5. Theme and New in Written English

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Abstract

Teachers often experience difficulties explaining to students how they should order the information in their sentences. Two concepts are helpful in this task: Theme and Information Focus. Theme is the point of departure of the clause as message. In English one can recognize Themes because they occur first in the clause. By contrast, information focus (or New, in more technical terms) is the information which is being presented as newsworthy. It contains the point of the clause, the information which the listener or reader should remember. In written language there is a tendency for New information to be presented at the end of the clause. Thus, in written language there is regularly a periodic motion from Theme (the point of departure of the clause) to the New information (information which is being presented as newsworthy). An advertisements will be examined in detail to demonstrate the operation of Theme and New in written text and implications for teaching will be drawn.

The concepts of Theme and Rheme

Both native English speaking and non native English speaking students have difficulty ordering the words in their sentences. They often ask what the difference is between sentences such as (1) and (2).

1. *They left their examinations on the table yesterday.*
2. *Yesterday, they left their examinations on the table.*

Clearly, the answer does not lie in the world being described in the two sentences, but rather in the way that world is presented. We can say, roughly that *yesterday* receives focal attention in sentence 1, while *on the table* receives focal attention in sentence 2. By the same token, in these sentences. *They* and *Yesterday* serve an orienting function; they set up a context in which the remainder of the sentence is to be interpreted. These issues concern the flow of information in a text: how the information presented in a given sentence is to be interpreted and related to its context. That is, they concern the role of the text as message. In this paper, I will discuss the flow of information in text using a theory - Systemic-Functional linguistics - as a framework for that discussion. Systemic functional grammar is a

multi-functional view of language in which each metafunction assigns a structure to the clause. Issues concerning the flow of information are addressed in Systemic Functional linguistics under the heading of the textual metafunction.

Chart 1 presents a representative analysis of a spoken clause complex.

<table>
<tr><td></td><td colspan="2">// 4 If</td><td>he</td><td colspan="2">brings</td><td>the car</td><td>// 1 we</td><td>can</td><td>use</td><td>it //</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="5">Textual Meta-function</td><td colspan="6">Theme 1</td><td colspan="4">Rheme 1</td></tr>
<tr><td>structural</td><td colspan="2">topical</td><td colspan="3"></td><td colspan="2">topical</td><td colspan="2"></td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Theme 2</td><td colspan="3">Rheme 2</td><td colspan="2">Theme 3</td><td colspan="2">Rheme3</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="6">Given ⇨</td><td>New</td><td colspan="3">Given</td><td>New</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Inter-personal Meta-function</td><td></td><td colspan="2">Subject</td><td>Finite</td><td>Predicator</td><td>Comp-lement</td><td>Subject</td><td>Finite</td><td>Predicator</td><td>Comp-lement</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td colspan="3">Mood</td><td colspan="2">Residue</td><td colspan="2">Mood</td><td colspan="2">Residue</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Ideational Meta-function</td><td colspan="6">xβ</td><td colspan="4">α</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td colspan="2">Actor</td><td colspan="2">Material</td><td>Goal</td><td>Actor</td><td colspan="2">Material</td><td>Goal</td></tr>
</table>

Chart 1: The multifunctional structure of a clause complex.

Each heavy horizontal line separates a metafunction. Chart 1 illustrates

a) that each metafunction assigns its own structure,
b) that these structures differ in important ways, though they partially overlap, and
c) that thematic structure and information structure form part of a complex of interlocking structures.

We will turn to thematic structure first (the top three lines of the analysis in Chart I). Thematic structure assigns the functions Theme and Rheme. The clause complex has one thematic structure as a whole (Theme 1 and Rheme 1 in the top row of the chart), and each clause itself also has a thematic structure (Theme 2 and

Rheme 2 in the first clause, and Theme 3 and Rheme 3 in the second clause). In other words for the whole sentence, the dependent clause, *If he brings the car* functions as theme (Theme 1), while each clause has its own clausal theme. *He* is the theme for the first clause (Theme 2), and *we* is the theme for the second clause.

