Are Italian left focalization AND cleft sentences monoclausal structures?
A syntax-prosody interface approach

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Cleft sentences have been traditionally analysed as biclausal structures, made of a copular sentence and a (pseudo-)relative sentence (Belletti 2009, Roggia 2009). Some authors (Meinunger 1998, Frascarelli&Ramaglia 2013), though, highlight strong similarities between corrective-contrastive clefts and left focalization, from an informational point of view: both structures show a focus+presupposition articulation and express corrective-contrastive focalization. For this reason, they propose a monoclausal analysis of cleft sentences, with the clefted constituent moving to the left periphery of the clause, as the focalized constituent does. Both analyses argue that the clefted constituent moves via A'-movement from a lower position in the structure to the right periphery of the copula (biclausal analysis) or to the left periphery of the main verb (monoclausal analysis). From a prosodic point of view, Italian left focalization has been thoroughly investigated by Bocci&Avesani (2006) and Bocci (2013) but no systematic comparison with cleft sentences has been carried out. A prosody-syntax perspective could however shed light on some new properties of these two structures and help to validate one of the two analyses proposed above.

The major questions we address in this work are: i) do corrective-contrastive clefts and left focalizations behave prosodically the same, i.e. show the same phrasing and the same pitch accents?; ii) do clefted and focalized constituents move via A'-movement?; iii) do cleft sentences and left focalization have the same syntactic properties (i.e. compatibility in embedded context, long distance extraction)?; iv) how do syntactic structure and prosodic realization interact in these contexts?

In order to answer these research questions, we carried out two experimental studies, a syntactic and a prosodic one. Both tests involved minimal pairs made of left focalization and cleft sentences embedded in appropriate linguistic contexts. In the (written) syntax test the participants had to express a preference between the two options in the same context, or to exclude/accept both of them; in the prosody test they had to read out the texts (target sentence+context) 3 times. In Table 1 we listed the relevant parameters of both experimental studies:

	Syntax test	Prosody test
Participants	48 (m&f, aged 20-60, Roman variety)	4 (female, aged 20-28, Roman variety)
Test design	60 target sentences + 10 fillers	(34 target sentences + 4 fillers) x 3 repetitions
Variables	- A'-movement tests (Corver&van Riemsdijk 1994): weak crossover, parasitic gaps, reconstruction, floating quantifiers - Focalized/clefted elements - Long distance extraction - Embedded context	- Different accent schema of the focalized/clefted constituent (proparoxytone and paroxytone trisyllables, paroxytone disyllables) - Length of the focal constituent - Length of the postfocal constituent - Embedded context
Analysis	Distributional analysis	ToBi transcription and analysis

Table 1: Parameters of the experimental studies.

