

Some Variations in Theme Across Languages

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Abstract

This paper discusses variations in how clauses are organised across diverse languages, including Chinese, French, Gaelic, German, Japanese, Pitjantjatjara, Tagalog and Vietnamese, from the perspectives of discourse functions and the grammatical strategies that realise these functions. The discussion is based on comparative text analyses, and informed by profiles of the grammars of these languages by researchers using tools of systemic functional linguistics (SFL). This work is collected in the volume *Language Typology: a functional perspective* (Caffarel & Martin, eds.). Amongst other valuable outcomes, the grammatical profiles and text analyses in this book give us unique opportunities to examine how different languages present clauses as messages, and how the textual organisation of clauses contributes to the organisation of discourse. This paper compares some of these textual resources, focusing on the functions of Theme in discourse.

In the following sections, five inter-related issues arising from variation in textual organisation are discussed. To begin with we identify functions of clause Themes, in setting up a 'local context' for the listener to interpret the meanings presented in a clause, demonstrated with clause examples from various languages. Secondly we outline motivations for variation in Themes from beyond the clause, in discourse functions that are in turn motivated by systematic variations in social context, illustrated with text samples from one language, Pitjantjatjara. This discussion opens up the question of what elements can be included in a clause Theme, so that in the third section we look at how various languages define the boundary between Themes and the remainder of the clause (Rheme), illustrated with text samples from English, Japanese and French. This discussion is then extended to languages sometimes classified as 'verb-initial', to interpret which elements we can include in a Theme analysis, exemplified with texts in Tagalog and Gaelic. Through these four sections, a picture emerges of interactions in discourse between clause Themes and identification of participants (people and things) through a text. This is continued in section five with a look at relations between Theme and 'definiteness' in various languages, illustrated with texts from Vietnamese and Chinese. While considerable variation is shown between languages in the textual organisation of clauses, one finding that emerges from these contrastive text analyses is the degree of clause variation within languages, motivated by discourse functions that are comparable between languages.

1. Functional motivations for Theme variation

Variation between languages in the textual organisation of clauses has been studied from various perspectives over the years. Across the literature, as much variety may be found in what counts as evidence and argumentation, as is found in features of the languages described. One starting point for analysis has flowed from the traditional view of 'word order' as an arbitrary feature of clause structure in certain languages that were held to have 'fixed word order'. English clauses, for example, were considered to be fixed as 'SVO', an assumption challenged comprehensively by Halliday as early as 1967 in his *Notes in Transitivity and Theme in English 1 & 2*. Other languages were held to be 'free word order', so that Dixon, a leading authority on Australian languages, believed that "The order of words and phrases can, in most Australian languages, be extraordinarily free; it has little or no grammatical significance" (1980: 441), a claim challenged from discourse evidence by Kilham (1977), Heath (1984), McGregor (1990), Bowe (1990) and Rose (in press a & b). Despite such evidence, the assumption of a semantically arbitrary basis for textual organisation has been remarkably tenacious, and traditional discovery methods such as elicitation and constructed examples have seemed to

support it. Hale (1983) and Blake (1983), for example, found that the Australian languages Warlpiri and Kalkutungu were ‘free word order’ languages, by testing various permutations of a five word sentence on their informants. Of course the meanings they were testing for were not textual but experiential, since they were not working with a model of textual meaning, so such apparently empirical hypothesis testing was self-fulfilling.

Other typological work has recognised that variation in textual organisation of clauses can be functionally motivated, while continuing to classify languages according to their ‘syntactically basic word order’ (eg. Chafe 1976, Keenan 1976, Schachter 1977, Comrie 1981, 1990a&b, Givon 1983, Mithun 1992). This ‘basic order’ may be rendered as a formula, such as “TOPIC [S FOCUS [...VERB] ANTI-TOPIC]” (Bowe 1990: viii, for the Australian language Pitjantjatjara), meaning that the function ‘topic’ is the obligatory element in a clause, and may be followed by a ‘focus’ element, which may be followed by a verb (and other elements), which may be followed by a further element related to the ‘topic’. This descriptive device reduces the textual structure potential of clauses in a language to a mathematic-like formula, which can be classified against similar formulae for other languages, to arrive at language typologies. While variation within each language may be motivated, in this view, by discourse ‘pragmatics’, the essential order appears to vary arbitrarily between languages. The evidence used to arrive at the ‘basic order’ for a language includes elicited and constructed clause examples, as with earlier approaches, but increasingly includes discourse samples, often from text corpora. However, the most highly valued analytic method applied to discourse samples tends to be statistical frequency of various clause forms, in contrast to semantic interpretation of functions in unfolding discourse. So the primary focus of study in this perspective often remains the forms of clauses over discourse functions.

A third approach has been developed in systemic functional linguistics, most notably by Halliday, who proposes three general functions for clauses - as a representation of experience, as a move in an interpersonal exchange, and as a message that phases together experiential and interpersonal meanings. For Halliday the clause as message is organised as a configuration of Theme and Rheme, terms inherited from the work of the Prague School (Mathesius 1975). Halliday defines Theme as “the starting point for the message... the ground from which the message is taking off” (1994: 38). A clause Theme in this formulation includes the notion of ‘topic’ as one (experiential) component, the ‘topical Theme’, but also potentially includes an ‘interpersonal Theme’ and a ‘textual Theme’. The motivation for such functional diversity of Themes is suggested in Matthiessen’s characterisation of Theme as “the resource for setting up the local context or local semiotic environment in

which each clause is to be interpreted” (1995: 413). This view assumes a discourse function for each clause Theme, to contextualise the message in relation to the preceding text, or the context of speaking, together with a local function, to predict how the listener (or reader) is to interpret the message. This is consistent with the role of the textual metafunction of language, to organise interaction and representation as discourse that is meaningful in social context. In Halliday’s metafunctional model, each Theme contextualises its message in three possible dimensions:

- discourse - how the message is logically related to preceding messages, by means of conjunctions and continuatives;
- the interaction - the speakers’ relationship, their assessments of the message, or which move in the exchange is being enacted - giving or demanding, by means such as vocatives, modal adjuncts, wh-elements and finite verbs;
- the field of activity - the identity and role of key participants (person or thing), the process they are involved in, or associated circumstances such as places, times or qualities.

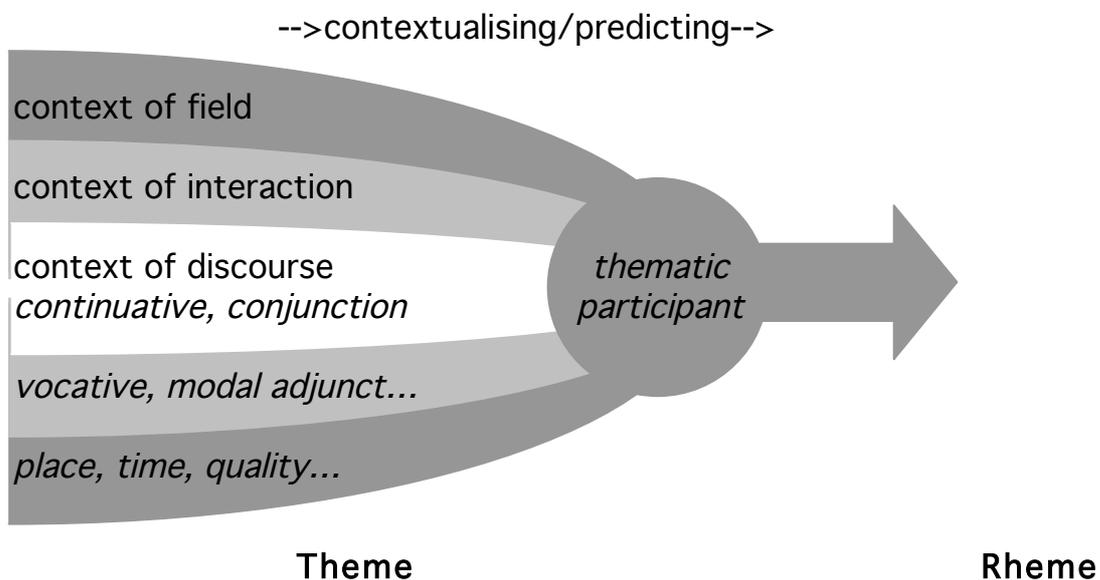
Halliday is cautious not to assume that all languages must organise clauses as messages, or organise messages as configurations of Theme and Rheme, and still less to realise such a configuration by the strategy of sequencing found in English and many other languages.¹ Tagalog, for example, realises topical Theme not by sequencing but by morphology, ie. a nominal adposition or special pronoun form (Martin in press). But Halliday does suggest that sequencing is likely to be a natural strategy for this textual function.