Halliday defines thematic structure primarily for the clause, but makes it clear that other units such as clause complexes also have thematic structures.[1] Thematic status is signaled in English by initial position in the clause or clause complex. The meaning of Theme is described as the 'point of departure of the message' and as 'that with which the clause is concerned' (Halliday, 1985:38). Halliday clearly intends these two wordings to be paraphrases; however, the second wording in particular tends to be associated with the notion of Topic. In my view Topic is a rather different concept. Indeed Fries (1981) and Downing (1991) explicitly attempt to disassociate the definitions of the notions Theme and Topic.[2] In my view a better description of the significance of Theme is that the Theme of a clause provides a framework for the interpretation of the clause. The Theme orients the receiver to what is about to be communicated. This orienting function is nicely described in Bäcklund's (1989) discussion of initial infinitive clauses. She suggests that initial infinitive clauses can be viewed as reflecting questions posed by an imaginary reader. In her words, '...they indicate which potential question the writer has chosen to answer.' (p. 297)

In contrast, to Thematic structure, Information structure is not directly a structure of the clause, but of the information unit. Information units are signaled in the spoken language by the tone group. Each tone group has some section which expresses information which is presented as New information. The tonic foot (the location of the so-called sentence accent) indicates 'the culmination of what is New' (Halliday, 1985: 275). In addition to information which is presented as New, information units may contain information which is presented as Given, but they do not necessarily do so. New information is information which is presented as 'newsworthy' - as worthy of the listener's attention, while Given information is presented as information which is recoverable in some way. Two points are important here. First, Given[3] and New are functions within language. It is not true that all information which happens to be new (= unfamiliar) to a listener is presented as New, nor is it true that all information which is presented as New is in fact new (= unfamiliar) information for the listener (even taking into account issues concerning differences in the knowledge and beliefs of the speaker and listener). Second, as described above, the functions of New and Given are

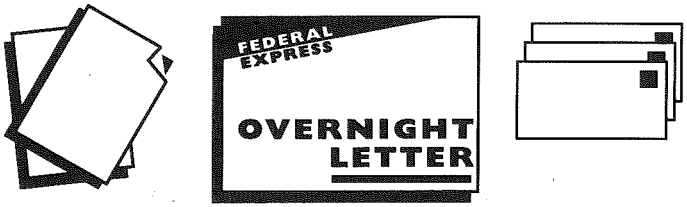
overtly signaled only in the spoken language. Clearly, written language must present some information as New. One means by which this task is achieved is through the correlation of the tone group with clause structure. A number of linguists (e.g. Chafe 1980:13, 1984:437, 1987:38 and 40, and Halliday 1985: 274) have found that in spoken English there is an unmarked association of clause structure with unit of information. Further they find a tendency to place New information toward the end of the information unit. (See for example, Clark and Haviland 1977: 13, Chafe 1987: 37.) As Halliday (1985: 276) expresses it, 'The unmarked position for the New is at the end of the information unit.' Indeed many linguists refer to the tendency to place important information toward the end of the clause with the term 'end focus'.

It is often said that writers tend to use this association of placement at the end of the clause with importance to make their written language flow naturally. If this is true, there ought to be a correlation between placement at the end of clauses and information which appears to be the focus of attention. Systemicists therefore have two theoretical constructs Theme and New. Theme is associated directly with initial position in the clause and functions as orienter to the information which is about to come, while New is associated indirectly with the end of the clause in written English. Information which is presented as New is the focus of attention. It is the newsworthy part of the message. Although systemicists have a term (*Theme*) which refers to the initial constituent of a clause or clause complex, they do not have a term which refers to the final constituent of a clause or clause complex. As a result, I have coined the term N-Rheme (for New-Rheme) to provide a convenient way of referring to the last constituent of the clause or clause complex. We can use the descriptions of Theme and N-Rheme as the source of hypotheses to predict the placement of information in written language.

1. N-Rhematic information contains the newsworthy information, information which is in focus in that message. As a result the N-Rhemes are likely to contain information which is directly relevant to the goals of the text or text segment.

2. Thematic information serves as orienter for the message which is about to come up. As a result it responds to local issues in the text and is less likely to contain meanings which are directly relevant to the goals and purposes of the text or text segment.

THE MOST COSTLY MISTAKES IN BUSINESS.



The way most businesses work today simply isn't working.

Too much time's wasted calling people who can't be reached. So connections aren't made, and deals fall through.

Too much money's spent on overpriced, overnight couriers. That devours your bottom line.

And by the time the post office delivers your bid, someone else could have the job.

That's why there's MCI Mail.©

MCI Mail is a new kind of business tool. One that lets you use your personal computer to send and receive information instantly. And inexpensively.

So instead of sending out sales information to customers in days, MCI Mail lets you do it now. You can get leads out, now. Send sales updates to all your salespeople, instantly. Receive orders the day the deal's signed. And follow up in a flash.

