

Topicalization and other related constructions
in English

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The purpose of this thesis is to analyse the topic-topicalized (TT) construction in English, comparing with some other related constructions, specifically, the focus-topicalized (FT) and the left-dislocated (LD) constructions. It is not an uncommon practice in English, and possibly in other languages as well, that when one wants to convey something to other people, he chooses a particular construction which accords with contextual factors from among a variety of constructions capable of expressing the same cognitive meanings. I have attempted to uncover some characteristics peculiar to TT sentences, mainly from a functional standpoint, and to determine what it is that makes TT sentences felicitous in a particular context.

Our primary claim is that the three levels must be distinguished in order to properly characterize a TT construction and, in turn, other related constructions. These levels are (1) the NP level, (2) the Sentence (S) level, (3) the Discourse (D) level. Previous analyses, including the latest ones, such as Gundel (1985) and Prince (1985), do not distinguish these levels and thus lead to erroneous conclusions.

I have devoted three chapters of this thesis to the considerations on each level, and have concluded as follows.

(1) NP level:

An element can serve as the topic, as long as it is REFERENTIAL. From this follows the generalization that the TT element must be REFERENTIAL while the FT element need not be. The LD element, which also serves as the topic, must be REFERENTIAL as well.

(2) S level:

TT sentences are constrained by the Topicalization Condition to the effect that the subject must not

be more definite than the TT element, while FT and LD sentences are not constrained by this condition. This conclusion is consistent with the function of each construction.

(3) D level:

The TT element must be either I-EVOKED (i.e., EVOKED immediately before the TT sentence in question) or INFERRABLE from the preceding context. If we take into consideration the general rhetorical device of presenting non-X information as if X, we can explain the possibility that the TT element is neither EVOKED nor INFERRABLE; the TT element of such a status must be interpreted as INFERRABLE by this rhetorical device, in order for the sentence to be appropriately understood in discourse. From this derives the PRESENTATIONAL function of TT, aside from the more fundamental function of TOPIC-CLARIFYING.

A specific indefinite NP, which has been erroneously claimed to be incapable of appearing in the TT position, has turned out to be capable of being topic topicalized. The relevant example is presented below.

(4) A certain passenger, a certain man wants to hit.

In this sentence, the TT element must be interpreted as INFERRABLE; the reason it cannot be understood as I-EVOKED is that a certain is generally considered to assert the existence of the NP of which it is a part. The fact that the actual use of such a TT sentence is quite limited is predictable in our analysis, because the condition advocated in (2) stipulates that the subject of the sentence must be specific as well.

A final remark:

(5) A TT sentence can be felicitously employed in discourse, only when it satisfies all of the conditions on these three levels.