

FOCUS AND EMPHASIS IN TEACHING ENGLISH FOR MASS MEDIA

One of the main functions of Mass Media is that of persuasion, and the powerful tool of providing that function is emphatic language, which includes a great number of emphatic constituents and structures. This work is an attempt to analyse and classify existing means of focus and emphasis at different language levels.

George Orwell, in his book "1984", depicted a society in which the ruling powers maintained almost total control over the population, and the weapon of that control was a specially created language Newspeak, which contained no ways of expressing

concepts and ideologies that were opposed to the state.

Such Orwell's vision of the role of language in the forming and maintaining of social structures was an exaggeration, of course. But even so, we can't

deny that language can be a powerful tool. This is an important point to bear in mind when dealing with the language of Mass Media.

Designing the course of English for MM we took into consideration that one of the main functions of MM is that of persuasion, the function, aimed to support the status quo and introduce new ideas into the society.

How do MM manage to be so persuasive in supporting certain ideas? Is the language of MM different from the language used in everyday life and if so, what are the differences? In the process of the course design the author arrived at a conclusion that the main difference is in the level of expressivity and intensity, caused by the so called 'Cone Effect' (the term by Edward J. Whetmore, 1989).

Studying the relationship between real life and MM and the processes involved one can see that what happens in real life and what we get from MM is not real life but only its reflection constructed by journalists. It is Constructed Mediated Reality (CMR). This CMR is then transmitted to the audience through MM (newspapers, magazines, radio and TV). What the consumer perceives is Perceived Mediated Reality (PMR). What lies in the core of the theory of Cone Effect is the fact that CMR, though taken from life, reflecting real life at the same time is different: it tends to be much more colourful, more dramatic, more intense - it is funnier, sexier, brighter and more violent than real life. It is real life's reflection "blown up", intensified. Mediated Reality is always exerting some degree of influence on mass audience, and the instrument of this influence is mainly the emphatic language.

This work is an attempt to analyse and classify the existing means of focus and emphasis in the English language. We make no claim to provide an exhaustive treatment of this important area, but only to draw attention to it.

Language operates at a number of levels. And at each level there are certain forms that focus and emphasis can take.

- On the **graphological** level focus and emphasis can be provided by a variety of fonts, bold and italic faces.
- On the **phonological** level intonation and special stress provide prominence to one of the constituents: John cooked the DINner. JOHN cooked the dinner. John COOKED the dinner.
- **Lexical** devices to provide focus and emphasis.

The vocabulary of the English language includes both neutral words and their "strong", emphatic counterparts. Let's consider the difference between the following sentences:

1. Typhoon came across the west coast of Taiwan.
2. Typhoon reached the west coast of Taiwan.
3. Typhoon hit the west coast of Taiwan.
4. Typhoon struck the west coast of Taiwan.

As we see, sentences 3 and 4 are more dramatic than sentences 1 and 2 due to the use of "strong", emphatic verbs, which are always **strong** in their meaning.

Besides emphatic verbs there are also emphatic adjectives. Let us compare the following pairs:

(Neutral - strong) Interesting - fascinating; Amusing - enthralling; Funny - hilarious etc.

A strong adjective can be made stronger by a strong, adverb: **absolutely boiling**.

• On the **morphological** level emphasis can be provided by the use of a neutral word in a certain position where it provides emphasising effect. Let's consider the following examples:

Adverbs **only** and **even** emphasise the word they modify. Where you put them makes a great change in the meaning. E. g.: Only I told Fred to come next week (I, none else).

I only told Fred (told, not commanded, nor asked).

• To emphasise negation the following words and phrases are used:

Not any at all; none whatsoever; not by any means; not a single one etc.

E.g.: We have ran out of bread. We don't have any at all. There is none whatsoever.

• To emphasise questions the phrase **on earth** can be used.

E. g.: Why on earth have we come here?! Where on earth did he get that information?!

An emphatic DO that occurs as a marker of emphasis in the following discourse:

1. Emphatic imperatives (even those with to be)
E. g.: DO sit down. DO be patient.

2. Wh-questions that ask about the subject E. g.: What DID happen?

3. Affirmative declarative sentences of the following five types (classification by Frank, 1972):

a) Emphasis of a whole sentence (often with an emphatic adverb like **certainly, really, definitely**, etc.).

