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# Italian Clefts and the Licensing of Infinitival Subject Relatives\*

Petra Sleeman

## Abstract

This paper investigates the licensing of infinitival subject relative clauses by clefted constituents. It is claimed that in Italian clefted constituents license infinitival subject relatives because in this language clefts function as contrastive foci. This claim is supported by the syntactic analysis of the position of clefted constituents that license infinitival subject relatives in Italian. It is argued that they occupy a left-peripheral Focus position in the clause. On the basis of extraction data, it is argued that the infinitival subject relative itself is a complement.

**Key words:** cleft, infinitival relative clause, contrastive focus, Italian, left-periphery

## 1. Introduction

Infinitival relatives are relative clauses containing an infinitive instead of an inflected verb. With infinitival subject relatives, the head noun is interpreted as the subject of the relative clause. The infinitive in the subject relative clause can be an active or a passive verb. In the literature it is shown that infinitival subject relatives are licensed by a head noun modified by a superlative or a comparable modifier, such as *only* or the superlative ordinals *first* or *last* (Kjellmer 1975, Geisler 1995, Bhatt 1999, 2006):

- (1) At age 60 years, Dolly Parton became the oldest woman to have a no. 1 song on the Billboard Hot Country Songs.
- (2) Pauling remains the only person to have been awarded two unshared Nobel Prizes, one for chemistry in 1954 and one for peace in 1962.

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- (3) The ancient Greeks were the last to have true democracy.

Infinitival subject relatives are not only licensed by superlatives and comparable modifiers in English, but also in French (4-6) and Italian (7-9):

- (4) Il est le soliste le plus jeune à avoir joué avec cet orchestre.  
'He is the youngest soloist to have played with this orchestra.'
- (5) Suis-je le seul à avoir ce problème?  
'Am I the only one to have this problem?'
- (6) Armstrong fut le premier à avoir marché sur la lune.  
'Armstrong was the first to have walked on the moon.'
- (7) Il più giovane a raggiungere la cima è stato un giovane di 11 anni.  
'The youngest one to reach the top was an 11 year old child.'
- (8) Non sono il solo a pensare così.  
'I am not the only one to think so.'
- (9) Il primo a entrare è il primo a uscire.  
'First in, last out.'

According to Kjellmer (1975: 325), "it seems that it is the selective function of superlatives that is operative here": *oldest* in (1) selects one out of many women, *only* in (2) selects one out of many men, and *last* in (3) selects one nation out of many nations. Kjellmer furthermore notes that superlatives mark the end of a scale.

However, infinitival subject relative clauses are not only licensed by superlatives and equivalent modifiers, which have a selective function and mark the end of scale. In Italian, but not in English or French, clefts are also able to license infinitival subject relatives:

- (10) È stato Gianni a darmi la chiave.  
is been Gianni to give-me the key  
'It was Gianni who gave me the key.'
- (11) \*It was John to have given me the key.
- (12) \*C'est Jean à m'avoir donné la clé.

The licensing of the infinitival subject relative by the cleft in (10) raises two questions:

- (i) Why is the cleft in (10) able to license the infinitival subject relative, and
- (ii) Why is the cleft able to license the infinitival relative in Italian, but not in English or French?

Sleeman (2010) claims that superlatives and equivalent modifiers license infinitival subject relatives because they express a contrastive focus. This seems to be a mere reinterpretation of Kjellmer's notions of 'selective function' and 'end of the scale', but it is motivated in Sleeman (2010) by several linguistic properties of the construction.<sup>1</sup> In this paper I make the same claim for Italian clefts. On the basis of answering strategies used by Italian, English and French native speakers to answer a *wh*-question (Belletti 2005, 2008), I argue that in Italian (but not necessarily in English or French) clefts express a contrastive focus, which makes them able to license infinitival subject relative clauses. I argue furthermore that the constituents licensing infinitival relative clauses, including clefted constituents in Italian, are in a high position. I analyze the infinitival relative clause as their complement, showing that it allows extraction from it.

The paper is organized as follows. In section 2, I argue that infinitival subject relatives are licensed by a contrastive focus. In section 3, it is shown that Italian clefts, but not English or French clefts, express a contrastive focus. In section 4, I argue that the clefted constituents licensing infinitival relative clauses are in a high position in the clause. In section 5, I discuss the syntactic relation between the clefted constituent and the coda. Finally, in section 6, the results of this paper are summarized.

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<sup>1</sup> Both reviewers observed that contrastiveness is not a sufficient condition for the licensing of infinitival subject relatives, as can be seen from the fact that infinitival subject relatives are ungrammatical in languages like German. As one of the reviewers pointed out, Frey (2004) convincingly argues for the existence of a contrast position in the left periphery of German sentences, which would show that contrastiveness does play a role in German. It is true that there must be more that blocks infinitival subject relatives in Germanic languages, but it should be noticed that they are not totally excluded. The following sentences, from Dutch, show that with the ordinals 'first' or 'last', in special contexts, infinitival subject relatives can be used. Although these sentences, and especially sentence (i), differ in interpretation from the sentences with superlative ordinals discussed in Sleeman (2010), there is a contrast expressed by these sentences. Sentence (i) means that every person might say this, but we would not. Sentence (ii) means that it might be the case that no one else admits this, but we will.

- (i) *Wij zullen de laatsten zijn om dat te beweren.*  
 we will the last be to that to state  
 'We do not say that.'
- (ii) *Wij zullen de eersten zijn om dat te beamen.*  
 we will the first be to that to admit  
 'We certainly agree.'

