

Discourse Functions of Certain Fronting Constructions in English

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Abstract

Following the assumption that similarities in syntactic form may correspond to discourse-functional similarities in the use of those forms, the paper examines English declarative sentences with initial non-subject nominals and initial adverbials. The identified discourse functions (additional elements of meaning introduced in the propositional content of sentences with canonical word order and the contribution of frontings to the context) were divided into prominence-giving pragmatic ones and text-development ones. The parameters influencing these discourse functions include: a/syntactic ones (form, definiteness, functional category), b/semantic and pragmatic ones (referring to information status), and c/ semantic and textual ones (dealing with formal, functional and semantic similarities between the initial element and other elements and structures in the relevant language segment).

1. Introduction

Despite a considerable number of studies dealing with discourse functions of various syntactic constructions, this continues to be an intriguing area for pragmatists, discourse analysts and syntacticians alike. In this paper, starting from the theoretical assumption that similarities in syntactic form may correspond to discourse-functional similarities in the use of those forms, a group of structurally similar fronting constructions in English declarative sentences was examined and compared with respect to their discourse functions. It was, however, assumed that sentences with fronted constituents do not differ in propositional content from their canonical word order counterparts, but they differ in discourse functions.

2. Fronting constructions

Fronting is generally understood as “the initial placing of an element such as an object or an adverbial” (Quirk *et al.*, 1985:89), or, more specifically, as “the achievement of marked theme by moving into initial position an item which is otherwise unusual there.” (*ibid.*, 1377).

The examined fronting constructions can be broadly grouped into two types, depending on the functional-positional category of the initial non-subject sentence element¹:

1/ sentences with initial nominals

¹ Initial constituents in the given examples are indicated by capitals.

(1) A gardener would be dismissed for being seen to come into the house with earth on his hands; a butler for having a spot of wine in his stock; a maid for having slut's wool under her bed. ... : for the gardens were a positive forest of humane man traps - "humane" in this context referring to the fact that the great waiting jaws were untoothed, though quite powerful enough to break a man's leg. These iron servants were the most cherished by Mrs Poulteney. *THEM*, she had never dismissed. (Fowles:23)

2/ sentences with non-clausal initial adverbials

(2) ONE MORNING a little rabbit sat on a bank. He picked his ears and listened to the trit-trot, trit-trot of a pony. (Potter:9)

Syntactically, the first type of initial constituents are subcategorized while the second usually are not. Neither of the constructions involves inversion of the subject and the verb. From the point of view of the thematic arrangement of sentence elements, initial (non-subcategorized) adverbials and topicalized direct objects have been claimed to be the most familiar types of 'marked themes' (Taglicht, 1985:20).

The analysis of some 1500 naturally-occurring tokens from the corpus of written language included the study of syntactic, semantic, textual, and pragmatic aspects of the defined constructions, in the attempt to see how these aspects interrelate with the identified discourse functions of such frontings. What is meant by discourse functions are the additional elements of meaning that are introduced in the propositional content of the sentences with canonical word order, as well as the contribution of such frontings to the context in which a particular sentence was used.

It should be stressed that, following the relatively recent recognition that an analysis of word order should go beyond the sentence and examine an extended domain, the examined language segments included not only the 'fronting' construction but also the surrounding context.

The starting point in the analysis of the tokens was the syntactic one. It included the identification of the fronted constituent in terms of its form and grammatical function, the determination of the sentence pattern and syntactic properties of major sentence elements, as well as the presence, type and the position of other sentence elements, such as complements, adjuncts and modifiers.

The semantic analysis at the sentence level included the analysis of the relevant semantic characteristics of basic sentence elements, primarily the initial, as well as the determination of the semantic role of the initial adverbial.

Textual and pragmatic aspects of fronting constructions were examined by observing the sentences in context, which primarily meant detecting the relations between the entity (property, state, etc.) denoted by the sentence-

initial element and other discourse entities, as well as the grammatical and lexical cohesive devices.

