INFORMATION SEQUENCING IN WRITTEN TEXTS: A CROSS-GENRE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

The main goal of this article is to analyse the topical sequentiality of three subgenres: narratives for young children, news items and tourist brochures. The 60 texts under analysis (twenty of each type) were written specifically for publication, and consequently do not provide the possibility of direct feedback between the writer and the reader. However, their main rhetorical purpose and their register are clearly different in each and it is proposed that this will play a key role in their topical sequentiality (Keenan & Schieffelin; Givón, *Topic; Functionalism*; Lautamatti; Siewierska; Dik, *Theory* Part II). The results of the study demonstrate that the communicative intentions of the journalist, the advertiser and the writer of tales play a decisive role in the topical progression of the three subgenres investigated.

KEY WORDS: Topic, topical sequencing, genre, register.

RESUMEN

El objetivo principal de este artículo es analizar la secuenciación tópica de tres subgéneros: narraciones infantiles, noticias de sucesos y folletos turísticos. Los 60 textos analizados (20 de cada tipo), escritos para ser publicados, tienen unas características de género y de registro específicas que van a determinar su organización tópica y estructural (Keenan & Schieffelin; Givón, *Topic; Functionalism*; Lautamatti; Siewierska; Dik, *Theory* Part II). Los resultados del análisis demuestran que las intenciones comunicativas del periodista, del autor de cuentos y del escritor de folletos desempeñan una función determinante en la progresión tópica de los tres subgéneros investigados.

PALABRAS CLAVE: tópico, secuenciación tópica, genero, registro.

I. INTRODUCTION

The main goal of this article is to analyse the topical sequentiality of three subgenres: narratives for young children, news items and tourist brochures.[1] As the 60 texts under analysis (20 of each type) were written specifically for publication, they share the fact that there is no possibility of direct feedback between the writer

and the reader. However, their main rhetorical purpose and their register (Propp; van Dijk, *News Analysis*; *News as Discourse*; Cook; Luch) are clearly different in each and this paper proposes that this will play a key role in their textual organization.

In fact, while the main aim of the journalist is to inform the greatest number of readers about all issues of a current and social event in a hypothetically objective and impersonal way, the main goal of the brochure (although it is, to a certain extent, also informative in nature) is to promote the tourist possibilities of an area being advertised. As with the news items, the children's tales are structured narratively. And as with the tourist brochures, the tales are also characterized by the use of evaluative and attitudinal lexis, by means of which the writer tries to have an influence on the potential reader or listener. They function rhetorically to entertain and to instil moral and / or social values in the young child from an early age, especially in the case of traditional tales.

The hypothesis proposed for this research is that the news items, the tourist brochures and the children's narratives should, according to the characteristics of genre and register, show a significant difference in their topical sequentiality (Keenan and Schieffelin; Lautamatti; Siewierska; Dik, *Theory* Part II). It is anticipated that the number of topical chains introduced in each text will be larger in the news items than in the two other subgenres. While the journalist is required to inform on all aspects of a current event, the writer of the tourist brochure needs to highlight the tourist possibilities of the location promoted. Narratives, regarding children under five, direct the child's attention to the main character. In this way, the writer facilitates the young reader / listener toward an understanding of the plot. Consequently, as with the brochures, these will be organized around a sole topical chain.

In an attempt to demonstrate the proposed hypothesis, the theoretical background concerning topicality (van Dijk, "Sentence"; "Towards"; van Oosten; Downing "Encpsulating"; Moya & Albentosa) and sequentiality of topic chains in discourse (Keenan and Schieffelin; Lautamatti; Siewierska; Dik, *Theory* Part II; Goutsos) will be discussed. The specific properties of genre and register will also be treated within each of the three subgenres under investigation (van Dijk, *News Analysis*; *News as Discourse*; Cook; Myers; Luch). Following the description of the method of analysis, the topical sequencing of the three subgenres will be carefully studied within three texts. Once this has taken place, the conclusions and the final results obtained from the analysis of the 60 texts (twenty of each type) will bring this study to an end. The texts were taken randomly from a selection of children's narratives for under fives, tourist magazines and quality newspapers.

II. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1. The Pragmatic function of topic: discourse topics and sentence topics

The notion of topic adopted in this paper is dissociated from the Hallidayan concept of theme (Halliday, "Notes"; *Introduction*). The topic is, above all, a textual category that is determined by the context and not by purely formal aspects. The fact that Halliday attributes to the *theme* both structural (the starting point of the message) and semantic properties (what the clause is going to be about) creates a problem of difficult solution. Although some academics accept the Hallidayan definition entirely, as is the case with van Dijk (*News Analysis*; *News as Discourse*), Martin (434-435), or Eggins (275), the correlation between the clause constituent that expresses what an utterance is about (the topic) and the first ideational constituent of the sentence (the theme) is by no means obvious. On many occasions, the theme is realized by an adverbial component that does not provide topical information and whose only function is to specify the temporal and spatial frame within which the communicative interaction takes place (Downing, "Alternative"; Moya & Albentosa).

Thus, I assume, following Downing ("Alternative"), Hassan and Fries, Alcaraz and Gómez-González, that they are two different concepts that should be defined from two distinct perspectives: the theme, by its location in the clause, as a structural category whose main function is to determine the point of departure of the message, and the topic, for its informative value, as a pragmatic and cognitive category that expresses what the message is about.

