

Syntax of *it*-Clefts I: Focus Movement or Clausal Extraposition ?

(É. Kiss 1999, Percus 1997, Hedberg 2000)

1. Two competing Analyses: Extraposition vs. Expletive Analysis

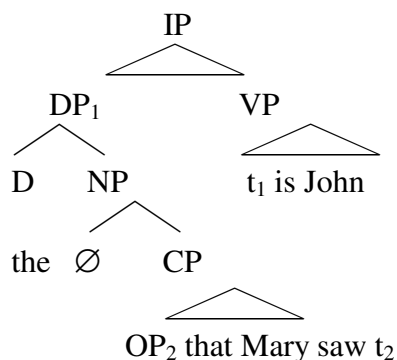
1.1 Extraposition analysis: Percus (1997) (see also Akmajian 1970, Gundel 1977, Hedberg 2000, a.o.)

- *Central features:*

- Cleft pronoun *it* & cleft-sentence** form a definite DP as part of a (specificational) copula clause.
- Cleft-clause is right-extraposed and adjoined to IP.
- It* is the phonological spell-out of $[_{DP} D_{def} [_{NP} \emptyset]]$

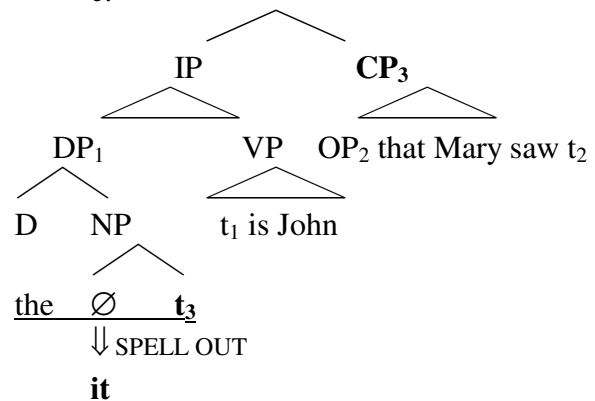
(1) a. **It** is John $[_{CP}$ **that Mary saw**].

b.



⇒

c.



- *General Prediction:*

Clefts should have the same properties as (specificational) copular sentences.

(2) a. It is Mary that came late.

b. [The one that came late] is Mary.

1.2 Expletive Analysis: É. Kiss (1998, 1999) (see also Chomsky 1977, a.o.)

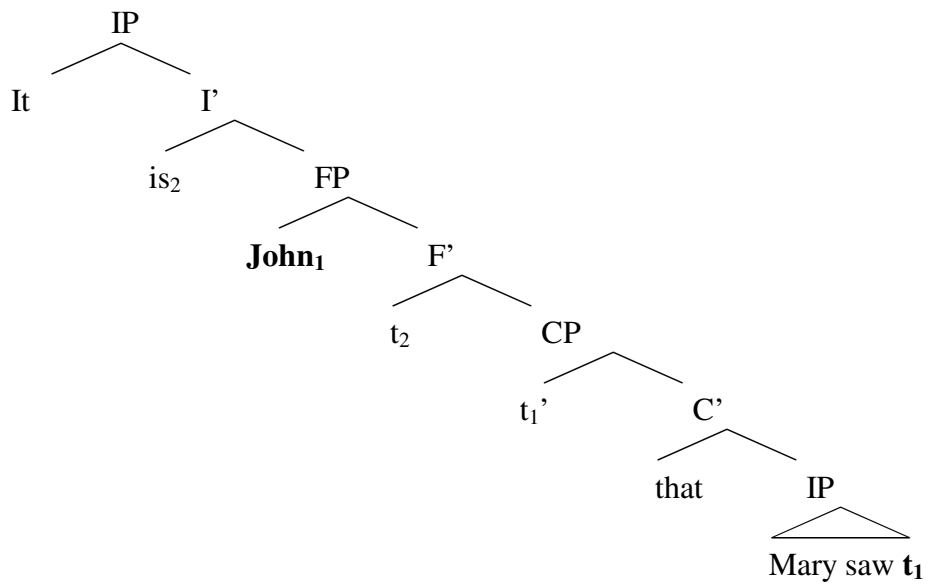
Hedberg (2000: 909): 'This analysis has come to be the dominant one'