## 2. Licensing of Infinitival Subject Relatives by Contrastive Focus

In the previous section we saw that infinitival subject relatives are licensed by superlatives, *only* and the superlative ordinals *first* and *last*. We saw furthermore that according to Kjellmer (1975), superlatives and equivalent modifiers have a ‘selective function’, selecting one or a subset of elements out of a larger set. Kjellmer notices furthermore that superlatives and equivalent modifiers “mark the end of a scale”. Sleeman (2010) identifies the first property with Kiss’ (1998) notion of ‘identificational focus’ and the second property with her notion of ‘contrastive focus’.

Kiss distinguishes ‘identificational focus’ from ‘information focus’. Whereas information focus merely conveys non-presupposed information, identificational focus is a quantification-like operation, it “represents a subset of the set of contextually or situationally given elements for which the predicate phrase can potentially hold” (Kiss 1998: 245). Kiss notices furthermore that an identificational focus “is identified as the exhaustive subset of the set for which the predicate phrase can potentially hold”. An information focus does not express exhaustive identification.

Kiss uses a test to determine whether a focus expresses exhaustivity. A non-exhaustive focus can be part of an enumeration, whereas an exhaustive focus cannot. In the context of (13a), the answer (13b) contains an information focus, whereas (13c) contains an identificational focus. Kiss claims that the English cleft construction, as in (13c), always expresses identificational focus and not information focus:

- (13) a. Where did you go in the summer?  
b. I went to Italy (among other places).  
c. It was to Italy where I went (and nowhere else).

Besides the cleft, phrases with which the operator *only* associates also have an exhaustive interpretation. Kiss supposes that “*only* lends them an identificational focus feature”. She argues that *only*-phrases are scalar: the elements of the set on which exhaustive identification is performed are ordered along a scale, and the element identified as that for which the predicate exclusively holds represents a low value on this scale.

A third notion that Kiss defines is that of ‘contrastive focus’. Kiss considers an identificational focus to be contrastive “if it operates on a closed set of entities whose members are known to the participants of the discourse” (Kiss: 1998: 267). The identification of a subset of a given set also identifies the contrasting complementary subset, as in (14):

- (14) a. I heard you invited John and Mary.  
b. I only invited John (and not Mary).

A non-contrastive identificational focus, on the other hand, operates on an open set of entities. It does not identify a contrasting complementary subset:

- (15) a. Who wrote War and Peace?  
b. It was Tolstoy who wrote War and Peace.

Sleeman (2010) argues that superlatives and equivalent modifiers licensing infinitival subject relatives create identificational foci, because they “have a selective function”. They identify a subset from a scalar set of elements: the highest or the lowest subset. Sleeman (2010) argues furthermore that the constituents licensing infinitival subject relatives, “marking the end of a scale”, express a [+contrastive] identificational focus. Superlatives and equivalent modifiers can also express a [–contrastive] identificational focus, but they only license infinitival subject relatives in their [+contrastive] use. In Sleeman (2010), a superlative is taken to create a [+contrastive] focus, if it identifies an (empty) contrasting complementary set consisting of members that represent a still higher or lower value than the end of the scale. Since superlatives represent the end of the scale, a still higher or lower value on the scale is naturally excluded. Superlatives express a [–contrastive], i.e. simply identificational focus, if only their selective function is stressed, but not the exclusion of an (empty) set of elements that represents a still higher or still lower value on the scale.

One might wonder what distinguishes my use of this notion ‘contrastive focus’ and Kiss’ use of the notion ‘identificational focus’. We saw that Kiss associates ‘identificational focus’ with exhaustivity. By exhaustivity Kiss means that there is no other element within the set of alternatives for which the predicate phrase holds: the identification of a subset goes together with the exclusion of the complementary subset. In my use of the notion ‘contrastive focus’ a complementary subset is also excluded. There is, however, a difference. Sleeman (2010) assumes, following Kampers-Manhe (1991) for French, that in languages such as Italian or French only subjunctive clauses, but not indicative clauses, can replace infinitival subject relatives:<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Just as in French (and in English), in Italian non-modal infinitival relative clauses are licensed by adjectives that represent the end of a scale. Just as in French, in Italian only subjunctive clauses can replace infinitival subject relatives:

- (i) E’ la donna più anziana a aver partorito.  
She-is the woman most old to have given-birth.  
‘She is the oldest woman to have given birth.’  
(ii) E’ la donna più anziana che abbia partorito. (= i)  
‘She is the oldest woman that has.SUBJ given birth.’  
(iii) E’ la donna più anziana che ha partorito. (≠ i).  
‘She is the oldest woman that has.IND given birth.’

(16) *C' est la femme la plus âgée à avoir eu un enfant.*  
 this is the woman the most old to have had a child

'She is the oldest woman to have given birth.'

