



“Tidings of Cú Chulainn, it is those which are here related”:

**How cleft sentence and *nominativus pendens* express emphasis
in the *Táin Bó Cúailnge***

Iris D. Schram (3858510)

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Supervisor: dr. Aaron Griffith

Second reader: dr. Mícheál Ó Flaitheatha

Statement on plagiarism and fraud

I hereby solemnly declare that it is *not* plagiarism or fraud that I have committed in this thesis.

Iris Diantha Schram, 8th of August, 2016, Soest

Preface

I would like to express my thanks here to everyone who has helped me in completing this master's thesis. First and foremost, Aaron Griffith: for supervising me and helping me to get the Old Irish sentences to reveal more information than superficial analysis would have yielded. Elliot Lash, together with Aaron: for interesting discussions from his syntactic point of view and for suggesting topics for this thesis.

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Appendix I: Database of all examples

List of used abbreviations

DIL	<i>Dictionary of the Irish Language</i> : Quin, et al. 2013.
GOI	<i>Grammar of Old Irish</i> : Thurneysen 1946.
LU	<i>Lebor na hUidre</i>
NounP	Noun Phrase
PP	Prepositional Phrase
PP(NounP)	Prepositional Phrase with Noun Phrase
PP(Pro)	Prepositional Phrase with Pronoun (a conjugated preposition)
SVO	Subject-Verb-Object word order
VSO	Verb-Subject-Object word order
YBL	<i>Yellow Book of Lecan</i>

Image on title page: *Watercolour of the young Setanta* by Stephen Reid, 1910, (retrieved the 23rd of May 2016 from: <http://www.badassoftheweek.com/cuchulainn.html>).

1. Introduction

1.1. Old Irish syntax

This thesis is concerned with Old Irish linguistics: syntax, or the ordering of words in a sentence. In fact, what it deals with are syntactical structures that set themselves apart from the normal word order. These structures are analysed for their emphasising qualities. In presenting an account of the analysis, this thesis strives to add to the linguistic and philological understanding of fronting for emphasis in Old Irish.

The neutral word order of Old Irish is Verb-Subject-Object, as strikes many a Western scholar who ever encounters Old Irish as peculiar because it is so different from most modern European languages. The main verb often stands at the head of the clause, followed by its subject and subsequently its object. Adverbials and all other parts of the sentence generally come after that, although some particles can appear in-between.¹

1.a *Benaid Cú Chulaind omnae ara ciund i sudiu & scríbais ogum ina taíb.*²

There Cú Chulainn cut down an oak tree in their path and on its side he wrote an ogam inscription.³

This example shows a simple, factual sentence. The sentence begins with the verb *benaid* 'cuts down' (O'Rahilly translates as a historical present), then comes the subject *Cú Chulaind* in nominative case and the direct object *omnae* 'oak tree' in accusative case. Many sentences do not have an explicit subject or object, because a pronominal subject does not need to be written out and can be inferred from the verbal ending, or because the verb is intransitive and does not take an object. However, the subject and object take the position right behind the verb if they are there. Adverbials come after that, which in this example are *ara ciund* 'before their head = in their path' and *i sudiu* 'then'. This pattern is repeated after the conjunction in the second clause. This time the subject is not explicitly mentioned, so the verb *scríbais* 'he wrote' is directly followed by the object *ogum* 'an ogam inscription' and after that the adverbial *ina taíb* 'on its side'.

¹ Stifter 2006: 40, 262.

² O'Rahilly 1976: 26, 1.827-28.

³ O'Rahilly 1976: 148.

In some sentences, however, the main lexical verb is preceded by something else.

1.b .i. **it/hésidi immurgu** / **beta** híchthi

'i.e. **it is they, however**, who shall be saved'⁴

The sentence in example 1.b is called a *cleft sentence*. An example of a cleft sentence in English is 'It is tea that you are drinking'. It is called thus because it is 'cleft' in two parts, as if it has been hacked in two by an axe. Instead of simply having the main lexical verb at the beginning of the sentence and everything else following it, this verb is somewhere in the middle (marked here in black bold type) and it is preceded by a small sentence (marked here in green bold type). Although formally the term 'cleft sentence' refers to this entire construction, it sometimes also refers to just the small sentence at the front. In this thesis, the terms 'cleft', 'cleft sentence' and 'cleft construction' are used to refer to the complete construction, although the interest will generally lie on the first part. When referring to the fronted clause specifically, it will always be using the term 'fronted element'. To understand the meaning of the cleft sentence 1.a above, one can try to deduce what a sentence with 'normal', neutral syntax would have looked like and pretend that the elements move around to create the cleft syntax. In this mental experiment, the cleft structure is reorganised from what could have looked like the simple *bit híchthi* 'they will be saved' to stress one element (*hésidi*), which is placed at the front. Two other changes happen to make the normal sentence into a cleft sentence. Firstly, a form of the copula (*it*) stands at the beginning of the sentence as a verb. Secondly, the main lexical verb takes the relative form (*beta*), but only if the fronted element functions as the subject or object to the main verb. If the fronted element functions as anything else, such as an adverbial, the main lexical verb takes the simple, non-relative form.⁵ It can already be seen that this construction gives special attention to the fronted element. In this case, the word *immurgu* 'however' adds extra force to it as well.

Mac Coisdealbha has done extensive study on the cleft sentence in the glosses, from which this example was also taken. He calls the cleft the 'cop. emph. (copular emphatic) construction'. This term already suggests its emphatic function: the cleft sentence

⁴ Taken from Mac Coisdealbha 1998: 165.

⁵ De Vries 2013: 152-154.

‘represents a very basic device in the expression of ‘emphasis’’⁶ by means of a copular sentence followed by a relative clause. Mac Coisdealbha distinguishes several kinds of emphasis, although he does not use the same terminology used in this thesis. He finds half of his cleft examples to have a contrastive function, as it would be called in this thesis.⁷ It is shown in this thesis that the contrastive function may even be more prominent than that among true cleft examples, at least in the Irish text used here. There are also several constructions which look like clefts but have slightly different characteristics; clefts without a copula and idiomatic structures making use of clefts, for example, which are both discussed in section 2.2 under ‘Method of analysis’.

There is one other main sentence structure where an element stands before the main verb:

1.c *sech ni ro-chim fon ainim a tīr doroacht do imchaisín,*

7 a tīr ōa tu[d]chadh ní róás in fect sa

With this blemish I cannot behold the land I have come to,

and **the land I have left, I cannot return** to it now (*Tochmarc Étaíne* 16 §9)⁸

The sentence in the example 1.c contains a *nominativus pendens*, which is Latin for ‘hanging nominative’. An example of a *nominativus pendens* in English is ‘Tea, you are drinking it’. In this structure, the main sentence remains intact and would be able to function as a complete sentence, unlike the cleft sentence in which either part can not constitute a complete sentence on its own. This is evident by the non-relative form of *ní róás*. The element *a tīr ōa tu[d]chadh* is fronted and put before the main clause in nominative case. In this example, the fronted element consists of a nominal part in the nominative (*a tīr*) and a relative verb referring to it (*tu[d]chadh*). The main sentence then sometimes contains a pronoun or conjugated preposition that refers back to the fronted element, to show which function it has in the clause.⁹ The *nominativus pendens* is a cataphoric construction, which means that it refers forward. It introduces and emphasises a noun which is often the subject, a phenomenon which Mac Coisdealbha calls topicalising. The fronted element is then picked up by a resumptive element in the

⁶ Mac Coisdealbha 1998: 143.

⁷ Mac Coisdealbha 1998: 162-167.

⁸ Taken from Mac Cana 1973: 97.

⁹ Stifter 2006: 263; De Vries 2013: 152-54; Mac Coisdealbha 1998: 83-86.

main clause, which is why it is mainly referred to by Mac Coisdealbha as the ‘resumptive construction’.¹⁰

The cleft and *nominativus pendens* structures occur rather often. Nevertheless, they are unusual when compared to the regular VSO word order: an element of the main sentence has been *fronted*. Interestingly enough, linguists who look at Old or Modern Irish from a comparative linguistic perspective and are used to working from the perception of Universal Grammar often see the Celtic languages as having fronted their verb. In that view the Celtic languages are anomalies, because their VSO word order differs from SVO – subject, verb, object – which is considered to be the only possible word order underlying every language. Everything else is derived from SVO in one way or another.¹¹ Syntacticians working with generative syntax are therefore trying to explain how the VSO word order came into existence and why this happened. Although a too detailed explanation would go outside of the expertise of this thesis, in the light of fronting constructions it is enough to note that the verb was probably attracted to the complementiser head at the very front of a sentence, a process which is also called fronting.¹² This is comparable to the formation of questions in English where an auxiliary is fronted (“Do you still like tea?”). As seen above for the cleft and *nominativus pendens* structures as well, the front of a sentence is an important place to study because many elements can be drawn to it for different reasons. Some linguists believe that there is a universal position for topic and focus structures at the front of a sentence.¹³

Syntacticians call fronted structures *marked*, as opposed to *unmarked*. *Marked* structures deviate from the ‘normal’, *unmarked* sentence structure and ask for the attention of the receiver. This makes clefts and *nominativus pendens* structures a natural conduit for emphasis.¹⁴ Indeed, they have been regarded and translated this way for centuries. Fronting is in many languages used for discourse purposes, which means that it does not have a direct influence on the content of the message, but rather organises the information in order to facilitate communication.¹⁵ Speakers use fronting to assert relevance or highlight a contrast: they package something in a different way, rather than

¹⁰ Mac Coisdealbha 1998: 83-85.

¹¹ Carnie and Guilfoyle 2000: 3.

¹² Carnie and Guilfoyle 2000: 8.

¹³ DiGirolamo (forthcoming): 4.

¹⁴ Mac Coisdealbha 1998: 87; 143.

¹⁵ DiGirolamo (forthcoming): 4.

saying something different. This aspect of the function of fronting structures suggests that they are “more frequent in speech than in carefully edited written language”.¹⁶

The exact way that this effect is achieved in Old Irish, however, has to my knowledge rarely been studied in detail. Mac Coisdealbha paved the way, but as Isaac states,¹⁷ there is a significant lack of syntactic research in Old Irish. Isaac gives a diachronic and a synchronic reason for this. Diachronically, Celtic studies never incorporated syntactical problems, because the syntactic theories now abundant in the field of linguistics only developed after Celtic studies had established itself as a discipline. Synchronically, Old Irish and theoretical syntax are both so complex that anyone who would take the time to learn one of them would be put off to learn the other.¹⁸ In Celtic studies there is a small number of long, extensive works encompassing many intricacies of Old Irish syntax; the names of Bergin¹⁹, Watkins²⁰, and Wagner²¹ come to mind as some of the most prominent scholars in this area in the last century. Empirical study and especially recent study, however, is hard to find. For this reason, research attempting to bridge this gap may turn out to be a fruitful exercise. Cara DiGirolamo is currently working on an article on word order and information structure in the Würzburg Glosses,²² which is one of the few recent accounts of corpus research similar to what is done in this thesis. She specifically looks at noun-initial sentences and draws on research by both Celticists and syntacticians in analysing her own results.²³

Subtleties may exist in Old Irish syntax which are still to be discovered. Recently, for example, it has been suggested that perhaps clefts represent one kind of emphasis (*focus*) and *nominativus pendens* structures represent another (*topic*).²⁴ DiGirolamo proposes that Old Irish uses clefting for focus. She discusses the different nominalised sentence structures and their syntax at length, although she does not call it *nominativus*

¹⁶ DiGirolamo (forthcoming): 4.

¹⁷ Isaac 2003: 185-187.

¹⁸ Isaac 2003: 185-186.

¹⁹ Bergin 1938.

²⁰ Watkins 1963.

²¹ Wagner 1977.

²² DiGirolamo (forthcoming).

²³ In addition to DiGirolamo, Mac Giolla Easpaig (1980) offers another expedition into Old Irish word order. He proposes a variant word order with a noun phrase at the end of the clause for emphasis.

²⁴ Private conversation with Elliot Lash and Aaron Griffith. See also Mac Coisdealbha 1998: 83-85 and 162-167, where topic and contrast are discussed in relation to *nominativus pendens* and cleft (although the terminology is slightly different) and see also Mac Coisdealbha 1998: 158-162. Contrastive emphasis that looks like focus is discussed by Mac Coisdealbha on pages 167 ff.

pendens herself and its function remains unclear, as she herself also admits.²⁵ This thesis attempts to answer the question whether clefts and *nominativus pendens* structures differ in emphatic function in the corpus used.

1.2. Linguistic emphasis

This thesis compares two parameters: structure and meaning, in order to identify certain patterns. Where section 1.1 is concerned with the structural form of fronting constructions in Old Irish, this section deals with the different meanings these can have. The previous section has established that fronting constructions have emphatic meaning. Terms which are often used by linguists to describe emphasis are ‘topic’, ‘focus’ and ‘contrast’. However, before analysis of the Old Irish sentences is possible, clear definitions for these terms have to be established. This section therefore makes an excursion into syntactic theory. There are several theories about the exact nature of the ‘topic’, ‘focus’ and ‘contrast’. This thesis adopts the representation of Neeleman and Vermeulen, outlined below. Their overview table looks like this:²⁶

	Topic	Focus
	aboutness topic [topic]	new information focus [focus]
Contrast	contrastive topic [topic, contrast]	contrastive focus [focus, contrast]

It could be argued that the Neeleman and Vermeulen theory is focused on modern English and therefore unsuitable to apply to medieval Irish. This certainly calls for caution in applying arguments derived from the theory directly to medieval Irish, which would be impossible to do without further investigation and taking into account the uniqueness of both languages. However, the notions of topic, focus and contrast seem to be cross-linguistic phenomena rather than language-specific. Although each language might have subtle differences in how a focused element feels to a speaker, it is

²⁵ DiGirolamo (forthcoming): 2-4; 25-27.

²⁶ Neeleman and Vermeulen 2012: 5.

chiefly the means of expressing these qualities that differ between languages. Neeleman and Vermeulen acknowledge this in their introduction:

“Focus is clearly a grammatical notion as it affects linguistic phenomena like stress. In English and many other languages, a focused constituent receives the main stress of the sentence (...). Other languages have different or additional means of marking focus. In Thompson River Salish, for example, focused constituents are licensed at the edge of an intonational phrase, but do not need to carry stress (...). In Gùrùntùm, focus is marked by a designated particle *a*, which precedes focused constituents (...).”²⁷

A notion like this leaves ample room for research like this master’s thesis to find out how exactly Old and Middle Irish express or mark focus, topic, and contrast.

Although this theory is only a few years old and not yet widely adopted, the main reason for using it here is to bring clarity to the distinct terms. Other works do not explicitly distinguish between *focus* and *contrast* and use both terms almost interchangeably to describe a phenomenon that seems to be more vaguely delineated.²⁸ This theory offers a way to separate the definitions in order to navigate the Irish sentences.

Neeleman and Vermeulen explain the difference between topic and focus in the following way.

Topic is not often marked by anything. It is characterised as the speakers’ intuition regarding what a sentence is about. In narrative, it often shows in the following sentences when pronouns refer back to the topic of the first sentence. Depending on the gender and number of the pronoun, or the inferred meaning, it then becomes clear what the topic of the first sentence is.²⁹ Chapter 3 explores what this looks like in Old Irish.

Focus points out what the new information in a sentence is. It can be the answer to a question, implicit or explicit. (Who came? *John* came.) In English, this can also be reflected in the intonation (I am drinking *tea*).

Contrast is regarded by Neeleman and Vermeulen as an extra quality that can be added on top of either topic or focus, to make it stand out even more. It is then not

²⁷ Neeleman and Vermeulen 2012: 6.

²⁸ See also the discussion in Mac Coisdealbha 1998: 158-162.

²⁹ Neeleman and Vermeulen 2012: 14-19.

only the topic of conversation or the new piece of information, but it is specifically *this* phrase that is the topic or focus and nothing else. Neeleman and Vermeulen explain **contrastive topic** as a statement where the speaker is unwilling or unable to make an alternative statement³⁰ and **contrastive focus** as a statement where there is at least one alternative that is not true for the speaker³¹. This means that contrast adds a negating aspect to *everything but* this specific topic or focus. It also means that *contrast* is not a quality that an element can have on its own; it must also be either *topic* or *focus*.

An interesting note Neeleman and Vermeulen make about modern English is that fronting of the contrastive topic may occur³² and fronting of the contrastive focus also (if it is prefaced by *only*).³³ In other words, normal topics and focuses stay in their original position and it is only their contrastive counterparts that can be fronted. Therefore, Neeleman and Vermeulen interpret any topic or focus element that is at the front of the sentence as contrastive.³⁴ The concept of contrast allowing for a different sentence structure is an interesting one. This thesis explores this concept in the context of medieval Irish. The contrastive aspect might be reflected in the form of Irish syntactical structures that make use of fronting, namely the cleft sentences and *nominativus pendens* structures introduced in the previous section. This generalisation is of course highly hypothetical, because it cannot be assumed without question that modern English and medieval Irish use the same specific rules in this instance. However, even though medieval Irish is a syntactic language and its cases should be able to inform about the syntax of a sentence, it has a more rigid word order compared to other syntactic languages such as German or Latin, where cleft structures are not necessary to be able to move elements around. In this rigidity, it looks like Irish behaves more like the analytic language English with its strict SVO word order than the other syntactic languages. This structural similarity in word order may also be reflected in the rules concerning fronting for contrast. Therefore, the hypothesis that all fronted elements are contrastive in meaning is something to keep in mind during the examination of the fronting examples in the Irish data.

³⁰ Neeleman and Vermeulen 2012: 22-23.

³¹ Neeleman and Vermeulen 2012: 11-13.

³² Neeleman and Vermeulen 2012: 20.

³³ Neeleman and Vermeulen 2012: 13.

³⁴ Neeleman and Vermeulen 2012: 20.

1.3. Research Question

Taking into account everything that has been sketched above, this thesis revolves around combining the two worlds of Old Irish philology and syntactical analysis. It attempts to answer questions about the relationship between the different kinds of linguistic emphasis on the one hand and the fronting devices in Old Irish on the other hand. The main research question, then, is as follows:

“How do *nominativus pendens* structures and cleft sentences in the *Táin Bó Cúailnge* express emphasis using topic, focus and/or contrast?”

