



HAL
open science

The French *c'est-cleft* : function and frequency

Shirley Carter-Thomas

► **To cite this version:**

Shirley Carter-Thomas. The French *c'est-cleft* : function and frequency. David Banks; Simon Eason; Janet Ormrod. *La linguistique systémique fonctionnelle et la langue française*, L'Harmattan, pp.127-157, 2009, 978-2-296-09278-5. halshs-00276942

HAL Id: halshs-00276942

<https://shs.hal.science/halshs-00276942>

Submitted on 2 May 2008

HAL is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

The French *c'est*-cleft: Functional and formal motivations¹

Shirley CARTER-THOMAS
Institut National des Télécommunications (INT/GET) & Lattice, UMR 8094 CNRS

1. Introduction

This article will examine the French *c'est*-cleft, a marked word order construction that can be considered as the formal equivalent of the English *it*-cleft. Recourse to the biclausal 'cleft' sentence provides the speaker with a number of options for rearranging a structurally simpler sentence. Associated with the simpler monoclausal sentence in French:

- (a) Paul a offert une montre à Marie pour son anniversaire (Molinier 1996)
Paul gave a watch to Marie for her birthday

it is possible to create the following cleft sentences, containing thus a matrix clause introduced by *c'est* and the selected clefted constituent, followed by a subordinate clause with the relative *qui* in the case of a clefted subject (b) and *que* or *qu'* in the case of other grammatical categories (c-e):

- (b) C'est Paul qui a offert une montre à Marie pour son anniversaire
(c) C'est une montre que Paul a offert à Marie pour son anniversaire
(d) C'est à Marie que Paul a offert une montre pour son anniversaire
(e) C'est pour son anniversaire que Paul a offert une montre à Marie

One of the principle goals of this article will be to discuss the motivations behind the choice of individual clefts such as the above in preference to a corresponding monoclausal agnate clause. With the aid of small fully contextualised series of examples taken from the French newspaper *Le Monde*, the aim will be to systematically compare the *c'est*-clefts with their non-clefted counterparts in order to determine the reasons

¹ The present article partly draws on a paper I presented at the 14th Euro-International Systemic Workshop in Lisbon (Carter-Thomas 2002).

for their clefting. I will discuss to what extent, if any, the cleft sentences and non-clefts are interchangeable and attempt to gauge the import of any “additional information” (Declerck 1984: 270) conveyed to the potential reader through the cleft.

A second goal of the paper will be also to compare the functioning of the French *c'est*-cleft with that of the English it-cleft. It has been suggested (Jespersen 1937) that clefts have evolved in fixed word order languages such as English and French as a compensatory focussing or highlighting device in order to provide more flexibility on the textual level. However the *c'est*-cleft and it-cleft are not employed with the same frequency. The French *c'est*-cleft is considerably more frequent than the English it-cleft, being widespread both in spoken language and writing (Gledhill 2003; Katz 2000). Indeed Katz considers the French structure to be overall a “more essential construction” than the English it-cleft. I shall discuss therefore some of the formal language-specific conditions that contribute to the greater use of the *c'est*-cleft in French². With this aim in mind the French clefts examined will also be compared with subsequent English translations published in the British paper, *The Guardian Weekly*, in order to discuss to what extent the cleft structure is maintained in the English translation.

2 Clefts in the systemic functional tradition

2.1 Thematic prominence

Previous studies dealing with the English it-cleft, or predicated theme as it is usually termed in systemic functional linguistics (SFL), have generally sought to account for the structure in terms of contrastiveness or specification, with the clefted element providing a certain thematic prominence. There is in particular widespread agreement within the SFL tradition that the key to the analysis of clefts is informational/thematic (Collins 1991) and related thus to the message structure of a text. Indeed the very terms of predicated theme (Halliday 1994) and enhanced theme (Fawcett & Huang 1996) employed in SFL place an emphasis squarely on this thematising role of the construction. According to Halliday (1994) theme predication enables a speaker to explicitly single out and highlight any experiential element in the clause by making it part of a separate predication. He proposes a dual analysis of the construction (Fig. 1

² As the status of clefts as a cross-linguistic class is in itself fairly controversial I have chosen to examine a fixed range of data in order to simplify the comparison of isomorphic structures in the 2 languages. I only, for example, examine the traditional it-clefts and *c'est*-clefts as illustrated above and will not be considering pseudo-clefts or any variants of the *c'est*-cleft such as the French (*il*) *y a* or *j'ai* clefts (“*Y a / J'ai mon pied qui me fait mal*”); the latter in any case would seem to be more of a feature of spontaneous speech.

below) in which at the local level the predicated element receives rhematic highlighting, both syntactically by means of the thematic relational predication (*it + be ...* in clause initial position) and prosodically by normally receiving end focus. The second level represents the whole clause as a grammatical metaphor, in opposition to the congruent non-cleft version. At this level the superordinate clause is considered as theme, with the relative clause constituting the rheme.

	It	was his teacher	who	persuaded him to continue
a) local thematic structure	Theme	Rheme	Theme	Rheme
b) thematic structure of a predicated theme	Theme		Rheme	

Figure 1. Thematic structure of clause with predicated theme
(Halliday 1994:60)

Although any experiential element in the clause can be theoretically thematised, as Collins's comprehensive survey of English clefts demonstrates, the highlighted element in the *it*-clause is predominantly a syntactic subject or adjunct (75% of cases), a result likewise confirmed in Katz's survey of the French cleft (Katz 2000). This preference, according to Collins, is a logical consequence of the thematic prominence issue, as "from a thematic perspective, the role of the cleft construction is to add to an already thematic item the further prominence deriving from predication in the case of the cleft construction" (1991:64). As in ordinary declarative sentences subjects and adjuncts are statistically the most frequent themes, it is thus unsurprising to find these functions imbued with the extra thematic prominence conferred via the clefts.

2.2 Information structure

The thematic prominence associated with the highlighted element in the predicated theme construction is also, however, intricately bound up with the interpretation of this element as 'new' salient information in the Given-New structuring of the proposition. In opposition to the general tendency for Theme to contain given information, the predicated theme system is presented by Halliday as a grammatical resource for combining New and Theme:

"It is precisely the function of this system to align Theme + Rheme with Given + New in such a way that focus falls on the Theme; this makes the Theme New and the Rheme Given" (1994: 302).

Halliday is at pains to emphasise that 'newness' does not necessarily indicate literal newness, in the sense of being completely fresh or not

mentioned, and in his commentary on the example quoted in figure 1 above:

John's father wanted him to give up the violin. It was his teacher who wanted him to continue.

recourse to the predicated form is linked to considerations of contrastivity, with the tonic accent falling on 'teacher' signalling in this case an explicit contrast between the father's attitude and that of the teacher. The prominence associated with the noun group 'his teacher' has thus both an intonational and a thematic basis.

