

Clausal Integration and the Generation of IT-Cleft Construction

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Received: December 2, 2014 Accepted: December 14, 2014 Published: December 31, 2014

doi:10.5296/ijl.v6i6.6718 URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5296/ijl.v6i6.6718>

Abstract

IT-cleft construction in English is an old but everlasting topic for researchers in linguistics. However, previous work on IT-cleft construction cannot adequately account for the link between the superordinate clause and the subordinate clause in IT-cleft construction. This paper discusses generation of the typical IT-cleft construction (i.e. NP-highlighted IT-cleft construction) with the apparatus of Clausal Integration Hypothesis. Following this hypothesis, the NP-highlighted IT-cleft construction consists of a superordinate clause and a subordinate clause wherein the NP highlighted constituent as new information represents an answer to the embedded question in the subordinate clause (the question may not physically appear). The superordinate clause phonetically and semantically inherits characteristics of the answer in the question-answer pair while the subordinate clause, which is known as a “relativized question”, inherits characteristics of the question in the question-answer pair.

Keywords: IT-cleft construction, Clausal Integration Hypothesis, Generation, Question-answer pair

1. Introduction

Cleft constructions in English have always, as Jucker (1996, p. 699) suggested, been a testing ground for linguistic frameworks. Previous work on clefts can be largely grouped into two approaches: the synchronic approach and the diachronic approach. The synchronic approach has paid much attention to form and function of cleft constructions regardless of their diachronic semantic changes. Most of the synchronic analyses of clefts after Jespersen have more or less been influenced by Jespersen's "transposition analysis" and "intercalation analysis". It is believed that some of the transformational analysis (e.g. Amajian, 1970; Gundel, 1977) and systemic-functional analysis (Halliday, 1994) are similar to Jespersen's "transposition analysis". Furthermore, most of the transformational studies (e.g. Chomsky, 1970; Williams, 1980; Delahunty, 1982; Rochemont, 1986, etc.) present some analyses which are similar to the "intercalation analysis" because they treat "it be" as an expletive element that serves to syntactically introduce the "highlighted element" (cleft constituent) (Hedberg, 1990, p. 50-53). The recent trend of approaching cleft constructions from a diachronic perspective has yielded some crucial new findings which in turn provide a new way for us to revisit cleft constructions (e.g. Patten, 2012; Traugott & Trousdale, 2013). However, neither the synchronic nor the diachronic approach can account for the link between the superordinate clauses (i.e. "It was John" in "It was John who broke the window") and the subordinate clauses (i.e. "who broke the window"). This paper tries to explain the generation of IT-cleft constructions with the apparatus of Clausal Integration Hypothesis in which the relation between the superordinate clauses and the subordinate clauses are largely bridged.

2. The Basics in the Clausal Integration

2.1 *Combination of Clauses*

Before discussing the notion of "clausal integration", we should at first consider what "grammaticalization" is. The term "grammaticalization" was probably first used by the French linguist Meillet as a type of language change which has then been discussed by numerous linguists (Givón, 1979; Heine & Reh, 1984; Lehmann, 1985; Traugott & Heine, 1991; Hopper & Traugott, 2003, etc.) The aim of studying grammaticalization, as Meillet (1912) suggested, is to investigate the transition of autonomous words into the role of grammatical elements (Hopper & Traugott, 2003, p. 19). Grammaticalization also refers to "the actual phenomena of language that the framework of grammaticalization seeks to address, most especially the process whereby items become more grammatical through time" (Hopper & Traugott, 2003). Givón (1979) proposes that there is a possibility of incorporating the combining process of clauses into the research of grammaticalization. A path of grammaticalization is suggested as follows (Givón, 1979, p. 209):

Discourse > Syntax > Morphology > Morphophonemics > Zero

A complex sentence can be syntactically defined as a unit that consists of more than one clause. In a complex sentence, the clause that can stand alone is referred to as a "nucleus"; the relatively dependent clauses are referred to as "margins", whereas they may not stand alone but exhibit different degrees of dependency (Hopper & Traugott, 2003).

As for language change, the initial formation of a complex clause involves a combination of two separate nuclei into a single integrated structure. This can be illustrated as “S1 ↔ S2”, and it implies the mutual relevance of two clauses. This combination makes the new single structure become a complex of two subclauses, thus the following formula “S=S1+S2” is generated. In clarifying this historical combination, Hopper & Traugott (2003, p. 177) propose three clines with three “cluster points” that can be represented as follows:

- (a) “Parataxis” or relative independence, except as constraint by the pragmatics of “making sense” and relevance;
- (b) “Hypotaxis” or interdependency, in which there is a nucleus, and one or more clauses which cannot stand by themselves, and are therefore relatively dependent. However, they are typically not wholly included with any constituent of the nucleus;
- (c) “Subordination” or in its extreme form, embedding, in other words, complete dependency, in which a margin is wholly included within a constituent of the nucleus.

