

ON THE GRAMMATICAL STATUS OF 'COLON STRUCTURES'

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The present paper is an attempt to examine the grammatical status of the kind of structure that is typically punctuated with a colon. Contrary to the traditional interpretation of this pattern, which relies heavily on the nebulous notion of apposition, it is argued here that *colon structures* are best seen as discursual processes. This means not only that apposition should be ruled out as a possible analysis, but also that the relationship of dependency (or indeed any other sentential relationship) is inadequate for dealing with this kind of structure. The basis for the textual interpretation is that the cohesion that characterises the units that make up colon structures cannot be adequately expressed from within the sentence at all.*

1. Introduction

It has generally been assumed that constructions such as the ones in italics below are appositions (Pombar 1981, 62; Quirk et al. 1985, 1623; Meyer 1987, 8, 11, 14; and Meyer 1992):

- (1) Consider *the features of utopian communism: generous public provision for the infirm; democratic and secret elections of all officers including priests; meals taken publicly in common refectories; a common habit or uniform prescribed for all citizens; even houses changed once a decade . . .*

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- (2) *The following possibilities exist for achieving this [improving the efficiency of plasma generators]: 1. The use of high voltages and low currents by proper design to reduce electron heat transfer to the anode for a given power output. 2. Continuous motion of the arc contact area at the anode by flow or magnetic forces. 3. Feed back of the energy transferred to the anode by applying gas transpiration through the anode.*
- (3) *Waterlogging leads to three kinds of changes in the soil: physical, biological and chemical.*

We should remark that all three examples above contain colons between the two presumed appositive units in each case. Sometimes other punctuation marks are also used, but colons are nevertheless by far the most common form of punctuation between the units of this kind of structure. Let us adopt the convention that the italicised unit before the colon is A and that the italicised unit after the colon is B. And let us further call the whole structure (both A and B and all the rest) the *colon structure*. In what follows we will first examine what it is that has prompted an appositive analysis for these structures. This will be done in section 2 below. In section 3 we will argue that colon structures are best seen as textual units and that, accordingly, phrase-structure notions such as apposition and dependency are inappropriate for expressing their peculiarities.

2. The Appositive Hypothesis

The appositive interpretation of colon structures has rested on the fact that A somehow *corefers* with B; or, more precisely, that A *is* B (Quirk et al. 1985, 1620). Thus, in (1), the features of utopian communism ARE generous public provision for the infirm, democratic and secret elections of all officers including priests, and so on; in (2), the possibilities mentioned ARE points 1, 2 and 3; and in (3), the changes that waterlogging leads to ARE physical, biological and chemical. We should remember that this underlying copulative relationship that is posited for cases such as (1)-(3) also often plays a part in the presumed appositive character of noun complements such as the *that*-clause in, for instance, *the fact that you came (the fact IS that you came)*. This copulative relationship is invoked because it is a salient feature of paradigmatic instances of apposition, such as *Mr Smith, the plumber*.

Thus, when a speaker of English says *Mr Smith, the plumber, was asking for you*, for instance, it is clear that the construction presupposes that Mr Smith *is* the plumber.¹ However, there is no one-to-one correspondence between our copulative reading of a given string and the syntactic structure of that string. In other words, positing an underlying copula may help us understand the meaning of these sequences, but it cannot help us establish their constituent structure. In actual fact, as soon as standard tests of phrase-structure are applied in order to structurally ascertain the syntactic constituency of colon structures, the resemblances with paradigmatic appositions disappear. Thus, notice that the units held to be appositives can generally neither stand alone, nor switch places without affecting either the acceptability of the whole string or its meaning:²

- (1b) ?Consider the features of utopian communism.³
- (1c) ?/*Consider generous public provision for the infirm; democratic and secret elections of all officers including priests; meals taken publicly in refectories; a common habit or uniform prescribed for all citizens; even houses changed once a decade . . .
- (1d) ?/*Consider *generous public provision for the infirm; democratic and secret elections of all officers including priests; meals taken publicly in refectories; a common habit or uniform prescribed for all citizens; even houses changed once a decade: the features of utopian communism.*
- (2b) ?The following possibilities exist for achieving this.
- (2c1) *Exist for achieving this: 1. The use of high voltages and low currents by proper design to reduce electron heat transfer to the anode for a given power output. 2. Continuous motion of the arc

¹ However, the equative relation appears to be more readily available in the case of canonical appositions, such as *Mr Smith, the plumber*. This is probably due to the fact that the identificational meaning provided by the underlying copula is more easily perceptible in the case of units referring to people and places. These are usually the referents involved in canonical appositions.

