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ТЕМАТИКАЛЫК ПРОГРЕССИЯ ЖАНА EFL КЛАССТАРЫНДА АНГЛИС ТИЛИН
ОКУТУУ

ТЕМАТИЧЕСКОЕ РАЗВИТИЕ И ПРЕПОДАВАНИЕ АНГЛИЙСКОГО ЯЗЫКА В
КЛАССАХ EFL

**THEMATIC PROGRESSION AND TEACHING ENGLISH SPEAKING
IN EFL CLASSROOMS**

Кыскача мүнөздөмө: Системалык функционалдык грамматиканын темасы жана рема теориясына негизделген бул макала Аки (англис тили чет тили катары) класстарында англис тилин оозеки үйрөтүүдө тематикалык прогресстин практикасын эксперименталдык изилдөө болуп саналат. Сю Шэнхуан сунуш кылган төрт тематикалык прогрессия модели, атап айтканда, параллель прогрессия модели (тво), үзгүлтүксүз прогрессия модели (стев1), концентрацияланган прогрессия модели (оса2) жана кесилишкен прогрессия модели (МИД) окуучуларга оозеки текстти түзүүгө жана эркин сүйлөөгө жардам берүү үчүн тематикалык прогрессти кантип колдонууну көрсөтөт.

Аннотация: Эта статья, основанная на теории темы и темы системной функциональной грамматики, представляет собой экспериментальное исследование практики тематической прогрессии при обучении разговорному английскому языку в классах АКИ (английского языка как иностранного). Четыре модели тематической прогрессии, предложенные Сюй Шэнхуанем, а именно модель параллельной прогрессии (PPP), модель непрерывной прогрессии (PCP1), модель концентрированной прогрессии (PCP2) и модель пересекающейся прогрессии (PIP), служат для иллюстрации того, как использовать тематическую прогрессию, чтобы помочь учащимся создавать и произносить устный текст связно и бегло.

Abstract: This paper, based on the theory of theme and rheme of systemic functional grammar is a tentative study on the practice of thematic progression in teaching English speaking in EFL (English as a foreign language) classrooms. Four patterns of thematic progression proposed by Xu Shenghuan, namely, the Pattern of Parallel Progression (PPP), the Pattern of Continuous Progression (PCP1), the Pattern of Centralized Progression (PCP2), and the Pattern of Intersectional Progression (PIP) are used to exemplify how to use thematic progression to help learners generate and deliver oral text coherently and fluently.

Негизги сөздөр: тематикалык прогресс; моделдер; англисче сүйлөө тилин үйрөнүү; англис тили чет тили катары (АКИ).

Ключевые слова: тематическая прогрессия; модели; обучение английской разговорной речи; английский язык как иностранный (АКИ).

Keywords: thematic progression; patterns; teaching English Speaking EFL.

Traditional oral English teaching often focuses on the accuracy and fluency of learners' language output, emphasizing that learners' pronunciation should be accurate, intonation natural, segments divided appropriately, and words used correctly. As a result, learners are often proficient in using single sentences, but unable to generate coherent oral texts. In addition, in teaching English speaking, teachers, in most cases, provide a topic and ask learners to discuss it in groups, assuming that as long as learners speak and practice they can naturally speak English well, but cultivation of learners' coherent narrative ability and thinking process is ignored. Thus, when learners do oral exercises, they often feel that they have nothing to say or what they say has no close relation to the topic. In view of the defects of current oral English teaching, this paper discusses the application of thematic progression in teaching English speaking to illustrate the practical significance of this pattern for improving English learners' oral proficiency.

1. Theme Structure

Theme is the grammatical component located at the beginning of a clause. Systemic functional grammar defines (Halliday 1985) that theme is the starting point of information, which is speaker-centered and is the central content that the speaker wants to talk about. Theme is also the information known to both parties in the communication. Rheme is information that revolves around the theme, and is unknown information centered on the listener. Unknown information is necessary for communication, otherwise communication will be interrupted. Theme and rheme constitute the thematic structure which is a means by which discourse can be realized.

