

# **PhD Course in Syntactic Theories**

## **-Prague School and Functionalism**

## **-Firth's Scale and Category**

## **-Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar**

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## **Prague School and Functionalism**

### **1. Introduction**

The Prague school or Prague linguistic circle started in 1926 as a group of linguists, philologists and literary critics in Prague. Its proponents developed methods of structuralism and a theory of the standard language and of language cultivation from 1928 to 1939. The linguistic circle was founded in the Café Derby in Prague, which is also where meetings took place during its first years. The Prague School has had a significant continuing influence on linguistics and semiotics. It was founded in 1926 by Vilem Mathesius (1882-1946), who was a professor of English at Caroline University. This school is associated with Russian and started in Europe in Prague. Most of the representative of Prague School did not only concentrate on their mother tongue but also on many other languages, like (Russian, English, and to a lesser degree on French and German). They were not in line with behaviorism. Their main interest laid in the phonological theory. The most important work was that of Roman Jakobson and Nikolai Trubetskoy and their theory of distinctive features. The followers of this school were also interested in the analysis of language as a system of functionality related units, an emphasis which showed Saussrean influence. synchronic and diachronic linguistics and on the homogeneity of the language-system . Linguists of the Prague school stress the function of elements within language, the contrast of language elements to one another, and the total pattern or system formed by these contrasts, and they have distinguished themselves in the study of sound systems.

The major work of Prague school is that it saw language in terms of functions, they asserted that language has jobs , they analyzed language with a view of showing the respective function played by various structural combination in the use of entire language . The Prague school Linguistic circle represented an important moment in linguistics in that

it provides linguistics with new contributions such as phonological contribution and syntactic contribution. It is characterized by the belief that the phonological; grammatical and semantic structure of languages is determined by the functions that they have to perform in the societies in which they operate. In the field of linguistics the Prague scholars were greatly influenced by Ferdinand de Saussure and by his incipient structuralism., although it has tended to reject Saussure's point of view on certain issues, especially on the sharpness of the distinction between synchronic and diachronic linguistics and on the language system.

## **2. Theory of Markedness**

Markedness theory now is a very vast and it is used almost in all the levels of linguistics. Therefore, when we study Markedness we have to depend on a specific aspect of or language. an unmarked property in language is more basic it is the universal pattern of language or within a specific language while the marked property in a language is something uncommon.

The notion of markedness was first developed in Prague School phonology but was subsequently extended to morphology and syntax. When two phonemes are distinguished by the presence or absence of a single distinctive feature, one of them is said to be marked and the other unmarked for the feature in question. For example, /b/ is marked and /p/ unmarked with respect to voicing. So the voiceless sounds are unmarked while voiced sounds are marked. This is because voicing is supposed to be an additional feature.

## **3. Theme (Old information\_ Topic) and Rheme (New information\_ Comment)**

Prague school were the first who talked about these two terms. So how can we define them?

Theme and rheme structure guides how an element fits into the discourse model. When the element relates back, then it is thematic. Whereas if it advances the discourse, then it is rhematic. So, once the theme is established, the new contribution, called the rheme, can be identified.

So, any sentence contains two parts, the first part is the theme which represents:

1. Connection to previous discourse
2. Point of departure
3. What is being discussed
4. The receiver knows it

The second part of the sentence is called rheme that represents:

1. New contribution to the discourse
2. Comment about what is being said
3. The receiver doesn't know it

For example:

A: Who is that person?

B: That person is my father.

The first part of the sentence “**That person**” is the theme, because it has textually evoked and known or already given in the speech . Whereas the second part “**is my father**” is the rheme in the sentence, because it made a new contribution in the sentence

## **Firth's Scale and Category**

### **Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar**

**Functionalism** , it can be said to have had two godparents, both European:

- (i) The Linguistic Circle of Prague (1926–39), including Vilém Mathesius (1882–1945), Roman Jakobson (1896–1982) and Prince Nikolai S. Trubetzkoy (1890–1938).
- (ii) The linguists of the so-called ‘London School’, beginning with Bronislaw Malinowski (1884–1942) in 1923.

