

University of Babylon

**IRAQI EFL COLLEGE STUDENTS'  
RECOGNITION AND PRODUCTION  
OF CLEFT CONSTRUCTIONS**

**A Thesis**

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*To My Parents..*

*For their Immortal Love*

*Kind Heart*

*and Endless Gift*

## Abstract

This study is mainly concerned with cleft constructions as one of the English highlighting devices. Cleft construction is a complex sentence structure consisting of a matrix clause and a relative clause. This construction consists of two major types: It-clefts and pseudo cleft.

The study aims to discover the ability of Iraqi EFL students in using cleft constructions and find out the extent to which they can highlight the various elements of the sentence by using such constructions. Moreover, it aims to identify the students' errors in recognizing and producing cleft-constructions. It is hypothesized that:

1. Iraqi EFL college students' results on the recognition level are better than those on the production level.
2. Iraqi EFL college students face difficulty in forming cleft sentences whose highlighted elements are **adverbial** and **complement** more than **subject** and **object**.
3. Iraqi EFL learners face difficulty in recognizing and producing pseudo cleft construction more than It-clefts.

To validate the hypotheses of the study, a diagnostic test has been designed and applied to a sample of 50 Iraqi EFL college students at their fourth year Department of English, College of Education, University of Babylon during the academic year 2004-2005.

The statistical and linguistic analysis of the subjects' responses to the items of the test has yielded the following conclusions:

1. The subjects' performance in the whole test has revealed that EFL college students encounter more difficulties in recognizing

and producing cleft constructions, but they face difficulties on the production level more than on the recognition one as the rate of their correct responses (360, 24%) is lower than that on the recognition one (448, 48.8%).

2. On the production level, the findings of data analysis show the subjects' incompetence to form cleft sentences, whose highlighted elements are **adverbial** and **complement**. The rate of their correct responses is (85, 41%) and (71, 47%) respectively is lower than that of **subject** (116, 78%) and **object** (90, 63%).
3. The subjects' performance has revealed that Iraqi EFL college students face difficulties in recognizing and producing pseudo cleft sentences more than It-clefts (35% vs. 65%).

The subjects' errors have been found to be attributed to the following factors:

- I. Intralingual transfer where the rate of the errors that can be attributed to this factor is (56.3%) of the total number of the subjects' errors.
- II. Communication strategies where the rate of the errors is (24%).
- III. Interlingual interference where the rate of the errors is (19.7%).

This study consists of five chapters, the first of which is dedicated to the problem, aims, hypotheses, procedures, limit and the value of the study. Chapter Two introduces the concept of cleft constructions, their structures, and types. Chapter Three describes

the test: its objectives, design, material selection, validity, reliability, subjects, as well as the scoring scheme adopted. Chapter Four is devoted to the results of the test from both statistical and linguistic perspectives. The subjects' errors have been analyzed and the probable causes of their errors have also been identified. Finally Chapter Five sums up the conclusions of the study, sheds light on some pedagogical implications, and suggests some topics for further studies.

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## Abbreviations

Symbol	Description
A	Adverbial
Adj	Adjective
Adj P (s)	Adjective phrase (s)
Adv	Adverb
Adv P (s)	Adverb phrase (s)
Aux	Auxiliary
Arg	Argument
C	Complement
Clm	Matrix clause
Co	Object complement
Cs	Subject complement
Def	Definite unit
N	Noun
NP (s)	Noun phrase (s)
Nuc	Nucleus
O	Object
Od	Direct object
Oi	Indirect object
PP	Preposition phrase
Pred	Predicational element
QP	Quantifier phrase
Ref	Referential
S	Subject
SVC	Subject + verb + complement
SVO	Subject + verb + object
SVOA	Subject + verb + object +adverb
V	Verb
VP	Verb phrase

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# Chapter One

## Introduction

### 1.1 The Problem

A cleft construction is a complex sentence structure consisting of a matrix clause headed by a copula and a relative or relative-like clause whose relativized argument is coindexed with the predicative argument of the copula. Taken together, the matrix and the relative express a logically simple proposition, which can also be expressed in the form of a single clause without a change in truth conditions (Lambrecht, 2003: 467).

There are different types of cleft constructions in English. To follow Jespersen's terminology (1969:89), sentences beginning with *it* refer to *cleft sentences* or simply *clefts*. Logically equivalent sentences in which the relative clause appears in initial position in headless form, are called *pseudo clefts*; finally sentences in which the headless relative appears in postcopular position are called *reverse pseudo clefts*.

- |                                       |                    |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------|
| 1. We need new references.            | Canonical sentence |
| 2. It is new references what we need. | It-clefts          |
| 3. What we need is new references.    | Wh-cleft           |
| 4. New references is what we need.    | Reverse Wh-cleft   |

(Lambrecht, 2003: 467)

Different elements of the sentence such as subject, object adverbial and complement can be highlighted.

- |   |              |
|---|--------------|
| 5. It is a poor heart that never rejoices.    | (subject)    |
| 6. What he bought is a chocolate.             | (object)     |
| 7. It was in the dark when he left.           | (adverbial)  |
| 8. It is dark green that he painted the room. | (complement) |

(Gundel, 1977: 543)

Most Iraqi EFL college students may lack knowledge about cleft constructions .Despite the fact that such construction is one of the English highlighting devices used for giving prominence to specific elements, many students may face difficulties in highlighting some elements more than others.

To the best of our knowledge this topic has not been tackled yet. Therefore it might be an attempt to fill part of the gap in this respect.

## **1.2 Aims of the study**

In connection with the previous statements, the study aims basically at:

1. Describing the devices used to express cleft-constructions.
2. Identifying the students' errors and their sources in recognizing and producing cleft-constructions.

## **1.3 Hypotheses**

In view of the preceding aims, it is hypothesized that:

1. Iraqi EFL college students' results on the recognition level are better than those on the production level.

2. Iraqi EFL college students face more difficulty in forming cleft sentences whose highlighted elements are **Adverbial** (henceforth **A**) and **Complement (C)** than **Subject(S)** and **Object (O)**.
3. Iraqi EFL college students face difficulty in recognizing and producing pseudo cleft construction more than It-clefts.

#### **1.4 Procedures**

To achieve the objectives of this study the following procedures are to be followed:

1. Presenting the notion of clefting and illustrating the various types of cleft-constructions in English.
2. Designing a test to fourth year students Department of English, College of Education, University of Babylon. Then analyzing its results on the bases of which conclusions and pedagogical recommendations will be given.

#### **1.5 Limit**

The sample of the study is restricted to fourth year students, in the Department of English, College of Education, University of Babylon during the academic year (2004-2005) because they are the most advanced learners at the university level.

#### **1.6 Value**

The findings of the present study are hoped to be useful in two aspects:

1. The theoretical aspect as the study will provide information about cleft constructions which can be advantageous for the researchers and the teacher for any further investigation on this topic.

2. The practical aspect as it will have a pedagogical value to teachers in that it can provide insight into the problematic areas concerning cleft constructions which can be of use to them in their efforts to help learners perform more effectively. The study can also be of some help to syllabus designers in which it can serve as a basis for the preparation of remedial teaching programmes.

# **Chapter Two**

## **Cleft Constructions**

### **2.1 Introduction**

The cleft construction is one of the grammatical devices used to highlight certain elements of the sentence or to emphasize a particular idea. The language user should be aware of the elements that can be highlighted and how he can highlight the proper element that serves to give the new information or the particular idea (Quirk et al., 1985:89).

This chapter presents some of the definitions of cleft construction, its types, structure, the highlighted elements, the relative elements, and ends with a comparison between its major types.

### **2.2 The Concept of Cleft Construction**

The notion of cleft construction has been defined in rigorous ways. Quirk et al. (1985:89) define the cleft sentence as one of the grammatical means similar to and associated with, information focus, it enables the user to select (within limits) which element of the sentence will be highlighted.

The cleft sentence consists of two (main) parts: an initial focal element, followed by a background structure which is similar to a relative clause.

For Chalker (1984:260) and Crystal (1990:201), the cleft sentence is used to emphasize a certain element of a sentence which

often starts with an introductory *IT* followed by *BE* with the result of a complex sentence (with two finite verbs).

Similarly, Lambrecht (2002:1) looks at the cleft construction as a complex sentence construction consisting of matrix clause and a relative clause.

As for Swan (1996:114) and Eastwood and Mackin (1989:193), they state that we can emphasize particular words and expressions putting every thing into a kind of relative clause except the words we want to emphasize.

We will depend on Quirk et al.'s definition (1985:89) because it is the most comprehensive one.

Here are some examples which illustrate what has been mentioned.

9. John brought his new car last night (SVO A).

We can emphasize the subject, object and the adverbial respectively by using the cleft construction.

10. It was John who brought his new car last night.

11. It was his new car that John brought last night.

12. It was last night that John brought his new car.

(Close, 1975:67)

13. It is near Chicago that John lives.

14. It is that the world is flat that I believe.

(Culicover, 1977:207)

Prince (1978:883-4) draws a distinction between cleft sentences (16 and 17) and non-cleft sentences (15) as in

15. John lost his keys.

16. What John lost was his keys.

17. It was his keys that John lost.

They are all cognitively synonymous each being true if and only if the other two are true; they therefore have the same objective information content.

### 2.3 The Structure of It- cleft

Jespersen (1969:73-4) states that cleft sentences start with “*it*” in sentences such as:

18. It is the wife that decides.

19. It was the colonel that I was looking for.

This means that the only person who decides is **the wife** and **the colonel** is *the man I was looking for*. The relative clause should belong to “*it*” rather than to the predicative following ‘**it is**’ or ‘**it was**’. The construction “**It is**” or “**it was**” serves as a *demonstrative gesture* to put at one particular part of the sentence to which the attention of the hearer is to be drawn especially.

The construction of It-clefts consists of two parts: a *superordinate clause* and a *subordinate* clause or more precisely, a relative clause,

this effect recognized that It-clefts construction serves to focus the element (s) in postcopular position. So the structure of It-clefts is.

*It + to be + highlighted element +relative element +clause.*

(Kaltenbock, 1993:7)

This structure is different from the simple sentence or the non-cleft sentence. The difference lies, as Prince (1978:884) maintains, in what is called **FOCUS** and **PRESUPPOSITION**. Prince in this follows Chomsky (1970: 122) and others. We may say that (16 and 17) logically presuppose the position conveyed by (20).

20. John lost something

The criterion for presupposition used here is the one frequently used in transformational grammar: “a sentence presupposes a sentence henceforth (*S*) just in case *S* logically implies *S* and the negation of  $\sim S$ , also logically implies *S*”

(Kennan, 1971: 45)

To see the examples (16-17) presuppose (20), but that (15) does not we have only to consider the negations of 21-23.

21. John didn't lose his keys.

22. What John lost wasn't his key.

23. It wasn't his keys that John lost.

(Prince, 1978:884)

Sentence (21), but not (22, 23) may occur naturally and truthfully in a context like this.

24. ... In fact, he's never lost anything in his life.

The fact that each of the clefted forms **John has lost something** as its presupposition and **his keys** as its focus has led many linguists of otherwise differing views to agree that Wh-cleft and It-clefts assume that they are synonymous, share the same presuppositions, answer the same questions and in general they can be used interchangeably.

Bolinger (1972:31) states that the distinction between them is “**false**”; and Chafe (1972:37) writes that they “evidently serve the same function”.

### 2.3.1 Types of It- Clefts

In her discussion of cleft sentence Prince (1978:896) concludes that It-clefts should be divided into two subclasses:

The stressed - focus It-cleft and the information - Presupposition It-cleft.

Prince (1978:896) and Declerck (1984a:243) distinguish two different types of information-presupposition cleft: cleft and non-cleft. With the same line, Kaltenbock (1993: 7-8) makes them three:

Contrastive cleft, Unstressed-Anaphoric-Focus cleft (UAF Cleft) and Discontinuous cleft.

