

语言学系列丛书

# CLEFTABILITY in LANGUAGE

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语言强调结构研究

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## Abbreviations

A( BS)	absolute
ACC	accusative
AH	the Accessibility Hierarchy
APPL	applicative suffix
ASP	aspect
AUX	auxiliary
B	benefactive
CFM	contrastive focus marker
CH	the Cleftability Hierarchy
COMP	complementizer
CPL	copula
D	dative
dem; DEM	demonstrative ( pronoun)
DET	determiner
DETRANS	detransitivizer
DIR	directive
DO	direct object
DO <sub>m</sub>	middle clause direct object
DP	declarative particle
E( RG)	ergative
EMPH	emphatic marker
F	feminine
FUT	future ( tense)
GEN	genitive NP
INDEF	indefinite
INF	infinitive

INT	interjective
IO	indirect object
LOC	locative
LF	logical form
m	masculine
M	measure word
MM	modifier marker
NEG	negative particle
NOM	nominalizer
NONPST	non-past ( tense)
OBL	oblique NP
OComp	object of comparison
OM	object marker
P( L)	plural
PERF	perfective ( aspect)
PRES	present ( tense)
PRO	pro-form
PROG	progressive ( aspect)
PRON	pronoun
PROP	proper noun
PRT	particle
PST	past ( tense)
RC	relative clause
REL	relative marker
RESULT.	resultative
RM	relative marker
S	sentence
S( G)	singular
SBJN	subjunctive ( mood)
SU	subject
TRANS	transitivizer
vi.	intransitive verb
VN	verbal noun
vt.	transitive verb

†	grammatical but a little odd
?	marginally grammatical
? *	problematic
*	ungrammatical



## Preface

Research in language universals as anchored in functional linguistics has drawn continued attention and interest from linguists, language educators and professionals of other applied linguistics areas in recent years. Through studying crosslinguistic variation, important generalizations about natural languages can be made which would not be revealed by investigating any single language. In that regard, previous studies of the Noun Phrase Accessibility Hierarchy as a universal tendency have largely focused on relativization, whereas those of cleft sentences have barely touched upon cleftability with regard to the Accessibility Hierarchy. Given such a gap in the research, it seems that a systematic crosslinguistic investigation of cleftability with regard to the Accessibility Hierarchy will add significant contribution not only to the research on cleft construction by converging the Accessibility Hierarchy studies and the research on cleft sentences, but also to finding out how human languages avail themselves of various linguistic strategies for contrastive emphasis in communication in the study of language universals as an important part of linguistic theory.

The present monograph is such an attempt. Furthermore, since clefting differs from relativization in that it affects not only NPs but also non-NPs, an adequate account of cleftability will have to go beyond the scope of the Accessibility Hierarchy, to accommodate cleftability of non-NP as well as NP constituents. A principal goal of this book, therefore, is to develop a principled account for cleftability in general.

The general organization of the book is as follows:

Chapter 1 is a general introduction, which identifies the research problem and its significance, provides the necessary theoretical background through literature review, and discusses the theoretical issues and methodological specifics involved.

Chapter 2 deals with NP cleftability. After an initial proposition of a Cleftability

Hierarchy, a Continuity Constraint, and a set of criteria for measuring cleftability, data from various languages will be examined and analyzed against each of the criteria as well as the Continuity Constraint, to attest the proposed Cleftability Hierarchy.

Chapter 3 continues to examine NP cleftability in terms of some apparent counterevidence found in some languages. Closer scrutiny of two kinds of such counterexamples, pattern incongruence of cleftability hierarchy in ergative languages and uncleftability of direct object in Chinese, reveals the interactive nature of the Cleftability Hierarchy in relation to typological features of a language and to some language specific constraints.

Chapter 4 examines non-NP cleftability. Through analysis of cleftability of PPs, ADVPs, APs and VPs, a nouniness principle will be advanced to account for cleftability of non-NPs as well as NPs. Evaluation of this principle with regard to its descriptivity will be made toward the end of the chapter.

