MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE OF UKRAINE STATE UNIVERSITY
“UZHHOROD NATIONAL UNIVERSITY”
UKRAINIAN-HUNGARIAN EDUCATIONAL AND SCIENTIFIC INSTITUTE
HUNGARIAN PHILOLOGY DEPARTMENT

Nataliia Varha

FUNCTIONAL APPROACH TO MASTERING ENGLISH GRAMMAR

ФУНКЦІОНАЛЬНИЙ ПІДХІД ДО ВИВЧЕННЯ ГРАМАТИКИ АНГЛІЙСЬКОЇ МОВИ

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Рецензенти:
кандидат філологічних наук, доцент Зикань Х.І.,
кандидат педагогічних наук, доцент Шпеник С.З.,
кандидат педагогічних наук, доцент Попович І.Є.

Затверджено на засіданні Вченої ради
Українсько-угорського навчально-наукового інституту
ДВНЗ «Ужгородський національний університет»
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1.1 Starting points

A man is driving through a part of the country he doesn't know, and he gets lost in what looks to him like the middle of nowhere, completely deserted. Finally, he sees an old man working in a field, and he stops the car and calls out to him, 'Excuse me, how do I get from here to ...?' (the town depends on which country you hear the story in). The old man thinks for a while, and then he says, 'Well, if I were you I wouldn't start from here.'

What I want this story to highlight is the fact that where you can get to – in language description as in anything else – depends a great deal on where you start from; and that starting from the wrong place may make it much more difficult to get to the desired kind of destination. In the second half of the last century, there built up an immensely influential view of what the study of language should involve which insists that there is only one proper place to start – from a view of language as an abstract set of generalized rules detached from any particular context of use. It would be possible to ignore this view and simply start with the approach that I will be setting out in the book – based on a view of how language functions as a system of human communication. However, a comparison of different possible approaches will help us to understand better not only the destinations that each approach allows us to head for but also the reasons why we might choose one of the approaches in preference to another. Therefore, in this chapter I will briefly outline the approach that was dominant, attempting to show why it was so attractive but also showing why an increasing number of linguists have come to feel that it does not make it easy for us to talk about many of the most central features of language. I will then go on to introduce an alternative

approach which takes full account of those features, and which offers a more appropriate place to start from if we are interested in language in use.

We can begin by looking informally at a bit of language, selected more or less at random. This comes from an advertisement aimed at attracting people to take up nursing as a career. Before reading on, can you decide what aspects of the sentence you might want to consider in providing a linguistic description of it?

Of course, you're unlikely to be attracted to nursing because of the money.

When I have asked students to do this kind of preliminary analysis, some (often those who have learnt English as a foreign language and therefore have more background in traditional grammatical parsing) break it up into its components as far as they can (this is in fact trickier than it might look). They label the parts of the sentence using terms like Subject and Verb, or non-finite verb and prepositional phrase. They may comment on the fact that 'to be attracted' is a passive form, and that the understood Subject is 'you', carried over from the Subject of the preceding verb '(a)re'. Some mention that the structure 'be unlikely to be attracted' is not possible in their own language and that, in a way, it is an illogical structure (since it is not 'you' who are 'unlikely', but 'you being attracted to nursing'). What they are essentially focusing on is what the different parts of the sentence are and how they fit together – in other words, the form.

Most students for whom English is their mother tongue, on the other hand, focus on issues such as who exactly 'you' is (since the writer is not addressing anyone face to face), and why the writer assumes this about 'you' so confidently ('Of course'). Some pick up on 'you're unlikely to', which softens the possible arrogance of the writer telling 'you' about 'your' own feelings; others comment on the implication that 'you' are likely to be attracted to nursing for other reasons apart from money; and a few wonder why the writer decided not to say 'nursing is unlikely to attract you'. What all these points have in common is that they are concerned with the function of the sentence, what the writer's purpose is in writing the sentence – in other words, with the meaning. Underlying the points, though

not usually made explicit, is also the idea of choice: that there are potentially identifiable reasons why the writer is expressing the message in this particular way rather than in other possible ways.

Both of these ways of looking at the sentence tell us something useful about it, and, in the informal descriptions given here at least, there is a good deal of potential overlap. Any full analysis of the sentence will inevitably need to take account of both the meaning and the form (and of the links between them). However, in order to make the analysis fairly rigorous rather than just an unordered list of points about the sentence, we need to decide on a reasonably systematic method; and in practice this involves choosing between form and meaning as our starting point. This may at first seem simply a difference in emphasis, but, if carried through consistently, each approach in fact ends up with a strikingly different kind of description of language.

1.1.1 Going in through form

The most fully developed and influential version of the approach through form is that proposed by Noam Chomsky and his followers, originally known as the TG (Transformational–Generative) approach, although a number of variations have developed from that starting point. Chomsky insisted that linguistics should go beyond merely describing syntactic structures, and aim to explain why language is structured in the way it is – which includes explaining why other kinds of structures are *not* found. He argued that, in order to do this adequately, it was essential to make language description absolutely *explicit*. Although the aim of TG was not to produce a computer program that could generate language, it was computers that provided the driving metaphor behind the approach. A computer is wonderfully literal: it cannot interpret what you mean, and will do exactly – and only – what you tell it to do. Therefore instructions to the computer have to be explicit and unambiguous: this includes giving them in exactly the right order, so

that each step in an operation has the required input from preceding steps, and formulating them so as to avoid triggering any unwanted operations by mistake. TG set out to provide rules of this kind for the formation of grammatically correct sentences. (Note that the following outline describes TG in its early form. The theory has changed radically since the 1960s, becoming more abstract and more powerful in its explanatory force; but the basic concerns, and the kind of facts about language that it attempts to explain, have remained essentially the same.)

In setting up its rules, TG started from another deceptively simple insight: that every verb has a Subject, and that understanding a sentence means above all identifying the Subject for each verb. In English, Subjects normally appear in front of the verb, so it might be thought that identifying them would be too easy to be interesting. However, there are many cases where the Subject does not appear in the 'right' position – or does not appear at all (we have already seen that the Subject of 'to be attracted' has to be carried over from a different verb). We are so skilled at understanding who does what in a sentence that we typically do not even notice that in such cases we have to interpret something that is not explicitly said. One well- known example used by Chomsky was the pair of sentences:

John is eager to please. John is easy to please.

These appear, on the surface, to have the same structure; but in fact we understand that in the first case it is John who does the pleasing (i.e. is the understood Subject of 'to please'), while in the second it is an unnamed person or thing (and 'John' is understood as the Object of 'to please'). This game of 'hunt the Subject' can become even more complex and exciting – the kind of (invented) sentence that made TG linguists salivate with delight is the following:

Which burglar did the policeman say Mary thought had shot himself?

Here, we understand that the Subject of 'had shot' is 'which burglar' – even though there are two other possible nouns that are candidates for the Subject role ('the policeman' and 'Mary') in between. Adding to the excitement is the fact that

we also understand that ‘himself’ refers to the burglar, even though ‘the policeman’ is closer in the sentence; whereas, if we replaced it with ‘him’, it might refer to the policeman or another male person, but it could not refer to the burglar. But how do we understand all this? And how can the linguist show, in an explicit way, what it is that we actually understand? One problem is that, in order to label part of the sentence as ‘Subject’, we have first had to identify that part as having a particular relation to the verb (the ‘doer’ of the verb rather than the Object or ‘done- to’): in other words, we have actually jumped over the initial stage. That means that our description is not in fact fully explicit. We need to work with labels that tell us what each constituent is in itself, not what it does in the sentence. At the same time, we also need to show where each constituent fits in the basic structure. Chomsky’s famous first rule captured this:

$S \rightarrow NP \quad VP$

This is a non-verbal (and thus apparently less ambiguous) way of saying that every sentence in a language consists of a noun phrase followed by a verb phrase – if it does not show these features it is not a grammatically acceptable ‘sentence’. It has to be borne in mind that S actually refers to a clause rather than what is traditionally called a sentence (in some later versions of the approach, the label ‘IP’, standing for inflectional phrase, was used instead); and VP here includes everything in the clause apart from the first NP. Translated into over-simple functional terms, it means in effect that every clause must have a verb and every verb must have a Subject. Using this rule, the underlying meanings of our ‘burglar’ example can be set out as follows, with each of the three clauses in the sentence labelled as an S (the inverted commas round the words signal that we are dealing with the abstract concepts that the words refer to rather than the words themselves):

$S_1 \rightarrow$	NP [‘the policeman’]	VP [‘did say’ (something)]

$S_2 \rightarrow$	NP ['Mary']	VP ['thought' (something)]
$S_3 \rightarrow$	NP ['which burglar']	VP ['had shot himself']

Note that this analysis also begins to elucidate why 'himself' refers to the burglar. When the Object of a verb refers to the same entity as the Subject, a reflexive pronoun is normally used: compare 'Mary washed her' and 'Mary washed herself'.

As the final S above suggests, the VP element does not only include the verb but any other elements that depend on the verb. We can therefore go on splitting the clause elements into their component parts until we reach the basic constituents (essentially words, though with some exceptions). This splitting up must, however, be done in the correct sequence in order to show the dependencies between different parts of the clause correctly. For example, two (simplified) further rules are:

VP →V NP

NP →Det N

The first rule allows us to show that some verb phrases consist of a verb and a noun phrase (a noun phrase in this position is traditionally called the Object). This accounts for the VP in S_3 above:

VP→	V ['had shot']	NP ['himself']

The second rule allows us to analyse within the noun phrase, and to show that it may consist of a determiner (e.g. 'the') and a noun (e.g. 'policeman').

However, we have not yet dealt with the VP in S_1 or S_2. This will allow us to show how $S_{1–3}$ combine into the sentence as we actually see it. Although the operation is immensely complex in practice, it is simple in theory: it turns out that we can identify not only a finite set of explicit rules governing the possible combinations (the complexity comes especially from the interaction between the rules), but, more crucially, an even more restricted set of underlying regularities in the type of rules that are possible. The crucial rule that we need to add is:

VP → V S

This rule means that verb phrases may include not only a verb (V) but also another S (this is technically known as recursion: a clause appears where the Object might be). This may be easier to grasp if we revise the analysis of our example to take these new rules into account:

S_1→	NP	VP→	[V S]
	[‘the policeman’]		[[‘did say’] [‘S_2’]]
S_2→	NP	VP→	[V S]
	[‘Mary’]		[[‘thought’] [‘S_3’]]
S_3→	NP	VP→	[V NP]
	[‘which burglar’]		[‘had shot’] [‘himself']

I have concentrated so far on the Subject in the clauses, but exactly the same kind of analysis can be done for Objects and other clause constituents that appear in the ‘wrong’ place or that govern the form and interpretation of other constituents (as ‘which burglar’ governs the interpretation of ‘himself’). What are the $S_{1–3}$ underlying this version of the example?

Which burglar did the policeman say Mary told him she had shot?

It is perhaps surprising that, using such apparently marginal examples, the approach should have thrown so much light on how sentences are structured; and yet the insights gained have been extensive and in some ways revolutionary. For our present purposes, however, it is less important to look at these discoveries in any detail than to consider where the approach leads us. The first thing to say is that this approach is almost exclusively interested in what we can call '**propositional meaning**' – the 'content' of the sentence (note that, from this point, bold typeface will be used when an important technical term is introduced). The following two sentences have exactly the same propositional content and therefore the same analysis in terms of Ss:

The burglar had shot himself.		Had the burglar shot himself?		
$S_1 \rightarrow$	NP ['the burglar']	VP →	[V ['had shot']	NP] ['himself']

The difference in surface form ('The burglar had' vs. 'Had the burglar') results from rules that allow the auxiliary 'did' to appear in front of the NP as the S transforms into the sentences. On the other hand, the fact that a statement and a question serve entirely different functions in communication is regarded as irrelevant in the grammatical analysis – it is taken into account in a different part of the linguistic description (though there was relatively little interest in developing that part within the approach). Chomsky made a principled decision to exclude how we use sentences in communication (e.g. as statements or questions): the model is not designed to show, for example, that one sentence functions as the answer to a preceding question. The aim is to discover the rules that govern how constituents can be put together to form grammatically correct

sentences, and to formulate these rules in as general a way as possible (ideally, so that they apply to all human language rather than just individual languages); therefore each sentence is analysed in complete isolation, both from other sentences and from the situations in which it might be used. This limitation is self- imposed because generative linguists feel that it is only worth describing those aspects of language that can be described 'scientifically' (i.e. with absolute explicitness). The ways in which language is used are thought to be, unfortunately, too messy and are therefore ignored, at least until someone can find a way of describing them according to scientific general laws.

But if the road towards an examination of use is blocked off, where else can we go from this starting point? The answer is inwards, into the brain. The fact that we as language users can handle the complex relations between Ss and clauses/sentences – i.e. we can identify the separate constituents in the sentence and assign them to their correct place in the structure of the appropriate S – tells us, it is argued, a great deal about how our brains must work. At the same time, the fact that we do not need to be explicitly taught how to do this means that we must in some way be born with the required mental capacities. Thus a rigorously formal approach to the description of language leads us towards neurology and genetics. Clearly, these are fascinating and worthwhile areas, but they do involve giving up any idea of looking at language in use. In fact the logic of Chomsky's approach leads him to argue in *On Nature and Language* (2002: 76) that 'language is not properly regarded as a system of communication. It is a system for expressing thought, something quite different.'

1.1.2 Going in through meaning

It may well be possible, and intellectually productive, to view language, as the generative approach does, as a system of abstract rules that are applied in order to end up with a grammatically acceptable sentence; but there are grave doubts about whether this view captures to any useful extent what goes on when users

actually produce or understand language. More importantly, there is little doubt that it does not reflect how the users themselves view language. They respond above all to the meanings that are expressed and the ways in which those meanings are expressed. For the user, despite the clear similarities in terms of propositional content, the following sentences have very different meanings because they are designed to elicit different responses from the addressee (acknowledging, agreeing/confirming or informing):

Colds last seven days on average.

Colds last seven days on average, don't they? Do colds last seven days on average?

Similarly, there are important differences between the following sentences because of the speaker's choice of a formal or colloquial wording:

Would you mind helping me with this? Can you gissa hand [= give me a hand]?

The syntactic underpinning in the examples above is of course essential in expressing the different meanings, but only as a tool that enables what most people see as the primary function of language – communicating meanings in particular contexts – to be carried out. As always, the exact nature of the tool used depends on the task in hand. In linguistic terms, we can express this as the assumption that, if we start from the premise that language has evolved for the function of communication, this must have a direct and controlling effect on its design features – in other words, the form of language can be substantially explained by examining its functions. Of course, we need to take into account the constraints of the 'raw materials': the pre-determined (genetic) characteristics of the human brain that allow or encourage certain kinds of language forms, and disallow or discourage other kinds. Generative approaches provide a possible way of investigating those characteristics (though their validity has been increasingly questioned). But they clearly represent only half the story: we still need to examine the formative influences of the uses to which language is put. (We can

see the contrast between the two approaches as a reflection of the old dichotomy of nature vs. nurture – and, as always, the answer is most likely to lie in a combination of both.)

What happens, then, if we head in the other direction and (like language users) start from meaning? The meanings that we may want to express, or the uses to which we may want to put language, are clearly 'messy': they appear so varied and so dependent on the infinite range of different contexts that it is difficult at first to see how we might impose some order on them. However, if we look at the grammatical options open to us, we can in fact relate those options fairly systematically to different kinds of meanings. Let us take just two examples of areas that we will examine in more detail later. We can relate the presence of modal verbs to (amongst other things) expressing the speaker's feeling that what they are saying needs to be negotiated with the addressee. In the following example, the speaker evaluates 'this seeming strange at first' as only potentially valid ('may') to show awareness of the fact that s/he cannot be sure whether it does seem strange to the addressee:

This *may* seem strange at first.

And we can relate the ordering of parts of the clause to the speaker's desire to signal how this message fits in with the preceding message(s). Compare what comes first in the second sentences in each of these pairs (and think about why the order is different, and whether the second sentences could be swapped):

What is a platelet? *A platelet* is a disc-shaped element in the blood that is involved in blood clotting.

One kind of blood cell is a disc-shaped element that is involved in blood clotting. *This* is called a platelet.

It may seem odd (note my use of 'may' to avoid imposing this opinion on you!) to say that ordering in the clause has 'meaning'; but it is only odd if we restrict meaning to 'propositional meaning' – which, as I have suggested, is a narrower definition than we want. If we take meaning as being the sum of what the speaker wants the hearer to understand – in other words, if we equate the **meaning** of a sentence with its **function** – then understanding how the present message fits in its context is clearly part of the meaning, just as the difference between a statement and a question is part of the meaning.

In describing the various kinds of meanings in this fairly general way (e.g. 'signalling how this message fits in with the preceding message(s)'), we are already beginning to set up categories of functions that we perform through language; and we can then go back to texts to see if there are other grammatical features that seem to be performing the same kind of function. But we are still in danger of ending up with a fairly random- seeming list of functions. Is there any way of arriving at an even more generalized grouping of meaning types, so that we can start to explain why we find the particular kinds of functions that we do? For this, we need to step back and, rather than looking at language structures, think about what we do with language. In the broadest terms, we use language to talk about things and events ('It's raining') and to get things done ('Sit down'). As we shall see, these are not mutually exclusive (the command 'Sit down' involves reference to the particular event of sitting rather than any other; and telling someone that it's raining has the effect of changing their knowledge): indeed, the basic principle is that every time we use language we are doing both simultaneously. We will also see that we need to add a third major function, a kind of language-internal 'service function'; but, having simply established here that it is possible to identify a very small number of broad functions, we can leave further specification until, in Lecture 3, we start exploring how these major functions can be used to illuminate and explain the choices that are available in language.

I have at several points used the term '**choice**' in discussing meanings. If we want to examine what a piece of language is intended to do (i.e. its function), we cannot avoid thinking in terms of choice. Clearly, speakers do not go round producing de-contextualized grammatically correct sentences: they have reasons for saying something, and for saying it in the way they do. To take a simple example, if you want to find out some information you are most likely to ask a question rather than make a statement; and, at a more detailed level, you are more likely to use an informal wording if you are talking to a friend rather than a formal one:

What the hell was that noise?

But note that, in describing the example in this way, we have in fact set up two sets of context-dependent choices: question vs. statement, informal vs. formal. If you have reasons for doing (saying) one thing, the implication is that you could have done (said) something else if the reasons (the context) had been different.

Functional Grammar sets out to investigate what the range of relevant choices are, both in the kinds of meanings that we might want to express (or functions that we might want to perform) and in the kinds of wordings that we can use to express these meanings; and to match these two sets of choices. In order to identify meaning choices, we have to look outwards at the **context**: what, in the kind of society we live in, do we typically need or want to say? What are the contextual factors that make one set of meanings more appropriate or likely to be expressed than another? But at the same time we need to identify the linguistic options (i.e. the lexical and structural possibilities that the language system offers for use), and to explore the meanings that each option expresses. These are complementary perspectives on the same phenomenon: one, as it were, from the bottom up – from wording to context – and the other from the top down – from context to wording. Looking from the bottom up, the use of the 'the hell' in the question above means – i.e. has the function of expressing – informality (amongst other things): in other words, one thing that our grammatical description must account for is the lexical and structural means by which different degrees of

formality are expressed. Looking from the top down, the fact that the speaker is talking to a friend makes appropriate the use of informal wordings: in other words, we need a description of the social context which includes degrees of familiarity between people interacting with each other as a relevant factor influencing their language choices.

Note that the use of the term ‘choice’ does not necessarily imply a conscious process of selection by the speaker: what we aim to uncover through a functional analysis are the meaning-wording options that are available in the language system and the factors that lead the speaker to produce a particular wording rather than any other in a particular context (in some ways, it would almost be as true to talk of the wording choosing the speaker). In writing this book, there are certain choices that I am very aware of making – e.g. I have consciously set out to sound ‘interactive’ in this book, and so I sometimes address ‘you’ directly rather than always avoiding this by using passives, etc. (both options are possible in a textbook, whereas in academic journal articles, for example, direct address to the reader as ‘you’ is very rare indeed). But there are many ‘choices’ that I am constrained to make by the kind of context in which I am using language: for example, it is very unlikely that I will use the structures associated with swearing, except perhaps in quotes. It is only in consciously trying to imagine the ‘wrong’ choices that such choices even present themselves as possible: but the choice not to swear has nevertheless been made (or, rather, made for me). These are deliberately crude examples; but the principle applies in every detail of the wordings that I ‘choose’.

One important implication of the functional view of language is that context and language are interdependent. This might seem too strong a way of putting it: it looks as though language could be seen as dependent on context. For example, a teacher may ask ‘display’ questions to which s/he already knows the answer, and to evaluate the answer given by a pupil as correct or not:

Teacher:	What is the woman wearing on her head?
Student:	A hat?
Teacher:	A hat, yes.

One could assume that this is 'allowed' because of the classroom context, where the teacher has a particular kind of authority; but it is equally true to say that, by speaking in this way, the teacher and student are contributing to creating the context as being that of a classroom interaction. If the same teacher behaved like this with the same student when they happened to meet in the street, it would almost certainly be inappropriate because it would project the context as if it were the classroom. Similarly, if a TV journalist interviewing a government minister asked a display question and evaluated the minister's answer as correct, it would sound odd precisely because it would conjure up the wrong context, with the wrong relationship between the two speakers. We can use the term '**construe**' to talk about this kind of reflexivity. The question and evaluation of the response construe a classroom context: that is, they simultaneously reflect and construct that context. To take a different example, 'the glass broke' construes a slightly different view of events from 'I broke the glass' (hinging on the question of agency – see Lecture 5).

At a broader level, our experiences in the world clearly influence what we normally talk about and the way we talk about it. For example, we constantly adjust the way we talk to the person we are speaking to so as to take into account what we think they already know, and to negotiate our moment-by-moment relationship with them (as I am doing with you – note how I have chosen to use the more interactive 'we' here rather than, say, 'speakers'); and the lexical and grammatical resources of the language therefore offer ways of conducting this negotiation. At the same time, the way we normally talk about these experiences (and the way we hear other people talk about them) influences the way we see

them: for example, we generally accept without conscious query the fact that advertisers talk about their products as solutions to our problems (as opposed to talking about our willingness to pay for the products as the solution to the advertisers' problems, which is at least equally valid a view).

By formulating our approach to linguistic description in the kind of terms used above – choices amongst relevant options in context – we are deliberately opening up the path towards grammatically based text analysis (where '**text**' means any instance of language in use): at each stage, we can ask why the writer or speaker is expressing this particular meaning in this particular way at this particular point. I mentioned earlier that generative approaches take linguistics towards biology; functional grammar takes it towards sociology: the systematic study of relevant features in the culture and society that form the context in which language is used, and which are at the same time constructed by the way in which language is used. Both approaches, through form and meaning, ask essentially the same question about language: how can we explain why language has the main features that it does? But whereas the form-based approach finds the answer in the way our brains are structured, the meaning-based approach finds it in the way our social context is structured. (Of course, the different answers depend very largely on the fact that each approach takes a different view of the 'main features' that need to be explained.) Although our focus in the rest of the book will be on choices within the grammatical systems, we shall be regularly looking outwards towards the wider contextual factors that are construed by these choices.

1.2 Language, context and function: a preliminary exploration

If it is true that language and context are inextricably linked, any naturally occurring stretch of language should, to a greater or lesser extent, come trailing clouds of context with it: we should be able to deduce a great deal about the context in which the language was produced, the purpose for which it was

produced, and the reasons why it was expressed in the way it was. (This is why formal linguists generally prefer invented examples: a pseudo-sentence like the burglar example above is designed to give no clues about 'distracting' elements such as who might have uttered these words, in what circumstances or why.) We can check this context-embeddedness of real language in a preliminary way by looking at a simple example. I have deliberately chosen one that conjures up a very clear context; but can you go from that to explain as much as possible about the language choices in terms of who the interactants are and what the speaker's purposes are? My commentary follows, but you will find it useful to try your own analysis before reading it.

Once upon a time, there was a big, bad bear.

The context is obviously a fairy story, probably told by an adult to a young child. This is most clearly signalled by 'Once upon a time', which is used almost only in fairy stories (so much so that, if used in another context, it conjures up the very specific fairy-tale context, however fleetingly). The individual story teller hardly needs to 'choose' this opening: he knows that this is how fairy stories start. However, it is worth considering why this type of narrative should have such an immediately recognizable opening. One important factor is the addressee: a relatively unsophisticated language user, for whom very clear signals of purpose are necessary. The conventional opening signals something like: 'I'm not going to tell you to do anything; I'm not going to scold you; all you need to do is to sit back and enjoy the story that is coming up.' In addition, although the expression belongs grammatically to the group of adverbials that specify time ('Once', 'Yesterday', 'Three years ago', etc.), it clearly does not in fact specify a real time. It thus signals that the narrative is a fictional one rather than, say, an account of what the teller did last year.

The clause structure ('there was ...') is an existential one (see 5.2.5). It introduces one of the main characters without saying that the bear was involved in any particular action – the action will presumably start in the next clause. Thus it

stages the information, building up the story in increments that are manageable to the inexperienced language processor to whom the story is addressed. What we are told about the bear apart from its existence is that it is big and bad. The alliteration is obviously striking here: it appeals to children's pleasure in incidental patternings of sound, rather like wordplay at a more sophisticated level (in many adult texts we are more likely to rewrite something to remove alliteration if it happens to occur). At the same time, it serves to reinforce the non-real, poetic nature of the story, perhaps reducing the potential scariness of the animal (cf. the effect of 'an enormous, savage bear'). It is also worth commenting on the fact that the speaker evaluates the character as he introduces it. In sophisticated narratives such as novels, we expect to be skilfully guided towards an evaluation of characters without having the author's evaluation thrust upon us; but here the child is told in advance that the bear is bad. The adult takes on the responsibility of setting out the required set of values for the child, partly no doubt as a reflection of his assessment of the child's restricted ability to do the necessary inferencing for himself. In addition, the evaluation opens up generic expectations of how the story will unfold: the bear will somehow cause problems for the good characters who will appear in a moment, but will in the end be defeated. Children learn very rapidly to recognize conventional story lines, as long as the signals are clear enough.

These are only some of the main points that can be made about how this piece of language works in its context – I have not, for example, touched on the broader issues of the role of story-telling in the socialization of children. I have deliberately outlined the points as informally as I can; but what I hope the discussion shows is the kind of features that we want to be able to discuss in a more formalized way. The grammatical system that we set up should provide categories that relate to the communicative purposes and choices that we have identified. In the rest of the book, I shall be setting out a functional approach

based closely on Michael Halliday's work, which allows us to do this in a systematic and satisfying way.