#### 1. Contrastive Cleft

According to Prince (1978:888-9) this type has a focus or (highlighted element) which is **new** and **heavily** stressed. The WH/that-clause, on the other hand is only **weakly** stressed and contains

information that is **given** in the sense that “the Wh/that-clause pursues the thematic line of the stretch of discourse in which it is couched” (Declerck, 1984b:264). In other words, the clause represents a “continuous topic”.

The highlighted Noun phrase (NP), because it is heavily stressed, is not only strongly contrastive but also likely to be an “important topic”.

25. It isn't higher prices but changed expectations that have caused people to buy more at the present time.

(Murcia, 2004:7)

## 2. Unstressed – Anaphoric – Focus Cleft

Prince (1978:896) calls this type informative presupposition, which is unlike the previous type. The Unstressed-Anaphoric-Focus (UAF) cleft has Wh/that-clause conveying information which is **new**. The focus NP or (highlighted NP) on the other hand, is **anaphoric** and therefore a *continuous topic*. Since the highlighted element is anaphoric and continuous, this type of cleft cannot occur at the beginning of a stretch of discourse. It needs a preceding context containing the antecedent of the anaphora.

As the name suggests, the highlighted NP is unstressed, which is perfectly in line with the fact that it is anaphoric and not strongly contrastive. The Wh/ that-clause is normally (vs. **weakly**) stressed.

26. It was in 1979 that Piet Kornhof rather boldly announced, Apartheid is dead.

(Murcia, 2004 :7)

### 3. Discontinuous Cleft

Kaltenbock (1993:8) points out that in discontinuous cleft both the highlighted element and the relative clause are new. Consequently, both constituents receive at least normal stress.

Thus, the main difference between the three types is that contrastive It-cleft consists of *an old relative clause* and a (possibly continuous) highlighted element representing new information, whereas UAF It-cleft has *a new relative clause* and a **weakly stressed continuous highlighted element**; discontinuous It-cleft involves a relative clause and a highlighted element that are both **new** and **discontinuous** (ibid).

#### 2.4 The Highlighted Element

There are several restrictions on the types of constituents that can occur as highlighted elements in It-clefts. Below is a discussion of the most common constituents that can be highlighted.

##### 2.4.1 Noun Phrase Clefts

*NP* Clefts are relatively unconstrained as to the internal structure and semantic function of the focus. They may be **a proper noun, a determiner, a relativized NP, or a nominalized sentence**.

It may function as **direct object** of the clausal verb, or the **object** of a preposition. Focal *NPs* may be **predicative** or **non-predicative**.

27. It was him that I saw leave the scene of the crime.

28. It was John's proof of the theorem that we wished to reexamine.

29. It was stupidity and greed that caused the Boston T shut down.

30. It is the destruction of the city that must be avoided.

31. It was Bill that we sent the get-well-card to.

(Delahunty, 1984:74-5)

### 2.4.2 Prepositional Phrase Clefts

Delahunty (1984:74-5) and Emonds (1985:261) remark that PP may range over the entire set of roles and functions assignable to the category. They may be subcategories or adverbial. They may be **dative** or **generative indirect objects**; they may be **agentive**, **instrumental**, **associational** or **location adverbials**.

$$P^1 \longrightarrow P \text{ (NP) } \left\{ \begin{array}{l} PP \\ ADV \end{array} \right\}$$

32. It was to Mary that Bill offered chastity belt.

33. It was in the hallway that we waited.

34. It was with Fred that we went to the movies.

(Emonds, 1985:261-2)

### 2.4.3 Particle Clefts

Emonds (1976:174-5) and Goddard (1978:206) state that certain types of particle can be clefted. In general those types can be also semantically separable from the verb with which they co-occur. Moreover, the cleftable particles can occur with other phrases. This

is not true of particles which form single semantic units with their verbs. The non-cleftability of the latter particles is treated in the lexicon and by the lexical insertion rules as verbs. Alternatively the non-cleftability of these particles may be due to the implication of contrast between the focus and other discourse entailed elements. This contrast depends upon the possibility of paradigmatic relation between the item in question and other items; in addition to that the lack of such a paradigm implies the impossibility of the necessary contrast.

35. It wasn't on that he pulled his boots, it was off.

36. It can't have been on that he flicked the switch, because the machinery was already in operation.

37. It wasn't on that he tried to turn the lights, it was off.

38. It isn't on that such movies turn me; it is off completely and thoroughly off.

39.\* It was up that I called him on the phone.

40.\* It was up that I made the exam.

41.\* It was over that we took the country.

(Emonds, 1976:174-5)

Sentences (35-38) indicate the possibility of a contrast between the focused particle and another element, typically another particle. Such contrasts are not available to the particle of the sentences (39-43) because one cannot call someone down on the phone, nor look down a word in a dictionary, at least not in the intended sense.

42.\* I called him down under on the phone.

43.\* I made down the exam.

(Delahunty, 1984:767)

#### 2.4.4 Adjectival Phrase

Emonds (1976:176) argues that Adj P may occur as a focus element.

44. It was green that he painted his boat.

45. It was red that we sprayed the sport car.

46. It was happy that he looked when I saw him last.

47. It is raw that Fred usually eats his meat.

(ibid)

Culicover (1977:123) suggests that sentences such as (44-47) can be analyzed as NP cleft. The adjective **green** could be considered a reduced form from the NP the *colour green*.

#### 2.4.5 Quantifier Phrase Clefts

*QPs* may also be clefted.

48. How far is it that we have to go?

49. It was not only too little that they received, but it was also too late.

50. It's little we care about our mothers till they're gone.

(Delahunty, 1984:79)

### 2.4.6 Adverbial Clefts

Adverbials can be clefted.

51. It was only reluctantly that he agreed to swim the channel.

52. It is only imperfectly that such things can be completed.

(ibid)

Quirk et al. (1985:548) show that *Rarely* and *Seldom* can sometimes be the focus of a cleft sentence even unmodified denoting negative frequency but(not often).

53. It's  $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{rarely} \\ \text{seldom} \end{array} \right\}$  that he loses any money.  
that people do not offer to help.

(ibid)

### 2.4.7 Sentential Subject Clefts

Sentential subjects may be clefted. The cleftability of sentential subjects contrasts dramatically with the noncleftability of their extraposed counterparts.

54. It is that Bill will ever be this late again that is unlikely.

55. \*It is that Bill will ever be this late again that it is unlikely.

The cleftability of sentential subjects of extrapositive verbs and adjectives counterparts also with the impossibility of clefting the complements of non-extrapositive such as *seem* and *appear*.

56. \* It was that Fred would get along with Mary that seemed.

57. \* It was that Fred would get along with Mary that it seemed.

(Delahunty, 1989:81)

### 2.4.8 Factive Complements

Factive complements can be clefted.

58. It was that he was supposed to get there early that Fred forgot.

### 2.4.9 The Complements of *Believe* and *Promise*.

The sentential complements of the verb *believe* can be clefted.

59. It is that Pigs have wings that we are asked to believe.

Also the sentential complement of the verb *promise* can be clefted as in (60).

60. It was that we'd take care of the cats that we promised Fred.

That *promise* is a dative verb is shown by the following paradigm which is perfectly analogous to that in (61-63).

61. It was Fred that we promised the book.

62. It was to Fred that we promised the book.

63. It was Fred that we promised the book to.

(Delahunty, 1984:83)

### 2.4.10 Purpose Infinitives

In contrast to other types of infinitival complement, Purpose infinitives readily cleft.

64. It was to buy shaving cream that Bill set out for the store.

65.\* It was to do her worst that he believed her.

(ibid, 85)

### 2.4.11 Sentential Complements of *Persuade* and *Eager*

The cleftability of the complements of *persuade* and *eager* can be explained by showing that they are like **purpose infinitive**, dominated by **PP** in their underlying forms.

66. It was that pigs fly that we persuaded Fred.

67. It is for Fred to return that the ladies are most eager.

(ibid, 86)

*Eager* also takes a **PP** complement.

68. It was for Fred's return that the ladies were most eager.

69.\* It was Fred's return that the ladies were most eager.

70. It was Fred's return that the ladies were most eager for.

(ibid)

## 2.5 Syntactic Function

Quirk et al. (1985:1385) emphasize the flexible character of cleft sentences which can be seen in the case with which different parts can be highlighted. They point out that the highlighted element can have the function of **subject**, **direct object**, **adverbial of time** and **position** and marginally, the function of **indirect object** and **object complement**. These functions are all applied to this following basic sentence.

71. John wore a white suit at the dance last night.

*S* as focus

72. It was JOHN  $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} who \\ that \end{array} \right\}$  wore a white suit at the dance last night.

O as focus.

73. It was a **white suit** (that) John wore at the dance last night.

A time as focus.

74. It was **last night** (that) John wore a white suit at the dance.

A position as focus

75. It was **at the dance** that John wore a white suit last night.

76. It was the dance that John wore a white suit at last night. <informal>

(ibid)

But more usually  $O_i$  would be replaced by a PP:

77. It's **me** he gave the book to.

78. It's to **me** that he gave the book.

Co as focus

79. It's **dark green** that we have painted the kitchen.

(ibid)

Also the highlighted element can function as **subject complement** as in

80. It was **a doctor** that he eventually became.

(ibid: 1386)

If we take into consideration the position of the subject in It-clefts construction and compare it with its non-cleft counterpart,

81. It is Annie who did it.

82. Annie did it.

We can realize that both sentences adhere to the basic SVO pattern.

The subject in (81) is put in non initial, i.e. marked position (Kaltenbock, 1993:11).

This may be due to the fact that only old (recoverable) elements normally occur towards the left of an information unit (old-before-new principle). Thus, if the subject is new, a speaker might be tempted to shift it to the right by cleaving in order to conform to the pattern of new information coming late in the sentence. This is due to the fact that contrastive It-cleft (or stressed-focus It-cleft) contains a new highlighted element. Moreover, a sentence like (82) would have nucleus on the initial element which is, however, highly unusual. English clearly prefers to put the nucleus as far right as possible. In the case of an unclefted sentence where the subject is old (recoverable), on the other hand, the temptation to use clefting as a means of moving the subject to the right be less strong.

## **2.6 The Relative Pronoun**

According to Quirk et al. (1985:1386-7) and Thomson and Martinet (1988:83), the second clause in the cleft sentence is similar to a restricted relative clause with both types being introduced by the

same pronouns (*who*, *that*, *zero pronoun*). The pronoun can be **fronted** from a position in a **prepositional phrase**, or from a pushdown position in a noun clause as **object**:

83. It is the girl that I was complaining about. (i.e. not the boy )  
(Quirk et al., 1985: 1386)

It is pointed out, however, that there are differences from relative clauses in that the *wh*-forms are rare in cleft sentences in comparison with *that* and *zero* although *whose* is allowed in cleft sentences.

84. It's Uncle Bill whose address I lost.  
(ibid:1387)

*Whom* and *which* are only marginally possible, and it is virtually impossible to use *whom* or *which* preceded by a preposition. Thus:

85. It was the dog to which I gave the water.  
(ibid)

can be read only as a sentence containing a postmodifying relative clause as if we compare this sentence with the sentence (86) and not as a cleft sentence.

86. She was the woman to whom I gave the water.  
(ibid)

Therefore, in order to prevent confusion with a postmodifying relative, a speaker might be tempted to choose *that* rather than a *wh*-

*pronoun* since the latter seems to be more closely associated with postmodifying relative than *that*.

The main reason for the high frequency of *that*, no doubt, is its semantic flexibility. Whereas **who** for example, requires a human antecedent, the antecedent of **that** can be both human and non human.

88. It's us that lifted it from them.(human)

(Kaltenbock, 1993:12)

Swan (1980:138) suggests a structure used to emphasize the subject or the object.

89. My left leg hurts. What hurts is my left leg.

90. I like her style. What I like is her style.

In addition he suggests the following constructions which begin with *thing* and *first*

91. The first thing was to make some coffee.

92. My first journey abroad is something I shall never forget.

93. All you need is love.

(ibid)

Also he states that we can use at the beginning of a cleft sentence *here* and *there* instead of *this* and *that* to give more emphasis.

