

A special (question) view on wh-doubling in Lombard varieties

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1. This contribution has two goals: we intend to present new data about the wh-doubling phenomenon in Northern Lombard varieties, and discuss their relevance for the syntax/semantics interface in the encoding of non-standard questions. We will also discuss the origin and the morphosyntactic status of the so-called ‘-è series’ of wh-items.

2. Wh-doubling in Northern Italo-Romance is a typologically rare phenomenon which has been extensively analyzed and discussed in the syntactic literature, since it poses some problems for theories about the derivation of interrogative clauses, about the exact nature of wh *in situ* constructions, and about the morphosyntactic construal of bare wh-items (Poletto & Pollock 2004; 2009; Manzini & Savoia 2011; Donzelli & Pescarini 2019; Munaro & Poletto 2023).

A typical distribution displayed by a variety with wh-doubling is exemplified in (1):

- (1) a. kuza fa =la ku'ze? (Olgiate, Manzini & Savoia 2011)
what does =SCL what
b. se fa =la ku'ze?
what does =SCL what
‘What does she do?’

In this variety, it is possible to find questions like (1a-b), with a wh-item in the left periphery and another one *in situ*. Varieties with this phenomenon also have questions with only one wh-item, which can appear *in situ* or be moved to the left periphery, but we will not deal here with these variants (see also Munaro & Poletto 2023). In general, Lombard varieties with wh-doubling have 2 or in some cases 3 forms for wh-items that can surface in these constructions:

a) a clitic form, like *se* in (1b); b) a basic form (considered a ‘weak’ pronoun by Poletto & Pollock 2009), like *kuza* in (1a); c) a form which seems to incorporate the copula, like *ku'ze* in (1a-b), which we simply label as ‘-è series’.

3. While there is variation regarding the forms of the wh-items and the possible combinations in the wh-doubling across the Northern Lombard domain, all the authors that have studied the phenomenon have pointed out that the form in the left periphery is always “lighter” than the one *in situ*. Thus, the generalization would be that it is possible to find forms like *ku'ze* in the left periphery, but only if it is the only wh-item in the interrogative clause, as in (2):

- (2) ku'ze fa =la? (Olgiate Molgora, Manzini & Savoia 2011)
what does =SCL
‘What does she do?’

However, Bernasconi (2021) has collected many cases in varieties from the Ticino area in Switzerland and the provinces of Como and Varese in Italy where there is a full doubling of the form from the -è series:

- (3) a. ku'mε ke te= fai ku'mε!/? (Mendrisio)
how that SCL = do how
‘How are you doing it!?’
b. ku'ze ka te= di ku'ze?! (Olgiate Comasco)
what that SCL = said what?
‘What have you said?!’
c. ndu'ε ka l= finis ndu'ε?! (Solbiate con Cagno)
where that SCL = finishes where
‘Where does it finish?!’

These questions always present two properties: a) there is a complementizer following the first instance of the wh-item; b) they are not standard questions, but are pragmatically marked.

4. The first property could be interpreted assuming that these questions are interrogative clefts (and thus the first wh-item would simply present the basic form plus a true copula). However, we exclude this solution, since there are not cases of similar constructions with a subject proclitic or enclitic in the presumed cleft. Furthermore, these varieties have true interrogative clefts, where the copula appears with a subject clitic. Compare (3a) and (4):

- (4) indua l=è ke l= finis indua? (*Mendrisio*)
 where SCL=is that SCL= finishes where?
 ‘Where does it finish?’

Finally, there is a variety, spoken in Davesco (Ticino), where similar questions, with the complementizer and a non-standard interrogative interpretation, are possible also with the basic form of the wh-item, where there is nothing similar to the copula:

- (5) ndua ka te= se nai ogi ndua!? (*Davesco*)
 where that SCL are gone today where
 ‘Where on earth have you been today!?’

The non-standard interpretation of these interrogative clauses can be characterized as ‘Surprise/Disapproval’ (and in some cases as ‘Can’t find the value’) in the terminology proposed by Obenauer (2004 and following works).

5. We will propose that the interrogative clauses under exam are encoded by Merge of the complementizer-like particle *ka/ke* in the higher part of a split CP, as the head of a projection we simply label SpeakerP, assuming that non-standard questions of this type encode the point the view of the speaker. Crucially, the higher wh-item is not moved from the *in situ* position (following Manzini & Savoia 2011, we would exclude a case of non-cancelled copy):

- (6) [_{SpeakerP} *ku'zε* [_{Speaker°} *ka* [_{CP} *te=di ku'zε*]]]

This analysis supports the approaches to wh-doubling assuming that the two wh-items have different functions (like scope marker / focus marker; cf. Manzini & Savoia 2011; Donzelli & Pescarini 2019). Furthermore, on the basis of the constructions we study it is possible to say something more precise about the grammaticalization of the ‘-è series’: these cases are clearly derived from true interrogative clefts, which become monoclausal (as suggested by the absence of the subject clitic on the copula), with the copula becoming part of the morphology of the wh-item (as already suggested by Manzini & Savoia 2011), and the complementizer becoming a discourse particle. Thus, two independent processes are at work: upward reanalysis and structure reduction.

- (7) [_{FocP} *kuz(a)* [_{TP} *ε* [_{vP} ~~*kuz(a)*~~ [_{CP} *ka* [_{TP}...]]]]] > [_{SpeakerP} *ku'zε* [_{Speaker°} *ka* [_{CP} ...]]]

We argue that it is precisely the monoclausal structure and the reanalysis of the complementizer that allow the reanalysis of the ‘-è series’ as bare wh-items, which can then appear *in situ*, or, in general, can be used also in standard questions.

Selected references

◆Bernasconi, C. 2021. On wh-doubling in Lombard varieties. The case of Ticino and Como area. MA dissertation, Univ. of Padova. ◆Donzelli G. & D. Pescarini. 2019. Tre tipi di wh-in situ nei dialetti Lombardi. *Bollettino del Centro di Studi Filologici e Linguistici Siciliani* 21: 183–97. ◆Manzini, M.R. & L.M. Savoia. 2011. Wh-in situ and wh-doubling in Northern Italian varieties: Against remnant movement. *Linguistic Analysis* 37: 79–113. ◆Munaro, N. & C. Poletto. 2023. Towards a Typology of wh-Doubling in Northern Italian Dialects. *Languages* 2023, 8, 24.