

Applying the Givenness Hierarchy Framework: Methodological Issues

Nancy Hedberg

Simon Fraser University
Burnaby, British Columbia, Canada

Abstract.

This paper will discuss methodological issues that arise in applying the Givenness Hierarchy framework (Gundel, Hedberg and Zacharski, 1993, *Language*) to describe the reference systems of different languages. The Givenness Hierarchy is a set of six ‘cognitive statuses’ that govern the use of different determiner and pronominal forms in languages. These statuses constitute different psychological attention and memory states towards a referent assumed to hold for the hearer by the speaker. The statuses are defined to stand in a unidirectional entailment relation and thus form a hierarchy, which means that a form associated with a status lower on the hierarchy can be selected to express a referent that has a higher status. Emphasis will be placed on the Coding Protocol (Gundel et al. 2006), a set of instructions for determining the cognitive status associated with a particular token referring expression in a natural text from a given language. Examples will focus on English, Japanese and Mandarin. How to decide on the cognitive status with which to associate a particular form in a given language at the level of referring expression type will also be addressed. In conclusion, some speculations will be advanced about what to expect concerning the reference systems of Austronesian languages.