

# *A proposal of a topic structure model for expository texts*

Marta CARRETERO  
Universidad Complutense de Madrid

GOUTSOS, Dionysis (1997). *Modeling Discourse Topic: Sequential Relations and Strategies in Expository Text. Advances in Discourse Processes, Vol. LIX*. Norwood, New Jersey: Ablex. ISBN 1-56750-217-2. ISBN 1-56750-218-0 (pbk.) xvi + 204 pp. †

*Modeling Discourse Topic* (henceforth MDT) presents a model for analyzing topicality in expository texts. The model is applied to data of two languages, English and Greek. MDT contains an introduction, six chapters, 11 pages of references, a subject index and an author index, as well as two appendices, of which the first specifies the title, date, author and number of words of the texts belonging to the corpora used, and the second displays a concordance of the beginnings of all the paragraphs, which are ordered according to the syntactic type of the initial element.

The contents of the book can be divided into three main parts: a) Chapter 1 surveys preceding literature on topicality; b) Chapters 2, 3 and 4 deal with the topic structure model here proposed: Chapters 2 and 3 present theoretical issues, and Chapter 4 is an application of the model to English and Greek texts; c) Chapter 5 views the model as part of the network of organizational relations in discourse. Finally, Chapter 6 sets forth the conclusions and some proposals for further research.

The parts mentioned earlier will be dealt with successively in Sections 1, 2 and 3. Each section will begin with a critical summary of the contents, followed by extensive general comments and more detailed observations on specific points.

## 1. SURVEY OF PRECEDING LITERATURE ON TOPICALITY

Chapter 1 is a successful overview of how the different facets of topic have been treated in previous research. This is in itself very meritorious, considering the wide range of literature covered. This good coverage, together with the clarity of exposition, makes the reading very profitable for all researchers on topicality, especially for those beginning their investigation. The survey starts by laying emphasis on the lack of consensus about what topic actually is, and in particular on the following oppositions between different perspectives:

1) The *what*-perspective, which views topic as a discrete element or unit, against the *how*-perspective, from which topic is seen as a structuring or unifying frame that pervades the overall discourse organization.

2) The unit of application: *sentence* topic versus *discourse* topic.

3) The reference to *content* or to *expression*.

The author proceeds to analyze previous works on topicality, focusing in each case on the angle from which topic is approached. At the end of the chapter, Goutsos (henceforth G.) sets forth a view of these perspectives with reference to Hjelmslev's (1954) model of stratification in language, and advances which of them will be chosen for the topic structure model presented in Chapter two: the *how*-perspective, discourse, and reference to expression.

Concerning the overview, the following comments could be made:

- To begin with, the degree of depth is uneven: for instance, six pages approximately are devoted to systemic-functional studies (Halliday 1967, 1985; Fries 1983), while the literature on the syntax-discourse interface, which includes contributions by well-known authors such as those in Givón (eds., 1979, 1983), Dik (1989) and Chafe (ed., 1980), has been dealt with in a couple of paragraphs.

- Secondly, in the description of the systemic-functional work, MDT fails to distinguish topic and theme, ignoring, for instance, the well-founded suggestion set forth in Downing (1991) that theme and topic could advisably be considered as distinct categories which may or may not conflate in one wording (cf. Mauranen 1993).

- Thirdly, the evaluation of the various contributions is, to this reviewer, somewhat biased. Those works which differ from MDT in that they follow the *what*-perspective and/or choose the sentence as the unit of application are generally undervalued. Sometimes the criticism is justified, even though not always original, as with Halliday's notion of theme or with the propositional approaches. Other models, however, seem to be ruled out without convincing reasons: for instance, work on the syntax-discourse interface is dismissed because it "has a specifically syntactic perspective. As a result, there is no attempt to develop a theory of discourse for its own sake or to describe

explicitly the relation between the two levels". Perhaps the author could have specified why MDT has not proceeded in this direction. Concerning Functional Sentence Perspective, even though its main exponent (Firbas 1992) has been reviewed by G. himself (1994), it is simply considered "complex and difficult to replicate and verify", and "not provid[ing] us with an easy and unambiguous method for the identification of theme and rheme" (p. 10), with no illustrations that might serve to justify this claim.

