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Cleft constructions in a contrastive perspective

Towards an operational taxonomy

1 Introduction

It is well known and accepted in the literature dealing with a wide array of typologically different languages that Cleft constructions are a family of forms that subsume three main types (for studies considering languages of several genetic families, see for instance Lambrecht 2001; Miller 2006): *Cleft sentences* (also called *IT*-clefts), *Pseudo-cleft sentences* (i.e. *WH*-clefts) and *Reverse pseudo-cleft sentences* (or reverse *WH*-clefts).¹ These forms, illustrated in (1) to (3)² on the basis of Lambrecht (2001: 467), share a set of central formal and semantic properties. They are biclausal structures (i.e., they contain two clauses, while being semantically equivalent to a monoclausal sentence: *I like champagne*) and have a specificational (also called identificational) meaning (i.e. they specify a value for a variable: *I like something* and this something is *champagne*). As far as their function

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1 As well as these three types of clefts, there are other cleft forms, for instance *Inferential clefts* (see Atayan and Wienen in this volume), *Pseudo-conditional clefts* (*if I insist it's because I think I am right*), *Presentational clefts* (It. *ho il piede che è gonfio* 'I have a swollen foot') etc. As the status of the clefts illustrated in (1) to (3) is already problematic cross-linguistically, and because the contributions offered in this volume mainly involve the clefts illustrated in (1) and (2), we will not say much on these other types of clefts here. In addition, we will only focus on clefts based on the copula *be* (or equivalent forms in other languages), as the status of syntactic structures with other verb forms is debated.

2 The examples provided in this paper will be taken either from the existing literature (maintaining, whenever there are some, the small capitals indicating the accented part of the cleft) or from other sources (mainly from written texts; the label ICOCP refers to a corpus described in detail in De Cesare et al. in this volume). These sources will always be provided in parentheses after the example or specified before the example(s). Examples with no reference to a source have to be interpreted as invented by the author of this paper.

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is concerned, clefts are typically associated with focusing. As can be observed in examples (1) to (3), the focus tends to coincide with the element highlighted with the small capitals; the small capitals also indicate the location of the main sentence accent:

- (1) It is CHAMPAGNE (that) I like. Cleft sentence / IT-cleft
- (2) What I like is CHAMPAGNE. Pseudo-cleft sentence / WH-cleft
- (3) CHAMPAGNE is what I like. Reverse pseudo-cleft sentence / Reverse WH-cleft

In this paper, we will use the following terminology to refer to the main components of these clefts: we will refer to the main verb (a form of the verb *be* in examples [1] to [3]) with the term *copula*; to the highlighted element (i.e. *champagne*) with the term *cleft constituent* and to the relative clause (*that / what / ø I like*) with the term *cleft clause*.³

As we will see in this chapter, both the taxonomy and the labels used in the literature to refer to each subtype of cleft are based primarily on the form of the different cleft types and, crucially, the basis of the formal description is the English language. This anglocentric view poses a number of important problems for the description of languages that differ from English, while at the same time making any large-scale cross-linguistic attempt to evaluate the frequency of clefts, analyze the forms available in the repertoire of different language families and describe the functions of these clefts quite intricate. The aim of the present study is thus to propose a more operational taxonomy of Cleft constructions, i.e., a taxonomy that can easily be used when working cross-linguistically both

³ The terminology used in the literature to refer to the cleft components varies quite significantly (on this issue, also see note 23). The term *cleft / clefted constituent*, which is used for instance in Hedberg (1988) and Calude (2009), is called differently in other studies, in particular according to the point of view that is adopted: Collins (1991: 2), for instance, prefers to use the term *highlighted element*, which he considers to be “neutral as to the semantic/syntactic/textual/logical role of the constituent in question” (p. 217). In his view, this element should be called *identifier* in propositional semantic terms, complement of the copula *be* (or post-copular constituent) in syntactic terms, *new* or *comment* in textual terms and *focus* in logical terms (cf. Collins 1991: 217). Again in line with Hedberg (1988) and Calude (2009), the same is true for what we call *cleft clause*: Declerck (1984) calls this part of the cleft *WH-that clause*, and Collins (1991) and Lambrecht (2001) label it *relative clause*. All of these labels have advantages and disadvantages that we cannot discuss in detail here. In a way, these labels are therefore to be interpreted as a practical, compromise solution.

with English and languages that differ from English. Our proposal is to classify Cleft constructions in the first place according to the position occupied by the so-called cleft constituent (i.e., the noun *champagne* in examples [1] to [3]) in the syntactic structure. We will therefore differentiate between three types of Cleft constructions: with initial cleft constituent (as in example [3]), with medial cleft constituent (as in example [1]) and with final cleft constituent (as in example [2]). This taxonomy is inspired by a proposal made by Calude (2009: 143) for English, which we have extended here to other languages. In this paper, we will focus primarily on Romance (mainly Italian, French and Spanish) and Germanic languages (mainly English and German). Amongst the languages taken into account in this study, special attention will be given to Italian.

This article is organized as follows: Section 2 presents the classic taxonomy of clefts and discusses some of the problems encountered with its application to languages that differ from English; in Section 3 a new taxonomy of clefts based on the position of the cleft constituent in the syntactic structure is proposed and some arguments supporting this new taxonomy are provided; Section 4 concludes by summarizing the main findings of the paper and pointing out some open questions.

2 Cleft construction: The classic taxonomy

A great number of studies identify two main types of clefts: *Cleft sentences* and *Pseudo-cleft sentences* (cf., among many others, the classic studies from Prince 1978; Sornicola 1988; Smits 1989; more recently, see Roggia 2008, 2009 and Panunzi 2009 on Italian; as well as Valentini 2012 on clefts in Bergamasco, a Gallo-Italian dialect spoken in Northern Italy). Thus, in the first place, the main distinction to be made is between these two types of clefts. In a second step, a distinction is made between two types of *Pseudo-clefts*: *Pseudo-clefts proper* (or *non-inverted*, according to the characterization of Declerck 1984 and Geluykens 1988) and *Reverse pseudo-clefts*.⁴ The classic taxonomy of Cleft constructions is recalled in Figure 1.

⁴ Cf. Geluykens (1988: 823): “Two formal types of CC [cleft construction] will be distinguished, the IT cleft [...] and the pseudocleft; the latter has a subtype with inverted order”.

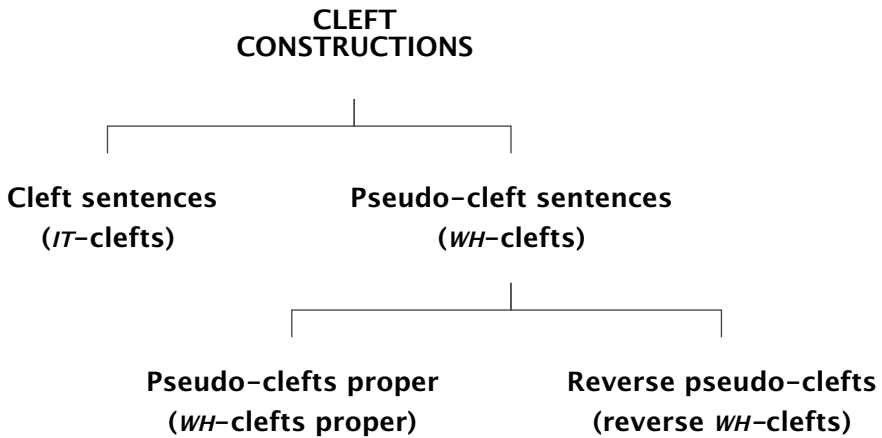


Figure 1: Cleft constructions: The classic taxonomy.

In both steps of the distinction, the decisive criteria are formal: Cleft sentences and Pseudo-cleft sentences are distinguished on the basis of the form that introduces the whole structure (*it* vs. *what*); in turn, the two types of pseudo-clefts are distinguished on the basis of the location of the WH-clause in the structure: it is found in initial and final position, respectively.⁵ These three subtypes of clefts differ on the basis of a number of other formal properties, such as the form that introduces the cleft clause (*that* vs. *what*), and the position of the cleft constituent (in medial, final and initial position in *Cleft sentences*, *Pseudo-clefts proper* and *Reverse pseudo-clefts*, respectively).⁶ In the following paragraphs, these

⁵ The element taken as a reference point in accounting for the linear order of Reverse pseudo-clefts is not always the same. In some studies, the reference point coincides with the cleft constituent (cf. Biber et al. 1999: 960); in others, it coincides with the copula (cf. Lambrecht 2001: 467: “sentences such as Jespersen’s [1937] above-quoted *Champagne is what I like best*, in which the headless relative appears in postcopular position, were called ‘Reverse pseudo-clefts’”).