- *Central features:*

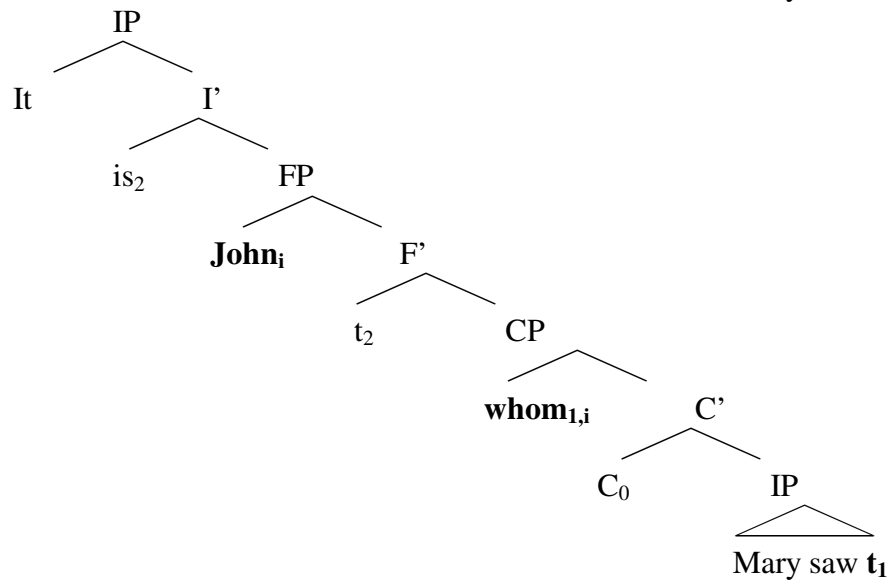
- Cleft constituent & cleft-sentence** form part of a (clausal) syntactic constituent that is selected by a functional head F.
- Cleft pronoun *it* is a semantically empty expletive subject
- The cleft constituent is moved to (with non-subject *that*-cleft clauses, (3a)) or base-generated (with *wh*-cleft clauses (3b), or with subject clefts generally (3c)) in SpecFP.

⇒ Asymmetry !

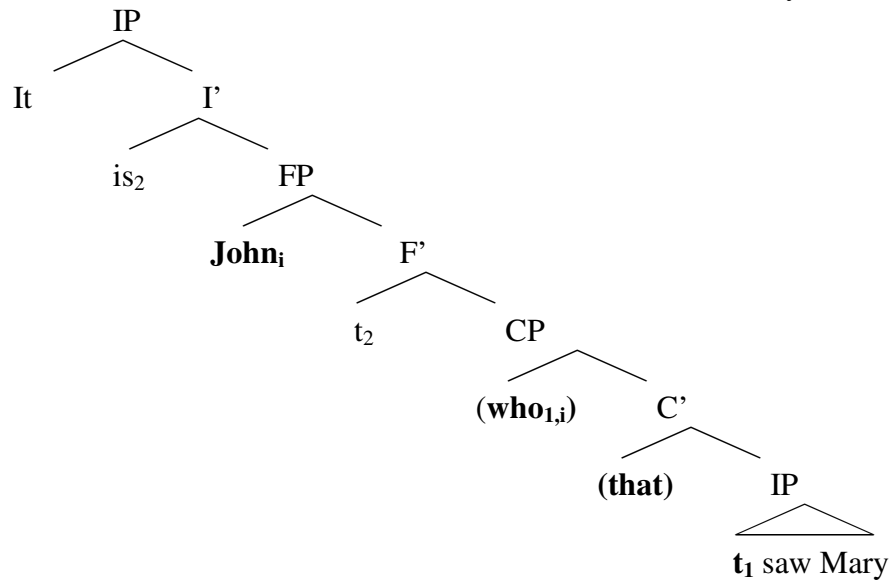
(3) a.



b.



c.



