

# 4. Using the concepts of given and new information in classes on the English Language

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## **Abstract**

This chapter offers definitions of the terms *given information* and *new information* useful in classes focusing on writing in English. Several ways are illustrated in which teachers can use these definitions to help students of English analyze and revise written texts.

## **Definitions of Given and New Information and classroom examples**

In describing the concepts *given information* and *new information*, I will rely on ideas developed in the theory of Functional Sentence Perspective (FSP). Functional Sentence Perspectivists believe that “the structure of utterances is determined by the use to which they are put and the communicative context in which they occur” (Lyons, 1981, p. 227). As a result, they analyze “the sentence (by which they generally mean an independent clause) into parts having a function in the total communication process” (Halliday, 1974: 43).<sup>1</sup>

According to the formulation described in this chapter,<sup>2</sup> a sentence should be analyzed into two parts, one of which bears given information and the other of which bears new information. As Dahl (1976), Chafe (1976), Kuno (1980), Prince (1981), and Halliday (1994) show, several different views of given and new information exist. For my work with writing students, I adopt the view of given information that centers on elements that have appeared prior to a point in a text, that are inferable by the reader from the text or the extralinguistic situation, or that refer to things that are unique and that are known to all with normal experience of the world.

For example, once a noun phrase such as *the old blue car* appears in a text, when it or a shortened form of it (like *the car*) appears later in that text, that form conveys given information. Or once a writer refers to something that is known to have several parts, the writer can later use references to those parts to convey given

information. An essay mentioning *a house* might naturally combine with references to common parts of houses: *the foyer, the floors, the curtains, and the kitchen*. All of these later references would be treated by readers as conveying given information on the basis of the inferences linking common or probable parts and a whole.

Some inferences can link references in texts to events in the extralinguistic situation. If a college president were to issue a written response to an attempted takeover of the administration building, he or she could refer to *the unfortunate incident yesterday*. Since this reference would appear in a situation in which probably all readers know who is writing to whom about what and for what purpose, readers can treat this reference as given information.

Finally, references to things in the world that are unique and that are known to all those who have normal experience of the world—references to things such as *the sun* and *moon* or to processes such as birth and death—will be treated by readers as conveying given information.

New information is information that has not appeared prior to a particular point in a text, that is not inferable by the reader from the text or the extralinguistic situation, and that does not refer to things and processes in the world that are unique and that are known to all with common experience of the world. If one were to write, *Bill was not at home*, and follow this with, *His home is on the outskirts of Madrid*, readers could say that in the second sentence, *His home* conveys given information, and *is on the outskirts of Madrid* conveys new information.

### **Some generalizations about Given and New Information**

As Chafe (1976: 31) shows:

The principal linguistic effects of the given-new distinction, in English and perhaps all languages, reduce to the fact that given information is conveyed in a weaker and more attenuated manner than new information.

Halliday (1967) adds that given information is often represented anaphorically, by means of reference (pronominals and demonstratives), substitutes (words like *one* and *do*), and ellipsis (no realization in the text). Moreover, in English sentences, usually the portion bearing given information precedes the portion conveying

new information (Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech, & Svartvik, 1972; Prince, 1978; Chafe, 1979; Kuno, 1980; Fries, 1993). The portion that bears the given information is often the complete subject, and the portion that bears the new information is often the complete predicate. Since given information tends to appear in an attenuated manner, many sentences in English move from a relatively short subject through a longer predicate, a phenomenon that many linguists refer to with the term “end weight” (Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech, & Svartvik, 1985: 1362).

These points are generalizations about tendencies in English, not statements of absolute rules. Occasionally writers will have a good reason to disregard these generalizations. Yet these generalizations can help all who wish to increase their skill in analyzing and revising English texts.

### **The Given-New strategy of comprehension**

Sentences in texts which accord with the generalizations presented above facilitate readers’ use of what Clark and Haviland call the given-new strategy of comprehension (Clark & Haviland, 1977). After dividing declarative sentences into given and new information, readers view the given as a pointer to a direct antecedent in memory and search for it. When they find it, they attach the new information to it. If they cannot find a direct antecedent, they can try a number of tactics:

- a. forming an indirect antecedent by constructing an inferential bridge from something they do know
- b. viewing all the information in the sentence as new and adding a new node or some new nodes to memory
- c. (more rarely) trying to restructure the information in the sentence so that they do have an antecedent for the given information.