These clines are manifested in the following sentences (Hopper & Traugott, p. 180-184):

- (1) (a) Veni, Vidi, Vici. (I came, I saw, I conquered)
(b) I drank too much wine and have a headache.
(c) I think the guy who just walked out of the store resembles the photo in the post-office window.

Examples (1a), (1b), (1c) presented above are instances of parataxis, hypotaxis, and subordination, respectively. Hopper & Traugott’s hypotheses adopt a descriptive perspective to some degree. But there are several limitations due to incomplete analyses of these clausal-combining mechanisms, such as how clauses are combined and why they are combined. Harris & Campbell (1995) further develop Hopper & Traugott’s hypotheses by elaborating clausal combinations on the syntactic level. For instance, as for clefts, Harris & Campbell examine examples of “cleft-to-highlighting” and “quotation-to-quotative transitions” in order for providing an overview of clausal integration. My arguments in this paper are generally associated with Hopper & Traugott’s statements and also owe much to Harris & Campbell’s tradition with regard to the position that clefts are integrated by two single clauses.

2.2 Componentiality

The term “componentiality” in linguistics means complex structures are assembled out of simpler ones or their components. According to cognitive grammar, most expressions are symbolic complex being assembled out of smaller symbolic elements (Langacker, 2008, p. 60). In most cases, a composite structure being assembled out of components can itself function as a component structure in an expression of greater symbolic complexity. For example, the phrase “lipstick” consists of two words “lip” and “stick”, which are then integrated as a whole forming a composite symbolic structure. Another pair “make” and “-er” shown as the symbolic components of a composite structure constitutes the composite

expression “maker”. As a result, the composite units “lipstick” and “maker” constitute the higher-level composite structure “lipstick maker”. Following Langacker, the relation between the components and composite structure is an instance of the *foreground-background* alignment. In light of the composite properties of “lipstick maker”, we can predict the single meaning embedded in “lipstick” and “maker”. According to the basic tenet of cognitive grammar, a composite structure’s meaning not only involves the semantic structure of its components, but also relates to its compositional path. The two parts as a whole constitute a *foreground-background* relationship. An important term should be identified here, namely, profile determinant, which can be defined as follows (Langacker 1987, p. 288-292; 1999, p. 13-18; 2008, p. 192-197):

Metaphorically, it can be said that the composite structure generally “inherits” its profile from the component structure. The component structure that “bequeaths” to its profile to the composite structure is referred to as “profile determinant” in cognitive grammar.

In the composite structure “lipstick maker”, “maker” is the profile determinant with “lipstick” as the modifier. In this paper IT-cleft can be thought of as a composite structure on the syntactic level which is assembled out of two single parts.

2.3 Clefts as Specificational Constructions

Recent studies of clefts have been inevitably intertwined with the notion of specificational constructions. Specificational copula sentences (e.g. Akmajian, 1970; Higgins, 1979; Declerck, 1988; Lahousser, 2009, etc.) are constructions whose overarching semantic function is that of specifying a value for a variable.

- (2) a. What I bought was this bag of oranges.
b. The champion was Tom.

Example (2a) is a specificational pseudo-cleft in that it specifies the value “this bag of oranges” for the variable “what I bought”. In (2b), it specifies the value “Tom” for the variable “the champion”. In such sentences, the post-copular phrase is used referentially rather than predicatively or attributively, therefore these entities are identified as “this bag of orange” and “Tom” rather than predicting a property of the entities “what I bought” and “the champion”. See examples in (3):

- (3) a. What I bought was heavy.
b. The champion was a middle school student.

In contrast to specificational sentences, examples in (3) are generally defined as predicational sentences where the elements after the copula are prediction of the current subject “what I bought” and “the champion” and the post-copular properties are “ascriptive” and “non-referential nominal” in (3a) and (3b) respectively (Traugott, 2008).

In general, the terminological differences between predicational and specificational sentences can be worked out clearly according to the following sentences:

- (4) a. What John is is important to him.
→Predicational: *important to him* predicates a property of *what John is*;

b. What John is is important to himself.

→Specificational: *important to himself* specifies a value for a variable in the wh-clause;

Sentence (4a) is “predicational” since there is no cleaving process, which is more of a common predicational copular sentence with a free clause as the subject and the postcopular part as the predicate. In contrast, it seems that some real “cleaving” of the sentence *John is important to himself* into two portions as forming (4b) with *important to himself* specifying a value for the variable. In specificational sentences, the postcopular part seems to be the underlying subject of the predicate denoted by the wh-clause in precopular position. In other words, the major semantic difference between specificational and predicational copular sentences is the “presence or absence of a connectivity effect” (Lahousse, 2009, p. 140).