This is analysed by way of taking example sentences with cleft sentence and *nominativus pendens* structures to see which kind of emphasis they express. The corpus in which these sentence structures are studied is the early Irish epic saga of the *Táin Bó Cúailnge*. Chapter 2 discusses both the corpus and the methodology in more detail. Preceding the in-depth discussion in later chapters about the research results concerning fronting for emphasis, chapter 3 contrasts against the emphatic examples with a treatment of the way in which non-emphatic topics are expressed in the *Táin Bó Cúailnge*. Chapter 4 deals with all noun-initial examples, discussing how to analyse their structure. After that, chapter 5 reports the results of the analysis of the *nominativus pendens* structures and chapter 6 discusses several different types of cleft sentence structures. These chapters have as their aim to present as what kinds of emphasis these sentences can be analysed. Chapter 7 strives to combine all of these analyses, and finally, chapter 8 concludes the entire thesis.

2. Methodology

2.1. Corpus

When it comes to word order, extensive study has been done before by Mac Coisdealbha (1998) and DiGirolamo (forthcoming), both of whom take the glosses as their main source. On the one hand, the glosses are unlikely to have natural Irish word order, due to their dependence on the main text and the fact that they are translations. On the other hand, DiGirolamo argues that the glosses are most like natural speech, because of the informal and unedited nature of the notes.³⁵ Keeping in mind how stylised some glosses are and how they were often copied into other manuscripts which presumably involved some form of editing, it is not yet certain that they can be interpreted in that way. In any case, this research does not focus on glosses: complementary to the work of the mentioned authors, it discusses narrative instead.

The Old Irish text used as the corpus in this thesis is the *Táin Bó Cúailnge, Recension I*, as edited and translated by O’Rahilly in 1976.³⁶

The *Táin Bó Cúailnge* is considered the “centrepiece of Irish heroic epic”³⁷ in the Early Irish literature from the period between 700-1100 AD. The story concerns a “cattleraid” (*táin*) for which the queen of Connacht sets out to Ulster with an army. The defence of Ulster against Queen Medb and King Ailill falls upon the young Cú Chulainn, who tries to save his province with his legendary heroic deeds.³⁸ There are several versions, called *Recension I, II* and *III*. This thesis will only be concerned with the oldest manuscript version, *Recension I*, which survives in four manuscripts. O’Rahilly has chosen not to use the two 16th century sources but base her edition only on the older two. This thesis follows O’Rahilly’s edition, because it offers a standard. The two older manuscripts that O’Rahilly’s text is based on are the *Lebor na hUidre* (LU)³⁹, which is dated around 1100, and the *Yellow Book of Lecan* (YBL)⁴⁰ which is dated to the late 14th century. The *Lebor na hUidre* text makes up the first 2546 lines of her edition before it breaks off in the manuscript. O’Rahilly has continued the story with the *Yellow Book of*

³⁵ DiGirolamo (forthcoming): 4.

³⁶ O’Rahilly 1976.

³⁷ Ruairí Ó hUiginn (1992: 29) paraphrasing Thurneysen (1921: 96).

³⁸ A full summary of the *Táin Bó Cúailnge* can be found in Mallory (1992: 9-28).

³⁹ Bergin and Best 1929: lines 4479-6722.

⁴⁰ Strachan and O’Keeffe 1912.

Lecan text as the base for the remaining lines 2547-4159.⁴¹ Because the first part of YBL agrees with LU on many points, she holds that the last part of the YBL version would also be the same as in LU if it had been finished.⁴² The *Táin Bó Cúailnge* of YBL is written by a single scribe, Gilla Ísa mac Firbisig.⁴³ Although there are signs that he has compiled several texts together and there is one scene (*Comrac Fer Diad*) which is filled in by a different hand,⁴⁴ this gives the second half of the text a certain stylistic coherence. In contrast, LU is written by two main scribes (A and M) whose work was greatly altered and added to by a third scribe called H. In addition to many glosses, there are four large interpolations by his hand on empty, intercalated or erased pages.⁴⁵

Although *Recension I*, is probably a compilation of several written sources even without H's interpolations, eventually going back to oral sources,⁴⁶ the language is quite uniformly dated to the 9th century⁴⁷ which places it in the last part of the Old Irish period. In this thesis, the language will be analysed according to the standards of Old Irish as these are established in Thurneysen's *Grammar of Old Irish* and Bergin's *Old Irish Paradigms and Glosses*.⁴⁸ As *Recension I* is late Old Irish and the manuscripts it is found in are from the Middle Irish period, it would not be unthinkable to come across features that remind of Middle Irish. As this thesis concerns mostly syntax, however, this will not interfere with the main argument; most of the recorded changes from Old to Middle Irish happen in the phonology and the morphology.⁴⁹

This text is chosen for several reasons, the first being that it yields a substantive amount of data. With its 4159 lines (in O'Rahilly's 1976 edition), it is famous for its length as well as its eminence in the medieval Irish literature. Since fronting structures are common, but not frequent enough to appear in every paragraph, the corpus in which to investigate them needs to contain sizeable chunks of narrative. Although a collection of texts would also be able to provide this, choosing one text as the corpus for this thesis

⁴¹ O'Rahilly 1976: viii; xxii.

⁴² O'Rahilly 1976: xviii.

⁴³ O'Rahilly 1976: xviii.

⁴⁴ O'Rahilly 1976: xix, 275-76.

⁴⁵ O'Rahilly 1976: vii-xvi.

⁴⁶ O'Rahilly 1976: viii; Ó hUiginn 1992: 31-32.

⁴⁷ Thurneysen 1921.

⁴⁸ Thurneysen 1946; Bergin 1949.

⁴⁹ McManus (unpublished).

ensures a certain consistency in style.⁵⁰ The second reason is that the style of the *Táin Bó Cúailnge* and *Recension I* in particular provides many shifts in emphasis and topic, because it is comprised of many short stories. If the hypothesis of fronting for contrast is true, it means that there is a higher probability for fronting structures to occur in this type of narrative. The third reason is that the narrative of the *Táin Bó Cúailnge* also consists for a large part of dialogue. This can be expected to be as much like natural speech as possible in the edited environment of a written and compiled story, reflecting a natural word order that speakers would have used. If the hypothesis of fronting for discourse purposes is true, it means that this offers a natural discourse environment where fronting is more likely to occur. Finally, the accessibility of the text in O’Rahilly’s clear edition and in Daan van Loon’s database of all its verbs⁵¹ have been of tremendous help in collecting and analysing the data. All examples cited in this thesis are accompanied by their English translation by O’Rahilly. Even when her translation is not literal, it is included for consistency. A literal translation is added between square brackets in those instances.

2.2. *Method of analysis*

In this thesis it is only the narrative sections of the *Táin Bó Cúailnge* and not the poetry or *roscada* which are analysed, as the word order in the straight-forward narrative of events is expected to be more natural than in metre-bound poetry. Descriptive paragraphs of people or hosts also do not have natural word order, as these generally do not contain any verbs. The reason for preferring conditions that promote a most natural word order is that emphatic structures are expected to occur more often in texts that most resemble natural speech. As this thesis tries to understand how Old Irish expresses the emphatic qualities of focus, topic and contrast, the fronting constructions of *cleft sentences* and *nominativus pendens* are the first place to look. Therefore, the narrative sections of the *Táin Bó Cúailnge* are analysed and every instance of cleft sentence or *nominativus pendens* is marked as an ‘example’. Throughout this thesis the individual instances are referred to as ‘example’ or ‘sentence’. They are often quoted as several sentences containing one example sentence, however, because the context is frequently

⁵⁰ To the degree, of course, to which the manuscript authors were consistent in their style, and to which the manuscripts are consistent between themselves, which is quite a high degree.

⁵¹ Van Loon 2012.

key to understanding the specific emphatic meaning. Every example is analysed for a number of characteristics and entered in a database, which is explained here below. One complication during the analysis is that for some examples with an initial noun phrase it cannot be ascertained whether they are a *nominativus pendens* or a cleft without a copula. These ambiguous examples and the arguments for choosing either construction are treated separately in chapter 4, although their numbers are counted in the analysis of clefts and *nominativus pendens* where it is possible to make an educated guess as to the probable syntax of the example.

The data are presented in a database as Appendix I. This section explains how the database is organised, and how the choices were made to assign certain labels to the examples. A slightly condensed example row is shown here below as figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1:

Old Irish	Translation	Fronting device	Emphasis label	Fronted element	Page	Line	Interesting context	Function of fronted element in sentence	Answer?	Direct speech?	Full Old Irish sentence	Full English translation
<i>is a líathróit</i>	[it was] his ball	Cleft	Contrastive Focus	NounP	18	586	im-morro	Direct Object	answer	narrator speaking	<i>Mad iar n-arailiu slicht immorro is a líathróit ro lá-som inna beólu co r-ruc a inathar thrít</i>	According to another version, however, he threw his ball into the hound's mouth and it drove his entrails out through him.

The columns are organised as follows. As the data were gathered from a document in which O’Rahilly’s edition and translation were on facing pages, the *Old Irish* and its English *Translation* were taken directly from there. A purple fronted element indicates that this example is incorporated into the text of this thesis to explain it further. In the Translation column, words in round brackets denote a translation from O’Rahilly that seems to reflect this phrase, although it is not a literal translation. Words in square brackets are not in O’Rahilly’s translation, but are added as literal translations to clarify the meaning. *Fronting device* is a column with three options: Cleft for cleft

sentence, Nom.Pend. for *nominativus pendens*, and Ambiguous for examples where it is not clear. These are discussed in chapter 4. The *Emphasis label* column tracks the main analysis of this research, which is why it is colour-coded, and has eight possible labels which are discussed below. Next to that, the *Fronted element* column notes the linguistic category of the words fronted (some examples of possibilities showing up in this corpus are: Pronoun, as in *mé*; NounPhrase, as in *cach óen*; and PrepositionalPhrases (PP) with either a pronominal object as in *foraib*, turning it into a conjugated preposition, or a nominal object as in *do Chonall*). The *Page* and *Line* number are noted separately. Both the *Interesting context* and *Particularities* (here not shown) columns are used to track additional comments: meaningful particles (such as *dano* or *immorro*), whether an example is noun-initial or a cleft is without a copula ('copula-zero', noted as COP0, also used for *nominativus pendens* and ambiguous examples to retain consistency), whether the cleft refers back to a previous *nominativus pendens*, if it is a double predicate (noted as 2PRED) construction, whether the copula is negative (noted as neg.cop.), whether the sentence is a *dindshenchas*, and any other commentary, such as on interpretation. The *Particularities* entry for this example contains the comment "strong contrast: he didn't kill the dog by choking him as we just described, but with the ball!"). The database aims to be as complete as possible in collecting all the information on the specific cleft and *nominativus pendens* examples; most of this extra information is used in the analyses in chapters 4-7, although some details such as particles in the context of the fronted element are not found relevant for the larger argument. Then there is the column *Function of the fronted element in sentence*, for which the options range from Subject and Direct Object to Adverbial and Purpose clause. These characteristics are treated in a separate part of the analysis. The *Answer?* and *Direct speech?* columns are used to track characteristics which can be true or false. The *Answer* column is only relevant for focus examples. As it is a feature of focus to form an answer to a WH-question (questions starting with 'what, who, why or where?'), this column shows whether an example can really be analysed as an answer. Some focus examples which are clearly contrastive and non-topical still do not really form an answer, so this column immediately shows which examples are inconsistent. The column tracking Direct Speech – whether or not the example is uttered by a character or forms part of a description – is relevant for every example and can be filled with the values 'yes', 'no', or 'narrator speaking'. Narrator speaking is used as a value when a sentence is part of an editorial comment where the

voice of the narrator is not completely part of the narrative, but 'breaking the fourth wall'. The results of this are treated in the discussion in chapter 7. Finally, at the very right the full sentences are added, which are simply indispensable for analysis purposes and to be able to see the context.

The *Emphasis label* assigned to an example is based on an interpretation of the sentence in its context. The most interesting possibilities for this column, those which classify the examples as relevant to the main research, are based on Neeleman and Vermeulen's overview table in chapter 1.2: *Aboutness Topic*, *Contrastive Topic*, *New Information Focus* and *Contrastive Focus*. All examples of clefts and *nominativus pendens* are carefully analysed according to the information in the chapter on linguistic emphasis. As Old Irish sentences are of course far from being an exact match with modern English, they are interpreted along the following guidelines.

Aboutness Topic (+topic)

This label is given to examples where the fronted element clearly acts as the topic and focal point of the sentence, but is not given any particular emphasis of the kind described below. It seems counter-intuitive to apply this label to a cleft sentence, as the very occurrence of the fronting structure would seem to imply emphasis. It does apply, however, a handful of times in cleft examples; more so in *nominativus pendens* examples. Those examples are mostly of the following type, where the fronted element is what the sentence is about, said in a neutral context:

2.a *Asbert Medb íarum fria h-araid a l-láa documlásat: 'Cach óen scaras sund trá indiu,' ol sí, 'fria chóem & a charait, dobérat maldachtain form-sa úair is mé dorinól in slúagad sa.'*⁵²

Then, on the day that they set forth, Medb said to her charioteer: '**All those** who part here today from comrade and friend will curse me for it is I who have mustered this hosting.'⁵³

In example 2.a, Medb is talking of people who she fears will speak ill of her. Her reference to *cach óen*, 'every one', is fronted by a cleft sentence without a copula.

⁵² O'Rahilly 1976: 1, l.25.

⁵³ O'Rahilly 1976: 125-126..

Chapter 3 contains a discussion on the zero-copula aspect of this example; for the present purposes, it is important to note that the fronted element *cach óen* does not carry contrastive emphasis, because Medb does not seem to have anyone else in specific in mind who will not curse her. It also does not carry focus emphasis, because it is not an answer of any kind to a direct or indirect question from her charioteer. However, it does carry topic emphasis as the fronted element is subsequently the subject of the sentence. This sentence is the first thing Medb says in the conversation and since it introduces the topic and subject of the sentence without further emphatic meaning, the label Aboutness Topic fits this example best.

Contrastive Topic (+topic, +contrast)

This label represents examples which state the topic of the sentence in the same way as the neutral Aboutness Topic, but with the added function of contrast. This means that it states the topic with exclusion of every other possibility. To the speaker, there is no other possibility considerable or even conceivable. (Compare to Contrastive Focus, where it is.) In Old Irish, the fronted elements in these examples often refer to something that has just been mentioned, such as in example 2.b.

2.b *'Bangal báethúallach insin,' or Fíngin. 'Is dóig bid fír,' ol Cethern. 'Dománic ben máethaineach bánaineach lecanfata chainmar. (long description) Is mór a delb. **Is é rombí & cetadomthánic.** 'Aill amae!' or Cú Chulaind. 'Meadb Crúachan sin.'*⁵⁴
*'Those are wounds inflicted by a proud and foolish woman,' said Fíngin. 'It is likely that it is so,' said Cethern. 'There came to me a tall beautiful woman with pale, tender face and long cheeks. (...) Great was her beauty. **She it was** who first came to me and wounded me.' 'Aye indeed!' said Cú Chulainn. 'That was Medb from Crúachu.'*⁵⁵

In this fragment the physician Fíngin examines Cethern and his wounds. Cethern then describes his opponent, after which Cú Chulainn recognises and names her. This is the first such scene in a long list of similar descriptions. It is a feature of contrast that this 'she' is named to be the very first to wound Cethern, and no other person. She is also the topic of discussion in this paragraph, which together makes for a contrastive topic.

⁵⁴ O'Rahilly 1976: 97, l.3209-3210.

⁵⁵ O'Rahilly 1976: 210.

New Information Focus (+focus)

This label is given to examples where the fronted element introduces new information in a neutral way. One way to test this is by determining whether the fronted element could form an answer to a question, either explicit or implicit; New Information Focus is always an answer or explanation.

2.c *'Ní duilig a aithni,' for Cú Chulaind. 'Mo poba Fergus dotháet and co r-robad & co n-airchisecht (...)'⁵⁶*

'It is not hard to recognize him,' said Cú Chulainn. 'That is my master Fergus, coming to give me a friendly warning (...)'⁵⁷

In example 2.c, Cú Chulainn replies to his charioteer. The charioteer has just described an approaching warrior in a watchman-device style, where the warrior's appearance is described and another character recognises who is coming towards them from the description. In this case, Cú Chulainn is the first one in this scene to name Fergus, as an answer to his charioteer's implied question "who is that coming towards us?". The answering function of this cleft structure is a feature of focus, which distinguishes it from topics. It is also new information, but presented in a neutral way: there is nothing else to contrast it with as the charioteer did not suggest any other character but asked an open question, so Cú Chulainn simply recognises his foster-father. These are features of non-contrast.

Contrastive Focus (+focus, +contrast)

This label represents examples where the fronted element makes clear that something is specifically this way and not another way. The narrator or character making use of a contrastive focus is often replying to another statement, contrasting his own with it, or implying the other way. It functions as an answer to an (implied) question almost every time and may present something new in a similar way as the New Information Focus. Most of the time, however, it is presenting something new about something that has just been mentioned or is under discussion. The contrastive element means that these examples negate every other possibility. In the case of Contrastive Focus (in contrast to Contrastive Topic) these other possibilities are very real and on the mind of speaker

⁵⁶ O'Rahilly 1976: 83, l.2721-22.

⁵⁷ O'Rahilly 1976: 199.

and audience. It is a dynamic way of presenting a small “plot twist” and going against the expectations of the reader or the characters.

2.d *‘Is espa didiu,’ ‘ol Medb,’ ‘a techt. Is foraib bíaid búaid in t-slóig.’*

*‘Is airiund arbáget dano,’ or Ailill.*⁵⁸

‘So it is useless for them (the Gailióin) to go on this expedition,’ said Medb, ‘for it is they who will take credit for the victory of the army.’

‘Yet **it is for us** they fight,’ said Ailill.⁵⁹

In example 2.d, Ailill points out that the Gailióin fight under the command of and for the glorification of Ailill and Medb and not, as Medb has just implied in the conversation, for their own glorification; she has just enumerated the many ways in which the Gailióin are faster and better than her own host and is afraid that they will rise above them. In that sense the cleft structure is Ailill’s emphatic reply to Medb’s statement, introducing a new point of view about the unchanged topic (the Gailióin), which is a feature of focus. He implies that Medb’s statement is untrue and negates it in this way, which is a feature of contrast.

