

40. Unity and Coherence of Texts

Lecturer: Dr. Sebastian Götz

Prof. Dr. Uwe Aßmann
Softwaretechnologie
Fakultät Informatik

Technische Universität Dresden

17. Mai 2017

[http://st.inf.tu-
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- 1) Unity and Coherence
- 2) Links for Coherence
- 3) Micro-order Patterns for Coherence



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References

- ▶ [Heff] James A. W. Heffernan, John E. Lincoln, Janet Atwill. Writing – A College Handbook. W. W. Norton & Company.
- ▶ [Bünting] Karl-Dieter Bünting. Axel Bitterlich, Ulrike Pospiech. Schreiben im Studium. Ein Trainingsprogramm. Cornelsen-Scriptor. (Check out the edition of 1996)
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40.1. Unity and Coherence



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Structuring for Unity and Coherence

- ▶ For a good text, talk or presentation of any kind, two principles are very important: **unity** and **coherence**.
- ▶ They can be achieved by structuring a line of thoughts according to some basic principles
- ▶ From the structure that exposes unity and coherence, “whole” and coherent texts can be written


When is a text nice to read? well structured? convincing?



Unity and Coherence, Two Related Concepts


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- ▶ A paragraph has **unity** if all sentences cling together, turn around one central *controlling idea*, a topic, concept, thing, assertion, claim. 

- Unity refers to *togetherness and oneness* [Pelegriano]

To create unity, every sentence of a text block must *remind the reader* of its controlling idea. [Rotter/Berndl]

- ▶ A paragraph is **coherent**, if all sentences are related to each other
 - Be aware: cohesion allows for several main controlling ideas which are related to each other by the text. Coherence may allow for
 - the change of a controlling idea
 - several related controlling ideas 
 - Be aware: both concepts are often intermingled

A text block is coherent, if every sentence returns to one of its (few) thematic strings. [Williams/Colomb Ch. 5]



Unity by Support

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- ▶ Unity by Support: A paragraph has **unity** if all sentences support one central *controlling idea*, a topic, concept, thing, assertion, claim.

To create unity, every sentence of a text block must *support the reader* of its controlling idea (thesis). [Parks]

- ▶ “Unity by support” is a stronger relationship between the paragraph and its controlling idea than “unity by reminding”. It is for argumentative essays, while the latter is also for novels.



Breaks

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- ▶ A sentence **breaks** the unity of a paragraph if it does not remind of the controlling idea.
- ▶ A sentence is **incoherent**, if it does not remind of a previous sentence
- ▶ Breaking and incoherent sentences are called **fat** [King]



40.2 Creating Coherence with Links in Sentences



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- ▶ A **link** is an expression that links a sentence with the previously written.
- ▶ A **vertical link** links a sentence with the point of the paragraph or section and creates the support relation.
 - Vertical links serve *unity*, the linkage with the sentence with its thesis
- ▶ A **horizontal link (chain link)** links a sentence with the previous one and creates the threading relation
 - Horizontal links serve coherence, the linkage with the sentence with its predecessor



Subject Links

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► A **subject link** ties the sentence with the logical subject of the paragraph, or the previous sentence.

Exc.: Subject Links in “Amazing Grace” (John Newton):

Amazing grace, how sweet the sound,
That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now I am found,
Was blind, but now I see.

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
And grace my fears relieved;
How precious did that grace appear,
The hour I first believed!

Through many dangers, toils and snares,
I have already come;
'Twas grace has brought me safe thus far,
And grace will lead me home.



Assessment Link (Commenting Link)

- ▶ An **assessment link** assesses the previous text with a remark on its quality.
- ▶ An assessment link can contain:
 - A personal comment
 - A grading

John Newton's ship almost sank in the storm before Dunegal.

This catastrophic event caused him to change his life.

This arousing day changed the life of John Newton completely.

Whenever John Newton thought back about his life, he could not help but think about **this remarkable moment** in which he decided to change his goals.



Generalization Link

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- ▶ A **generalization link** generalizes the previous text into a more general concept. It is a special form of summary link.

John Newton's ship almost sank in the storm before Dunegal.

This turmoil caused him to change his life.

This turning point changed the life of John Newton completely.

Whenever Johan Newton thought back about his life, he could not help but think about **this moment** in which he decided to change his goals.



Object Links

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- ▶ A subsequent sentence can refer to previously mentioned things as an *summary object with demonstrative particle*:

John and Mary had married on Thanksgiving day. The financial authorities, however, who taxed *this freshly married couple* a year later, could not believe *their* wedding date and moved it to the month's first day.



