

PROBLEMS OF EMPHASIS AND CONTRAST
IN ENGLISH NOMINAL CONSTRUCTIONS

The problem of emphasis and contrast in English nominal constructions are of both a syntactic and a semantic nature. Or, to be more explicit, we can say that the syntactic means of expressing nominal contrast within an English sentence vary primarily:

1. according to whether the contrasted nominals are structurally in the subject position or in an object position (that is, whether the nominals are used as subjects or as direct objects, indirect objects, objects of prepositions, or objective complements) and
2. according to whether the base sentences underlying the contrasted nominals are both semantically positive, both semantically negative, or one positive and the other negative.

Thus, the syntactic devices used to express nominal contrast are determined by the interaction of "subject-object" considerations with "positive-negative" ones. The following possibilities are not all that a native English-speaker uses, but they are common enough to be considered representative:

I. Contrast in Subject Position

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| <u>and</u> | (a) First Clause Positive . . . and so + carrier + subject ¹ |
| | (b) First Clause Negative . . . and neither + carrier + subject ² |
| <u>but</u> | (c) First Clause Positive . . . but + subject + carrier + n't. |
| | (d) First Clause Negative . . . but + subject + carrier. |

II. Contrast in Object Position

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| <u>First</u>
<u>Clause</u>
<u>Positive</u> | (a) Positive . . . and + object, <u>too</u> . ³ |
| | (b) Positive . . . but + not + object. |
| <u>First</u>
<u>Clause</u>
<u>Negative</u> | (c) Negative . . . and neither + carrier + subject + verb + object. ⁴ |
| | (d) Negative . . . but + subject + carrier + verb + object. ⁵ |

Now, let's look at these various possibilities in more detail, with examples and with some consideration of the problems involved for the non-native speaker of English.

1. Contrast in Subject Position

A. First Clause Positive . . . and so + carrier + subject .

1. Mary thought the Port Moresby War Cemetery was very beautiful, and so did Dick.
2. Tom's money was stolen last week, and so was Dick's.
3. Tom's been to the bottom of Rouna Falls many times, and so has Dick.

B. First Clause Negative . . . and neither + carrier + subject.

1. Tom doesn't have a cold, and neither does Dick.
2. Tom wasn't in Germany during the Second World War, and neither was Dick.
3. Tom's money wasn't stolen last week, and neither was Dick's

C. First Clause Positive . . . but + subject + carrier + n't.

1. Mary thought the Port Moresby War Cemetery was very beautiful, but Dick didn't.
2. Tom's been to the bottom of Rouna Falls many times, but Dick hasn't.
3. Tom's knowledge of her business affairs caused a scandal, but Dick's didn't.

D. First Clause Negative . . . but + subject + carrier.

1. Tom doesn't have a cold, but Dick does.
2. Tom's never been to the bottom of Rouna Falls, but Dick has.
3. Tom's knowledge of her business affairs didn't cause a scandal, but Dick's did.

The problems connected with the types of nominal contrast shown above fall into three main categories:

- (1) What nominals are being contrasted?
- (2) What carrier is used in the second clause, what is its tense form, and is it negated?
- (3) When does one use "and so" and "and neither"?

Failure to answer these correctly leads to such sentences as the following noted in my own classes this year:

- (1) Tom's money was stolen last week, and so was Dick.
- (2) Tom's been to the bottom of Rouna Falls many times, but Dick isn't.
- (3) Tom thought the Port Moresby War Cemetery was very beautiful, and neither did Dick.
- (4) Tom won't go to town tomorrow, and so will Dick.

In addition, students frequently fail to grasp the emphatic significance of the nominals in a sentence like "Mary liked the Port Moresby War Cemetery, and so did Dick" as opposed to "Mary and Dick liked the Port Moresby War Cemetery." It must be made clear that what is involved in such examples as this is primarily a matter of semantic emphasis.

Problems of a similar nature exist in the second major type of English nominal contrast -- that of contrast in object position.

11. Contrast in Object Position

A. First Clause Positive . . . and + object, too.

1. Mary's gloomy and cynical Weltanschauung amazed Tom and Dick, too.
2. He gave some money to Tom, and to Dick, too.⁶
3. He liked the picture of his father, and that of his mother, too.⁷

B. First Clause Positive . . . but + not + object.

1. Mary's gloomy and cynical Weltanschauung amazed Tom, but not Dick.
2. He liked the pictures of his brothers, but not those of his sisters.
3. She called him a liar, but not a thief.

C. First Clause Negative . . . and neither + carrier + subject + verb + object.

1. He didn't give the money to Tom, and neither did he give it to Dick.
2. He didn't like the picture of his mother, and neither did he like that of his father.
3. She didn't call him a liar, and neither did she call him a thief.