Exercise 1.1

Analyse the following extracts in the same way as the fairy-story opening: identify as much as you can about the context from which the extract comes, and discuss any features of the wording (lexis and structure) that you can relate to that context. The lexis will often provide the easiest clues, but try to go beyond that to identify other features as well.

1. Day return to Liverpool, please.
2. Appearances can be deceptive. But not in this case. The new Mercedes E-class
looks different. And is different. It has the most aerodynamic body we've ever
built. The best in its class.
3. Well you see she wrote this letter saying that she'd been ringing and what we
couldn't understand when we spoke to Liz was she knew you were going to Peru and she knows you don't put the cats in the cattery when you go away so it was obvious where we were.
4. Old Brother Rhys was sitting up beside his neatly made bed, not far from the fire, nodding his ancient, grey-tonsured head. He looked proudly complacent, as one who has got his due against all the odds, stubbly chin jutting, thick old eyebrows bristling in all directions, and the small, sharp eyes beneath almost colourless in their grey pallor, but triumphantly bright.
5. While this handbook will give intending applicants the information they need, students must, in order to obtain up-to-date, full and official information about entrance requirements and courses, write direct to the institutions of their choice at least a year before they hope to begin their

studies, so that they will have decided to which institutions they wish to seek admission, and obtained the necessary application form, well before the closing date for receipt of applications.

6. To make brown rolls divide the dough into 18 equal portions – each should weigh about 50g (2 oz). On an unfloured surface roll each piece of dough into a ball inside your cupped hand. Press down hard at first, then ease up to shape them nicely.

7. In Section 37-2 we found the directions of maximum and minimum intensity in a two-source interference pattern. We may also find the intensity at *any* point in the pattern. To do this, we have to combine the two sinusoidally varying fields (from the two sources) at a point *P* in the radiation pattern, taking proper account of the phase difference of the two waves at point *P*, which results from the path difference.

8. But I am carried back against my will into a childhood where autumn is bonfires, marbles, smoke; I lean against my window fenced from evocations in the air. When I said autumn, autumn broke.

Lecture 2

Identifying clauses and clause constituents

2.1 Breaking up the sentence – and labelling the parts

At this stage, it is possible that the framework that I have set out in Lecture 1 will strike you as rather abstract, and the full implications of adopting the functional approach may not be easy to grasp. There is something of a Catch-22 situation: you can only really understand each aspect of an approach when you have a general framework into which you can fit the various aspects as they are introduced; but you cannot get a firm grip of this framework until you understand most of the aspects. This means that you may find it useful to re-read Lecture 1 after reading the rest of the book (and, anyway, in the final chapter I will come back to some of the themes in the light of the intervening discussion).

In the present chapter I want to turn to some more concrete preliminaries: the ways in which we can split up the sentence into parts, so that we can later go on to look at the particular functions that each part serves. As well as reviewing the different kinds of elements that make up sentences, one of the main purposes of the chapter is to go rapidly over the basic terminology that I will be using. Technical terms that are specific to Hallidayan Functional Grammar, or which are used in a special sense, will be defined and explained as they are introduced in the book. However, there are other terms that I will be assuming are familiar to you – but which I will look at briefly in this chapter, just so that we can confirm that we are on common ground. If you have done grammatical analysis before, you will probably find that most of this chapter tells you nothing new, and you can safely skim through it rapidly (but check section 2.2 on ranks, which organizes the familiar topics in a possibly unfamiliar way). If you are not familiar with grammatical analysis, you may find some of this chapter hard going – but it is a necessary foundation for what follows.

The focus of this book is on clauses and the elements that make up clauses, which is why I will only look briefly in this chapter at the way in which these smaller elements themselves are made up. However, it should be borne in mind that a full account of the grammar of English would include a good deal of discussion of the structure of nominal groups, for example. My main interest is in analysing how clauses function in texts. It would be equally possible, and useful, to write a book looking 'downwards' from the clause at all details of the smaller elements – but that would be a different book.

2.1.1 Recognizing constituents

As a start, I assume that you will be familiar with the main terms for word classes: **noun, verb, adjective, adverb, preposition, auxiliary verb, modal verb, pronoun** and **conjunction**. I also assume that you will be able to recognize them in text. For example, the following sentence includes at least one example of each of the nine word classes listed above. Can you identify them before reading on?
When you are learning about basic law, you will usually find it relatively easy.
Here are the examples of each:

- noun: 'law'
- verbs: 'learning', 'find'
- adjectives: 'basic', 'easy'
- adverbs: 'usually', 'relatively'
- preposition: 'about'
- auxiliary verb: 'are'
- modal verb: 'will'
- pronouns: 'you', 'it'
- conjunction: 'when'.

I also assume that you will be able to recognize when there might be some doubt about which class a word belongs to. For example, in what ways might there be

some hesitation over labelling the word class of the highlighted words in the following examples?

I heard a *car* door slam.

Other visitors, *however*, regret the lack of a residents' lounge.

Heller's music was new. *So* were many of the piano works composed by Schumann.

We came about nine years *ago*.

I am less interested here in deciding on a 'right' label than in showing that there are areas of uncertainty; but, for the record, these are my comments on the underlined words. 'Car' is a noun, but modifying another noun ('door') in a way that seems more typical of an adjective. 'However' is generally classified as an adverb, mainly because adverb is the rag-bag category where words get put if they do not fit anywhere else. 'So' is a pro-form (like a pro-noun), standing in for part of the clause:

it may be called an adverb in grammar books, for the same negative reason as 'therefore'. And 'ago' belongs in a class of its own, since it behaves like no other word in English – it can be described as a postposed adverb.

Moving up from individual words, we will be dealing with **groups**. You will find the analyses in the main part of this book easier to follow if you are familiar with the idea that the words in a clause can often be grouped together into separate components of the clause each consisting of more than one word. For example, we can split the following sentence into three groups, each consisting of two or three words, which represent the elements of the 'doer', the 'action' and the 'done-to' being talked about:

[The little girl] [had eaten] [all the porridge].

Here 'the little girl' and 'all the porridge' are nominal groups (i.e. groups centred around a noun – 'girl' and 'porridge'), while 'had eaten' is a verbal group. Can you identify the parallels between the following sentences in terms of groups?

Charity is business.

This comfortable family-run old farmhouse on the unspoilt southern shore of Ullswater has been a long-time favourite of Guide readers, particularly walkers and climbers.

One aspect of Trollope's reputation that can find no place in the present study is his fame as a writer of travel books.

Although you may not have recognized this at first, each of the four sentences consists of three groups: the middle group in each case comprises a form of the verb 'be' ('is', 'has been', 'is'); everything before the verbal group forms a single nominal group, and so does everything after it. Nominal groups can become very complex, and you may sometimes find it hard to work out where they end. It is usually easy enough to identify the noun at the centre of the group, but the group may include a long **Postmodifier**: this is the part of the nominal group that follows the noun. In the following versions of two of the examples above, the nominal groups are in square brackets, the central noun is in bold and the postmodifiers are in italics.

[This comfortable family-run old **farmhouse** *on the unspoilt southern shore of Ullswater*] has been [a long-time **favourite** *of Guide readers, particularly walkers and climbers*].

[One **aspect** *of Trollope's reputation that can find no place in the present study*] is [his **fame** *as a writer of travel books*].

I will come back to this point in 2.1.2 below, when I look at the nominal group in more detail, and in 2.2, when I discuss the phenomenon of embedding.

One distinction within groups that we need to make is that between **finite** and **non-finite verbal groups** (these are sometimes confusingly referred to as finite and non-finite verbs). This distinction will be discussed briefly in 4.3.6, but it is important particularly in relation to clauses (see next paragraph). A finite verbal group is traditionally defined as one that shows tense, whereas a non-finite group

does not. In the following example, ‘was leaning’ is finite, and ‘listening’ is non-finite:

She was leaning on the banisters, listening to something.

Tense is often shown in the auxiliary rather than in the main verb, as in ‘*was* leaning’: note that ‘leaning’ and ‘listening’ are identical in terms of their form. This helps to explain why I have said that finiteness is a property of the group rather than just of the verb. Can you identify the verbal groups in the following sentences and decide if they are finite or non-finite? Are there any doubtful cases?

She would start with them, ticking off their names after each call.

Bogart did his best to put her at ease by joking with her.

The jobs pay £350 a week and have been created as the plant gears up for the production of new V8 engines for a range of Jaguar cars to replace the ageing XJS.

The clear cases are as follows:

• Finite groups: ‘would start’; ‘did’; ‘pay’, ‘have been created’, ‘gears up’ (a phrasal verb).

• Non-finite groups: ‘ticking off’ (another phrasal verb); ‘to put’; ‘joking’; ‘to replace’.

There is one potentially doubtful case: ‘ageing’. ‘Adjectives’ like this derived from a non-finite verbal form have an uncertain status between verbs and adjectives, but for most purposes they are best taken as adjectives.

Following from this point about verbal groups, I will also be assuming on the whole that you can identify the boundaries of clauses. For our purposes, a **clause** is (potentially) any stretch of language centred around a verbal group. Thus, the following example has four clauses:

The author met her husband in the 1940s, married him in India and lived there before settling in Canada in 1955.

You might like to verify this by identifying the verbs and then marking the clause boundaries. Sometimes it is said that a clause must have a finite verbal group and

that, if there is a non-finite group, we call it a phrase. However, in Hallidayan grammar clauses may be either finite or non-finite, depending on whether the verbal group is finite or non-finite. Can you therefore identify the clause boundaries in the three sentences above that we analysed for finite and non-finite verbal groups?

You should find two clauses in the first sentence (one finite, one non-finite), three in the second (one finite, two non-finite), and four in the third (three finite, one non-finite). But what about this sentence – how many clauses are there in this?

Today, however, she is struggling to finish a sentence, because she is crying.

It seems clear that there are two clauses here, but the first one seems to include two verbal groups, one finite ('is struggling') and one non-finite ('to finish'). However, they are not analysed as two clauses: instead they form one complex verbal group. This point will be discussed further in Chapter 5. And what about the following sentence (which you saw above)?

One aspect of Trollope's reputation that can find no place in the present study is his fame as a writer of travel books.

Here, we have a clear finite clause 'that can find no place in the present study', but it is 'inside' something that we have already identified as a single nominal group. This is in fact an embedded clause – a concept that will be discussed more fully in 2.2 below.

So far we have simply counted the clauses in a sentence; but we can also look at the relations between the clauses. There are traditional distinctions between **main (independent)** and **subordinate clauses**, and between **coordination** and **subordination**. We can illustrate these distinctions with the following sentence:

Aunt Julia smiled broadly and murmured something about compliments as she released her hand from his grasp.

Here we have two coordinated main clauses '... smiled ... and murmured ...', and a subordinate clause 'as she released ...' Can you identify the main and

subordinate clauses in the examples below? And can you see any differences in the various cases of coordination?

Bedrooms are individually decorated, and while you are having dinner your room is tidied and the beds are folded down.

Although the back door of the cottage could be locked and they had left her the key, an intruder could easily break in through a window.

In the first example, you should find three coordinated main clauses and one subordinate clause ('while ...'); and in the second, one main clause and two coordinated subordinate clauses ('Although ... and ...'). One thing that the analysis shows is that coordination can occur at different levels: between either main clauses or subordinate clauses, and between either finite clauses or non-finite clauses. This is a point we will come back to in Lecture 8.

2.1.2 Structural and functional labels

So far in this chapter, I have avoided using some terms that you might have expected to see, like Subject and Object. This is deliberate, because it is essential in a functional approach to have different sets of labels according to whether we are describing the structure of a stretch of language or its function. Most of the rest of the book focuses on functional labels, for obvious reasons, so I will not spend long on them here; but it will be useful at this point to set out the distinction as clearly as possible. To show the difference, how can you label the following bit of language?

their subsequent affair

You should be able to see that it is a nominal group; but is it Subject or Object? The answer, of course, is that it can be neither until it is used in a clause; and in a clause it can be either:

Their subsequent affair climaxes in a showdown across the House divide. [= Subject] The death of his children overshadows *their subsequent affair*. [= Object]

It can also form part of a different type of clause constituent, an Adjunct (part of the clause that tells us circumstances like when, where, how or – as in the example below – why the event happens):

She got a divorce *because of their subsequent affair*.

As you will see, we are making a distinction between what it is (a nominal group) and what it does (e.g. Subject in the clause). Its structural label remains the same, whereas its functional label is dependent on the grammatical context in which it appears.

One image that you may find it useful to keep in mind as you do analyses is that of **slots** and **fillers**. We can see the clause as having a number of functional slots, such as Subject, which can be filled by elements (groups) with certain kinds of structural qualities. For example, the Subject and Object slots are normally both filled by a nominal group; and so on. We can show this as in Figure 2.1 for the sentence:

He had paid his bill very casually.

types of group	*nominal group (NG), e.g.*	*verbal group (VG), e.g.*	*adverbial group (AG), e.g.*
⇓	[1] He	had paid	very casually
	[2] his bill		
clause functions			
	NG [1] !_____!	VG	AG
	Subject	NG [2]	
		!_____!	!_____!
		!_____!	
		Predicator	Adjunct
		Object	

Figure 2.1 Functional slots and structural fillers

One reason for using this approach is that it allows us to show how the functional slots may in fact be filled by different structural constituents. Most obviously, the Adjunct slot is often filled by a prepositional phrase rather than an adverbial group:

He had paid his bill *by credit card*.

But we can also find, for example, the Subject slot sometimes filled by an adverbial group or an embedded clause:

Tomorrow is another day.

To lose one parent may be regarded as a misfortune.

The traditional labels for the functional slots in the clause give the abbreviation SPOCA: Subject, Predicator, Object, Complement, Adjunct. (Sometimes 'Verb' is used instead of Predicator, but that is mixing a structural label with the functional ones.) In traditional terms, as we have seen above, the Object is the entity that the Subject 'does' the Predicator to. The 'Complement' is used to label a nominal or adjectival group that refers to the same entity as the Subject, or describes the Subject – the Predicator in these cases is a linking verb such as 'be':

The first prize is *a trip to the Bahamas*.

In the end, the choice became *pretty clear*.

An Adjunct is typically an adverbial group or a prepositional phrase giving some kind of background information about the event or state expressed by the Predicator. Just to check, can you label the functional parts of these clauses?

Charity is business.

On the first day I wept bitterly.

She released her hand from his grasp.

In 1969, schools which were based in the town were reorganised.

Their subsequent affair climaxes in a showdown across the House divide.

The analyses are: SPC; ASPA; SPOA; ASP; SPA.

Although we will not be focusing directly on groups in the rest of the book, it is

worth mentioning that we can also analyse nominal groups in functional terms. Nominal groups can be divided into three main functional components: (Premodifier) Head (Postmodifier). The brackets here indicate that two of these components are not always present; but, just as a clause must have a Predicator, so a nominal group must have a Head. Table 2.1 shows the various possibilities from the example sentences above. As can be seen, the Premodifier is simply anything that comes before the Head in the nominal group, and the Postmodifier is anything that follows the Head. The Premodifier includes determiners (such as 'a' and 'the'), adjectives (e.g. 'subsequent') or nouns premodifying the Head (e.g. 'credit'). The main options for the Postmodifier are prepositional phrases (e.g. 'across the House divide') and embedded clauses (e.g. 'which were based in the town'): there will be more on this in 2.2 below.

In Lecture 4, I will be setting out a slightly modified version of the clause labels given above; but, more importantly, I will be introducing a range of other types of functional labels, reflecting the fact that clauses do not express only one kind of meaning (or perform only one kind of function). To reiterate what I have emphasized above, the main point to take from this section is the difference between the two types of labelling: structural and functional. In generative approaches, as I explained in Chapter 1, functional labels are avoided as much as possible, since they are too closely associated with meaning and context and therefore introduce undesirable fuzziness into the description. In functional grammar, on the other hand, we obviously rely primarily on functional labels, but structural labels are used in exploring exactly how different meanings are expressed. To help keep the distinction clear in the discussion to come, I will follow Halliday's custom of using an initial capital letter for all functional labels such as Subject.

Table 2.1 The nominal group

Premodifier	*Head*	*Postmodifier*

	business She	
the first their subsequent credit a	day affair card showdown schools	across the House divide which were based in the town

2.2 Ranks

So far I have been referring in a fairly informal way to the different parts of sentences that we can identify. It will be useful at this point to set up a more systematic approach to looking at the constituents on which our analyses are going to be based.

One way of doing this is by using the theoretical concept of the **rank scale**. This is based on the assumption that we can normally split any meaningful unit at one rank, or level, into smaller units of a different kind at the rank below. Thus, for example, we can divide the following clause into three groups:

[Tensions at work] [could undermine] [your usual sunny optimism]

This analysis represents an explicit claim that we can identify two different ranks – clause and group – and also an implicit claim that the distinction is analytically useful: that the concept of ranks captures something about the way this stretch of language is put together, and that we need a rank between the intuitively identifiable ranks of clause and word. This seems justified on a number of grounds: for example, we can move the groups around as complete units in different grammatical structures while keeping recognizably the same propositional meaning (although, of course, the functional meaning will change):

[Your usual sunny optimism], [tensions at work] [could undermine]
What [could undermine] [your usual sunny optimism] is [tensions at work]
[Your usual sunny optimism] [could be undermined] by [tensions at work]

The groups themselves can clearly be divided further, into **words** at the next rank – for example:

[{your}{usual}{sunny}{optimism}]

This division is intuitively necessary (we do, after all, separate words by spaces in writing, which indicates that we think of them as separate elements), but, equally importantly, it corresponds to identifiable functional divisions: each word clearly contributes a distinct element to the meaning of the group. We can in fact go to a rank below the word and identify meaningful units that make up words. These are not, as one might perhaps expect, letters or sounds, or even syllables: those are not in themselves meaningful (the letter 'o' and the syllable 'ti' in 'optimism' do not mean anything), and they need to be dealt with in a completely different part of the description of the language. The smallest meaningful units are **morphemes**. For example, 'sunny' can be analysed as the lexical morpheme 'sun-' plus the grammatical morpheme '-(n)y' (which changes the noun into an adjective – compare 'fun/ funny'). In a similar way 'optimism' can be analysed as 'optim-' plus '-ism': 'optim-' is not a free lexical morpheme as 'sun' is, but it combines with several grammatical morphemes such as '-ist', '-ize' and '-al' and makes a similar contribution to the meaning of each resulting word. We therefore have a rank scale consisting of the following four ranks: clause, group, word, morpheme.

There are two important aspects of the rank scale hypothesis that need to be made explicit. The first is that units at each rank can be made up only of units from the rank below: a clause is therefore taken to consist of groups, not of words. Of course, a group, for example, may consist of a single word:

[{Christmas}] [{starts}] [{here}]

Nevertheless, it is as a group that each unit functions in the clause (each group here could be expanded: e.g. '[Our Christmas] [will start] [right here]'). The second is that the analysis is, in principle, exhaustive: every element is accounted for at each rank. We cannot have 'spare bits' floating around in the clause – in principle, every word has a function as part of a group and every group has a function as part of a clause (although in practice this requirement has to be relaxed).

You may wonder why there is no 'sentence' rank above clause. The main reason is that we can adequately account for sentences by introducing the concept of **clause complexes**: two or more clauses linked by coordination and/or subordination in a larger structural unit. This sounds very like the traditional description of a sentence. However, as you will know if you have ever tried to transcribe an informal conversation, the sentence is an idealization of the written language which it is often difficult to impose on spoken language. We also find that full stops, which mark the boundaries of sentences in writing, may in some kinds of texts be used between clauses that are grammatically dependent on each other:

Ticket agencies then resold them for $400. Thus capitalising on the unique skill of this specialised workforce.

The term '**sentence**' is therefore best reserved to label stretches of written text bounded by full stops or the equivalent. Typically, written sentences correspond to clause complexes – but not always (the example above comprises two sentences but one clause complex). A more theoretical reason for not including the sentence as a separate rank is the fact that two clauses may be combined into a complex unit, but the choices (slots) available in the second clause are basically the same as in the first. As we move from group to clause, the set of options is very different: in the group we have no equivalent, for example, of the Subject slot in the clause. But there is no such clear-cut change as we move from clause to clause complex: the same SPOCA slots recur. An image that I find useful is

that of a tandem: it is different from a bicycle – it has two crossbars, two seats and two sets of handlebars – and yet functionally it is still the same sort of machine as a bicycle (not least because it consists mainly of the same structural elements like handlebars).

If the image of the clause complex as a tandem does not appeal, you may find it easier to grasp the idea of complexes at group rank. In a clause like the following, it is reasonably easy to accept that we have only one Subject (in italics):

A huge sofa and two armchairs surrounded the fireplace.

But the Subject consists of two nominal elements, either of which could be Subject on its own, with a third element ('and') linking them into a single complex unit. The clause complex is simply a parallel phenomenon at the next rank up. As one might predict, it is also possible to identify word complexes (e.g. 'These play an *essential though unexplained* role') and, more rarely, morpheme complexes (e.g. '*pro- and anti-* marketeers'); but these are linguistic resources that are not as regularly drawn on in expressing meanings as complexes at the two upper ranks are, and we will not deal with them in any further detail.

Figure 2.2 gives an overview of the rank scale as outlined so far (the reasons for the number of slashes around clauses will become clear in Chapter 8).

clauses → *combine* *into* ↓ e.g. Computer facilities are free of charge *are made up of one or more* **groups** → *combine* *into* ↓ e.g. [computer facilities] [are] [free of charge] *are made up of one or more* **words**	**clause complexes** e.g. If this applies to you / tick this box. **group complexes** e.g. [Mark \\ and I] [tried \ to help]

↓ e.g. [{computer} {facilities}] *are made up of one or more* **morphemes** e.g. {<compute><er>} {<facility><s>}	

Figure 2.2 The rank scale

This deceptively simple picture needs two main additions to make it fit most of the observable phenomena. The first is the inclusion of **prepositional phrases**. They lie at roughly the same level as groups, though Halliday and Matthiessen (2014: 437) point out that they have arrived there from different directions: the group is 'an expansion of a word' (I mentioned above that it may in fact consist of a single word), whereas the phrase is 'a contraction of a clause' (it must consist of at least two different parts, the preposition and the nominal group dependent on it). The prepositional phrases in the following examples are in italics:

Her education had been completed *in Switzerland*.

We drove *for a couple of hours into the mountains* and arrived *at a hotel*.

It is worth remembering that prepositional phrases can be used either as Adjuncts, as in these examples, or as part of nominal groups; and it can sometimes be easy to get these confused. The following newspaper headline could have two different meanings (though of course only one was intended): what are they?

Police subdue man *with a carving knife*.

If the prepositional phrase is read as an Adjunct, it explains how police subdued the man (rather brutally!); if it is read as part of the nominal group, it describes the man.

The second addition is the concept of **embedding**. This is a general principle that allows a unit to be expanded by the inclusion of another unit from a higher or, in some cases, the same rank. This is a phenomenon that will crop up at several points (e.g. in discussing the identification of the Subject in 4.3.2), so I will only

give a few examples here. The main site for embedding is the Postmodifier in the nominal group. Very frequently, this has a prepositional phrase embedded in it:

[Tumours *of the cervical spine*] are rare.

[Experiments *in the dehydration and evaporation of milk*] were also taking place at this time.

You can check that all the words in square brackets above need to be included in their group by thinking about the groups as answers to questions: e.g. 'What are rare?' 'Tumours of the cervical spine' (not just 'Tumours'). Since a prepositional phrase itself includes a nominal group, that nominal group may have another prepositional phrase embedded in it (e.g. 'of milk' in the second example above) – and the embedding can obviously be repeated again, certainly more than once without sounding odd:

... has put forward [a proposal *for the doubling of the assisted places scheme for independent schools in the area*].

This nominal group can be seen as constructed in the following way:

the area → independent schools in the area → the assisted places scheme for independent schools in the area → the doubling of the assisted places scheme for independent schools in the area → a proposal for the doubling of the assisted places scheme for independent schools in the area

A nominal group may also have a clause embedded in it as the Postmodifier:

It is impossible to trace [all the influences *which led to the Gothic revival in architecture*]. But [the idea *that this new method could bring profits*] soon drew other manufacturers into the field.

They showed [no disposition *to chat*].

This structure can be less easy to identify at first, but it is so frequent in the language that it cannot be overlooked. Again, you can check that the embedded clause is part of the nominal group by thinking about the group as the answer to a question – e.g. 'What drew other manufacturers into the field?' Some Postmodifiers can consist of a combination of embedded prepositional phrases

and clauses. I have marked the boundary between the prepositional phrase and the clause with a slash in this example:

[The questions *of marriage and the succession/which remained the chief matters of contention between Elizabeth and her parliaments*] sprang from satisfaction with her rule ...

It is worth noting that an embedded clause may function by itself as the equivalent of a nominal group:

[*That there had soon been a reconciliation*] was due to Albert. [*What really happened*] cannot be definitely established. She never knew [*what had happened between the two men*].

There are other types of embedding, as we shall see in later chapters; but at this stage it is mainly important to grasp the principle. The term '**ranking clause**' is used to distinguish non-embedded from embedded clauses. If we mark the clause boundaries with slashes, we can see that the first example below consists of one ranking clause, whereas the second consists of two, one independent and the other dependent (and thus we have a clause complex):

That there had soon been a reconciliation was due to Albert Use strawberries/when raspberries are not available

There are certain problems with the rank scale as a way of looking at the structure of clauses. We do not need to go into most of them, since we will only be using the rank scale as a practical starting point and can overlook theoretical objections. However, there is one that will come up especially in Chapter 4. The rank scale prioritizes the view of the clause in terms of constituents – but there are times when we will want to examine elements in the clause that do not fit easily in the scale. I said above that only groups, not words, have a function at the level of the clause; but in Chapter 4, for example, we will be focusing on the Finite, which has a crucial function directly at clause level, but which does not constitute a group (or even a word in some cases). Similarly, in a sentence like the following:

He felt *certain* there *must* be a clue he had forgotten.

both ‘certain’ and ‘must’ are clearly contributing to expressing the same meaning – his attitude towards the validity of there being a clue – and yet they are very different kinds of constituents which the rank scale will separate, thus obscuring their functional symbiosis.

Nevertheless, despite drawbacks like these, the rank scale provides an extremely useful and systematic basis for the initial analysis of clauses into their constituent parts. Once we have a fairly secure picture of what the main parts are, we can move on to a functional analysis, if necessary adapting or overlooking the divisions made according to the rank scale.

Exercise 2.1

Divide the following sentences into clauses and label them as independent or dependent or embedded. Also decide whether they are finite or non-finite.

