

# Assessing the emergence of reduced clefts in Brazilian Portuguese: Rhetoric structure, information structure and syntax

*A emergência de clivadas reduzidas em  
Português Brasileiro: estrutura retórica,  
estrutura informacional e sintaxe*

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## ABSTRACT

This paper assesses the issue of the emergence of reduced clefts in Brazilian Portuguese, from an analysis of the contexts in which this construction takes place. To do so, it develops a reasoning based on Segmented Discourse Representation Theory (SDRT), by means of a comparison of its textual usage vis-à-vis the one of canonical and inverted clefts, in a corpus of TV interviews. These two latter types present distinct usage contexts in terms of Rhetorical Relations, which are taken to reflect the informational distinction between stressed-focus *it*-clefts and informative-presupposition *it*-clefts. Reduced clefts were found exactly in the same contexts of canonical clefts, which allows one to conclude that these ones conform the structure from which the innovative construction was generated. This is compatible with the possibility of reduced clefts being the result of a grammaticalization process, to be explored in greater detail in future work.

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Keywords: reduced clefts, rhetoric structure, syntactic change.

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Este artigo avalia a questão da emergência das clivadas reduzidas no português brasileiro, a partir de uma análise dos contextos em que tal construção ocorre. Para tanto, desenvolve-se uma argumentação com base na Teoria da Representação do Discurso Segmentado (SDRT), por meio da comparação do seu uso textual face àquele das clivadas canônicas e invertidas, num corpus de entrevistas televisivas. Esses dois últimos tipos apresentam contextos de uso distintos em termos de Relações Retóricas, que consideramos reflexos da distinção informacional entre clivadas com foco acentuado e clivadas com pressuposição informativa. As clivadas reduzidas foram encontradas exatamente nos mesmos contextos que as clivadas canônicas, o que permite concluir que estas conformam a estrutura a partir da qual a construção inovadora foi gerada. Isso é compatível com a possibilidade de as clivadas reduzidas serem o resultado de um processo de gramaticalização, a ser explorado em maior detalhe em trabalho futuro.

Palavras-chave: clivadas reduzidas, estrutura retórica, mudança sintática.

## 1. Introduction

**T**his text explores a much-discussed topic in the analysis of marked informational constructions in Brazil, the characterization of reduced clefts. They are illustrated below, side by side with other well documented cleft structures, canonical and inverted clefts:

- (1)
- a. O João que eu vi.  
‘It is João that I saw.’
  - b. Foi o João que eu vi.
  - c. O João é que eu vi.

As indicated above, reduced clefts do not include the copula, which occurs to the left of the clefted constituent *o João* in canonical clefts, and to the right of it in inverted clefts. The literature converges in assuming a cartographical approach to their derivation, but diverges regarding their synchronic analysis: some believe the reduction involves copula deletion, either from the inverted cleft structure (KATO; RAPOSO, 1996), or in the canonical cleft structure (KATO, 2009; GUESSER,

2015). Others claim that the copula is not projected at all, *que* being a focus marker (MIOTO, 2001).

In other words, whereas the first set of proposals shares a conservative view, assuming a biclausal structure for clefts across the board, the second one assumes that reduced clefts are derived in a monoclausal structure, thus assuming an innovative view (cf. MEDEIROS JÚNIOR, 2017; for a review of the arguments around this debate). These works, however, overlook the historical development of this construction, as well as its textual values. There are few mentions to these problems, sometimes without a detailed examination: Kato (2009) assumes that reduced clefts are the result of a grammaticalization process, whereas Oliveira (2011) defends that reduced clefts are the result of contact with African substrates, where focus is usually marked morphologically.

The present text intends to contribute to this discussion by presenting an analysis of the textual values of reduced clefts vis-à-vis those of canonical and inverted clefts, so as to consider a basic question for a more encompassing discussion on their origin, i.e. which is the source construction for reduced clefts. This is considered to be a necessary step for any detailed investigation on the hypothesis advocating that a grammaticalization process is involved in this syntactic change. In order to do so, I have analyzed data from Brazilian TV interviews according to the framework of Segmented Discourse Representation Theory or SDRT (ASHER; LASCARIDES, 2003) and observed related characteristics of these constructions in information structure and syntax.

104 As much as I know there has been almost no work on the textual values of clefts in Portuguese. This sort of study also faces theoretical obstacles because there is little work on the connection between rhetoric structure and information structure. Because of this, the analysis cannot be made with the expected level of detail. Nevertheless, the results, especially on the empirical level, are considered well argued for, as I hope to show.

The text is organized as follows. In section 2, I detail the theoretical and methodological assumptions guiding this investigation. Section 3 presents the results on the textual values of clefts stemming from the corpus-based analysis. Section 4 discusses the meaning of these results for the grammatical status of reduced clefts and its syntactic change, as well as for the interface between rhetoric structure and information structure, and between information structure and syntax. Section 5 closes the text.

## 2. Theoretical and methodological assumptions

Before detailing on the methodology and theoretical framework, I make some considerations on the rationale guiding this paper.

The proposed discussion pertains to the domain of *contrastive studies on pragmatic aspects of grammatical phenomena*, to use the classification in Verschueren

(2016). The importance of considering the pragmatic aspects of clefts has to do with the general consideration that they are semantically equivalent, but informationally distinct, from their non-clefted correlates. Besides that, in a contrastive study, similar constructions are expected to be *equivalent* in terms of some basis of comparison (*tertium comparationis*) which must be expressed in functional terms, a quite expected solution in view of the fact that the diversity of forms is at stake. This method is somewhat simplified here due to the specific goals of this study: to analyze two types of clefts in European and in Brazilian Portuguese would not elucidate their diachronic development in the latter;<sup>1</sup> instead, what I intend to do is to compare reduced clefts to another cleft type, their expressions in Brazilian Portuguese (BP), so as to observe a possible diachronic development between the two. To this end, I assume some equivalences with respect to European Portuguese (EP).<sup>2</sup>

Equivalences between similar structures in BP and EP are indeed expected because of their common history, usually dubbed as Classical Portuguese, the language written in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, with a point of differentiation taking place by the 18th century. The new cleft type may display different distributions when compared to another cleft type, i.e. they may occur:

- (i) in similar contexts, thus having similar function;
- (ii) in distinct contexts;
- (iii) in similar contexts, but showing some type of functional distinction.

