

# Textual roles of two forms of rhematic subjects: initial rhematic subjects vs. subjects rhematized by *it*-clefts

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## ABSTRACT

The paper discusses two realization forms of rhematic subjects, initial rhematic subjects construed with a presentation verb and an optional scene-setting adverbial, and rhematic subjects in the underlying form of cleft-constructions. The two forms are examined from the viewpoint of their potential synonymy, the points in focus being their FSP features with respect to their assignment to the dynamic semantic scale and their textual roles. The aim of the paper is to find out to what extent the two constructions of rhematic subjects are differentiated or exchangeable.

## KEYWORDS

rhematic subject, presentation sentence, cleft sentence, dynamic semantic scale, textual role

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The paper discusses two constructions with rhematic subjects, initial rhematic subjects construed with a presentation verb and an optional scene-setting adverbial, and rhematic subjects in the underlying form of cleft-constructions, i.e. rhematic subjects signalled in speech prosodically by carrying the intonation centre (nuclear tone) and in writing syntactically by the cleft construction. The two types are illustrated, respectively, by exx. (1) and (2)<sup>1</sup>:

Type I: (1) Then JOHN appeared.

Type II: (2) It was JOHN who then appeared.

Both constructions have received a great deal of attention, the former especially as one of the realization forms of the presentation scale (Adam 2013, Firbas 1992, Chamonikolasová 2010, Chamonikolasová and Adam 2005, Dušková 1998; for the latter, see e.g. Firbas 2009, Prince 1978, Hasselgård 2004, Dušková 1999, Quirk et al. 1985, Huddleston and Pullum 2002). However, with the exception of an unpublished diploma dissertation (Kudrnová, 2013), the literature, copious as it is, treats each of the constructions separately.

The present discussion attempts to answer the following questions: (1) does the rhematic function of the subject invariably conduce to the presentative perspective

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1 Rhematic subjects as components of existential constructions, cf. *Then there appeared John*, and in the final position with S – V inversion, cf. *Then appeared John*, were left out of account.



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of the sentence? Specifically, does the realization form of rhematic subjects affect the assignment of the sentence to the presentation scale? (2) If Type II can be classed as a presentation sentence, is it synonymous with Type I to the extent as to be actually interchangeable with it? (3) In which respects do Types I and II differ on the FSP and the textual levels?

## 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Considered from the standpoint of the FSP theory (Firbas, 1992), the characteristics of prototypical instances of the two constructions suggest absence of synonymy, and hence textual non-interchangeability rather than alternative deployment, albeit restricted.

The first divergent point is the instance level (Firbas 1992, 110, 112–114) on which the two constructions occur: the levels displaying Type I are the first instance levels, viz. the basic and the ordinary levels. On the former, all elements are context-independent, accordingly the factors determining the FSP structure are semantics and linearity; on the latter, some elements are context-dependent so that the FSP factors include, in addition, the contextual factor. In the case of Type I the distinction between the first instance basic and ordinary levels is due to the context dependence or independence of the scene-setting adverbial. Type II is close to the second-instance level, where all elements except one are context-dependent, forming an extensive theme, with one element put in contrast. This is shown in the underlying non-cleft form in which the rhematic function of the subject is signalled by the contrastive nuclear tone, i.e. besides context, also the prosodic factor is in play. However, Type II in the standard form is not regarded as a structure of the second instance level. Discussing it with a view to the communicative subfield formed by the subordinate clause, Firbas (2009, 302–303) assigns to the second instance level only clefts with a prosodically focused element other than the subject complement, such as *It WAS yesterday that George flew to Prague, It was yesterday that GEORGE flew to Prague*. The question of the instance level of Type II is resumed in more detail in 4.3.1. Irrespective of its appurtenance to an instance level, it differs from Type I in being a derived form whose underlying structure involves the FSP factors of context and intonation, while the factors determining the communicative field of Type I are semantics and linearity alone or together with context.

Connected with this difference is the second divergent point of the two types, viz. their unequivocal assignment to the dynamic semantic scale. While Type I is next to the existential construction a typical realization form of the presentation sentence, Type II has not so far been considered from this point of view. Treatment of this point calls for taking into account both main types of the construction, stressed-focus clefts and informative-presupposition clefts (Prince, 1978). As regards Type I, a point for further study is offered in the extended presentation scale (Chamonikolasová and Adam, 2005), especially as regards its realization forms (cf. 3.3).

Perhaps the most important difference with respect to the textual roles of the two constructions arises from the third divergent feature, viz. the type of context-independence of their subjects. The subject in Type I typically displays context-in-

dependence that might be called independence of the first order, i.e. its referent is introduced into discourse for the first time (a first-mention instance). In the case of common nouns this is overtly indicated by the indefinite or zero article.<sup>2</sup>

- (3) Then a problem / problems arose.  
A frayed and tattered trench coat fell to his knees. (Grisham)  
Mild laughter rippled round the table (Clarke)

In contrast, the context independence of the subject in Type II is independence “of the second order”, insofar as the subject is rhematized by being disengaged from context dependence through one of the decontextualizing factors, mostly that of contrast, selection or identification (Firbas, 1995, 22). In the cleft sentences drawn from conversation, the focused element is frequently the pronoun of the second person in its basic deictic function, reference to the addressee, viz. an inherently thematic element, as in (4) a. Here, it is also anaphoric, like the appellative noun phrases in (4) b.

