

THE ROLES AND FUNCTIONS OF TEXT TITLES

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1. ROLES OF TEXT TITLES IN COMMUNICATION PROCESS

From a general perspective, the communication process is a combination of a series of behaviors, including actions of choosing and processing words, from the point of view of the sender, and actions of perceiving, evaluating the concrete effect of words, from the point of view of the receiver.

With regard to the subject being discussed, it is often spoken of as two opposite processes, i.e. a text encoding process and a text decoding one

As such, what role does a text title play in these two processes?

1.1 Text encoding process

In this process occurs a lot of selecting actions, including the choosing of a text title structure. It is up to the habit of each individual writer. A title can occur before or after the text has been materialized, or some time much earlier (when only just drafting the text) or some time much later (when finishing and editing the text). However, there are grounds to assume that a title is a permanently existing element that either consciously or unconsciously influences the text encoding process. Without it, it is really difficult to define the contents to be communicated as well as the limit of the contents to be presented.

From the perspective of a text encoding process, a title carries out the function of a cataphora, and the duty of an anaphora at the same time. These two functions are completely hidden. As a text linking means, it is quite different from a cataphora and an anaphora. If the two mentioned elements can be easily recognized in a text, i.e. there are some words specially in charge of these functions, then a cataphora and an anaphora in a text title are realized in an implicit way. They occur simultaneously in the text encoding process as well as in the text decoding process.

A writing is only regarded as complete when we can name it with a title in one form or another. This shows that a text title is an opening element but also a concluding element in the text encoding process.

As a matter of fact, psychologically, the actual writing can have some elements, which appear in mind much earlier such as ideas on a subject for example. But when starting to textualize those ideas, there must be certainly a base for content orientation in which the text title- although still being abstract- will be its core.

1.2 Text decoding process

Facing a concrete text, the receiver can decide to read it (read it carefully or just scan quickly) which means he decodes it, but he can also put it aside, which means he does not decode it.

The role of the text title has a decisive meaning to either of the above can not deny that decisions, because the text title is the first element to be perceived by the receiver.

Whether the text title performs well the stimulating function or not, of course, first of all it is up to the content of the subject mentioned in the title to determine whether it is suited to the needs of the receiver or not; however there is another very important element which sometimes prevails the contents of the subject, that is the attractive "wow" elements which comes from the title structure. In other words, is the structure of the title strange, attractive, curiosity rousing? Is it a subject the receiver is interested in or not? etc. confronting a title, there may be similar questions for the receiver. A title can be described as the door of a text, open and ready to welcome guests, and whether the guests come in or not is up to what is inscribed on the door. Once the guests have entered the text, of course the title will be the object of cognition and recognition many more times in the future. It performs the functions of a cataphora, and at the same time, the important tie of the anaphoric line. It is a focus point, where all the text constituents must turn to. And during the process of reading and understanding the text, the receiver always turns to it, too.

A text title is the base for checking and evaluating the text. Based on it, the compatibility/incompatibility between the meaning of a text title and the contents of the text, can be judged, as well as the completeness of the text, etc.

A text title is the first element and also the last element which affects the text understanding process of the receiver.

1.3 Informative channel

During the process of encoding as well as decoding the text, it can be said that the text title is a special informative channel, it is not formed only once but many times, not only a one-way but a two-way channel.

A text writing person, generally, can't help thinking of different objects of receivers, as well as possible ways in which a text can affect the reader, so that he can come up with a more appropriate structure for the text title. As a title normally bares an implicit meaning, therefore, the text writing person can't help putting himself in the receiver's shoes to foresee in advance all the possible deductive thoughts. Thereafter he can choose a title structure so as to direct the receiver's deductions towards his own ones.

A text decoding person, when reading and understanding a title, has to come up with different possibilities regarding the contents contained in the remaining part of the text together with the writer's intention of communication. Then, the title will also accompany him during the whole text decoding process so as to continuously edit and supplement his preliminary understanding of the text contents. Because the text encoding person to forecast all deductive ideas possibly formed from the title structure which he thinks suitable most to the intention of the text encoding person.

2. FUNCTIONS OF A TITLE IN THE TEXT

Under the form of an utterance or a series of utterances, but depending on each point of view, the title has different functions.

