

# On the Discourse Function of Rightward Movement in English\*

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While much work has been done on the discourse functions of individual constructions, little has been done to develop generalizations concerning classes of syntactic constructions. Previous work by Ward & Birner (1994b) shows that leftward movement in general serves to front ‘given’ information, although the type of givenness involved varies from construction to construction. In this paper we examine three constructions which have been analyzed as rightward-moving (Stowell 1981, Safir 1985, *inter alia*; cf. Rochemont & Culicover 1990): inversion, existential *there*-insertion, and presentational *there*-insertion. Based on an extensive study of naturally-occurring data, our analysis reveals that these three constructions are all sensitive to a similar pragmatic constraint: that the postverbal NP represent information that is unfamiliar, either within the discourse or in the hearer’s (inferred) knowledge store. Thus, we show that as a class, rightward-moving constructions postpose unfamiliar information (Horn 1986); moreover, this property is not shared by right-dislocation, a superficially similar but non-rightward-moving construction.

## 1 Inversion

As demonstrated in Birner 1994, felicitous inversion in English is crucially dependent on the ‘discourse-familiarity’ of the information represented by the preposed and postposed constituents, where discourse-familiarity is determined by prior evocation in the discourse, inferrability based on the prior discourse, and recency of mention within the discourse. The first two factors determine whether information is old

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or new with respect to the discourse; information that has been evoked in the prior discourse or is inferrable based on the prior discourse is discourse-old, while information that has not been evoked and is not inferrable is discourse-new (Prince 1992). Among discourse-old information, that which has been mentioned more recently in general is treated as more familiar, in the sense of being more salient, than that which has been mentioned less recently.

In the study reported in Birner 1994, an examination of a corpus of 1778 naturally-occurring inversions revealed that in 78% of the tokens, the preposed constituent represented discourse-old information while the postposed constituent represented discourse-new information, as in (1):

- (1) We have complimentary soft drinks, coffee, Sanka, tea, and milk. *Also complimentary is red and white wine.* We have cocktails available for \$2.00.  
[Flight attendant on Midway Airlines]

Here, the preposed AdjP *also complimentary* represents information previously evoked in the discourse, while the postposed *red and white wine* is new to the discourse. There were no tokens in which the situation was reversed; that is, in no case did a preposed discourse-new element appear in combination with a postposed discourse-old element. Moreover, information that had not been evoked in the prior discourse yet was inferrable in context (Prince 1981c) behaved as discourse-old, occurring in exactly the same range of contexts as did explicitly evoked information.

Of the two constituents in question, it is the postposed constituent that will be most relevant for the purposes of this paper. Consequently, it should be noted that of 1290 applicable tokens in the corpus (excluding incomplete tokens and those lacking sufficient context), in 1149, or 89%, the postposed constituent represented discourse-new information. These cases included not only tokens containing preposed discourse-old information, but also 141 tokens (11%) whose preposed and postposed constituents were both discourse-new.

It is not the case, however, that the postposed constituent need always be discourse-new. In 11% of the tokens in the corpus, both the preposed and the postposed constituents represented discourse-old information. Interestingly, however, of those cases in which the preposed and postposed elements had both been explicitly evoked, but at different points in the prior discourse, in 91.3% of the cases the preposed element was the more recently mentioned (and hence more salient) of the two, as in (2):

- (2) Each of the characters is the centerpiece of a book, doll and clothing collection. The story of each character is told in a series of six slim books, each \$12.95 hardcover and \$5.95 in paperback, and in bookstores and libraries across the country. More than 1 million copies have been sold; and in late 1989 a series of activity kits was introduced for retail sale. *Complementing the relatively affordable books are the dolls, one for each fictional heroine and each with a comparably pricey historically accurate wardrobe and accessories....*  
[Chicago Tribune]

Here, although the dolls have been evoked in the prior discourse, they have been evoked less recently, and are thus arguably less salient within the discourse, than the books. For this reason, switching the preposed and postposed constituents in the inversion results in infelicity:

- (3) Each of the characters is the centerpiece of a book, doll and clothing collection. The story of each character is told in a series of six slim books, each \$12.95 hardcover and \$5.95 in paperback, and in bookstores and libraries across the country. More than 1 million copies have been sold; and in late 1989 a series of activity kits was introduced for retail sale. #*Complementing the relatively affordable dolls are the books, one for each fictional heroine....*

Here, placing the less recently mentioned dolls in preposed position results in infelicity. Thus, even in cases where both constituents have been previously evoked, the postposed constituent nonetheless represents less familiar information, where familiarity is defined by prior evocation, inferrability, and recency of mention. The results from the corpus study indicate that the postposed constituent in an inversion tends to represent, but need not always represent, discourse-new information; moreover, when it represents discourse-old information, this information is still less familiar within the discourse than that represented by the preposed constituent. Thus, what is relevant for the felicity of inversion in discourse is the relative discourse-familiarity of the information represented by these two constituents.

## 2 There-Insertion

The felicitous use of *there*-insertion is also sensitive to the information status of the postverbal NP (Erdmann 1976; Rando & Napoli 1978; Ziv 1982; Penhallurick 1984; Holmback 1984; Lumsden 1988; Prince 1992;

McNally 1992; Abbott 1992, 1993; Ward & Birner 1994a; inter alia). However, previous studies have generally focused on *there*-insertion with main verb *be*. Others (Aissen 1975, Larson 1988, Rochemont & Culicover 1990, inter alia) have argued that there are two structurally distinct types of *there*-insertion: ‘existential’ *there*, restricted to main verb *be*, and ‘presentational’ *there*, restricted to verbs of ‘appearance’ or ‘emergence’ (Levin 1993). The two types are illustrated in (4a) and (4b), respectively:

- (4) a. There’s a problem with our analysis.  
[BB to GW in conversation]
- b. Daniel told me me that shortly after Grumman arrived  
at Wideview Chalet there arrived also a man named  
Sleman.  
[Upfield, A.W. The Devil’s Steps. 1987:246]

We will argue that, notwithstanding any structural differences that may exist between them, the two types of *there*-insertion are pragmatically distinct with respect to the information status of the NP in postverbal position. We begin with existential *there*.

## 2.1 Existential There-Insertion

Unlike inversion, existential *there*-insertion is sensitive not to DISCOURSE-familiarity, but rather to HEARER-familiarity. That is, as first noted in Prince 1988, 1992, the postverbal NP (henceforth PVNP) of existential *there*-insertion is required to represent information that the speaker believes is not already familiar to the hearer. Such information is typically, although not necessarily, represented by morphologically indefinite NPs, as illustrated above in (4a). This correlation has led some researchers to go so far as to claim that definites are grammatically and categorically excluded from the postverbal position of this construction. However, as we have argued in earlier work (Ward & Birner 1994a), it is not only possible but quite common for definite NPs to appear in this position just in case they represent hearer-new information. In Ward & Birner 1994a we discuss five such types of PVNP; these are listed in (5).

- (5) Types of definite PVNP in existential *there*-insertion:
- I Hearer-old entities marked as hearer-new
  - II Hearer-new tokens of hearer-old types
  - III Hearer-old entities newly instantiating a variable
  - IV Hearer-new entities with unique descriptions
  - V False definites

Type I consists of hearer-old entities marked as hearer-new. This category includes the ‘reminder’ *there*-insertion noted by, inter alia, Bolinger (1977), Hannay (1985), Lakoff (1987), and Abbott (1993), as illustrated in (6):

- (6) Almanzo liked haying-time. From dawn till long after dark every day he was busy, always doing different things. It was like play, and morning and afternoon *there was the cold egg-nog*. [Wilder, L.I. Farmer Boy. 1933:232]

Although the entity represented by the PVNP here (*the cold egg-nog*) is evoked two pages earlier, there are sufficient grounds for the writer to believe that the entity has been (temporarily) forgotten by the reader, thus licensing her to reintroduce it and treat it as hearer-new (see Lakoff 1987).

