Two word order variations in German cleft sentences

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In German cleft sentences, there are two word order variations, illustrated as in (1):

(1) a. [Es] [ist] [Hans][,] [der kommt].
[cleft pronoun] [copular] [clefted constituent] [comma] [cleft clause]
        It be.3SG. Hans, RP.3SG. comes.
    b. [Hans] [ist] [es][,] [der kommt].
[clefted constituent] [copular] [cleft pronoun] [comma] [cleft clause]
        'It is Hans who comes.'

To our knowledge, what has not been pointed out before is the fact that this word order variation is related to discourse structure. Our main claim is that syntactic derivation reflects different interpretations of these word order variations. A question-answer congruence makes the difference clear: In the context given in (2), the canonical word order cleft (1a) is used if the clefted constituent of it is selected from the suspects, while the marked word order cleft (1b) is licensed if its clefted constituent is selected from out of the suspects:

(2) Kontext: *Inspector Lestrade ermittelt in einer Mordserie, die sich innerhalb der Familie Baskerville ereignet hat. Bis gestern wurden der Vater, der Hausarzt und der Dienstbote ermordet. Nun werden der Sohn sowie der Neffe des Mordes verdächtigt. Während der Sohn kein Alibi hat, kann der Neffe ein Alibi aufweisen. Inspector Lestrade bekommt einen Brief von Holmes. In diesem steht Folgendes: (...) Vermutlich haben Sie schon angefangen, Ermittlungen gegen den Sohn des Grafen anzustellen. Ich habe aber jetzt einen schlagenden Beweis gefunden, der zeigt, wer der Täter ist.*

[Context: *Inspector Lestrade is investigating a series of murders in the Baskerville family. So far, the father, the family doctor, and the servant have all been murdered. The prime suspects are the son and the nephew. The nephew has an alibi, but the son does not. Inspector Lestrade receives a letter from Holmes. It reads: (...) You've probably already started investigating the son. However, I've found solid evidence that reveals who the true culprit is.*]

a. Es ist **der Neffe**, der die Mordserie begangen hat.

b. ??**Der Neffe** ist es, der die Mordserie begangen hat.

[It is **the nephew** who committed the series of murders.]

    c. ??Es ist **der Hausarzt**, der die Mordserie begangen hat.

    d. **Der Hausarzt** ist es, der die Mordserie begangen hat.

    [It is **the family doctor** who committed the series of murders.]

    (...)

From this observation, it follows that the clefted constituent of the marked word order cleft (1b) can be characterized as having a mirative focus (cf. Zimmermann 2008). We applied EmpP (Emphasis Phrase) in CP to the marked word order cleft, which is proposed by Trotzke (2017) in order to capture German focus fronting which causes a mirative interpretation. In the spirit of a discontinuous definite description approach (cf. Percus 1997, Zimmermann 2007, den Dikken 2013, Hartmann 2016), we assume that the cleft clause, together with the cleft pronoun, constitutes a conjunction of the predicates (of type $<e, t>$) in the base position, as follows:

(3) [$_{CP}$ [$_{DP}$ Hans$_F$]$_i$ [$_{C'}$ war] [$_{EmpP}$ t$_i$ … [$_{SC}$ t$_i$ [[es] [t$_j$]]] tv]][$_{CP}$ der kommt]$_j$]

Concerning the canonical word order cleft (1a), instead of activating EmpP and extracting the clefted constituent to that position, the originally predicative pronoun moves to the initial Spec,TP position and then occupies the Spec,CP as topicalization via individuation. Whereas Hartmann (2016) proposed that the inversion of the cleft pronoun is driven by the grammatical mechanism in English, we assume that the inversion is driven by TopicP (cf. Frey 2006), resulting in the individuation (of type $<s, e>$) of the cleft pronoun.

(4) [$_{CP}$ [$_{DP}$ [Es] [t$_j$]]$_i$ [$_{C'}$ war] [$_{TopicP}$ t$_i$ … [$_{SC}$ Hans$_F$ [$_{SC'}$ t$_i$ tv]]]][$_{CP}$ der kommt]$_j$]

The previous literature of a discontinuous definite description regards the cleft pronoun as expletive, quasi-argument or pro-predicate. In such forgoing research, the cleft pronoun plays no semantic part in the interpretation. In contrast, our crucial assumption is that the semantic contribution of the cleft pronoun in both word order variations is quite different, depending on its syntactic position. In the marked word order cleft, the cleft pronoun is interpreted as merely a pro-predicate for the clefted constituent. On the other hand, the interpretation of the cleft pronoun in the canonical word order cleft can be subsumed under the question-answer relationship in discourse. Hartmann (2016) suggested that the inversion of the cleft pronoun causes a predicative interpretation in the specificational copular construction, in which the initial DP has an intentional interpretation, such as a concealed question (cf. Romero 2005, Heycock 2013). In modifying Hartmann's analysis, we

propose that the cleft pronoun in the prefield preserves a current question in the previous discourse in the sense of the question under discussion (cf. Roberts 1996). This explains perspicuous correlation between discourse strategy and word order variations in German cleft sentences. Our investigation could be applied to other linguistic phenomena in the syntax-semantics interface, such as the sentential proform in German (cf. Zimmermann 2016).

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