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## Theme and Information structure in French and English A contrastive study of journalistic clefts

### Introduction

My choice of this topic is based on a conviction, following several years of teaching English to French students, that many of the difficulties encountered by language learners in constructing native-like discourse are linked to information structuring, the so-called third level referred to by the Praguian linguists (as opposed to the grammatical & semantic layers), and to issues related to the textual metafunction in systemic linguistics.

Although French and English are typologically close (both languages have an obligatory subject and are generally considered to have an SVO structure<sup>1</sup>), considerable differences in word order remain and the specialised syntactic structures available for manipulating information structure are neither identical nor necessarily used in the same circumstances. I will illustrate this with various examples of *it*- and *c'est*-clefts

The theoretical approach I adopt in this paper, whilst drawing on many considerations related to the textual metafunction in systemic linguistics, will also take into account some of the earlier theories of theme developed by the functional linguists of Prague (Daneš 1974; Firbas 1964). I will not however be adhering to the 'combining' theory still adopted by many of those who continue the the Praguian tradition. Separation of the systems of theme/rheme and Given/New would indeed seem to be essential to an understanding of how clefts and other specialised structures work. Some of the literature I have read in preparing this paper is extremely confusing from this viewpoint. The conflating approach often leads French grammar manuals for example, when speaking of clefts, to refer to a reversal of the usual *thème/propos* order (where *propos* is usually considered as the informative part of the clause providing information about the theme). Equally it would seem misleading, even with written text, to ignore the Given/New dimension and just talk about clefts simply as *thematizing structures* (Thompson 1996). If the focalised constituent in a cleft is the Subject it would usually also be considered as theme in the canonical non-clefted structure, and only speaking about a thematising structure in this case would therefore seem to be insufficient.

In my view an adequate account of specialised structures – structures that play an important role in this third informational layer of language organisation – must take into account the two separate strands. As Martin Davies has underlined (the Given/New structure must be visible in writing) otherwise we would not understand what we read, (1994). A successful piece of writing is therefore one “which gives the reader the

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<sup>1</sup> Knud Lambrecht (1987) notes that this SV(O) structure tends now to be used less in oral French: the preferred-clause construction being a verb initial structure, clitic + verb (X).

necessary clue for this reconstruction” (Banks 1999). I will, when speaking of the Given/New component, also refer to the work of linguists of a more cognitive persuasion such as Wallace Chafe (1987) and in particular Knud Lambrecht (1994; 2001), whose approach to the question of information structure is illuminating for studies of both written and oral discourse

I have chosen to analyse in particular the functioning of clefts as they are one of the specialised syntactic structures (or marked word order patterns) that seem to be used with a very different frequency in French and English. Structures such as:

*C'est Claire qui aime le chocolat*

*It's Claire that/who likes chocolate*

French makes far greater use of the 'c'est' cleft than English does of the it-cleft. Péry-Woodley (1989) in a study of students' essays in French and English found *c'est*-clefts for example to be used twice as frequently by the French students as the it-cleft in the English essays. A preliminary study I made of front page news stories in a British and French newspaper also revealed a similar trend. Why should this be the case? Why does French seem to need cleft structures more than English does? Which alternative information packaging strategies are used in English?

As the status of clefts as a cross-linguistic class is in itself fairly controversial I have chosen to examine a fairly fixed range of data with a view to simplifying the comparison of isomorphic structures in the two languages. I will, for example, only examine the traditional *it* & *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 *ya* or *j'ai* clefts. The latter in any case would seem to more of a feature of spontaneous speech (“*J'ai mon pied qui me fait mal*”). It and *c'est*-clefts though are quite frequent in both written and speech genres.

As the English and French 'it' cleft systems examined appear to be syntactically identical (except for possible relative pronoun effacement in English), it thus seems to be a reasonable hypothesis that distributional differences will reflect the functional properties rather than the formal characteristics of the two languages.

### **1. Corpus and methodology**

In order, however, to really compare the functioning of clefts as an information packaging strategy across the 2 languages, it is important to base the analysis on a corpus which is as close as possible not only in terms of genre and purpose but also in terms of propositional content. For this reason I decided to direct my research towards a corpus of translations.

