

# THEME AS THE INTERPRETER'S PATH INDICATOR THROUGH THE UNFOLDING TEXT

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## Introduction

In this study\* I hope to show that the dynamic perspective in text linguistics, which has only begun its development in recent years alongside the more widely practised and firmly established synoptic perspective, has much to offer for a greater understanding of the mechanisms of simultaneous interpretation and for the promotion of these mechanisms in student interpreters.

Several studies indicate that, particularly when the text is seen dynamically, as an on-going process, rather than synoptically, as a finished product, the element which is thematic (Theme in the Theme/Rheme structure), used by the speaker as the starting point for each new message as she/he builds up the text, can serve the hearer as a path indicator to the direction the discourse is taking. This implies that, along with the special attention accorded new information, which normally receives end focus, there should also be specific attention paid to the beginnings of sentences and of paratactically linked clauses where, at least in English, the thematic elements are located. Good interpreters probably do this instinctively, but training student interpreters in this sense might help more of them to become good interpreters.

A speech made by Bill Clinton while he was campaigning for the presidency of the United States will be used to illustrate how, as the text unfolds, each new sentence thematizes one or more elements of meaning which form a proper "peg" on which to hang the on-going message. This "peg" only functions as such, however, because it represents the present state of the text. Only the hearer who has incorporated into her/his knowledge set the preceding text, along with the common ground that it presupposes, will be able to make use of that "peg" as the basis of understanding for the message that is unfolding. Analysis of the translations of Clinton's speech by five professional simultaneous interpreters

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seems to reveal different degrees of success on the part of these interpreters in making use of thematic elements as path indicators.

A simultaneous interpreter who is able to follow the path indicated by the Themes in a text, bringing into the understanding of each new Theme all necessary parts of the previously heard text - as it were, updating the text with each new Theme - should have the kind of global understanding of the text which is the basis of good interpretation. Since thematic structuring works differently in different languages, in relation, among other things, to differences in the unmarked order of constituents, an interpreter will not necessarily always be able to maintain all the same elements as thematic, but the clearer the path traced through thematization in the interpreter's text, the more easily it, in its turn, will be understood by the interpreter's audience.

The implication for interpreter training would seem to be that a dynamic perspective should be used in early phases of text study. Similarly to what always happens when the medium is oral, even when written texts are the object of study, through the use of the overhead projector with cover sheets over parts of the transparency, or of a computer that offers texts small parts at a time, the preceding text can be made to disappear once it has been received and the following text can be kept out of sight until it is time for it to be processed. Pauses after thematic elements can become opportunities for checking students' ability to update the text to that point by filling out all the meaning that the Themes presuppose. This can be followed by a phase of making expectations explicit about what might follow, and an exercise in raising awareness of the linguistic, textual and situational reasons for certain expectations rather than others.

Other implications regard the relationship between linguistic theory and interpretation. The practice of interpretation, and the study of this practice, would seem to be a forceful example of a language-based discipline which needs dynamic models of linguistics and discourse analysis. Interpretation, as a discipline, therefore has a right to insist on the development of such models. On the other hand, as is always the case when application of theory is taking place, the applying discipline becomes an important laboratory for the experimentation, evaluation and development of the theory. But even the linguistic theory regarding Theme and Rheme is still extremely unstable and leaves many questions open. The present study seems to indicate that interpreters from English make use of Theme, in the sense of everything placed before the Verb in declarative constructions (and including the Verb if this is in pre-Subject position), as a path indicator, orienting them as to how to move through the text. If further studies confirm this, then interpretation will have contributed positively to the understanding of Theme and its function in English. Furthermore, since interpretation is an interlinguistic discipline, its

contribution to linguistic theory on the function of Theme will not be limited to a single language.

1. The dynamic perspective in text linguistics

As a whole, "our available linguistic models are much more suited to accounting for the finished, static nature of language, where texts are presented and received as complete wholes, than for the unfinished, fluid nature of language, in which a text may be presented and received as something unfolding and on-going" (Ravelli, in print). This is because most available models adopt a 'synoptic' perspective (Martin 1985) closely associated with the study of written language, which, presenting texts as complete products, encourages a static overview of them. Today's closer attention to spoken language, a mode in which texts occur as active and on-going, has encouraged interest in developing models based on a 'dynamic' perspective in order to account for the text as process. The efforts made by computational linguists at specifying the processes of text generation have also contributed to a move toward a more dynamic view of language (Bateman 1989, O'Donnell 1990). In a dynamic perspective, the syntagmatic ordering of language in text is seen as a flow, or as the unfolding of the text piece by piece, constituent by constituent. As the initial element in a syntagmatic structure appears, its function is often ambiguous - a noun phrase like *This morning* may be an Adjunct of time or the Subject of the sentence. The appearance of each following constituent makes a contribution to the process of disambiguation. Another way of putting this is that the constituents that appear as the structure unfolds along the syntagmatic axis help to delimit the range of options that open up paradigmatically, as possible next occurrences to complete the syntagmatic structure. In a dynamic perspective each step forward in one way (choosing one of the possible options from the paradigmatic set available at that point in the structure) rather than in another (through a possible choice which, in the actual development of the text, is rejected) becomes meaningful (Ravelli, in print).

At each stage of text understanding, probabilities are important. Not all possible options are equally probable, and greater confidence must be allotted to the more probable choices. Initial delimitation of probabilities derives from the context of culture and from the context of situation, and specifically what is known about the type of event and the social function of the text (Halliday 1989: 28,46; Lemke 1991: 27-31). This initial delimitation grows and solidifies as the text progresses, creating new states in the context as it goes along (Lemke 1991: 32-33). The text itself, as it unfolds, progressively delimits the range of possibilities for its continuation, and skews probabilities in one

direction rather than in another. "The receiver of a text uses the current choices to set up hypotheses about what is to come next, and interprets the next actual choice in light of these. The actual choices are understood against the background of what the receiver expects the text to be meaning at that point" (Ravelli, in print). The probabilities are to a great extent determined by what has gone on in the preceding text. As Sinclair (1992: 8) says, language "constantly prospects ahead", so "whatever does happen has a value that is already established by the discourse at that point". In a dynamic perspective, anaphoric text cohesive devices, rather than being seen as taking the reader or listener back to a preceding part of the text to retrieve the needed meaning, can be seen as a way of bringing the text forward and keeping it as a part of the current sentence - updating the text through the current sentence. The current sentence, in this sense, 'is' the text (Sinclair 1992: 9).

## 2. Theme

The notion of theme was articulated by Mathesius as early as 1939 and developed by the Prague School as a part of 'functional sentence perspective' in a way which makes 'given' (a matter of information structure, where the contrast is given/new) a part of the definition of theme, since for this School the theme element either contains information that is already known or it is, at any rate, the part of the sentence with the lowest 'communicative dynamism', the part which is most context dependent, in the sense of verbal context or of situational context (Firbas 1992). Theme (contrasting with Rheme), or topic (contrasting with comment), has persisted in this Prague School sense in much linguistic literature (e.g. Van Dijk 1977: 217-220, Chafe 1976: esp. 49). But systemic functional linguistics, following Halliday, has kept Theme separate from Given, although it is said that in the unmarked case the two functions regard the same element of the clause or sentence (Halliday 1970: 162). (Here I am adopting the Systemic Functional convention of capitalizing words for functions in that theory such as Theme, Given, Subject and Verb.)

Thematic structuring exists as a type of text-making device. It is a way of organizing the messages that make up a text so that they cohere properly as a text, with each message building upon the previous ones and pointing towards the ones that will follow. Nonetheless, the primary domain of thematic structure is the clause. This domain extends to sentences as well, though, either because the clause and the sentence coincide (in which case the thematic structures coincide), or because clauses are related hypotactically (in which case the hypotactic clause can be regarded as an element within the thematic structure of

the main clause), or because a sentence is made up of paratactically linked clauses (in which case each clause maintains a separate thematic structure).

The Theme is the element which serves as the point of departure of the message, while the part in which the Theme is developed is the Rheme (Halliday 1985: 38). Theme has also been said to be "the peg on which the message is to hang" (Halliday 1989b: 73; cf. 1970: 161). It functions as a linker by "establishing an anchor point for the clause" (McGregor 1990: 31). It is an important part of the message "since it is here that the speaker announces his intentions" (Halliday 1989b: 73).

In English an element of the clause is signalled as thematic by its position at the beginning of the clause (Halliday 1985: 38). This has made it possible for Halliday to relate the unmarked Theme to the normal order of grammatical constituents in English, according to the mood choice, saying that in a declarative, the unmarked Theme is the grammatical Subject, since the normal order of constituents for this mood is with the Subject first. (Here, for simplicity, we will only be concerned with declaratives.) In the text in Appendix N° 1, sentence 5, *My parents' generation* is an unmarked Theme because it is the Subject in a declarative sentence. Any other constituent (for example, the Verb, an Adjunct, or a Direct Object) which precedes the Subject in an English declarative clause is, then, considered a marked Theme (Halliday 1985: 45). In Appendix N° 1, sentence 2, *In the aftermath of World War I* is a marked Theme, since it is an Adjunct of time in front position in a declarative sentence. The Theme functions as such, not as a grammatical element, but as a meaning (Halliday 1985: 52), so if the word *it* is Theme, the Theme is actually the meaning that the pronoun calls up at that point in the text. This is illustrated in Appendix 2, sentence 12, where the Subject and topical Theme *It* actually gives us a thematic element at this point in the text which is something like 'The present situation with the Cold War over and the Soviet empire collapsed'.

