

语言理论与实践

工作论文

Cleft Sentences as Grammatical Metaphors

NOTE: The following paper was written in April 2000 and was presented at the 7th National Conference on Contemporary Linguistics (October 21-23, Guangdong University of Foreign Studies)

Abstract

One common interpretation of the term “metaphor” is that it is seen as relating to the way a particular word is used (for example, the word “crippled” in “The country was crippled with the burden of the industrial revolution.”). However, it is also possible to view metaphor from the perspective of the meaning being expressed. For example, (1) “Great changes took place in Guangzhou in 1988” and (2) “1988 saw great changes in Guangzhou” have more or less the same propositional meaning. If we compare these two expressions, we can see that Example (1) is closer to the state of affairs in the external world in terms of transitivity and wording. In systemic functional grammar, Example (1) is regarded as the “congruent” expression and Example (2) as the “metaphorical” expression, when the two are being compared in terms of expressing the “same” meaning. For systemicists, Example (1) is an experiential grammatical metaphor since the major difference between the two expressions is in the Process.

In this paper, I will first discuss concepts such as “grammatical metaphor” in systemic functional grammar and ideas concerning the three Metafunctions (Ideational, Interpersonal, Textual). Then I will look at clefts (both “it-clefts” and “wh-clefts”) from the perspective of systemic functional syntax and then argue that they are grammatical metaphors and that their corresponding “non-clefts” are congruent forms. By analyzing their thematic structures (e.g. unmarked vs marked, simple vs nominalized/predicated) and information structures (given vs new), I will be in a position to argue that clefts are in fact Textual grammatical metaphors. One of the implications of the present study is that clefts (e.g. “What I want is this.”; “It was John that kissed Mary.”) are not derived from the so-called corresponding “non-clefts” (e.g. “I want this.”; “John kissed Mary.”).

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