STiL – Studies in Linguistics Vol. 2, 2008
CISCL Working Papers

The CP of *clefts*

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1. Introduction

I have argued in recent work (Belletti 2008) that the CP of cleft sentences has some peculiar properties, the crucial ones being the following two:

i. it is a reduced CP;
ii. the reduced CP may or may not be endowed with an EPP feature.

In the pages that follow I would like to review the main arguments for i.-ii. in light of the different kinds of focalization that the two CP structures lead to in clefts. The main emphasis of the discussion here will be on the particular shape of the articulated CP projection in clefts. Throughout I will limit my attention to structures where the clefted constituent is a DP (or a PP), either a subject or a direct /indirect object.

2. The CP small clause

Consider the basic shape of the split CP projection. According to current analyses (Rizzi (1997), Benincà & Poletto (2004), Haegeman (2006), Bocci (2004) Grewendorf (2005), Mioto (2003), and related work), the Fin head is found at the bottom of the projection selecting the inflectional functional system of the following clause, while the Force head sits at the top of the projection expressing the illocutionary content of the clause, e.g. whether it is a declarative or an interrogative; the Force head is selected by the matrix verb when CP is embedded. Given this familiar background of assumptions, the question of the status of the CP of clefts naturally arises. Take the following two cleft sentences in (1) from Italian. I will use Italian throughout to illustrate different properties, unless other languages, in particular French, are needed to draw relevant distinctions.

(1) a (subject cleft) E' Gianni che ha parlato
it is Gianni that has spoken

b (object cleft) E' Gianni che i ragazzi hanno salutato
it is Gianni that the boys have greeted

Two main questions should be asked: i. where in the clause structure is the clefted constituent located? ii. Is the shape of the CP the same in the two cases?

Assume a vP periphery along the lines I have argued for in previous work (Belletti 2004, 2005); assume the classical hypothesis according to which the copula - *be* as a

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shortcut – takes as its complement a small clause (a long standing hypothesis, dating back at least to Burzio (1986), Stowell (1983), and thoroughly developed in Moro (1997), Rothstein (2000)). It can be proposed that, in the case of clefts, the small clause of the copula is a CP, as schematized in (2) (Belletti (2008) and references cited there):

(2) ……. *Be* [CP ……..]

The dots above (left of) *be* contain a vP periphery, where a new information focus head is present whose specifier is ready to host a new information constituent (see the references quoted for details). We have now to make explicit what the dots in CP correspond to. It seems correct to assume that they differ in part in subject vs non subject clefts.

2.1 The small CP of subject clefts

As clearly evidenced by different languages, e.g. French, the postcopular subject DP of subject clefts can be the focus of new information. Typically, a subject cleft (with an often deleted/unpronounced predicate) can provide the answer to a question on the identification of the subject of the clause:

(3) a Qui (est-ce que qui) a parlé?
who spoke

b C'est Jean (qui a parlé)
it is Jean (who spoke)

As I have discussed in detail in the references quoted, this characteristic answering strategy of French share a crucial property with the inversion strategy characteristically adopted in similar contexts in languages allowing for post verbal new information subjects, such as, e.g., Italian:

(4) a Chi ha parlato?
who spoke

b Ha parlato Gianni
has spoken Gianni

In a cartographic perspective, in both cases the subject fills the same position: the specifier of the low vP peripheral new information focus position. It is in this position that it is interpreted as the constituent carrying the required new information. According to this analysis, the concealed/disguised inversion of subject clefts like (3)b is attributed the analysis in (5), details omitted[1]:

[1] See Belletti (2008). The vP periphery of the copula may also contain Top-type positions (within the dots in (5)) as is the case with the vP periphery of lexical verbs. However, a peculiarity of the copula, in particular in clefts, seems to be that it necessarily involves focalization. This could be expressed by the idea that the vP periphery of the copula is reduced and it solely contains the focus head. I will not develop this idea in detail here, but just note that one could go further and assume that the copula itself is a realization of the focus head in clefts. This idea would at the same time account for the necessary focalization involved in clefts and provide a natural characterization of the frequently observed fact across languages according to which the copula tends to grammaticalize into a focus