The above categories are presented in the database on the sheet ‘Relevant examples’, which is so named because the examples there are emphatic and therefore directly relevant to the main question this thesis strives to answer. There are many other instances of cleft or cleft-like sentences and *nominativus pendens* structures in the *Táin Bó Cúailnge*, however, which do not fit in these categories. These examples are presented in the sheet ‘Irrelevant examples’. Some constructions which originated as cleft constructions do not seem to possess much emphasis, because their form has become idiomatic. These are the *Time* and *Idiom* labels; these examples are less suitable for the current research on emphasis and have been left out of the main discussion. Other constructions do have emphasising qualities, but cannot really be considered clefts or are otherwise unsuitable to analyse for contrast, topic and focus. These are the *Figura Etymologica* and *Predicate* labels. The four categories are introduced below.

⁵⁸ O’Rahilly 1976: 5, l.155.

⁵⁹ O’Rahilly 1976: 129.

Time

This label is given to any otherwise non-emphatic occurrence of *is íarom*, *is iarsin*, *is and*, and *is and sin/so*. Sentences such as *Is and asbert Medb*: ‘**Then** Medb said:’ show up relatively often, especially using *is and* and when followed by direct speech, a poem, or verbs of movement. Although technically speaking *is and* represents the syntactical structure of a cleft sentence, it is doubtful that it was still considered that way by speakers. “It is in this (moment?)” had simply come to mean “Then”. In this semantic shift it loses any emphatic meaning that the cleft construction may have originally given it; it becomes an adverbial of time and loses also its lexical meaning. This merits a separate category for these examples, as they would contaminate the data otherwise. Indeed, O’Rahilly often omits this phrase entirely in the English translation, sometimes reflecting the feeling of a pause with the conjunction ‘and’. This development is discussed by Mac Coisdealbha as the weakening of the anaphoric/cataphoric nature of *is and*, frequently appearing in narration.⁶⁰

Idiom

Similarly to the Time category above, certain fixed expressions are found so frequently that they were placed in a special category to avoid muddling the data. They are almost invariably adverbial in meaning. The idiom that occurs most often is that used in *dindshenchas* (‘namegiving’) fragments: *Is de (sin) atá... (placename)*, translated with ‘**Hence** the name (placename)’. Another structure analysed as Idiom is *Is amlaid...* (*verbal phrase*), translated variably with ‘in this manner, even as, as, so, so in this wise’.

Figura Etymologica

This label accomodates the two examples of *figura etymologica* in this text. These are zero-copula clefts, using the verbal noun of the following verb as a fronted element. In English, this would be equivalent to ‘I drink a drink’, or in literal cleft order: ‘(it is) a walk (that) I walk’.⁶¹ This emphasises the verbal meaning of an inflected verb, something which is otherwise hard to achieve.⁶² As these examples do not carry contrastive, topical or focus emphasis, however, they receive their own label.

⁶⁰ Mac Coisdealbha 1998: 37.

⁶¹ De Vries 2013: 150.

⁶² Ronan 2006: 147-48.

Predicate

This label was given to many examples which consist of a fronted adjective in a cleft-like sentence. Although they may look like clefts, this construction in fact makes the adjective into an adverb. If one wants to follow the copular word order (Copula, Predicate, Subject) this can also be interpreted as the adjective standing in predicate position and the main verb in subject position.⁶³ The fronted element does not carry any particular emphasis in this category, such as in example 2.e.

2.e *‘Táinic buiden mór aili ann didiu isin telaig i Sleamain Midi,’ or Mac Roth. ‘Buiden rochaín roálaind itir lín & costud & timthaigi. **Is borrfadach** dofarfobrit in tulaig.*⁶⁴

‘There came still another great company to the hill in Slemain Mide,’ said Mac Roth. ‘A company beautiful and splendid in numbers and arrangement and equipment. **Proudly** they made for the hill.’⁶⁵

This fragment is part of the March of the Companies in which host after host is described coming to the hill. All of them are described as fair and brave. The fronted adjective *borrfadach* is only used here in this array of warriors to describe their action, not to add special focus to it or contrast it against cowardly warriors, nor can the adjective be called the topic of the sentence.

The data from this database are presented in chapters 4, 5 and 6. The examples are summarised in tables there, allowing for a quantitative analysis of the numbers in each category and their shared characteristics. Individual examples, trends, and philological motivation for their analysis are also explained in detail.

⁶³ Mac Coisdealbha 1998: 166-167, 180-181.

⁶⁴ O’Rahilly 1976: 111, l.3669.

⁶⁵ O’Rahilly 1976: 223.

3. Topics outside of fronting situations

3.1 Overview

Because this thesis concerns fronted elements in the *Táin Bó Cúailnge*, some of which are topics, it is useful to reflect on the 'normal', 'unmarked', and 'unemphasised' way in which Old Irish expresses its topics. This chapter discusses the topics which are most like the Aboutness Topics discussed above, although even those carry a certain emphasis because they are fronted. The topics under discussion in this chapter, however, are the topics that are understood by a reader reading between the lines and the moments when these topics shift from one question or character to another. As this abstract concept is more difficult and less straight-forward to put into practice than the concept of 'focus', it benefits the understanding of emphasis in this thesis to devote some attention to non-emphasis first. The contents of this chapter are not based on an exhaustive analysis of every episode in the *Táin Bó Cúailnge*, but rather describe the trends that have surfaced during the research of the fronted elements. Several illustrative fragments are analysed below. These are arbitrarily chosen from among the corpus, in order that passages with different topics can be discussed. A longer passage is also included which contains multiple shifts in topic as well as several instances of fronting for emphasis, so that it can be seen how the two interact.

The topic is an elusive phenomenon. As explained in the introduction, the topic of a sentence is the one of the harder aspects to locate or study because it is analysed intuitively. It forms part of the discourse between speaker and listener, or writer and reader, in such a way that all parties understand what the sentence is about – otherwise the sentence would be ambiguous or even unintelligible – even though it is often not explicitly said. DiGirolamo describes the topic of a sentence as the 'question under discussion'.⁶⁶ In practice, the topic of a sentence is frequently the same as the subject of its main verb; this is the assumption from which this thesis approaches the phenomenon of topic, although clear instances where a prepositional phrase can be understood as the 'topic' of a sentence are excused from that generalisation.⁶⁷ Because Old Irish is an inflectional language, subjects of verbs often do not take the separate form of a pronoun

⁶⁶ DiGirolamo (forthcoming): 9.

⁶⁷ This is only the case, however, if the prepositional phrase contains the first mention of the topic. Otherwise it is analysed as a focus.

but are only expressed in the verbal inflection. This means that topics are even harder to identify.

3.2 *Fragment with a single topic*

In the following example 3.a, Cú Chulainn is the topic throughout. In the Old Irish sentences this is expressed through the verbs, which do not have an explicit subject noun or pronoun here; it is understood that the 3rd person singular ‘he’ is Cú Chulainn. These are marked with bold type in the fragments below. Many fragments like this can be found in any text; it is the most neutral, simple and straight-forward way of expressing topics in Old Irish. Without other characters in the vicinity, the topic can only be one person.

Example 3.a:

<p><i>'Tairnic Cú Chulaind íarom a dáil, & focheird fáthi n-imbi iar cathais na h-aidchi, & ní airigestár in corthe már baí ina farrad comméte friss fessin. Daratailc etir & a brat, & saidid inna farrad.</i> ⁶⁸</p>	<p>Cú Chulainn ended the meeting, and he cast his mantle around him after his night watch, but he did not notice the great pillar-stone as big as himself which was beside him and he covered it over between himself and his mantle and sat down beside it. ⁶⁹</p>
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3.3 *Fragment with topic shifts and emphatic structures*

The following fragment 3.b is rather long; it is printed in full here because it contains several shifts in topic. This provides for an excellent opportunity to investigate the subtleties of Old Irish in this environment.

This passage is taken from the first pages of the *Táin Bó Cúailnge* and concerns Medb, Ailill, Fergus and the war parties from Connacht who are gathering for their expedition. Medb is complaining about a certain party in particular, that of the Gailióin; she is afraid that they will take away her glory and wishes for something to be done to

⁶⁸ O'Rahilly 1976: 45, l.1440-1442.

⁶⁹ O'Rahilly 1976: 165.

prevent this. Thus the narrative shifts repeatedly between Medb, Ailill, Fergus, and their entire host. It is a dialogue-heavy scene, so in fact the Gaili6in are the topic in most of the fragment because they are frequently the topic of their dialogue.

The character(s) or question that is understood as the topic in this analysis is marked in bold type, as are the references to it. When a topic shift occurs and this is made evident by the mention of a name or something explicit, the colour of the bold type changes.

The passage starts out introducing Medb as the topic and subject of the first sentence, naming her and then giving a verb without needing subject identification. Once she starts conversing with Ailill, the topic in their conversation is the troops of the Gaili6in. Their name is given in the indirect speech of Medb, but they are properly introduced as a noun phrase in the dialogue by Ailill's '*Ced ara t6ansi na firu?*'. They are frequently referred to as the subject of verbs, with possessive pronouns and conjugated prepositions; even emphatic pronouns, when their behaviour is contrasted against that of the rest (*c6ach*). There are two cleft sentences in this part of the fragment, which are underlined here. These are both analysed as Contrastive Focus. In the context of the Gaili6in as a topic for the paragraph, the cleft sentences add information about the topic, focusing extra on it rather than introducing a new topic. They are also contrasting against each other, because Medb and Ailill do not agree in this part of the dialogue.

As an answer to Ailill's question 'What shall be done with them?', then, Medb introduces a new topic: 'Their killing!' (literally translated). This idea then becomes the topic of the following part of the passage, as evidenced by Fergus and Medb referring to it with pronouns and making it the subject or object of verbs: *n6maricfe, dorig6nma6s-ni, n6pa fir s6n*. It is only after Fergus decides that 'he will not argue the point' (*acht n6 thac6r-sa an6 sin*) that he deliberately shifts topic again back to the Gaili6in: *Airlif6m-ni na h-6cu* 'we will arrange the warriors'. This is made clear by the way their name is mentioned again and introduced by the pronoun *6* first: *Iss 6 in t-ochtmad tr6cha ch6t d6ac inso .i. tr6cha c6t na n-Gali66n*. 'The eighteenth division is it, that is to say, the division of the Gaili6in.' They are also the topic when Medb is speaking, as she can use 3rd person plural verb forms without naming them again. When the dialogue finishes, however, the topic shifts to the action that has been decided upon, referred to by the cleft sentence *Is ed dogn6th and 6arum* 'It is it/that which was done then'. This is analysed as a Contrastive Topic because it topicalises the decision with the pronoun *ed*, while contrasting against

every other possible option for actions against the Gaili6in (such as killing them). In this context, the function of the fronted structure is to summarise a new topic for the narrative from all that has been said in the dialogue.

In the last paragraphs, the entire host becomes the topic. This is not said explicitly, unless the mention of *sl6g* in *Fodailte in Gaili6in f6n sl6g* ‘The Gaili6in were distributed among the host’ can be counted as such; in any case, it is clearly shifted away from the Gaili6in. The narrative simply takes up the action with 3rd person plural verb forms that cannot refer to the Gaili6in alone, given the subsequent paragraph where *fer donaib Gaili6inaib* briefly takes back the topic again as a contrast against the rest of the host. It would seem that the entirety of the host is a topic so all-encompassing, so basic to the story, that it can be returned to again at any time without explicit mention. Individuals inside that host, or enemies, do need to be named in order to be understood as a topic; but if the emphasis on the individual topic (carried by their name) falls away, the topic reverts back to the standard of the collective. This is only true until the topic shifts from the army of Ailill and Medb to that of Cú Chulainn or his individual exploits, however. These big shifts are often accompanied by the signal word *Imthús(a)* [name of host], originally meaning ‘the doings of’ but in this text often taking on the meaning of ‘concerning (the adventures of), as for’ before a genitive noun.⁷⁰

Example 3.b:

<p><i>Tic Medb iar n-déscin in t-sl6ig & asbert ba n-espá do chách dul in t-sl6gaid dían téset in trícha cét Gaili6n.’ ‘Ced ara tánsi na firu?’ or Ailill. ‘Ní dá tánsem dam,’ ol Medb. ‘It ána ind óic.</i></p>	<p>After she had surveyed the host, Medb came back and said that it would be vain for the rest to go on that expedition if the division of the Gaili6in went also. ‘Why do you belittle the men?’ asked Ailill. ‘I am not belittling them,’ said Medb. ‘They are splendid warriors.</p>
<p><i>In tan ro m-boí cách oc gním a sosta, ro scáig dóib-seom tuga a sosta & fune a m-</i></p>	<p>When the others were making their shelters, the Gaili6in had already finished thatching their shelters and cooking their</p>

⁷⁰ DIL s.v. *imthús*.

⁷¹ O’Rahilly 1976: 5-6, l.147-188.

bíd. In tan ro m-boí cách oc praind, ro scáig praind dóib-**seom** h-i suidiu, & ro bátár **a** cruti ocaó n-airfitiud.

Is espa didiu,' ol Medb, '**a** techt. Is **foraib** bíaid búaid in t-slóig.' 'Is airiund arbáget dano,' or Ailill. 'Ní regat lend,' ol Medb. 'Anat didiu,' ol Ailill. 'Nach ainfet dano,' ol Medb. 'Ficfit fornd iar tiachtain dúin,' ol sí, '& gébtait ar tír frind.' 'Ceist, cid dogéntar **friu**,' or Ailill, 'innách maith **a n-anad** nách **a** techt?

'**A n-guin!**' ol Medb. 'Ní chélam **as** banchomairle,' or Ailill. 'Ní maith a n-asbir la sanais ón,' ol Fergus. '**Nímaricfe**, úair is áes comhchotaig dúinni 'nar n-Ultaib, acht má non gontar uli.'

'Cid ed ón **dorigénmaís**-ni,' ol Medb, 'ár atú-sa sund mo sainteglach díb tríchtaib cét,' ol sí, '& atát na secht Mane .i. mo secht meic secht tríchait cét. Cotaroí a toccad,' ol sí, '.i. Mane Máthramail & Mane Athramail & Mane Mórgor & Mane Mingor & Mane Móepirt — .i. iss éside Mani Milscothach — Mane Andóe & Mane Cotageib Ule — is éside tuc cruth a máthar & a athar & a n-ordan díb línaib.'

food. When the rest were eating, **they** had already finished **their** meal and **their** harpers were playing to them.

So it is useless for **them** to go on this expedition,' said Medb, 'for it is **they** who will take credit for the victory of the army.' 'Yet it is for us **they** fight,' said Ailill. '**They** shall not go with us,' said Medb. 'Let **them** stay here then,' said Ailill. 'Indeed **they** shall not,' said Medb. '**They** will overpower us when we have come back and seize our land.' 'Well then, what shall be done **with them**,' asked Ailill, 'since neither **their** staying nor **their** going pleases you?'

'**Kill them!**' said Medb. 'I shall not deny **that is** a woman's counsel,' said Ailill. 'You speak foolishly,' said Fergus in a low voice. '**It** shall not happen unless we are all killed, for they are allies of us Ulstermen.'

'Nevertheless,' said Medb, 'we could do **it**. For I have here with me my own household retinue numbering two divisions, and the seven Maines are here, my seven sons, with seven divisions. Their luck can protect them,' said she. 'Their names are Maine Máthramail, Maine Aithremail, Maine Mórgor, Maine Mingor, Maine Mo Epirt, who is also called Maine Milscothach, Maine Andóe and Maine

⁷² O'Rahilly 1976: 129-130.

*'Nípa fír **són**,'* ol Fergus, *'atát secht ríog sund
din Mumu & trícha cét la cech n-áe
comchotach dúinni 'nar n-Ultaib. Dobér-sa
cath duit,'* ol Fergus, *'for lár in dúnaid h-i
tám cosna secht tríchtaib cét sin & com
thríchait chét fadéin & co tríchait chét na n-
Galión. Acht ní thacér-sa **aní sin**,'* ol Fergus.

*'Airlifim-ni **na h-ócu** chena conná gébat
forsin t-slóg. Secht tríchaith chét déac lenni
h-i sund,'* ol Fergus, *'iss é lín ar n-dunaid
cenmothá ar n-dáescorslúag & ar mná —
ar itá a rígan la cach ríog sund h-i
comaitecht Medba — & cenmothá ar
maccáemu. Iss **é** in t-ochtmad trícha chét
déac inso .i. trícha cét **na n-Galión**.
Fodáilter fón slóg ule.'*

'Cumma lem,' ol Medb, *'acht ná **robat** isin
chaír chomraic i **táat**.'* *Is **ed** dogníth and
íarum. Fodailte in Galión fón slóg.*

***Dollotár** ass arna bárach do Móin
Choíltrae. **Dosnáirthe** ocht fichit oss n-
allaid and i n-óenalaim. **Cúartait** impu. Nos
gonat íarom.*

Cotageib Uile—he it is who has inherited
the appearance of his mother and his
father and the dignity of them both.'

'That will not be,' said Fergus, 'There are
here seven kings from Munster, allies of us
Ulstermen, and a division with each king.

I shall give you battle in the middle of the
encampment where we now are,
supported by those seven divisions, by my
own division and by the division of the
Gailiún. But I shall not argue **the point**,'
said Fergus.

'We shall arrange **the warriors of the
Gailiún** so that they shall not prevail over
the rest of the army. Seventeen divisions,'
said Fergus, 'is the number here in our
encampment, not counting the camp-
followers and our boys and our women-
folk—for each chief here in Medb's
company has brought his wife. The
eighteenth division is that **of the Gailiún**.
Let **them** be distributed throughout all the
host.'

'I care not,' said Medb, 'provided that **they**
do not remain in the close battle array in
which **they** now **are**.' **This then was done**;
the Gailiún were distributed among the
host.

