Abstract:

This paper examines aspects of the interaction between syntax and information structure, specifically detached syntactic structures in the spoken language, in the variety of French spoken in Manitoba, Canada. The data is analyzed using Role and Reference Grammar as a theoretical framework.

Manitoban French exhibits a variety of structures containing the identificational c’est (‘it is’) cleft. This element has the effect of creating narrow focus on the constituent that follows. In the use of c’est in detached constructions, focus structure can be seen to override issues of coreference between the pronominal and the detached element.

In other words, rather than studying the referents that the pronominal ce can corefer with, this analysis highlights the significance of information structure by examining together those sentences where the c(‘est) is a focus–marking element.

Other uses of the c’est cleft to achieve different pragmatic nuances are also noted, such as employing detachments within detachments. In terms of syntactic structure, these sentences also illustrate nominal, adjectival and clausal (3) predicates following c’est.

This paper is innovative empirically as it highlights uses of detachment and cleft structures in a variety of French virtually ignored in the literature on information structure and analyzes it using RRG.