1. The reasons for the difference confirm the analysis of Lecture VI.
2. Benn’s strategy was shaped by his analysis of Britain’s economic problems and the political situation as he saw it.
3. Since I had been inoculated against hepatitis before leaving New Zealand, I had never considered it as a risk.
4. Since the middle of June the joint shop-stewards’ committee had been examining the issue of direct action.
5. While you are poised for a significant development on the work and personal front you would be advised to separate fact from fiction.
6. With Mercury’s move forward, you will soon be hearing the news for which you have been waiting.
7. She told me that she had not expected Gareth to react quite so violently.
8. They were probably worrying themselves sick about the delay, but there was nothing we could do about it.

Exercise 2.2

Both texts below are about Elizabeth I, who was Queen of England in the sixteenth century (they have been slightly adapted). The first text is from a website about the history of Britain aimed at young readers, and the second is from an article in an academic journal for historians. Divide the texts into their constituent clauses and groups (and phrases). Identify any embedded clauses. Label the groups/phrases in terms of their function in the clause – SPOCA.

1. Elizabeth was the last sovereign of the house of Tudor. She was born at Greenwich, September 7, 1533. Her childhood was passed in comparative quietness, and she was educated by people who favoured reformed religion.

   In 1554, Elizabeth was confined in the Tower by order of Queen Mary. She narrowly escaped death, because some of the bishops and courtiers advised Mary to order her execution. After she had passed several months in the Tower, she was removed to Woodstock and appeased Mary by professing to be a Roman Catholic.

2. But to understand the genesis of English anti-Catholicism, we must return to the sixteenth century and to the problem of the two queens. We can begin by exploring the linkage between gender and religion that fuelled fears of female rule in the early modern period. Early modern culture defined 'male' and 'female' as polar opposites. This hierarchical dual classification system categorically differentiated between male and female, privileging men over women as both spiritual and rational beings in ways that underpinned social order and hierarchy.

Lecture 3

An overview of Functional Grammar

3.1 Three kinds of meaning

I pointed out in Chapter 1 that, in functional approaches to grammar, meaning is essentially equated with function, and that describing language from this perspective appears at first sight to be a much less manageable task than describing the structures (as we did in Chapter 2). To begin to identify generalizable patterns, we have to stand back and think broadly about what people use language for. A number of different models have been proposed for the kinds of functions that language serves; but, for reasons that I will discuss below, Michael Halliday argues that three kinds of meanings are particularly relevant. These can be summarized in an informal way as follows:

- We use language to talk about our experience of the world, including the worlds in our own minds, to describe events and states and the entities involved in them.
- We also use language to interact with other people, to establish and maintain relations with them, to influence their behaviour, to express our own viewpoint
  on things in the world, and to elicit or change theirs.
- Finally, in using language, we organize our messages in ways that indicate how
  they fit in with the other messages around them and with the wider context in which we are talking or writing.

It might well be possible to establish other sets of categories: for example, some theoreticians have suggested functions such as ‘expressive’ (expressing one’s own feelings and view of the world) as a separate category rather than including it in a broader category as I have done. In Hallidayan Functional Grammar,

however, the three categories above are used as the basis for exploring how meanings are created and understood, because they allow the matching of particular types of functions/meanings with particular patterns of wordings to an extent that other categorizations generally do not.

This idea of matching meanings and wordings is central. Because we are concerned with functional grammar (the study of linguistic forms in relation to the meanings that they express) rather than only semantics (the study of meaning) – we have to keep firmly in mind the wordings that people use in order to carry out these functions. In the second edition of his *Introduction to Functional Grammar*, Michael Halliday (1994) expressed this idea very explicitly. (Note that Halliday uses the term 'lexicogrammar' to capture his view that lexis and grammar form a continuum of linguistic resources for the expression of meaning, with lexis as the most delicate set of choices and grammar as the most general.)

> all the categories [of analysis] employed must be clearly 'there' in the grammar of the language. They are not set up simply to label differences in meaning. In other words, we do not argue: 'these two sets of examples differ in meaning; therefore they must be systematically distinct in the grammar.' They may be; but if there is no lexicogrammatical reflex of the distinction, they are not.
>
> (Halliday, 1994: xix)

This means that we can formulate the question that we need to answer in a more precise way: how do we go about relating in a systematic way the functions performed by speakers to the wordings that they choose?

In Chapter 1, I mentioned some of the more specific types of meanings or functions that can be identified. For example, we can set up a group of meanings relating to what the speaker expects the hearer to do (e.g. the functional difference between giving information and asking for information); and we can match these with sets of lexicogrammatical resources typically used to express the meanings, including different choices in the ordering of certain elements in the clause ('you are' vs. 'are you?'). Another group is meanings relating to the speaker's

assessment of the validity of his/her proposition; these meanings are typically expressed by the use of the modality resources of the language ('may', 'possibly', etc.). A different kind of grouping is related to signalling how the message fits in with (makes sense in relation to) what else is said around it; these meanings are expressed, amongst other things, by the ordering of the constituents of the clause. Up to this point, then, we have considered meaning differences like those exemplified in the following rewordings:

She bought the CD on Friday.	vs.	Did she buy the CD on Friday?
She bought the CD on Friday.	vs.	She may have bought the CD on Friday.
She bought the CD on Friday.	vs.	On Friday she bought the CD.

We also need to account in the grammar for meaning differences like the following, to which I have deliberately not paid much attention so far:

She bought the CD on Friday.	vs.	She loved the CD on Friday.
She bought the CD on Friday.	vs.	Friday saw her buy the CD.

These are probably the kinds of differences in meaning that spring most easily to mind: different wordings used to refer to different objects, ideas, states and events in the world (in other words, the propositional meaning – see section 1.1.1). These differences are obviously very important, and we will focus on them in Chapter 5. The reason why I have appeared to downplay them is that they are sometimes taken to represent the only, or at least the dominant, kind of meaning that needs

to be considered; but within Functional Grammar, they represent only one of three broad types of meanings that are recognized. It is important to understand that each of the three types contributes equally to the meaning of the message as a whole. If we only take account of the different objects or events referred to (e.g. 'buying' vs. 'loving'), we end up with an impoverished, one-dimensional view of meaning. It is also important to understand that each of the three types of meaning is typically expressed by different aspects of the wording of the clause.

3.1.1 The three metafunctions

As we explore the lexicogrammar, it becomes clear that the many different sets of choices that are available to language users, such as those mentioned above, fall into three main groups. The choices within each group interact with each other in different ways, but there is relatively little interaction across the groups. For instance, the choices involved in giving and asking for information interlock with choices in modality, in that it may be the position of the modal verb that indicates whether the speaker is giving or asking for information (e.g. 'he must' vs. 'must he?'); so these belong in the same part of the grammar. On the other hand, the propositional content does not affect these choices: the same propositional content may appear in a statement giving information or in a question asking for information, and the proposition may include modality or not. 'She bought the CD', 'Did she buy the CD?' and 'She may have bought the CD' all express the same propositional content (which can be crudely characterized as she + buy + CD). Thus the resources of wording that express propositional content belong in a different part of the grammar. All the more specific functions can be assigned to one or other of the three broad functions outlined above; and hence we refer to these broad functions as **metafunctions**. The labels for each of the metafunctions are reasonably transparent: the first (using language to talk about the world) is the **experiential**; the second (using language to interact with other people) is the

interpersonal; and the third (organizing language to fit in its context) is the **textual**.

The grammar – that is, the description of the specific matches of function and wording – reflects this three-strand approach, in that it consists of three **components**, each corresponding to one of the metafunctions. For example, the interpersonal component of the grammar is the part where we describe all the options that we have in expressing interpersonal meanings. Each component has its own **systems** of choices: to stay with the interpersonal as the example, the system that includes the choice between interrogative forms (typically used to realize questions) and declarative forms (typically for statements) belongs to the interpersonal component of the grammar; and so does the system that includes the range of different ways of expressing modality. The result of a series of choices from any system is a **structure**. As we shall see in Chapter 4, if the speaker chooses the declarative option, this will typically result in the structure Subject^Finite ('^' means 'followed by'; and 'Finite' is the first auxiliary in the verbal group) – e.g. 'you have'– whereas the interrogative option results in the structure Finite^Subject – e.g. 'have you?'. When we put together the structures resulting from choices in all the relevant systems in each of the three components, we end up with a wording, a message.

This is a deliberately brief outline that it is probably difficult to take in fully as yet, but a simplified example may help to make things a little clearer. Let us suppose that a child in class complains that someone has taken her calculator while she was not looking. In that context, the teacher is expected to identify the child responsible and make him or her return the calculator. There are obviously many options open to him as to how he goes about this, but let us assume that he guesses that one of the usual suspects is guilty, and questions the boy about this. In experiential terms, he wants to refer to the action that has happened (taking), the thing that the action was done to (the calculator) and the time when the action happened; and he also wants to refer to the possible doer of the action. He will

thus opt for an experiential structure that expresses the event together with the doer and the done-to: we can symbolize this as ‘you/take/her calculator/just now’. Simultaneously, in interpersonal terms, he wants his addressee, the possible culprit, to confirm or deny the missing information in his description – whether he was the doer or not; and he will therefore opt for an interrogative structure. Since this is a yes/no question, the ordering is Finite^Subject: ‘Did you (take)?’. In textual terms, his starting point is the part of the sentence that shows that this is a question, since the questioning function is presumably uppermost in his mind; so he has no reason to move the Finite^Subject combination from its most natural position at the beginning of his utterance. As a result of these choices (and others, such as the choice of tense, not included here), he produces the wording: ‘Did you take her calculator just now?’

It is important to emphasize that this is not intended as a description of successive steps in a process that the speaker goes through: I have to set it out step by step simply because of the linear nature of written language. We unpack the choices for analytical purposes, but the choices are usually all made – consciously or, in the main, unconsciously – at the same time. There are times when the process may become more staged and more conscious: for example, in redrafting written text I sometimes find myself deciding that a new starting point will make the sentence fit in more clearly, which may mean that I also have to alter the wording in the rest of the sentence. But typically a functional description brings to light and separates closely interwoven decisions that we are not aware of making about how to word what we want to say. It also throws light, at a higher level, on how we decide to say what we do – I will come back to this briefly in 3.2 below.

3.1.2 Three kinds of function in the clause

In the discussion so far, I have gone from what the speaker wants to say to how he says it. However, we more typically move in the other direction, starting from

the utterance ‘Did you take her calculator just now?’ and explaining retrospectively the choices that are expressed – or ‘**realized**’– in the utterance. This is also probably easier to grasp in practice, because we are starting at the concrete end, with an actual wording. Thus we can ask, for example, why he ordered the constituents in the way he did; what factors led him to make the choice of an interrogative; and so on.

In doing the analysis from this end, we work with three different sets of labels, corresponding to the three different kinds of **functional roles** that the elements in the clause are serving. To give you a preliminary idea of what is involved, we can look at analyses of the calculator example from each of the three perspectives, and compare them with the analyses of possible rewordings. Try not to be put off by all the unfamiliar labels that will be appearing: I will not explain them in any detail here, since that will be the function of the three following chapters. The aim is simply to indicate what a three-strand functional description looks like.

Figure 3.1 shows the analysis of the clause in experiential terms.

Did	you	take	her calculator	just now?
	Actor	**Process**	**Goal**	**Circumstance**

Figure 3.1 Analysis from the experiential perspective

To label ‘you’ as Actor, for example, indicates that this element of the clause has the function of expressing the (possible) ‘doer’ of the action expressed in the process: in other words, we are looking at the clause from the experiential perspective of how entities and events in the world are referred to (in crude terms, who did what to whom and in what circumstances). From this perspective, ‘you’ remains Actor even if we reword the example as a passive clause, as in Figure 3.2.

Was	her calculator	taken	by you	just now?
	Goal	**Process**	**Actor**	**Circumstance**

igure 3.2 Experiential analysis of a passive clause

Figure 3.3 shows an analysis in interpersonal terms: this is only a partial analysis, but

it is sufficient for our present purposes.

Did	you	take	her calculator	just now?
Finite	**Subject**	**Predicator**	**Complement**	**Adjunct**

Figure 3.3 Analysis from the interpersonal perspective

(The reason why 'her calculator' is labelled Complement rather than Object will be explained in 4.3.6.) When we say that 'you' is Subject, we are looking at the clause from the interpersonal perspective of how the speaker negotiates meanings with the listener (this function of Subject is a tricky concept, but I will be discussing it more fully in 4.3.3). Note that the passive rewording this time results in a change of Subject – see Figure 3.4 ('by you' is a prepositional phrase, so it is an Adjunct in interpersonal terms).

Was	her calculator	taken	by you	just now?
Finite	**Subject**	**Predicator**	**Adjunct**	**Adjunct**

Figure 3.4 Interpersonal analysis of a passive clause

Finally, Figure 3.5 shows the analysis in textual terms.

Did you	take her calculator just now?
Theme	**Rheme**

Figure 3.5 Analysis from the textual perspective

To say that ‘Did you’ is Theme means that we are looking at the clause from the textual perspective of how the speaker orders the various groups and phrases in the clause – in particular, which constituent is chosen as the starting point for the message. With the passive version, the words in the Theme change, but they are still the part of the clause that signals that this is a question, the Finite^Subject – see Figure 3.6.

Was her calculator	taken by you just now?
Theme	**Rheme**

Figure 3.6 Textual analysis of a passive clause

If we move the time circumstance/adjunct to the beginning of the clause, this means that we have a new Theme – a new starting point; but the experiential and interpersonal analyses are not affected – see Figure 3.7.

just now	did you take her calculator?
Theme	**Rheme**

Figure 3.7 Textual analysis of a reordered version

It is important to see that the different labels, even for the same constituent, identify different functions that the constituent is performing in the clause. This multifunctionality is in fact the norm for clause constituents: typically, they are all doing more than one thing at once – they are all contributing in different ways to the different kinds of meaning being expressed in the clause. The examples also show that, though there are tendencies for certain functions to be performed by the same constituent – e.g. Actor tends to be Subject, and Subject tends to be Theme – they can all be performed by different constituents. This reinforces the need for the three- dimensional analysis.

3.1.3 Three kinds of structure in the clause

I have focused above on individual functional roles (Actor, Subject, Theme); but I should stress that each perspective has in fact identified a different kind of structure for the clause. The label 'Actor', for example, represents one function in the experiential structure Actor+Process+Goal+Circumstance. Typically, there is a fair amount of overlap in the way in which the three perspectives divide up the clause into parts, although there are significant differences. We can see this if we put together the three analyses of the original example, as in Figure 3.8.

Type of structure	Did	you	take	her calculator	just now?
experiential		**Actor**	**Process**	**Goal**	**Circumstance**
interpersonal	**Finite**	**Subject**	**Predicator**	**Complement**	**Adjunct**
textual	**Theme**		**Rheme**		

Figure 3.8 Three kinds of structure in the clause

The vertical lines show that many of the divisions are the same in two or all three of the structures, but not in all cases. Note, for example, that the experiential perspective is 'blind' to the separate existence of the Finite: in very simple terms, from this perspective we are only interested in what action is referred to, not in the time of the action in relation to the time of talking about it (the tense). Once we move on to more complex clauses, we will find that such differences in terms of which parts of the clause are highlighted from each perspective become greater.

As you can probably begin to appreciate, even with relatively simple examples it is hard to juggle all three perspectives at once. In the main section of the book, formed by Lecture 4, 5, 6 and 8, we will in fact be examining each perspective in turn, with only occasional cross-references to the other perspectives, usually in

the analyses of texts in the latter part of each chapter. Lecture 9, on grammatical metaphor, will start to draw the perspectives together and extend them; and in the final chapter I will discuss some aspects of how the three sets of choices interact in a particular text.

3.1.4 Showing the options: systems networks

I have talked in a number of places above about the options open to a speaker, and the choices that a speaker makes. One of the fundamental assumptions of Halliday's Functional Grammar is that the most useful and accurate way of picturing language is as a system of choices. As I mentioned above, this does not mean that we make each choice consciously or separately when we use language. But each choice contributes something to the meaning of what is said; and by unpacking the choices we can explore in detail how the resources of the language have been used to construct the meaning.

But how precisely do we represent 'language as a system of choices'? To explain this, it might be useful to start with something completely different which you may already be familiar with: the automatic answering service that you have to negotiate when you telephone an organization. You are likely to hear something like the following, which I heard when I telephoned my doctor's surgery recently:

Hello and welcome to Tower House Practice. In order for us to deal with your call more efficiently, please select from one of the following options. If you wish to use our automated appointments service, please press 1. If you would like a home visit, please press 2. For test results, please press 3. For all other enquiries, please press 4, and you will be transferred to the first available receptionist.

[*I pressed 1*]

Thank you. If you wish to make an appointment, please press 1. To cancel an

appointment, please press 2. To change the time or day of an appointment, please press 3.

[*I pressed 1*]

Thank you. The next available appointment is this afternoon at 4.20 with Dr Bell. Please press 1 to confirm that you wish to book this appointment. If this time is not convenient and you wish to check the next available appointment, please press 2.
[*I pressed 2*]

The next available appointment is tomorrow at 9.45. Please press ... [*and so on*]
What happens here is that a set of four functional categories (the kind of service you require) is established, of which you choose the appropriate one. For some of those categories, you then go on to choose from a set of sub-categories: in the instance above, once I opted to use the automated service, I then had a choice between making, cancelling or changing an appointment; and could then choose to specify whether or not to accept the time offered. An economical way of showing the different options that a caller might select is by a system network, which shows the parts of the system that I have used.
Obviously, the success of a system network like this, or of any kind, depends on accurate identification of the appropriate categories and on avoiding ambiguities and overlaps: the person who set up the answering system will have had to work out what the callers might need, and the correct sequence in which the choices must be made. But the basic principle should be clear: you start with a range of choices; and choosing one option may then open up another set of choices; and so on. As we move across the network from left to right, the choices become more '**delicate**' (that is, more specific). After traversing the relevant part of the network, you reach the point where you have realized your desired function (in

this case, making an appointment). Note that, when you make one choice at any point, only the more delicate further choices in that part of the network are open to you: for instance, if you choose ‘test results’, the option ‘make appointment’ is not available. Also, the network shows a small instance of recursion (which I mentioned in Chapter 1, where S may be a component of VP), shown by the curved line that goes back from ‘reselect time’: this takes you back into the final set of choices and you can again choose between ‘confirm’ and ‘reselect time’.

Essentially the same kind of system networks can be used to describe language in terms of the choices that are available. The concept of language systems is perhaps easiest to grasp when we are dealing with the interpersonal metafunction. If we go back to the case of the missing calculator, I said that the teacher chose an interrogative structure. In making this choice, he had only two other possibilities: that is, there are just three basic interpersonal structures for any clause. These are: interrogative (which can be recognized by the Finite^Subject ordering: ‘Did you take?’); declarative (Subject^Finite: ‘You took’); and imperative (no Subject or Finite: ‘Take!’). These are the three primary options in what is called the **mood** system of English. This might seem over simple, but if you try different arrangements of this message, keeping all the elements, you will always end up with one of these three. For example ‘Her calculator was taken by you’ is still a declarative – the Subject ‘Her calculator’ precedes the Finite ‘was’. Similarly, ‘Was her calculator taken by you?’ is still an interrogative – the Finite ‘was’ precedes the Subject. The choice of one of these basic structures has a generalized but recognizably different meaning: with an interrogative, the speaker is normally using language to elicit information from the addressee, whereas with a declarative s/he is normally passing on information, and with an imperative s/he is normally prompting the addressee to take some kind of action (there will be a fuller description of these possibilities in Chapter 4).

It may already have occurred to you that ‘interrogative’ by itself is not enough to characterize the teacher’s choice of structure: he chose a yes/no interrogative, but

he could have chosen a WH-interrogative: e.g. ‘Where has her calculator gone?’ These are both kinds of interrogative, so the choice between them is at a more delicate level: it is only when the ‘interrogative’ option is chosen in the mood system that the choice of yes/no or WH- is opened up. Within WH-interrogatives, there is in fact a further structural choice at the next level of delicacy. The WH-element comes first in the clause, but there are differences in what follows it. In many questions, the WH-element serves as Complement (‘*What* have you lost?’) or as Adjunct (‘*Where* has her calculator gone?’). In these cases, it is followed by the same ordering Finite^Subject as in yes/no interrogatives. However, the WH-element is sometimes Subject, in which case the order is WH-Subject^Finite: e.g. ‘*Who* has taken her calculator?’ Note that the WH-Subject interrogative still expresses the ‘interro- gativeness’ that is common to all the types (and differentiates them from declaratives and imperatives); and to that it adds ‘WH-ness’ (to differentiate it from the yes/no type) and ‘WH-Subjectness’ (to differentiate it from the other WH-types).

We can draw up a system network to show the choices that have been outlined above. The **entry condition** for the mood system (the overall category that we are describing in more detail) is ‘independent clause’: I will explain in 4.2 below why it is not simply ‘clause’. I mentioned earlier that the designer of a system network needs to be careful in choosing the categories used. In this case, to make the system work efficiently, we actually need to bring in a category of ‘indicative’. This covers the options that require the presence of an explicit Subject and Finite: namely, declarative and interrogative. This feature distinguishes them from the imperative, which does not require their presence. I have included the ways in which we can recognize the various options, marked by a slanting arrow. In technical terms, the arrows signal that we are shifting from choices in the systems to the structures that **realize** the options in the system: that is, the specific language forms that express the meaning choices. For example, the realization statement under ‘indicative’ shows that a clause is indicative if it

has both Subject and Finite (without specifying the order), whereas the realization statement under 'declarative' shows that a declarative clause has these two elements in the order Subject^Finite.

Of course, this system is not at all complete (the choices involved in language are far more complex than those involved in making a doctor's appointment). More delicate options could be added under declarative and imperative, as I have done for interrogative. In addition, the network only covers one set of interpersonal choices, and we need other simultaneous sets of choices to account for other aspects. For example, all clause types can be positive or negative: that option is not dependent on which type of clause is selected, and we show it through another network. Some sets of choices do not combine with all other sets: we can easily add question tags to declaratives ('it's hot, isn't it?') and imperatives ('sit down, will you?'), but it is rarer to find them with yes/no interrogatives ('is it hot, is it?') and they do not normally occur with WH-interrogatives. There are ways in which we can diagram the system network to show such restrictions on combinations of choices (though, to keep things simple, I will not introduce them here). And, since we are working with a three-dimensional grammar, we need to establish other equally complex sets of systems for the experiential and textual metafunctions.

This is only a very brief introduction to the idea of system networks. They can look daunting, but once you learn to read them they are a very economical way of giving a good deal of information about the language. My focus in this book is on looking at how grammatical choices function in text, but text analysis of this kind relies on identifying what the particular meaning of any grammatical choice is in comparison with other options that might have been chosen but were not. Therefore the main part of each chapter will be a description of the choices within each metafunction; and I will use systems networks to summarize the sets of choices. Other special conventions (like the use of slanting arrows to show realizations) will be introduced as necessary.

3.1.5 A fourth metafunction

Although I have not so far said it explicitly, I have implied at a number of points that the book will mostly concentrate on choices in the clause. This is not to say that we cannot identify similar kinds of choices at lower levels. Nevertheless, it is in the clause that the main functional choices operate: just as Subject is a functional slot in the clause (see 2.1.2), so are Actor and Theme. The clause is the main resource through which we express meanings.

However, there is one further issue that we need to consider: what happens when clauses are combined into clause complexes? For this, we need to explore the types of relationships that can be established between clauses; and this involves bringing in a fourth metafunction: the **logical** metafunction. It is the logical component of the grammar that handles the similarities and differences in the way that the following pair of clauses can be combined:

Estimates of the soot produced by the fires vary, *but* it is probably about 500,000 tonnes a month.

Although estimates of the soot produced by the fires vary, it is probably about 500,000 tonnes a month.

Whereas the other three metafunctions relate mainly to the meanings that we express in our messages, the logical metafunction relates to the kinds of connections that we make between the messages.

This formulation suggests that the logical metafunction may operate at levels other than just between clauses; and indeed there are clearly similarities between the combinations of clauses above and the following rewording with two separate sentences/clause complexes:

Estimates of the soot produced by the fires vary. *However*, it is probably about 500,000 tonnes a month.

We can even go the other way and recognize functional similarities with the following rewording, where the meaning of one of the clauses is expressed in a prepositional phrase:

Despite variations in the estimates of the soot produced by the fires, it is probably about 500,000 tonnes a month.

Some aspects of the logical metafunction will be explored more fully in Chapter 7.

3.2 Register and genre

In Chapter 1, I mentioned that socio-cultural factors influence or determine the kinds of things that we try to do through language, and thus the kinds of things that we say. So far in this chapter, on the other hand, I have talked only about the choices in how we say things; and in the rest of the book this will remain the focus of attention. 'How we can say things' is a very simplistic description of what the grammar of a language covers, but it does indicate the role of the grammar in offering conventionally accepted wordings to express our meanings. A more formal way of putting this is to describe grammar as the set of linguistic resources available to us for making meanings.

But I have already suggested that the kinds of wordings that are available are themselves determined by the uses to which we want to put them; in other words, the linguistic resources are determined by the meanings that we want to make. In 1.1.2, I talked about 'wordings choosing the speaker': a crucial part of our language ability is knowing how things are typically – or even obligatorily – said in certain contexts. We can extend this to talk of 'meanings choosing the speaker': we also know what kinds of things are typically – or obligatorily – said in certain contexts. Although I will not be examining in a systematic way the issue of what the broader contextual factors are and how they determine meanings, it will be essential to think about some of these factors when we analyse texts.

3.2.1 Register (and the corpus)

The way in which these factors are accounted for in Functional Grammar is primarily by invoking the concepts of register and genre. **Register** as defined by Halliday (in Halliday and Hasan, 1985/1989) is 'variation according to use': that is, we typically use certain recognizable configurations of linguistic resources in certain contexts. There are three main dimensions of variation that characterize any register: what is being talked about and the role of language in the activity that is going on (this is called the '**field**'); the relationships between the people involved in the communication, both in general and moment-by-moment (the '**tenor**'); and how the language is functioning in the interaction – e.g. whether it is written or spoken (the '**mode**'). The fact that there are three areas is not accidental, since each of them corresponds to one of the metafunctions: the field mainly determines, and is construed by, the experiential meanings that are expressed; the tenor mainly determines, and is construed by, the interpersonal meanings; and the mode mainly determines, and is construed by, the textual meanings. In Exercise 1.1, you were in fact being asked to identify informally the register of the extracts – the context from which they come and the linguistic features that are typical of text produced in that context.

