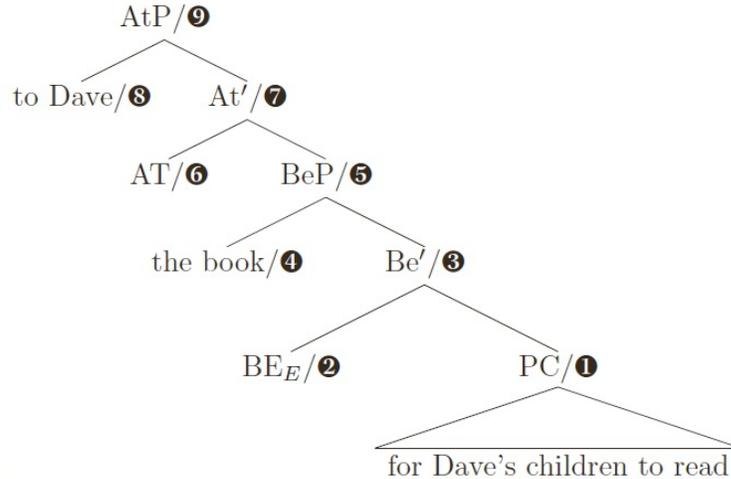**Modal Existential *Wh*-Constructions** (MECS)

- background: Šimik's (2011) analysis of PURPOSE CLAUSES, in sentences such as (1a): see (1b)
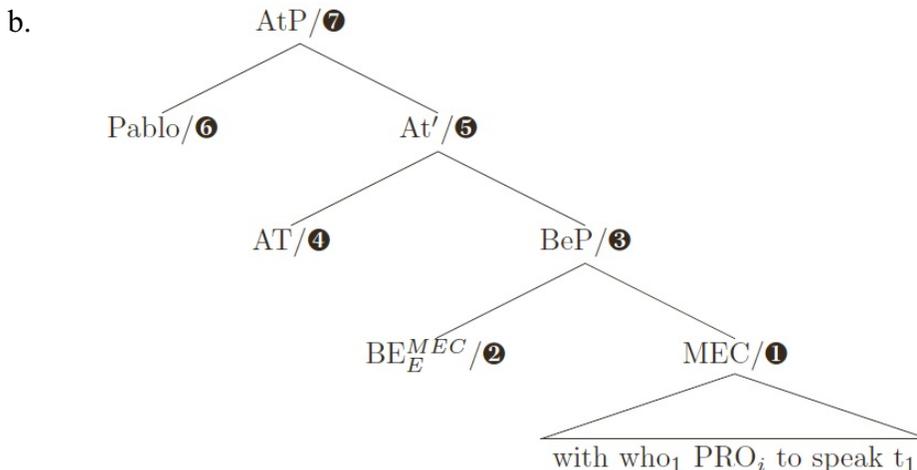
(1) a. the book is available to Dave for his children to read
     b.

```
                    AtP/❾
                  /       \
         to Dave/❽      At'/❼
                        /      \
                    AT/❻      BeP/❺
                             /      \
                    the book/❹     Be'/❸
                                  /      \
                           BE_E/❷       PC/❶
                                      /        \
                            for Dave's children to read
```

→   ❶ is the PURPOSE CLAUSE ('PC'), serving as the complement of BE$_E$ ('existential *be*')
→   ❹ is the subject of BE$_E$
→   ❻ is a functional head introducing the argument to whom the state of affairs denoted by ❺ applies (let us call this the Beneficiary)
→   the Beneficiary, when preceded by a preposition, forms a constituent with this preposition; the PP originates in SpecATP, as shown in ❽

- the MEC according to Šimik (2011): see (2b), the structure proposed for Spanish (2a)

(2) a. Pablo tiene con quién hablar
         Pablo has with whom talk.INF
         'Pablo has someone to talk to'
     b.

```
                AtP/❼
              /       \
       Pablo/❻      At'/❺
                    /      \
                AT/❹      BeP/❸
                         /      \
                 BE_E^{MEC}/❷   MEC/❶
                              /        \
                    with who_1 PRO_i to speak t_1
```

→ note that in the MEC, BE$_E$, for Šimik, does NOT have a specifier: BE$_E$ is not a RELATOR of a predication relationship

→ indeed, it cannot be a RELATOR of a predication relation if the complement of BE$_E$ is a fully saturated clause, as in (2b)

• **revised analysis** of MECs: a copular structure in which the complement of BE is a predicate

(3) $[_{RP1} [DP_i] [R1=AT [_{RP2} wh_k [R2 [_{CLAUSE} ec_i ... ec_k ...]]]]]$

→ the clause in the complement of R2 contains two open places, one of them the subject and the other an *ec* linked to the *wh*-constituent base-generated in the specifier of RP2 (i.e., *outside* the clause in the complement of R2: ec_k is <u>not</u> a trace of movement of wh_k)

→ as a result, the clause is doubly predicative, associated to both *wh* and DP
    – the clause is directly predicated of wh_k, with R2 as the RELATOR of the predication relationship
    – since RP2 is not fully saturated, it itself serves as the predicate of a second predication relation, mediated by R1 (Šimik's 'AT'; I have preserved his labelling here, but nothing hinges on the label)

....

