

President's Research Gran Application
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SUMMARY

English, like other natural languages, possesses a repertoire of grammatical constructions which serve to mark particular elements as playing particular pragmatic roles in the discourse in which the sentence is uttered. One important subclass of such pragmatically-marked constructions are those which single out a particular constituent as the topic (what the sentence is about) or the focus (what is said, asked, etc. about the topic) of the sentence. Such constructions include left dislocations, right dislocations, topicalizations, clefts, pseudoclefts, and inverted pseudoclefts, as illustrated in (1):

(1)	left dislocation	Beans, I like them.
	right dislocation	I like them, beans.
	topicalization	Beans I like.
	cleft	It's beans that I like.
	pseudocleft	What I like is beans.
	inverted pseudocleft.	Beans is what is like.

Although a great deal of progress has been made in discovering the general discourse functions of the individual constructions (e.g., Halliday 1967, Kuno 1972, Gundel 1974, Prince 1978, Ward 1985, Hedberg 1990), theoretical assumptions of individual researchers have frequently been in conflict, and crucial terminology has been inconsistently applied. Furthermore, even though a number of pragmatically-marked syntactic constructions have been identified in other languages, along with certain of their prosodic, semantic, and pragmatic properties, a systematic cross-linguistic exploration has not yet been undertaken; and the language-particular conclusions which have emerged have proven difficult to evaluate, given the terminological and conceptual confusion characterizing the field. The goal of the present study is to rectify these shortcomings by systematically developing a conceptual framework which has already been successfully applied to the English constructions in (1) for application to the analysis of pragmatically-marked constructions in other languages.

A. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Previous research has determined that the constructions in (1) do not consistently mark one particular pragmatic function. As first emphasized in Gundel 1974, for example, two discourse-pragmatic types of topicalization construction in English must be distinguished ('topic-topicalization' and 'focus-topicalization'). Since the topicalized clause highlighted in (2) answers the question *When did they take Savannah?*, while that highlighted in (3) answers the question *Where was this?*, the initial constituents express a topic and a focus, respectively:

- (2) The most dramatic moment I thought of all is when they reached the sea. Very dramatic moment. Very close to the end of the year. Because **Savannah they took just before**

CHRISTmas, in order to give a Christmas present... [Neil, Frederickson Tapes, December 1989]

- (3) We had, well we had been to Stratford on Avon, and seen Richard the Third there, the day before and we came back the next morning, the next day, after classes were all over we went to this pub named — **in OXFord this was** — named 'the Nosebag'. [Neil, Frederickson Tapes, December 1989]

This discourse-pragmatic distinction is systematically correlated with a difference in prosodic structure. Thus, the answer to the eliciting question receives a primary, falling, focus accent (indicated above by large caps); while salient elements contained in the eliciting question receive a secondary, rising, topic accent (indicated by small caps). (see also Prince 1985, Ward 1985).

Hedberg 1990 found a similar discourse-pragmatic distinction between two types of cleft constructions ('focus-marking clefts' and 'topic-marking clefts') in English. The distinction is again correlated with prosodic structure when spoken aloud (see also Prince 1978).

- (4) JM: I want to ask this question: Why is this agreement so bad? I ask you.
JG: Because our whole intention was to bring some form of democracy there; our intention was to make the Sandinistas cry uncle. **It is the CONTRas who have cried uncle.**
[McLaughlin Group, 3/25/88, PBS]

- (5) At a podium or on the House floor, her searing wit can vaporize an opponent in the 15 seconds suitable for a sound bite: **it was she who labeled Reagan 'the Teflon President'**, she who called defense contractors 'the welfare queens of the 80's.'
[Ferraro, 'The Prime of Pat Schroeder', the New York Times Magaine, 7/1/90, p. 14].

