Cleft Constructions in Arabic and English: A Contrastive Study

Dr. Mahmoud Nassar[1*], Dr. Mohammad Shatnawi[2], Dr. Anas Bawareed[1]
[1]Ministry of Education, Jordan
[2]Islamic Educational College schools, Jordan

Abstract: This paper aims at investigating cleft constructions in both Arabic and English to see how elements and entities of a sentence are connected through many different focus devices. The results reveal that English, as well as Arabic, use different strategies to form focus constructions. In English, for instance, *It-cleft* and the *Wh-cleft* constructions are the most frequently used devices for highlighting a certain element. It has been claimed that the underlying structure of the Arabic nominative sentences is the VSO pattern from which fronting or topicalization is used as a process of highlighting a certain element in the sentence. It has been further claimed that focus constructions in Arabic can be achieved by further devices like the particle [ʔinna] and the pronouns of separation.
Keywords: It-cleft, Wh-cleft, focus, Arabic.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Language users utilize different phonological as well as syntactic means to express emphasis. On the one hand, they may use stresses, rises in pitch, or changes in the tone to highlight a certain idea in spoken discourse. On the other hand, in written discourse, they may shift word order or use different sentence types to highlight an idea. One of the most important syntactic constructions used for emphasis is the so-called Cleft constructions. Thus, language users may resort to various patterns of 'Cleft Constructions' as one of the syntactic structures used for emphasis.

One may claim that cleft structures are more apparent in written than spoken forms of the language. This could be because, in spoken languages, there are other ways of emphasis like intonation and stress which usually do not appear in written forms of the language. When intonation is of less or no use, language users usually resort to emphatic word order, cleft constructions, to help focus a particular part of a sentence, and to emphasize what they want to say. This is usually done by introducing it with a kind of relative clause. This idea is confirmed by Harries (1973) who maintains that phonological means of emphasis are secondary because there are no languages that solely make use of phonological means to express contrastive emphasis. On the other hand, some languages solely use syntactic means to express emphasis (p, 86).

Lambrecht (2001) proposes the following definition for cleft constructions:

> A CLEFT CONSTRUCTION is a complex sentence structure consisting of a matrix clause headed by a copula and a relative or relative-like clause whose relativized argument is co-indexed with the predicative argument of the copula. Taken together, the matrix and the relative express a logically simple proposition, which can also be expressed in the form of a single clause without a change in truth conditions (p, 4).

Cleft constructions are thus grammatical devices used to highlight certain pieces of information or to emphasize a particular idea in the sentence by changing the word order. Hence, the cleft is a type of construction in which a certain element in a sentence is moved from its normal position into a separate clause to give it greater emphasis which will result in changing the normal pattern of the sentence. Poitrowiski (2009: 3) states that cleft constructions are a set of constructions, including several subtypes, characterized by the use of bi-clausal syntax to express a proposition that could

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grammatically be expressed using simpler syntax but crucially without a change in truth conditions.

In this connection, Delin (1989) maintains that for a message to be conveyed in a particular context, speakers and writers have at their disposal a range of message-carrying devices, i.e., different types of sentences. Many of these sentence types are truth-functionally equivalent, and the choice between them has to be made based on a variety of syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic factors. Delin (1989) suggests some aims based on which the speaker or writer may choose a sentence pattern:

- To mark the message being conveyed with particular information regarding its relationship with the discourse context;
- And to observe as far as possible co-operative principles ensuring the comprehensibility of the message. (p, 5)

A cleft sentence then can be generally defined as a sentence that has been split into two clauses, one main clause, and another subordinate clause, to emphasize one part of the whole structure. This part is often referred to as the "focus". The present study aims to investigate and analyze cleft constructions in both Arabic and English looking for similarities and differences between the two languages. The present study aims at answering the following questions:

1. What are the most frequent constructions used in both languages to indicate focus?
2. How is each type of construction formed in both languages?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

A closer look at the various studies those deal with cleft construction, thus, reveals that different researchers discuss clefts from different angles. Some focus on the structural components of this type of sentence, while others take into account their pragmatic functions. On the other hand, some researchers focus on cleft constructions in only one language while others conduct contrastive studies. The following are some of these studies:

Cross-linguistic studies reveal similarities and differences among languages. Helga (1973), for instance, investigates how different languages express contrastive emphasis. He claims that all contrastively-emphasized constructions have underlying cleft sentences, independent of whether the surface structure is an equational or a non-equational one. He, further, maintains that emphatic word orders are systematic and predictable given a certain language type and that the position of the object plays an essential role both in cleft and non-cleft emphatic constructions.

There are different ways of highlighting a certain idea in a sentence. This motivated Fichtner (1993) to claim that various sentence patterns are produced by a single set of operations on a normal English sentence including WH-clefts and IT-clefts. He states that cleft constructions, like those introduced by *It* and *There*, allow the speaker or writer to shift some of the component elements of a sentence to different positions to make them more prominent.

Lambrecht (2001), on the other hand, proposes a framework for analyzing cleft constructions across languages. To account for the defining property of clefts, i.e. the expression of a single proposition via bi-clausal syntax, he postulates a grammatical division of labor between matrix and subordinate clause: while the relative-clause predicator assigns a semantic role to the shared argument, the matrix predicator assigns it a pragmatic role (that of focus).