94. You pay here.

95. This is where you pay ( or Here is where you pay )

Swan (1996:116) also asserts that there is difference in the use of the relative element when used in the formal and informal cases, especially when the emphasized subject is a pronoun.

96. It is I who am responsible. (formal)

97. It is me that's responsible. (informal)

To avoid being either too formal or too informal, Swan (ibid) suggests:

98. I'm the person who's responsible.

Also we can give extra emphasis to the whole sentence by using cleft structure with *what* and the verb *happen*.

99. a. The car broke down.

b. what happened was ( that ) the car broke down.

(ibid)

## **2.7 An Analysis of It-Clefts Within a Role and Reference Grammar Framework**

Most analyses of cleft sentences have assumed that the subject '**it**' of these constructions is semantically empty. It is argued here, however, that cleft sentences are reduced forms of right-dislocated pseudo-cleft, where it is a pronominal reference to the topic which appears at the end of the sentence. The fact that this NP is always pronominalized with it is shown to follow from a more

general principle which governs pronominalized in identifying sentences.

(Culicover, 1977: 210)

It-clefts construction is generally accepted to be a marked syntactic bi-clausal option which expresses a simple semantic proposition; in terms of information structure, the construction places an element in focus position within a copular matrix clause. This element receives an exhaustive interpretation; that is, in the case of (100) it is *Bill*, and only *Bill*, that was seen.

100. It was Bill that I saw.

According to Pavey (2003:1), cleft lacks a straightforward mapping between its syntactic, semantic and pragmatic structures.

The studies of It-clefts in the literature, particularly formal rather than functional studies, tend to fall into two broad approaches. These focus on one of the two main relationships in the cleft construction as primary: the copular nature of cleft, focusing on the matrix clause, or the relation between cleft and its uncleft counterparts, focusing on the proposition in the cleft clause.

*EXTRAPOSITIONAL* accounts focus on the copular nature of cleft construction, and treat the postponed cleft clause as being related to, or modifying, the cleft pronoun. Together these form a semantic unit and the clefted constituent is identified, or equated with this unit, through the use of the copula. This can be roughly diagrammed as in (101).

101. It was John that I saw → [It +that I saw] was John.

(ibid: 9)

This emphasis on the copular nature of It-clefts was used by some generative grammarians who treated them as extraposed variants of pseudo cleft.

Akmajian (1970:150), Emonds (1976:120), Gundel (1977:543) and Wirth (2000:7) all adopt the assumption that It-clefts derive from right-dislocated pseudo cleft, moving from (a) to (b) to (c) as in example (102) below.

102. (a) What you heard was an explosion (pseudo cleft).

(b) It was an explosion, what you heard (right-dislocated pseudo cleft).

(c) It was an explosion that you heard. (It-cleft)

(Wirth, 2000:7)

There are clearly familiar similarities between types of pseudo clefts and It-clefts, since both are copular constructions. However, an analysis to derive It-clefts from pseudo cleft seems to use an equally, if not more complex construction as the basis from which to derive one for It-clefts.

For these extrapositional accounts of It-clefts, there is also the issue of the difference in **form** and **meaning** between the first NP in a pseudo cleft (what you heard in 102 (a)) which is referential NP with a head noun, and the cleft clause (that you heard) in a cleft, which has no head noun, is semantically incomplete, and is therefore

no referential in the same sense. **It-clefts** cannot be said to equate or identify two noun phrases in exactly the same way as **pseudo cleft** or other copular sentence with two definite noun phrases. (Gundel, 1977:543-4) and (Pavey, 2003:3).

Another potential problem with extrapositional analyses is that they sideline, or ignore any relationship between the clefted constituent and the cleft clause. This causes a problem firstly in how to account for sentences where only part of the clefted constituent is focused (e.g. a *scarf* in 103) and the rest seems to function with the cleft clause as being part of the *given* description, part of the *presupposition*, as in:

103. It was a hat and a SCARF that she wore.

(Pavey, 2003: 3)

The second consequence is difficulty in accounting for verb agreement in number between the predicate in the cleft clause and the cleft constituent.

The other type of approach to It-clefts is called *EXPLETIVE*. Under these analyses, some grammarians like Huddleston (1984:53), and Lambrecht (2001:463) regard that the cleft pronoun (and generally also the copula) are relegated to being expletive, dummy, semantically inert elements, while the cleft clause bears a semantic relation to the clefted constituent. This is diagrammed roughly below in (104).

104. It was [John + that I saw]

So, rather than focusing on cleft as copular constructions this type of analysis connects cleft sentences more closely with their non-clefted counterpart sentence *I saw John* in the case of (104).

Kiss (1998:253), states that *identificational* focus, which expresses exhaustive identification, “occupies the specified of a functional projection While focus phrase serving to “mark the sentence part following it...as the scope of **exhaustive identification**”.

Lambrecht (2001: 463-5) also offers a generally *expletive* analysis but from a functional perspective proposing a pragmatic, focus-assigning function for the cleft pronoun and copula in its relation to the clefted constituent. Lambrecht treats the clefted constituent as what he terms the ‘*pragmatic predicate*’ a role which is connected to the focus or asserted part of the sentence. Thus, for example in the intonationally marked narrow focus structure in (105), the pragmatic predicate is ‘(is) the speaker’s car’.

105. Sentence     My CAR broke down.

Presupposition: “Speaker’s x broke down”

Assertion:       “x = car”

Focus:            “car”

Focus domain:   NP

Pragmatic predicate: (is) the speaker’s car.

He adds that this pragmatic predicate serves to **identify** rather than (**semantically**) predicate.

What many of the expletive accounts face is the fact that although the cleft clause may formally resemble a relative clause, there are differences between the head-modifier relationship in a restrictive relative clause and what is often referred to as the *VALUE-VARIABLE* relationship between the constituent and cleft clause.

Davidse (2000:109) takes a construction approach to cleft and interprets them as a combination of two coded relationships which are part of the constructions themselves.

Firstly she argues that the relationship between the cleft clause and its antecedent, the clefted constituent, constitutes a ‘**value-variable**’ relation rather than head modifier or restrictive. This different interpretation of the function of the relative clause, Davidse argues, stems from the different antecedents in noun phrases and cleft.

Davidse (ibid:109-112) states that in NPs containing restrictive relative clauses, the antecedent of the relative clause is the head minus the determiner where in It-clefts the antecedent is the head plus determiner, other “grounded instance designated by the full NP”

In other words, the antecedent in It-clefts is a fully referential noun phrase. Thus, in (106) the antecedent of the relative clause is the nominal head *man* whereas in (107) it is the NP *the man*.

106. I don't like the [man]<sub>N</sub> who spoke first.

107. It was [the man]<sub>NP</sub> who spoke first.

(ibid: 110)

Davidse also proposes that there is a second ‘identifying’ semantic relation within the copular matrix clause.

The cleft pronoun “quantifies exhaustively” and is equated via the copula with the clefted constituent. She contrasts It-clefts such as (107) with there-cleft, illustrated by (108), which she calls “enumerative existential” since they provide a potentially incomplete list of instances. In other words, they are not exhaustive.

108. There’s Jim who makes the coffee.

(ibid: 120)

Therefore, in It-clefts the clefted constituent is exhaustively quantified and then serves as antecedent for the following relative clause.

Davidse repeats several times that the ordering or scope of the two semantic relationships she posits is significant but she does not explain this ordering.

In summary a comprehensive account of It-clefts construction needs to take into account both the way that cleft exploits the copular verb and the relationship cleft and their unclefted counterpart sentences, otherwise many aspects of the construction are necessarily interpreted as unique.

### **2.7.1 Role and Reference Grammar Framework**

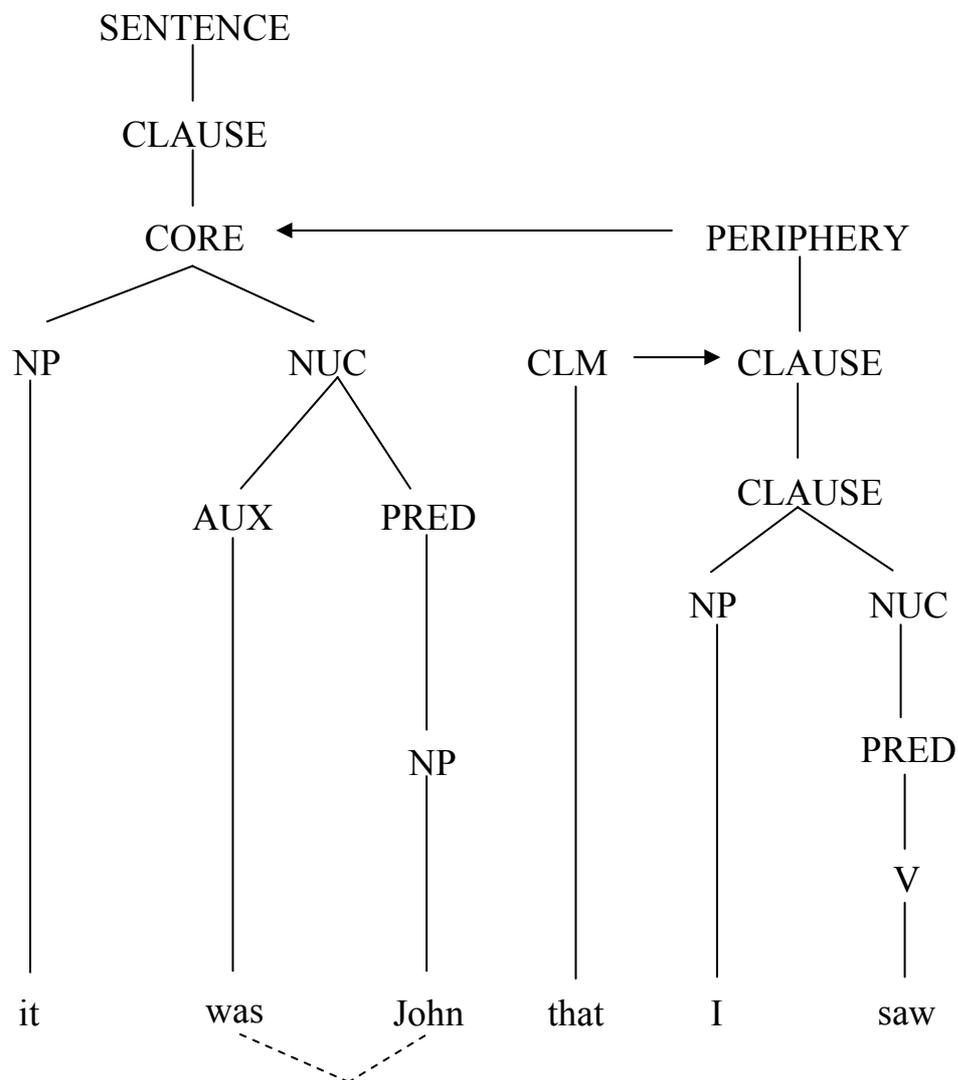
As mentioned earlier in (2.7), there is no straightforward mirroring between the syntactic and semantic structure of It-clefts. There are (at least) two interrelated syntactic and semantic

relationships to be accounted for: the first is between the clefted constituent and the cleft clause and the second is within the copular matrix clause. (Pavey 2003:6).

### **2.7.1.1 Clefted Constituent and Cleft Clause–Similarities to Restrictive Relative Clauses**

In studying the structures proposed below in Figure (1) the first relationship to be accounted for is between the clefted constituent and the cleft clause. There are syntactic, semantic and pragmatic similarities between restrictive relative clauses and It-clefts construction which bear upon the analysis.

## SYNTACTIC STRUCTURE



## SEMANTIC STRUCTURE

**It was John that I saw.**

Figure (1): Proposed Structure for it-Clefts.

∩ = FOCUS DOMAIN

(Pavey 2003:6)

In terms of its syntactic structure, the cleft construction given in Figure (1) leans toward an *EXPLETIVE* approach in the way it indicates a relationship between the cleft clause and the clefted constituent; the cleft clause is similar to a restrictive relative clause, in its internal form and in its peripheral relation to the rest of the sentence.

