Towards a Functional Description of Cleft and Reversed Pseudo-Cleft Sentences in Alan Paton's Play Sponono

Abstract:
The author's intention is to explain how the text creates meaning with anomalous word order and to observe the potential of language to build its context of use by the analysis of two structures of marked syntax from a functional perspective, i.e. cleft sentences and reversed pseudo-clefts. Instead of having chosen independent examples coming from a computational corpus, it has been decided to analyse in detail these two structures of thematization in English in the play Sponono, written by the South African writer Alan Paton in 1965 because they are used to highlight action in the play. Due to the recurrent use of these thematization processes in the play we can perceive the feelings and thoughts of the main characters. We can also observe that these structures are used in situations of climax. Systemic Functional Grammar has been chosen as the linguistic framework because this linguistic school studies language in relation to society and analyses the main reasons for choosing between some linguistic forms or others, which is always determined by the function that those linguistic forms have in society.

Resumen:
Mi intención es explicar cómo el texto crea significado con estructuras de sintaxis marcadas; pretendo observar el potencial de la lengua por medio del análisis desde una perspectiva funcional de dos estructuras anómalas en la lengua inglesa como son la oración hendida y la oración semi-hendida inversa. En lugar de haber elegido ejemplos independientes de un corpus computacional, he decidido analizar con detalle dos estructuras de tematización en inglés, como son la oración hendida y la oración semi-hendida inversa en la obra de teatro Sponono, escrita por el escritor sudafricano Alan Paton en 1965. Debido al uso recurrente de las estructuras de tematización que son objeto de análisis en la obra de teatro podemos percibir los pensamientos y sentimientos de los principales personajes de la obra. También se puede observar que estas estructuras se usan en situaciones de clímax. La Gramática Sistémica Funcional ha sido elegida como marco teórico porque estoy interesada en estudiar cómo la lengua se usa en el contexto, es decir, en el periodo en que Alan Paton escribió, y esta escuela lingüística estudia la lengua en relación con la sociedad y analiza las principales razones para elegir entre unas formas lingüísticas u otras, hecho que siempre está determinado por la función que esas formas lingüísticas tienen en la sociedad.
1. Introduction

In a systemic functional grammar, the interpretation of language is understood as a system of meanings together with the forms that those meanings express (Halliday, 1994:xiii-xiv). In this sense it can be stated that a functional grammar is connected with semantics. Halliday (1994:xx) declares that “The fact that this is a ‘functional’ grammar means that it is based on meaning; but the fact that it is a ‘grammar’ means that it is an interpretation of linguistic forms.”

Systemic linguists place considerable emphasis in the idea of choice, i.e., we view language as a network of interrelated options from which speakers and writers can select according to their communicative needs. This theory analyses authentic products of social interaction (texts). As Butler (2003, vol. II:355) declares, one of the main priorities in Systemic Functional Grammar is to give an account of the resources available to speakers and writers for the construction of texts.

According to Couture (1991:261) there are three premises which govern the linguistic laws or patterns established by functional language theory: language constructs social harmony, language organizes space and time and language polarizes reality. In the author’s view, through these three orientations, conventional meanings, structures and ideologies are functionally validated.

For Halliday language (and hence grammar) is interrelated to the social system where it is used. Following the tradition of systemic functional linguistics, I understand language as a form of social action. From the previous statement it can stated that texts arise in social contexts and that is the reason why texts cannot be considered autonomously, divorced from social, historical, political and cultural determinations. As Halliday declares:

Language is the ability to ‘mean’ in the situation types, or social contexts, that are generated by the culture. When we talk about ‘uses of language’, we are concerned with the meaning potential that is associated with particular situation types; and we are likely to be especially interested in those which are of some social and cultural significance, […]. (Holliday 1978: 34)

It is evident that language plays a very important role in our lives because it involves several things: interpretation of experience (ideational function), interaction with others (interpersonal function). There is another function in order to fulfil these two, the textual function, which is the one we will concentrate on in this article, since it is the one concerned with the set of resources language needs to link any part of the text with the rest of it as well as to the context.
The language used by the South African writer Alan Paton in the play has a clear social purpose: to describe a social reality. That is why the theoretical model of this article is Systemic Functional Grammar: a social theory that makes clear that reality and experience are described and built throughout language.

Instead of having chosen independent examples coming from a computational corpus, I have decided to analyse all the examples of cleft and reversed pseudo-cleft sentences in the play *Sponono*, written by Paton in 1965. In this article I will present the most representative examples in context to illustrate the functional characteristics of the structures. The examples I have found are very powerful from the functional point of view, as I will show in section three because language cannot be divorced from its specific context of use.