Further, since markedness and naturalness are also important aspects of languages in general, Lambrecht (2001) introduces the concept of 'focus category' and claims that cleft formation is one of various devices languages can use to express deviations from the unmarked predicate-focus type. He uses examples from various languages to develop a formal and functional taxonomy of cleft sentences. He claims that the variety of cleft types is shown to be much greater than previously assumed in the literature.

IT-Clift is claimed to be one of the most frequent ways of highlighting different parts of a sentence by introducing the dummy pronoun *It* followed by the copula *Be*. Dékány (2010), for instance, investigates the structure of *it*-clefts providing the most important properties of cleft sentences. Then she discusses previous analyses of clefts that view the clefted constituent as identificational focus providing further evidence in support of the Focus Phrase analysis. Her main point was that analyzing the clefted constituent as identificational focus gives a natural explanation of the distribution of the high pitch accent in *it*-clefts. Besides, she gives an account of the direction of tense dependency attested in clefts, whereby the tense of the higher clause depends on the tense of the lower clause. She proposes that in the higher clause the tense feature is unvalued on both the copula and T. These tense features are valued either by receiving a default value (present) or by feature sharing with T in the lower clause.

Contrary to English sentences, cleft constructions have not been widely investigated in Arabic. This could be because Arabic may focus elements in situ not only by fronting the emphasized elements or it could be the case as suggested by Aoun *et al*., (2010) who claim that the study of focus construction sits at the edge of syntax and pragmatics, and traditionally focus has been dealt within the context of rhetoric rather than grammar.

The general traditional ternary analysis for cleft sentences is that the copula takes two complements, a

focus, and a cleft clause. However, Kim (2012) reviews the main grammatical properties of it-cleft constructions in English and then sketches a uniform analysis for different types of construction. He maintains that the English it-cleft construction displays ambivalent structural properties: restrictive relative clause and non-relative clause properties. He suggests that the copula is in the cleft, as in other canonical environments, projects a binary structure, forming a cleft construction. Based on this view, he claims that it-cleft construction as an independent grammatical entity brings us several welcoming consequences.

Lyassi (2012) investigates the so-called left-dislocation constructions in Standard Arabic, considered so far as SA CLLD constructions by Aoun and Benmamoun 1998. She demonstrates that the categorization proposed by Aoun and Benmamoun 1998 concerning SA left-dislocation is inadequate. She builds her argument based on an arsenal of movement diagnostic and cross-linguistic comparison with cross-linguistic findings. To make sure whether SA CLLD, are hanging topic left dislocation (HTLD), she compares SA CLLD with their HTLD counterparts. It turns out that SA and English pattern together with respect to HTLD; According to the findings, she provides a new classification of left-dislocation constructions which takes into account SA facts.

İrgin (2013) investigates the difficulty levels of the different types of clefts constructions for EFL learners. The study examines to what extend instruction on cleft sentences clarified the EFL freshman students' confusion in cleft structures. The data was collected through the pre-test and post-test design. Sixty-one freshman students at the Department of English Language Literature (ELL) in a state university in Turkey participated in the study. The results reveal that participants showed a significant improvement in understanding the cleft structures. Also, there are significant differences among students' level of recognition for each type of cleft structure and the most confusing cleft types for the EFL students are it-clefts, if-because cleft, and all-cleft**.**

Sarage and Hum (2015) discuss the cleft sentence, especially the type that involves subject prominence or the subject fronting both in Arabic and English. They try to explain the different functions of sentence elements. Thus, they claim that cleft constructions are supposed to reveal different emphasis or meaning in different sentence structures.

One of the very few studies on cleft constructions in Arabic dialects is that of AL-Ghazali (2016) who studies cleft constructions as one of the grammatical devices used to highlight certain elements of the sentence or to emphasize a particular idea in Iraqi Arabic. He states that it is normally assumed that the cleft construction is a means of steering the focus towards the highlighted constituents. AL-Ghazali (2016) adopts two models of analysis given by Halliday (1994) and Prince (1978) to explore the intricacies of the spoken Arabic of Iraq.

Al-Horais (2017) investigates the interface between syntax and information structure using interpreting focus under the negation particle *laysa*, which exhibits some interesting focus features. He argues that *laysa* has three different ways showing an interaction between negation and focus. For instance, wide focus refers to the fact that negation may have scope over the whole clause, while bound focus occurs when negation has scope over the element in the final position, which constitutes the focus of the sentence. Al-Horais claims that when the focus in the final position is out of the scope of negation, then it is called the free focus. He maintains that each of these foci (wide, bound, free) involves a different derivation and a different syntactic structure.

