

Kwansei Gakuin University
Humanities Review
 Vol. 13, 2008
 Nishinomiya, Japan

Word Order Rules from the Informational Viewpoint ——Multiple Locatives——¹⁾

ASADA Hisao*

Abstract

The purpose of the present paper is to explore the implications for linguistic theory of word order beyond syntax, focusing particularly on two or more locatives in a sentence. A major goal is to show that the informational principle “From-Rough (or Global)-to-Detailed (or Particular) Principle” proposed in my papers (1981, 1982, 1985, 1986 a) should be valid for the word order rules of multiple constituents, including multiple locatives, in a sentence.

I. Introduction

When we say in Japanese “Kobe-de Rokkosan-ni nobotta” (We climbed Mt. Rokko in Kobe), we mean that we climbed Mt. Rokko, and at the same time that Mt. Rokko is in Kobe. Thus, in Japanese, a single location can be doubly specified by using the expression of the “~de ... ni” phrase. We should note here also that the phrase “~de” expresses a general and broader location, and that the phrase “... ni” pinpoints the place which should be limited more narrowly and also be included in it. Another point to be noted is the fact that the grammaticality or the acceptabil-

* Professor of English Linguistics at School of Sociology and at Graduate School of Language, Communication and Culture, Kwansei Gakuin University

1) This is a revised and enlarged version of my paper (1986 b) written in Japanese. I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Professor Alan Brady, Ph.D., at School of Sociology, who kindly gave me many valuable comments on my draft. And also, as this is one of the many results of my studying at the School of English Studies, the University of Nottingham, U.K., in 2005–06, I wish to thank all of the people who supported my research and study, especially to my host, Professor Nobert Schmitt, Doctor Valerie Durow, administrator, and Ms. Rebecca Peck, finance administrator. Needless to say, any remaining inadequacies are solely my own.

ity of the sentence in which the order of two phrases is reversed as in “?Rokkosan-ni Kobe-de nobotta” (We climbed in Kobe Mt. Rokko) will diminish, even though Japanese is a typical free word order language.²⁾

Tentatively though, we will arrive at the conclusion that the order of two locatives observed here, a rough or general location being shown first and a strict or an exact location being placed subsequently, should be clearly reasonable from the viewpoint of a cognitive process and informational flow. For example, the pragmatic function of *Tail* proposed by Dik (1978) in *Functional Grammar*, as I will mention in the following section, strongly supports my conclusion here. From such a viewpoint, it is apparently redundant to put a locative indicating a general location immediately after one pinpointing the strict location.

On the other hand, in English, the locative “at ... ” which shows a pinpointed place, precedes the locative “in ~” which indicates a larger place which includes the former. Therefore, English and Japanese seem to have a so-called mirror image relational word order, and the order of locatives in English seems to be inconsequential from the viewpoint given above.

However, this is simply due to the syntax of English concerning the arrangement of words and phrases of this sort, and does not directly reflect a cognitive process and informational flow mentioned above.

In this connection, it can be said naturally that such principles might not be reflected throughout the language, because there is a general premise that words must be primarily arranged like a line in every language. Of course, abiding to the informational principle above, some plausible explanation will be possible: Even if we put a small unit first and then a larger unit after it, we can show the more precise information as the sentence goes from left to right, expressing to what kind of the larger unit the smaller one belongs. However, since this point does not directly concern or relate to the argument of this paper, we simply conclude that the orders of multiple locatives in English do not reflect any principle of this sort directly, contrary to those in Japanese.