⁶ All three cleft types also differ in regard to the syntactic categories and functions of the cleft constituent. Cf. Prince (1978: 884): “Both [IT-clefts and WH-clefts] readily accept an NP [...], but an ADV [*It was then that I became a young revolutionary*] or a PP [*It is against pardoning these that many protest*] commonly occur mainly (though not only) in *it*-clefts, while a VP [*What that does is tend to rob Ervin and the Grand Jury with yet a third investigation group*] or an S [*What you are saying is that the President was involved*] commonly occur in WH-clefts”; Cf. also Biber et al. (1999: 960): “*Wh*-clefts are less flexible than *it*-clefts in that they cannot be used to focus on a prepositional phrase, an adverb phrase, or an adverbial clause [...]. *Wh*-clefts, on the other hand, permit focus on a nominal clause and on the verb plus accompanying elements in the predicate [...]; this possibility is excluded with *it*-clefts”.

properties will be described in more detail. Specifically, Section 2.1 will focus on the forms that introduce the Cleft sentences and Pseudo-cleft sentences and Section 2.2 discusses the forms that introduce the cleft clause of these two types of clefts. Along the way, and in particular in Section 2.3, we will point out some problems related to the cross-linguistic classification of clefts based on the criteria we just mentioned.

2.1 Distinguishing Cleft constructions on the basis of the introducer

2.1.1 From English to other languages

The first criterion that is used in the classification of clefts is the form that introduces the cleft structure as a whole. As we have seen in examples (1) and (2), recalled below in (4) and (5a), in English we have the following picture: a Cleft sentence is introduced by the pronoun *it*,⁷ while a Pseudo-cleft sentence is opened by a free relative pronoun,⁸ i.e. by *what* in (5a), or by *who* (5b), *when* (5c), *why* (5d), *where* (5e) and *how* (5f); according to Collins (1991: 27), a Pseudo-cleft can also be opened by *which*.

- (4) **It** is CHAMPAGNE (that) I like. Cleft sentence / IT-cleft
- (5) a. **What** I like is CHAMPAGNE. Pseudo-cleft sentence / WH-cleft
- b. **Who(m)** she saw last week was an old friend.
- c. **When** the band went home was after dark.
- d. **Why** I left was because of my headache.

⁷ Lambrecht (2001: 468) also considers the cases in which the pronoun introducing a cleft is not empty: “Exceptionally, it can be a semantically nonempty pronoun (*I, you, etc.*) which loses some or all of its meaning within the [cleft construction], or which is semantically redundant with an element elsewhere in the sentence (cf. [*I have my NEIGHBOR who’s black*]).” We will not discuss these cases here.

⁸ In this chapter, we will use the labels *free relative pronoun* (in other chapters also *fused relative pronoun*) and *wh-pronoun* interchangeably. As we can see in examples (5), we are referring to a relative clause opened by a pronoun that does not have an antecedent. A list of free relative pronouns used in English, German, Italian, French, Spanish is provided in Table 2 of § 3.1.2.

- e. **Where** my parents went on holidays was their bach.
- f. **How** I chose it was by looking at the entire list of courses.

(Examples b–f are from Calude 2009: 132)

In German, the situation is very similar to English, as the class of Cleft sentences is introduced by the pronoun *es* ‘it’ and the class of Pseudo-clefts by a free relative pronoun (by the form *was* ‘what’, *wer* ‘who’, *wo* ‘where’, etc.; on these forms, see Gast and Levshina in this volume):

- (6) **Es** war Hans, der mir half.
 It was Hans REL me helped
 ‘It was Hans who helped me.’

(Erdmann 1990a: 69)

- (7) **Was** ihn störte, war ihre Gleichgültigkeit.
 What him bothered was her indifference
 ‘What bothered him was her indifference.’

(Erdmann 1990a: 69)

In the Romance languages, the picture is somewhat different. Although Clefts and Pseudo-clefts are of course also identified as two stable Cleft constructions classes in Italian, French and Spanish, the forms that introduce them do not necessarily coincide with an empty pronoun and a free relative pronoun, respectively. In French, a parallel to English clefts can be drawn only for the category of Cleft sentences: French Cleft sentences are opened by the pronoun *ce* ‘it’, as in (8), while Pseudo-clefts can theoretically be opened by a free relative pronoun such as *qui* ‘who’ (9), *où* ‘where’ (10), *comment* ‘how’ (11), *pourquoi* ‘why’ (12), *quand* ‘when’ (13) (cf. Roubaud 2000 for authentic examples taken mainly from spoken registers), but start most of the time with the complex pronoun *ce qui* ‘what’ (for quantitative data related to a corpus of electronic news, see De Cesare et al. in this volume and Baranzini in this volume):

- (8) **c’** est mon PIED qui me fait mal.
 it is my foot that me hurts
 ‘it’s my foot that hurts.’

(Lambrecht 2001: 486)

- (9) **qui** Nixon a choisi c' est Agnew
 who Nixon chose it is Agnew
 'who Nixon chose was Agnew'
 (Roubaud 2000: 26)
- (10) **où** je vais c' est au cours de linguistique
 where I go it is to the class of linguistics
 'where I go is to the linguistics class'
 (Roubaud 2000: 9)
- (11) **comment** il l' a su c' est qu' elle lui a donné
 how he it found out it is REL she him gave
 le numéro
 the number
 'how he came to know it is that she gave him the number'
 (Roubaud 2000: 14)
- (12) **pourquoi** il a fait ça c' est parce qu' il est fou
 why he did this it is because he is crazy
 'why he did this is because he's crazy'
 (Roubaud 2000: 14)
- (13) **quand** ils m' ont énervé c' est quand ils m'
 when they me have bothered it is when they me
 ont répondu
 answered
 'when they got on my nerves is when they answered me'
 (Roubaud 2000: 14)
- (14) **ce qui** m' intéresse c' est le pognon
 what me interests it is money
 'what I am interested in is money'
 (Roubaud 2000: 13)

In Italian and Spanish, a parallel to English is even more far-reaching. As we already said, in these two languages, Cleft Sentences are not opened by any form of pronoun and the situation regarding the class of Pseudo-clefts is similar to French: Pseudo-clefts can be introduced either by a free relative pronoun (It. *chi* 'who', Sp. *quien* 'who'; note that there is no Romance equivalent to the wide-spread E. *what*) or – and this is the preferred option (cf. De Cesare et al. in this

volume) – by a relative headed by another pronoun (cf. It. *quello che* ‘what’, Sp. *lo que* ‘what’, etc.). Here are some representative examples of clefts and Pseudo-clefts in Italian and Spanish, respectively:

- (15) [Ø] è mio padre che ha aperto la finestra
 [Ø] is my father that opened the window
 ‘it’s my father that/who opened the window’
 (Berretta 2002: 16)
- (16) [Ø] es este coche el que compré
 [Ø] is this car that bought.1SG
 ‘it’s this car that I bought’
 (Pinedo 2000: 131)
- (17) **chi** va a Roma sono io
 who goes to Rome is I
 ‘the one who goes to Rome is me’
 (Sornicola 1988: 345)
- (18) **quien** va a Roma soy yo
 who goes to Rome is I
 ‘the one who goes to Rome is me’
 (Sornicola 1988: 345)
- (19) **quello che** mi è venuto in mente è di partire domani
 what me came to mind is to leave tomorrow
 ‘what came to my mind is to leave tomorrow’
 (Salvi 1991: 180)
- (20) **lo que** compré es este coche
 what bought.1SG is this car
 ‘what I bought is this car’

In light of these cross-linguistic grammatical differences, we consider that it is better to avoid using the labels *IT*-cleft and *WH*-cleft in the description of the languages that differ from English (e.g. Italian, French, and Spanish) because these labels are not transparent (either) and therefore their use is relatively counter-intuitive. The label *IT*-cleft is not appropriate for pro-drop languages such as Italian and Spanish, because these languages are not opened by any form of pronoun. In our view, stating, as Lambrecht (2001) does, that the matrix subject

of an *IT*-cleft coincides with an inflectional morpheme in Italian and Spanish (p. 464) demands to stretch the notion of “matrix subject” as well as the label *IT*-clefts to a point where they no longer seem operational. In turn, the label *WH*-cleft is problematic because in the case of the Romance languages it is also supposed to refer to constructions that are not opened by a *wh*-word (i.e., by a free relative pronoun of the form *chi / qui / quien* ‘who’ or *dove / où / donde* ‘where’ etc. in Italian, French and Spanish, respectively) but by a complex pronoun, such as It. *quello che*, Fr. *ce que*, Sp. *lo que* ‘what’. Using the other set of labels – i.e., *Cleft sentence*, *Pseudo-cleft sentence* and *Reverse pseudo-cleft sentence* – is not unproblematic either. Besides their lack of transparency and the fact that, for some, the two last terms misguidedly lead to the view that the syntactic structures to which they refer are not real clefts, they cover syntactic forms that differ quite a bit from one language to another (a fact that is also true for the alternative set of labels).

2.1.2 On the external and internal boundaries of the classic taxonomy of clefts

As is well known, the boundaries of the subclasses of clefts, in particular of Cleft sentences and Pseudo-cleft sentences, are problematic. A first debated issue is whether temporal syntactic structures such as (21) to (25) are clefts or not. Some authors take them into account, while others do not (see Berretta 1994 for Italian; Grewendorf and Poletto 1989: 115; on temporal clefts in general, also see Valentini 2012). It is not clear if these structures are real clefts or if they are predicative constructions in which the initial pronoun is anaphoric (cf. E. *it*, Fr. *ce* ‘it’, G. *es* ‘it’) or else in which there is an unexpressed subject that could be made explicit through the use of a demonstrative pronoun (as in Italian *questa è la seconda volta che...* ‘this is the second time that’; the same is true for Spanish):

- (21) it was the last time she would bow to leadership pressure. (ICOCP, AP)
- (22) È la seconda volta in tre mesi che il tribunale è colpito da una deflagrazione (ICOCP, ANSA)
‘It is the second time in three months that the court is hit by a blast’
- (23) Ce n’est pas la première fois qu’Elio Di Rupo dramatise la situation politique. (ICOCP, lalibre.be)
‘It is not the first time that Elio Di Rupo dramatizes the political situation.’