Thus a sentence will be relatively easy to process and comprehend if its given information is easy to recognize, matches a direct antecedent in memory, and appears before the new. When new information comes before given, a reader “must hold the new information in abeyance while waiting for the given information and searching for its antecedent. This increases the load on memory and makes comprehension less than optimal” (Clark & Haviland, 1977: 13).

The generalizations given above can help students of English understand many sentence patterns more fully and can undergird useful exercises.

### Strategies for moving words and phrases around within sentences

Several grammatical structures enable writers to express given information before new information by moving words and phrases around within English sentences.

#### *The Passive Voice*

Many students are admonished to avoid passive verbs. Passive verbs almost always lead to longer sentences than corresponding active verbs do, and sentences with passives are often harder to read, since they frustrate a common reading strategy of searching in each sentence for the agent, the action, and the goal of the action, in that order. And sometimes in sentences with passive verbs references to the agent are omitted (*The valve was left open.*). Such passives can have ethical implications when those at fault in an illegal and possibly dangerous action describe the action with a passive verb and omit references to themselves. Therefore, writers should be cautious about passives. But they should not avoid them altogether.

Passives are good choices when the agent is either obvious or unimportant. And they often can help writers express given information at the beginning of sentences. The gain in getting given information before new information will usually offset the losses incurred with greater sentence length and with the marked order of goals being expressed before agents. For example, in a sentence from *The Little Drummer Girl* (p. 56), John le Carré focuses on a telegram offering Alastair, an actor, a good part in a movie: "It [the telegram] had come up to the farmhouse on a Lambretta at ten that morning; it had been brought down to the beach by Willy and Pauly..." Le Carré could have written the second clause in the active voice: *Willy and Pauly brought the telegram down to the beach.* But if he had, he would have lost the chance to express the given information about the telegram early in the clause.

#### *Reversals*

With some verbs (such as forms of *be, lie, rest, sit, hover, and stand*), writers can reverse the position of elements that would ordinarily appear early and late in a sentence. Instead of writing, *A challenge to traditional stylistic analysis was especially noteworthy in the essay*, they could produce, *Especially noteworthy in the essay was a challenge to traditional stylistic analysis*.

Writers often use reversals to mark with extra force the connection between given information and that which the given information connects to. One of my students recently concluded a paragraph on characteristics of the speech of autistic

children and then opened the next paragraph with a sentence in which she used a reversal to get the subjective complement (*characteristic*) expressed before the subject (*difficulty*): *Very characteristic of the speech of autistic children is the difficulty in communicating all but the simplest needs.* My student could have followed the more conventional order by writing *The difficulty in communicating all but the simplest needs is very characteristic of the speech of autistic children.* But if she had, she would have missed the chance to express *Very characteristic of the speech of autistic children* where it is nearest to the discussion of other characteristics of autistic speech, and she would not have been able to save the new information in this sentence (*the difficulty in communicating all but the simplest needs*) for the end of the sentence.

### ***Fronts***

Sometimes writers take an element that would ordinarily appear fairly late in a sentence and “front” it or move it to the beginning, leaving the order of the rest of the elements undisturbed. For example, they could change, *They had wit* into, *Wit they had.*

Writers sometimes use fronts to make the connection between the given information in one sentence and what that information connects to in an earlier sentence especially apparent. Note the front that Robert Hughes uses in the second of these sentences from *The Fatal Shore* (p. 11): *The Iora fished from canoes. These they made by cutting a long oval of bark from a suitable eucalypt and binding its ends together to make bow and stern.*

Fronts are perhaps even more common when two or more items have been mentioned and are then contrasted. In *David Copperfield* (p. 266), Mrs. Micawber says that participating in the coal trade on the Medway River requires talent and capital. Then she adds this: *Talent, Mr. Micawber has; capital, Mr. Micawber has not.*

### **Kinds of Possible Exercises**

My colleagues and I regularly ask writing students to identify sentences in texts that could be changed using passives, reversals, or fronts to make the information in them flow from given to new. Students are also instructed to do the following:

- a. imitate sentence forms.
- b. edit individual sentences, pairs of sentences, and texts according to

- instructions involving passives, reversals, and fronts.
- c. follow instructions involving passives, reversals, and fronts to compose sentences to fit particular contexts.
  - d. evaluate passives, reversals, and fronts in others' writing.
  - e. use passives, reversals, and fronts in their own writing and justify their use to us.<sup>3</sup>

### **Sentence patterns that call special attention to new information**

Knowledge of given and new information can also help us understand sentence patterns that call special attention to new information.