3. Cleft Sentences in English

English is a language that follows the SVO pattern in forming sentences in normal situations. Cleft constructions in English can be divided into various subgroups based on their syntactic and semantic properties. However, the main interests of the present paper are the most frequently used types - *it-clefts* and *wh-clefts.* Dékány (2010), for instance, states that the best-known types of cleft-constructions are those called *it-clefts* (also called simple cleft), and *wh-clefts* (also termed pseudo-clefts) (p, 40- 41). Other researchers have added the *Inverted (or Reversed) wh-cleft* constructions as one of the main types of cleft constructions in English. In this connection, Lambrecht (2001) provides the following examples of the four basic structural types, including the canonical sentence: the capital letters indicate the position of the main focus accent in each sentence:

1.　a. I like CHAMPAGNE.　　Canonical sentence
　　b. It is CHAMPAGNE (that) I like.　　IT-cleft
　　c. What I like is CHAMPAGNE.　　WH-cleft
　　d. CHAMPAGNE is what I like.　Reverse WH-cleft.
　　(p, 5)

These English sentences contain the same meaning-bearing elements; words. However, these words are combined differently; they have different orders. Consequently, the four sentences do not differ in terms of the words they contain, rather they differ only in terms of their syntax; word order. Bara (2005) maintains that both types of cleft constructions contain the same type of element that is focused on the difference that the focused element appears early in it-clefts and late in *WH-clefts*. We may assume that the two-sentence patterns also differ with respect to the parts of the sentence that can be fronted and highlighted. For instance, *it-cleft* constructions do not allow the VP to be fronted, whereas VPs can be freely fronted in *wh-cleft* constructions.

Fichtner (1993: 8) maintains that cleft sentences can be derived from the simple underlying sentence by the insertion of various dummy elements. He further states that introducing such elements is not simply a linguistic accident which by chance produces different cleft sentences, but represents actual syntactic properties of the language. The following section will shed light on it-clefts as well as Wh-clefts in English.

3.1. It-cleft Constructions

Pavey (2003) maintains that it-cleft is a marked syntactic bi-clausal sentence that expresses a simple semantic proposition; in terms of information structure, this type of construction places an element in focus position within a copular matrix clause (p, 1). Pavey (2003) explains the marked property of it-cleft in terms of the fact that their semantic proposition resembles the semantic proposition of nonclefts.

It is important to note that one may come across the term 'focus' while reading about cleft sentences. This is because, in clefting, there is a particular element in the sentence that attracts attention, and thus must be brought into focus. Dékány (2010: 50) states that it is indisputable that cleft constructions are semantically interpreted as focus constructions.

A good example of the first type of focus constructions, *it-cleft*, is found in the simple declarative sentence, "*Jane won the Prize for Arts last year*" which can be split differently on the bases of which part of it to be brought into focus. Thus, in this sentence one may emphasize different parts of the sentence: the NP [Jane], the object NP [the prize of Art], the adverbial phrase [last year] as can be seen in (1) below:

2. a. It was ***Jane*** who won the Prize for Arts last year. [NP subject]

    b. It was **the Prize for Art** that Jane won last year. [NP object]

    c. It was **last year** when Jane won the Prize for Arts. [ADVP]

It is worth noting that these sentences (2: a, b, c) denote the same proposition denoted by the original declarative sentence "*Jane won the Prize for Arts last year*". However, the only difference is that the cleft sentences (2: a, b, c) have different information structures. As can be seen from the examples in (2) above, cleft constructions comprise four main parts that can be syntactically analyzed as follows:

It was Jane who won the Prize for Arts last year.
cleft pronoun + copula + clefted constituent + cleft clause [the highlighted constituent]

In 2(a), the DP constituent [*Jane*] is brought into focus by occupying the first position after the [It + copula] construction. In 2(b), the NP [*the prize for Art*] is brought into focus by leaving its normal position after the main verb [*won*] and occupying a position after the

[*It + copula*] construction. Similarly, in 2(c), the ADVP [*last year*] is also preposed to occupy the focus position after [It + copula]. As indicated in the previous section, VPs cannot be brought into focus in it-cleft constructions. Therefore, sentences like (**It was won the prize for art that marry did*) would be an ungrammatical cleft sentence.

Dékány (2010) suggests some syntactic properties of this type of cleft constructions. For instance, she maintains that the clefted element must be a constituent, otherwise, the sentence will be ungrammatical.

3. a. It is [*the man with a red hat*] that she hit on the nose.

    b.*It was [*the man*] that she hit on the nose with a red hat.

We can account for the grammaticality of sentence (3.a) by suggesting that the whole constituent [*the man with a red hat*] is clefted, brought into focus. However, (3.b) is ungrammatical because only part [*the man*] of the NP [*the man with a red hat*] is clefted.

Moreover, she states that the copula [be] must also agree with the expletive subject pronoun [it]. Therefore, only the forms [is/was] of the copula [be] are allowed.

4. a. It was/is [*the man with a red hat*] that she hit(s) on the nose.

    b.*It are/were [*the man with a red hat*] that she hit on the nose.

It is clear that the grammaticality of (4a) is accounted for in terms of the agreement between the expletive subject pronoun [it] and the [is/was] forms of the copula [be]. The ungrammaticality of (4b), on the other hand, is accounted for in terms of the lack of agreement between the expletive subject pronoun [it] and the [is/was] forms of the copula [be].

Further, Dékány (2010) states that the copula [be] must agree with the tense of the embedded clause; i.e. if the embedded clause is in the past, then the appropriate form of [be] is the past singular form [was], otherwise, the present singular form [is] is used instead.

5. a. It was Jane that won the prize.

    b. It is Jane that cleans the room.

In this connection, Kim (2012) states that certain types of phrases can be used in a focus position in it-cleft constructions. Kim provides the following examples to support this claim:

6. a. It was [NP the man] that bought the articles from him.

    b. It was [AdvP then] that he felt a sharp pain.

    c. It was [PP to the student] that the teacher gave the best advice.

