Lingüística sistémico-funcional

La cláusula como mensaje

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3

Clause as message

3.1 *Theme and Rheme*

In Section 2.6 we introduced the notion of a clause as a unit in which meanings of three different kinds are combined. Three distinct structures, each expressing one kind of semantic organization, are mapped on to one another to produce a single wording.

Of the various structures which, when mapped on to each other, make up a clause, we will consider first the one which gives the clause its character as a message. This is known as THEMATIC structure.

We may assume that in all languages the clause has the character of a message: it has some form of organization giving it the status of a communicative event. But there are different ways in which this may be achieved. In English, as in many other languages, the clause is organized as a message by having a special status assigned to one part of it. One element in the clause is enunciated as the theme; this then combines with the remainder so that the two parts together constitute a message.

In some languages which have a pattern of this kind, the theme is announced by means of a particle: in Japanese, for example, there is a special postposition -*wa*, which signifies that whatever immediately precedes it is thematic. In other languages, of which English is one, the theme is indicated by position in the clause. In speaking or writing English we signal that an item has thematic status by putting it first. No other signal is necessary, although it is not unusual in spoken English for the theme to be marked off also by the intonation pattern (see below).

Following the terminology of the Prague school of linguists, we shall use the term Theme as the label for this function. (Like all other functions it will be written with an initial capital.) The Theme is the element which serves as the point of departure of the message; it is that with which the clause is concerned. The remainder of the message, the part in which the Theme is developed, is called in Prague school terminology the Rheme. As a message structure, therefore, a clause consists of a Theme accompanied by a Rheme; and the structure is expressed by the order — whatever is chosen as the Theme is put first. For examples of this Theme + Rheme structure see Figure 3-1.

In the following example, which is the first sentence of the Introduction to Roget's *Thesaurus*, the Theme is *the present Work*:

the duke	has given my aunt that teapot
my aunt	has been given that teapot by the duke
that teapot	the duke has given to my aunt
Theme	Rheme

Fig. 3-1 Theme–Rheme structure

The present Work is intended to supply, with respect to the English language, a desideratum hitherto unsupplied in any language; . . .

Some grammarians have used the terms Topic and Comment instead of Theme and Rheme. But the Topic – Comment terminology carries rather different connotations. The label 'Topic' usually refers to only one particular kind of Theme (see Section 3.5 below); and it tends to be used as a cover term for two concepts that are functionally distinct, one being that of Theme and the other being that of Given (see Chapter 8). For these reasons the terms Theme – Rheme are considered more appropriate in the present framework.

As a general guide, the Theme can be identified as that element which comes in first position in the clause. We have already indicated that this is not how the category of Theme is **defined**. The definition is functional, as it is with all the elements in this interpretation of grammatical structure. The Theme is one element in a particular structural configuration which, taken as a whole, organizes the clause as a message; this is the configuration Theme + Rheme. A message consists of a Theme combined with a Rheme.

Within that configuration, the Theme is the starting-point for the message; it is the ground from which the clause is taking off. So part of the meaning of any clause lies in which element is chosen as its Theme. There is a difference in meaning between *a halfpenny is the smallest English coin*, where *a halfpenny* is Theme ('I'll tell you about a halfpenny'), and *the smallest English coin is a halfpenny*, where *the smallest English coin* is Theme ('I'll tell you about the smallest English coin'). The difference may be characterized as 'thematic'; the two clauses differ in their choice of theme. By glossing them in this way, as 'I'll tell you about . . .', we can feel that they are two different messages.

First position in the clause is not what defines the Theme; it is the means whereby the function of Theme is **realized**, in the grammar of English. There is no automatic reason why the Theme function should be realized in this way; as remarked above, there are languages which have a category of Theme functionally similar to that of English but which nevertheless express it in quite a different way. But 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, then it seems natural that the position for the Theme should be at the beginning, rather than at the end or at some other specific point.

The Theme is not necessarily a NOMINAL GROUP, like those above. It may also be an ADVERBIAL GROUP or PREPOSITIONAL PHRASE, such as the examples in Figure 3-2. John B. Carroll's 'Foreword' to Whorf's *Language, Thought and Reality* begins with the adverbial Theme *once in a blue moon*:

[handwritten margin note: the fact that it comes first in English is not a general definition]

once upon a time	there were three bears
very carefully	she put him back on his feet again
for want of a nail	the shoe was lost
with sobs and tears	he sorted out those of the largest size
Theme	Rheme

Fig. 3-2 Themes other than nominal groups

Once in a blue moon a man comes along who grasps the relationship between events which have hitherto seemed quite separate, and gives mankind a new dimension of knowledge.

