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# *Cleft-Sentence in English*

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## Holy Verse

بِسْمِ مَبْرُورٍ لَمْ يَلْمِ

بِسْمِ مَبْرُورٍ لَمْ يَلْمِ لَمْ يَلْمِ لَمْ يَلْمِ لَمْ يَلْمِ لَمْ يَلْمِ لَمْ يَلْمِ لَمْ يَلْمِ لَمْ يَلْمِ

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صَقَّ هَلَا جَنْظَام

بِسْمِ مَبْرُورٍ لَمْ يَلْمِ لَمْ يَلْمِ لَمْ يَلْمِ لَمْ يَلْمِ لَمْ يَلْمِ لَمْ يَلْمِ لَمْ يَلْمِ

## **Dedication**

**To My father and mother**

**To My extended family**

**To My friends**

## **Acknowledgment**

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## *Abstract*

The purpose of this study is to examine the uses and forms of Cleft Sentence in English. Cleft construction is one of the main constructions as it is used to emphasize and highlight certain elements than other elements. This construction is widely used as cleft constructions are either the subject, object; complements are emphasized and focused on.

This study aims at defining the cleft construction and explains what is meant by cleft sentence as well as the types of this construction and the grammatical element that are used to be used. This study also makes comparison between the forms of the different type of cleft construction. Finally, there is a conclusion to sum up the finding

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## **1. Introduction**

Clefting is one of the constructions that are used in English grammar to highlight certain type of function. The main purpose of making clefting in English is meant to highlight certain type of information. This type of clefting process can have several of cases. This condition of using clefting can show different approaches to the semantic and the syntactic approach as the structure can be used to make clear set type of prominence that is reflected in certain syntactic structures. It is clear that the sentence is consisting of various elements and some one of the elements that are important than the others. One process of singling the needed element out is made by using clefting construction. This construction is used to show the certain element is being highly emphasized. This clefting can further explain the condition of presupposition and assertiveness for some elements. The elements can be foregrounded by some syntactic ordering for of shedding light on. This condition is reflected in English by the use of the cleft-sentence or construction. (Han, & Hedberg, 2008: 1-2)

## **2. What is the Cleft Sentence?**

A cleft is a construction in which the certain element in a sentence is moved from its position so as to give greater emphasis. The sentence that undergoes this splitting condition can be termed as cleft sentence, cleft construction or cleft. The cleft sentence is a sentence that is split in order to put emphasis on certain parts of its element. Generally, the cleft sentence is introduced by „it“ which is often

followed by the form of the verb „be“ that represents the main verb in the sentence and the emphasized part comes next and the rest of the sentence is introduced by a relative pronoun, relative determiner, or relative adverb. (Nordquist, R. 2020: Web Source)

According to Crystal (2008:79) a cleft sentence is considered as a grammatical term that refers to the condition where a construction of single clause that is divided into two separated section. Each section has its own verb. One of these clauses can appear as independent *wh- clause* that is termed as relative clause. To exemplify this condition, a sentence like „Mary is driving a new car“ can be made in various ways such as „it is Mary who is driving a new car“; „it is a new car that Mary is driving“. The selection of any way can expose the emphasis which is often related to the Intonational prominence.

In addition, cleft construction is viewed as one of the construction in English which is look very similar to relative clauses, yet, it is different in that it can occur not only after noun but cleft sentence can occur after different part of speech. This construction, namely, cleft construction is mainly used to give more emphasis for a particular proposition in the sentence. The sentence “Benjamins published this book in 2000 in Amsterdam”, can be made like;

1. It is Benjamins who published this book in Amsterdam.
2. It is this book that Benjamins published.
3. It was in 2000 that Benjamins published this book.( Verspoor, & Sauter, 2000:177)



In addition Trask (1993:46), defines the cleft sentence as “a marked structure in which a focus constituent is extracted from its logical position and set off with some additional material, including an extra verb”.

Furthermore, according to Swan(2005:17), the cleft construction is a type of construction in which special or certain elements is give a special emphasis. This element can be either object or subject. This focus is made by the using of either „it“ or „what“.

In addition, cleft sentence is viewed a sentence that is split into more than one section and one of the section is being emphasized and there are main three basic forms for it which are it-cleft, wh-cleft, and inverted wh-cleft in English which can be exemplified as;

4. It's their teaching material that we're using.
5. What we're using is their teaching material
6. Their teaching material is what we are using

It is clear that the main meaning of the proposition is the same in the three sentences and it is mainly derived from the proposition which says that „We are using their teaching material”. The real issue is that, what is the meaning that is added by the use of the cleft construction then. It is clear that there is one section being emphasized. In addition, the use of the cleft sentence can provide sort of presupposition (background) of something such as in the sentence above that „We are using **Such**”; which the material that is presupposed. On another hand, the use of the cleft-sentence can

make assertion of sort as being included or asserted in the course of making proposition. (Kim, & Sells, 2008:258 )

### **3 Types of cleft sentence**

#### **3.1 Cleft Sentence Proper**

This types of cleft sentence is considered to have the pronoun" it" and the form of copula „be“. This verb can be optionally connected to the negative particle „not; or the adverb „only“. The emphasized elements can be either a noun phrase, prepositional phrase such as;

7. It was her voice that held me.

8. It was only for Mary that they come to the party.

Furthermore, this type can have the focused element as either an adverb or adverbial clauses as in;

9. It is here that we meet.

10. It was because they were frightened that they can't sleep.(  
Biber et al., 1990: 959)

#### **3.2. Pseudo – Cleft Sentence**

This type of cleft is similar in function; however, the emphasized part comes at the end. In this type the sentence is introduced by wh- word and it is followed by the copula form of the verb „be“". The verb „be“ is used to link the two part of the sentence as in;