D. First Clause Negative . . . but + subject + carrier + verb + object.

1. Mary's gloomy and cynical Weltanschauung didn't amaze Tom, but it did amaze Dick.
2. He didn't give the money to Tom, but he did give it to Dick.
3. She didn't call him a liar, but she did call him a thief.

The major problem connected with contrast in object position is that it is frequently confused with contrast in subject position. Such sentences as the following are likely to emerge from such confusion:

- (1) Last year, she had lots of dates with Jim, and so did Dick.
- (2) Mary's gloomy and cynical Weltanschauung confused Tom, but Dick didn't.
- (3) The girl didn't dance well with Jim, but Dick did.
- (4) The girl didn't dance well with Jim, and neither did Dick.

Additional problems, as might be expected, are caused by use of the wrong carrier in the second clause, by failure to note the tense form required, by confusion about whether or not to negate the carrier, and by failure to distinguish between separately emphasized nominal objects, as in (1) "He liked the taste of gin, and that of vodka, too" or (2) "He liked the picture of his brothers, and that of his sisters, too" and unit objects, as in (1) "He liked the taste of gin and vodka" or (2) "He liked the picture of his brothers and sisters."

Because of the considerable differences involved between contrast in subject position and contrast in object position, each should be treated separately before the two types are juxtaposed.

For contrast in either position, the following suggestions might prove useful to the teachers:

- (1) Show that every sentence containing a nominal contrast is based on two underlying sentences.

For example:

- (a) "John thought the movie was very poor, and so

did Dick" is based in "John thought the movie was very poor. Dick thought the movie was very poor."

- (b) "John thought the movie was very poor, but Dick didn't" is based on "John thought the movie was very poor. Dick didn't think the movie was very poor."
- (c) "John didn't like the picture of his father, but he did like that of his mother" is based on "John didn't like the picture of his father John liked the picture of his mother."

Special care should be taken here to make clear the derivation of the second clause in the combined sentence from its underlying base sentence.

- (2) Once the relationship between the sentence containing the contrasts and its underlying bases has been established, the teacher should give additional sentences with contrasts and elicit the bases from the students. This will prove difficult for most students.
- (3) A more exacting drill can be provided if the teacher gives the base sentences and seeks to elicit the sentence with contrasts based on them. This sort of drill not only emphasizes syntax, but also semantics.
- (4) As more mechanical, but quite excellent summing-up drill, something like the following exercises can be suggested:

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Directions: Complete the following sentences by using "Dick" in the second clause.

A. Contrast in Subject Position

- 1. John thought the movie was very poor, and _____
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2. Tom hasn't received many letters from his parents since he arrived in New Guinea, and _____

3. Mary's ideas were always a bit odd, but _____

4. Even though she apologized for the incident, John never forgave her, but _____

B. Contrast in Object Position

1. John's objections to the war in Vietnam on moral grounds didn't disturb Bill, but _____

2. The vicious cyclone slammed into Bill's hometown, but _____

3. The children didn't like the picture of Bill, and _____

4. The discovery of the bodies made John feel sick, and _____
_____ 8

C. Contrast in Either Subject or Object Position (items to be contrasted are underscored);

1. Jim couldn't understand Bill's way of thinking, and _____

2. Jim had never seen the ocean before, but _____

3. The sight of the old lady dancing the twist disgusted Jim, but _____

4. The roaring winds didn't frighten Mary, but _____

5. The roaring winds frightened Mary, but _____

6. Jim simply didn't care what others thought about his actions, but _____

7. Mary couldn't stand Jim, and _____

8. Because of her long years of experience in mission work, Jim
 felt that she deserved the great honor, and _____

In conclusion, I only wish to say that the problems associated with emphasis and contrast in English nominal constructions deserve careful attention; otherwise, non-native speakers, being unsure of the syntactic patterns involved in such contrasts, may "solve" their problems by avoiding these contrasts altogether. This will leave a significant void in their use and understanding of English.

Notes

¹ Also: First Clause Positive . . . and + subject + carrier, too.

² Also: First Clause Negative . . . and + subject + carrier + n't, either.
 . . . not + carrier + subject.

³ Also: First Clause Positive . . . and also + object.

⁴ Also: First Clause Negative . . . and + subject + carrier + n't + verb + object, either.

⁵ . . . nor + carrier + subject + verb + object.

Note that in 11(a) and (b), "object" refers to an object of a preposition, an indirect object, a direct object, or an objective complement. In 11(c) and (d), "object" refers not only to these, but also to the contrasting member of a "direct object--

⁶ indirect object" pair or to that of a "direct object--objective complement" pair. In sentences A.1. and A.2. "Tom" and "Dick, are being emphasized or highlighted separately; they are not treated as a single unit.

⁷ Two separate pictures; one picture would be signalled by "the picture of his father and mother."

⁸ Note that "John feel sick" is the direct object after "made". Thus "John can be said to occur within an object construction and hence be in an "object" position.