FACOLTÀ DI STUDI UMANISTICI

Lingue e Comunicazione

Lingue e culture per la mediazione linguistica

Lingua Inglese 2

LESSON 5

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a.a. 2026-2027



Thematisation

- Arranging the text, attracting the reader's attention on certain parts (the most important ones for the writer's intentions & for intelligibility)
- New information is associated to known/ shared information (in the co-text or situational context)
- Known v new information – according to the writer
- The initial part of the clause, what it will be about: THEME

- The morpheme is the smallest unit of discourse v
- The smallest unit of discourse is the morpheme
- The theme is context-dependent
- The remainder of the clause is the RHEME, that functions as the new context-independent element – it holds the new info about the theme & carries most of the sentence's communicative relevance (Ulrich 152)
- Theme/rheme – subject/predicate

- When the theme appears at the beginning of the sentences -> unmarked (declarative sentences: subject)
- SVO(A) – Theme-Subject, Rheme-Object; Yes/No interrogative sentences – the theme is the subject (operator); wh- Questions, the theme is the wh- interrogative pronoun

Ex: the grandma gave a bunch of flowers to her niece; did you get a gift?; what did you get?

Deviation from normal word order

- Fronting – an element different from the subject is moved to the opening of the sentence + an element or the subject is moved to the end of the sentence
- Inversion – subject-verb inversion (mainly w/ place adverbials moved to the front), subject/operator inversion (w/ restrictive or negative adverbial)
- Clefting – division of the sentences into 2 clauses, each w/ its own verb (anticipatory subject *it* + verb *to be … that*)

- Pseudo-clefting – *wh-* pronoun becomes the subject to foreground another clause element
- Left & right dislocation – used to foreground elements. *Left disl.* to anticipate identification (marked themes), *right disloc*. to postpone identification (cataphoric subsitute theme related to the postponed theme) – mainly in informal spoken discourse
- End-focus – focal element is at the end (written discourse)

- Active/passive voice – the person who does the action is the subject/theme in the former, in the later what matters is not the agent but the person or thing influenced by the verb
- The focus moves from what or who causes the happening to the happening itself
- Know v new: Julia lost her doll v the doll was lost by Julia
- Double object verbs – text dynamism
- Impersonal style

- Focus on the verb: the emphatic operators do/did -> a contrast, the rejection of a previous remark in the co-text or context
- Also emotive emphasis: personal worry, blame or grumpiness

Thematic progression

- Communication evolves through the theme/rheme division, alternation, of clauses
- Known -> new = known -> new
- Theme + rheme: communicative dynamism of successive sentences in the text, where the theme carries the lowest degree of communicative dynamism & the rheme drives the communication forward (Ulrich 162)
- Functional organization of the clause in terms of theme & rheme = FSP (functional sentence perspective, Firbas 1964, Danes 1974)

Recognizable patterns

- Overall thematic structure and rhetorical purpose of the text
- Thematic progression: the choice & ordering of the theme & rheme in relation to superior text units (paragraphs, chapters) and the whole text (Ulrich 163)

- Linear thematisation of rhemes

T1 -> R1

I

T2 -> R2

I

T3 -> R3

The new house was built by Mr. Jones. He was …

- Thematic progression with a constant theme (subsequent themes are related to the first)

T1 -> R1

I

T1 -> R2

I

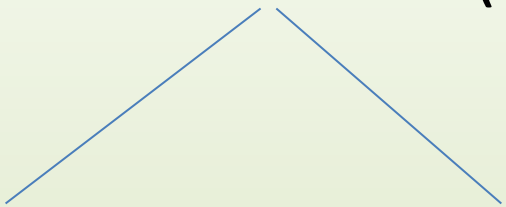
T1 -> R3

The child was a good boy. He used to play fairly. He went to school …. He …

Typical of advertising (theme = brand)

- Thematic progression by means of a split rheme

T1 -------→R1 (A can be divided into B & C. B is …. C is …)



T2 -> R2 T3 -> R3

- Thematic progression w/ subsequent themes derived from a *hypertheme* or *metatheme*

hypertheme

T1 -> R1

T2 -> R2

T3 -> R3

(Sardinia is … Its sea … the mountains … The southern region…)

- Thematic progression w/ subsequent constant themes related to the first rheme

T1 -> R1

|

T2 -> R2

|

T2 -> R3

|

T2 -> R4

Ex. Kids drink milk. Milk is white. Milk comes from cows. …

- Thematic progression w/ subsequent new themes related to a constant rheme

T1 -> R1

T2 -> R1

T3 -> R1

Ex. Kids drink milk. Poppies drink milk. Adults drink milk