11. What I want is a good sleep.

12. What I'm going to do is see the principal.( Nelson, & Greenbaum, 2018:131)

In addition, this type can expose the focused element be either a noun phrase or base form of infinitive as in;

13. What she objected to is violence on TV.

14. What you should do is greet them when they come in.

Furthermore, this type cleft sentence, the emphasized element can be (to + infinitive) as in;

15. What she did was to help her mother. (Biber et al. 1990: 960).

### **3.3. Reversed Cleft – Sentence**

This type of the clause is similar to the later one but it differs in that the wh-clause is reversed as in in the following example;

16. Exercise is what I need

17. Courage is what I lack.( Chalker, 1984: 262)

### **3.4. All Cleft – Sentence**

It is also important to make clear that the cleft sentence can be used with the „all- structure“ which means” the only thing” as in;

18. All I want is a home somewhere.( Swan 2005: 130)

### 3.5 Demonstrative Cleft – Sentence

This type of cleft sentence is seen to consist of the demonstrative pronoun „that“ with the wh-clause with and the form of the verb „be“ which can be showing as follows;

19. That's what I thought.

20. That's why we asked.( Biber et al . 1990 : 961 )

It is clear that the main splitting in the cleft sentence is to emphasize certain element. The common element to be emphasized can be the form of a verb whereas such cleft sentence can require a structure of using wh-word with „to“ or without it as in;

21. What she did was (to) **scream**. (Swan,2005: 130)

### 3.6 Other Wh-Cleft Sentence

This type has form where it comes through certain type of sequencing the use of the wh-word „why“. This type can be used to make focus on a particular, reason, and time or place as in

22. The reason why Jack went to London on Tuesday was to see  
Colin.

23. The place where Jack went to see Colin on Tuesday was  
London.

24. The day when Jack went to London to see Colin was  
Tuesday.(Ibid, 130)

### 3.7 Other Cleft Constructions

Other type of cleft sentence can take the form of having certain words or pronoun or expressions like (somebody), (someone), (something) as in;

25. The headmaster is **somebody** who believes in disciplines.

26. My first trip to Paris is something that I will never forget.(  
Jebur, & Hussein, 2016:33)

### 4. Elements to be emphasized

In addition the emphasis in cleft sentence can be wholly extended by using the form of „what „plus the verb of „happen“ as in;

27. What happened is that it's raining. (Swan 2005: 130)

It is significantly to show the fact that the cleft sentence is seen to be emphasized different element within a sentence. This cleft sentence can be used to shed light on the subject as in;

28. It was **John** who wore a white suit at the dance last night

Moreover, the sentence can be used to emphasize the direct object or the adverbial of place as in;

29. It was **last night** that John wore a white suit.

30. It was **at the dance** that John wore a white suit.

The focus of the cleft sentence can cover the indirect object and the object complement as in;

31. It was **me** who gave the book to.

32. It was **dark green** that we have painted the kitchen (Quirk et al. 1985:1385).

## 5. Comparison between it-cleft and Wh-cleft sentences

The main forms of the cleft-sentences are it-cleft and wh-clefts Sentences. According to Leech and Svartvik (1994: 203), the wh-cleft sentences are more flexible than „it-cleft sentences because the wh-clefts can often shed focus on the complement as in;

33. What she is, is a brilliant reporter.

Another difference is made in the condition that it-cleft sentences are mainly used to put focus in the beginning of the sentence whereas the wh-clefts are used to leave the focus to the final position as in;

34. What Miss Williams enjoyed as a pastime was **novels**.  
(Greenbaum and Quirk, 1990: 415)

In addition, the use of the cleft sentence can be analyzed in two main directions which are an extraposition analysis and an expletive analysis. The extraposition suggests a direct syntactic and semantic relationship between the cleft pronoun „it“ and the cleft clause as in;

35. It was an explosion that you heard.

This view suggested that the example is a product that generates an it-cleft with the replacement of what into that. This condition that it can basically take the cleft clause to be extraposed to the end of the sentence. On another hand, there is analysis that takes the forms of the pronoun „it; to be expletive that comes up in place where the cleft

clause is semantically connected to the cleft clause by prediction as in;

36. It was *John who heard an explosion*

According to this analysis of prediction, the cleft sentence is the focus functioning one that takes the role of a specifier for the focus phrase where the copular is the head of this phrase where the cleft clause is a complement. It is clear that the wh-cleft and it-cleft sentences are used to present a salient information, yet there are various differences between them in the level of the syntactic structure which sometimes can be hard to mark. It is clear that Wh-clefts permit a base of verb phrase to be highlighted as in;

37. What you should do is order one first.

Furthermore the head of the *it cleft* clause can be a prepositional phrase while this cannot be done with wh- clause as in

38. And it was this matter *on which* I consulted with the chairman of the Select Committee. (Kim, & Sells, 2008:260-261)

## Conclusion

It has been concluded that the cleft construction is a process of moving certain elements for the purpose of emphasizing or making focus on. The form is found in English by using cleft construction. The cleft-construction can take the pronoun „it“ with copula verb. The other type is Pseudo – cleft sentence where the emphasized element comes at the end with making focus on various elements in the sentence. The other type of cleft sentence is represented by the reversing type as WH-clause isn“t“ used in initial position. The cleft – sentence can be „all-cleft, or „demonstrative-cleft“ for the purpose of stating the emphasized element. Hence separation and clefting are also done by some constructions of wh-form. The elements that can be emphasized and highlighted by cleft construction are subject, object, and adverbial place and object complement. The cleft sentence is very important to making focusing meaning in the sentence.



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