² On the use of the tests of omission and interchangeability for detecting appositions, see Hockett (1955, 99 ff.), Sopher (1971), Burton Roberts (1975, 391 ff.) and Fuentes Rodríguez (1989), to name but a few.

³ On the question mark for cases such as (1b) and (2b), see pages 11-12 below.

contact area at the anode by flow or magnetic forces. 3. Feed back of the energy transferred to the anode by applying gas transpiration through the anode.

- (2c2) *1. The use of high voltages and low currents by proper design to reduce electron heat transfer to the anode for a given power output. 2. Continuous motion of the arc contact area at the anode by flow or magnetic forces. 3. Feed back of the energy transferred to the anode by applying gas transpiration through the anode exist for achieving this.⁴

- (2d) *1. *The use of high voltages and low currents by proper design to reduce electron heat transfer to the anode for a given power output. 2. Continuous motion of the arc contact area at the anode by flow or magnetic forces. 3. Feed back of the energy transferred to the anode by applying gas transpiration through the anode exist for achieving this: the following possibilities.*

- (3b) ?Waterlogging leads to three kinds of changes in the soil.

- (3c) *Waterlogging leads to physical, biological and chemical.

- (3d) *Waterlogging leads to *physical, biological and chemical: three kinds of changes in the soil.*

The first important generalization to make is that, normally, B cannot occupy the place of A simply because it is usually much too “large” to appropriately fill the vacated A position. Notionally, it could be said that A and B are somehow equivalent since, after all, in the context in question, A *is* B. But, syntactically, the specific structural mould is intended to provide accommodation for A only, and not for B. This is most evident from (2c1) and (2c2) above.⁵ Typically, colon structures are made up of an A position that is occupied by a NP belonging with the sentence structure before the colon, and a B position that elaborates on the meaning of that NP in an

⁴ The result of the omission test in (2) is literally (2c1). We offer (2c2) to prove that not even an abstract recovery of the exact A position by B improves the results of the test.

⁵ The fact that (1c) might be regarded as more acceptable than (2c1) and (2c2) should not cause confusion. Omission in (1) has the effect of replacing a NP in final object position by a series of nominal elements also in final object position. But this is just coincidental. As the contrast with (2) clearly shows, as soon as A and B are separated by further intervening constituents, the replacing operation cannot be easily carried out. Notice in this connection

“enlarged format”, after the colon. Taking into account this dissimilarity in the occurrence potential of the units, it is not clear how an appositive relationship can be posited, for, in fact, there is nothing in the pattern that suggests that the members are syntactically equivalent.⁶ If ordinary syntactic relations must be posited (and we will contend here that they must not), the fact that B does not share “equal privileges of occurrence” (Hockett 1955, 100) as A argues *against* the appositive analysis and *for* a dependency interpretation.

But, in order to arrive at a better knowledge of this pattern, let us forget for a moment the previous considerations and toy with the idea of ordinary syntactic relations, including apposition. A close examination of the results of both the omission test and the interchangeability test yields a number of further interesting observations. In the first place, granting that there are different degrees of deviance, (3c-d) are utterly deviant. This fact might have been easily anticipated by merely noticing that unit B is made up of three adjectives with no capacity for standing alone. It might be objected that (3) is after all not eligible for an appositive analysis, but simply a structure made up of a head noun (*changes*) and a series of displaced adjectival modifiers (*physical*, *biological* and *chemical*). This view would therefore entail that (3) is structurally different from (1) and (2), which would be appositions (we are momentarily ignoring the results of the tests). However, such an analysis would not account for the fact that, by merely changing the form (i.e. the category) of B while still retaining the same type of relationship between A and B (the same ‘relational structure’⁷ [Quirk et al. 1985, 1433]), the tests would yield better results. The different versions of (4) below illustrate this last point:

that, keeping the same syntactic pattern, we could rewrite (1) as follows: *Consider the features of utopian communism: In the first place, the state guarantees a generous public provision for the infirm. Secondly, officers are democratically and secretly elected, including priests. Thirdly . . .* In this case, however, it is clear that the series of clauses making up B cannot fit into the NP position of A. As we will presently argue, the basic obstacle to the syntactic equivalence of the units is that the B position is virtually unconstrained as regards the forms that can occupy it, whereas the A position is much more category-dependent.