...if in any given language the message is organized as a Theme - Rheme structure, and if this structure is expressed by the sequence in which the elements occur in the clause, it seems natural that the position for the Theme should be at the beginning [of the clause], rather than at the end or at some other specific point (1994: 38).

Where a message must be contextualised in two or more functional dimensions simultaneously, the resulting competition for thematic status may be resolved by strategies of sequencing of functional elements. Across languages, such multiple Themes tend to be sequenced metafunctionally, from textual to interpersonal to experiential elements. Firstly the context of discourse may be initially thematised by speaking the textual elements (conjunctions and continuatives) in obligatory first position, since these elements relate the message to the immediate context of the preceding clause. Second tend to come interpersonal elements, which serve to relate the message to the wider context of the interaction, and so tend to follow the textual elements. Thirdly the

context of field is wider still in two senses: (1) in the staging of sequences, in terms of time, place, quality or other circumstance, and (2) in the identities of key participants that are presented, tracked and switched through a text. In many registers these identities tend to be the most consistent elements of Themes; as a text unfolds they are presented to the listener as the speaker's continuous perspective on the field. It is because they are the most frequent topical Themes that the more formally oriented approaches discussed above interpret such elements as obligatory 'topic' (eg. Givon 1983). These patterns of contextualisation as Theme are schematised in Figure 1, in which the context of discourse is construed as narrowest, that of interaction as wider, and that of field as widest, with the thematic participant as most probable Theme.

Figure 1: Metafunctional contexts and thematic elements



The following examples of multiple Themes illustrate sequences of textual, interpersonal and topical elements in various languages. Themes are underlined, and the type of Theme element (textual, interpersonal or topical Theme) is given below. Some examples include pairs of clauses to show the context for Themes, numbered as 1 and 2. Examples that are not contiguous are numbered a and b.

1 French (from Caffarel in press)

1 Vraiment, c' est une fille bizarre,
Really, she is a strange girl

interperson.	top. Th.
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+2 mais, probablement toutes les filles ont des idées pas ordinaires
but probably all girls have funny ideas

textual	interperson.	topical Theme
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2 Tagalog (Martin in press)

1 Nakaka-ramdam na ng gutom si Brigitte
is feeling already hunger T/Brigitte

top. Theme

'Brigitte is already feeling hungry

+2 pero hindi siya makadaing
but neg. T/she able to complain

textual	interperson.	top. Theme
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but she can't complain.'

3 Pitjantjatjara (Rose in press)

ka kunyu wati kutju-ngku tili wirutjara-ngka nyina-ngi
and reportedly only one man with good brands was sitting

textual	interperson.	topical Theme
---------	--------------	---------------

And apparently there was only one man who had good firebrands.

4 Vietnamese (Thai in press)

the roi may man thay no gap lai nguoi ban cu
then fortunately he meet again friend old

textual	interperson.	top.
---------	--------------	------

Then fortunately he met his old friend again.

5 Japanese (Teruya in press)

a Konotame, gensi-no situryoo-wa kazu-no wa-ni yotte hobo kimaru.
because of this atomic-NO mass-WA by no.-NO total-NI almost decided

textual	topical Theme
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Because of this, the atomic mass is measured according to the total number.

b Akireta, <<uso-ga uso-de, nani-ga honto-ka>>-mo wakatte nai-no-ne.
amazed lie-GA lie what-GA true-KA-MO don't know-NO-NE

interperson.	top. Theme
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Amazing, you don't even know lies are lies, and what is true.

For German, Steiner & Teich (in press) report that, "As for multiple Themes, they cannot cover all three metafunctional types, largely because of the strong preference for second position of the finite verb in German main clauses". In the terms developed here, competition for thematisation may be too dense to include both textual and interpersonal Themes where a finite verb must also be thematised. The same may also be the case for Gaelic, in which almost every clause begins with a verb.

6 German (Steiner & Teich in press)

- a Also, und deshalb habe ich ihn nicht eingeladen.
Well, and therefore have I him not invited.

textual	top. Theme
---------	------------

Well, and therefore I didn't invite him.

- b Freunde, vielleicht habt ihr das Problem bald gelöst.
Friends, perhaps have you the problem soon solved.

interpersonal	top. Theme
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Friends, perhaps you will have solved the problem soon.

7 Scots Gaelic (McDonald pers. comm.)

- 1 chan eil fhios agamsa.
NEG be+PRES+DEP knowledge at-me+EMPH

interperson.	topical Theme
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I don't know,

- +2 ach tha gobhar dhubh ann am Bun Ruaidh,
but be+PRES+IND goat black+FEM in Bun Roy

textual	topical Theme
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but there's a black goat in Bun Roy.

The ordering of thematic elements is thus generally textual -> interpersonal -> topical Theme. Where a clause has a Theme at all it must include a topical Theme, but textual and interpersonal Themes are optional.² The most likely topical Theme is a participant. Depending on the language, the most typical participant Theme may be an active experiential role, such as actor, or in languages like English it may be the 'Subject', which plays a role in the mood structure of the clause (Halliday 1994). Where a circumstance, such as a place or time, comes first, it may be marked as Theme, and so be used to signal new stages in a sequence of events.

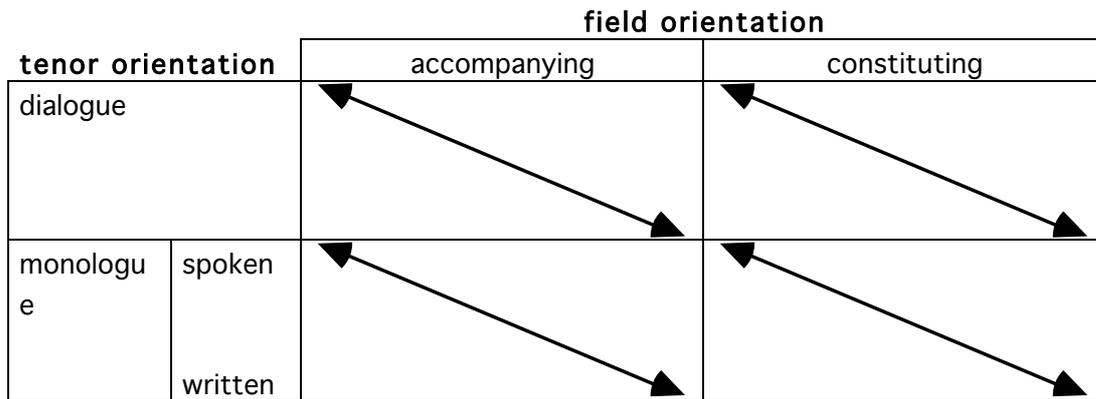
However it should be noted that there are many important exceptions to some of these general patterns. For example, interpersonal elements often come last in Chinese and Japanese, and in Korean conjunctions come last in a preceding clause rather than first in a following clause. Furthermore, another strategy to resolve structural competition between functions is to conflate them in a single element, and languages vary greatly in how they do this. For example, some languages conflate participant identities with verb inflections, and so present the process first. Others conflate identities with conjunctions, to indicate whether the participant is the same or 'switched' from the preceding clause. However the type of sequencing illustrated above appears to be a common principle for resolving metafunctional pressures for thematisation.

2. Contextual motivations for Theme variation

Research in the SFL tradition is grounded in a functional view of textual variation, that the organisation of clauses realises systematic variations in textual functions in discourse. Such a discourse semantic perspective is taken by Martin (1983) in a comparative study of participant identification in English, Tagalog, and the Papuan language Kâte (following Gleason 1968), which he found to be “functionally related in terms of the discourse tasks accomplished, at the same time as grammatically divergent in terms of the way they are coded”. This is also the approach to contrastive analysis in the paper here; variations in the textual organisation of clauses are interpreted as strategies for organising discourse in various types of social contexts. Discourse analysis in this tradition is framed within a model of social context. This model enables us to sample texts that are representative of the type of context they realise, and so describe contextual motivations for the discourse patterns we find in them.