The corpus I assembled consists of a series of articles from *Le Monde* (a leading French quality newspaper) which were later translated into English for 'The Guardian Weekly'. The original articles and their translations were then basically identical, with regard to content, barring the odd passage which does not appear in the English version, presumably because it was judged inaccessible or uninteresting for the English reader.

In a first stage I noted all the *c'est qui/que* cleft structures in the thirty original French articles (medium length articles of 400-700 words). This provided me with a total of

twenty-six clefts. Eight of the articles examined contained no clefts but in the remaining twenty-two there were then one or two clefts per article. I then analysed the English translations of these articles to see how frequently the cleft structure was preserved in the translations. Of the twenty-six French clefts only twelve (roughly 45%) were also translated by a cleft construction in English. In the other cases non-cleft constructions were preferred.

30 French articles →	22 articles contain at least 1 cleft	26 French cleft constructions →	12 clefts in English
	8 articles with no clefts		14 non-cleft constructions

One could argue that in a corpus of translations like this the question of language interference may play a role - the translator could be influenced by the source text and in this case there might be more clefts in the English translation than in English original articles. However, as over 50% of the original French clefts were not rendered by an English cleft construction, it would seem that the translators were not unduly influenced by the original form in this respect<sup>1</sup>.

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## 2. General functions of clefts

The literature on clefts, and on English cleft structures in particular, is extensive. Many commentators seem to consider that questions of ‘newness’ (or freshness) and in particular contrastive newness are essential to an understanding of how they function. This was indeed the view taken by Halliday in the 1994 edition of IFG. Halliday explains that cleft sentences (or predicated theme) enable the receivers’ attention to be explicitly directed towards the ‘news’ value of a particular information unit, with the tonic accent falling on a constituent after the copula. As a result this constituent will often tend to receive a contrastive emphasis – “in order to make it clear that this, and nothing else, is the news value”. In writing, as he goes on to explain, where one does not have the possibility of voice accentuation, clefts are particularly useful, as they explicitly direct the reader to interpret or decode the information structure in a particular way.

Halliday illustrates this with the following example:

*John’s father wanted him to give up the violin.*

*His teacher wanted him to continue.*

In the 2<sup>nd</sup> sentence here the reader would, without any other clues, normally interpret the final constituent ‘continue’ as having the principle news value.

It	was his teacher	who	persuaded him to continue
Theme	Rheme	Theme	Rheme
Theme (& ‘New’)		Rheme (& Given)	

<sup>1</sup> It would be interesting to compare these results with a corpus of English/French translations to see if the phenomena observed are mirrored. One would logically expect to find a greater number of clefts in the French translations than in the original English articles

However, using the marked word order (cleft) structure, a tonic accent would now fall on ‘teacher’. The reader would realise that the fact that John continued is Given and that not only the theme but also the principle news value is conveyed by the noun ‘teacher’. It was the teacher and not the father or anyone else who persuaded him to continue.

Many French linguists also highlight the contrastive and news value attached to clefts. However, due to the fact that in mainstream French linguistics theme and rheme are seen from an essentially Praguean perspective, the approach and terminology adopted are different. Experiential theme is not considered as a ‘staging post or starting point’, but as a psychological subject with low informative value; the rheme (or *propos*) is the part of the clause providing information about this theme

C’est Paul	qui est arrivé le premier
Rhème (nouveau, informatif)	Thème (connu)

From Le Goffic 1993: 221

Le Goffic provides the following analysis of the *c’est* cleft:

“..l’attribut de *être*, Paul est l’élément nouveau, informatif, le propos ou rhème.

On parle aussi dans ce cas de **focus**, en raison de la mise en relief appuyée dont le terme fait l’objet: Paul, et personne d’autre, est celui qui est arrivé le premier” (1993: 221).

Although the descriptive terms may be different, the fact remains that the clefted constituent here is also considered as ‘new’ and receives a special emphasis.

The distribution of Given and New in the cleft construction is not always, however, so straightforward as the examples quoted above; often the clefted constituent is an anaphoric and cannot by definition be considered as referentially new or fresh. Many researchers, often from the cognitive linguistic tradition, have proposed a scale of *givenness* and *newness* (for example, Prince 1978) with several sub-divisions, in order to determine the precise informational status of particular referents.

