Grounding in English and Arabic News Discourse
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Chapter 3

Syntactic Manifestations of Text-Level Grounding

3.1 Introduction

The main thrust of this chapter is to examine a number of syntactic structures as far as the expression of meanings in terms of grounding is concerned. Since the ground is more frequent in text than the figure (Givón 1990), and given the assumption that in the Modern English system it is preferred to mark the background rather than the foreground, in the sense that it could be 'more difficult to point at an explicit foreground marker' (Wårvik 1990: 572), the main question to be addressed is how background is signaled in the surface structure of news texts. We will therefore examine constituents that tend to associate with background meanings in these texts and focus on those that occur as sentence-initial markers. They are part of text syntax and are assumed to serve crucial text-level grounding-signaling functions. Other possible manifestations of grounding at a local or lexical level will not be dealt with.

Our examination of sentence-initial markers corroborates that of schemata in the previous chapter. Although the syntactic manifestations that we examine represent a general tendency and not absolute rules, the assumption is that part of syntax is pragmatically motivated, that there is a relation between syntactic form and discourse function (see e.g. Green 1982; Gundel 1985), and that one important discourse function that syntax may serve is to signal distinctions in grounding-values. Text-level grounding, then, may be syntactically encoded and sentence-initial markers are an important manifestation of it.

The communicative strategy that employs syntax to encode grounding may also employ the location of the sentence in the sequence. It may therefore be said that text-level grounding is not only syntactically but also locationally encoded. Staging operations manipulate sentence structure as well as sentence order to express grounding. Constituents in sentence-initial position play an important role in these operations. Certain sentence-initial markers are expected to be indicative of staging operations and to
signal the FG-BG distinction.

In addition, sentence-initial markers provide readers with clues as to how writers package, segment, and re-construct facts or events. This raises the question of intentionality to signal relationships at that position. The news writer may be like a narrator who, at times, may not take an 'explicit responsibility' for causal connection and 'is merely a recorder of events and not of their relationship' (Prince 1982:40). To interpret the relationships among propositions, the reader of course 'has only the final edited form of the text and is without access to the writer for further clarification' (Meyer 1985: 66). Indeed, the only access to the speaker's or writer's cognitive structuring is via the utterance or the text which is used to express that structuring (see Brown and Yule 1983). It is significant to note that the intentions of writers and the expectations of readers are issues that raise the question as to how far the FG-BG distinction might—or ought to—be signaled at sentence-initial position.

ORGANIZATION OF THE CHAPTER
The organization of this chapter will be as follows. In 3.2 we address the question of text-level features of grounding. Thus we examine the textual role of sentence structure as far as grounding-signaling is concerned. Subsequently, we discuss the importance of sentence-initial position, and present an overview of entities that appear in that position in the sample. We also distinguish between prominence in sentence and in text. In 3.3 we distinguish between two entities in initial position in terms of the two types of staging, namely sequential descending and sequential ascending. Then in section 3.4 we start to address the question of inter-sentential signaling of grounding in short news items by focussing first on entities that provide what we call weak signals of grounding. In 3.5 we explore the role of a certain class of initial markers in signaling background across sentence-boundaries, and in 3.6 we illustrate the functions that the different types of markers fulfil. Finally, in 3.7 we examine the markers that signal the background end of the continuum and their relation with other markers that may initiate subsequent sentences.
3.2 Text-Level Surface Structure Features of Grounding

3.2.1 The Textual Role of Sentence Structure in Signaling the FG-BG Structure

Communicating grounding— as part of communicating the intended meaning— depends on the way sentences and their constituents are organized in text: syntactically and locationally. Within the sentence— characterized by the orthographic boundaries of a capital letter and a period— several constituents may be available to signal how the FG-BG structure is intended to be received and interpreted. The following lead sentence of T35 gives an idea of the textual role that sentence structure may play in signaling the FG-BG distinction.

ATHENS (Reuters)— (1) a Police defused a small bomb found outside the West German Embassy in Athens b after telephone tipoffs to Greek newspapers.

In a typical news text, the lead sentence expresses foreground meaning (the main, most recent event) before background meaning (a preceding event). Though the information underlying background is less important than that about the action of the police and their success in defusing the bomb, it still has current relevance and immediate concern for readers, and hence its propositional mapping is prominently expressed in the lead sentence. In order to express meaning in that position, the writer uses the adverbial subordinator after, and nominalizes the clause after Greek newspapers had been tipped off (see Enkvist 1987a,b). This shows what may be referred to as a telescoped event or rather a neutralized event, where an action verb has been nominalized (see Comrie and Thompson 1985).

Subordination, of course, is 'a grammatical means by which to communicate different levels of thematicity' (Beekman et al. 1981: 25). It may be also employed in order to express semantic representations in terms of grounding, i.e. background meaning, relative to surrounding structures that may express other grounding-values. Cognitive constraints, for example taking readers' knowledge for granted, are a possible basis for the low degree of information importance. They may motivate expressing background meaning in subordinate structures— as distinct from asserted meaning expressed in a main clause (see Dillon 1981: 129ff). It should nevertheless be added that although subordinate or embedded clauses may
be presupposed (see Reinhart 1984), this need not necessarily be always the case (for various expressions of presupposed information, see Givón 1989: 132; see also Matthiessen and Thompson 1988). In terms of grounding, subordinate clauses such as the following one (Luraghi 1995: 365) may signal *foreground* meaning, mapping important information:

*John was skiing, when he fell and broke his leg.*

Although a postposed adverbial may express the most important piece of information in the sentence (see Levinsohn 1992), a subordinate structure in news discourse usually expresses meanings that are lower on the FG-BG continuum, as (1b) of T35 shows. But since 'the sentence not only expresses its own meaning but also the multiple links it has with the whole text and communicative context' (van Dijk and Kintsch 1983: 285), the textual role of sentence structure in signaling the FG-BG distinction is apparent primarily across sentence-boundaries. These boundaries are the locus for powerful signals of how meanings are packaged, segmented and expressed in the whole text. Sentence-boundaries, then, are important indicators of text-level features of grounding. The assumption— and expectation— is that constituents that appear in initial position, such as adverbials, have the potential for providing crucial signals of text-level grounding (see 3.6).

### 3.2.2 The Importance of Sentence-Initial Position

Since constituents in sentence-initial position are assumed to have the potential for playing a crucial role in signaling the FG-BG distinction across sentence-boundaries, it would be useful to refer briefly to a few general features or factors— from different perspectives and levels of analysis— that account for the importance of initial position. Primary among these are the following ones.

1- Initial position in the sentence is associated with syntactic as well as semantic functional categories (syntactic roles, e.g. Subject; semantic roles, e.g. Agent). It is PI placement in the order of constituents in functional grammar (see e.g. Dik 1978, 1980) and may be occupied by constituents that vary in discourse status: It is used in some languages for topic, but may in the same languages also be used for contrast (= focal) in
spoken discourse (See Mackenzie & Keizer 1991). Sentential topics, of course, may coincide with the grammatical subject (see e.g. Brown and Yule 1983).

2- Sentence-initial position is determined by the choice of what is given, old, or known information, as well as by the bipartition of the utterance into a Topic-Comment structure. The Topic, which is usually expressed first by a single lexical item namely the subject, tends to be associated with known information, and the Comment, which is usually expressed by the predicate, pertains to what is said about the Topic and is usually associated with new information. So an entity in initial position (e.g. a noun phrase) represents a choice of information as a point of departure of the message expressed in the sentence (Fries 1983). At the level of discourse topic, that entity may be occupied by important notions or participants (see van Dijk 1984). Therefore, Agents, Subjects, Sentence Topics tend to come first. They may denote a main participant contribution to the events referred to in several subsequent sentences. Apart from that, initial position or the earlier position in a string may be reserved for information that is less predictable and more important (Givón 1988). This, of course, depends on text-type and contextual constraints.

3- As part of a string, an entity in initial position contributes to the development of communication and has a low degree of communicative dynamism (CD) (see Firbas 1964). CD is one of the basic concepts of the theory of functional sentence perspective (FSP) (see Danes 1987, 1989). This theory 'deals with how the semantic and syntactic structures of the sentence function in fulfilling the communicative purpose intended for the sentence' (Firbas 1986: 40).

