



**ACTUAL SENTENCE DIVISION AND COMMUNICATIVE FUNCTION OF SENTENCE
PARTS (THEME–RHEME–FOCUS) IN UZBEK**

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the actual division of sentence parts and the communicative function of the sentence from functional-syntactic and linguopragmatic perspectives. Actual division is treated as an information-structuring mechanism which, alongside grammatical organization, determines how utterances distribute “given vs. new” information and “background vs. focus” within discourse. Special attention is paid to Uzbek, where relatively flexible word order, preverbal focus tendencies, case marking, derivational and inflectional morphology, intonation patterns, particles (-ku, -da, -mi), topic markers such as *esa*, and segmentation strategies play a key role in shaping theme–rHEME relations. The study also reviews the extent to which the topic has been investigated in Uzbek linguistics by drawing on textbooks, teaching manuals, monographs, dissertation abstracts, and dissertations. On this basis, it argues for the necessity of further genre- and corpus-based investigations within the framework of communication grammar.

Keywords: actual division, theme, rHEME, focus, communicative center, information structure, functional syntax, pragmatics, word order, intonation, particle, segmentation, presupposition, discourse.

INTRODUCTION

The sentence is one of the most fundamental units of language: it not only represents a fragment of reality in propositional terms, but also realizes a communicative intention in concrete speech. In other words, every sentence is simultaneously an informational statement (“what is said”) and a communicative act (“why it is said and what in it matters most”). This dual nature becomes especially visible when we distinguish between grammatical sentence structure and information structure. While grammatical relations (subject–predicate organization, complements, modifiers, adverbials, etc.) describe how elements are syntactically connected, actual sentence division explains how the same elements are organized according to communicative relevance: what is treated as already accessible in the discourse and what is presented as informative novelty, what remains in the background and what becomes the focal point of the utterance.

The relevance of this topic has increased with the rise of modern communication domains such as academic writing, media discourse, official documentation, and digital communication. These domains demand not only correctness, but also efficient information packaging: speakers and writers constantly decide which element should be foregrounded, which should be demoted, and how attention should be guided. Uzbek provides a particularly productive ground for studying these processes. Its morphological resources (case marking, tense–person markers, connective and particle systems) and a comparatively flexible word order allow speakers to restructure utterances in multiple ways without losing grammatical well-formedness. Consequently, actual sentence division is not a narrow syntactic issue; it intersects with pragmatics, stylistics, discourse organization, and speech culture, making it central to both theory and practice.

Degree of research (literature overview). In Uzbek linguistics, the study of actual sentence division and communicative function has developed along several lines. A first line is represented by theoretical grammar and semantic/meaning-based syntax. Works by N. Mahmudov and A. Nurmonov discuss the communicative aspect of sentence structure and emphasize that theme–rHEME partitioning



should not be confused with traditional grammatical segmentation. In their approach, the communicative center is commonly identified through question–answer diagnostics: questions target the rheme, whereas the theme is typically repeated or presupposed in the question frame. This methodological principle has been influential in Uzbek syntactic studies and remains practical for diagnosing information structure in real discourse.

A second line of research focuses on positional and word-order factors. Studies in this line explore how the placement of constituents—especially the tendency of focus to appear in preverbal positions—correlates with theme–rheme organization in Uzbek. Such analyses demonstrate that information structure is often encoded not by a single marker, but by a constellation of cues: position, morphology, and prosody working together.

Degree of research (literature overview) - continued. A third line of research is represented by dissertation-level studies that treat communicative (actual) structure as an independent object of analysis. In Uzbek scholarship, O. Bozorov’s dissertation abstract on the communicative (actual) structure of Uzbek sentences is frequently cited as an attempt to systematize theme–rheme relations and to describe their realizations across different sentence patterns. This line of work is significant because it moves beyond illustrative examples and aims at building a coherent descriptive apparatus for Uzbek information structure, including the role of contrast, emphasis, and context-dependent focusing.

A fourth line concerns linguopragmatic approaches and discourse-oriented descriptions. Research in this line examines how presupposition, speaker intention, addresser–addressee relations, evaluation, and discourse cohesion influence the distribution of communicative weight inside the sentence. In particular, studies devoted to segmentation constructions (topic detachment, afterthought structures, and other forms of splitting an utterance into communicatively unequal parts) show that the theme–rheme relation can be reconfigured not only within a single syntactic frame but also through text-building strategies. M. Umurzaqova’s PhD dissertation on the linguopragmatics of segmentation constructions is relevant here: it demonstrates that segmentation, punctuation, and pragmatic cues jointly shape what is treated as “background” and what is promoted to a focal, attention-capturing position.