All for less than what you're paying for the hassles and headaches tied to the way you usually communicate.

Start moving your business ahead now—for less. Call 1-800-MCI-2255. In Washington, D.C., call 833-8484.

Now is the time for me to find out about MCI Mail.

Mail to: MCI Mail
Box 1001
1900 M Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20036

Name_____
Title_____
Company_____
Address_____
City, State, Zip_____
Tel. ( )_____

TO1

MCI Mail

NOW IS THE TIME FOR MCI MAIL.

© 1985 MCI Communications Corp. MCI Mail© is a registered service mark of MCI Communications Corp.

Figure 1: MCI Mail Ad

Written advertising appears to be a good place to explore these hypotheses, since much of written advertising is constructed to read as if it were spoken. Rather than provide a statistical analysis of the placement of information in a variety of advertisements, I will examine here the flow of information in one advertisement in some detail. Then I will try to relate what was found in this advertisement to the patterns which one of my students and I have found in a larger sample of 154 advertisements.

The advertisement I will examine in detail is the advertisement for MCI Mail reproduced in Figure 1. I have typed the text of the advertisement in Text 1, numbering each new punctuated sentence and beginning it on a new line.

I would like to focus on the use of word order in this text, showing how word order is used to emphasize certain meanings. Thus, I first need to discuss the meanings expressed in this text. It is obvious that this advertisement goes through several stages. It expresses a request (Sentences 18-20) which is preceded by a motivation for that request (sentences 1-17), and a section which helps the readers comply with the request (sentences 21-23 and the coupon). The motivation section describes a Problem which is then followed by a Solution. Of course this structure is encoded in the language and the visuals of the advertisement. Therefore it is useful to examine the language of the advertisement to see how these meanings are communicated.

As was said above, the first section of the advertisement presents a Problem. We can ask two questions:

1. What features of the language tell us that there is a problem?
2. What features tell us what that problem is?

The second question can be answered in a very general way simply by looking at the types of processes used in the motivation section of this ad (See Halliday 1994). If we look at the non-embedded processes in this text, we see that 17 out of the 20 processes are material processes.[4] That is, they are actions. These seem to be evenly distributed throughout the text. Thus, both the problem and its solution seem to center around a kind of *doing*. This result is hardly surprising, since the advertisement describes a service. However, since the service concerns communication, the absence of clear verbal processes is somewhat surprising.

Let us now return to question 1: How do we know that there is a problem? The language of punctuated sentences 1-7 provides a partial answer. One of the most

1. THE MOST COSTLY MISTAKES IN BUSINESS.
2. The way most businesses work today simply isn't working.
3. Too much time's wasted calling people who can't be reached.
4. So connections aren't made, and deals fall through.
5. Too much money's spent on overpriced, overnight couriers.
6. That devours your bottom line.
7. And by the time the post office delivers your bid, someone else could have the job.
8. That's why there's MCI Mail.
9. MCI Mail is a new kind of business tool.
10. One that lets you use your personal computer to send and receive information instantly.
11. And inexpensively.
12. So instead of sending out sales information to customers in days, MCI Mail lets you do it now.
13. You can get leads out, now.
14. Send sales updates to all your sales people, instantly.
15. Receive orders the day the deal's signed.
16. And follow up in a flash.
17. All for less than what you're paying for the hassles and headaches tied to the way you usually communicate.
18. Start moving your business ahead now - for less.
19. Call 1-800-MCI-2255.
20. In Washington, D.C., call 833-8484 [[On coupon]]
21. Now is the time for me to find out about MCI Mail
22. Mail to: MCI Mail, Box 1001, 1900 M Street, N.W., Washington D.C., 20036
    [[Coupon also has lines to fill in reader's name and address]]
23. MCI MAIL
24. NOW IS THE TIME FOR MCI MAIL
25. © 1985 MCI Communication Corp.
26. MCI Mail* is a registered service mark of MCI Communications Corp.