2. Data

- *Connectedness effects*

i. anaphor licensing

- (4) a. It is **each other**_i [that **they**_i trust the most]. [É. Kiss 1999: 217]
 b. It was [a picture of **himself**_i] [that **Peter**_i was looking for].
 c. It was **herself**_i [that **Mary**_i saw first]. [Percus 1997: 343]
 d. ?It was **himSELF**_i [that **John**_i wanted Mary to describe] [Percus 1997: 343]

ii. Semantic binding

- (5) It was [**his**_i mother] [that **every boy**_i saw first] [Percus 1997: 344]

iii. NPI-licensing

- (6) a. It **isn't** [**anyone** I know] [that John saw] [Percus 1997: 344]
 b. *It **wasn't** John [who did **anything** to help]

- *OBL-Case on clefted subjects*

- (7) a. It is **me/him** that/who is responsible. [É. Kiss 1999: 218]
 b. It is **me** who **is/*am** not satisfied with himself.

- *Scope facts*

[É. Kiss 1999: 218]

- (8) a. It was [**some** paper by Chomsky] [that **everybody** wanted to read]. $\forall > \exists$ possible
 b. I have [**some** paper by Chomsky] [that **everybody** wanted to read]. $\forall > \exists$ impossible

- *Categorial restrictions on cleft constituent: DP/PP (Emonds 1976, É. Kiss 1999: 219)*

- (9) a. It was **a tax break / Peter** (that) I counted on. **DP**
 b. It was **to John** (that) I spoke. **PP**
 c. It was **in physics** (that) I excelled. **PP**
 d. *It was **unhappy** that Bill was. **AP**
 e. *It was **ask John for money** that I heard you. **VP**

- *Presence/Absence of Complementizer/Relativizer*

- (10) a. It was John *(**that / who**) invited Mary.
 b. It was John (**that/ whom**) Mary invited.

- *Modal auxiliaries*

- (11) a. It **could be** Clinton who wins.
 b. *It could Clinton be who wins.

- *Semantic Effects*

i. Existence effects [Percus 1997: 339]

(12) Q: Who saw John?

A1: NObody_F saw John.

A2: *It is NObody_F that/who saw John.

ii. *Uniqueness/Exhaustiveness effects ???* [Percus 1997, É. Kiss 1999]

(13) a. It's John and Bill that stole a cookie. [Krifka 2008]

Krifka (2008): "This example [13] says that nobody else but John and Bill stole a cookie. Consequently, exhaustive focus is not compatible with additive particles, like *too*."

b. *It was everybody / also Mary / even Mary that John invited. [É. Kiss 1999: 227]

c. Mary picked a hat and a coat for herself. [É. Kiss 1998,
⇒ Mary picked a hat for herself. Hedberg 2000: 906]

d. It was a hat and a coat that Mary picked for herself.
// ⇒ // It was a hat that Mary picked for herself.

BUT: 'It was **also a hat** that Mary picked for herself.'

É. Kiss (1998: 245): An identificational focus represents a **subset** of the set of contextually or situationally given elements for which the predicate phrase can potentially hold; it is identified as the exhaustive subset of this set for which the predicate phrase actually holds.

⇒ F_{IDENT} assigned by F to constituent in Spec,FP.

- *Clefting of PPs*

(14) a. It was **John** that I spoke **to**. [É. Kiss 1999: 220ff.]

b. It was **to John** that I spoke.

c. *It was **to John** that I spoke **to**.

d. *[The person OP₁ I spoke t₁] was **to John**.

(15) a. It was **with George** that Mary eloped.

b. It was **George** that Mary eloped **with**.

c. (The one) who Mary eloped **with** was **George**.

d. *(The one) who Mary eloped was with George.

