

# There's more to Italian *c'è* clefts than expressing all-focus

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This paper investigates the information structural and discursive properties of Italian *c'è* 'there is' clefts (*C'è il gatto che ha fame*, 'There's the cat that is hungry'). We argue by means of a qualitative corpus analysis that *c'è* clefts are more versatile than previously assumed: not only are *c'è* clefts able to express several information structure articulations other than the prototypical all-focus articulation (focus-background, double contrast, contrastive topic-comment), we also question the widespread assumption that clefts are exclusively motivated by the expression of information structure by showing that *c'è* clefts can have other motivations too. These motivations include (i) signaling that a singular indefinite NP has plural reference, (ii) the expression of reinforced negation, (iii) increasing textual coherence. Furthermore, we show that the few topical NPs that *c'è* introduces simultaneously have topical and focal properties. Thus, the data support our hypothesis that *c'è* clefts function as processing cues preventing a regular topic-comment construal.\*

**KEYWORDS:** *c'è* clefts; Italian; information structure; all-focus; focus-background; topic-comment; contrastive topic; reinforced negation; textual coherence

## 1. Introduction

In this paper, we investigate the information structural and discursive properties of the Italian *c'e* 'there is' cleft (1-2). Note that we translated the Italian originals to English using *there's/there is* for the sake of clarity, despite the fact that it may often be more natural in English to leave out *there's/there is*.

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- (1) *C'è*            *il gatto*            *che ha fame.*  
there's        the cat            that has hunger  
'There's the cat that is hungry.' (Berretta 1995, our translation)
- (2) *C'è*            *il gatto*            *che gioca*            *nel giardino.*  
there's        the cat            that plays            in the garden  
'There's the cat that is playing in the garden.' (De Cesare 2007: 136, our translation)

*C'è* clefts constitute a subtype of the more general category of 'c'è sentences', which also include (existential / locative / presentational) sentences without relative clauses such as *C'è uno squalo nel Lago Maggiore* 'There's a shark in the Lake Maggiore'. This type of cleft is relatively under-researched in comparison to its equivalents in e.g. English and French. Furthermore, most analyses of *c'è* clefts present only a few carefully selected examples, often without a discourse context, and are at most corpus-based but do not scrutinize a large corpus in depth (e.g. Berretta 1995; Marzo & Crocco 2015). An additional problem is that not all authors use the same definition of *c'è* clefts (see De Cesare 2007; Marzo & Crocco 2015 about this issue).

It is common in the cross-linguistic literature on clefts to assume that the main *raison d'être* of clefts is to express a certain information structure articulation (see for example Lambrecht 2001). Thus, the main function of Italian *c'è* clefts is to create an all-focus articulation and thereby 'present' a new referent that can subsequently be picked up as a topic (De Cesare 2007; Marzo & Crocco 2015).

However, there is an increasing amount of analyses showing that specific types of clefts (e.g. *it* clefts, French *c'est* 'it is' and *il y a* 'there is' clefts) are often able to express *several* information structure articulations (e.g. Prince 1978; Doetjes *et al.* 2004; Dufter 2009; Hedberg 2013; Lahousse & Borremans 2014; Karssenber & Lahousse *forthcoming*). Moreover, it has been argued that clefts are not always motivated by information structure at all (e.g. Dufter 2009; Matic & Wedgwood 2012; Jacob 2015). Given these insights in the use of clefts across languages, the question arises whether the only motivation of *c'è* clefts is to introduce a new referent in an all-focus articulation, as is traditionally put forth.

In this paper, we will present the results of a qualitative corpus analysis, showing that *c'è* clefts are indeed more versatile than previously assumed. Not only are *c'è* clefts able to express several information structure articulations apart from all-focus, we also show that *c'è* clefts can have motivations that are unrelated to the expression of information structure.

As for the information structure properties of *c'è* clefts, the

corpus data contain cases that express all-focus, focus-background, all-focus with a double contrast and contrastive topic-comment. Furthermore, we hypothesize that *c'è* clefts function as processing cues that prevent a regular topic-comment construal of the sentence. Surprisingly, the data contain a few instances in which *c'è* introduces a discourse-given referent. We will show that these tokens do not contradict our hypothesis to the extent that they are not regular topics.

Concerning the motivations of *c'è* clefts that are not linked to information structure, we show that speakers can use *c'è* clefts for reasons related to scope, the expression of a special type of negation and increasing textual coherence.

An in-depth corpus analysis allows us to analyze the phenomenon at hand in more detail and conclude that the prototypical (often decontextualized) examples cited in the linguistic literature do not reflect the richness of the *c'è* cleft. Moreover, we hope that our analysis stimulates further critical approaches to the notion of 'cleft' and the widespread assumption that clefts are only dedicated to the expression of information structure, by showing that clefts are not always a one-to-one form-function pairing. It should be noted that since the consulted corpus is written and we didn't investigate the possible intonational effects, we are unable to state anything about the prosody of *c'è* clefts. We leave this issue for future research.

The paper is structured as follows. A brief overview of previous analyses (section 2) is followed by a presentation of the methodology used in this study (section 3). The information structure properties of *c'è* clefts are analyzed in section 4, and section 5 is devoted to functions of *c'è* clefts that are unrelated to information structure.

## *2. Previous analyses*

*C'è* sentences such as *C'è il gatto che ha fame* 'The cat is hungry' are usually considered as a subtype of existential or presentational sentences introduced by *c'è* (e.g. Berruto 1986; Berretta 1995; De Cesare 2007; Sornicola 2010; Cruschina 2012; Marzo & Crocco 2015; Casalicchio 2016; Cruschina 2016). Different classifications of *c'è* sentences have been proposed, in which the type of *c'è* sentence with a relative clause, such as (1-2), figures more or less prominently. In our view, those examples can be seen as instances of the cross-linguistic cleft family introduced by different expressions (e.g. English *it is*, *there is*, French *c'est* 'it is', *il y a* 'there is' and a null pronoun in Italian *è* 'it is' clefts). What all clefts have in common is the fact that

they use a biclausal syntactic format (introducing expression + clefted element + [pseudo-]relative clause) in order to express a single proposition that could also be expressed by a sentence with Subject Verb (SV) or, in Italian, Verb Subject (VS) word order. Thus, the well-known Italian cleft in (3a) expresses the same proposition as the VS word order sentence in (3b).

- (3) È '(IT) IS' CLEFT  
 CONTEXT: Is your knee hurting?
- a. *No, è il PIEDE che mi fa male*  
 no is the foot that me.DAT does pain  
 'No, it's my FOOT that hurts.'
- b. *No, mi fa male il PIEDE*  
 no me.DAT does pain the foot  
 'No, my FOOT hurts.' (Cruschina, 2014)

Similarly, the *c'è* cleft in (4a) corresponds to the canonical equivalents with SV and VS word order in (4b) and (4c) respectively, which contain neither the expression *c'è* nor a relative clause.

- (4) a. *C'è una signora che ti cerca.*  
 there's a lady who you searches  
 'There's a lady looking for you.' (Serianni 2000: 178-179, in: De Cesare, 2007: 128, our translation)
- b. *Una signora ti cerca.*  
 a lady you searches  
 'A lady is looking for you.' (Serianni 2000: 178-179, in: De Cesare, 2007: 128, our translation)
- c. *Ti cerca una signora*  
 you searches a lady  
 'A lady is looking for you.'