My intention is to explain how the text creates meaning with anomalous word order. For this reason I want to observe the potential of language by analysing the two structures of marked syntax under analysis, i.e. cleft sentences and reversed pseudo-clefts in *Sponono*.

It is evident that the use of certain marked syntactic structures allows the author to highlight information, as Whittaker declares:

> For writers, position of information is an important matter- a number of syntactic choices can be seen to be motivated by the possibility they offer of placing information in different places in the sentence, with first and last positions giving particular, and different, prominence. (Whittaker 1996: 105)

I am aware that this theoretical model does not offer a detailed analysis of the marked structures under analysis, but it takes into consideration some important aspects for this study such as: the importance of the text for linguistic analysis, the different types of contexts and the variables field, tenor and mode.

Apart from this, I would like to underline that Alan Paton was a human being committed with his historical moment. This is achieved by his defence of the black population, especially during the period in which he was the president of the Liberal Party, and with the great work he did in a reformatory for black boys called Diepkloof, which was changed from a prison to a school by Paton. *Sponono* takes place in a reformatory for boys in Victoriatown, a suburb of Johannesburg, and is based on the situation at Diepkloof.

I have decided to use examples from this play as a corpus because it has a clear social purpose, and because I am interested in the context described in it, which is characterised by some of the problems of a reformatory in South Africa in the apartheid period. For instance, Sponono, the protagonist, is one of the boys in the reformatory that is always between what is right and what is wrong.
The apartheid politics included the application of a total segregation in such a way that cities were divided in group areas, selecting the population by their racial category according to their identity documents. The purpose of this measure was to eliminate irregular categories through the prohibition of mixed marriages. The fact that the author describes and centres his work in South Africa during the apartheid implies that the historical, political and social reality described has very specific characteristics that the author tries to highlight and denounce through his writings.

Paton always felt a strong desire to communicate the real situation of South Africa in the apartheid period, which is clearly characterized by racial segregation and social problems. He decided to show his commitment through his writings, as it happens in *Sponono*.

Before I proceed with the analysis of the corpus of examples in context, I am going to concentrate on the description of the main concepts related to the social function of language such as ideology, context of culture and context of situation, and the variables of the context of situation, i.e. field, tenor and mode. In this way the analysis of the examples can be related to contextual factors, and it is made clear that the functional interpretation of the play is ‘situation-oriented’ since in SFG language is interpreted as a resource for making and expressing meanings in context.

2. Application of Concepts Related to the Social Function of Language to the Analysis of the Play

Since my intention is to provide a functional analysis of *Sponono*, paying special attention to cleft and reversed pseudo-cleft sentences, my next step will be the application of the main concepts related to the social function of language, i.e. ideology, context of culture, context of situation and its variables of field, tenor and mode. This will be done to understand better the analysis of the examples in context in section three.

2.1 Ideology

There are many definitions to refer to the concept of ideology. The easiest way to explain this concept will be by referring to it as the way in which a person understands the world, i.e., it is connected with beliefs and values, with what is right and what is wrong.

As Johnstone declares, there is a clear relationship between language ideology and social life:

> Language ideology has to do with the ways in which language is conceived of and thought to articulate with other aspects of social life. Beliefs about how language corresponds to reality, about how communication works, and
about linguistic correctness, goodness and badness, and articulateness and
inarticulateness are all aspects of language ideology, as are beliefs about
the role of language in a person’s identity, beliefs about how languages are
learned, and beliefs about what the functions of language should be, who
the authorities on language are, whether and how usage should be
legislated and so on. (Johnstone 2002: 55-56)

At this point it is fundamental to consider the author’s ideology. Paton was
brought up by very religious parents, who helped him to develop ethical and
moral principles that made him very sensitive to the racial conflicts in South
Africa. This vision underlined his innovations as director of Diepkloof
Reformatory for black boys near Johannesburg, which provided him with
some material to write several short stories and the play under analysis.
As principal of the Diepkloof Reformatory, Paton became known as an
advocate of reform in the juvenile racial system. He was the first to confront
the problems of South Africa- social, political, racial, sociological, etc.; he
concentrated in the African social system due to his contact with some
young delinquents. At the same time, his vision of human life and society,
which had always been religious, was hardened.
A central idea in Alan Paton’s ideology is to denounce what is inhuman in
racial separation and, consequently, the defence of individual freedom and
of racial equality.