⁶ The syntactic equivalence of the members, as evidenced by omission and interchangeability, has traditionally been taken as the main characteristic feature of apposition. See Hockett (1955), Sopher (1971), Burton-Roberts (1975), Quirk et al. (1985, 1300 ff.), Fuentes Rodríguez (1989) and Meyer (1989 and 1992), among others.

⁷ Further reference will be made at a later stage.

- (4) Waterlogging leads to *three kinds of changes in the soil: one (change) which is physical, another which is biological, and still another (one), which is chemical.*
- (4b) Waterlogging leads to three kinds of changes in the soil.
- (4c) Waterlogging leads to one change which is physical, another which is biological, and still another, which is chemical.
- (4d) Waterlogging leads to *one change which is physical, another which is biological, and still another, which is chemical: three kinds of changes in the soil.*

It could be claimed that (3) is also different from (4) and that the latter, but not the former, belongs with the group of (1)-(2), the three of them being appositions. However, making a distinction between (3) and (4) in terms of constituent structure would appear to be highly counterintuitive. The fact is that the three kinds of changes in the soil mentioned are, roughly speaking, *whatever* comes after the colon in *whatever* the categorial form. It appears that the well-formedness of colon structures does not depend on whether the string *after* the colon fully satisfies the formal requirements of the sentence of which A is a constituent *before* the colon. Indeed, the main characteristic of this syntactic mould is that we can attach virtually any kind of category to the B position of the structure: from a series of adjectives with typically low syntactic independence, to a series of fully independent sentences. In all cases—and this is crucial—we perceive that the relationship between A and B continues to be the same:

- (3) Waterlogging leads to *three kinds of changes in the soil: physical, biological and chemical.*
- (4) Waterlogging leads to *three kinds of changes in the soil: one (change) which is physical, another which is biological, and still another one, which is chemical.*
- (5) Waterlogging leads to *three kinds of changes in the soil: 1. The first change is brought about by the action of water upon the solid residues of the surface. 2. A subsequent change comes when the altered residues move to the bottom of the soil as a result of their newly-acquired weight. 3. The third change is caused by the chemical reaction that originates in that place . . .*

Notice also (6) below:

- (6) It was then that Picasso and Braque were confronted with a unique dilemma: *they had to choose between illustration and representation.*

Perhaps the best description of colon structures is that A must be subject to the well-formedness conditions of sentence structure (it must be a constituent of its own sentence and therefore have a function in it), while B, though referring back to A, can itself be of any form. B is therefore not subject to the sentential requirements that condition the appearance of A. This is most evident from cases like (6) above. In these there is no way for B (a whole sentence) to enter the functional slot filled by A (a NP inside a PP), simply because the immediate domain containing A (a PP) is extraneous to a sentence (prepositions cannot govern sentences: **they were confronted with (that) they had to choose*).

This takes us to the other results cast by the omission and the interchangeability tests. Notice in the first place that, when meaning is taken into account, all the cases in which we omit B appear to be grammatically correct but nevertheless *peculiar* —as is the case with (1b), *Consider the features of utopian communism*— or even deviant ([2b], *The following possibilities exist for achieving this*), by comparison with the full versions. Consider (1b) first. It has an (implicit) subject, a verb, and a direct object. Its sentential frame thus appears to be fully equipped for the expression of the intended meaning. However, (1b) cannot alone mean anything even remotely close to (1): the reason is that the main part of the message is in fact missing. The only way for (1b) to mean anything approximately similar to (1) would be to interpret the definite article in “the features of utopian communism” as anaphorically referring to a previously-specified universe of discourse. But notice, crucially, that this is not the kind of article we have in (1). In (1), “the” refers cataphorically (i.e. forward) to what comes after “features of utopian communism”. It does so, specifically, because the structure is framed so as to contain those particular “features” right after they have been mentioned. As a matter of fact, not even the (forced) anaphoric interpretation of the article in (1b) can provide the decoder with the particular kind of information he obtains from (1). If we decode “the” in (1b) to mean “the features of utopian communism that everybody in our culture knows of”, we are simply doing away with the potential that the encoder has for selecting a

specific number and type of features of utopian communism out of the whole number of them. Some people may fail to know which those features are, and therefore the meaning of A and B cannot be said to be the same. This point can be made clearer if instead of utopian communism we were talking about something less culture-dependent. Witness (7) below:

- (7) Consider *the features of the problem: lack of appetite after extraordinarily demanding physical activities; sleeplessness and amnesia at irregular intervals; stomach complaints originating from all kinds of food . . .*
- (7b) Consider the features of the problem.

Note that the structure of (7) is the same as that of (1). However, this time the meaning of “problem” is so vague that it precludes any attempt on our part to guess what kind of problem is specifically referred to in (7) (unlike in (1), where we could possibly guess the features of utopian communism even before they were mentioned). Unless “the problem” has been mentioned before in the discourse, we could not make sense of a sentence such as (7b) in isolation. In this respect, leaving out all that appears after the colon in (7) above (that is, the explanation of what “the features of the problem” actually are) would severely damage a potential decoder’s understanding of the construction. Indeed, in a fundamental respect, it would *destroy* the construction altogether. Imagine further that instead of “the problem” we had “the following problem”. *Following* being nothing more than a modifier of “problem”, it cannot be said to affect the structure of the whole, but if we say *consider the following problem*, we cannot even resort to a possible previous mention in the discourse of what the problem in question might actually be. We are explicitly informed that “the problem” is going to be revealed to us now. This takes us back to (2b) above, *The following possibilities exist for achieving this*.

It is questionable whether instances such as this one are fully grammatical. But, even if they are, it is clear that the spontaneous use of language by real speakers would never produce such strings in isolation. The fact is that, in order to account for the specific *MEANING RELATION* (see below) conveyed by colon structures, A and B must appear together. The two parts are necessary in a way in which ordinary modifiers and ordinary canonical appositions are not. Note, from the tests above, that dropping either of the units does not leave us with the kind of minor information void that we obtain from paradigmatic instances of apposition (e.g. *Peter, Jane’s brother*,

dropped in today; Peter dropped in today; Jane's brother dropped in today). Rather, if we omit any of the two terms in (2), we are left with substantial syntactic and/or communicative flaws in the organization of the message, as the tests demonstrate. We must therefore explain A and B as making up a superordinate unit C, which is the whole colon structure and not just the italicised parts. This means that, in this broader context, the question of whether the constituent before the colon is grammatical or not simply does not arise. By the same token, the question of whether the whole of B fits in the vacated place of A (something which is evidenced by omission) does not arise either. Normally, as we have pointed out, B cannot occupy A's position because the former can take virtually any form and any length while the latter is usually "squeezed" into a NP shape only. The really important observation that must be made here, however, is that all these phrase structure considerations are totally irrelevant. The point is that the type of *cohesion* that the unit as a whole exhibits is a clear symptom of its supra-sentential character; in other words, it is a symptom of its inherently *textual* nature.

3. The Textual Hypothesis

The fact that it makes very little sense to describe colon structures as having either one or two heads (dependency and apposition respectively), suggests that a textual analysis of these strings ought to be considered. More importantly, the fact that we entirely miss the global *MEANING RELATION* vehiculed by colon structures if we intend to account for them in phrase structure terms forces us to take the textual hypothesis very seriously. The linguistic relation that so-called appositions presumably convey is one in which two units are identical in both semantic and syntactic terms and are therefore mutually substitutable. This is not what we have found in the tests. The linguistic relation vehiculed by dependency is another one in which one element is fully self-sufficient while all other elements in the structure are both notionally and syntactically dependent on it. Again, this, though arguably a better approximation to the facts, is not what we have found from a close examination of the tests. What we *have* found in the tests, and, most importantly, what emanates from our comprehension of colon structures, is that, in order to achieve the *specific meaning relation* that we obtain from these structures, both what comes before the colon and what comes after the colon must be seen as closely *interrelated*. This close *interrelation* of the compo-

ment parts of the meaning relation expressed is, we claim, fully in accordance with Quirk et al.'s insightful description of the 'basic relational structures' that characterise the formation of texts. Consider the relevance of their words for the very specific type of construction we are analysing here:

Basic relational structures

A text may have one (or more) of an indefinitely large number of purposes: description, persuasion, narrative, etc. Some of these correlate closely with *particular connective devices and presentational styles*, . . . But irrespective of the various purposes and general intentions of a text, *there are a few relationships within texts that constantly recur, which involve particular connective devices*, and which are therefore useful to bear in mind as we consider the devices themselves. *They can be seen as basic relational structures*. (Quirk et al. 1985, 1433. Emphasis added)

The notion of textual *relational structure* relies heavily on the specificity of the *communicative goal* and on the corresponding specificity of the *presentational style*.⁸ These two aspects characterise colon structures. Thus, it should be noted that the basic relational meaning of colon structures can be consistently expressed in the form of a very specific formula: *here is A, and A equals all that follows, B*. This kind of semantic and communicative specificity—which is not dependent on such structural entities as parts of speech—is absent from ordinary syntactic relationships, such as coordination, subordination and apposition. Syntactic relations are inherently *formal* relations, valid as underlying *abstract* representations of the linguistic reality, but they do not consistently express specific meanings. Rather, they serve as the framework that supports a whole range of different concrete meanings. Notice, for instance, that the syntactic relation underlying the structures of (8)-(10) below is the same (dependency), whereas the meaning relationship that is expressed varies in each case:

⁸ See Halliday and Hasan (1976, 10) on the notion of *discourse structure* as opposed to *sentential structure*. In a less specific way than Quirk et al., Halliday and Hasan also point out the possibility of describing certain discourse structures in relation to particular genres and registers. The important point, however, is their insistence that discourse structures cannot be seen as "generalized structural relationships into which sentences enter as the realization of functions in some higher unit, as can be done for all units below the sentence". Discourse structures must be seen as semantic entities in which the grammatical notion of sentence does not necessarily play a part. See G. Rojo (1978, 11 ff.).

- (8) The man *in the corner*. (location)
- (9) The man hit *the table*. (patient)
- (10) The man did it *because he was terrified*. (reason)

This confirms that *abstract* grammatical relations are not the best means to account for *specific*, supra-sentential meaning relations such as the one upon which colon structures are based. This conclusion is further borne out by a number of considerations:

In the first place, the *closed*, or *finished*, character of colon structures cannot be very well explained from a phrase structure perspective. Notice that if we attempt this, we would have to explain B as either belonging inside A (as modifier of it) or inside a superordinate appositive structure comprising both A and B. If this were the case, we would have an ordinary phrasal constituent filling a functional slot inside an ordinary sentence. However, this view would not account for the fundamental fact that we cannot add any more constituents to the sentence, that is to say, the fact that the construction is processed as *complete*.⁹ Note in this connection the straightforwardly deviant character of the following (a) examples as opposed to the merely cumbersome appearance of their unquestionably sentential (b) counterparts:

- (11a) *Consider *the features of utopian communism: generous public provision for the infirm; democratic and secret elections of all officers including priests; meals taken publicly in common refectories* when you go and speak to the officer.
- (11b) (?) Consider the features of utopian communism that the lecturer at the Trade Convention Center was referring to as we entered the place the week of the International Conference on Human Rights when you go and speak to the officer.
- (12a) *The following possibilities are open for improving the efficiency of plasma generators: 1. *The use of high voltages and low currents.* 2. *Continuous motion of the arc contact area at the anode.*

⁹ Note that we do not mean the NP, but the sentence. NPs may be *saturated* when their referential potential is perceived as finished (e.g. **the poet of the decade Sánchez*). When this happens, non-restrictive modification appears as the only way of further affecting the head (*the poet of the decade, Sánchez*). But the fact that a NP frame has been saturated does not mean that the clause in which that NP appears must also be saturated. If colon structures are analysed within NPs (saturated or not), there should be no reason why the rest of the sentence cannot accept further expansions. Yet, this is what happens in colon structures.

3. *Feed back of the energy transferred to the anode*, if our recommendations are followed.

- (12b) (?) A number of possibilities are open for improving the efficiency of plasma generators in the arc contact area that is adjacent to the muscular region affected by the spread of the disease, if our recommendations are followed.