Sometimes in English the Theme is announced explicitly, by means of some expression like *as for . . ., with regard to . . ., about . . .*. Usually it is only nominal Themes that are introduced by a locution of this kind. The Theme is then picked up later in the clause by the appropriate pronoun — *her, it* in the following examples:

As for my aunt, the duke has given her that teapot.
About that teapot — my aunt was given it by the duke.

This 'picking up' of the Theme by a pronoun may happen even when the Theme is not explicitly introduced, and even if the Theme is also the Subject, especially in spoken English; cf. *The Queen of Hearts she made some tarts.*

The Theme of a clause 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 prepositional phrase or (ii) a nominal group not functioning as Subject — in other words, where the Theme is anything other than that which is most expected (see Section 3.3 below). But even ordinary Subject Themes are often given a tone group to themselves in everyday speech. One tone group expresses one unit of information (this is described in Chapter 8); and if a clause is organized into two information units, the boundary between the two is overwhelmingly likely to coincide with the junction of Theme and Rheme. This is in fact an important piece of evidence for understanding the Theme + Rheme structure.

[handwritten margin note: On Theme and the Tone Group]

3.2 Simple Themes of more than one group or phrase

As a first step we have made two assumptions: that the Theme of a clause consists of just one structural element, and that that element is represented by just one unit — one nominal group, adverbial group or prepositional phrase. These two assumptions hold for the examples given above; similarly, in the first sentence of the Preface to J. R. Firth's *Papers in Linguistics 1934–1951* the Theme is *the first chair of General Linguistics in this country*, which is still one single nominal group:

The first chair of General Linguistics in this country was established in the University of London in 1944, at the School of Oriental and African Studies . . .

In each of these examples the Theme is one element, which in turn is one nominal group or one prepositional phrase.

the Walrus and the Carpenter	were walking close at hand
Tom, Tom, the piper's son	stole a pig and away did run
from house to house	I wend my way
on the ground or in the air	small creatures live and breathe
Theme	Rheme

Fig. 3-3   Group complex or phrase complex as Theme

A common variant of this elementary pattern is that in which the Theme consists of two or more groups or phrases forming a single structural element. Any element of clause structure may be represented by a COMPLEX of two or more groups or phrases (see Chapter 7 Additional below). Such a group or phrase 'complex' functions as a Theme in the normal way. This is illustrated in Figure 3-3.

Such Themes still fall within the category of 'simple' (as opposed to 'multiple') Themes. Any group complex or phrase complex constitutes a single element within the clause. Any group complex or phrase complex constitutes a single element within the clause; for example, two nominal groups joined by and, like the Walrus and the Carpenter, make up a nominal group complex. This is just one element in the clause, and therefore constitutes a simple Theme. The two prepositional phrases from house to house likewise make up a prepositional phrase complex, and this is also therefore one simple Theme. The different kinds of relationship that may be expressed in these 'complex' structures are discussed in Chapter 7 below.

The first sentence of Hjelmslev's Prolegomena to a Theory of Language, Whitfield's translation, has as its Theme the nominal group complex language — human speech, consisting of two nominal groups in apposition:

Language — human speech — is an inexhaustible abundance of manifold treasures.

Another example of apposition in the Theme is the following, from the blurb to Hunter Davies' biography of George Stephenson:

One hundred and fifty years ago, on 15 September 1830, the world's first passenger railway — the Liverpool to Manchester — was opened, an event which was to change the face of civilization.

Here the Theme consists of two phrases forming a phrase complex, ending at 1830.

In the above examples, the group or phrase complex is a single constituent of the clause; it is not specially constructed by the thematic system. There is in addition a special thematic resource whereby two or more separate elements are grouped together so that they form a single constituent of the Theme + Rheme structure. An example of this would be:

What the duke gave to my aunt was that teapot.

Here the Theme is what the duke gave to my aunt. Technically, this is still a 'simple' Theme, because it has now been turned into a single constituent, in a clause of a particular kind.

This kind of clause is known as a THEMATIC EQUATIVE, because it sets up the Theme + Rheme structure in the form of an equation, where 'Theme = Rheme'. The particular clause type that is being exploited to form a thematic equative is the 'identifying' clause; this will be described in Chapter 5, Section 5.4 below; but

[handwritten left margin: Thematic equative (pseudo-cleft)]

something will be said about it here in order to explain why it plays an important part in the construction of the clause as a message.

