

CANONICAL CLEFTS AND PSEUDO-CLEFTS IN DISCOURSE

Clivadas canônicas e pseudoclivadas no discurso

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ABSTRACT: This article discusses the function of canonical clefts and pseudo-clefts in discourse. More specifically, it analyses how their Information Structure explains their use as a cohesive device. Based on an analysis of these structures in written texts, I conclude that the cleft clause of a pseudo-cleft functions as the topic of a subsection, to which the constituent clause adds information. Canonical clefts, on the other hand, commonly introduce background information as discourse openers or reaffirm an entity to an open proposition when concluding a segment of the discourse.

KEYWORDS: canonical clefts; pseudo-clefts; Information Structure.

RESUMO: Este artigo discute a função das clivadas canônicas e das pseudoclivadas no discurso. Mais especificamente, analisa como sua Estrutura Informacional explica seu uso como um dispositivo de coesão. Com base em uma análise dessas estruturas em textos escritos, concluo que a oração clivada de uma pseudoclivada funciona como o tema de uma subseção, à qual o constituinte clivado adiciona informações. As clivadas canônicas, por outro lado, comumente introduzem informações de fundo ao abrir o discurso ou reafirmam uma entidade em uma proposição aberta ao concluir um segmento do discurso.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: clivadas canônicas; pseudoclivadas; Estrutura Informacional.

INTRODUCTION

Human languages allow speakers to convey the same idea through a variety of grammatical forms. This is a remarkable feature: passive sentences, inversions, and topicalizations, among others, are examples of structures that offer flexibility — that is, the ability to express a given propositional content in multiple ways.

(1)

Simple sentence: You should rarely feed this animal.

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- a. Passive: This animal should rarely be fed.
- b. Inversion: Rarely should you feed this animal.
- c. Topicalization: This animal, you should rarely feed (it).

Among these, a special type is the **cleft sentence**, defined by Lambrecht (2001: 467) as

a complex sentence structure consisting of a matrix clause headed by a copula and a relative or relative-like clause whose relativized argument is coindexed with the predicative argument of the copula. Taken together, the matrix and the relative express a logically simple proposition, which can also be expressed in the form of a single clause without change in truth conditions.

Traditionally, clefts seem to divide a simple sentence, like ‘you should rarely feed this animal’, into two parts: the cleft constituent and the cleft clause. This division results in information being distributed in a unique way: while the cleft constituent conveys **new information**, the cleft clause conveys **old** or **shared/given information**.

(2)

Simple sentence: You should rarely feed this animal.

Cleft sentence: It is this animal that you should rarely feed.

Cleft constituent: this animal

Cleft clause: you should rarely feed (it)

old information: you should rarely feed x

new information: this animal

It is generally understood that in (2) both speaker and hearer share the proposition “x animal should rarely be fed”, but only the speaker knows which animal fills the variable “x”. Therefore, when the speaker utters the sentence, the cleft constituent is new for the listener (Prince, 1978; Lambrecht, 2001).

Clefts can be subdivided into several forms. In English, the most frequent are the **it-cleft** (also called **canonical cleft**), the **pseudo-cleft**, and the **inverted pseudo-cleft**:

(3)

- a. It is this animal that you should rarely feed. (It-cleft)
- b. What you should rarely feed is this animal. (Pseudo-cleft)
- c. This animal is what you should rarely feed. (Inverted Pseudo-cleft)

Other forms include **all clefts** and **there-clefts**:

(4)

- a. All clefts: “All the car needs is a new battery” (Collins, 1991: 32).
- b. There-clefts: “There are two children (who) started talking at eight months” (Collins, 1992 :1)

Brazilian Portuguese includes a variety of subtypes as well. Canonical clefts and pseudo-clefts, for example, correspond to the it-clefts and pseudo-clefts of English.

(5)

- a. Foi o bolo que eu comi.
'It was the cake that I ate.'

- c. O que eu comi foi o bolo.
'What I ate was the cake.'

Similarly, Brazilian Portuguese includes other forms – some of which curiously lack a copula ((Braga 2009: 180-181); also called **reduced clefts**; see Andrade (2019: 103)).

(6)

a. “É QUE” Construction

Dinheiro **é que** tem muito.

‘It's money that there is a lot of.’

b. “QUE” Construction

Os jogadores **que** falam mal da imprensa.

‘(It's) the players that speak badly of the press.’

c. “Focus SER” Construction

Tinha que fazer **era** processar o homem.

‘What should have been done was to sue the man.’

(Braga, 2009: 180-181)

Given this range, we wonder whether these structures are synonymous. In other words: can they be used interchangeably in any context? As Lambrecht (2001) pointed out, there is no change in truth conditions when a simple sentence is rephrased as a cleft. Is their purpose to simply provide speakers with a variety of forms, aiming to enrich discourse?

If we follow the words of Bolinger (1972b: 71), the answer is no.

There are situations where the speaker is constrained by a grammatical rule, and there are situations where he chooses according to his meaning ...; but there are no situations in the system where “it makes no difference” which way you go... This is just another way of saying that every contrast a language permits to survive is relevant, some time or other.

More so if we analyse them under their **Information Structure**, a subfield of linguistics that studies “the ways linguistically encoded information is presented relative to the speaker’s estimate of the temporary mental state of the receiver of the message” (Matić, 2015 :95; Chafe, 1976). That is, Information Structure is concerned

with the link between memory and language, the way the **cognitive status** of the information (if old or new) shapes our linguistic choices. As a result, Information Structure affects our understanding of discourse organisation – in the case of clefts, it helps to understand their function as a cohesive device.

This idea is not new. De Cesare (2017: 544) claims that “clefts are important cohesive devices, functioning as links between different portions of a text”. According to Hedberg (1990: 26), they “are also used to mark a transition from one segment of discourse to the next”. In the study of clefts in French, Bourgoin (2019: 29) notes that, in research discourse, “the combination of the repetition of arguments and the emphasis laid on them with cleft constructions creates an explicit structure that accompanies the article’s titles and subtitles”.

Studies in Brazilian Portuguese also point to clefts having specific textual functions. Menuzzi and Roisenberg (2010) identified canonical clefts whose purpose is to end a segment of the discourse, which they call **conclusive clefts** – a type further studied by Moretto (2014; 2021) and Andrade (2019). Based on the Segmented Discourse Representation Theory (Asher and Lascarides, 2013), Andrade (2019) identified conclusive clefts associated with the textual functions of Background, Comment, Elaboration, and Explanation. The author’s results are in line with those found by Moretto (2014), who studied the structures through the framework of the Rhetorical Structure Theory (Mann and Thomsson, 2014).

