

Abstract

The issue of functional sentence perspective divides each utterance into a theme (a contextually inferable component known from a previous context or situation) and a rheme (a non-contextually involved component that is new to the utterance). It thus sets itself against formal syntax, which deals only with the compositional relations between the individual sentence members, and focuses on the information structure. The aim of this paper was to focus on the acoustic parameter of speech signal amplitude for both of these components separately and to see whether either of them shows higher or lower values than the other with statistical significance. Taking into account that in the flow of spoken speech speakers use different means to create prominence (stressing certain words or syllables), which affect the acoustic parameters (frequency, duration and amplitude), the hypothesis arose that the contextually uninvolved (i.e. new) information could show higher amplitude values than the contextually involved component because of the need to stress it. At the same time, during the course of each utterance, the amplitude values decrease, and the new information tends to be in the unmarked word order at the end of the utterance. On a corpus of 100 recordings from ten speakers, three methods of measurement were chosen: one of them (mean amplitude) confirmed the predominance of the thematic component, the second (amplitude of a word multiplied by its duration) confirmed the predominance of the rhematic component, and the third (amplitude of a stressed group multiplied by its duration) denied any statistically significant difference. It was further found that the shorter the components examined, the more clearly the stated hypotheses were confirmed.