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Cleft Construction in English : An Experiment on Language Users' Syntactic Sensitivity

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I. Introduction

The purpose of this study is to pragmatically approach English cleft construction(hereafter CC) to determine what makes a language user prefer CC over its corresponding non-CC in his processing of information. In the previous study of text analysis of CC(Kim, 1986 : 86-87) it turned out to have a very low frequency rate, i. e. less than 1%, in comparison to non-CC. Indeed the CC is only minor type of construction and yet known as a focus construction for its focusing function.

Syntactic derivation of the CC has been controversial between the transformationalist and the non-transformationalist. As the term 'cleft' states, it has been analyzed and supported that CC is a transformed structure derived from other sources.¹⁾ On the other

1) Akmajian(1970) is the first grammarian who treats CCs in a transformational fashion. He claims that a CC is derived from a pseudo-cleft construction on bases of the same presuppositions and the same answer to the same question.

a. It is Los Angeles that is the horizontal city.

b. What is the horizontal city is Los Angeles.

Pinkham and Hankamer(1975) determine that CCs derive by 'it' -relativization or by 'it' -clefting process. Emonds(1976) believe that CCs are derived by 'focus movement' or by 'cleft extraposition'. Chomsky(1975) analyzes CC as 'it' relativization within his WH-movement theory.

hand, it has been also claimed to be one type of basic structure that is neither derived nor transformed from any other construction.²⁾ Its derivational process is not the concern of this study.

This study, however, aims at determining one pragmatic element of CC. What makes a language user prefer CC to non-CC when he/she is asked to choose one as their answer in the situation the CC and non-CC answers are given simultaneously? In an attempt to solve the problem an experiment was developed and conducted. The results of the experiment of "syntactic sensitivity" to CC will be discussed as it relates to the semantic function of CC. "Syntactic sensitivity" is defined in this study as the structural perceptiveness of a language user in processing information content.

The syntactic sensitivity is measured by having subject groups of natives and non-natives respectively respond to stimuli of question items in a quiz.

Answer items are syntactically contrived: uncleft, pseudo-cleft and cleft construction underneath each question. Thirty one question items are given for them to respond by checking the best out of the same information and to have a variable in difference in syntactic structure. By requiring time responses, I hope that subjects would make choices based upon the criterion of focalized information. Their choices should be bound to syntactic sensitivity.

II. Cleft Construction

Jespersen(1973 : 73) first coined the word "cleft" to refer to a specific type of construction which gives both thematic and focal prominence to a particular element of the clause. Quirk et al (1973 : 414) adopted the term, "cleft", for the special construction

2) Delahunty claims that CCs are base generated with no transformations.

'Base generation' entails that focus and clause are generated by phrase structure rules in their surface position. Structural description of CC and its actual example sentence are as follows ;

It (Modal) (Neg) (Aux) be Focus comp S1

It might not have been him that killed her.(Kim, Soon-Bok : 1986 : 128-141)

However, in my previous analysis of CC(1986 : 95) distribution of comps in CCs was examined in relation to the focal item preceding the comp.

The analysis clearly shows some general patterns of comps in CC. When the focus is semantically [+animate, +human], and syntactically a subject of the cleft clause, 'wh' -comp occur four times more frequently than 'that' comp.

Animateness of the focal item and animateness of the comp is likely to go together syntactically as in semantic parallelism. If the focus lacks animateness, 'that' or 'zero' comp respectively is used in the comp position of CC. Even when the focus has [+animate] and an object relation to the clause verb, the 'zero' comp is more preferred to other comp, i. e. 'which' or 'that'.

- (8) It was he who first said so.
- (9) Why should I explain to him that it was Pyle who had met me?
- (10) It's only people who ravish things.

3. Focus

A focal element in a CC can be of any grammatical category except verbal (Delahunty, 1984).

- (11) It is the destruction of the city that must be avoided.
NP
- (12) It was to Mary that Bill offered the opportunity.
PP
- (13) It was before we left that Mary and Bill got into one of
Sentential PP
there awful rows.
- (14) It wasn't on that he pulled his boots, it was off.
Particle
- (15) It was green that he pated his boat.
AP
- (16) How far is it that we have to go?
Quantifier Phrase

(17) It was only lately that they began to repair this street.
Adverbial

(18) It is that Bill will ever be this late again that is unlikely.
Sentential subject of extrapostive verb, 'unlikely'

However, foci of sentential subject, particle, adjective phrase and quantifier phrase are as hardly present as were in my text analysis(1986).

