Part II
Explorations in thematic structure and information structure

3 Marked Themes with and without pronominal reinforcement: their meaning and distribution in discourse*

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3.0 INTRODUCTION

After studying a corpus of spoken texts (the unedited transcripts of two television interview programs, *The MacNeil/Lehrer Report* and *Donahue*), one discovers that sentences employing a marked theme without pronominal reinforcement ('topicalized' structures), e.g., *John Smith I haven't seen for ages*, and sentences employing a marked theme with pronominal reinforcement ('left dislocated' structures), e.g., *John Smith I haven't seen him for ages*, serve a variety of distinct communicative functions in discourse. Further study reveals that those marked structures are distinctive syntactically, semantically, pragmatically, and distributionally. The findings allow one to hypothesize a direct relationship between the communicative functions and the syntactic forms of sentences employing marked themes with or without pronominal reinforcement.

The meanings, uses and distribution of MARKED THEMES (as they are called in Halliday 1985, or THEMATIC FRONTING as they are called in Quirk *et al*. 1985, or TOPICALIZATIONS and LEFT DISLOCATIONS as they are called in the transformational-generative literature) have not yet been fully examined. Often these sentence types are characterized as EMPHATIC, but the pre-theoretic, intuitive notion of emphasis has never been fully explicated. The purpose of this study is to explicate the intuitive notion of emphasis associated with marked themes, particularly pronominally reinforced marked themes (PRMTs) and unreinforced marked themes (UMTs). To do that, one must fully explicate

— the syntactic and semantic properties of marked themes, which define the notion of 'topic';
— the pragmatic functions of marked themes, which follow from the semantic properties; and
— the discourse distributional properties of marked themes, which illustrate the differences between PRMTs and UMTs in this study.

If successful, this study can be seen as a plea for corpus studies of linguistic phenomena, because only through corpus studies is one able to discover the distributional differences between various marked themes.

3.1 PRONOMINALLY REINFORCED MARKED THEMES (PRMTs) AND UNREINFORCED MARKED THEMES (UMTs) DEFINED.[1]

Sentences with UMTs and PRMTs, as in (1) and (2) respectively, appear to be marked correspondences of unmarked sentence types.[2]

(1) The basic idea we do in fact accept. [MacNeil/Lehrer transcript No. 1287][3]
(2) The child that has the temper tantrum in the store, fine, let 'em have the temper tantrum because they can't have the cookies. [Donahue transcript No. 10059]

The UMT of sentence (1) is characterized by the sentence initial appearance of a noun phrase that has a grammatical function other than subject. Usually the sentence initial noun phrase is the direct or indirect object of the clause; less commonly it is the object of a preposition. Sentence (3) is the unmarked corresponding form to the UMT structure in (1).

(3) We do in fact accept the basic idea.

The characteristics of the PRMT of sentence (2) not only include the sentence initial appearance of a noun phrase that has a grammatical function within the clause, but also the appearance of a co-referential pronoun within the sentence, 'sharing' the grammatical function of the sentence initial constituent and 'holding' the grammatical position of the sentence initial constituent within the clause. In (2), the sentence initial constituent *The child that has the temper tantrum in the store* is co-referential with the pronoun *them* (reduced to *'em*) appearing in the following clause. The pronoun shares the grammatical function of the sentence initial noun phrase and holds the grammatical position of the sentence initial noun phrase. The corresponding unmarked form is (4).

(4) Fine, let the child that has the temper tantrum in the store have the temper tantrum because they can't have the cookies.

Additionally, it is possible to distinguish UMT structures from PRMT structures with a number of METALINGUISTIC MARKERS, such as, *As for*, *Concerning*, *Speaking of/about*, *About*, or *But with*. Only PRMTs allow such metalinguistic markers, cf. (5):

(5) a. * {As for / Concerning / About / Speaking of/about / But with} the basic idea we do in fact accept.

b. {As for / Concerning / About / Speaking of/about / But with} the basic idea we do in fact accept it.

3.2 A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

At the risk of oversimplifying the issues, one could divide the literature into three camps. First, there are those who see marked themes as surface structure reorderings for stylistic/rhetorical purposes, e.g. Chomsky (1965) and Katz (1972). Secondly, there are those who are interested in the pragmatic effects/functions of marked themes, e.g. Green (1980), Quirk *et al.* (1972, 1985), and Chafe (1976). Thirdly, there are linguists who are interested in the semantics of sentences with non-canonical word order, e.g. Ross (1967), Firbas (1964), Halliday (1967, 1985), Gundel (1977), and Rodman (1974). Finally there are two studies, Green (1982) and Lyons (1977), that are concerned with the semantics of word order inversions. Both studies are mainly of interest here because they make comments based on inadequate corpus studies and faulty intuitions. Thus these two studies demonstrate the need for careful corpus study.

3.2.1 Stylistic reordering

In the standard theory of transformational-generative grammar, Chomsky dismissed sentences like (1) and (2) as stylistic variants of more basic sentences. Chomsky (1965: 126–7) asserts that

grammatical transformations do not seem to be an appropriate device for expressing the full range of possibilities for stylistic inversion . . . the rules of stylistic reordering . . . are not so much rules of grammar as rules of performance . . . with no apparent bearing, for the moment, on the theory of grammatical structure.

Further, in a footnote to those remarks, it is clear that UMTs, and presumably PRMTs, fall into this area of stylistic reordering:

Notice, for example, that Case is usually determined by the position of the Noun in surface structure rather than in deep structure, although the surface structures given by stylistic reordering do not affect Case . . . stylistic inversion of the type we have just been discussing gives such forms as 'him I really like,' 'him I would definitely not try to antagonize'. [Chomsky 1965: 221–2]

By labelling sentences with UMTs and PRMTs as stylistic phenomena of language performance, Chomsky was one of the first transformational

grammarians to ignore these forms as essentially MEANINGLESS, hence uninteresting.

It is important, however, to recognize a distinction between the kind of stylistic variation that is determined by the speakers' communicative intent, their social status and role, and their situation or context at the time they speak, and the kind of stylistic variation that is undetermined by such factors. The first kind of stylistic variation is consciously controlled more easily. For example, the social status and participant roles of two interlocutors influence their choice of diction and degree of formality. The second kind of stylistic variation is not consciously controlled easily. Word order and the location of main stress (which is affected by stylistic reorderings) are examples of that second kind of stylistic variation. So if by 'stylistic', Chomsky understands the variation resulting from free choices made by the speaker, it seems strange to call word order and placement of main stress stylistic phenomena. It seems more appropriate to treat those examples of the second kind of stylistic variation as grammatical, not performance, phenomena. Nevertheless, the notion of stylistic reordering survives.

Katz (1972: 417–34), for example, argues for the basic correctness of the standard theory of transformational grammar and proposes a separate 'rhetorical' component to account for the effects of stylistic inversions.

3.2.2 Pragmatic studies

Other grammarians focus on the pragmatic functions served by inversions in general, cf. Green (1980), Quirk *et al.* (1972), and Chafe (1976). These studies explore the usefulness of non-canonical word order for textual cohesion, contrastiveness, euphony, and ease of language processing. As fruitful as pragmatics is to the understanding of how people actually use language, there are some linguists who are uncomfortable using pragmatic principles as an explanatory force in linguistics for two reasons. First, pragmatic principles of language organization are not very rigorous as scientific principles; i.e. they do not make completely accurate predictions about word order. Pragmatic principles discuss GRAMMATICAL TENDENCIES, which are the result of one discourse function or another. Pragmatic principles are not GRAMMATICAL RULES. For example, Rodman (1974), Green (1980), Quirk *et al.* (1972), and others have often noted the tendency for 'heavy' clausal constituents to appear clause finally—the euphonic function of 'end-weight'. Yet, in (6) below, the 'heavy' subject does not necessarily occur later in the clause for reasons of euphony (or as the transformationalists would say, 'trigger right dislocation'), even in impromptu speech.

(6) . . . the Victorian husband whose wife didn't know what job he had downtown was probably well in control in the bedroom. [Donahue transcript No. 07269]

Likewise, the principle of end-weight, which Rodman (1974) and Quirk *et al.* (1972) employ to explain the function of right dislocation and extraposition, will not explain the presence of 'heavy' clause initial constituents as in (7).