(17) a. *C' est la femme la plus âgée qui ait eu un enfant. (= 16)*  
 this is the woman the most old who has.SUBJ had a child

b. *C' est la femme la plus âgée qui a eu un enfant. (≠ 16)*  
 this is the woman the most old who has.IND had a child

Farkas (1985) suggests that a negative existential is involved in sentences containing superlatives and associated modifiers and that this negative existential is responsible for the possibility of using subjunctive relatives in such cases. In Romance languages the subjunctive in relative clauses is licensed by a head noun whose existence is negated, almost negated or at least questioned.<sup>3</sup> Part of the meaning of (16) and (17a) is that there has never been a woman older than this one that has given birth. This means that an extra set of alternatives is created, which is, however, a set of potential alternatives, because their existence is denied. I take a contrastive focus therefore to imply that there is domain widening and to exclude any possible alternative.<sup>4</sup>

This interpretation is supported by the following fact. Besides stating that superlatives "have a selective function" and "mark the end of a scale", Kjellmer (1975) points out that the adverb *ever* can be used in infinitival subject relative clauses. Kjellmer states that *ever* is normally non-assertive,

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<sup>3</sup> This is illustrated by the following examples from French:

- (i) *Il n'y a personne qui le sache.*  
'There is no one who knows.SUBJ.'
- (ii) *Il n'y a que peu de personnes qui le sachent.*  
'There are only few people who know.SUBJ.'
- (iii) *Y a-t-il quelqu'un qui le sache?*  
'Is there anyone who knows. SUBJ?'
- (iv) *Je cherche quelqu'un qui le sache.*  
'I am looking for someone who knows.SUBJ.'

<sup>4</sup> Although superlative ordinals can be combined with a subjunctive clause, non superlative ordinals such as *third* or *seventh* cannot. Although in the literature some examples are given of infinitival subject relatives licensed by non superlative ordinals, I take these examples to be rather marginal. The marginality results from the fact that the non-superlative ordinals do not represent the end of the scale and that therefore there is no negative existential involved.

occurring in negative and/or interrogative clauses. Kjellmer observes that (18) means ‘I haven’t ever tasted a better wine than this’, and states that it is therefore natural that ‘ever’ should be found in infinitival relative clauses depending on head nouns modified by a superlative:<sup>5</sup>

(18) This is the best wine I’ve ever tasted.

Sleeman (2010) claims that it is the negative interpretation entailed by the superlative and equivalent modifiers that makes them create a [+contrastive] identificational focus, a contrast being expressed with an empty complementary set, which is entailed by the meaning of the superlative denoting the extreme value on a scale and which is therefore known to the participants of the discourse (see Kiss’ definition of contrastive focus above).<sup>6</sup>

In the introduction to this paper I showed that not only in English, but also in Italian and French, superlatives and equivalent modifiers license infinitival subject relative clauses. Some examples are repeated below:

(19) Il più giovane a raggiungere la cima è stato un giovane di 11 anni.  
‘The youngest one to reach the top was an 11 year old child.’

(20) Armstrong fut le premier à avoir marché sur la lune.  
‘Armstrong was the first to have walked on the moon.’

However, in the introduction I also showed that whereas in Italian clefts can license infinitival subject relatives, in English and French they cannot do so. The relevant examples are repeated below:

(21) a. È stato Gianni a darmila chiave.  
is been Gianni to give-me the key  
‘It was Gianni who gave me the key.’  
b. \*It was John to have given me the key.  
c. \*C’est Jean à m’avoir donné la clé.

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. Giannakidou (1997), who argues that in Greek polarity items are licensed, among others, by superlatives, because of the negative part of their meaning.

<sup>6</sup> One of the reviewers wondered why the other elements on the scale cannot count as alternatives. It is true that in the case of, e.g., *last*, all preceding elements could count as alternatives. What, in my analysis, is important in the licensing of infinitival subject relatives by superlatives, however, is the negative existential that is created by the absence of elements following *last*. This is supported by the use of the superlative ordinal *first*. The sentence *John is the first New Zealander to have won this prestigious tournament* may be uttered without there being a person that has won the tournament after John. There is therefore only a contrast with any other person that might have won the tournament before John but whose existence is denied.

Kiss argues that there is parametric variation in the feature content of identificational focus. In English, identificational focus is [ $\pm$ contrastive]. The *only*-phrase in (14b) expresses a [+contrastive] identificational focus, but in another context it can also express a [–contrastive] focus. The cleft in (15b) expresses a [–contrastive] identificational focus. However, if the interpretation as [+contrastive] depends on the possibility of the identification of a complementary subset, which is possible within a closed set of elements, as Kiss states, the cleft can also express a [+contrastive] focus:

- (22) a. Who wrote War and Peace: Tolstoy or Dostoyevsky?  
b. It was Tolstoy who wrote War and Peace (and not Dostoyevsky).

For Italian Kiss claims that identificational focus is always [+contrastive]. I assume that it is the necessarily [+contrastive] interpretation of the cleft in Italian which allows it to license infinitival subject relative clauses. In the next section I provide support for the claim that the Italian cleft, as opposed to the English and French cleft, expresses a [+contrastive] identificational focus, allowing it to license infinitival subject relatives.

### 3. Parametric Variation in the Feature Content of Clefts

In the previous section we saw that in Italian, but not in English or French, the cleft is able to license an infinitival subject relative clause. The question is why this should be so: why is the cleft able to license the infinitival relative in Italian, but not in English or French? In the previous section I claimed that if the cleft licenses an infinitival relative clause in Italian, it does so because it expresses a [+contrastive] focus. In English and French the cleft expresses an identificational focus that is [ $\pm$ contrastive].