- (24) Es la primera vez que la madre y su entorno son tan claros en sus acusaciones. (ICOCP, elpais.com)
‘It is the first time that the mother and the ones around her are so clear in their allegations.’
- (25) Es war das erste Mal, dass er öffentlich in Erscheinung trat (ICOCP, swissinfo.ch)
‘It was the first time that he made a public appearance’

Very much debated are in particular the boundaries of the class of Pseudo-cleft sentences.⁹ Classification problems are encountered, for instance, with the syntactic structures illustrated in (26) and (27), i.e., with forms of clefts that are not opened by one of the English free relatives *what*, *who*, *which*, *where*, *why*, *how*, and *when*:

- (26) **All** the car needs is a new battery. (Collins 1991: 32)
- (27) **all that** is needed is some space, a mat and a few favorite things (chicago-tribune.com)

If it is generally recognized that these syntactic structures are clefts, their specific nature is debated. In some studies, clefts opened by *all* belong to the class of Pseudo-clefts; in Collins (1991: 27), for instance, this cleft type forms a subtype of *Pseudo-cleft* called *all-cleft*¹⁰ (see also Biber et al. 1999: 961). In other studies, these clefts form an independent category; in Erdmann (1990a), they are called *fokussierende all-Sätze* (i.e. *focusing all-clefts*). Note that Erdmann (1990a) extends this proposal to German clefts such as (28). However, in German, an *alles-cleft* ‘all-cleft’ does not match neatly the English *all-cleft*, as only in the former language is the cleft opened by both a complex form, based on *alles* ‘all’ and a WH-form (*alles was* ‘all what’). Consider the different acceptability of examples (28) and (29), as opposed to (26) and (27):

⁹ On this issue, see in particular the chapter entitled *The ‘th-cleft’ debate* in Calude (2009: 130–144).

¹⁰ For Collins (1991: 32), there is a close semantic relationship between *all-clefts* and *th-clefts* (i.e., clefts introduced by the definite article and followed by a generic noun; we will say more on these clefts below) with a relative clause headed by the noun phrase *the only thing*. Consider the following two examples: *all you need is love*; *the only thing you need is love*. Accordingly, for Collins (1991), both *all-clefts* and *th-clefts* opened by the noun phrase *the only thing* are considered subtypes of Pseudo-cleft sentences.

- (28) **Alles was** du brauchst, ist Liebe.
 All what you need.2SG is love
 ‘All you need is love.’

(Erdmann 1990a: 69)

- (29) ***Alles** du brauchst, ist Liebe.
 All you need.2SG is love
 ‘All you need is love.’

- (30) **All** you need is love.

In the Romance languages, English *all-clefts* do not have a one-to-one structural equivalent either. From a semantic and functional point of view, English *all-clefts* correspond to Romance clefts introduced by a relative headed by a complex pronominal form (It. *tutto quello che*, lit. ‘all what’ / *tutto ciò che*, lit. ‘all what’, Fr. *tout ce que*, lit. ‘all what’, and Sp. *todo lo que*, lit. again, ‘all what’; note that all the following examples are quotations):

- (31) “**Tutto quello che** voglio è essere dimenticata.” (ilgiornale.it)
 “All what want.PRS1SG is to be forgotten
 “ ‘All I want is to be forgotten.’ ”

- (32) “**Tout ce que** je veux, c’est que Gottéron gagne le titre!”
 “All what I want it is that Gottéron wins the title
 “ ‘All I what is that Gottéron wins the title!’ ” (laliberte.ch)

- (33) “**Todo lo que** quiero es huir de esta ciudad”
 “All what want.PRS1SG is flee from this city
 “ ‘All I want is flee this city’ ” (elpais.com)

In addition to this problematic case, in the literature there is also no agreement on the status of the syntactic structures opened by a generic noun phrase, such as *the one* in the following example:

- (34) **The one** I like is Robert (Lambrecht 2001: 469)

In some studies (see for instance Prince 1978),¹¹ these syntactic structures are not taken into account, while in other studies they belong to a new, independent category of clefts. In the classification of Cleft constructions proposed by Erdmann (1990a), for instance, these clefts form a fifth group called *focusing copular sentences with generalized nouns* (G. “*generalisierenden Nomen*”) and are claimed to occur in both English and German.¹² Here are two parallel examples in English and in German provided by the author:

(35) **The one** who helped you was me (Erdmann 1990a: 70)

(36) **Der** dir geholfen hat, war ich (Erdmann 1990a: 70)

In yet other studies, syntactic structures of the type illustrated in (35) and (36) are considered to be Pseudo-cleft sentences (cf. Akmajian 1979: 18, cited in Erdmann 1990b: 175). However, their status in this class varies in the literature, as they are presented in some cases as prototypical examples of Pseudo-clefts (in Sornicola 1988: 343, the first example provided to illustrate the class of Pseudo-clefts is *the one who wrote the book is me*) and in others only as a peripheral subtype of Pseudo-clefts. As mentioned earlier (cf. footnote 10), these structures belong to the subtype of Pseudo-clefts called *th-clefts* notably by Collins (1991: 27).¹³ This label is based on the fact that these clefts are opened by the definite article *the*, and followed by a generic noun corresponding to a free relative (*what = the + thing; who = the + one; where = the + place; when = the + time; why = the + reason; how = the + way*; for German, Erdmann 1990a mentions the sequence *der + Grund* ‘the reason’ coinciding with the free relative *warum*).¹⁴

11 On the clefts of the type illustrated in (34), Prince (1978: 883, N. 1) states the following: “I am (perhaps arbitrarily) defining WH-clefts as sentences of the form *What S – C_i is / was C_i*, where *S – C_i* = Sentence minus Constituent_i. That is, I am excluding all clefts whose subject clause has a lexical head (*the one, the thing...*)”.

12 In Erdmann’s (1990a) taxonomy, we find *IT*-clefts, *WH*-clefts, Reverse *WH*-clefts, *all*-clefts and clefts with generalized nouns.

13 Note that the label *th-cleft* is already used in Horn (1981: 132) to describe examples such as *The thing that Mary ate was a pizza*. In addition, it should be noted that, in the literature, the label *th-cleft* is also applied to a completely different type of cleft. In Ball’s (1977) study, it refers to a type of Cleft sentence opened by a demonstrative pronoun (rather than by the form *it*): *that was Timothy laughing at you* (ex. from Calude 2009: 135).

14 Another issue is whether syntactic structures opened by generic heads that are modified by an adjective or an adverb should be considered clefts or not. Collins (1991), for instance, considers as clefts syntactic structures headed by lexically empty pro-forms (*the one, the thing, the place* etc.) that are modified by numerals and quantifiers (*The second thing which the university does is to give its students a special experience in which they gain an abiding insight into a university’s*

Syntactic and semantic structures such as (34) to (36) are also attested in the Romance languages. However, the forms that can be considered to be typical in Italian, French and Spanish are not the same. As can be observed on the basis of the following examples, in Italian and French we find a construction headed by the generic noun phrase *la persona* ‘the person’ and followed by a relative pronoun (It. *che*, Fr. *que*, both corresponding to E. ‘that’), while Spanish prefers a form in which the generic lexical noun is not expressed:

- (37) **la persona che** ha aperto la finestra è tuo padre
‘the person who opened the window is your father’
- (38) **la personne que** Nixon a choisie c’est Agnew (Roubaud 2000: 26)
‘the person that Nixon chose is Agnew’
- (39) **la que** me falta es Nuria Espert (revistavanityfair.es, 15.11.2012)
‘the one I am missing is Nuria Espert’

The inclusion of syntactic structures such as (34) to (39) in the class of clefts is debated, as it is sometimes claimed that these constructions could be interpreted as monoclausal, predicative structures, which involve an anaphoric noun phrase (*the one*, *la persona* ‘the person’ etc.), rather than as biclausal, specificational Cleft constructions, based on a non-anaphoric noun phrase (see, in particular, Calude 2009: 132).

Even more debated is whether other classes of lexical nouns can be accepted to head Pseudo-clefts or to be involved in a Cleft sentence as well as a Reverse pseudo-cleft sentence. In some studies, it is proposed that the list of lexical nouns involved in a cleft (i.e., opening a cleft clause) should not be restricted whatsoever or should not be restricted to the generic nouns coinciding with a WH-word (*what* = *the* + *thing*; *who* = *the* + *one* etc.). This view is adopted, for instance, by Halliday (1967: 234) for English and by Salvi (1991: 180) for Italian.¹⁵ Thus, both authors consider that structures such as (40) to (43) are instances of Pseudo-cleft

perspective; *The only time I can RELAX is when I ACCEPT this*, p. 31). Other modifiers, such as evaluative adjectives (*The best thing I can do is lie still*, p. 31) are not included in his study. The criterion on which this choice is based regards the availability of a non-cleft version (p. 31): according to Collins (1991), only the syntactic structures that have a monoclausal equivalent should be regarded as real instances of clefts (for Collins, the monoclausal equivalents of the two examples provided above are *secondly*, *the university gives*; *I can relax only when I accept this*, respectively; cf. Collins 1991: 31).