Halliday (1985: 49-56) introduces the possibility of more than one element of clause structure being thematic in what he calls "multiple Themes", where Themes relating to his three metafunctions - ideational, interpersonal and textual - can coexist at the beginning of the clause. Every clause must have a Theme which relates to its ideational meaning, as a representation of experience. This is called the topical Theme. In the text in Appendix N° 1, both *My parents' generation* in sentence 5 and *In the aftermath of World War I* in sentence 2 are topical Themes. The topical Theme can, however, be preceded by two other Themes, relating to interpersonal and to textual meaning. Themes relating to the interpersonal metafunction, called modal Themes, are expressions like *of course*, *perhaps*, *certainly*, *usually* and *luckily*. In the text in Appendix N° 1, modal Themes are found in sentences 1 (*Perhaps*) and 8 (*Fortunately*). It is also possible to consider *I believe* in sentence 18 a 'metaphorical' modal Theme

(Halliday 1985: 332-4), since the meaning is close to that of a modal adjunct like *probably*. The Themes that relate to the textual metafunction, called textual Themes, are elements of text conjunction at sentence beginnings and coordinators which are at the beginning of clauses linked paratactically to a preceding one. In the text in Appendix N° 1, textual Themes occur in sentences 6 and 13 (*Yet*), but also at the beginning of the second paratactically linked clause in sentences 6 and 19 (*and*).

In Halliday's description of Theme, the thematic element ends with the topical Theme, and whatever follows this is part of the Rheme. Recently, however, on the basis of the analysis of Theme structures in texts, Berry (1992) and Matthiessen (1992) have both suggested that the boundary of Theme in English declaratives needs to be broadened to include the Subject even when this is not topical Theme, so long as it is in pre-Verb position. This view is accepted by Ravelli (in print), and, indeed, seems to be reinforced by her dynamic perspective to texts, since interpretation of the process type (material, mental, relational etc.) the clause represents, and of the role of the elements as Subject, Object, Adjunct and so on, is all very open until the Verb is reached. So in a sense the Theme is "constantly revised as the clause unfolds, until the point at which the clause unequivocally moves into Rheme" (Ravelli, in print), which is the arrival at the Verb. Until the Subject has been definitively analysed, "there is still a sense in which the departure point of the message has not yet been fully elaborated". But "once the Process is reached, the clause is unequivocally 'under way'" (Ravelli, in print). Halliday (1985: 67 footnote) does seem to see what he calls a "displaced Theme", that is, an element which would have been unmarked topical Theme if it had not been preceded by a marked topical Theme, as retaining some thematic flavour, but his delimitation of Theme in English excludes this element.

In the analysis carried out in this study (see Appendix N° 2) I have followed the suggestion which emerges from the work of Berry, Matthiessen, and Ravelli and considered all pre-Verb elements as thematic. This analysis, carried out from a dynamic perspective, seems to show that the thematic structure of the text functions in a way that corroborates that theoretical and methodological choice.

Halliday (1981: 37) says that Theme and New both represent prominence points in the clause, the former coming at the beginning and the latter typically coming at the end of the clause. They are, however, two different kinds of prominence: Theme is speaker-oriented prominence, or 'what I am on about', while New is hearer-oriented prominence, or 'what I present as news to you'. This might seem to imply that the hearer should concentrate attention on New. However, a recent study by Whittaker (1990) on reading as cognitive processing suggests that writers use Theme to manipulate the reader's reception of the message, indicating the path that is to be followed through the text. Such

helpful manipulation is possible because the reader is attentive to Theme. Textual studies of Theme and its function carried out by Fries also indicate that "Theme functions as an orienter to the message" and that "it orients the listener/reader to the message that is about to be perceived and provides a framework for the interpretation of that message" (Fries, in print). There is, then, reason to think that interpreters need to be attentive to Theme as the indicator of the path to follow through the text as a unit of meaning. In the following sections this assumption will be tested through the analysis of the beginning section of a source text in English (3) and of the ways in which this has been handled by five professional simultaneous interpreters translating into their native language, Italian (4).

### 3. The Clinton text

The text considered in this study is a speech made by William Clinton before the Foreign Policy Association of New York in April of 1992, while he was campaigning for the U.S. presidency. The whole speech lasts 16 minutes and 48 seconds, but space allotted here will only make it possible to consider about the first quarter of it, that is, the part which, in written form, is included in Appendix 1 below.

#### 3.1 A written-to-be-spoken text

Speeches have very different characteristics when they have been written down before the spoken presentation than when they are improvised as impromptu spoken discourse. The text considered here is of the former type. This is quite obvious from the lack of hesitation markers and false starts and from the careful structuring it presents. Written-to-be-spoken texts are very frequently the object of the simultaneous interpreter's task in conference interpreting, and the claim has often been made that interpreting these is a more difficult task than interpreting spontaneous speech (Déjean Le Féal 1982; Kopczynski 1982; Seleskovitch 1982; Barik 1986), a claim which is confirmed by De Feo's (1992-3) experiments. The greater difficulty of written-to-be-spoken texts is probably due in part to the more sustained rhythm that their deliverers maintain, since the text is fully prepared and thus available for delivery without pauses for planning or those hesitation markers, repetitions or reformulations which allow impromptu speakers time to think through the next bit of what they are going to say. But it is also surely related to what a written-to-be-spoken text maintains of the structure of the written text. Although an expert speech-

writer will certainly take care to avoid making a speech 'sound written', a written-to-be-spoken text is likely to maintain, at least to some degree, the tendency toward "lexical density" which is a characteristic of written language. If we distinguish between lexical items (open system words) and grammatical items (closed system words like - in English - determiners, pronouns, prepositions, conjunctions, auxiliaries, modals, and some adverbs such as those of intensification, downtoning, frequency and indefinite time), then we can see that "Written language displays a much higher ratio of lexical items to total running words" (Halliday 1989b: 61). The lexical density of a text can be calculated on the basis of the average number of lexical items per ranking (i.e., either independent, paratactic or hypotactic) clause (Halliday 1989b: 61). Halliday (1989b: 80) says, "On the basis of various samples I have found that a typical average lexical density for spoken English is between 1.5 and 2, whereas the figure for written English settles down somewhere between 3 and 6, depending on the level of formality in the writing." He concludes that "the lexical density of written language is likely to be of the order of twice as high as that for speech." The lexical density of the text portion in Appendix N° 1, as I have counted it, is just under 5.5. Since it is the lexical items rather than the grammatical items which pack the greatest load of information, the more a text has the characteristic of written language, the more densely packed it will be with information. Of the Clinton text, then, we can say that it is a text which has maintained a lexical density, and an information load, which is much more typical of written language than of spoken. This greater density must not be confused with greater overall complexity, however, since there is another kind of complexity which characterizes spoken language, and that is grammatical complexity, also called grammatical intricacy. One of the reasons why spoken language tends to have a lower lexical density than written language is that spoken language is typically organized into a greater number of clauses, linked to each other paratactically or hypotactically to form sentences, and in each of these clauses the number of lexical items compared to grammatical items is very low (Halliday 1989b: 80). Grammatical intricacy might be calculated in terms of the average number of ranking clauses per clause complex, or, in written language, sentence. The grammatical intricacy of the text portion in Appendix N° 1, thus calculated, is 1.84. (In dividing the sentences into clauses, I have followed Halliday's grammar, and have counted non-finite hypotactic clauses as well as finite hypotactic clauses, but not embedded clauses.) The examples of spontaneous speech reported by Halliday (1989b: 85-89) often have many more clauses per clause complex than the less-than-two of this text, but unfortunately he offers no numerical comparison between spoken and written discourse as far as grammatical intricacy is concerned.

### 3.2 The thematic function in the Clinton Text: a dynamic analysis

'Thematic' to the Clinton text, in the widest, non-structural sense, is the situation that is the speaker's point of departure for his message: in this case, Bill Clinton, as Democratic candidate for the American presidency against the Republican incumbent George Bush, is speaking before the Foreign Policy Association of New York. The listeners can be expected to be interested in hearing what Clinton's foreign policy program is. The speaker will certainly be interested in making himself accepted by his audience, and, in particular, in showing them that he has clear ideas in this regard, and that what he plans to do is better than what the Republican administrations, both Bush's and Reagan's, have done. This basic situation, as the speaker's starting point, also functions as the beginning of the interpreter's path through the text.

In the paragraphs of this section an attempt is made to follow the path through the text as this is indicated by the thematic elements. This involves analyzing the text as it unfolds and making use of what is already available, in the text and in the situation, in interpreting the indications offered by each new Theme as to the direction the text is about to take.

