Focus, contrast, and the syntax-phonology interface: The case of French cleft-sentences
with new conclusion on recent developments (2014)

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Abstract In this paper, we argue for a prosodic approach (Samek-Lodovici, 2005) to the preference for cleft-sentences over canonical sentences in two focusing contexts in French: answers to subject constituent questions and contrastive [+− corrective] contexts. Our proposal is that the ranking Sf >> EPP, H_i >> *Structure is responsible for the emergence of cleft-sentences in answers to subject constituent questions and the emergence of canonical sentences in answers to non-subject constituent questions. As for contrastive [+− corrective] cleft-sentences, we propose treating them as cases of nested foci, along the same lines as the analysis offered by Féry and Samek-Lodovici (2006) for so-called Superman sentences.

1 Introduction

Languages vary in the extent to which they use cleft-sentences and also in the contexts in which they use them.¹ The fact that French speakers tend to use cleft-sentences as answers to subject wh-questions has been noticed by Belletti and Leonini (2004) in their experimental investigation of French learners of Italian as well as by Lambrecht (2001, 492), who claims that focused constituents are excluded from the preverbal subject position in French. Lambrecht rejects the possibility that this ban on preverbal foci in French follows from a phonological requirement and suggests that “the relevant constraint operates at the level of the mapping of syntax and information structure, prohibiting the occurrence of focus elements in the preverbal subject position”. The same view is advocated by Zerbian (2005, 2006, 2007) in her optimality theoretic (OT) account of Northern Sotho, a Bantu language spoken in South Africa, which exhibits a subject/non-subject asymmetry strikingly close to the one observed in French.

¹ An earlier version of this paper was presented at the 18th CIL conference in 2008 and published in its proceedings. To stay true to the original proposals, the paper only features minimal changes. Recent developments are briefly addressed in the last section of the paper, and the interested reader is referred to our upcoming work on cleft-sentences.
The aim of this work is to consider an alternative according to which the ban on focused preverbal subjects in French follows from phonology, and more particularly from the fact that, although the preverbal position can host a pitch accent, it cannot bear the main stress of the clause. We argue that, in French, the preference for cleft-sentences over canonical sentences in subject focusing follows from the high ranking of S\_TRESS\_FOCUS, (Samek-Lodovici (2005), adapted from Truckenbrodt (1995)), a constraint which requires that a focus be most prominent in its focus domain, a tie between EPP (Grimshaw, 1997), which requires that clauses have overt subjects, and H\_I (Truckenbrodt, 1995), which requires that the head of an intonation phrase be aligned with its right boundary, and the ranking of *\_STRUCTURE (Zerbian (2006), adapted from Grimshaw (1997)) below these constraints. What about non-subject cleft-sentences? Although they are excluded from information focus contexts, they are well formed and often preferred to canonical sentences in certain contrastive contexts. We propose an account of these cleft-sentences along the same lines as the one proposed by Féry and Samek-Lodovici (2006) for so-called Superman sentences, that is, as a type of nested foci which are an exception to rightmost main stress. Finally, we propose that our analysis extends to corrective cleft-sentences, which in our view constitute an instance of free second occurrence focus.

The paper is organized as follows. Section 2 presents the French data in 2.1 and the Northern Sotho data as well as Zerbian’s syntax-information structure interface account in 2.2. Section 3 is dedicated to our prosodic account of French cleft-sentences: Section 3.1 concentrates on non-contrastive cleft-sentences and Section 3.2 on two types of contrastive clefts. Section 4 concludes the paper.

2 Subject/non-subject asymmetry in French and Northern Sotho information focusing

2.1 French subject focusing

In their L2 acquisition experimental study, Belletti and Leonini (2004) observe that non-advanced French L2 speakers of Italian produce a very high percentage of cleft-sentences in contexts where the Italian verb-subject order is expected, that is, in contexts of subject focusing. This is illustrated in example (1), taken from Belletti and Leonini (p. 111).

(1) A: Chi ha portato questi fiori?
   ‘Who brought these flowers?’
B: Ha portato i fiori una donna. (L1 speaker)
   has brought the flowers a woman
   ‘A woman has brought the flowers.’
C: E’ una donna che ha portato i fiori. (L2 speaker)
   is a woman who has brought the flowers
   ‘It is a woman who has brought the flowers.’

As observed by Belletti and Leonini, the French learners of Italian investigated in their study tend to transfer the strategy of their L1 onto their L2 and, consequently, produce a cleft-sentence in a context where Italian speakers would produce a verb-subject inversion.

In the same vein, Lambrecht (2001, 491) notes that French is similar to Spanish and differs from languages like English and German in that the focus is banned from the preverbal position. Indeed, for many French speakers, the most common way to answer a question

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2 In (1)B, L1 speakers also produce: ‘Le ha portato una donna, i fiori’, with a clitic right-dislocated object.
such as the one in (2)A is by means of a cleft-sentence of the type given in (2)B. However, in object and adjunct focusing, canonical sentences are preferred to their cleft-sentence counterparts. This is illustrated in examples (3) to (5).

(2) A: Qui est-ce qui mange un biscuit?  
who Q that eats a cookie  
‘Who is eating a cookie?’
B: C’est Thomas qui mange un biscuit.  
it-is Thomas that.nom eats a cookie  
‘It is Thomas who is eating a cookie.’

(3) A: Qu’est-ce qu’il mange?  
what-Q that-he eats  
‘What is he eating?’
B: #C’est un biscuit qu’il mange.  
it-is a cookie that-he eats  
‘It is a cookie that he is eating.’
B’: Il mange un biscuit.  
he eats a cookie  
‘He is eating a cookie.’

(4) A: A qui est-ce qu’il parle?  
to who Q that-he speaks  
‘Who is he speaking to?’
B: #C’est à Marie qu’il parle.  
it-is to Marie that-he speaks  
‘It is to Marie that he is speaking.’
B’: Il parle à Marie.  
he speaks to Marie  
‘He is speaking to Marie.’

(5) A: Où est-ce qu’il va?  
where Q that-he goes  
‘Where is he going?’
B: #C’est à la maison qu’il va.  
it-is to the house that-he goes  
‘It is to home that he is going.’
B’: Il va à la maison.  
he goes to the house  
‘He is going home.’

The label ‘cleft-sentence’ refers to the B-sentences from (2) to (5), that is, bi-clausal structures divided into a matrix clause (TP) and a relative-like clause (CP). In a context such as the one provided in (2)A, the relative-like clause in (2)B can simply be omitted, yielding what is usually referred to as a ‘reduced’ cleft-sentence. There is a vast literature on cleft-sentences, as they have long been an object of interest. The syntactic analysis assumed here was proposed for French cleft-sentences by Clech-Darbon et al. (1999). It is given in (6).