Repetition Link

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- ▶ [Ross Section 3]
- ▶ A **repetition link** repeats a word, fragment, or phrase from the previous text. Repetition and subject links are related, of course.
 - In China, where surnames have been in use far longer than in most other places, their paucity has become *acute*. To get an idea of *how acute*, think that a surname usually consists only of one syllable. [after Ross]
- ▶ A **Question link** takes up the previous and turns it into a question.
 - In China, where surnames have been in use far longer than in most other places, their paucity has become *acute*. *How acute?* A surname usually consists only of one syllable. [after Ross]
- ▶ **Q+A link**
 - Ms Angela Merkel has managed to keep the Euro countries together. *How did she do that?* *Several times, she showed an attitude that supported the poor countries by large loan packages.*



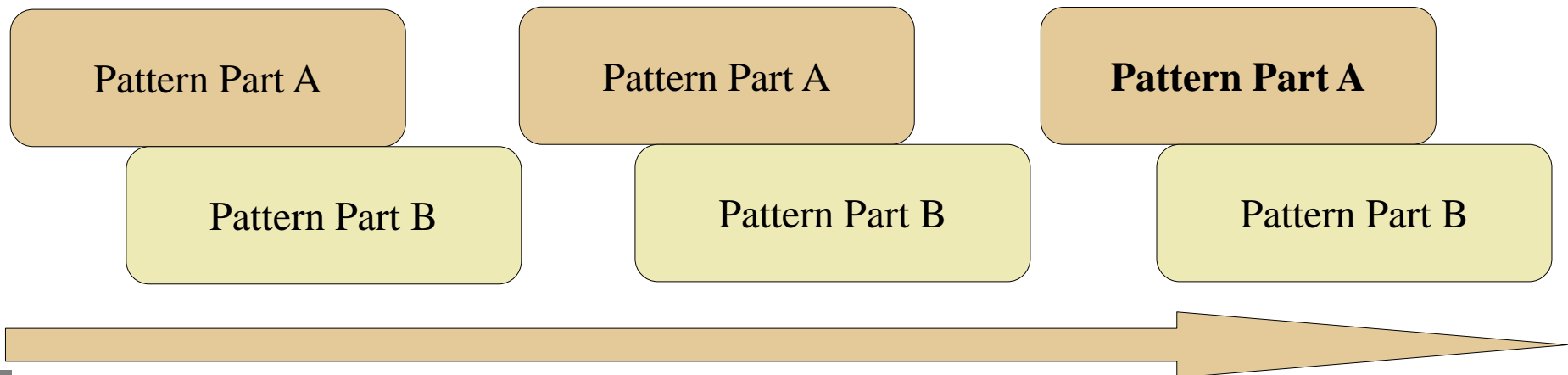
40.3 Microorder Patterns in Sentences for Microthreading and Thematic Strings

Microorder Patterns use horizontal and vertical links to remind readers on OLD material he knows already – to distinguish it from NEW material



Microorder Pattern are Based on Parallelism in Sentences

- ▶ Two subsequent sentences are called **(structurally or semantically) parallel**, if they show the same *structural or semantical pattern (microorder pattern)*.
 - In both sentences, something must match *pattern A*, then something must be *pattern B*.
- ▶ A **sentence chain** uses a **microorder pattern** for sentence parallelism.
- ▶ Semantical Microorder Patterns: Given2New, TopicFirst, StressLast,
- ▶ Structural Microorder Patterns: Syntactic parallelism, step-up whalebone, step-down whalebone