As a subtype of specificational copular sentences, specificational pseudoclefts exhibit three major characteristics (e.g. Amajian, 1970; Ross, 1972; Higgins, 1979; Declerck, 1988; Lambrecht, 2001; Dikken, 2000, 2006, 2008; etc.):

(a) The postcopular constituent appears to be “more referential” than the precopular phrase;

(b) The sentence may show kind of “connectedness” or “connectivity effects”;

(c) The postcopular constituent is interpreted as the focus.

A distinction of “predicational” and “specificational” can be elaborated in the following sentences:

(5) It was a fantastic party that I went to last night.

a. Predicational: the party that I went to last night was fantastic

b. Specificational: I went to the following place last night: a fantastic party (the only place I went to last night)

Example (5) exhibits two types of readings. The first construal regards it as a predicational sentence, only the attributive adjective *fantastic* supplies new information, so it seems only the adjective is phonetically stressed. Instead the second reading views it as a specificational sentence wherein the noun phrase *a fantastic party* is the focus of the whole sentence which carries new message.

Like specificational pseudoclefts, specificational IT-clefts, as Huber (2005: 563) suggested, have at least three important categories (see also Prince, 1978; Declerck, 1988; Hedberg, 2000; Huber, 2005; Dikken, 2008; Traugott, 2014; etc.):

a. contrastive or stressed focus IT-clefts;

b. continuous-topic IT-clefts;

c. discontinuous or all-new or broad-focus IT-clefts.

As for the contrastive IT-clefts, the value (focus) must be focally stressed, while the relative clause typically receives no stress. In contrast, in the continuous-topic IT-clefts, the relative clause conveys new information, thus receives prosodic prominence. In the “all-new” clefts,

both the cleft constituent and clausal constituent contain new message; the cleft sentence should be all focused, according to Huber (2005, p. 565), there are two subtypes: there would be a maximally focused clefts that display a “topic-comment structure”, on one hand; there would be clefts that lack a topic, thus rendering a “all-comment structure” which is a typical feature for the so-called “thetic” sentences.

The distinction between “predicational” and “specificational” sentences is not only to distinguish some cleft-like structures from clefts, but also consider a possibility of embedding a “question-answer” pair in clefts wherein the “variable” as a “question” is specified by a “value” that represents an “answer”.

3. The Generation of IT-Cleft Constructions

3.1 *The Question-Answer Pair in the IT-cleft Constructions*

According to Declerck (1988, p. 6; see also Lahousse, 2009, p. 140), specifying a value for a variable is similar to “enumerating the items on the list” and “providing the answer to a question”. Some proponents of *Question-in-Disguise Theory* (Ross, 1972; Dikken, et al., 2000; Dikken, 2008; Schlenker, 2003, etc.) have analyzed pseudoclefts as question-answer pairs, where part of the answer is elided. Look at the sentence listed below (Schlenker, 2003, p. 157)

(6) What John likes is himself.

Following Schlenker, (6) can be generally considered as an “elided answer” to “what John likes is John likes himself”. Schlenker further states that “a connectivity sentence (as specificational sentences) is an equation of two clauses: a concealed question and an elided answer” (p. 159). Dikken (2006) rejects the popular “relative clause analysis of wh-clefts” by claiming that WHAT clause is not a free relative but an embedded question. These arguments seem to be in accordance with Harris & Campbell (1995)’s cross-linguistic research by suggesting that the appearance of subordination representing dialogue is a secondary effect of the fact that certain devices which mark subordination indeed originate from questions and then are extended to subordinations.

Fowler & Fowler (1931) suggest that all clefts should be seen answering a question that is on the hearer’s mind (Ball, 1994, p. 610). Fowler & Fowler’s discussion is of great significance to conduct a clausal integration approach to the generation of IT-cleft Construction. In this paper I would take this view, but what I want to emphasize is that the “question” which corresponds to the clefts can either be an actual one, which obviously emerges in the current discourse, or untraceable in the immediate discourse but logically or psychologically exists. In other words, the questions relate to clefts in most cases can only be mentally accessed in the mind rather than being displayed physically in form.

This position can account for Traugott (2008)’s report about pseudoclefts wherein she has attempted to testify the hypothesis that wh-clefts and all-clefts are likely to have arisen from dialogic contexts. Unfortunately, the result shows only all-clefts in the formula “all I can say” is “dialogual” or associated with the question-answer pairs, and other types of clefts are marginally related to dialogic contexts. Nevertheless, this evidence cannot disapprove the

proposal that the cleft tends to answer a question. The reason behind is partially due to the fact that the question does not physically appear in the discourse but is embedded or fused in the cleft, which might have lost its original form and is difficult to be tracked down.

