Clefting in Journalistc Texts
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Abstract

This paper intends to analyse the frequency in use of three types of cleft constructions (it-clefts, wh-clefts and reversed wh-clefts) in Present-Day American English (AmE) and Present-Day British English (BrE) journalistic texts using an own-made corpus of around 100,000 words. This corpus is composed of texts extracted from two online newspapers: The New York Times and The Times. I will try to provide a brief account of the different syntactic and pragmatic behaviour of these constructions in the register represented by the corpus and, besides, to compare, whenever possible, the results obtained with those provided by Biber et al. (1999).

1. Introduction

This paper particularly focuses on three different types of *cleft* constructions, *it-clefts*, *wh-clefts* and *reversed wh-clefts*. Attention is paid to their behaviour in a particular register, journalistic texts. So, first of all, it is necessary to provide a general definition of *clefts* and afterwards a brief explanation of why this particular register was chosen.

According to Biber et al. (1999: 958), *clefting* is similar to dislocation in the sense that the information that could be given in a single clause is broken up. *Clefts* take their name from the fact that a single clause is divided into two different clauses, each with its own verb: one of the clauses being superordinate and the other one being subordinate.

There are three main types of *cleft constructions*: *it-clefts, wh-clefts* and *reversed wh-clefts*.[1] These structures contain a form of the copular verb *to be* followed or preceded (in the case of *reversed wh-clefts*) by the so-called *focus position*. This position can only be filled by constituents, that is, a "string of one or more words that syntactically and semantically (i.e. meaningwise) behave like units" (Aarts 1997: 4). However, the three of them differ in the category of elements they select to be placed in the focus position.

As regards the general use of these constructions, Jespersen (1949: 147) claims that *clefts* serve "to single out one particular element of the sentence and very often, by directing attention to it and bringing it, as it were, into focus, to mark a contrast." As a matter of fact, the most general use of these structures is that of giving prominence to a certain element by placing it in the focus position or "focussing on a particular part of a sentence" (Sinclair 1990: 409).

Here follows an example of each of the three constructions we are going to deal with:
(1)   It is **Michael** who has taken your umbrella. IT-CLEFT
(2)   What Michael took was **your umbrella**. WH-CLEFT
(3)   **Your umbrella** was what Michael took. REVERSED WH-CLEFT

As Huddleston (1984: 459-467) observes, the focus in *it-clefts* is the complement of the verb *to be* – example (1), and also in *wh-clefts* – example (2), while in *reversed wh-clefts* it is the subject which is normally focused. As we will see later on in this paper, each construction chooses different elements to place in the focus position and, besides, they have different functions in discourse.

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[1] The term *cleft* is sometimes used instead of *it-cleft*, especially in opposition to *pseudo-cleft*. *Wh-clefts* are also called *pseudo-clefts*.

Journalistic texts are analysed in this paper mainly because they are approachable by any of us at any moment thanks to the Internet. Besides, these texts present an interesting variety of subtypes, which provide examples in different contexts, and so help the study to be more exhaustive. What is more, the use of online newspapers made it easy to obtain two different varieties of English.

2. Method and main problems
2.1. The design of the corpus

The corpus used for analysis in this paper was compiled using the online edition of two newspapers: *The New York Times* (http://www.nytimes.com/) and *The Times* (http://www.timesonline.co.uk/global/). These two papers were selected because they are two of the most relevant newspapers in American (AmE) and British English (BrE) respectively.

The samples date from the period corresponding to the end of March, 2006, and the beginning of April, 2006.

The corpus contains 100,078 words: 50,029 from *The New York Times* and 50,049 from *The Times*. The text categories analysed are the following: national, international, business, sports and opinion.

Table 1. Number of words in each text category

	NEW YORK TIMES (number of words per category)	THE TIMES (number of words per category)
NATIONAL	12,270	12,302
INTERNATIONAL	13,658	13,701
BUSINESS	11,999	11,919
SPORTS	12,102	12,127
OPINION	12,017	12,031

As can be observed in Table 1, I tried to create even samples from each category so that different issues and ways or writing were present in the corpus. However, it was not always an easy task, as it is difficult to get round figures when dealing with already written texts.