#### ***The Expletive There***

Although this is another sentence pattern that writers should use with caution, uses of the expletive *there* can be justified particularly when involving special presentations of new information. Often, for instance, writers use *there* to introduce a sentence in which everything or virtually everything after the *there* is new information. In effect, writers draw special attention to new information by making it the substance of an entire predication. This is what Walker Percy does in the first sentence of his essay entitled "Symbol, Consciousness, and Intersubjectivity": *There are two interesting things about current approaches to consciousness as a subject of inquiry*. Sometimes writers make all or part of the information that follows a *there* in a sentence the focal point for one or more subsequent paragraphs.

#### ***The What-Cleft***

In forming *clefts* writers must *cleave* a sentence in two, just after the main verb. In *what-clefts* they then add a *what* to the beginning of the sentence and a form of *to be* after the original verb. In such constructions, all the elements through the form of *to be* carry given information, and all the elements after the form of *to be* convey new information.

Writers use such forms when they wish to give a strong clarification of an issue or a forceful reply to a question they think their readers might have. In "Literature in the Reader: Affective Stylistics" (p. 77) Stanley Fish uses the following *what-cleft* to clarify what he thinks his readers might be wondering: *What I am suggesting is that there is no direct relationship between the meaning of a sentence (paragraph, novel, poem) and what its words mean.*

Furthermore, *what-clefts* often respond to readers' probable questions by

showing contrasts. For example, in *The Act of Reading* (p. 71), Wolfgang Iser asserts that the literary text cannot produce the “expected expectations” that are provided by the prevalent system of thought. Then he uses this *what-cleft*: *What it [the literary text] can and does do is set up a parallel frame within which meaningful patterns are to form.*

### ***The It-Cleft (1)***

Another sentence pattern that highlights new information (as well as given information to some extent) and that is formed by cleaving a sentence in two is the *it-cleft*.

There are two different kinds of *it-clefts*, each with its own functions. In the first kind the given information placed immediately after *it is* or *it was* refers to someone or something mentioned in a previous sentence. The new information that usually has special significance in context is placed after the *that*.

For example, one of my students uses such an *it-cleft* in an essay on the total physical response method of teaching languages:

*In the back of the room, the home base chairs should be positioned. It is in these chairs that the students perform the actions to the commands of the teacher for all the others to see.*

The new information is especially significant because performing actions in response to commands is at the center of the total physical response method.

The first kind of *it-cleft* can also signal contrasts. It is as if writers are saying to readers, “Only this given information can be connected to this new information.” For example, at one point in *The Act of Reading* (p. 108), Wolfgang Iser argues that readers’ understandings of a literary work cannot be completely controlled by that work. He concludes his case with this *it-cleft*: *... and, indeed, it is the very lack of control that forms the basis of the creative side of reading.*

### ***The It-Cleft (2)***

The second kind of *it-cleft* is particularly striking because given information does not precede new information. In an *it-cleft* such as, *It was a cat who ate the popcorn*, the words *a cat* carry new information and the structure, *who ate the popcorn* carries given information.

Writers use this kind of *it-cleft* when they are confident that their readers

already have the given information in mind but are facing obstacles in understanding the new information. For example, when readers know that something was done but do not know which of several people did it, writers use an *it*-cleft to focus on the appropriate person. P.D. James uses an *it*-cleft for this purpose in *Cover Her Face* (p. 209). At one point, several members of the Maxie family and Detective Dalgleish are having a tense conversation. Stephen Maxie asks how his sister, who had been attacked, is doing. Readers strongly expect someone to answer. But since there are many suspects, some of whom probably do not want to respond since a response might incriminate them, readers cannot tell who it will be. Then James uses the second kind of *it*-cleft: *It was Dalgleish who answered...*

Writers and speakers also use this kind of *it*-cleft to correct mistaken views they suspect that their readers and auditors have. Near the end of *Cover Her Face* (p. 196), Stephen Maxie is talking to a former employer of Sally Jupp. The employer expects Stephen to want to know more about Sally's past and to be concerned primarily with her death. But this is not the case for Stephen, and James has him use an *it*-cleft to set matters straight: *It's the child I'm really worrying about.* With the second kind of *it*-cleft, then, the order of given and new information is the reverse of what it typically is in English sentences. When writers use this form, the urgency they feel to convey the new information justifies expressing the new before the given, especially since the given is usually very nearly apparent.