#### 3.2.1 Perhaps once in a generation, history

The first thematic element of the text, *Perhaps*, is of the modal type, bringing into the text the speaker as a human being, evaluating the possibility/probability of the statement he is about to make. Given the context, we can expect this modal Theme to have two major functions: to open the speech with a personal touch, and to keep Clinton from being liable for the exact truth of what he is about to say. The topical Theme *once in a generation* introduces a generalization about historical recurrences (see the indefinite article and the adverb *once* for number of times of recurrence), related to generations, and therefore to the lifetime experience of the participants in the speech act. As marked Theme, this can be expected to be particularly important as a path indicator. *History*, an abstract noun in what we can expect to be Subject position, should be the agent in the event that has been anticipated as recurring once every generation. But we know that the real actors in historical events are people, so history is likely to be either the Initiator of a human event (e.g., *history makes us live through ...*) or the Actor in a metaphorically expressed process, one which, congruently, would be about events happening or existing in time (indeed, see the congruent renderings in the performance of interpreters P2 and P1, 4.4 and 4.5 below).

### 3.2.2 In the aftermath of World War I, our country

The marked topical Theme of sentence 2, *In the aftermath of World War I*, arrives at a point in the text's unfolding when expectations have been set up about moments of monumental importance which occur periodically, once in a generation. It is therefore interpretable as one such generation - the generation of people who found themselves faced with the aftermath of World War I, easily interpretable here as a moment of monumental importance. *Our country*, with the first person plural possessive adjective related to an inclusive *we*, links together the speaker, Bill Clinton, and his immediate audience of hearers, and, since the head noun is country, all the people of the United States. *Our country*, then, is the U.S.A., which now has as a part of its 'intratextual history' (Halliday 1992: 40-45) what has been said to happen periodically to the *us* (perhaps people in general, perhaps Americans) in sentence 1: the U.S. is presented with moments of monumental importance.

### 3.2.3 After World War II, we

The marked topical Theme of sentence 3, *After World War II*, evokes another generation, similar in the post-war challenge it is called on to face to that introduced by the marked Theme of sentence 1, so a comparison can be expected. The introduction of the pronoun *we* in Subject position indicates that the comparison will regard the political behaviour of the U.S. in those two circumstances. We expect it to be predicated by a behaviour which we must compare with retreating from the world (sentence 2), and we also expect to compare the consequences of the political behaviour of the later generation with the tragic consequences of the policy adopted by the earlier one.

### 3.2.4 *I*

The first person singular pronoun is the most typical unmarked Theme of interactive, non-informative, spoken discourse (Halliday 1985: 45). Its referent is clearly the speaker, Bill Clinton. As Theme of sentence 4 it adds a personal, interactive touch to Clinton's speech, as does *perhaps* in sentence 1. However, the pronoun is part of a text functioning in a situation, and although this is only the fourth sentence, we already realize that this is not primarily a text of the interactive type, but one where information about national policy is important. The path we have followed so far, indicated by the previous Themes, is a path through indications about stages of recent history, so our expectations

added to the fact that it was no ordinary moment. What is to be added regards *history*, and the paratactic clause complex (all within the range of influence of *yet*) indicates that it should contrast with the expectations set up by the desires of Clinton's parents' generation for peace-time joys. History, in this text so far, is the history of public, international events, while the joys Clinton's parents desire are private and domestic. In sentence 1, *history* was Subject and Actor, with *us* as people acted upon by history, and this fact is now present as a part of the text's development up to this point, part of the intratextual history of this instance of the word *history*. *History* as Theme of the second part of sentence 6 is 'history, which, once in a generation, presents Americans (or people in general) with a moment of monumental importance'. Our expectation is that history, in the Rheme of this message, will act in a way which overrides the generations' desires for domestic, peace-time joys, and this **because** the moment is one of monumental importance and history is the history of international events. *And* expresses addition, which is the default relation between events, but at times other semantic relations can be interpreted as existing along with this, on the basis of the semantics of the message, for example 'and in contrast with this' (= but), or 'and as a consequence of this' (= because), as in our case here.

### 3.2.7 Overnight, an expansionist Soviet Union

We have just been told that the international events making up history would not allow Clinton's parents' generation to rest and fulfil their desire for private, peace-time joys. We now expect to be told what happened. The marked topical Theme of sentence 7, *overnight*, in this textual context, gives us a sense of the suddenness of the historical event, or advent of a series of events, that kept the generation of Clinton's parents from resting after the end of World War II. A more literal interpretation, that is as the hours going from nightfall of one day to sunrise of the next, is so highly improbable in this context of historical time as to be excluded as a possible interpretation here. The noun phrase in Subject position gives us the source of the international problem that will not let the generation rest, *an expansionist Soviet Union*. The adjective *expansionist*, with its strongly negative connotation, prepares us for the relating of a problematic event, while also specifying the nature of the problem. The problem is a known one, the Cold War, already mentioned in sentence 4 as having started about the time of Clinton's birth. And the thematized nation, the Soviet Union, is known to be America's opponent in the Cold War.

are oriented in this sense, even as we accept the new starting point for the message, which is Bill Clinton himself.

### 3.2.5 My parents' generation

The personal, interactive touch is continued in the possessive element (*my parents'*) of the noun phrase which functions as unmarked topical Theme. However, the head of that noun phrase is *generation*, which indicates that we are continuing along the main path we have been following from the beginning of the text, through periods of recent history. The preceding text allows us to understand this as a reference to those Americans who, after World War II, chose to lead the world, as well as to those Americans whose children were born during the Cold War.

#### 3.2.6.1 Yet it

The textual Theme of the first clause of sentence 6, *yet*, is of the type that relates what has gone before, and has set up expectations of one type, to something following which does not fulfil these expectations. *Yet*, at this point in the text, means 'Despite Bill Clinton's parents' generations' desire for the private joys of peace time', and contrasts the expectations set up by these desires with something that is introduced by the pronoun *it* in Subject position. *It* cannot be understood without reference to another part of the text, or to the situation, for its interpretation. If the meaning is to be brought forward from the previous text (anaphoric reference), then the most obvious candidate is *my parents' generation*. But there are also various uses of *it* which must be interpreted cataphorically (e.g., *It was unlikely that they would be able to do this*, where the meaning of *It* is found in the last part of the sentence, *that they would be able to do this*). Or *it* could be a situational Theme, indicating simply the situation, and often in particular the temporal setting (e.g., *it's late; it's dinner time*). These are three possibilities here, and only the unfolding of the Rheme will clarify that *it* here is of the third type. The meaning of this topical Theme is something like 'the time and situation faced by the generation of Clinton's parents after World War II'.

#### 3.2.6.2 And history

The textual Theme *and* links what follows to what precedes it in the text in the simplest way, by addition. Here we know that something more is to be

### 3.2.8 Fortunately, America

The international historic event, or series of events, constituting the problem that kept Clinton's parents' generation from resting and enjoying private life is the new struggle made unavoidable (according to the logic which we can see as characterizing the text that is unfolding) by an expansionist Soviet Union. The starting point of sentence 8 is a modal Theme, one which introduces the speaker as a person, and his own evaluation of what will follow. The evaluation is positive: *Fortunately*. Obviously what will follow is not a further description of the problem and of its gravity, but some circumstance which served to alleviate the seriousness of the problem or limit the damage it could cause. *America*, as topical Theme and in Subject position, tells us that the circumstance is an American one. America will be said to have had the right characteristics, or to have taken the proper action, to keep the problem from bringing about tragic consequences. After all, already in sentence 3 this was anticipated: after World War II, America chose to lead the world and take responsibility for shaping the post-war era. This generation reacted properly to the challenge of the moment of monumental importance which history presented it with, whereas the post-World War I generation did not.

### 3.2.9 Under their leadership, we

Through the anaphoric personal reference item, *their*, we are able to interpret the marked topical Theme of sentence 9, *under their leadership*, as: under the leadership of great leaders like Truman and Marshall who, in the post-World War II period, brought Americans to accept the challenge of the Cold War. The Subject *we* is interpretable as the U.S. of the post-World War II period, the battle-weary nation that Truman and Marshall roused to the challenge constituted by the expansionism of the Soviet Union. Our expectations are set for a Rheme which specifies the positive action taken by the U.S. after World War II under the leadership of good leaders - what Clinton has, with the modal Theme of sentence 8, evaluated positively.

### 3.2.10 Now, we

With the marked topical Theme of sentence 10, the temporal deictic *now*, pointing to the discourse time, and no longer to the past as had previous temporal Themes, there is a shift from recent history as topic to the present. This step into the present can be expected to conclude the journey through time illustrating the point made in sentence 1: that is, that once in a generation

history presents us with a moment of monumental importance. It should also conclude the set of examples of how generations can react, either negatively (see sentence 2 about the aftermath of World War I) or positively (see sentences 3 to 9 about the aftermath of World War II) to the challenge of a monumental moment. Once the discourse time, the speaker's present, has become marked Theme, the meaning of the Subject *we* is delimited: it is no longer the America of the past, as in the previous sentence, but now becomes the America of the present, the country of Bill Clinton, his audience, and their fellow Americans, seen at this point in the development of the text no longer as children of the Cold War, but as the adults of a new generation.

