

Cleft constructions and discourse function 1

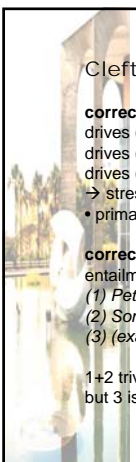
cleft types: wh-cleft, it –cleft
 cleft head: immediate syntactic complement of copula

What Mel wouldn't eat was her cabbage
It was her cabbage what Mel wouldn't eat

- cleft head, filler = *her cabbage* (cf. Delin in Verschueren (ed.))
- relative constituent: *what Mel wouldn't eat*
that Mel wouldn't eat

but: clearly not expected to be known
 discourse functions of clefts:

- 1 correct a claim by challenging it
- 2 continue discourse by asserting information
- 3 fill variable in salient proposition



Cleft constructions and discourse function 2

correction function:
 drives (John, a bus)
 drives (Pete, a bus)
 drives (Pete, a bus) & ~(drives(John, a bus))
 → stressed focus: it- clefts

- primary stress on cleft head

correction cleft is contrastive with explicit antecedent
 entailments:
 (1) *Pete drives a bus*
 (2) *Someone drives a bus*
 (3) *(exactly) on person drives a bus*

1+2 trivially entailed by drives (Pete, a bus)
 but 3 is peculiar to clefts and marked stress declaratives