If we want to identify exactly what the typical linguistic features of a register are, we can partly rely on intuition, since we are expert producers and receivers of a range of registers (though we are generally not conscious of this). For example, we probably know how to make our writing appropriate for a business letter as opposed to a personal letter, and we would recognize if a newspaper report or a medical leaflet sounded stylistically 'wrong'. But for a more reliable and accurate picture we need to analyse texts belonging to a particular register; and the more texts we examine, the better. This is why the **corpus** is becoming an increasingly important part of Functional Grammar research. We aim to move away from unsupported intuitions and to base our descriptions on actual occurrences of use.

In many cases, this will reinforce and probably refine our intuitions; but in many others, it will result in our seeing important facts about language that are not easily accessible to intuition. So far, the most exciting work with corpora has been done at lexical level: we now know much more about **collocation** (the ways in which words typically appear together) and **colligation** (the grammatical and textual patterns in which words typically appear). But, increasingly, the corpus is being used to explore grammatical patterns, particularly in describing the characteristic features of specific registers.

As an illustration of how this can be done, take this book as a sample of the 'academic textbook' register. Look back at the mood system network in Figure 3.10, and estimate approximately how often I have so far chosen each of the three major clause types in my text (ignoring the example sentences): declarative, interrogative, imperative.

It is fairly obvious that the overwhelming majority of clauses are declaratives; but there have been a few imperatives (for example, 'take', 'look' and 'estimate' in the preceding two sentences), and very roughly the same number of questions. By my reckoning, out of every 100 clauses, on average I have used three interrogatives and three imperatives; and the other 94 clauses are declaratives. We can use the kind of system network that I introduced above to show this information economically by assigning a **probability** to each choice. Conventionally this is shown as a decimal fraction of 1. So, for this textbook, the probabilities.

If we looked at other academic textbooks, we would expect to find a similar kind of distribution. There would be some variation from textbook to textbook; and occasionally we might come across one that was markedly different for various reasons (though in that case our intuitive sense of register would be likely to tell us that it was an untypical textbook). But, if we included a large enough sample of textbooks in our corpus, we would find a fairly clear, consistent pattern of choices emerging in the three major clause types. This is one feature of the

register of academic textbooks. By assigning probabilities, we are in effect claiming that any academic textbook in English produced in the same culture is most likely to conform to that pattern.

If we then examined other registers, we would find other patterns of probabilities in the mood choices. In conversation, for example, we could predict that we might find many more interrogatives; and in recipes the proportion of imperatives would be significantly higher. In each case, we could relate the differences in distribution to contextual factors. The choice of mood is to do with interpersonal meanings, and so the relevant contextual factors relate mainly to tenor, the relationship between the interactants. For example, as the 'expert' in the context of this textbook, I am allowed to spend much of my text telling you (the 'novice') information; and I am also allowed to tell you sometimes to do certain kinds of things (mainly mental processes like 'Note' and 'Look' rather than physical ones); and I can also sometimes ask you questions (though typically ones to which I already know the answer, which I then go on to tell you). You might like to think about the factors that influence the choices in conversation and recipes: for example, why does the recipe writer have the right to issue lots of commands using imperatives, without worrying that you, the reader, might protest at such 'bossiness'?

These are very simple examples of register differences. Obviously, it would be possible to look at a very wide range of other choices in a register in the same way. Some of these choices will be more delicate than others: we might, for example, look not just at interrogatives but at yes/no vs. WH-interrogatives; and we can also examine choices in experiential and textual systems. We can then go on to check the typical combinations of choices: for example, I have mentioned that when I use imperatives addressed to 'you' in this textbook it generally involves mental processes. This differs from, say, imperatives in recipes, which typically involve physical actions like 'mix' or 'chop' (the choice of process is something we will explore under experiential meanings in Chapter 5). In this way,

we could build up a detailed picture of the configurations of choices that make my text sound like a typical textbook. However, this is inevitably time-consuming: in my experience, producing an analysis of a page of text from the perspective of each of the three metafunctions, keeping only to the main systems, takes a couple of hours (if I am lucky and don't run into too many problem cases!). When we extend the corpus to include many other textbooks the amount of time needed obviously increases enormously. It is not surprising that corpus linguistics has so far focused on words rather than grammatical features: words can be recognized automatically by computers with relatively little difficulty (in writing, we conveniently put spaces before and after each word), and computers can process huge amounts of text very rapidly. Most functional grammar analysis, on the other hand, still has to be done largely by hand. Even if the analyst focuses on just one area of the lexicogrammar across many texts, this is still very slow work. Gradually, however, an increasingly extensive body of analysed texts is being built up, and computer tools to help make analysis quicker are being developed (you can download a number of these from http://www.isfla.org/Systemics/Software/ index.html). One important task for the future is to extend and develop such corpus- based work.

This is obviously only a brief overview, but it is designed to give you an idea of how this kind of corpus-based register analysis can be carried out. The next step is then to move from the description of individual registers to a description of the probabilities for the language as a whole. One way of doing this is by combining all the information about different registers. This in effect mimics the way in which a native speaker's knowledge of his or her own language is built up from childhood onwards by exposure to an increasingly wide variety of instances of language in use. These global probabilities form a baseline against which we as linguists can measure the characteristic deviations of each register – just as they form the baseline that users of the language rely on, largely unconsciously, to recognize what sounds natural and appropriate in any particular register.

3.2.2 Genre

If we now turn, more briefly, to **genre**, this can be seen in very simple terms as register plus communicative purpose: that is, it includes the more general idea of what the interactants are doing through language, and how they organize the language event, typically in recognizable stages, in order to achieve that purpose. An image that may help you to grasp the difference between register and genre is to see register as cloth and genre as garment: the garment is made of an appropriate type of cloth or cloths, cut and shaped in conventional ways to suit particular purposes. Similarly, a genre deploys the resources of a register (or more than one register) in particular patterns to achieve certain communicative goals. As a simple and unusually clear example of generic staging, we can take a recipe for roast potatoes (from the magazine *Good Housekeeping* for December 2011). The heavily abridged version below gives an informal indication of the main stages and enough of each stage to gain a flavour of the language choices.

Text	**stage**
Right Every Time Roasties	title
Adding polenta or semolina isn't a new trick, but it gives an even, crisp coating.	"hook"
Hands-on time 20 min. Cooking time about 1 hr. Serves 8	practical details
• 2.5kg (5½ lb) potatoes	ingredients
• 6tbsp goose fat or olive oil ...	
1 Preheat oven to 190ºC (170ºC fan), mark 5. Peel and cut potatoes ...	instructions
2 Drain potatoes well ...	

PER SERVING 326 cals, 9g fat ...	nutrition details
GET AHEAD	helpful tips
Prepare potatoes up to the end of step 2 a day ahead ...	

This text immediately shows many of the features of the register of recipes, such as the list of nominal groups giving the ingredients and, as I mentioned above, the predominance in the instruction stage of bare imperatives (no 'please') with action processes. It is characteristic of this genre that the language choices change from stage to stage in an unusually marked way, particularly the switch between predominantly nominal groups (title, practical details, ingredients, nutrition details), predominantly imperative clauses (instructions, helpful tips) and predominantly declarative clauses ('hook'). In other genres, there are likely to be changes in the patterns of wording and meaning that are characteristic of each stage, but they are often much less easy to detect (although a corpus study of many texts can help to bring out these changes more distinctly).

Beyond these registerial features, however, we can also point to generic features of how the text goes about its business. In any instance of a genre, there are some stages that are more or less certain to appear: a recipe without title, ingredients and instructions stages would no longer be a recognizable recipe. Other stages are highly likely to appear in most recipes, such as what I have called a 'hook', whose main purpose is to 'sell' the recipe to the reader. Others are optional: for example, some recipes may not include practical details of timing or helpful tips, and most recipes do not give nutrition details. The stages will change over time: in a famous nineteenth-century book of recipes, *Mrs Beeton's Cookery Book*, the stages are always title, ingredients, method (i.e. instructions), and practical details (including average cost – easier to predict in that period of low inflation!). Her recipes do not, for example, have a 'hook', which has become more or less standard practice in modern recipes, and can sometimes be by far the longest

stage. In addition, the stages are mode-dependent (for example, spoken recipes are unlikely to have a title in the form of a free-standing nominal group, and ingredients are not normally listed separately before the instructions). They are also culture-specific: the recipes in a Hungarian cookbook that I have include only the obligatory core of title, ingredients and instructions, which would probably seem rather terse and over business-like in an English cookbook.

This is only a very brief indication of the broader socio-cultural orientation of the functional approach that I will be setting out. I have included it here just before we begin the detailed examination of clause-level grammatical choices in order to re-emphasize that these are only part of the story, and that they can only be fully understood in the wider socio-cultural context.

Exercise 3.1

Select any written text or spoken text (video or sound recording) of a reasonable length (a page or more, or the spoken equivalent). Decide broadly what type of text you think it is – e.g. news report, narrative, interview, book or film review, etc. Predict what percentages of declarative, interrogative and imperative clauses will be used in it. Then count them. What contextual factors may help to explain the results?

Next, find another text that you would categorize as the same type, and do the same. Are the percentages similar to those in the first text? If not, can you identify particular contextual factors that might explain the differences?

Exercise 3.2

Select any short complete text of a maximum of one page (or spoken equivalent). Decide broadly what type of text you think it is – the list of text types suggested in Exercise 3.1 is a guide, but you could also consider advertisements, book blurbs, regulations, etc. As far as possible, identify the stages that the text moves

through, together with any linguistic clues that help you (these may include headings which mark the stages explicitly).

Next, find another text that you would categorize as the same type, and do the same. Are the stages similar to those in the first text? If not, can you identify particular contextual factors that might explain the differences?

Lecture 4

Interacting: the interpersonal metafunction

4.1 Introduction

As emphasized in the previous chapter, one of the main purposes of communicating is to **interact** with other people: to establish and maintain appropriate personal and social links with them. If we try to view language simply as a one-way system for telling other people things, we end up with a very distorted view of how language works, because we are overlooking the fact that we use it to **exchange** meanings, that communication is inherently two-way. We tell other people things for a purpose: we may want to influence their attitudes or behaviour, or to provide information that we know they do not have, or to explain our own attitudes or behaviour, or to get them to provide us with information, and so on. I have already said that a functional approach to investigating language is based on the assumption that the language system has evolved (and is constantly evolving) to serve the functions that we need it for. Therefore, the fact that interaction – having a purpose for saying things to other people – is an inherent part of language use means that there will be aspects of the grammar that can be identified as enabling us to interact by means of language. Some of the grammar of the clause will be attributable to its role in the exchange of meanings between interactants. In this chapter, we will be looking at some of the most important

lexicogrammatical systems that we rely on to express our messages in such a way that our hearers have a good chance of understanding why we are saying something to them.

We can start with a relatively simple analysis that should help to show the kind of aspects that we will be concerned with. Take the following example from an email that I received:

Might I ask you if you could recommend a couple of nice books on taboo language?

Interacting: the interpersonal metafunction

What 'content' would you identify in this sentence? It is fairly clear that the message is 'about' books and recommending. Presumably we would accept 'you' as part of the content, as the person involved in the recommending. However, it is not so clear whether the content includes the event of asking: 'might I ask you if' seems to be functioning less to talk about events in the world than to negotiate politely with the reader for the right to ask for something. If we look back at the recommending, 'could' refers not to the event of recommending in itself but to some kind of assessment by the writer of how likely the event is to happen – and again the issue of politeness comes up. The phrase 'on taboo language' gives us information about the characteristics of the books and belongs under the content, but 'nice' refers more to the writer's feelings about the books. Finally, we can note that listing the 'content' does not allow us to mention the vital fact that this is not a statement about recommending books, but has a complex function in the interaction between writer and reader. It looks like a question to the reader, but, although it is expressed in the form of a yes/no interrogative, a simple answer of 'yes' would clearly not be appropriate (whether this answer were understood as expressing either of two possible meanings: 'yes, you might ask' or 'yes, I could recommend some'). In everyday terms, this would be seen as a request, aiming to influence the reader's behaviour in a certain way (and in my reply I complied

with the request by listing some relevant titles). It is possible to separate the cores of the two different kinds of meaning that we have identified as follows:

‘CONTENT’ [I ask you] you recommend books on taboo language

‘INTERACTION’ Might I ask you if could nice ?

Of course, this is over-simple and does not take account of all the aspects touched on above, but it captures enough of the difference for the moment. (As will become clear especially in Lecture 9 on grammatical metaphor, it is significant that ‘I ask you’ appears in both kinds of meaning.)

We can now express what we have done here in the terms introduced in the previous chapter: we have separated the experiential meanings (the ‘content’) from the interpersonal ones (the ‘interaction’). The interpersonal meanings relate to the fact that the clause is interrogative but functions as a kind of command, that it expresses the writer’s assessment of probabilities and her attitude, and that it explicitly signals the writer’s negotiation with the reader. In the rest of this chapter, we will look at how each of these kinds of meanings is encoded in the clause, under the headings of Mood, modality, evaluation and negotiation. However, we first need to provide a general framework for looking at the clause in terms of its function in the communicative exchange of meanings.

4.2 Roles of addressers and audience

I have mentioned above a number of purposes that we might have in entering into a communicative exchange. In one sense, these purposes are clearly unlimited: we may want to request, order, apologize, confirm, invite, reject, evaluate, describe, and so on. However, in order to be in a position to make useful general statements about the grammar, we need to identify a more restricted range of purposes as a basis to work from. The most fundamental purposes in any exchange are, of course, **giving** (and taking) or **demanding** (and being given) a commodity of some kind. If we look at this from the point of view of a speaker

in a verbal exchange, the commodity that the speaker may be giving or demanding is **information**. In such cases, the speaker's purpose is carried out only, or primarily, through language: the speaker makes a statement to give information, or asks a question to demand it; and the exchange is successful if the listener receives (understands) the information that the speaker gives or provides the information demanded (answers the question). We can encapsulate this by saying that in these cases language has a **constitutive** function: that is, it does all, or most, of the work in the exchange. But this clearly does not apply so well to what is happening if the speaker says something like:

Look up the words in a dictionary to find more uses.

Here, the exchange will only be successful if a non-verbal action is carried out – if the listener obeys the command. For such cases we need to include another 'commodity' that is being exchanged: what Halliday and Matthiessen (2014: 135) call '**goods-&-services**'. In these cases language has a more **ancillary** function: that is, it 'helps' the success of the exchange, but at least part of the exchange need not involve language (for example, if the speaker demands goods-&-services from the addressee, the essential response is typically an action rather than words). We then end up with four basic **speech roles**: giving information, demanding information, giving goods-&-services and demanding goods-&-services. The usual labels for these functions are: **statement, question, offer** and **command**. Figure 4.1 shows these options, with an example of each.

commodity exchanged role in exchange	(a) goods-&-services	(b) information
(i) giving	**offer** I'll show you the way.	**statement** We're nearly there.
(ii) demanding	**command**	**question**

	Give me your hand.	Is this the place?

Figure 4.1 Basic speech roles

Note that these functions need to be seen in very broad terms (they are the least delicate options in the system of speech roles). A statement is any stretch of language that functions to give information to the addressee; a question is any stretch that functions to elicit information from the addressee; a command is any stretch whose intended function is to influence the behaviour of the addressee in some way; and an offer is any stretch whose function is to initiate or accompany the giving of goods- &-services to the addressee.

Three of these basic functions are closely associated with particular grammatical structures: statements are most naturally expressed by **declarative** clauses; questions by **interrogative** clauses; and commands by **imperative** clauses. As we saw in Lecture 3, these are the three main choices in the mood system of the clause. From this perspective, offers are the odd one out, since they are not associated with a specific mood choice (though they are strongly associated with modality). Halliday and Matthiessen (2014: 139) suggest that this is because here 'language is functioning simply as a means towards achieving what are essentially non-linguistic ends'. They point out that this is also true of imperatives, which are associated with specific grammatical resources. However, in offers language has a more ancillary function: in very simple terms, commands normally need to be verbalized (though the response need not be), whereas an offer can be carried out without using language (as when someone hands you a cup of tea). We typically do accompany offers with language ('Tea?' 'Thanks.'), but the utterances are not necessarily crucial to the performance of the offer.

It is important to stress that the natural meaning–wording pairings mentioned above do not always occur. English (in common with many, perhaps most, other languages) has evolved distinct lexicogrammatical resources to express the three basic speech functions that rely on language for their realization; but it is a

fundamental principle – which we shall come across a number of times in the following chapters, with special focus in Lecture 9 – that, once a linguistic form (whether a word, or a grammatical structure, or whatever) evolves in the language to perform a particular function, it is available for use to perform other kinds of functions. We can think of this as the principle of linguistic recycling. As we shall see, the form continues to make its own contribution when it is used to realize meanings that it did not originally evolve to realize: the result is semantic value added, with a new meaning that arises from the fusion of the form and function.

We have in fact already come across an example of this, in the example at the beginning of this chapter:

Might I ask you if you could recommend a couple of nice books on taboo language?

As I mentioned, this is an interrogative, but it functions, in terms of the basic speech roles, not as a question but as a command (since it was intended to influence my behaviour). What the interrogativeness adds to the command function is essentially politeness, because it allows for negotiation in a way that an imperative command normally does not. On the surface, the writer was asking not just about my ability to recommend some books, but – with an extra layer of negotiation – for my permission to ask about my ability to recommend some books. At its simplest, we can see this in terms of a cline:

Recommend some books!

Could you recommend some books?

Might I ask if you could recommend some books?

There would be contexts in which factors such as the relations between the speaker and hearer would make each of these three wordings perfectly appropriate. The original was addressed to me by someone who had been a student of mine, and with whom I had not had any contact for a number of years. Thus the wording chosen reflected the writer's view of the relationship as sufficiently distant to call for careful negotiation in making the request (whereas

at the time when we had regular contact as tutor and student, she would have been more likely to opt for the second version above as appropriate, given the relatively small imposition and the fact that suggesting readings for students is part of a lecturer's duties).

For fairly obvious reasons, commands – where the speaker's utterance is intended to influence the addressee's behaviour – are especially likely to need to be negotiated; and it is in the realization of commands that there is typically the greatest variation in the lexicogrammatical forms that are used. The examples above show interrogatives serving this function, but declaratives can also be used – for instance:

I wonder if you could recommend some books.

This wording construes politeness by appearing to be a statement about the speaker's own mental world ('I wonder'); but the expected response is still for the addressee to give some recommendations. Other form–function pairings also occur. To check that you have understood the distinction, try identifying the form (declarative, interrogative, imperative) of the following examples, and then decide which speech function (statement, question, command, offer) is being performed. My explanation is given below.

Are you ready for coffee?

Dinner's ready.

So it's pain in the lower back?

Just think what you could do with cash for old phones.

In dialogue, we can usually understand how an utterance is interpreted by the addressee by looking at the reaction that the utterance evokes. The first example above is an interrogative which on the surface could be taken as a demand for information (a question). However, the response from the addressee included the word 'please', indicating that she (rightly) took it as an offer:

Ooh, yes please.

The second example, a declarative clause, is ambiguous out of context: if said to guests, it would be most likely to be taken as an offer (with an appropriate response of 'Thank you'), whereas, if said to members of the family, it could well be understood as a command ('OK, I'm coming'). The third is again a declarative, but the question mark shows that it is intended as a question, aiming to elicit the answer 'Yes'. This is a fairly common form–function pairing in certain contexts, and is sometimes called a **queclarative** (a combination of 'question' + 'declarative'). The fourth is an imperative, but in response the addressee is not expected to say 'OK, I will' and sit thinking about cash for phones. Rather, it functions as an emphatic statement, roughly paraphrasable as 'You could do a lot with cash for old phones'.

We will come back to the issue of such form–function pairings in Chapter 9 when we examine grammatical metaphor.

Before moving on, I should highlight a further practical point about mood in texts. Only independent clauses in English normally have a choice of mood. Non- finite clauses have no mood, precisely because they are non-finite. More surprisingly, perhaps, there is no choice in dependent finite clauses: with a very few exceptions, these can only have Subject^Finite ordering. This comes out very clearly in reported questions. Learners of English as a Foreign Language very often find these tricky because they want to keep the interrogativeness; but the structural restriction dictates that the reported clause must be declarative in form, since it is dependent. This is irrespective of the mood of the main clause:

He asked if *we were* staying in Ostend.

Did you ask him how long *he had* known all this?

What this means is that only independent clauses express speech roles (statement in the first example above, question in the second); dependent clauses simply fill in the details.

4.3 Mood

If we now look in more detail at how the different mood choices are formed, we need to focus on a particular element of the clause, which we shall call the Mood (the capital 'M' is important to distinguish this from 'mood' as we have been using it so far).

4.3.1 The structure of the Mood

One very distinctive feature of English is the kind of responses illustrated below:

'They've all gone.' '*Have they?*'

'I thought very highly of him.' 'So *you did, did you?*'

'One goes on looking.' 'Yes, I suppose *one does*. Or at least *some of us do*.' 'Do you remember that case?' '*Should I?*' 'Well, I thought *you might*.'

What is happening here is that part of the first speaker's message is being picked up and re-used, sometimes slightly adapted, in order to keep the exchange going. However, it is not just any part: in each case, the core of the response consists of the same two elements. One is the **Subject** – e.g. 'they' in the first example. The other is traditionally called an auxiliary verb (e.g. 'have' in the same example); but this does not identify its function precisely enough, and in our approach the term **Finite** is used instead. Together, the Subject and Finite make up a component of the clause that is called the **Mood.** This term is unfortunately a little confusing, because we also use 'mood' (small 'm') to refer to the choice of clause types. The reason why the same term is used is that, as we saw in Lecture 3, it is the presence and ordering of Subject and Finite that realize mood choices. As the examples above also indicate, they have a vital role in carrying out the interpersonal functions of the clause as exchange in English. It is therefore useful to divide these two elements from the rest of the clause, and give them a label, Mood, which reflects their combined function in the clause (the rest of the clause also has an umbrella label: see 4.3.6).

The Subject is a familiar term from traditional grammar, although it should be remembered that here it is being reinterpreted in functional terms. The Finite is the first functional element of the verbal group – it is most easily recognized in yes/no questions, since it is the auxiliary which comes in front of the Subject. In the following examples, the Finite is in italics. Note that in the last example there are two auxiliaries ('may have'), but only the first is the Finite.

Did you see him that day?

Didn't he come home last night? You *can* imagine his reaction. What *were* you doing?

Someone *may* have heard the shot.

One reason why the concept of the Finite is probably less familiar than that of Subject is that in many cases it is '**fused**' with the lexical verb. This happens when the verb is used in the simple present or simple past tense (which are in fact the two most frequently occurring verb forms in English):

Linguists *talk* of marked and unmarked terms. She *sat* at the big table.

Despite the absence of an overt marker of the Finite in forms like 'talk' or 'sat', it is useful to see them as consisting of two functional elements, the lexical verb itself (the Predicator) and the Finite. For one thing, the Finite becomes explicit as soon as we ask a question ('*Did* she sit ...'), or use the negative ('She *didn't* sit ...'), or if we use an emphatic form ('Linguists *do* talk of marked forms'). In addition, as we shall see, one of the main functions of the Finite is to mark tense, and this is still identifiable even in fused forms.

4.3.2 Identifying Subject and Finite

It is usually relatively easy to identify the Subject, and only a little less difficult to identify the Finite, but in cases of doubt (at least in declarative clauses) we can establish exactly what the Subject and Finite of any clause are by adding a **tag question** – if one is not already present. For example:

Well, X Factor just became terribly upsetting, *didn't it*?

A tag question repeats the two elements in the Mood at the end of the clause: the Finite is made explicit, even if it is fused with the lexical verb in the clause (as it is in this case, with ‘became’), and the Subject is picked up by the pronoun in the tag. Figure 4.2 shows the links.

X Factor She Ted Running a hotel These two quotes	[*past*] was wouldn’t isn’t [*present*]	became terribly upsetting shopping in town have married her as easy as it might look exemplify many of the points	didn’t wasn’t [would [is [don’t	it? she? he?] it?] they?]
Subject	Finite		F	S

Figure 4.2 Tags showing Subject and Finite

One implication of this method of identifying the Subject is that it leads us to include certain things that are not traditionally called Subjects, especially dummy ‘it’ and ‘there’ in clauses like those shown in Figure 4.3.

It It There	‘s was should	pouring down outside half past seven be another one like this	isn’t wasn’t [shouldn’t	it? it? there?]
Subject	Finite		F	S

Figure 4.3 ‘It’ and ‘there’ as Subject

Most of the Subjects in the examples so far have been relatively simple; but the nominal group functioning as Subject may be much more complex, especially in certain genres such as academic articles. For example, there may be a complex nominal group consisting of more than one constituent functioning together as Subject (the Subject is in italics):

The loss of his father's fortune and his father's subsequent death, along with the general decline in the family's circumstances, decrease the number of servants in the household [don't they?]

The nominal group may include a postmodifying embedded clause:

The problems which we have just been considering have been discussed in philosophy for well over two thousand years [haven't they?]

The Subject function may also be performed by an embedded clause on its own, functioning as the equivalent of a nominal group:

What I needed was a sort of personal Christmas organiser [wasn't it?]

To remark of Brooksmith *that 'the scaffolding of this tale rests upon the existence of a class-stratified society'* is silly [isn't it?]

With regard to this last example, it is worth noting that, when the Subject is an embedded clause of this type, it is actually far more common to find an **anticipatory 'it'** in the normal Subject position, with the embedded clause itself appearing at the end of the clause of which it is Subject. In this case, both 'it' and the embedded clause are labelled as Subject:

In general, however, *it* is best *to modernize only the spelling*.

It has been found *that a significant number of children turn up at school being able to read*. *It* was Grice *who spoke next.*

It is this latter question *which is often ignored*.

As we shall see when we examine Theme in Chapter 6, there are in fact two different structures involved here, but they both share the function of placing certain kinds of information in different positions in the clause for primarily thematic purposes (see 6.4.2 and 6.4.3).

Whereas the Subject function may be carried out by any nominal group of the kinds illustrated above, the Finite is drawn from a small number of verbal **operators**. These can be divided into two main groups: those that express **tense** (‘be’, ‘have’ and ‘do’, plus ‘be’ as the marker of passive voice) and those that express **modality** (‘can’, ‘may’, ‘could’, ‘might’, ‘must’, ‘will’, ‘would’, ‘shall’, ‘should’, ‘ought [to]’). It can be argued that ‘will’ and ‘would’ can be included in the tense as well as the modality group, because of their particular uses in signalling the future. There are some less central operators – e.g. ‘used to’ for tense and ‘have to’ and ‘needn’t’ for modality; and a few marginal ones that tend to be restricted to semi-idiomatic uses – e.g. ‘dare’ is Finite in ‘How dare you talk to me like that?’. If present, the negative marker ‘n’t’ is included as part of the Finite, for reasons that will be explained below.