Anyway, under the circumstances where the strict syntactic restrictions are removed or loosened for some reason, the arrangement of words and phrases which

2) Kamio (1980: 56) also points out that the phrase “~de” expresses a broader location, and that the phrase “... ni” pinpoints the place which should be limited more narrowly and also be included in it. Now I remember with deep gratitude to the late Professor Akio Kamio at Tsukuba University that he approved of my hypothesis, “from the rough to the detailed” principle for word order appeared in my paper (1982), when I read it at the Sixth Annual Meeting of the Kansai Linguistic Society on November 15 th, 1981. He encouraged me to pursue my hypothesis as well as he perfectly agreed with me, showing his own examples “Kobe-de Sannomiya-ni itta” and “Shizuoka-de Nihondaira-ni nobotta.” And, for further details of the usage of Japanese particles *-ni* and *-de*, see, for example, Yuasa (2008).

follow the cognitive principle and the flow of information should be seen in English, just as in Japanese.³⁾

In the present paper, clarifying the point that the informational “From-Rough (or Global)-to-Detailed (or Particular) Principle” should govern word order, I will argue that there should be this type of universal principle for word order common to English and Japanese on a deep level, contrary to any description that they have a mirror image relation on word order.

II. Evidence from Functional Grammar

In Functional Grammar, Dik (1978: 19) describes the pragmatic function of *Tail* as “the Tail presents, as an ‘afterthought’ to the predication, information meant to clarify or modify it.”

Also, he mentions in his book (1997: 401) as the follows:

- (1) ... so it may be followed by loosely adjoined constituents which add bits of information which may be relevant to a correct understanding of the clause.
 ... To such constituents we assign the pragmatic function *Tail*, defined in general as characterizing constituents which present information meant to clarify or modify (some constituent contained in) the unit to which they are adjoined. — *ibid.*

These descriptions apparently show that the function of *Tail* should point out just the same principle as the informational “From-Rough (or Global)-to-Detailed (or Particular) Principle.” So that, the followings are not only for an illustration of the *Tail* in Functional Grammar but also excellent exemplification of the informational principle proposed here:

- (2) He is a nice chap, *your brother*. — Dik (1981: 153)
 (3) I didn’t like it very much, *that book of yours*. — *ibid.*
 (4) I like John very much, *your brother I mean*. — *ibid.*

It goes without saying that, in the examples above, *He* and *your brother* in (2), *it* and *that book of yours* in (3), and *John* and *your brother* in (4) have the rough and the detailed information respectively. Therefore, the two words or phrases in these

3) Just because these are beyond syntax, some examples show the order “from the general to the specific” breaking the traditional rule of syntax and following the informational principle here, and others show, on the contrary, “from the smaller to the larger” pursuing the traditional syntax.

sentences cannot be reversed because of the natural cognitive process or the informational flow mentioned here.

III. Multiple Specification of Place by the Prepositional Phrases of the Same Form

In order to avoid syntactic restrictions, the smaller unit precedes the larger one, this being caused by using different prepositional phrases repeatedly. The basic and convenient way to do so is to use the prepositional phrases of the same form in piles. Though having the same preposition should be grammatically considered as one basis for treating them as equal elements in respect of the degree of combination with a verb, it should be noted that, strictly speaking, there might be a syntactic difference even if they are prepositional phrases of the same form. In other words, if they have a difference in respect of the degree of combination with a verb like this, it is natural that their word order will be syntactically determined before following the informational principle argued here.

For example, in "Many people eat in restaurants in London." [Quirk *et al.*, p. 476], the combination or cohesion of the verb "eat" and the prepositional phrase "in restaurants" is so strong that they should have a rigid word order according to a syntactic restriction. Please see my papers (1981, 1982, 1985, 1986 a) for further details. Considering such a special case we will be able, at least temporarily, to consider the same prepositional phrases to have almost the same grammatical cohesion or specific gravity. For relevant descriptions of the multiple place specifications of this kind, please refer to Bennett (1975) and Gruber (1976):

- (5) Trevor has gone *to Wembley to the Cup Final*. —Bennett (1975: 31)
- (6) John sent the book *to New York to Bill*. [**to Bill to New York*]—Gruber (1976: 85)
- (7) The duck swam *from the shore from the tree*. [**from the tree from the shore*]—*ibid.*

Bennett (1975) points out that the two prepositional phrases in sentence (5) integrate with each other to specify a single location. Furthermore, referring to the sentences (6) and (7), Gruber (1976) indicates that the order of successive prepositional phrases is preferably from the general to the specific.