(7) Finally, and then I'll stop, we had a bunch of prominent people, largely former Republicans or Republicans—Arthur Burns and Paul McCracken and George Shultz and William Simon—who formed a committee to fight inflation, and issued a report just a couple of months ago. And the only tax cut they advocated was a very small initial tax cut on business. NO PERSONAL CUTS, NO ACROSS-THE-BOARD TAX CUTS, NO KEMP-ROTH, THEY SAID, IN ORDER SCRUPULOUSLY TO AVOID REKINDLING THE FIRE OF INFLATION. [MacNeil/Lehrer transcript No. 1284] [author's emphasis]

In the UMT in (7), one might expect the principle of end-weight to 'disallow' the heavy marked theme sentence initially for the sake of euphony. Yet the principle of end-weight does not apply, making the entire issue of pragmatic explanations suspicious for some.

The second problem with pragmatic principles as explanatory concepts in syntax involves the nature of explanation in the philosophy of science. Any explanation of syntactic phenomena that appeals to explanatory principles or concepts beyond the realm of syntax is suspect unless there is compelling evidence to justify the validity of the explanatory principle and the relevance of the explanatory principle to the syntactic phenomena in question. Hence, many grammarians are reluctant to accept explanations of non-canonical word order as 'emphatic', 'focusing', or 'highlighting' constructions without some elaboration of the concepts. Bever (1975: 601) expressed similar sentiment when he wrote:

I have taken care to argue that each specific linguistic phenomenon is interpreted as due to independently motivated aspects of speech perception. I have attempted to avoid vague references to properties such as 'mental effort', 'informativeness', 'importance', 'focus', 'empathy', and so on. I do not mean that these terms are empty in principle: however, they are empty at the moment, and consequently have no clear explanatory force.

Nevertheless, neither criticism of pragmatic studies is insurmountable. The first criticism fails to take into account the interaction of various pragmatic principles functioning for different purposes in discourse. In the case of example (7), the connective function of the marked theme overrides the euphonic function of end-weight. Thus the heavy constituent *No personal cuts, no across-the-board tax cuts, no Kemp-Roth* provides textual cohesion with *the only tax cut they advocated*, which appears in the previous clause. It seems reasonable to expect that in particular discourse situations some pragmatic principles would be more highly valued than others, and so in the context of example (7) the connective function of the marked theme seems more important for effective, efficient communication than the euphonic function of the principle of end-weight.

The second criticism is just the kind of admonition one would expect whenever one proposes any explanatory principle. The pragmatic functions of UMTs and PRMTs, discussed in section 3.4, must be justified on independent grounds. An examination of the syntactic and semantic properties of UMTs and PRMTs, in section 3.3, provides the independent motivation for the pragmatic functions of presentation, connection and contrast.

Still, as a final cautionary note, one should be careful not to overgeneralize

any one pragmatic function as the sole reason for the existence of a particular type of sentence. Such overgeneralizations could lead the sceptical to doubt the explanatory force of pragmatic principles.

Chafe (1976: 49–50), for example, argues that the notion of 'contrastiveness' alone captures the meaningful differences between sentences employing marked themes with and without pronominal reinforcement and their corresponding unmarked forms. Chafe believes that sentences with UMTs and PRMTs are marked to show only a contrast in focus so that when speakers utter *The play John saw yesterday* or *As for the play John saw it yesterday*, they appear to make more explicit that *the play* is one item of many that John may have done or saw yesterday. However, given a corpus containing both UMTs and PRMTs, one discovers that contrast of focus is not as general as Chafe believes, cf. the UMT in (8) and the PRMT in (9):

(8) *Lehrer*:
There's no question in your mind that this is discrimination, and that you accept the idea—Newman's basic argument about comparable work. Is that true?

Norton:
THE BASIC IDEA WE DO IN FACT ACCEPT. [MacNeil/Lehrer transcript No. 1287] [author's emphasis]

(9) *Audience*:
Do men readily seek the advice of a psychiatrist when they're impotent?
Dr. Weisberg:
No. No, men are very ashamed about being impotent and they're not going to go to a psychiatrist. And particularly the older man who thinks that psychiatrists are crazy and so why do I have to do that, but they also feel that—they're so ashamed because it's a part of aging. They can justify it, they can say, well, I'm 55, 60, 65, 70 years old. It's part of life not to have more sex. MY FATHER, MY GRANDFATHER, THEY ALL TOLD ME, so I'm not going to go to a doctor about it. [Donahue transcript No. 07269] [author's emphasis]

The UMT in (8) has a connective function. The UMT, *The basic idea*, provides lexical cohesion with an earlier clause, *you accept the idea—Newman's basic argument*. The connective function of the UMT is aided by the repetition of the lexical items.

The PRMT in (9) has a presentative function. The PRMT, *My father, my grandfather*, presents the necessary 'universe-of-discourse' to interpret correctly the pronoun *they* in the main clause of the sentence. In other words, the PRMT presents the TOPIC of that clause. Notice that there is no explicit or implicit contrast between the UMT in (8) or the PRMT in (9) given their respective contexts.

3.2.3 Semantic studies

Finally, there are those grammarians who search for meaningful differences between sentences that seem to exhibit only a 'stylistic' reordering of constituents, cf. Ross (1967), Firbas (1964), Halliday (1967, 1985), Gundel (1977),

Rodman (1974), Gary (1976), and Bolinger (1977). The principle governing these studies maintains that differences in syntactic forms express differences, though perhaps subtle, in meaning. Bolinger (1977: 4) states the principle of one form-one meaning most explicitly:

Obviously the idea that even in syntax one could have identity with difference could not have gained currency without some empirical support. The classical case is that of the passive voice. If some differences of meaning are ignored, it is possible to say that *John ate the spinach* and *The spinach was eaten by John* are the same. They report the same event in the real world. The same entities are present and they are in the same relationship of actor and patient. But if truth value were the only criterion of identity in syntax we would have to say—as some have recently been trying to say—that *John sold the house to Mary* and *Mary bought the house from John* are just as much the same as the active-passive pair . . . Linguistic meaning covers a great deal more than reports of events in the real world. It expresses . . . such things as what is the central part of the message as against the peripheral part, what our attitudes are toward the person we are speaking to, how we feel about the reliability of our message, how we situate ourselves in the events we report, and many other things that make our messages not merely a recital of facts but a complex of facts and comments about facts and situations.

Ross (1967) argues that sentences with UMTs and PRMTs should be derived transformationally from more basic forms exhibiting canonical word order. His formulations of the Topicalization and Left Dislocation rules have remained fundamentally unchanged in much of the transformational literature. Through Ross, sentences with UMTs and PRMTs became a small part of a larger debate in transformational generative grammar. Some grammarians wished to relate transformationally all the reorderings of an underlying representation expressed in the surface representations of a language. Other grammarians wished to constrain the power of transformations, dealing with subjects like stylistic reordering of constituents by some other component of the grammar. However, Ross's thesis did not explain the value of sentences with UMTs or PRMTs. In 1967, assuming that transformations were meaning preserving, linguists argued that the one function and *raison d'être* of a transformation was to link different levels in a derivation for the purpose of relating in the theory sentences that speakers find related in the language. Thus the meaningful differences between the next to last clause in (10) and (11), for example, were considered negligible, often described only as 'emphatic' although the exact nature of the emphasis in (11) was never culled out.

(10) . . . they treat me like a regular, normal kid, and that's the way I like it because I don't think I'm a star and OTHER PEOPLE, GIRLS ON THE STREET, ASK ME FOR MY AUTOGRAPH and I give it to them.

(11) . . . they treat me like a regular, normal kid, and that's the way I like it because I don't think I'm a star and OTHER PEOPLE, GIRLS ON THE STREET, THEY ASK ME FOR MY AUTOGRAPH and I give it to them.

More recently, some grammarians have appealed to the distribution of 'old' and 'new' information in the clause, e.g. Firbas (1964). However, a general principle that says topics are 'old' information and that 'old' information precedes 'new' information conflicts with examples like (12) where the

PRMT, presumably the topical element, is 'new' information in the conversation.