Regarding the discourse functions of fronting constructions, two major types were identified. The first type can be broadly described as 'prominence-giving' pragmatic functions, while the second type of discourse functions can be described as textual-pragmatic functions, which chiefly deal with text development and text cohesion. We shall examine them in detail by looking at the results of the analysis of syntactic, semantic, textual and pragmatic aspects, here grouped as the parameters influencing the identified discourse functions.

3. Syntactic analysis

The first group of parameters, the syntactic ones, deals with the functional category of the initial element, including the semantic-functional role of the initial adverbials, the form of the initial element, its structure in terms of definiteness, and the presence of other sentence elements, primarily complements, adjuncts and verbal complements within the sentence predicate.

According to the grammatical function, the following functional elements, exemplified in (1)-(14) were identified: direct objects (1), (14), indirect objects (3), prepositional objects (4), subjective complements (5), adverbials, which, according to the semantic role, were further classified as adverbials of space (6), time (2), process (with subtypes of manner (7), means (8), instrument (9) and accompaniment (10)), respect (with subtypes of reference point (3, the last token), subject-matter (11), and partitivity), degree (12), and reason (13).

(3) Considered as a group my family was not a very prepossessing sight that afternoon, for the weather had brought with it the usual selection of ills to which we were prone. FOR ME, lying on the floor, labelling my collection of shells, it had brought catarrh, pouring it into my skull like cement, so that I was forced to breath stertorously through open mouth. FOR MY BROTHER LESLIE, hunched dark and glowering by the fire, it had inflamed the convolutions of his ears so that they bled delicately but persistently. TO MY SISTER MARGO it had delivered a fresh dappling of acne spots to a face that was already blotched like a red veil. FOR MY MOTHER there was a rich bubbling cold, and a twinge of rheumatism to season it. Only my eldest brother, Larry, was untouched, but it was sufficient that he was irritated by our failings. (Durrell:15)

(4) What was lacking, of course, was the corollary of the collapse of the ladder of nature: that if new species can come into being, old species very often have to make way for them. PERSONAL EXTINCTION he was aware of - no Victorian could not be. But

general extinction was as absent a concept from his mind that day as the smallest cloud from the sky above him; (Fowles:48)

(5) You may think that Mrs. Norton was a mere insipid poetastrix of the age. INSIPID her verse is, as you will see in a minute, but she was a far from insipid person. (Fowles:101)

(6) Having quelled the wolves Ernestina went to her dressing table, unlocked a drawer and there pulled out her diary, in black morocco with a gold clasp. FROM ANOTHER DRAWER she took a hidden key and unlocked the book. She turned immediately to the back page. THERE she had written out, on the day of her betrothal to Charles, the dates of all the months and days that lay between it and her marriage. Neat lines were drawn... (Fowles:30)

(7) "Whats you going to do with them bastards?" asked Spiro. SOMEWHAT ACIDLY I said that I intended to keep them as pets, and that, furthermore, they were not bastards, but magpies.

"Whats you call them?" (Durrell:232)

(8) Then suddenly, Kralfesky remembered a throw he had been taught by a Japanese friend of his. WITH A TWIST AND A JERK he heaved his massive adversary up, twirled him round, and hurled him right out of the ring. The unfortunate man was in hospital ... (Durrell:240)

(9) But, to my surprise, the man seemed satisfied with my answer, and asked no further, but sat there blowing fine streamers of smoke into the sky and staring about him with dreamy blue eyes. WITH MY FINGERNAIL I scraped an attractive pattern in the hardening carapace of grey mud on my thigh, and decided that I would have to go down to the sea and wash myself and my clothes before returning home. I got to my feet ... (Durrell:267)

(10) Finishing at last, I would slip from the table and saunter towards the gate, where Roger sat gazing at me with a questioning air. TOGETHER we would peer through the wrought-iron gates into the olive-groves beyond. I would suggest to Roger that perhaps it wasn't worth going out today. (Durrell:42)

(11) But not infrequently a man will engage in activities of which the purpose is destructive without regard to any construction that may come after. FREQUENTLY he will conceal this from himself by the belief that he is only sweeping away in order to build afresh, but it is generally possible to unmask this pretence, ... by asking him what the subsequent construction is to be. ON THIS SUBJECT it will be found that he will speak vaguely and without enthusiasm, whereas ON THE PRELIMINARY DESTRUCTION he has spoken precisely and with zest. This applies to not a few revolutionaries ... (Russell:164)

(12) This is PARTLY due to having discovered what were the things that I most desired and having gradually acquired many of these things. PARTLY it is due to having successfully dismissed certain objects of desire - such as the ... - as essentially unattainable. But VERY LARGELY it is due to a diminishing preoccupation with myself.

