

## Expletive vs discourse marker: Sardinian *ello*<sup>1</sup> and Balearic Catalan *ell*<sup>2</sup>

Eva-Maria Remberger & Marc-Olivier Hinzelin

(Universität Konstanz, University of Oxford)

eva.remberger [at] uni-konstanz.de, marc-olivier.hinzelin [at] mod-langs.ox.ac.uk

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In this talk we want to show that:

- neuter ‘personal’ pronouns like Catalan *ell* and pronouns of other Romance varieties lend themselves to different kinds of uses, implying the loss of some of their features or even their class membership as pronouns,
- neuter ‘personal’ pronouns in impersonal constructions that have been described as expletives fulfil a different role,
- Sardinian *ello* exhibits a behaviour similar to Balearic Catalan *ell*.

### 1. Introduction: uses of neuter pronouns in (Ibero-)Romance

Already the development of Romance 3rd person subject pronouns from the Latin demonstrative presupposes a grammatical and pragmatic shift by losing deictic force and even syntactic independence in the case of Gallo-Romance clitics. In some constructions, the pronouns given in Table 1 seem to be used similar to the expletive pronouns of French and English.

	‘personal’ pronouns
CAT	ell
SPA	ello
GAL	el / il
POR	ele

Table 1: neuter ‘personal’ pronouns in Ibero-Romance languages

Neuter / expletive pronouns are used in impersonal constructions (henceforth ICs) with e.g. weather verbs or impersonal expressions in non-null subject languages like French, German, and English. Their use is obligatory and they do not express any reference, they are semantically empty.

- (1) a. FRE **Il** pleut.  
ENG **It** rains.  
b. FRE **Il** semble qu’**il** y a deux manières de classifier.  
ENG **It** seems that **there** are two ways to classify.

<sup>1</sup> Part of the research concerning Sardinian *ello* has been supported by a Feodor-Lynen-Fellowship granted to Eva-Maria Remberger by the Alexander von Humboldt-Foundation.

<sup>2</sup> Parts of this study have been carried out as part of the research project “Evolution and Variation of Expletive and Neuter Pronouns in Romance Languages”, directed by Georg A. Kaiser. This project has been funded by the DFG (German Research Foundation) within the framework of the Research Centre SFB 471 “Variation and Evolution in the Lexicon” at the University of Konstanz.

In null subject languages (e.g. Ibero-Romance: Catalan, Spanish, Portuguese), the use of a subject pronoun is impossible (for Catalan cf. Todolí 1998: 27, Wheeler et al. 1999: 459-461):

- (2) a. CAT \***Ell** plou.  
 SPA \***Ello** llueve.  
 b. CAT \***Ell** sembla que hi ha dues maneres de classificar.  
 SPA \***Ello** parece que hay dos maneras de clasificar.

Haider (2001: 285) comments on the *clustering* of properties of the *pro-drop* parameter that “*einzig die Korrelation von pro-drop mit dem Fehlen von Subjektsexpletiva ausnahmslos gilt*” (“only the correlation of *pro-drop* and the absence of subject expletives holds without exception”).

However, occurrences of subject pronouns in precisely these ICs are found in null subject languages in non-standard varieties (colloquial / regional European Portuguese, Galician, Balearic Catalan):

- (3) EP **Ele** chovia tanto que as ruas eram ribeiras. (Academia das Ciências de Lisboa 2001:1340)  
 'It rained so much that the streets were rivers.'  
 GAL **El** chove. (Álvarez Blanco et al. 1986:169)  
 'It rains.'  
 DOM-SPA **Ello** estaba lloviznando un poco. (Jiménez Sabater 1975:165)  
 'It was drizzling a bit.'  
 BAL-CAT Si ‘m demànas ¿Qui n’ hora es? / et respòng; (Amengual 1858:609)  
**éll** es estàda: / S’ hòra que seña ja ‘s passada, / de mòdo que ja no ‘s res.  
 'When (you) ask me: what time is (it)? / and (I) answer:  
 it has been: / the hour that (I) show already has passed, / in the way that (there) already  
 is not anything.' (quartet for a sundial)

## 2. Neuter pronouns in Catalan: a corpus study

Synchronic occurrences of ‘neuter’ *ell* are best known and frequently documented in Balearic Catalan:

- early modern documentations: Amengual (1835, 1858)
  - *ell* frequently used in *rondaies* (folktales) and folk songs – a feature of spoken language (in rural areas)?
- (4) **Ell** tanmateix és gros, **això!** (Men.) (DCVB IV:701)  
 'It still is big, that!'  
 (5) **Ell això** no acaba mai! (Mall., Men., Eiv.) (DCVB IV:701)  
 'It that not ends ever! (= it never ends)'  
 (6) A Pollença vaig anar / a dur una pollencina, / i la volia fadrina; / varen dir:  
**Ell** no n’hi ha! (cançó pop. Mall.) (DCVB IV:701)  
 'To P. (I) went / to take a girl from P., / and (I) wanted her maidenly; / (they) said:  
 there not of-it there has! (= there is not anyone)'

### 2.1 Previous proposals for the analysis of the use of ‘neuter’ *ell* in impersonal constructions

- Analysis as expletive pronoun: Amengual (1835), Barnils (1916), Spitzer (1917, 1918, 1920, 1941), and – using examples from these and other sources from the literature and in comparison to the other Ibero-Romance languages – Silva-Villar (1998).

- Debate between Tallgren (1914: 77-78, 1918: 87-88, 1920) and Spitzer (1917: 715-716, 1918: 69-70, 1920, 1941) about the status of *ell*, which Tallgren analyses as an adverb.

## 2.2 Analysis of six modern Balearic corpora

### Investigation: usage of the ‘neuter’ pronoun *ell*

- description of the synchronic usage in Balearic Catalan: strikingly frequent occurrences of *ell* in *rondaies* (folktales)
- analysis of Balearic Catalan: a corpus study of five *rondaies* (folktales) collections from all Balearic Islands and an account of the Christmas feasts

### Results:

- Neuter *ell* appears only rarely in the (apparent) subject position of ICs, in only 22 of 142 cases

	all occ.	eS	nS	oS	na	na / opr
<i>salom</i>	4	1	*	*	3	*
<i>mall</i>	56	2	15	21	17	1
<i>nadal</i>	29	6	*	7	14	2
<i>men</i>	31	7	*	5	16	3
<i>eiv</i>	14	2	*	5	7	*
<i>form</i>	8	3	*	*	4	1
total	142	21	15	38	61	7

Table 2: Function of non-referential *ell* in Balearic texts<sup>3</sup>

### Examples of *ell* as (apparent) subject in ICs (very rare):

- (7) —¡Jo ’t posaré a sa presó! li diu es Bal·le. (*salom*, 154)  
 —¡**Ell** no hu provará! s’ exclama En Salom. An es qui creu es Bal·le, no ’l posen dins sa presó.  
 ‘I’ll put you in the prison! the Mayor says to him.’  
 ‘(That) won’t prove it! exclaims Salom. To the one who believes the Mayor, they don’t put him in the prison.’
- (8) ¿Què me’n direu? **Ell** era sa mateixa murtera a on s’eren enredonides ses seues germanes; [...] (*mall*, 133)  
 ‘What will you say me of-it? There was the same myrtle where her sisters made themselves round;’
- (9) —**Ell** no hi haurà perill que patesca gaire fam! (*nadal*, 102)  
 ‘There won’t be (any) danger that (He [Jesus]) would suffer much hunger!’
- (10) —**Ell** va de lo bo a millor! (*nadal*, 153)  
 ‘It goes from the good to better!’
- (11) —No, **ell** és ben cert —deia En Pere—; i si no, mirau. (*men*, 20)  
 ‘No, it is quite certain, said Pere; and if not, look.’
- (12) **Ell** no hi ha qui la confongui. (*men*, 67)  
 ‘There isn’t (anyone) who would confound her.’
- (13) —**Ell** és veritat! (*eiv*, 74)  
 ‘It is truth! (= it is true)’

<sup>3</sup> all occ. = all occurrences, eS = (apparent) expletive subject, nS = *ell* cannot be the subject of the sentence considering its meaning, even though the verb is in the 3SG and no other subject is realised, oS = other, non-pronominal subject realised, na (/ opr) = no agreement with the verb (or no (finite) verb present) (and another pronoun is realised). \* = Construction does not occur in the text.

⇒ *Ell* seems to be used as an (apparent) subject in these rare cases (21 of a total of 142 tokens), it is almost always sentence-initial and **never** obligatory in ICs.