- (4) a. I’m now fairly firmly convinced, Mr. Dixon, that it was you who rang me up recently and pretended, in fact you lied when I asked you, pretended both to myself and to my son to be a newspaper reporter. (Amis)  
 b. And it wasn’t the young man’s nakedness that caused Ruth to scream; she had seen her father and her mother naked — nakedness was not hidden among the Coles. It was the young man himself who made Ruth scream, because she was certain he was one of her dead brothers; (Irving)

These differences presumably play a part in the textual roles of the two constructions. By the textual role is meant their function within higher units than the sentence, viz. paragraphs, sections, chapters, and even entire works. In addition to Firbas’s FSP and decontextualizing factors, the examination of the textual roles of the two constructions is based on Hasselgård’s (2004) textual functions related to longer stretches of text, one of which, summarization, coincides with Firbas’s; the other two are topic launching and topic linking. In a previous study (Dušková, 2010), the textual roles of *it*-clefts were found to be connected with their position in paragraphs. Paragraph-initial clefts displayed the function of launching the paragraph theme, while paragraph-final clefts had the summarizing / concluding function, sometimes connected with the linking function. *It*-clefts in textual units higher than the paragraph were noted only in academic prose, where in some instances the concluding function extended over a whole section. The most frequent textual function of *it*-clefts occurred paragraph-internally where it served topic evolvment or introduced a deviation or a shift in the narrative. However, these results are only partly comparable since here all syntactic elements focusable by *it*-clefts were dealt with, not only the subjects of the underlying construction. Considering the textual roles of *it*-clefts from the view-

2 In speech, the rheme is as a rule signalled by the intonation centre. In examples where rhematic subjects are underlined, the underlining also indicates the position of the intonation centre. In other instances, the words carrying the intonation centre are in capitals.

point of their FSP characteristics, they appear to lack the prerequisite to serve as an opening of a textual theme, unless the text of a novel opens “in medias res”.

In this respect, Type I, initial rhematic subject with a presentation verb, is in general better disposed insofar as it has fewer presuppositions. However, a restriction is found even here, viz. not only forms with an expressed scene-setting adverbial, but also the bare form consisting of a subject and a verb has a temporal and local setting, even though merely implied. Compare ex. (5), which is conceivable only in a given situation. Accordingly, whether expressed or not, the scene-setting component connected with the situation in which a novel element appears is to be regarded as a constitutive element of the construction.<sup>3</sup>

(5) A problem arose.

Of the textual functions attested for the *it*-cleft, Type I can be assumed to lack the summarizing/concluding function on account of introducing a novel element.

### 3. MATERIAL AND METHOD

Answers to the questions raised at the beginning in Section 1. and to related points noted in Section 2. are sought in an analysis of instances of both constructions collected from on-line novels from InterCorp. Included in the search were six novels: 1. Kingsley Amis, *Lucky Jim*, 2. Arthur C. Clarke, *Rendezvous with Rama*, 3. John Grisham, *The Street Lawyer*, 4. Arthur Hailey, *The Final Diagnosis*, 5. John Irving, *A Widow for One Year* and 6. Kazuo Ishiguro, *An Artist of the Floating World* (see Sources).

**3.1** The original idea was to collect an equal number of examples of each type, viz. 50 instances of presentation sentences of Type I and 50 instances of the cleft construction focusing a subject, with equal representation from each source, i.e. 10 examples from each novel. The search was first done for presentation sentences with initial rhematic subjects. This had to be done manually, since identification of initial rhematic subjects depends not only on their structure and the structure of the whole clause, but more essentially on sentence semantics and context. Although this procedure might seem laborious and time-consuming, in fact the needed number of examples from each novel was collected readily enough, which could have been expected, considering that the dynamic semantic scale is an intrinsic feature of every sentence as a communicative unit. Even though the presentation scale is much less frequent than the quality scale (according to Adam, 2013, 19–21, presentation sentences account, in dependence on the genre, from 8–12% of the clausal fields), on average every tenth sentence can be expected to express presentation. And indeed, the needed number of examples was collected in the first few (up to five) chapters (according to their length).

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<sup>3</sup> Even generic sentences imply existence in time and space, cf. *Problems arise*.

**3.2** The search for the cleft construction was done automatically by a case-insensitive query consisting of *it/It*, all forms of the verb *be*, followed (within the scope of three words at most) by a common noun / proper noun and *that/who*. *Which*, initially left out, was subsequently included after two clefts containing it were registered in the stretch of a text that had been searched manually for initial rhematic subjects; cf. ex. (6).

- (6) “It is pathology which tests a patient’s blood, checks his excrements, tracks down his diseases, decides whether his tumor is malignant or benign. It is pathology which advises the patient’s physician on disease and sometimes, when all else in medicine fails” (Hailey)

In addition to these two clefts, the *which*-search yielded two more instances from Hailey and Clarke. The remaining sources (Amis, Irving, Ishiguro, Grisham) showed no instance of this form.

