

PARALLEL TOO

Bruce Fraser

Boston University

1. Initial comments

The English formative too functions in three distinct ways, illustrated by the examples in (1):

- (1) i) You are too noisy (for me to concentrate)
 [Excessive too]
 ii) A: You can't do it. B: I can TOO (do it)
 [Adversative too]
 iii) John saw Mary and I did, too [Parallel too]

Excessive too occurs pre-adjectivally and functions as an intensifier, with the rough gloss of "to an excessive extent." Adversative too occurs after the tensed element of the verb phrase in a positive declarative sentence, requires emphatic stress, and signals the speaker's emphatic affirmation of some predication previously denied by another speaker. Finally, Parallel too (hereafter only too) usually occurs in sentence-final position (although it may occasionally occur elsewhere) and signals a parallelism between the present utterance and an earlier one.¹

Papers by Green (1973), Kaplan (1984), and Goddard (1986) deal in part with aspects of too. My purpose in the present paper is to extend the work found in these earlier efforts. I will first characterize the signalling function of too, and will then show how this characterization accounts for certain restrictions on its occurrence.

¹Although parallel too is often viewed as synonymous with forms such as also, in addition, as well, it is far more restrictive:

- a. It happened then. John left. Sam left. Also/*too Harry left
 b. How is John? Also, how is Mary?/*How is Mary, too?

2. The Function of Parallel too

To begin, too is a focus particle, one which occurs in the second of two sentences which differ primarily in sentence focus.² These sentences might be spoken as a single utterance by a single individual and linked by a coordinate conjunction (e.g. and), might consist of two separate successive utterances, or might be spoken by two different speakers. This is illustrated by the examples in (2):

- (2) i) [John] knows Mary. [Harry] knows her, too
 [Harry], too, knows her
 ii) John knows [Mary], and he knows [Susan], too
 iii) John [knows] Mary; he [talks] to her, too
 iv) A: [John] knows Mary. B: Well, [Harry] knows her,
 too

Since too usually occurs in sentence-final position rather than contiguous with the focus elements, the focus assumed in the examples, normally given prominent stress, is shown by brackets, []; "A" and "B" designate different speakers.

The influence of too on the interpretation of the sentence in which it occurs is straightforward: it signals the speaker intends to emphasize that the present sentence is closely parallel to an earlier sentence in the discourse and, although the two sentences have a different focus, the non-focus content of the current too-containing sentence is to be interpreted as similar, although not necessarily as identical, to the corresponding non-focus content of the earlier sentence.

²I will take "focus" to refer to that part of a sentence which the speaker intends to highlight to the hearer. It may or may not be syntactically, and/or lexically identified or, in the cases at hand, marked only by prominent stress when uttered.

In this regard, consider the examples in (3):

- (3) i) [John] knows Mary. [Harry] knows her, too
 ii) [John] is 21 years old, and [Mary] can drink legally, too
 iii) [Harry] is sun bathing, and [I'm] relaxing, too
 iv) [She] talked to Einstein; [I] met a great scholar, too
 v) [John] is sorry about the mess. [I] apologize, too
 vi) I want the kitchen cleaned up. Your room is a mess, too
 vii) I think that [John] loves [Mary]. I wonder if he loves Sue, too
 viii) [John] can go. Can [Mary] leave/go, too?
 ix) [John] will stay. Stay, too

In (3i), the similarity of the two non-focus contents is imposed by the identity of the lexical material. However, (3ii) becomes acceptable if legal drinking is entailed by being at least 21 years old. Similarly, (3iii) only if sun bathing can be interpreted as a type of relaxing. The reverse order does not work: ?"I'm relaxing, and Harry is sun bathing, too." (3iv) is acceptable only if Einstein is taken to be a great scholar. In (3v) the hearer must interpret the entire first utterance as an implied apology, while in (3vi), the hearer must interpret both sentences as implied directives of some sort, the first to clean up the kitchen, the second to clean up the room. The focus of these sentences must be taken to be the unexpressed speaker desire for hearer action. Although the last three examples pose no new interpretation issues, they do show that it is the message content rather than markers of speaker communicative intention that is specifically affected by the presence of parallel too.³