#### **Bronislaw Malinowski :**

Malinowski is an anthropologist with an interest in language from the London School of Economics, established a working relationship with J.R. Firth (1890–1960), a senior member of staff at the School from the late 1920s and (from 1944) the first Professor of General Linguistics in the UK. He was particularly concerned with his failure to produce any satisfactory translations for the texts he had recorded. For instance, he recorded a boast by a canoeist which he translated, 'We-run front-wood ourselves . . . we-turn we-see companion-ours he-runs rear-wood.' This, Malinowski argued (1923 [1949: 300-1]), made sense only if the utterance was seen in the context in which it was used, where it would

become clear that, for instance, 'wood' referred to the paddle of the canoe. Living languages must not be treated like dead ones, torn from their context of situation, but seen as used by people for hunting, cultivating, looking for fish, etc. Language as used in books is not at all the norm; it represents a far-fetched derivative function of language, for language was not originally a 'mirror of reflected thought'. Language is, he maintained, a 'mode of action' not a 'countersign of thought'.

## **John Rupert Firth**

John Rupert Firth (1890-1960) was an English anthropologist and linguist who was an influential figure, not only in Britain, but also in Europe. He is the founder of Modern British Linguistics “London School of Linguistics”, and the first professor of General Linguistics in London in 1944. He was influenced by Saussurean’s concepts which appeared very clearly through using his concepts and references in his writings, but he denied any allegiance to his theories. Moreover, he was influenced by Malinowski (1884-1942).

Firth expanded the notion of ‘context of situation’ into a schematic construct, as he called it), and one of the major themes that he drew from it was the importance of language variation in context, an idea that later became known as **‘register’**.

Firth acknowledged his debt to Malinowski, but felt that Malinowski's context of situation was not satisfactory for the more accurate and precise linguistic approach to the problem. He preferred to see context of situation as part of the linguist's apparatus in the same way as are the grammatical categories that he uses. It was best used as 'a suitable schematic construct' to apply to language events and he, therefore, suggested the following categories

A. The relevant features of the participants: persons, personalities

(i) The verbal action of the participants.

(ii) The non-verbal action of the participants.

B. The relevant objects.

C. The effects of the verbal action.

It is important to stress that Firth saw context of situation as one part of the linguist's apparatus or rather as one of the techniques of description, grammar being another such technique on a different level, but of the same abstract nature.

## **Firth Category and Scale**

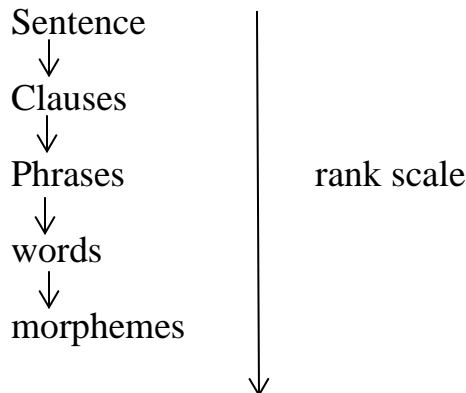
Scale and Category Grammar is a model of linguistic description developed in the late 1950s and early 1960s by Michael Halliday. It constitutes an attempt at building insights derived from J.R. Firth (1890-1960) into an overall theory of what language is and how it works. In grammar, the first Firthian principle of analysis is to distinguish between structure and system. A syntagmatic relation obtains among elements of a structure, so that in grammar, the elements share a mutual expectancy in an order which is not a mere sequence. Firth laid great emphasis on the notion of syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations, as proposed by Saussure and developed by Hjelmslev and the parallel distinction of structure and system, structures always being syntagmatic or 'horizontal systems being paradigmatic or 'vertical.' Within each system the units or terms were commutable and received their value from their place within that system. Attention must first be paid to the longer elements of text, such as the paragraph, the sentence and its component clauses, phrases, pieces, and lastly words if they are institutionalized or otherwise established for the language being analyzed. A set of categories are accordingly set up to handle the data. These categories are identified with Firth's theory: unit; structure, class, and system. Moreover, these four categories are universal: they are necessary and sufficient as a basis for the description of any language. Scale and category Grammar is so called because language is analyzed as an interrelationship between four categories units, classes, structure and system, and possibly depth..

