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浅谈托福写作官方范文中的主位及 主位推进模式

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摘 要

韩礼德(Halliday)提出的系统功能语法框架内的分析理论一直是许多英语教学学者和教育工作者所重视的理论。然而，现有许多研究的关注点是高校教师如何把主位及主位推进理论作为一种有效工具去判定学生论文中语篇连贯的情况，很少有研究关注语培机构工作环境下的教师如何将主位及主位推进理论应用到新托福独立写作的课堂教学当中。同时，托福独立写作其中一个较为常见的教学重点是提升学生文章中的语言特征而非连贯性。本文旨在分析由美国教育考试服务中心(ETS)提供的五篇高分作文范文，并考查这些文章中的主位及主位推进模式。本文将探讨其在实际教学上的相关启示，致力于给语培机构教师未来的托福独立写作教学提供一定的启发。

关键词

主位及主位推进，语篇连贯，新托福独立写作

Analyzing Theme and Thematic Progression in TOEFL Writing Sample Responses

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Abstract

The significance of theme and thematic progression (T/TP) as a key component of discourse analysis theory within the framework of Systemic Functional Grammar proposed by Halliday has been stressed by many ELT scholars and educators. However, many existing studies concentrate on the

usefulness of T/TP as an instrument for college instructors to identify their students' essay quality in terms of textual coherence, and few of them place emphasis on how teachers in a test-prep institutional environment can apply the theory of T/TP in their classroom teaching of TOEFL iBT Independent Writing. Also, common Independent Writing teaching attaches more importance to linguistic features than to coherence. This paper intends to analyze five high-level writing responses provided by ETS, the TOEFL iBT test developer, and to examine the T/TP patterns in these essays. Pedagogical implications will be discussed, and some insights for test-prep teachers into the application of T/TP to their teaching of TOEFL Independent Writing will be provided.

Keywords

1. 背景

托福考试是目前世界范围内主流的语言考试之一，全面检测考生的听说读写能力。该考试写作部分的任务之一(独立写作)要求考生完成一篇不少于 300 词的议论文。该任务的满分评分标准有一处明确写着学生的文章需要体现出连贯性(coherence)，即文本语篇(语义)连贯。大多数一线教师把其含义仅仅理解成语法衔接 (grammatical cohesion)，着重教授学生使用表示不同逻辑关系的连接词，在一定程度上忽略了语义连贯的教学。目前学界普遍认为研究语篇语义连贯的一个重要维度是文章中的主位推进模式。

2. 文献综述

2.1. 主位(Theme/T)与述位(Rheme/R)

Halliday (1994) [1] [2]认为，"任何句子或话语从交际角度出发可分为主位和述位。主位是小句的第一个成分，是小句表达信息的起点；围绕主位加以叙述的部分，统称为述位"。主位一般可以理解为句子的话题、背景信息、预设或假定，可以是句子中的名词短语、动词短语、副词短语、介词词组或者一个从句，这些信息的特点是它们出现在句子前面的开始部分，代表着已知信息，为交际双方所熟悉的。而述位一般可以理解为对主位信息的评论、关注、判断或断定，是句子中除了主位信息剩余的部分，代表着新的信息。

2.2. 主位推进(Thematic Progression/TP)

从单个句子的角度分析，可以找到的主位和述位信息是唯一的，这两部分的信息是固定的，然而在语篇分析背景下，即大多数文章特别是议论文的句子数量都是大于等于两句的，就需要研究整体展开的形式了。Daneš (1974) [3]指出文中后一个句子的主位会以不同的方式与前一个句子的主位、述位之间产生某种联系，可能是重复某一部分，然后对其进一步拓展。这些联系和变化被称为主位推进。众多学者从不同角度对主位推进进行了研究，比如 McCabe 研究过西班牙语及英语中一些历史教科书中的主位及主位推进模式、Li 分析过中英文交替口译文本(温家宝总理 2008 至 2010 年的答记者问)的主位模式的差异、Soleymanzadeh & Gholami 研究过自己国家一些大学英语语言文学本科生雅思考试 Task 2 作文分数、Jalilifar & Abbasi 分析过 60 种学术教科书前面的介绍部分。

2.3. 主位推进模式(Patterns of Thematic Progression)