The data collected through these studies show different results depending on the level of linguistic analysis considered. As for syntax, neither clefted constituents nor focalized constituent seem to move exactly via A'-movement: as shown in Table 2, they only show some properties of A'-elements among those that should result from the 4 "classical" tests (Corver&van Riemsdijk 1994): these results could suggest that the A/A' distinction is no more adequate to account for such phenomena. Moreover, clefts and focalizations exhibit a different syntactic behaviour between each other not only with regard to A'-movement tests, but also according to other parameters: cleft sentences are highly preferred in embedded contexts and when it comes to long distance extraction, while they are completely excluded when a quantifier acts as clefted constituent (Table 2). Those data suggest that the syntactic structure of clefts and left focalization should be different, or at least should involve different functional projections to host the clefted and the focalized constituent.
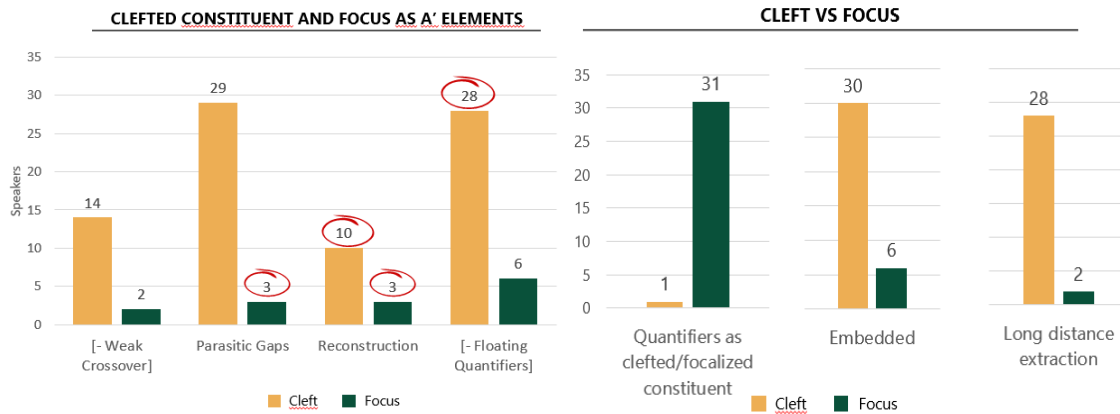
Table 2: Distribution of the answers in the syntactic test (left: A'- movement tests; right: quantifiers, embedded context, extraction)

The prosodic results, on the other hand, show that for all the parameters listed in Table 1 (different syllabic and accentual patterns, length of constituents, embedded context) clefts and focalizations have the same prosodic realization. Both of them are systematically divided into two intermediate phrases, the first one characterized by a focal pitch accent (L+H* or L+H*+L) and a L- phrase accent at the right boundary, the second one clearly postfocal, i.e. with a low and flat contour of F0, near to the speaker's baseline (Table 3).
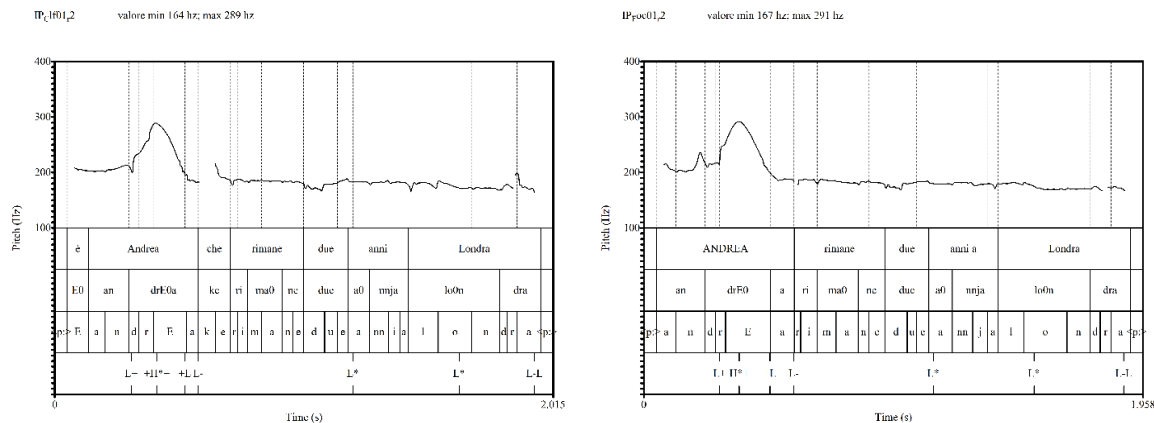

Table 3: Praat pictures of cleft sentence "è Andrea che rimane due anni a Londra" vs left focalization "ANDREA rimane due anni a Londra"

Therefore, syntactic structure and prosodic realization seem to contrast with each other: the prosodic data suggest a unified analysis of clefts and focalizations (that can be both interpreted as monoclausal), while syntactic results underline the differences between them. This could mean that prosody interprets only some parts of the syntactic structure, namely the highest functional projections, where discourse related properties are encoded, as shown by the realization of focus + presupposition articulation.

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