NB   cases in which *wh* itself corresponds to the subject of the clause (see Šimik, pp. 186–7, for illustration and discussion of such cases: e.g., Hungarian (i)) link ec_i not to the DP in SpecRP1 but rather to the *wh* in SpecRP2

(i)   nekem van ki elmenjen a postára
            to.me is who PV.go.SUBJUNC.3SG the post.office.to
            'I have someone who can go to the post office'

→ these cases, it seems to me, are assimilable to Romance-style pseudo-relatives, such as (ii)

(ii)   je vois Jean qui fume une pipe
            I see Jean who smokes a pipe
            'I see Jean smoking a pipe'

• whether the clause in the complement of R2 in the structure of (i) contains an additional empty category linked to the dative (*nekem*), or *nekem* is instead associated to the clause in the way that a possessor is associated to the possessum in clausal HAVE-sentences, is a question whose answer depends on whether (i) and its ilk must always be interpreted in such a way that the constituent in SpecRP1 is a beneficiary to the event denoted by the clause (for the particular case of (i): 'I have someone who can go to the post office *for me/us*')

....

Q   how to account for '**connectivity**' in MECs?
A   in the same way as in another well-known subfamily of copular sentences: the CLEFT

(4) a. it was to/with/about Mary that John was talking
     b. het was met mij dat Jan wilde spreken
     c. het was mij die Jan wilde spreken   ⇒ object reading
     d. het was ik die Jan wilde spreken   ⇒ subject reading

→ in (4), the relative clause is a predicate predicated of the focus in postcopular position
→ the predicate associates with the kind of constituent appropriate for the nature of the predication relationship, in turn connected to the nature of the gap inside the predicative clause:
   – a PP if the gap inside the clause is a PP (4a,b)
   – an accusative DP if the gap inside the clause is a direct object (4c)
   – a nominative DP if the gap inside the clause is a subject (4d)
→ the clause-external subject of predication is not itself the beneficiary of case assignment in the containing copular clause: nominative is assigned to *it*; no further case is available in the copular clause
→ the form of the subject of predication is entirely a function of the relation between this constituent and (the gap inside) the predicative clause

• the optimal way to account for this 'connectivity effect' is a matter for a different occasion
→ the important point to take away from the parallel with CLEFTS is that this kind of connectivity is by no means unique to MECs, and, crucially, does not motivate an analysis of MECs wherein the *wh*-constituent is inside the clause in the complement of BE: there can be no doubt that in CLEFTS, the constituent exhibiting connectivity (i.e., the postcopular focused constituent) is not within the relative clause — see esp. the Dutch word-order facts

(5) a. het was met mij dat Jan wilde spreken   (= (4b))
     b. dat het met mij was dat Jan wilde spreken
     c. dat het met mij geweest zou kunnen zijn dat Jan wilde spreken
         'that it could have been with me that Jan wanted to talk'

• in German, case connectivity disambiguates PSEUDOCLEFTS, making them unambiguously specificational

(6)   was Hans schon immer kaufen wollte war ein(en) Audi
         what Hans already always buy wanted was a(ACC) Audi

→ with *ein*, (6) is ambiguous between a predicational and a specificational reading
→ with *einen* (case connectivity), only the specificational reading is available

• Meinunger notes further that (6) with *einen* is irreversible, whereas with *ein*, on its specificational reading, (6) does allow reversal

(7)   ein(*en) Audi war was Hans schon immer kaufen wollte

→ the irreversibility of (6) with *einen* is probably due to a case clash: *einen Audi*, raised to SpecIP, ends up in the quintessential nominative case slot
→ case is probably also behind the categorial restrictions on the focus in PSEUDOCLEFTS

[for English, it is perhaps particularly interesting that in PSEUDOCLEFTS there is a marked difference between *what* and *who*, the latter impossible for many speakers: note that while *what* has no case paradigm, *who* (at least in the highly formal/prescriptive register) alternates with *whom*]

- with the postcopular clause analysed as a predicate of a constituent outside the clause that is interpretively linked to a gap inside the clause, MECs are assimilated not just to CLEFTS but also more directly to the PURPOSE CLAUSES that Šimík (2011) himself talks about (but fails to directly identify with MECs)
→ such PURPOSE CLAUSES do not just occur in the presence of an explicit predicate of existence, as in (1a) (where the PC is a secondary predicate of the subject) but also as primary predicates of copular clauses or complex noun phrases: see (8)