2.2. The exploitation of the corpus

In order to search for the *cleft* constructions present in the corpus, the *Concapp Concordance and Word Profiler Version 4 for Windows Operating Systems* was used. This is a free and user-friendly text analysis programme which offers concordances, collocations and word frequency statistics and can also be used to edit text files. Its author is Chris Greaves (The Hong Kong Polytechnic University) and it can be downloaded from *Edict.com Virtual Language Centre* (The Hong Kong Polytechnic University — http://www.edict.com.hk/pub/concapp/).

It was possible to use *Concapp* because the amount of words in the corpus (around 100,000 words) is not high. If I were dealing with a bigger corpus the use of this programme would have been ineffective.

2.3. Main problems

The main problems faced when looking for *cleft* constructions were due to the fact that, in spite of using a concordancer, most of the work had to be made by hand. I

tried to revise the extracted examples as thoroughly as possible, as on some occasions some of them were misleading, such as the following:

(4)   [TT_opin_They are going to mug you_April 3, 2006_Tim Hames] It is that a quiet consensus will be secured between the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition that the taxpayer should be mugged in the form of a larger dose of state funding of parties.[2]

The concordancer places this instance together with *it-clefts*, so, if it is read carelessly, it could have been understood as an *it-cleft* whose highlighted element is a that-clause.

3. Frequency of *cleft* constructions in the corpus

Clefts are not actually frequent constructions in any register in English, and so it seems to be the case in journalistic texts, cf. the Table below:

Table 2. Number of instances of *cleft* constructions in the texts analysed

	NEW YORK TIMES	THE TIMES	*TOTAL*
IT-CLEFTS	4	12	*16*
WH-CLEFTS	6	11	*17*
REVERSED WH-CLEFTS	10	9	*19*
TOTAL	*20*	*32*	*52*

If we have a look at the total figures in the Table, we notice that the use of the three types of *clefts* is similar in this type of register and in the two varieties of English present in the corpus.

However, the number of examples of each kind of *cleft* in each newspaper is not the same:

- Neither *it-clefts* nor *wh-clefts* are common in *The New York Times*.
- *It-clefts* and *wh-clefts* seem to be more common in BrE, as it can be extracted from the results.
- Apart from being the most common type, *reversed wh-clefts* are used in a similar amount in both newspapers.

When talking about the distribution of *cleft* constructions across registers in the *Longman Spoken and Written English Corpus* (LSWEC), Biber et al. (1999: 961) find 20 examples of *it-clefts* per 100,000 words,[3] 10 examples of *wh-clefts* per every 100,000 words and 15 examples of *reversed wh-clefts* per every 100,000 words.[4] These findings do not contrast considerably with those shown in this paper. Unfortunately, it is not possible to compare the findings as regards the dialect, because Biber et al. (1999) do not distinguish between both.

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[2] Each example is noted with the following data: <u>newspaper</u> (NYT – The New York Times; TT – The Times); <u>subgenre</u> (bus – business; intl – international; ntl – national; opin – opinion; spt – sports), <u>article title</u>; <u>date</u> and <u>author</u> (whenever it appeared on the article).

[3] Biber et al. (1999: 961) also work with a corpus presenting both BrE and AmE, the *Longman Spoken and Written English Corpus* (over 40 million words). They norm the occurrences of *clefts* per million words, so I have made the appropriate calculations to get their occurrences per 100, 000 words, in order to be able to compare their results and mine.