What is at issue when discussing clefts is not so much the question of degrees of newness of particular referents as that of the new distribution of newsworthiness/focus brought about by the reorganisation of the clause. Using a cleft enables the enunciator to signal a particular slant or orientation, different from that of the non-clefted canonical clause. The clefted item receives additional prominence (although this does not mean it is necessarily the only item to receive this prominence) which in turn affects our interpretation of the rest of the clause.

We can illustrate the above points with an example from the French newspaper corpus – an example that is also translated with a cleft construction in the corresponding English article.

FI *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 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**

The context is that of that the relationship between Jews and Russians. The point in time the author is referring to has been defined in the preceding sentences (the eve of the Bolshevik revolution) and is thus easily 'recoverable' for the reader. However by placing the time adverbial within the cleft, the item is automatically signalled as being particularly 'newsworthy'. It was at this moment in time and no other (ironically, considering the fact that anti-Semitism was not an issue) that the revolution occurred. As Halliday puts it: "The meaning is attend to this: this is news". Referential identifiability or recoverability is not necessarily what is at issue. For this reason I prefer to follow Peter Fries in referring to the concept of 'newsworthy' to describe the meaning of 'New' in information structure.

It is also important to point out that the real focus or newsworthiness in the above example is not just created by this item itself but by the relation it creates with the information conveyed by the relative clause, a point forcefully made by Knud Lambrecht on several occasions:

The new information .... is strictly speaking not expressed in the focus denotatum itself but in the relation established between this denotatum and the rest of the clause (2001: 477).

In other words the real news value or newsworthiness of the clefted constituent can only be evaluated in relation to the information presented in the rest of the clause. In the above example the newsworthiness of the temporal adverbial cleft is only really brought home when juxtaposed with the rest of the sentence.

In the strict Hallidayan tradition, however, the identification of Newsworthiness is dependent on the prosodic structure of oral discourse. Transferring this approach wholesale to written discourse can therefore be somewhat problematic. It is true - as P. Fries (1994) has pointed out - that writers will generally speaking sequence their texts so that New or focal information occurs where the tonic accent would be in the spoken sentence. The researcher can of course ask subjects to read the texts aloud (cf. Banks 1999). However this approach seems rather artificial, and will always involve a degree of guesswork (due to both inter- and intra-speaker variability). For this reason the approach advocated by Knud Lambrecht (1994, 2001), which involves not only taking into account prosody but also including grammatical markers (such as the position and ordering of constituents, complex grammatical constructions and certain choices between related lexical items), seems more insightful. This approach is notably centred on the comparison of semantically equivalent but formally and pragmatically divergent alternatives. In the case of written clefts, it would therefore seem essential to study the various agnate and non-cleft alternatives.

In a non-cleft canonical version of the above example, that is to say a clause without the copula, the initial adverbial expressions would normally be treated 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, in the French version this thematic adverbial expression merely seems to refer to the background against which the revolution or explosion happened. Without the cleft the cause and effect relationship between the initially occurring temporal adjunct and the rest of the clause is not apparent.

?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*

In the second manipulated example here, the adverbial expression occurs postverbally within the rheme and could conceivably be thought of as carrying contrastive focus, but the long composite nature of the rheme makes 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 would seem to be the only possibility for providing clear processing instructions to the reader and the distribution of newsworthiness in the sentence.

### **3. Results**

#### **3.1 French clefts also translated by an English cleft**

As underlined above of the twenty-six French cleft constructions in my corpus only twelve were also translated with a cleft construction in the English version. Of these clefted elements, nine were adjuncts or dependent clauses, and three were subjects or complements of their respective canonical sentences. I do not have the space in this article to discuss any more of these examples, numbered 1-12 in the appendix below, but it is perhaps significant that the great majority are adjuncts of some type (particularly temporal adverbials). Both French and English would seem to need a cleft in these cases. I would now like to concentrate on the examples of French clefts that were not translated by a cleft in English.