Scenario (i) is the null hypothesis, because it would imply a very improbable situation, the existence of split forms without any clear functional distinction. This result would favor one of the conservative analyses for the reduced cleft, and deletion would result from pure phonetic pressures. Scenarios (ii) and (iii) would both imply distinct syntactic analyses for the two constructions at hand, with reduced clefts having an innovative analysis. Scenario (ii) would be more favorable to a contact analysis involving structure borrowing. Finally, scenario (iii) is the most plausible one if grammaticalization is indeed involved in the development of reduced clefts.

However, due to space limitations, I will limit myself to verify whether point (i) or (ii) is the most correct, and if similarity is proven to exist, which is the source construction for the purported grammaticalization process. This much said, I intend to probe parallel expectations in information structure and syntactic structure, so as to show a distinction between different cleft types in Portuguese.

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1 This type of study may be implemented, in the case of reduced clefts, for Angolan Portuguese and Brazilian Portuguese, in view of previous studies attesting the existence of reduced clefts in the former (cf. FIGUEIREDO; FERREIRA DOS SANTOS, 2014; on the variety of Libolo).

2 Cf. Andrade (2015) for a similar study contrasting Topicalization and Left Dislocation in the latter.

## 2.1 Theoretical framework

In order to study the pragmatic value of clefts, I have made a textual analysis of the corpus data in the framework of Segmented Discourse Representation Theory, dubbed SDRT (ASHER; LASCARIDES, 2003). Although SDRT and other theories of rhetorical structure do not present independent hypotheses for the distribution of different cleft types, they provide a detailed methodology that helps to distinguish their usage contexts, in combination with theories of Information Structure.

SDRT's textual analysis consists of basic units and rhetorical relations (RRs) connecting those units. The ensuing structures represent both the propositional contents and the macro-structure of discourse. Basic units are dubbed Elementary Discourse Units (EDUs), which correspond to propositions. A simple or independent clause corresponds to an EDU, and a subordinate clause may be mapped to a distinct EDU with respect to its matrix clause if the verb in the latter indicates propositional attitude. Crucially, cleft constructions are considered to map to a single EDU (MULLER *et al.*, 2012).

RRs may be classified according to two main criteria: structuring and veridicality. The first notion considers the way EDUs are organized: while subordination serves to deepen an argument, coordination contributes to textual progression. Veridicality takes into account whether the propositional content of the related segments is presupposed to be true. Table 1 gives a revised version of the updated list of RRs taking into account the structuring classification, considering Afantenos; Asher (2010) and Muller *et al.* (2012), including also the dialogical RR Correction, discussed in Asher and Lascarides (2003), due to the observation of cases of self-correction.

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Coordinating RRs	Subordinating RRs
Alternation,	Attribution,
Condition,	Background,
Continuation,	Comment,
Contrast,	Elaboration,
Correction,	Entity-Elaboration,
Narration,	Explanation,
Result,	Flashback,
Parallel	Frame,
	Goal,
	Temporal localization

Table 1: The SDRT Rhetorical Relations used in this work.

Source: own elaboration.

The basic types of coordinating RRs are Narration and Continuation.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, the basic types of subordinating RRs are Elaboration and Explanation, which differ in that the first details, whereas the second explains a basic segment.<sup>4</sup> Notice that a group of EDUs linked by coordinating RRs which explain another EDU are annotated by Continuation, a fact demonstrating that various types of linguistic cues as well as the logical structure are taken into account (example adapted from ASHER; LASCARIDES, 2003, p. 32):

- (2) Lansbury renunciou à liderança parlamentar (a). Seu apoio ao pacifismo recebeu só 102 mil votos (b) e ele foi pessoalmente atacado por Ernest Bevin (c). Ele foi substituído por Clement Attlee, o primeiro líder de classe média educado numa escola pública (d).  
 ‘Lansbury resigned from the parliamentary leadership (a). His support for pacifism received only 102,000 votes (b) and he was personally attacked by Ernest Bevin (c). He was replaced by Clement Attlee, the party’s first public-school educated middle-class leader (d).’

In this excerpt, there is Explanation between (2a) and the Complex Discourse Unit (CDU) formed by (2b-c). These two EDUs are linked by Continuation. Finally, there is Narration between (2a) and (2d). This Rhetorical Structure can be presented in the form of an SDRS (Segmented Discourse Representation Structure), either in the form of cards (similar to the ones used in DRT, cf. KAMP; REYLE, 1993), or in a simplified graph, as shown in Figure (1) below.

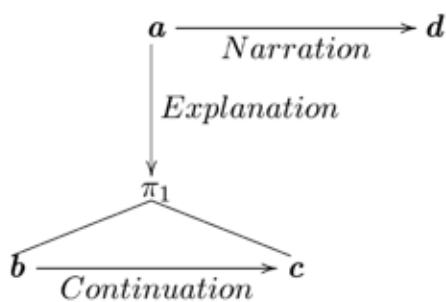


Figure 1: Rhetoric Structure of (2)

Source: ‘Asher; Lascarides (2003, p. 33, with adaptations).

3 Other coordinate RRs are briefly presented in the following: Alternation indicates a disjunction relation between two segments; Condition indicates a relation connecting a consequence to its triggering hypothesis; Contrast indicates a relation whereby either there is an explicit formal distinction between two segments, or the violation of an expectation expressed in one segment; Correction indicates a divergent relation where the focused part of a target segment is challenged; Result indicates that one segment is the cause of another, where the cause is presented first; Parallel indicates that two segments share a similar syntactic construction.

4 Other subordinate RRs are briefly presented in the following: Attribution indicates a relation according to which a segment is attributed to its speaker; Background indicates that a segment offers the background state for another one, which expresses an event; Comment indicates that a segment presents a viewpoint of an author about a previous segment; Entity-Elaboration indicates a type of elaboration that details on a specific entity, found in a previous segment; Flashback indicates a narrative connecting two segments in an inverse temporal order; Frame indicates a specific type of Elaboration whereby a segment presents a spatio-temporal frame for another one; Goal indicates that one segment presents a goal according to which the action developed in another segment is carried out; Temporal localization indicates that one segment allows one to temporally localize another segment.