2.2 Context of Culture

The linguistic or stylistic analysis of a text should go with the research of
the context and the society in which the text is framed, because the text is
written taking into consideration the social conventions so that it can be
understood. In other words, language is always embedded in a context of
culture and any particular text is always embedded in its own context of
situation, as we will see in 2.3. This is the reason why it is necessary to
make reference to the term context of culture proposed by Malinowski to
explain the relationship between text and context and to make clear that
these two notions are inseparable. Malinowski highlighted that language is
clearly connected to the situation in which it is used, which is one of the
basic ideas in this article.
Malinowski (1923), (1935) saw that in any appropriate description it was
necessary to give information not only about what was taking place in that
precise moment but also about the whole cultural environment, since in any
type of linguistic interaction, in any type of conversational interchange, the
only thing that counts is not the sounds and visions that surround the event,
but also the whole cultural history that is behind the participants and behind
the social practices in which they take part, determining in this way their
meaning inside that culture.
The context of culture in *Sponono* is South Africa during the apartheid period, whose population is divided in several groups: whites, Asians, half-breed and Africans. Each group has its own cultural identity, a language, a social organization and a territory to which it is attached by historical links. The apartheid, a politics of extreme racial segregation, started when the National Party obtained the power in 1948. This party was in power until 1994, showing a great control in politics. It can be said that the social context that surrounds Alan Paton’s play is dominated by racism and the white man’s superiority.

### 2.3 Context of Situation and Variables of Field, Tenor and Mode

The context of situation is the immediate context in which language is used. The anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski (1923) needed a term to refer to the whole environment of the text and that also included the situation in which the text was produced. He coined the term context of situation to refer to the environment of the text.

In *Sponono*, we find the story of some reformatory boys in Victoriatown, a suburb of Johannesbourg. The boys are victims of the discriminatory society in which they live. As it will be seen when I refer to some specific examples of clefts and reversed pseudo-clefts sentences in context, there are many discipline problems in the reformatory since the boys fight among each other, steal and disrespect the principal.

The principal’s job is to teach the black boys in the reformatory to obey the law, which can be considered autobiographical since that is what Alan Paton did while he was the director of the Diepkloof Reformatory. Halliday proposes the three general concepts “field”, “tenor” and “mode” to describe the way the context of situation determines the kind of meanings that are expressed. When we refer to what a text is about, we talk about the field of a text. Tenor makes reference to the participants that take place in the communication, to the roles and social positions that participants have. When we talk about the role language plays, we refer to mode. The definitions proposed by Halliday are very clear:

> The field is the social action in which the text is embedded; it includes the subject matter, as one special manifestation. The tenor is the set of role relationships among the relevant participants; it includes levels of formality as one particular instance. The mode is the channel or wavelength selected, which is essentially the function that is assigned to language in the total structure of the situation; it includes the medium (spoken or written), which is explained as a functional variable. (Halliday 1978: 110)
When analysing the notion of field, it is necessary to remember the place and the moment in which Alan Paton places the action of the play: South Africa during the apartheid era. The objective of the play is to show how the terrible conditions in which black people live take some black boys to extreme situations (kill, rape, steal, etc), and as a consequence they have to be taken to a reformatory. The intention of the author consists of presenting real facts that took place during the historical period in which he places the play.

When we analyse the notion of tenor, we have to take into consideration the social relations between the participants in the linguistic interchange since the kind of social relation affects the use we make of language: the sender is the author, Alan Paton, and the addressees can be considered both the society of his time as well as any reader that approaches the play in any other historical moment. Paton was acutely conscious of white South African attitudes and fears, and there can be no doubt that white people were the primary audience that he had in mind.

The concept of mode makes reference to the role that language plays in the text. Mode refers to the role that language plays, to what participants expect language to do for them in that situation: the symbolic organization of text, its function in context, including the channel (if it is written or oral or a combination of both), and also its rhetorical component, i.e., if we are able to persuade, teach, state, etc. through the text.

The channel through which the author transmits his linguistic message is the play, i.e., it is a written text to be represented on a stage. Since *Sponono* is a written text, the author lacks both visual contact and the possibility of obtaining information from the reader because there is a spatial and temporal distance.

Since I am analysing a written text in which there is dialogue between the different characters, the language is related to phenomena that show spontaneity such as false starts, interruptions or incomplete sentences.