There is an ongoing discussion about the exact syntactic nature of the relative clause in clefts, which is characterized by various terms, such as 'pseudo-relative', 'relative clause-like complement', 'small clause' and 'reduced Complementizer Phrase' (e.g. Belletti 2008, 2012, 2013; Verwimp & Lahousse 2016). Indeed, the *che*-clause often displays properties that set it apart from relative clauses known as 'restrictive relative clauses' (e.g. the possibility of having a proper noun as antecedent), which explains the label '*pseudo-relative*'. For an extensive analysis of pseudo-relatives in Romance varieties, see Casalicchio (2013b, 2013a) (and more specifically about pseudo-relatives behind *c'è*: Casalicchio 2013b: 124-138). We follow Lambrecht (2001) in seeing the *che*-clause in clefts as a subtype of the more general category of 'relative clause', of which restrictive and appositive relative clauses are two other subtypes. Furthermore, it is important

to realize that there is no general consensus about the necessary and/or sufficient criteria for inclusion in the cleft category. While some authors adopt a strictly syntactic approach, focusing on the properties of the relative clause (e.g. Belletti 2012 and colleagues in the generative framework), others see 'deleftability' (i.e. the transformation into a canonical equivalent) as an essential criterion (e.g. Dufter 2009). We adopt the latter stance in order to allow for an inclusive approach that does not disregard all syntactically ambiguous corpus tokens. In this way, we hope to come to a broader understanding of the phenomenon than if we were to analyze only those tokens that closely resemble the prototypical instances of *c'è* clefts that are already discussed in previous works. However, this decision also entails that some of the conclusions in this paper may not be pertinent for researchers who define clefts in a more restrictive way. The monoclausal equivalent should express the same (semantic) proposition, but may be *pragmatically* infelicitous, as argued for by Lambrecht (1988: 137), among others. For instance, Lambrecht argues that French presentational *il y a* clefts introducing proper names or indefinite NPs are usually 'pragmatically unacceptable', because there is a ban on such NPs in sentence-initial position in French (and in other languages).

Apart from the possibility of transformation into a canonical counterpart, clefts introduced by different expressions also have other properties in common. For instance, the initial expression is often stated to be semantically empty (e.g. Lambrecht 2001), which has also been reported for presentational *c'è* (e.g. Berretta 1995; De Cesare 2007). However, it needs to be noted that some authors, such as Davidse (1999, 2000, 2014); Davidse & Kimps (2016) and Karszenberg & Lahousse (*forthcoming*), argue that the cleft expressions are *partly* rather than *completely* delexicalized in French and English. Another characteristic clefts have in common is that they often resemble related constructions that are not clefts. In the case of clefts introduced by *it* and its cross-linguistic equivalents, such 'cleft lookalikes' concern identifying sentences that do not correspond to a canonical equivalent, such as (5). The *it* sentence in (5a) is not a cleft: the proposition it expresses in this particular discourse context cannot be conveyed by a sentence with SV word order, as illustrated in (5b). However, in the context presented in (6a), the same string of words *is* a cleft, as confirmed by the felicitous transformation in (6b).

(5) CLEFT LOOKALIKE WITH *it* (IDENTIFYING *it* SENTENCE)

- a. A: *Who's that talking to the police?* — B: *It's the director who was sacked.*  
(Huddleston & Pullum 2002: 1416)
- b. A: *Who's that talking to the police?* — B: # *The director was sacked.*

(6) *It* CLEFT

- a. A: *I hear they sacked the secretary.* — B: *No, it was the director who was sacked.* (Huddleston & Pullum 2002: 1416)
- b. A: *I hear they sacked the secretary.* — B: *No, the director was sacked.*

A similar opposition can be found with *c'è* sentences: certain utterances can be classified as clefts in one context but as regular existential / presentational / locative sentences in another context. In (7), the *c'è* sentence cannot be transformed into a VS/SV sentence (and hence is *not* a cleft), because it no longer expresses the same proposition in this context. However, the same word sequence *is* a cleft in the context provided in (8), witness the fact that it can be transformed into a felicitous VS word order sentence.

(7) CLEFT LOOKALIKE WITH *c'è* (EXISTENTIAL *c'è* SENTENCE)

- a. *Che cosa c'è sul tavolo?* — *C'è la tazza che si è rotta.*  
 'What's on the table?' — 'There's the cup that broke.'
- b. *Che cosa c'è sul tavolo?* — # *Si è rotta la tazza.*  
 'What's on the table?' — # 'The cup broke.'

(8) *C'è* CLEFT

- a. *Che cosa è successo?* — *C'è la tazza che si è rotta.*  
 'What happened?' — 'There's the cup that broke.'
- b. *Che cosa è successo?* — *Si è rotta la tazza.*  
 'What happened?' — 'The cup broke.'

Although *c'è* clefts and *è* clefts have several properties in common, this does not entail that they are interchangeable in the same discourse contexts: while *è* clefts are usually argued to exhaustively identify a value (*my foot* in (3)) for a given variable (*body part that hurts*), *c'è* clefts prototypically express all-new events (see (8)). Such differences in discourse function have also been reported in other languages, e.g. English clefts introduced by *it* and *there* (Davidse 2000; Lambrecht 2001; Davidse 2014; Davidse & Kimps 2016) and French clefts introduced by *c'est* 'it is' and *il y a* 'there is' (Karssenber & Lahousse *forthcoming*). In this paper, we limit ourselves to the analysis of *c'è* clefts, leaving an in-depth comparison with *è* clefts for future research.

The equivalence between the cleft versions and their canonical counterparts in examples such as (8a-b) raises the question why the speaker would use a more complex structure (a cleft) instead of conveying the same proposition in a simpler equivalent (an SV or VS sentence). The largely prevalent answer to this question is that clefts

allow to express a particular information structure articulation that the SV/VS sentence is unable to convey. For instance, *it* clefts have been argued to express a focus-background partitioning in which the clefted element is focalized (i.e. is the salient part of the sentence), whereas the relative clause expresses discourse-given information (e.g. Lambrecht 2001). Similarly, *c'è* clefts are often seen as 'focalizing structures' (Berretta 1995; Dardano 1996; De Cesare 2007; Marzo & Crocco 2015). In all examples of *c'è* clefts presented in the literature, the whole sentence expresses new information, and the clefted element is not topical in the sense of 'that which the sentence is about' (for definitions of 'topic' in terms of aboutness, see Strawson 1964; Gundel 1974; Reinhart 1982; Lambrecht 1994; Erteschik-Shir 2007). In other words, *c'è* clefts are commonly presented as all-focus structures. However, as stated in the introduction, equivalents of *c'è* clefts in other languages are able to express not one but several information structure articulations. A relevant cleft type in this respect is the French equivalent of the *c'è* cleft, the *il y a* 'there is' cleft, which can express not only all-focus (9), but also focus-background (10) (see Léard 1992; Lambrecht 2001; Karssenbergh 2016a, 2016b, 2017; Verwimp & Lahousse 2016; Karssenbergh & Lahousse *forthcoming*) and all-focus with a double contrast (11) (Karssenbergh 2016a, 2017; Karssenbergh & Lahousse *forthcoming*). These different articulations presumably have different intonational contours, which under some accounts could be taken to indicate that they in fact constitute different constructions. However, to the best of our knowledge, this issue has not yet been investigated, and we thus remain agnostic about it.