The grammaticality of these sentences does support this claim. However, phrases such as an infinitival VP, AP, or CP cannot in general function as the focus of *it-cleft* sentence, and thus account for the ungrammaticality of the following sentences:

7. a. *It was [VP to finish the homework] that John tried.
    b. *It is [AP fond of Bill] that John seems to be.
    c. *It is [CP that Bill is honest] that Jane believes. (p, 48)

Johnson (2015) maintains that there are subject cleft clauses as well as to object cleft clauses. For her, in a subject cleft such as (2), the relative pronoun *who* occupies the position of the subject of the verb *completed* in the cleft clause, but in an object cleft such as (3), the pronoun *whom* replaces the object of the verb *thanked* in the cleft clause.

8. *It was **I who completed the assignment**.* [cleft clause refers to the subject *I*]
9. *It was we **whom the mayor thanked**.* [cleft clause refers to the object *we*] (p, 1).

She adds that recently people tend to accept accusative pronouns like [me, us...] in the cleft phrase position, as in the examples below:

10. *It was **me** who completed the assignment.*
11. *It was **us** whom the mayor thanked.* (p, 2)

The results of her study show that more frequently people prefer accusative personal pronouns (e.g., *me*, *them*) instead of the required nominative personal pronouns (e.g., *I*, *they*) in *it*-cleft sentences.

To sum up, a focus, it-cleft, sentence is a sentence that is split to put the focus on one part of it. The cleft sentence is introduced by *[it],* (dummy subject), which is followed by a verb phrase whose main verb is generally the copula [*be*]. The focused part comes next, and then the rest of the sentence is introduced by a relative pronoun, relative determiner, or relative adverb.

3.2. Wh-cleft Constructions (pseudo-cleft)

Now, let's turn our discussion towards the direction of Wh-cleft constructions. Similar to it-cleft sentences, Wh-clefts have been analyzed as information structure constructions which consist of two main parts: a presupposition expressed in a Wh-clause and a focus coded as copular complement. Calude (2008: 83) states that the two parts of a Wh-cleft sentence usually contains three main components: the cleft constituent, which is the phrase being focused, the copula verb (*be*), and the cleft clause that contains the remaining parts of the original simple sentence. She provides the following examples as illustration:

12. Who asked for a long holiday is Mary.   (Wh-cleft, focusing subject)
13. Mary is who asked for a long holiday. (reversed Wh-cleft, focusing subject)

Elegerwi (2013) maintains that the clefted constituent is a predicate complement and that the cleft clause is a restrictive relative clause, as summarized in the following:
PRONOUN+COPULA+PREDICATE
COMPLEMENT+RELATIVE CLAUSE. (p, 16)

But, how do these elements appear to surface? And what elements are to be preposed? These questions and others were fully answered by Fichtner (1993: 4) who provides a detailed analysis of the formation of a cleft sentence. The following will be a summary of what he claims to be the case when forming a Wh-cleft sentence.

Fichtner maintains that the formation of a Wh-cleft sentence takes place by various operations carried out on a fully formed simple declarative sentence. He gives the following simple sentence as an illustration: *The butler served the wine*. To see how these operations take place, he suggests that we should designate a noun, pronoun, or an adverb as the 'Focus' of the cleft. Therefore, both *the butler* and *the wine* are possible foci. Then, he claims that three elements will be attached to this focus by a procedure called 'Cleftization'. These elements are the verb *be,* a referent RFRT, and a Relative Pronoun (RLTV). Thus, The Focus and the forms attached to it together form the 'Cleft Phrase' (CLFPHR).

- *US: the butler served the wine* (the Underlying Structure)
- CLFZ: the butler   served   the wine BE RFRT RLTV

The focus (the cleft Phrase)
The next step is to tropicalize the Cleft Phrase; move the focus of the sentence to a higher position in the sentence. So, if we take the NP [the wine + the three elements attached to it] as the focus, the process of topicalization will result in the following form:

- T/ CLFPHR: the wine   BE   RFRT   RLTV + the butler served

After left-dislocating the Cleft Phrase, Fichtner (1993) maintains that the dummy elements, BE, RFRT and RLTV must be given the value that they normally have in surface structure. First, the verb *be* must agree in person and number with the grammatical subject [*the wine*] and with the min verb in the base sentence. These changes produce the sequence:

- The wine was RLTV the butler served.

As we can see we are left with the dummy RLTV which is realized, Fichtner maintains, according to the semantic properties of the Focus elements [*the wine*], i.e., whether it is + / - Human, +/- Specific, and +/- Plural. Since the Focus phrase [*the wine*] is -Human, -Specific, and -Plural, the dummy elements RLTV are realized as *that which* or the reduced form *what* as he claims. For economy purposes, the use of *what* is preferred which results in the following:

- The wine was what the butler served.

According to Fichtner (1993), the other Wh-cleft sentence pattern is formed by further operations on the output of the topicalization of the Cleft Phrase, which was:

- T/CLFTPHR: the wine   BE   RLTV the butler served.

The next change in this sequence is the topicalization of being:

- T/BE: BE + the wine ... RLTV the butler served

A Wh-cleft is then generated by the subsequent topicalization of the Referent and all forms which follow it (RFNT&FF):

- T/RFNT&FF: RFNT RLTV the butler served + BE the wine

Again, the verb be is changed to agree with the person and number of the grammatical subject, taking its tense markers from the verb served, and the elements RFNT and RL TV are modified according to the semantic properties of their antecedent. The full form of these elements produces the sentence:

- "That which the butler served was the wine". With the reduced form, the sentence finally becomes: "What the butler served was the wine."