(Russell:14)

(13) FOR SOME INEXPLICABLE REASON the consul was under the impression that Mother could speak French, and *he* would never lose an opportunity to engage her in conversation. If she had the good fortune, ..., to notice his top hat bobbing through the crowd towards her, she would hastily retreat into the nearest shop ... (Durrell135)

Regarding the form of the initial elements, it was noticed that they are mostly word groups. As shown in Table 1, in our basic corpus, the most frequent form for topicalized nominals was the noun phrase (74 tokens), realized sometimes as a pronoun, but much more often as a modified NP, and there were also prepositional phrases, nominal clauses and adjective phrases. The most frequent form of initial adverbials was prepositional phrase, but there were also noun phrases, adverbs and adverbial phrases and coordination constructions.

Table 1: The number of fronted constituents in terms of their form and sentence function

FUNCTION		FORM				
		NP	PP	Nom. Cl.	Adj(P)	Adv(P)
N	DO	59		23		
	IO		13			
M	OP	9				
	SC	5			6	
A	Place	12	568			43
D	Time	55	254			50
V	Manner		120			80
E	Means		40			
R	Instrument		4			
B	Accomp.		8			2
I	Respect		99			
A	Degree		4			8
L	Reason		16			

It was observed that the subjects in the examined fronted constructions are mostly short, frequently pronouns.

As for the description of the syntactic and semantic characteristic of sentence initial elements, it was noted that they are mostly subcategorized by the verb in the sentence, i.e. they are obligatory. Initial adverbials,

however, are more often optional. It should be noted, though, that here we did not much insist on the difference between 'sentence adverbials', more precisely, 'sentence adjuncts', and predication adjuncts.² Sentence adjuncts, especially locative and temporal, are considered 'scene-setting', almost 'natural' in the initial position. Unlike them, predication adjuncts, especially obligatory ones, are perceived as more prominent in the initial position and the whole construction is felt as more marked (Quirk *et al.*, 1985:491, 510-511).

4. Semantic, pragmatic and textual analysis

The following two groups of parameters deal with a larger language segment, i.e. take into account the context. We will first examine the parameters of a semantic and pragmatic nature that deal with the information status of the initial constituent in the first place, but also of the subject and the predicate.

The information status was determined basically according to E. Prince's taxonomy. Information can be new (with subtypes brand-new anchored, brand-new unanchored, and unused), inferrable (containing or non-containing), or evoked (textually or situationally) (Prince, 1981a)³. In Prince 1992 this familiarity scale was transformed into a matrix of crosscutting dichotomies, classifying information in terms of its status as either discourse-old or discourse-new, and either hearer-old or hearer-new. It should be noted, however, that this matrix leaves the issue of inferrable information relatively unresolved, which was later reexamined by Birner (1997).

² Our analysis of adverbials included what in Quirk *et al.* (1985) is classified as both adjuncts and subjuncts, which are relatively integrated in the sentence structure, whereas other two adverbial categories, disjuncts and conjuncts, being rather peripheral, were not analyzed.