[4] Biber et al. (1999: 960-961) distinguish between *reversed wh-clefts* and what they call *demonstrative clefts*, consider the examples:

(a) "There's a lot more darkness in this second TV series compared with the last one but **darkness** is [what comedy is all about]." (NEWS †) (Biber et al., 1999:960). REVERSED WH-CLEFT

(b) **That's why** we asked. (NEWS †) (Biber et al., 1999:961). DEMONSTRATIVE CLEFT

However, I have considered these so-called *demonstrative clefts* as reversed wh-*cleft*s, and not as a separate type of *cleft*, as I believe they are some sort of subtype of reversed *wh-clefts*.

4. Syntactic characteristics of journalistic *clefts*

I will deal with each of the three types of *cleft* constructions separately. Let us start with *it-clefts*.

4.1. It-clefts

When dealing with the syntactic properties of *it-clefts*, it is necessary to consider what is the *form* of the focus, what would be the *function* of that focalised element in the subordinate clause and which *type of elements* introduce the subordinate clause.

It will be difficult to provide a complete comparison between BrE and AmE for this type of *cleft*, as there are only four examples in *The New York Times* and so they are not enough to be entirely representative of the dialect.

4.1.1. Form
The focused element in journalistic texts may belong to three different grammatical categories as shown in Table 3:

Table 3. Form of the focused element in *it-clefts*

	NEW YORK TIMES	THE TIMES	*TOTAL*
NP	1	7	*8*
PP	3	2	*5*
ADVP	0	3	*3*

As Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 1418) maintain, noun phrases are the most common elements chosen to occupy the highlighted position. This also seems to be the rule in the journalistic register (8 instances):

(5) [NYT_opin_The Endgame in Iraq_April 2, 2006] That may be hard for Americans to understand, since it was **the United States** invasion that toppled Saddam Hussein and helped the Shiite majority to power.

(6) [TT_spt_Abbott ready for space mission_March 17, 2006] That has been an English failing for ever and a day but it was **Abbott's ability in that regard at club level,** most notably in concert with Fraser Waters, who has been even more injury-prone than Abbott, that prompted his promotion into the World Cup squad three years ago.

Prepositional phrases are the following in occurrence (5 instances), as we can observe, in AmE journalistic texts, they seem to be the most usual focused element in *it-clefts*, consider the examples:

(7) [NYT_ntl_10 Years After Girl's Murder, DNA Link Results in Arrest_March 17, 2006_By STACEY STOWE] Over the years, Florida detectives tried to use DNA from Cherie's body to solve her murder but it was not **until last year** that a DNA profile was developed by the Biology Laboratory of the Florida Department of Law Enforcement.

(8) [TT_opin_They are going to mug you_April 3, 2006_Tim Hames] It is **at general elections** that all hell breaks loose as the major parties attempt to raise the nearly £20 million that they are legally allowed to spend in the 12 months before polling day.

Adverb phrases are not particularly common (only 3 examples). Furthermore, we do not find any example of this category as highlighted elements in AmE. The only two examples belong to *The Times*:

(9)   [TT_spt_'I have a masochistic desire to be boxed into a corner'_March 17, 2006] It was **after the World Cup victory** that Ivo Slot wrote to Wilkinson in his best newly learnt handwriting.

Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 1418) consider that content clauses cannot generally be placed in focus position in it-clefts, and so it seems in journalistic texts, as there is no example of this type in the corpus.

4.1.2. Function
The elements in focus position in the instances found in this journalistic corpus fulfil two main syntactic functions: subject and adjunct; cf. Table 4.

Table 4. Function of the focused element in *it-clefts*

	NEW YORK TIMES	THE TIMES	*TOTAL*
S	1	7	*8*
ADJ	3	5	*8*

This is the typical behaviour of focalised elements in *it-clefts* and bears a direct relation with the fact that the most common categories chosen to occupy the focus position are noun phrases and prepositional phrases:

(10) [NYT_intl_A Port's Ice Is Thinning, and So Is Its Tourist Trade_March 14, 2006_By NORIMITSU ONISHI] It is only **in the last 25 years** [ADJ – PP] that drift ice became a tourist attraction, said Masayoshi Hatanaka, president of the Mombetsu City Tourist Association. Mr. Hatanaka is now emphasizing the importance of finding another tourist attraction in Mombetsu's post-drift-ice era.