In spoken discourse, sentences need to be logically focused on a center topic and coherently combined together for listeners to follow. There is coherence in the combination of sentences with referential relationship or superior-subordinate relationship between sentences. If sentences are progressed by the division of thematic structure, the coherent and referential relationship or superior-subordinate relationship can be expressed in the theme/rheme connection. With theme-rheme theory, Xu Shenghuan (1982) proposed four basic connection patterns between theme and rheme based on the study of discourse structure: parallel development, continuous development, concentrated development, and cross-development. These four patterns are applicable in teaching English speaking in EFL (English as a foreign language). Therefore, we borrow these four patterns to explore the guiding role of thematic structure in oral English teaching.

2. Theme patterns and oral English teaching

Xu (1982) believes that in sentence combining, the theme and the rheme of each sentence correspond to each other, indicating a relation of connection or transition. There are generally four patterns of thematic progression: the Pattern of Parallel Progression (PPP), the Pattern of Continuous Progression (PCP1), the Pattern of Centralized Progression (PCP2), and the Pattern of Intersectional Progression (PIP). In the following, we discuss the applications of these four patterns in teaching English speaking in EFL Classrooms.

2.1. Application of PPP

The Pattern of Parallel Progression (PPP), in spoken discourse, refers to the pattern that takes the theme of the first sentence as the starting point, and then this sentence is used as the main theme in each subsequent sentences, introducing different rhemes and elucidating this theme from different perspectives. Xu (1982) diagrammed this way of development as the following:

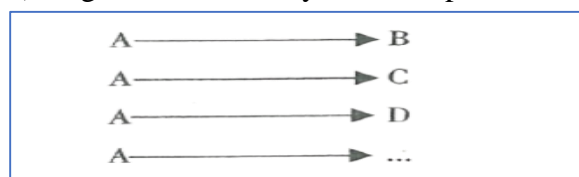


Figure 1. The Pattern of Parallel Progression (PPP)

The PPP pattern shows that A is the starting point for the information to be elaborated around the topic, and B, or, C, or D are rhemes. Using this pattern, the teacher can first provide a topic to students who are motivated to share opinions on this topic. Then the teacher guides students to focus on ideas or content of students' oral production, which in turn can generate new information on this theme, and the new information is rheme. For example, teachers can guide students to make the following statements using "I" as the theme to talk about one's hobby.

- (1) *I like drawing pictures.*
- (2) *I draw rivers, mountains, birds and trees.*
- (3) *I can stay all day long at home, drawing pictures.*
- (4) *I get pleasure and satisfaction from my hobby.*
- (5) *I won't give up drawing until I'm too old to learn.*

If new information is used to elaborate "drawing" in statement (1), students can be guided to use "Drawing" as theme, like:

- (1) *Drawing pictures is my hobby.*
- (2) *Drawing can keep me indoors all day long.*
- (3) *Drawing pictures offers me great pleasure and satisfaction.*
- (4) *Drawing is my life - long hobby.*

This training method may seem monotonous, but it is helpful for beginners who tend to be off topic. With known information put at the beginning of sentences, and the rest part created by the speakers, the spoken discourse can be cohesive.

2.2. Application of PCP 1

The Pattern of Continuous Progression (PCP 1) means that the rheme or part of the rheme of the previous sentence serves as the theme of the next sentence, and the new information to be created serves as the rheme to clarify the theme. This continuation brings out new information and promotes the development of oral discourse. This pattern can be shown by the following figure:

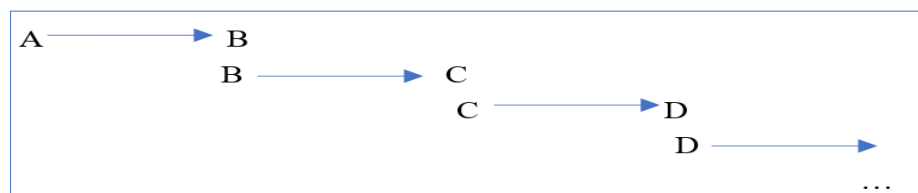
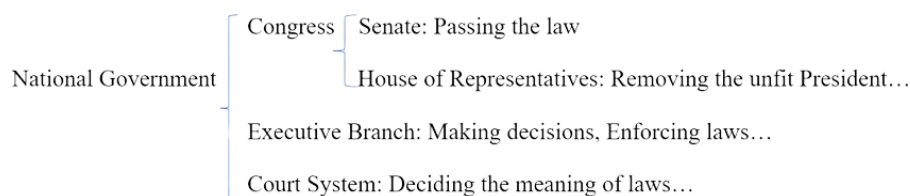