(9) ALL-FOCUS *il y a* CLEFT

*Y'a le téléphone qui sonne!*  
there's the phone that rings  
'The phone's ringing!' (Lambrecht 1988: 137)

(10) FOCUS-BACKGROUND *il y a* CLEFT

- A: "Je recherche des modèles de voiture à acheter neuve moins de 10 000 euros, ou aller!?"  
B: "Bonjours. Il y a la Citroën C1 qui est a moins de 10 000 euros."  
A: «I'm looking for new car models that cost less than €10.000, where should I go?!»  
B: «Hello. There's the Citroën C1 that costs less than €10.000.» (Karssenbergh 2016a: 14)

(11) ALL-FOCUS *il y a* CLEFT WITH A DOUBLE CONTRAST

- A: “Atterissage de l’airbus à New-York? [video link] *Le co-pilote n’était t-il pas un arabe* [laughing out loud] *et traiter les arabes de terroriste.*”
- B: “*Il y’a un pilote qui arrive a poser un avion sur l’eau et évite la perte de 160 personne, et d’un autre coté il y’a toi qui n’arrive même pas a faire une phrase compréhensible!!!*”
- A: «Landing of the airbus in NY? [video link] Wasn’t the co-pilot an Arab (lol [laughing out loud]), and to treat Arabs like terrorists!»
- B: «There’s a pilot who manages to land a plane on the water and avoid the deaths of 160 people and, on the other hand, there’s you who can’t even write a comprehensible sentence!!!» (Karssenber 2016a: 9)

According to Karssenber (2016a), *il y a* clefts do not introduce discourse-given topics, and can be seen as processing cues that avoid a topic-comment construal of the sentence. This analysis is in line with observations about Italian presented by Cruschina (2012); Bentley (2013); Bentley *et al.* (2015), according to whom *c’è* sentences in different varieties of Italo-Romance are unable to introduce a discourse-given topic. This is shown by the infelicity of (12B), in which the referent *the towels* is topical, due to the preceding question.

(12) Italian variety: Santa Croce di Magliano, Molise

- |    |   |                   |                          |
|----|---|-------------------|--------------------------|
| A: | <i>Dovə</i>   | <i>stannə</i>     | <i>i tuvagliə?</i>       |
|    | where   | stay.3PL          | the towels               |
|    | ‘Where are the towels?’   |                   |                          |
| B: | <i>Cə stannə</i>  | <i>i tuvagliə</i> | <i>dend’ u taraturə.</i> |
|    | there stay.3PL  | the towels        | inside the drawer        |
|    | # ‘There are the towels inside the drawer.’ (Bentley <i>et al.</i> 2015: 75-76) |                   |                          |

Given these facts, we posit the hypothesis that *c’è* clefts, similarly to *il y a* clefts, prevent a topic-comment construal and thereby facilitate language processing. This hypothesis leads us to predict that *c’è* clefts do not introduce discourse-given topics. This predication will be verified in section 4.

Furthermore, although it may often be true that clefts in general create a particular information structure articulation, this does not mean that the encoding of information structure is the sole purpose of clefts (Dufter 2006, 2009; Matic & Wedgwood 2012; Jacob 2015). For instance, Dufter (2006, 2009) shows that clefts across languages can also be used to avoid scope ambiguities, and the French *c’est* ‘it is’ clefts discussed by Jacob (2015) serve functions related to rhetoric. Indeed, in section 5, we will show that *c’è* clefts can also serve functions that are not directly related to the expression of information structure.

### 3. Methodology

For the present study, the *La Stampa* corpus was used. The whole corpus contains the editions of the daily newspaper *La Stampa* ('The Press') from 1996 to 1998 and has an approximate size of 75 million tokens (see Gaeta & Ricca 2002 for more details). We limited our search to the editions of the year 1998 (approximately 25 million tokens) and automatically extracted 2.616 sentences introduced by the singular form *c'è* 'there is' and 687 tokens with the plural form *ci sono* 'there are' followed by a relative clause, using Nooj. All plural forms were manually classified, as well as the first 1500 instances of the singular forms. This led to a total of approximately 250 clefts. A token was classified as a cleft if it could be transformed into an SV/VS equivalent. Thus, while the underlined sentence in (13a) is considered a cleft corresponding to the VS equivalent in (13b), the token in (14a) was excluded from the analysis, because it does not have an SV/VS equivalent (14b).

(13) C'è CLEFT

- a. *Alla domanda sulle nomine in programma lunedì nel consiglio Mediaset, Berlusconi è stato evasivo: "C'è mia figlia che se ne occupa."*  
'When asked about the appointments scheduled next Monday at the Mediaset council, Berlusconi was evasive: «There's my daughter who takes care of that.»'
- b. [...] *Se ne occupa mia figlia.*  
[...] 'My daughter takes care of that.'

(14) EXCLUDED TOKEN

- a. *Alla guida del governo c'è un uomo che si chiama Romano Prodi e che è iscritto al gruppo parlamentare dei Popolari alla Camera.*  
'At the head of the government there's a man who's called Romano Prodi and who is part of the parliamentary group of the Popolari in the House.'
- b. # *Alla guida del governo un uomo si chiama Romano Prodi e è iscritto al gruppo parlamentare dei Popolari alla Camera.*  
# 'At the head of the government, a man is called Romano Prodi and is part of the parliamentary group of the Popolari in the House.'

#### 4. Information structure articulations

In this section, we show that *c'è* clefts can express the same information structure articulations as its French equivalent, namely all-focus with or without a double contrast (section 4.1) and focus-background (section 4.2). As far as we know, double contrast and focus-background tokens have not yet been analyzed in the Italian literature, possibly because of their limited frequency. These findings show that *c'è* clefts do not constitute a one-to-one form-function pairing, as is often assumed in the literature on clefts in general (see section 2). Furthermore, contrary to the prediction posited in section 2, the corpus data contain three instances in which *c'è* introduces a discourse-given referent. We will analyze and account for these tokens in section 4.3. The consequences of our findings are discussed in section 4.4.

##### 4.1. All-focus

In the most prototypical instances of all-focus *c'è* clefts illustrated in the literature, the sentence expresses an observable event involving a human referent. Most *c'è* clefts in our corpus are indeed of this type. Thus, in (15-16), the cleft expresses an ongoing event involving an unknown man committing violent acts, and the cleft in (17) introduces four unknown men waiting for the speaker in a harbor.

- (15) *Nell'auto dietro a Vignola, c'era un collega, munito di telefono cellulare che ha dato l'allarme: «C'è un uomo che spara per strada.»*  
'In the car behind Vignola, there was a colleague with a cellphone who raised the alarm: «There's a man shooting in the street.»'
- (16) «*Va bene, allora spostatevi in via Gioberti, c'è un uomo che dà in escandescenze e tenta di abbattere la porta di casa.*» «*Ricevuto.*»  
'«Alright, then move to via Gioberti, there's a man who's creating a scene and is trying to break down the door of his house.» «Roger that.»'
- (17) *Al momento mi accorgo che dentro c'erano quattro tipi che mi aspettavano (...).*  
'At this moment, I realize that inside there were four guys who were waiting for me (...).'