However all-covering the extended query for clefts might have appeared, the manual search for initial rhematic subjects yielded three more subjects focused by the cleft construction that the automatic search had failed to detect, viz. exx. (7) a. b. c. By going through parts of the full texts the automatic search was thus optimized.

- (7) a. It wasn’t the double-exposure effect of the last half minute’s talk that had dumbfounded him for such incidents formed the staple material of Welch colloquies; it was the prospect of reciting the title of the article he’d written. (Amis)  
 b. In fact, it may be said that respected enormously as he is by the public at large, it is we here at this table who alone know the extent to which that respect still falls short. (Ishiguro)  
 c. Shintaro’s ignorance of such matters is often remarkable, but as I say, it is not something to disparage. One should be thankful there are still those uncontaminated by the current cynicism. In fact, it is probably this very quality of Shintaro’s — this sense that he has remained somehow unscathed by things — which has led me to enjoy his company more and more over these recent years. (Ishiguro)

Example (7) a. moreover illustrates an instance where both the denied and the intended meaning are explicitly expressed, the latter in an elliptical form, with ellipsis of the *that*-clause. Both this example and (7) b. show the need in the query for several more spaces before the subordinator. Example (7) c. contains, before the *which*-clause, an inserted apposition with a postmodifying content clause, separated by dashes, which is probably another reason why the query had failed to detect it.

The automatic search for focused subjects by *it*-clefts had to be supplemented by manual elimination of surface structures identical with *it*-clefts but representing other constructions, viz. extraposed subject clauses introduced by the conjunction *that* (cf. (8) a.), and relative clauses introduced by relatives (cf. (8) b.).

- (8) a. it is my hope that my grandson will retain them into his adult years. (Ishiguro)  
 b. Isn’t it logical enough for you? Isn’t it the only explanation that fits? (Amis)  
 It’s someone who carries disease germs in their body (Hailey)

**3.3** A problem raised by the search for rhematic subjects focused by *it*-clefts was a great difference in the frequency of occurrence between the two constructions. The cleft sentence was found to be substantially less frequent than sentences with initial rhematic subjects. Even this could have been expected insofar as the cleft sentence is a derived structure which requires much more specific contextual conditions for its use. While the needed number of presentation sentences was collected from a few chapters in each source, the search for the cleft construction, albeit done on the entire texts of five source novels, failed to yield fifty examples. This was only partly due to the limitation of the search to a single clause element, the subject of the underlying form, because of all the focusable elements the subject appears to be the most frequent. In Dušková (2010) it accounted for 65% of all the focused elements and as shown in Table I, an even greater prevalence of focused subjects was also noted in this study. Besides the lower occurrence due to the derived character of the cleft construction, a major role in its representation is played by the author's individual style. Table 1 shows the frequency of occurrence of Type II to vary according to the source: one source (Grisham) yielded no cleft sentence at all. Consequently, a sixth source had to be added, viz. Irving, which, however, was not included among the samples of the presentation sentences. The exclusion was due to the fact that Irving's novel yielded no presentation sentences in a much larger stretch of text than was needed for their excerption in the other sources. Apparently, even the use of this type of presentation sentence, although to a much lesser degree, depends on the individual style of the author, possibly in connection with the content and scenario of the narrative.

	<b>Focused subjects</b>	<b>Other focused elements</b>	<b>Total</b>
Amis	7 (78%)	2 (adverbials) (22%)	9
Clarke	4 (80%)	1 (adverbial) (20%)	5
Grisham*	—	—	—
Hailey	10 (91%)	1 (object) (9%)	11
Irving	21 (62%)	13 (11 adverbials 2 objects) (38%)	34
Ishiguro	13 (81%)	3 (adverbials) (19%)	16
Total	55 (73.3%)	20 (26.7%)	75

**TABLE 1** Cleft constructions: Subjects focused by *it*-clefts (Type II)

\*While this sample yielded no *it*-clefts, in the part excerpted manually for initial rhematic subjects, there were 6 *wh*-clefts. Even this feature suggests dependence on the style of the author.

The problems involved in collecting the sample of presentation sentences with initial rhematic subject were of a different kind. They concerned reliable identification of sentences conveying presentation semantics, which may not be a simple matter (cf. Firbas, 1992, 108–110). In view of the textual roles of the two constructions, the following analysis is based only on instances whose presentative character was adequately straightforward. Instances of potential dual interpretation, illustrated by (9) and (10), were noted merely to ascertain their proportion with respect to the former.

Conceivably, their number, viz. about ten, is only approximate as in some cases one of the interpretations appeared more plausible than the other.

- (9) it had been a long hard chase; Rama was already inside the orbit of Venus when Endeavour caught up with her. No other ship could ever do so; this privilege was unique, and not a moment of the weeks ahead was to be wasted. (Clarke)

Here the interpretation of the dynamic semantic scale depends on the semantics of the verb which has no complementation, and hence no competitor for rhematic function. If regarded as a verb of (dis)appearance (one of the semantic classes of presentation verbs, cf. Adam, 2013, 132–135), it perspectives the communication to the subject; however, since the presentative meaning is here only implicit, the lexical semantics of the verb, expressing quality, may perspective the communication to the verb.<sup>4</sup>

Example (10) contains a context-dependent element in the subject, the postverbal element demonstrates the graded character of context — an imminent unpleasantness is implied pragmatically, and the verb may again be interpreted as expressing disappearance from the scene. Again the question arises which of the two elements, the subject or the postverbal element, is the rheme.

