Theme-Rheme (and Given-New)



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Grammatically 'marked'
Themes

Unit 3

Theme-Rheme (and Given-New)

Clause-as-message, and information unit

Grammar presentation given on 14.xi.2017

Robert Spence Angewandte Sprachwissenschaft Universität des Saarlandes

Theme-Rheme (and Given-New)



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 To understand the difference between Theme-Rheme and Given-New structures. Theme-Rheme (and Given-New)



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Theme-Rheme (and

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- 1 To understand the difference between Theme-Rheme and Given-New structures.
- 2 To learn to analyse clauses into Theme and Rheme.

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- 1 To understand the difference between Theme-Rheme and Given-New structures.
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- To learn to identify the most typical Themes for each grammatical mood.

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- 1 To understand the difference between Theme-Rheme and Given-New structures.
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To understand the difference between Theme-Rheme and Given-New structures.

- 2 To learn to analyse clauses into Theme and Rheme.
- To learn to identify the most typical Themes for each grammatical mood
- 4 To learn to identify textual, interpersonal, and topical Themes.
- 5 To understand the difference between grammatically 'unmarked' and grammatically 'marked' Themes.

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Theme-Rheme (and Given-New)



- To understand the difference between Theme-Rheme and Given-New structures.
- 2 To learn to analyse clauses into Theme and Rheme.
- To learn to identify the most typical Themes for each grammatical mood
- 4 To learn to identify textual, interpersonal, and topical Themes.
- 5 To understand the difference between grammatically 'unmarked' and grammatically 'marked' Themes.
- To understand and be able to identify predicated Themes and thematic equatives.

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• Thema [topic] In der Thema-Rhema-Gliederung der Mitteilung bzw. der Äußerung der (kommunikative) Ausgangspunkt, die Basis zur Entfaltung des Mitteilungsgehalts des Satzes: das Bekannte oder das durch Situation oder Kontext Gegebene; der Teil der Äußerung, der weniger Information enthält als das Rhema. T. ist das, worüber etwas mitgeteilt wird, und auch das, was aus Kontext und Situation ableitbar ist; Rhema is das, was über das Thema mitgeteilt wird, was aus Kontext und Situation nicht ableitbar ist – die neue Information (Daneš 1970, 1976).

Th. Lewandowski: Linguistisches Wörterbuch 3.

Heidelberg/Wiesbaden: Quelle & Meyer [UTB 1518]: 1990 (5., überarbeitete Auflage).

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Th. Lewandowski: Linguistisches Wörterbuch 3. Heidelberg/Wiesbaden: Quelle & Meyer [UTB 1518]: 1990 (5., überarbeitete Auflage).

But this definition is ambiguous (!!!)

Theme-Rheme (and Given-New)



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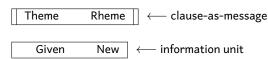
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THEME and MOOD

Textual, interpersonal, and topical Themes

 The two concepts Theme (='what the message is about') and Given (='derivable from situation / context') are kept distinct:



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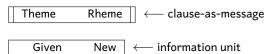
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THEME and MOOD

Textual, interpersonal, and topical Themes

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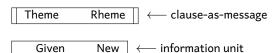
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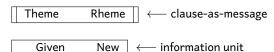
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- Normally (but not always), one information unit coincides with one clause.



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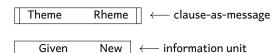
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- 'Given' is treated as a function in the structure of the information unit
- Normally (but not always), one information unit coincides with one clause.
- Sometimes an information unit can be shorter or longer than one clause.



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• Theme-Rheme is realized by sequence.

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- Theme-Rheme is realized by sequence.
- To signal that something is Theme in English, you put it in first position in the clause, to create a 'local context' for the message.

Γ	Theme		Rheme	Ι
Γ	the dinosaurs	were killed	by an asteroid	Ī

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Theme	me Rheme	
the dinosaurs	were killed	by an asteroid

• The information unit is realized by intonation: one information unit is expressed as one 'melody' or **tone group**.

Textual, interpersonal,

and topical Themes

Grammatically 'marked'
Themes

- Theme-Rheme is realized by sequence.
- To signal that something is Theme in English, you put it in first position in the clause, to create a 'local context' for the message.

