

Alfred Toth

Presentative strategies in Latin. A preliminary approach.

1. Little is known about the category of presentative strategies, and this is true both for thorough investigations of single languages as well as in a cross-linguistic perspective (e. g. Aikhenvald 2004, Carvajal 2020, DeLancey 1997, Dol 2007, Wehr 1984). In the present article, I will try to establish the basic grammatical means which Latin uses for introducing discourse and sentence topics (cf. already Toth 1994). I have restricted myself to the language of Petronius. For the respective translations I have used basically the English one by Heseltine (Petron 1925), or, if their translations seemed more ‘appropriate’, the ones by Ehlers (Petronius 1983) and Schnur (Petronius 1968), respectively).

2. Topic introduction

2.1. “Topic-less” sentences

Topic-less sentences serve solely for the introduction of an NP as a new topic in discourse or in a sentence. They are mostly known as openings of fairy tales.

Es war einmal ein alter König, der hatte eine Tochter, die war die schönste Jungfrau auf der Welt. (Grimms Märchen)

fuit tamen faber qui fecit phialam vitream, quae non frangebatur (51, 1)

Einmal aber gab es einen Handwerker (Schnur).

matrona quaedam Ephesi tam notae erat pudicitiae, ut vicinarum quoque gentium feminas ad spectaculum sui evocaret.

Es war einmal eine Dame in Ephesus, deren Sittsamkeit in so hohem Rufe stand, daß selbst Frauen aus den Nachbarländern sich aufmachten, sie anzustauen (Ehlers)

erat instead of *fuit* at the beginning of a sentence appears only 2 times in Petronius. The first occurrence is a topic introduction strategy

erat autem venalicium <cum> titulis pictis (29, 3)

Da war ein Sklavenmarkt abgemalt mitsamt den Reklameplakaten: ... (Schnur),

the second, however, is a description of an already introduced topic.

(nactus ego occasionem persuadeo hospitem nostrum, ut mecum ad quintum miliarium veniat.) erat autem miles, fortis tamquam Orcus (62, 3)

(Ich benütze die Gelegenheit und kriege einen Gast von uns herum, bis zum fünften Meilenstein mitzukommen.) Nun, das war ein Soldat, schneidig wie der Satan (Ehlers)

2.2. “Hanging” topics

Rather than classifying hanging topics as left dislocations, I shall consider them “short-cuts” from explicit topic introductions by elimination of the VP (cf. 2.1).

Ein alter König, der hatte eine Tochter, die ...

matrona inter primas honesta, Philomela nomine, quae ... (140, 1)

Eine Dame aus den ersten Kreisen der Gesellschaft namens Philomela, die ... (Ehlers)

However, mere NPs do not serve for the introduction of a new topic, but as a strategy for topic change, especially for marking the resumption of old or known topics:

(argentum in ostiarii illius cella plus iacet, quam quisquam in fortunis habet.) familia vero — babae babae! — non mehercules puto decumam partem esse quae dominum suum noverit. (37, 9)

And his slaves! My word! I really don't believe that one out of ten of them knows his master by sight

Since this strategy belongs to the well-researched “quod attinet ad NP” strategies, we will not further research them at this point.

2.3. Presentative sentences

They are generated by further reducing the original topic introduction strategy in (2.1.) via the intermediate stage (2.2):

Ein alter König hatte eine Tochter. Die ...

Diomedes et Ganymedes duo fratres fuerunt. horum soror erat Helena. (59, 4)

Diomede and Ganymede were two brothers. Helen was their sister.

2.4. Further strategies

Instead of esse with subject-verb inversion, we find the following type with habere and object-verb inversion:

habebamus tunc hominem Cappadocem, longum, valde audaculum et qui valebat (63, 5)

Es war zu der Zeit ein Kerl aus Kappadokien bei uns, baumlang, ein ganz dreister Geselle und gut beieinander (Ehlers)

Cf. also

et habebam in domo qui mihi pedem opponerent hac illac (57, 10)

And there were people in the house who put out a foot to trip me up here and there.

Diathesis with *videri*:

Videbatur mihi secundum quietem Priapus dicere (104, 1)

Mir erschien Priapus im Traum und sprach: ...

Generally, the passive diathesis, amongst having many other functions, serves as a means for topic introduction:

dicto citius de vicinia gallus allatus est, quem Trimalchio iussit ut aeno coctus fieret. (74, 4)

He had scarcely spoken, when the cock was brought in from somewhere near. Trimalchio ordered him to be cooked in a saucepan.