Figure 2. The Pattern of Continuous Progression (PCP 1)

Avin (Avin, Listyaning, and Dias, 2023) use this pattern, which is “zig-zag pattern” in their research, to analyze the most common pattern of thematic progression on Jack Ma’s speech “We Never Give Up”, indicating that thematic progression analysis can be used in teaching speaking to improve learners’ speaking skills. Using PCP1, a sentence (Sentence 1) with a theme (“A” in Figure 2) and rheme (“B” in Figure 2) can be provided by the teacher, and students are asked to continue with the rheme in Sentence 1 serving as the theme in Sentence 2. New information which is the rheme of Sentence 2 needs to be created by students, which in turn acts as the theme (“C” in Figure 2) of Sentence 3. And the continuation can be conducted as much as possible to make sure majority of students participate in practicing oral English.

In order to enable students to better apply this pattern, teachers can guide students to retell the content of the materials they have learned. For example, in a text about political system, the following chart can be used to facilitate students to retell this system:



Guided by the teacher and supported with the above chart, students may generate the following paragraph:

National government may consists of congress, executive branch, and court system.

Congress

A

B

B

has two parts: Senate and House of Representatives. Senate is in charge of passing laws while House

C

C

of Representatives is in charge of removing the unfit President. . .

Using this pattern, continuous oral discourse can be created by speakers without fear of lacking ideas or discourse consistency.

2.3. Application of PCP2

The Pattern of Centralized Progression (PCP2) means that all sentences have different themes but the same rheme. In other words, the starting points of speaking are different, but they all boil down to the same rheme. This development can be represented diagrammatically as

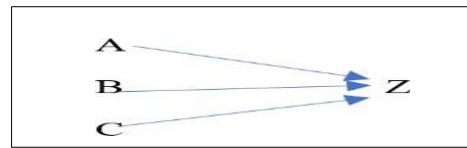
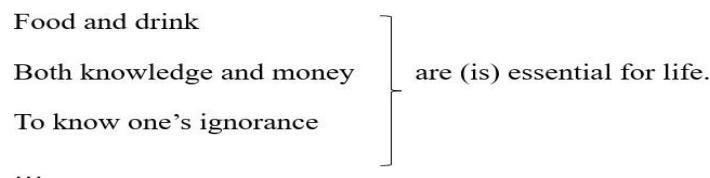


Figure 3. The Pattern of Centralized Progression (PCP 2)

In oral English teaching, this pattern helps students develop thinking ability. Using this pattern, the teacher can offer topics and provide reference sentence patterns, words or starting sentences for students to imitate and then to acquire knowledge and develop ability. For example, with the topic “What are essential for life?”, the teacher provides students with some information, such as: “Food and drink are essential for life”. After the students present their views on this topic, the teacher can guide students to summarize in order to internalize student’s knowledge. The topic discussed can be summarized as:



2.4. Application of PIP

The Pattern of Intersectional Progression (PIP) means that the theme of the first sentence becomes the rheme of the second sentence, and the theme of the second sentence becomes the rheme of the third sentence. The theme of the third sentence becomes the rheme of the fourth sentence. If this continues, it can be represented by a diagram:

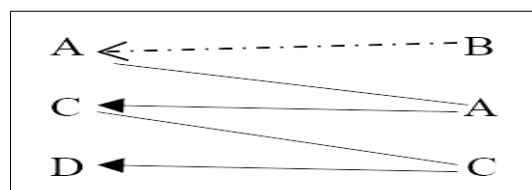


Figure 4. The Pattern of Centralized Progression (PCP 2)

By using intersectional PIP, we can express the intricate relationships between the themes and rhemes of each sentence and the things described. However, the expression of human thoughts is complex, and it is impossible to express it completely using one of the above four patterns in that a progression pattern does not serve to fully express the speaker’s thoughts. Therefore, the combined use of multiple patterns in spoken discourse is necessity.

3. Conclusion

The above four patterns provide theoretical guidance for generation of English learners’ oral discourse. They help organize language materials and facilitate students to output logical narratives. These four patterns play a guiding and referential role in actual teaching process. However, these

patterns need to be applied flexibly since there is no one-to-one correspondence of the thematic progression patterns and specific oral discourse output.

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