Examples of Type II, in which the PVNP represents a new instance of a known type, are well attested in the literature (Jenkins 1975, Erdmann 1976, Ziv 1982, Woisetschlaeger 1983, Hannay 1985, Lakoff 1987, Lumsden 1988, Prince 1992, Abbott 1993, inter alia); these include PVNPs with adjectives indicating an instance of a known or inferable type (e.g., *same, usual, obligatory, ideal, perfect, necessary*), as in (7):

- (7) CP: We had another one of our delightful faculty meetings today.  
 GW: My God, what do you have? Three a week?  
 CP: I know. And they’re always the same. *Today there was the usual bickering...*  
 [CP to GW in conversation]

Here, the PVNP has dual reference, both to a type and a token. The definite is licensed by the unique identifiability of the (hearer-old) type (Hawkins 1978, 1991), while the *there*-insertion is licensed by the hearer-new status of the current instantiation of that type. Thus, the bickering evoked in (7) is presumed to be familiar; what is hearer-new is the newly instantiated bickering that held of the particular faculty meeting in question.

The third class of definite PVNP corresponds to the so-called ‘list’ interpretation that has been widely acknowledged to tolerate definite NPs in *there*-insertion (Milsark 1974, 1977; Rando & Napoli 1978; Lakoff 1987; Lumsden 1988; Abbott 1992, 1993; inter alia). It consists of one or more hearer-old entities newly instantiating a variable, as in (8):

- (8) [Khalili] joined the staff of the Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago, a nationally prominent 20-story medical facility, which at the time was just a handful of doctors working in a former warehouse at Ohio Street and McClurg Court. “At times, *there were just the two of us*, and he and I had to see all the patients,” recalled Dr. Henry Betts, the institute’s medical director and chief executive officer.  
[Chicago Tribune]

Here, the definite NP specifies the uniquely identifiable set of two individuals evoked in the prior discourse. However, this set of individuals also constitutes a hearer-new instantiation of the variable in the salient open proposition ‘X-many doctors were at the Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago’ (see Prince 1981b, Ward 1988, Prince 1986, inter alia, for details).

Unlike the first three types, the fourth type of definite PVNP does not depend on the prior context for its felicity. Consider the example in (9):

- (9) In addition to interest-rate risk, there is the added risk that when interest rates fall, mortgages will be prepaid, thereby reducing the Portfolio’s future income stream.  
[Vanguard Financial Center Newsletter]

Here, although this particular risk constitutes new information for the hearer, the description provided in the NP is sufficient to fully and uniquely identify the risk in question, hence the felicity of the definite (cf. Holmback 1984).

The last type of definite PVNP is what we call ‘false definites’. As Prince (1981a) notes, the demonstrative *this* can be felicitously used to non-deictically introduce a hearer-new entity, as in (10):

- (10) There once was this sharp Chicago alderman who also happened to be a crook.  
[Mike Royko, Chicago Tribune]

While most uses of demonstratives require that the speaker assume the hearer is in a position to identify the referent, the use of *this* exemplified

in (10) assumes the hearer is not in such a position; and, as we would expect, NPs that represent such hearer-new entities are fully felicitous in the PVNP position of existential *there*-insertion. We use the term *false definite* to refer to formal definites used to represent entities not assumed to be uniquely identifiable to the hearer.

Thus, postverbal position in existential *there*-insertion may felicitously be occupied by exactly those definite NPs that are construable as hearer-new. Given this, there is no reason to appeal to the so-called ‘definiteness effect’ (Milsark 1974, Safir 1985, Reuland & ter Meulen 1987, *inter alia*). More importantly, these results demonstrate that what is relevant for the felicitous use of existential *there*-insertion is not discourse-familiarity, but rather hearer-familiarity. That is, it is not sufficient for the PVNP to be merely discourse-new; it must in fact be hearer-new for the felicitous use of existential *there* in discourse.

## 2.2 Presentational There-Insertion

The other class of *there*-insertion in English contains main verbs other than *be*. Based upon an analysis of a corpus of 428 naturally-occurring tokens, we found that the PVNP of presentational *there*, like that of existential *there*, is felicitous when the NP represents hearer-new information, regardless of the morphological definiteness of the PVNP. However, unlike existential *there*, presentational *there* is not limited to PVNPs representing hearer-new entities; hearer-old entities are also possible, provided they are discourse-new.

