



Introduction

**Observation:** two kinds of cleft constructions in Igbo

- cleft involving focus-fronting (1-a)
- cleft that contains a relative clause (RC) (1-b)

- (1) a.  $\dot{O}$  bụ [FP gí'ní kà Ádá rìrì? ]  
3SG COP what FOC Ada ate  
'What did Ada eat?' **FOC cleft**
- b. Kèdú [Rel íhé Ádá rìrì? ]  
WH.COP thing Ada ate  
'What did Ada eat?' **RC cleft**

**Claims:**

- focus cleft  $\Rightarrow$  **expletive analysis + movement** of clefted XP
- RC cleft  $\Rightarrow$  **specificational analysis + base-generation** (Goldsmith 1981) of the clefted XP
- cleft copula is non-expletive

Approaches to cleft sentences

Two approaches to cleft sentences:

1. **Expletive analysis:** posits that clefts are related to focus. The cleft pronoun is treated as expletive, and it is not related to the cleft clause. This analysis strengthens the relation between focus movement and clefting. (e.g. É. Kiss 1998, Meininger 1998).
2. **Specificational analysis:** the structure of the cleft is similar to that of specificational sentences. The analysis considers the cleft pronoun as non-expletive and referential. The cleft pronoun and the cleft clause form a semantic unit (Akmajian 1970, Percus 1997, Hedberg 2000, Reeve 2012, a.o.).

$\hookrightarrow$  The Igbo facts with the two different kinds of clefts support the idea that the two analyses can be found side-by-side in a language.

The syntax of focus fronting and relativization

Focus

- XP<sub>[foc]</sub> occurs in the clause-initial position; it is followed by the focus marker *kà* when it is a non-subject (2-b)
- fronting involves movement; evidence from island sensitivity and reconstruction effects
- focused (local) subjects cannot undergo A'-movement to the local SpecFoc; evidence: absence of focus marker and tonal reflexes of subject movement (cf. (2-a) & (3-a))

Relativization

- relative clauses are postnominal, head external (Green & Igwe 1963, Welmers & Welmers 1969), no relative pronouns
- Subject extraction is indicated by tone change on the finite verb  $\hookrightarrow$  downstep tones in (3-a)
- relativized subject also bears a final (H)igh tone (3-a)
- head nouns are base-generated and there is movement of a null operator in RCs for both subject and non-subject

- (2) *focus* (3) *relativization*
- a. Nwáànyị rìrì jí. a. nwáànyị 'rì'rì jí  
woman ate yam woman ate yam  
'A/The woman ate yam.' 'the woman that ate yam'
- b. Jí kà nwáànyị rìrì. b. jí nwáànyị rìrì  
yam FOC woman ate yam woman ate  
'A/The woman ate YAM.' 'the yam that the woman ate'

$\rightarrow$  H tone marks the right edge of the crossed-over subject in SpecTP (cf. (2-b) (3-b)) (Manfredi 2018)

Copulas in Igbo

- there are three 3 copulas in the language (Déchaine 1993, Uchekukwu 2011); but 2 are found in clefts.
- *bụ* copula is type flexible – specificational and predicational (4).
- *dị/dú* copula is predicational (5); it selects predicate complements of semantic type  $\langle e, t \rangle$  (Mikkelsen 2005, Geist 2007);

- (4) a. Ónyé níkuzi \*(áhù) bụ Ádá  
person teaching DET COP Ada  
'The teacher is Ada.'
- b. Ádá bụ ónyé níkuzi (áhù)  
Ada COP person teaching DET  
'Ada is the teacher.'

$\Rightarrow$  focus cleft combines with *bụ* copula

- (5) a. Ádá dị òchá  
Ada COP white  
'Ada is fair in complexion.'
- b. \*Òchá dị Ádá  
Ada COP white  
'Ada is fair in complexion.'

$\Rightarrow$  cleft containing RC combines with the predicational copula (Nwachukwu 1995)

Arguments for expletive analysis of focus clefts

- Presence of the focus marker

Clefts: the Igbo facts

- No relative clause structure, e.g. tonal reflexes of movement attested in subject RCs are absent (6-c)

- (6) a. Nwáànyị rìrì jí.  
woman ate yam  
'A/The woman ate yam.' *subj. foc*
- b. [ Nwáànyị 'rì'rì jí ] à-sá-á-lá éféré.  
woman ate yam PFX-wash-SFX-PFV plate  
'A/The woman that ate yam has washed the dishes.'
- c.  $\dot{O}$  bụ nwáànyị rìrì jí.  
3SG COP woman ate yam  
'It is a woman that ate yam.' *subj. cleft*

- No further focus movement: A'-movement of a particular type do not iterate (Rizzi 2006, Abels 2008)