### Kinds of Possible Exercises

My colleagues and I often ask students to do the following:

- a. examine uses of the expletive *there* in their own drafts and revise those that they cannot justify.
- b. examine how other writers use the expletive *there*.
- c. transform sentences into cleft sentences.
- d. complete a short paragraph with a kind of cleft sentence that we specify.
- e. find some cleft sentences in print, identify what in these sentences is given and new information, and specify how these sentences function in context.

### Expressing Give and New Information in appropriate forms and places

Writers can ask themselves several questions in order to check whether they have expressed given and new information in individual sentences in such a way that those sentences facilitate readers' use of the given-new strategy of comprehension.

### ***Is the Given Information in a Sentence Marked Appropriately?***

When information appears repeatedly in a text, subsequent appearances will usually take different forms. Some of these forms call more attention to the given information, or mark it with more force, than do others. For instance, *the old car with the dented fender* calls more attention to the car than *the old car* does. And *the old car* calls more attention to the car than *the car* does. Further, *the car* calls more attention to the car than *it* does. It is not necessary to determine precisely where on such a scale each referring expression fits. It is important to realize, however, that such ranges of referring expressions force writers to make a choice each time they refer to something.

Sometimes writers refer to something with too much force. Here are two sentences from an essay in which one of my students examines the language of twins:

Savic also found some interesting features of twins' language in her study of adult-twin interaction. Savic found that twins tend to direct their utterances toward another person more than non-twins usually do.

In the second sentence I was expecting to find *she* rather than the heavier reference *Savic*.

Sometimes writers do not mark bits of given information with enough force. That is why information that writers apparently treat as given information can be difficult for readers to identify. In the next example, one of my students marks some given information too lightly: *Finally, when Genie was 13 1/2 years old, Genie's mother sought help for her increasing blindness.* Instead of *her*, which refers to Genie or her mother, either Genie's first name or words such as *her own* must appear.

As writers face such decisions, they should consider how long it has been since some given information has appeared. If it has appeared in the previous sentence, it usually needs less marking. However, if some given information has been conveyed in several successive sentences with expressions that call little attention to it, before too long that information will probably require an expression that attracts more attention to it. Readers' memories for given information fade slightly with each expression that calls little attention to the information, and after a while their memories have to be renewed. On the other hand, if a bit of given information has not been conveyed in the last page or two, it will require fairly

strong marking when it appears again.

The area of marking given information is one in which it is difficult to formulate precise rules. However, writers can learn about tendencies in English, which should help them read others' writing and craft their own with sensitive eyes and ears.

### ***Is All the Information Modifying Given Information Justified?***

Linguists have found that readers typically accept the given information in a sentence as something beyond challenging, and--if they are inclined to challenge something--challenge the new information. Once writers realize this, they must resist the temptation to modify given information with information that could or should be challenged.

In a paper about her plans for teaching literature, one of my students states that she has one overall objective. Immediately after that she writes this sentence:

This ambitious objective grew out of my discussions with some supervising teachers and out of my personal beliefs about literature.

In the subject of this sentence, *this* and *objective* clearly carry given information. But *ambitious* has been expressed in such a way as to nudge the reader into accepting it. Had the word appeared in the sentence, *This objective is ambitious*, I would have considered its implications carefully.

But imagine a politician claiming the following: *My extremist and short-sighted opponent has appeared on television twice in a week*. This politician is modifying what is probably contextually given information (there is an opponent) with the words *extremist* and *short-sighted*, words that probably deserve to be debated. And at the end of the sentence the politician expresses information that no one would be likely to challenge. Thus, we can see how the placement of given and new information can manipulate readers or listeners.