4.3.3 Meanings of Subject and Finite

I mentioned at the beginning of this section that Mood plays a special role in carrying out the interpersonal functions of the clause. In order to understand fully what this role is, we need to examine the meanings expressed by the Subject and Finite, and then to see how they work together as Mood.

In traditional terms, the Subject is the entity of which something is predicated in the rest of the clause. This is a powerful insight that has been applied in most approaches to grammatical description. It is, for example, reflected in Chomsky’s original idealization S → NP VP (‘a Sentence consists of a Noun Phrase followed by a Verb Phrase’), which makes the first ‘cut’ in the sentence between the first noun phrase, which is by definition the Subject, and the rest of the sentence. In such approaches, the sentence is seen as being ‘about’ the Subject. As was made clear in Lecture 3, however, in a functional approach the choice of a particular entity as Subject expresses only one of three possible kinds of ‘aboutness’. In what sense can we see ‘aboutness’ as an interpersonal meaning?

To clarify this, it will be useful to return to the difference between Subject and Actor. In the following example, 'NatWest' (a banking company) is clearly the entity responsible for the action of sacking – that is, 'NatWest' is the Actor.

She was sacked last week by NatWest.

Thus, if we think of the real-world event being described, the clause tells us about something that NatWest did. On the other hand, we can also look at the clause in terms of the exchange going on between the speaker and the listener. One way of doing this is by examining the kind of response that the listener can make to the information being given (since, as mentioned above, the response indicates how the listener is interpreting the purpose of the speaker's message). If, for example, the listener disagrees with the validity of the statement, he can simply repeat the Mood elements with negative polarity:

No, she wasn't.

What is 'carried over' here from one step of the exchange to the next is all the rest of the clause ('No, she wasn't [sacked last week by NatWest]'), and therefore the listener may be disagreeing with the whole message (she still has her job with NatWest) or any part of the message (perhaps she resigned voluntarily, or it happened two weeks ago, or it was a different bank that sacked her). What is important is that he cannot change the Subject without making a complete new message:

No, NatWest didn't sack her, Barclays did.

If this was the response that he wanted to make to the original statement, 'No, they didn't' would not work, even though 'they' refers to the Actor.

From this perspective, the speaker is making a claim about 'she', not about NatWest. It may seem odd to think of this statement as a claim; but in effect every statement is a claim that can in principle be queried. We do not normally notice this, because on the whole our listeners do not attack everything we say. But, in conversation at least, there is always the option of disagreeing; and cooperative listeners very often acknowledge the information they receive (by saying 'Oh',

or nodding, or something similar) to show that they accept it. Even with written text, you may have found yourself shouting ‘No, it isn’t!’ at a book when you disagree with one of the writer’s statements. The Subject is the entity (‘she’ in the example above) that the speaker wants to make responsible for the validity of the proposition being advanced in the clause. That is, the claim that the speaker is making is valid for that entity. The listener can then accept, reject, query or qualify the validity by repeating or amending the Finite (see below), but the Subject must remain the same: if the Subject is altered the exchange has moved on to a new proposition, which represents a new claim (which can itself be attacked). For example:

‘No, NatWest didn’t sack her.’ ‘Yes, they did!’

It is in this sense that the clause is ‘about’ the Subject from the interpersonal perspective. This is obviously clearest in dialogue, where both sides of the interaction are explicit, and it is often the Mood element of Subject + Finite that is kept in play (as with ‘Yes, they did!’ above); it may be more difficult to grasp this kind of meaning in other kinds of discourse.

If the Subject is the entity on which the validity of the clause rests, what is the meaning of the Finite? To some extent, the answer has begun to emerge from the discussion of Subject: the Finite makes it possible to argue about the validity of the proposition. We can see the Subject as fixed as long as the current proposition remains in play. Through the Finite, the speaker signals three basic kinds of claims about the validity of the proposition, each of which in principle is open to acceptance or rejection by the listener:

- whether the proposition is valid for the present time and actual situation or for other times – past, future – or for unreal situations (tense)
- whether the proposition is about positive or negative validity (polarity)
- to what extent the proposition is valid or the proposal is being imposed (modality

  – see 4.4.2 for the distinction between propositions and proposals).

The following examples illustrate each of the above claims being contested or amended in turn:

'She *was* a brilliant actress.' 'She still *is*.'

'You *know* what I mean.' 'No, I *don't*, as a matter of fact.'

'It *could* be a word meaning "inferior".' 'Oh, yes, it *must* be, because the rest is an anagram.'

As mentioned above, in the majority of cases (especially in written text) propositions are not explicitly contested or amended in this way, and the arguability of the Finite is not highlighted. Nevertheless, the basic function of the Finite is to orient the listener towards the kind of validity being claimed for the proposition, by relating it either to the here-and-now reality of the speech event or to the speaker's attitude towards the proposition or proposal. Either of these options may be expressed in positive or negative terms.

Thus from an interactional perspective we can see the declarative clause as doing something like the following: the speaker introduces an entity (the Subject) about which she wants to make certain claims; she then indicates the kind and degree of validity of the claims she is going to make in the Finite; and she then makes the claims in the rest of the clause. If we go back to the earlier example:

She was sacked last week by NatWest.

we can paraphrase what is going on as follows: 'The validity of the information I am giving you depends on your accepting that we are talking about something that happened to "she"; the validity I claim for the information is that it is valid for something in the past (not present or future tense), it is categorically valid (not modalized) and that it is positively valid (not negative); and the information I want to give you about "she" is "sacked last week by NatWest". As long as you accept the validity of the information in these terms, we can proceed to the next step in this interaction.' Of course, set out like this it looks unmanageably cumbersome: the paraphrase is not in the least intended to reflect the conscious mental processes of those taking part in the interaction. But it does reflect the

tacit, unconscious agreement on which the interaction is based; and it also reflects what the grammatical structure indicates about the way in which the exchange is proceeding. In looking critically at how speakers and writers attempt to achieve their purposes, to negotiate with – and to manipulate – their audience, it is often essential to make these validity claims explicit.

It is because this negotiation is done through the Subject and Finite, and is then taken as given for the rest of the clause, that the Mood is identified as a separate functional element in the clause. The importance and the relative detachability of the Mood within the meaning of the clause in English is shown by the fact that it can be used as a 'counter' for the whole proposition in responses ('No, she wasn't'), demands for acceptance of validity through tags ('wasn't she?'), and so on. In interpersonal terms, the Mood is the core of the exchange: the rest of the clause merely fills in the details.

4.3.4 Mood in non-declarative clauses

We have been focusing on declarative clauses in order to establish the general meanings of Subject and Finite. However, as was mentioned earlier, the Mood also has a crucial function in signalling the mood of a clause. As we saw in Lecture 3, the basic pattern is that the presence of Subject and Finite in the clause signals that the clause is indicative rather than imperative; and within this category, the ordering of the two elements distinguishes between declarative (Subject^Finite: see Figure 4.4) and interrogative (Finite^Subject: see Figure 4.5; but see the discussion of WH-interrogatives below).

Assessment We	will [present]	be by coursework. take conversation for granted most of the time.

Subject	Finite	
Mood		

Figure 4.4. Mood in declarative clauses

Can Do	he we	paint well enough? have anything in common?
Finite	Subject	
Mood		

Figure 4.5. Mood in yes/no interrogative clauses

In **yes/no interrogatives**, it is primarily the **polarity** of the message that the speaker wants the listener to specify ('He can or can't paint well enough?'), and, for thematic reasons (see 6.3.2), the speaker typically begins with the Finite, which is the part of the Mood where polarity is signalled.

In **WH-interrogatives**, there are two conflicting functions at work. The interrogative purpose is reflected in the fact that many WH-interrogatives have Finite preceding Subject in the Mood. However, the primary purpose of a WH-interrogative is to demand that the listener fill in a missing part of the message; and the WH-element signals which part is missing. For example, the question 'When is he leaving?' can be seen as a demand for the other person to complete the message 'He is leaving ... [time expression] ...' Again for thematic reasons (see 6.3.2), the speaker typically begins with the WH-element (though we occasionally find so-called 'echo questions' where the WH-element remains in the place where the missing part would normally go: 'He's leaving *when*?'). In some cases, of course, it is the Subject that the speaker wants supplied, and thus the WH-Subject in fact appears before the Finite: the WH-first 'rule' outweighs the Finite-first 'rule'. These two orderings are compared in Figure 4.6 and Figure 4.7.

Why What How many	did do are	the affair you there?	end? expect me to do?
	Finite	Subject	
	Mood		

Figure 4.6 WH-interrogative with known Subject

Who What kind of idiot Who	‘s would [past]	been sleeping in my bed? do something like that? typed out that note?
Subject/WH-	Finite	
Mood		

Figure 4.7 WH-interrogative with WH-element as Subject

There is a further clause type which has not yet been mentioned because it is relatively rare in comparison with the three major types. **Exclamatives** are like WH-interrogatives in that they have a WH-element that typically comes first. However, they have the Subject^Finite ordering of declarative clauses (remember that ‘^’ is the symbol for ‘followed by’). They are therefore included as a sub-type of declarative. Figure 4.8 gives some examples.

What an epitaph How simple How quickly	that it all we	would [past] [present]	make! seemed at the time. forget our promises!
	Subject	Finite	

	Mood	

Figure 4.8 Mood in exclamative clauses

In **imperative** clauses, the unmarked form has no Mood. The Subject of a command (the person responsible for carrying it out) is not specified, since it can only be the addressee ('you'). In interpersonal terms, an imperative is presented as not open to negotiation (which does not mean, of course, that the command will actually be obeyed), and thus most of the functions of the Finite are irrelevant: a command is absolute (there are no imperative forms of the modal verbs), and there is no need to specify time relevance since there is no choice (an imperative can only refer to an action not yet carried out – i.e. it can only refer to future time). The Finite (of a special kind) may in fact appear in unmarked imperatives, but it has a restricted purpose: it is used only to signal negative polarity, see Figure 4.9.

Don't		Go away. Answer no more than three of the following questions. look at me like that
"Finite"	Subject	
Mood		

Figure 4.9 Unmarked imperative clauses

There are, however, marked forms of imperatives in which the Subject may appear; and the Finite may also be used for emphasis, see Figure 4.10.

Do Don't	You you	listen to me, young man. hurry up, for goodness'

		sake. take that tone of voice to me.
"Finite"	"Subject"	
Mood		

Figure 4.10 Marked imperative clauses

I have mentioned that the Finite here is not a 'normal' Finite with the normal range of functions; this is reflected in the fact that it is not the same form as appears if a tag is added at the end of an imperative clause:

Don't tell him anything, *will you*?

The Subject is also not a 'normal' Subject. In the following example, there is not the usual agreement between Subject and Finite (if the Subject were normal, it would be 'you are'):

Now *you be* careful with that slingshot and don't go breaking glass bottles.

There is also a second kind of imperative clause, where the understood Subject is not 'you' but 'you and me': this is the '**let's**' form (technically called the 'suggestive' form, while the ordinary imperatives are called 'jussive'). Halliday and Matthiessen (2014: 166) argue that 'let's' itself 'is best interpreted as a wayward form of the Subject'. In support of this, they mention that there is an unmarked negative form 'don't let's' and an emphatic form 'do let's'. The suggested analyses are shown in Figure 4.11.

Don't Do	Let's let's let's	call it a day. argue about it. try and get it right this time.
"Finite"	"Subject"	
Mood		

Figure 4.11 'Let's' imperative clauses

The tag in these cases is ‘shall we?’

At this point, it may be useful to summarize the different mood options outlined above in an extended version of the system network presented in Chapter 3: see Figure 4.12.

To make this a more complete picture of the systems mentioned above, we would have to add polarity, tagging (which can combine with any of the choices except WH-interrogative) and modality (which can combine with any of the indicative choices). But each of these leads to more delicate choices: for example, polarity may be realized in the Finite (‘n’t’) or as a separate polarity Adjunct (e.g. ‘never’); tags are affected by polarity choices (e.g. a negative clause typically has a positive tag, and vice versa); and, as we shall see below, modality opens up a very complex set of systems. The network would then proliferate in a daunting way – and it would be difficult to fit it all on one page!

Exercise 4.1

Identify the Subject and Finite in the following sentences. Where there is an embedded clause, ignore the Subject and Finite within that clause: simply analyse the main clause.

1. Kate didn’t like this at all.
2. In that case, the universe should contain a number of regions that are smooth and uniform.
3. Tears streamed down his face.
4. In silence they went through the rooms on the top floor.
5. So the four we have don’t count.
6. That might have been a different matter.
7. The other few items in the printing history of this work are easily summarized.
8. In the footnotes, the titles of works which we have had to cite fairly frequently have been abbreviated to the author’s surname.

9. It is a matter of common experience that one can describe the position of a point in space by three numbers, or coordinates.
10. It isn't the money I'm worried about.

Exercise 4.2

Identify Mood and Residue in the following clauses, and label the elements in each: Subject, Finite, Predicator, Complement, Adjunct. For any Adjunct, decide whether it is circumstantial, textual, Mood or Comment. Do not analyse any non-finite clauses separately.

1. He picked up ideas about form from his teachers.
2. He had already been over the house.
3. Where have all the flowers gone?
4. Of course Tim could not really banish care.
5. To the inmates of the Grange that ceaseless murmur must inevitably evoke the tantalizingly close but unobtainable freedom of wide blue horizons.
6. In her waking hours she would never let us out of her sight.
7. The union involved certainly has to face criticism for its lack of activity on health and safety over many years.
8. Put simply, you will probably find it difficult to find a job as a student.
9. Meanwhile, Bruce Grobbelaar's days at Liverpool could be over this week.
10. Right now, however, you might have to juggle your finances around.

Lecture 5

Representing the world: the experiential metafunction

5.1 Introduction

As well as using language to interact with people, we clearly use it to talk about the world, either the external world – things, events, qualities, etc. – or our internal world – thoughts, beliefs, feelings, etc. When we look at how language works from this perspective, we are focusing primarily on the propositional '**content**' of a message rather than the purpose for which the speaker has uttered it (although it is not in practice possible to make a complete distinction: there are many alternative ways in which speakers can choose to represent the world, and their actual choice is dependent to a large extent on their purpose).

In Lecture 4, we have been examining the very different functions served by, for example, statements and questions. It is clear that the following two sentences are not in any way interchangeable in use:

Lifestyle changes could prevent many illnesses. Could lifestyle changes prevent many illnesses?

But it is equally clear that in both the statement and the question 'lifestyle changes' and 'many illnesses' have the same relation to each other and to the action of 'preventing': lifestyle changes 'do' the preventing 'to' many illnesses. Looking separately at the interpersonal meanings enables us to give them their full value in the overall meaning of the clause; but we do still need to account for the content meanings of 'what/who did what to what/whom'. It is the role of the experiential perspective in the grammar to allow us to do this. This perspective is 'blind' to the difference between statement and question. It is also blind to the modal verb 'could': in experiential terms we only take account of the action expressed in the main verb 'prevent'. It is worth emphasizing again, however, that both perspectives are needed:

the clause carries both kinds of meanings simultaneously, so at some point we need to bring the two analyses together.

From the experiential perspective, language comprises a set of resources for referring to entities in the world and the ways in which those entities act on or relate to each other. At the simplest level, language reflects our view of the world as consisting of 'goings-on' (verbs) involving things (nouns) that may have attributes (adjectives) and which go on against background details of place, time, manner, etc. (adverbials). Thus the following representation distinguishes not only a recognizable type of going-on ('unlocked') but also doers ('they') and 'done-to' ('the front door'), and a manner ('slowly').

They slowly unlocked the front door.

This will seem so obvious as hardly to need saying: but it is precisely because it is so natural-seeming that we can easily overlook what is going on. For one thing, it would clearly be possible to represent the 'same' going-on in different ways ('She took out the key. The door swung open in front of them'), and we will want to be able to say something useful about exactly what the differences are. More importantly, this first step leads us towards a systematic and less immediately obvious categorization of the kinds of goings-on, things, etc. that we can express through language.

If we use functional labels (i.e. labels that indicate the role played by each element of the representation), we can express what we have said about the 'content' of clauses in terms of **processes** involving **participants** in certain **circumstances**. The example above can then be analysed in a preliminary way as in Figure 5.1.

They	slowly	unlocked	the front door
participant	**circumstance**	**process**	**participant**

Figure 5.1 Process, participants and circumstance

Processes are the core of the clause from the experiential perspective: the clause is primarily 'about' the action, event or state that the participants are involved in. The process is typically expressed – or realized – by the verbal group in the clause. In some cases, the process can be seen as including another constituent apart from the verbal group proper. This is clearest with phrasal verbs, where the particle is usually best analysed as expressing part of the process (and see also the discussion of Scope in 5.2.6 below):

He *found out* that she had high blood pressure. He *didn't look at* her.

Note that from the experiential perspective, we are only interested in the process as far as the verbal group is concerned: in over-simple terms, this means that we generally focus on the main verb, and we ignore interpersonal elements such as the Finite 'didn't' in the second example.

Every major clause normally includes at least one participant, which is normally realized by a nominal group. In interpersonal terms, this is usually Subject. There can be up to two other participants (Complements in interpersonal terms).

She shut *the door* firmly.

His wife passed *him the phone*.

In some cases, a participant may not be explicitly mentioned but is understood as part of the experiential meaning: for example, 'you' is understood as the 'doer' participant in imperative clauses. With a small group of processes of a specific type – relating to weather – there may be no participant (even though there is a Subject ('it') this has no experiential meaning). The following example consists only of two processes in transitivity terms:

It's raining, it's pouring.

Circumstances are typically realized by adverbial groups or prepositional phrases: they are circumstantial Adjuncts in interpersonal terms. Note that conjunctive and modal Adjuncts (see 4.3.7) do not contribute to the experiential meaning of the clause and are left out of the transitivity analysis (modal Adjuncts that appear next to or within the verbal group can simply be included with the process).

Circumstances are often optional, reflecting their ‘background’ function in the clause – compare what was said about Adjuncts not easily becoming Subject in 4.3.6.

In 1923 two volumes were published.

However, with certain processes, it may be more or less obligatory to include a Circumstance in the clause:

The second great discovery took place *at about the same time*.

She put the lamp *down on the floor*.

The process/participant/circumstance model is a start, which has the required advantage of matching structural and functional features. However, it is clearly still too general: in particular, we have no way of indicating the role of different participants (‘doer’ vs. ‘done to’, etc.). We need to establish a more delicate set of categories, bearing in mind that the categories must be based on grammatical as well as semantic differences. It turns out that there are two basic ways in which we can do this, each corresponding to a different way of representing the world, and each resulting in a different perspective on the structural possibilities. The first of these, which is the focus of this chapter, involves an analysis in terms of transitivity: this starts from a classification of the different kinds of processes (see 5.2). The other involves analysing the clause in terms of ergativity: this centres on the kind of relationship that is set up between the process and the participants (see 5.5).

5.2 Transitivity: processes and participants

The term **transitivity** will probably be familiar as a way of distinguishing between verbs according to whether they have an Object or not. Here, however, it is being used in a much broader sense. In particular, it refers to a system for describing the whole clause, rather than just the verb and its Object. It does, though, share with the traditional use a focus on the verbal group, since it is the

type of process that determines how the participants are labelled: the ‘doer’ of a physical process such as kicking is given a different label from the ‘doer’ of a mental process such as wishing (note that even at this informal level ‘doer’ seems less appropriate as a label in the case of the mental process).

In deciding what types of process to recognize, we resort to a combination of common sense and grammar: common sense to distinguish the different kinds of ‘goings-on’ that we can identify, and grammar to confirm that these intuitive differences are reflected in the language and thus to justify the decision to set up a separate category (you may recall the quote from Michael Halliday at the start of Chapter 3 stressing that all categories must be ‘there’ in the grammar). We need to set up categories that are detailed enough to make us feel that we have captured something important about the meaning, but broad enough to be manageable as the basis for general claims about the grammar of English. In the following discussion, the grammatical justification for the categories will often be touched on only briefly, in order to keep things reasonably simple; but it should be borne in mind that the grammatical underpinning is there.

You may well find that there is a rather bewildering amount of new terminology in this outline of transitivity. However, I hope that you will also see that the basic concept is simple: a relatively small number of types of process can be identified, and they each have their own types of participants. We need labels for each (and the labels are, admittedly, not always as transparent as they might be); but we are essentially going through the same kind of steps for each process type. As I have noted above, common sense can take us quite a long way in identifying the categories (though unfortunately it is not enough in more complex cases, as we will see). To get some sense of this, pick out all the verbs (ignoring any auxiliaries) in the following slightly adapted extract from Doris Lessing’s novel *The Good Terrorist*, and see how many different categories the processes seem to fall into.

Joan followed Alice to the door, with the look of someone who feels that everything has not been said.

She waited to see Alice go in at the door of No. 43. Then she went back into her kitchen, where she examined the smears of blood on the telephone directories and on the table. She wiped the table. Then she decided not to call the police, and went quietly to her bed.

Alice found Philip and Faye exactly as she had left them. But Faye's eyes were open, and she stared, expressionless, at the ceiling.

'I've rung Roberta,' said Alice.

The kind of informally named categories that my students usually come up with in exercises like this are: physical action ('followed', 'waited', 'go', 'went', 'wiped', 'call', 'went', 'found', 'left', 'rung'); feeling ('feels'); speech ('said', 'said'); perception ('see'); thought ('decided'); being ('were'). There is often some argument over 'examined' and 'stared': do these refer to actions or some kind of perception, or both? But there is broad agreement that most of the processes do fall into fairly easily identifiable groups. These groupings in fact represent the ways in which we categorize the goings-on around us. As with any linguistic categories, some cases will fall more neatly into a category, whereas others will be more marginal; and it is possible to identify more delicate sub-divisions within each category.

If your categories were fairly similar to the ones listed above, you should not have much difficulty in understanding the rationale for the outline of transitivity in the following sections. However, I should warn you that some of the categories are fairly complex once you get on to the details. In addition, problems typically arise when you analyse transitivity in real texts: it is not always easy to decide which type of process you are dealing with, or what role the participants are playing. So I will begin by describing the basic features of each category in terms that I will keep as simple as possible, but then I will go back over the categories, exploring some of the more complicated aspects in 5.3.

5.2.1 Material processes

The most salient types of process, as in the extract above, are those involving physical actions: running, throwing, scratching, cooking, sitting down, and so on. These are called **material processes**. A traditional definition of a verb is a 'doing word', and this describes such processes reasonably well (but not, as we shall see, other types). The 'doer' of this type of action is called the **Actor**: any material process has an Actor, even though the Actor may not actually be mentioned in the clause. Material processes can be divided into those that represent the action as involving only the Actor and those that also affect or are 'being done to' another participant. This second participant is called the **Goal**, since the action is, in a sense, directed at this participant. These labels for the participants are perhaps easiest to understand when the Actor is human and the Goal, if there is one, is inanimate, as in Figure 5.2. (Note: some of the examples of processes include Circumstances – we will look at these separately in 5.2.7 below.)

He The young girl Edward Her mother	had been shaving. bounded was sawing smashed	 wood. the glass.	 out of the gate.
Actor	**Process: material**	**Goal**	**Circumstance**

Figure 5.2 Material processes 1

However, the Actor may also be an inanimate or abstract entity, and the Goal may, of course, be human. Some examples are given in Figure 5.3.

The car Coarse grass The unhappiness The fire Scores of tiny brambles The pounding rhythm	slithered was growing disappeared. had destroyed scratched shook	 everything. him. walls and floor.	off the road. here and there.
Actor	**Process: material**	**Goal**	**Circumstance**

Figure 5.3 Material processes 2

Material processes form the largest and most diverse category in transitivity; and there are many different suggestions for ways in which they can be sub-categorized at more delicate levels. One important grouping separates processes that bring Goals into existence (**creative**) from those that are 'done to' existing Goals (**transformative**).

I've just made *the Christmas puddings*. (creative)
My Mum never eats *Christmas pudding*. (transformative)

This distinction can also apply to processes that only have an Actor: in this case, a creative process relates to the coming into existence of the Actor (e.g. 'war broke out'), and a transformative process relates to some change of state of the Actor (e.g. 'she hesitated'). Another possible grouping is according to whether the process is **intentional** or **involuntary**. With involuntary processes, the Actor (in italics) often seems like a Goal in some respects (and in fact there usually is no Goal):

She tripped over the step. *The car* accelerated.

If we want to find out about the events encoded in clauses like these, we are not likely to ask 'What did she do?' as with the other material processes so far; instead it seems more appropriate to ask 'What happened to her?' The process here

appears to affect the Actor – a description that recalls the way we defined the role of the Goal above. In a sense, therefore, these are less prototypical examples of material processes (we will come back to this issue when we look at the clause from a different perspective in 5.5). As mentioned above, the groupings discussed here are only some of the possibilities, and we are still far from having a definitive map of the sub-categories of material processes, though, see Table 5-5 in Halliday and Matthiessen 2014: 234–6 for an elaborated overview of the choices available. For many purposes, it is sufficient just to use the label 'material'.

It was noted above in passing that all material processes have an Actor, but that the Actor may not appear explicitly in the clause. One of the main ways in which this can happen is by the choice of a passive clause:

The oil is added drop by drop.

Your son didn't kill himself. *He was murdered*.

In this case, the participant at which the process is directed is still coded as Goal, since its semantic relationship to the process has not changed; see Figure 5.4.

The oil He	is added was murdered.	drop by drop.
Goal	**Process: material**	**Circumstance**

Figure 5.4 Passive material processes

Combining this analysis with the Mood analysis allows us to characterize passive material process clauses as those where the Goal is Subject. Note that we can normally probe the Actor in such cases by asking 'Who by?' Passive clauses are, of course, marked in relation to active clauses (that is, there is usually a particular reason for choosing a passive clause, whereas an active clause is the natural choice when there are no particular reasons for not choosing it); and this is reflected in the fact that the most natural probe question is the one associated with more peripheral types of material processes: 'What happened to him?' – 'He was

murdered.' It is worth mentioning that the Goal may also be understood but not expressed in some cases: we can, for example, capture the difference between 'The fire's smoking' and 'He's smoking' by saying that, unlike the first clause, the second has an understood Goal (as the possible question 'What's he smoking – a cigarette or a pipe?' shows).

5.2.2 Mental processes

I pointed out above that the simple functional description of a verb as a 'doing word' did not by any means fit all processes, which suggests that we need to establish other categories apart from material processes. Intuitively, **mental processes** form a viable semantic category: there are clear differences between something that goes on in the external world and something that goes on in the internal world of the mind; and there are many verbs that refer to these mental processes, of thinking, imagining, liking, wanting, seeing, etc. In addition, the terms Actor and, to a lesser extent, Goal seem inappropriate as labels for, say, the participants in this clause:

She could hear *his voice*.