(12) *Mr. Donahue*:

You know what knocked me out in the shows we've done with Masters & Johnson, and others, is that it's easy to change people with therapy. I mean, not every last patient, but I was astounded at the fact that this isn't all that complicated, is it?

Dr. Kaplan:

Well, we used to think that anybody who has any sexual difficulty was suffering from something deep, and you couldn't fix it so easily, or repair it. But a good number of people can be helped rapidly, another number cannot. And something—A problem like this gentleman talked about so openly might just be a normal pattern for him, and that couple would feel better if that woman knew it was his normal pattern, she might find it much easier to accept than if she thought, 'Oh, it's I'm not pretty enough.'

Mr. Donahue:

I'll never forget Dr. Masters' response to my question. I said, 'How can you, with a lifetime, and if a person is grown up and sex is bad and the puritanical, and you don't like your body, and it's evil, and, you know, and then God is watching us. With all of that, how can you possibly, in a session, remove all those outside programmings from childhood and take it out of the soul of a person?' And he looked me right in the eye and he said, 'Like taking candy from a baby.'

Audience: (laughter)

Dr. Kaplan: (laughter)

Mr. Donahue:

Now, I don't know whether he was showing off—But the point is that it isn't—

Dr. Kaplan:

Well, there's only one cause of sexual problems, really only one, and you've mentioned lots of them, but that's anxiety about sex. The moment of making love, if you feel some anxiety, that will ruin all the reflexes and all the appetite. But that anxiety can be very minor and simple, and will cause the same mischief as some anxiety that has a very deep root, and to be a good diagnostician you have to tell, you know, THE CAR, WELL YOU JUST HIT IT WITH A HAMMER, PING, AND IT GOES GOING AGAIN, AND THE OTHER ONE THAT NEEDS TO BE TAKEN APART. They look the same. They both don't run. [Donahue transcript No. 03120] [author's emphasis]

In one sense, the PRMTs in (12), *the car* and *the other one* (also referring to a car), are 'new' information in that there was no previous mention of cars earlier in the conversation. Yet the PRMTs are presumably the topics of their respective clauses. But notice that the PRMTs in (12) are in another sense 'old' information in that the reference to cars is an analogy to an earlier comment, in which Dr. Kaplan said *a good number of people can be helped rapidly,*

another number cannot. So it seems that any simple distinction between 'old' and 'new' information is not completely adequate to account for the data.

Another problem with a simple distinction between 'old' and 'new' information arises in contexts involving contrastive stress. Recall Chafe's examples of contrastive stress, *The play John saw yesterday* and *As for the play John saw it yesterday*. Chafe (1976) argued that the marked, sentence initial constituent *the play* was in contrast to other items that John may have done or saw yesterday. If the other items were mentioned earlier in the discourse, say, *the play, the film, the photograph*, then the mention of *the play* in the marked sentence is 'old' information. But there is another sense in which the UMT or PRMT is 'new' information. If one understands by 'new' information that which is unpredictable, then the contrastive use of *the play* in the marked sentences reveals a use of *the play* as 'new' information since its occurrence could not be predicted with any great accuracy from all the other members of the contrastive set.

Such a situation arises in (13) where two items, *robots* and *human workers*, are contrasted in the discourse.[4]

(13) *Lehrer*:

The General Electric Company, for instance, has automation plans that could eventually result in replacing half of its 37,000 employees with robots. Robot advocates say that they are more efficient, cheaper and, yes, more productive than human workers. And if the U.S. is to stay competitive in international markets, particularly against Japan, THEN ROBOTS IT MUST BE. [MacNeil/Lehrer transcript No. 1286] [author's emphasis]

In one sense the mention of *robots* in the marked sentence *then robots it must be* is 'old' information since it was already mentioned in context. In another sense, *robots* is 'new' information since it cannot be predicted which member of the contrastive set will be selected. Conceivably, Lehrer might just as well have said . . . *then human workers it must not be*.[4]

Other linguists have appealed to concepts like 'theme' or 'topic', cf. Halliday (1967, 1985) and Gundel (1977). Halliday (1967) characterizes theme structurally as the first position in the clause. Gundel argues that it is ridiculous to characterize a sentence like *Probably he'll be home tomorrow* as speaking about *probably* or probability. Therefore, she modifies Halliday's definition such that the topic of the clause is usually the left-most noun phrase. Halliday (1985), however, presents an extensive overview of thematic structures, making a number of distinctions that undercut Gundel's criticism, such as the distinction between the definition of theme and its realization in the English clause (1985: 39) or the distinction between simple and multiple themes (1985: 53ff.).

Nevertheless, it is not at all clear what Gundel's structural definitions of topic adds to the understanding of the differences between the italicized clauses in (10) and (11) above. Her definition will pick out *other people* as the topic in both (10) and (11), and nothing more is learned about the use or meaning of the PRMT used in (11). Halliday (1985: 38–67), on the other

hand, elaborately details the semantics of theme and demonstrates precisely how thematic structure is incorporated with other systems in any language.

Although Rodman (1974) provides some of the most thorough analyses of the syntax of sentences with UMTs and PRMTs, he does not provide a complete account of the functions or distribution of those sentences. Rodman was primarily concerned with arguing for a base-generated analysis of 'left dislocation' and a transformational analysis of 'topicalization'. He was not concerned with discourse functions or distribution; hence he missed a number of facts about those sentence types.

3.2.4 Green (1982) and Lyons (1977)

Finally, there are two studies that are interesting here only because they demonstrate the need for careful corpus studies. Green and Lyons have argued that sentences with UMTs or PRMTs are of little interest since they are so infrequent in natural speech, cf. Green (1982: 123): '. . . in natural speech inversions of most types are few and far between . . . So I abandoned natural speech as a primary source of inversions for syntactic study'. For this study there were 21 transcripts representing 21 hours of impromptu speech. In those 21 hours of speech, there were 43 examples of PRMTs (averaging 2 PRMTs per hour of speech) and 36 examples of UMTs (averaging 1.7 UMTs per hour of speech). The transcripts also contain a large number of other non-canonically ordered sentences, including inverted pseudo-cleft sentences, verb phrase inversion, adverbial preposing, and right dislocations.

Similarly Lyons (1977: 506) claims that 'Utterances like (6) [*John Smith I haven't seen for ages*] are relatively uncommon in Modern English; and they are even more uncommon perhaps when the grammatical subject is something other than a personal pronoun'. The examples in (14), however, are all sentences with UMTs in which the grammatical subject is something other than a personal pronoun.

(14) a. That sort of thing, this [= traditional psychiatry] is not. [Donahue transcript No. 09249]
   b. and that [= the proposition of an oversupply of physicians], I think, no one can question. [MacNeil/Lehrer transcript No. 802]
   c. And if the U.S. is to stay competitive in international markets, particularly against Japan, then robots it must be. [MacNeil/Lehrer transcript No. 1286]
   d. Wonderful it is that we have a society which resolves these matters in the courts instead of in a less rational way. [MacNeil/Lehrer transcript No. 1287]

There are two points one should learn from this short overview of contemporary linguistic treatments of non-canonical word order generally, and sentences with UMTs and PRMTs specifically. First, it seems certain that one's intuitive judgements about the frequency and meaning of unusual forms often reveals more about one's linguistic biases than about one's linguistic behaviour. That argues for the importance of corpus studies to

observe sentence constructions IN DISCOURSE, since it is there that their full range of functions can be studied.[5] Secondly, when one does collect a body of data, one learns that there is a meaningful difference between the sentences employing UMTs or PRMTs and their canonically ordered correspondences, which is discussed in sections 3.3–3.5.

3.3 SYNTACTIC AND SEMANTIC PROPERTIES OF SENTENCES WITH UMTs AND PRMTs

In this section, one will discover how certain syntactic properties of structures with UMTs and PRMTs indicate that UMTs and PRMTs are PRESUPPOSED, not asserted. The notion of presupposition that applies here follows from the fact that every statement can be seen as supplying an answer to an explicit or implicit question. And marked sentence structures also provide an answer to an explicit or implicit question that carries with it certain determinable presuppositions. For example, the statement.

(15) John saw the pláy yesterday

(with main stress on *play*) answers the question

(16) What did John see yesterday?