The question of the information structuring of cleft sentences and of the type of 'newness' highlighted through the cleft is however complex. This has led many researchers to propose various sub-divisions to the clefting system (cf. Prince 1978; Declerk 1984; Collins 1991). One particularly thorny issue concerns that of the nature of the newness of the clefted item. In Halliday's admittedly succinct presentation of the clefting system in IFG only mention is made of the fresh and overtly contrastive type of predicated theme. As numerous researchers have pointed out (for example, Banks 1999), clefting involving contextually recoverable information is frequent and in many cases no obvious co-textual contrast can be established. I do not believe, however, that such examples are necessarily fundamentally different from those discussed above in enabling the alignment of thematicity and focus.

In discussions over the given-new distinction, Halliday has often underlined the subjective 'treated as' quality of information distribution:

... what is treated as non-recoverable may be something that has not been mentioned; but it may be something unexpected, whether previously mentioned or not. (1994: 298)

Information focus reflects the speaker's decision as to where the main burden of the message lies. (...) What is focal is new information; not in the sense that it cannot have been previously mentioned (...), but in the sense that the speaker presents it as not being recoverable from the preceding discourse" (1967: 204)

What is new is in the last resort what the speaker chooses to present as being new (Ibid: 211)

In that newness is associated with intonational focus, the speaker's decision about how to treat an item is taken to override the actual recoverability of the reference (Butler 2005: 613). An anaphor, for example, can either be given (if not focal) or new (if focal). Although listener-oriented, information structure is speaker-selected and subject thus to speaker manipulation.

For the above reasons I prefer to follow Peter Fries (1994) in using the concept 'newsworthy' to describe the meaning of 'New' in information structure and to employ the often more appropriate term of 'focalised' when referring to the emphasis placed on the highlighted item in a cleft (cf. Banks 2004).

What is at issue when discussing clefts is not so much the informational status of particular referents but that of the new distribution of newsworthiness/focus brought about by the reorganisation of the sentence. Using a cleft enables the enunciator to signal a particular slant or orientation, different from that of the non-cleft canonical counterpart. The clefted item receives additional prominence (although it is not necessarily the only item to receive prominence) which in turn affects our interpretation of the rest of the clause. I will illustrate the above points with an example from the French newspaper sample – an example also rendered with a cleft construction in the translation of the article that later appeared in *The Guardian Weekly*.

- F1. A la veille de la révolution bolchevique, cette vraie Russie et son intelligentsia libérale rejetaient l'antisémitisme ; elles ne voulaient même pas entendre parler d'une 'question juive. Le pouvoir tsariste était lui-même sur le point, affirme Soljenitsyne, de lever toutes les restrictions civiques, sociales, éducatives qui pesaient encore sur la population juive.
Et c'est à ce moment-là qu'une déflagration mit en pièces le système politique et social de la Russie
- E1. Just before the Bolshevik revolution, the real Russia and its liberal intelligentsia rejected anti-semitism. They would not even hear of such a thing as the 'Jewish question. The tsarist regime, according to Solzhenitsyn, was on the brink of lifting all the civic, social and educational restrictions that still affected the Jewish population.
And it was at that point that an explosion destroyed Russia's political and social system)

The extract is taken from an interview with Solzhenitsyn on the publication of his book dealing with the situation of Jews in Russia prior to the 1917 revolution. The point in time referred to in the adverbial cleft has been defined two sentences previously (*la veille de la révolution bolchevique*) and is thus easily 'recoverable' for the reader. However by placing the time adverbial within the cleft, the author is able to draw the reader's attention to it as being particularly 'newsworthy', imbuing it not only with thematicity but also with focus. It was at this particular moment in time, ironically (considering the fact that anti-Semitism was not an issue), that the revolution occurred. There is no overt contrast with something previously mentioned. On the other hand, however, the clefted adverbial expression marks a covert contrast with what could have been

expected or assumed. As Halliday has put it: “The meaning is attend to this: this is news” (1994:228).

Support too for disassociating referential newness from focus indication can be found in the work of Knud Lambrecht (1994; 2001). Lambrecht, however, rejects the parcelling out of information and its matching with individual sentence constituents. In his view, the real focus or newsworthiness in a cleft does not reside in the item clefted itself but in the relationship created between the clefted item and the information conveyed by the relative clause (2001: 477). In other words, in example F1 above, the newsworthiness of the temporal adverbial cleft can only really be evaluated when juxtaposed with the rest of the sentence. Without, however, the presence of the cleft, this newsworthy reading of the clefted adverbial is difficult to suggest.

In a non-cleft canonical version of the above example (F1b and E1b) the initial adverbial expressions would in all probability be interpreted as ‘given’ backgrounded information.

F1b. A la veille de la révolution bolchevique, cette vraie Russie et son intelligentsia libérale rejetaient l’antisémitisme ; elles ne voulaient même pas entendre parler d’une ‘question juive. (...) Et à ce moment-là une déflagration mit en pièces le système politique et social de la Russie

E1b. And at that point an explosion destroyed Russia’s political and social system

While it is true that an attentive reader could perhaps attribute a contrastive focal reading to the initially placed adjunct in the manipulated English version E1b (see section 4.1 below), in the French version F1b, this thematic adverbial expression would merely seem to be indicating the background against which the revolution or explosion happened. Without the cleft the cause and effect relation between the initially occurring temporal adjunct and the rest of the clause is not apparent. (cf. Prince 1978: 202)

In a declifted version with the temporal adverbial occurring postverbally within the rheme the sentence is also difficult to process.

F1c. A la veille de la révolution bolchevique, cette vraie Russie et son intelligentsia libérale rejetaient l’antisémitisme ; elles ne voulaient même pas entendre parler d’une ‘question juive. (...) Et une déflagration mit en pièces le système politique et social de la Russie à ce moment-là

E1c. And an explosion destroyed Russia’s political and social system at that point

Although in the manipulated examples above the adverbial expression could conceivably be thought of as carrying contrastive focus, the long

composite nature of the rheme would make it difficult for the reader to establish a hierarchy out of the different elements that appear. The manipulated sentence is difficult to read and process in both the English and French versions. The original cleft construction thus seems to be the only possibility for providing clear processing instructions to the reader as to the distribution of newsworthiness in the sentence.

2.3 Clefts in writing

Another problem arising from Halliday's account of information structuring in predicated theme concerns its application to written clefts, as in the present case. Since the Given-New stratum of the SFL textual metafunction is tied to intonation, with the tonic accent marking the culmination of the New or focalised element of structure, transferring the notion wholesale to written discourse can be difficult. The researcher can of course ask subjects to read the texts aloud (cf. Banks 1999). Such an approach must however always involve a degree of guesswork, due to both inter- and intra-speaker variability. Certain typographical clues such as underlining or bold print to indicate emphatic and/or contrastive emphasis³ can help to prevent ambiguity, but such explicit pointers were extremely rare in the newspaper sample analysed. Information structure must however also be visible in writing (Davies 1994) as, without this input, it would otherwise be impossible to understand written text. In SFL it is presumed that readers reconstruct mentally information structuring patterns. The information unit is considered by default as co-extensive with the clause, with writers sequencing the information presented so that where possible the New is placed where the tonic accent would be in speech. A competent writer will, above all, make use of all the syntactic possibilities of a given language in order to suggest an appropriate (and unambiguous) interpretation to the intended reader(s). One such syntactic expedient is provided by the cleft, a point forcefully made in Halliday's own presentation of predicated theme:

“Since accentuation is not marked in writing, the predication has the additional function in written English of directing the reader to interpret the information structure in the intended way.” (1994: 59)

Following Collins, I will therefore assume that this function of clefts in the written language is to be interpreted in the light of the latent intonation of writing, where “unless there is good reason for an alternative explanation, the expected intonation will be unmarked” (1991: 182), signalling therefore a particular interpretation of information structure and

³ For an account of typographical marking signalling emphasis and contrast in scientific journal articles, see Ormrod 2000.

namely one where the theme is unmarkedly newsworthy. In the following analysis, the focus will be upon the *c'est*-cleft as an informed textual strategy, a strategy destined to suggest a particular interpretation on the part of the reader.