In terms of these previous related studies (see Fowler & Fowler, 1931/1973; Huddleston, 1984; Ross, 1972; 1985; 1997; Harris & Campbell, 1995; Schlenker, 2003; Dikken, at al., 2000; Dikken, 2006, 2008; and many others), a hypothesis for the generation of IT-cleft is suggested as follows:

The original NP-highlighted IT-cleft construction consists of a superordinate clause and a subordinate clause; the NP highlighted constituent as new information represents the answer to an embedded question in the subordinate clause which is currently shown as the presupposition.

The above hypothesis is suggested in this paper to account for the generation of IT-clefts, which can be illustrated by the following example.

- (7) It was the interrogation that frightened him most.
The superordinate clause: it was the interrogation
(Answer)
The subordinate clause: that frightened him most
(Relativized question)

Consider the subordinate clause in (7), it is represented as a “dependent element”, which does not like a real question but emerges as a declarative form of a question, that is, more of a disguised question than an explicit one, but it cannot stand as a separate unit. The NP constituent as the focus represents an exact answer to the embedded question, together with “it was” constituting the superordinate clause, an autonomous part, in most cases. This hypothesis is quite similar to Polotzky’s (1960) proposal that “(the cleft) consists of an adjunction and two underlying sentences” (Lee, 1963, p. 372). He argues that the cleft “it is the wife who decides” could be thought of as a derivation of two clauses: *it is the wife* vs. *who decides*. This proposal has been criticized since “either of the two underlying sentences might in certain cases not be available as source” (Lee, 1963, p. 372). Huang (2003, p. 25) points out that, for Polotzky, “it is of him” is the superordinate clause of the cleft “it is of him that I asked”, but “it is of him” cannot be easily accepted as an idiomatic sentence. However, we shall see, almost all noun phrases seem to be possibly accepted in the “it copula be NP” formula, but of course the subordinate part in clefts is not always feasible to be an independent part because it has been modified like a relative clause thus losing its independence. On the other side, “it is of him” can also be accepted as an answer to the question “who did you ask (of)” according to the clausal integration hypothesis. Therefore, the above criticisms cannot challenge the hypothesis.

After identifying the question-answer feature in IT-clefts, the next question is: how is the clausal integration realized in IT-cleft construction? The basic principle for clausal integration or fusion of clefts is “componentiality” of linguistic organization. This kind of componentiality occurs not only on the lexical level, but also on the syntactic level. We have suggested that the cleft is closely associated with a question that physically or

psychologically exists, and this part will identify how these questions are realized in IT-clefts. Consider examples below:

- (8) a. What Martin ate was the banana. (Wh-cleft)
b. All Martin ate was the banana. (All-cleft)
c. It was the banana that Martin ate. (It-cleft)

The clefts and pseudoclefts listed above can be considered as an answer to the question below (Traugott, 2008, p. 150):

- (9) What did Martin eat?

The interrogative sentence in (9) is generally called a “special question”. That differs from these general questions, alternative questions, alternative questions or tag questions in that the interrogative words in special questions are among “who, what, which, where, when, why, and how”. However, not every kind of “wh-question” can exactly serve a potential question to a cleft. For example,

- (10) a. What’s that? --It’s a book/a pen/a picture/a house.
b. Who is he? --He is my teacher/father/student.

These “wh-questions” in (10) can hardly be eligible for generating a question for clefts since their corresponding answers are always predicational rather than specificational. It seems that only “specific reference question” can be a qualified question for clefts. Example (9) in most cases is equivalent to the following counterpart:

- (11) What Martin ate?

That is to say that both (9) and (11) can be eligible questions to clefts in (8). Example (11) generally gives rise to two major characteristics. The first is that this sentence carries some given information or at least can be recoverable from contexts, and “Martin ate” here has this status which might also carry some presuppositions in terms of the proposition corresponding to this sentence. The second is that “what” as a “slot” tends to carry new information and thus potentially indicates the “focus”.

As for (11), its distribution of information structure can be listed as follows:

Presupposition: Martin ate X

Forthcoming focus: X (the information “what” denotes)

Following the question-answer pairs, the interrogative point (referred to as “wh-words”) often indicates the “focus” and the answer directly corresponds to the question, but the given information or presupposition in most cases is omitted in the answers (Zhang & Hu, 1989; Chen, 2000). In light of (11), the possible answers with regard to their corresponding clefts in (8) might be:

- (12) What Martin ate?
a. The (this) banana.
b. The banana, he ate.

- c. He ate the banana.
- d. What Martin ate was the banana.
- e. All Martin ate was the banana.

