

Specificational Predication and Cleft-Constructions

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Constructions in different *languages are often* said to be ‘like the English it-cleft’, if they are used to mark contrastive narrow focus. In this talk I will examine and compare cleft-constructions found in Tagalog and Japanese to the English cleft-construction, arguing that they all involve specificational predication but differ dramatically in their morphosyntactic properties. What these constructions have in common *functionally* is that they are specificational predications, rather than attributive or classificatory predications (Declerck 1988, Den Dikken 2006, Frascarelli & Ramaglia 2013) and what they share *grammatically* is that they give special morphosyntactic treatment to the ‘value’ of the variable in the specificational predication. This value of the variable is represented by a referring expression which functions as part of the predicate. It is exactly this property that seems to distinguish ‘clefts’ from non-cleft specificational predications like *John is the murderer*. Declerck (1984) describes subtypes of the English *it*-cleft: the contrastive cleft, the unstressed-anaphoric-focus cleft and the discontinuous cleft. However, for most languages, including the ones discussed in this paper, the functional range of the cleft -constructions has not yet been determined. Based on a comparative corpus (*The Hunger Games*), it will be shown that while the cleft constructions under discussion overlap in discourse function, they clearly differ in frequency and distribution, strongly suggesting that they are not fully equivalent with respect to discourse function and raising the question to what extent syntactic structure correlates with functional range.

References:

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