(8)   a.   dit boek is nog te lezen
             'this book is still to be read' (□) OR 'this book is still readable' (◇)
             →   here ◇ is more salient than □
       b.   een nog te lezen boek
             'a book (that is) still to be read' (□) OR 'a book that is still readable' (◇)
             →   here □ is more salient than ◇

- PURPOSE CLAUSES of the type in (8) show no case connectivity, because they cannot: the clause-external subject of predication has its own case
→ concomitantly, PCs never have non-nominal associates

(9)   a.   I have something to talk about
       b.   *I have about something to talk

- in CLEFTS, case conflicts are averted thanks to the fact that nominative case is assigned to *it*
→ the postcopular focus is allowed to have any case and to be of any category
→ all forms of connectivity are therefore always legitimate in CLEFTS

- Hungarian MECs of the type in (10) show connectivity, unproblematically: the postcopular constituent does not need to meet any case requirements
  [nominative case is not necessarily explicitly assigned in Hungarian, a pro-drop language; either (10) contains a silent nominative subject or else (probably more plausibly) *nekem* serves as a 'quirky-case' subject]

(10)   nekem nincs kivel {beszélni/beszélnem/beszéljek}

- Hungarian MECs of the type in (11) also show connectivity, again unproblematically: the postcopular constituent in (11) is arguably a silent-headed noun phrase serving as the head of a relative clause following it (see the English paraphrase below (11))

(11)   nekem nincs akivel beszéljek
              'I don't have a person with whom I could talk'

- a variation on the MEC theme are Hungarian constructions of the type in (12) (see a recent *Acta Linguistica Academica* paper of mine; the judgements on these sentences are variable)

(12) a. $^?$nekem nem kell senkivel, hogy beszéljek
          'I don't need to talk to anyone'
      b. $^?$nekem nem kell semmivel, hogy meglepjenek
          'they needn't surprise me with anything'
      c. $^{??}$ez nem kell senkit, hogy befolyásoljon
          'this needn't influence anyone'

→ in my *Acta* paper, I tentatively suggest that the constituent following *kell* is a reverse predicate of the subordinate clause; but in light of the foregoing, it now seems more sensible to me to treat the post-*kell* constituent as the subject of predication for the *hogy*-clause

....

NB Hungarian has (iii) but not (easily) (iv), in contrast to English

(iii) a. nekem nem kell senkivel beszélni
           'I don't need to talk to anyone'
       b. nekem kell valakiben bízni
           'I need someone to trust'
(iv)   a. $^{??}$nekem nincs senkivel beszélni
           'I don't have anyone to talk to'
       b. *nekem van valakiben bízni
           'I don't have anyone I can trust'

→ this is likely related to the fact that Hungarian has MECs (recall (10)) while English does not
→ exactly how to work this out without an appeal to cross-constructional ('global') competition remains an open question for now

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- **'sluicing'** in MECs?

- the clause in (10) can remain silent if it is recoverable from context; in (11) this is impossible
→ see the continuations in (10′) and (11′)

(10′)   nekem van miről {beszélni/beszélnem/beszéljek}, de nincs kivel ___
(11′)   *nekem van amiről beszéljek, de nincs akivel ___

- the ungrammaticality of (11′) is unsurprising — sluicing is generally impossible in relatives

- Šimik (2011:53): 'Sluicing is a term for an IP-ellipsis which is fed by wh-movement or focus movement (see e.g. Merchant 2001; van Craenenbroeck and Lipták 2006). That sluicing (or its variants, such as sprouting) is possible in MECs was first observed by Rudin (1986)'
→ Šimik follows the earlier literature in treating (10′) as a case of sluicing

['The absolute majority of investigated languages allow for sluicing in MECs. The outlier is ... Italian.' (p. 53)]

- 'On the face of it, there are two possible ways to deal with these facts. The first option is to deny that the kind of ellipsis in restructuring MECs is sluicing. After all, it clearly involves vP-ellipsis and moreover, it is unrelated to sluicing in interrogatives. On the other hand, it is obviously functionally related to standard interrogative sluicing and to CP-level sluicing in MECs, which *is* parasitic on interrogative sluicing and which is very common cross-linguistically.' (p. 210)

→ Šimik never seriously considers the possibility that MECs such as (10′) could involve something other than sluicing

→ these are indubitably elliptical constructions, but it is not obviously the case that a strategy akin to sluicing (i.e., IP-ellipsis) is involved

- Šimik (2011:54) brings up a fact which suggests a possible avenue for analysis: 'in most languages, the availability of sluicing [in MECs] disappears under certain predicates, such as 'send'' (e.g., *'He wanted to clean the car but I didn't send him with what')