¹⁵ Also see Panunzi (2010: 118), who provides examples of Pseudo-clefts opened by *quello che* and *ciò che* ‘what’, *la cosa che* ‘the thing that’, but also *la storia che* ‘the story that’ (cf. *la storia*

sentences (for Salvi 1991 the noun heading what he considers to be a Pseudo-cleft should minimally function as hyperonym in relation to the postcopular element, as in *the color > red*):

(40) **The colour** I like best is red.

(41) **The movie** I like best is *Easy Rider*.

(42) **Il colore** che preferisco è il rosso.
The color that prefer.PRS.1SG is the red
'The color I prefer is red.'

(Salvi 1991: 180)

(43) **Il mese** in cui verrà è marzo.
The month in which will.come.3SG is March
'The month in which s/he will come is March.'

(Salvi 1991: 177)

This view, however, is very controversial because with lexically less generic nouns than *one, thing* etc., i.e., with nouns such as *color, movie* etc., it is even harder to draw a line between biclausal, specificational constructions and monoclausal sentences (on this issue, cf. for instance Berretta 1996: 121 for Italian; the example she provides is the following: *La ragazza che ti ho presentato è la mia compagna di scuola* 'the young woman that I introduced you to is my schoolmate').

If the structures given in (34) to (43) seem to be biclausal and specificational constructions, from a purely syntactic point of view they differ from the traditional Pseudo-clefts, opened by a free WH-word. An important argument to keep them separate from the classic Pseudo-clefts is that, besides the fact that they are not headed by the same type of generic pronouns, they cannot be declefted easily, as shown in (44) and (45). In these cases, either important informations of the original propositional content are lost in the syntactic conversion (see [44a] in respect to [44b]) or the original sentence has to be greatly restructured from a syntactic point of view (see [45], in which the adjective *last* becomes an adverb):¹⁶

che vogliamo raccontarvi / non è quella di guerre commerciali, lit. 'the story that we would like to tell you / is not the one concerning commercial wars').

¹⁶ Cf. also Calude (2009: 133), who claims that some propositional content can be lost in the conversion. Additional observations on this issue can be found in Gast and Wiechmann (2012) on declefting English and German Pseudo-clefts.

- (44) a. **Il colore** che preferisco è il rosso.
 The color that prefer.PRS.1SG is the red
 ‘The color I prefer is red.’
 (Salvi 1991: 180)
- b. Preferisco il rosso.
 prefer.PRS.1SG the red
 ‘I prefer red.’
- (45) a. **The last person** to die while active in the major leagues was Nick Adenhardt (ICOCP, nytimes.com)
- b. Nick Adenhardt died last while active in the major leagues

Based on their differences with classic Pseudo-clefts, we thus believe that the syntactic structures opened by a semantically (non) generic noun such as the ones illustrated in (37) to (45) are at best peripheral to the class of Cleft constructions. That said, structures such as (37) to (45) seem to be functionally similar to Pseudo-clefts and it can be interesting to consider them in pragmatic and textual accounts of clefts (as does Agar Marco in this volume).

Classic clefts also bear some functional resemblance with syntactic structures (also considered clefts by some researchers) in which the cleft clause is opened by a (non) generic noun. Consider the text provided in (46). In this text, we find two similar Cleft constructions (both with the cleft constituent after the copula) that occur in two consecutive Utterances. As can be easily noted, although the two Cleft constructions are syntactically different – and would therefore be associated with different cleft types in some works – they are associated with the same information pattern and perform exactly the same discourse function. In both cases, the cleft constituent coincides with given information, while the rest is new. In addition, both constructions highlight the anaphoric and topical, post-copular element (the referent *lui* ‘he’), while the rest (i.e., the cleft clause) reformulates and specifies the content conveyed in the Comment part of the first proposition of the reported speech (*must explain what truly happened in 2006*):

- (46) “Guido Rossi deve spiegare cosa davvero accadde nel 2006. **È lui il primo tra tutti che deve pubblicamente spiegare che cosa è realmente accaduto allora**, assumendosi le proprie responsabilità. **È lui** – aveva concluso Diego Della Valle – **che ha il dovere di ricostruire i fatti e darne spiegazione pubblica a tutti quelli che vogliono conoscere la verità**”. (ICOCP, leggo.it)

“Guido Rossi must explain what truly happened in 2006. **He’s the one that must publicly explain what really happened then [...]. He’s [...] the one that must reconstruct the facts and explain them publicly to all the people who want to know the truth.**”

È lui il primo tra tutti che deve pubblicamente spiegare
 Is him the first one among all that must publicly explain
 che cosa è realmente accaduto allora
 what is really happened then
 ‘He’s the one that must publicly explain what really happened then’

È lui [...] che ha il dovere di ricostruire i fatti
 Is he [...] that must reconstruct the facts
 ‘He’s [...] the one that must reconstruct the facts’

2.2 Distinguishing Cleft constructions on the basis of the cleft clause

As we pointed out earlier, two other formal criteria related to the cleft clause are used in the classification of clefts: the nature of the cleft clause introducer and the position of the cleft constituent in regards to the rest of the structure.¹⁷

2.2.1 Nature of the cleft clause introducer and position of the cleft constituent

On the basis of examples (1) to (3), recalled below for the sake of clarity, we could describe English clefts in the following way: the cleft clause of English Cleft sentences can be opened either by a generic / opaque form (*that*) or by a null form (\emptyset); by contrast, the cleft clause of Pseudo-cleft sentences, including the reverse type, is opened by a WH-word (E. *what, who, which, where, why, how, when*; see Collins 1991: 27):

¹⁷ A debated issue is whether we can have clefts lacking a subordinate clause (cf. Mikkelsen 2007). In some cases, as in (a) below, where we have two consecutive clefts, it is quite clear that the structure in bold is indeed a so-called “truncated cleft”; in other cases, it is not so easy to decide.

(a) One of the major changes seen by FareShare and organisations like it is in the type of people they are now feeding. Where once **it was single homeless and the chronically destitute** now it’s increasingly families and working people who have fallen on hard times. (ICOCP, guardian.co.uk)

- (47) It is CHAMPAGNE (**that**) I like. Cleft sentence / IT-cleft
- (48) **What** I like is CHAMPAGNE. Pseudo-cleft sentence / WH-cleft
- (49) CHAMPAGNE is **what** I like. Reverse pseudo-cleft sentence /
Reverse WH-cleft

In Italian and French, too, there seems to be a close connection between the form that introduces the cleft clause and the cleft type:

- (50) È lo champagne **che** mi piace. Cleft sentence
Is the champagne that I like
'It is champagne that I like.'
- (51) **Quello che** mi piace è lo champagne. Pseudo-cleft sentence
What I like is the champagne
'What I like is champagne.'
- (52) C'est le champagne **que** j'aime. Cleft sentence
It is the champagne that I like
'It is champagne that I like.'
- (53) **Ce que** j'aime c'est le champagne. Pseudo-cleft sentence
What I like it is the champagne.

However, the idea that there is a tight connection between the form that introduces the cleft clause and the cleft type does not always hold across all the languages considered and is therefore not possible to rely on in contrastive studies. It is known, for instance, that in some languages there is no difference between the form that opens the cleft clause of what is nevertheless sometimes assumed to be three different types of clefts. As can be observed on the basis of the following examples (these are alternative cleft versions conveying the basic meaning *John lost his keys*), this is the case in Spanish (note that the labels referring to the three cleft types that are given under parenthesis are from Pinedo 2000); thus, in Spanish, the nature of a cleft type depends solely on the position of the cleft constituent in regards to the rest of the structure (cf. Van den Steen 2005: 278):

- (54) Fueron las llaves **lo que** perdió Juan.
Were.3PL the keys what lost.3SG John
'It was the keys that John lost.'

(*IT-cleft*; Pinedo 2000: 130)

- (55) **Lo que** perdió Juan fueron las llaves.
What lost.3SG John were.3PL the keys
'What John lost was the keys.'

