-copular they would appear in Wackernagel position, a syntactic position which normally hosts weak pronouns (Poletto & Tomaselli, 1995; Tomaselli, 2009). Clefted pronouns can never be weak because they have to bear stress; positing them in front of the verb ensures that this can take place. On the other hand, *es* is a weak pronoun by

nature and is therefore a suitable candidate to fill in the post-copular position. It is not by chance that *es* can very frequently cliticize and reduce its phonological form to ‘s when it is post-verbal even in non-clefts contexts. A very clear example is provided by the following formula:

- (164) Wie geht’s?
 How goes-it
 “How are you?”

Similar examples, with the focused pronoun obligatorily placed in front of the copula and *es* cliticized onto the copula can be found also in clefts, both in everyday language and in literary attestations:

- (165) Ich bin’s, der dir immer hilft
 I am-it who_{NOM} you_{DAT} always helps
- (166) Du bist’s, der, was wir bauen, / mild über uns
 You are_{2nd PERS SING}- it who_{NOM} what we build_{1st PERS PL} mildly over us
 zerbricht
 destroys
 “It’s you who mildly destroys over us what we build”
 (J. von Eichendorff⁴², *Der Umkehrende*, 1838)
- (167) Und ich bin’s, der all dies elend schuf
 And I am-it who_{NOM} all this miserely construed_{3rd PERS SING}
 “And it’s me who miserely construed all this”
 (R. Wagner, *Parsifal*, Act III)

It is well-known in the literature (Poletto & Tomaselli, 1995) that *unbetonte* (unstressed) pronominal forms appear immediately on the right of the *linke Klammer* (Wackernagel position), on the right of inflected verbs in main clauses and on the right of complementizers or pronominal items if they are embedded. The pronominal sequence in Wackernagel position gives rise to syntactic enclisis with respect to the word which realizes the *linke Klammer* (inflected verb – pronominal sequence).

⁴² Joseph von Eichendorff (1788-1857) is a German author who wrote in the Late Romantic period. This is a short extract coming from the ballade “Der Umkehrende” written in 1838.

6.5 *The insertion of modifiers within the copular clause*

At the very beginning of the copular sentence some conjunctions such as *denn*, *aber*, *sondern*, etc., can appear without changing the normal order of clefts. In the terms of traditional grammar, these elements are claimed not to count as one position within the sentence because their presence does not change in any way the canonical order *XP* – *V* and they do not cause the verb to shift. In formal terms however, we have to account for them and hypothesize that they occupy a very high position in CP (probably in the *Force* area), which does not affect the collocation of the verb - and eventually the pre-verbal subject – which would in any case remain lower.

- (168) Nicht wir sind es, die von Thomas Mann lernen
 not we are_{3rd PERS PL} it who_{NOM PL} from Thomas Mann to-learn
 können, sondern er ist es, der in aller
 can_{1st PERS PL} rather he is it who_{NOM MASC SING} in all_{DAT}
 Bescheidenheit schweigen sollte, wenn ihm das
 modesty to-keep-silent should_{3rd PERS SING} if him_{DAT} that
 möglich ist
 possible is
 “It’s not us who can learn from Thomas Mann. On the contrary it’s him
 who should keep silent in all modesty if he can”
 („Der Spiegel” 29/1949)

The matrix clause can of course also contain modifiers such as adverbs or modal particles. The fix position of these elements in the structure can offer us some clues to better understand the precise collocation of the copula and the clefted constituent within the clause. As they give rise to main clause phenomena, modal particles can only be found in the main clause and never in the subordinate clause of clefts.

- (169) Wer war es nochmal, den ich morgen anrufen sollte?
 Who_{NOM} was it PRT who_{ACC} I tomorrow to-call had_{1st PERS SING}
 “Who was it that I had to call tomorrow?”

(169) gives the idea that the speaker remembers they had to call someone the following day, but they do not remember exactly who. It is as if the piece of information were somewhere in the mind of the speaker and they need help to recall it. (169) is therefore not a true question, but a sort of echo-question. Notice that the use of *Präteritum* tense does not prevent from using the future temporal adverb *morgen*. This is probably due to the very specific nature of the utterance which is anchored in the past as far as the information of having to call someone is background information (see Giorgi & Pianesi, 1997). The activity of calling anyway is still in the future. The particle *nochmal*, which clearly conveys this nuance of meaning, is probably one of the most frequently used in clefts, especially in questions.

Another particle often used in the matrix clause of clefts is *eigentlich*, which contrarily to *nochmal* does not express familiarity, but contrastiveness. Its meaning is quite difficult to render, but the idea it carries is similar to *actually*. The nuance it provides is particularly suitable to emphasize the message which contrastive clefts normally express.

(170) Denn er ist es eigentlich, der am meisten spricht
 Because he is it PRT wh_{NOM MASC SING} at-the most speaks
 “Because it’s actually him who speaks the most”

As can be inferred from (170) and (171), the modal particles are always placed after both the clefted pronominal constituent and *es*. If the copula is in a compound tense the particle precedes the uninflected verbal form:

(171) Sie ist es eigentlich gewesen, die die Vase zerbrach
 She is it PRT been wh_{NOM FEM SING} the vase broke_{3rd PERS SING}
 “It was actually her who broke the vase”

As is well-known that focus markers sit in the IP layer, examples such as (171) signal that even when it is postcopular, *es* is always higher in the structures than these markers. If we combine this with its tendency to cliticize onto the copula in clefts, we can hypothesize that it sits in Wackernagel position in CP, when it is postcopular.

The reciprocal order with focus markers and past participle is a good diagnostic test also to investigate where post-copular focused DP are placed. The following example could be of help:

- (172) Es ist wohl Hans gewesen, der mich gestört hat
 It is PRT Hans been wh_{NOM} me disturbed has
 “It was surely Hans who disturbed me”

This simple sentence clearly indicates that the clefted DP has to be placed in a Specifier position in the low left periphery.

Focus markers are certainly useful to determine the position of the different items forming a cleft sentence. However, other elements can be found in the main clause of clefts as well. Some of them are adverbs, which have a specific position in the syntactic structure depending on their nature. Modal adverbs or adverbial expressions such as *zum Glück*, *glücklicherweise*, etc, generally appear at the beginning of the sentence. The fact that they occupy the first position triggers the same effects on the reciprocal order of clefted pronoun and *es* described for embedded sentences: this means that the clefted constituent comes immediately after the copula, followed by *es*:

- (173) Zum Glück war er es, der keine Kinder mehr
 For-the_{DAT} luck was he it wh_{NOM MASC SING} no_{ACC} children more
 kriegen konnte
 to-receive could_{3rd PERS SING}
 “Luckily it was him who couldn’t have children any more”.

Lower adverbs instead, such as adverbs of frequency, appear both after the clefted constituent and *es*.

- (174) Er ist es immer, der darauf Wert legt.
 He is it always wh_{NOM MASC SING} this-to value attributes
 “It’s always him who attributes value to this”⁴³

⁴³ English, differently from German, doesn’t offer the opportunity to express a diverse nuance depending on the fact that the modifier modifies the whole sentence or simply the clefted constituent.

Naturally, if the communicative intention is to modify not the whole sentence, but just the clefted constituent, *immer* can be placed in front of it forming just one constituent; this signals that it has undergone further movement.

- (175) Immer er ist es, der nicht ausgehen will
 Always he is it who_{NOM MASC SING} not to-go-out wants
 “It’s always him who doesn’t want to go out”

Some more light on this construction can be shed thanks to the cases in which an adverb is in pre-copular position and a modal particle are inserted as well. The reciprocal order of clefted pronouns and *es* is in fact quite rigid:

- (176) Vielleicht bin doch ich es, der sich irrt
 Perhaps am PRT I it who_{NOM MASC SING} himself is-wrong
 “Perhaps it’s just me who is wrong”

Coherently with the points which have been made about the order of clefted pronouns and *es*, the latter comes after, while the modal particle comes between the copula and the clefted constituent.

6.6 *The categorial status of es*

Es is a weak pronoun, which can never be stressed. It assumes different functions in the grammar; depending on its uses it can be categorized as simply expletive or as (at least partially) argumental⁴⁴. When it is used as an expletive, it is generally considered a *Stellvertreter* (a placeholder), since it appears at the beginning of the sentence, in the so-called *Vorfeld*, to occupy the first position, if there is no other element doing so. This is a requirement due to the V2 nature of German.

The insertion of *es* as a pure expletive can be distinguished from its other uses on the basis of some syntactic tests, which I will apply to the *es* of clefts. The first diagnostic test involves the possibility of omitting *es* in post-verbal contexts: in post-verbal position, if it is an expletive, *es* can/must be dropped. This is the case of unaccusatives (177), provided that the subject is not a pronoun:

⁴⁴ For a discussion of *es* and a possible syntactic analysis in the Generative Grammar framework see Tomaselli (1986).

- (177) a. Es kamen immer mehr Gäste
 It came_{3rd PERS PL} always more guests
 b. Immer mehr Gäste kamen (*es)
 Always more guests came_{3rd PERS PL} it
 “There came an increasing number of guests”

The same happens with passive forms:

- (178) a. Es wird hier getanzt
 It is here danced
 b. Hier wird (*es) getanzt
 Here is it danced
 “Here you can dance”

Es is optional if it is used cataphorically with certain verbs governing infinitive clauses (179). It can be dropped with psych verbs if it is in post-verbal position (180b), and it can be dropped also if it is post-copular anticipating an infinitive clause (181):

- (179) Ich vermeide (es), die Straße hier zu überqueren
 I avoid it the street here to to-cross
 “I avoid (it) to cross the road here”
- (180) a. Es grauste dem Kind vor dem Gewitter
 It scared_{3rd PERS SING} the_{DAT} child in-front-of the_{DAT} storm
 b. Dem Kind grauste (es) vor dem Gewitter
 The_{DAT} child scared_{3rd PERS SING} it in-front-of the_{DAT} storm
 “The child was afraid of the storm”
- (181) Gut ist (es), nach Hause zu gehen und sich ein bisschen erholen
 good is it to home to to-go and themselves a bit to-rest
 “It’s good to go home and have some rest”

It can’t be eliminated if it is the subject of weather-verbs (182):

- (182) a. Es regnet stark heute
 It rains strong today

- b. Heute regnet *(es) stark
 Today rains it strong
 “Today it is pouring”

In existential sentences and cleft sentences, *es* can never be omitted even in post-copular position.

- (183) a. Es gab gestern viel zu hören
 It gave yesterday much to to-hear
 b. Gestern gab *(es) viel zu hören
 yesterday gave it much to to-hear
 “Yesterday there was a lot to hear”
- (184) a. Es ist Georg, der Maria liebt
 It is Georg wh_{NOM MASC SING} Maria loves
 b. Georg ist *(es), der Maria liebt
 Georg is it wh_{NOM MASC SING} Maria loves
 “It’s Georg who loves Mary”

If *es* cannot be dropped, it means that it has at least semi-argumental status and its function is not merely syntactic. This does not necessarily imply that it is referential, although referentiality might play a role. This seems to be confirmed by the possibility that *es* is substituted by *das*, which has (at least etymologically) deictic value. *Das*, as well as *es*, has an intermediate status between completely referential items and expletives: *das* has a further property if compared with *es*. It can refer independently to a point in space, since it is a proximal but as *es*, it cannot receive a theta-role from the head of the predicate.

- (185) ER⁴⁵ ist das, der uns putzt von oben bis unten
 He is that wh_{NOM MASC SING} us_{ACC} cleans from up to down
 “He is the one that cleans us from top to toe”
 (www.diggy-dogs.de)

⁴⁵ Emphasis in the original.

Es in clefts is subject to precise order restrictions, expletives are not: they can simply be dropped if they assume certain positions. These restrictions concern both copular main clauses and copular clauses inserted within subordinate clauses. In main clauses *es* is obligatorily post-copular (see (172-173), § 6.4) if the focus is pronominal, and in embedded sentences *es* must appear after a pronominal focus (186-187).

- (186) Eigentlich habe ich selten das Gefühl, dass ich es bin,
 PRT have I rarely the_{ACC} feeling that I it am
 der eine Geschichte entwickelt, sondern es kommt
 wh_{NOM MASC SING} a_{ACC} story developed rather it happens
 mir oft vor, als entwickelte sie sich von selber.
 me_{DAT} often PREF as developed_{3rd PERS SING} she herself on-her-own
 “To tell the truth I rarely feel that it’s me who develops a story, on the
 contrary, it is as if it developed by itself”.

(www.phantastik-couch.de)

- (187) *...weil es ich bin, der es getan hat
 because it I am wh_{NOM MASC SING} it done has
 “...because it is me who did it”

Notice that if the focus is a noun, *es* comes first in embedded clauses:

- (188) Beim ersten Syntaxbaum ist es so, dass es Hans ist,
 In-the_{DAT} first_{DAT} syntactic-tree is it so that it Hans is
 der die Frau mit seinem Fernglas sieht.
 wh_{NOM MASC SING} the_{ACC} woman with his_{DAT} binoculars sees
 “In the first syntactic tree it is Hans who the woman sees with his
 binoculars”

(U. Schöning, *Ideen der Informatik: grundlegende Modelle und Konzepte*)

As the *es* of clefts cannot be considered fully referential and is evidently different from true arguments like the one instantiated in (189), I will claim, in agreement also with the literature on *it* of English - though on a different basis - that *es* has a semi-argumental status.

- (189) Ich habe ein neues T-Shirt gekauft. Es ist blau mit roten Streifen.
 I have_{1st PERS SING} a new T-Shirt bought it is blue with
 roten Streifen
 red_{DAT PL} streaks
 “I bought a new t-shirt. It’s blue with red streaks”

Notice that also truly referential *es* undergoes many restrictions, which concern especially fronting⁴⁶. Object *es* cannot be fronted, or if it can, it generally refers to whole CPs and the syntactic subject is low in the structure.

Interestingly *es* is subject to further restrictions in clefts. Specifically, even if it bears Nominative Case, it cannot be clefted, as pointed out by Huber (2006):

- (190) *Es ist es, das er wollte
 It is it which_{ACC NEUT SING} he wanted
 “It’s it that he wanted”

Some authors such as Ahlemeyer & Kohlhof (1999) argue that the non-cleftability of *es* is due to its impossibility to bear stress. The fact that it cannot have stress does not only affect prosody or phonology, but it has precise syntactic reflexes. A prosodic-phonological approach in fact, does not account for all the peculiarities of *es*. The point is that, due to its weak pronoun nature, *es* can never occupy the focus projection. Furthermore, *es* cannot be clefted: it is very difficult to manipulate and to displace it, especially when it refers syntactically to an object as in (190). Difficulties in moving items bearing Accusative case, however, do only affect *es*, but are part of a wider issue concerning the possibility of moving and extracting Accusative case. *Es* is even more problematic in this respect, because being a neuter form, there is no morphological distinction with the Nominative and displaced items not bearing distinctive morphological marking are not immediately interpretable, since their Case is not *a priori* inferrable. Although it is extremely marginal, clefted *es* coindexed with a neuter subject is not as irredeemable as *es* referring to an object, this could be due to the structural proximity of the relative pronoun to the position normally hosting subjects: the *d-* pronoun first occupies the SpecTP position and then moves up to a SpecCP

⁴⁶ For a discussion on this see Meinunger (2007) and references cited there.

position, while the *d-* pronoun serving as an object evidently starts to move as an internal argument.

- (191) ? Es ist es, das mich zu einer Romanfigur macht
it is it which_{NOM} me_{ACC} to a_{DAT} novel-character makes
“It’s this that makes me a novel character”

(blog.buchmesse.de/2012/10/16/)

Provided that *es* cannot be considered neither fully referential nor an expletive, it is now worth exploring what its syntactic representation could be and why it is inserted in cleft structures. In this respect, I will follow Moro (1997)’s analysis, which proposes to consider this kind of elements as predicates which can undergo raising. This explanation relies on the fact that *es* in clefts is not simply inserted in the course of the derivation to hold the place of the subject of the predication. As expected for all predicates of this nature, it is impossible to find it in unaccusative constructions if it is not merely a placeholder in front of the verb, because unaccusative constructions already have their predicate which is the verb itself. This hypothesis is also reinforced by the case of passive constructions which, once again cannot have *es* lexicalized if it is not pre-verbal⁴⁷. When *es* raises in front of the copula, we can consider the clause as an instance of an inverse copular sentence. As has already been pointed out in the brief section devoted to copular sentences (§ 2, and § 6.2 for German), copulas give rise to small clauses. *Es* constitutes the predicate of this small clause and it can optionally rise to reach the pre-copular position.

To sum up, the strongest clues which induce to think of the *es* of clefts as a predicate, and not simply an expletive are the following:

- *Es* is obligatory also in postcopular contexts
- It is at least partially referential (possibility, though limited, to substitute it with *das*)
- if it were simply an expletive, we would not expect it to interact with other pronominal items to determine their reciprocal orders even in V final contexts, in which the pronouns are not adjacent to the verb.

⁴⁷ The same diagnostic tests have been used by Moro (1997) to support the predicate nature of the English *it* and the Italian *ci*.

- It is obligatory in clefts, but incompatible with passives and unaccusatives if post-copular.
- Inserting it in a small clause structure as a predicate effectively accounts for the reciprocal orders of it and the focus.

6.7 *The nature of the copula*

6.7.1 *Previous literature*

There is a long-standing debate concerning the nature of the copula. In particular it has been discussed whether the copula is semantically vacuous (Hedberg 1990, 2000; Reeve 2010, 2011) or if it contributes somehow to the meaning of the sentence. The term *copula* appeared very early in linguistics and its etymology clearly suggests what its main function is: to link two elements. Considering it as a linking element however, does not mean that it is necessarily free of meaning. Reeve (2011) argues against all the analyses traditionally proposed within the Generative Grammar framework and maintains that the copula has to be treated as if it were a transitive verb taking two arguments: a Nominative subject and an object. This is allegedly reinforced by the fact that *it* is supposedly in the Nominative while the focus is Accusative; this is what happens in English, nevertheless there are many languages which contradict this assumption, as they do not display the same pattern. This hypothesis of the copula behaving as a transitive verb has been heavily criticized also on the basis of other linguistic facts which affect English. Treating the copula as a transitive verb, for instance would not account for the syntactic behavior of the copula in English questions. If it were a transitive verb in English, it could not move to C°, as normally happens, but it would be blocked lower in the structure. Thinking of the copula as a transitive verb also entails that it takes canonical arguments, while the most influential literature starting from Moro (1997) argues that the copula does not behave this way. Moro (1997) proposes that the copula is a defective verb because it only resembles transitive verbs in that it occurs with two DPs / pronouns or with a combination of the two, but the crucial difference is that it contains only one agreement projection. According to Moro (1997), the copula originates in the V head and takes a small clause complement. In the case of clefts, we can apply this analysis and hypothesize that the focus and *es* are placed in the small clause projections.

The analysis of small clause has undergone much debate and different structures have been proposed. Its status has been controversial since the notion of small clause was first proposed by Williams (1975). In the 1980's it was argued that it should be considered as a sort of adjunction structure (Stowell, 1981 a.o.), Williams (1983) proposed ternary branching. The relation between the two items was allegedly not mediated by any functional head. In more recent time it has been stated that the small clause should be thought of as a projection of a functional head⁴⁸. Moro (1988) proposed that the relation between the two elements contained in the small clause was mediated by an Agreement head. Moro (1997) revisited this hypothesis, since it does not account for the cases in which two DPs contained in the small clause do not agree. This however, does not entail that it is always impossible for the silent head to be an Agreement head. It simply implies that it is not always the case. There are instances in which agreement has to take place as for the predicative adjectives of some languages (not in German). Recently, Moro (2010) still maintained, along the same lines of Moro (1997, 2000), that the structure of a small clause is actually symmetric with no silent head between the subject and the predicate. He corroborates his claim on the basis of cliticization tests. Starting from the *Head Movement Constraint*, originally proposed in Travis (1984), he states that if there were a silent head in the small clause, cliticization would entail the violation of this principle, according to which a head cannot skip another head when it moves up. As cliticization normally takes place in small clauses, this is supposed to be a clue that there is no such head. The seminal work about dynamic antisymmetry by Moro (2000) explains that small clauses (both bare and rich)⁴⁹ are a good example of possible provisional symmetries in the syntactic structure before syntactic triggered movement takes place. This is *contra* Kayne (1994), according to which no symmetry is possible even when syntactic elements are generated in the structure: no step of the derivation can have symmetric relations. The possible existence of symmetric sister nodes containing constituents with the same categorial status, is alleged not to require that a functional head is inserted to restore an anti-symmetric relation, as provided by the basic X-bar scheme. Moro (1997) however, had suggested (although he was not fully persuaded by the argument) that the fact that small clauses can contain adverbs indirectly supports the fact that there must be a functional

⁴⁸ See Cardinaletti & Guasti (1995), Bowers (1993) and Moro (1988).