The textual organisation of discourse tends to realise variations in the dimension of social context that Halliday terms ‘mode’. Some general criteria for sampling mode variation are given by Halliday in his (1989: 12) definition of mode as “what part language is playing, what it is that the participants are expecting language to do for them in the situation: the symbolic organisation of the text, the status that it has, and its function in the context”. Martin (1992a: 509-10) more specifically proposes that, as the textual metafunction phases interpersonal and ideational meanings together as cohesive, coherent text, it realises variables in mode that are oriented to either the tenor or the field of the situation; that is the ‘part language is playing’ is both to enact social relationships as interaction, and to construe a field of social action. From the perspective of tenor, the most general variations in mode are between dialogue or monologue, and within monologue between spoken or written modes. From the perspective of field, the mode of a text is most generally either language-in-action (accompanying the field of action, such as directions or sports commentaries) or language-as-reflection (constituting its own field, such as stories, explanations, reports and so on). Options in these two metafunctionally oriented dimensions give the general categories illustrated in Figure 1. Arrows in the figure indicate that within the general categories, potential variations in mode are considerable; texts may be more less field accompanying or field constituting, and more or less dialogic or monologic, spoken or written.

Figure 1: Metafunctionally oriented dimensions of mode variation



Using these dimensions of mode variation as a framework, Martin (1992a: 434-448) is able to illustrate the discourse functions of Theme in the method of development of various types of text in English. The term ‘method of development’ was coined by Fries (1981), to describe the role of clause Themes in organising the method in which a text unfolds. Along the field oriented continuum, in the region of language-as-reflection, Martin contrasts written and spoken activity sequences, finding various interactions between Themes and chains of participant identities as a text develops. In spoken stories, topical Themes tend to identify concrete participants (people and things), so the default method of development is to present and track these identities. Marked Themes punctuate this development with circumstances such as time or place, predicting shifts in the identities that interact with Themes. In written texts by contrast, marked Themes are more frequent and the topical Themes in each stage of a sequence are more consistently predicted by ‘hyperThemes’ at paragraph level (‘Topic Sentences’ in traditional school rhetoric), which are in turn predicted by ‘macroThemes’ at text level (‘Introductory Paragraphs’). Along the tenor oriented continuum, towards the dialogic end, Martin illustrates how Themes are used to engage the interactant by means of first and second person pronouns, while monologic texts tend to use third person referents to present and track participant identities through a text sequence.

Contrasts between monologue and dialogue, and between language as action or reflection, are illustrated by choices of Theme in texts 1-4 below, in the Australian language Pitjantjatjara (Rose in press a & b). This is a useful language to begin a typological comparison of textual resources, most generally because Australian languages are often considered to be maximally distant typologically from more familiar Eurasian languages, from which they have diverged for at least 40,000 years, and so form one possible perspective from which to measure functional variation across languages. More specifically Pitjantjatjara is a purely spoken language; although it has been transcribed, a written mode has not evolved in

Pitjantjatjara culture, so its textual resources form a useful point from which to view the development of textual resources in other languages that may or may not have evolved a written mode.

Text 1 below illustrates the tendency in dialogue for the interaction itself to be a point of departure for each move in an exchange, so that Themes tend to include an interpersonal element that precedes the topical Theme. Text 1 is the opening exchange of a dialogue between a younger brother (YB) and elder brother (EB) about to camp for the night. It is a brief example but representative of more general patterns in dialogue. Themes are underlined up to and including the first experiential element.

Text 1

YB kuta ngayulu nyanga-ngka ngari
 elder brother I at here lie-?
 Elder brother, may I lie here?

EB wiya ngura nyaratja tjitji ma-ngari
 no, yon place child, lie apart-!
 No, over there child, lie away from me!

Theme analysis of text 1 is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Themes in text 1

	interpersonal Theme	topical Theme
1	<u>kuta</u> elder brother	<u>ngayulu</u> I
2	<u>wiya</u> no	<u>ngura nyaratja</u> yon place

From the tenor orientation of mode, each move in this exchange is framed by the speakers' relationship: their kinship is close, but their status is unequal. The younger brother's starting point is with the vocation *kuta* 'elder brother', and his elder brother opens with a negation in response *wiya* 'no'. By these means each speaker presents their angle on their relationship as point of departure for their move in the exchange. The younger brother presents his angle as close but deferential with the respectful vocation, and the elder brother presents his angle as close but dominant with the direct negation. From the field perspective, this type of text accompanies the field of action (camping for the night); topical Themes refer exophorically to the situation, firstly with the younger speaker's identity *ngayulu* 'I', and secondly with a location indicated by the elder speaker *ngura nyaratja* 'yon place'.

Like text 1, the following text 2 accompanies rather than constitutes its context, but unlike text 2 it is a monologue rather than a dialogue. In this text the speaker is instructing the addressee in performing a task, digging in the ground for 'honey ants', a species that stores nectar in the

abdomens of selected individuals. Here most topical Themes refer exophorically to places and things in the situation, with some interpersonal Themes.

Text 2

- 1 piruku wati-wani nyangatja
more throw across-! here
Again throw (the earth) over here!
- 2 palatja kura-riya'
that is getting bad
That's no good.
- 3 nya-wa
look-!
- 4 nyangatja wiru-nya
this good
This is good.
- 5 nyaratja -lta nyina-nyi paluru
yonder at that is sitting it
There it is, over there.
- 6 munkarra ma-tjawa
other side dig away-!
On the other side, dig over there.
- 7 nyangatja katja
here son
Here, son!
- 8 tjinguru nyarangka nyina-nyi uril-ta
maybe yonder is sitting on the outside
Maybe it's over there, on the outside.
- 9 uwa ala palatja pala palu-la arka-la
yes 'there you are' at that there try-!
Yes, there you are, try that there!

Theme analysis of text 2 is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Themes in text 2

	interpersonal Theme	topical Theme
1		<i>piruku</i> more
2		<i>palatja</i> that
3		<i>nya-wa</i> look-!
4		<i>nyangatja</i> this
5		<i>nyaratja -lta</i> yonder at that
6		<i>munkarra</i> other side
7		<i>nyangatja</i> this
8	<i>tjinguru</i> maybe	<i>nyarangka</i> yonder
9	<i>uwa ala palatja</i> yes 'there you are'	<i>pala palu-la</i> that there

In text 2 the speaker is less concerned with enacting a relationship than with directing the listener's attention to features of the context in which they are working, by means of demonstrative topical Themes - such as 'this/that/yon' or 'here/there/yonder'. Interpersonal Themes are also oriented to the activity - 'maybe (it is yonder)', 'there you are!'. In sum, texts 1 and 2 illustrate, firstly that dialogic moves tend to open with interpersonal Themes that enact the speakers' relationship, and secondly that topical Themes in field accompanying texts tend to refer exophorically to the situation.

Text 1 was a dialogue that accompanied its field, text 2 a monologue accompanying its field. Text 3 illustrates another possible combination: it is a dialogue, between two sisters, which constitutes rather than accompanies its field. The sisters are negotiating about the younger sister (YS) telling the elder sister (ES) what she has seen. The transcription of text 3 includes foot and tone group boundaries, in order to illustrate the relationship between Theme, rhythm and boundaries between tone groups. Each line in the transcript includes one or more whole tone groups. (Most clauses are spoken on a single tone group in Pitjantjatjara.) Where a tone group boundary falls within a line, it is indicated with a double slash //. Boundaries between rhythmic feet are shown with a single slash /. (Most words are spoken on a single foot in Pitjantjatjara, with stress on the first syllable of the word.) A major feature of this text is the clitic (bound) pronouns, that are appended to thematic elements.

Text 3

- YS1 kangkuru // watja-lku -na-nta
 elder sister will tell? -I-you
 Sister, shall I tell you?
- ES1 nyaa -n / nya-ngu // nyaa // nyaa
 what? -you did see what? what?
 What did you see? What? What?
- ES2 walangku / watja-la
 quickly tell-!
 Tell me quick!
- YS2 kuniya / pulka alatjitu / tjarpa-ngu
 utterly huge python did enter
 An absolutely huge python entered (the earth)
- YS3 piti-ngka -ni / nguwanpa / tjarpa-tju-nu
 into a burrow me nearly did drag in
 It nearly dragged me into a burrow!