An important consequence of this structure for anaphor resolution is presented in the Right Frontier Constraint, which foresees that a pronoun in a subsequent EDU cannot co-refer to the referent *102 mil votos*, such as *Eles eram a minoria dos votos* ('They were a minority of the votes'): this referent is not accessible, because it is away from the SDRS's right frontier, which includes the last segment and any segment dominating it.

## 2.2 Material and methods

The corpus used in this research is composed of interviews from *Roda Viva*, a program broadcast by the Brazilian television channel *Cultura*. The specific ones used have been made available online in Memória Roda Viva (2008). This textual genre was chosen because interviews usually raise an environment of debate, which is conducive to the marking of contrastive focus, generally considered to be the main function involved in the usage of clefts (cf. BRAGA, KATO; MIOTO, 2010, among many others). From this corpus, I have composed a database with 87 clefts. The basic methodological decisions undertaken involved the elimination of some data which could somehow interfere with the results, such as:

- (i) negated clefts, because they are usually associated with corrective contexts, which may bias the results;
- (ii) *wh*-questions and *yes/no* questions, because they have a different set of variants with respect to declarative clefts;
- (iii) examples inside reported speech material.

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We have thus included in the database just declarative sentences, followed or not by a question tag. The steps undertaken in the analysis included:

- (i) the identification of relevant examples of these constructions;
- (ii) the classification of the relevant RRs in context, with special attention to the RR connecting the EDU containing the cleft;
- (iii) the analysis of the information packaging recurrently associated to each cleft type, with special attention to (informational and/or contrastive) foci.

In this picture, "context" may be simplified to the RR types connecting the cleft to its context, whereas "function" may be identified as the information packaging, i.e. the part of the utterance that is focused/presupposed in connection with its specific value (contrastive or informational).

A general problem for the application of SDRT is that the definitions of RRs are characterizational. This implies that in some contexts more than one RR may be chosen, by different annotators. This problem may be mitigated with two actions.



First, if the possible RRs pertain to the coordination/subordination divide, some tests distinguishing the two RR types may be applied (ASHER; VIEW, 2005). If this is not the case, the opinion of a second (trained) annotator may verify if the classification is correct. The two practices were incorporated into this research.

An important point regarding the classification in RRs in cleft sentences is that the clefted constituent cannot be taken to be a discourse marker, because this type of element does not have a syntactic function, but only a semantic-pragmatic one (cf. GARACHANA, 2012). Thus in an example such as *É agora que o problema começa* ('It is now when the problem begins'), *agora* cannot be interpreted as a discourse marker signaling opposition, as in *Agora, sou eu que tenho de resolver o problema* ('However, I am the one that has to solve the problem'); in the latter case, it must be placed outside the whole construction. The same is taken to apply to *por isso* and other adverbial elements that may function as discourse markers.

Another issue is that, among the clefts found in the corpus, not all of them are good for a rhetoric analysis with the RR types listed in Table 1, because they are aimed at analyzing monologues. If the cleft occurs in the very beginning of a turn, such as in the case in (3), it cannot be analyzed accordingly:

- (3) **Ciro Gomes** – Para quem está na seca do Nordeste setentrional, isso é uma falta de respeito, e eu sei que você não tem vontade de fazer.

'For those that live in the drought of the Northern Northeast [of Brazil], this is a lack of respect, and I know that one has not will of making (it).'

**Apolo Lisboa** – A gestão das águas é que é o problema, não há gerenciamento.

'Water management is the (real) problem, there is no (water) administration.'

Notice that this cleft appears in the beginning of Mr. Lisboa's turn, a professor and environmentalist participating in the show. It is possible that this segment is classified according to one of the available RR types in Table 1, but the problem here also relates to its integration to the rhetoric structure of the text. Here, one must observe that there is a dispute between Mr. Gomes and Mr. Lisboa on the topic of the necessity of the water transposition project from the São Francisco river. So it makes sense to analyze that in this segment Mr. Lisboa keeps a topic of his own previous turn. However, in most cases the speaker uses the beginning of his/her turn to make a reply to his/her interlocutor. Both issues would add complexity to our analysis, which would lead us to necessarily consider other RR types related to dialogical texts and the very structure of dialogical texts.

After putting away the clefts appearing in the beginning of a turn, our database decreased to 76 sentences, organized according to the distribution in Table 2.

Cleft type	Occurrences	Percentages
Canonical	43	56%
Inverted	14	18%
Reduced	19	26%
Total	76	100%

Table 2: Database overview.

Source: own elaboration.

This amount of clefts consists in a reasonable number. Kato *et al.* (2002), a work based on the NURC-SP corpus, have counted only canonical and inverted clefts, thus the comparison indicates that my database is slightly more than the half of theirs (57 against 91 occurrences, respectively), but this is partly to be attributed to the elimination of some clefts from the database, as mentioned above. On the other hand, the balance between different cleft types is different: in Kato *et al.* (2002) the number of canonical clefts is smaller than that of inverted clefts: respectively, 25 against 66 occurrences, which is the opposite of what is found in the present work. My hypothesis is that this discrepancy is due to the different textual genres dominant in each corpus.

In compliance with the best scientific practices, the identification of the interviews used to construct the database, as well as the database itself, are available through the following link: [https://www.dropbox.com/s/chalkda3bunwvsh/Corpus\\_clivadas\\_PB.xlsx?dl=0](https://www.dropbox.com/s/chalkda3bunwvsh/Corpus_clivadas_PB.xlsx?dl=0).

### 2.3 Specific analysis framework

As already mentioned, studies on SDRT have been dedicated to themes such as the analysis of temporal structure and salience, so that there is still no clear framework for studies willing to deal with the rhetoric structure – information structure interface, especially those working with informationally-marked constructions. In this brief section I intend to show that in spite of the scarcity of studies in this area, it is yet possible to develop a coherent work. In the end of it, I show some hypotheses to be verified.