⁴⁹ With the term "bare small clauses" Moro (2000) refers to small clauses headed by a copula, while "rich small clauses" refers to small clauses headed by verbs as *believe*.

head licensing them. Cinque (1999) first proposed that adverbs occupy a specifier position, which evidently can only be projected by a head. The debate is still taking place, but there are good reasons to think that small clauses respect the same syntactic rules as other constituents do, such as binary branching and asymmetry. I will treat them as complete phrases containing a silent head, there is no need for the construction I take into account that small clauses do not function along the same lines of all other X-bar schemes.

Although he does not label it as a small clause, convincing evidence for treating small clauses as layered structure is provided by Kayne (1993). He proposes an account for the Saxon Genitive construction of English, in which he shows that the relation of Possess between the Possessor and the Possessee is mediated by an Agreement head – along the lines of Moro – in a configuration in which the Possessor occupies the Specifier position and the Possessee the Comp position of the same X-Bar scheme. This module is headed by a DP, which is headed by a copula *be*. Both the Possessor and the Possessee can move out of their generation site to reach their final position. Here is the schema proposed by Kayne (1993):

$$\text{BE [DP Spec D/P}_e^\circ \text{ [DP}_{\text{poss}} \text{ [AGR}^\circ \text{ QP/NP]]}]$$

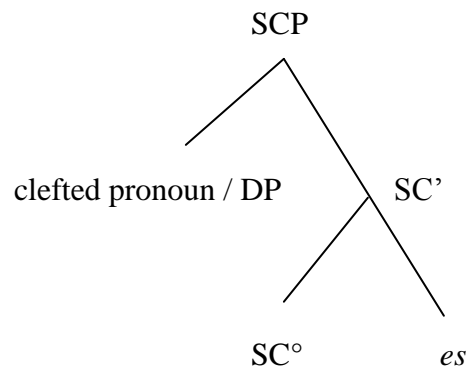
Although there is no relation of possess in clefts, this structure could be somehow exploited to prove that there must be a mediation between two items which are strictly related to each other and are both generated in a module (a small clause) governed by the copula. The very peculiarity of the small clause of clefts is that it effectively captures the identity nature (determined by the copula) holding between *es* and the focused constituent. The fact that there is or not a functional head is not crucial for the analysis.

Due to the debated nature of the small clause, there is still no consensus among the scholars concerning its status with respect to the complete structure of the sentence and its organization in phases. In particular, it is of fundamental importance for the derivation of clefts, to establish whether small clauses are phases or not. I will adopt the standard idea, according to which only CP, vP and (probably even though not surely) DP are phases. This has as an evident syntactic consequence the fact that for an element to be extracted from a small clause, there is no need for escape hatches and further syntactic movements can take place before the content of the small clause is put to

spell-out. I am well aware that there are scholars, such as Müller (2010) who along the lines of Chomsky (2001) and his *PIC* (*Phase Impenetrability Condition*), assume that all phrases are phases and that edge features which trigger intermediate movements can only be inserted before the phase head becomes inert. Others such as Den Dikken (2008) claim that all predications are phases and therefore small clauses are purportedly phases as well. I will not adopt this perspective, since considering every phrase a phase, impoverishes the idea of phase itself and forces to add unnecessary syntactic operations to overcome the limits posed by the rules which govern phases.

The structure I propose for the small clause of clefts is (192).

(192)



For the reasons I have outlined in this paragraph, I will treat *es* as a predicate. The reciprocal orders of pronominal item and focus are given by movement, specifically by the raising of predicates, as has already been described. Not accepting a transformational proposal for clefts and claiming for the semantic vacuity of the copula does not prevent Reeve (2011) from thinking of a null head licensing the relation holding between the two terms of the copular clause, too. He shares with the rest of the authors the idea that the copula does not assign Theta-roles, which are assigned somewhere else in the structure, presumably by the embedded verb.

6.7.2 *Some considerations on the basis of German data*

It may be that certain languages have grammaticalized the structure to the point that a copula is merely an instrument to join two sentences together. Standard German however, has not reached this level, yet. The main points which suggest that the copula has maintained its independence and that it continues to be a verb in its force are diverse. First of all, it still requires the obligatory assignment of the Nominative to the

focus. If it were just a linking element we would expect it to have no real connection with Case assignment. Secondly, tense mismatches between the copula and the embedded verb can take place. If the copula had just the role to link two sentences together, it would not make sense to display an autonomous tense and mood. The following example illustrates the pattern:

- (193) Wer war es nochmal, der in zwei Wochen heiraten wird?
 Who was it PRT who_{NOM MASC SING} in two weeks to-marry will
 “Who is it, who is going to get married in two weeks?”

(193) functions as a kind of echo-questions, in that it anchors the event to the past because it is as if the speaker already knew that somebody would marry and is well aware that the event has not taken place yet⁵⁰. Interestingly this is a property displayed by German clefts, which Italian and English do not have: tense mismatches between the matrix and the embedded clause are possible in German, but not in Italian and English. Further examples of tense mismatches are (194-195):

- (194) Es war Michael, der Urlaub in Sizilien macht
 It was Michael who_{NOM MASC SING} holiday in Sicily makes
 “It’s Michael who spends his holidays in Sicily”

- (195) Es war Hans, der nach Berlin fahren wird
 It was Hans, who_{NOM MASC SING} to Berlin to-go will_{3rd PERS SING}
 “It’s Hans who will go to Berlin”

This is quite unexpected, since there is apparently no evident relation between a past copula and a present or future event predicated in the embedded clause. This is in any case not the rule and most speakers confirm that these sentences have to be considered as a kind of echo: the utterer has the clear sensation that he knew the information in the past and is now claiming that he is remembering that piece of information concerning present or future events, which have not taken place yet.

The main drawback to the claim I will make that the copula is not vacuous is that there exist languages which have silent copulas in clefts. The fact that it is not

⁵⁰ For a detailed discussion on the values of tenses, see Giorgi & Pianesi (1997) and its review in Bertinetto & Bianchi (2003).

lexicalized could be perceived a clue that it is not indispensable, however this does not entail that there is no semantic value. Besides, the same statement, at any rate, would apply also to *es*, since in languages such as Italian it remains silent and is simply a *pro*; I have already provided evidence to support the hypothesis that *es* is not vacuous. As has already been pointed out, the fact that the copula requires the Nominative and is completely inflected induces to think it bears at least some residual semantic value. Although this does not contribute to better defining what the semantic status of the copula itself is, we have to account for all the cases in which modality (both deontic and epistemic) is expressed within the copular clause, with the copula serving as a kind of host, which is modified. (196) is a first example of it; here *können* expresses epistemic modality.

- (196) Nicht du kannst es gewesen sein, der diese
 Not you can_{2nd PERS SING} it been to-be who_{NOM MASC SING} this_{ACC}
 Zerstörung hervorbrachte
 destruction caused_{3rd PERS SING}
 “It can’t have been you who caused this destruction”

Notice that the epistemic reading is favored by the use of past tense. Hypotheses are in fact mainly - though not necessarily - made on past events. Epistemic modality expressing certainty can be conveyed by the verb *sollen* as well:

- (197) Er soll es sein, der am Montag
 He must_{3rd PERS SING} it to-be who_{NOM MASC SING} on-the_{DAT} Monday
 die Star-Tankstelle in Lannesdorf überfiel
 the_{ACC} Star-petrol-station in Lannesdorf raided
 “It must have been him who raided the Star petrol station in Lannesdorf
 on Monday”

(197) carries the idea that, according to the source from which the news has been learned, it is sure that it was a specific man who attacked the station. Notice that the choice of using *sollen* instead of *müssen* indicates that the speaker does not want to commit themselves, as it could be just a rumor. A reduced degree of certainty can be expressed by the verb *mögen*:

(198) Er mag es sein, der sich im Dunkel verirrt hat
 He may it to-be who_{NOM MASC SING} himself in-the_{DAT} dark got-lost has
 “It may be him who got lost in the dark”

Deontic modality can be expressed in different forms depending on the nature of the illocutionary act: an order, a suggestion, etc.

(199) Nur du kannst es sein, der vergibt.
 Only you can_{2nd PERS SING} it to-be who_{NOM MASC SING} forgives
 “You can be the only one who forgives”

(200) Nicht gerade er darf es sein, der dem
 Not just he can_{3rd PERS SING} it to-be who_{NOM MASC SING} the_{DAT}
 Namen seiner Familie Schande bringt.
 name his_{GEN} family discredit brings
 “It can’t be him who brings discredit on the name of his family”

(W. Weber, *Studien zur Herrschaftslehre in der deutschen politischen Wissenschaft des 17. Jahrhunderts*)

(200) is meant to express a strong hint for the person not to cause his family to feel ashamed. (201) is a strong suggestion to do something:

(201) Du musst es sein, der ihr noch eine
 You must_{2nd PERS SING} it to-be who_{NOM MASC SING} her again a
 Chance gibt.
 chance gives
 “It must be you who give her yet another chance”

A further clue for considering the copula not totally vacuous is the chance to conjugate it in different moods, which definitely adds values that otherwise would have remained unexpressed. Apart from some specific cases, which can be explained as echoes of previously uttered sentences, the tense of the copula is strictly connected with the tense of the embedded verb, which determines the setting in time of the whole

proposition. Tense mismatches are however possible and this suggests that a partial autonomy of the copula is assured.

- (202) Es wird Franz sein, der Olga heiratet/heiraten
 It will Franz to-be wh_{NOM MASC SING} Olga marries to-marry
 wird
 will_{3rd PERS SING}
 “It will be Franz who marries Olga”⁵¹
- (203) Wer war es, den du gestern angerufen
 Wh_{NOM} was it whom_{ACC MASC SING} you_{2nd PERS SING} yesterday called
 hast?
 have_{2nd PERS SING}
 “Who was it that you called yesterday?”

In (203) both the matrix and the embedded verb are in the past, but the copula is a *Präteritum* while the verb of the subordinate clause *angerufen hast* is a *Perfekt*. This comes as no surprise, since the verb *sein* is preferably conjugated in the *Präteritum* form.

To sum up, I assume that the copula is neither semantically vacuous nor serving as a linker. This has as a formal consequence the fact that the copula is generated in the VP field (Moro, 1997), where it is provided with semantic content. In the languages in which the copula is not lexicalized, the modal values that it can assume are tendentially shifted onto the embedded verb, although part of the semantics could get lost. Tense mismatches between the two verbs cannot be in any way rendered if the copula is not lexicalized. The very possibility to carry modal values and a precise temporal collocation thanks to the different combinations of tenses and moods supports the claim

⁵¹ Notice that in Italian the use of the future for the copula would sound odd if it were followed by an explicit subordinate clause introduced by *che* with a present verb; it would be definitely better if the tense of the embedded verb were a future, perfect if the subordinate clause were implicit or if the copula were in the present form and the embedded verb in the future:

- a. Sarà Franz a sposare Olga
 Lit: It will be Franz to to marry Olga
- b. E' Franz che sposerà Olga
 Lit: It's Franz that will marry Olga
- c. Sarà Franz che sposerà Olga
 Lit: It will be Franz that will marry Olga
- d. ?? Sarà Franz che sposa Olga
 Lit: It will be Franz that marries Olga

that it does not simply connect *es* and the Focus, but puts them in a relation that could not find an effective equivalent.

6.8 *Negation within the matrix clause of clefts*

There are two main possibilities at disposal to insert a negation within the matrix clause of clefts: either the focus or the entire clause is negated. It would not make sense to negate *es*, because it is neither referential nor “completely” argumental. This heavily influences the position of the Focus in the matrix clause, and consequently the collocation of negation.

When the focus is meant to be negated, it often appears in precopular position, even if it is a noun, and the negation *nicht* comes in front of it (204). The clefted constituent however can also remain *in situ* (205). Negation still has to appear in front of the clefted constituent regardless of whether it is inserted in a matrix or in an embedded clause. Emphatic particles can intervene (see (200) *nicht gerade er ...*).

- (204) Nicht Hans ist es, der da kommt, sondern Karl oder
 Not Hans is it wh_{NOM MASC SING} there comes rather Karl or
 Maria oder ihr Kind
 Maria or her child
 “It’s not Hans who comes here, but Karl, or Mary, or her child”
- (205) Es ist nicht Hans, der protestiert hat. Es schadet
 it is not Hans wh_{NOM MASC SING} protested has it makes-sorry
 Peter, dass es nicht Hans ist, der protestiert hat.
 Peter that it not Hans is wh_{NOM MASC SING} protested has
 “It’s not Hans who protested. Peter is sorry that it is not Hans who
 protested.”
- (206) Es ist nicht Marie, die um einen Liebestrank bittet
 It is not Marie wh_{NOM MASC SING} for a_{ACC} love-potion asks
 “It’s not Marie who asks for a love potion”
- (207) Was sagt uns, dass er es nicht ist, der sie überhaupt
 what says us_{DAT} that he it not is wh_{NOM MASC SING} her_{ACC} really
 in den Laden mitgebracht hat?
 in the shop accompanied has

- “What tells us that it was not him who accompanied her to the shop?”
- (208) Uwe ist verärgert, dass anscheinend niemand bemerkt, dass nicht er es
 Uwe is furious that apparently nobody notices that not he it
 ist, der hinter dem Schreibtisch sitzt.
 is wh_{NOM MASC SING} behind the_{DAT} desk sits
 “Uwe is furious that nobody notices that it’s not him who is behind the
 desk”
 (de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Der_Job_seines_Lebens)
- (209) * ..., dass er nicht es ist, der...
 that he not it is wh_{NOM MASC SING}
 “that it’s not him who...”
- (210) a..., dass es nicht Paul ist, der
 that it not Paul_{NOM} is wh_{NOM MASC SING}
 “that it’s not Paul who”
 b..., dass es Paul nicht ist, der
 that it Paul_{NOM} not is wh_{NOM MASC SING}
 “that it’s not Paul who”

The possible positions of negation within the matrix clause of clefts are effectively summarized by the short passage in (211):

- (211) Sie nennen den letzteren auch den Teufel, doch ist er es nicht.
 they call the_{ACC} latter also the_{ACC} devil PRT is he it not
 Er ist es nicht! Nicht er ist es, der die Menschen
 He is it not not he is it wh_{NOM MASC SING} the_{ACC} people
 gegeneinander aufhetzt; nicht der Teufel ist es,
 one-against-the-other stirs-up not the_{NOM} devil is it
 der die Menschen schlachten lässt; nicht er ist es,
 wh_{NOM MASC SING} the_{ACC} people to-massacre leaves not he is it
 der jedem einzelnen Menschen die Gefühle
 wh_{NOM MASC SING} every_{DAT} single_{DAT} person the_{ACC} feelings
 ausrupft, wie ebendieser Mensch die Federn seiner Gänse;
 plucks-out as this-same_{NOM} person the_{ACC} feathers his_{GEN PL} geoses

er ist es nicht, der den Menschen die Fühler,
 he is it not wh_{NOM MASC SING} the_{DAT} people the_{ACC} feelers
 die Taster abschert
 the_{ACC} horns shears-off

“They call the latter also the Devil, but it is not. It’s not! It’s not him who stirs up the people one against the other; it’s not the devil who has people massacre each other; it’s not him who plucks out the feelings of each human being, as this human being does with the feathers of geese; it’s not him that shears off horns and feelers from people”

(<http://www.tagesanzeiger.ch/kultur/buecher/Die-Schweiz-ist-des-Schlaechters-Herz/28076997/print.html>)

To sum up, the only possible negation in the matrix clause of clefts is *nicht*, *kein* is incompatible with clefts since it would require non-definiteness. The position of negation can vary according to what item is meant to be negated: either the clefted constituent or the whole sentence. In the first case *nicht* precedes the Focus regardless of the fact it is pre-copular or post-copular, in the latter case negation goes at the end of the clause, on the left of the non-finite verb if the copula is in a compound tense:

(212) Du bist es nicht gewesen, der⁵²... Du hättest
 You are_{2nd PERS SING} it not been who you have_{SUBJ 2nd PERS SING}
 nicht in einer Art Geistesabwesenheit... Nein, das ist widersinnig
 not in a_{DAT} sort spirit-absence no this is absurd.
 “It was not you, who...you wouldn’t have in a sort of lack of mind...no, it’s absurd”

(J. Verne, *Die geheimnißvolle Insel*)

(213) Du bist es nicht gewesen, der diese
 you are_{2nd PERS SING} it not been wh_{NOM MASC SING} this
 Abscheulichkeiten getan hat.
 horrible-things done has
 “It was not you who made these horrible things“
 (<http://www.fanfiktion.de/s/4b9a81ad0000cfa8066203a0/12/Altesten-Blut>)

⁵² The context clearly signals that *der* is a pronoun introducing a cleft and not an article.

(222) Du bist es, der immer lügt
 YOU_{2nd PERS SING} are_{2nd PERS SING} it who_{NOM MASC SING} always tells-lies
 “It’s you who always tells lies”

The responsible for blocking 2nd person agreement on the embedded verb is the *d*- pronoun, which stops the chain⁵⁵ in German. The situation is definitely more fluid in English in which, although the correct agreement pattern entails that the *wh*- pronoun triggers 3rd person agreement, there are speakers willing to accept the verb agreeing in number with the focused constituent⁵⁶. Having the double possibility of introducing a cleft either with a pronoun or with a complementizer, English realizes both agreement patterns: the complementizer does never block the chain and, as there is no other candidate which can assume the subject features, agreement is necessarily governed by the clefted subject; the *wh*-, on the contrary, absorbs all these features and serves as true syntactic subject. Italian, which must obligatorily use a complementizer, has the same type of agreement triggered by the English *that*, this means that agreement is determined by the Nominative focused constituent.

(223) *Italian*
 Sei tu che dici sempre le bugie
 Are_{2nd PERS SING} you_{SING} that tell_{2nd PERS SING} always the lies
 “It’s you that always tell lies”

Differently from many other languages, the fact that the *d*- pronoun is distinct for gender, number and case, implies that even with first and second person singular foci, the gender of the clefted subject is signaled on the pronoun. This is a peculiarity of German, which distinguishes it from English, French, Italian and Italian dialects.

(224) Ich bin es, die immer interessante Geschichten erzählt
 I am it who_{NOM FEM SING} always interesting stories tells
 “It’s me who always tells interesting stories”

⁵⁵ For a recent discussion on the notion of chains, see Rizzi (2006).

⁵⁶ A dedicated discussion in this respect has developed in *Wordreference* forum. Although the majority of the speakers prefer 3rd person agreement, not everybody would find odd 1st or 2nd person agreement depending on the focused item. <http://forum.wordreference.com/showthread.php?t=1798583&langid=14>

The requirement that only *d*- pronouns are suitable introducers of cleft sentences triggers further consequences. As has been outlined before, the *d*- subject pronoun absorbs all ϕ -features and blocks the chain. By blocking the chain, it also blocks reconstruction. Reflexive pronouns can be used, but even though they are co-referential with a subject pronoun in the 1st or the 2nd person, they are also marked for 3rd person as required by the *d*- pronoun. Only the syntactic and not the true pragmatic subject can agree with the embedded verb. *D*- pronouns introduce sentences which are strong islands whose boundaries should not be overcome.

(225) Ich bin es, die sich entschuldigen müsste
 I am it who_{NOM FEM SING} herself to-apologize should_{3rd PERS SING}
 “It’s me who should apologize”

(226) Ihr seid es, die sich entscheiden
 you_{PL} are_{2nd PERS PL} it who_{NOM PL} themselves to-decide
 dürfen wann sie gehen wollen
 can_{3rd PERS PL} when they to-go want_{3rd PERS PL}
 “It’s you who can decide when you want to go”

(http://www.liebe-licht-kreis-nuernberg.de/GJK/GJK_01224_GRUPPE.doc)

(227) Du bist es, der sich
 you_{NOM SING} are_{2nd PERS SING} it, who_{NOM MASC SING} themselves
 lächerlich macht.
 ridiculous makes
 “It’s you who makes yourself ridiculous”.

(www.photovolttaikforum.com)

(228) Nicht wir sind es, die sich illegal
 not we are_{1st PERS PL} it who_{NOM PL} themselves illegally
 verhalten, sondern sie sind es, die illegal handeln.
 behave_{3rd PERS PL} but they are it who_{NOM PL} illegally act_{3rd PERS PL}
 “It’s not us that behave ourselves illegally, but it’s them who act illegally”.