3. **Analysis of Cleft and Reversed Pseudo-Cleft Sentences in *Sponono***

3.1 **Analysis of Cleft Sentences: Syntax and Thematic Organization**

Jespersen (1909-1949:Vol. VII:147-148) defines cleft sentences in the following way: “A cleaving of a sentence by means of *it is* (often followed by a relative pronoun or connective) serves to single out one particular element of the sentence and very often, by directing attention to it and bringing it, as it were, into focus, to mark a contrast.”

In Systemic Functional Grammar, the term used by Halliday and Matthiessen (2004: 95) is “predicated theme”, since the elements that we
find at the beginning of the structure are introduced by the predicative formula “it +be”. After that we find a nominal or adverbial group that receives emphasis. Halliday and Matthiessen (2004: 96) declare that “the predicated Theme structure is frequently associated with an explicit formulation of contrast; it was not..., it was..., who/which...; for example [...] And, say the authors, it was Mary Magdalen, not Mary the Mother of Jesus, who has been the real, if secret, object of Mariolatry cults down the ages.”

However, I agree with Collins (1991: 489) in that although this structure is “frequently associated with a formulation of contrast, the highlighted element may not be contrastively focal (that is, incorporating placement of the intonation nucleus-and thus definition of the culmination of the new information-upon some item other than the last functional element of clause structure in the tone/information unit)”.

The division of the structure in terms of theme and rheme can be established in two different ways, as Halliday and Matthiessen (2004: 97) point out: the first one represents the local thematic structure of the two sentences that appear in this construction. The second one points out the thematic structure of the whole sentence, as we can see in the following example.

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Principal: It was Elizabeth herself who told me this. (II, v)
(a) Theme Rheme Theme Rheme
(b) Theme Rheme
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No matter what analysis is chosen, it is evident that in analysis (a) or (b), the theme is the part of the message with less communicative dynamism, since it hardly adds any information to the message as we can see with *it* and the relative pronouns *who* in the previous example. On the other hand, the rheme is the expression with higher communicative dynamism because its content is essential to understand the message as it happens in *Elizabeth herself* and in the relative clause *told me this*.

After what I have said in the previous paragraph, it is evident that cleft sentences place the most important elements for communication, and more relevant from the semantic point of view, after the introductory formula *it is* or *it was*. In this way, it is found in the first place what is more important for the hearer or reader.

In relation to the relative pronoun that introduces the second part of the structure, it is *that* or *who* and there are also examples without any pronoun.

Regarding the structure of the information, the highlighted element has known information and the relative clause has new information in the majority of the examples.
With regard to the form of the highlighted element it is clear that it is a nominal group in all the examples:

Mrs. Makatini: *It was our money that was stolen.* (II, i)
Sometimes this nominal group is a personal pronoun or a proper noun:
Elizabeth: *It’s you who are making him sick.* (II, iii)
Principal: *It was Elizabeth herself who told me this.* (II, v)

This highlighted element is emphasized even more with a reflexive pronoun as in the previous example. Regarding the function of the highlighted element, it fulfils the function of subject in almost all the examples that have been analysed except in the following one, in which it fulfils the function of object:

Sponono: *You see, he knows the words. It was the meanings he didn’t know.* (III)

3.2 Textual Effects of Cleft Sentences in *Sponono*

In the majority of our examples, the cleft sentence is used to emphasize moments or feelings in the play. Sponono, the protagonist of the play, points out his surprise and emotion with a cleft sentence when he knows that Elizabeth is going to get married to Spike (another reformatory boy) because he also liked Elizabeth and thought that Spike was his friend and would have told him:

Sponono: *Who’s the guy?*
*So that’s a secret too. So it’s you! So it’s you!*
Spike: *Of course it’s me.*
Sponono: *So it’s you two that are getting married!* (I, ii)

As I have pointed out previously, Halliday and Matthiessen (2004: 96) point out that the cleft sentence is a contrastive structure, as in the next example that occurs in one of the moments of tension when there is a fight between two reformatory boys, Walter and Sponono. The use of the cleft sentence contributes to point out tension that is very important in the discussion about forgiveness and punishment between the principal and Sponono. The principal wants to punish Walter not taking part in sports for six months because of having hurt Sponono’s eye. In this way, Walter will pay the consequences of his act. During the conversation Sponono says that he has forgiven Walter and asks the principal not to be so strict:

Sponono: *But mereer, I have forgiven him.*
Principal: That was generous of you, Sponono. But your forgiveness is between you and him. Between him and me is another matter.
Sponono: You should find it easier to forgive him, mereer. It was my eye that was hurt, not yours. (I, v)