Widely accepted by various grammarians, NP and PP are most commonly used as a focal element. This characteristic is further supported on a statistical scale as shown in the following table.

Table 1. Types of Foci and their Frequency

Categories of Foci	Frequency
NP	70%
PP	19%
Adverbial	9%

4. "It is" matrix clause

The subject, i.e. 'it' and the verb of matrix clause, i.e. 'be' in CC do not contribute anything to the meaning of CC, but only a syntactic characteristic of the CC (Halverson, 1978 : 54), as illustrated in the following sentences.

(19) It is John that kissed Mary.

(20) John is someone kissed Mary.

(21) John kissed Mary.

5. Tense Agreement

The tense of the copula can be either neutralized present tense or unneutralized tense(Declerk, 1983 : 22-24). However, it is taken for granted that the tense in the matrix copula clause and tense in the cleft clause must be in agreement. If the former tense is present and the latter tense is also present, and if the former past, then the latter past too.

text analysis. Negation of copula 'be', the type of (30), turned out to have about 12% of frequency rate, negation of cleft clause, the type of (31), was found as little as less than 1% off frequency rate, while the rest of CCs were affirmative CCs (Kim, 1986 : 108–109).

The low frequency of negation appears as supporting evidence for the argument that the CC semantically presupposes negation even when it is syntactically constructed in affirmative construction.

III. Experiment on User's Syntactic Sensitivity to CC

1. Definition

The experiment purports to measure the language user's syntactic sensitivity to CC. The term, syntactic sensitivity is used here to denote one's structural perceptiveness of information that is carried on by the form of cleft construction. In other words, how they react to the syntactic differences in answer items when they process the given information.

2. Hypothesis

If one is asked to respond to the information by choosing only one of the alternative answers that are constructed to be essentially the same in meaning but different in structure, then the choice indicates one's preference based upon structural perceptiveness. Accordingly statistical analysis is a measure of the structural perceptiveness, i. e. syntactic sensitivity.

However, as non-natives the subjects by nature reflect more syntactic sensitivity than would the native subjects. In application to our discussion of the CC the working hypotheses are as follows ;.

1. Subjects choose the CC, over non-CCs, because of the

syntactic sensitivity to its syntactic means of the introductory unit, 'it is', of which semantic function is to focalize new information when they are asked to respond to a question demanding for new information.

2. Especially to those clefted 'wh' -questions that are syntactically marked via clefting subjects definitely choose the alternative answer marked by the same syntactic device, i. e. clefting. The clefted answer of their choice is motivated by their syntactic sensitivity to the marked construction(i. e. the CC) in the question and in the answer.
3. The non-native subjects in comparison to the native subjects show stronger preference for the CC due to their higher syntactic sensitivity to the CC than that of the non-natives.

3. Subject

The subject involves two groups A and B controlled by non-natives or natives. The eighty-two subjects in Group A are in the third year at Sejong University, majoring in English language and literature. The other fifteen subjects in Group B are Americans working as reporters and editors for the Stars and Stripes, and British students and civilians respectively studying at the Language Research Institute of Seoul National University or working at the Seoul branch office of a British company.

It is hardly believed that the groups are representative of non-natives or natives. But their performance of Group A or Group B can be comparable to each other not as an individual but as a group. The subjects of Group A are believed to have enough competence in English since they have been majoring in English for some years.

4. Method

The rationale for the quiz as a measuring tool for "syntactic

sensitivity" is based on the question-answer relationship. As are illustrated in Jackendoff(1972 : 229), the same presuppositions can be kept both in the question-answer pairs. With the control over the presupposition, the variable in the experiment can be the "syntactic sensitivity" of the subjects to different structure.