3. French clefts

3.1 Data collection

The 36 *c'est*-clefts analysed in this study were extracted from articles from the French daily newspaper *Le Monde*. The press can be expected to provide fruitful pickings, for as Collins has shown it is precisely in 'opinionative' type texts where clefts occur with the greatest frequency, providing the journalist with a linguistic means to direct and persuade their readers (*op cit*: 187).

The clefts were collected on an ad hoc basis, the only selection criterion being that the articles in which they appeared were also those subsequently chosen for publication in English in *The Guardian Weekly*. This as explained above was so as to be able to also help explore some possible differences in the use of predicated theme in the two languages⁴.

In searching for examples, care was taken to distinguish *c'est*-clefts from superficially similar constructions, such as extraposition structures or restrictive relative clauses. In the case of restrictive relative clauses, the phenomenon of agreement can sometimes in French play a discriminating role, as agreement is unusual in the cleft reading (Molinier 1996: 86):

C'est une élégie que j'ai écrit la semaine dernière (Cleft)

C'est une élégie que j'ai écrite la semaine dernière (Restrictive relative clause).

In other cases, however, a *c'est*-cleft can only be identified once it has been set into its complete contextual environment.

3.2 Formal properties

As discussed above the syntactic functions represented by the highlighted elements in English it-clefts are predominantly subjects and adjuncts, a predilection also confirmed by Katz's (1997) study of spoken French. The sample analysed here of written French clefts reflects this tendency. Of the 36 French *c'est*-cleft examples, 18 of the highlighted

⁴ The annex provides a list of the *c'est*-clefts in this sample, labelled F(French) 1-36. Each example is followed by the published English translation (E1-36).

items were adjuncts (prepositional phrases or adverbials), and 15 were subjects of their respective canonical clauses. There were also 2 clefted complements and a clefted subordinate clause.

The French copular unit *c'est* is considered to be partly fossilised, with variations in tense, mood and number rarely occurring. Unlike in English where the past tense is frequent, in the sample analysed the present tense is systematically employed, even when combined with a past tense relative clause as in F2:

- F2. *C'est* en 1220 après l'hégire que le vaste Djihad a été déclenché
 E2. It was in the year 1220 after the hegira that a great jihad was started

The singular/plural distinction however does not appear to be completely frozen, at least in written French. There are 3 examples in my data where the plural form *ce sont* is used before a plural noun, as illustrated in F14 below.

- F14. *Du reste, ce sont les Israéliens qui ont crée le Hamas pour contrer l'organisation de libération de la Palestine*
 E14. *By the way, it was the Israelis who created Hamas to counter the Palestine Liberation movement*

The range of relative pronouns used to introduce the relative clause is also less diverse than in English. Although according to Katz (1997: 223) other pronouns such as *où* can in theory occasionally appear in the French cleft, the only occurrence of *où* found in the present sample was in the case of a lexicalised expression:

- F28. *C'est là où le bât blesse*
 E28. *This is the sticking point*

As this expression in French has no canonical counterpart it should arguably not be considered as a *c'est*-cleft. It is however interesting to note that in the English translation proposed the biclausal structure is dispensed with. The thematically positioned deictic with one can imagine a tonic accent is sufficient to denote its newsworthy status (cf. section 6.1). In all other cases in the sample the relative pronouns used are *qui* for clefted subjects and *que* or *qu'* for other grammatical categories. The presence of this relative pronoun is obligatory in French; unlike in the case of the 'that/which' object pronoun in English.

4. Functional motivations for the use of *c'est*-clefts:

4.1 Disambiguation and increased clarity

In this section I will argue that the main motivation behind a writer's choice to employ the *c'est*-cleft is one of disambiguation. In opting to employ the cleft construction the writer provides the reader with more specific processing instructions than in the case of a non-cleft equivalent. In this perspective the various semantic effects associated with the use of the cleft, such as emphasis, contrastivity or exhaustive specification, are viewed as more the results rather than the actual reason for clefting.

In the SFL treatment of predicated theme outlined above, we have seen that the textual prominence associated with the item highlighted through clefting has both an information structuring and thematic basis. This emphasis on theme selection and focus attribution would appear to be amply justified in the case of the French *c'est*-cleft. The use of the biclausal cleft structure, in signalling explicitly both the starting point of the complex clause and an intended focus placement, greatly facilitates processing for the reader. Such precise processing instructions guide the reader towards the intended interpretation, an interpretation which would invariably be difficult to arrive at in the case of an unclefted version of the same sentence in French.

In this section I will only deal with the French *c'est*-clefts which were also rendered by a cleft in the corresponding English translation. It will be seen that, whereas in all these cases the French cleft construction signals an interpretation which could not easily be suggested in the case of the canonical non-clefted version, the same is not necessarily true in the case of the corresponding *it*-cleft (cf. section 2.2 and example E1b above). Questions relating, however, to the less 'vital' nature of the English construction and indeed its lesser frequency compared with that of the *c'est*-cleft will be dealt with specifically in sections 5 and 6.

Let us examine the case of a clefted subject group in a *c'est*-cleft, where this desire to signal one particular interpretation and avoid ambiguity is very apparent:

F16. Pour gagner un peu d'argent et acheter le maïs trop cher qui viendra de la côte Pacifique (ou des Etats-Unis), il faudra vendre ce qui reste : le bois. (...) « Dans tout le nord, et dans notre région aussi, les Mexicains viennent illégalement prendre le bois. Malheureusement, ce sont les gens d'ici qui le leur vendent », explique Eric Black, de l'Office forestier municipal, un volontaire du Peace Corps des Etats-Unis qui tente d'encourager le reboisement.

E16. To buy expensive corn from the Pacific coast (or the United States), they will have to sell their wood (...) "All over the north, and here too the Mexicans are taking wood illegally. Unfortunately, it's local people who are selling it." says Eric Black, a US Peace Corps volunteer working for the forestry department, which is trying to encourage replanting.