In the examples illustrated above, only (12a) offers entirely new information with regard to its corresponding question. In other cases, given information or presupposition is more or less involved in the answers. Given or presuppositional information can be elided partly because of “Principle of Economy” in communication. The next question is: Why is the given or presuppositional information in the clefts usually treated as an essential part which cannot be omitted easily since reduced IT-clefts are really infrequent in use? This question may lead us to another important question that will be discussed in the coming part, i.e. why can the NP highlighted cleft always bear new information and given information at the same time?

The pseudoclefts, such as *wh*-clefts and *all*-clefts, seen from the historical evidence, are scarcely associated with a question in a real discourse except the “all I can say is X” type (Traugott & Trousdale, 2013). The same is true to that of IT-clefts; hence most scholars do not tend to believe clefts are related to a question. See the example:

- (13) a. What Martin ate?
b. The banana.

The question-answer pair in (13) forms a “discourse”, more specifically, a usage event. It constitutes an integrated discourse with its independent semantic status. Therefore, the given information which may be presented in (13b) can be omitted. But this question-answer pair is inconvenient or common in the written English, and however, if the question is elided as it happens in most cases, leaving the answer like (13b) alone, it will lead to a threat of “information incompleteness” in the current discourse since “the banana” cannot usually convey the adequate semantic content as that of a corresponding cleft. This solution could cause an integration of the “answer” and the “elided question” in the question-answer pair. There are two reasons with regard to the integration of the question and answer pair. On the one hand, the answer and question can form an integrated semantic unit or a discourse, thus can be applicable to a text. On the other hand, the embedded question usually has a restrictive function; it then together with the answer forms the “identifying function” of the clefts by strengthening the focusing capability of this sentence.

3.2 Realization of Clausal Integration in IT-cleft Construction

3.2.1 Realization of the Superordinate Clause

In this paper we will approach the generation of IT-clefts using the apparatus of Clausal Integration Hypothesis. The transformational generative approach’s “base-generation” analysis is inherently similar to the systemic functional perspective by claiming that clefts are derived from their “non-clefting” forms known as “congruent simple clauses”. In this paper we take the view that the generation of IT-cleft (the NP highlighted IT-cleft) is a result of clausal integration and then undergoes a process of grammaticalization.

Heine & Reh (1984, p. 109-10, 147-82; Harris & Campbell, 1995, p. 152) have proposed three historical stages for IT-clefts:

Stage 1: There is a cleft structure something like: (NP/PP) copula-subordinate clause.

This structure serves to foreground new, asserted information, expressed by the sentence initial constituent, the presupposed part of the sentence being encoded in the subordinate clause;

Stage 2: The copula is desemanticized to a focus-marker. This structure is exploited to optionally emphasize WH-words.

Stage 3: The focus construction undergoes functional shift, i.e. it is no longer possible on synchronic grounds to derive it from the cleft construction, its source.

Generally speaking, two observations arise from Heine & Reh's hypotheses. For one thing, the function of "clefting" comes earlier than "highlighting" in IT-clefts. For another, the generation of IT-clefts is grounded in grammaticalization. Harris & Campbell (1995)'s clausal fusion is largely based on this position. This paper argues that it is the identifying function of "copular be" that makes clefts derive their function of "highlighting". In other words, the "exclusive identifying function" is formed before the clausal fusion of clefts. Consider the following example:

(14) Who broke the window?

Simple answers:

- a. John.
- b. John did it.
- c. It was done by John.

Identifying answers:

- d. It was John.
- e. It was John who did it.
- f. The one who did it was John.
- g. John was the one who did it.

As we shall see, almost every sentence carries new information "John", but the differences are: 1) the sentences in (14d), (14e), (14f), and (g) exhibit the feature of exclusive identification or exhaustive listing; 2) in the sentences (14e), (14f), and (14g), information is organized into two parts: representing presupposed and non-presupposed material wherein JOHN receives prominence. Hence, (14d) has the same "identifying function" with that of (14e), (14f), (14g). (14d) and (14e) are functionally the same regarding the question "Who broke the window?" is given. But both types can be the marked answers to the question by carrying implied exhaustive listing of the candidates, especially (14e), it rarely emerges in the dialogic discourse where a question is obviously presented. Sentence (14d) is like a "reduced IT-cleft", which has been discussed by a number of scholars (Poutsma, 1916; Declerck, 1988; Collins, 1991, and many others). Consider the following example (Huang, 2003: 15):

(15) She called the desk and told him it was OK, to put through calls now. Then she telephoned and requested a temporary secretary to do her typing. The phone rang as soon as she put it down. Surprise, it was her mother, the impeccable Stella.

...

The phone rang again. This time it was Mike. He was contrite.

