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**ON FOCAL AND WH-PROJECTIONS, INDIRECT WH-QUESTIONS,  
AND QUANTIFICATIONAL CHAINS<sup>i</sup>**

**Abstract**

In this paper, I investigate the cartography of focus using novel data from non-standard Italian (non-StandIT) and Trevigiano, a Venetan dialect. I claim that focus is less constrained in indirect wh-questions in these varieties than in Standard Italian (StandIT). Indeed, in Trevigiano both focalised objects and adverbials are felicitous in constructions with a lower wh-phrase. Using Featural Relativized Minimality, I argue that in the case of direct objects, the problem of crossing chains is circumvented using an IP-internal clitic that absorbs the [+N] feature of the direct object. Then, I explain the behaviour of focalised adverbials in these varieties claiming that they are externally-merged directly in the Left Periphery, hence create a high focus-chain that does not interfere with the creation of the lower wh-chain.

**Key words**

Syntax, Cartography, Focus, Peripheries, Wh-Phrases, Wh-Movement, Clitic Doubling, Chain formation, Romance.



- (2) [ XP [ Foc° YP ] ]  
 Focus Presupposition

(Rizzi & Cinque 2010:52(5))

A recursion of (2) would result in a focus-containing focus. In such a construction, the embedded FocP would have to encode both new and given information at the same time, inevitably causing an interpretive clash.

Interestingly, despite the fact that interrogative wh-items are widely considered focalised, the co-occurrence of a focused element and of a wh-element is marginally possible in the indirect wh-questions of Standard Italian (StandIT). However, the productivity of this operation appears to be limited: only the strict order FOC>Wh is possible (Rizzi 2004, Rizzi & Bocci 2017). This is illustrated by the contrast (3):

- (3) a. ? Mi domando A GIANNI che cosa abbiano detto [...]ii  
 ‘I wonder TO GIANNI what they said(, not to Piero)’  
 b. \* Mi domando che cosa A GIANNI abbiano detto [...]  
 ‘I wonder what TO GIANNI they said(, not to Piero)’

(adapted from Rizzi & Bocci 2017:7-8(27))

Because of the felicity of (3a), the presence of a left-peripheral wh-projection lower than FocP was proposed. This projection has been referred to as either WhP (as in Rizzi 1997) or QembP (from Rizzi & Bocci 2017), and appears to host wh-phrases in indirect wh-questions such as (3a). Starting from Rizzi (2001), WhP has been argued to occupy a very low position within the LP, along the lines of (4):

- (4) [ Force [ Top\* [ Int [ Top\* [ Foc [ Top\* [ Mod [ Top\* [ Qemb/WhP [ Fin [<sub>IP</sub> ...]]]]]]]]]]]]

(Rizzi & Bocci 2017:8(29))

Semantically, the co-occurrence of focus and a wh-phrase, which is ruled out in matrix contexts, such as (2), might be possible in indirect wh-questions like (3a) because these are not real questions. Indeed, indirect questions differ from direct questions in the fact that they do not require an answer. Hence, and very exceptionally, in indirect wh-questions the movement of the wh-phrase to WhP is not focal movement but mere wh-movement required to check a [+INT] feature: ‘Uniqueness of focus’ is preserved, and no interpretive clash arises (see Bianchi et al. 2017 for a finer semantic explanation).

Syntactically, in indirect focus-containing wh-questions the processes of chain formation are complex, since in most cases the focus-chain and the wh-chain cross over each other (Rizzi 2001). In this work, I argue that languages

such as non-StandIT and Trevigiano, a Venetan dialect, circumvent all chain-formation problems by means of special syntactic properties such as the availability of clitic doubling for foci, and the presence of left-peripheral adverbs whose focalisation does not disturb the formation of the wh-chain.<sup>iii</sup>

### 1.2 *The low Periphery of the Clause*

Along with the LP of the clause, some authors argue that there exists a low periphery, that of *vP/VP* (Belletti 2004). This clause-internal periphery contains (minimally) the projections in (5), all of which have a discourse-related nature:

(5) ... [<sub>TopP</sub> Top° [<sub>Foc</sub> Foc° [<sub>TopP</sub> Top° ... VP]]]

(Belletti 2005:9)

The periphery of *vP/VP* exhibits a design that closely resembles the clause-external LP. For example, from the beginning of the cartographic enterprise, it has been clear that languages like Italian have lower ‘in situ’ focalization (Cinque 1993, Rizzi 1997), as suggested by examples such as (6):

(6) Ho letto IL TUO LIBRO (, non il suo)

‘I read YOUR BOOK, not his’

(Rizzi 1997:287(7))

Starting from Belletti (2004), instances of low focus such as the one in (6) have been argued to target the  $\nu$ P/VP-peripheral Foc. However, while both wh-phrases and foci compete for the Spec position of the left-peripheral FocP (Rizzi 1997), the  $\nu$ P/VP-peripheral focal projection appears only available for foci, at least in Standard Italian (StandIT). Indeed, wh-in situ is a question-formation strategy that StandIT rejects. In section 2, I claim that evidence from Trevigiano and non-StandIT suggest that the  $\nu$ P/VP-peripheral focal projection is actually able to host wh-phrases.

