1   TEXTUALITY

1.1   An example

Text can be distinguished from 'non-text' by virtue of its having generic structure, textual structure (thematic and informational) and cohesion.

The following is a piece of text which is perfectly well-formed except for one thing: one aspect of its textual structure (namely its 'thematic' patterns—i.e., the way Theme and Rheme are organized) has been deliberately scrambled:

> Now comes the President here. It's the window he's stepping through to wave to the crowd. On his victory his opponent congratulates him. What they are shaking now is hands. A speech is going to be made by him. 'Gentlemen and ladies. That you are confident in me honours me. I shall, hereby pledge I, turn this country into a place, in which what people do safely will be live, and the ones who grow up happily will be able to be their children.'

M.A.K. Halliday, 'The sociosemantic nature of discourse'. Ch. 7 of: *Language as social semiotic: The social interpretation of language and meaning.* London: Edward Arnold, 1978.

Unscramble the text by re-writing each sentence in a more natural way:

What was wrong with each sentence? Before formulating your answers, look at the definitions on the following pages.

1.2   Unmarked Theme vs. Marked Theme

An English clause is typically structured as a configuration of Theme + Rheme. The speaker or writer singles out one part of the message and makes it the Theme, or 'point of departure': this is 'what the message is about'. The rest of the message is the Rheme. The way we signal that something is the Theme is by putting it first, so that it can provide a kind of 'local context' which the addressee (the hearer or reader) can use to interpret the meaning of the message as a whole. Just about any element in the structure of a clause can be chosen as Theme in this way, but some choices feel more normal ('unmarked'), whereas others stand out rather strongly because they're so unusual ('marked').

In an imperative clause, the unmarked Theme would be the Predicator, i.e. the clause constituent that contains the verb that names the action the addressee is supposed to perform.

In an interrogative clause, the unmarked Theme would be the clause constituent that specifies what it is the speaker/writer doesn't know and needs to find out:

In a wh-interrogative clause, the unmarked Theme would be the Wh- element (*Who? What? Where? Why? How?* etc.); and in a yes-no interrogative it would be the Finite Operator together with the inverted Subject (*Did ... ? Wouldn't ... ?* etc.), because that's the sequence of elements that indicates that the polarity of the clause—i.e., whether the clause is 'positive' (an affirmation) or 'negative'—is in question, i.e., that the polarity is something the speaker/writer doesn't know and is trying to find out.

In a declarative clause, the unmarked choice would be to take one element and make it both the Subject of the predication (i.e., the element you're prepared to argue about) and also the Theme of the message:

George Mallory	may	have conquered	Mt Everest	in 1924,	according to one theory.
Subject	Finite	Predicator	Complement$_{D.O.}$	Adjunct	Adjunct
Actor	Process		Goal	Time	Angle
Theme	Rheme				

Mt Everest	may	have been conquered	by George Mallory	in 1924,	according to one theory.
Subject	Finite	Predicator	Adjunct	Adjunct	Adjunct
Goal	Process		Actor	Time	Angle
Theme	Rheme				

The first of these messages is a message about Mallory (so Mallory is Theme, and therefore comes first); here, Mallory is someone who did—or may have done—something (so Mallory is also Actor) and Mallory is what the speaker/writer is prepared to argue about (so Mallory is made the Subject of the predication, and the verbal group is active).

The second of these messages is a message about Mt Everest (so Mt Everest is Theme, and therefore comes first); Mt Everest is still the Goal of the action that Mallory performed—or may have performed—before he fell to his death (so Mallory is still Actor), but what the speaker/writer is prepared to argue about is Mt Everest (so Mt Everest is the Subject of the predication, and the verbal group is passive).

In both of these messages, the Theme is at the same time the Subject. This is the 'unmarked' choice, as far as Theme is concerned: whatever is chosen as Theme is also chosen as Subject, even if that means being forced to choose the passive voice so as to make the Goal of the action the Subject, rather than the Actor.