Evidence for these claims is provided by preferred answering strategies used to answer questions concerning the identification of the subject of the clause (Belletti 2005, 2008). Belletti states that in order to answer questions about a video they had seen native speakers of Italian, French and English used different answering strategies. In order to answer the questions in the (a)-sentences of (23) A, B, and C formulated below, native speakers of Italian used a subject inversion strategy, native speakers of French used a truncated cleft or a full cleft, and native speakers of English used an SV order with a pitch accent on the subject. According to Belletti, although a (truncated) cleft is the preferred option in French, an SV order with a pitch accent on the subject is not excluded. Although a pitch accent on the subject is the preferred option in English, the cleft is not excluded either:

- (23) **A.**  
 a. Chi è partito / ha parlato ? Italian: VS (“free inversion”)  
 b. E’ partito / ha parlato Gianni.
- B.**  
 a. Qui est parti/ a parlé? French: ((reduced) cleft, also C)  
 b. C’est Jean (qui est parti/ a parlé).
- C.**  
 a. Who came/spoke? English: SV/(*in situ* focalization, also B)  
 b. *John* came/spoke  
 c. *John* did

According to Belletti, a (reduced) cleft, normally disfavored, is possible in Italian and may become the preferred option when either a cleft is contained in the question, as in (24),

- (24) a. Chi è (stato) che ha rotto il vaso?  
 Who it-is (been) that has broken the vase  
 ‘Who broke the vase?’  
 b. E’ (stato) Gianni.  
 it-is (been) Gianni  
 ‘It was Gianni.’

or with agentive predicates expressing a somewhat negative presupposition, as in (25):<sup>7</sup>

- (25) a. Chi ha urlato?  
 who has screamed  
 ‘Who screamed?’  
 b. E’ stato Gianni.  
 it-is been Gianni  
 ‘It was Gianni.’

Belletti does not explain what she means by “agentive predicates expressing a somewhat negative presupposition”. I take it to mean that by asserting that someone has done something, other possible agents are excluded. If I utter (25b), asserting that it was Gianni who screamed, the presupposition is that the one who screamed might have been me (or someone else present). By uttering (25b), this possible alternative is excluded.

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<sup>7</sup> Mara Frascarelli (p.c.) pointed out to me that the question in (24) is not necessarily contrastive. Belletti’s main argument for the contrastive interpretation comes indeed mainly from (25), the cleft in the question in (24) rather seems to be a grammaticalized structure.

Belletti shows that with object questions, Italian, French and English do not manifest any difference in the answering strategies, when answers are provided with a full clause:

(26) Italian

- a. Che cosa hai comprato?  
'What have you bought?'
- b. Ho comprato un libro.  
'I have bought a book.'

(27) French

- a. Qu'as-tu acheté /Qu'est-ce-que tu as acheté?
- b. J'ai acheté un livre

(28) English

- a. What have you bought ?
- b. I have bought a book.

Belletti shows that, in all three languages, with object questions a cleft can also be used, with a contrastive meaning (examples are from Italian, where “-” indicates the base position of the moved constituent):

(29) E' Gianni [che (Maria) ha incontrato (Maria) -]  
it-is Gianni that Maria has met (Maria)  
'Mary met GIANNI.'

(30) E' con Gianni [che Maria ha parlato - ]  
it-is with Gianni that Maria has spoken  
'Mary spoke with GIANNI.'

Belletti's discussion of answering strategies shows thus that in Italian not only object clefts but also subject clefts, both involving a negative presupposition, have a contrastive interpretation:

- (31) a. E' MARIA che ha parlato con Gianni (non Francesca.)  
'It is Maria that has spoken with Gianni (not Francesca).'
- b. E' MARIA che Gianni abbracciava (non Francesca).  
'It is Maria that Gianni kissed (not Francesca).'
- c. E' CON GIANNI che Maria ha parlato (non con Piero).  
'It is with Gianni that Maria has spoken (not with Piero).'

In English and French, only object clefts have a contrastive interpretation. In French a subject cleft is the canonical strategy used to answer a *wh*-question. In English it can also be used, although a pitch accent

on the subject is the preferred strategy. In both languages, a subject cleft is thus not necessarily contrastive.

This discussion of answering strategies supports my claim that in Italian (subject) clefts are able to license infinitival subject relatives, because they express a [+contrastive] focus. Since, in French and English, subject clefts express a [ $\pm$ contrastive] focus, the contrastive interpretation just being a side effect of the identificational focus interpretation, they cannot license infinitival relative clauses.<sup>8</sup>

In this section and the preceding one, I have argued that, in Italian, a cleft is able to license infinitival subject relative clauses because it expresses a [+contrastive] focus. In the next section, I provide syntactic evidence for my claim.

#### 4. Syntactic Evidence for the Feature [+contrastive]

As Kiss (1998) shows, a non-contrastive identificational focus is in a high position in Hungarian:

- (32) Mari **egy kalapot** nézett ki magának.  
 Mary a hat.ACC picked out herself.ACC  
 ‘It was a hat that Mary picked for herself.’

Kiss claims that the English realization of identificational focus is the cleft construction. She adopts Brody’s (1990, 1995) analysis of the cleft construction. IP in the main clause is filled by expletive *it* and the copula *be*. I<sup>o</sup> takes the subordinate clause as its complement. The subordinate clause is dominated by FocusP to the Spec of which the clefted constituent moves:<sup>9</sup>

- (33) [CP [IP it [I is<sub>i</sub> [FocusP me<sub>j</sub> [Focus’ [Focus<sup>o</sup> t<sub>i</sub> [CP t<sub>j</sub> [C’ [C that [IP t<sub>j</sub> is sick  
 ]]]]]]]]]]]

Kiss (1998) states that in many languages a focus in a high position in the sentence is a [+contrastive] focus. Belletti (2008) claims that this is also the case in Italian. Whereas in Sicilian, a sentence-initial focus is not

<sup>8</sup> One of the reviewers wondered why superlatives, also being [ $\pm$ contrastive], can license infinitival subject relatives in French and English, whereas clefts cannot. As I argued above, however, superlatives have two clearly distinguished uses, one in which the relative clause contains an indicative, and one in which the relative clause contains a subjunctive or has the form of an infinitival relative. In the first case the nominal head modified by the superlative simply expresses an identificational focus and is therefore [–contrastive], in the second case it is [+contrastive] and expresses a contrastive focus. Therefore, it is not [ $\pm$ contrastive], but [+contrastive] or [–contrastive].