(www.mrbb.de)

In languages which use complementizers as introducers of clefts, reflexives have to concord in number with the clefted constituent. This is evident in Italian:

- (229) a. Sono io che mi devo occupare di tutto
 am I that myself have_{1st PERS SING} -to to-care of everything
 b. *Sono io che si deve occupare di tutto
 am I that him/herself has-to to-care of everything
 “It’s me that have to care about everything”

6.9.3 *Extraposition*

Another crucial syntactic aspect of the subordinate clause of clefts is that extraposition⁵⁷ is compulsory. In other words, sentences like (230) are irredeemable:

- (230) *Es ist Paul, der zu spät nach Hause gekommen ist,
 it is Paul, who_{3rd PERS SING} too late to house come is
 gewesen
 been
 “It was Paul who came home too late”

It is not even a matter of heaviness of the subordinate clause which requires obligatory extraction:

- (231) * Es ist Paul, der klug ist, gewesen
 It is Paul who_{NOM MASC SING} intelligent is been
 “It’s been Paul who is intelligent”

The matrix clause has to be fully concluded before the embedded clause starts. There is no possibility to circumvent this requirement:

- (232) Es ist Paul gewesen, der zu spät nach Hause gekommen
 it is Paul been who_{NOM MASC SING} too late to house come
 ist
 is
 “It has been Paul who came home too late”

⁵⁷ The real value of extraposition will be made clearer in the following pages (§ 6.10).

Interestingly, canonical headed relative clauses can only optionally be extraposed, as signaled by the following examples:

- (233) a. Ich habe Inge getroffen, die sehr nett ist.
 I have_{1st PERS SING} Inge met wh_{NOM FEM SING} very nice is
 b. Ich habe Inge, die sehr nett ist, getroffen.
 I have_{1st PERS SING} Inge wh_{NOM FEM SING} very nice is met
 “I met Inge, who is very nice”

Although the use is quite marginal, it is not impossible to make a subordinate clause intervene within the subordinate clause of clefts. A very famous example in this respect is a passage in prose by W. Goethe:

- (234) Diese Neigung_i kann nach vielen Seiten gerichtet sein,
 this tendency can_{3rd PERS SING} to many_{DAT PL} sides directed to-be
 sich_i auf manche Personen und Gegenstände beziehen, und sie_i ist
 itself to certain_{ACC PL} people and circumstances to-refer and she is
 es eigentlich, die_i den Menschen, wenn er sie_i
 it PRT wh_{NOM FEM SING} the_{DAT PL} people when he her_{ACC}
 sich zu erhalten weiß, in einer schönen Folge glücklich
 himself to to-keep knows in a_{DAT} beautiful consequence happy
 macht
 makes
 “This tendency can be directed towards many directions and refer to
 some people or things, and it’s it that, when people know how to keep it,
 makes you happy as a beautiful consequence”

(*Kunst und Altertum*, 6. Band, 1. Heft, 1827)

Of course, though prose, the language used by Goethe cannot be considered as a model of contemporary standard German. It is however worth noting that the cleft construction was already used in this form, with a secondary sentence intervening, in a respectable work by Goethe. Instances of this kind of clefts can still be found in today’s standard German, although prescriptive grammars often recommend to avoid to insert subordination within other subordination for the sake of clarity.

(235) Er ist es, der, wenn er das für ethisch begründbar
 he is it who_{NOM MASC SING} when he this for ethically explicable
 ansieht, tötet.
 sees kills

“It’s him who, when he thinks that this is ethically explicable, kills”.

(www.ruhr-uni-bochum.de/kbe/SchwPrinzip.rtf)

Notice that also 19th century grammarians recognized the presence of the cleft structure in German, especially in comparative grammars which involve French. An interesting case in point is provided by Mozin (1836) in which an input sentence such as “du schreibst” is followed by the forms in brackets: “*du bist es, der du schreibst; ou du bist es der schreibt*”. The French translation is “*c’est toi qui écrit*”. Equivalent examples are supplied also with 1st person both singular and plural. The considerations we can make concerning the description made by this grammar are the following:

- French examples containing a cleft were possibly translated by the grammarian both with the unmarked form and a cleft. This underlines that the pragmatic value of a cleft in German is supposedly stronger than in French.
- The German cleft with a focalized deictic pronoun can require the insertion of this pronoun within the subordinate clause – as happens today in headed relative clauses – or must not – as is the case of today’s German clefts.

If we keep aside the issue regarding the interpretation of cleft sentences nearly two centuries ago, what we notice synchronically is that cleft constructions can never be preceded by Hanging Topic or left dislocations referring to an item within the subordinate clause:

(236) *Das Buch, es ist Maria, die es gekauft hat
 The_{ACC} book, it is Maria_{NOM} who_{NOM FEM SING} it bought has
 “It’s Maria who bought the book”

This is a point which distinguishes German clefts from Italian, since in Italian the left periphery can host a left dislocation or a Hanging Topic even in the context of a cleft sentence:

(237) *Left dislocation*

a Gianni il libro_i è Maria che gliel_i' ha comprato
to Gianni the book is Maria that to-him- it has bought
Lit: "The book, it's Maria that bought it"

(238) *Hanging topic*

Vacanze_i, è Luigi che ne_i parla sempre
holidays is Luigi that of-them talks always
Lit: "Holidays, it's Luigi that always talks about them"

This asymmetry with Italian is probably due to the possibility of Italian to insert more than one constituent in the left periphery and to simultaneously have different projections of CP occupied. Italian can easily coindex the pronouns within the subordinate clause and the DPs in the left periphery thanks to the nature of the Italian cleft introducer: a complementizer instead of a *wh/d-* pronoun. This also enables to skip the matrix clause of clefts, as this is not a Barrier and the subordinate clause is only a weak island.

6.9.4 *Summary of the main characteristics of the subordinate clause*

To sum up, the subordinate clause of clefts has the following main characteristics:

- it must be introduced by a *d-* pronoun inflected for gender, number and case (assigned by the embedded verb).
- If the clefted constituent is a deictic pronoun, the subordinate clause does not display co-indexation in number, since all reflexive pronouns referring to the clefted pronoun must be in the 3rd person as required by the *d-* pronoun.
- Extraposition is always compulsory: this becomes clear if the matrix clause is in a compound tense, since the subordinate cleft can never appear between the auxiliary and the past participle of the copula.
- Although preferably avoided, it is not excluded that a subordinate clause is inserted immediately after the introducer of the cleft.
- Tense mismatches are possible provided that the cleft assumes a sort of echo-reading.

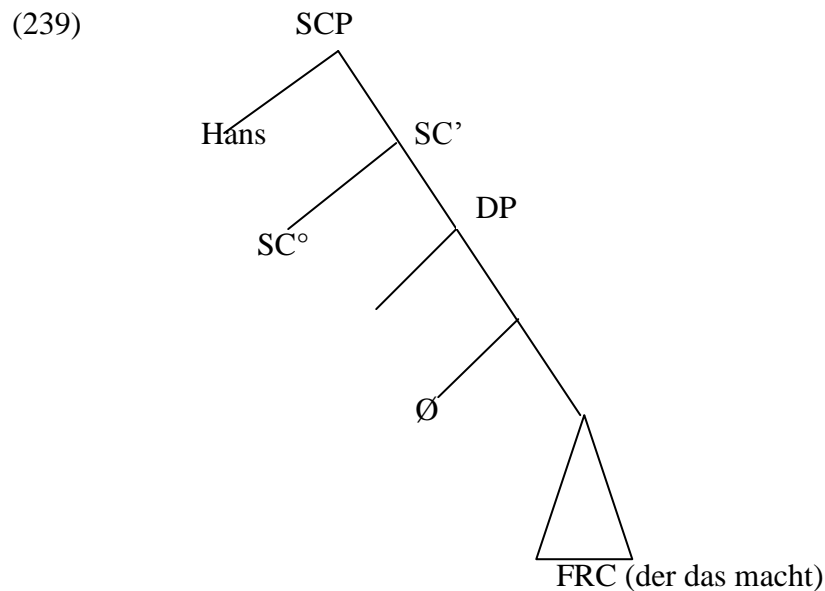
6.10 *Proposal for a formal account for the subordinate clause of Standard German clefts*

Once that a description of the main syntactic characteristics of the subordinate clause of clefts has been proposed, we can try to provide a formal account for the facts which have been described. First of all, we have to notice that the subordinate clause must be introduced by a *d-* pronoun belonging to the relative paradigm, as happens in many languages, also typologically very different (see § 1). Secondly, we have to account for the mismatch (pointed out also by the literature, Reeve (2011) a. o.) between the superficial form of clefts, resembling a headed relative clause, and their semantics. Differently from headed relative clauses, the function of a cleft is neither to add unnecessary information about the reference – as in non-restrictive relative clauses – nor to give information which enables to identify who the following or the preceding part of the sentence refers to – as in restrictive relative clauses. English linguists (Reeve, 2010, 2011; Hedberg 1990, 2000) propose that clefts have to be treated as restrictive relative clauses on the basis of the fact that the introducer *that* could be used, which is impossible for non-restrictive relative clauses. Once again this is in contrast with empirical data, since most clefts involve a focused proper noun whose identification is not questionable at all. What clefts do is: focalizing a constituent which can either be new-information focus or contrastive focus. As was originally stated by the literature (Higgins, 1979 a.o.), as far as semantics is concerned, cleft sentences are very similar to free relative clauses, with the difference that in clefts a pragmatic relation between one item in the main clause and the subordinate clause is implied. It is as if a relation as the following holds:

Es ist Hans, der das macht $\xrightarrow{\text{paraphrased}}$ Hans ist der(jenige), der das macht

A formal syntactic proposal has to account for this relation, which implies the presence of a silent head, which functions as a true antecedent for the subordinate clause with which the focused constituent is equated. The proposal I will make is that the subordinate clause of clefts is actually a free relative clause, in which there is a silent head, which is always there, although it is not lexicalized. Intuitively a relation must hold also between the focused constituent and the free relative clause. I will maintain that this is a small clause type relation, in which the Nominative focused constituent

identifies with the DP instantiated by the free relative. Once the clefted DP has been generated within the small clause, it reaches the low left periphery of the main clause, vP. We can assume that this item does not move to the high left periphery on the basis of the reciprocal orders between the focus and focus markers, such as *ja*, *doch*, *aber*, *eigentlich*, which always precede the clefted constituent if it is post-copular.



Once it has been shown that the subordinate clause of a cleft cannot be a headed relative clause for a number of reasons (absence of a suitable antecedent, semantic mismatch with the headed relative structure, impossibility to use *welch-*, obligatory extraposition, impossibility to reinsert deictic pronouns within the subordinate clause if the clefted pronoun is deictic, a.o.), and that there is a small clause type relation between the clefted constituent and a silent antecedent heading a free relative clause, the question which naturally arises for German is that free relative clauses are normally introduced by a *wh-* pronoun, which is not our case.

However, it is well known that there exist free relative clauses introduced by *d-* pronouns (Fuss & Grewendorf, 2012) and which I have discussed in chapter 1, § 8). Their use and their existence is much less studied, *wh-* pronouns and *d-* pronouns are not interchangeable, or, to be more precise, *wh-* pronouns can always substitute *d-* pronouns but the reverse is not true. The crucial point is the restrictions which apply in the use of free relative clauses of the *d-* type: one of them is specificity and another one is exhaustiveness. These are actually requirements of clefts as well. As for *d-* free relative clauses, the generic interpretation is not allowed. Notice a possible contrast:

- (240) a. Wer das sagt, ist dumm
 b. Der das sagt, ist dumm
 who_{NOM} this_{ACC} says is stupid
 “Who says this is stupid”

In (240a.) we can, although we are evidently not forced to, propose a generic interpretation and rephrase it as “Wer auch immer das sagt, ist dumm”, in which *wer* (the equivalent of *who*) could be interpreted as *whoever*. In b. instead *der* can only refer to the very specific person who has uttered that. The semantic interpretation of the *d*-free relative clause and of the subordinate clause of clefts coincide. There is however, an aspect in which free relative clauses of the *d*- type and the subordinate clause of clefts diverge. While clefts must obligatorily occupy a post-copular position, after the main clause is completely concluded (so after the past participle of *be* if it is in a compound tense), *d*- free relatives cannot be extraposed. Grewendorf & Fuss (2012) maintain that the *d*- clause can never occupy the *Nachfeld*, but is only compatible with *Vorfeld* and *Mittelfeld* positions. At first glance this could look like an important drawback to the analysis which is being proposed. However, the situation is slightly different and we must be cautious. First of all, we have to question what we mean by the term *Nachfeld* and we have to wonder in what contexts it can be activated and what its function normally is. By *Nachfeld* German grammarians generally refer to the portion of the sentence which stays after the so-called *rechte Satzklammer* (the parenthesis on the right) which normally coincides with past participles in matrix clauses (all arguments in German precede it). Differently from all *other* syntactic fields, *Nachfeld* is not obligatorily realized and the sentence generally concludes with *rechte Satzklammer*. This is a first asymmetry that we recognize between the *Nachfeld* notion and the subordinate clause of clefts: while this is not mandatory for a sentence to be grammatical to have its *Nachfeld* occupied, the subordinate clause of clefts is mandatory for the construction to exist. The two ideas therefore cannot be easily overlapped and we can therefore only make reference to a superficial linear position, which is not normally attested for *d*- relatives and not to the formal notion of *Nachfeld*. Now, it is worth seeing how *Nachfeld* functions and the kind of elements it can host. A recent discussion on this has taken place and some interesting research has been carried out for instance by Ott (2011) and Truckenbrodt (2013). In particular, Truckenbrodt makes an interesting distinction between extraposition and right dislocations as two

possible guests of *Nachfeld* and he provides some clues for distinguishing the two in German.

German, as any other language, has a default stressing system, which can be modified by pragmatic reasons as for example focus. He repropose the old formula by Jackendoff (1972):

Prosodic effect of F⁵⁸: F attracts the strongest stress of the sentence.

This implies that the last part of the sentence is given and does not bear stress. This idea has been formalized in the following terms, too (Féry & Samek-Lodovici, 2006):

Prosodic effect of G⁵⁹: G rejects accent and sentence stress.

An important distinction can be made between extraposition on the one side and right-dislocation on the other. The extraposed items bind a trace in the preceding clause, and somehow “belong to it”. On the other hand, right dislocation is a sort of doubling of an element contained in the clause, as for instance a pronoun. It seems that the extraposed constituent forms a stress-domain with the clause from which it has been extracted:

- (241) a. Was ist geschehen?
 what is happened
 „What happened?”
 b. Die Maria⁶⁰ hat ein Buch *t* gelesen von Chomsky
 the Maria has a book read by Chomsky
 “Maria has read a book by Chomsky”

(Truckenbrodt, 2013)

On the contrary, it is not possible to have the first portion of the sentence unstressed in right dislocation. Extraposed constituents are part of the stress domain and this requires sentence stress, while right-dislocation is not part of the preceding sentence and this implies that the latter has to bear stress on its own.

⁵⁸ F stands for *Focus*.

⁵⁹ G stands for *Givenness*.

⁶⁰ Underlined items indicate stress.

- (242) Claudias Mutter sagt, dass der Peter sie gesehen hat.
 Claudia's mother_{NOM} says that the Peter her_{ACC} seen has
 "Claudia's mother says that Peter has seen her."
- (243) a. * Ja, der Peter hat sie gesehen, die Claudia.
 b. Ja, der Peter hat sie gesehen, die Claudia
 yes the Peter has her seen the Claudia
 c. Ja, der Peter hat sie gesehen – die Claudia.
 Yes the Peter_{NOM} has her_{ACC} seen the_{ACC} Claudia
 "Yes, Peter has seen her, Claudia"

(Truckenbrodt, 2013)

Furthermore, in right dislocation, it is not possible to consider the rest of the sentence as background information, while the reverse could be true. It is now worth concentrating on the possibility to right-dislocate entire clauses. A prototypical case is the right-dislocation of declarative clauses introduced by verbs such as *behaupten*. When right-dislocation takes place, the dislocated clause is preceded by the anticipatory pronoun *es*, which shares characteristics both with expletives and referential *es* (Holler, 2013).

- (244) a. Fährt Wilma weg? Kommt sie wieder?
 goes Wilma_{NOM} away comes she back
 "Is Wilma leaving? Is she coming back?"
 b. Fred hat es behauptet – dass Wilma wegfährt.
 Fred_{NOM} has it_{ACC} claimed that Wilma_{NOM} left
 "Fred has claimed it, that Wilma is leaving."

It is impossible to eliminate stress from the main clause. The key point is that *es* is present, otherwise this example could/should be interpreted as a case of normal extraposition, which does not need to have the main clause bearing stress.

The framework we have outlined for *Nachfeld* on the basis of Truckenbrodt (2013) has some interesting symmetries with what happens in clefts. What we observe in clefts is exactly the same:

- *es* is compulsory in the main clause and can be claimed to have at least some anticipatory value which predicates the event or the state described in the subordinate clause with reference to the clefted constituent in the small clause.

- The focused constituent in the main clause has to bear stress, while the subordinate clause is always given and contains presupposed information, which does not need to receive stress.
- If extraposition took place we would expect the focused constituent to take scope over the entire subordinate clause of clefts, but, as evidenced by deixis, this is not the case. Binding facts show that the chain is blocked.
- The subordinate clause of clefts could be assimilated both to a *dass* clause as far as prosody is concerned and to a heavy shifted DP, as it is a free relative clause, therefore functioning as a noun.
- As the *es* of clefts, also the *es* of correlative structures requiring right-dislocation has a twofold nature: partly expletive, partly referential (Holler, 2013).

- (245) a. Hans ist es, der das machte
 Hans_{NOM} is it who_{NOM} this_{ACC} did_{3rd PERS SING}
- b. Es ist Hans, der das machte
- c. *Es ist Hans, der das machte
 it is Hans_{NOM} who_{NOM} this_{ACC} did_{3rd PERS SING}

What we can conclude is that the subordinate clause of clefts, a free relative clause of the *d*-type, is not truly extraposed, but it is rather right-dislocated as prosodic and syntactic facts confirm. The ban highlighted by Fuss & Grewendorf (2012) therefore, can refer to the impossibility to extrapose this kind of clauses, but does not necessarily imply a ban on right-dislocation. As DP objects cannot normally be extraposed and occupy a *Nachfeld* position, even *d*-free relatives cannot, but both of them can be right-dislocated. Even though this approach has never been proposed for German clefts, this proposal is further corroborated by cross-linguistic facts. In West-Flemish, in fact, the subordinate clause of clefts follow sentence-final discourse particles and therefore show that it must be right-dislocated (Haegeman & Hill, to appear).

How right-dislocation functions syntactically is far from being clear, and committing myself in providing an analysis for this construction is far beyond the goals of this dissertation. I will simply outline some of the accounts which have been proposed in the literature.

Ott & de Vries (2012) hypothesize that a right dislocated constituent originates in a separate clause in which it is initially fronted; then the rest of the second sentence is

deleted by *sluicing* in the parts which coincide with the previous sentence. Besides, it has been proposed that right-dislocation could be base-generated. A further account which has been proposed is the so-called *gapping analysis*, in which unnecessary material is deleted and only the content of right dislocation is actually lexicalized (246). I prefer to remain rather agnostic in this respect.

(246) Ich habe sie_i gesehen, ~~ich habe~~ [die Maria]_i
 I have_{1st PERS SING} her_{ACC} seen I have_{1st PERS SING} the Maria
~~gesehen~~
 seen

(Truckenbrodt, 2013)

7. Colloquial German

7.1 Some caveats

Since colloquial German is a spontaneous non-standard language, not subject to regularization from above, there is huge micro-variation among the speakers with respect to the acceptability of cleft constructions. This variation is due to diverse factors:

- First of all, the geographic area plays a role: dialect speaking people are influenced by their own variety in judging the grammaticality of the sentences. Some of them are not even aware that certain sentences that they accept are not Standard, but only colloquial.
- Secondly, the judgments are often heavily dependent on the own grammatical sensitivity of the speaker, with the consequence that people from a homogeneous geographic area can express different judgments. There is in any case no regularity which allows to establish patterns accepted by Northern and not by Southern speakers or *viceversa*.
- Thirdly, once it has been checked that certain cleft sentences are actually produced by native speakers, although they are very marginal, it is worth analyzing why some sentences are odd, but not impossible, while other are definitely unacceptable to any native speaker of German. Certainly this does not happen by chance but is the result of precise syntactic requests.