Where that-clause is within the potential focus domain and is a direct daughter of the main clause node. In It-clefts, that-clause is outside of the potential focus domain and this is reflected by the fact that it is not a direct daughter of the main clause node, (Pavey 2003:7).

In terms of semantics, the logical structure proposed here also bears a resemblance to the structure for restrictive relative clauses. The difference is that in *NPs* containing restrictive relative clauses, the relative clause logical structure is within a noun phrase, whereas for cleft, the BE predicate structure forms the main predication of the sentence.

A restrictive relative clause NP logical structure is given in (109) for comparison. In *NPs* containing restrictive relative clauses as in It-clefts, the logical structure for the relative clause forms the second argument of the *BE* predicate.

109. The cars which were destroyed (noun phrase)  
 be' cars<sub>i</sub>, [do' (∅, ∅)] CAUSE [BECOME destroyed' (which<sub>i</sub>)]  
 (ibid)

Thus, as well as some syntactic similarities (patterns of verb agreement for example), there is also a sense in which the semantic function of It-clefts is similar to relative clauses; this is in terms of the exhaustiveness or exclusiveness which holds on the head noun and clefted constituent.

In relative clauses, the referent of the head noun is restricted to only being one to the exclusion of the others-that fits with the

modifying description given by the predicate phrase in the relative clause. This is similar to the situation in cleft where the identity of the referent of the clefted constituent is restricted to one which can (exclusively) fill the missing argument in the predicate phrase set up by the cleft clause (ibid:7-8).

### 2.7.1.2 Cleft as Specificational, Copular Constructions

Some of the differences between restrictive relative clauses and It-clefts are a result of the bi-clausal nature of clefts which involve an additional syntactic copular structure to other copular structure.

As previously mentioned in 2.7.1.1, Davidse (2000:109-112) and Davis (1999:24-6) suggest that the antecedent in It-clefts is the clefted constituent as universally (exhaustively) quantified by the cleft pronoun 'it' whereas the antecedent in restrictive relative clauses is only the head noun. In other words, the relationship between cleft clause and clefted constituent is not as modifier of a nominal head but as a clause containing a variable for which the referential clefted constituent provides the value. This difference is related to the scope of the noun phrase the NP level locality or grounding operator of definiteness the clefted constituent is a referential unit before it is modified by the relative clause. The proposed structure thus, reflects this important difference between cleft and restrictive relative clauses: in cleft the **determiner operates** on the clefted constituent **noun** and this forms the **unit** that the peripheral cleft clause modifies. For *NPs*, the situation is

reversed. The examples below in figure (2) highlight this difference and include the *NP* operator projection (ibid).

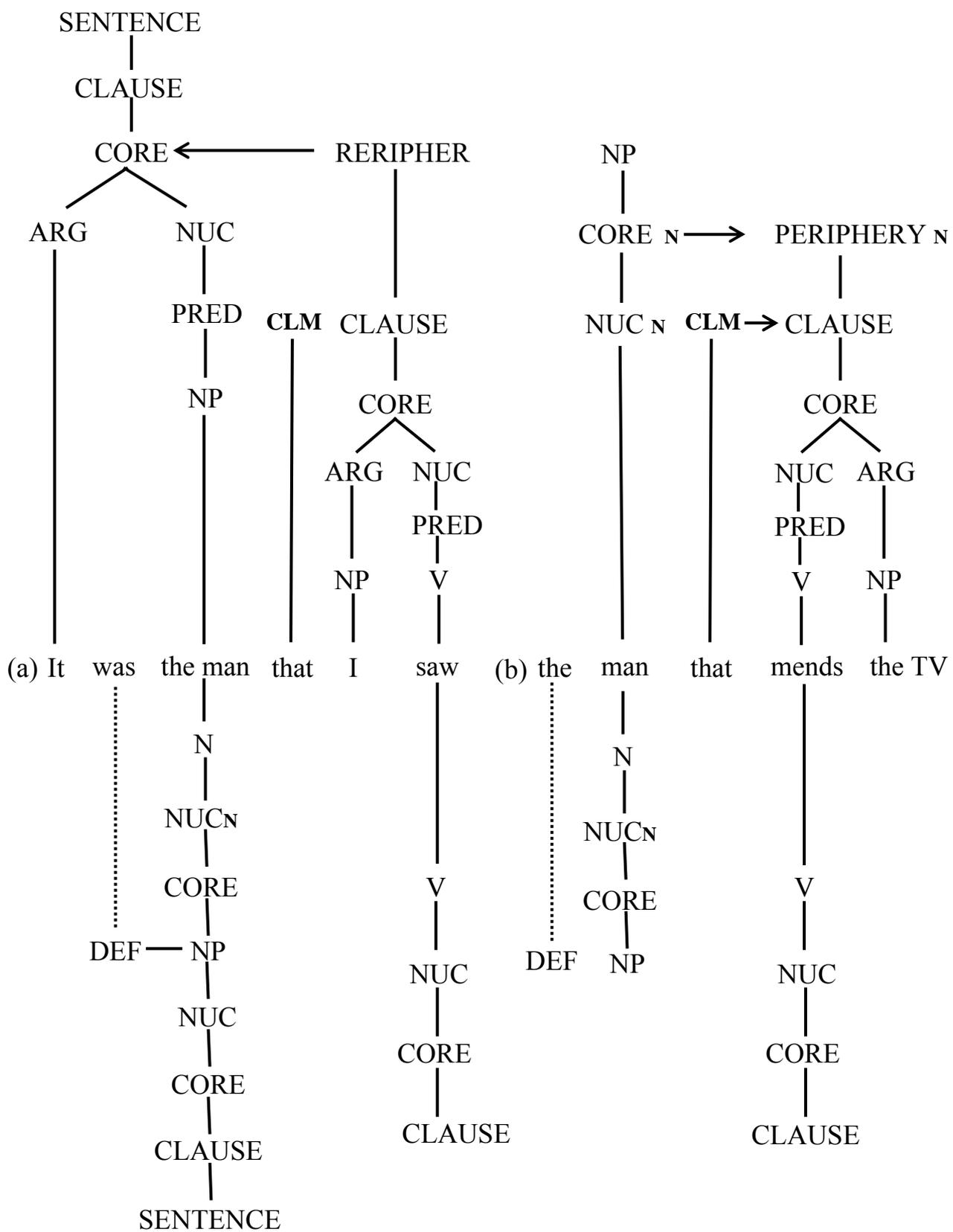


Figure (2) Structure for (a) It-clefts and (b) Relative Clause Showing Operator Scope. (Pavey 2003:8 )

Another way this difference is realized is in terms of the presupposition attached to restrictive relative clause and to it-cleft. A sentence such as (110 a), containing a restrictive relative clause, has presupposition given in (110 b) where the referent of man that mends the TV is within the presupposition of existence that the definite determiner assumes. The main presupposition for It-clefts in (111 a) on the other hand, excludes the referent of the clefted constituent the *TV man* merely presupposes that ‘*someone*’ exists that was seen by the speaker.

110. (a) I saw the man that mends the TV.

(b) Presupposition: There exists (in the world of discourse) one man that mends the TV.

111. (a) It was the TV man that I saw.

(b) Presupposition: There exists someone that was seen by the speaker.

(Pavey, 2003:8)

This has something to do with the scope of the definite determiner which has existential condition that licenses its use. As Figure (2) shows, in *NPs* the head ‘**man**’ as well as the modifier (the relative clause ‘**that mends the TV**’) are within the scope of the determiner and its existential condition.

In cleft, however, only the clefted constituent noun ‘*TV man*’ is within the scope of that *NP* determiner this constituent is the asserted part of the sentence (or the value), and therefore by definition not part of the presupposition (the variable). The *variable*

accounts are permitted as antecedent in cleft but not in the restrictive clause. In other words, the relative-type clause is not in the restrictive clauses. In other words, the relative-type clause is not within the scope of the determiner in the clefted constituent, whereas it is within the scope of the determiner in *NPs* with restrictive relative clauses (ibid: 9).

Hedberg (2000:891) maintains for the *referential* status of the cleft clause or elements within it, based on assumptions about the significance of similarities with the other types of *specificational* sentences which contain two referential units.

It is true that It-clefts do create a pragmatic presupposition which includes the existence (within the discourse) of a referent, as (112) illustrates, for which the assertion provides the identity of the referent.

Semantically the cleft sentence contains the presupposition '*I saw someone*'. The content of this presupposition is not to be found solely in the semantic content of the cleft clause without reference to the clefted constituent (as the personhood of someone illustrates).

This latter type of pragmatic presupposition seems to correspond more closely to what is referred to as the '**variable**'. The identity of the referent of the '*looser*' pragmatic presupposition '*I saw someone*' is given by the content of the clefted constituent (or part of it).

The clarification is often made in the literature where pragmatic presuppositions are taken to stand for the semantic content of the

cleft clause, and thus, stand as evidence for linking the cleft clause with the cleft pronoun.

112. Sentence: It was John that I saw

L S: [be John, [see (I, xi)]]

Create open proposition: I saw x

Assertion: x=John

Pragmatic presupposition: The speaker saw someone (i.e. such a person exists)

Pragmatic assertion: “The someone is John”

It-clefts are (assigned a logical structure similar to the identification attributive template given in Declerck (1988:172) be (x,y)) the cleft clause forms the second argument and the clefted constituents fill the first argument. The semantically-coindexed argument within the cleft clause is represented as (x) if lexically-unfilled or as a WH-word if one is used.

Pavey (2003:10) calls for the specification sentences such as (113),(114),(115) which are examples of, respectively pseudo cleft, reverse pseudo cleft and “NP *vs.* NP” sentences have the function of **specifying**, or **identifying a value for variable** .

113. What I want is a Mercedes.

114. A Mercedes is what I want.

115. The real criminal is Mr. Shrub.

The value-variable approach gives a more accurate picture of the function of the cleft construction.

In characterizing cleft purely as types of identification specificational copular sentences in the literature (extrapositional analyses), the relationship between the cleft clause and the cleft constituent is often overlooked, however the function of a cleft construction is a combination of the relative clause relationship and the information structure properties of the copular matrix clause.

The function is not necessarily to highlight or place into focus a particular clefted element but to highlight or assert an exhaustive relationship between the clefted constituent and cleft clause. (ibid)

### **2.7.1.3 Cleft Pronoun**

Some grammarians such as Davidse (2000:11), Hedberg (2000:896-900) Pavey (2003:11), propose a determiner role for the cleft pronoun which diverges in term of the function of that determiner. Davidse compares '*It-clefts*' to '*there-cleft*' and '*have-cleft*' as in (116) and (117) and suggests that the cleft pronoun determiner operates on the clefted constituent. Hedberg (2000:981-920) on the other hand compares '*It-clefts*' with '*this-cleft*' and '*that-cleft*' as in (118)and (119) which seek to show the link between the pronoun as determiner and the cognitive status of the cleft clause. The position of the cleft pronoun in the sentence is clearly suitable to be exploited for different pragmatic, discourse and possibly semantic purposes while it operates as a syntactic dummy argument-participating in question formation and verb agreement with the copula.

116. There's John who's causing us trouble.

117. We have John who's causing us trouble.

(Divadse, 2000:1101)

118. This was John that I saw.

119. That was John that I saw

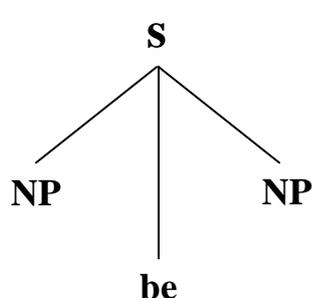
(Hedberg, 2000:892)

### 2.7.1.4 Clefted Constituent

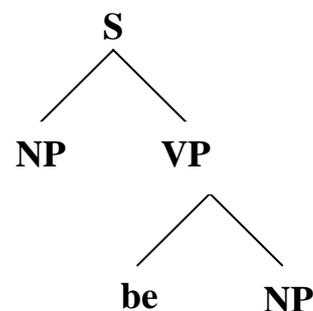
The cleft constituent is an important element like the cleft clause and the cleft pronoun. This element is the source of different interpretations and analyses.