Finally, Hedberg 1988 reported two discourse-pragmatic types of inverted pseudocleft construction in English. Either the initial clefted constituent marks the focus while the final cleft clause marks the topic, as in (6), or else the initial clefted constituent marks the topic and the final cleft clause marks the focus, as in (7):

- (6) JM: What must George Bush accomplish at the convention?
EC: ...Michael Dukakis received the opening kickoff, and he scored a touchdown at his convention. Now what George Bush has to do, now that it's his turn with the ball, is put some points on the scoreboard.... He's got to emerge from Reagan's shadow and draw the differences between himself and Dukakis in the sharpest possible terms. And he's got to, you know, criticize Duakakis. **THAT's what he's got to DO.**
[McLaughlin Group, 8/12/88, PBS]
- (7) JM: Number two, is it not true that Nancy Reagan is always right? ... This is not a bash Reagan session. I just want to know whether or not her instincts are invariably correct? I ask you.

MK: No, they're not. I mean, **SHE was the one who wanted to keep REAGAn from appearing anywhere in PUBLIC.** That was— *[McLaughlin Group, 3/6/87, PBS]*

However, the remaining pragmatically-marked constructions in (1) consistently mark only topics. Thus, the sentence-initial pseudocleft clause in a pseudocleft expresses a continuing topic as in (6) or a shifted topic as in (8), with the sentence-final pseudoclefted-constituent marking the focus:

(8) JM: What's in it for Dole?

JG: **What's in it for DOLE is getting out a DUMB JOB that he's SICK of.**

[McLaughlin Group, 6/17/88, PBS]

Similarly, left-dislocated constituents consistently function to express continuing or shifted topics as in (9), while right-dislocated constituents consistently function to express continuing topics as in (10):

(9) JG: **That POLL in the Boston HERald that you took so SERiously, I don't suspect it's taken very SERiously by the James BAKers and Lee ATwaters of this world.** I

think Dukakis will carry Massachusetts by an easy 10 points. *[McLaughlin Group, 9/2/88, PBS]*

(10) PB: I'll tell you, **but they have a POINT, the Likud PARTY,** and they believe if they give it up, what you're going to have is Yasser Arafat, in effect, as governor of the West Bank. And so they have an argument in that sense. I think it's valid they're concerned. *[McLaughlin Group, 12/26/87, PBS]*

B. PLAN OF RESEARCH

One reason that the two pragmatic functions of 'topic' and 'focus' have so often been conflated in the literature is that both topic marking and focus marking serve to draw the attention of the addressee to the element so marked. To avoid confusion it is necessary to carefully determine whether the particular utterance under analysis exhibits the individual prosodic, morphological, syntactic, semantic, and discourse properties which are diagnostic of the pragmatic function in question. It is only through a careful examination of such properties that subtle differences between the different topic-marking and focus-marking constructions even in English can be properly understood. In order to better understand the causal origin of these properties, I propose to undertake a cross-linguistic investigation of the extent to which the clusters of properties characteristic of the English constructions in (1) universally co-occur—the central question being whether they are fact pragmatic in nature.

Previous research has identified only a proper subset of the pragmatically-marked constructions in (1) as potentially universal. On the basis of a preliminary examination of thirty languages, using formal criteria to identify constructions across languages, Gundel 1988

suggested that all languages permit left dislocations, pseudoclefts, and right-dislocations, while verb-final languages lack clefts, and several languages lack topicalization constructions. I propose to evaluate and build upon these findings, extending the analysis to include other constructions, properties, and languages. However, I plan to use pragmatic as well as formal criteria to identify constructions across languages. The reasons for this methodological modification is that general morphological and syntactic differences between languages may systematically obscure the origins of formal similarities and differences.

It appears, for example, that the discourse-pragmatic function of topic-topicalization in English is not always performed by a preposing construction involving a gap. In Arabic, for example, the pragmatic functions of both left-dislocation and topic-topicalization are performed by constructions containing clitic resumptive pronouns, but the distinction shows up in case marking. Pragmatic correlates of left-dislocated constituents in English receive default nominative case in Arabic (11a), while pragmatic correlates of topic-topicalized constituents receive a case marker matching that of the coreferential resumptive pronoun (11b). Pragmatic correlates of focus-topicalized constituents are obligatorily associated with a gap in Arabic and receive the case they would have were they not preposed (Al Bayaty 1990, and personal communication).