## **2. Foci and Wh-Phrases**

In Trevigiano, foci and fronted wh-phrases display the properties and distribution of their StandIT counterparts, as described in Cinque (1990) and Rizzi (1997), but not exclusively. Indeed, the focal elements of Trevigiano (and non-StandIT) display two interesting distributional properties that are not observed in StandIT. In what follows, I shall only discuss what makes Trevigiano peculiar with respect to StandIT.

The first difference concerns the availability of Belletti's (2004) clause-internal Foc for wh-phrases. As widely claimed in Bonan (2019), the clause-

internal wh-items of Trevigiano systematically target a linear position right below the finite V in T° (or the past participle, which in turn moves out of vP, in an Italian-like fashion). Since Trevigiano is an SVO language in which adverbials must always follow all arguments selected by the verb, this clause-internal movement of wh-items is only visible in the cases of wh-IOs and wh-adverbs, as illustrated in (7).<sup>iv</sup> In the absence of clause-internal movement in interrogatives, i.e. if the unmarked declarative order is conserved, ungrammaticality is observed, as in (7'):

(7) a. Ghe ga-tu dato a chi<sub>i</sub> a tecia \_\_\_\_<sub>i</sub>?

DAT have=you given to who the saucepan

‘Who did you give the saucepan to?’

b. Ga-tu magnà cuando<sub>i</sub> el dolse \_\_\_\_<sub>i</sub>?

have=you eaten when the cake

‘When did you eat the cake?’

(7') a. \* Ghe ga-tu dato a tecia a chi?

DAT have=you given the saucepan to who

b. \* Ga-tu magnà el dolse cuando?

have=you eaten the cake when

I wish to argue that the clause-internal wh-items of Trevigiano undergo short, IP-internal movement.<sup>v</sup> Following Kato's (2013) work on Brazilian Portuguese and an intuition briefly sketched in Manzini (2014), I claim that the targeted projection is Belletti's (2004) Foc. As a consequence, the derivation of sentences like (7) is roughly done along the lines of (8):

$$(8) \quad \dots [\text{Foc wh-item}_i [\text{wh}^\circ [\text{TopicP} [\text{Top}^\circ [\text{vP/VP} [\text{V}^\circ \text{---}_i ]]]]]]$$

The Trevigiano data suggest that both the clause-external and the clause-internal focal projections can indeed host not only foci but also wh-words. It follows that the impossibility for StandIT to license wh-in situ must depend on language-internal properties, not on an inherent incapacity of the vP/VP-peripheral Foc to host wh-words. The second major divide between Trevigiano (and non-StandIT) and StandIT concerns the productivity of focus inside indirect wh-questions, which is the subject of section 2.1.

### 2.1. *On Foc > Wh*

Since Rizzi (1997), it has been widely acknowledged that the co-occurrence of focus and a wh-phrase is ruled out from matrix questions, in any order. This is illustrated by the StandIT examples in (10):



(10) a. \* A chi IL PREMIO NOBEL dovrebbero dare?

‘To whom THE NOBEL PRIZE should they give?’

b. \* IL PREMIO NOBEL a chi dovrebbero dare?

‘THE NOBEL PRIZE to whom should they give?’

(Rizzi 1997:298(45))

In contrast, as already seen in (3a), a focus and a wh-item can marginally co-occur in indirect wh-questions *iff* the focalised element is an IO. Indeed, the combination of contrastive foci and wh-items of any other nature is ungrammatical, as illustrated by Rizzi's example in (11):

(11) \*? Mi domando QUESTO<sub>DO</sub> a chi<sub>IO</sub> abbiano detto

‘I wonder THIS to whom they have said’

(adapted from Rizzi 2001:4(14))

### 2.1.1 *Trevigiano and non-standard Italian*

In contrast to what is observed in StandIT, a focalised DO is felicitous in constructions with a lower wh-item in Trevigiano, as long as the DO is construed with a co-indexed clause-internal clitic. I illustrate this in (12):<sup>vi</sup>

- (12) a. Vojo saver EL GATO<sub>i</sub> a chi che i gheo<sub>i</sub> g`a dato<sup>vii</sup>  
 want know THE CAT to who that they DAT.it gave  
 ‘I want to know THE CAT to whom they gave (it) (not the dog)’
- b. Me domando TO MARE<sub>i</sub> dove che i a<sub>i</sub> g`a vista<sub>u</sub>  
 I wonder YOUR MOM where that they her have seen.F  
 ‘I wonder YOUR MOM where they saw (her) (not your father)’