Next morning **they** set out for Móin
Choltna. There **they** met with eight score
deer in a single herd. **They** encircled them

<p><i>Nách airm thrá i m-buí fer</i> <i>donaib Galiónaib is h-é arddaánaic, acht</i> <i>cóic oss arránic in slóg ule díib.</i></p> <p><i>Dotháegat iar sudiu i m-Mag Trego & scurit</i> <i>and & arfognat dóib.⁷¹</i></p>	<p>and killed them.</p> <p>Wherever there was a man of the Gailióin, it was he who got a deer, for the rest of the host got only five of the deer.</p> <p>They came on then to Mag Trego and there they encamped and prepared food for themselves.⁷²</p>
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3.4 Fragment with two characters

The following passage is an interesting object of study because it provides two characters, one of which does most of the action while the other seems to be the topic of most of the fragment. Although Nad Crantail is fighting against Cú Chulainn, who is a topic of many sentences in the Táin Bó Cúailnge since he is a main character, there are clear indicators that we are indeed experiencing this moment from Nad Crantail's point of view. The references to Nad Crantail are marked with bold type, whereas those to Cú Chulainn are marked with red bold type this time. It can be seen in the distribution of these bold words that Nad Crantail is not actually the subject of many verbs, but when he is, his name is not specifically mentioned. Nad Crantail is generally referred to with pronouns or incorporated in the 3rd person singular verbal flexion. In contrast to that, it is striking that Cú Chulainn's name is always mentioned with his actions. This was not necessary in example 3.a, where Cú Chulainn was the topic. It is for this reason that Nad Crantail is understood as the topic in this analysis. The action shifts between Nad Crantail and Cú Chulainn several times, but the topic never shifts completely, until *Cingid...* briefly takes over from Cú Chulainn's perspective. When the topic shifts back to Nad Crantail, however, the pronoun *-seom* is enough to reinstate his perspective.

This tells us a crucial thing about the nature of topics in Old Irish: they are implicit. Because Cú Chulainn stays explicit in this fragment, he cannot be analysed as the topic.

Example 3.c:

<p><i>‘Téit Nad Crantail arna b́arach asin dúnud & berid noí m-bera culind fúachtai follscaidi laiss. Is and boí Cú i sudiu oc foroim én & a charpat inna farrad. Sríd Nad Crantail biur for Coin Culaind. Clissis Cú Chulaind for rind in bera h-ísín & ní n-derbai di forimim inna n-én. A chumut na h-ocht m-bera aili.</i></p> <p><i>In tan focheird a nómad m-bir, techid ind íall óChoin Chulaind i sudiu. Luid Cú Chulaind íarom for slicht na h-éile. Cingid íarom for rindris na m-bera amal én di cach biur for araili i n-iarmóracht na n-én arnách élaitís. Glé la cách immorro ba for teched luid Cú Chulaind remi-seom.’</i></p> <p><i>‘For Cú Chulaind uccut,’ ol sé, ‘dochóid reom-sa for teched!’⁷³</i></p>	<p>On the morrow Nad Crantail went forth from the camp, taking with him nine stakes of holly, sharpened and charred. Cú Chulainn was there engaged in fowling, with his chariot beside him. Nad Crantail cast a stake at Cú Chulainn. Cú Chulainn sprang on to the top of that stake but it did not hinder him in his fowling. Similarly with the other eight stakes.</p> <p>When Nad Crantail cast the ninth stake, the flock of birds flew away from Cú Chulainn who went in pursuit of them. Then, like a bird himself, he stepped on to the points of the stakes, going from one stake to another, pursuing the birds that they might not escape him. They were all certain, however, that Cú Chulainn was fleeing from Nad Crantail.</p> <p>‘That Cú Chulainn of yours,’ said Nad Crantail, ‘has taken to flight before me.’⁷⁴</p>
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3.5 Summary

This short investigation into Old Irish topics seems to indicate that they are implicit and expressed mainly through the verbal flexion. Shifts of topic are accompanied by a name, usually, which is quickly replaced by pronouns or verbal inflections. If the name persists, it does not feel like a topic anymore but rather like a reinforcement of a second character. The dialogue consists of a different topic layer, as the characters have a different ‘Question under Discussion’ amongst them than the narrator. There seems to

⁷³ O’Rahilly 1976: 44, l.1415-1425.

⁷⁴ O’Rahilly 1976: 164.

be a neutral underlying topic layer always accessible for the narrator as well: by using inflected verbs without explicit subjects, the topic defaults to a collective topic.

This realisation about non-emphasis is important for the research into emphasis in the thesis as a whole. Just as contrast can only be understood in relation to the thing it contrasts against, knowing how Old Irish expresses topics in a neutral way is valuable information when looking for the way in which it expresses topics in an emphatic or even a contrastive way. Understanding what shifts in topic often look like is also very useful for the investigation into fronting for emphasis. It can be expected that the fronting constructions are employed to emphasise the new topic, when introducing or just after a topic shift. In the fragments analysed here, emphatic fronting structures are indeed supportive to the topics, highlighting features of the current topic (focus emphasis) or introducing a new topic (topic emphasis).

4. Noun-initial sentences

4.1. Overview

There are many ways in which to interpret a fronted element before the verb in Old Irish, depending on the context. Although this thesis focuses on two structures of which it is commonly accepted that they are a part of the Old Irish grammar, there are instances where an analysis as a cleft or as a *nominativus pendens* is not that clear-cut. Sometimes clear characteristics are missing or invisible, making it difficult to decide whether a fronted structure is one or the other. Sentences that start with nouns, pronouns or prepositional phrases – anything other than a verb – can be a cleft with a dropped copula, a *nominativus pendens*, or something else altogether. As the *nominativus pendens* and the cleft are only two of the available interpretations of noun-initial sentences and not everything is yet known about noun-initial syntax in Old Irish, it is very well possible for examples not to fit any of the explanations.⁷⁵ For example, Mac Cana mentions a construction where the subject or direct object of a verb can be fronted to noun-initial position and still be felt as the ‘real’ subject or object, without a relative verb or a pronoun taking its place like in a *nominativus pendens*.⁷⁶

This chapter discusses all examples without a verb at the beginning of the fronted element, in order to clarify the approach taken in this thesis and show why certain choices are made. For the examples to be used in this research it is important that they can be classed into one of the categories. At the same time, this approach should not mean that subtleties are glossed over. This is why the interpretation of these examples is dealt with in detail here. Some of the examples are very clearly *nominativus pendens* or cleft sentences and these are mentioned briefly in sections 4.2 and 4.3, together with the argumentation for either choice. Other examples are more ambiguous and these are discussed in more detail in section 4.4.

The characteristics used to analyse the examples and separate them out from each other are focused on the form of the main verb of the sentence and that of any pronominals referring back to the fronted element. Figure 4.1 below gives the main characteristics in a table. If an example shows any of the characteristics in the *nominativus pendens* or cleft sentence column, it is analysed as such if the context allows

⁷⁵ DiGirolamo (forthcoming): 2.

⁷⁶ Mac Cana 1973: 101.

for a coherent translation. For example, to recognise a cleft sentence when its copula is not there, the relative sentence can often be identified. The relative flexion is therefore a clear indicator that a sentence can be analysed as a cleft, as the *nominativus pendens* does not use a relative structure. All ‘clear indicator’ characteristics are marked in the table with italic type. The ‘ambiguous’ column contains the characteristics that do not point to any of the structures in particular. It is still possible for an example classifying as ambiguous according to this table to be analysed as a cleft when, for example, the relative lenition would affect a letter which does not orthographically show it (as in *ro nenaisc*) and other considerations point towards it being a cleft.

Figure 4.1:

IDENTIFICATION	<i>Nominativus pendens</i>	Cleft sentence (dropped copula)	Ambiguous
Main verb if fronted element is subject or object	non-relative form	<i>relative flexion (simple verbs), relative lenition or nasalisation (compound verbs)</i> ⁷⁷	non-relative form, or relative mutation does not show ⁷⁸
Pronoun in main sentence	<i>reference to antecedent, is substitute for antecedent in syntax of sentence</i> ⁷⁹	no reference	no reference
Infix pronoun	Class A or B ⁸⁰	Class C or B ⁸¹	Class B
Fronted element is prepositional phrase	It is doubtful that a <i>nominativus pendens</i> can consist of a prepositional phrase.	<i>Preposition contains relative particle aⁿ</i> . ⁸²	Preposition does not contain hints of relative particle <i>aⁿ</i> .

⁷⁷ GOI §493-504.

⁷⁸ This could be due to a nasalising relative clause being replaced by a normal clause as in GOI §505.

⁷⁹ Stifter 2006: 263; De Vries 2013: 152-54; Mac Coisdealbha 1998: 83-86.

⁸⁰ GOI §411-12 and §415.

⁸¹ GOI §412-13 and §415.

⁸² GOI §492.

All the noun-initial examples from the *Táin Bó Cúailnge* are analysed according to these principles. Every *nominativus pendens* example is treated here in section 4.2, as well as every cleft with dropped copula in section 4.3, and the noun-initial examples that could fit either or a different interpretation are treated in section 4.4. In the citations below, the fronted element is marked in bold green type. To facilitate the discussion about the form of the main verb and any pronominals that motivate the choice for cleft or *nominativus pendens*, these words are marked in bold black type.

Figure 4.2 below shows the philological interpretation of all noun-initial sentences that is to come in the following pages, summarising all the individual analyses that are presented in this chapter.

Figure 4.2:

NOUN-INITIAL	Aboutness Topic	Contrastive Topic	New Information Focus	Contrastive Focus
pronominal reference in following cleft	8	0	0	0
infixd pron. class A	0	1	0	0
pronominal reference	0	1	0	0
non-relative main verb	0	3	0	0
<i>Nominativus Pendens</i> <i>Total: 13</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>
relative flexion	1	0	0	1
relative lenition	2	0	2	0
infixd pron. class C	0	0	1	1
relative particle	0	0	1	1
<i>Cleft</i> <i>Total: 10</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>3</i>
subject-initial	5	1	0	0
object-initial	1	1	0	0
initial prep. phrase without relative particle	0	0	3	1
<i>Ambiguous</i> <i>Total: 12</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Total examples: 35</i>	<i>17</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>4</i>

The distribution of all noun-initial sentences is shown across *nominativus pendens*, cleft and ambiguous examples as one variable, as well as across the various topic and focus labels indicating emphasis as the other variable. The numbers in this figure are similar to those in figure 5.4 for the *nominativus pendens* examples and the COP0 row in figure 6.1 for the cleft sentence examples. This figure organises the examples according to the arguments for analysing its structure, however. It is reprinted in the summary at the end of chapter 4.

4.2. Examples which are true *nominativus pendens*

The examples 4.a-4.k presented in this section can all be clearly analysed as formal *nominativus pendens* on the grounds of the above characteristics. A pronominal reference to the fronted element can be found in the following examples 4.a-4.h:

- 4.a *Tintaí Medb aitheruch atúaid (...). Nach airm trá i Cuib in ro sáidi Medb echfleisc, is Bile Medba a ainm. **Cach áth & cach dingnai ocár fíu, is Áth Medba & Dindgna Medba a ainm.***⁸³

Medb turned back again from the north (...). Wherever in Cuib Medb planted her horsewhip is named Bile Medba. **Every ford and every hill by which she spent the night is** named [its name is] Áth Medba and Dindgna Medba.⁸⁴

Example 4.a is analysed as an Aboutness Topic. It is a very clear *nominativus pendens* with a copular sentence as the main sentence. The possessive *a* refers back to the fronted element.

The following examples 4.b, 4.c and 4.d are also interpreted as Aboutness Topics. They are clearly *nominativus pendens* constructions, because of the non-relative form of *is*, and because the fronted element is referred to by a pronoun (*h-é* and *ed*).

- 4.b ***Conchobar rí cóicid h-Érind, is h-é deisid forsin fert fótmaig; Sencha mac Aililla, erlabraid Ulad, is é deisid ara bélaib; Cúscraid Mend Macha mac Conchobair, is h-é deisidh for láim a athar.***⁸⁵

⁸³ O’Rahilly 1976: 47, l.1531-36.

⁸⁴ O’Rahilly 1976: 167.

⁸⁵ O’Rahilly 1976: 110, l.3623-25.

‘It was Conchobar, the king of a province in Ireland, who sat down on the mound of turf. **It was Sencha mac Ailella, the eloquent speaker of Ulster, who** sat down in front of Conchobar. **It was Cúscraid Menn Macha, Conchobar's son, who** sat at his father's hand.⁸⁶

4.c ***Imthúsa Con Culaind immorro is ed*** indister sund coléic: ‘Fég dúind, a mo popa a Loíg, cindus fechtha Ulaid in cath indosa.’⁸⁷

Tidings of Cú Chulainn [it is they which] are now told: ‘Look for us, my friend Láeg, and see how are the men of Ulster fighting now.’⁸⁸

4.d ‘Ced sucat, a Ferguis?’ ‘or Ailill.’ ‘Samalta lat.’ ‘Ní andsa dam-sa a samail ón,’ ‘or Fergus.’ ‘Ulaidh indsin ar tíachtain asa ces. It é torpartatar a fid. **Imdrong iarom & mét & imforráin na láth n-gaile, is ed** forrochraid in fid, is rempu ro thechadar na fiadmíla isin mag. ⁸⁹

‘What was that, Fergus?’ said Ailill. ‘Identify it.’ ‘It is not hard for me to recognize what it is,’ said Fergus. ‘Those are the men of Ulster now recovered from their debility. It was they who rushed into the wood. **It was the multitude, the greatness and the violence of the warriors** that shook the wood. It is from them the wild beasts fled into the plain.’⁹⁰

The following two examples both have a similar explanation, although they make use of a negative in the fronted element of the following cleft. Example 4.e is analysed as an Aboutness Topic. Seeing as *ní* is not relative, this is interpreted as a *nominativus pendens* (*Imthúsa Ulad trá*) followed by a cleft (fronted element: *ní de*).

4.e ***Imthúsa Ulad trá ní de leantar*** sund calléic.⁹¹

The doings of the men of Ulster [it is not therefore they are pursued] (are not described) for a while.⁹²

⁸⁶ O’Rahilly 1976: 222.

⁸⁷ O’Rahilly 1976: 120, l.3984.

⁸⁸ O’Rahilly 1976: 232.

⁸⁹ O’Rahilly 1976: 108, l.3567-68.

⁹⁰ O’Rahilly 1976: 220.

⁹¹ O’Rahilly 1976: 118, l.3941.

⁹² O’Rahilly 1976: 231.

4.f *Tánic Cú Chulaind inn aidchi sin didiu conici sin, & ro faí ré banchéle fodeisin. **A imthúsa ó sin amach nochon iad** chestnaighther sund colléicc, acht imthúsa Fir Diad.*⁹³

So on that night Cú Chulainn came to that place and spent the night with his own wife. **His doings apart from that [it is not they which] are (not)** recorded here now, but those of Fer Diad.⁹⁴

Example 4.f is analysed as an Aboutness Topic. *Nochon* is a byform of *nícon*. This adverb of negation, a strengthened form of *ní*,⁹⁵ is not used in relative clauses (where it would be *nadchon*).⁹⁶ Thus a cleft interpretation is ruled out for this example, although a *nominativus pendens* followed by a cleft is very well possible and would give an acceptable translation.

Example 4.g is interpreted as a Contrastive Topic. It is a clear *nominativus pendens* construction. The fronted element is felt as the object of *fosngert-side* and neatly referred to with both a Class A 3rd person singular feminine infixed pronoun *-sn-* and possessive pronouns, so this cannot be a relative cleft construction.

4.g *La sodain atnethat láith gaile Emna & foherdat i n-dabaig n-úarusci. Maithi immi-seom in dabach h-ísin. in dabach aile dano in ro lád, fichis dornaib de. **In tress dabach i n-deochaid iar sudiu**, fosngert-side combo chuimsi dó **a tess & a fuacht.***⁹⁷

Then the warriors of Emain seized him and cast him into a tub of cold water. That tub burst about him. The second tub into which he was plunged boiled hands high therefrom. **The third tub into which he went after that**, he warmed [**her**] so that **its** [**her**] heat and **its** [**her**] cold were properly adjusted for him.⁹⁸

⁹³ O’Rahilly 1976: 85-86, l.2813-16.

⁹⁴ O’Rahilly 1976: 201.

⁹⁵ DIL s.v. *nícon*.

⁹⁶ GOI §493 (1).

⁹⁷ O’Rahilly 1976: 25, l.816-18.

⁹⁸ O’Rahilly 1976: 148.

4.h *Imthúsa Ulad trá ní de leantar sund calléic. Imthús immorro fer n-Érind, cotagart Badb & Bé Néit & Némain forru ind aidchi sin for Gáirig & Irgáirich conidapad céit lóech díb ar úathbás.*⁹⁹

The doings of the men of Ulster are not described for a while. **But as for the men of Ireland**, Badb and Bé Néit and Némain **shrieked above them** that night in Gáirech and Irgáirech so that a hundred of their warriors died of terror.¹⁰⁰

Example 4.h is interpreted as a Contrastive Topic. The main verb *co-ta-gart*, from *do-gair*, is not visibly relative with a Class B infixed pronoun *-ta-*, which can occur in both relative and non-relative clauses. When considering the translation, it is impossible to analyse this as a cleft. *Imthús* is neither the subject nor the object of *cotagart*; *fer n-Érind* is the object. In this sentence, *Imthús* needs to be interpreted as ‘concerning, as regards’, introducing the genitive noun phrase which is the true fronted element. Then a *nominativus pendens* interpretation becomes possible, because the fronted element *fer n-Érind* is picked up in the conjugated preposition *forru* in the rest of the sentence.

4.i ***Fer dorigni inna gníma sin inraptar lána a choic blíadna, nírbo*** *machtad cé na thised co h-or cocríchi & cé no éisged a cinnu don chethror ucut.*¹⁰¹

‘If a man did those deeds [a man who did those deeds] when he was five years old, it were no wonder that **he** should have come to the marches, and cut off the heads of yon four men.’¹⁰²

Examples 4.i, 4.j and 4.k are all three of the same formula. They are interpreted as Contrastive Topics. *Dorigni* does not look like relative flexion, although it may have invisible relative lenition. The construction inside of the *nominativus pendens*, where only *fer* is the fronted element, is therefore analysed as relative. The entire first part of the sentence until the comma is taken as a *nominativus pendens* for all three examples, because *nírbo*, *nípu* and *nípo* are definitely not relative verbal forms. In examples 4.j and 4.k, the fronted element is again referred to with an emphatic pronoun *-side*.

⁹⁹ O’Rahilly 1976: 118, l.3941-44.

¹⁰⁰ O’Rahilly 1976: 231.

¹⁰¹ O’Rahilly 1976: 17, l.537-39.

¹⁰² O’Rahilly 1976: 140.