Kim (2012) states that one noticeable difference between it-cleft constructions and wh-clefts lies in the fact that only wh-clefts allow a base VP as the highlighted XP phrase:

14. a. What you should do is [VP order one first].

    b. *It is [VP order one first] that you should do first.

To conclude, one may maintain that cleft constructions are syntactic structures used to highlight various elements in a sentence either by fronting or delaying the focus element.

4. Focus in Arabic

Now that we have briefly discussed some syntactic realizations of *It-cleft* and the *Wh-cleft* constructions in English, this section is an attempt to provide a brief account of focus construction in Arabic.

4.1. General Remarks on Sentence Structure of Arabic

In Arabic, there are two types of Arabic sentence: nominal sentences جُمْلٌ إِسْمِيَّةٌ gˇumlun ismiyyatun, and verbal sentences جُمْلٌ فِعْلِيَّةٌ gˇumlun fiʾliyyatun. Abu-Chacra (2007) maintains that a nominal sentence does not contain a verb and consists of two main parts: a subject and a predicate. The subject is usually a noun, a noun phrase or pronoun in the nominative case. The predicate may be a noun, a noun phrase, pronoun, an indefinite adjective, or an adverb of place or time. A nominal sentence refers to the present tense and does not require the copula to be, e.g.

15. (a). Al-bintu dʒami:latun: البنت جميلة   (b). Ana ṭalibun: أنا طالب

The girl   beautiful   I   student

The girl is beautiful.   I am a student

A verbal sentence for Abu-Chacra (2007) is the one that contains a verb, and follows the following structure:

16. Verb + Subject + Object or complement

    Kataba   ṭ-ṭalibu   qis-sat-an

    Wrote   the student. Nom   a letter. Acc

    The student wrote a letter.

In (16) above, the subject is in the nominative case which appears as inflections [u, un], called ħarakat, at the end of the noun. In this connection, Aoun, Benmamoun, and Choueiri (2010) maintain that the subject partially agrees with the verb in VS order, but fully agrees with it under the SV order. On the other hand, other researchers assume that nominative sentences do have verbs, but they differ from verbal sentences in the order of the main elements, the subject, and the verb; i.e. in nominative sentences the noun occupies a position before the verb, whereas in verbal sentences the verb comes first.

17. ʔal-waladu   rasama   ʃadʒarat-an

    the boy. Nom   drew   a tree. Acc

    The boy drew a tree

18. qarʔa   l-muʔal-lim-u   d-dars-a

    read.past   the teacher. Nom   the lesson. Acc

    the teacher read the lesson.

In this sense, sentence (17) is believed to be a nominative sentence whereas sentence (18) is a verbal one.

Thus we may conclude that nominal sentences, in Arabic, have two main parts: a subject, the so-called (*mubtada'a*), and a predicate, also called (*xabar*). Harries (1973) maintains that Arabic is one of the languages that do not use any forms of the copula morpheme *be* in their sentence patterns. AL-Ghazali (2016: 27) justifies the absence of the copula [*be*] by the fact that it is understood from the context. He adds that it can be confusing to some of the non-Arabic speaking people who are used to having a verb in each sentence. Thus, the subject of the nominal sentence is a noun or pronoun, while the predicate can be a noun, adjective, preposition and pronoun, or verb. This way we can say that Abu-Chacra's (2007) analysis of Arabic nominal sentences is not complete, but is part of the correct analysis.

4.2. Focus Constructions in Arabic

Aoun *et al.*, (2010) state that focus constructions in Arabic need not involve fronting; i.e. a phrase can be focused in situ. They further claim that the two types of focus constructions, fronting and in situ, are not equivalent. Whereas in-situ focus phrases can function as new information focus, fronted focus phrases

can only be understood contrastively, that is, in contrast with pre-existing information.

Some rhetorical purposes for fronting and pre-posing
1- Individualization and specification as in the following verse from the Holly Quran

"لله الامر من قبل ومن وبعد" **lilahu ʔalʔamru min qablu wa min baʕad** " With Allah is the decision".

2- Cheerfulness for the hearer as in

naзiħun ʔanta

"You succeeded."

3- Excitement and fascination as in the following verse from the Holy Quran

"ان في خلق السموات والارض واختلاف الليل والنهار لايات لاولي الالباب"

ʔinna fi xalqi alsamawati wa alʔardˤ **laʔajatin liʔuli ʔalbab**

"Indeed, the creation of the heavens and the Earth and the alternation of the night and the day are signs for those of understanding."

4.2.1 Fronting for Focus
The researcher of the present study, however, assumes that the canonical structure of the Arabic sentence is the VSO pattern. Thus, similar to English, we may assume, as a starting point, that Arabic allows fronting certain elements in a sentence to put them under focus. If we assume that the unmarked verbal sentence pattern is that of VSO, then we may claim that the SVO pattern is the result of a process of topicalization; i.e. fronting an element to highlight it. If this is so, the DP [ʔaṭ-ṭalib-u], in (19) below, moves into spec. VP position. The result will be (20) as shown in the examples below:

19. madaħa   ṭ-ṭaalib-u   l-muɔal-lim-a
    praised.3ms   the-student-Nom   the teacher. Acc
'The student praised the teacher.'