Let us call the constructions in (12) Clitic-Doubled Foci (CI-DF). In the absence of the clause-internal clitic, ungrammaticality arises, as in (13):

- (13) a. \* Vojo saver EL GATO a chi che i ghe g`a dato  
 want know THE CAT to who that they DAT gave
- b. \* Me domando TO MARE dove che i g`a visto<sub>u</sub>  
 I wonder YOUR MOM where that they have seen

CI-DF are also available in non-standard Italian, in constructions that, again, crash in the absence of clitic doubling. An example is provided in (14):

- (14) Mi domando TUA MADRE dove \*(I)'hanno vista<sub>u</sub>  
 I wonder YOUR MOTHER where her=have<sub>3PP</sub> seen

‘I wonder YOUR MOTHER where they saw (her) (not your father)’

In Trevigiano, focalised IOs construed with a lower wh-phrase are the only arguments that do *not* require clitic doubling (other than the compulsory *ghe*), as in (15):

- (15) Me domando A TO MAMA chi che ghe gà dato da bevar  
I wonder TO YOUR MOM who that DAT gave to drink  
‘I wonder TO YOUR MOM who gave drinks (not to your dad)’

Similarly, in the indirect wh-questions of Trevigiano an adverbial focus is never construed with a clitic either (16). This fact is unsurprising, since Trevigiano lacks all adverbial clitics, but needs to be accounted for:

- (16) Me domando DOPO SENA chi che te gà visto  
I wonder AFTER DINNER who that you saw  
‘I wonder AFTER DINNER who you saw (not this morning!’)

Again, constructions like (15) and (16) are also possible in non-standard Italian.

### 3. An Analysis of Clitic-Doubled Foci

#### 3.1. Enter Featural Relativized Minimality

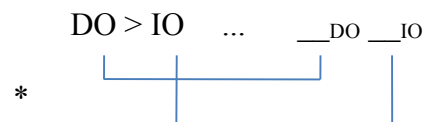
The co-occurrence within the same sentence of two quantificational elements like focus and a wh-phrase is theoretically problematic. Indeed, it is not clear how the focus-chain and the wh-chain can form properly, at least if we take both elements to start out clause-internally.

Rizzi (2001) explains the felicity, in the indirect wh-questions of StandIT, of focalised-IO>wh-DO (3a) and the ungrammaticality of focalised-DO>wh-IO (11) in terms of the crossing constraint à la Pesetsky (1982): the relevant A'-dependencies are nested in the former and crossed in the latter, and only nesting is unproblematic. I illustrate this in (17):

- (17) a. Nesting chains (IO>wh-DO):



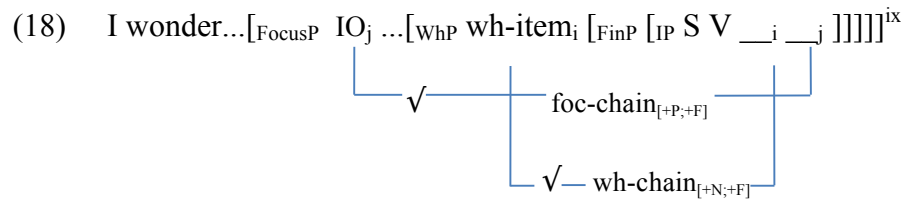
- b. Crossing chains (DO>wh-IO):



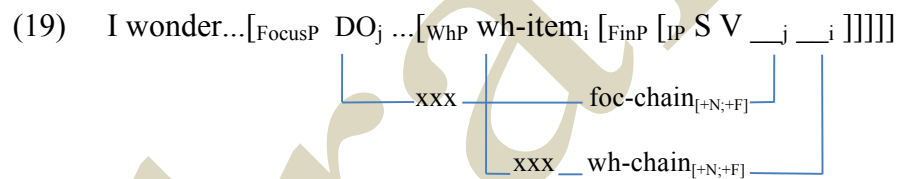
However, an analysis in terms of the crossing constraint is not sufficient to explain all data considered here. Indeed, the crossing chains appear to be felicitous in varieties such as Trevigiano and non-standard Italian, in which structures such as DO > wh-IO/Wh-Adv and DO/IO > Wh-Adv are fine.