- (10) he'd been passing behind the Registrar's chair at the first Faculty meeting, had stumbled and had knocked the chair aside just as the other man was sitting down.  
A warning shout from the Registrar's Clerk had averted complete disaster, but he could still remember the look on the face of that figure, stiffened in the shape of a letter S. (Amis)

Instances included in the sample mostly represented the canonical form: they had a context-independent subject, a verb with presentative semantics and a scene-setting adverbial, ex. (11) a., and/or a context-dependent postverbal element, ex. (11) b., see also ex. (3) above; four examples had the bare form S -V, as in ex. (11) c.:

- (11) a. A helicopter hovered nearby, and I could only imagine what they were planning in the parking lot. (Grisham)  
A huge bus now swung into view from further round the bend. (Amis)  
 b. Nevertheless, as I pondered over the whole business during the days which followed, a new idea struck me: (Ishiguro)  
 c. The traffic was getting worse, and I was getting chatted up by people I couldn't stand. Two reporters called. (Grisham)

4 In Czech, both perspectives, indicated by the respective word order arrangements with the rheme at the end, are possible in the given context: (a) *Z týdnů před nimi nesměl být zmařen ani OKAMŽIK*. [Of weeks before them must not be wasted SINGLE MOMENT.] (b) *Ani okamžik z týdnů před nimi nesměl být ZMAŘEN*. [Even single moment of weeks before them must not be WASTED.]

Over a half of them (32 instances) contained an intransitive verb explicitly or sufficiently implicitly (in Firbas's terminology) expressing appearance/existence on the scene, as exx. (11) a. and c.; the second largest group displayed a passive verb (16 instances), cf. ex. (12).

- (12) But sometimes a little sleight of hand was practiced. (Hailey)

Transitive verbs are illustrated by (11) b., and the verb *enter* (*something new — a kind of fascination — had entered his manner* [Ishiguro]). One example contained a verb-nominal (phraseological) verb phrase (*where the specialists held court* [Hailey]). This example displays a subject determined by the definite article, which, however, is not anaphoric but limits the existence of the respective class to a particular locality. Other definite subjects (9 instances) were cataphoric or referred to unique entities. There was only one instance where the subject was context-dependent, anaphoric, cf. (13):

- (13) 'Any questions?' It was Dr. Pearson asking.  
Vivian had one ... Now one of the other girls was putting a question. (Hailey)

**3.4** As regards the extended presentation scale, the second rhematic element contained therein in addition to the subject, the specification, raises the question of the relationship to complex sentences. Clausal realization forms have so far been considered with respect to sentences containing one clausal or semiclausal (non-finite) constituent. Firbas's treatment (1992, 36, 54–55) is concerned with the effect of linearity on the FSP function of infinitives of purpose and adverbial clauses of reason and time, with all his examples representing quality scales. The same realization forms are exemplified in the proposal of extended presentation scale by Chamonikolasová and Adam (2005), which presents, in addition, a specification implemented by a present participle: *In these days John the Baptist came preaching in the Desert of Judaea ...* A comprehensive treatment of this point, however, is still lacking.

Accordingly, the following remarks based on my sample sentences are offered only as suggestions. In comparison with the basic presentation sentences (i.e. sentences containing only one rhematic element, viz. the subject), extended presentation sentences are relatively rare. After excluding instances with discontinuous post-modification of the subject, which does not constitute a separate clause element but a component of the subject, as in ex. (14), about ten instances of extended presentation scale (again allowing for potentiality) were found, cf. (15).

- (14) a. But then one particular exchange has come back to me which I gave little significance to before. (Ishiguro)  
b. They at least would enjoy air conditioning when their turn came to enter one of the six offices leading off the general waiting room. (Hailey)
- (15) a. That, added to two deaths which had occurred during the night, meant that four new names could be plucked from the hospital's long waiting list for immediate admission. (Hailey)



b. The establishment my own group frequented was called ‘Migi-Hidari’, and stood at a point where three side streets intersected to form a paved precinct. (Ishiguro)

Example (14) b. is in fact an instance of potentiality whose interpretation depends on which syntactic status is ascribed to the infinitive construction, postmodifying infinitives being often interpretable as adverbial infinitives of purpose; it would then implement an extended presentation scale as (15) b. Example (15) a. contains, in addition to the rhematic subject and a context-dependent thematic adverbial, a context-independent adjunct of purpose, realized by a prepositional phrase and constituting a specification. Similarly the final infinitive construction in (15) b. (a “false” purpose standing for a coordinate clause “and formed”) constitutes the second rhematic element in addition to the subject. Apparently, further research into the types and realization forms that may constitute specification in the extended presentation scale offers a promising line of future studies.

#### 4. DISCUSSION

As regards answers to the questions posed in Section 1. concerning the role of different realization forms of rhematic subjects in determining (1) the dynamic semantic scale of the sentence, (2) their extent of synonymy and textual interchangeability, and (3) differences between them at the FSP and textual levels, the first point has partly been answered in Section 2.

