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Chapter 1 : Topic and comment - Wikipedia

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Definitions[edit] The sentence- or clause-level "topic", or "theme", can be defined in a number of different ways. Among the most common are a the phrase in a clause that the rest of the clause is understood to be about, b a special position in a clause often at the right or left-edge of the clause where topics typically appear. These clauses have different topics: In English it is also possible to use other sentence structures to show the topic of the sentence, as in the following: The case of expletives is sometimes rather complex. Consider sentences with expletives meaningless subjects , like: In these examples the syntactic subject position to the left of the verb is manned by the meaningless expletive "it" or "there" , whose sole purpose is satisfying the extended projection principle , and is nevertheless necessary. In these sentences the topic is never the subject, but is determined pragmatically. In all these cases, the whole sentence refers to the comment part [5]. Distinct intonation and word-order are the most common means. The tendency to place topicalized constituents sentence-initially "topic fronting" is widespread. Topic fronting refers to placing the topic at the beginning of a clause regardless whether it is marked or not [8]. Again, linguists disagree on many details. Languages often show different kinds of grammar for sentences that introduce new topics and those that continue discussing previously established topics. When a sentence continues discussing a previously established topic, it is likely to use pronouns to refer to the topic. Such topics tend to be subjects. In many languages, pronouns referring to previously established topics will show pro-drop. Please help improve this section by adding citations to reliable sources. Unsourced material may be challenged and removed. October Learn how and when to remove this template message Japanese and Korean: The topic can be a noun or a nominal group but not necessarily: So-called free-word order languages e. Russian, Czech , to a certain extent Chinese and German use word-order as the primary means. Usually the topic precedes focus. However, for example in Czech, both orders are possible. The two orders are distinguished by intonation. In modern Hebrew , a topic may follow its comment. In American Sign Language , a topic can be declared at the beginning of a sentence indicated by raised eyebrows and head tilt describing the object, then the rest of the sentence describes what happens to that object. Practical applications[edit] The main application of the topic-comment structure is in the domain of speech technology, especially the design of embodied conversational agents intonational focus assignment, relation between information structure and posture and gesture [10].

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Chapter 2 : The Order of Words in the Ancient Languages Compared With That of the Modern Languages

The order of words in the ancient languages compared with that of the modern languages by Weil, Henri, ; Super, Charles William, tr Publication date

I mean, just look at this diagram below. There were only two clusters in total; the rest of this translation was a straight out substitution of words for other words. Latin and Ancient Greek are surprisingly similar in basic grammar. Historically they came from different groups of the larger Indo-European language family, and various Greek and Italic-speaking cultures were geographically separated for thousands of years. Despite this longstanding cultural separation, the inflectional system in both languages is very similar. The later, more complex grammar lessons were very different though. This trend seems to reinforce the idea that Latin shares a lot of basic similarities with Ancient Greek. On the other end of the scale, the Mandarin Chinese translation Chinese Standard Version exhibited the greatest amount of word order change—so much, in fact, that one sentence in the middle seems to have been completely rearranged, even clause by clause. While Greek and Latin nouns and verbs are highly inflected the endings tell you what the words are doing, Chinese has basically no inflections whatsoever and the critical information about subject, verb and object is conveyed wholly by their position in the sentence. In this sense, Chinese is rather like English except with even more emphasis on word order. Various little words can modify the tense of the sentence but they are not the same as inflections. Looking back at the graph, it seems that most of the modern languages in this sample needed a similar amount of rephrasing to preserve meaning. I was surprised in particular that the English translations of vastly different ages—ranging from the Wycliffe medieval translation of to the King James Version of to the modern English Standard Version of the s—varied very little in their amount of necessary rephrasing. English, it seems, was never really much like Greek, or at least not since Middle English came on the scene Anglo-Saxon translations of Matthew are not yet available online. There also did not seem to be a strong difference between the amount of word order change in a Romance language like French compared to that required of the Germanic languages, English and German. I also found there was very little difference in word order change between versions which were translated from the original Greek or Latin Vulgate. Of all modern languages, the dialects of Modern Greek appear to be the closest to Koine Greek in word order. That is understandable, since Modern Greek is ultimately descended from medieval, Koine and Classical Greek. However, there is a very strong disparity between the different ends of the Modern Greek spectrum. Greek as it is spoken today exists on a continuum from the more sophisticated literary dialect on one end to a form of common and everyday speech on the other end. Others see proficiency in Katharevousa as a sign of good education and appreciation of high literature. This 19th century translation into Katharevousa is only partly rephrased from the source language and large sections of the translation seem to have been left untouched by the translator. I changed the colour of the recipient language to blue to make it easier to work out visually which language was the original: Katharevousa, by an Oxonian Englishman source Demotic Greek, the kind of Greek spoken commonly by the people, is rather more rephrased from Koine than the Katharevousa, but it is still somewhat less rephrased than most other modern languages: Demotic Greek unsourced, found here Katharevousa appears to straddle the gap between Koine and Demotic Greek, and a person familiar with Katharevousa is said to be able to figure out passages in Koine, especially if they had learned basic lessons about Classical Greek grammar at some point during their schooling. But Demotic and Koine are mutually unintelligible. Classics and Theology students definitely cannot read Modern Demotic Greek, and Demotic speakers cannot understand full sentences of Koine. Conclusions In a sense, translation is the act of moving something from one place to another—in regards to most languages this will literally mean that words must be moved around. If less is done, the job of the translator is incomplete. In fact, 4th century Latin seems to be more similar in word order to Koine Greek than the Modern Greek dialects are. There are so many ways that this study could be expanded. I would really like to add more Romance languages to the study like Spanish,

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Italian and Portuguese, and even Romanian which is said to be the grammatically closest to Latin. Currently Mandarin Chinese is the only non-Indo-European language involved in the study, but it would be great to include Syriac at some point, to get a better sense of how languages outside of the IE language group may differ from those inside. Or I could redo this study with a much larger selection of English translations, old, new, formal and dynamic, and lay them all out on a scale of how greatly word order changes between these translations. The preliminary findings seem to suggest that English translations are not all that different from each other in the amount of word order change required, so separating them out might be tricky and require larger sample passages. In any case, I hope you enjoyed working through this experiment as much as I did. I studied Chinese for about 7 years before giving it up in year 10 and focusing on Latin, because Latin was much easier to learn. I can still remember parts of Chinese, though doing this exercise reminded me of just how unforgiving that language is. My current grasp of German and French is quite basic but happily I am due to start formal German lessons in a couple months time. My understanding of Modern Greek is limited to how much it resembles Ancient Greek, which is not a whole lot. Luckily, the premise of this experiment was not to study the subtle aspects of word-meanings but the very obvious feature of word order. I relied mostly on checking online dictionaries to establish which translated words were meant to represent which Greek words. If I have made a mistake in any of these transcriptions, I would welcome you all to comment below. In order of lowest total cluster length to highest:

Chapter 3 : Moving words: which languages have the closest word order to Ancient Greek? | Found in Antiquity

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