In dealing with such informationally-marked constructions, it is important to have in mind they are also marked in that they convey more pieces of information than unmarked ones. This in part explains why they show contextual usage constraints. One of the first authors to put forward some constraints on rhetorical structure onto the usage of informationally-marked constructions, using the SDRT model, is López (2009). For him, Left Dislocation in Romance languages can only occur if the topic constituent (the *link*) is connected to a previous EDU containing an *anchor* by a subordinate RR.<sup>5</sup> The following examples illustrate the adequacy

<sup>5</sup> An anchor may be informally described as a referent establishing a functional dependency with the topic. Following Birner and Ward (1998), this dependency may be considered to be some sort of Partially Ordered Set (poset): set/subset; part/whole; greater-than/less-than; identification, and so on.

of different contexts for Left Dislocation in European Portuguese, with their corresponding representations in Figures 2 and 3 (inspired from LÓPEZ 2009, p. 49; this variant of Portuguese was chosen because it is closer to the original Catalan example, considering that the usage of 3<sup>rd</sup> person clitic pronouns is not typical of Popular Brazilian Portuguese):

- (4)
- a. O João levou suas roupas para o quarto.  
 ‘João took his clothes to the bedroom.’
  - b. Abriu a janela  
 ‘He opened the window.’
  - c. e pôs o seu fato no guarda-roupa.  
 ‘and put his suit in the wardrobe.’
  - d. **O casaco verde**<sub>i</sub>, ele separou-o para uma obra caritativa...  
 ‘The green coat, he put it away for charity work...’

- (5)
- a. O João levou suas roupas para o quarto.  
 ‘João took his clothes to the bedroom.’
  - b. Abriu a janela  
 ‘He opened the window’
  - c. # e **o casaco verde**<sub>i</sub>, ele separou-o para uma obra caritativa...  
 ‘and the green coat, he put it away for charity work...’

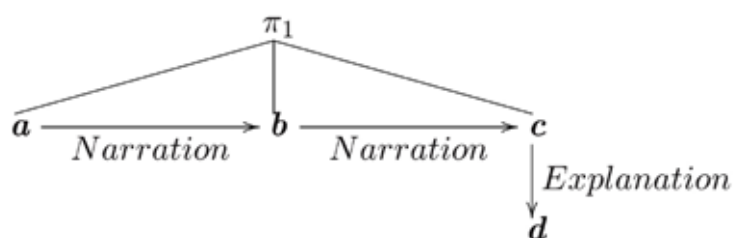


Figure 2: Rhetoric Structure of (4)  
 Source: own elaboration.

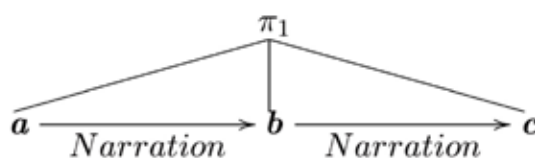


Figure 3: Rhetoric Structure of (5)  
 Source: own elaboration.

The sequence in (4) is well-formed because (4) is connected to (4c) by a subordinate RR, to wit, Elaboration, where the anchor is *fato* (‘suit’), which makes the poset *roupas* ‘clothes’ salient. On the other hand, according to López’s (2009) hypothesis, the usage of Left Dislocation in (5) is infelicitous because (5c) is not connected

to (5a) by a subordinate RR: the excerpt in (5) indicates a small narrative with coordinate RRs, where  $\pi^1$  merely indicates the presence of a discourse topic built from the narrative sequence. The explanation he gives for this constraint is that topics introduce a sort of “strong anaphor” that must be licensed in that specific configuration.<sup>6</sup>

In the case of clefts, relevant informational differences vis-à-vis Left Dislocation structures suggest that a more complex scenario is expected to be found. First, once many clefted constituents are new in the discourse model, the anchor-link relation cannot be applied to this study, at least not for all cleft cases. For this reason, I consider instead a more basic goal, to analyze the attachment of the EDU containing the cleft into the discourse (and disregarding intervenient relations without strong semantic content, such as Attribution). Second, previous work on informational properties of cleft sentences must be taken into account in order to formulate any viable hypothesis on rhetoric structure configurations for different clefts types in Portuguese:

- (i) There are two main types of *it*-clefts: stressed-focus *it*-clefts and informative-presupposition *it*-clefts, which correspond to a difference in the informational value of the clefted constituent vis-à-vis the cleft clause (PRINCE, 1978);
- (ii) Stressed-focus *it*-clefts are used in two discourse functions: either a question-answer function or a contrast function; on the other hand, informative-presupposition *it*-clefts tend to mark a discursive background with temporal anteriority, or a cause-effect function (DELIN; OBERLANDER, 1995);
- (iii) Regarding the rhetoric structure configuration, stressed-focus *it*-clefts seem to indicate the completion of a discourse segment, whereas informative-presupposition *it*-clefts indicate the continuation of a discourse segment (DELIN; OBERLANDER, 1995).

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6 However appealing this proposal seems to be, there are grounds to think that López's (2009) proposal is too strong, at least for Portuguese. It may be the case that there is no specific constraint on strong anaphors, which is in fact an epiphenomenon of the Right Frontier Constraint conjoined with some requirement according to which the elements forming the salient poset must be individuated somehow. Therefore, one does not expect to find Left Dislocations in narrative sequences; but other coordinating RRs allow them, such as Contrast:

- (i) a. O João abriu a janela  
'João opened the window.'
- b. e pôs o seu fato no guarda-roupa.  
'and put his suit in the wardrobe.'
- c. Já o casaco verde, ele separou-o para uma obra caritativa.  
'But the green coat, he put it away for charity work.'

If this observation is true, the results presented in Shaer (2009) and Costa; Andrade (2015), according to which only (some types of) subordinating RRs are found between the topic or link and its comment, and between the topic and its anchor, in the case of Hanging Topic Left Dislocation, are to be considered independent of the notion ‘strong anaphor’. This indicates that more general informational and rhetorical constraints must be taken into account in the investigation.