The following cleft sentence is also pronounced in another moment of tension: Mr. and Mrs. Makatini come to the reformatory to visit their son and Sponono steals money from them. The principal decides to punish Sponono depriving him of six months of freedom so that he bears the consequences of his act. This example and the previous one are connected with forgiveness, which seems to be a recurrent topic in the play since Mrs Makatini asks the director to forgive Sponono emphasizing through the cleft sentence:

Sponono: Don’t do that, mereer. Do anything else you like, but don’t do that. I could have run away, mereer. But I didn’t. [...] Can’t you forgive me, mereer?
Mr. Makatini: We forgive him, mereer.
Mrs. Makatini: It was our money that was stolen.
Sponono: Don’t take away my freedom, mereer. (II, i)

In the next example, Elizabeth emphasizes with this structure that Walter, the reformatory boy who fought with Sponono, is a bad influence for Spike, the boy she is going to marry. The example is pronounced in a moment of climax in the text, since Walter goes to see Elizabeth before she marries Spike and tries to discourage her from marrying Spike saying that Spike is sick, then Elizabeth is worried and doubts about her love for Spike:

Elizabeth: You devil!
Walter: You know, that Billy Boy of yours is sick. He ought to see a doctor.
Elizabeth: He wasn’t sick before. It’s you who are making him sick. Pity mercy… (II, iii)

After Spike had died, apparently killed by someone a few days before getting married to Elizabeth, the principal started to investigate what happened. Walter told the principal that Sponono loved Elizabeth and wanted to marry her; that is the reason why the principal decided to interrogate Sponono. This is one of the climatic moments of the play because the principal is trying to find out if Sponono is responsible of Spike’s death. The following example underlines the importance of Sponono’s answer through the cleft sentence pronounced by the principal. Here the principal wants to emphasize that Elizabeth had told him that Sponono had asked her to postpone the marriage:
Principal: Is it true that you advised Spike and Elizabeth to postpone their wedding?
Think carefully before you answer. It was Elizabeth herself who told me this.
Sponono: Yes, I told them, meerer. (II, v)

In the following example, Sponono refers categorically to the moment the principal could not forgive him when he stole money from Mr and Mrs Makatini. The cleft sentence establishes a clear contrast between the principal’s words and his behaviour. Sponono wants to emphasize that it was hard for the principal to forgive:

Sponono: You see, he knows the words. It was the meanings he didn’t know. He believed we must bear the consequences of our acts. He wanted an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth. (III)

3.3 Analysis of Reversed Pseudo-Cleft Sentences: Syntax and Thematic Organization

Halliday and Matthiessen (2004: 70) refer to this structure as “marked thematic equative”.
Erdmann (1990:195) states that these structures are normally introduced by this or that; these demostratives are normally used anaphorically although we can also find in that position nominal groups. When this and that have anaphoric reference, they show the hearers that they need to concentrate in the immediate context.
Halliday (1967:231-232) states that demonstratives are not always anaphoric, as can be seen in some of the examples of the play, since they are reference items whose reference may be either situational or textual. If the reference is textual it can be anaphoric or cataphoric. In the first case it contains ‘given’ information, while what is referred to situationally or cataphorically is ‘new’, demonstratives are normally non focal when anaphoric and focal otherwise.
In this version of the pseudo-cleft sentence, we can find the following wh-forms: what, why, where, how and when. The most common are what and why, as we will see when we analyse the examples. Quirk et al. (1985:1388) state that “clauses with who, where, and when are sometimes acceptable but mainly when the wh- clause is subject complement”:

Here is where the accident took place.
(In) Autumn is when the countryside is most beautiful.
(?) The police chief was who I meant.

There are several examples of reversed pseudo-clefts in the play under analysis. This structure is found whenever there is a nominal relative clause
at the end of the complex sentence functioning as subject complement and the emphasis is on the subject. It is a SVC structure with a nominal relative clause as subject complement. 
As regards the analysis of the structure as theme and rheme, the following division can be established:

\[
\text{Theme} \quad \text{transition} \quad \text{Rheme}
\]

\[
\text{Mrs. Makatini: That} \quad \text{is} \quad \text{where they stay. (I, vi)}
\]

Reversed pseudo-cleft sentences are unmarked from the thematic point of view, since the theme coincides with the subject, which is normal in declarative sentences. In these structures it is the identifier element instead of the identified which tends to be thematic and receive emphasis. The identified element is rhematic.