In this dialogue two or more elements are included in the topical Theme by cliticising participant identities, and including them as weak syllables within the foot on which the topical Theme is spoken. Salient topical Themes include a process *watjalku* ‘will tell’, wh-element *nyaa* ‘what’, quality *walangku* ‘quickly’, and place *pitingka* ‘in a burrow’, and the interactants’ identities are realised as clitic pronouns attached to these elements. Theme analysis of text 3 is presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Themes in text 3

	inter- personal	salient topical	clitic topical		
			speaker A	speaker B	other
YS1	<i>kangkuru</i> elder sister	<i>watja-lku</i> will tell	-na I	-nta you	
ES1		<i>nyaa</i> what?	-n you		
ES2		<i>walangku</i> quickly	∅ (you)		
YS2		<i>kuniya pulka alatjitu</i> utterly huge python			
YS3		<i>piti-ngka</i> into a burrow	-ni me		∅ (it)

By including the interactants’ identities within the Theme, they remain their persistent angle on the field. But these identities are backgrounded to allow other elements to be thematised. The least salient form in the clitic pronoun system is reserved for those clauses where an identity can be implicitly presumed from the context. In commands this is the addressee (2nd person), as in ES2. In statements it is non-interactant (3rd person) identities that can be implicitly presumed as the same as the

preceding clause, such as the python ('it') in YS3. Implicit presumption of these participants is one element of the more general system of clitic pronouns, the discourse function of which is to enable other elements to be presented as salient topical Theme.

In contrast to the dialogue text 3, the following text 4 is a monologue, from a traditional narrative, that also constructs its own context. It concerns two men and two women, who are presented and then tracked through the text by the dual pronoun *pula*, glossed here as 'they2'.

Text 4

- 1 wati kutjara kunyu kuta-rara nyina-ngi
two men it's said brother-pair were sitting
It's said that there were two men who were brothers.
- 2 kungkawara kutjara alti-ngu, kangkuru-rara
two young women (they2) married sister-pair
Two young women were married to them, who were sisters.
- 3 wati kutjara pula a-nu malu-ku
they2 two men went for kangaroos
Those two men went hunting for kangaroos.
- 4 kuka kanyila-ku tati-nu puli-ngka
for wallaby game (they2) climbed up in the hills
For wallabies, that is, they climbed up in the hills,
- +5 munu _____ pula kuka kanyila kati-ngu
and-SM they 2 wallaby game brought back
and they brought back wallaby meat to the camp.
- +6 ka _____ pula mai-ku tjaru-ukali-ngu
and-SW they 2 for vegetable food descended down
Meanwhile the other two for went down to the plain, looking for vegetable foods,
- +7 munu _____ pula mai ili ura-ningi
and-SM they 2 fig food were collecting
and were collecting wild figs.

Theme analysis of text 4 is presented in Table 4. Here there are only textual and topical Themes, which are distinguished in the table as circumstance or participant.

Table 4: Themes in text 4

	textual	circumstance	participant 1	participant 2
1			<i>wati kutjara</i> two men	
2			∅ (they2)	<i>kungkawara kutjara</i> two young women
3			<i>wati kutjara pula</i> they2 two men	
4		<i>kuka kanyila-ku</i> for wallaby game	∅ (they2)	
+5	<i>munu</i> and-SM		<i>pula</i> they2	
+6	<i>ka</i> and-SW			<i>pula</i> they2
+7	<i>munu</i> and-SM			<i>pula</i> they2

In this extract the starting point of each message is with the field of the narrative, including:

- the identity of major participants *wati kutjara*, ‘two men’, and *kungkawara kutjara* ‘two young women’
- the purpose of their activity *kuka kanyila-ku* ‘for wallaby meat’,
- logical relations between each step in the activity sequence *munu* or *ka* ‘and’.

Major participant identities are included in the topical Theme in each clause of this story (comparable with the findings of Martin 1992a for spoken English stories). While the activities they are involved in change in each step of the sequence, these participants are the speaker’s persistent angle on the field, and are the point of departure for each step. The story begins by presenting the major participants as Themes of clauses 1 and 2, and then presumes their identities thematically by means of pronouns, *pula* ‘they two’, and ‘switch reference’ conjunctions, *munu* which means ‘same identity’ as the preceding clause, or *ka* ‘switch identity’ from the preceding clause.

In clauses 2 and 4, the identity of the ‘two men’ is implicitly presumed as the same as the preceding clauses (‘they’). This is achieved as follows. In 2 the process is *altingu* ‘married’, an effective process in Pitjantjatjara. But the topical Theme *kungkawara kutjara* ‘two young women’ is not the actor of ‘marrying’ but the goal, because it is not inflected as active. (The active inflection would be *kungkawara kutjara-ngku*.) Therefore the listener can presume the identity of the ‘two men’ as the implicit actor. In 4 the topical Theme *kuka kanyila-ku* ‘for wallaby meat’ is a circumstance of purpose (indicated by the inflection *-ku*). So the listener can presume the ‘two men’ as actor of *tatinu* ‘climbed up’.

By implicitly presuming the identities of active participants, Pitjantjatjara is able to present elements other than active participants as unmarked Theme, a textual function that is achieved in some other

languages by means of passive voice. A difference with the Pitjantjatjara strategy is that the active participant identity is still implicitly thematic, whereas in voice systems it can be left out altogether. On the other hand the Pitjantjatjara system enables both non-active participants and circumstances to be unmarked Theme, whereas voice systems are restricted to participants.

Thematising the identity of major participants 'grounds' each message in an identity chain, but we have also shown that topical Themes can be strongly predictive of transitivity functions. Topical Themes are typically in active roles and are inflected as active. When an uninflected participant is Theme in an effective clause, such as 'two young women' in text 4, the listener knows that this is not the actor but the goal of the process, and so the actor is the same as the preceding clause. This could be compared with voice strategies in other languages that indicate that the thematic participant is goal rather than actor, by means of a passive structure of the verbal group. In Pitjantjatjara, it is the transitivity of the process together with the absence of active inflection on the Theme that indicates it is goal rather than actor. Pronouns that are clitic to the Theme also always indicate transitivity role, eg. *-na* 'I' (active), *-ni* 'me' (non-active), *-n* 'you' (active), *-nta* 'you' (non-active).³

In sum texts 1-4 have illustrated four general types of contextual motivation for Theme variation, between dialogue or monologue on the one hand, and accompanying or constituting a context on the other, as predicted in Martin's (1992a) model of mode variation. A dialogic/accompanying text, such as text 1, tends to front each message with an interpersonal Theme enacting the speakers' relationship; monologic/accompanying texts (text 2) tend to thematise exophoric reference; dialogic/constituting texts (text 3) thematise various elements, but include the speakers' identities as clitic pronouns; monologic/constituting texts (text 4) tend to thematise major participant identities in active roles. It should be emphasised that these are not the only possible text types realised in each of these modes. Field constituting monologues in Pitjantjatjara also include, for example, hortatory expositions spoken in meetings, and recounts of procedures, as well as stories, and many more varieties of field accompanying texts are possible. The general patterns illustrated in texts 1-4 are summarised in Table 5.

Table 5: Mode variables and patterns of Theme in texts 1-4

tenor orientation	field orientation	
	accompanying	constituting
dialogue	<i>Text 1</i> interpersonal Themes enact speakers' relationship; topical Themes are exophoric	<i>Text 3</i> topical Themes construe field - various elements, with interactants included as clitic pronouns
monologue	<i>Text 2</i> topical Themes refer exophorically to the situation; interpersonal Themes assess activity	<i>Text 4</i> textual and topical Themes organise activity sequence: major participants tracked as Theme, punctuated by circumstances

Texts such as 3 and 4, that construct rather than simply pointing to their context, deploy a more elaborate set of topical Theme resources to manage the complexity of this discourse task, than do field accompanying texts such as 1 and 2. Most of the texts used for comparing discourse functions and strategies in the following sections are of this type, ie. stories, that are drawn from the grammatical descriptions in Caffarel and Martin in press. Most of these are traditional stories, with the exception of a Japanese news story. Since these texts have comparable social purposes in various languages, we are able to compare the discourse strategies used to achieve them in each language. This focus on stories does not diminish the need for studying other mode varieties in future typological work, as more examples of natural discourse become available, but the stories used below are a useful starting point.

3. The extent of Theme: strategies for defining the local context

We have seen in Pitjantjatjara, that the extent of the Theme can be indicated rhythmically by the end of the last foot of the Theme, so including clitic elements that follow a salient topical Theme. This strategy for indicating the extent of the Theme may be widespread in spoken modes. For example, Halliday (1994: 39) reports that in English, the Theme “is frequently marked off in speech by intonation, being spoken on a separate tone group; this is especially likely when the Theme is either (i) an adverbial group, or (ii) a nominal group not functioning as Subject... But even ordinary Subject Themes are often given a tone group to themselves in everyday speech”.⁴ More generally Themes may be demarcated not only by a tone group boundary, but also by a foot boundary, a rhythmic strategy for demarcating Theme that may be common across languages.⁵ Themes demarcated by foot and tone group boundaries are illustrated in the following dialogue, text 5, analysed by Halliday (1994: 304) for rhythm and tonality. The dialogue is between the manager of a jewellery shop and

a new salesperson. (As in the Pitjantjatjara dialogue in text 3, each line represents a clause spoken on one or more complete tone groups, so only those boundaries within lines are indicated with a double slash. Foot boundaries are shown with a single slash, and underlines have been added to indicate Themes, taking the final thematic foot boundary as demarcating their extent.)