I thus present the following working hypotheses for Portuguese clefts:

- (i) the distinction between canonical and inverted clefts mimics the informational distinction between stressed-focus *it*-clefts and informative-presupposition *it*-clefts;
- (ii) the cleft type corresponding to stressed-focus *it*-clefts may encode either informational focus or contrastive focus, is are expected to be found in subordinate and in coordinate RRs, respectively; on the other hand, the cleft type corresponding to informative-presupposition *it*-clefts conveys a contrastive topic as the clefted constituent, and should appear in coordinate RRs;
- (iii) the signaling of closure or continuation of discourse segments (i.e. a CDU) applies to the cleft types accordingly.

Moreover, a general expectation is that not all RR types should link cleft constructions, such as Narration - clefts are incompatible with narrative sequences, because these are informationally simple, whereas clefts are informationally heavy (DELIN, 1989, p. 181). With the help of such working hypotheses, it is possible to present the results for each cleft type with more interesting prospects.

### 3. Textual values of clefts

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#### 3.1 Canonical clefts

This is the only cleft type in Brazilian Portuguese that has received previous study regarding its textual value. According to Moretto (2014), canonical clefts frequently mark the conclusion of a reasoning, which tends to be implemented by a subordinate discourse relation. This prediction is borne out in my data. Most canonical clefts in the database occur in subordinate RRs, such as **Background**,<sup>7</sup> **Comment**, **Elaboration** and **Explanation**, although one coordinate RR was also found, **Correction**. In some examples, such as in (6), there is a discourse marker signaling conclusion of a discourse segment, such as *então* ('therefore'):

- (6) **D. João de Orleans e Bragança** – [Tinha muito pouco apelo popular a República no Brasil.]<sub>1</sub> [Mas, quando o positivismo entrou na política republicana,]<sub>2</sub> [o positivismo defendia a república ditatorial.]<sub>3</sub> [Defendia a república pelo golpe.]<sub>4</sub> [Então, **foi isso que** aconteceu.]<sub>5</sub>

<sup>7</sup> In fact, Asher, Prévot and View (2007) observe that there are two subtypes of Background, forward-looking and backward-looking, but both are subordinate. For this reason, in this work I not distinguish these two types. The first one can be observed in (6), and is easily identifiable from the inverse ordering of the arguments in the RR annotation, where the second argument expresses the Background.

‘[The Republic had small popular appeal in Brazil],<sub>1</sub> [However, when positivism entered into the politics of the Republic (regime),]<sub>2</sub> [positivism defended the dictatorial republic.],<sub>3</sub> [It defended the republic by a coup.],<sub>4</sub> [So, this was what happened.],<sub>5</sub>

→ Contrast (1,[2-4]); Temporal localization (3,2); Elaboration (3,4);

**Background (5,[3-4])**

- (7) **Celso Amorim** – [Agora, isso reflete também uma nova percepção do mundo.],<sub>1</sub> [Uma nova percepção do mundo que reflete, também, a percepção que o povo brasileiro tem de si próprio e o respeito que o povo brasileiro tem em relação a si mesmo.],<sub>2</sub> [É isso **que** nós procuramos, também, levar para fora.],<sub>3</sub>

‘[However, this also reflects a new perception of the world.],<sub>1</sub> [A new perception of the world which also reflects the perception which the Brazilian people has of itself and the respect that the Brazilian people has regarding itself.],<sub>2</sub> [It is this (feeling) that we also seek to take abroad.],<sub>3</sub>’

→ Elaboration (1,2); **Comment (2,3)**

- (8) **Cláudio Abramo** – [Mas o objetivo de se reduzir a corrupção, em qualquer ambiente, em qualquer país, não deve ser o de punir culpados.],<sub>1</sub> [deve ser o de melhorar a alocação dos recursos da sociedade],<sub>2</sub> [para que o desenvolvimento possa se dar melhor.],<sub>3</sub> [para que os programas sociais possam ser mais eficientes.],<sub>4</sub> [É *para isso* **que** serve.],<sub>5</sub>

‘[But the goal of reducing corruption, in any environment, in any country, must not be that of punishing the culprits.],<sub>1</sub> [it must be the one of improving the allocation of society’s resources],<sub>2</sub> [so that development can take place in a better way.],<sub>3</sub> [so that social programs may be more efficient.],<sub>4</sub> [It is for this (reason) that it serves.],<sub>5</sub>’

→ Correction (1,2); Goal (2,[3-4]); Parallel (3,4); **Elaboration ([2-4],5)**

- (9) **Carlos Saldanha** – [É a fase mais difícil e mais demorada do trabalho.],<sub>1</sub> [Tudo precisa ser desenhado antes.],<sub>2</sub> [cada personagem é desenvolvido primeiro no papel.],<sub>3</sub> [Depois, cada um precisa ser esculpido com todos os seus detalhes.],<sub>4</sub> [É *das maquetes* **que** são tiradas as referências em três dimensões para o trabalho no computador.],<sub>5</sub>

‘It’s the most difficult and the most time-consuming phase of the work (of cartoon-making).],<sub>1</sub> [Everything must be drawn beforehand.],<sub>2</sub> [each character is first created on paper.],<sub>3</sub> [Afterwards, each one needs to be sculpted with all their details.],<sub>4</sub> [It is from the scale models that the references in three dimensions are taken for the computer work.],<sub>5</sub>’

→ Elaboration (1,[2-5]); Background (3,2); Narration (2,4); **Explanation (4,5)**

- (10) **Benjamin Steinbruch:** – [Foi anteontem que pagamos.]<sub>1</sub> [Aliás, **foi semana passada** **que** nós pagamos a dívida do BNDES.]<sub>2</sub>  
‘[It was the day before yesterday when we payed.]<sub>1</sub> [In fact, it was last week when we payed the debt with BNDES.]<sub>2</sub> (the National Bank for Economical and Social Development).’  
→ **Correction (1,2)**

These results suggest that canonical clefts in Brazilian Portuguese are similar to stressed-focus *it*-clefts. First, because both subordinate RRs and a coordinate RR conveying a type of contrast are found, mimicking the division of labor between informational and contrastive foci. Second, they usually occur to mark the closing of a discursive segment. Table 3 below shows a summary of the results found with this construction.

RR type	Occurrences
Background	1
Comment	20
Correction	3
Elaboration	16
Explanation	3
Total	43

Table 3: Classification of the RR types found with canonical clefts.