Pronouns or demonstratives are normally found in the theme; they make reference to something that has been previously said. In the majority of the examples of *Sponono* that is found as identifier; *it* is found in just one example:

\[
\text{Spike: That's what Sponono says too. (II, ii)}
\]
\[
\text{Spike: It's what I dreamed. (I, ii)}
\]

After what I have said in the previous paragraphs, it is clear that the theme of reversed pseudo-cleft sentences has known information, and that new information is in the rheme. After the pronoun or the demonstrative, it is found the copular verb in present. Then we find the nominal relative clause (identified element), introduced by *what* in the majority of the examples already mentioned, but it is also introduced by *why*, as I will show in the analysis of the corpus.

In other examples we find the *wh*- forms *where* and *how*:

\[
\text{Mrs. Makatini: That's where they stay. (I, vi)}
\]
\[
\text{Mr. Mabaso: Principal, that's how he was seen last month in Victoriatown. Remember I drew your attention to it? (II, v)}
\]

In the majority of the examples that appear in the text, the demonstrative has anaphoric reference.

**3.4 Textual Effects of Reversed Pseudo-Cleft Sentences in *Sponono***

With regard to the function of reversed pseudo-clefts, it is mainly used to underline something in the previous context.
In the following example Sponono is having a conversation with Elizabeth, the girl he loves, and wants to show himself as somebody good, i.e. he wants to emphasize his good qualities. The demonstrative that refers back to the good characteristic that Sponono wants to highlight:

Sponono: Did you ever think of me as a protector of the small kids? Well, that’s what I am. The smallest of the small kids is Ha’penny, and I look after him. If anyone touches him, there’s trouble. If the Principal wants to know about him, he comes to me. (I, ii)

The next example is the only one in which we find the pronoun it introducing the structure. It refers back to Spike’s dream before his wedding with Elizabeth. This example is important because he seems to foresee that he is not going to get married and that something terrible is going to happen to him:

Spike: And then- I saw you at the top of some stairs, you called to me, I rushed to you, and when I got there—there was nothing, only a fall. And I fell. Then I woke up, and Sponono shouted to me, “Spike! Spike! Why are you crying?”
Elizabeth: You don’t think I’d do that to you?
Spike: It’s what I dreamed. (I, ii)

This example is spoken after the fight between Walter and Sponono. Walter provokes Sponono saying that Sponono always pleases the principal. The fight is the result of the tension between black boys at the reformatory. Walter hurts Sponono’s eye with a belt and Sponono has to be taken to hospital, which is considered a very serious fact by the principal and by Walter. The reversed pseudo-cleft sentence is used to express a conclusion based on what the speaker has just said.

Principal: This is a very serious thing.
Walter: I know, mereer. That is why I got permission to go to the hospital, so that I could ask Sponono to forgive me. (I, v)

Although Sponono is injured, he wants to forgive Walter and he thinks that the principal should forgive Walter also. The reversed pseudo-cleft sentence makes reference to the reason given by Sponono to forgive, i.e. it highlights a recurrent feature in the play i.e., the relationship between forgiveness and punishment. The reversed pseudo-cleft sentence announces what is going to be the main topic of the next sentence. This is the only example of reversed pseudo-cleft that is negative, and it shows a
clear contrast between the reversed pseudo-cleft and the sentence following it.

Sponono: *Mereer, what good is it to forgive a person if you mean to punish him afterwards? This is not forgiveness mereer*
Principal: *You are lucky Sponono is so generous. He believes that if you are forgiven, you cannot be punished. Now that is not the reason why I am not punishing you. I am punishing you because I still hope you will learn that you cannot strike whenever you want to. Therefore you are dismissed with a reprimand. Your belt will be taken away from you, and a softer one will be given to you. If you will take my advice, you will never wear such a belt again for the rest of your life.* (I, v)

After Sponono has stolen money from Mr. and Mrs. Makatini, there is a heightened tension in the reformatory and the principal and Mr. Mabaso (the principal’s assistant) are afraid and quite nervous. He is aware of the dangerous personality of Sponono. The cleft sentence used by the principal emphasizes that he is frightened. The reversed pseudo-cleft sentence spoken by Mr. Mabaso refers back to the terrible things that Sponono or any other reformatory boy could do, the reversed pseudo-cleft sentence is used as a conclusion based on what the speaker has just said.