As Carlson states in *Dialogue Games*(1983 : 222), questions serve to state the topic of a dialogue. Thus the topical question determines which further questions and declarative sentences are relevant to the dialogue. Likewise, the importance of the question-answer relationship for dialogue structure is confirmed by the existence of peculiar grammatical constructions which serve the purpose of articulating a sentence as an answer to a particular question. In English they are cleft sentences and the pseudo-cleft sentences. Moreover, in terms of Logical Form(or Logical Structure), cleft, pseudo-cleft and uncleft are all the same, answering the same question. Thus they are thematically related but structurally different.

The quiz employed in the experiment is made up of thirty-one questions, each provided with their corresponding answer items constructed as clefts, unclefts(or declarative sentences) or pseudo-clefts. Of the thirty-one questions ten are given in context of a reading passage and the rest of the questions are given out of context. Eight question items are clefted on purpose to see whether there may cause any difference in syntactic perceptiveness due to the different structures, i.e. clefted 'wh'- question as opposed to unclefted 'wh'- question. In other words, it is based on the assumption that the syntactic clue implanted in the 'wh'- question form may give an incentive to choose the answer of CC. If this assumption is supported, then the working hypothesis of syntactic sensitivity is thus supported.

Here follows one example of the quiz. The whole sample is available in Appendix.

- (33) What is a big part of their problem?
New
- (34) It is transportaiton that is a big part of their problem. (CC)
New Old
- (35) Transportation is a big part of the problem.
New Old
(uncleft or simple declarative)
- (36) What is a big part of that problem is transportation. (P-CC)
Old New

The 'wh'- question of (33) demands respondents for information and the information required is given in the three differently structured answers : the CC, the uncleft construction, and the P-CC. In terms of old/new information dichotomy the three alternative answers(34-36) are all the same in menaning but different in order of the dichotomy in (36). Thus The choices of subjects are not made based upon variation in information among the alternatives but made based upon syntactic variation. Thus their choice reflect their preference for a particular construction which might have been motivated by their syntactic sensitivity.

5. Results

The primary concern was to look into the motivation, which may result in syntactic sensitivity to structures, for choosing one of three possible conctructions : uncleft, pseudo-cleft, and cleft.

The results are computed per question item and per group in terms of percentages of preference for each construction. The following table shows overall results of the experiment in percentages.

Table 3. Percentages of Preference per construction and per item

(1) Question Item	Non-native Group(A)			Native Group(B)		
	Answer Item			Answer Item		
	Cleft	P-C	Uncleft	Cleft	P-C	Uncleft
1	4	4	92	---	---	100
2	34	8	58	---	---	100
37	23	70	---	---	100	
@4	30	13	57	10	---	90
5	46	11	43	---	---	100
6	---	5	95	---	---	100
7	37	---	63	---	---	100
8	36	---	64	---	---	100
9	35	8	57	---	---	100
10	12	6	82	---	---	100
11	30	23	47	20	---	80
12	59	---	41	---	---	100
@13	51	---	49	20	---	80
14	8	---	92	---	---	100
@15	42	---	58	50	---	50
@16	25	18	57	---	40	60
17	45	17	38	20	10	70
18	34	---	66	50	---	50
@19	61	6	33	10	---	90
20	33	---	67	---	---	100
@21	34	18	48	---	---	100
22	53	---	47	30	---	70
23	27	23	50	---	---	100
@24	49	9	42	60	---	40
25	19	16	65	---	10	90
26	29	---	71	10	---	90
27	60	16	24	---	10	90
@28	43	7	50	---	---	100
29	27	---	73	---	---	100
30	43	16	41	50	---	50

Legend : column (1) represents the number of question item. the rest of the columns respectively refer to frequency of the choice of the respondents per group and per different structure. Question numbers with @ mark refer to the clefted question item in question.

6. Interpretations and Implications

For the interpretation of the statistics, let us look at specific items. The average percentage of preference is as follows per group.

Table 4. Average Percentage of Preference per construction per group

(1) Preference Construction	(2) NativeGroup(B)	(3) Non-native Group(A)
Cleft	11%	34%
P--C	2%	8%
Uncleft	87%	58%

Legend : column(1) represents the choices of answer items, and column(2) and (3) refer to frequency of their preference per group.

