

Examples of end-weight in Obama and Trump

The principle of end-weight is one of the features of English that characterizes eloquent speech, and both Obama and Trump respect it. They keep their grammatical subjects (underlined below) short, and put the verbs early in the clause. This makes utterances much easier for listeners to process, as will be immediately apparent if the following pairs are read aloud. There is greater rhythmicity in the A examples and less abruptness in the sentence endings.

Obama

A It grew strength from the young people who rejected the myth of their generation's apathy.

not

B The young people who rejected the myth of their generation's apathy gave it strength.

Trump

A We will be protected by the great men and women of our military and law enforcement.

not

B The great men and women of our military and law enforcement will protect us.

End-weight also applies to triples and lists: either the number of words increases, or the number of syllables, or both:

Obama

... how they'll make the mortgage or pay their doctors' bills or save enough for their child's college education

[3 words, 4 syllables + 4 words, 5 syllables + 7 words, 12 syllables]

Trump

... every decision on trade, on taxes, on immigration, on foreign affairs

[2 words, 2 syllables + 2 words, 3 syllables + 2 words, 5 syllables + 3 words, 5 syllables]