Principal: *I get anxious. When boys get out on leave, I never rest till the last one’s back. But it’s the telephone that frightens me—at night, I mean. I know that a man could take the life’s work of a man, and break it to pieces in a minute. Brutal assault. Murder, rape.*
Mr. Mabaso: *That is what Sponono could do.*
Principal: *If he did—that might finish me.* (II, i)

Before the wedding, Spike is quite nervous and Elizabeth points out that she is there to support him. This is one of the few examples in which the demonstrative has cataphoric reference. The following example points out the mutual love between Spike and Elizabeth before their wedding:

Spike: *If it weren’t for you, Elizabeth, what would have become of me?*
Elizabeth: *That’s what I’m for.*
*That’s what I’m promising tomorrow. To love and to comfort and to keep, not only when you are well, but when you are sick too.* (II, ii)

The next example appears in one of the moments of tension in the play: after Spike is found dead, Walter accused Sponono of being responsible of the crime because he had been seen near the place where Spike was found. The principal interrogates Sponono and Mr Mabaso refers back to the way in which Spike was seen:

*Sponono: Mereer, you know where I was when Spike was killed.*
Walter: How can you know, mereeer, when he has this secret door in the Games Room?
Principal: What secret door?
Walter: Behind the boxes in the Games Room.
Mr. Mabaso: Principal, that’s how he was seen last month in Victoriatown. Remember I drew your attention to it? (II, v)

Again we find another example related to the importance of forgiveness. Sponono asks Mrs Makatini why she forgave the boy who stole her money. The reversed- pseudo-cleft presents Mrs Makatini’s conclusion, based on what Sponono has just said:

Sponono: Why did you forgive him?
Was it not, Mrs. Makatini, because you hoped that if you forgave him, that the second boy would grow more and more like the first one, until the only one was the good one after all?
Mrs. Makatini: Yes, that is what I thought. (III)

4. Similarities and Differences Between the Use of Cleft and Reversed Pseudo-Cleft Sentences in the Play

The marked thematic structures under analysis add a special meaning to the play since they are used in climactic situations with the purpose of emphasizing in the case of cleft sentence, or referring back to something already said in the case of reversed pseudo-clefts. Clefts and reversed pseudo-clefts are used differently to provide different textual effects. It is evident from a formal point of view that cleft sentences create a local thematic structure through the predicative formula “it + be”. In this way, the predicative element becomes the marked focus of the predication, as it happens in It was my eye […] that belongs to the cleft sentence It was my eye that was hurt, not yours (I, v). From the semantic point of view, cleft sentences are identifiers since they establish a relationship of identification between two entities, the identified and the identifier. Cleft sentences contrast with something previously said or emphasize a fact that is important for the development of the play. The fact that cleft sentences are used by the protagonists in some of the most important moments of the play underlines that this structure is used to emphasize, to underline a determined part of the information, or to highlight feelings or emotions.

After the analysis of our corpus of examples it is obvious that there are more reversed pseudo-clefts (65%) than clefts (35%) in the play. The reason for this is that reversed pseudo-clefts are very much used in conversations because they are useful to refer to something previously said. The structure of cleft sentences is quite common in writing since the
combination theme/new information is marked, and normally contrastive. The cleft sentence in written English helps the reader to be conscious of assuring or denying something in a categorical way. At the same time, this syntactic structure is also important in the textual organization of discourse, since it lets us emphasize fundamental information in a determined text. We cannot forget that written texts, in addition to being written to be read, may be written to be read as if spoken, as is the case of dialogue elements in plays.

Reversed pseudo-cleft sentences are mainly used in dialogues or in more informal situations than cleft sentences. It is not a very common structure in other genres such as novels or short stories. Reversed pseudo-cleft sentences give vividness to the narration because they make reference to information already mentioned. If this is combined with the fact that the majority of the verbs are in present tense because they refer to habitual actions or that are taking place in that moment, the vividness is even greater.

This structure is normally introduced by the demonstratives this and that with anaphoric reference but in our corpus all the examples are introduced by that except one, which is introduced by it. The theme has known information although it is emphatic, which means that it hardly adds any information; that is one of the reasons why this structure is suitable in informal situations. As it happens with the beginning of cleft sentences, the theme in reversed pseudo-clefts has a low degree of Communicative Dynamism because it refers back to something previously said, and it hardly gives some information to the hearer. On the other hand, the rheme has a high degree of Communicative Dynamism since this is the part of the structure in which new information is found.

The demonstrative is not the focus of the information, which is on the identified element, introduced by a wh-. The wh- element appears always at the end of the structure, i.e. reversed pseudo-clefts accomplish the principles of “end-focus” and “end-weight” because they move from low to high information value and the longest and heaviest part of the sentence comes last in both structures.