The person in whose mind the mental process occurs is not really 'acting' – if anything, she is 'undergoing' the process of hearing; and the process is not really 'directed at' the phenomenon – intuitively it seems equally satisfactory to say that it is the voice that triggers the mental process of hearing. Thus a more appropriate set of labels are those shown in Figure 5.5.

She	could hear	his voice.
Senser	**Process: mental**	**Phenomenon**

Figure 5.5 Senser and Phenomenon

The semantic differences from material processes are clear; but what is the grammatical justification for placing these in a separate category?

Halliday and Matthiessen (2014: Section 5.3.3) outline five properties that distinguish mental from material processes, which in fact help us to understand more fully how this area of language works. The first is that mental processes always involve at least one human participant: the participant in whose mind the process occurs. Even if an inanimate participant is represented as undergoing a mental process, a degree of humanness is bestowed on that participant by its involvement in the process (and the mental process also loses some of its 'mentalese') – for example:

We used to have a car *that didn't like cold weather*.

The second, complementary, criterion is that the kind of entity that can fill the role of the other participant in a mental process – the **Phenomenon** – is less restricted than the entities that can act as participants in a material process. It can, of course, be a person, a concrete object, an abstraction, and so on, just as with material processes. We can say, for example:

I didn't understand *the text*.

She wanted above all *an end to the suspense*.

However, in addition, the Phenomenon may be a 'fact': that is, a clause treated as if it were almost a thing:

I realized *that I would never see her again*. Do you regret *that she's left*?

A more precise definition of 'fact' will be given in 7.5.2; here it is sufficient to note that an embedded clause like those in the examples cannot be a participant in a material process. Facts can be sensed – perceived, or felt – but they cannot do anything or have anything done to them.

A closely related criterion, which is very important in distinguishing mental processes from material ones, is that mental processes can **project**. This will be discussed in 5.3.2 below.

The fourth reason for differentiating between material and mental processes is **tense**. For material processes, the most natural present tense is the continuous form: 'He's mending the handle.' It is of course possible to use them in the simple

form, but this needs some extra contextualization: ‘He mends the handle every week [but it keeps sticking].’ For mental processes, on the other hand, the most natural present tense is the simple form: ‘They like salmon’; and it is often difficult to construct a context in which the continuous form sounds natural (this is one reason why the well-known advertising slogan ‘I’m lovin’ it’ is much more memorable than the more natural ‘I love it’). In teaching English as a Foreign Language, this feature of mental-process verbs is often presented as an odd exception; but in fact it is an inherent part of their grammar.

The fifth reason for having a separate category for mental processes is that they need a different type of question from that used to probe core examples of material processes. For a clause like ‘She wanted above all an end to the suspense’, we cannot really ask ‘What did she do?’ The most appropriate question is ‘What was her reaction?’ There are some cases, however, where this question is also not appropriate, which leads us to identify four sub-categories of mental processes: **perceptive** (seeing, hearing, etc.); **emotive**, or reactive (processes of feeling); **cognitive** (processes of deciding, knowing, understanding, etc.); and **desiderative** (a technical term for ‘wanting’; this category was not included in Halliday, 1994, by the way). Figures 5.6 to 5.9 give examples of each of these sub-categories. Note that ‘discover’ in Figure 5.7 means ‘find out’; if it was used to mean ‘find’ (e.g. ‘Columbus discovered America’) it would be a material process.

He He Cordelia	could not see heard felt	anything. a faint sound. her face burning.
Senser	**Process: mental, perceptive**	**Phenomenon**

Figure 5.6. Mental process: perceptive

She I I	hated like appreciated	the thought of leaving him alone. most operas. the fact that you kept quiet.
Senser	**Process: mental, emotive**	**Phenomenon**

Figure 5.7. Mental processes: emotive

You No one She	can imagine would choose never discovered	his reaction. such a colour. the exact address.
Senser	**Process: mental, cognitive**	**Phenomenon**

Figure 5.8. Mental process: cognitive

I You	don't want may crave	any trouble. a cigarette
Senser	**Process: mental, desiderative**	**Phenomenon**

Figure 5.9. Mental processes: desiderative

The sub-categories have different patterns of use in certain ways. One of the most striking is that some mental processes are '**reversible**': that is, in talking about a mental process it is equally possible to have the Subject role filled either by the human participant in whose mind the process occurs or by the phenomenon that triggers the process. With material processes, the second participant, the Goal, can be Subject, but only in a passive clause (see Figure 5.4 above). With mental processes, this constraint does not always apply. This happens most easily with

emotive mental processes: Figure 5.10 shows some examples of Phenomenon as Subject.

This news His lack of self-esteem The realization	seemed to puzzle never worried horrified	her. him. her.
Phenomenon	Process: mental, emotive	Senser

Figure 5.10 Phenomenon as Subject

This reversibility follows from the semantics. As the formulation I have just given suggests, the process can be seen either as sensed by the human participant or as triggered by the phenomenon: for example, when I receive a Christmas present, I can talk about it in terms of me liking the present or the present pleasing me. Of course, it is also possible in principle to use a passive clause, especially to bring the human Senser into Subject position. Figure 5.11 gives rewordings of the examples in Figure 5.10 to show this – note that this is one case where the passive typically sounds as unmarked and natural as the active.

She He She	seemed to be puzzled was never worried was horrified	by this news. by his lack of self-esteem. by the realization.
Senser	Process: mental, emotive	Phenomenon

Figure 5.11. Passive mental process clauses

The other sub-categories of mental processes tend to be less easily reversible than emotive processes – they most naturally occur in active clauses with Senser as Subject. It is possible to reverse them in some cases, though often only by using

wordings that are to some extent metaphorical (usually encoding the mental process as if it were a material process; see Figure 5.12).

An awful thought A flash of colour	has just struck caught	me. her eye.
Phenomenon	**Process: mental**	**Senser**

Figure 5.12. Cognitive and perceptive processes with Phenomenon as Subject

Figure 5.13 shows the analysis for a fairly common type of metaphorical wording with anticipatory 'it'.

It It	strikes occurred	me to someone	that she's making a fool of you. that they needed a logo.
Phe-	**Process: mental**	**Senser**	**-nomenon**

Figure 5.13 Embedded fact Phenomenon as Subject

5.3 More complex aspects of transitivity

The description of transitivity that I have given so far allows us to handle a good proportion of clauses in the texts that we might want to analyse. However, as I have mentioned in a couple of places, there are complexities that we have not yet explored and some problems that almost always crop up when you analyse full texts. In this section, I will first revisit the three major categories of process types – material, mental and relational – to fill in some of these complexities, and then discuss some general issues in transitivity. In doing this, I will be touching on a few problematic questions to which we do not yet have clear-cut answers.

5.3.1 More on material processes

I pointed out in 5.2.1 above that material processes form the most diverse of the categories; and it is possible to set up many cross-cutting sub-categories (e.g. see Halliday and Matthiessen, 2014: Section 5.2.3 for sub-divisions of the broad categories of transformative and creative material processes). However, this diversity means that it can be difficult to be sure whether a particular verb should be categorized as a material process or something else. For example, there are processes that encode an **outcome** without in themselves specifying what led to that outcome. In the following example, the process of 'achieving' seems to blend the ideas of 'doing something in order to have' and 'having' – in other words, there is a blend of action and resulting state:

He achieved his lifetime ambition when he finally appeared on television.

The 'action' interpretation suggests that this is a material process, whereas the 'state' interpretation suggests that it is a relational process of possession (see 5.3.3 below). The most useful way of looking at such areas of uncertainty is to accept that the material process category has a core of **prototypical** processes that can be probed by questions like 'What did he do?'; around this core there are slightly less typical processes that are more easily probed by questions like 'What happened (to him)?'; and further out on the periphery there are processes for which the most appropriate probes are questions like 'What was the resulting state?' In a sense, material is the default transitivity category: if a process cannot be assigned to any of the other categories following the criteria described in section 5.2 above, it is probably material; so this fuzziness is predictable. But it is in fact typical of all the categories: many examples fit smoothly into the categories as defined, while others seem to include less typical elements of meaning or to show a blend of two categories.

In practice, I find that it is usually possible to assign blended processes to one of the categories as the dominant meaning (for example, I would label 'achieve' a

material process); but, if a number of the same blended-process types appear in a text, it is often worth examining them separately as a text-specific sub-category that may give a particular 'tone' to the text as a whole. For example, a type of blending that occurs fairly frequently in certain types of text is one where the relational ('state') meaning is dominant but the wording brings in a material ('action') process colouring:

Hope Street *runs* between the two cathedrals.

This clearly expresses location, but the choice of a verb that normally encodes action gives the stative description a different tone, especially if there are a number of similar choices in that area of the text. One genre in which this blend is fairly common is tourist brochures: an advantage of the blend is that it can give the description of the location a more dynamic and thus more appealing feel. Similarly, many cognitive mental processes are expressed in material terms: for example, 'grasp', 'take in', 'a thought crossed my mind', 'reach a decision', 'it struck me that'. These are dead metaphors, but in comparison with 'understand', 'think' or 'decide' they still preserve some of their original material force, and allow a speaker to represent cognition as drama.

One small further point that is worth mentioning is that in some cases a material process clause may include an Attribute, usually expressing the state in which the Actor or Goal ends up as a result of the process:

Her dad and I painted the walls *a shade of grey*

Although this looks like a direct participant, it is similar to the Attribute in a relational:

attributive clause in that – unlike other direct participants – it cannot become Subject.

5.4 Transitivity patterns in text

In this section, I will illustrate some of the insights that can be gained by analysing patterns of transitivity choices across texts.

5.4.1 Analysing transitivity in clauses and in text

As a first practical point, it is worth highlighting briefly the ways in which different kinds of clauses can be analysed for transitivity. The following are some examples from a textbook for learners of English for Academic Purposes.

[Circumstance: quality] How do *[Senser]* I *[Pr: mental, cognition]* learn?

The fact that this is an interrogative with the Finite 'do' is ignored for the transitivity analysis. In order to work out the transitivity role for a WH-element, try imagining the declarative equivalent: in this case, 'I learn how' = 'I learn in a certain way'.

[Actor][you] *[Pr: material]* Prepare *[Goal]* both books

The process here is an imperative, so the Actor ('you') is not mentioned explicitly. However, when you are counting participant roles in the text, you should include 'you' as Actor in the results. You may prefer to show the understood Actor in square brackets, as I've done above; but this is not essential.

[Value/Identified] The first step in successful study *[Pr: relational, identifying]* is *[Token/Identified]* to know as much as possible about yourself as a learner.

[Senser] [you] *[Pr: mental: cognition]* to know *[Phenomenon]* as much as possible about yourself as a learner

This sentence includes an embedded clause, which is 'pulled out' and labelled separately. It is a good idea to indent these, to indicate that they are not ranking clauses. The Senser of the embedded non-finite clause is understood as being 'you'; and in counting participant roles in the text you would include it as Senser. Again, you can add it in square brackets as I have done.

[C-] It *[Pr: relational, attributive]*is *[Attribute]* important *[-arrier]* to become familiar with any book you use for study.

[Carrier] [you] *[Pr: relational: attributive]* to become *[Attribute]* familiar with any book you use for study

[Goal] any book *[Actor]* you *[Pr: material]* use *[Circumstance: purpose]* for study

This illustrates one way of handling multiple embedding, where an embedded clause has another clause embedded in it: each embedded clause is put on a separate line, indented from the one above it.

5.4.2 Comparing transitivity choices in different registers

As an example of this kind of comparison, we can take two texts from different registers that are both about small medical advances. The first is from a popular newspaper, the *Daily Mail*; the second from a scientific journal for medical experts. From each version I have simply taken a sample of six representative sentences to analyse in detail below; but the discussion following the analysis will relate to the results for the whole texts. You will find it useful to do your own analysis of the samples and to see what potential patterns you can identify, before reading on. You will also find it useful to use your knowledge of the two different registers to predict the kinds of patterns that you might expect to find – particularly in terms of the entities (people, medical features, etc.) that you might expect to find as participants.

Extract 1: The newspaper report

1. *[Token/Identified]* It *[Pr: relational: identifying]* may be *[Value/Identifier]* the solution to a marital problem which has led to thousands of long-suffering spouses seeking refuge in spare bedrooms.
   [Initiator] which (= problem) *[Pr:-]* has led to *[Actor]* thousands of long-suffering spouses *[-: material]* seeking *[Scope]* refuge *[Circumstance: location]* in spare bedrooms.
2. *[Actor]* The news that researchers may have made a breakthrough in the search for a way to prevent snoring *[Pr:material]* will bring *[Goal]* hope *[Recipient]* to millions of bleary-eyed couples.
   [Actor] researchers *[Pr: material]* may have made *[Scope]* a breakthrough *[Circumstance: location]* in the search for a way to prevent snoring
   [Actor] [researchers?] *[Pr: material]* to prevent *[Goal]* snoring

3. *[Actor]* Dentists *[Pr: material]* have invented *[Goal]* a device which is said to reduce significantly the disturbing sounds made by noisy sleepers. *[Actor]* which (= device) *[Pr: material]* is said to reduce *[Circumstance: degree]* significantly *[Goal]* the disturbing sounds made by noisy speakers *[Scope]* sounds *[Pr: material]* made *[Actor]* by noisy sleepers
4. *[Sayer]* Tests *[Pr: verbal]* indicate that // *[Actor]* the inexpensive appliance *[Pr:*
   material] can cut *[Goal]* levels of snoring *[Circumstance: degree]* by more than half.
5. *[Phenomenon]* Its usefulness *[Pr: mental: cognition]* was assessed *[Senser]* by 14 male snorers and their sleeping partners *[Circumstance: location]* during a month-long trial, // *[Sayer]* the British Dental Journal *[Pr: verbal]* reported.
6. *[Sayer]* The men and their partners all *[Pr: verbal]* reported *[Verbiage]* improvements during the trials.

Extract 2: the medical journal article

1. *[Token/Identified]* Various epidemiological studies *[Pr: relational: identifying]* show *[Value/Identifier]* that an increasing number of children suffer from allergic disorders.
2. *[Carrier]* an increasing number of children *[Pr: relational: attributive]* suffer from *[Attribute]*allergic disorders
3. *[Phenomenon]*Desensitization *[Pr: mental: cognition]* should be aimed for if possible.
4. However, *[Circumstance: location]* in most cases, *[Carrier]* symptomatic treatment of young patients *[Pr: relational: attributive]* will be *[Attribute]* adequate.
5. *[Attribute]* Of particular importance *[Pr: relational: attributive]* is *[Carrier]* an effective and well tolerated treatment with as low as possible exposure to an active principle which does not have any sedative side-

effects.

[Carrier] which (= treatment) *[Pr: relational: attributive]* does not have *[Attribute]* any sedative side-effects.

6. *[Circumstance: location]* In a multicentre observation *[Phenomenon]* the efficacy and tolerability of Allergodil nasal spray *[Pr: mental: cognition]* was studied *[Circumstance: location]* in patients suffering allergic rhinitis.

   [Carrier] patients *[Pr: relational: attributive]* suffering *[Attribute]* allergic rhinitis

7. *[Circumstance: location]* In 21.5% of these children, *[Phenomenon]* rhinitis *[Pr:*

   mental: cognition] was diagnosed *[Circumstance: guise]*as 'perennial'

It is worth noting that the whole newspaper report is 392 words long, whereas the medical journal article is 489 words; but the newspaper report has 50 clauses to 38 in the medical article. That is, the clauses in the medical article have on average one and a half times as many words as the newspaper report. However, this cannot be straightforwardly interpreted as meaning less complexity: the newspaper report has three times as many embedded clauses (15 compared with 5), and the overall effect, contrary to what one might expect, is of simpler sentences in the medical article.

Exercise 5.1

The following six sentences all express more or less the same 'meaning', but in different experiential terms. Analyse each one in terms of process, participants and circumstances. If possible, decide which category the circumstantial elements come into – but don't expect to be able to do this easily in all cases!

1. She bought the car from him for £3,000.
2. He sold her the car for £3,000.
3. She paid him £3,000 for the car.
4. He got £3,000 for the car.

5. The car cost her £3,000.
6. The car was sold to her for £3,000.

Now analyse each of the following clauses in the same way. Note that 16 has two slightly different readings.

7. The cat's eaten all the fish.
8. All our pasta is made daily.
9. This decision was the most difficult of her life.
10. A car backfired outside in the street.
11. They finally announced their engagement to the press.
12. The house is a real bargain.
13. I worry about her health.
14. Her illness worries me.
15. It was snowing heavily outside.
16. The house owner then hit the man with the guitar.

Exercise 5.2

Below are some parts of the doctor–patient consultation that you analysed for mood and interaction in Lecture 4. Analyse the clauses in transitivity terms (some parts will not need analysing).

P I can't bend forward and I can't like turn sideways D so it's pain in the lower back

D ok how long did you say again

P I mean all last night I couldn't turn on my side

D so it got worse overnight

P yeh

D so the first thing is rest secondly I'll give you some painkillers/they don't speed up the healing/it's just to make life comfortable for you while it's healing/

P is it like a thing I've got with my spine

D it’s a torn muscle in your back yeh/it should recover

P you wouldn’t think it was so painful would you

D they don’t make you drowsy/you don’t have to finish the course/simply when your back is fine just stop them

Lecture 6

Organizing the message: the textual metafunction – Theme

6.1 Introduction: making messages fit together

Having looked at the clause from the perspective of what interaction is being carried out and what is being talked about, we will now turn to examining aspects that can only be fully understood by looking at the clause in its context in the rest of the language around it.

When we look at language from the point of view of the textual metafunction, we are trying to see how speakers construct their messages in a way that makes them it smoothly into the unfolding language event (which may be a conversation, or a newspaper article, for example). As well as interacting with their listeners and saying something to them about the world, speakers constantly organize the way their message is worded in order to signal to them how the present part of their message its in with other parts. To get an idea of this, look at the following example from a letter appealing for money for the SOU, an organization that tries to prevent cruelty to animals:

You probably haven’t heard of the SOU before. That’s because we i ght cruelty undercover.

There are a number of signals in the second sentence here that it functions as a coherent continuation of the i rst: ‘that’ encapsulates the whole of the information

given in the first sentence, while ‘because’ signals the logical relationship of result and reason between the new information in the second sentence and the information in the first. Less obviously, perhaps, the placing of ‘that’ in initial position makes the second sentence i t more smoothly (if you change the order of the constituents around the ef ect sounds awkward – e.g. ‘The fact that we i ght cruelty undercover is the reason for that’). What we have identii ed here are three of the main ways in

Organizing the message: the textual metafunction – Theme

which textual meanings are constructed in a text: repetition, conjunction and thematization.

Repetition, as I am using the term, clearly includes repetition of the same word or a synonym – in the letter from which the example is taken, ‘the SOU’ is repeated three times in the i rst four paragraphs. This is usually called ‘lexical repetition’. However, it also includes more ‘grammatical’ kinds of repetition of meaning, which may not be expressed by the same or similar wording – in the example, ‘that’ brings into its sentence the meaning of the whole previous sentence. The function of repetition is typically to show that parts of a text (not necessarily adjacent to each other) are related in some way. By repeating a wording or a meaning, speakers signal that they are keeping to the same topic, whereas an absence of repetition might make it dii cult for the hearers to understand that they are. While repetition typically signals that parts of a text are related, it is the function of conjunction to show how they are related. This is clearest when a conjunction such as ‘because’ is used to relate two clauses:

> You probably haven’t heard of the SOU before, because we i ght cruelty undercover.

Conjunctive Adjuncts such as ‘therefore’, and certain kinds of nouns (see Winter, 1982) such as ‘the reason’ can also perform the same kind of function, though in dif erent ways. Conjunction obviously works primarily between two or more clauses. So, too, does repetition, since it plays a crucial role when a speaker

chooses to express certain elements of one clause in a way that recalls the elements of earlier clauses. Thematization is dif erent in that it relates not to the way that individual components are expressed but to the structuring of the clause itself – the order in which elements appear in the clause. The Theme of a clause is simply the i rst constituent of the clause. In choosing the starting point for a clause – the constituent that appears in i rst position – cooperative speakers select something that will make it easier for their hearers to 'hook' this clause onto the earlier clauses, to see immediately how the information that will come in the remainder of the clause is likely to i t in with what has already been said. This section on textual meanings is split over two chapters, to make it more manageable. In this i rst part, Chapter 6, we will be dealing with Theme. Chapter 7 will be a kind of interlude, in which I look at conjunction in terms of the grammatical resources that enable clauses to get combined into complexes/sentences. In Chapter 8, I will then move beyond the limits of the clause complex for the second chapter on textual meanings. That will focus on an outline of grammatical kinds of repetition between complexes/sentences. (We will not be looking in detail at lexical repetition, since that would take us beyond what is traditionally accepted as grammar.) I will also come back to conjunction as a broader phenomenon, from the particular perspective of its role in establishing relations between complexes/sentences.

6.2 Theme

The following example is the i rst sentence of a newspaper report of an exhibition on industrial history:

For centuries, yellow canaries have been used to 'test' the air in mining.

The first clause constituent in this case (which is in italics) is an Adjunct. Without changing the wording too much, we can reorder the components of this sentence in a number of dif erent ways:

Yellow canaries have been used to ‘test’ the air in mining for centuries.

Miners have used yellow canaries to ‘test’ the air for centuries.

In mining, yellow canaries have been used to ‘test’ the air for centuries.

To ‘test’ the air in mining, yellow canaries have been used for centuries.

The air has been ‘tested’ in mining for centuries by using yellow canaries.

What we have done in each case is to start the message from a dif erent point – that is, to choose a dif erent Theme for the clause. As mentioned above, the Theme is the i rst constituent of the clause. All the rest of the clause is simply labelled the Rheme. You might like to think about what the ef ects of changing the starting points are, and in what context each might be appropriate.

The original sentence starts from the historical perspective – ‘For centuries’ – which makes sense since the theme of the exhibition is industrial history and this is the opening sentence of the article. Both ‘Yellow canaries’ and ‘Miners’ could work as Theme in the context, but they might be read as indicating that canaries or miners will be the main topic of the article rather than just an example of the interesting things dealt with in the exhibition. ‘In mining’ as Theme suggests even more strongly a restricted starting point, from which it would be a little more awkward to shift to the general topic of the exhibition. The i nal two Themes (‘To “test” the air in mining’ and ‘The air’) are both very restricted as starting points in this context, and would be more likely to occur later in the article rather than at the beginning. The comparison of the dif erent versions underlines the fact that, although each refers to the same state of af airs in the world, they are by no means interchangeable. That is, the dif erent choice of Theme (amongst other changes) has contributed to making a dif erent meaning.

You may feel, in reading this analysis, that it is tempting to say that the Theme is ‘what the clause is about’ – and indeed Halliday (1985a: 39) originally suggested that this was the meaning of Theme. However, this can lead into problems. It certainly seems a good way of capturing the dif erence between the

second and third versions above to say that one is ‘about’ yellow canaries, while the other is ‘about’ miners; but the original version also seems intuitively to be ‘about’ yellow canaries, since that is the Subject of the clause. In other words, this way of expressing the meaning of Theme makes it hard to distinguish it from Subject. That is why it is better to keep to the idea of Theme as the ‘point of departure of the message’ or ‘that which locates Organizing the message: the textual metafunction – Theme and orients the clause within its context’ (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2014: 89). These two ways of describing Theme will probably still seem rather vague, but the analyses later in this chapter of Theme in whole texts should help to make them clearer.

6.3 Identifying Theme

6.3.1 Theme in declarative clauses

The kind of clause in which Theme is usually most straightforward to identify is a simple declarative. In the majority of cases, with this kind of clause Theme and Subject are the same (they are said to be ‘conl ated’). Subject is the ‘normal’ Theme choice in declarative clauses: it is the constituent that is chosen as Theme unless there are good reasons for choosing something else. It is therefore said to be the unmarked Theme choice, see Figure 6.1.

You	probably haven’t heard of the SOU before.
Yellow canaries	have been used to ‘test’ the air in mining for centuries.
The Queen	yesterday opened her heart to the nation.
This large sixth form college	

	is one of only two offering boarding accommodation.
Theme	**Rheme**

Figure 6.1 Subject as Theme

As was mentioned in 4.3.2, the Subject may be fairly extensive, if, for example, the nominal group acting as Subject includes a long Postmodii er. In these cases, it is the whole nominal group that is Theme. The Subject may also be a nominal group complex, where, for example, two coordinated nominal groups function together as Subject: again, the whole group complex is a single clause constituent and thus functions as Theme (see the second example in Figure 6.2). In some cases, the Subject may be an embedded clause, as in the third example.

The languages that the Eskimo people speak around the top of the world, in places as far apart as Siberia, Alaska, Canada, and Greenland, A keen interest in the environment, familiarity with the workings of Government and/or the town and country planning systems Sending the fi nal result through to Faculty before all the required documents have arrived	differ quite a lot in details of vocabulary. would be a strong advantage. will probably just confuse matters.
Theme	**Rheme**

Figure 6.2 'Heavy' Subject as Theme

The other kind of constituent that is relatively often chosen as Theme in declarative clauses is an Adjunct. Unlike Subject and Complement, which typically occur in a relatively i xed order in relation to the Predicator ('Subject-

Verb-Object' in traditional terms), the position of Adjuncts is fairly l exible, and they can be placed in Theme without this seeming particularly unusual or marked compared with the choice of Subject as Theme. As with Subject Themes, the Adjunct may be quite long – e.g. see the last example in Figure 6.3.

Last night	a man was helping police inquiries.
In our classical collection	you will fi nd many well-loved masterpieces.
Out of Britain's 37 most senior judges	only one is a woman.
As a tax-payer,	I object to paying for the restoration of Windsor Castle.
In common with almost every art movement born in the early part of this century,	it considered itself revolutionary.
Theme	**Rheme**

Figure 6.3 Adjunct as Theme

It is possible to have a constituent other than Subject or Adjunct as Theme in adeclarative clause, but this is not very common, and usually needs a particular kind of context, such as where the constituent in Theme position is being contrasted with something else in the text. In the i rst example in Figure 6.4, the travel agency who have issued the advertisement have listed all the (pleasant) tasks that the client will do on holiday, such as exploring the beaches or learning the local dances; now they are about to list all the tiresome tasks that they will undertake for the client, such as making the travel arrangements.