Text 5

- 1 \wedge in / this job / Anne we're / working with / silver
 2 now / silver / needs to have / love
 3 you / know the // people that / buy silver / love it
 4 yea // I guess they / would
 5 yea // mm // well / naturally I / mean to say that it's // got a / lovely / gleam
 a/bout it you / know
 6 \wedge and / if they come / in they're // usually / people who / love / beautiful / things
 7 \wedge so / you / have to be / beautiful / with it you / know
 8 \wedge and you / sell it with / beauty

In each clause in this dialogue, Themes are demarcated by foot or tone group boundaries following the final experiential element. In 1, 2, 3 and 7 the topical Theme occupies one or more whole feet, but in 4, 5, 6 and 8, the last thematic element is a pronoun spoken as a weak final syllable following other elements. This pattern is comparable with that in Pitjantjatjara dialogue, in that these English pronouns function as non-salient clitics, appended to salient thematic elements. Theme analysis is presented in Table 6.

Table 6: Themes in text 5

	textual	interpersonal	circumstantial	participant (Subject)
1	<i>in this job</i>			
2	<i>now</i>			<i>silver</i>
3		<i>you know</i>		<i>the people that buy silver</i>
4	<i>yea</i>	<i>I guess</i>		<i>they</i>
5	<i>yea mm well</i>	<i>naturally I mean to say</i>		<i>it's</i>
6	<i>and</i>		<i>if they come in</i>	<i>they're</i>
7	<i>so</i>			<i>you</i>
8	<i>and</i>			<i>you</i>

Table 6 displays two simultaneous methods of development predicted by Martin's (1992a) analysis of spoken stories: (i) continuous presenting, switching and presuming of the key participant Themes - *silver-it's*, *the people that buy silver-they-they're*, and *you-you*, and (ii) punctuated staging of the sequence by means of circumstantial Themes, realised by a prepositional phrase *in this job*, which is hyperTheme to the manager's explanation, or dependent clause *if they come in*, which is hyperTheme to the salesperson's role. In most clauses the first experiential element is the Subject/Theme, but in 6 the Subject *they* is

clitic to a circumstantial Theme *if they come in*. It could be argued that this participant is included in the Theme rhythmically, in the same fashion as pronouns in Pitjantjatjara that are clitic to salient topical Themes. In fact, for the purposes of discourse analysis in English, Halliday does consider Subject following a circumstantial Theme, using the term ‘displaced Theme’ for “a topical element that would be unmarked Theme (in the ensuing clause) if the existing marked topical Theme was reworded as a dependent clause” (1994: 66). By this means the identity of a Subject following a circumstantial Theme can be included in the analysis of an English text’s method of development. Identifying both these constituents in the analysis of Theme is more fully argued by Martin and Peters (1985). To be generally applicable to languages without the same Subject role or voice system as English, these two thematic elements are referred to here as ‘circumstantial Theme’ and ‘participant Theme’.

A further strategy for demarcating the extent of Theme is to mark its boundary morphologically. This is the strategy of Japanese, in which a morpheme GA or WA is suffixed to the final thematic element, the participant Theme. This is illustrated in text 6, an extract from a newspaper story about a plane crash (from Teruya in press). Themes are underlined up to the morpheme indicating the Theme boundary.⁶

Text 6

- 1 Kankoku Saisyuutoo-no kuukoo-de tooka, Taikan kookuuki-ga
Korea Cheju Island-in, airport-at 10th Korean Airline-GA
 At the airport in Cheju Island, Korea, on the 10th, Korean Airlines
- cyakuriku-ni sippaisita ziko-de,
 landing-by failed accident-in
 was involved in an accident in which a landing failed,
- ...
- 2 Tocyuu-de sankai hodo, <<rankiyuu-ga arimasu>>-tono kinaihoosoo-ga ari,
on the way 3 times about “turbulence exist” announcement-GA exist
 During the flight, about three times there were announcements which said “There is turbulence,”
- 3 kitai-ga yureta.
aircraft-GA shook
 the aircraft shook.
- ...
- 4 Syuuto-de orite iru' tocyuu, usiro-de bakuhatuon-ga sita
chute-in getting off on the way back-at explosive sound-GA did
 While we were getting off through the chute, behind our backs an explosive sound occurred.
- 5 Kitai-kara abura-ga moreta no ka,
aircraft-from oil-GA leaked Q
 Oil may have leaked from the aircraft,

- 6 kusamura-ga moete ita.
grass-GA was burning
 the grass was burning.
- ...
 7 kitai-ga hi-ni tutumare,
aircraft-GA fire-NI surrounded
 the aircraft was surrounded by fire,
- 8 kuroi kemuri-ga tatte ita.
black smoke-GA was pouring out
 black smoke was pouring out.

Analysis of Themes is presented in Table 7. Two types of topical Theme are presented, circumstantial Themes that are first in each clause, followed by participant Themes that are marked with GA. (To save space only an opening sentence and two segments of the story, beginning with an announcement of turbulence (2-3), and an explosive sound (4-7), are displayed.)

Table 7: Themes in text 6

	circumstantial	participant
1	<i>Kankoku Saisyuutoo-no kuukoo-de tooka</i> At the airport in Cheju Island, Korea, 10th	<i>Taikan kookuuki-ga</i> Korean Airline-GA
2	<i>Tocyuu-de sankai hodo</i> During the flight, about three times	<i>ankiyuu-ga arimasu-tono' kinaihoosoo-ga</i> "turbulence exist" announcement-GA
3		<i>kitai-ga</i> aircraft-GA
4	<i>Syuuto-de orite iru' tocyuu, usiro-de</i> While we were getting off through the chute, behind our backs	<i>bakuhatuon-ga</i> explosive sound-GA
5	<i>Kitai-kara</i> from the aircraft	<i>abura-ga</i> oil-GA
6		<i>kusamura-ga</i> grass-GA
7		<i>kitai-ga</i> aircraft-GA
8		<i>kuroi kemuri-ga</i> black smoke-GA

In 3, 6, 7 and 8, GA marks the Theme boundary following a simple participant Theme. But in the other clauses this thematic participant identity is preceded by circumstantial elements, which may be phrases or dependent clauses (4). Furthermore in 1, 2 and 4 there are not one but two circumstantial elements that precede the participant Theme. The two types of topical Theme here present different angles on the field: circumstantial Themes are concerned with the location of activities in time and place (as in English stories), while participant Themes are concerned with the airline, aircraft and features of the accident.

In Japanese, as in Pitjantjatjara the first participant is explicitly included in the Theme along with preceding circumstantial Themes. Teruya

in press) reports that “the Theme always extends up to and includes that element marked by -WA or other markers”. This also reflects a finding for French by Caffarel (in press), who identifies two potential layers of Theme in French clauses: an outer layer with a salient topical Theme, and an inner layer with a clitic pronominal Theme. The inner clitic Theme may simply repeat the identity of the outer Theme, as in example 8 below.

8	<u>ma mère</u>	<u>elle</u>	a toujours fait du pot-au-feu
	my mother	she	always made stew
	outer Theme	inner Theme	

Or the outer Theme may be a non-Subject, with the inner clitic Theme presenting the Subject identity (9), comparable with the pattern we have seen in Pitjantjatjara and spoken English.

9	<u>son enfant,</u>	<u>mais</u>	<u>elle</u>	le deteste,	<u>cette mère</u>
	her child	but	she	him hates,	this mother
	absolute Theme		top. Theme		reprise Theme
	[[outer.....		[inner layer]	layer]]

As shown in 9 above, the outer Theme in French may also be reprised at the end of the clause. This is also similar to a frequent pattern in Pitjantjatjara, part of a more general pattern of reprising or elaborating an element of the clause with a further element spoken on a separate tone group. (This is the element labeled ‘anti-topic’ in Bowe’s ‘syntactically basic’ formula in section 1 above.)