根据 McCabe (1999) [4]的分类，主位推进有三种基本模式，分别是主位延续模式(constant thematic progression/C-TP)、简单线性模式(simple linear thematic progression/SL-TP)以及派生模式(derived thematic progression/D-TP)，如下图 1 所示：
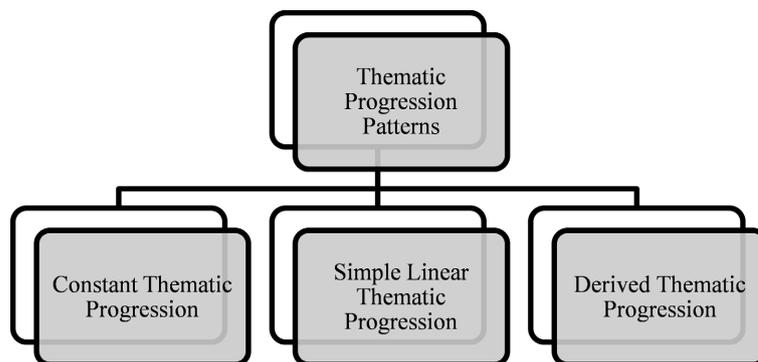
Figure 1. Three basic thematic progression patterns
图 1. 三种基本的主位推进模式

在主位延续模式中，每句主位和上一句的主位相同，述位不同，即 T1 = T2，R1 ≠ T2，R1 ≠ R2。如下图 2 所示：
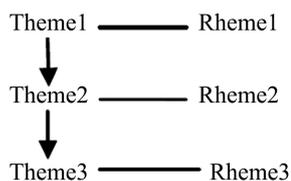
Figure 2. Constant thematic progression pattern
图 2. 主位延续推进模式

具体例子如下：

- The teachers/all looked very kind and understanding in my eyes as a child.
- They/had special relationships with nearly each and every one of the students and were very nice to everyone.

在简单线性模式中，前一句的述位或者述位的一部分是后句的主位，这个新的主位后面跟着一个新的述位，该述位继续充当下一句的主位，如此类推，即 R1 = T2，R2 = T3，如下图 3 所示：
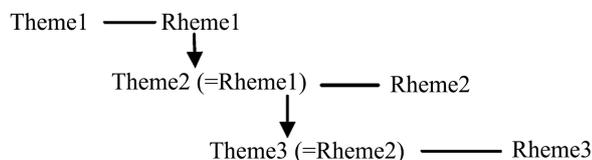
Figure 3. Simple linear thematic progression pattern
图 3. 简单线性推进模式

具体例子如下：

- <u>One</u>/must go through and pass a series of courses and tests in order to become a **teacher**.
- **Any teacher**/is able to have excellent knowledge of their subject...

而在派生模式中，前一句的主位或述位派生或分裂成后几句的主位，后面句子的主位都是围绕着前/第一个句子的主位或述位信息展开，即 T2 = part of T1，T3 = part of T1，如下图 4 所示：

Theme1 ——— Rheme1

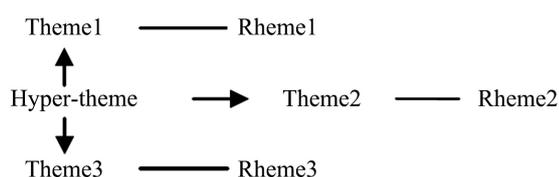Hyper-theme ——→ Theme2 ——— Rheme2

Theme3 ——— Rheme3

Figure 4. Derived thematic progression pattern
图 **4.** 派生推进模式

具体例子如下：

- It is widely understood that <u>to live independently</u>/<u>requires a lot of energy and is not easy at all</u>.
- In this twenty first century, <u>people</u>/may <u>need more and more preparation</u> because competition is increasing rapidly.
- An observation shows that <u>many university graduate students</u>/<u>are unemployed</u>.
- Therefore, <u>they</u>/will <u>not be able to support and fulfill their necessities</u>.

需要明确的是本研究采用 McCabe 提出的三种模式，具体研究过程中只会关注范文中是否出现这三类形式。事实上，主位推进模式的分类还可以分为交叉延续型(alternative progression)、并列型(coordinating progression)、述位延续型(the-same-rheme progression)以及无模式型(no-pattern progression) [5]，由于这些并不是本研究的重点，因此不在此赘述。

3. 研究问题

为了给一线托福写作教师提供有关的教学启示，本文提出以下两个研究问题：
- 官方提供的 5 篇高分作文范文(见附录)中包含了哪些主位推进模式？
- 在这 5 篇高分作文范文中，每种基本主位推进模式出现的频率是否有差异？

4. 方法论

本次研究主要采用了偏向定量研究的方法论，一共选取了 5 篇真题范文，其中 4 篇来自《托福考试官方指南第五版》(The Official Guide to the TOEFL Test Fifth Edition) [6]以及 1 篇来自《托福官方备考计划》(TOEFL Test Prep Planner) [7]。所选的文章都获得官方给出的高分评分，具体的写作题目如下：

1) Some young adults want independence from their parents as soon as possible. Other young adults prefer to live with their families for a longer time. Which of these situations do you think is better?

2) Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Young people enjoy life more than older people do. Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer. Be sure to use your own words.

3) Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? It is more important to keep your old friends than it is to make new friends. Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer. Be sure to use your own words.

4) Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Students are more influenced by their teachers than by their friends. Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer. Be sure to use your own words.

5) Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? A teacher's ability to relate well with students is more important than excellent knowledge of the subject being taught. Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer. Be sure to use your own words.

Clauses	Text	Semantic Labels	Frequency
R0001	Every **young adult**/ will grow and live apart from their parents to form their own families.	1 young adult	1
R0002	**The ages for those young adults** to be independent/ depends on each person.	2 age of young adults	1
R0003	**Some people**/ may have to live longer with their parents	1 young adult	1
R0004	and **some others**/ may not.	1 young adult	1
R0005	This **essay**/ will discuss the issue of independent life and living with their families for a longer time.	3 essay	1
R0006	Most **young adults**/ prefer to have a separate or independent life from their parents or families as soon as possible.	1 young adult	1
R0007	**This**/ is because they have a strong urge for freedom in doing what they desire.	4 young adults' preference	1
R0008	But in fact, many of **them**/ fail.	1 young adult	1
R0009	**This**/ should not be surprising,	5 failure of young adults	1
R0010	since often **they**/ are actually not ready mentally although they are physically ready.	1 young adult	1

Figure 5. Template for thematic progression analysis
图 5. 主位推进分析模版

研究中所使用的文本分析工具是 Leong [8]设计的主位推进 Microsoft Excel 模版，如图 5 所示。整体的模版表格主要分成 4 列，分别是 Clause (分句)、Text (文本)、Semantic Labels (语义标签)、以及对应标签出现的 Frequency (频次)。表格中的 Clause 一列使用 R0001、R0002、R0003 等命名每一行(row)，每一行对应一个切割的分句。需要注意的是由于一开始作者所设置的行数是固定的，目前最多可用的行数是

1000，即 R1000，如果所分析文本过长，则该表格不太适用。使用时，将要分析的文本以分句(包含了一个主位以及一个述位)为单位填入 Text 一列，可以进一步对该分句进行成分标记，重点标出主位信息，并使用"/"符号将其与其他信息隔开，然后根据主位信息进行核心主题概括，即语义概括，然后可以按照个人选择，把所选的标记词填入第 3 列 Semantic Labels 中，填写时需要使用阿拉伯数字如"1""2""3"加上具体的英文标记词(如图 5 R0001 中的"1 young adult")。如果下一个句子所选用的语义标签与上一个的不一样，填写时则需要注意使用新的阿拉伯数字和新的英文标记词(如图 5 R0002 中的"2 age of young adults")。如果后面某一分句的标签与之前出现过的相同，则可以使用原来的标签，不需要改变对应的阿拉伯数字以及英文标记词(如图 5 R0003 中的"1 young adult")。该 Microsoft Excel 模版中 Frequency 一列会自动计算频次，最后会按照频次，从高到低排列所有的语义标签。

整体的研究过程主要是对 5 篇范文中的每个句子按照以上工具模版进行主位推进模式的分析，然后总结是否有出现上文提及的三种基本模式，即主位延续模式、简单线性模式以及派生模式。

5. 结果与讨论

从本次研究中可得知主位延续型以及简单线性模式都有出现在这 5 篇官方提供的范文当中，并且这两种主位推进模式是最主要的，在每一篇范文中出现的频率都很高，具体的数据如下表 1 所示：

Table 1. Frequency of three thematic progression patterns in high-level responses
表 1. 三种主位推进模式在范文中的出现频率

官方范文	C-TP 模式	SL-TP 模式	D-TP 模式	出现次数
1	1	5	1	7
2	4	5	0	9
3	6	7	0	13
4	4	3	1	8
5	6	2	3	11