From the examples shown above, what they clearly indicate is just the same as our argument which appeared at the beginning of this paper that rough specification of place will precede the detailed or pinpointed one as observed from the logical viewpoint of a cognitive process or a transfer of information.

In other words, even in English, when the elements of the same kind are repeatedly piled up in a sentence due to some formal need,⁴⁾ the larger element or the one bearing rough information will be placed first before the smaller one or the one bearing detailed information, just like as in Japanese.⁵⁾

For instance, suppose a natural scene where this fact will be described, we can usually say “I live in Apartment #207 of this building.”⁶⁾ But if we emphasize “living in the same building (Apartment)” at the same time due to some need, and want to say it simultaneously in a sentence, we will say “I live in this building in Apartment #207.” In this case, beyond the syntax of English, the order of the two prepositional phrases, *in this building* and *in Apartment #207*, should be arranged from the general to the specific, contrary to the syntactic demand, precisely following the informational principle mentioned above. Such typical examples are as follows:

- (8) Zoran arrived, stopped his horse, and stared down *at the ground, at Kava*.
—G. A. Effinger, *Planet of the Apes #1: Man the Fugitive* [author’s italics]

In the example (8), roughly speaking, Zoran looked down at the ground. But the exact object he looked down at was not the ground but Kava on the ground. The phrase “at the ground” (the general) should be placed just before the phrase “at Kava” (the specific), never in reverse order, following the informational principle argued for here.

- (9) Sprawled on the cot in his darkening cell at the Honolulu jail, Illya looked through the bars *at the lighted corridor at the guards and trustys* [sic] moving around out there in the onion yellow light.—H. Whittington, *The Man from U.N.C.L.E. #2: The Doomsday Affair* [author’s italics]

Also, in the example (9), the phrase “at the lighted corridor” which has rough and broader information is arranged first, while the phrase “at the guards and trustys [sic]” which has finer and detailed information is placed later.

We have thus far examined the case in which only two locatives appear. Never-

4) See Footnote 3) for details.

5) My paper (1981) has called it “Rough-to-Detailed Principle,” arguing that it should govern the wider range of phenomena including not only multiple specification of place, but also double object constructions in English, and that it should determine every order of multiple elements in a sentence.

6) This sentence appeared in the first part of the private letter I received from a graduate student (Male, 28 years old then) who was living in the same building when I was a full-time research scholar at the University of California, Berkeley in 1983–1984.

theless, we have clear evidence that three or more locatives should be arranged from the general to the specific following the above-mentioned principle, as shown in the example (20) in Section VIII below.

IV. Double Place Specification by a Locative Pronoun and a Prepositional Phrase

There seems to be no difference, concerning the cases of the prepositional phrases of the same kind mentioned in the previous section, between the approach' from the viewpoint from the general to the specific or from the rough to the detailed which this paper presents. There also seem to be no difference from the traditional viewpoint of size from the smaller to the larger. Therefore, it is clearly the case that the traditional approach cannot apply to any case of the locative pronoun *here* (or *there*) and a prepositional phrase, nor even pull them out on a line of the same explanation.

However, if we adhere to the informational point of view we can easily notice that the *here* (or the *there*) should specify the location broadly or vaguely (or should bear rough information), and that it should precede the prepositional phrase specifying the exact location according to the "From-Rough (or Global)-to-Detailed (or Particular) Principle."

In other words, for instance, the phrase "here in Nottingham" cannot be reversed as "*in Nottingham here." As the *here* specifies a location roughly, the approach from the informational viewpoint here can immediately predict that phrases of this kind cannot or should not be reversed. Only the informational principle, not the traditional approach, can solve one of the more mysterious phenomena in the field of usage or grammar: why is it that these phrases cannot be arranged reversely?