All the rest Friends like that What I saw inside Particularly significant	we'll do for you. I can do without. I do not want to describe. was the way the subjects reacted to the third task.
Theme	**Rheme**

Figure 6.4 Complement as Theme

Clauses like those in Figure 6.4 are said to have marked Theme, because they are unusual enough to draw attention to themselves, and because they only occur when contextual reasons overrule the unmarked choice of Subject as Theme. I mentioned earlier that it is easy to confuse Theme and Subject since we can say that, in some sense, the clause is 'about' both. But looked at from the speaker's point of view, it makes sense to start the clause with the constituent that combines both these types of 'aboutness'. This is why Subject is the natural choice as Theme. What is slightly odd

about the sentences in Figure 6.4 is that the Theme slot is i lled by the Complement, an entity that, as mentioned in 4.3.6, could have been Subject as well (e.g. 'All the rest will be done for you'). In other words, Theme and Subject have been separated when they could in principle have been conl ated. The reason why they have been separated in cases like this is often to highlight a contrast between the thematized element and something in the preceding text, as in the i rst example in Figure 6.4. Adjuncts, on the other hand, could not usually move so easily into the Subject role. In addition, as mentioned above, their position in the clause is typically l exible. Therefore, when an Adjunct is used as Theme, as in Figure 6.3, it is somewhere in the middle on the scale of markedness. However, for simplicity they are labelled as marked Theme – see Halliday and Matthiessen (2014). The main reason for including them as marked Theme is that, just as with

the examples in Figure 6.4, it is normally possible to identify factors in the context that have led to their being chosen as Theme. We will explore some of these factors when we look at Theme in text, below; but as a simple example, think of the dif erence between these two sentences (Theme is in italics):

I went to town on Friday.
On Friday I went to town.

If a speaker was starting a conversation, they would be much more likely to use the first version. The speaker would be more likely to use the second if they had already established that they were organizing what they were saying in terms of time sequence: you might well expect to i nd other Themes like 'The next day' somewhere else in their talk. Another way of putting this is that Subject is chosen as Theme when there is no good reason to choose anything else; but when there are contextual pressures, such as the speaker's wish to establish a contrast or signal a particular form of organization in their discourse, another element – Adjunct or Complement – may be chosen as Theme instead.

6.3.2 Theme in non-declarative clauses

The other main type of clause is interrogative, which typically serves to realize a question. To understand the unmarked Theme choice in these clauses, we need to think about the communicative function of questions. The basic reason for asking a question is to i nd out some 'missing' information (of course, as noted in Chapter 4, questions may be used to serve many other purposes – e.g. to invite someone to do something – but that basic function remains present in all cases). As mentioned in 4.3.4, with WH-interrogatives, the WH-word or group itself represents the missing information that the other person is being asked to provide. In questions the natural starting point is the thing that the questioner wants to

know about, and therefore it is the WH-word or group that almost invariably appears in Theme position – indeed, the clause structure of WH-questions has evolved as dif erent from that of declaratives precisely in order to allow the thematization of the WH-element. As the examples in Figure 6.5.

What	happened to her?
What	do you want to know?
Which platform	does it leave from?
How	did you come to employ him?
What use	is a second?
How often	are you supposed to take them?
Theme	**Rheme**

Figure 6.5 Theme in WH-questions

message: Subject in the i rst example, Complement in the second, Complement of a preposition in the third, Adjunct in the fourth, and so on. Unlike Theme in declarative clauses, the type of clause constituent does not af ect markedness. A marked Theme choice in a WH-question is when the WH-word or group does not come in i rst position. However, since the structure of interrogative clauses is specii cally designed to bring the WH-element to i rst position, marked Theme choices are relatively rare with questions; see Figure 6.6 for an example.

After the party,	where did you go?
Theme	**Rheme**

Figure 6.6 Marked Theme in WH-questions

As well as WH-interrogatives, we also need to consider yes/no interrogatives. As pointed out in 4.3.4, the missing information in these cases is polarity (‘yes’ or ‘no’). We can see a question like ‘Has he gone?’ as the speaker inviting the other

person to clarify which of the two possibilities is correct: ‘He has/hasn’t gone’. It is, of course, the i nite verbal operator that expresses polarity: ‘has’ vs. ‘hasn’t’. Thus again it is natural for this to be in Theme position. However, for reasons that will be discussed in section 6.6.4 below, the Theme in these cases also includes the Subject; see Figure 6.7. As with WH-questions, marked Theme, with something appearing before the Finite, is rare; but the i nal example in Figure 6.7 shows an instance of this.

Have you	fi nished your meal, sir?
Did he	tell you where I was?
Hasn’t he	changed his name?
So on Monday	did they get the problem fixed?
Theme	**Rheme**

Figure 6.7 Theme in yes/no questions

A further type of non-declarative clause is imperative. Once again, the unmarked Theme choice can be understood by considering the communicative purpose. This is normally to get the other person to carry out the action, and the natural starting point is therefore the Predicator, which expresses the action. In the case of a negative or emphatic imperative, the Predicator is still included along with the Finite ‘don’t/ do’ (for essentially the same reason as in the case of the Subject in yes/no questions, see section 6.6.4). With most imperatives, it is the addressee that is understood as the person who will carry out the action. However, there is a sub-category of imperatives in which both the addressee and the speaker are involved: this is the form of imperative with ‘let’s’. As noted in 4.3.4, ‘let’s’ expresses, albeit in an idiomatic way, the Subject, and is therefore analysed as Theme; see Figure 6.8.

Leave	the lamp here.

Don't cry Do have Let's	about it. some cheese. go for a walk, shall we?
Theme	**Rheme**

Figure 6.8 Theme in imperative clauses

Marked Theme is rather more common with imperative clauses than with the other non-declarative types. As mentioned above, the understood doer of the action in an imperative clause is normally the addressee; and it is in fact possible to make this explicit by using 'you' as a marked Theme choice. In addition, an imperative clause may start from an Adjunct, which may, for instance, give an explanation of why the command should be carried out. Figure 6.9 gives examples of some possibilities.

You On arrival in Liverpool For a sharper taste	just shut up, will you? take a taxi to the University. squeeze some lime over it.
Theme	**Rheme**

Figure 6.9 Marked Theme in imperative clauses

A final small group of clauses are exclamative: clauses that are formally declarative but which are similar in some ways to WH-interrogatives, and which are analysed in the same way, with the WH-element as the natural Theme. See Figure 6.10.

What a nice plant How absolutely lovely	you've got! she looks tonight!
Theme	**Rheme**

Figure 6.10 Theme in exclamative clause

Exclamative clauses bring us to the question of minor clauses: clauses that do not have a Predicator. These include: exclamations like ‘How interesting!’ and ‘Congratulations’; greetings and vocatives like ‘Hallo’ and ‘Sue!’; and certain idiomatic expressions such as ‘What about the other two?’. Generally, only major clauses (those which have a Predicator) have thematic structure, and thus minor clauses are not analysed for Theme/Rheme (just as they are not usually analysed for transitivity). To conclude the discussion of different Theme choices in the basic clause types, it is worth mentioning that either the Theme or Rheme may be missing from a clause. This happens with elliptical clauses, where part of the message may be ‘carried over’ from an earlier message (e.g. in the answer to a question), or may be understood from the general context. A few examples of the possibilities are given in Figure 6.11, with the elliptical elements given in brackets to show how the decision is made to assign the elements that are present to Theme or Rheme.

Who	(would you most like to meet)?
(I	’d most like to meet) Your real father.
Why ever	(will you) not (come)?
(That	’s an) Amazing discovery!
(Are you)	Not sure what a special delivery is?
Theme	Rheme

Figure 6.11 Theme in elliptical clauses

•Refer to Exercise 6.1.

6.4 Special thematic structures

Having established the basic types of Theme, in the following three sections we will look at certain aspects in more detail. We begin by examining ways in which

the speaker can manipulate the structure of her message in order to establish specii c kinds of starting points.

6.4.1 Thematic equatives

So far, all the Themes that we have examined have consisted of a single clause constituent. However, there is a textual resource in English by means of which the speaker can group together more than one element of the message as a single constituent, and then use that 'multi-element constituent' as Theme (and Subject). This is the structure illustrated in Figure 6.12, which is traditionally called a 'pseudo- cleft', but which Halliday and Matthiessen (2014: Section 3.2) prefer to call a 'thematic equative'

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What I'm going to do now What I want to talk about What really annoyed me What one will not learn here What happened	is to whisk these all together is the nature of certain kinds of evidence used in the courts was that they didn't tell me the truth. is anything about the Enlightenment. was that Benjamin Lee Whorf picked up Boas' example and used it.
Theme	**Rheme**

Figure 6.12 Thematic equatives

Halliday and Matthiessen use the term 'thematic equative' because the Theme–Rheme structure here is expressed in the form 'Theme = Rheme', with the '=' expressed by the Predicator 'be'. This formulation is a reminder of the fact that

these are actually a type of identifying clause, in which the embedded WH-clause always acts as the Value – see 5.2.3. It is also worth highlighting the fact that the Theme is Subject, so these structures technically have unmarked Theme. Most of these examples could be re written to distribute the components of the message in their 'normal' positions. For example:

Now I'm going to whisk these all together.

In most cases, the components of the message are distributed across the Theme and Rheme: in the example above, 'I'm going to now' is in the Theme and 'whisk these all together' in the Rheme. However, a re-writing of the i nal example in Figure 6.12 does not in fact use any of the words from the Theme, since none of the specii c components of the message are placed in Theme: the writer's starting point is simply'something happened'.

Benjamin Lee Whorf picked up Boas' example and used it.

Re-writes like these show that more or less any combination of the meaning components can be grouped in the single constituent functioning as Theme, or that the Theme may include very little of the specii c content of the message. It is revealing to compare WH-clauses as Themes with WH-interrogative clauses. In both, the WH-element represents a 'gap' that is about to be i lled in: with questions, it is the addressee who is expected to i ll the gap, whereas in thematic equatives it is the speaker who completes her own message by i lling the gap. This link with questions helps us to understand why a speaker might use a thematic equative. In a sense, the starting point in a thematic equative is often a question that the speaker imagines the hearer might want to ask at this stage in the text. It helps us to see this if we look at the context of the examples. For instance, the sentence comes at a transition point in a book review. The reviewer has begun by making it clear that he does not like the book as a whole. He then, however, lists a number of good aspects, things that can be learnt from the book. The example sentence signals the return to the more critical comments that his opening has led us to expect. It is as if the reviewer is imagining his reader

thinking: ‘Why has he said that the book is bad if I can learn useful information from it? What won’t I learn here?’ The writer then takes that as the starting point of the message, signalling in the Theme that the Rheme will answer this question.

In other cases, particularly in speech, the thematic equative seems to serve more as a way of ‘staging’ the message: splitting it into two chunks that the hearer will i nd easier to process. The Theme as starting point is divided of from the Rheme in a way that is more obvious than in the corresponding non-equative version, which allows the hearer to process each part separately. This feature is made even clearer by the fact that there is typically an intonation break after the equative Theme: this signals that the speaker is presenting that part of the message as a separate information unit. This applies to the i rst two examples in Figure 6.12, which are from spoken discourse: the i rst is from a cookery demonstration on television, and the second from the opening of a lecture. Theme choice in general serves to orient and guide the listener or reader; and thematic equatives are particularly clear examples of this. Both the functions mentioned – asking the reader’s or listener’s question and staging the information – make explicit the interactive consideration of the audience. As well as having the WH-clause as Theme, it is possible to start from the other end, and to put the WH-clause in Rheme. This is shown in Figure 6.13. Such clauses are, in fact, the marked version of thematic equatives. These marked thematic equatives often occur with pronouns (e.g. ‘that’) in Theme, which refer back to what has been said in the immediately preceding message. Even when the Theme position is not taken by a pronoun, the component of the message in Theme normally relates back to a meaning that has already been set up.

That	’s not what I meant.
Making the Party feel good about itself	is, after all, what he does best.
And nothing	is precisely what we got.

Theme	**Rheme**

Figure 6.13 Marked thematic equatives

6.4.2 Predicated Theme

One key feature of thematic equatives is that they group more than one element of the message into a single clause constituent, which can then function as Theme (or, in marked cases, as Rheme). There is another thematizing structure that allows the speaker to pick out a single element and give it emphatic thematic status. This is the structure exemplii ed in Figure 6.14, which is traditionally called a 'cleft sentence', but which Halliday and Matthiessen (2014: Section 3.7) prefer to call 'predicated Theme'.

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It's not the technology	which is wrong.
It is we	who have not learned how to use it.
It is the second of these points	that I shall be concentrating on in this talk.
It wasn't until 1986	that we fi nally came back to work in the UK.
It was only by sheer luck	that I noticed the key was missing.
Theme	**Rheme**

Figure 6.14 Predicated Theme

As the examples in Figure 6.14 show, the clause constituent that occurs in predicated Theme may be Subject (examples 1–2), Complement (example 3) or Adjunct (examples 4–5). Evidence from corpus studies suggests that Adjunct occurs at least as frequently as Subject; but we can understand the function of predicated Theme if we focus i rst on Subject as Theme. As mentioned earlier, Subject is the natural choice for Theme, so it might seem unnecessary to use a

specialized structure to place it in Theme position. But notice what happens if we re-write the i rst two examples (which follow

The technology is not wrong. We have not learned how to use it.

What we have lost here is the clear signal of contrast between the two Subjects. In speech, it would be possible to signal the contrast by intonation – amongst other things by stressing ‘technology’ and ‘we’; but in writing this resource is not available, and the tendency would be for the reader to assume that the emphasis was on the last lexical item of each clause (‘wrong’ and ‘use’), which is the unmarked pattern of intonation in English. Predicated Theme here serves to guide the reader towards a particular pattern of emphasis that is not the most natural one. More generally, the function of predicated Theme is to single out the predicated constituent as particularly noteworthy in some way, often because it contrasts with something in another part of the text (as in examples 1 and 2), or because it is represented as selected from amongst a number of alternatives (as in example 3).

6.4.3 Thematized comment

Another special thematic structure, which in some ways resembles predicated Theme, allows speakers to start their message with their own comment on the value or validity of what they are about to say. We have already considered these structures as ways of expressing explicit objective modality (4.4.4) and appraisal (4.5). Here is a typical example:

It’s true that we don’t know what we’ve got until we lose it

Here the main information is ‘we don’t know what we’ve got until we lose it’, a proposition which is evaluated as ‘true’. The main similarity with predicated Theme is that in both cases the ‘it’ acts as a place-holder for the Subject of the

Predicator ‘be’ in the i rst clause: the real Subject is the second clause (see 4.3.2). The main dif erence is that, with thematized comment, the comment in the ‘it’-clause is not a meaning component of the second clause, and it is not possible to re-write them in the form of a single clause as we were able to do with the examples of predicated Theme.

It’s not the technology which is wrong. = The technology is not wrong.

It’s true that we don’t know what we’ve got until we lose it. = ?

However, this still involves a grammatical operation (the use of ‘it’ as a place-holder) that serves to set up as the starting point of the message the speaker’s own comment. One’s own attitude is a natural starting point, and thematized comment is extremely common in many kinds of discourse. The alternative (where Theme and true Subject – i.e. the embedded clause – are conl ated) is possible, but it is very much the marked one of the pair:

That he should hit back in the only way he seems to know was grimly inevitable.

Figure 6.15 gives a few of the wide range of possibilities for thematized comment.

It is true that	we don’t know what we’ve got until we lose it.
It may be that	
It’s interesting that	the news reporters are manipulating the truth for reasons of
It is diffi cult	strikingness.
It is regretted that	you should say that.
	to know exactly how to characterize what we have just noticed.

	the University is unable to provide continuous nursing or domestic care.
Theme	**Rheme**

Figure 6.15 Thematized comment: one possible analysis

I should point out that Halliday and Matthiessen (2014: 97–8), who only touch on this structure in passing, do not take it as a thematizing device, and imply that the Theme in all the examples in Figure 6.15 is 'It' alone. However, my own experience in analysing texts suggests strongly that it makes more sense to include the comment: in many cases, thematized comment plays a specialized role in the text and it obscures the method of development of the text if one simply labels 'It' as Theme. It must be admitted, though, that it is dif erent from all the other types of Theme that we have considered so far; and in 6.7.5 below I will suggest an alternative way of viewing this structure.

6.4.4 Preposed Theme

One i nal thematizing structure, which occurs almost exclusively in impromptu speech or in writing that imitates speech, is preposed Theme. In such cases, the speakers announce their Theme as a separate constituent, and then substitute a pronoun in the appropriate place in the following clause.

People like us, in the middle, Happiness, That bloke who rang last night, Your Mum,	we have to be careful about the children we have. that's what life is about. what was he on about? does she know you're here?

Theme	Rheme

Figure 6.16 Preposed Theme

As the examples in Figure 6.16 show, the preposed Theme is normally a nominal element; and it is most commonly Subject. Most pre-position in authentic speech occurs with declaratives, but the last two examples show that such Themes may also occur with interrogatives.

6.4.5 Passive clauses and Theme

Before leaving the topic of thematizing devices, we should mention one structural resource that has a number of functions, including that of moving a particular constituent into Theme. This is passivization. In most cases, there will be a complex
web of reasons for choosing passive rather than active; but there are some cases where
the inl uence of Theme choice is relatively dominant. This is clearest where the Agent (the 'doer' of the action) is explicitly mentioned in a prepositional phrase with 'by', since in these cases both potential Subjects are present. As an example, here is a slightly simplii ed extract from a narrative, with the Themes in italics.

> They'd managed to get themselves on the wrong coach at Exeter.
> They were rescued by a soldier who spotted them both crying.
> He took them back to Exeter on another bus.

One reason for the passive form in the second sentence is that it enables the writer to maintain the starting point 'They', which is carried over from the previous sentence. The other character, 'a soldier', is introduced in the Rheme of the second sentence, and is then available as a natural starting point for the third sentence. This 'chaining' is weakened by switching the active and passive forms:

They'd managed to get themselves on the wrong coach at Exeter. A soldier who spotted them both crying rescued them. They were taken back to Exeter by him on another bus.

This version is not incoherent, but it certainly sounds less natural.

•Refer to Exercise 6.2.

6.5 Theme in clause complexes

So far we have concentrated on Theme in single clauses. But what happens when we have a clause complex consisting of more than one clause? When a dependent clause in a clause complex precedes the independent clause on which it depends, there appear to be good practical reasons for analysing the dependent clause as the Theme for the whole clause complex. We can take the following as an example:

As the universe expanded, the temperature of the radiation decreased.

If we follow strictly the basic assumption that every clause has a Theme, we will analyse this sentence as in Fig 6.17.

As the universe	expanded,	the temperature of the radiation	decreased.
Theme1	Rheme1	Theme2	Rheme2

Figure 6.17 Theme in dependent and dominant clauses

However, if we compare this sentence with the one immediately following it in the text from which it is taken, the dependent clause seems to be functioning thematically in a very similar way to the Adjunct in the second sentence:

> One second after the big bang, it would have fallen to about ten thousand million degrees.

In both cases, the component before the comma serves to set the following information in a sequenced time frame; and in fact, in the sentences around these, there is an alternation between dependent clauses and Adjuncts signalling the successive steps in the origin of the universe. This suggests that it may be equally valid to analyse both sentences in similar ways, as shown in Figure 6.18.

As the universe expanded, One second after the big bang,	the temperature of the radiation decreased. it would have fallen to about ten thousand million degrees.
Theme	**Rheme**

Figure 6.18 Dependent clause vs. Adjunct as Theme

The dif erent analyses of the dependent clause in Figures 6.17 and 6.18 capture dif erent aspects of what is going on. We can show both together, as in Figure 6.19

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As the universe	expanded,	the temperature of the radiation	decreased.
Theme1		Rheme1	
Theme2	Rheme2	Theme3	Rheme3

Figure 6.19 Theme in the clause complex

But for practical purposes you rarely need to show so much detail. In analysing a text, as we shall see, the way in which the Themes work to signal the ‘method of development’ (Fries, 1981) of the text emerges more clearly if dependent clauses

in initial position are taken as the point of departure for the whole clause complex – i.e. the analysis shown in Figure 6.18 is generally preferable. This applies both to i nite and non-i nite clauses. Figure 6.20 gives a range of examples.

After the police arrived Since he's already paid the bill Although they are aware of its existence, If he was in the house, Having worked on the Who's rock opera Tommy, Without replying	I brought them to this cottage. there's not much point in arguing. none of these linguists discusses the Problem-Solution structure in any detail. would he keep out of sight? I later found myself at the front of a tribute band called Who Two. he put his head under the blankets.
Theme	**Rheme**

Figure 6.20 Dependent clause as Theme

There are two practical points about analysing Theme in this way that need to be borne in mind. The i rst is that a dependent clause following the clause on which it depends normally does not need to have its Theme separately identii ed if you are analysing a text. In the analyses in Figure 6.19 we have assumed that the dependent clause represents in itself the starting point for the whole clause complex: we are thus to some extent treating it as equivalent to a constituent of the dominant clause. The corollary of this is that when the dominant clause comes i rst, the Theme of that clause functions as Theme for the whole clause complex, including the dependent clause. In Figure 6.21, the dependent clauses in Rheme are initalics.

My dad	died when I was fi ve.

I Down	do it because it's an addiction. she ran to the kitchen, where there were voices.
Theme	**Rheme**

Figure 6.21 Dependent clause in Rheme

The second point is the question of what happens when there is more than one independent clause in a clause complex. In such cases more than one Theme may need to be identii ed in a sentence. Fries (1994) argues that the most useful unit for analysing Theme in a text is the T-unit: that is, an independent clause together with all the clauses that are dependent on it. Thus, if a sentence has more than one independent (or main) clause there will be two T-units, each with its own Theme. In the following sentences, the T-units are separated by the slashed lines, and the Themes are in italics. (For more on clause complexes and T-units, see 7.2.)

> When we talked I was thinking of myself ,// and you may have thought me very selish.
>
> Then, as the universe expanded and cooled, the antiquarks would annihilate with the quarks, //but since there would be more quarks than antiquarks, a small excess of quarks would remain.

•Refer to Exercise 6.3.

6.6 Multiple Theme

So far, I have deliberately tried to keep to examples where it is reasonably easy to identify the boundary between the Theme and the Rheme. However, in looking at dependent clauses in the preceding section, I have passed over without comment the fact that conjunctions like 'and', 'but' and 'as' are included in Theme but do not I ll the Theme position by themselves. These and certain other elements have a special status in the thematic structure of the clause.

6.6.1 Conjunctions in Theme

With conjunctions, this status is rel ected by the fact that, if present, they must come in first position. Their function is to signal that the coming clause forms part of a larger structural unit, the clause complex, and also to signal how it relates to the other clause(s) in the complex. Therefore, they constitute a natural point of departure, helping the hearer to i t this clause in its appropriate context. However, since they must come i rst they do not 'take up the full thematic potential of the clause' (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2014: 110): the speaker still has her main thematic options open –e.g. Figure 6.22 shows dif erent thematic choices following the conjunction 'but'.

but all rooms but by the morning But if she missed those in Hyde Park in 1838,	look out onto the secluded garden. the snow had all melted. she made up for it in the following year.
Theme	**Rheme**

Figure 6.22 Conjunctions as part of Them

What may be a little trickier to grasp is that there are two classes of Adjunct that also
have special thematic status. It is to these that we now turn.

6.6.2 Conjunctive and modal Adjuncts in Theme

We have seen a number of examples where Adjunct has been chosen as Theme; but I have deliberately restricted these to circumstantial Adjuncts that contribute to the experiential meaning of the clause, as in the following example:

After about i ve minutes she came out of the door.

There are, however, two other kinds of Adjuncts that serve a dif erent purpose, which contribute a dif erent kind of meaning to the message.

Conjunctive Adjuncts, such as ‘however’, ‘alternatively’ and ‘as a result’, signal how the clause as a whole i ts in with the preceding text (see 8.3). They are obviously similar to conjunctions in the kinds of semantic relationships that they signal, but, unlike conjunctions, they do not link the clause into a larger structural unit (in over- simple terms, they show how two sentences relate to each other, whereas conjunctionsjoin two clauses into one sentence).

Modal Adjuncts, such as ‘probably’, ‘surprisingly’ and ‘frankly’, convey speakers’ judgements of the relevance or truth value of their message (see 4.3.7). They may be

seen as a comment on the ‘content’ of the message rather than part of the content itself (just as conjunctive adjuncts may be seen as linking the content of the clause to that of other clauses without forming part of the content). Thus they orient thehearer to the message by signalling a standpoint from which to view the informationin the clause.

Figure 6.23 gives examples of a range of these two kinds of Adjuncts in Theme (the Adjuncts are in italics). The i rst four examples show conjunctive adjuncts, while the last three show modal adjuncts. (For a detailed list of Adjuncts that fall into these two categories, see Halliday and Matthiessen, 2014: Section 3.4.)

Thus disorder	will tend to increase with time.
Nevertheless, we	can refl ect on our own activities.

However, when ice crystals form, Then we Certainly his wife June Admittedly, he Please may I	they will have defi nite positions. haven't met before, have we? was a very odd woman. took the trouble to destroy all the papers in the cottage. leave the table?
Theme	**Rheme**

Figure 6.23 Conjunctive and modal Adjuncts in Theme

From the account of their functions above, it should be clear that both conjunctive and modal Adjuncts are natural starting points, just as conjunctions are. However, unlike conjunctions, they do not have to be thematic: the speaker can choose whether or not to put them in Theme. They frequently occur in second position in the clause, at the Theme–Rheme boundary immediately after the Subject or whateverother constituent has been chosen as Theme; and they may appear even later in the Rheme – see Figure 6.24.

The little station, In North America, Then It	however, had not changed at all. for example, there is a grade system for measuring reading. they would certainly have to send you home. doesn't last, naturally.
Theme	**Rheme**

Figure 6.24 Conjunctive and modal Adjuncts in Rheme

The fact that there is a choice involved in placing these Adjuncts in Theme raises the

question of why we then need to include other elements in Theme. To answer this, we need to broaden the scope of the discussion a little and to establish a more special definition of Theme.

6.6.3 Textual, interpersonal and experiential elements in Theme

We have already established that the clause expresses experiential, textual and interpersonal meanings. Lexical elements, such as conjunctive and modal Adjuncts, that express primarily textual and interpersonal meanings have the function of 'placing' the content, of signalling how it i ts coherently with the content around it. They therefore naturally tend to gravitate towards the beginning of the clause, which is the structural slot (the Theme) where 'i tting-in work' is done. However, the textual and interpersonal elements signal how the i tting-in is going to work; they do not signal what is going to be i tted in. In order to see what is going to be i tted in, what the actual starting point is, we need to have an element from the experiential content of the clause. This is not an easy concept to grasp, and I i nd that sometimes it is useful to think simply in terms of getting your hearer settled in before launching into what you want to tell them. Older British readers may still have imprinted on their memories the words with which 'Listen with Mother', a radio programme for children, always started the stories that were told: 'Are you sitting comfortably? Then I'll begin. Once upon a time ...' On a small scale, Themes with more than one element can be seen as performing the same function.