But most of the time *ell* occurs in other constructions:

- (14) **Ell** no me'n puc avenir! (eiv, 132)  
'not me of-it (I) can convince! [expression of astonishment]'
- (15) I comensa a fer-se en fora i en fora, i es pareier darrera ell; i **ell** revolts d' aquí i d' allà; i assetsuaixí sonava a rompre, [...] (salom, 151)  
'And begins to undo itself; and the farmhand after him; and strained from here to there; and suddenly it sounded to break, '
- (16) —[...] No he fet més que lo que vostè m' ha dit.  
—**Ell** no poren fer una berba amb tu, segons veig! diu es Bal·le. (salom, 153)  
'(I) don't have done more than that what you have said me.'  
'(They = one) can't do a joke with you like (I) see! says the Mayor.'
- (17) **Ell** aquella dona no maltractà pus Na Catalineta; [...] (mall, 26)  
'That woman didn't mistreat anymore Catalineta;'
- (18) —**Ell** ja torn esser jo, es descuidat! (mall, 43)  
'Already (I) turn (to) be me, the heedless!'
- (19) —**Ell** ja ho hauríem d'esser! — contesta Na Catalina. (mall, 145)  
'Then (we) would have to be it! answers Catalina.'

⇒ In these constructions, either a non-pronominal subject is realised or *ell* does not agree with the verb. *Ell* is almost always – like in the ICs – sentence-initial. It occurs primarily in dialogues. Its adverbial character is obvious and it is used to mark emphasis or the speaker's attitude.

### 2.3 Are the neuter pronouns 'true' expletives? – *Ell* as discourse marker

Many examples of *ell* with unspecific reference do not occur in ICs but in sentences where they cannot be analysed as subjects (and therefore not as expletives either), as the following examples taken from the *DCVB* (IV:701) illustrate:

- (20) **Ell** tu saps que crides! (Eiv.) (DCVB IV:701)  
'You know that (you) (are) yell(ing)!'
- (21) **Ell** sabeu quina al·lota que és! (Alcover Cont. 2) (DCVB IV:701)  
'(You-PL) know what(-kind-of) girl that is!'

Here, *ell* cannot function as subjects because they do not occupy the subject position, which is filled by another overt subject pronoun, or there is no agreement.

Proposal: analysis of *ell* as discourse markers or 'topic expletives' (cf. Faarlund 1990, Silva-Villar 1996, 1998).

Trask (1993: 84) describes a "discourse item" as having the following properties:

Any lexical item or grammatical form which typically serves to relate one utterance to another in a discourse, or to relate the utterance in a particular way to the discourse as a whole.

⇒ This description covers the functioning of *ell* in (20) and (21).

Arguments for an analysis of *ell* as a discourse marker:

- Missing agreement of 'pronoun' and verb in some sentences: *ell* cannot be subject. Agreement in other sentences is only the default agreement (3<sup>rd</sup> person singular).  
⇒ This 'agreement' is only superficial as these sentences would exhibit the same verb form without *ell*.

- The distribution of *ell* shows peculiarities in comparison with ‘true’ expletives in French and German: it is almost always realised in sentence-initial position.<sup>4</sup> ‘True’ expletives also appear in other positions and in embedded sentences.
- The realisation of *ell* in front of the subject is possible. Then it is not verb-adjacent and does not agree with it.
- The frequency of use of *ell* does not correlate with the use of other subject pronouns. With weather verbs, the prototypical expletive construction, *ell* is not found in the analysed corpora. (The only example featuring *ell* (from the DCVB IV: 701) is at least extremely marginal.)
- In ICs *ell* is not obligatorily used. In languages with ‘true’ expletives, this is not possible:

- (22) BAL-CAT [...] que \_\_\_ era un gust; [...] (men, 15)  
 ‘... that (it) was a pleasure’
- (23) BAL-CAT Però \_\_\_ no hi va haver remei; [...] (men, 20)  
 ‘But (there) was no remedy (= that was not possible)’

⇒ The difference in sentences with or without *ell* consists in the speaker’s attitude to the described events: emphasis, surprise, consternation, doubt, etc.

⇒ These are characteristics of a discourse marker.

*Ell* is an element without pronominal features, its use depends on the information structure, not on the grammar / syntax. This applies also to cases where an analysis as an expletive would be possible superficially. It is only an *apparent* expletives.