This extract is taken from an article describing the aftermath of a recent mudslide in Guatemala, in which the corn crop, the local staple and main source of livelihood of the region, was severely damaged. In order to buy more corn from abroad the population is resorting to selling wood, an extremely dangerous expedient from an ecological viewpoint in that trees provide a natural protection in the event of torrential rain and mudslides. The French journalist is reporting the opinion of a US forestry official, an opinion which in all probability in the original interview was expressed in English. The formulation chosen, involving the predicated theme structure provides unambiguous instructions to the reader as to the point of departure of the clause as message:

Malheureusement, ce sont les gens d'ici / qui le leur vendent

The division between theme and rheme is rendered particularly apparent. Through the cleft construction, the lexical subject group, *les gens d'ici* (*local people*), is explicitly selected as topical theme of the clause complex. The local people alone are singled out as being responsible for the sale of the wood – an activity ultimately against their better interests, as made clear by the interpersonal theme, *malheureusement* (*unfortunately*) preceding the topical theme.

The reporter could have expressed this opinion using a formulation without a cleft, as in 16b below:

F16b. Malheureusement, les gens d'ici le leur vendent
 Unfortunately local people it them selling
 (*local people are selling it to them*)

However, in the manipulated version of this sentence here, the corresponding canonical declarative sentence, the accusatory tone is less obvious. The 'local people', whilst still the topical theme, are no longer explicitly pointed to as perhaps unwittingly being the eventual harbingers of their own undoing. Moreover, *les gens d'ici* ('local people' or literally 'people from here') would normally be considered as 'recoverable' in that the deictic, *ici* (*here*), clearly signals an element situationally accessible for the reader. Without the idea of exclusive selection conferred on the nominal group through the use of the cleft, the culpability of the local people themselves is no longer highlighted.

On the other hand, by placing the subject group within a separate predication using the cleft, the reader is invited to interpret the item as focalised, and as contrastively new. The local people, the ones selling the wood, are contrasted not only with the Mexicans, the ones taking the wood, the subject of the preceding sentence, but also more generally with all other potential vendors:

F16. Dans tout le nord, et dans notre région aussi, les Mexicains viennent illégalement prendre le bois. Malheureusement, ce sont les gens d'ici qui le leur vendent.

Only the original clefted sentence provides a clear unambiguous indication of the speaker's attitude with regard to the regrettable responsibility of the local populace in the ecological problems facing their region.

An examination of an example involving one of the many clefted adverbial groups in this sample will provide us with another illustration of this very directive nature of the *c'est*-cleft.

F9. Dans presque tous les pays concernés existent des services de surveillance qui tentent de déceler les premiers regroupements, en s'aidant d'imagerie satellitaire. Des mesures préventives peuvent alors être prises, consistant à les asperger de pesticides avant qu'ils ne grossissent démesurément. C'est à l'automne 2003 que les premiers signes de la recrudescence ont été observés en Mauritanie, puis au Maroc.

Ses voisins estiment que la Mauritanie n'a pas réagi assez rapidement, ce qui aurait pu limiter le développement des essaims.

E9. In almost all the countries potentially affected by swarms there are monitoring stations that use satellite images to try to detect the first concentrations of locusts. Preventive measures, such as spraying them with insecticides before they grow too large, can then be taken. It was in the autumn of 2003 that the initial signs of an upsurge were observed first in Mauritania, then in Morocco.

Mauritania's neighbours feel that the country did not react quick enough, thus missing a chance to limit the growth of the swarms.

The article discusses the threat posed to agriculture by locusts in parts of northern Africa. In the part of the article immediately preceding the cleft the author describes the importance of monitoring procedures and early preventive measures. Dating the exact moment of the outbreak is therefore of prime importance in this context. The clefting of the temporal adverbial group in the following sentence enables the author to pinpoint this time reference:

F9. C'est à l'automne 2003 / que les premiers signes de la recrudescence ont été observées en Mauritanie (...)

One could argue that in the declefted version of the sentence in (F9a) the initially occurring adverbial group would also be considered as topical theme:

F9b. A l'automne 2003 les premiers signes de la recrudescence ont été observés en Mauritanie

(In the autumn of 2003 initial signs of an upsurge were observed in Mauritania)

Temporal adverbials can indeed frequently serve to organise a text around a chronological time sequence. However as the message unfolds it becomes apparent that the journalist's intention is not simply to establish a temporal framework as background. At the beginning of the next paragraph, we learn that Mauritania is considered to have tarried in adopting the necessary preventive measures. The predicated theme structure in (F9) enables the journalist to present the date of the initial outbreak of locusts as the informative thrust or focus of the sentence, and thus draw the reader's attention to the importance of this date. Without the extra attention conferred on the adverbial through the cleft in the original version, the connection between this presumably early warning sign and the slow reaction of the Mauritanian authorities would be difficult to make. This interpretation is however facilitated thanks to the cleft.

I have argued that the primary motivation underlying use of the *c'est*-cleft at the discourse level is one of disambiguation. This does not adequately account, however, for the increased use of the French structure, as noted in the literature (Gledhill 2003; Katz 1997; Lambrecht 2001; Rivelin-Constantin 1992), in comparison to the lesser use of the formally and theoretically functionally equivalent English *it*-cleft. It is true in both languages that the notion of textual prominence and in particular the exhaustive, contrastive interpretation conferred on the clefted constituent play a crucial role and it is thus tempting to view these attributes as properties of the syntactic form of the construction. However, it is important in any cross-linguistic comparison to consider whether such attributes can also be realised by alternative means. This involves, in other words, taking into account the language-specific constraints that lead to the choice of the *c'est*-cleft or *it*-cleft in preference to other syntactic, prosodic or morphological forms fulfilling a similar functional purpose.

5. Formal motivations for the use of *c'est*-clefts

From a typological perspective the cleft contraction has often been viewed as a "compensatory device" (Doherty 2001) essentially prevalent in languages with a relatively fixed word order. Jespersen has proposed the following generalisation:

"this construction may be considered one of the means by which the disadvantages of having a comparatively rigid grammatical word order (SVO) can be obviated. This explains why similar constructions are not found, or are not

used extensively, in languages in which the word order is considerably less rigid than in English, French, or the Scandinavian languages” (1937:85)

As illustrated by Lambrecht (2001), where a shift in constituent ordering involving a subject-verb inversion can be acceptable in Italian (a), the same is not true for the corresponding sentences in French (b) or English (c):

Does your knee hurt?

a. No, mi fa male il PIEDE (or “No, è il PIEDE che mi fa male”)

*b. Non, me fait mal mon pied

*c. No, hurts my foot

Cleft formation however provides a grammatically acceptable pragmatic alternative in the three languages:

d. *No, è il PIEDE che mi fa male*

e. *Non, c'est mon PIED qui me fait mal*

f. (i) *No, it's my FOOT that hurts; (ii) No, my FOOT hurts*

A further possibility for indicating a particular information structuring arrangement is provided in the English sentence by the positioning of a marked focal accent. In example f(ii), a pitch accent on the preverbal constituent can also be sufficient to denote the marked ‘newsworthy’ status of the element. In French, however, the corresponding prosodic shift would be considered rather unnatural and the *c'est*-cleft in (e) is preferred.

In Lambrecht’s account of information structuring (1994, 2001), prosodic shifts, syntactic shifts and cleft formation are all three presented as potential devices for manipulating information structure and enabling the alignment of thematic and newsworthy material. This leads Lambrecht, following on from Jespersen’s generalisation, to postulate that the presence of cleft constructions in a language correlates not only with syntactic constraints on word ordering in that language but also with the degree of positional freedom of prosodic accents signalling focalisation (2001:488).