(6) \[
\text{IP} \quad [\text{IP} \quad \text{C’est, [VP \ t_j, [DP \ Thomas]]}] \quad [\text{CP} \quad \text{Op}_{j} \quad [\text{C’} \quad \text{qui \ [VP \ t_j \ a \ [DP \ un \ biscuit]]}]])\]

Some French speakers seem to accept in-situ subject focusing in the contexts for which we claim that a cleft-sentence is highly preferred (J.M. Marandin, p.c.)
Clech-Darbon et al.’s approach challenges Lambrecht’s (2001, 466, and references therein) constructional view of cleft-sentences in arguing that clefts are the simple “amalgamation of independently occurring types of identificational sentences and relative clauses” (p. 16), namely that there is nothing in their syntactic and semantic properties that “cannot, or not entirely, be accounted for in terms of other properties of the grammar of a language or universal grammar and which therefore require independent explanation” (Lambrecht, 466).

In their view, the matrix clause is a typical identificational TP, whose specifier is occupied by the pronoun $c'$. Their analysis is ‘maximally simple’ in that there is no movement other than that of an abstract relative operator within the relative-like clause. The functional category heading the relative-like CP is $qui$ when the clefted constituent (the complement of the copula) is the logical subject of the verb within the CP, and $que$ in all the other cases. As demonstrated by Clech-Darbon et al., French admits no explicit relative pronoun as head of this CP. This is illustrated in examples (7) and (8), in which the presence of an explicit relative marker forces the sentences to be interpreted as presentational sentences involving a genuine restrictive relative clause and the cleft-sentence reading to be rejected.

(7) C’est la maison dans laquelle j’ai dormi.
   ‘This is the house in which I slept.’

(8) C’est la fille à qui j’ai confié Fido.
   ‘This is the girl to whom I entrusted Fido.’

In their analysis, Clech-Darbon et al. treat the functional category heading CP in cleft-sentences as a complementizer (Comp) and assume that an abstract relative pronoun covertly moves from an argument/adjunct position to Spec,CP. Although we agree with their analysis, we depart from it in the following respect: we adopt the view advocated by Taraldsen (2002) that the form $qui$ which emerges in so-called cases of ‘subject-extraction’ is actually an amalgamation of the Comp $que$ and an expletive subject pronoun $-i$.

In some dialects of French, a subject pronoun explicitly occurs in this position. This is illustrated in the following example from a song by Loïc Lantoine:

(9) C’est nous qu’on s’ra les P.D.G.
   ‘It’s us that (we) will be CEOs.’

Another argument comes from the fact that the frequent omission of the last segment of the expletive pronoun $il$ has led some speakers to re-analyse the string $qu’il$ (Comp+$i$-expletive) into $qui$. This is illustrated in the subsequent example:

(10) (...) qui disent bien tout ce qui faut faire.
   ‘... that say well all that must be done.’

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4 An alternative approach, taken in Hamlaoui (2009), is the one offered by Tesnière (1959) and according to which $qui$ is the result of the amalgamation of the complementizer $que$ and the nominative case $-i$.

5 “Quand les cigares” in Tout est calme, 2006, U10.

In other words, we take the view that the subject position within the relative-like clause of a 'subject' cleft-sentence is not empty but overtly filled by an expletive -i, which attaches to the Comp que and yields the form qui.

To sum up: In the context provided by subject constituent questions of the type qui/qu’est-ce qui, the most common way to answer in French is by means of a cleft-sentence, whereas in non-subject questions of the same wh-word + est-ce que type, cleft-sentences are inappropriate and canonical sentences preferred. We now turn to another language which exhibits the same behaviour with respect to answering constituent questions.

2.2 Northern Sotho

The subject/non-subject asymmetry observed in French has been observed in other languages and more particularly in some Bantu languages. Northern Sotho (henceforth NS), an SVO language spoken in South Africa, is one of them. In her study of this language, Zerbian (2006, 2007) offers a comprehensive overview of the contexts in which cleft-sentences are either the only or are among the least marked alternative(s) in a number of discourse contexts. For reasons of lack of space and time, we will concentrate on information focus, and leave the other areas mentioned by this author for future research.

There are several ways to question subjects in NS, however the one described by Zerbian as the most common is by means of a cleft-sentence. Alternative structures are described as pragmatically more marked.

(11) A: Ké mang a-nyaka-ng ngaka?
   COP who CL1-look.for-rel cl9.doctor
   ‘Who is looking for the doctor?’

B: Ké mo-kglabje a-nyaka-ng ngaka.
    COP CL1-old.man CL1-look.for-rel cl9.doctor
    ‘It is the old man who is looking for the doctor.’

The syntactic structure assumed in Zerbian (2006) for a sentence such as the one in (11)A or (11)B is given in (12).

(12) [CP Ké mang, [IP t; a-nyaka-ng ngaka]]

In NS, the cleft-sentence is characterized by the presence of the copula ké, which appears right before the subject. A relative affix, -ng, is attached to the final vowel of the verb and there is a change in the verbal morphology, as the subject marker a is used instead of the class marker o. The syntactic analysis adopted by Zerbian for NS is different in several respects from the one assumed for French and illustrated in (6). The structure in (12) is a monoclausal structure in which the clefted constituent, here the wh-word mang – considered as inherently focused – is assumed to move from its argument position within IP to a higher (specifier?) position in the CP domain.

Contrary to subjects, objects and adjuncts are both questioned and focused in-situ, as illustrated in the question-answer pairs in (13) and (14).

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7 I would like to thank Prof. Manfred Krifka for drawing my attention to this fact.

8 It is worth noting that questioning a subject by means of a cleft-sentence is not as common in French as in NS. Cleft subject wh-questions are grammatical and productive in French. They are however highly stigmatized by prescriptive grammars and, as a consequence, children are often corrected when they produce such sentences.
(13) A: Mokgalabje ó-nyaka mang?
   CL1-old.man CL1-look.for who
   ‘Who is the old man looking for?’

B: Mokgalabje ó-nyaka ngaka.
   CL1-old.man CL1-look.for CL9.doctor
   ‘The old man is looking for the doctor.’

(14) A: Mokgalabje ó-jwala mo-hlare neng?
   CL1-old.man CL1-plant CL3-tree when
   ‘When is the old man planting a tree?’

B: Mokgalabje ó-jwala mo-hlare lehono.
   CL1-old.man CL1-plant CL3-tree today.
   ‘The old man is planting a tree today.’