In a thematic equative, all the elements of the clause are organized into two constituents; these two are then linked by a relationship of identity, a kind of 'equals sign', expressed by some form of the verb be. Examples are given in Figure 3-4.

what [the thing] the duke gave to my aunt	was	that teapot
the one who gave my aunt that teapot	was	the duke
the one the duke gave that teapot to	was	my aunt
what the duke did with that teapot	was	give it to my aunt
how my aunt came by that teapot	was	she was given it by the duke
Theme		Rheme

Fig. 3-4   Thematic equatives

There is an example of this in the first clause of the second paragraph of Through the Looking-glass:

The way Dinah washed her children's faces was this:

where the Theme is the way Dinah washed her children's faces. Strictly speaking the was, or other form of be, serves to link the Rheme with the Theme; but for the sake of simpler analysis it can be shown as part of the Rheme.

A form such as what the duke gave to my aunt is an instance of a structural feature known as NOMINALIZATION, whereby any element or group of elements is made to function as a nominal group in the clause. Any nominalization, therefore, constitutes a single element in the message structure.

[handwritten right margin: Nominalization]

In this case the nominalization serves a thematic purpose. The thematic equative pattern allows for all possible distributions of the parts of the clause into Theme and Rheme, as in Figure 3-4. It even includes one such as the following:

what happened was that the duke gave my aunt that teapot   —

where the Theme is simply what happened, meaning 'I want to tell you that something happened', and every component of the happening is put into the Rheme.

In the typical instance the nominalization functions as the Theme, because in a Theme–Rheme structure it is the Theme that is the prominent element. All the examples above were of this type. But — as so often happens in language — in contrast with the typical pattern there is a standing-out or MARKED alternative, exemplified by you're the one I blame for this, with you as Theme, in which the usual relationship is reversed and the nominalization becomes the Rheme. Further examples of this are given in Figure 3-5.

that	is	the one I like
this teapot	was	what the duke gave to my aunt
a loaf of bread	is	what we chiefly need
Theme		Rheme

Fig. 3-5   Marked thematic equatives (nominalization as Rheme)

A thematic equative (which is usually called a 'pseudo-cleft sentence' in formal grammar) is an identifying clause which has a thematic nominalization in it. Its function is to express the Theme–Rheme structure in such a way as to allow for the Theme to consist of any subset of the elements of the clause. This is the explanation for the evolution of clauses of this type: they have evolved, in English, as a thematic resource, enabling the message to be structured in whatever way the speaker or writer wants.

Let us say more explicitly what this structure means. The thematic equative actually realizes two distinct semantic features, which happen to correspond to the two senses of the word *identify*. On the one hand, it identifies (specifies) what the Theme is; on the other hand, it identifies it (equates it) with the Rheme.

The second of these features adds a semantic component of exclusiveness: the meaning is 'this and this alone'. So the meaning of *what the duke gave my aunt was that teapot* is something like 'I am going to tell you about the duke's gift to my aunt: it was that teapot — and nothing else'. Contrast this with *the duke gave my aunt that teapot*, where the meaning is 'I am going to tell you something about the duke: he gave my aunt that teapot' (with no implication that he did not do other things as well).

Hence even when the Theme is not being extended beyond one element, this identifying structure still contributes something to the meaning of the message: it serves to express this feature of exclusiveness. If I say *what the duke did was give my aunt that teapot*, the nominalization *what the duke did* carries the meaning 'and that's all he did, in the context of what we are talking about'.* This is also the explanation of the marked form, which has the nominalization in the Rheme, as in *that's the one I like*. Here the Theme is simply *that*, exactly the same as in the non-nominalized equivalent *that I like*; but the thematic equative still adds something to the meaning, by signalling that the relationship is an exclusive one. Compare *a loaf of bread we need* and *a loaf of bread is what we need*. Both of these have *a loaf of bread* as Theme; but whereas the former implies 'among other things', the latter implies 'and nothing else'. Note that some very common expressions have this marked thematic equative structure, including all those beginning *that's what*, *that's why* etc.; e.g. *that's what I meant*, *that's why it's not allowed*.

Figure 3-6 gives some further examples which help to bring out the difference between a thematic equative and a clause with ordinary Theme–Rheme structure.

3.3   Theme and mood

What is the element that is typically chosen as Theme in an English clause? The answer to that question depends on the choice of mood.

Mood will be discussed in Chapter 4. Here we shall need to anticipate the first steps in that discussion, and introduce the primary categories of the mood system.