Previous studies have already shown that all-focus *il y a* 'there is' clefts can express a double contrast (Karssenber 2016a; Karssenber & Lahousse *forthcoming*). It turns out that the same holds for *c'è* clefts, which regularly display a contrast between (i) two referents encoded by the clefted NP, and (ii) the opposing characteristics of those referents, encoded by the relative clauses. In (18), for example, a contrast is created between someone who does *not*

pay his/her taxes and the consequence of this action – *others* who have to pay *double*.

- (18) «Penso che stringeremo un patto tra padani: non più una lira di tasse né di imposte a questo Stato se lo Stato non farà le riforme», ha dichiarato venerdì scorso il Senatur in conferenza stampa. «In secondo luogo - ha aggiunto Prodi - voglio poi vedere come fa Bossi con quelli che le debbono pagare al posto suo (le tasse), perché se c'è qualcuno che non le paga ci sono degli altri che ne devono pagare il doppio e credo che questo creerebbe grossi problemi.»  
'I think that we will make an agreement between padani: not a penny of fees or taxes for this state anymore, if the state does not carry out reforms», declared the senator last Friday in a press conference. «Secondly – added Prodi – I want to see how Bossi will handle those who have to pay taxes in his place, because *if there's someone who doesn't pay them, there are others who have to pay double*, and I think that this would create big problems.»

Similarly, in (19), the two referents *il ministro Bindi* 'minister Bindi' and *il Polo* 'the Pole' (a political alliance between several parties) are contrasted: they have opposing reactions to the scandal about a doctor's unorthodox methods. These reactions are expressed by the two relative clauses: minister Bindi is more careful, while *il Polo* is completely behind the new method, and uses it to make a bigger point.

- (19) [Beginning of newspaper article]  
*Il professor Di Bella e la sperimentazione.*  
*Il metodo adottato dal professor Luigi Di Bella contro il cancro sta ormai divenendo sempre più materia di scontro politico. Da una parte c'è il ministro Bindi che cerca di avviare un percorso di sperimentazione stabilito in un decreto appositamente approvato. Dall'altra il Polo che, pur non entrando nel merito della cura (come potrebbe?), giura sulla totale affidabilità del metodo del professore di Modena, facendo del metodo stesso un simbolo della libertà di cura.*  
'Professor Di Bella and his experimentation.  
The method used by professor Luigi Di Bella against cancer is becoming more and more a subject of political debate. On the one hand, *there's minister Bindi who is trying to pave the way for an experimental path that would be approved in a special decree*. On the other hand (there's) *il Polo* [political alliance] which, while not commenting on the merits of the treatment (how could they?), swears on the complete reliability of the professor's method, turning the method itself into a symbol of freedom of treatment.'

In our view, the contrasts expressed in these examples are not encoded in the cleft construction, but can be derived from context: taken out of context, neither of these *c'è* sentences is 'inherently' contrastive. Hence, these examples can be seen as cases of what

Lombardi Vallauri (2001) characterized as ‘syntagmatic contrast’, i.e. a contrast that “holds between the focused element and other elements that are part of the linguistic context” (Lombardi Vallauri 2001:244). In other words, rather than stating that *c’è* clefts are special linguistic constructions dedicated to the expression of contrast in these instances, it is more accurate to claim that the referent introduced by the *c’è* cleft receives a contrastive reading in certain contextual environments (see also Leonetti 2014 for a similar view of contrast in other environments).

To conclude, our corpus data contain (i) prototypical all-focus instances of *c’è* clefts, as described in the literature, and (ii) all-focus tokens with a double contrast, which had not yet been analysed before. These clefts are therefore a first indication that not all *c’è* clefts resemble the prototypical examples presented in previous analyses.

#### 4.2 Focus-background

Other cases that show that *c’è* clefts do not constitute a one-to-one form-function pairing are focus-background *c’è* clefts. The fact that these are few in number in our corpus (less than a dozen) may explain why this type of *c’è* cleft has so far remained unnoticed. As an illustration, consider (20), in which the relative clause (*who can take on this role*) relates to the role of ‘representing minors’ and is therefore discourse-given. What is salient here is the fact that *the prosecutor* can already fulfil this function.

- (20) *Molti chiedono anche l’istituzione di una figura che rappresenti il minore: l’avvocato dei bambini. «Non sono d’accordo - osserva l’onorevole Lucidi - perché c’è già il PM che può rivestire questo ruolo, magari si può rafforzare il suo potere d’intervento.»*

‘Many people also ask for the institution of a figure who represents minors: a children’s advocate. ‘I disagree – observes Mr. Lucidi – because *there’s already the prosecutor who can take on this role*, maybe his right to intervene can be strengthened.’

Similarly, in (21), the information expressed by the relative clause – *people who are afraid of communists* – can be inferred from the preceding statement about anticommunism. What is focalized is the fact that *only Berlusconi* is still afraid of communists.

- (21) [“Why do you think the right-wing politician said outrageous things about homosexuals?”] *“A me pare che questa gente stia cercando qualcosa di qualificante per far presa sugli elettori. È un modo di compattare la destra agitandogli*

*davanti un drappo colorato. Ormai l'anticomunismo non basta più, c'è solo Berlusconi che ha ancora paura dei comunisti in questo Paese... E allora perché non puntare sugli omosessuali?"*

‘It seems to me that these people are trying to find something to appeal to voters. It’s a way to keep the right-wing together, waving a colorful flag in front of them. Anticommunism is not enough anymore, *there’s only Berlusconi who’s still afraid of communists in this country...* So why not focus on homosexuals?’

As a final illustration of the focus-background type, consider (22). Since this cleft is the first sentence of an article, nothing can be assumed to be discourse-given. However, the fact that the council is ‘trembling’ (i.e. ‘has internal problems’) is accommodated as given by the hearer. The salient information in this sentence is the fact that the council is *not the only party* that is trembling. The following discourse context then elaborates on this: the Torino shopkeepers are also internally divided.

(22) [Beginning of article]

Non c'è solo la giunta che vacilla. *Anche tra i commercianti torinesi si è aperta una profonda spaccatura con posizioni contrapposte.*

*‘There’s not only the council that’s trembling.* Even among the shopkeepers in Torino a profound split has emerged with opposing positions.’

Presumably, focus-background *c'è* clefts are read with a different intonational contour in mind than prototypical *c'è* clefts with an all-focus articulation. In several accounts, a difference in prosody may be taken to indicate that the all-focus and the focus-background uses of *c'è* clefts correspond to two different (syntactic) constructions. The question of which criteria are necessary and/or sufficient to qualify two utterances as different ‘constructions’ is addressed differently across linguistic frameworks (e.g. Construction Grammar or generative accounts). In this paper, we adopt an inclusive account by considering all *c'è* sentences with a relative clause that can be transformed into an SV/VS equivalent as ‘*c'è* clefts’. We thus see the all-focus and focus-background articulations as two functions of the same construction. However, we are aware that one could also characterize these two uses as two different constructions and we leave this issue open for debate. An analysis of spoken data may give rise to clearer differences in this respect; our generalizations are only relevant for the investigation of written Italian.

To conclude, we have shown that *c'è* clefts, like other clefts in languages such as English and French, are able to express a focus-background articulation.

### 4.3. C'è + discourse-given referent

In section 2 we hypothesized that *c'è* clefts function as processing cues preventing a regular topic-comment construal, and that they therefore probably cannot introduce discourse-given topics. Surprisingly, our data contain three instances of *c'è* clefts that combine with discourse-given referents. We will show that the referents in these instances do not behave like regular topics, and, in this sense, do not contradict our hypothesis.

