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[Westergaard, Marit R. Definite NP anaphora: a pragmatic approach]

Marit R. Westergaard, **Definite NP Anaphora: A Pragmatic Approach**, Norwegian University Press, Oslo 1986, 118 pp.

This book is Westergaard's thesis dealing with a pragmatic study of anaphora. It consits of six chapters preceded by a Preface and followed by Notes. It contains the author's own examples and modifications of sentences selected from the existing studies of anaphora.

Chapter 1 is an *Introduction*.

In chapter 2, *Background*, Westergaard sketches the history of anaphora study carried out within the transformational-generative framework. She refers to Lees and Klima, Langacker, Ross, Jackendoff, Lasnik, Chomsky, and Reinhart; she deals with the shortcomings of their treatments of anaphora.

In chapter 3, called *Problems with a Purely Syntactic Approach to Anaphora*, Westergaard examines some empirical and theory-internal problems connected with Reinhart's treatment of anaphora.

In chapter 4, *A Pragmatic Analysis of Anaphora*, Westergaard gives a brief survey of the previous pragmatic research on anaphora, referring to Kuno, Carden, Bickerton and Bolinger. She introduces her own pragmatic hypothesis of definite NP anaphora and a special method of testing the coreferentiality of a pronoun and a full NP (see below).

Chapter 5 deals with *Testing the Hypothesis*. Westergaard gives examples of sentences containing coreferential and non-coreferential pairs (the latter are marked with an asterisk). The author provides explanation for some cases of (non-)coreference that caused problems in the previous anaphora study.

In chapter 6, *Conclusion*, Westergaard summarizes her theory and writes about some remaining problems and the possibilities of further research.

The pragmatic theory of anaphora introduced in Marit R. Westergaard's book is, in the words of the author, based mainly on the linguistic framework of the Prague School, as formulated in the work of Jan Firbas and his associates. The following comments will
(I.) draw attention to the similarlities and the differences between Westergaard's pragmatic approach to language and Firbas's theory of functional sentence perspective (= FSP)
(II.) illustrate Westergaard's method of testing coreferentiality.

I.

The following list contains some of the most important concepts used by Firbas and their counterparts used by Westergaard:

Firbas	Westergaard
degree of CD theme/rheme	degree of thematicity

determining factors: determining factors:
(a) linear modification   (A) theme/rheme
(b) semantic structure   linear order
(c) context dependence/independence (B) pronoun/full NP
(d) intonation; intonation centre (C) given/new
                                    (D) intonation; focus

The concepts *degree of CD* (= degree of communicative dynamism) and *theme/rheme* are in close relation in Firbas's theory. The degree of CD of a sentence element is the relative extent to which the element contributes to the development of the communication. Low degrees of CD are carried by thematic elements, and high degrees of CD by rhematic elements. The degree of CD and the theme/rheme classification of an element is determined by the interplay of *linear modification* (a), *semantic structure* (b), and *context dependence/independence* (i.e. derivability/non-derivability from the preceding context) (c); in spoken language, there is another important factor determining the degree of CD: intonation (d).

There is a tendency for thematic elements (a low degree of CD) to occur in the initial part of a clause, to be weak semantically, to be context dependent and to be weak prosodically. Rhematic elements (a high degree of CD), on the other hand, tend to occur towards the end of a clause, to express important semantic contents, to be context independent and to carry a high prosodic weight (the element carrying the highest degree of CD, the rheme proper, is the intonation centre of the clause).

Not all these tendencies need necessarily be expressed at the same time. A thematic element, for instance, may occur towards the end of a clause; it will be classified as thematic if it is context dependent and weak semantically and prosodically, i.e. if the outcome of the interplay of factors is a low degree of CD (cf. ex. 168 below).

Westergaard says she agrees with Firbas's conception of CD. Her parallel to Firbas's degree of CD seems to be *degree of thematicity*. The two concepts, however, differ in their relations to theme/rheme. Firbas's degree of CD determines the theme/rheme classification, while Westergaard's degree of thematicity is (co)determined by it. Theme/rheme in Westergaard's theory is defined exclusively in terms of linear order: theme is the initial element of a clause, rheme is the last element of a clause. The *theme/rheme* distinction (A) is considered one of the factors determining the degree of thematicity, in addition to the *pronoun/full NP* distinction (B), the *given/new* distinction (C) and *intonation* (D).