<sup>9</sup> The constituent in Spec,FocusP can also be base-generated, and linked to a corresponding *wh*-pronoun in the embedded CP at LF:

(i) It is me<sub>i</sub> who<sub>i</sub> is sick.

necessarily [+contrastive] (Cruschina 2004), in standard Italian it is, according to Belletti.<sup>10</sup>

In Belletti's analysis, contrastive clefts involve the left peripheral focus position of the CP complement of a copula, *che* occupying the head of FinP:

(34) E' [CP [FocusP MARIA...[che [ *pro* ha parlato – con Gianni]]]]

(35) a. E' [CP [FocusP MARIA ...[che [ *Gianni* abbracciava – ]]]]  
 b. E' [CP [FocusP con GIANNI ....[che [ *Maria* ha parlato – ]]]]

According to Belletti, it might be that there is no real semantic difference between sentences like (36) and (37), where the crucial distinction between the two pairs is that the latter instantiates left peripheral contrastive focalization in a root clause with no overt copula:

(36) a. E' MARIA che Gianni abbracciava.  
 'It is Maria that Gianni kissed.'  
 b. E' con GIANNI che Maria parlava.  
 'It is with Gianni that Maria spoke.'

(37) a. MARIA Gianni abbracciava.  
 Maria Gianni kissed  
 b. Con GIANNI Maria parlava.  
 With Gianni Maria spoke

In Belletti's analysis, a [+contrastive] focus occupies thus a high position in the complement clause of the copula, just as in Brody's analysis of the English [ $\pm$ contrastive] cleft in (33). In Belletti's analysis, a [ $\pm$ contrastive] focus, however, occupies a low position in the clause. In her analysis of the French subject cleft (23B), the [ $\pm$ contrastive] cleft involves the low new information focus position in the periphery of the vP domain. Since, in English, instead of a (more preferred) SV construction with a subject bearing a pitch accent, as in (23C), a cleft can also be used, this analysis would also hold for the English cleft construction.<sup>11</sup> In Belletti's analysis, the copula in vP takes a small clause (sc) as its complement. The small

<sup>10</sup> In Sicilian (i) can be used to answer the question 'What did you write yesterday?' (Cruschina 2004):

(i) *N' articulu scrissi.*  
 an article I-have-written  
 'I wrote an article.'

<sup>11</sup> Since in English and French object clefts are contrastive, just as in Italian, they would occupy a high peripheral position in Belletti's analysis. In Belletti's view, Brody's analysis of English clefts would thus only hold for object clefts :

(i) [CP [IP it [I was<sub>i</sub> [FocusP to John<sub>j</sub> [Focus' [Focus° t<sub>i</sub> [CP t<sub>j</sub> [C' [C that [IP I spoke t<sub>j</sub> ]]]]]]]]]].



- (42) Sono molte le persone a farne uso in Italia.  
are many the persons to make-of it use in Italy  
'Many people in Italy use it.'
- (43) Siamo in molti a pensare questo.  
we-are in many to think this  
'Many of us believe it.'

The construction in (42) can be used with preposed 'many' or 'few':

- (44) Sono poche le persone a conoscere la storia di  
are few the persons to know the story of  
questa città.  
this city  
'There are few persons who know the story of this city.'

When the quantifier is not preposed, the use of the infinitival relative is ungrammatical:

- (45) \*Le persone a farne uso in Italia sono molte.
- (46) \*Le persone a conoscere la storia di questa città sono poche.

- 
- (iii) *Rares sont les personnes à avoir les trois quarts des produits.*  
rare are the persons to have the three quarters of-the products  
'The people that have three quarters of the products are rare.'
- (iv) *Elles sont trois à avoir remporté les premiers prix.*  
they are three to have taken the first prizes  
'Three have taken the first prizes.'

The distinction between French and English suggests that the proposed analysis needs to be refined. I will leave this for future research.

<sup>13</sup> Marcel den Dikken (p.c.) pointed out to me that one might wonder whether the constructions in (42-43) are clefts or simply inverted sentences. Den Dikken (this volume) considers the specificational sentence in (i) to be a (pseudo)cleft, because (i) "'cleaves' the sentence *Brian is important to himself* into two portions on either side of the copula, with *important to himself* specifying a VALUE for the variable in the *wh*-clause".

- (i) What Brian<sub>i</sub> is is important to himself<sub>i</sub>.

Analogously, in a canonical cleft sentence, there are two portions: the clefted constituent specifying a VALUE for 'it', and the relative clause, cf. Den Dikken's (this volume) analysis. In the same spirit, in (43), there are two portions: the quantifier specifying a VALUE for the (empty) subject of the copula and the relative clause. (42) can also be considered to be a cleft and to contain two portions, but in a slightly different way: whereas the first portion is the quantifier specifying a VALUE for the (empty) subject of the copula, as in (43), the other portion is not the relative clause alone, but the whole DP (see also fn. 21). The French equivalent (ii-iii) in fn. 12, however, can be considered to be a simple inversion structure.

It is only possible to leave the quantifier in its base position if a finite relative clause is used instead of an infinitival relative clause.<sup>14</sup>

(47) Le persone che ne fanno uso in Italia sono molte.  
 the persons that of-it make use in Italy are many  
 ‘Many people in Italy use it.’