Text 1: MCI Mail Advertisement

obvious features of this section is the large number of negatives. There are overt grammatical negatives in *isn't working* (2), *can't be reached* (3), and *aren't made* (4). There are the implied grammatical negatives in *too much time* (3), *too much money* (5), and *over-priced* (5). There is the implied negative which arises from contrast (*someone else could have the job* (7) - implying 'not you'). There are lexical negatives in which the dictionary definition of a word includes a negative as in mistake (1),[5] wasted (3),[6] and fall through(4).[7] There is a pragmatic negation in *by the time the post office delivers your bid* (7) which implies that the post office does not deliver your bid until someone else could have the job. Finally, a number of processes describe events which are negatively valued in business. In business, connections should be made (4), deals should not fall through (4), bottom lines should not be devoured (6), nor should other people have the job you bid for (7). In other words, it is tempting to say that we know that this section describes a problem simply because of the pervasive use of negatives. That is, the problem might be one where things are not happening.

However, this is too simple an answer, for many things happen in this section of the text as well. *Most businesses work* (2), people are called (3), *money's spent* (5), *the Post office delivers your bid* (7). Also the processes which are negatively valued are expressed in positive sentences. *Time is wasted* (3), *deals fall through* (4), *That devours your bottom line* (6). First it is to be noticed that the events that take place in the context of the negations. Thus, calling people is the **means** by which time is wasted. It is true that the post office delivers the bid, but it does so too late. One can say that this Problem section presents a picture of frustrated activity. One way of getting a better focus on the nature of the problem is to examine the relations between the processes. I will use a means of discussing these relations called rhetorical structure theory (Mann and Thompson 1988, Mann, Matthiessen and Thompson 1992).

Rhetorical structure theory (= RST) views texts as consisting of hierarchically related text segments. Each relation belongs to one of a limited list of relations such as solutionhood, (in which one text segment presents a problem and a second text segment presents a solution to that problem), non-volitional result (in which one text segment presents a situation that is not a volitional action, and a second presents a situation that caused that situation), or elaboration (in which one text segment provides additional details about some aspect of the situation expressed in a second text segment). Figure 2 presents an RST analysis of the first 17 punctuated sentences of the MCI Mail advertisement - the portion of the ad which expresses