**4.1** What is said there about the realization form shows it to reflect the respective semantic and contextual features relevant to the assignment of the sentence to the presentation or the quality scale. Type I has in this respect appeared to be fairly straightforward. The instances of potentiality and the question of the extended presentation scale only demonstrate a general feature of all categories, viz. their scalar, gradient nature. Expectedly, the sample of initial rhematic subjects largely represents central instances of Type I.

**4.2** On the other hand, the quality / presentation status of Type II, the cleft construction, is a question yet to be answered. Here the first step was a classification of the collected instances according to Prince’s seminal study (1978) into stressed-focus and informative-presupposition *it*-clefts. Stressed-focus *it*-clefts contain a context-dependent, hence weakly stressed, subordinate clause, whereas the subordinate clause in informative-presupposition *it*-clefts conveys novel information, which is reflected in its normal stress contour. Theoretically, presentation sentences are to be sought in stressed-focus clefts since it is these clefts that present the subject of the underlying sentence as the only rhematic element. In the case of informative-presupposition clefts the presentation scale is possible only in the extended form, viz. with two information foci, the focused subject and the novel information contained in the subordinate clause. However, where this clause is contextually heterogeneous, in containing

both context-independent and context-dependent elements, which is often the case, its setting or specification function has again to be determined.

As regards the representation of stressed-focus and informative-presupposition clefts, in the collected sample it is nearly equal, with a slight preponderance of the informative-presupposition clefts. When compared with the results of previous studies, the representation of the two types appears to vary. While the findings reported in Dušková (1999, 326) showed a slight prevalence of stressed-focus *it*-clefts, prominent prevalence of the informative-presupposition clefts was found in Dušková (2010). However, these figures are not to be regarded as strictly accurate since the classification into the two types, being based on semantic and contextual factors, offers much space for potentiality.

**4.2.1** The clearest cases of the stressed-focus clefts are instances with ellipsis of the subordinate clause: the content of this clause is so activated that it need not be re-expressed. This is the case where the elided information occurs in the closely preceding context. Compare exx. (16) a. and b.

- (16) a. ‘Yes, Mr. Welch knows you asked him to ring you up about your parents.’  
 ‘Who told him? Who told him?’  
 ‘Please don’t dig your nails into my back. It was that little man who played the oboe [who told him] — you did tell me his name (Amis)  
 b. it wasn’t the spring that made Eddie feel indolent. It was his parents’ unending and unconnected conversations [that made him indolent]; (Irving)

Another instance of ellipsis occurred in the last clause of ex. (7) a. There were two more examples, cf. (17) a. and b.

- (17) a. ‘I mean it’s not just your appearance that makes you seem older and more experienced and all that. It’s the way you behave and talk, a lot of the time, too. (Amis)  
 b. It’s her mind that’s suffering now, you see not her body; (Amis)

Other straightforward instances of stressed-focus clefts were found in short subordinate clauses containing no or minimal new information:

- (18) *Father is not strict at all. It’s me that has to be strict with him*. (Ishiguro)

However, in most stressed-focus clefts the subordinate clause containing context-dependent information does not reiterate it in the same wording but in a different way which imparts some novelty to it. For instance in (19) it summarizes the content of several preceding clauses.

- (19) I remember someone asserting, ‘the low perspective lends the woman a dignity she would otherwise not have. It is a most astonishing achievement. For in all other respects, she looks a self-pitying sort. It is this tension [between dignity and self-pity] that gives the painting its subtle power.’ (Ishiguro)

**4.2.2** Clear instances of informative presupposition clefts are illustrated by exx. (20) a. and b. where the principle of end focus coincides with the principle of end weight:

- (20) a. There are some who would say it is people like myself who are responsible for the terrible things that happened to this nation of ours. (Ishiguro)  
 b. for a year or so, whenever I heard of a suitable house for sale, I would remember to make enquiries. It was one of my pupils who first brought it to my attention that Akira Sugimura's house, a year after his death, was to be sold off.

Where this was not the case, together with the limited stretch of the context provided in the concordance, which sometimes did not cover the entire retrievability span, classification into stressed-focus and informative-presupposition clefts was less straightforward. Cf. ex. (21).

- (21) a. he had always suffered from defeatist tendencies, and now he wished that he'd never agreed to give such a speech in the first place. Who am I, he thought miserably, to introduce Ruth Cole? It was the bartender who saved Eddie from missing the dreaded event altogether. (Irving)  
 b. "Well, sir, it's the physician who decides how long a patient remains in hospital. I think you should have another talk with your wife's physician, ..."