As a consequence, I claim that the felicity of indirect wh-questions containing a focalised IO (and eventually of any focus-containing wh-question with crossing interpretational chains) is better explained if Featural Relativized Minimality (fRM) is used instead of the crossing constraint. Indeed, in recent experimental work, Friedmann et al. (2009), and later Villata et al. (2016), convincingly argued that most cases of intervention can be accounted for in terms of features. Accordingly, no intervention effects occur when two elements are associated to different features (a configuration known as ‘feature disjunction’), weak effects occur when the two elements share only one of two features (‘feature inclusions’), and ungrammaticality arises when the two elements carry the exact same features (‘feature identity’).

Ever since Cinque (1990), PPs have been known to have different, less constrained movement properties compared to NPs, which makes it tempting to link the special behaviour of the IOs of StandIT to the presence of (minimally) a [+P] feature, as opposed to a [+N] feature on the wh-item. In the framework of fRM, the [+P;+F]<sup>viii</sup> chain created by a focalised IO enters a relation of feature inclusion with the [+N;+F] wh-chain, creating minimal (to no) intervention effects when the two cross. This is sketched in (18):



On the other hand, a focalised DO is ruled out from the indirect wh-questions of Italian because its [+N;<sub>i</sub>+F] features enter a configuration of ‘feature identity’ with the [+N;<sub>i</sub>+F] features of the wh-phrase, hence the two chains are not able to form correctly. This is illustrated in (19):



Note that, in this theoretical framework, the ungrammaticality of examples in which a [+N;<sub>i</sub>+F] focalised DO co-exists with a lower wh-IO is explained *iff* one takes the wh-phrases of Romance to be adjoined within complex Wh-NPs, i.e. to have (silent) nominal features even in constructions with a P, along the lines of (20):



I believe that the analysis of the internal structure of Romance wh-PPs in (20) is legitimated by the fact that Romance languages, contrary to many Germanic languages including English, do not allow preposition stranding. An example from French is provided in (21):

- (21) \* Qui<sub>i</sub> as-tu donné la cléf à \_\_<sub>i</sub> ?  
who have-you given the key to  
'Who did you give the key to?'

If Romance wh-PPs are analysed as instances of big-NPs, as in (20), then the unavailability of stranded prepositions as in (21) follows.

### 3.2 *Left Peripheral External-Merge*

Let us now turn to Trevigiano and non-standard Italian which, as previously argued, display fewer constraints in the licensing of focus-containing wh-questions. To provide an explanation in terms of fRM for the felicity of focalised adverbials would be overly simplistic: while some adverbials are nominal in nature and some others are PPs, there are no distributional differences between adverbs associated with a [+N] feature and adverbs that are [+P]. Also, such an explanation would be unable to account for the reverse felicity of these constructions in languages such as StandIT.

I believe it is tempting to attribute the felicity of focalised adverbials in Trevigiano to their external-merge *locus*. Indeed, in contrast to IOs, which must start out within VP, where they are assigned a theta-role, for adverbials to start out VP-internally is not semantically necessary. Consequently, the possibility for focalised adverbials to appear in indirect wh-questions of varieties like Trevigiano and non-StandIT is easily explained if one takes the adverbials of this variety to be able to external-merge directly in the LP of the clause. Indeed, it seems plausible that in some varieties, such as Trevigiano, adverbials might externally-merge in the low LP, more precisely in *SpecModP*, and then move higher, into Rizzi's (1997) *FocP*. If adverbials are base-generated in Mod, which is Rizzi's (2004) left-peripheral landing site for adverbials and PP modifiers, then their focalisation creates a focus-chain that lies exclusively within the LP. I leave this minor question for further investigation. Since *WhP* sits very low in the LP (Rizzi 1997, Bonan 2018, a.o.), the possibility that Trevisian adverbials might be merged in ModP is compatible with the theory developed here: indeed, a focus-chain that goes from *SpecModP* to *SpecFocusP* is high enough not to cross the wh-phrase's movement into *SpecWhP*, as illustrated in (22):

- (22) ... [<sub>FocP</sub> ADV<sub>i</sub> ... [<sub>ModP</sub> \_\_\_<sub>i</sub> [<sub>TopP</sub> [<sub>WhP</sub> wh-phrase<sub>j</sub> [<sub>FinP</sub> [<sub>IP</sub> ... \_\_\_<sub>j</sub> ]]]]]]]]]
- └ focus-chain ─┘
└ wh-chain ─┘



In the absence of focus-movement, and consequently of a focus-chain, the formation of the wh-chain cannot be disturbed, as sketched in (23):

- (23) \* I wonder...<sub>[FocusP ADV ...<sub>[WhP wh-i <sub>[FinP [IP ...<sub>[VP S V \_\_\_i ]]]]]]</sub> ]]</sub></sub></sub>
- |
|  
adv-focus
√ wh-chain

If my intuition is correct, the different distribution of adverbial foci in the indirect wh-questions of StandIT and of non-standard varieties can be linked to the different availabilities of adverbials externally-merged in the LP.