## 2. DESCRIPTION AND APPLICATION OF THE TOPIC STRUCTURE MODEL

Chapter 2 describes the sequential relations, strategies and techniques that make up the model, as well as the linguistic devices that signal the techniques. The chapter starts with some general considerations on the view of topic as a sequential structure, followed by an attempt to describe expository texts. With a good critical eye, G. states that previous definitions, such as those proposed in Longacre (1976) and Martin (1985), are simplistic and do not account for the variations that can be found within this genre. He concludes then that "expository discourse cannot be narrowly defined, but only with a degree of arbitrariness. Thus, our material involves texts that have typical expository functions in general" (p. 39). At this point he does not specify what these functions are, and the reader is left to infer them from the previous definitions or from other sources of knowledge.

MDT goes on to describe the data used, which consist of the following corpora: Corpus 1 (academic): 5 extracts, from papers published in academic journals and from non-fictional books; Corpus 2 (journalism): 12 texts from the press; Corpus 3 (editorials): 15 editorials from *The Guardian* covering the events in the Gulf War (1991); Corpus 4: Greek translations of 5 texts from the other corpora.

The author gives reasons why such texts have been selected: wide-ranging authorship, different subject-matters, moderate-sized texts (i.e. short enough to be manageable and long enough to be representative and not too simple) <sup>1</sup>.

This account of the data is followed by an exposition of the main features of the model, which are the following:

a) **Spans:** continuation and transition. Texts consist of a regular succession of continuation and transition spans, that is, of "areas of local continuity or stability interrupted by areas of swift or abrupt ruptures that introduce turbulence or instability into the text" (p. 44).

b) **Strategies:** topic shift and topic continuity;

c) **Techniques**, which are divided into primary and secondary. The primary techniques are four:

c1) *Topic framing*, an optional technique which simultaneously indicates the ending of a continuation span and the beginning of a transition span:

- (1) (p. 46, text J7) <sup>2</sup> In resonant reference to Margaret Thatcher's disastrous reform of local taxation, Tory politicians mutter that the bill is a "poll tax on wheels". *Are they right?*  
For railway fans, privatisation should, in principle, offer three huge advantages.

c2) *Topic introduction*, an obligatory technique which opens a continuation span. It is usually preceded by topic framing (2), but in some cases it is not (3):

- (2) (p. 57, A4) At least that is what is supposed to happen, but you can always question the competence of the person who carried out the observation.  
*In practice, what often happens is that a new theory is devised that is really an extension of the previous theory.*
- (3) (p.47, E4) If morale matters [...], then telling your forces that the "mother of battles" is pointless seems deadly serious stuff. So, immediately thereafter, does sending your Foreign Minister to Moscow to test true intentions. *Saddam Hussein appears finally seized of the need to extricate himself from a personal disaster.* The temptation to obliterate him is naturally strong [...]

c3) *Topic closure*, an optional technique which provides an end the current continuation span, thus anticipating the beginning of a transition span:

- (4) (p. 63, A4) Yet it appears that he chose to make it evolve in a very regular way according to certain laws. *It therefore seems equally reasonable to suppose that there are also laws governing the initial state.*  
It turns out to be very difficult [...]

c4) *Topic continuation*, an obligatory technique which establishes continuation spans by explicit signals or by default:

- (5) (p. 68, A1) Accordingly, over the last few decades, many new industrial spaces have sprung into existence on the landscape of capitalism. *These spaces are the outcome of a twofold process...* [...]

Secondary techniques, all of which signal transition, include asides, digressions and interruptions, as well as topic drift, i.e. a very smooth transition combining different sequential techniques in the same sentence.

