

REDISTRIBUTION OF INTERLOCUTORS' ROLES AS A FACTOR OF TOPIC RECONTEXTUALIZATION

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The given article deals with the study of peculiarities of topic recontextualization under conditions of redistribution of interlocutors' roles. We singled out basic cases of redistribution of communicative partners' roles, such as free-will transference of the communicative initiative by the speaker to the listener, self-willed seizure of the communicative initiative by the listener and modification of the communicative status of the side-recipient (from a passive observer to an active participant). Special attention is focused on the analysis of linguistic markers of topic recontextualization in discourse caused by redistribution of interlocutors' roles.

Key words: context model, interlocutor, recontextualization, redistribution of roles, topic.

Ковальчук Л.В. Перерозподіл ролей співрозмовників як фактор реконтекстуалізації топика. Стаття присвячена дослідженню особливостей реконтекстуалізації топика в умовах перерозподілу ролей співрозмовників. Виокремлені основні випадки перерозподілу ролей комунікативних партнерів, такі як добровільна передача комунікативної ініціативи мовцем слухачеві, самовільне захоплення комунікативної ініціативи слухачем та модифікація комунікативного статусу стороннього реципієнта (від пасивного спостерігача до активного учасника). Особлива увага фокусується на аналізі лінгвістичних маркерів реконтекстуалізації топика в дискурсі, спричиненої перерозподілом ролей співрозмовників.

Ключові слова: контекстуальна модель, перерозподіл ролей, реконтекстуалізація, співрозмовник, топик.

Ковальчук Л.В. Перераспределение ролей собеседников как фактор реконтекстуализации топика. Статья посвящена исследованию особенностей реконтекстуализации топика в условиях перераспределения ролей собеседников. Выделены основные случаи перераспределения ролей коммуникативных партнеров, такие как добровольная передача коммуникативной инициативы говорящим слушающему, самовольный захват коммуникативной инициативы слушающим и модификация коммуникативного статуса стороннего реципиента (от пассивного наблюдателя к активному участнику). Особое внимание фокусируется на анализе лингвистических маркеров реконтекстуализации топика в дискурсе, обусловленного перераспределением ролей собеседников.

Ключевые слова: контекстуальная модель, перераспределение ролей, реконтекстуализация, собеседник, топик.

The contemporary "panoramic" study of context is marked by the fact that context is no longer treated as purely linguistic environment (co-text) of a language unit but as a set of linguistic and non-linguistic factors that play a significant role in the effective production and interpretation of discourse.

The actuality of the article consists in the use of cognitive-communicative approach to the study of context and topic recontextualization. According to a radically new sociocognitive approach suggested by T.A. van Dijk context is not viewed as the objective physical environment where communication takes place. Instead we deal with *context models* – mentally

construed subjective representations of the relevant properties of a communicative situation in episodic memory of its participants [3, p. 16].

The crucial point is not the situation by itself taken in its absolute dimensions, but the definition of this situation by the participant, as it is the latter who chooses the relevant properties of his real physical environment for the current moment. Thus the situation is an abstraction, generated as a result of mental processing of the participant's background (sensory, intentional, rational) [1, p. 101].

Such relevant properties include time and place parameters, interlocutors and their various identities

and roles, actions, goals and knowledge. It demonstrates the great importance of taking as a point of departure for the analysis of context the perspective of the participant(s) whose behavior is being analyzed [4, p. 4]. Accordingly, within a communicative situation there exist at least two context models: the speaker's context model and the listener's context model which overlap in the process of communication.

Topic as "an object of thought formed in the mind of the speaker and expressed in the text" [2, p. 82] can be easily recognized and appropriately identified by the listener under the condition of taking into consideration the relevant context model. Thus topic and context stand in a fundamental *figure-ground relationship* to each other. Context models are characterized by their dynamic character. They develop "ongoingly" and "on line," that is, in parallel with interaction and thoughts [3, p. 18]. *Topic recontextualization* is the process of viewing and interpreting topic putting it in a new context model.

The aim of this paper is to study how the redistribution of interlocutors' roles influences the process of topic recontextualization.

The object of the article consists in the study of linguistic (verbal and non-verbal) markers of topic recontextualization under the conditions of redistribution of communicative partners' roles.

The material for the article is taken from the modern English fiction.