Cleft constituent, as the logical structure and the syntactic structure in Figure (1) shows to function simultaneously as a semantic, referential argument and syntactic predicate forming the nucleus of the copular matrix clause.

Gundel (1977:70) and Pavey (2003:11-12) argue that specificational sentences containing two *NPs* such as (116-117) aim to specify or identify a referent rather than attribute and the copular verb is the predicate of the sentences.



(1) Identificational



(2) Attributive

Figure (3): Identificational vs. Attributive Copular Structures

(Gundel, 1977:546)

There is also an alternative analysis presented by Adger and Ramchand (2001:2) which states that where two *NPs* appear in copular sentences, one of them is semantically and syntactically the predicate, while the other is referential...‘**The doctor**’ is the predicate in both (120 a & b).

120. a. Jenny is the doctor.  
b. The doctor is Jenny.

## 2.8 Pseudo-Cleft

According to Quirk & Greenbaum, (1973:416) and Leech and Svartvik (1975:180), pseudo-cleft refers to another type of cleft sentences. It is essentially an SVC sentence pattern with a nominal relative clause as subject or complement. Like the cleft sentence, the pseudo-cleft makes the same separation between **given** and **new information**, given and new parts of the communication. Winograd (1983:508–9) explains that the pseudo-cleft is another phenomenon of cleft structure that allows nearly any combination of the elements of the clause to appear at front or back. The main verb of a pseudo-cleft sentence is *be*, but instead of having **it** as the **subject**, a **nominalized relative** clause is created. Dummy verbs like *do* can be used to enable the subject and verb to appear in different halves.

The same thing can be seen in:

121. What we need is a good five-cent nickel.  
122. What we did then we gave them back their clothes.  
123. What he will be after doing it is exhausted.

(ibid: 509)

Pseudo-cleft can be done in reverse with the relative clause as the complement rather than the subject as in.

124. A big hug is what you need most right now.

Not every sentence with a nominalized relative clause as its subject and ‘**be**’ as a main verb is an example of clefting or pseudo-clefting as in sentence (125) which is a nominal attributive clause .

125. What we need is obvious to anyone who thinks about it.

(ibid)

In spite of the fact that cleft sentence needs to change the verb to the non-finite form, and substituting ‘**do**’ for **it** in the second part of the sentence in order to place the focus on the verb, the pseudo-cleft sentence allows to place focus on the verb or the predication.

(Quirk & Greenbaum, 1973:416)

126. It’s teaching that he does for living.

127. What he’s done is (to) spoil the whole plan.

Sometimes, the wh-clause consists of verbs in the perfective or progressive aspects; in such conditions, the complement also matches that aspect.

128. What she's done is ruined the economy.

129. What they are doing is cleaning the room.

(ibid)

Concerning the complement in the progressive aspect, it cannot be in the progressive form with **be + going + to**.

130. \*What they are going to do is to ruin the economy.

In some cases, the pseudo-cleft sentence is more limited than the cleft sentence proper. It is indeed only with *what-clause* that we can make a direct comparison (or choice) between the two constructions. Clauses with *who*, *where*, and *when* are sometimes acceptable, but mainly when the Wh-clause is **subject complement**.

131. Here is where the accident took place.

132. (In) Autumn is when the countryside is most beautiful.

133. .? The police chief was who I meant.

(ibid: 1388)

There are numerous paraphrases of the pseudo-cleft construction involving noun phrase of general reference in place of the **wh- item**.

134. It must have been the manager that spoke to you.

(ibid: 1389)

We have a noun phrase in place of the pseudo-cleft.

135. The person who spoke to you must have been the manager.

136. Somebody I particularly like is John.

137. The way you should go is via Cheltenham.

138. The place (where) the accident happened is here.

139. The hour at which she must make her decision was fast approaching.

140. The way we make a cake is by following mother's recipe.

(ibid)

The device of general antecedent is also found where a corresponding pseudo-cleft is fully available.

141. The thing }  
 142. What } I like about Joan is her sense of humor.

The cleft and pseudo-cleft types can occur together. To illustrate:

143. What it was you asked for was a ticket to Brighton. Did you mean Birmingham?

(ibid)

Low (2003:9) investigates another kind of pseudo cleft which is (reverse pseudo-cleft) which does not need to give the reader any background information at the start. Rather, they tend to start with **this** or **that** and have fairly low information. They are thus, very useful for **summarizing, distancing yourself from or ending a topic of conversation.**

144. ... so, that is how it works.

145. ... so, that is what happened.

## 2.9 It-clefts vs. Pseudo – cleft

The difference between pseudo-cleft and It-clefts lies in the expression which refers to the **topic**. In It-clefts this expression occurs initially i.e. subject position while in the pseudo cleft it occurs in the final position of the sentence. In this case this topic

typically refers to some entity which is not only familiar to the addressee inattention but it is already focused on.

For Gundel (1985:97), we can predict that the pragmatic properties, of Wh-cleft (pseudo-cleft) and It-clefts are similar, these two constructions will not always be equally appropriate in the same discourse context.

In addition, since the relative clause in the It-clefts is not a surface subject (and does not occur in sentence initial position), we expect that it will not refer to the topic as consistently as the relative clause in the Wh-cleft. In fact, the relative clause in It-clefts is often stressed and in such instances it is interpreted as part of the new information asserted or questioned in the sentence. This use of It-clefts is illustrated by the sentence,

146. It was just about 50 years ago that Henry Ford gave us the weekend.

(Prince, 1978:898)

The relative clause in the Wh-cleft typically refers to the **topic** (either activated or inactivated) and the material in the clause is, generally interpreted as a **background assumption**, while the relative clause in It-clefts either refers to an activated topic (if it is unstressed) or it does not refer to the topic at all (if it is stressed). In the former case the content of the clause is interpreted as a background assumption which the speaker's and addressee's attention is already focused on, In the latter case it is interpreted as

part of the comment, i.e. the new information asserted or questioned in the sentence.

(Gundel, 1985:99)

Prince (1978:885), on the other hand remarks that the difference between pseudo-cleft and It-clefts is due to the fact that the former construction can focus on animate *NP* whereas the latter can focus on both an animate and an inanimate *NP*.

# Chapter Three

## The Test

### 3.1 Introduction

To measure EFL college students' recognition and production of using cleft constructions, a test is designed.

In this chapter, a description of this test including objectives, design, material selection, and the subjects to whom the test has been applied, its validity and reliability have been given. The chapter describes the pilot and the main administration of the test with the scoring scheme adopted.

### 3.2 Objectives of the Test

Baker (1989:3-5) believes that language testing is a complicated subject and much of this complication stems from problems of description and measurement. Davies (1990:9) states that language testing represents a measured concentration on **language use** and **knowledge**. Bachman (1990:20) looks to language testing as a means to obtain certain information about student's performance in a certain subject. For him “language testing is a procedure designed to elicit certain behaviour from which one can make inferences about certain characteristics of an individual”.

The present test has been designed primarily to discover the ability of college students to manage cleft constructions. It aims to investigate Iraqi EFL college students of using cleft construction on

the recognition and production levels. Through the results of the test, the causes of the students' errors will be clear to enable us to suggest appropriate remedial recommendations for such errors.

The test is constructed to measure the students' ability on the recognition and the production levels. The first question measures the students' responses on the recognition level while the last two questions measure their responses on the production level.

### **3.3 Selection of Material**

The items of the test have been chosen from the grammar books mentioned in Chapter Two in addition to *A University Grammar of English (Workbook)* (1974) by **R. A. Close**.

The items cover the types of cleft constructions and their functions.

The items of the test have been approved by a jury committee of ten experienced university lecturers as follows (The names are arranged according to their scientific status and alphabetical order)

Prof. Abdul Latif Al-Jumaily (Ph. D. in Applied Linguistics),  
College of Arts/ University of Baghdad.

Prof. Salih M. Hameed (Ph. D. in Literature), College of  
Education/ University of Babylon.

Asst. Prof. Abbas D. Drwish (Ph. D. in Translation and  
Linguistics) College of Education/ University of Babylon.

Asst. Prof. Adil Al-Akkam (M. A. in English Language and Linguistics), College of Basic Education/University of Babylon.

Asst. Prof. Firas Awa'ad Ma'roof (M.A. in Linguistics), College of Education/ Ibn Rushed/ University of Baghdad.

Asst. Prof. Lamia'a Al-Ani (M.A. in Applied Linguistics), College of Education/ Ibn Rushd/ University of Baghdad.

Asst. Prof. Razzaq N. Mukheef (M. A. in English Language and Linguistics), College of Education /University of Babylon.

Lecturer A'sim Al-Dulaimi (Ph. D. in Methods of Teaching English as a Foreign Language), College of Basic Education/ University of Babylon.

Lecturer Fareed H. Al-Hindawi (Ph. D. in Linguistics) College of Education/ University of Babylon.

Lecturer Wafa'a M. Faisal (Ph. D. in Methods of Teaching English as a Foreign Language), College of Education/ University of Babylon.

### **3.4 Test Design**

The test consists of three questions. The first question is designed to measure the subjects' responses on the recognition level. This question includes twenty items intended to test the subjects' ability to distinguish cleft from non-cleft sentences.

The last two questions are designed to measure the subjects' responses on the production level. The second question consists of fifteen items in which the subjects are asked to highlight the underlined words by using the cleft constructions. The subjects'

responses to this question will indicate whether the subjects can highlight the underlined words and making meaningful sentences by using cleft constructions.

Finally, the third question is put in such a way that it indicates whether the subjects are able to distinguish the elements between brackets from the other elements of the sentences, and how they can highlight these various elements (between brackets) making grammatical sentences by using cleft constructions.

This question contains fifteen items with various functions of the elements of the sentences such as S, O, Adj, Adv, Cs, Co asked to be highlighted.

### **3.5 Validity**

Validity has been defined by many linguists such as Best (1970:193), Stanley and Hopkink (1972:101) and Wier (1993:19-20). Who all agree that in order for a test to be valid it has to test what a researcher wants it to test. For Davies (1990:21), validity is concerned with the truth of the test, its relations to what it is intended to test. In Heaton's words (1988:160) "a good test should possess validity: that it should measure what it is intended to measure and nothing else. If a test does this it is said to be valid."

Bachman (1990:243) describes that validity as the appropriateness, meaningfulness, and usefulness of the specific inferences made from test scores.

There are two types of validity: face validity and content validity. Kelly (1978:8) and Anastasi (1982:131) define content validity as essentially the systematic examination of the test content to determine whether it covers a representative sample of the behaviour domain to be measured.

Harries (1969:19) asserts that the content validity of the test should depend on the accurate analysis of the material which is aimed to be tested.

The second one is face validity, Weir (1990:26) points out that face validity is not validity in the technical sense; it refers not to what the test actually measures, but to what appears superficially to measure. Face validity pertains to whether the test looks valid to the examinees who take it (Mehrens & Lehmann, 1984:285).

Moreover, the test has been introduced to a jury of experts (see section 3.3) to assure its face and content validity. The jury approved of the test as being valid to measure the aims for which the test is designed. They provided some suggestions and modifications which have been taken into consideration.

### **3.6 Reliability**

Validity is the starting point in test design task. However for a test to be valid it must also be reliable. For its importance, reliability has been paid a considerable attention by many linguists to study its significance in the test virtue.

Lado (1961:332), Guilford (1965:69), Harris (1969:15-16) and Gronlund (1976:102) affirm that reliability is a fundamental criterion in language testing, and they define it as the means which seeks for the accuracy of scoring and accuracy of administration procedures of the test.

Bachman (1990:239) mentions that validity is concerned with identifying the factors that produce the reliable test scores. So reliability is concerned with determining how much of the variance in test scores is reliable variance, while validity is concerned with determining what abilities contribute to this reliable variance.

Heaton (1988:163-4) remarks that there are different methods for estimating the reliability of a test like: test-retest, two equivalent forms split-half, and Kurder-Richardson Method.