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* It further indicates, by the choice of the 'pro-verb' *did*, something about the role of the duke: that he did something — he was an active participant in the process. Contrast *what happened to that teapot* . . ., where the role of the teapot is shown to have been a passive one. See Chapter 5, Section 5.2.

(a) Ecuativa temática

(i) thematic equative:
(a) nominalization as Theme   Nominalización = tema

what the one wanted to notice	was	the writing on the wall
the thing that impresses me most	is	their enthusiasm for the job
the ones you most see	are	the smugglers
Theme		**Rheme**

(b) nominalization as Rheme   Nominalización como rema

twopence a day	was	what my master allowed me
the Walrus	is	the one I like best
Theme		**Rheme**

(ii) non-equative equivalents (assuming Subject as Theme; see Section 3.3 below)   (b) Equivalentes no ecuativas

no one	wanted to notice the writing on the wall
their enthusiasm for the job	impresses me most
you	most see the smugglers
my master	allowed me twopence a day
I	like the Walrus best
Theme	**Rheme**

Fig. 3-6   Further examples of thematic equatives

We will restrict ourselves to independent clauses, those that can stand by themselves as a complete sentence.   non-finite clause

Every independent clause selects for mood. Some, like *John!* and *good night!*, are MINOR clauses; they have no thematic structure and so will be left out of account. The others are MAJOR clauses. An independent MAJOR clause is either indicative or imperative in mood; if indicative, it is either declarative or interrogative; if interrogative, it is either polar interrogative ('yes/no' type) or content interrogative ('WH-' type). Examples:

indicative: declarative	Bears eat honey. Bears don't eat honey.
indicative: interrogative: yes/no	Do bears eat honey? Don't bears eat honey?
indicative: interrogative: WH-	What eats honey? What do bears eat?
imperative	Eat! Let's eat!

We will consider each of these moods in turn, from the point of view of their thematic structure.

(1) Theme in declarative clauses. In a declarative clause, the typical pattern is one in which Theme is conflated with Subject; for example, *Little Bo-peep has lost her sheep*, where *Little Bo-peep* is both Subject and Theme. All the examples in Figure 3-1 were of this kind; likewise those in 3-4 to 3-6.

We shall refer to the mapping of Theme on to Subject as the UNMARKED THEME of a declarative clause. The Subject is the element that is chosen as Theme unless there is good reason for choosing something else. Note that this adds a further explanation for the use of a thematic equative in clauses such as *you're the one I blame*, *that's what I meant*: here the Theme is Subject, and therefore unmarked,

whereas in the non-identifying form *you I blame*, *that I meant*, making *you* and *that* thematic also makes them marked Themes (because not Subject), and so adds a sense of contrast which may be out of place.

In everyday conversation the item most often functioning as unmarked Theme (Subject/Theme) in a declarative clause is the first person pronoun *I*. Much of our talk consists of messages concerned with ourselves, and especially with what we think and feel. Next after that come the other personal pronouns *you, we, he, she, it, they*; and the impersonal pronouns *it* and *there*. Then come other nominal groups — those with common noun or proper noun as Head — and nominalizations. Providing these are functioning as Subject, then having them as Theme is still the unmarked choice.

A Theme that is something other than the Subject, in a declarative clause, we shall refer to as a MARKED THEME. The most usual form of marked Theme is an adverbial group, e.g. *today, suddenly, somewhat distractedly*, or prepositional phrase, e.g. *at night, in the corner, without much hope*, functioning as ADJUNCT in the clause. Least likely to be thematic is a COMPLEMENT, which is a nominal group that is not functioning as Subject — something that could have been a Subject but is not. For discussion of Complement and Adjunct see Chapter 4, Section 4.3 below.

The main tendencies for the selection of Theme in declarative clauses are summarized in Table 3(1).

Table 3(1) Examples of Theme in declarative clause. Theme-Rheme boundary is shown by #.

	Function*	Class	Clause example
Unmarked Theme	Subject	nominal group: pronoun as Head	I # had a little nut-tree she # went to the baker's there # were three jovial Welshmen
	Subject	nominal group: common or proper noun as Head	a wise old owl # lived in an oak Mary # had a little lamb London Bridge # is fallen down
	Subject	nominalization	what I want # is a proper cup of coffee
Marked Theme	Adjunct	adverbial group; prepositional phrase	merrily # we roll along on Saturday night # I lost my wife
	Complement	nominal group; nominalization	a bag-pudding # the King did make what they could not eat that night # the Queen next morning fried

* Function in clause as exchange; see Chapter 4.