Following van Dijk (*Text*; *News Analysis*; *News as Discourse*) and van Oosten, the cognitive concept of topic is defined from the aboutness perspective as the entity, proposition or main idea which a sentence, a stretch of discourse or a discourse in its global sense is about. The communicative purpose of the writer, the linguistic and extralinguistic contexts and the general or background knowledge that both the writer and the reader share or can infer from a specific situation, are all taken into account in the delimitation of the notion of topic as aboutness. Interpreting a text or stretch of discourse from a topical perspective is highly dependent on being able to activate our knowledge structures or schematic conceptions (Rumelhart; Lakoff, *Women*; "Invariance") which serve to shape our experience of the world. As a result, I have considered this concept as a pragmatic phenomenon, which can only be established in con-textual terms (Moya & Albentosa).

Hockett's notion of topic has been enlarged upon to apply not only to the sentence, but also to textual sections and to the text in its global sense. In fact, depending on the unit of application (sentence or discourse), many linguists make a distinction between sentence or local topics and discourse topics (Schank; van Dijk, *Text; News Analysis;* Reinhart; van Oosten).

Within the pragmatic and discourse perspective that has been adopted, the local topic is defined as the referential entity about which information is given at the sentence level. The sentence topic is a referential phenomenon, which is maintained through the continuous references that are made to it (Givón, *Topic*; *Func-*

tionalism). In agreement with van Dijk (*Text*), I have considered that a passage is about a topic if this entity about which information is given is referred to persistently throughout the text. The local topics are closely related to the discourse topic, which organizes them hierarchically under the same topical frame.

However, the topic does not always coincide with a specific constituent of the clause structure. In many cases it expresses a main idea or a general concept that unifies and gives coherence to the text (Givón, *Topic*; *Functionalism*). While the sentence topic is confined to a single clause and represents the entity or the proposition about which information is given at local level, the discourse topic represents what a whole text or discourse is about and is defined as a cognitive schema which sequentially organizes and unifies all the sentence topics of the discourse under the same topical frame (van Dijk, *Text*; *News Analysis; News as Discourse*; van Oosten,; Moya & Albentosa).

Although in cognitive approaches (van Dijk & Kintsch) the general meaning of a text is not always considered to be intrinsically present, but is instead assigned to it by its readers, I have considered the notion of Discourse Topic useful and necessary to refer either to the global idea which the discourse or an episode within the discourse is about, or to the propositions, hierarchically organized, that constitute its semantic macrostructure (Brown & Yule; van Dijk, "Relevance"; van Oosten). Therefore, discourse topics were identified on the basis of the aboutness perspective referred to previously and in terms of the macropropositions expressed either in news headlines, in the titles of tourist brochures or in the titles of children's narratives. On many occasions these provide a frame for the global meaning of a stretch of text, giving the analyst a basis for focussing in on the textual elements that realize or carry out in some way the general thrust of a passage.

However, sentence or local topics, "what shorter segments of discourse are about" (Downing, "Organizational" 27), were identified by their being embodied or subsumed within the discourse topic and by their referential continuity in the text. In practical terms, the sentence topics of the news items, the children's narratives and tourist brochures under analysis are prototypically those referential, concrete and perceptually salient entities which, after their activation, tend (1) to refer to the previous anaphoric discourse by the use of pronouns and other proforms, (2) maintain their continuity in the following cataphoric discourse by means of repetitions, synonyms, hyponyms etc. and, finally, (3) emerge linguistically as the nominal arguments of sentences.

With regard to the hierarchization of sentence topics and in line with Dik (*Theory* Part I, a further typology is presented in which four different subtypes of local topics are differentiated (New topic, Known topic, Subtopic and Resumed topic), in order to study the cohesive relationships that are established between the local topics of a text and the sequentiality with which they are activated.

In accordance with Dik (*Theory* Part I) and Hannay ("Inferrability"), I will use the term "new topic," to make reference to those topical entities that are introduced for the first time in the discourse. The function of introductory topics is to activate an entity which will later become a potential topic (Hannay, "Inferrability").

Therefore, two characteristics should be attributed to this notion: on the one hand, its presentative and new character and, on the other, its level of persistence in the following text (Givón, *Topic*; Dik, *Theory* Part II).

Once a topical element has been introduced or activated it will be called "known topic." A topical entity should be analysed as known, not only in those cases when it has been previously activated directly or indirectly through an introductory topic or a subtopic component (Dik, *Theory* Part I), but also in those when it is presented by other informative elements of the clause. As can be seen in the following fragment, these can be either verbal processes, circumstances or nominal entities ("an engineer") which, usually placed in rhematic position, introduce future potential topics ("Jim"):

> (1) ...CHOO CHOO had an engineer. His name was JIM. Jim (known topic) loved the little engine and took care of her. He would shine and polish her till she looked like new and oil all the parts so they would run smoothly (Choo Choo: the Story of a Little Engine Who Ran Away).