First, note that morphologically definite PVNPs may occur with presentational *there*-insertion when they represent hearer-new information, as in (11):

- (11) a. The first to be seen of the Wirragatta homestead by anyone following the creek track from the Broken Hill road were the stockyards; and then, as he swung round a sharp bend in what had become the Wirragatta River, *there came into view the trade ships, the men’s quarters, then the office-store building, and finally the large bungalow surrounded by orange-trees, which in turn were confined by a white-painted wicket fence.*  
[Upfield, A.W. *Winds of Evil*. 1937:55]
- b. The visitors here are a doctor who keeps zapping himself with a burglar-fighting stun gun, and Moon Unit’s best friend, a lovable flake played by Bess Meyer. The two women like to wear goofy hats. The credits say that three writers were required to create this tableau.

Okay, but it has only one good line. The line is: “So?”  
*There remains the burning question of whether the Zap-  
 pas, offspring of rock star Frank Zappa and occasional  
 guest veejays on MTV, can act.*  
 [AP Newswire 1990]

In (11a), the PVNP represents a hearer-new instantiation of a variable (a Type III PVNP). The open proposition ‘X came into view’ is licensed by the preceding description of what could be seen from various vantage points. Although the various things that came into view are themselves familiar to the reader, the identification of those items as instantiations of the variable constitutes hearer-new information. Example (11b) is an example of a Type IV PVNP. In this case, the burning question is uniquely identifiable by virtue of having been explicitly and completely identified within the NP. Nonetheless, the question is assumed to be new to the reader and thus may appear felicitously as the PVNP.

However, while both types of *there*-insertion permit PVNPs that represent hearer-new information, presentational *there* is less restrictive than existential *there*, in that it allows PVNPs representing hearer-old information as well; however, presentational *there*-insertion requires that this NP represent information that is discourse-new. Consider the examples in (12):

- (12) a. There appeared before the committee your good friend  
 Jim Alterman.  
 b. There stood behind him the Vice President.  
 c. Suddenly there ran out of the woods the man we had  
 seen at the picnic.  
 [=Aissen 1975:2, ex. 12]

In these examples, the referent of the PVNP represents information that is presumably familiar to the hearer. Thus, presentational *there* is less constrained than existential *there* in allowing the PVNP to represent hearer-old information, as long as that information is NEW WITHIN THE DISCOURSE.<sup>1</sup>

However, both types of *there*-insertion disallow PVNPs representing discourse-old information. Consider (13)-(14):

- (13) a. A: Hey, have you heard from Jim Alterman lately? I  
 haven’t seen him for years.  
 B: Yes, actually. #There appeared before the commit-  
 tee today Jim Alterman.

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<sup>1</sup>See Prince 1988 for an analysis of a construction in Yiddish that appears to be subject to the same constraint.

- b. President Clinton appeared at the podium accompanied by three senators and the Vice President. #There stood behind him the Vice President.
- (14)
- a. A: Hey, have you heard from Jim Alterman lately? I haven't seen him for years.  
B: Yes, actually. #There was before the committee today Jim Alterman.
  - b. President Clinton appeared at the podium accompanied by three senators and the Vice President. #There was behind him the Vice President.

The PVNPs in these examples represent discourse-old information, and hence are infelicitous in either presentational or existential *there*-insertion. Presentational *there*-insertion, then, shares with inversion the property of backing discourse-new information; however, it shares with existential *there*-insertion the property of being sensitive to absolute (rather than relative) information status.

### 3 Right-Dislocation

In contrast to inversion and the two types of *there*-insertion, right-dislocation does NOT require that the clause-final NP represent new information. Consider the right-dislocations in (15):

- (15)
- a. Below the waterfall (and this was the most astonishing sight of all), a whole mass of enormous glass pipes were dangling down into the river from somewhere high up in the ceiling! *They really were ENORMOUS, those pipes.* There must have been a dozen of them at least, and they were sucking up the brownish muddy water from the river and carrying it away to goodness knows where. [Dahl, R. *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*. 1964:74-75]
  - b. Can't write much, as I've been away from here for a week and have to keep up appearances, but did Diana mention the desk drama? Dad took your old desk over to her house to have it sent out, but he didn't check to see what was in it, and forgot that I had been keeping all my vital documents in there – like my tax returns and paystubs and bank statements. Luckily Diana thought “that stuff looked important” so she took it out before

giving the desk over to the movers. Phew! *She's a smart cookie, that Diana.*  
[personal letter]