Firstly, in (23), the clefted element *il bagnino* 'the lifeguard' is mentioned twice in the preceding discourse context.

- (23) *Dunque si cambia, e più che tornare al passato si torna alla tradizione: il bagnino, la piadina, la spiaggia, la famigliola, perfino l'orchestra Casadei e vai con Romagna mia. Si è mosso il marketing, e basta guardare uno dei cento spot pronti per questi due mesi di tv. C'è il bagnino, appunto. Sparite la discoteca, la bellona che va a ballare, la notte folle. C'è il bagnino che promuove il mare, la spiaggia, la vela, il golf, Riccardo Muti che dirige il Ravenna Festival.*

'And so we change, and rather than turning back to past, we go back to tradition: the lifeguard, the piadina [= a kind of pizza], the beach, the family, even the Casadei Orchestra and green light for *Romagna mia* [= a famous song]. Marketing tactics have changed, just watch one of the hundred commercials aired on TV in the past two months. There's the lifeguard, indeed. No more disco, gorgeous dancing women or crazy nights. *There's the lifeguard who promotes the sea, the beach, sailing, playing golf, Riccardo Muti who heads the Ravenna Festival.*'

However, in spite of the fact that *the lifeguard* is discourse-given, it is not topical in the sense of 'that which the sentence is about', as confirmed by the topic test (see Reinhart 1982; Lambrecht 1994; Erteschik-Shir 2007; Hedberg 2013 about this test):

- (24) – *Per quanto riguarda il bagnino, cosa c'è di speciale a proposito di lui?*  
'Regarding the lifeguard, what's special about him?'  
– # *C'è il bagnino che promuove il mare.*  
'There's the lifeguard who promotes the sea.'

In other words, *the lifeguard* is interpreted as a discourse-given focus (see also Dufter 2006: 43 about discourse-given referents that are interpreted as foci in French *c'est* 'it is' clefts).

In the second case, presented in (25), the clefted element *il portiere* 'the goalkeeper' is mentioned in the preceding discourse context, and is the general topic of the newspaper article.

- (25) [Beginning of article]  
*Lido Vieri, preparatore dei portieri del Toro, è anche uno studioso di questo ruolo*

*There's more to Italian c'è clefts than expressing all-focus*

*speciale, diverso da tutti gli altri. Forse, il più delicato sotto il profilo psicologico. Se un attaccante, un centrocampista o un difensore sbagliano, c'è il portiere che può metterci una pezza. Se sbaglia lui, non c'è rimedio. E il portiere è uno degli elementi-cardine, si punti al primo posto o si lotti per la salvezza.*

‘Lido Vieri, trainer of Toro’s goalkeepers, is also an expert of this special role, different from all the others. Maybe even the most delicate one from the psychological point of view. If an attacker, a midfielder or a defender makes a mistake, *there's the goalkeeper who can make up for it*. If he makes a mistake, there's no remedy. And the goalkeeper is one of the pivotal elements, whether one aims at the first position or struggles for salvation.’

The topic test in (26) shows that *the goalkeeper* can be seen as that which the sentence is about.

- (26) – *Per quanto riguarda il portiere, cosa c'è di speciale a proposito di lui?*  
‘Regarding the goalkeeper, what’s special about him?’
- *Se un attaccante, un centrocampista o un difensore sbagliano, c'è il portiere che può salvare il gioco.*  
‘If an attacker, a midfielder or a defender make a mistake, there’s the goalkeeper who can save the game.’

However, it is not a regular topic but a contrastive one: an explicit contrast is evoked between the midfielder and the defender on the one hand and the goalkeeper on the other hand. In our view, it is the contrastive nature of the goalkeeper that allows it to appear behind *c'è* in spite of the fact that it is a topic. This is because contrastive topics have been argued to display properties of topics and foci simultaneously (Erteschik-Shir 2007; Büring 2016). Therefore, contrastive topics may sometimes appear in positions from which regular non-contrastive topics are excluded. This analysis is confirmed by the fact that without the *se* ‘if’-clause which includes the contrastive referents, the *c'è* cleft no longer passes the topic test:

- (27) – *Per quanto riguarda il portiere, cosa c'è di speciale a proposito di lui?*  
‘Regarding the goalkeeper, what’s special about him?’
- # *C'è il portiere che può salvare il gioco.*  
# ‘There’s the goalkeeper who can save the game.’

The last token that contains a discourse-given referent is presented in (28). *Una* ‘one (of them)’ refers to *i giornalisti* ‘the journalists’ in the previous sentence.

- (28) *L'ultima volta che un asteroide precipitò sulla Terra, nella penisola dello Yucatan, provocò l'era glaciale e la fine dei dinosauri. Naturalmente i giornalisti ne escono malconci. C'è una che chiede: «Riuscirete ad evacuare la città*

*prima dell'arrivo dell'asteroide?». Le rispondono: «Riusciremmo, se non fossimo continuamente interrotti dalle vostre domande».*

'The last time an asteroid crashed on earth, in the Yucatan Peninsula, it caused the ice age and the extinction of dinosaurs. Of course, journalists do not remain unharmed. *There's one [of them] who asks: «Will you be able to evacuate the city before the asteroid hits?».* They answer her: «We would, if we weren't continuously interrupted by your questions.»'

In this instance, the topic test indicates that the *c'è* sentence can answer a question *about* the referent, and that the referent can therefore be considered a topic.

- (29) – *Per quanto riguarda i giornalisti? Mi parli dei giornalisti.*  
'What about the journalists? Tell me about the journalists.'  
– *C'è una che chiede [...]*  
'There's one [of them] who asks [...]

However, *una* 'one [of them]' is a rather non-prototypical topic, because it is a specific indefinite NP. Erteschik-Shir (2007) states that contrary to non-specific indefinites, specific indefinites can function as topics: "Whereas an indefinite is new to both speaker and hearer, a specific indefinite is new only to the hearer. Specific indefinites contain a modifier which minimally indicates that the speaker has a particular referent in mind" (Erteschik-Shir 2007: 52). Thus, according to the author, the NP *a person I know* in (30a) is the topic of the sentence, and has the subordinate information structure in (30b).

- (30) a. *A person I know is famous.*  
b. *A person<sub>loc</sub> [I<sub>top</sub> know<sub>]</sub>* (Erteschik-Shir 2007: 52)

The same analysis can be applied to *una* in (28), although the modifier that Erteschik-Shir (2007) sees as obligatory is left implicit in Italian, as indicated in (31).

- (31) *Una<sub>loc</sub> [dei giornalisti<sub>top</sub>]*  
'One<sub>loc</sub> [of.the journalists<sub>top</sub>]

In this sense, Italian differs from other languages such as English and French, in which a modifier relating the pronoun to a previously established referent (*of them, en* 'of.it') is almost obligatory in such contexts (32):

- (32) a. English  
(*There's*) *one of them (who) asks*

- b. French  
*il*            *y*            *en*            *a*            *une*            *qui demande*  
 EXPL        there        of.it        has        one        that asks  
 'There's one of them who asks'

To conclude, in all three instances of *c'è* clefts that contain a discourse-given referent, this referent is not a regular topic: it is either not a topic at all (23) or it has a subordinate information structure combining focal and topical properties, as is the case with contrastive topics (25) and specific indefinites (28).