Although there are countless numbers of examples of this sort, the following are two typical examples among them:

- (10) The young samurai beside Omi said, 'May I please ask that he be allowed to commit seppuku *here, on the beach?*'—J. Clavell, *Shogun* [author's italics]
- (11) I stood *there at the bottom of the steps*, afraid to ask how long she had been sitting, knowing only that I had wronged her terribly.—E. Segal, *Love Story* [author's italics]

V. Double Place Specification by *Abroad* and a Prepositional Phrase

We have the adverb *abroad*, similar to the locative pronouns *here* and *there*,

which points vaguely at a foreign country or outdoors. Similar to the locative pronouns above, this *abroad* cannot but specify a location generally or roughly. So that, if needed, it will be accompanied by a prepositional phrase to indicate which country or where outdoors or outside exactly.

- (12) I felt restless and ill at ease not seeing Ellie and knowing she'd gone *abroad to France*. — E. Christie, *Endless Night* [author's italics]

Also in this case, it cannot be reversed as “*to France abroad” just as predicted by the informational principle we have argued for to this point.

Here, of course, the view may be somewhat possible that it is natural for the word *abroad* to precede the prepositional phrase because the verb *go* and the word *abroad* might be connected firmly as one idiom. We will not completely deny the possibility of this view at the present. But considering the fact that many other adverbials can go between the verb *go* and the word *abroad* freely, we will conclude here that our view based on the information or the cognitive process should be far better than any other view based on the idiomaticity.

In addition, we are convinced of the fact that other adverbials can intercede between the word *go* and the word *abroad* from the great number of indications by native informants. However, due to the limited number of examples that can be observed, the following, although somewhat dated, is the only example in novels at hand at the present time of writing this paper:

- (13) ... she pack'd up her toilet at half a day's warning and went *with him abroad*, ... — J. Cleland, *Fanny Hill* [author's italics]

VI. Double Place Specification by *Somewhere* and a Prepositional Phrase

Also, as regards the use of the adverb *somewhere*, it can be accompanied by a prepositional phrase which pinpoints a location more precisely. This is quite different from the examples like “somewhere in New York” which simply means some place in New York or something like that.

Thus, “She lives somewhere near here” [*Lexicon*] is a good example, in which the location is more clearly pinpointed by the *near here* after the more vague *somewhere*. As these are examples of double place specification, the order of the *somewhere* and the *near here* cannot be reversed following the informational principle. The following is one of many examples that have appeared in novels:

- (14) The man did not need response; he had worked all of this out *somewhere*

inside himself and Caine was little more than an object.—H. Lee, *Kung Fu #1: The Way of the Tiger, the Sign of the Dragon* [author's italics]

VII. Place Specification by an Adverbial Particle and a Prepositional Phrase

Hyakutake & Akiyama (2007), pursuing the verification of the word order principle proposed in a series of my papers (1981–1986), firmly support my proposal and present further patterns governed by the principle proposed, “From-Rough (or Global)-to-Detailed (or Particular) Principle.” The following are some of the examples cited by them:

- (15) a. The lark is flying *up in the sky*.
b.* The lark is flying *in the sky up*. — *ibid.*
- (16) a. The river flows *down into the sea*.
b.* The river flows *into the sea down*. — *ibid.*
- (17) a. I saw you last night *out on the edge of town*.
b.* I saw you last night *on the edge of town out*. — *ibid.*
- (18) a. He is going *over to America*.
b.* He is going *to America over*. — *ibid.*
- (19) a. He turned *off into the lane*.
b.* He turned *into the lane off*. — *ibid.*

All of these adverbial particles *up*, *down*, *out*, *over*, and *off* have rough information and specify general or broader location, respectively in each of the sentences above. On the other hand, each prepositional phrase, having detailed information, pinpoints the specific or exact location, respectively. Therefore, the b-versions of these sentences, being contrary to the informational flow *from the general to the specific*, are ungrammatical or unacceptable.

The above examples and linguistic phenomena pointed out in Hyakutake & Akiyama (2007) directly verify the existence of the word order principle “from the rough to the detailed,” and strongly support my proposal.