The close relationship between spans, strategies and techniques is evident: continuation spans are realized by the strategies and techniques of topic

continuity; transition spans are realized by the strategies of topic shift, and the techniques of topic framing, introduction and closure. It may be argued that strategies are redundant, since topic shift and topic continuity coincide with continuation and transition spans, respectively. The model could be simplified by considering only spans and techniques; thus, transition spans would include those stretches of discourse that convey framing, introduction and closure techniques, and continuation spans would show techniques of topic continuity.

The techniques are indicated by a wide variety of topic signals, which can be roughly divided into the following kinds:

- **Orthographic markers:** paragraph breaks and parentheses.
- **Metadiscourse items**, such as *here, at this point, to sum up...*
- **Prediction pairs.** This notion, taken from Tadros (1985), refers to a number of discourse acts, which involve structural pairs of predictive and predicted members. Certain prediction pairs can play a role in topicality, in that the first member signals topic framing, and the second topic introduction; they are classified into four types: advance labelling by anaphoric nouns, enumerations through numerals, hypotheticality pairs, and question-answer pairs.
- **Discourse markers**, such as *now, then, therefore, thus, so, and, but...* They often work in combination with other signals.
- **Cohesive devices.** Here are included, among others, ellipsis, substitution, pronominalization, repetition and encapsulation.
- **Time framing.** Tense shift and tense continuity tend to indicate topic introduction and continuation, respectively.
- **Syntactic devices**, such as sentence-initial adjuncts<sup>3</sup> and light thematic structures.

Chapter 3 begins with an explanation of the basic patterns by which the major techniques follow each other. An interesting though uncommon pattern is that called *twin transition* (p. 78), which consists of a sequence of a topic introduction followed by a framing and another introduction instead of a continuation, such as (6):

- (6) (p. 78, J5) When Mao was asked what he thought the effect of the French Revolution was on world history, he reputedly replied: "It is too early to tell". That is also the defence of many - and there were many - involved in last year's UN conference in Rio, the Earth Summit.  
*But is it a fair defence?* (t.intr.) *Or was the summit, as many suggest, a nine-day media extravaganza that changed very little indeed?* (t.fr.) It all depends on where you sit. (t.intr.)

This chapter proceeds to make further elaborations on the topic model, among which the most important is perhaps a proposal of a hierarchy of topic signals: these are ordered as in the enumeration above, from higher to

lower significance in the establishment of sequential techniques, i.e. orthographic markers are the most important signals, followed by metadiscourse items, prediction pairs, discourse markers, cohesive devices, time framing and, to end, sentence-structure patterns.

Chapter 4 begins with an application of the model to texts from the English corpora. As was predictable from the two previous chapters, the analysis sheds light on the linguistic devices that play a role on topic management. In certain places naturally occurring examples are compared with constructed ones with the same propositional content but different topic signals, with the result that the patterns of sequentiality are different: for instance, in (7) the clauses after the colon indicate topic continuation, while in (8) the new paragraphs, together with the numerals and the renominalization of the last paragraph, signal two successive shifts:

- (7) (p.90, A4) A theory is a good theory if it satisfies two requirements: it must accurately describe a large class of observations on the basis of a model that contains only a few arbitrary elements, and it must make definite predictions about the results of future observations.
- (8) (constr. example) A theory is a good theory if it satisfies two requirements.  
 First, it must accurately describe a large class of observations on the basis of a model that contains only a few arbitrary elements.  
 Second, a theory must make definite predictions about the results of future observations.

The analysis makes it possible to see the differences among texts: for example, two of the texts analyzed, an article on nuclear power from the *New Statesman Society* and an extract from Stephen Hawking's *A Brief History of Time*, differ in that the first has some abrupt shifts and does not always show correspondence between the succession of transition and continuation spans and the division into paragraphs. However, there is no attempt to explain the **why** of such differences: for instance, it could be argued that the abruptness of shifts and the occasional mismatches between spans and paragraphs are due to the less elaborate nature of journalistic texts in comparison with academic prose. This omission is implicitly acknowledged by G. himself, when at the end of the book he suggests, as a direction of further research, to "mov[e] from the *how* perspective [...] to the *why* perspective" (p. 175).