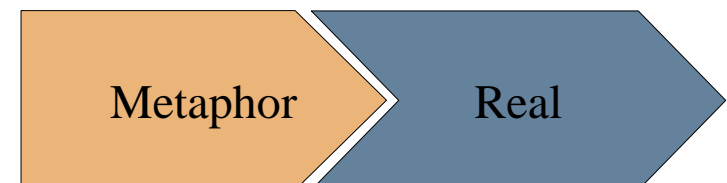
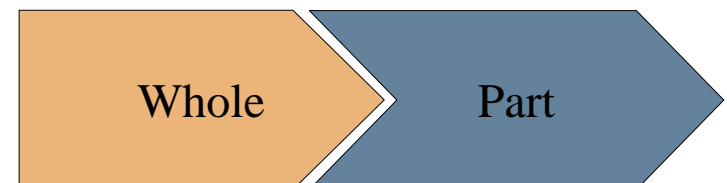
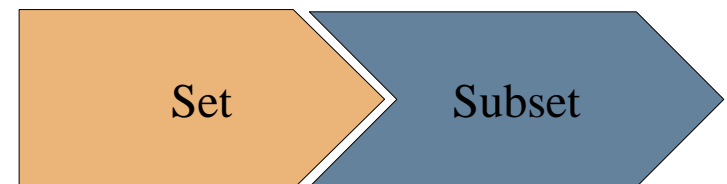
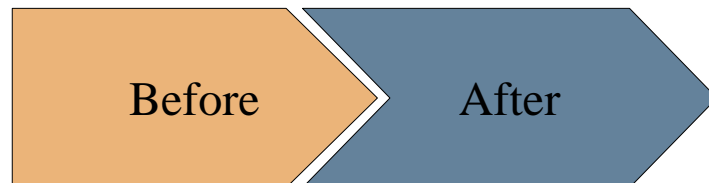
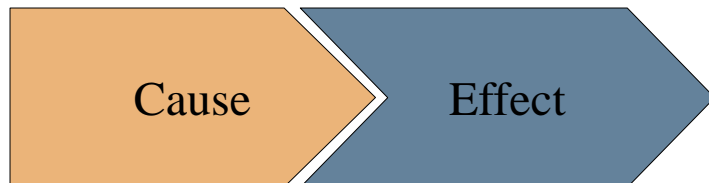
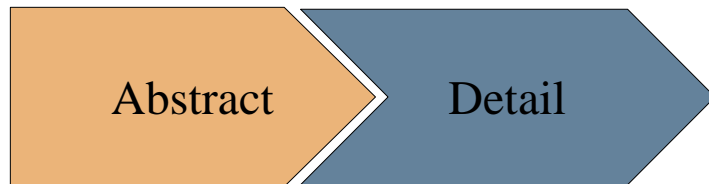
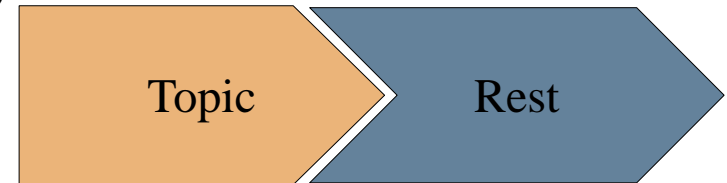
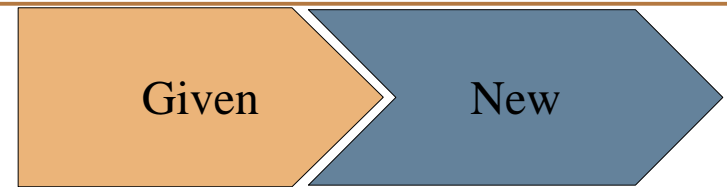


Other Microorder Patterns

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- ▶ Other chain patterns stem from general modeling relations (i.e., a world ontology)
- ▶ One can apply chain patterns to link sentences, or chains of sentences.

