

Analysis on Thematic Structures of Passage Reading in CET-4

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Abstract: Theme specifies and changes the framework for interpretation of the following clause or clauses and signals the boundaries of sections in the text. The paper, based on Halliday's theories on the theme structures, devotes great attention to passage reading from 2014 to 2019 CET-4 with the main purpose of studying the application characteristics of thematic structures in the passage reading, thereby, helping readers grasp the language layouts of passages and promoting reading efficiency. The analysis indicates that the simple themes, thematic equatives, interpersonal themes, thematised comment and existential there are adopted in clauses of the abstracted passages, among which pronouns and conjunctions are commonly distributed in examination-oriented passages.

1. Introduction

Reading is a great way to acquire information, knowledge and developing thinking ability, involving in the process of comprehension, absorption, appreciation, evaluation and exploration. Besides the reading materials for obtaining information in the daily life, college students get access to intensive reading of written language in classes as well as the various examinations.

From the discourse analyst's point of view, the most wide-ranging and interesting approach must be that which considers the effect of using one sentential form rather than in the context of discourse. [1] The analysis of the process of linear organization from a sentential level plays a key role in reading comprehension, especially for students' locating the answers to the questions when they read passages. While, theme, as the starting point of the utterance, is indispensable in analyzing the syntactic structure of the discourse.

As a widely ranged national examination, College English Test is a test for those who are not majoring in English. Passage reading is a decisive factor among the three types of reading comprehension. In order to find out key information, readers tend to cut several concerns to answer questions based on passages. While theme concerns the patterns of information flow and the role of each utterance part in articles is evaluated for its semantic contribution to the whole discourse.

2. Definition of Theme

According to Mathesius (1942), each simple sentence has a theme 'the starting point of the utterance and a rheme, everything else that follows in the sentence which consists of 'what the speaker states about, or in regard to. [2]

The Prague school defines theme as a point of departure of a sentence.

Halliday (1994) believes that the theme, generally, can be identified as element which comes in first position in the clause, and theme is the starting point for the message and the ground which the clause is taking off. [3]

3. Classification of Theme

Based on Halliday's theories on thematic structures, theme can be classified into the simple theme and the multiple theme. Simple theme is a simply label that we used to suggest that meaning

is attached to in the clause, where the utterance comes from. While sometimes there might be more than a single structure in this position, then there are multiple themes in the clause. Typical ordering of a multiple theme is textual, interpersonal and experiential.

4. Analysis of Theme in Passage Reading

With the combination of qualitative and quantitative analysis, passages from 2014 to 2019 CET-4 with 6 reading materials in each year are abstracted as the research target. First, the articles are cut into several parts based on the unit of clauses. And then theme and rheme of each clause are separated from each other. Finally, the application of thematic structures are analysed in detail.

4.1. Simple Theme

When the theme of a clause consists of only one structural element, and that element is represented by only one unit shown by one nominal group, adverbial group or prepositional phrase, it is called a simple theme. [4] Specifically, the application of simple themes in passages are listed as follow.

Simple themes including nominal group, prepositional phrase and adverbial group are employed in CET-4. For instance, Some critics say it is a luxury and shouldn't be free to families able to pay. Some critics is a simple noun phrase in the clause, composing a simple theme. Besides the person, there are few nouns or noun phrases used as simple themes, such as the clause The most difficult step in programming values will be deciding exactly what we believe is moral. The superlative form followed by a prepositional phrase is the theme of this clause. Moreover, a typical character is that there is a parenthesis after the simple themes. For example, the element launched 50 years ago in the clause The federal Head Start program, launched 50 years ago, has served more than 30 million children appears between the subject and the predicate to determine the theme. Finally, adverbs are put before the nominal theme to emphasize and the most common one is even like the clause in Even shorter times away from work for working fathers are already difficult.