### ***Is the Given Information Expressed Before the New Information in Most Sentences?***

My students occasionally express the new information in sentences before the given information. Thus I fairly frequently find phrases such as *still another*, *some of these*, *the second solution*, and *a similar problem* - all of which clearly convey given information - at the very end of sentences, precisely where the newest

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information should be. Here are a few examples of such sentences from essays by some of my former students:

- Aphasia occurs at least as often as a result of a lesion in the right as the left hemisphere for **these groups**.
- Speaking to unbelievers through tongues of a known or unknown language and having the speaking interpreted is **another way this can be accomplished**.
- The possibility for children to work and develop at their own pace is a **fourth advantage for home-schoolers**.

All of the example sentences should be revised in order to get the information flowing from given to new.<sup>4</sup>

One reason that the given information in such examples appears last is that, as many people compose, their main concern is to come up with new information, which they then tend to express first in their sentences. Another reason is that writers have heard so often about varying the beginnings of their sentences that they sometimes tend to move bits of given information to the ends of sentences just for the sake of variety.

But if new information comes before given information in a sentence, readers must try to retain the new at the same time that they continue into the sentence in search of the given. When they find the given, they might have to review the new information to remind themselves of its details. Such processes take time and drain the energy available for reading.

Evaluating the status of information as writers compose may impede their flow of thought. Thus, I suggest that they wait to give most of their direct attention to the given-new order of information until they revise their sentences.

### Kinds of Possible Exercises

My colleagues and I give our students various sentences and have them write one with both given and new information to follow each of these. We also give them a sentence followed by a pair of sentences and ask them which sentence in the pair flows from given to new information and not the other way around. We may also ask them to find sentences (perhaps from political campaigns or propaganda) in which the given information is modified by information that perhaps is not justified as given information. Finally, we give them paragraphs in which some

sentences flow from new to given information and have them find these sentences and revise all those they decide should be changed.

### **Exercises on Given and New Information in sentences within a text**

Writers can learn many of the important lessons about given and new information by examining individual sentences or pairs of sentences. However, they generally will put these lessons to use in their writing within paragraphs and entire texts. In this section, therefore, I will present some exercises and analyses that can help writers check on and perhaps improve the flow and formal coherence of paragraphs and texts.

### ***Choosing an Effective Order of Elements Within Some Sentences in a Text***

Rei R. Noguchi (1991: 104) asks students to “rearrange the information in the asterisked items... in order to come up with the smoothest-reading paragraph”:

- (1) At our school, the football team is one of the few teams to have a well-organized junior varsity program.
- (2) The school knows it must have a strong j.v. team to field a strong, experienced varsity.
- (3) \*/the women's field hockey team/ a prime example of / is / what a strong junior varsity program can do for the varsity program /.
- (4) \*/ five separate j.v. hockey teams / the women's field hockey program / three of which / consists of / compete against other school/.
- (5) \*/ as the fourth best team in the nation / because of this program / the varsity finished /.
- (6) Over and beyond the high ranking, over one hundred girls at the school participate in this single sport.
- (7) Every sport should be the same.

Noguchi writes that students will probably come up with a version like this:

- (1) At our school, the football team is one of the few teams to have a well-organized junior varsity program.
- (2) The school knows it must have a strong j.v. team to field a strong, experienced varsity.
- (3) A prime example of what a strong junior varsity program can do for the

*varsity program is the women's field hockey team.*

- (4) *The women's field hockey program consists of five separate j.v. hockey teams, three of which compete against other schools.*
- (5) *Because of this program, the varsity finished as the fourth best team in the nation.*
- (6) *Over and beyond the high ranking, over one hundred girls at the school participate in this single sport.*
- (7) *Every sport should be the same.*

(Noguchi, 1991, p. 104)

Students who know enough about given and new information to produce such a version have taken a significant step toward understanding formal coherence.

#### ***Choosing an Effective Path of Information Through a Paragraph***

In the following exercise students select the sentence in each pair that moves from given to new information in the context established by the first sentence and the subsequently chosen sentences:

*Climatologists have predicted that the continual warming of the earth's surface, known as the "greenhouse effect," could have dramatic consequences.*

*1a. The melting of the polar ice caps could be one result.*

*1b. One result could be the melting of the polar ice caps.*

*2a. This melting would, in turn, cause a rise of the sea level.*

*2b. A rise of the sea level would, in turn, be caused by this melting.*

*3a. Coastal flooding would occur as the sea level rises.*

*3b. As the sea level rises, coastal flooding would occur.*

*4a. Such disastrous effects might be lessened to some degree by cloud reactions.*

*4b. Cloud reactions might lessen to some degree such disastrous effects*

(Jan Frodesen, 1991)

I have also found this exercise useful for ESL writers even at early stages of development.