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(5) [$_{TP}$Ce … [**FocP** [……. [$_{vP}$ être [Jean [$_{CP}$ ~~qui a parlé~~]]]]]]]

The subject of the small clause complement of the copula raises to the vP peripheral focus where it is interpreted; movement of the copula to a high functional head is also indicated in (5). The CP predicate of the small clause is/can be left unpronounced/deleted. If the hypothesis in (2) is adopted, the whole small clause complement of the copula is a CP in turn.[2] This idea can be naturally expressed in a split conception of the CP: there can be room within CP for both the subject of the small clause and the CP predicate. The subject of the CP small clause is the DP about which the CP introduced by the relative complementizer predicates some property. If we take the idea that a small clause is any constituent where a predication relation obtains – close in spirit to Stowell's (1983) subject across categories original proposal – if we equate the presence of a predication relation with the formal property "having an EPP feature", we can formally characterize a small clause as any categorical projection endowed with an EPP feature. The small clause of the copula in clefts is thus a CP with an EPP feature. Let us refer to it as a small CP. The DP about which the following CP predicates some property, generally referred to as the subject of the small clause, is the constituent which then moves to be associated with new information focus. Thus, we can make (5) more precise, by attributing the label CP to the whole small clause, as in (5'), for the same French sentence:

(5') [$_{TP}$Ce … ……[**FocP** [……. [$_{vP}$ être [$_{CP}$ Jean [$_{CP}$ ~~qui a parlé~~]]]]]]]

It is time now to make precise what the two CP labels in (5') correspond to in a split-articulated conception of the CP projection. I would like to propose that the low CP corresponds to the projection of the Fin head, while the high CP corresponds to some head lower than Force. Thus crucially, in this proposal the CP of a subject cleft is a reduced CP which does not contain the highest part of a CP projection, the projection of Force. The proposal is schematized in (6), with reference to the same French example; the highest head projection, lower than Force, is left unlabeled in (6), and it is again indicated with the neutral label CP:

(6) [$_{TP}$Ce … …[**FocP** [. [$_{vP}$être[$_{CP}$…[$_{EPP}$Jean [$_{FinP}$ ~~qui [a parlé~~]]]]]]]

In (6) the subject of the small CP fills the specifier of the head carrying the EPP feature, which, by assumption, is active within the small CP of subject clefts. In terms of the A/A' distinction, the EPP position of the small clause is an A type position,

particle. See Haraiwa & Ishiara (2002) who attribute this observation to Chris Collins and Frascarelli and Puglielli (2005) for discussing the relation between the focus particle of Somali and the copula in similar terms.

[2] On a first proposal that CPs can be small clauses and its generalization that all small clauses may be CPs, see Starke (1995). See below for reference to Guasti's work on pseudorelatives in closely related terms.

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much as the subject position of regular TP clauses where a predication relation is established with the verbal predicate. The same analysis can be attributed to the small CP complement of perception verbs in pseudorelatives, of the type illustrated in (7)a, b in Italian, thus essentially updating the proposal originally due to Guasti (1993), keeping the main insight unchanged:

(7) a Ho visto Maria che parlava con Gianni
I have seen Maria that spoke to Gianni

b Ho visto [$_{CP}$….[$_{EPP}$Maria [$_{FinP}$che [(*pro*) parlava (-) con Gianni]]]]

In (7), "Maria" is either directly merged in the EPP position of the small CP and a small *pro* related to it is present in the subject position of the following clause, or it is moved to the EPP position from the position where it is merged in the clause. In the latter derivation, extraction should take place from the vP-internal postverbal position indicated as "-" in (7)b, and an expletive *pro* should sit in the preverbal high subject position (Rizzi & Shlonsky 2006, Cardinaletti 2004)). The former derivation is the one which most directly represents an update of the one assumed in Guasti (1993).[3] This issue aside, the small CP of (7)b has exactly the same shape as the one of a subject cleft in (6).