4.j **Fer dorigni sin amdar lána a sé blíadna, nípu machdad cé dorónad-side** dagním ind inbuid sea in tan ata lána a secht m-blíadna déc,' 'ol Conall Cernach.¹⁰³

It were no cause of wonder that **one who had done this when he was seven**, should have performed a valiant deed now that he is seventeen years old,' said Conall Cernach.¹⁰⁴

4.k **Fer dorigni sin inna sechtmad blíadain,**' 'ol Fíachna mac Fir febe,' **'nípo** machdad cia chonbósad-side for écomlond & cia nodragad for comlond in tan ata lána a sé blíadna déc indiu.¹⁰⁵

'**One who did that in his seventh year**,' said Fiachu mac Fir Febe, 'it were no wonder that **he** should triumph over odds and overcome in fair fight now that his seventeen years are complete today.'¹⁰⁶

4.3. Examples which are true clefts

The examples 4.l-4.u treated in this section can be identified as true formal clefts, on the grounds of clear relativity seen on the main verb following the fronted element, or a Class C infix pronoun.

Examples 4.l and 4.m have a simple verb as their main verb. The special relative flexion on these verbs shows that these are true cleft sentences. Example 4.l is analysed as an Aboutness Topic and 4.m as a Contrastive Focus.

4.l *Asbert Medb íarum fria h-araid a l-láa documlásat: 'Cach óen scaras sund trá indiu,' ol sí, 'fria chóem & a charait, dobérat maldachtain form-sa úair is mé dorinól in slúagad sa.'*¹⁰⁷

Then, on the day that they set forth, Medb said to her charioteer: '**All those who part** here today from comrade and friend will curse me for it is I who have mustered this hosting.'¹⁰⁸

¹⁰³ O'Rahilly 1976: 19, l.605-07.

¹⁰⁴ O'Rahilly 1976: 142.

¹⁰⁵ O'Rahilly 1976: 26, l.822-24.

¹⁰⁶ O'Rahilly 1976: 148.

¹⁰⁷ O'Rahilly 1976: 1, l.25.

¹⁰⁸ O'Rahilly 1976: 125-126.

- 4.m *'Consinter chena indiu,' ol in t-ara, im thráth turcbála gréne. 'Aes úallach fiches in cath indossa,' ol in t-ara, 'acht nád fil rígu and air is cotlud beós dóib.'*¹⁰⁹
 'There is fighting here already today,' said the charioteer at sunrise. 'It is **proud folk who are** now **fighting** the battle, but there are no leaders for they are still asleep.'¹¹⁰
- 4.n *'Mór do chétaib trá & mílib,' or Mac Roth, 'doroacht in dúnad sa Ulad. (...)' 'Fer muinte adchondaircais ém,' or Fergus.*¹¹¹
 'Many hundreds indeed and many thousands,' said Mac Roth, 'came to this encampment of the Ulstermen. (...)' 'It was indeed **a brave(?) company that you saw,**' said Fergus.¹¹²

Example 4.n is analysed here as an Aboutness Topic. The 2nd person singular preterite form *adchondarcais*, from *ad-cí* 'sees', contains a relative lenition. Because the fronted element *fer muinte* is felt as the object of the relative clause, lenition is optional in this case.¹¹³ The fact that it is there, however, reveals that this example can be analysed as a true cleft sentence.

- 4.o *Cingid íarom for rindris na m-bera amal én di cach biur for araili i n-iarmóracht na n-én arnách élaitís. 'For Cú Chulaind uccut,' ol sé, 'dochóid reom-sa for teched!'*¹¹⁴
 Then, like a bird himself, he stepped on to the points of the stakes, going from one stake to another, pursuing the birds that they might not escape him. They were all certain, however, that Cú Chulainn was fleeing from Nad Crantail. '**[it is] That Cú Chulainn of yours,**' said Nad Crantail, '**[who] has taken** to flight before me.'¹¹⁵

Example 4.o is analysed as an Aboutness Topic. Because *dochóid* contains a relative lenition and there is no pronominal reference to the fronted element, this is taken as a cleft.

¹⁰⁹ O'Rahilly 1976: 117, l.3900-02.

¹¹⁰ O'Rahilly 1976: 230.

¹¹¹ O'Rahilly 1976: 116, l.3862-3870.

¹¹² O'Rahilly 1976: 229.

¹¹³ GOI §494-95.

¹¹⁴ O'Rahilly 1976: 44, l.1421-25.

¹¹⁵ O'Rahilly 1976: 164.

Examples 4.p and 4.q also contain relative lenition pointing towards a cleft interpretation. These are both analysed as New Information Focus.

4.p *‘Ní duilig a aithni,’ for Cú Chulaind. ‘Mo poba Fergus dotháet and co r-robaid & co n-airchisecht (...)’¹¹⁶*

‘It is not hard to recognize him,’ said Cú Chulainn. **‘That is my master Fergus, coming** to give me a friendly warning (...)’¹¹⁷

4.q *Tecait iarom meic Nechta Scéne. ‘Cia fil sund?’ ol fer díb.*

*‘Mac bec dochóid indiu ar esclu h-i carpat,’ ol in t-ara.*¹¹⁸

Then came the sons of Nechta Scéne. ‘Who is here?’ said one of them.

‘A little lad who has come on an expedition in a chariot today,’ answered the charioteer.¹¹⁹

4.r *‘Cindus nondfechad gilla Ulad in cath?’ ‘Is fearrda,’ ol in t-ara. ‘Ba bág dóib-som a toitim oc tesorcain a n-éiti,’ ol Cú Chulaind. ‘Ocus anosa?’ ‘Na óclacha*

*amulchacha nodfechad indosa,’ ol in t-ara.*¹²⁰

‘How do the youth of Ulster fight the battle?’ ‘Bravely,’ said the charioteer. ‘It were right that they should fall in rescuing their flock,’ said Cú Chulainn. ‘And now?’ **‘[it is] The beardless young warriors [who] are fighting [it]** now,’ said the charioteer.¹²¹

Example 4.r is analysed as a New Information Focus. *Nodfechad* has infixed pronoun *-d-* of class C, 3rd singular neuter (untranslated by O’Rahilly, but referring to the battle, just like a few lines earlier in *Cindus nondfechad*). This form occurs only in relative clauses. *Fichid* is a simple verb, but the 3rd plural form makes use of the preverb *no* to indicate its relative character. This means that this sentence classifies as a true cleft, like example 4.s below, which shows the same Class C infixed pronoun *-d-* and is interpreted as a Contrastive Focus.

¹¹⁶ O’Rahilly 1976: 83, l.2721-22.

¹¹⁷ O’Rahilly 1976: 199.

¹¹⁸ O’Rahilly 1976: 23, l.721-23.

¹¹⁹ O’Rahilly 1976: 145.

¹²⁰ O’Rahilly 1976: 117, l.3892-96.

¹²¹ O’Rahilly 1976: 230.

4.s *'Anmai,' or Fergus, 'frisín n-id n-ucut. Atá ogam inna menuc, & iss ed fil and: "ná tíagar secha co n-éatar fer ro láa id samlaid cona óenláim, & óenslat díá tá, & friscuriur mo phopa Fergus." Fír,' ol Fergus, 'Cú Chulaind rod lá & it é a eich geltatar in mag so.'*¹²²

'We are waiting,' said Fergus, 'because of yonder withe. There is on its peg an ogam inscription which reads: "Let none go past till there be found a man to throw a withe made of one branch as it is in the same way with one hand. But I except my friend Fergus." In truth,' said Fergus, '**it is Cú Chulainn who has cast it** and it is his horses which grazed this plain.'¹²³

4.t ***A Findabair Chúalngi fosdailset** in t-slóig & adachtatár in crích h-i tenid. Doinólat a m-baí di mnáib & maccaib & ingenaib & búaiib hi Cúalngiu h-i teclom co m-bátár h-i Findabair uli.*¹²⁴

From Findabair Cúailnge the army **scattered** and set the country on fire. They gathered together all the women, boys, girls and cows that were in Cúailnge and brought them all to Findabair.¹²⁵

Example 4.t is analysed as New Information Focus. *A* here is probably preposition *i* with the relative particle *aⁿ* added to it, which would give the cleft interpretation 'it is in Findabair Cúailnge the hosts scattered themselves'. The infix pronoun *-s-*, which has a reflexive meaning with this verb, is of Class A. Presumably the pronoun does not formally have to be Class C in this case because the relative clause is dependent on a prepositional phrase instead of the subject or object, although Thurneysen is not clear about this usage.¹²⁶

¹²² O'Rahilly 1976: 9, l.268-71.

¹²³ O'Rahilly 1976: 132.

¹²⁴ O'Rahilly 1976: 31, l.978-80.

¹²⁵ O'Rahilly 1976: 152.

¹²⁶ GOI §411-13 and §415.

4.u *‘Ní dénaim-sea báa de sin,’ ol Medb. ‘In-óenchorp atá-side. Fodaim guin. Ní móu gabáil, (...)’¹²⁷*

‘I reek little of that,’ said Medb. ‘He has [**he is in] but one body**; he suffers wounding; he is not beyond capture. (...)’¹²⁸

Example 4.u is analysed as Contrastive Focus. The main verb takes the non-relative form of *atá* instead of the relative *fil* because it is not the subject or object that is fronted. It is not visible whether *In-* is the simple nasalising preposition or whether it contains the relative particle, which formally should look like *a n-* in Old Irish although these vowels are frequently confused in later usage. Because of the translation, however, it is still preferable to analyse this as a cleft.

4.4. *Examples of ambiguous nature*

Those examples which do not fit either the cleft or *nominativus pendens* interpretation because of formal considerations are discussed here in an extra category.

The following examples 4.v-4.ac are ambiguous because their fronted element functions as the subject or direct object of the following verb, but there are no other indicators that would allow for a classification as either a cleft sentence or a *nominativus pendens*. It is possible that these examples are in fact the subject-initial or object-initial structure as sketched by Mac Cana, in which the subject or direct object is fronted while still retaining its direct relationship with the verb.

4.v *‘Náchim thomaid im sodain,’ ol Etarcomol. ‘In cor amra ro nenaisc .i. comrac fri óenfer, is messe cíatacomraicfe frit di feraib n-Érend i m-bárach.’¹²⁹*

‘Do not threaten me thus,’ said Etarcomol. ‘**As for the wonderful agreement** [which] **you** [Cú Chulainn] **made**, namely, to engage in single combat, it is I who will be the first of the men of Ireland to fight with you tomorrow.’¹³⁰

¹²⁷ O’Rahilly 1976: 13, l.393-94.

¹²⁸ O’Rahilly 1976: 136.

¹²⁹ O’Rahilly 1976: 42, l.1332.

¹³⁰ O’Rahilly 1976: 162.

Example 4.v is interpreted as an Aboutness Topic. Because the fronted element is the direct object of *ro nenaisc*, relative lenition would be optional in a cleft interpretation, although it would not show on the *n*- regardless. This example is the only object-initial structure in this corpus with a direct relation to its verb, for the following examples contain a fronted subject.

4.w *Nírbo andsa thrá do Findchath a techtaireacht ar ro bátar cóiceth Conchobair h-uile, cach tigerna díb, oc irnaidi Conchobair. **Nach óen trá baí** fri h-Emain anair & antúaid & aníar dolotar uile co m-bádar oc Emain Macha.¹³¹*

It was not difficult, however, for Findchad to deliver that summons, for all of the province of Conchobar, every lord among them, was awaiting Conchobar. **All those who were** east or north or west of Emain came now to Emain Macha.¹³²

Example 4.w is analysed here as an Aboutness Topic. *Baí* is not the relative form of the 3rd singular preterite of the substantive verb (which would be *boie* in Old Irish according to DIL) even though the fronted element is felt as the subject of *baí*. This makes it impossible to classify this sentence as a formal cleft, although it is translated as a relative ‘who were’ by O’Rahilly. Interpretation as a *nominativus pendens* is also difficult, however. There is no reference to the fronted element with a pronominal anywhere else in the sentence and the translation ‘Every one, then, he is against Emain east and north and west, they came now to be at Emain Macha’ sounds very stilted. Because there are two verbs in this sentence (*baí* and *dolotar*) a translation of the first part as a relative is the best option here. This makes this example one of the ambiguous sentences. The subject-initial sentence type, in which the subject takes initial position while still being the true subject of the verb it stands in front of, seems to be the best available interpretation.

¹³¹ O’Rahilly 1976: 106, l.3498-3501.

¹³² O’Rahilly 1976: 219.

4.x *Recait iar sin co Emain. ‘Carptech dorét far n-dochum,’ ol in dercaid i n-Emain Macha. ‘Ardáilfe fuil laiss cach dune fil isind lis mani foichlither & mani dichset mná ernochta friss.’¹³³*

They [Cú Chulainn with his charioteer] reached Emain then. ‘**A chariot-warrior is driving** towards you!’ cried the watchman in Emain Macha. ‘He will shed the blood of every man in the fort unless heed be taken and naked women go out to meet him.’¹³⁴

Example 4.x is analysed as a Contrastive Topic. Although there could be relative lenition on the verb, it would not be visible on the *-r-*. Because of this it is not clearly a cleft; neither is there a reference to the fronted element in the remainder of the sentence, so it cannot be analysed as a proper *nominativus pendens*. Either interpretation could fit here, as well as that of the subject-initial sentence. The contrastive emphasis concerns in this case the entire clause, and not specifically only the fronted element.¹³⁵ This is reflected in O’Rahilly’s translation by her usage of the verb ‘cried’ to describe the entire utterance.

4.y *Is and sin geogain Cú Chulaind Cronn & Cóemdele, & ro fer fuire n-imnaise. (...) Cethri ríg ar secht fichtib ríg atbath laiss forsín n-glais chétnai.¹³⁶*
Then Cú Chulainn killed Cronn and Cóemdele and fought a furious(?) combat. (...) **A hundred and forty-four kings were slain [perished]** by him beside that same stream.¹³⁷

Example 4.y is analysed as an Aboutness Topic. *Atbath* is the absolute 3rd singular preterite form, of which the subject seems to be the fronted element (which is singular because it is dependent on a numeral). Although O’Rahilly translates passively, *at-baill* is the intransitive ‘perishes’. Relative lenition on *atbath* would not show, so there are three options. The first is that this example could be a relative construction in a cleft sentence: ‘it is a hundred and forty-four of kings that perished by him’. It could also be a non-relative construction and a *nominativus pendens* without reference in the rest of the sentence: ‘a hundred and forty-four of kings, it perished by him’. The last option, and the one preferred here, is that this example is a simple subject-initial sentence. This would

¹³³ O’Rahilly 1976: 25, l.802-05.

¹³⁴ O’Rahilly 1976: 147.

¹³⁵ Mac Cana 1973: 101.

¹³⁶ O’Rahilly 1976: 32, l.1011-14.

¹³⁷ O’Rahilly 1976: 153.

give the translation closest to that of O’Rahilly: ‘a hundred and forty-four of kings perished by him’.

4.z *‘Fo chen duit, a maccáin, fo déig cridi do máthar. **Messe immorro**, ní mád airgénus fleid!’*¹³⁸

‘Welcome, little lad, for your mother’s sake. **But as for myself**, would that I had not prepared a feast!’¹³⁹

Example 4.z is taken from the Boyhood Deeds of Cú Chulainn. This is Culann speaking, upon discovering that the young Sétanta has killed his hound. The fronted element is analysed as Contrastive Topic and as the subject of the greater sentence. This is one of the few examples among the noun-initial sentences in which a Pronoun is fronted. The fact that this pronoun resembles a Noun Phrase in function makes it slightly less exceptional, however. In Old Irish these independent stressed pronouns were used only in very specific situations. Thurneysen mentions that they can function as a subject in clauses without a verb.¹⁴⁰ *Messe* can here be described as a cataphoric pronoun, referring forward to the subject in the 1st singular verbal form. It is used in its stressed form because it stands on its own here and perhaps also for extra emphasis. Culann clearly uses it as an exclamation, bewailing his own fate.

The following examples 4.aa-4.ac, which are analysed as Aboutness Topics, also do not have a relative verb or any pronominal reference to the fronted element. In all of them the fronted element functions as the subject of the following verb. These examples are possibly also subject-initial sentences.

4.aa ***Nach áen trá adroindi isin chath ní feith** ní acht déicsin in dá tarb oc comruc.*

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Everyone who had survived the battle now **did** nothing except to watch the two bulls fighting.¹⁴²

¹³⁸ O’Rahilly 1976: 19, l.592.

¹³⁹ O’Rahilly 1976: 141.

¹⁴⁰ GOI §406.

¹⁴¹ O’Rahilly 1976: 124, l.4127-28.

¹⁴² O’Rahilly 1976: 237.

4.ab *Bátar imsníma móra for menmain Fir Diad in aidchi sin coná reilcset cotlud dó.
 (...) **Imsním robo** móo aici-som andás sin, dá nataiselbad óenfecht for áth
 do Choin Chulaind, demin lais ná bíad commus a chind nach a anma aici bodéin
 asa h-aithli.¹⁴³*

That night great anxieties preyed upon Fer Diad's mind and kept him awake.
 (...) But **there weighed** upon him a greater **anxiety** than all that [**an anxiety, it was** upon him greater than that]: he was sure that if he once appeared before
 Cú Chulainn on the ford, he would no longer have power over his own body or
 soul.¹⁴⁴

4.ac ***Cú Chulainn immorro baí** ina súantairthim cotulta co cend teóra láa & teóra n-
 aidchi h-icond ferta i l-Lergaib.¹⁴⁵*

[introducing new scene:] **Cú Chulainn, however, lay [was]** in a deep sleep at
 the mound in Lerga until the end of three days and three nights.¹⁴⁶

The following examples 4.ad-4.ag are fronted by a prepositional phrase, which complicates the analysis. Because there is no subject or object relation to the verb, the relative particle *aⁿ* formally needs to be added to the preposition. Although for some examples a cleft interpretation would give a better translation, these examples have problems with regard to the relative particle, which makes it hard and sometimes impossible to accept them as relative constructions.

4.ad *'Sínithi íarom co m-memdatar in dá liic ro bátár immi. **Hi fíadnaise Bricriu ucut
 dorónad,**' ol Fergus.¹⁴⁷*

Then he [Cú Chulainn] stretched himself so that the two flag-stones which were
 about him were smashed. **Bricriu yonder witnessed this happening,**' said
 Fergus.¹⁴⁸

Example 4.ad is analysed as New Information Focus. O'Rahilly's translation is not much
 to go by in this case, as she clearly had to change the syntax in order to arrive at a

¹⁴³ O'Rahilly 1976: 86, l.2822-28.