In each of these examples, the sentence-final constituent (*those pipes* in (15a) and *that Diana* in (15b)) represents information that has been explicitly evoked in the immediately prior discourse. Since this information is both hearer-old and discourse-old, right-dislocation cannot be viewed as marking new material; on the contrary, this construction appears to disallow new information in dislocated position, as illustrated in (16):

- (16) a. Below the waterfall (and this was the most astonishing sight of all), a whole mass of enormous glass pipes were dangling down into the river from somewhere high up in the ceiling! #*They really were ENORMOUS, some of the boulders in the river.* Nonetheless, they were sucked up into the pipes along with the brownish muddy water.
- b. [...] Some of the boulders in the river really were enormous. Nonetheless, they were sucked up into the pipes along with the brownish muddy water.

Here, the presentation of new information in dislocated position renders the utterance infelicitous, although its canonical non-dislocated variant (16b) is felicitous in the same context.

The functions posited by previous researchers for right-dislocation, in fact, generally assume that the dislocated NP represents information that is to some extent given or inferrable within the discourse. For example, Davison (1984) argues that right-dislocation marks the referent of the dislocated NP as a topic, and thus also as having a 'discourse antecedent' (1984:802). Tomlin (1986), on the other hand, maintains that right-dislocation's primary function is "to self-correct potentially defective texts" (1986:62), with the speaker initially believing that the pronoun will be sufficient for the hearer to identify the referent, but then anticipating a possible communicative breakdown and providing a more explicit referring expression. Similarly, Geluykens (1987) argues that right-dislocations (in his terminology, 'tails') represent a repair mechanism for self-initiated correction of a potentially unclear reference (see also Givón 1976). However, in cases like those in (15) above, it is not plausible to consider the right-dislocation to be correcting for a possible reference failure. In (15a), for example, the identity of the referent of *they* in the right-dislocation is clear; not only do the pipes represent the only entity realized by a plural in the previous sentence,

but they are also presumably the most salient entity in the discourse at the time the pronoun is uttered. Similarly, in (15b), Diana is the only female mentioned in the prior discourse, and thus the only available referent for the pronoun *she*. Geluykens suggests that such cases may be functionally distinct from right-dislocations used for repair purposes; he does not, however, offer an account of such cases, but rather maintains that the majority of right-dislocations serve as repairs.

Ziv & Grosz (1994), on the other hand, draw a sharp distinction between right-dislocations and repairs, or ‘afterthoughts’, on the basis of distinct syntactic and intonational properties. For example, afterthoughts are characterized by a pause before the final NP, while right-dislocations consist of a single intonation contour with no such pause. Similarly, they note that the two have different functions as well. Whereas the function of afterthoughts is corrective, the function of right-dislocation, they argue, is organizational. In right-dislocation, according to Ziv & Grosz, an entity which has previously been situationally or textually evoked (Prince 1981c) is brought to the top of the ‘Cf list’ (Grosz, Joshi, and Weinstein 1983); that is, it becomes the most salient entity available for subsequent reference. Following Lambrecht (1981), they argue that right-dislocation instructs the hearer to search the context for the intended referent. They state that “if the immediately preceding utterance includes a reference to the entity in question right-dislocation is not felicitous” (1994:190), except when (a) the entity is merely inferrable from, but has not been explicitly evoked in, the prior utterance, or (b) the dislocated NP is predicative rather than purely referential (e.g., when it expresses additional descriptive or emotive content). However, as we have seen in (15), the dislocated NP may in fact felicitously represent information that is immediately accessible and currently topical, even when it has been explicitly mentioned in the prior utterance and expresses no further descriptive or emotive content.