However, none of these explain the role played by the clitic in Cl-DF, namely constructions in which a focalised DO co-occurs with a lower wh-phrase and is construed with a co-indexed clitic. I address this in the section that follows.

### 3.3 *Division of labour between the focalised NP and its doubling-clitic*

Since Cinque (1990) and Rizzi (1997), one of the major divides between the topics and foci of StandIT has been identified in the incompatibility of the latter with clitic doubling, as illustrated in (24):

- (24) IL TUO LIBRO (\*lo) ho comprato (, non il suo)  
 ‘YOUR BOOK I bought (not his)’

(Rizzi 1997:290(16))

In contrast, topics are systematically construed with a clitic, as in (25):

(25) Il tuo libro, \*(lo) ho comprato

‘Your book, I bought it’

(Rizzi 1997:289-290(15))

The contrast between (24) and (25) makes the case of Cl-DF theoretically challenging. Indeed, the first question that needs addressing is whether these are real foci or rather somewhat topical elements.

### 3.3.1 *Cl-DF are real foci*

Valentina Bianchi (p.c.) notes that indirect wh-questions like (11) sound significantly better if the focus is construed with a clitic, as illustrated in (26):

(26) Mi domando QUESTO a chi l'abbiano detto (non

I wonder THIS to who it'have<sub>SUBJ</sub> said (not

qualcosa d'altro)

something else)

‘I wonder THIS to whom they have said (it) (not something else)’

Also, Bianchi underlined that, despite the presence of the clitic, (26) is not an instance of contrastive topicalization, as witnessed by the possible presence of a negative tag such as *non qualcosa d'altro* ('not something else'). In contrast, a negative tag is never legitimately construed with a contrastive topic, as in (27):

- (27) Questo, l'ho già detto a Gianni (\*non quest'altro)  
this, it'have already told to John not something else  
'This, I have already said (it) to Gianni (\*not this)'

The property of foci discussed in (26) also applies to all cases of CI-DF discussed for Trevigiano and non-StandIT in this paper. Indeed, the availability of foci construed with clitic doubling is a rather robust phenomenon in Romance and constitutes a solid test for focushood.<sup>x</sup>

Importantly, one must note that in Trevigiano and non-StandIT matrix foci are systematically incompatible with clitic doubling, as in StandIT (Cinque 1990, Rizzi 1997). Indeed, Trevisian non-doubled foci display all classic properties that set Italian matrix foci apart from topics, as discussed in Rizzi (1997): (i) incompatibility with clitic doubling, (ii) weak cross-over effects, (iii) incompatibility with *wh*-phrases, and (iv) resistance to reiteration (Bonan 2019). It follows that the clause-internal clitic of CI-DF is a strategy that is peculiar to the specific syntactic context of indirect *wh*-questions, not one that

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is independently needed by contrastive foci. The clitic notwithstanding, CI-DF also displays the classic properties of matrix foci. Therefore, despite the presence of a clitic, CI-DF are not to be considered instances of topicalization.

### 3.3.2 *On the role of the clause-internal clitic*

I have extensively claimed that, in Trevigiano and non-StandIT, the co-occurrence of a focus and a *wh*-phrase is less restricted than in StandIT in the sense of Rizzi (1997). However, that in Italian the felicity of a focalised element  $\alpha$  crossing over another focal element  $\beta$  can depend on the presence of a clitic co-indexed with  $\alpha$  had been observed in Wagner (2012). Observe (28-28'):

(28) 'The exam was definitely not too easy. Many problems were such that only some students could solve them'.

(28') [ $\alpha$  Solo il problema più facile] \*(lo<sub>o</sub>) ha risolto [ $\beta$  anche lo studente peggiore]

(Wagner 2012:14(25))

In (28'), the clitic that resumes  $\alpha$  is crucial for the felicity of the question: *solo* ('only') takes scope over *anche* ('also'), excluding alternative interpretations such as '# the most difficult problem was even solved by the

worst student’ and ‘# the medium difficulty problem was even solved by the worst student’. As for clitic placement, the pattern in sentences with multiple overt focus-operators, as (28’), are parallel to those of topics (Wagner 2012).

Quite clearly, at least in the case of DOs, the presence of a doubling clitic seems to be required to save structures where an operator crosses over another operator. Indeed, the clitic also partially guarantees an amelioration effect when a wh-DO crosses over a focal element introduced by *anche* (‘also’), as illustrated by the contrast in (29), or another wh-phrase, as in (30):

(29) a. ?? Quale problema ha risolto anche lo studente peggiore?  
 which problem has solved also the worst student  
 ‘Which problem also the worst student solved?’

b. Quale problema **lo** ha risolto anche lo studente peggiore?  
 which problem it has solved also the worst student  
 ‘Which problem also the worst student solved it?’