This article examines the Information Structure (IS) of canonical clefts and pseudo-clefts and the way they affect the organisation of the discourse. Based on an analysis of their function in Brazilian Portuguese, I conclude that (i) canonical clefts and pseudo-clefts are in complementary distribution; (ii) when real data is considered, their study involves the calculation of complex semantic and pragmatic inferences; (iii) as predicted, they function as a type of cohesive device; (iv) the cognitive status of each component of the cleft is crucial for understanding the aforementioned distribution in discourse.

I should note that it is beyond the scope of this article the discussion regarding the syntax of these structures, as well as the discussion of subcategories other than the canonical cleft and the pseudo-cleft. Since my primary focus is on demonstrating

how clefts function as a mechanism that organises the discourse, it suffices to study these two types through Information Structure.²

1. INFORMATION STRUCTURE

The term Information Structure (IS) was first used by Halliday (1967: 199) in the article “Notes on transitivity and theme in English: Part 2”.

The English clause, it is suggested, can be regarded as the domain of three main areas of syntactic choice: transitivity, mood and theme. [...] Theme is concerned with the information structure of the clause; with the status of the elements not as participants in extralinguistic processes but as components of a message; with the relation of what has gone before in the discourse, and its internal organisation into an act of communication.

A similar notion, **information packaging**, had already been used by Chafe (1976). It referred “to those aspects that respond to the temporary state of the addressee’s mind, thus excluding several other aspects of messages, like reference to long-term background knowledge, choice of language or level of politeness” (Krifka, 2006: 2). These features, however, are studied as part of IS today. Matic’ (2015: 95), for example, defines it in the following way:

Information Structure is a subfield of linguistic research dealing with the ways speakers encode instructions to the hearer on how to process the message relative to their temporary mental states. To this end, sentences are segmented into parts conveying known and yet-unknown information, usually labeled ‘topic’ and ‘focus.’ Many languages have developed specialized grammatical and lexical means of indicating this segmentation.

Therefore, what remains is the idea that IS views information as a cognitive entity, an element which is stored in the speaker’s mind and is transferred to the hearer’s during communication. It sees the exchanging of information as an activity that constantly changes the background knowledge of its participants and, contrary to Chafe’s (1976) initial understanding, affects our linguistic choices. In this model,

² This article follows from my master’s and doctoral studies, conducted under the supervision of Professor Sérgio de Moura Menuzzi at the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS). I thank him for having supervised me, and through this article I hope to demonstrate his contributions to the study of the interface between syntax, semantics, pragmatics, and discourse.

differences in knowledge are reduced between participants while “the stock of shared knowledge” increases their **common ground** (Stalnaker, 1999; Matic, 2015). “In order to do this, constraints on the input to the common ground have to be taken into account: only such content can be added which relates to the previously existing knowledge” (Matic, 2015: 95).

Central to IS are concepts such as old information and new information, topic, and comment. In the subsections below, I present these in detail.

1.1 OLD INFORMATION X NEW INFORMATION

According to Prince (1988: 1), the term **discourse analysis** can be interpreted in two ways: under a **humanistic tack** and a **scientific tack**. While the humanistic tack studies what makes a text special (as opposed to others in a similar class or genre), the scientific tack aims at understanding “what general principles of texthood are discernible from a single token of text.” It is the latter approach that Prince (1988) is concerned with.

Within this approach, it is necessary to clearly differentiate old/given information from new information, due to the inexistence of a universally agreed definition (Prince, 1988: 5). Prince (1988) offers her own account, in which she defines old and new as three separate categories.

The first is the **focus-pressuposition construction** category. It refers to an element which is assigned to a variable in an open proposition. For example, in a sentence such as “It was Lucas that ate the cake,” there is an open proposition, “Lucas ate X,” and “an instantiation of the variable” (Prince 1988: 5), “X = Lucas”.

(7)

a. It was Lucas that ate the cake.

Open proposition: Lucas ate X.

Instantiation of the variable: X = Lucas

The sentence in (7) describes structures “marked by stress or by syntactic form in conjunction with stress” (Prince 1988: 5), an example of which is the cleft

sentence. In (7), “Lucas ate X” is “old information”, whereas “X = Lucas” is “new information”.

The second category is **old/new in the hearer’s head**. Here, information can be old or new “with respect to (the speaker’s beliefs about) the hearer’s beliefs” (Prince, 1988 :5). In other words, it can be old if it is part of the common ground, and new when it is part of the speaker’s background knowledge (and therefore not yet part of the common ground).

(8)

- a. I must talk to **Professor Menuzzi**.
- b. I must talk to **someone at university**.

Following Prince (1988), the NP “Professor Menuzzi” can be understood as old for both the speaker and for the hearer – it is “old” with respect to the “hearer’s head” and is therefore **hearer-old**. The NP “someone at the university,” though, is new for the hearer – it is old for the speaker but new to the hearer’s head. It is, thus, **hearer-new**. In this regard, a key observation is that hearer-old NPs tend to be definite, whereas hearer-new NPs tend to be indefinite (Prince, 1988).

The third category is **old/new in the discourse-model**. It refers to “the point of view of the discourse-model being constructed during discourse processing” (Prince 1988: 7). This presents a new dimension for analysis: an element old in the hearer’s head may be new on the level of discourse. In other words, information is new at the discourse level when it is evoked in conversation, and only then, with the continuation of the communicative exchange, does it become both old in the hearer’s head and in discourse. According to Prince (1988: 12):

First, discourse entities may be considered old or new with respect to the hearer, or Hearer-old/Hearer-new. Second, they may be considered old or new with respect to the discourse, or Discourse-old/Discourse-new. Furthermore, Discourse-status and Hearer-status are partially independent of each other. In particular, Discourse-new tells us nothing of Hearer-status [...], and Hearer-old tells us nothing of Discourse-status [...]. In contrast, the status of Discourse-old is not independent of Hearer-status: if an entity has had a prior evocation in a discourse-model, then it follows that it is now Hearer-old, as well as Discourse-old: hearers are assumed to remember the entities we have told them about, at least for the duration of the discourse. Likewise, if something is Hearer-new, then it must be Discourse-new, for, if it were not, then the hearer would already know about it.

In example (9a), “Lucas” can be understood as old in the hearer’s head; however, it is new when mentioned for the first time in the communicative exchange (9b). The pronoun “he,” in “he is the one,” is old in the hearer’s head and at the discourse level.

(9)

- a. Did you talk to Lucas? He is the one who ate the cake.
- b. Do you know Lucas? He is the one who ate the cake.

Considering that “Lucas” can be new at the level of the discourse, while not part of the hearer’s background knowledge, Prince (1988) argues that discourse-newness says nothing about the state in the speaker’s head – in this case, it might as well be hearer-new.