Pseudorelatives of the type in (7) differ from a subject cleft in one respect: while the cleft requires focalization of the small clause subject, focalization in the pseudorelative can either affect the subject or the entire small clause. This is witnessed by the possibility of using the same sentence (7)a as an answer to the following two questions:

(8) a Chi hai visto (che parlava con Gianni)?
whom have you seen (that spoke to Gianni)

b Che cosa hai visto?
what have you seen

As discussed in Guasti (1993) and Rizzi (2000), in both (8)a and b there is direct perception of "Maria", but in (8)b it is the whole small CP which the question focuses on. Clefts, on the other hand, imply a peculiar semantics which provides a unique identification explicitly expressed by the focussed argument. In subject clefts, the (uniquely) identified argument is precisely the subject.[4]

[3] A third derivation is possible, where "Maria" may be moved to the EPP position within CP from a "big DP" inside the clause, stranding a silent (referential, Belletti (2005)) small *pro* in the relevant EPP position within the clause. I leave a resolution of the various technical implementations open, which should optimally be decided on both empirical and theoretical independent grounds.

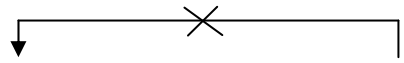
[4] Exchanges like the following, discussed in Rialland, Doetjes & Rebuschi (2002) are possible in French:

i. Q. Qu'est-ce qui se passe?
what happens
A. C'est le petit qui est tombé dans l'escalier (qui se passe)
it is the kid who has fallen on the stairs (that happens)

In cases like this, as suggested by the possibly unpronounced intended predicate in i.A, the uniquely identified argument is present in the cleft answer to the general question of information, modified by a (restrictive) relative clause.

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Given the A status of the EPP position of the small CP complement of the copula that we have assumed, a prediction is directly derived: this position can be filled by the subject of the following clause, but it cannot be filled by a DP corresponding to the direct or indirect object of the following clause. This is so for locality reasons: Relativized Minimalty (RM) would be violated in moving an object to the EPP position of the small CP, crossing over the intervening subject. The relevant part of the derivation is illustrated in the following schema in (9):



(9) …. […[$_{FocP}$ …[$_{vP}$ *be* [$_{CP}$ EPP [$_{FinP}$ che [$_{TP}$ S … O/PP]]]]]…

Hence, a direct consequence of the proposed analysis of subject clefts is that only the subject of the (TP) clause can reach the EPP position - or be directly merged there -in the small CP, for principled reasons.[5] Indeed, this is precisely what happens in pseudorelatives. Only the subject of the clause can be the head of a pseudorelative. This is a well known fact accounted for in similar locality terms in Guasti (1993). The ungrammaticality of (10)a,b, minimally contrasting with the wellformedness of (7)a, repeated in (10)c, illustrates the relevant contrast:

(10) a *Ho visto Maria che Gianni/i ragazzi salutava/salutavano
I have seen Maria that Gianni /the boys greeted

b *Ho visto con Maria che Gianni parlava
I have seen with Maria that Gianni spoke

c Ho visto Maria che parlava con Gianni
I have seen Maria that spoke with Gianni

In contrast, in non subject clefts, to which we turn in the following section, the unique identification implied by the semantics of clefts may also be brought about by a focussed non subject argument. The kind of focalization, however, is not the same in subject and non-subject clefts as we argue in 2.2. And this is the key of the contrast with pseudorelatives.

2.2 The reduced/truncated CP of non subject clefts

Suppose that the CP complement of the copula has the same shape as in (9), but that no active EPP feature is present. In this case the CP is not a small CP, in the technical sense defined above. Nevertheless, it is a similarly reduced CP, where the Force head is lacking. We may see this CP as a truncated CP, in Rizzi's (2005) sense. We can propose that the CP complement of the copula in non subject clefts is precisely a reduced/truncated CP of this sort. If there is no EPP to be satisfied, this has the consequence that there should be no restriction for non-subject arguments to move into the reduced/truncated CP crossing over the intervening subject argument in TP;

[5] This in turn has the consequence that only the subject can then reach the new information focus position in the vP periphery of the copula. See the discussion in 2.2 .

Note that for a direct/indirect object the option of being directly merged in the EPP position with a related *pro* sitting in the argument position of the clause , is not an available option (due to the licensing constraints on object *pro*). Hence, the intervention problem necessarily arises in this case. Furthermore, the movement of a PP to the EPP position would be different from a PP pre-posing operation , which is an A' type operation.