4- Entities in initial position may vary in the degree of relation they express with other entities referred to in textual propositions and hence contribute in varying degrees to the expression of text coherence. While an initial entity may refer to an entity referred to elsewhere— denoting sub and resumed topics (Mackenzie & Keizer 1991: 179)— it may also be among 'discontinuity markers' (see Hustinx 1996), or it may lead to the production of less coherent texts, for example by obliterating many of the relations that exist among events, states and objects.
5- Sentence-initial position may play an important role in staging and in the strategy that employs the initial slot in order to distinguish among entities in the strength of signaling grounding at that position. In this respect, we suggest that there is resemblance or parallelism between what we call strong as well as weak signals of grounding and what has been referred to as marked (= non-subject) and unmarked (= subject) themes (for this, see Fries 1995). Fries (1995: 62-63) explains:

'Circumstances are very likely to be expressed either as subordinate clauses (of purpose, time, cause, etc.), or as Adverbials. In either case (whether expressed by subordinate clauses or Adverbials), when they occur initially, they are marked Themes. On the other hand, when one moves to elaboration, one usually finds that some item is introduced in an earlier clause, and that, in the elaboration, this item becomes the Subject of some following clause. When Subjects are Themes of statements, they are unmarked Themes.'

Weak signals of grounding at initial position include entities that are labelled as (unsignaled) theme (see e.g. Halliday 1967). As will become apparent, marked themes coincide with constituents that we refer to as strong signals of the FG-BG articulation in text (see Table 1 below). They serve as sentence-initial markers and signal grounding across sentence-boundaries, that is, relative to other grounding-values expressed elsewhere in the text.

It may therefore be said that sentence-initial position may be occupied by markers that demonstrate the textual role of sentence structure in signaling the FG-BG distinction. As we will see in the next two chapters, sentence-initial position in Arabic news texts may be occupied by a particular class of markers. These markers manifest the influence of perspective on syntactic organization and hence on the establishment of a certain grounding-angle from which events and states of affairs referred to in propositions are seen. The use of these markers, then, may constrain the interpretation of the grounding-value a certain proposition has.

3.2.2.1 The Distribution of Entities in Initial Position

We surveyed all entities that occur in sentence-initial position in the International Herald Tribune (IHT) sample. Table 1 presents an overview of them.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>percentage</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1- NPs and other forms*</td>
<td>344</td>
<td></td>
<td>weak signals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2- Direct speech</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>=360</td>
<td>86.1 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>of grounding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3- Participles</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4- Adverbial clauses</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>strong signals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5- Adverbials **</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>= 41</td>
<td>9.8 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>of grounding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6- Connectives and</td>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sentential adverbials***</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.1 %</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of entities</td>
<td>418</td>
<td>100.0 %</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: The distribution of entities in sentence-initial position in the IHT sample

* Other forms that appear sentence-initially in this category are proper nouns, personal pronouns, possessor pronouns, adjectives as NP heads, quantifiers and numerals preceding the NP, a NP having a degree adverb or a prepositional complement (e.g. At least 34 people), a prepositional adverb (e.g. About 70 people), demonstratives.

** Included in this category are: time adverbs (2), adverbials of time (15), and adverbials of place (18).

*** They are: meanwhile (5), but (6), however (3), also (2), and nonetheless (1)

Table 1 presents three main categories of entities in sentence-initial position:

1- Entities that are part of the main clause such as noun phrases. They are the majority in the sample. The assumption is that they do not provide clear and strong signals of the FG-BG distinction. We refer to them as weak signals of grounding at initial position. Excluded from the count are entities that are text-initial, since the lead sentence does not usually contain special initial markers. In the IHT sample, entities that are text-initial are invariably of the main clause. The proposition expressed in that clause usually has foreground interpretation. Constituents that may express background meaning and that may occur in the lead sentence occupy non-init-
tial position, as we saw before.

2- Entities that belong to a special class of markers such as adverbials. Their frequency is rather low. We refer to them as sentence-initial markers since they are assumed to be strong grounding-signaling devices. Included in the category of adverbials are entities that have the form of a prepositional phrase (a preposition and a noun phrase) and serve as adverbials: abstract and concrete locative prepositional phrases. This is similar to Virtanen (1992b), who found that the large majority of adverbials in her data were prepositional phrases, e.g. *In the morning, On Friday, On the wall*.

3- Entities that represent a few varied markers. Among significant features that they have in common is their occurrence in sentence-initial position and their having a close relationship with the clause they preface. It is the clause as a whole at the head of which they appear that expresses a certain grounding-value.

THE MARKERS WE EXAMINED
We examined the markers that appear in the second category (3-5) in Table 1. Though they may contribute to text cohesion and coherence, we focussed on their potential for signaling text-level grounding. So we examined them in terms of grounding-values and not in terms of old or new information expressed for example by an initial subordinate structure. Parenthetically, the news texts we examined do not manifest initial adver­bial clauses that function in discourse to relate an upcoming event to the already established temporal line: an orienting (e.g. *when*) clause (see Thompson 1987). Although we focussed on the markers in the second category, reference will also be made to markers in the first category that provide weak signals of grounding. Comparison will be made in chapter 5 with the special category of markers in Arabic news texts.

3.2.3 Prominence in Sentence and Text

As surface structure mechanisms that have the potential for signaling text-level grounding, sentence-initial markers are related to prominence, which is a property of surface structure. Examining how the FG-BG articulation is signaled in surface structure prominence requires that we make a distinc-
tion between prominence in the sentence and in the text.

Sentence- (or below sentence-) level prominence is local and is defined in terms of individual lexical items. An entity may be preposed, hence it gets more attention and gains some 'topical prominence' because the information in context models is new or newsworthy. Therefore the writer wanted to emphasize it. In this case, emphasis is realized by grammatical (= syntactic) means (see Erdmann 1990). A preposed entity may also be for (contrastive) focus.

It should be added, however, that this is contrary to the general rule as to the usual organization of the sentence according to the Communicative Dynamism, manifesting a gradual increase in the contribution of a certain entity. The order of individual entities belonging to functional categories has to do with the 'patterning of the sentence into the theme and the rheme' (Mathesius 1975: 82) in terms of the theory of Functional Sentence Perspective.

The occurrence of a certain entity in sentence-initial position may also have to do with local, sequential coherence relations within the sentence. A prepositional phrase, for example, may be more appropriate in that position because it is a 'light' constituent that leads to a more 'heavy' one in a final position. This is in accordance with the Maxim of End-weight that operates on the syntactic level, namely that 'light' constituents precede 'heavy' ones (Leech 1983: 65).

These features of syntactic structure have less to do with prominence in text. They do not accommodate the way whole textual propositions— not even in a sequence— are prominently and non-prominently expressed. What is at issue in prominence that signals text-level grounding is not the 'weight' of the constituent but the distribution of text meanings that are assigned relative grounding-values and expressed in surface structure as news upstage and news downstage. In this regard, manipulating sentence-(constituent) order (viz. text structure) rather than word-order (viz. sentence structure) in terms of subject-predicate would manifest how grounding is signaled in surface structure prominence.

In organizing constituents, an adverbial may be placed in sentence-initial position. But even if the adverbial denotes a marked sentential structure, it may have an optimal textual fit and becomes textually unmarked (Virtanen 1992b: 28) because of other high-level constraints on signaling grounding. So the placement of the adverbial in initial position may not necessarily be because the underlying information is known— it may quite
well be new and unknown before—but because of the writer's perspective, that is the grounding angle, as to how background meaning in text is to be expressed. After all, the text-based grounding angle that readers capture pertains to whole events and states of affairs referred to in propositions and not to individual participants, for example.

In fact, the difference between prominence in sentence and in text echoes the difference between grounding in terms of single concepts and textual propositions. A participant may be held in high focus by continued reference, but this does not assign foreground interpretation to the proposition, since meaning about the referent may map less important information, and, accordingly, the proposition would be assigned background interpretation relative to other surrounding propositions. Thus, referential expressions that are in focus (Marslen-Wilson et al. 1982), that realize topic continuity (Givón 1983a), or that maintain reference within a particular episode (Tomlin 1987), may coincide with different degrees of information importance, different grounding-values, and eventually more or less prominence.

The preceding discussion makes it apparent that the prominence in sentence and in text are distinct from each other and that they are defined respectively for single concepts or words and for propositions. It should nevertheless be added that there may be links between both, and that for example an initial adverbial that is thematical (viz. topically important), may also often be locally or sententially prominent in that position in the sentence. It may, in addition, be textually prominent if the sentence that it prefaces is located early in the text.

SYNTACTIC PROMINENCE MAPPING RULES
Differences between prominence in sentence and in text raise the question of rules for mapping syntactic structures as to having greater or lesser prominence. At issue are three related features that show how grounding-values are expressed in surface structure prominence:

1- hierarchy within the sentence, that is, as high (main clause) or low (subordinate clause).
2- position within the sentence, that is, left-right in sentence structure, whereby syntactic manipulation may include constituent fronting.
3- location in text, that is, early (as part of news upstage) or late (as part of news downstage).
The three features are presented below in terms of sentential and textual prominence.