7.2 Case assignment

Differently from what happens in the Standard, colloquial and substandard varieties do not necessarily have the clefted constituent in the Nominative, but, provided that certain syntactic requirements are satisfied, it can also bear the case governed by the embedded verb. Although the preferred case remains the Nominative, the requirement of the Standard is sometimes circumvented if the case governed by the verb of the subordinate clause is the Dative. There are some speakers⁶¹ in fact, who accept sentences like the following:

- (247) Deiner Frau war es, dass ich begegnet bin.
your_{DAT} wife was it, that I met am
“It was your wife that I met”
- (248) Es ist meiner Mutter, dass ich diesen Preis widme
It is my_{DAT} mother, that I this_{ACC} prize dedicate
“It is to my mother that I dedicate this prize”
- (249) Dem Hans war es, dass ich geholfen habe
the_{DAT} Hans was it, that I helped have
“It’s Hans that I helped“
- (250) Es war einem Jungen, dass ich half
it was a_{DAT} boy, that I helped
“It was a boy that I helped”

What immediately strikes if we compare these cleft sentences with the pattern we have outlined for the Standard is that the introducer of the cleft clause is the declarative complementizer *dass*. Speakers who accept these sentences accept nominal phrases in the dative both in pre- and post-copular position. All these examples share the characteristic of having a morphological mark of dative. There are however speakers who are very doubtful as far as the acceptability of these sentences is concerned: they claim that these same sentences are very marginal and that they would have to rephrase them according to the standard pattern (Nominative followed by a dative *d-* pronoun). Nevertheless, even for speakers who accept the previous examples, not all datives are

⁶¹ These speakers come mostly from Berlin and from Saxony.

grammatical in clefted position. Interestingly, the same speakers who judge the examples above as fully grammatical claim that the following one is impossible:

- (251) *Es war Jan, dass ich half
it was Jan_{DAT} that I helped
“It was Jan that I helped”

Notice that the version in which a *d-* pronoun is used, is perfectly acceptable.

- (252) Es war Jan, dem ich half
it was Jan_{NOM} whom_{DAT} I helped
“It was Jan that I helped”

Crucially, the main point which distinguishes (251) from (247-250) is that this dative has no morphological marking which identifies it as such. It is as if datives can appear in the matrix clause of clefts only if they are clearly identifiable for their syntactic role. No ambiguity is tolerated. If a dative is clefted it must be clearly recognizable. All borderline examples, accepted by a group of people (not by everybody) have in fact morphological marking of dative (mostly on the article). The minimal pair in which we have a clefted proper noun preceded by an article and a clefted bare proper noun is instructive. Since only the first one is accepted, while the latter is ungrammatical for all speakers, we have evidence for claiming that it is not the thematic role or the semantic nature of the argument which counts, but it's a purely morpho-syntactic question. This, together with further clues we will collect, leads to think that the interface morphology-syntax is crucial in determining the possible patterns and the introductory strategies which are available. Although a dedicated section will deal with this issue, it is worth underlining from now that the subordinate clause of the cleft containing a focalized dative is never introduced by the canonical *d-* pronoun, but it is formed by the declarative complementizer *dass*. This is a possibility which had been excluded for the Standard. The fact that the subordinate clause is not introduced by a *d-* pronoun, but by a complementizer is vital in determining the possibility that a dative appears in the matrix clause. If it were introduced by a pronoun in fact, the subordinate clause would be a strong island from which it would be

impossible to extract an argument. The dative cannot be assigned directly in the matrix clause by the copula and is therefore the result of extraction from the embedded clause.

Along the same lines, the extraction of a PP from the subordinate clause is possible as well. Clefting a PP is considered even more acceptable than clefting a dative, since here the morphological mark signaling the syntactic role is even more transparent, it is an independent item: the preposition itself.

(253) Es ist mit Hans, dass ich gespielt habe
 it is with Hans, that I played have
 “It’s with Hans that I played”

(254) Es ist zu ihr, dass wir zurückkommen, wenn unser Leben beendet
 it is to her_{DAT} that we back-go_{1st PERS PL} when our life finished
 wird
 i_{3rd PERS SING}
 “It’s to her that we go back when our life finishes”

(www.zazzle.de)

(255) Es ist mit mir, dass Sie ein Problem haben,
 it is with me_{DAT}, that they_{NOM} a_{ACC} problem have_{3rd PERS PL}
 “It’s with me that you have a problem”

(256) Es ist aufs Tanzen überhaupt, dass ich keine Lust habe
 It is to-the_{ACC} dance altogether that I no_{ACC} desire have
 “It’s dancing altogether that I don’t feel like”

(257) Ich denke, dass es wegen dem⁶² schlechten Wetter war, dass fast
 I think that it because-of the_{DAT} bad weather was that nearly
 niemand da war
 nobody_{NOM} there was
 “I think it was because of the awful weather that there was nearly nobody
 there”

(Höhn 2012)

⁶² Standard German would require the use of the Genitive, but in colloquial varieties the dative is dominating

- (258) Normalerweise ist es mit dem Fahrrad, dass ich zur
 Usually is it with the_{DAT} bike that I to-the_{DAT}
 Uni fahre
 university go_{1st PERS SING}
 “Usually it’s by bike that I go to University”

(ibidem)

- (259) Es ist mit großer Freude, dass ich es mitteile
 it is with big_{DAT} joy that I it_{ACC} announce
 “It’s with big joy that I announce it”

As the examples show, there is no sensitivity to the animacy of the clefted constituent, even though some restrictions - as for instance a preference for prepositions such as *mit*, *wegen* or *von* governing a dative DP - apply. Some authors maintain that the possibility of extracting a PP from the embedded clause depends on its nature: extraction is alleged to be easier if the PP is circumstantial, while it is disfavored if it is argumental. The empirical data do not seem to support this claim. Certainly not all PPs are identical. Crucially there are scalar differences in the acceptability of the construction connected with word order, which affect dative clefted constituents as well as PPs. Some speakers seem rather skeptical in accepting preposed dative or prepositional phrases. In other words, even though they accept PPs or datives appearing in the matrix clause, they need them to be placed after the copula. It is as if a further movement were too expensive and the distance from the embedded verb which assigned the case too long.

We have seen so far that dative case and PPs are compatible with colloquial clefts and that the clefted constituent does not need to bear Nominative case provided that the embedded verb requires the Inherent Case displayed by the focused phrase. We will now see, whether the focused constituent can bear Accusative case.

Differently from Inherent cases, informants judge the clefting of an Accusative constituent as ungrammatical. If the embedded verb requires Accusative, the strategy to be applied is that of the Standard: the clefted constituent appears in the matrix clause and displays Nominative Case, the *d-* pronoun introducing the subordinate clause bears Accusative Case. The generalization is rather robust: only few internet findings contradict this claim and are judged as extremely marginal by speakers. The residual cases are instantiated by pronouns, therefore elements which are clearly inflected for

case. Naturally the only attestations which can be considered are in the masculine singular, as all other genders and the plural have Case-syncretism which opacifies the phenomenon:

- (260) ?? Es ist ihn, den ich liebe
It is him_{ACC} who_{ACC} I love
“It’s him who I love”

(www.alina.dietberg.de)

- (261) *Es ist den roten Rock, dass/den ich kaufen will
It is the_{ACC} red_{ACC} skirt that/which_{ACC} I to-buy want
“It’s the red skirt that I want to buy”

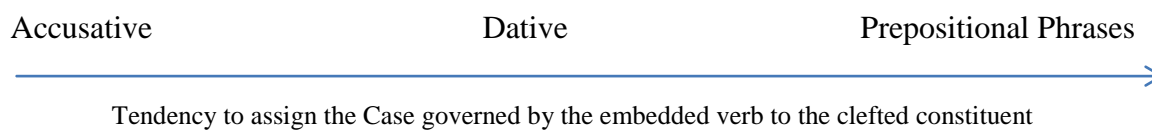
Coherently with what I claimed before, this marginal example (260) is only possible because the pronoun has a clear morphological mark of accusativity and is a light element which can be relatively easily moved. The main difference with the examples in the dative and the PPs is that the introducer of the subordinate clause is a *d*-pronoun regularly declined, as if the clefted constituent were in the Nominative. Notice that this (albeit very marginal) possibility for pronouns to be in the Accusative, is totally banned for DPs.

It is now possible to outline a coherent system which rules Case assignment in German colloquial clefts and to draw an implicational scale.

The type of constituent which more easily allows not to respect the Nominative-requirement for the focused element is the PP: entire PPs can be extracted from the subordinate clause and appear as such in the matrix clause. This is the first rule of the Standard which is circumvented because having the whole PP in the matrix clause avoids any ambiguity with a presentational sentence and explicitly signals that the entire PP is clefted and not just the bare noun governed by it. Clefted PPs preferably appear in post-copular position. A subgroup of the informants who accept clefted PPs maintain that they can possibly cleft datives as well, but they can do so, provided that there is a morphological Case signaling their status. Accusatives are considered unsuitable to be clefted with their Case, therefore focused constituents which are objects conform to the Standard pattern and display Nominative Case. Moreover, differently from datives, accusatives are not associated with a specific thematic role and this makes them even less inclined to be moved. The fact that these difficulties could arise is supported by the

experiments on object relative clauses, which show that performances on production and comprehension of headed relative clauses on the object are definitely lower than for subject relatives (Caloi, Sanfelici, Poletto, 2013). Better performances are even obtained if an object relative is reformulated as a subject relative clause with a passive voice.

Hence, German has a dual system which splits Structural Cases on the one side and Inherent Cases on the other. Both Structural cases, when clefted, are maintained in the Nominative, Inherent Cases instead tend to appear in the matrix clause with their case. There is however a *continuum* which respects Keenan & Comrie's (1977) Case Hierarchy⁶³.



For the sake of completeness, it is worth mentioning that there exist some very marginal cases (basically Internet findings) in which the clefted constituent, if it is a pronoun - especially a 1st person pronoun – bears Accusative case regardless of the fact it is actually the case required by the embedded verb. In the following examples for instance, the constituent which is clefted is co-indexed with the *d*- Nominative pronoun, which serves as the subject of the subordinate clause. This is alleged not to be a genuine German strategy, but it is claimed to be a kind of syntactic loan from English (Fischer, 2009), which has the clefted constituent in a default Accusative Case. The introducer of the subordinate clause however is correctly a *d*- pronoun, which restores some sort of grammaticality. The hypothesis that this is a syntactic loan from English is not convincing though. If loans take place, they mostly affect lexicon and hardly involve syntax. This could be a sort of circumvention strategy which allows not to place the deictic pronoun in front of the copula as required by the Standard strategy. Interestingly, even if the clefted pronoun has a morphological form which makes it easily recognizable, *dass* can never serve as a suitable introducer in this case. This is coherent with the general behavior of Structural Cases. Notice however, that these very marginal cases only involve pronouns and never lexical DPs.

⁶³ Here I do not mention the Genitive because it is ruled out in German clefts probably for left branching reasons, and the Nominative, which, I will claim, is assigned *in situ*, and does not result as a fulfillment of the requirements of the embedded verb.

(262) ?? Es ist mich, der in deinem Buch über Lotti die Geschichte
 It is me_{ACC} who_{NOM} in your book about Lotti the story_{ACC}
 eines afrikanischen Kindes geschrieben hat.
 an_{GEN} African_{GEN} child_{GEN} written has
 “It’s me who wrote the story of an African child in your book about
 Lotti”
 (gb.webmart.de/gb.cfm?id)

(263) ?? Es ist mich, der definiert meine Identität, wie ich
 It is me_{ACC} wh_{NOM MASC SING} defines my_{ACC} identity as I
 wünsche
 desire
 “It’s me that define my identity as I desire”

7.3 *Cleftable constituents*

Substandard and colloquial German are much freer with respect to standard German as far as the type of cleftable constituents is concerned. While standard German can only cleft Nominative DPs and pronouns, colloquial German has further possibilities:

As highlighted above, beside Dative DPs⁶⁴, PPs can be clefted, although some more perplexities emerge when the PP is pre-copular. Anyway there seems to be no preference concerning the Theta-role, the argumental status or the animacy of the clefted PPs:

(264) Es ist mit Hans, dass ich immer ausgehe
 It is with Hans that I always to-out-go
 “It’s Hans that I always go out with”

Some linguists such as Höhn (2012) suggest that the grammaticality of such examples may be improved if there is strong illocutionary force or in tag questions and polar questions. It is not by chance that they appear in questions, since they are a privileged environment for clefts; this is confirmed by French, in which the cleft construction has grammaticalized as a device to form questions.

⁶⁴ For the restrictions applying on clefted datives see above.

(265) Es war mit Franz, dass sie gestern gesprochen hat, oder?
 It was with Franz, that she yesterday talked has, PRT
 “It was with Franz that she spoke yesterday”
 (Höhn 2012)

(266) War es mit Franz, dass sie gestern gesprochen hat?
 Was it with Franz that she yesterday spoken has
 “Was it with Franz that she spoke?”
 (ibidem)

Notice that this use with PPs, which is nowadays exclusively colloquial and not unanimously accepted by speakers even in informal contexts, was actually attested in 19th century German literature, even in authors like Goethe:

(267) Lotharlo wird mir ewig theuer seyn; aber seine Freunde
 Lotharius will me_{DAT} forever dear to-be but his_{ACC PL} friends_{ACC}
 kenne ich, es ist mit leid, daß er so umgeben ist.
 know_{1st SING I} it is with pain that he so surrounded is
 “Lotharius will be dear to me forever, but I know his friends and it is
 with pain that he is surrounded by them”
 (Goethe, *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*)

(268) Es ist mit leid / daß ich / in den Umständen / in welchen ich
 It is with pain that I in the_{DAT PL} circumstances in which_{DAT PL I}
 mich befinde/ ...
 myself find_{1st PERS SING}
 „It’s with pain that in the circumstances in which I find myself...”
 (Zschokke, *Miszellen für die neueste Weltkunde*)

Some speakers also accept to cleft pronominal adverbs such as *davon*, *damit*, *daran*, etc.

(269) Es ist davon, dass sich die Regeln geändert haben.
 It is this-from that themselves the_{NOM} rules changed have_{3rd PERS PL}
 “It is because of it that the rules have changed”
 (www.tv.scrip.te.de/buffy/scripts/6-09t.html)

- (270) Es ist dafür, dass Europa ein einheitlicher Wirtschaftsraum
 It is this-for that Europe a unitary_{NOM MASC SING} economic-space
 wurde
 became_{3rd PERS SING}
 “It is with this purpose that Europe became a unitary economic area”
 (www.terminmarktwelt.de/cgi-bin/nforum.pl%3FST%3D131966)

Some speakers maintain that they would prefer pronominal adverbs in front of the copula, with an increment in the acceptability of such sentences:

- (271) Davon ist es, dass meine Zukunft abhängt
 This-from is it that my_{NOM} future depends
 “It’s on this thing that my future depends”

Clefts are also compatible with adverbs of time and place or adverbial DPs:

- (272) Es war letztes Jahr, dass er geheiratet hat (nicht vor zwei Jahren)
 It was last year that he married has not before two years
 “It was last year that he married (not two years ago)”
- (273) Es ist dort, dass meine Tochter gearbeitet hat
 It is there that my_{FEMM SING} daughter worked has
 “It’s there that my daughter worked”
- (274) Es war gestern, dass ich auf dich gewartet habe
 It was yesterday that I at you_{ACC} waited have_{1st PERS SING}
 “It was yesterday that I waited for you”

They are not compatible however with any kind of adverbs: high adverbs (Cinque 1999) for instance cannot be clefted. The same holds for Italian. This is probably due to a semantic incompatibility between adverbs expressing illocutionary force and clefts, which are an instrument to reorganize information structure.

- (275) a. *Es war glücklicherweise, dass ich mit dir geredet habe
 It was fortunately that I with you_{DAT} talked have_{1st PERS SING}

b. *E^c stato fortunatamente che ho parlato con te
 Is been fortunately that have_{1st PERS SING} talked with you
 Lit: “It was fortunately that I talked with you)

(Höhn 2012)

High adverbs express the attitude towards the entire event and are therefore not prone to be clefted. They are most likely to appear in front of the cleft construction:

(276) Glücklicherweise war es Maria, die dir das gesagt hat.
 Luckily was it Maria_{NOM} who_{NOM FEM} you_{DAT} this said has
 Wenn ich es gewesen wäre, hättest du es nicht
 if I it been was_{1st PERS SING} would-have_{2nd PERS SING} you it not
 verstanden
 understood
 “Luckily it was Maria who said it to you. If it had been me, you would
 not have understood”

Manner adverbs are basically excluded as well:

(277) *Es war ziemlich schnell, dass ich reagiert habe
 It was quite fast that I reacted have
 Lit: “It was quite fast that I reacted”

(ibidem)

Only a very restricted number of informants accept sentences such as:

(278) Es ist langsam, dass das Kind liest
 It is slowly that the child reads
 “It’s slowly that the child reads”

Notice that in Italian this kind of sentences is generally grammatical, although certain restrictions apply:

- (279) E' lentamente che bisogna leggere i libri per capirli
 Is slowly that needs to-read the books for to-understand-them
 bene
 well
 "You have to read books slowly if you want to understand them
 properly"

7.4 *Sluicing*

After having considered what happens when pronouns, PPs, DPs and Adverbs are clefted, it is now worth investigating sluicing so as to understand whether this phenomenon can be somehow traced back to cleft sentences. First of all, it could be useful to recall a traditional definition for sluicing:

"Sluicing is the ellipsis phenomenon [...] in which the sentential portion of a constituent question is elided, leaving only a wh-phrase remnant." (Merchant, 2006)

Let us consider instances such as:

- (280) John saw someone, but I don't know who
 (Van Craenenbroeck, 2010)

Two possible accounts have been proposed: (i) from the one side the elliptical part can be interpreted as a wh- question (*John saw someone but I don't know who* <*John saw*>); (ii) from the other side the lacking part could be considered to be a cleft (*John saw someone, but I don't know who* <*it was*>). However, none of these two accounts is satisfactory. Sluicing has independent properties, in fact, that cannot be uncontroversially associated neither with questions, nor with clefts. Since the core topic of the present investigation are cleft sentences, I will analyze only the reasons why clefts cannot be considered a source for sluicing and sluiced sentences are not therefore to be considered as a form of reduced clefts. The seminal work of Merchant (2001) draws a detailed picture on the topic and provides clues not to state that sluiced sentences are reduced clefts. The aspects that he takes into consideration are the following:

- a. *Adjuncts and implicit arguments*: in sluicing there can be an adjunct, whereas in “short clefts” there cannot.
- b. *prosody*: sluiced wh- phrases have to be stressed, while cleft sentences do not need to.
- c. *Aggressively non-D-linked wh-phrases*⁶⁵: they are not allowed in sluicing, but are tolerated in clefts.
- d. *Non-exhaustivity*: sluicing is compatible also with modification of the type of “some” and “else”, while clefts are not.
- e. *Exhaustivity*: clefts are necessarily exhaustive, whereas modifiers such as “all” lead to degradation in sluicing.
- f. *Swiping*⁶⁶: sluicing allows for both prepositions following and preceding the wh-, while clefts allow only for the latter.
- g. *Languages with no cleft strategy*⁶⁷: languages such as Romanian disallow clefts, but admit sluicing.
- h. *Case matching*: the case of sluiced wh- phrases is the same that they would bear if they were complete questions, while in clefts it has to bear Nominative Case (provided that the copular clause always requires for it).
- i. *Left-branch extraction*: it is compatible with sluicing but not with clefts.

These are good reasons not to think of clefts as a source for sluicing. There are anyway some controversial points which Merchant makes to corroborate his hypothesis, which are not very convincing in that he indicates that some German sentences are ungrammatical, while they are widely accepted by native speakers.

These are some of Merchant (2001)’s alleged ungrammatical sentences, which are assessed as acceptable by informants, provided that they would not write them, but just use them in conversation:

⁶⁵ The term indicates expression such as *who the hell*, *chi diavolo*, *chi cavolo*, etc.

⁶⁶ The acronym was created by Merchant (2002) and stands for Sluiced Wh-word Inversion with Prepositions In Northern Germanic.

⁶⁷ Among these, Merchant (2002) explicitly mentions German PPs, which are instead ceftable as we will see further on in the discussion.

(281) ? Mit wem war es, dass er gesprochen hat?

with whom_{DAT} was it that he spoken has

“With whom was it that he spoke?”

(Merchant, 2001)

(282) Wem war es, dass er das Geschenk gegeben hat?

who_{DAT} was it that he the present given has

“Who was it that he gave a present to?”

(283) Wohin ist es, dass du in Urlaub fährst?

Where-to is it that you_{SING} in holiday go_{2nd PERS SING}

“When is it that you go on holiday?”

