# Unit 3

# Theme-Rheme (and Given-New)

Clause-as-message, and information unit

Slides for the session of Exploring English Grammar — the world of clauses held on 29 xi 2021 γρα

Theme-Rheme (and Given-New)

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



- 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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- To learn to identify the most typical Themes for each grammatical mood.
- 4 To learn to identify textual, interpersonal, and topical Themes.
- To understand the difference between grammatically 'unmarked' and grammatically 'marked' Themes.
- To understand and be able to identify predicated Themes and thematic equatives.

### Theme: an ambiguous definition



Given-New)

• 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).

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### Theme: an ambiguous definition

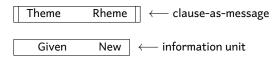


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- But this definition is ambiguous (!!!)



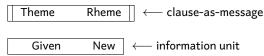
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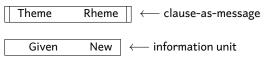
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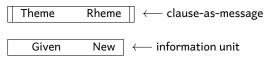
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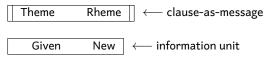


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- Normally (but not always), one information unit coincides with one clause.



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- 'Theme' is treated as a function in the structure of the clause-as-message ('Theme-Rheme structure').
- '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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- 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.

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- 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 //



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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

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- The groom says the following words:
   "With this Ring I thee wed,
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- 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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- "He # 's crazy he # 's a grammarian."

# Internal structure of a multiple Theme



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)