So (15) presupposes that John saw something yesterday and it asserts that the variable (realized by an indefinite pronoun *something* in the presupposition) was *the play*.

Similarly, negation provides another test for determining the presuppositions of a statement. Intonation and definiteness also provide tests for presupposed constituents.

3.3.1 The question test for assertion/presupposition

In (17) the question presupposes that John enjoys tea in the morning, but what is unknown (and what is asserted in the answer) is the kind of tea most enjoyed in the morning.

(17) What kind of tea does John most enjoy in the morning?

   a. John can drink English breakfast tea every morning.
   b. ?English breakfast tea John can drink every morning.
   c. *English breakfast tea, John can drink it every morning.

The unacceptability of (17b)[6] and (17c) shows that UMTs and PRMTs are not asserted. Instead UMTs and PRMTs are presupposed within their clauses.

3.3.2 The negation test for assertion/presupposition

Chafe (1976: 49) argues that (18a)–(18c) are functionally identical: 'The so-called topic [in (18a) and (18b)] is simply a focus of contrast that has for some reason or other been placed near the beginning of the sentence'.

(18) a. The pláy, John saw it yésterday.
    b. As for the pláy, John saw it yésterday.
    c. Rónald made the hamburgers.

What (18a–18c) share in common is contrastive focus, indicated by the focal stress on the sentence-initial noun phrase. But (18a)–(18c) are not equivalent. It is impossible to include the UMT or PRMT under the scope of negation, cf. (19a)–(19c).

(19) a. *It is not the case that the pláy John saw it yésterday.
    b. *It is not the case that as for the pláy, John saw it yésterday.
    c. It is not the case that Rónald made the hamburgers.

However (20) is perfectly acceptable.

(20) As for the pláy, it is not the case that John saw it yésterday.

Example (19c) shows that *Rónald* can be included within the scope of negation, but (19b) and (20) show that PRMTs cannot. The crucial difference is that *Rónald* in (18c) is asserted, but *the pláy* in (18a)–(18b) is not. Additionally, it should be noted that the sentence initial constituents in (18a)–(18c) are new information in the sense that it cannot be predicted, and is not known, which member of the contrastive set will be selected to contrast with the other members of the set. So the difference in meaning must be the presuppositional nature of the UMTs and PRMTs.

3.3.3 Intonationally marked structures and presupposition

Another difference between structures with UMTs or PRMTs and their canonically ordered corresponding forms is intonational. Besides syntactic markedness, structures with UMTs or PRMTs are intonationally marked in that they 'break' a clause, with a single tone unit, into a clause with two tone units. The two tone units double the number of constituents that receive stress within a clause. Compare the 'neutral' intonation of (21), which has main stress on the last major class constituent, and the marked intonation of (22a)–(22b), which breaks (21) into two tone units.

(21) John ate the pízza.

(22) a. The pízza John áte.
    b. The pízza John áte it.

Intonationally marked structures often serve to evoke a set of items that Jackendoff (1972: 246) calls the 'presuppositional set'. Thus a person who says

(23) Jóhn ate the pizza.[7]

would usually presuppose *Someone ate the pizza*. The presuppositional set of the intonationally marked item *Jóhn* is all the values that could be substituted for the variable *someone* in the presupposition. Membership in the presuppositional set is defined contextually and situationally by the information shared by, and in the consciousness of, the interlocutors, cf. Chafe (1974). The

presuppositional set makes a coherent and well-defined set of items in the discourse, amenable to discussion: this also suggests that topics are presupposed constituents.

So the intonational marking of UMTs and PRMTs suggests that those constituents are presupposed, not asserted, and that they are the topics of their clauses.

Also note that selecting one member of a presuppositional set amounts to contrasting one set member against the others. Thus many grammarians have called intonational marking 'contrastive stress'.[8]

3.3.4 UMTs and PRMTs realized by definite and indefinite noun phrases (NPs)

The examples in (24) and (25) show that NPs with indefinite reference do not occur sentence initially as readily as definite NPs.

(24) a. John shot the lion.
    b. The lion John shot.
    c. The lion, John shot him.
    d. $\begin{Bmatrix} \text{As for} \\ \text{About} \\ \text{Speaking of/about} \end{Bmatrix}$ the lion, John shot him.

(25) a. John shot a lion. [with indefinite reference]
    b. *A lion John shot.
    c. *A lion, John shot him.
    d. * $\begin{Bmatrix} \text{As for} \\ \text{About} \\ \text{Speaking of/about} \end{Bmatrix}$ a lion, John shot him.

The sentences in (26) provide more examples of unacceptable UMTs and PRMTs, which are also indefinite NPs.

(26) a. *Someone, he's coming.
    b. *Someone Tom likes.
    c. *A woman, he saw her.
    d. *Everybody, they're doing it.
    e. *Anyone, I didn't see.
    f. *Many men, Mary would like to marry them.
    g. *Many men Mary would like to marry.

The crucial semantic difference between the acceptable and the unacceptable sentences in (24), (25) and (26) is the notion of presupposition. Singular definite referring expressions, plurals and generic NPs make existential presuppositions. They presuppose the existence of, and succeed in identifying, the object about which something could be said. In other words, those NPs are potentially topics of a discourse. The indefinite NPs above do not have existential presuppositions, do not presuppose the existence of an object about which something could be said, and therefore are not topics.

Given the syntactic analysis presented here, one can now explain the ungrammaticality of indefinite NPs as UMTs or PRMTs. The data from the question test, the negation test and the intonational properties of sentences with UMTs or PRMTs suggest that UMTs and PRMTs are not semantically equivalent to their corresponding constituents in canonically ordered structures. UMTs and PRMTs are presupposed while their correspondences in canonically ordered structures may be asserted.

Further, presupposed constituents, as mentioned above, make reference to or identity objects about which something could be said. Presupposition is then a necessary condition for topichood. If indefinite NPs that do not presuppose the existence of anything are in a structure requiring presupposed constituents (the UMT or PRMT, for example), then this analysis would predict unacceptability, and that is precisely what one finds in (26).[9]

3.4 THE PRAGMATIC FUNCTIONS OF STRUCTURES WITH UMTs AND PRMTs

As one can see from the contextualized examples to follow in section 3.5, many UMTs and PRMTs are anaphoric in that they are co-referential with expressions that occur earlier in context. Structures with UMTs or PRMTs then certainly can have a connective function. And as discussed in section 3.3.3 above, UMTs and PRMTs can exhibit a contrastive function by virtue of evoking a 'presuppositional set'. Additionally though, sentences with UMTs or PRMTs serve a presentational function (to borrow a term from Hetzron 1975).

Note that all of the pragmatic functions discussed here are independently justified by the syntactic and semantic facts outlined in section 3.3. None of the pragmatic functions here is open to the attacks levelled against some other pragmatic studies of word order.

3.4.1 Presentational function

What are the pragmatic implications of the previous syntactic analysis? The examples in section 3.3 demonstrate the presuppositional nature of UMTs and PRMTs. Presupposed constituents represent entities that the speaker assumes to be shared knowledge among all discourse participants. And something could be said of those constituents upon whose existence speakers and their audiences co-operatively agree. Thus, topic could be defined as an entity whose existence is agreed upon by speakers and their audiences. More loosely, one might characterize the topic as a presentational device that 'sets a spatial, temporal or individual framework . . . which limits the applicability of the main predication to a certain restricted domain' (Chafe 1976: 50). Similar observations are scattered throughout the literature. Firbas (1964: 268) speaks of the 'local setting of the sentence'; Friedman (1976) defines the topic as an NP that is 'creating a *scene*'.

The presentational or stage-setting function of UMTs and PRMTs is

necessary because speakers may substitute 'new' lexical items for 'old' lexical items that appeared earlier in context. The motivation for the substitution is either elegant variation or analogy. In either case, the sentence with a UMT or PRMT helps to 'change the scene' or 'present a new scene' and thereby provides for easier understanding.

The sentences with PRMTs in (12) above are examples of a change in lexical items for analogy. Recall that in (12) two PRMTs, *the car* and *the other one* [= another car], are analogous with two different populations mentioned earlier in the discourse, *a good number of people can be helped rapidly, another number cannot*. The PRMTs help to set the scene so that the clauses comprising the analogy are more easily understood.