The percentages are obtained by averaging the total for the thirty-one question items. The table shows that 87% of the native subject group displays their preference for the uncleft construction over other types of constructions by 87% of the group. But only 11% of the group demonstrate their preference for the CC over anything else. These statistical results indicate the following : (1) the majority are not aware of the syntactic characteristic of the CC that serve to focalize the new information immediately following (2) the CC does not really perform the function of focalization of new information (3) the CC is not obligatory in processing new information in a question-answer pair (4) Because of its structural complexity the CC is less favorable than the simple declarative construction (or the uncleft construction). The results are seemingly contradictory and must be studied with caution. For example, contrary to linguistic sources, the CC's pragmatic function of focalization of new information is not supported in a situation where new information is required by a 'wh'- question, even by a clefted 'wh'

- question.

It must also be mentioned that variation in the choice of answer, or construction preference, is greater with the non-native group than with the native group. For Group A of non-native, consistency in their preference does not come into view. This could be a revelation that they are more sensitive to syntactic differences among answer items. In other words, the syntactic sensitivity is higher in Group A than in Group B. Therefore, the working hypothesis that non-natives are more sensitive to syntax of the CC than the natives.

Natives in Group B are consistent in their preference for the uncleft construction. Especially they demonstrate that they do not favor P-CCs at all, except in item No. 16 where the question is given in P-CCs. Even in this case they show their preference for the uncleft construction by 60% of them.

Furthermore, in clefted 'wh'- question items, Group B showed very low, in fact, zero preference for the CC. For only one question item, No. 24, the CC was favored by 60% of the respondents. For example, to the question "Who was it that bothered Owney?" their answers are split between two groups: 60% for cleft and 40% for uncleft. This item is the only one in which native subjects show their preference for the CC.

To my dismay, the hypotheses No.1 and No.2 collapsed according to the statistic results of the experiment, in particular with Group B of natives. For example, in cases of hypothesis No.1 and No. 2, no matter what type of 'wh'- question, clefted or unclefted, was presented for the subjects to answer, the uncleft construction like (35) was much more preferred as their choice. Even in a situation where a clefted question form is given, the majority of subjects still maintain their preference for the uncleft construction. This preference pattern implies that despite the CC's focusing function of new information, the uncleft construction turned out to be the

most favored means of processing new information.

This pattern supports that neither the CC nor the P-CC but the uncleft construction is core and the CC or the P-CC is only peripheral in handling communication via language.

In the matter of syntactic sensitivity to the clefted 'wh'- question form, the subjects especially of Group B turned out to have little sensitivity to the syntax of the CC. In other words, the syntactic markedness of a clefted 'wh' -question was not perceived by the subjects enough to choose the answer item also clefted, i. e. the CC answer item like (34).

However, syntactic sensitivity is more revealed in the choices of the non-native group than in those of the native group. The following table serves to demonstrate 'non-natives' tendency to respond to CCs in comparison to natives.

Table 5. Difference in response due to syntactic sensitivity to the question cue

Question Form (1)	Answer Form		
	CC (2)	Uncleft (2)	P-CC (3)
Cleft	42 (18)%	31 (8)%	9 (7)%
Uncleft	49 (75)%	61 (87)%	8 (5)%

Legend : column (1) refers to the forms of 'wh' question and the rest of the columns (2-4) refer to the forms of answers, the number given in parentheses are the percentages of the answer chosen by native subjects.

Even though the questions are not clefted, the respondents chose half the CCs and half uncleft answers.

(37 a) Who met us?

(38 b) When is the countryside most beautiful?

These unclefted questions are in fact given in isolation and the

respondents' answers are divided exactly half and half into two choices: the CCs of (37 b) and (38 b) and the uncleft constructions of (37 c) and (38 c).

(37 b) It was the Ambassador who met us.

(38 b) It is in autumn that the countryside is most beautiful.

as opposed to

(37 c) The Ambassador met us.

(38 c) The countryside is most beautiful in autumn.

One more fact to note in the experiment is that the context (i. e. reading passage) appears to have motivated the choice of uncleft construction. In this case the provision of context and the construction of 'wh' -question may have something to do with the pattern.

However, in processing information in a question-answer situation especially Group B's preference for the uncleft construction is well witnessed. Thus the preference for the uncleft or cleft construction is no longer a matter of syntax and semantics, but a matter of pragmatics. The uncleft construction is preferred in both situations where a clefted 'wh' -question and a unclefted 'wh' -question are respectively asked. Subsequently, I may ask whether the CC, known as a syntactic device for focalizing the new information, is less favorable by virtue of its syntactic complexity. At this point, I can offer no insight.