The method adopted to estimate the reliability of the present test is Kurder-Richardson of which the following formula can be considered.

$$r = \frac{N}{N-1} \left( 1 - \frac{m(N-m)}{NX^2} \right)$$

where

r = reliability

N= the number of items in the test

m = the mean of the test scores

X = the standard deviation of the test scores

(ibid)

After applying this formula to the results of the test, it is found that the reliability coefficient is 0.92 which is a highly positive correlation.

### **3.7 The Subjects**

The sample of the study consists of 50 subjects of the four academic year (2004-2005) of the Department of English on the College of Education, University of Babylon.

The sample represents about 70% of the total student population. They are native speakers of Iraqi Arabic who have similar EFL backgrounds and their average age is twenty-two years old. The fourth year students are preferred for the application of the test because they are the most advanced learners of English on the university level before graduation.

### **3.8 Pilot Administration**

Before making the actual administration of the main test, the researcher applied a pilot test on the fifteenth of January, 2005 to ten subjects chosen randomly from the fourth year students who are detached from the main test.

Behind this attempt many aims need to be specified by the researcher such as: the time required for answering the test, knowing whether the directions and the items of the test are clear to the subjects, checking which of them needs clarification and modification, finally analyzing the items to diagnose their

effectiveness in terms of item difficulty and item discrimination power (see section 3.8.1).

The results of the pilot test have indicated that the time required to answer the whole items of the test is one hour. All the results obtained from the pilot administration of this test have been incorporated to the final version of the test.

### **3.8.1 Item Analysis**

Item analysis is another technique which can be used with the performance-referenced test through the unidimensional trait assumptions underlying their use (Baker, 1989:98). Indices of difficulty or discrimination can point to items which are too difficult or too easy or fail to discriminate because of some reasons.

The purpose of such analysis is to provide information about the items of the test in terms of ease or difficulty and to investigate whether they discriminate between good and weak students.

Item analysis is a statistical device which enables us to monitor the behaviour of the whole test in its interaction with the populations. This device depends on the facility value and the discrimination index to calculate the result of each item.

Heaton (1988:178) remarks that the facility value of an item is concerned with how easy or difficult that a particular item proves in the test.

It is calculated by using the formula:

$$FV = \frac{R}{N}$$

where

FV = facility value

R = the number of correct answers

N = the number of the students taking the test

(ibid)

After applying this formula to the results of the test, it has appeared that the item difficulty ranges between 0.10 to 0.80 (see Table 1).

Bloom et al (1985:95) point out that good spread of results can be obtained if the items vary in difficulty from 0.20 to 0.80. Therefore, the item difficulty of the present test is satisfactory except for item (3) in question (2).

Another formula which has been used to find out the item discrimination power is the following:

$$D = \frac{\text{Correct}U - \text{Correct}L}{n}$$

where

D = discrimination index

U = upper half

L = lower half

N = the number of the students taking the test in one group

(Heaton, 1988:180)

After calculating, it has been found that the discrimination power is between 0.10 to 0.80 (see Table 1).

Ahman and Glock (1975:139) assure that the reasonable and acceptable discriminatory power of each item is 0.20 and above.

Also Ebel (1972:395-9) admits that “good classroom test items have indices of discrimination of 0.30 or more”.

Concerning item (3) in (Q2) which shows low indices of discrimination, it has been included in the final version of the test because it is necessary to measure certain aspects of the students' performance.

The following table shows the facility value and the discrimination index of each item of the test:

**Table (1)**  
**The Facility Value and the Discrimination Index of the**  
**Test Items**

No. of Question	No. of Item	FV	D	No. of Question	No. of Item	FV	D
1	1	0.80	0.40	2	1	0.70	0.70
	2	0.40	0.40		2	0.70	0.70
	3	0.80	0.40		3	0.10	0.10
	4	0.70	0.20		4	0.80	0.80
	5	0.50	0.20		5	0.80	0.80
	6	0.70	0.20		6	0.70	0.70
	7	0.70	0.20		7	0.80	0.80
	8	0.50	0.60		8	0.70	0.70
	9	0.70	0.20		9	0.70	0.70
	10	0.80	0.40		10	0.70	0.70
	11	0.50	0.60		11	0.60	0.60
	12	0.70	0.20		12	0.80	0.80
	13	0.50	0.20		13	0.80	0.80
	14	0.50	0.60		14	0.20	0.20
	15	0.60	0.40		15	0.50	0.50
	16	0.70	0.20	3	1	0.20	0.70
	17	0.40	0.40		2	0.20	0.70
	18	0.80	0.40		3	0.40	0.80
	19	0.70	0.20		4	0.60	0.70
	20	0.60	0.40		5	0.40	0.60
			6		0.60	0.70	
			7		0.20	0.70	
			8		0.20	0.50	
			9		0.20	0.70	
			10		0.40	0.80	
			11	0.20	0.50		
			12	0.20	0.50		
			13	0.60	0.50		
			14	0.20	0.30		
			15	0.40	0.60		

### **3.9 Final Administration**

The main test was administrated on the seventeenth of January/2005. The time allowed for answering the test was one hour. The instructions for each question were given to the subjects. They were instructed to answer on the same sheets to save time and effort. They were asked not to write their names on the test sheets so as to avoid embarrassment.

The process of marking the test has been carried out by the researcher using the scoring scheme in the following section.

### **3.10 The Scoring Scheme**

A particular scoring scheme has been adopted so as to achieve the objectivity and reliability of the test.

The test as a whole was scored out of (100) and the scores were distributed in such a way as to give two scores for each correct answer and zero for the incorrect one. The items neglected or left by the subjects with no answers have also been given zero since they indicate that the subjects have failed to give any answer.

The scoring scheme adopted for the test can be illustrated in the following table:

**Table (2)**  
**Distribution of the Scores of the Test**

<b>No. of Question</b>	<b>No. of Items</b>	<b>Scores</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1	20	40	40
2	15	30	30
3	15	30	30
Total	50	100	100

# **Chapter Four**

## **Discussion of Results**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter is devoted to presenting and discussing the results of the test. The discreditable linguistic errors that the subjects made in using cleft constructions have been illustrated and indicated statistically. Attempts have been made to diagnose the sources of these errors in order to get some ideas about the nature of the difficulties that Iraqi EFL college students face in this area.

### **4.2 Discussion of Results**

This section presents the results of the subjects' performance on each question of the test in particular and on the whole test in general with respect to the recognition and production levels. The degree to which the subjects manage the cleft construction is indicated by their correct responses which are very important to assert or refute the hypotheses of study.

#### **4.2.1 Subjects' Performance of the First Question**

The first question, as mentioned earlier in (3.2), is constructed to measure the subjects' responses on the recognition level. The results obtained after analyzing the subjects' performance on each item in this question are presented in the following table:

**Table (3)**  
**Subjects' Performance on the Recognition Level in**  
**Question (1)**

No. of Item	No. of Correct Responses	%	No. of Incorrect Responses	%
1	39	78	11	22
2	15	30	35	70
3	31	62	19	38
4	32	64	18	36
5	22	44	28	56
6	36	72	14	28
7	21	42	29	58
8	14	28	36	72
9	26	52	24	48
10	20	40	30	60
11	22	44	28	56
12	20	40	30	60
13	23	46	27	54
14	17	34	33	66
15	20	40	30	60
16	24	48	26	52
17	12	24	38	76
18	37	74	13	26
19	30	60	20	40
20	27	54	23	46
<b>Total</b>	<b>488</b>	<b>48.8</b>	<b>512</b>	<b>51.2</b>

As shown in table (3) the total number of correct response is (488, 48.8%), whereas the incorrect response is (512, 51.2%). The number of incorrect responses reveals the subjects' incompetence in distinguishing cleft sentences from non-cleft.

Table (4), on the other hand, illustrates the subjects' performance of the two types of cleft-construction: It-clefts and pseudo-cleft and the non-cleft sentences.

**Table (4)**  
**Subjects' Performance of Types of**  
**Cleft-Constructions: It-Clefts, Pseudo Cleft and Non-Cleft Sentences in**  
**Question (1)**

Types	Total No. of Responses	No. of Correct Responses	%
It-Clefts	234	153	65
Pseudo-Cleft	484	210	43
Non-Cleft	242	115	49

The results show that the total number of correct responses to It-clefts items (153, 65%) is higher than that of non-cleft (115, 49%) and pseudo-cleft (210, 43%) items. This suggests that the subjects face more difficulties in distinguishing pseudo-cleft than the It-clefts and non-cleft, and this in turn indicates the subjects' unawareness of this type of constructions.

### 4.2.2 Subjects' Performance of the Second Question

The second question is concerned with the production level, i.e., it measures the subjects' ability to make grammatical sentences by using cleft constructions.

Table (5) shows the subjects' responses to each item in Q 2

**Table (5)**

#### **Subjects' Performance on the Production Level in Question (2)**

No. of Item	No. of Correct Responses	%	No. of Incorrect Responses	%
1	20	40	30	60
2	10	20	40	80
3	7	14	43	86
4	15	30	35	70
5	12	24	38	76
6	14	28	36	72
7	18	36	32	64
8	10	20	40	80
9	8	16	42	84
10	15	30	35	70
11	25	50	25	50
12	11	22	39	78
13	10	20	40	80
14	4	8	46	92
15	4	8	46	92
<b>Total</b>	<b>183</b>	<b>24.4</b>	<b>567</b>	<b>75.6</b>

It is clear from Table (5) that most of the subjects have failed to give the correct responses to this question and still there is a big difference between the rate of the correct responses and that of the incorrect ones, for that the number of correct responses is (183, 24.4%) and the number of incorrect ones is (567, 75.6%). This indicates that the subjects have faced difficulties in forming cleft sentences, but they seem to encounter more difficulties in making cleft sentences especially when the highlighted elements are (A) and (C). This can be shown in the following table. The total number of correct responses to A (52, 18%) and C (35, 23%) is lower than that of O (39, 32%) and S (59, 42%).

**Table (6)**  
**Subjects' Performance of the Four Types of Function:**  
**S, O, A and C in Question (2)**

Function	Total No. of Responses	No. of Correct Responses	%
S	137	59	42
O	121	39	32
A	250	52	18
C	147	35	23

#### 4.2.3 Subjects' Performance of the Third Question

This question is also constructed to measure the subjects' performance on the production level (see section 3.4 for more details). Table (7) shows the analysis of each item in question (3).

**Table (7)**  
**Subjects' Performance on the Production Level in Question (3)**

No. of Item	No. of Correct Responses	%	No. of Incorrect Responses	%
1	20	40	30	60
2	15	30	35	70
3	18	36	32	64
4	8	16	42	84
5	10	20	40	80
6	20	40	30	60
7	14	28	36	72
8	7	14	43	86
9	15	30	35	70
10	10	20	40	80
11	10	20	40	80
12	8	16	42	84
13	7	14	43	86
14	5	10	45	90
15	10	20	40	80
Total	177	23.6	573	76.4

It can be concluded from this table that most of the subjects have failed to give the correct responses for this question. This indicates that the subjects are incompetent in producing cleft

constructions since the total number of their incorrect responses (573, 79.54%) is higher than their correct ones (148, 19.73%).

The majority of the subjects are unable to make grammatical cleft sentences. What is more, they face more difficulties in forming cleft sentences whose highlighted elements are A and C. This result as well as that of question (2) verify the second hypothesis of the study which states that Iraqi EFL college students face more difficulty in forming cleft sentences whose highlighted elements are A and C than S and O this can be illustrated in the following table:

**Table (8)**  
**Subjects' Performance of the Four Types of Function:**  
**S, O, A and C in Question (3)**

Function	Total No. of Responses	No. of correct Responses	%
S	160	57	36
O	164	51	31
A	139	33	23
C	145	36	24

It can be asserted from Table (8) that the subjects have encountered more difficulties in highlighting A and C since the total number of correct responses to A (33, 23%) and C (36, 24%) is lower than that in O(51,31%) and S (57, 36%).