The 'most marked' type of Theme in a declarative clause is thus a Complement: for example *nature* in *nature I loved*, *this responsibility* in *this responsibility we accept wholly*. This is a nominal element which, being nominal, has the potentiality of being Subject; which has not been selected as Subject; and which nevertheless has been made thematic. Since it could have been Subject, and therefore unmarked Theme, there must be very good reason for making it a thematic Complement — it is being explicitly foregrounded as the Theme of the clause. Let us look at one

example, taken from the end of Bally and Sechehaye's Preface to Saussure's *Course in General Linguistics* (English translation by Wade Baskin):

> We are aware of our responsibility to our critics. We are also aware of our responsibility to the author, who probably would not have authorized the publication of these pages. This responsibility we accept wholly, and we would willingly bear it alone.

Here the Theme *this responsibility* is strongly foregrounded; it summarizes the whole burden of the preface — the special responsibility faced by scholars reconstructing from others' lecture notes the work of an outstanding colleague for publication after his death — and enunciates this as their point of departure, as what the undertaking is all about.

Sometimes even the Complement from within a prepositional phrase (see Chapter 6, Section 6.5) functions as Theme, particularly in idiomatic combinations of preposition and verb: for example *that* in *that I could do without*, *two things* in *two things we need to comment on*. Perhaps the type of Complement/Theme that stands out as 'most marked', however, is a pronoun, such as *me* in *me they blame for it*. This is, as it were, the opposite end of the scale of thematic tendency from the unmarked Subject/Theme *I* with which we started.

There is one sub-category of declarative clause which has a special thematic structure, namely the exclamative. These typically have an exclamatory WH-element as Theme, as in Figure 3-7.

Fig. 3-7 Theme in exclamative clauses

(2) Theme in interrogative clauses. The typical function of an interrogative clause is to ask a question; and from the speaker's point of view asking a question is an indication that he wants to be told something. The fact that, in real life, people ask questions for all kinds of reasons does not call into dispute the observation that the basic meaning of a question is a request for an answer. The natural theme of a question, therefore, is 'what I want to know'.

There are two main types of question: one where what the speaker wants to know is the POLARITY 'yes or no?', e.g. *Can you keep a secret? Is John Smith within?*; the other where what the speaker wants to know is the identity of some element in the content, e.g. *Who will you send to fetch her away? Where has my little dog gone?* In both types, the word indicating what the speaker wants to know comes first.

In a yes/no question, which is a question about polarity, the element that functions as Theme is the element that embodies the expression of polarity, namely the FINITE VERBAL OPERATOR. It is the finite operator in English that expresses positive or negative: *is, isn't; do, don't; can, can't*; etc. So in a yes/no interrogative the finite operator is put first, before the Subject. The meaning is 'I want you to tell me whether or not'.

In a WH- question, which is a search for a missing piece of information, the

element that functions as Theme is the element that requests this information, namely the WH- element. It is the WH- element that expresses the nature of the missing piece: *who, what, when, how,* etc. So in a WH- interrogative the WH- element is put first no matter what other function it has in the mood structure of the clause, whether Subject, Adjunct or Complement. The meaning is 'I want you to tell me the person, thing, time, manner, etc.'.

Interrogative clauses, therefore, embody the thematic principle in their structural make-up. It is characteristic of an interrogative clause in English that one particular element comes first; and the reason for this is that that element, owing to the very nature of a question, has the status of a Theme. The speaker does not choose each time to put this element first; its occurrence in first position is the regular pattern by which the interrogative is expressed. It has become part of the system of the language, and the explanation for this lies in the thematic significance that is attached to first position in the English clause. Interrogatives express questions; the natural theme of a question is 'I want to be told something'; the answer required is either a piece of information or an indication of polarity. So the realization of interrogative mood involves selecting an element that indicates the kind of answer required, and putting it at the beginning of the clause.

In a WH- interrogative, the Theme is constituted solely by the WH- element: that is, the group or phrase in which the WH- word occurs. Examples in Figure 3-8.

Fig. 3-8 Theme in WH- interrogative

If the WH- word is, or is part of, a nominal group functioning as Complement in a prepositional phrase, this nominal group may function as Theme on its own, e.g. *what* in *what shall I mend it with?*, *which house* in *which house do they live in?*

In a yes/no interrogative, the Theme includes the finite verb; but it extends over the Subject as well. Finite verb plus Subject form a two-part Theme, the principle of which will be explained in Section 3.5 below. Examples in Figure 3-9.