IV. Conclusion

Cleft construction is syntactically known as "It is focus that S" and semantically known as a focus construction. Some grammarians claim that by its nature of focusing a single declarative sentence gets split into two connected clauses; 1) matrix clause, i.e. "it is ..." 2) cleft clause, i.e. "comp S", resulting in a CC.

An experiment on the language user's sensitivity was developed in an attempt to find out what can be a clue to an actualized use of CC in reality. The syntactic clue implanted in a clefted 'wh' - question, according to the results of the data, did not succeed as assumed in response to CC. Therefore, one can infer that syntactic sensitivity to a CC does not play an essential role in perceiving the semantic function of the CC, i.e. focalization of new information in discourse. In other words, language users choose with no discrimination non-cleft answers when they responded to a clefted question form or a non-CC question form. Only non-native group of the subject showed slight different behavior by showing more syntactic sensitivity to CC than the non-native group. Then what really makes language users use cleft constructions in their language production? It has been attacked in this experiment, but there's not much satisfying yield. Only significance in this study could be summarized as follows.

1. a CC serves as a minor construction in which a certain information gets a focus. Its frequency is less than 1% in the reality of text analysis.
2. Its distribution in a paragraph is more in the initial sentence and much less in the final sentence of the paragraph. This finding supports the fact that a CC as a focus construction serves to draw reader's attention right off the first utterance of paragraph begins. A CC appears to lose its focusing ef

fect by being used as a final sentence in coherence of a paragraph.

3. The non-native group of the subject is more sensitive to the syntax of a CC than the native group. This suggests that semantic function doesn't seem to come with syntactic make-up, but may come with something else.

APPENDIX

The Quiz for Experiment on “Syntactic Sensitivity”

Pick the sentence which you feel best expresses the information content of the reading passage. Do not concern yourself with grammar or style. Questions 1–10 are based on the passage. Subsequent questions are independent of any context. Thank you for your cooperation for my research.

Reading Passage

Celes King is director of the Los Angeles Rumers Control and Information Center(LARCIC), which serves as a switchboard for the black and Mexican minority organizations. King, a chunky brown man in his 40s, sits in a storefront office on a cheap vinyle couch. I ask him if the blacks are happy. King laughs bitterly. He points out that juvenile unemployment in the balck communitcy is 25% to 30% ; adult unemployment in the black community is 12% to 15%. Transportation is a big part of the problem. Los Angeles is a horizontal city, and it's huge. Most industrial jobs are ten to twenty miles or more from the black ghettos. Angelenos own 3,000,000 cars. But 31% of the black families don't have a car, other problems too. The city's going to have to make some substantial moves fast before it decays. The colonies-that's what they are, colonies are on the threshold of exploding.

1. Who is Celes King?
 - a. Celes King is director of the LARCIC.
 - b. Who Celes King is director of the LARCIC.
 - c. It is director of the LARCIC what Celes King is.
2. Where does King sit?
 - a. Where Kingsits is in a store office on a cheap vinyl couch.
 - b. It is in a store office on a cheap vinyl couch where King sits.
 - c. King sits in a store office on a cheap vinyl couch.

3. What did I ask King?
 - a. It is if the blacks are happy that I asked him.
 - b. I asked him if the blacks are black.
 - c. What I asked him is if the blacks are happy.
4. What is it that King points out as a problem?
 - a. What King points out is that juvenile unemployment in the black community is 25–30% as a problem.
 - b. King points out that juvenile unemployment in the black community is 25–30% as a problem.
 - c. Juvenile unemployment in the black community is 25% to 30%
5. What is a big part of that problem?
 - a. Transportation is a big part of that problem.
 - b. It is transportation that is a big part of that problem.
 - c. What is a big part of that problem is transportation.
6. How far are industrial jobs from the black ghettos?
 - a. It is ten to twenty miles from the ghettos that industrial jobs are.
 - b. How far industrial jobs are from the ghettos is ten to twenty miles.
 - c. Industrial jobs are ten to twenty miles from the ghettos.
7. What percentage of the black families does not have a car?
 - a. The percentage of black families that does not have a car is 31%.
 - b. It is 31% of the black families that does not have a car.
 - c. 31% of the black families does not have a car.
8. Who is the chunky brown man in his forties?
 - a. The chunky brown man in his forties is King.
 - b. King is the chunky brown man in his forties.
 - c. It is King who is the chunky brown man in his forties.
9. What is the horizontal city?
 - a. Los Angeles is the horizontal city.
 - b. It is Los Angeles that is the horizontal city.
 - c. What is the horizontal city is Los Angeles.
10. How does King laugh?
 - a. How King laughs is bitterly
 - b. King laughs bitterly.