Chapter 5 reviews strengths and weaknesses of both the Cleftability Hierarchy and the Nouniness Principle, and proposes a unified, discourse-functional explanation for cleftability in general. Empirical evidence will be presented in support of such an explanation, presented as the Thematicity Principle.

Chapter 6 adds an important dimension to the typology of cleft sentences, with special reference to the contrastive focus marker. Though not directly related to the issue of cleftability, some interesting research findings regarding the use of focus markers, deictic pronouns and copulas will be presented, findings that support a functional-iconic view of language.

To facilitate the readership's understanding of crosslinguistic data, all crosslinguistic examples are presented phonetically, with both morpheme-by-morpheme glossing and free translation. For Chinese data, both phonetic and character representations are given. Finally, a language index and a subject index are provided at the end of the book for ease of reference.

In preparing this monograph, I owe much to my mentor and one of the prominent contemporary linguists, John Haiman, whose philosophical thought of and rigorously scientific approach to linguistic study have left visible marks on this work. I am also grateful to Terry Russel, John Nichols and Pat Mathews for their helpful feedback during the early stages of this project, to James Tai, whose work in and approach to Chinese linguistics had inspired part of the present study, and to Moshe Nahir for his

valuable advice on Hebrew. Special thanks go to Wuhan University Press and my long-time colleague Chungue Wang, whose support is indispensable in publishing this book. Finally, the completion of this monograph was in part funded through a Wuhan University Luoia Fellowship, for which I am deeply appreciative.

**by Cheng Luo**



## Chapter 1 Introduction

### 1.1 The Noun Phrase Accessibility Hierarchy

Studies of crosslinguistic variation can often lead to important generalizations about natural languages, generalizations that can not be reached by investigating any single language. For instance, consistent general patterns of crosslinguistic variation in certain syntactic constructions can be characterized by a number of grammatical hierarchies in typology. A classical example is Keenan and Comrie's (1977) crosslinguistic study of relative constructions, which vary from language to language both in relativizing strategies and in noun phrase (NP) positions available for relativization, but which follow a general pattern in terms of relativizability. This general pattern, known as the Noun Phrase Accessibility Hierarchy (henceforth AH), aims to account for the relativizable NP argument positions across languages, by virtue of an implicational scale for the relativizability of different grammatical functions. By comparing relative clauses in fifty odd languages, Keenan & Comrie (1977) argue for the existence of the Noun Phrase Accessibility Hierarchy as in (1), where the positions toward the left are claimed to be universally more accessible for relativization than those toward the right.

(1) The Noun Phrase Accessibility Hierarchy

$SU > DO > IO > OBL > GEN > OCOMP$

In (1), SU stands for subject; DO, direct object; IO, indirect object; OBL, oblique NPs such as those headed by prepositions or postpositions; GEN, possessive NPs; and OComp, object of comparison, such as the post-*than* NP in English.

According to the Noun Phrase Accessibility Hierarchy, subjects are more accessible to, or easier for, relativization than direct objects, which are more accessible to relativization than indirect objects, which in turn are easier to relativize

than any lower position, and so on. Since subject is the easiest position to relativize, any language that has a relativizing strategy can relativize on subjects, any language that can relativize on direct objects can also relativize on subjects, and so on down the Hierarchy (Maxwell 1979).