(284) Er hat mit jemandem gesprochen aber ich weiß nicht

He has with someone_{DAT} spoken but I know_{1st PERS SING} not

mehr mit wem

more with whom_{DAT}

“He spoke with someone but I don’t know anymore with whom”

(Höhn 2012)

If (281) were ungrammatical this would predict that sluicing is never possible in clefts. A good number of speakers however accept the sentences above and show that VP ellipsis is possible in clefts and PPs still remain good pivots for clefts. There is however, a considerable degradation in the grammaticality involving sluicing if the introducer is a bare wh-, especially not provided with case. The point is that clefts can undergo sluicing, but not all the cases of sluicing are interpretable as clefts. (284) for instance is an example of sluicing, but cannot be unambiguously accounted for as a case of sluicing in which a cleft is elliptical. Notice also (285):

(285) *Ich weiß, dass du jeden Sommer in Urlaub

I know that you_{2nd PERS SING} every_{ACC} summer in holiday

fährst, aber es ist wann genau, dass ich nicht weiß

go_{2nd PERS SING} but it is when exactly that I not know_{1st PERS SING}

“I know that you go on holiday every summer but it’s when exactly that I

don’t remember”

- (291) a. *Ich weiß, dass Hans mit dir gestritten hat, aber es ist
 I know that Hans with you_{DAT SING} quarrelled has but it is
 warum, dass ich nicht weiß
 why that I not know
 “I know that Hans quarrelled with you, but it’s why that I don’t know”
- b. *So che Hans ha litigato con te, ma è
 know_{1st PERS SING} that Hans has quarrelled with you_{SING} but is
 perché che non so
 why that not know_{1st PERS SING}

Notice that in Italian the sentence improves considerably if the CP is nominalized and rendered as a DP (even preceded by the definite article).

- (292) So che Hans ha litigato con te, ma è
 know_{1st PERS SING} that Hans has quarrelled with you_{SING} but is
 il perché che non so
 the why that not know_{1st PERS SING}
 “I know that Hans quarreled with you but it’s why that I don’t know”
- (293) *Ich erinnere mich, dass wir weggehen müssen, es ist um wie
 I remember myself that we to-away-go must_{1st PERS PL} it is at how
 spät dass ich nicht weiß.
 late that I not know
 “I remember that we have to go out, but it’s at what time that I don’t
 remember”

Thus, it seems that sluicing is only accepted if its pivot is a wh- pronoun which has been assigned Case, preferably governed by a preposition, so a PP, or, as is the case of Italian, it is a DP.

Heavy clausal constituents, even though not involving sluicing are not grammatical either. In sentences like the following, nothing would change in the grammaticality depending on the presence or absence of sluicing. Once again, at least the Italian equivalent would considerably improve if the CP were nominalized.

- (294) *Ich bin mir sicher, dass wir das Problem lösen werden, aber
 I am me_{DAT} sure_{NOM} that we the problem to-solve will_{1st PERS PL} but
 es ist wie (wir es schaffen werden), dass mich besorgt.
 it is how we it to-make will_{1st PERS PL} that me_{ACC} worries
 “I am sure that we will solve the problem, it’s how we will manage that
 worries me”
- (295) Sono sicura che risolveremo il problema, ma è il come che
 Am sure that will-solve_{1st PERS PL} the problem but is the how that
 mi preoccupa
 me_{ACC} worries
 “I am sure that we will solve the problem, but it’s how that worries me”

Lighter clausal clefted constituents such as simple infinitival sentences are at least marginally accepted, albeit perceived as odd:

- (296) ? Es ist zu leben, dass ich keine Lust habe
 It is to to-live that I no_{ACC FEM} desire_{EM} have_{1st PERS SING}
 “It’s to live that I don’t want to”

Coherently with what has been described for Italian, informants anyway suggest that the best option would involve the nominalization of the clefted constituent governed by a P, which makes it a canonical colloquial cleft of a PP:

- (297) Es ist aufs Leben generell, dass ich keine Lust habe
 It is at-the_{ACC} life generally that I no_{ACC FEM} desire have_{1st PERS SING}
 “It’s to live in general that I do not feel like”

Adjectives alone are impossible to cleft:

- (298) *Es ist rot, dass das T-Shirt ist
 It is red that the T-Shirt is
 “Red is the color of the T-shirt”

7.5 Summary of the possibilities to cleft a constituent in colloquial varieties

To summarize, here is a scheme of the possibilities of clefting a constituent in substandard varieties⁶⁸:

Type of constituent	Perfectly Acceptable	Acceptable although with restrictions	Marginal/Odd	Ungrammatical
Nominative DPs	√			
Accusative DPs			?	
Dative DPs		√		
PPs		√		
Pronominal adverbs		√		
Adverbial DPs/Adverbs	√			
Sluicing (Wh- -Case)				X
Sluicing (Wh- +Case)		√		
Heavy clausal constituents				X
Light clausal constituents			?	
Infinitives			?	
Adjectives				X

7.6 The structure of the copular clauses of clefts

There are some important differences between the structure of the copular sentence of Standard clefts and that used in colloquial varieties. The main difference resides in the fact, that in colloquial varieties the focused constituent does not need to bear Nominative Case. If it is not in the Nominative, focus cannot determine the verbal agreement of the copula, which is therefore necessarily governed by *es*.

- (299) Es sind meine Freunde, denen ich ein Geschenk gegeben
 It are my_{NOM PL} friends who_{DAT PL} I a_{ACC} present_{ACC} given
 habe
 have_{1st PERS SING}
 “It’s my friends who I gave a present to”

⁶⁸ The table is necessarily a simplification. Thorough discussion on the acceptability of the diverse clefted constituents, has been carried out in body of the text.

- (300) Es ist meinen Freunden, dass ich ein Geschenk gegeben
 It is my_{DAT PL} friends that I a_{ACC} present_{ACC} given
 habe
 have_{1st PERS SING}
 “It’s to my friends that I gave a present”
- (301) Du bist es mit dem Peter Spaß hat
 You are_{2nd PERS SING} it with whom_{DAT} Peter fun has
 „It’s with you that Peter has fun with“
- (302) Es ist mit dir, dass Peter Spaß hat
 It is with you_{DAT} that Peter fun has
 “It’s with you that Peter has fun”

Evidently, different patterns of agreement with respect to the Standard can be displayed if the focus is plural or if it is a deictic pronoun. If it is in the singular, in fact, the copula is provided with regular 3rd person singular agreement, being any other possibility excluded. Phenomena as the ones described in the examples above are highly frequent. Nevertheless there are some other phenomena – albeit much rarer- which are worth analyzing. As anticipated in the previous section, if the focus is a pronoun, it may happen that it is even in the Accusative, regardless of its true syntactic relation with the embedded verb. This is alleged to be a loan from English, which has the Accusative as a default case, but is most likely a genuine German strategy, which avoids to place clefted pronouns in pre-copular position.

Other interesting phenomena concern odd agreement of the copula with deictic focused pronouns in the Nominative. Unexpectedly the copula can agree with *es* instead of with the focus. This pattern is attested above all in Internet examples, with a good number of google results, while speakers are mostly reluctant to use or even accept sentences like these:

- (303) Es ist ICH⁶⁹ der das geschriebene erlebt und gefühlt hat
 It is I who_{NOM MASC SING} the written lived and felt has
 und ICH bin Mensch!
 and I am person

⁶⁹ Capital letters in the original.

„It’s me who experienced and felt what has been written and I’m a person“

(www.geo-reisecommunity.de/diskussion/132/74/1)

The case of (303) however is peculiar, since the emphasized *ich* is treated more like a DP than a pronoun. Nevertheless there are other attestations which show that the semi-nominal status of the deictic pronoun is not a necessary requirement for this pattern of agreement to be displayed:

(304) Es ist du, der sagt was für dich wahr ist
It is you, who_{NOM MASC SING} says what for you_{ACC} true is
“It’s you who says what is true for you”

(forum.zwoelf-schritte.de/index.php%3Ftopic%3D2566.285)

In the previous sections, it has been highlighted that all speakers confirm a preference for pronominal focused items in pre-copular position and this preference becomes cogent if the focus is a deictic pronoun (*ich, du, wir, ihr*). In the speakers’ judgment, in fact, the linear sequence of *es* and a copula inflected for 1st or 2nd person is unacceptable. Violations of this constraint are anyway attested: either the deictic pronoun - albeit post-copular - correctly determines verb agreement (304), or the main verb agrees with *es* (305):

(305) Es bist du, der vom
It are_{2nd PERS SING} you_{NOM SING} who_{NOM MASC SING} from-the_{DAT}
Nettolohn kaum noch leben kann
take-home-pay little again to-live can_{3rd PERS SING}

“It’s you who nearly cannot earn the living with your take-home pay”

(www.fn-erzgebirge.info/%3Fp%3D931)

The fact that in colloquial varieties the copula does not strictly require the use of the Nominative for the clefted constituent, but tolerates that it is extracted from the subordinate clause to reach its final position within the matrix clause, is a clue that the copula is losing part of its lexical value. Furthermore, the NP₂ agreement rule is not always respected and, in marginal cases, this happens even if the focused constituent is

in the Nominative and could therefore trigger agreement. Moreover, the possible tense-mismatches between the matrix and the subordinate clause, which have been described for the Standard, seem to be much more limited in colloquial varieties. All these clues lead to think that the copula is progressively losing its lexical properties and is developing in the direction of becoming merely a “linker”, this means an element which is generated directly in the IP field, to satisfy the agreement requirements and then move to CP.

7.7 *The subordinate clause of clefts*

Differently from Standard German, the introducer of the subordinate clause of substandard clefts is not always obligatorily a *d*- pronoun. The choice of the introducer is certainly not random, but it conforms to a very specific pattern which is strictly connected with morphosyntactic factors and, more precisely, with the Case assigned to the clefted constituent.

7.7.1 *Use of a d- pronoun*

As has been outlined in the previous sections, in the Standard the Nominative is the Case assigned to the clefted constituent regardless of the thematic role and the Case required by the embedded verb from which it depends at least syntactically. It has been then pointed out that beside the standard strategy, substandard varieties can choose to lexicalize the Case required by the embedded verb for the clefted constituent in the matrix clause. I will not recall here what the constraints on the use of a Case other than the Nominative are, but it is worth stressing that basically an Accusative cannot be a Case borne by the clefted constituent. If the focalized item is an element to which the embedded verb would assign Accusative, the standard strategy is always applied and prevents the clefted constituent from being in the Accusative. This device directly affects the choice of the introducer of the subordinate clause, which needs to be a *d*-pronoun correctly inflected for gender, number and Case (either the Nominative or the Accusative, depending on the syntactic function of the pronoun).

If the introducer of the embedded clause is a pronoun we expect that *d*- blocks the chain between the embedded verb and the clefted constituent and accumulates all the features. It is in fact the introducer of a clause which constitutes a strong island from which it is impossible to extract. It is all the more evident, since the embedded verb

displays 3rd person agreement if the *d*- pronoun is the subject. Some unexpected phenomena however, take place if deixis is involved. In the great majority of cases, even though a 1st or 2nd person pronoun is clefted, all reflexives or possessive pronouns contained in the embedded clause are 3rd person. Anyway it is not impossible to find instances in which the focused constituent and reflexives within the embedded clause agree in number, because the *d*- pronoun does not manage to hinder the relation between the deictic pronoun and the embedded verb:

- (306) DU bist es der dich
 You_{SING} are_{2nd PERS SING} it who_{NOM MASC SING} yourself_{SING}
 glücklich machen kann. DU bist es
 happy to-make can_{3rd PERS SING} you_{SING} are_{2nd PERS SING} it
 der dich lieben kann. DU
 who_{NOM MASC SING} yourself_{2nd PERS SING} to-love can_{3rd PERS SING} You_{SING}
 bist es der alle Antworten auf all' deine
 are_{2nd PERS SING} it who_{NOM MASC SING} all_{ACC} answers to all_{ACC} your_{SING}
 Fragen kennt.
 questions knows
 „It's you that can make yourself happy, it's you that can love yourself,
 it's you that know all the answers to your questions”
 (www.freiraum-der-blog.de/sehenswert/du/)

Notice that differently from relative clauses, both in standard, colloquial and dialectal varieties, the repetition of the deictic pronoun within the subordinate clause leads to ungrammaticality:

- (307) *Ich bin es, der/die ich immer die Wahrheit sagt
 I am it who_{NOM SING} I always the truth tells
 “It's me who always tells the truth”

Such a repetition is instead compulsory in relative clauses whose antecedent is a deictic pronoun:

- (308) Gerade ich, die *(ich) viel gearbeitet habe, bin
 just I who_{NOM FEM SING} I much worked have_{1st PERS SING} am
 durch die Prüfung gefallen
 through the_{ACC} test fallen
 „Just I, who has studied so much, didn’t pass the exam”

7.7.2 Use of the complementizer *dass*

Differently from the Standard, there are contexts in which colloquial varieties have to use the declarative complementizer *dass* to introduce the subordinate clause of a cleft. This pattern has to be displayed when the clefted constituent is an Adverb (therefore not provided with a thematic role or a case) or is a DP in an Inherent Case. The pattern applies also for pronouns in Inherent Cases or PPs. Deeper insights as to how the choice of the introducer of the cleft is made, can be provided by the investigation of the mechanisms underlying the Case assignment to the clefted constituent. If it bears Nominative-Case and satisfies the Nominative-requirement of the copula, this triggers that the Case and the thematic role assigned by the embedded verb to its displaced argument is somehow conveyed. The only possibility to do so is to use a pronoun, i.e. the sole suitable candidate to carry this syntactic information. A complementizer can in fact display neither Case nor a thematic role. The question arises as to how the system works if all the syntactic information required by the *d-* pronoun is actually displayed in the clefted constituent. For the well-known principles of the unicity of Role and Case, this information cannot be replicated on *d-*; if it were so, an unjustified form of doubling would take place. The introducer of the subordinate clause cannot but be a complementizer in this case. There are however further reasons which require that the introducer of the subordinate clause is a complementizer: the extraction of a constituent inserted in a clause introduced by a complementizer is possible, as it is only a weak island, while it would be prohibited if the subordinate clause were introduced by a pronoun, since it would form a strong island from which extraction is banned. It is noteworthy that also computational and morpho-syntactic factors play a role in licensing one strategy or the other. Constituents can be extracted and positioned in the matrix clause either as PPs or DPs/pronouns in an Inherent Case if and only if they have clear morphological marking which signals their non-Structural Case status. It is therefore not a matter of abstract Case which establishes the strategy to be chosen, but concrete morphological Case. A bare noun which has been displaced and does not have

morphological marking that makes it clearly identifiable as bearing an oblique case cannot be correctly computed and part of the syntactic information risks to get lost. If extraction takes place, it cannot do it at the expense of correct and unambiguous computability: the pronominal strategy which preserves all the information licensed by the embedded verb has to be applied.

- (309) *Es ist Hans, dass ich begegne
 It is Hans_{DAT} that I meet_{1st PERS SING}
 “It is Hans that I meet”

The question now arising is why the complementizer strategy should be applied given that the pronominal strategy guarantees that all the Case and Thematic role information is preserved. The pronominal strategy poses a problem of different nature: as the *d-* pronoun is identical with the relative pronoun, the structure is ambiguous between a presentational sentence and a cleft, creating double-access reading. The ambiguity becomes all the more evident if a PP needs to be clefted. The pronominal strategy would impose to cleft only the bare noun, without the preposition, excluding the possibility to clearly signal that the whole PP is clefted and not just the noun.

- (310) Normalerweise ist es das Fahrrad mit dem ich zur
 Normally is it the bicycle with which_{DAT NEUT SING} I to-the_{DAT}
 Uni fahre
 university go_{1st PERS SING}
 a. “The bicycle is the means of transport with which I normally go to
 University”
 b. “It’s the bicycle (not the car) the means of transport with which I
 normally go to university”
 (Höhn 2012)

- (311) Normalerweise ist es mit dem Fahrrad dass ich zur
 Normally is it with the_{DAT MASC SING} bicycle that I to-the_{DAT}
 Uni fahre
 university go_{1st PERS SING}
 “It’s normally with the bicycle that I go to university”
 (ibidem)

To sum up, the main drawback to the use of the pronominal strategy is that it risks to make the sentence ambiguous between a presentational sentence and a cleft, while the main disadvantage of the “complementizer-strategy” is that the C does not manage to fulfill the syntactic requirements of the embedded verb of clefts if the clefted constituent does not bear an Oblique case clearly displaying morphological marking that makes its syntactic function distinctly identifiable. The Standard adopts a unitary strategy: the pronominal one, while colloquial varieties apply a mixed system: they basically use *dass* whenever the syntactic context allows for this. The more unequivocal the syntactic mark of Oblique Case is, the more probable it is that the speaker chooses the “complementizer strategy”.

On the basis of the scalar grammaticality judgments expressed by the speakers, it is possible to draw an implicational scale in the use of *dass*, which considers Case:

PPs > ? Dative > *Accusative > ** Nominative

(i) The maximum of acceptability of *dass* is offered by PPs. It is in fact not the embedded verb which directly assigns Case to the noun, it is the P which does it, so there is no possible opacity concerning the Case and the thematic role of the clefted constituent. Notice however that the PP is preferably not further moved from the post-copular position and can hardly be preverbal.

(312) Es ist mit großer Freude, dass ich an deiner Hochzeit
 it is with great joy that I at your_{DAT} marriage
 teilnehme
 take_{1st PERS SING-part}
 “It’s with great joy that I take part in your marriage”

(ii) The the use of *dass* is then tolerated, although clear morphological marking is needed, with datives. The peculiar nature of this case provides clues to motivate this use with the complementizer. The Dative is in fact deeply diverse from Structural Cases: as postulated by Bayer, Bader, Meng, (2001), the Dative is claimed to have a further layer if compared with Structural Cases (KP) in which a silent preposition is collocated. This is coherent with what had already been hypothesized by Kayne (1984). The difference with PPs is that in the Dative the preposition is not

lexicalized. The asymmetry between Dative on the one side and Nominative and Accusative on the other is also supported by further clues proposed by Bayer, Bader and Meng (2001). For instance a CP can never be the Dative argument of a verb, besides it is impossible to use quantifiers which do not have any marker of Case in contexts in which the Dative is required, moreover datives do not manage to bind reciprocals. Further interesting approaches have been proposed to the issue of Case assignment. One of them is provided by the nano-syntactic framework (Starke, 2004; Caha, 2009). In this framework it has been proposed that all DPs are always generated with the possibly richest amount of Case-features. DPs then move to hierarchically ordered projections which can be identified by Case labels. To reach its final Case position the DP has to be “peeled”, until it has only the features corresponding to its case, i.e. it has to lose all the features which characterize more marked cases. This has as a consequence that the least marked cases have to leave behind a “shell” containing the features of most marked cases. This approach entails also that the most marked cases contain within them all the features which least marked cases have, the latter being simply poorer. If this framework were adopted, this would imply, for this kind of clefts, that only the richest cases can be clefted by means of *dass*, while the poorest, which have already been peeled do not succeed to.

(iii) Accusatives can never appear in clefted position with their Case; the very marginal contexts in which this happens however, require that the introducer of the subordinate clause is a *d-* pronoun.

- (313) *Es ist den Jungen, dass ich sehe
 It is the_{ACC} boy that I see_{1st PERS SING}
 “It’s the boy that I see”

Even if we leave cleft sentences aside for a moment, it is noteworthy that the movement of Accusative phrases is far from being unproblematic in German. Restrictions apply for instance in scrambling: non-specific objects, pure indefinites and existentials cannot be scrambled; object *es* can be scrambled only very limitedly. The constraints which Accusatives undergo concern also double object constructions such as the double accusative of the verb *lehren*, in which the inanimate object cannot be passivized if the animate Accusative is simultaneously present in the sentence:

- (314) *Die Mathematik wird den jungen Mann gelehrt
The Maths_{NOM} is the_{ACC} young man taught
“Maths is taught to the young man”

(iv) With a Nominative clefted constituent, the subordinate clause can never be introduced by *dass*. This complementizer is in fact not a suitable linker to guarantee that a morphologically poor Nominative constituent is correctly interpreted as the subject of the subordinate clause. *Dass* simply serves as an operator whose function is to connect the main and the subordinate clause.

