

中国语用学研究会

语用学研究

Studies in Pragmatics

第四辑
Volume 4

中国语用学研究会

YONGYU XUE YANJIU

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序 言

作为语言学的一门新兴学科，语用学之所以能够在20世纪70年代被确认成为一门独立的学科，是因为发生了一个标志事件：1977年，《语用学学刊》(*Journal of Pragmatics*) 在荷兰正式出版、发行。该刊对推动语用学在全世界的发展起了巨大的作用。

在过去的二十余年里，中国语用学研究的迅猛发展进程中有许多令人瞩目的里程碑：

1980年，胡壮麟先生发表《语用学》一文第一次把语用学作为一门学科较系统地介绍给中国学人；

1988年，何自然先生编著的中国第一本语用学教材《语用学概论》出版问世，极大地推动了语用学研究在中国的开展、普及和发展；

1989年，首届全国语用学研讨会在广东外语外贸大学的前身——广州外国语学院隆重召开；

2004年，在中国修辞学会的支持下，中国语用学研究会正式成立，研究会的工作网站也随即开启。

在当今中国语言学研究领域，语用学占据重要的地位。语用学研究成果广泛发表于各类语言学刊物以及综合性学报。我们认为，为了给增量迅猛的语用学研究成果提供更多的平台，提升中国语用学研究成果的交流效果，中国语用学迫切需要一个属于自己的专业平台。《语用学研究》便是为了适应这一需要而诞生的。

《语用学研究》有着庞大的作者群。据不完全统计，迄今为止，国内拥有语用学研究方向的博士点逾十个，拥有语用学研究方向的硕士点数十个，全国范围内从事语用学研究的专家学者、博士、硕士数以千计，且在不断增长，他们将会把《语用学研究》当作自己与同行切磋语用研究心得的平台。当然，国外语用学专家以及国内其他相邻学科的专家也将成为《语用学研究》的潜在撰稿人。

《语用学研究》有着广阔的读者群。语用学是一个带有跨学科性质的研究领域，其研究成果具有广阔的应用空间。语用学又是关注语言生活的学科，对各类语言实践具有直接的指导意义。可以相信，凡是对语言哲学、语言逻辑、认知科学、人工智能与信息处理、社会心理、人际交往、语言教育、语言应用、儿童发展、跨文化交际等感兴趣的读者都可以从《语用学研究》中读到自己关心的研究成果。

《语用学研究（第四辑）》登载的是2009年在武汉大学召开的第十一届全国语用学研讨会上发布的优秀论文。

作为中国语用学研究会主编、高等教育出版社出版发行的专业文集，《语用学

研究》的目标是高远而明确的，那就是前沿性、专业性、学术性和本土性。我们特别欢迎本国学者在本土语料上做出的具有中国特色的学术成果。

《语用学研究》的起航代表了一个新时期的到来，让我们齐头并进，为她的平安远航而共同努力吧！

何自然 陈新仁
2010年8月20日

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Topicality and Contrastive Focusing in Chinese and English Discourse

Cheng Luo, Brock University, Canada

1 Introduction

This paper examines a cleftability hierarchy (Luo, 1993) based on Keenan & Comrie's (1977) Accessibility Hierarchy (hence the AH), in an attempt to discuss some limitations of the NP-based theory and explore an alternative pragmatically based account for cleftability in general, by proposing a Thematicity Principle that shows greater descriptive and explanatory adequacy. The term *cleft* is defined as "a construction in which a particular constituent is marked by means of a syntactic and / or morphological device for the purpose of focus, contrast, or emphasis" (Luo, 1993).

The AH-based Cleftability Hierarchy (hence the CH), (1), is expressed in terms of grammatical functions subject (SU), direct object (DO), indirect object (IO), oblique object (OBL), genitive NP (GEN) and object of comparison (OComp), with the higher positions presumably more cleftable than the lower ones.

(1) SU > DO > IO > OBL > GEN > OComp

The Hierarchy represents a set of implicational universals, whereby the implicatum of the prior universal becomes the implican of the following one. Thus, if in a language an NP on the Hierarchy is cleftable through a given strategy, so are all higher NPs. Generalizations like this determine constraints on the form and substance of possible human languages.

Luo (1993) shows crosslinguistic evidence supporting the CH in terms of grammaticality, clefting strategies, distribution, frequency of occurrence, promotion, and precedence in language change. However, it should be noted that its applicability has been limited to NP arguments only. This is not surprising, given that the AH was originally based

on studies of relativization, which in general involves only NPs. Clefting, on the other hand, differs from relativization in that it can affect non-NPs as well as NPs. Therefore, for a grammar to adequately describe and account for cleftability, it must consider non-NP as well as NP cleftability.