(*Canonical pseudo-cleft*; Pinedo 2000: 131)

- (56) Eso fue **lo que** perdió Juan.
This was.3SG what lost.3SG John
'That's what John lost'

(*Inverted pseudo-cleft*; Pinedo 2000: 131; small capitals are mine)

In contrast with English and other Romance languages, in the variety of Spanish used in Spain, clefts cannot be introduced by the generic / opaque *que* (cf. Duffer 2010 and Metzeltin 2010: 115):¹⁸

- (57) *Fueron las llaves **que** perdió Juan.
Were.3PL the keys that lost.3SG John

- (58) ***Que** perdió Juan fueron las llaves.
That lost.3SG John were.3PL the keys

- (59) *Eso fue **que** perdió Juan.
This was.3SG that lost.3SG John

As reported by Pinedo (2000), the lack of grammatical marks to distinguish Cleft sentences (54) from Pseudo-cleft sentences (55) and the fact that the form that opens a Spanish cleft clause (*lo que*) is closer to English Pseudo-clefts than to English Cleft sentences has led to different accounts of the Spanish cleft system. Some scholars consider that Spanish only has Pseudo-clefts. Other scholars, such as Helfrich (2003: 439) and Metzeltin (2010), distinguish only two main groups of clefts: Cleft sentences (Sp. *hendidias*) and Pseudo-cleft sentences (Sp. *seudo-hendidias*). For Helfrich (2003), the class of Cleft sentences includes examples such as (54) and (56), while Pseudo-clefts coincide with examples such as (55). It

¹⁸ Spanish Clefts found in varieties used outside of Spain behave differently, as they can be introduced by the complementizer *que* (on this issue, see for instance Sedano 1990).

is important to note that, in this account, the class of Cleft sentences is broader than in the other languages we consider in the present study. In Helfrich 2003, two types of Cleft sentences are distinguished on the basis of the position of the copula: structures such as (56) are labeled *clefts with mid-copula* (see also *Antonia es quien gana*, lit. ‘Antonia is who wins’, ‘Antonia is the one who wins’); clefts such as (54) are called *clefts with initial copula* (cf. *Es Antonia quien gana* ‘Is [= it is] Antonia who wins’).

As can be observed on the basis of the following examples, in German too the picture is quite different from English:

- (60) Es ist Elisabeth, **der** du hättest schreiben sollen.
 It is Elisabeth REL you have.PST.2SG write should
 ‘It was Elisabeth you should have written to.’
 (Cleft sentence; Engel 1988: 298)

- (61) **Was** ihn störte, war ihre Gleichgültigkeit.
 What him bothered was her indifference
 ‘What disturbed him was her indifference.’
 (Pseudo-cleft sentence; Erdmann 1990a: 69)

- (62) GELD ist **das, was** sie wollen.
 Money is what they want.PRS.3PL
 ‘Money is what they want.’
 (Reverse pseudo-cleft; Erdmann 1990a: 69; small capitals are mine)

While the cleft clause of German Pseudo-clefts is opened by a free or complex relative (both involving a WH-form: *was* ‘what’ in [61] and *das, was* ‘what’ in [62]), the cleft clause of Cleft sentences is generally opened by a so-called *d-pronoun* (*der, die, das* etc.; on this label, cf. for instance Grewendorf and Poletto 1989: 115), which is similar to both a relative and a demonstrative pronoun. Moreover, in contrast with English as well as with the three Romance languages with which we are dealing in this paper, in German a cleft constituent is always in the nominative case; it’s in fact the *d-pronoun* that bears case-marking (i.e., is declined or preceded by a preposition):

- (63) Es war **der arme, blutige Christus**, dem man nachfolgen sollte.
 It was the poor, bloody Christ.NOM REL.DAT one follow should
 ‘It was the poor, bloody Christ that one had to follow.’
 (Kiese 1993: 20)

In German, when a prepositional object or an adjunct based on a prepositional phrase is clefted, the preposition is always placed before the *d*-pronoun. Consider example (64), as opposed to its English translation:

- (64) Zunächst ist es die PUPpenbühne, **auf der** der sensible Knabe
 At first is it the puppet stage, **on which** the sensitive boy
 seine Träume austobt
 his dreams lets free course to
 ‘At first it is **on** the puppet stage **that** the sensitive boy lets free course to his dreams.’

(Altmann 2009: 27)

This picture is further complicated by the fact that in German the cleft clause of a Cleft sentence can also start with a different paradigm of forms. Besides the class of *d*-Pronouns, the cleft clause of Cleft sentences can also be opened by the forms *welches*, *welche*, *welcher* ‘which’, ‘who’. According to Kiese (1993), clefts such as (65) are more formal and thus belong to higher registers of the language.

- (65) Es war Jolanthe, **welche** die Frage gestellt hatte. (Kiese 1993: 52)
 ‘It was Jolanthe, who asked the question.’

In German, the generic relative form *dass* corresponding to English *that* is used only in special cases, such as when the cleft constituent coincides with a temporal expression:¹⁹

- (66) Es ist Elisabeth, der / ***dass** du hättest schreiben sollen.
 It is Elisabeth REL / *that you have.PST.2SG write should
 ‘It is Elisabeth you should have written to.’
- (67) Es war am 13. Dezember 1918, **daß** er zuerst auf französischen Boden
 It was on December 13, 1918 that he first on French soil
 landete
 landed.3SG
 ‘It was on December 13, 1918 that he first landed on French soil.’

(Kiese 1993: 24)

¹⁹ Clefts on adverbials are not considered to be natural by all native speakers; the following example provided by Motsch (1970: 90) is considered ungrammatical: **es war gestern, dass wir uns trafen* ‘it’s yesterday that we met’.

2.2.2 The status of cleft clauses opened by a WH-form

Another taxonomic problem occurs with Italian clefts, such as (68), in which the cleft clause is headed by a WH-form (It. *chi* ‘who’) and the cleft constituent (*il conte* ‘the count’) is found after the copula. This form of cleft can also be found in other languages. Below, we provide examples from English, French, Spanish and German:

(68) È il conte **chi** ha ucciso il maggiordomo
 Is the count who killed.3SG the butler
 ‘It’s the count who killed the butler’
 (Salvi 1991: 177)

(69) It was they **who** fought back during a violent police raid [...] (cf. Prince 1978: 898; Biber et al. 1999: 959)

(70) C’est elle **qui** viendra.
 It’s she who will come.3SG
 ‘She’s the one who will come’

(71) Ha sido Mercedes **quien** ha entregado un ramo de flores.
 Has been Mercedes who delivered a bouquet of flowers
 ‘It’s Mercedes who delivered the flowers.’
 (Metzeltin 2010: 115)

(72) Es war in dem weniger betretenen Teile des Gartens, **wo**
 It was in the lesser known part of the garden where
 die Rosenschule war.
 the rose school was
 ‘It’s in the lesser known part of the garden that the rose school was.’
 (Leirbukt 1969: 6)

Differently from (69)-(72), Italian clefts such as (68) have quite a fuzzy status in the literature. While the syntactic structures given in (69) to (72) are almost unanimously considered to be instances of Cleft sentences in English (cf., among many others, Collins 1991; Lambrecht 2001), in French (Lambrecht 2001), in Spanish (Pinedo 2000; Helfrich 2003; Van den Steen 2005; Metzeltin 2010) and in German (Birkner 2008), Italian clefts such as (68) – albeit very similar to the ones given in (69) to (72) – are described as either Cleft sentences (cf. Metzeltin 2010: 111), a type of Pseudo-cleft sentences (for Salvi 1991 these structures are Pseudo-clefts involv-

ing right dislocation of the subject) or Reverse pseudo-cleft sentences (cf. Roggia 2009, who also provides the authentic example *è in casa dove lavoro meglio* ‘it’s at home that I work best’, p. 19).²⁰

The same uncertain status is associated with the following forms of Italian clefts, based on a complex relative, i.e., on a relative headed by a pronoun (*ciò che* ‘what’, *quello con cui* ‘the one with whom’ etc.):

- (73) è proprio l’alta inflazione **ciò che** si teme
 is precisely the high inflation what one is afraid of
 ‘It’s precisely high inflation what we are afraid of’

(Berretta 2002: 21)

- (74) È Giovanni **quello con cui** voglio parlare
 Is Giovanni the one with whom want.PRS.1SG talk
 ‘It’s Giovanni the one I want to talk to’

(Berretta 2002: 21)

Again, examples such as (73) and (74) are considered to be instances of Cleft sentences (Metzeltin 2010), Pseudo-cleft sentences (Salvi 1991: 178) or Reverse Pseudo-cleft sentences (Berretta 2002: 21; Roggia 2009: 19).²¹

2.3 Classifying clefts with no English counterparts

As pointed out in Section 2.2, the traditional taxonomy of Cleft constructions, based on the formal properties of English clefts, is particularly problematic in the cases in which a language has a cleft form in its repertoire that has no (close) structural equivalent in the English language. We will consider three other cases here: the first from Italian, the second from German, the third from Spanish and French.

²⁰ According to Roggia (2009), cleft clauses of (what he considers) reverse clefts opened by *dove* ‘where’ are possible, albeit rare. This fact could explain why this type of cleft has not been pointed out in the literature prior to his study.

²¹ Note that similar structures are already discussed in Bolinger (1972: 111): *It was John who did it; It was up here where I put it; It will be pretty soon when you have to do it*. Bolinger refers to these constructions as *inverted clauses*.