A good example of a PRMT to set the stage with a piece of elegant variation is in (32) in section 3.5.1. There one speaker re-establishes an earlier topic, *the Moral Majority*, by using elegant variation in the form of *the evangelicals*.

3.4.2 Connective function

It has already been established that UMTs and PRMTs are presupposed. And language users may assume that presupposed items have been established earlier in the discourse, either contextually or situationally. Given the presuppositional nature of UMTs and PRMTs and assuming they are established earlier in discourse, the connective function of UMTs and PRMTs follows.

For example the UMTs in (27) and (28) are both presupposed and both refer to asserted constituents in the immediately preceding clause.

(27) *Wallop*:
       They don't pay income taxes. Wyoming's never had one.
       Bumpers:
       Well, if they'd had one, I'm sure—
       Lehrer:
       What about sales taxes?
       Wallop:
       SALES TAXES WE DO. But we do have schools to build, and we are putting out approximately 80 percent of what we collect in Wyoming into impact aid, housing aid, or community aid. [MacNeil/Lehrer transcript No. 1285] [author's emphasis]

(28) *Dr. Dobkin*:
       Well, it's getting confusing for us. As a young physician when I started medical school ten years ago, the gospel was there were too few doctors and the more that could be trained and the faster, the better. It's certainly clear now that there are still major deficiencies in terms of health services, and in many cases it seems that there is an oversupply of services or an overavailability in other areas. And assuming an imbalance—AND THAT, I THINK, NO ONE CAN QUESTION—the problem now is, I think, again the issue has been put in terms of economics . . . [MacNeil/Lehrer transcript No. 802] [author's emphasis]

Often the connective function of structures with UMTs and PRMTs is reinforced by other devices that also provide textual cohesion. In (27) there is an exact lexical repetition, one cohesive device. In (29) lexical repetition, grammatical parallelism (the repetition of a grammatical structure through a text) and the UMTs all provide cohesion.

(29) *Audience*:
Yes. I feel it depends on the type of—or the type of naughtiness that they've done as to the type of punishment. SOME THINGS I DO THINK YOU HAVE TO SPANK 'EM ON THE BUTT A LITTLE BIT. SOME THINGS YOU CAN SEND THEM TO A ROOM AND SET THEM ON A CHAIR. OTHER THINGS YOU CAN YELL AT AND THEY'LL PROVE IT. [Donahue transcript No. 10059] [author's emphasis]

At the lexical level there is the cohesive repetition of *some*, *things*, *you* and *can*. At the syntactic level there is repeated use of UMTs (itself forming a grammatically parallel pattern here), and there is the grammatical parallelism in clause structure. All three clauses with UMTs share the form:

UMT	subject	auxiliary	main verb
Some things	*you*	*have to*	*spank*
Some things	*you*	*can*	*send*
Other things	*you*	*can*	*yell*

3.4.3 Contrastive function

The contrastive function of constructions with UMTs and PRMTs has already been discussed in section 3.3.3. The contrastiveness of UMTs and PRMTs arises through intonational marking, which in turn evokes a presuppositional set. The UMT or PRMT is but one member of the presuppositional set, and selecting one member of a set amounts to contrasting it against all other members of the set. It is through the semantic properties of presuppositional sets that structures with UMTs and PRMTs achieve their contrastive function. Indeed, the contrastiveness of structures with UMTs and PRMTs is so common and well known that Chafe (1976: 50) believed contrastiveness was the major, if not sole, purpose of UMTs and PRMTs.

Two examples of this contrastive function are (13) in section 3.2.3 and (33) in section 3.5.2. In (13) the contrastiveness of *then robots it must be* arises through the mention earlier in the discourse of two items that comprise the presuppositional set for this UMT, *human workers* and *robots*. In (33) the sentence with a UMT *That sort of thing* [= traditional psychiatry], *this* [= surrogate therapy] *is not*, contrasts two items, both of which comprise the presuppositional set of the UMT and both of which are mentioned earlier in the discourse.[10]

3.5 THE DISTRIBUTIONAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN STRUCTURES WITH UMTS AND PRMTS

After examining the corpus, one can make two general statements about constructions with UMTs and PRMTs, which directly relate to their distribution in discourse:

A. Contextualized examples of PRMTs in (30)–(32) show that PRMTs RE-ESTABLISH an earlier discourse topic.
B. Contextualized examples of UMTs in (33)–(35) show that UMTs MAINTAIN a current discourse topic.

These two generalizations of the functional differences between UMTs and PRMTs can be captured by the notion of consciousness. Speakers use a PRMT when they believe the presupposed constituent is no longer in the immediate consciousness of their audience. UMTs are used when speakers assume that the presupposed constituent is in the immediate consciousness of the audience. The notion of consciousness was first introduced by Chafe (1974: 111–12):

Language . . . is used primarily to increase the amount of knowledge that is shared by separate minds . . . What a speaker shares with his addressee must be part of what is in the speaker's consciousness at the time . . . The speaker must make assumptions as to what the addressee is conscious of, and transmit his own material accordingly.

Earlier studies of PRMTs—Rodman (1974), Givón (1979), and Duranti and Ochs (1979)—have noted the power of this sentence type to re-establish an 'old' discourse topic that seems to have been lost as the conversation shifts naturally from one topic to the next. As mentioned in section 3.4.1, part of the presentational function of PRMTs is restricted to 're-establishing on the scene' topics of conversation that are, in the speaker's judgement, no longer in the audience's immediate consciousness. In other words, the less vividly 'on stage' an idea is, the more necessary a PRMT becomes. This is part of the function of a PRMT, and this function helps to explain its discourse function of 'topic recoverability', as Givón (1979: 56–65) calls it.

Examples (30) and (32) below show how speakers shift from the present topic to an 'older' topic, older in the sense that the PRMT was a topic earlier in the conversation. Examples (33) and (35), by contrast, show that the function of UMTs is restricted to settings where the discourse topic is already established, a given, in the immediate consciousness of the speakers and audience.

3.5.1 Examples of PRMTs

(3) *Lehrer*:
I see. Well, is it possible for you to define in Western terms what a free trade union movement under this agreement might look like in Poland?
Szostak:
Well, it's sort of—they will be given their demands. How many of these

demands will be given, we do not know. To what degree, is another question yet to be resolved. However, they are still—will have to fall in line with the main umbrella organization.

Lehrer:
I see.

Szostak:
So in other words, they are giving enough latitude to go so far, but there is a stopping point. While here in the United States, A FREE TRADE UNION— YOU CAN JUST GO AND DO ANYTHING YOU WANT. [MacNeil/Lehrer transcript No. 1283] [author's emphasis]

In this example, the progression of the topic through the discourse can be schematized as illustrated in Figure 3.1. In the course of describing the trade union's movement in Poland, the initial topic of conversation, Szostak touches upon two related subtopics, the union's demands and the Polish government's umbrella organization. The PRMT re-establishes an 'old' discourse topic, which seems to have been lost as the conversation shifts naturally from one topic to another.
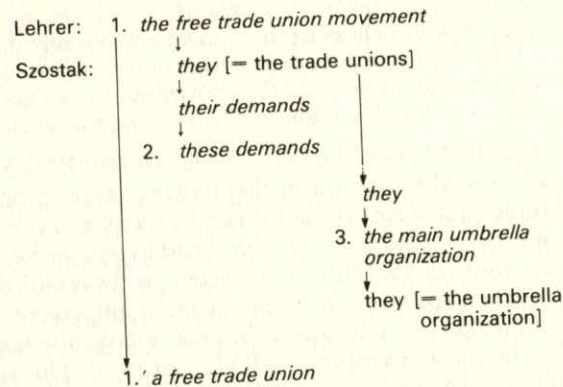

Lehrer: 1. *the free trade union movement*
Szostak: *they* [= the trade unions]
their demands
2. *these demands*
they
3. *the main umbrella organization*
they [= the umbrella organization]
1.' *a free trade union*

Figure 3.1

Another shift to an 'older' discourse topic through a PRMT appears in the following example.

(31) *MacNeil:*
Ms. Curry, if major concessions are granted to the Polish workers and tolerated by the Soviet Union, what will the effect be on the neighboring East European countries?