### **1-Unit:**

The category Unit describes stretches of language on a scale of inclusiveness or Rank, such that units are both more and less inclusive than others: the most inclusive unit being Sentence and the least inclusive Morpheme, with Sentences being inclusive of Clauses, Clauses inclusive of Groups, Groups inclusive of Words, Words inclusive of Morphemes. The units of grammar which enter into the description of English and any 'related' language are: sentence-clause-phrase-word morpheme. Here they are arranged on a scale from 'largest' to 'smallest', which implies that any unit consists of one or more instances of the next lower unit, and Vice-versa, that any unit is a direct constituent of the next higher unit: sentences consist directly of clauses, clauses directly of phrases, and so on. This order of direct inclusion in turn implies a scale, which is called the rank scale. The rigidity of the Rank scale is frequently broken. Units of one rank frequently expound elements not in the unit at the next rank above, but in some unit lower than that. A unit breaking the Rank scale

is said to undergo rankshift. The text "breaking the Rank scale" in the preceding sentence is a clause operating at Q in a nominal group, and is thus rankshifted.

### Unit



Example : She has finished reading this book.

S.	Cl.	Phr	Wd	Morph
1	1	2	6	8

( She/ has/ finish/ ed/ read/ ing/ this/ book = 8)

### **2-Structure:**

This category is the one most familiar to language teachers who have adopted a 'structural' approach. "A structure is thus an arrangement of elements ordered in 'places' The 'elements' making up the structure of the unit clause in English are the Subject, Predicator, Complement and Adjunct, as in: 'The cat(s) caught (P) a mouse (e) last night' (A). A nominal group such as 'the green shed outside' has the structure DE H Q: Determiner (the), Epithet (green), Headnoun (shed) and Qualifier (outside), each of which is a word. Morphemes, being the smallest units on the level of grammar, have no grammatical structure, of course: they are composed of phonological units. On the level of phonology one would say that the words [stri:t] and [lekt.,] have the structures CCCVC and VCCV respectively, where 'C' means consonant and 'V' vowel.

### 3- Class :

The category class describes items which are grammatically similar. There are restrictions on which units can operate at given places in structures. There is one class of the unit phrase which can fill the Predicator slot in the clause: this we call the 'verb phrase'. 'next Thursday' exemplifies a unit phrase which typically occurs as Adjunct: this we may call an instance of the class 'adverbial phrase'. An interlingual class contrast at clause rank is exemplified in:

London is foggy.

\*In London is foggy.

**4- System** : each language allows its speakers choices from sets of elements which are not - unlike the class.choices exemplified above - determined by the place which the element is to occupy in the structure. 'Choice' here means "the selection of one particular term at one particular place on the chain in preference to another term or other terms which are also possible at that place. For example, we must use a nominal phrase to fill the Subject slot in the clause: but we are free to choose between a **singular** and **plural** nominal phrase. When we come to the slot P, we must use a **verb phrase**, but we are free to choose between **past** and **present** tense forms, and simultaneously between **perfect** or **non-perfect**, as well as between **progressive** and **non-progressive** forms in English: there are in English three simultaneous two-term systems from which choices must be made. Systems operate over the domains of units: there are systems of sentences, of clauses, of groups, of words and of morphemes. Typical systems at clause rank are mood, transitivity, theme, and information . The mood system offers a choice between indicative and imperative; if the speaker selects indicative, a second choice is open to him, between declarative and interrogative, and so on.

## Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar

Many of the assumptions underlying Firth's approach to linguistic analysis were carried over into SF linguistics. While there have been many changes of emphasis and direction, Firth's influence and input is still evident. SF theory has retained Firth's focus on text and has built upon and developed his ideas on restricted languages, the context of situation, and on the notions of system and structure. More importantly, however, Firth's influence is evident in the multifaceted and wide-ranging approach to meaning: SF grammar is about meaning, about the resources that are available in a language that allow

us to say and do meaningful things. It is about the lexicogrammatical resources that allow us to make meanings.

### **Context of Situation According to Halliday (Register):**

According to Matthiessen & Halliday “language is embedded in a context of culture or social system, and any instantiation of language as text is embedded in its own context of situation.” Perhaps unsurprisingly, then, SFL divides context into three categories or “dimensions of variation” that correspond to the three metafunctions of language. These are field (ideational metafunction), tenor (interpersonal metafunction), and mode (textual metafunction) , and together they describe a text’s register, the functional variety of a language that evolves in a given context .

**Field** describes the social action, the type of activity taking place, its content and ideas.

**Tenor** refers to the participants; that is, who they are, what roles they have, and what the relationships are between those roles. The third dimension of variation, **mode**, is concerned with “symbolic organization the role the language is playing, participant expectations regarding the language, and the channel of communication.