Crucially, this information status is exactly the one that is disallowed by all of the other three constructions we have considered thus far: In no case may the postposed NP of inversion or either type of *there*-insertion represent the most recently evoked, or most topical, information in the discourse. Moreover, what all of the above accounts of right-dislocation share is a prohibition on the appearance of brand-new information in dislocated position, where ‘brand-new’ refers to information that has not been evoked either textually or situationally, is not inferrable from the prior discourse, and is not believed to be otherwise within the hearer’s knowledge store (Prince 1981c). And this, importantly, is also precisely the one information status that is not only allowed, but is in fact prototypical, in postposed position for inversion

and both types of *there*-insertion (which differ from each other only in terms of the nature of the newness on which their felicity depends). Thus, despite the current lack of consensus regarding the discourse function of right-dislocation, it is clear that the functional restriction on the dislocated NP in right-dislocation differs radically from that imposed on the PVNP in inversion and *there*-insertion.

## 4 The Function of Rightward Movement

Our corpora-based study of four constructions – inversion, existential *there*-insertion, presentational *there*-insertion, and right-dislocation – reveals that each is sensitive to different constraints on the information status of the NP in marked position. However, the pragmatic constraints to which these constructions are sensitive do pattern in such a way that significant generalizations across constructions can be drawn. Our findings are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Constraints on Information Status of the PVNP in Four Constructions

CONSTRUCTION	INFORMATION STATUS OF PVNP
inversion	relatively new in the discourse
existential <i>there</i>	hearer-new
presentational <i>there</i>	discourse-new
right-dislocation	discourse-old

First, note that our analysis predicts different distributions for the four constructions in question. For example, in contexts where the information represented by the PVNP is familiar to the hearer yet new to the discourse, inversion should be felicitous but the corresponding existential *there*-insertion should not (contra Hartvigson & Jakobsen 1974, Erdmann 1976, Breivik 1981, Penhallurick 1984, Freeze 1992, inter alia). This prediction is borne out, as evidenced in (17):

- (17) a. Mary didn't know why she had been called out of class, but she hurried to the principal's office and went in. Standing in the corner holding a fat red folder was the algebra teacher.
- b. [...] #Standing in the corner holding a fat red folder there was the algebra teacher.

Similarly, although existential *there*-insertion disallows hearer-old, discourse-new information in postverbal position, presentational *there*-insertion does not, as seen in (18):

- (18) a. There appeared before the committee your good friend Jim Alterman. [= (12a)]  
 b. #There was before the committee your good friend Jim Alterman.

Here, the PVNP constitutes hearer-old information and, as such, is disallowed in existential *there*-insertion yet is felicitous in presentational *there*-insertion.

Second, notice that three of the four constructions under investigation – inversion and the two types of *there*-insertion – share an important function, namely the postposing of information that is unfamiliar, either within the discourse or within the hearer’s knowledge store. Interestingly, this property is shared by precisely those constructions that have been argued to involve rightward movement of the PVNP (Stowell 1981, Safir 1985, inter alia; however, cf. Rochemont & Culicover 1990). Thus, we can hypothesize that rightward-movement in English is characterized by the postposing of unfamiliar information.

Crucially, this function does not apply to right-dislocation, a superficially similar construction which involves no movement to PVNP position. With right-dislocation, in addition to the dislocated PVNP, there is necessarily a pronoun within the same sentence that is interpretable as coreferential with the dislocated NP. In the case of inversion and *there*-insertion, on the other hand, the PVNP appears in postverbal position as a result of movement, leaving behind no coreferential pronoun, but rather the hallmark of syntactic movement: a gap, or trace, that is subject to various independently motivated constraints on movement and extraction. Thus, we assume that the ‘dislocated’ NP of right-dislocation is simply base-generated in postverbal position.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Ziv & Grosz (1994) invoke the notion of subjacency to rule out non-afterthought examples of right-dislocation, and thus commit themselves to a movement account of RD. Consider (i):

- (i) \*The story that he told us was very interesting, Bill. [=Ziv & Grosz 1994:185, ex. 5]

Ziv & Grosz maintain that the pronoun in (i) cannot be interpreted as coreferential with *Bill* because it occurs within a complex NP, resulting in ungrammaticality. However, consider the following (constructed) example:

- (ii) One thing he’ll never be is motivated, that guy.

The grammaticality of this example suggests that the deviance of (i) is pragmatic rather than syntactic, and that no subjacency violation is involved. Rather, the possibility of a coreferential interpretation in (ii) is consistent with the non-movement analysis of right-dislocation that we are assuming in this study.

