

## Information Focus and Identificational Focus at the Sentence Level

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In this paper I analyze the pragmatic meaning of the Scottish Gaelic Propositional Cleft (PC), which utilizes cleft morphosyntax (bolded in (1)) to convey contrastive focus on the proposition (bracketed).

(1) ‘**S ann** [a thuit e dhan allt].

*S ann a thuit e dhan allt*  
is it that fell he to.the burn  
‘He fell into the burn.’

The PC is similar to Sentence Focus (SF) utterances (Lambrecht 1994) in the size of focus: both SF utterances and the PC convey focus on an entire proposition. The PC differs from SF, however, in the type of focus. While SF corresponds to Kiss’s (1998) Information Focus (simply non-presupposed information), the PC corresponds to her Identificational Focus (contrastive but preliminarily non-exhaustive). The contexts for the PC are invariably contrastive, including corrective, counter-presuppositional and emphatic contexts; but what is being contrasted is the entire proposition, and not some subpart of it. The PC functions to reject a salient proposition in the discourse, and to offer its own propositional content in its place. It is in this sense the PC functions to convey contrastive focus on the proposition itself.

In Roberts’ (1996) Question under Discussion (QUD) framework, focus utterances are understood as presupposing CONGRUENCE to the QUD (i.e. they share a set of evoked alternatives). SF utterances, like other information focus constructions, may ADDRESS the QUD. SF utterances differ from other information focus constructions in the size of focus: SF utterances are congruent only to the Big Question (‘what is the way things are?’). As such, they are restricted to contexts where the Big Question is the QUD (they may also conceivably be used to re-evoke it as a QUD). This is why SF utterances are felicitous discourse-initially. The PC, however, requires a context to be felicitous (i.e. it cannot address the Big Question). The PC is demonstrably not congruent to the QUD, nor can it felicitously answer a *wh*-question of any kind. The function of the PC is not to address the QUD but to REVISE the current QUD. In doing so, the PC rejects not only a salient proposition, but also the QUD it presupposes congruence to.

The Scottish Gaelic PC contributes to a typology of clause-level focus constructions. In particular, the existence of the PC demonstrates that broad focus is not incompatible with contrastive focus, and additionally corroborates Lambrecht’s (1994) claim that focus is relational and not a structural notion.

### References

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