从以上三种主位推进模式在官方提供的高分范文中各自出现的频率可看出延续型以及简单线性主位推进模式值得各位一线托福写作教师在未来的教学中重点关注。

6. 局限性

本次的研究由于相关技术的融入有限，在文本分析上的精确度可能存在一定的偏差。首先，人工切割句子过程中会出现一些划分的考量(研究中的划分单位是一个句子或从句)。此外，研究的文本样本数量不够大，体现的主要是官方在其正式出版物或免费备考资料上的范文，同时范文仅是高分范文，不是满分。在未来可针对本次研究的不足做出改进，加入更大规模的文本样本，同时加入特定的文本分析工具和技术，以求进一步提升研究结果的效度。

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附录(官方范文)

1) Some young adults want independence from their parents as soon as possible. Other young adults prefer to live with their families for a longer time. Which of these situations do you think is better?

Every young adult will grow and live apart from their parents to form their own families. The ages for those young adults to be independent depends on each person. Some people may have to live longer with their parents and some others may not. This essay will discuss the issue of independent life and living with their families for a longer time.

Most young adults prefer to have a separate or independent life from their parents or families as soon as possible. This is because they have a strong urge for freedom in doing what they desire. But in fact, many of them fail. This should not be surprising since often they are actually not ready mentally although they are physically ready. It is widely understood that to live independently requires a lot of energy and is not easy at all. In this twenty first century, people may need more and more preparation because competition is increasing rapidly. An observation shows that many university graduate students are unemployed. Therefore, they will not be able to support and fulfill their necessities.

So, living independently at an early age is not suitable for all young adults, some young adults may need to take more time to prepare themselves before going out to struggle. Young adults need to be ready to support themselves. Taking time to get more education and living with their families for a longer time may lead them to a better independent life because they will be well prepared for the hard-life outside. Still, living with their families for *too* long will not be a good idea because they could get used to it and tend to be less independent.

The time to live independently depends on the person himself. He or she must decide whether they are ready to leave their parents to have an independent life or not. The decision will vary from one person to another. A person should judge that he is capable of fulfilling his needs without being dependent on his parents; this indicates that he is ready for his independent life. Otherwise he might need to stay longer with his parents.

2) Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Young people enjoy life more than older people do. Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer. Be sure to use your own words.

People often complain about saying themselves becoming older too quickly. But does that mean that they are enjoying their lives less than they did before? Personally, I rather disagree with this statement. It would probably be more accurate to say that every time of a person's life is worth being lived and enjoyed.

There is no denying that young people have far less responsibilities with, for instance, family and work. Thus, they can spend more time on their hobbies than people who are working all day long and who have to care about their children at night when they come home. But one cannot overlook that having a family to care about can be considered as a satisfying pleasure in itself. Besides, many people find fulfillment in their work and enjoy spending most of their time on it.

Moreover, it is customary to say that older people tend to have more health problems than teenagers or students do. However, it is well worth noticing that this assertion cannot be taken as a general rule, as also many young people develop painful illnesses. A striking example of a disease which tends to affect more and more teenagers is back ache, because they are sitting for too long periods of time and doing too little sport to compensate. Consequently, the argument supporting that good health makes life more enjoyable when you are young may be called into question.

In addition to that, one should not forget that today's teenagers are expected to take important decisions about their future at an early age, and that they have to cope with heavy responsibilities even before getting their first school degree. As it becomes more and more difficult to find a job these days, young people have to worry about what to study and they even often have to fix priorities according to what the job market offers, and not according to their personal preferences.

Last but not least, one cannot forget that after working hard for long years, people retire and are then given the chance to concentrate on their centers of interest and hobbies again. Up to a certain point, when taking into account the arguments of the previous paragraph concerning the early responsibilities teenagers have to assume, pensioners are even more free to enjoy their lives without thinking of potential problems of the future.

To put it in a nutshell, that all amounts to saying that there is no period of time in a person's life which is more prone to happiness than the others. People only have to learn to make the best of every situation and of what they have even if it is easier said than done!

3) Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? It is more important to keep your old friends than it is to make new friends. Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer. Be sure to use your own words.

In a lifetime, we are bound to meet many people, we get on well with some of them and they become our friends. As we grow up, we meet new people and make new friends but it does not imply that they will replace our old ones. That is why I disagree with people who think that keeping old friends is more important than making new friends.

I think that there is no matter of more importance. Since old friends and new friends do not bring us the same things, we cannot compare them. Indeed, old friends are the ones we can count on; we trust them, they know us well, we have complicity and real friendship is just wonderful. When I feel sad or when I need to talk to someone about a serious problem, I go to see my old friends because they are reliable and I know that they will understand me more than anyone else. My old friends are very important to me and I agree with the fact that it is important to keep them and make efforts to keep contact.