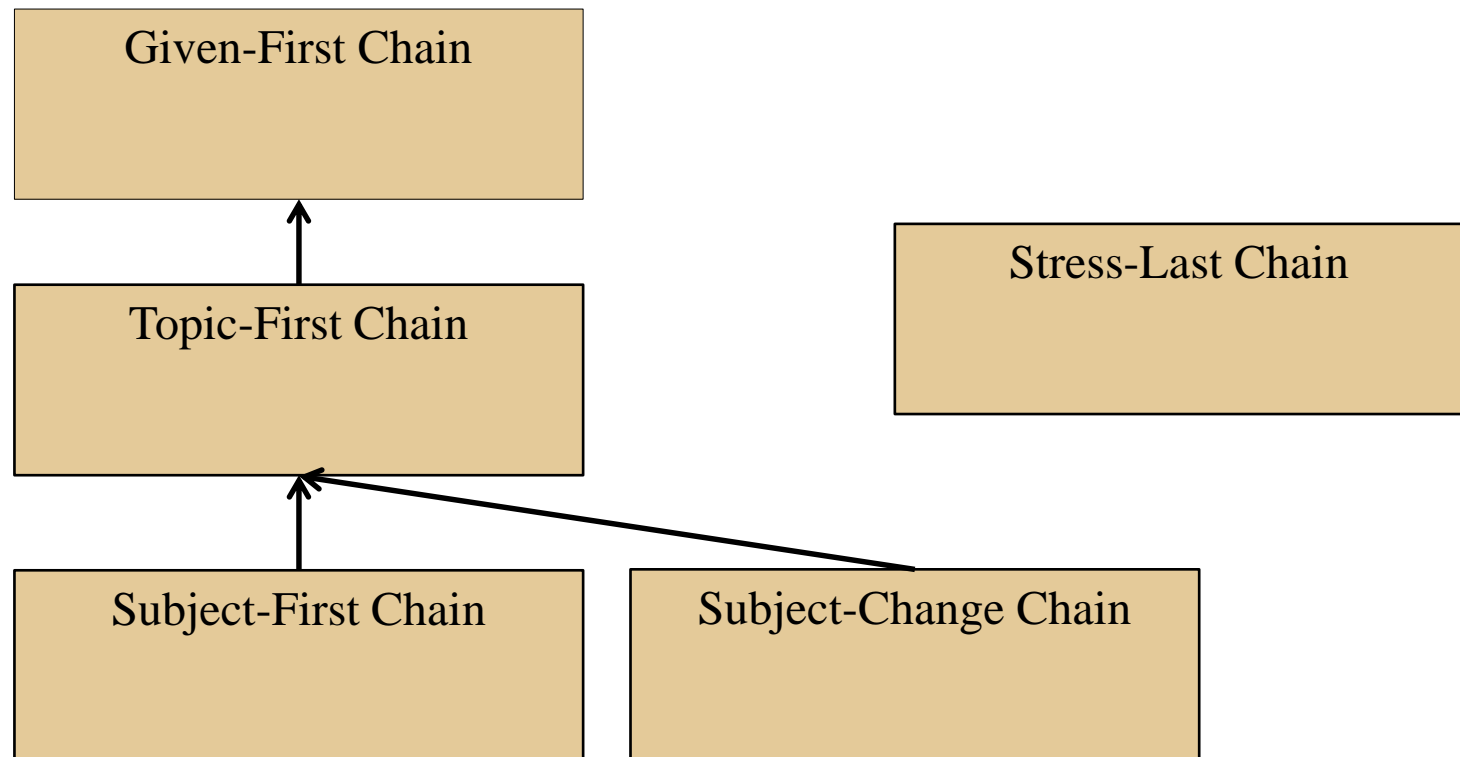


Microorder Pattern Combined with Sentence Chains

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- ▶ Threadings can be based on global threading schemes, but also on micropatterns.
- ▶ A microorder pattern can be combined with a **sentence chain** and serves for strong coherence



40.3.1 Microorder Pattern „Given-First“ (Given2New, Old2New)

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- ▶ [BCW] [Turner] *Old information is introduced at the beginning of a sentence or complex sentence by references and vertical links to the previous text (subject links, summary links, commenting links, etc.)*
 - Given2New uses Links in the Old part
- ▶ Don't reverse this pattern, because otherwise readers feel puzzled, or bored (if the OLD is repeated in vain or appears too late)
- ▶ Horizontal Links support Given-First.

Given (Known,
Old)

• New (Unknown)

Good:

John Newton's ship almost sank in the storm before Dunegal. **This turmoil** caused John Newton to change his life.

Bad:

John Newton's ship almost sank in the storm before Dunegal. John Newton decided to change his life **because of this turmoil.**