2.3.1 Italian implicit Cleft sentences

A first type of cleft that is not found in English but is typical of Italian is the so-called “implicit cleft sentence”, illustrated below in (75a) and (76).²² This type of cleft is special as the cleft clause is based on an infinitive verb form (see *uccidere* ‘kill’ in [75a], as opposed to the tensed verb form *rovina* ‘ruins’ in [75b] where we have an “explicit cleft sentence”) preceded by *a* ‘to’ (instead of *che* ‘that’). The examples provided in (75a) and (76) show that this type of cleft has two linguistic manifestations. The implicit cleft clause can occur at the end or at the beginning of the construction, i.e. after or before the copula and the cleft constituent:

- (75) a. Ho responsabilità politiche, ma non **fui** **io**
 Have.PRS.1SG responsibilities political, but NEG be.PST.1SG I
a uccidere (ICOCP, ANSA)
 to kill
 ‘I have political responsibilities, but I was not the killer’
- b. **“È l’opposizione che ci rovina”**. (ICOCP, Adncronos)
 “Is the opposition that us ruins”
 ““It’s the opposition that ruins us”.’
- (76) **A segnare** **gli aumenti maggiori** [...] **sono** **pizza, tramezzino,**
 To mark the increases highest [...] are pizza, tramezzino,
cappuccino e cornetto. (ICOCP, repubblica.it)
 cappuccino e cornetto
 ‘To have become more pricey are pizza, sandwiches, cappuccino and cornetto.’

The first type of implicit cleft (illustrated in [75a]) has been quite unanimously assigned to the class of Cleft sentences (cf. Berretta 2002; Roggia 2009), while the second type (76) is associated with two different cleft classes: in a first account, this form belongs to the class of Pseudo-clefts (Berretta 1994, 1995, Gil 2004 and De Cesare 2005 refer to this form as *frase pseudoscissa*); more recently, based on the observation that this form of cleft is actually reversed in relation to the structure illustrated in (75a), it has been suggested to call examples such as (76) *Reverse cleft sentence* (It. *frase scissa inversa* notably by Roggia 2009).

²² Note that in English we find clefts of the type *it’s him speaking*, with a non-finite verb form in the cleft clause. As can be observed on the basis of the example provided, we do not, however, have to do with clefts involving an infinitive form in the cleft clause.

2.3.2 German Cleft sentences with initial cleft constituent

Another problematic case to describe is the German cleft illustrated in (77), in which we find the cleft constituent in initial position – in line with Reverse pseudo-clefts – and a cleft clause opened by a *d*-pronoun – in line with German Cleft sentences (prototypical examples of German clefts are provided in [60] to [62] above):

- (77) **SIE** [Marilyn Monroe] **war es, die sagte:** [...]
 SHE [Marilyn Monroe] was it, REL said.3SG
 ‘SHE [Marilyn Monroe] was it who said: [...]’

(Altmann 2009: 21)

The hybrid form of these clefts has led to two distinct taxonomic proposals: in some studies, clefts such as these are called Reverse pseudo-clefts (cf. Doherty 1999: 292; Birkner 2008: 318, 325, 327), while in other studies they are considered to be Cleft sentences (see Kiese 1993; Altmann 2009).

This case is informative because it shows quite clearly that the categorization of clefts generally follows from a single criterion, which is on the one hand the position of the cleft constituent in respect to the rest of the sentence (cf. first account of cleft [77]) and on the other hand the form that introduced the cleft clause (cf. second account of cleft [77]).

2.3.3 French and Spanish Reverse pseudo-cleft sentences

Related to the problem discussed above, i.e., to the difficulty of classifying clefts that do not have a direct equivalent in the English language, is also the fact that some English cleft types are claimed not to exist in certain languages.

One case in point regards the category of Reverse pseudo-clefts, which Lambrecht (2001) and Miller (2006) claim is absent in the family of both French and Spanish clefts. The examples provided by Lambrecht (2001) to support the fact that this structure is only available in English are given in (78) to (81):

- (78) CHAMPAGNE is what I like.

- (79) *Le champagne est ce que j’aime.
 the champagne is what I like
 ‘Champagne is what I like.’

(Lambrecht 2001: 492; note the lack of small capitals on *le champagne*)

(80) I'm the one who bought this coat. (Lambrecht 2001: 492; the pronoun *I* is stressed)

(81) *YO fui quien compró este abrigo.
I was.3SG who bought.3SG this coat
'I am the one who bought this coat'

(Lambrecht 2001: 492)

In Lambrecht's (2001) view, both French and Spanish use a Cleft sentence where English would use a Reverse pseudo-cleft. Hence the English Reverse pseudo-clefts given in (78) and (80) coincide with the following two structures in French and Spanish, respectively:

(82) C'est le champagne que j'aime.
It's the champagne that I like
'It is champagne I like.'

(Lambrecht 2001: 492)

(83) Fui YO quien compró este abrigo.
Was.3SG I who bought.3SG this coat
'I am the one who bought this coat.'

(Lambrecht 2001: 492 on the basis of Smits 1989)

However, in our view these claims are in need of a revision (cf. also Wehr in press). As we have seen in Section 2.2.1, there are clear instances of Reverse pseudo-clefts in Spanish as well (cf. Pinedo 2000; Van den Steen 2005; Wehr in press). Consider the following cases, the first with the pronoun *yo*, excluded by Lambrecht 2001, the second with the demonstrative *eso* 'this' (the latter example, already seen in [56], is from Pinedo 2000):

(84) **YO** soy el que se va. (Wehr in press)
I am the one going
'I'm the one who's leaving'

(85) **ESO** fue lo que perdió Juan
This was.3SG what lost.3SG Juan
'That's what Juan lost'

(Pinedo 2000: 131; small capitals are mine)

A similar claim can be made for French. As we can see on the basis of the example provided in (86), there are attested occurrences of what looks like Reverse pseudo-clefts in this language as well. What is true is certainly that this form of cleft is rather rare in French, while it is common in English. It should also be noted that the noun phrase *le sport* is not highlighted here because we are dealing with a written text. However, it is only in the case in which the NP *le sport* is prosodically highlighted that we are dealing with a Reverse pseudo-cleft (as in *LE SPORT est ce que je connais le mieux* ‘SPORTS in what I know best’):

- (86) Le sport est ce que je connais le mieux. (humanite.fr)
 The sport is what I know.PRS.1SG best
 ‘Sports is what I know best’

As can be observed in examples (84) to (86), much in line with German Reverse pseudo-cleft sentences (cf. example [87], provided earlier in [62]), in Spanish and in French the cleft clause is opened by a complex pronoun (Sp. *lo que*, Fr. *ce que*, G. *das, was*, all translated by ‘what’) rather than by a free relative pronoun (*what*), as is commonly found in English:

- (87) GELD ist **das, was** sie wollen.
 Money is what they want.PRS.3PL
 ‘Money is what they want.’
 (*Reverse pseudo-cleft*; Erdmann 1990a: 69; small capitals are mine)

That said, it seems that there is a difference between Spanish and German, on the one hand, and French, on the other. In French, the syntactic structure given in (86) is more readily interpreted as having a non-focal initial constituent. Hence, the constituent *le sport* is not associated with a special prosodic contour, i.e. with contrastive accent, and the whole structure cannot be considered to be a cleft. Moreover, when there is the need of contrasting a referent, it seems indeed more likely that French would use a regular Cleft sentence.

3 Cleft constructions: A new taxonomy

In Section 2, we have shown that the traditional taxonomy of Cleft constructions is not always easy to apply cross-linguistically and has given rise to different interpretations of the same structure. We believe that the main reason for this difficulty is that clefts have been described from a somewhat anglocentric point

of view (a claim also made in Berretta 1994: 87 and recently by Valentini 2012: 79, n. 10), on the basis of the somewhat misguided belief that the theoretical categories developed on the basis of one language (in this case English) are valid for and thus transferable to other languages, without major descriptive adjustments. In fact, the accounts of clefts are often offered without taking into account the structural specificities of the languages analyzed, i.e., by overlooking the fact that the main cleft components do not have the same grammatical status in different languages.²³

In light of the classification problems highlighted in the previous paragraph, we believe that a more economical way of classifying the different cleft types available cross-linguistically is to focus first and foremost on the placement of the cleft constituent in the syntactic structure. Additionally, we would also like to claim that it is better to avoid using the two sets of labels commonly employed in the literature on clefts. As we have seen, besides the clear English bias of one of the sets, the traditional labels *Cleft sentences (IT-clefts)*, *Pseudo-cleft sentences (WH-clefts)* and *Reverse pseudo-cleft sentences (reverse WH-clefts)* are not used to describe the same syntactic structures cross-linguistically and are therefore not optimal to rely on as a starting point in (large-scale) contrastive studies.

3.1 A new taxonomy based on the position of the cleft constituent

The criterion that in our view allows the best comparison of the Cleft constructions available cross-linguistically, i.e., that allows us to compare these syntac-

23 Up to this point, we have not said much on the divergent grammatical interpretations of the sub-parts of the clefts, but have concentrated instead on the interpretation of the structure as a whole. There are, however, numerous discrepancies (both intra- and cross-linguistic) in the description of the grammatical status of the cleft parts, in particular in the description of the cleft clause and the cleft clause introducer. These discrepancies are due on the one hand to different grammatical traditions and on the other hand to the fuzzy status of the cleft components.