These patterns of topical Themes in Pitjantjatjara, English, Japanese and French extend Halliday’s (1994: 53) definition of the extent of Theme, as “up to (and including) the first element that has a function in transitivity”. This grammatical definition is useful for distinguishing marked from unmarked Themes in English, but in order to analyse the interaction between Themes and participant identification, it may be necessary to include participant identities following circumstantial Themes, as we have seen Halliday also does for discourse analysis. By reflecting on English from patterns in other languages, rather than the other way around, this thematic motif becomes more apparent.

4. Thematising identities in ‘verb-initial’ languages

How to analyse the interaction of Theme with identity chains is often a question with languages that tend to put the process, or some part of it, at the beginning of the clause. These languages may be characterised in formalist typologies as ‘verb-initial’, with ‘basic word order’ VSO or VOS. One such language is Tagalog, which indicates the element functioning as

topical Theme by means of the adpositions *ang* (common nominals), *si* (proper names), or certain pronoun forms. However the adposition or pronoun does not indicate the transitivity role of the Theme (what type of participant or circumstance it is). This role is indicated by an affix of the verb, which tends to come first in the clause. The following Tagalog examples (from Martin in press) include unmarked Themes as Goal (10) and Means (11).⁷ Although the process is the same in both examples, the affix indicating transitivity role of Theme differs. Topical Themes are underlined, and verbal affixes dotted underlined, in the examples here.

- 10 h-in-iram ng tao ang pera sa bangko...
 borrowed man T money bank
 The man borrowed the money from the bank...
- 11 i-p-in-ang-hiram ng tao ng pera sa bangko ang bahay niya
 borrowed man money bank T house his
 The man used his house to borrow some money from the bank.

Like the Pitjantjatjara clitic pronoun system, this strategy can present both participants and circumstances as unmarked Theme, whereas voice systems are restricted to participants. Alternative clause rank translations for these examples could be (goal/Theme) ‘Money was borrowed by the man from the bank’ and (means/Theme) ‘With his house the man borrowed money from the bank’, but the latter will only translate as a marked Theme in the English voice system. Martin (in press) reports that “Virtually all participants and circumstances in a Tagalog clause can be made thematic and focused upon in such terms”. Tagalog achieves this by separating out the role and identity of the topical Theme, presenting the identity as an ‘*ang* phrase’, which may occur anywhere in the clause, and its transitivity role as a verbal affix which tends to come first. For Tagalog, defining the extent of the Theme is not an issue, since the topical Theme may be positioned anywhere. Although Tagalog may resemble Japanese in that Theme is indicated with a morpheme, it is a different strategy since it marks the element that is topical Theme, not the Theme boundary. In the following narrative extract, text 7 (from Martin in press), the key participant is first presented by name *Brigitte*, indicated as Theme by the adposition *si*, and is then presumed by the pronoun *siya*, which indicates thematic status.

Text 7

- 1 Nakaka-ramdam na ng gutom si Brigitte
 is feeling already hunger T Brigitte
 Brigitte is already feeling hungry
- 2 pero hindi siya maka-daing
 but neg T she able to complain
 but she can't complain.

- 3 Na-hihiya siya ng mag-salita kahit sa utility boy
is ashamed T she LINK speak even
She is even too embarrassed to speak to the utility boy.
- 4 Artista nga rin siya
actor emph. also T she
She really was an actor
- 5 pero hindi siya big shot
but neg T she
but she wasn't a big shot.

Verbal affixes indicating transitivity roles of Themes are dotted underlined in text 7. In the relational clause 4, the attribute *Artista* is also underlined, since speaking this element first may indicate that the transitivity role of the topical Theme *siya* is the carrier of this attribute. Tagalog does not require a verb in relational clauses, so the function of thematising an attribute in first position seems to mirror that of verbal affixes, to thematise transitivity roles. Thematic analysis is presented in Table 8. Along with the identity of the participant Theme, the element that indicates its transitivity role is also displayed, including verbal affixes (1, 3), or thematised attribute (4).

Table 8: Themes in text 7

	textual	interpersonal	transitivity role	identity
1			<i>Nakaka-</i> senser/Theme	<i>si Brigitte</i>
2	<i>pero</i> but	<i>hindi</i> neg.		<i>siya</i> she
3			<i>Na-</i> senser/Theme	<i>siya</i> she
4			<i>Artista</i> carrier/Theme	<i>siya</i> she
5	<i>pero</i> but	<i>hindi</i> neg		<i>siya</i> she

Tagalog's strategy of indicating topical Themes morphologically enables them to be presented at the end of the clause, and still be unambiguously Theme. But Tagalog also employs sequencing as a thematising strategy, as can be seen for textual, interpersonal and pronominal Themes in 2 and 4. Martin (in press) challenges the traditional characterisation of Tagalog as 'topic-final' (VOS), showing that in natural discourse, major participants are first presented as New information at the end of the clause, as *Brigitte* is presented in clause 1 above. But these identities then tend to be presumed by topical Themes that occur earlier in the clause, such as the pronoun *siya* in clauses 2, 3 and 5 above. It could also be argued that marking the topical Theme enables the process or attribute to be simultaneously thematised by the parallel strategy of first

position in the clause, as in 1, 3 and 4. This strategy would enable the transitivity role to be presented as Theme by means of first position, affixed to the verb, or implicit in the attribute, while the identity of the Theme is presented separately as a nominal group or pronoun, that may be clause final as New information.

It appears that many European and other languages tend to position the verb first in declarative clauses, more frequently than does English, including for example, Greek, Spanish and German. Gaelic is a limiting case in this regard, since all or part of the process appears to precede the first participant in most clauses. This may be either a finite auxiliary verb expressing mood, tense and dependency status, or a lexical verb that indicates these functions with suffixes. The initial finite verb is followed by a participant Theme, and may be preceded by a circumstantial Theme. Where the initial verb is an auxiliary, its associated lexical verb follows the participant Theme. Text 8 is a narrative extract that illustrates these patterns (from Ed McDonald, personal comm.). Themes are underlined up to and including the first participant identity. Where this identity follows a circumstantial Theme, the participant is in bold.

Text 8

- 1 β uair dha robh an saoghal,
 time to-it was+DEP the world
 Once upon a time,
- α bha **iolaire** anns na beanntan a-muigh taobh Loch Treig.
 was+IND eagle in those mountains away side Loch Treig
 there was an eagle in the mountains away by the side of Loch Treig.
- 2 bha i a' fuireach ann an coire an-sin
 was+IND she at living in the corry there
 She was living in a corry [depression in the side of a mountain] there
- 3 a' bhliadhna seo thainig **geamhradh fuar**
 the year this came+IND winter cold
 This year there came a cold winter
- 4 oidhche dhe na h-oidhcheannan,
 night of those nights
 On one of those nights,
- bha **an iolaire** a' faireachdan an fhuachd.
 was+IND the eagle at feeling from the cold
 the eagle was feeling the cold.
- 5 "cha do dh'fhairich mi a leithid de dh' fhuachd riamh?"
 not felt+DEP I its like of cold ever
 "Have I ever felt the like of such cold?"

thuir i rithe fhein
 said+IND she with herself
 she said to herself.

6 bha dreathann donn a' fuireach faisg oirre,
 was+IND wren brown at living near to-her
 There was a wren living near her,

7 is chaidh i far an robh an dreathann,
 and went+IND she where was+DEP the wren
 and she went where the wren was.

By including the first participant in our analysis of Gaelic, we can bring out the complementarity of circumstantial and participant Themes, presented in Table 9.

Table 9: Themes in text 8

	circumstantial	finite verb	participant
1	<i>uair dha robh an saoghal,</i> time to-it was+DEP the world	<i>bha</i> was+IND	<i>iolaire</i> eagle
2		<i>bha</i> was+IND	<i>i</i> she
3	<i>a' bhliadhna seo</i> the year this	<i>thainig</i> came+IND	<i>geamhradh fuar</i> winter cold
4	<i>oidhche dhe na h-oidhcheannan,</i> night of those nights	<i>bha</i> was+IND	<i>an iolaire</i> the eagle
5		<i>thuir</i> said+IND	<i>i</i> she
6		<i>bha</i> was+IND	<i>dreathann donn</i> wren brown
7		<i>chaidh</i> went+IND	<i>i</i> she

As in the English text 5, and Japanese text 6, circumstantial Themes locate the activity sequence in time, while participant Themes identify the story's participants - *an eagle-she-the eagle-she-she*, *winter cold*, and *brown wren*. As with *Brigitte* in the Tagalog text 7, major participants *eagle* and *winter cold* are first presented as clause final New information (marked in bold in the analysis). These clauses invert the unmarked sequence of intransitive clauses, to thematise a circumstance and present the participant as New. However although these new participants follow circumstantial Themes, they are equally relevant to staging of the text as is the location in time. Clause 1 is hyperTheme to the text segment, locating it in general ancient time 'once upon a time' and presenting the 'eagle' as the major participant in the narrative. Clause 3 specifies the time as 'this year', and presents 'winter cold' as New. Clause 4 further specifies the time as 'one of those nights' and re-presents 'the eagle' as unmarked Theme. Each of these participants is first presented without indefinite deixis, as Themes appear to be inherently non-specific in this

language. After it is first presented *iolaire* ‘an eagle’ is then presumed by a pronoun in 2 *i* ‘she’. Then after the identity switch in 3 to ‘winter cold’, she is re-presented lexically in 4 with definite deixis *an iolaire* ‘the eagle’, and again as a pronoun in 5 and 7. Because it is a secondary participant, *dreathann donn* ‘brown wren’ is presented, not as New, but only as an unmarked Theme in 6.