Westergaard says that she agrees with Firbas's conception of context dependence/independence. The way she uses her concepts *given/new*, however, differs considerably from the way Firbas conceives *context dependence/independence*. Westergaard concentrates on the relation between a pronoun and a full NP occuring in one clause. (Other elements of the clause are not analyzed.) One of the two elements is always considered given; if the other element is part of what is said *about* the given element, it is considered new. Even a pronoun, i.e. an element referring to a concept mentioned in the previous context, may be considered new, which contradicts Firbas's theory of FSP (cf. ex. 168).

The differences between Firbas's and Westergaard's approaches can be illustrated by the following sentences, taken from Westergaard's book and supplemented with examples of Firbas's analysis.

(168)   The man who liked Leslie   kissed   her.

Westergaard: —   rheme

Firbas: theme 1   rheme proper theme 2
                                       (+ transition proper)

From the viewpoint of the theme/rheme distinction, Westergaard considers *Leslie* in ex. 168 neither theme nor rheme because it is neither the initial nor the last element of the clause. *Her* is the rheme, because it is the last element. In Firbas's analysis, *Leslie* is part of the complex sentence element *The man who liked Leslie,* which as a whole has a thematic function (theme 1). The pronoun *her* is a thematic element, too, (theme 2) though its degree of CD is, owing to the interplay of factors, slightly higher. The most dynamic element in the clause, rheme proper, is *kissed*. (Rheme proper is represented by the notional part of the verb; its temporal and modal exponents have the function of transition proper.)

given/new — context dependent/context independent

(168)   The man who liked   Leslie   kissed   her.

Westergaard: given   new

Firbas: context dep.   context dep.

In Westergaard's analysis, *Leslie* in ex. 168 is a given element. The element *her* is considered new because it is part of the information that Leslie was kissed. Firbas considers both *Leslie* and *her* context dependent because the elements both refer to a person (Leslie) who must have been mentioned in the previous context. (The context is not provided but the sentence does not seem to be the opening of a story.)

The comparison of Westergaard's and Firbas's analyses suggests that, though drawing on Firbas's work, Westergaard's theory contains approaches that are not in agreement with the principles of FSP worked out by Firbas.

II.

Marit R. Westergaard's hypothesis is based on several principles, one of which, the super-principle, is always valid and can be regarded as the last court of appeal. According to the

super-principle, a pronoun is never more thematic than a coreferring full NP. The degree of thematicity is tested by means of a scale; a pronoun and a full NP are given points according to their qualities:

theme: −1,   pronoun: 0,   given: −1
rheme: +1,   full NP: +1,   new: +1,   focus: +1

If a pronoun gets fewer points than a full NP in the same sentence, it is considered more thematic; the super-principle is thus violated and the pronoun and the full NP cannot be interpreted as coreferential.

(170c) The man who kissed ___her___ liked ___Leslie.___

0		+1 (rheme)
0 (pronoun)		+1 (full NP)
+1 (new)		−1 (given)
+1		+1

(170a) The man who kissed ___her___ liked ___Léslie.___

0		+1 (rheme)
0 (pronoun)		+1 (full NP)
−1 (given)		+1 (new)
−1		+3

In ex. 170c, *her* and *Leslie* have the same number of points, the super-principle is not violated (the pronoun is not more thematic than the full NP) and the elements analyzed can, therefore, be interpreted as coreferential. In ex. 170a, however, *her* has fewer points than *Leslie* and consequently the two elements must be interpreted as non-coreferential.

(186) Near the garage that ___Peter___ had built, ___he___ found a snake.

+1 (full NP)		0 (pronoun)	
−1 (given)		+1 (new)	
0		−1 (theme)	
0		0	

(185) Near ___Peter___ , ___he___ found a snake.

+1 (full NP)		0 (pronoun)	
+1 (new)		−1 (given)	
0		−1 (theme)	
+2		−2	

In ex. 186, the elements *Peter* and *he* are coreferential because the pronoun *he* is not more thematic than the full NP *Peter*. In ex. 185, however, the pronoun has fewer points than the full NP, i.e. the pronoun is more thematic and consequently the elements must be interpreted as non-coreferential.

Marit R. Westergaard has studied the extensive literature on anaphora and has worked out an elaborate method of analyzing this phenomenon. Her system has even succeeded in explaining some cases of (non-)coreference which other linguists' conceptions of anaphora failed to account for. Some aspects of Westergaard's analysis, however, are not easy to grasp and cause difficulties in the application of the method.