Example : Jack fell down and broke his crown

- **Field:** content—“describing an accident”; rhyme; non-technical use of language; Processes: material; Participants: Actor (Jack), Goal (his crown); Circumstance: adverb (down)

- **Tenor:** original author unknown; writer to (adult/child) reader, adult reader to child hearer, adult reciting to child hearer, child reciting, etc.; declarative mood

- **Mode:** written text, which can either be read or performed; published in children’s book of rhyme; open readership, primarily aimed at children; unmarked Themes (second Theme elided)

- **Register:** “nursery rhyme”

### **Halliday’s Systemic Functional Grammar :**

**Functional Grammar (What thing does ? )** is used to describe language in actual use and so focus on texts and their contexts. Systemic Functional Grammar or Linguistics, first introduced by Michael Halliday (1985), refers to a new approach to the study of grammar that is radically different from the traditional view in which language is a set of rules for specifying grammatical structures. In this view, language is a resource for making



meanings and hence grammar is a resource for creating meaning by means of wording.

Look Functionally to the clause, the clause configures three kinds of meaning together at the same time.

	Enemies of freedom	attacked	our country.
Exprential metafunction :	<b>Actor</b>	<b>process</b>	<b>goal.</b>
Interpersonal metafunction:	<b>Subject</b>	<b>finite+predictor</b>	<b>complement.</b>
Textual function :	<b>Theme</b>		<b>rheme</b>

## Basic concepts for the study of language:

### Metafunction

what are the basic functions of language, in relation to our ecological and social environment? We suggested two: making sense of our experience, and acting out our social relationships

### Three Metafunctions of Haliday

In Systemic Functional Linguistics, ‘clause’ rather than ‘sentence’ is the unit of analysis. In Systemic theory, a clause is a unit in which meanings of three different kinds are combined. Three distinct structures, each expressing one kind of semantic organization, are mapped onto one another to produce a single wording. These semantic structures are referred to as Meta-functions:

#### (1) The Interpersonal Meta-Function: (how does the text enact attitudes and social relations)

It is expressed through the interpersonal metafunction as a communicative exchange of meanings. Within the interpersonal metafunction **the Subject and the Finite** convey the main interpersonal meanings through their relationship to one another. The Subject, in experiential terms, is the Participant. It is the nominal group that interacts the closest with the Finite. **The Finite**, as part of the verbal group, encodes a writer or speaker’s tense or opinion. Additionally, the event part of the verb is labelled the **Predictor**. A third feature of the clause is called the polarity. The polarity is the positive or negative aspect of a clause. The Subject and the Finite combine with the polarity to create the Mood Block (Mood). In addition to the Mood Block there is also the **Residue**. The **Residue** is the remaining part of the clause made up of the Predictor and any **Compliments or Adjuncts** within the clause. **Compliments** are elements that complete the argument “set up by the clause.” **Adjuncts** are prepositional phrases and adverbs that function to locate the event in time or space and “to indicate the manner of the process not central to the arguability.

### Anna Nicole Smith died last night

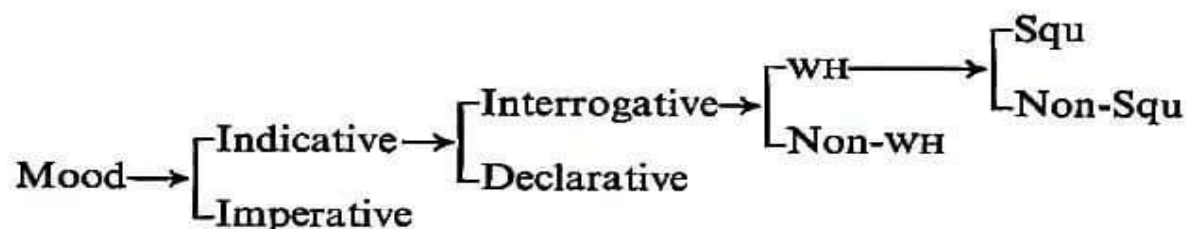
Anna Nicole Smith	died	last night
subject	Finite(past)/ Predicator	Circumstantial Adjunct
Mood	Residue	

### Smith could not stay out of the limelight

Smith	could not	stay	out of the limelight
Subject	Modal Finite (past) negative	Predicator	Circumstantial Adjunct
Mood	Residue		

### Mood system

Example	Mood type
He came from a Southern city of China	Declarative
Did he come from a Southern city of China?	Interrogative: Yes/No
Where does he go ?	Interrogative :wh-q
Open the door	Imperative



### (2) The Ideational Meta-Function (what information does the text contain):

It is concerned with 'ideation', grammatical resources for construing our experience of the world around and inside us. **This meta-function is analyzed in terms of Transitivity system, i.e. a choice between the six processes and the participants and circumstances associated with those processes.** A clause in its ideational function is a means of representing patterns of experience, i.e. to build a mental picture of reality. This is what people employ to make sense of their experience of what goes on around them and inside

them: these going on (processes) are sorted out in the semantic system of the language and expressed through the grammar of the clause. The system that works out the types of process and hence participants in the process and circumstances associated with the process is known as **the Transitivity system**.

