

TGIF: The NTU Linguist Chatroom

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**Friday, 19 February 2016, 2.30pm
@ HSS Seminar room 3 (HSS-B1-10)**



A Typology of Focus Devices and Focus Devices in the History of Chinese Grammar

The nature and types of 'focus' in semantics, pragmatics and grammar are a complicated issue (see Gundel 1999 for a discussion of the many complications involved). I propose to make the complicated issue simple by first distinguishing two types of focus-related phenomena in grammar: 'focus devices' which are deployed merely to emphasize a grammatical constituent and 'focus-sensitive constructions' which contain a constituent that is sensitive to focus but whose primary function is not emphasizing. We can simplify the issue by concentrating on focus devices while leaving focus sensitive constructions aside.

This talk, following Culicover and Rochemont (1983, 1990) and Horvath (1986) among others, assumes that the essentially semantic/pragmatic conception of 'Focus' can be characterized as a syntactic feature [+FOCUS] or [+F], which can be associated with or assigned to any constituent in a sentence. Feature [+F], once assigned to a constituent, may trigger different syntactic operations in different languages. Cross-linguistically, there are two types of Focus Devices, one is to insert a Focus Marker before a focused constituent (Focus-Marking) as is attested in Malay, and another is to move the focused element to a comparatively more prominent position (Focus-Fronting) as observed in Hungarian.

Speaker



Xu Jie received his BA in Chinese Language and Literature from Henan University, China in 1981, MA in Chinese Linguistics from the Central China Normal University in 1984, MA in Asian Linguistics from the University of Hawaii in 1988, and PhD in General Linguistics from the University of Maryland at College Park in 1993. He taught Chinese language and Linguistics at the National University of Singapore, Henan University, and Central China Normal University from 1993 to 2008 before joining the University of Macau where he is Professor of Chinese Linguistics and Associate Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Humanities.

He is currently affiliated with the Division of Chinese, HSS, NTU as a Visiting Professor. Xu Jie has published five books, and has authored over 50 articles and book chapters mainly on syntactic theory, Chinese grammar, language education, and language planning. He is an associate editor of the journal 《汉语学报》 (*Chinese Linguistics*).



The TGIF seminar series is organised by
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