### 3.2.11 The end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet empire

In sentence 10 Clinton has defined the discourse time as "our own moment of great change and enormous opportunity", thus comparing it, as a challenge, with the two post-war periods described in the preceding text. In sentence 9, the Soviet Union has been depicted as "yet another totalitarian threat", and thus compared with the totalitarian threat of Nazism which brought about World War II. The unmarked topical Theme of sentence 11 specifies the great change which characterizes the present moment, making it a moment of enormous opportunity for the U.S.: *the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet empire*. With these events in Subject position we can expect a sentence expressing their effect on the U.S.

### 3.2.12 *It*

The unmarked topical Theme of sentence 12, realized by the pronoun *it*, requires some interpretation based either on the previous text, the following text, or the situation (see 3.2.6.1). There are various possibilities, but perhaps the one most probable is an anaphoric interpretation of the meaning of *it* as to be found in the moment and situation expressed as the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet empire. The use of the singular pronoun might be related to a presentation of these two events as making up a single event or situation.

3.2.13 Yet at the very moment America's ideas have triumphed and the whole world is rushing to embrace our way of life, our own leaders

The textual Theme *yet* which opens sentence 13 tells us that what is to be stated in this sentence goes against the expectations set up in the previous one, or ones. The expectations we bring with us from the point in the text in which the subject matter is the speaker's present (sentence 10) are very positive for the U.S. There is a moment of great opportunity. The Cold War enemy has collapsed, leaving the people of the Soviet empire open to the development of a capitalistic economy and a non-totalitarian political system. The U.S., without the enemy that had characterized its international policy for a generation, now finds itself with new opportunities and new duties, as the undisputed single-nation leader of the world. The expectations are clearly for positive action on the part of the U.S. The textual Theme *yet* tells us that these expectations will be baffled. The prepositional phrase that follows clearly functions as a fronted Adjunct, and therefore as a marked topical Theme. Adjectival *very* before *moment* tells us that this marked Theme also presupposes the existence of expectations which are not confirmed by the text. And in fact, *at the very moment America's ideas have triumphed and the whole world is rushing to embrace our way of life* is a rephrasing of what has been said in the previous part of the text which regards the speaker's present (sentences 10-12). With the Subject we expect to begin the statement which goes against the expectations set up for positive action on the part of the U.S. *Our own leaders* are the leaders of the U.S. at the time of the speaker's present, and therefore the Republican administration led by President Bush. The textual and marked topical Themes have told us that this administration will not be said to take the positive action called for by the situation.

3.2.14 In the midst of revolutionary change, they

Like the marked topical Theme of sentence 13, the marked topical Theme of sentence 14 is a fronted Adjunct making reference to a circumstance regarding the international scene, already introduced in the previous portion of text, which sets up expectations for positive action on the part of the U.S. We already know, on the basis of the textual Theme *yet* in the previous sentence and the development of the sentence, that these expectations will be baffled. This sentence is a continuation of the message of the last one, and the Subject *they* is easily interpretable as the Subject of the last sentence, *our own leaders*. We can be confident that in the development of this sentence we will be told that these leaders have not taken the sort of action that such a moment of revolutionary change would require.

### 3.2.15 In the coming weeks, I

The marked topical Theme of sentence 15 is a temporal circumstance which has as its reference point the speaker's discourse time, since it contains a form of the deictic verb *come* (*In the coming weeks*). This prepares us for a speaker-orientation of the sentence, which is confirmed by the Subject *I*. Since the temporal Adjunct regards the immediate future, the probabilities are in favour of a statement of Clinton's immediate plans.

### 3.2.16 Today I

Marked thematization of the time Adjunct *Today*, contrasting with the marked thematized time Adjunct of the previous sentence, invites us to compare and contrast what will be said in this sentence with what was said in the preceding one (cf. sentences 2 and 3). Again the Subject is *I*, and, since in the preceding sentence the plans announced by President Clinton regarded speeches he would make about his domestic program - such issues as unemployment, health care and education - we expect him to continue this sentence by making explicit the topic of the speech he is making on this occasion. Everything that has been said so far, with the exception of sentence 15, has had to do with foreign policy. And sentences 10 to 14, about present matters, indicate a particular focus on the problems arising from the changes in Eastern Europe. Of course, the occasion itself - a speech before the Foreign Policy Association of New York - sets up expectations for a speech about foreign affairs. Therefore the contrast is easy to anticipate: today's speech will be about Clinton's program regarding foreign policy.

#### 3.2.17.1 No national security issue

In the previous sentence, Clinton has announced the topic of the speech he is giving: *what America must do to secure democracy's triumph around the world, and most of all, in the former Soviet empire*. The unmarked topical Theme of sentence 17, *no national security issue*, reclassifies this topic as a national security issue. The non-specific deictic *no* at the beginning of the nominal group sets up the basis of a comparison between the national security issue that is the topic of this speech and all other members of the class 'national security issues' - a comparison which is anticipated, through the negative deictic, as granting the issue in question a special status of its own, separate from all the others.

### 3.2.17.2 *Nowhere*

The topical Theme of the first clause of sentence 17 has set up the basis for a comparison of the national security issue which is the topic of today's speech with all other possible national security issues, and the Rheme has realized that comparison, classifying the issue at question as more urgent than any other. The marked topical Theme of the second clause, a negative indefinite adverbial as Adjunct of place, prepares us for a parallel structure, so we need to have brought with us to this point in the discourse a place which forms an important part of the subject matter of the speech, so that this place can serve as the basis of comparison with all other possible places. That place is: *in the former Soviet empire* (see sentence 16). We can therefore understand *nowhere* as 'in no place that might be compared with the area of the former Soviet empire'.

### 3.2.18 I believe it

Sentence 18 begins with a mental process clause, *I believe*, which is a metaphorically expressed modal Theme (Halliday 1985: 332-334), which can be similar in meaning either to 'probably' or to 'certainly'. As in the case of all modal Themes, it serves to bring the speaker's own evaluations into the discourse. In this case the speaker evaluates the probability of truth of what he is about to say as very high, and at the same time he declares his own involvement of belief, his personal commitment to the truth of the statement. The topical Theme of this sentence is the pronoun *it*. As in 6 and in 12 where this pronoun was Theme, here we require a further element of the text in order to decide which of the various possible interpretations is the right one. An anaphoric meaning might be 'our country's imperative'. But this and all other anaphoric meanings are immediately excluded as the beginning of the Rheme gives us *it is time*. This fixed collocation tells us that *it* in this case is what can be called a situational Theme, linking what follows to the situation, and in this case, in particular, to the temporal setting.

### 3.2.19.1 If we don't take the lead, no one else

Sentence 19 begins with a marked topical Theme, *if we don't take the lead*, which is a hypotactic clause. The Subject *we* in this hypotactic clause includes the speaker and his hearers (the inclusive *we* of solidarity), while at the same time it calls forward *America*, which (preceded by *for*) functions as Subject of the non-finite clause in sentence 18. *America*, in this instance, can be read as the American nation or as all Americans. The expression *take the lead* in the topical

Theme of 19 carries forward the full meaning of the non-finite clause in the previous sentence: *to lead a global alliance for democracy as united and steadfast as the global alliance that defeated communism*. But here an 'alliance for democracy' brings with it the textual meaning of 'an alliance to favour the development of democratic systems in the former Soviet empire', so this is also carried forward into sentence 19 by the expression *take the lead*. At the same time, this expression also carries forward, through the textual relation of opposition or contrast, the lack of leadership of which the Republican administration is said to be guilty (see sentences 13 and 14), so the hypothesis can also be read as: 'if the U.S. government does not act differently from the way the Republican's in power are acting', thus giving *we* a more limited interpretation. Since Clinton has, in sentence 18, declared his belief that leadership is necessary and timely, we can be sure that the *if*-clause in which the hypothesis of America not assuming the lead is foregrounded will be followed by a statement of the negative results of this hypothesized state of affairs. The Subject of the main clause, *no one else*, with its comparative reference item *else*, links back to *we* in the hypotactic clause: no one other than *we*, that is, the Americans in general, as a population and a nation, and, at the same time, those who make up the U.S. government, since both of these references coexist in the textual meaning brought forward. We therefore know that the negative result of the hypothesis *If we don't take the lead* is stated in a clause whose Subject (and Theme) means 'no nation/government other than the U.S.', and it is not difficult to imagine that an adequate fulfilment of the responsibility of leadership will be excluded if this responsibility is not taken up by the U.S.

### 3.2.19.2 and no one else

The textual Theme *and* tells us that another clause will be related additively to the clause *no one else can*, which is elliptical for 'no one else can take the lead'. It also suggests that the sentence-initial *if*-clause is hypotactically related to this second clause just as it was to the first, which means that we will have a second negative result, or a second aspect of the negative result of the state of affairs hypothesized in the *if*-clause. The topical Theme of this clause is *no one else*, and since it is also Subject and is an exact repetition of the Subject of the preceding clause, expectations of a parallel structure are set up. A likely parallel of the elliptical operator *can* of the first clause is the elliptical operator *will*. This is, in fact, what appears in the Rheme. This allows us to integrate our interpretation of the textual Theme *and* as not only addition but also consequence: following from the fact that no other nation or government is capable of taking the lead of a global alliance for democracy and assuring the

development of democratic systems in the former Soviet empire, there is also the fact that no one else **will** do this.