I. Sentential prominence
   (1) Constituent hierarchy:
       A main clause is hierarchically higher than a subordinate clause or any other constituent (e.g. a prepositional phrase).
   (2) Constituent prominence:
       A subordinate structure in sentence-initial position is more prominent relative to the following main clause.

II. Textual prominence
    (3) Sentence-initial markers:
       A sentence-initial marker, though locally or sententially is more prominent, may be globally or textually non-prominent, if it occurs later in text. The earlier its location in text (and of course the location of the host clause of the marker), the higher its textual prominence and vice versa.

3.3 Initial Position and Types of Staging

Our discussion of initial position in the sentence implied that there is a relation between the kind of entity or constituent that occurs in that position and the type of staging in text. In chapter 2 we examined schematic salience and introduced two major types of staging. Here we examine syntactic prominence and distinguish two initial constituents in terms of the two types of staging:

A. A noun phrase, part of the main clause that encodes the main event in which participants are engaged. This is staging type I that expresses meaning in a sequential descending pattern.

B. A sentence-initial marker, for example an adverbial that encodes the context of the main event in which participants operate. This is staging type II that expresses meaning in a sequential ascending pattern.

The two patterns are readers' access to the measure of surface structure prominence that is assigned to various grounding-values. This involves the choice and manipulation of:
1- the constituent (e.g. a main clause, adverbial clause) that is suitable to express certain meanings.
2- the position of the constituent in the sentence (e.g. sentence-initially).
3- the location of the sentence in the text (e.g. early or late).

Given the importance of the lead sentence in the news text, we will illustrate the two patterns with the lead sentence and S2.

A. THE SEQUENTIAL DESCENDING PATTERN

In the sequential descending pattern, the entity that occurs in initial position in S2 is usually part of the main clause. It signals the introduction of midground meaning. This inter-sentential signaling of grounding-values in a gradual descending fashion, i.e. from foreground to midground, is illustrated as follows:

S1 The president said that...
S2 He explained that...

S2 expresses specifics of the event referred to in S1 and hence denotes a midground proposition. Thus, the degree of prominence of S2 coincides with decreasing grounding-values. Schematically, the propositions expressed in both sentences are assigned to a Main Event category (see Figure 1).

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{foreground} \\
\text{S1 [Main Event]}
\end{array}
\]

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{midground} \\
\text{S2 [Main Event]}
\end{array}
\]

Figure 1 The sequential descending pattern of signaling grounding-values

Focusing on initial constituents, Figure 1 does not show other non-initial constituents that both sentences may have. Given the special traits of the short news item discussed in chapter two, the lead sentence in particular may include a constituent that expresses background meaning (see T6 cited in chapter 2). In this case, the sequential descending pattern would be interrupted intra-sententially and, in addition to foreground meaning,
the sentence would signal foregrounded background meaning, since background is prominently expressed, that is, in the direct vicinity of foreground, early in the text as part of news upstage.

Apart from that, expressing background in non-initial constituents may be construed as an evidence of a communicative strategy that does not interrupt the sequential descending pattern inter-sententially. S2 of T19 will make this clear.

BEIRUT (AP)— (1) 1a Prime Minister Rashid Karami has blamed an unjustified "market fever" for the recent weakness of the Lebanese pound 1b and pledged government efforts to strengthen the country. (2) 2a Mr. Karami, 2b in a radio broadcast after an eight-hour cabinet meeting, also said that several battalions of Lebanese soldiers were ready and waiting to "move immediately" into southern Lebanon 2c when the Israeli occupation force is withdrawn.

The noun phrase in initial position in 2a denotes a continued reference to the same event and participant referred to in S1. The main clause at the head of which it appears expresses a proposition that is midground (specification, addition to the main speech event). The noun phrase provides readers with an early evidence of that grounding-value. It also makes clear that the midground proposition is assigned to a Main Event schema category. The syntactic structure of S2, then, manifests a sequential descending pattern, where midground (or rather part of it) follows foreground and is followed by background (occasion of the main event) subsumed under a Context schema category and expressed in the parenthetical structure 2b. By expressing background in a non-initial constituent, the writer does not affect (i.e. interrupt) the sequential descending pattern inter-sententially, that is, at sentence-boundaries.

B. THE SEQUENTIAL ASCENDING PATTERN

In the sequential ascending pattern, the constituent that occurs in initial position in S2 is a sentence-initial marker. It expresses background meaning and supersedes other constituents in the sentence that express midground meaning. Thus syntactic prominence manifests an increase in grounding-values: from background to midground. This is shown in Figure 2.
Figure 2  The *sequential ascending pattern* of signaling grounding-values

Figure 2 shows both inter-sentential and intra-sentential realization of grounding-values: a shift from *foreground* meaning in S1 to *background* meaning expressed in an initial constituent in S2, then a shift to *midground* meaning expressed in a main clause in the sentence. As a consequence of expressing *background* in initial position in S2, *midground* is relegated to a later position in the sentence. Hence, the *sequential ascending pattern* separates at sentence-boundaries the expression of *foreground* from *midground*. Schematically, sentence-boundaries manifest two different categories: **Main Event** and **Context**. This pattern is illustrated by the reverse order of 2a and 2b in T19 above:

S1 Prime Minister Rashid Karami has blamed...
S2 2a In a radio broadcast after an eight-hour cabinet meeting, 2b Mr. Karami also said...

The *sequential ascending pattern* provides evidence for communicative situation constraints on the FG-BG structure, namely the occurrence of *foregrounding* and *backgrounding* operations in underlying semantic representations. It also shows a communicative prominence strategy that is intended inter alia to:

1- signal as prominent— or assign more prominence to— some *background* meaning that maps less important information, for example about circumstances. Due perhaps to pragmatic newsworthiness, the information acquires greater contextual or pragmatic relevance, and hence it is mapped in the semantic structure as having immediate concern. Expressing *background* immediately after the expression of *foreground* shows the writer's perspective on how *background* should be signaled in a particular text: early in the sentence, that is, in initial position, and early in the text, that is,
as part of news upstage.

2- signal as less prominent— or assign less prominence to— some midground meaning that, although semantically higher, is considered pragmatically less relevant, and hence— as a signal of that— it is realized later in the sentence.

It is not unusual of course that background meaning is expressed in a main clause or an independent sentence. In the sequential descending pattern, background would be expressed subsequent to S2 that expresses midground. In the sequential ascending pattern, background may be expressed as in the following example:

S1 The president said that...
S2 He made the speech in a three-hour meeting...
S3 He explained that...

All three sentences have in initial position components of a main clause. They express respectively foreground, background, and midground meanings. Background meaning in S2 could have been expressed as an initial adverbial, as we saw earlier. Expressing it in an independent clause or sentence, prior to the expression of midground in S3, delays the expression of midground to a subsequent (i.e. the third) sentence, and, concomitantly, separates foreground from midground propositions.

3.4 Entities in Initial Position and Unsignaled Grounding Structure

The two patterns of staging show two distinct ways of organizing meaning and signaling grounding-values in surface structure prominence. They also differ in the strength of signaling. So they provide what we consider to be weak or unsignaled and strong or signaled grounding at sentence-initial position. We look now more closely at unsignaled grounding structure.

We have seen that main or independent clauses may express grounding-values that are higher than those expressed by dependent or parenthetical structures. In two syntactically independent sentences it may sometimes be difficult— judging solely by the syntactic structure— to determine which sentence expresses a higher or lower grounding-value on the FG-BG continuum. Of course, cognitive models provide the basis for greater or lesser
importance of information and consequently for manifestations of information in discourse meaning in terms of a FG-BG structure. But if subordinate clauses and other dependent structures express low grounding-values, the problem in inter-sentential signaling of grounding is that independent clauses do not always express parallel high grounding-values. We have seen that a main clause or an independent sentence may express propositions that have foreground, midground, or background interpretation, and that in all these cases the sentence may not signal in initial position the difference in grounding-values. Linguistic markers that indicate at that position the FG-BG distinction may at times be absent. As a result, it may sometimes be difficult—inter-sententially and at sentence-boundaries—to detect signals of grounding or rather of background meaning expressed in a main clause.

NOUN PHRASES IN INITIAL POSITION
The occurrence in initial position of noun phrases or other main clause entities is frequent in English news texts. The data analyzed exhibit an overwhelming majority of these entities (see Table 1).