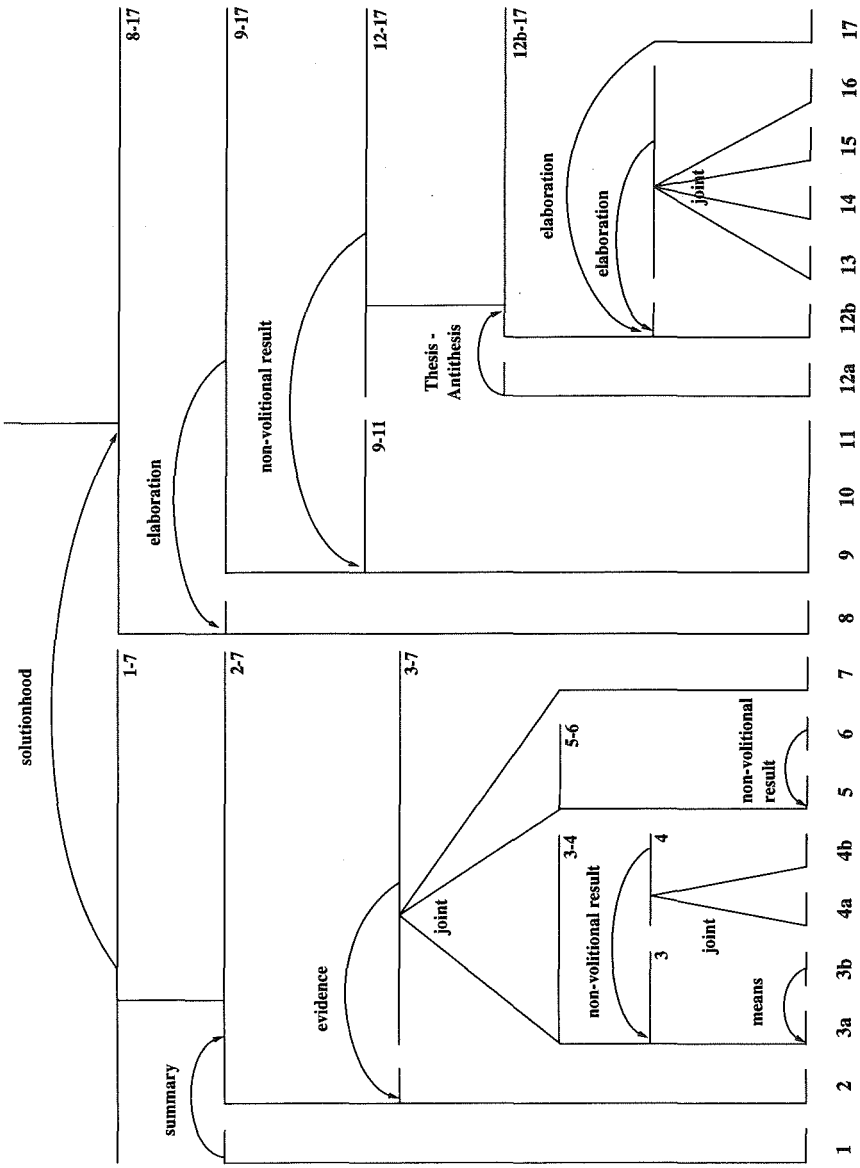


Figure 2: RST diagram of the relations between text segments in the first 17 punctuated sentences of the MCI Mail advertisement[9]

the problem and its solution. Again, sentences 1-7 express the problem. Sentence 2 expresses a generalization which describes the current situation as not working. (A negative evaluation of the current situation, and an indication of a problem.) This claim is then supported by three bits of evidence expressed in sentences 3-4, 5-6 and 7. It turns out that the first two text segments (sentences 3-4 and 5-6) express non-Volitional result. That is, the waste of time referred to in (3) is presented as the cause of the connections not being made and deals falling through described in (4). Similarly, the high cost of overnight couriers referred to in (5) is presented as the cause of the bottom line being devoured mentioned in (6). In addition sentence 7 could reasonably be interpreted as at least implying non-volitional result in which *By the time the post office delivers your bid* implies that the post office delays delivering the bid, and this delay is seen as the cause of *someone else could have the job.*[8] If we look at the consequences in this small text segment, each one is one which should not happen. They are negatively valued in the business world. Thus, the negative value attached to the description of the current situation is the indication that there is a problem. *(Figure 2)*

When we turn to analyze the causes of the current situation which are expressed in this section of the advertisement, we see that in (3a) it is the waste of time, in (5) it is spending too much money, and in (7) it is the (implied) delay in time. Of course, it is not true that these factors are the **entire** cause of the problems described. The grammatically prominant use of the lexical items *call, reach, connections, deals, courier*, and *bid*, all indicate that an important part of the problem is communication. Thus, time and money in regard to communication is brought into the reader's attention as an issue - as a **cause** of bad things happening.

Now let us turn to the solution section of the advertisement. How do we know that this section solves the problem presented in sentences 1-7? On the one hand this section is concerned largely with communication. However, communication is expressed largely as 'moving information'. Table 1 presents an analysis of the meanings expressed in each of the messages of this section. *(see previous page)*

The major verbs in this section are material processes (actions) such as *send, receive, get out*, and *follow up*. None of these verbs necessarily involved communication by definition, however, when we look at the Goals of the processes - what receives the action of the verb - we see that information is involved. The Goals are *information, sales information, leads, sales updates* and *orders*. Not only does this portion of the advertisement repeat the notion of transferring information, it also repeats the idea that this transfer can be achieved swiftly and cheaply. Every

Table 1: Cohesive harmony analysis of punctuated sentences 10-17 of MCI Mail Advertisement

S #	Agent	Actor	Instrument	Material	Goal	Circumstance	Circumstance	Circumstance
10/11	MCI Mail lets	you	use your PC to	send and receive	information		instantly	and inexpensively
12a	instead of	[you]		sending out	sales information	to customers	in days	
12b	MCI Mail lets	you		[send out]	[sales information]	[to customers]	now	
13		you		can get out	leads		now	
14	[and]	[you]		[can] send	sales updates	to all your sales people	instantly	
15	[and]	[you]		[can] receive	orders		the day the deal's signed	
16	and	[you]		[can] follow up			in a flash	
17		[you]		[can do]	all			for less than what you're paying for
[17]		[you]		[communicate]				

punctuated sentence from 10 through 17 mentions either time or expense. One can also see that MCI Mail is the factor which enables all this to happen, since it is encoded as Agent - the external cause of all these processes.

Of these ideas, which ones receive the greatest emphasis? If we look at sentences 10-17, we can see that the last constituent of each punctuated sentence refers either to time/speed, or money, or both. These expressions regularly take on the grammatical role of Circumstantial Adjuncts placed at the ends of their clauses (i.e. in the N-Rhemes of the clauses). Often they are punctuated as complete sentences, even though they are not grammatically complete. This placement and this punctuation serves to indicate that they are being presented as New information. These are meanings which are being emphasized.

