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## PROMINENCE

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## KINDS OF PROMINENCE

## I. Syntagmatic (thematic) Prominence

The topic under discussion, in contrast with concurrent background material.

## A. Development Themes:

discourse plot, main thread  
 paragraph development, thematic script thread  
 sentence propositional development

## B. Conceptual Themes:

discourse concept theme, author's purpose

## II. Paradigmatic (thematic) Prominence

Prominence by selecting one out of a possible set of items or actions. The participant theme is the participant most subject to pronominalization or zeroing.

## A. Participant Themes:

discourse hero  
 paragraph topic, focus  
 sentence subject  
 clause topic  
 noun phrase head

## B. Other Paradigmatic Choices

## III. Slot (structural) Prominence

Normal peaks, in sequence with (and contrast with) troughs.  
 Nucleus vs. margin. The surface peaks usually, but not always, correspond with semantic peaks.

## A. Individual Tagmemes:

discourse climax, denouement  
 paragraph peak (episode peak)  
 sentence main clause (main action)  
 noun or verb phrase head

## B. Nuclear Strings

nucleus (vs. periphery) on all levels

## IV. Special (emphasis) Prominence

Superimposed ad hoc peaks or interruptions, in contrast with normal peak-trough structure.

A. Plot cruxes, crucial details

B. Contraexpectancies

C. Interpolations of narrator's feelings

## PROMINENCE DEVICES

1. Degree of position markedness; the first or last position in a construction and the first participant are usually most marked. This seems most true on sentence to discourse levels.
2. Rate of progression of events. Motion attracts attention.
3. Degree of specification. Specific names, direct quotations, narrow-focus nouns and verbs, or nouns with relative clauses are most marked. Concreteness gives prominence.
4. Degree of evaluation. Strong evaluation, whether good or bad evaluation, heightens prominence.
5. Degree of contrast. Contrast with opposites increases prominence.
6. Degree of information concentration. The crowding of stated or implied information into a few words draws attention.
7. Repetition. Repetition gives prominence. Repetition may be spread out through a discourse as a reminder of prominence.
8. Rhetorical underlining. Features of poetry or eloquence which differ from normal prose often give prominence.
9. Suspense or surprise, unexpectedness.
10. Conjunction of two or more themes (hero, events, concept) at a single point.
11. Degree of activity. An active description is stronger than an inactive state. An active verb draws more attention to an action than does a passive verb or a descriptive adjective.
12. Special words or particles may be markers of emphasis.
13. Structural prominence: discourse theme, climax slot, etc.

14. Dummy verbs or nouns may be used to put another verb or noun in prominence (cf. cleft sentences).
15. Prominence.

## SOME REFERENCES ON PROMINENCE

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