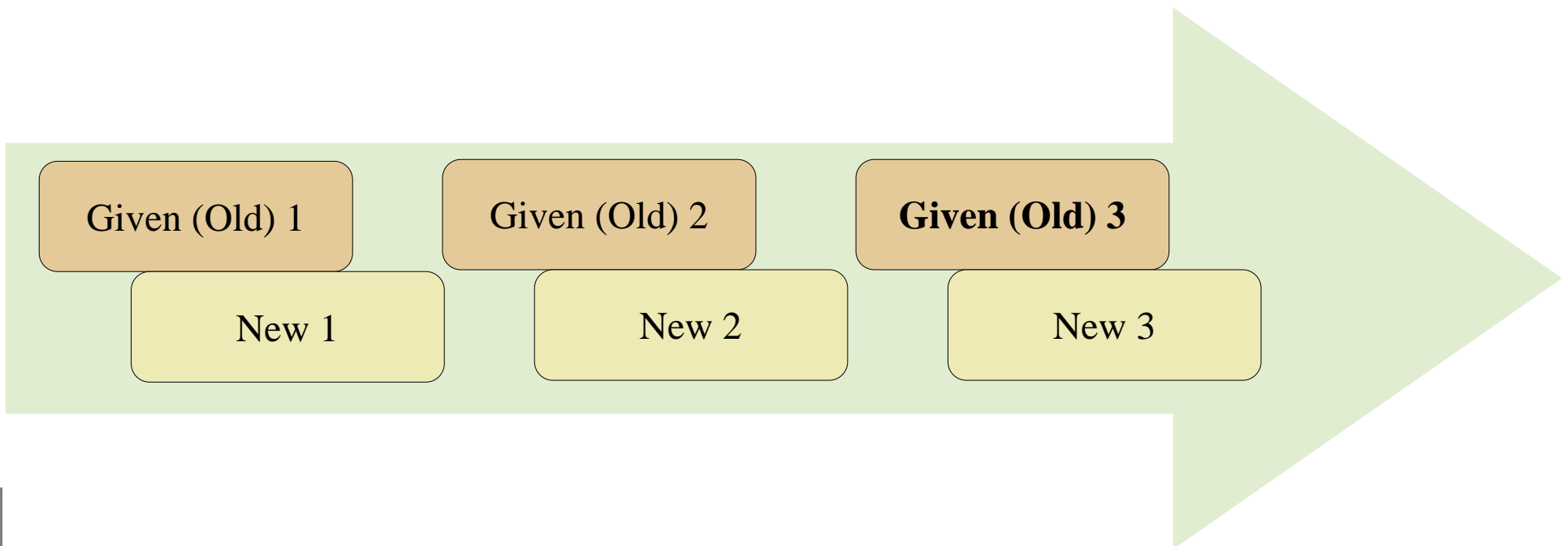


Given-To-New Chain

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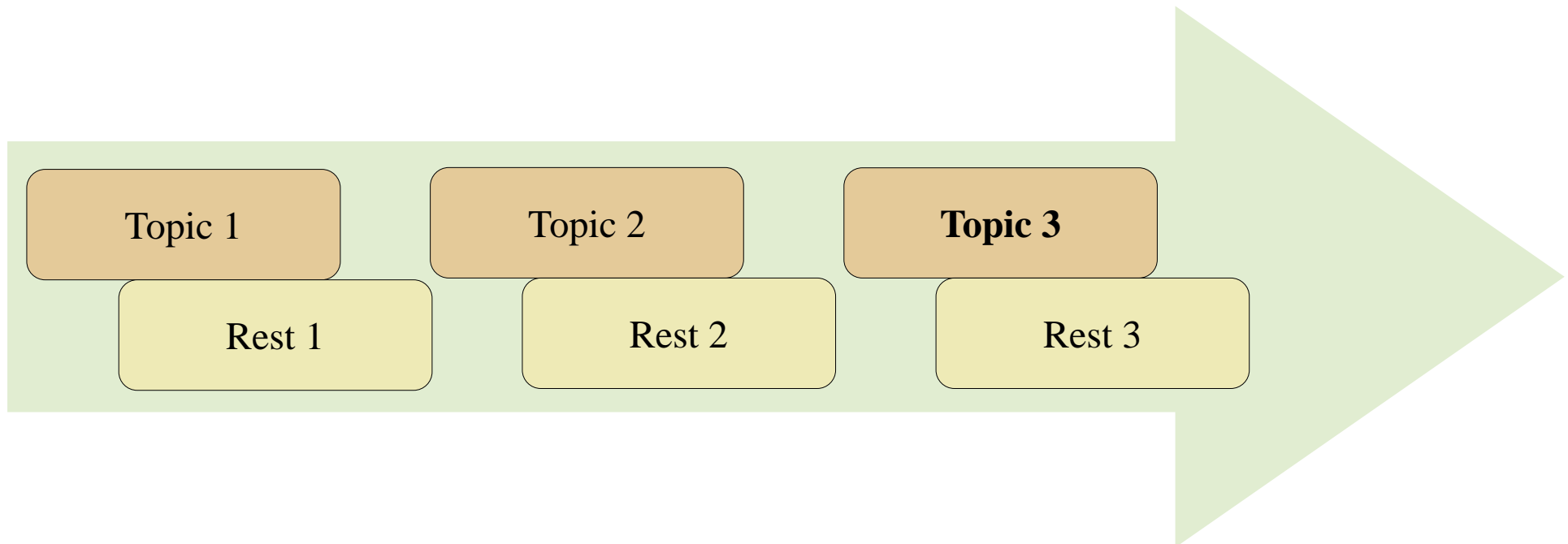
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- ▶ The **Given-To-New chain** builds on the micropattern GivenToNew, and applies it to the sentence chain of a paragraph [WiCo]
 - The chain uses horizontal links in the Old part (summary links, commenting links, subject links, etc.)
- ▶ Old things first, new things later:
 - Starting from a given information A, often represented by a link, new info B is introduced later in a sentence
 - Then the information B is taken as given, and used to introduce a new information C.



40.3.2. TopicFirst Chain

- ▶ This chain specializes the Given2New chain. It builds on the micropattern TopicFirst and chains it over a paragraph [Williams, Ch. Cohesion]
- ▶ Topics first, rest later: Start every sentence with a reference T:i to an already known topic T
 - The T:i must appear in the first words of the sentence
 - The topic is the “Old” part and forms a link



Topic-Chain Analysis (Slicing)

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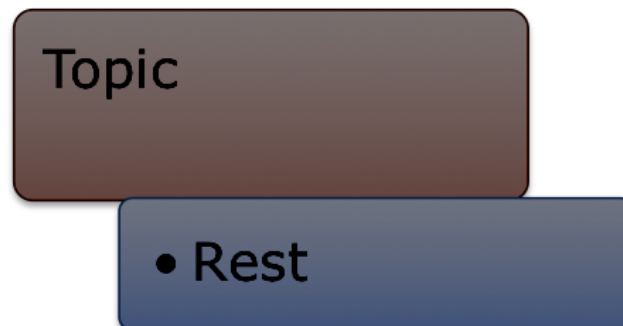
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- ▶ In a paragraph, underline in each sentence the first 5-7 words
- ▶ Read this slice loud
- ▶ If you find a sentence not sticking to the topic, revise it.



40.3.3 Microorder Pattern „TopicFirst“

- ▶ This Microorder Pattern *TopicFirst* is a special Given2New pattern that helps to orient the reader early in reading a sentence [Williams-Colomb, Ch. Cohesion]
- ▶ **In a sentence: Topic first, rest later:** The first words of a sentence are decisive: begin it well-connected with the thesis, and the rest will be ok.
 - Start it with the topic chaining it to the previous, linking it into the support or threading relation
 - This Microorder Pattern supports also Given2New
- ▶ The Microorder Pattern allows for diversion in texts, but always returns to the central controlling idea
- ▶ TopicFirst subsumes Given2New, because the topic is well-known



Topic Strings, Thematic Chains

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- ▶ **Thematic strings (topic strings)** result from a chain of Microorder Patterns.
 - For example, repetitors or Given2New patterns can be used to chain sentences together
- ▶ The process of **microthreading**, writing a sequence of coherent sentences, is supported by using Microorder Patterns.