It is of course beyond the scope of this paper to present a detailed account of the different descriptions provided in the literature for the main cleft components. Suffice it to mention here some proposals related to the interpretation of the cleft clause introducer. The form *that* in *It was mainly his cynical attitude that made him unpopular* is described as a relative particle in Smits (1989: 299), a pronoun in Pinedo (2000), while it is considered to be a complementizer in generative accounts (cf. Grewendorf and Poletto 1989: 113). The form *where* (and *how*) in *It was in the kitchen where John built a ship* is called relative adverb in Smits (1989: 300–301), while the corresponding Spanish form *donde* ‘where’ in *Fue en Madrid donde nació* ‘It’s in Madrid that he is born’ is considered to be a preposition (cf. Pinedo 2000). Note also that for Smits (1989: 299–300), *who* in *it was I who bought this coat* is interpreted as a relative pronoun.

tic structures more easily, is the position that the cleft constituent occupies with respect to the rest of the structure. Such a proposal is of course not new. Following this very criterion, a distinction is sometimes made in the literature between clefts with initial (88) and with final (89) cleft constituent (cf., among others, Berretta 2002 and Roggia 2009 for Italian, as well as Metzeltin 2010: 109 for the main Romance languages):

- (88) a. **QUESTO** è quello che penso
 This is what think.PRS.1SG
 ‘That’s what I think’
 (Berretta 2002: 17; small capitals are mine)
- b. È **questo** quello che penso
 Is this what think.PRS.1SG
 ‘That’s what I think’
- (89) Quello che penso è **questo**
 What think.PRS.1SG is this
 ‘What I think is this’

This distinction is based on the position that the cleft constituent (in our examples, the demonstrative pronoun *questo* ‘this’) occupies with respect to the cleft clause (*quello che penso* ‘what I think’). In German, this proposal even gave birth to a new set of labels: in Engel (2004: 181), instead of the more common *Spaltatz* ‘Cleft sentence’ and *Sperratz* ‘Pseudo-cleft sentence’, clefts are referred to as *Linksspaltung* ‘left clefting’ and *Rechtsspaltung* ‘right clefting’, according to the position that the cleft constituent occupies in the structure. Consider the following examples:

- (90) Es ist **die Michaela**, die mir in dieser Geschichte am meisten Leid tut.
 ‘It is Michaela the person that I feel most sorry for in this story.’
 (*Linksspaltung* ‘left clefting’)
- (91) Wer / Die mir in dieser Geschichte am meisten Leid tut, ist **die Michaela**.
 ‘The one who I feel most sorry for in this story is Michaela.’
 (*Rechtsspaltung* ‘right clefting’)

classification proposal there is no hierarchy between the three types of clefts: as can be observed on the basis of their position in Figure 2, the three cleft types are independent from each other; from this it follows that the three types of clefts are considered to be equally important; (iii) in turn, from the previous point it follows that in the new classification system no correlation is suggested between a given cleft type and its derivation pattern and that there are no expectations concerning the reversibility of one cleft type into another; (iv) the classification proposed in Figure 2 is more straightforward in describing the problematic structures discussed in Section 2. We will return to this point below.

3.1.2 Cleft constructions with initial, medial and final cleft constituent: Cross-linguistic evidence

At this point, we would like to make our classification proposal more concrete by providing examples from the five languages in which we are interested. Table 1, which also recalls the abstract formal make-up of the three main types of clefts (cf. line 3), illustrates the paradigm of Cleft constructions in English, German, Italian, French and Spanish:

Table 1: Cleft constructions in five European languages

CLEFT CONSTRUCTIONS WITH ...		
INITIAL CLEFT CONSTITUENT	MEDIAL CLEFT CONSTITUENT	FINAL CLEFT CONSTITUENT
CC-COP-CCL	COP-CC-CCL	CCL-COP-CC
E THAT 's what I think	it's Stella that helped me	what I think is this
G DAS ist (es), was ich glaube	es ist Sella , die mir half	was ich glaube, ist das
I QUESTO è quello che penso	è Stella che mi ha aiutata	quello che penso è questo
F ÇA , c'est ce que je pense ²⁴	c'est Stella qui m'a aidée	ce que je pense, c'est ça
S ESO es lo que pienso	es Stella la que me ayudó	lo que pienso es eso
A	B	C

²⁴ Based on its structural resemblance with Type C clefts (i.e. with the structure *ce que je pense, c'est ça* 'what I think is this'), we decided to include this example here. However, we have already observed that it is difficult to interpret this structure as having a contrastive focus without clear prosodic cues (the same holds for other languages).

As Table 1 demonstrates, there is a certain degree of structural overlap across the five languages. This structural overlap also concerns the paradigm of forms that belong to the three types of clefts. First, it concerns the clefts constructed with a cleft clause opened by a free (or *WH*-) pronoun (in particular Type C clefts). Consider Table 2, which provides the list of free pronouns (some of which could be considered adverbs) that can open the cleft clause of all three types of clefts (note that these forms basically correspond to interrogative pronouns and, in some cases, also to relative pronouns).²⁵

Table 2: Free relative pronouns in five European languages

English	German	Italian	French	Spanish
who	wer	chi	qui	quien
where	wo	dove	où	donde
	wieviel	quanto	combien	cuanto
what	was			
when	wann	quando	quand	cuando
how	wie	come	comment	como
why	warum	perché	pourquoi	por que

Leaving the realm of prototypical clefts, there is a fair cross-linguistic formal overlap also in the case of clefts constructed with a cleft clause opened by a generic noun. Table 3 provides the list of generic heads that can be used in English, German, Italian, French and Spanish to open the cleft clause of Type C, but also of Type A and B clefts. Following Collins (1991), we propose to consider only the lexical nouns corresponding to the list of free relatives given in Table 2 and recalled in the first column to the left of Table 3 (cf. Collins 1991: 29–31). In Table 3, we adopt this view for the other languages.

²⁵ The empty cells of this table are to be interpreted as a gap in the system of simple *WH*-forms. It should also be noted that this table does not contain all the possible *WH*-forms: as well as E. *who*, we find *whom*, as well as Sp. *quien*, the form *quienes* etc. A slightly more detailed list of *WH*-forms is provided in De Cesare et al. (in this volume). Moreover, although semantically related, in Table 2 we have not included the English form *all* (cf. Calude 2009: 143: *a book is all I want; all I want is a book*).

Table 3: List of generic lexical heads opening cleft clauses in five European languages

	English	German	Italian	French	Spanish
who	one / person	Person	persona	personne	persona
where	place	Ort	luogo posto	endroit lieu	sitio lugar
what	thing	Ding Sache	cosa	chose	cosa
when	time moment	Moment	momento periodo, volta	moment	momento
how	way	Art Weise	modo	manière façon	manera modo forma
why	reason explanation motive	Grund	ragione motivo	raison motif	razón motivo

Note that we have extended somewhat the list of generic nouns that can open a cleft clause in particular of Type C clefts. In Collins' (1991) view, the generic noun corresponding to the WH-form *who* is *the one*; we believe that other nouns, such as *person* should also be taken into account. Consider the following authentic example in (92) which corresponds to the forms commonly employed in Italian and French Type C clefts (examples [93] and [94] repeat examples already seen above):²⁶

(92) I think **the person** I like best is the step granny. (kiasuparents.com)

(93) **la persona che** ha aperto la finestra è tuo padre
‘The person who opened the window is your father’

²⁶ A detailed discussion of the relationship between free relatives and generic lexical nouns is already provided in Bolinger (1972). In his view (cf. in particular, p. 105), what he calls *analytical compounds* (*the one*, which expresses an entity or person; *the place*, which expresses location; *the way*, which expresses manner; *the time*, which expresses time; and *the reason*, which expresses rationale) are in free variation with synthetic compounds, which are similar to interrogatives (*what*, *who*, *where*, *when*, *why*; note that he does not provide an equivalent synthetic compound for manner; in his view, thus, *how* is only an interrogative pronoun). Interestingly, the list of analytical compounds is the same as the one provided by Collins (1991).

- (94) **la personne que** Nixon a choisie c'est Agnew (Roubaud 2000: 26)
 'the person that Nixon chose was Agnew'

The same is true for other WH-pronouns: in our view, *why* corresponds not only to *the reason* but also, in addition to Collins' (1991) proposal, to the generic lexical nouns *the explanation* and *the motive*; *when* corresponds to *the time* but also *the moment* etc.

As we highlighted in Section 2 and present in more detail in De Cesare et al. (in this volume), the five languages on which we focus do not always construct the three types of clefts in the same way or use the same structure in the cases where parallel options are available cross-linguistically. There are differences even between languages belonging to the same genetic family (cf. Harries-Delisle 1978; Smits 1989). For instance, as already mentioned, there are important cross-linguistic differences regarding the cleft clause introducers in English and German: while English Type B clefts can involve a "covert" introducer (*it's Stella* \emptyset *I saw*), German Type B clefts cannot do so (**es ist Stella, \emptyset ich sah*) and rely instead on a form of cleft clause introducer that has no structural equivalent in English, i.e., a so-called *d-Pronoun* (*es ist Sella, die ich sah*). Another cross-linguistic difference regards Type C clefts in the two Germanic as opposed to the two Romance languages we are dealing with (cf. De Cesare et al. in this volume). While English and German strongly favor syntactic structures opened by a simple, free pronoun (mainly E. *what*, G. *was* 'what'), the Romance languages use syntactic structures opened by a complex pronoun (It. *quello che*, Fr. *ce que*, Sp. *lo que*, all three corresponding to 'what'), as they lack a corresponding generic, simple free pronoun. While the option of using a complex pronoun is not easily available in English, it is possible in German (cf. *das, was* 'what').