(30) a. ?? Quale problema ti chiedi chi possa risolvere?  
 which problem you wonder who can<sub>SUBJ</sub> solve  
 ‘Which problem do you wonder who might solve?’

b. ? Quale problema ti chiedi chi **lo** possa risolvere?

which problem you wonder who it can<sub>SUBJ</sub> solve

‘Which problem do you wonder who might solve (it)?’

Despite sounding sub-standard, (29b) and (30b) are clearly less marginal than their clitic-less counterparts in (a).

I wish to analyse the clitic of CI-DF as a syntactic device that marks the path of an operator that takes wide scope over another operator, as for example the path of a focalised DO that crosses over a wh-phrase. More specifically, my claim is that the clitic and the coindexed NP must start off together, as part of the same ‘big DP’: I believe it is reasonable to assume that there is some division of labour between the clitic and the NP, in the sense that the clitic carries the [+N] feature and the NP carries the [+F] feature.<sup>xi</sup> When the clitic, to satisfy its nature, moves to its cliticization site in the high IP (à la Pollock 1989), it carries along the [+N] feature, while the NP moves to its left-peripheral focalisation site undisturbed because it has been stripped of its nominal feature by the clitic and is hence only endowed with a [+F] feature. Consequently, the focus-chain that is created entertains a felicitous relation of feature inclusion with the wh-phrase. This is illustrated in (31-31’):

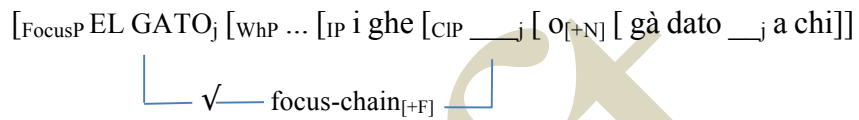
(31) Vojo saver EL GATO a chi che i gheo gà dato

want<sub>IPS</sub> know THE CAT to whom that they DAT=it gave

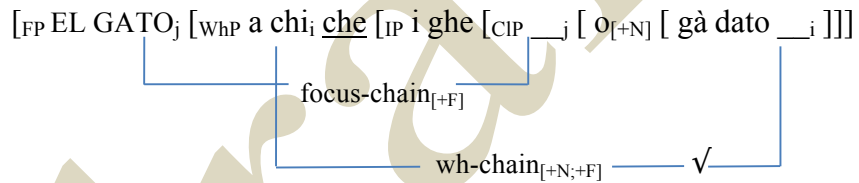
‘I want to know THE CAT to whom they gave it (not the dog!)’

(31') Input: the NP and the clitic start out as a 'big DP';

- a. Step 1: the clitic absorbs the [+N] feature of the NP.
- b. Step 2: the clitic moves to a dedicated cIP in the higher IP;
- c. Step 3: the DO moves to SpecFocP to check its [+F] feature: the focus-chain that is created is merely [+F]:



- d. Step 4: a [+N;+F] wh-chain is created following wh-movement, Wh° is realised as *che* ('that').<sup>xii</sup>



The legitimacy of this analysis is confirmed by the possibility, in Trevigiano, to leave the focus clause internally, in the Spec of Belletti's (2004) Foc, as in (32). In such cases, no clitic is generated, which suggests that focus movement that takes place at LF is less constrained than the pre-Spell Out one<sup>xiii</sup> (indeed, crossing chains appear unproblematic here):

(32) Vojo saver a chi che i ghe gà dato EL GATO  
 want<sub>1PS</sub> know to who that they DAT gave THE CAT

|

‘I want to know to whom they gave THE CAT (not the dog!)’

The analysis in (31') can be extended to all cases where a clitic allows the co-occurrence of quantificational elements crossing over each other. However, such an analysis raises the question about the status of DO-topics: why should they be construed with a doubling clitic, since they are not operators taking scope over another operator, and there are no crossing chains? I leave the question, which is not the subject of this paper, for further investigation.

#### **4. Further thoughts on chain-formation and the peripheries**

In this paper, I have claimed that, in Trevigiano and in non-StandIT, focus-containing indirect wh-questions are less constrained than in StandIT. I explained this phenomenon as the result of the availability, in these varieties, of focalised adverbials externally-merged directly in the LP and of a clitic that absorbs the [+N] feature on the NP that undergoes focalisation. The latter, I explained as a semantic tool that makes proper focus-chain formation possible, despite the presence of a wh-chain: once the nominal feature is stripped from the focalised chunk into the clitic, the focus-chain only carries a [+F] feature that does not disturb the creation of the [+N;+F] wh-chain. From this analysis, it follows that the major divide between, on the one hand, the indirect wh-



questions of Trevigiano and similar varieties and, on the other hand, those of StandIT, lies in the unavailability of ‘big DPs’ in the latter.