Following Hannay ("Inferrability") and Dik (*Theory* Part I), the term "subtopic" will be used to define those entities associated or related to a previously activated topic: "If an entity X has been activated in the given setting, then the speaker may present an entity Y as a sub-Topic entity, if Y R X, where R is a relationship of inference" (Hannay, *English* 53). Finally, I will use the term "resumed topic" to describe a topical entity that has been re-established through anaphoric reference after some time without mention in the text. The resumed topic functions both as a mechanism of continuity and discontinuity, since it produces a break in the current topical chain and at the same time establishes the continuity of a known topical entity that had already been the focus of attention in the previous text. In (2) both subtopics and resumed topics can be identified. The constituent "the west coast" of the last sentence is a resumed topic by means of which the writer of the brochure makes reference to a subtopic previously activated in the linguistic context, "on *its* fashionable *west coast*":

> (2) ...But Barbados (known topic) also has two intriguingly different faces. On its fashionable west coast (subtopic), the placid Caribbean waters gently lap dazzlingly bleached sands. Take a trip to the south east (subtopic), on the other hand, where the Caribbean meets the Atlantic,... Barbados (known topic) is not as scenic and lush as some of its more mountainous neighbours... Don't expect deserted stretches of beach- the south coast (subtopic) in particular is quite built up... The west coast (recurrent topic), although also busy, offers delightful golden sandy beaches... (Barbados. Time Off. City Selection, 1995).

This topical hierarchy allows us to approach the study of the topical progression of a text from two different perspectives: from a local level, through the identification of the sentence topics, and from a general or global perspective, on the basis of the discourse topic.

2.2. The topical sequence

As it is not possible to introduce all the information at once and in a sole sequence, there are continuity and discontinuity chains within a stretch of text and they are realized, as Beaugrande & Dressler point out, by linguistic strategies of continuity and topical transition.

Once an introductory topic is activated for the first time in the linguistic context, it can maintain its persistence or continuity (Givón, *Topic*; *Functionalism*) through the references that are made to it in the following discourse by means of known topics, subtopics or resumed topics (Dik, *Theory* Part I, *Theory* Part II). The activation of a new topical entity will obviously open a new topical sequence and will break the continuity of the previous topical chain.

There are topics that stay alive throughout several sentences or even the whole text. However, others have a low level of persistence. The discourse is in this way organized hierarchically in topical sequences, formed by groups of clauses that are about the same topic and that keep, in turn, a narrow relationship with the discourse topic. These topical chains of continuity and discontinuity follow each other and allow the writer to introduce the information s/he wants to transmit to his/her readers progressively. As Siewierska affirms: "The common situation is for a discourse to consist of several chains of clauses each united by a common topic of discourse which in turn somehow bears on an overall topic of discourse" (154).

I have assumed that the continuity of a topical sequence is kept through both collaborating and incorporating discourse strategies (Keenan and Schieffelin 342). The first are used when two or more utterances give information on the same entity. The second, when a subtopic associated with another topic previously introduced in the discourse is activated. These two mechanisms are at the writer's disposal to keep the persistence of a topical participant during a passage. In fact, when the writer activates an entity previously introduced in the linguistic context, s/he facilitates the identification of the topic for the reader.

However, it is considered that a change of topic will take place when a topic does not keep a close relationship with the previous topical chains (new topic). When the information that is expressed in the rhematic span of the sentence generates another potential topic and when a resumed topic is reintroduced, this also produces a variation of topic. Therefore, each different topical constituent that is not related to other previously activated topical entities ("the wolf" in (3), for example) opens a new topical sequence and interrupts, albeit for a brief lapse of time, the continuity of the current topical chain:

DISCOURSE TOPIC

Introductory topic — Known topic — Subtopic ———— Resumed topic

(3) ...The rabbit (Resumed topic) started weeping again. By and by a wolf (new topic) came along and asked her. 'What is the matter, Mrs Rabbit? Why are you

crying so bitterly?'... So the wolf began to howl in the most fearsomely wolfish manner... (Mrs Rabbit's Cottage)

It is generally an introductory topic that activates a new topical sequence in discourse. However, a topical chain is not always introduced by means of novel constituents. In many cases, it is a known topic that generates a different topical sequence. In news items, for instance, it is not infrequent to find cases where the information introduced in the rheme about a local topic becomes topical in the following discourse (see (4): "a random" - "the figure"):

DISCOURSE TOPIC

Known topic — Subtopic — — — Resumed topic

(4) ...Soon after his disappearance, rebels from the Jaime Pardo Leal front of the hard line Colombian Armed Revolutionary Forces (Given topic) called his mother and stepfather to ask for a ransom of half a million dollars. During weeks of telephone negotiations, the figure (Given topic) was lowered... (Kidnapped Briton, Killed in Colombia. The Guardian, August, 16th 1995).

Resumed topics, however, do not activate new topical chains, as their main pragmatic function is to re-establish an old informative sequence. Although their activation breaks up with the progression of the current topical sequence, they have been considered as mechanisms of continuity since they reintroduce entities that had already fulfilled a topical function. Subtopics cannot introduce new topical chains in the text either, due to their dependence on the new or known topics that activate them. For this reason when the writer moves from an introductory or known topic to its corresponding subtopic or from a subtopic to the main topic again, I have considered that a proper change of topic does not take place. In these cases, a different topic is not being introduced, we are just moving within the same topical frame (Crete and its resorts, in (5)):

(5) ...Crete (Introductory topic) has a fascinating history... Being the largest of the Greek islands, its landscape (subtopic) changes at every road bend. The northern coast (subtopic) is by far the most visited and Heraklion (subtopic)- the capital- separates the west and the east in an almost uncanny way...With so much to enjoy, no wonder you find such a mixture of people visiting Crete (Known topic) for, whatever your idea of a good time, Crete's (Known topic) got something just for you! (Crete. An island so varied you'll be spoilt for choice. Olympic Holidays, 1995)