Entities like nouns, of course, may denote participants and 'events or occurrences in the world of human activity' (Erdmann 1990: 98). They may also denote actions or movements 'carried out by people or other agents' (ibid.): reply, inquiry, arrival, stampede. They often function as sentential topics and may in the meantime signal discourse topic. Noun phrases, then, are a category that is commonly employed in organizing discourse. They may therefore be iterated from preceding sentences, such as when (discourse) participants are (re)introduced in sentence-initial position, for example in T3 examined in chapter 2 about Mr. Cruz backing rebels in Nicaragua. The text has the following entities in sentence-initial position:

S1: Arturo José Cruz
S2: Mr. Cruz
S3: He
S4: His
S5: Mr. Cruz

It manifests topic-continuity by means of a sentence-initial proper noun, a personal pronoun, a possessive pronoun, and again a proper noun (viz. renominalization). But apart from denoting co-referential identity for discourse referents (e.g. the topical Mr. Cruz), and sequential topic, the enti-
ties in initial position in T3 do not show explicitly the way the FG-BG structure is signaled. Specifically, the text manifests a weak signal of background in sentence-initial position.

Other manifestations of unsignaled or weak signals of background may be provided by nouns that are derived by implication from some other entities referred to before, such as demonstrations in S2 below.

(1) People went to the streets to protest against the recent increase in food prices.
(2) The demonstrations were the largest since the government took power three years ago.

They may also be provided by general hypernyms, such as in the following example, where the lexical item situation in the second sentence is a more global, abstract noun that summarizes meanings expressed before and denotes the introduction of a state of affairs.

(2) Thousands were out of work; there was hunger, anger, and unrest. The situation required careful handling.

(Quirk et al. 1985: 1442)

Indeed, one common pattern of expression in news texts is placing in sentence-initial position entities that are derived from knowledge frames or scripts, such as the noun phrase The Boeing 727 in S2 of the following short text that has been cited in chapter 2.

(3) A team of Bolivian climbers fighting high winds and snow reached the wreckage of an Eastern Airlines jet nearly 20,000 feet (6,000 meters) up Illimania Mountain on Saturday and reported finding no survivors of the crash, the airline said.
(2) The Boeing 727, carrying 29 people, crashed on Tuesday, minutes before it was to land at La Paz airport.

The initial noun phrase identifies the already referred to Eastern Airlines jet. In addition to identifying the jet, it reintroduces and specifies it. In terms of grounding, S2 expresses meaning that has background interpreta-
tion (a preceding event).

Of course, referential expressions (e.g. definite noun phrases) differ in lexical specificity and identificational explicitness (see Vonk et al. 1992). So 'a referring expression that is more specific than is needed for identification of the antecedent itself indicates a boundary' (ibid.: 303). It serves discourse structuring and thematic shift functions. Overspecified anaphoric expressions thus can be used as 'thematic structure indicators' (ibid.: 329). It should be added that initial noun phrases in news texts may sometimes identify boundaries and signal a genuine thematic switch that also 'marks the point at which a newly introduced participant deploys his first activity' (Bakker 1993: 284). In this case, noun phrases may mark a structural boundary point and realize a global shift. Similar functions may also be realized by other entities (see van Dijk 1982), though not necessarily in sentence-initial position, such as predicates that cannot be subsumed under the same macro-predicate, or change of perspective markers (e.g. by different 'observing' participants, or differences in time or aspect morphology of the verb).

THE STRENGTH OF SIGNALING GROUNDING

The occurrence in initial position of entities such as those examined above raises the question of the strength of signaling the FG-BG distinction. Although it has been mentioned that one of several pragmatic functions of noun phrases is foreground and background (see Andrews 1985: 77) (the others are given/non-given, topicality, definiteness, specificity, perspective, inherent salience properties of noun phrases), the question of their real contribution to signaling a background function remains uncertain.

What is sometimes absent in English news texts is the use of—borrowing the term of Buth (1994: 218)—a marked contextualizing constituent ('Topic'). The difference in the syntactic structure between the following two sentences (Buth 1994: 217) provides perhaps some evidence for the difference in the strength of signaling grounding:

(4)

(1) In the early evening the wolf howled.
(2) The wolf howled in the early evening.

In S1, in the early evening is pragmatically marked: 'it is not what the event is "about" but serves to relate the clause to its context' (ibid.). In S2,
'the time reference is not marked and is part of the salient information to be communicated' (ibid.).

We suggest that there is a close relation between initial markers that contextualize, segment, or shift, and the strength of signaling background. Accordingly, the syntactic structure in S1 may be employed in order to signal the introduction of background meaning, and that in S2 to signal either foreground or midground meaning. It is significant to note that one property of midground is continuation, and that lexicosyntactic devices such as coreference, definite articles, pronouns cannot perform the function of informing readers that continuity is not preserved, because it is only their lack that would signal a discontinuity (Bestgen 1997: 203). This task is performed by segmentation markers (ibid.). Thus, although sentence-initial entities like full noun phrases may be used to demarcate new structural units (see Fox 1987), they are not equal in the text functions that they perform. For shift functions, for example, speakers and writers may use different markers: adverbial phrases (e.g. around two o'clock) to highlight the most important shifts in their narratives; connectives (e.g. then) for intermediate breaks; and and for high continuity (Bestgen 1997: 202). We suggest that there are similar differences in the function of signaling grounding among entities that occur in initial position such as between noun-phrases and adverbials. The overspecified anaphoric reference, which 'is usually used when there are no other linguistic means to indicate a theme shift' (Vonk et al. 1992: 316), also suggests that it does not provide a sufficient signal of grounding, and that other (i.e. stronger) markers like adverbials, when present, may take over the grounding-signaling function and perform it better.

3.5 The Role of Sentence-Initial Markers in Signaling Background across Sentence-Boundaries

3.5.1 Initial Markers and Difference in the Grounding-Value

So far we have focussed on entities such as noun phrases that occur in sentence-initial position in independent clauses and we referred to them as providers of relatively weak signals of text-level grounding. We turn now to the markers in the second category in the sample. Representing initial subordination, the markers may also be considered the margin that is dis-
tinct from, and independent of, the *nucleus* (see Longacre 1985), which is the most characteristic part of the sentence. Primary among these markers are spatio-temporal constituents that express the spatio-temporal context of an event or that denote time change (e.g. *In the meantime*) and location change (e.g. *In Amsterdam*) (see van Dijk 1982).

Before we examine in detail types of markers and their grounding-signaling functions (see 3.6), it would perhaps be useful to demonstrate how entities that occur in initial position may have implications for the interpretation of the grounding-value that propositions at issue have. With the discussion about the strength of signaling grounding in mind, consider the following example.

(5)

(1) A call to support the Palestinian uprising in the Israeli-occupied territories has brought life to a standstill in Lebanon yesterday.

(2a) Palestinian women and children carrying the Palestinian flag organized a protest march in the streets of West Beirut, chanting revolutionary slogans.

(2b) In the streets of West Beirut, Palestinian women and children carrying the Palestinian flag organized a protest march, chanting revolutionary slogans.

The proposition expressed in 2a that is introduced by the noun phrase specifies or exemplifies the proposition expressed in S1, hence it is midground. *Palestinian women and children*, being an instance of the main event, expresses a continuation of the same scene depicted in the proposition in S1 that is foreground (main event).

With the prepositional phrase functioning as an initial marker in 2b, it seems as if a shift has occurred to a new location and a totally different scene from the one expressed in S1—realizing perhaps a topic suspension (see Reichman 1981). As such, the initial marker denotes a new context, namely of the new participants in the event referred to in the rest of 2b, which ceases to continue the main event referred to in S1.

Discontinuity or the degree of shift has consequences for the interpretation of meaning expressed in 2b and for the relationship with what preceded. *Palestinian women and children* is no longer conceived of as specifying or giving an instance of the event referred to in S1. Rather, it is sup-
posed to refer to a different, separate and perhaps concurrent event that has its own participants as well as context. More importantly, 2b will also have consequences for the interpretation of the underlying FG-BG structure in the text. In the streets of West Beirut will signal a shift to a lower grounding-value, namely background, and the semantic representation of the entire sentence would be assigned to a Context schema category. Since we are supposed to be still within the same scene or situation expressed in SI, 2b would provide a less appropriate continuation. Its inappropriateness is due to the high degree of shift (i.e. disconnection of the present scene) that occurs as a result of referring to context in initial position. The initial marker signals what is referred to as thematic discontinuity (Givón 1987, 1990) or the opening of new thematic paragraphs (Givón 1993: 313). It is perhaps a sudden, low grounding-value that the FG-BG structure in the text does not warrant. Apart from that, 2b manifests a crucial difference in grounding with sentences whose initial constituents may signal background while the main clause that follows signals midground, as we explained earlier. This feature will be examined later on.