The sentences underlined are known as ‘it reduced clefts’ in that they can be expanded into their full forms within the contexts (Huang, 2003, p. 15), as follows:

- (16) a. Surprise, it was her mother, the impeccable Stella that was on the phone.
b. This time it was Mike that was on the phone.

Example (14d) can also be expanded into its own full form, which would bring out the sentence in (14e) in which “did” is used to take the place of “broke” to avoid repetition. In short, we can say that the historical transformation from “predicative *be*” to “specificational *be*” is a crucial part for the generation of IT-clefts where the “identifying exclusive” function of “copula *be*” is induced. In (14d), “John” receives the intonational and informational salience, indicating the implied meaning, namely, the exhaustive listing: it was John, not others (who has committed the action of breaking the window).

This proposal could be criticized for the same reason as given to H. J. Polotzky’s (1960) proposal, as follows: the (subj. copular *be* identified obj.) sentence is not an idiomatical answer to the question or in certain cases it cannot be available as sources. Part of the answer we have offered before as the NP highlighted IT-clefts wherein the NP is shown as the “object” are the most possible kind for the superordinate clause to stand alone as an independent clause. Moreover, the answer like (14d) is actually not an idiomatic answer to its corresponding question compared to its unmarked counterparts (14a), (14b) and (14c), but it can of course represent a marked answer carrying some implied meanings, namely the exhaustive identifying of the postcopular constituents. Therefore, the uprising of “identifying copular *be*” is crucial for generation of NP highlighted IT-clefts since it marks production of the “superordinate clause” in the NP highlighted IT-clefts.

3.2.2 Realization of the Subordinate Clause

The “subordinate clause”, as suggested before, is an embedded question shown as the presupposition with the answer offered in the superordinate part. Following this position, the subordinate clause could be regarded as a “relativized question”. In (14), the subordinate clause “who did it” is the conversion of “who broke the window?”, and shared information the verb phrase “break” and the noun phrase “window” are substituted by “did’ and “it” for avoiding repetition, which can be recoverable from discourse.

How could a question be converted to a relative-like clause as the subordinate constituent? Now, we shall evoke a set of Quirk et al.’s (1985, p. 1385) examples to answer that question.

- (17) John wore a white suit at the dance last night.

Subject as focus:

- a. It was John who/that wore a white suit at the dance last night.

Object as focus:

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

Time adverbials as focus:

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

Position adverbials as focus:

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

These examples are considerably quoted mainly because they are typical examples of IT-clefts. These sentences might be thought mentally answering the following questions:

(18) a. Who wore a white suit at the dance last night?

b. What John wore at the dance last night? / What did John wear at the dance last night?

c. When John wore a white suit at the dance? / When did John wear a white suit at the dance?

d. Where John wore a white suit last night? / Where did John wear a white suit last night?

The normal order “wh-questions” are presented before the “inverted” kinds simply because we would claim that such kinds of questions are the most possible sources for the subordinate sentences in IT-clefts. Both kinds of questions, however, function almost the same, and the only difference lies in: the syntactic order, using the “auxiliary verbs” like “do” or not. The normal order questions and inverted questions can usually be transformed or converted. In most cases, the inverted kind might be more popular, but it of course does not affect our analysis of the question corresponding to the subordinate clause in IT-clefts. Now, the sentences in (18) would be invoked as examples to explicate how the subordinate clause of IT-clefts is formed.

(19) **Case 1: Subject** as focus

Possible question:

Who wore a white suit at the dance last night?



It clefts: It was John who wore a white suit at the dance last night.

In this case, the subordinate clause directly inherits almost all the elements of a question, so it is known as “full componential copying”. When the subject refers to a “person”, “who” might be the most frequent “relative word” in most cases, however, “who” can still be substituted by the most important relative word in IT-clefts, namely, “that”. But when the subject refers to an entity that is not a person like a “dog” or some “flowers”, there is something different:

(20) Question: What bit you?

What gave out the perfume?



It-clefts: It was the dog that bit me. It was the flowers that gave out the perfume.

Therefore, if the subject is not a person, there might be something different to the “relative word”, however, the relative word “that” is always the most eligible word to cover all kinds of subjects as shown in (17). Another relative word “which” can also be used in many cases when its referent is a thing instead of a person, and there is still another possible option: zero relative (without a relative word).

(21) **Case 2: Object** as focus

Possible question:

What John wore at the dance last night?

↓

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

In (21), “what” cannot be inherited as a relative word. Two options are here acting as the “relative clause realization device”: one is an addition of “that” and another is a cancellation of “that”.

(22) **Case 3: Time** adverbials as focus

Possible question: When John wore a white suit at the dance?