They        - played    -tennis        - in the school  
Participant – process – Participant – Circumstance.

### **a-Participants**

Participants are the subjects within a clause and are realized through the use of nominal groups. The Participant constituent can be further divided into Participant roles such as actor, agent, goal, carrier and sayer. Each of the Participant roles corresponds with one of the Processes.

### **b-Circumstances**

Circumstances describe background information for Processes within the clause, such as **time, place and manner**. They are realized by adverbial groups, prepositional phrases and by occasional nominal groups acting as adverbs .

### **c-Processes**

Processes are expressions of “happening, doing, being, saying and thinking” .Processes can be viewed as an event and are the pivotal component of a clause.

The processes as follows:

**1. Material process clause** is the process of doing and happening."Material clauses construe figures of ‘doing-&- happening’. Example:

**The company is giving a new car to my brother.**

-Terrorist        attacked        our country  
**Actor**        **Material p.**        **goal**

-----  
-The whole country is paying    a heavy price  
**Actor**                    **material**                    **Scope**

-----  
- Kerry gave        you        those flies - there  
**Actor – material – recipient – goal**        **– circumstance .**

-She      has poured      herself      a mineral water

**Actor – material – client – goal**

Note : goal is that which is affected by something being done . if it remains unaffected , it is scope .

Note : the recipient takes the preposition (to) the client takes (for).

**2. Mental process clause**, i.e. the process of sensing. According to Halliday (2004)," mental clauses are concerned with our experience of the world of our own consciousness. The other main element in the mental process clause is called the 'Phenomenon'. The phenomenon is that which is thought, felt, wanted or perceived by the 'Senser'. They express mental Phenomenon' such as perception ( see , look , hear ) , reaction ( please, like ) , cognition ( know, believe, convince), Example:

-----  
- My mom   wants      a new teapot.

**Senser - mental p – phenomenon**

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- Ali              saw              the movie

**Senser - mental p – phenomenon**

**3. Relational process clauses** are processes of being and having. The relational clause is realized by the verb 'Be' in the simple present or past. There are three main types of relational clauses which are intensive', 'possessive' and 'circumstantial. These types come in two modes: of being, attributive and identifying. The attributive clauses construe class- membership by ascribing an attribute to some entity (the Carrier and the attribute). The identifying clauses convey some attribute to an identity.

**a- Relational Attributive :**

-she      is              beautiful .

**carrier- relational p - attribute.**

-----  
**Relational Identifying:**

-He              is              lawyer

**Identified relational p – identifier .**

**It has three types:**

**(1) intensive 'x is a'**

-Sarah              is              wise                                      /   Sarah              is                                      the leader

**carrier- relational p - attribute. / Identified - relational p – identifier .**

-----  
**(2) possessive ‘x has a’**

-Peter has a piano the / piano is Peter's  
**carrier- relational p - attribute. / Identified - relational p – identifier**

-----  
**(3) circumstantial ‘x is at a’**

-the fair is on a Tuesday / tomorrow is the 10th  
**carrier- relational p - attribute. / Identified - relational p – identifier**

**4. Behavioural process clauses.** According to Halliday (1994), behavioural clauses are "processes of (typically human) physiological and psychological behaviour, like breathing, coughing, smiling, dreaming and staring" .He adds they are partly like the material and partly like the mental. They are the least distinct of all the six process types because they have no clearly defined characteristics of their own; rather, they are partly like the material and partly like the mental .These clauses have one participant which is Behavior’

- People are laughing .