#### **3.2 French *c'est* clefts not translated by an *it* English cleft**

##### **3.2.1 Rigidity of French focus structure**

Of the fourteen French clefts that were not translated with a cleft construction in English, a notable proportion (seven out of fourteen) would seem to be linked to the fact that

English is far more flexible than French as regards focus structure and the distribution of newsworthiness in the clause (*cf.* Van Valin 1999). Whereas in English the preceding context is often sufficient to indicate the possibly newsworthy nature of an item appearing in preverbal position, this is not the case in French where grammatical subjects in theme position, in particular, cannot easily receive a newsworthy reading. According to Knud Lambrecht there is, in fact, 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, p.22). Although Lambrecht’s comment was made about spoken French, I would suggest that such considerations can also be a factor in written French and can go a good way towards explaining why there are more incidences of the *c’est*-cleft than the *it*-cleft in my corpus.

This can be illustrated by the following example (F13) taken from an article dealing with the subject of arranged marriages – that is to say young immigrant girls who are victims of arranged marriages by their families.

*F13 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  
menacées.*

*#F13b Pour Emmanuelle Piet, la quasi-totalité des jeunes Turques, des Africaines du  
fleuve Sénégal et un grand nombre de jeunes Maghrébines sont menacées.*

**E13 In Dr. Piet’s view, almost all Turkish, Senegalese and a large number of North African girls are at risk**

In example F13 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. (We notice in passing that the plural form *ce sont* instead of *c’est* is employed, although this agreement is tending to disappear, particularly in informal genres). The fact that there is a real risk has already been commented upon, but what is particularly newsworthy is the precise numbers affected: 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 readers’ attention towards the **news** value of these elements. Without the cleft structure, the reader would be inclined to attribute newsworthiness to the predicate *sont menacées*, in the usual rheme portion of the sentence (F13b). Cleft structures thus not only serve to signal the newsworthiness of a constituent that would normally be nonfocal but also to mark the nonfocal character of a predicate that might otherwise be construed as focal (Lambrecht, 2001, p.489)

In the English translation (13E) of this part of the text, however, a cleft construction is not used. This is because it is unnecessary. The English reader would, I believe, naturally attribute focal status to the expressions detailing the population at risk. With a cleft



structure the translator could have achieved the same result on the pragmatic level, but the additional presence of the *it* cleft would seem 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 to require the extra grammatical clue to indicate the location of the newsworthy parts of the clause.

An even more striking example, illustrating this relative flexibility of English focus structure in relation to French, is the following:

F14 “*Il y a une recrudescence d’actes de délinquance qui visent la communauté. C’est CA qui est angoissant.*”

?F14b “*CELA est angoissant*”

E14 “**There’s been an increase in crimes against the community. That’s worrying.**”

The article is dealing with the wave of anti-Semitic violence in France at the beginning of the year. The portion of the text under investigation concerns an interview with a spokesman for the Jewish community in Sarcelles, a Parisian suburb. In the original French article, the deictic pronoun is clefted. Without the cleft it would indeed be difficult to attribute focus to the element in theme position. Using a cleft thus enables the enunciator to cope with co-mapping constraint evoked earlier and to signal unambiguously the newsworthy nature of the deictic.

In the English translation, on the other hand, the cleft structure is unnecessary, as English accepts a focal element in preverbal position far more easily than French does. On reading the article the reader would automatically recognise the thematic ‘That’ as carrying a focal stress rather than the predicate ‘worrying’.

Note that in the English translation a reverse pseudo-cleft (RWH) or marked thematic equative in systemic parlance would also have been a pragmatically acceptable alternative: ‘*That’s what’s worrying*’ (further underlying the exclusiveness of the relation between the thematic and rhematic components). Such a structure, however, is impossible in French (as in Spanish) as once again a specifically focalised element cannot be used as a preverbal subject and clausal theme.

This difference in the relative flexibility of the focus structure in the 2 languages can go a good way towards explaining the higher frequency of clefts in French than in English. Seven of the fourteen French clefts that were not translated with a cleft in English (N° 13-19) would seem to be directly linked to this question of preverbal thematic focus. Of these examples six would have been subjects of their respective canonical sentences in

French, further reinforcing Lambrecht's point about the particular difficulty in French relative to the co-mapping of theme, grammatical subject and focus.