¹⁴⁴ O'Rahilly 1976: 201.

¹⁴⁵ O'Rahilly 1976: 66, l.2154-55.

¹⁴⁶ O'Rahilly 1976: 184.

¹⁴⁷ O'Rahilly 1976: 16, l.485-487.

¹⁴⁸ O'Rahilly 1976: 138.

correct English sentence. A relative lenition is not necessary when a preposition is fronted, although the relative particle *aⁿ* is expected in a cleft interpretation. This particle could be hidden in *hi fiadnaise*, but that phrase would then be expected to look like *a fiadnaise* instead. A cleft interpretation would give the following translation: ‘it was in the presence of B yonder that it was done’. A *nominativus pendens* interpretation would give the following translation: ‘in the presence of B yonder, it was done’. *Nominativus pendens* is not the preferred interpretation because there is a prepositional phrase at the beginning, although the cleft is also formally hard to accept. It almost looks like the combination *hi fiadnaise* is on its way to becoming an idiomatic phrase, which would petrify its form and make it less susceptible to such changes as the addition of a particle with mutation. This would not explain why the relative particle is not used in the first place, however. This remains an ambiguous example.

4.ae *Tecait di sudiu co Slíab Fúait. Forreccat Conall Cernach and. **Do Chonall dano dorala** imdegail in chóicid a l-lá sin, (...).*¹⁴⁹

Thence they [Cú Chulainn with his charioteer] came to Slíab Fúait where they found Conall Cernach. **It had fallen to Conall** to guard the province that day, (...).

¹⁵⁰

Example 4.ae is interpreted as Contrastive Focus. This and the following two examples are problematic because they do not show the relative particle. There are no references to the fronted element, so they cannot be classified as *nominativus pendens*, which indeed would not be expected for a structure with a fronted preposition. A cleft-like interpretation would give the best translation, such as in ‘it is to Chonall then that the defence of the province happened (befell) that day’. A relative clause should have given *di conall*, however,¹⁵¹ which is why a cleft interpretation is formally impossible to accept.

¹⁴⁹ O’Rahilly 1976: 21, l.666-67.

¹⁵⁰ O’Rahilly 1976: 142.

¹⁵¹ GOI §492.

4.af *Luid Fergus didiu fordul mór fadess co fórsed do Ultaib terchomrac slóig.*

*Ar chondailbi doróni-seom sin.*¹⁵²

He [Fergus] went far astray to the south to give the Ulstermen time to complete the mustering of their army. This **he did out of affection for his own kin.**¹⁵³

4.ag *‘Fír,’ or in bantocht, ‘is ulchach Cú Chulaind. Is cubaid do niaid comrac fris.’*

*Oc gressacht Lóich ón dorigénsat-som aní sin.*¹⁵⁴

‘Yes,’ said the women, ‘Cú Chulainn is bearded. It is fitting that a warrior should fight with him.’ This **they said [did] in order to goad Lóich.**¹⁵⁵

Example 4.af and 4.ag are interpreted as New Information Focuses. A cleft-like interpretation would give the best translation here as well, but the sentences should start with respectively *ara condailbi* and *oca (n)gressacht* to be a true relative clause. These three sentences might be signs that there is a construction possible for fronting prepositional phrases, similar to that of the subject-initial and object-initial structure described by Mac Cana. Perhaps the word order is not always as fixed as scholars like to believe.

¹⁵² O’Rahilly 1976: 8, l.227-29.

¹⁵³ O’Rahilly 1976: 131.

¹⁵⁴ O’Rahilly 1976: 59, l.1906-08.

¹⁵⁵ O’Rahilly 1976: 178.

4.5 Summary

Figure 4.2 is reprinted here verbatim for ease of reference while reading this summary of the chapter on noun-initial sentences. It even has the same number, in order to avoid confusion. After all the detailed descriptions of examples, it is good to gain an overview again.

Figure 4.2:

NOUN-INITIAL	Aboutness Topic	Contrastive Topic	New Information Focus	Contrastive Focus
pronominal reference in following cleft	8	0	0	0
infixd pron. class A	0	1	0	0
pronominal reference	0	1	0	0
non-relative main verb	0	3	0	0
<i><u>Nominativus Pendens</u></i> <i><u>Total: 13</u></i>	<i><u>8</u></i>	<i><u>5</u></i>	<i><u>0</u></i>	<i><u>0</u></i>
relative flexion	1	0	0	1
relative lenition	2	0	2	0
infixd pron. class C	0	0	1	1
relative particle	0	0	1	1
<i><u>Cleft</u></i> <i><u>Total: 10</u></i>	<i><u>3</u></i>	<i><u>0</u></i>	<i><u>4</u></i>	<i><u>3</u></i>
subject-initial	5	1	0	0
object-initial	1	1	0	0
initial prep. phrase without relative particle	0	0	3	1
<i><u>Ambiguous</u></i> <i><u>Total: 12</u></i>	<i><u>6</u></i>	<i><u>2</u></i>	<i><u>3</u></i>	<i><u>1</u></i>
<i><u>Total examples: 35</u></i>	<i><u>17</u></i>	<i><u>7</u></i>	<i><u>7</u></i>	<i><u>4</u></i>

It can be seen in this figure that the noun-initial structures are used most often to express Aboutness Topics (17 out of 35 examples, 49% of all noun-initial sentences). They are fairly regularly divided over the *nominativus pendens*, cleft, and ambiguous structures. The ambiguous and *nominativus pendens* examples are more often used to express topics whereas the cleft examples more frequently express focus, a distinction that also becomes visible in the analysis of every example in chapters 5 and 6.

To conclude this chapter on the noun-initial sentences, a table of all the ambiguous sentences is included below in figure 4.3. In this figure the characteristics of the sentences are written out: their fronted elements and the function of the fronted element in the sentence, organised by topic or focus label. This is a similar table to those for the *nominativus pendens* examples in figure 5.1 and the clefts in figure 6.1. Because these ambiguous examples are not counted in either of those, they are given their own table here.

It is not really possible to distil global trends from a figure like this, however, since the only thing all of these examples have in common is that they are *not* something else. As can be seen in figure 4.2 already, the ambiguous examples fall apart in broadly two groups: that of the subject/object-initial sentences, which are all analysed as topics, and that of the “preposition-initial” sentences, which are all analysed as focuses. This is illustrated in more detail in figure 4.3 where it can be seen that the topics front nominal elements which function as the subject or object, whereas the focus examples front prepositional phrases which function as adverbials and once a purpose clause.

Figure 4.3:

AMBIGUOUS NOUN-INITIAL	Aboutness Topic	Contrastive Topic	New Information Focus	Contrastive Focus
<i>Fronted element:</i>				
NounP	6	1	0	0
Pronoun	0	1	0	0
Pronoun + NounP	0	0	0	0
PP(NounP)	0	0	3	1
PP(Pro)	0	0	0	0
Noun + V(Rel)	0	0	0	0
<i>Function in sentence:</i>				
Subject	5	2	0	0
Direct Object	1	0	0	0
Adverbial	0	0	2	1
Purpose clause	0	0	1	0
<u>Total examples: 12</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>1</u>

It is a striking detail that many of these ambiguous examples do not form part of direct speech. It can be seen over the previous pages and in the Direct Speech column in the Appendix at a glance that only three of the ambiguous examples are part of dialogue. These are the Contrastive Topic ambiguous examples and the single Aboutness Topic fronting a direct object. It seems, then, that the subject/object-initial structure did not feel natural enough for the scribes to use it more than once in the speech of their characters. When writing dialogue, they opted to front with a cleft (with or without copula) or a proper *nominativus pendens* far more often. This suggests that the subject/object-initial structures, as well as the tentatively suggested preposition-initial structure, are more of a written structure at this point in the language, rather than features of spoken language making their way into the written manuscripts.

5. Nominativus Pendens

5.1 Overview

Of all eight categories that this research distinguishes, the *nominativus pendens* structures are only found to emphasise in two ways: Aboutness Topic and Contrastive Topic. The focus categories are not expressed with *nominativus pendens* at all in this text. A table summarising the examples in each category is given below as figure 5.1, in which the 'fronted element' and 'function in sentence' sections count up to the total separately. Chapter 6 contains a similar table for the clefts. It can be seen, however, that the numbers are significantly different between the two constructions. This is partly due to the comparatively tiny number of *nominativus pendens* structures in the *Táin Bó Cúailnge*, but also to their function.

As explained in the introduction, a *nominativus pendens* is a cataphoric phenomenon anticipating the rest of the sentence, often putting the subject of the clause first. Indeed, as would be expected, all the Aboutness Topic examples (the most important function for the *nominativus pendens* structure with 8 out of 13 examples, which is 62% of all *nominativus pendens*) consist of a noun phrase and function as the subject in the greater sentence. The Contrastive Topic examples (5 out of 8 examples, 38% of all *nominativus pendens*) are also often the subject, although it is in this category that a direct object is felt in one sentence as the topic of the sentence. In one example a noun phrase is even referenced in a conjugated preposition, which makes it into an adverbial. It is also here that other elements besides noun phrases function as the fronted element. Some examples include a relative clause as part of their *nominativus pendens*, but prepositions are never used in this construction.

It may even be impossible for prepositional constructions to commence a *nominativus pendens*, if the Latin meaning of 'hanging nominative' is maintained as a definition. After all, a preposition is of course not nominative and neither is the pronoun or noun phrase following it.

Figure 5.1:

NOMINATIVUS PENDENS	Aboutness Topic	Contrastive Topic	New Information Focus	Contrastive Focus
<i>Fronted element:</i>				
NounP	8	2	0	0
Pronoun	0	0	0	0
Pronoun + NounP	0	0	0	0
PP(NounP)	0	0	0	0
PP(Pro)	0	0	0	0
Noun + V(Rel)	0	3	0	0
<i>Context:</i>				
COP-0	-	-	-	-
<i>Function in sentence:</i>				
Subject	8	3	0	0
Direct Object	0	1	0	0
Adverbial	0	1	0	0
Purpose clause	0	0	0	0
Total examples: 13	<u>8</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>

The *nominativus pendens* examples are discussed here in two sections. Those examples that are analysed as Aboutness Topics are treated first in section 5.2, as they seem to conform to a paradigm following the function of the *nominativus pendens*. The examples analysed as Contrastive Topics are treated in section 5.3. In the examples below, the *nominativus pendens* is marked with green bold type. The element in the main sentence that refers back to it is marked with black bold type.

5.2 Examples of Aboutness Topics

The examples analysed as Aboutness Topic are remarkably similar in form and function. As section 4.1 and 1.1 establish that the *nominativus pendens* has a topicalising function and that the topic is often a noun phrase which is also the subject of the main sentence, a perfect example would be one that has all these standard characteristics. This is what is called here the ‘paradigm’. Below are given examples for the standard paradigm as it is seen for Aboutness Topic and for a construction with clefts using forms that fall into this paradigm.

5.a *Tintaí Medb aitheruch atúaid (...). Nach airm trá i Cuib in ro sáidi Medb echfleisc, is Bile Medba a ainm. **Cach áth & cach dínghai ocár fíu, is Áth Medba & Dindgha Medba a ainm.**¹⁵⁶*

Medb turned back again from the north (...). Wherever in Cuib Medb planted her horsewhip is named Bile Medba. **Every ford and every hill by which she spent the night is** named [its name is] Áth Medba and Dindgha Medba.¹⁵⁷

Although there are only two such examples, example 4.a is the one that comes closest to a standard *nominativus pendens*. It is analysed as an Aboutness Topic and has fronted a Noun Phrase which is related to the subject, because the possessive *a* refers back to the fronted element. There is nothing else to contrast against. This line provides a topic shift, which makes it even more suitable for carrying Aboutness Topic emphasis. As such it follows the expected paradigm perfectly.

Examples 5.b, 5.c and 5.d are Aboutness Topics, have fronted a Noun Phrase and function as the subject. They are also picked up by a cleft with Pronoun (*is ed, is h-é*), as discussed in section 6.3. This type of double construction occurs five times in the corpus. In all of those instances, the *nominativus pendens* is an Aboutness Topic and the cleft construction following it is a Contrastive Focus. Example 5.b is even part of a scene where two other great men besides Conchobar are introduced with the same formula.

¹⁵⁶ O’Rahilly 1976: 47, l.1531-36.

¹⁵⁷ O’Rahilly 1976: 167.

The only difference is their names and the place where they sit, described in relation to Conchobar.¹⁵⁸

- 5.b *‘Cia sin, a Fergais?’ or Ailill. ‘Rofetar-sa ém,’ or Fergus, ‘ina buidni sin .i. **Conchobar rí cóicid h-Érind**, is h-é deisid forsin fert fótmaig; (...)*¹⁵⁹
‘Who were those, Fergus?’ asked Ailill. ‘We know those companies indeed,’ said Fergus. ‘It was **Conchobar, the king of a province in Ireland, who** sat down on the mound of turf. (...)’¹⁶⁰
- 5.c *‘Ced sucat, a Ferguis?’ ‘or Ailill.’ ‘Samalta lat.’ ‘Ní andsa dam-sa a samail ón,’ ‘or Fergus.’ ‘Ulaidh indsin ar tíachtain asa ces. It é torpartatar a fid. **Imdrong iarom & mét & imforráin na láth n-gaile**, is ed forrochraid in fid, is rempu ro thechadar na fiadmíla isin mag.* ¹⁶¹
‘What was that, Fergus?’ said Ailill. ‘Identify it.’ ‘It is not hard for me to recognize what it is,’ said Fergus. ‘Those are the men of Ulster now recovered from their debility. It was they who rushed into the wood. **It was the multitude, the greatness and the violence of the warriors** that shook the wood. It is from them the wild beasts fled into the plain.’¹⁶²
- 5.d ***Imthúsa Con Culaind immorro** is ed indister sund coléic: ‘Fég dúind, a mo popa a Loíg, cindus fechtha Ulaid in cath indosa.’*¹⁶³
Tidings of Cú Chulainn [it is **they** which] are now told: ‘Look for us, my friend Láeg, and see how are the men of Ulster fighting now.’¹⁶⁴

The manner in which this double construction seems to work is that the Aboutness Topic *nominativus pendens* introduces a new character or concept in a neutral way, which the Contrastive Focus cleft then gives extra emphasis. In this way, the fronted element of the *nominativus pendens* receives even more emphasis than it would have carried if it had been expressed within a Contrastive Focus cleft. This can be seen in example 5.c, where the double construction is used alongside multiple other cleft

¹⁵⁸ O’Rahilly 1976: 110, l.3622-24.

¹⁵⁹ O’Rahilly 1976: 110, l.3622-23.

¹⁶⁰ O’Rahilly 1976: 222.

¹⁶¹ O’Rahilly 1976: 108, l.3567-68.

¹⁶² O’Rahilly 1976: 220.

¹⁶³ O’Rahilly 1976: 120, l.3984.

¹⁶⁴ O’Rahilly 1976: 232.

sentences. These are underlined in the example. The *nominativus pendens* in question, however, which is printed in bold green type, is emphasised even more because it is twice mentioned: both by the *nominativus pendens* and by the pronoun in the cleft. Example 5.d has the same heightened emphasis, but for a different reason. Instead of needing to stand out among similar sentences, in this case the *nominativus pendens* introduces a shift in topic to Cú Chulainn after a long triad from Ailill's perspective. It is immediately followed by dialogue between Cú Chulainn and his charioteer, for which it is important to know that the scene has changed.

5.3 Examples of Contrastive Topics

The examples analysed as Contrastive Topic are all too diverse to establish a standard for, although the six examples can be divided into two trends (the fronted element functions as the direct object, or contains a verb) and a single exception (the fronted element is a pronoun). Several examples are given here to illustrate these.

5.e *La sodain atnethat láith gaile Emna & focherdat i n-dabaig n-úarusci. Maitti immi-seom in dabach h-ísin. in dabach aile dano in ro lád, fichis dornaib de. **In tress dabach i n-deochaid iar sudiu**, fosngert-side combo chuimsi dó a tess & a fuacht.*¹⁶⁵

Then the warriors of Emain seized him and cast him into a tub of cold water. That tub burst about him. The second tub into which he was plunged boiled hands high therefrom. **The third tub into which he went after that**, he warmed [her] so that **its** [her] heat and **its** [her] cold were properly adjusted for him.¹⁶⁶

Example 5.e is a Contrastive Topic and has fronted a Noun Phrase. It is listed as an example deviating from the standard paradigm because the *nominativus pendens* functions as the Direct Object in the sentence. The tub is referred to with an infixed pronouns attached to the verb and again with possessive pronouns. The fronted element clearly carries a contrastive function, as it is specifically the third tub and not the first or second that this sentence is about.

¹⁶⁵ O'Rahilly 1976: 25, l.816-18.

¹⁶⁶ O'Rahilly 1976: 148.

5.g *Fer dorigni sin inna sechtmad bliadain,* 'ol Fíachna mac Fir febe,' nípo machdad cia **chonbósad-side** for écomlond & cia nodragad for comlond in tan ata lána a sé bliadna déc indiu.¹⁶⁷

'**One who did that in his seventh year,**' said Fiachu mac Fir Febe, 'it were no wonder that **he should triumph** over odds and overcome in fair fight now that his seventeen years are complete today.'¹⁶⁸

Example 5.g is a Contrastive Topic and functions as the subject in the sentence, which is made apparent by the emphatic *-side* attached to the verb. It is listed as an example deviating from the standard paradigm because the fronted element is not a simple nominal but also contains a verb; in fact, it contains an entire cleft sentence (of which *fer* is the fronted element and the copula is dropped). There are three examples like this, all talking about Cú Chulainn's childhood deeds with the same formula. They have fronted the Noun Phrase *fer* together with the relative verb *dorigni* and a following relative clause. These are classed as Noun + V(Rel) in the table and database.

5.4 Summary

The *nominativus pendens* examples are always topicalising. Most of the analysed examples are Aboutness Topics, which is the most neutral emphasis. This is generally used to indicate a shift in topic. Sometimes the Aboutness Topic *nominativus pendens* is picked up by an immediately following Contrastive Focus cleft sentence, giving it extra emphasis. The Contrastive Topic examples vary more in form and function, apart from having a slightly different nuance in meaning, as none of them strictly follow the Aboutness Topic pattern of being a Noun Phrase and a Subject.

¹⁶⁷ O'Rahilly 1976: 26, l.822-24.