The proposed Noun Phrase Accessibility Hierarchy is subject to a working principle known as the Continuity Constraint, expressed here as (2):

(2) The Continuity Constraint

Any relative clause-forming strategy must apply to a continuous segment of the AH; and strategies that apply at any one point of the AH may in principle cease to apply at any lower point. (Keenan & Comrie 1977: 67)

Thus some languages have relative clause (RC) forming strategies which apply only to subjects, for example, the Western Austronesian language Toba Batak (Keenan & Comrie 1977); other languages have strategies which apply only to subjects and direct objects, for example, Persian (*ibid.*), and still other languages have ones which apply only to the top three positions on the Accessibility Hierarchy, for example, Tamil, etc. (*ibid.*). But no language, it is claimed, could relativize, say, direct objects and oblique NPs in the same way unless it can also relativize indirect objects in that way. In other words, (1) and (2) can be expressed as a set of implicational universals in the following sense: given a certain strategy, if a language can relativize, for example, direct objects, then it can relativize subjects; if a language can relativize indirect objects, then it can relativize direct objects and subjects; and so forth. Thus, a grammatical hierarchy like the AH covers a chain of implicational universals, such that the implicatum of the first universal is the implicant of the second, the implicatum of the second universal is the implicant of the third, and so on. Put together, the chain can be summarized as: if an NP on the AH is accessible to relativization in a language, then all NPs higher on the hierarchy are also accessible to the same process. Generalizations like this, as claimed by Keenan (1987), determine constraints on the form and substance of possible human languages.

The proposed Accessibility Hierarchy has so far been claimed to gain a fair measure of validity as a language universal in a number of psycholinguistic and text studies, notably Keenan & Hawkins (1987), although exceptions and problems are not lacking (Keenan & Comrie 1977, 1979; Maxwell 1979; Stenson 1979; Sigurd 1989; Fox 1987; Comrie 1981, chap. 7; and Lehmann 1986); and various attempts (e.g. Cole et al. 1977; Fox 1987; Tallerman 1990) have been made to either modify it



with different versions of extension or interpret it from different perspectives.

In addition to relativization, other syntactic processes have also been studied with regard to the AH. For example, Johnson (1974) and Trithart (1975) argue that operations which promote NPs low on the AH to higher positions, as via passivization, distribute according to the AH. Thus, if a language can promote locatives to subjects ( e. g. *The forest was seen-in e a lion by John* ), then it can necessarily promote indirect objects and direct objects to subjects as well ( e. g. *Mary was shown the picture by John* ).

## 1.2 The Cleftability Hierarchy

From the above discussion, one would be tempted to extend the applicability of the Accessibility Hierarchy to other syntactic processes, such as clefting, given its close structural and functional resemblance to relativization ( Schachter 1973 ). However, in spite of the bulk of existing literature on the Accessibility Hierarchy, little systematic study on clefting has been known to provide evidence that the AH is, or to what extent it is, applicable to clefting crosslinguistically in terms of cleftability of various grammatical positions. Studies of the AH have largely been with regard to relativization, with little if any reference to clefting. On the other hand, studies of cleft sentences, though abounding, have barely touched upon cleftability with regard to the AH in any systematic way. Most research concerning the cleft construction has centred on its appropriate underlying structure and its derivation, for example simplex derivation ( e. g. Jespersen 1949; Ennaji & Sadiqi 1986 ), pseudo-cleft derivation ( e. g. Akmajian 1970; Gundel 1977; Bolinger 1972; Chafe 1976 ); copula sentence derivation ( e. g. Wirth 1978; Heggie 1988 ), base generation ( e. g. Delahunty 1984; Knowles 1986; Hedberg 2000 ), and dual-source analysis ( e. g. Hankamer 1974; Pinkham & Hankamer 1975 ). Other studies have focused on the semantics and/or pragmatics of cleft sentences ( e. g. Declerck 1984; Halvorsen 1976; Prince 1978; Horn 1981; Collins 1987 ). Few, if any, have dealt with cleftability; and even among the few which do, such as Declerck's ( 1983, 1984 ) study on cleftability of English adjective phrases ( APs ) and Collins' ( 1987, 1991 ) quantitative text study on English clefted constituents, none have been associated with the Accessibility Hierarchy in a crosslinguistic perspective. Given such a gap in the research, it seems that a systematic crosslinguistic investigation of cleftability with