- (7) a.  $\dot{O}$  bụ [FP gí'ní kà Ádá rìrì \_\_\_? ]  
3SG COP what FOC Ada ate  
'What did Ada eat?'
- b. \*Gí'ní kà ó bụ \_\_\_ (kà) Ádá rìrì \_\_\_?  
what FOC 3SG COP FOC Ada ate

The cleft pronoun

- cleft pronoun is expletive in focus cleft; it cannot be replaced with a demonstrative (cf. Hedberg 1990, Reeve 2012, for English)

- (8) *answer to (1)*
- a.  $\dot{O}$  bụ [ jí kà Ádá rìrì. ]  
3SG COP yam FOC Ada ate  
'It is yam that Ada ate'
- b. \*Nkè á bụ [ jí kà Ádá rìrì. ]  
the.one this COP yam FOC Ada ate  
Lit: 'This is yam that Ada ate.'

- but alternation is possible in predication construction with RC

- (9) *NOT an answer to (1)*
- a.  $\dot{O}$  bụ [ jí Ádá rìrì. ]  
3SG COP yam Ada ate  
'It is the yam that Ada ate'
- b. Nkè á bụ [ jí Ádá rìrì. ]  
the.one that COP yam Ada ate  
'This is the yam that Ada ate.'

Evidence for specificational analysis of RC clefts

- Absence of focus marker, also not found in RCs
- Presence of RC structure

- (10) a. [ Nwáànyị 'rì'rì jí ] à-sá-á-lá éféré.  
woman ate yam PFX-wash-SFX-PFV plate  
'The woman that ate yam has washed the dishes.'
- b. Kèdú [ nwáànyị 'rì'rì jí? ]  
WH.COP woman ate yam  
'Which woman ate yam?'/Where is the woman that ate yam?'

- Extraction from RC not possible  $\rightarrow$  CNPC violation

Movement properties of clefted XPs

- **Island sensitivity:** adjunct island

- (11) a. Ádá siri ófé [túpú ò síé 'jí. ]  
Ada cooked soup before 3SG cook yam  
'Ada prepared the soup before she prepared the yam.'
- b. \* $\dot{O}$  bụ jí kà Ádá siri ófé [túpú ò síé \_\_\_ ]  
3SG COP yam FOC Ada cooked soup before 3SG cook  
Lit: 'It is yam that Ada prepared soup before she prepared.' *FOC*
- c. \*Kèdú íhé Ádá siri ófé [túpú ò síé \_\_\_? ]  
WH.COP thing Ada cooked soup before 3SG cook  
Lit: 'What did Ada prepared soup before she prepared.' *RC*

- **Ban on extraction from perfective clauses** (language-specific test)

- (12) a. Ádá è-rí-é-lá 'jí.  
Ada PFX-eat-SFX-PFV yam  
'Ada has eaten jí.'
- b. \* $\dot{O}$  bụ gí'ní kà Ádá è-rí-é-lá \_\_\_?  
3SG COP what FOC Ada PFX-eat-SFX-PFV  
Lit: 'What is it that Ada has eaten?' *FOC cleft*
- c. \*Kèdú íhé Ádá è-rí-é-lá \_\_\_?  
WH.COP thing Ada PFX-eat-SFX-PFV  
Lit: 'What is it that Ada has eaten?' *RC cleft*