**4.2.3** Considering the examples illustrating the two types of *it*-clefts from the presentative point of view, it can be concluded that stressed-focus *it*-clefts represent a type of the presentation sentence, while informative presupposition clefts do not. The reason for assigning the former to presentation sentences is the rhematic function of the subject and the optional absence of all the other elements on account of their context dependence, i.e. retrievability from the context. Compared with presentation sentences implemented by initial rhematic subjects + explicit or implicit verbs of appearance or existence on the scene, stressed-focus clefts are a marginal, peripheral realization type. Their marginal character stems from the FSP function and semantics of the verb and from the type of context independence of the subject. While in the case of initial rhematic subjects the verb typically performs the FSP function of transition, here it is thematic; similarly while the static semantics of verbs with initial rhematic subjects typically expresses presentative meaning, here the static semantics is typically non-presentative. As for the context independence of the subject, in Type I the subject as a rule denotes a referent introduced into discourse for the first time, whereas in Type II it is an anaphoric element disengaged from context dependence by one of the decontextualizing factors. The marginal character of the presentative function of stressed-focus *it*-clefts is also demonstrated by the actual exchangeability of the two forms. The sample under study provided only one example of Type I replaceable by Type II, which displays all the features of the verb and the subject noted above. Compare the two forms in (13) a., b.

- (13) a. 'Any questions?' It was Dr. Pearson asking.  
 Vivian had one  
 Now one of the other girls was putting a question. (Hailey)
- b. 'Any questions?' It was Dr. Pearson asking.  
 Vivian had one  
 Now it was one of the other girls who was putting a question.

As regards informative-presupposition clefts, examples from the sample show them to be perspected to the predicative part of the sentence, i.e. away from the subject, even though the subject is put in contrast. This does not exclude it from operating within the theme, since — as has been shown by Hajičová (2008)<sup>5</sup>, focusing devices can be found not only in the rhematic section, but also in the theme ('contrastive topic' in Topic-Focus-Articulation terms).

**4.3** The last point to be dealt with concerns the differences between initial rhematic subjects and subjects focused by *it*-clefts at the FSP and the textual levels. As noted in Section 2., the differences in the FSP aspects involve the instance level at which the constructions occur and the type of context dependence of the subject.

**4.3.1** While Type I is a structure of the first instance level, either basic or ordinary, Type II has been described as second instance only where the cleft construction prosodically focuses an element other than the subject complement: *It WAS yesterday that George flew to Prague, It was yesterday that GEORGE flew to Prague* (Firbas, 2009, 302). "It is of course true that even in its most natural application, the examined structure is used to single out one of its elements for special attention. Under such circumstances, however, its contextual dependence is quite different. In their entirety, the elements that have not been singled out cannot then be regarded as merely repeating some information and therefore not developing the communication any further. That shows that if used in its most natural application, the examined structure cannot be interpreted as functioning within second instance." (*ibid.* 302-303). According to this formulation, Firbas here discusses stressed-focus clefts whose subordinate clause is not entirely context-dependent, but contains some new element(s). In the sample of the clefts under study, this was indeed the most common case. Still, the question remains how to treat the type whose subordinate clause is entirely context-dependent and allows elision (cf. 4.2.1). In the case of this type, in particular in instances of minimal unexpanded structures such as *It was JOHN told me that*, the cleft has all the contextual and prosodic features as the second instance non-cleft *JOHN told me that*, from which it differs only in splitting the same FSP structure into two distributive fields. Hence it can be regarded as pertaining to the second instance level, even though to its periphery bordering on the level of first instance. As regards Firbas's examples of second-instance clefts, *It WAS yesterday that*

5 Here Hajičová refers to the treatment of focusing particles and focalizers in Hajičová, E., Partee, Barbara, and Sgall, P., *Topic-Focus Articulation, Tripartite Structures, and Semantic Content*, 151. Kluwer, Dordrecht: 1998.

*George flew to Prague, It was yesterday that GEORGE flew to Prague*, they also appear to be peripheral within the second instance level, but on its opposite end. Considering the ordinary type of clefts and the type regarded by Firbas as second instance from the viewpoint of their presuppositions, the usual type *It was YESTERDAY that George flew to Prague* implies a previous utterance calling for correction of one element, e.g. *George flew to Prague on Thursday*. This applies to the stimulus sentence in both its first-instance FSP structures, i.e. if the adverbial is context-independent and constitutes a thematic temporal scene (basic instance level) cf. *What's the news? — George flew to PRAGUE on Thursday*, or if it constitutes the rheme (ordinary instance level), cf. *When did George fly to Prague? — George flew to Prague on THURSDAY*. Here the correction expressed by the cleft represents the second step in a series of turns with one presupposed preceding step. On the other hand, a second-instance cleft represents a third step in the sequence, hence two preceding steps are presupposed. Compare: A: *George flew to Prague yesterday*. — B. *No, it was on THURSDAY that George flew to Prague*. — A. or C.: *You are mistaken, it WAS yesterday that George flew to Prague*. As regards *It was yesterday that GEORGE flew to Prague*, three preceding steps are presupposed since two elements are contrasted, one in the main clause and the other in the subordinate clause. Compare: A. *John flew to Prague on Thursday*. — B. *No, it was YESTERDAY that John flew to Prague*. — C. *As far as I know, it WAS on Thursday that John flew to Prague. It was YESTERDAY that GEORGE flew there./ YESTERDAY, GEORGE flew there*. As shown by the construed exemplification, the combination of syntactic focusing in the main clause with prosodic focusing in the subordinate clause calls for very specific contextual conditions; hence actual occurrence of FSP structures of this type may be expected to be rare.