Interestingly, the implicational scale which has been drawn is the reverse of the Hierarchy often described for relative clauses (Keenan & Comrie 1977). This is definitely not by chance, it is not exactly the opposite, it is specular. If we consider the traditional Accessibility Hierarchy, it is clear that the Cases which are easier to relativize are the least marked, while the maximum level of complexity in relativization is reached by PPs. The *ratio* which rules cleft sentence formation could follow directly from this: the more complex and computationally expensive the relativization strategy is, the more likely it is that the language develops an alternative strategy which enables to avoid the formation of a relative clause. German data confirm exactly this pattern: the first nominal constituents which allow to form a cleft sentence with *dass* are PPs, followed by Datives with overt morphological marking. The computational high cost of PP relativization is certainly one of the key factors which lead to the *dass* strategy, but it is evidently intertwined with another factor: overt case morphology, which has to guarantee for the correct interpretation of the clefted constituent. It could be claimed that also languages such as Italian or English can use a complementizer to introduce clefts (*che*, *that*, respectively). The crucial point is that these complementizers have always been considered relative complementizers on the basis of the fact that these complementizers are the ones used in headed relative clauses as well, and this had led linguists to take their relative-status for granted. However, these same complementizers are also used in declarative contexts, and the claim that clefts are headed relative clauses cannot be therefore made on the basis of the fact that this complementizer is used in relative clauses. Ambiguity with declarative clauses cannot be underestimated. The case of German is illuminating in this respect, since no ambiguity can arise. *Dass* can only be a declarative complementizer and, as has been shown in the previous sections, there

exist no German variety in which *dass* can be used as a relativizer. This enables to state with certainty that German *dass*-clefts are not relative clauses⁷⁰. The circumvention of relativization is only possible insofar as the clefted constituent is provided with clear morphological markers, which make their relation with the embedded verb which governs it transparent. Overt case marking corresponds with Case markedness, which separates Inherent Cases from the one side and Structural Cases on the other. As expected, the dative has an intermediate status, in that it shares characteristics with both groups and allows for the *dass* strategy to be applied only if the requirement for overt case marking is satisfied as well. The pattern which is developing in German is certainly derelativization: the tendency is to avoid relativization in clefts whenever possible.

7.7.3 Use of *wo*

Another possible introducer of the subordinate clause of clefts is *wo*. Differently from both the pronominal strategy with *d-* and the complementizer-strategy with *dass*, *wo* is limited to some geographical areas, basically to the varieties in which the item is used to form relative clauses (e.g. Central Bavarian and Alemannic). In German Switzerland for instance, especially in Alemannic dialects, *wo* is obligatorily used. Its status as an introducer of clefts is peculiar, since it displays both pronominal and complementizer-like characteristics. On the one side it is not sensitive to the animacy of the constituent it refers to, it is not inflected for gender, number and Case and it can never be governed by a preposition; but on the other, there are cases in which its presence blocks the chain - and therefore reconstruction - and determines 3rd person agreement, although the true subject is a 1st or 2nd person pronoun.

⁷⁰ The case of German is not isolated but is further supported by other Germanic languages such as Danish and Norwegian, which both use the declarative complementizer with PPs, the difference being that, at least in Danish, the declarative complementizer can be omitted, whereas in German it never can. Notice that the pronoun introducing the copular clause of clefts is a demonstrative whose status is close to the German *das*.

- (1) *Danish:*
 Det var over dronningen (at)/*som han skrev hen bog
 this was about queen that has written a book
 "It was about the queen that he wrote a book"

(Smits, 1989)

- (2) *Norwegian*
 Det var om Etiopia at/*som han skrev en bok
 this was about Etiopia that has written a book
 "It was about the queen that he wrote a book"

(ibidem)

- (315) Du warst es, wo immer an mich geglaubt hat
 You_{SING} were_{2nd PERS SING} it C always to me_{ACC} believed has
 “It was you who always believed to me”

Anyway in a good number of cases, *wo* does not rule agreement, since it does not assume the ϕ -features of the subject:

- (316) Es bin ich wo singe
 It am I C sing_{1st PERS SING}
 “It’s me that sing”

(www.anschauenoderauch.net)

- (317) Es warst du, wo ihn damals abgezogen
 It were_{2nd PERS SING} you_{SING} C him_{ACC} at-the-time dissuaded
 hast
 have_{2nd PERS SING}
 “It was you who dissuaded him from doing so at the time”

(www.elitepvpers.com)

This instability in the patterns of verbal agreement leads to think that *wo* could be interpreted as a head (Bayer & Brandner (2008)) but with some more features. In the varieties in which it rules agreement it will have more pronoun-features, where it does not, it is more like a complementizer. The fact that *wo* is richer in features than a true complementizer such as *dass*, but is not truly a pronoun, makes this item suitable for a wider number of contexts, than *dass* and even than *d*-pronouns, in that any type of cleftable constituent can be inserted in a construction involving it as the introducer of the subordinate clause of clefts.

- (318) a. Es ist langsam wo ich lese
 b. Es ist langsam, dass/**d*- ich lese
 It is slowly C I read_{1st PERS SING}
 “It is slowly that I read”

- (319) a. Mein Mann ist es wo du gestern getroffen
 My husband is it that you yesterday met
 hast
 have_{2nd PERS SING}
- b. Mein Mann ist es, den/*dass du gestern getroffen
 My husband is it that you yesterday met
 hast
 have_{2nd PERS SING}
 “It’s my husband who you met yesterday”

It is worth noting that whenever *wo* introduces the subordinate clause of a cleft in which the focused item is a PP or a phrase bearing Oblique Case, this constituent has to appear with its case in the matrix copular clause. In other words, differently from relative clauses, in clefts resumption is not an accepted strategy. It would not, in fact be advantageous to have a Nominative constituent in the copular clause, then a complementizer and the syntactic information rescued by a resuming pronoun. The movement of the whole constituent with its Theta-role and its case is more transparent and less risky. Notice that the movement of a constituent out of a subordinate clause, which reaches the main clause is enabled by the fact that *wo* is not a pronoun.

- (320) Es ist mit dem Messer wo ich das Brot schneide
 It is with the_{DAT} knife C I the bread cut_{1st PERS SING}
 *Es ist das Messer, wo ich damit/ mit ihm das Brot schneide
 It is the_{NOM} knife C I it-with with it_{DAT} the bread cut_{1st PERS SING}
 “It’s with the knife that I cut the bread”

7.7.4 Use of other strategies

The only attested strategies to form cleft sentences in German are those mentioned above. However dialectal varieties have further possibilities to which I will just briefly refer. I will cite as an example the case of Meranese. Coherently with what has been claimed in the previous sections for the *ratio* in the use of a ‘pure’ complementizer as the introducer of a cleft, also Meranese can use a bare complementizer (*dass*) not preceded by a pronoun only if the clefted constituent bears an Inherent Case with morphological overt mark.

- (321) ‘s isch lei mit Mühe, dass i gwunnen hon
 It is only with effort that I won have_{1st PERS SING}
 “It’s only with effort that I won”

For Inherent Cases it can also use the Standard pronominal strategy, in which the clefted constituent is in the Nominative and the *d-* pronoun is inflected. This pronoun however can be optionally followed by the complementizer *wos* (was) in the Standard, which can never appear alone if we set the Nominative aside. The fact that *was* is compatible only with the least marked Case, and only with that, renders it transparent and unambiguous.

- (322) Er isch es, der/wos/ der wos kronk isch
 He is it who/C/who C sick is
 “It’s him who is sick”

Notice that Meranese offers interesting clues also in the treatment of deixis: as observed for the Standard, while cleft sentences cannot have the deictic pronoun serving as a subject repeated within the subordinate clause, relative clauses have to.

- (323) Du bisch es, der (wos) ollm liagn tuat
 You_{SING} are_{2nd PERS SING} it who C always tell-lies does
 “It’s always you who tell lies”
- (324) Grod du, de wos die Prüfung gmocht hot/*hosch, ...
 Just you_{SING} who C the test made has/ have_{2nd PERS SING}
 “Just you, who made the test, ...”

8. A syntactic account for German cleft sentences

8.1 Cleft sentences: free relative clauses towards derelativization

A long-standing debate concerns the structure of cleft sentences. The issue is very challenging and much research has been carried out to provide syntactic accounts for them. As Reeve (2011) correctly points out, there seems to be a syntax-semantics mismatch in this construction. Their superficial form leads to think of them as relative clauses, since in most languages the introducer of the subordinate clause has the form of

a relative pronoun/complementizer; however their semantics cannot be fully assimilated to a headed relative clause: a cleft does not necessarily add new information to identify the antecedent, the subordinate clause is background information already known to the speaker, while the clefted constituent is either new or contrasted information. There are evidently no such constraints for canonical relative clauses. Thus, caution is needed and thorough investigation is compelled to gain deeper insights as to what the syntax of this construction looks like. English-centric approaches run the risk to observe the phenomenon only from a very limited perspective.

After having provided a detailed description of cleft sentences in German, on the basis of the data I collected, I will now try to make some points which can give a contribution to the understanding of the nature of the subordinate clause of colloquial German clefts and, specifically, they can help evaluate whether they are ‘true’ relative clauses. All these arguments have already been outlined in the course of the dissertation and I will now resume those which can serve as a clue to provide an account.

First of all we cannot ignore the fact that most language, even typologically at distance, use relative introducers to form a cleft sentence and this cannot happen by chance. In the languages however, not all clefts are identical to headed relative clauses. Their distance from true relative clauses is highly dependent on the degree of grammaticalization that this construction has. In French questions, for example, the construction is totally grammaticalized in questions and is no more perceived as such; on the opposite side, there are languages such as German which use it very scarcely. The more the construction is grammaticalized, the less does it have in common with a relative clause. German is particularly interesting in this respect because it shows synchronically two different levels of grammaticalization: on the one hand the construction is rarely used and therefore not grammaticalized in the Standard, on the other hand, colloquial varieties show a more liberal use of clefts which corresponds to a greater degree of grammaticalization, which leads to the passage from a relative clause introducer to a declarative complementizer: the language is evidently undertaking a process of derelativization. Even though standard German clefts look like headed relative clauses, because of the use of a *d-* pronoun, there are some elements which make them different.

First of all, standard German clefts are normally introduced by a relative pronoun, but not all relative pronouns are suitable to form a cleft: *welch-*, for instance, can always be used as a relativizer, but it is factored out in clefts. These limitations in

the choice of the relativizer are shared also by other languages such as Italian, in which only the complementizer *che*⁷¹ can be used in clefts, while the relative pronouns *il quale* is excluded. A very common explanation for that is that *il quale* cannot be used because in Structural cases it can only form appositive relative clauses, whereas clefts are restrictive relative clauses, as showed for English by the possibility to use the complementizer *that* (Reeve 2011). The claim that the subordinate clause of a cleft is a restrictive relative clause however is contradicted by facts: one of the most frequently clefted items is the proper noun, which, if it is not preceded by an article that restricts its reference, is not compatible with restrictive interpretation.

There are many other asymmetries between headed relative clauses and clefts, which I will briefly recall. One of them concerns deixis: while in cleft sentences a 1st or 2nd person subject pronoun cannot be repeated within the subordinate clause, in true relatives at least 1st person subject pronouns have to be repeated for the sentence to be grammatical. This happens not only in Standard and colloquial German, but also in dialectal varieties such as Meranese.

- (325) a. *Ich bin es, der ich das macht
 I am it wh_{NOM MASC SING} I that_{ACC} makes
 b. Ich, der *(ich) das mache, ...
 I, wh_{NOM MASC SING} I this_{ACC} make_{1st PERS SING}
 ‘‘It’s me that makes it’’

As (325) highlights, the repetition of the deictic subject pronoun in the relative clause determines 1st or 2nd person agreement, depending on the subject, whilst in clefts, where this is not possible, verbal agreement is 3rd person.

Other differences between clefts and relatives involve extraction: whilst in relatives extraction is not compulsory, it is in clefts, which otherwise are barely ungrammatical:

⁷¹ Notice that in Italian *che* can serve both as a relativizer and a declarative complementizer. If we follow the trend established by English literature, we are led to interpret it as a relativizer in cleft. However, Belletti (2008), cautiously remains rather agnostic as to the nature of the complementizer in this construction and does not express a clear position about that.

- (326) a. Ich habe ein Buch gelesen, das schön ist
 I have_{1st PERS SING} a book read which_{NOM} beautiful is
 b. Ich habe ein Buch, das schön ist, gelesen
 I have_{1st PERS SING} a book which beautiful is read
 „I read a book, which is beautiful“
- (327) *Er ist immer es, der das machte, gewesen
 He is always it who this_{ACC} made_{3rd PERS SING} been
 “It has always been him who made it”

Moreover, while relative clauses cannot be stacked in German⁷², a relative clause and a cleft can co-exist. This property is shared also by French.

- (328) Es ist ein Buch, das sehr interessant ist, das ich gestern
 It is a book which_{NOM} very interesting is which_{ACC} I yesterday
 gekauft habe
 bought have_{1st PERS SING}
 “It’s a book, which is very interesting, that I read yesterday”
- (329) *Ich lese ein Buch, das sehr interessant ist, das ich gestern
 I read a book which_{NOM} very interesting is which_{ACC} I yesterday
 gekauft habe
 bought have_{1st PERS SING}
 “It’s a very interesting book that I bought yesterday”

The embedded clause of clefts can never have V2, while true relatives, under certain specific syntactic conditions can:

- (330) a. Ich habe einen Bruder, der ist reich
 I have a_{ACC} brother who_{NOM} is rich
 “I have a brother who is rich“
 b. *Es ist mein Bruder, der ist reich
 It is my_{NOM} father who_{NOM} is rich
 “It’s my brother who is rich”

⁷² This is a language specific constraint, because Italian, for instance, can stack more than one relative.

Paranetical clauses are admitted with clefts and not with headed relative clauses:

- (331) a. Es ist Mario, denke ich, der das Zimmer
 It is Mario think_{1st PERS SING} I wh_{NOM MASC SING} the room
 aufgeräumt hat
 tidied up has
- b. *Mario, denke ich, der immer das Zimmer aufräumt,
 Mario think I wh_{NOM MASC SING} always the room tidies-up
 ist...
 is
 “It’s Mario, I think, that has tidied up the room”

All these points, which have been made starting from the observation of German data, strongly lead to refuse the hypothesis that cleft sentences are always headed relative clauses, and this goes against most accounts which have been put forth on the basis of English (Reeve 2011, Hedberg 2000, Den Dikken 2006 a. o.).

I will claim that the subordinate clause of German clefts is still a relative clause, but neither restrictive nor appositive, as, beside the clues we have already mentioned, there would also be no suitable candidate to serve as a head. It is rather a free relative clause of the *d*- type, in which a generic silent head is always present though not lexicalized. German free relatives are not normally introduced by *d*-, rather by *wh*-. Interestingly, *wh*- can be used in all the contexts in which *d*- is used, but the reverse does not hold. *d*- free relatives are subject to some more constraints, which are: specificity (they are incompatible with the generic reading) and exhaustiveness, which are exactly the same constraints displayed by the subordinate clause of Standard German clefts. A further clue for considering cleft sentences as free relative clauses is that an equivalent with a *wh*- pronoun exists, while there is no possible substitution of *d*- with *welch*-. Nevertheless, at first glance, there seems to be an asymmetry between *d*- free relative clauses and the subordinate clause of clefts: while the former cannot appear after the *rechte Satzklammer*, the latter have to appear also after the past participle if the copula is in a compound tense. This is only an apparent mismatch: *d*- relatives cannot be extraposed, but a clear distinction between extraposition and right-dislocation has to be made. As evidenced by syntactic, prosodic and pragmatic data analyzed on the basis

of Truckenbrodt (2013)'s diagnostic tests, the subordinate clause of clefts is right-dislocated rather than extraposed. Having a ban on extraposition, does not necessarily imply that there is a ban on right-dislocation as well.

The account for the clefts of German colloquial varieties introduced by *dass* is obviously not the same: nothing changes if the strategy applied for Structural Cases is taken into consideration: they have to use the Standard strategy. Something different happens with Inherent Cases and PPs, which are clefted by means of the declarative complementizer *dass*. The first consideration is that using *dass* implies that this structure is no more a relative clause. *Dass* can in no way serve as a relativizer and no doubt can arise in this respect. This, together with the fact that a bigger number of constituents can be clefted, signals that the construction has grammaticalized. The reasons why the introducer of cleft sentences changes with respect to the Standard are diverse and the shifting towards this strategy follows a specific direction. A good reason to abandon the standard strategy starting a new pattern from PPs, is that this enables to cleft not just a bare DP, as happens in the standard, but to cleft entire PPs. No more confusion can arise between a presentational and a cleft sentence, because the relation is clearly disambiguated. A second reason why this new strategy with a declarative complementizer is applied is that using a *d-* pronoun involves forming a relative clause and to relativize a very marked case, which is computationally complex. Using the *dass* strategy enables to easily extract a constituent from the subordinate clause - which does not constitute a strong island - and move it to the matrix clause. Moreover, using a declarative complementizer enables to cleft also items such as manner adverbs which could not be clefted if a relative pronoun were the only possibility to form a cleft sentence. These are the main factors which contribute the shifting to another strategy. For this strategy to be successfully applied however, a strict morphological requirement has to be satisfied: all focused constituents have to display clear morphological marking, which makes them easily interpretable as bearing a specific case. The presence of a morphological filter is corroborated by instances of datives which can be clefted under the *dass* strategy only provided they have overt case markers, proper nouns with no articles cannot for instance undergo this pattern.

German has the advantage to show synchronically that not all cleft sentences can be treated homogeneously, because they mirror different levels of grammaticalization: grammaticalizing a construction entails that it evolves in the direction of becoming progressively lighter to compute and unambiguous. German evidences that even in the

same language clefts can be construed differently because they give rise to two diverse structures albeit serving the same purposes. A diversity in the syntactic structure however, never leads, at least for German, to the formation of a single clause, as has been proposed for instance for French (Munaro & Pollock, 2005). In general, alternative approaches, which refuse the analysis in terms of relative clauses and propose that clefts are nothing else than focusing devices are not free of problems. Although in body of the text the label “focused constituent” has been used, it is noteworthy that the focus status of the clefted constituent is problematic. The account in terms of Focus is not convincingly explicative, since it does not predict why certain types of constituents such as negative quantifiers can be focalized but cannot be clefted. Cinque (2003) has highlighted some further differences in this respect by comparing focalization and clefting in Italian:

- (332) a. *Era bella che sembrava
 was beautiful that seemed_{3rd SING}
 b. BELLA sembrava
 beautiful seemed_{3rd SING}
 “She seemed beautiful”
- (333) a. *E’ completamente che l’ ha rovinato
 Is completely that him_{ACC} has damaged
 COMPLETAMENTE l’ ha rovinato
 completely him_{ACC} has damaged
 “He damaged it completely”

Once the syntactic behavior of German cleft sentences has been described and provided that mono-clausal approaches are inadequate in that they do not account for the above mentioned asymmetries and for the self-evident fact that there are two distinct verbs and that one of the clauses is introduced by a pronoun/complementizer, we now have to propose a formal account, namely syntactic trees which mirror the syntactic and semantic relations holding between the different items inserted within cleft constructions.