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the movement implemented in this case would be an A' type movement, hence no intervention effect should be produced in this derivation.

To the extent that clefts involve a form of focalization, the natural proposal can then be made that non subject arguments move to the focus position of the reduced/truncated CP. Indeed, this kind of left peripheral focalization within the CP complement of the copula is the only focalization admitted for non subject arguments. Specifically, an alternative direct long movement of an (direct or indirect) object from the embedded TP into the new information focus position in the vP-periphery of the matrix copula is excluded on principled locality grounds. Phase theory (Chomsky (2005)) explicitly rules out the possibility of such long direct moment with no intermediate steps (within the CP), with the embedded CP sent to spell out. But no intermediate step is possible in this case as the reduced/truncated CP complement of the copula does not contain any escape hatch *edge* position, given its reduced/truncated nature. In particular, it does not contain any position different from the criterial interpretable ones, such as e.g., the focus position, from which movement is excluded in principle, through any version of criterial freezing (Rizzi (2006)). The consequence of all this is that while the focalization of subject clefts can occur in the vP periphery of the copula and correspond to the new information focalization expressed by this position, the focalization of non subject arguments necessarily corresponds to left peripheral focalization.

As discussed in detail in various works (Belletti (2004, 2008; Bocci (2004), Rizzi (1997), a.o.), left peripheral focalization involves more than just new information. It typically is contrastive/corrective focalization. If this is the case, then, one direct consequence of the proposal is that although clefts constitute a form of focalization in general, the focalization of subjects can be new information focalization, while the focalization of non subject arguments is contrastive/corrective focalization[6]. I have proposed in the quoted references that a direct reflex of this different way of focalization may be found in the fact that although a cleft (with an often deleted/unpronounced predicate) can be used as a felicitous answer to a question of information on the identification of the subject, the same possibility is not available for a question of information on the identification of the object. This is visible in those languages where clefts are used as a most suitable answering strategy, as in the case of French. The contrast in (11) in French can be taken as an illustration of this important distinction:

(11) Q Qu'est-ce-que t'as acheté (/Qu'as-tu acheté)?
what have you bought
A *C'est un livre
it is a book

Q Avec qui es-tu sorti?
with whom did you get out
A *C'est avec Jean
it is with Jean

[6] Of course, a subject cleft can also instantiate contrastive/corrective focalization, implementing the same movement in the reduced/truncated CP left periphery as non subject arguments. Nothing excludes this possibility. "S" can thus be involved in the same derivation illustrated in (12) following, for non subject clefts the only available derivational option.

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On the other hand, it may be speculated that this clear distinction should not hold in languages where both new information focus and contrastive focus are realized in the left periphery of the clause. Should languages of this type exist, all other things being equal, in these languages both subject and non subject clefts should qualify as possible answering strategies to questions of information. I leave the development of this parametrical option open for further study.[7]

The proposed derivation of non subject clefts is schematized in (12):

ok

(12) ….. *be* [CP ~~Force …~~ [FocP … [FinP che [TP S …O/PP]]]]..

For the sake of explicitness, in (12) the reduced status of the CP complement of the copula is illustrated in terms of the truncation idea.

Summarizing, in both subject and non subject clefts the copula *be* takes a reduced/truncated CP as complement. The reduced/truncated CP may or may not contain an active EPP feature. When it does, it is a small clause CP (a small CP, as we have called it) where a predication type relation holds between the subject of the small clause and the (rest of the) CP predicate, the same kind of relation instantiated in the pseudorelative complement of perception verbs. For principled locality reasons, only the subject of the CP predicate can check the EPP feature. One consequence of this is that only the subject can realize the new information focus in the vP periphery of the matrix copula. If, in contrast, the reduced/truncated CP complement of the copula does not contain any EPP feature, then the focalization implemented by the cleft is left peripheral focalization within the reduced CP complement of the copula. Such focalization is thus contrastive/corrective focalization and not simple new information focalization and, crucially, may also affect non-subject arguments.

3. The position of "che" and the nature of the CP complement of "be"

Given the general analysis presented in the preceding paragraphs, I would now like to look more closely at the shape of the reduced CP complement of the copula, concentrating more specifically on the position and nature of the complementizer present in clefts, *che* in Italian in the examples we will consider[8].