3.1.3 Cleft constructions with initial, medial and final cleft constituent: Paradigm of forms

At this point it should be highlighted that each paradigm of clefts – i.e., clefts with initial, medial and final cleft constituent – can have different realizations in one and the same language. As displayed in Table 4, the Italian language is particularly adapted to illustrate the wealth of forms that could possibly be found in this language for each class of clefts. Each class of clefts, i.e., each of the three Cleft construction types (A-B-C), are based on the same structure: they are constructed with a cleft clause headed by a generic (relative) pronoun (It. *che* 'that'),

a free relative pronoun (It. *chi* ‘who’), a complex pronoun (*quello che* ‘what’) or with an implicit verb form opened by *a* ‘to’:²⁷

Table 4: Subtypes of Cleft constructions with initial, medial and final cleft constituent in Italian

CLEFT CONSTRUCTIONS	
Type A (with initial cleft constituent)	
A-1 STELLA è che ama la linguistica	A-3 STELLA è quella che ama la linguistica
A-2 STELLA è chi ama la linguistica	A-4 STELLA è ad amare la linguistica
Type B (with medial cleft constituent)	
B-1 È Stella che ama la linguistica	B-3 È Stella quella che ama la linguistica
B-2 È Stella chi ama la linguistica	B-4 È Stella ad amare la linguistica
Type C (with final cleft constituent)	
C-1 Che ama la linguistica è Stella	C-3 Quella che ama la linguistica è Stella
C-2 Chi ama la linguistica è Stella	C-4 Ad amare la linguistica è Stella

Several observations ought to be made here. The first one is, again, that the three cleft types identified in Table 4 correspond only roughly to the three cleft types traditionally identified (cf. Figure 1) and should therefore not be equated in block. In other words, Cleft constructions of Types A, B and C do not necessarily correspond to what is traditionally subsumed in the classes of Reverse pseudo-cleft sentences (Reverse *WH-clefts*), Cleft sentences (or *IT-clefts*) and Pseudo-cleft sentences (or *WH-clefts*). Thus, in contrast to what is traditionally considered to be a Pseudo-cleft in Italian, Cleft constructions of Type C do not only include syntactic structures opened by a free relative (cf. C-2) and by a relative headed by a complex pronoun (C-3), but also by other forms (C-1 and C-4).²⁸

²⁷ In order to ease the reading of the data contained in Table 4, we do not provide the glosses and translations of the examples. The monoclausal counterpart of all these clefts is the following: *Stella ama la linguistica* ‘Stella likes linguistics’.

²⁸ As mentioned earlier, there have been some proposals in the literature on Italian to extend the domain of application of both the classes of *Cleft sentences* and *Pseudo-cleft sentences*. Such a proposal has been made for instance by Monica Berretta (cf. Berretta 1994, 1995, 2002), who suggests that all the Clefts Constructions with medial cleft constituent should be called *Cleft sentences* and all the clefts with final cleft constituent should be labeled *Pseudo-cleft sentences* (‘if the focus introduced by *essere* [‘to be’] precedes the pseudo-relative we will talk about clefts, if the order is reversed of Pseudo-cleft”, Berretta 2002: 16; the translation is ours). A similar proposal is found in Gil (2004) for the class of *Pseudo-clefts*: in his view, this category can be

It should of course also be observed that this new taxonomic proposal is straightforward to apply and can easily solve the problematic cases highlighted in Section 2. In this new taxonomy, clefts like (68) and (73), repeated below as (95) and (96), are both instances of Type B clefts, as the cleft constituent is located between the copula and the cleft clause. Although in the literature these two types of clefts have been assigned to the class of Cleft sentences, to the class of Pseudo-cleft sentences as well as to the class of Reverse pseudo-cleft sentences, in our proposal these clefts are quite clearly instances of Type B-2 and Type B-3, respectively:

- (95) È **il conte** chi ha ucciso il maggiordomo
 Is the count who killed.3SG the butler
 ‘It’s the count who killed the butler’

(Salvi 1991: 177)

- (96) è proprio **l’alta inflazione** ciò che si teme
 is precisely the high inflation what one is afraid of
 ‘It’s precisely high inflation what we are afraid of’

(Berretta 2002: 21)

Another observation is that all the examples provided in Table 4 have to be interpreted as potential realizations of A-B-C type clefts; this table does not mean to convey the idea that all these clefts are attested and that they have the same distribution and frequency of use. The latest results of corpus-based researches (cf. also De Cesare et al. in this volume) show very clearly that these cleft types and subtypes are strongly register and genre-specific, i.e., that their distribution varies according to textual as well as socio-linguistic parameters. It is well known, for instance, that there are major differences in the distribution of clefts in spoken vs. written varieties of contemporary Italian, specifically in formal vs. informal registers of the language. Let us illustrate this point on the basis of Type C-clefts. Implicit clefts of Type C-4 are typical of written / formal language varieties (Roggia 2009; also see De Cesare 2014), while Type C-1 clefts are used chiefly in

extended so as to cover not only the constructions opened by a free relative (*chi* ‘who’) and by a relative headed by a pronoun (*quello che* ‘the one that’), but also the constructions opened by an implicit cleft clause (our Type C-4). In this paper, we make a different suggestion: the labels *Cleft sentences* and *Pseudo-cleft sentences* should be maintained only for the traditional and prototypical forms of Cleft sentences (i.e. B-1 and B-4) and Pseudo-cleft sentences (i.e. C-2 and C-3). In the other cases, these labels should be avoided, in particular for languages that differ significantly from English.

colloquial / substandard varieties of Italian (cf. Berretta 1996: 120). The colloquial nature of Type C-1 clefts is evident in the example provided below, taken from an informal conversation, in which we can observe several oral features (cf. the *constructio ad sensum*, i.e., the notional agreement between the plural verb form *parlano* and the singular noun *la gente*):

- (97) A me **che fa paura** **è la gente** **che**
 To me that makes me scared is the people.SG that
parlano piano
 speak.PL low
 ‘What scares me is people that speak in a low tone of voice’

(Berretta 1996: 120)

4 Concluding remarks

In light of important taxonomic shortcomings resulting from the application of the traditional taxonomy of clefts to five European languages, this paper proposes a new classification system of Cleft constructions based on a single factor, which identifies the linear position of the cleft constituent within the syntactic structure. In contrast to the classic tripartite taxonomy of clefts, which is primarily rooted on the formal properties of both the cleft construction introducer as well as the cleft clause introducer, the new tripartite classification of clefts is based on the location of the cleft constituent in relation to both the cleft constituent and the cleft clause.

The main advantage of the new classification system of clefts we proposed is that it is straightforward to apply to data from different languages and allows the classificatory problems listed in the first part of the paper to be easily solved. We believe that this new classification system of clefts offers a very good basis for contrastive studies which aim to describe the frequency, forms and functions of clefts from a cross-linguistic perspective. We also believe that this classification is especially useful when several languages are taken into account at once and when the comparison involves languages that differ structurally, not only from English but also from each other. The papers included in the first part of the volume partly rest on this new classification system to describe the cross-linguistic similarities and differences in the frequency, forms and functions of clefts. For an overview of the distribution of Type B and C clefts in a corpus of online news articles, see in particular De Cesare et al. (in this volume).

There are of course numerous open questions to address in future research and several pieces of data that ought to be further developed. For instance, while the literature has mainly shown that different types of clefts (in particular the traditionally labeled *IT-cleft* and *WH-cleft*) encode different syntactic and semantic properties,²⁹ we need to demonstrate more thoroughly that there are significant differences in the ways syntactic and semantic features are encoded within the same paradigm of Cleft construction types, i.e., within Type A, Type B and Type C clefts. Moreover, a more fine-grained account of the functional differences and similarities between Type A, Type B and Type C clefts must be provided. Specifically, while the differences between Type A / B clefts, on the one hand, and Type C clefts, on the other hand, have already been described in numerous studies – and so we thus moved away long ago from the belief that Cleft sentences and Pseudo-cleft sentences are functionally equivalent; crucial studies in this respect are certainly Prince (1978) and Sornicola (1988) – the differences between Type A and Type B clefts are not so evident. In our view, the main evidence showing that there is a difference between Type A and B clefts is the fact that many languages (cf. English, Spanish, German) have both types of clefts in their repertoire and that in these languages, the cleft constituent of these two types of clefts does not have the same formal and pragmatic properties (cf. De Cesare 2011 on German). This, of course, presupposes that we have solved another difficult issue, namely the distinction between Type A clefts and canonical predicative sentences.³⁰

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²⁹ Cf. Prince (1978: 884–885) and later, for instance, Biber et al. (1999: 160).

³⁰ This problem is particularly acute in written texts, as prosodic cues are missing and the intonational contour of syntactic structures ought to be reconstructed on the basis of the context; on these issues, cf. Garassino 2014, as well as Wehr in press.

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