↓

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

The word “when” can occasionally function as the relative word in IT-clefts according to Collins (1991, p. 35)’s corpus-based investigation, but with a marginal number. It seems that it is the “frequency effect” that makes the relative “when” not be entrenched as prototypical use in IT-clefts. In contrast, the relative “that”, which is eligible as a dominant figure in IT-clefts, is largely based on its high frequency in use which enables it to be more entrenched.

(23) **Case 4: Position** adverbials as focus

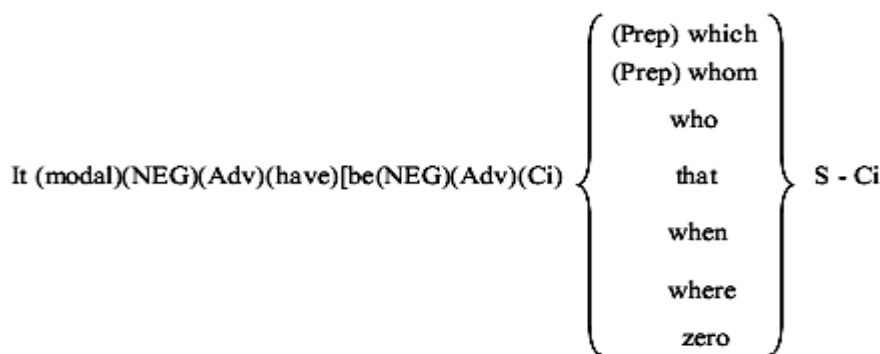
Possible question: Where John wore a white suit last night?

↓

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

The word “where” is not always shown as the relative word in IT-clefts. When “position adverbial” is shown as the focus, “zero relative” or “that” is the most possible relative word. Besides, some other syntactic elements can also be highlighted. But no matter what kind of elements is highlighted, the subordinate clause can be regarded as an inheritance of its corresponding question. The subordinate clause undergoes kind of modification, which brings out a superficially relative-like question, but differs from a real relative in many ways.

In terms of Prince’s (1978) formula on the possible elements in IT-clefts, Collins (1991: 36) modifies her formula as follows:



- Notes: (1) Only one occurrence of NEG and Adv is possible.
 (2) If the items in square brackets are absent, only that or zero may be selected.

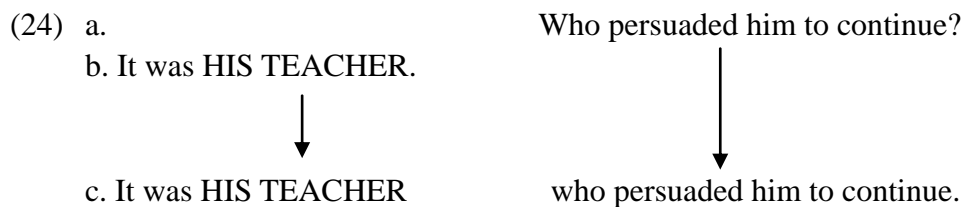
According to the formula listed above, there are numerous possible kinds of relative words can appear in IT-clefts as that in real relative clauses. But they differ from each other in the frequency of use.

4.3.3 The Relation between Clauses in IT-cleft Construction

As we have seen, IT-cleft construction is a composite structure with two basic components: a superordinate clause vs. a subordinate clause, wherein the former represents an answer to a specific reference question and the latter is shown as a relative-like clause inherited from the specific reference question. Therefore, IT-cleft is an embedment of a question and an answer.

IT-cleft construction is a composite structure with two parts which have different status. It is “typical in constructions for the composite semantic structure to profile the same entity as one of the component structure” (Langacker, 2008, p. 192). What exactly is the semantic relation between the two clauses in IT-clefts? The notion “profile determinant” that has been mentioned earlier might be the key answer to the question. The concept “profile determinant” refers to the component structure, in a composite architecture, which directly inherits its profile to the composite structure. For example, the composite phrase “woman teacher” has the same profile as “teacher”, with “woman” functioning as the modifier. In a composite structure like “the apple on the table” profiles the nominal entity “the apple” with “on the table” as the complement.

Now, let’s look at the “profiling” relation in IT-clefts, see example (24):



The above example represents the typical function of the NP highlighted IT-clefts: the highlighted element as the focus conveying new information and the embedded clause carries presupposition. (24b) as the “identifying answer” with the function of “exhaustive listing” obviously presents as the “profile determinant” since its function is almost phonetically and

Table 1. The inheritance of (24c) from (24b)

	phonetically	semantically
(24b): the answer	“his teacher” receives “stress”	identifying; exclusive listing (weak)
(24c): IT-cleft	“his teacher” receives “stress”	identifying; exclusive listing (strong)

The table shows that the cleft (24c) has phonetically and semantically inherited most properties of the answer in (24b). This kind of “profile determinant” relation is intertwined with the figure/ground alignment. It is believed that the inherited answer as in (24c) is a type of figure in that the entity designated by the inherited answer is profiled in the IT-cleft as a composite whole, while the inherited question is shown as the ground. It will be acknowledged that semantic functions of (24c) are not wholly inherited from (24a) and 24b).