8.2 A formal representation: syntactic trees

The syntactic trees that I will propose have the following characteristics⁷³:

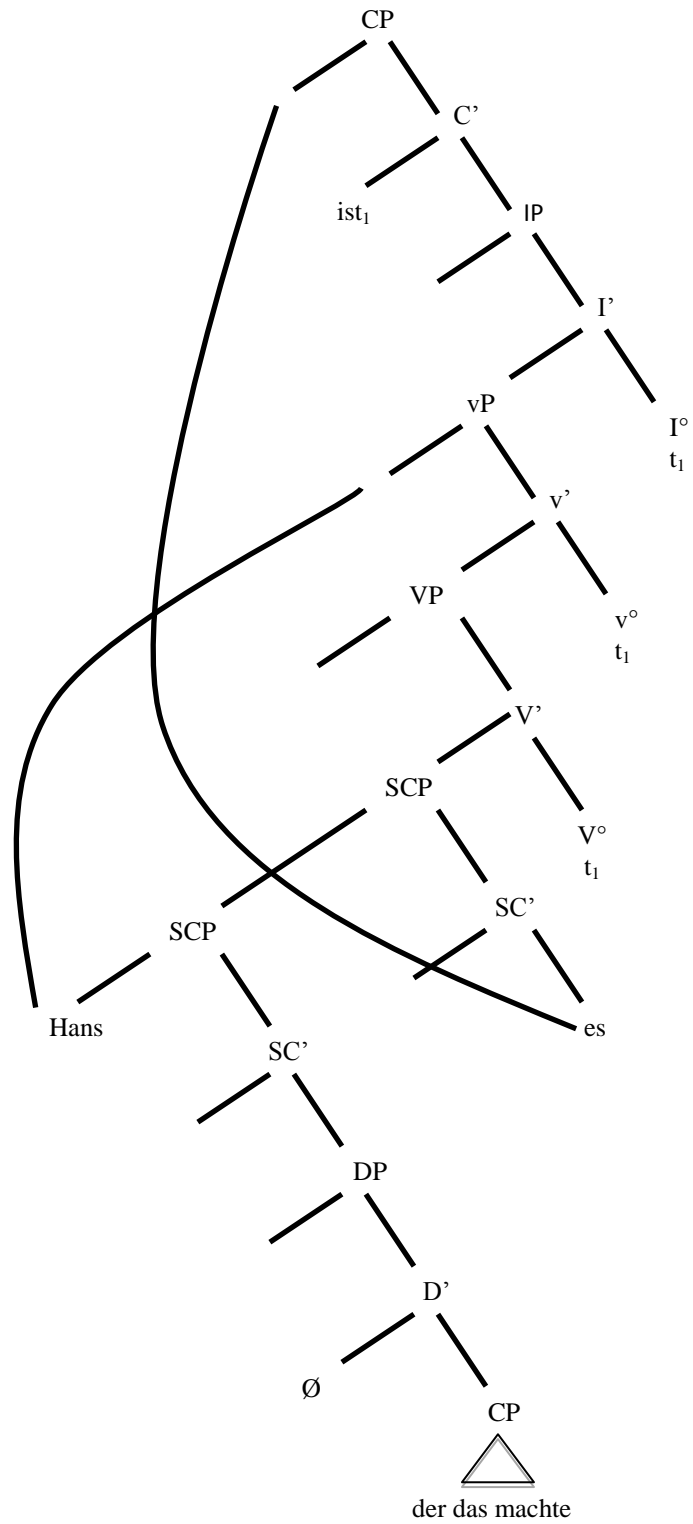
a. **Standard** (e.g. *Es ist Hans, der das machte*):

We can think of a structure in which the main copular sentence hosts a small clause, containing the weak pronoun *es* and the focus respectively. The copula, still maintaining its lexical value, is generated in VP and then moves, with successive steps, until it reaches its landing site in CP. *Es* is a predicate, and in the unmarked form, it is extracted from the small clause and moves to a Specifier position within CP. The clefted item moves from its generation site to land in the Low Focus position within vP. The fact that it does not occupy the high left periphery is evidenced by the fact that it always follows focus markers such as *ja*, *doch*, *nochmal*, which are in the IP field. If the reverse order is displayed, the clefted constituent moves from the small clause and at the end of the derivation occupies a Specifier position in CP. *Es*, which is therefore post-copular, is hosted in the Wackernagel position, as demonstrated by the fact that it can cliticize onto the verb. The subordinate clause has the structure of a free relative clause of the *d*-type, headed by a silent antecedent, which holds a small-clause like relation with the subject

⁷³ The trees are necessarily a simplified version, which does not consider all the projections which are not strictly relevant for the derivation.

Tree 1

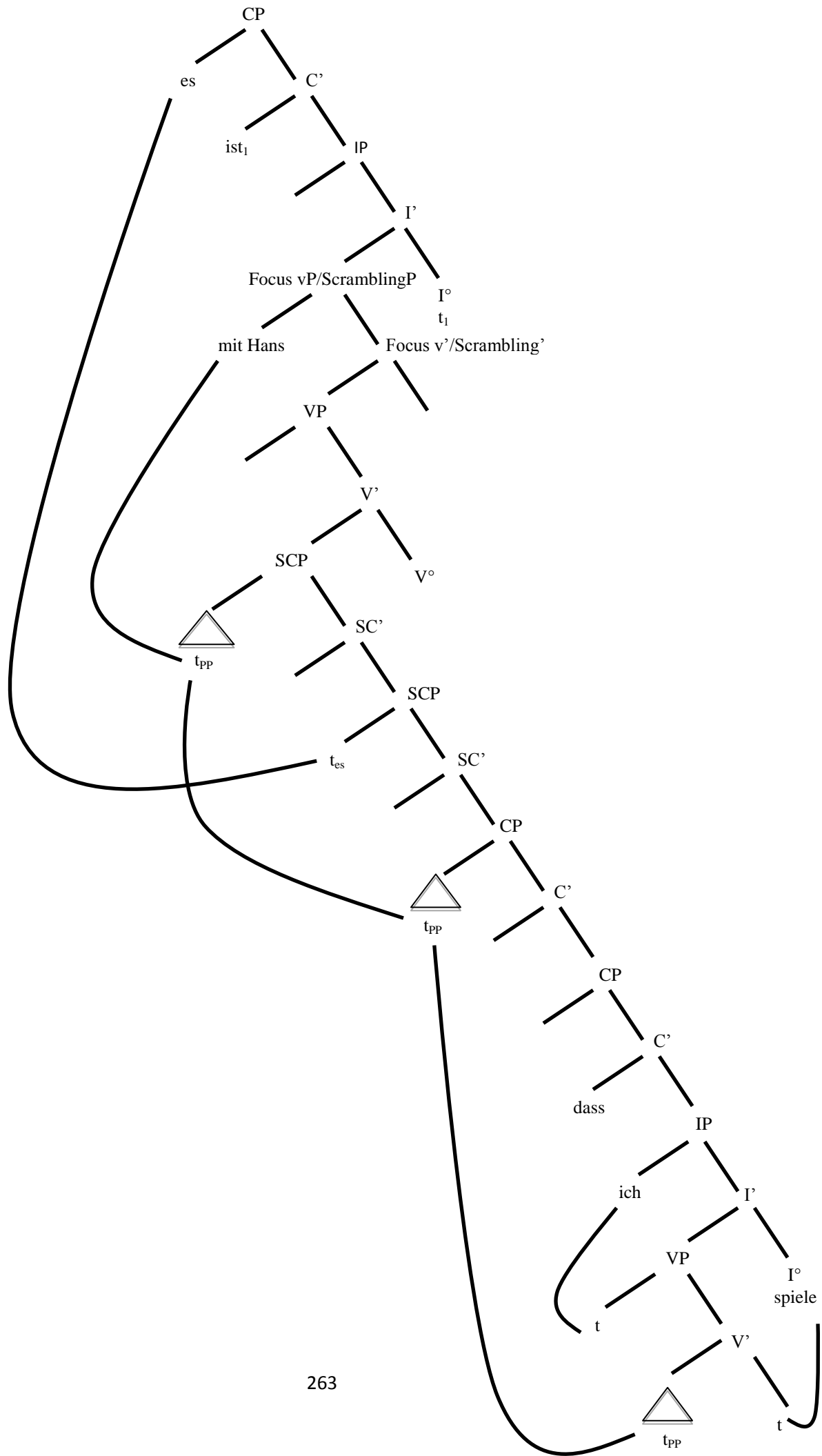
Es ist Hans, der das machte



b. Colloquial varieties (e.g. *Es ist mit Hans, dass ich spiele*):

Differently from the standard, the copula does not hold its full semantic value and does not assign Nominative case: it could therefore be generated directly in IP. The main copular clause contains a small clause, whose predicate is formed by another small clause, having *es* as its subject and the whole CP introduced by *dass*, as its predicate. This double small clause effectively catches the complex nature of *es* in Colloquial varieties, which is simultaneously the predicate of a small which has the focused constituent as its subject, but is simultaneously the subject of the predication carried out by the subordinate clause. As is evident from the morphological form, of the focused constituent, differently from the Standard, it is not base generated as the subject of a small clause, but it is generated within the subordinate clause (in the form of a declarative clause) with the embedded verb selecting for it. Declarative clauses are not strong islands, and this makes extraction easier. Nevertheless, since CP is a phase, the clefted item has first to be moved to an upper Specifier of CP, which serves as an escape hatch so that the phrase can escape CP, be extracted, reach its subject position in the first small clause and be then further moved to the FocusvP/ Scrambling position within the main clause. As I recalled in the section devoted to small clauses, I do not assume that they are phases and therefore extraction can take place, with no need for other syntactic operations. On the basis of the reciprocal orders of the focused constituent and modal particles or IP adverbials, I assume that the landing site of the clefted constituent is the low left periphery. The label FocusvP, does not refer to any specific position, but it rather refers to the position usually exploited for scrambling.

In the next page, tree 2 is proposed.



FINAL REMARKS

One of the main aims of the present dissertation is investigating German free relative clauses and clefts and explaining whether the two constructions are related. It seems in fact, that the German A-bar movement structures which have more features in common are free relative clauses and clefts. Careful research has shown that they are actually parallel phenomena and that cleft sentences involve a diachronic pattern of development in the languages, which German displays synchronically. I have proposed that standard German clefts are free relative clauses of the *d*- type, which is semantically and syntactically different from *wh*- free relatives. This difference resides in the respective nature of the silent heads. I have proved that not all cleft sentences are actually relative clauses, but there is a tendency to progressive grammaticalization, which corresponds to a gradual derelativization of the structures. This has been demonstrated on the basis of German data, which clearly evidence that in the Standard, clefts are free relatives, while in colloquial varieties, they are clearly embedded declarative clauses, as is made clear by the use of the declarative complementizer *dass*, which can in no way be ambiguous with a relative. Cross-linguistic data show that a similar pattern of development has taken place for Romance languages as well. While in Latin cleft sentences were clearly relatives, in Romance languages the construction has grammaticalized and is no more relative. In most cases in fact, complementizers whose status is ambiguous between a relative and a declarative are used. The passage from a relative structure to a non-relative form corresponds also to an increased frequency of use of clefts.

Standard German, for instance, which employs a *d*- free relative to introduce clefts, use them very scarcely. A series of factors could contribute in the limited use of this construction: (i) the possibility for German to easily focus or front some constituents to create markedness; (ii) the fact that German is a V2 language (Den Besten, 1983; (iii) the presence of modal particles and pronominal adverbs which can confer pragmatic nuances and model the syntax. None of these accounts is satisfactory: there are V2 languages such as Norwegian (Gundel, 2006) which abundantly use clefts, although they can easily front; modal particles and clefts are not mutually exclusive, on the contrary, their presence even improves the acceptability of some clefts. The core factor which diminishes the use of clefts in German is probably the type of information

structure that German adopts and which is realized syntactically as scrambling at the vP edge. This is proved by the fact that the contexts which are more easily clefted are interrogative clauses and subjects, thus environments in which the possibility to model the structure of information and create markedness is reduced. Treating cleft sentences naturally implies that all its syntactic components are accounted for. I analyzed the main clause of clefts (the copular construction) along the lines of Moro (1997). I proposed that the copular clause of clefts gives rise to a small clause headed by the copula. Reverse orders are to be explained transformationally and are all derived by a basic structure in which there is a precise order of generation in the two terms of the copular construction. Differently from Moro (1997, 2000), however, I preferred to exploit his earlier proposal (Moro, 1988) and to strictly adhere to Kayne (1994)'s Antisymmetry. I postulated that the relation between the subject and the predicate is mediated by a silent head, which could be prospectively thought of as an identificational head. This point however is not crucial for my analysis. Following Moro (1997) I proposed that *es* is the predicate of the copular construction, as the application of traditional tests clearly confirm also for German. It is neither fully argumental, nor an expletive, since it can never be dropped (Tomaselli, 1986). The subject position within the small clause is occupied by the clefted constituent. All these points and this general skeleton is shared both by standard German and colloquial varieties. Many asymmetries however arise, when other aspects of the construction are considered, first all the copula: while in the Standard it seems to have maintained its lexical features and, as in all specificational copular sentences, it agrees with the second term of the copular construction, in colloquial varieties the pattern is not that clear. Although agreement is preferably carried out with the second term (provided that it is a Nominative), agreement with *es* is possible as well, and the copula seems to have lost part of its lexical properties and to function merely as a linker (Den Dikken, 2006). The most striking differences however, concern the possible cleftable constituents with evident consequences also on the nature of the subordinate clause which is employed. In the Standard only Nominative DPs can be clefted, and appear both in pre- and post-copular position, while in colloquial varieties Dative objects with a clear morphological marking and PPs can be felicitously clefted. The consequences for this are that in the Standard, regardless of the function the clefted constituent would have if it were in the subordinate clause, it cannot bear a Case other than the Nominative. The requirements of the embedded verb (basically case) have to be displayed by the pronoun which introduces the subordinate clause. This

pronoun belongs to the *d*- series as the introducer of headed relative clauses. This is the reason why clefts are generally assumed to be headed relative clauses as well. However I have provided evidence that the subordinate clause of clefts does not behave as a headed relative: (i) the pronoun *welch*- cannot be used, (ii) “extraction” is compulsory, (iii) deictic forms such as *ich* or *du* can never be repeated within the subordinate clause of clefts, while they have to in headed relatives; (iv) since deictics cannot appear in the subordinate clause of clefts, the agreement pattern is regularly 3rd person, as if no deictic were relativized; (v) there is no suitable antecedent for the relative clause, since there is neither additional information which could be provided in appositives nor restriction of the reference; (vi) the semantics is also different. All these drawbacks to the headed relative clause hypothesis together with a very specific semantics of clefts led me to think of another type of analysis which has to combine (i) the necessity to account for the morphological form of the subordinate clause introducer, and (ii) the semantic interpretation of clefts, which is specific and exhaustive. All these requirements (both syntactic and semantic) are met by *d*- free relative clauses. I postulated that the subject of standard German clefts is in a small clause with the silent head which governs the free relative clause. This accounts also for the lack of an overtly realized suitable antecedent.

The situation in colloquial varieties is different. Since also PPs and oblique objects can be clefted and appear in the matrix clause under this form, the subordinate clause introducer cannot be a pronoun, otherwise it would violate the principles on the unicity of Case and Thematic Role. All this information is, in fact, contained in the *wh*- item. Interestingly, the complementizer which is used in German as an introducer is *dass*. The standard language, as well as colloquial and dialectal varieties show that *dass* can only serve as a declarative complementizer and is never employed as a relative. I capitalized on this and I have therefore stated that colloquial clefts are not relative clauses, but rather normal embedded declaratives. This triggers syntactic consequences also for languages other than German, which normally introduce clefts with a complementizer (e.g. Italian and English). As in these languages the relative complementizer has the same form as a declarative, it has always been taken for granted that it was actually a relative element and this datum was even exploited as a proof for the restrictive relative clause nature of clefts (Reeve, 2010, 2011 a.o). The perspective from which these phenomena are observed could now be reversed on the basis of German data: the complementizer in an ambiguous morphological form should not be used as a starting

point for formal claims, but it should rather be investigated on the basis of independent tests.

I have also wondered why colloquial varieties are developing a strategy other than the Standard and I examined the contexts in which the standard strategy can be replaced. Significantly, the cases which more easily allow for the *dass*-strategy are PPs, then Dative objects provided that their morphological marker is distinctive. I noticed that this strategy apparently follows the opposite direction with respect to Case Hierarchy (Keenan & Comrie, 1977). Noticeably, relativization and clefting by means of *dass* are specular. The more difficult relativization is (also cognitively), the more probable it is that the *dass* strategy is used. Since *dass* is merely a connector between the two clauses forming a cleft construction, clefted items have to bear sufficiently clear morpho-syntactic information to be displaced from their original position within the subordinate clause and be shifted into the main clause. Morphology is crucial in this respect: this is demonstrated by dative objects, which can only be moved provided that they are clearly interpretable as datives. I also drew an implicational scale for clefts, which respects this specular relationship with relativization: if datives can be clefted by means of *dass*, PPs surely can, as well. Notice that Structural Cases can never be clefted with *dass* because their interpretation is strictly related to their position and the standard strategy has to be applied.

The asymmetry holding between the Standard and colloquial use, can be detected also in their structure. For the Standard, I have proposed that the clefted constituent and the free relative clause are in a small clause; in colloquial varieties instead, I hypothesized that the structure is articulated differently. Since in colloquial varieties the subordinate clause is not a relative, but rather a declarative, the small clause is formed by *es* and the *dass*-clause. This effectively accounts for the differences between relativizing and clefting.

Being the cleft clause of standard German a free relative, both cleft sentences and free relatives with a lexical matrix verb share the characteristic that they are constructions involving wh- movement and a silent head. Colloquial clefts do not display any silent head because they are not relative clauses, but something different.

The investigation of German clefts is particularly interesting in that it reveals synchronically two different strategies which languages have at their disposal: either complementation or relativization by means of a pronoun. Both strategies are used in the languages of the world and the more cleft sentences are grammaticalized, the more

the construction tends to simplification and therefore to a complementizer strategy. Rethinking clefting on this light could bring interesting results also for a diachronic perspective.

Although they have been thoroughly investigated in the literature some questions still remain open for free relatives. The fact that they are employed in clefts, in which an identification between two terms takes place, could shed some new light also to better understand the internal structure of free relatives.

It has then been shown, starting from German empirical data, that not all free relative clauses are alike and that the syntactic and semantic differences holding between German *wh*- and *d*- free relatives depend on the nature of the silent head. This, together with the puzzling issue of matching between the null head and the *wh*-item, are the core aspects I tried to provide an account for. First of all, on the basis of cross-linguistic empirical data, I corroborated the idea that postulating a silent head effectively explains variation. There is in fact, nothing stipulative in assuming the existence of covert elements in the syntax: null operators of yes-no questions, *pro* in null subject languages are only two possible examples of the fact that it is not an *ad hoc* proposal for free relatives. Besides, Latin uses the pronominal series of relative clauses and not that of interrogatives; this would not be easily accountable if we did not assume that they actually relativize a head that we do not see. Other clues come from the asymmetry with respect to the syntactic behavior of CPs. Evidence for this comes both from Italian and German. Italian cannot form free relative clauses with inanimate reference, while indirect questions can certainly be construed on an inanimate DP. Furthermore, Italian indirect questions have no constraints concerning matching, whereas free relative clauses are very rigidly regulated. Some more clues come from the position of the *wh*-interrogative and the *wh*- relative item with respect to left dislocation. While the relative is high in the CP field and is on the left of left dislocation, *wh*- interrogatives are always on its right (Benincà & Poletto, 2004). German shows that free relatives are not CPs because, as convincingly shown by Bayer & Bader & Meng (2001), CPs, can never serve as dative arguments of verbs, while free relatives can. Once it has been shown that the silent head exists, I tried to detect its nature. Useful diagnostic tests were provided by quantification in the languages. In particular, being quantifiers very high in the DP layer (Giusti, 1990), they open the way to the entire DP. I have demonstrated on the basis of Italian, but also of French forms, that generic universal quantifiers such as *tutto*, cannot be directly relativized, but need to have an overt head, which is usually *quello* or

ciò, which are deictic classificatory elements. Substandard Italian extends this pattern also to *wh-* of the kind of *dove* or *come*, which can be preceded by generic heads such as *il posto/luogo*, or *il modo*. This indicates that the generic head determines the category of the free relative clause and determines its semantics. This diagnosis has been fruitful also for German, which does not display this pattern with respect to quantification, as the *wh-* immediately follows the quantifier.

Matching phenomena have been analyzed, as well. Provided it is a very puzzling issue, I showed that they are differently ruled in the various languages, which employ different strategies. These are often dependent on Case morphology, although this is not the only factor. Starting from the verified assumption, that there is actually a silent head in free relatives, I considered the interactions between the case assigned to the null head and the case of the *wh-*. Differently from languages such as Greek or Gothic, in German the *wh-* always has to display the case required by the embedded verb which selects for it. This requirement can never be violated. Case Hierarchy (Keenan & Comrie, 1977) plays a decisive role in determining the acceptability or unacceptability of a given sentence. Mismatches are potentially allowed only if the *wh-* is more marked than the silent head with respect to Case. In other words, if we were to rephrase it in nanosyntactic terms (Caha, 2009), this would imply that heads can remain silent only provided that the case displayed by the *wh-* is richer in features than the case of the null head. Unmarked cases are contained in more marked cases. Cases such as the Dative contain all the features of Nominative and Accusative and simply add some more. Respecting Case Hierarchy however, does not ensure that the output is grammatical, as many other factors intervene. In non-matching contexts, provided that Case Hierarchy is respected, only silent heads in Structural Cases guarantee that the resulting sentence is grammatical. Combinations of dative silent heads and prepositional *wh-*, which should in theory be tolerated in the light of Case Hierarchy, are often perceived as extremely odd. Even though I tried to provide a refinement of current descriptions of these phenomena, I concentrated on a field, which is still unexplored for German free relatives, namely I investigated possible means to restore the grammaticality of the sentences. I called them “rescuing devices”; i.e. circumvention strategies, which enable to form a free relative clause also in contexts in which it would be ruled out by language internal constraints. This issue emerged from the various proposals of reformulation that I received from informants who were provided with ungrammatical free relative clauses and were asked to express a grammaticality judgment. What surfaced was the possibility to left

dislocate the free relative clause, with the *wh*- meeting the requirements of the embedded verb, and the resumptive pronoun always in form of a weak *d*- pronoun which respects and overtly realizes all the requirements of the main verb. I checked whether the employment of this strategy leads to pragmatic effects and whether it is compatible also with a generic interpretation, which could, in theory, be blocked, by the presence of a resuming pronoun, which is deictic in nature. Neither of the two claims has been confirmed by speakers: there is no pragmatic effect (since there is no syntactic unmarked alternative) and resumption is felicitous also with a generic reading imposed by the presence of expressions such as *auch immer*. I examined the potential reasons why left dislocation manages to rescue the grammaticality of sentences which would be, otherwise, unacceptable. Two factors play a role: (i) the external position of the free relative clause, which is external to the sentence, in an A-bar position (an ungoverned position, if were to label it with old terminology); (ii) the presence of a resuming pronoun, which serves as a substitution for the lack of an overt head. Neither of the two aspects would suffice alone to restore the grammaticality of the sentence. Left dislocation definitely reduces the perception of crash between the requirements of the matrix and the actual form of the free relative, and resumption concretely realizes the features which the verb selects for to be correctly interpreted. Additionally, left dislocation instantiates a form of syntactic doubling, which renders the syntactic derivations easier and more economic (Poletto, 2006), in that the syntactic operations are split in simpler components, each of them carrying out a precise function. I proposed to locate the resuming pronoun in a *Wackernagel position* (Tomaselli & Poletto, 1995), within the CP field, as it is always the second clausal constituent, it has a fix position, it is unstressed and tends to cliticize onto the finite verb.