3. Presentative movement

In Latin, presentative movement (cf. Hetzron 1971) necessarily involves inversion. Pinkster's example (cf. Pinkster 1988, p. 268) also calls this type of topic introduction strategy "presentative". His example is quite impressive:

apud Helvetios longe nobilissimus *fuit* et ditissimus *Orgetorix* (Caes. 1, bell. Gall. 2, 1)

In Petronius, we find, among other examples for V-S inversion:

stabat inter haec *Giton*. (24, 5)

Unterdessen stand Giton da (Ehlers)

venerat iam tertius *dies*, id est expectatio liberae cenae (26, 7)

Schon war der dritte Tag da, und das hieß : Aussicht auf ein zwangloses Souper (Ehlers)

assidebat aegrae fidissima *ancilla* ... (111, 4)

Bei ihr saß, ihren Kummer zu teilen, eine treue Magd ... (Schnur)

Besides, there is also O-S inversion used in presentative moment (cf. Wehr 1984, p. 20 s.). However, in Petronius, there are only very few and not-so-significant examples. In addition, many of these examples combine presentative movement with other topic marking strategies (cf., e. g., Petron. 115, 7).

Cum ego negarem me agnoscere domum, *video* quosdam inter titulos nudasque *meretrices* furtim spatiantes (7, 3)

I was saying that I did not remember it, when I noticed some men and naked women walking cautiously about among placards of price

Nos interim vestiti errare coepimus, immo iocari magis et circulis accedere, cum subito *videmus senem calvum*, tunica vestitum russea, inter pueros capillatos ludentem pila (27, 1)

We began to take a stroll in evening dress to pass the time, or rather to joke and mix with the groups of players, when all at once we saw a bald old man in a reddish shirt playing at ball with some long-haired boys.

An unclear example (because followed by a *lacuna*), is:

Circumferebat Aegyptius puer clibano argenteo panem (35, 6)

Ein Ägypterbub reichte auf einer Silberpfanne Brot herum (Ehlers)

4. Topic introduction with lexical markers

Cf. Danckaert 2014, Kroon 1989, 1994, Toth 1994.

4.1. quidam

nec diu moratus rusticus quidam familiaris oculis meis cum muliercula comite propius accessit (12, 3)

In a little while a countryman, whom I knew by sight, came up with a girl

4.2. unus

(itaque cum maesti deliberaremus quonam genere praesentem evitaremus procellam,) unus servus Agamemnonis interpellavit trepidantes et ... (26, 8)

(We were making some melancholy plans for avoiding the coming storm,) when one of Agamemnon's servants came up as we stood hesitating, and said ...

4.3. ille

(Lichas Tarentinus ... onus deferendum ad mercatum conducit.) hic est Cyclops ille et archipirata, cui vecturam debemus (101, 5)

This is the ogre and pirate king to whom we owe our passage

4.4. nam

(Philargyro etiam fundum lego et contubernalem suam, Carioni quoque insulam et vicesimam et lectum stratum.) nam Fortunatam meam heredem facio, et commendo illam omnibus amicis meis (71, 3)

I am making Fortunata my heir, and I recommend her to all my friends.

4.5. nam NP quidem

("aliquando, inquam, totum me, Fortuna, vicisti!"). nam Giton quidem super pectus meum positus diu animam egit (101, 1)

For Giton, who was sprawling over me, had already fainted

4.6. et NP quidem

(ad sinistram enim intransibis non longe ab ostiarii cella canis ingens, catena vinctus, in pariete erat pictus superque quadrata littera scriptum CAVE CANEM.) et collegae quidem mei riserunt (29, 2)

Nun, meine Herren Kollegen lachten (Ehlers)

4.7. at NP quidem

(servavit nos tamen atriensis, qui interventu suo et canem placavit et nos trementes extraxit in siccum.) at Giton quidem iam dudum <se> servatione acutissima redemerat a cane (72, 10)

Ja, Giton – der hatte sich schon längst auf höchst raffinierte Weise von dem Hund losgekauft (Ehlers)

4.8. enim

(et facinus indignum, aliquis ovillam est et tunicam habet.) apes enim ego divinas bestias puto ... (56, 6)

It is a gross outrage when people eat lamb and wear shirts. Yes, and I hold the bees to be the most divine insects ... (Heseltine)

Die Bienen halte ich ja für geniale Tiere (Ehlers)

4.9. autem

dumque loquimur, sera sua sponte delapsa cecidit reclusaeque subito fores admiserunt intransentem. mulier autem erat operto capite ... (16, 3)

It was the veiled woman ... (Heseltine)

Nun, es war eine vermummte Frau, und sie sagte: ... (Ehlers)

4.10. vero

"videris tamen, inquit, non ero tui similis. si quid vis, fac iterum". ego vero deposita omni offensa cum puero in gratiam redii (87, 6)

Ich, ja ich vergaß alle Kränkung und schloß mit dem Knaben wieder Frieden (Ehlers)

4.11. igitur

una igitur in tota civitate fabula erat (111, 5)

There was but one opinion throughout the city

4.12. ergo

(matrona quaedam Ephesi tam notae erat pudicitiae, ut vicinarum quoque gentium feminas ad spectaculum sui evocaret.) haec ergo cum virum extulisset ... (111, 2)

So when she had buried her husband ...

