

Maintaining participant identity in discourse: A contrastive English/Spanish account

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This presentation draws upon and expands previous research on textual progression in English and Spanish (Arús-Hita 2014). One of the findings of that research was the radically opposite nature of pronominal Subject Theme realisation in English and in Spanish in terms of communicative dynamism. Such realisation in English is associated with low communicative dynamism. Thus, in example (1) the personal pronoun *they* is procedurally used to maintain participant identity, *the tutors*, in this case. It is in fact necessary to use the pronoun to ensure the grammaticality of the clause. In Spanish, conversely, the pronominal realisation of Subject Themes carries high communicative dynamism, as is the case in (2), where the second clause would have been perfectly grammatical without the pronoun *ellas* ('they'). The pronoun is exceptionally used on this occasion to reinforce the singularity of *female* adolescents.

- (1) This also reflects the tutors' experience; **they** found the warm-up activities essential to get people talking...
- (2) *Cuando las adolescentes imaginan.... Además, **ellas** se ven con menor frecuencia en situaciones laborales sexistas...* ('when (female) adolescents imagine... Besides, they see themselves less often in sexist situations at work')

Here we delve into this contrast by looking at a number of written and spoken texts in order to explore the different ways in which English and Spanish maintain participant identity in the unfolding of text and communicative exchange, and, in particular, the role that the pronominal realisation of Subject Themes plays in such tasks within each language. We will see that English and Spanish are, regarding the issues here at stake, more similar in writing than in speaking. Finally, some consequences will be drawn concerning the grammatical and semantic environments of the Subject and the different ways in which these environments determine the resources used in each of these two languages for maintaining participant identity in discourse.

Reference

Arús-Hita, Jorge (2014) Communicative Dynamism and Textual Progression in English and Spanish. Paper delivered at the 1st Round Table on Communicative Dynamism, Cardiff University, 4-5 September.