All these ruling mechanisms, which I have outlined for German, are valid both for “canonical” *wh*- free relatives and for *d*- free relatives. This latter type is often disregarded in the literature, it is definitely less used than *wh*- relatives, but it is particularly interesting because it displays peculiar semantic and syntactic characteristics, which deserve autonomous investigation. The data show that *wh*- relatives and *d*- relatives are not in free variation, or, precisely, the *wh*- can always substitute *d*- while the reverse is not true. As the introducer itself signals, *d*- pronouns have a strong deictic component, which makes them usable only in contexts in which the interpretation is specific and exhaustive. The generic reading is ruled out and they preferably appear either at the beginning of the sentence or in *Mittelfeld*, an unmarked

reading in *Nachfeld* position being excluded in these cases. Reflexes of these semantic nuances, which differentiate wh- and *d*- relatives, must also affect the syntax, although it is superficially identical. I claimed that these differences are syntactically mirrored by a different set of features composing the silent head of wh- relatives and *d*- relatives. While for the former, the head is a classifying element, for *d*- free relatives the head contains an additional feature, namely specificity, which is then transmitted to the relative pronoun. It still remains unclear why free *d*- relatives cannot appear in *Nachfeld* position, in their unmarked reading, while all other relatives can. This could be due to the necessity for the specificity feature contained in the null head to be licensed in the structure by means of additional requirements, which cannot be contained in *Nachfeld*. This point surely needs further investigation and is strictly connected with a requirement that I have observed for pseudoclefts: the obligatory precopular position of free relatives regardless of the fact they are introduced by a *d*- or a wh- pronoun. Unfortunately, for reasons of time I did not investigate pseudoclefts extensively in this thesis; some descriptive considerations are provided in the *Appendix*. They are certainly worth being taken into account for future research, since they seem to stand in an intermediate position between free relatives and clefts. I noticed that pseudoclefts can be formed with both introducers of free relatives (also *d*- pronouns). This contradicts the hypothesis (Den Dikken, 2006) according to which some pseudoclefts involve an interrogative clause, hence a CP, rather than a free relative clause (a DP). I also observed that, when a rescuing strategy is applied for the free relative clause of pseudoclefts, the resuming pronoun always has the form *das* regardless on the gender and animacy of the relative clause introducer. Since *das* can also be used as the subject of clefts instead of *es*, there is probably a connection between these two forms. Nevertheless, what this connection is, still remains mysterious and investigating it could bring considerable contribution to the theoretical research on the topic and also help to further refine our knowledge of clefting and relativizing.

APPENDIX

Pseudocleft sentences in German

1. Proviso

Pseudocleft sentences are surely a construction which needs in-depth investigation and which deserves to be treated separately. Pseudoclefts are also prospectively very interesting from a theoretical point of view in that they pose challenging questions, which have not received an adequate treatment, yet. For reasons of time however, I did not have the possibility to study this construction as is worth doing, and I hope I will manage to do it possibly in post-doctoral research. The interest of doing it is that pseudoclefts are probably the step in between the two closely related constructions I took into account in the present work. For the moment, I will only sketch some of the main characteristics of this construction, which I only collected at a descriptive level. Data collection, however, should be definitely widened, so as to continue the work on a robust empirical basis. At the end of this section I will also provide a tentative tree syntactic representation, provided that it will surely need to be developed and modified according to the results of new research.

2. Previous accounts

In the following paragraphs, I will only provide a descriptive account for pseudo-cleft sentences. I will not really commit myself in providing my own account for pseudoclefts, whose nature is still widely disputed and they are certainly not the core of the present dissertation. Nevertheless, it will be showed from now, on the basis of German data, that some leading proposals concerning this construction are disclaimed by German linguistic facts.

Even if the superficial form of this kind of clauses is very similar to free relatives clauses with the matrix clauses containing a lexical verb, at a closer look, they display some peculiarities which make them the linking element between free relative clauses and clefts.

For the moment, before clarifying the characteristics of this construction in German, I will provide the definition for pseudoclefts given by Iatridou & Varlokosta (1998):

“A pseudocleft construction is an ordinary copular sentence with a free relative clause in one of the copular positions and a phrase in the other copular position”

There is a variable, the *wh*- clause, which in German can also be introduced by a *d*- pronoun; and a constituent specifying the value for the variable. Den Dikken (2006) distinguishes at least two types of pseudoclefts, which he labels “Type A” and “Type B”.

Type A: Basic pseudoclefts: *Wh*- clause¹ – *be* – *XP*

(1) What I ate was a piece of cake

Type B: Inverted pseudoclefts: *DP* - *be* – *Wh*-clause

(2) A piece of cake was what I ate

The fact that in “Type A” the so-called *wh*- clause is proleptic is relevant in that prolepsis offers further syntactic possibilities if compared with post-matrix clauses. This is signaled also by the fact that the second term of the copular sentence is an *XP* and does not need to be a *DP*. Some scholars (Ross, 1972; Den Dikken, 2000, 2006; a.o.) have argued that these asymmetries can be accounted for if a different status for the two *wh*- clauses is proposed. Specifically, the *wh*- clause of pseudoclefts is claimed to be actually a *wh*- question (*contra* Akmajian, 1970; Declerck, 1988). This is purportedly the reason why the *wh*- can be governed by a preposition: it is a *CP* instead of a free relative clause. This is however not sufficient to prove the *CP* status of this *wh*- clauses, as also free relative clauses can be headed by prepositions as has been shown for German. Type B pseudoclefts instead are quite unanimously described as formed by a free relative clause and a copular clause.

¹ I use Den Dikken’s labels, even though I will then clarify that they are not to be blindly adopted for German

3. German pseudoclefts: a description

Interestingly, German pseudoclefts can be construed both by means of a *d*-relative and by means of an ordinary *wh*- free relative.

Differently from “ordinary” free relatives, however, informants tend to reject all pseudoclefts in which the free relative is not posited in front of the matrix clause. As has been described for free relatives, prolepsis offers further syntactic possibilities, which are normally excluded for other positions:

- (3) a. *Martin ist, wer das sagte
Martin is who this said_{3rd PERS SING}
- b. Wer das sagte, war Martin
who_{NOM} this said_{3rd PERS SING} was Martin
“Who said it was Martin”

A first asymmetry with “normal” free relatives is therefore that in pseudoclefts, the subordinate clause is only pre-copular. The privileged case is, as predictable, the case in which both *wh*- and silent head are in the Nominative. Even if it is in a pre-copular position, if the *wh*- bears Accusative Case, informants tend to reject the sentence:

- (4) */?Wen ich gestern getroffen habe, war dein Bruder
Who_{ACC} I yesterday met have_{1st PERS SING} was your brother
“Who I met yesterday was your brother”

Sentences in which the pre-copular free relative clause is introduced by a *wh*- in the Dative or headed by a *P* are always ungrammatical:

- (5) *Wem du immer geholfen hast, war die Tochter von Jan
Who_{DAT} you always helped have_{2nd PERS SING} was the daughter of Jan
“Who you always helped was Jan’s daughter”
- (6) *Mit wem der Lehrer gesprochen hat sind die besten Schüler
With whom_{DAT} the teacher spoken has are_{DAT} the best students
“Who the teacher has always spoken with are the best students”

It seems therefore that the contexts of use for pseudoclefts are very restricted. Notice, however that these restrictions only concern the internal syntax. *D*- free relatives for instance, are well-tolerated provided that both the requirements on specificity and exhaustiveness are respected. In addition to these limitations, also the general constraints on prolepsis clearly apply.

- (7) Der immer nett zu mir ist, ist Andreas
 Who_{NOM MASC SING} always kind to me is is Andreas
 “Who is always kind to me is Andreas”
- (8) *Den eine reiche alte Frau heiraten wird, ist oft ein
 Whom_{ACC MASC SING} a rich old woman to-marry will is often a
 Junger
 young
 “Whom a rich old woman wants to marry is often a young boy”

The fact that *d*- free relatives are felicitous in pseudoclefts enables us to reconsider the assumptions according to which in Type A pseudoclefts, the subordinate clause is actually an indirect question rather than a free relative. If it were so, *d*-pronouns should be incompatible with this construction.

German data instead show that Type A and Type B pseudoclefts can be obtained transformationally and are both formed by free relative clauses.

We can now wonder whether pseudoclefts always require strict case matching or whether there is any escaping device along the lines of free relative clauses. This circumvention strategy does exist and is obtained by means of left dislocation. We have already seen how left dislocation as a rescuing device for non-matching free relative clauses works. We will just recall the main points of it. For the derivation to be successful:

- (i) The free relative clause has to be left dislocated, this means placed in a high Specifier position in the left periphery.
- (ii) The left dislocated DP has to be resumed by a weak unstressed pronoun of the type of *der*, which is inflected for gender, number and Case and coindexed with the *wh*- to which it refers.

It is noticeable that only the first of these two points holds completely for pseudoclefts, while the second needs to be amended, since the resumptive pronoun always has to appear in the form of *das*, regardless of the gender and the animacy of the wh-. Notice that the use of a gendered pronoun, if the sentence is meant to be a pseudocleft is completely excluded. Here are some examples:

- (9) Wen ich gestern getroffen habe, das/ *der war
 Who_{ACC} I yesterday met have_{1st PERS SING} this_{NOM NEUT/MASC} was
 dein Bruder
 your_{NOM} brother
 “Who I met yesterday was your brother”
- (10) Wen sie gestern zum Kino eingeladen hat, das/ *der
 Who_{ACC} she yesterday to-the cinema invited has this_{NOM NEUT/MASC}
 war dein Mann
 was your_{NOM} husband
 “Who she invited to the cinema yesterday was your husband”
- (11) Wer sich schlecht verhalten hat, *der/ *die/das war
 Who_{NOM} herself bad behaved has this_{NOM MASC//FEM/NEUT} was
 Pauls Schwester
 Paul’s sister_{NOM}
 “Who didn’t behave correctly was Paul’s sister”
- (12) Mit wem ich gestern aus war, *der/ das war Hans
 With whom_{DAT} I yesterday out was this_{NOM MASC/NEUT} was Hans
 “Who I was out with last night was Hans”
- (13) Wem du immer hilfst, das bin ich
 Whom_{DAT} you always help_{2nd PERS SING} this_{NOM NEUT} is I
 “Who you always help is me”

Normally, in pseudoclefts the wh- clause is in an unmarked pre-copular position if there is matching, i.e. the wh- is in the Nominative and can optionally be moved upper in the structure to a Left Dislocation position and be then resumed by a weak pronoun. If there is no matching left dislocation is basically compulsory, if we exclude the marginal acceptability of the Accusative.

- (14) a. *Es war dein Bruder, mit wem ich gestern ausgegangen
 It was your_{NOM} brother with whom_{DAT} I yesterday out-gone
 bin
 am
- b. *Dein Bruder war (es), mit wem ich gestern ausgegangen bin
 Your_{NOM} brother was it with whom I yesterday out-gone am
 “Who I went out with yesterday, was your brother”

Provided that the free relative is left dislocated and then resumed, the *wh-* can bear any case. It is quite intriguing to investigate why resumption can only be performed by *das* and not by a concorded pronoun, even in *d-* free relatives in which the morphological information about gender, number and case is supplied.

- (15) Der hier kommt, (das) ist Mario
 Who_{NOM MASC SING} here comes this_{NOM NEUT} is Mario
 “Who comes here is Mario”
- (16) Die da kommen, (das) sind meine
 Who_{NOM PL} here come_{3rd PERS PL} this_{NOM NEUT} are_{3rd PERS PL} my_{NOM PL}
 Schulkameraden
 school-mates
 “Who come here are my school-mates”
- (17) Dem du hier die Hand gegeben hast, *(das) ist
 Who you here the hand given have_{2nd PERS SING} this_{NOM NEUT} is
 der Bürgermeister von Meran
 the mayor of Meran
 “Who you gave your hand here is the mayor of Meran”

On the light of the fact that no form of concordance between the relativizer and the resuming pronoun takes place, we are led to think that *das* is not really the resumptive for the relativizer, but it rather equates the two terms of the copular sentence. Recall that in German the pronoun *das*, when it is inserted in a copular construction or serves as a demonstrative, can also appear together with a copula inflected in the plural:

- (18) Das sind meine Freunde
 This are_{3rd PERS PL} my friends
 “These are my friends”

Notice that the special nature of *das* used as a demonstrative makes it the best candidate to serve as the second term of a copular construction in which one of the terms has been left dislocated, therefore shifted from its unmarked, canonical position to its ultimate higher position.

Some spontaneous data offered by informants when required to judge the acceptability of some pseudoclefts provided as stimulus are worth analyzing. Given the sentence in (19), basically all speakers judged it as impossible, or at least extremely marginal. Some of them rephrased it as (20).

- (19) Dein Kollege ist, mit wem ich gestern ausgegangen bin
 Your colleague is with whom I yesterday out-gone am
 “Your colleague is the person who I went out with”
- (20) Es ist dein Kollege, mit dem ich ausgegangen bin
 It is your colleague with whom I out-gone am
 “It’s your colleague who I went out with”

As is clear from the discussion carried out in chapter 2, (20) is a cleft sentence. The fact that speakers spontaneously rephrase a pseudocleft as a “full” cleft is noticeable. It indicates at least that there is semantic contiguity between the two types.

On this light it could be argued that there is probably also a syntactic link between these two constructions. This hypothesis is corroborated by the fact that the only possible resumptive pronoun for pseudoclefts is *das*, which can be used as alternative to *es* in clefts as well. In the past decades, it was argued that there was certainly a transformational relation between clefts and pseudoclefts, I will not commit myself in taking a position about that and I will leave it as an open question. It is anyway a question which would deserve future research.

4. Pseudoclefts: summing up

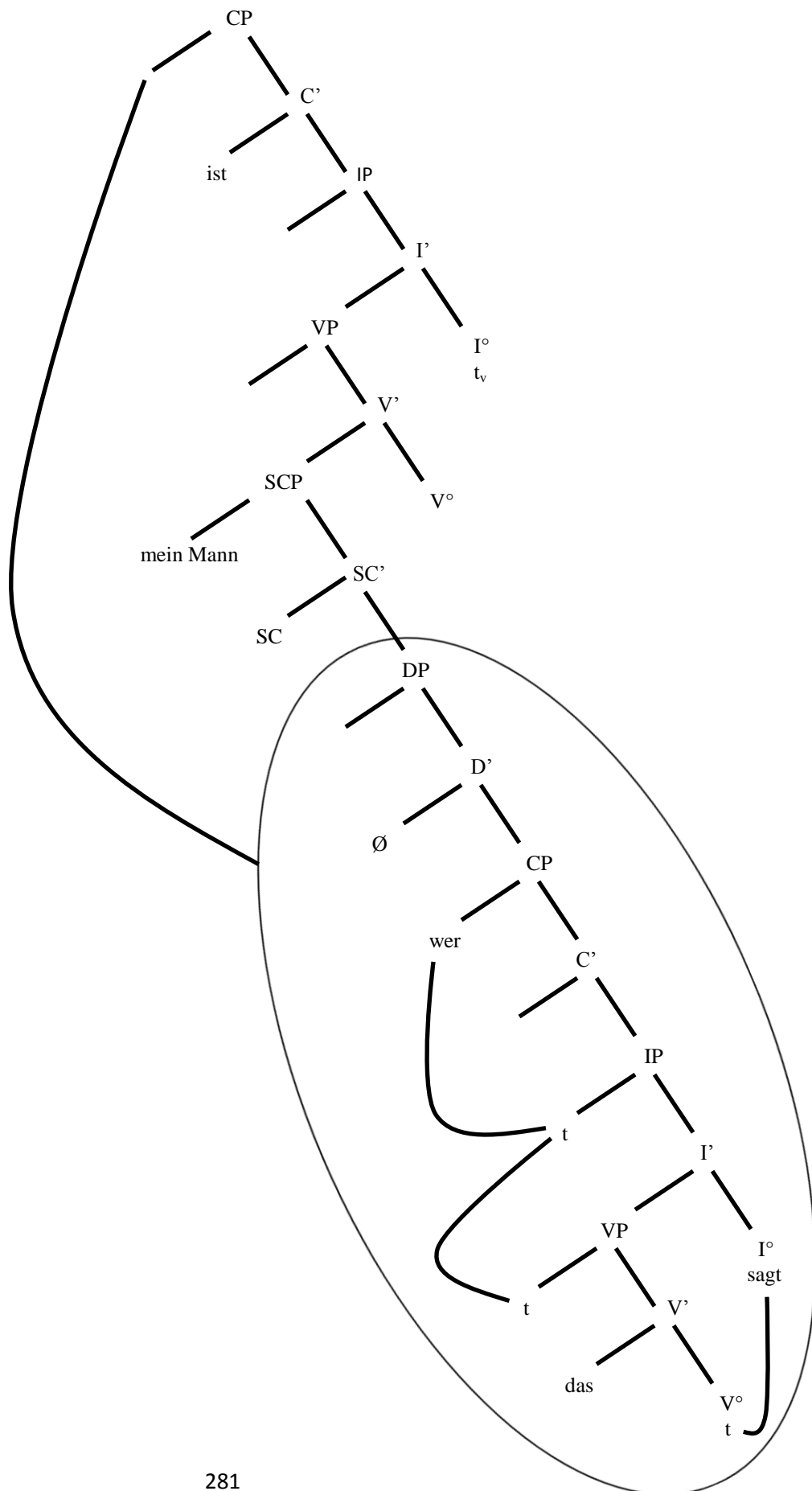
There is a special type of free relative clauses: pseudocleft sentences, i.e. sentences containing a free relative clause and a copular clause. Also in pseudoclefts the relativizer can be either the *wh*- pronoun or a *d*- pronoun. The fact that also *d*- pronouns can be employed regardless of the fact that the free relative clause is pre- or post-copular contradicts influential hypotheses according to which free relative clauses in pre-copular positions are actually indirect questions, therefore CPs rather than DPs. If they were embedded questions in fact, we would not expect *d*- pronouns to be suitable introducers, as they are never used in embedded questions. Interestingly, non-matching is allowed provided that the free relative clause is left dislocated and resumed by a pronoun. The resumptive pronoun employed in pseudo-clefts however, is not the same as in “normal” free relatives, or rather it belongs to the same pronominal series, but it is always *das*, the neuter form, regardless of the fact that the free relative has an animate or inanimate referent. The resumptive pronoun is therefore not co-indexed with the relativizer, but is instead a pro-form which constitutes the second term of the copular clause. It is noticeable that the resuming pronoun of pseudoclefts always has the form of *das*, in that it can also substitute *es* in true clefts and this cannot happen by chance.

5. Formal representation: a tentative proposal

As has been anticipated in the *proviso*, since carrying out thorough research also on clefts would have led me too far away, I only limited myself to the observation of some potentially relevant phenomena on which it could be capitalized.

As pseudoclefts involve the presence of a copular clause, I hypothesize that it has the same structure that I proposed for clefts: this means that the copula heads a small clause. In pseudoclefts however, there is no predicate of the type of *es*, but there is still a subject, which is the focalized item. The predicate is in this case the entire free relative clause, which is then extracted and moved to its final pre-copular position.

Wer das sagt, ist mein Man



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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS

NOM: Nominative

ACC: Accusative

DAT: Dative

PERS: Person

SING: Singular

PL: Plural

FEM: Feminine

MASC: Masculine

PRT: Particle

IMPERS: Impersonal

IMP: Imperative

SUBJ: Subjunctive

CLIT: Clitic

OK: Acceptable

?: Marginally acceptable

?: Extremely marginal

*: Ungrammatical

** : Severely ungrammatical

C: Complementizer

V2: Verb Second