¹⁶⁸ O'Rahilly 1976: 148.

6. Cleft sentences

6.1. Overview

In contrast to the *nominativus pendens* structures, the cleft sentence examples concentrate their numbers in the right-hand side of the table; they are by far most often used to express the strongest emphasis of Contrastive Focus. This category comes up to 60 out of 80 examples, which is 75% of all topic and focus cleft examples. The other three categories only make up 5 out of 10 examples, which is 6,25% (for Aboutness Topic and Contrastive Topic) and 10 out of 80 examples, which is 12,5% (for New Information Focus). In these three categories, it can be seen that the Topics again function as the subject and have a noun phrase or pronoun fronted, with a preference towards noun phrase for Aboutness Topic and towards pronoun for Contrastive Topic. This differs from those Aboutness and Contrastive Topic examples analysed in the ambiguous and *nominativus pendens* examples, although it is hard to compare with only one single pronominal among the ambiguous examples. New Information Focus examples, by contrast, often have a preposition with a noun phrase fronted and as such often function as an adverbial or purpose clause in the sentence. Figure 6.1 shows the distribution of cleft examples among the different categories.

The Contrastive examples, both for Topic and Focus, have a remarkably higher number of fronted pronouns when compared to fronted noun phrases. It seems that there is a tendency to prefer the pronoun when a nominal is fronted for contrastive emphasis. This is also seen in the double construction with a *nominativus pendens*: first the topic is given in the *nominativus pendens*, and then the contrastive meaning is added by a short Contrastive Focus cleft fronting a pronoun which refers back to the *nominativus pendens*. Perhaps even the double predicate construction, found in figure 6.1 under the heading Pronoun + NounP, can be explained in relation to this tendency.

Figure 6.1:

CLEFT	Aboutness Topic	Contrastive Topic	New Information Focus	Contrastive Focus
<i>Fronted element:</i>				
NounP	3	0	3	7
Pronoun	2	5	1	27
Pronoun + NounP	0	0	0	4
PP(NounP)	0	0	5	14
PP(Pro)	0	0	1	7
Noun + V(Rel)	0	0	0	0
<i>Context:</i>				
COP-0	3	0	4	3
<i>Function in sentence:</i>				
Subject	4	5	3	33
Direct Object	1	0	2	3
Adverbial	0	0	4	20
Purpose clause	0	0	1	4
Total examples: 80	<u>5</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>60</u>

These trends can be explained neatly when considering the function of clefts. As explained in the introduction, the cleft is an emphasising device because of its fronting nature, most suitable for contrastive emphasis.¹⁶⁹ The copular construction also lends itself very well for answers, which is a feature of focus. It simply repeats only the answer as a fronted clause without having to build an entire sentence.

¹⁶⁹ Mac Coisdealbha 1998: 143.

6.2. Examples of Topic clefts

The cleft examples analysed as Aboutness Topics, although their numbers are small, have one striking thing in common: they have by far the highest percentage of zero-copula (COP-0) phrases (3 out of 5 examples, 60%). Contrastive Topics, however, do not have any zero-copula sentences among their examples. These are only fronted pronouns functioning as the subject: *Is ed, is é, it éside...* Figure 6.2 below gives all the Topic cleft examples again for ease of reference.

Figure 6.2:

CLEFT	Aboutness Topic	Contrastive Topic
<i>Fronted element:</i>		
NounP	3	0
Pronoun	2	5
Pronoun + NounP	0	0
PP(NounP)	0	0
PP(Pro)	0	0
Noun + V(Rel)	0	0
<i>Context:</i>		
COP-0	3	0
<i>Function in sentence:</i>		
Subject	4	5
Direct Object	1	0
Adverbial	0	0
Purpose clause	0	0
<u>Total examples: 10</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>5</u>

Several examples are given here to illustrate the use of the cleft in Topic meaning. In the examples below, the fronted element of the cleft is marked with green bold type.

Only the two Aboutness Topic examples fronting a pronoun use a copula in their cleft sentence. The other three examples, fronting a noun phrase, do this without a copula. It is not visible from these results whether this trend also continues for

Contrastive Topics, because there are no Contrastive Topic examples fronting noun phrases. A zero-copula construction gives all the attention to the fronted noun phrase in a way that is similar to the *nominativus pendens*. As noun phrases are the only elements fronted by *nominativus pendens* constructions, it is striking that they also occur as zero-copula clefts. Although these structures look very much alike, these three examples have been established by a detailed discussion in chapter 4 to be zero-copula clefts.

6.a *Cingid íarom for rindris na m-bera amal én di cach biur for araili i n-iarmóracht na n-én arnách élaitís. 'For Cú Chulaind uccut,' ol sé, 'dochóid reom-sa for teched!'*¹⁷⁰

Then, like a bird himself, he stepped on to the points of the stakes, going from one stake to another, pursuing the birds that they might not escape him. They were all certain, however, that Cú Chulainn was fleeing from Nad Crantail.

'[it is] That Cú Chulainn of yours,' said Nad Crantail, '[who] has taken to flight before me.'¹⁷¹

As discussed under example 4.o in chapter 4, this example can be definitively analysed as a cleft sentence without a copula, because *dochóid* contains a relative lenition. In this example, the fronting does not seem to impose any contrastive or focus emphasis upon Cú Chulainn. He is made the topic of Nad Crantail's utterance with topic emphasis, however.

This type of relative cleft construction then is very suitable for the neutral meaning of Aboutness Topic, for the same reasons why the *nominativus pendens* lends itself so well to it. This observation, however, begs the question why these clefts still exist and are used to express topics, when apparently the *nominativus pendens* and even the ambiguous subject-initial structures can do it just as efficiently. Since these constructions become so similar in form and function, it seems unnecessary to have two or more separate syntactical constructions to express the same meaning. It must be that both have had their merits to the user of Old Irish, for an almost equal number of examples have shown up in this text for both cleft and *nominativus pendens* in the Topic categories. This could mean that it was a style choice, for the main formal difference

¹⁷⁰ O'Rahilly 1976: 44, l.1421-25.

¹⁷¹ O'Rahilly 1976: 164.

between zero-copula cleft and *nominativus pendens* is the verbal form following it and whether or not there is a resumptive pronoun. A difference in meaning or emphasis does not seem to be the leading principle for this choice, however.

Another example illustrating the use of a cleft (with copula) as Aboutness Topic is example 6.b. The cleft does not emphasise anything in this sentence; as far as can be seen, it is a neutral context. The time is emphasised by a fronting construction in the previous sentence, but in the sentence marked by the green bold type the fronted pronoun simply seems to function as the subject of *dollotar*.

6.b *In lúan iar samain is and documlaiset. **Iss ed** dollotar sairdes a Crúachnaib Aí .i. for Muicc Cruinb, for Terloch Teóra Crích, (...).*¹⁷²

On the Monday after the autumn festival of Samain they set out. **[it is] They** [who] travelled south-east from Crúachain Aí, past Mucc Cruinb, past Terloch Teóra Crích, (...).¹⁷³

The Contrastive Topic clefts consist of fronted subject pronouns. An illustrative example for the usage of a cleft sentence in Contrastive Topic meaning is example 6.c. Here, the pronoun takes an emphatic form as well as being fronted. This signals a certain contrastive importance about the topic. Then we learn why these men are so important to the story: they find Cú Chulainn's warning.

6.c *Eirr & Inell, Foich & Fochlam a n-da ara, cethri meic Iraird meic Ánchinne, **it éside** no bítis remain résin slóg do imdidnad a m- bretnas & a fortcha & a m-brat ar nácha salchadh dendgor in díрма. Fogabat-side in n-id focheird Cú Chulaind & arigsitár in geilt geltatár ind eich.*¹⁷⁴

The four sons of Irard mac Anchinnel, Eirr and Indell with Foich and Fochlam their two charioteers, **[they] were those** who always preceded the hosts to protect their brooches and their rugs and their mantles that the dust raised by

¹⁷² O'Rahilly 1976: 4, l.114-16.

¹⁷³ O'Rahilly 1976: 128.

¹⁷⁴ O'Rahilly 1976: 9, l.256-60.

the army might not soil them. These men found the withe Cú Chulainn had cast and they noticed the grazing made by the horses.¹⁷⁵

One example which fronts the direct object with a cleft is also analysed as a Contrastive Topic. This is example 6.d, where it is used in a dialogue as a retort by Etarcomol to Cú Chulainn. He refers to that which Cú Chulainn has just said and reaffirms it as the topic under discussion, with added contrastive meaning to negate everything else that he could possibly have seen.

6.d *Téit Fergus ass íarom. Anaid Etarcomol oc déscin Con Culaind. ‘Cid dofécai?’ ol Cú. ‘Tussu,’ ol Etarcomol. ‘Mós tairchella ém súil tar sodain,’ ol Cú Chulaind. ‘Is ed ón atchíu,’ ol Etarcomol. ‘Ní fetar ní arndott áighte do neoch.’¹⁷⁶*

Fergus departed. Etarcomol remained behind gazing at Cú Chulainn. ‘What are you looking at?’ said Cú Chulainn. ‘You,’ said Etarcomol. ‘An eye can soon glance over that,’ said Cú Chulainn.

‘So [it is that which] I see,’ answered Etarcomol. ‘I see no reason why anyone should fear you.’¹⁷⁷

In summary, the category of Topic clefts cannot be explained in a single sentence. Although it should hardly be logical for it to exist, seeing as the *nominativus pendens* and the subject-initial categories can express the same meaning, it is there. It could be a matter of style which structure is decided to be used. The clefts are not with many in this category, but they can definitively be analysed as clefts. Therefore, it can be concluded that clefts are also possible vehicles for expressing topic meaning. The fronted elements which are used for the purpose of Aboutness Topic are similar to those used in *nominativus pendens* examples: nominals. The fronted elements for Contrastive Topic are only pronominals, however, which may have to do with the function of contrast.

¹⁷⁵ O’Rahilly 1976: 132.

¹⁷⁶ O’Rahilly 1976: 41, l.1325.

¹⁷⁷ O’Rahilly 1976: 162.

6.3. Examples of Focus clefts

Figure 6.3:

CLEFT	New Information Focus	Contrastive Focus
<i>Fronted element:</i>		
NounP	3	7
Pronoun	1	27
Pronoun + NounP	0	4
PP(NounP)	5	14
PP(Pro)	1	7
Noun + V(Rel)	0	0
<i>Context:</i>		
COP-0	4	3
<i>Function in sentence:</i>		
Subject	3	33
Direct Object	2	3
Adverbial	4	20
Purpose clause	1	4
<u>Total examples: 70</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>60</u>

Figure 6.3 shows the numbers for cleft examples that have been interpreted as Focus, either Contrastive Focus or New Information Focus (without contrast). This table is identical to the righthand side of figure 6.1; it is only reprinted here for ease of reference while reading. An interesting aspect of this figure is that it contains all the Focus examples as well, because as figure 5.1 shows, none of the *nominativus pendens* examples have been analysed as Focus. The correlation between form and function therefore seems apparent in this case. However, there is more to be said about the form of these examples.

Firstly, the fronted elements common in these categories differ from those in the categories discussed so far. In the Contrastive Focus category, there is suddenly a big spike for the Pronoun (27 out of 60 examples, 45%) while it does not at all occur very

often in the other categories. The pronoun is probably well suited to express Contrastive meaning because this offers an economical way of calling attention to a single person or thing. The same has been mentioned for the Contrastive Topic clefts, where Pronouns are in fact the only fronted elements. There is a difference in usage, however. When expressing Contrastive Focus, the pronoun more often refers to a Noun Phrase or character name which has just been mentioned. Because that construction does not consist of a shift in topic, but it is the pronoun that calls extra attention to the element, the second mention with the pronoun has then been classed as Contrastive Focus. Example 6.e illustrates this.

6.e *Is nephnár a n-dogníat **Ulaid másat é** file sund thall,' ol Cú,' 'cén file in slóg fora tairr.'*¹⁷⁸

'It is a bold action on the part of the **Ulstermen if it is they** who are yonder,' said Cú Chulainn, 'while the army is on their track.'¹⁷⁹

Completely new fronted elements appear in figure 6.3 that were not present among the Topics in figure 6.2, as well. These merit some discussion. Structurally the most different from the elements fronted by the *nominativus pendens* are the prepositional phrase with enclosed noun phrase (PP(NounP)) and to a lesser extent the prepositional phrase with enclosed pronoun (PP(Pro), better known in Celtic studies as a conjugated preposition). These are prominent among both the Contrastive Focus examples (14+7 out of 60 examples, 35%) and especially the New Information Focus examples (5+1 out of 10 examples, 60%). Their confinement to the Focus examples may be caused indirectly by the function which these prepositional structures often carry, because prepositions are frequently used to create adverbials such as in example 6.f.

6.f *'**Nípa isind áth escomon sa** condricfem, áit h-i torchair Long.'*¹⁸⁰

'We shall **not** meet **in the polluted ford** where Long fell.'¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁸ O'Rahilly 1976: 27, l.876-77.

¹⁷⁹ O'Rahilly 1976: 149.

¹⁸⁰ O'Rahilly 1976: 61, l.1977-78.

¹⁸¹ O'Rahilly 1976: 180.

For secondly, there is naturally a clear correlation between the fronted element and their function in the sentence. In the case of the prepositional phrases, they are invariably classed as Adverbials or Purpose clauses and together they make up almost completely these two sections. Whereas pronouns and noun phrases can function as subjects of verbs and as such can be analysed also as topics, adverbials and purpose clauses have a more abstract meaning. They can never be topics, a characteristic which means that the fronted adverbial or purpose clause is automatically analysed as a focus if it carries any emphatic meaning. It says something about the topic instead of changing the topic. The difference between adverbials and purpose clauses as they are analysed here is that the label of adverbial is a catch-all category containing many different kinds of adverbials ranging from conjugated prepositions to complicated prepositional phrases with nouns, while the label of purpose clause is used to track prepositions that are used to front an action. These usually look like *is do* + verbal noun, as in the following example 6.g:

- 6.g *‘Nímda mac écin,’ or Cú Chulaind, ‘acht **is do chuingid chomraic fri fer dodeochaid in mac fil and**’¹⁸²*
 ‘I am no lad indeed,’ said Cú Chulainn, ‘but the lad who is here has come **to seek battle with a man.**’¹⁸³

Thirdly, there are a handful of examples with a curious fronted element. In the following example 6.f, the fronted element consists of both a pronoun and a noun phrase which both refer to the same thing. The pronoun seems redundant, but in fact it is proleptic and refers forward to the possessive *a* in this case. Examples like this occurring in the *Táin Bó Cúailnge* are represented in figure 6.3 as the four examples with “Pronoun + NounP” as their fronted element. They only occur among Contrastive Focus examples. These constructions are called double predicates and occur not only in cleft sentences, but in normal copular sentences too.¹⁸⁴ Even though the double predicate poses quite a problem to scholars who are trying to understand the phenomenon in Old Irish because

¹⁸² O’Rahilly 1976: 23, l.729-30.

¹⁸³ O’Rahilly 1976: 145.

¹⁸⁴ Mac Coisdealbha 1998: 56-57.

it is not seen as formally correct, this construction with the added pronoun just after the copula later becomes productive in Modern Irish.¹⁸⁵

In example 6.h, the cleft sentence in question (*it é a eich geltatar in mag so*) is preceded by another cleft construction (*Cú Chulaind rod lá*) which is also analysed as a Contrastive Focus. Although the verb *rod lá* is not visibly relative, this is taken to be a cleft with dropped copula. As the pronoun in the cleft with double construction refers back to *Cú Chulainn* in the first cleft, this combination could be a reason to double the predicate here. However, this argument is unlikely as the possessive *a* also refers to *Cú Chulainn*. The use of the pronoun could also be a feature of contrast, which generally prefers fronting pronouns.

6.h *'Anmai,' or Fergus, 'frisín n-id n-ucut. Atá ogam inna menuc, & iss ed fil and: "ná tíagar secha co n-étar fer ro láa id samlaid cona óenláim, & óenslat día tá, & friscuriur mo phopa Fergus." Fír,' ol Fergus, 'Cú Chulaind rod lá & it é a eich geltatar in mag so.'*¹⁸⁶

'We are waiting,' said Fergus, 'because of yonder withe. There is on its peg an ogam inscription which reads: "Let none go past till there be found a man to throw a withe made of one branch as it is in the same way with one hand. But I except my friend Fergus." In truth,' said Fergus, 'it is **Cú Chulainn** who has cast it and **it is [he] his horses** which grazed this plain.'¹⁸⁷

Apart from example 6.h, the other three occurrences of this construction concern the account of the narrator telling us who did something. All four examples are analysed as Contrastive Focus, which means that the construction is only used in highly emphatic environments in this text. In two cases, that is to say, half of the examples collected here, the construction is found in an editorial passage comparing sources such as in example 6.i. In light of the double predicate construction becoming more accepted in Modern Irish, this might explain the occurrence of it in this specific place in the *Táin Bó Cúailnge* examples as well. If there is any discrepancy in date between an editorial comment and the narrative itself, the editorial comment would naturally be placed later in time. This would make it more probable for a late construction to be used there.

¹⁸⁵ For example DiGirolamo (forthcoming): 25.

¹⁸⁶ O'Rahilly 1976: 9, l.268-71.

¹⁸⁷ O'Rahilly 1976: 132.

6.i *Is and asbert Fachtnai in tan donórcaib grían: — Nó **is h-é Conchobar** ro chan trena chodlad: ‘Comérgid, (...)’*¹⁸⁸

It was at sunrise that Fachtna spoke. —Or (according to another account) **Conchobar** chanted these words in his trance: ‘Arise... [*roscada* poetry]’¹⁸⁹

Fourthly, Contrastive Focus clefts pair on a number of occasions with an Aboutness Topic *nominativus pendens* to create the double construction with extra emphasis introduced in section 5.2. The clefts in 6.j refer back to a noun phrase put forward as a *nominativus pendens* (marked in black bold type). All cleft sentences are analysed with a separate entry from the *nominativus pendens* in the database and in all the calculations.