Curry:
I think first of all you have to keep in mind that the Soviets must have agreed to whatever concessions were made. These weren't made alone by the Polish leadership. And secondly, that the other worker in Eastern Europe, although economically they're getting to be in the same position as the Polish workers, they're still better off than the Poles. And these

concessions, these political concessions are not going to bring economic prosperity to Poland, at least in the short run. So, I think the Czechs are going to remember what happened in '68. That's not something they've forgotten. The Hungarians are fairly well off economically. I don't think they're gonna be concerned about threatening their economic well-being. The East Germans are a fairly repressed society, so the options for East German workers are far more limited than for Poles, who've always been a very different country than anywhere else in Eastern Europe.

MacNeil:
So, in short, you don't see a wave of imitation following this incident in Poland?

Curry: No, I don't see a wave of imitation.

MacNeil: Mr. Szostak, do you?

Szoztak:
Yes, I see a selective imitation with possibly Czechoslovkia [*sic*], Rumania. BUT WITH EAST GERMANY, IT'S A DIFFERENT SITUATION, because the Soviet Union has witnessed the ravages of war with Germany, and I think the Soviet Union would think twice before it loosens the reins in East Germany. This is why East Germans are so repressive. HOWEVER, THE OTHER COUNTRIES THAT I'VE MENTIONED, THEY WILL SEE WHAT THE MODEL IN POLAND IS, and they will gradually acquiesce, because there's no need for violence, and I think their feeling is, 'If the Soviet Union agrees to Poland, they will agree to us.' BUT EAST GERMANY—THAT'S A DIFFERENT SITUATION, because definitely for its own security protection, she wants to keep East Germany totally independent of the western part of Germany. [MacNeil/Lehrer transcript No. 1283] [author's emphasis]

Schematically the topical progression here is depicted in Figure 3.2. Again, one can see PRMTs re-establish earlier discourse topics. The first of three PRMTs re-establishes a sub-topic, *East Germany*, and the second PRMT re-establishes the topic *other East European countries*, which has been lost in the discussion. Then as the topic shifts again from *other countries* back to *East Germany*, yet another PRMT is used.

(32) *Hunter-Gault:*
Mr. Falwell, what do you say to Congressman Drinan's assertion that you don't have the real majority that you think you have, or that you say you have?

Falwell:
Well, first of all, the name Moral Majority doesn't imply that every American agrees. A December Gallup poll indicated that 84 percent of all Americans believe the Ten Commandments are valid for today. That doesn't mean they can all quote them. And certainly we don't all live up to what we believe in. That's why we go to church and serve God and pray and so on. But it does mean that intellectually a majority of Americans still believe—and I think that probably the percentage that believed in 1776—in the traditional family and basic moral values, all the things that this country was built upon, a nation under God. Therefore,
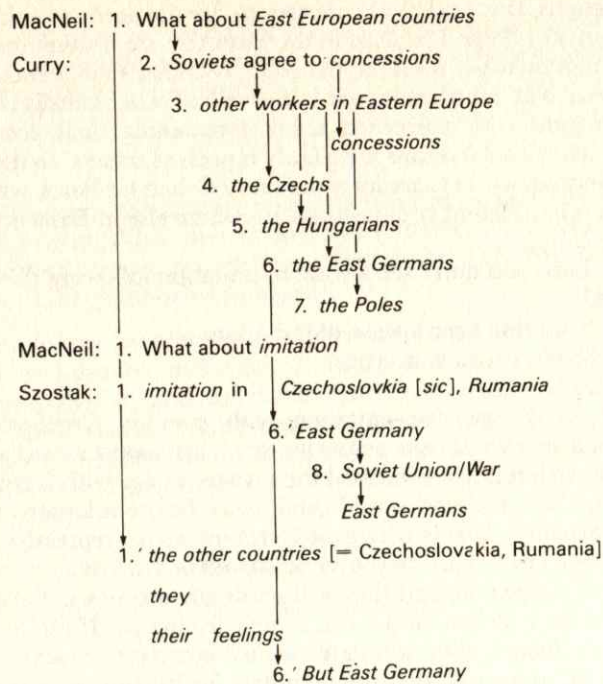
Figure 3.2

the people haven't gone bad. Leadership has. And instead of having government of the people, by the people, for the people, we now have a government in spite of the people—and Father Drinan is a typical example of that—ignoring what the majority of the people, and his own church, all God-fearing people want, and that is a return to moral sanity in this country, and a strengthening of the military fiber and fabric of this country so the citizenry can once again be safe from the attack of some aggressor somewhere, in particular the Soviet Union. To me, I say there is a majority out there, a vast overwhelming majority. But politicians have successfully come home to their constituency waving a bible in one hand and a flag in the other, saying 'I'm a conservative,' going right back to Washington, and along with the Ted Kennedy's and the Father Drinans, have voted anti-family, anti-morality, anti-strong national defense consistently every time. And I say that is the very height of hypocrisy.

Drinan:

Sir, I have never cast a vote against the family. I taught family law for a dozen years——

Falwell:

You have voted federal funding for abortion, and that is anti-family.

Hunter-Gault:

Congressman Drinan, are there any areas within that list of things that Mr. Falwell has just outlined that you can possibly agree with? I mean, is it possible for a liberal to—of your persuasion to agree with any of those things that he has laid out?

Drinan:

Of course. Christianity dictates fundamentally that we should do everything that we can to avoid war, and that's why it's appalling THAT THE EVANGELICALS, THE ONES THAT WE'RE DISCUSSING TONIGHT AT LEAST, THEY ARE OPPOSED TO SALT II. And it seems to me inconceivable that they wouldn't want to make this step forward to disarmament. Secondly, all Christians and all people of religious faith would say we have to do all that we can to feed the Third World. Now, there's people, millions of people, who are starving, and I see nothing in the evangelicals that we're discussing, nothing that would say America has to increase its foreign aid. [MacNeil/Lehrer transcript No. 1280] [author's emphasis]

Here the topical progression can be seen in Figure 3.3. The PRMT again re-establishes the earlier topic of conversation. Notice how Falwell progresses through a number of related sub-topics and Drinan's use of the PRMT re-establishes a topic long removed from the immediately preceding topic, *war*.
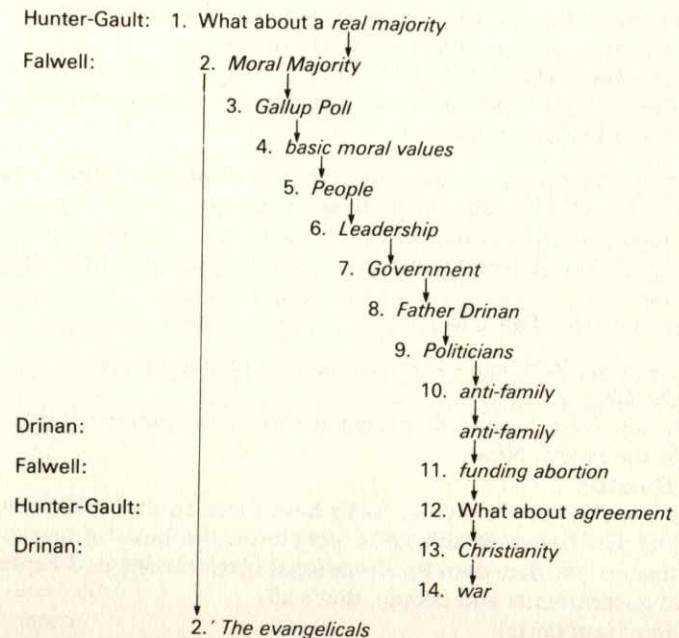

Figure 3.3

3.5.2 Examples of UMTs

(33) *Audience*: What is the average cost of this therapy?
Ms. Dreyer: Um, I'd—
Mr. Donahue: Give us a ball park, can you? I mean—
Ms. Dreyer:
I would say that it is about a hundred dollars a week. It's very, very expensive. And one of the reasons that I'm on this program is that I feel that there are many things available to people in this country who can afford it. Okay. But this is not a program that is available at our major universities. They have sexual dysfunction clinics, but they don't have the availability of working with surrogates yet. Okay.
Mr. Donahue: Do you think they ought to?
Ms. Dreyer:
I feel they should. But, then, you're the audience here, how would you feel if your tax dollars were going to support a, you know, a thing like this? I mean, see it, it's a complicated issue, isn't it?
Audience: The way that it remains is upper-middle class therapy.
Ms. Dreyer: That's right.
Audience: I think that's immoral.
Audience: So do I.
Mr. Donahue: So much of psychiatric care remains that.
Ms. Dreyer:
That's true, Phil, but to a certain extent, there is very good psychiatric care available through major medical universities.
Mr. Donahue: True.
Ms. Dreyer: THAT SORT OF THING, THIS IS NOT. [Donahue transcript No. 09249] [author's emphasis]

Schematically the topical progression here is illustrated in Figure 3.4, which shows that the UMT, *that sort of thing*, does not re-establish an earlier discourse topic, as PRMTs do; rather, it maintains a discourse topic. In this example, the UMT is co-referential with the immediately preceding topic, *psychiatric care*.