Thus in both kinds of interrogative clause the choice of a typical 'unmarked' thematic pattern is clearly motivated, since this pattern has evolved as the means of carrying the basic message of the clause. Hence there is a strong tendency for the speaker to choose the unmarked form, and not to override it by introducing

can	you	find me an accent land?
is	anybody	at home?
should	old acquaintance	be forgot?
Theme (1)	Theme (2)	Rheme

Fig. 3-9 Theme in yes/no interrogative

after tea	will you tell me a story?
in your house	who does the cooking?
Theme	Rheme

Fig. 3-10 Marked Theme in interrogative clauses

a marked Theme out in front. But marked Themes do sometimes occur in interrogatives, as illustrated in Figure 3-10.

(3) Theme in imperative clauses. The basic message of an imperative clause is either 'I want you to do something' or 'I want us (you and me) to do something'. The second type usually begin with *let's*, as in *let's go home now*; here *let's* is clearly the unmarked choice of Theme. But with the first type, although the 'you' can be made explicit as a Theme (e.g. *you keep quiet!*, meaning 'as for you, . . .'), this is clearly a marked choice; the more typical form is simply *keep quiet*, with the verb in thematic position. The function of the verb, in the mood structure (clause as exchange), is that of PREDICATOR; here, therefore, it is the Predicator that is the unmarked Theme.

In negative imperatives, such as *don't argue with me, don't let's quarrel about it*, the principle is the same as with yes/no interrogatives: the unmarked Theme is *don't* plus the following element, either Subject or Predicator. Again there is a marked form with *you*, e.g. *don't you argue with me*, where the Theme is *don't + you*. There is also a marked contrastive form of the positive, such as *do take care*, where the Theme is *do* plus the Predicator *take*. Examples in Figure 3-11.

The imperative is the only type of clause in which the Predicator (the verb) is regularly found as Theme. This is not impossible in other moods, where the verb may be put in first position precisely to give it thematic status, e.g. *forget* in *forget it I never shall*; but here it is the most highly marked choice of all.

answer	all five questions!
you kids	keep out of the way!
first	catch your fish!
don't leave	any belongings on board the aircraft!
don't let's	quarrel about it!
let's	not quarrel about it!
Theme	Rheme

Fig. 3-11 Theme in imperative clauses

Thus the question which element of the clause is typically chosen as the Theme depends on the choice of Mood. The pattern can be summarized as follows:

Mood of clause	Typical ('unmarked') Theme
declarative	nominal group functioning as Subject
interrogative: yes/no	first word (finite operator) of verbal group, plus nominal group functioning as Subject

imperative: 'you'

nominal group, adverbial group or prepositional phrase functioning as interrogative (WH-) element

imperative: 'you and me'
exclamative

verbal group functioning as Predicator, plus preceding *don't* if negative

let's, plus preceding *don't* if negative

nominal group or adverbial group functioning as exclamative (WH-) element

When some other element comes first, it constitutes a 'marked' choice of Theme; such marked Themes usually either express some kind of setting for the clause or express a feature of contrast. Note that in such instances the element that would have been the unmarked choice as Theme is now part of the Rheme.

The following passage from *David Copperfield* shows a typical context for the choice of marked Themes in declarative clauses (Figure 3-12):

'We came,' repeated Mrs Micawber, 'and saw the Medway. My opinion of the coal trade on that river is, that it may require talent, but that it certainly requires capital. Talent, Mr Micawber has; capital, Mr Micawber has not. . . . We are at present waiting for a remittance from London, to discharge our pecuniary obligations at this hotel. Until the arrival of that remittance, . . . I am cut off from my home . . . , from my boy and girl, and from my twins.'

talent capital	Mr Micawber has Mr Micawber has not
nominal group as Complement	
Theme	Rheme

until the arrival of that remittance	I am cut off from my home
prepositional phrase as Adjunct	
Theme	Rheme

Fig. 3-12 Examples of marked Theme in declarative clauses

3.4 Other characteristic Themes

We now have to consider certain other elements that have a special status in the thematic structure of the clause. These are elements which, if they are present at all, tend to be — or in some cases have to be — thematic. Those that are typically, though not obligatorily, thematic consist of two sets of items, almost all of them adverbs or prepositional phrases, functioning as Adjunct in the clause: CONJUNCTIVE (DISCOURSE) ADJUNCTS and MODAL ADJUNCTS. Those that are obligatorily thematic are CONJUNCTIONS and RELATIVES.

(1) Typically thematic: conjunctive and modal Adjuncts