Table (9) sums up the subjects' performance of the second and third questions:

**Table (9)**  
**Subjects' Total Performance on the Production Level in**  
**Question (2 and 3)**

No. of Questions	No. of Correct Responses	%	No. of Incorrect Responses	%
2	183	24.4	567	75.6
3	177	23.6	573	76.4
Total	360	24	1140	76

It has become obvious that the subjects' productive knowledge is low since most of subjects' responses are incorrect (1140, 76%) as compared with their correct ones (360, 24%). This is an indication that such learners face difficulties in forming cleft sentences.

#### **4.2.4 Subjects' Performance of the Whole Test**

The results of the subjects' performance of the whole test are presented in the following table which contains the recognition and production levels:

**Table (10)**  
**Subjects' Performance on the Recognition and the Production Levels**

Level	No. of Correct Responses	%	No. of Incorrect Responses	%
Recognition	488	48.8	512	51.2
Production	360	24	1140	76
Total	848	36.4	1652	63.6

The high number of incorrect responses as shown in table (10) means that Iraqi EFL college students face difficulty in mastering cleft constructions on both levels, but they face more difficulty on the production level since the total number of their correct responses (360, 24%) is lower than that of their correct responses on the recognition level (488, 48.8%). This is in turn an assertion to the first hypothesis which states that the learners' performance on the recognition level is better than that on the production one. Moreover such learners face difficulties in recognizing and producing pseudo cleft sentences more than It-clefts as the rate of their correct attempts to form pseudo-cleft sentences is lower than that with It-clefts ones (35% vs. 65%) respectively. This is an assertion to the third hypothesis of the study.

### **4.3 Error Analysis**

Error analysis is a type of linguistic analysis that focuses on the errors learners make. It consists of a comparison between the errors made in the target language (TL) and the TL itself (Dulay and Burt 1974:75-8). Researchers are interested in errors because they are believed to contain valuable information on the strategies that people use to acquire language (Richards 1974:98; Taylor 1975:83). According to Richards and Sampson (1974:15), "At the level of pragmatic classroom experience, error analysis will continue to provide one means by which the teacher assesses learning and teaching and determines priorities for future effort".

For Corder (1974:120), error analysis has two objects: one theoretical and another applied. The theoretical object serves to “elucidate what and how a learner learns when s/ he studies a second language”. The applied object on the other hand serves to enable the learner “to learn more efficiently by exploiting knowledge of his or her dialect of pedagogical purposes”.

The investigation of errors can be *diagnostic* and *prognostic*. It is *diagnostic* because it can tell us the learners' state of the language on a given point during the learning process and *prognostic* because it can tell course organizers to reorient language learning materials on the basis of the learners' current problems (Corder 1967: 87).

#### **4.3.1 Categories for Description of Errors**

The categories for the description of errors cited by Brown (1994:222-3) help to distinguish between writing errors originating in a student's first language and other within the target language itself. Generally, errors can be categorized as ones of *addition*, *omission*, *substitution* and *ordering* on either the sentence or discourse level.

In addition, errors can be classified as either those which hinder communication or those which do not. However, of this purpose study, the errors can be divided into interlingual transfer, context of learning and intralingual transfer, strategies of second language communication.

### 4.3.1.1 Interlingual Transfer

This type of error is produced by second and foreign language learner. Brown (1994: 215) points out that interlingual refers to the “separateness of a second language learner's system, a system that has a structurally intermediate status between the native and target language (TL)”. Within this intermediate language, learner errors may be caused by many different processes including: [a] borrowing patterns from the mother tongue, and [b] extending patterns from the (TL), or overgeneralizing a learner rule. Connor (1996:201) remarks that analyses of interlanguage system of learners' actual performance suggests that the influence of transfer on acquisition of the (TL) is quite complex.

The type of errors mentioned in [a] above may also be categorized as “interference” (a form of generalizing that takes prior language experiences and applies them incorrectly).

These sorts of error are a direct result of influence from the learner's native language. Brown and George (1993:224) state that especially in early stages of learning a second language, before the system of the language becomes familiar, the native language is the only previous linguistic system upon which the learner can draw. The sorts of error resulting from this kind of 'negative transfer' vary widely from student to student.

Lado (1964: 180), in this respect, demonstrates that interference is the negative influence of the mother language (L1) on the performance of the target language learner (L2). It is those

instances of deviation from the norms of either language which occur in the speech of bilinguals as a result of their familiarity with more than one language (Scott and Tucker, 1974: 70-5). Selinker (1992:15) considers this type interlingual transfer as the systematic knowledge of an L2 which is independent of both the learner's L1 and the (TL).

Some of the errors on the production level give evidence of the influence of the mother tongue. Some of the subjects' responses to the following items in question (2) can reflect this influence:

He was killed by a terrorist. (Q2, 3)

**\*It is a terrorist which he was killed by it.**

They name their baby Ali. (Q2, 4)

**\*Their baby's name is Ali**

He likes them because they are always helpful. (Q2, 8)

**\*Why he likes them is they are always helpful.**

He gave me a book. (Q2, 9)

**\*It is me who was given a book.**

The minister is here to talk about his plans. (Q2, 14)

**\*What makes the minister comes here is to talk about his plans.**

It seems that the subjects have depended on translation to realize the semantic features of those items in the same way as in their

mother tongue (i.e. Arabic) to form sentences with possible efforts to highlight the underlined words. But using such a process has produced these errors since such structures in question (2) refer to this interference between the native language and the (TL). The subjects may translate those instances as follows respectively.

لقد قتل من قبل الارهابي  
اسم طفلهم هو علي.  
لماذا هو يحبهم لأنهم متعاونون دائما.  
أنه هو من أعطاني الكتاب.  
الذي جعل الوزير ياتي هنا هو للتحدث عن الخطط.

With this interference the words that want to be highlighted have lost their sense because of this process which deforms the real meaning of the sentence.

The same thing can be seen in the following instances in question (3)

This question is very easy to answer (S). (Q3, 2)

**\*What is very easy to answer is the question.**

Ronald made the hamburger (S). (Q3, 6)

**\*Who made the hamburger is Ronald.**

He sent the police a report of this incident (O<sub>i</sub>). (Q3, 8)

**\*Whom he sent a report is the police.**

The subject may translate the sentences above respectively as follows.

هذا السؤال سهل الاجابة  
الذي عمل الهامبرغر هو رونالد  
التي أرسلت التقرير هي الشرطة

This source of errors accounts (120, 19.7%) of the total number of the subjects' errors.

### 4.3.1.2 Intralingual Transfer

Intralingual transfer is the second source of error which extends pattern from the TL. Errors appearing in students' writing are often the result of faulty or partial learning of the TL and this is the negative element of intralingual transfer, or overgeneralization. Such errors may be caused by the influence of one TL item upon another.

Brown (1994: 225) remarks that the early stages of language learning are characterized by a predominance of interference (interlingual transfer) but once learners have begun to acquire parts of the new system, more and more intralingual transfer-generalization within the TL is manifested. These errors can be attributed to the language being learned (TL), independent of the native language.

According to Richards (1989: 55) and Odlin (1992: 60) such errors are “items produced by the learner which reflect not the structure of the mother tongue, but generalizations based on partial exposure to the TL. The learner, in this case tries to derive the rules behind the data to which s/he has been exposed, and may develop hypotheses that correspond neither to the mother tongue nor to the TL”.

Spada and Lightbown (1999: 75) state that with regards to 'transfer' or 'interference' errors it is difficult to determine the source of such errors and there are often no clear insights into what causes learners to do what they do. For instance, learners sometimes avoid using certain features of language which they perceive to be difficult for them.

Allen and Corder (1974: 130), Richards and Sampson (1974: 7-20), Ellis (1995: 51-2), Hubbard et al (1996: 135-141), Ellis (1997: 15-20) have mentioned several factors that can be related to this source of error such as *overgeneralization*; (which is associated with redundancy reduction). It covers instances where the learner creates a deviant structure on the basis of the experience of other structures in the TL. Overgeneralization is the result of the learner reducing his linguistic burden (Richards 1970: 174).

*Ignorance of rule restriction* is defined as applying rules to contexts to which who do not apply. *Incomplete application of rules* has referred to the failure of learning finds that he can communicate effectively by using simple rules, and semantic errors such as building false concepts/ systems: i.e. faulty comprehension of distinctions in the (TL).

To illustrate these factors practically, there are some subjects' errors in questions (2 and 3).

The researcher has concluded that there are some of the subjects' errors which can be attributed to *overgeneralization*, for example:

We elected him our president (C<sub>o</sub>). (Q3, 3)

**\*Our president whom we elected him.**

You ruin the whole day (O<sub>d</sub>). (Q3, 7)

**\*What you did is ruined the whole day.**

The child drinks a cup of milk every morning (O). (Q3, 11)

**\*It is a cup of milk every morning the child drinks.**

Grandmother makes the decisions. (Q2, 11)

**\*What makes the decisions is grandmother.**

People seldom do not offer to help (Adv). (Q3, 14)

**\*It is seldom that people help.**

As it is known, *overgeneralization* is the bad application of the previously learned rules of the foreign language. For this the researcher has found that the subjects have failed to give correct responses because they have confused between the rules of other constructions they have learned and the rules of the cleft constructions. They have mixed these rules which result in sentences with odd rules away from the rules and the structures of the TL.

The subjects' ignorance of rule restrictions, as mentioned earlier, is another factor that leads to the errors' causes.

We need more time. (Q2, 10)

**\*What need is time.**

We need pilots, not ground staff. (Q2, 12)

**\*What we need are pilots, not ground staff.**

**\*It are pilots that we need not ground staff.**

He did not leave till dawn. (Q2, 15)

**\*It were down when he left.**

It is clear that the subjects are ignorant of the structures of cleft sentences. This is indicated by their errors above; more obviously in item (12), question (2) since they thought that the structure of cleft-sentences will change since the object is plural; so it will be *It+are* not *It+is*.

Errors caused by *incomplete application* of rules are clearly found in items (2), (5) and (7) in question (2) and in items (3) and (10) in question (3).

Good manners are a rarity these days. (Q2, 2)

**\*It is a rarity good manner are .....**

He rarely loses any money. (Q2, 5)

**\*It rarely he loses any money.**

His callousness I shall ignore. (Q2, 7)

**\*It is his callousness I shall ignore.**

We elected him our president (C<sub>o</sub>). (Q3, 3)

**\*It is after ..... John .....**

Mary keeps sheep in the yard (Adv). (Q3, 10)

**\*It is in the yard .....**

The subjects' errors in the items above are caused by incomplete application of rules. The subjects have failed to form cleft sentences with highlight the appropriate elements. Their responses lack some important and obligatory elements in the structure of a cleft sentence, such as the pronoun **'it'**, **'be'**, the highlighted element and the relative pronoun. In certain cases they dropped the relative pronoun from their responses. The number of the errors caused by incomplete implication of rules is (44) from the total number of the subjects' errors. If a sentence lost one of these elements it will not be a cleft sentence any more.

The subjects' incorrect responses to these items might be due to their ignorance of the structure by which they can highlight the specific element in the sentence. Moreover, it might be the absence of certain elements in the structure of cleft constructions. The total number of errors that are possibly due to the intralingual transfer is (844, 56.3%).

#### **4.3.1.3 Communication Strategies**

There have been essentially two approaches to defining communication strategies: the “interactional” definition and the psycholinguistic definition (Carson, 2001: 25) and (Bialystok, 1990:210).