→ the fact that 'sluicing' in MECs generally fails under predicates like 'send' (brought up pro-minently on p. 54 but never revisited by Šimik in section 5.5) gives us a hint as to what might be going on in these elliptical constructions

→ we can descriptively understand the contrast between the 'be' and 'have' cases on the one hand, and the 'send' cases on the other, in light of the fact that while 'be' and 'have' are compatible with a small clause in their entourage, 'send' is not, when it takes a Beneficiary

(13)   ik heb de neus verstopt
         ik heb de band lek
(14)   *het koude weer heeft me de neus verstopt gestuurd
         (*cf.* het koude weer heeft me naar binnen gestuurd)

→ in (13), *ik* is a MATRIX constituent serving as a subject of predication; this is possible under 'have' (and Hungarian-style 'be'+DATIVE), but not under 'send'

→ MECs embedded in 'send'-type constructions must be of the RELATIVE type: they cannot feature the clause as a predicate of a DP-external [+WH] indefinite

→ sluicing is ungrammatical in relatives; the ill-formedness of (11′), in conjunction with the fact that in 'send'-type constructions we can only be dealing with relativisation-MECs, accounts for the unavailability of clausal ellipsis in MECs in 'send'-type constructions

- but in 'be' and 'have' constructions, embedding a (small) clause IS possible, hence recourse to relativisation in the formation of MECs is not necessary here

- in (13), both DPs originate outside the maximal projection of the predicate (*verstopt*, *lek*)

→ when ellipsis applies to the predicate in such constructions (not easy to do in Dutch because Dutch in general does not like predicate ellipsis: see the general absence of VP-ellipsis in Dutch, for instance), this is a case of PREDICATE ELLIPSIS, parallel in relevant respects to English examples such (15)

(15)   John is smart and Bill is ___, too

- back to the MEC: arguably, (10′) is NOT the product of sluicing — the 'remnant *wh*' is not located within a clause that is targeted by IP-ellipsis; rather, this is another case of PREDICATE ELLIPSIS

- the MEC in **the grand scheme of things**

(I)   nekem nincs kivel {beszélni/beszélnem/beszéljek}   MEC$_1$

(II)   nekem nincs akivel beszéljek   MEC$_2$

(III) $^?$nekem nem kell senkivel, hogy beszéljek

(IV) a.   I don't need anyone to talk to/with
              *I don't need to/with anyone to talk
       b.   we all have someone {that we can talk to/to talk to}:
              I have Éva to talk to, and Éva has me to talk to

(V)   a.   heb je te eten?   a macskának nincs enni
       b.   ik heb de kat te eten gegeven   adtam a macskának enni

(VI) a.   it was to/with/about Mary that John was talking   CLEFT
       b.   het was met mij dat Jan wilde spreken
       c.   het was mij die Jan wilde spreken
       d.   het was ik die Jan wilde spreken

(VII)   je vois Jean qui fume une pipe   PSEUDORELATIVE

(VIII) a.*i* it   COP   FOCUS$_k$ [$_{CLAUSE}$ EOP$_k$ ... ec_k ...]$_{INDICATIVE}$ ⇒ no covert modality
        a.*ii* it   COP   FOCUS$_k$ [$_{CLAUSE}$ WH$_k$ ... ec_k ...]$_{INDICATIVE}$ ⇒ no covert modality
        b.   @DP   COP   FOCUS$_k$ [$_{CLAUSE}$ EOP$_k$ ... ec_k ...]$_{INFIN/SUBJUNCT}$ ⇒ covert modality
MEC$_1$ c.   @DP   COP   WH$_k$ [$_{CLAUSE}$ EOP$_k$ ... ec_k ...]$_{INFIN/SUBJUNCT}$ ⇒ covert modality
MEC$_2$ d.   @DP   COP   ∅$_k$ *a*-[$_{CLAUSE}$ WH$_k$ ... ec_k ...]$_{SUBJUNCT}$ ⇒ covert modality
        e.   @DP   COP   ∅$_k$ [$_{CLAUSE}$ EOP$_k$ ... ec_k ...]$_{INFINITIVE}$ ⇒ covert modality

→   MEC$_2$ has a clause-internal *wh*-element, associated with a clause-external *a*-; the *a*-+clause combination forms a unit related to an external silent head, ∅; like all relative clauses in Hungarian, the clause in MEC$_2$ must be finite (with its subjunctival nature being related to covert modality, though there is a chicken-and-egg question here)

→   MEC$_1$ is structurally very much like the *it*-cleft and the constructions in (III) and (IV); from the latter, it seems to differ only in *(a)* the nature of the postcopular constituent, and *(b)* the presence/absence of a complementiser in the clause (if finite)
      [the distribution of the complementiser in MEC$_1$ remains difficult to account for]