Theme		Rheme
the dinosaurs	were killed	by an asteroid

- The information unit is realized by intonation: one information unit is expressed as one 'melody' or tone group.
- The climax of the 'New' information is signaled by the Focus (which
 you can hear as the Nucleus of the tone group: the syllable "AST")

			Focus
Given?			New
the	dinosaurs were	killed by an	ASTeroid

```
/\!/_{.1.} the / dinosaurs were / killed by an */ ASTeroid //
```

Learning Resources

 'Helmut Kohl went to Halle': shows all four possible ways Theme-Rheme and Given-New can map onto each other: http://spence.saar.de/courses/grammar/unit03/halle.pdf Theme-Rheme (and Given-New)



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- 'Now comes the President here': worksheet http://spence.saar.de/courses/grammar/questions02/index.pdf

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- 'Textuality: A first look' (four-page summary in English, to read for homework; will be incorporated in chapter 3 of the coursenotes): http://spence.saar.de/courses/grammar/unit03/textualitv1.pdf

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- one-page summary in German of the differences between Theme-Rheme and Given-New structure (slightly dogmatic): http://spence.saar.de/courses/grammar/unit03/themrhem2.pdf

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- Annabelle Lukin: Clause as message part 1 / Clause as message part 2 (scroll down the page)
 https://vimeo.com/album/2028694

A sacrament as a semiotic act

 "Dearly beloved, we are gathered here in the sight of God, and in the face of this congregation, (...)" Theme-Rheme (and Given-New)



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THEME and MOOD

Textual, interpersonal, and topical Themes

- "Dearly beloved, we are gathered here in the sight of God, and in the face of this congregation, (...)"
- Anyone who was raised in the Church of England knows that this is the beginning of a wedding ceremony, or to give it its official title: The Form of Solemnization of Matrimony. Matrimony, a.k.a. marriage, is one of the "sacraments" of the Church of England. But what is a sacrament?

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- ACHTUNG! PROTESTANTENALARM!

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 (The word "sign" here really means 'signifiant'; the "grace" (= gift from God) is the 'signifié'.)



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- The groom says the following words:
 "With this Ring I thee wed,
 with my body I thee worship,
 and with all my wordly goods I thee endow"



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- The groom says the following words:
 "With this Ring I thee wed,
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 and with all my wordly goods I thee endow"
- What comments would you make on the order of the parts of each clause? And what intonation would you use if you said this aloud?



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The Theme-Rheme boundary is shown by #

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- The Theme-Rheme boundary is shown by #
- [imperative] Predicator

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- The Theme-Rheme boundary is shown by #
- [imperative] Predicator
- "Open # the window!"

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- [imperative] Predicator
- "Open # the window!"
- · [indicative: interrogative: WH-] Wh-

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Textual, interpersonal, and topical Themes

- The Theme-Rheme boundary is shown by #
- [imperative] Predicator
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- · [indicative: interrogative: WH-] Wh-
- "What # does he want?"

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- "Open # the window!"
- [indicative: interrogative: WH-] Wh-
- "What # does he want?"
- [indicative: interrogative: yes/no] Finite

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- [indicative: interrogative: yes/no] Finite
- "Did he # mean me?"
- [indicative: declarative: exclamative] Wh-
- "What a rude person # he is!"
- [indicative: declarative: non-exclamative] Subject

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- "Did he # mean me?"
- · [indicative: declarative: exclamative] Wh-
- "What a rude person # he is!"
- [indicative: declarative: non-exclamative] Subject
- "He # 's crazy he # 's a grammarian."

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Internal structure of a multiple Theme

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Theme-Rheme (and

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THEME and MOOD

Grammatically	'marked'
Themes	

well	but	then	surely	Jean	wouldn't	the best idea	be to join in?
con-	struc-	con-	mo-	voc-	finite	topical	
tinu-	tur-	junc-	dal-	at-			
ative	al	tive		ive			
textual			interpersonal				
Theme					Rheme		

Unmarked vs. marked Themes

	Function	Class	Clause example
unmarked	Subject	nominal group: pronoun as Head	I # have a dream
Theme		nominal group: noun as Head	my sister # has a new boyfriend
		nominalization	what I want # is a proper cup of tea
marked	Adjunct	adverbial group	merrily # we roll along
Theme		prepositional phrase	on Saturday night # I lost my wife
	Comp-	nominal group: noun as Head	Eliot # you're particularly fond of
	lement	nominal group: pronoun as Head	this # they should refuse
		nominalization	what chance gave # chance took away

(Based on Halliday and Matthiessen)