#### *Revising Paragraphs for Effective Information Flow*

The students are asked to find and revise sentences in a paragraph that do not flow from given to new information:

*Research Writing is probably the most valuable course for college students. The assignments for this course are three short expository essays and two long research papers. Thus the course requires a great deal of students' time, often too much in their view. But future success in college is almost synonymous with passing Research Writing. Some of the benefits of the course are gaining greater familiarity with the library and developing organizational skills, analytic ability, and smooth writing style. Some of its disadvantages are cramped fingers, bloodshot eyes, and irritability before deadlines. Only first-year students may take Research Writing.*

The first sentence that should be revised is the fourth one, which should appear thus: *But passing Research Writing is almost synonymous with future success in college.* The last sentence should also be revised, as follows: *Research Writing may be taken only by first-year students.*

A natural extension of this exercise is to have the students, as individuals or in groups, compose such paragraphs themselves for others to revise.

#### *Examining the Early Portions of Sentences in a Text*

When students are revising their texts, a useful exercise is to have them list either the complete grammatical subjects or the first six or seven words from the sentences in their texts. If the students have not expressed given information early in their sentences, they will likely find that the people or things referred to in their lists do not make up a very coherent set of focal points. Here is a paragraph from one of my students; with all the complete grammatical subjects italicized:

*Light rock-and-roll can be as comforting to a college student as classical music can be to a professor. Most radio stations play light rock-and-roll. Themes about*

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*sex, alcohol, and violence* come up in the lyrics of light rock-and-roll. But *country music* deals with sex, alcohol, and violence too.

The subjects in this paragraph are not radically unrelated, but they fall short enough of constituting an obviously coherent set that my student was led to see that he had missed some chances to express given information in a sentence subject. His revised paragraph had a much more coherent set of sentence subjects, a significant step toward achieving formal coherence:

*Light rock-and-roll* can be as comforting to a college student as classical music can be to a professor. *Light rock-and-roll* is played on most radio stations. *The lyrics of light rock-and-roll* bring up themes about sex, alcohol, and violence. But *these themes* come up in country music too.

### ***Analyzing and Writing About Others' Prose***

Teachers can move beyond discussions of prose with their students by asking them to read others' prose and to analyze in writing to what extent those writers facilitate readers' application of the given-new strategy of comprehension to that prose. Once my students learn to examine whether sentences in a text convey both given and new information and where this information appears, they make insightful judgments about that text.

For instance, one student recently noted that the given information in the essay he analyzed almost always achieves that status on the basis of explicit connections to references included earlier in the essay. Another student noticed how a certain writer often begins a paragraph with a reference to material that appears at the end of the preceding paragraph. Still another complained that the author of a book on German poetry seems to assume more knowledge of German culture on the part of readers than my student felt many actual readers would have. Finally, another student wrote that in some of Kant's writing a progression of given and new information is present but that it can easily get lost among qualifying information expressed in rather unwieldy sentence structures. Comments like these show how perceptive students can be about the structure of texts and about the possible interactions among writers, readers, and texts.

### Further work

As students become increasingly skilled and comfortable with exercises and analyses such as those presented above, teachers can invite them to explore matters related to given and new information further. For instance, teachers and students could follow Prince's (1992) lead and explore more precise definitions of given and new information or of degrees of given and new information than those I have used here. Such definitions promise to add important nuances to the exercises and analyses described here suggest new studies: studies of kinds of information in multi-clausal sentences, of patterns of development of information within texts, of processes of development among writers, of different ways of reading, of different kinds of genres, and of ways to characterize prose styles.

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### Notes:

1. Not all FSP linguists, however, agree on the number of parts into which a sentence should be analyzed, how the parts are to be distinguished from one another, what the parts should be called, and what functions they have.
2. One can say with some justification that there are three dominant formulations of FSP, one of which provides the foundation for this chapter (see Vande Kopple, 1986, for a description of the other two formulations).
3. Several examples of such exercises appear in my *Clear and Coherent Prose* (1989).
4. Occasionally writers may be able to justify expressing new before given information (as is the case with the second kind of *it*-cleft), particularly if they judge that their readers, because of contextual constraints, simply cannot wait within a sentence to learn the new information.