(48) Le persone che conoscono la storia di questa città  
 the persons that know the story of this city  
 sono poche.  
 are few  
 ‘There are few persons who know the story of this city.’

Departing slightly from Brody’s (33) and Belletti’s (34) analyses of the clefted DP-construction, I propose that the quantifier in (42) and (44) moves to a FocusP in the left periphery of the clause (Rizzi 1997) and that the copular verb moves to a position dominating FocusP:<sup>15</sup>

(49) Sono [<sub>FocusP</sub> molte [<sub>VP</sub> t<sub>essere</sub> [<sub>SC</sub> le persone a farne uso in Italia  
 [t<sub>molte</sub>]]]].

The quantifiers that license the use of the infinitival subject relative, i.e. ‘many’ and ‘few’, are proportional quantifiers. They denote high or low values on the scale. I suggest that preposing, i.e. focalization, makes their position on the scale even “more peripheral”. Just like superlatives, they have a contrastive interpretation, asserting that there is (almost) no one or nothing else (not) having the property under consideration, which licenses the infinitival clause.

<sup>14</sup> With the preposed quantifier the finite relative clause can also be used, with an indicative verb and not a subjunctive verb (i). The subjunctive is only used in relative clauses depending on a (quasi-) negative head noun (such as nouns modified by a superlative), but not in clauses depending on an indirectly quantified noun as in (i) or depending on a clefted noun as in (ii):

(i) *Molte sono/Sono molte le persone che ne fanno / \*ne facciano uso.*  
 many are/are many the persons that of-it make.IND/of-it make.SUBJ use  
 ‘Many people use it.’

(ii) *E’ stato Gianni che mi ha / \*mi abbia dato la chiave.*  
 is been Gianni that mi has.IND/me has.SUBJ given the key  
 ‘It was John who gave me the key.’

<sup>15</sup> In Belletti’s (2008) analysis of the canonical Italian cleft, as in (34), FocusP is in the left periphery of the subordinate clause, whereas in Brody’s analysis of the canonical cleft presented in (33) it is on top of the subordinate clause. For all types of clefts, I rather assume that the focalized constituent moves to a position outside its (small) clause, which is more in line with Brody’s analysis or with Belletti’s analysis of the English and French cleft (38-40), the difference being that the clefted constituent moves to the high focus position and not to the low focus position.

The second type of clefted quantificational constituent that licenses infinitival subject relatives, as in (43), does not necessarily denote the end of a scale:

- (50) Siamo in tre a sapere la verità.  
 we-are in three to know the truth.  
 ‘Three of us know the truth.’
- (51) Sono in diversi a voler lottare.  
 they-are in several to want fight.  
 ‘Several want to fight.’
- (52) Siete in troppi a visitare il sito.  
 you-are in too-many to visit the site  
 ‘Too many of you visit this site.’
- (53) Molte persone sono sole a gestire una famiglia.  
 many persons are only to manage a family  
 ‘Many people manage a family on their own.’

This construction comes close to the clefted DP construction:<sup>16</sup>

- (54) Siete voi a decidere.  
 you-are you to decide  
 ‘You may decide.’

Whereas in the construction in (49) the relative clause contains an overt subject DP, both in (54) and in (50-53) it does not (cf. fn. 13). However, just as in (49), in (50-53) it is the quantifier, and not a DP as in (54), that moves to FocusP in the left periphery of the clause (Rizzi 1997):

- (55) *pro* siamo [<sub>FocusP</sub> in tre [<sub>vP</sub> t<sub>essere</sub> [<sub>SC</sub> t<sub>pro</sub> a sapere la verità [t<sub>in tre</sub>]]]]

If it is correct to claim that syntactically the construction in (50-53) comes close to the cleft construction in (54), there should also be a semantic

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<sup>16</sup> In both cases a relative clause with an inflected (indicative) verb instead of an infinitive can also be used:

- (i) *Siamo in tre che sappiamo la verità.*  
 we-are in three that know the truth.  
 ‘The three of us know the truth.’
- (ii) *Siete voi che decidete.*  
 you-are you that decide  
 ‘You decide.’

correspondence.<sup>17</sup> We have seen that a clefted DP in Italian can be interpreted as [+contrastive]. I suggest that the same holds for the clefted quantificational expression in (50-53). The focalization of the quantificational expression in (56) entails that other numbers than three are excluded. This is why infinitival subject relatives are licensed, even if the quantifiers themselves do not refer to the end of the scale:

- (56) Siamo in tre a sapere la verità (e non in quattro).  
We-are in three to know the truth (and not in four).  
'Three of us know the truth (and not four).'

In this section I have shown that there is syntactic evidence for my claim that infinitival subject relatives are licensed by a [+contrastive] focus. We have seen that infinitival subject relatives are not only licensed by canonical DP-clefts, but also by clefted quantifiers, moving all to a position in the left periphery in the clause. In the next section I discuss the syntactic relation between the clefted constituent and the coda, i.e. the relative clause.

## 5. Syntactic Analysis of the Cleft Constructions

In the previous section we saw that three types of cleft constructions license infinitival subject relative clauses. The relevant examples are repeated below for convenience:

- (57) È stato Gianni a darmila chiave.  
is been Gianni to give-me the key  
'It was Gianni who gave me the key.'
- (58) Siete voi a decidere.  
you-are you to decide  
'You may decide.'
- (59) Sono molte le persone a farne uso in Italia.  
are many the persons to make-of it use in Italy  
'Many people in Italy use it.'
- (60) Siamo in tre a sapere la verità.  
we-are in three to know the truth  
'Three of us know the truth.'