³ Evoked information is represented by an entity that has been explicitly evoked, mentioned in the prior discourse. ("A guy I work with says **he** knows your sister.") Brand-new anchored information is represented by the entity that has not been evoked in the discourse but is 'anchored' to some other entity known to the hearer (e.g. "**A guy I work with**"), whereas brand-new unanchored is neither anchored to nor inferrable from the prior discourse. Unused information is represented by the entity presumed to be known to the hearer, though not evoked in the current discourse. (e.g. "**Noam Chomsky** went to Penn."). The third category, inferrable information, is the most complex. It is represented by an entity which the speaker believes the hearer can infer by logical or plausible reasoning from information that has been either discourse evoked or other inferrables (e.g. "I got on a bus and **the driver** was drunk."). Containing inferrable is a special case wherein the phrase licensing the inference is properly contained within the inferrable phrase itself (e.g. "One of these eggs is broken") (Prince, 1981a:233-237)

Although Prince herself applied these taxonomies only to nominals, they can be applied to other functional and formal categories as well, representing not only entities but also states, locations, properties, etc. (cf. Virtanen's (1992) analysis of sentence initial time and space adverbials and Birner's (1994) of inversion in English).

When determining the degree of discourse familiarity of a particular initial element, it was its form that was primarily taken into account, and then the prior discourse. Thus, for instance, the presence of pro-forms that express coreferentiality, especially personal (example 1) and demonstrative pronouns and possessive (example 3) and demonstrative (example 11) determiners in initial nominals or adverbials in the form of an NP or containing an NP, as well as the presence of definite adverbs of time and place (example 6), indicated a relatively rather well-known, given information.

Comparing the two basic syntactic types of fronting with respect to the information status of the initial elements, it can be noted that for initial nominals it is characteristic that they denote information that is relatively high on the familiarity scale. Initial nominals, therefore, often carry information directly evoked from the prior discourse, with a coreferential antecedent (example 1), or inferrable information (inferrable from some semantic, logical, or more rarely, morphological relationship) (examples 3, 4). There are comparatively few tokens of initial nominals that can be considered as relatively new information, or, more precisely, unused information. However, unused information is not really new, but only Discourse-New, while at the same time it is Hearer-Old, although it need not necessarily be at the hearer's consciousness at the moment of utterance). This is illustrated by (14): the fronted direct object is the personal name of one of the characters in the novel, who was mentioned three chapters (!) before.

(14) *He withdraw into the sunlight outside. The herring-gulls flew over, screaming raucously. Charles moved out of sight of the fields nearer the Dairy. GROGAN, he did not fear; or expect yet. But the place was too open; the dairyman might come for hay ...* (Fowles:215)

Initial adverbials, on the other hand, can be said to be lower on the familiarity scale. Information carried by an initial adverbial is least frequently directly evoked from the prior discourse, with a coreferential antecedent (6, 10, 11). Most often it is inferrable information (8,9,12), although there are quite a few tokens with unused or brand-new information, especially in time and manner adverbials. (2, 7, 13).

This finding is partly confirmed by the study of T. Virtanen (1992), who, after examining a relatively small corpus, concluded that "the category of inferrables has by far the largest group of exponents among the text-

strategically important adverbials of time and space. ... The data contain relatively few ... adverbials ... that could be included in the other two main categories: evoked and new." (Virtanen, 1992:104-105).

The third type of parameters influencing the discourse functions of frontings are of a semantic and textual nature. They take into account formal, functional and semantic similarities between the initial constituent and the whole examined sentence, and some other elements in the language segment. The most characteristic cases are those of parallelism or partial parallelism of syntactic structure in two or more sentences or clauses (example 4), as well as the presence of other adverbials in the relevant context, which are of the same or similar semantic role as the initial adverbial (examples 11, 12).

5. Discourse functions

Let us now concentrate on the discourse functions themselves, previously classified into two groups - 'prominence-giving' pragmatic functions and textual functions.

5.1 'Prominence-giving' discourse functions

The most significant among the 'prominence-giving' pragmatic functions is the creation of two particularly prominent positions in the sentence. It has been widely and generally recognized that the most prominent positions in a sentence are the initial, as the starting point of the message, and the final, which usually contains the nucleus. However, since we are dealing with constructions with non-canonical word order, the initial position is occupied by a constituent that is, more or less, unusual in that position, i.e. it is more conspicuous, which makes it more prominent, and makes the whole construction marked. In the majority of the analyzed tokens, together with the emphasized initial constituent, in the examined sentence there is also the focal constituent, the one that carries new or contrastive information, and which, in speech, would carry the nucleus. As it was noted by N. Enkvist (1980:149), in a topicalized structure "marked focus goes on the topicalized or commentized elements or on both".