3. Taking Stock & Modifications

Q1: How do the two analyses fare with respect to the observable data?

phenomenon (ex. number)	Extraposition (Percus 1997)	Expletive (É. Kiss 1999)
licensing of reflexives (4bc)	✓	✓
licensing of long reflexives (4d)	✓	*
licensing of reciprocals (4a)	*	✓
binding into cleft (5)	✓	✓
NPI-licensing (6ab)	✓	*
case-marking (7ab)	✓	✓
scope facts (8)	??	✓
categorical restrictions (9)	✓ (type e)	??
presence/absence of C/REL (10)	✓	✓
modal auxiliaries (11)	✓	*
existence effects (12)	✓	??
uniqueness effects (13)	✓	✓
PP-clefting (14, 15)	*	✓
additional functional structure	NO	YES
different underlying structures	NO	YES

Q2: How to account for PP-clefts (14, 15) on the extraposition analysis?

• *Options:*

i. Different underlying structure ???

ii. Shallow (case-driven) manipulations:

e.g., preposition copying for reasons of case-marking (Gundel 1977: 550)

(16) It was [**with** George] [that Mary eloped **with**]

(17) Two case-marking patterns in Russian clefts.

a. Èto **Ivan** **kogo** ja videl.
 PRON Ivan.NOM REL I saw

b. Èto **Ivana** ja videl.
 PRON Ivan.ACC I saw

iii. Different content of NP_∅ in extraposed relative clause: EVENT SEMANTICS !!!

(18) a. [The **event** e such that Mary eloped in e] was **with George**.

b. *[The event such that Mary eloped with] was George.

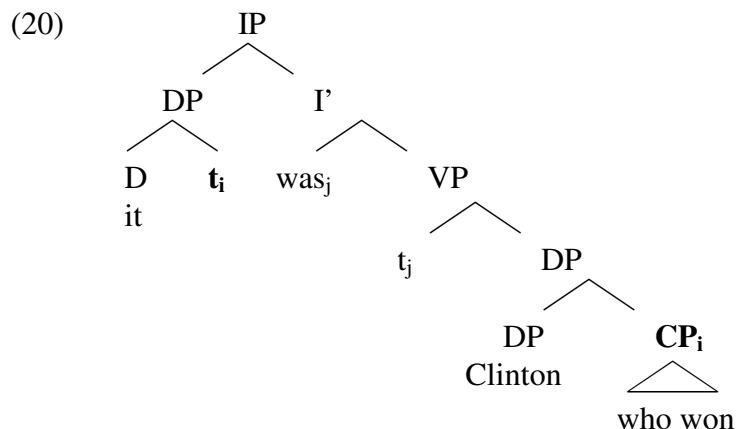
- **A final observation:**

cleft constituent and cleft clause form a constituent (e.g. Hedberg 2000: 916):

they ‘act as a unit with respect to deletion (19a), right-node raising (19b), parenthetical formation (19c), conjunction (19d), and preposing (19e)’:

- (19) a. I said that it should have been **Bill who negotiated the new contract**, and it should have been \emptyset .
 b. It could have been - and it should have been - **Bill who negotiated the new contract**.
 c. It must have been, in my opinion, **the cyanide that did it**.
 d. It must have been **Fred that kissed Mary but Bill that left with her**.
 e. ?I said that it was Bill that argued the case and **Bill that argued the case** it was.

⇒ Hedberg (2000 913): ‘While the cleft clause forms a syntactic constituent with the clefted constituent, it doesn't form a semantic constituent with it. Rather it forms a semantic constituent with the cleft pronoun, functioning as complement to it.’



⇒ downward movement?

⇒ LF-reconstruction !

- *Prediction:*

Clefting should not open up additional interpretive options over the basic specificational copula construction in terms of quantifier scope, binding, NPI-licensing etc.

4. On the Status of *it*-pronouns as definite articles/ definite descriptions

Postal 1966, Stockwell et al. 1973, Abney 1987, Longobardi 1994, Uriagereka 1995, Elbourne 2001ab, 2005, 2008, Neale 2005, Adger 2008: *it* = definite article

Cooper 1979, Heim 1990, Neale 1990, Elbourne 2001, 2005, Roelofsen 2008:
donkey pronouns = definite descriptions

- (21) If a farmer owns a donkey [[DP **he** \emptyset] beats [DP **it** \emptyset]]

= every minimal situation of a farmer owning a donkey expands to a situation in which **the unique farmer in that situation** beats **the unique donkey in that situation**.