NS’s asymmetry in subject/non-subject focusing has traditionally been accounted for by the claim that in this language the subject position is a topic position and, as a consequence, non-topical elements cannot surface there. Zerbian’s (2007) (and references therein) optimality theoretic account is in the same vein as traditional analyses. The hierarchical ranking of constraints proposed by this author is the following:

(15) Northern Sotho:
    SUBJECT = TOPIC >> SUBJECT >> STAY >> FOC-SPEC >> *STR

As mentioned above, NS’s canonical order is Subject-Verb-Object. As in English or French, the subject is assumed to move from a position inside VP to the specifier of an I-related head. This movement is taken to indicate that in this language the constraint SUBJECT outranks the constraint STAY. Both constraints appear below.

(16) SUBJECT:
    Sentences have overt subjects in SpecIP.

(17) STAY:
    Don’t move constituents.

The constraint SUBJECT (Grimshaw, 1997), also referred to as EPP (‘Clauses have an overt subject’), corresponds to Chomsky’s (1982) Extended Projection Principle. There are (at least) two trends with respect to the evaluation of this constraint. Zerbian (2007) (and references therein) considers SUBJECT to be violated whenever the logical subject is not located in the subject position. For instance, the example in (18), displaying an impersonal construction, violates this constraint.  

(18) Go-fihla ba-eti.
    CL17-arrive CL2-guest
    ‘There are guests arriving.’

In Samek-Lodovici (2005), in contrast, this constraint is violated whenever the “highest A-specifier – or the specifier of I-related heads such as T0, Agr0, Neg0 – is not overtly filled.”. Under the latter view of EPP and following a treatment of subject markers à la Demuth and Johnson (1989) (under Spec,IP), the impersonal construction in (18) satisfies this constraint.  

9 Zerbian follows Baker (2003), among other works, in assuming that subject markers are located somewhere under I0, leaving SpecIP empty in impersonal sentences. An alternative approach is the one offered by Demuth and Johnson (1989) for Setawana (Sotho-Tswana family), in which subject markers are located under Spec,IP and lexical subjects are always left-dislocated.
constraint. Our own proposal (Section 3) is in the same line as the latter approach, in considering impersonal constructions displaying an expletive in the preverbal subject position to satisfy \textsc{subject/ep}. As for the constraint \textsc{stay} in (17), it has the effect of generally favouring an absence of movement over movement. It is violated by every trace (or copy) present in the derivation.

To account for the fact that a cleft-sentence is preferred to its canonical counterpart in subject focusing contexts, Zerbian proposes that the interface constraint in (19) ranks above all the other constraints in NS.

\begin{equation}
\text{subject} = \text{topic}
\end{equation}

The grammatical subject of the sentence must not be \textsc{f-marked}.

The interface constraint \textsc{subject} = \text{topic} is violated whenever the subject position hosts a focused constituent. This constraint is reminiscent of Zerbian’s (2006) constraint *\textsc{subj/f-marked}. *\textsc{subj/f-marked} was aimed at capturing the generalization that subjects do not have to be topical to appear in the preverbal subject position: it is sufficient that they be non-focused. Both constraints are derived through the harmonic alignment of two scales (Prince and Smolensky, 2004): the grammatical function scale (\textsc{subject} \succ \text{non-subject}) and the focus scale (\textsc{non-focus-marked} \succ \text{focus-marked} or, alternatively, [−\text{focus}] \succ [+]\text{focus}). The idea is that the subject position attracts non-f-marked constituents over f-marked ones: the presence of a narrowly focused subject in the preverbal position is therefore ‘un-harmonic’ and the constraint *\textsc{subj/f-marked} is violated whenever this configuration occurs. The fact that, in NS, focused subjects never appear in the preverbal position leads Zerbian to conclude that \textsc{subject} = \text{topic} outranks \textsc{subject} and \textsc{stay}.

All else being equal, the constraint *\textsc{structure} (*\textsc{str}) favours less complex structures over more complex ones in terms of functional layers. Every additional functional layer incurs one violation of this constraint. The fact that cleft-sentences emerge in NS is taken to indicate that the constraint in (20) is not highly-ranked in this language.

\begin{equation}
\text{structure}
\end{equation}

Finally, the interplay of \textsc{stay} with \textsc{foc-spec} in (21) ensures that, in NS, objects and adjuncts are focused in-situ.

\begin{equation}
\text{foc-spec}
\end{equation}

Focused constituents must be in a specifier position.

Zerbian’s \textsc{foc-spec} is also an interface constraint. It maps an information structural category, namely focus, onto a position in the syntactic structure. \textsc{foc-spec} is parallel to the constraint \textsc{op-spec} (Grimshaw, 1997), which requires that operators such as wh-words be in a specifier position. This is the case in languages like German and English, in which obligatory wh-movement in wh-questions can be accounted for by the high-ranking of such a constraint. As wh-structures and focus-structures exhibit the same behaviour in NS, Zerbian proposes a reformulation of \textsc{op-spec} into \textsc{foc-spec}. This constraint is violated whenever a focused constituent is not located in a specifier position, as is the case in object and adjunct focusing in NS. Zerbian derives the in-situ focusing of these constituents through the ranking of \textsc{stay} above \textsc{foc-spec}.

To sum up, French and NS seem to share the same subject/non-subject asymmetry in the use of cleft-sentences in answers to constituent questions (‘\textsc{wh-answers}’). As was illustrated above, in NS this asymmetry has been tied to the relation between syntax and inform-
tion structure. This analysis is reminiscent of the one suggested by Lambrecht (2001, 492) for French: “(...) the relevant constraint operates at the level of the mapping of syntax and information structure, prohibiting the occurrence of focus elements in preverbal subject position”. In the following subsection, we propose an alternative approach to the subject/non-subject asymmetry observed in information focusing contexts, where the observed pattern is a consequence of the interaction of prosodic and syntactic constraints and which relates the French data to what has been observed in English and Italian subject focusing.

3 A prosodic approach to French informational and contrastive focus

3.1 Towards an analysis of the French subject/non-subject asymmetry

3.1.1 Italian and English subject focusing

We adopt an alternative path and propose an account of French in the spirit of the analyses which have recently been proposed for Italian and English subject focusing within OT (Szendrö, 2001; Samek-Lodovici, 2005, among others). Contrary to the approaches cited in the previous section, in which discourse influences syntax, in the present account the asymmetry is derived through the interplay of prosodic and syntactic constraints. Our account is based on the claim that, contrary to what has long been assumed, pitch accent is not the main correlate of focus, but main stress is (Féry and Samek-Lodovici, 2006; Samek-Lodovici, 2005; Büring, 2006, among others). Although pitch accents are not banned from the preverbal subject position in French, we argue that leftmost main stress has a marked status in French and is avoided whenever another structure is available in the language, that satisfies the same syntactic, semantic and discursive requirements and at the same time enables the requirement for rightmost main stress to be fulfilled.