Example (5) demonstrates that while the noun phrase tends to provide a weak signal of grounding, the occurrence of the locative adverbial as an initial marker tends to provide a strong signal of grounding. We conclude that there is a close relation between the strength of signaling grounding that a marker has and the degree of shift that the marker provides. We also conclude that 2b would be appropriate or warranted if and when the initial adverbial is meant to:

1- contextualize what follows and in the meantime realize a context separation with what preceded, that is, to signal a boundary point and (a relation of) discontinuity (or rather 'a discontinuity of space' (Levinsohn 1992:24)) with the main event expressed in S1. It guides readers 'across the discontinuity' (see Levinsohn 1994: 5).

2- signal the assignment of background to the proposition expressed in the sentence that it prefaces. This would enable readers to capture at once the writer's perspective on the distinction in grounding-values in the text.

3.5.2 Signaling Grounding-Relation

The preceding discussion introduces the question of the different functions
that sentence-initial markers may serve in news texts in respect of signaling relations between grounding-values expressed in the surrounding text. We look therefore at the markers and their environment.

The sentence at the head of which the marker appears usually expresses more than one proposition. It may express more than one grounding-value, for example, that of the ancillary constituent and that of the main clause. That initial markers may express meanings that have a place on the FG-BG continuum is particularly apparent in the case of some (complex) adverbials, as we will see later. This feature distinguishes them from some other markers that may also occur sentence-initially such as connectives, where it is the clause as a whole at the head of which the marker appears that expresses a certain grounding-value.

By dint of their initial position in the sentence, the markers we will examine in the next section are potential grounding-signaling devices at text-level. They signal background across sentence-boundaries but they may differ in the relation they signal with other grounding-values expressed in the text. In this respect, we identify two major and distinct functions of signaling grounding-relation that initial markers may serve. These functions would not be realized should the markers occur in non-initial position. The two functions are: prefacing-connecting (i.e. bi-directional), and prefacing-disconnecting (i.e. uni-directional). The connecting and disconnecting functions are inter-sentential. The prefacing function that coincides with both functions is intra-sentential. It obtains when the marker—as a subordinate structure, which is a form of clause linkage (Lehmann 1988: 182)— signals background relative to the grounding-value expressed in the main clause that follows it. As a point of departure for what follows, the marker serves a scene-setting or a framing function. In news texts, a typical prefacing function is performed by adverbials, which express 'the setting of the contents of the textual unit at the beginning of which they appear' (Virtanen 1992b: 270).

The connecting and disconnecting functions are briefly explained below.

1- prefacing-connecting
An initial marker denotes a relation not only with the immediate co-text, that is, the main clause that follows, but also with other, larger, segments of text, that is, the wider co-text. So the marker signals the establishment of a connection between the grounding-value expressed by the preceding
sentence(s) and that expressed by the following clause. The connecting function suggests that the underlying semantic representation maps usually context-dependent information, for example spatio-temporal, about the only or same event referred to before in the text. The marker may also realize a communicative strategy that signals the introduction of background meaning before other meanings that are usually higher on the FG-BG structure as we saw in the sequential ascending pattern.

2- prefacing-disconnecting
An initial marker signals the establishment of a disconnection relative to grounding-values expressed in all preceding sentences. This function suggests that the underlying semantic representation maps usually context-independent information about independent events and states of affairs. As will become apparent later on, one main function of entities that are recognized as initial markers in English news texts is to signal a global shift, namely to the background end of the continuum (see 3.7). In this case, the initial marker realizes a communicative strategy that signals the initiation of that level of background. The propositions are assigned to an Association schema category.

3.6 Types of Markers
The markers we examine below are participles and adverbials including adverbial clauses (see Table 1 presented earlier). They are considered as providers of strong signals of background meaning. One of the markers in the category of connectives and sentential adverbials, meanwhile, will be briefly examined. It is the only marker in that category that signals the background end of the continuum. Therefore, it has a grounding-signaling function that is similar to that served by some other markers that we will examine. Examining meanwhile is also important since the marker shows the interplay with other markers, and it will be relevant to Arabic markers that will be examined in chapter 5.

We looked into the distribution of markers as regards their prefacing-connecting and prefacing-disconnecting functions and found that 15 markers, including all five occurrences of meanwhile, serve a prefacing-disconnecting function. They signal the background end of the continuum (see 3.7). They are:
3 adverbials of time
6 adverbials of place
1 time adverb
5 meanwhile

We examine now the different markers.

3.6.1 Participles

There are only two occurrences of the -ing and the -ed participles as a sentence-initial marker in the sample.

THE -ING PARTICIPLE

The -ing verb form occurs in 2a of T1.

(1) Pope John Paul II strongly called on the United States and the Soviet Union Tuesday to "renounce egoistic and ideological interests" for the success of their arms limitation talks resuming in Geneva next week.

(2) 2a Addressing thousands of faithful in St. Peter's Square, 2b the pope said the negotiators "cannot be guided simply by technical criteria but must be inspired above all by human and moral reasons."

The constituent 2a expresses background meaning about the spatial setting or the circumstance under which the main speech event of the pope holds. The meaning is more at the occasion of addressing than while he was addressing, which denotes an event or an activity as ongoing (i.e. the progressive aspect). In initial position, background is expressed prior to the expression of midground in 2b about specifics of the main speech event. The participle 2a serves a prefacing-connecting function (see Figure 3) and provides a bridge between two different grounding-values: foreground and midground.

```
foreground      background       midground
S1             2a Addressing...   2b the pope said...
```

Figure 3 The prefacing-connecting function of the -ing participle in T1

Schematically, the meaning expressed in 2a is assigned to a Context cate-
Syntactic Manifestations of Grounding

109

gory that separates two components of a Main Event category. In terms of staging, S2 manifests a sequential ascending pattern where background meaning, though mapping less important and less newsworthy information, is prominently realized, that is, early in the text as an instance of news upstage, manifesting foregrounded background. Background meaning seems to be pragmatically more relevant to the goals of the writer at this point than other semantic representations that are high on the FG-BG continuum. In fact, expressing background in that position serves also an anticipatory function vis-à-vis midground meaning.

The sentence, of course, could have started with 2b (The pope said) and the constituent 2a could have occurred in an independent subsequent sentence, signaling background less prominently:

S3 The pope made his speech to thousands of faithful in St. Peter's Square.

This rendering would have manifested a sequential descending pattern, expressing midground immediately after foreground and before expressing background.

The -ing participle could also have occurred in non-initial position in S2 as follows:

The pope, addressing thousands of faithful in St. Peter's Square, said...

Set off by pauses and marked by commas (see Thompson 1983), the participle would express background meaning and fulfil the same function as circumstance provider. However, in non-initial position it would be limited in scope and would not operate at text-level to signal an inter-sentential relation between two different grounding-values.

THE -ED PARTICIPLE

The -ed participle occurs in 4a of T15.

T15

Iranian-Sandinist Talks Concern U.S.

WASHINGTON (AP)—(1) 1a A spokesman for the Reagan administration, 1b which is seeking renewed aid to Nicaraguan rebels, said Friday there is reason to believe that Iran is arranging an arms deal with Nicaragua.
Chapter 3

(2) He added that Iranian contacts with Nicaragua's leftist government are causing concern about an expansion of terrorism.

(3) President Ronald Reagan on Thursday told a group of legislators from Western Hemisphere nations that, "A new danger we see in Central America is the support being given to the Sandinists by Colonel Qadhafi's Libya, the PLO and most recently, the Ayatollah Khomeini's Iran."

(4) 4a Asked about the president's statement, 4b Robert Sims, 4c a White House spokesman, said the current visit to Nicaragua of the Iranian prime minister, 4d Mir Hussein Moussavi, "is obviously evidence of political support" for the Sandinists.

(5) There is also reason to believe that Iran is in the process of arranging support in the form of oil supplies and funding for armaments.

(6) As to where it might lead, the potential for some expansion of terrorism in this hemisphere is always a concern."

Figure 4 shows the grounding-relation that the first four sentences of the text express and the pre-facing-connecting function that the -ed participle serves.

foreground background midground background background midground

1a 1b S2 S3 ← 4a → 4b

Figure 4 The pre-facing-connecting function of the -ed participle in T15

The meaning expressed by the -ed participle in 4a is background since it is about the circumstance and perhaps the moment of the event reported in 4b, viz. that the White House spokesman said what he said as an answer or a reaction to a question. Similar to the -ing form in T1, the -ed participle prefaces a clause that expresses midground meaning (specification of the main speech event). But the president's declaration has been referred to in S3 that expresses background meaning: It is a preceding event that provides the political context for foreground meaning expressed in 1a. The -ed participle serves a pre-facing-connecting function with S3 and 4b. In non-initial position, of course, an -ed participle—similar in form to a reduced relative clause—serves a local function, namely to identify the immediately preceding entity, and hence it is limited in scope.