This means that Theme must always include a constituent that plays a role in transitivity: a participant, process or circumstance. Halliday and Matthiessen label the thematic experiential constituent the 'topical Theme', arguing that it corresponds closely to what is called 'topic' in topic–comment analysis. However, 'topic' is anotoriously shifty concept, and, like many people working

in the Hallidayan approach, I prefer to avoid it in this context; so I will simply keep to the label ‘experiential Theme’.

If anything precedes the experiential element in Theme – textual and/or interpersonal elements – it is also part of Theme. This is then called a ‘multiple Theme’. There is a restricted range of elements that may precede experiential Theme in multiple Themes. As textual elements, we have already mentioned conjunctions and conjunctive Adjuncts; and to these we can add ‘continuatives’: a small set of what are sometimes called discourse markers (‘yes’, ‘no’, ‘well’, ‘oh’, ‘now’, etc.) that signal the beginning of a new move in the exchange. If more than one textual element is present, they normally occur in the order: continuative, conjunction, conjunctive (‘Well, but on the other hand ...’). As interpersonal elements we have mentioned modal Adjuncts; to these we can add Vocatives (e.g. names or other forms of direct address such as ‘darling’).

Examples of multiple Themes, showing various combinations of elementspreceding the experiential element, are given in Figure 6.25.

Well, But And,	certainly, My God, Harriet surely oddly,	sanity we the course he	is a precarious state. ’ve been dealt a bad hand! doesn’t start till next week. was right.
textual	interpersonal	experiential	
Theme			Rheme

Figure 6.25 Multiple Themes

As Figure 6.25 suggests, the typical ordering of elements in multiple Theme is textual^interpersonal^experiential. But when a conjunctive and modal Adjunct

appear together in Theme, the modal Adjunct normally precedes the conjunctive one; and the order of elements is interpersonal^textual^experiential; see Figure 6.26.

Unfortunately, Not surprisingly,	however, then,	the 'Un-artist' its operations	proliferated within the art institutions as well. were viewed with admiration.
interpersonal	textual	experiential	
Theme			**Rheme**

Figure 6.26 Alternative ordering of elements in multiple Themes

6.6.4 Interrogatives as multiple Themes

In section 6.3.2 above, I mentioned that the unmarked Theme of yes/no interrogatives included the Subject as well as the initial verbal operator. With the concept of multiple Theme established, we can now come back to the question of why Subject needs to be included. As discussed earlier (see 4.3.6), it is the Predicator, not the Finite, that expresses the process in transitivity. Thus, in line with the rule that the Theme of a clause goes up to and includes the i rst experiential constituent, it becomes clear that we must include Subject. Yes/no interrogatives are in fact simply a kind of multiple Theme, with the Finite as an interpersonal element. Similarly, imperative clauses in which the negative or emphatic operator ('don't' or 'do') is present have a multiple Theme with the operator constituting an interpersonalthematic element – see Figure 6.27.

Well,	had Mrs Lovatt, would Do Please don't	she you have make	missed her Mum? say it is untrue? one of these eclairs. me out as some kind of hysterical idiot.
textual	interpersonal	experiential	
Theme			**Rheme**

Figure 6.27 Yes/no interrogatives and imperatives as multiple Themes

This does not apply to WH-interrogatives, since, although they have an interpersonal function in signalling interrogativeness, the WH-element always plays a role in the transitivity of the clause – it stands in for a participant or circumstance – and therefore it expresses both an interpersonal and an experiential meaning at the same time.

•Refer to Exercise 6.4.

6.7 Some issues in Theme analysis

In any analysis of real text, you will almost certainly i nd that you run up against problems – some more serious than others – in deciding exactly what to label as Theme in some cases. The following sections look briel y at some of the dii culties that have come up in my experience, and suggest possible ways of handling them (see also 6.9 below).

6.7.1 Existential 'there' in Theme

The issue that arises with existential ‘there’ is that it is Subject (see 4.3.2) and therefore ought to be Theme, but in experiential terms it has ‘no representational function’ (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2014: 308) and therefore does not fuli l the thematic criterion of expressing experiential meaning. As I argued in 5.2.5, existential clauses

typically take as their starting point the simple fact that some entity exists (and, in the present clause at least, does nothing else). The existence is signalled not just by ‘there’ but also by ‘there’ plus the existential process (typically realized by the verb ‘be’). Thus it seems to make sense to include the process in Theme – and, in addition, this means that the Theme includes experiential content. Figure 6.28 exemplii es the analysis suggested here. Note that this runs counter to Halliday and Matthiessen (2014: 98), who assume that ‘there’ alone is Theme.

There was There is	no question of Kate’s marrying Ted. something special about this situation.
Theme	**Rheme**

Figure 6.28 Existential ‘there’ – Theme

Whichever analysis is preferred, it is clear that existential ‘there’ in Theme functions as a ‘pass’ option (as could be predicted from its special role in transitivity): it typically points forward to the content of the Rheme as signalling the topic of the clause, and, in many cases, of the following stretch of text.

6.7.2 Interpolations in Theme

Interpolation is a little-analysed but very common linguistic phenomenon, in which the speaker suspends his/her clause at a point where it is clearly not complete in order to comment on it, add extra details, etc. before returning to

complete the original clause. The interpolations in the following examples are in italics:

> Maureen Freely's piece, which is pure personal invective, I will not dignify with aresponse.
>
> Karr, 40, is a testimony to survival.

In a sense, interpolations are not part of the clause that they interrupt (this is signalled in writing by the paired commas, dashes or brackets that separate them of): they are a separate message. They can therefore often be analysed as having a separate thematic structure, especially when, as in the i rst example above, they are realized as a full clause. However, they are tethered to the host clause by the fact that the speaker has

chosen to bring them in as interpolations rather than as structurally independent messages; and when the peg to which they are tethered is the constituent in Theme, it is more practical simply to include them as part of Theme, as in Figure 6.29.

Maureen Freely's piece, which is pure personal invective, Karr, 40,	I will not dignify with a response. is a testimony to survival.
Theme	**Rheme**

Figure 6.29 Interpolations in Theme

6.7.3 Preposed attributives

In certain texts, you will come across a distinctive structure often associated with particular registers such as tourism and advertising. This is where an attribute of the Subject, rather than following it as with the interpolations illustrated above,

is placed in front. The preposed attributives in the following examples are in italics.

> One of the most imposing buildings in Liverpool, St George's Hall was designed by Lonsdale Elmes, who was only 24 when the foundation stone was laid in 1838.Always ready the instant you need it, the torch needs no battery or mains recharging. Standing in extensive gardens, the house has been carefully maintained to a highstandard.Priced from under £200 to around £20,000, our choice of rings is seemingly endless.

The preposed attributive clearly has thematic prominence and experiential content, and could therefore be taken as Theme. Like interpolation, however, it is expressed as structurally dependent, tethered to the following nominal group, and therefore the nominal group can be taken as forming the real starting point of the clause: the preposed attributive, in this view, merely smuggles in a bit more information before the writer gets down to his/her real message. The suggested Theme analysis for someof the examples is given in Figure 6.30.

Always ready the instant you need it, the torch Standing in extensive gardens, the house	needs no battery or mains recharging. has been carefully maintained to a high standard.
Theme	**Rheme**

Figure 6.30 Preposed attributives in Theme

6.7.4 Theme in reported clauses

One recurring dii culty in analysing Theme is how to treat reported clauses. As we shall see in Chapter 7, reporting – or projection, as we shall call it – involves a dif erent kind of relationship between clauses than other types of clause

complex; and this is rel ected in the uncertain status of projected Themes in text. In the case of quotes, the analysis is usually straightforward: the reporter makes a Theme choice in the projecting (reporting) clause and also re-cycles the original speaker's Theme choice in the quote. Both Themes typically seem to be important in the development of the text, and they are best shown separately, as in Figure 6.31. (For practical convenience, when drawing up a separate list just of the Themes in a text, a Theme in a quote can be marked with the opening set of double inverted commas: "Some people.)

He "What deters them	said: is the likelihood of being caught,"	"Some people he	won't like it." said.
Theme	**Rheme**	**Theme**	**Rheme**

Figure 6.31 Theme in quotes

With indirect speech, on the other hand, it is dii cult to decide whether to treat the projected (reported) clause as forming a T-unit with its projecting clause – in which case the Theme need not be shown separately – or as a separate message on a dif erent 'level'– in which case the Theme should appear separately. On the whole, I tend to favour the latter course, as shown in Figure 6.32. If the Theme is shown separately, a single inverted comma can be used in a list of Themes to mark it as projected. In
many cases, the Theme of the projected clause (e.g. 'the demise of the mine') links in with the topic of the text, while the Theme of the projecting clause (e.g. 'Ms Squire') primarily 'frames' the information by identifying the source. Thus both Themes seem to serve dif erent functions in the development of the text, and it is useful to identify both separately. But I must admit that this is an unresolved issue (for an alternative way of handling such cases see 6.9 below).

Baker (1999) Strike action	suggests that puts teachers' hopes of winning reductions at risk,	certain features the education secretary	might be observed more systematically using corpora. will warn today.
Theme	**Rheme**	**Theme**	**Rheme**

Figure 6.32 A possible analysis of Theme in reports

6.7.5 Theme and interpersonal grammatical metaphor

The issue of projection takes us to another area that potentially has fairly far-reaching implications for how Theme is identii ed. As discussed in 4.4.4, modality may be realized in the form of a separate clause. This is a kind of interpersonal grammatical metaphor (see Chapter 9), using the grammatical resources of projection: interpersonal meanings are experientialized and treated as if they were 'content' meanings. Such cases can therefore be viewed from either of two perspectives. We can see them from

the experiential angle, in which case we treat them as projecting clauses and implement the analysis we decided on in 6.7.2 above. This gives us the Theme patterns shown in Figure 6.33.

I I John Hamm	think suspect is too old to be Batman	those days the clocks I	are gone. might have been replaced. think.
Theme	Rheme	Theme	Rheme

Figure 6.33 A possible analysis of Theme in interpersonal projection

However, it is also possible to view them from the interpersonal angle, as interpersonal thematic elements in multiple Theme. We then have the Theme patterns shown in Figure 6.34.

I think I suspect	those days the clocks John Hamm	are gone. might have been replaced. is too old to be Batman, I think.
interpersonal	experiential	
Theme		Rheme

Figure 6.34 An alternative analysis of Theme in interpersonal projection

One advantage of this latter analysis is that it opens the possibility of handling other forms of interpersonal grammatical metaphor in the same way. For instance, in 6.4.3 I suggested one way of analysing thematized comment in examples such as:

It's true that we don't know what we've got until we lose it

This is not exactly the same structure as that illustrated in Figure 6.34, since here the second clause is embedded, and therefore not a ranking clause. This means that, if we identii ed a separate Theme in that clause, it would be moving down to a more delicate level of analysis than is usually helpful in exploring how thematic choices work in texts. What we can do instead is to take the thematized comment as an interpersonal element in multiple Theme. The resulting analysis of these cases and other forms of interpersonal metaphor is shown in Figure 6.35 (see Chapter 9 for an explanation of the dif erent forms of metaphor illustrated here).

It is important to stress that both the experiential and the interpersonal perspectives are valid: they simply prioritize dif erent aspects of the structure. The experiential perspective takes the wording as primary, and analyses Theme in terms of the clausal composition; the interpersonal perspective takes the function as primary, and analyses Theme in terms of the modal or evaluative

meaning. The latter is the perspective that I generally adopt now, since I i nd that it allows me to track more easily the ways in which interpersonal framing appears across texts; but this decision is based on practical rather than theoretical considerations.

Organizing the message: the textual metafunction – Theme

It is true that It may be that It's interesting that It is diffi cult It is regretted that I would argue that Could I ask whether	we the news reporters you the University your download speed you	don't know what we've got until we lose it. are manipulating the truth for reasons of strikingness. should say that. to know exactly how to characterize what we have just noticed. is unable to provide continuous nursing or domestic care. relies on a number of things: feel a little embarrassed tonight?
interpersonal	experiential	
Theme		**Rheme**

Figure 6.35 Theme in interpersonal projection

To check that you recognize all the categories, you may i nd it useful to think of (or, even better, i nd in text) an example of each of the most delicate

options on the right of the systems. For example, ‘unmarked: Subject: clause’ includes cases such as ‘to lose one parent may be regarded as a misfortune’.

6.8 Theme in text

So far in this chapter, the focus has mainly been on identifying Theme in various types of clauses and clause complexes. I have mentioned dif erent reasons for choosing certain constituents as Theme and for choosing certain structures to express Theme choices. These reasons are typically those that hold at the level of individual clauses: what, in the context, helps to explain why this Theme choice has been made for this clause. But this does not give a full picture of what is going on. I generally i nd that Theme starts to make more sense once you examine it in terms of how Theme choices work together through a text to signal its underlying coherence, and to signal its ‘method of development’, in Fries’s term. Very broadly, it is possible to identify four main, related functions:

•Signalling the maintenance or progression of ‘what the text is about’ at that point. This is especially done through the choice of Subject as unmarked Theme: maintenance is done by keeping to the same Theme as the preceding clause (most obviously if the Subject Theme is a pronoun), progression often by selecting a constituent from the preceding Rheme (see also the discussion of encapsulation by nominalization in 9.3).

•Specifying or changing the framework for the interpretation of the following clause (or clauses) – the wording here is taken from Fries (1995). This is mostly done by the choice of marked Theme, especially Adjunct or clause, and/or by including textual or interpersonal elements in Theme. A ‘heavy’ Subject Theme, giving a large amount of information, can also be used for this purpose.

•Signalling the boundaries of sections in the text. This is often done by changing from one type of Theme choice to another. In many cases, there may be anumber of successive Themes (typically three – a ‘thematic triplet’) of dif erent types: for

example, a summative Theme (e.g. ‘All this’), followed by one that signals a change of framework, followed by one that signals the start of the new framework.

•Signalling what the speaker thinks is a viable/useful/important starting point. This is done by repeatedly choosing the same element to appear in Theme (a particular participant, the speaker’s evaluation, elements that signal interaction with the hearer, etc.).

The Themes are given in Figure 6.38. They are grouped in columns in order to bring out the organization that they construct. The i rst Theme links the whole paragraph back to the concept of ‘Indo-European’, which has been introduced previously. The second Theme maintains the topic, and the Rheme of (2) introduces the two sub-branches that are subsequently picked up in the following Themes. Themes (3) to (5) relate to the i rst sub-branch, and are ordered chronologically, from early to modern forms; while Themes (6) and (7) relate to the second sub- branch, and are also ordered by chronology, though in reverse from modern to ancient. Theme (8), which is the start of a new paragraph, then connects back to Theme (1): ‘one branch’ – ‘another branch’.

(1) ↑One branch of Indo-European
    (2) The branch
    (3) To the Indian group
    (4) A later form of this language
    (5) Modern representatives of the group
    (6) The other Aryan group, Iranian,
    (7) An ancient form of Iranian
(8) ↑Another branch with ancient texts

Figure 6.38 Themes in the ‘language family’ extract

In order to explore the implications of these Theme choices, let us imagine for a moment that we wanted to help students (of linguistics, say, or of English as a Foreign Language) arrive at a coherent understanding of the text. Clearly, we would hope that they would understand the content not just as an unrelated string of facts about languages, but arranged in a kind of hierarchy or tree diagram, as in Figure 6.39. An EFL teacher might, indeed, design a reading comprehension task in which the students were asked to i ll in the boxes in this diagram with the names of the various languages. The diagram represents a plausible 'conceptual map' of how we should it together the information in the text. What is signii cant for our purposes is that it is the Themes that tell us where we are in the tree, the map coordinates if you like; while the Rhemes tell us what content i lls each node in the tree. In the terms used in Figure 6.37, the framework of the text is the tree, the way in which the languages relate to each other; and the point of the text is the languages themselves and their main features.

The role of the thematic choices in guiding the reader can also be highlighted if we compare the original extract with the following version in which the Themes and Rhemes have been systematically reversed (I have taken out much of the detail, to make it simpler; the Themes are in italics):

> *(1) Indo-European, or Aryan, is one branch of Indo-European. (2) Two groups, the Indian and the Iranian, make up this branch. (3) The language of the ancient Vedic hymns from North-West India belongs to the Indian group. (4) Classical Sanskrit is a later form of this language. (5) Bengali, Hindi, and other languages of Northern India, are modern representatives of the group. (6) Modern Persian, and neighbouring languages such as Ossetic, Kurdish and Pashto (or Pushtu), are included in the other Aryan group, Iranian. (7) The Avesta, the sacred writings of the Zoroastrians, contain an ancient form of Iranian. (8) Greek is another branch with ancient texts*.

Each sentence is grammatically acceptable; but, although it is perfectly possible to make sense of the text, it requires more ef ort on the part of the reader: the way in which each language mentioned i ts into the categorization only becomes clear in the Rheme (and the reference to the Avesta, a set of texts rather than a language, seems to appear out of nowhere).

•Refer to Exercise 6.5.

6.8.2 Other ways of exploring thematic choices

In the analysis above I have focused mainly on one aspect of thematic choices, the content; but there are other ways in which we can look at Theme in text. The short extract below about damp-prooi ng, taken from a do-it-yourself book (The Which? Book of Do-It-Yourself), can be used to illustrate the dif erent approaches. The Themes are in italics.

> *Of the non-traditional methods, chemical injection seems to be the most proven and popular alternative. In this system, a chemical water repellent is injected throughout the thickness of the wall to act as a moisture barrier. Three types of water repellent are in common use: the i rst consists of a silicone material carried in a white spirit*

solvent; the second is an aluminium stearate compound also in white spirit; the third is a silicone material using water as the solvent. The water-based silicone liquid is usually fed into the wall under very low pressure and allowed to dif use into the structure over quite a long period of time. The other two l uids do not mix with water so they are pumped into the wall under quite high pressures to displace at least some of the moisture present.

If we concentrate on the type of Theme (unmarked, marked or enhanced), there is a clear pattern that echoes the points I made above about how Theme choices may maintain topic or signal changes. The extract opens with a marked Theme, which links back to what has gone before and signals a topic shift: the preceding

section was about the traditional method of damp-prooi ng, and now the writer moves to one of the non-traditional methods. The second sentence also has a marked Theme, which sets up the specii c frame for this paragraph: a description of the system now in focus. After that, the Themes are all unmarked Subject Themes, signalling that the writer is keeping to the topic that has been established. When the writer moves to the next stage in the method (in the sentence following the extract), the shift – this time in chronology – is again signalled by a marked Theme: 'Once the l uids have penetrated the voids or pores in the masonry'. And later in the section, after a series of mainly unmarked Themes, another marked Theme appears as the writer shifts from the general description and evaluation of the method to an explanation of how readers can install this kind of damp-prooi ng for themselves:

> Of all the techniques for damp-prooi ng, chemical injection is the easiest to do yourself.

It is generally accepted that dif erent registers will display dif erent thematic patterns, particularly in terms of the content and frequency of dif erent kinds of marked and enhanced Themes. It is noticeable, for instance, that neither of the extracts from expository texts above includes any enhanced or interpersonal Themes. They do occur elsewhere in those texts, in other generic stages – for instance when the writer of the second extract appraises the ef ectiveness of chemical injection, we find interpersonal clauses as Themes: e.g. 'Current evidence suggests that these treatments'. This rel ects the shift from 'neutral' description to interpersonal evaluation.

A further approach to analysing Theme in text is thematic progression. This looks particularly at how Themes relate to preceding Themes and Rhemes, in terms of where the content of each Theme is derived from.

Three main types of progression are generally identii ed. In constant progression, the Theme of one clause relates back to the Theme of the preceding clause: for example, 'they' connects to 'The other two l uids'. In linear

progression, the Theme relates back to one or more elements in the Rheme of the preceding clause: e.g. ‘This system’ connects to ‘chemical injection’. In derived progression, Themes relate back to a ‘hyper-Theme’ which establishes the topic for a longer stretch of text. A simple example is shown in the relation between ‘Three types of water repellent’ and the following three Themes: ‘the i rst’, ‘the second’ and ‘the third’.

As with the different kinds of Theme, it has often been assumed that different patterns of thematic progression will be characteristic of different registers. So far, however, this has not been shown convincingly by empirical text studies. Nevertheless, thematic progression has fed into recent studies of Theme through the concept of hyper-Theme (Martin, 1992). This is an introductory sentence that sets up the frame for a sequence of following sentences – that is, it is similar to the traditional idea of a ‘topic sentence’ in a paragraph. It predicts the kinds of Themes that are likely to follow. This resource is associated with planned – usually written – registers, since it implies that the writer has a clear sense of how the text will unfold from that point (even if only retrospectively, after the rest of the text has been written), and aims to guide the reader cooperatively through the text. In the damp-prooi ng extract, the first sentence clearly has this function: as I noted above, the Theme of this sentence connects this section back to the preceding section, and the Rheme introduces the new topic, chemical injection, which will be the focus of the following stretch of text (hyper-Themes, apart from those in text-initial position, typically have this double- facing nature, connecting back and pointing forward). The insight that Theme choices may perform essentially the same function at different levels of textual organization can in fact be taken further: it is possible in many instances of carefully planned discourse to identify macro-Themes, which predict the hyper-Themes to follow. An example of a macro-Theme is found in the chapter from which the damp-proof ng extract is taken: this starts with a short paragraph introducing four different methods of damp-proof ng to be discussed (the macro-Theme), and then devotes

a section to each, in the order in which they are mentioned in the introductory paragraph (chemical injection is the second of the methods). Thus the same resource is drawn on to scarf old the text at different levels, with appropriately different kinds of realization: typically, clause Themes are realized by a clause constituent, hyper- Themes by a sentence, and macro-Themes by a paragraph.

6.8.3 Theme in different registers

I mentioned in passing above that enhanced Themes and interpersonal Themes are typically associated with particular types of registers, or of particular generic stages. One broad kind of discourse where they tend to occur is text that sets out to persuade readers or argue a case. In the following extract from an article on the website of a medical university, the writers are arguing through possible interpretations of indings from a range of studies. You will i nd it useful to identify the T-unit Themes yourself before checking my analysis in Table 6.1.

> First, it is possible that certain nutrients alter the cellular environment in important ways. Some nutrients, including Vitamin E, ß-carotene, and Vitamin C have antioxidant properties. Since there is evidence that oxidation of important intracellular chemicals may alter the control of cell differentiation and proliferation, such antioxidants may influence carcinogenesis.
>
> Second, it has been suggested that foods we eat may alter hormone production, though little direct evidence exists for this idea. However, it is well-known that certain tumors, particularly those involving genital organs, respond to hormone levels and may actually be promoted by them. Interestingly, there is some evidence that soybeans alter sterol metabolism in ways that may be important for cancers such as breast cancer.

The writers are here exploiting Theme for two complementary purposes: to carry forward the topic, mainly through experiential constituents referring to foodstuff

sand their chemical composition, and, at the same time, to give prominence to the writers' self-presentation as appropriately cautious in putting forward possible interpretations and as aware of the need to negotiate degrees of validity with the reader. Examples like this support the usefulness of viewing the interpersonal projecting clauses as elements within a larger multiple Theme: the two purposes – topic development and negotiation – are realized by different parts of the thematic choices. If a narrower definition of Theme is adopted, i.e. of the eight Themes in ranking clauses would be 'it' or 'there (is)', which would give a much less convincing picture of how the text is scaffolded.

As I have indicated in several places above, much of what I have said about Theme so far applies more transparently to planned, monologic text, especially formal written discourse, where one person has control over the 'method of development', and can predict how the text will unfold. In other registers, there may be no discernible method of development in the strict sense. This applies most obviously to unplanned speech involving more than one speaker. The following extract is from a discussion about what to buy a family member as a birthday present (recorded by Angela Reid). Again, it is worth identifying the Themes yourself before reading on.

Exercise 6.1

Identify the Theme in the following sentences. Decide which kind of clause is involved: declarative, WH-interrogative, yes/no interrogative, imperative, exclamative, minor or elliptical. Also decide whether the Theme is marked or unmarked (label Adjunct as marked Theme in declarative clauses as well as in other clause types).

1. This was Bono's i rst interview in two years.
2. In this same year, he also met Chester Kallman.
3. What are you currently reading?

4. Don’t you feel more relaxed already?

5. Print your name and address on a piece of paper.

6. More heads at independent schools are considering testing their pupils for drugs.

7. Ever wondered where your favourite pop star is?

8. How many times a week do you buy the Guardian?

9. Actions which are inconsistent with an individual’s usual behaviour and which give rise to some concern may be an indication of psychological distress.

10. For enquiries relating to this of er please phone 0227 773111.

11. Don’t forget to look out for new winning numbers every day!

12. With a Charity Card tax-free giving is easier than ever!

13. Out of the pub came a small, intent-looking woman with a helmet of dun-coloured hair.

14. What sort of car are you thinking of buying?

15.. A £2 million, two-hour adaptation of Emma, Austen’s fourth novel, planned for ITV’s autumn season, will coincide with the release of a big budget Hollywood version in British cinemas.

Exercise 6.2

Identify the Theme in the following sentences. Decide whether a thematizing structure is involved, and if so which kind: thematic equatives, predicated Theme or preposed Theme. Identify any marked alternatives

1. What often happens is that a new theory is devised that is really an extension of the previous theory.

2. It’s not only our engine that’s rei ned.

3. These mass parties, they lose touch with the people.

4. This is what I have attempted to do in this book.

5. All I want is a room somewhere.

6. What we didn’t realize was that he’d already left.

7. The most important thing to remember when you’re roasting a duck is that it must be perfectly dry before it goes in the oven.

8. That book you were talking about, is it the one that came out last year?

9. It was with an ini nite feeling of tolerance she allowed that other people had need of these struts and supports.

10. Eating at home was what they would have to learn to do.

Exercise 6.3

Identify the T-unit Themes in the following sentences

1. If she were to survive, all her energy must be harnessed for the next painful inch.

2. The workmen waved, and she waved back, conspicuous on her high ridge.

3. While drinking it, she read the paper.

4. He was killed in 1937, i ghting in Spain for the Republican cause.

5. When talking about people in industrialized countries with problems in reading or writing, it is important to stress that they are ordinary people.

6. As long as the Chancellor funds tax cuts by cutting spending he could assuage the City’s fears while making it even more dii cult for Labour to match the Conservatives cut for cut.

7. To i nd out more about this unique, new way of giving and how you can make the most of your generosity, just call free or use the coupon provided.

8. Eventually, when the region got small enough, it would be spinning fast enough to balance the attraction of gravity, and in this way disk-like rotating galaxies were born.

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