#### 4. Simultaneous interpreters' handling of the Clinton text

In this section of the study reference will be made to the performance of five professional simultaneous interpreters with Italian as their native language and English as an 'active' interpretation language, that is, a language they are qualified to translate into as well as from in simultaneous interpretation tasks. All five interpreters are experienced, having had from six to sixteen years of professional work. Transcriptions of the texts they produced are found in De Feo (1992-3: 118-142). I am grateful to Dr. De Feo for permission to use this material, which exists thanks to her efforts in collecting it for the purposes of her own research on reformulation strategies in simultaneous interpretation. Appendix N° 3 presents the thematic elements of the 19 sentences of the Clinton text being studied here, this time with information about whether or not the five interpreters have included these thematic elements in their own versions of this part of the text, and also whether or not they have made them thematic in their own production.

Analysis of the interpreters' handling of the text shows that, in this small corpus, the ability of these interpreters to follow the development of the text without ever 'getting lost' correlates with inclusion in the translations of the elements of meaning that are thematic in the source text. In the paragraphs that follow comments will be made on the performance of each interpreter, beginning with the one who seems to be most successful in following the path indicated by the Themes of the text and ending with the one who seems most often to fail to follow these indications.

##### 4.1 Interpreter P3

The interpreter labelled P3 manages to capture the meaning of each thematic element, with the single exception of the modal Theme *I believe* in sentence 18 - an exception which, in the case of this text, creates no problem. Interpreter P3, in fact, offers a translation of the text which is clear, cohesive, and faithful to the overall sense of the original, with no points of local failure or 'getting lost'. Interestingly, P3's version keeps these same elements as thematic, with only three exceptions, which can easily be related to the inherent differences in ordering of the structures chosen in Italian from those used in English (see the topical Themes in 9, in 17b, and in 18). P3 has also clearly understood the

contrastive function of the marked topical Theme of sentence 3, *After World War II* (contrasting with the marked topical Theme of sentence 2, *In the aftermath of World War I*), since the sentence produced contains a textual Theme which reinforces this contrast: *Invece* (*On the other hand, Instead*). In the source text, *instead* is a part of the Rheme. The same sort of reinforcement of the thematic contrast is used in sentence 16, where the Theme *Today* is translated as *Ma ora* (*But now*), underlining the contrast with *In the coming weeks* through the addition of the adversative conjunctive, not present in the source text.

#### 4.2 Interpreter P4

The interpreter labelled P4 also manages to produce an Italian version of the source text which is clear, cohesive, and for the most part faithful to the overall sense of the original. This is another instance in which the interpreter has maintained almost all the elements that are thematic in the source text, and this interpreter generally maintains Theme position for the translated thematic material.

The textual Theme *Yet* at the beginning of sentence 6 is not translated, however, and this might indicate that the interpreter has not really oriented toward the contrast what follows in 6 and 7 represents to what has been said in 5 about the parents' desires for peacetime joys. In sentence 7 *Overnight* is not translated, nor is the Subject, *an expansionist Soviet Union*. P4's translation of this sentence does recover some of the idea of suddenness carried by *overnight* in the original by the swift, dry structure chosen to express the transition: *e si è passati da una guerra normale a una guerra fredda* (*and we went from a normal war to a cold war*). This means that the idea of an expansionist Soviet Union is lost as a path indicator in P4's text, and must be recovered by the interpreter's audience through the understanding of *cold war*.

Another exception occurs in the translation of sentence 18, where P4 leaves out the modal Theme *I believe*, but this, as we have seen, does not create problems in this particular text (although it might in a text in which contrast between what is believed and what is known is important).

Sentences 13 and 14, as will be seen below, represent a stumbling block for two of the interpreters (P1 and P5), and for a third (P2) they represent a hurdle that is overcome by sacrificing part of the meaning. Interpreter P4 intelligently avoids local failure by summing up in a single word the basic function of the two complicated marked topical Themes in 13 and 14, *at the very moment America's ideas have triumphed and the whole world is rushing to embrace our way of life and In the midst of revolutionary change*. Both of these Themes have the function of reiterating what has so far been said about the present moment

so as to make the contrast with the behaviour of the Republican administration stronger. Interpreter P4 handles both Themes with great economy, by simply making the temporal Adjunct) thematic to a compound sentence in which the versions of both 13 and 14 are paratactically linked. The job of filling out the intratextual meaning of *ora (now)* on the basis of the previous text is left to the interpreter's audience.

Another sign of P4's attention to thematic meaning is the addition of a variative conjunctive, *mentre invece (whereas instead)* in the thematic portion of sentence 3.

Interpreter P4 has some local difficulty in sentences 5 and 17, but manages to overcome the problem without loss of face. In interpreting sentence 5, P4 ignores the indication offered by the sequence of three marked topical Themes in sentences 1, 2 and 3 - *once in a generation, In the aftermath of World War I and After World War II*. The clear indication is that the text is unfolding as one in which periods of historical time, generations in recent history, are important. This indication should have prepared the interpreter for the Theme of sentence 5, which is *My parents' generation*, and which P4 translates simply as *I miei genitori (My parents)*. This makes the following steps up to the topical Theme of sentence 8, *America*, less obvious than in the original text. The difficulty in sentence 17 is perhaps more serious, although the interpreter manages to come out of it with very little loss of control. In sentences 15 and 16 Clinton has contrasted his forthcoming speeches (see the marked Theme of 15 - *In the coming weeks*), in which the issues treated will be domestic, with the speech he is making on this occasion (see the marked Theme of 16 - *Today*) in which the issue treated is one of national security, that is, a foreign policy issue, and specifically *what America must do to secure democracy's triumph around the world, and most of all, in the former Soviet empire*. This national security issue has been prepared by the Theme of sentence 11, *The end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet empire*, and by the reference to America's duty associated with this in sentence 12. In P4's translation, the Theme of 17, *No national security issue*, becomes *La sicurezza (Security)*. Of course this means that the comparative reference (*more urgent*) to the issue stated in sentence 16 must also be sacrificed, so P4's clause is *La sicurezza è urgente (Security is urgent)*. The translation of the second part of sentence 17 also leaves out the comparison between other places and the former Soviet empire and between the clarity of the nation's imperative there and in other places. P4's sentence continues ... *e l'imperativo è chiaro (and the imperative is clear)*. However, the interpreter seems to set up an appositive relationship between these vague statements and the translation of sentence 18, thus recovering for 17 some of the textual meaning that it was supposed to have.

### 4.3 Interpreter P5

Up to sentence 13, interpreter P5 manages to handle the text very well, including each Theme in the translation and following the text faithfully and coherently. Like P4, this interpreter drops the Theme of 7, *overnight*, without any great loss, and like P3, P4 and P2, he or she includes the variative conjunctive *invece* within the thematic portion of sentence 3. P5 also makes use of the addition of a type of textual Theme which underlines the interactive aspect of the discourse: *Ebbene (Well, Alright)* in sentences 4 and 10; *In effetti (As a matter of fact)* in sentences 5 and 7.

The difficulty begins at sentence 13. First of all, the textual Theme *Yet* sets up a concessive relation similar to that set up by *despite that*. Therefore, a dismissive conjunctive, *Comunque (Anyway)* is not appropriate: the matter that it sets up a relationship with is too serious simply to be dismissed. The main problem arises because interpreter P5 has not followed the indications of the thematic elements of sentences 10, 11 and 12, which trace a path into the speaker's immediate present. Having missed the nature of the textual Theme *Yet*, and having completely missed out the marked topical Theme of 13, *at the very moment America's ideas have triumphed and the whole world is rushing to embrace our way of life*, P5 is unable to associate the Subject of sentence 13, *our own leaders*, with the proper referents. In fact, he or she makes them the leaders of all time rather than George Bush and the other Republicans in his government. This confusion makes the translation of sentence 14 vague and unclear as well. The temporal contrast which is thematized in sentences 15 and 16 is also lost by P5. This interpreter's version of *In the coming weeks* is *Nelle mie prossime allocuzioni pubbliche (In my forthcoming speeches)*, which is in itself an excellent solution, recovering textual meaning into the Theme. But as a consequence of this thematic choice, the translation of the next sentence should begin with a Theme which contrasts with this, such as the equivalent of *In today's speech*. But P5 does not even translate *Today* and simply continues the list of topics to be discussed in future speeches to include what is (on the basis of the preceding text) obviously the topic of THIS speech.

Interpreter P5, like P4, does not translate the Themes of sentence 17, *no national security issue* and *nowhere*, and, indeed, reduces the meaning of sentence 17 to the equivalent of *the imperatives facing our nation are clear*. However, like P4, P5 seems to recover some of the lost meaning by setting up a relationship of apposition between the translated versions of 17 and of 18.

#### 4.4 Interpreter P2

Interpreter P2 tends to add textual Themes highlighting the type of relationship existing between sentences : *invece (on the other hand, instead)* in 3, *Ed (And)* in 10 and *Inoltre (Furthermore)* in 11.

