

# Advanced Topics in English Word Order

End-Focus & End-Weight





# Before we begin

Please ensure you have two (2) samples of your work  
(at least one page/350 words each)  
You will revise them during the lesson



# Word-Order Influences

## Information Flow

- General rule governing rhythm of given/new information in English clauses

## Focus

- What parts of the sentence draw your attention?

## Weight

- “Heavy” elements tend towards certain positions

## Contrast & Emphasis

- Can alter the previous rules to shift focus and attention

# Information Flow

- Given information is typically presented before new information
- Given information usually from immediately preceding sentence
- Given information usually passed forward



# Information Flow

The dark blue text below shows given information, while the green text shows new information (the dark blue text in the first sentence is given information from a prior paragraph).

At one level, the *how* of new dialect learning seems straightforward: people tend to talk like the people they talk to, an aspect of the more general phenomenon of accommodation.

Accommodation typically refers to the short-term adjustments speakers make that are linked to audience or other aspects of the communicative context (Bell 1984, Trudgill 1986, Giles et al. 1991).

If someone moves to a new region, interacts with speakers of the local dialect, and regularly converges towards their patterns, the accumulation of such experiences may lead to more lasting changes.

(Nycz, 2015)



# Focus

- End-focus
  - Focus is generally on the final lexical word in a clause
  - Can deliberately alter this to add emphasis (see Contrast)





## End-Focus

Green text is used to show focused information

**Wolfram, Charity  
Hudley & Valdés  
(2023)**

“Linguistics in general, and sociolinguistics in particular, has a significant history of engagement in issues of social inequality.”

**Boersma & Weenink  
(2025)**

“Like the sound editor, the TextGrid editor will show you a spectrogram, a pitch contour, a formant contour, and an intensity contour.”

**Katz (1987)**

“In a number of surviving Yiddish manuscripts, medieval romances such as *King Arthur* are adopted from German models.”

# Weight

- Complex, lengthy clause elements are considered “heavy”
  - Most often NPs or PPs
- Heavy elements tend towards the end of a clause
- Example (green text = “heavy” clause elements):

You know Dasher and Dancer and Prancer and Vixen,  
Comet and Cupid and Donner and Blitzen, but do you recall  
the most famous reindeer of all?

(Autry & The Pinafores, 1949)





# End-Weight

Green text is used to show “heavy” elements

## Sun, Saito & Tierney (2021)

“Supporting this view, White-Schwoch et al. (2017) found that trial-by-trial variability measures in the FFR closely tracked **timing jitter in the inferior colliculus in guinea pigs, as measured using extracellular recordings.**”

## Anthony (2024)

This tool shows **search results in a concordance or 'KWIC' (Key-Word-In-Context) format.**

# Exercise 1



## Option 1 (individuals)

- Choose one piece of work that you brought with you
- Keeping the information flow principle, end-focus, and end-weight in mind, make at least three revisions to your work

## Option 2 (groups)

- Choose one piece of work that you brought with you
- Exchange it with a peer
- Keeping the information flow principle, end-focus, and end-weight in mind, suggest at least three revisions to your peer's work
- Return the paper to your peer

# Contrast & Emphasis

- All of the previous rules can be altered to provide contrast/emphasis, usually by fronting
  - New information at clause start can emphasize the start of a new section or thought
  - Adding an emphasized element at clause start to create comparison or contrast
    - Does not remove clause-final focus



# Contrast

Green text is new information that has been fronted for primary focus

Purple text is given information that now receives secondary, clause-final emphasis

Due to its highly-visible location, aesthetic design concepts  
and size, the Blumenauer Bridge is a signature structure for  
the City.

(KPFF, *Blumenauer Bridge*)



# Emphasis

Green text is contrastive information that has been fronted for primary emphasis

Purple text is contrastive information that retains secondary, clause-final emphasis

Through **robust appraisal systems, coupled with established standards and best practices**, this approach enhances efficiency and productivity and fosters collaboration and integration amongst project stakeholders, building a solid foundation for success in **meeting the project's rapid delivery timelines**.

*(Jacobs, Alexandra Hospital)*



# Exercise 2



## Option 1 (individuals)

- Take the second piece of work that you brought with you
- Considering areas that could benefit from increased contrast and/or emphasis, make at least three revisions to your work

## Option 2 (groups)

- Take the second piece of work that you brought with you
- Exchange it with a peer
- Considering areas that could benefit from increased contrast and/or emphasis, suggest at least three revisions to your peer's work
- Return the paper to your peer

# Thanks!

**Do you have any questions?**

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