VIII. Concluding Remarks

We have so far examined the typical examples following the informational principle for word order, “from the general to the specific” or “from the rough to the detailed,” and have suggested that it should be a universal principle for word order, presumably not only as regards English and Japanese but also applicable to every other language. It can also be said here that this principle will not be directly re-

flected in the established syntax of English where the different type of prepositional phrases are hierarchically arranged in piles from the smaller to the larger, as we have seen in the first part of this paper. But we are able to see the word order which will follow this principle in a situation where the ordinary framework of syntax is loosened for some reason:

(20) I think I have such a gun in mind, and easily available *here in Brussels at some sports shops*. —F. Forsyth, *The Day of the Jackal* [author's italics]

Furthermore, there will be more patterns and examples which will verify this principle in addition to the cases we have argued for so far in this paper. There will also be much more phenomena beyond syntax, especially on the discourse level, which this principle can account for. For instance, we believe that this principle should greatly help to clarify such phenomena as “apposition” in a traditional grammar, “extraposition” in a transformational grammar, and so on. These points will be argued in future papers.

REFERENCES

- Asada, Hisao. “Envy-no Goho,” (“Grammar of *Envy*,”) *Eigo Kyoiku*, (*The English Teachers' Magazine*,) Vol. XXIX, No. 12, Tokyo: Taishukan, 1981, pp. 80–83.
- Asada, Hisao. “Movement and Word Order of Two Constituents of the Same Formal Type,” *Kansai Linguistic Society*, No. 2, Kansai Linguistic Society, 1982, pp. 31–39.
- Asada, Hisao. “Zoku *Envy*-no Goho,” (“Grammar of *Envy* Reconsidered,”) *Eigo Kyoiku*, (*The English Teachers' Magazine*,) Vol. XXXIII, No. 11, Tokyo: Taishukan, 1985, pp. 71–75.
- Asada, Hisao. “Gojyun-o Ketteisuru Ichi-Genri—So-Mitsu-no Jyoho—,” (“A Principle for Word Order—From the Rough Information to the Detailed—,”) *Bulletin Faculty of Foreign Studies*, No. 57, Kitakyushu University, 1986 a, pp. 37–56.
- Asada, Hisao. “Tajyu-no Basho Shitei,” (“Multiple Specification of Location,”) *Eigo Seinen*, (*The Rising Generation*,) Vol. LLXXXII, No. 3, Tokyo: Kenkyusha, 1986 b, pp. 118–120.
- Bennett, David C. *Spatial and Temporal Uses of English Prepositions: An essay in Stratificational Semantics*, London: Longman, 1975.
- Dik, Siomn C. *Functional Grammar*, North-Holland Linguistic Series 37, Amsterdam: North-Holland, 1978.
- Dik, Siomn C. *Functional Grammar*, Publications of Language Sciences 7, Dordrecht: Foris Publications, 1981.
- Dik, Siomn C. *The Theory of Functional Grammar*, Part 2: Complex and Derived Constructions, Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1997.
- Gruber, Jeffrey S. *Lexical Structures in Syntax and Semantics*, North-Holland Linguistic Series 25, Amsterdam: North-Holland, 1976.
- Hyakutake, Tamae & Saori Akiyama. “Eigo Dorui-Yoso-no Gojyun-ni Kansuru Kosatsu,” (“A

Cognate Constituents in Present-Day English,") *VISIO* No. 36, Kyushu Lutheran College, 2007, pp. 113–124.

Kamio, Akio. "Ni to De," ("Ni and De,") *Gengo, (Language,)* Vol. IX, No. 9, Tokyo: Taishukan, 1980, pp. 55–63.

Quirk, Randolph, *et al.*, *A Grammar of Contemporary English*, London: Longman, 1972.

Yuasa, Akiko. "Nihongo-no Ni/De to Indoneshiago-no Pada/Di," ("Japanese Ni/De and Indonesian Pada/Di,") *Gengo, (Language,)* Vol. XXXVII, No. 7, Tokyo: Taishukan, 2008, pp. 70–75.