However, I must admit that we are bound to lose some of our old friends sometimes. For example, I had a very good friend a few years ago but we do not see each other anymore since I moved in another town. I guess that we also grew up and took a different way and there is no use to keep old friends when you realize that you have nothing left in common.

Therefore, it is also very important to make new friends. That is a way to learn, to change and they bring us different things. Making new friends makes us more open-minded, and in this way, we can discover new personalities. For my part I enjoy making new friends, at school, at work, on holidays. I am conscious not to have close relationships with them at first but I need to be with other people and have fun. Sometimes they just remain acquaintances but they can also become good friends who could become old friends one day. For instance, I met a German girl on holiday two years ago and we got on very well, so we kept in touch and I went to visit her in Germany twice. She belongs to this kind of people who you know that they will be important in your life, and who you know you can have a long and strong friendship with.

As a conclusion I would say that everybody needs to have a at least few real and strong friendship.

4) Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Students are more influenced by their teachers than by their friends. Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer. Be sure to use your

own words. Do not use memorized examples.

In my opinion, students are more influenced by their friends rather than by their teachers. Therefore, I disagree with the statement "Students are more influenced by their teachers than by their friends".

I do not disagree with the fact that students get influenced by their teachers, however, I believe that this 'influence' is mostly within the field of academics. In most cases, the only time that students communicate with the teacher is in the school building, in the classroom. Most of the discussions are about topics related to studies. However, with friends, students often tend to discuss a variety of topics, such as studies, friends, relationships and families. Therefore, students are generally influenced more broadly by their friends, while the only influence made by the teachers are mostly academical.

The amount of time spent with the teacher or friend, also effect on how much influence has been made to a person. As mentioned previously, the time that students communicate with the teachers is restricted to school hours. However, students spend or communicate with their friends not only in school but even outside the school campus and school hours. Especially with the emerging technology, and the development of mobile phones and the internet, students are now able to communicate with their friends at any time where ever they are. Since the amount of time spent communicating with their friends are much larger than the time spent with the teachers, there are more chance of the students being influenced by their friends rather than their teachers.

Also, it is normal that the students feel psychologically more attached to the people in their age group, especially with their friends. The teachers are usually from different generations from the students and this may cause the students to feel that there is a distance between how they think and feel and how the teachers think and feel. Since the students are more emotionally and psychologically attached to their friends, they feel more comfortable to discuss their issues with them and accept their responses more openly and easily. This fact relates directly to how much they are influenced by their friends.

For these reasons, I believe that students are more influenced by their friends than by their teachers.

5) Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? A teacher's ability to relate well with students is more important than excellent knowledge of the subject being taught. Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer.

I remember every teacher that has taught me since I was in Kindergarten. If a friend wants to know who our first-grade teacher was in elementary school, all they have to do is ask me. The teachers all looked very kind and understanding in my eyes as a child. They had special relationships with nearly each and every one of the students and were very nice to everyone. That is the reason I remember all of them.

A teacher's primary goal is to teach students the best they can about the things that are in our textbooks and more important, how to show respect for one another. They teach us how to live a better life by getting along with everyone. In order to do that, the teachers themselves have to be able to relate well with students

My parents are teachers too. One teaches Plant Biology and one teaches English, but that's not the reason I'm calling them "teachers." They are teachers because they teach me how to act in special situations and how to cooperate with others. I have a brother, and my parents use different approaches when teaching us. They might scold my brother for surfing the internet too long because he doesn't have much self-control and they need to restrain him. He almost never studies on his own and is always either drawing, playing computer games, or reading. On the other hand, they never tell me off for using the computer too long. I do my own work when I want and need to because that brings me the best results and my parents understand that. They know that I need

leisure time of my own and that I'll only play until needed. My parents' ability to relate well with my brother and I allows them to teach, not just the subject they teach but also their excellent knowledge on life.

Knowledge of the subject being taught is something taken for granted, but at the same time, secondary. One must go through and pass a series of courses and tests in order to become a teacher. Any teacher is able to have excellent knowledge of their subject but not all teachers can have the ability to relate well with students.

A teacher's primary goal is to teach students the best they can about how to show respect for one another, so teachers use different approaches when teaching, and knowledge of the subject being taught is secondary. For these reasons, I claim with confidence that excellent knowledge of the subject being taught is secondary to the teacher's ability to relate well with their students.