Before going through the details of our own analysis, we will briefly outline Samek-Lodovici’s analysis of English and Italian focusing. Italian and English are both SVO head-initial languages, and have in common that they are rightward oriented with respect to main stress: in the neutral case (all-focus sentences) the main prosodic prominence is perceived to be aligned with the right edge of the clause. This is illustrated in (22) for both English and Italian (small capitals indicate main stress).

(22) A: What happened?
B: A woman brought the FLOWERS.
B′: Una donna ha portato i FIORI.

Within the OT approach proposed by Samek-Lodovici, the link between prosodic prominence and focus has been implemented in the form of the STRESS-FOCUS constraint (Truckenbrodt, 1995) given in (23).

(23) STRESS-FOCUS (SF):
A focused phrase has the highest prosodic prominence in its focus domain.

STRESS-FOCUS ensures that no candidate can emerge that assigns more prominence to a non-focused item than to a focused one.

In English and Italian, phonological constraints push the main stress towards the right edge of the clause.
(24) **Hp:**
Align the right boundary of every P-phrase with its head(s).

(25) **Hi:**
Align the right boundary of every I-phrase with its head(s).

(26) **Hu:**
Align the right boundary of every U-phrase with its head(s).

**Hp** and **Hi**, adapted from McCarthy and Prince (1993) and Truckenbrodt (1995, 1999) (see Samek-Lodovici (2005) and references therein), require that prosodic heads (stress) be aligned with the right boundary of the corresponding phrases (Selkirk’s (1984) prosodic hierarchy: prosodic word ($\omega$) $<$ phonological phrase ($\phi$) $<$ intonation phrase (I) $<$ utterance (U)), where phonological phrases correspond to lexical XPs (NP, VP and AP) with the functional items on their non-recursive side, and intonation phrases to syntactic clauses.

What’s crucial is that in the languages considered here, the subject position does not match the position where main stress is neutrally assigned. The fact that focused items must bear the highest prosodic prominence in their domain makes subject focusing in languages like Italian and English an area of the grammar where the respective demands of prosody and syntax clash: on the one hand, prosody requires the main stress of the clause to be aligned with its right edge, and on the other hand, syntax requires that the preverbal subject position be filled. English and Italian each have their own strategy to solve this conflict. English favours syntax over prosody in keeping the canonical SVO order and shifting the main stress to the subject. This is illustrated in the following example.

(27) **A:** Who bought a cake?
**B:** JOHN bought a cake.
**B’:** JOHN did.

Italian adopts the reverse strategy in favouring prosody over syntax: main stress keeps its rightward position while the subject occupies a position located to the right edge of the clause, as illustrated in example (1) and repeated below for convenience.

(28) **A:** Chi ha portato questi fiori?
‘Who brought these flowers?’
**B:** Le ha portato una donna, i fiori.
‘Them has brought a woman the flowers’

In other words, when the respective requirements of syntax and prosody clash, syntax gets the upper hand in English, that is, the canonical SVO order is preserved, whereas in Italian prosody prevails and the canonical SVO order is simply discarded.

In his comprehensive study of different focusing paradigms, Samek-Lodovici proposes that the following hierarchical rankings of constraints are responsible for the above facts:

(29) English:
$S_F \gg EPP \gg STAY \gg HP \gg HI$

(30) Italian:
$S_F \gg HI \gg HP \gg EPP \gg STAY$

In both languages, $S_F$ is the highest-ranked constraint. In English, the hierarchical ranking of the syntactic constraints $EPP$ and $STAY$ above the prosodic constraints $HP$ and $HI$ allows
the emergence of a candidate such as (27)B, in which the main prominence is not aligned with the right edge of the clause. The reversed ranking of these constraints in Italian is responsible for the emergence of candidate (28)B, in which the preverbal subject position is left empty.

3.1.2 French subject focusing

Let us now finally turn to our French subject/non-subject asymmetry. French is similar to Italian and English in that it is an SVO language whose main stress in the neutral case is assigned to the right edge of the clause. As illustrated in (31)B, in all-focus sentences, main stress falls on the rightmost item.

(31) A: What happened?  
B: Une femme a apporté des fleurs.  
   a woman has brought some flowers  
   ‘A woman brought flowers.’

Our proposal is that the asymmetry described in Section 2.1. results from the following hierarchical ranking of constraints (we leave the ranking of H\_P open for further research):

(32) French: \( \text{SF} \gg \text{EPP}, \text{HI} \gg \ast \text{STAY} \)

As in English, Italian and NS, we take the French SVO canonical order to indicate that EPP is ranked above STAY in this language. However, as was mentioned in Section 2.1., and contrary to Zerbian’s syntactic assumptions about cleft-sentences in NS, the analysis adopted for French cleft-sentences does not involve movement of the focused constituent. As a consequence, the constraint STAY is not crucial to account for the distribution of cleft-sentences in information focusing contexts. We propose that the preference for cleft-sentences over canonical sentences in subject focusing follows from the interplay of the four constraints SF, EPP, HI and \( \ast \text{STAY} \).

The constraint SF outranks all the other constraints, as no candidate can emerge in French which assigns more prosodic prominence to a non-focused constituent than to a focused one. The crucial constraints here are the syntactic constraint EPP and the prosodic constraint HI. We have seen that the ranking of EPP above HI is responsible for the acceptability of leftmost main stress displayed in English subject focusing, whereas the ranking of HI above EPP is responsible for the empty subject position and the postverbal subject witnessed in Italian. These two languages favour one constraint over the other and are in this respect different from French. French resorts to a configuration, namely a cleft-sentence, that satisfies both EPP and HI, to the detriment of \( \ast \text{STAY} \).

The proposed ranking for French subject focusing is illustrated in Tableau 1. Candidate \( a \), the winning candidate, is a cleft-sentence. From a syntactic perspective, this candidate contains more layers than candidates \( b \) to \( d \) and therefore fares worse on the constraint \( \ast \text{STAY} \). Candidate \( a \), like candidates \( c \) and \( d \), however, satisfies SF, as the most prominent item within a cleft-sentence is clearly the clefted constituent.