As Prince (1988) herself points out, there exists competing definitions for old and new in the literature. For the purposes of this article, the distinction between old/new in the speaker’s head and in the discourse gives us a solid point of departure for understanding the function of clefts as organisational devices. Therefore, Prince’s (1988) account is sufficient.

1.2 TOPIC X COMMENT

Topic and **comment** are other concepts for which there is no universally agreed definition. Van Kuppevelt (1995 :111), for example, claims that

as is often noticed, topic-comment research is characterized by the absence of uniformity in terminology. Beside the fact that in the literature different terms are used to refer to the same topic notion, for example the terms TOPIC, THEME and PSYCHOLOGICAL SUBJECT, the absence of uniformity in terminology also follows from notional differences in term designation. Many times terms like topic and theme are used to refer to notions that differ categorically from the notion of sentence or discourse ‘aboutness.’

Matić (2016: 96) points out the existence of two major competing definitions for topic and comment: those based on the notion of **givenness** and those based on the notion of **aboutness**.

Givenness-based definitions are hearer-centred: topic is that part of the utterance that is assumed to be already known to the hearer, present in the common ground of the interlocutors, and/or activated in the hearer's short-term memory, by being mentioned previously, inferable, or given in the extralinguistic context. The alternative view is that topic is that part of the utterance about which this utterance is meant to give information. The focus is here more on the speaker's intentions than on the hearer's state of mind: the speaker determines what she intends to increase the hearer's knowledge about and encodes this element as a topic.

According to Matić (2015), even though it is not possible to exclude givenness-based definitions of topicality (because a topic is often accessible to the reader, it is likely to be old information), empirical studies have shown aboutness definitions to be empirically superior (Reinhart, 1981). One example of aboutness definitions comes from Gundel (1985 :86), who differentiates between two types of topics: the **pragmatic topic** and the **syntactic topic**.

(10)

“An entity, E, is the pragmatic topic of a sentence, S, iff S is intended to increase the addressee's knowledge about, request information about or otherwise get the addressee to act with respect to E.”

Regarding the syntactic topic, Gundel (1985) defines it in the following way:

(11)

“A constituent, C, is the syntactic topic of some sentence, S, iff C is immediately dominated by S and C is adjoined to the left or right of some sentence S' which is also immediately dominated by S.”

Gundel (1985 :86) claims that “the referent of a syntactic topic is always a pragmatic topic”, but a pragmatic topic may or may not correspond to a syntactic topic. In fact, “a pragmatic topic does not have to have direct expression in the sentence at all.”

Alongside topic, Gundel (1988) introduces the concept comment (Hedberg, 1990):

(12)

“A predication, P, is the comment of a sentence, S, iff, in using S the speaker intends P to be assessed relative to the topic of S.”

Both are exemplified below, where “ATE THE CAKE” and “LUCAS”, capitalized, are comments.

(13)

a. A: What did Lucas do?

B: Lucas ATE THE CAKE.

b. A: Who ate the cake?

B: LUCAS ate the cake.

Hedberg (1990) presents a series of tests that identify topics and comments. For example, the comment always corresponds to the element which receives primary accent. The topic can be identified by moving an element to the left of the sentence, or by including it in a phrase like “speaking about...”. Another interesting possibility is to embed an entity into a question-and-answer context, where the question corresponds to the topic and the answer to the comment. The latter has been extensively developed by van Kuppevelt (1995) – the QUD approach – and is the view I adopt in the textual analysis of canonical clefts and pseudo-clefts.

The **Question Under Discussion** framework, or simply **QUD**, was originally developed by van Kuppevelt (1995) with the objective of unifying the notion of topic. It understands topicality as “the general organizing principle of discourse structure” and defends that “a discourse derives its structural coherence from an internal, mostly hierarchical topic-comment structure” (van Kuppevelt, 1995 :109).

In this theory, an utterance – the **feeder** – is followed by a question (explicit or implicit) whenever the speaker understands that it is obscure and needs

clarification. Alongside the context, it entails a group of indeterminate items (parameters of time, reason, duration etc.) that lead to the formulation of questions. For example, in (14) the speaker assumes that his sentence needs clarification – such as explaining why Lucas was unable to go to class, what the matter with him is, how long he has been ill etc.

(14)

Feeder: Lucas is not in class.

(Why?)

He is sick.

(What is the matter?)

(How long has he been ill?)

(Will he get better?)

In (14), the question corresponds to the topic, whereas the answer corresponds to the comment. The theory also accepts the existence of **(sub)topics** when the speaker deems an answer as unsatisfactory and produces additional **(sub)questions**. In (14), these would be the questions “what’s the matter”, “how long has he been ill”, and “will he get better”. When a final (sub)question is asked, a segment of the discourse is closed off. This corresponds to “a hierarchy of structural units into which a discourse can be segmented” (Van Kuppevelt, 1995 :110).

For Kuppevelt (1995), clefts are partitioned into a **topic-comment structure**, where the cleft clause is the topic, and the cleft-constituent is the comment. For example, in “it was Lucas who ate the cake,” “Lucas” is the comment and “who ate the cake” is the topic. In my understanding, though, such a partition is not reflected in the data. By segmenting the discourse into a QUD, we find sentences such as (15), where both the cleft constituent and the cleft clause function as topics – in line with Gundel’s (1985) definition of pragmatic topic.

(15)

“For Abel Braga's team, [the result of yesterday's game] was a revenge. In 2007, the Veranópolis team eliminated the team from the Capital. Yesterday, it was Inter who ended Gilmar Dal Pozzo's team's chances of qualification.”³

(Newspaper “Diário Gaúcho;” Pasqualini, 2018).

QUD

For Abel Braga's team, [the result of yesterday's game] was a revenge.

1) Why?

[it was a revenge because] In 2007, the Veranópolis team eliminated the team from the Capital.

2) What happened yesterday?

Yesterday, it was Inter who ended Gilmar Dal Pozzo's team's chances of qualification.

In practice, it is not easy to formulate the right questions that accurately describe the QUD of a discourse. For example, “What happened?” may function as a proper question for question 1, and “why then was it a revenge?” as a question for question 2. Regardless of the answer, though, it is possible to formulate a QUD in which both the cleft constituent and the cleft clause are used as a response to the question provided. This shows that the whole of the cleft can be interpreted as a pragmatic topic, i.e., as a sentence intended to increase the addressee’s knowledge about a given element.

³ Original in Portuguese: “Para o time de Abel Braga, foi uma revanche. Em 2007, o time de Veranópolis havia desclassificado a equipe da Capital. Ontem, foi o Inter que acabou com as chances de classificação do time de Gilmar Dal Pozzo.”