3.6.2 Adverbials

We will examine first adverbial clauses and then time and place adver-
ADVERBIAL CLAUSES

The most general function of initial adverbial clauses 'is that of creating and reflecting discourse structure by signaling shifts in time, place or orientation' (Cumming and Ono 1997: 123). The sample we examined has four initial adverbial clauses. In terms of grounding, all of them express background meaning. Consider T19.

**T19**

**Lebanese Pound Falls to Record Low**

BEIRUT (AP)— (1) *la* Prime Minister Rashid Karami has blamed an unjustified "market fever" for the recent weakness of the Lebanese pound *lb* and pledged government efforts to strengthen the country.

(2) *2a* Mr. Karami, *2b* in a radio broadcast after an eight-hour cabinet meeting, also said that several battalions of Lebanese soldiers were ready and waiting to "move immediately" into southern Lebanon *2c* when the Israeli occupation force is withdrawn.

(3) He dismissed Israeli warnings of possible sectarian violence in the south.

(4) *4a* As the cabinet met Saturday, *4b* Lebanon's currency fell to a record low of 13.30 to the U.S. dollar.

(5) Economists have blamed the sharp drop in the value of the Lebanese pound in recent weeks on Lebanon's deepening recession and the government's inability to restore law and order.

The adverbial clause in 4a denotes the context of the event referred to in 4b, and hence defines the political setting of the world expressed in it. In other words, it contextualizes it and modifies the entire proposition expressed in the sentence (see Thompson and Longacre 1985). The constituent 4a expresses background to the meaning expressed in 4b about the drop in Lebanon's currency, which has a background interpretation (a preceding event). S4 provides the actual context for foreground (the most recent event) expressed in the lead sentence about the (subsequent) radio speech of the Lebanese premier.

The constituent 4a serves a prefacing-connecting function (see Figure 5), since it refers to entities referred to in 2b. (For the use of initial adverbial clauses in English (conversation) as tying back to the preceding discourse and framing the following discourse, see Ford 1993).
It is important to note that the adverbial clause introduces a clause that expresses *foregrounded background* meaning. The information about the drop in the Lebanese pound is considered so important that its semantic representation is *foregrounded* and signaled prominently in the headline. This provides further evidence for the influence of the writer's perspective on *foregrounding* and *backgrounding* and consequently on staging in expression (see the earlier discussion of the notion of perspective in chapter 1).

TIME AND PLACE ADVERBIALS

Adverbials 'tell us something extra about an action, happening, or state as described by the rest of the sentence' (Leech and Svartvik 1994: 225) such as the time, the place, or the manner: respectively, time, place, manner adverbials (ibid.). In news discourse, adverbials are primarily spatio-temporal constituents that express meaning about the setting of the main clause. Adverbials have been traditionally approached from a sentence-perspective but they have been recently examined from the vantage point of their discourse function (e.g. Virtanen 1992a,b). However, unlike other studies of information structure in the sense of given and new (e.g. Virtanen 1992b), we focus on the *background* function that adverbials signal in text. Their occurrence in initial position may not be because of the pattern of 'old-information first' (for this, see Virtanen 1992b), but, as we saw already in other markers, because of the intention of the writer to express *background* meaning early in the sentence (and consequently realize a certain pattern of staging) and early in text, which means that *background* is prominently signaled. The adverbial thus fulfils a text-level grounding-signaling function. This function is evident from the fact that it may also express the setting of the main event referred to in the *fore-
That the adverbial signals background for meanings expressed in the following constituent(s)— hence it is the 'ground' or 'scene-setting' for what follows (Quirk et al. 1985: 491)— as well as for those expressed in preceding sentences is particularly evident in adverbials that express what is called 'a complete setting' (Geis 1987: 107). Event, place, and time adverbials occur together in the same constituent such as in *a speech to the nation in Amsterdam last night*. Complex adverbials such as this one in sentence-initial position occur often in news reporting (Geis 1987): They are *situation adverbials* [what Geis referred to as *situation adverbs*] and may consist of event, place, and time adverbials. Given the *compact* structure of the short news text, there is a common journalistic practice to encode meaning about spatio-temporal aspects in a sentence-initial constituent. In this position, adverbials are not integrated into the predicate as a modifier, which is the case in non-initial adverbials. In addition, they provide the primary basis for relating the communication or what follows to the context (Levinsohn 1992). In initial position, adverbials are therefore instrumental for making clear the connecting or disconnecting function. In non-initial position, adverbials would specify the event reported in the clause or sentence (Virtanen 1992b: 96) and hence their scope would be narrower. Similarly, a final adverbial clause 'does not serve a text-organizing function, but is local in scope' (Ford 1993: 18). So the scope of the adverbial— specifically the locative— depends on its sentential position (see Huumo 1995). For that matter, a sentence-initial locative describes 'the largest scope of the events' (Huumo 1995: 315). By describing the largest scope of the events, the initial adverbial that may also express a complete setting denotes clearly a crucial part of background meaning in text.

This is a distinct function of adverbials. It is different from the default segmenting or text-structuring function that they are associated with (on the text-structuring function of adverbials, see e.g. Thompson and Longacre 1985; Virtanen 1992a, 1992b). However, the two functions are perhaps related. The relation might be explained in terms of another function, namely that initial adverbials maintain discourse perspective. Maintaining discourse perspective is usually realized by initial adverbials that express spatio-temporal meanings for what is described. In a travel book on Mexico, for example, the author 'is constantly reminding the
reader of the you're-on-a-journey perspective of the entire discourse' (Thompson and Longacre 1985: 207). Similarly, time adverbials may maintain discourse perspective by denoting boundary points (e.g. temporal shifts) and hence they may structure or segment the text, such as when they express meanings about the career of individuals (see Brown and Yule 1983: 137ff) or about different landmarks in their lives. (For the role of temporal markers in the segmentation of narratives, see Bestgen 1997.) Consider T24.

T24

**Ballonist Dies in Plane Crash in U.S.**

ALBUQUERQUE, New Mexico (AP)—(1) **1a** Ben Abruzzo, 55, **1b** who rode in the first balloons to cross the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, was killed Monday along with his wife and four other people **1c** when their twin-engine plane crashed near an airport.

(2) **2a** In August 1978, **2b** Mr. Abruzzo, Maxie Anderson and Larry Newman crossed the Atlantic Ocean in a balloon **2c** named the Double Eagle-2.

(3) **3a** The helium-filled craft landed at Evreux, France, **3b** after a five-and-half-day flight of about 3,000 miles (4,848 kilometers) from Presque Isle, Maine.

(4) **4a** In November 1981, **4b** Mr. Abruzzo was captain of the helium-filled Double Eagle-5 **4c** when he, Mr. Newman and two other men made the first balloon crossing of the Pacific Ocean, **4d** flying from Nagashima, Japan, to northern California in four days.

The two adverbials: 2a and 4a introduce the temporal location of two different and earlier events (see Figure 6), and hence they denote boundary points in the career of Mr. Abruzzo. While maintaining discourse topic (by adding other aspects to it), they also maintain discourse perspective, which revolves around the history of certain events in which the main participant was engaged. Discourse perspective is therefore geared towards this pattern of presentation, constraining the way events are described in the sequence of sentences.
Apart from that, the function of signaling background that adverbials serve favours their occurrence in initial position, since they manifest the grounding-angle and make the reference to 'rode in the first balloons' in lb immediately clear. This function would not be fulfilled had the noun phrase Mr. Abruzzo been placed in initial position in sentences S2 and S4. This realization-form, of course, would have signaled participant continuity, which pertains to cohesion, topicality, given and new information, and hierarchical structure (see e.g. Wårvik 1994). However, from the grounding-signaling function point of view, this rendering would first create the impression that the meaning is midground: that the proposition denotes specifics of the main event (i.e. the plane crash). Therefore, the occurrence of the adverbial markers sentence-initially in S2 and in S4 serves as an early signal or warning to readers that the writer at this point in text is initiating background meaning.

In fact, background meaning introduces other background meanings that map historical information. Therefore, adverbials 2a and 4a do not serve their background function relative to the current news event, i.e. the plane crash, and hence they do not contextualize that event but other past events (assigned to a History schema category). That the two initial adverbials do not disconnect is evident in their being anaphoric (as the majority of clause-initial adverbials of time and place are anaphoric (see Virtanen 1992b)): they co-refer with entities referred to in the lead sentence, namely the relative clause (lb).