Of course, given the nature of the problem presented in sentences 1-7 (and more specifically, the nature of the **cause** of the problem described in 1-7), we could predict that the notions of time and money should be emphasized in the Solution section. That is, sentences 1-7 brought speed of communications and cost of communication into our attention **as issues**, and sentences 8-17 addressed these issues in the N-Rhemes. By contrast to the information in the N-Rhemes of the

	Problem (sentences 1-7)		**Solution (sentences 8-17)**
2	The way most business work today	8	that
3a	too much time	10	
3b	calling	11	
4a	so connections	12a	instead of sending
4b	and deals	12b	MCI Mail
5	too much money	13	you
6	that (=spending too much money)	14	[you]
7	By the time the post office delivers your bid	15	[you]
		17	all

Table 2: Clause Themes in punctuated sentences 2-17 of the MCI Mail advertisement.

clauses, the information placed in the Themes of the Solution section avoid all mention of time or money.

Another way of approaching the issue of the use of thematic and N-Rhematic information is to compare the information placed in the Themes and N-Rhemes of the two sections of the text. Table 2 lists the clause Themes of the clauses in the Problem section and the Solution section of the MCI Mail ad.

Clearly the Themes of the two sections express different information. In the problem section, three of the eight Themes contain evaluations concerning time or money ((3a) *too much time*, (5) *too much money* and (6) *that* (= spending too much money on couriers). One additional Theme mentions time with no obvious evaluation ((7) *by the time the post office delivers your bid*). Two additional Themes mention concepts which are obviously connected with communication in the business world ((3b) *calling* (4a) *connections*, and (4b) *deals*). One more Theme (that of (2)) refers to business in a general way. At no point in the Problem section of this advertisement is a reference to time or money made in the N-Rheme of a clause.

When we move to the Solution portion of the advertisement, we see a very different pattern of information. Four of the 8 Themes) mention *you*. (Note that punctuated sentences 10 and 11 are interpretable only as extensions of sentence 9, and therefore constitute only part of a thematic structure which encompasses 9-11 as a whole.) *MCI Mail* is encoded as Theme in one clause, *That* (referring to the entire section 2-7) is Theme of one clause, The Theme of 12a is *sending*, and *all*, the Theme of sentence 17, refers to what you can do using MCI Mail as described in the entire sequence 13-16. None of the Themes in the solution section contains an evaluation or a reference to time or money.

Classroom Applications

What relevance do the issues discussed here have for teaching students to read and write? I would like to suggest three ways in which these issues are relevant. First, there is the obvious one of helping students become sensitive to what they write - to the signals they give their readers as to what is important, and how they can orient their readers to what is to come. For example a student of mine once wrote the paragraph given in Text 5.

1. To solve the world hunger problem, agriculturists suggest we should focus on increasing the production and improving the marketing of traditional crops such as rice, wheat, barley, corn, millet, and root crops, or on finding new ways to get more out of domesticated animals.

2. Unfortunately, many agriculturists overlook an important possibility to supplement the current system of food production.

3. A variety of unconventional foods can be used in order to solve the food shortage problem in the third world.

4. By using non-traditional species of plants and animals, many of the world's poorer nations can be fed.

Text 5: student text A

Text 5 was the first paragraph of a paper in which the student wished to discuss alternative food sources. The immediately following paragraph began this discussion by introducing one unusual food source. Here I am primarily interested in sentences 3 and 4. If we ignore the repetition in these sentences, we can see that each one mentions the concept of unconventional food sources. In addition, each one refers to the world-wide food shortage problem which was mentioned earlier. Now these ideas are essential to provide a bridge between the first sentences of the paper and the body of the paper. However, the student's point is that we need to examine new food sources, while the notion of the food shortage has already been mentioned. Thus, the reference to the new food sources should normally appear at the end of the sentence, while the reference to the food shortage problem should appear as the Theme. This student has ordered the information in her sentences in exactly the opposite way that is required.

A similar instance is provided in Text 6. Again, this is the first paragraph of a student paper.

1. Alcoholism has always been a major problem in the U.S.

2. In the past few years, though, an alarming increase in teenage

alcoholics has been found in research studies.

3. Nobody really knows what the reasons actually are, but many believe that young people have a too easy access to liquor.