A possible solution to this problem, as suggested by Pinkham and Hankamer (1975), is an extended CH that entails non-NPs in certain order at the lower end of the Hierarchy. However, there are some difficulties with this approach. First, in many languages (e.g. English, Tera, Malagasy, Chinese, and Danish), adjuncts (including PPs) enjoy higher cleftability than most types of NPs. For example, Collins' (1987) comparison of frequency of occurrence among cleftable constituents in English texts finds adverbials (36.7%) only second to SU (38.3%), as compared with DO (7.2%) and IO or OBL (3.2%), as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Intralinguistic frequency of occurrence among cleftable constituents in English discourse
(adapted from Collins, 1987)

Grammatical Position	Number	Percentage
SU	288	38.3%
ADVL	276	36.7%
(zero)	109	14.5%
DO	54	7.2%
IO / OBL	24	3.2%
Sub Complement	1	0.1%
TOTAL	752	100%

High cleftability of adjuncts is attested not only in English corpus as actual language use in Table 1, but also crosslinguistically as potential language usage, in terms of the number of languages capable of clefting a certain grammatical position as against another. The results of a survey of 40 languages of different language families by this researcher (Table 2 and Fig. 1) show that SU is found cleftable in all 40 languages (100%), DO, in 31 (75%), and adverbials (ADVL), in 27 (68%). Despite the slight difference between DO and ADVL in Table 2, adverbials do show high cleftability crosslinguistically. Thus, to place adjuncts after NP positions on the Hierarchy, as suggested by Pinkham and Hankamer (1975), would be empirically unsupportable.

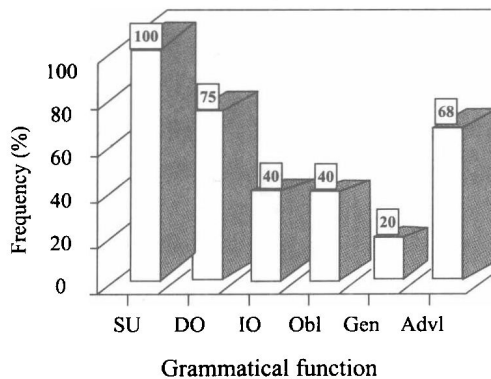
Table 2 Crosslinguistic frequency of cleftability of grammatical functions

Language	SU	DO	IO	OBL	GEN	ADVL	Sources
Bade	+						Schuh (1971)
Basque	+	+					Saltarelli et al. (1988)
Berber	+	+	+	+	+		Ennaji & Sadiqi (1986)
Breton	+	+				+	Timm (1987)
Chinese	+		+	+	+		Huang (1982); Ross >83; my data
Danish	+	+			+ _{su}	+	Smits (1989)
Dera	+						Schuh (1971)
Dutch	+	+	+	+	+	+	Smits (1989)
English	+	+	+	+	+	+	<i>ibid.</i>
French	+	+			+ _{do}	+	<i>ibid.</i>
German	+	+	+	+	+	+	<i>ibid.</i>
Icelandic	+	+				+	<i>ibid.</i>
Indonesian	+						Chung (1978)
Irish	+	+	+	+		+	McCloskey (1979)
Ivatan	+	+				+	Reid (1966)
Italian	+	+	+	+	+	+	Smits (1989)
Kanuri	+	+				+	Lukas (1967)
Karekare	+						Schuh (1971)
Kihung=an	+	+					Takizala
Kinyarwanda	+	+	+	+		+	Kimenyi (1978)
Kpelle	+	+		+		+	Welmers (1964)
Malagasy	+					+	Keenan >85; Harries-D (1978)
Malay	+	+	+			+	My data
Maori	+	+					Chung (1978)
Margi	+						Hoffmann (1966)
Ngizim	+						Schuh (1971)
Norwegian	+	+		+		+	Smits (1989)
Pukapukan	+	+	+	+		+	Chung (1978)
Rennellese	+	+	+	+		+	<i>ibid.</i>
Samoan	+	+	+	+		+	<i>ibid.</i>
Somali	+	+				+	Bell (1953)
Swedish	+	+	+		+	+	Smits (1989)

Taba-Batak	+						Percival (1981)
Temne	+	+	+				Nemer (1987)
Tera	+	+	+	+		+	Newman (1970)
Tojolabal	+	+					Brody (1984)
Tongan	+	+	+	+			Chung (1978)
Welsh	+	+				+	Dik (1980)
Yapese	+	+				+	Jensen (1977)
Yoruba	+	+		+	+	+	Bamgbose (1966)
TOTAL	40	31	16	16	8	27	
% (N=40)	100	75	40	40	20	68	

Note: The percentage shows the proportion of all languages under study which allows a given grammatical function to be clefted.