#### 4.1 On ‘mild’ feature relations

Similarly, the possibility of fronting a focalised-IO, available also in StandIT (Rizzi 1997;2001), is attributed here to the special nature of indirect objects: PPs have been known for decades to move more freely compared to DOs and subjects (Cinque 1990), which I linked to the fact that their [+P;+F] features entertain a relation of feature inclusion with the [+N;+F] wh-chain. Note that, in Friedmann et al. (2009) terms, feature inclusion should result in a weak violation, which is not observed here. I claim that this is easily explained if one considers that the [+F] feature checked by the focus is different from the [+F] feature in WhP checked by the wh-phrase (in Bonan 2019, I argue that the former is [Q<sub>foc</sub>] while the latter is [Q<sub>int</sub>]). As a consequence, I believe that these configurations can be treated as instances of ‘mild’ feature inclusion, which results in no violation at all. In contrast, a focalised DO that crosses over a wh-phrase creates an undesirable [+N;+F] configuration of (mild) feature identity, which results in ungrammaticality (as in StandIT), unless the [+N] feature can be ‘stripped’ from the focus by means of a grammatical device such as the clitic of Trevigiano and non-StandIT Cl-

DF, which again results in a configuration of ‘mild’ feature inclusion ([+Q<sub>foc</sub>] vs. [+N;+Q<sub>int</sub>]).

Note that there exist (standard and non-standard) Italian cases in which a focalised S crosses over a *wh*-phrase, such as the one in (33). These, I believe, are not problematic for the theory developed here:

- (33) Mi domando I ROSSI chi abbiamo visto  
I wonder THE ROSSI who have<sub>SUBJ</sub> seen  
‘I wonder who THE ROSSI saw’

Indeed, (33) is only apparently an instance of two [+N;+F] chains in a relation of feature identity: following Rizzi (2005), the nominal feature on the subject must also carry a special [+aboutness] feature, which makes the two nominal chains slightly different, hence giving rise to a relation of either feature inclusion (if we take [+aboutness] and [+N] to be separate features) or of ‘mild’ feature identity (if we take [+N] and [+N<sub>about</sub>] to exist). In either case, the felicity of (33) is correctly predicted.

#### 4.2 *Peripheral focal- and wh-projections*

For the sake of completeness, let us see how the left peripheral and *vP*/*VP*-peripheral focal- and *wh*-projections are used in the varieties under

investigation. We saw that one and only one focus can appear in the LP (focus fronting) and one and only one in the VP-periphery (clause-internal focus). These are likely to target, respectively, Rizzi's (1997) left-peripheral FocP and Belletti's (2004) clause internal Foc. The incompatibility of two foci within the same sentence has been explained, since Rizzi (1997), in terms of interpretive implausibility of focus-containing foci. The same interpretation-driven incompatibility is observed in direct questions of a focus and a wh-phrase. Elements of these types can neither co-occur within the same periphery, as illustrated in (34), nor in different peripheries, as in (35), irrespective of their linear order and the grammatical role:

- (34) \* QUESTO a chi hanno detto (, non qualcos'altro)?  
 THIS to whom have<sub>3PP</sub> said (, not something else)  
 (Rizzi 2001:4(13))

- (35) \* Quando hanno consegnato IL LIBRO a Leo?  
 when have<sub>3PP</sub> given THE BOOK to Leo  
 (Bocci 2013:19)

In contrast, when combining a focus and a wh-phrase in indirect wh-questions, the co-occurrence of these elements is grammatical because indirect interrogatives are not inherently information-seeking: the movement of the

wh-phrase into SpecWhP is indeed to be considered as mere wh-movement which causes no semantic clash (Bianchi et al. 2017, Bonan 2019). In the cases, discussed in section 2, in which the focus of such constructions does not undergo fronting, this can either be argued to stay in its first-merge position (in situ focus) or to undergo short movement into the Spec of Belletti's (2004) Foc (clause-internally moved focus, see Bonan 2019 for a detailed investigation). However, Belletti's Foc is not only able to host contrastively-focused clause internal elements (be they alone in the structure or construed with a higher wh-item in SpecWhP). In Trevigiano, this  $\nu$ P/VP-peripheral focal projection is also available for wh-phrases (Bonan 2019). This is sketched in (36):

- (36) Si-tu ... [IP ndà [Foc cuando<sub>j</sub> ... [VP al marcà    ]]]?  
 have-you gone when to.the market  
 ‘When did you go to the market?’