From a prosodic perspective, we have represented the cleft-sentence as split into two intonation phrases, one encompassing the identificational TP and the other the relative-like clause. In other words, in the type of cleft-sentences investigated in the present work, each clause has an intonation phrase edge. In the prosodic structure offered in Tableau 1, the focused item, which is here the head of the intonation phrase, is aligned with the right edge
The cleft-sentence alone does not allow it to be determined whether Hi dominates EPP in French, or whether it is EPP that dominates Hi, as this construction satisfies both constraints. For the time being, we propose that neither constraint dominates the other in French. As for Italian and English, we propose that the ranking of *STR above EPP and Hi prevents the cleft-sentence candidate from emerging in (non-contrastive) subject focusing contexts in these languages.

The ranking of constraints proposed in (32) also enables us to account for the non-emergence of cleft-sentences in object and adjunct focusing. This is briefly illustrated in Tableau 1.

Table 1. Subject focusing in French

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Context: Who is eating a cookie?</th>
<th>SF</th>
<th>EPP</th>
<th>Hi</th>
<th>*STR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. C’est [Mona]f qui mange un biscuit</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. [Mona]f mange un biscuit</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. [Mona]f mange un biscuit</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. mange un biscuit [Mona]f</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The tones are only noted on the secondary (Jean and est) and the main (Pierre and sorti) stressed positions. The relative clause is characterized by a flat intonation. Clech-Darbon et al. observe that a terminal low boundary tone (L%) is present once at the end of the focused phrase and again at the end of the relative-like clause. They further note that this “duplication of what is otherwise identified as typical ‘terminal intonation’ may also involve other features typical of the end of utterances, such as final lengthening” (p. 95). We take this as evidence for the presence of two intonation phrase edges.

The fact that French is not a null subject language also seems to point towards the relatively high ranking of EPP. As mentioned above, EPP is only violated when the subject position is not overtly filled. This is not the case in the matrix clause of the cleft-sentence, as the pronoun c’, be it expletive or not, occupies this position. EPP is also satisfied in the relative clause, as the Comp qui simultaneously heads CP and fills the subject position. In Tableau 1, candidate d, the counterpart of the Italian subject-verb inversion, is the only candidate that violates EPP. This violation is fatal and leads to the elimination of the candidate.

The cleft-sentence alone does not allow it to be determined whether Hi dominates EPP in French, or whether it is EPP that dominates Hi, as this construction satisfies both constraints. For the time being, we propose that neither constraint dominates the other in French. As for Italian and English, we propose that the ranking of *STR above EPP and Hi prevents the cleft-sentence candidate from emerging in (non-contrastive) subject focusing contexts in these languages.

The ranking of constraints proposed in (32) also enables us to account for the non-emergence of cleft-sentences in object and adjunct focusing. This is briefly illustrated in Tableau 1.

The cleft-sentence alone does not allow it to be determined whether Hi dominates EPP in French, or whether it is EPP that dominates Hi, as this construction satisfies both constraints. For the time being, we propose that neither constraint dominates the other in French. As for Italian and English, we propose that the ranking of *STR above EPP and Hi prevents the cleft-sentence candidate from emerging in (non-contrastive) subject focusing contexts in these languages.

The ranking of constraints proposed in (32) also enables us to account for the non-emergence of cleft-sentences in object and adjunct focusing. This is briefly illustrated in Tableau 1.
2. Objects and adjuncts are distinct from subjects in that their canonical position is closer to the right edge of the clause. As shown in the following tableau, *STR prevents the cleft-sentence from emerging when the canonical sentence satisfies SF and HI.

Tableau 2 Object focusing in French

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Context: What is Mona eating?</th>
<th>SF</th>
<th>EPP</th>
<th>HI</th>
<th>*STR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Mona mange un [biscuit]</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>°</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. C’est un [biscuit] que Mona mange</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>°</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What about the ranking of STAY? In his study, Samek-Lodovici uses object focusing in ditransitive sentences to determine whether STAY dominates HI or whether HI dominates STAY. In French ditransitives, the canonical order is S-V-DO-IO. However, French also resorts to heavy NP-shift when necessary. The ordering of the direct object with respect to the indirect object is flexible in French. In our investigation of the preferred strategy to put narrow focus on the object in a context like the one provided in (34)A, we could obtain no categorical judgement from the French speakers investigated. Based on the type of ‘marginally acceptable’ sentence in (34)B, in which the direct object is stranded in clause-final position, Samek-Lodovici concludes that French is similar to Italian in ranking HI above STAY.

(34) A: Qu’est-ce que tu vends à Mona?
       ‘What are you selling to Mona?’
B: Je vends à Mona un LIVRE.
       ‘I’m selling Mona a book.’
B’: Je vends un LIVRE à Mona.
       ‘I’m selling a book to Mona.’

French shares with NS the possibility of leaving wh-phrases in-situ in genuine requests for information. Therefore, (35) below seems to constitute a well-formed alternative to (34)A.

(35) Tu vends quoi à Mona?
       ‘What are you selling to Mona?’

(35) however does not allow us to conclude that French is similar to English in that the main stress can simply shift from the indirect object to the in-situ direct object, as (35) is preferably interpreted as involving a multiple focus: one on the wh-phrase and one on the indirect object. It is worth noting that the interrogative counterpart to (34)B is undoubtedly ungrammatical.

(36) *Tu vends à Mona quoi?
       ‘you sell    to Mona what

It is unclear whether French speakers do produce this type of wh-in situ questions. For ‘à Mona’ not to be interpreted as focused, the clitic ‘lui’ is required: ‘Tu lui vends quoi à Mona?’ In this case ‘Mona’ is interpreted as given.
‘What are you selling to Mona?’

For the time being, and as it is not crucial in the present account of the subject/non-subject asymmetry in the distribution of cleft-sentences, we leave the issue of STAY’s ranking open for further research.

### 3.1.3 Summary and discussion

In sum, we have proposed that cleft-sentences satisfy STAY, EPP and HI in that they simultaneously (i) assign the highest prominence to the focused item, (ii) enable this prominence to be aligned with the right edge of an intonation phrase, and (iii) have their two subject positions overtly filled. They fare worse than canonical sentences on *STR, but this violation is only fatal in non-subject focusing, due to the low ranking of this constraint in the language. Cleft-sentences have long been associated with the notion of extraction of the focused item and as a consequence with movement. We have departed from this view in claiming that the constraint STAY is not crucial in an account of the competition between canonical sentences and clefts. How can cleft-sentences be prevented from emerging in English and Italian subject focusing? The ranking of *STR is crucial here: we propose that this constraint is ranked above HI and EPP in these languages.