Another pragmatic function is that the entity denoted by the prominent initial element can evoke some salient set, whose part or member it is. In some instances, such a set or/and some of its other members can even be explicitly mentioned.

This function has been mentioned in literature, and is said to be related to another pragmatic function. Prince (1981b, 1985, 1986), Ward (1988), Ward & Birner (1994) in their extensive study of topicalization/preposing constructions, which, however, they defined as fronting of lexically-governed constituents only, identified two discourse functions that are performed simultaneously:

- marking the referent of the preposed constituent as a member of a salient partially ordered set⁴
- marking an open proposition as salient in the discourse,⁵

Since the entity denoted by the (final) element, which carries the focus, can also evoke a set, in such cases, (example 1), and especially in case of parallelism, there are two salient sets, whose members are entities denoted by initial and final elements (11, 12). Thus, for instance, in (1) the salient sets could be described as 'servants, human and mechanical' and 'Mrs Poultney's attitude towards her servants', and in (11), they could be 'the subject matters' and 'manner of speaking'.

It was interesting to examine whether these two discourse functions could be said to be performed also by initial adverbials. As noted earlier, they differ syntactically from the fronted nominals because they are usually not subcategorized. Prince (1986) explained the difference between sentence and predication adverbials by claiming that there was a connection between the pragmatic function of marking the presupposed open proposition as shared knowledge and syntactic constructions that involve a 'trace' (such as topicalization and fronting of a predication adverbial).

The results of our analysis lead to the assumption that in cases where there is the parallelism of syntactic structure, accompanied by the contrast between the sentences with initial adverbials, they are actually similar to the sentences with topicalized subcategorized nominals (direct, indirect, and prepositional objects). In both cases it is possible to note an open proposition, i.e. the presupposition of the sentence is felt as salient both by the speaker and the hearer. On the other hand, when in the relevant language segment there is only one sentence with the initial adverbial, its presupposition is not felt as salient. Also, neither is the referent or the

⁴ A partially ordered set (=poset) relation of two elements exists if either one of them is of a lower value than the other in the set, or is of a higher value, or they are alternates. Examples of such relations are 'type-subtype', 'a-part-of', 'a-member-of', 'an-attribute-of'. (Ward 1988, Ward & Prince 1991). It should be noted that, whereas most of the previous studies of Topicalization insisted on definiteness, generality, etc., (cf. Davison 1984, Gundel 1985, Hietaranta 1986, *inter al.*) of the topicalized constituent (usually an NP), Ward & Prince (1991:173,177) claim that "the entity represented by the preposed constituent must be related, via a salient partially set relation, to one or more entities already evoked in the discourse model." ... "What is relevant for the Topicalization of an NP is not its intrinsic morphological /lexical /semantic properties but rather the relation of the entity it represents to other entities in the discourse structure."

⁵ An open proposition (OP), as defined by Prince (1981a), Ward (1988), and Ward & Birner (1994), *inter alia*, is a proposition which contains one or more variables; the variable is instantiated with the focus of the utterance.⁵

denotation of the initial adverbial felt as an element of some evoked set, which is the case with fronted nominals. (Cf. Misić Ilić 1997).

The next noted pragmatic-textual function is that the initial element, depending on its functional category can be considered as setting the 'theme' or the 'scene' of the sentence.

The notion of 'theme' was adopted from Halliday's (1970, 1985:32-37) distinction of three functions, Subject, Actor and Theme, instead of the traditional idea of the three types of subjects, grammatical, logical and psychological, respectively. In Halliday (1985:35), Theme is not to be confused with 'topic', which is generally taken to be 'what the sentence is about'. Some authors defined the function of topicalization, according to its name, as "marking the topic" (Reinhart 1981, Gundel 1985), or as "the rule which creates topic out of otherwise non-sentence-initial elements" (Hietaranta, 1986:42).

According to Halliday (1970:161), "The theme is another component in the complex notion of subject, namely the 'psychological subject'; it is as it were the peg on which the message is hung, the theme being the body of the message. The theme of a clause is the element which, in English, is put in first position."