#### 4.4. Consequences

On an information structure level, *c'è* clefts have commonly been seen as syntactic structures that are dedicated to the expression of all-focus. However, in the previous sections, we have shown that *c'è* clefts express other articulations as well: (i) all-focus with a double contrast, (ii) focus-background, (iii) contrastive topic-comment. These new findings have several consequences. Firstly, they confirm the increasingly widespread insight that clefts are able to express not one but several types of information structure articulations. Secondly, the data can be seen as evidence for the hypothesis posited in section 2, according to which *c'è* clefts prevent the hearer from expecting a regular topic: almost all *c'è* clefts introduce a focal referent. The only exceptions, discussed in section 4.3, introduce topics that have focal properties (a contrastive topic and a specific indefinite topic), and therefore do not qualify as regular topics. More generally, our findings can be seen as evidence for Matic & Wedgwood's (2012) stance that contrary to previous assumptions, many constructions do not unambiguously DETERMINE one particular information structure articulation (e.g. all-focus), but rather that they RESTRICT the number of possibilities (e.g. all-focus OR focus-background, but NOT regular topic-comment). Conversely, one could qualify these different uses as separate constructions, see the discussion at the end of section 4.2.

However, even if *c'è* clefts function as processing cues warning the hearer that a non-topical referent is coming, this does not mean that this is the *only* possible motivation for the use of *c'è* clefts. We will discuss this in the next section.

#### 5. Other motivations

In what follows, we show that *c'è* clefts can be used for reasons other than marking information structure. In this sense, our analysis

is in line with a more general tendency in the literature on information structure: it is becoming increasingly clear that certain structures which used to be considered as dedicated to the expression of information structure are in fact polyfunctional (see for instance Heidinger 2016 about post-verbal constituent order in Spanish, and Bianchi *et al.* 2015 about focus fronting in Italian). More generally, we agree with Matic' & Wedgwood (2012) when they argue that authors often oversimplify linguistic phenomena by equating them with the expression of information structure, disregarding other potentially pertinent motivations that the phenomenon may have.

### 5.1. Singular indefinite NPs with plural reference

In this section, we show that *c'è* clefts can signal that a *singular* indefinite NPs has a *plural* reading (i.e. a wide scope reading), whereas their SV/VS equivalents do not yield this interpretation as easily.

As has been noted by Dufter (2006: 50; 2009), clefts can serve to avoid scope ambiguities that would otherwise occur in their SV/VS equivalents: "By virtue of splitting up a single clause into two and singling out one major constituent, clefting is an excellent device to bring this constituent unambiguously under the scope of operators such as negation, hedges or the like." (Dufter 2009: 108, see also De Cesare's [2007] 'fragmenting function'). According to the author, this function is more relevant in languages such as French than in Italian, because Italian is more tolerant of operators such as negation with narrow scope over single constituents than French. However, our corpus data do contain instances in which the *c'è* cleft allows to avoid a different kind of scope ambiguity, involving indefinite NPs denoting plural referents.

In certain instances, a singular indefinite NP is used in combination with an adverbial expression such as *ogni giorno* 'every day' or *sempre* 'always' in order to express a habitual event, as in (33).

(33) [Interview between the author of the article and a politician]

*Da quando si parla di giustizia in Bicamerale, ogni giorno, c'è un procuratore che ripete: «non ci lasciano lavorare, i processi non si fanno per colpa della classe politica...» «Se si riferisce alle dichiarazioni di Borrelli al Corriere, non mi interessano. Io mi occupo solo di riforme istituzionali». Mi riferisco anche a Colombo.*  
'Ever since there is talk about justice in the Bicameral, every day, *there's a prosecutor who repeats: «they don't let us work, trials don't take place because of the political class...» «If you're referring to the statements made by Borrelli to the Corriere [= a newspaper], I'm not interested in them [...] I also refer to Colombo.'*

In this example, the singular NP can have a plural (/distributive) reading: each time the event occurs (*a prosecutor complains*), it is a DIFFERENT prosecutor who repeats his/her complaint. This plural reading is confirmed by the following discourse context: the interviewee assumes that the interviewer refers to *Borrelli* (“*if you are referring to the statements made by Borrelli in the newspaper Corriere, ...*”) but the interviewer / author of the article states that he/she *also* refers to *Colombo*. In other words, in (33), *un procuratore* ‘a prosecutor’ refers to at least two people.

Interestingly, however, this plural reading is less straightforward in the SV equivalent of the cleft:

- (34) *Ogni giorno, un procuratore ripete: non ci lasciano lavorare.*  
‘Every day, a prosecutor repeats: they don’t let us work.’

This is in line with Kurtzman & MacDonald’s (1993) “single reference principle”, according to which indefinite NPs in subject or topic position are taken to refer to singular referents. We argue that the use of the *c'è* cleft in this example is motivated by the need to signal plural reference: by putting the NP in a position that is *not* a subject or a topic position, the NP can obtain plural reference. In other words, although a plural reading in the SV/VS sentence in (34) is possible, it is signaled more clearly by the original *c'è* cleft in (33).

The same analysis holds for the examples in (35-38), in which *qualcuno* ‘someone’ does not refer to a single, specific person, but has a plural interpretation.

- (35) [End of an article]  
*E mentre Cimoli, alle sei del pomeriggio, va in prefettura per il doveroso vertice, dalla Fisafs-Cisal rilanciano: «Quella è una tratta a rischio, li avevamo avvertiti!». C'è sempre qualcuno che l'aveva detto.*  
‘And while Cimoli goes to the prefecture at six in the afternoon for the due summit, those at Fisafs-Cisal repeat: ‘That’s a risky segment, we warned you!’. *There’s always someone who (already) said so.*’
- (36) *Diceva Sergio Escobar, che dopo neppure due anni ha lasciato l’Opera per il Piccolo Teatro di Milano, che ad ogni nuova iniziativa, ad ogni conquista, c’era sempre qualcuno che tirava fuori «gli scheletri dall’armadio».*  
‘Sergio Escobar, who left the Opera for the Piccolo Teatro di Milano after not even two years, said that for every new initiative, every victory, *there was always someone who pulled «the skeletons out of the closet».*’
- (37) *Per quanto riguarda il plagio di Blu, Zuccherò ha detto: «Non voglio fare la parte del perseguitato, ma ogni volta che esce un mio disco c’è sempre qualcuno che va ad analizzare le canzoni con la lente d’ingrandimento.»*

‘As for the plagiarism of *Blu* [= a song], Zuccherò said: «I don’t want to play the victim, but every time an album of mine is released, *there’s always someone who goes and analyzes the songs through a magnifying glass.*»’

- (38) *Niente è andato bene, non potevamo cambiare l’esito della partita: qualunque cosa facessi c’era sempre qualcuno che sbagliava.*  
 ‘Nothing went right, we couldn’t change the outcome of the match: whatever I did, *there was always someone who made a mistake.*’

Again, a plural interpretation is signaled more clearly in the original sentences introduced by *c’è* than in their SV/VS equivalents in (39), in which *qualcuno* ‘someone’ is in subject position and takes wide scope over *sempre* ‘always’.