No doubt the series of recursively-stacked modifiers of the (b) versions above turn these constructions into rather heavy packages of information which are difficult to process. But there is a clearcut difference between the “infelicitous” style of these examples and the downright unacceptable status of the (a) versions. This is simply a result of the fact that the (b) examples, though tortuously convoluted, maintain their phrasal constituency still perceptible through the proliferation of modifiers.¹⁰ On the other hand, the structure of the (a) examples does not rest on *phrasal signposts* (phrasal nodes in the abstract representation) to be adequately interpreted. Rather, it rests on semantically-based cohesive relations between the units that make it up. This takes us to our next observation.

Another obstacle to the phrase structure approach to colon structures is that there is more involved in the expression of the relational meaning that they convey than just units A and B. Specifically, other elements of the sentence of which A is a constituent may also play a part in the expression of that relational meaning. In (1), for instance, both the lexical meaning of the verb *consider* and the particular clause type of the sentence before the colon, which is imperative, contribute to the formation of the cataphoric type of *clause reference* (Quirk et al. 1985, 1461 ff.) that characterises colon structures. That is, these two aspects instruct the reader to continue reading, after the colon. Thus, it is chiefly the combination of *lexical signposts* (as opposed to structural ones) that provides the decoder with the key to the adequate understanding of the construction. The key is always that, in order to interpret what comes before the colon, *one must proceed to* what is after the colon. Using Halliday and Hasan’s words, the global cohesion of the text is achieved because

¹⁰ Grammaticality in the processing of sentences rests on the appropriate identification of phrasal constituents. This is evident from examples illustrating structural ambiguity, such as *I used the book in the corner*. Here, the PP *in the corner* may be taken as belonging with either the NP or with the VP directly. The importance of choosing the right phrasal constituent is obvious from the fact that the choice has a clear impact on the meaning of the whole sentence.

the INTERPRETATION of some element in the discourse is dependent on that of another. The one PRESUPPOSES the other, in the sense that it cannot be effectively decoded except by recourse to it. When this happens, a relation of cohesion is set up, and the two elements, the presupposing and the presupposed, are thereby at least potentially integrated into a text. (Halliday and Hasan 1976, 4. Emphasis in original)

In the example we are analysing, (1), the interpretation of B depends on our understanding the invitation to continue reading which is expressed by the imperative form of the verb *consider*, and of course on the cataphoric function of the determiner of the object NP (*THE features of utopian communism*). When we reach the end of B we know that it satisfies the expectation raised before the colon and we thus establish the cohesive *ties* (Halliday and Hasan 1976, 3 ff.): i.e. we know that the features of utopian communism we are invited to consider are *generous public provision for the infirm, democratic and secret elections*, and so on. The textual instruction to continue to read might have equally surfaced as any other clause constituent apart from the verb. A disjunct such as *in what follows*, for instance, could have added further specificity to the meaning of the construction (e.g. *In what follows, consider the features of utopian communism*). Therefore, it is not only the NP, A, that is involved in the creation of the particular meaning relation of the text: it is rather the broader notion of textual cohesion that accounts for that meaning.

A third indication that colon structures are best seen as supra-sentential constructions comes from the particular punctuation mark that is mainly associated with them and that characterises their presentational style: the colon. Unlike other marks of punctuation, colons tend to consistently express the same kind of meaning structure. More precisely, they tend to express the cataphora. This fact turns them into rather reliable visual aids in the identification of the appropriate meaning relation in written English.¹¹

¹¹ Brown and Yule (1983, 194) consider colons (and semi-colons) "special punctuation marks" which "indicate a relationship between what has been said and what is about to be said, just as verbal markers of conjunctive relations do". Quirk et al. (1985, 1620 ff.) characterise their role in speech in the following way: "what follows . . . is an explication of what precedes it or a fulfilment of the expectation raised (even if raised only by its own use. . . . The most central use of the colon is to imply «as follows» or «namely»". These authors associate them both with the expression of appositive meanings and with the copulative relationship between the units that they connect.