Another example of an UMT is:

(34) *Mr. Donahue*: Why can't I be aiming at reducing misery?
Dr. Shockley:
Well, you were aiming at reducing misery by making things perfect across the board. Now—
Mr. Donahue:
Well, no. I'm merely saying, 'Let's have more equitable distribution of wealth.' Let's have wealth go to people on the basis of merit, not on whether or not they own multi-national corporations and exploit third world governments and people, that's all.
Audience: (applause)
Dr. Shockley:
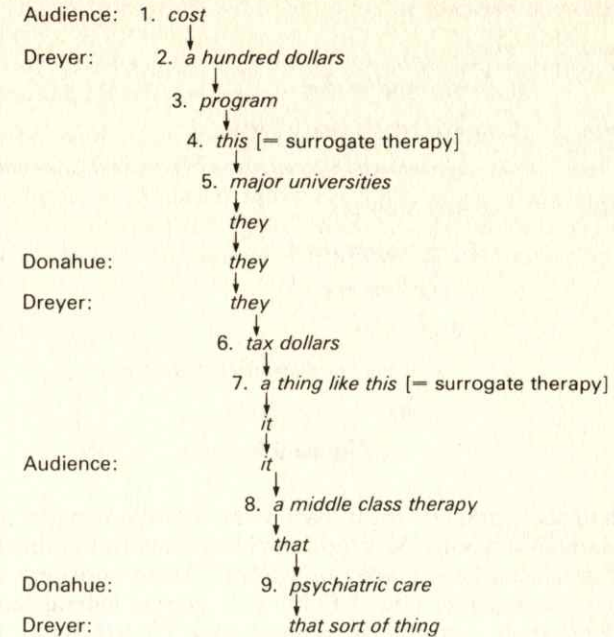Well, I'd rather stick to the U.S. in this point. And now I was bringing

Figure 3.4

something up about this thing, which I say is the biggest threat for any minority group in our nation. And this is the high birth rate at the bottom of the black population. And we got as far as saying that taxpayers are gonna suffer from this, and that brought a response from the audience. And I was gonna say there was a more fundamental moral issue, to my way of thinking. AND THAT I DIDN'T FINISH. And that moral issue is that these babies that come into the world at the bottom of this scale, at this lowest socio-economic status, are, in effect, getting an unfair shake from a badly loaded parental genetic dice cup. [Donahue transcript No. 03250] [author's emphasis]

Schematically the topical progression is as shown in Figure 3.5. Again, the UMT, *that*, maintains a current discourse topic, rather than re-establishes an earlier discourse topic.

Consider also:

(35) *Jim Lehrer*:
Senator, what kind of limit would you put on coal severance taxes?
Sen. Dale Bumpers: Twelve and a half percent.
Lehrer: Why?
Bumpers:
Well, number one, that is an arbitrary figure, Jim, and I recognize that. But I think it's a reasonable figure. It certainly would do more than
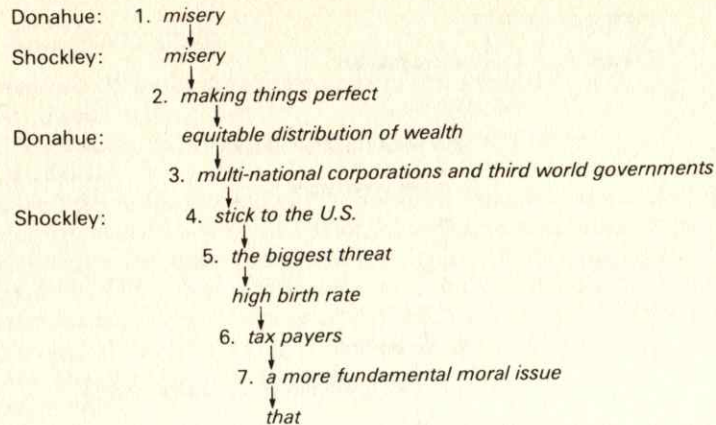
Donahue: 1. *misery*
Shockley: *misery*
2. *making things perfect*
Donahue: *equitable distribution of wealth*
3. *multi-national corporations and third world governments*
Shockley: 4. *stick to the U.S.*
5. *the biggest threat*
high birth rate
6. *tax payers*
7. *a more fundamental moral issue*
that

Figure 3.5

enough to accommodate the impact of the increased energy production, particularly in states like Montana and Wyoming. But I think there's one point that has not been made in yours and Robin's opening, and THAT I WANT TO STRESS RIGHT NOW. My bill only goes to federal coal, and I'm not talking about coal that is owned by the United States. [MacNeil/Lehrer transcript No. 1285] [author's emphasis]

Schematically the topical progression is illustrated in Figure 3.6. Again, the UMT maintains a current discourse topic. The UMT, *that*, is co-referential with the immediately preceding topic, *one point that has not been made*. The function of the UMT is to maintain the topic.
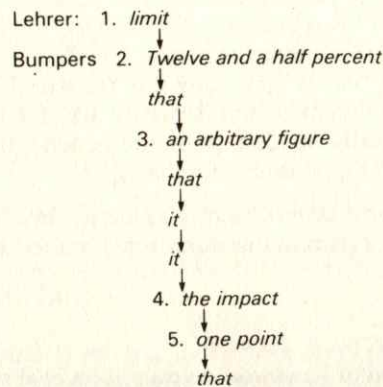
Lehrer: 1. *limit*
Bumpers 2. *Twelve and a half percent*
that
3. *an arbitrary figure*
that
it
it
4. *the impact*
5. *one point*
that

Figure 3.6

To characterize more precisely the distribution of structures with UMTs and PRMTs, one could make the following generalizations:

— UMTs are co-referential with the topic in the immediately preceding sentence.
— PRMTs are co-referential with a topic in an earlier sentence, x-sentences away from the PRMT, where $x = 2$.

Or to describe the distribution relationally, one would say that the UMT is co-referential with the immediately preceding discourse topic, but the PRMT is co-referential with an earlier discourse topic, where there is at least one intervening topic between the PRMT and its antecedent topic. One could schematically illustrate the relational description of distribution by Figure 3.7.
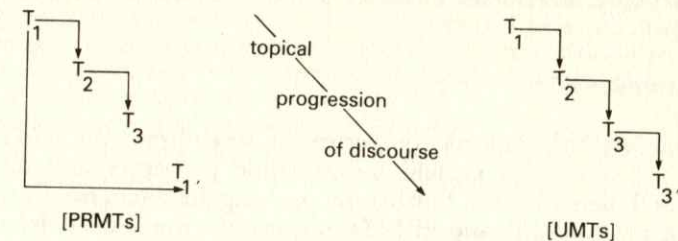
T_1
T_2
T_3
T_1'
[PRMTs]

topical
progression
of discourse

T_1
T_2
T_3
T_3'
[UMTs]

Figure 3.7

3.6 WORD ORDER STUDIES

Having examined the syntactic, semantic and distributional differences between structures with UMTs and PRMTs, one now can make a claim about the relationship between function and form. It may be the case that the differences in the syntactic forms of sentences with UMTs and PRMTs derive from their functions in discourse. Intuitively, one might guess that any construction that functions to re-establish an earlier discourse topic must be 'richer' in semantic content than any construction that functions to maintain a topic.[11] A structure maintaining a topic, which can be assumed to be in the immediate consciousness of the audience, requires a 'leaner' semantic content compared to the structure that must re-establish an earlier topic, which cannot be assumed to be in the immediate consciousness of the audience.