6.j *Conchobar rí cóicid h-Érind, **is h-é** deisid forsin fert fótmaig;
Sencha mac Aililla, erlabraid Ulad, **is é** deisid ara bélaib;
Cúscraid Mend Macha mac Conchobair, **is h-é** deisidh for láim a athar.*¹⁹⁰
‘It was Conchobar, the king of a province in Ireland, who sat down on the mound of turf. **It was Sencha mac Ailella, the eloquent speaker of Ulster, who** sat down in front of Conchobar. **It was Cúscraid Menn Macha, Conchobar's son, who** sat at his father's hand.’¹⁹¹

Finally, a curious example needs to be addressed. 6.k can be analysed as a cleft sentence and a Contrastive Focus, that much is clear. The exact point where the sentence has been cleft is not, however, which also makes it difficult to name the fronted element and establish its function in the sentence. It almost seems to be two fronted parts of clefts immediately following one another: *is cóic lá déc/ iss ed*. Thus, the interpretation can go two ways in taking either one of these as the fronted element of the true cleft. In any case, the function of the fronted element can be labelled as Adverbial: both *cóic lá déc* and *ed* have an adverbial function to the main verb *ro boí*. It is unusual to classify a pronoun as such, but in this case it refers to the fifteen days. This leaves the question of the fronted element and which of the clefts is considered to be the true cleft. For the

¹⁸⁸ O’Rahilly 1976: 117, l.3903.

¹⁸⁹ O’Rahilly 1976: 230.

¹⁹⁰ O’Rahilly 1976: 110, l.3623-25.

¹⁹¹ O’Rahilly 1976: 222.

purposes of this research, it is probably best to choose *iss ed* as the main fronted element, because it is closest to the main verb. In this analysis, *Nó is cóic lá déc* would become a separate sentence, an interjection coming across as enthusiasm on the part of the narrator: ‘...or it is the fifteen days! It is that (amount of time) that Cú Chulainn was in Focherd, *that* is why the name Cóicsius Focherda is in the Tain!’

6.k *Nó is cóic lá déc iss ed ro boí Cú Chulaind h-i Fochaird, conid de atá Cóicnas Focherda isin Tána.*¹⁹²

Or else **it is** because Cú Chulainn was **fifteen days** in Focherd that the name Cóicsius Focherda comes in the Tain.¹⁹³

In summary, the category of Focus clefts contains a number of interesting developments. Focus is clearly a feature of cleft sentences and not of *nominativus pendens*. Especially Contrastive Focus is an emphasis feature which is found in 3 out of 4 emphatic clefts. The fronted element of a Focus cleft can consist of more than a simple noun phrase or pronoun, although there are many Contrastive Focus examples with fronted pronouns; fronted prepositional phrases also make up a sizeable portion of the Focus clefts. This means that the functions of the fronted element of Focus clefts in the main sentence include adverbial function and purpose clause as well as subject and direct object. For the most part, fronted prepositional phrases function as adverbials and purpose clauses, whereas fronted nouns and pronouns function as subjects and direct objects. Finally, there are two constructions concerning Contrastive Focus clefts that are interesting formations, both carrying extra emphasis. The first is an internal development in which the fronted part of the cleft consists of a double predicate, of which there are four examples. The other is an external construction making use of a *nominativus pendens* and combining it with a subsequent cleft sentence which refers back to it.

¹⁹² O’Rahilly 1976: 62, l.2034-35.

¹⁹³ O’Rahilly 1976: 181.

6.4. Examples of clefts which are neither Topic nor Focus

Those examples of clefts and *nominativus pendens* that were labeled something other than the four topic/focus categories are briefly summarised in figure 6.4 below.

The Time and Idiom examples are not extremely relevant to this research, as they are not emphasising anything. Their fronting is merely used because that has become the default way of expressing it in Old Irish. Expressions like *Is and...* ‘Then (something happened)’ have become stereotyped, especially in narrative, thus losing any emphatic interpretation. Neither do they show any subtle differences in meaning. These examples are nevertheless recorded in the database under a different tab. Anyone conducting research on *dindshenchas* in the *Táin* may find it a useful resource, as many of those occurrences are collected there, although it needs to be stressed that only the examples that are clefts or *nominativus pendens* have been incorporated.

The examples labelled as *Figura Etymologica* are also clefts, but because their emphatic function is very different from focus and contrast they are included in this section instead of the discussion in previous sections. The Predicate examples are formally not clefts at all. They are included here because they do carry an emphatic function and because they are fronted structures. It is quite probable that the number for Predicate examples is not accurate, however. Possibly about 50% of the text was analysed already before it was decided to give these examples a dedicated category. At that point there were a handful of examples already in the database that could finally be analysed correctly, which accounts for the marking of Predicate examples early in the text, but it was only going forward that every Predicate example was entered and analysed. The following figure 6.4 reports the number of examples of these four extra categories found in the *Táin Bó Cúailnge*.

Figure 6.4:

	CLEFT	NOMINATIVUS PENDENS
Time	83	2
Idiom	56	2
Figura Etymologica	2	0
Predicate	17	0
Total examples:	158	4

The examples of Time and Idiom are not discussed here in detail, as they are not emphatic and very standard. By far the most are identical to the examples cited in the explanation of the labels in the introduction. For example, there are 68 occurrences of variants of *is and (sin)* and 15 occurrences of *is iarom*, labeled under Time; and 35 occurrences of *is de (sin)*, and 9 occurrences of variants of *is amlaid*, labeled under Idiom. Other examples analysed as these categories include *is aire* (4x) and *is iarsin* (2x); these can be viewed with all their other characteristics in the Appendix.

When the time is emphasised for Contrastive Focus, *is and* is not enough, so then a cleft construction is used as discussed in previous sections. There are two such examples which emphasise the time of the utterance. These use a cleft construction with a prepositional phrase and noun indicating a time period and typically introduce a new scene. Example 6.l below illustrates this, discussing the night before the final battle when several people have prophetic visions.

6.l *Ba isin n-aidchi sin* adchondairc Dubthach Dóel Ulad in aislingi a m-bádar ind t-slóig for Gáirich & Irgáirich.¹⁹⁴

That was the night when Dubthach Dóel Mad saw a vision in which the army stood at Gáirech and Irgáirech.¹⁹⁵

The two Figura Etymologica examples, however, are in a way emphatic. This is because the verbal stem is repeated when using its verbal noun as an object and also moving it to the front in a zero-copula structure. As Patricia Ronan argues and shows, it is otherwise difficult to emphasise the verbal action of an inflected verb.¹⁹⁶ Both examples are given here below as examples 6.m and 6.n.

6.m *Tongu-sa do dia toingte Ulaid, clóenad clóenfath-sa mo chend fair nó in t-súil dogén-sa fris, nocon focheor cor d'á chind riut & noco lémaither a glúasacht.*¹⁹⁷

'I swear by the god by whom the Ulstermen swear, that I shall so nod at him and so **glare [(it is) a glare I will glare]** at him that he will not move his head towards you and will not dare to stir.'¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁴ O'Rahilly 1976: 107, l.3527.

¹⁹⁵ O'Rahilly 1976: 219.

¹⁹⁶ Ronan 2006: 147-48.

¹⁹⁷ O'Rahilly 1976: 25, l.794-96.

¹⁹⁸ O'Rahilly 1976: 147.

6.n *'Olc gním dorignius fri Ailill,' 'or sé.'*¹⁹⁹

'I have **wronged [(it is) a bad deed which I have done to]** Ailill,' said he.²⁰⁰

The Predicate examples can be recognised because their fronted element is an adjective. They show three main modes of expressing which are fairly well divided over the seventeen examples. There are five examples which have a negative copula, such as 6.o. This gives them a contrastive meaning by default, because it contrasts against the positive form of the adjective. Eight examples have a positive copula, such as 6.p. The remaining four examples have no copula at all, such as 6.n. In the examples quoted here it can be seen that this fronting construction makes the fronted adjective into an adverb. In 6.q, the adjective is already turned into an adverb by the addition of *co*, although the example can also be interpreted as the noun *glinne* in a prepositional phrase (as O'Rahilly translates: 'with security').

6.o *'Ní maith a n-asbir la sanais ón,' 'ol Fergus.'*²⁰¹

'You speak **foolishly [it is not well]** that you speak with this (bad) advice],' said Fergus in a low voice.²⁰²

6.p *'Is co n-glinni dothéig ar mo chend-sa, a popa Fergus,' 'ol sé,' 'cen claideb inna intiuch.'*²⁰³

'**It is with (a feeling of) security [it is securely]** that] you come against me, master Fergus, seeing that you have no sword in your scabbard.'²⁰⁴

6.q *'A gilla,' 'for sé,' 'romór molaid-siu Coin Culaind úair ní lúag molta darad duit.'*²⁰⁵

'O lad,' said Fer Diad, '**too highly** do you extol Cú Chulainn, for he has not given you a reward for your praise.'²⁰⁶

There is a certain emphasis on the adjective in this way, which can be compared to contrastive emphasis, because the speaker is expressing that it has specifically this

¹⁹⁹ O'Rahilly 1976: 33, l.1059.

²⁰⁰ O'Rahilly 1976: 155.

²⁰¹ O'Rahilly 1976: 6, l.164.

²⁰² O'Rahilly 1976: 129.

²⁰³ O'Rahilly 1976: 76, l.2506-07.

²⁰⁴ O'Rahilly 1976: 194.

²⁰⁵ O'Rahilly 1976: 90, l.2979-80.

²⁰⁶ O'Rahilly 1976: 205.

quality and not another. This is posited tentatively, however, as it may also be the default position for an adjective to have predicate meaning.

In summary, the 'extra' categories of Time and Idiom contain many examples which are mainly very similar to each other and do not contribute much to the discussion on emphasis. When the time needs to be emphasised in Old Irish, a cleft sentence is used. The categories of *Figura Etymologica* and Predicate do offer some insight in emphasis. These structures are used to emphasise something other than a nominal or preposition: the *figura etymologica* emphasises the verbal meaning by using the verbal noun as fronted direct object and the predicate may emphasise the adjective by fronting it in a cleft sentence.

6.5. Summary

The cleft category is very diverse. As can be seen in the many different structures and meanings it can be used to express, this fronting strategy is the most versatile and also the most numerous in this corpus. Whereas clefts are only one way to express Topic and this can also be done using noun-initial or *nominativus pendens* structures, the meaning of Focus, which is also the most occurring category among clefts, seems to be exclusive to the fronted structure of the cleft. The fronted element of Topic clefts is always a nominal, but the fronted element of Focus clefts can range from nominals to prepositional phrases. This means that the function of Focus clefts also ranges from subject and object to adverbial and purpose clause whereas the function of Topic clefts is restricted to subject and object, as form corresponds to function.

By far the most cleft examples (75% of emphatic clefts) express a Contrastive Focus emphasis. These clefts can also form constructions with *nominativus pendens* clauses at the front for extra emphasis. The cleft structure is so productive, however, that there are a handful of extra categories which contain a high number of petrified or non-emphatic utterances.

7. Discussion

In order to draw everything back together after this lengthy volume of research, this chapter makes a synthesis of all results and attempts to contextualise and explain them before the conclusion in chapter 8. To this end, a table summarising all the fronted examples is presented here below as figure 7.1. The individual tables that these numbers are drawn from can be found in figures 4.3, 5.1, 6.1 and 6.4.

Figure 7.1:

<i>TÁIN BÓ CÚAILNGE</i>	NOMINATIVUS PENDENS	CLEFT	AMBIGUOUS NOUN-INITIALS
Aboutness Topic	8	5	6
Contrastive Topic	5	5	2
New Information Focus	0	10	3
Contrastive Focus	0	60	1
Subtotal:	13	80	12
<i>Time</i>	2	83	0
<i>Idiom</i>	2	56	0
<i>Figura Etymologica</i>	0	2	0
<i>Predicate</i>	0	17	0
Subtotal:	4	158	0
<u>Grand Total of Examples</u>	<u>17</u>	<u>238</u>	<u>12</u>

Regarding the comparison and hypothesis in the introduction between the fronting structures of cleft sentences and *nominativus pendens* structures and the linguistic emphasis (*focus*, *topic* and *contrast*) they are able to carry, it can be seen that there is a clear preference. Cleft examples most often express a focus, whereas *nominativus pendens* examples always express a topic. As for contrast, this is mainly carried by 65 cleft examples (81% of 80 examples). The *nominativus pendens* and ambiguous examples show a preference for non-contrast, as they only count 5 (39% of 13 examples) and 4 (33% of 12 examples) examples respectively. Upon the whole,

however, only taking into account the emphatic examples (the topic and focus examples in the upper half of this table and not counting the italicised numbers), there are 73 contrastive examples (70% of 105 examples) and 32 non-contrastive examples (30% of 105 examples).

In the introduction, Neeleman and Vermeulen's reasoning was introduced for interpreting every fronted element as having contrastive emphasis in modern English. It is clear from the results of this research that Old Irish does not have this rule. Contrastive examples are more common among sentences with fronting, but Aboutness Topic and New Information Focus examples can just as well place their emphasised element at the front, even though they do not have contrastive emphasis. Old Irish seems to be somewhat freer in its word order in this respect than modern English.

The distinct trends that characterise the different structures can be traced back to the fronted element and its function in the sentence. As the *nominativus pendens* is always a nominal or pronominal element, it is often used to express the emphasis of topic. A cleft, however, can front any element. This makes it the construction of choice for fronting adverbials, which carry the emphasis of focus. As such, cleft sentences in the *Táin Bó Cúailnge* front many adverbials (focus) and also many nominals (focus or topic).

The cleft structure is also very productive in producing other constructions, such as the *figura etymologica*, predicate, time and other idioms. The 83 Time examples make up one third of all cleft examples (35% of 238 examples). The other three 'extra' categories together make up another third with 75 examples (32% of 238 examples). It is only the last third which makes up the topic and focus clefts analysed in the greater part of this thesis: 80 examples (34% of 238 examples). These figures are rounded up towards a round percentile.

As this research touches upon the layers of emphatic, discourse-influencing meaning hidden in the Old Irish fronted sentences, it is not surprising to find many of these in dialogue. There it can be seen how the clefts and *nominativus pendens* work together to weave an intricate pattern indicating to the reader or listener what to pay attention to, which information is new or shocking, which choice should be preferred, or simply what the topic of the utterance is. In a flowing discourse, whether it is dialogue or narrative, there are many shifts of topic. The receiver risks getting lost if he is not able to follow along with this pattern. In long narrative sections, these topic shifts are indicated by

explicitly naming the new topic, which can then subsequently be the implicit subject of verbs and be referred to by pronouns. Sometimes the receiver has emphatic structures to guide him.

Therefore, the cleft sentences and *nominativus pendens* structures that use fronting for emphasis are right at home in the environment of dialogue. It can be seen in the Appendix that 56 out of 106 emphatic examples (53%) are part of direct speech; another 19 examples (18%) are part of a sentence in which the narrator himself adds a comment to the reader (which could be interpreted as the narrator speaking to his audience). These meta-comments strikingly often make use of fronting constructions. Together this makes for 71% of emphatic fronting examples in a speech-like environment, against 30 emphatic fronting examples (28%) which are not part of direct speech but of narrative prose. When contrasting this against the 'extra' categories, a clear pattern appears. A staggering 141 out of 162 examples (87%) are not part of direct speech but of narrative prose; the many Time and Idiom examples are far more suited to prose than dialogue. Of the remaining 22 examples (13%), many are in the Figura Etymologica and Predicate categories. This distinction suggests that the emphatic structures serve an important function in dialogue, more so than in prose. One emphatic structure which does not occur very often in direct speech, however, is the noun-initial sentence.

Noun-initial sentences play an intriguing part in this research. A detailed discussion of every noun-initial example seems to suggest that apart from those examples which are *nominativus pendens* or zero-copula clefts, there are also examples which cannot be classed as such. Two suggestions are made to explain the two main groups of noun-initial sentences. These are the subject/object-initial sentence, which has been posited by scholars before, and a tentative suggestion for a preposition-initial sentence structure. Although it is not formally supposed to be possible, there are examples that seem to have it. All of these examples carry emphasis.

8. Conclusion

After all of these analyses and arguments, it is a good thing to return to the research question which started this investigation:

“How do *nominativus pendens* structures and cleft sentences in the *Táin Bó Cúailnge* express emphasis using topic, focus and/or contrast?”

The research of this thesis consists of a marriage of tiny parts of two worlds: Early Irish philology and theoretical syntax. It focuses on two striking syntactic constructions in Old Irish and analyses their usage in the *Táin Bó Cúailnge* according to the linguistic notions of emphasis. Because the introduction hypothesises that cleft sentences are expected to have more of a focus meaning, whereas *nominativus pendens* structures are more suited to express topics, the remainder of the thesis puts this to the test. Examples are listed in a database with assigned labels for emphasis, fronted element, the function of the element in the sentence, and contextual elements. The structure of all noun-initial examples is explained in detail in order to arrive at a solid argument. All of this information together allows for a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the examples, which shows that the focus/topic distinction does indeed follow certain patterns in regard to the characteristics of the examples.

In answer to the main research question, then, it can be said that the *nominativus pendens* structures clearly express topic emphasis, whereas the cleft sentence is very frequently used to express focus emphasis, although it can express both. Many of the examples also carry contrastive emphasis, as a second layer in addition to topic or focus. Especially cleft sentences tend to occur in contrastive meaning: the Contrastive Focus label contains by far the highest number of examples.

A number of interesting mini-trends show up among the examples, some of which might offer more insights than this research has been able to get into. Among these are the double predicates (e.g. *it é a eich geltatar in mag so*) discussed in section 6.3 and the examples in the Predicate label discussed in section 6.4. Something odd is happening in both predicative structures. It would be interesting to find out how the sentence structure works in detail. Another possibly fruitful investigation would be to explore topic shifts outside fronting situations in a more structured manner than what can be found in chapter 3. This might be able to give more insight into the discourse

structure and whether subtle signs of the topic shifting exist in medieval Irish. Additionally, the noun-initial and preposition-initial sentences are certainly worthy of more work into the discovery of their structure and meaning. It would probably take a larger corpus than this to truly say something substantive about them and decide whether or not the preposition-initial sentence actually exists.

As most of the outcomes of this analysis are fairly subtle and are at the intuitive range of understanding a text, the research results remain descriptive. It does not make much difference in the translation of a cleft sentence to know whether it is a New Information Focus or a Contrastive Topic; in the subtle philological interpretation of this particular cleft in its context, however, these findings may inspire new thoughts.

It is rather the theoretical knowledge about the workings of Old Irish syntax that this thesis strives to add to. As an investigation of the topic/focus hypothesis in a very clearly defined corpus, this hopefully forms a practical addition to the debate.

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