The process of verbal interaction presupposes the presence of two communicative partners – *the speaker* and *the listener*. The speaker and the listener change their roles in the process of communication. As the initiator of communication, the speaker introduces the topic for discussion and contextualizes it by means of giving definite reference depending upon the relevant context model. In his turn, the listener identifies and evaluates the suggested topic depending on his own context model. But there are cases of violation of regular distribution of interlocutors' roles called *redistribution*. We singled out the following basic cases of redistribution of roles leading to topic recontextualization: 1) free-will transference of the communicative initiative by the speaker to the listener; 2) self-willed seizure of the communicative initiative by the listener; 3) modification of the communicative status of the side-recipient: from a passive observer to

an active participant. Let us consider each of these cases of topic recontextualization in detail.

1. Free-will transference of the communicative initiative by the speaker to the listener.

Such case of redistribution of interlocutors' roles is regarded as "self-withdrawal" of the speaker from his dominating position in topic contextualization. The speaker as a leader of verbal interaction who performs the function of a distributor of interlocutors' roles transfers the communicative initiative to the listener. Consequently, the topic under discussion undergoes certain modifications. Now it is the listener (potential speaker2) who contextualizes the topic based on his context model. The linguistic markers of the free-will transference of the communicative initiative by the speaker to the listener are represented verbally (expressions like *you know all about, you are an expert in ... , it's better for you to know, etc*) and non-verbally (kinetic and proxemic means).

We may represent this process with the help of the following formula:

$$(1) R \text{ (free-will)} = \frac{T}{CMS1} \rightarrow \frac{T'}{CMS2},$$

where R – recontextualization, T – topic, CMS1 – context model of speaker1 and CMS2 – context model of speaker2 (former listener).

Let us analyze the following example:

He came back in a few moments and devoted himself to the ancient (and often, it seemed to me, timewasting) Irish ritual of steeping and pouring the tea. He did so with the grace of a bishop presiding over a solemn liturgy.

S1 "You are a desperate man altogether, Dermot Michael Coyne... Now what is it you want to know?"

S2 "You can tell me about Maamtrasna."

S1 "Ah", he said shifting uneasily. "Yet it is a grand story, one that ought to be told... Would you be after thinking about telling it yourself? You know a lot about it, Jack Lane. Aren't you the one who should be telling the story?"

He placed what looked like a manuscript on the coffee table between us.

S2 "I might, if you don't mind... You said it ought to be told..." [8, p. 50–51].

In the given conversation, the speaker transfers the communicative initiative to the listener (potential

speaker2), feeling that he is more knowledgeable about the topic suggested. The expressions “*Would you be after thinking about telling it yourself?*”, “*You know a lot about it*”, “*Aren't you the one who should be telling the story?*” serve as verbal markers of redistribution of interlocutors' roles. Topic recontextualization is signalled by the speaker2's final remark “*I might, if you don't mind*”, “*You said it ought to be told*” and non-verbal marker (*placed what looked like a manuscript on the coffee table*).

2. Self-willed seizure of the communicative initiative by the listener.

In this case of redistribution of interlocutors' roles, self-willed seizure of the communicative initiative by the listener is considered as “self-nomination” of the listener for the role of the speaker. Such phenomenon is characterized as violation of the regular turn-taking by the interlocutors. The listener changes his subordinate position of the topic interpreter to the dominant position of the author. As a result, the topic suggested by the speaker is recontextualized by the listener depending on his context model. Linguistic markers of self-willed seizure of the communicative initiative by the listener are expressed verbally (expressions like *I'm sorry to interrupt you, just a minute, excuse me for snapping up, sorry for cutting off*, etc) as well as non-verbally (mimics, gestures, smile, etc).

Our basic recontextualization formula is modified in the following way:

$$(2) R' (\text{self-willed}) = \frac{T}{CMS1} \rightarrow \frac{T'}{CMS2},$$

where R – recontextualization, T – topic, CMS1 – context model of speaker1 and CMS2 – context model of speaker2 (the former listener).

Let us illustrate it by the following example:

Charles moved to the edge of his seat. For him the issue was crystal clear and he was astounded that he and Ibanez could view the event from such fundamentally different perspectives [...]. Closing the door behind Brighton, Dr. Ibanez came back to his desk and sat down. His mood had abruptly switched to tired irritation. He eyed Charles across the expense of his desk.