That the sentence-initial adverbial initiates background meaning is also evident in 4a of T12.
Israel Starts Withdrawal Preparations

TEL AVIV (Reuters)—(1) Israeli troops began dismantling equipment Sunday in preparation for the first stage of withdrawing from southern Lebanon, an Israeli military spokesman said.

(2) "We're not waiting," the spokesman said.

(3) "From today we begin taking apart and removing equipment so that on Feb. 19 there will not remain any Israeli soldier or equipment in the phase-one area."

(4) A week ago, the Israeli government decided to withdraw its troops from southern Lebanon in three phases.

(5) Orders to begin dismantling medical centers, fuel depots, ammunition dumps and storage installations were sent to field units Friday.

(6) In Jerusalem, Brian E. Urquhart, a United Nations undersecretary for special political affairs, conveyed to Yitzhak Rabin, the Israeli defense minister, Lebanon's agreement to resume negotiations on deploying UN troops in the evacuated areas.

In initial position, the adverbial *a week ago* provides an early signal of the temporal shift from the current news event to a different 'span back to a point of time in the past' (Quirk et al. 1985: 688). In that position, it is a separate constituent that initiates *background* meaning, namely the context of the *background* proposition expressed in 4b about the earlier decision of troop withdrawal. This proposition is assigned to a *Previous Event* category. It illustrates one important function that initial adverbials may serve, namely signaling the introduction of a different schema category.

The initial adverbial, in addition, realizes a communicative strategy of showing that *background* meaning, where the time factor is important, is prominently expressed. The lead sentence refers already to Sunday and 3 refers to today and February 19. Therefore, the question of *when* events take place is here very essential and relevant. The initial adverbial signals clearly the connection between *background* and grounding-values expressed in the preceding sentences. The writer, of course, could have opted for other entities in initial position, such as the *Israeli government* in the following rendering:

> The Israeli government decided a week ago to withdraw its troops from southern Lebanon in three phases.

Like in T24, this realization-form would have limited the scope of the adverbial and made the shift to *background* less apparent. Also, it would...
have made it less clear from the outset that the proposition is assigned to a **Previous Event** schema category.

**INITIAL MARKERS AND SIGNALING THE DISTRIBUTION OF BACKGROUND** may be assigned to meaning expressed in the initial constituent only; the main clause that follows may express a proposition that has a *midground* interpretation. This is evident in 2a and 3a of **T1**.

2a Addressing thousands of faithful in St. Peter's Square, 2b the pope said...
3a In a speech marking the Roman Catholic Church's day of peace, 3b John Paul said...

Both initial markers preface clauses that express *midground* meaning about specifics of the main speech event. **Background** meaning expressed by the abstract locative 3a maps less important information about the high-level context or the setting of the pope's speech (i.e. that the pope said something in the form of a speech on a certain occasion). Expressed in initial position, **background** meaning serves as a prelude to **midground**. It also makes clear that **background** is relative to other textual propositions as well. The initial adverbial realizes a *separation* rather than a *break* (i.e. disconnection) and shows the writer's own way of *structuring and signaling meaning in the text in terms of grounding-values*. Schematically, 3a introduces a **Context** category that does not subsume all propositions in the sentence. Thus it connects the **Main Event** category, that subsumes propositions expressed in preceding sentences, to other components of that category in S3.

Apart from that, the expression of a complete setting by means of adverbials may sometimes be distributed in several sentences. In this case, the initial position in the sentence would be employed in order to distribute pieces of **background** meaning about the setting of the main event. This is illustrated by the two initial constituents of sentences S2 and S3 of **T1**. They provide respectively the spatial setting and the occasion of the main speech event. The text shows that a **Context** schema category to which these meanings are assigned may be recursive.
3.7 Signaling the *Background End of the Continuum*

We examine finally the use of some adverbials— including *meanwhile* which is a sentence-adverbial— to signal the *background end of the continuum*. It is the lowest position on the FG-BG continuum and it denotes meaning that is about a totally different kind of activity and hence it is not covered by the present topic. Markers that signal that position serve a *prefacing-disconnecting* function and draw a boundary line with all foreground, midground, and other background meanings expressed before in the text.

Two distinct features of the *background end of the continuum* are worth noting:

1- it is assigned to all propositions that are expressed in the sentence.
2- it is invariably expressed in or towards the end of the text (see below), that is non-prominently, as part of *news downstage*. Propositions in the *background end of the continuum* are assigned to an *Association* schema category that is always realized as the last category in the text.

We explained in chapter 2 that an *Association* category is realized in the end of the text in order not to block (any) further development of—or return to— propositions that are covered by the topic. As a consequence, a proposition in the *background end of the continuum* would not be foregrounded. This distinguishes functionally the markers that signal the *background end of the continuum* from those that signal the introduction of other background meanings.

Apart from that, propositions in the *background end of the continuum* map information that is contextually or pragmatically relevant and is of interest for people, hence it is included in the semantic representation (see chapter 1). Their inclusion fulfils a pragmatic function of informing readers about certain properties of other events and states of affairs. Their non-prominent expression manifests the writer's perspective, given the properties of the present context, namely that they have a *delayed or indirect concern*.

The *background end of the continuum* manifests itself in a rather few texts of the *IHT* sample: 10 texts, or 10%. As expected, most occurrences are in paragraph-initial position and in the last paragraph of the text. There is only one adverbial phrase and one adverb that occur sentence-initially.
within the last paragraph. All occurrences of *meanwhile* are in paragraph-initial position. With the exception of one occurrence, they appear in the last paragraph of the text. We look now at a few illustrative examples.

In 6a of T12 cited earlier, *in Jerusalem* realizes a location-shift from the source of the news item, which is *Tel Aviv*. In addition, it draws a boundary line between text meanings expressed before and after (see Figure 7).

![Figure 7 Signaling the background end of the continuum in T12](image)

It is evident that the initial marker in 6a serves a grounding-signaling function that is different from the functions we examined so far. It realizes a global shift and *disconnects* with what preceded by initiating *background* meanings that are contextually independent of other meanings expressed before. These meanings are assigned to an *Association* schema category.

**MEANWHILE AND OTHER MARKERS WITHIN THE BACKGROUND END**

We examine below three texts that include *meanwhile*. This marker performs various textual functions. It refers to the time of the event reported before, 'up to the present' (Quirk et al. 1985: 1453). It also denotes temporal overlap, i.e. *at the same time*, and signals usually the introduction of an event that is (locationally) different from the current one(s). When used in narratives, the function of *meanwhile* is to link a temporally concurrent activity. But its use for example in television news— which is the news of the day and is ipso facto connected— is to mark boundaries (Glasgow University Media Group 1980: 147) between different events or scenes.

In news discourse, not only does *meanwhile* function as a boundary marker, but it also signals the *initiation* of a proposition or a series of propositions that are independent of what preceded, hence it performs a *prefacing-disconnecting* (that is, a global shift) function. All occurrences of *meanwhile* in the *IHT* sample demonstrate that it performs that grounding-signaling function.
That *meanwhile* tends to occur towards the end of the short news text in an environment of a typical *Association* schema category demonstrates that it is a wide range marker: It occurs after the introduction of several sentences or a long stretch of text. Consider T20 cited in chapter 2 and repeated below.

**T20**

**Greek Tanker Hit by Iraqi Missile**

KUWAIT (Combined Dispatches) — (1) A missile fired by an Iraqi warplane damaged a Greek oil tanker Monday near Iran's main oil export facility in the Gulf, it was reported here.

(2) Greek officials in Athens confirmed that the Greek tanker Fairship-1 had been seriously damaged in an attack while en route to the Kharg Island oil terminal.

(3) None of the 26 crew members aboard the 132,000-ton tanker was hurt.

(4) The attack followed a week of heavy land fighting in the Gulf war.

(5) 5a The Iraqi News Agency, 5b in a report monitored Monday in Kuwait, quoted an Iraqi general as saying that his brigade had destroyed two Iranian army units in a battle last week, 5c killing more than 1,500 men.

(6) 6a He said the battlefield, 6b in the central front, was "littered with Iranian dead soldiers."

(7) 7a Meanwhile, 7b there were reports that a fresh diplomatic effort was underway to end the war.