Figure 1: Cleftability of Grammatical Functions:
Crosslinguistic Frequency (%)



Secondly, an extended CH assumes a certain degree of inherent, context-free cleftability of non-NPs. However, as shown in Luo (1994a) and Heggie (1988), many apparently uncleftable non-NPs often become more cleftable in certain contexts. For example, whereas predicational APs are in general uncleftable due to their non-argument status, as in (2a), when they become more noun-like via morpho-syntactic and/or semantico-pragmatic features, they are more cleftable, as in (2b):

- (2) a. *It is happy that he is. (Heggie, 1988)
 b. A: What is Mary's **most** typical characteristic? (Declerck, 1984)
 B: It is **pretty** that Mary is, more than anything else.

Moreover, varying degrees of grammaticality with clefted non-NPs in different contexts make it difficult to specify fixed positions for them.

Finally, even if an extended CH was possible, it would not explain why some PP adjuncts (e.g. of time/place) are more cleftable than most kinds of NPs, nor why some PP adjuncts (e.g. again, of time/place) are more cleftable than other PP adjuncts (e.g. dative PPs) in many languages, as seen from Table 2.

Given these considerations, it seems that insight into a plausible theory of cleftability may be gained from alternative accounts. In the rest of this paper, I will explore an alternative, pragmatically based approach, by proposing and verifying a Thematicity Principle as a general account of cleftability. I will first introduce the notions *theme* and *thematicity* and discuss the pragmatic function of clefts, and then state the principle. Qualitative and quantitative evidence from analysis of crosslinguistic discourse samples will be presented in support of the Thematicity Principle.

② Theme and Thematicity

2.1 Theme

The concept of *theme* has been studied extensively (e.g. Halliday, 1985; Chafe, 1976; Declerck, 1984; Morris, 1998; Cucatto, 2003; Hedberg, 2006; De Hoop & De Swart, 2000; Dooley, 2007) but has not enjoyed consensus. Halliday (1985: 38) defines it as the communicative “point of departure of the clause, that with which the clause is concerned.” Structurally, theme unmarkedly occupies initial position in many languages, although other markings are also possible. The implication of this variation to cleftability is that in some non-configurational languages in which the cleft focus does not occur initially, it may still have thematic force.

While Halliday rightly points out crosslinguistic variation of thematic realization, Chafe (1976) notes inadequacies of defining theme (what he calls *topic*) as “what the sentence is about” [, which] “applies better to English subjects” (p.50) but does not apply to external topics in topic-prominent languages like Chinese. Since the function of such a theme/topic is to limit the applicability of the main predication to a certain restricted domain, it is more appropriate to define it as that which “sets a spatial, temporal, or individual framework within which the main predication holds” (*ibid.*). This definition seems to enjoy more crosslinguistic plausibility.

Another discrepancy is whether theme and topic are distinct semantico-pragmatic notions. Chafe (1976) and Declerck (1984) think they are not. However, according to Dik (1980: 15-16), theme “specifies the universe of discourse with respect of which the

subsequent predication is presented as relevant. It is assigned to constituents which precede the predication ... [and] often presented in ‘absolute’ form, i.e. without any specified semantic or syntactic function.” Topic, on the other hand, is “the entity about which the predication predicates something in the given setting. Topic is assigned to constituents of the predication proper.” Compared with theme, topic has a more limited scope in that it has to function within the setting defined by theme. This view coincides with Foley and Van Valin’s (1985: 300) distinction between external topic and subject, where the former is not a clause constituent and does not necessarily bear semantic relationship to the predicate or its arguments, whereas the latter is a basic NP constituent of the clause and must correspond to an argument of the verb semantically. We will return to this distinction later.

Given the diverse use of the term, the term *theme* in this paper is operationally defined as in (3):

- (3) A theme is that which specifies a spatial, temporal, or individual discourse framework with respect of which the subsequent predication is presented as relevant.

2.2 Thematicity

While *theme* can be viewed as the *actual* discourse framework within which the main predication holds true, *thematicity* is defined as the *potential* for a constituent to act as theme; and such discourse thematicity is “fundamentally a conceptual phenomenon, dealing with mental representation” (Dooley, 2007: 6). According to van Oosten (1984: 378), discourse topics as referential themes are the most prototypical themes: “human beings tend to focus on entities.” As Givón (1984: 137) notes, human discourse is “prototypically about the fate, affairs, doings, trials and tribulations of individual — most commonly nominal — topics.” Potentially, all nominal arguments in propositions can be topic in this sense, especially SU, DO and IO, which can be ranked in the order SU > DO > IO, according to their potential to code the most important, recurrent, and continuous topic. Much of what Givón says applies to thematicity. In discourse, theme is typically conflated with subject, i.e. the unmarked theme. On the other hand, a theme which is realized by constituents other than subject, such as a DO, IO or adjunct, may be called a marked theme. According to Halliday (1985: 45), “the most usual form of marked theme is an adverbial group ... functioning as adjunct in the clause, [and] least likely to be thematic is a complement ... [S] ometimes even the Complement from within a prepositional phrase functions as Theme.” Put together, the rank of thematicity can be shown as: SU > Adjunct > DO > IO > OBL. That adjuncts have high thematicity is echoed in Sanders (1984), Thompson and Longacre (1985), and Collins (1987), and attested in Collins (1987) and Luo (1994a).