1.4 COGNITIVE STATUSES

Finally, a unit of information can occupy distinct positions in our memories. The **Givenness Hierarchy** (Gundel et. al, 1993) provides a model which explicitly demonstrates this by correlating entities with their state of memory and attention in the minds of speakers – a **cognitive state**.

This hierarchy establishes a set of six states, ranging from **type identifiable** (when the speaker assumes that the hearer knows what the word means) to **in focus** (when a referent is assigned to the word and the speaker assumes that the hearer has his attention focused on it).

(16)

In focus > activated > familiar > uniquely identifiable > referential > type identifiable

It	It/this/that	that NP	the NP	indefinite	a NP
	This NP			this NP	

Hedberg (2013 :2) exemplifies the states with the sentences below. In (17d), “a dog” is used because it is only necessary that the speaker knows the meaning of the word “dog”; in (17c), the speaker assumes that the hearer can attribute a unique representation to the NP; in (17b), he assumes that the hearer is able to locate in his memory the dog in question; and in (17a) the speakers assumes that the hearer’s attention is focused on this representation.

(17)

- a. I couldn’t sleep last night. **It** kept me awake.
- b. I couldn’t sleep last night. **That dog next door** kept me awake.
- c. I couldn’t sleep last night. **The dog next door** kept me awake.
- d. I couldn’t sleep last night. **A dog** kept me awake.

As the sentences above exemplify (Hedberg, 2013 :3),

The cognitive statuses are defined in such a way that they stand in a unidirectional entailment relation and thus form a hierarchy. Any DP referent that is in the addressee’s focus of attention is also represented in working memory, is represented in memory generally, can be associated with a unique token representation expressed by the DP, can be associated with a unique token representation in general, and can be associated with a representation of a type of entity. However, a referent can be familiar but not activated, for example, or referential but not uniquely identifiable, because the entailment relation only goes in one direction.

Hedberg and Fadden (2007) develop a similar hierarchy, by integrating Prince’s (1988) notion of old/new in the level of discourse. It is important to note the addition of the category **inferable**, which is based on Prince (1988 :8), and defined as the situation “when the speaker evokes an entity in the discourse”, where “they often presume that the listener can infer the (discursive) existence of other entities based on the speaker's beliefs and their reasoning ability”.

(16)

Discourse Old	Activated
	Recently Activated
	Inferable from activated situation
	Inferable from activated proposition
	Inferable from recently activated proposition
Discourse New	Familiar
	Inferable from familiar proposition
	Informative
	Cataphoric
	Question-word

I used this hierarchy in the analysis conducted in my doctoral dissertation (Moretto, 2021), since Hedberg and Fadden’s (2007) cognitive statuses allow for “intermediate levels” that could reveal novel characteristics about clefts and pseudo-clefts. The examples I discuss in section 3 are, therefore, based on this model.

In summary, this section introduced the notion of Information Structure as a subfield of linguistics that studies information as a cognitive entity and views

discourse as a social activity, where speakers change each other's background knowledge to lead to a common ground. It also presented the notions of old and new information in a three-layered dimension, of which will be important the idea that information can be in the speaker's head (without necessarily having been mentioned in discourse) or in the current discourse. Then, the notions of topic and comment were defined, with an emphasis on aboutness definitions, where topic is identified in a question-and-answer hierarchy. Finally, I presented a model for identifying a cognitive status, i.e., the location of information in terms of memory and attention.

In the following section, I focus on the analysis and description of clefts according to their IS.

2. CLEFT AND PSEUDO-CLEFTS IN DISCOURSE

In this section, I present an overview of the semantic and pragmatic properties of canonical clefts and pseudo-clefts and proceed to the discussion of their function in segmenting the discourse. First, I discuss the **exhaustive effect** of canonical clefts (Kiss, 1998). Then, I analyse the IS of canonical clefts and pseudo-clefts, as well as the position they occupy in written discourse.

It is important to note that some examples in this section are taken from Brazilian newspapers and magazines. Those presented in section 2.1 are part of the corpus "Estruturas Marcadas," collected by Professor Sérgio de Moura Menuzzi (UFRGS). This corpus contains texts from newspapers and magazines such as "Jornal Zero Hora," "Veja" and "Folha de São Paulo," and are aimed at readers of higher levels of reading proficiency. The examples presented in section 2.2, 2.3 and 2.4 are part of "CorPOP: Corpus de Referência do Português Popular Escrito no Brasil" (Pasqualini, 2018), which contains texts from the newspaper "Diário Gaúcho" aimed at readers with intermediate levels of reading ability (Pasqualini, 2018). This distinction will be important in section 3.

Finally, for the sake of clarity, most texts were translated directly into English. This, I believe, does not impact the analyses, given the similarities between canonical clefts and pseudo-clefts in English and Portuguese. When necessary, I present the examples in Portuguese (for details, see Moretto (2016, 2021)).

2.1. CLEFTS AND ONLY

It is generally accepted that clefts have a contrastive function. Givón (1993) claims that the use of clefts in discourse requires a counter-expectation: in saying “it was Lucas that ate the cake”, we imply that someone else, say “John”, did not. As a result, the NP in the cleft constituent, “Lucas,” denies the NP “John” as the instantiation of the variable in the open proposition “X ate the cake.”

Related to this is the exhaustive effect, an inference drawn from Kiss’s (1998 :245) **identificational focus**. An identificational focus identifies a subset as the one which instantiates the variable, and in doing so excludes all other elements that are part of the set.

The function of an identificational focus: An identificational focus represents a subset of the 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.

According to Kiss (1998), the identificational focus also involves sentences with the adverb “**only**”. By drawing on the analysis of the Hungarian word “csak”, Kiss (1998 :265) states that “the elements of the set on which the exhaustive identification is performed are ordered along a scale, and the element identified as that for which the predicate exclusively holds represents a low value on this scale”. Therefore, both “Mary only loves John” and “It is John that Mary loves” have an identificational focus. From this we conclude that inserting “only” in the cleft works as a test to verify the exhaustive effect.

However, Moretto (2016) argues that this operation is more complex. “Only” can only be used to judge the acceptability of clefts when certain criteria are met: (i) the context prior to the cleft must include an **existential presupposition** that corresponds to the cleft clause (the **prejacent**); (ii) this context must include **contextual alternatives**; (iii) there must be no presupposition incompatible with an “**assertion of exclusion**” (for details, see Horn (1969, 2005)).

For example, “only” is incompatible with the cleft in (17) because the content of the cleft clause (“something steals the spotlight in Salvador”) is not presupposed in the prior context. In addition, there is no contextual alternative whose semantic

properties clearly correspond to the cleft constituent “the contemporary cuisine” (“BiBi juices” refers to a place, not a type of cuisine).