P2's version of sentence 1 does not contain the equivalent of the word *history*, but it does contain the notion of historically recurring moments of great importance, so this part of the Theme has been made proper use of although not translated as such or thematized as a notion in the translated text. In fact, what is metaphorically expressed in Clinton's text, as a material process with *history* as Actor, is congruently expressed by both P2 and P1 as an existential process (in the case of P2, *c'è un momento di grande importanza - there is a moment of great importance*). Interestingly, though, P2 leaves out the portion of sentence 6 in which *history* is again thematized, as though the lack of a thematic path reinforced by lexical text cohesion might have made this clause less readily available for processing.

When P2 misinterprets *in the aftermath of* as *during* in the Theme of 2, he or she is consistent and makes the necessary adjustment in the Theme of 3. Even an imperfectly interpreted path-indicator, then, orients the interpreter for the next portion of text.

The pronoun *it* which is thematic in 12 is appropriately filled out in its textual meaning by P2 as *questo momento (this moment)*.

Interpreter P2, like P4, reduces *My parents' generation* to *My parents*, probably misled by the interactive pronoun *I* as Subject of sentence 4 to think that sentence 5 would continue an interactive path set up by this personal pronoun, rather than the information path, and specifically, the path of recent historical time, set up by the Themes of sentences 1, 2 and 3.

Interestingly, P2 translates the marked topical Theme of 7, *Overnight*, as the equivalent of *within fifteen days* (perhaps because of confusion with *fortnight?*). This specific time indication is, however, more consistent with the personal, interactive path that the interpreter has mistakenly taken up than it would be with the path of recent historical time. In fact, *overnight*, in the historical path, has as its most probable interpretation the non-specific one of suddenness (see 3.2.7).

Then the Subject of sentence 7, *an expansionist Soviet Union*, becomes the equivalent of *the invasion of the Soviet Union*, so the interpreter's sentence becomes the equivalent of *Within fifteen days the invasion of the Soviet Union dragged them (the speaker's parents) into a new war*, mingling the personal and the historical paths in a very strange way.

Like P5, P2 leaves out the marked topical Theme of sentence 13, but in this case the version of the sentence, although so vague as to leave a doubt as to

whether or not the interpreter has actually understood the reference, at least does not exclude a proper reference to Bush's government: *i nostri leader non sono stati particolarmente attivi, sia in politica interna che in politica estera* (Our leaders have not been particularly active, in domestic policy or in foreign policy).

Like P5, P2 loses the contrast between the marked Themes of 15 and 16 and makes the whole program, domestic and foreign, something to be discussed in the near future (P2 says *Nella prossima settimana - During the next week*). Having lost the speaker's link between the two types of policy, interpreter P2 creates a link of his or her own, which, unfortunately, does not fit into the text at all well: the parts of the policy that are domestic are said to be *for the purpose of (anche al fine di)* securing democracy's triumph around the world.

#### 4.5 Interpreter P1

Interpreter P1 manages to include the notion of history in the translation of sentence 1, like P2 does, without actually translating this thematic element, but rendering congruently the notion of events existing in time through an existential construction (*Forse capita una volta ogni generazione che ci siano dei momenti di straordinaria importanza - Perhaps it happens once every generation that **there are** moments of extraordinary importance*).

The translation works very well up to sentence 6, where interpreter P1 perhaps does not put enough trust in the value of the textual Theme *Yet*, which is meant to set up a contrast between the desires for peace of the parents' generation (mentioned in 5) and the moment in history, which would not allow rest (the message of sentence 6). P1 does not translate *yet* at all in the first clause of 6 and instead uses a simple adversative conjunctive, *però* (*however*) in the middle of this sentence, to link the two clauses to each other, creating a contrast which is in no way justified by the text: *Il momento era davvero straordinario; la storia però non li lasciò in pace* (*The moment was really extraordinary; history, however, did not leave them alone*). In the second part of sentence 6, P1 thematizes *history* despite the fact that this word was not used in the translation of sentence 1. In fact, it arrives as much less expected in P1's text than in the original.

Sentence 13 creates difficulty for P1. This interpreter does not catch the signal offered by the textual Theme *Yet*, which, while conceding the whole content of sentences 11 and 12, contrasts this content with what follows in the portion of the sentence beginning *our own leaders*. This contrast is very important to show how inadequate the Bush administration is. To make sure the contrast is fully understood, the Democratic candidate summarizes the situation

presented in the preceding sentences in the marked topical Theme of 13, while also making it obvious that the problem is immediate and on-going through *at the very moment* and the use of the present progressive form of the verb, *is rushing*. P1 misses, and does not translate, the contrast indicated through the textual Theme and so important to the meaning here, and he or she also misses the reference to a precise time (the speaker's present) and a specific group of Republican political leaders (the Bush administration), all part of the precise indication of the thematic elements of this sentence. The sentence formed, which unites 13 and 14 in P1's text, is *Gli ideali americani hanno trionfato e i nostri leader sono stati sempre molto importanti nel mondo, anche se hanno a volte cercato di mantenere una situazione che non esiste praticamente più* (*The American ideals have triumphed and our leaders have always been very important in the world, even though they have at times tried to maintain a situation that, practically, no longer exists*). [Emphasis mine.]

P1 maintains the contrast set up in the thematic elements of 15 and 16. He or she also presents the foreign policy issue in the Rheme of 16 in the 'prepackaged' form of a clause beginning with *ciò che* (corresponding to *what* in the original text), which should make it easy to recognize it as an issue: *Oggi voglio dirvi ciò che l'America deve fare per assicurare il trionfo della democrazia nel mondo e soprattutto per quanto riguarda l'ex impero sovietico* (*Today I want to tell you what America must do in order to assure the triumph of democracy in the world and particularly as regards the former Soviet empire*). Nonetheless, the indication given by the Theme of 17 - that is, that this issue will be compared with other issues and its greater urgency confirmed - seems not to be caught at all by P1. Like P4, P1 makes a vague and only loosely linked statement about the importance of security, and therefore cannot go on in the direction of the source text, comparing the urgency of the imperatives in the former Soviet empire with those in other regions to confirm the greater urgency of action in the Soviet area. The professionalism of the interpreter comes through, however, in the way he or she keeps control of the situation despite this local difficulty and goes on to conclude this portion of the text.

#### 4.6 Conclusions on the interpreters' performance

All five interpreters show their professionalism in their handling of the text in that they manage to continue their task from beginning to end without loss of control even when they fall into rather serious local difficulty. I believe that the above analysis shows that in this corpus local difficulty quite often corresponds with failure to follow the path indicated by thematic material in the

source text. Furthermore, inclusion of the thematic material in the interpreter's text correlates quite highly with success in following the path indicated. The interpreters who are best at following the path through the whole text also seem to be those who most consistently maintain the thematic material of the original in the thematic portion of their own sentences.

The corpus used here, however, is very limited, as is the number of interpreters involved. Further studies are needed before a strong claim can be made about the function of Theme in orienting the interpreter through the text. Also, comparative studies on more and less expert interpreters could bring to light differences in the ability to make use of the indications provided by Theme.

##### 5. Implications for the training of simultaneous interpreters

It seems to me that there are several important implications of this study for interpreter training. The first of these is that the situation should be made available as pre-Theme to student interpreters during training sessions. In order to fill even the first arriving portion of message, the Theme of the first sentence, with the meaning it presupposes, they need to know who is giving the speech, on what occasion, for what type of audience, for what social purpose and in what cultural context. The greatest contextualization possible with re-usable materials for training is provided by video-taped material, since this offers the possibility to see the interactants, the material setting and any meaningful fixtures in that setting, as well as facial expressions and gestures. But since a re-usable video cassette is, by definition, to some extent decontextualized, some introductory work on the cultural and situational context will almost always be necessary. Since intonation (something that in this study has not been touched on) is an important part of the way speakers 1) organize and control the interaction, 2) structure the message into units, 3) signal relationships between parts of the message, 4) structure information and signal relative informativity, 5) signal their attitudes to the message and to the listeners, and 6) signal the type of speech act involved (Taylor Torsello 1992: 91-129), the original production, even if on an audio cassette, is always much better training material than someone else's reading. There is too much of the meaning present in the original context which can go lost when the intonation is not the intonation which that context actually produced.

The second implication is that a dynamic perspective should be used in early phases of text study. In pre-interpretation text-study phases in class or in the language lab, texts on video or audio cassettes can be presented with pauses inserted after thematic elements. These pauses become the opportunity to get the

students to show that they have brought with them what is necessary from the preceding text, as well as situational and cultural knowledge, to be able to fill out the full textual meaning of the Theme, and then to make predictions about where the text will go from there. They can also become the opportunity to have students say what it is in the structure, lexicon or intonation of the thematic portion, or else in the previous text, or even the situational or cultural context, which brings them to make the predictions they have made. But even when written texts are the object of study, such simple hardware as the overhead projector with cover sheets over parts of the transparency, or a personal computer on which the texts can be presented small parts at a time, make a dynamic presentation of the text possible. The preceding text can be made to disappear once it has been received and the following text can be kept out of sight until it is time for it to be processed. In such presentations of written texts, a division of the material whereby the chunks for presentation are the thematic portion of a sentence or clause, followed, on command, by the rhematic portion, will make it possible to check the students' ability to update the text to that point each time a new Theme arrives, filling out all the meaning that it presupposes. Before the rhematic chunk is called up, students can be asked to make predictions about what might follow. With this method too, the opportunity can be taken to build up linguistic, textual and cultural awareness of the reasons why certain continuations are probable while others are unlikely. The journey through the text in this dynamic way should also become an exercise in reconsidering and readjusting previous hypotheses on the basis of new information provided by the unfolding text.