In exx. 170c and 170a above, for instance, the shift of the focus from *liked* to *Leslie* accounts for the change of *Leslie* from given to new. It does not seem quite clear, however, why *her* should be changed from new to given when the complex subject containing this element has not undergone any prosodic, semantic or syntactic change.

Two other examples of certain difficulties in applying the method are sentences 185 and 186 above. Although the sentences are identical syntactically and show strong similarities semantically,

the element *he* is interpreted as given in 185 and as new in 186. In the words of the author, *he* in 185 is given because "185 expresses where the referent of the pronoun found a snake", while *he* in 186 is new because "186 tells us what happened at this location". We could argue, however, that the sentences both tend to express what happened at a certain location, i.e. to express the idea that somewhere, someone found a snake. Although the referents of *he* in the two sentences are different (in 186 *he* refers to *Peter*, in 185 *he* refers to someone else), the pronoun *he* could be interpreted as given in both the sentences.

In the *Conclusion*, Westergaard admits that "The criterion for the assignment of values to NPs as given or new information is not as clear as could be desired," that "the theory may need to distinguish between more elaborate structures such as embedded themes and embedded rhemes," and that certain problems could be solved by "a refinement of the scalar system". These seem to be the right areas to investigate in order to achieve greater comprehensibility and wider applicability of the author's elaborate method.

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Morton Benson, Evelyn Benson, Robert Ilson, **The BBI combinatory dictionary of English, A guide to word combinations**, John Benjamins Publishing Company, Amsterdam and Philadelphia 1986, XXXVI – 286 pp.

The first entry in *The BBI combinatory dictionary of English* under N is *nadir* with two collocations: 'to reach a ~' and 'at a~'. The reader may not know what *nadir* is, nor does he learn its pronunciation, but the BBI dictionary (The first English dictionary named after its authors?) tells him that the preposition used before *nadir* is *at*. The entry *nadir* reveals the main characteristic of the dictionary: it was written for advanced students of English (the number of entries exceeds twelve thousand). There are cases, however, where pronunciation is given – *bow* and *use* (Introduction XXXIV) – and there are many entries where the various meanings of the entry-word are distinguished: for example *disk* as 'structure in a spinal column' and as 'flat plate for computer storage'.

Some of the features of the BBI dictionary are not described very well in the Preface or on the back cover (the two are written in a similar tone): there a r e dictionaries where the grammatical information is present to at least the same extent as in the BBI (Hornby, *The Oxford advanced learner's dictionary of current English* and the *Longman dictionary of contemporary English*, both of them in British and American editions). Both these dictionaries give the collocation 'administer an oath' and the OALD also gives 'inflict a wound', 'hatch a plot', 'roll a hoop' (the BBI claims that they cannot be found "in any existing dictionary", Preface VII).

The BBI combinatory dictionary of English is not the first dictionary of English collocations. Albrecht Reum's *A dictionary of English style* was first published in 1931 (and went through a number of editions later) and J. I. Rodale's *The word finder* in 1947 (based on the previously published *Adjective-finder* and *Verb-finder*). The differences between the three dictionaries of collocations are obvious from the way they treat the word *access* (the synonyms included in Reum have been left out):

REUM	RODALE	BBI
access, s. (1) *Zutritt*... to have, to gain, to obtain ~ to a p., to the safes of a bank, to one's library. – A p. is difficult/easy of ~; a room easy of ~; (mountain) is difficult of ~. – (2) *Anfall*... ~ of fury, ~ of generosity	ACCESS *adjectives* impregnable; casual; unrestricted; momentary; exclusive; strange; convenient; direct; expeditious; easy *verbs* bar – ; deny – to; desire – ; disdain – ; shut off – ; stop up – ; survey – ; throng – .	access n. 1. to gain, get ~ 2. to deny ~ 3. direct, easy, free, unlimited; limited ~ 4. (computers) random ~ 5. ~ to (we gained/got ~ to the files; ~ to a building)

Both Reum and BBI give only three verbs collocating with *access* but BBI distinguishes positive and negative meanings and is based on contemporary current speech. Rodale offers twelve collocating verbs (but not *gain* and *get*) and ten collocating adjectives, compared with five verbs in