Our account captures Jespersen’s (1937) view that cleft-sentences can be considered one of the ways “by which the disadvantages of having a comparatively rigid grammatical word-order (SVO) can be obviated” and Lambrecht’s (2001) Principle 1, stating that “the occurrence of cleft constructions in a language correlates with the degree of positional freedom of prosodic accents and syntactic constituents in that language” (p. 488). In addition, we hope to have shown that the prosodic prominence of the clefted-constituent directly follows from the grammar and is perfectly consistent with the phonology of the language. From a theoretical perspective, our account crucially reduces the number of constraints used in order to account for the phenomenon under investigation, as we have postulated no extra (interface) constraint. Does our account extend to NS? One of Zerbian’s (2005; 2006) main claims is that there is no prosodic expression of focus marking in this Bantu language. From a prosodic perspective, Northern Sotho is distinct from French, English and Italian, as it is a tone language. However, as shown by Zerbian (2006, Chapter 3), it also has accentual properties of the type observed in the above cited European languages. Additionally, several phonetic cues speak in favour of rightmost prominence in NS. Zerbian (2005) states that “phono-syntactic processes like deletion, morphosyntactic operations like pronominalization, and syntactic movement like dislocation and inversion conspire in order to place the focused constituent in clause-final position” (p.14). What seems clear is that a constraint like SUBJECT=TOPIC or *FOCUS-MARKED/SUBJECT might be necessary to account for the full range of subject-related patterns observed in NS (and maybe in French as well), but, in both languages, it is not sufficient to account for the full range of focus-related patterns and, in particular, the need for focus to be aligned with the right-edge of the clause.

### 4 French contrastive cleft-sentences

#### 4.1 Non-corrective contrastive cleft-sentences

In Section 3.1., we provided an account of the preference for cleft-sentences over canonical sentences in the type of information focusing context set by a wh-question. We concluded
that this preference follows from the ranking in (32). The proposed ranking predicts that adjunct and object cleft-sentences do not surface as optimal candidates in information focusing contexts, but we now have to account for the fact that they do surface, along with subject cleft-sentences, in contrastive contexts. This is the case in the examples given in (37) to (39).

(37)  
A: ‘Why do you suspect me?’
B: C’est vos EMPREINTES qu’on a trouvées sur le coffre.
   ‘It is your fingerprints that they found on the safe.’

(38)  
A: Why are you so interested in Paris? (Adapted from Lambrecht (2001))
B: C’est à PARIS que j’ai rencontré ma FEMME.
   ‘It’s in Paris that I met my wife.’

(39)  
A: Things have changed at the Miller family. (Adapted from Umbach (2004))
B: (Ce soir) c’est Ronald qui est allé faire les courses.
    ‘Tonight, Ronald went shopping.’

The above cleft-sentences are so-called ‘informative-presupposition it-clefts’ in Prince’s (1978) terminology. They are characterized by (i) the exhaustive identification (contrastiveness) of the clefted constituent, (ii) the non-given status of the (presupposed) relative-clause, and (iii) the obligatory presence of a prosodic accent on the relative clause (Lambrecht, 2001, 483). In Umbach’s (2004, 164) terminology, the above examples are cases “which come close to a correction, although the proposition to be corrected is not expressed explicitly”. What is noticeable is that the informative status of the relative clause does not prevent main stress from being assigned to the clefted constituent. This is reminiscent of the so-called Superman sentences in (42) (Neeleman and Szendrői, 2004; Féry and Samek-Lodovici, 2006). Superman sentences are cases of nested foci. They are among the sentences displaying the configuration in (40), where “SF requires both foci to bear the highest prosodic prominence and can be satisfied by assigning local prominence to the innermost focus” (Féry and Samek-Lodovici, 2006, 141).

(40)  
[...[XP]f ... YP]f

This configuration is illustrated below:

(41)  
Father: What happened?
Mother: You know how I think our children should read decent books. Well, when I came home, rather than doing his homework, Johnny was reading SUPERMAN to some kid.

(42)  
[[Johnny] [was reading SUPERMAN to some kid]]f1

The example in (42) contains three foci: the entire sentence (f1) is an information focus, as it is part of the answer to the father’s question. Reading Superman to some kid (f2) is contrastively focused against doing his homework. Finally, Superman (f3) is contrastively focused against decent books, “and appears to take the entire VP as its focus domain” (Féry and Samek-Lodovici, 2006, 147). As mentioned in (23), SF requires that a focused constituent be most prominent in its focus domain. Féry and Samek-Lodovici (2006, 140) adopt Truckenbrodt’s (1995) definition of focus, which makes SF sensitive to the extension of the focus domain: “the focus domain always contains the focused phrase and identifies the
background information relevant to the semantic denotation of focus; it is thus defined in semantic terms and does not necessarily coincide with a single prosodic constituent”.

In the cleft-sentences in Section 2, the focus consisted of one constituent (for instance Thomas in example (2)B) and the focus domain of the entire sentence. However, as the relative clause was given, we could have accounted for its destressed status by resorting to the constraint DestressGiven (Féry and Samek-Lodovici, 2006).

(43) DestressGiven:
A given phrase is prosodically non-prominent.

The Superman sentence in (42) and the examples in (37) to (39) have in common that the non-rightmost stress cannot be explained by the given status of the items separating the main stress from the right edge of the sentence. Féry and Samek-Lodovici (2006) propose that the ranking of SF above HI correctly predicts the non-rightmost stress in example (42). Placing main stress on Superman is the only way to simultaneously satisfy SF with respect to f1, f2 and f3. The rightmost position of main stress that would follow from ranking HI above SF would satisfy SF with respect to f1 and f2, but would violate SF with respect to f3. The ranking of SF above HI is not sufficient to account for the clefting strategy adopted in French in such cases of contrastive foci. The requirement that main stress be aligned with the right edge of an intonation phrase appears to be stronger in French. HI is satisfied in the examples (37) to (39), as the right boundary of each I-phrase is aligned with its head. We propose that these data can be accounted for by the ranking of SF above HU (Samek-Lodovici, 2005).

(44) Head-U (HU)
Align the right boundary of every Utterance with its head.

Example (42) only involves a single intonation phrase and as a consequence the head of this phrase is also the head of the utterance. This is not the case in the above cleft-sentences, which involve two intonation phrases and require that the utterance level be considered separately.

We propose that the pattern observed in contrastive cleft-sentences follows from the following constraint ranking: SF\textsubscript{Contrast} >> SF\textsubscript{New} >> HI (, EPP) >> HU >> *Str.