Evidence for base-generation of HN in clefts with RCs

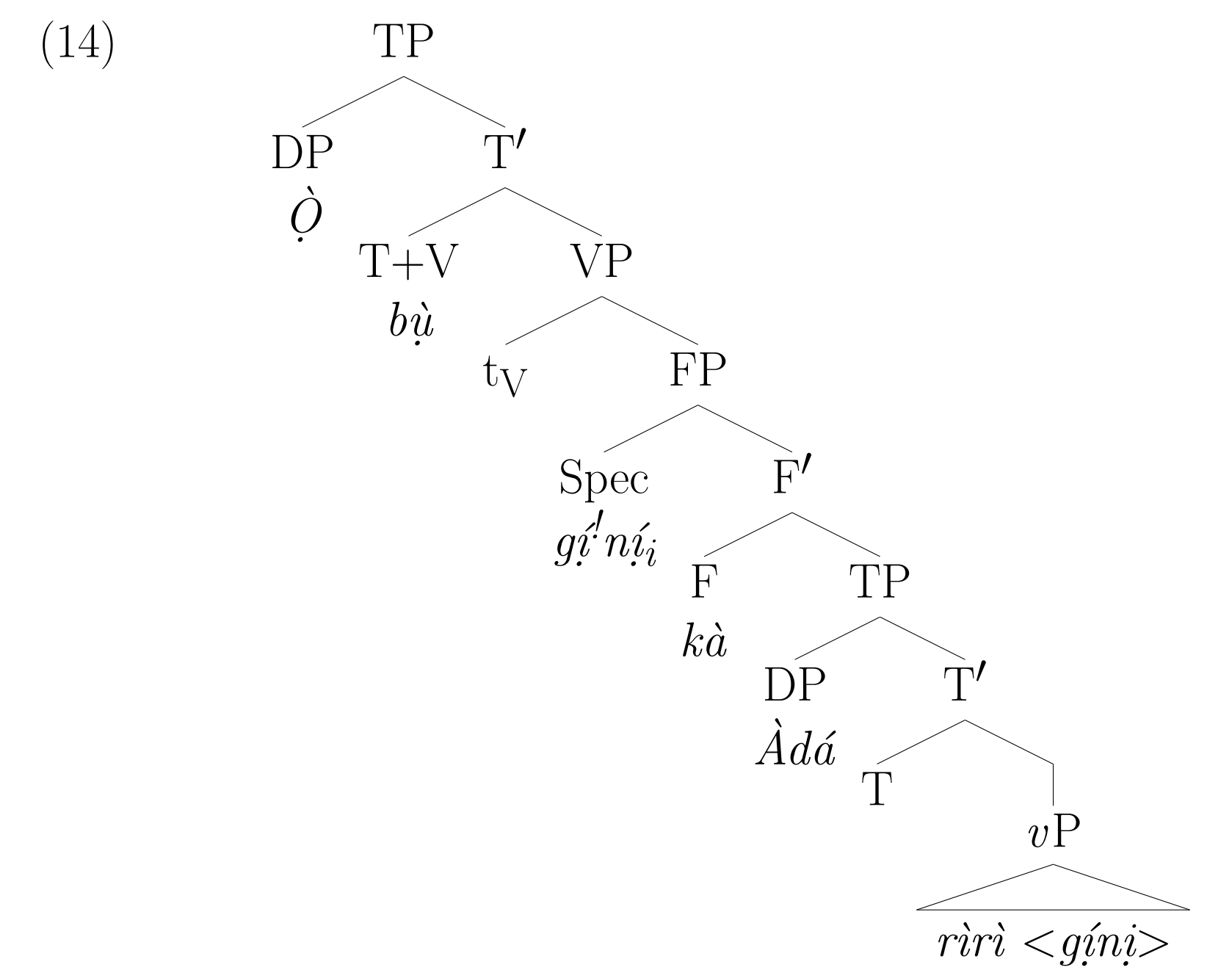
- (Non-)reconstruction of idioms

- (13) a. Há nà-àkú ngàjí n'éze.  
3PL PROG-hit spoon P-teeth  
'They are eating.' [Lit. 'They are hitting their teeth with spoon.']
- b.  $\dot{O}$  bụ ngàjí kà há nà-àkú \_\_\_ n'éze.  
3SG COP spoon FOC 3PL PROG-hit P-teeth  
'They are EATING.' *FOC cleft*
- c. Kèdú ngàjí há nà-àkú \_\_\_ n'éze?  
WH.COP spoon 3PL PROG-hit P-teeth  
'What spoon are they hitting their teeth with?'  
# 'What are they eating?' *RC cleft*

Analysis

Expletive analysis of focus cleft

- FocP is the complement of the copula
- overt movement of the clefted non-subject XP to the left periphery of FocP. (Local) subjects do not move (Ozo-Mekuri 1991, Amaechi & Georgi 2018)



- the copula is a linking verb (Hedberg 2000), and it connects the cleft pronoun in SpecTP and FocP

RC cleft - *kèdú*

- in the cleft with RC, the *wh*-morphemes *kè* and copula have formed a compound and are grammaticalized; evidence: difference in the ATR harmony of the vowels (15); the copula does not undergo tone change; thus it seems to have lost its verbal status