MDT proceeds to the application of the model to the Greek corpus. The author states the reasons why he has chosen translations instead of texts written originally in Greek: first, the importance of translation in the Greek sociocultural context, in terms of the number of books translated into this language; second, since translations tend to keep to the original constructions as far as possible, "any instance of deviations, in the sense of textual reorganization, would have a special significance" (p. 121).

The contrastive analysis leads to the following conclusions:

a) Concerning techniques and strategies, there is virtually no difference between both languages.

b) *The Greek translations attempt to maintain the sequential structure of the original*: for example, when a sentence has to be split into two, some signal of topic continuation is added.

c) The Greek translations tend to lay emphasis on the sequential structure if it is considered not to be sufficiently explicit in the original: this tendency accounts for the occasional deviations from the original in paragraphing or in the use of cohesive devices.

d) The main differences are to be found in linguistic devices. There are certain areas of convergence, such as the use of parentheses and paragraphing, tense continuity and shift, and the significance of cohesive devices and prospective lexis. There are also areas of divergence, as is the case, for instance, of the mapping of adversative conjunctions or the variation in the type of signal chosen.

Factors b) and c) are in line with some observations included in MDT by Blum-Kulka (1986) and Baker (1993) about translation in general: translation favours, among other things, explicitness and disambiguation.

At this point we will proceed to an evaluation of the model. First of all, it must be noted that, due to the great number of linguistic devices and the depth with which their role in topicality is analyzed, Chapters 2, 3 and 4 are invaluable for researchers on topic management as well as for students wishing to improve the sequential organization of their writings.

However, the model also has several shortcomings, which are largely due to the following factors:

a) The absence of topic levels; that is, texts are viewed as sequences of successive continuation and transition spans, without any topic layers: “from the perspective of the topic structure model there is no need for distinguishing between paratactic and hypotactic or embedded relations between spans” (p. 71)<sup>4</sup>. The result is indeed an economical model to handle, as is stated in several places, but, as we will see, this quality has several drawbacks.

b) The complete reliance on the *how*-perspective: in other words, the model deals exclusively with form, and considerations of content are excluded. This factor is related to the previous one, since the distinction between global and local topics has to do with content (or ‘aboutness’, as is often stated in works on topicality).

The main negative consequences of these limitations are perhaps the following:

First, there is no definition of continuation or transition spans in terms of content, and, although it is easy to know approximately what each consists of, the assignation of one technique or another to given stretches is not

always convincing. For instance, the analysis offered for the following two examples could lead to confusion:

a) The paragraph break and the last sentence in (9) are considered as a transition span, and more concretely as an instance of topic framing:

- (9) (p.51, E3) This week-end in Moscow will -by arrangement - find Tariq Aziz and the new Soviet Minister gathered [...]  
*Of course this may all come to nothing.*

It is true that the writer describes a future meeting in the first paragraph and its possible consequences in the second, but there is no great subject change, the statement about the consequences is short and general, and there are also formal factors favouring the analysis as topic continuation, such as no tense shift, modals in the two utterances and no change of referents. The last sentence could even be analyzed as a signal of topic closure.

b) *Too* is analyzed as a signal of topic continuation in (10):

- (10) (p. 65, J9) Nonetheless, even the largest and the most enterprising firms must recognize that there are far too many languages in the world [...]  
 So we must recognize, too, that [...] some languages are more equal than others.

The things referred to in the two sentences have in common the advisability of their recognition, but they are nevertheless two different things. This interpretation of a shift is reinforced by three signalling devices: the paragraph break, *so* and *too*.

In the same line, MDT states, somewhat arbitrarily, that *for example* cannot indicate topic shift (p. 91). It could be argued that it can indicate a local topic shift, from something more general to a concrete instantiation.