(17)

Some places that embody the spirit of summer never go out of style. In Rio de Janeiro, BiBi Sucos in Leblon is one of them. On a sunny day, the house sells up to 700 juices. In Salvador, **it's (??only) the contemporary cuisine that steals the spotlight**. “We love traditional dishes like vatapá, but on a daily basis, we tend to avoid these heavier meals,” explains Amador Moura Jr., one of the owners of Josefina. As a bar, lounge, and restaurant, it has become one of the main meeting points in the capital of Bahia.⁴

If the text is rewritten to include the missing information, the cleft is appropriate with “only.”

(18)

Some places with the face of summer never go out of style. In Rio de Janeiro, BiBi Sucos, in Leblon, is one of them. On a sunny day, the house sells up to 700 juices. “In Salvador,” explains Amador Moura Jr., one of the owners of the Josefina restaurant, “we love typical food, such as vatapá, but on a day-to-day basis we run away from these heavier dishes; On a day-to-day basis, **it's (only) contemporary food that is successful.**”⁵

⁴ Original in Portuguese: “Alguns lugares com a cara do verão nunca saem de moda. No Rio de Janeiro, o BiBi Sucos, no Leblon, é um deles. Em um dia de sol a casa chega a vender 700 sucos. **Em Salvador, é (??samente) o restaurante Josefina que faz sucesso.** ‘Adoramos uma comida típica, como o vatapá, mas no dia-a-dia fugimos desses pratos mais pesados’, explica Amador Moura Jr., um dos proprietários. Bar, lounge e restaurante, o lugar é um dos principais pontos de encontro na capital baiana.”

⁵ Original In Portuguese: “Alguns lugares com a cara do verão nunca saem de moda. No Rio de Janeiro, o BiBi Sucos, no Leblon, é um deles. Em um dia de sol a casa chega a vender 700 sucos. “Em Salvador”, explica Amador Moura Jr., um dos proprietários do restaurante Josefina, “adoramos uma comida típica, como o vatapá, mas no dia-a-dia fugimos desses pratos mais pesados; no dia-a-dia, **é (samente) a comida contemporânea que faz sucesso.**”

According to Moretto (2016 :55),

It should be noted that the modifications in the text make the prejacent of the cleft – or, at least, a proposition very close to it – now accessible in the context. “X to be successful” is inferable from the phrase that introduces the theme of the text, “some places ... never go out of style.” “X to be successful on a day-to-day basis” is, in turn, activated by the phrase that precedes the cleft [...]. Finally, “contemporary food” corresponds to “non-typical food,” which is the alternative activated – by contrast – by “we run away from typical food (= “these dishes”) in everyday life.” Thus, the context preceding the cleft allows us to take as the speaker’s assumption that “non-typical food is successful in everyday life.”⁶

As we have seen, the cleft in (17) is appropriate even though there is no clear alternative to be excluded, which suggests that the identificational focus does not clearly capture the exhaustive effect of clefts. This issue was previously noted by Menuzzi and Roisenberg (2010 :4), who analysed a specific type of cleft that does not identify an entity by **excluding** alternatives, but by **precisely identifying** them:

(20)

An Eastern proverb says that bamboos bend but do not break. The life trajectory of the current Chief of Staff [José Dirceu] can be considered the embodiment of this metaphor [...] He is an articulator par excellence, praised even by his enemies, with a unique and complete vision of government, of society as a whole, and of the political class with whom he deals daily. [...] **it was (precisely/??only) before this tripod - society, Congress, and government** – however, that he lived his bamboo day.⁷

⁶ Original in Portuguese: “Note-se que as modificações no texto fazem com que o prejacent da clivada – ou, ao menos, uma proposição muito próxima a ele – seja agora acessível no contexto. “X fazer sucesso” é inferível da frase que introduz o tema do texto, “alguns lugares ... nunca saem de moda”. “X fazer sucesso no dia-a-dia” é, por sua vez, ativado pela frase que antecede a clivada, por contraste: se “no dia-a-dia fugimos de certos pratos”, então “o que faz sucesso no dia-a-dia” é alguma outra coisa. Finalmente, “a comida contemporânea” corresponde a “comida não-típica”, que é a alternativa ativada – por contraste – por “fugimos da comida típica (= “esses pratos”) no dia-a-dia”. Assim, o contexto precedente à clivada permite tomar como pressuposto do falante que “a comida não-típica faz sucesso no dia-a-dia”.

⁷ Original in Portuguese: “Diz um provérbio oriental que bambu enverga mas não quebra. A trajetória de vida do atual chefe da Casa Civil [José Dirceu] pode ser considerada a encarnação desta metáfora [...] É um articulador por excelência, elogiado até pelos inimigos, com uma visão única e completa de governo, do conjunto da sociedade e da classe política com quem lida diariamente. [...] Mas **foi (exatamente/??samente) diante deste tripé – sociedade, Congresso e governo – (e de nada mais) que ele viveu seu dia de bambu.**”

Another interesting aspect refers to contexts that contain a **uniqueness presupposition**. According to Szabolcsi (1994), clefts presuppose uniqueness, that is, they presuppose that the individual expressed by the cleft constituent is the only one that satisfies the open proposition. However, the semantics of “only” is incompatible with a uniqueness presupposition (see Teixeira and Menuzzi, 2015). In (21), “only” is incompatible in the cleft because the context presupposes uniqueness prior to the cleft.

(21)

Paulo and I were talking, and then he said he was thirsty and decided to go to the bar to get a beer. When I arrived at the bar, I saw that Paulo greeted a couple and then hug the man. When he returned, I asked him who he had hugged at the bar, and he said: “**It was (?? only) my ex-wife's brother**. He was celebrating his birthday.”⁸

According to Moretto (2016), the example in (22) does not introduce a uniqueness presupposition: the context states that Paulo argued with a couple, not a single individual. In this case, “only” is not only not incompatible with the cleft, but is necessary, since the speaker needs to correct the information “I was arguing with a couple”.

(22)

Paulo and I were talking, and then he said he was thirsty and decided to go to the bar to get a beer. A few minutes later, he came to Maria and told me that he saw Paulo arguing with a couple at the bar. When he came back, I asked him who the couple was that he was arguing with at the bar, and he said, “**It**

⁸ Original in Portuguese: “Eu e o Paulo estávamos conversando, e daí ele disse que estava com sede e resolveu ir no bar pegar um chope. Ao chegar no bar, vi que Paulo cumprimentou um casal e que começou a abraçar o homem. Quando voltou, perguntei quem ele tinha abraçado no bar, e ele me disse: “**Era (??somente) o irmão da minha ex-mulher**. Ele estava de aniversário”.

was (?? only) with the man that I was arguing. It was my ex-wife's brother.”⁹

What examples (21) and (22) demonstrate is that (i) the uniqueness presupposition blocks only-phrases, and (ii) clefts do not necessarily presuppose uniqueness.