Like the sentences that constitute a text, the different topical chains that define the content of a stretch of discourse are closely related to each other and succeed each other progressively. Each topical sequence is associated directly or indirectly with the previous sequence and with the discourse topic, so that the

message that is transmitted is informatively relevant, linguistically cohesive and contextually coherent. As Lautamatti affirms:

> We expect sequences making up a piece of discourse to be related, however, indirectly, to the main idea discussed, here referred to as discourse topic. This relation may be direct, especially in short text, or indirect, based on the development of subordinate ideas, subtopics, which in their turn relate to the discourse topic. (87)

Therefore, discourse is organized in continuous and discontinuous topical sequences, made of a series of sentences that give information on the same topic. A topic, in turn, will maintain its continuity while it is still relevant for the communication and until the activation of a new informative entity opens a different topical chain in the text: "...human discourse is multi-propositional, with clauses making up chains, which in turn make up paragraphs, etc." (Givón, *Functionalism* 91). While the writer has to add more information about a topic, this will be kept alive by means of the continuous references that are made to it. Once the chain is over, the current topic is left out and a new referent with a topical status is introduced.

The cohesive and coherent relations that are established between the local topics of a text and the discourse topic, along with the different topical chains that define its content, are the essential factors that should be borne in mind when analysing its internal coherence and its topical progression. Although the concept of topic has been typically related with the notions of aboutness and information, Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson already considered it in their studies on oral discourse as a structural mechanism that carried out a decisive function in the general organization of discourse.

III. TOPICAL AND INFORMATION STRUCTURING IN THREE SUBGENRES

Now that the theoretical framework has been outlined, the proposed typology of topic can be applied to the 20 news items, 20 tourist brochures and 20 tales in order to establish the differences in their topical organization. As the main aim of this study is to carry out a comparative analysis of the topical sequencing displayed by the three subgenres researched, it is considered convenient to canvass the general characteristics of genre and register in the sample of texts which form the data.

3.1. DATABASE AND GENRE SELECTION

The selected news items belong to the informative subgenre and, following van Dijk (*News Analysis*), can be classified as "hard news," as they are current events that should be published the same day on which they occur. The "field" of the news

of events is determined by the specific activity that defines them.[2] Although the rhetorical purpose of the journalist when writing a news item for a newspaper can be influenced by political or ideological motives (Fowler, 1991), his/her main aim is to inform on current issues in a hypothetically objective and impersonal way (van Dijk, *News as Discourse*; Martínez Albertos; Grijelmo).[3] The "tenor" of the news items selected for research is determined by the sociological characteristics of the newspapers from which it has been taken. In this case, quality newspapers such as *The Times, The Daily Telegraph, and The Guardian*, typically directed at the upper-middle class with a medium or high cultural level (Jucker). Finally, the "mode" of the news is, evidently, the written language. Therefore, there is no possibility of feedback between the journalist and his/her reader. These variations in field, tenor and mode will be shown in the utilization of a formal, concise and impersonal language which rejects personal comments and evaluative expressions.

In opposition to the narrative character of the news items, the main aim of the tourist brochures is not so much to inform the reader about a particular *product* as to influence directly his behaviour (van Dijk, *News Analysis*; *News as Discourse*; Cook). The promotion of a town is what defines the "field" of the tourist brochures. Their main rhetorical purpose is to attract the attention of the readers so that they take an interest in the place that is being advertised. The variable of "tenor" is characterized by the interpersonal relationship that is established between the sender and the reader of the tourist brochure. An expert in a geographical area addresses with informative and persuasive aims to a possible visitor, usually less familiar with the place that is being described. Although there is no possibility of feedback between them, the advertiser appeals to the potential tourist in a personalized tone in order to have an influence on his/her behaviour. As written texts, the tourist brochures share some properties of the "mode" of the news items, both subgenres are written to be published. However, in contrast to the discourse of journalism, the discourse of advertising is more interpretative and evaluative. As a text type, the tourist brochure is a descriptive text in which there is a predominance of subjective language. In fact, although there is no possibility of direct interaction, the advertiser looks for a certain complicity with the tourist. This complicity is achieved by the utilization of personal and commentary expressions, stative verbs and descriptive adjectives (Lázaro Carreter).

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[2] The variables of field, tenor and mode determine the register of a particular genre, that is, the variations the language suffers in a specific social situation of communication (Halliday & Hasan 12). A genre is, in turn, defined by a schematic macrostructure, considered as a cognitive model that facilitates its identification, understanding and interpretation. Whereas the genre is typically associated with the context of culture, the register is related to the situational context in which the communicative interaction is developed.

[3] Although many Spanish scholars agree that journalism must be essentially objective (Martínez Albertos; Grijelmo), news items are products which are logically mediated by ideological interests. In fact, with the term "objectivity," Martínez Albertos (43) makes reference to the journalist's duty to truthfulness and intellectual honesty.

As with the news items, the tales belong to the narrative text type and are basically characterised as a plot which develops from an initial complication towards a final resolution by passing through a range of intermediate stages (Fabb 165).[4] As stories, their main characteristics are there condensed style and brevity (cf. Cervera 113; Sotomayor 29). All this implies that the texts will basically be formed by short sentences, usually in the past, which contribute to the plot's development of the action: there are no digressions, nor detailed descriptions which can interfere with the narrative tension.