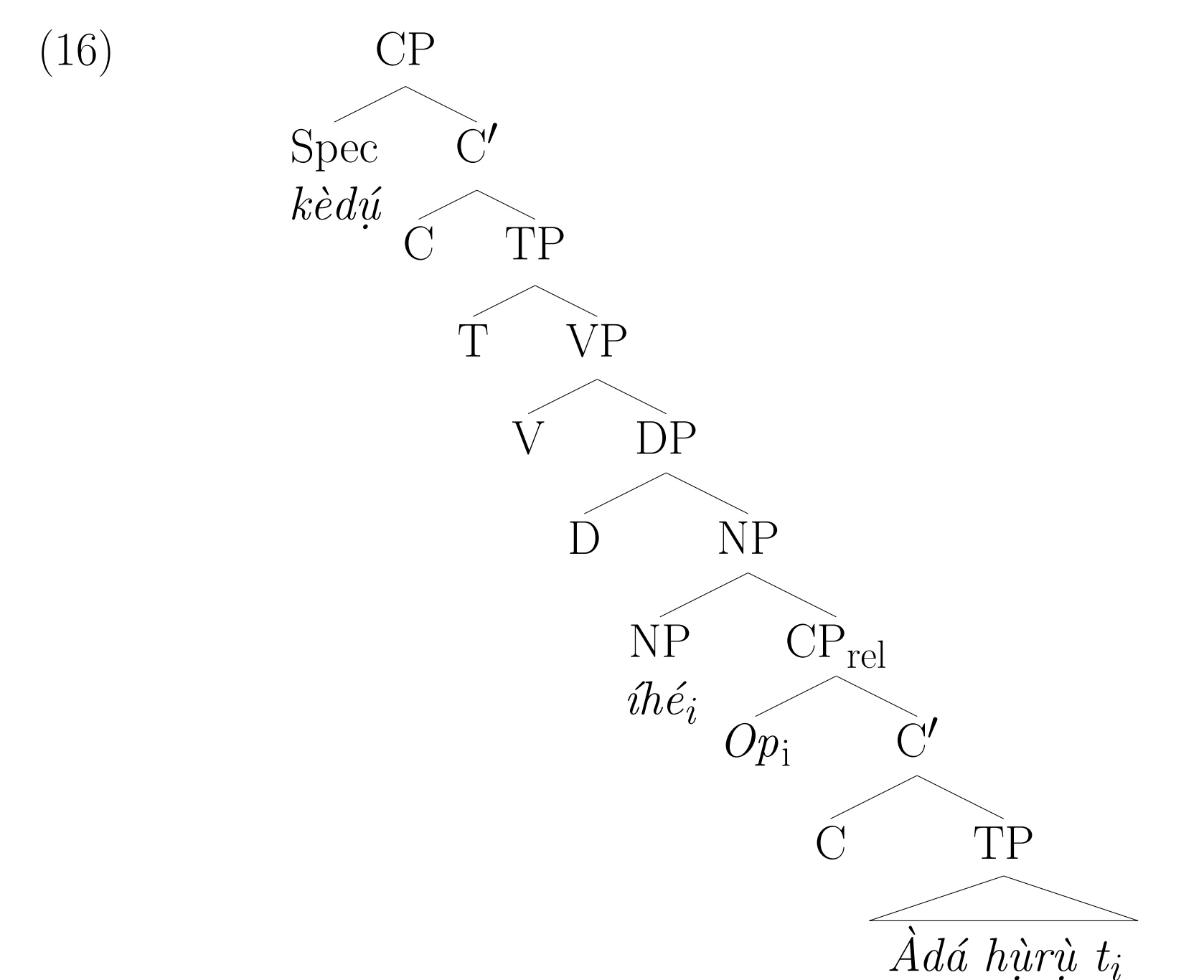
(15) [ $\pm$ ATR] harmony distinction in *kèdú*

- a. [+ATR] i, u, o, e = *kè*  
b. [-ATR] i, u, o, a = *dú*

- both copulas belong to H tone group of verbs but *bụ* has a (finite) LT and *dú* bears its inherent HT in (cf. (1)).

Specificational analysis of RC cleft

- the copula and the *wh*-element *kè* are grammaticalized with use only in *wh*-question context;
- the grammaticalized *kèdú* take the clefted XP (= head noun) containing the relative CP
- assuming the head external analysis (Chomsky 1977) with movement of a null operator from the argument position to the relative Spec-CP, the null operator is indirectly co-indexed to the base-generated clefted XP, as in (16)



- the different copulas in the two kinds of clefts are sensitive to the different types of CP complement they combine with.

- question  $\approx$  propositions
- relative  $\approx$  properties (Simik 2018)

- in Igbo, clefts with RCs (set of properties) combine with the predicational copula *dị*, and clefts involving focus (set of propositions) combine with *bụ*.

Selected references and acknowledgments

Akmajian, A. 1970. On deriving cleft sentences from pseudo-cleft sentences. *LI* 1(2). • Déchaine R.-M. 1993. *Predicates across categories: Towards a category-neutral syntax*. PhD thesis, University of Massachusetts at Amherst. • É. Kiss, K. 1998. Identification focus versus information focus. *Language* 74. • Goldsmith, J. 1981. The structure of wh-questions in Igbo. *LA* 7(4). • Hedberg, N. 2000. On the referential status of clefts. *Language* 76(4). • Nwachukwu, P.A. 1995. *Tone in Igbo syntax*. Nsukka. • Reeve, M. 2012. *Clefts and their relatives*. John Benjamins. • Šimik, R. 2018. On wh-questions, wh-relatives, and their kin. GLOW 41.

Many thanks to Doreen Georgi, Martin Salzmann, Marta Wierzbna and Malte Zimmermann, as well as audience at the colloquiums at Potsdam & Frankfurt/Main for comments and valuable feedback. All errors are mine.