⇒ ***Ell* is a discourse marker (cf. Hinzelin 2006, to appear).**

### 3. Sardinian *ello*

Sardinian has several idiosyncratic particles in the left periphery, one of them being *ello*, an affirmative discourse particle. *Ello* has never been termed an expletive or a neuter pronoun, as it was, in contrast, for Balearic Catalan *ell*. This is also due to the fact that the third person subject pronoun in Sardinian is clearly phonologically different from *ello*, namely *iddu* /id̪du/. In the following section 3.1 and 3.2 the semantics and syntax of *ello* are exemplified, whereas section 3.3 discusses the origin of this particle.

#### 3.1 The semantics of *ello*

*Ello* is an adverbial element meaning approximately ‘thus, then, so, surely’ (cf. Italian *allora*, German *also*; cf. Puddu 2000: s.v.). It is frequently employed in questions, especially in rhetoric questions, which do not expect an answer, cf. the statements in (24) and (25):

- (24) **èllo**, avb: **ellu**, **ellus** peràula chi prus che àteru serbit pro dare prus fortza a una dimandha, mescamente candho no b'at de ispetare risposta peruna, candho sa risposta, siat chi ei o siat chi nono, est una cosa chi azummai no est mancu de dimandhare, chi si podet cumprendher gai etotu: segundhu comente, si narat fintzas in su sensu de "nono própiu!, mancu a bi pessare!" (Puddu 2000: s.v.)  
 [èllo, avb: ellu, ellus: word that is needed to give more emphasis to a question, especially when no answer is expected, when the answer, be it yes or no, is something understood without asking; besides it is used in the sense of "not indeed", "not at all"]

<sup>4</sup> Only in very rare cases *ell* is not sentence-initial but occurs after other sentence-initial adverbs / discourse markers or extraposed at the end of the sentence (one example in *nadal*).

- (25) „ELLO“ impreau in cada occasione pro affortzare una frase chin dimanda: „Oh, compa’, ello in bidda che sezis?!“; „Ello comente s’impreat custa cosa?“; „Deo so-e sardu“ „Ello deo, itte so-e?“ (sa-Limba 1999-2008)  
 [“ELLO” applied in all occasions in order to reinforce a clause with a question: "Oh, companion, are you still here in town?!", "And how do you use this thing?", "I'm Sardinian" "So what am I?"]

In the research literature on Sardinian, the element has been characterised in several ways: Blasco Ferrer (1994) e.g. maintains that it is an affirmative particle, typical of Sardinian and similar to *yes*. However, *ello* (which is Logudorese, or its Campidanian variant *ellu/ellus*) has an ‘affirmative’ value only in some of its uses and its meaning can more adequately be translated as ‘hence’, ‘so’, i.e. as an adverb of the higher functional field, which mainly concerns discourse related phenomena: It conveys emphasis on what is said or asked, which is a consequence derived from the context of the discourse.

### 3.2 The syntax of *ello*

As for the syntax of *ello* it is most frequently found in questions, i.e. in polar questions, cf. (26), especially in negated contexts, cf. (27)-(28), as well as in wh-questions, cf. (29)-(31):

- (26) **Ello** ieo non l’aco menzusu? (Archivi del Sud, II, 60)  
 ELLO I not it'I-make better  
 'And don't I make it better?'  
 (27) **Ello** no sunt parte de s’Unione Europea? (sc.monediplo.com)  
 ELLO not they-are part of the Union European  
 'And are they not part of the European Union?'  
 (28) **Ello**, non t’a datu nudda mama? (Archivi del Sud, II, 42)  
 ELLO not you'she-has given nothing mummy  
 'And your mummy hasn't given you anything?'  
 (29) **Ello** aite ses tristu, coro ’e mama? (Puddu 2000)  
 ELLO why you-are sad, heart of mummy  
 'And why should you be sad, heart of your mother?'  
 (30) **Ello** a ue sese andande? (Archivi del Sud, II, 46)  
 ELLO to where you-are going  
 'And so where are you going?'  
 (31) **Balla! Ello** in ue s’est cuadu su malaitu? (Sa-Limba 1999-2008)  
 Wow! ELLO in where himself'he-is hidden the sick  
 'Wow! So where did the sick guy hide himself?'