4.13. itaque

(invasit eum Trimalchio et osculari diutius coepit.) itaque Fortunata, ut ex aequo ius firmum approbaret ... (74, 9)

So Fortunata, to assert her rights at law ...

5. Evidentiality and mirativity

5.1. Ø + V-S inversion

(uterque nostrum religiosissimis iuravit verbis inter duos perituum esse tam horribile secretum.) intraverunt palaestritae quamplures et nos legitimo perfusus oleo refecerunt. (21, 4)

A number of attendants came in

5.2. subinde + inversion

subinde intraverunt duo Aethiopes capillati cum pusillis utribus (34, 4)

Darauf traten zwei langhaarige Mohrenbuben mit winzigen Schläuchen ein (Ehlers)

5.3. et

For apodosis marking and “parahypotaxis” cf. Wehr (1984, p. 153 ss.).

sed quomodo dicunt — ego nihil scio, sed audivi — quom Incuboni pilleum rapuisset, et thesaurum invenit (38, 8)

People do say—I know nothing, but I have heard—that he pulled off a goblin's cap and found a fairy hoard

5.4. repente

(postero die, cum poneremus consilium, cui nos regioni crederemus,) repente video corpus humanum circum actum levi vortice ad litus deferri (115, 7)

I suddenly saw a man's body caught in a gentle eddy and carried ashore

5.5. et repente

(avidius ad pompam manus porreximus,) et repente nova ludorum remissio hilaritatem hic refecit. (60, 5)

and a sudden fresh turn of humour renewed our merriment

5.6. nam repente

(nec diu mirari licuit tam elegantes strophas;) nam repente lacunaria sonare coeperunt totumque triclinium intremuit (60, 1)

suddenly there came a noise from the ceiling

5.7. subito

(cum ergo illum mater misella plangeret et nos tum plures in tristimonio essemus,) subito <stridere> strigae coeperunt (63, 4)

suddenly the witches began to screech

In the following example, subito appears in the main clause and not in the apodosis (cf. Wehr 1984, pp. 159 ss.)

subito intraverunt duo servi, tamquam qui rixam ad lacum fecissent (70, 4)

Suddenly two slaves came in who had apparently been fighting at a water-tank

5.8. et subito

at ille circumminxit vestimenta sua, et subito lupus factus est. (62, 6)

He made a ring of water round his clothes and suddenly turned into a wolf

5.9. ecce

(ego sum ancilla Quartillae, cuius vos sacrum ante cryptam turbastis.) ecce ipsa venit ad stabulum petitque ut vobiscum loqui liceat (16, 4)

Bitte sehr, da kommt sie selbst ins Quartier und möchte euch sprechen dürfen (Ehlers)

(obiter et vernaculae quae sunt, meliusculae a Graeculis fient.) ecce intra hos dies scripsit, ut illi ex India semen boletorum mitteretur. (38, 4)

Denk mal an, dieser Tage hat er geschrieben, daß man ihm aus Indien Champignonsporen schicken soll! (Ehlers)

5.10. et ecce

(cum extra triclinium) clamor sublatus est ingens), et ecce canes Laconici etiam circa mensam discurrere coeperunt. (40, 2)

(when a great shout was raised outside the dining-room,) and in came some Spartan hounds too, and began running round the table

tu si aliubi fueris, dices hic porcos coctos ambulare. et ecce habituri sumus munus eccellente in triduo die festa (45, 4)

Du da wirst sagen, wenn du anderswo gewesen bist, daß hier die Säue gebraten umherlaufen. Und paß auf, in drei Tagen gibt's bei uns ein delikateses Spiel, am Feiertag (Ehlers)

5.11. mehercules

(quis autem grabatum ilium erexit aut quid sibi vult tam furtiva molitio?) vos mehercules ne mercedem cellae daretis, fugere nocte in publicum voluistis (95, 3)

Bei Gott, ich glaube, ihr wolltet euch um den Mietpreis drücken und euch nachts heimlich fortmachen (Schnur)

Cf. also 37, 9 (quoted above).

Further thorough research is necessary in order to find more presentative strategies and to change or adjust some of the ones established here.

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Address of the author:

Prof. Dr. Alfred Toth, 8225 East Speedway, Apt. 1013, Tucson, AZ 85710 (USA)