(11) [TT_spt_Rhodes completes tale of triumph over tragedy_March 17, 2006_By Craig Lord] Gary Sutton, the Australia coach, describes that answer as "playing down just how tough she is — this girl is as hard as nails. It's **her attitude** [S – NP] that's brought her this far."

4.1.3. Elements introducing the subordinate clause
As can be observed in Table 5 below, there only appear two elements in the examples extracted from the corpus: *that* and *who*.

Table 5. Elements introducing the subordinate clause in *it-clefts*

	NEW YORK TIMES	THE TIMES	*TOTAL*
THAT	4	10	*14*
WHO	0	2	*2*

Both in BrE and in AmE, *that* is preferred to *wh*-relatives, something already acknowledged by Lambrecht (2001: 464).

That appears after all types of antecedent, whatever their category may be. Witness the following examples:

(12) [TT_bus_Russia's energy giant with a split personality_March 16, 2006_From Jeremy Page in Moscow] It was here [ADVP] **that**, on New Year's Day, they cut off gas supplies to Ukraine during a pricing dispute, causing severe shortages across Europe in the depths of winter.

(13) [NYT_ntl_10 Years After Girl's Murder, DNA Link Results in Arrest_March 17, 2006_By STACEY STOWE] Over the years, Florida detectives tried to use DNA from Cherie's body to solve her murder but it was not until last year [PP] **that** a DNA profile was developed by the Biology Laboratory of the Florida Department of Law Enforcement.

(14) [TT_ntl_The Queen was dismayed that Earl 'ignored' Diana's faith_By Andrew Pierce] . . . Diana explained to me once that it was her innermost feelings of

suffering **that** made it possible for her to connect with her constituency of the rejected . . .

Who only appears twice, and only in BrE. It both cases the antecedent is human (which is one of the main characteristics of this pronoun):

(15)   [TT_opin_Why is a woman's brain smaller than a man's? Maybe because she's a fox_April 3, 2006_Science Notebook by Terence Kealey] Men and women inhabit different social spheres, and though women may enjoy deeper social interactions than men, it is probably <u>men</u> **who**, as tribal leaders, have experienced wider social interactions over evolutionary time.

4.2. Wh-clefts

Regarding *wh-cleft* syntactic properties, there are several aspects that had to be dealt with: the *form* of the focused element, its *syntactic* function and the *wh-form* that introduces the fused relative. Nevertheless, I will not deal with the last issue, as the only wh-form that appears in this corpus is *what*.

4.2.1. Form

Wh-clefts do not choose the same range of elements as *it-clefts* to be placed in the focus position – cf. Table 6.

Table 6. Form of the focused element in *wh-clefts*

		NEW YORK TIMES	THE TIMES	*TOTAL*
NP		2	6	*8*
CL	*Finite*	3	2	*7*
	Non-finite	0	2	
AdjP		1	1	*2*

In the journalistic texts analysed here, only three categories of elements are focalised. Once again, noun phrases are the most typical ones:

(16)   [NYT_spt_Bracket Boss Criticizes the Critics_March 14, 2006_By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS] What riled Littlepage most apparently was **Packer's assertion that the committee needs to look at a five-year track record of teams and conferences.**

(17)   [TT_ntl_Party brought out 'Mr Chequebook' to fund election_March 17, 2006_By David Charter, Chief Political Correspondent] What attracted Mr Blair to the man known as "Labour's chequebook" was **his success in raising funds for a small charity called Jewish Care.**

Clauses are also usual in this kind of constructions. We find five instances which have a finite clause as focalised element ((18) [NYT_opin_Preparing for Nature's Attack_April 1, 2006_By TED NORDHAUS and MICHAEL SHELLENBERGER] *What we all must agree on, though, is* **that it poses a risk** — one for which we are woefully unprepared.), and they appear both in BrE and in AmE. However, there are only two examples in BrE which have a non-finite clause as focus – something typical of *wh-clefts* and not so common in other types of *clefts*:

(19)   [TT_opin_Yes, I'll fight the little Hitlers in coffee bars. No, I won't fight smoking bans_March 28, 2006_David Aaronovitch] What I couldn't do, however, was **to construct an objection on the basis of political philosophy.**

(20)   [TT_intl_Hamas likely to go it alone after coalition talks fail_March 16, 2006_By Jenny Booth and agencies] "What we cannot do is **end up funding the government** when the government is inimical to the whole basis on which we want to settle the Middle East problem," he said.

There is only one instance of an adjective phrase acting as focus in each variety of English. As we can deduce, although possible, they are rare in *wh-clefts*:

(21)   [NYT_bus_McClatchy to Resell 12 Papers It's Buying_March 14, 2006_By KATHARINE Q. SEELYE] "The chains that took a pass on us whole," Mr. Papatola said, "may find that *what's left is* **less desirable**.*"*

4.2.2. Function

As it happens with *it-clefts*, the fact that noun phrases are the most common highlighted elements involves that the typical functions fulfilled by this category (subject and direct object) are the ones that appear in most of the examples; cf. table below:

Table 7. Function of the focused element in *wh-clefts*

	NEW YORK TIMES	THE TIMES	*TOTAL*
S	4	4	*8*
DO	0	4	*4*
PCS	1	1	*2*
PTE	0	2	*2*
CompofP	1	0	*1*

Let us consider again examples (19) and (20). In these instances, the focused element would function as the predicate in the non-*cleft* counterpart:

(19)   I couldn't **construct an objection on the basis of political philosophy.**
(20')   We cannot **end up funding the government.**

In this cases the verb that usually appears in the fused relative is *do* and the form of the focused element is that of a non-finite clause, as in these two *wh-clefts*.

4.3. Reversed wh-clefts

As regards *reversed wh-cleft*, it is necessary to make a distinction between two types of examples in the corpus:

- Those introduced by a demonstrative (16 instances).
- Those not introduced by a demonstrative (only 3 instances). They seem rare, and especially in AmE, where we only find one example.

Let us talk first about the second group of *reversed wh-clefts*:

(22)   [NYT_ntl_Nuclear Reactors Found to Be Leaking Radioactive Water_March 17, 2006_By MATTHEW L. WALD] Tami Branum, who lives close to the Braidwood reactor and owns property in the nearby village of Godley, said in a telephone interview, "It's just absolutely horrible, what we're trying to deal with here."

(23)   [TT_opin_They are going to mug you_April 3, 2006_Tim Hames] Alas, self-raising is what British political parties seem not to be, hence their need to acquire "loans" from persons many of whom, by mysterious coincidence, later come to be nominated for honours, notably peerages.

(24)   [TT_spt_Battle lines drawn for Flintoff in ultimate test_March 17, 2006] The task looks impossible; but then the impossible was what Rama did best.

If we have a look at the three examples, we observe that they are structurally similar to the *wh-clefts* analysed in the previous section; it could be even possible to reverse them:

(22')   **What we're trying to deal with here is just absolutely horrible.**
(23')   **What British political parties seem not to be is self-raising.**
(24')   **What Rama did best was the impossible.**

In examples (22) and (23), the focus is an adjective phrase functioning as predicative complement of the subject, while in example (24), what we have is a noun phrase functioning as direct object.

The examples introduced by a demonstrative (either *that* – 13 cases; or *this* – 3 cases), however, are not all reversible like the ones without it, especially those where the *wh*-word is *where* or *why*:

(25) [NYT_spt_Difficult Road for Rutgers Will Begin Close to Home_March 14, 2006_By BILL FINLEY] "This is a great bracket, and anyone who wants to see a champion, this is where you're going to see it," she said.

(25') * Where you're going to see it is this.