*Ello* also appears in clauses that have an exclamative flavour, cf. (32). These constructions sometimes are rhetorical questions and thus not marked by a question mark, cf. (33):

- (32) Disgrasciadu, anima mala, anima niedda, **ello** a Deus furas! (Masala 2000:45)  
 disgraced soul bad soul black ELLO to God you steal  
 'Disgraced, bad soul, black soul, you even steal from God!'  
 (33) **Ello** fàula est! (Puddu 2000)  
 ELLO lie it-is  
 'This is surely true! [Originally: Is this a lie?!]'

However, *ello* also appears in isolation, cf. (34) and (35), either as a positive affirmation, in the sense of Blasco Ferrer (1984) mentioned above, or in the context of an emphatic negation, cf. (36) :

- (34) **Ello!** Gai est! (Falconi 2002:121)  
 ELLO so it-is  
 'Surely! So it is!'

- (35) **Ello!!** E itt'aiais krefidu? (Sa-Limba 1999-2008)  
 ELLO and what had-you believed  
 'Certainly!! What did you think?'
- (36) a bi cres tue, in Deus? - **ellonono**?! (Puddu 2000)  
 A-particle there you-believe in God - ELLO no  
 'Do you believe in God? How couldn't I?! [=certainly]'

*Ello* is in the very left periphery, i.e. higher than focus fronted elements, cf. *macu* in (37), or wh-elements (cf. (29), (30) and (31) above), and even higher than topicalised items, cf. *custa vinza* in (38):

- (37) Su fogu brusiat: **ello** macu ses a lu tocare?! (Puddu 2000:664)  
 the fire burns ELLO crazy you-are to it touch  
 'Fire burns: So are you so crazy to touch it?!'
- (38) **Ello** custa vinza aitte la tener goi? (Archivi del Sud, II, 46)  
 ELLO this vineyard why it keep like-this  
 'Why should this vineyard be kept like this?'

However, it also can appear on the right of a topic (*su ministru frantzesu* in (39)):

- (39) Su ministru frantzesu de sos afares internatzionales **ello** no at [...] acusadu s' Iràn ...  
 the minister French of the affairs international ELLO not he-has accused the Iran  
 'So didn't the French minister of foreign affairs accuse Iran ...'  
 (sc.monediplo.com)

Moreover, *ello* often appears in combination with other discourse markers, like *e*, *tandho*, *edducas*, all of them more or less of the same meaning (i.e. 'thus', 'also', 'so', 'hence'):

- (40) **ello** e tue times su fritu de maju?! (Puddu 2000)  
 ELLO E you you-fear the cold of May  
 'And thus you are really afraid of the cold of May?!'
- (41) **Ello** tando, proitte narrer [...] chi semus iscriende in sardu? (Sa-Limba 1999-2008)  
 ELLO TANDO why say that we-are writing in Sardinian  
 'So why at all should we say that we write in Sardinian?'
- (42) **ello** edducas comente depo presentemente viver in cust'istadu? (Spano 1999:415)  
 ELLO EDDUCAS how should-I presently live in this state  
 'So how could I thus presently live in this state?'

### 3.3 The origin of *ello*

The etymology of Sardinian *ello* until now was either left unclear, cf. Wagner (1957-1962), who suggests that it be an “imitative interjection” (43), or it was not very convincing, cf. Porru (2002), who derives it from a Greek verb of unclear origin (cf. (44)). In any case, it has been noted (also by Wagner and, before, by Meyer-Lübke, cf. (45)) that *ello* with an intervocalic geminate lateral [ll] cannot be a lexical item inherited from Latin in the Sardinian lexicon, since this nexus should have changed to the voiced retroflex geminate so characteristic of Sardinian, as found in the place name *Casteddhu* ‘Cagliari’ (< CASTELLU), the verb *faeddhare* ‘to talk’ (< FAVELLARE), the suffix *-eddhu* (< -ELLUS) etc. and also in the personal pronoun *iddhu* [ˈiɖɖu] (< ILLU), which represents the parallel to Catalan *ell*.

- (43) Wagner (1960:488)  
*èllo* log.; *èllu* camp. 'dunque' (*ello gási* 'dunque così'; *ell'inòke sès* (Orani); *elleíta* barb. (voce di affermazione); 'Ellu e dunces?'; Scomúniga, v. 620); non può essere ELLUM (C[orpus]G[lossariorum]L[atinorum] II, 330, 57: *ellum*: ἰ δοῦ ἔκεῖνον),

REW 2851, come dice anche il Meyer-Lübke (a causa di *-ll-* e *-o*). La voce è una interiezione imitativa [...]  
 [... cannot be ELLUM ... as stated also by Meyer-Lübke (because of *-ll-* and *-o*). The word is an imitative interjection ...]