The functions that are thematised in the initial finite verb in Gaelic clauses are mood, tense and dependency status, either analysed as an auxiliary verb, or fused with the lexical verb. While all the clauses in text 8 are indicative, polar interrogative mood is realised by a contrasting verb form, so the motivation for initially thematising the verb may be primarily interpersonal, indicating the exchange move as giving or demanding information, as finite auxiliaries become interpersonal Theme in interrogative English clauses (‘you are/are you?’). However where other grammatical functions are conflated with the process, these may also contribute to its thematisation. By thematising the verb the listener is directed to interpret certain grammatical features of the message, such as mood, tense, dependency (Gaelic) or transitivity (Tagalog). For German, Steiner and Teich (in press) report that “The finite *haben* realises the perfective, active, indicative, third person, plural meanings in its inflection, and this is what is thematised”. Languages that indicate participant identities in the form of the verb are also likely to thematise processes, since these identities tend to be presumed thematically, as the speaker’s persistent angle on the field. In dependent clauses in many languages a participant is often presumed implicitly from a primary clause, allowing the dependent process to be Theme and so also its dependency status, as in Gaelic. While the most common reason for presenting the verb first may be interpersonal, to indicate the mood or modality of the clause, there may be other functional motivations that vary between languages - textual, experiential or logical. Such features realised in the verb may be presented thematically as elements of the local context from which the listener interprets the message, along with the participant identity that is included in or follows the initial verb.

5. Theme and definiteness

Including the first participant in theme analyses facilitates comparison of discourse patterns, despite varying realisational strategies, not only in languages as diverse as Gaelic, Pitjantjatjara, Tagalog and English, but also Vietnamese and Chinese, as the following narrative extracts and analyses display. Both Vietnamese and Chinese use existential type strategies for presenting participants. As with Gaelic, this involves inverting the unmarked sequence of an intransitive clause to thematise a circumstance and present the participant as New. This is shown for the

key participants, ‘farmer’ and ‘bear’ in the following extract from a traditional Vietnamese narrative, text 9 (from Thai in press). Again Themes are underlined up to the participant identity. Where this follows a circumstantial Theme the participant is in bold.

Text 9

- 1 Ngày xưa co **mot-nguoi nong dan-ngheo-doi.**
Day old have one-farmer-poor-hungry.
Once upon a time, there was a poor hungry farmer.
- 2 Anh ta phai-bo lang b vao rung g vo d hoang-trong tria
He have to-leave village enter forest explore cultivate unknown land
He had to leave the village to enter the forest to explore unknown land to cultivate.
- 3 Mot hom khi anh dang-gieo-hat cai-cu,
One day while he sowing seed-cabbage,
One day, while he was sowing cabbage seeds,
- 4 bong co **mot-con gau-to**
suddenly have one-bear-big
there suddenly appeared a big bear
- 5 o dau chay den quat
from where run to him
who ran to him
- 6 lon: "Anh kia, Ai cho phep anh vao rung-cua-ta?
shout You! Who allow you enter forest-of-I?
and shouted, "You! Who allows you to enter my forest?"
- 7 Nguoi nong dan binh tinh dap lai: "Ong gau oi! Ong de-cho toi gieo it-cai.
Farmer calmly reply: Mr Bear! You let I sow cabbage.
The farmer calmly replied: "Mr Bear! Please allow me to sow some cabbage.

As in the Gaelic example, major participants *mot-nguoi* ‘one farmer’ and *mot-con gau-to* ‘one big bear’ are presented in an existential structure with a circumstance first, followed by the new participant. Thematic analysis is presented in Table 10.

Table 10: Themes in text 9

	circumstantial	process	participant 1	participant 2
1	<i>Ngay xua</i> Day old	<i>co</i> have	<i>mot-nguoi</i> one-farmer	
2			<i>Anh ta</i> He	
3	<i>Mot hom khi</i> One day while		<i>anh</i> he	
4	<i>bong</i> suddenly	<i>co</i> have		<i>mot-con gau-to</i> one-bear-big
5	<i>o dau</i> from where	<i>chay den</i> run		\emptyset (it)
6		<i>lon</i> shout		\emptyset (it)
7			<i>Nguoi</i> Farmer	

Again, including participant identities following circumstantial Themes enables us to interpret the interaction between chains of identities and Themes. And again, as in Gaelic, Japanese and English, circumstantial Themes locate the sequence in time or place, followed by presentation of new identities. In Gaelic we saw that new participants are presented without deixis, since Themes are inherently non-specific, ie. 'indefinite'. In Vietnamese by contrast, new participants are presented with non-specific deixis, the indefinite *mot* 'one', since Themes are inherently specific in this language. This can be seen in clause 7, where the 'farmer' *nguoi* is re-presented without definite deixis, since it is Theme. This contrasts with the Gaelic *an iolair* 'the eagle', and the English free translation of clause 7 as 'The farmer'. Furthermore, the identity of the 'bear' in clauses 5 and 6 is implicitly thematic, '(it) ran', '(it) shouted', presumed from the preceding Theme 4 (a strategy we first noted in the Pitjantjatjara text 4 above).

Comparable patterns can also be observed in Chinese. Text 10 below is an extract from a traditional Chinese narrative (from McDonald & Zeng 1996).

Text 10

- 1 congqian you yige ren zai tian li zhong di
once have one person at field farm land
Once upon time, there was a man planting in a field
- 2 huran pao lai le yizhi tuzi
suddenly run come-perf one hare
suddenly out ran a hare
- 3 yitou zhuang-zai tianbian'r de da shu shang
headlong dash-against at field-side of big tree upon
and dashed headlong against a big tree near the field

- 4 tuzi zhuang-si le.
hare dash-against dead ASP:perf
The hare dashed itself to death.
- 5 nage ren feichang gaoxing.
that person very happy
The man was very happy.
- 6 ta ba tuzi shi qilai,
he DISP hare pick up
The hare he picked up
- 7 dai-hui jia qu.
bring back home go
and (he) took (it) home

Again, major participants *yige ren* 'one person' and *yizhi tuzi* 'one hare' are presented in an existential structure with a circumstance followed by the new participant. Thematic analysis is presented in Table 11.

Table 11: Themes in text 10

	circumstantial	process	participant 1	participant 2
1	<i>congqian</i> once	<i>you</i> have	<i>yige ren</i> one person	
2	<i>huran</i> suddenly	<i>pao lai le</i> run come-perf		<i>yizhi tuzi</i> one hare
3	<i>yitou</i> headlong			\emptyset (it)
4				<i>tuzi</i> hare
5			<i>nage ren</i> that person	
6			<i>ta</i> he	<i>ba tuzi</i> DISP hare
7		<i>dai-hui</i> bring back	\emptyset (he)	\emptyset (it)

As in Vietnamese, new thematic participants must be first presented in Chinese with indefinite deixis *yige ren* 'one person', *yizhi tuzi* 'one hare'. But *tuzi* 'hare' is then re-presented in 4 and 6 without a deictic element, as Themes are inherently definite, ie. 'The hare' in the English translation. In 5 the 'person' is re-presented with demonstrative deixis *nage ren* 'that person', to make the reference unambiguous. In clause 3 we also see the familiar feature of the 'hare' presumed implicitly from the preceding Theme '(it) dashed'.