4.3.1. Wh-form introducing the fused relative in reversed wh-clefts
Let us have a look at the following table:

Table 8. Wh-form introducing the fused relative

	NEW YORK TIMES	THE TIMES	*TOTAL*
WHY	6	3	*9*
WHAT	3	5	*8*
WHERE	1	1	*2*

It is clear that, in journalistic texts, *reversed wh-clefts* seem to choose not only *what* to introduce the fused relative (as with *wh-clefts*), but they choose two other wh-forms: *where* and *why*. Nevertheless, *what*, along with *why*, are the most common ones:

(26) [NYT_bus_McClatchy to Resell 12 Papers It's Buying_March 14, 2006_By KATHARINE Q. SEELYE] "There are families and lives and loans and benefits and mortgages and careers on the line, and that's **why** we'd like the uncertainty resolved in a positive way," he said.

(27) [TT_spt_Abbott ready for space mission_March 17, 2006] I imagine that's **what** England have worked on this week.

5. Pragmatic characteristics of *clefts* in journalistic texts

We have already seen that the different types of *clefts* give prominence to different elements. However, they are not only dissimilar in that sense, they also differ in the way they organise information and in the kind of prominence they give to the highlighted elements.

It-clefts usually place new information at the beginning, breaking the information principle (by which, new information should be placed at the end of the sentence). However, we find examples in the corpus in which old information is placed in the focus position, especially those which have an adjunct as focalised element:

(28) [TT_bus_Russia's energy giant with a split personality_March 16, 2006_From Jeremy Page in Moscow] In the depths of Gazprom's headquarters — a blue glass and granite skyscraper in southern Moscow — there is a control room dominated by a 20ft-high electronic model of Eurasia's gas network. From here, Gazprom engineers control a vast spider's web of pipelines, pumps and valves that deliver a quarter of Europe's gas — most of it through neighbouring Ukraine. **It was <u>here</u> that, on New Year's Day, they cut off gas supplies to Ukraine during a pricing dispute**, causing severe shortages across Europe in the depths of winter.

Here stands for *Gazprom's headquarters*, so it is actually old information which can be easily obtained from the previous text. The new information is conveyed in the subordinate clause, although it is presented as shared or known information as it is placed in this part of the *it-cleft*.

Whatever the organisation of information in the examples, we do not find discourse-initial *it-clefts*, they need some sort of context, background, etc, in order to be used.

Although Biber et al. (1999: 962) claim that *it-clefts* are typically contrastive, there is only one example in the journalistic texts here analysed which shows contrast explicitly:

(29)   [TT_opin_Yes, I'll fight the little Hitlers in coffee bars. No, I won't fight smoking bans_March 28, 2006_David Aaronovitch] It is his issue that's wrong, **not his instinct**.

On the contrary, *wh-clefts* move from given to new information, so that the focused element always expresses new information. These constructions denote more clearly what the main communicative point is. In contrast with *it-clefts*, we can find examples in discourse-initial position since they do not need to have a preceding context to refer to. In fact, there are quite a few examples in the corpus in that position, especially, cases in which the words of someone are literally conveyed:

(30)   [TT_bus_Doubts over business class airlines_March 16, 2006_By Andrew Ellson] "What stands out most strongly is the absolutely incredible feedback we're getting from everybody who touches or flies Eos," he said.

As regards *reversed wh-clefts*, the ones found in the corpus which do not have an initial demonstrative have different behaviours. In example (31), the new information is represented by the highlighted element which occurs at the beginning of the construction, so it could be pragmatically associated with a typical *it-cleft*:

(31)   [NYT_ntl_Nuclear Reactors Found to Be Leaking Radioactive Water_March 17, 2006_By MATTHEW L. WALD] Tami Branum, who lives close to the Braidwood reactor and owns property in the nearby village of Godley, said in a telephone interview, "It's just absolutely horrible, what we're trying to deal with here." Ms. Branum and her children, 17-year-old twin girls and a 7-year-old boy, drink only bottled water, she said, but use municipal water for everything else. "We're bathing in it, there's no way around it," she said.