E. g.: I really DO care about him. We certainly DO hope to reimburse your hospitality.

b) Emphasis of an action, expressed by a verb used with adverbs of frequency like **always, never, rarely** etc. E. g.: Their team always DOES win. The Tomsicks never DID show up at the party.

c) Emphasis of the positive result that had been in doubt.

E. g.: We were pleased to know that she DID finish her thesis.

d) Emphasis of affirmative contradiction of a negative statement (often introduced with **but**).

E. g.: The librarian says that I didn't return the book I borrowed last week. But I **DID** return it!

e) Emphasis on concession or contrast.

E. g. : Even though I dislike noisy parties, I **DO** find this party pleasant and exciting.

• **Syntactic** means for expressing emphasis. Emphatic constructions.

1. *Cleft sentences*

A cleft sentence is a special marked construction that puts some constituent, typically a noun-predicative, into focus. The construction usually implies contrast.

The approximate pattern, or formula for this type of emphatic sentences is:

It + aux (be/modal) + focused constituent ·
+ who/that + sentence

E.g. : It's a bike that the boy wants for his birthday.

The boy wants a bike for his birthday. He doesn't want anything else.

2. *Pseudo-clefts or Wh-clefts*

This construction may be expressed in the following pattern:

What + sentence + to be + noun

In this type of sentences special emphasis is given to the constituent that follows the copula BE.

E.g.: What I like about John is his honesty.

• **Marked word order.**

Word-order focus can be defined as the movement of a constituent into a position in the sentence where we would not ordinarily expect to find it.

There are several types of sentences with marked word order:

1. Object-fronting. E. g.: Him I like, her I don't.

2. Nominal/adjective predicative fronting. E.g.:

A professor he was, but in name only.

3. Adverbial fronting.

a) Adverbials of time fronting. E. g.: In the morning he jogs.

b) Adverbial of manner fronting. E. g.: With great skill Patty decorated the pudding.

c) Adverbial of reason fronting. E. g.: Because I was tired and annoyed, I made some unfortunate remarks at the meeting.

d) Adverbial of purpose fronting. E. g.: In order to see Mr. Briggs we went to London.

e) Adverbial of frequency fronting. E. g.: Every day Jim drives fifty miles to work.

• And, finally, there are several types of sentences with **auxiliary/subject inversion**. They can be classified as follows (classification by the author):

1. Negative adverbial + aux./subject inversion ·
+ sentence

In this type such negative adverbials are found in the front position: **never, never again, nowhere, not for one moment, at no time, in no way, on no account, rarely, little.**

E. g. Not for one moment did he hesitate.

2. Time-clause + aux. / subject inversion + sentence

The adverbials of time that usually begin the time clause in this type are: **not until, not since, only after, only when.** E.g.: Only after she boarded the plane did she realize how much she will miss her parents.

3. Emphasis on simultaneity of two actions:

Hardly + aux. / subject inversion + sentence + when + s

No sooner + aux./subj. inversion + sentence + than + s

E. g.: Hardly had they sat down when somebody knocked at the door.

No sooner did the two foreigners arrive than the majority of the guests left.

4. | Not only + aux./subj. inversion + but also + sentence

E. g.: Not only was she a devoted wife and mother, but also a talented novelist.

5. Conditional sentences with inversion

E. g.: Should you come to visit, you will be surprised to see all the changes.

Were they to know the truth, they would be shocked.

Had you come when you promised to, we would not have missed the train.

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ФОКУС ТА ЕМФАЗА У ВИКЛАДАННІ АНГЛІЙСЬКОЇ МОВИ ДЛЯ ЗМІ

Одним із головних інструментів впливової функції засобів масової інформації є експресивність і динамізм мови, які, в свою чергу, забезпечуються шляхом вживання різноманітних емфатичних конститuentів та емфатичних конструкцій. Ця робота є спробою проаналізувати і класифікувати існуючі засоби емплази на різних рівнях мови.