In clause 6, both participants are elements of the topical Theme, since both are definite (ie. known). The 'person' is first presumed with the non-salient pronoun *ta* 'he', followed by the salient *ba tuzi* 'hare'. The adposition BA marks this element as a 'displaced' goal. It appears that this functions as a strategy for thematising a goal, a comparable discourse

function to the Pitjantjatjara and French clitic pronoun systems (which can include both actor and goal in the Theme), or the Tagalog strategy of topic marking, or passive voice in other languages. However in Chinese, conflating goal with Theme also makes it definite, which is why the ‘hare’ is thematised here (its identity is known). In Chinese clauses, actors must come before goals, because this is how the actor role is realised, and the goal usually follows the process (as in active voice in English clauses). In order to thematise the goal it is marked with BA as ‘displaced’ from its usual location following the process, but still follows the actor. This strategy enables both these known identities to be tracked in thematic position. Because both these identities are thematic in 6, they can both be implicitly presumed in the Theme of 7, ‘(he) (it) brought’

From a grammatical perspective Theme can be employed to indicate ‘definiteness’. But what this means from a discourse perspective is that Theme can be a resource for presuming identities that have been previously presented. The most general choice in discourse systems of IDENTIFICATION is between presenting an identity for the first time, or presuming it from a previous mention (Martin 1992a). Languages can choose to mark one or the other of these options in a nominal group (or choose to mark both, as in English or French).

We have seen that Gaelic does not mark first mentions with indefinite deixis, since its Themes are inherently non-specific. But for the same reason it has to mark presuming nominal groups with definite deixis, such as *an iolair* ‘the eagle’ (text 8). The same is true of Pitjantjatjara, in which Themes are also inherently non-specific. First mentions have no deixis, but presuming nominal groups are marked as definite, such as *wati kutjara pula* ‘they2 two men’ (text 4). However Vietnamese and Chinese take the opposite tack. Since their Themes are inherently specific, they have to present new identities with indefinite deixis, such as *mot-con* ‘one bear’ (text 9) and *yizhi tuzi* ‘one hare’ (text 10). But when these identities are presumed as Theme, they require no definite deixis. Likewise in Tagalog, Martin (1983) reports that “the indefiniteness of the Topic is made explicit through the numeratives *isa* ‘one’ (most commonly) or *ilan* ‘few’”, otherwise topical Themes tend to be indefinite.⁸

Languages may mark participants as either definite or indefinite, or they may mark both, with a deictic element in the nominal group. Likewise, they may also employ Theme as a strategy for one or the other, or neither. These alternative approaches to presenting and presuming nominal groups are set out in Table 12.

Table 12: Strategies for presenting and presuming nominal groups

	Pitjantjatjara, Gaelic	Chinese, Tagalog, Vietnamese	English, French
presenting (non-specific)	realised by Theme	indefinite deixis in nominal group	indefinite deixis in nominal group
presuming (specific)	definite deixis in nominal group	realised by Theme	definite deixis in nominal group

Conclusion

In his *Introduction to Functional Grammar*, Halliday interprets the totality of a grammatical system as a ‘semantic code’, that is manifested through texts-in-situations, which in turn manifest the culture of its speakers. He cautions that it is not sufficient to try interpreting such a code in piecemeal fashion, but rather “to understand the code, we need an overview of the grammatical system; both in order to confront one part of it with another, and in order to interpret texts construed in the code” (1994a: xxxi).

In this paper we have used the grammatical overviews provided in Caffarel & Martin (in press) to go one step further, from confronting one part of a language system with another, to confronting comparable parts of different language systems with each other. In the process we have brought out significant differences in the ways that languages go about realising comparable discourse functions, and we have also found some surprising similarities. Firstly we have shown that sequencing is a widespread strategy for thematising textual, interpersonal and experiential elements, that contextualise clauses as messages in the contexts of discourse, interaction and field respectively. But we have also seen more variation in the ways that languages conflate disparate functions in single elements, to resolve competition for thematic status. These include conflation of participant identities, mood or transitivity with clause initial processes, as well as participant identities with conjunctions.

Secondly we have suggested that diversity of textual organisation within languages is motivated by systematic variation in social contexts, between monologue and dialogue on one hand, and language as action or reflection on the other. These are variables in mode that produce comparable Theme variations in both English and Pitjantjatjara, and presumably other languages as well. This contextual model gives researchers an effective tool for systematically investigating textual organisation in texts and clauses.

Thirdly we have found various strategies for including more than one element in a topical Theme, such as cliticisation of participant identities in Pitjantjatjara and French, that are appended to salient elements. We also found a comparable strategy in English, using rhythm and tone to include

pronominal Subjects following circumstantial Themes, and an analogous strategy in Japanese using morphemes to indicate Theme boundaries. It is also possible that Chinese uses the strategy of a ‘displacement’ morpheme, to include a goal within a topical Theme, following a pronominal actor. Additional evidence for this is that both identities can be implicitly presumed in a following clause, as thematic identities in all the languages investigated can be implicitly presumed in following clauses.

Using these findings, we suggested a method for analysis of topical Themes that can extend to more than one experiential element, including participants following processes in so called ‘verb-initial’ languages, as well as those following circumstantial Themes in other languages. This method enables us to comprehensively investigate the interaction between Themes and participant identification in a text’s method of development, and compare discourse patterns across languages, using simple tables. By including the first participant identity in Theme analyses, we found surprising commonalities between divergent languages, in the ways that circumstantial Themes are used to stage sequences in time or place, while participant Themes present and then presume major identities.

Finally we found that thematic position can be used to identify participants as either known (specific) or not known (non-specific), and that different languages opt for one or the other of these strategies, or neither, using both definite and indefinite deixis in nominal groups. This is further evidence that participants following circumstances are also interpreted by the listener as topical Themes, since in those languages where Theme is inherently non-specific, new participants require no deixis, whereas in languages where Theme is inherently specific, new participants do require indefinite deixis. This is another example of how languages may conflate functions in a single element. In this case a participant is presented as topical Theme and conflated with New information at the end of a message; the whole clause thus functions as hyperTheme to the following text, with a circumstantial Theme locating it in time or place and a participant Theme presenting a major new identity.

Grammatical descriptions focused on clause functions may label such circumstances as topical Theme, and treat the following participant as part of the Rheme, and such an interpretation is valid at a local level. But we have suggested that to ‘confront’ such clauses with the discourse patterns in which they play a role, and with comparable patterns in other languages, it is useful to extend the Theme analysis to the participant following a circumstantial Theme.

These findings are by no means exhaustive for any of the languages examined, or for the discourse functions or grammatical strategies surveyed across languages; rather they are partial at best, and further research may render some of them invalid. But they are at least useful, not only for informing typological comparisons, but also for investigating

variation in textual organisation within languages. Perhaps their foremost utility is to illustrate an analytical methodology that goes beyond the clause, to find the motivations for grammatical variation within and between languages, in the patterns of discourse by which speakers of any language exchange meanings with each other.

Notes

- ¹ Despite the care with which Halliday defines the functions of Theme, and distinguishes them from the strategies by which they are realised, his proposals are still sometimes misinterpreted (Martin 1992b).
- ² Some clauses, such as exclamations, have no Theme-Rheme structure.
- ³ Each of the Pitjantjatjara clitic pronouns also has a 'full' pronoun form that can function as a salient topical Theme, eg. *ngayulu* 'I' (active), *ngayu-nya* 'me' (non-active), *nyuntu* 'you' (active), *nyuntu-nya* (non-active), *paluru* 's/he/it' (active), *palu-nya* (non-active). Alternative forms of these clauses with these salient pronouns as Themes could be *ngayulu nyuntunya watjalku* 'will I tell you?', *nyuntu nyaa nyangu* 'you saw what?', *paluru ngayunya nguwanpa tjarpatjunu* 'it nearly dragged me in'.
- ⁴ In the English Theme system, the unmarked (ie. typical) Theme corresponds to the interpersonal function 'Subject', so circumstances or participants not functioning as Subject are marked as Themes.
- ⁵ Kornfilt (1990: 24) recognises what is probably a comparable pattern in both spoken and written Turkish, "The topic, ie. the material that the sentence is about, is placed at the beginning of the sentence and is often separated from it - orthographically by a comma and by a slight pause in speech".
- ⁶ The distinction between GA and WA Theme markers in Japanese is experiential, not textual, and is not illustrated in text 6.
- ⁷ Martin (in press) finds that transitivity roles indicated by verbal affixes are generalised as Medium/Theme, Goods/Theme, Instrument/Theme and Direction/Theme. Labels for more specific roles are given in the examples here, to be consistent with the presentations of other languages.
- ⁸ The differences between these east Asian languages and English, in the role of Theme to indicate definiteness, often becomes apparent with people speaking English as another language. Even relatively fluent ESL speakers from these regions frequently omit definite deixis from English nominal groups.

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