We follow Féry and Samek-Lodovici (2006) in distinguishing between SF\textsubscript{Contrast} (SF\textsubscript{C}) and SF\textsubscript{New} (SF\textsubscript{N}) (see also Lee (2003) and Lee (present volume) for a similar claim). Indeed, in examples (37) to (39), the clefted constituent is a contrastive focus, but the overall sentence is an information focus.

In Tableau 3, candidate a is the optimal candidate. It satisfies both SF\textsubscript{C} and SF\textsubscript{N} in placing main stress on f2. It also satisfies HI in aligning both heads with each intonation phrase’s right boundary. Placing main stress on f2 however violates HU, as the head of this phrase is not aligned with its right boundary. Finally, candidate a violates *Str, as it involves more structural layers than its canonical counterpart. Candidate b, which never surfaces as an optimal candidate, shows that SF\textsubscript{C} outranks both SF\textsubscript{N} and HU in French. The violation of SF\textsubscript{C} is fatal, even though both SF\textsubscript{N} and HU are satisfied. Candidate c is the optimal candidate under an all-focus reading. It is a mono-clausal structure that involves a single intonation phrase. Under the reading investigated here (narrow focus + broad focus), the alignment of the main stress with the right boundary of U and I, although it satisfies HI and HU, violates SF\textsubscript{C}. Candidate d is reminiscent of Neeleman and Szendröi’s (2004) observation that in an example such as (42), it is not possible to stress both Superman and some kid in order to simultaneously “provide stress to f3 and rightmost stress to f2” (Féry and Samek-Lodovici, 2006, 148), that is, to simultaneously satisfy SF on f3 and HI. In Féry
Tableau 3 French nested foci (contrastive focus + information focus)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Context: Why do you suspect me?</th>
<th>SF_{C}</th>
<th>SF_{N}</th>
<th>HI</th>
<th>HU</th>
<th>^{ST}\text{R}</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. [C’est vos EMPREINTES qu’on a trouvées sur le COFFRE]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. [C’est vos EMPREINTES qu’on a trouvées sur le COFFRE]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. [On a trouvé vos EMPREINTES sur le COFFRE]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. [On a trouvé vos EMPREINTES sur le COFFRE]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. [On a trouvé vos EMPREINTES sur le COFFRE]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

and Samek-Lodovici’s account, this would indeed amount to a violation of both SF and HI: Superman would no longer be the most prominent item in its focus domain (the entire VP) and in addition, the head on Superman would still be misaligned with the intonation phrase boundary. Similarly, “assigning multiple heads to the intonation phrase encompassing the entire clause” (p. 149) as in candidate d violates SF on f2 because vos empreintes is no longer the most prominent item in its domain (the entire clause). It also violates HI (as well as HU), because the right boundary of the intonation phrase (as well as the utterance) is misaligned relative to the head on vos empreintes. Finally, candidate e is equivalent to the English example in (42), except that it involves two foci instead of three. In French, this candidate is the optimal candidate under a discourse-given reading of sur le coffre. However, under the investigated reading, this candidate fatally violates HI and HU.

In sum, the cleft-sentences from (37) to (39) exhibit a contrastively focused item in clefted position and a discourse-new relative clause which (i) cannot be omitted and (ii) is stressed although it does not carry main stress. Another way of looking at these so-called cases of ‘informative-presupposition’ cleft-sentences is, as we have proposed, that they constitute cases of nested foci reminiscent of so-called Superman sentences, as the pattern [C’est [XP] qui YP] is similar to the configuration in (42). We have maintained that in French, the conflict observed in English between SF and HI is transposed into an SF and HU conflict.

4.1.1 Corrective contrastive cleft-sentences

Finally, we would like to turn to corrective contrastive cleft-sentences. In Umbach’s (2004) terminology, the following examples are cases of ‘exclusion by substitution’: the clefted constituent is intended to correct a previously mistaken belief. Examples (45) to (48) illustrate French cleft-sentences in contrastive contexts.

(45) A: Mona is eating a plum.
   B: Non, c’est Daniel qui mange une prune.
   ‘No, it’s Daniel who is eating a plum.’
(46) A: He is eating a plum.
    B: Non, c’est un biscuit qu’il mange.
        ‘No, it’s a cookie that he is eating.’

(47) A: He is talking to Mary.
    B: Non, c’est à Mona qu’il parle.
        ‘It’s Mona he is talking to.’

(48) A: He is going home.
    B: Non, c’est à l’école qu’il va.
        ‘It is school he is going to.’

What is noticeable is that although the relative clause is discourse-given, speakers have the
strong intuition that it generally needs to be produced in corrective contexts. In our view,
this is not surprising considering that corrective contexts are distinct from wh-question con-
texts in that no gap is waiting for an item/value to fill it. The overall sentence itself unex-
pectedly replaces an all-focus sentence expressing a mistaken belief. Although this requires
more investigation, we would like to propose that in corrective contexts the overall cleft-
sentence is a case of free second occurrence focus (Büring, 2006) embedding a contrastive
focus in the clefted position. If this is correct, the analysis proposed above for informative-
presupposition cleft-sentences would extend to this type of cleft-sentence as well.

5 Conclusion: Recent developments and a possible alternative approach

In the OT analysis offered in this paper, our starting point was a particular aspect of cleft-
sentences, that is, the French subject/non-subject asymmetry in expressing information fo-
cus. We have suggested that canonical sentences and their cleft counterparts compete for the
realization of the same predicative structure and we have argued that prosody is central in
favouring cleft-sentences in subject information focus contexts.

One of the questions we have not addressed is whether, ultimately, (i) French (subject)
cleft-sentences are primarily meant to convey exhaustivity on a semantic level and are sim-
ply conveniently used in subject focusing because they happen to better achieve the required
prosodic configuration or (ii) whether they constitute no more than a better prosodic alterna-
tive to canonical sentences – that is, they are equal on the semantic level in that in both cases
exhaustivity is obtained via Grice’s conversational implicatures. Only the latter approach is
compatible with the idea that canonical sentences and cleft-sentences take part in the same
competition.

The meaning of cleft-sentences has long been a topic of discussion. It is rather uncon-
troversial that at least two aspects of cleft-sentences distinguish them from their canonical
counterparts: (i) the existential presupposition they carry and (ii) their exhaustive reading.
This is shown in (49), adapted from Destruel (2013).