Text 6: Student Text B

Here sentence (2) illustrates a problem which often arises. The student has placed information which is quite unimportant in the N-Rheme of the clause - a focal position. That is, in this context, it is perfectly obvious that findings are produced in research studies. Indeed, that information can be considered redundant, and the sentence would be improved if the last prepositional phrase were deleted, giving (2b).

2b. In the past few years, though, an alarming increase in teenage alcoholics has been found.

The result of this change is to bring *found* (a much more important idea in this context) into the N-Rheme. Another possible revision would be to move the notion of *teenage alcoholics* (another important meaning in this context) into the N-Rheme position, perhaps by changing the sentence to the active voice as in (2c).

2c. In the past few years, though, research studies have found an alarming increase in teenage alcoholics.

Notice that in (2c), even though *research studies* is still redundant information, it has not been placed in as prominent a position as it was in the original (2) (it is neither Theme nor N-Rheme) and so is not so obtrusive as it was. (Of course another possible wording would be to substitute *researchers* for *in research studies*.) Composition teachers have long known that the beginnings and endings of sentences are important. More recently linguists have investigated the phenomena of placement within the sentence and agree that the two ends are important, but they are important for different reasons. The beginning of the sentence is important because it provides a framework to interpret the message expressed in the remainder of the clause. The end of the clause is important because it indicates the point of the sentence as message; what one is trying to say.

A second implication for the teacher is that a focus on how text is constructed

can help learners become better readers and writers. If a text is interpreted as having a problem-solution structure, then what is it about the language of that text that leads us to interpret it that way? Similarly, if some element is perceived as New information, then what is it about the way that concept is expressed that leads us to interpret it as New? We cannot be satisfied with simply looking at the external situation and saying that in our view as analysts X is a problem or Y is New to the listener. If I can paraphrase the old joke about the baseball umpire "It ain't a problem unless the speaker *presents* it as a problem." "It ain't New unless the speaker *presents* it as New." We must teach our students to be sensitive to the language that writers use as they are presenting their ideas, so that the students become sensitive to the issues which are of primary concern to the writers.[10] The placement of information in the clause and sentence constitutes such a signal, and sensitizing our students to patterns in the placement of information will help them better interpret texts.

Finally, I suggest that advertising be taken seriously as effective writing. Many of us are familiar with the study of advertising as a misleading medium of communication, and many teachers devote significant class time to unraveling the logical fallacies and hidden persuasion in advertising (double speak.) On the other hand, it is obvious that advertising is successful writing in that people are led to buy products by successful advertising campaigns. Looking at advertisements as 'double speak' as is done in the United States will help protect children from the dangers of advertising, but will not address the issues of why advertising is so often successful. To do that it must be taken seriously, and studied carefully.

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Notes:

1. See Fries (1981) and Halliday (1985, 1994) for analyses of Themes at the ranks of clause complex and clause. It is worth noting that in my view these attempts to dissociate the definitions of Theme and Topic are quite consistent with Halliday's view of the notion of Theme.
2. Terms which refer to grammatical functions will be capitalized. Terms which are being used informally will be written normally.
3. A mistake is an action of opinion that is incorrect or foolish or that is not what you intended to do, or whose result is undesirable. (Sinclair et al. 1987)
4. See Halliday (1985 and 1994) for descriptions of embedded and non-embedded clauses and for a classification of process types
5. If you waste something such as time, money, or energy, you use too much of it on something that is not important, valuable, or likely to be successful. (Sinclair et al. 1987)
6. If an arrangement, plan, deal, etc. falls through, it fails or is unsuccessful before it can be completed. (Sinclair et al. 1987)
7. Winter 1977 finds a strong correlation between denials (which involve negations) and corrections of the information.
8. In spite of the comma punctuation, 7 is one clause and not two. In *By the time* ***the post office delivers your bid,*** the underlined portion is an embedded clause with *time* as the head. Therefore, there is no clausal relation between *By the time the post office delivers your bid* and *someone else could have the job* just as there would not be a non-volitional result relation between *By noon* and *someone else could have the job.*
9. Segment 1 is both a label for the visual image in the advertisement, providing an interpretation for that visual image, and at the same time summarizes the problem which is about to be described in segments (2-7) of the advertisement. Since RST analysis only accounts for the relations between text segments, it takes no account of the important relation between (1) and the visuals.
10. Of course in saying this, I do not mean to imply that the only relevant readings of a text are ones the writer intended. However, readers must be sensitive to the signals provided in the text, and should be aware of the ways information is being emphasized or de-emphasized by the language used.