To the three resources above can also be added a number of morphological markings for signalling focus such as those present for example in many African languages and in Breton where textually prominent elements at clause onset are followed by the particles *a* or *e(z)* (Matthiessen 2004: 643). Different devices may co-exist within the same language. Marked focal stress and cleft formation can, for example, under certain contextual conditions be seen to function in English as alternative compensatory strategies. Syntactic expression of information structure is often unnecessary, with sentence accentuation making up for the rigid

word order constraints of English grammar. In French, however, as the sentence accentuation is less flexible particularly in regard to preverbal focus, formal motivation for clefting is strong (Katz 1997: 24; Lambrecht 2001:491).

Lambrecht suggests that cleft formation is a way for a language to “have its cake and eat it too” (1994:25). In what he describes as the ‘competition’ between information structure and syntax, neither system loses out. Thanks to the biclausal division of the cleft sentence syntactic constituents and prosodic accents are both placed in cognitively preferred positions, without causing ungrammaticality.

6. Comparative frequency of translation of *c'est*-clefts into English

Under half of the French *c'est*-clefts in the sample were also translated into English with the corresponding *it*-cleft (F/E1-17). In the other cases various non-cleft constructions were preferred (F/E18-36). One could argue that in a sample of translations the question of language interference must obviously play a role⁵. The journalist could either be overly influenced by the source text or on the contrary deliberately strive to make his translation different from that of the source text. Despite this restriction and the size of the sample involved I believe however that these figures show up some useful general tendencies regarding cleft distribution in the two languages.

	Original French <i>c'est</i> -cleft	Translated as <i>it</i> -cleft	Other formulation
Subject	15	4	11
Adjunct	19	12	7
Object	2	1	1
Total	36	17	19

Table 2: Distribution of translated *c'est*-clefts according to grammatical category

As the above table illustrates, the translator’s decision to preserve the cleft or not in the translation would seem to be linked to the grammatical category concerned. On the one hand, the great majority of clefted subjects in the *c'est*-clefts were not preserved in the English translations. In 9 out of 11 of these cases (F18-26) the constituent(s) clefted in the French article are presented as regular subject themes, and in most cases I would argue as marked ‘focalised’ themes. In one case, the French cleft is transposed into a reversed pseudo-cleft, a structure that does not exist in

⁵ It would also be interesting to compare these results with a sample of English to French translations to see if the phenomena observed were mirrored (cf. Johansson 2001).

French (cf. section 6.1.1). In the remaining example (F/E 35) the original *c'est*-cleft is rendered as a pseudo-cleft in the corresponding translation.

The majority of clefted adjuncts in the *c'est*-clefts (the one example of a clefted dependent clause has also been included in this category), on the other hand, and particularly those with a temporal adverbial expression, were likewise translated using an *it*-cleft in English. One can presume here that the translator also considered the preservation of the cleft necessary in order to preserve textual clarity and avoid ambiguity, although it is also feasible that there may be cases of redundant or superfluous signalling (Delin & Oberlander 2000). Of the 7 adjuncts not translated by a cleft in English, 3 were deictic adverbial expressions and occurred in preverbal thematic position in the corresponding translation (E27-29). The 4 remaining French adverbial clefts occurred within the rheme in the non-clefted English translation proposed (E31-34). Finally, only 2 clefted object expressions were found in the present sample: one preserved in English and in the other appearing in canonical rhematic position in the non-cleft translation proposed.

In the following sections I will detail these alternative sentence patterns selected in the English translation, firstly commenting on those cases where the clefted items of the *c'est*-clefts appear to receive a thematic newsworthy reading in the non-cleft English translations, and secondly on the cases where the items clefted in French occur within the rheme in the English translation. This will be followed by a short section dealing with a few cases where the non-cleft solution adopted by the translator poses an interpretative problem with regard to the original French formulation.

6.1 French *c'est*-clefts not translated by *it*-clefts

6.1.1 Thematic positioning of highlighted constituent(s)

I will first discuss the cases where the item clefted in the *c'est*-cleft occupies the preverbal thematic position in the English translation (examples F/E 19-F/E 33). English is more flexible than French as regards information structuring patterns and the distribution of newsworthiness in the clause. Although in both English and French word ordering is fairly rigid, this rigidity is somewhat offset in English by the flexibility of focus assignment. In English the preceding context is often sufficient to indicate the newsworthy nature of an item appearing in preverbal position. However, this is frequently not the case in French where grammatical subjects in theme position in particular cannot easily receive a newsworthy reading. Knud Lambrecht goes as far to invoke a powerful constraint “against the co-mapping of the pragmatic relation focus and the grammatical relation subject”, which means in turn that French often

resorts to cleft constructions “to avoid focus-initial SV structures.” (1994: 22).

It is interesting to note that this constraint correctly predicts the dubious acceptability⁶ of reverse pseudo-clefts in French, since the item focalised would precede the verb:

**le champagne est ce que j'aime*
 CHAMPAGNE is what I like (Lambrecht 2001: 492)

There is one example in the present sample of a *c'est*-cleft rendered as a reversed pseudo-cleft in the English translation:

F30. *C'est sa pratique et sa mise en œuvre, ratée, qui doivent être réformées*”

E30. Its implementation, which was botched, is what needs to be reformed.

Although Lambrecht's comments concerning the constraints on pre-verbal focus were made about spoken French, I suggest that such considerations can also be a factor in written French and can go a long way towards explaining why there are more cases of the *c'est*-cleft than the *it*-cleft in the present sample. The following example (F18), taken from an article dealing with the subject of arranged marriages amongst young immigrant girls, provides a telling illustration of this more supple nature of English focus assignment:

F18. *La mesure du phénomène reste délicate. Il n'existe aucune statistique officielle (...)*
 Pour Emmanuelle Piet, ce sont la quasi-totalité des jeunes Turques, des Africaines du fleuve Sénégal et un grand nombre de jeunes Maghrébines qui sont menacés.

E18. In Dr. Piet's view, almost all Turkish, Senegalese and a large number of North African girls are at risk

In example F18 the clefted item, the subject of the canonical clause, concerns the precise number of young girls who are likely to be victims of arranged marriages. The fact that a real risk may exist has already been hinted at, but what is particularly newsworthy is the scale of the risk: the *quasi-totalité* of young Turkish, *Senegalese* girls and *un grand nombre* of North African girls. The cleft structure is necessary in order to direct the

⁶ The sentence immediately becomes more acceptable in a left dislocated form involving the addition of 'c': *le champagne, c'est ce que j'aime*. For other examples in French of absolute themes with a focal reading, see Caffarel (2000).

readers' attention towards the news value of these elements. Without the cleft structure, the French reader would probably be inclined to attribute newsworthiness, by default, to the predicate *sont menacés*, in the usual rheme portion of the sentence (F18b):

F18b. Pour Emmanuelle Piet, la quasi-totalité des jeunes Turques, des Africaines du fleuve Sénégal et un grand nombre de jeunes Maghrébines sont menacées.