While the question of the appurtenance of the cleft sentence to an instance level is purely theoretical, the second difference, different type of context dependence, has major textual consequences. This has been amply demonstrated by the adduced examples: initial rhematic subjects largely refer to entities introduced into discourse for the first time, whereas in Type II a context-dependent element is disengaged from context dependence by the factor of contrast, identification or selection. As was shown in 4.2.3, this was the case of the only registered example that allowed both constructions, ex. (13): it was not a typical instance of a presentation sentence with a context-independent subject, but a rare case with a subject disengaged from context dependence by one of the decontextualizing factors.

**4.3.2** As regards the roles of the two constructions in the build-up of textual themes (themes of paragraphs, paragraph groups, sections, chapters, etc., cf. Pípalová, 2008), viz. the launching function, summarizing/concluding function, linking function, topic evolvment (shift in the narrative or a diversion), the assumptions made at the beginning suggested, on the one hand, exclusion of Type I (initial rhematic subjects) from the concluding/summarizing function and of the cleft sentence from the function of launching the highest textual theme, and on the other hand, the disposition of Type I for the topic-launching function.

Presentation sentences with initial rhematic subjects were found in four textual roles: topic launching, as in (22):

- (22) a. On the first floor, as far away from Mister as they could get, the families and friends were waiting. Dozens of our associates and colleagues were packed in the offices and hallways, waiting for our rescue. (Grisham)  
 b. The autopsy-room door swung open and Mike Seddons breezed in. Seddons was a surgical resident, temporarily assigned to Pathology, and he always breezed (Hailey)

Ex. (22) a. is the opening sentence of a new chapter (Chapter III).<sup>6</sup> The referents of the subject of the first sentence are brought into discourse for the first time, the definite article having here the function of limiting the respective class to those associated with the narrator and his co-captives. Ex. (22) b. is the opening sentence of a paragraph introducing a novel character, the previous paragraph having been concerned with someone else. Contrary to expectations, the group of these examples is relatively small, altogether some ten examples.

Also contrary to expectation, Type I appeared to be employed in the topic-concluding function (albeit rarely, three instances), cf. ex. (23).

- (23) a. The argument had reached the take-off point, and was now self-sustaining. Dr Bose sat back in his chair, said very little, and waited for the consensus to emerge. (Clarke)  
 b. It was precisely the kind of senseless slaughter that would grab the headlines for twenty-four hours and make people shake their heads. Then the dead lawyer jokes would start. (Grisham)

Another minor textual role was paragraph linking, with the presentation sentence launching the theme of the next paragraph (two instances), cf. ex. (24).

- (24) He and Welch might well be talking about history, and in the way history might be talked about in Oxford and Cambridge quadrangles. At moments like this Dixon came near to wishing that they really were. He held on to this thought until animation abruptly gathered again and burst in the older man, so that he began speaking almost in a shout, with a tremolo imparted by unshared laughter: (Amis)

The two best represented textual roles were evolvment of paragraph themes and introducing a new circumstance in the scene on which a particular storyline is developed. This latter function might in fact be subsumed under the former, the evolvment of a paragraph theme (a partial storyline), as its special, distinctive subtype. Paragraph-theme evolvment was the most frequent textual role of all, accounting for over a half of all instances (27), cf. exx. (25) a.<sup>7</sup>, b. Type I introducing a new cir-

6 In the original, the initial words of all chapters are in capitals. Here they have been replaced by lower case in order to avoid confusion with the use of capitals for indicating the placement of the intonation centre.

7 As in ex. (22) a., the first sentence of this example also opens a new chapter, cf. Note 6.

cumstantial element in the scene of the storyline was found in about a third of all instances (18), cf. exx. (26) a., b.

- (25) a. The man with the rubber boots stepped into the elevator behind me, but I didn't see him at first. I smelled him though—the pungent odor of smoke and cheap wine and life on the street without soap. We were alone as we moved upward, and when I finally glanced over I saw the boots, black and dirty and much too large. A frayed and tattered trench coat fell to his knees. Under it, layers of foul clothing bunched around his midsection, so that he appeared stocky, almost fat. But it wasn't from being well fed; ... (Grisham)
- b. From the corridor outside there was the sound of feet. Then the autopsy-room door opened, and a nurse, whom McNeil recognized as a member of the nursing school's teaching staff, looked in. She said, ... (Hailey)<sup>8</sup>
- (26) a. We both sat, my knees touching his desk, my hands thrust deep into the pockets of my overcoat. A radiator rattled behind him. We looked at each other, then looked away. It was my visit, I had to say something. But he spoke first. (Grisham)
- b. They moved towards the road at walking pace, the engine maintaining a loud lowing sound which caused a late group of students, most of them wearing the yellow and green College scarf, to stare after them from the small covered-in space beside the lodge where sports notices were posted. (Amis)

It is to be noted, however, that here, as in the FSP part, quantitative data are only approximate as different functions often overlap or may be interpreted in more than one way, as in ex. (27).