#### English canonical rheme/focus ordering is sufficient

On several other occasions in the corpus (N° 20-23), the item clefted in the *c'est* French cleft simply occupies the usual rhematic position towards the end of the clause in the English translation. Once again, however, the absence of the *it*-cleft does not seem to affect the accuracy or clarity of the translations:

F20 *En réaction à la funeste 'présidence à vie' instaurée au bénéfice d'un président Bourguiba devenu sénile, l'actuel chef de l'Etat avait eu l'intelligence de limiter à trois le nombre de mandats présidentiels.*

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

#### **E20 The same Ben Ali is now preparing to scrap that restriction under constitutional reform.**

In the English translation the element highlighted through the French cleft simply occurs in the canonical rheme position. The translation seems perfectly clear, we know exactly which restriction is being referred to and drawing further attention to it in a cleft would seem unnecessary.

**?E20b It is that restriction that the same Ben Ali is now preparing to scrap under constitutional reform.**

Likewise in examples 21-23, the information highlighted in the cleft of the French original falls in the usual rhematic position in the English translation. The translator could have used a cleft in these instances too. The fact that that he chose not to do so is presumably because he considered the same communicative effect to be achievable by using a structure with the highlighted element in its canonical position.

Why should this be 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 seen, 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 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.

#### 3.2.2 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 of French clefts in my corpus translated with a non-cleft structure in English where the information structure does not appear to have been respected (N° 24-26). 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, 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.

F25 *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 constitutionnelles.*

E25 **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 nominal groups are presented as thematic and this adjunct simply occupies the usual unmarked rhematic and newsworthy 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.

E25b *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.*

A translation using an *it* cleft would seem more appropriate:

#### 4. Some tentative conclusions

As explained in the introduction one of my main motivations in embarking on this comparison of cleft structures in English and French was to try to pinpoint more closely their role as information packaging strategies in the two languages, from the didactic viewpoint. Many of my French students' difficulties in creating native-like discourse lie, I believe, on the informational level. Although having a sound grasp of English (and making few serious grammatical errors) they tend to reproduce certain French syntactic patterns, rather than using syntactic arrangements more suited to the communicative context in terms of theme and information structure in the target language. I recently reread a rather dense philosophical paper, written in English by a French university colleague. In his 20-page article there were no less than thirteen *it*-clefts, five of which no longer existed after a thorough reworking of the text. It is features like these I believe that often contribute to the rather awkward and non-native like feel of advanced English learners' discourse.

The fact that such a small corpus has been analysed discourages me from making any sweeping statements, but nevertheless a few general tendencies would seem to emerge. The *it*-cleft structure in English appears by no means as vital as the *c'est* cleft is in French. Although, French and English both have recourse to a cleft structure, particularly for the clefting of adverbial adjuncts, there are many other contexts in French where the

*c'est* cleft is required, but where the *it*-cleft is optional and at times even best avoided. The main reason for this is, as we have seen, that English focus structure is more flexible than that of French and can, given the right contextual clues, place a newsworthy reading on an element in theme position. In French, however, due to constraints against the co-mapping of subject and focus, a *c'est* cleft is vital in order to attribute a newsworthy reading to such initially occurring clausal themes<sup>1</sup>. On other occasions in our corpus we have seen that the clefted item in the *c'est* French cleft simply occupies the canonical rheme position in a monoclausal version proposed by the English translator. The usual information packaging arrangements, with Given at clause outset and the climax of the newsworthiness occurring towards the right-hand side of the clause, are deemed adequate.

The use of the English *it*-cleft, unlike the *c'est* cleft, sometimes appears to be motivated more by stylistic reasons than pragmatic ones. It can sound rather formal and as other researchers have noted, is often used as a literary device, which may account for the fact that it would seem to occur with a greater frequency in certain types of 'sophisticated' writing and elevated speech rather than in spontaneous exchanges (Katz, Collins). There is no straightforward correspondence between the French *c'est* cleft and the English *it* cleft. In either language, if one employs the cleft in an inappropriate context or does not use it when required, the resulting statement, although comprehensible, will sound strange to a native speaker. This is something that learners should be made aware of. The informational level must be taken into account in language teaching. Specialised syntactic structures for example should be taught within this framework, and not simply as alternatives or clever grammatical manipulations. I also think there is a strong argument, particularly with advanced learners from the same linguistic background, for the (re)introduction of certain translation-based tasks.