In summary, this section explored the effect of exhaustivity, commonly assumed to be a feature of clefts. As we have seen, this effect involves a number of features that are not captured by Kiss's (1998) definition. According to De Cesare (2017), the “exhaustive component of clefts is best captured as a conventionalized conversational implicature, as it can be cancelled and reinforced”.

The following two sections analyse the role clefts and pseudo-clefts as the first sentence of a discourse, i.e., the role they play as discourse-opening segments. The discussion is based on Prince's (1978) seminal article, “A comparison of Wh-Clefts and It-Clefts in Discourse”, and the research I conducted during my doctoral studies about Brazilian Portuguese (Moretto, 2021). As we shall see, Prince (1978) argues that the English it-cleft and Wh-cleft (which I simply call “canonical cleft” and “pseudo-cleft”) behave differently in discourse: while the cleft clause of pseudo-clefts contains information which is known to the reader – and, therefore, is the **theme** of the discourse –, the cleft clause of an it-cleft can either convey information which is known or which is new. The latter is unexpected: the cleft clause contains a presupposition, but is used to convey information that, though not known to the interlocutor, is taken to be part of the common ground.

2.2 PSEUDO-CLEFTS

Prince (1978) introduces several examples demonstrating that the information in the cleft clause of a pseudo-cleft is known to the reader (that is, old). In some cases, the information is explicitly present in the preceding context, but most often it is an

⁹⁹ Original in Portuguese: “Eu e o Paulo estávamos conversando, e daí ele disse que estava com sede e resolveu ir no bar pegar um chope. Alguns minutos depois, chegou a Maria e me disse que viu o Paulo discutindo com um casal no bar. Quando ele voltou, perguntei quem era o casal com quem ele estava discutindo no bar, e ele respondeu: “**Era ?? (somente) com o homem que eu estava discutindo: era o irmão da minha ex-mulher.**”

implication **assumed** to be in the hearer's consciousness. In this case, it can be retrieved through **bridges** ("the inference one must make to get from the new information back to what is known" (Prince, 1978 :887)) or by **contrast**, **metalinguistic antecedents** and phrases that relate to **mental processes** (for example, thoughts and reactions). In (23) the cleft clause contains a metalinguistic antecedent (it is common knowledge that when people speak, they mean things) (Prince, 1978 :891):

(23)

Nixon: '... There is something to be said for not maybe this complete answer to this fellow, but maybe just a statement to me. My versions are these: bing, bing, bing. That is a possibility.'

Dean: 'Uh huh.'

N.: 'WHAT I MEAN is we need something to answer somebody.'

(Prince, 1978 :890)

Similar information is borne out in my data. In my analysis of 100 pseudo-clefts in Brazilian Portuguese, I categorised 90 of them in 7 types. Below, I provide the types with examples in Portuguese. To increase readability, the examples are followed with the original in Portuguese, in parentheses.

(24)

(i) Cleft clauses that express desires:

What the Colorados most want is to see Internacional working as an adjusted and efficient machine in 2008.

("O que os colorados mais desejam é ver o Internacional funcionando como uma máquina ajustada e eficiente em 2008.")

(ii) Cleft clauses that emphasize information:

What matters is to reflect on December 25, the date chosen to celebrate the birth of Jesus.

(“**O que importa** é refletir sobre o 25 de dezembro, data escolhida para festejarmos o nascimento de Jesus.”)

- (iii) Cleft clauses that express surprise:

What is terrifying is that evil is no longer the work of unbalanced individuals but a collective phenomenon.

(“**O que apavora** é que a maldade deixou de ser obra de indivíduos desequilibrados para se transformar em fenômeno coletivo.”)

- (iv) Cleft clauses that introduce problems:

What aggravates the situation are the machines that the city uses to push the vegetation and clay.

(“**O que agrava a situação** são as máquinas que a prefeitura utiliza para empurrar a vegetação e o barro.”)

- (v) Cleft clauses that describe preferences:

What attracts me the most is the prison.

(“**O que me atrai mais** é a prisão.”)

- (vi) Cleft clauses that describe perceptions:

What we hear at school is that, last year, he saw an uncle kill a person and, since then, he has entered this same world.

(“**O que a gente ouve** aqui na escola é que, no ano passado, ele viu um tio matar uma pessoa e, desde então, entrou para esse mesmo mundo.”)

(vii) Cleft clauses that give advice:

What I suggest is that first of all this campaign be permanent and extended to the homeless.

(“**O que sugiro** é que, em primeiro lugar, essa campanha seja permanente e estendida aos moradores de rua.”)

(viii) Cleft clauses that introduce events:

What we are going to do is bother these criminals with our presence.

(“**O que vamos fazer** é incomodar esses criminosos com a nossa presença.”)

The cleft clause in these examples contain information which is shared knowledge – in Hedberg and Fadden’s (2007) hierarchy, their cognitive status is familiar. Note that, even though hearer-old, they were introduced for the first time and therefore are discourse-new.

If we analyse the cleft clause in terms of its QUD, we notice that they function as the topic of the discourse. This confirms the idea put forward by Prince (1978), for whom the cleft clause must be the theme. This idea is also supported by Gundel (1985 :87), who defined the **Topic-Familiarity Principle**: “An entity, E, can successfully serve as a topic iff both speaker and addressee have previous knowledge of or familiarity with E”.

As we see below, the cleft clause in (sub)answer 2 corresponds to the question in (sub)question 2. It is, therefore, the topic, and the rest of the cleft is its comment.

(25)

Soup for the poor

Organiser of a weekly soup kitchen for the poor, Marlene also had an active political participation in the community. She did not resist the cruelty of the

aggressor and died. Also assaulted, her partner was admitted to the hospital in serious condition. A heinous, brutal, inexplicable crime. **What is terrifying is that evil ceased to be the work of unbalanced individuals to become a collective phenomenon.** That way, I don't know where we're going to end up.¹⁰

QUD

Organiser of a weekly soup kitchen for the poor, Marlene also had an active political participation in the community.

(question 1: What happened with Marlene?)

[answer 1] She did not resist the cruelty of the aggressor and died. [...]

((sub)question 1: What do you think about this?)

[(sub)answer 1]: A heinous, brutal, inexplicable crime.

((sub)question 2: **What terrifies you** about this?)

[(sub)answer 2]: **What is terrifying** is that evil has ceased to be the work of unbalanced individuals to become a collective phenomenon.