According to the proposed analysis *che* is not the realization of the Force head in clefts; rather, it is the realization of finiteness, the lowest Fin head in the articulated CP. This amounts to claiming that the (reduced) clausal complement of the copula is not a full fledged declarative sentence in any case.

[7] Hungarian and Sicilian (Belletti (2008)) may be two languages worth looking at in this perspective. Furthermore, other languages may also more or less parasitically exploit this UG option. One first thing to determine, however, is whether a cleft is an answering strategy normally adopted in the relevant language. I am not in a position to provide structured data in this domain for the moment, so I leave open to future investigation this intriguing comparative issue.

[8] A regular restrictive relative introduced by a clear relative pronoun does not seem to be possible in Italian, as witnessed by the strong marginality of sentences like i.a which contrast with i.b:

i. a*? E' (a) Gianni a cui parlerò di questo problema
it is (to) Gianni to whom I will speak of this problem
b E' a Gianni che parlerò di questo problema
it is to Gianni that I will speak of this problem

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Clear distributional evidence in favour of this distinction comes from the contrast in (13). In (13)a left peripheral focalization is implemented within the declarative CP complement of the verb "dire" (say); as the ungrammaticality of (13)b shows, the mandatory respective order of the complementizer and the focalized argument, here a direct object, is C – Foc and cannot be Foc – C. This is expected given the shape of the articulated CP, the very nature of the Force head, and the respective order of the Force and Focus heads, with Force the highest head of the articulated CP.

(13) a Ho detto che GIANNI avrebbero assunto (non Maria)
I have said that GIANNI they would have hired (not Maria)

b *Ho detto GIANNI che avrebbero assunto (non Maria)
I have said GIANNI that they would have hired (not Maria)

Similarly, whenever a perception verb like "vedere"(see) is used in its epistemic reading (and not in its perception reading) the order, as expected, is once again C – Foc and not Foc – C, as illustrated in (14).

(14) a Ho visto che GIANNI avrebbero assunto (non Maria)
I have seen that GIANNI they would have hired (not Maria)

b *Ho visto GIANNI che avrebbero assunto (non Maria)
I have seen GIANNI that they would hae hired (not Maria)

In the CP complement of the copula in clefts, which in the proposal we have developed is reduced/truncated under Force, the order is rather Foc – C, as (15) reminds.

(15) a E' GIANNI che assumeranno (non Maria)
it is GIANNI that they will hire (not Maria)

b E' con GIANNI che parleranno del problema (non con Maria)
it is with GIANNI that they will speak of the problem (not with Maria)

c E' GIANNI che ha parlato (non Maria)
it is GIANNI that spoke (not Maria)

The respective order of Foc and C in (15) is directly obtained if *che* is not here the realization of Force, but rather the realization of Fin, as assumed. (15)c is an instance of left peripheral focalization of the subject in the reduced CP complement of the copula, an option available for all kinds of arguments, direct and PP complements included as in (15)a, b (see footnote 6, and the discussion in 2.2).

If *che* is not the expression of the declarative Force of the clause in clefts, this comes close to claiming that clefts like those in (15), which instantiate left peripheral focalization, are not that different from root left peripheral focalization in sentences like (16).

(16) a GIANNI assumeranno (non Maria)
GIANNI they will hire (not Maria)

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b Con GIANNI parleranno del problema (non con Maria)
with GIANNI they will speak of the problem (not with Maria)

c GIANNI ha parlato (non Maria)
GIANNI spoke (not Maria)

Under cartographic assumptions, in (16) the contrastively/correctively focalized phrase fills the specifier of the high focus position within the articulated CP; this is exactly the same position occupied by the embedded focalized argument in the clefts of (15).