Regarding the three components of register, the field of the tales can be defined as non-technical or non-specialised. Tales are then characterised by simple, clear and colloquial language. The topics belong to a young child's world and are presented in a way that is only slightly more developed than the colloquial language of the child, surely with the aim of increasing his lexical and linguistic competence without supposing too much difficulty. As for the rhetorical purpose, both entertainment and instruction are the two basic aims of this genre. The tenor, which defines the relationship between the participants in the communicative exchange, is realized in short tales by the necessary presence of three participants, since between author (tale writer) and receivers (young children under five) mediates the figure of an adult (normally parents or teachers at a nursery school) that tells (not just reads) the story. Given the close relationship between the story teller and the receiver/s, the language is direct and informal, simple yet careful. The presence of evaluative and attitudinal lexis is, as in tourist brochures, a constant in tales. This evaluative and attidudinal language is frequently used by writers of traditional tales in order to instill moral values in young children. As far as mode is concerned, although the tales analysed are in written mode, their oral origin is traditionally accepted. The obvious oral orientation of tales contributes to their level of abstraction and complexity being kept to a minimum. The lexis and simplicity of syntactic structures are, of course, closer to that of oral discourse.

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[4] When describing the news schema, van Dijk (*News Analysis*; *News as Discourse*) distinguishes two basic parts: (1) the summary, formed by the headline and the lead, where the most relevant information is given and the five questions (who, what, when, where and why) are answered in a concise way and (2) the body of the news story, where the main events referred to in the lead are developed in a decreasing order of informative importance. The structure of the news item is, therefore, prototypical of the narrative style, characterized by a chronological sequence of events. Also narrative in form, although with a less complex structural arrangement, are the tales, defined by a very simple presentation of the situation and the main characters, a very basic account of the development of the action and a brief account of the final outcome of the story. As far as the schematic structure of tourist brochures, it should be stated that they usually follow a clearly predictable organization: once the name of the place being promoted is introduced, the different tourist areas of interest that can be visited are referred to. Finally, information about timetables, fares and telephone numbers frequently close the brochure.

3.2. METHOD OF ANALYSIS

At this point I will study in detail the differences in the topical organization of each of the following three texts: a tale about a little boy who is wishing to become older, taken from *Stories for Under-Fives* by Corrin and Corrin (1979), a news item on terrorism, taken from a quality newspaper, *The Daily Telegraph* (1995), and a tourist brochure on a Greek island, taken from a tourist magazine, *Olympic Holidays* (1995). Each were selected at random from a further sample of 60 texts. Finally, the overall results obtained from the study will also be shown, regarding topical sequentiality in the entire text samples. In this way the research will conclude with a comparative analysis of the topical sequencing occurring within the three subgenres.

In order to demonstrate the hypothesis outlined before, the 20 news items, 20 tales and 20 tourist brochures will be submitted to an empirical analysis. On the basis of the aboutness criterion and the topical typology presented in the previous pages, the topics of the sentences of the sample of texts will be classified, in an attempt to determine the macrostructure or the general topical sequentiality of the three subgenres researched. Discourse topics are identified in terms of the macropropositions expressed either in the headlines of the news of events, in the titles of tales or in the titles and subtitles of the tourist brochures. Sentence or local topics, however, are identified by their being embodied within the discourse topic and by their referential continuity in the text. The local topics of the news items, tourist brochures and children's narratives each consistently make reference to aspects of the main characters of the news items, the tourist areas of interest or to the characters that fulfil the main functions in tales (Propp; Luch).[5]

Once the topical sequentiality of the 60 texts is established, determination will be made regarding the activation of new topical chains by means of new elements or of given constituents previously introduced in the co-text.

3.3. THE TOPICAL SEQUENCING OF THE THREE TEXTS

As for the introduction and continuity of topics in the tourist brochure (see appendix, text I), it should be stated that the main topical entity, *Rethymnon*, is introduced in the rheme slot of the first sentence and is realized by a proper name. Its continuity is maintained through a known topic, realized by a definite noun, *the*

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[5] The main characters that fulfil Propp's functions in tales are the following: the hero, who either suffers an aggression or lacks something, the aggressor, the donor of the magic object, who will help the hero to achieve his goal and overcome all the obstacles, the princess (she is usually the final prize of the hero after his triumph), the king or any other powerful man, and the false hero (Cerrillo & García).

massive stretch of sand, and five subtopics which, closely related to the basic topical entity, make reference to the places of main tourist interest in this seaside town *(the promenade, the harbour, the old part of town, the Rethymnon wine festival* and, finally, *Creta Palace, a luxurious hotel)*. The close relationship that is established between the discourse topic and the various subtopics determines the internal coherence and the topical progression of the tourist brochure, characterized by only one topical sequence, Rethymnon and its main tourist places.

As regards the organization of the news item and the tale, distinctive features can be found. Unlike the tourist brochure, the topical progression of the news item (see appendix, text II) is characterized by more than one topical sequence. Therefore, its structural organization is multisequential and is defined on the basis of the different topical chains about which information is given in the text (*a car bomb, Beant Singh, the attack, the fanatics, PM Narasimha Rao's government* and *Sikh militancy*).