- (27) Outside the building they turned along a gravel drive and went up to the car where it was parked with a few others. Dixon stared about him while Welch looked thoroughly for his keys. An ill-kept lawn ran down in front of them to a row of amputated railings, beyond which was College Road and the town cemetery, a conjunction responsible for some popular local jokes. Lecturers were fond of lauding to their students the comparative receptivity to facts of 'the Honours class over the road', while the parallel between the occupations of graveyard attendant and custodian of learning was one which often suggested itself to others besides the students. (Amis)

Here the description of the scene of the main storyline also serves to introduce a diversion from it.

<sup>8</sup> This example displays, in addition to the Type I presentation sentence, an existential construction which the Type I form could replace, cf. *From the corridor outside the sound of footsteps could be heard*. The use of two different forms is presumably due to avoidance of the same structure; moreover, it shows the higher hierarchic status of the existential construction as a presentation sentence. Interchangeability of the different forms of the presentation sentence appears to offer a fruitful line of further research.

In the case of Type II, the textual roles appeared to be less varied as compared both with those of Type I and the roles noted in my previous study (Dušková, 2010; cf. the enumeration of the functions in Section 1.1). Nearly all instances of the present sample were classed as serving theme evolvment, other functions being exceptional. This finding is presumably due to the small size and perhaps also to the choice of the source novels. In any case, polyfunctionality of a smaller or larger number of examples again has to be taken into account. The theme-evolvment function is demonstrated by ex. (28), as well as by all previously adduced examples of this Type. Example (29) illustrates a summarizing function that also serves as a link to the next paragraph theme.

(28) He'd completed his second year at Phillips Exeter Academy, where his father taught English; it was an Exeter connection that got Eddie the job. Eddie's father ebulliently believed in Exeter connections. (Irving)

(29) O'Donnell accepted this fact himself but sometimes had difficulty in getting it across to the newer staff members.  
It was just this situation which had made him thoughtful after talking with Bill Rufus. (Hailey)

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

The foregoing discussion of the two realization forms of rhematic subjects, initial rhematic subjects with a presentation verb and the cleft construction, has shown that the rhematic function of the subject does not in itself constitute a decisive factor in determining the presentational perspective of a sentence. The decisive role is played by the factors imparting to the subjects the rhematic function, which underlie not only the realization forms of the subjects as such, but also, and more importantly, the syntactic-semantic structure of the whole sentence. While the rhematic subject in Type I is typically an indefinite noun phrase, the subject in Type II is frequently a proper noun, a personal pronoun or a definite noun phrase with anaphoric reference. In terms of context dependence / independence, Type I subjects are context-independent, their referents being introduced into discourse for the first time, whereas the subjects in the underlying form of the cleft sentence are context-dependent: they owe rhematic function to the operation of one of the decontextualizing factors. Another decisive factor is the semantics and FSP function of the verb. In Type I, the verb is typically presentative, expressing explicitly or implicitly existence or appearance on the scene, and its FSP function is typically transition. In Type II, the static semantics of the verb is very diverse and typically conveys quality meanings; the verb is mostly context-dependent, and hence functions within the theme. Consequently, actual interchangeability is very rare, as was demonstrated in the examined sample by a single instance.

These characteristics of Types I and II are reflected both in the related FSP aspects — appurtenance to the instance level and dynamic semantic scale, and to a considerable extent also in their textual roles.



As regards the instance level of the two Types, only Type II calls for consideration. Type I is an established structure of the first basic and ordinary instance levels. As for Type II, its largely prevailing use has been treated as a special case of context dependence on the first instance level, assignment to the second instance level being reserved for clefts with a prosodically focused element other than the subject complement. However, reconsideration of the clefts' instance level suggests that even within the basic use at least stressed-focus clefts, especially those with a simple structure, may be regarded as peripheral representatives of the second instance level insofar as they share with the underlying form, which pertains to the second-instance level, both the prosodic and contextual characteristics; the only difference here consists in the clefts' two distributive fields. Clefts with a prosodically focused element other than the subject complement also appear to be peripheral, but at the opposite end of the second instance level, as follows from the respective presuppositions. While the prevailing use of clefts presupposes one previous step in a series of turns forming a set, clefts with a prosodically focused element other than the subject complement presuppose, in dependence on the clause element involved, two or three previous steps.

A similar picture emerges in regard to the appurtenance of Types I and II to the dynamic semantic scale. While Type I is an established realization form of the presentation sentence, in the case of the cleft sentence a marginal instance of the presentation scale is found in stressed-focus clefts containing one rhematic element, the underlying subject, with a completely context-dependent subordinate clause. The marginal status of this cleft follows from the type of context-independence of the focused element, viz. disengagement from context dependence by one of the decontextualizing factors, and from the thematic function of the verb.

More similarities between the two Types are found on the textual level. Here both Types I and II appear to serve primarily the theme-evolving function. In the other textual functions, Type I manifests its disposition to the theme-launching function, but exceptionally also serves the summarizing/concluding function. Moreover, it appears to have a well-represented specific function of introducing a novel circumstance in the background scene on which the main storyline of a textual event is being developed.

The textual functions of the cleft sentence presumably partly depend on which clause element is being focused. As was found in previous research, when all focusable elements are included in an examination of their textual roles, the roles appear to be more diversified than in the case of focused subjects.

Owing to the limited size of the examined samples, the present findings are presented only as probes to be followed by further studies.

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