Secondly, certain devices such as encapsulating nominals and discourse markers (*and, but...*), are classified as signals of topic framing or of topic continuation, depending on their scope. For example, the following two instances of *but* in (12) and (13) are considered as framing and continuation devices, respectively:

- (11) (p. 52, J7) The track authority itself could be privatised.  
*But* there is one glaring gap in Mr. MacGregor's plan.  
 (12) (p.52, A5) It is true that Zellig Harris had published some papers in 1952 which had introduced the term «discourse analysis» into the linguist's vocabulary. *But* their main importance had lain not in discourse studies [...]

It is not easy to see much difference between *but* in the two instances, since in both cases there is a topic shift of some sort. Something similar happens with examples of *and* and of other cohesive devices; in sum, the

issue that they can signal different techniques is not convincing. Had MDT allowed for a topic hierarchy, all these devices could be assigned the function of topic framing; the higher or lower place of the new topic within the hierarchy would depend on the greater or lesser scope of the devices<sup>5</sup>. An argument for this view is the statement, found in MDT itself (p. 151) that both local and long-range cohesive devices share the side-effect of shortening identity chains; this effect is due, in all probability, to the change of referents that these cohesive devices tend to involve.

Thirdly, the linearity of the model does not consider the role in topicality of cohesive devices between non-contiguous spans. For instance, G. states explicitly (p. 95) that, according to the model, there is no cohesive link between *the first part* and the previously mentioned *parts* and *first* in (13):

- (13) (p. 95, A4) However, the approach that most scientists follow is to separate the problem into two *parts*. *First*, there are the laws that tell us how the universe changes with time. [Sentence] *Second*, [Sentence] Some people feel that science should be concerned only with the *first part*; ...

Fourthly, the absence of hierarchy hinders research within this model on the differences in the signalling of topic shift depending on the importance of the topic. Investigation along this line would shed light on two important points:

a) Differences in the linguistic devices used. It is predictable that certain expressions will tend to signal global topic shift (*one other thing, let me tell you a story...*), while others will be often found in local shift (*also, else, too...*). It would also be interesting to investigate on to what extent there is a correlation between the hierarchy of topic devices proposed here and that of global and local topic levels<sup>6</sup>.

b) Quantitative differences: in all probability, global topic transition will normally be indicated by a greater number of devices than local topic transition.

### 3. THE TOPIC STRUCTURE MODEL WITHIN DISCOURSE ORGANIZATION

Chapter 5 explores the contributions of the topic structure model to the network of organizational relations in discourse. Its first part is an outline of previous studies of these relations, which are classified according to Hjelmslev's (1954) model of stratification in language. Here they will be divided only into two groups: those that, like the topic structure model, deal with form, and those which focus on content. In order to test the interaction between these planes, their independence of each other is taken as a working assumption.

Among the relations based on form are cohesive patterns (Hasan 1984) and lexical patterning (Hoey 1991). Concerning those based on content, particular emphasis is laid on the influence of genre on topic structure; it is noticeable that in the editorials, due to their immediacy and interactivity (which make them similar to spoken language), the topic linguistic devices display peculiar characteristics, in contrast to the other corpora analyzed here.

MDT also pays special attention to Halliday's metafunctions: the topic structure model, which belongs to the textual domain, is viewed as interacting (but not overlapping) with certain ideational relations in the way approached within Rhetorical Structure Theory (Mann and Thompson 1986). For example, topic shift and topic continuation often correspond to problem signalling and interclausal matching relations, respectively, and the relations of circumstance and purpose in RST are often indicated by topic framing signals such as fronted adverbial clauses. G. reminds us that ideational relations are more varied than sequential relations, since topic shift may have many purposes: to introduce or restate a problem, to introduce evaluation, and so on. There is also a section on the multifunctionality of signals, which shows how *but* can have a sequential function, when it signals a transition span, and/or an ideational function, when it indicates an antithesis between rhetorical segments of the text<sup>7</sup>.

To sum up, the main idea of this chapter is that there are significant interferences between topic as a sequential structure and many other textual relations, but there is no complete overlap with any of these. The hypothesis is set forth that the degree of overlap between all these relations could be a measure of the success of a text. If this is confirmed in further research, the study of topic structure will be shown to be crucial to language pedagogy.