(8) 8a In Kuwait, 8b the newspaper Al-Seyassah said Sunday that France, Saudi Arabia and Algeria were working on a plan for talks with the support of the six-nation Gulf Co-operation Council. (*UPI, AFP*)

Sentences S7 and S8 form the last paragraph that is introduced by *meanwhile*. They express propositions that are not covered by the main event referred to before in other textual propositions, hence they are assigned to the *background end of the continuum* position. Schematically, the propositions are assigned to an *Association* category. The marker that prefaces S8, *in Kuwait*, expresses meaning about details of the reports about diplomatic efforts referred to in S7. It serves a local grounding shift function since the global shift to the *background end of the continuum* is performed by *meanwhile* in S7. In fact, without S7, a change in the function of *in Kuwait* would occur, namely that it fulfils a global grounding function right away. It would be the first signal in the text of the shift to the *back-
ground end of the continuum. In this regard, in Kuwait would serve a function that is similar to the function of in Jerusalem in T12 cited earlier.

Similarly, the propositions expressed in S3 at the head of which meanwhile appears in T28 are severed from propositions that have other grounding-values in the first two sentences of the text.

T28

IRA Leader Is Denied Visa by U.S.

WASHINGTON (from combined Dispatches)— (1) The U.S. State Department has denied a visa to Gerry Adams, president of the political wing of the Irish Republican Army, because of his "advocacy of violence in Northern Ireland," a department spokeswoman said Saturday.

(2) Mr. Adams had been invited by 10 congressmen to join protests against Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher of Britain during her visit this week.

(3) Meanwhile, in Armagh, Northern Ireland, a senior prison officer, Pat Kerr, was shot to death on Sunday as he left church after attending Mass on his 37th birthday.

(4) The IRA, later claiming responsibility, said Mr. Kerr, the security chief at the Maze prison outside Belfast, had been killed for harassing prisoners.

(5) In Dublin, the jailed IRA kidnapper, Eddie Gallagher, suspended a hunger strike on Sunday after 39 days to allow talks to go ahead on his demands for improved prison conditions, his lawyers said. (AP, Reuters)

The propositions expressed in S3 as well as in subsequent sentences occupy the background end of the continuum (unrelated event or development). All of them are subsumed under an Association schema category. The other initial marker, in Dublin, signals the same grounding-value (details of the event referred to in a proposition that is the background end of the continuum). This grounding-value is constrained by the FG-BG articulation in the text and the location of the sentence at the head of which the marker appears. In Dublin serves a local grounding-signaling function that is different from the function performed for example by in Jerusalem in T12. The locative phrase in Dublin, of course, denotes the place where the event referred to in the rest of S5 took place. In fact, it sets the stage for the specific activity being reported in the sentence (Geis 1987: 106-107). Although it denotes a location shift, it is not a straight one from the location referred to in the foreground proposition, namely Washington.
The shift from Washington has already been made in S3, to Armagh in Northern Ireland, which prepares the way for the (further) shift in S5. Thus, although in Dublin signals a shift from Armagh, it does not disconnect. Rather, it expresses meaning about context that is interpreted in terms of the immediately preceding meaning encoded in the second paragraph starting with S3, and hence the function of in Dublin is in terms of the meaning expressed in the immediately preceding sentence. This suggests that the marker performs here the function of signaling background to background.

It should be noted that from the perspective of foreground meaning expressed in the lead sentence, in Dublin introduces context-independent meaning and disconnects, though it does not itself introduce that disconnection. Disconnection has already been introduced in S3 by meanwhile. Thus in Dublin is not the first signal in the text of the global shift to the background end of the continuum.

In the third example, meanwhile introduces the last paragraph (S5 and S6) of T22. We presented part of the propositional structure of this text in chapter 1.

**T22**

**Nicaragua Increases Price of Food**

MANAGUA (Reuters)— (1) Nicaragua's Ministry of Internal Trade has raised the price of meat and milk about 100 percent.

(2) An announcement Wednesday listed an increase of 110 percent for eggs and more than 50 percent for chicken.

(3) 3a Officials said the price of basic grains and sugar, 3b not listed in the announcement, might be increased later.

(4) 4a Diplomats said the move spotlighted economic troubles 4b caused partly by the widening war the Nicaraguan Army is fighting against insurgent forces 4c armed, trained and financed by the United States.

(5) 5a Meanwhile, 5b Nicaragua's vice president, 5c Sergio Ramirez, 5d visiting London on Wednesday, asked Britain to urge Washington to exercise its influence by reaffirming backing for the Contadora regional peace plan and by encouraging the United States to resume the dialogue with Nicaragua it suspended three weeks ago.

(6) 6a Mr. Ramirez met for talks with the British foreign secretary, 6b Sir Geoffrey Howe.

*Meanwhile* does not only signal a shift to a locationally different activity, but it also initiates the background end of the continuum position: It is not background to foreground meaning about the event of increasing the
prices of food.

We would like finally to refer to the strength of signaling grounding in propositions subsumed under an Association category. S6 has a noun phrase in initial position. The underlying proposition denotes details of the event referred to in the proposition expressed in S5 and is therefore in the background end of the continuum. The noun phrase does not introduce that level of background. Presumably, weak signals of grounding are less capable of introducing contextually unbound propositions. This provides evidence that the grounding-value may determine the choice of the marker that has a certain strength of signaling on the FG-BG continuum.
Conclusion

In this chapter we examined a number of text-level features that pertain to the syntactic signaling of grounding in short news items. We focused on the grounding functions of entities that occur in sentence-initial position. The assumption is that initial position is a potential locus for differences in signaling grounding, and that syntactic choices in that position are associated with different staging patterns that manifest or rather communicate variant FG-BG structures. The implication is that not all staging operations that affect sentence structure signal also text-level grounding. We examined two major patterns of staging that realize the intended communicative strategy— the sequential descending and the sequential ascending— and related them to what we called unsignaled (or weak signals of) grounding and signaled (or strong signals of) grounding at sentence-initial position.

Distinct from initial main clause entities that we associated with weak signals of grounding are certain markers— primarily spatio-temporal and circumstantial— that we consider potential grounding-signaling devices. We examined these markers at length and found that they tend to be associated with background meaning in news texts. They are also strong indicators of the influence of perspective on the realization of grounding. We discerned two main functions of these markers: prefacing-connecting and prefacing-disconnecting. Both functions are determined by the grounding-value that a certain marker signals in text. For example, a marker that signals the introduction of background to foreground as well as midground meanings would be expected to serve a prefacing-connecting function.

By dint of their initial position in the sentence, markers may be locally or sententially prominent. This has to do with constituent-order. They may be also globally or textually prominent, which has to do with sentence-order, when the markers occur at the head of sentences that are staged early in the text and hence become instances of news upstage— mapping foregrounded background meaning. On the other hand, the later location in text of an initial marker provides an important indication of low prominence.

One important finding is that sentence-initial markers vary in the background value they signal. Thus, while they usually signal background that connects, and that may be prominently expressed as part of news upstage, a few of them, including meanwhile, disconnect and are non-prominently expressed as part of news downstage, mapping very low information im-
Syntactic Manifestations of Grounding

Portance. We identified this important function as signaling the background end of the continuum. Initial markers would be expected in this case to serve a prefacing-disconnecting function. Underlying propositions are usually assigned to an Association schema category—the least prominent category of the news schema.

We have seen the interplay among different markers that signal the background end of the continuum. Meanwhile signals thematic discontinuity (for a study of how readers recognize thematic units on the basis of thematic discontinuity and linguistic devices that mark thematic shift, see Hustinx 1996). It also constrains the interpretation of the grounding-signaling function that other (adverbial) markers get (mapping low informativeness in the present context). This may lead to differences in background values. Some markers that we examined (such as in Kuwait and in Dublin) may express more or less background. Depending on the co-text, they may signal meanings about a specification or exemplification of what preceded. But the analysis revealed that they may also signal the introduction of a major shift, namely to the background end of the continuum.

Though not widespread, sentence-initial markers perform important grounding-signaling functions. That is, they manifest text-level distinctions in the FG-BG structure in news texts. However, the degree of importance of these mechanisms in signaling variation in (background) meanings is not the same in all languages. Therefore, we will examine in the next chapters the phenomenon of sentence-initial markers in Arabic news texts in order to show how that language attaches much more importance to initial markers primarily for grounding-signaling purposes. We will examine the ramifications of this phenomenon and differences with English news texts.
We examined these markers of length in English and found that they had a strong tendency to signal certain functions of content that were important for the overall structure of the text. We found that these markers are globally or contextually prominent, which helps to de-emphasize sentence-order, when the markers occur at the head of sentences that are staged early in the text and hence become instances of very weak foregrounding. On the other hand, the location of text of an initial marker provides an important indication of prominence.

One important finding is that sentence-initial markers vary in the contextual value they signal. Thus, while they usually signal background for contexts, and that may be prominently expressed as part of news openings, a few of them can signal meanwhile, disconnect and are non-prominently expressed as part of news openings, mapping very low information value.