Interestingly, the impossibility for StandIT to license wh-items clause-internally, which has been widely discussed in the literature, ceases to exist in the non-standard varieties in contact with dialects that have ‘optional wh-in situ’, such as Venetan Italian. Examples are provided in (37):

- (37) a. Seeing your friend's new cardigan. You ask:

E l'hai comprata dove, questa meraviglia?  
and it'have<sub>2PS</sub> bought where, this wonder  
'And where did you buy this beauty?'

b. Sarah is happy because Marco has finally called her. You ask:

Ti ha chiamata quando, Marco?  
you has<sub>3P</sub> called when Marco  
'When did Marco call you?'

Plausibly, the choice between overt scope (as in StandIT, in which overt wh-fronting is required) and scope construal (as in Trevigiano and other optional 'in situ' languages) is ruled by a component of grammar that is quite vulnerable, which can explain why dialect-influenced varieties of non-standard Italian display interrogative constructions that the standard variety rejects. My claim is that the impossibility for  $\nu$ P to host wh-phrases in StandIT cannot be linked to an inherent incompatibility of the clause-internal Foc and wh-items, but to linguistic reasons that go beyond the subject of this work.

## Conclusions

To conclude, my claim is that it is possible to explain the different distribution of focus in indirect wh-questions in StandIT on the one hand and

Trevigiano and non-StandIT on the other, if we take them to be linked to the unavailability in the former of (i) ‘big DPs’ whose clitic is able to ‘absorb’ the [+N] feature of the focalised NP, and (ii) of adverbials eligible for focalization that can be externally-merged directly in the LP. One might wonder why in languages in which ‘big DPs’ are available, clitic doubling is categorically not available in constructions with matrix focus. However, I believe that the use of such a tool would be utterly unnecessary in combination with matrix focus, and is hence ruled out by Economy.

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## Endnotes

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<sup>ii</sup> Throughout, I shall only provide glosses for my own examples.

<sup>iii</sup> The variety of Trevigiano described here is the one spoken in a 'mixed' area that has both Sinistra Piave ('left bank' of the Piave river) and Destra Piave

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(‘right bank’) features. This variety is widely described and discussed in Bonan (2019). As for non-standard Italian, throughout this article this term is used to refer mainly to the regional variety of Italian spoken in the Veneto region, unless otherwise specified.

<sup>iv</sup> Please note that the DOs in the examples in (7) are *not* right dislocated – in Trevigiano right dislocation can only exist in constructions with clitic doubling and in the presence of so-called ‘comma intonation’ (that is, when the dislocated chunk is phrased as an independent intonational phrase). Also, Italian-like ‘marginalization’ (Antinucci & Cinque 1977, Cardinaletti 2002, Samek-Lodovici 2015, a.o.) is categorically excluded in this variety (Bonan 2018;2019).

<sup>v</sup> But see Bonan (2019) for a claim that the movement under investigation is actually an instance of focus movement à la Kahnemuyipour (2001) (or of ‘non-wh-movement’ in Bošković’s 1997 words).

<sup>vi</sup> *Ghe* (‘to her/him’, dative marker) might seem a doubling element. I argue it is not, since in the variety of Trevigiano described here its presence is always compulsory in constructions with datives (it is a classic instance of Romance clitic doubling, as described for French and Spanish in Kayne 1991 and Uriagereka 1996, respectively). In the closely-related varieties that do not display clitic doubling of datives, all of the examples in this section would systematically lack *ghe*.

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<sup>vii</sup> Here, and in most examples that follow, I am leaving out the (optional) negative tag for reasons of space. I shall nonetheless include one in each translation, to make sure the constructions are understood correctly.

<sup>viii</sup> I use ‘F(eature)’ here to refer to any feature(s) that might be responsible for the movement of wh-phrases and foci in interrogatives (+int, +foc, +q, etc.).

<sup>ix</sup> Note that I purposefully draw this process of chain formation, which in Rizzi's terms is explained in terms of nesting, as an instance of chain crossing. Indeed, I do believe that any case of nesting could technically be analysed as crossing instead, as the sketch in (18) illustrates.

<sup>x</sup> Except Romanian, in which the phenomenon of clitic doubling is actually related to the notion of specificity and, for example, wh-phrases are normally clitic-doubled (Dobrovie-Sorin 1990;1994), as pointed out by an anonymous reviewer.

<sup>xi</sup> I wish to thank one of my anonymous reviewers for this suggestion.

<sup>xii</sup> This is actually an oversimplification of the structure. In Bonan (2019) I argue that the Trevisian complementizer *che* found in all instances of doubly-filled COMP is better understood as the (nominal) head of Fin, à la De Crousaz & Shlonsky (2003) and later refinements in Rizzi & Shlonsky (2007).

<sup>xiii</sup> But see Bonan (2019) for an alternative analysis in which all focus-features are verified clause-internally in Trevigiano and similar languages.