Faerch and Kasper (1983:51) observe that an interactional view of communication strategies is too narrow in scope, since it only applies to “the negotiation of meaning as a joint effort between two interlocutors”. They (ibid: 52) adopt a psycholinguistic approach and recognized communication strategies as being a part of the planning

process. The strategies are used when the learner has problems with the original plan and cannot execute it: “potentially conscious plans for solving what to an individual presents itself as a problem in reaching a particular communicative goal”. It has been argued that ‘problematicity’ should not be regarded as a defining criterion of communication strategies. Tarone (1980:420)

The early strategies of communication are based on surface structural differences in the utterances and have proposed several linguistic possibilities to express a thought. For Tarone (1981, 417-31), from an interactional perspective, there are strategies intended to overcome the differences between the learner’s and the native speaker’s linguistic knowledge as well as strategies that are applied when there does not seem to be any solution to the problem. In Tarone’s taxonomy (strategy) four main categories are distinguished: avoidance, paraphrase, conscious transfer, and appeal for assistance. ***Avoidance strategies*** the learner decides not to say anything in order to avoid communication problems. There are two possibilities; ***topic avoidance*** where the problem is avoided and ***message abandonment*** where the learner starts to refer to an object but gives up because it is too difficult. With ***paraphrase*** Tarone means “the rewording of the message in an alternate, acceptable target language construction, in situations where the appropriate form or construction is not known or not yet stable”. **Paraphrase** is divided into ***approximation*** (i.e. using a word for a related meaning to that intended-such as chair for ‘stool’), ***circumlocution*** (i.e. paraphrase using words one does

know), *coinage* (i.e. making up a TL word), *transfer* (e.g. using an NL word).

Some of these strategies have been used by our subjects, such as *guessing*, *approximation* and *avoidance*. It is to be noticed that some of the subjects' errors on the recognition level and sometimes even the correct ones are attributed to guessing. In question one, for example, fifteen cases of **guessing** are marked. Many of the subjects have guessed that item (15) and (17) in question (1) are non cleft sentences due to the fact that they are incompetent in recognizing some of the types of cleft-constructions.

Somebody I particularly like is John. (Q1, 15)

**\* Non cleft**

My first journey abroad is something I shall never forget. (Q1,17)

**\* Non cleft**

Errors of **approximation** can be seen clearly in items (12), (13) in question (3).

Some of the subjects have thought that the correct responses can be as follows:

The most striking feature of malaria in Tropical Africa is its high endemicity with hardly any seasonal changes (Cs). (Q3, 12)

**\* It is the high endemicity with hardly any seasonal changes.**

Some of the subjects omit the pronoun **its** as they thought that it is like the structure of It-clefts (i.e.) (It+be)

I am teaching him a lesson. (Q3, 3)

**\* It is me who is teaching him a lesson.**

The subjects convert the pronoun *I* to *me* and this is incorrect because the structure will change and the emphasized element will change also from subject to object because the pronoun (me) refers to the object not to the subject. The researcher has noticed about (20) errors that might be ascribed to this factor of the total number of the subjects' errors.

Finally, **avoidance strategy** which may lead to the “absence of certain errors, but it also leaves the analyst without information about the L1 learners’ developing interlanguage.” That is, the absence of particular features will be difficult for the researcher or teacher to observe, but this “phenomenon of ‘**avoidance**’ may also be a part of the learner’s systematic second language performance”. Related to this notion of ‘**avoidance**’ but more closely identified with negative transfer-or interference is the ‘**omission**’ of certain grammatical features from the learner’s developing interlanguage.

Finally **avoidance** strategy has also been represented by the items that were left by the subjects with no answers. The total number of error that might be related to using such strategies is (324, 24%) of the total number of the subjects' errors. The suitable reason for illustrating the causes of the large number of these avoided answers can be attributed to the fact that most of the subjects are incompetent in using cleft constructions.

# Chapter Five

## Conclusions, Recommendations, and Suggestions

### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter sums up the main conclusions arrived at through the theoretical work of this study as well as the results of the test. In addition, these conclusions are meant to base for the pedagogical recommendations and suggestions for further investigations in the area of cleft constructions.

### 5.2 Conclusions

#### 5.2.1 Theoretical Conclusions

The theoretical work of the present study has yielded the following conclusions:

1. A cleft construction is a complex sentence construction consisting of two clauses: a matrix clause containing a copula whose non-subject complement is a focus phrase and a relative clause whose arguments is coindexed with the focus phrase. Together, the main and the relative clause express a logically simple proposition, which can normally also be expressed in the form of a single clause.
2. A cleaving of a sentence by means of *it is* (often followed by a relative pronoun or connective) serves 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.

3. The relative clause and the preceding predicative phrase must be adjacent to each other.
4. In English, the relative pronoun *that* is used preferably to *who* or *which*.
5. Clefts convey uniqueness: Clefts convey an assumption that the elements named by the clefted constituent are an exhaustive listing of the elements to which the presupposed predicate applies, assuming some salient set of potential such elements. That is, when a cleft such as *It was John who left early* is uttered it is taken to mean that John and only John left early, and not John among others.

### 5.2.2 Practical Conclusions

The empirical work of the study has come up with the following conclusions:

- 1- The subjects' performance in the whole test has revealed that EFL college students encounter more difficulties in recognizing and producing cleft constructions but they face difficulties on the production level more than on the recognition one as the rate of their correct responses (360, 24%) is lower than that on the recognition one (488, 48.8%). This validates the first hypothesis of the study.

- 2- On the production level, the findings of data analysis show the subjects' incompetence to form cleft sentences, especially when the highlighted elements are **A** and **C**. The rate of their correct responses (85, 41%) and (71, 47%) respectively is lower than that of **S** (116, 78%) and **O** (90, 63%). This is an assertion to the second hypothesis of the study.
- 3- The subjects' performance in the whole test has revealed that Iraqi EFL college students face difficulties in recognizing and producing pseudo cleft sentences more than in It-cleft (35% *vs.* 65%) respectively. This is an assertion to the third hypothesis of the study.
- 4- The plausible causes underling the subjects' poor performance can be ascribed to the following factors arranged hierarchically according to the frequency of errors attributed to each:
  - I. Intralingual transfer which constitutes the majority of the subjects' errors. The subjects' reliance on their prior knowledge of the target language rules to recognize or produce cleft constructions regardless of their acceptability is due to the incomplete understanding of such clauses which encourages overgeneralization, incomplete application of rules, and failure to learn conditions for rule application .The rate of intralingual errors accounts for (844, 56.3%) of the total number of the subjects' errors.
  - II. Communication strategies which the subjects resort to in their attempt to structure what they mean. This source

accounts for (324, 24%) of the total number of the subjects' errors.

III. Interlingual interference whereby the subjects use the rules of their native language in the production of cleft constructions. In this respect, the use of translation is the most common phenomenon. This source of errors accounts for (120, 19.7%) of the total number of the subjects' errors.

### **5.3 Pedagogical Implications**

In the light of the findings arrived at in this study, the following pedagogical implications can be mentioned:

1. Learners do not master forms with their first encounter. The problem with the present syllabus in the Department of English, as far as cleft constructions are concerned, is due to the students' unfamiliarity with these constructions. In a pedagogical situation, it makes sense then for the syllabus designers to break the material into simple components and to proceed step by step, and with maximum recycling, the presentation of it from the students' first stage. In this way, the students will have ample opportunity to work out the material so that by the time they are in the fourth stage, they will be familiar with it and their errors can be reduced to a minimum.
2. During the preceding process, a clear distinction should be drawn between the types of cleft constructions: It-cleft, pseudo cleft and reverse pseudo cleft. Moreover to the explanation of their rules as this is one of the possible ways to increase their

information about this topic which can be of help for students in communication.

3. A clear distinction should also be drawn by teachers and syllabus designers between cleft construction as one of the highlighting devices and other devices such as fronting to illustrate the differences and the ambiguities between these devices. In all cases, it is recommended that the material should be explained in plain language with sufficient examples.
4. The results of this study can be of use to teachers and syllabus designers as they can provide the necessary information and examples that can enhance the students' competence in using cleft constructions, and thus helping them overcome the difficulties they encounter in this area.

#### **5.4 Suggestions for Further Research**

The following topics are suggested for further research in this area:

1. A study can be conducted to investigate the role of cleft constructions as one of the grammatical devices used to highlight some elements of English sentences in literature.
2. A further study can be constructed to show the role of cleft constructions in translation.

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# **Appendix I**

## **The Letter to the Jury Members**

University of Babylon  
College of Basic Education  
Department of English  
Postgraduate Studies, Methods of Teaching EFL, M.A.  
January, 2005

Dear Sir /Madam,

I'm an M.A. student of English Methodology .The research I 'm conducting is about Iraqi EFL College Students' Recognition and Production of Cleft Constructions throughout their fourth- year study of English.

Attached to this letter a draft of a performance test designed to be administered to Iraqi EFL students at their fourth stage in Department of English at College of Education. The test draft contains three questions with a total of 50 items. The first twenty items (Q1) test the students at the recognition level where as the last thirty items (Q2 & Q3) test the students at the production level .Scores are allocated evenly for the levels with two marks for each item.

You are kindly requested to furnish me with your valuable comments or corrections, which will be incorporated into the final version of the test. Please, allow me to refer to your name as a member of the jury in my thesis.

***Thank you very much for your kind cooperation***

## Appendix II

**Q1. Indicate whether the following sentences are cleft or not: If cleft underline the highlighted item (s).**

1. It is a Mercedes that she wants.
2. The only time when I can relax is on Sunday.
3. Rhetoric we prefer.
4. It's us that lifted it from them.
5. It must have been the manager that spoke to you.
6. It is I who am responsible.
7. It was over that we took the country.
8. The person who spoke to you must have been the manager.
9. It was intentionally that these linguistic units were separated.
10. Is it often that she drives alone?
11. What we need is obvious to anyone who thinks about it.
12. All you need is love.
13. The only thing I remember is a terrible pain in my head.
14. All I did was (to) touch the window and it broke.
15. Somebody I particularly like is John.
16. The reason he likes them is since they are always helpful.
17. My first journey abroad is something I shall never forget.
18. It was an explosion, what you heard.
19. Quality is what counts most.
20. The manager he met yesterday.

**Q2. Rewrite the following sentences highlighting the underlined word(s) by using the cleft constructions.**

e.g. Ali eats his lunch after midday.

It is Ali who eats his lunch after midday.

1. Julie buys her vegetables in the market.
2. Good manners are a rarity these days.
3. He was killed by a terrorist.
4. They named their baby Ali.
5. He rarely loses any money.
6. Kay is in command.
7. His callousness I shall ignore.
8. He likes them because they are always helpful.
9. He gave me a book.
10. We need more time.
11. Grandmother makes the decisions.
12. We need pilots, not ground staff.
13. He eventually became a doctor.
14. The minister is here to talk about his plans.
15. He did not leave till dawn.

**Q3: Form cleft sentences that will focus on the different elements given in brackets.**

e.g. Tom lost his keys yesterday (Adv<sub>time</sub>).

It is yesterday that Tom lost his keys.

1. Sartoris saw an enormous serpent approaching (O<sub>d</sub>).
2. This question is very easy to answer (S).
3. We elected him our president (C<sub>o</sub>).
4. The book took a long time to write because it raised so many difficult questions (because clause).
5. John only felt justified in publishing his conclusions after eighteen years of continuous research (A).
6. Ronald made the hamburger (S).
7. You ruin the whole day (O<sub>d</sub>).
8. He sent the police a report of this incident (O<sub>i</sub>).
9. The speed causes accidents, not bad roads (S).
10. Mary keeps sheep in the yard (Adv).
11. The child drinks a cup of milk every morning (O).
12. The most striking feature of malaria in Tropical Africa is its high endemicity with hardly any seasonal changes (Cs).
13. I am teaching him a lesson (S).
14. People seldom do not offer to help (Adv).
15. We've painted the kitchen dark green (Co).

# الخلاصة

**It-cleft**

**.Pseudo-cleft**

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# جامعة بابل

## تميز و إنتاج بُنى القطع لدى الطلبة الجامعيين العراقيين دارسي اللغة الإنجليزية لغة أجنبية

### رسالة

تقدمت بها إلى مجلس كلية التربية الأساسية في  
جامعة بابل جزءاً من متطلبات نيل درجة ماجستير  
تربية في طرائق تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية لغة أجنبية

سرى عباس عبيد

بإشراف

أ.م.د. رياض طارق كاظم العميدي

أ.م.د. حميد حسون

شعبان ١٤٢٦ هـ

ايلول ٢٠٠٥ م