Now, if we assume that genitive NPs, which as non-heads have only quasi-argument status, have even less thematic potential, and other non-argument elements (e.g. VP) have still less thematic potential, then it is possible to posit a thematicity scale as in (4):

(4) The Thematicity Scale: .

SU > ADJUNCT > DO > IO > OBL NP > GEN NP > OTHER

(4) states that the grammatical positions toward the left on the scale tend to have greater thematic potential than those toward the right. In terms of markedness, the leftmost position will occur as the most unmarked theme, whereas the rightmost as the most marked. Of interest here is the relatively high position of adjuncts, especially those of time and location. This is because adjuncts of time and location in general have typical thematic properties by virtue of occurring in initial position in many languages¹, thus setting a temporal or spatial world for particular discourse that is taking place (Thompson & Longacre, 1985).

3 The Thematicity Principle

3.1 Function of Clefts

Functionally, cleft sentences serve to contrastively focus on a clause constituent morpho-syntactically singled out for such prominence (Deng, 1979). Another way to look at the function of clefts is in terms of thematicity, as suggested in Prince (1978), Brömser (1984), Declerck (1984), Timm (1987), Collins (1987, 1991), and Herriman (2008).

While in non-clefts, theme is usually some presupposed element, in clefts, it is the focused element that functions as theme (Declerck, 1984; Halliday, 1985). What this means is that

- (5) a. clefting is in some important way associated with thematization;
- b. given the high cleftability of subjects and adjuncts (especially of time and place), it seems that the function of clefting is to “imbue an already thematic element,” or at least an element with thematic potential, with “further prominence” (Declerck, 1984: 277) by focusing it;
- c. the effect of clefting is focused thematization (Brömser, 1984).

1 Even in some non-configurational languages such as Chinese, where no dislocation is apparent in WH-questions, relativization and clefting (Huang, 1982a), adjuncts may still be fronted as theme.

(5a) has been noted in many languages, for instance English (Chomsky, 1977), Kinyarwanda (Kimemyi, 1978), and Ivatan (Reid, 1966). In relation to (5b) above, thematic prominence is generated through highlighting the theme part of a sentence. This can occur in two ways: thematic potential and thematic actual. Thematic potential is the general statistical probability of a focused grammatical function that can occur as theme in non-clefts. Thematic actual refers to the actual occurrence of the cleft focus as theme in the preceding discourse. For example, in English, cleft focus tends to be elements that continue the thematic line of the preceding discourse. This is in line with Givón's (1983) view that the focused element tends to be an "important [and ...] rather persistent topic in terms of the succeeding discourse context" (p. 265). This is supported by (6), an excerpt from an article in the *Toronto Star* (Steed, 1993: D1-6):

(6) ... I turn and bump into a rock: Pat Carney. *She's* not smiling. The plot thickens

.....

Loyal British Columbian that *she* is, *Carney* does not support Campbell's leadership bid; there is no love lost between these two, but *Carney* will not speak about Campbell, except to explain *they* are related by marriage. *Carney's* cousin Marguerite Parkinson is the third wife of George Campbell, Kim's father.

It was *Carney*, the senator, who flew from Vancouver to Ottawa on Feb. 1, 1991, to cast the crucial vote (in a 43-43 tie) that killed Justice Minister Campbell's legislative effort to recriminalize abortion, making *Carney* a hero to a broad range of medical and feminist groups. [italics mine]

In (6), the italicized words mark the continued theme, *Carney*. The cleft sentence appears in the last paragraph, with *Carney* as the cleft focus. The same NP had been introduced into the discourse three paragraphs back and has persisted as theme throughout before it becomes the cleft focus. Thus, what appears as the cleft focus continues the thematic line of the preceding discourse. A similar example is found in another article in the same issue (Brennan, 1993: E1):

(7) His partner in North Drive Estates is his 31-year-old son, *Danny*. *We've* been building homes together since he was a teenager.

It was *Danny* who found this site. I've driven past this corner hundreds of times but never paid any notice to it because you can't see anything for the trees... [italics mine]

Here again, the italicized words represent the continued theme, and it can be seen