The French cleft structure thus serves to avoid any ambiguity with regard to the intended information structuring of the sentence.

However, in the English translation (E18) of this part of the article, a cleft construction is not used. The English reader is expected to naturally attribute focal status to the expressions detailing the population at risk. With a cleft structure the translator could have achieved a similar result on the pragmatic level, but the additional presence of the *it*-cleft seems unnecessarily cumbersome:

?E13b. In Dr. Piet's view, it's almost all Turkish, Senegalese and a large number of North African girls who/that are at risk

English would seem therefore much more flexible with regard to the distribution of focus or newsworthiness than French and would not seem in this instance to require the extra grammatical clue to indicate the location of the newsworthy parts of the clause.

Another striking example illustrating this relative flexibility of English focus structure in relation to French is provided by the following example:

F23. Le seul fait de s'asseoir à la table des négociations est un signal d'espoir pour les peuples israélien et palestinien. Ne pas le faire, enclenche un cercle vicieux : Israël tue des Palestiniens et des Palestiniens commettent des attentats-suicides anti-Israéliens. Et dans les deux cas, ce sont des civils innocents qui en paient le prix.

E23. The mere fact of sitting down at the negotiating table sends out a message of hope to the Israeli and Palestinian peoples. If you don't do that, there's a vicious circle; Israelis kill Palestinians and then the Palestinians send suicide bombers against the Israelis. In both cases innocent citizens pay the price.

In French, the *c'est*-cleft is needed in order to draw the reader's attention to the newsworthy status of the subject group, *des civils innocents*. What is being emphasised is not merely the fact that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is causing casualties but that the casualties involved are particularly ordinary citizens. In the English translation, however, the cleft

is once again unnecessary. The English reader is expected to mentally (re)create this emphasis without the further grammatical clue.

6.1.2 Rhematic positioning of highlighted constituent(s)

On several other occasions in the sample (examples F/E31-F/E36), the item clefted in the *c'est*-cleft simply occupies an unmarked position within the rheme in the English translation. In example F31, for example, the information highlighted in the adverbial cleft in French falls in its canonical rhematic position in the English translation:

- F31. José Mantero a tout du charme massif d'un Russell Crowe, l'acteur australien rendu célèbre par son maniement du glaive dans *Gladiator*. Pourtant c'est dans un combat autrement plus dangereux que s'est lancé ce prêtre catholique de 39 ans, en choisissant de descendre dans l'arène médiatique, à travers la publication de ses confessions de prêtre gay.
- E31. José Mantero seems to have all the hunky charm of Russell Crowe, the Australian actor famous for his swordplay in *Gladiator*. (...). But Mantero, 39 Spanish priest, embarked on a much more perilous combat when he decided to enter the media arena and confess to (...).

Drawing further attention to this information in a cleft was perhaps deemed unnecessary:

- ?F31b. But it was on a much more perilous combat (that) Mantero, 39 Spanish priest, embarked when he decided to enter the media arena (...)

Likewise in example F32, extracted from an article dealing with the photographer Gustave Le Gray, the locative adverbial group highlighted in the *c'est*-cleft occupies an unmarked rhematic position in the corresponding English translation:

- F32. Cette notoriété aiguillonne les chercheurs. Dans le monde anglo-saxon, d'abord, C'est aux Etats-Unis que la redécouverte de Le Gray a eu lieu.
- E32. His rise to fame has stimulated a great deal of research, initially in English-speaking countries. Le Gray was first rediscovered in the United States.

The absence of the *it*-cleft does not seem however to adversely affect the clarity or accuracy of the translation. As both the identity and the rediscovery of Le Gray are already known facts for the reader, the indication of the place of his discovery naturally emerges as the informative thrust of the sentence. The translator could have used a cleft in this instance too:

?E32b. It was in the United States that Le Gray was first rediscovered.

The decision not to do so presumably reflects the fact that the same communicative effect was considered achievable without recourse to the cleft.

Why should this be the case? One hypothesis is simply that the English *it-cleft* structure is considered more ‘marked’ than the French *c’est* cleft, if we understand markedness here as related to the degree of the potential domain of application and hence the frequency of use. French, as we have discussed, has more frequent recourse to *c’est* clefts due in great part to its more rigid focus structure and consequently the structure can be considered less marked than in English. If the English translator had in the above examples also clefted the element highlighted in the French originals, making them not only the focus of the newsworthiness but also the theme, they would perhaps have received more prominence than intended in the original French text.

6.1.3 Translation ‘noise’

As often, though with a linguistic analysis based on a corpus, some examples do not fit neatly into the pattern. There are a few examples in the sample of *c’est*-clefts rendered with a non-cleft formulation in English where the accuracy and clarity of the translation proposed are questionable, notably E25, E26 and E32. This may be partly due to a certain amount of interference or ‘noise’ linked to the translations themselves. The journalistic translator, working to a tight deadline, is not producing a lasting work of art but journalistic prose. It is possible that the absence of certain *it*-clefts may simply be sins of omission, with nuances of the original being elided or even unnoticed.

In the following extract, for example, the absence of the cleft in the English translation makes the sentence far less clear.

F32 .Ironie de l'histoire, c'est le 11 septembre que les pays membres de l'OEA, dont les Etats-Unis, ont signé une nouvelle charte démocratique prévoyant des mécanismes régionaux de défense des régimes constitutionnels.

E32. By a curious twist of history, OAS member countries, including the US, signed a new Inter-American Democratic Charter on September 11 2001, which provided for regional mechanisms to defend constitutional governments.

In the original French text, the adverbial expression, *le 11 septembre*, is presented as both the thematic starting point and the focus of the clause. In the English translation, however, the subject nominal groups are presented as thematic and this adjunct simply occupies the usual

unmarked rhematic slot at the end of the clause. Its positioning here, however, at a distance from '*a curious twist of history*' is not only awkward but conceals the very irony that the writer was trying to convey. A translation using an it-cleft would seem more appropriate in this context, conferring on the adverbial group the textual prominence necessary for an unambiguous reading:

E32b. By a curious twist of history, it was on September 11 2001 that OAS member countries, including the US, signed a new Inter-American Democratic Charter, which provided for regional mechanisms to defend constitutional governments.

7. Summary and conclusions

In this article I have argued that the main discourse motivation behind a writer's decision to employ a *c'est*-cleft is one of disambiguation. Use of the *c'est*-cleft enables the writer to confer a certain textual prominence on the clefted item, by imbuing it not only with thematicity but also with focal highlighting. The reader is given more precise processing instructions than in the case of a non-cleft equivalent with regard to the desired interpretation and ambiguity is thus reduced to a minimum.

From the more formal viewpoint, the productivity of the French structure can be linked to various constraints concerning word order and the positioning of prosodic accents in the language. The structure is more frequently employed in French than in English because the thematic positioning of newsworthy material in English can by itself be sufficient to suggest an unambiguous interpretation, due to the very flexible nature of voice accentuation. If the reader can be expected to naturally reconstruct a marked prosodic highlighting on a selected thematic constituent, motivation for using the it-cleft is consequently low. Finally, I have suggested that the comparative rarity of the English it-cleft structure itself confers on it a further degree of emphasis than on the more frequent French *c'est*-cleft.