In other words, the segment of the discourse in (sub)answer 2 is about that which terrifies the speaker. Notice that (sub)answers 1 and 2 are dominated by answer 1. Their function is to add information that clarifies “she did not resist the cruelty of the aggressor and died”. In my view, the segment that follows the pseudo-cleft, “That way, I don’t know where we’re going to end up”, clarifies both (sub)answers 1 and 2. Notice that both the fact that the speaker views the crime as “brutal” and the fact that “evil has become a collective phenomenon” lead the speaker to fear for the future. In this context, the pseudo-cleft ends a subsegment of the discourse while the cleft clause introduces the topic.

In my study, (Moretto, 2021) I analysed the frequency of pseudo-clefts according to their position: (i) if the first or last sentence of the discourse, or (ii) in

¹⁰ Original in Portuguese: “Sopa para os pobres – Organizadora de um sopão semanal para os pobres, Marlene também tinha participação política ativa na comunidade. Não resistiu à crueldade do agressor e morreu. Também agredido, seu companheiro foi internado no hospital em estado. grave. Um crime hediondo, brutal, inexplicável. **O que apavora é que a maldade deixou de ser obra de indivíduos desequilibrados para se transformar em fenômeno coletivo.** Desse jeito, não sei onde vamos parar.”.

the middle. Only 10 pseudo-clefts were found at the end of the discourse, and only 5 as discourse openers. In this position, they generally introduced the **background** of the text.

Most pseudo-clefts were in the middle of the text, where the cognitive status of the cleft clause was hearer-old (discourse-old or discourse-new), and the cleft constituent was hearer-new. This element did not persist for longer segments, which points to pseudo-clefts having a more “local” function in the organisation of the discourse.

In summary, the pseudo-cleft contains a cleft clause whose cognitive status is familiar and the topic of a segment of discourse. In the data collected (Moretto, 2021), the cleft constituent was used to add information to the cleft clause, not persisting for longer segments. Thus, I suggest that pseudo-clefts are frequently used to satisfy the informational requirements of subsegments of the discourse.

2.3 CANONICAL CLEFTS

Prince (1978) argues that the cleft clause contains presupposed information that can be of two types: one which conveys information the speaker supposes the hearer knows or can deduce and another which the speaker takes as a fact that the hearer does not know about. This second category is what Prince (1978) calls an **informative presupposition cleft**.

Regarding the first category, Prince (1978 :896)) states that the information of a cleft clause in a canonical cleft does not have to be a theme. While in the pseudo-cleft the interlocutors need to be “thinking about” the information of the cleft clause, in a canonical cleft the information is necessarily old, but not necessarily of current concern – i.e., it does not need to be a topic. Prince (1978) defines this type as a **stressed-focus it-cleft**.

The second category is somewhat surprising. Prince (1978) uses as criteria for presuppositionhood the situation where the proposition remains when a sentence is negated. This is surprising because in this context a logical presupposition cannot be information which is completely new to the hearer. However, Prince (1978 :898) notes that

The fact that it-clefts may present information as known without making any claims that the hearer is thinking about it (or, in fact, even knows it) presents the speaker with a strong rhetorical temptation: what is to prevent him/her from putting new information into the *that*-clause? Note that such an action on the part of the speaker would be totally in line with the general convention of putting new information last. It turns out that nothing prevents such a use of it-clefts; we may distinguish a whole class of sentences in which this occurs, which I shall call INFORMATIVE-PRESUPPOSITION it-clefts. With these sentences, not only is the hearer not expected to be thinking about the information in the *that*-clause, but s/he is not expected even to KNOW it. In fact, the whole point of these sentences is to INFORM the hearer of that very information.

In (26), I present an example of an informative-presupposition cleft (Moretto, 2021), which appears as the first sentence of the discourse. In my study, the cleft constituent is often discourse-new, but hearer-old, while the cleft clause can be informative and therefore discourse-new.

(26)

Stones remain on the path

It was not in 2007 that the dreamed staircase of the Beco da Associação, in Vila Augusta Meneguini, in Viamão, got off the ground. The claim of chambermaid Clarice de Fátima Flores de Souza, 43, shown in June and November of this year, has not yet been met.¹¹

The data I found is similar to those studied by Prince (1978). Informative-presupposition clefts are commonly used as the first sentence of a discourse and contain an adverbial as the cleft constituent. They are often used in historical narratives and have a “backgroundness” effect. In my analysis, they raise an expectation, and the remainder of the text focuses either on an element linked to the background or on an assertion of identify. In (26), for instance, the speaker is concerned about the fact that the promised staircase has not been built yet.

¹¹ Original in Portuguese: “Pedras continuam no caminho – Não foi em 2007 que a sonhada escadaria do Beco da Associação, na Vila Augusta Meneguini, em Viamão, saiu do papel. A reivindicação da camareira Clarice de Fátima Flores de Souza, 43 anos, mostrada em junho e novembro deste ano, ainda não foi atendida.”

According to Prince (1978 :899-900), the function of informative presupposition clefts “is to mark a piece of information as a fact, known to some people although not yet known to the intended hearer”. While in the pseudo-cleft what is presupposed in the semantic level is presumed pragmatically, in this type “what is presupposed logico-semantically [...] is NEW information on the discourse level – and therefore, in contrast to both the WH-cleft and the stressed-focus it-cleft.” (Prince, 1978 :898).

In my study, I also analysed the distribution of canonical clefts at the end and in the middle of discourse. My initial hypothesis was that clefts of the informative-presupposition type would not be found at the end, but would be in the middle, indicating a shift to a new segment. Although I was not able to find such use in my data (probably due to the genre of the text; the texts in CorPop are geared towards readers of lower level of reading proficiency, and tend to be short), I found a type of canonical cleft which has a **conclusive function**, in line with the conclusive clefts found by Moretto (2014) and Andrade (2019).

In (27), both the cleft constituent and the cleft clause are discourse-old (and hearer-old). From the preceding discourse, we know that the player must make an offer and that this must be done at a certain point (“doubts about how to buy athletes;” “there are only two seasons to make signings”). Before the reading the cleft, the reader is able to infer the moment he must make the offer. However, the cleft is necessary to confirm the assumption and does so by identifying a value (the cleft constituent, “the point in time”) to a variable (the cleft clause, “make the offer”).

(27)

Athletes in WE

For those who have doubts about how to buy athletes in the Master League mode of Winning Eleven (or PES 2008), here are some tips from gaming expert Leo Prosopopeio Cardoso.

There are only two seasons to make signings: in the middle and at the end of the championship.

In periods when the market is open for the purchase of players, there are no matches. These intervals last about five weeks.