20. ʔaṭ-ṭalib-u   madaħa   l-muɔal-lim-a
    the-student-Nom   praised.3ms   the teacher. Acc
'THE STUDENT praised the teacher.'

As can be seen from the examples above, the two sentences have the same proposition. They only differ with respect to the position of the subject; in (19) it is after the verb, whereas in (20) it occupies the initial position before the verb. This change, topicalization, in word order means giving the subject, the DP, [ʔaṭ-ṭalib-u] (THE STUDENT) some prominence over the other elements in the sentence. The claim made here is that it was *the student*, not any other person who praised the teacher, not the head principal, not the parents, and so on. So, (20) may be translated in a way that is similar to the English it-cleft construction like:

21. ʔaṭ-ṭalib-u   madaħa   l-muɔal-lim-a

'It was THE STUDENT who praised the teacher.'

Many researchers (Aoun *et al*., 2010 and Jalabneh 2007, among others) have adopted the assumption that Arabic subject is originally generated in the VP shell. Then, it moves into a higher position to merge with the verb to get its theta role in [Spec, VP]. If this is so, the assumption proposed here is that the DP [ʔaṭ-ṭalib-u] originates in a position within the VP and then is attracted by a strong feature into a higher Focus position in the structure.

Another sentence in support of this claim is the one that we derive from the simple declarative sentence in (22) below, where the object, not the subject, has been brought to occupy the focus position:

22. ʔal-muɔal-lim-a   madaħa   ṭ-ṭalib-u
    The teacher.Acc   praised.past   the student.Nom
It was the teacher who the student praised.

Although Aoun *et al*., (2010) state that focus constructions in Arabic need not involve fronting, we may assume that in (22), the original position of the DP [ʔal-muɔal-lim-a] is the complement of the verb [madaħa]. However, it surfaces as the grammatical subject of the overall sentence. How could this be? The answer to this question is given by Elegerwi (2013: 87) who maintains that cleft constructions in Arabic "take a constituent from its unmarked position and place it in an 'unusual' one" [emphasis original]. Thus, the unmarked position of the NP [ʔal-muɔal-lim-a] is at the end of the sentence whereas the unusual position is the grammatical subject of the sentence.

A closer look at (19, 20, and 22) reveals that the VSO (19) is the unmarked structure from which we can derive the SVO (20) and the OVS (22). In all these cases, a certain constituent is given more prominence and thus fronted, than any other elements in the structure. In this connection, Elegerwi (2013: 88) such examples are "referred to as cleft-equivalent in Arabic".

Therefore, nominal sentences SVO or OVS patterns, in Arabic can be thought of as a surface syntactic structure that results from the underlying VSO pattern. This change in the word order is due to a topicalization process intended to highlight the subject or the object [NPs or DPS], rather than any part of the sentence. This is in line with Aoun *et al*., (2010) who state that focus fronting is characterized by the presence of a phrase in the left peripheral domain of a clause (p, 203). They provide the following example from Standard Arabic as an illustration:

23. al-kitaab-a   wadʒada   muħammad-un
    the-book-Acc   found.3ms   Muhammad-Nom
'The book, Muhammad found.'

To see how this process of topicalization takes place, let's take the following simple declarative sentence in the VSO pattern, the unmarked pattern in Arabic, from Aoun *et al*., (2010: 202):

24. ʃariba   zayd-un   ʃay-an
    drank. 3ms Zayd-Nom   tea-Acc
    'Zayd drank TEA.'

Ouhalla (1994b), quoted in Aoun *et al*., claims that focus fronting constructions require generating a further new projection, he calls it FP, to separate CP from TP. This FP, carrying the [+F] feature, is the host for the focus phrase. The identification of the [+F] feature is done either by moving a phrase bearing the [+F] feature to the specifier position of FP or by merging a head bearing the [+F] feature with the head of FP. This movement will result in the following sentence:

25. ʃay-an   ʃariba   zayd-un
    tea-Acc   drank.3ms   Zayd-Nom
    'It was tea that Zayd drank.'

Aoun *et al*., (2010) maintain that when the FP is projected between the CP and TP, then the NP [ʃay-an] (tea) is first generated in the canonical object position and moves to [Spec, FP]. However, if the FP is not projected, there would be no reason to move, and hence the focus marked element remains in situ as shown in example (24) above.

4.2.2 The Use of the Particle [laqad]

Ouhalla, quoted in Aoun *et al*., (2010: 210), states that Standard Arabic has a set of particles that can be analyzed as focus markers (FM). When one of these particles is merged with the head of FP, the result is that movement is prohibited in those constructions; i.e. the focus phrase remains in situ. Hence, we may add the particle [laqad] before the verb [ʃariba] in (25) above. The result will be the following structure:

26. laqad   ʃariba   zayd-un   ʃay-an
    FM   drank   zaydun.Nom   tea.Acc
    Zayd did drink tea. (Or. It was Zayd who drank tea)

However, there is a constraint on the use of the particle [laqad], only VPs can follow it. Hence, following Aoun *et al*., (2010), we can say that the focus phrase, whether the DP [zayd-un] or the DP [ʃay-an] will not be fronted, rather they remain in situ, since the particle [laqad] can only precede VPs headed by a verb. In this connection, consider the contrast between the following sentences:

27. laqad   na:ma   ṭ-ṭiflu   mubak-kiran
    FM   slept. 3ms   the baby. Nom   early
    The child slept early. (Or. It was the child who slept early)

28. *laqad   [DP] ṭ-ṭiflu   [VP] na:ma mubak-kiran
    FM tea. Acc   slept.3ms   early

Zayd tea did drink

29. *laqad   [ADVP] mubak-kiran   [VP] na:ma ṭ-ṭiflu
    FM   early   drank
    the baby. Nom
    Zayd in the house did drink tea

30. *laqad   [ADJP] fil-bayti   [VP] na:ma ṭ-ṭiflu   mubak-kiran
    FM   in the house.gen   slept.3ms
    the baby. Nom   early
    Zaid sweet did drink tea

We can simply account for the grammaticality of (27) by the claim that only VPs are allowed to follow the particle [laqad]; i.e. the VP *na:ma ṭ-ṭiflu mubak-kiran*. The ungrammaticality of (28-30) is accounted for in the sense that [DPs, PPs, APs] can never be brought to focus in a topicalization process since as mentioned previously only VPs can follow the particle [laqad].

4.2.3 Focus by ʔinna wa axawatuha

Arabic has many constructions for focusing and shifting the importance for a particular constituent. One of these constructions is **ʔinna wa axawatuha** which are called in Arabic **alnawasix alħarfijah (ʔinna, laʕala, and lajta).** The three have the same construction. So in the rule below the researcher is using **ʔinna** as the variable.

ʔinna + *X* + subordinate clause

Where **ʔinna** is an emphasis word and *X* is usually a noun phrase. The focus is on *X*, or else on the subordinate clause or some element of it. The following example for illustrating.

18. a. ʔinna ʕalijan huwa allaði baʕa alsjarata bilʔamsi
"It was Ali who sold the car yesterday."
b. ʔinna alsjarata hija ma baʔa ʕalijun bilʔamsi
"It was the car what Ali sold yesterday."
c. # ʔinnahu ʔalʔamsi ʕindama ʕalijun baʕa alsajarat
"It was yesterday when Ali sold the car."

The two sentences have the same meaning of ʕalijun baʕa alsajarat bilʔamsi. The subject and the object can be emphasized respectively by using the ʔinna construction in 18. But time cannot be emphasized or at least it is not common in Arabic. By assuming that the CP is split into ForceP and a ForceP where the complementiser *ʔinna* occupies the head position Force and the DP is attracted by the strong feature carried by the complementiser (**ʔinna**) to occupy the head of the FP. So ʕalijan is the head of FP in the 18a while alsjarata takes the position of the head of FP in 18b.

19. a. ʔinna mona hiya allati ʔaʕadat alfutˤura haða asˤbaħ
"It was Mona who prepared the breakfast."
[ForceP [Force *ʔinna* [FP [F mona [TopF hiya [Top allati[complement]]]]]]]
b. ʔinna alfutˤura huwa ma ʔaʕadat mona haða asˤbaħ

"It was the breakfast what Mona prepared."
[ForceP [Force *ʔinna* [FP[F alfutˤura [TopF huwa [Top ma[complement]]]]]]]
c. #ʔinnahu haða asˤbaħ ʕindama ʔaʕadat mona alfutˤura
"It was this morning when Mona prepared the breakfast."
20. a. laʕalla jaman huwa allaði naзаħa bibajʕi alsajarata haða alusbuʕi
I hope it was Yaman who succeeded in the car this week.
b. laʕalla alsajarata hija ma naзаħa jaman bibjʕihi haða alusbuʕi
I hope it was the car what Yaman succeeded in selling this week.
c. laʕallahu haða alusbuʕi allaði naзаħa jaman bibajʕi alsajarati fihi
I hope it was this week that Yaman sold the car in.
21.a. lajta ijasun huwa allaði aħdˤara almala liʔabihi aljawma
I hope it was Iyas who brought the money for his father today.
b. lajat almala ma aħdˤara ijasun liʔabihi aljawma
I hope it was the money what Iyas brought to his father today.
c. lajatahu aljawma allaði aħdˤara ijasu almala liʔabihi fihi
I hope it was today in which Iyas brought the money for his father.

From the examples above. It is recognized that **ʔinna wa axawatuha** structure is similar to the IT-left structure in English. And in both constructions, the focus is fronted to the beginning of the sentence to show that it is the most important element. Where focused DP is attracted to the position of the head of FP.

4.2.4. Focus by the Relative Pronouns (pseudo-cleft)

Another construction is used as a means for focusing is the **relative pronouns** construction. The relative pronouns are (huwa allaðˤi, hiya allati, huma allaðˤan, huma allatajin, hum allaðˤin, huna allawati or allati and ma) which is similar to the pseudo-cleft structure. In which the relative pronoun takes the position of head C of the CP and the whole CP is raised from the position of a complement of NP to the position of a specifier of FP. The following sentences are for illustrating:
22. allaði ištra almazraʕata alsanata almadˤjata huwa muħamadun
"Who bought the farm last year was Mohammad."
23. ma ištra muħamad alsanata almadˤjata hiya almazraʕatu
"What Mohammad bought last year was the farm."
24. alsanata allati ištra almazraʕata fiha hiya alsanata almadˤjata
"When Mohammad bought the farm was the last year."
25. ʔalusbuʕa allaði mat fihi abi huwa ʔalusbuʕa almadˤi
"When my father died was the last week"

When the focus is on the time, the focused word is repeated and inserted between the two pronouns as in 24 and 25. It appears that WH-cleft in English time is not a foci so it cannot be focused in pseudo cleft. So sentences like "when he came was an hour ago" and "when they won the war was in 1945" are weird and do not use by the native speakers. According to this, it appears that Arabic and English are different in two structures related to focus; the first is that in Arabic time is not foci in the structure of **ʔinna** which is nearly the same as **It-cleft** construction in English where time is a foci. On the other hand, time is foci in **relative pronouns** construction in Arabic while it is not in **pseudo-cleft** in English.