**Behavior - Behavioural p**

**Types Of Behavioural Processes :**

**[near mental]:** look, watch, stare, listen, think, worry, dream

**[near verbal]** chatter, grumble, talk, gossip, argue, murmur, mouth

**[physiological]:** cry, laugh, smile, frown, sigh, sob, snarl, hiss.

**[other physiological]:** breathe, sneeze, cough, hiccup, burp, faint, shit, yawn, sleep.

**[near material]** bodily postures and pastimes : sing, dance, lie (down), sit (up, down)

**5. Verbal processes,** i.e. processes of saying. These process clauses are an important resource in various kinds of discourse. They contribute to the creation of narrative by making it possible to set up dialogic passages.

-John said ‘I’m hungry’

Sayer Verbal P

**1: Quoting 2: Quoted**

-John said he was hungry.

**Sayer Verbal P**

**1- Reporting 2- Reported**

-they don't talk about your nephews and nieces

**Sayer Verbal P Verbiage**

-He also accused Krishan Kant of conspiring with Bansi

**Sayer Verbal P target**

**6. Existential clauses**, the process of exists or happens. Existential clauses are not regular in discourse, but they provide an important contribution to different types of texts. In narrative, for instance, these clauses are used to introduce different participants. **'There'** when used in existential clauses enables the addressee to prepare for something which represents new information that is about to be introduced. For example:

-There was a historical city near the sea.

**Existential p- existent**

Process Type	Participants
Material = doing or happening	<b>Actor</b> = the one who does the action (doer) <b>Goal</b> = the one to which the process extend (affected) <b>Scope</b> = the one to which the process extend but not affected <b>Beneficiary or client</b> = for whom / which the action occurs <b>Recipient</b> = the receiver of goods or services
Mental = perceiving, thinking, feeling or wanting	<b>Senser = doer</b> <b>Phenomenon</b> = things known, liked/disliked, wanted, perceived
Verbal = saying	<b>Sayer = doer</b> <b>Verbiage</b> = is the function that corresponds to what is said, representing it as a class

	of thing rather than as a report or quote. <b>Receiver</b> = is the one to whom the saying is directed <b>Target</b> = occurs only in a sub-type of 'verbal' clause; this function construes the entity that is targeted by the process of saying
Relational Attributive = being and having: general characteristics of description of a participant.  Relational Identifying being and having: identity, role or meaning of a participant.	Carrier = thing described Attribute = description  Identified = that which is to be identified Identifier = the new
Behavioural process = behaving	Behaver = who is behaving
Existential process = existing	Existent = who / what exists

### (3) The Textual Meta-Function ( how does the text structured and how it is linked with other texts):

It is concerned with the creation of text with the presentation of ideational and interpersonal meanings as information that can be shared by speaker and listener in text unfolding in context. This meta-function consists of two sub-functions, Theme and Rheme.

**(1) Theme in declarative clauses.** In a declarative clause, the typical pattern is one in which Theme is conflated with Subject; The Subject is the element that is chosen as Theme unless there is good reason for choosing something else for example,

-John                      has lost his pen.

**Unmarked Theme              Rheme**

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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, for example, today, suddenly, somewhat distractedly, or prepositional phrase, for example at night, in the corner, without any warning functioning as Adjunct in the clause :

on Saturday night      I lost my wallet

**marked theme                      Rheme**

- 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, as in the examples

You                      I blame for this, that they don't tell us.

**Marked Theme                      Rheme**

(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.

-----  
where                      did you get that from?

**Unmarked Theme                      Rheme**  
-----

Could you                      eat a whole packet of tim tams?

**Unmarked Theme                      Rheme**  
-----

Has he                      got the car back by the way?

**Unmarked Theme                      Rheme**  
-----

**The marked theme in interrogative :**

-on the right                      is it?

**marked Theme                      Rheme**  
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-Now about The Love Song of Alfred J. Prufrock,                      what is that poem about?

**Marked Theme                      Rheme**

(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. For example

-Let's turn it down.

-just place a blank CD in the drive,

**Unmarked Theme Rheme**

- Imperative clauses may have a **marked Theme**, as when a locative Adjunct is thematic in a clause giving directions:

From this crossroads town follow the main road south

**Marked Theme Rheme**

The Adjunct part of a phrasal verb may serve as marked Theme in an imperative clause with an explicit Subject, as in

**Up you get!**

Marked Theme Rheme

Example :

Traditional	The	police	quickly	removed	protesters	from	the	controversial	site
	det	n	adv	v	n	p	det	adj	n
Functional	subject		verb		object	Prepositional phrase			
Experiential	actor		material		goal	circumstances			
interpersonal	mood: declarative		residue						
textual	theme		rheme						