The news item narrates the killing of the PM of Punjab, Mr Singh, by a terrorist gang and the political implications of his death. The introductory topic is activated in thematic position by an indefinite expression, *a car bomb*, and is maintained by means of a resumed topic (*the blast,* sentence No. 3) and three known topics, realized by a relative pronoun (*which*), a lexical variation (*the explosion*) and a partial repetition (*the bomb*). The information given about the new topic in the rheme slot of the sentence, "*killed the chief minister of Punjab and 12 body guards,*" generates, in turn, another topical entity in the text, *Beant Singh*, which opens the main topical chain of the news item. The continuity of this known topic is kept alive in the following discourse through three resumed topics (sentences 8, 12 and 19), three known topics (sentences 9, 10 and 13) and two subtopics (*his failure* and *Mr Singh's election as chief minister*, sentences 13 and 21).

Besides the two main topical entities (*a car bomb* and *Beant Singh*), other local topics, which complete the information the journalist tries to give, can be identified in this news item. These entities, previously activated in the rheme slot of the previous sentences activate other different topical sequences and show, by means of their lexical implications, the ideological orientation of the journalist: "*the fanatics*" (sentence No. 15), "*which (PM Narasimha Rao's government)*" (sentence No. 17) and *"which (Kikh militancy)"* (sentence No. 21).

The sentence topic "*the attack*" has an encapsulating effect (Sinclair, 1992) on the news items, as it evokes all the information expressed in the previous sentences on its own. In fact, this local topic, whose continuity is kept alive in sentences No. 14 *(the attack)*, No. 16 *(the assassination)*, by means of two nominalizations, and in sentence No. 18, through the personal pronoun "*it*," encapsulates at the sentence level the general idea about which information is given until its activation in the text. Therefore, it helps to establish the internal coherence of the news item and to maintain its topical continuity. It is used as a way of creating links between a specific sentence and the whole text of which it is a part.

Less complex is the topical organization of the tale (see appendix, text III), characterized by only two topical chains, a main one, Tim and his desire to become older and a secondary one, his brother and sister's growing up. Although the conti-

nuity of the main topical sequence is broken by three direct appeals by the narrator to the listener with the use of the impersonal you (*and you can't count them; so you can guess how small he was; what do you think of that?*), Tim's desire to become older is the central topic about which information is given at a local and global level.

In *The Growing Tale* there is almost a complete identification between the title and the omnipresence of *Tim* as theme and topic: the character grows and is described with almost each clause in the story, and the story, in turn, grows with the character. The simple arrangement of the structure and content of this narrative seems to agree with the idea of making it easier for the child to follow the plot so that s/he does not lose the thread of the story.

3.4. The sequentiality of topic chains in the sample texts

Once the detailed study of the three texts has been concluded, the topical sequentiality of all text samples will be analyzed in this section. After carrying out the empirical analysis of the sixty texts, I can affirm that, due to the characteristics of genre and register and the typology of topics which are most frequently predominant, the structural organization of the three subgenres shows relevant differences. Chart I demonstrates the relevance of subtopic components present in tourist brochures. 47.6% of the topics identified in the data are subtopical. Through the subtopic the writer highlights the main areas of interest that are a must for the tourist and attracts the reader's attention to the 'product' that is being advertised.

TABLE I: TYPOLOGY OF TOPICS					
	NEWS ITEMS	TOKENS	TOURIST BROCHURES	TOKENS	TALES	TOKENS
New topic	9,9%	48	6,4%	21	8,9%	68
Subtopic	7,0%	34	47,6%	157	5,6%	42
Known topic	65,7%	318	42,1%	139	56,0%	427
Resumed topic	17,4%	84	3,9%	13	29,5%	225
Total number of Tokens	100,0%	484	100,0%	330	100,0%	762

The prevailing constituent, reaching 65.7% and 56% in the news items and tales respectively is the known topic. This increase in known topics, with regard to the previous subgenres, brings with it other significant differences between the three text types. Thus, while the subtopic is demonstrated with the greatest frequency in the tourist brochures, it represents only 7 and 5.6 per cent of the total number of topics identified within the news items and tales.

The high rate of subtopics in the tourist brochures is a decisive factor of their topical progression. The close relationship that is established between new topics and subtopics in the brochures determines their global topical organization, typically characterized by a sole topical sequence which makes reference to the most interesting places of a tourist area. In fact, once the advertising texts have been analyzed, it can be stated that 15 out of 20 brochures are centred on a sole topical chain, defined on the basis of the association that is made between the main topic and its subtopics. Only 5 out of the 20 tourist texts give information about more than one topical entity.[6]

Unlike the tourist brochures, the macrostructure of the news items and the tales is characterized by more than one topical sequence. Therefore, their structural organization is multisequential and is defined on the basis of the different topical chains about which information is given in the text. There are different topical referents, most of them known or resumed, about which information is introduced at clause level and there is not a relationship of dependency between the introductory topic and the rest of the topical entities. The aim of the journalist is not so much to highlight only one informative aspect as to inform the greatest number of readers about all the issues of a current and social event. As for the children's narratives, entertainment and instruction are their two basic aims of the tales' writer. Thus, it is essential for the writer to create dynamic and interesting stories for young children in order to attract their attention to the didactic aspects utilized (social or moral values, on the one hand, and linguistic competence, on the other). As Nobile (52-56) states "if it is totally obvious that young children enjoy listening to tales, it is not less evident that this type of narrative plays a crucial pedagogic and moralizing role."