The secret to a clear and readable style is in the first five or six words of every sentence. At the beginning of every sentence, locate your reader in familiar territory; at the beginning of a series of sentences, create for your reader a reasonably consistent point of view, a *consistent topic string*. [WiCo Chap. 3]



40.3.4 Microorder Pattern „StressLast“ („The stitch is in the end“)

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- ▶ This Microorder Pattern *StressLast* helps to create an impression in the reader while reading a sentence [WiCo, Ch. Emphasis]
- ▶ **In a sentence: Stress last:** The last words of a sentence can be used to express stress
 - Show a surprise in the end of the sentence
 - Show the most important thing in the end of the sentence
 - Show the message of a sentence in the end of the sentence
 - Set a Link in Anything part
- ▶ **Stress isolation refactoring:** Break sentences, extract important things, isolate them, move them, rearrange sentences
- ▶ The Microorder Pattern is related to Given2New, *because it is assumed that stress is new (unknown).*

Anything

• Stress

„When you put your most important ideas in the middle of a long sentence, the sentence will swallow them up.“ [WiCo]

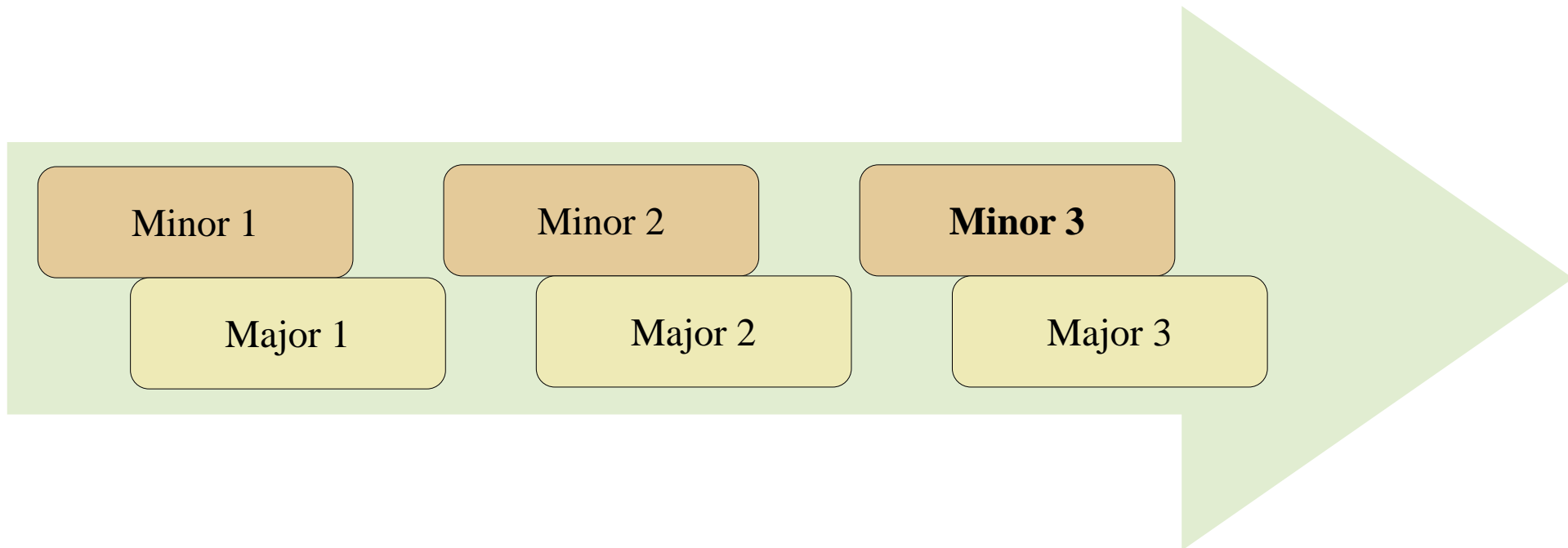


Stress-Last Sentence Chain