As can be inferred from this description, the approach to other models in Chapter 5 is more conciliatory than that in Chapter 1, where MDT laid emphasis on the differences to be found among the perspectives from which topicality has been studied. Both chapters coincide in that these perspectives are viewed as different and as objects of separate study, but in Chapter 5 they are also considered as compatible and complementary: each perspective, in its unique way, sheds light on text organization.

Apart from this general comment, the following observations will be made on specific points:

- 1) Although the MDT approach deliberately follows a *how*-perspective, leaving the *why*-perspective for further research, a few tentative hints of the reasons why the different textual relations do not always overlap would be welcome. For example, a reader could very well wonder why sequential units do not always coincide with content units. In all probability, the mismatches between sequential units and content units are due to the lack of hierarchy in the topic structure model: if topics were ranked, perhaps most sequential

units, if not all, could be analyzed as content units, some being of a higher rank than others. Something similar happens with the mismatches between sequential units and certain topic shift signals, such as paragraphing: for instance, the beginning of the new paragraph in (14) is considered to belong to the same continuation span as the previous lines:

- (14) (J4, pp. 107-108, 6.1 to 7.3) [...] But this [nuclear power] is a technology for the rich. Capital costs are high, plant sizes are big (minimum 1,000 megawatts), and it needs a large grid systems to be economic and a highly skilled workforce to operate it. On the other hand, the fossil fuel replaced is freed for use elsewhere, particularly in the third world, where demand is likely to grow explosively over the next few decades. The fuel cycle is thus very compact - fabrication burnup disposal. It maximises the use of proven technology and minimises potential problems. Despite all this nuclear power still has a definite image problem. [...]

Although there is apparent continuity between the two paragraphs, due to the reference to 'fuel', the first paragraph deals with the advantages and disadvantages of nuclear energy, including within the former the possible use of the saved oil elsewhere; the second, however, starts with a very brief description of the advantages of fuel. Even though this description lasts only for two sentences, it could be analyzed as a topic of a very local kind.

2) The argumentation throughout the chapter is in general convincing. Nevertheless, one point must be noted: in the analysis of the interferences of the topic structure model with Hoey's (1991) lexical pattern model, according to which marginal sentences (i.e. those with a low number of lexical bonds with other sentences in the text) tend to be found in continuation spans, G. (p. 151) states that the interrogative sentences in (15), which occur at the beginning of a new paragraph, are marginal sentences related to topic continuation:

- (15) (E14, Box 5.2., 3.1.-3.2., p. 150) *Not sure whose side we are on? Unrest in Iraq is helpful?*

However, there are two strong signals of transition: a new paragraph and prospective questions (which are a kind of first member of prediction pairs). This stretch, which is strikingly similar to (6) in this review, seems to be an instance of twin transition. Therefore, these sentences seem to be a counterexample of Hoey's claim. This makes one think that low bonding may also occur with other signals of topic framing, such as sentence-initial adjuncts and other kinds of first members of prediction pairs. Research in this direction could give way to refinements of Hoey's model.

3) Although this issue is approached rather marginally (p. 154, p. 172 in Chapter 6), MDT relates topic structure with the rank scale of conversational

structure (Sinclair and Coulthard's (1975)) in the following way: transactions, like topic structure, are primarily textual; however, exchanges, moves and acts are concerned with ideational and interpersonal considerations. This radical division of labour seems to be far from reality: the names that Sinclair and Coulthard, in a more recent work (1992), give to the subtypes of transactions, 'informing', 'directing' and 'eliciting', suggest a strong interpersonal role; transactions could also be shown to have a certain unity of content, thus not being alien to the ideational function. Moves and acts also play a role in the three macrofunctions, at least in conversation. Concerning the textual function, certain works (Downing *et al.* 1998, Neff and Carretero 1997) show that both of them do play a role in topic management; for instance, topic introduction is carried out potentially via three moves: an initiation (i.e. a proposal of a new topic), an acknowledging response by another speaker, and a consolidation. This is illustrated in the following example from Svartvik and Quirk's (1980) corpus:

- (16) initiation    A: I acquired an absolutely magnificent sewing machine .  
                               did I tell you about that?  
           response    b: no  
           consolid.    A: well, when I was doing freelance advertising (S.1.3, 95-100)

Chapter 6 contains a summary of the topic structure model and of the interrelations with other models, as well as suggestions for applications and for further research. MDT argues for the application of the model in text interpretation and in language pedagogy: the mechanisms for signalling sequentiality, which have been the object of a deep study, are crucial for the understanding of a text, and therefore language students (both native and non-native), in order to be able to write satisfactory texts, could advisably be conscious of these mechanisms. Concerning further research, MDT proposes an improvement of this model through the qualitative and quantitative study of larger corpora of different genres, as well as a study of the apparently high extent to which the role of sentence-initial elements is dependent on the signalling of topic sequential techniques; and, above all, G. claims for an integrated description of discourse, for further study of the interaction of text planes, and for analyzing texts from structural perspectives in various ways.

On the whole, it can be stated that, even if the model proposed in MDT has the inconveniences of not considering content and of lacking a topic hierarchy, the book is a very welcome contribution to the literature on topicality, due, above all, to the good perspective which it provides of the different approaches to this subject and of the relations between them, and also to the thoughtful analysis carried out on the functions of a wide variety of

topic signalling devices. Its reading will be enlightening to researchers engaged in topic management, whatever the orientation of their work, as well as to those graduate or advanced undergraduate students wishing to improve the organization of their writings.

#### NOTES

† The context of this study is the research project on Topic Management in English and Spanish (DGICYT PB94-0256), financed by the Spanish Ministry of Education and Culture, of which the Principal Investigator is Angela Downing.

<sup>1</sup> The reasons why Greek translations have been chosen instead of original texts are stated in Chapter 4. This review will also specify them.

<sup>2</sup> In MDT, the examples are not numbered, but only preceded by a specification of the text from which they have been extracted, and original new paragraphs are indicated by numbers; the lines of the examples within the texts are specified. In this review the examples will show the order (by the numbers on the left in brackets), the MDT page and the source text; the lines will not be specified, and new paragraphs will be indicated by beginning a new line, as in the originals. G's italics and underlining will be maintained.

<sup>3</sup> From the examples it can be inferred that in MDT adjuncts include what in other works are called 'disjuncts', 'conjuncts' and 'adverbial clauses':

(1) (p. 52, J4) Reactors were chosen and discarded [...]

*For the ecological movement, on the other hand, nuclear power - centralised, polluting, expensive high technology - represented everything it hated.*

(2) (p.52, J3) It commissioned Martin's review of foresight programmes around the world. [...]

*Although the way ahead for technology foresight now seems clear, not everything has gone according to plan.*

<sup>4</sup> There are occasional brief allusions to a hierarchy, such as the following comment on a stretch of text (p.98): "The thematic progression pattern is that of a hypertheme, which tends to occur within continuation spans".

<sup>5</sup> In certain cases cohesive devices have no role in topicality when their scope is very short, especially when they function as intraclausal links, as in the following cases:

Paul is ugly *but* clever.

I bought some butter *and* jam.

<sup>6</sup> The relationship between topic formulating devices and topic levels in English face-to-face conversation has been one of the major concerns of the Topic Management project mentioned above. For more details see Downing *et al.* (1998).

<sup>7</sup> The status of interpersonal relations in RST is far from clear, but, as MDT states (p. 163), both the topic structure model and RST can be seen to "provide an insight into the intentional structure of discourse; that is, the succession of illocutionary acts of segment purposes. As a result, the orchestration of topic and ideational strategies may also have an interpersonal dimension."

Departamento de Filología Inglesa  
Facultad de Filología - Edificio A  
Universidad Complutense  
Ciudad Universitaria  
28040 Madrid  
e-mail: fling11@sis.ucm.es

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