2.1. A text title is an independent utterance

A text title is actually the "brand" of a text. It is the nominal role that makes it quite independent.

Its independence is very different in terms of quality from that of an utterance in a text. At first, to be independent (i.e. to become "a basic sentence"), an utterance in the text must be full of basic elements and can not contain any pronouns. In contract, the

title, regardless of this condition, still maintains its independence. Although "independent", an utterance in a text is still affected by the heritage of the message. That means it is still affected by the preceding and following utterances. Normally, the preceding utterance will be the base for the following ones. And gradually, in turn, they will be the proceeding utterance for the later following ones. In the same manner, they will depend on each other, and connect with each other in a linear form. On the other hand, the title utterance has no constraints like that. It has a rather clear limit between itself and the remaining text in many forms or colors or different letter fonts, but it is often seen that there is a space between itself and the remaining part of the text to help the receiver to easily distinguish between them.

As for incomplete utterances in a text, it can be based on the narrow context to restore the contracted elements. The "missing" parts in a title utterance can't be based on this simple technique must be based on reading the whole text, that is, by basing it on the wide context. In this way the reader is likely to restore them. Of course, there are some cases, where we need to read only a few first sentences of a text or the first paragraph, and the contracted parts can be understood right away. However, please keep in mind that it is not necessary to restore those elements. In other words, it is perceived as a complete and perfect entirety regardless of how its forms are.

Therefore, when separated from a context, a title utterance has the full status of a representative element of the text and in other cases, it has the full status of a small text.

The sub-titles, whether they can be limited by a parenthesis, or put in a position of a supplementary part to supplement the main title, then can be regarded as an independent utterances when separated from the context. Their level of independence, of course, is lower than that of the main title.

2.2. A text title is an "objective utterance"

An objective utterance is an utterance or part of an utterance, which really exists in society. It exists objectively without any input of the sender's initiative. In other words, an objective title is an extracted title. The source of extraction is plentiful and various, it can be from folk literature, from another text, or from a certain famous declaration, etc. and the extraction can be a complete form or only some elements. Anyway, finally, this objective utterance is subjectivized by the sender.

2.3. A text title is a subjective title

A subjective title is created by the sender with his full personal characteristics. To some writers with strong personality, it can be perceived through title unique traits in terms of their personal style.

Whether it is an objective or subjective utterance, the text title is still the spirit of the text, it is a selected utterance after a difficult brain storming process.

2.4. A text title is a symbolic utterance

A text title is symbolic for the contents of the whole text or the whole paragraph for which it is named. In relation with the whole text or the whole paragraph, it can be said that the title is the theme in the "theme-rheme" pattern, rheme. However, it is different from the theme of which the content is the symbol of the whole content of the "rheme", i.e. the remaining part of the text or the paragraph.

When representing the whole text, relating to the whole remaining part of the behind, and standing at the beginning of the text, then it is a general title.

On the contrary, when it represents a paragraph of the text and stands at the beginning of a paragraph, then it is a partial title. A partial title is directly related to the paragraph for which it is named. At the same time, it is indirectly related to the general title and other partial titles (if the text has many partial titles). Therefore, a partial title has 3 main functions: (i) firstly, stating general content of the paragraph it is named for, (ii) secondly, specifying the concrete content of the general title, (iii) and thirdly, being a ring linking a whole chain of partial titles with the general one. Besides, the partial title can be regarded as a jalonname (this terminology is borrowed from Thomas Gergeley) marking the segmentation of a text and thanks to it, the content of a text can be easily understood.

Beside the above described positions, a partial title can be placed behind the general title in order to specify the content of the latter, therefore, the partial title may not appear again in the text. In this case, the partial title is also a symbolic utterance.

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As mentioned above, this research paper has considered the roles and functions of a text title in the communication process. Actually, the subject mentioned here, in the cognition of this research paper writer, is not simple at all. The linguistic characteristic of the text title is much influenced by the styles of linguistic functions and types of text. Furthermore, when viewing it in relation to a complete text, the formation seems not to change much, but with regard to the semantic contents, it will be more profound, receiving more additional meanings from the text contents, whereas if viewing the text title as an element alone, it will not have this characteristic.

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