- (39) a. *Sempre qualcuno l’aveva detto.* (=35)  
 ‘Someone always (already) said so.’  
 b. [...] *ad ogni conquista, sempre qualcuno tirava fuori gli scheletri dall’armadio*  
 (=36)  
 ‘but with every victory, someone always pulled out the skeletons from the closet.’  
 c. *Ogni volta che esce un mio disco sempre qualcuno va ad analizzare le canzoni con la lente d’ingrandimento.* (=37)  
 ‘Every time one of my albums is released, someone always goes and analyzes the songs with a magnifying glass.’  
 d. [...] *sempre qualcuno sbagliava.* (=38)  
 ‘Someone always made a mistake.’

It can be questioned whether the canonical equivalents in (35-38) do or do not express the same semantic proposition as the original *c’è* sentences that they are based on, because the adverb *sempre* modifies *c’è*. Furthermore, one could add an adverb that is incompatible with *sempre* ‘always’ to the relative clause, as in (40) (examples provided by an anonymous reviewer):

- (40) a. *C’era sempre qualcuno che sbagliava.*  
 ‘There was always someone who made a mistake.’  
 b. *C’era sempre qualcuno che non sbagliava mai.*  
 ‘There was always someone who never made mistakes.’  
 c. \* *Qualcuno non sbagliava sempre mai.*  
 ‘Someone did not always never make mistakes.’

We agree that cases such as (38) are not as straightforward to analyze as the other examples presented in this paper. However, one can argue that these equivalents, as well as the one in (40c), are unacceptable because of parsing/processing difficulties due to the presence of two antonymic adverbs (*always* and *never*). In this sense, they might parallel cases of center embedding such as *It is more likely that the man who said that*

a cat that the dog that the boy owns chased killed the rat is a liar than not (Karlsson 2007: 368), which are too demanding to process, but nonetheless express semantically conceivable propositions that could also be expressed in more accessible ways. In this line of reasoning, the bi-clausal format of the *c'è* sentences in section 5.1 would thus be used to avoid costly ambiguity, as argued for in other types of clefts by e.g. Dufter (2006, 2009).

To conclude, we have shown that *c'è* clefts can interact with scope properties by signaling unambiguously that a singular indefinite NP is to be interpreted with a plural reading. This is in contrast with their SV/VS equivalents, which do not indicate as clearly that a plural reading is intended.

### 5.2. Reinforced negation

In this section, we argue that *c'è* clefts can embody a type of reinforced negation. The *c'è* clefts in our corpus are often used in combination with *non* 'not', leading to expressions such as *non c'è niente che* 'there's nothing that' (41), *non c'è un milligrammo che* 'there's not a (single) milligram that' (42) and *non c'è uno che* 'there's not a (single) person who' (43):

- (41) «*E allora perché l'Avvenire vi accusa di essere succubi della sinistra?*»  
«*C'è chi ha l'abitudine di considerare anti-costituzionale tutto ciò che non li trova d'accordo. Mi spiace, ma nella nostra Costituzione non c'è niente che impedisca una legge sulla fecondazione eterologa.*»  
'Then, why does *Avvenire* [= a newspaper] accuse you of being submissive to the left?« There are people who have the habit of considering unconstitutional anything that they don't agree with. I'm sorry, but in our constitution, *there's nothing to prevent a law on heterologous artificial insemination.*»
- (42) *Ammettiamolo: non c'è un milligrammo della sua fama che non sia meritato.*  
'Let's admit it: *there isn't a milligram of his fame that he didn't earn.*'
- (43) *Rabbia per uno scippo che ai ladri frutterà pochi soldi e a lei tanti grattacapi: le hanno rubato 50 mila lire in contanti, un telefonino da rivendere a qualche ricettatore e i documenti. E rabbia per l'indifferenza della gente. «Quando mi sono rialzata, tutti hanno visto com'ero conciata, ma nessuno ha mosso un dito. Non c'è stato uno che si sia avvicinato e mi abbia teso la mano.»*  
'Anger about a mugging that will bear the thieves little money and that leaves her with a big headache: they stole 50 thousand lire in cash, a mobile phone to sell and some other goods and documents. And anger about people's indifference. «When I got up, everybody could see in which state I was, but nobody lifted a finger. *There wasn't a single person to come closer and give me a hand.*»'

Such sentences have a VS/SV equivalent in which the negative quantifier *niente* 'nothing' or *nessuno* 'nobody' is sentence-initial (44a)-(44c), or the double negation is replaced by *ogni X* 'every X' (44b).

- (44) a. *Niente impedisce una legge sulla fecondazione eterologa.*  
'Nothing stops a law about heterologous artificial insemination.'
- b. *Ammettiamolo: ogni milligramma della sua fama è meritato.*  
'Let's admit it: every milligram of his fame is well-earned.'
- c. *Nessuno si è avvicinato e mi ha teso la mano.*  
'Nobody came closer and gave me a hand.'

The propositional content of the SV/VS equivalent seemingly remains the same, but in our view the cleft version differs from the SV/VS version in that the cleft instantiates a 'reinforced negation', as has already been argued for other Italian structures such as double negation (Godard & Marandin 2006) and the expression *mica* (Cinque 1991; Mosegaard Hansen & Visconti 2009). In such instances of reinforced negation, the sentence often expresses an attitude of the speaker towards some state of affairs (e.g. Godard & Marandin 2006: 178). Such a subjective dimension is indeed often present in our data. For instance, in (43), the speaker expresses surprise and frustration about the fact that no one helped her out. Furthermore, (42-43) closely resemble negated existential sentences such as the ones in (45), discussed by Cappelle *et al.* (2016).

- (45) a. *There wasn't a grain of truth in X.*  
b. *There wasn't a damn thing to V.*  
c. *Il n'y a pas l'ombre d'un doute.*  
'There isn't a shadow of a doubt'  
(Cappelle *et al.* 2016: 37)

According to the authors, the denial of a minimal degree (*a grain of truth, a damn thing*) "reinforces the absence of anything higher" (Cappelle *et al.* 2016: 37). The same analysis applies to *un milligrammo* 'a milligram' in (42) and *uno* 'one' in (43): by denying that a 'single' milligram and a 'single' person helped, anything higher on the scale (e.g. 'a lot', 'several people') is also excluded.

### 5.3. Enumeration of events / textual coherence

The corpus data contain a considerable number of *c'è* clefts such as those in (46-47), which introduce an event (e.g. *Ganz che ritrova l'Inter* 'Ganz who goes back to Inter', *i capigruppo della Camera che decidono...* 'the leaders of the House who decide...') that is an instance of a discourse-given class (*cose* '[ongoing] things'; *initiative* 'initiatives'). These instances are then followed by other instances of the same class (*Ravanelli che...*; *Antonio Di Pietro che...*).