As the present analysis suggests, there is no straightforward correspondence between the French *c'est*-cleft and the English it-cleft. This has important implications not only for translation studies but also for language teaching. In either language, if one employs the cleft in an inappropriate context or does not use it when required, the resulting statement can adversely affect the desired communicative effect. I have admittedly only scratched the surface with regard to the semantic properties of the French *c'est*-cleft. It has been suggested, for example, that overt contrastivity is often not a feature of the French construction (Katz 2000; Nowakowska 2002). Such considerations warrant further attention with a more extended corpus encompassing different discourse environments.

References

- Banks, David 1999. "Decoding the Information Structure of Journalistic Clefts", *Interface, Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 14:1, 3-24.
- Banks, David 2004. "Anglophone systemicists and French enunciativists: shall the twain never meet?", *Language Sciences*, 26, 391-410.
- Butler, Christopher S. 2005. "Focussing on focus: A Comparison of Functional Grammar, Role and Reference grammar and Systemic Functional Grammar", *Language Sciences*, 27, 588-618.
- Caffarel, Alice 2000. "Interpreting French theme as a bi-layered structure: Discourse implications" in Eija Ventola (ed.): *Discourse and community: Doing functional linguistics*, Tübingen, Gunter Narr.
- Carter-Thomas, Shirley 2002. "Theme and information structure in French and English: A contrastive study of journalistic clefts", *14th Euro-International Systemic Workshop, Issues in Language Description: Rethinking Systemic Functional Theory*, Lisbon University.
- Collins, Peter 1991. *Cleft and pseudo-cleft constructions in English*, London & New York, Routledge.
- Davies, Martin 1994. "Intonation IS visible in written English" in Čmejrková, Daneš, & Šticha (eds.): *Writing vs Speaking*, Tübingen, Gunter Narr.
- Declerck, Renaat 1984. "The pragmatics of IT-clefts and WH-clefts", *Lingua* 64, 251-289.
- Delin, Judy & Jon Oberlander. "Cleft constructions in context: some suggestions for research methodology", draft journal article, retrieved October 15, 2005, from <http://www.fb10.uni-bremen.de/anglistik/langpro/projects/gem/delin-publications.html>
- Doherty, Monica 2001. "Discourse functions and language-specific conditions for the use of cleft(-like) sentences: a prelude", *Linguistics* 39-3, 457-462.
- Fries, Peter H. 1994. "On Theme, Rheme and discourse goals" in Coulthard (ed.): *Advances in written text analysis*, London, Routledge.
- Gledhill Christopher. 2003. *Fundamentals of French Syntax*, Lincom Europa.
- Halliday, M.A.K. 1967. "Notes on transitivity and theme in English, Part 2", *Journal of Linguistics* 3(2), 199-244.
- Halliday, M.A.K. 1994. *An introduction to Functional Grammar*, London. Arnold
- Katz, Stacey 1997. *The syntactic and pragmatic properties of the c'est-cleft construction*, Doctoral dissertation, University of Texas.
- Katz, Stacey 2000. M.A.K. "Categories of C'est-Cleft Constructions", *Canadian Journal of Linguistics*, 45(3/4): 253-273.
- Jespersen, Otto 1937. *Analytic syntax*, London, Allen and Unwin.

- Johansson, Mats 2001. "Clefts in contrast: a contrastive study of it clefts and wh clefts in English and Swedish texts and translations", *Linguistics*, 39-3, 547-582.
- Lambrecht, Knud 1994. *Information structure and sentence form*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Lambrecht, Knud 2001. "A framework for the analysis of cleft constructions", *Linguistics*, 39-3, 463-516.
- Lambrecht, Knud 2004. "Un système pour l'analyse de la structure informationnelle des phrases. L'exemple des constructions clivées" in Fernandez-Vest, M.M.J. and Carter-Thomas, Shirley (éds.) : *Structure informationnelle et particules énonciatives – essai de typologie*, Paris, L'Harmattan.
- Matthiessen, Christian 2004. "Descriptive motifs and generalizations" in Caffarell Alice, J.R. Martin & Christian Matthiessen (eds.): *Language Typology: A Functional Perspective*, Amsterdam and Philadelphia, John Benjamins.
- Molinier, Christian 1996. "Constructions en c'est : une classification générale", *Cahiers de Grammaire*, 21, 75-94.
- Nowakowska, Aleksandra 2002. "Problématique de la phrase clivée dans une approche plurilingue", *Marges linguistiques*, <http://www.marges-linguistiques.com>
- Ormrod, Janet 2000. *La rédaction de l'article scientifique par des anglophones et par des francophones : Le groupe nominal*, Unpublished doctoral thesis, Université de Bretagne Occidentale.
- Prince, Ellen F. 1978. "A comparison of wh-clefts and it-clefts in Discourse", *Language*, 54, 883-906.
- Rivelin-Constantin, Eve 1992. "La thématisation en français et en anglais : une étude contrastive" in Guillemin-Flescher, J. (éd.), *Linguistique contrastive et traduction*, Gap, Ophrys.
- Thompson, G. 1996. *Introducing Functional Grammar*, London, Arnold.

Annex 1: Corpus

French *c'est*-clefts translated by English *it*-clefts

Adjuncts

F1. Et c'est à ce moment-là qu'une déflagration mit en pièces le système politique et social de la Russie.

E1. And it was at that point that an explosion destroyed Russia's political and social system.

F2. C'est en 1220 après l'hégire que le vaste djihad a été déclenché ici.

E2. It was in the year 1220 after the hegira that a great jihad was started.

F3. Or c'est en 1420 que le mujaddidi Ahmad Sani a été élu gouverneur du Zamfara.

E3. And it was in 1420 that the mojaddidi Ahmed Sani was elected governor of Zamfara.

F4. Mais c'est à Milan que Christopher Raeburn, le légendaire directeur artistique d'enregistrement chez Decca, la découvre et lui fait bientôt signer un contrat.

E4. But it was in Milan that Christopher Raeburn, Decca's legendary recording producer, discovered her talent and quickly got her to sign a contract.

F5. C'est d'ailleurs avec l'argent qu'ils envoient chez eux que le pays tourne encore.

E5. Indeed, it is thanks to the money they send home that the Moldavian economy is still functioning.

F6. C'est par la réitération de ces petits faits, petites agressions ou micro-violence, que le jeune, seul ou en groupe, assoit sa domination sur les autres.

E6. He argues that is through the repetition of petty offences and acts of aggression that youngsters, either alone or in groups, achieve dominance over others

F7. C'est au lendemain de l'ouverture du pays (milieu du XIXe siècle) que les Japonais ont commencé à consommer du bœuf sous l'influence des étrangers résidant dans les ports de Kobe et Yokohama.

E7. It was after the opening up of the country in the mid-nineteenth century that the Japanese, influenced by foreigners living in the ports of Kobe and Yokohama, began to eat meat.