At the same time, the current state of research indicates several gaps that require systematic treatment: a) a genre-based comparison of theme–rheme strategies in Uzbek (academic prose, official documents, journalism, digital communication), b) a detailed model of the intonation–punctuation–syntax interface as a focus-marking mechanism, and c) corpus-driven evidence for the relationship between morphological marking (case, particles, clitics) and “information weight.” These gaps suggest that the problem should be approached at the intersection of traditional syntax, pragmatics, and text linguistics, using both qualitative and quantitative methods.

Main body. In functional grammar, actual sentence division is a way of describing how an utterance is “packaged” for communication. It is crucial to separate two levels that often overlap but are not identical. The first is the grammatical level: subject, predicate, object, attribute, adverbial modifier, and other syntactic functions. The second is the informational level: theme (what the utterance is anchored to), rheme (the informative contribution about that anchor), and focus (the element that receives the highest degree of communicative prominence within the rheme or, in some contexts, within the theme). Uzbek data clearly show that a constituent may be grammatically secondary yet communicatively central, and conversely, a grammatically core constituent may be communicatively backgrounded.



A practical diagnostic for identifying rheme and focus is the question–answer test. Questions are designed to locate the unknown part of the utterance; the unknown typically corresponds to the rheme or the focal element within it. For instance, in response to “What did Karim do?”, the informative load falls on the predicate phrase: “Karim went to Moscow.” In response to “Who went to Moscow?”, the focal element is the subject: “Karim went to Moscow.” The propositional content remains comparable, but the communicative geometry changes because the addressee’s information needs change. This illustrates a fundamental property of actual division: it is context-sensitive and intention-driven.

In Uzbek, word order is one of the strongest tools for encoding information structure. Although Uzbek is commonly characterized as an SOV language, it also exhibits a degree of constituent mobility enabled by rich morphological marking (especially case suffixes) that preserve grammatical relations even when the linear order changes. Neutral information flow typically places the theme early and the rheme closer to the predicate. Yet speakers frequently front objects, adverbials, or other constituents to create topicalization or to set up a contrast, thereby shifting the communicative center. Compare “I went to the library today” with “To the library I went today.” The second pattern does not primarily change grammatical relations; it changes what is presented as the most relevant anchor for the addressee at that moment.

A particularly important tendency in Uzbek is the frequent association of focus with the preverbal position. In many utterances, the most informative element appears immediately before the finite verb (or verbal complex), creating a natural “focus window.” This does not mean that focus is always preverbal; rather, the preverbal slot functions as a highly productive place for focal placement. Morphology and context interact with this positional tendency: a case-marked object can be moved to the beginning for topicalization, but if the speaker intends to focus it as the decisive novelty, it is often placed closer to the predicate or reinforced by particles and prosody.

Prosody and logical stress constitute a second major channel for signaling actual division. In spoken Uzbek, focus can be highlighted through stronger stress, pitch movement, and pausing, often without drastic rearrangement of word order. The contrast between “I bought a **BOOK** yesterday” and “I bought a book **YESTERDAY**” shows how the same sentence frame may host different focal peaks depending on which element answers the implicit question in the discourse. In written language, prosody is not directly visible, but it can be indirectly encoded through punctuation, segmentation, and emphatic constructions. Short, separated clauses, parenthetical insertions, and marked punctuation may function as focus cues by creating interpretive pauses and directing the reader’s attention to a selected element.

Topic–Rheme–Focus” modeli



Particles and discourse markers are another essential resource. Uzbek particles such as -ku, -da, and -mi, as well as lexical focus operators like faqat (“only”), aynan (“exactly”), ham (“also/even”), and hech ham (“not at all”), can significantly reshape the distribution of communicative weight. These elements do not simply “add meaning”; they reorganize the pragmatic profile of the utterance. For example, “Only I said it” focuses the agent, while “I only said it” restricts the action and implies that other actions were not performed. The particle esa often operates as a contrastive topic marker: it does not merely connect two clauses, but sets up an opposition in which the second clause is interpreted relative to the first (“I came, whereas he did not”). This contrastive arrangement changes the communicative function of the subject in the second clause: it becomes a carrier of contrast rather than a neutral theme.