With regard to the prepositional phrases, fixed expressions are cited for many times to indicate the themes, like in general, for example, on the other hand, etc. Whereas, the prepositional phrase which is applied as the theme usually starts with by. As is seen in the clause, By "following individuals over time," Salthouse said, " we gain insight in cognition changes.

Adverbial groups are less frequently distributed. For example, in the clause now we're capable of shouldering social responsibilities and making contributions to the country with our own efforts the lexicon now appears at the beginning to indicate the theme, the starting point of the utterance.

However, in some cases a simple theme contains two or more groups or phrase complex and functions as a single structural element. This comfortable cycle, in which the rhythms of the day helped shape the rhythms of the meals, gave rise to the custom of the large midday meal. In this comparatively complex clause, this comfortable cycle is followed by the modification in which the rhythms of the day helped shape the rhythms of the meals and the two components constitute a single structure to form the theme of this clause[5-7].

4.2 Textual Theme and Interpersonal Theme

The textual theme refer to any combination of continuative, structural and conjunctive. A typical feature of passages in CET-4 is that quite a few imperative sentences are covered, which are mood marking themes with finite verbal operators and without preceded by another experiential element. The sentences in this case are Take a look at your own network. and Break the tension with smiles and humor to reinforce the idea that this is friendly discourse.

A structure theme is any of the obligatorily thematic elements, such as the conjunctions and WH-relative words. In the clause Whether you can successfully change your personality as an adult is the subject of a longstanding psychological debate, the subject is led by whether is the theme. Nevertheless, such structure is rarely adopted. It is obvious that conjunctions are used as themes with high frequency, presenting coordinating relations, adversative relations and hypothetical relationship, etc. The discourse markers of condition if in the clause If you could get the right ten

thousand people to move from Silicon Valley to Buffalo, time when in When it comes to driverless cars, result so in so there was a very important interconnection between eating together" are conjunctions used as structure themes respectively. A commonly indicators of reason-result and adversatives are often employed in the written texts of reading materials. The examples of words but, whereas, and while in but among those who are open to them, every age group is similarly engaged. Whereas older generations are sometimes reluctant to adopt new technologies, While there's reason to believe that interest in self-driving cars is going up across the board come in the first position with the function to signal that the coming clause forms part of a larger structural unit, the clause complex.

An interpersonal theme is WH-interrogatives. Such cases include What does it take to make a Silicon Valley? And Why do some people live to be older than others?

4.3. Thermalizing Structures

Two or more separate elements act as a single element, occasionally presented in passages, which are said to be a single theme. For example, in the sentence what government has not yet found is the political will to put that understanding into full practice with a sequence of smart schooling that provides the early foundation. What government has not yet found is the theme and such kind of clause is known as thematic equative, which means theme is equal to rheme.

In a Thematised Comment, it is a place-holder for the subject of be in the first clause, and the real subject is the second clause. A case in this point is it's no secret that the Mediterranean diet is healthy.

Existential there in there-be structure, the departure point of the clause, can be as the theme. A case is there are two worrying features of the slowdown, indicating the process to express experiential meaning.

4.4 Other Theme Structures

Besides the research analysis above, other characteristics are clearly revealed. Taking the pronouns as an example, the same propositional content expressed with pronouns this, that, it and personal pronouns is a preference as the continuation sentence to maintain the same subject or discourse topic entity-a notion to be developed. The clause that was nothing and some show up ready is such kind of cases [8-12].

Conclusion

Every sentence forms part of a developing, cumulative instruction which tells how to construct a coherent representation. What the writer puts first or the choice of the theme will influence the interpretation of everything that follows. The detailed study on thematic structures of passage reading in CET-4 explains the basic organizational method for discourse production involves placing the main referent in subject position. It is of great value for readers to understand the written styles, grasp the topic of sentences and locate the key information. Mastery of the language features of examination-oriented passages, such as the major rates of conjunctions especially the result-so relationship and the adversative relationship which imply the emphasis on the content of the latter clause promotes the efficiency of problem solving in the examination as well as other exercises of reading comprehension.

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