And corresponding to the syntactic difference between right-dislocation and the other constructions that do involve rightward movement, we find that right-dislocation is subject to an entirely different pragmatic constraint. Unlike NPs that occur in postverbal position as the result of movement, the dislocated NP of right-dislocation is constrained to constitute familiar, discourse-old information in context. Thus, we propose that rightward movement in English always restricts the familiarity of the referent of the moved NP.

## 5 Conclusion

It is argued in Horn 1986 that leftward movement in general serves to prepose ‘thematic’ or familiar information, whereas rightward movement serves to postpose nonthematic or unfamiliar information. Previous work (e.g., Ward & Birner 1994b) has shown that leftward movement does indeed serve to front familiar information, although the type of familiarity involved varies from construction to construction. In this paper we have examined three constructions which have been analyzed by syntacticians as rightward-moving, and have found that all three postpose information that is unfamiliar, either within the discourse or in the hearer’s knowledge store. In the case of inversion, the PVNP is required to represent information that is less familiar in the discourse than that represented by the preposed constituent. Presentational *there*-insertion is similarly sensitive to discourse-familiarity, but requires that the PVNP represent information that is absolutely, rather than relatively, new within the discourse. Finally, existential *there*-insertion requires that the PVNP represent information that is not only new to the discourse, but also (presumed to be) new to the hearer.

Thus, these constructions share the property of postposing information which is ‘new’ in some sense. Moreover, this property is not shared by right-dislocation, a superficially similar but non-rightward-moving construction. These findings, in combination with those noted above for leftward movement, support the proposal that in general, leftward movement in English preposes information that is familiar while rightward movement postposes information that is not.

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I also claim that the effects of locality in three types of rightward movement construction in English, including the "Heavy NP Shift construction," can follow from the parsing strategies that are independently motivated (Section 5.1).5. In this chapter, I provide cross-linguistic descriptions of rightward movement phenomena observed in six languages: Japanese, English, German, Dutch, Italian, and Turkish. First, I present a general description of Japanese postverbal constructions (Section 2.2). I then consider three types of constructions in English: Heavy NP Shift (HNPS), Extraposition from NP (EX), and Right Dislocation (RD) (Section 2.3). Finally, I describe the other languages in the context of rightward movement constructions (Section 2.4). A study of discourse-functional constraints on the use of a marked syntactic construction. Argues that inversion in clauses serves an information-packaging function, linking familiar and unfamiliar information in the discourse. Demonstrates a correlation between a well-defined type of givenness and c. View via Publisher. On the Discourse Function of Rightward Movement in English. Gregory Ward, Betty J. Birner. Psychology. On the Discourse Function of Rightward Movement in English Conceptual Structure, discourse and Language. Jan 1996. G Ward. B Birner. Ward, G. & Birner, B. (1996). "On the Discourse Function of Rightward Movement in English". This paper presents a discourse-functional account of English inversion, based on an examination of a large corpus of naturally-occurring tokens. It is argued that inversion serves an information-packaging function, and that felicitous inversion depends on the relative discourse-familiarity of the information represented by the preposed and postposed constituents. The data moreover indicate that evoked elements and inferrable elements are treated alike with respect to inversion; both are treated as discourse-old information. Discourse on the Move - Free ebook download as PDF File (.pdf), Text File (.txt) or read book online for free. Corpus Linguistics. chapter 1 Discourse analysis and corpus linguistics 1.1 Discourse and discourse analysis 1.1.1 Discourse studies of language use 3 1.2 Discourse studies of linguistic structure beyond the sentence 4 1.3 Discourse studies of social practices and ideological assumptions associated with communication 6 1.4 Register and genre perspectives on discourse 7 1.5 Identifying structural units in. The term discourse (L. *discursus*, "running to and fro") identifies and describes written and spoken communications. In semantics and discourse analysis, a discourse is a conceptual generalization of conversation. In a field of enquiry and social practice, the discourse is the vocabulary (codified language) for investigation of the subject, e.g. legal discourse, medical discourse, religious discourse, et cetera. In the works of the philosopher Michel Foucault, a discourse is "an entity of sequences, of