It is at this point that the player must make the offer to other teams.

It is also the time to put your athletes up for sale.

To buy, go to Search. To sell players, go to My Team and make whoever you want available. But beware of purchases: there is nothing to prevent you from acquiring the salary total greater than your funds, but you will not be able to reach the end of the year without money to pay the players. Otherwise, game over, my friend.¹²

Note that the text addresses two problems: one about the “right moment” to make the purchase and another about “how” to do it. The function of the canonical cleft is to conclude the first segment. This can be verified through a simple QUD:

(27)

For those who have doubts about how to buy athletes in the Master League mode of Winning Eleven (or PES 2008), here are some tips from gaming expert Leo Prosopopeio Cardoso.

Question 1: When can you buy athletes?

Answer 1: There are only two seasons to make signings: in the middle and at the end of the championship. In periods when the market is open for the purchase of players, there are no matches. These intervals last about five

¹² Original in Portuguese: “Para quem tem dúvidas sobre como comprar atletas no modo Master League do Winning Eleven (ou PES 2008), aí vão algumas dicas do especialista em games Leo Prosopopeio Cardoso. Só há duas épocas para fazer contratações: no meio e no final do campeonato. Nos períodos em que o mercado está aberto para a compra de jogadores, não ocorrem partidas. Esses intervalos duram cerca de cinco semanas. **É neste momento que o jogador deve fazer a oferta a outros times.** Também é a época de colocar os seus atletas à venda.

Para comprar, vá em Search. Para vender jogadores, entre em My Team e coloque quem você quiser à disposição. Mas atenção às compras: não há nada que o impeça de adquirir o total de salários maior do que seus fundos, mas você não poderá chegar ao final do ano sem dinheiro para pagar os jogadores. Senão, game over, meu amigo.

weeks. **It is at this point that the player must make the offer to other teams.** It is also the time to put your athletes up for sale.

Question 2: How can you buy athletes?

Answer 2: To buy, go to Search. To sell players, go to My Team and make whoever you want available. But beware of purchases: there is nothing to prevent you from acquiring the salary total greater than your funds, but you will not be able to reach the end of the year without money to pay the players. Otherwise, game over, my friend.

Based on the conclusive function of canonical clefts, I hypothesized that similar clefts would have been found as the last sentence of the discourse. In fact, the cleft constituent was always “discourse old” in this position, with the information mentioned in the preceding context. However, this was not always the case for the cleft clause. Sometimes it conveyed completely new information. Thus, we cannot conclude that every cleft that closes the discourse is of the conclusive type – at least not in the sense of (27).

In (28), the canonical cleft is the last sentence of the text and has a similar to function to (27):

(28)

I say this because I believe that barriers and difficulties were made to be overcome. The stories of Merocildo, Matheus and Michele and their daughter Chrysley Vitória are examples to be followed. I think their first reaction and that of their relatives was to complain. But I also believe that other reactions came later. And **it was these other responses to the tragedy that struck each one that made it possible to turn their lives around and overcome these difficulties.**¹³

¹³ Original in Portuguese: “Digo isso porque acredito que barreiras e dificuldades foram feitas para serem transpostas. As histórias de Merocildo, Matheus e Michele e sua filha Chrysley Vitória são exemplos a serem

However, in (29) the situation is different. In this example, the cleft functions as a speech act, which can be interpreted as discourse-old (the purpose of the text is to thank the newspaper). Note that this type is also common in the beginning of discourse, in formal situations where someone is introduced to an audience (“it is with great pleasure that I welcome...,” as was noted by Menuzzi and Roisenberg, 2010)

(29)

Pride

I really liked the article about the Nobel Prize of the Periphery, which tells the story of the carpenter José Davanir Barth, 69 years old. His story moved me because my father was also there. At the time, he did not even dream that this story would become a newspaper cover story after so many years. I have a copy of his diploma too. Yes, because he proudly gave a copy to each of his five children. In May it will be four years since my father passed away. **It is with emotion and pride that I thank you for remembering them.**¹⁴

In summary, the cleft clause of a canonical cleft contains information which, though often old, is not necessarily a topic. In addition, there are instances where it conveys information which is not known to the hearer at all but accepted as “old” and considered a fact. This type of cleft – an informative presupposition cleft – is often found as the sentence opener of a discourse, and its general function is to introduce background information. I also suggest that canonical clefts have other functions:

seguidos. Acho que a primeira reação deles e de seus parentes foi a de reclamar. Mas também creio que depois vieram outras. **E foram essas outras respostas à tragédia que atingiu cada um que possibilitaram a virada na vida e a superação dessas dificuldades.**”

¹⁴ Original in Portuguese: “Gostei muito da reportagem sobre o Nobel da Periferia, que conta a história do marceneiro José Davanir Barth, 69 anos. Sua história me emocionou porque meu pai também esteve lá. Na época, ele nem sonhava que essa história viraria notícia de capa de um jornal depois de tantos anos. Tenho a cópia do diploma dele também. Sim, pois, com muito orgulho, ele deu uma cópia para cada um dos cinco filhos. Em maio fará quatro anos que meu pai faleceu. **É com emoção e orgulho que agradeço por lembrarem deles.**”

they may have a conclusive function and end specific segments of the discourse. In this case, both parts of the cleft tend to be discourse-old and therefore are hearer-old.

CONCLUSION

In this article, I presented the concept of Information Structure as a subfield of linguistics that views information as a cognitive entity and studies how information is expressed and interpreted in communication. I briefly presented the terms “old and new information” and “topic and comment” as central to understanding how information is realised. Finally, through these I discussed the way canonical clefts and pseudo-clefts function in discourse. I suggested that pseudo-clefts are used in subsections, where their cleft clause is the topic to which the cleft constituent adds information. Canonical clefts, on the other hand, appear to (i) organise larger sections of the discourse, where they generally introduce background information that is further developed (when they open segments of the discourse) or (ii) conclude segments with an identificational function (where an element is identified to the presupposed portion of the cleft). It seems, thus, that, as opposed to pseudo-clefts, canonical clefts are specialised in opening and ending a segment of discourse – though these are not their only function.

Finally, these facts demonstrate that canonical clefts and pseudo-clefts are powerful mechanisms of discourse organisation. Quoting Prince (1978 :905), “the one final point I wish to stress is the importance of studying these and all other sentence constructions in discourse, since it is only there that their communicative functions can be observed”.

Finally, I would like to thank Professor Sérgio de Moura Menuzzi for having supervised me on the course of my studies. I am grateful for his guidance, the opportunities for insightful discussions, and the invaluable support provided during this period. I sincerely hope to have contributed in a meaningful way to his research at the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS).

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