## 6. Implications for interpretation and linguistics

The study presented here also has, I believe, some implications for the question of the relationship between linguistics and interpretation.

Linguistic theory until very recently offered only models which were basically synoptic, based on the text as a finished product, on language structures as completed wholes, and on paradigmatic systems of options as all coexisting at once. If today there are some linguists who are beginning to offer dynamic models, this is because some of the many language-based practices and studies now being carried out have proven to require them. Interpretation would seem to be one language-based discipline which needs dynamic models of language and of text. If this is so, then the discipline of interpretation should be pushing for the development, within linguistic theory, of dynamic models. At the same time the discipline of interpretation will need to be willing to accept the role that this sort of interrelationship with linguistics implies, acting as a

laboratory for the experimentation, evaluation and development of the theory. If the theory does not apply well, it must be changed or, if necessary, discarded.

Other implications of this study for the relationship between interpretation and linguistics can be seen in regard to the question of Theme and Rheme. This is an area where the linguistic theory is still in formation, and the literature is full of contradictions. Fundamental questions have not found definitive answers. Linguists do not agree on the meaning related to the function Theme, nor do they delimit Theme in the same way. Then there is the complex problem of studying Theme in languages which may use very different means of indicating that a particular element is thematic. For the purposes of this study a proposal has been accepted whereby, simply stated, everything up to the Verb has been considered thematic, although if our corpus had included non-declaratives or declaratives with the Verb as marked theme, such a simple statement of the rule would have proven inadequate. Despite the limited scope of the study, some evidence has emerged that interpreters from English make use of Theme, as this has been delimited here, as a path indicator, orienting them as to how to move through the text. Further studies should be carried out to see whether or not they confirm these findings. If such confirmation is provided, then interpretation will have contributed positively to the understanding of Theme and its function in English. A contribution to the linguistic theory of Theme which comes from such an interlinguistic discipline as interpretation will surely also be a contribution to the understanding of how Theme works in different languages.

Appendix N° 1

The beginning of William Clinton's speech to the Foreign Policy Association of New York, April 1992, during the presidential campaign. (Text based on De Feo 1992-3: 113-114.)

(Sentences have been numbered and kept on separate lines for ease of reference. Paragraphing has been avoided, since in the written form based on a speech this might be arbitrary.)

1. Perhaps once in a generation, history presents us with a moment of monumental importance.
2. In the aftermath of World War I, our country chose to retreat from the world, with tragic consequences.
3. After World War II, we chose instead to lead the world and take responsibility for shaping the post-war era.
4. I am literally a child of the Cold War, born as it was just beginning.
5. My parents' generation wanted nothing more than to return from a world war to the joys of work and home and family.
6. Yet it was no ordinary moment and history would not let them rest.
7. Overnight, an expansionist Soviet Union summoned them into a new struggle.
8. Fortunately, America had farsighted and courageous leaders like Harry Truman and George Marshall, who recognized the gravity of the moment and roused our battle-weary nation to the challenge.
9. Under their leadership, we helped Europe and Japan rebuild their economies, organized a great military coalition of free nations, and defended our democratic principles against yet another totalitarian threat.
10. Now, we face our own moment of great change and enormous opportunity.
11. The end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet empire pose an unprecedented opportunity to make our future more prosperous and secure.
12. It reminds us, too, of our duty to prevent the tragedies of the 20th Century - cataclysmic wars and the fear of nuclear annihilation - from recurring in the 21st Century.
13. Yet at the very moment America's ideas have triumphed and the whole world is rushing to embrace our way of life, our own leaders have been standing still at home and abroad.
14. In the midst of revolutionary change, they have struggled to shore up a status quo that no longer exists.
15. In the coming weeks, I will be giving more speeches outlining my plan of assistance for America: to create jobs, provide health care, educate our children, and turn this country around.
16. Today I want to discuss what America must do to secure democracy's triumph around the world, and most of all, in the former Soviet empire.
17. No national security issue is more urgent, nowhere is our country's imperative more clear.

18. I believe it is time for America to lead a global alliance for democracy as united and steadfast as the global alliance that defeated communism.

19. If we don't take the lead, no one else can, and no one else will.

...

#### Appendix N° 2

Theme as path indicator for the interpreter of Clinton's speech

#### Legend

- (Tex) = Textual (or structural) Theme  
 (Mod) = Modal (or interpersonal) Theme  
 (Top) = Topical (or ideational) Theme  
 (S) = Subject (unmarked theme of declaratives)  
 (Top/S) = both topical Theme and Subject.

Marked Themes are in bold print.

What is enclosed in square brackets [ ] is textual, linguistic or situational information which must be available at this point in the discourse in order for the Theme to function properly as path indicator.

A vertical line | is used to divide Theme elements in complex Themes.

Numerals with a parenthesis after them are used to simplify reference to sentences with Theme/Rheme structure, but where there is parataxis the number is followed by a letter so that each paratactic clause can be indicated with its own Theme/Rheme structure.

An equal sign = indicates meaning retrievable with certainty or near certainty, whereas an equal sign with an asterisk =\* indicates that the probabilities are in favour of the meaning indicated.

An elbow parenthesis > indicates that the meaning is only clarified later.

'Speaker' is abbreviated as SP and 'hearers' as HRS.

#### Analysis

1. (Mod) Perhaps | (Top) once in a generation, | (S) history
2. (Top) In the aftermath of World War I, [= one generation] | (S) our country [= U.S.A., country of SP and HRS]
3. (Top) After World War II, [= another generation, to be compared with the one previously referred to] | (S) we [= SP and HRS' country, which had on the previous occasion retreated with tragic consequences]
4. (Top/S) I [U.S. presidential candidate for the Democratic Party, William Clinton]
5. (Top/S) My parents' generation [= those who, after World War II chose to lead the world, and whose children were born during the Cold War]
- 6a. (Tex) Yet [= despite the parents' generation's desire for private joys] | (Top/S) it > [= time and situation of the parents' generation]

- 6b. (Tex) and > [= following from the fact that the post W.W.II years were no ordinary moment] | (Top/S) history [= which, once in a generation, presents Americans with a moment of monumental importance]
7. (Top) Overnight [in a historical context =\* suddenly], | (S) an expansionist Soviet Union [= the Cold War opponents of the SP's generation]
8. (Mod) Fortunately [= introduction of positive evaluation of the SP on utterance to follow], | (Top/S) America [= the country having to face the Soviet Union in a new struggle]
9. (Top) Under their leadership, [= under the leadership of great leaders like Truman and Marshall who brought Americans to accept the challenge of the Cold War] | (S) we [= the U.S. of the post-W.W. II Generation]
10. (Top) Now, [in a historical context =\* in the historical period of the present speech event] | (S) we [= the U.S. of the generation of the SP and HRS]
11. (Top/S) The end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet empire [=\* the moment of great change and enormous opportunity the SP and HRS are living at present]
12. (Top/S) It [=\* the present situation with the Cold War over and the Soviet empire collapsed]
13. (Tex) Yet [=\* Despite the present moment of change, the U.S.'s opportunity to make things better, and its duty to prevent the recurrence of the wars and fear of nuclear annihilation that were the tragedies of this century] | (Top) at the very moment America's ideas have triumphed and the whole world is rushing to embrace our way of life, [= at the present time (a time in which a different type of behaviour would be expected - see "very") when the Cold War has ended with an American victory and the Soviet empire has collapsed] | (S) our own leaders [= President Bush and the other Republicans presently in power, whom the SP hopes to put out of power in the next elections]
14. (Top) In the midst of revolutionary change, [= during changes like the collapse of the Soviet empire which have left people anxious to embrace the American way of life] | (S) they [= the present leaders of the SP's and HRS' country, the Republicans in power]
15. (Top) In the coming weeks [= immediate future weeks in relation to time of SP's speech event] | (S) I [= Clinton, Democratic presidential candidate]
16. (Top) Today [= in the immediate speech event, which is a talk before the Foreign Policy Association of New York, as opposed to the speech events planned for the ensuing weeks in which the topic will be the SP's domestic program] | (S) I [= Clinton, Democratic presidential candidate]
- 17a. (Top/S) No national security issue [= no issue that might be compared with the national security issue which is the SP's topic in the present speech event, that is, what America must do to secure democracy's triumph around the world, and particularly in the former Soviet empire]
- 17b. (Top) nowhere [=\* in no place that might be compared with the area of the former Soviet empire]

18. (Mod) I believe [= introduction of SP's evaluation of high probability of truth of what will follow and very high personal commitment to truth of what will follow] | (Top/S) it > [= the present time and situation]
- 19a. (Top) If we don't take the lead, [= if the U.S. government does not act differently from the way the present Republican's in power are acting and assume a leading role in the triumph of democracy after the fall of the former Soviet empire] | (S) no one else [= no government different from that of the U.S.]
- 19b. (Tex) and > [= following from the fact that no other government is capable of taking the lead in the development of democratic systems in the former Soviet empire] | (S) no one else
- ....