(44) Porru (2002)

**Ellu** avv. di affermazioni, de (ελλω affirmo) *dunque*

[... affirmative adverb, from (ελλω I affirm *thus*)]

(45) Meyer-Lübke (1935:254):

ëllum "sieh ihn da".

(Log. *ello* "also", "gewiß" kann wegen *-ll-* und *-o* nicht hierher gehören [...])

[Log. *ello* "thus", "certainly" cannot belong to this entry because of *-ll-* and *-o* ...]

As we have seen in the previous paragraphs, the function of *ello* seems to be very close to what has been analysed in the first part of the talk for Balearic Catalan: Also Sardinian *ello* is a discourse marker which is highly dependent on information structure. In contrast to Balearic Catalan, it is most commonly used in questions, but not only. Furthermore, it seems to be a more independent item, since it can appear in isolation to represent an emphatic affirmation or negation. The parallel use of Sardinian *ello* and Balearic *ell* seems to ask for an explanation that relies on Sardinian language history, i.e. the long lasting influence of Catalan (and often also insular Catalan) on Sardinian.

If we have a look on Algherese, the Catalan dialect of the Sardinian town of Alghero, there no other use of *ell* but as a personal pronoun has been reported (cf. Pais 1970: 106f). However, Algherese Catalan did not have but little impact on the surrounding Sardinian varieties (cf. Wagner 1997 [1950]:188). We suggest that *ell* must have been in use in the other Catalan varieties spoken in Sardinian from 1326 until at least the beginning of the 18th century. The influence of Catalan on the Sardinian varieties – the Southern Campidanian varieties are even more subject to it than the Northern Logudorese varieties – is proven especially in the area of the lexicon (cf. Wagner 1997 [1950]: 184). And indeed, it might be that Catalan *ell* was borrowed into Sardinian not as the functional element exhibiting neuter (or masculine) pronominal features but rather on account of its function as an emphatic discourse particle belonging to the left periphery. This would also explain its syntactic independence.

If we have a look at Catalan loanwords in Sardinian, the nexus <ll> /ʎ/ is either maintained or changed as follows:

(46) Catalan loanwords with <ll> /ʎ/ in Sardinian (Wagner 1964)

- a. Cat. *cullera* 'spoon'  
> kuʎera (central, Cagliari), kullera (Camp.), kutsɛra (Nule), kuttʃɛra (Scano)
- b. Cat. *burrumballa* 'confusion, riot'  
> burrumbaʎa (Orani), burrumballa (central, Camp.)
- c. Cat. *ulleres* 'glasses'  
> ulleras (Camp.), uʎeras (Perdas de Fogu, Busachi, S. Antioco)
- d. Cat. *orenella* 'swallow' (type of fish/ray)  
> orineʎa (Camp.), oniella (Cabras)
- e. Cat. *canadella* 'cruet'  
> kanaðɛʎa (Camp.), granaðellas (Orgósolo)
- f. Cat. *carceller* 'jailor'  
> kartsellɛri (Camp.)
- g. Bal. Cat. *cintell* 'measurement of a mason'  
> suntɛllu (Camp.)

- h. Cat. *cascavell* 'little bell'  
> kaskavellu (Nuor., Camp.), kaskaveḷu (Camp.)
- i. Cat. *escorcollar* 'to rummage, to search'  
> skrukullai (Camp.), iskurkulljare (Ghilarza, Norbello.)
- j. Cat. *esquella* 'little bell'  
> izkiḷa (Log.)
- k. Bal. Cat. *rallar* 'to gossip'  
> arrallai (Camp.)
- l. Cat. *tavella* 'crease, plait'  
> tavella (Camp.), taveḷa (Log.) tavedḷa (Log.)
- m. Cat. *camella* 'plough stilt'  
> kamedḷa (Log.)

As these examples show, the normal outcome of Catalan /ʎ/ in Sardinian is either /ʎ/ or /ll/ whereas /dḷ/ is rare (cf. (46) l, (46)m). Thus, especially considering the outcome of the examples in (46)g and (46)k, the following etymology would indeed not be implausible:

(47) (Balearic) Catalan *ell* /eʎ/ > Sardinian *ello/ellu*

#### 4. Conclusions

Is the discourse particle discussed in this paper, *ell* in Balearic Catalan and *ello* Sardinian, a phenomenon of insular Romance?