However, even though no declarative force is expressed by the complementizer in clefts like (15), this is not equivalent to saying that focalizing by means of a cleft as in (15) amounts to exactly the same kind of focalization as root left peripheral focalization of the kind in (16). As noted above, a cleft is not just a way of focalizing a phrase. Even if this may be (one of) the most salient property of clefts in general, other semantic/discourse values are implied by use of a cleft. In particular, a cleft also implies a unique identification of the focussed element (Kiss (1988); Abels & Muriungi (2005) for more recent discussion). Furthermore, there is in clefts what we may call a presupposition of existence, likely to be induced by the very presence of the copula.[9] A similar presupposition is not necessarily implied in (root) left peripheral focalization. The following contrast in (17), brought to my attention by Paola Benincà, suggests exactly this kind of distinction between the two focalization procedures. The contrast identifies one context where use of one of the two structures is not just infelicitous, it is plainly ungrammatical.

(17) a NESSUNO ho incontrato (non tutti)
nobody I met (not everybody)

b. *(Non) E' NESSUNO che ho incontrato (non tutti)
it is (not) nobody that I met (not everybody)

In (17) the indefinite negative quantifier "nessuno" (nobody), corresponding to the direct object of the clause, is (contrastively) focalized in the left periphery. The clear ungrammaticality of (17)b in contrast with the possibility of (17)a indicates that such focalization can be done by means of a plain left peripheral operation, but not through a cleft.[10] We interpret this as due to the special semantic-discourse value implied by use of a cleft, which, as a first approximation, we have identified in a presupposition of existence of the uniquely identified argument, linked to the very presence of the copula. Thus, although the kind of focalization can be the same in the two structures, involving the left peripheral focus position in both cases, the two structures are not equivalent in their overall discourse value, with the consequence that, in pairs like (17), one is just plainly ungrammatical.

[9] An interesting comparative question that I am not in a position to properly address here, concerns the status of clefts (or rather their equivalents) in languages without the copula. This is left open to future investigation.

[10] The left peripheral focalization of the indefinite quantifier can also be located in an embedded CP, with the decarative complementizer preceding the focalized phrase, as always. This is illustrated in

i. Ho detto che NESSUNO assumeranno (non tutti)
I have said that NOBODY they will hire (not everybody)

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It thus seems that there are good reasons to believe that the complementizer present in clefts is not the one found in embedded declarative clauses expressing the declarative illocutionary force of the sentence. Since, however, it is the same word, at least in Italian (*che*) and several other languages, it would be most welcome if this coincidence could be expressed in some form. Let us then hypothesize in this connection that a complementizer like *che* always originates in Fin. Let us further assume that in a full fledged selected subordinate CP it raises up to the Force head to check the interpretive illocutionary declarative force of the clause. It would be through a mechanism of this sort that *che* at the same time expresses the finite nature of the clause and its declarative force. Given these assumptions, should the Force head not be present, *che* could solely express finiteness. Our proposal has been that this is precisely the case of clefts, where *che* remains in Fin and there expresses the finite nature of the embedded clause.

It is known that there are languages where more than one complementizer is/can be expressed in complementation.[11] If the derivational mechanism just described is on the right track and if it has a general application, it would provide a direct reason why this possibility should arise: given the view that movement is copying (Chomsky (1995) and subsequent work), the two instances of the complementizer could just be seen as two spell-outs of different copies. The copies would be located in the distinct Force and Fin heads, with the complementizer originally externally merged in Fin, and subsequently internally re-merged in Force.[12] While it is generally just the highest copy the one which is sent to spell out, it is in principle conceivable that, under defined conditions whose identification is beyond the aims of the present work, both copies be phonetically realized. This may be a non trivial general consequence of the idea that *che* is primarily the realization of Fin. A property that cleft sentences appear to overtly realize in a reduced/truncated CP, where *che* remains in Fin.

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[11] See Paoli (2007) for recent discussion of different Romance varieties manifesting this possibility, which is interpreted along lines related to ours, with the complementizers exploiting the two heads Force and Fin. Our proposal capitalizes on the nature of movement as copying as is discussed momentarily in the text.

[12] As pointed out in Belletti (2008), the proposal also opens up the possibility that some language may have two different complementizers realizing Force and Fin respectively, or else that some language realizes the complementizer of clefts in a way different from the declarative complementizer. A way of characterizing these (hypothetical) languages could be that the complementizer in Fin would have the property of not moving to Force, where the relevant feature would be expressed by a complementizer directly merged in Force.

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