- Arguments pro-DP status & spell-out:
 - i. Percus (1997: 348ff.): Other extraposed CPs (clausal subjects) also denote definite descriptions and the non-extraposed rest is spelt out as *it* (21b):
 - (22) a. [That the shares are overvalued] is widely believed on Wall street.
 - b. **It** is widely believed on Wall Street [that the shares are overvalued].
 - ii. Heim (1993):
 - (23) *Context*: Two people are looking at a political candidate speaking on a soapbox. They cannot see the person clearly and are wondering who it is.

A: Is that Zelda?

B: **She**'s praising her to the skies. It must be Zelda. no condition B effect

[[she]] = $\lambda s. \iota x [x \text{ is a speaker on SB in } s]$
 - (24) A: What's Zelda doing?
 - B: *She_i's praising her_i to the skies. condition B effect
 - iii. Nunberg (1993):
 - (25) John has just been elected to the Kansas State Board of Education, a body known for changing hands between advocates of Intelligent Design and advocates of Darwinian evolution. It so happens that after this election all of the members of the Board are advocates of Intelligent Design. If John says (J) to the other members of the Board, his utterance will be ambiguous:

J: We might have been evolutionists

 - i. John and his fellow Board members might have been evolutionists.
 - ii. **The members of the Board** might have been evolutionists.
 - (26) Pointing to the actual Pope (Benedikt Ratzinger)

He is usually Italian. [[he]] = [[the pope]]
 - iv. Formal implementation of Nunberg (Elbourne 2008) :
 - (27) [it [R₁ i₂]]

i: a variable of type <e> = the deictic component

R: a variable of type <e, <se, st>> = the relational component (supplied by context)
 - (28) a. [[R]]([[i]]): an expression of type <se,st> (property)
 - b. [[it]] = $\lambda f_{\langle se, st \rangle}. \lambda s. \iota x [f(\lambda s'.x)(s) = 1]$

\Rightarrow *it* takes a property-denoting expression and maps it onto an individual-concept, same as run-off-the-mill definite articles !!!

- Application to *it* in *it*-clefts

(29) [DP *it* [NP \emptyset t_3]] R-variable denoted by empty head-noun?
 R *i*

(30) a. The (person) *x* [such that *x* invited Mary] was George.

b. The (event) *e* [such that Mary eloped in *e*] was with George

 ↓ ↓
 i R value of R provided by relative clause?

- Further evidence for status of *it* as definite descriptions: Hedberg (2000)

The distribution of various types of (truncated) *it*-clefts and *this/that*-clefts is governed by the same information-structural factors (the Givenness Hierarchy, Gundel) as the distribution of overt definite and demonstrative descriptions:

In contexts where *the* is licit, *it*-clefts are licit.

In contexts where *this* or *that* must be used, *this/that*-clefts must be used.

(31) a. **It / #this / #that** was just about 50 years ago that Henry Ford gave us the weekend.
 (Newspaper Headline): uniquely identifiable, but unfamiliar

b. Today, **the dad of one of my students** called. (on coming home)

(32) NF: And then, one morning, about three or four or five mornings before I was due to get out, I was lying in bed and someone, one of, one of my fellow soldiers came by and shook my bed and said, 'Come on Fredzo, get up' ... and the Sergeant himself said, 'Leave him alone, he's too short'.

KF: Hmm.

NF: I mean, the, **that** was the platoon sergeant **that said that**.
 (activated, but not in focus)

- *A final question:*

Does the German pronoun *es* (or the other pronouns) behave in full parallel with its English counterparts, or does it have a different status?

(33) a. It seems to me that you're wrong.

b. It is snowing.

c. It was John that I saw.

d. It's not true.

(34) a. **Es/?das** kommt mir so vor, als ob du unrecht hast. [Hedberg 2000: 893]
 it/that seems me so, as if you wrong have

b. **Es/?das** schneit.

it/that snows

c. **?Es/das** war John, den ich gesehen habe.

it/that was John, that I seen have

d. **?Es/das** ist nicht wahr.

it/that is not true

⇒ If so, could this be the reason for any potential interpretive differences between English & German?