Source: own elaboration.

### 3.2 Inverted clefts

The literature on Brazilian Portuguese has not dealt with the textual values of inverted clefts, so I will limit myself to the hypotheses set forth in section 2.3. With this group I have found only coordinating RRs, namely, **Continuation**, **Contrast** and **Result**:

- (11) **Danilo Miranda** – [Eu acho]<sub>1</sub> [que eu posso construir mais e fazer mais onde eu estou.]<sub>2</sub> [E *essa coisa da continuidade*, [que o Markun falava agora há pouco,]<sub>4</sub> **é que** deu base para a gente poder continuar a levar esse projeto adiante.]<sub>3</sub>  
‘[I think]<sub>1</sub> [that I can build more and do more where I am.]<sub>2</sub> [And this issue of continuity, [which Mr. Markun mentioned just now,]<sub>3</sub> is the one that gave us support to keep with this project.]<sub>4</sub>’  
→ Attribution (1,[2-3]); Entity-Elaboration (3,4) [% *continuidade*]; **Continuation (2,3)**

- (12) **Dráuzio Varella** – [É verdade,]<sub>1</sub> [a morte não respeita das virtudes de ninguém,]<sub>2</sub> [Pode acontecer aleatoriamente,]<sub>3</sub> [mas, [como acontece todos os dias,]<sub>5</sub> **nós é que** fingimos que isso não é possível,]<sub>4</sub>  
 ‘[It is true,]<sub>1</sub> [death doesn’t respect nobody’s virtues,]<sub>2</sub> [It may occur randomly,]<sub>3</sub> [but, as it happens every day,]<sub>5</sub> we pretend that this is not possible,]<sub>4</sub>  
 → Elaboration (1,[2-3]); Explanation (4,5); **Contrast (3,5)**

- (13) **Benedita da Silva** – [Não, nós não tínhamos o sistema de cotas,]<sub>1</sub> [O sistema de cotas foi um debate muito acirrado,]<sub>2</sub> [Realmente tivemos aí a iniciativa do projeto,]<sub>3</sub> [mas o debate foi extremamente acirrado no estado do Rio de Janeiro, a compreensão,]<sub>4</sub> [*Só depois é que* nós conseguimos implantar o sistema,]<sub>5</sub>  
 ‘[No, we didn’t have the (social) quota system,]<sub>1</sub> [The quota system involved a very tough debate,]<sub>2</sub> [In fact, I took the initiative (to launch) the project,]<sub>3</sub> [but the debate was extremely tough in the state of Rio de Janeiro (and), its comprehension,]<sub>4</sub> [Just afterwards we could implement the system,]<sub>5</sub>’  
 → Background (1,[2-6]); Elaboration (3,[4-5]); Contrast (3,4); **Result (4,5)**

The results found with inverted clefts show that this cleft type largely coincides with the profile expected for informative-presupposition *it*-clefts. This is so because they may convey a cause-effect function, which corresponds to the RR Result. Other coordinate RRs found show that there is an effect of continuation of the discourse segment at hand. Table 4 below summarizes the RR types found with this specific construction.

RR type	Occurrences
Continuation	3
Contrast	3
Result	8
Total	14

Table 4: Classification of the RR types found with inverted clefts.

Source: own elaboration.

### 3.3 Reduced clefts

It is well possible that reduced clefts are textually similar to one of the previous cleft types. In fact, reduced clefts have been found in the same contexts of canonical clefts, such as in the subordinate RRs **Comment**, **Elaboration** and **Explanation**, but also in the coordinate RR **Correction**:



- (14) **Ciro Gomes** – [Estava pronta a barragem – ]<sub>1</sub> [três anos seguidos de seca]<sub>2</sub>  
 [e a barragem ficou lá com a parede sem uma gota;]<sub>3</sub> [aconteceu agora,  
 há 10 anos atrás, em Fortaleza.]<sub>4</sub> [*Por isso que* eu sou comovido com esse  
 assunto.]<sub>5</sub>  
 ‘[The dam was ready – ]<sub>1</sub> [(there were) three continuous years of drought]<sub>2</sub>  
 [and the dam was there, with its wall without a (single) drop (of water);]<sub>3</sub>  
 [it happened now, 10 years ago, in Fortaleza.]<sub>4</sub> [It is for this reason that I  
 am touched by this subject.].’  
 → Narration (1,3); Frame (2,3); Temporal\_localization (3,4); **Comment**  
 ([1-4],5)
- (15) **Ciro Gomes** – [Fomos nós que empoderamos,]<sub>1</sub> [*nós que* adiamos,]<sub>2</sub> [*nós*  
**que** fizemos o plano de bacias]<sub>3</sub> [em atendimento ao pleito do comitê  
 de bacias,]<sub>4</sub> [nós tivemos reuniões, lá em Penedo, do comitê de bacias,]<sub>5</sub>  
 [pessoalmente fomos lá.]<sub>6</sub>  
 ‘[We were the ones who empowered (the populations)]<sub>1</sub> [us the ones that  
 delayed (the decision),]<sub>2</sub> [we (were) the ones who made the (hydrological)  
 basins plan]<sub>3</sub> [in attendance to the plea of the Basins Committee,]<sub>4</sub> [we  
 have had meetings, over there in Penedo, of the Basins Committee,]<sub>5</sub> [we  
 have been there in person.].’  
 → **Elaboration (1,[2-3])**; Continuation (2,3); Explanation (3,4); Elaboration  
 (3,[5-6])
- (16) **Elza Soares** – [Tenho o sonho de um projeto social,]<sub>1</sub> [só estou esperando  
 me estabilizar melhor,]<sub>2</sub> [porque *só agora que* eu tenho uma estabilidade,]<sub>3</sub>  
 [*só agora que* a gente tem uma estrutura,]<sub>4</sub>  
 ‘[I have a dream of (creating) a social project,]<sub>1</sub> [I am just waiting to get  
 (financially) stabilized]<sub>2</sub> [because only now I have a certain (financial)  
 stability,]<sub>3</sub> [only now we have some structure,].’  
 → Background (1,2); **Explanation (2,[3-4])**; Continuation (3,4)
- (17) **César Maia** – [Se eu tivesse assinado,]<sub>1</sub> [não haveria calamidade pública?]<sub>2</sub>  
 [Portanto, *o ministro que* blefou,]<sub>3</sub> [não fui eu.]<sub>4</sub>  
 ‘[If I had signed (the deal),]<sub>1</sub> [wouldn’t there be a public calamity  
 (situation)?]<sub>2</sub> [Thus, the minister was the one who bluffed,]<sub>3</sub> [not me.].’  
 → Conditional (1,2); Result ([1-2],[3,4]); **Correction (4,3)**

These contexts coincide with those of canonical clefts, i.e. those compatible with the expression of either informational or contrastive foci (respectively, subordinating RRs and Correction). Table 5 below summarizes all types of RRs found with this construction. It is probable that the RR Background was not found only because of the limited corpus size, combined with the fact that this is a rare RR type in the corpus.