4.2.5. Focus by interrogative ʔa

In Arabic, the interrogative with **ʔa** is used for focusing to express doubt, in this construction the **ʔa** is inserted to in T the head of TP and then raised to C of FP because of the strong feature. For example, **"ʔafaʕalta?"** Here the **ʔa** starts with the verb which means that the most important thing is the action, and doubts whether it happened or not. In this sentence, **ʔa** is inserted in T and then raised up to C of FP. The V moves up to T and then to F the head of FP. The **ta** which is an ACC pronoun remains in its position as a complement of the VP. And in **"ʔa ʔanta faʕalta?"** Here the **ʔa** starts with the subject which is the most important and the doubt is whether the subject did the action or not. Here the **ʔa** is inserted in T and then moves up to C, the V does not move up while the subject is raised from a specifier of VP to a Specifier of TP and then it is attracted to the head of FP. In **"ʔalabariħata faʔalta?"** The time is doubted here because the **ʔa** starts with the time which is the most important. Again in this sentence the **ʔa** is inserted and raised to C of and **alabariħata** is raised from the complement of VP to a specifier of VP then up to the specifier of TP and finally to the head of FP.

4.2.6. Focus by the negating ma

The focus in Arabic using the **negating ma** is another construction to show the most important part of the sentence. What comes after **ma** immediately is the most important so **ma** negates the most important element in the sentence. In saying **"ma faʕaltu"** shows that the action (verb) is the most important element in the sentence because it is the one which is negated by **ma**. In **"ma ana faʕaltu"** the subject **ana** comes immediately after **ma** so it is negated and the emphasis is on the subject. The object can be also focused by this structure as in **"ma laħman akaltu"** ma negates the object so it is the most important element in this sentence. Time can be focused too by **ma** as in the following sentence **"ma aljawma ʔaradtu alquduma"** time is negated by **ma** so it receives the focus in the sentence as the most important element. **ma** is a specifier of NEGP so its place is after the TP. In this construction there are two movements, the first is the **ma** movement and the movement of the word that is going to be fronted. So in the first sentence **"ma faʕaltu"** the **ma** moves from the specifier of NEGP to a specifier of TP then to the specifier of FP. And the V moves to T and then to F. In **"ma faʕaltu"** the **ma** moves from the specifier of NEGP to the specifier of TP and up

to the specifier of FP. The V moves to T and then to the head F. The normative pronoun **tu** remains in the specifier of VP. In "**ma ana faʕaltu**" **ma** moves from specifier of NEGP to specifier of TP then to specifier of FP. the V moves to T and **ana** moves from the specifier of VP to the head of FP to receive the focus.

4.2.7. Focus using almafʕul almutˤlaq

almafʕul almutˤlaq is a noun derived from the verb and used as a complement of the verb in the sentence to emphasize the verb. **almafʕul almutˤlaq** is used to focus on the action (verb) which means that it emphasizes the verb. This emphasis is used to show the frequent or the number of occurrences of the verb as in "**dˤarabtu dˤarbatajn**" (*I hit twice)*. And to show the kind of the action (it identifies the way the verb occurs) as in "**qataltu qitala alusudi**" (I fought a fight like lions).

4.2.8. Focus by separating the pronoun

Separating the pronouns is a structure to show focus. The pronoun is moved to a position after the focused element to give it the emphasis. For example, "**haða huwa ʔalkitabu ʔalʒadidu**" (*This is the new book)* to emphasize the word **ʔalkitabu** (the book), the pronoun **huwa** is moved to a position after the word **ʔalkitabu** so the sentence becomes "**haða ʔalkitabu huwa ʔalʒadidu"**. Another example "**haðihi hija ʔalmadinatu ʔalaʒmalu**" *(This is the most beautiful city)* when moving the pronoun **hija** to be after the word **ʔalmadinatu,** it is emphasized, "**haðihi ʔalmadinatu hija ʔalaʒmalu"**.

5. CONCLUSIONS

This paper is intended to investigate cleft constructions in both Arabic and English to see how elements and entities of a sentence are connected through many different focus devices. It is claimed that written forms of the language may have more of cleft constructions due to the lack of other devices in written discourse compared to that of spoken forms. It can be concluded that English, as well as Arabic, use different strategies to form focus constructions. In English, for instance, *It-cleft* and the *Wh-cleft* constructions are the most frequently used devices used for highlighting a certain element. It-cleft is achieved by a process of fronting the focused element and introducing the [it – copula] elements while wh-cleft construction is via the use of a relative pronoun. In Arabic, on the other hand, fronting or topicalization is indeed a process of highlighting a certain element in the sentence. It has been claimed that focus constructions in Arabic can be achieved by further devices like the particle [ʔinna] and the pronouns of separation.

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