It could be said that their role is not just the *separation* of the units of the discourse; it is also the *specification* of a semantic function, or of a relational meaning (Quirk et al. 1985, 1610 ff.; Brown and Yule 1983, 94 ff.). This view is supported by Halliday and Hasan's comments as regards their function in speech, and, above all, by their explicit rejection of the sentence domain for the structures that colons tend to connect:

The presupposed element may, and sometimes does, consist of more than one sentence. Where it does not, the cataphoric reference is often signalled in writing with a colon: but *although this has the effect of uniting the two parts into a single orthographic sentence, it does not imply any kind of structural relation between them. The colon is used solely to signal the cataphora, this being one of its principled functions.* (1976, 17) (emphasis added)

As Halliday and Hasan point out, colons are not always necessarily used when the presupposed element consists of more than one sentence. When this is the case, it is normally periods that are used to connect the parts. This latter fact further suggests that the sentence domain offers a rather narrow frame for the analysis of these strings. In the writer's mind at least, A and B do not appear to constitute such a tightly-knit structural unit as a sentence; instead, they are seen as simply the parts of a cohesively-formed textual (and therefore semantic) unit. The following instance, extracted from Brown and Yule's own account of discourse analysis, illustrates this point.

- (13) A problem arises from Halliday's commitment to the clause as the principle unit of syntactic organisation. In spite of his assertion that 'in the unmarked case (in informal conversation) the information will be mapped on to the clause', in his own extended transcription of conversation, the *phrase* seems a much more likely candidate. . . . (1983, 159)

Note that in (13) above, it is clear, despite the length of both parts, that the problem that arises from Halliday's commitment to the clause is the whole concessive sequence occurring after the period. It is clear, therefore, that the basic relational structure continues to be the same as in the examples we have been considering up to this point. It is so despite the change in punctuation mark, and despite the freedom that this syntactic mould allows one to have in the selection of the category and form of the B constituent.

Yet the punctuation form used suggests, more than colons do, that the relationship between what is before and what is after the colon (their period in this case) is too loose to underlie the formation of a sentence. That is, it suggests that it is not structural but cohesive.

4. Conclusion

As a matter of fact, (13) is a good example for us to recapitulate all that has been said so far about the convenience of resorting to a textual analysis for colon structures, and about the inappropriateness of the appositive interpretation (and, more generally, of the sentential interpretation). In the first place, apposition must be rejected since the long complex concessive sentence in B position cannot take the place of the NP *a problem*, nor can the two be interchanged.¹² There is therefore nothing in the construction that allows one to posit anything like the syntactic equivalence of the members. Secondly, the *closed* or *complete* character of the construction (its unity as a text) is evident from the difficulty one has in adding further phrasal constituents to the sentence node.¹³ Thirdly, notice that the cataphora is expressed not only through A (the NP *a problem*), but also through other constituents of the sentence containing A. Particularly, (13) does not refer simply to *A problem*, but to one whose characteristics are expressed outside that NP (the problem in particular is Halliday's commitment to the clause as the principle unit of syntactic organisation). Thus, in order to establish the appropriate cohesive ties, B must look back to both the NP *a problem* and the PP *from Halliday's commitment* . . . It is therefore not possible to account for the meaning relation expressed only from within a NP domain. Fourthly, the punctuation chosen suggests that the writer conceptualises the relationship between the parts as one falling outside the domain of the sentence. The construction is perceived as a single *textual unit*, but the

¹² At this stage of the discussion, we invite the reader to check the tests for herself/himself.

¹³ Although we will not pursue this issue any further here, it appears intuitively clear that adding more constituents to (13) would result in the kind of unacceptability which we have seen in (11a) and (12a) above, and not in the mere awkwardness of (11b) and (12b). As we have already pointed out, if the whole string appearing after the period in (13) were a constituent of the NP *a problem*, the sentence node should be free to accept all kinds of adjuncts, for instance. The fact that it does not indicates that the sentence containing A is *finished* before the period, and that unit B is linked to it in a non-sentential way (i.e. in a "textual" way).

syntactic instantiation of this communicative unit rests on cohesively-based semantic relations rather than on identification of phrase structure nodes. The period that separates the parts in (13) above does not, however, serve as a visual aid in the identification of the particular textual meaning involved as effectively as colons do in the other examples dealt with above. On the whole, it appears that the peculiarities of colon structures can be more adequately expressed in terms of discursal processes than in terms of such a tightly-knit structural concept as the sentence. The appositive hypothesis, or indeed any other sentence-oriented hypothesis, must therefore be abandoned in favour of a textual interpretation.

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