##### 1.1 Corsican *ellu*

- (48) ch'**ell**'ùn si vega ellu mài più (Firroloni 1985: 495)  
'qu'on ne le voie jamais plus'
- (49) ma s'**ellu** vene Petru (Firroloni 1985: 495)  
'si Pierre venait'
- (50) quand **ellu** piuvía, tuccava à ella à arricoglie l'acqua piuvana ... (www)  
when ELLU rained it-touched to her to collect the water of-the-rain  
'when it rained it was her task to collect the rain water'

=> third person subject or expletive pronoun used in subordinate clauses

cf. also Tuscan *gli*

- (51) Tusc. Gl'è venuto delle ragazze. (Brandi & Cordin 1989:115)  
GLI is come of-the girls  
'There came some girls.'
- (52) Tusc. *Gli* è piovuto tanto. (Rohlf's 1968 [1949], §446, 141)  
GLI is rained a-lot  
'It rained a lot.'

=> expletive pronoun

##### 4.2 Sicilian *iddu* / Calabrian *illu*

- (53) Sic. idḷu è vveru (Sornicola 1996:338)  
IDDU is true  
'It is really true.'

=> expletive?/exclamative particle?

- (54) Cal. *illu* tu non veni a la marina? (Rohlf's 1969 [1964]: §757, 159)  
 ILLU you not you-come to the sea shore  
 'Do you really not come to the sea shore?'
- (55) Cal. *illu* non mangi? (Rohlf's 1969 [1964]: §757, 159)  
 ILLU not you-eat  
 'Don't you eat?'
- (56) Cal. *illu* è lu veru ca tu te 'nzuri? (Rohlf's 1977:327)  
 ILLU is the truth that you yourself marry  
 'It is really true that you get married?'

=> interrogative particle, "esprime una meraviglia" (Rohlf's 1977:327) (cf. also Calabrian *allu* (Rohlf's 1977:71): av. eccolo [l. vl. ellum id.]<sup>5</sup>)

Variety	Element	Properties	Origin
Balearic Catalan	<i>ell</i>	emphatic discourse marker	< Latin ILLU(D)
Sardinian	<i>ello / ellu(s)</i>	emphatic discourse marker mainly in questions also in isolation	< Balearic Catalan <i>ell</i> ?
Corsican	<i>ellu</i>	3rd person masculine subject pronoun, obligatorily used only in certain subordinate contexts / expletive pronoun	< Latin ILLU(D)
Tuscan	<i>gli, egli</i>	expletive / 3rd person subject pronoun	< Latin *ILLI
Sicilian	<i>iddu</i>	expletive?/ exclamative particle?	< Latin ILLU(D)
Calabrian	<i>illu</i>	mirative question particle	< Latin ILLU(D)

Table 3: Overview

The function of Sardinian *ello* is clearly different from Corsican *ellu* (an obligatory subject or expletive pronoun in subordinate contexts) or Tuscan *gli* (a subject or expletive pronoun). Sound change processes common to Sardinian also disallow it to derive *ello* directly from ILLU(D), which is the origin of Balearic *ell*, Sicilian *iddu* and Calabrian *illu*. It is also impossible to derive Sardinian *ello* from Latin ELLUM (like Calabrian *allo*). Thus, it seems to be very plausible, especially for its functional meaning, but also for its phonological form, to explain Sardinian *ello* as a loanword from the Balearic Catalan, i.e. the emphatic discourse marker *ell*.

In this study, we have shown that:

- *ell* in the initial position of certain constructions in Balearic Catalan has obviously a very different function – the encoding of sentence pragmatics – in comparison with ‘true’ expletives like English *it*, French *il*, and German *es*.
- sentences in which an overt subject is used or the verb does not agree with the apparent expletive suggest an analysis as a discourse marker – even in superficially ambiguous sentences in which the ‘pronoun’ could be interpreted as an expletive as well as a discourse marker.
- this function of *ell* as a discourse marker in Balearic Catalan is parallel to the use of *ello* in Sardinian which thus might be a Catalan loan element.

<sup>5</sup> *ellum* > *em illum* or *en illum*, but cf. Coromines (1982:266-267) who doubts a continuation in Romance of this Latin contraction.

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