It is possible for these three functions to be collated in a single sentence element, but it need not always be so, which is exactly what happens in the constructions that we are dealing with here. Fronting, therefore, enables the dissociation of the functions of Subject, Theme and Actor and the arranging of sentence elements, which carry particular semantic roles, not according to their syntactic functions, bound to certain sentence positions, but as the writer finds most appropriate. The writer, to use Chafe's (1976) term, 'packages information', selects the starting point of his message in such a way as he considers the most adequate for conveying across his message, depending on the effect he wants to achieve.

As we talk about 'setting the theme' when discussing fronted nominals, we will, likewise, talk about 'setting the scene', when we talk about initial adverbials. The main function of the initial placing of an adverbial of time and space is considered to be scene setting. (Quirk *et al.*, 1985:491) In a similar way, adverbials of other, various semantic roles can be considered as setting the framework for the proposition of the sentence (cf. Chafe, 1976:50-51). Depending on the semantic role of the initial adverbial, we defined this framework setting as setting the spatial or temporal framework, or the framework specifying the manner, means, instrument, company, reference point, subject-matter, part, degree or reason. In that way, the initial adverbial refers to the sentence as a whole, rather than to the verb only. Although we don't absolutely agree with D. Bolinger's observations (1972:37-48) that the very meaning of initial adverbials and adverbs is extended, our study completely confirms his colourful remark that "The

effect of pre-position is that the adverb colors everything that follows." (*ibid.*:37).

Although we grouped the identified discourse functions into two groups, the text-building ones and the prominence-giving pragmatic ones, it should be stressed that they are by no means unrelated and very distinct from each other. On the contrary, they can be considered interrelated in the sense that they often influence each other and cannot be viewed separately. In other words, it is very seldom that we can speak of just one clearly manifested function but rather of the 'mixture' of functions.

5.2 Text-development discourse functions

Before turning to the second group of discourse functions, tentatively labeled the textual functions, a few remarks concerning the theoretical background should be made. By 'text' we mean a semantic unit, a unit not of form but of meaning, realized by sentences (Halliday & Hasan, 1976:2), whereas 'cohesion' refers to relations of meaning that exist within the text, and it is expressed partly through the grammar and partly through the vocabulary (*ibid.*; 4-5). Among the five basic types of cohesive relations identified by Halliday & Hasan, conjunction, reference, lexical cohesion, substitution and ellipsis, the first one was not very relevant for our study, but the other four were.

In the second group of functions, the text-building ones, the most significant function is that of making the link of the examined sentence with the preceding text.

Sentence topic in general have been claimed to be linguistic constituents with particular syntactic and semantic characteristics so they can perform a cohesive function in the process of linking the sentence to its context (Davison, 1984:797). Alternative ways of expressing the same grammatical relations, which also includes fronting constructions, can serve the function of defining the topic, "which seems to increase efficiency when a sentence is processed in a context, ... i.e. the message is encoded into a more compact form that it might have been otherwise." (Davison, 1984:843).

The function of linking with the preceding text is usually related to the function of creating two prominent positions. The first prominent position, where the fronted element is, which is considered a 'marked theme' is a "'thematic echo' of what has been contextually given, and serves, mostly, the function of providing direct linkage with what has preceded" (Quirk *et al.*, 1985:1377). Such linkage can be realized in various ways and in various degrees. It was noted that it primarily depends on the relationship of the entity denoted by the fronted element to some antecedent discourse entity, on the information status of the fronted element, and, less directly, on its form and function. This textual function is more frequent in fronted nominals than in adverbials, but it doesn't have so much to do with the

functional category in itself, as it has to do with the information status of the denotations of those functional elements.

The linking is most prominent if the referent of the fronted element has a coreferential antecedent in the preceding sentence. The strongest formal indicators of this relationship are topicalized nominals in the form of a personal (example 1) or demonstrative pronoun, and for adverbials, deictic adverbs of time and space (6). Other formal indicators of such a coreferential relationship are the presence of definite determiners and repeated or synonymic or hyperonymic head words in nominals (4) and definite determiners or demonstrative pronouns or adverbs within the initial adverbial (3, 11), as well as certain headwords that can be considered as hyperonyms to something already mentioned. According to their information status, initial adverbials with linking function are quite high on the familiarity scale, because they carry wither textually evoked or inferrable information, inferrable from the part/whole relationship from the membership in some implicitly (11 - 'subject matters', 12 - 'degree'), and often also explicitly evoked set (3 - 'family members').