c. It is bitterly that King laughs.

The following question items are not relevant to the passage.

11. Who wishes to retire from public life?
 - a. It is my husband himself who wishes to retire from public life.
 - b. My husband himself wishes to retire from public life.
 - c. The one who wishes to retire from public life is my husband himself.
12. How far did we come that day to speaking of Pyle?
 - a. We came very near to speaking of Pyle that day.
 - b. It was very near that we came to speaking of Pyle that day.
 - c. That day we came very near to speaking of Pyle.
13. What was it that could contain her?
 - a. Only the darkened house could contain her.
 - b. The only thing that could contain her was the darkened house.
 - c. It is only the darkened house that could contain her.
14. How did he come?
 - a. The way he came was worrying.
 - b. It was worrying that he came.
 - c. He came worrying.
15. What was it who interviewed you?
 - a. The person who interviewed you was the dean.
 - b. It was the dean who interviewed you.
 - c. The dean was the person who interviewed you.
16. Who is the one who broke the window?
 - a. The one who broke the window is John.
 - b. It is John that broke the window.
 - c. John broke the window.
17. Who might have stolen the money?
 - a. Mary might have been the one who stole the money.
 - b. It might have been Mary that stole the money.
 - c. The one who might have stolen the money might have been Mary.
18. Who met us?
 - a. The ambassador is the one who met us.

- b. It was the ambassador who met us.
 - c. The ambassador met us.
19. When was it that John wore his best suit to the dance?
- a. It was last night that John wore his best suit to the dance.
 - b. When John wore best suit to the dance was last night.
 - c. John wore his best suit to the dance last night.
20. What color did we paint kitchen?
- a. Dark green is the color that we painted the kitchen.
 - b. We painted the kitchen dark green.
 - c. It was dark green that we painted the kitchen.
21. Why was it that he was dismissed?
- a. It was because he lied that he was dismissed.
 - b. He was dismissed because he lied.
 - c. The reason why he was dismissed was that he lied.
22. When are the students believed to have handed in their assignments on time?
- a. The students are believed to have handed in their assignments on time only rarely.
 - b. Only rarely are the students believed to have handed in their assignments on time.
 - c. It is only rarely that the students are believed to have handed in their assignments on time.
23. Now what was she obsessed by?
- a. It was now a baby that she was obsessed by.
 - b. She was not obsessed by a baby.
 - c. What she was now obsessed by was a baby.
24. What was it that bother Owney?
- a. What bothered Owney was the lack of respect.
 - b. The lack of respect bothered Owney.
 - c. It was the lack of respect that bothered Owney.
25. In which direction does stock turn?
- a. Stock turns under, not over.
 - b. The direction that stock turns is under, not over.
 - c. It is under that stock turns, not over.

26. Why did he come here?
- It is to say that to her that he came here.
 - What he came here for is to say that to her.
 - He came here to say that to her.
27. How does that wife cease to be a monstrosity of fiction and become alive?
- The wife ceases to be a monstrosity of diction and become alive in doing this.
 - In doing this the wife ceases to be a monstosity of fiction and becomes alive.
 - It is in doing this that the wife ceases to be monstrosity of fiction and becomes alive.
28. Who bought an old car last week?
- Last week John bought an old car.
 - The one who bought an old last week was John.
 - It was John who bought an old car last week.
29. What was it that they were doing in the park?
- What they were doing in the park was smooching.
 - They were smooching in the park.
 - It was smooching that they were doing in the park.
30. To whom did they give the gold watch?
- They gave the gold watch to Sigfried.
 - Sigfried is the one they gave the gold watch to.
 - It was to Sigfried that they gave the gold watch.
31. When is the countryside most beautiful?
- When the countryside is most beautiful is in autumn.
 - Autumn is when the countryside is most beautiful.
 - It is autumn that the countryside is most beautiful.