(49) C’est NP qui P. (‘It is NP that P.’)
    a. There is an x such that P(x)
    b. The referent of NP in some way exhausts the set \{x\mid P(x)\}

Whether exhaustivity is grammatically encoded in cleft-sentences (i.e. it is part of their truth-
conditional content, either as a presupposition or as an entailment) or whether it is pragmat-
ically inferred (i.e. it is a conventional or conversational implicature) has long been debated
(among others Bolinger, 1972; Atlas and Levinson, 1981; Horn, 1981). It is widely assumed
that unlike sentences with an exclusive particle (e.g. only), exhaustivity is not part of the asserted content of cleft-sentences. With the advent of experimental semantics/pragmatics, this question has recently returned to center stage (among others Onea, 2009; Onea and Beaver, 2011; Byram Washburn et al., 2013; Destruel et al., submitted).

One view, originally developed by Horn (1981, 133), is that exhaustivity in cleft-sentences arises as a generalized conversational implicature:

(50) The utterance in context C of any sentence which entails $P_\alpha$ [(49)] and conventionally implicates (...) $\exists xP_x$ [(49-a)] will induce a generalized conversational implicature to the effect that $\neg \exists x (x \neq \alpha \& P_x)$ [(49-b)], where the variable $x$ ranges over entities in a set determined by the context C.

Horn’s approach constitutes an alternative to claims according to which exhaustivity is a semantic component of clefts (among others Bolinger, 1972; Szabolcsi, 1981; É. Kiss, 1998; Büring and Križ, 2013). Considering that, when used to answer wh-questions, canonical sentences are also interpreted as conveying an exhaustive answer by virtue of Grice’s conversational maxims of Quantity and Quality, under Horn’s approach, the difference between canonical sentences and cleft-sentences is minimal.

Concerning French, Destruel (2013) has recently thoroughly investigated the distribution and meaning of cleft-sentences by means of experimental methods and has shed some new light on this issue. Concerning the distribution of clefts when compared to canonical sentences, it is first worth noting that Destruel’s results from a (semi-spontaneous speech) production study confirm the observation reported in Section 2.1. that subject information focus is primarily expressed by means of a cleft-sentence, whereas non-subject information focus (in her study: Direct Object, Indirect Object and Double Object) is primarily realized by means of a canonical sentence.11

Destruel offers a Stochastic OT analysis that aims at capturing the variation observed in her empirical data. In line with the present study, canonical and cleft-sentences compete as alternative realizations of the same input. Destruel’s empirical findings concerning the meaning of French cleft-sentences are taken to support the view that exhaustivity is not part of the truth-conditional content of cleft-sentences (p. 88). By means of a completion task, she observes that exhaustiveness effects attached to cleft-sentences are stronger than those attached to canonical sentences but weaker than those attached to sentences with an exclusive particle. In a nutshell, whereas the favoured continuation to express the actual non-exhaustiveness of a wh-answer is of the form in (51)C when the answer is a canonical sentence, it is of the form (51)C′ when the answer is a cleft and (51)C″ when the answer contains an exclusive particle.

(51) A: Qu’est-ce que le fermier a brossé?
‘What is it that the farmer brushed?’
B: C’est le cheval que le fermier a brossé.
‘It is the horse that the farmer brushed.’
C: Oui, et le fermier a aussi brossé la chèvre.
‘Yes, and the farmer also brushed the goat.’
C′: Oui, mais le fermier a aussi brossé la chèvre.
‘Yes, but the farmer also brushed the goat.’

11 This claim does not hold for Standard French, as made explicit in Hamlaoui (2009) and Hamlaoui (2011). See forthcoming experimental work by Destruel on Standard French.
Destruel’s results and conclusions are in agreement with recent studies of Hungarian preverbal focus (Onea, 2009; Onea and Beaver, 2011) as well as English cleft-sentences, which have also been claimed to convey exhaustivity. Although Destruel admits that the above-illustrated experimental design does not allow it to be determined whether the exhaustive inference is a presupposition or an implicature, she follows Horn’s approach and proposes that the exhaustivity is an implicature. More precisely, she argues that it is a scalar implicature: “the cleft is used by a speaker to convey the total answer to the Question-Under-Discussion that he wishes to commit to, having a reason for not using a stronger term (i.e. an exclusive) on the same scale” (p. 75).

Let us summarize so far. Recent experimental studies on the exhaustive inference associated with cleft-sentences conclude that it is pragmatic rather than semantic. Unless explicit indication to the contrary is provided by a speaker, canonical wh-answers are generally interpreted as exhaustive by virtue of conversational, cooperative principles (Rooth, 1992; Krifka, 1995; van Rooij, 2008) and French is no exception in this respect. Under this view, considering cleft-sentences and canonical sentences as competing to realize the same input does not seem unreasonable. In subject focusing, French speakers would thus primarily treat cleft-sentences as a prosodically more suitable, semantically equivalent alternative to canonical sentences. As we however share the intuition that the exhaustivity associated with cleft-sentences is stronger than the one associated with their canonical counterparts in the same context, we do not consider the issue of the nature of the exhaustivity inference to be settled.

If clefts semantically encode exhaustivity and the answer is clearly not exhaustive, speakers should avoid using a cleft. To the best of our knowledge, no study has systematically investigated whether cleft-sentences emerge as non-exhaustive answers to subject wh-questions or whether speakers would prefer an alternative strategy, be it a canonical sentence or an existential statement (or even a sentence in the passive voice, see Féry, 2013). This issue will be addressed in our upcoming work on cleft-sentences.

In a non-exhaustive context, the canonical sentence is actually not the only alternative to the cleft-sentence. Among other structures, French speakers also have at their disposal bi-clausal existential statements of the type in (52), which are pretty much non-exhaustive cleft-sentences: from a prosodic perspective, they would also satisfy the requirements that (i) the focus be made prominent and (ii) the head of an intonation phrase be aligned with its right edge. Existential statements were not considered in our original proposal, but according to our approach to the input, nothing presently prevents them from emerging as optimal candidates in contexts where cleft-sentences are chosen over canonical sentences.

(52) A: Qui est-ce qui a apporté les pommes?
   ‘Who brought the apples?’
B: (Il) y a Arthur qui en a apportés. Et (il) y a aussi sa mère (qui en a apportés).
   ‘Arthur brought some. And his mother too.’

12 However, see Destruel et al. (submitted) for an alternative approach in terms of ‘at issue’ vs ‘not-at-issue’ content.
If speakers use cleft-sentences to express non-exhaustive answers, this would constitute additional evidence that the exhaustiveness of French (subject) cleft-sentences is not semantic. If the speakers avoid using cleft-sentences, this would be evidence against the present OT approach and in favor of an alternative approach (still to be developed) in which these structures would compete, but not as alternative realizations of the same input.

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