

## On the differential use of subtypes of English clefts in dialogue

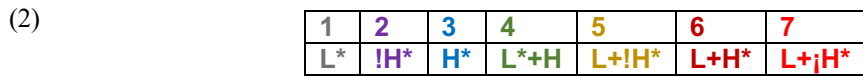
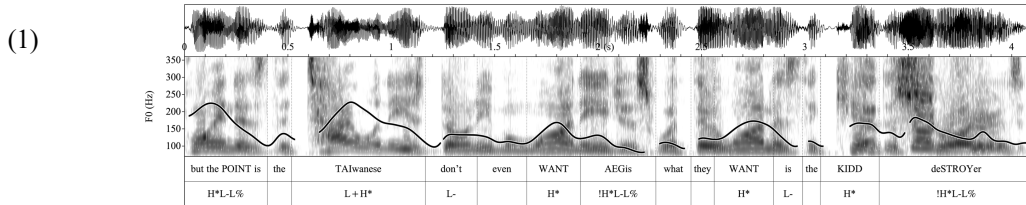
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Clefting, including English it-clefts (‘it’s the ECONOMY that people will be voting on’), wh-clefts (‘what people will be voting on is the ECONOMY’), and reverse wh-clefts (‘the ECONOMY is what people will be voting on’), is a syntactic mechanism enabling speakers to highlight a constituent of their message (the **focus**) against a residual sentential **background**. While the structural properties and range of pragmatic uses of different subtypes of clefts in a variety of languages are now fairly well explored, less is known about the motivations behind speakers’ decisions to choose between subtypes of clefts in particular contexts. The range of possible prosodic realizations of the cleft structures speakers employ in particular contexts is also not well understood.

We report on a pilot study which compared how the three subtypes of English clefts are used in spoken argumentative dialogue. We analyzed a set of 24 entity-focusing cleft tokens extracted from a corpus of 13 transcribed half-hour 2001-2002 episodes of the McLaughlin Group, which was a political affairs discussion program broadcast in the United States on PBS in which a moderator led a question-answer formatted discussion with four mostly regular guests.

Using Praat (Boersma & Weenink 2021) we first annotated the **intonation** of each token using ToBI (Silverman et al. 1992), as shown in (1). Based on findings such as those of González & Reglero 2023, Riester et al. 2020, and Baumann et al. 2021, we then used the metric shown in (2) to calculate a **prominence strength** (P-score) based on averaging the value assigned by the metric to the pitch accents realized in each token utterance. Third, we annotated each utterance with the **information structure** categories Focus (F), Background (BG), Contrastive Topic (CT), and Givenness (G), based on definitions from Riester et al. 2018 and Kratzer & Selkirk 2020, as illustrated in (3). Finally, we classified the **pragmatic subtype** of each cleft focus, based on definitions of subtypes of focus found in e.g. Molnár 2001, Umbach 2004, Krifka 2008, Repp 2016, and on the proposals of Destruel et al. 2019 and Cruschina 2020 to view such subtypes of focus as ranked along a gradient scale of expressive strength.



(3) [The *Taiwanese*]<sub>CT</sub> don't even [*want*]<sub>F</sub> [*Aegis*]<sub>BG</sub>. [What they *want*]<sub>CT</sub> is [the *Kidd destroyer*]<sub>F</sub>

Focus type:	Corrective	Additive	Mirative	Scalar	Restrictive	Informational
Distribution of P-scores:	Correcting alternative	Expanding the alternative set	Unexpected alternative	Extreme scalar value	Restricting the alternative set [± exclusive]	Unlimited alternative set
<b>IT</b>	<b>3.84</b>	4.25	4.17	3.60, 3.50	3.57, 3.25, 3.20	
<b>REV</b>	<b>3.13</b>				4.00, 3.50, 3.50, 3.25, 3.00	3.22, 2.93, 2.75, 2.00
<b>WH</b>	<b>3.14</b>				3.79, 3.67, 3.14, 2.86	3.13, 2.27
Average P-score	<b>4.50</b>	<b>4.25</b>	<b>4.17</b>	<b>3.55</b>	<b>3.39</b>	<b>2.72</b>

We preliminarily conclude from our data that (i) speakers use different subtypes of clefts for different pragmatic purposes which (ii) differ on a gradient scale of expressive strength that (iii) linearly correlates with a second gradient scale of pitch-accent prominence strength.

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