Although the research on English clefts is extensive, full-length studies of French clefts seem rare (Katz 2000) and very little research seems to have been done from a contrastive viewpoint. Contrastive research though is perhaps the only way to really understand when and why clefts and non-clefts are truly in free variation.

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<sup>1</sup> An argument placed in **preclausal** position can have a focal reading in French (Lambrecht, 1994, p31). For other examples of topicalisations (or absolute theme) with a focal reading, see Caffarel (2000).

## Appendix

### French c'est clefts translated by an English it cleft

- F1 *A la veille de la révolution bolchevique, cette vraie Russie et son intelligentsia libérale rejetaient l'antisémitisme ; elles ne voulaient pas 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.»**
- F2 *Parmi les sept collègues de Danièle Darrieux, il y avait Catherine Deneuve*  
*“C'est la quatrième fois que je suis sa mère à l'écran. D'abord dans l'un de ses premiers films” (...).*
- E2 **One of Darrieux's seven colleagues was Catherine Deneuve:**  
**“It was the fourth time I had played her mother on the screen. I did so first in one of her earliest movies” (...).**
- F3 *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).*
- E3 **Over the past ten years it has been France that has rightly drawn attention to the dangers of a steady fall in development aid.**
- F4 *C'est en 1220 après l'hégire que le vaste djihad a été déclenché ici.*
- E4 **It was in the year 1220 after the hegira that a great jihad was started.**
- F5 *Or c'est en 1420 que le mujaddidi Ahmad Sani a été élu gouverneur du Zamfara, et qu'un mouvement..(...).*
- E5 **And it was in 1420 that the mujaddidi Ahmed Sani, elected governor of Zamfara, introduced sharia...(...).**
- F6 *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.*

- E6 **But it was in Milan that Christopher Raeburn, Decca's legendary recording producer, discovered her talent and quickly got her to sign a contract.**
- F7 *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.*
- E7 **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.**
- F8 *C'est principalement l'impossibilité de rembourser qui avait poussé à l'exil beaucoup de paysans.*
- E8 **It was chiefly because they could not pay back what they owed that many farmers left Afghanistan.**
- F9 *C'est une page de l'apocalypse que nous vivons ici.*
- E9 **It's an episode from the Apocalypse that we're experiencing here in Moldova.**
- F10 *C'est d'ailleurs avec l'argent qu'ils envoient chez eux que le pays tourne encore.*
- E10 **Indeed, it is thanks to the money they send home that the Moldavian economy is still functioning.**
- F11 *Selon Eric Debarbieux, elle (la répétition) est au cœur de la logique délinquante. C'est par la répétition de ces petits faits, petites agressions ou micro-violence, que le jeune, seul ou en groupe, assoit sa domination sur les autres.*
- E11 **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**
- F12 *La consommation de bœuf fut longtemps faible dans l'archipel. (...) 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 résidants les ports de Kobe et Yokohama.*
- E12 **For a long time, very little beef was eaten in Japan. (...) 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.**

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

- F13 *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 menacées.*
- E13 **In Dr. Piet's view, almost all Turkish, Senegalese and a large number of North African girls are at risk**