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<Abstract>

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This study attempts to fulfill two tasks. The first one is to discuss major syntactic and semantic characteristics of English cleft construction with reference to the findings of a text analysis. The syntactic accounts of the cleft construction are carried out on pragmatic grounds. The second task is to experiment on language user's syntactic sensitivity to cleft construction in their information processing. The results and interpretations of the experiment are closely examined in Part III of this study.

English cleft construction turned out to have such a low frequency rate as less than 1% in the text analysis. The experiment shows that the syntactic characteristics of the cleft construction do not play a significant role in causing the language users to choose the focus construction in a question answer situation. Nevertheless, to non-native speakers of English the syntactic make-up is proven somewhat relevant to their choice of cleft construction over non-cleft one. It is evident that any clue to the actual use of cleft construction can hardly be determined on a syntactic basis. The pragmatic analysis in this study finds the cleft construction more frequently used as the initial sentence(or topic sentence) than as the final sentence of the paragraph.

<국문초록>

영어의 분절구문 : 언어사용자의 통사적 감응도에 대한 실험

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‘It분절문(혹은 분절구문)은 그 명칭이 시사하듯 특정의 정보가 의미적으로 분절되며 구문형식은 “it is”의 SVC구조의 matrix clause의 본절과 compsi의 보문소절로 구성되어 있다. 이러한 분절문에 대한 여러 분석에 의하면 분절과정 혹은 변형과정을 통하여 파생된 구문으로 보는반면 원래부터 분절의 기능으로부터 기저구조에서부터 짜여진 구문으로 보기도 한다.

단지 본 논문의 첫째 의의는 It분절구문의 통사/의미적 특성이 언어사용자들에 의해 나타난 사례를 텍스트 분석을 통하여 여러 통사적 특징을 회용론적으로 논함에 있다. 두번째 의의로는 질의-응답이란 환경속에서 응답자가 정보처리시 어떤 통사적 요인에 의해 분절구문형의 응답을 택하게 되는지에 대한 실험적 연구에 있다. 실험연구의 가설로는 ‘it’구문이 정보내용에 관한 그와 상응되는 서술문과 같다는 점에서 두 구문간의 선택의 차이는 통사적 차이에 대한 “감응도”에 기인한다는 것이었다. 이 실험에서 사용된 시험의 질문형은 분절문과 비분절문으로 각각 제시하였고, 언어사용자가 선택할 답항으로도 분절문과 비 분절문형을 동시에 제시하였다. 응답자가 정보처리를 통하여 선택할 수 있는 31항의 문항지를 통해서 실험한 것이다.

이러한 실험 결과에서 당초에 설정된 가설과는 달리 언어사용자의 분절구문에 대한 “통사적 감응도”가 별로 없는 것으로 나타났다. 따라서 정보처리시 분절문의 선택은 주어진 질문의 분절문의 통사적 특성에 대한 감응도에 의해 결정되어지는 것이 아닌 무엇인가 통사적이 아닌 것에 의해 결정되는 것이라는 결론이 유추되었다.

그러나 분절문에 대한 “통사적 감응도”는 언어를 정보내용보다는 문장형식으로 처리할 수 밖에 없는 비 토박이에게서 보다 현저히 높게 나타났다. 과연 어떠한 조건이 “it is focus comp SI”의 통사적 특성을 갖는 분절구문을 사용하게 하는가? 한 문장영역내의 통사적인 문체가 아니라면 단락속에서의 쓰임을 통하여 그 단서를 잡아볼 수 있을까 하여 그 분포도를 보았다. 각 문단의 첫째문장으로서 분절구문이 사용되는 경우가 가장 빈번히 나타났으며 그 문단의 마지막 문장으로서는 가장 뜸하게 사용되고 있었다. 이러한 현상은 분절문은 역시 새 정보를 분절하는 의미적 기능이 있다는 문법가(Quirk et al, 1985 Chapt 18)의 분석을 뒷받침하고 있었다.