In other words, there is no full componentiality at all in the integration of (24c) in terms of some new properties being derived in the process of clausal integration as illustrated in Table 1. From this table, it will be noted that embedding or relativizing of the question adds a presupposition to the cleft in (24c) which in turn constitutes restrictions to the superordinate clause. The part to be identified, namely, the postcopular constituent, as a “slot” for new information, has more focusing capability after addition of the embedded clause for restriction. Meanwhile, semantic restriction of the subordinate clause strengthens the “exclusive listing” function of the “identifying copular be” in IT-clefts as shown in the table.

The following figure will be presented to demonstrate the overall relation involved in the clausal integration of (24c).

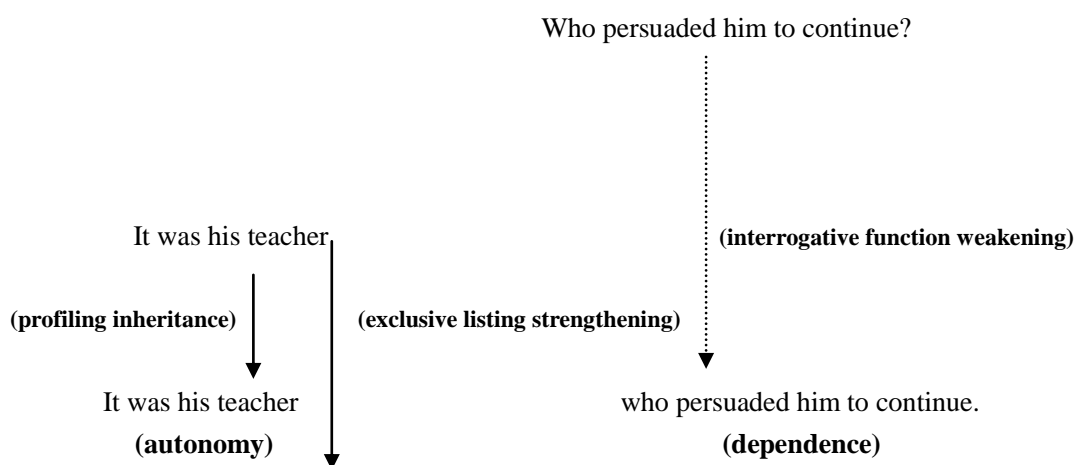


Figure 1. The major characteristics in clausal integration of NP highlighted IT-clefts

In sum, IT-cleft inherits most of the properties from its corresponding question and answer pair in the process of clausal integration. It is clausal integration that brings out some new features in the composite structure, such as strengthening the exclusive listing in the superordinate clause vs. weakening the interrogative function in the subordinate clause. The subordinate clause as an embedded part seems to be inherently restrictive which greatly contributes to identification of the definite phrase, that is, the postcopular constituent, and this intense identification makes NP highlighted IT-cleft an eligible member of specificational sentences. Ultimately, this integrating process brings forth two basic constituents in IT-clefts: the superordinate clause as “an autonomous part” vs. the subordinate clause as “a dependent part” which in most cases cannot be easily reduced to its corresponding question without any additional operating rules. It is necessary to point out that clausal integration of IT-clefts is not simply a process of adding components but relating to structural grammaticalization. This structural grammaticalization involves degrading of “wh-words” as “connectives” and grammaticalizing IT-cleft as a construction for focusing.

4. Conclusion

This paper has mainly discussed the generation of IT-cleft construction with the apparatus of Clausal Integration Hypothesis. We began by considering possibilities for the clausal

integration of IT-clefts. It is believed that the question-answer pair hypothesis provides some supporting evidence for our argumentation in the clausal integration of NP highlighted IT-clefts. The NP-highlighted IT-cleft construction consists of a superordinate clause and a subordinate clause wherein the NP highlighted constituent as new information represents the answer to an embedded question in the subordinate clause (the question may not physically appear in discourse). The superordinate clause phonetically and semantically inherits characteristics of the answer in the question-answer pair while the subordinate clause, which is known as a “relativized question”, inherits many characteristics of the question in the question-answer pair. As a whole, it seems that IT-clefts are always not totally reducible but analyzable.

Acknowledgement

This research is supported by the following projects: The Key Project of the Key Research Institute of Humanities and Social Science in Chongqing (13SKB023), The 56th General Financial Grant from the China Postdoctoral Science Foundation (2014M562262), Project Funded by Chongqing Postdoctoral Research Foundation (Xm2014011) and The Fundamental Research Funds for the Central Universities (SWU1409169).

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