

L'italiano: una lingua esocentrica.
Osservazioni lessicali e testuali in un'ottica tipologico-comparativa

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Abstract

This paper presents a typological description of Italian as an “exocentric” language. The terms “exocentric” and “endocentric” languages, suggested by the Danish research group TYPOlex, are based on lexicalisation patterns, i.e. on the semantic components that each language codes into its nouns and verbs. In Italian (and the other Romance languages), nouns carry a particular semantic weight and “precision” due to the lexicalisation of the component FIGURE, whereas in the Germanic languages verbs are more semantically precise due to the lexicalisation of the component MANNER. This provides a higher information concentration in the Germanic verb, i.e. in the centre of the Germanic sentence, hence the term “endocentric”, and in the nominal arguments in the Romance sentence, i.e. outside the sentence centre, hence “exocentric” languages. The paper focuses on the text structure implications of these differences. Romance verbs, which due to the typical lack of the component MANNER often have an abstract and hyperonymic meaning, are more easily confined to pragmatic and/or narrative background usages, as “frames” for foregrounded actions and activities. This causes a more hierarchized and complex Italian text structure compared e.g. with endocentric Danish, where the concrete MANNER verbs tend to remain in the narrative and/or pragmatic foreground and therefore entail text sequences of a more linear and syntactically simple structure.