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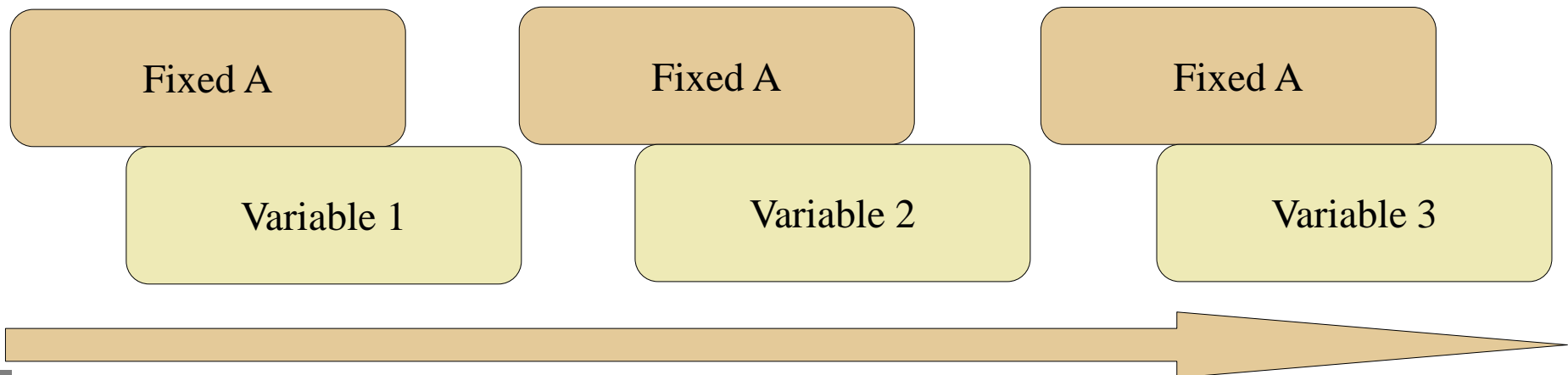
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- ▶ This chain builds on the micropattern StressLast, and chains it over a paragraph
 - Stress is placed to the end of the sentences



40.3.5. Microorder Pattern “Fixed-First (Syntactic Parallelism)”

- ▶ Two subsequent sentences are called **(syntactically) parallel**, if they share a common first part.
- Something must be *variable (hook)*, something must be *fixed (template)*. The variable must be filled with a fragment to generate the parallel sentences



Syntactic Parallelism in Speech is Powerful

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- ▶ End a speech with a parallelism, to achieve an impact.
- ▶ Martin Luther King “I have a dream”, 1963.
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/3170387.stm>

“And so let freedom ring from the prodigious hilltops of New Hampshire.

Let freedom ring from the mighty mountains of New York.

Let freedom ring from the heightening Alleghenies of Pennsylvania!

Let freedom ring from the snow-capped Rockies of Colorado.

Let freedom ring from the curvaceous peaks of California.

But not only that.

Let freedom ring from Stone Mountain of Georgia.

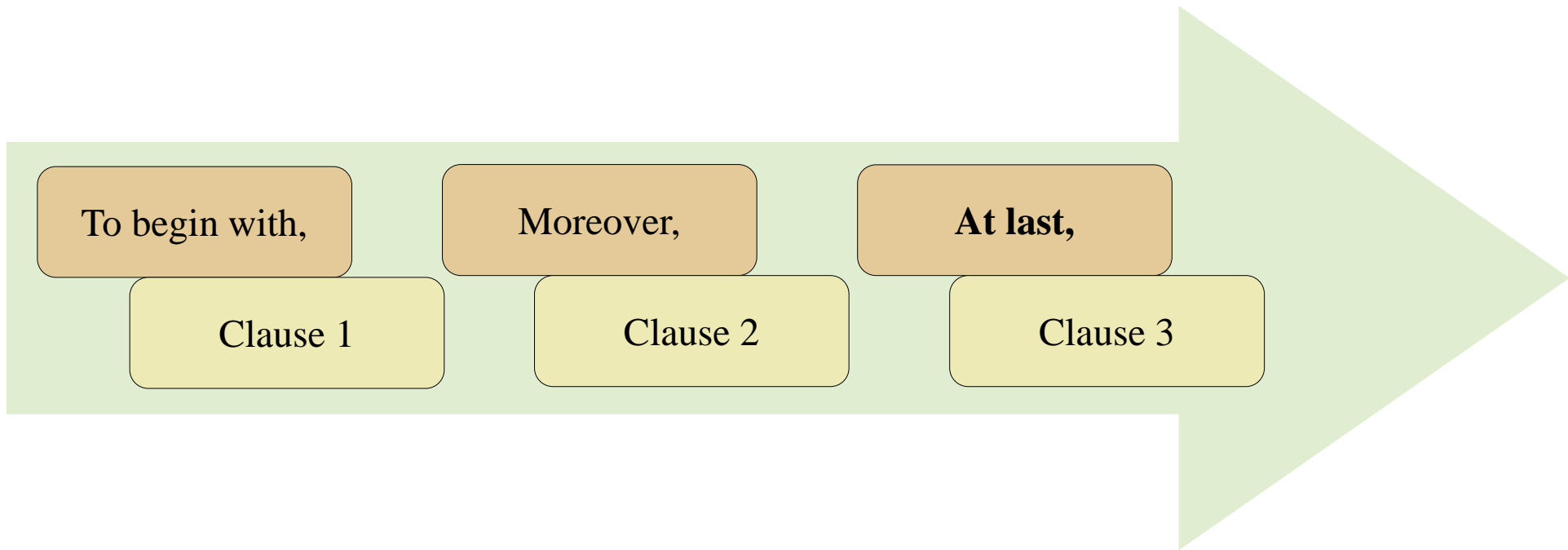
Let freedom ring from Lookout Mountain of Tennessee.