The very strong connective function of initial adverbials, however, is not very common, and was identified only in initial adverbials denoting space, time, reason and, even less often, respect.

When a particular element is fronted, it also gets physically closer to its antecedent, which can be considered to have a greater cohesive force due to quicker processing time. Moreover, regardless of the physical distance of the coreferential elements, the fact that one of them has been made more prominent because it was fronted, where it is felt as unusual or unexpected, emphasizes its relation with its antecedent and contributes to better cohesion.

In cases when the entity (or attribute) denoted by the initial element does not have a (coreferential) antecedent, it is possible to note some other relevant relations, logical, semantic or morphological, with the elements from the prior discourse (examples 3, 4, 5). It could, be, therefore, concluded that the prominent fronted element there too has a cohesive function, although to a somewhat lesser degree than when there is a coreferential antecedent.

Birner's (1997) recent findings concerning inferrable information confirm this. She explicitly states that "inferential links can serve the same connective function in a marked syntactic construction as do links of identity (such as between the referent of a pronoun and its antecedent) ... inferrable information may appear in the same range of positions as does explicitly evoked information." The only difference may be that with explicitly evoked information the inference is described as "rather trivial", whereas in other cases it is "less straightforward". (Birner, 1997:144-145).

As already noted, initial adverbials are lower on the familiarity scale and can be considered to have a lesser role in providing linkage with the prior

text. They are, nevertheless, important signals of text continuity and indicators of textual shifts, marking textual segments. Virtanen (1992:99), in her study of sentence-initial time and space adverbials, concluded that "more and informationally newer material may be used to indicate the starting point of a major textual unit, while the more local shifts seem to be associated with elements of lesser size that are also more given." Although our study did not focus much on the text organization scheme and did not examine all the fronted adverbs in this way, it, nonetheless, does not seem to prove Virtanen's conclusion, especially regarding the size of the fronted material.

The cohesive function can be viewed not only with respect to the preceding but also the following text. By fronting a certain element, in the final position there may appear an element which, otherwise, would not be final. The following sentence may directly, by rhematic linking, take over as its theme something that was expressed by the final element of the fronting construction. The link with the following text can also be less direct, when the following sentence can be considered the illustration, elaboration of, or contrast to what was expressed by the final element of the sentence with fronting. This function is usually connected with the syntactic-textual function of better arranging the elements within a sentence, especially when there are several complements, adverbials, verbal complements or structures of coordination within the sentence predicate. The fronting of one of the elements from the predicate, together with the above mentioned most significant functions of making it more prominent and achieving better cohesion with the preceding text, also has the function of preventing the 'accumulation' of elements in the predicate, in the rhematic part of the sentence, whereby some of them could be rather inconspicuous and felt as a bit 'lost in the crowd'. Moreover, especially with initial adverbials, in this way a possible structural ambiguity is avoided, when it could not be possible to determine for sure what the adverbial really refers to.

6. Conclusion

This review of discourse functions of certain fronting constructions in English declarative sentences and syntactic, information and textual parameters that influence these functions does not intend to give the most exhaustive and exact summary of this language phenomenon, neither can it be presumed that the observed relationships have the force of generally valid language regularities. Rather, as it is common in discourse analysis, the aim was to reveal some regularities, motivation, preferences and tendencies, rather than hard-and-fast rules. Regardless of that, we nevertheless believe that the offered review of discourse functions and parameters influencing them can be useful in considering the complexity of the factors the speaker/writer manipulates with when he speaks/writes. In order to convey

his message in the most adequate way, he not only packages information, taking into account the current state of consciousness of his listener/reader (Chafe, 1976:55), but also tries to induce a particular state in his listener's/reader's consciousness.

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