### Appendix No. 3

P1, P2, P3, P4 and P5 are five professional simultaneous interpreters recorded by N. De Feo (for transcriptions see De Feo 1992-3: 118-142). Where they have brought the thematic meaning into their translations, they are mentioned next to the thematic element, or next to the meaning this calls up if their choice is closer to this, with a + if in their translation the same meaning is thematic and a ° if it is not. Other symbols and abbreviations are as in Appendix N° 2.

### Interpreters' performance

1. (Mod) Perhaps P1+, P2+, P3+, P4+, P5+.  
 (Top) **once in a generation**, P1°, P2+, P3+, P4°, P5+.  
 (S) history P3+, P4° (part of post verbal fact clause as S), P5+.
2. (Top) **In the aftermath of World War I**, P1+, P2+ (During), P3+, P4+, P5+.  
 [= one generation]  
 (S) our country P1+, P2+, P3+, P4+, P5+.  
 [= U.S.A., country of SP and HRS]
3. (Top) **After World War II**, P1+, P2+ (nell'ambito della seconda guerra mondiale : during), P3+, P4+, P5+.  
 [= another generation, to be contrasted with the one previously referred to] (contrast reinforced by variative conjunctive *invece* by P2, P3, P4 and P5)  
 (S) we P1+, P2+ (ellip), P3+ (ellip), P5+ (ellip).  
 [= SP and HRS' country, which had on the previous occasion retreated with tragic consequences] P4+ (our country by ellipsis).
4. (Top/S) I P1+, P2+, P3+, P4+, P5+.  
 [U.S. presidential candidate for the Democratic Party, William Clinton] (P5 adds conjunctive social filler *Ebbene*, reinforcing personal interactive aspect of first person pronoun)

5. (Top/S) My parents' generation P1+, P2+ (My parents), P3+, P4+ (My parents), P5+.  
[= those who, after World War II chose to lead the world, and whose children were born during the Cold War] (P5 adds conjunctive *In effetti*, which reinforces SP's interactive role)
- 6a. (Tex) Yet P2+ (*Tuttavia*), P3+ (*Tuttavia*), P5+ (*Però*).  
[= despite the parents' generation's desire for private joys] | (Top/S) it P2+ (ellip), P3+ (ellip), P4+ (ellip), P5+ (quello).  
> [= time and situation of the parents' generation] P1+ (The moment).
- 6b. (Tex) and (P1° *però*) P3+, P4+.  
> [= following from the fact that the post W.W.II years were no ordinary moment]  
(Top/S) history P1+, P3+, P4+, P5+.  
[= which, once in a generation, presents Americans with a moment of monumental importance]
7. (Top) **Overnight** (P2+ within fifteen days, (a fortnight)), P3+ (*Da un giorno all'altro*).  
[in a historical context =\* suddenly],  
(S) an expansionist Soviet Union P1+, (P2+ the expansion - the invasion of the Soviet Union), P3+ (The expansion of the Soviet Union).  
[= the Cold War opponents of the SP's generation] (P5+ adds conjunctives *E in effetti* and as Subject has The United States and the Soviet Union)
8. (Mod) Fortunately P2+, P3+, P4+, P5+.  
[= introduction of positive evaluation of the SP on utterance to follow], (P5 adds contrastive conjunctive *Però* to reinforce step from negative to positive evaluation)  
(Top/S) America P1°, P2+, P3+, P4+, P5+.  
[= the country having to face the Soviet Union in a new struggle]
9. (Top) **Under their leadership**, P2+, P4+, P5+.  
[= under the leadership of great leaders like Truman and Marshall who brought Americans to accept the challenge of the Cold War] (P1°), (P3°).  
(S) we P3+, P4+, P5+ (ellip).  
[= the U.S. of the post-W.W. II Generation] (P1° has the great leaders of the post W.W. II period as elliptical Subject)
10. (Top) **Now**, P2+, P3+, P4+, P5+.  
[in a historical context =\* in the historical period of the present speech event] P1+ (*oggi*), (P5 adds conjunctive social filler *Ebbene*).  
(S) we P1+ (ellip), P2+ (ellip), P3+ (ellip), P4+ (ellip), P5+ (ellip).  
[= the U.S. of the generation of the SP and HRS]
11. (Top/S) The end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet empire P1+, P2+, P3+, P4+ (The collapse of the Soviet Empire), P5+.

[=\* the moment of great change and enormous opportunity the SP and HRS are living at present]

12.(Top/S) It

[=\* the present situation with the Cold War over and the Soviet empire collapsed] P2+ (this moment), P3+ Top/S of 11 by ellipsis, P4+ and | the collapse of the Soviet Empire by ellipsis, P5+ and | S of 11 by ellipsis.

13.(Tex) Yet P2+ (*Tuttavia*), P3+, P4°, P5+ *Comunque* (dismissive conjunctive).

[=\* Despite the present moment of change, the U.S.'s opportunity to make things better, and its duty to prevent the recurrence of the wars and fear of nuclear annihilation that were the tragedies of this century]

(Top) **at the very moment America's ideas have triumphed and the whole world is rushing to embrace our way of life**, (P1+ from "America's ideas.." only), P3+ At the very moment in which America's ideas have triumphed in the world.

[= at the present time (a-time in which a different type of behaviour would be expected - see "very") when the Cold War has ended with an American victory and the Soviet empire has collapsed] P4+ now.

(S) our own leaders P1+ (but confuses temporal reference, interpreting as leaders of all times), P2+, P3+, P4+, P5+ (but confuses temporal reference - *sono sempre stati*).

[= President Bush and the other Republicans presently in power, whom the SP hopes to put out of power in the next elections]

14.(Top) **In the midst of revolutionary change**, P3+, P5+.

[= during changes like the collapse of the Soviet empire which have left people anxious to embrace the American way of life] P4+ now as time adjunct of whole compound sentence.

(S) they P2+ (ellip), P3+, P4+ (ellip).

[= the present leaders of the SP's and HRS' country, the Republicans in power] (P1+ misinterprets reference), (P5+ misinterprets reference, or leaves it too vague).

15.(Top) **In the coming weeks** P1+, P2+ (week), P3+, P4+.

[= immediate future weeks in relation to time of SP's speech event] P5+ (In my forthcoming speeches - but no contrast follows)

(S) I P1+ (ellip), P2+, P3+ (ellip), P4+, P5+ (ellip).

[= Clinton, Democratic presidential candidate]

16.(Top) **Today** P1+, P4+.

[= in the immediate speech event, which is a talk before the Foreign Policy Association of New York, as opposed to the speech events planned for the ensuing weeks in which the topic will be the SP's domestic program] P3+ (But now)

(S) I P1+ (ellip), P3+ (ellip), P4+ (ellip).

[= Clinton, Democratic presidential candidate]

- 17a. (Top/S) No national security issue (P1+ only 'national security'), P2+, P3+ (No security issue), (P4+ only 'Security').  
[ = no issue that might be compared with the national security issue which is the SP's topic in the present speech event, that is, what America must do to secure democracy's triumph around the world, and particularly in the former Soviet empire]
- 17b. (Top) **nowhere** [=\* in no place that might be contrasted with the area of the former Soviet empire] P3° (Nor are there any clearer imperatives (by comparative reference - than democracy in the former Soviet Empire), P4° ('The imperative is clear', by demonstrative reference, retrieves duty towards former Soviet empire), (P5 *In effetti, gli imperativi che si pongono al nostro Paese sono chiari*; 18 is linked to this appositively).
18. (Mod) I believe P2+, P5+.  
[= introduction of SP's evaluation of high probability of truth of what will follow and very high personal commitment to truth of what will follow]  
(Top/S) it P4+ (ellip).  
>[= the present time and situation] P2°? (*sia giunto il momento che l'America si metta alla testa di un'alleanza mondiale...*), P3°? (*E' arrivato il momento che l'America guidi...*), P5° (*sia venuta l'ora che l'America si ponga alla testa di...*).
- 19a. (Top) **If we don't take the lead**, P2+ (If we don't take the lead of this alliance), P3+ (If we don't give the example), P4+ by general verb and personal reference (if we don't do it).  
[= if the U.S. government does not act differently from the way the present Republican's in power are acting and assume a leading role in the triumph of democracy after the fall of the former Soviet empire] P1+ (If we don't take the lead of this movement), P5+ (If we are not the ones who take the lead of this movement).  
(S) no one else P2+, P3+, P4+, P5+.  
[= no government different from that of the U.S.] P1+ (*Nessuno...al nostro posto*: No one ... in our place).
- 19b. (Tex) and P2+, P3+ (nor), P4+.  
> [= following from the fact that no other government is capable of taking the lead in the development of democratic systems in the former Soviet empire]  
(S) no one else P2+, P3+? (*vorrà* - ellipsis of *anyone else*), P4+ (no one), P5+.  
...

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