Let freedom ring from every hill and every molehill of Mississippi, from every mountainside, let freedom ring!”



40.3.6 Microthreading Pattern „Explicit Sequence“

- ▶ An enumeration can be defined by adding horizontal links for sequence markers (enumeration markers) to the text [Ross]:
- ▶ A **start marker** marks the first element of a sequence (enumeration)
 - To begin with, First, Initially, As a basis,
- ▶ A **middle marker** marks middle elements. It may also introduce repetitions.
 - Moreover, Likewise, Furthermore,
- ▶ A **concluding marker** marks final elements
 - Finally, At last,



40.3.7 Comparison and Contrast - Micro-ordering of Arguments

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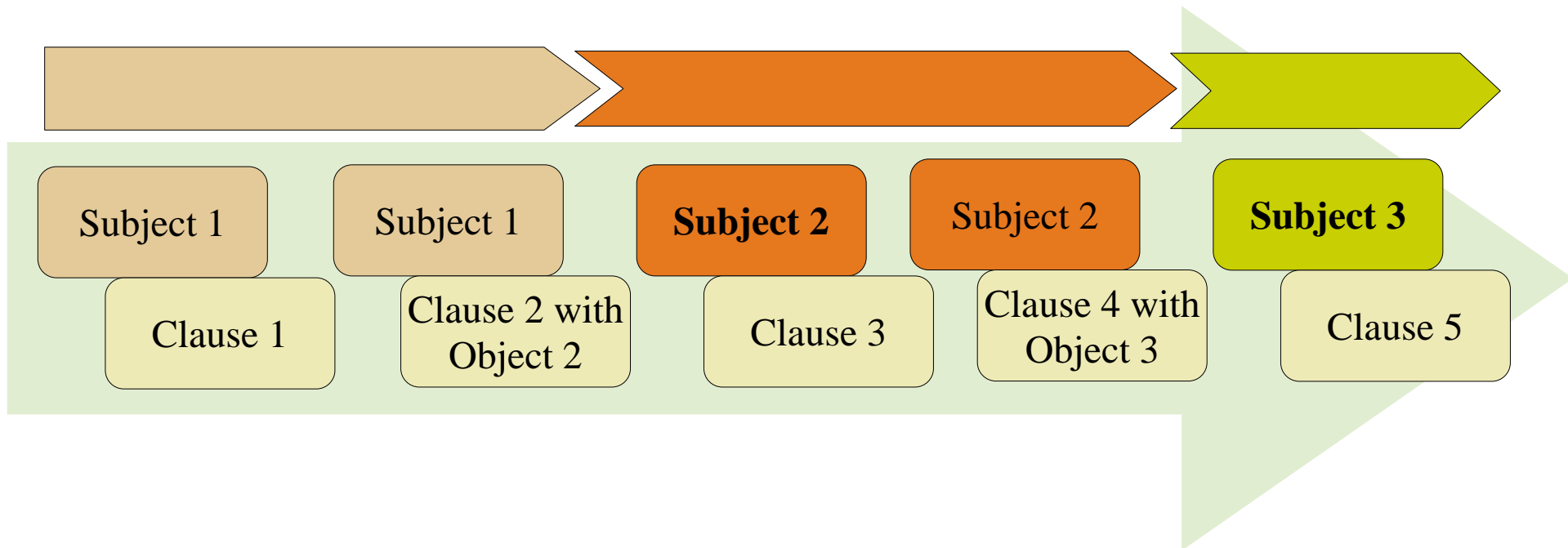
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- ▶ Microthreading can use stereotypical multi-sentence patterns with modifiers which link larger groups of sentences
- ▶ Comparison and contrast:
 - On the one hand, ... On the other hand, ...
 - One could say that... More important is, however, Alas, the primary reason is...



40.3.8 SubjectChange-Chain with Subject Links

- ▶ In a chain of subject links, subjects can be changed from sentence to sentence
- ▶ By changing an object of the later clause to be the subject of the next sentence, a new „controlling“ subject or concept can be introduced.
- ▶ In a third sentence, a third subject may be introduced



Why Use Microorder Patterns?

- ▶ Microorder Patterns are very important for **creating coherence**.
 - With Microorder Patterns, you create a rhythm for a sequence of sentences
- ▶ If your text reads boring,
- ▶ 1) Check whether you violated in your sentences the principles
 - Given2New
 - StressLast
 - TopicFirst
 - SyntacticParallelism
- ▶ 2) Did you use parallelism?
- ▶ 3) Did you use interruptions with background framing?
- ▶ 4) Can you insert repetitors?