But it's also possible to choose something else as Theme, such as the Time, or the Angle:

In *1924,*	George Mallory	may	have conquered	Mt **Everest.**
Adjunct	Subject	Finite	Predicator	Complement$_{D.O.}$
Time	Actor		Process	Goal
Theme		Rheme		

According to *one* theory,	Mt Everest	may	have been conquered	in **1924.**
Adjunct	Subject	Finite	Predicator	Adjunct
Angle	Goal		Process	Time
Theme		Rheme		

In each of the above examples, the choice of Theme is a 'marked' one: the clause constituent that is thematized is not the Subject—and in English that is uncommon, so it stands out from the normal flow of the text all around it and makes the hearer/reader pay special attention to the local context that's being set up: the message is to be interpreted as being about '1924' as a location in time, or about 'what one theory claims'. The most natural way to pronounce such a clause when speaking or reading would be to structure it as two information units—one for the marked Theme, and a second for the Rheme—with a falling intonation contour to put a Focus at the end of the Rheme (indicated above by **bold** type) and a falling-rising intonation contour to put a Focus on the Theme (indicated by *italic* type).

Now imagine you wanted to have a clause with Mallory as Subject/Actor/Theme, but you want to contradict someone who has just claimed that the conqueror of Mt Everest was Sir Edmund Hillary. The way you would do it in speaking would be to say:

George **Mallory**	conquered	Mt Everest
Subject	Finite/Predicator	Complement$_{D.O.}$
Actor	Process	Goal
Theme	Rheme	

But suppose you were writing, and didn't have any way of indicating which part of the clause was to be specially emphasized, or you wanted to make the emphasis less dramatic. How could you do it?

1.3   Predicated Theme ("cleft sentence" in non-functional grammar)

This structure is very common in French and English, but less so in German:

It	was	George **Mallory**	who	conquered	Mt Everest
Su	Fi/Pr	Compl$_{Subj}$	Su	Fi/Pred	Complement$_{D.O.}$
Identified	Process	Identifier	Actor	Process	Goal
Theme	Rheme		Theme	Rheme	
	Theme			Rheme	

This allows a Theme to simultaneously function as the Focus within the information structure, but in a more natural way than would be possible by simply making it tonic ("making it carry the main sentence stress" in non-functional linguistic terminology). Someone who is reading such a "cleft sentence" will see a Subject ('it'), followed by a predication, and, thinking that the message is almost finished, will naturally want to place a tonic

stress on the subject-complement ('George Mallory'); everything that follows up to the end of the sentence will be correctly interpreted as post-tonic, and therefore as being 'contextually given' information—not the main point of the news, as the main point was 'Mallory'.

1.4   Postposed Subject

Now we come to a structure that looks somewhat similar, but isn't:

It	's	frightening	that Mt Everest may have been conquered as early as 1924.
Sub-	Fi/Pr	Compl$_{Subj}$	-ject (embedded clause)
	Process	Attribute:quality	Carrier:fact
Theme	Rheme		

At first sight, this looks a bit like Theme predication, but in reality it's simply a way of avoiding having to start a sentence with a long, heavy Subject containing an embedded 'that'-clause:

That Mt Everest may have been conquered as early as 1924	is	frightening
Subject	Fi/Pr	Compl$_{Subj}$
Carrier:fact	Process	Attribute:quality
Theme	Rheme	

The problem with having an embedded clause as Subject is that it would tend to make the reader think that it was the Subject, rather than the Complement, that contained the main point of the clause as a whole, because the Subject is so long, and the rest is so short.

1.5   Thematic equative ("pseudo-cleft sentence" in non-functional grammar)

This is a technique for dividing up the information in the clause in practically any way you like, and giving thematic status to any constituent or sequence of constituents whatever, using a kind of '=' sign:

The one who conquered Mt Everest in 1924	was	Thomas Mallory.
Subject	Fi/Pr	Compl$_{Subj}$
Identified	Process	Identifier
Theme	Rheme	

What Thomas Mallory did	was	conquer Mt Everest in 1924.
Subject	Fi/Pr	Compl$_{Subj}$
Identified	Process	Identifier
Theme	Rheme	

What Thomas Mallory did in 1924	was	conquer Mt Everest.
Subject	Fi/Pr	Compl$_{Subj}$
Identified	Process	Identifier
Theme	Rheme	