The multisequential organization of the news items and the tales requires the utilization of resumed topics. These make reference to topical entities already introduced in the linguistic context. In fact, the presence of resumed topics is more relevant in the narrative (29.5%) and journalistic (17.4%) subgenres than in the advertising texts (3.9%). In *Mrs Rabbit's Cottage*, for example, the high frequency of resumed topics is imposed by the alternation of the two main characters (Mrs Rabbit and Mr Fox) in the story and by the constant appearance of secondary characters (a dog, a wolf and a cockerel) that try to help Mrs Rabbit to recover her home, taken over by Mr Fox.

Although the presence of known topics is clear in the three subgenres, tourist brochures (42.1%), tales (56%) and news items (65.7%), they fulfil different textual functions. In the tourist texts the function of these topical entities is to maintain continuity of a subtopic. In the news items and tales known topics are typically used either to maintain the persistence of an introductory topic or to grant a topical status to a rhematic constituent, previously introduced in the text.

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[6] Tunisia, Castleton, Stanford Hall, *The Canterbury Tales and Our Little Farm.*

There is a minimal presence of new topics in the three subgenres. Although all the texts have at least one introductory topic, the high rate of known topics and resumed topics minimizes the frequency of novel entities in the global percentage. There is a higher presence of this topical category within the news items (9.9%) and tales (8.9%) than in the brochures (6.4%). This is due to the fact that in the latter only one introductory topic is usually activated, in order to focus the readers' attention on the main tourist area which is being promoted. In the news items and the tales, however, several introductory topics are activated to inform the reader about the most relevant aspects of a current event, generally of tragic and criminal character, or about the main actions carried out by the main character of the tale. These local entities generate, in turn, part of the topical chains that determine the semantic content of the news item and the tale. Nevertheless, introductory topics are not the only constituents that create new topical sequences in journalistic and narrative texts.

A high percentage of journalists and writers of tales introduce several topical sequences. Those most relevant are activated at the beginning in the lead of the news item or in the first paragraphs of the tales. Others, informatively less significant, are generated either through new topics, introduced later, or through known topics, previously referred to in the rheme of the previous sentences.

Only one of the twenty news items of the sample of texts, "Former teacher jailed for sex abuse of boys" (*The Times*, 02.09.1995), has an atypical macrostructure, as it does not transmit information about several topical chains. This news item is essentially centred on a sole topical entity, "Charles Napier," that maintains its continuity throughout the text by means of the activation of known topics, in their majority located in thematic position:

> (6) A former British Council worker who sexually abused boys at his home was sent to prison for nine months yesterday.
> ...Napier found a job with the British Council in Cairo after <u>being</u> banned from teaching jobs in British schools after a conviction for indecent assault. He was sacked when British council officials discovered the offences... He admitted in a pre-sentence report that he was still sexually attracted to boys, and had also expressed continuing sexual feelings for children in a recent letter.. Napier, who has been living abroad, was also ordered to pay £1,000 costs.

As for tales, the average of topical chains is 4.5. Only in *The Growing tale*, the text that has been analysed in detail in the previous section, a smaller number of topical sequences is shown: (1) Tim's desire to become older and (2) his brother and sister's growing up. It is a story with no real action, and is in no way suitable for an older audience (5 years), who would certainly find it too boring and without interest.

Regarding the informative value of the clause constituents which introduce the topical sequences in the three subgenres, the empirical analysis carried out also shows important differences between them. Thus, while the main topical sequence in the tourist brochures and the tales is activated by means of new topics (81% and 83% of the tokens examined), only 44% of the topical sequences identified in the

news items are introduced by introductory topics.[7] Most of the informative sequences, 56%, are generated by means of known topics, linguistically established before. Known topics, therefore, carry out a double function in the news items: on the one hand, they maintain the continuity of the topical entities which have been previously introduced and, on the other, assimilating functions typical of novel topics, they activate new informative sequences in the text.

The writer of the brochure generally introduces a sole topical sequence through a new topic, with the purpose of focalising the attention of the reader on the 'product' or tourist area that is being promoted. The journalist also tends to introduce the main topical sequence of the news items through a new topic. However, most of their topical chains are generated by known topics, already referred to in the text. This way, the understanding of the message is made easier for the reader, as the sentence topics of the text are created from entities which have already been linguistically introduced or which have been activated in the rheme of the previous sentences.

Finally, the writer of the tales consistently introduces different topical chains in the narrative through new topics. In 91 of the topical chains identified in tales, 68 are activated by novel topics. These introductory entities make reference to the main characters in the story. However, the less significant secondary characters are activated by known topics, already introduced in the rhematic span of the previous sentences.

IV. CONCLUSION

As a conclusion, the structural organization of the news items and the tales appears multisequentially, unlike the tourist brochures, in which the organization appears monosequentially (1.3 topical chains per text). I have identified an average of 5.4 topical chains in the news items. They follow and, sometimes, interrupt one another as all the issues of a current and social event are transmitted to the reader. An average of 4.5 topical chains has been identified in the tales as a relationship does not exist between the introductory topic and the rest of the topical entities. Although in the twenty texts analysed, the writer of the tales directs the child's attention to the main character in order to simplify comprehension, s/he also makes reference to other secondary characters in an attempt to make the action in the story dynamic and interesting for young children.

Therefore, the results demonstrate that the communicative intentions of the journalist, the advertiser and the writer of tales play a decisive role in the topical progression of the three subgenres investigated. The evidence does not support one aspect of my original hypothesis, as the topical sequentiality of the tales appears multisequentially.

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[7] In raw figures, 21 out of 26 sequences in the tourist brochures, 68 out of 91 topical chains in the tales and, finally, 48 out of 108 in the news items are activated by novel topics.

