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A summary: a prospective research project for exploring some parallelism between discourse structure and information flow.

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Researchers analyzing discourse structure have thought about how the intent of senders/speakers will be transmitted in linguistic forms to recipients. A “topic” phrase is expected to initiate an utterance or sentence. Then, some information as new content or main point tends to follow. This sort of theorized construct is referred to as Information Structure. Halliday, Chafe, Prince, Vallduvi, Lambrecht, Birner & Ward, Kiss, Erteschik-Shir are those who present their discussion concerning how information structure affects the meaning and the sender’s intent of utterances in context. As in utterances (1) – (4), passivization, left dislocation, clefting, or pseudo-clefting examples indicate the effects of ordering of elements in utterances, depending on sender’s intent in discourse context.

- (1) The cat was chased by a dog.
- (2) The cat, the dog chased.
- (3) It was the dog that chased a cat.
- (4) What the dog chased was a cat.

The possibilities in (5) can be further multiplied by placing primary stress on different parts of the utterance.

- (5) The dog chased a cat.

As Gundel & Fretheim (2009) state, it is assumed that these different structural and intonational options reflect different ways that a sender can structure information depending on what he/she intends the utterance to be mainly about and on what he/she assumes the recipient already knows.

Based on their data on utterances with “non-canonical” word ordering, Birner & Ward (1998) further demonstrate the relevance of information structure to non-trivial meanings.

Vallduvi and others try to generalize the function of a particular point in an utterance.

(6) [LINK The boss][FOCUS HATES][TAIL broccoli].

In (6), Vallduvi names the utterance-initial position *link*, the core position *focus*, the utterance-final position *tail*. However, such a three part structure raises problems with languages such as Japanese and others in which word ordering in a sentence structure is not necessarily fixed. Simon (1989) shows that, in examples of the same kind taken from Japanese, focus function can be functionally identical to tail. Further problems are demonstrated in Ishikawa (2004, 2008), and certain groups of utterances must bear high pitch accent in their subject position.

Based on the observations in which the three-part model poses contradictory consequence, I re-examine the data given in the model, and collect new data that may highlight real problems about the model. Instead of presenting a hypothetical working theory, I collect data made in different settings since 2009 in which the grant started, and I analyze the flow of information transmission in terms of both corpus linguistic analysis and also of acoustic-phonetic analysis. On one hand, I analyze a sizable data base compiled by government-supported institute, “Corpus of Spoken Discourse in Japanese,” and “American National Corpus.” On the other hand, I have conducted recording projects at Meiji University for Japanese acoustic-phonetic data and also the projects at Yale University for English data. For recorded voice data, I use phonetic software such as “Praat” to extract particular factors such as pitch peak of high/low accent contrast, amplitude of voice with dB measurement, and change of voice quality measured in spectrograph. They are expected to affect the information flow of sender’s intent. This is still an on-going “pilot” project and I hope that this step will lead to a realistic, integrative observation. “

This research project proposal acquired Japanese government grant (by Ministry of Education & Science in Japan) for 2009-2011, but the budget is tight, and so, I have to request volunteers each time. I would be happy to have any form of participation in realizing recording activities. I am equipped with recording devices including special microphone and a recorder kit.

If I am given some space with accessible electricity or a room and

volunteers, I can record participants' reading of prepared written materials and their topic-specific semi-free talk with a friend or somebody.

Note:

(1) Each recording takes only 40 minutes.

(2) If some space is available with electricity outlet offering power to my recorder and pin-type microphone, I'll be able to work in the campus with my recording devices.

(3) Preferably in the recording, 2 people participate at a time for 40 minutes or so. If one person participates in it, the third part may be cut.

(4) There will be 3 parts that participants take part in the projects. Section 1, as I give examples below, consists of short dialog units. The dialog units will be read aloud by the participants. Section 2 consists of dialog units with more lines each. This part aims at examining whether or not the second occurrences of noun phrases function as another focus within an utterance. These two sections will be sources of acoustic-phonetic analysis I conduct in Japan as the next procedure -- after the recording is complete.

The following are just a few examples a participant will be asked to read.

Ex. Dialog for Section 1:

(1) A: Did you ever play any indoor sports: volleyball, ping-pong, basketball...?

B: Badminton, I played badminton in high-school.

(2) A: When we were in Japan, we lived on rice.

B: Boy, I'm glad I wasn't there. I'm not finicky, but ... only on rice? I couldn't live.

(3) A: Did you manage to get any course textbooks?

B. A Thai dictionary, I got.

Section 2:

A: Everyone already knew that Mary only eats vegetables these days.

B: That's right, we all knew that she only eats vegetables these days. We should have told Renaldo to suggest a different restaurant. ... (*continues.*)

Section 3 will consist simply of a free talk between 2 people, with topics predetermined by them. Usually, 3-5 minutes for one topic. When 2 people

cannot attend at a time, this section may be cut.

My publications related to this topic include:

- *a paper read and published later -- Chicago Linguistic Society (CLS), University of Chicago, in 1994 and 2008.
- *a paper read at Linguistic Society of America (LSA) in 2000 and 2005.
- *a paper read and published – Linguistic Association of Canada & U.S. (LACUS) in 2005.
- *a book published, *Discourse Representation of Temporal Relations in the So-Called Head-Internal Relatives*. Published in 2009 through the aid in part by (Japan) Government Grant for publishing academic research results.

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