F8. Après tout, c'est dans le centre de la Thaïlande qu'a été capturé, en août, l'Indonésien Hambali, principal animateur d'un réseau terroriste régional.

E8. It was in central Thailand that Hambali, the Indonesian ringleader of a regional terrorist network, was captured last August.

F9. C'est à l'automne 2003 que les premiers signes de la recrudescence ont été observés en Mauritanie, puis au Maroc.

E9. It was in the autumn of 2003 that the initial signs of an upsurge were observed first in Mauritania, then in Morocco.

F10. C'est par elle qu'il a rencontré Jonas Mekas.

E10. It was through her that Koirine met the American avant-garde film-maker Jonas Mekas.

F11. C'est à la Freeze de Londres qu'elle a acquis sa grande photo de Gillian Wearing.

E11. It was at the Freeze exhibition in London that she bought a large photograph by Gillian Wearing.

Subordinate

F12. C'est souvent lorsqu'ils découvrent leur fille avec une cigarette, ou la soupçonnent d'avoir un petit copain, qu'ils se décident à la marier.

E12. It is often when the parents discover their daughter with a cigarette, or suspect she has a boyfriend, that they decide to marry her off.

Subject

F13. Ces dix dernières années, c'est elle qui insista, à juste titre, sur les dangers de la baisse constante de l'aide publique au développement (APD).

E13. Over the past ten years it has been France that has rightly drawn attention to the dangers of a steady fall in development aid.

F14. Du reste, ce sont les Israéliens qui ont créé le Hamas pour contrer l'Organisation de Libération de la Palestine.

E14. By the way, it was the Israelis who created Hamas to counter the Palestine Liberation movement.

F15. C'est le désespoir qui pousse certains à commettre des attentats contre tel ou tel intérêt américain. Il existe aujourd'hui une haine des Américains jamais égalée dans la région.

E15. It's despair that pushes some of them to attack American interests.

F16. Malheureusement, ce sont les gens d'ici qui le leur vendent, explique Eric Black, de l'Office forestier municipal, un volontaire du Peace Corps des Etats-Unis qui tente d'encourager le reboisement.

E16. Unfortunately, it's local people who are selling it, says Eric Black, a US Peace Corps volunteer working for the forestry department, which is trying to encourage replanting.

Object

F17. C'est une page de l'apocalypse que nous vivons ici.

E17. It's an episode from the Apocalypse that we're experiencing here in Moldova.

French *c'est* clefts translated by a non-cleft structure in English

A - Thematic positioning of highlighted constituent(s)

F18. Pour Emmanuelle Piet, ce sont la quasi-totalité des jeunes Turques, des Africaines du fleuve Sénégal et un grand nombre de jeunes Maghrébines qui sont menacés.

E18. In Dr. Piet's view, almost all Turkish, Senegalese and a large number of North African girls are at risk

F19. Il y a une recrudescence d'actes de délinquance qui visent la communauté. C'est ça qui est angoissant.

E19. There's been an increase in crimes against the community. That's worrying.

F20. C'est elle qui fait remarquer la similitude de forme entre 'Huit femmes' et l'un de ses grands succès, 'Marie Octobre' de Julien Duvivier, autre huis clos à énigme.

E20. Darrioux herself points out the formal similarity between 8 femmes and one of her great successes, Julien Duvivier's 'Marie Octobre', another claustrophobic whodunnit.

F21. Ce sont ainsi 44% des Français qui ne seront pas représentés au second tour.

E21. This means that 44% of the French electorate will not be represented at the second round.

F22. C'est le même malentendu qui continue entre L'Europe et l'Irak après les attentats de Madrid.

E22. The same misunderstanding between Europe and Iraq has persisted after the Madrid bomb attacks

F23. Et dans les deux cas, ce sont des civils innocents qui en paient le prix.

E23. In both cases innocent citizens pay the price.

F24. Nous autres, Syriens, ne faisons plus venir personne, précisera leur chef. C'est nous qui repartons en Syrie.

E24. We're not attracting anyone from Syria, though. On the contrary, we're going home."

F25. C'est le discours de Président Bush sur l'état de l'Union et la dénonciation de l'axe du mal qui a déclenché des salves d'épithètes peu amènes.

E25. President Bush's state of the Union speech and his denunciation of 'an axis of evil' has triggered a volley of hostile reaction.

F26. C'est le 11 septembre qui a servi de révélateur à la crise d'identité de l'Alliance Atlantique, l'Amérique ayant fait comprendre à ses alliés que pour organiser la riposte elle jugeait plus efficace d'agir seul.

E26. The September 11 attacks revealed NATO's identity crisis, when America made it clear to their allies that they could organise a more effective response if they acted alone;

Adjuncts

F27. C'est pourtant dans ces langues que s'expriment désormais à leurs tables une clientèle étrangère que tout devise.

E27. Yet these are the languages spoken by their foreign patrons.

F28. (...) mais dans les faits, comment ce code fonctionne-t-il ? C'est là où le bât blesse.

E28 This is the real sticking point.

F29. C'est ici, en plein territoire autonome kurde irakien, que se sont repliés les derniers combattants actifs du PKK en Turquie, obéissant à l'ordre de retraite donné en 1999 par Apo, après sa capture.

E29. Here, in the self governing Kurdish region, the last PKK combatants withdrew in 1999, obeying orders given by Ocalan after his capture.

F30. C'est sa pratique et sa mise en oeuvre, ratée, qui doivent être réformées"

E30. Its implementation, which was botched, is what needs to be reformed.

B - Rhematic positioning of highlighted constituent(s)

Adjuncts

F31. C'est aux Etats-Unis que la redécouverte de Le Gray a eu lieu.

E31. Le Gray was first rediscovered in the United States.

F32. Ironie de l'histoire, c'est le 11 septembre que les pays membres de l'OEA, dont les Etats-Unis, ont signé une nouvelle charte démocratique prévoyant des mécanismes régionaux de défense des régimes constitutionnels.

E32. By a curious twist of history OAS member countries - including the US - signed a new Inter-American Democratic Charter on September 11 2001, which provided for regional mechanisms to defend constitutional governments.

F33. Pourtant c'est dans un combat autrement plus dangereux que s'est lancé ce prêtre catholique de 39 ans, en choisissant de descendre dans l'arène médiatique, à travers la publication de ses confessions de prêtre gay.

E33. But Mantero, 39 Spanish priest, embarked on a much more perilous combat when he decided to enter the media arena and confess to (...).

F34. C'est en août 2000 qu'il entre en pleine lumière.

E34. Saif first hit the international headlines in August 2000

Subject

F35. C'est un crime contre l'humanité qui est commis au Darfour, dans l'indifférence réservée à une lointaine contrée. Comme au Rwanda, en un terrible printemps 1994.

E35. What is being committed in Darfour is a crime against humanity, whilst the rest of the world averts its gaze from that remote part of the world – exactly as it did from Rwanda in 1994.

Object

F36. C'est ce verrou que le même président Ben Ali se prépare à faire sauter dans le cadre d'une réforme de la Constitution.

E36. The same Ben Ali is now preparing to scrap that restriction under constitutional reform.

Pre-publication version