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APPENDIX

Text I:

Crete
RETHYMNON

(1) Half way along Crete's northern coast between Heraklion and the island's western most point is *the seaside town of Rethymnon.*

(2) *The massive stretch of sand* is a pretty welcoming sight: a great place to 'sun bake', build sand castles or take part in the water sports on offer: (3) *The promenade which* leads from the beach to the centre of town provides a great choice of bars and tavernas.

(4) A favourite spot after dark is the picturesque and colourful old *harbour* with some very good fish tavernas. (5) Contrasting with the bustling atmosphere of the waterfront is *the old part of town where* narrow alleyways and beautiful old houses give evidence of past Venetian and Turkish influences. (6) For lots of Greek music, dancing and drinking don't miss *the famous Rethymnon wine festival which* takes place every year in mid July.

GRECOTEL
CRETA PALACE
THE LUXE

(7) Luxury, style, service, quality, *this* beautiful *hotel* has it all. (8) *The Grecotel Creta Palace* is located, in its own private grounds, on a beautiful sandy beach 3½ miles outside the town of Rethymnon. (9) *This large complex* offers elegant accommodation in the main building and bungalow village types. (10) It boasts many amenities which will keep all the family occupied by day and by night. (11) *The Grecotel Creta Palace* is very popular and not just with Olympic's clients SO BOOK EARLY! (12) *It* will also accommodate clients in wheelchairs.

Olympic Holidays, 1995

Text II:

Car bomb kills Punjab minister
By Trevor Fishlock and Rahul Bedi in New Delhi

(1) *A car bomb* yesterday killed the chief minister of Punjab and 12 bodyguards.

(2) *Beant Singh* was leaving his office in the region's capital, Chandigarh, when the powerful bomb exploded.

(3) All windows in the 10 storey building were shattered by *the blast*, (4) *which* was heard several miles away.

(5) *The explosion* prompted security agencies to declare a red alert across the troubled region and to seal off the Indian capital, New Delhi.

(6) Initial reports indicate that *the bomb*, believed to be plastic explosive, was placed inside Mr Singh's car.

(7) No one has yet claimed responsibility for *the attack* but (8) many believe that *Mr Singh* may have paid the price for his own vanity.

(9) *Mr Singh* was lauded at a meeting 10 days ago by two ministers in the Punjab government.

(10) Once, a Sikh, likened *Mr Singh* to one of the gurus of his faith. (11) Many Sikhs considered this a blasphemy.

(12) *Mr Singh* made the mistake of not rejecting this flattery. (13) To fanatical Sikhs especially, *his failure* to do so meant *he* was accepting the praise.

(14) Suspicion for *the attack* has fallen on the small band of Sikh separatists. (15) It may be that *the fanatics*, enraged by Mr Singh's vanity, planted the bomb - perhaps with inside help.

(16) *The assassination* is a set back to Prime Minister Narasimha Rao's government, (17) *which* claimed to have eliminated Sikh militancy nearly three years ago.

(18) *It* is also a setback to Mr Rao's ruling Congress party, (19) of which *Mr Singh* was a member and close ally.

(20) *Mr Singh's election as chief minister* in February 1992 virtually ended 12 years of Sikh militancy, (21) during *which* more than 17,000 people were killed.

The Daily Telegraph, 1995

Text III:

A GROWING TALE
N. Montgomery (In S. and S. Corrin eds. [1974]
Stories for Under-Fives. Puffin Books)

(1) *THERE* was once a boy called *Tim*.

He was smaller than his sister Sally and smaller than his brother Billy. *He* was the smallest person in the house, except the kitten and the canary, and you can't count them.

(2) *Tim* was so tiny *he* could only just walk, *he* could only just talk and *he* only had one candle on his birthday cake. So you can guess how small he was.

(3) *He* couldn't wash himself, *he* couldn't dress himself and *he* couldn't blow his own nose. *His mother* had to do almost everything for him. *She* gave him a tiny chair to sit on, and a tiny bed to sleep in every night.

(4) *He* didn't know his right foot from his left foot. *He* didn't know what was red and what was blue. *He* couldn't say what one and one makes. *He* was much too small to count.

(5) *He* was very good at shouting, at banging and at bawling. *He* was very good at throwing, at grabbing and at crawling. *Tim* was so very tiny *he* could walk beneath the table and never bump his head!

(6) But *he* wished and *he* wished he could see over fences, and turn door handles all by himself.

(7) *He* grew and he grew until he was two, *he* grew and *he* grew until *he* was three, and *he* grew and *he* grew and then *he* was FOUR. And when he was four, *Tim* was a Great Big Boy. *He* had four candles on his birthday cake.

(8) *He* could see over fences and what was on tables. *He* could now turn door handles, all by himself.

(9) *He* was MUCH too big for his tiny little chair, *he* was much too big for his tiny little cot, so *he* slept in a real bed of his very own. *He* could wash himself, dress himself and blow his nose on a great big pocket-handkerchief. *He* put his left shoe on his left foot, his right shoe on his right foot, and *he* tied both the laces in a very tidy bow. *He* knew what was red and what was blue, so *he* didn't bother bawling and he didn't bother crawling. *He* was much too big for that!

(10) *Tim* was now so BIG he went to the Nursery School. What do you think of that?

(11) *He* was still much smaller than his sister SaIly, and *he* was still much smaller than his big brother Billy. For *they* had grown too!