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<sup>17</sup> Mara Frascarelli (p.c.) pointed out to me that the construction in (55) is not necessarily contrastive. Although it might be the case that because of grammaticalization the structure is losing its contrastive interpretation, some other native Italian speakers that I consulted still felt it to be there.



In the introduction to this paper I showed that infinitival subject relative clauses are not only licensed by clefts, but also by a head noun modified by a superlative or an equivalent modifier.<sup>20</sup> The infinitival subject relative can be replaced by a relative clause containing an inflected (subjunctive) verb:

- (67) Gianni è stato il solo a parlare con la stampa.  
 ‘Gianni was the only one to speak with the press.’
- (68) Gianni è il solo che abbia raggiunto un risultato  
 Gianni is the only that has.SUBJ obtained a result  
 vero.  
 true  
 ‘Gianni is the only one that has obtained a true result.’

Sleeman (2005) analyzes both the inflected relative clause and the infinitival relative clause as a complement, but shows that extraction is only possible from the infinitival relative clause:

- (69) Con chi Gianni è stato il solo (giornalista) a parlare –?  
 ‘With whom was Gianni the only (reporter) to speak?’
- (70) \*Con chi Gianni è stato il solo (giornalista) che  
 with whom Gianni is been the only (reporter) that  
 abbia parlato?  
 has.SUBJ spoken

Sleeman (2005) claims that the prepositional complementizer *a* is located, within the articulated C-domain (Rizzi 1997), in the lower complementizer position, viz.  $Fin^\circ$ , which reflects certain properties of the verbal system of the clause, such as mood. The noun or empty pronoun moves to the Spec of FinP, leaving Spec,ForceP empty so that another constituent can move through this position:

- (71) [<sub>ForceP</sub> Con  $chi_j$  Gianni è stato il solo [<sub>ForceP</sub>  $t_j$  [<sub>FinP</sub> giornalista $_i$  /  $pro_i$  a parlare  $t_i$   $t_j$ ]]]?

For the full relative clause Sleeman (2005) assumes that it is also dominated by ForceP, but this time the (empty) noun has to move to Spec,ForceP, which contains the complementizer *che* in its head position. This means that there is no empty Spec left that could be used for the extraction of a

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<sup>20</sup> If infinitival subject relatives are licensed by a “high” focus, it might be assumed that in (67)-(68) the superlative or equivalent modifier moves to a (maybe “high”) DP-internal focus position (Aboh 2004, Corver & van Koppen 2009), probably at LF (Sleeman 2010).

constituent out of the relative clause, which is the complement of *solo*, just as in (72):

- (72) \*Con  $chi_j$  Gianni è stato il solo [<sub>ForceP</sub> giornalista<sub>i</sub> / *pro*<sub>i</sub> [<sub>Force'</sub> che [<sub>FinP</sub> abbia parlato  $t_i$   $t_j$ ]]]]?

For the three types of clefts I assume that the infinitival relative clause and the finite clause occupy the same position. The following examples show that extraction from the finite clause is excluded:

- (73) \**l' orchestra strabiliante che è stato lui che*  
 the orchestra extraordinary that is been he that  
 ha plasmato  
 has modeled

- (74) \**un lusso che siamo in pochi che ci possiamo*  
 a luxury that we-are in few that us can  
 permettere  
 permit

- (75) \**una storia che sono poche le persone che conoscono*  
 a story that are few the persons that know

Extraction from the infinitival relative clause corresponding to (73-74), however, is much better:

- (76) *l' orchestra strabiliante che è stato lui a plasmare*  
 the orchestra extraordinary that is been he to model  
 'the extraordinary orchestra that he has modeled'

- (77) *un lusso che siamo in pochi a poterci permettere*  
 a luxury that we-are in few to can-us permit  
 'a luxury that few can afford'

Assuming Kayne's (1994) raising analysis of relative clauses, we can account for the difference between (73) and (76) in the following way. In (73), both *lui* and *l'orchestra strabiliante* have to pass through the most embedded Spec,ForceP: when *lui* has moved to Spec,ForceP, this position cannot be used anymore for the movement of *l'orchestra strabiliante* (78). In (79), however, *a* occupies Fin<sup>o</sup> and Spec,FinP can be used for the movement of *lui*, leaving Spec,ForceP available for the movement of *l'orchestra strabiliante*:

- (78) \**l'orchestra strabiliante<sub>j</sub> che pro è stato* [<sub>FocusP</sub> lui<sub>i</sub> [<sub>IP</sub> [<sub>vP</sub> t<sub>essere</sub> [<sub>ForceP</sub>  $t_i$  che ha plasmato  $t_i$   $t_j$  ] ] ]

- (79) l'orchestra strabiliante<sub>j</sub> che *pro* è stato [<sub>FocusP</sub> lui<sub>i</sub> [<sub>IP</sub> [<sub>vP</sub> t<sub>essere</sub> [<sub>ForceP</sub> t<sub>j</sub> [<sub>FinP</sub> t<sub>i</sub> a [plasmare t<sub>i</sub> t<sub>j</sub> ]]]]]]

For (74) I assume a structure as in (80). Since *pro* moves to the Spec of the embedded ForceP (and subsequently to Spec,IP of the copular verb), this position cannot be used to move *un lusso*. In (81), however, Spec,FinP is used for the movement of *pro*, and Spec,ForceP is available for the movement of *un lusso*:

- (80) \*un lusso<sub>j</sub> che *pro*<sub>i</sub> siamo [<sub>FocusP</sub> in pochi [<sub>IP</sub> [<sub>vP</sub> t<sub>essere</sub> [<sub>SC</sub> [<sub>ForceP</sub> t<sub>i</sub> che ci possiamo permettere t<sub>i</sub> t<sub>j</sub> ] [t<sub>in pochi</sub>]]]]].
- (81) un lusso<sub>j</sub> che *pro*<sub>i</sub> siamo [<sub>FocusP</sub> in pochi [<sub>IP</sub> [<sub>vP</sub> t<sub>essere</sub> [<sub>SC</sub> [<sub>ForceP</sub> t<sub>j</sub> [<sub>FinP</sub> t<sub>i</sub> a poterci permettere t<sub>i</sub> t<sub>j</sub> ] [t<sub>in pochi</sub>]]]]]]].