- F14 “*Il y a une recrudescence d’actes de délinquance qui visent la communauté. C’est ça qui est angoissant. Mais ce ne sont pas toujours des actes antisémites. J’ai l’impression que ces jeunes agressent ceux qu’ils voient comme les bourgeois de Sarcelles(...)*”
- E14 **“There’s been an increase in crimes against the community. That’s worrying. But the attacks are not always anti-Semitic. I think the youngsters attack people they regard as the bourgeois of Sarcelles (...)”**
- F15 “*Notre objectif est de dire que ces mariages concernent l’école car ils vont à l’encontre de ses valeurs d’épanouissement et de liberté”, explique Alain Seksig, conseiller technique de Jack Lang.  
C’est en effet auprès de l’infirmière ou de l’assistante sociale de leur lycée ou de leur collège que ces jeunes filles osent confier leur drame.*
- E15 **“Our aim”, said Alain Seksig, (...)“is to make schools feel concerned about these marriages(...).” The school sickroom nurse or the school social worker is often the person to whom the girls dare to talk about the ordeals they are subjected to.**
- F16 *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.*
- E16 **Darrieux herself points out the formal similarity between 8 femmes and one of her great successes, Julien Duvivier’s Marie Octobre, another claustrophobic whodunnit.**
- F17 *Incongrue avant le 11 septembre, la question de la raison d’être de l’Alliance atlantique fait désormais partie de la réflexion stratégique, aux Etats-Unis comme en Europe. (... /)  
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.*
- E17 **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;**
- F18 (...) le tremblement de terre politique qu’est le premier tour de l’élection présidentielle a une seule cause: la dispersion, absurde, de la gauche.  
Celle-ci, qu’on la considère dans ses limites modérées ou en incluant l’extrême gauche, ne recule pas, d’un scrutin présidentiel à l’autre.  
*Ce sont ainsi 44% des Français qui ne seront pas représentés au second tour.*
- E18 (...) **the absurd degree to which the left was fragmented. Whether one considers only its more moderate elements or includes the far left, the left-wing vote has not in fact decreased from one presidential election to the next.**  
**This means that 44% of the French electorate will not be represented at the second round.**

F19 *Le maire (PS), Roger Madec ne nie pas les faits: “ Il ne faut pas faire d’angélisme. Nous avons dans l’arrondissement une bande de jeunes d’origine musulmane qui commettent des actes d’incivilité contre les juifs. Pour eux, c’est la communauté juive qui est opulente et qui a tout. C’est faux, et il faut le dire. ”*

**E19 The mayor, Roger Madec says: “It’s no good pretending this doesn’t go on. We have a gang of young Muslims who commit antisocial acts against Jews. They regard the Jewish community as rich. That’s not true, and we must say so.”**

Clefted French item occurs in canonical rheme position in English

F20 *En réaction à la funeste ‘présidence à vie’ instaurée au bénéfice d’un président Bourguiba devenu sénile, l’actuel chef de l’Etat avait eu l’intelligence de limiter à trois le nombre de mandats présidentiels.  
C’est ce verrou que le même président Ben Ali se prépare à faire sauter dans le cadre d’une réforme de la Constitution*

**E20 The same Ben Ali is now preparing to scrap that restriction under constitutional reform.**

F21 *(...) 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.*

**E21 (...) 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 (...).**

F22 *Après cinquante sept mois d’une cohabitation Lionel Jospin devait immédiatement démarquer ... Pour cela, il a soigneusement choisi le moment, la manière et le message.  
(...)  
La manière s’ensuit. C’est par une ‘courte lettre aux Françaises et aux français’, transmises à l’Agence France presse, que Lionel Jospin a fait connaître sa décision.*

**E22 As for the medium, Jospin broke the news with a ‘brief letter to Frenchwomen and Frenchmen’ which he sent to the news agency, Agence France Presse.**

F23 *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.*

**E23 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.**

Translation noise

F24 *Irritations transatlantiques  
Le ton monte entre les deux rives de l’atlantique...*



*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.  
Hubert Védrine, le ministre français a tiré le premier*

- E24** **Tempers have flared up on either side of the Atlantic.**  
**President Bush's state of the Union speech and his denunciation of 'an axis of evil' has triggered a volley of hostile reaction.**  
**The French minister, Hubert Védrine, was the first to unleash his barbs.**
- F25 *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.*
- E25** **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.**
- F26 *"J'avais des liens très forts avec lui (Aristide). Aujourd'hui, je me confesse en public car il faut reconnaître le mal pour l'extirper. Davantage que l'homme, c'est le vide de sa pensée qui me déçoit."*
- E26** **"I used to be very close to Aristide. Now I publicly admit my mistake (...). I'm disappointed less with the man than with the emptiness of his thinking. "**

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