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

1. Two competing Analyses: Extraposition vs. Expletive Analysis


- **Central features:**
  i. **Cleft pronoun *it* & cleft-sentence** form a definite DP as part of a (specificationnal) copula clause.
  ii. Cleft-clause is right-extraposed and adjoined to IP.
  iii. *It* is the phonological spell-out of \[\text{DP}_{\text{def}} [\text{NP} \emptyset]\]

(1) a. \text{It} is John \[\text{CP that Mary saw }\].

b. \hline
c. \hline

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{IP} \\
\text{DP}_1 \quad \text{VP} \\
\text{D} \quad \text{NP} \\
\text{the} \quad \text{CP} \\
\text{OP}_2 \text{ that Mary saw } t_2
\end{array}
\Rightarrow
\begin{array}{c}
\text{IP} \\
\text{DP}_1 \quad \text{VP} \\
\text{D} \quad \text{NP} \\
\text{the} \quad \text{t}_3 \\
\text{OP}_2 \text{ that Mary saw } t_2
\end{array}
\]

\[
\downarrow \text{SPELL OUT}
\]

- **General Prediction:**
  Clefts should have the same properties as (specificationnal) copular sentences.

(2) a. \text{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:**
  i. **Cleft constituent & cleft-sentence** form part of a (clausal) syntactic constituent that is
     selected by a functional head F.
  ii. Cleft pronoun *it* is a semantically empty expletive subject
  iii. 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.

\Rightarrow \text{Asymmetry !}
(3)  a. IP
    It Δ′
    is₂ FP
    John₁ F′
    t₂ CP
    t₁′ C′
    that IP
    Mary saw t₁

b. IP
    It Δ′
    is₂ FP
    Johnᵢ F′
    t₂ CP
    whomᵢ C′
    Cₒ IP
    Mary saw t₁

c. IP
    It Δ′
    is₂ FP
    Johnᵢ F′
    t₂ CP
    (whoᵢᵢ) C′
    (that) IP
    t₁ saw Mary
2. **Data**

- **Connectedness effects**
  - **anaphor licensing**
    - (4) a. It is each other\textsubscript{i} [that they\textsubscript{i} trust the most]. [É. Kiss 1999: 217]
    - b. It was [a picture of himself\textsubscript{i}] [that Peter\textsubscript{i} was looking for].
    - c. It was herself\textsubscript{i} [that Mary\textsubscript{i} saw first]. [Percus 1997: 343]
    - d. ?It was himSELF\textsubscript{i} [that John\textsubscript{i} wanted Mary to describe] [Percus 1997: 343]
  - ii. **Semantic binding**
    - (5) It was [his\textsubscript{i} mother] [that every boy\textsubscript{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. \textbf{DP}
    - b. It was to John (that) I spoke. \textbf{PP}
    - c. It was in physics (that) I excelled. \textbf{PP}
    - d. *It was unhappy that Bill was. \textbf{AP}
    - e. *It was ask John for money that I heard you. \textbf{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: NObodyF saw John.
   A2: *It is NObodyF 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, Hedberg 2000: 906]

⇒ Mary picked a hat for herself.

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.

⇒ FIDENT 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.

Taking Stock & Modifications

Q1: How do the two analyses fare with respect to the observable data?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>phenomenon (ex. number)</th>
<th>Extraposition (Percus 1997)</th>
<th>Expletive (É. Kiss 1999)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>licensing of reflexives (4bc)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>licensing of long reflexives (4d)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>licensing of reciprocals (4a)</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>binding into cleft (5)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NPI-licensing (6ab)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>case-marking (7ab)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>scope facts (8)</td>
<td>??</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>categorical restrictions (9)</td>
<td>✓ (type e)</td>
<td>??</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>presence/absence of C/REL (10)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>modal auxiliaries (11)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>existence effects (12)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>??</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>uniqueness effects (13)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PP-clefting (14, 15)</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>additional functional structure</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>different underlying structures</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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 ∅.

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
cleffed 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.’

(20)

⇒ downward movement?

⇒ LF-reconstruction !

Prediction:
CLEFTING should not open up additional interpretive options over the basic specificationnal
Copula construction in terms of quantifier scope, binding, NPI-licensing etc.

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

(21) If a farmer owns a donkey [[DP he ∅] beats [DP it ∅]]
    = 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

\([\text{she}] = \lambda s. \, \tau x \, [x \, \text{is a speaker on SB in s}]\)

(24) A: What’s Zelda doing?
B: *She’s praising her 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. \([\text{he}] = [\text{the pope}]\)

iv. Formal implementation of Nunberg (Elbourne 2008):

(27) [it \[[R_1 \, i_2]\]]

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. \([it] = \lambda f_{<se,st>} \lambda s. \, \tau x \, [f(\lambda s’.x)(s) = 1]\)

\(\Rightarrow \text{it} \) takes a property-denoting expression and maps it onto an individual-concept, same as run-off-the-mill definite articles !!
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MM3, MM5 Clefting and focus
Malte Zimmermann & Shravan Vasishth

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

(29) \[ DP \text{ it} \ [NP \emptyset \ t_3] \quad \text{R-variable denoted by empty head-noun?} \]

(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

\[ \downarrow \quad \downarrow \]
\[ i \quad R \quad \text{value of R provided by relative clause?} \]

- 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?