RR type	Occurrences
Background	--
Comment	9
Correction	2
Elaboration	6
Explanation	2
Total	19

Table 5: Classification of the RR types found with reduced clefts.

Source: own elaboration.

## 4. Analysis

### 4.1 The distinction between canonical and inverted clefts

The results presented above gather relevant consequences for the interfaces between rhetoric structure, information structure, and syntax, regarding the distinction between canonical and inverted clefts.

First, the paper shows that the distinction first presented in Prince (1978) between stressed-focus versus informative-presupposition *it*-clefts seems to be syntactically encoded in Brazilian Portuguese. This informational classification consists in a crucial difference: the clefted constituent is a focus, and the cleft clause is the presupposition; or, in the second case, the clefted constituent is a topic (i.e. the presupposition), and the cleft clause is the comment (i.e. it includes the focus). Observe the pair below:

- (18) [Context: The reaction of bossa nova singers to Nara Leão's launching of a samba disc]

**Carlos Lyra** – Na verdade, naquela época, eu não acompanhei o processo, porque como eu estava brigado com o Ronaldo Bôscoli, ele também separou a Nara de mim. Então, eu não tinha muita intimidade. Minha reaproximação foi quando eu descobri os crioulos das escolas de samba e levei as músicas para ela, **foi assim que** eu me reaproximei dela.

'In fact, I did not follow these events at the time, because once I had quarreled with Ronaldo Bôscoli, he had also separated Nara from me. So, I did not have too much intimacy (with her). My reconciliation (with her) occurred when I discovered the black people from the samba schools and I took these songs to her; this is how I reconciled with her.'

(19) **Teresa Cruvinel** (asking **Dulce Maria Pereira**) – Língua, todos nós sabemos, língua é poder. E o melhor exemplo disso é o predomínio do inglês no mundo, hoje, como tradução do poder unipolar dos Estados Unidos. *Exatamente contra esse poder unipolar dos Estados Unidos é que* os países e as regiões têm procurado se organizar em blocos econômicos, em blocos regionais.

‘Language, we all know, is power. And the best example of that is the predominance of English in the world, today, as the translation of the unipolar power of the United States. It is exactly against this unipolar power of the United States that the countries and regions have been trying to organize themselves in economic blocks, in regional blocks.’

As Hedberg (1990) suggests, this difference is more clearly shown by looking at the informational status of the cleft clause. In (18), it is clear that the singers’ reconciliation is old information, so the cleft clause is presupposed. On the other hand, in (19), the cleft clause includes the information on the countries’ effort to get organized in blocks, which is clearly new information in the context, thus it corresponds to the focus. In this latter case, notice also that the clefted constituent is presupposed (the unipolar power of the USA). Although many to imagine that a canonical cleft may be replaced by an inverted cleft and vice-versa, facts are that a canonical cleft would not sound fully natural in (19).

Second, we expected to find either informational or contrastive foci in canonical clefts, and a correlation between informational foci and subordinating RRs, and between contrastive topics and coordinating RRs. This seems to be correct, and probably most foci in canonical clefts represent informational foci, because most of the RRs linking them are of the subordinating type, as in (18). Nevertheless, the only context where a contrastive focus may occur involves the RR Correction, as illustrated in (20) below.

(20) **D. João de Orleans e Bragança** – Fala-se muito to Brasil ser o último país a libertar os escravos, o que é fato, mas D. Pedro II era nitidamente anti-escravocrata e a princesa Isabel também. A Lei do Ventre Livre não foi a Câmara que propôs, **foi D. Pedro II que** propôs.

‘People speak a lot about Brazil being the last country to free its slaves, which is a fact, but D. Pedro II was clearly an anti-slavery man, as well as princess Isabel. The Free Womb law was not proposed by the Chamber (of Deputies), it was D. Pedro II who proposed it.’

This conclusion challenges a widespread old belief on cleft studies, according to which the clefted constituent serves basically to mark a contrastive focus. Instead, the additional information brought by clefts, i.e. the uniqueness of the clefted constituent, is to be understood as the idea guiding such a misconception. Equally unexpected is the idea that the clefted constituent in inverted clefts marks a contrastive topic, discussed right below.

According to Lee (2003), contrastive topics differ from contrastive foci in that only the latter implies the denial of alternatives. On the other hand, the type of contrast conveyed in these examples comes from a “deviation” from the previous discourse topic, as depicted in the scheme below, representing possible guiding questions<sup>8</sup> for the discourse excerpt in (19):

(21)

- a. What is the relation between language and power?
- b. How does English reflect power?
- c. How do nations counteract the unipolar power of the USA?

Notice that (21c) includes a more specific question which deviates the text from the type of questions explored in the previous sentences in (21a-b). This is closely connected to the fact that the contrastive topic *the unipolar power of the USA* does not imply a denial of alternatives, i.e. nations may counteract this trend in other ways besides forming multinational blocks.<sup>9</sup>

Coming back to the correlation between RR types and the informational function of the clefted constituent, it turns out to be also correct in the case inverted clefts. All the RRs found in this context are of the coordinating type. This probably means that the backgrounding effect of clefts does not refer to a RR Background, but to a more general semantic effect of cleft related to the incompatibility with temporal progression in a narrative, which becomes more evident in continuative discourse sequences. Regarding the latter point, although there is a general intuition that canonical (and reduced) clefts tend to occur at the end of a discourse segment, whereas inverted clefts signal the continuation of a segment, more studies involving the concept of discourse segment should be carried on before giving a more definitive answer. In (18), this is evident because the cleft is used at the end of the interviewee’s turn. Many of the examples occur in the very end of a turn, or close to it, as (22) below.