However, examples (32) and (33) are closer, pragmatically speaking, to *wh-clefts*, as the new information is conveyed in the second part of the construction (by the fused relative clause). What is more, the focused element is just a repetition of something already stated in the previous discourse:

(32)   [TT_opin_They are going to mug you_April 3, 2006_Tim Hames] AFTER ABOUT A month of the subject being almost continuously in the news — although it feels far longer —, the words "party" and "funding" must appear about as exciting to most people as **"self-raising"** and "flour". Alas, **self-raising** is what British political parties seem not to be, hence their need to acquire "loans" from persons many of whom, by mysterious coincidence, later come to be nominated for honours, notably peerages.

(33)   [TT_spt_Battle lines drawn for Flintoff in ultimate test_March 17, 2006] The task looks **impossible**; but then the **impossible** was what Rama did best.

This gives these two examples a contrastive flavour which would not be achieved using a *wh-cleft*.

Reversed wh-clefts which are introduced by a demonstrative, and which are, alongside with *wh-clefts*, the most common in the corpus (especially in AmE), bear new information in the fused relative. They function here as a sort of summing-up construction (as Biber et al. (1999: 963) comment), as the demonstrative has not a single referent, but refers to what has been said in the previous discourse:

(34) [TT_spt_Abbott ready for space mission_March 17, 2006] His great strength is his ability to communicate and **that's** what seemed totally absent from last weekend's game with France.

In this example, *that* refers to the whole previous sentence, and what appears in the *wh*-clause is new information which has not been mentioned before in the text.

These *clefts* appear especially when the journalist is transcribing some other person's words, so, in some way, they are a means of reflecting spoken language:

(35) [NYT_spt_South Korea Continues to Find Motivation_March 14, 2006_By MURRAY CHASS] "He respects other people. That's why he may answer that way."

6. Conclusions

One of the main conclusions we reach to after analysing the data is that *clefting* does not seem to be a very productive process in the journalistic register (in fact, there are only 52 examples in a corpus containing one hundred thousand words). Besides, *it-clefting* and *wh-clefting* are not common at all in AmE journalistic texts.

The data do not differ too much from those obtained by Biber et al. (1999), and so it is possible to say that what has been found here is quite representative of what actually happens with *cleft* constructions in present-day English journalistic register.

As regards the syntax of these constructions, it can be observed that noun phrases functioning as subject are the preferred both in *it-clefts* and in *wh-clefts*, mainly because they are the least prone to be given prominence in *non-clefted* sentences. Nevertheless, *wh-clefts* place clauses (finite and non-finite) in the focus position in a high number of instances, probably because of the end-weight principle, which says that the larger sentence elements are usually placed at the end of the sentence.

Reversed wh-clefts have a similar distribution in both variants of English, especially those introduced by a demonstrative, which outnumber typical *reversed wh-clefts*. Besides, *reversed wh-clefts* introduced by a demonstrative may choose different wh-forms (*what, why* and *where*), something which does not happen in *wh-clefts*.

There are also differences in the way these three constructions organise information. *It-clefts* break the information principle and normally place the new information in the focus position. Although we find cases, especially those focusing an adjunct, which place old information after the verb *to be*.

Wh-clefts, in contrast, move from old information to new information. Besides, they are placed as discourse openers in many cases, stating which will be the communicative point of the following discourse, something that cannot be done with *it-clefts* as they need a preceding context to be meaningful.

Finally, *reversed wh-clefts* which are introduced by a demonstrative function here as a sort of summing-up construction (and obviously, they never appear at the beginning of discourse) as the demonstrative has not got a single referent, but refers to what has been said in the previous discourse; furthermore, the new information appears in the fused relative.

Our results should be regarded as totally preliminary, as it will be necessary to analyse and discuss the data more carefully and to expand our original sample of data to come to a final conclusion.

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