Extraction from the infinitival relative clause corresponding to the third type of *che*-cleft, (75), is, however, ungrammatical:

- (82) \*una storia che sono poche le persone a conoscere  
 a story that are few the persons to know  
 'a story that few people know'

The difference between (79) and (81) on the one hand, and (82) on the other, is that in (79) and (81) there is a trace in Spec,FinP, whereas in (82) a DP fills Spec,FinP:

- (83) \*una storia<sub>j</sub> che *pro* sono [<sub>FocusP</sub> poche [<sub>IP</sub> [<sub>vP</sub> t<sub>essere</sub> [<sub>SC</sub> [<sub>ForceP</sub> t<sub>j</sub> [<sub>FinP</sub> le persone<sub>i</sub> a conoscere t<sub>i</sub> t<sub>j</sub> ] [t<sub>poche</sub>]]]]]]].

I propose that (83) is ruled out by the Minimal Link Condition, i.e. Shortest Move (Chomsky 1995), which is incorporated in Attract: Spec,ForceP of the main clause should attract the closest DP in the lower ForceP, which is *le persone*, and not *una storia*, which is not the closest DP.<sup>21,22</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Ignazio Mauro Mirto (p.c.) pointed out to me that there is another difference between the two types of quantifier clefts: whereas fronting of the infinitival relative clause is acceptable in (i), it is not in (ii):

- (i) *A pensare questo siamo in molti.*  
 to think this we-are in many  
 'Many people believe it.'
- (ii) \**A farne uso in Italia sono molte le persone.*  
 to make-of it use in Italy are many the persons  
 'Many people in Italy use it.'

In this section I have claimed that the subordinate clauses in *a*-clefts and *che*-clefts do not differ w.r.t. their position in the sentence. In principle extraction is possible from both, but in *che*-clefts movement through Spec,ForceP is not possible because this position is used for the movement of another constituent. In *a*-clefts, Spec,ForceP is available for movement, because Spec,FinP is used for movement of another constituent. An overt DP in Spec,FinP, however, can block movement because of the Minimal Link Condition. For all cases I have adopted an analysis in which the clefted constituent moves to a high focus position dominating the subordinate clause.

## 6. Conclusion

In this paper, I have claimed that infinitival subject relatives are licensed by clefted constituents if these express a [+contrastive] focus, which I have taken to mean ‘excluding any possible alternative’. I have shown that whereas in English and especially in French the use of clefts is a normal strategy used to answer a question concerning the identification of the subject of the clause, in Italian the use of a cleft in this case is associated with a somewhat negative presupposition and expresses thus a [+contrastive] focus (Belletti 2008).

I have shown that three types of clefts license infinitival subject relative clauses: the canonical cleft with a clefted DP, and two types of clefts with a clefted quantificational expression. I have argued that all three types express a [+contrastive] focus. For all three types of clefts, I have adopted a structure in which the clefted constituent, being a [+contrastive] focus, is located in the left periphery of the clause. Following Belletti (2008), I have assumed that clefted constituents in English and French, expressing a [ $\pm$ contrastive] focus, are in a low focus position, viz. in the left periphery of the vP phase.

For the coda, i.e. the infinitival relative clause, I have assumed that, just like the finite relative clause, it is a complement rather than an adjunct, in line with Kayne’s (1994) Antisymmetry theory. I have shown that extraction is possible from the infinitival relative clause with the canonical DP-cleft and with one type of quantifier-cleft. I have argued that extraction is

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The difference in grammaticality might result from the fact that in (i) the whole FinP including the trace of *pro* (cf. 81) is moved, whereas in (ii) only part of FinP, viz. the infinitival relative clause is moved (cf. 83).

<sup>22</sup>For some of the native Italian speakers that I consulted the insertion of a resumptive pronoun in (83) improved its acceptability (i). This suggests that the unacceptability of (83) is syntactic in nature:

- (i) \*? *una storia che sono poche le persone a conoscerla*  
a story that are few the persons to know it

possible because Spec,ForceP is available as an extraction site. I have attributed the impossibility of extraction from the second type of quantifier-cleft, a type involving subject inversion, to Chomsky's (1995) Minimal Link Condition.

In this paper I have shown that, besides clefts, infinitival subject relatives are licensed by a head noun modified by a superlative or an equivalent expression, not only in Italian, but also in English and French. I have argued that the superlative or the equivalent expression expresses a [+contrastive] focus, which suggests that it moves to a FocusP in the left periphery of the DP, probably at LF. I have also argued that a superlative does not necessarily have to express a [+contrastive] focus, but I have claimed that in that case it does not license an infinitival subject relative. In line with Belletti's distinction between a high and a low focus position in the clause, a question that comes to mind is whether two types of focus position can be motivated within the DP: a high focus position in the left periphery of the DP and a low focus position just dominating NP. I leave this question for future research.

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