The “given–new” parameter is central to understanding why some constituents behave as themes and others as rhemes. “Given” information is typically recoverable from the prior context, shared knowledge, or the immediate situation; “new” information is introduced into the discourse as an update. Uzbek can introduce new discourse referents through indefinite expressions (often with bir “a/one” in a presentational function), which tend to be rheme-friendly: “A person came” introduces a new participant. In contrast, demonstratives or contextually definite expressions (“that person”) behave as theme-supporting devices, stabilizing reference and shifting the main communicative load toward what is said about that reference (“That person came”).

However, it is insufficient to reduce information structure to a simple “given = theme, new = rheme” equation. Uzbek provides many examples where something “given” becomes focal because it is contrasted with alternatives or corrected against an expectation: “Not Alisher, but Bahrom came.” Here Bahrom may already be known, yet he becomes focal because the utterance performs a corrective function. This is where the communicative function of the sentence becomes decisive: the utterance is not merely informing; it is adjusting the addressee’s belief state by selecting one



alternative and rejecting another. Such cases require a model that distinguishes between (i) familiarity/identifiability and (ii) prominence/contrast in the speaker's intention.

Actual division must also be examined beyond the boundaries of a single sentence, at the level of text and discourse. In coherent texts, theme–rheme progression creates informational continuity: a rheme in one sentence may become the theme in the next, forming a chain that gradually develops the topic. Academic writing is a particularly clear example: authors introduce a term, then elaborate it through definitions, classifications, evidence, and conclusions. This progression is not accidental; it is a communicative strategy that manages the reader's cognitive load. When theme–rheme progression is poorly controlled-e.g., when long themes bury the rheme or when focal points are not clearly signaled-the text becomes hard to follow even if it is grammatically correct.

Complex sentences add another dimension. In subordinate clause constructions, communicative weight is often distributed asymmetrically: the main clause tends to carry the central assertion, while subordinate clauses provide conditions, reasons, or background. Yet the distribution can be reversed or reshaped when the speaker intends to focus the condition itself (“We will start only if he comes”). Here the conditional clause is no longer mere background; it becomes focal, frequently strengthened by focus operators (faqat) and by placement near the predicate. This demonstrates that communicative function (asserting vs. restricting vs. contrasting) directly influences where focus is placed and how theme–rheme relations are built.

Presentational patterns also reveal important properties of Uzbek information structure. Expressions like “Bor ekan...” (“There was...”), “Kelib qoldi...” (“[Someone] happened to come”), and “Mana...” (“Here is...”) are used to introduce new entities or events into a narrative space. In such cases, the rheme can expand to include almost the entire sentence, because the primary purpose is to “stage” a new referent or situation. The theme is minimal or implicit, and the communicative nucleus is the introduction itself. Within this expanded rheme, there may still be a focal peak-often the identity of the new participant or a crucial circumstance (time, place, cause).

From an applied perspective, the study of actual sentence division is directly relevant to writing, translation, editing, and speech training. In academic Uzbek (and in academic English translations of Uzbek research), clarity is strongly dependent on how efficiently themes are anchored and how explicitly rhemes are presented. In journalism and media discourse, segmentation, inversion, and contrastive focusing can enhance expressiveness, but they should be controlled within stylistic norms to avoid ambiguity or unnecessary emotionality in contexts that require neutrality.

CONCLUSION

The actual division of sentence parts and the communicative function of the sentence constitute a core problem at the intersection of syntax, pragmatics, and discourse organization. Uzbek evidence confirms that grammatical functions and informational functions are not identical: theme–rheme–focus relations depend on speaker intention, contextual presuppositions, genre constraints, and addressee-oriented strategies of information packaging. Uzbek makes these relations particularly observable due to its morphological marking and its flexible constituent order, which allow speakers to shift communicative prominence without destroying grammatical well-formedness.

The most promising directions for further research include genre-based and corpus-based studies of theme–rheme strategies, a systematic account of the prosody–punctuation–syntax interface in focus marking, and empirically grounded analyses of how particles and topic markers contribute to focus semantics. Advancing research in these directions will strengthen “communication grammar” as a methodological framework for Uzbek and will provide concrete benefits for teaching academic writing, improving translation quality, and developing speech culture competencies.



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