S1 “Dr. Ibanez”, began Charles, “I...”

S2 “Just a minute, Charles”, interrupted Ibanez,

his eyes boring into Charles's face.

S1 “Dr. Ibanez”, Charles broke in. “I really want to say something”.

S2 “In a minute, Charles. Can you tell me your latest publications?” [7, p. 51].

The example illustrates the situation when the listener Dr. Ibanez makes an attempt to seize the communicative initiative and recontextualize the topic based on his context model. The verb *interrupt* serves as an indicator of redistribution of interlocutors' roles. The verbal markers of topic recontextualization (*Just a minute, In a minute. Can you tell me your latest publications*) are combined with non-verbal means (*tired irritation, eyed Charles across the expense of his desk, his eyes boring into Charles's face*).

3. Modification of the communicative status of the side-recipient: from a passive observer to an active participant.

The canonical structure of a communicative situation presupposes the obligatory presence of two communicative participants (the speaker and the listener). But there are communicative situations with the extended anthropological structure that are marked by the presence of the third participant – *a side-recipient*.

The sum of individual perspectives contributed by language users makes the *contextual potential* of linguistic interaction. The addition of a new perspective may extend the contextual potential of interaction [5, p. 51–52].

The side-recipient can perform the role of either a passive or an active participant of communication. In other words, at first he may just observe what is going on and contextualize the topic under discussion “silently” depending on his own context model. But in the course of verbal interaction he may also become an active participant and “verbalize” his own perspective of the topic. The dynamics of the side-recipient's communicative position is realized in the functional transformation of his status from a passive observer to an active participant (speaker3).

In this case our basic formula of topic recontextualization is as follows:

$$(3) R = \frac{T}{CMS1} \rightarrow \frac{T'}{CMS3},$$

where R – recontextualization, T – topic, CMS1 – context model of speaker1 and CMS3 – context model

of speaker3 (the former side-recipient).

The active position of the side-recipient consists in his verbal reaction to the topic being discussed. He demonstrates how adequately he perceived and interpreted the information obtained as a result of observing the communication between the speaker and the listener. The linguistic markers of modification of the communicative status of the side-recipient are represented by the following verbs: *to say, to tell, to ask, to explain, to interfere, to intrude, to break in, to butt in* etc.

Let us consider the following example:

S1 “*You to understand it Mr. Ablewhite, if you please*”.

S2 “*I’m also to take it as a matter of fact that the proposal to withdraw from the engagement came, in the first instance, from YOU?*”

S1 “*It came, in the first instance, from me. And it met, as I’ve told you, with your son’s concern and approval*” [...].

S2 “*My son is a mean-spirited hound! cried this furious old wordling*”.

S1 “*In justice to myself as his father – not in justice to HIM – I beg to ask you, Miss Verinder, what complaint you have to make of Mr. Godfrey Ablewhite?*”

S3 (side-recipient) *Here Mr. Bruff interfered. “You are not bound to answer this question”, he said to Rachel, touching her arm.*

S1 “*Don’t forget, sir*”, he said, “*that you are a self-invited guest here*” [6, p. 54].

The given dialogue describes the attempt of the side-recipient Mr. Bruff to intrude into the quarrel between Mr. Godfrey Ablewhite and Rachel. Thus he recontextualizes the topic being discussed by means of verbal (*You are not bound to answer this question*) and non-verbal markers (*touching her arm*) taking into consideration his own context model. The verb *interfere* serves as an indicator of the communicative activity of the side-recipient. But such self-willed intrusion of the side-recipient into the verbal interaction causes the speaker’s negative reaction *Don’t forget, sir, that you are a self-invited guest here*”.

Thus, we may conclude that redistribution of interlocutors’ roles serves as a significant factor of topic recontextualization in discourse. The basic cases of redistribution of roles comprise free-will transference

of the communicative initiative by the speaker to the listener, self-willed seizure of the communicative initiative by the listener and modification of the communicative status of the side-recipient (from a passive observer to an active participant). They functionally re-orient the process of topic contextualization and are expressed by the specific linguistic (verbal and non-verbal) markers in discourse.

The suggested study opens new prospects for future researches of other communicative factors of topic recontextualization, such as modification of temporal and spatial parameters or change of topical perspective, as well as linguistic markers of their expression in discourse.

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