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|------|----|---|---|
| (11) | a. | ar-rija:l-u saʔad-na-hum
the-men-NOM helped-I-them
'the MEN, I HELPED them.' | resumptive clitic
default nominative
(left-dislocation) |
| | b. | ar-rija:l-a saʔad-na-hum
the-men-ACC helped-I-them
'the MEN I HELPED.' | resumptive clitic
case-matching
(topic-topicalization) |
| | c. | ar-rija:l-a saʔad-na
the-men-ACC helped-I
'the MEN I helped' | gap
case-matching
(focus-topicalization) |
| | d. | *ar-rija:l-u saʔad-na
the-men-NOM helped-I | |

Similar paradigms of preposing constructions can be extracted from discussions of Italian (Cinque 1991) and French (Barnes 1985), although to distinguish the pragmatic correlates of left-dislocation versus topic-topicalization in these languages, it is necessary to rely on the presence versus the absence of subtle locality conditions on the permitted relationship which the initial constituent can bear to a resumptive pronoun since noun phrases in these languages are not morphologically marked for case. Prosodic structure reliably distinguishes topic and focus in Italian and French, however, as in English. Other apparently universal properties of left dislocation are the acceptability of dangling topics that are associated with neither a resumptive pronoun nor with a gap (e.g. *Fish, I like red snapper*) and a definiteness/referentiality restriction on the initial constituent.

Significantly, a cleft paradigm which is pragmatically identical to that of English has recently been argued in Jhang (under preparation) to be characteristic of Korean, although the absence of pleonastic pronouns (such as the *it* in the English cleft construction) in Korean and other verb-final languages obscures the comparison, misleading Gundel 1988 to conclude that such languages lack cleft constructions. Data from languages like Korean is particularly important from a universal perspective because topics can be morphologically marked. Topics in Korean are marked with a topic marker (*-un, -nun*), which replaces the nominative (*-ka*) or accusative (*-ul*) case morpheme marking a subject or direct object focus. Thus any of (12), (13), and (14) can answer the question *What did you buy?*, whereas (15) can answer the question *So what about the car?*:

(12. nay-ka sa-n kes-un say cha-i-ta
 I-NOM buy-REL COMP -Top new car-be-DECL
 'What I bought is a new CAR'

(13) *i* say cha-ka nay-ka sa-n kes-it-ta
 this new car- NOM I-NOM buy-REL COMP-be-DECL
 'This new CAR is what I bought.'

(14) *i* say cha-ul nay-ka sa-n kes-it-ta
 this new car-ACC I-NOM. buy- REL COMP -be-DECL
 'it is this new CAR that I bought.'

(15) *i* say cha-nun nay-ka sa-n kes-it-ta
 this new car-TOP I-NOM buy- REL COMP-be-DECL
 'This new CAR is what I BOUGHT' / 'It is this new CAR that I BOUGHT'.

That the same cleft paradigm, which was identified for English in Hedberg 1988, is also characteristic of Spanish is suggested in Guitart 1989.

The initial (current) stage of this research will involve compiling a list of reliable prosodic, morphological, syntactic, and semantic, and pragmatic properties of the pragmatically-marked constructions in English shown in (1); searching grammars and the research literature (especially current dissertations) for previous observations and conclusions regarding pragmatically-marked constructions in other languages; and systematically eliciting examples and judgments on properties from native speakers and field-work specialists associated with SFU's Linguistics Department. Available languages will likely include: Chinese, Korean, Japanese, Thai, Tagalog, Shona, Arabic, Swedish, Finnish, Hungarian, Breton, French, Italian, Spanish, German, Russian, Czech, Polish, Albanian, Armenian, Greek, Cakchiquel, Halkomelem, Shushwap, etc.

For each language, the discourse-pragmatic correlates of the English constructions in (1) will first be identified. These will then be checked to determine whether they exhibit an identical cluster of properties. Later stages of research will involve verification of the

preliminary findings through the collection, transcription, and computational analysis of natural discourse texts, and a critical appraisal of the implications of the results for syntactic theory.

C. IMMEDIATE OUTCOME

The immediate outcome of this project should be a journal article on universal properties of inverted pseudoclefts, an abstract submitted to the 1993 International Pragmatics Association conference, and a SSHRC standard research grant proposal.

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