By using reversed pseudo-clefts, the author directs the attention of the listener or reader to something in the immediate context that he is going to use as theme in the following structure.

In contrast with reversed pseudo-cleft sentences, cleft sentences are oriented towards new information, i.e., new information is emphasized through the thematic predication. Since cleft sentences normally present new information at the beginning of the structure, this part of the information is not so dependent on the previous discourse as it is in reversed pseudo-clefts, which start with known information.
When reversed pseudo-clefts are found, the theme-rheme sequence is reversible, which does not happen in clefts. In cleft sentences, the emphasis and the high degree of Communicative Dynamism is placed on the highlighted element. On the contrary, the reversed pseudo-cleft puts emphasis on the subject and high degree of Communicative Dynamism is placed on the rheme. Biber et al. (1999:960) point out another difference: “Wh-clefts are less flexible than it-clefts in that they cannot be used to focus on a prepositional phrase, an adverb phrase, or an adverbial clause.”

After what has been said in the previous paragraphs it is evident that there is a relationship between the linguistic structure chosen by the author and the situation in which it is used, i.e., there is a relationship between medium and linguistic structure as Leckie-Tarry declares:

> Far from being arbitrary, the relationships between medium and linguistic structure, like those between contextual factors and medium, are functionally motivated. This is not to say that there is a one-to-one relationship between function and form, but that there is a probabilistic relationship between types of situation and types of linguistic structure, and given that specific situations are simply cross-sections of whole societies, whole cultures, there is a probabilistic relationship between types of culture and types of linguistic structure. (Leckie-Tarry 1995: 52)

There are some similarities between both structures. Since they are both thematization structures, they put emphasis at the beginning of the structure, as it happens in clefts with the part of the structure following it is or it was.

**5. Conclusions**

The grammar of the English language is a very rich and complex system since there is a great potential available for the writer or speaker, as it has been seen with the analysis of two syntactic structures. I have tried to join the marked syntactical structures under analysis with their use so that it can be clearly seen the relationship between language, context and function. The different selections of marked syntactical structures made by the writer are determined by the description of the social reality described in the play, which is clearly characterised by the apartheid period in South Africa. As Halliday (1979:200) declares:

> […] the hypothesis will be that (i) each of the semantic components typically generates a different kind of structural mechanism as its output, or realization; and that (ii) these different types of structure are non-arbitrarily related to the kinds of meaning they express.
Texts can be viewed as patterned choices in language and all choices have an effect on the interpretation of the text. With the analysis of the examples I have made clear that grammar and lexis are never totally separated from one another and that the social part of grammar is responsible of many of the choices made by speakers or writers.

The reversed pseudo-cleft sentence is more common than the cleft sentence in the play since this structure tends to be used in dialogues or conversations due to being oriented towards new information. In this last structure, new information is emphasized through thematic predication.

The recurrent use of two thematization processes in the play highlights the feelings and thoughts of the main characters in the play. It is evident that there is a clear relationship between the context in which the examples are used and the linguistic structure; there is a clear connection between marked syntactic structures and the function they have in the play. I can then conclude that profound feelings and emotions are attempted throughout the whole play, and are expressed with clefts and reversed pseudo-clefts.

An important implication from the functional perspective of language from which I have analysed the examples is that language and context are interrelated, in other words, there is a clear relationship between language and social structure that is present in Sponono; that is the reason why I have applied concepts related to the social function of language such as field, tenor and mode to the analysis of the play.

I agree with Halliday et al. (1964:52) in that “the relationships between medium and linguistic structure, like those between contextual factors and medium, are functionally motivated”. From this I can deduce that “there is a probabilistic relationship between types of situation and types of linguistic structure”. By ‘medium’ I understand the channel of communication used.

Systemic Functional Linguistics has been chosen as the linguistic framework for this article because I am interested in studying how language is used in its context, i.e., in the period in which Alan Paton wrote. In this way, different recurrent elements in the language of the play will be explained by reference to their function in the total linguistic system. Physical properties of texts anchor the text within social circumstances and relations. By giving attention to the physical properties of texts, creativity is located in writing within a framework of concrete social forces.

Since systemic meaning is not independent from context, each of the examples I have presented appears in the appropriate context and in the appropriate discourse situation. In the same way, the literary text, as the one under analysis, is considered an authentic text because in it we find the real language in context.

In the examples of the play it is seen how the use of language made by the author is the union through which we can perceive his ideology or world
view, and the social reality that he wants to describe. In this way, the literary text becomes a source of meanings because it shows the relationship between text and social reality.

References


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