3. Restrictions on the occurrence of Parallel too

Green (1973) suggests that too cannot occur in case there is more than one meaning difference between the two

³I am aware of one type of example which appears to violate this general pattern: symmetrical pairs such as "John loves Mary" "Mary loves John, too". I have no satisfactory explanation.

compared sentences.⁴ The unacceptability of sentences like "*John had fish and Mary had soup, too" were used to illustrate this point. However, exceptions to this constraint abound: "Pick up your other toys or they will be confiscated, too," "John loves Mary and, not surprisingly, Mary loves John, too," and "He has written a sequel to Indiana Jones, and now he wants to produce that film, too." Indeed, it is not the number of differences--however one might choose to characterize them--that plays a role in precluding the presence of too. Rather, it depends on whether or not the non-focus content of the two sentences can be viewed as sufficiently similar. Only if such similarity can be imposed on fish and soup can the above example be found to be acceptable. In contrast, since sun bathing can be viewed as a type of relaxing, (3iii) can be found acceptable. I take it to be clear that whether a hearer will achieve sufficient similarity is not a matter of grammar as has often been assumed.

Green also suggests that too is obligatory after sentential conjunctions with exactly one meaning difference.⁵ But this is far too strong a constraint, as the following sentences illustrate: "Stop and talk (*too)," "John left or he didn't leave (*too)" and "John slept and Harry did the same (*too)."

Kaplan addresses Green's proposal by claiming that too is favored, if not outright obligatory, in such one-meaning difference cases under certain, specific conditions. Rather

⁴It is not at all clear what Green and subsequent writers mean when they speak of a "meaning difference." However, in what follows, I have attempted to frame my argument independent of this difficulty.

⁵There is often an improvement in acceptability of too sentences when they are separated from the first sentence by a full stop or by an intervening utterance. Even greater acceptability occurs when the second sentence is uttered by a different speaker. I will not specifically address this issue although it will ultimately play a role in a complete analysis of too.

Indeed, but signals some non-focus contrast which, if not found in the hearer's interpretation, renders a sentence such as (6ii) unacceptable. But too is not the obligatory saviour. And when it does occur, as in (6i), it functions as in other cases, although its signal of emphasis could certainly be considered to be the "second contrast."

Finally, let us consider the range of examples in (9) in which too is indeed unacceptable:

- (9) i) It was John who left. *It was Mary who left, too
- ii) Only John left. *Mary left, too
- iii) John left. *Even Mary left, too
- iv) Who left. *Who returned, too?
- v) What can you see? *What can John see, too?
- vi) How is John? *How is Mary, too?
- vii) Maybe John is in Boston. *Mary is there, too

The cleft sentence construction of (9i) signals that "John" is the sole individual who left at the time of consideration; the same information is signaled by the "only" in (9ii). Since the too in the second sentence signals a similar, parallel leaving, in contradiction to what was explicitly denied earlier, the results are unacceptable. The same sort of account applies to (9iii) with "even."

In the sentences (9iv-vi), the interrogative form (who, what, and how) is necessarily the utterance focus; but the focus of too must be "Mary" in each case, thereby creating, once again, an unacceptable contrast. And finally, in (9vii) the "maybe" is not a framing device (such as "I wonder" in (3vii), above) but is a so-called modal particle which signals a modification of the speaker's attitude towards the message content--"X is in Boston." Since too requires a similarity which in this case is not interpretable (definitely in Boston / maybe in Boston), the result is, once again, unacceptable.

4. Some final comments

In the foregoing few pages I have argued (not unlike Kaplan) that parallel too signals that the non-focus

material of the sentence in which it occurs is to be interpreted as similar (if not identical) with the corresponding part of an earlier sentence. The parallelism, however, extends far broader than heretofore suggested: it may lie with part of the message content, explicit markers of speaker communicative intent (e.g., a performative expression such as "I apologize") or even in the inferred speaker implied utterance force (e.g., implied directives). I have argued, as well, that there is no so-called "obligatory too," contrary to earlier work, and that such alleged cases need to be considered from a different perspective. It is my hope that the suggestions made here will make a positive contribution to a larger, more serious study of the focus particles of English which is clearly needed at this point in the study of English grammar.

References

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