Three syntactic facts support these intuitions about the relation of form to function. First, nearly one-half of all the UMTs in the corpus are pronouns. Pronouns themselves are 'leaner' in semantic content than their co-referential, full noun phrases. Secondly, all of the PRMTs in the corpus are definite, full noun phrases. So on the basis of their sentence initial constituents, structures with PRMTs are 'richer' in semantic content than structures with UMTs, and this is exactly what one would predict given the discourse function of PRMTs to re-establish topics not in the immediate consciousness of the audience.

Thirdly, the structural differences between sentences with UMTs and

PRMTs also provide PRMTs with a 'richer' semantic content. That is, PRMTs have co-referential pronouns within their clauses that serve to reinforce the semantic content of the PRMT in much the same way as reflexive pronouns can reinforce their antecedents in sentences like *John himself ate the pizza*. UMTs do not have this kind of pronominal reinforcement of their sentence initial constituents, so they are comparatively 'leaner' in semantic content.

These three syntactic facts bear out one's intuitions about the kinds of structures needed to maintain, as opposed to re-establish, a discourse topic. One could hypothesize, therefore, that the form of structures with UMTs and PRMTs is (partly) determined by their distribution and function in discourse.

3.7 CONCLUSIONS

By determining the syntactic properties of structures with UMTs and PRMTs, one is able to explain the semantic properties and discourse functions of those structures. Further, by studying the discourse distribution of structures with UMTs and PRMTs, one can discover how differences in discourse functions create differences in syntactic forms. Those studies, discoveries, allow a number of conclusions:

— the semantic properties of UMTs and PRMTs provide a definition of topichood through the notion of presupposition;
— the (discourse) functions of presentation, connection and contrast follow directly from the semantic properties of structures with UMTs and PRMTs;
— structures with UMTs and PRMTs are in complementary distribution; i.e. they do not occur in the same discourse environment;
— one can hypothesize (based on the discourse functions of UMTs and PRMTs, their semantic properties and their discourse distribution) that the form of the structure is at least partly determined by its function.

As a final note, one should recognize that these generalizations can only be made after a careful corpus study of the structures involved.

NOTES

1. A note about terminology: these constructions are labelled differently in different grammatical theories. Transformational-generative theory prefers the labels 'topicalization' and 'left dislocation'. The formal, scholarly grammars, such as Quirk *et al.* (1985), often use 'thematic fronting'. Those labels imply, unquestioningly, a movement analysis of the non-canonical word orders, suggesting that they are somehow derived from more basic types of sentences or from their canonically ordered corresponding sentences. Following the Prague school, Halliday (1967, 1985) uses the general label 'marked theme' to characterize non-canonically ordered structures. Marked themes in an independent declarative clause include the structures studied here in addition to sentence initial adverbials (i.e. adjuncts).

Further, Halliday (1985: 45, 81) clearly labels marked themes without pronominal reinforcement as 'thematic complements' or 'marked-thematic complements'. It is not certain if he would include marked themes with pronominal reinforcement in the category of (marked-) thematic complements. And given the evidence to follow in this study, one has reason to distinguish the two different structures, for as Halliday (1985: 384) notes, 'All of them differ in meaning in some respect, and given a functional grammar we can say what that respect is'.

So, in this study, I prefer the labels 'pronominally reinforced marked themes' (PRMTs) and 'unreinforced marked themes' (UMTs) over the more specific label '(marked-) thematic complement'. First, as Halliday mentions himself, not all of those marked themes are complements in Halliday's system, as in *the other one, that needs to be taken apart*, where the marked theme functions as subject, or in *Some things I do think you have to spank 'em on the butt a little* [*for*], where the marked theme functions as object of a (subvocalized) prepositional phrase. Secondly, as we shall see, those constructions are grammatically, semantically and functionally distinctive, justifying separate labelling.

2. Markedness here is determined by (1) frequency of occurrence, (2) structural complexity in sentences beginning with PRMTs, and (3) restricted distribution: i.e. not all unmarked structures have corresponding sentences with UMTs or PRMTs appearing in the same contexts.

3. All of the impromptu speech data for this chapter comes from the unedited transcripts of two television interview programmes, the *Donahue Show* and the *MacNeil/Lehrer Report*.

4. Compare Prince (1981) for her interesting and useful explication of the concepts 'given' and 'new'.

5. This review of the literature was meant to outline some of the problems that arise in word order studies. A major source of problems when one studies word order might be called the poverty of surface syntactic information, i.e. the number of distinctions serial order can make as an information-carrying device. Serial order can provide only two possible pieces of information: (1) two constituents can be sequential or not (i.e. serial order can describe adjacency relations), and (2) if the constituents are sequential, their order may be either X–Y or Y–X (i.e. serial order can describe precedence relations).

Through the relationships of adjacency and precedence, serial order, supplemented in the surface representation by morphology and intonation, provides information about grammatical relationships of subject, object, etc; about thematic structure of theme/rheme or topic/comment (the 'psychological' subject of Sandmann 1954); about the participant roles of agent, patient, etc. (the 'logical' subject of Sandmann 1954); and about information structure of given and new. As Chafe (1976: 27) puts it, 'A noun in its sentence plays many roles, or has the potential of doing so'.

So part of the difficulty in determining the contribution of linear order to one's understanding of language results from the interplay of various language processes. These linguistic processes 'conspire' to determine the serial order of clausal constituents. Out of context, or in a controlled context, it is possible to isolate the functions of end-focus, thematic prominence, and euphony in determining linear order, but *in vivo*, as it were, it becomes more difficult to characterize precisely the contribution of individual language processes.

Neutralization processes provide an analogous situation to the 'conspiracy' described here. Neutralization rules, at any level of linguistic analysis, eliminate a potential contrast, thereby creating the potential for ambiguity. At some level of

analysis, one would want to explain the ambiguity by positing different forms, which are no longer overtly distinguished at the surface level because of a neutralization process. Likewise, different sentence types seem to neutralize some distinctions between grammatical, thematic, psychological and logical subject, for example, in order to express some distinction that otherwise may be missed. That is, in appropriate contexts, language users may need to be explicitly clear about information structure, or thematic structure, etc., for efficient language processing. For example, when speakers need to be explicit about the 'packaging' of information within a clause, the cleft and pseudo-cleft constructions allow a distinction between GIVEN versus KNOWN information. See Prince (1978) for a discussion of the discourse contexts that require such explicitness.

For more details about the confusion that arises through the poverty of surface syntactic information, see Chafe (1976).

6. Sentence (17b) is acceptable only if one assumes a contrast with other kinds of tea that could be asserted as possible answers to the question. Without this contrastive sense, (17b) is unacceptable.

7. Sentence (23) is intonationally marked because focal stress falls on a non-focal constituent. But it is not marked if it answers the question *Who ate the pizza?*, which requires an answer like (23).

8. Quirk *et al.* (1985) provide a more detailed account of the relationship between marked theme and intonation.

9. Firbas (1966), Reinhart (1982), and Simon-Vandenbergen (1987) present evidence that indefinite NPs with specific reference may also serve as marked themes. For example, Simon-Vandenbergen discusses *Now, a friend of mine, he had the same problem*. Simon-Vandenbergen explains this apparent discrepancy by citing Langendonck's study of indefinites. Langendonck argues that for some classes of indefinites, like the one above, 'the individuals are presupposed in the speaker's world, though not in the hearer's for whom an introduction is needed' (1980: 216). So it seems that SPECIFICITY OF REFERENCE (in addition to definiteness, plurality and generic reference) can provide the necessary conditions for topichood by creating existential presuppositions (at least in the speaker's world). Thus, 'This presuppositional status of [this class of] indefinite entails that these NPs tend to figure in the front of the sentence, just like definites' (Langendonck ibid.).

10. Note also that the marked themes in examples (13) and (33) have a concessive force.

11. Givón believes that there is an iconicity principle at work here: '... the more disruptive, surprising, discontinuous or hard to process a topic is, the more coding material must be assigned to it' (1983: 18).

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