(46) [Beginning of article]

*Nella speranza che possa dare torto agli assenti (solo 22.406 biglietti venduti), e che, soprattutto, possa aver luogo, visto l'incombente nebbione, questo derby di Coppa Italia servo della TV e dei suoi dispotici orari ruota attorno a una vigilia piena di cose. C'è Ganz che ritrova l'Inter, Ravanelli che (probabilmente) ritorna, Ronaldo che stuzzica la Juve, e c'è, soprattutto, Nicola Berti che annuncia: vado al Tottenham.*

'Hoping that it can prove the absentees wrong (only 22.406 tickets sold) and, above all, that it can take place despite the threatening fog, this derby in the Italy Cup –slave of TV and of its despotic time schedule – revolves around the day before, which is full of *things*. *There's Ganz who finds Inter again, Ravanelli who (probably) comes back, Ronaldo who teases Juve, and there's, above all, Nicola Berti who announces: I'm going to Tottenham.*'

(47) [Beginning of article]

*Con il primo aprile scatta, improvviso, un gran fervore di iniziative sotto le volte di Montecitorio. Ci sono i capigruppo della Camera che decidono di approvare le riforme della Costituzione entro luglio (...). C'è Antonio Di Pietro che si presenta nella sala stampa di Montecitorio, assieme al professore Sartori (...) per annunciare una proposta di legge di iniziativa popolare (...). Tanto movimento sembra indicare [etc.].*

'With the beginning of April, a great fervor of *initiatives* suddenly arises in the House of Deputies. *There are the leaders of the House who decide to approve the reforms of the constitution by July (...). There's Antonio Di Pietro who appears in the pressroom of the House of Deputies, together with Professor Sartori (...) to announce a bill of popular initiative. All these movements seem to indicate [etc.].*'

The expression *c'è* explicitly announces that an instance of the evoked set will be presented, thus enhancing textual coherence. Therefore, leaving out *c'è* in an SV/VS sentence leads to a slightly less coherent – though not incomprehensible – text.

Furthermore, what is interesting about these tokens is that they combine two functions of *c'è* clefts: (i) introducing a referent involved in some event, and (ii) enumerating instances of a class (enumerative or 'listing' function). The first function is usually associated with all-focus clefts, while the second function is attributed to clefts with a focus-background articulation (e.g. Lambrecht 2001) and to existential sentences without a relative clause (Rando & Napoli 1978). It thus seems that when using the *c'è* clefts in these contexts, speakers are able to combine the best of both worlds.

## 6. Conclusion

In this paper, we presented the results of a qualitative corpus analysis of Italian *c'è* 'there is' clefts based on a corpus of written Italian. We argued that *c'è* clefts are more versatile than previously assumed: not only are they able to express several information structure articulations other than the prototypical all-focus articulation, we also questioned the widespread assumption that clefts are exclusively motivated by the expression of information structure by showing that *c'è* clefts can have other motivations too.

Concerning the analysis of the information structure properties of *c'è* clefts, we showed that apart from the all-focus articulation, the corpus data contain instances which (i) display a double contrast, (ii) express a focus-background articulation, or (iii) introduce a discourse-given referent. Two of the discourse-given referents were argued to have topical and focal properties at once. Thus, given that the corpus data do not contain *c'è* clefts introducing regular topics, the data can be considered as evidence in favor of our hypothesis that *c'è* is a processing cue preventing regular topic-comment construal. In other words, rather than seeing *c'è* clefts as a one-to-one mapping between form and information structure articulation, *c'è* clefts can be regarded as a form that restricts the number of possible articulations.

As for other motivations of *c'è* clefts that are unrelated to information structure, we argued that speakers can use these clefts in order to (i) signal plural reference of a singular indefinite NP, (ii) express reinforced negation, or (iii) increase textual coherence. In the latter case, the *c'è* cleft combines two functions that have previously been attributed to separate types of clefts, namely the expression of an event involving some referent and the 'listing function', in which *c'è* introduces an instance of a broader class.

More generally, we have shown that a detailed, discourse-functional scrutinization of corpus data allows us to arrive at a more precise understanding of the information structural and discursive properties of a phenomenon that has previously often been analyzed on the basis of a few prototypical cases only. We thus hope to stimulate more in-depth analyses of the versatility of clefts in different Romance varieties, in written as well as in spoken modalities. Our prediction is that corpus analysis of equivalents of *c'è* clefts will uncover a similar polyfunctionality.

Notes

<sup>1</sup> Throughout this paper, 'c'è. cleft' refers to both the singular *c'è* 'there is' and the plural *ci sono* 'there are' forms.

<sup>2</sup> Lambrecht (1988: 136-137) illustrates this with the example *Y'a Jean qu'a téléphoné* 'There's Jean who phoned', whose canonical equivalent *Jean a téléphoné* 'Jean phoned' expresses the same proposition, but is pragmatically infelicitous in French.

<sup>3</sup> Another property that is often mentioned in the literature on the presentational expressions *c'è* and its French equivalent *il y a* is that these cannot be negated when they are used 'presentationally', i.e. when they introduce an entity or an event (e.g. Lambrecht 1986; Lagae & Rouget 1998; De Cesare 2007; Casalicchio 2013b). Negation in these instances is excluded because it is incompatible with the function of presenting something new (see Secova 2010: 248). However, our definition of *c'è* clefts, which is based on the criterion that the utterance corresponds to a VS/SV equivalent, does include *c'è* sentences with a negation, as will become most obvious in section 5.2. In other words, our definition is more inclusive than the analyses of 'presentational' *c'è* and *il y a* referred to above. See also Karssenber (2017) for criticism about the negation test in presentational *il y a* clefts.

<sup>4</sup> The examples in (7) and (8) are a translation of the French examples provided by Pierrard (1985: 48).

<sup>5</sup> The correct spelling is 'bonjour' rather than 'bonjours'. Karssenber (2016a) states that she did not correct spelling mistakes from her informal written corpus, which is based on an online discussion forum (YCCQA 'Yahoo Contrastive Corpus of Questions and Answers').

<sup>6</sup> Cruschina (2012: 90) shows that the NP in a *c'è* sentence can be topical when it is fronted, as in (i). This does not contradict the hypothesis proposed here, to the extent that we see *c'è* as an online processing cue that warns the hearer about the constituent that follows it.

(i) [Pane]TO [ce n'è sul tavolo]foc  
bread ci of-it.cl on-the table

'There's bread on the table.' (Cruschina 2012: 90)

<sup>7</sup> In all corpus examples, the cleft is in normal font in the Italian original and italicized in the English translation

<sup>8</sup> The original relative clause *che può metterci una pezza* 'who can make up for it' was replaced by *che può salvare il gioco* 'who can save the game', because otherwise the sentence may be judged inappropriate due to the anaphoric link that is implied by 'make up for it'.

<sup>9</sup> Interestingly, however, several native speakers indicate that for them, the cleft in (23) would be more natural if such a modifier is added, i.e. *ce n'è una che chiede* 'there of.it is one who asks'. It may be relevant that *una* 'one' can also have the quasi-idiomatic reading of 'one (female) person', 'someone', as in *Una/uno viene da me e mi chiede* 'Someone comes to me and asks...'. In other words, the possibility of this alternative analysis (in which *una* 'one' does not have a partitive reading referring to the *journalists*) may explain the absence of the partitive pronoun *ne*.

<sup>10</sup> See also 'quantifying *there* clefts' in English: Davidse (1999, 2000, 2014); Davidse & Kimps (2016). However, such clefts, illustrated in (i), differ from the *c'è* clefts in (35-38) in that the relative clause in (i) expresses a discourse-given variable (*x says Merry Christmas*), and the cleft is semantically specificational. The parallels and differences between such instances of *there* clefts and the *c'è* clefts discussed in this section remain to be analyzed in detail.

(i) a. *It's not just Catholics, it's [all Christians] [who say Merry Christmas].*  
b. *All Christians say Merry Christmas.* (Davidse & Kimps 2016)

<sup>11</sup> See Karssenber (2016a: section 4.2.2) for a comparison of 'list reading existentials' and *il y a* clefts with a focus-background articulation.

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