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(22) **Carlos Lyra** – E depois o Chico me trouxe para São Paulo para ser diretor musical do Teatro de Arena com a peça dele, *O testamento do cangaceiro*, onde aparecia o Lima Duarte como ator. Então, **foi aí que** eu me integrei com o Teatro de Arena e comecei a me politizar, comecei realmente a tomar uísque sem culpa, né?

‘And afterwards Chico [Gonçalves] brought me to São Paulo to be the musical director of the Arena Theater in his play, *The social bandit’s will*, where Lima Duarte appeared as an actor. So, it was at this moment when I became part of the Arena Theater and I began to become politicized, I really began to take some whisky without guilty, you know?’

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8 The guiding questions technique is in fact the analytic tool usually referred to as the *Question under Discussion (QuD)*, which has its roots in Stutterheim and Klein (1989).

9 Some native speakers have the feeling that inverted clefts convey a stronger type of contrast with respect to canonical clefts. I suggest that this is a consequence of the unexpectedness of the contrast in the former, whereas the syntactic parallelism required by Corrections, as shown in (20), turns the contrast less unexpected.

A possible generalization is that the margin of a discourse segment coincides with the right margin of a CDU. However, (22) demonstrates that this generalization does not apply regularly to all cases of canonical clefts. For space limitations, I leave this issue for future work.

#### 4.2 Syntactic change and the status of reduced clefts

The previous discussion has paved the way for the analysis of syntactic change involving reduced clefts. As summarized in Table 6, canonical and reduced clefts share the same contexts in terms of RR types linking the EDU containing the cleft to the previous discourse model. On the other hand, inverted clefts show complementary distribution with respect to these two other cleft types.

Cleft type	RR types found
Canonical	Background, Comment, Correction, Elaboration, Explanation
Inverted	Continuation, Contrast, Result
Reduced	Comment, Correction, Elaboration, Explanation

Table 6: The distribution of RR types connecting clefts to rhetoric structure  
Source: own elaboration.

The central point is that these results allow me to answer the questions pointed out in the beginning of this text:

- (i) Is the hypothesis that a grammaticalization process is at the base of reduced clefts tenable?  
a) **consisted in canonical clefts**
- (ii) If positive, which was the source construction for grammaticalization?

The answers to these questions are:

- (i') yes, although the results need additional evidence for a, and
- (ii') the source construction consisted in canonical clefts.

Notice that I do not dismiss the contact hypothesis pursued in Oliveira (2011), among others. However, if contact was relevant, I do believe that it triggered syntactic change in accordance with a grammaticalization process (cf. HEINE; KUTEVA, 2005; for a series of related evidence). This hypothesis should receive more attention in future work.

## 5. Final remarks

This text has presented the results of a corpus-based research on different types of cleft constructions in Brazilian Portuguese. I have shown that canonical and inverted clefts stand in complementary distribution according to the RR types connecting the cleft to the discourse. This fact has many important consequences for information structure and syntax. In this text, I have explored mainly the issue of the informational function of the clefted constituent, showing that it may be a contrastive focus or an informational focus in canonical clefts, and a contrastive topic in inverted clefts. Still regarding their informational profile, one important additional finding was that, apparently, canonical clefts and inverted clefts mimic the informational distinction between stressed-focus *it*-clefts and informative-presupposition *it*-clefts, using the terms first proposed in Prince (1978).

Besides, reduced clefts have been found to occur in the same environments where canonical clefts occur. Therefore, textual evidence goes against the hypothesis according to which reduced clefts are syntactic variants of inverted clefts, as some authors, such as Braga, Kato and Miotto (2010) have suggested. Notice, besides, that a textual analysis is necessary in this case because previous morphosyntactic evidence pointed out in the literature does not help to decide between the similarity between either canonical and reduced clefts, or between inverted and reduced clefts. In the first direction, Kato (2009) supposes that the copula is in a weak position, i.e. in the beginning of the clause. Besides, especially at view of the possible lack of agreement between the copula and the clefted constituent (in person and number features) and between the copula and the cleft clause verb (in mood and tense features), there is a prevalence of the form *é* ('(it) is'), weaker than other possible verb forms, such as *são* or *foi*. On the other hand, Braga, Kato and Miotto (2010) suggest that the necessary lack of agreement found in the copula of inverted clefts is to be considered a factor for the more frequent usage of the simple copula form *é*, which may be dropped. This analysis may receive complementary evidence in view of the loss of the syntactic function of *é*, deemed to be part of the particle *é que*, a focus marker according to some authors (cf. COSTA; DUARTE, 2001). Therefore, the textual analysis gives evidence which is independent from these inconclusive (and perhaps stipulative) change scenarios for this construction.

In fact, the paper gives hints on possible syntactic analyses of clefts, but leaves other questions unaccounted for. For instance, whether reduced clefts should receive an innovative structure or a conservative one. To do so, one must enquire whether there is a specific context in which reduced clefts, but not canonical clefts, would be felicitous, a topic left for future work.

Regarding the problem of textual genres and the distribution of cleft types, it is probably the case that the design of the corpus is to be considered responsible for the frequency unlikeliness between my database and the one discussed in Kato *et al.* (2002), based on the NURC-SP corpus, built from sociolinguistic interviews. Unlike

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in that corpus, in TV interviews it is natural to find face-to-face threats, by means of disputes in discourse. This context is more prone for the usage of canonical (and reduced) clefts, because the interlocutors use more elaborations, comments and explanations in order to endorse their arguments. As a consequence, this paper shows the relevance of exploring real speech data in the study of informationally-marked expressions.

The results observed in this text indicate that the analytic levels of rhetoric structure, information structure and syntax work harmonically. Thus, the syntactic analysis of informationally-marked constructions would benefit from seriously taking into account their pragmatic and textual characteristics.

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